



Housing and Community



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Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	General Communities Activity Report
Date:	13 th September 2023
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Sheron Wilkie, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	N/A
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Diane Southam – Assistant Director Place Community and Enterprise



Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All wards
Purpose of the report:	1. To provide an update the activities of the Arts, Culture and Wellbeing, Health Inequalities and Healthy Hub areas of work within the Communities team
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. That Members note the report and identify any areas

	where they require additional information
Period for post policy/project review:	N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This paper provides an update on Arts, Culture and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities and Healthy Hub activities during 2023/24 to date.

2. Arts, Culture and Wellbeing

2.1 Dance

2.1.1 'Let's Dance' - seated dance sessions in Supported Housing for older adults and those with low mobility (April – December 2023)

- Weekly seated dance sessions in two Supported Housing Schemes in Hemel Hempstead and Tring for DBC tenants and the wider community to support active ageing.
- Partnership project with the Supported Housing Team and Dacorum Community Dance.
- Funded until December 2023 - an application has been submitted to the National Lottery Awards for All for continued funding in 2024.
- From April- date:
 - Dance sessions delivered: 26
 - Attendance: 296

2.1.2 Wake Up and Dance – short drop-in online daily dance sessions for all ages (ongoing)

- Ten minutes of freestyle dancing each weekday morning for all ages and abilities, supporting health and wellbeing.
- Partnership project with BEEE Creative and Dacorum Community Dance
- Funded until March 2023 with up to 20 daily participants. Currently working with DBC's Health Inequalities Officer and CDA Herts to engage more people from ethnically diverse communities.
- From January-date:
 - Dance sessions delivered: 155
 - Attendance: 1,993

2.1.3 Dance Re:ignite - funding success for a two year community dance programme for adults and people with disabilities and/or those disadvantaged accessing dance (2023/4 – 2025/6)

- 100k funding awarded in July by Arts Council England for a 2 year community dance programme which will include workshops, performances, festivals and training.
- A partnership project with BEEE Creative, East Herts, Watford and Three Rivers District Councils
- Project planning to start in September with delivery starting late 2023/early 2024.

2.2 Art

2.2.1 Recycled art sculpture competition and event - a project challenging schools and children's/youth groups to create a sculpture out of recycled materials, culminating in an event in Hemel Town Centre on 14th October to promote National Recycle Week (July-October 2023)

- Sculpture challenge competition launched in July 2023 and closes on 6th October

- The October event will involve several local artists and environmental organisations offering free recycled art and environmental activities for the community and a DBC National Recycle Week awareness stand
- Partnership project with DBC's Climate Change Team and Sustainability Officers, Hemel BID and Marlowes Shopping Centre.

2.2.2 **Colourful Minds: art for wellbeing programme** – A 16 week social prescribing project for adults involving visual art, craft and mixed media sessions to support mental health and wellbeing (May-September).

- Sessions run weekly at the South Hill Centre with taster sessions held in the Employment and Wellbeing Hub to engage those from low socio-economic backgrounds and those who may not normally access to creative activities.
- Run in partnership with Herts Inclusive Theatre and in collaboration with Dacorum Healthy Hub and South Hill Centre.
- Nine participants are registered onto the course which finishes at the end of September with the next course due to start in November.
- To date:
 - Sessions delivered: 12
 - Attendance: 77

2.2.3 **Grovehill underpass art/mural project** (May-October 2023)

- Partnership project with Hemel Hempstead Police, Grovehill Neighbourhood Association, Osborne Property Service and Hertfordshire County Council and Astley Cooper School to improve the underpass outside Astley Cooper School used by many of their pupils.
- The mural will be designed and painted by students from Astley Cooper School with support from their art teachers and is supported by Locality Budget funding from Councillor Fiona Guest and in-kind support from Osborne PS.
- Mural should be completed by October half term

2.3 **Theatre and Performance**

2.3.1 **Nothing on Earth** – theatre and storytelling project about inspiring women in Hertfordshire (Jan-December 2023)

- Partnership project with Pursued By A Bear Theatre Co, Hertfordshire Libraries, Three Rivers District Council and other Hertfordshire theatre venues, funded by Arts Council England.
- A professional performance took place in March at The Old Town Hall theatre as part of Women's History Month featuring stories collected from the Dacorum community and DBC Supported Housing Tenants.
- The stories have been recorded by professional actors for a short film to be released in September/October which will be available online and shown in the Supported Housing Schemes.
- Hemel Hempstead library is interested in holding an exhibition about the project in the autumn.

2.3.2 **The Shakespeare Circus** –Shakespeare workshops and performances for schools (Feb-July 2023)

- Worked with Gobstoppers Theatre Company in Berkhamsted to deliver accessible and inclusive theatre workshops and performances for schools in Dacorum with funding support from Councillor Locality Budgets.
- 400 primary pupils from Hemel Hempstead attended workshops and performances of a Midsummer Night's Dream in the woodlands at Boxmoor Trust, including pupils from a special educational needs school.

- Performances and workshops also took place at the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project for Berkhamsted schoolchildren.
- A performance for the public and local community took place at the Boxmoor Trust to raise funds to support the education element.

2.3.3 **Nysa Projects: Planet Munch** – musical puppet shows and workshops about healthy eating for families and schools (Feb-July 2023).

- Supported a successful research and development project, funded by Arts Council England, to create and deliver interactive musical puppet performances and workshops for children, families and schools to promote and educate on healthy eating.
- Performances took place in June in Hemel Hempstead Library and at Chaulden Infants School.
- Based on the success of the R&D phase the project has received funding to deliver further performances and workshops in Dacorum this autumn with plan to submit another Arts Council application to develop a touring model.

2.4 **Other/General**

2.4.1 Involvement in strategic countywide cultural groups and Dacorum partnership groups: Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership steering group, Herts Association of Cultural Officers, Creative Hertfordshire network group, Dacorum Families First Partnerships, Dacorum Youth Strategy Group.

2.4.2 Support and advice for local artists and cultural/creative organisations with arts funding opportunities and applications, to increase arts investment and cultural activities.

2.4.3 Supporting Hemel Hempstead library with the planning and delivery of a Fun Palace event, which will take place in October 2023. DBC is passing the mantle to Dacorum Libraries, with support, to ensure this annual community arts and culture event continues as a sustainable annual event that is embedded in the community.

3. **Health Inequalities**

3.1 Funded by Herts County Council (HCC), the area of focus is obesity, which is disproportionately high in Dacorum among residents of South Asian origin living in the most deprived wards. There are 3 main projects which are in the HCC approved Place Based Health Inequalities Intervention Plan which runs until March 2024. They are:

3.2 **To improve physical activity levels and reduce obesity in children aged 9-11 living in Bennett's End**

3.2.1 In conjunction with Herts Sports Disability Foundation, providing reconditioned bikes and / or cycling lessons to children in 5 schools in Dacorum's most deprived area. The aims are to encourage increased physical activity and reduce obesity.

3.2.2 All work has now been completed and we are waiting for the final report which will include an event in the summer holidays. Statistics so far show;

- 270 young people took part in cycling lessons –there were varying degrees of help required (final stats will give more details)
- Most young people are now cycling independently with just 8 needing further support
- 26 bikes were repaired on site
- 58 bikes have been gifted to young people (final figure may be higher)
- 52.3% of young people needing intervention were from an ethnic minority background

3.3 **To reduce the BMI of 175 obese residents in the most deprived wards, with a priority focus on residents from South Asian origin**

3.3.1 Working with GP Surgeries in the most deprived areas and Watford FC Community and Engagement Trust to deliver Shape Up courses. There are 7 cohorts in total – 4 for men and 3 for women. The aims are to increase nutritional focus and exercise and to reduce obesity. The goal is to have a minimum of 30% of participants from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly South Asian.

3.3.2 Good links have been established with GP Surgeries in Dacorum now, particularly in the most deprived areas. The first cohort has taken place and we are waiting for the report. There have been some staff shortages at Watford FC as well as some learning for them in preparation for the September cohort including making more personal contact and having a reserve list as some people did not attend or dropped out.

3.3.3 The second two cohorts, one for men and one for women, will be starting mid-September and there is a lot of interest from GP Surgeries so it is expected the places will be filled quickly.

3.4 **To tweak the council's free physical activity programmes for children aged 8-16 to encourage more participants from South Asian communities in deprived areas to attend**

3.4.1 Working with the Adventure Playgrounds to develop the service for different cultures, with a focus on South Asia, including the translation of flyers and provision of culturally-appropriate games, activities and food. The aim is to encourage physical activity and therefore reduce obesity among South Asian families.

3.4.2 The Adventure Playground collate data monthly and this shows that we are seeing a slight increase in ethnic minority engagement so whilst there is a lot more work to be done, across many communities, it is a real start.

3.5 Other areas which we are working on in addition to the Implementation Plan include;

- Working with BEE Creative's Wake Up and Dance to incorporate music and dance moves from other cultures into their daily 9am dance sessions
- Working with Herts Sports Partnerships Moving More platform to create some new exercise videos from members of community groups so that there are Asian, Caribbean, Polish etc. videos which have culturally appropriate dance moves, culturally appropriate clothing and music from that culture
- Working with the ADDA Club, which is a charity assisting Asian people to manage their diabetes, to create a recipe book and have a launch workshop at the Dacorum Bangladeshi Welfare Association
- Working with local GP practices to increase the number of patients, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds, to take their blood pressure readings as this is a huge area of focus for the NHS to prevent other health long-term health issues.

4 **Healthy Hub**

4.1 **Overview of Healthy Hub Referrals**

In the past year there has been a total over 2,139 residents referred into the Healthy Hub Dacorum to gain access to health and wellbeing support. The previous year there were 1,690 referrals which is a **26.5%** increase in use of the Healthy Hub Dacorum. Since the launch in June 2020, there has been a total of 4,892 referrals. The quarter April-June 2023 had 508 referrals. 410 referrals came from the Employability and Wellbeing Hub in the South Hill Centre, 25 referrals came from the Shape-Up project with Watford FC Community and Engagement Trust and 65 referrals came from the Generalist Adviser Service project with Citizens Advice Dacorum. As a result, Dacorum are one of the highest in referral figures in Hertfordshire compared to other local healthy hubs. Whilst during the pandemic referrals were

due to physical or mental health concerns, the majority of referrals at the present time are due to the rising cost of living which is affecting all parts of the community. Residents who have previously never asked for financial advice are coming forward for help on their bills and whether they are entitled to any benefits to support their household. Obviously the cost of living is primarily a financial concern, it has been seen to affect some resident's physical and mental health as a secondary impact as residents begin to cut spending on gyms, healthier but more expensive food and an increase in drinking alcohol.

4.2 **South Hill Centre - Employability and Wellbeing Hub**

The Healthy Hub Officer has attended the South Hill Centre hub as part of a partnership with the South Hill Centre under the Healthy Hub name for over two years now. The Healthy Hub has promoted and has a breakout room for services users to have confidential conversations about the support they need to improve their health and wellbeing. The Healthy Hub Officer continues to attend the physical hub on Tuesdays and Fridays to provide face to face drop-ins and appointments to clients wishing to use the project. The Healthy Hub Dacorum partners have expressed an interest in joining, with Herts Help and NHS health checks having a monthly physical presence. With the South Hill Centre, we have created a programme to promote monthly health and wellbeing topics, through workshops and promotional materials in order to create awareness of support networks for residents.

4.3 **Hemel Hempstead Job Centre Support Sessions**

We arrange monthly sessions where the Healthy Hub Officer supports the work coaches with health and wellbeing advice and signposting for their clients. The sessions support residents who are experiencing unemployment and barriers that are impacting their ability to work independently.

4.4 **Generalist Adviser Service- Citizens Advice Dacorum Joint Project-** This year-long project has supported clients with welfare advice where people have lost their employment due to economic changes from the pandemic and the rising cost of living. Also the project has supported those who have issues relating to debt, benefits, housing and relationship issues. The Generalist Adviser has been working Tuesday in line with the Healthy Hub Dacorum drop in sessions at the South Hill Centre. The Generalist Support Adviser has also been required to support the Healthy Hub Dacorum with physical and telephone appointments. Full generalist advice at 4 appointments (45mins) per week, plus one dedicated disability form filling appointment (90mins) (PIP, AA, UC LCW or ESA).