

Salisbury District Council

The Sunshine Healthy Living Project is a partnership between voluntary and community groups and other public bodies. It is currently in the third year of a five-year project, funded by the New Opportunities Fund (now the Big Lottery Funding). It aims to address some of the underlying causes of ill health in the western wards of the Salisbury district and reduce health inequalities in the area.

The Sunshine Healthy Living Project is a comprehensive cluster of voluntary and statutory, large and small, local, regional and national organisations. All partners are independent but have come together under the umbrella of a 'healthy living project' to deliver a range of services within a clearly defined geographical area in the western part of the district.

The key reasons for developing the partnership were that the cost of delivering services in a rural area are far greater than within an urban settlement. That had resulted in key services only being delivered from Salisbury City. The local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) is accountable for the project. It employs two part-time project staff to manage, build capacity, and monitor and support delivery.

The objectives of the Sunshine Healthy Living Project were to improve basic rural facilities with the provision of new outreach services, in order to:

- improve general health and wellbeing by encouraging the adoption of healthier lifestyles, in terms of diet, exercise, and warm and safe homes
- reduce social isolation and loneliness to improve mental health
- improve access to information and advice on health, and also to the wider determinants of health such as income, training and employment.

Sunshine runs a diverse portfolio of services including video arts projects on sexual health, a keep fit club for people with disabilities and a community garden. It also offers basic skills and training to improve employability; advice on disability issues; a money advice skills programme; support to families with young children; an exercise project for older people; an energy efficiency advice service; and a specialist advice service for women.

Salisbury District Council's played a leadership role in the development of the Sunshine Healthy Living Project to tackle the inequities in our rural communities. The council facilitated a meeting of all potential stakeholders to discuss the possibility of developing a partnership that would applying for funding.

Those stakeholders that expressed an interest then participated in a number of meetings which drew together the strategic objectives and aims of the proposed partnership. Information was drawn and collated from a wide range of sources to inform the emerging partnership of those most in need and areas where inequalities around poverty, health, access to services, social exclusion were considered as high.

To achieve the agreed objectives, a partnership of committed stakeholders was created to deliver twelve separate projects that meet the objectives. This partnership approach maximised the expertise available locally and made best use of valuable resources. Salisbury District Council and the local primary care trust (PCT) coordinated the bid for funding. The council also took the lead in supporting the voluntary and community sector partners in developing their individual project plans.

The council is both a 'delivering' partner in the Sunshine Healthy Living Project and continues to play a strategic role to the board in an advisory capacity. We also assist in meeting training needs and help build the capacity of individual organisations.

Since the project began, it has seen an 80 per cent increase in users for 2004/05 with outcomes including:

- seven beneficiaries received basic skills training
- a total of 240 beneficiaries received disability advice
- a total of 70 beneficiaries for the 'Sex Actually' video produced by young people, with
 - participants awarded Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Award for becoming sexual
 - health peer mentors at their school
- a total of 22 clients received money advice
- a total of 10 volunteers supported 20 families (62 beneficiaries), through Homestart
 - family support
- a total of 16 regular participants of the Tisbury Fit Club
- a total of 10 regular participants of the Elderly People's exercise project
- a total of 117 regular and casual users of Tisbury Community Garden project
- the target of reaching 100 fuel poor households was exceeded by the energy advice project
- a total of 151 users of the women's rural advice service.

The project still has a further two years to run, but a number of lessons have already been learnt.

Core staffing is critical to the partnership. It is important to develop better communications and community links. Joined-up local sectors have been created to reduce duplication.

Key players were not always fully conscious of their motives at the initial stages of partnership development. A significant number were driven by opportunistic considerations rather than a planned, documented and strategic approach.

Small service providers were driven by the opportunity to expand delivery of their services across a wider geographical area.

The smaller partners have had the opportunity to access intellectual resources; financial expertise; human resources support; assistance with strategic and action planning; free or reduced cost training; and policies and procedures such as monitoring and performance review processes.

Smaller organisations have recognised the benefits of belonging to a partnership that allows them to gain confidence, voice, power, money and networks.

The lack of time is a fundamental issue for the smaller agencies, as they simply do not have the time or capacity. Time spent developing a partnership is time spent away from service delivery.

Partners did not always cost in the time to develop the partnership. Larger agencies felt the strain and some even reflected that had they understood the complexity and the enormity of the time and commitment required they may not have entered into it.

There has been an increase in 'cross-referral' of clients, as the project develops as a single point of access for clients.

As an example of how the council's rural policies join-up it is interesting to note that the Sunshine Healthy Living Project uses the South Wiltshire Community Web to promote its activities and services - [view site](#).