

ADEPT President's Awards 2024

Entry form

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Award category Shaping Places for People

Project Title Improving Homes and Wellbeing Service

Local authority entrant South Gloucestershire Council

Partner/s if applicable Age UK South Glos

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

The Improving Homes & Wellbeing Service has been developed to tackle the problem of run down, poorly maintained homes and the underlying causes.

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

The projects purpose was to find an alternative resolution to traditional unsuccessful enforcement routes, when tackling untidy land and properties in poor state of repair. It was aimed at private home owners in the 50+ age group where the underlying causes related to health and wellbeing prevented them from being able to manage their own home effectively.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

In Yr 1 51 referrals were received and outcomes have included;

Providing resource savings for NHS, Adult Social Care and other Council staff
Prevented 9 prosecutions
Improved the support network for 24 residents
Prevented 17 slips/trips/falls in the home
Avoided 15 unplanned hospital admissions and decreased the need for GP visits
Dealt with 8 safeguarding concerns
22 residents reported positive outcomes as a result of using the service

Within those homes the service found underlying causes related to; damp and mould (16), asbestos (7), hoarding activity (15), falls associated with baths (24) electrical hazards (9), pets domestic hygiene and refuse (16).

The service has also improved the working relationship between the voluntary sector agencies and the statutory services, providing what nobody else was able to but which they have long been looking for. The service currently has funding via Public Health Prevention Fund until March 2026.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

The service and the choice of delivery partner for the project has provided Adult Social Care teams, Health Care teams, Planning Enforcement and Private Sector Housing Teams with the ability to refer to a service that can respond quickly. Team briefings have been held, referral routes established and a feedback process put in place to measure success. In addition Age UK South Glos have also developed links with St Monicas Trust, Lendology, Warm and Well, Village Agents and other community based initiatives. Adult Social Care staff report that the service is saving them significant amounts of time and enabling case closure sooner than before due to the level of intervention possible.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

The service is providing something that has never before been accessible to professionals in the furtherance of residents cases. It is also enabling professionals to close cases at a much earlier stage due to the level of intervention that has been possible and the residents outcomes. Case studies used have enabled the service to attract additional funding which is adding to the ability to deliver and the sustainability of the project. The aims of the project fit with the Council Plan in helping people to sustain themselves and build resilient communities.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

The service was originally supported as a 12 month pilot project by the Council, the outcomes and the clear need for a continuation of the project prompted a full business case bid being submitted to the Prevention Fund. The project was awarded £172k over 3yrs. Evaluation has started for the first year that the service has been running, which will be added to throughout the term of the project in order to create an evidence base for the service to be mainstreamed or to access alternative funding. In addition the service has attracted funding from other sources in the community such as St Monicas Trust. Age UK South Glos bring added value as a partner in this project by being able to draw on the other services they provide.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

The project started as a pilot project to look at the issue of poorly maintained homes within the private home owners group and for those in the 50+ age bracket. Complaints from within communities had highlighted these properties as being a blight in communities, lowering the tone and increasing the risk of attracting anti-social behaviour. The traditional route to deal with these kinds of properties was via the use of enforcement, but in doing so we already knew that we were dealing with people who often didn't have the means to correct or improve the situation, and therefore using enforcement in itself became ineffective. We also found that the home owners had underlying issues such as social isolation, bereavement, mental health, physical health, poor access to services and financial difficulties which had precluded them from looking after themselves and their properties in the first place.

We developed the Improving Homes and Wellbeing Service as a free to access service and approached Age UK South Glos as our delivery partner. In doing so we expected engagement with them as a charity to be better than with the Local Authority, plus it allowed the LA to remain distinct should enforcement at any stage really become necessary, protecting the status of Age UK as a voluntary sector agency.

The pilot project was a huge success with referrals that had been made due to "presentation issues" such as overgrown gardens, poor maintenance etc but in fact were driven by the underlying causes of poverty, social isolation, damp and cold, mental health, physical health, bereavement etc.

In 2023 the project was put forward for Public Health funding through the Prevention Fund who were looking to support 12 projects under the banners of Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing Well. We were able to secure funding for 3yrs to run the project under the Ageing Well stream. The service has 2 part time case officers and the support of an Age UK South Glos Manager.

The project has just completed its first year and the outcomes have been extensive;

51 referrals received - 33 supported fully, 10 required advice only, 3 refused to engage and 5 didn't meet the criteria.

The issues identified on presentation included - clutter/hoarding, overgrown garden, unsightly shed or garage, domestic waste issues, broken windows and house repairs, perimeter fence repairs.

The issues discovered as the underlying causes included - 18 mental health cases, 26 physical health issues, 8 bereavements, 11 social isolation cases, 22 in financial difficulty, 10 in dispute with their neighbours, 16 with draughts, poor living conditions and poor heating, 4 people in fuel poverty, 21 at risk of CO2 or fire, 8 safeguarding issues.

As a result of supporting those residents we have managed to show;

6 residents reported an improvement in their living conditions

21 reported an improvement in their home and/or garden

9 prosecutions were prevented

15 unplanned hospital admissions or decreased need for GP visits

21 reported an improvement in their health and wellbeing

17 slips/trips and falls were prevented

24 residents had their support network improved

22 people reported positive outcomes from accessing the service

8 safeguarding concerns were dealt with before they escalated into more serious situations.

In all cases the original "presentation issue" was also addressed leading to an improved living condition both for the homeowner and neighbours.

The project supplied 19 oil filled radiators, 56 heated blankets, 40 cold weather packs, 15 new extension leads to reduce socket overload, 40 draught excluders, 10 boilers have been serviced to make them safe to operate.

In addition to the Prevention Funding the service has attracted an additional £14k from St Monicas Trust which has allowed an additional budget for each resident dependent on need.

For professionals, feedback surveys report that the support of the service has allowed them to save time and money on caseloads and given them access to a service that is much needed. The ability to work alongside the IHWS case Officers has provided additional knowledge and support.

When looking at cost savings, a full evaluation of year one is currently underway and so more detail will become available as we benchmark against tools such as Social return on Investment and NHS costings. However, we have accessed a previous SGC report, "Dealing with run down housing" written in October 2020 which predicted that the average cost of enforcement was £5000 per case. On that basis and having avoided prosecution work in 9 cases that would equate to a saving of an estimated £45k.

When looking at the "Building Research Establishments Report" of 2021 that states that damp and cold within homes costs the NHS £895m per year or on average £982 per person. 16 cases of cold/damp were dealt with by the project which could equate to a saving of nearly £16k.

When looking at "The Unit Cost of Health and Social Care Report" 2022 it estimates the cost of falls within the home to the NHS annually as £435m and therefore £17.5k per year per person. The IHWS dealt with 17 cases in this first year which may equate to a saving of £297.5k.

The two photos provided within this application relate to a resident that was referred to the service. Case Officers found that he had no hot water, no heating and the temperature in his home was 5.6C. The kitchen sink waste water had been leaking into the unit and on to the floor, the waste from the washing machine had been doing the same as it had not been connected properly. The home was extremely damp with a moisture reading of 94%. He had 3 calor gas heaters but none of them worked and his bedding and clothing was also damp.

IHWS supported him to get the repairs carried out on the home to make it safe so that he could then work with Adult Social Care and a full assessment of his home life could be completed.