

IDEAS
ALLIANCE

Dudley

A story of stories

A report commissioned
by Dudley Council
April 2018





Dudley

– A story of stories

This is a story of Dudley told by Anna and Helen. We are not from Dudley but you welcomed us, inspired us and shared your stories. We have been privileged to have met you and hear about you and the great place in which you live.

We were asked by Dudley's Health and Wellbeing Board to talk with a wide range of people using a story-telling approach to:

- identify the key priorities for the new Adults Alliance to focus on over the next 5 years
- begin to define a new relationship/nature of engagement between organisations and communities.

This report is our record of what we heard, what we learnt and what we hope you will take into the future. It is for the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Council and all the people we met.

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The people round here are first class; they do things – they just help you and they don't expect anything back.

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CHAPTER ONE

Dudley

What people told us they cared about:

- Black Country people are the 'salt of the earth' – time and again local people were described as very friendly, helping each other out and always having a story to tell
- The history of the Black Country – from the steelworks to mining, chain making, the extinct volcano, the canals, museums and castle
- Transport links – mainly via the buses and Ring and Ride. Mobility came up time and again as both an asset and a hindrance
- The green spaces – parks, canals, countryside; being able to reach the countryside quickly, cycle the canals and visit bluebell woods and fossil grounds
- Community spaces – including the leisure centres, the swimming pool, community centres, pubs and markets, The Beacon Centre, Queens Cross Network and cafes
- Social groups – where people come together for a common interest or just for a chat

Yet we know that not everything is good. Some people in Dudley face poor health and wellbeing across their lives, from birth to old age. In some parts of the borough people can only expect to live to age 55 in good health, while those living in other areas can expect to live to age 71 in good health.

This gap is bigger for men than women. Not only do some people live shorter lives, they also live more of their lives in poor health. Dudley's Health and Wellbeing Board want to narrow this gap to achieve Longer, Healthier, Safer Lives for All.



SHAMIM'S STORY: CONNECTION, TRUST AND PURPOSE

Part 1

Shamim told us about the work she has been doing in her community. Her story highlights the importance of understanding cultural differences, creating activities that are useful in safe spaces and then building support around that, rather than focusing on the issues or problems first.

Shamim lives in Lye and has been actively working with and supporting her community for around 28 years. She is particularly passionate about helping Muslim women and she followed in the footsteps of her father who dedicated himself to charitable work. Shamim told us: "I'm from a generation where you look after people... I realised lots of people were isolated".

Shamim started by setting up sewing classes for women at her local mosque which became a place where people could learn skills, socialise and share problems. Muslim women were able to attend

classes at the event because it was seen as a safe, familiar environment. Through these classes, Shamim met many women who faced different issues and many of whom wanted to get a job.

"People just thought 'oh I'll go to the mosque and learn to sew' – that was the biggest draw for women, learning to sew our own clothes. From there, people opened up about their problems.

There's a lady now who couldn't speak English, she was begging me for support to get a job. I took her to a factory, she had a test to sew. She couldn't sew very well, but

they were kind to her and gave her some samples and said go and practice at home, you need some experience. So she started doing that and they eventually hired her.

This lady, a few years later, she's bought a house, she's contributing to society, to the economy, she's paying taxes. She feels better inside. Without a bit of help, she would have been left sitting at home.

People need gentle guidance to remove the barriers gradually. It's not just "here's an interview, go to that." They have to trust you. Often the parents have to trust you too if the women are younger". ■

“

People need gentle guidance to remove the barriers gradually.

What we did

Ideas Fair

We started with a gathering of key people in the health, social care and voluntary sectors at an Ideas Fair in November 2017, to begin understanding their experience of working and living in Dudley and to identify their priorities for the future. The Ideas Fair was attended by over 50 people. A similar but smaller event was held with a wider group of the Community and Voluntary Sector later in the project.

In the 'discovery' sessions we talked about using an appreciative approach to focus on the best in people's work and the support they provide others. To get them thinking about services differently, attendees were asked:

Looking back over the years can you recall a time when you had an especially positive experience of supporting someone; a time when you felt really alive and engaged, or really useful and the person's health and well-being was improved as a result?

From these sessions, we heard about how support and services should be developed and delivered in the future and this led to the principles we talk about later in the report [pg 25-27].

Meeting people

We had conversations with individuals and groups from all walks of life and levels of service and community involvement. Over the six months, we had the privilege to listen to people in their living rooms, cafés, streets, local gyms and community spaces.

- Chit Chat café, Canal Trust
- Daybreak Service lunch club
- Airtime Group
- Age UK befrienders
- Church View Sheltered Housing
- Age UK Volunteer gathering
- Deaf sign cafe
- MS Society cafe
- Queens Cross Network Centre
- Red House Glass Cone
- Over 50s forum
- Carers' network

On the street and in our pop up living rooms in the community:

- Cornbow, Halesowen
- Brierley Hill Market
- Churchill Centre, Dudley
- Stourbridge



When talking with local residents we asked:

- 1 What do you love about your local area and why?
- 2 What do you value about it? What does it bring to you?
- 3 What is working best - what is helping you manage at the moment?
- 4 How could things be better for the future?

These questions use an appreciative inquiry approach. To find out more see pg 32.

Listening workshops

We held two workshops for 16 people from the local area and workforce, introducing them to the art of listening to stories.

We aimed to equip them to go out and collect one story from a friend, neighbour or family member which we could combine with the others we had heard.

Building confidence in listening helps the process of shifting the relationship between workforce and communities.

We used the following headlines to guide the story-tellers while ensuring people were allowed to control their own narrative and explore with us what mattered most to them.

- 1 **Opening questions - e.g. how long have you lived in this area? You must have seen a lot of changes over that time**
- 2 **Growing up in Dudley (if relevant) - the best bits. Why were they the best bits?**
- 3 **Parts of Dudley borough that they love and the reasons they love them.**
- 4 **The hidden treasures and why they're so treasured (they could be a person, a place, an activity, a group, an environment, a feeling, an approach)**
- 5 **A wish for Dudley's future**



Ideas Station

An ideas box was located for several weeks in the reception of a local gym.

While people were waiting, they had the opportunity to fill out a brief questionnaire on the things they value and hand it in to the receptionist. That way, we reached people who were going about their everyday business who would not necessarily be engaging with formal services.

Online survey

We created a short online survey asking people about what they valued in their lives and local area. This was sent out to Council staff using their internal intranet.

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I value having good neighbours to rely on when needed. I feel protected. It makes me feel happy

Summary of who we spoke to and where

Total number of participants	354
Local residents	227
Female	65%
Male	35%
Age:	
18-30	9%
31-40	14%
41-50	20%
51-60	24%
Over 60	33%
Online surveys and ideas stations	53

CHAPTER 3:

What we heard – what matters to people

Here are the messages we heard loud and clear

1 Having strong relationships and connections with others

People repeatedly told us that they liked being part of clubs and groups, visiting cafes and centres because of the people they were able to meet and be with. People often talked about how they valued the connections they had to others in the local area from family members living nearby to friends from childhood.

Topics people talked to us about:

Community feeling, having a job where I talk to people (burger van), growing up in local area, chit chat café, Daybreak service, public transport, ball-room dancing, football, raising a family, pubs and cafes, people of Dudley, local market, over 50s forum, Coseley swimming pool

“The people round here are first class; they do things – they just help you and they don’t expect anything back”

“I like the good road network, my family and the good broadband provision in my local area. They allow me to do things I want to do, to stay connected which makes me feel content and not alone”.

“We love meeting new people on a commute into Dudley”

“It’s like one big family here”

“Some of us from the group go out for a meal once a month too”

“I value having good neighbours to rely on when needed. I feel protected. It makes me feel happy”

DAVID’S STORY: BEING ACTIVE AND SOCIAL AND THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Retired Stourbridge resident David is a member of Stourbug a cycling group which has been running for over ten years and has more than 400 members across the borough. He told us about how he got involved and what he likes about the group.

“I saw a little write-up about it in the local paper. I thought, ‘Oh that’s interesting’ and went along to join in. It’s just a group of people who go out for rides. There are rides everyday for different durations and speeds. You sign up for what you fancy”.

David told us that he likes going to the group because of the fitness element and the fun: “You get to see some of the bits of the borough which if you were in a car, you would never see”.

The groups’ activities all relate to cycling but there are many social elements. “Just before Christmas there’s a Christmas ride. And then leading to a Christmas lunch. There’s usually coffee and cake... an integral part of any ride! Along the way there’s usually a coffee stop somewhere. That’s seems to be a requirement that you stop somewhere along the way. So there are lots of little cafes

in the area which you get to know about. Which is nice”.

David described the group as getting on quietly and organising itself. The one area he would like to see support for the group is “To fill potholes! The roads around here are really bad for cycling. The road surface – you really have to keep an eye out for potholes when cycling. They can be really dangerous.”

David told us that the group always welcomes new members and holds a couple of events each year trying to recruit and encourage new people to join. They have found that some people are hesitant.

“Some people haven’t been on bikes for a long time. or are scared to go on roads. To begin with you can go on a small ride without a great deal of distance, to build your confidence up and develop your skills. But one of the things which people do say

is that they don’t like going on the road. Not just going on roads where there is traffic, but with roads with potholes, things like that. It makes people uncertain. So it’s trying to encourage people to help remove the barriers which make people uncertain about joining in”.

“You get to see some of the bits of the borough which if you were in a car, you would never see”

David’s story shows how sometimes it’s about thinking outside the box and supporting groups in indirect ways to help them continue and to get others involved.

Stourbug have any amazing story of how they were started in 2007. Visit their website to find out more.

www.stourbug.org.uk ■

2 Being active

Topics people talked to us about:

Canals, parks, getting out of the house every day, nature reserve, Daybreak service, ring and ride, ball-room dancing, walking, Himley Hall, organised walks (Active Citizens), tram service, golf clubs, local transport, civic theatre, bowling, bingo, volunteering, The Hub activities, Sedgeley community centre, Coseley swimming pool, Dudley leisure centre

We heard many examples of how being active helps people feel connected, helps them to relax, feel happy and 'let their mind wander'. Being active could include attending a local lunch club or simply getting out of the house. We realised how important it is to be mindful of people's ability to be mobile.

"Growing up, we always used to visit the ballroom every weekend. It was a great place to make friends and socialise. I met my wife at the ballroom and we are still dancing to this day"

"A super place which allows wonderful walks within the local area"

"Dudley borough is the healthiest place to live because of all the hills and the walks"

“

Running takes me to a place where I can release, plan my life and switch off.

3 Having autonomy and being in control

People continually told us that one of the things they valued about the local area was their easy access to amenities and transport. Others expressed how they or the group they were a part of struggled to get around and do what they wanted to due to transport issues such as accessibility, reliability and costs

"I feel safe and secure in my area. I enjoy access to parks, walks, nature reserves. I am able to access shops and libraries where I can then access local services. I value this access. It makes you feel that you have some control over your environment and life".

"I feel happy as I can be independent. Local amenities are within walking distance of my home; there's green spaces and a good bus network".

“

I can collect a trolley at one end of Merry Hill and take it with me to all the shops I need.

Topics people talked to us about:

Being able to leave the house every day, ring and ride service, Merry Hill shopping centre, buses, shops and traders, close access to the countryside, accessible health services

AUDRIE'S STORY

Audrie is a volunteer for Age UK. She volunteers as a befriender, calling and visiting older people in the community who may be isolated or are looking for company. Audrie is 82 years old and has grown up in Dudley all her life.



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If you've been active, your mind's active and you don't want to give up.

Audrie is an accountant and was a Director of Finance for a heating company in the 1980s. She then owned a haulage business and 'roped and sheeted', including long distance journeys: "I had a four tonner and a ten tonner to start with". She then went on to work in care. She got her NVQ2 when she was 60 years old and worked three nights a week.

Audrie worked until she was 73 years old and her son told her to take a break. She didn't get into volunteering straight away. "I've been gardening you see. Because I've got such a big garden. So I was used to my garden. And then I found, as you slow down, I've got to do something else. So that's why I've taken up my knitting and doing the volunteering work.

I phone people. But I also visit. I used to visit a lady but she's had to go into a home, and moved away. But she used to love me going to have a chat and used to stay there and have a cup of tea with her. It's nice. You get to know all the people and you go in and you sit at your desk. Which is normal for me. No problem. And then you start ringing them. I get pleasure out of it because I know that people at the other end can't do much and they're just waiting for the phone to ring. And a soon as they hear my voice, you can hear the voice lift up. And they say 'Hello, Audrie'.

Some of the people are younger than me. They're lonely. And they can't get out and I say to them "Well, can you get a chair to sit outside in the sun?" And they can't. I mean they can't have the beautiful sunshine". Audrie thinks there needs to be more things going on in the community for older people to come together, "where people could go and have a cup of tea together and a chat" which she feels is important because it "keeps the mind active.. and gives people something to look forward to". She feels that there used to be services and activities: "They used to have the knitting groups, they used to have the little exercise group. Then they used to have a singing group, where people could sit down together and have a little sing song. They've closed it all because of funding". ■

QUEENS CROSS NETWORK STORY: COLLABORATION AND PURPOSE

We made several visits to the Queens Cross Network centre in order to talk to the different people who use it and work there. The centre is home to Disability in Action (DIA), a member organisation made up of people who use the centre and who are actively involved in running it. Their motto is 'services for disabled people, by disabled people'. DIA has just recently become a charity and is starting to fundraise.



DIA has a committee of seven members who are elected by the organisation's members. Sam, the Committee Member for Marketing told us "We are a group of seven people who meet every four weeks and see what needs doing".

Sam, and DIA member Ben, told us that DIA volunteers run the centre's reception service, horticulture service and café kitchen, preparing and selling food and drinks. Sam gives tours to new members of the centre and helps at open nights to promote the work of the centre. When we asked

him what the best thing about Queens Cross Network was, he told us: "I love it because I can help".

He also said that the relationship between staff and the people using the centre felt like "a big family". The centre hosts many other groups who hold weekly 'cafes' in the space. We spoke to members of the MS Society and Deaf Sign group who use the centre to meet regularly. We repeatedly heard from them that the staff go above and beyond to help and that the informality of the centre,

and having somewhere to be together, were some of the things they valued the most.

"We are a group of seven people who meet every four weeks and see what needs doing".

We also spoke to the manager Paul, who has been involved in the centre for nineteen years. He has seen it change from a traditional day service centre to a service that is now run in partnership with people who

use services or have used services in the past. DIA work with Paul to make decisions about the centre. When we spoke to Paul, he highlighted the importance of purpose and having the opportunities to learn.

"I always think that if you can encourage people and support them to have a purpose and to be able to connect with society, connect with the people around them, and to have friends. Then it doesn't matter if you don't have very much money or if you don't have a lot of other things going. If you've got a purpose

and you feel like you are needed, then you can build on top of that.

"I love it because I can help".

We all need to be needed and wanted, don't we? I think people do come here who might have had a pretty rotten deal prior to, but then they come in, they make friends, they build confidence. And people will say to me, 'Do you know what? I didn't even feel comfortable switching a computer on before I came

here, but now you've got me word processing minutes from meetings and stuff like that'. That's just one example. There's lots of others, like people who are now working in our café producing lunches for other people. And they couldn't boil an egg before, they say 'Mom didn't let me go near the cooker,' or something similar.

To me, pretty much everything else you can build on in life. And whatever life throws at you, if you've got purpose, you've got sustainability". ■

4 Having something to do, a place to be, a purpose

We heard stories from people about how important it was to have a purpose during the day. This ranged from having something to organise or focus on to activities that they looked forward to and feeling needed by others.

"The people are loyal... just look at that chap over there. He is here every single day".

"This (Daybreak service) is the only thing I do all week. The rest of the time I'm on my own. I love coming here; it's my lifeline. I wish there were more places like this like there used to be".

Topics people talked to us about:

Car racing, getting out of the house everyday, fear of retiring, Daybreak service, employment (florist), market and fellow traders, cafes, meeting friends, Hope Centre

5 Being able to contribute and give

Many people talked about how being involved and helping out was important to them and that they like being asked to lend a hand or assist in some way that suited them.

"Volunteering is my 'get up and go'!"

"Because no matter what, the people always come back on a weekly basis, they are loyal and devoted to the town. The market traders have limited equipment and resources but they are out there every day no matter the weather"

"People miss me at the centre when I'm not there. They ask where I've been!"

Topics people talked to us about:

Volunteering, parenting, community activity, crystal making, market trading, over 50s forum

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The best thing about Queens Cross Network is that I can help here.

LAURA'S STORY

"My main memories of growing up in Stourbridge, is that there was always plenty going on. To this day, my favourite part of Dudley is Mary Stevens Park. It has been since I was walking back from primary school and every evening begging my Mum to take me to the park after school. I learnt to ride my bike in Mary Stevens; I had my first drunken experience as a teenager on white cider in Mary Stevens; hopping the bandstand; playing in the woods at the top, sledging down the hill. When the waterpark got introduced I remember running around like idiots, everything. Most of my memories of Dudley, of childhood, centre around Mary Stevens park.

Some people I'm still friends with now I met when I was sixteen down the park. Even now, 12 years later, I will walk down through Stourbridge and it's unusual that you don't at least see someone that you recognise, if not somebody that you know to stop and talk to.

And I still go to Mary Stevens. There's a beautiful café down there. And I walk my partner's dogs down there occasionally. I missed it this year, but there's a Santa fun run every year. There's carol singing. And it's the way I walk to my Mum's house. I could walk another way, but I never do. I always walk that way". ■

6 Learning new things, new ideas

Many of the stories we heard included opportunities for people to learn and this was less about formal education. People talked about trying out new things, learning a new skill or going back to one previously known. Their stories also included situations where they shared information with each other and the value of peer support and learning from those with similar lived experience.

"(Crystal healer) I give people opportunities to try something they've never tried before"

"At the over 50s forum we find out about so many things that are going on"

"I've learnt more about my condition from this group (Airtime) than I have from the specialists"

Topics people talked to us about:

Online gaming, car racing, volunteering, Black History Museum, healing through crystals, walking and exploring, chit chat group, active retirement group, over 50s forum, local libraries, self-help groups (e.g. Airtime), college

7 Loving where we live

In Dudley, the environment was mentioned many times in terms of how people love enjoying the parks, green spaces and being on the edge of the countryside. We often heard that people took notice of their surroundings whether these were beautiful and natural or run down and shabby; they recognised where there had been investment (e.g. the parks) and where it was needed. In particular, there is a feeling that Dudley town centre had "lost its soul" and is full of empty shops.

"The market is full of empty stalls. I think there's something here for community development".

“

The thing I like is that it's (Stourbridge) on the edge of the countryside. Best of both worlds, city and country activities.

Topics people talked to us about:

Canals, parks, nature reserve, wren's nest, local architecture, Coseley fossils, market and fellow traders, footpaths and pavements

SHAMIM'S STORY:

CONNECTION, TRUST AND PURPOSE

Part 2

Shamim went on to work with Stourbridge college, putting on courses that appealed to the Muslim community and particularly women, although the courses were open to anyone.. Though the courses were open to anyone. In 2002 she was part of setting up Direxions a registered charity supporting community development starting with sewing courses, then sewing courses and English and then GCSE courses and it grew to cover many things.

"I started all of these courses for the community. Sewing classes, painting, classroom assistant courses. We got deaf sign language, Arabic, Urdu, we did hair and beauty, healthy cooking, IT, driving theory, exercise, training exercise instructors. So much. I can't mention all the courses, because I did hundreds!"

At one point Shamim noticed that women from her community were not accessing the local gyms as it wasn't considered culturally appropriate. So she started a course to train up women as exercise instructors and she took part herself. She met a lot of people when working as an exercise instructor and learnt a lot about the impact of inclusive exercise activities on people and how not "just talking" as a form of support is important.

"When people are feeling low, and they are isolated and depressed and they've got

so many problems. Doing a session of exercise gives them those good hormones. And they start feeling good about themselves and they feel like they can do other things. Not everyone wants to just talk. There are so many things that people have to feel better about themselves before they can talk". Shamim believes that there are still barriers facing women to get involved in services and opportunities, particularly around transport.

"The Council have got their leisure centres which are really good and they are doing that one day for women. Swimming just for women. The issue I have now is I'm thinking how many women can I fit in my car to take them to the swimming? Many Muslim women don't use buses, or they've never taken it on their own. Some women do, and it's really good to see them being independent, but a lot of them won't. Particularly, older

women don't, they think it's not safe for them, they worry about having a fall.

I'm now trying to work with a nearby school as they have a pool. I'm trying to arrange swimming there for local women who can walk to it. Otherwise I have to take women to the pool and I can only take a few in the car.

"Doing a session of exercise gives them those good hormones. And they start feeling good about themselves and they feel like they can do other things."

The Council are providing those services and things like yoga, Pilates, all classes for ladies, but they can't get there! I'm now going to try and organise something local for them. Perhaps if we had somewhere we could contact to arrange

a mini bus on such and such a day and time, because it's the health of our community and it's important. You want the health of the community to improve, so it's not such a burden on the NHS, but we need to get people there. It's simple."

Shamim's keen to keep supporting her community and her latest plan is to set up a health hub. "At the moment I want to do stuff with women around health and set up a health hub in our areas. That's my passion. I want one place where people can come to for

that sort of advice and help".

Shamim's story is a great example of how connections, trust and purpose have improved the wellbeing of women in her community and how she wants to do even more with a little support. ■

8 Being of Dudley and belonging

Many of the people we talked to felt that the local history had a significant part to play in their sense of identity and they felt enormous pride in the area's history. We heard about the dialect of Dudley, the industrialisation, the flag and the famous people who had come from Dudley.

"Growing up I loved how close knit we were and it felt like I was part of a community. All of the people who worked at the steelworks used to live in close proximity and you were always welcome into anybody's house for a tea or coffee"

"The Black Country is made by the people"

"Dudley is the oldest place on earth"

"Gornal people are wonderful, warm and generous"

"When I moved back to Dudley I had a permanent smile on my face for the first month because everyone is so friendly"

"There's an inherent pride in Dudley folk - they're salt of the earth!"

Topics people talked to us about:

Car racing, online gaming, Black Country history, Daybreak service, previous employment (old steelworks), memories and history (where I grew up), football, Coseley fossils, market traders, Dudley people, Brierly Hill market, Coseley swimming pool

CHAPTER 4:

What we heard - How could it be better?

Getting out more – 'I would love to get out more if I could'

You told us you want to get out and about but sometimes this is difficult. Many people told us of their sense of loneliness and lack of purpose being trapped indoors and craved the opportunity to be helped out to meet people in mainstream spaces such as parks and cafes.

"Many people told us of their sense of loneliness and lack of purpose being trapped indoors"

Knowing about what's on - There's loads going on in the borough but people don't know about it

There is a lot of activity and support available in Dudley but spreading the word is often difficult. Many smaller projects don't have the capacity to spend on engagement and outreach.

People reported hearing about these activities mainly through word of mouth and would often attend something if they knew someone

else was going. Generally people did not find out information online or through leaflets. The network of trusted people within a community needs to be built on and used to share information across the local area. They can also offer to accompany people or be the warm welcoming person at the other end.

Build on what is happening and mix everything up – There is so much great stuff going on that is not formal 'service'.

People talked about how much they valued the spaces where they met each other; they felt comfortable there because they were the sorts of places that were accessible, welcoming and part of everyday life. Formal 'services' could think outside the box and outside their boundaries and link with these trusted spaces, bringing aspects of their support with them.

People also talked about mixing everything and everyone – taking people out of their service siloes and opening up services to be accessible to the whole community.



Involve us - People want to be involved and help

People are very keen to get involved with the Health and Wellbeing Board's new vision, including groups from museums and heritage, community gardens, choirs and cafes.

Involving a diverse group of people at every level means improving the wellbeing of people can become a responsibility across the community.

For example, one person we spoke with suggested that there would be opportunities to

meet people who are housebound and support them through the people who enter the houses to undertake repair. They could stop for a cup of tea and spend time with them, potentially sharing information about local services or simply listening.

We also heard from people working in the third sector and local residents who attend community groups that they often don't feel involved on an equal footing.

"It feels like the Council reach out to the community and voluntary sector when things are going 'belly up' and then when things start to get sorted out, the Council take it back. We need a new level playing field"

CHAPTER 5:

What does this mean for the Adults Alliance?

Themed areas have already been identified by the Health and Wellbeing Board. We cross checked these with what we heard.

Themed area	What matters to people
Healthy behaviours	Being active Opportunities to learn Environment
Loneliness and isolation	Sense of belonging and community Relationships and connections Sense of purpose
Reducing the impact of poverty	Sense of purpose Sense of autonomy and control Ability to contribute and give back
Mental health and wellbeing	Sense of belonging and community Relationships and connections Sense of purpose Sense of autonomy and control Being active Opportunities to learn Ability to contribute and give back Sense of identity
Financial abuse	Sense of autonomy and control Opportunities to learn

The Health and Wellbeing Board brings together Dudley Council, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch Dudley, the NHS Commissioning Board and partners in the voluntary and community sectors.



Areas for further development

We feel that rather than addressing 'problems to be fixed', there is more that can be done to make the most of what is already happening. This includes:

- helping people get out and go to the places and people they want to visit and connect with
- helping people know about what's going on in their community - in different ways
- looking at all that is happening, not just the 'services'
- building on and adding to what's already there - go to people where they are and reflect the community
- saying yes to all the offers of help from partners and individuals who want to be involved

Our new way of working

The Ideas Fair and CVS event provided us with unique insight into what local practitioners from the health, social care and voluntary sector believe is best in their support work with others.

There was consensus across people from statutory, voluntary and community sectors that there could be a broader sense of creating the right conditions and space for fostering and nurturing a new relationship with the community; a relationship where people are seen as the key to the solution, where all the local resources are combined and mobilised and where people are able to contribute to the design and delivery of support.

We've used this to create a set of guiding principles to help rethink the role of services and local people. We've added some notes which might be helpful for understanding each principle.

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We want to be in the Alliance and involved. But in a true partnership, we can't just do it for free. We're not a tick box exercise which can feel really unfair

Co-production – sharing everyone's perspectives and ideas

All future service design and delivery should work towards co-production so that this eventually becomes fully embedded across the system provision and commissioning has local people at the heart of the process.

Collaboration – working together

Collaboration is encouraged between and across broader sectors to make the best use of all the local resources and enhance the provision. This includes the Council, statutory and voluntary sector, community assets and small businesses and employers.

Asset based – build on what is already there and what works well

Promote and strengthen the factors that support wellbeing and foster communities and networks that sustain mental health. People are assessed for their skills, capabilities, experience and knowledge and these are mobilised and strengthened as a core part of any service intervention.

Measure what matters – focus on what matters to people

Explore and identify robust ways of measuring the qualitative and subjective experiences of people, with people, to complement the objective, numerical data and understand a broader sense of the impact. Ensure the results are used to learn and reflect from and inform future provision.

Human centred design – keep people in the centre of our thinking

Creating the right conditions to enable change, innovation and growth in the sector; collaborative organisational development which aims to re-humanise and grow a system based on relationships and compassion.

Diversity and accessibility – be inclusive and avoid labels and siloes

People have access to a range of different types of support from specialist interventions to more informal, community level options including activities focused on improving well-being, peer support networks and self-help. Services come out of their siloes and are designed for a broader range of people so that the focus is on what matters to people rather than their 'issue'.

Environment – our surroundings impact our wellbeing

The environment has a significant impact on wellbeing and people notice their surroundings whether they are beautiful or derelict. Outcomes related to this should be designed to influence service delivery and community involvement.



CHAPTER 6:

What does this mean for the Health and Wellbeing Partnership and what and how it commissions?

We suggest the Health and Wellbeing Partnership considers commissioning for the outcomes identified as important to people and for co-production.

The role of the commissioner may change, shifting towards facilitation and community engagement to combine with process management. This is new for some and they may need support as they incorporate these new skills into their day-to-day work.

It is important that the Health and Wellbeing Partnership aligns its purpose with that of the people; after all, the outcomes they commission against should belong to the people. From the stories they told us, we were able to translate the themes into the following outcomes.

An **'Outcome'** is the meaningful and valued impact or change that occurs as a result of a particular activity or set of activities. For example, enabling people to be active and participate is an outcome and could be achieved through the development of a range of community transport opportunities.

1 People build relationships and are connected with others

It is well documented that increasing connectedness between people has a direct positive impact on their wellbeing. This theme goes beyond the role of trusted relationships and focuses on the need to help people to connect with a different range of people, including support workers, peers, adults and young people and members of their communities.

2 People have a sense of community and belonging

This relates to people feeling that they matter to one another and having a shared belief that theirs and other's needs will be met through their commitment to be together. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important for seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions as well as easing loneliness.

3 People are active and able to participate

This outcome often relates directly to physical activity; during our research, it soon became clear that in Dudley, this outcome needs to focus more broadly on participation as well as exercise as there was consensus among many of the older people that mobility, getting out of the house and participating in a group activity was highly valued.

4 People have a sense of autonomy and control in their lives

It is known that the level of control a person has over their life is associated with their health and when choice is taken away from us, it can be deeply upsetting. A sense of autonomy is a big driver of reward or threat at all ages and is often compromised for individuals in the health and social care systems.

5 People have a sense of purpose

The importance of purpose has been a principle of motivational theories and practice since the 1960s. It is also well established that the ability of services and social programmes to align their purpose with individuals' purposes can be key to their success. Furthermore, a recent study suggests that people who think their life has meaning and purpose live longer than people with a lower sense of personal wellbeing.

6 People have opportunities to keep learning

This outcome encompasses not only the traditional sense of learning through formal education but also trying out new things, learning a new skill or going back to one previously known. It also includes the role in support to help people understand their situation better and share their learning with others.



CHAPTER 7:

The Future

We thought about all we had heard. There are many positives and some obvious ways to make things even better. We have knowledge and experience of what others are doing elsewhere and combining all these, we have the following recommendations.

1. Keep listening, keep discovering

We have started a conversation and only scratched the surface – there are so many more people to hear and stories to unearth. People working in the Council can set the example in reaching out and listening to people.

- Continue to go out and listen, encourage and enable all staff to go out and talk and listen – for example, arrange regular Walk and Talks
- Provide space and opportunity for people to share their stories together and with you
- Be appreciative in your inquiries. You cannot know in advance what you will discover. You cannot pre-determine what you will find out or know the things you need to know about. Open conversations with no agenda will lead you into new places

“

Work hard at listening with intent to understand – not reply

ROZ DAVIES

It is also important to value stories

- Create a culture where stories are valued; teach others to listen and allow people to talk about what is important to them, not what you are interested in
- Use insight and evidence that combine stories with quantitative data

2. Keep building a shared future, keep learning together

We heard a lot about the value of spaces, reasons to meet and learning activities that bring people together. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership can lead and drive the changes, unblocking the barriers to people getting involved and creating the space for innovation and learning.

- Put on cross sector training, communities of practice and create other spaces for people to learn and come together, making sure people are able and feel comfortable to get to them
- Collaborate with and learn from others who have experience in these areas both in and outside Dudley
- Examples that link with what we heard are:
 - Chatty Café** - Creating connections in an informal way
 - Cycling Without Age** - A creative way to help people ‘get out more’
 - History Cafes** - Combining a love of history, sense of identity and connection
- Foster a culture of learning so that people feel safe to fail and make mistakes as well as celebrate the successes and achievements; evaluate as you go and share across the sector

3. Keep collaborating

We are impressed with the desire to be involved and to work with others. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership can help people meet each other and build collaborative relationships. This could initially be place based, so that all collaboration is focused around an area rather than an issue or other population demographic

- Involve people from all backgrounds who are committed and enthusiastic
- Explore and welcome help from unusual places – look outside the traditional budgetary and commissioning boundaries for collaborators (e.g. museums, theatres, community activists, private businesses) and make it easy for people to get involved and feel welcome
- To be effective and avoid frustrations, it helps to be clear about why you are coming together and the nature of the collaboration
- Share power with service providers and the community – explore where to ‘let go’ of traditional ways of working, technical language and policies and procedures

Appendix

OUR APPROACH

1. Co-production

We use this definition of co-production:

Co-production is a relationship where people (workforce and citizens) share power and responsibility to design, plan and deliver support together, recognising that everyone has a vital contribution to make in order to improve quality of life for people and communities.

In order to create the right conditions for co-production to flourish, we used appreciative inquiry through story-telling. This allowed participants to lead us towards outcomes and guiding principles which matter most to them through the recounting of their life experiences. We aimed to build the interest of local people and other stakeholders thereby influencing their willingness and capacity to contribute now and in the future. Building a foundational level of ownership and shifting the way people are engaged with from the start, will put the Adult Alliance in good stead for deeper integration of the capacity and roles of the people and professionals around them.

2. Appreciative inquiry

'We need to discover the root causes of success rather than the root causes of failure'

David Cooperider creator of AI

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a particular way of asking questions and thinking of the future that fosters positive relationships and builds on the basic goodness in a person, a situation, or an organisation.

The idea is to build organisations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. It is the opposite of problem solving. Instead of focusing your energy on fixing the small part that is wrong, this approach focuses on how to create more of what's already working. Importantly it acknowledges the contribution of individuals and increases trust and collaboration.

Appreciative inquiry uses story-telling as its central mode of discovery and this helped us to adapt our approach and respond flexibly to the community because:

- the story-telling format is easy to grasp and use
- participants can learn the skills while taking part
- it can be used almost everywhere: community; school; family; voluntary group; etc.

An AI approach shaped conversations with all the stakeholders in this project from the stakeholder events with practitioners to the informal fieldwork in town centres.

3. Story telling

'You write in order to change the world, knowing perfectly well that you probably can't, but also knowing that literature is indispensable to the world.... The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way...people look at reality, then you can change it.'

James Baldwin



'Wheel of Listening' adapted from The Samaritans

Statistics and lists of facts can communicate important information, but stories communicate meaning and emotion, which are what motivate people to act. People don't relate to issues, they relate to other people—in other words, to their stories.

Stories are a fundamental aspect of human consciousness; they're an essential part of how we think, feel, remember, imagine, relate—and create change. And importantly for this project, they help to make up the foundations of community; every community has a narrative and people's daily lived experiences are full of stories.

4. Story listening

In this project, we have also highlighted the importance of story-listening and focused on building listening skills amongst some of the workforce. Listening is a skill which is often overshadowed by the use of structured forms of engagement including assessments, care planning and time-limited interventions.

Some of the best story-listeners are those who work for The Samaritans, and we used their 'Wheel of Listening' to frame our work and develop the skills of those who joined us at the listening workshops.

5. Thematic analysis

The stories, comments and responses from the residents and workforce were analysed thematically using a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns with data (Braun and Clarke 2006). This approach develops a matrix to organise qualitative data according to key themes.

The following stages were employed to conduct the thematic analysis:

- Notes and audio recordings were collected and transcribed
- Individual codes were applied to the data including the local assets described, the value of these assets and the outcome that could be aligned to this
- The codes were then connected together according to the outcomes and themes they matched
- These outcomes or themes were then compared and contrasted with the existing themes identified by the Health and Wellbeing Board

Thank you

We would like to thank all those who told us about what was important in their lives, shared stories of the past and wishes for the future. These can be very personal accounts and we are honoured that they were willing to speak to us. We would also like to thank all of the people and groups who allowed us to take their photographs and bring our findings to life.

There have been certain groups and individuals who have really helped us during this project and without them we wouldn't have been able to reach so many people. We also couldn't have done this project without the support of the Public Health team. Thank you to everyone involved.

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Photos taken by Joshua Harry Brown

Canal photo on page 9 taken by Bryan Kelsey