

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE ON 24 JANUARY 2022

### REPORT

**SUBJECT: Arun Covid Community Champions Project Update**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Julie Hoggatt, Coordinator Community Champions Project

**DATE:** 23 November 2021

**EXTN:** 37515

**AREA:** Community Safety

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report is an information paper to provide an update on the progress of the Covid Community Champions project. It seeks to provide an overview of how the service has performed since its inception and sets out key performance data and outcomes.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This is an information report.

#### **1. BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1. The Arun Covid Community Champions project is funded by The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), formerly the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Arun District Council was successful in its funding application in January 2021 and was awarded a grant for the project in February 2021.
- 1.2. The target audience for the project includes those that don't have English as a first language (including economic migrants), those in 'settled' communities, those in underserved communities, those who are disabled, digitally and/or financially excluded and those that don't wish to be reached.
- 1.3. The team consists of a staff Coordinator, two Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) delivery partners, the Community Champion volunteers, and organisational Community Champions located in the Council's Environmental Health and Wellbeing teams.
- 1.4. The two core VCS delivery partners are: Age UK (West Sussex, Brighton & Hove), Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice (CA) – utilising their existing social prescribers, members, and volunteers plus newly recruited Community Champions.

- 1.5. Local partnerships were also engaged, including those already in place with statutory health partners including: Public Health England, West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, Sussex Health and Care Partnership, local Primary Care Networks, and the NHS Vaccine Champions Project.
- 1.6. HM Government partners include the Accessibility, Equity & Inclusion Policy Team and the Communities and Local Services Team - UK Health Security Agency, NHS Track and Trace, and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.
- 1.7. The Covid Community Champion team also regularly liaise with our District, Borough and County colleagues and internal departments and work with community and voluntary sector services and providers to increase their capacity and outreach with these 'hard to reach' communities in Arun.

## **2. Purpose:**

- 2.1. The purpose of the project is to:
  - a. Develop relationships and build trust across Arun residents and communities to enable us to communicate accurate COVID-19 information and guidance in accessible and appropriate formats
  - b. Support those most at risk from COVID-19, encourage safer behaviours and promote vaccine take up
  - c. Increase communities' access to information about Council and local support services; information about Government support mechanisms; and information about public health services and primary care.
- 2.2. To achieve this, the project delivery partners, volunteers and coordinator:
  - 2.2.1. Identify target communities, groups, and individuals.
  - 2.2.2. Engage with our audience via the Community Champions volunteers, organisational volunteers, social prescribers, delivery partner memberships and service delivery partners.
  - 2.2.3. Prepare, produce, and share COVID-19 and support information in the most appropriate format to include digital, video, website and hardcopy translations, infographics for those with poor literacy skills and British Sign Language (BSL).
  - 2.2.4. Ensure resources and support information is available for district wide partner organisations.
  - 2.2.5. Share local insight with the Arun Vaccination Uptake Group led by Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Team.
  - 2.2.6. Respond to requests for information and support from residents and service providers.
  - 2.2.7. Signpost residents to service providers that have live interpreter resources.

- 2.2.8. Refer those with vaccine hesitancy to the NHS Vaccine Champions project.
- 2.2.9. Distribute specially designed user-friendly information to venues frequented by younger people including sports bars, pubs, and clubs.
- 2.2.10. Ensure information for local walk-in vaccination clinics, free transport etc is widely published and translated where required.
- 2.2.11. Hold community-based events in partnership with local GP surgery to enable on the ground 1-2-1 engagement around COVID-19 and primary care.

### **3. Performance**

- 3.1. A snapshot of data to date is illustrated below with narrative of highlights, key achievements and findings of the project to date.
- 3.2. A small sample survey carried out by Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester (VAAC) found:
  - a. 50% felt well informed about the government's regulations for socialising during lockdown.
  - b. 61% felt informed about how to avoid catching or spreading COVID-19
  - c. 45% knew clearly when they should get tested for COVID-19 and knew where to get tested
  - d. 31% strongly felt that they did not know where they could get financial assistance during COVID-19
  - e. 63% would have the vaccine.
- 3.3. It should be noted we also found the sources for the received information for COVID-19 may not have been relevant to England i.e. information was received from family and friends residing in their home nations. This has guided the statutory partners communications and underlined the need for secondary questioning/research with individuals and groups.
- 3.4. We recruited 13 Community Champions from a range of local communities including one Russian speaking resident. She heard about the project and came in person to volunteer and took away guidance, information, and support material to share where needed within her community. We were also able to supply her with Russian translations.
- 3.5. Some volunteers have links to people residing on park home sites, which are normally difficult to access; this ensured engagement and sharing of COVID-19 information, guidance, and translations with this relatively inaccessible community. We estimate the reach to be approximately 750 + individuals on these sites including those that are digitally/socially excluded and include Polish, Thai, Romanian nationals, and those with refugee status.
- 3.6. COVID-19 information was provided in multiple languages, including Latvian, Russian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian, to support over 2000 migrant workers across the horticulture and food processing sector to work and live safely. The sector was also supported through a major outbreak, to set up on-site testing centres and encourage uptake of the vaccine through

the Council's Environmental Health (EH) team.

- 3.7. Increase in testing across Arun was achieved via setting up local testing sites and the EH team working directly with businesses. Among multinational employers locally, the project team supported a resort to prepare for the summer season with lateral flow testing for all staff. The resort has up to 850 staff, caters for over 385,000 visitors per year with 300,000 being resident and 85,000 visiting for the day.

#### **4. Project Highlights**

- 4.1. Members of the community representing minority groups, on hearing about the project, asked to become Champions for their community. We were able to provide key COVID-19 information, support, and guidance in Russian to one such 'walk-in' resident to take away with her to share with local friends and family.
- 4.2. Working with the Council's Rough Sleeper Coordinator and local homelessness charities we partnered with the local NHS Vaccine Champions project. Despite the formidable support for the street community throughout the pandemic there were still several service users who had vaccine hesitancy. This highlighted the importance of partnership working and engaging with individuals on their level and at their pace.
- 4.3. We produced Support Service Contact Information around various themes including the West Sussex County Council Community Hub details, debt, domestic abuse, housing, and NHS in six key languages spoken - available as a hardcopy or digital format. All services listed have a live telephone interpreting service.
- 4.4. There were some anomalies when national guidance was introduced for the hair and beauty sector coming out of 'lockdown'. Mask wearing, social distancing and queuing systems were not in place in several the European owned barbers. We visited these establishments explaining the guidance. Advice was taken on board and behavioural change was highlighted by the cessation of reports from the public and business wardens.
- 4.5. Via detailed feedback from Age UK's members and Champions, we were able to provide information for vaccine hesitancy driven by the effect it may have on fertility. This insight was addressed by the Sussex NHS Commissioners Public Involvement Team and led them to shape the themes of their myth busting public communications.
- 4.6. The Coordinator was invited to present a case study of the project to other Community Champions projects and local authority officers across the country at a webinar organised by the NHS Test and Trace Programme.
- 4.7. During the Euro 2020 soccer tournament a group of residents on a park home site watched matches together. This led to several cases of COVID-19; knowing of the Community Champion volunteer, and wishing to stop the spread, residents approached him for information and consequently he was able to work with our delivery partner and provide testing kits, guidance, and signpost to appropriate services.

- 4.8. Migrant workers, and others reported difficulties in registering with a GP. Lack of ID or proof of address should not be a barrier to registration. We have therefore recently been promoting the Safe Surgery Initiative to GPs; Safe Surgeries recognise the barriers to healthcare access that exist, particularly for migrants and those in vulnerable circumstances and work to ensure that nobody in their community is excluded.
- 4.9. The Coordinator was invited to present at a cross Whitehall Interdepartmental Working Group meeting hosted by the Accessibility, Equality and Inclusion Team, UK Health Security Agency. Again, this was an opportunity to showcase our project and led to interesting conversation around the reality of residents being able to access the Test and Trace Support Payment and economic migrants and others being able to register with a GP at such a critical time. It also enabled us to share information about the Safe Surgery initiative and support wider learning.
- 4.10. Recent work includes sharing information about the vaccination booster programme as it rolls out, highlighting the high number of current cases of COVID-19 in Arun and new government guidance for individuals around increased self-testing before attending crowded areas or indoor visits.
- 4.11. In partnership with the Welcome Back Fund, designed to help areas build, back better safely after the pandemic, and in response to the increasing number of positive cases recorded in Arun as we approach the festive season, we are distributing cotton tote bags bearing the Hands, Face, Space messaging to shoppers across our town centres. It's felt this different way of sharing guidance will have more impact.

## **5. Future:**

- 5.1. As the pandemic evolves the Community Champions Project will continue to target communities with lower vaccine and booster uptake with information and support signposting. It will ensure, with partners, that residents across the district are aware of government advice and guidance updates around the current increase in COVID-19 cases.
- 5.2. The Community Champions project will in late December filter into the Arun Community Engagement Project, designed to help our local communities recover from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, thereby providing a sustainable outcome for the project. This will ensure that the Community Champions Network will continue to be supported and can be re-mobilised at a future date if required.
- 5.3. The Arun Community Engagement Project is dedicated to continuing the work of the Champions and developing and supporting a new community engagement approach to recovery that emphasises the participation and the voice of our local communities to improve health, wellbeing and increase resilience to harms such as exploitation.

## **2. PROPOSAL(S):**

None

<b>3. OPTIONS:</b>		
None		
<b>4. CONSULTATION:</b>		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Relevant Town/Parish Council	✓	
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify)		✓
<b>5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)</b>		
Financial		✓
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓
<b>6. IMPLICATIONS:</b>		
None		
<b>7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:</b>		
This is an information only paper and there is no decision required.		
<b>8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b>		
None		