

Alcester Town Council Health and Wellbeing Working Group
Meeting on 16th November 2023, 1.30pm at Globe House

Present: Cllr Kathryn Cargill (Chair), Wendy Sherwood, Vanessa Lowe, Ali Buchanan, Jen Hopkins, Rev Alison Mackay
Apologies: Cllr Alison Leask

1. SEND Support Project

- a) Wendy had extracted the following list of initiatives/activities that SEND parents would like to see in Alcester from Jen's notes from the SEND meeting at St Nicholas School:
- A SEN youth club
 - Alcester becoming a neurodiverse friendly town
 - Support specific to autistic girls
 - Safe space to go if child is feeling dysregulated
 - A support group with talks from professionals
 - Information sharing from ATC to SEND parents
 - List of SEN aware childcare providers
 - List of respite services
 - Access to SEN holiday clubs
 - Help to fill in forms
 - Access to counselling service
 - Subsidised gym membership
 - Make connections with Entrust Care Partnership
- b) Wendy and Vanessa offered to lead on this project. **Action WSHE, VLOW**
- c) The group agreed that ATC would start a support group for SEND parents, to which appropriate professionals would be invited. Help with completing forms could be offered at the group. Many of the other suggestions from the list above could then follow from the group, with the need being established to allow applications for funding to be made. **Action WSHE**
- d) Local schools and pre-schools could be asked to publicise the new group. We agreed that the group would be open to all parents local enough to attend, to include Bidford, Studley and the villages. **Action WSHE, VLOW**
- e) It was agreed that a Google form made available through social media would be another way to try to find parents who might be interested in the group. **Action JHOP, WSHE**

- f) It is not easy to find the range of Special Needs services offered in Warwickshire. Worcestershire has a far more helpful website. Vanessa will contact the portfolio holder at WCC to see if Warwickshire could look at doing something similar.
Action VLOW
- g) It was felt that initially the sessions should be held monthly. This would need to be coordinated with the existing group meetings at St Nicholas school. It was suggested to start with a drop-in session on a Tuesday afternoon in early January, with initial advertising of the group before Christmas. **Action WSHE**
- h) We discussed the possibility of becoming a neurodiverse-friendly town. This could include awareness training for local businesses and interested residents. Ali will investigate what support and training might be available. **Action ABUC**
- i) Alison suggested that some of the church's volunteer group might be interested in possible mentoring for SEND parents and will follow this up. **Action AMAC**
- j) Wendy and Kathryn will be meeting with Everyone Active about fitness classes for older residents and can raise the idea of subsidised gym membership then.
Action WSHE and KCAR

2. Home Educators Update

- The first drop-in was well received and a second meeting is planned. One idea is for a social activity for children and parents to get to know each other. The main benefits are expected to be the opportunity for socialising and advice and support for functions normally dealt with by schools, eg entrance for exams.

3. Other Updates

- The business case for the Alcester Community Shed at the old squash courts has been approved by Full Council. Funding promised and actually received now totals over £90k
- Progress on the teenage sexual health project is slow, mainly waiting on response from external services. Alcester Pharmacy is now ready to offer new services, but posters to advertise this are still awaited.
- Funding has been agreed for an additional half hour a week of youth club time for sexual health activities. It was suggested that this extra time should be badged as offering a range of 'services' to try to avoid stigma. It was suggested that Vanessa and Wendy include asking about the likely uptake of condom services by young people when they meet the schools. **Action WSHE and VLOW**

- Extra funding has been received for the Christmas holiday lunch club (in January) from WCC HAF (holiday activities and food). The proviso is that the session must be for four hours, so there will need to be activities provided for the children.

It was suggested that a workshop for Window Wanderland could be included. Vanessa will ask Cllr K Foster for assistance. **Action VLOW**

Other craft activities will be included. Wendy and Ali will plan the day, Jen agreed to 'MC' the craft session and Jen and Alison will seek to coopt volunteers from their church groups. **Action WSHE, ABUC, JHOP, AMAC**

- Delivery of a Cybersafe session has been agreed for the Youth Club. Ali is arranging possible dates. **Action ABUC**
- The Community Fridge continues to be very popular, but will soon need to look at fundraising for their future running costs. Ali will liaise with Alison on ideas for funding applications (eg Severn Trent) **Action AMAC and ABUC**

4. Next Meetings

The next meeting will be on Thursday March 7th 2024, 1.30 pm at Globe House.

5. Update Notes

The following update notes from Wendy were circulated ahead of the meeting.

Brief Summary of activity from September 2023 to November 2023 (H&W Working Group)

1. **The repair café** – We have new volunteers, a total of 38. We are outgrowing our space at The Depot and continue to be very busy.
2. **Well Connected** weekly group continues to be well attended, although the numbers have dropped recently. We are considering running some extra sessions that focus on a particular topic, such as cyber crime etc. We have two new volunteers.
3. **The Crafty Lunch Club** is continuing to be well liked and attended and is now officially a Community Interest Company. They are now independent from ATC.
4. We delivered more **kids holiday lunches** during the summer holiday and included free family picnic bag for 30 families. We had an extremely good turn out at all sessions, with at least 60 people attending. We will continue these over October half term, Christmas and February half term and funding for all of these sessions has been secured. The sessions at Christmas and Feb will be extra special.

5. **The Health and Wellbeing Partnership** meeting took place on 18th October. There are separate notes available.
6. **Contraception/teenage pregnancy.** Work around this topic is ongoing. It has been agreed that STI kits can be ordered for collection at the Hopkins Pharmacy rather than at home (in certain circumstances) and that they are ready to go with EHC supply through the pharmacy and to distribute condoms as well. Funding has been sought for an extra half hour youth club time for sexual health activities. We still need to do some research of needs in the schools and find practical ways to get the kits delivered and collected from the Pharmacy.
7. **Working for Marcus.** We have delivered one training session in Alcester Academy, One for teachers (all 3 schools) and one for the community. The final numbers attending the community event was disappointing. Two more training sessions at the remaining schools will take place before Christmas and this will conclude our work around child exploitation.
8. **The Depot Youth Club** continues to be successful and well attended.
9. **Alcester Community Shed.** Lots of ongoing work around this. We now have a committee, constitution, bank account, and hopefully premises. There is also now a squash courts working group to look at the feasibility of these premises becoming the home of both the shed and repair café. Funding has been sought and granted for this purpose. We attended a ShedFest to gather info and visited two local sheds.
10. **SEND support. This is now an area of ongoing work for the H&W Working Group to undertake.** We have attended a meeting with the SENCO teacher at St. Nicholas Primary School and subsequently attended a coffee morning for the parents of SEND children, to find out their needs. We will now consider these options and see what support ATC and the partnership can offer.
11. **Alcester Community Fair** took place on 16th September and was very well attended. We had some good feedback from both attendees and stall holders who found the event enjoyable and useful.
12. **Grand Days Out.** Funding has been received to take older people out on day trips and more funding has been secured. Five trips have taken place so far with another one planned for 31st October.