

*St Matthew's Church*

# St Matthew's Community Development Project

**How Can a Small Organisation Make a Big Difference?**

**(2015 – 2016)**



## Executive Summary

Through this project we are *breaking down the walls of social isolation and empowering our community*.

We are doing this through...

- networking,
- supporting,
- leading and managing, and
- shaping values and influencing.

Our Community Development Manager, Pam Robinson, has had an exceptional year of progress. Her value to this area as a community builder cannot be over emphasised.

- Communication is the key to the success of this project and Pam continues to build an extensive network of communication channels.
- Pam has continued to support a number of new and established local groups and community initiatives. She helps to build sustainability by assisting them to gain funding and improve their governance.
- Pam is a natural leader and has a gift for bringing together large scale events as well as smaller scale projects. She knows and is known by those who make decisions for our area. She holds key strategic roles in the local community. She knows not only local groups but also local people. She listens to their concerns and shares their stories.
- Pam has built up extensive new partnerships with key organisations.

This report looks at the impact of Pam's role over the last 12 months.

Some of Pam's achievements are easily delineated whilst others work relate to the breadth of her role.



## How can the resources of a community be used to the best effect?

**By *Networking*:** drawing together small groups and establishing a network, creating robust communication, facilitating and sharing resources, forging new links, and raising awareness of opportunities.

**Pam is constantly seeking to build a network across the local area which currently encompasses over 50 groups and impacts over 1000 individuals. Networks don't just happen, they need forums in which to connect and someone to facilitate.**

Key highlights of this year...

- **Building key relationships** with *Stockport Homes, Targeted Prevention Alliance, Beanstalk* (the literacy charity), *Give2Gain time bank, SMBC Localities Management Team, library services, public health, etc.*
- **Continuing** to strengthen partnerships with local *councillors, schools, police, community services, groups and charities.*
- **Extending** the reach of group and community websites and social media (for example, **promoting a human interest story** of a local mum donating a Christmas hamper to an elderly lady in the community reached over **6,000 people** on *Facebook*).
- **Continuing** to raise our profile via the local press, social media and the Talking Newspaper.

Where next?

- **Continue** to build and facilitate the network.
- **Explore** a possible visual awareness project between Walthew House, a local school and the Neighbourhood Charity Crafters group.
- **Develop** a more integrated relationship between the library service and Olive ROC Centre, bringing a new approach to the Storytime sessions, leading to a greater sharing of resources and create a deeper awareness of the library service in the community.



## Impact statement – Stockport MBC

*Pam Robinson is the Community Development Worker for St Matthews Church but her impact goes far beyond the Church and its congregation... Unfortunately there is some significant deprivation in the Edgeley area and the work that Pam does has a **direct impact on reducing inequalities**...*

*My role for Stockport Council is to support the development of community strength and resilience in localities. Going forward I am certain that **Pam's role will add value to building the strength of this area**. For example a key project led by Stockport Homes, a local housing provider will be identifying gaps in provision and then working with the community to grow groups, activities and services to address the gap. Pam will be key to supporting the development of many of these projects and activities through the **peer support** she offers and **the local knowledge of skills and opportunities which she networks so well**.*

*Pam is a pleasure to work with, **generous with her rich knowledge of the area and supportive of those trying to make a difference**. Her **networking and peer support is helping other groups and individuals realise their aspirations** for their area and is contributing to a thriving and valued Edgeley and Cheadle Heath.*

*Carolyn Anderson, Localities Manager*



## How do we help groups to become sustainable?

**By Supporting:** multiplying resources through partnerships, offering information and practical advice, promoting groups, attracting new volunteers from the community and sharing skills.

**Pam has helped to support over 15 groups which work with over 500 individuals.**

Key highlights of this year...

- **Establishing St. Matthew's as a Community Hub**, under the new engagement programme with *Stockport MBC Localities Management* and *Stockport Homes*. This will enable us to reach more isolated people, identify their needs, and work with partners to develop new opportunities.
- **Participating as a member of the *Click in the Community* project team**, an *Awards for All* funded project aiming to get 100 new people online (in partnership with *Stockport and District MIND*, the mental health charity).
- **Securing £1,000 funding for Asian Family Group (APPNA)** to enable sewing classes to continue for Asian ladies.
- **Connecting** various groups into mutually beneficial partnerships - for example, when working with a local school, Pam identified a need for more bean bags. Through her work supporting the *Neighbourhood Charity Crafters*, Pam was able to connect these two groups resulting in a craft evening where local crafters came together at St. Matthew's to sew a mountain of bean bags with materials donated from the local community.
- **Facilitating three new volunteers** being placed locally thanks to contact with *Targeted Prevention Alliance* and *Abacus Children's Centre*.
- **Recruiting four new volunteers** to the monthly computer confidence session at *St. Matthew's Church*.

Where next?

- **Support Olive Community Project** to develop a new website.



- **Partner** with a new initiative (*Men In Sheds*), to secure funding and donations of material, and an increase in membership.
- **Mentor** the new *Community Worker* at *St Thomas' Church* and assist other churches to define job descriptions and secure funding to recruit for similar roles.

### Impact statement - APPNA (*Asian Family Group*)

When I first met Pam, she was part of the Edgeley and Cheadle Heath Community First funding panel. She **supported our bid** for swimming lessons for Asian ladies and has since **helped me several times to put bids together to win further funding**, mainly to set up sewing classes that helped Asian ladies come together and learn how to make clothing. This has **helped to reduce social isolation and give us new skills** which benefit the whole family.

Without Pam's help in continuing to secure funding for the group, we would have found it very difficult to continue the sewing classes.

Pam is always **willing to spend time** with me, to **tell us about new funding opportunities**, to **help come up with new ideas** for the group and to **keep us in touch with what is going on** in the local community.

Rukhsana Anwar, APPNA (*Asian Family Group*, Stockport)



## How do we engage with our community?

**By *Leading and Managing*:** bringing people together through large scale community events, holiday activities, building on existing activities and building partnerships.

**This year Pam has been instrumental in planning or leading 11 major events across our community which have involved over 1000 individuals. Additionally, Pam manages regular groups which involve around 50 people per month.**

Key highlights of this year...

- **Supporting local police in the management of the Emergency Services Day**, held on the high street, bringing emergency and support services together with local people and businesses.
- **Forming a new partnership with *Neighbourhood Charity Crafters***, who create a variety of items to give away (baby clothes and blankets for mums in need, hats for the homeless, twiddle muffs for people living with dementia, greetings cards for a local youth club to sell). The community have been encouraged to give resources and funding has been secured so that all who want to be involved can be without the need for their own resources. Around **15 ladies attend every month** and over 50 items have already been given away. New friendships are being formed and isolation is being reduced.
- **Training 15 people as Dementia Friends.**
- **Managing our Community Open Day**, which was the largest public event to date, with over 36 groups and activities on offer, including **9 new** partner organisations.

Where next?

- **Continue** to support existing events and activities.
- **Identify** new training and awareness opportunities.



- **Use** her extensive network of contacts to encourage the sharing of knowledge and information to ensure that groups thrive.
- **Develop** partnership with the *Give2Gain time-bank*, to encourage time exchanges across the community.

### **Impact statement** – volunteer at St Matthew’s *Comfortable with Computers* group

*I first met Pam by chance whilst I was out shopping. We started to chat about different things and Pam mentioned that she belonged to St Matthew’s Church and about the help they provided for the community. I asked if she needed any volunteers to help with computers and she told me that the Church was hoping to start a project to do just that later in the year.*

*At that time I was caring for my Husband and had been for 2 years. I needed some sort of respite for myself for at least a couple of hours occasionally and thought voluntary work would be perfect for me. Unfortunately, shortly after meeting Pam my Husband passed away.*

*The Comfortable with Computers sessions started later in the year and it was an **absolute lifesaver** for me at that time. In helping other people it also helped me in trying to get my life back together. Now more and more people are coming for help with their computers, tablets, ipads and mobile phones and **I find that voluntary work is so rewarding**. Recently we have started doing the voluntary computer sessions at The Olive Café on Castle Street. I think it’s an ideal place to hold such sessions because people walking into the cafe can also see we can give free advice on any problems they have with their devices. That too is getting busier.*

*I am so grateful to Pam for all the support she has given me and continues to give to all the volunteers. **She is an amazing coordinator and nothing is too much trouble for her**. Caring for someone distances you from people and you live for the person you are caring for. You don’t have any time for your own life and it can shatter your confidence. Through volunteering my life has certainly changed for the better. I have made some wonderful new friends and have regained my confidence. I consider myself very lucky to have met Pam that day.*

*Maeve Noble*



## How do we speak out for justice to those who make decisions?

**By shaping values and influencing:** by being a force for good in the community, getting involved through taking leadership roles, attending residents' associations and by becoming a known presence in the communities of Edgeley, Cheadle Heath and Bridgehall.

**With the move away from statutory provision, councils in particular are looking to the local community to “bridge the gap”. Pam’s breadth of knowledge of community development and the local community provides an invaluable resource to those in strategic planning positions. In this new environment, good decision making is essential when planning how the needs of the community can be met both effectively and fairly.**

Key highlights of this year...

- **Holding strategic leadership positions** across the local area: *Olive ROC Centre* (Trustee), *Rose Walker Community Centre* (Trustee), *York Street Residents’ Association* (Chair), *Residents’ of Edgeley and Cheadle Heath group* (Member).
- **Changing perceptions** of those who are homeless, refugees or asylum seekers by creating an opportunity for the community to donate food and goods to a local food bank, a homeless charity and refugee support group (*Loaves and Fishes*) and a group working with new mums in need and their babies (*Early Essentials*).
- **Raising awareness** of the challenges faced by the visually impaired through the *Dining in the Dark* experience at the community café (engaged with over 50 people).

Where next?

- **Plan** the strategic development of the *Rose Walker Community Centre*, in line with major new investment in the local area.
- **Establish** the charitable status of the *York Street Residents’ Association*.



- **Offer** to facilitate a workshop for *Stockport Homes* and other partners to help shape the model for future community development.
- **Develop** opportunities to work with *GM Action on Poverty* to change negative attitudes towards poverty.

### Impact statement – local Councillor

*Edgeley and Cheadle has **many community groups** but they **often existed in isolation** and were not aware of other activities and opportunities in the area. When Pam became involved, one of her major priorities was to **create networks** throughout the area and make sure that **communications between the groups improved considerably**. To do this Pam has **demonstrated leadership skills**, has **encouraged groups to grow** and to become part of the wider community and to **reach out to other organisations and individuals**.*

*Pam is a Trustee of the Rose Walker Community Centre, which has gone through some turbulent times but is now doing well; she is a Trustee of Olive ROC Centre, Chair of the York Street Residents Association and attends the REACH Community Group. With the Reach Your Community website (set up by Pam and local Councillors), social media and publicity through the local press there is now a much stronger network of communication and a sharing of information which benefits all local residents and community groups.*

*Sheila Bailey, local Councillor.*



## Final Word

As we have considered all that has been achieved in the last year, we see that Pam's role contains a large amount of strategic planning, working with both individuals and groups, as well as hands on practical engagement.

We continue to aim to be flexible as we respond to the needs of the community and facilitate the engagement of community groups, charities, and statutory bodies.

We recognise, however, that in community development the best growth is often organic, so we look forward to seeing how this role will continue to develop.

We are beginning to have a significant impact on the lives of those who live and work in our local area but we feel this work is only just getting started.

There is so much more still to do and we continue to reflect on how we can develop this pivotal role of community development into the future.

**As this project is all about people, we want to leave the very last word to someone with whom we've worked over the last year.**

### **Impact statement – daughter of a Socially Yours member**

*I thought I would drop you an email to express my thanks for all the work you and Quality Care do in running 'Socially Yours'. My Mum (Alma) attends regularly and thoroughly enjoys it. She has made new friends, which is not something that happens often when you are 84 years old, and she looks forward to the activities that you do which are meaningful and challenging at the same time.*



*Mum had a fall last October and broke her hip, she is recovering well but it has really knocked her confidence and she hasn't been out of the house since without being accompanied by a member of the family and hasn't walked far when she has been out. A couple of weeks ago none of her family or her (new) friends family were available to transport them to the club. However undeterred they decided to walk there (a good 20 minute walk at their pace) her friend called for her and both of them set off together, Mum using her outdoor walking frame encouraged and supported by her friend. The motivation for this was definitely not wanting to miss her afternoon at Socially Yours.*

*The whole experience has boosted her confidence in her ability to walk further than she thought and being accompanied by someone other than her family. Should no lift be available in the future I'm sure she won't hesitate to do it again.*

Jenny

