

# Co-creating libraries for wellbeing

# North Ayrshire

Pilot project



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# North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire Libraries had existing strong relationships with the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Public Health, the Third Sector and NHS Library staff through the Ayrshire Self Management Network. This new project provided a new opportunity to work strategically with colleagues in the HSCP.

To ensure there was local level buy in, the project leads coproduced a paper for the Integration Joint Board highlighting the ambitions and to seek their approval and support for the pilot. Stakeholder representatives across the HSCP strategic planning group were also keen to support the pilot and as an outcome library services have now joined the strategic planning group.

The pilot in North Ayrshire came together around a Project Steering Group, whose membership included public library staff, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) staff, Third Sector Interface, Public Health and NHS library staff. The group members were able to share intelligence around current support for children and young people and their mental health. The time that was taken to build relationships between partners was a key enabler for this project developing.

In order to avoid duplication of work, the NHS librarian carried out an evidence summary on 'what work has been done with public and school libraries to improve the mental health and wellbeing' for the group. The Community Link Workers provided local intelligence on third sector and community groups working in the area providing supports for young people and the adult populations and routes via GP practices were also provided for support.

Kilwinning Academy's Health and Wellbeing pilot was identified as being a key partner by the Project Steering Group (PSG). This participatory budgeting-funded pilot involved the training of a group of senior pupils to become Mental Health Ambassadors and to create a hub within the school. Members of the PSG visited the young people in their hub and agreed to co-create a library Fun Day during the summer holidays at Kilwinning library to promote further engagement.

The Fun Day was aimed to target P6-S1 pupils and their families to enjoy a range of activities and to gather feedback about what support young people and their families need to keep them well and understand more fully what support they currently accessed. The Fun Day included activities such as a laughter workshop, mindfulness sessions, den building with countryside rangers, and a silent disco to name a few. All the partners gave their time on the day and Education supported the release of the young people to attend planning meetings and they gave their own time for the event itself.

The Fun Day attracted over 400 children and adults aged from 9 weeks old to 101 years old. The event was formally opened by the local Gala Queen and received double-page spread in the local press. An evaluation of the day revealed that 94% were very satisfied and 18 families/groups were interviewed and commented: 'wide variety of activities and plenty of young people' 'event was very organised and great fun'. Partners also commented 'It was a fantastic atmosphere created -friendly, informal and inclusive' and 'Very pleased with the number of people who showed interest in our Public Involvement Network'.

After the Fun Day the group visited the library to audit the space available and made several recommendations which informed the creation of a short, medium and long-term implementation plan. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a new meeting space was created in the library with the library staff engaging with local groups. A PhD student from the University of Strathclyde helped analyse the findings from the survey and further surveys were conducted as part of the P6/7 class visits and library staff visit to the local college. HSCP staff, working with the mental health youth ambassadors, undertook a visit to the school wellbeing hub and as a result additional public health materials were delivered to both the school and library to ensure improved access to suitable resources.

Draft Pathways were developed and updated during the Covid-19 pandemic, working with NHS staff linking public libraries to young people and adult/older people HSCP services. Once finalised these will be shared throughout North Ayrshire.

An example of an outcome from the pilot is that some front-line library staff took part in Mental Health First Aid training and have since become Wellbeing Warriors to offer support to their colleagues within the Council, being a listening ear and signposting to other health and wellbeing resources. In reconfiguring the public library space, venues in the library were made available for third sector organisations to book a space for health and wellbeing support.

In addition, the project was presented to the HSCP Strategic Planning group and subsequently approved by the IJB in November 2019 and the Library and Information Service Manager was invited to become a member of the Strategic Planning Group to ensure libraries are represented in HSCP governance structures.

Social isolation was identified as a second priority area for the Project Steering Group to work together on redesigning. To address the social isolation priority, two other libraries opened early on the days of the 'flu clinics' in adjacent health centres offering refreshments and a chance to relax and enjoy what the library had to offer. Kilwinning library offered Chatty Café style events and this is now being considered as an online offer. A library garden area is also being created as an outdoor wellbeing space.

As a consequence of the strengthened relationship between libraries and health and social care, in March 2020 Kilwinning library and another library became Community Hubs where multi-disciplinary teams from North Ayrshire Council and the HSCP responded to the needs of communities with food and prescription deliveries and mental health advice. This model of working is now being embedded and extended to two other libraries. These four libraries and another became Health and Wellbeing Hubs for carers and Care at Home staff in May 2020 providing them with a safe place to rest during their breaks and to meet their line managers. This was highlighted as good practice in the Carnegie UK Trust's 'Making a Difference: Libraries, Lockdown and Looking Ahead'<sup>1</sup>.

 **All partners and community/groups of interest having an equal voice to co-design solutions jointly.**

<sup>1</sup> [https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2020/10/13090335/Overarching-report-Making-a-Difference-1.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2020/10/13090335/Overarching-report-Making-a-Difference-1.pdf)



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