



**North Yorkshire County Council
Thirsk and Malton Constituency Committee – 13 March 2019
Stronger Communities – Community Showcase**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with an update on the Stronger Communities Programme linked to the priority areas of School Readiness and Transport, and showcase the work of two key delivery partner organisations in the Thirsk and Malton constituency area; Ryedale Community Transport and Thirsk Community Library.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Stronger Communities Programme, working with a wide range of partners from within the Council, health and from the voluntary and community sector, agreed a strategy in 2017 and published the investment prospectus 'Inspire, Achieve, Innovate'. The work of the Programme and any projects supported through it will need to demonstrate that they are making a positive contribution to one or more of the following outcomes:

- Reduced inequalities;
- Improved social connectedness; and
- Improved social, physical or emotional well-being.

2.2 The scope for transforming the Council's services from traditional direct service delivery models to those that are more collaborative in their design, production and delivery is substantial; therefore the four priority programme service areas are:

- Libraries;
- Community Transport
- Children, Young People & Families, and
- Services for Older People and Adults.

2.3 School Readiness

One high-level strategic priority which has been identified both nationally and locally in North Yorkshire relates to the relatively large number of young children who are classified as not yet ready for school, which is then reflected in the fact that about 3

in 10 young children do not achieve a good level of development as part of the assessment at Early Years Foundation Stageⁱ. This figure rises to 5 in 10 for children eligible for free school meals (i.e. from disadvantaged backgrounds). It is however worth noting that most time for children is spent outside of school; this is where most of their life and learning takes place, somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of their waking hours (70%), rising to 100% during holidays. It is therefore imperative that the importance of the family and community environment is recognised.

In conjunction with Children and Young People's Services, the role of the Stronger Communities team is to develop a strong community asset base, growing the community and voluntary sector offer that supports the improvement of outcomes for children and young people; primarily through an asset based community development approach, and promoting social action in communities. To date, the Programme has supported a number of projects across the County that support the school readiness agenda including:

- Parent and toddler groups participating in healthy eating courses run by the PLA.
- Grants have been given to enable stay and play groups to purchase new resources.
- Community venues (for example village halls and churches) provided with resources to enable families with children to participate in community events.
- Breastfeeding peer support groups helped to find spaces to meet.
- A parent peer support group supported with business planning.
- Supported the children and young people's offer in Community Libraries (for example community arts projects).
- Pre-School resources and equipment.
- Group provision for young people with Special Educational Needs.

2.4 Transport

In a very large rural authority with a population density of 0.75 people per hectare, transport plays a key role in ensuring access to services is maintained; despite significant reductions in budget, NYCC continues to spend over £24m per annum on in-house transport services and £1.5m on subsidised bus services and community transport. NYCC have recognised, and continue to support the valuable contribution that the community and voluntary sector can make to the provision of responsive, effective and efficient transport schemes in local communities, whether that is through voluntary car schemes, community minibus projects or the provision of mopeds through the Wheels 2 Work scheme.

In conjunction with Integrated Passenger Transport (IPT) and the voluntary and community sector, the role of the Stronger Communities team is to develop an increased and more sustainable community transport offer. To date, the

Programme has supported a number of projects across the County that support this priority workstream. This includes:

- 'Go Local' is the new marketing brand for the 30 independent community transport providers across the County. Co-designed with providers in the county, Go Local is a modern, recognisable and unifying brand that is available for community transport organisations to use and clearly conveys to existing and potential new customers the range of community transport services available to them.
- Development of community minibus scheme in response to community need.
- Organisational development and business planning support to providers.

3.0 Community Showcase

3.1 Ryedale Community Transport

In the Thirsk and Malton area it takes residents double the time to get to all key services than it does for people in the rest of the Yorkshire and Humber. Rurality is a cross-cutting challenge for the area both in terms of equitable access to services but also to tackle the rural isolation. Vitally this year locally we are looking to work together to identify and develop potential solutions for the area. NYCC are reviewing transport provision in Ryedale this coming year as well as the Ryedale Development Group (Chaired by the Stronger Communities Delivery Manager for infrastructure support organisations) specifically looking at rural transport challenges and solutions.

Ryedale Community Transport (RCT) is the key community transport provider in the district. RCT have just celebrated their 30th anniversary, are a member of the Ryedale Charities Together Partnership and an essential partner to the wider services in the community as a whole.

3.2 Thirsk Community Library

Thirsk Community Library (TCL) was one of 22 Libraries transferred over to community management in April 2017. Based in Meadowfields (an extra care facility), the Library is now run by a volunteer led independent charity, with support from NYCC Library Service and Stronger Communities. TCL's first year of operation as a community library saw levels of good performance, with the number of visits and book issues, and the Summer Reading Challenge being areas of particular success.

Work to start developing TCL's broader vision to support the community of Thirsk (and surrounding area) in relation to improved health and wellbeing outcomes and school readiness has commenced, with a number of partnerships established. This includes:

- Established working relationship with the Children's Centre based in East Thirsk.
- Development of the 'Pop-up Library' through which library volunteers attend a local primary school on a monthly basis to raise awareness of the services offered, activities and events that are taking place, on-going and emerging campaigns (for example Bookstart Bear and Summer Reading Challenge) and to encourage children, young people and their families to become members of, and use library resources.
- In conjunction with the Thirsk School and Sixth Form College, developing volunteering placements for Duke of Edinburgh Award students.
- More recently, starting to explore the opportunity to provide work placements for those on the journey to seeking employment, and those undertaking qualifications in health and care, and early years education.

4.0 Points for discussion

- How should NYCC and partner statutory bodies approach rural transport challenges and how can this be enhanced and developed by the VCSE sector?
- How do NYCC continue to support community libraries in the most effective way possible to achieve their broader outcomes in terms of school readiness and improved health and wellbeing?

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

Report Authors: Paddy Chandler & Adele Wilson-Hope
Stronger Communities Delivery Managers (Ryedale & Hambleton)
North Yorkshire County Council
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ⁱ The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile is an assessment completed at the end of the Reception year (4 - 5 year olds). The profile measures children's attainment in 17 areas of learning, known as Early Learning Goals. Performance is measured by the percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD).