

Appendix C Core programmes supported by the Stronger Communities Team

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1. Volunteering

The Volunteers' guide and the Volunteer Coordinator's guide written by Volunteering Bradford to support management/training/induction of volunteers during the lockdown was picked up National Council for Volunteering Organisations (NCVO) and used as an exemplar.

During the previous lockdown we developed a new service called 'Link Up Letters' which provided an alternative 'befriending service' to residents of Care homes. This has proved very successful and popular and is on-going, with more volunteers coming on board on a regular basis. The feedback we've had from both care homes and residents has been tremendous. We have 120 volunteer letter writers supporting the Link Up Letters project.

Volunteer recruitment was capped at 1800 to support response to pandemic during lockdown via the hubs. Since the first lockdown ended and the hubs were closed 685 COVID volunteers (plus approx. 200 in Keighley) have agreed to remain on our database to support on going and need. We are currently actively recruiting /placing drivers and befrienders.

The 'People Can – Kitemark' or Volunteering Quality Standards as we now call it has been attained by 24 local organisations.

Recognising and valuing the contribution of volunteers in the district is a key part of the People Can calendar and this year's Community Stars awards are running online through the Telegraph and Argus with the winners announced in a supplement in December. People Can is supporting businesses to become more involved in communities to develop the 'Business Can' Community Star Award. Last year's winner XPO Logistics have partnered with 'Staying Put' to provide free support packs for victims of domestic abuse. A separate People can report will be presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18th March 2021.

2. Transformation Fund

The Transformation Fund administered by the Stronger Communities Team allows community organisations with support to access expert help for business planning or other gain additional funds through a means of match funding. The good news story from Hainworth Wood Community Centre illustrates the positive outcome this funding can have for local groups.

The Hainworth Wood community centre provides a base for a food bank, and is normally home to the DART luncheon club – which offers a lifeline to older residents – and hosts Big Local meetings and activity sessions, such as children's arts and crafts.

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“The centre volunteers see the new repairs as part of a relaunch of the building and they come at a time when everyone involved is working on a vision – defining what the building’s role is and planning on ways to expand that role in the future,” said Shaun O’Hare, of Keighley Big Local.

“Over the coming months those involved in running the centre want to start providing again – from it being a place where residents can drop-in for a cup of tea to hosting hobby groups, arts and crafts and after-school clubs and for the community centre to be the venue of choice for residents to hold family celebrations.”

“We are grateful that the centre – with fantastic support from the area coordinator’s office – was able to access £8,500 through the council’s Transformation Fund,” said Keighley East district Councillor Caroline Firth. In total, more than £20,000 was raised.

“So much positive work goes on at the centre and during lockdown volunteers have been a lifeline for people, by knocking on doors and providing food support.

“The centre is a success due to the dedication of these volunteers, who do everything from being treasurer to opening and running activities. They always need a helping hand, so if anyone has a bit of time to provide support with the running of the building or organising activities, please do get in touch. The transformation of the building means it’s an exciting time to be involved.”

3. European Settlement Scheme Support (EUSS)

The Stronger Communities Team has been coordinating and supporting community organisations with on-going provision of services throughout the pandemic. Our successful 5 hub support model has been secured until March 2021 by the allocation of Brexit preparations money, sharing £184,000 in total. In addition, we have also secured £150,000 with a bid to the Home Office to support Community Organisations providing OISC registered support to vulnerable people – these include:

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Homeless / rough sleepers
- People with disabilities and/or serious health conditions (e.g. physical or mental impairments)
- Victims of modern slavery and/or trafficking

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- Victims of domestic abuse
- Elderly
- Children in care
- Adults in care
- Young adults who have left care
- Prisoners and family members of prisoners

As of 31 March 2020:

- 22,000 applications for EUSS had been made in the Bradford District, up from 17,200 by the end of December 2020. Our ONS estimated population is 26,000 (there is a 95% confidence interval of 15,000 to 35,000).
- 64% achieved full settled status and 34% pre settled. Nationally, 58% of concluded applications secure full settled status and 41% pre settled status.

Bradford has achieved a very high percentage of EUSS applications. However, there is still much work to be done. We know the real EU citizen population is likely to be larger than 26,000.

An example is provided of the EUSS support work from one of our delivery partners – **Girlington Community and Advice Centre**, reporting Period: June 2019 – June 2020

This report reflects the delivery of our services in relation to reaching and supporting vulnerable and at risk European citizens to enable them to apply for EU Settlement Scheme. We received funding from the Home office and from Bradford Council EUSS and offered information advice and casework assistance across Bradford District.

Girlington Advice Centre has organised publicity and marketing campaigns throughout the project. We have established links with other organisations to refer complex cases to European Settlement Scheme. We set up a separate EU telephone line for EUSS project. Through this project we assisted service users to make their applications, dealt with their follow-up queries and correspondence and with benefit or other advice related matters as well.

Total Number of Individuals accessed our services related to EU settlement scheme during reporting period of this project was 436 excluding Home Office funded cases Total Number of appointments offered to help all EUSS clients were over 1100. Some of the clients need extra support for their applications and advisor has to see the client more than twice.

We assisted all individuals with initial advice and advocacy, helped clients to apply for the scheme, review their applications, assisted to setup their email accounts and contacted all third parties involved to obtain documents for the application. Some clients did not have any ID or passport we advised and assisted in obtaining these documents. Most of the clients were vulnerable and unable to claim benefits for the lack of residency evidence; we referred these clients internally to our benefit advisors.

Wider Impact of Our Support:

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After making successful applications we further support the clients with other matters. Most of our clients were extremely anxious before coming to the centre. They felt reassured living in the UK particularly non-European family members. Families were saved from living in poverty and destitution.

Case Studies:

Case Study 1 (Client CI1)

CI1, a Non EU national, was referred to GATC by the Early Health team. She came to the UK in March 2015 as the spouse of an Italian national and has two children under 18 from this relationship. The couple have separated due to domestic violence

CI1 applied for settled status for her and the children, and wanted to know if a decision had been made. An on-line check using CI1's Bio-metric card number, showed her application as still in process. In discussion with client it was identified that she was not asked to provide information regarding her sponsor / residency in the UK, and therefore did not provide it. We advised client that the application forms were not completed correctly.

CI1 provided her application number to GATC so that her application could be checked, and this confirmed that CI1 had incorrectly declared she has permanent residence. CI1 had not provided any information in regards to her sponsor on the application as the applications for both children had been linked with the mother's application.

CI1 has been issued with a residence document confirming she is a family member of an EEA national exercising Treaty rights in the UK. CI1 remains a family member of an EEA member unless / until she obtains a divorce. CI1 came into the UK in March 2015 and has completed 5 year's residency. The two children are Italian nationals - both are in full time education.

Discussed the possible options available with CI1 in regard to hers and her children's residency in the UK under either Derivative Rights, or Permanent Residency. As a result, CI1 attended GATC with both children to provide evidence for residency for the children - once the documentation had been gone through with GATC a decision was made about how to proceed.

CI1's husband receives all benefits paid, and provides the money to CI1. However, CI1 states he blackmails her and because of this would like all benefits to be moved to her name. CI1 is receiving Universal Credit and child benefit.

Benefits

CI1 is receiving UC with her husband providing his self-employment details. He is in receipt of UC from £1100 -£1500 per month including housing costs. CI1 has been advised to inform UC of change of circumstances to avoid overpayment

CI1 can claim benefits in her own right if her partner is exercising Treaty rights in the UK. They do not have to be living together to claim the benefit. As CI1 has not obtained a divorce she could also claim benefits through her children (derivative rights) as both children are EU citizens and in full time education. CI1 is their primary carer – her partner exercised Treaty rights whilst the children are in education.

Outcome: Reported change of circumstances for Universal Credit and applied for child benefit

Case Study 2 (Client CI2).

CI2 is an Indian National who came to the UK with her two children as dependents of an EEA national. CI2 married her partner in India in 2007 and has two children from this relationship. CI2 and her children joined her partner in the UK in June 2015, but separated from her husband on 18/09/2017 and fled to Bradford from London in April 2018 due to domestic violence. They were divorced on 10/09/2019 and CI2 is now under the care of social services.

CI2 stated that they all have Biometric residence cards. She had fled the family home due to domestic violence / child abuse, and is now receiving financial help and accommodation from the Council. CI2 was married for the 3 years required to obtain settled status in the UK - and lived in the UK for at least one year out of the three. CI2 has obtained a divorce, but would need to provide evidence that her partner was exercising his Treaty rights at the time of the divorce.

CI2 stated that she has been in the UK for over 5 years and wished to apply for settled status. She provided evidence, submitted her application and obtained settled status with the assistance of GATC.

CI2 applied for settled status for her children but only had a birth certificate for her son, who obtained settled status. She did not have her daughter's birth certificate and therefore her daughter's application is on-going. GATC has asked the Home Office to use evidence from her previous application.

At the moment CI2 is in the care of social workers. She would like to apply for Universal credit, which she is able to do and GATC will help with the application. CI2 would like to apply for child benefit, and GATC will assist her with this once she has obtained her daughter's birth certificate.

Case Study 3 (Client CI3)

CI3 is an EU national who came to the UK in 2009 with her partner. The relationship broke down in 2019 due to domestic violence. There is a dependent child. As CI3 no longer had any ID or passport she approached GATC for help with applying for settled status.

GATC advisors contacted the EU scheme helpline on behalf of the client, and assisted her with completing a paper application for settled status. She was assisted with identifying relevant documentation, including proof that she had been resident in the UK for 5 years. The application has not been granted, pending further information requested by the Home Office. GATC have made extensive attempts to remain in contact with CI3 over the course of eleven months to update her on the progress of her application, including liaison with other welfare service providers who have been supporting CI3. This has proved challenging due to her domestic situation, and the case remains unresolved.

4. Equalities and Communities Relations Strategic Group

We have a diverse circulation list of 53 members both public sector and community organisations that discuss equalities issues on a thematic agenda and then feedback to agencies from the outcome of workshops held to explore barriers to services amongst other equalities concerns.

The theme of the last meeting was Culture – and how our shared equality objectives can be linked to the 2025 City of Culture bid. Given the restrictions the next meeting is to be undertaken virtually and will focus on the impact of Covid 19, to organisations and our equality communities. The Council Management Team (CMT) will be joining in this session.

5. VCS Infrastructure Grant Review

The review is a major cross sector attempt to co-produce and co-design design the contract for commissioning support for the Voluntary and Community Services in the district. This review is currently in the last stage of consultation and a report is due to be produced in December 2020. The new strategy for delivering VCS infrastructure services across the district will now incorporate funds from CCG and Council Departments currently commissioning services to community organisations. The aim of the review is to agree the key priorities, introduce transparency and simplify the process and avoid duplication arising from several contracts.