

Age UK Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
Containment Outbreak Management Fund
Report - April 2022



“Older people, with pre-existing health conditions were some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Those who were shielding were about half as likely again to be feeling more anxious since lockdown than those who were not. Seeing their loved ones deteriorate has caused families great anguish.” **Age UK - The impact of COVID-19 to date on older people’s mental and physical health.**



“I’ve gone from thinking what’s the point in anything and feeling as if I’m just waiting to die (yes really) to someone who now thinks she is not ready to go anytime soon as there are lots of things to look forward to” *Zoe, Step into Wellness Participant*

Age UK Cornwall COMF Report

The Programme



Background

Age UK Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (AUK CIOS) have been providing support to individuals and communities since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The support has been varied and has included: prescription collections/deliveries, shopping for those shielding, providing welfare support, transportation to access vaccinations, and supporting people from hospital to home - as well as through commissioned contracts such as **Inclusion Matters and Cornwall Carers Service**.

The Cornwall Link Platform has provided an online resource tool for individuals, communities and other organisations to access and identify support across the county.



We have been grateful to secure COMF funding for different strands of our work.

Public Health COMF – has supported us with the development of Community Hubs to support geographic communities, shared interest and shared identity communities to improve access to support for those who would otherwise struggle.

Adult Social Care COMF – has contributed to improving online information and resources for Cornwall Link

Cornwall Community Foundation COMF – has enabled the purchase of tablets and internet enabled SIM's for those with limited mobility and no online access.

Our COMF project commenced against a backdrop of Covid-19, the resulting control measures, and responded to gaps in services and support.

A **2020 Healthwatch Survey** highlighted that people shielding found it difficult to get clear information or advice, and concerns about mental wellbeing during the pandemic. Common concerns included separation from family and friends and social isolation.



Our Community Helpline continued operating throughout the pandemic. The number of people, unable to access simple things such as shopping, transportation and picking up prescriptions increased during this period.

The Centre for Better Ageing summarised how the pervasiveness of poor health, limited activity and a lack of social connections have exacerbated the impact of the pandemic on those who already face challenges. Covid, coupled with the substantial cost of living increase, is set to deepen and widen existing inequalities across Cornwall. **This impact will be felt more sharply across our county over the next 20 years, as greater numbers of people reach their 60s, 70s and 80s. If this continues, the gap between those who can enjoy later life and those who struggle through it will increase.**

Community Hubs

We worked with several community hubs throughout the pandemic, including our own. Our hubs had operated as Day Care Centres prior to the pandemic, and transformed to run as community hubs based in St Austell, Newquay and Falmouth, respectively.

We also worked with other place-based community hubs such as **One For All at Lanivet, Neetside Centre, and Concern Wadebridge.**

We also worked with those operating for shared interest and shared identity groups, for example, **Battling On** - who support veterans and CN4C.

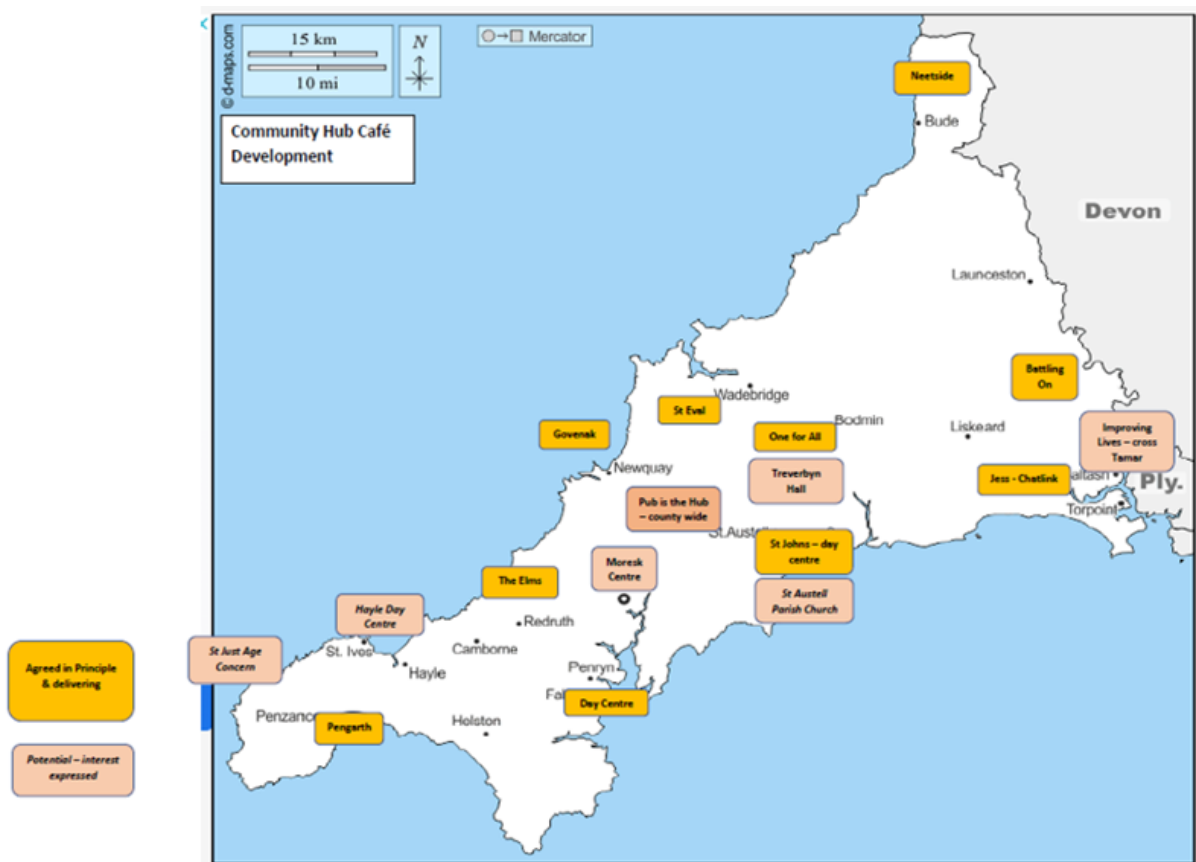
Our Social Prescriber Link Workers have engaged small local hubs operating in Saltash, Torpoint, Newquay, St Eval, and one under development in Padstow. Whilst we don't 'own' the hub venues our team are co-ordinating support activities, clubs and services.

We allocated and ring-fenced some of the COMF funding to support the ongoing development, so that the hubs, and the support on offer, can be sustained until they reach the point where they become self-sustaining. Simple things such as room hire and refreshment costs have helped enable those most impacted by Covid-19 to leave their homes, access support and friendship - which they have said has been hugely beneficial and empowering.

Community Engagement

We have used COMF funds to support hubs to operate our **Step into Wellness Programme.** This programme helps those most vulnerable to overcome reclusive tendencies. It has given individuals the confidence to reconnect with people and their communities. Local support centres such as Concern Wadebridge and One for All Lanivet are aligning their service delivery with the early hub model, which is a significant step in creating a consistency of offer and presentation across the developing network of community hubs.





Community Engagement

Other organisations and representatives, including churches and local groups, are now contacting us to find out more - asking 'how can they get involved'. One potential hub reached out via an Adult Social Care Locality Commissioning Manager, who has now been invited to be part of the hub development / implementation steering group.

We have seen a positive engagement with health colleagues, who are keen on the concept as it aligns with many of the strategic programmes they have in place. However, there is a remaining need to engage with council strategic programmes, as our intention is that the hubs will provide a point of access for people and communities - obtaining the right support and services to meet their needs.

The COMF monies have enabled the progress and development of hubs, for activities to happen and to support venues to host activities.

The map above shows we are working with nine hubs across the county delivering support to communities, with another seven who have expressed interest and have engaged with the development.

Overall, this means that the hub café development is progressing well and the positive response from stakeholders provides exciting opportunities. We have the next stage of development organised with a system, VCSE and hub hosts set up to integrate hubs into the anticipatory care programme. **The COMF monies have enabled a test and learn model that is now informing an effective routeway for the future delivery of a number of place-based person-centred programmes to be rolled out.**

Cornwall Link

The Adult Social Care (ASC) COMF monies enabled some significant development of our Cornwall Link Platform, especially in supporting carers.

The learning we had from the pandemic was that many carers found it difficult to find out about a range of support for the conditions they were caring for, especially as their normal health providers, such as GPs and outpatients had their time consumed by Covid-19 demands.

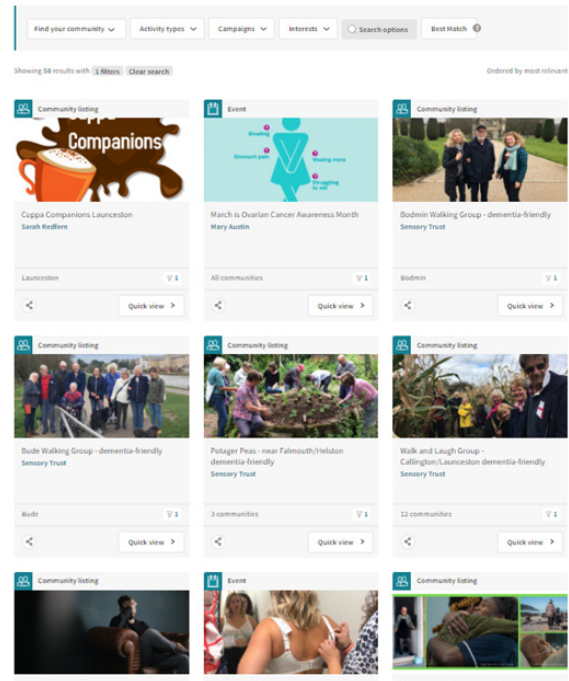
Carers who were looking after people who had recently been discharged from hospital found it especially difficult to access information and guidance about how best to provide care that would aid rehabilitation. Cornwall Rural Community Charity (Lead for Cornwall Carers Service) was keen for a solution so that the service could quickly signpost carers and families to.

The ASC COMF monies facilitated some redesign of the Cornwall Link platform, specifically around search terms to make carer support a central tag when searching the directory. Broadening search results included a range of peer support that was not premised on meeting at venues, such as walking groups, gardening activities that were also condition friendly. For example, many of the new results included dementia friendly activities that allow carers and those cared for to enjoy joint activities, enabling carers to build positive experience and memories of their caring role.

The COMF monies not only made the Cornwall Link Platform more carer friendly, but provided a resource to reduce demands on patient outflow. Such as, helping cancer patients find out about suitable clothing and garments before they recovered sufficiently for any re-constructive surgery. **This boosted both patients and carers confidence about participating in public spaces.**

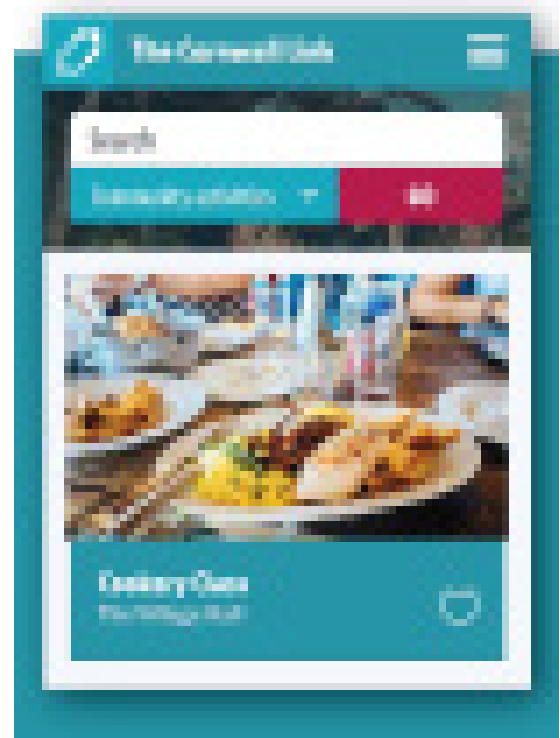
Community activities

These activities have been posted by members of Cornwall Link.



Find support near you

www.cornwall-link.co.uk



*"I find it difficult to put into words how much this Programme and group has helped me to gain back my confidence and help equip me for the future. The planning & delivery, including the sourcing of the appropriate level and subject of content, discussions, sharing ideas for wellbeing, inclusion and support from all involved, has helped me to feel ready for the future. I so look forward every week to logging in and listening, chatting, laughing, sharing information but most of all just being part of this programme with others, being listened to, knowing we all enjoyed being there". **Marian 2021***



Breaking down Barriers

The COMF monies we received via Cornwall Community Foundation Trust have enabled the purchase of tablets, phones and data SIM cards for those who would otherwise not have the means to access the online resources available.

This was especially helpful for those who had to shield themselves and had limited contact with family and friends. The reality of contemporary telephone listings means that traditional methods, such as yellow pages and telephone directories, are no longer viable or a comprehensive information resource.

The ability to be able to provide individuals with the means to access online information and attend virtual sessions such as Steps into Wellness and respiratory programmes has helped individuals to connect and benefit in ways they hadn't anticipated.



Summary

The COMF monies have empowered us to respond in a way that traditional funding models, commissioning, and reporting does not facilitate. It has enabled us to be agile and respond immediately to the needs being presented by individuals and our communities. It allowed us to blend our services to provide a more cohesive offer - connecting and collaborating with other organisations and services in a more open and transparent manner. This has resulted in more effective and responsive support.

There is no doubt that the COMF funding has helped us enhance the scope and level of support we provided throughout the pandemic. The one-year snapshot (see below) Infographic demonstrates this perfectly.



Report dated April 2022.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact lee.davies@ageukcornwall.org.uk

