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PUBLIC SECTOR AND COMMUNITY:
CONNECTING FOR GOOD





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PUBLIC SECTOR AND COMMUNITY: CONNECTING FOR GOOD

On the 10th November 2020 we asked the public sector in Coventry and Warwickshire to lay down the lanyard, sign out of Teams and join us for open discussion, a dose of optimism, and commitment to action.

THERE WAS AN URGENT CONVERSATION TO BE HAD

For over a decade we've heard the public sector talk about how it wants to share leadership with our communities. It took just twelve weeks of Lockdown One to show us how.

We worked together on the problem in front of us. Leadership fell to those most able or willing to adopt it, sometimes the council, sometimes the voluntary sector, sometimes community groups.

If we want to continue to confront the pandemic, its social and economic fall out, then Councils and the NHS need to carry on unlocking the power of communities. We need to wedge the door open to new ways of being and working together before 'business as usual' closes it.

Grapevine stepped forward to start that conversation and help lead it towards action. Sixty eight people from our local public sector joined in. It was an event full of hope, energy and openness, with many pledges to act.

THANKS

Special thanks go to the following for inspiring us on the day

Fiona Langworthy Associate Director of Business Development – South Warwickshire Foundation Trust

Tony Clements Strategic Director for Economy at Hammersmith and Fulham Council. Previously expert advisor to Local Government and Housing Ministers who joined us in a voluntary and personal capacity

David Robinson East London Community Worker who joined us as leader of The Relationships Project

Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council

3 QUESTIONS

WE TACKLED 3 MAIN QUESTIONS

BEFORE ENDING WITH CALLS TO ACTION

1. **What are the stories** of collaboration that gave us the most satisfaction and optimism during the Pandemic?
2. **What will it take** for public sector and communities to continue to collaborate?
3. **How can we collaborate** on the other challenges we face - in the same way we've done with covid19?



1 OUR STORIES OF NEW AND COLLABORATIVE WAYS OF WORKING

“ We've had a long period of austerity. Many people feel ground down. We're sort of trapped in the challenges ... and it's been a reconnection with what we go to work for. There's some new energy here that we can plough back into our jobs

VALERIE DE SOUZA PUBLIC HEALTH CONSULTANT COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

SUMMARY

We told some remarkable stories of the pandemic drawing us together like never before to provide our best ever help at our greatest moment of need.

We heard how important it's been that people have been adaptable, responsive and tenacious, working beyond traditional boundaries.

WE EXPERIENCED:

- urgent pace
- embracing new relationships and reframing old relationships around a sense of shared purpose and possibility
- experimentation and flexibility
- staff released into different roles
- reduction in red tape
- shared data
- working as a whole system
- pared back commissioning
- more humanity
- community leadership

A main feature of our stories was urgency in the face of a common enemy. But other ingredients were important like embracing the skills and knowledge that exists outside of councils and the NHS in order to achieve a shared goal. And the absence of money worries – 'mark it down to Covid'.

In specific examples those ingredients made real the long held ambition to work as a whole system.

INVITATIONS

- How are we retelling our stories to create energy and momentum for the future?
- How are we ensuring that we're returning back to these stories when things feel tired?
- How are we retelling our stories to 'seal the deal' on future collaborations?
- A heightened sense of humanity gave us the motivation to act during the pandemic. But generally the sector only enters the lives of those who are most excluded when they present and require statutory intervention. How can we all keep shared humanity as a motivator?



QUOTES AND STORIES

“ I saw guys on the front line going out of their way to buy [a migrant homeless man] food out of their own pockets. He had a rucksack of food by the time he left to see him over the weekend. It's a person in front of us, and hey, if this was a person that had anything to do with me, what would I want in terms of outcome? We just had that real human focus.

ADRIENNE BELLINGERI, HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ We were able to have a list of people who live in Coventry who we weren't sure had sufficient means and then wrap a package of care around them - food support, medication support, social support, as well as regular medication related blood tests at safe centres set up quickly. Doing something that's wrapped around the person in the middle of it is how we all want to work, isn't it? It's what we're all here for.

LESLEY TERRY STRATEGIC DELIVERY LEAD, UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE

“ [we convened in a way that] seemed to be much more about what the people and the families actually needed, rather than which bit of our service are we willing to allow somebody into.

DAN BARNARD, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST, COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE PARTNERSHIP TRUST

“ A whole lot of bureaucracy and paper work disappeared overnight.

RACHEL TOMPKINS GENERAL MANAGER SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE FOUNDATION TRUST

“ What astounded me was the speed at which it happened. It frustrates the life out of me as a councillor how long things take in local government sometimes to actually happen. This (Food Hubs) materialized and happened at such pace. And it wasn't driven by the Council. It was driven by local people coming together.

CLLR RICHARD BROWN, CHEYLESMORE, COVENTRY

“ There was a hunger to work together, to share, but also to be a supportive network, to hear people's fears about what was going on for their community as well as what was going on for them on an organizational level.

TIM JACQUES PARTNERSHIP CO-ORDINATOR AT A FAMILY HUB IN COVENTRY

“ We had resident associations getting in touch saying, 'I hear you're making face visors? Can we have some?' And we could support high-impact small requests like that, right through to bigger asks like 'we need somewhere to house our nurses.' Medical staff were housed on the University campus in some of our accommodation.

BEN HAYDAY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER WARWICK UNIVERSITY.

“ There was a real sense that your system was asked to deliver what's needed. It doesn't matter who you work for and it's about getting it done.

BECKY HALE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PEOPLE, WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

2 WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR AND COMMUNITIES TO CONTINUE TO COLLABORATE?

“one of my favourite sentences of COVID was ‘no egos, logos or silos’.

NAME UNAVAILABLE

SUMMARY

Participants thought the pandemic shone a light on much needed change. That change was described as rooted in seeing each other as part of a whole interconnected system and therefore each of us as part of the solution.

The pandemic experience suggests that this culture change is possible when we really see each other, when we really listen to each other, and when we prioritise the relationships that unlock our capacity for co-operation.

There was repeated emphasis on how we need to embed permission and freedom to discover creative solutions together.

WE THOUGHT THIS WOULD INVOLVE

- rethinking risk - how it inhibits permission and collaboration
- embracing a more collective and collaborative responsibility
- sitting with discomfort and uncertainty
- ripening problems together
- a level of candor and trust
- allowing for more iteration-listening, testing, adapting

Our communities and sectors shared tasks, but how much redistribution of leadership really occurred? In Coventry the Food hub model was already community owned when the city council was given a statutory responsibility for those who were shielded. The community-led collaboration could build on that foundation. More usually though the public sector builds systems to deliver on statutory responsibilities. Then it invites community participation in how they work while retaining ‘ownership’.

Our shared challenge now is to turn ‘ownership’ and ‘participation’ into collaboration - and all without the powerful but temporary drivers of a pandemic.

INVITATIONS

- Where can we see other uniting forces that we can capitalize on to trigger collaboration?
- How can we build enough parity of voice?
- In our conversation ‘letting go’ often seemed to mean the public sector holding onto the end goal and outcome while engaging others in a better way of getting there. But collaboration will involve meeting the end goals and outcomes of partners and communities too. How do we do that together?



QUOTES AND STORIES

“ We saw our interconnectedness... You need to stay in the discomfort long enough to think and resist the urge to go back to business as usual.

BEN HAYDAY, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER, WARWICK UNIVERSITY

“ If we could find a way together, across the whole of the community asset base, local government, and all other stakeholders just to spend more time ripening the problems together ... in that trusted environment and saying it's not wasted time.

MARTIN REEVES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ So traditionally, you would point to say, that's the responsibility of public sector, that's a responsibility of that charity, because they've had a service level agreement to deliver it. The Pandemic was a mishmash of people just getting things done. And I think that didn't fit into the existing risk model. That was what scared people. But if we are all going get the best deal for our city, we've got to try not to risk manage too much.

ANDREA BUCKLEY, SERVICE MANAGER COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

“ As local government, we should be listening much more to what people actually want rather than what we think they want. And I think, elected members like myself, need to be aware of that, because I'm the guy that's elected. I'm the voice of the community. I think we have to look at ourselves and see the role that we play and not get too defensive about it.

CLLR RICHARD BROWN (CHEYLESMORE, COVENTRY)

“ Collective identification and prioritization of what we focus our resources on is going to be really key. Make sure that we're putting support in the right places at the right time, and through the right channels as well, which is not necessarily the council.

NAME UNAVAILABLE

“ Having that strong sense of purpose, I think brings the right people around the table, because otherwise, we get forced into false Venn diagrams and there's nothing actually in the centre that's in common.

STEPHANIE CONNELL LEAD CANCER NURSE, SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE FOUNDATION TRUST

“ [Being redeployed to] Rugby Food bank massively increased our understanding of what the client group look like, what are the complications, issues they were facing, that was absolute gold. Interacting with different services, understanding their realities - that's when you start to develop relationships. And that's where the trust will come from.

TAYLOR MCDONALD, COMMISSIONER WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

“ It's really difficult, because I will have to meet my objectives as well. But I really want to help as much as I can our community partners. So it's trying to find that balance. I think that can't happen, unless everyone's really honest about the conversations that they're having back at their organization.

NAME UNAVAILABLE



3 COLLABORATING ON THE OTHER CHALLENGES WE FACE

“ It means us deconstructing a world that we’ve all become comfortable with in order to construct something better and bigger

KULWANT BASI, BUSINESS MANAGER, COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE PARTNERSHIP TRUST

SUMMARY

Willingness to share the challenges public sector agencies face was strong. Conversations on this question, as with the previous one, circled around what it might take to share challenges and collaborate around them. There was a strong emphasis on surfacing new perspectives on need.

KEY POINTS

- Need is bigger than statutory obligations
- Need must also be defined by communities themselves
- Need is more than a service gap
- Public sector agencies fear uncovering more need
- Learn and quantify the benefits of collaboration now
- Let’s at least hold onto the new relationships and networks we’ve built
- Public sector workers need air cover from their leaders



Warwickshire is here to help you

INVITATIONS

- There’s a feeling that for collaboration to be meaningful from now on we need to slow down. But the need to deliver at pace is still there.
- Is there really a trade off between collaboration and time? Didn’t the pandemic show that transformative collaborations can be done at a fast pace? Loss of momentum is likely to be fatal to the precious flowering of new ways of working during the pandemic.
- How can we better manage that tension between pace and meaningful collaboration? Could lighter structures release more time? Let’s work on this tension together.
- How can we model and normalise new ways of working around permission, risk, and shared purpose?
- How might we hold each other to account in our commitment to change?



QUOTES AND STORIES

“ I wonder if we need to start to see ourselves more as facilitators of conversations locally, trying to bring people together to find out what the local challenges are and what people are prepared to offer.

ALI COLE COMMISSIONER, WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

“ We live constantly in a global pandemic on a range of issues. I would really like to talk with others about problems that are pervading our society that we've just kind of lived with and put a sticking plaster on. And could we talk about how we would respond by utilizing the community, not just a service response?

JANE MOFFAT, EARLY HELP MANAGER (CITY-WIDE) COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ Our organizations articulate need around our legislative duty - that's how we perceive need, not necessarily where the need exists within the community. [We need community] to push that up rather than us push down.

ADRIENNE BELLENGERI, HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ I think there's just some very practical things that we could hold on to even if the beast does then come back in terms of structures... relationships that have developed, the networks, the partnerships and the wider knowledge and experience of who's on the ground that you could talk to.

RACHEL TOMPKINS GENERAL MANAGER SWFT

“ There's always that fear that if we just say tell us what the issues are, what are we doing badly then we'll just have a tirade of negativity. So it's having that bravery but we're not quite there.

KRISTI LARSEN, INSIGHT TEAM, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ We need to quantify the benefits of some of the work that we've been able to do over the past several months. Putting the resource into certain things pays for itself. And we need to be building that narrative, I think over the coming months.

BARRIE STRAIN, HEAD OF REVENUE, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ Replicate what we did with the Rough Sleepers Strategy ... make it a city strategy not a council strategy. Sometimes the local authority will be the facilitator of that and sometimes we have to back off and just participate rather than lead.

JIM CRASHAW, HEAD OF HOUSING, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

“ I certainly have been guilty of viewing the community and voluntary sector as a way of filling a service gap. ... I've got to listen to what it is that they want. And then through ... listening ... understanding, get to a joint process of meeting need within the local community. It might not be quite the need that I want filled. But that's okay because I'm not in a position to dictate what another organization should or shouldn't do.

TIM JACQUES PARTNERSHIPS CO-ORDINATOR FAMILY HUB IN COVENTRY



CALL TO ACTION

At this event we saw how the emergency forced new ways of working on us all. It catapulted us from talking about working differently to doing it. Those who came were convinced working differently was worth it. We've got a moment now to build on it and do even better.

Thirty six of you want to form a thinkers and doers group, willing to cement new ways of working. The invitations in this report are a start point for our journey.

JOIN US

- » Sign up for a conversation with Clare Wightman or Mel Smith
- » Come to Collaboration Station
Every third Wednesday of the month, 5.30-7pm.
- » Email: admin@grapevinecovandwarks.org

WHO ARE Grapevine?

We are a multi-award winning social action charity that's best at reinventing itself in response to people's needs. We help services, funders and systems find new ways to create deep social change. We're willing to be bold, remove the box and bring edge-based solutions into the middle. Check us out at:

Web: www.grapevinecovandwarks.org

Twitter: www.twitter.com/grapevinecandw

facebook: www.facebook.com/grapevinecovandwarks/

Insta: www.instagram.com/grapevinecovandwarks/