

# Changing Futures – Learning Report – Positive Activities

## November 2022

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<b>Sheffield has a wide range of positive activities on offer</b>	<p>Positive activities are meaningful and purposeful activity that help participants develop new social connections, grow in confidence, learn new skills and move towards more structured and long-term uses of time such as education, training and employment.</p> <p>The benefits of such activities, especially for those with support needs, are well documented and are nationally recognised through projects and programmes including the NHS <a href="#">Social Prescribing</a> element of universal care. Most positive activities are delivered through the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE).</p> <p>Within the Changing Futures delivery bid we allocated £200k to fund either new or the continuation/expansion of existing positive activities delivered by the VCSE. To inform this work we mapped out the cities current offer and found over 300 activities were available covering a broad range of subjects.</p> <p>Whilst our mapping demonstrated there is a vast range of positive activities being delivered in Sheffield it also identified important gaps across the current provision. These gaps include barriers to accessibility, a lack of sustainable delivery and a scarcity of provision on evenings and weekends.</p>
<b>Awareness, accessibility and stigma were key barriers</b>	<p>We worked with people using services to better understand what did and didn't work in the city in relation to Positive Activities, this included reviewing the cities current offer and where any gaps in provision might exist.</p> <p>Participants told us that accessibility was the main barrier. Many were unaware of what activities were on offer, where they were and how to access them. In addition, many flagged concerns around being judged as equally obstructive and were worried about attending a group only to be turned away, kicked out or ostracised.</p> <p>The other notable barrier was the lack of provision during evenings and weekends which participants told us were often the times they felt loneliest and most likely to relapse into negative behaviours such as substance use.</p>
<b>Sustainability was a shared concern for providers AND people accessing activities</b>	<p>Organisations highlighted insecure, short-term funding cycles as a critical barrier to delivery whilst people accessing support services expressed their frustration at activities starting and then stopping when funding ended.</p> <p>Participants told us they would rather have a smaller number of longer-term activities in the city than a wide range of insecure options. This also tied into challenges around communication of what is on offer as the landscape in this area changed so frequently.</p>
<b>Co-production offers funders the opportunity to improve their thinking and have a greater impact</b>	<p>We are working collaboratively with people who have lived experience to develop and deliver best practice training resources on how to set up, advertise and deliver inclusive positive activities. This training will be aimed at organisations and/or services that deliver positive activities for vulnerable adults to improve accessibility and reduce stigma.</p> <p>Using the data from our mapping work, the Changing Futures team are supporting colleagues in Sheffield City Council to improve the information offer around positive activities across the city.</p> <p>With a focus on sustainability Changing Futures have agreed to jointly commission provision in this area with the Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team increasing the funding pool and removing constraints linked to the lifespan of the Changing Futures programme.</p>

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