

Community at the heart of social care



A community-led approach to social care being championed in Scholes is gaining momentum and has won national support. Wigan Council is one of just five councils in the UK selected to receive Creative Councils funding, which is being used locally to trial new ideas about how public services are delivered.

The Heart of Scholes project is exploring new ways of providing social care to people and is part of the council's move to redesigning social care across Wigan. The emphasis is on working closely with local communities to understand their needs and priorities more fully and building a new relationship between people with social care needs, the professionals who support them and the wider community. The result, it is hoped, will be social independence and the creation of a self-supporting community to which the

people of Scholes feel like they belong.

Working with residents and groups throughout Scholes to coordinate the project are two council teams. One of the teams focuses on having 'new conversations' with people needing support to find out exactly what they need, and what they would

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like. The conversations are very different to traditional social care assessments; they look at the person's whole environment, network and own skills, and are more flexible about what can be offered.

The other team is focusing on what can be provided in the community, either building on what is already available or working with more partners, individuals, businesses and other

organisations to develop this, supporting small enterprises to start up. The teams exchange and develop this, generating new ideas and building a comprehensive picture of locally available social and economic support.

Through this process, ideas, solutions and new opportunities are already

time, which can range from perhaps just an hour a week to several days to the Heart of Scholes initiative, but more are being encouraged to get involved. Sunshine House community centre provides a hub for people to make contact, meet up and take part in some activities, but the initiative is taking place in homes and

taking shape. For example, the 'good neighbour' scheme is helping to connect people to each other, simply through neighbours getting to know each other and helping each other. This may just be by taking in a wheelie bin, delivering a newspaper, collecting some shopping, taking in a parcel or contact on a daily basis to check people are okay. Many local people have already volunteered their

centres and on streets right across Scholes.

Barbara Nettleton has been a volunteer for 16 years and has seen a lot of change in the seven years she's spent based at Sunshine House community centre on Vauxhall Road. "Everyone's aware that budgets are being cut and some services reduced as a result, but often what people really want – such as someone to have a chat to while they have their

lunch – can be found right here amongst the community, on people's doorsteps. It's not about replacing social care, but looking at it differently and, in many cases, moving away from what's traditionally been on offer.

"What we are doing with the council is finding out what people want, what they need, and what resources we have within the community to help meet these needs. I believe everyone has a skill and something to offer but we need to take the time to sit and have conversations with people to find out what this is. The council's role is as an enabler, rather than a provider, enabling those 'micro-communities' – smaller networks – within Scholes to talk to each other and make positive things happen."

A volunteer's story

Zuber Tantwala (pictured left), cares for his mother who has health problems which have made her housebound. They moved out of Zuber's Scholes flat into a more suitable house in Scholes six years ago. Over that time he has got to know many of their neighbours, and now picks up their shopping and does various odd jobs which may seem like huge tasks for them, but take just a few minutes of his time. He believes this is simply being a 'good neighbour' - once part of everyday life in Britain.

"People no longer know their neighbours," says Zuber. "People want to interact and feel they have something to give but have become isolated in their homes. It's understandable to be suspicious of new people but we need to make the effort with young and older people and just say "Hello" every day to build confidence. This scheme is helping by linking people up with volunteer individuals or organisations.

"I've seen the difference the engagement makes to people and they often get more involved by offering to help others – they start out receiving help but discover they can do something in return. It reinvigorates people and the community becomes more self-sufficient as a result. We need to stop expecting things to be done for us and make things happen for ourselves."

The Heart of Scholes project is supported by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). To find out more, or how you can get involved, go to: www.wigan.gov.uk/scholes. You can also call Liam Swann on **01942 487371**, Sunshine House **01942 515519** or email scholesnesta@wigan.gov.uk



Online marketplace – should you be there?

WIGAN Council's new online 'marketplace' is set to radically improve the way local people buy and sell social care support. Almost 300 adverts for social care goods and services are already live but more providers are being urged to sign up to the site.

The new system is a locally-focused online marketplace which brings together individuals looking for services, council support brokers, and organisations and businesses who provide relevant goods or services.

Many organisations and businesses involved in providing a social care service have already signed up to be part of the new online marketplace but more groups offering a social care service, from care organisations to community, social or special interest groups, however large, small or informal they may be, are being encouraged to join. Advertising on the marketplace is completely free and providers will find selling more convenient as they will be able to sell social care support any time. Importantly, having a presence in the marketplace enables

providers to demonstrate they meet quality requirements.

Food Positive Ltd, a social enterprise dedicated to improving health through food skills and knowledge training which it delivers to community groups and individuals, joined the marketplace as soon as it launched. Shirley Southworth from the organisation said: "I think the marketplace is essential, especially for small organisations who find it difficult to reach their potential user groups. It is a bridge between us delivering and the brokers and carers looking for services. Since advertising on the marketplace we have seen an increase in the number of people attending our session for people with learning difficulties and are looking forward to adding a new session soon. If you need it, there is help to get on the site and it costs nothing to use."

The online marketplace will become the main route for people to buy support services, offering local people more choice and control over the support they receive. The site will be fully operational for transactions in the next few months, but people can already browse a huge range of services and contact the providers currently advertising.

Find the marketplace at: emarketplace.wigan.gov.uk