

Appendix A – Volunteer Case Studies

Chilgrove House

Resident A is in their early sixties and has multiple chronic health conditions. Through knowing the Community Engagement Officer in their previous council role as housing officer, resident A came into the hub in its very early stages to see the refurbishment. Whilst there, they noticed that a donated tea set had been in storage and was very dirty. They rolled up their sleeves and spent a couple of hours washing and drying and organising the kitchen cupboard. They thanked the officers for letting them help and said it was “lovely to feel useful”. They returned the next day and took the donated school uniforms, ironing them and bringing them back looking crisp and new as they wanted to ensure nobody received anything that did not look its best. They have volunteered every day since and have been instrumental in setting up the centre, planning the opening event and everyday organisation of the centre including the bingo, registration and raffle prize collections.

Supported by the Community Engagement Officer, resident A achieved their level two food hygiene qualification, the first qualification they have ever had of which boosted their self confidence and self-esteem.

Resident A participates in the exercise classes at the centre, has joined the local gym for swimming sessions and has lost 31lbs. They have reduced their smoking from 20 a day to 6 a day. They now try to eat a healthy diet and encourages other people to do the same. Before the centre opened resident A did not get dressed, remained in their nightwear all day everyday (unless attending an appointment that required dressing). They did not do any form of exercise, ate junk food everyday and had little self-worth.

The transformation for resident A has been inspiring for the Community Engagement Team: now open, confident, motivational and always helpful, Resident A is behind everything the project aims to achieve and does their absolute best to make sure it is successful. Resident A disclosed that they had always been told that they were useless including their teacher telling them they were stupid and has never been given credit for anything. The project team regularly tell Resident A how valuable their help and support is to the centre and the community: slowly beginning to believe in themselves.

Resident A is pivotal to the successful running of the community centre; they are an ambassador for the project and they have been invited to speak at the Active Sussex conference in September.

Bersted Green Hub

Resident B is in their early sixties and has lived at Bersted Green Court for 5 years. They retired early due to a breakdown and has largely kept their own company. Resident B did not come to the opening of the Hub in April but regularly sat in the park opposite by themselves. One morning the Community Engagement Officer asked them if they would like a cup of tea to which they said yes and then started to come into the centre a couple of times a week. One particularly busy day they jumped in with the Community Engagement Officer making the teas and coffees and helped move tables and chairs for the New Age Curling and put it all back together at the end of the day.

Resident B started to help on regular occasions so the officers asked him if he would like to make it official and sign up as a volunteer. They were pleased to be asked and now comes in every day. They keep an eye on the building at weekends and is happy to look after residents using the centre with drinks and biscuits if the Community Engagement Officer is in a meeting or otherwise engaged. The regular visitors to the Hub acknowledge Resident B's position and are happy to have them about: visitors ask after Resident B when they are not in and say they look forward to them blue tooting their phone to the boom box to play country and western music as they liven the place up. Resident B has been reliable and solid volunteer involved in the hub and their support and commitment is both appreciated and valued by the officers and residents alike.

Resident B feels that their volunteering at the hub gives them a sense of purpose and responsibility without the stress of pressure of paid work. They volunteer because they like it and realises that they are relied on by some of the frailer residents which has given them their self-confidence back after their breakdown. Resident B has proved themselves to be a great organiser and recognises this strength which they are happy to share for the benefit of others.