



Mid-Notts Community Champions - Extending the Reach



Evaluation Report 2022

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) set up the Community Champions scheme during the pandemic to support communities at greater risk of COVID-19, including disabled people, BAME communities, the elderly, faith groups and hard to reach communities. Over £23 million funding was allocated to sixty councils and voluntary groups across England to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take up. Community Champions are active community members who draw on their local knowledge, skills, and life experience to promote health and wellbeing or improve conditions in their local community. They address barriers to engagement and improve connections between services and disadvantaged communities.

In January 2021, Mansfield was confirmed as part of this funding allocation. Mansfield District Council (MDC) opted to deliver the programme via a network of 'recognised and trusted voices' through a partnership with Mansfield CVS (MCVS), business leaders and influencers. The Community Champions project initiated early discussions and communications with communities to understand appropriate ways to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 including social isolation support, Test & Trace, social distancing, rumour dismantling and importantly vaccine take up and transportation. This support broadened into wider health and wellbeing advice and support for communities.

The Mansfield Community Champions work continued through into 2022, with its established and valued network supporting expanded health and social care priorities in the locality – this work is evaluated in the [Mansfield Community Champions Learning Report](#) which was presented to a Learning and Legacy event for stakeholders in late April 2022.

Further to the acknowledged success of the activity in Mansfield, the Mid Notts Locality Team at Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG commissioned an expansion across the Mid Nottinghamshire (Mid Notts) health footprint to enhance and embed vaccination take up and promote wider health and wellbeing messages. MCVS was asked to facilitate the sharing of its expertise and to work with Ashfield Voluntary Action and Newark & Sherwood CVS to instigate Community Champions activities over a very focused period covering January – March 2022.

METHODOLOGY

As evaluators of the Mansfield Community Champions Learning Report, we were asked to reflect on the extension of the Community Champions model into the wider Mid Notts districts. In this instance, both Ashfield Voluntary Action and Newark & Sherwood CVS wished to focus on delivery as opposed to supporting a wholesale formal evaluation and this report is therefore structured on that basis. Our evaluation methodology consists of:-

- reviewing the core MCVS project management process
- reviewing peer support processes
- reviewing reporting from Ashfield Voluntary Action and Newark & Sherwood CVS
- interviewing Ashfield Voluntary Action and Newark & Sherwood CVS project leads to identify main learning and legacy points
- interviewing CCG leads to establish how the findings of this work can inform future strategy.

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2. Funding and Key Performance Indicators

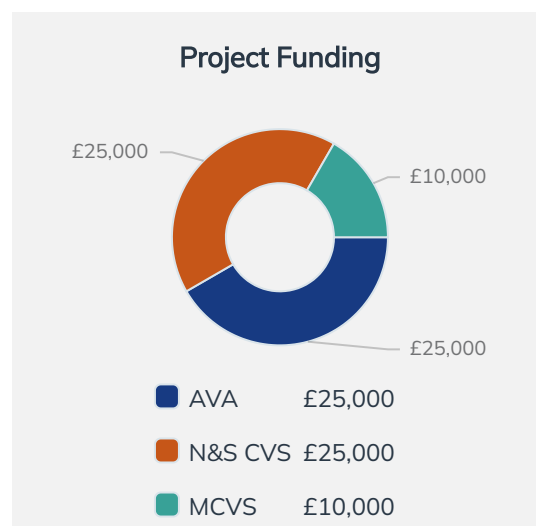
PROJECT FUNDING

Project funding totalled £60,000, with outline delivery plans covering the periods Jan - Mar 2022. Funding was allocated as detailed below:-

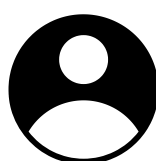
- Ashfield Voluntary Action - £25,000.
- Newark & Sherwood CVS - £25,000.

The above budget included a contribution to staffing costs of £10,000 and delivery costs covering Community Anchor support, Community Transport and Communications of £15,000.

Mansfield CVS - £10,000 covering contribution to community worker costs, financial management, reporting, peer support and evaluation.



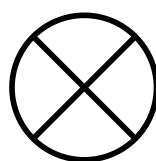
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Recruitment of additional Community Champions, building a network across Mid



Delivery of Health and Wellbeing Pop Ups in geographical areas of focus.



Both targeted and opportunistic health promotion activity/interventions, including working with general practice, community pharmacies, dental services and high street optometrists to improve accessibility.



Provision of an evaluation report, any case studies and budgetary info for the period Jan-March 2022.



Attendance at the Mid Notts Health Inequalities Oversight Group/COVID-19 Vaccination Task and Finish Group, and support delivery of action plans/targeted activity.

3. Key Learning from Mansfield

As part of the confirmation process to secure this additional investment across the Mid Notts footprint, MCVS were asked to reflect on their learning from the Community Champions approach:-

- **Initial development of the Network** – MCVS and MDC worked together to develop a network of individuals who are embedded in their community and able to support the dissemination of COVID-19 related communications. The network included Geographical community groups, those who support BAME communities and people living with disabilities/LTHCs, businesses, elected members and social media influencers. At its peak, there were more than 80 individuals/organisations registered on the Mansfield Community Champions Network.
- **Partnership Working** – Strong partnership working was key to the success of the programme - working with Local Authority and NHS partners to ensure that consistent messages were shared and duplication avoided. This included working alongside health colleagues to shape and promote local vaccine opportunities such as the mobile vaccine bus and health and wellbeing pop ups.
- **Community Transport** – A proportion of the Mansfield Community Champions budget was set aside to support community transport. Initially residents were supported to attend vaccine appointments and this was latterly extended to include flu vaccinations and other relevant health & wellbeing appointments where transport costs were a barrier.
- **Community Anchor Funding** – In Spring 2021, the Mansfield programme funded 4 geographical Community Anchor organisations and 2 issue based Anchor Groups to ensure they could bring staff out of furlough and stabilise their organisations. This meant that they could reopen services safely and play an active role in the Community Champions programme.



Mansfield Community Champions Learning & Legacy - read the full report [here](#).

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4. Key Informing Factors

MCVS team members provided the following insights into how best Ashfield Voluntary Action and Newark and Sherwood CVS based colleagues could 'hit the ground running':-

- **Network Membership** – look at how existing networks can be expanded and utilised to support the dissemination of COVID-19/Health & Wellbeing messages across the district, existing VCS organisations, community groups and PPGs. Reach and effectiveness as a 'trusted voice' is key.
- **Network Meetings** – Mansfield Community Champions meetings were held bi-weekly as the national Government progressed its 'Road Map', moving English residents out of lockdown and rolling out the vaccine programme across the age groups. As services reopened and members went back to their 'day job', network attendance fell and the meetings moved to monthly. Urgent communications were sent out for dissemination as and when required. The issue of time constraints was also highlighted and the possibility of 'piggybacking' onto the agenda of existing network meetings.

- **Strong Links** - with District Council Health & Wellbeing and Communications teams is key along with CCG colleagues. This is essential to ensure consistent messaging is shared and issues fed back from the community in a timely manner. Continued involvement in the vaccination bus scheduling/promotion and representation at the associated Inequalities meetings was also seen to be essential.
- **Transport Referrers** – Transport costs can be met through delivery budgets with the decision making re the eligibility shared with the VCS organisation and other trusted community partners within the network including front-line staff such as Social Prescribing Link Workers/Age UK Connect staff.
- **Community Anchors/Volunteers** – as this extension was on a much smaller scale and tight timeframe, a VCS small grants model was suggested, with funds devolved and managed via a simple Service Level Agreement.

In addition, the key learning points from the Mansfield Community Champions evaluation were shared in a Presentation format – please see below for a summary. The full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

Insights have been grouped into 8 key areas...



Strategic
Influencing



Central Hub



Making
Funding Go
Further



Information
Sharing



Training &
Development



Anchor
Organisations



Communications



Other Barriers

5. Activities and Reflections

In addition to analysis of reports and attendance at project monitoring meetings, interviews were carried out with staff from the three voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations along with an interview with the Leads in the Mid Notts Locality Team, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG. The key activities are summarised below.

Ashfield Voluntary Action

- **Support for the homeless/rough sleepers** - worked through a church-based organisation, Sutton Christian Fellowship. This included providing £5000 funding which contributed towards installing a showering facility and a laundry room, which in turn assists with wider health and wellbeing. In addition to providing hot meals, Sutton Christian Fellowship provide a food bank and wider support including registering with a GP. Community Champions funding also supported the delivery of Health and Wellbeing Pop Up sessions and a vaccination/sanctuary outreach at their centre.
- **Optometry Access** - picking up on experience from a previous Ashfield-based organisation that provided eye tests and spectacles for people who are homeless and asylum seekers, each infrastructure organisation has ringfenced £1000 of funding to pilot a new service. Working through the Notts Local Optical Committee, three optometry 'Community Champion' practices have been identified who will provide eye tests, glasses and test for diabetic retinopathy. This also includes allocated funding to transport people to appointments and build on the community transport model developed by MCVS.

- **St. John's Community Outreach, Kirkby Woodhouse** – trialled a 'Living with Loss' support group, focused on helping people who experienced loss through COVID-19. A small amount of funding was used 'pump-prime' the course in this ex-mining community in response to community insight. St Johns were originally concerned re getting involved in health related activity but following discussions at their Steering group, they are now planning to survey local residents on access to health and social care services.
- **Health and Wellbeing Pop Ups** – as above with plans to trial more in the District.
- **Communications** – developed a Community Champions briefing document; Vaccine Hesitancy event brief.
- **Data/Information sharing** – this funding has provided the opportunity for AVA to strengthen its own data/information sharing practice by investing in a CRM system, with a focus being the effective sharing of current information with health partners such as Social Prescribing Link Workers.

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Newark and Sherwood CVS

The approach in Newark and Sherwood focused on supporting local community groups and organisations to open in a 'COVID-safe' way through grants ranging from £50 - £600. This was managed via a straightforward application process and included getting centres open, transport provision and communications. Groups and individuals were asked to become Community Champions and this resulted in the recruitment of an additional 35 commitments and support to 100s of local people enabling them to re connect with their communities.

Support included:-

- Bilsthorpe Emergency Team – to provide personal care packs.
- Children's Bereavement Centre Funded to re-establish free monthly drop-in peer support for 6-12- year-olds.
- Blidworth on the Move is the community hub for the villages of Blidworth, Rainworth and Ravenshead and outlying hamlets - funding was used to support a professional advisor to help upskill individuals who have a fear of using the internet, including accessing NHS services.
- Supported the vaccination of over 20 people in Blidworth via the Medivan through working with the local Community Champion.
- Lifespring Centre is a major community hub in Ollerton with access to many groups and individuals – funded via a grant to support four specific groups who were recruited as Community Champions – Friendship Club, Memory Café, Friday Night Bingo and the re development of Autism Unlimited.
- Ollerton Bowls club, St Paulinus, Age Concern and Ollerton Wood Turners all received grants to assist with for example rent, transport, equipment, volunteer costs.
- Thursday Night Club – this young people's club was funded to specifically channel health messages and information to vulnerable young people including practical support with first aid and defibrillator training. This assisted with greater independence and supports better health, well-being and confidence.
- A Health and Wellbeing Pop Up took place in Ollerton which included defibrillator training, BP check-ups, local radio interviews and increased contacts/partnership working, including with Insight regarding Mental Health support.
- Two Syrian families were supported to access local services.
- Individual supported to attend Men-In-Sheds sessions.
- Individual support for community transport to access radiology appointments.
- Communications – cascaded information on mental health and suicide training; circulated information on vaccine FAQs and vaccination centres, with a specific focus on those groups that had yet to be vaccinated; supported and promoted the vaccination bus.

To Bilsthorpe Emergency Team (BET) who received a grant from us:

'Hi, thank you ever so much for the care package you gave us. We are extremely grateful for it; with us having Covid, Alex only gets paid for one day's pay this week. It has really helped us. The contents are brilliant everything we need and will definitely use. Sorry for only just sending this. I have been very emotional today because of your generosity. Thank you again. Xxx'

From a young person who received support for BET

'I am very glad of the donations. They help ever so much- now I don't have to resort to sacrificing non-essential food products, during those tough weeks, for house essentials such as cleaning products. Once again thank you very much a very great full 16 years old young person.'

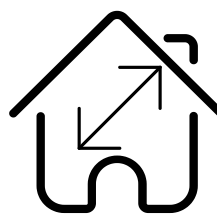
Mansfield CVS

- Continuation of Mansfield Community Champion network
- Attendance at MNHIOG and COVID19 Vaccination Task & Finish Group Meetings
- Lead on Mid Notts KPI's agreement and project sign off with all partners
- Fed into Mansfield Priority Vaccination Meeting with the CCG, Mansfield District Council and Notts County Council to review activity, discuss support for upcoming sanctuaries/vaccine van outreach and to share intelligence with the planning teams.
- Facilitated two Health & Wellbeing Pop Ups on the Bellamy Estate using Community Champions that focused on vaccinations, community testing, Rosewood PCN GP sign-up support, people supported to access emergency dental appointments, BP checks, AGE UK Connect referrals, information shared regarding IAPT services, Children's Centre Services, employment support and Food Club provision.
- Communications - 2000 multilingual flyers were delivered in priority wards to promote vaccination; flyers also delivered by Community Champions ahead of the mobile vaccine service at Mansfield Town FC; social media posts re the roving team and the vax van service in Mansfield.
- Met with Hetty's to understand the link between the pandemic and the rise in alcohol addiction and consequent increase in service requests. Grant of £1200 provided to support external room hire costs and on-going PPE expenses to facilitate face to face services in a larger venue due to this increased demand.
- Continued to work with Rosewood Primary Care Network to support SMD patients to access services through the provision of transport.

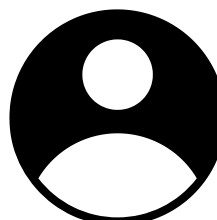
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All three voluntary and community sector organisations were asked to reflect on this focused project and their views are summarised below:-

- One of the strengths of the voluntary and community sector is its **flexibility and ability to work at pace** - by the time the contract was sorted, this left only 8 weeks to deliver which has meant that activities have been planned and delivered very quickly.
- This funding has provided the opportunity to work closely with grassroots community sector groups to understand barriers and what will help local areas – **a genuine two-way conversation**.
- The Community Champions model has helped to vaccine hesitant people **make informed choices**, providing the right amount of information.
- This funding has **strengthened relationships with the community and enabled true partnership working**.



**6 additional
Health and
Wellbeing
Pop Ups**



**40+ additional
Community
Champions
recruited.**

Commissioner View

The views of the Leads in the Mid Notts Locality Team, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG were sought, particularly to establish the 'strategic fit' of the Community Champion model in future plans. Comments received included reflecting both on the original Mansfield Community Champions model as well as the extension of its good practice into Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood. The key points are summarised below:-



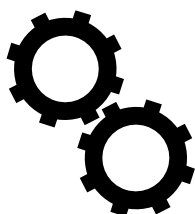
Partnership Working

- Everything was about COVID – needed to understand very quickly roles and activities across a diverse set of representatives. This often resulted in frustrations in meetings, particularly when dealing with guidance and regulations, with a lot of expectation of and challenge to the CCG. In many instances, partners potentially did not realise that policy and rules were being devised at a national level and what the CCG could or could not do locally.
- Local areas were enabled to find their own Community Champions solutions through this extension.



Anchor Organisations

- For the Mansfield Community Champions model, it was clear that trusted relationships were already established between the anchor organisations, Mansfield CVS and Mansfield District Council. The CCG therefore supported that position.



Delivery Model and Representation

- The Community Champions model has identified a number of themes – access to GPs, resources, sharing insight. However, care is needed that this model covers all population groups e.g. young people, BAME groups.
- Delivery is dependent on a small number of experienced people within the three voluntary and community sector organisations.



Communications

- A key focus of the Mid Notts Community Champions work has been to raise awareness of general health and wellbeing, not COVID specific.
- It has been helpful to use this project as a way of trying to share messages on how primary care works.

6. Learning Points and Recommendations

The success of the Mansfield Community Champions model is reported in the [Mansfield Community Champions Learning Report](#). A number of those insights have translated directly into this very focused 3 month extension:-

- Strategic Influencing
- Making Funding Go Further
- Information Sharing
- Training and Development
- Communications
- Addressing Other Barriers

In addition, as highlighted, whilst one of the strengths of the voluntary and community sector is its flexibility and ability to work at pace, the success of the model in all three localities surely merits longer term funding. This would enable grassroots community sector work to contribute to improving health and wellbeing and ultimately generate resource savings 'upstream'. The Community Champions model has been praised for its scope to have a genuine two-way conversation and to help people **make informed choices**.

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Future funding should be prioritised to support this work:-

- The Public Health COVID-19 Response Service in Nottinghamshire has Contain Outbreak Management funding for 2022-23, with initial plans to put a network of coordinators in place - there may be scope to work with the leads in this area to demonstrate the success of the Community Champion model and to roll it out across the county.
- The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG are supportive of greater collaboration across the CVS Alliance and alignment in the context of Place-based Partnerships. This should be reflected in the CVS Alliance Patient and Public Contract and hopefully can attract additional funding into the sector from other funding sources.
- All opportunities to highlight the success of the Community Champions model should be taken. This should include linkages with funding sources such as Public Health and the Shared Prosperity Fund. To maximise collaboration, agendas should be shaped at a District level, with priorities explored as a matter of urgency over the next 2 months.

Forward Priorities



Further partnership delivery building on shared learning.



Enhancing the collaboration with the CVS Alliance.



Future investment planning.



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