

Slough Community Networking Forum Summary

13th September 2023, The Royal British Legion, Cippenham



Introduction



Cllr Dexter Smith, the Leader of Slough Borough Council (SBC), acknowledged the challenges faced by the council. He emphasised the council's gratitude for the support of the voluntary sector, especially during the pandemic when all communities and partners worked together to provide coordinated assistance. He also expressed his vision of collaborating with the community to create a more positive and improved future for Slough. The introduction shows the importance of community involvement and cooperation in addressing challenges and building a better Slough.

What is Co-Production?

Asma Aziz, Head of Capacity Building and Fundraising at Slough CVS, discussed the concept of co-production within the voluntary sector, emphasising its importance for partnerships and the younger generation in the community. She highlighted the significance of valuing feedback from the community and residents, stressing the need to listen to the voices of the people in Slough. Additionally, Asma emphasised making services accessible to all by addressing cultural, religious, disability, language, and digital barriers to ensure inclusivity and relevance.

What does Co-Production look like to Young People?

"Collab"

"Co-Sketching"

"Team-Up"

Fact: Slough has the second largest proportion of children aged 15 or under in England and Wales, behind only Barking and Dagenham.

sloughcvsvoluntarysector.org.uk



Community Connectors Project

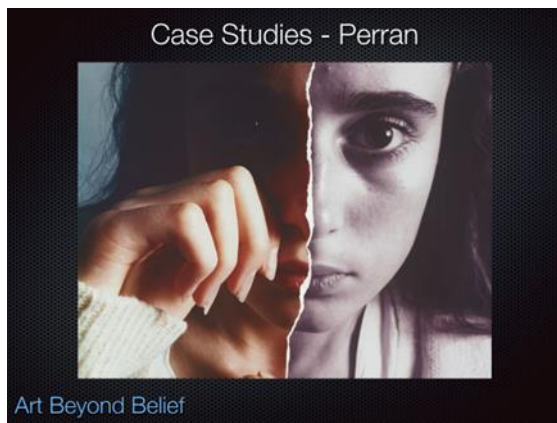
Kinder Bassi, Front Door Manager at Slough CVS, discussed a collaborative project involving Slough CVS, Slough Borough Council and Wexham Park Hospital. This project aims to guide residents towards community support services to improve their health and social well-being, while reducing the need for adult social care and hospital admissions. It uses Community Connectors and The Wellbeing for Slough Directory of Services, to promote social connections, combat social isolation, encourage independence, and boost residents' confidence in managing their well-being.



Community Connectors:

Working together to make our services accessible





Emel Soylu from Art Beyond Belief and Rob Deeks and Aliya Chaudri from The Young Carers Project (Together as One) presented best practices on collaborating with statutory providers like the NHS and SBC. Their presentations highlighted the significant positive impact of their services on vulnerable individuals:

- Art Beyond Belief (ABB) focused on combating isolation and loneliness, while enhancing mental health and wellbeing through their programmes. They demonstrated how creative engagement and artistic expression can have a profound effect on individuals' lives, promoting social connections and improved mental health.
- The Young Carers Project, led by Together as One, provides essential support services for young carers. Their approach recognises the unique challenges faced by young carers and aims to address their wellbeing needs. The project also opens doors to opportunities for personal development and aspirations, empowering young carers to lead fulfilling lives, while balancing caregiving responsibilities.

These presentations underscored the importance of collaborative efforts between community organisations and statutory providers, in addressing critical issues and making a positive impact on vulnerable individuals within the community.



The SBC Co-Production Network



Jane Senior, Jocelyn John, Bestina Bukori, and Vicky Tutty, representing Slough Borough Council, provided an overview of the Co-Production network. This network seeks to establish a collaborative partnership between individuals with personal experience using Health and Social Care Services and professionals in the field.

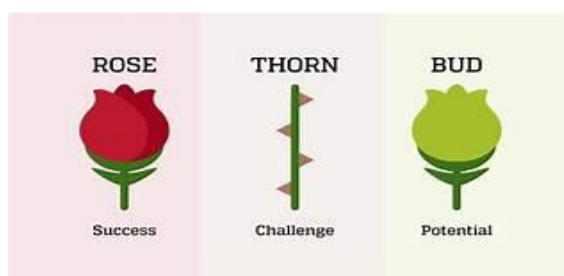
The main goals of the SBC Co-Production network are:

1. **Knowledge Sharing:** It aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and personal experiences between service users and health and social care professionals. This exchange informs the design and improvement of these services.
2. **Community Engagement:** The network actively engages the wider Slough community in discussions related to local priorities. This ensures that health and social care services are tailored to meet the specific needs and concerns of the local population.

The SBC Co-Production network is an initiative inviting members of the community to work collaboratively, to enhance the quality of Health and Adult Social Care Services in Slough, through knowledge sharing and community engagement.

The Rose, Bud and Thorn Workshop

Slough CVS hosted an interactive workshop, where partners gathered around 12 tables to engage in discussions.



1. **Thorn:** Participants identified challenges and difficulties encountered when collaborating with statutory services.
2. **Bud:** The focus here, was on finding solutions to overcome these challenges, through enhanced co-production and collaboration.
3. **Rose:** Participants shared success stories of positive partnership working that had made a significant impact in supporting the community and vulnerable residents.

The workshop aimed to address challenges, find solutions, and celebrate successful partnership action, in the context of community support and collaboration with statutory services.

Main points from the discussions



Summary of the main discussion points

Thorn:



- Challenges included a lack of trust, communication, and response from the council, as well as gaps in service provision.
- Statutory services often do not engage with residents and local voluntary organisations effectively.
- Access to community buildings, especially for the voluntary sector at reduced costs, was highlighted as an issue.
- Dealing with politics was challenging, and it was suggested to find the right contacts within the local authority.
- The lack of access to technology was identified as a barrier, particularly for those facing financial struggles.
- Statutory services were reported to have limited financial resources.
- The Asian Carers Group faced challenges in accessing services through the local authority.

Bud:



- Building relationships with partners and demonstrating transparency in service processes to build trust within the community was emphasised.
- Understanding each other's priorities and adopting a shared approach to collaboration was encouraged.
- Networking was seen as a valuable tool for building relationships and bridging sectors to develop new projects.
- The Compact agreement was mentioned as a means to optimise the use of community buildings.

Rose:



The transition from "bud" to "rose" involved the Slough Directory of Service, which required regular updates.

- Strong partnership work between Thames Valley Police, SBC, and the Voluntary Sector, aimed to protect and support young people at risk of gang involvement.
- Cllr Smith agreed to talk to the council regarding helping to secure reduced or free premises for the voluntary sector.
- The Asian Carers Group received resources and allotment space to support carers' mental health and well-being.
- Volunteering and networking strengthened relationships and explored opportunities for collaboration in statutory settings.
- A successful example involved making Talking Therapies more inclusive by providing user feedback on letters to engage people with language barriers.
- The "Ability Slough" project was launched through a joint partnership bid to support people with disabilities.

These discussions highlighted the challenges faced by the community, the importance of building trust and relationships, and successful partnership initiatives to address various issues. Collaboration between different sectors and ongoing communication were key themes throughout the discussions.

Slough Foodshare Initiative

Connect Aid's proposal to open a store on Bath Road offering surplus food at reduced rates to residents and distributing surplus to food banks and the voluntary sector is a commendable initiative. This approach not only addresses food waste but also supports the community by providing affordable access to essential food items. It reflects Connect Aid's commitment to working in collaboration and making a positive impact on the community's well-being. Such initiatives have the potential to enhance food security and reduce food inequality, making them valuable contributions to the community.

Closure/ Any Other Business

Asma expressed gratitude to all attendees for their presence and extended a special thank you to The British Royal Region for hosting the event.

Date of next forum: 13th December 2023

