



Building Community Together

Community Resilience in Action - Hungerford

Context

The Hungerford community conversations have developed to allow a sharing of experience and skill between local residents and multi-agency staff working in Hungerford (everyone from Police Officers, to teachers, early years and family support workers, health visitors, the local library and local charities).

The work has been successful in large part to the skilled and determined leadership of the local Head of Hungerford Nursery School, who has acted as a 'Community Anchor' for the local community conversation, with the active support from other partner agencies.

Building Community Together aims to empower local communities and individuals to find their own sustainable solutions to improve the quality of life locally in Hungerford and reduce the likelihood of residents needing more specialist help later on.

The local community has looked at a number of areas including:

- School transport
- Building a sense of community cohesion
- Helping parents with more challenging home situations to manage and look after their children
- Supporting different professionals with how they can best work together to work together to meet emerging needs early
- Designing innovative approaches to pastoral support and inclusion within Primary and secondary schools
- A local charity working with more vulnerable young people to give them a positive experience of producing a film – the Watermill Community Film Project – to increase their sense of aspiration and achievement and help them make an active and positive contribution to their local community.

Here is a more detailed explanation of two of these areas of local change

Understanding the difference this has made to local residents

Local parents, a number of whom had previously had their children removed into the care system, came together to find ways, with the help of some local professionals, to manage their family and social circumstances. They informed the development of a programme of support led by the local Family & Well-Being Hub, with the help of the Emotional Health Academy.

The programme helped local parents to get a greater sense of confidence and self-worth, by encouraging them to volunteer locally in the community. These parents shared their confidence with other parents in the local area. This experience has provided the experience and confidence for a number of these parents to start to get a job and start to work. It's encouraged other parents locally in the community to ask for help earlier with managing the stresses and strains of their lives. These parents have not been referred back to

Social Care – the strategies they learnt have helped them manage day-to-day much better. The Family and Well-being Hub continues to be a place these parents can come back to, whenever they need a bit of support.

Impact on outcomes

100% of the finishing group had shown improvement in the course outcomes including:

- Awareness of professional boundaries and appropriate behaviours.
- Confidence to contribute positively to group environments.
- Understanding diversity and how to manage it within a group
- Understand how to develop positive working environment using FISH philosophy
- Understand the qualities of reliable, committed volunteer or worker.
- Understanding of working in a restorative way.

At the end of the course of those eight that finished:

- Two had started further training one in child care and one her maths GCSE,
- Three moved into employment of those one is now part of the family centre team, two were pursuing starting their own business
- One is currently waiting to take up a volunteer role at our Lambourn Family Play and learn sessions.

Feedback from the delegates included:

'I feel more confident in myself to recognise people's needs and better at reading people's body language. I will use these skills to hopefully get a job and help others' CB

'FISH has helped my family because its taught me to try to listen more and to make their day and to reward them even if it's something small' BG

'I feel more confident especially when it comes to my new place of employment. I have a the ability to talk to people and support where needed' KB

A professional perspective – building professional resilience and real partnership

At the request of local workers from a range of organisations in the area, a multi-agency model of restorative supervision and reflection was introduced, helping staff from very different professional backgrounds to come together to talk about the local challenges they were struggling to improve and problem solve together. This group very quickly begun to support improved joint working, consistent descriptions of the type of need or risk professionals were trying to manage and introduced a more consistent approach to working together to solve problems.

Multi-agency professionals say that the difference includes:

- it's reduced their feelings of professional anxiety
- their actions are far more proactive, rather than reactive – they try and solve the problem, rather than react to the problem
- they look together for what is 'causing' a problem or behavior and try and fix the cause, rather than just reacting to the problem or situation
- they feel as though they are managing risk or challenge together with others, rather than on their own – they are less isolated.

'I firmly believe that multi-agency work is a very strong vehicle for supporting families, sharing concerns and developing solutions which would otherwise be a huge burden on individuals. It is not about 'doing onto others' and is most often about helping families to help themselves. The guidance, advice and signposting of colleagues from other agencies brings a greater depth to finding pathways to support and it is invaluable'

Primary School Head Teacher

