

2020-2021

EVALUATION REPORT:

Bearwood Community Hub

Bearwood Community Hub CIC

THANK YOU...

to our Board of Directors, partners, funders, donors, volunteers, consultants & all of our supporters.

Partners:



GRAND
UNION



MOTHERSHIP



Funders:



Board of Directors:

- Jo Capper
- Fatma Keskin
- Éadaoin Ilten
- Julie McKirdy MBE
- Amy Martin

Staff:

- Sally Taylor (Director)
- Renata Salazar Lasocki (Community Engagement Lead)

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS:

As well as the specific projects we work on, in the last two years we have run a number of engagement events which inform all the work we do at the Hub.

Who: Bearwood & Smethwick locals

When: between 2018 and 2021

- We Are Bearwood community survey (350)
- Build, Make and Mend Community Hub design day (102)
- Bearwood Indoor Market day (155 people)
- 3 x 2hr facilitated #MakeItHappen meetings (90)
- 2 x Bearwood Business Network (43)
- Architectural design drop in (40)
- Bearwood Trade School (38)
- Bearwood High Street Garden Family Day (48)
- Online Trade School (24)
- High Street Garden renovation with Princes Trust (16 volunteers, 9 were aged 18-24 NEET)
- 1 Sew and Chat (about the potential of the hub) (5)
- Bearwood Bonds in-depth street conversations (24 people across seven streets)
- 8 x Bearwood Coffee Mornings Online (45)
- 2 x Bearwood Business Network online (21)
- 5 x Online Bakery session for women who have sought sanctuary (11)
- Evaluation surveys 2021 (73)

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INTRODUCTION:

Bearwood Community Hub is a Community Interest Company (CIC) dedicated to increasing community and individual resilience to improve lives, livelihoods and the local urban environment.

Bearwood Community Hub is a not-for-profit community led company that registered on 12th July 2018, and was founded by local residents in the community. The vision includes developing and providing a co-working space and 'social enterprise incubator', a flexible crèche for children whose parents cannot access traditional childcare models, community collaboration and connection space, community kitchen and sub-leased office space. It is intended that this open-to-all community hub will be sustained in part by a venue hire and work space business, offering a welcoming and happy, productive, and professional workspace for commuters, homeworkers and business owners.

The hub activities are currently delivered virtually or in various locations in Bearwood which is located in the southern part of Smethwick, Sandwell, West Midlands.

Bearwood, like many areas of the West Midlands region, has a strong local 'sense of place' which refers to the emotive bonds and attachments people develop or experience in particular locations and environments. The areas where most participants live are Smethwick, Abbey, Old Warley, Old Quinton, North Edgbaston wards of Birmingham and Sandwell. Most of which are in the constituency of Warley.

"It was a fantastic opportunity for my little one to explore and learn some practical skills, and for us both to socialise with other parents and children after so long in lockdown. "
- Participant, Nature Playgroup

ABOUT US:

We are currently a nomadic organisation, developing a partnership with St Mary's Church on Bearwood Road to explore how we could use the community hall and rooms behind the church. The plan is to find a short-term home for the Hub where we can set up our co-working space, flexible creche and the Bearwood Community Bakery.

The long term plan is to provide a 'single front door' in an accessible place, for all in Bearwood and beyond. Where all can access support, be it referrals to our partners or for developing new projects or businesses. Where local people can be the kick-starters. Together, we can all be the incubators, accelerators, connectors, supporters, enablers, innovators, collaborators, activators and partners.

Everyone is welcome!



Thank you to Annabel Evans, one of our most stalwart supporters and encouragers, for this art work. Annabel died recently but we will continue to pursue her wonderful ideas in her memory.

Mission:

To consistently enable every child, young person and adult in Bearwood and surrounding areas to connect, collaborate and create in ways that are right and beneficial for them, and in ways that foster belonging, ownership and autonomy.

Vision:

An open-to-all community hub. A place where everyone can connect, create and collaborate.

Values:

Everyone is welcome
Everyone is valued
Everyone has something to offer

OUR STORY SO FAR:

Since September 2020 The Bearwood Community Hub CIC has had staff who work full time on projects and experiment with what works well and what doesn't. Prior to that, one Director was paid as a project manager to engage with the local community to co-create the Hub's vision.

As soon as we were able, we opened up our community garden for a Nature Playgroup and have received feedback that it's been a vital space for the parents and children attending.

"My girls had loads of fun, if something like this could be put on through school holidays that would be great as I work term time and my daughter's loved playing on the garden." - Participant, Nature Playgroup

We have also been able to experiment on how to work with people offline during a pandemic, through delivering leaflets and litter picks (aka the Bearwood Bonds Project). We have continued to strengthen and develop our partnerships with local organisations, such as through the delivery of Online Art Workshops and Trade School Online and much more besides.

We are in a crucial developmental stage so it is important for us to understand how our knowledge, resources and networks impact our community. With every new session, project or get together we collect feedback to understand more deeply what to focus our resources on.

ORGANISATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Hub will be three years old in July 2021
- Director moved from project management fees to full time member of staff
- Hired our first ever Community Engagement Lead
- Collected 140+ individual pieces of feedback
- 200+ resident engaged in projects

THEORY OF CHANGE:

The Bearwood Community Hub's Theory of change was developed through community consultation and engagement work carried out on the 'Make it happen' event. It consists of three pillars which inform the work we do, Art & Culture, Health & Wellbeing and Economic Resilience.

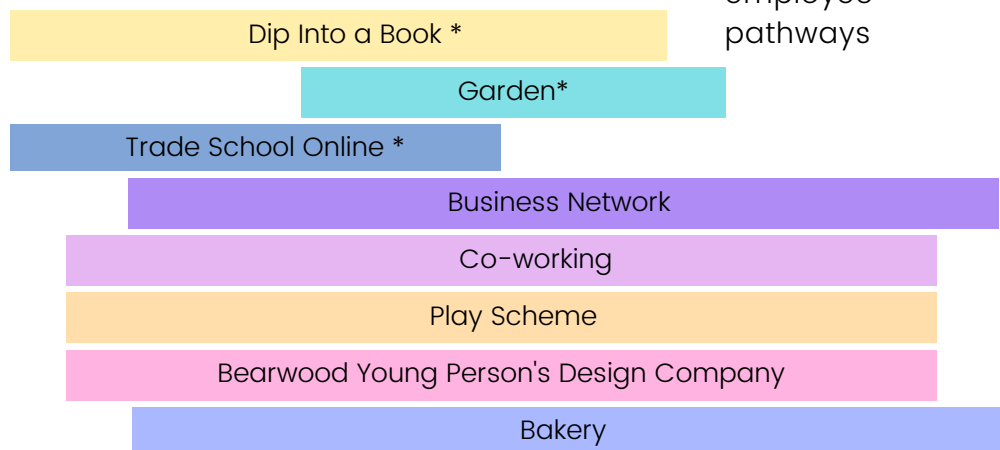
	Art & Culture	Health & Wellbeing	Economic Resilience
Changes:	A community in which everyone has the opportunity to express, create and participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced isolation • Improved mental wellbeing • A more physically active community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more inclusive economy for all
Target Group:	Those who have little or no access/experience of the arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in poverty • Newly arrived families & individuals • Children & young people • Socially isolated individuals & families • Men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly arrived families & individuals • Unemployed & in poor quality employment • Independent businesses & social enterprises • NEET

Activities:

Hub Led Engagement work with men

Volunteer Led *

- Skills development
- volunteer to employee pathways

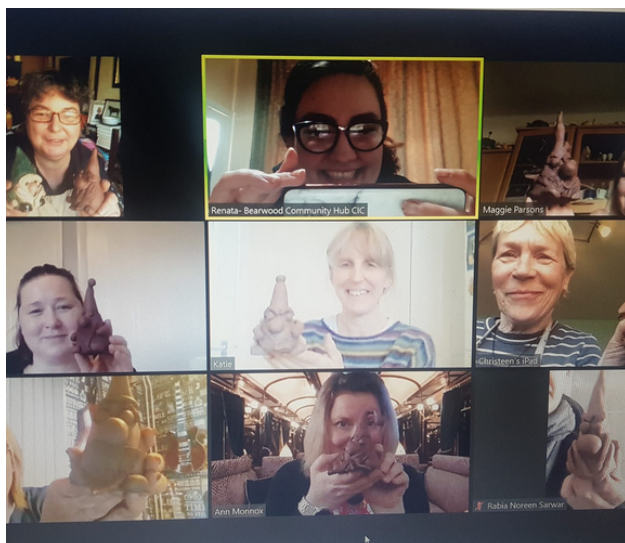


ART & CULTURE PROJECTS:

1. "Dip into a Book With the Hub":

This was suggested by one participant at one of the Hub's Coffee Mornings; the project is also supported by another volunteer. Dip into a Book with the Hub is a shared reading experience which brings people together to read out loud (or just listen to) a short story or excerpt of a book, giving space for reflection and discussion with a 'poem for pudding' too, to develop connections through literature. The group used to meet once a month between February and May, they are now meeting twice a month - with a morning session and an evening session.

- Twice a month online
- 13 regular attendees



"So much difference, it was nice to have a little light hearted hour with some giggles too!! "

-Participant, Online Art Workshops

"Lovely to see different people and experience a book that I wouldn't usually read."

- Participant, Dip into a Book with the Hub

2. Online Art Workshops in Partnership with The Dorothy Parkes Centre:

The workshops changed from the original brief of piloting short art-based music therapy, to piloting Online Art Workshops delivered in collaboration with the Bearwood Community Hub CIC. This change was due to the new lockdown restrictions enforced in the UK at the beginning of 2021. The workshops were designed to support local artists and showcase different art practices, which in turn would expose people to a variety of art forms - to be able to offer 'something for everyone'. Both Dorothy Parkes Centre and the Bearwood Community Hub believe in supporting and working with other local organisations to support the local community.

- 35 attendees - intergenerational
- 5 artists from 5 different disciplines
- Delivered once a week across 5 weeks

ART & CULTURE PROJECTS:

3. "Bearwood Tapestry":

Partnered with We Are Bearwood (voluntary led organisation) for the delivery of a co-created community tapestry. This included the delivery of 3 online sew & chats (through zoom) attended by 15+ participants and one in real life outdoor sew & chat attended by 5 participants. The tapestry was led by textile artist Maria Wigley, lead volunteers Marian Hills and Sarah-Ann Cromwell and supported by Renata (Bearwood Community Hub).

"Nice to meet a couple of new people!"

- Participant, Sew & Chat.



4. Bearwood Young Person's Design Company (BYPDC):

The Bearwood Young Person's Design Company was set up in 2020 during the first national lockdown, in Collaboration with Grand Union Art and funded by West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. Project coordination has been provided by Grand Union Art and Bearwood Community Hub. The project saw its first cohort of local young people who alongside local artists developed marketing assets, products and saw them launch their products for online sales. The BYPDC was commissioned to take part in 'In The Mix' by Sandwell CEP and most recently they have been working with the Hub to develop a Bearwood Art & Culture Manifesto, currently open to community consultation.

HEALTH & WELLBEING PROJECTS:

5. Bearwood Bonds:

Was a pilot project (between January 2021-June 2021) designed to experiment with ways of connecting with local people street by street. This project was entirely offline although some information about it was disseminated through the Hub's social media and newsletters. The method of contacting residents was through leaflets and letters, in total 7 streets and 3 flats were contacted. Some of the impact is:

- Referring residents to support through the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- Community litter picks
- Lots of interest in staying in touch and attending online projects and newsletter
- Lots of interest in the Architectural Design for the redevelopment of St Mary's Church Bearwood



**"Knowing people are wanting to make a difference to the area and improve it and get people together"
- Participant, Bearwood Bonds**

6. Online Coffee Mornings:

Set up as a direct result of the 2nd national lockdown in January 2021. To increase social connections virtually by providing an unstructured online space in which to share conversations and reflections.

- A total of six sessions were delivered in January, February and March 2021
- With 40+ participants in total

7. Bearwood Community High Street Garden:

A space for working, socialising, meeting, playing or resting. Started pre-lockdown by our volunteers, designs led by volunteers. During lockdown, designs were implemented by a team of young people from Prince's Trust Smethwick.

- Wild Lives Forest School and New Baby Network CIC were commissioned to run a 10 week outdoor playgroup pilot.
- In memoriam remembrance project taking place hosting Brum YODO and allowing local people to install flags to remember lost friends and relatives.
- Volunteers are currently discussing how to open the garden more regularly.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PROJECTS:

8. Bearwood Business Network:

A time to meet with other local businesses, share ideas, opportunities and experiences.

Two sessions were delivered in February and March 2021, with one per month now scheduled until Autumn.

**"Was great to connect with other local businesses and see what other businesses are in the area, and get ideas for partnership working"
- Participant, Bearwood Business Network**

9. Trade School Online:

Online - a Black Country collaboration, with Co Lab Dudley and Wolverhampton for everyone: local people sharing their skills and experience in return for barter (gift) items that learners 'pay' with - it's a chance to connect with others and learn with others.

Activity - The first season of the trade school online took place in August & September 2020. A second season for May / June 2021 and has been in development during Spring 2021.

11. Bearwood Community Bakery with Smethwick CAN and Mothership Projects CIC:

Bakery equipment funded and installed to enable a local migrant baker to teach up to 20 newly arrived women or isolated community members to bake bread and develop a social enterprise bakery/their own enterprises. It has been on hold for over a year and will be taking place from July 2021-August 2021.

In the interim we have been delivering online baking sessions on Monday mornings.

10. Local Advise Network:

Initially envisaged as a collaboration with the Black Country Consortium, a pilot resident-led advice network, harnessing the professional skills base locally to create a volunteer network of support for people. As safeguarding challenges are worked out for a wider programme, the hub has focused on offering financial crisis coaching through Your Money Your Way CIC.



IMPACT:

1. To what extent has the Hub been addressing an identified need?

It is evident that from many survey respondents mental health has been positively impacted because of the Bearwood Community Hub. One participant shared “I’ve been able to talk to people, even though some of them I’ve not seen in real life, it’s been fun having to chat and interact. It takes away stress, it takes away anxiety. It’s been fun doing what you love .. I’ve been enjoying all the activities so far and I look forward to engage in more fun activities”

It was widely reported in mainstream media that due to the position of the economy many families were impacted financially. Evidence shows that the Hub has been instrumental in signposting families to organisations to receive support in regard to their financial challenges, and in this way clearly addressing an identified need.

Given the number of groups that were on offer virtually this provided social interaction and reduced the risk of some individuals being socially isolated. This may potentially have contributed to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals who engaged.

The local consultations that were carried out provided opportunities for people to give feedback on their needs and interests. They were also given the opportunity to evaluate the services that were provided and input into future projects. There is clear evidence that projects have evolved following participants' feedback and expressed needs.

In addition the Hub has demonstrated good practice around ‘inclusion’ through establishing projects that specifically address and support newly arrived families in the community.

2. How well did the Hub achieve the identified outcomes?

The Hub was active and engaging with the local community prior to and during the pandemic. However, there were some restrictions in the delivery of planned projects due to government guidelines on social gatherings. Some of the planned projects had to be postponed as the Hub navigated transitioning online. Whilst members of the community did engage, there was scope for greater numbers if the capacity was there to identify the hard to reach individuals and families. The outcomes relating to bringing people together, promoting wellbeing and providing advice and guidance services were clearly met.

The Hub was successful in the use of volunteer skills to support in the development of a community garden, which became an innovative space fostering interactions to enable more inclusive community togetherness.

IMPACT:

3. What were the particular features of the programme and context that made a difference?

Local community knowledge, networks and information that allowed for effective signposting. Responding to local needs in regards to developing and offering services in accordance to the expressed needs of individuals. Working in partnership with other local providers to create a hub of services in the community.

Volunteers made a difference in the service delivery, by adding to the workforce, some of which were specialists in various fields.

4. What approaches have worked well and not so well?

There was evidence that a high number of women engaged with the service, however there was little evidence of male participation. Although the local demographics highlight that there are slightly more female residents than male residents the service users did not clearly reflect the gender profile of the area. It may be that the services that were offered were more appealing to a female audience, and further research and investigation should be undertaken to identify the barriers men may face in accessing local services provided by the Hub.

Digital poverty has to be taken into account, although the Hub has been able to deliver services digitally to some members of the community, there are still families who may not be able to access services online due to a lack of technology and or knowledge. Given that most services during and post pandemic have increased their virtual offer, this is an area that needs to be explored further, to enable the reach of the Hub to be extended.

5. What organisation features or context have helped or hindered progress or impact?

The projects that the Hub have set out to deliver is fully reliant on funding, which is mainly used for staff salaries. Whilst volunteers are available and assist to deliver services, their involvement would not be possible without the coordination of the staff. Additionally the development of the organisation, structure and partnerships would not exist without the staff members. As such any changes in the funding would greatly hinder the progress and future of the Hub activities, resulting in a reduction of services to the community.

The staff's local knowledge of the community needs greatly helped with the delivery of the services, in addition to the strength of the partnership working.

RECOMENDATIONS:

- Although the Hub are reaching the majority of the ethnicity groups, further work should be considered around newly arrived families
- Development of addressing and minimising language and cultural barriers for newly arrived families
- Carry out further research and consultation to discover the barriers to men accessing the services
- Develop activities and services to attract more men from the community, this may also include recruiting additional male volunteers
- Encourage more participation and openly share how they identify to ensure needs are met
- Explore new ways of income generation or methods
- Expanding the work with the partner organisations
- Developing the physical hub into a self sustaining income generating community business
- Extensive consultations have provided lots of data for future work
- Implement the projects that have been on pause due to lockdown

Limitations

Every project has limitations and for Bearwood Community Hub these were exasperated by piloting and delivering work during the global pandemic, nevertheless much of the funding received during this time was Covid related, and so acknowledging the limitations and learning from these is critical for future success both during and after the pandemic. Bearwood Community Hub CIC had to transition from delivering in person and face to face events to delivering online, in addition to communicating digitally. This may have meant that some people were not able to access the events due to lack of technology or internet access or a lack of confidence using technology and being 'on screen'. The hub has spoken to a number of local individuals who have said that online delivery has increased accessibility, as they may have faced barriers with face to face services.

CONCLUSION

Bearwood Community Hub is a Community Interest Company that is not only dedicated to increasing community and individual resilience to improve lives, livelihoods and the local urban environment, but can demonstrate that they continue to achieve these aims. Families in the community of Bearwood are being positively impacted socially, economically, financially and mentally as a direct result of the work and commitment of the staff, partners, volunteers and board within Bearwood Community hub.