



Connect

Connected people, connected communities: How can we work together to make Gateshead and Newcastle places in which people make and maintain good quality relationships?

In late 2015, partners in Gateshead and Newcastle started work to consider what more we can do to make these areas into places where people make and maintain good quality relationships. It's a work in progress but given that the first major event took place on 7 June 2016, it is worth a stocktake on progress to date and what happens next.

Our intention

The work intends to build on, and add value to, existing developments such as introducing asset based approaches, health and care integration and developing social prescribing models. It will also enable us to consider how other areas of activity, such as housing, urban design or transport, can make a difference.

Our aim in doing this work is:

- Raise awareness of importance of good social relationships to our wellbeing
- Consider what best practice could look like and different approaches in use
- Understand how we can build on our local strengths to create the conditions that enable people to establish and maintain good social relationships
- Consider what would enable us to build a stronger and more effective interface between 'formal' services and 'informal' community networks and support
- Inform subsequent areas of system activity – such as considerations for commissioning, workforce development, information, tracking change

The first key event

On 7 June 2016, over 140 people from different partner organisations came together to consider where we should be focussing our energy in the future. In the lead up to the event:

- We encouraged groups of people from organisations to have conversations in their team and network meetings about good quality social relationships and what people from organisations can do to value and build them. We distributed an information sheet to support these conversations. It drew on reports, academic journals and research projects to act as discussion points for people to consider.
- We invited groups of people from our local communities to think about and share their thoughts on good social relationships. The groups produced a total of 28 posters (using a standard template) that were displayed at the event itself and incorporated into the activities that took place. Three groups also worked with a local artist to produce more visual posters.

During the event itself, participants started by discussing the value of social relationships and produced posters that were displayed alongside those produced by community groups. They went on to consider what works to help make and maintain good quality relationships.

Participants were then invited to identify a number of action areas that they felt that they could drive forward. A number of proposers came forward with the following action areas:

- Connecting through information, advice and digital media
- Making waiting rooms into connecting spaces
- Commissioning for social activity
- Promoting connectivity through grassroots sports activity/clubs
- Nurturing bumping spaces in all communities
- Connecting communities in emergencies – Before, during and after.
- Establishing a high street meditation centre
- Canny City – safe places to connect when in mental distress
- Establishing community launderette(s)
- Promoting connectivity through food
- Promoting connectivity for people with long term conditions
- Role of front line staff as connectors
- Promoting connectivity for children and young people not attending school full-time
- Promoting connectivity through volunteering
- Promoting connectivity through culture, creativity and diversity

Participants considered these action areas and made plans in relation to the steps they could take to progress them.

Overall, the feedback on the day was positive with participants valuing the time it gave for networking and thinking about an issue in a different way. We will continue to reflect on the process to share learning and consider what would make future events of this kind successful.

What happens next?

Much depends on the participants and what they choose to do to follow on from the event in relation to the action areas they agreed to work on. This isn't just about the formal action areas listed above but the ad hoc ideas and agreements people made in their networking that are less easy to capture centrally.

We are organising some follow-up to support and capture the work that participants' take forward. This will be led and facilitated by Involve North East.

The first immediate job is to share the information about the day and make sure participants have a record of what they said they would do. All information will be made available on the website (<http://www.newcastlegatesheadccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/connected-people-connected-communities/>) very shortly, and we will be contacting the proposers of the action areas and others directly.

In September and December, we will be following up with proposers to find out what has happened and what has helped and hindered progress. Early in 2017, we will provide an account of the progress that has taken place.

NHS Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group
in conjunction with our partners in Gateshead and Newcastle
Contact the organisers via email: NGCCG.gettingconnected@nhs.net