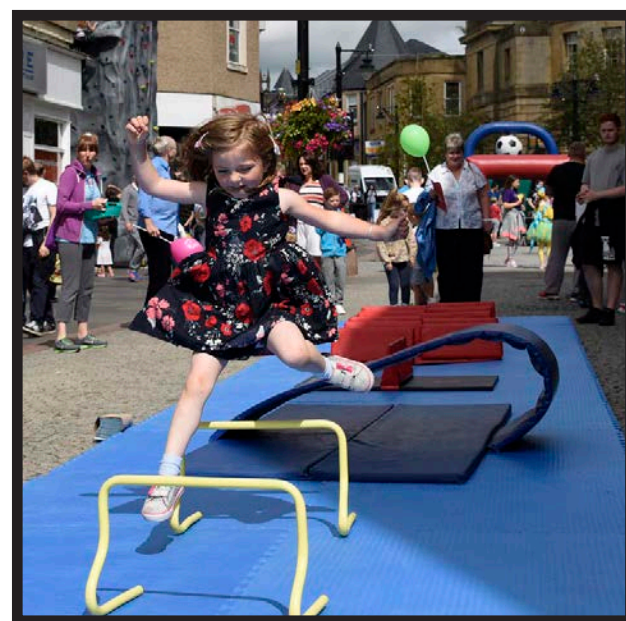



EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

vibrant

COMMUNITIES

THE
NEXT
CHAPTER



PEOPLE
ARE AT THE
HEART OF
EVERYTHING
WE DO 

Vibrant Communities... the story so far

East Ayrshire Council's Vibrant Communities Service has been up and running since April 2013 and its impact on local people and communities has been far-reaching.

In 2015, we told you about our 'Story So Far' and we thought that now was a good time to update you about the next chapter in our Journey to People Powered Transformation.

This unique service, which initially brought together the skills and talents of over 100 employees, has expanded over the last two years as we have continued to integrate our work across other public sector service areas including Housing, Alcohol and Drugs and, most recently, Parental Engagement as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

The service has continued to attract considerable national interest from other local authorities, Health and Social Care Partnerships and major funders and at the end of 2016 we hosted our national conference in partnership with the Improvement Service, attended by representatives from 26 of the other local authorities in Scotland and six national agencies. This offered an opportunity for others to hear about our approach to putting people at the heart of everything we do, and to make connections and share their own ideas and experiences of Community Empowerment.

Vibrant Communities works “with and for” local communities rather than “doing to” them. The aim is to balance the relationship between those who design and deliver services and the people who ultimately use them.

Vibrant Communities is changing culture and unlocking the knowledge, skills and experiences of local people and employees, to harness the enthusiasm, talent and “can do” spirit that exists across East Ayrshire.

The establishment of Vibrant Communities has driven the Council's transformation agenda and embedded our vision to put people at the heart of everything we do.

Whole council and partner approach

The Vibrant Communities service is working across all Council and partner services to ensure a consistent approach. The Vibrant Communities team has delivered over 100 presentations and workshops to employee groups and partners about asset based approaches, creativity, solution focused work and sharing positive practice.

“There is a people’s revolution going on in East Ayrshire.

A social movement resulting in vibrant people taking control of their communities. Every community in Scotland needs Vibrant Communities.”

Annemargaret Black *Head of Community Health & Care Services, Health and Social Care Partnership*

“We had the privilege of working with Council colleagues to co-host a national Vibrant Communities Conference in 2016. The passion and commitment to working with local people and communities to help them fulfil their potential and improve their life outcomes shone through. Vibrant Communities is an outstanding example of community empowerment in action.”

Sarah Gadsden *Director of Strategic Development & Collaboration, The Improvement Service*

“I first met the Vibrant Communities team almost four years ago – and came out buzzing. Where many places talk about valuing and building on people’s strengths, I got to experience first-hand how Vibrant Communities’ ways of working actually do build trust, confidence and a real sense of hope that things can be better - especially for people who don’t usually get to feel that. Looking forward to what’s next....”

Nick Wilding *Lead, Transformation and Inquiry, Ingage team, Scottish Government*

“Our journey over the last few years has been an incredible one! Prior to Vibrant Communities, I worked in the Community Learning & Development Service delivering good quality services to our communities. Since the creation of Vibrant Communities I have seen enhanced services, better collaboration and improved outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. Our communities are being empowered more than ever and that for me has been the change that the creation of Vibrant Communities has helped to enable.”

Kevin Wells *Team Leader, Young People, Sport and Diversion*

“As a section Vibrant Communities provide that missing link between community groups and council departments. In Outdoor Services, we’ve worked with Vibrant Communities to improve services for the groups and communities that we serve, we see this section as a key partner in building strong and sustainable relationships. This ensures a better outlook for communities, better use of resources and budgets and also encourages a joint delivery and ownership of clean, green vibrant areas. These outcomes would be difficult to achieve without the support and co-ordination of Vibrant Communities.”

Nick Kelly *Team Leader, Outdoor Services*

“I am constantly in awe of the passion and spirit which is at the very core of Vibrant Communities and all that they do. Their inherent desire to make our communities vibrant is as inspiring as it is vital. HMP Kilmarnock is delighted to work so closely with them in a variety of ways, all with the joint goal of enhancing and improving so many aspects of our local communities. I am delighted that their hard work has been recognised in a variety of ways including the recent COSLA award, which is a well deserved acknowledgement of their drive and commitment.”

Michael Guy *Director, HMP Kilmarnock*

“Organisational Development and Vibrant Communities working together has developed a true connectedness across the different services enabling us to learn and develop both individually and collaboratively by doing things differently. This has helped build services, relationships and effectively embrace change, strengthening our focus on the people we serve, working in a more positive culture.”

Kathlynn Hewitson *Team Manager, Organisational Development*

“East Ayrshire Vibrant Communities have a fantastic team of diverse individuals all striving for the same goal of making people in our communities feel safe and cared for in a kind and connected way. We have embraced working in partnership helping to open doors and break down perceived barriers, making it easier for our communities to engage in services and activities and tackle any issues in a truly joined up way.”

Craig Marshall *Police Constable, Safer Communities*

“Housing Asset Services have developed a new and innovative approach to the delivery of major projects within the Housing Improvement Programme which has proven to be an outstanding success for both communities and individuals alike. The support provided by our colleagues in Vibrant Communities has been excellent and they are now a key player in the process, working closely with HAS in strong community engagement. We look forward to building on the relationships to ensure that collectively we serve our communities in the very best way that we can.”

Gary Craig *Housing Improvement Manager, Housing Asset Services*

Sharing best practice...

Falkirk Council • Argyll & Bute Council • Midlothian Council
Scottish Community Development Centre • Scottish Health
Council • Scottish Borders Council • West Lothian Council
South Lanarkshire Council • Improvement Service • Audit
Scotland • East Lothian Council • Scottish College for
Education Leadership • Inverclyde Council • Stirling Council
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service • Scottish Government
South Ayrshire Council • West Dunbartonshire Council • East
Renfrewshire Council • Highland Council • Perth and Kinross
North Ayrshire Council • Moray Council • Aberdeenshire
Council • Orkney Council • Renfrewshire Council • Glasgow
City Council • Cne-Siar Council • Edinburgh City Council
Dundee City Council • Scottish Government and Healthcare
Improvement Scotland • North Ayrshire Health and Social
Care Partnership • Volunteer Scotland • SCVO • Fife Council
COSLA • Lloyds TSB Foundation Scotland • Big Lottery

.....

All of the above councils, bodies and associations either attended our 2016 conference, visited us or took part in a Vibrant Communities teleconference

What we do

Vibrant Communities works with all sectors of the community including children and young people, adults and older people and the wider community to develop sustainable communities and reduce inequalities through prevention and early intervention services.

Large-scale events

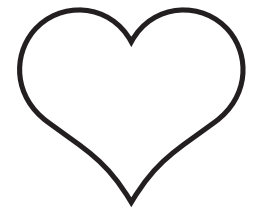
Vibrant Communities hosts a series of large-scale events each year to positively engage with a wide range of communities which encourage participation, empowerment and celebrate the successes of the people we serve.

- **Playday**
- **Youth Conference**
- **Celebrate East Ayrshire**
- **Community Council Seminar**
- **Older People's "Full of Life" event**
- **East Ayrshire Learning Disability Awareness Week**
- **Celebration of Learner's Achievements Award Ceremony**
- **Communities' Conference for Community Led Action Plans**
- **Celebration of Volunteering**
- **Tour of Britain and Tour of Ayrshire cycling events**





Our key highlights



Key highlights from Vibrant Communities include:

17

**COMMUNITY LED
ACTION PLANS**

44

**COMMUNITY ASSET
TRANSFER APPLICATIONS
APPROVED**

148

**COMMUNITY
GROUPS
SUPPORTED**

161,116

Attendances by young people at activities

11%

**INCREASE
ON PREVIOUS YEAR**



61%

**INCREASE IN FEMALE
PARTICIPATION AT
YOUNG PEOPLE
SPORT & DIVERSION
EVENTS OVER 3YRS**

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

250 projects sharing funding of over
£140,000

213 **COMMUNITY PROJECTS**
across East Ayrshire received
£5,415,000 **EXTERNAL FUNDING**
(April 2015 - March 2016)



£190,000+

FUNDING OBTAINED BY LOCAL SPORTS CLUBS
(2016 - 2017)

31 **ACTIVE** 
COMMUNITY COUNCILS

986

community based exercise
classes delivered

13,492 recorded attendances

(2016/17)

207 vibrant
COMMUNITIES
VOLUNTEERS

10,000
ADDITIONAL HOURS
OF SERVICE PER YEAR

(April 2017)



Our administrative
support staff use their
creative skills and
talents to enhance
the work of the teams
and support our
communities

Youth voice

An important part of Vibrant Communities' work involves encouraging young people to participate in positive activities and divert them from anti-social behaviour. A major success factor in doing this has been the combination of Youth Work, Sports Development and Active Schools within a single team which has enabled a fusion of skills and talents from across the workforces, blurring the roles and ultimately improving the outcomes for young people.

Vibrant Communities continues to give young people the platform to have a positive say and helps to create better opportunities for children and young people across East Ayrshire. Through our partnerships with academies, youth work has engaged and encouraged our young people to value others and express opinions.

Voting awareness workshops

Across East Ayrshire, seven academies and one additional support needs school participated in voting awareness workshops throughout February and March 2017. These workshops helped school pupils to think about what they want from a politician and to consider key policies that are important to them. The young people involved also got the chance to experience a polling booth and the voting process.

In addition to the delivery of these workshops, Vibrant Communities worked hard to ensure young people had registered to vote in recent elections. Staff focused on pupils within academies and gave them the option to register and become more aware of their right to vote. As a result of this targeted work, 88% of young people in East Ayrshire were registered to vote.

Celebrating Abilities conference

Cumnock Academy pupil Derrick Hughes was the driving force behind the establishment of the Celebrating Abilities Conference in February 2017.

Attended by 100 pupils from East Ayrshire secondary and additional support needs schools, the conference came about after Derrick visited the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education's Hearing in 2015. This led him to reflect on education within East Ayrshire and he wanted a way to highlight the barriers faced by young people with additional support needs.

At the conference, Derrick encouraged East Ayrshire Council to ensure our schools were supporting young people with additional support needs as best as they could but he also asked for support so that his peers could better understand the barriers and be more supportive and mindful of others' abilities.

Youth Conferences 2016

The aim of the Young People, Sport and Diversion team is to encourage more 11 – 25 year olds to participate in youth work programmes in East Ayrshire. Our Youth Conferences are part of those programmes which promote youth work as well as having an educational context. The conferences are split across two age groups: P7 – S2 and age 14+, and give young people a platform to have their say on subjects that directly affect their everyday lives, including the Council's budget prioritisation and services provided by Community Planning Partners.

Focus groups held prior to the conferences recognised the need to develop a programme around social media, considering the positives and negatives, and how we support young people to engage positively in these technologies.

Young people were represented at the conferences from academies, primaries, additional support needs schools, community partners and the local college.



Kaitlyn's journey

Kaitlyn Moran first became aware of the work of Vibrant Communities in 2014 when she attended our Annual Youth Conference. There, she heard about the experiences of the then Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Louise Cameron MSYP which inspired Kaitlyn to want to get involved.

Kaitlyn stood as a candidate in the 2015 Scottish Youth Parliament Elections and became an MSYP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. Over the next two years, she met with MPs to discuss Social Justice and campaigned on a range of young people's issues. Soon she became the Depute Convener of the Social Justice Committee at the Scottish Youth Parliament.

Kaitlyn is a keen, inspirational young person who wants to help others. This became particularly evident when her peers at school said they would like more information around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) support. With help from Vibrant Communities, Kaitlyn has successfully started the PROUD LGBT youth group that runs within the school, and delivered a workshop at Vibrant Communities' first ever LGBT Youth Conference.

In 2017, Kaitlyn decided to apply to become a Vibrant Communities Bank Staff member and is now a Senior Youth Worker within our Youth Clubs.

Kaitlyn said: "All of my work with Vibrant Communities and as an MSYP has definitely helped me become the young woman I am today. It has directed me into working with young people as I don't think I would have done it otherwise."



Capturing our legacy

We continue to use the legacy of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games to strengthen our sports infrastructure and inspire the next generation of sports stars across our communities.

Our local sports clubs benefit from expert guidance and advice from the Sports Development Officers including support in club development, funding, protecting people and starting new clubs. As a result, the number of sports clubs affiliated to our Sports Council has reached a four-year high. This, coupled with the tremendous amount of sport and physical activity opportunities offered to children and young people and a record number of attendances at these sessions, highlights that we are bucking the trend with our young people's physical activity levels against national statistics.

Cycling has been high on the agenda in East Ayrshire over recent years with the Tour of Britain passing

through our area and the hosting of a major new UCI World Championship Gran Fondo event – the Tour of Ayrshire. Our Active Schools and Sports Development Officers have used this as a platform to enhance our local cycling provision in partnership with affiliated sports clubs and the Ayrshire Roads Alliance Road Safety and Active Travel hub team. All of our schools have the opportunity to participate in iCycling training through Ayrshire Roads Alliance and pupils can then progress to on-road cycling proficiency training if it is suitable for them.

Since autumn 2015, 320 pupils have completed the Cycling Proficiency module which equates to an impressive 88% pass rate. As well as this, 48% of schools have participated in the on-road cycling training programme.

We have also seen an increase in small-scale cycling events in the community which build on the major events that have taken place. A particular highlight is the extensive and continued uptake of our All Ability Cycling programme which ensures there are no barriers to anyone getting on wheels!

Tour of Ayrshire

2,300 visitors to the area

1,150 visitors from outside of Scotland

3,000 pupils engaged



Impact on young people participating in activities

increase in confidence



88.7%

increase in communication skills



91.3%

increase in team work skills



95.7%



Unlocking potential

We've been dedicated to increasing opportunities for All Ability sport over the last few years and have set ourselves ambitious targets for this going forward. Tailoring our approach to this area of work, we have sought to co-produce our programmes with local people and their families.

Frame Football is one such club that was born out of the demand from young local people with cerebral palsy who use walking frames to play football. Parents and family members have highlighted the difference that this has made to the young people in their lives:

"It has meant my grandson can stay on his feet for one hour. He couldn't do this before...it's excellent for the kids to mix, play as a team and make new friends."

Through their hard work, all of the young people have seen an improvement in their footballing ability and it's also an opportunity for them to get weekly physio to help them become physically stronger.

Frame Football, now a constituted group which is affiliated to the East Ayrshire Sports Council, continues to develop and provide fantastic opportunities for many young people.

Young Ambassadors

Young Ambassadors is an exciting and energetic lottery funded programme which aims to help develop young people as leaders in sport. Each year, two pupils from secondary schools in East Ayrshire are chosen as Young Ambassadors and their roles is to motivate and inspire young people to get involved in sport in their schools, clubs and local communities. In East Ayrshire our young ambassadors benefit from the fusion between our Young People, Sport and Diversion Team meaning that their pathways are now much clearer and opportunities for progression wider – as is the impact they make in our communities.

One particular highlight of the Young Ambassador Programme was when one of our young people, Courtney Cartner, was invited by sportscotland to officially open the National Conference in September 2016 with an inspirational speech to all new recruits about her journey. This was an amazing gesture by sportscotland and Courtney also got the chance to share the stage with Scottish and Great British Track and Field athlete, Eilidh Doyle.

Melanie Grant, an S6 Young Ambassador from Grange Academy, was selected to be part of the Young People's Sports Panel this year with sportscotland. She has been looking at developing various opportunities specific to her interests with LGBT, disability and girls' groups within sport. Melanie is part of the Scotland U20s Rugby Team and was recently interviewed about her experiences as part of the Equality in Sport Event at Ayrshire College.

It's also a real testament to East Ayrshire that two of our Young Ambassadors are females and we firmly believe that this has played a key role in our continuing increase in girls' participation in sport.

Play matters

The Play and Early Intervention Team works across a variety of key service areas. It takes an early intervention approach to working with children, families and whole communities to ensure improved quality of life using unique, asset based approaches.

The team has embraced the development of new relationships, shared skills and knowledge within the wider Vibrant Communities team. It has also adopted a multi-agency approach to working in partnership with other key external agencies to support children, young people and families.

Playday is one of Scotland's best and largest free play events which is run annually by the Play and Early Intervention Team at Kay Park in Kilmarnock. In 2017, 12,000 children and their families attended the event which supports family bonding and celebrates a child's right to play (UNCRC).

“Playday was a fantastic event for the whole family to enjoy. I think I will be creating a mud kitchen in our garden now!”

Play in Prison

In Scotland, over 27,000 children are affected by the imprisonment of a parent and the impact this has on them and their wider family can be devastating. This figure means that more children each year experience a parent's imprisonment than a parent's divorce. To support these young people, the Play and Early Intervention Team runs the Play in Prison project which helps families to establish and maintain the paternal bond with fathers who are incarcerated in HMP Kilmarnock.

The project provides positive play experiences for prisoners, children and their families and offers an excellent incentive for good behaviour within the prison. It helps to maintain meaningful contact with children thereby reducing reoffending and improving outcomes for both parent and child. Programmes such as 1-2-1 bonding visits, family book share, sports days and summer family days allow dads increased quality time with their children, lessening the impact of the sentence on their children.

In 2016, Play in Prison won the “Chair's Award” from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) for its innovation and success. The project was selected from over 200 other entrants across all other categories in the annual Excellence Awards. The award recognises the innovation, enthusiasm and motivation of the project group, as well as the strength and unique nature of the partnership.

“The CoSLA award is great testament to the fantastic work being undertaken by everyone involved in the Family Strategy Group, from East Ayrshire Vibrant Communities and HMP Kilmarnock. There should also be recognition for the offenders who engage with the programmes and services developing family bonds and parenting skills.”

Keith Mason, *Gymnasium and Health Improvement Manager, HMP Kilmarnock*

In April 2017, the team was successful in winning two silver awards at the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (IESE) Awards. The team won in the Transformation in Health and Social Care and Working Together categories for its work with prisoners and their families at HMP Kilmarnock.



Children and young people's befriending

The Befriending Service is delivered across East Ayrshire and provides over 30 vulnerable and isolated young people with the opportunity to build supportive, trusting relationships over a period of time in their lives and helps them to maintain good social contacts.

The service has recently expanded to work with children and young people affected by drug and alcohol misuse and young people leaving care who require additional support in their first tenancy. It works in partnership with key agencies across social work, education and health to ensure a multi-agency approach is adopted to effectively support children and young people.

“Having a Befriender was a great experience. We had lots of fun and I feel happier and more confident as a result. If any child or young person out there who needs a bit of support gets the chance to have a Befriender, I would tell them to go for it.” **Paul** (age 13)

“The Befriending Service is a fantastic service. It really made a difference to us as a family to have someone there for Paul.” **Paul's mum**

Full of life

For adults and older people, we work to provide a range of innovative and dedicated services that can help everyone live longer, healthier lives at home or in a homely setting.

Keeping active

In 2016/17 our work has made a very positive impact on residents' wellbeing, with over 986 community based exercise classes being delivered, attracting over 13,492 recorded attendances.

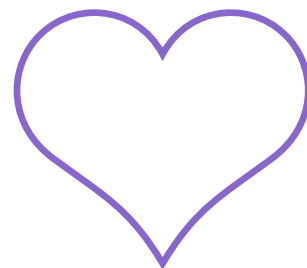
Through our Activity on Prescription programme we offer one to one support and class activities for people who are dealing with one or more long-term health conditions. We work as part of an Ayrshire-wide HARP (Healthy Active Rehabilitation Programme) that offers specifically tailored support for those with cardiac and pulmonary issues, strokes, falls, cancer and diabetes. Local people are really seeing the difference.

The volunteer-led walking programme has had over 1,636 attendances at groups in Kilmarnock, Auchinleck, Shortlees and New Cumnock. Walking is great exercise, a good opportunity to chat with other people and it improves your wellbeing. We also support specific walks for adults with mental and physical health conditions.

“When you feel fitter your perspective widens and your outlook is better as you have classes and goals to meet.”

“The class is great, it gets you meeting new people and also keeps you fit and active.”

“It keeps me active, no longer sitting staring at four walls or watching TV during the day.”





CHIP Van (Community Health Improvement Partnership)

The CHIP Van, as it travels throughout East Ayrshire, continues to be an important first contact for local people wishing to keep an eye on their health and receive lifestyle advice. 1,403 people attended the CHIP Van in 39 communities and many reported positive changes in their health and lifestyle as a result of this.

We also visit local groups and companies with the CHIP Van to improve Healthy Working Lives. We have visited 171 events and 4,754 people have been supported with health checks and lifestyle advice.



Improving connections for older people

Loneliness and isolation are now known to have a huge impact on people's physical health. Social connections are one of the major ways to wellbeing and we know that some of our older population in particular can feel isolated.

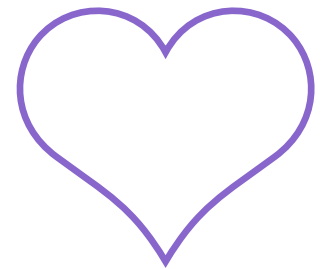
Weekly social clubs, activities and outings are available across East Ayrshire's supported accommodation units which offer opportunities for residents and members of the surrounding community to connect, socialise, pursue hobbies and stay active.

Most of the social hubs are constituted and run for and by local older people themselves. They enjoy a very busy and varied social calendar, and some of the most popular activities and events have included the Golden Olympics, Come Dine with Me and the annual CHiPmas party. Weekly social activities range from quiz nights and tea dances to bowling, bingo, film nights and chair-based exercise. Trips to Dumfries House, local garden centres, the canal boats and Ayr Races have also been a huge success. There have been 1821 activities across East Ayrshire and 19,295 attendances recorded.

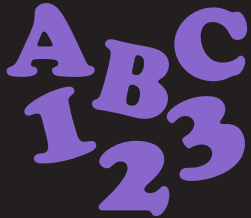
For more vulnerable older people we offer the opportunity of a befriender to help make those initial connections to community activities. We then find that many of our older people who are matched with a befriender end up becoming befrienders for others before long and this service has really been life changing for many.

Irene, one of our older befrienderes said:

“After the death of my daughter my world just got smaller and I couldn't face anyone. Now with the help of Alanda my befriender I am getting out more. Alanda has also set up Skype for me and I can now speak to my family in Australia once a month - I can see the grandchildren and chat to them too.”



In the last year



439 adults have been helped to improve their literacy & numeracy skills



148 adults with learning disabilities have been assisted to live fulfilling + independent lives



97 families have participated in family literacy learning



2,933 people have attended community learning centres for digital access and support

Skills for life

Vibrant Communities supports people to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary for them to play an active and productive role in their personal, community and working lives.

We help people to achieve positive outcomes through planned learning experiences which develop their literacies and learning skills for life, learning and work. Better literacy, numeracy and learning skills can be life-changing for many people, bringing about real improvements in their personal, social and economic circumstances.

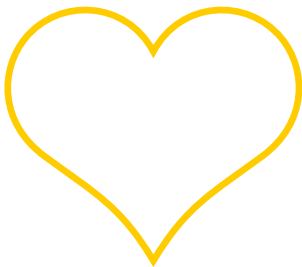
In the past year, 439 adults have been helped to improve and develop their literacy and numeracy skills; 201 adults with learning disabilities have been assisted to live fulfilling and independent lives; and 97 families have participated in family literacy learning.

As well as helping people with their reading, writing and counting, we have continued to deliver financial literacies support, which helps people manage their financial affairs. Our Money MOT course runs in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, Sovereign Credit Union, Citizens Advice Bureau and Citrus Energy and covers all aspects of money management, including dealing with debt and arrears.

Our work around employability skills, delivered in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and Ayrshire College, aims to get people back into work or further training. Through our employability courses, we help people improve their skills for employment including communication, literacy and numeracy, using digital technology and working with others. 2,933 adults have also attended our community learning centres across East Ayrshire in the last year for digital access and support with job search and online benefit claims.

Our Local Area Co-ordinators connect people with disabilities, families and communities to promote inclusion and encourage communities to be open and welcoming to everyone as equal citizens. We support people with learning disabilities to live full and independent lives in their communities and help them to develop their skills, talents and abilities. We also co-ordinate East Ayrshire Learning Disability Awareness Week each year to help raise awareness of learning disabilities in our communities and celebrate diversity.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is an area of our work which has seen a growing demand recently from people living and working in East Ayrshire. We support people in their own community initially and work closely with Ayrshire College to ensure that they can progress and move forward in their English language learning.





ABC
123

94.7%

ADULT LITERACY LEARNERS
achieved intermediary
outcomes set in Individual
Learning Plans

Tea at Two ESOL Group

The need for a supportive and welcoming learning environment was identified through discussions between Vibrant Communities and a group of refugees who had recently settled in East Ayrshire. They were having difficulties with everyday communication which created a barrier to their confidence and independence. One individual was also hearing impaired which created a further communication barrier.

The Killie Browser, a community-run café based in Kilmarnock Train Station, was chosen as a suitable venue for the group to meet as it offers an informal and relaxing space. The group started meeting on a weekly basis and looked at everyday English language learning and communication skills. This approach provided them with new opportunities to improve and develop their communication skills, helping to break down the barriers to their learning and to integrate with their local community.

Most of the group have since joined other community groups and are more active in their own communities. The hearing impaired learner was also supported to learn British Sign Language and went on to volunteer in the café. His voluntary work experience enabled him to go on to do barista training and become a mentor with other hearing impaired individuals.

All of the learners gained vital communication skills, improved their self-confidence and most importantly, took steps towards becoming more independent. They still meet every week to progress further with their learning and are looking ahead positively to their future lives in East Ayrshire.

Volunteering

Vibrant Communities is the lead for the East Ayrshire Council Volunteer Framework, which provides the basis for all our volunteering activity, and ensures a co-ordinated and consistent approach.

The Framework recognises the vital contribution that volunteers make to individuals, families and communities across East Ayrshire, helping people both young and old to live happy, healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.

There are currently 207 Vibrant Communities volunteers contributing over 10,000 additional hours of service each year, not accounting for the many volunteers working in their own communities. A key aspect of the Volunteer Framework is Employer Supported Volunteering, where Council staff are granted a day's paid leave each year to volunteer with a local community or voluntary organisation.

Employer Supported Volunteering is helping to build strong, vibrant communities by sharing employees' skills and talents. So far, a number of staff have taken up volunteering opportunities with a range of local groups and organisations. We continue to work closely with our partners, particularly the Volunteer Centre East Ayrshire and the East Ayrshire Council for Voluntary Organisations, to promote volunteering and ensure that all our volunteers get the support and training they need.

As Ewen Logie, committee member with the Stewarton Community Trust, put it:

“Volunteering is the beating heart of a community.”

Emily's journey

Emily Chau started volunteering with Vibrant Communities in 2010 when she was just 11 years old. She had been a participant on a MEND (Mend, Exercise, Nutrition...Do It!) Programme and then became a young volunteer within the MEND Graduates Group. Emily described herself at this time as being "a wee shy girl who didn't really speak to many people", but despite this she decided to give volunteering a go. She now says "I'm so glad that I did."

Emily has always been keen to learn new skills and has attended a variety of training sessions which have not only allowed her to gain valuable knowledge, skills and experience but also helped

her improve her confidence and self-esteem. After leaving school, Emily went onto Ayrshire College to study Early Education and Childcare. She then worked for East Ayrshire Leisure Trust before securing a position within Vibrant Communities as a Modern Apprentice within the Early Intervention and Prevention Team. She is currently working towards an SVQ Level 3 in Children and Young People.

Looking back at her experience as a volunteer within Vibrant Communities, Emily said: "I wouldn't be where I am today if it hadn't been for my volunteering. Volunteering makes me feel happy and I'm now much more confident. It's great for your CV and it gives you a chance to try things out. I had never thought about a career working with children and look where I am now!"





Our communities

Communities across East Ayrshire are on an exciting transformational journey which is reaping significant rewards and long-lasting benefits for local people for years to come.

Community Led Action Plans

Vibrant Communities has been successfully helping to make connections between communities and partner agencies and over the last three years we have been seeing a real transformation in how communities are developing and engaging with each other.

Vibrant Communities focuses on empowering and building capacity of local people and communities, and developing strong social networks. It does this more specifically through the deployment of dedicated Community Workers to:

- *support communities to identify local assets and bring together local groups, associations and communities of interest*
- *prioritise actions through local surveys and consultation*
- *develop a five-year Community Led Action Plan*

“The process of the plan has brought local community organisations together, helped to build bridges and got rid of misconceptions.”

Work continues to support the development of locally led action plans in every one of East Ayrshire’s communities when requested. So far, 17 Community Led Action Plans have been launched. This approach underpins the Council’s aspiration to transform our relationship with the communities we serve, ensuring communities are empowered to plan, prioritise and progress community led regeneration in their area.

The development of Community Led Action Plans is the cornerstone of our work and is integral to Community Planning in East Ayrshire. There are also clear links with our Community Planning arrangements ensuring that local people have a real voice and can influence the decisions which impact on their communities. We now have two representatives from both the Community Councils and Community Action Plan Forum who sit on the Community Planning Partnership Board. This provides an opportunity for local people to help shape and design services important to their area and ensure that they are delivered effectively.

There has been significant engagement within and across communities as a result of the plans. The Community Action Plan Forum was developed following requests and comments being made at the conferences and it is now in its second year. It plays an important role in the planning of the annual conference, working on cross-community initiatives such as tourism and Participatory Budgeting as well as providing the communities with another opportunity to connect and share good practice.

The Communities Conference has become an annual fixture and provides an opportunity for the groups to meet with each other, make new connections and help them to work towards achieving their aspirations. National and local guests also attend to discuss and debate issues of importance to the communities.

“Sharing our achievements was an important part of the day which gave comfort that the hard work is all worthwhile in the long term.”

“After discovering how similar our problems and aspirations are, I now see that all the communities need to work together for a better future.”

Conference participants

Communities who have developed an action plan are changing their communities and increasing community spirit through the numerous activities and initiatives they have developed. These are only some of the achievements:

- *A Food Festival in Newmilns which has attracted thousands of visitors*
- *Communities creating their own branding such as ‘Cumnock is Ours’*
- *Communities selling merchandise such as ‘Love Newmilns’*
- *Groups working hard and working together to improve the look of their community, such as purchasing hanging baskets, inserting planters, heritage sculptures and seats as well as a huge number of community clean ups*

Mauchline Action Group

Mauchline Action Group was established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in November 2014 following the launch of the Mauchline Community Led Action Plan.

12 active trustees and over 30 members representing a cross section of the community are driving forward the themes and actions contained in their action plan. Since the inception of the plan, the Action Group has been active in consulting with the local community and has undertaken projects including: town centre improvements through the provision and upkeep of hanging baskets and planters; strengthening the local economy by supporting businesses with the development of the Mauchline Business Directory; and focusing on heritage and environment with the development of a Community Growing Garden through the investment of £84,000 from funders including CSGN, EB Barr, SUES and Awards for All.

The Group is now developing its Hilltop Path and undergoing Asset Transfer of the local park for the development of a Community Sports Hub.



Community Asset Transfer

A dedicated team within Vibrant Communities was established to support the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process across East Ayrshire. This involves the transfer of the responsibility of an asset from the Council to a community group or voluntary organisation. Our approach has attracted interest from other local councils in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Following adoption of the Community Asset Transfer policy in October 2012, 44 CAT applications have been approved including community facilities and areas of green space as well as sports facilities for football, boxing and karate. The CAT process presents local groups and communities with unique opportunities to get involved in running facilities and delivering services; empowering them to help themselves and create a more sustainable future.

There has been significant interest in the work of the team and the approach they have taken. They have spoken at conferences, shared their experience and practice with others and hosted numerous visits from other authorities.

As a result of the co-production work with communities, they were approached by the Scottish Government to do the first video for the #100 Co-production Stories.

Further applications are progressing for a range of facilities and land. The policy will now be reviewed and refreshed based on our own experiences and taking into consideration the implications of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

Community Councils

There are currently 31 Community Councils operating across East Ayrshire. Each Community Council is made up of residents who live in that area who are elected for a period of four years and attend a minimum of seven meetings each year. The role is voluntary and Community Councillors represent the views of their community to statutory agencies like East Ayrshire Council.

Community Councillors have the best interests of their community at heart and local issues are discussed at their meetings which are often attended by elected members and representatives from Police Scotland.

As well as ensuring that their community is involved in decisions which affect it, they may also fundraise to improve their local area, for example to supply hanging baskets or put up Christmas lights.

Community Council meetings are open to the public and anyone who lives in the area, is over 16 years old and is on the Electoral Register is able to join. Community Councillors also benefit from support from Vibrant Communities, including the organisation of annual seminars, which allow them to find out more about East Ayrshire Council and share good practice.

In February 2016, the keys for Dalmellington Community Centre were handed over to the Dalmellington Community Association and since then, the centre has been transformed. The Association secured £10,000 investment from Awards for All, new windows thanks to Coalfield Regeneration Trust and £80,000 from LEADER to upgrade the toilet facilities.

**“We have found
the strengths of the
community and we
are moving forward
to make the plan
happen and deal
with the challenges
we face.”**

Community Investment and external funding

The Community Investment Team helps a range of community groups, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and charities to think about their funding approach and consider alternative finance and investment models to support their work.

The team offers a range of information and training sessions for these groups, including regular updates on grant funding, meetings with groups to discuss funding options for their projects and advice on new routes to Community Investment.

During the financial period 2015/16, 213 community projects received £5,514,000 of external funding from a variety of sources including the Big Lottery Fund, Scottish Government and a wide range of charitable trusts and foundations. The team specifically supported 63 of these projects to obtain £1,506,000 of funding.



“Following a meeting with Community Investment Officer Neil McKenna, he pointed us in the right direction and explained the funding options that were available. This proved to be of immense help and got us started on the right path to apply. When we were ready with our application to the Big Lottery, I reached out once again to ask if Neil could look over our application. He did and gave me some great pointers, feedback and comments. We have received a formal conditional offer for the full amount and would like to thank Neil for his help and guidance which was much appreciated.”

Springhill Bowling Club

A further £1,202,000 of funding was received for nine East Ayrshire community-based projects between October 2016 and April 2017 from Ayrshire LEADER (2015 – 2020), representing 42% of the total pan-Ayrshire allocation. The total funding packages for these projects amount to £2,926,000.

As part of our commitment to community and voluntary groups, charities and social enterprises in search of external funding opportunities, we operate a free to use resource called East Ayrshire 4 Community. This provides a cohesive and streamlined approach to external funding and enables registered groups to identify the best range of funders for their particular projects. Over the past two years 530 community groups and organisations have registered to use the site and over 8,500 visits and associated searches have been undertaken.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting (PB) gives local people the opportunity to decide where public money is spent in their communities.

In 2016, Vibrant Communities received £10,000 from the Scottish Government to pilot the PB approach in two communities (Mauchline and Newmilns/Darvel) that had developed a Community Led Action Plan. This was matched with funding received from the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, providing a total budget of £20,000.

Based on the success of the pilot events, Vibrant Communities submitted a bid to the Scottish Government's Community Choices Fund to offer a further 12 communities the opportunity to experience

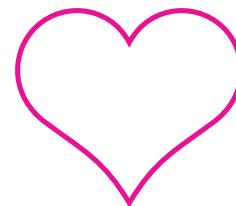
PB. The Community Investment Team also supported East Ayrshire Tenants' and Residents' Federation (EATRF) to submit a bid for their own PB events.

Both bids were successful, resulting in a further £200,000 being made available for local communities from the Community Choices Fund, East Ayrshire Council and the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. In total, 19 PB events have taken place across communities with 250 projects receiving a share of the £220,000.

In the last year, the team has worked with colleagues and local communities to deliver:

19 PB events
(with over **2000+** people voting)

250 PROJECTS
sharing **£220,000** funding



PB in East Ayrshire is still at an early stage of development, however the impact it has had on communities to date has been remarkable. In addition to receiving funding there have been a number of other benefits, such as groups making new connections within the community and sharing their skills and talents with each another. The Community Investment Team has been laying the foundations of PB within East Ayrshire through the development work on a pan- Ayrshire basis and our PB pilots. This exciting new process is set to grow, involving more local people to empower them to make decisions about how money is allocated or spent in their communities.

Vibrant Communities is committed to the development of PB locally and the Community Investment Team within Vibrant Communities has been tasked to be the lead support for PB in East Ayrshire. It will continue to work with local communities and partners to promote PB and offer support to take it forward and embed it into our everyday practice.

“The process was great, very open. Great way to do things. Absolutely great for the valley. To see so many groups, so many people, that has to be a bonus.” Newmilns Regeneration Group

“I thought the event was very well attended and a huge success. It was great just mixing with the other groups and chatting. Our scout group got offers of help for our garden from the flower show. I thought it was very good for community relations irrespective of whether we actually got any money or not, so very well done”

Dalmellington Parish Decides Event



**Empowering
communities to
make informed
choices about
how public
money is spent**

WHAT'S
NEXT FOR

VIBRANT
COMMUNITIES



What's next...

We will continue to embed the Vibrant Communities approach across our Council area (and beyond) to keep 'people at the heart of everything we do', including the launch of our Kind, Caring & Connected Campaign.

2018 will be a huge year for our Young People, Sport and Diversion Team as we continue to establish our youth voice in the 'Year of Young People'. Our Children and Young People's Cabinet will be formally established and will take lead responsibility in reporting on the 'State of Children's Rights and Wellbeing' annually as part of the Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act.

Our Play and Early Intervention work will be central to achieving the Council's ambition to reduce the poverty related attainment gap. We will be leading on key areas of this around Parental Engagement, Physical Literacies and developing a Growth Mindset, with our foundations for this being in our communities.

We will continue to support local people at their most vulnerable and in recovery from illness. Our multi-morbidities interventions will be expanded to incorporate the Move More programme to support those recovering from cancer and will create community based connections working alongside self-managed groups.

Community empowerment and community engagement will remain central to our work in relation to transforming relationships with communities. The journey of Participatory Budgeting will develop supported by the Community Investment Team.

We will continue to:

Harness the opportunities linked to Community Empowerment Legislation

Further embed and share the Vibrant approach across the workforce, in our communities and with other councils

Focus on simplification and integration

Increase natural, inclusive supports and connections for the most vulnerable people to reduce the need for formal interventions

Create and enable the conditions for people powered transformation

The Communities Team will continue to work with communities to create their own Community Led Action Plans setting out their local priorities. We will continue to roll out the 'Engaging our Communities' framework for Community Engagement. This will involve co-producing a Community Engagement Charter Mark in partnership with community organisations which will help strengthen and support community groups, organisations and Community Planning Partners to engage with their members and wider communities.

To ensure the most vulnerable people in our communities are supported in relation to welfare reform, the Lifeskills and Inclusion Team will continue to empower and enable individuals to develop digital and financial literacies skills.

The journey to people powered transformation continues....



For more information about Vibrant Communities contact...

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THE STORY CONTINUES...