

Local Voices

**Life in 5 Derbyshire Communities
during Coronavirus April-June
2020**



INTRODUCTION

Our mission is to create a culture shift across Derbyshire whereby regular physical activity is not just normal, but also seen as central to good health and wellbeing.

We are currently working in 5 small communities (1000-3000 people) to test an asset based approach – focusing on the strengths of a place and nurturing community led action.

**New Bolsover/Carr Vale – Fairfield – Petersham
New Mills – Crich**

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD):

Our approach builds on the principles of 'a-b-c-d'; '[Asset Based Community Development](#)' – or even 'a-b-c-d-e'; 'Asset Based and Community Driven Efforts'.

Asset based approaches build on what's strong, not what's wrong. Initial effort goes into unearthing and connecting with local people who have energy, ideas and who care about themselves, each other and their place. Enabling those people to lead in their place is central to this way of working and achieves sustainable change in the long term. Connecting the wider system around the 'abcde' model is central to our approach and learning in Derbyshire and we are working with colleagues from Active Derbyshire, Local Authorities, Live Life Better Derbyshire, CCGs, Public Health, NHS and the Community and Voluntary Sector to achieve the culture shift required for lasting change.

Key work strands in these places includes:

Local leadership development – identifying emerging leaders, connecting people locally, building a movement to champion community led physical activity

Influencing the influencers: Organised and systematic story telling with different audiences in communities to demonstrate the value of community organising and regular physical activity.

Creating Exposure: Testing new ways of exposing people in communities to physical activity through events and campaigns, integrating exercise into other activities eg cookery classes and local challenges such as the Daily Mile and Family Mile.

Underpinning Assumptions:

Based on our collective experience of community-based sport development, alongside a plethora of epidemiological evidence and data, we believe that:

- An active community is a healthy community
- People living 'in community' are best placed to drive sustained change
- Achieving a culture shift where physical activity is central to health and wellbeing depends on the contributions of multiple and interconnected agents and agencies

Principles of Building Active Communities:

- Enabling and encouraging local people to lead (mobilising)
- Building partnerships around shared purpose
- Identifying capacity
- Connecting people and building relationships
- Exploring the potential of the material and built environment
- Shifting power away from organisations to residents and integrating services and systems where appropriate
- Inspiring behaviour change – showcasing what's possible and inspiring a movement for change through public narrative



Local Voices

As part of a Community of Learning, Sport England recently shared resources that capture insights during the outbreak of the Coronavirus. In response to this and building on the learning, we are sharing examples and observations from 5 Derbyshire communities using the **9 themes** cited in the '[Local Voices](#)' document.

Our information has been sourced directly from people living in the 5 communities; from local leaders, residents, schools and community organisations.

- 1 **Widening inequalities and impact of wellbeing**
- 2 **Common purpose**
- 3 **Making connectivity and trust count**
- 4 **Community and place matters**
- 5 **Daily life**
- 6 **Clarity of message**
- 7 **Digital divide**
- 8 **Financial sustainability**
- 9 **What does recovery mean?**

CHARLES
THE

LOCKDOWN 2020.

NEW MILLS

SNAKE THIS CORONAVIRUS COVID 19.

A PANDEMIC, LIKE WE'VE NEVER SEEN,
THOUSANDS OF LIVES LOST, ITS SO VERY SAD,
LOCKED IN OUR HOMES, FEELING QUITE MAD.

SHOPS, PUBS, AND SCHOOLS CLOSED, ITS FOR THE BEST
WE REALLY HAVE BEEN PUT TO A TEST,
WE MOST OF US CLAPPED, ON A THURSDAY NIGHT,
FOR THE NHS AND KEY WORKERS ALIKE

NOT SEEING FAMILY MEMBERS FOR QUITE A TIME,
TUNING INTO ZOOM, TO CHAT, AND CHECK ALL IS FINE
WE THE SURVIVORS, SHOULD BE GRATEFUL OF THIS,
FOR THE PEOPLE WE LOST, WENT WITHOUT A KISS.

MY GRANDSON CHARLIE, STARTED THIS SNAKE,
HOPEFULLY TO PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE.

REDMOOR BUILDERS, DONATED THE SNAKE FEED,
SO PLEASE TAKE A ROCK, AND PAINT AS YOU PLEASE
WHEN ITS ALL OVER, AND THINGS ARE FINE,
WE'LL TOAST THEM THAT WE LOST, WITH SOME WINE,
AND HOPEFULLY THE SNAKE BE A REMINDER IN TIME,
HOW HELPFUL AND THOUGHTFUL, WERE THOSE
ON THE FRONTLINE.

TAKE CARE, STAY SAFE

1. Widening inequalities and impact on wellbeing

Impact on Wellbeing:

There is evidence of both a positive and negative impact on life during the Coronavirus outbreak between April and June:

+ve

During the early weeks many families reported enjoying spending more time together at home, gardening, working at the allotments and generally slowing down. Some talked of being more connected with their neighbours, friends, family and work colleagues. Local parks and open spaces were important for everyone, especially where activities such as pavement chalking and rock painting became popular via social media. Pavilion Gardens in Buxton hosted a 'Sid the Snake' rock collection which encouraged children from Fairfield to paint rocks and walk into town (approx. 1 mile) to add to the collection.



Residents who volunteered as part of an organised Mutual Aid network in Crich reported improved mental health

*"I felt useful"
"I enjoyed being with can-do people"
"It's been a real privilege volunteering and speaking with our amazing community"*

-ve

As time passed there were increasing reports of anxiety and deteriorating mental health, from elderly or isolated people who were fearful of becoming ill to families with young children who were bored and restless.

Widening Inequalities:

It is evident from our work in 5 places that where there are high levels of social capital things get done quickly, efficiently and with minimal input from statutory agencies. In New Mills and Crich where there is a strong culture of volunteering and a wealth of lived experience of organising, networks were mobilised quickly and volunteers had clear roles with guidance documents and protocol.

Whereas in Petersham, Fairfield and New Bolsover whilst there were high levels of activity and community organising, the default response from some citizens was to retract and await instruction from the authorities. Support from external organisations was needed to put in place safeguarding systems and databases and give confidence to those leading.

As such, we could assume that in places where there is little social capital or support for community leaders, responding to such a crisis would be even harder or less likely and the gaps in quality of life would widen.



Infrastructure

Communities without local amenities found it harder to access basic requirements whereas those with local shops, pharmacies and infrastructure were able to look after themselves adequately.

“ Communities without local amenities found it harder to access basic requirements ”

2. Common Purpose - energy, passion, kindness, and humanity

Compassion, Community and Co-operation

Each of the 5 communities has shown resilience through collaboration at a time of crisis. Driven by the desire to care for each other and in particular for isolated or vulnerable people in their wider neighbourhoods, local leaders with energy and ideas have stepped forward and taken action together.

Local Action

In Fairfield, Petersham and New Bolsover/Carr Vale it was noticeable that when the Community Builder was forced to step back due to lockdown restrictions, community organisers we had been supporting from within the place stepped forward. Using Facebook as the primary platform, connections were made and plans came to life.

In Crich, where the Community Builder lives and works it was clearly easier to support local efforts and to remain involved from with the community networks. During 12 weeks of lockdown the Covid Voluntary Network handled 650 calls, delivered over 500 prescriptions and made and delivered over 1000 hot meals to isolated people.

Collaboration

In Fairfield, Petersham and New Bolsover partners who have been connecting around the asset based community development work over the past 2 years have increased their efforts to collaborate during the pandemic (e.g. SHIFT, Active Derbyshire, Local Authority, CCG, CVS, Schools, Public Health etc). Place group meetings shifted onto Zoom and were well attended and productive with resources being channelled quickly to support local action.

Power Shift

In Petersham the effective partnership between infrastructure organisations and residents has led to a '**Participatory Budgeting**' approach being explored, agreed and funds held locally for the first time.

Above and Beyond

In many communities the efforts have stretched beyond shopping, prescription collections and phone calls to setting up new projects. In Crich 4 'Community Pantries' have been created where residents are invited to '**give what you can, take what you need**'. Food, sanitary products, plants and face masks have been shared and there is a constant flow of goods in and out. In addition, a 'Digital Friends' scheme has been developed to teach isolated people how to connect on social media and using a tablet or smart phone.



“ People living in community are best placed to drive change ”

3. Making connectivity and trust count

Local Networks

Our work over the past 2 years has intentionally focussed on building capacity within communities to enable people to lead in their place. Much of this has involved connecting people, mobilising networks and encouraging a sense of agency and personal responsibility allowing people to take action.

Throughout the pandemic many of these networks have revealed value beyond the initial purpose.

In Fairfield the Foodies Group which was established at the junior school to support families cook healthy, nutritious meals on a budget became a social network to share Joe Wicks PE Videos, photos of family walks and recipe ideas using food parcels.



Through community organising and convening hundreds of community conversations, residents have built relationships with each other and trust has developed. This has become an important source of comfort, strength and hope during a difficult time.

Trust is a key feature in one success story in Fairfield and New Mills where New Bodies Gym – a local, well respected sports provider decided not to furlough staff but adapt their operations, move on-line and listen to what their members were saying. They loaned out equipment, provided masks, delivered socially distanced outdoor sessions on the car park and posted every day on Facebook to keep in touch with their members.

They are a trusted and valued part of the community and as a result, their members have been loyal and activity levels have remained high.

Trust within communities also led to a swift, agile and well organised response in Mutual Aid groups who didn't need to ask for permission and just got on and took action.

Confidence to refer In Crich, where efforts have recently been made by the Community Builder to connect the GP Practice and health providers with local social networks, there is now enough trust and confidence that during lockdown GPs referred patients directly to the Mutual Aid Network where they were contacted and their needs were met.

Distributed Leadership – More work to do!

Whilst in Petersham local leaders have stepped up and taken responsibility during the crisis, the growth in power has led to a reluctance to ask for help and share responsibility.

Further work is needed to support volunteers to enable others to lead, to share responsibility and recognise the value of building capacity rather than being a local hero!

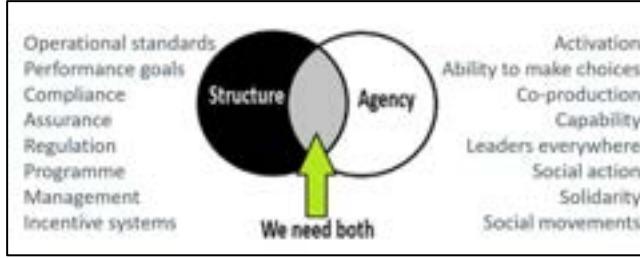


“ Members have been loyal and activity levels have remained high ”

4. Community and place matters

Agency

The shift away from structure and service led interventions and towards social action has been observed in each of the 5 communities with an uprising of local leaders who want to make a difference in their community.



Within days of lockdown in Petersham, a Covid Mutual Aid Group was formed to support vulnerable people led by Anna, a once shy and isolated resident with 3 young children. The group of residents was supported by local charities and organisations including Hope Long Eaton, Long Eaton Rugby Club, Erewash Borough Council, CVS and Shift Community Builder Zoe.

Similarly in Fairfield local residents rallied together to organise distribution of food parcels, family activities and signposting under the umbrella organisation of ROFA (Residents of Fairfield Association). The Scout Hut became a central organising venue and **23 new volunteers were recruited**.

Enabling Active Lives

As well as shopping services, food share and prescription delivery, the Petersham group organised the production of **activity packs for young people** which were delivered to over 100 families and funded by the local councillor. Table tennis, bean bags, skipping ropes, activity cards and body weight work outs were all well received.



The Friends of New Bolsover group also led a lot of the local organising and secured £1000 of Covid funding to purchase **sports equipment for a community loan scheme** in response to young people who couldn't access play equipment and the parks.

Thursday Night Clapping

Clapping for Carers on a Thursday evening became a social ritual during lockdown where streets and neighbourhoods took to their doorsteps to clap, sing and chat to each other. A chorus in what was otherwise an unusually quiet time. In some streets it was an expression of pride, gratitude and togetherness followed by encouraging notes on Facebook eg Carr Vale: '**Great effort from Scarsdale Street in the applause today. Making our community proud.**'

When people realised that they could stay connected on their own doorsteps there was a decision to continue with the VE Day celebrations after initially considering cancelling. Other communities encouraged doorstep activity and some organised fitness and dance sessions with music.



“Within days of lockdown, a Covid Mutual Aid group was formed in Petersham”

5. Daily life

Visibility of Exercise

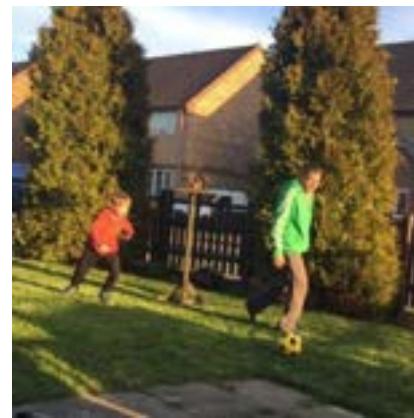
During lockdown exercise such as walking, cycling and jogging became highly visible on the streets and in communities and this was received with both positivity and resistance. In some instances, seeing neighbours heading out walking or running encouraged others to do the same whereas in other cases where runners were out on pavements, it became a source of fear and even anger.

Gardens became the new sports halls and families were spotted playing football, cricket and badminton during the sunny weather. Children learnt to ride bikes on the streets which were much quieter and safer than normal.

Displacement of Activity

Exercise classes which had developed in village halls (such as yoga and pilates in Bainbridge Hall, New Bolsover) were quickly transferred onto screens and took place in front rooms. Most classes remained popular and in some cases grew due to unlimited capacity.

In Crich, the Patient Participation Group (PPG) funded production of a chair-based yoga DVD by the local instructor for participants to use in their homes while the classes couldn't take place in the 08 community centre.



Inactivity

Schools have reported that there were young people who were sleeping all day and playing on the x-box all evening/night. Although this may be providing a source of social interaction for these children, anti-social behaviour has decreased over the period, physical activity levels seem to be low with these young people who perhaps get most of their activity through school during the day.

Residents observed that there were fewer children playing on open spaces than normal – likely due to the lockdown restrictions as well as closure of play equipment, sports clubs, groups and organised activities.

Lack of Fitness

People who were shielding have spoken about being unfit due to lack of normal exercise and are now reluctant to walk to the shops as they don't think they would make it there and back. One Mutual Aid group is now considering a buddying scheme to encourage volunteers to meet nervous residents and accompany them to the shops or on a short walk.

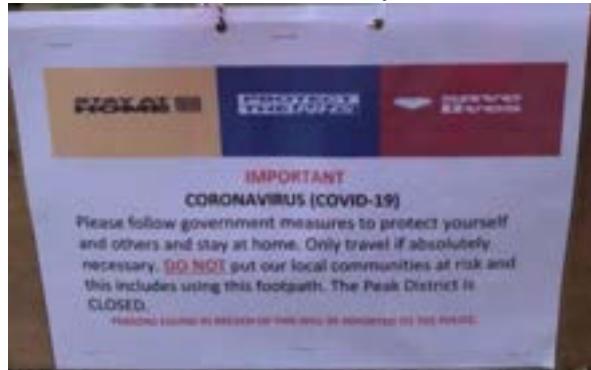
“ Children learnt to ride bikes on the streets which were much quieter than normal.

6. Clarity of message

Car Parks Closed

In New Bolsover particularly, residents were unsure whether the local trails and footpaths were open and accessible as adjacent car parks were closed. This made people reluctant to walk despite this often being possible.

Clear, consistent messaging around access to open space would have been welcomed by residents and enabled increased levels of activity.



Government Messaging

There was also uncertainty around the levels of activity and exercise permitted per day, particularly in the early weeks. Some understood the message to be 1 hour per day, others 1 session and others one form of exercise. Clear messaging around exercise was perhaps an opportunity to encourage positive habits and increase levels of activity.

Local Trusted Messengers

In all 5 communities it was clear that residents were most responsive to messaging from local and trusted people rather than authorities.

Lia Roos, Chair of ROFA (Residents of Fairfield Association) was the source of most information shared with people in Fairfield via her Facebook page. Similarly in Petersham, Anna erected an interim noticeboard in her front garden to inform people of the latest news and activities taking place in the community.

In Crich, the parish magazine 'Crich Standard' became the central point of contact for volunteers and residents alike featuring stories, shielding advice and services available via the Mutual Aid group.

In New Bolsover the community newsletter stopped for a month (a further example of retraction in response to crisis) but is again up and running and the Friends of New Bolsover Facebook Group has been the main source of communication locally whilst the Community House has been closed.



“ Residents were unsure whether the local trails and footpaths were open ”

7. Digital divide

Screen Success

Access to technology became significant during the pandemic. Those with the means and the confidence quickly transferred their activity to screens, be it work, exercise or social.

Fitness Instructors who had been used to leading sessions in halls now had to figure out how to stream on Facebook with cameras, social media platforms and space in their living rooms to make this happen. For those who were brave it paid off with continuity for them and their participants.

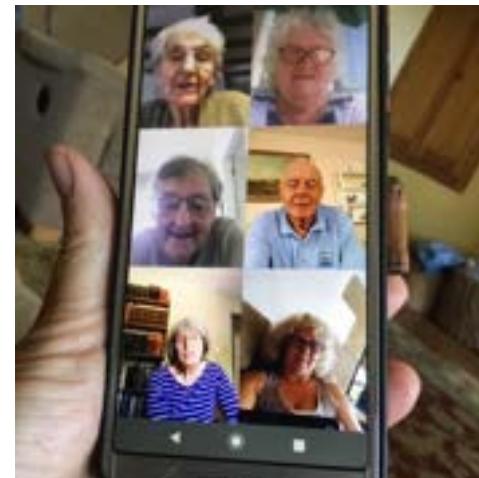
Posts

 **Zumba with Jenny**
23 March at 21:06

Update - Zumba will be on Skype tomorrow. I have just tried zoom & skype - skype had better sound quality & it didn't cut the sound off as much! This week only will be a trial for regular members- please can everyone that would like to join message me & send me your email address, I will then add you on Skype & start the class at 6.15pm. I'll give more details in your messages. Then next week will be a class open to more people & should run more smoothly 😊

1 Like 2 comments

 Like  Comment  Share



Digital Disconnect

Whilst those who were technologically savvy switched to their screens to connect, many who relied on face to face contact were isolated from friends, families and their neighbours. Volunteers out delivering food to residents became acutely aware of the lack of interaction and growing sense of isolation and loneliness amongst older residents and in Crich this prompted a new project.



Digital Friends

The Digital Friends project secured £7000 of covid funding to purchase tablets and smart phones for a local loan scheme. A group of retired residents who were confident with social media and digital technology provided one-one support to enable interested residents to access platforms such as 'WhatsApp, Facetime and zoom and have now been in regular contact with their social groups and friends.

"This has been an absolute blessing"

8. Financial sustainability

Investing in Communities

Traditionally, community activity has been financed through grants, often following long and laborious application forms, panels and lengthy administrative procedures.

Participatory budgeting

In Petersham, the trial of a 'participatory budgeting' approach is already proving valuable. The benefits are seen in increased ownership, engagement and collaboration around a shared purpose as well as effective decision making and better use of resources.

Doing things differently

Covid has created an upsurge in residents stepping up to take action and many are seeking quick, intuitive funding streams to support their efforts. This is perhaps an opportunity to do things differently, to bring communities and the wider system stakeholders closer together and use finance as a means of joining up and taking shared decisions about what's best for the people. Rather than simply providing funds, in future it might be an opportunity to tie in crowd sourcing of skills, expertise from appropriate organisations, network support and agree realistic outcome requirements with longer timescales.

9. What does recovery mean?

Resurgence over Recovery

Rather than recovering to what was, there seems to be an uprising and **resurgence** from communities to pull together, care for each other, to share and generate new ideas. This has been witnessed in all 5 communities in varying degrees and no doubt there is much more going on beneath the surface, neighbour to neighbour.

Leadership

As leaders, we have the opportunity now to **create space for resurgence**, to listen, support, enable and champion the ideas and possibilities emerging through community networks.

Challenge

In enabling community leadership, there is also a role for leaders to challenge the practices within our systems which are no longer helpful. Recreating something better will undoubtedly mean disrupting old ways and being brave together.

We are a community of possibilities, not of problems.
It's not about what this town used to be.

We have people right now, assets right here, and we can take action right away. We don't need another plan, another committee, or another meeting.

We can do it now!
We create the moments that show what this town could be and the places that take our breath away, if only just for a moment. What we create doesn't have to be permanent to create possibility. We don't care about titles or who holds official positions. The people who do hold titles may not think like us.

That's OK.
Community is our goal.

We try everyone's ideas. We don't let statistics and negative reports beat us up. Those numbers are nothing but a snapshot in time. What we do next is up to us. We aren't changing our town to attract others to come save us.

We are valuing the people who are here now and what we all want to create together.
That means everyone, every single one. People of all ages, all ethnicities, all backgrounds, all incomes, people who are new to town and people who have been here for generations.

All of us have ways of doing things, culture and things to share.
We all want a thriving town with a future for generations. We thrive by doing more business together.

We have everything we need.
We celebrate the entrepreneurs, business people, dreamers, makers, artists, experimenters, performers, crafters, bakers, upcyclers, junkers, people who sell in booths and homes and parking lots and trucks and sheds. Together we prosper, right here where we are. We are creating the community we want one small step at a time. It's nothing short of a revolution in how we build our town together.

Welcome to _____, an Idea Friendly town.

“ People living in community are best placed to drive change ”

Next Steps

"Citizenship is a muscle you build, not a cup you empty"

Jon Alexander, co-founder of the New Citizenship Project noted in a recent interview for the 'Now Then' magazine that between February and May this year, **the proportion of the population who think of Britain as a society where people look out for each other trebled.**

We have noticed in all 5 places in Derbyshire that where the notion of Mutual Aid has grown – be it formally or not, there has been a huge sense of joy and a renewed desire to care for each other. People have felt good for belonging to something that's making a difference.

Shared purpose and shared power is deeply human and requires nurturing and encouraging, not harnessing and capturing. Our next steps must be to discover together as a system how we enable more 'Mutual Aid' type behaviours and support them to grow and flourish.



Physical Activity

Let's build on what's emerging as strong:

- Increased interest in nature, trails, rivers and footpaths.
- Parks and local outdoor spaces
- Doorstep interaction and front gardens as play spaces
- Informal activity: skipping, table tennis, slack lining
- Cycling, bikes and active travel
- Home workouts
- Social Media Fitness Challenges
- Sports Equipment Loan Schemes
- Couch to 5k

And recognise where it's difficult:

- Reduced fitness levels and confidence for people who have been shielding
- Sports clubs, exercise groups and fitness classes which have stopped and many who are unsure how to come back, if at all.
- Reliance on access to digital technology which could exclude so many, particularly older people
- Young people choosing X-Box over exercise



“ A huge sense of joy and renewed desire to care for each other ”

A large, abstract geometric graphic is positioned on the right side of the image. It consists of several overlapping triangles and a central square, all in various colors including blue, yellow, pink, red, green, and orange. The graphic is set against a dark blue background.

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