



Community Investment Projects

Making More Voices Heard



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Introduction

Healthwatch Dorset is the independent champion for people who use health or social care service in Dorset. We listen to local people's experiences of, local healthcare services and use them to influence change and improvement in those services.

We are particularly keen to hear from people whose voices aren't as loud, or as often heard, as others. To help us achieve that goal, we set aside funding to support local voluntary and community group projects that help us reach communities and people with "protected characteristics", as defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Through our Community Investment, we gain knowledge and understanding of more people's experiences of local services, and the groups we work with are able to do more and also, in some cases, become more sustainable as our support leads to funding from other bodies too.

Over the last 18 months we've funded and supported 14 local projects, covering a wide range of communities, from school and disability groups to homeless support and carers' groups.

This report gives a snapshot of those projects.

February 2018



At a glance

We've invested over £16,000 in community projects across Dorset



Our projects have tackled issues ranging from homelessness & isolation to carers' support



We've reached over 6000 people...



...and met hundreds more local people at community events



Our Community Investment Projects support local community organisations to help more people...



...and help us get feedback on local healthcare from people we might not hear from otherwise



Flourish Café

[EDP](#) provides drug & alcohol support and homelessness services across Dorset.

We supported EDP's Flourish project to run pop-up cafés in Bridport, providing a safe space for vulnerable people to improve their wellbeing.

27 pop up cafés were held in and around Bridport, attended by 462 people.



This successful pilot project enabled EDP to attract additional funding to run further cafés throughout the whole of 2017.

Findings highlighted the need for more low-level mental health support, issues raised about eligibility criteria for the Community Mental Health teams & concern over the Dorset Clinical Services Review, including transport and hospital access.

“I love coming here & hope it will continue to help people like myself who can be depressed, living alone, with some health problems. Long Live Flourish!”

Ideal Health Exhibition

We provided funding towards the promotion and advertising of a Health Exhibition in North Dorset.



The event was organised by [Blackmore Vale Partnership Patient Participation Group](#) in response to their 2015 patient survey in which people wanted to know more about local support groups.

The event brought together 35 exhibitors from local health & wellbeing organisations and attracted over 600 visitors.

“It is wonderful to discover so many supportive organisations in North Dorset”

Healthwatch Dorset was promoted in the event brochure, posters, local newspapers and social media promotion and our leaflets went out to the families of hundreds of pupils at Sturminster Newton High School.

Findings highlighted public transport issues in North Dorset, access to GPs and concern about proposed changes to local community hospitals.

Parkinson's Dance Classes

We provided funding towards the creation of community dance classes across Dorset for people with Parkinson's disease and their carers.



The project is run by [Pavilion Dance South West \(PDSW\)](#) with support from the Health & Wellbeing Legacy Fund, Parkinson's UK. Research is carried out by Southampton University. Successful classes have been set up in Sherborne & Dorchester, both well attended and sustainable.

This project has received widespread promotion and PDSW have produced a report with case studies & early research findings.

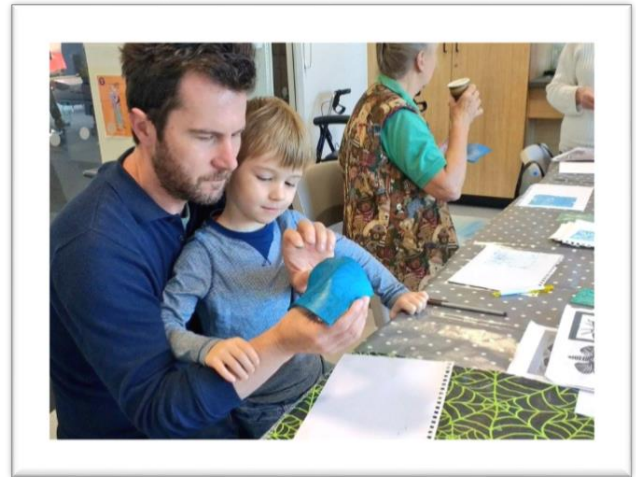
Findings highlighted problems when people with Parkinson's disease aren't allowed to take their own medication in hospital, the need for more carers' support and the benefits of peer support for people living with long term conditions.

“Last week I had a day with no Parkinson's Symptoms at all. It was great: my daughter said it must be the dance class.”

Artgroup for Wellness

This community art project is run by [Creative Connections](#) in Dorchester Library and provides a fun & creative environment for people who may be feeling isolated.

Art is a powerful and cost-effective way of improving people's health and wellbeing.



“Sometimes I feel imprisoned at home. This takes my mind off my problems”

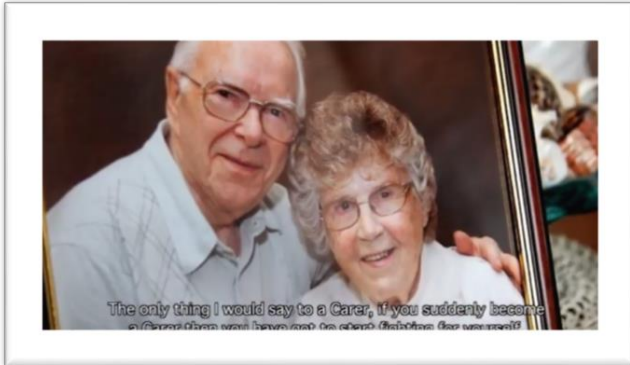
The project has brought together people of diverse backgrounds and ages and created friendships. People who took part said they experienced a real improvement in their wellbeing.

A recent [parliamentary report](#) recommended that the NHS ensure arts and cultural organisations are involved in the local delivery of health services. This community project shows how a small investment can have a significant impact on people's lives.

Chief Cook & Bottle Washer

"Chief cook and bottle washer" is a [film](#) created by [Bournemouth University](#) in partnership with Healthwatch Dorset & the local [Carers' Resource Centre CRISP](#).

11 male carers over the age of 85 took part in the project.



In this moving film, they share their insights on being an older carer, how life has changed for them and what their key messages are for health and social care practitioners.

The group is now working on carers' information for GP surgeries & setting up an older male carers' support group.

"I find the restriction of not being able to leave my wife, is becoming more and more difficult. I used to go sailing, I used to play golf, but I can't leave her now."

We're delighted that this project won a Special Recognition Award in the Daily Echo Proud to Care awards 2017. The film was also featured on BBC television South Today and in a [national blog](#) from the British Geriatric Society.

Yewstock School Radio Club

[Yewstock School](#) is a day community school in Sturminster Newton, North Dorset for children with profound and multiple, severe, moderate or complex learning difficulties.

We provided funding towards radio equipment for the school to set up a Radio Club for pupils. The club began in September 2016 and has a core membership of 6 young people with learning disabilities.

The children host a regular music show and have written radio stories and plays with the support of Wessex FM's DJ Owen.



The school has over 130 pupils. All their families now know about Healthwatch and we have learnt more about their experiences and views on local health and care services.

"Jack loves the Yewstock School radio club & looks forward to it every week, he's learnt new skills and gained confidence."

SocialEyes

This [Dorset Blind Association](#) social group is for younger people with visual impairments.

We provided funding to set up a new SocialEyes group in Bridport.

This successful pilot has enabled the group to become self-funding and sustainable.



Findings from the project have highlighted the need for more peer support for young people with visual impairments & more local support for carers.

The Socialeyes group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month and organises regular outings and events throughout the year.

“It’s a wonderful way for me to get out & meet different people who really understand my situation.”

BH1 Project

The [BH1 Project](#) is a community house in Boscombe (Bournemouth) run by the Salvation Army, providing support to over 80 rough sleepers and vulnerably housed people.

We supplied funding to BH1 to buy a shed which they could use as safe storage for their clients’ belongings while they are using services at the community house.

“The BH1 project saved my life, it’s massive to me. If I hadn’t found this place I don’t know what I would have done.”



We ran a Healthwatch session at the BH1 project, where clients raised issues about homeless services, safety and access to local health services, including GPs and dentists.

Restore

[Restore Support Network](#) supports older people in prison prior to release, as well as those with criminal convictions in the community who are over 50 years of age with physical, mental health or social care needs.

In this project, Restore distributed Healthwatch Dorset leaflets in local prisons during their workshops and provided 1-2-1 support for older ex-prisoners resettling in Dorset.

“I was a young man when I went to prison and am now in a wheelchair with severe disabilities. Thanks to my mentor who sees me every week I feel no longer alone & have stopped wishing I was back inside”.



This project has resulted in Restore working with Public Health England on a [national guidance document](#) to assess the health and care needs of the older prison population.

Musica Dorset

[Musica](#) provides interactive music sessions in care homes across Dorset.



In this project, Katy from Musica visited 12 care homes across Dorset, meeting 173 care home residents.

“Music is a wonderful way of connecting with older people who have memory loss. The son of one of the residents at Maiden Castle House care home told us that his mother’s dementia has made her more and more withdrawn, so it was lovely to see her taking part and playing percussion instruments along to the music.”

This project has shared information about Healthwatch in care homes across Dorset and provided stimulating reminiscence music sessions for residents & their families. Many of the care homes involved now run regular music events.

Friendly Food Club

[Friendly Food Club](#) worked with local Food Banks, giving support to families struggling to cope with rising food prices and lack of cookery and budgeting skills with demonstrations and recipe workshops.

"We are very thankful to Healthwatch Dorset for funding the pilot project last year which established the feasibility and supported our Awards for All application. As a result, our latest Food Bank project has been recognised with an award of £10k from the Awards for All Big Lottery fund, allowing us to develop the project to roll out across the whole of Dorset."



As part of the project, the Friendly Food Club gave Healthwatch Dorset leaflets and information to local people and food banks across Dorset.

Dementia Friendly Films

This project supported the set up and promotion of regular [dementia friendly daytime film screenings](#) of classic movies in partnership with the Borough of Poole Arts Service.



Although not exclusively for people with dementia, these film screenings are particularly suitable for people affected by the condition, their partners and family members, as well as the people who care for them professionally.

During the film the volume is reduced slightly, cinema house lights are left on low so that people can see to move around and staff are on hand to assist. There's also information for carers and people living with dementia, a free hot drink and biscuits before the film.

Healthwatch Dorset information and leaflets were available at screenings, enabling us to receive more feedback on local services.

Refresh

[Refresh](#) describes itself as “the church of Weymouth & Portland in action”.



We provided funding for volunteer training and equipment to set up a Refresh Me job club, offering literacy and numeracy skills to existing clients and people in hostel accommodation in the Weymouth & Portland area, many of whom have mental health issues.

As a result, volunteers received training to set up the Job Club, our funding also bought a printer and laptop for the project and several people are now applying for jobs. Our involvement has helped to make the project sustainable and Refresh has now successfully bid for over £250,000 Big Lottery funding for its money management training programme.

Everyone involved also now has information about Healthwatch, what we do and how we can help.

#LifeUnfiltered

We worked on this film project with a group of 18 young people, [Bournemouth University](#), [Dorset Mind](#), [Dorset Mental Health Forum](#) and [Dorset HealthCare NHS Trust](#).

The aim of the film is to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of talking about mental health.

The [film](#) was launched on World Mental Health Day October 2017, it's been watched over 12,000 times on YouTube and shown in schools, colleges, youth clubs and community events across Dorset.

The young people who developed the film have big aspirations for it and are planning to promote it nationally to raise awareness about young people's mental health.



“For me, working on this film was not only to get to know new people and gain confidence. I want young people to be able to reach out and get the help they need before things deteriorate further.”

£10,000 to invest in local communities



The Dorset patient champion has £10,000 to offer to local community groups to help people across the county have their say and get the best out of health and social care services.

Healthwatch Dorset has launched its Community Investment Fund 2018, to invest in grassroots projects and groups that aim to improve the health and well-being of local people.

“There is no need for the group to be a registered charity or an official group and applying is easy”, said Healthwatch Dorset Engagement and Communications Lead, Louise Bate. “We want this money to make a difference to local people, so we’ll be judging applications on how well we think they could contribute to improving people’s health and well-being.”

Interested groups or individuals just need to send in a short description of their project idea and the amount of funding they’re asking for to louise.bate@healthwatchdorset.co.uk or call Louise on 0300 111 0102.

Louise explained that the projects do not have to be expensive or complicated: “It could just be enough to cover the cost of materials so that a group can produce some artwork representing their experiences of health or care services, or the cost of setting up an event or regular group so people can meet or take an exercise class.”

Last year Healthwatch Dorset supported 14 projects across the county, including setting up a new social group for young adults with a visual impairment in Bridport called SocialEyes, supporting Dance Classes for people living with Parkinson’s Disease, and setting up a Radio Club in a school for children with profound learning disabilities. Healthwatch Dorset is looking for people with creative ideas to come forward and use this £10,000 funding pot for the benefit of local people.

To find out more, email louise.bate@healthwatchdorset.co.uk or call Louise on 0300 111 0102. **The deadline for applications is 5pm Friday on 9th March and funding will be distributed at the end of March.**

healthwatch Dorset

The independent champion for people who use health and social care services

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