

Working Together to Build Great Communities

FINAL Draft Leicestershire Communities Strategy, 2017-21





Contents

Section 1: Context	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Voluntary and Community Sector in Leicestershire• Parish and Town Councils• Austerity• Changing Public Services• Early Help and Prevention	
Section 2:	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievements to date• Lessons learned	
Section 3: Our Approach	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Action• Building on Leicestershire's Assets - the asset based approach	
Section 4: Our Priorities	14
Section 5: Delivering the Communities Strategy	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wider Ownership and Participation• Action Plan• We want to hear from you	
Appendices	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1 – Pitfalls to avoid• Appendix 2 – Comparison table of deficit focused versus asset based approaches	
Sources	21
Case Studies	22

1. Foreword

I am delighted to introduce our Communities Strategy – Working Together to Build Great Communities.

Our Communities Strategy sets out how by working together, the Council, local communities and partners can make a real difference to the quality of life of the people of Leicestershire. Whether this is about good health, strong and friendly social networks or making environmental improvements, communities have a central role to play in continuing to make Leicestershire a great place.

There are already many active and vibrant communities across Leicestershire and we want to build on this and equip communities with the tools, support and information they need to help shape their local area through initiatives such as neighbourhood planning.

Austerity has affected the types and level of services that the Council can provide and we will need to continue to make some difficult decisions about where funding needs to be allocated in the future. This also means that the Council will be more innovative, and tailor its approach to meet local need and ensuring value for money for our residents. We therefore believe that it is more important than ever that we allocate our resources where they are needed most and that we work alongside other agencies in the public sector (such as health, police and education), the private and voluntary sector and with local communities to make things happen.

Every community has a tremendous supply of assets including land and buildings, people, skills and networks that can be used to build the community and solve challenges. We know we cannot do this on our own but that it will require a shared commitment and a willingness to come together.

However we are not starting from scratch. We have a lot to build on.

We want to identify more opportunities to involve communities in service redesign and expand on the success of the Community Managed Libraries. This is about working together with communities to support local action whether this is activities for young people, good neighbour schemes or dementia friendly projects.

We want to build community capacity, encouraging people to participate in, and contribute to, their local community for example, through volunteering, connecting people, strengthening skills and confidence. We want to see our voluntary and community sector develop and thrive and our local Parishes flourish.

I hope the Communities Strategy and some of the case studies we have highlighted will inspire you to get involved to continue to make Leicestershire a great place to live, work and stay.

I look forward to hearing how you can help us achieve this.

Councillor Pam Posnett, Cabinet Lead Member – Communities

Introduction

This Communities Strategy sets out the council's continuing commitment to work in partnership to support, strengthen and empower communities. It includes our aspirations to build on and develop the assets of the people and places of Leicestershire, in order to achieve the best outcomes for everyone.

It was first adopted by the council in 2014 and there has been significant progress in its delivery. We want to build on this success.

We have a strong track record of working closely with communities to address local issues and improve the quality of life of Leicestershire citizens. As resources have become increasingly stretched due to an increase in demand for services, it is more important than ever that we work together to ensure the best possible outcomes for all of our residents and communities.

In order to do this, we need to continue to work in partnership with other agencies such as town and parish councils, voluntary and community sector organisations, district/borough councils, the NHS and the police, as well as businesses who have an interest and shared commitment to supporting communities.

Communities have, for a long time been providers of activities and support for residents. The council is already working closely with communities to design and deliver services in partnership, but there is more to be done, especially in a changing landscape where the ways in which people interact with public services is shifting.

When we talk about 'communities' we mean both people in different places (communities of place/geography) and different groups of people (communities of interest) and we recognise that people could belong to many different communities at any one time.

Communities are often best placed to understand their own needs and to develop their own solutions. By working with local people, agencies and partners and combining resources, skills and knowledge, we can achieve our vision.

Our vision for Leicestershire is for our communities to thrive, to be inclusive, and where people take pride in their local area. Leicestershire is a place where people help themselves and each other, for example through volunteering and local initiatives. This is underpinned by a strong local economy where people have the skills, knowledge and expertise they need. People are healthy and have choices, and they feel safe. Across Leicestershire people have access to appropriate and affordable housing which meets their needs.

The Communities Strategy is underpinned by **4 Priorities**:

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Communities support themselves, individuals and families	Communities in collaboration with public services, are supported to design and deliver better outcomes for the people of Leicestershire	Voluntary and community sector organisations, social enterprises and parish and town councils are supported and empowered to provide a range of effective services and activities for individuals and communities	The council continues to be outward focussed, transparent, and open to new ways of working

This Strategy provides a framework for continued collaboration, to achieve positive outcomes for residents and communities. By using the skills and knowledge of our residents, our partners and our volunteers, we can collectively build the required capacity to actively support our communities, and enable more opportunities for communities to help us design and collaboratively deliver services in future.

Section 1: Context

Leicestershire is recognised as a great place to live. It is made up of vibrant and active communities, who have a history of working together in partnership with others, to make a positive difference.

It is a diverse county, benefitting greatly from close links with Leicester, one of the most culturally diverse cities in the UK. International migration has had, and will continue to have, an impact on both service provision/access and community cohesion across the county, as new arrivals and emerging communities integrate into existing communities, within both Leicestershire and Leicester City.

The mid-2015 population estimate for Leicestershire was 675,000*. Leicestershire is a predominantly rural county by area, but urban by population.** The rural parts of the county are characterised by a large number of smaller settlements, (with populations below 10,000).

Like many places, the county faces the challenge of an ageing population. By 2030, people aged 65 years and older will account for over 25% of the total Leicestershire population. Furthermore, the working age population is expected to reduce over the next 20 years.

Leicester and Leicestershire functions as an integrated economic area in terms of travel-to work patterns, retail and cultural catchments and transport links. It benefits from a diverse industrial structure and is not dependent on the fortunes of any one sector or employer. The west and north-west of the county have a strong industrial heritage of manufacturing and mining industries, are more densely populated and situated along major motorway routes. In the north, the town of Loughborough hosts a university and a higher density urban population.

Leicestershire is a relatively affluent County and experiences very low levels of social-economic deprivation overall. Even so, pockets of significant deprivation exist, with some neighbourhoods in Loughborough and Coalville amongst the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

Neighbourhoods with lower levels of deprivation can be found in each of the county's districts.

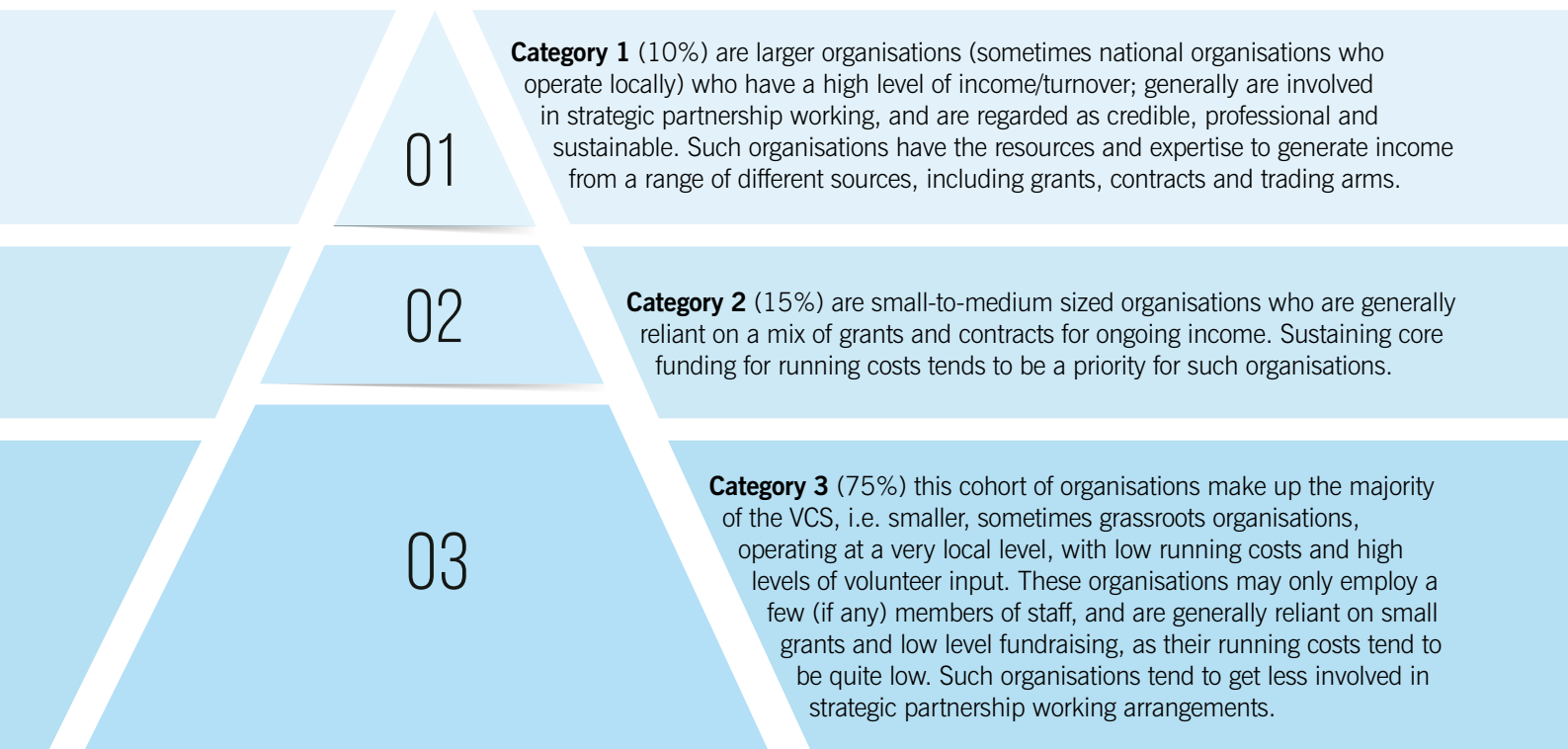
Population Estimates by Age & Gender

**Urban Rural Population

The Voluntary and Community Sector in Leicestershire

Leicestershire has a thriving and diverse voluntary and community sector (VCS), with many types of organisations operating across the County, ranging from small grassroots groups, to social enterprises and national charities.

A VCS 'pyramid' has been developed to illustrate the VCS landscape in Leicestershire. The 'pyramid' concept suggests that the VCS can be understood in terms of 3 categories:



The VCS in Leicestershire has a strong track record of innovation and responsiveness to changing priorities and demographics. The Council and its partners recognise that the VCS provides valuable services, which help public sector partners to meet their strategic objectives, particularly around supporting those most in need through an early intervention approach.

The Communities Strategy continues our commitment to support and work with the voluntary and community sector in Leicestershire, in order to deliver effective solutions for all of our communities.

Parish and Town Councils

Within Leicestershire there are more than 230 town and parish councils or meetings. Whilst we understand that the entire county is not parished, we wish to support and enable those that are in place to be in the strongest position and able to respond to local needs and build on the activities already taking place.

Local parish and town councils have the potential to deliver benefit to their communities through the activities they undertake. This potential exists no matter what the size of population or the differences in finances.

Whilst there may be further opportunities for devolved services (those transferred from councils) there is a real role for local councils in developing and delivering local services that meet the needs of their communities. Many councils are becoming more innovative through initiatives ranging from supporting community resilience, youth provision, local transport solutions and promoting health and wellbeing.

Austerity

The Communities Strategy was adopted in 2014, partly as a response to the financial challenges facing the public sector and the need for reform.

The Council has had to save £161m over the last seven years and will need to save a further £68m over the next four years. We must acknowledge that with less money and rising demand, fewer services will be available to fewer people and decisions have to be made about what can be provided. This is why we need to re-think what we do, who does it and how it is done and have to acknowledge that some of the things that used to be delivered or offered by the Council will no longer be available or be able to be supported.

This has placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of developing capacity in communities, in order to both support the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives, and to develop resilient communities.

To help achieve these savings, the way in which we deliver our services has had to change. Commissioning is the process of deciding how we use money and other resources so that they have the biggest impact on the things which are most important. We need to consider how we commission our services in future, to ensure they provide value for money, as well as ensuring we achieve positive outcomes for our communities.

Changing Public Services

Public services have to re-think the way in which they do things and how services are designed and delivered. This partly reflects changes in how people expect to be involved with and receive those services, but it is really about achieving better outcomes for everyone.

We have seen significant changes in how our schools operate and a move towards greater community ownership and management of services (such as Youth Centres and Libraries) demonstrating what is possible when we work in collaboration with our partners and communities.

The amount of 'choice' given to people who use services has also changed. A good example is the introduction of personal budgets for adults and families with children who have disabilities to enable them to buy the care services that they most need.

People no longer expect or require services to be 'done to them' but rather 'with them'- a collaborative approach where the contribution and willingness to get involved and take responsibility is shared.

We want to support and enable more people to access services and information virtually, both for themselves and for others. This requires new ways of joint thinking about who receives services; how they are delivered; where and when they are received and what those services should look like. The shift towards digital solutions will help to provide flexibility to enable residents to 'self-serve', i.e. access services on-line; and to find the right information and advice when it is most needed.

The Council has started the process of looking at how services are delivered and this Strategy provides a framework for how we can build upon this and can achieve this change.

The table below provides a useful overview of what this means.

Old model of public services	New model of public services
Done to: led by professionals, citizens disempowered, passive consumers	Act with: citizens as equal, collaborative partners, active co-producers
Top-down organisational decision making	Recognising insights of frontline staff and the public
Closed	Open, transparent, listening, responsive
Delivering	Facilitating
Services delivered through the large institutions	Services embedded in homes and communities
One size fits all, standardised, prescriptive	Personalised, flexible, holistic, diverse solutions
Disjointed service episodes	Services integrated with people's lives
Defining people by problems and needs	Starting with people's assets

Early Help and Prevention

The Council's Early Help and Prevention Strategy sets out how to "support communities at the earliest stage to prevent and reduce the need for help"; and to "target help as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging."

The framework for the Council's approach to early help and prevention work, identifies four tiers of preventative activity to provide increasingly focused support for communities and individuals. The four tiers range from building community capacity (Tier 0), through maintaining good health and well-being via information and advice (Tier 1) and targeted prevention for individuals (Tier 2) to reducing more established needs (Tier 3).

The Council must also seek to ensure that the most appropriate services are provided when people need them most, and that those most in need not only receive the right services, but are also supported to get help and advice to prevent further problems from arising.

We want people to be able to plan ahead, to help themselves and those around them, and to rely less on public services. We also need to encourage individuals and communities to take more responsibility for their own needs, particularly their health and wellbeing, to stop problems escalating.

Communities have a key role to play in helping people to look after themselves, to prevent further problems from arising further down the line. A number of examples already exist, where early help and prevention approaches are embedded within communities. This includes initiatives such as Knit and Chat clubs, which help to provide much needed social interaction; informal walking groups, which keep people active; and Good Neighbour Schemes, which provide a range of support to socially isolated people. We want to ensure these initiatives continue and are supported to grow across Leicestershire.

Section 2:

Achievements to date and lessons learned

Achievements to date

The Council and its partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors have already helped to develop and support a number of successful community-based initiatives. The Communities Strategy has been at the forefront of this change and some of the achievements so far include:

- Supporting communities to take over the management of more than 30 local libraries and develop these into community hubs by providing a package of support including a dedicated Relationship Manager from the Council's Communities Team, tapered funding and a tailored programme of workshops delivered by Voluntary Action Leicestershire.
- Providing volunteering guidance and training, developing volunteering opportunities and raising the profile of what community volunteers can achieve. Bringing key networks together to resolve challenges and provide a platform for Volunteer Managers to champion their roles.
- A refocused SHIRE Community Grants programme, which has funded over 300 community projects that support those most in need.
- Supporting community buildings to sustain and expand their role as community hubs where people can meet, socialise and support each other and from where community services and activities are provided.
- Empowering Town and Parish Councils to develop capacity and engagement to help improve the areas and the lives of local people. By providing opportunities for meaningful dialogue between the Council and the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC)
- Continuing to invest in organisations such as Voluntary Action Leicestershire and CASE to provide direct support and assistance to voluntary and community sector groups and social enterprises with a more targeted approach.

CASE STUDY:

Arts for Health aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of adults and their carers through the provision of accessible arts and music opportunities. A particular issue it aims to address is the limited number of activities during the evening for adults who are experiencing mental health difficulties. A weekly music project at the local Methodist church, led by a music teacher, has enabled individuals to learn and play various instruments, write and perform songs. Participants have experienced an increase in confidence, a sense of achievement, reduced feelings of anxiety, and feel better able to deal with problems.



Lessons Learned

- **The first two years** of the Communities Strategy has provided some key learning. We know that initiatives or service changes do not just happen; there is a significant amount of resource required, along with a change in thinking and culture, about how we do things. Whether it is time, funding, skills or knowledge, investment is a key requirement to ensure communities are properly supported.
- **Taking a long-term view** - To ensure that communities are enabled to develop the required capacity to successfully deliver and maintain services (including devolved services) a long-term view of supporting communities is required.
- **One size does not fit all** – Experience has shown us that we need to tailor our approach to meet the needs of the communities we are working with.
- **Combining Resources/Working in partnership** - We need to continue to build strong relationships with partners and our communities by listening to them and being honest about what it is we can do. Change cannot be delivered alone and there is a need to combine resources with our partners.
- **A strong VCS provider market** - This is crucial to the delivery of the Communities Strategy and its priorities. There is a need to support local VCS organisations to develop sustainable business models, as well as considering a range of alternative approaches to generating income.
- **Opportunities for working with the private sector** - Some of the options we need to promote include engagement with businesses around Corporate Social Responsibility, along with exploring potential social investment opportunities.

CASE STUDY:

A Local History Café was established at the Cotesbach Educational Trust, to provide social opportunities for older people, including those with dementia, to meet and form new friendships over lunch and through stimulating conversations about history and genealogy. Based at an education centre in a historic listed building, the project has given opportunities for older, socially isolated individuals to reminisce about their own lives whilst also contributing to the centre's own archives through their personal recollections of local history.



The project has achieved positive impacts on the wellbeing of the participants, through opportunities for stimulating conversations and sharing of stories and knowledge, whilst making new friends. The reminiscence activities have also had positive impacts for individuals with dementia, as these types of activities have been found to be effective in delaying/reducing the effects of dementia.

Section 3: Our Approach

The Leicestershire Communities Strategy identifies the way in which the Council will work with its communities. There are two key components to the approach we are taking. These are:

- **A focus on social action.** Acknowledging that when people come together and act, they can improve their lives and solve the problems their communities face; and
- **An asset-based approach.** Harnessing the skills, knowledge, connections and potential which already exists within communities.

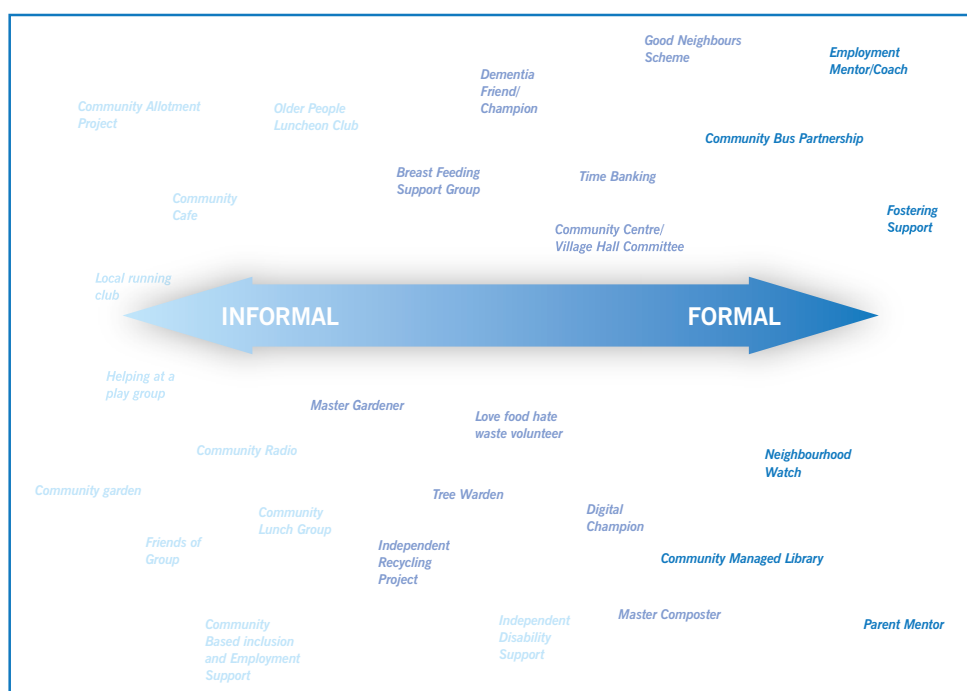
Social Action

The Communities Strategy is underpinned by the desire to encourage social action. Social Action can be described as:

People coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can broadly be defined as practical action in the service of others, which is (i) carried out by individuals or groups of people working together, (ii) not mandated and not for profit, (iii) done for the good of others – individuals, communities and/or society, and (iv) bringing about social change and or value.'

Source: Cabinet Office. (2015). Social action: Harnessing the potential: A discussion paper. Retrieved from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-action-harnessing-the-potential

Social Action covers a broad spectrum of informal and formal volunteering activities, ranging from small acts of kindness and neighbourliness, or one-off volunteering (e.g. in response to a specific request) through to regular involvement in formal volunteering. Volunteering underpins many of the strands within the Strategy which contribute towards its aim of energising communities (see diagram below).

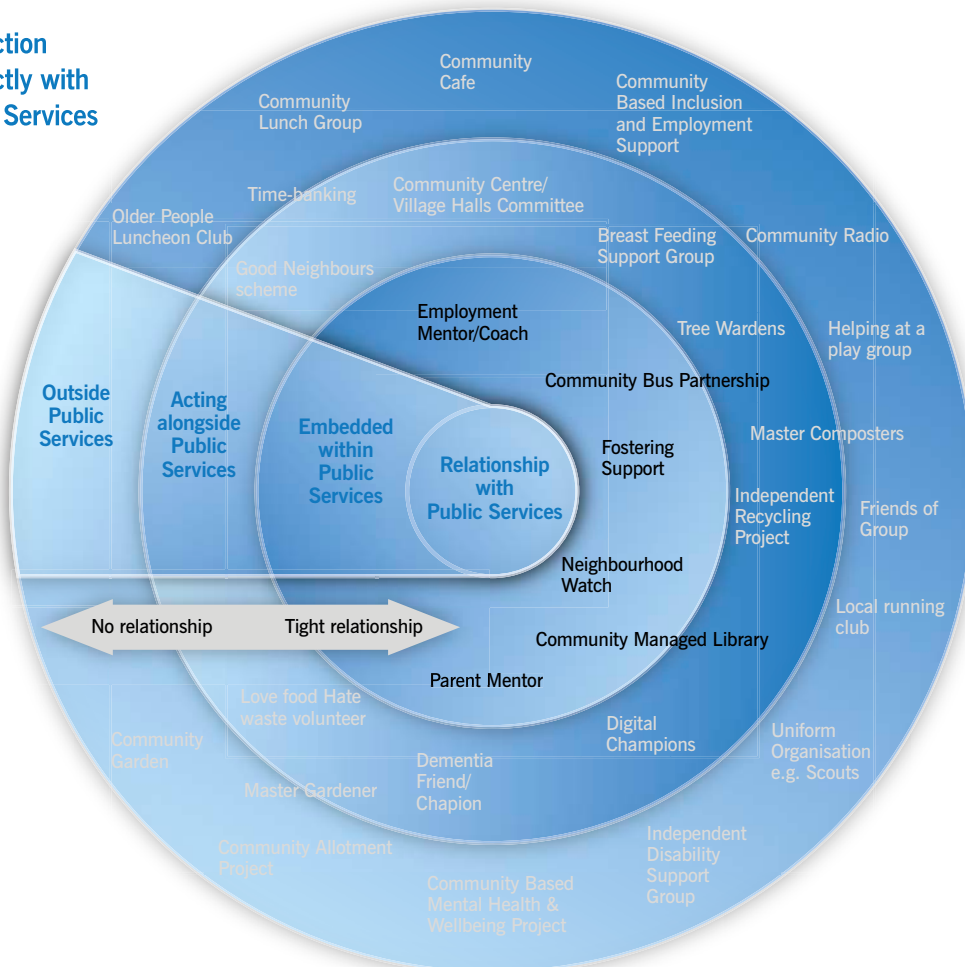


Examples of volunteering in Leicestershire ranging from formal to informal

The Council is committed to supporting and enabling social action because it lies at the heart of thriving and inclusive communities and can help the Council to jointly deliver better quality, more effective services and outcomes.

There are already lots of activities that we know take place in Leicestershire and this Strategy seeks to build on these. The diagram below provides examples of the role of social action in relation to the Council services - it is this relationship that we need to build on.

Examples of social action and relationship directly with Leicestershire Public Services



(source: People Helping People: the future of public services, Emma Clarence and Madeline Gabriel, NESTA, September 2014)

We believe that social action is a central design principle for public services and should be embedded in how we commission services. We understand that this approach requires us to be innovative and try new ways of doing things and this will also be a challenge to us.

We want to support social action by:

- Listening and building relationships that support residents to act;
- Encouraging and developing opportunities where people can get involved in their communities;
- Providing advice, guidance and training to help people understand the role that volunteers can have in and alongside public services.

An overview of the 'pitfalls to avoid for the public sector' is attached as **Appendix 1**

CASE STUDY:

Remap Leicestershire & Rutland makes bespoke equipment to help disabled people live more independent lives. Unique pieces of specialist equipment are tailor made by Remap's volunteer experts, and given free to the people who need them. A small amount of grant funding was awarded to Remap, for materials required to develop a set of items, as required by beneficiaries.

The pictures show (1) a low board fitted with braked castors and a car seat to help a young mother who uses a manual wheelchair to move her child safely around the floor, from room to room; and (2) a tailor made piece of equipment which enables a visually impaired man to use a white cane and a walking stick with one hand.



Building on Leicestershire's Assets – The Asset Based Approach

Building on the strengths of local communities is fundamental to this Strategy. It is an approach that is based on local assets - the skills, knowledge, connections and potential that exists within a community. Rather than starting from the perspective of the problems in a community, or what a community needs (a 'deficit-based' model), the asset-based approach starts by making visible and explicitly valuing the strengths that exist in people and places.

These strengths include:

- Personal assets – the knowledge, skills, talents and aspirations of individuals
- Social assets – the relationships people have with family, friends and the wider community
- Community assets – voluntary and community sector organisations; faith groups; public sector services that operate in the area
- Neighbourhood assets – the physical assets that contribute to health and wellbeing where people can meet and take part in activities, for example community centres, parks etc.

An asset based approach can help develop connections, build relationships and mobilise social action at the local level, helping to prevent the need for more formal services.

This approach also highlights that the design, development and delivery of solutions is not only the responsibility of public services, but is much more effective when accompanied by local community involvement which helps people to take ownership of, and responsibility for, local solutions.

Investment in identifying, understanding and developing community assets can help to prevent and address problems early on, rather than when they have had a greater impact on people and have become more difficult and costly to tackle.

We want to support an asset based approach by:

- Encouraging and promoting the importance of an ‘asset-based’ approach amongst our staff, service departments and with our partners;
- Embedding the principles of the Social Value Act in commissioning;
- Identifying local assets and supporting communities to take full advantage and make the best use of what is already available.

Appendix 2 provides a more detailed explanation of the differences between deficit and asset-based approaches.

CASE STUDY:

The Council has supported the establishment of a network for service providers who are currently working on, or are hoping to develop new ways of working, using an asset-based approach. The network is attended by stakeholders from a number of partner organisations and offers a platform for sharing experience and best practice; discuss solutions to common challenges and provide valuable peer support. New partnerships have already been established through this network, for example, with Health partners, which demonstrates the value of working collaboratively to develop ideas for understanding and implementing asset based approaches.

Encouraging and enabling social action and asset based approaches should be understood as a shared organisational responsibility and we will be incorporating the approach into our plans and commissioning. Staff training and guidance will be introduced to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support this. We also recognise that one of our biggest assets is our staff and we will ensure that we enable colleagues to make a positive impact within communities using their time, skills and knowledge.

In Leicestershire our approach will be to:

- Support communities to better understand local strengths and assets;
- Address challenges in partnership with communities and other agencies;
- Realise the opportunities within, and aspirations of, our communities to be involved;
- Introduce a corporate volunteering policy to support the above
- Adopt the ‘Social Action Toolkit’ to ensure the approach is embedded into our Commissioning policies and processes

Section 4: Our Vision and Priorities

Our Vision

The council has developed five strategic outcomes as part of an updated strategic plan. This focuses on the difference we want to make for communities in Leicestershire.

This requires a clear understanding of the aspirations of all sections of our communities, particularly those who may require the most support.

We need to ensure that communities also have the right information about existing assets and resources, so that they are in a stronger position to support themselves and that our vision:

Working together for the benefit of everyone

can be achieved.

This vision is underpinned by five outcomes:

Strong Economy

Leicestershire's economy is growing and resilient so that people and businesses can fulfil their potential.

Wellbeing and Opportunity

The people of Leicestershire have the opportunities and support they need to take control of their health and wellbeing.

Keeping People Safe

People in Leicestershire are safe and protected from harm.

Great Communities

Leicestershire communities are thriving and integrated places where people help and support each other and take pride in their local area.

Affordable and Quality Homes

Leicestershire has a choice of quality homes that people can afford.

The outcomes are not about short-term plans and processes. Instead, they highlight what we want to achieve collectively and collaboratively. The outcomes are a way of helping us to align the commissioning decisions across the council, in order to help us deliver the council's vision.

The Outcomes

The Communities Strategy is primarily focused on creating great communities, which is Outcome 4.

However, it will also support, strengthen and empower communities and will help to deliver all of the Outcomes.

For example, through activities such as Neighbourhood Watch, Outcome 3 is boosted. Good Neighbour Schemes where people are supported in their homes or with daily activities such as appointments and shopping enables people to stay independent for longer which we know contributes to better wellbeing, reinforcing Outcome 2.

We also know many people will build their confidence and boost their skills through social action and volunteering. This can lead to improved health and wellbeing and possibly paid employment - Outcomes 1 and 2.

We support the community led Neighbourhood Planning Network and provide an online resource, information and networking for communities wishing to undertake the process helping to inform Outcome 5.

This Strategy sets out how we will seek to achieve these Outcomes working with communities and partners, and how supporting and enabling social action and harnessing community assets within Leicestershire will help achieve our objectives.

This new approach requires a strong emphasis on co-design, production and openness with our communities themselves and partners.

The Communities Strategy Priorities

The Communities Strategy centres on how we will help to build Great Communities and how together we can achieve all of the Outcomes.

The four Priorities of the Communities Strategy are:

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Communities support themselves, individuals and families	Communities in collaboration with public services, are supported to design and deliver better outcomes for the people of Leicestershire	Voluntary and community sector organisations, social enterprises and parish and town councils are supported and empowered to provide a range of effective services and activities for individuals and communities	The council continues to be outward focussed, transparent, and open to new ways of working

In the next section we will talk more about our Priorities, what do they mean, and what we understand success would look like. Case study examples demonstrate some of the excellent initiatives already happening within Leicestershire Communities in support of our Priorities.

CASE STUDY:

A walking football club has been established by Measham Community and Recreation Centre for people over the age of 50, who are at risk of developing long term health conditions. The project is delivered in partnership with Measham Medical Unit, with doctors at the Medical Unit referring appropriate people to the football club. The project is further supported by volunteers. The weekly game lasts for an hour and the rules are identical to five-a-side football, but one with one major exception – if you run, the opposition gets a free kick! As well as being able to increase fitness levels, the project boosts the social and emotional wellbeing of participants, with new friendships being made. The project has received financial support from Measham Parish Council, along with a SHIRE Community Grant.



Priority One:

Communities support themselves, individuals and families

What will the Outcome be?

Confident, active and empowered communities where people participate, volunteer and contribute to their local community. Communities are enabled to develop the knowledge, skills and expertise to support themselves and each other, including those most in need. Community cohesion and inclusion is strengthened within and amongst communities.

How do we achieve this?

- Support volunteering programmes and identify ways to enable more people to volunteer
- Support a range of community initiatives including the 'Good Neighbour Schemes' and 'Community Broadband'
- Develop strong and robust relationships with communities to achieve better outcomes in service delivery.

CASE STUDY:

Desford Parish Council requested support from the Rural Community Council to set up a Good Neighbour Scheme in the Parish of Desford, which includes the villages of Botcheston, Newtown Unthank and Kirby Grange. Community volunteers have come forward to help ensure the success of the scheme, with particular regard to supporting the needs of the more vulnerable people within the community.

The scheme has helped people to remain in their own homes for longer, through the valuable support and contributions of the members of the community carrying out day to day tasks.



Priority Two:

Communities, in collaboration with public services, are supported to design and deliver better outcomes for the people of Leicestershire

What will the Outcome be?

Communities are empowered with the tools they need to help shape their local area, including access to relevant information, knowledge and advice. Inclusive decision making processes where communities are listened to, and able to influence the types of services they receive, including those they wish to deliver themselves.

How do we achieve this?

- Embed an asset based approach into the Council and partners day to day activities
- Enable communities to make informed choices about their community, e.g Neighbourhood Planning
- Build on the success of the Community Managed Libraries and use principals to influence future service delivery
- Ensure communities have access to the right information, at the right time, and in the right format

CASE STUDY:

In a climate of unstable finances, and in response to a commissioning opportunity, the UAVA (United Against Violence and Abuse) partnership of three existing domestic abuse reduction agencies was established. The three organisations are now jointly responsible for providing a co-ordinated range of services for those at risk of domestic/sexual abuse across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. This new arrangement has demonstrated considerable success in effective partnership working, which has resulted in benefits for individuals who access the support provided by the new single service, as well as for commissioners.

Priority Three:

Voluntary and community sector organisations, social enterprises and parish and town councils are supported and empowered to provide a range of effective services and activities for individuals and communities

What will the Outcome be?

A diverse, effective and sustainable voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. As well as active and empowered town and parish councils who are supported to work collaboratively with and across communities and with those most in need in Leicestershire.

How do we achieve this?

- Support and develop the voluntary and community sector to ensure it is in an optimum position to provide relevant services for Leicestershire communities
- Provide support to Town and Parish Councils
- Encourage greater partnership working and collaboration between VCS organisations

CASE STUDY:

Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) has worked in partnership with the Council to develop and run a series of workshops with VCS organisations. These workshops have focussed on topics of interest and importance to VCS organisations, including funding, partnership working and capacity building. The workshops have been well attended and have provided a vital learning opportunity both for the organisations who attend, but also for VAL and the Council, in terms of the types and levels of support required by VCS organisations.

Priority Four:

The Council continues to be outward focused, transparent and open to new ways of working

What will the Outcome be?

Strong relationships with stakeholders, partners and communities. A consistent and co-ordinated approach to engaging with communities and stakeholders. Ensuring new approaches are trialled and the council considers the needs of communities in all areas of service design and delivery.

How do we achieve this?

- Challenge existing services to identify alternative delivery models to achieve better outcomes for everyone
- Through dialogue and conversations encourage and enable communities to identify areas where we can work together to design and deliver tailored local solutions
- The development and implementation of ways to better co-ordinate and work with the private and VCS sectors to harness the combined powers of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) across the region.

CASE STUDY:

ACCEPT is a Hinckley based charity that provides support to adults with mental health difficulties. The project offers those who attend a range of activities to get involved with, including growing healthy, organic vegetables, and arts and craft activities. The opportunity to engage in meaningful activity and meet new people has greatly assisted participants' recovery, improving their confidence and independence.



Section 5: Delivering the Communities Strategy

Wider Ownership and Participation

A key element of the delivery of this Strategy is our commitment to work with others to embed the principles of the Strategy across Leicestershire. Improving people's lives, whilst also making best use of limited resources, remains at the forefront of the Council's aims.

To aid us in our aspirations to build thriving, sustainable, resilient communities we will work collaboratively with voluntary and community organisations - not only to help to develop the sector, but to ensure that they are in a strong position to work with us to achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of Leicestershire.

In order to achieve the aims of the Communities Strategy, the Council needs to build on this framework and continue to work with other organisations including local councils, the Police, the NHS and the private sector.

Action Plan

We know that empowered communities can deliver a great deal for their residents. This Strategy sets out the framework to enable us to collectively achieve our vision for communities.

A detailed Action Plan will give focus to the delivery of the strategy, along with a strong commitment to engagement and ongoing conversations with all partners.

We will continue to engage with communities, key partners and other relevant stakeholders in order to further develop and co-produce the activities within the Action Plan.

This strategy reinforces our message, that as a council, we are committed to building on the great communities we live in. Realising the aspirations of and harnessing the opportunities within Leicestershire communities will enable us to achieve better outcomes for all.

CASE STUDY:

With support from the County Council's, Measham, led by the Parish Council have prepared their own bespoke Community Response Plan and created an Emergency Store, enabling them to be prepared for any severe weather or emergency that may come their way. Measham is now one of over 40 Response Plans either in place or being developed throughout Leicestershire and Rutland.



Appendix 1

Pitfalls to avoid

The table below summarises the pitfalls that are commonly encountered by public sector leaders working to change culture, commission for social action and create the conditions for social action. Resisting these pitfalls can prevent social action from becoming tokenistic or ineffective.

Do	Don't
<p>Use co-production to bring together the best of both public sector and community expertise Co-design and co-deliver activities with local people, and recognise that social action is not 'free'.</p>	<p>Expect communities to run services It is unrealistic to expect people to run social care, housing, or health services without professional input and adequate resources.</p>
<p>Recognise that paid facilitators can increase the capacity of residents to volunteer and support new groups to engage. Provide development support for organisations to help them seek funding from other sources.</p>	<p>Believe that all social action can eventually become self-sustaining In many instances, it will continue to require some funding for staff to coordinate and facilitate activities.</p>
<p>Go beyond consultation and engagement by recognising that sharing power between professionals and citizens can create a genuinely reciprocal partnership through co-design and co-production.</p>	<p>Mistake consultation, collaboration, or partnership for co-production Partnerships and collaborations with colleagues in the public sector are important but they do not amount to genuine co-production.</p>
<p>Use practical examples of local social action and conversations with people leading it as the starting point for strategic decisions.</p>	<p>Think about strategy without thinking about implementation This can lead to an unrealistic high-level plan with absence of buy-in from people who will be relied on to implement local programmes.</p>
<p>Listen to citizens about their priorities Use creative methods to engage them in an asset-based conversation.</p>	<p>Enable social action solely as a way of cutting costs Social action is about improving outcomes, but it is unlikely to achieve this if it is being driven largely by the need to make public sector savings.</p>
<p>Define outcomes with residents through co-production Be clear about what all participants want to achieve, what success looks like, and how it will be measured.</p>	<p>Work generically on social action without defining outcomes This is unlikely to lead to clear measurable impact on public service outcomes that the</p>

(Source: Enabling Social Action Section C Leadership and Change)

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591799/Leadership_and_culture_change_to_enable_social_action.pdf

Appendix 2

Deficit focused approaches	Asset based approaches
Start with deficiencies and needs in the community	Start with the assets in the community
Respond to problems	Identify Opportunities and strengths
Provide services to users	Invest in people as citizens
Emphasise the role of agencies	Emphasise the role of civil society
Focus on individuals	Focus on communities and the common good
See people as clients and consumers receiving services	See people as citizens and co- producers with something to offer
Treat people as passive and done – to	Help people take control of their lives
Fix people	Support people to develop their potential
Implement programmes as the answer	See people as the answer

Sources

All Together Now: Whole systems commissioning for councils and the voluntary sector, Sarah Stopforth and Claire Mansfield, New Local Government Network, April 2016

Enabling social action – tools and resources developed by the New Economics Foundation in collaboration with the Office for Civil Society. Available from www.gov.uk

Engaging and empowering communities: Our shared commitment and call to action, Think Local Act Personal, NHS England Gateway Reference: 05864

People Helping People: the future of public services, Emma Clarence and Madeline Gabriel, NESTA, September 2014)

We want to hear from you

We would like to hear your views on how we can deliver this strategy together. Here are a few questions for you or your organisation to consider:

- How can we work together to achieve our vision for Great Communities in Leicestershire?
- How can we build confidence in people to enable them to participate, volunteer and contribute to their community?
- How can we work together to build capacity within communities to achieve our vision?
- What role can the Voluntary and Community Sector play in helping to deliver the Communities Strategy?
- What can the Council and its partners do to help people access effective sources of support?
- What type of activities will help us to deliver our priorities?
- How can you/ your organisation help us to achieve our priorities?

Please contact us:

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