



## **BRIEFING FOR WARMINSTER AREA BOARD – December 2024**

The Warminster Area Health and Wellbeing Forum comprises nearly 70 members and aims to join together those needing help and support to those best able to meet that need, in an efficient and cost-effective way. The 2024 membership survey is under way and initial responses clearly demonstrate both the need for – and the real value of - the Forum in making connections and keeping members up to date.

### **Vision for Volunteering**

Further to the Valuing Volunteering public event held in June, organisations using volunteers were invited to a workshop at Warminster School on 23<sup>rd</sup> October to help to develop a **Vision for Volunteering in Warminster**.

While the number of attendees was limited, some lively discussion ensued and we attach the summary notes of the discussions along with agreed next steps. An important part of this is the symbiotic relationship between services provided by local councils and those needs met by voluntary community bodies. These need to dovetail as well as react to changing resources so **a health and wellbeing liaison contact within both Wiltshire Council and in Warminster Town Council are needed**.

### **Neighbourhood Collaboratives**

This initiative was discussed at length in the 16 October Forum meeting and, again, the detailed notes are attached. After extensive debate, it was concluded that the many worthy activities and opportunities already offered in the Town are not necessarily accessible to everyone and that a first step was to identify the reasons for this which fall into four broad groups:

- I want access - but I physically can't (lack of resources)
- I want access but I am not confident to do it (lack of social skills, empathetic support)
- I would access if I knew about it (lack of knowledge)
- I don't want to access it (lack of motivation).

The next step is to **identify initiatives (current and past) that are/were used to help address these barriers to accessing HWB opportunities** and we are using both Forum members and those who supported the volunteering events to gather this information. Addressing gaps will be a more significant task requiring engagement from all parties across the community.

### **Warminster School Tech Club**

Councillors will be aware of the important work carried out by Warminster School pupils via their Tech Club held in the Civic Centre foyer for an hour on Wednesday afternoons in term times. Many older and vulnerable people have been helped to use their devices as well as accessing specific help on apps for parking and health, for example. To date, this service has been at zero cost but the Town Council has now withdrawn the facility and the school is looking for a new location which may incur a fee. Digital exclusion is a key barrier in modern life and was agreed as a HWB topic last year. **Depending on the outcome of the search for new premises and/or the Town Council relenting, the HWB Forum may request grant funding from the Area Board to allow this important community facility to be retained.**

## THE VISION FOR VOLUNTEERING FRAMEWORK

The framework was partly a response to the challenges of the last five years. These include how to engage younger and working people; the Covid effect and the Cost-of-Living crisis; the accepted rise in social isolation and loneliness; and a worrying loss of trust in larger bodies.

DG asked attendees for their views on what “good” volunteering looks like locally.

- Balancing the need for relevant and appropriate training for volunteers
- Matching volunteers to appropriate roles – skills audit, volunteer passport, understanding motivation
- Consistent management, communication with and engagement of volunteers
- Understanding that volunteering is an “emotional contract”
- Safeguarding and protecting volunteers while ensuring that their views are sought and heard;

Current challenges to volunteering in the local area included.....

- Recruitment and retention of volunteers;
- Demand for volunteers (“all fishing in the same pool”);
- Lack of diversity in terms of age and ability;
- Digital anxiety for some;
- How do potential volunteers find opportunities; lack of a “central hub”;
- How do organisations find potential volunteers? Word of mouth important here;
- Accessing those who would benefit from volunteers’ help – through professionals, going to them rather than expecting them to come to us;
- Worries about “being known” or social media exposure;
- The cost of required training (safeguarding, fire and safety, DBS Checks) for smaller volunteer groups; possible pooling to share costs and time.

...and ideas to overcome these included:

- ✓ “Reach out” in a properly organised way – pamphlet, poster, website, booklet?
- ✓ Engage key stakeholders (Town Council, Area Board, Avenue Surgery, Job Centres, large employers) on the benefits to them of a vibrant and engaged volunteer population
- ✓ Identify and focus on under-represented groups (younger people, return to work parents; those looking for work; returners after lockdown). Make volunteering a valuable asset on a cv;
- ✓ Encouraging referrals from first contact points (e.g. information hubs, Town Council, social prescribers, Cornerstone et al);
- ✓ Using existing media to publicise opportunities and raise the profile of volunteering in Warminster (Warminster Journal; WCR Radio; Facebook and other social media (preferable Heart of Warminster).
- ✓ Fliers. Posters et al targeted at local cafes and meeting places;

## **Next Steps**

- ✓ Look at existing routes like Wiltshire Together; Warminster Volunteer Bank (DR);
- ✓ See if anyone else is doing something similar (AC via Volunteer Managers' Network; AG via Wiltshire Council; MB with High Sheriff's meeting; LC in her capacity)
- ✓ Chase up the Involvee Passport concept (AG);
- ✓ Initiate engagement with key stakeholders (e.g. Town Council DG/DR). Try to enlist advocates for change;
- ✓ Keep within HWB forum business for now (DG);
- ✓ Enlist more voluntary organisations to "join the movement" (?)
- ✓ Consider an intro pack for new residents (?)
- ✓ Produce a volunteering comms plan (DG); suggested article for media (DR);
- ✓ Feed back to Volunteer Managers Forum (AC); Badge volunteering as a flexible, rewarding and beneficial choice that everyone can make.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD COLLABORATIVES (NCS) – A GROUP DISCUSSION – DG LEAD

Taken from HWB Forum 16 October 2024 notes:

DG began by acknowledging that the outline offered by Clare Scudamore at the June meeting inevitably focussed on the theoretical, but stressed that this is an important initiative that will also help the Forum (and others) make a real difference to the community. She reminded members that we are not constrained to working with Westbury and that we had agreed with the Westbury HWB Group that we would each separately identify our topics and then explore any synergy.

DG introduced Vanessa Rubery of the Bath Swindon and Wiltshire ICB who would be facilitating much of this work on NCs, although new to this role. SC from Age UK Wiltshire added that she had been involved in NCs from the start which was helpful.

DG suggested that the key is to initially identify the need without overly worrying about constraints. Possible sources to help in this included– members' feedback; local JSNA; Area Board "priorities". TJ wisely cautioned that the limited response rates to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) could skew the issues.

Recognising the potential of getting mired at the outset, DG reiterated that, **from this initial session, we are looking to identify a particular need and to think about who (inside or outside of the Forum) should be invited to help to address that need.** At a push, we may also want to ask people to step forward to develop these ideas. Other important questions were: how we would arrive at our decision? what data would inform us? Who else did we need to involve? And a further question arose on how we would implement any action plan. Was there funding available from the ICB? Would we have to do the work or who else could be engaged?

Opening out the discussion, themes around mental health were floated. CL talked about **young people's needs** with a nascent young persons' group having had two meetings already and with Christ Church looking to appoint a Youth Worker.

**Various chronic illnesses** - such as heart disease, dementia, hypertension were mooted. The discussion then moved onto whether we were looking to focus on **preventative activities** (like the work on 'falls' in Melksham). Or **supportive activities** around, for example, obesity. This led to a **discussion about the potential cohort** - Warminster has a large population of older people. It was suggested, but not verified, that it also has a large population of **neurodiverse younger people**. Where best to start?

The conversation eventually coalesced around '**accessibility**'. There is no point in providing services that people cannot - or will not - access. Longer-serving Forum members will recall this being a constant concern across decades and there was general agreement that accessibility fits well with the wider aims of the Forum.

Contributions ranged around these suggestions: a community hub for information; transport service; community partners (to support people lacking confidence or with additional needs); SC suggested taking services to people instead of expecting them to travel into town. TJ pointed

out that Pewsey has a bus project while RS suggested that villages could organise a neighbour transport scheme.

In further planning on this topic, accessibility could be broken down into 'stages':

- I want access - but I physically can't (lack of resources)
- I want access but I am not confident to do it (lack of social skills, empathetic support)
- I would access if I knew about it (lack of knowledge)
- I don't want to access it (lack of motivation). CLQ spoke here about disenfranchised young people who move into criminality.

The discussion concluded with agreement that we were in the right ballpark with accessibility - but some way off making a robust decision. DG said we needed to do more investigation. And she asked VRu, the ICB rep, to point us in the direction of more granular data (which she referenced during the discussion) than that evident in the JNSA.