

# Annual Report 2023-24



Barry Island Coach Trip Summer 2023



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**We are Stronger Together**

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**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**  
GLCOMMUNITIES.ORG.UK

**LISTEN TO OUR PODCASTS!**



**Special points of interest:**

- Managed household debt £4,223,687.09
- 2,721 food vouchers to struggling families.
- Warm Spaces provided 600 prepared meals.
- 18 Job Seekers found their way into employment
- Over 10 men that shared a shed.
- 18 Households who were able to get online through Digital Inclusion
- 741 Volunteering hours at the Advice & Resource Centre

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"What would you say to others thinking of becoming a GL Communities volunteer?"

**JUST GO FOR IT!**

**Message from the Chairs**

As Co-Chairs of the Board of Trustees, we are immensely proud to present the Annual Report and Financial Statements describing GL Communities work during 2023-24. It has been another busy year for all of us and we would like to thank our stakeholders for their ongoing support for the charity.

In a year where the cost-of-living crisis has impacted our communities, we have continued to witness its impact not only on those requiring emergency support, but also on the increasing number of individuals falling into debt and the effects that stress has caused on people's mental and physical well-being. Whilst, we have made concerted efforts to address these challenges by enhancing our services, initiating new projects, and fostering strong partnerships, the demands continue to grow.

GL Communities has continued to play an integral part in the local area, with programme initiatives such as the Money Advice Service, Employability, Inclusion, Community Development, Community Connectors and Wellbeing to name just a few examples of the support we have been able to provide. The Board of Trustees and senior team have been reviewing our work plan for the coming years to ensure we focus on the main needs of the community and to help us to continue to meet our charitable objectives.

The Board of Trustees is justifiably proud of the achievements of our staff and volunteers. As ever, the trustees will continue to work with the senior team to ensure that the excellent outcomes and achievements by GL Communities continue. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we would like to thank everyone for their dedication and support over the last twelve months

Finally, we would like to thank all the many people we have worked with for their strength, humour and desire to bring about positive change for themselves and for others. We would like to express our gratitude to all those who have supported GL Communities, whether through funding, donations, partnership working, volunteering their time, or through the dedication of our staff and Board members.

**Message from the CEO**

In July 1998 I began my role in Podsmead Neighbourhood Project seems like a lifetime ago. My role to start with was a Community Co-ordinator with a contract of 13 weeks, 27 years later I am still here.

My age has crept up on me and it is time to go next October to enable a younger more vibrant CEO to come in and oversee my legacy of GL Communities. It has been a roller coaster ride sometimes but a job that I will always love in all its ever-changing roles throughout this time.

In 2010 I was TUPED over into our newly formed GL Communities to be the Operations Manager role which I held for many years as a lone manager. We had to close buildings, restructure the organisation and bring in new funding to provide services throughout Matson, Robinswood, White City and Podsmead.

In 2015 I became the CEO and continued to build on the strategic plan and for the following 3 years that is what we concentrated on. Working in partnership and in a collaborative way with many organisations/agencies we were able to start to put into plan sufficient funding, contracts of work both nationally and southwest and locally. Our program has always been to co-produce our work with residents who live locally and with partners who want to work with us in that way in Gloucester/shire.

Our work is embedded into 4 areas of work, and we consistently add to them with priorities of new needs that present themselves to us.

- \* **ADVICE SERVICES**
- \* **EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY**
- \* **HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
- \* **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSION**

My last year is coming, and I am looking forward to my retirement and all what that brings for me. But to work with a team as I have who strive everyday to make communities and the residents lives easier, offer new opportunities for them and an array of choices around their lifestyles. I am proud of what we have achieved together and all the that has passed through. I know that I am leaving a good strong and passionate team who will continue to do that every day after I leave.

**Trustee's**

**As stated in Accounts**

- Liam Kelch (Co-Chair)
- Albert Gardener (Co-Chair)
- Jessica Stone
- Jason Dunsford

**Welcome To**

- Anita Pope
- Mark Walker
- Heather Beer
- Agnes Joshua

**Thank You To**

- Ashleigh Doyle
- Jan Parrott
- Brendon O'Donnell
- William Seare

**Volunteer's**

- Sheena Scarratt
- Michael Burrows
- Matt Crabb
- Andrea Davies
- Tracey Ngugi
- Agnes Joshua
- Jan Parrott
- Sue Harris
- Roy Kellet
- Janice Bird
- Buket Buyukcelebi
- Pam Sysum
- Dan Wyatt
- Sophie Parker

**Funders**

- GGT\* – Gateway (Ewe Space)
- GGT\* – LOOP (Looking out for Potential)
- GGT\* – Community Growing project
- GGT\* – Food Fair Shares
- GGT\* – Core
- Health Inequalities funding (Partnership) CCG
- Carers Glos (GCC)
- GLI I
- ESHO (GCC)
- Good Things Foundation

- All Pulling Together (APT)
- Gloucester Community Fund (Cost of living)
- Multiply (GCC)
- DFSW – Money Advice and Pensions Fund
- Rank Foundation
- National Grid
- Trussell Trust
- The Venture Hub
- Levelling UP GCC

\* Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

*"We would like to thank all those that have given resources through the year, whether that was financial, or goods for emergency stores for people who are in crisis, or those who give their time."*

*We could not do this without you!*



# LOCAL PEOPLE ARE MORE INSPIRED TO BUILD CONNECTED

## ADVICE & BENEFIT SERVICES



We provide a specialist service for both Debt and welfare rights. We deliver this with a team of professionally qualified caseworkers and trained assistants.

It has once again been another busy year with the needs of residents growing more and more in the cost of living crisis.

**“We do not turn anyone away and when they present we see them that day.”**

We are able to offer a holistic approach to supporting people with internal and external referrals as needed throughout our organisation and our partners.

We can support someone when they need it, by easing the pressures of creditors, those living on low income and enabling clients to claim everything that they are entitled to.

After COVID we have been able to put into place an array of how to contact them through:

- ✓ What's App
- ✓ Website Talk Chat
- ✓ Email
- ✓ Telephone Service
- ✓ And finally face to face



## Case Study - Advice

### Client Profile:

- **Marital Status:** Single
- **Children:** 2
- **Housing Tenure:** Currently awaiting eviction from private tenancy property

**Client's Query:** The client sought assistance primarily due to urgent financial concerns, such as council tax and energy bills. During our discussion, it became clear that her only source of income was her wages, which were limited by her immigration status, leaving her without access to public funds for herself or her children in the UK. With the rising costs of living, including escalating council tax and other expenses, she was struggling to provide adequately for her family, as her earnings were insufficient to meet their needs.

**Background:** I have been supporting the client since 2023, but since early 2024, her health has deteriorated due to a cancer diagnosis. Additionally, she faced eviction as her landlord decided to sell the property, which further exacerbated her difficulties in providing for her growing children, including necessities such as meals for school and clothing.

### Advice and Support Provided:

#### Visa and Public Funds:

Negotiated with her MP's office to expedite her visa application and gain access to public funds. The only resource available to her was the Household Support Fund grant, which provided assistance for clothing and food for her and her children. All applicable benefits are now in place.

#### Eviction Notice:

Submitted a defence form in court concerning her eviction notice (Notice of Seeking Possession).

#### Cancer Support:

Referred the client to Charlie's for support regarding her cancer diagnosis and coordinated a one-off mental health and wellbeing chat through WhatsApp before discussing any debt-related issues. We ensured she felt okay and considered whether she needed additional support before we delved into her debt situation. I provided guidance on where she could find help for her cancer treatment and the possibility of counselling, which she is now receiving.

#### Welfare and Disability Benefits:

Assisted her in completing forms for welfare and disability benefits, put all debts on hold, and informed creditors of her situation, including providing medical and mental health evidence.

#### Housing Situation:

Offered advice regarding her housing situation, including signing up for Home seekers and negotiating with the housing department's homeless team.

#### Well-being and Mental Health:

Conducted a well-being/mental health one-off chat through WhatsApp before asking questions related to debt or before starting appointments. We had a conversation on how the client was feeling, ensuring her well-being was okay and if she required extra support for anything before discussing her debt situation.

## IMPACT STATS

### Money Advice Services

- ✓ We provided Money Advice to 542 people
- ✓ Referrals of 256 from 241 referring agencies.
- ✓ Debt Relief Order Completed £393,596.65

### Stroud Independent Service (GL11 & APT)

- ✓ Provided services to 143 clients
- ✓ Financial gains of £262434.26
- ✓ Managed £183,015.64 of household debt

### Trussell Trust

- ✓ Provided services to 226 clients
- ✓ Foodbank vouchers issued 2,721
- ✓ Provided food for 7,344 households

*“The adviser was there for me when I had nobody and didn't judge and reassured me every time throughout the service”*

## Trussell Trust - Financial Inclusion

GL Communities received funding from the Trussell Trust – Gloucester Foodbank to promote Financial Inclusion throughout Gloucester.

This initiative aims to reduce reliance on Foodbank Vouchers and identify any potential issues clients may face.

We assist clients by ensuring they receive all relevant benefits, identifying and addressing debt issues, and helping them apply for schemes to reduce their expenses, such as the Severn Trent Big Difference Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments for housing cost shortfalls. We also assist with Social Tariffs where applicable.

In total, we have supported 226 clients, significantly improving their financial situations through these measures.

As an organization, GL Communities is the largest referrer for Foodbank Vouchers in the city.

## PHOENIX GARDENING GROUP (ROSE GARDEN)

In June 2023, I was approached by Viva O'Flynn (Community Connector) if I would be interested in a community gardening project, in this case the Matson Rose Garden. At this time, I was relatively new to the voluntary sector and only had a few months experience working at the Phoenix Centre with GL Communities after retiring from work.

I accepted the opportunity and a date was set in July 2023 to meet with other like-minded people to start the project, unfortunately the turn out on that first day was disappointing. However, I met Barbara Russell a seasoned volunteer who had a wealth of experience in the voluntary sector and the enthusiasm to match.

I soon recognised that a project of this size needed a team of volunteers to help support the challenge, so Barbara and I advertised for more help through the local community and local charitable organisations. This led to the Phoenix Gardening Group being formed and we now have ten members, including ex-service Veterans.

The Matson Rose Garden (*formally also known as the Rectory Road Garden*) is managed by Gloucester City Council and to undertake voluntary work our gardening group had to meet statutory regulations and be fully insured to safeguard the group volunteers and the general public.

This led to various meetings, training events and administration to gain approval for the group to continue with our challenge.

We are now approved to work in the Rose Garden and have started phase 1 of our project. Phase 1 involves removing brambles, dead branches from the tree stock and clearing the borders of weeds and general waste material. Thankfully Gloucester City Council have been removing all waste generated from this process.

We use all resources in an environmentally friendly way and have opted for clearing the borders of weeds as much as possible and then laying cardboard, covered with a bark chip to suppress further weed growth.

Apart from preventing the weeds from growing, this method allows the cardboard to break down and compost, to help recondition the soil in preparation for future planting.

As a group we are very grateful to Gloucester Wildlife Trust, GL Communities, Loop, Gloucester City Council and many more who have provided advice, support and donations to make our Gardening Group successful.

Unfortunately, Viva O'Flynn has moved to a new position with Gloucester Council and we wish her every success with her new job. We will miss her smile and her enthusiasm in everything she did.

## GROWING COMMUNITIES PROJECT

In April 2023 a metal container was installed on the Community Growing Space. This provides storage and shelter and replaces the yurt that had fallen into disrepair and was dismantled in late summer 2021.

Sadly, none of our three colonies of bees survived the winter of 2022-23; it wasn't clear from inspecting the hives whether they had died, been taken or left of their own accord. Some honey was harvested and the hives left in place, although the decision was made not to actively introduce more bees. Then in June 2023 a wild swarm took up residence in one of the empty hives; the colony made it through the winter of 2023-24 and continues to thrive.

We now have a small tree nursery which includes guelder rose, hawthorn, hazel,

oak, field maple and birch species, propagated from seeds collected from the community space. The saplings will be planted on site and are also available to individual and community gardening projects.

Once again, fruit (blackcurrants, redcurrants, blackberries, wild plums, apples) was harvested from the site and shared between various community projects, including GL Communities, Fair Shares and The Welcome Table.

A range of activities – tree planting, fruit picking, nature walks, natural decoration -making, tree identification quiz, site maintenance - took place throughout the year and were attended by community groups, local people, and colleagues working at Gloucester Services. In total 57 people participated in these activities.

## DIGITAL INCLUSION AND BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

**Overview:** In the past year, our initiative focused on enhancing digital inclusion in Gloucester and Matson by providing Free Data SIMs cards to 18 residents. This effort aimed to bridge the digital divide and ensure that everyone has access to essential online services and opportunities.

### Key Achievements:

- **Distribution of Data SIMs:** Successfully delivered Data SIMs to 18 individuals, enabling them to access the internet for education, job searches, healthcare, and social connectivity.
- **Community Engagement:** Conducted workshops and one-on-one sessions to help recipients understand how to use their new digital tools effectively.

**Support Services:** Provided ongoing technical support and digital literacy training to ensure sustained usage and confidence in using digital services.

### Impact:

- **Improved Connectivity:** All 18 recipients reported increased access to online resources, which significantly improved their ability to participate in digital activities.
- **Enhanced Skills:** Participants developed better digital skills, which are crucial for navigating the modern digital landscape.

**Positive Feedback:** The initiative received positive feedback from the community, highlighting the importance of digital inclusion efforts.

### Challenges:

- **Technical Issues:** Some recipients faced initial technical difficulties, which were addressed through our support services.

**Awareness:** Raising awareness about the availability and benefits of the program required continuous effort.

### Future Plans:

- **Expansion:** Plan to expand the program to reach more residents in Matson and surrounding areas.
- **Partnerships:** Seek partnerships with local organizations to enhance resources and support for digital inclusion.

**Continuous Improvement:** Regularly update training materials and support services based on feedback and evolving digital needs.

**Conclusion:** The delivery of Data SIMs in Matson has been a significant step towards digital inclusion. By providing essential tools and support, we have empowered 18 individuals to better engage with the digital world, improving their quality of life and opportunities for the future. We look forward to building on this success in the coming year.

## ESHO—PHASE 1

GLOUCESTER (11 Participants)		BAME (23 Participants)	
Not engaging	1	Not engaging	8
Went into employment	4	Went into employment	8
Volunteering	2	Volunteering	3
Found work before VP	1	Full time education	1
Limited Time Left on EHSO	2	Limited Time Left on EHSO	3
Mental Health—Not carry on	1		

## ESHO—Paul Stepney

The employment support role was developed from the successful “Go the Extra Mile” fund. Having previously worked on the GEM programme, I was well-prepared for the requirements of this role. The primary focus is to support economically inactive residents of Gloucester, helping them gain confidence in securing work, training, or weekly volunteering opportunities.

### Achievements Over the Year

Over the allocated year, I supported 21 participants in achieving various outcomes. Building a strong relationship with each participant was crucial to ensure they felt supported and their interests were met. Most participants engaged regularly with the support provided, except for two individuals. Unfortunately, support was withdrawn for these two participants after they missed three consecutive contact attempts.

### Employment Outcomes

Out of the 21 participants:

- **6 secured jobs** in areas such as construction, catering, logistics, and warehouse work.
  - The process involved:
  - Confidence building
  - CV development
  - Job search applications
- Interview support

## Case Study 1 - ESHO

EO, a Nigerian student studying Finance at Bristol University, faced work restrictions due to his student visa. After various attempts, including an unsuccessful CSCS Card test, EO joined the Bridging the Gap course and secured a front-of-house job. Later, encouraged to apply for a finance manager role at GL Communities, EO was successful and is now their Finance Manager, reflecting a strong support system throughout his journey.

## Case Study 2

SB, a former employee of GL Communities, faced challenges returning to work due to health issues. After being referred to Aaron, a health and wellbeing coach, SB made significant progress, including weight loss, improved confidence, and active participation in a numeracy darts course. She then began volunteering at GL Communities, eventually coordinating a warm space initiative and securing employment with JIGSAW. SB’s journey culminated in finding work as a LOOP worker, with ongoing support from the community, which was key to her success.

## MULTIPLY

Everyday I’m calculating:	5
Basic maths for building planters:	5
Craft wizard:	5
Easy Peasy Cooking:	7
Around the world food:	6
What’s the point?:	5
Magic doll studio 1:	10
Magic doll studio 2:	5
Sew what you know:	2
Knows about macrame:	7
Creative expression:	9
Phoenix Flights:	5
3-week air frying course:	9
How to start your own business:	5
Cook from scratch:	4
Symphony of maths and art:	7
Knots about macrame:	5
Pudding generator:	5

**Total Learners**                      **106**

In July we closed the Ewe Space down for two weeks and carried out Phase One of a resident planned refurbishment. We decluttered, sent broken things to the tip, sold clothes and raised funds to pay for materials. We also got donations from businesses and residents carried out the work themselves creating zones to use the Ewe Space in a more efficient way.

In August the Residents Group supported the LOOP project with an Outdoor Cinema event in the Rose Garden which was well attended by the community. The Rose Garden Group was thanked for all their efforts working hard to make this open space a community asset again. The Rose Garden has become a standing Agenda item for our monthly meetings, and is a good example of working in partnership, with GL Communities providing the Public Liability Insurance and joining up with the gardening group from the Phoenix Centre.

We played a big part in the planning and preparation for the Matson Music and Food Fest with Viva from the LOOP project. Viva met with us and listened to our suggestions and we had a gazebo where we were able to have conversations with residents.

We have now got many more residents coming to the meetings and feel very excited about the future of the Residents’ Group.

## MATSON & ROBINSWOOD RESIDENTS GROUP

Once again this year the residents’ group has had several officer resignations which means the group has had a shuffle round. We still have a core membership of 6/7 residents who volunteer at the Ewe Space and who attend the residents group meetings. We have met the last Thursday of every month except for taking a summer break in August.

We have topical discussions and the residents’ group have taken advantage of organising events to do wider consultation. We use conversations which helps to engage views and through this we gather community intelligence and build relationships. The latest conversations helped to prioritise actions and led to the Ewe Space changing what is offered and changing our opening hours.

During this year Matson and Robinswood Residents Group has been proactive in supporting the planning and delivery of several key events with strong partnerships building with GL Communities, the LOOP project, the local councillors and PSCSOs. We held seasonal events for families at Halloween and Christmas and took two coach loads of residents to the Weston Super Mare Light Carnival as well as taking residents to the beach during the summer holidays.

We had a Warm Space and every Tuesday, Bernie and Carol ran the session on behalf of the residents’ group. Welcoming people to the Ewe Space for teas, coffees and a fair amount of banter.

In May we held the event that has become an annual occurrence called The Picnic on the Green, we held it earlier this year.

# AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES WITH STRONG SENSE OF PRIDE

## INDEPENDENT ADVICE IN THE STROUD DISTRICT

**Independent Advice Services:** Throughout the year, we have continued to provide independent advice with All Pulling Together in Stonehouse and GL11 in Cam Dursley. These community centres serve as vital hubs for local residents, offering a range of support services.

**Debt and Welfare Benefits Support:** We offer comprehensive support in both debt management and welfare benefits. This includes assessing clients’ financial situations and identifying opportunities to reduce their outgoings. For instance, we assist clients in applying for various schemes such as the Severn Trent Big Difference Scheme, Bristol Water Assist Scheme, and the Warm Front Discount Scheme, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

**Financial Inclusion:** A key aspect of our role is promoting financial inclusion. By ensuring clients are aware of and can access available financial support, we help them manage their finances more effectively. This includes providing guidance on budgeting, accessing benefits, and applying for financial assistance programs.

**Collaborative Efforts:** We maintain a close working relationship with Stroud Citizens Advice, which allows us to make direct referrals for clients facing complex debt issues. This collaboration is particularly beneficial for cases requiring Debt Relief Orders, ensuring clients receive the specialized support they need.

**Community Impact:** The services provided at All Pulling Together and GL11 have had a significant impact on the local community. By offering tailored advice and support, we have helped individuals and families navigate financial challenges, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and financial stability.

Through these efforts, we continue to strengthen our community, providing essential support to those in need and fostering a more inclusive and financially secure environment for all residents.

## Case Study - Independent Advice

### Client Profile:

- **Status:** Single lady
- **Residence:** Two-bedroom privately rented property
- **Employment:** Part-time due to health issues
- **Income:** Wages and Universal Credit, including partial Housing Costs and Council Tax Support

### Challenges:

The client was struggling to maintain payments on her rent and utility bills due to the Cost of Living Crisis and her low income.

### Interventions and Support:

#### 1. Discretionary Housing Payment:

- **Action:** Submitted an application for Discretionary Housing Payment to cover the shortfall in Housing Costs.
- **Outcome:** The application was successful, and a shortfall of £150.00 per month was covered for three months. Further applications can be submitted depending on the council’s budget.

#### 2. Water Bills Assistance:

- \* *Bristol Water Assist Scheme:*
  - **Action:** Completed a financial statement showing minimal surplus income.
  - **Outcome:** A payment plan of £1.00 per month was set up.
- \* *Severn Trent Water Big Difference Scheme:*
  - **Action:** Applied for the means-tested scheme.
  - **Outcome:** Monthly payment was reduced to £11.00.

## COMMUNITY SHED

For the past seven years, our community shed has been a hub for those passionate about woodworking, metalworking, and design. Every Wednesday from 10 AM to 2 PM, over ten dedicated individuals gather to work on a variety of projects. Everyone stays busy, contributing to the community and honing their skills.

### Our Projects and Community Involvement

We’ve had the pleasure of assisting various community groups. For instance, we’ve crafted garden furniture, supported Radio Gloucester’s soapbox race, and are currently helping the British Legion prepare trench memorabilia for an upcoming school presentation. We also frequently receive orders for raised beds, which keeps us engaged and productive.

### Building Skills and Confidence

Our shed isn’t just about completing tasks; it’s about building confidence, self-esteem, and practical knowledge in DIY, repairs, and woodworking. We welcome individuals of all ages and skill levels, providing a safe and supportive environment where everyone can learn and grow. Whether you’re a novice or an experienced cabinet maker, there’s a place for you here.

Flexible Attendance and Valued Contributions  
Members can attend weekly, monthly, or whenever they can. Regardless of how often they come, they know they’ll always receive a warm welcome, and their contributions are highly valued by both the group and the wider community.

### Supporting the Community

We often collaborate with local groups who need items built or repaired. For example, we worked with the Lannet Community Group to create specific planters for their space and provided raised beds for GL Communities’ well-being garden. We discuss each project thoroughly, including costs and building processes, ensuring transparency and quality. All proceeds from our projects go back into purchasing equipment and tools.

#### 3. Electricity and Gas Accounts:

- **Action:** Discussed the importance of submitting regular meter readings.
- **Outcome:** Ensured the account is up to date and payments are sufficient to cover usage.

#### 4. Health Issues and Personal Independence Payment (PIP):

- **Condition:** The client suffers from a rare neurological disorder called SCDS, causing constant dizziness and ringing in her ears.
- **Action:** Completed a Personal Independence Form to highlight the daily impact of her condition.
- **Outcome:** Initial application and mandatory reconsideration were rejected. The case was taken to appeal, and after two and a half years, the client was awarded Standard Allowance for both Daily Living and Mobility. She received ongoing payments and a backdated amount totalling £13,044.51.

### Client Feedback:

The client expressed immense gratitude for the support provided. She mentioned that both her mental and financial well-being have significantly improved and that she would not hesitate to seek further assistance if needed. She acknowledged that without this support, she would have given up long before achieving a positive outcome.

### Impact:

This case highlights the comprehensive support provided to clients facing financial and health challenges. Through targeted interventions and persistent advocacy, we were able to significantly improve the client’s financial stability and overall well-being.

### Collective Decision-Making

Our group operates on a collective decision-making process, ensuring everyone feels ownership over our activities. When we became so popular that we needed more space, we decided to double the size of our shed to 20 feet by 20 feet, using mainly recycled materials. This expansion was a testament to our teamwork and resourcefulness.

### Benefits of Joining

Many people have benefited from being part of our shed. It’s a great place to visit, chat, gain new skills, and make friends. You can learn everything from restoring a park bench to the intricacies of planning and building a large shed.

### Join Us!

We invite you to bring your skills and join our team. We only use recycled wood for our projects, as we believe in sustainability and reducing waste. All personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided, but please bring your own steel toe-capped boots.

Come and be a part of our vibrant community, where your work is valued, and your presence makes a difference!

## PHOENIX CENTRE—HEALTH & WELLBEING

We aim to highlight the successes and positive impacts of the 1-2-1 coaching program facilitated by the Levelling Up funding over the past 12 months. The program, focused on health and wellbeing, has significantly contributed to the improvement of both mental and physical health among the participants within GL Communities.

### Program Overview

The 1-2-1 coaching program commenced with the goal of positively impacting the lives of 35-40 individuals through an 8-week coaching regimen. Although the initial uptake was gradual, awareness of the available services gradually spread, leading to increased participation.

### Achievements

Over the course of 12 months, remarkable achievements have been recorded:

**Weight Loss and Muscle Building:** Collectively, participants have shed over 10 stone in weight and have also reported gains in muscle mass.

**Improved Mobility, Strength, and Balance:** Participants have experienced enhanced physical capabilities, including increased mobility, strength, and balance.

**Boosted Confidence:** The program has played a pivotal role in building confidence among participants, enabling them to tackle challenges with newfound self-assurance.

### Additional Activities

**Walk and Talk Group:** Despite a slow start, the Walk and Talk group has evolved into a valuable addition to the participants' wellbeing. Over 30 individuals have actively participated, enjoying walks in the countryside followed by social interactions over coffee or breakfast.

**Yoga Sessions:** Yoga sessions, held at the Phoenix Centre, have attracted approximately 30-40 participants over the past year, with a consistent attendance of 10-20 individuals per session. These sessions have provided a holistic approach to wellness, promoting physical flexibility, mental relaxation, and emotional balance.

### Weekly Activities Breakdown

- 1-2-1 Coaching: 10 hours per week, totalling 40 hours per month.
- Walk and Talk Group: 2 hours per week.
- Yoga Sessions: 2 hours per week.
- Diamond Art: 2 hours per week.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the 1-2-1 coaching program, made possible by Levelling Up funding, has yielded substantial positive outcomes in the realms of physical and mental wellbeing for the participants within GL Communities. The program's success underscores the importance of investing in initiatives that promote holistic health and inclusive community engagement.

### Testimonial

Seven out of the 40 participants have confirmed significant personal transformations. They have not only lost weight but have also witnessed improvements in mobility and strength. This newfound confidence has empowered them to transition back into the workforce, demonstrating the tangible impact of the health and wellbeing program enabled by Levelling Up funding.

## Case Study - Julie's Journey to Health & Wellbeing

### Client Background:

Julie, a vibrant 59-year-old woman soon to celebrate her 60th birthday, sought the guidance of a Health and Wellbeing Coach to address feelings of isolation and improve her overall health. Having retired early, Julie found herself grappling with the challenges of pandemic-induced social distancing measures. Despite her love for walking and occasional meet-ups with friends, she felt disconnected and apprehensive about exploring new avenues like strength training.

### Initial Assessment and Goals:

Julie entered the 8-week program with a mix of excitement and nervousness. She expressed reservations about weightlifting but showed a willingness to try. It was evident that building trust and rapport with Julie would be essential for her progress. During the initial sessions, Julie admitted feeling nervous but quickly found comfort in the coach's relaxed and approachable demeanour.

### Progress and Achievements:

As Julie progressed through the program, significant improvements in her mobility, strength, and overall wellbeing became apparent. She noticed enhanced ease in activities such as stair climbing, attributed to newfound strength and improved posture. Better sleep quality emerged as a welcome side effect of her strengthened back muscles. Julie's confidence soared as she embraced new opportunities within the program.

### Integration and Community Engagement:

One of the most notable transformations in Julie's journey was her integration into various activities and communities offered by the program. Inspired by

her progress, Julie joined the walk and talk group, where she not only found physical activity but also a sense of camaraderie. Her enthusiasm led her to pursue a leadership role within the group, aiming to facilitate her own walks. Additionally, Julie eagerly participated in the resin group and cooking courses, expanding her social circle and skillset.

### Overall Outcome and Reflection:

Julie's journey with her Health and Wellbeing Coach transcended physical fitness, culminating in a holistic transformation. While her posture, strength, and fitness levels improved significantly, the most profound changes occurred on a personal level. Julie found a sense of belonging and community within the program, describing it as a "home away from home." The supportive environment, coupled with Julie's determination, fostered a journey of self-discovery and newfound confidence. As she approaches her 60th birthday, Julie is not only healthier and stronger but also surrounded by friends and opportunities for growth.

### Conclusion:

Julie's case exemplifies the power of holistic health and wellbeing coaching in fostering personal transformation. By addressing physical, emotional, and social aspects of Julie's life, the program enabled her to thrive beyond her initial goals. Julie's journey serves as a testament to the importance of community, support, and a client-centered approach in achieving sustainable lifestyle changes.

## WARM SPACES

Warm Space started 22<sup>nd</sup> January and has run for 13 weeks, we served food on Mondays and Thursdays 12pm and 3.30pm.

We served home cooked food, this included roast dinners, lasagne, toad in the hole etc. All these were made with fresh ingredients and were worked in line with our well being coach who helps people with healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.

Our warm space is for everyone to access activities, access to hot drinks and hot food (served twice a day) provide a safe and warm place for people to meet others so they are not feeling isolated, we also offer advice service, we are able to help with benefit advice, refer to our jigsaw service for food vouchers, debt advice and also help with sim cards for mobile phones. We have also been here should people just want to have a chat, offload their troubles and provide an ear just to listen in a safe and warm environment also they can have access to our IT room.

Activities we have provided include:

- Diamond Art
- Resin
- Arts and craft
- Board games
- Cards
- IT access

We have also run an easter event which ran parallel to warm space which had lots of easter activities, the easter bunny, easter hunt and a teddy bears picnic, a lunch box and an activity pack was provided by warm space for each child and a hot meal of Spaghetti Bolognese was made along side this for everyone else. Over 100 adults and children attended this event.

With everyone facing the biggest cost of living crisis in over 70 years we are pleased that we have been able to offer everything that we have here at the Phoenix Centre, and how we have supported people to access our other services, I have included a case study of a gentleman who attended to show the impact that warm space has had on him and his life.

We have had an amazing turnout with great feedback from everyone who attended, over the weeks it has got busier with some days up to 30-40 people coming in for a hot meal or coming in to get themselves a take away. Since warm space started we have also seen a rise in people coming to fair shares, fair shares is where we have donations from Tesco and people turn up to stock up on supplies that Tesco have donated. This has been amazing to see so many people benefiting from the food.



## Case Study - Warm Spaces

Anon 1 started attending warm space at the start in January and attended with his support worker. Anon 1 was a very shy person and offered very little information about himself, he is always happy and smiley but didn't appear very confident.

Over the 13 weeks warm space was running mitch came out of his shell more and started to participate in activities that were set.

Anon 1 joined two multiply courses pudding generator and cook from scratch, he really enjoyed these and always enjoyed cooking and helping wash and clean up afterwards. He also took part in diamond art group, resin group, macrame group and is also currently on a 8 week personal training programme through the wellbeing coach in phoenix centre.

Anon 1 has been attending the centre 4 days a week at present.

When speaking to Anon 1 support worker she explained how life changing warm space had been for him, previously before coming to warm space he stayed in his room a lot and spent a lot of time at home in his bedroom.

The support worker said Anon 1 has gained a new self confidence and now looks forward to coming to the phoenix centre, he has thoroughly enjoyed all the new activities he has learnt through us.

### Some further examples of who we have helped during our warmspace:

1) A elderly lady who attends had her key broken off in her front door, we were able to help her phone housing association and explain what her problem was and arrange for someone to come out and fix it for her, the lady on arrival was anxious, stressed and wasn't sure what she had to do.

2) A young gentleman with alcohol addiction who had been sober for 3 months came in and was on the verge of drinking again because his mental health had declined due to no electric, no food, and his flat being untidy, he saw no purpose to carry on. We were able to provide him with a hot drink some hot food and a chat through all his issues, we then referred him to our services provided by jigsaw which he left to go over straight away. They were able to sign him up and provide him with food vouchers and help with his mental health, they are still currently assisting him.

3) A lady attended who was currently going through a marriage break up, she found herself in a 3 bedroom property with 4 children, she was sleeping on the sofa and was left struggling financially, we provided her with take away meals for her and her children one being a vegetarian. We also referred her to one of our advice teams, they supported and gave her food vouchers and help to fill in relevant forms to help ease her situation.

4) A lady attended with her 2 children who are homeschooled, they had complex needs and severe allergies, we were able to make them feel safe in our environment, and enabled them to access our activities. Mum said that they were very grateful and also it helped give her some socialisation time with others as she can feel isolated at home.

5) A gentleman attended who has severe mental health, he finds himself alone and struggles to deal with his thoughts. We encouraged him to come in and have food and a general chat. He has said he really enjoys coming in and now doesn't feel so alone and knows we are always there for a chat and a cuppa, he said he really appreciates everything we have done for him.

6) A young couple had recently moved in temporary accommodation near the centre, they both suffer with anxiety and do not like to be in a crowd. I began talking to them outside and asked them when their last hot meal was, they said they hadn't eaten for 2 days as they had no money, I encouraged them to come in and have a takeaway lunch and provided them with cutlery, they have become regulars to warmspace now and come in twice a week for a hot meal. They no longer need me to meet them at the door as they now have the confidence to come in on their own.

These are just a few of our examples of who warmspace has helped, we have had a massive impact on the community and have had such positive feedback on everything we have provided.

*"Before warm space I felt like my life wasn't worth living, I felt isolated, and I have struggled all my life to fit in, coming to Phoenix I have felt like I belong somewhere, I have a purpose.*

*I have really enjoyed taking part in all the activities, multiply courses and all of this is all thanks to Mandy and warm space. I have had meals provided for me twice a day, I have met lots of people, and I am even now doing personal training with the wellbeing coach, I am also going to sign up as a volunteer to help at the Phoenix Centre. I have really enjoyed everything and can't thank the staff enough for everything they have done for me, warm space has been amazing and has made my life so much better"*

