

St Matthew's Church

St Matthew's Community Development Project

How Can a Small Organisation Make a Big Difference?

(2016 – 2017)



Executive Summary

Through this project we are *breaking down the walls of social isolation and empowering our community*. We are doing this through...

- networking,
- supporting,
- leading and managing, and
- shaping values and influencing.

Our Community Development Manager, Pam Robinson, has had another ground breaking year. Her value to this area as a community builder cannot be over emphasised

This report looks at the impact of Pam's role over the last 12 months. Some of Pam's achievements are easily delineated whilst other work relates to the breadth of her role.



How can the resources of a community be used to the best effect?

By *Networking*: drawing together small groups and establishing a network, creating robust communication, facilitating and sharing resources, forging new links, and raising awareness of opportunities.

Pam continues to build and strengthen the network she has developed across the local area which currently encompasses over 60 groups and impacts over 1000 individuals.

Networks don't just happen, they need forums in which to connect and someone to facilitate.

Key highlights of this year...

- **Building key relationships** with *Stockport Credit Union, Targeted Prevention Alliance, Stockport Community Shed Group, Stockport Homes, Stockport Action for Voluntary Youth (SAVY), Youth Offending Team (YOT), Spaces of Hope, Equity Housing Social Enterprise team.*
- **Continuing** to strengthen partnerships with *local councillors, schools, police, community services, groups and charities.*
- **Extending** the reach of group and community websites and social media.
- **Continuing** to raise our profile via the local press, social media and presentations to local forums.
- **Connecting with *Health as a Social Movement and Spaces of Hope*** which aim to reduce social isolation and strengthen communities.

Where next?

- **Continue** to build and facilitate the network, working closely with the Community Development Officer for *Spaces of Hope* and the Social Enterprise Manager for *Equity Housing*.
- **Develop** a partnership between *our Youth on the Edge* summer holiday programme and two local supermarkets, in order to provide free lunches for all children who attend our holiday club.



Impact statement – Neighbourhood Charity Crafters

Pam has marketed our group very well, by word of mouth, through social media, through the church newsletter and with posters around the church and in local businesses nearby. Pam asked local journalists to come and do an article on our group when we first set up. Pam also added two other articles to the local newspaper which were successfully published. Pam arranged for the local councillors to come and visit us and understand what we were doing. This led to us being included in their local newsletter to residents. The Local councillors were so impressed with what we were doing that they wanted to expand the idea to another community centre.

Through these groups we have experienced some amazing moments. We now get a delivery of around 160 knitted squares every couple of months from a 97 year old lady who is house bound. We wrote to her to let her know how the squares were being used. Her daughter told us her mother is very proud of her achievements and is glad to feel useful again. Neighbourhood Charity Crafters has seen some new friendships form. Ladies are getting out and about more visiting different clubs with new friends made at this group. It's wonderful to see these relationships blossom. When we carried out a survey recently we learned that the vast majority of people who have joined our groups feel so much more involved in a community and have a stronger sense of belonging. One other example is a lady who had a stroke at quite a young age. Prior to this the lady had been an avid crafter but since the stroke had lost confidence. In the last 4 months we have seen a massive change. Now she is happily travelling on public transport, she has found ways to work around the disabilities, she has a group of new friends and is crafting again. More importantly she is so much more confident and happy. There is a definite ripple effect to these groups and they're so important to the community as a whole.

Basically Pam is a community leader in every sense of the word and I for one feel proud of the things she has achieved.

Anna Rogers, Host of Neighbourhood Charity Crafters and supporter of Rose Walker Centre Crafternoons



How do we help groups to become sustainable?

By Supporting: multiplying resources through partnerships, offering information and practical advice, promoting groups, attracting new volunteers from the community and sharing skills.

Pam has helped to support over 20 groups which work with over 500 individuals.

Key highlights of this year...

- **Supporting the establishment of the Stockport Community Shed group.** A much needed social and skills group for older men. The group is managed by Stockport Homes and well supported through Pam's role at the Rose Walker Community Centre.
- **Participating as a member of the Stockport Community Hubs Network** which brings a wide range of local groups and leaders together to share best practice and help resolve issues around a range of difficulties faced by community groups. Pam also took an interim leadership role, managing the network for several months.
- **Securing approximately £6,000 of funding for 11 different community groups.** These groups now have far better resources enabling them to buy equipment and materials and cover the costs of room hire.
- **Mentoring the Spaces of Hope Community Development Worker,** and supporting his development of the network.
- **Taking a greater role in developing the Rose Walker Community Centre** including: managing bookings; building relationships with new groups; working with the private contractors, Seddon, to improve internal storage; and securing funding to further equip the office and kitchen to offer better facilities to those who hire the venue.
- **Working with the new public health worker at the Rose Walker Community Centre** to revitalise the Four Seasons Group for adults with learning disabilities. Pam has secured funding for new resources and has encouraged the development of new activities to help the group thrive.



Where next?

- **Continue to develop the Rose Walker Community Centre**, working with the local Councillors and Stockport Council. The long-term aim is to install: a new heating system, with greater ventilation and a new damp proof course; broadband facilities; and a new semi-commercial kitchen.
- **Identify further personal and professional development** to further increase Pam's value to the community.
- **Support initiatives in communities surrounding Edgeley** by sharing ideas, information and funding experience. This includes the...
 - **re-imagining of St Mary's Parish Church, Stockport**, as a community hub.
 - **re-development of the Café One community café.**
 - **development of the Heald Green "green space" initiative.**

Impact statement – *Community Development Worker, St Mary's Church, Stockport*

I have worked in Stockport since April 2016 as a community development worker at St. Thomas' and more recently St. Mary's Parish churches. During that time I've been fortunate to have worked with and received support from Pam, both in her capacity as community manager at St. Matthew's Church and increasingly as a strategically significant leader of faith-based engagement in the borough of Stockport. Pam's work both at a parish level, and across the various networks that she supports, has become an illustration of best practice both within the Diocese of Chester and with partners across public, faith and voluntary sectors in the area.

The primary focus of my work, defining and modelling faith based organisations as Spaces of Hope, in both an academic and policy context, has been aided in its development through being able to dovetail with the work that Pam has pioneered. In the current context of partnership working, and a wider national context of austerity, localism and coproduction, the development of Pam's work is a critical part of developing a sustainable and progressive offer that will support people across Edgeley.

Matthew Barber



How do we engage with our community?

By *Leading and Managing*: bringing people together through large scale community events, holiday activities, developing existing activities and building partnerships.

This year Pam has been instrumental in planning or leading 12 major events across our community which have involved over 1000 individuals. Additionally, Pam manages regular groups which involve around 60 people per month.

Key highlights of this year...

- **Promoting Age UK Stockport through an ‘Afternoon Tea’ at St Matthew’s Church.** Fifty people were served by children from St. Matthew’s School and musical entertainment was provided by the Stockport Academy.
- **Forming a new *Crafternoon* session** where anyone who would like some company on a Friday afternoon can enjoy arts and crafts free of charge. This included securing the donation of a large range of craft items and a micro-grant to buy new resources.
- **Hosting a weekly Coffee Afternoon for St. Matthew’s Primary School to engage with the local community** in order to share information about groups, activities and opportunities.
- **Organising displays and presentations to showcase the work of the Community Hubs that Pam helps to lead** (St. Matthew’s Church, Olive ROC Centre, and the York Street and Rose Walker Community centres). These displays were used at the local library, the Discover Your Edgeley event, the Equity Housing Wellbeing event, and the Curating Spaces of Hope event (*Preventing the Enemy of Isolation, in Partnership*, which was supported by Chester University, the William Temple Foundation, Stockport Together and attended by the Bishop of Stockport).
- **Becoming an authorised signatory for Foodbank Vouchers**, so that help can be given at the point of need.



Where next?

- **Partner** with St. Matthew's Primary school and the Olive ROC Café to deliver two new projects for local families in need (a holiday hunger project and a project to help people gain skills and confidence for the workplace).
- **Promote** the existing pop-in information sessions, held at the Olive ROC Cafe for Age UK, The Prevention Alliance and Beechwood/Macmillan Cancer Care, to raise awareness amongst local people.

Impact statement – member of the *Crafternoon* arts and crafts session

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoy Crafternoons. I have no crafting ability - and never really had an interest before - but I happily spend two hours every week cutting and sticking bookmarks; or colouring in. One day I'll try something else of all the fun activities you have available, but this is enough for now. Friday afternoons have become the favourite part of my week: I love being able to sit quietly and work; or chat with the others if I feel like it. Thanks for running this group.

Linda Cosgriff

Impact statement – Principal St Matthew's School

Over the last two years we have worked hard to develop and strengthen links between ourselves, St. Matthew's church and the local community. Pam Robinson has been instrumental in enabling us to do so successfully. Most recently, we have been working with Pam to address the concerning issue of supporting families who may be vulnerable during school holidays when free school meals are not available. Pam has taken the lead, undaunted by difficulties in her search for funding so that we might work together to support local families in the community who may be in need.

As Principal at St Matthews, I would like to say how valuable the role is within our community and that Pam's dedication, enthusiasm and commitment mean that she is central to its success.

Jackie Band



How do we speak out for justice to those who make decisions?

By shaping values and influencing: by being a force for good in the community, getting involved through taking leadership roles, attending residents' associations and by becoming a known presence in the communities of Edgeley, Cheadle Heath and Bridgehall.

With the move away from statutory provision, councils in particular are looking to the local community to “bridge the gap”. Pam’s breadth of knowledge of community development and the local community provides an invaluable resource to those in strategic planning positions. In this new environment, good decision making is essential when planning how the needs of the community can be met both effectively and fairly.

Key highlights of this year...

- **Holding strategic leadership positions** across the local area: *Olive ROC Centre* (Trustee), *Rose Walker Community Centre* (Trustee), *York Street Residents’ Association* (Chair), *Residents’ of Edgeley and Cheadle Heath group* (Member).
- **Changing perceptions** of those who are homeless, refugees or asylum seekers by creating an opportunity for the community to donate food and goods to a local food bank, a homeless charity and refugee support group (*Loaves and Fishes*) and a group working with new mums in need and their babies (*Early Essentials*).
- **Becoming a Community Anchor and establishing new Anchors in key places.** Community Anchors are friendly faces when a person may be anxious about going somewhere for the first time. Initiated by *The Prevention Alliance*, Pam was the first Community Anchor in Stockport and she has recruited Anchors at the *Olive Café* and *Socially Yours* group.
- **Ensuring fairness** by shaping the management agreement between local community centres and



Stockport Homes. Pam worked hard to make sure the final agreement was fair and equitable and properly reflected the value of the long-standing volunteers who manage the centres.

Where next?

- **Plan** the strategic development of the *Rose Walker Community Centre*, in line with major new investment in the local area.
- **Encourage deeper links** between York Street Community Centre and local residents.
- **Encourage deeper links** between St Matthew's school and the local community, particularly around involvement in Toddle Time and Olive Cafe *Storytime*.

Impact statement – local Councillor

I and my fellow Ward Councillors have worked with Pam over a number of years and we all greatly value and appreciate her work in Edgeley and Cheadle Heath. Her contribution to the local community has been extensive and ranges from developing new partnerships, introducing and supporting new groups and applying for grants to help with community activities. In addition she has been tenacious in her attempts to get building improvements for the Rose Walker Community Centre, challenge Stockport Homes to make sure the York Street Community Centre has a fair and appropriate management agreement and has recently taken up the role of centre manager/administrator for the Rose Walker Community Centre where use of the venue for community groups is steadily increasing. In these days of continuing cuts in local government and the consequent impact this has on local communities, it is more important than ever that we have people dedicated to their local community and determined to get the best for it.

Sheila Bailey



Final Word

As we have considered all that has been achieved in the last year, we see that Pam's role contains a large amount of strategic planning, working with both individuals and groups, as well as hands on practical engagement.

We continue to aim to be flexible as we respond to the needs of the community and facilitate the engagement of community groups, charities, and statutory bodies.

We recognise, however, that in community development the best growth is often organic, so we look forward to seeing how this role will continue to develop.

We have a significant impact on the lives of those who live and work in our local area but we feel that there is much yet to be done so we continue to reflect on how we can develop this pivotal role of community development into the future.

Impact statement – *Member of Parliament for Stockport*

As the local MP for Stockport since 1992, I know Edgeley very well, and can appreciate the difference it has made to have some hands-on community development in an area where many people experience social and economic deprivation, or can feel isolated at home.

I have been very impressed to see how you have created a hub which links St. Matthew's to all the community groups in the area, and are able to support local groups to become more sustainable – finding volunteers for them, putting them in touch with possible sources of local funding etc. I think the new partnerships you have also established within the local voluntary sector (with Age UK, Beechwood Cancer Care, the fostering team etc) are all helping my constituents by providing much-needed information sessions



at the Olive ROC Centre, which people now see as the place to go for help and advice.

It's great that you have been able to strengthen the Rose Walker Centre and the York Street Centre with activities like craft which people enjoy and which help decrease loneliness.

It's also great to see that the annual Community Open Day at St Matthew's has become a focus, bringing local people, community groups and the church together to showcase the best which the area has to offer.

Of course, I know there is so much more which can be done in terms of bringing greater resilience to our community. I offer my wholehearted support for your continuing work, and I hope that further grant funding will be made available. Keep in touch.

Ann Coffey

