

# Cherwell District Council Wellbeing Service

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*The wellbeing service has residents at its core; encouraging social action, resilience, good governance and use of resources in a range of projects and community led programmes. Delivering services as well as facilitating an environment of self-help and volunteering.*

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## **Leisure Facilities - Community Development - Sport and Physical Activity - Healthy Communities**

Since March 2020 the Wellbeing Team have supported communities in their endeavours to respond to the pandemic. The Cherwell Community Hub was managed by this team, giving detailed information and practical help to residents who had to shield; either because they were Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or because they had to self-isolate. They have provided practical help and solutions for shopping, feeling isolated, dog walking and pharmacy collections. They have signposted people to debt and money services, grant provision and voluntary sector groups able to befriend and come alongside people at their most desperate times. In the initial lockdown the team were joined by the healthy place shaping team to boost the numbers of staff and provide resilience.

The Wellbeing Team has strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations in the voluntary sector and robust relationships in housing and social care. It has been gratifying to see those relationships underpin so much of the excellent delivery and response in Cherwell. We need to particularly mention Citizens Advice who repurposed the Volunteer Drivers scheme to make emergency food deliveries to those people who had to shield or isolate in the early days and continued to provide their advice sessions to a broader number of people who were new to the benefits system or had to ask for help for the first time. They have also been instrumental in delivering the Covid support grant aid to people needing financial support for food and essentials such as utility costs

We have also worked with Good Food Oxford to establish a Cherwell Food Network - a group of organisations intent on providing food to anyone in need and reducing food waste. It involves some well-established groups like Banbury Food for Charities to completely new organisations such as the Cherwell Collective as well as Food banks, pantries, larders, all working together

### **Sport and Physical activity**

At the start of the pandemic our usual services shut down requiring us to put activity online. We have adapted our provision to ensure that residents still received quality physical activity opportunities in a safe way. The FAST programme has adapted by offering families a bespoke service which they get in touch with space and equipment they have available and the team design activities and lend equipment and resources if required. A new website and Youtube was designed to offer online content and resources while in lockdown <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/activity-and-wellbeing-hub>

**FAST** - has continued to grow massively over the last year providing a family's support, ideas and resources during Covid to stay active. 6500 individuals and 2400 families are on the programme with

a huge range of opportunities. These include Street Tag which is a new walking app that we delivered in July 2020 which enabled the families to safely be active together with over 9000 residents currently participating.. Other activities include Multi Skills, Boxing, Cycling , Climbing Swimming and many more as well as resources

**Active Reach** is a new programme started in September 2020, funded by Sport England, in Grimsbury with a particular focus on the BAED community. Banbury Mosque and Lighthouse Parish along with Aspire, Legacy Leisure, Active Oxfordshire, Banbury United, St Leonards Church and Age UK are all involved with over 500 people attending opportunities such as learning to swim, gym fitness, yoga, seated exercise, online classes, health walks and more

**Key Worker bike scheme** – bikes got donated, fixed and handed out to key workers who needed one. Since April 2020 over 100 bikes have been upcycled and found a grateful owner with this growing into a FAST bike scheme for families who need support to access a free bike from June 2021.

**Youth Activator** – The Activator programme has continued to provide an essential service and grow. During the pandemic the activator programme provided schools with support for Key Worker Children by delivering adapted physical activity sessions in a covid safe way to over 3500 children across 26 schools. The new Mental Health and Physical Activity programme has been developed in partnership with Mind as a clear need to support primary school children in year 5 & 6. This has seen 16 schools access the 6 week programme that combines physical activity and 6 topics around mental health. The partnership with Schools has never been stronger with the Activators being embedded into school programme as a key part of the physical activity offered and held in high regard.

**Top up swimming** has been offered to four schools in partnership with North Oxfordshire School Partnership and Legacy Leisure where children in year 7 who have missed the opportunity to swim 25 meters can access this free of charge to the school through a top up swimming programme. This has been so popular that it will continue into the next academic year and will be another programme we offer to help address the inequalities with swimming. This is another externally funded programme

**Cycling development** – In partnership with British Cycling we have offered a range of provision for all ages to get on their bike and even access a bike if they haven't got one. The Key Worker Bike Scheme offers the opportunity for adults to gain a bike along with the FAST bike scheme. Courses have also been delivered to train up teachers, CDC staff and volunteers to be able to run school programmes from September along with family and ladies rides in the community. This will offer a huge range of opportunities along with Dr Bike sessions to FAST families to maintain the bikes once in use.

### **Community Development**

During the lockdown period, the team had to look at different ways to stay in touch with residents and support our voluntary organisations and partners who were still delivering services. Our usual quarterly newsletter the "Community Link" which offers advice, guidance and shares good practice to the voluntary sector became a monthly publication to help groups navigate new guidance and offer essential support during such strange times. The feed back from partners was that this was an invaluable resource and that their local authority was continually supporting them.

A priority was given to keeping in touch and supporting our most vulnerable individuals and communities. Activity and information sheets were produced aimed at engaging our older residents,

to share essential information and contact numbers but also to give them activities to do when so many were being asked to shield. The team worked with our community wardens, sheltered housing partners and Age UK to distribute hard copies across the district.

Many events were cancelled in 2020 but we still managed to try and keep residents entertained. A play day resource pack was created and distributed to schools, early year settings and youth groups to allow young people to still get involved in activities during the summer be it in their back gardens. The Bicester Festival went online and streamed live performances over the weekend in September and engaged local artists to make tutorial videos for activities to do at home.

Over a 1000 activity packs were distributed to our most vulnerable young people and families in the last year, containing games, reading books, sports equipment and arts and craft materials. Working with partners in our Brighter Future wards we were able to continue to engage and share high quality resources to support families in lockdown.

Cherwell is committed to nature conservation and it couldn't be more important after the last 12 months with residents connecting more with nature than ever. Our Community Nature Plan sets out how we will contribute towards looking after the natural environment for wildlife and people. It includes aims, actions and targets relating to health and wellbeing, planning and sustainable development, climate action and land and buildings management.

During lockdown working with our forest schools partner Muddy Feet a school transition resource was created to help support young people returning to school using nature as an intervention which has been shared with all schools in the district and received with positive feedback.

To celebrate wildlife and nature across the district and make it easy for residents to engage a wild calendar has been created to celebrate different themes each month which include step into spring, growing together and park life with helpful links and resources held on the CDC website in the information hub – connect to nature.

<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/118/communities/532/community-nature-plan>

**Cherwell voluntary organisations forum** took place online in September 2020 and delivered a week of webinars, training courses and open forums to support the voluntary sector under a variety of themes. Although groups do like to meet in person, some elements of the online forum will be kept in the future to be able to reach the maximum audience.

**Community Halls** - The council supports voluntary residents associations in Banbury and Bicester who lease the council owned community Centres to comply with guidance and maintain good levels of activity. The team have helped groups apply for grants and rate relief.

### **Leisure Facilities**

Leisure Facilities across the District have made a significant contribution during the pandemic on a number of key fronts. Not only have the facilities all re-opened in line with each stage of the Government roadmap for a return to leisure activity but some Centres have also had to stand up as either symptomatic or asymptomatic testing centres.

**National Leisure Resilience Fund** Cherwell were successful in a bid process to secure £320,000 of Government funding to support the re-opening of the Leisure Centres and are participating in the national Moving Communities programme.

**Woodgreen Leisure Centre** in Banbury has been a symptomatic test centre for a number of months now supporting those residents who displayed symptoms and required an immediate test. The partnership approach with our Leisure Operator was key to the success of this launch as well as support from the Facilities Management Team. In recent weeks with the return of customers to the Centre not only using the Outdoor Pool which opened at the end of March but also the re-opening of the gym, library and group exercise classes the logistics in and around the site has been challenging but well managed

**Spiceball Leisure Centre** in Banbury stood up as an asymptomatic test centre until early May allowing residents to access the facility for Covid testing. Again, this was in partnership with our Leisure Operator (Parkwood Leisure) with Leisure Centre Staff acting as operatives for the Site. As part of the transition to re-opening more activities within Spiceball Leisure Centre, the asymptomatic test centre moved to Banbury Utd FC, however, is still being managed by the Leisure Facilities Team.

In terms of access to Leisure Centres/Facilities the first of these to re-open were those facilities that could accommodate Outdoor Sport with the directly managed Facilities at North Oxfordshire Academy and Cooper School re-opening its doors on the 29<sup>th</sup> March for organised sport. This also coincided with the earlier than planned opening of the Outdoor Pool at Woodgreen Leisure Centre. 12<sup>th</sup> April saw the re-opening of Gyms. Swimming Pools at Spiceball, Bicester and Kidlington Leisure Centres with the re-introduction of group exercise classes from 17<sup>th</sup> May

### **Healthy Communities**

**Grants** - Since the start of 2020 we have set up and run four new grant schemes:

Good Cause Partners Community Fund: A grant to distribute CDC's share of income from Cherwell Lottery ticket sales.

Community Hubs Emergency Relief Fund: A grant specifically aimed at voluntary sector organisations distributing food and providing essential services to people affected by the pandemic.

Covid-19 Councillor Priority Fund: A small grant fund whereby each councillor had a £2,000 budget to distribute amongst parish councils and third sector groups affected by the pandemic. 115 awards were made.

COMF Parishes Fund: A grant specifically aimed at Parish Councils, for initiatives to reduce the spread of infection and mitigate the social effects of the pandemic

In December 2020 we took over the running of the OCC Councillor Priority Fund. Run along similar lines to the CDC Councillor Priority Fund, but with a broader remit and each councillor has a budget of £15,000. Last year over 500 awards were made.

**Parish Liaison** The Wellbeing Team leads on CDC's relationships with rural communities and communication with our 79 parishes. Twice a year we host a conference style Parish Liaison Meeting to consult, inform and inspire parishes, and give them the opportunity to network with each other and senior CDC members and officers. Since July 2020 the Parish Liaison meetings have been virtual.

During the first lockdown we realised the need to keep parishes more informed about the rapidly changing situation, so we began issuing a fortnightly 'Parish Bulletin' consisting of items and links specially curated for the parish council and rural community audiences. This regularly includes grant opportunities, consultations, changes to government guidance on village hall and community facility management, examples of good practice, and up to date information on infections and testing.

**Local Strategic Partnership** The Wellbeing Team manages and facilitates the Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The purpose of the LSP is to promote dialogue and cross-sector working between

statutory, business and third sector partners. A recent expansion of the LSP Board included partners from Oxford University Hospitals Trust and the Primary Care Networks. The Board of 20 representatives is chaired by the leader of CDC and since Summer 2020 has been held virtually

**Community Resilience and Good Neighbour Schemes** Working with partners including Community First Oxfordshire and Volunteer Link-up, we encourage the sustainability of parish and neighbourhood based self-help and neighbour support arrangements.

**Military Covenant** The Wellbeing Team leads on the Military Covenant for CDC, supporting the Military Champion (Cllr McHugh) and liaising with county and regional colleagues to ensure veterans, service personnel and military families are not disadvantaged. In 2020 we secured MOD Employer Recognition Scheme 'Silver' status for CDC.

**Health & Wellbeing** The Wellbeing Team represents CDC on a number of countywide wellbeing partnerships, including Mental Health Concordat, Oxfordshire Tobacco Control Alliance and Health Inequalities Implementation Group. We act as joint commissioner for the Citizens Advice Social Prescribing service and fund and oversee their district wide Volunteer Connect and Volunteer Driver services.