



# Above and Beyond:

*How voluntary sector providers add value to communities*



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VODG represents organisations within the voluntary sector whose work is focused on enabling disabled people of all ages to live the lives they choose. VODG believes that an ambitious, trusted and vibrant voluntary sector that works together plays a unique role in achieving this aim.

VODG's mission is focused on two key areas – enabling its members to achieve excellence and influencing those who can improve the environment in which they operate. VODG believes that policymaking should be informed by the views of disabled people and by professional expertise.

Please visit [www.vodg.org.uk](http://www.vodg.org.uk) or follow @VODGmembership on Twitter to find out more.



# INTRODUCTION

The voluntary sector exists “because people with shared values come together to achieve something independently of state and markets”, according to NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)<sup>1</sup>.

While there are fewer voluntary sector providers in the social care ‘market’ than private sector organisations<sup>2</sup>, the former have a distinct role and history. Not-for-profit providers of adult social care share a collective desire for social change. More specifically, VODG members are united in the aim of improving the lives of people and their communities and they believe in collaboration with the individuals they support.

## This report

VODG champions the role of the voluntary sector support within local areas and supports organisations to create high quality and sustainable services.

This report reflects these aims through the experiences of four organisations delivering innovative projects and positive benefits to their communities. Above and Beyond shows how care providers routinely do more than what is necessary, either compared to their public service contracts or based on general expectations.

This report explores the following issues:

- what values characterise voluntary sector provision and make its contribution distinctive?
- what contribution do organisations make to local communities beyond directly commissioned services?
- what gaps are being filled with voluntary sector solutions?
- how do organisations work with local communities?

<sup>1</sup> National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Independence and values. Accessed: [www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/independence-values](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/independence-values)

<sup>2</sup> Estimates from Skills for Care NMDS-SCs suggest that approximately 75% (935,000) of the jobs for independent employees were in independent establishments (around 58% of all jobs) and 25% (300,000) were in voluntary establishments (around 20% of all jobs). Accessed: [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/NMDS-SC-intelligence/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Size-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/Size-and-Structure.pdf](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/NMDS-SC-intelligence/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Size-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/Size-and-Structure.pdf)





Above and Beyond showcases the unique characteristics, influence and potential of voluntary sector providers social care. This report follows other VODG work on similar issues, such as our contribution to Civil Society Futures, the national independent inquiry into English civil society that ran from 2017–2018<sup>3</sup>. Civil Society Futures explored how both civil society and the context in which it operates are rapidly changing. It considered how to maximise the impact of civic action to lead to positive social change.

## The context

As Civil Society Futures made clear, community and voluntary organisations face significant and unprecedented challenges. Major pressures in adult social care include funding, workforce and policy implementation, as VODG has previously outlined in detail<sup>4</sup>. For example, more people need support at a time when funding for services is on the wane.

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<sup>3</sup> Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (2018), Challenge can fuel change: a VODG contribution to Civil Society Futures. Accessed: [www.vodg.org.uk/publications/challenges-can-fuel-change-a-vodg-contribution-to-civil-society-futures/](http://www.vodg.org.uk/publications/challenges-can-fuel-change-a-vodg-contribution-to-civil-society-futures/)

<sup>4</sup> Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (2018), A stitch in time: the case for funding social care. Accessed: [www.vodg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018-VODG-A-stitch-in-time.pdf](http://www.vodg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018-VODG-A-stitch-in-time.pdf)

By 2025 there will be 11.7 million disabled people in England but since 2010 cumulative adult social care savings have amounted to £7bn<sup>5</sup>.

Although the Social Value Act 2012 encouraged commissioners to consider the wider social, economic and environmental impact of care services, in reality its impact has been limited. This is one reason for VODG's involvement in Social Care Future<sup>6</sup>, a national, volunteer-led movement to create positive change in our sector. There are many voluntary sector organisations who are "more than a provider"<sup>7</sup> and whose work extends beyond the contracts they are commissioned to provide by local authorities or the NHS.

## Our organisations – purpose and innovation

The roots of today's community and voluntary disability support are diverse.

<sup>5</sup> Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (2018) ADASS budget survey 2018. Accessed: [www.adass.org.uk/adass-budget-survey-2018](http://www.adass.org.uk/adass-budget-survey-2018)

<sup>6</sup> Social Care Future. Accessed: <https://socialcarefuture.blog/>

<sup>7</sup> Duffy, A (2019) More than a provider. Accessed: <https://socialcarefuture.blog/2018/07/30/more-than-a-provider/>

Some organisations were set up by families, other by philanthropists and some lie in the closure of long-stay hospitals. New organisations were developed to improve standards of care and increase people's independence by strengthening community connections.

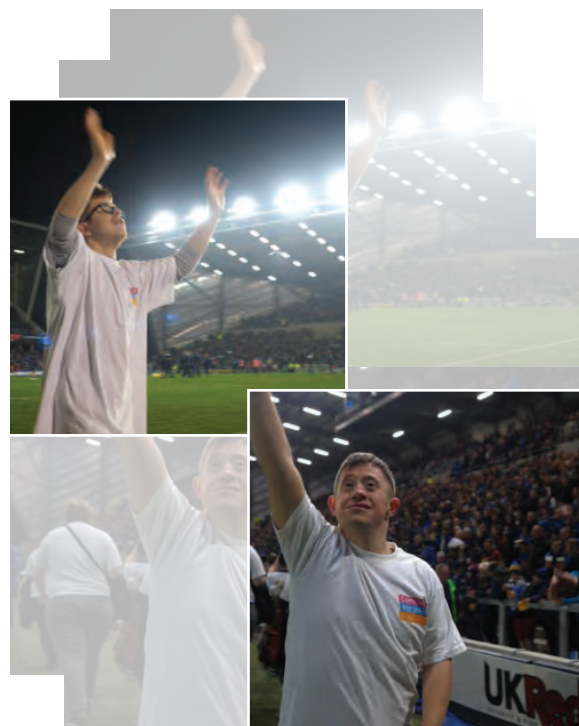
As part of a recent discussion facilitated by VODG for this report, Sarah Burslem, chief executive of MacIntyre, explained the significance of this history: "As a sector, we were set up to do something different and we recognised that statutory provision wasn't aspirational enough. Most charities exist for that additional benefit; it's in our DNA."



Sarah Maguire, chief executive of Choice Support, agreed: “Some of the things that distinguish us is our history and connections. There’s something about us starting connections and being embedded in the communities that we serve. There is a huge sense of social justice and the fact we started off by supporting people to have the lives they hadn’t had.” One example of Choice Support’s “more than a provider” approach is its Supported Loving campaign, which highlights good support in helping learning disabled people enjoy relationships<sup>8</sup>.

John Hughes, head of communications at Community Integrated Care, defined the voluntary sector as one that is not motivated by mere ‘contractual compliance’. “We are the connectors; we look further and aim higher to find opportunities that enable people to lead more fulfilling lives.” As an example, Community Integrated Care has partnered with the Super League, Europe’s elite rugby league competition, and the Rugby Football League to create a groundbreaking inclusive sports programme for people with learning disabilities and autism.

The Community Integrated Care Learning Disability Super League gives people with support needs the opportunity to play an adapted version of Rugby League, in a series of high-profile festivals and events. The initiative, which is supported by 12 major and emerging clubs, is the world’s first ever example of a professional sports league sharing its brand with a learning disability sports programme<sup>9</sup>.



Huw John, chief executive of Camphill Village Trust, added that voluntary sector organisations deliver a more holistic approach to care. He said: “It’s not just about keeping people safe but about connecting them to where they live and providing purpose”. One of CVT’s aims, for example, is to value what each individual brings to the communities in which they live”.

Not-for-profit organisations are also more willing to be more creative and innovative with people’s support. John Exton, business development manager at Future Directions community interest company, said: “Generally in our sector there’s more appetite in terms of positive risk-taking. So people come into our services perhaps from a hospital setting, and previously there’s been a great reluctance in terms of things the individual has been able to achieve. But with the right attitude and innovation, there’s no end to what they can do. As a sector we have more appetite in taking those risks and moving forward.” Future Directions core values include an aim to “support individuals to take positive risks where appropriate”.

<sup>8</sup> Choice Support, Supported Loving. Accessed: [www.choice-support.org.uk/about-us/how-we-support-you/supported-loving](http://www.choice-support.org.uk/about-us/how-we-support-you/supported-loving)

<sup>9</sup> Community Integrated Care, Learning disability super league announced. Accessed: [www.c-i-c.co.uk/learning-disability-super-league-announced](http://www.c-i-c.co.uk/learning-disability-super-league-announced)



## The stories in this report

Common themes that emerge in this report include how voluntary sector care providers consistently meet gaps in support, not least because austerity is undermining existing statutory provision. Organisations encourage community connections and forge strong, collaborative links with partners, tackling isolation and helping people achieve their aspirations. In doing so, care providers use the skills and talents of people supported in an asset-based approach that benefits not only the person they work with, but the wider community.

The story from Imagine, Act and Succeed shows how everyone has a skill, regardless of their support need. It proves how strong community partnerships enable support staff to use existing resources to help fulfill someone's goals. It also shows how it is possible to build connections between people usually separated by traditional divisions in the social care support system (older people and disabled people for example). Similarly, the work of Certitude shows how diverse people can be brought together through shared interests, tackling isolation and creating new and dynamic community connections.

The example described by Options for Supported Living reflects how an entire region can benefit from inclusive and accessible cultural and leisure activities created by local community and voluntary sector partners. MacIntyre's is a powerful description of how an asset-based approach helps meet an unfulfilled need and places the person at the centre of their own support.

The work described in this report challenges perceptions of people who need support and encourages inclusion. It also shows how the voluntary sector's initiative positively impacts on entire communities. The stories are illustrative of the much wider impacts that voluntary sector organisations bring to local communities every day.



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## IMAGINE, ACT AND SUCCEED

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Henry Crook, aged 75, worked on a farm in his youth. At Elmridge Court extra care scheme in Lowton, Wigan, where he now lives, his habit of waking early stemmed from his days of getting up at dawn to feed the animals. Henry often talked about how much he enjoyed looking after chickens and collecting their eggs.

Imagine, Act and Succeed (IAS) took over from Wigan Council as Henry's care provider in December 2017. When staff talked to him about his aspirations, he said he'd always wanted his own chicken coop. To find out if this was possible, IAS contacted the local Community Circles, which connects individuals to help them achieve their goals. Through Community Circles, Henry enjoyed a visit from local animal rescue organisation, Lucky Hens, and brushed up on his chicken rearing skills. IAS then enlisted the help of the local Men's Sheds association to install a small coop to house three to four hens. As Henry told his support staff recently, "you can't beat a warm egg in the palm of your hand!"

Ruth Gorman, IAS chief executive, says: "Henry had always been told that it would be too difficult to have chickens at Elmridge. But we recognised the impact that meeting his dream would have on him." Staff talked to Henry's housing provider reassuring them about health and safety issues and describing the potential positive effect on his wellbeing. Ruth adds of the practical implications: "As a provider, it's not about assuming you can do it all, it's about how you engage other organisations and make use of existing resources in the community. We provide opportunities that have nothing to do with commissioned services and that's thanks to our links with other local organisations."

There are other examples of this asset-based approach at Elmridge, which is home to 39 adults over 55, including those without support needs as well as those with dementia, learning disabilities or mental health needs.

The on-site shop, for example, is a direct response to a previously unmet need and is run by volunteers from elsewhere in Wigan who want retail experience. When IAS staff started supporting residents at Elmridge, they noted how several people with mobility problems would regularly take taxis to and from the supermarket for simple, everyday essentials.

Recognising the value of opening a shop at Elmridge, IAS successfully bid for funding from Wigan Council's community investment fund to convert an unused storage area into a retail space. The shop, which is open several times a week, is now run by seven people with learning disabilities who IAS supports in Wigan. The arrangement is part of IAS' Stepping Out service designed to link people in the community who have shared interests. The volunteers, who were recruited through an interview process, are responsible for everything from serving customers to stocking shelves and counting the daily takings.

The shop not only has a regular customer base, but it gives residents a reason to come out of their flats, develop friendships and interact with people who don't live at Elmridge, this is also a resource to the local community. The shop's success has led to a similar development at another extra care scheme, Wickham Hall. This, again supported by Wigan council funding, has created another four volunteer positions for people with learning disabilities.

IAS also runs a dog walking service for residents who aren't able to walk their own pets and may therefore be unable to keep them. Using IAS' Stepping Out service staff connected Elmridge pet owners with two learning disabled people who love animals. Now, all those involved in the dog walking project benefit from the arrangement. The volunteer walkers feel they are doing something worthwhile (as Ruth says, "there's something about having a sense of purpose and doing something for someone else"), while the owners are reassured they can continue having their pets live with them.

Creating such opportunities builds stronger communities, both at Elmridge and more widely across the local area says Ruth. She says: "There's no obligation to do this kind of work but it's driven by desire to do something different, and to have a 'can do' culture." The barriers, she says, "aren't necessarily time and money, but mindset and headspace". For example the housing provider had concerns about the risks involved in bringing chickens into the extra care scheme. The way to overcome such challenges, says Ruth, is having resolve and taking time to talk people through their concerns.

Meanwhile Henry's new hobby has made his fellow residents consider what it is they might like to do with their time. Other residents are now asking if it's possible to create a potting shed for those who are keen gardeners. "If you raise one person's aspirations," as Ruth says, "it has a knock on effect on other people."





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## OPTIONS FOR SUPPORTED LIVING

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A new inclusive and accessible festival in the north west of England has doubled its audience size within a year – from 2,000 people to 4,000. The event’s growth reflects the need for local social and leisure activities that encompass people of all abilities.

Despite progress in the festival sector, facilities and access remain difficult for people with disabilities. Toilet facilities may be inadequate, the terrain may be tricky to navigate in a wheelchair and there are rarely any sign language interpreters to ensure performances are enjoyed by everyone.

The One Wirral event, a partnership between three learning disability support organisations – Options for Supported Living, Wirral Mencap and Wirral Evolutions – launched in August 2017. The free festival in Birkenhead Park responds to the lack of inclusion and diversity at music and community events and is the first inclusive festival for the area. The first One Wirral attracted 2,000 people and the second event a year later drew a 4,000-strong crowd.

The three partners, which all support people with a range of disabilities, recognise that for One Wirral to be truly inclusive, the activities offered will give people with a disability an opportunity to contribute and to demonstrate their talents and skills. The event also raises awareness in the wider community of that largely untapped potential.

The festival, which is set to become an annual event, includes accessible facilities like toilets with hoist facilities, mobility scooters and sign language interpreters. All the activities are open to people with a range of abilities and include sports, Middle Eastern dance, art and crafts and drumming workshops. A range of stalls include those run by small local businesses and those selling world foods. The performance stage showcases local musical groups, with support from local sign language groups. Performances in 2017 and 2018 included non-profit signing group The Riversign Choir and local band The Beathovens, whose members are autistic and who have previously played at Glastonbury.

Feedback from attendees over the last two years has been positive and proved that the festival must remain an annual event. Comments from local families included the fact that One Wirral is “a great day out” and entertaining “especially for the kids”. People who came to One Wirral and who have a connection with someone with a disability have commented on their contribution to the day, in terms of how many people with disabilities contributed to the event and the amount of attendees.

One Wirral also provides opportunities for people receiving support to get involved and grow in confidence. For example, Jim Williams overcame his initial nerves and became more confident through speaking to large audiences at the festival. Jim’s role at the festival was greeting people arriving and handing out programs.

After the 2017 event, Jim said: “I was helping with fundraising events, going around doing tombolas, going around greeting people, shaking hands with people, looking at all the stalls, looking at all the events, going in the tent and

looking to see others doing dancing competitions and so on....I enjoy it.”

Meanwhile Andrew Kershaw, support worker at Options who helped organise the event, overcame his shyness by sharing his ideas during planning meetings. Andrew came up with some great suggestions around promoting healthy eating and raising awareness for healthier lifestyle choices.

Christine Bithell, health lead at Options for Supported living, recalls of last year’s festival: “On the day I was overwhelmed and felt a great sense of pride to be part of seeing what was achieved and how inclusive it was. What I remember the most is a member of the public coming over to me and highlighting how great it was to see the abilities of people we support.”

For the last two years, the three partner organisations behind One Wirral have won funding from The Big Lottery and also used crowd funding to cover the cost of the festival. The team is now applying for funding for the 2019 festival, which is estimated to cost £20,000.

From a practical perspective, planning for the August event starts in the October of the previous year. There are four lead areas: event and stakeholder liaison; planning and production, health and safety, volunteer and steward co-ordination and welfare and marketing and media. Staff in the four lead roles are funded by core costs from Options for Supported Living and Wirral Mencap. As the festival has grown, there is now also a part time administrator to manage the day-to-day bookings and administrative tasks. At last year’s festival, 64 volunteers from Options for Supported Living and Wirral Mencap were also on hand to ensure everything ran smoothly and this year, as the event has grown, the organisers are hoping for 100 volunteers of all abilities.

Plans have already started for One Wirral 2019, with the aim to encourage more partnerships with other local charities and local business owners to get involved. Following the feedback from One Wirral 2018, there is a plan for a greater focus on accessible sports for all and more food stalls offering international cuisine. The festival is also likely to move to a bigger location within the same park and offer more visual performances like dancers and accessible sports.

One Wirral proves how events can be made accessible to all with just a few small adjustments and a strong vision shared by organisations with a similar ethos. According to Chloe Harvey, chief executive of Wirral Mencap: “We want everyone to feel part of one community and to get involved if they want to – this includes the people with a learning disability that we support”.



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## CERTITUDE

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Of the 200 or so people who joined weekly arts workshops and social events as part of Certitude's recent year-long community cohesion drive, Connect and Do, around half were individuals not directly supported by the social care provider.

The progressive and inclusive programme drew interest from the local communities where the activities were offered, not just from people who traditionally use support services.

Connect and Do, which ran from November 2017 to March 2019 in the London boroughs of Hounslow, Bromley and Lambeth, involved a wide range of free events with a focus on wellbeing, personal development and promoting social interactions. Workshops were held in accessible spaces like community centres that were offered for free by Certitude's local partners. Sessions also took place at the organisation's own drop-in community hub at Railton Road in Brixton, Lambeth.

The majority of the events were led by disabled adults – including people with mental health needs – who were supported through Certitude's peer mentoring project and community development team. Activities throughout the week brought different people together around shared interests. This built positive new relationships through running groups, coffee mornings, knitting groups, yoga and mosaic making.

The aim was to help people feel more engaged with their community through offering free activities that enabled local residents to socialise and engage with others in their area. The bonus was that people were also encouraged to discover or revisit their passions or interests and, because all the events were free, price was not a deterrent.

Connect and Do was launched after an initial pilot funded by grant making network Open Society Foundation and run by Certitude in Lambeth. This demonstrated the huge impact on people's recovery, confidence and increased positive sense of self.

The pilot, which ran from November 2017 until October 2018, involved mentoring 10 adults with mental health support needs and learning disabilities to design and run community workshops and support them to become peer facilitators. Certitude has since secured funds from City Bridge Trust to work with 72 peer facilitators over the next three years to ensure develop the ethos of Connect and Do.

The pilot fundamentally changed how paid staff and the wider community viewed people with learning disabilities and/or mental health issues in these new empowered peer supporter roles.

Certitude also learnt that a large number of people who are isolated within their communities regularly attended both the pilot and the subsequent programme. However, they weren't formally using social care services and weren't deemed to be in need of them. Peer facilitators reported a significantly positive impact on their recovery and all 10 facilitators involved at the start of Connect and Do have remained with the programme.



Several of them have gone on to engage with other external community programmes and paid employment.

Connect and Do was delivered through a community connecting team consisting of a full time community development manager and two full time community development partners. The staffing and costs of materials were funded through a combination of charitable and local authority grants as well as matched funding from Certitude. The team supports members of the community who are socially isolated to connect with other local people around shared interests. This is done by building their confidence, using a flexible coaching approach that focuses on rediscovering and identifying people's qualities, interests and aspiration; and in the process, help people feel more connected with their community.

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, including one person who said: "I am so glad I came in as I have thoroughly enjoyed myself never had I done any creative work as this before." Another art workshop attendee added: "There was a great creative energy and was good to see people trying out things they never done before." A third participant said:

"The life drawing evening was a life changing experience for me and something I would certainly like to attend again... I think all participants enjoyed the evening and found it a safe and encouraging environment." Such comments came from people who had no previous connection to social care and who were not supported by Certitude.

Jeff Krouwel, an artist who volunteered his time as a peer facilitator at arts workshops, said: "Using my training as an artist and my experience of anxiety and depression to benefit others has been a pivotal experience for me... For the first time in I can't remember how long, the act of leaving the house has been a way to stop an anxiety attack."

Jack Hughes, theatre teacher community coordinator from the Brit School, one community partner involved in some of the workshops, said: "You have offered the most amazing experience to our students by working so collaboratively and I know it has been a life changing moment for so many of them."

Certitude staff believe that one area of key learning is that with the right models in place, the community is open and willing to engage with people traditionally separated by traditional social care models. More than this, they noted how people were prepared to bring resources, time and offer spaces to support the programme's development once they saw the impact for themselves.

Certitude chief executive Aisling Duffy describes Connect and Do as "a range of collaborative, creative ventures focused on building more inclusive communities that value the talents and experiences of everyone". She adds: "We believe people with learning disabilities and mental health needs should be able to play a more active role within their local communities rather than be viewed as the passive recipients of traditional services. Connect and Do's key message to people that use traditional social care services is 'You belong in your community, with your community and you have skills to share and something to offer'. This model allows for people from all walks of life to model behaviours to each other, break down perceived barriers and learn and develop together."

## MACINTYRE

Local authorities are facing unprecedented demand for services, accompanied by budget reductions and tightening eligibility criteria. As a result, social care providers are being asked to support more people for less money, with the risk that some people may lose their support and others may fall through the gaps.

In response, MacIntyre launched Great Communities in 2017. The pilot project in Warrington, Cheshire, is delivered in partnership with social enterprise Community Catalysts. It engages people who might miss out on support, along with local businesses, institutions, individuals and community organisations. MacIntyre has invested part of a recent charitable legacy in the project, funding a project manager. Great Communities targets learning disabled or autistic people aged 16 and over and aims to engage those not currently using support services.

The approach is designed in particular to identify people who may be overlooked for support, like those who have been offered help and need to contribute to the cost, but cannot. It is also relevant to people living independently but who need more help to manage, or those who live chaotic lifestyles and find it hard to engage (like people who have never been on their local authority's radar, and don't want to be).

The goal is to make Warrington a vibrant, inclusive and aspirational community for everyone. Great Communities encourages people to think differently about care and community, and to discover the skills and knowledge of people with learning disabilities. Co-production is at the heart of Great Communities. The initial step is for staff to speak to people about their lives and goals, finding out about the things they are good at. Then the project connects them with organisations or individuals who can help them reach their goals, including others in a similar situation.

Take Kelly, 23, who heard about Great Communities in 2018 through a local advocacy group. She met project workers who asked about her ambitions and how she hoped to achieve them. Kelly said she wanted friendships like other people her age. She said she'd love to meet up with friends at weekends and was keen to help others like her; those who are shy, lacking in confidence and anxious around new people or environments.



With a little support from Great Communities, Kelly started a fortnightly friendship club at a local café. Kelly designed a leaflet, to inform others about the group and invite them to join. She placed the leaflet in key community venues in Warrington including the Gateway, the Warrington Club and Fairfield Community Centre, and Kelly also shared the details at her local advocacy group. Three young women came along to the first meeting in May 2018 and, after time, everyone exchanged phone numbers. There are now 12 people who meet weekly. They applied for funding to rent a room and have some resources. It's become a catalyst for friendships but also aspirations, learning and enterprise. They have asked guest speakers to come and talk about issues that interest them like Internet safety and the town's new building development.

Rosie says: "I feel that I have been supported to get out of the house and socialise with people like me through going to the friendship group. I now also feel able to talk about my journey through social care and living on my own. My confidence is growing a lot."

Other developments in Great Communities include a cooking and nutrition programme created in

response to someone who wanted to become more independent. This led to the project working in partnership with community interest leisure company Livewire Warrington, to design an eight week long course to help people with meal planning and nutrition.

Examples of support in Great Communities include volunteering opportunities with the fire service, St Rocco's hospice and Creating Adventures art group. There is also support for people to get paid employment such as selling programmes at the local rugby club or completing online application and introducing people to potential employers. Cheshire's Museum of Policing also held its first ever autism-friendly tour under the Great Communities project. People who might only have been seen for their deficits demonstrated their talents by advising the museum and therefore contributing to their community.

Ciaran, a 24-year-old film buff, launched an autism-friendly film club in Warrington as part of Great Communities. The club launched in January 2019 with a group of 15 filmgoers and the fantasy adventure the Golden Compass. Ciaran says: "I thought it was a success as we had a great turnout and I'm glad the people really enjoyed themselves."

For Peter Connor, who manages the Great Communities project, the film club has a wider benefit: "It was great to see people of all ages in the community coming to watch a film in a welcoming local facility. It was also fantastic to see Ciaran take the lead on the project and use his passion, drive and ideas to organise and host the event as it can be daunting standing in front of a group, but Ciaran was a natural. It's also great to see him develop his skills as he has learnt to set up the audio visual equipment."

There is a common thread running through all the diverse events taking place under Great Communities, says Sarah Burslem, MacIntyre chief executive: "Each of these activities has started with people being given a space to articulate their aspirations and then help to connect with others to make things happen."

As for what the organisation is learning as a result of this work, Sarah says: "We're learning to see people's strengths as well as the challenges they face. We're learning a lot about the gaps in social and health care and how treacherous they can be for people and families who fall into them. We are also learning how to 'lead from behind'...and that might be the hardest, but potentially most rewarding lesson of all."



## CONCLUSION

Voluntary sector organisations that support disabled and older people have an irreplaceable, singular role in individuals' lives and communities, as the stories in this report prove.

### Key impacts

This report shows the innovation and value of voluntary sector providers of social care. The benefits include:

- engaging local partners and harness the potential of existing community resources
- helping people meet their aspirations and live the lives they want
- reducing social isolation and promote inclusion
- creating wider social and community impact by supporting the needs of individuals
- changing attitudes and perceptions towards disability.

The social impact of voluntary sector providers of social care needs to be more widely acknowledged, with local authority commissioners recognising and encouraging the kind of community development initiatives outlined in Above and Beyond.

Traditional commissioning and procurement that adheres to a narrow focus on contractual obligations and system-focused care risks overlooking the huge potential gains to people and local areas. Instead, person-centred, asset-based approaches should carry far more value.

The creative approaches to care and support outlined in this report deserve to be more widely replicated if we are to encourage the potential of people supported.

The approaches shared by organisations that go 'above and beyond' include:

- Approaches grounded in local community engagement
- Values driven with a commitment to co-production and creativity
- Seeking to support people to get on with their lives, to be independent
- Funded through an eclectic range of mechanisms including charitable sources, donors, investors, the organisations own resources and lots of good will!

*This is an edited extract from an article by Aisling Duffy for Social Care Future<sup>10</sup>*

Organisations aiming for asset-based approaches should:

**Create a partnership of equals** – working in genuine partnership with people and families is at the core of great support. Too often adult social care has focussed on the needs of the person, sometimes to the exclusion of anyone else in their life.

**Focus on outcomes not tasks** – providers are still too often contracted to deliver tasks and hours not outcomes and happy, healthy lives.

**Develop community connecting** – from street parties to community choirs, providers can support grass roots community development. Providing great support to people means strengthening the communities people are part of – not replacing them.

**Explore systems leadership** – providers support people at the receiving end of our health and social care system – who know first-hand what works and what doesn't. This experience and knowledge is too often lost.

**Develop collaborative methods** – In times of austerity, the tendency can be to batten down the hatches and cut back on partnering. But effective alliances can lead to more innovative solutions, shared risk taking and better outcomes for people supported and colleagues.

*This is an edited extract from an article by Aisling Duffy for Social Care Future<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> Duffy, A (2019) More than a provider – part 2. Accessed: [www.socialcarefuture.blog/2019/02/02/more-than-a-provider-part-2/](http://www.socialcarefuture.blog/2019/02/02/more-than-a-provider-part-2/)

<sup>11</sup> Duffy, A (2018) More than a provider. Accessed: <https://socialcarefuture.blog/2018/07/30/more-than-a-provider/>



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