

## **MHCLG Community Champions Programme Case Study**

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### **Name of scheme:**

Hyndburn Community Champions

### **Local area(s) covered:**

Hyndburn Borough

### **Contact details:**

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### **How does this scheme support your local COVID-19 response? Are there other priorities for your champions?**

Our Hyndburn Hub was originally set up to support our response to COVID-19 in March 2020. It is a one-stop shop service and has particularly focused on coordinating the distribution of food, medicine and other support to our shielding population. It brings together a broad range of local government, NHS and community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations and people, in a way and at a scale that has never previously been achieved. It has its own branding, which is shared by all of the organisations involved. The network of people involved in the Hub have come together to focus on: -

- Developing and embedding ways of working
- New and improved ways to connect services and people together
- How together we have the ability to reach and engage with all communities across the borough

The Hub is supplemented by our Community Action Network, which regularly brings together key organisations and people actively working on projects to support people across the borough. Whilst the Network is closely linked to the pandemic, it is still evolving, and we are keen to retain this momentum.

Unsurprisingly, the work of the Hub and the Community Action Network overlap significantly. Collectively, the organisations that make up the Hub already engaged with thousands of Hyndburn residents with varying levels of need on a regular basis, and over the past year we have made some very positive steps towards ensuring that these organisations and services connect up. There is a real appetite to ensure



that we develop the Hub into a more sustainable, long-term way of working, to improve outcomes for people across the borough.

The Hub currently works alongside our local primary care networks (PCNs) and clinical commissioning group (CCG), with the aim of developing a long-term vision and purpose for our Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB). This will ensure that lessons from the pandemic and improvements to partnership working throughout can be taken forward and sustained in future strategic arrangements, meaning that we can continue to make a positive impact on more general health and wellbeing issues across the borough.

We have worked with a range of stakeholders from across the Hub to identify measures that we will assess ourselves against. Collectively, we have agreed that new structures and working practices will: -

- Impact positively on the health of communities in Hyndburn
- Build on learning and experiences from the pandemic
- Develop shared goals which bring us together
- Help gain high level buy-in from key leaders and influencers
- Empower people, build their confidence and help them to develop healthier lifestyles
- Take a place-based approach, incl. building on existing assets
- Share data & information between organisations
- Promote accessibility, ensuring that organisations, groups and residents know how to be involved, and tackle any barriers to participation
- Ensure that our approach is developed with and by our residents
- Develop strong communication and public messaging
- Recognise the contribution and potential of the third sector
- Focus on and engage with the most vulnerable people in our community
- Understand and be able to clearly communicate our health infrastructure
- Identify and maximise opportunities to resource and drive further improvement

### **How did the scheme come about? When did it first come about?**

We were made aware of community champions funding (CCF) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in late 2020 and felt that it could provide resource to allow us to build on the work that we had already led during the pandemic.

Through the funding, we have been able to: -

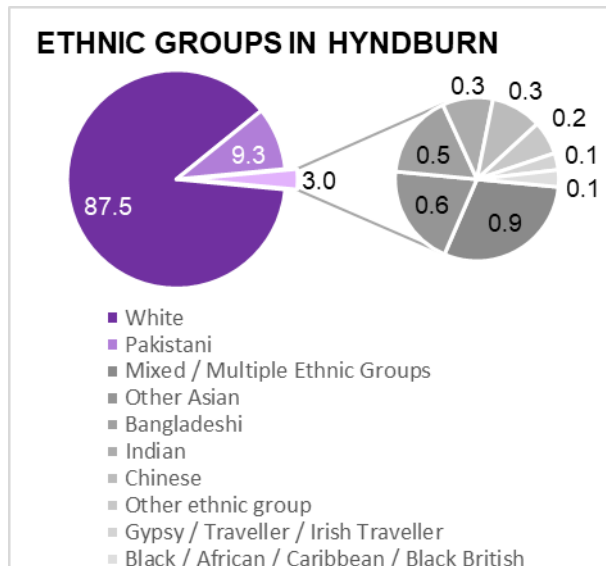
- continue to maintain leadership for the Hub (via the part-time secondment of the CEO of our local leisure trust)
- support a small team of 'hub agents' to assist the Council's contact centre in dealing with Hub enquiries
- develop and coordinate a network of community and voluntary groups (building on our existing infrastructure) to ensure that efforts are not being duplicated and that gaps in provision can be quickly identified and addressed.

This has allowed us to further develop our central referral processes, ensuring that, as our understanding of emerging need grows, we are able to link residents to appropriate services and support, e.g. referring people living with ‘long COVID’ to support and tailored activity programmes. Maintaining and developing infrastructure around the Hub will also provide us with the opportunity to continue to develop our marketing channels and grow our Community Influencer Network; an active and lovely WhatsApp group which includes key community representatives, e.g. the lead local GP from our vaccination partnership. We have found these to be highly effective ways to share and reinforce key messages and information.

**Please briefly describe your local population. Does your scheme target any specific population groups?**

There are circa 81,043 residents of Hyndburn (as of mid-2019). It is ranked as the 18<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority area overall in the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation and the 9<sup>th</sup> most deprived in terms of health <sup>i</sup>. As such, the borough has had to address the compounded challenges of facing COVID-19 alongside a history of enduring poverty and deprivation.

The ethnic makeup of the borough is shown in figure 1 below. White British currently accounts for 87.6 of the local population, in comparison to the remaining 12.4% from ethnic minority communities <sup>ii</sup>.



*Figure 1: Graph showing breakdown (by %) of local population in Hyndburn by ethnic group*

A slightly lower proportion of Hyndburn’s population is of working age (60.7%) compared to both regional (62.1%) and national (62.5%) averages. This is due to a high proportion of under 16’s living in the borough. The borough has a lower economic activity rate (74.2%) compared to regional (77.6%) and national (79.1%) figures. It also has a lower proportion of people in employment (73.2%) compared to



regional (74.2%) and national (75.4%) figures. Hyndburn has a higher rate of people who are classed as self-employed compared to regional and national figures. Earnings for Hyndburn residents are lower than regional and national comparators, with 2020 median gross weekly earnings for full-time workers standing at £471 (compared to £560 regional and £587 national). Despite this, median earnings in the borough have improved over the past ten years at roughly the same rate as they have at both regional and national levels <sup>iii</sup>.

There are a number of key groups in our communities that we would like to improve our engagement with, including: -

- Ethnic minorities
- Young people
- Older adults
- Homeless and rough sleepers
- Adults with a disability and/or additional needs

### **How does the scheme work? Which organisation or groups are involved?**

Strategic oversight and governance of the work is provided by the Council at management team level with project management coming from our Hyndburn Hub Lead. The Hub Lead also manages our Community Action Network, which is central to this work. A small project team meets monthly to monitor and drive progress against specific actions connected to the CCF funded work.

Specific activities which are being funded by the CCF are as follows:

- The Hyndburn Hub

Enhancing and extending the operation of the Hub, making it even easier for residents to access the right support for them, in the right place, at the right time.

- Communications and Information

Developing localised campaigns, voiced by the community, to amplify crucial messaging such as around vaccination or other public health information. We do this by engaging with local groups and producing digital media assets or printed material which includes or is relevant to them. We ask them what would be effective and respond accordingly. We have supported organisations with media toolkits which they can edit and use as they see appropriate, to extend their own reach.

We use #HyndburnChampions on social media and are producing magazines: [Spring 2021 Hyndburn Community Champions Magazine](#)

- Community Investment Scheme

£100,000 has been allocated that community and voluntary organisations from across the borough can bid for, to support projects which will target those disproportionately affected by COVID-19.



Successful organisations have now been announced, please follow [this link](#) to read more.

- Wellbeing Programme

Providing 1000 residents who have been impacted by COVID-19 with free access to a 12-week physical activity and nutrition programme, following NHS guidance.

- Volunteering and outreach events

Supporting more residents to gain high-quality volunteering experiences, learn new skills, connect with others and give back to the local community.

- Networks and expansion

Expanding the Community Action Network and welcoming more local people to become community champions. Investing in learning and development events for the network to grow knowledge and expertise.

- Celebrating

Hosting a volunteer celebration event to recognise and thank the hundreds of people across Hyndburn who have made a real difference to the lives of people within our communities throughout the pandemic.

Significant proportions of the fund have been paid to local CVS organisations, through our Community Investment Scheme, as well as to our local leisure trust, who are delivering the Wellbeing Programme. A number of locally-rooted CVS organisations are involved via the Scheme, ranging from those supporting victims of domestic abuse (our figures have risen during the pandemic and lockdowns) to small community organisations providing outdoor activities to support people to get out and about safely after a period of isolation. Each organisation has identified a specific cohort of people from our local communities, based on consultation and local need, that they will be supporting. There is a focus on engaging people from a range of communities including older adults, young people, adults with a disability / additional needs, women and families from ethnic minority communities, people who are experiencing long-COVID and people who have been isolated due to the pandemic.

We have also offered protective screens to all of our local taxis and over 300 now have these in place. Not only do these offer practical protection against infection for our many residents who rely on taxis, and to the drivers, but they also serve as a conduit for messaging as there is an insert for posters. These initially had information about our Hub and the support it can offer, and this will be developed further depending on the messages we need to convey.

### **How are champions recruited?**

Our Hyndburn Community Champions include organisations that have benefitted from our Community Investment Scheme and key local people who have been involved in all of the activities described above and have given their time to support others in their communities throughout the pandemic.



We are initially using the Scheme, alongside our growing Community Action Network, to recruit champions, as well as reaching out via social media and through our other networks and elected members. For example, we attended a recent meeting of a local youth organisation, through which we were able to recruit volunteers who agreed to feature on marketing assets showing them getting their COVID-19 vaccinations.

### **How are champions trained and supported?**

We have a programme of learning and development activities, which all community champions and organisations involved in our Community Investment Scheme and Community Action Network are invited to participate in. These include sessions on producing information in an accessible way and on using social media to grow volunteer networks and increase the visibility of messaging and community presence. We also use the Network to share good practice and learning, and to link together organisations where that will increase the effectiveness of their work and address gaps in provision.

Projects supported by CCF funding have been given clear brand guidelines and a range of media assets to reinforce key local messages. Our Council communications lead continues to produce a wide range of high-quality campaign materials to share and use across the borough, e.g. our toolkit for COVID-safe businesses, which can be downloaded [here](#). CVS partners have rolled out a number of engagement campaigns and are successfully delivering directly to residents across the borough. For example, Brain Health Breakthrough CIC have used the Community Champions funding and media toolkit to promote their peer support for people with 'long COVID'.

### **How do you engage and communicate with champions?**

Our Community Action Network meets every two weeks, with minutes and any resources shared with all members. The network is virtual, which has helped to facilitate excellent levels of attendance, and continues to welcome new organisations and people. We currently have 98 Community Champions in the Network, representing 55 organisations and groups.

Through this regular contact we are able to remain responsive. For example, we identified that there was an issue for some residents in getting to pop-up vaccination sites. We were able to quickly call upon the services of Little Green Bus, one of the volunteer organisations whose project succeeded in being awarded funding through our Community Investment Scheme, to transport people for free. Our focus over the next couple of months will be to grow our engagement with schools and general practice.

### **Has the scheme been evaluated in any way?**



Part of our CCF bid was for a formal evaluation of the work of the Hub and the funded projects, so that we can learn lessons and build sustainable future working arrangements to continue to develop community engagement and tackle health issues within Hyndburn. After a competitive tender process, we have appointed a company called Trueman Change to do this work. The evaluation will include focus groups, surveys and 1-1 interviews with those in our networks and we are expecting initial findings in the Autumn.

### **What outcomes has the scheme led to?**

Many of the organisations funded through our Community Investment Scheme have already begun delivery of their work. Our Wellbeing Programme is underway, with referral pathways in place and a number of individuals already signed up. Training events have already taken place as outlined above. We have produced a magazine (already linked above) to communicate progress and future editions of this will include information from health and other partners. Through our influencer network we continue to reach high volumes of people via social media and social media resources have been shared with partners. We have also started to plan a series of community located roadshow events, which are expected to commence from July 2021.

We have had a particular focus on our ethnic minority communities in our comms work over recent weeks, including around promotion of vaccine uptake. We have successfully engaged community leaders as part of this work. We have also launched a celebration campaign, which includes a visual representation of uptake in a high-profile local venue (Accrington Market Hall) and a post-vaccine tree planting event. Resources developed through CCF funding leave us well-placed to influence vaccination and health messaging within Hyndburn, knowing that we can support these responsively by communicating effectively with our residents and communities.

We firmly believe in the power of positive stories for community cohesion amid so much negative news. As the pandemic has progressed people are becoming much more receptive to engaging with positive community stories than they were before. The CCF funding gives us the resource to do more around this and engender pride in the borough. Some examples of recent news stories, directly linked to this project are linked to below: -

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/getting-out-and-about-is-a-walk-in-the-park-with-spring-into-action/>

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/rainbow-steps-bring-smiles-ahead-of-national-thank-you-day-in-hyndburn/>

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/maundy-relief-offer-wrap-around-support/>

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/tackling-long-covid-in-hyndburn/>

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/screens-offered-to-all-taxi-drivers-in-hyndburn/>

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/chats-and-crafts-around-the-campfire/>

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/news/trees-for-vaccines-in-hyndburn/>



## **What has been your key learning from the scheme to date?**

Some key learning points to date have included: -

- Working with existing organisations who have made a contribution throughout the pandemic has helped to strengthen relationships and organisations tell us they feel valued as equal partners
- Utilising the expertise of partners such as those in local CVS organisations and our leisure trust has helped to ensure swift progress.
- Starting our evaluation work now means that we are gathering evidence as we go, and this helps us reflect on progress to date so that we can be flexible and adapt our plans as issues emerge.
- Relatively small amounts of funding are already making a real difference and providing practical services and interventions to help support our residents.
- The scheme helps us to promote positive stories at a difficult time for many and reassures people that the Council and its partners are there to support them. This is effectively one evolution of our Hub branding

## **How are you planning to develop your scheme moving forward?**

The funding has represented both a continuation and a progression, at a time when some of our redeployed resources from within the Council have needed to return to their 'day jobs'. The Hub was initially set up to deliver food boxes and provide information to our shielding population, but it quickly became much further reaching as we identified other groups and individuals needing support. Everyone involved has seen the impact that this has had within Hyndburn, and there is a real determination to carry this on beyond the pandemic, to address wider population health issues.

We still have several months of CCF funded activity ahead of us and will continue to respond to events and opportunities, as well as to any emerging recommendations from our evaluation work. Over the coming months we will share updates and highlights of the impact of CCF funding on [this webpage](#) and via our social media channels.

## **Links to any further information**

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/communitychampions/>  
<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Spring-2021-Hyndburn-Community-Champions-Magazine.pdf>

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<sup>i</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. English indices of multiple deprivation 2019. Sept 2019. Available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

<sup>ii</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2011 Census. Available online at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>.

<sup>iii</sup> Office for National Statistics. NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics. Available online at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957698/report.aspx>.