Living Well – Wednesday 4th June

One Ilfracombe Project Updates:

Into The Blue – We are now into Week 5 of 6 of this amazing project. The feedback we are getting back from all angles is fantastic. We have had visits from members of Fullabrook and Active Devon (who contributed towards the funding of this programme) and Cllr Sara Wilson is joining us tomorrow. We will be evaluating this project once as it has finished and will circulate once completed.

Cultural Town Team – Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday 16th June at 5.30pm at the Lantern. The current projects are:

1. Blue Plaques – led by Ilfracombe Museum. They now have a long list of potential candidates for the blue plaque scheme and have spoken with English Heritage to establish eligibility.
2. Trails (for families, for health, for locals and for tourists)
3. Multi-Media space for local businesses –Town-wide art displays based on themes/significant dates – Mel and Steph from The Art Trail are going to look more into this. It would be great to tie this in with the work Neil has been doing to identify who owns empty shops in the town.
4. Potential to relaunch the Silver Saturday/Sunday project beyond just the museum
5. Community noticeboards – We do now have a digital noticeboard in Hand:Plant and have plans to replicate in the Ilfracombe Centre
6. Oral Histories/Kelvin's History Vlog
7. Ilfracombe Film Club
8. Town library of event footage/images

The Emmanuel Church – Following a positive site visit to the church with Josephine Brown from the AHF, we have now submitted an application to them for £15,000 for the cost of building a business case for the potential future use of the Emmanuel Church. We are likely to hear back within 6 weeks.

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Ilfracombe Futures Forum –- https://www.ilfracombefutures.org/ - The forum has been going great guns! Lots of hugely valuable conversations and connections following our last meeting which was hosted by Ilfracombe Academy and included a tour and presentation by the teaching staff.
One major project which we are working on is a Youth Hub. We have a wide range of organisations who would be interested in delivering youth services in Ilfracombe should a suitable venue be found. On a related note I have had a meeting with Phil Harris and Tracey Green MBE from Devon Mental Health Alliance on how we could potentially collaborate and venue share for the benefit of the wider community.
We all feel that the Link Centre could be a space that could happily house all of these activities so have been having discussions with Simon Kitchen at DCC about this and has received an outline proposal of what we would like to achieve.

Oxford Park Community Gardening Project – this has been on the back burner due to annual leave, but I am following up an initial meeting between NDC Parks and Cllr Sara Wilson. .

Poverty Truth Commission – The meeting now happen every Thursday but alternate between focussing on the two chosen areas which are: Early Intervention, and Adult Education and Employment. I am taking part in the Early Intervention work as it aligns with my other projects and Sarah will be representing us on the Adult Education and Employment group (and I will cover her when she isn't available).

Serenity Retreat – I was invited to a coffee morning at Score Valley Guest House who have established a CIC to support people with a wide variety of issues ranging from domestic violence to mental health and addiction. Unfortunately when I arrived the owner had been called away but staff from Belle's Place and the Family Hub were there who had been given an overview by someone on speaker phone. I will await contact from the owners to see if there is anything that I can help with but I would want to see more of their policies, especially around safeguarding of vulnerable people, first.

Ian Flett – Service Manager Early Help and Partnerships Children's and Young People's Services at Devon County Council
– Questions around the Family Hub and how changes could impact Ilfracombe

As part of the Government agenda a decision was made last year to move Children's Centres from a Children's Centres model to Family Hubs, when they were moved across to Devon County Council. There have been changes in staffing with some members moving over to the Family Interventions Team (supporting targeted Level 3 families) but there are still ongoing conversations around staffing so Ian was unable to comment any further on this issue as it is still in progress.
The new Family Hub system supports families with children aged 0-19 (and up to age 25 for families with young adults who have additional needs) which moves away from the 0-5yrs model that Action For Children has had in recent years.
There is now a three locality model and the team manager for North/Torridge and Mid Devon is Cat Hewitt.
Although there has been no cut to the budget, it needs to be managed according to meet the needs at the time.

There are hubs in Ilfracombe and Bideford but they are trying to move away from a building base model as they feel that some people may struggle to get to the hubs. There are three ways to access the hubs; walk-in, online via a contact form or a phone call to the Family Hub where they will receive relevant advice, guidance and signposting. They also offer single sessions to families who only need support for a particular thing rather than a long intervention period.

They want to work with communities in the communities where people are so they don't have to travel to a hub. They will offer triage through the locality team, pregnancy support meetings for families with vulnerabilities around pregnancy, locality partnership meetings and there is a newsletter.

One of the main questions asked of Ian was around the concerns that this move to a model of community reliance is a real risk as a) we know on a local level that our voluntary capacity is already exhausted, b) some of these groups need specialist/expert support that wouldn't be available in peer support groups, c) how will volunteers be trained to deal with/prevent safeguarding issues and d) we have seen no evidence that the local availability has not been mapped and understood before taking the decision to move to a model that is heavily reliant on our community.
Ian explained that it is going to be difficult to map everything for Devon as this is the model being used across the patch, and it will be a challenge as Devon is a big geographical area. He explained that every community will be different and will develop in different ways, and historically people have relied on the community support systems so their plan is that there can be an element of this so that communities can help each other.

One of the other key areas of question was around communication. At present the public are very confused about the changes and what they mean as a user of the centre. There is no clear community briefing so individuals are already taking to social media or asking others about what is available to them, how they access them, when the building is open etc. The messaging needs to be clear, obvious and wide spread.

Whilst everyone could appreciate Ian's predicament, it was reinforced by the group that he needs to feed all of this information back to his managers as the impact that this change has bought is already being felt negatively in our community.
Ian has said he would be happy to answer any further questions but had to leave for another meeting, so he is happy for you to email him directly at ian.flett@devon.gov.uk

Following the conversation and after Ian had left, we continued to air concerns around safeguarding, losing skilled family workers and the appropriateness of volunteers running complex groups. Ilfracombe Town Council also had similar concerns and were writing to DCC on this subject, so we agreed that we would also send a letter on behalf of the One Ilfracombe Living Well Group.

One Ilfracombe Project Updates:
Presentation – Man Down – James Coomber – james@jamescoomber.com - https://mandown.org/

James, a leadership coach/consultant and career firefighter, gave an empassioned presentation about Man Down Ilfracombe which he facilitates.

Man Down is an organisation operating mostly in the south west (7-8 groups in the North Devon area) which is a UK based non-profit making CIC. It was founded in Cornwall in 2017/2018 and was formed to support men (currently age 18+) with mental health challenges. They have informal peer led talking groups which provide a safe, judgment free space for men to share their problems and connect with other men who understand the problems they are going through. They want to break the

stigma around men's mental health and reduce the number of male suicides as in 2024 there were three times more men who committed suicide than women. Suicide is the leading cause of death for men up to the age of 50 in the UK and 40% of men will not talk to anyone else about mental health problems - hence the importance of men's support groups.

They are currently looking for a small amount of sponsorship if anyone knows of anything.
They have meetings every other Wednesday in Ilfracombe at The Candar and those who go along can participant as much or as little as they like. If anyone knows of any men who are struggling please let them know about Man Down (links to the website and also James email is above).

Phil a trained counsellor from the Devon Mental Health Alliance offered to help and support Man Down in any way they can.

We'd like to thank James for sharing his personal story of his own experience of mental health with the group.

Round The Table/Updates:

Terry said the Tyrrell MIU is ending on 31st July when there will be a review but she is not hopeful that things will change. There is concern that people will fall through the cracks when this service ends. Terry is attending a meeting with the chair of the Health Care Trust and will keep us informed.

Eric said the exercise classes at the Salvation Army will end in 6 weeks and they are looking forward to continuing after the summer holidays. They are looking at trying to arrange transport for people to be able to get to the exercise classes. Charmain will talk to the people who run the community bus. Age Concern are also potentially able to help.

Louise Flagg let us know that the website for HAF bookings was opening on 9th June and there were opportunities for Ilfracombe kids to take part in the activities at Simonsbath House (that includes free transport).

Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 2nd July 2025