

# GRCC/Independence Trust 2022-23

## Year in Focus



# Community Development

Working with communities, parish and town councils, and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, the Community Development Team provide valued independent advice and support.

## **1-to-1 organisational development support**

231 organisations supported including:

- 29 town / parish councils / parishes
- 82 village hall / community building committees
- 120 voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations

*“You have a fantastic depth of knowledge and experience, and it was great to have an ‘external view’ and insight.” Cotswold-based VCS organisation.*



# Community Development

We provide opportunities for people to come together at our various networks and forums to share good practice, up to date information, and to encourage more collaboration.

## Networks and Forums:

- 46 Network meetings held during the year, with 610 attendances in total
- 12 monthly KiT (Keeping in Touch) e-newsletters issued
- 24 Know Your Patch (12 each to Cheltenham and to Cotswold) Network updates issued

## Resources and Community Consultation

- CARS (Community Approaches to Road Safety) toolkit refresh
- Five Acres Campus Redevelopment consultation, Forest of Dean
- Community-Led Planning consultation



# Floods & Community Resilience

## Floods & Community Resilience Schemes

Flood Wardens receive induction and ongoing support/training for their roles, and we work closely with our District Council partners to deliver this programme and support their work with communities affected by flood events

- Flood Warden schemes in Tewkesbury, Cotswold and Stroud districts
- Approximately 70 Flood Wardens in place across Gloucestershire
- Flood Resilience scheme in Forest of Dean
- Support provided to Cheltenham's Flood Warden scheme
- Worked with 47 parishes to support them to be better prepared for flooding events



# Rural Affordable Housing

## Housing Needs surveys:

- Over 8,700 surveys distributed
- 18 parishes in Gloucestershire surveyed
- Average return rate 15.5%
- 13 pipeline projects in progress
- Review of methods identifying those in housing need
- Creation of marketing materials for Gloucestershire Rural Housing Partnership
- Experimentation on how we engage with communities
- Creation and development of marketing materials for the project
- Providing evidence to ACRE national network enabling business case to central government for funding contribution towards Housing Enablement function



# GRCC's DAISI (Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, Support & Innovation) Project

GRCC's DAISI project aims to use its knowledge, expertise and connections to support and upskill VCS organisations and individuals to increase digital access. By embedding co-design and co-production principles, we have seen an increase in engagement with the project, empowerment of individuals, and an 'accessible by default' approach become embedded in partner organisations.

## Example outcomes:

- Promotion of open source technologies saved individuals with a disability and mental health needs (over £79,000 in one year) and provision of 50 pieces of equipment with 2 or more assistive technologies / software installed, saving on average £1,584 per person
- Over 70 organisations changed to an 'accessible by default' approach, resulting in higher engagement levels, more opportunities for individuals, and financial savings



# GRCC's DAISI (Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, Support & Innovation) project

## Case Study

- 'Ali' – legally blind and from the BAME community had previously been offered only trial versions of expensive software and no support with accessibility options, so had low expectations of the referral. To make life easier, build trust and demonstrate the options available and benefits of engagement we:
  - Installed a camera viewer on his phone which reads labels, documents and other information. It also describes objects around him so with headphones on, Ali would know if individuals were walking towards him, where parked cars were etc
  - Set up voice controls and personalised settings allowing him to send texts and make calls by voice command as well as accessing other features and settings on his phone

*"I am no longer outside the conversation, and can actively engage in my social groups and society." - Ali*



# DAISI (Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, Support & Innovation) activity

## Feedback and comments:

- *“DAISI has made my local library accessible by default. Thank you, it means more than I can say.”*
- *“DAISI has shown me assistive software that has saved me £2,000 per year; everyone should know about these options”*
- *“The design process was the first time I felt I was actually designing a service, not being consulted or just spoken to”*
- *“I had tried every digital support I could think of, after 3 months of struggle in the Forest & Gloucester, I was empowered by designing my own support with my mental health experiences as a strength, not a barrier”*





## Community Wellbeing Service – Social Prescribing Team

Our Community Wellbeing Service team of Social Prescribers provide 1:1 support for anyone registered with a GP in the Cotswolds aged 16+.

This year's activity focused on advice and support addressing the Cost of Living crisis. Through NHS funding via the Cotswolds ILP (Integrated Locality Partnership) we were able to purchase and distribute items direct to those most in need during the coldest months of the year, including hot water bottles, blankets and slow cookers. Examples of support:

- Single mother of 4 in considerable debt received 5 hot water bottles. Was extremely grateful and told us her 4 children went to bed so excited to cuddle up to the warm hot water bottles
- Client lives in a caravan on farmland. Previously got into debt and ended up living there with many health issues. After a spell in hospital, the prescriber helping him was concerned about his health and being cold and was able to supply him with an electric blanket. He sent text the following morning which read 'slept well...nice and warm...thank you'.
- A client struggling to lose weight and pay bills received a slow cooker and was sent healthy recipes to help with her weight loss and save money



## Community Wellbeing Service – Social Prescribing Team

- Development of Community Hubs at Moreton in Marsh and Stow with partner organisations
- Driving an increase in the number of self-referrals – helping to prevent clients needing to see their GP for non-clinical issues affecting their physical and mental health
- Set up of new locally based support groups and activities e.g. short walks for wellbeing and Fibromyalgia support group

*“A very positive experience in terms of support being arranged that has made life more bearable over the last months. Some gentle steering and encouragement further helped me to access other support myself which gave me some confidence and motivation back. My social prescriber has been truly warm, understanding, helpful, non-judgemental and has even made me laugh despite my current situation. I have very much enjoyed our conversations. I'd strongly encourage anyone to try the service.”*



# Independence Trust

Independence Trust is a mental health charity, previously part of the Connexus Housing Group. GRCC was then approached to consider housing the Independence Trust and in August 2020 they became part of GRCC with a full merger and TUPE of staff completing in June 2023.

Independence Trust still maintains its unique identity externally and services are provided by existing staff. They currently deliver a number of contracts:

- **CALMHS (Community Advice Links Mental Health Service)** – 922 active clients this year
- **CASA (Community Autism Support and Advice Service)** – 200 active clients this year
- **CWS (Community Wellbeing Service - Stroud and Berkeley Vale)** – 875 active clients this year
- **Discharge Hub pilot – Wotton Lawn, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital**
- **Annual Health Check pilot**
- **Social Prescribing Link Worker for the Armed Forces pilot**

