



High Hopes for Halliwell-being AGM Report

September 2019 – August 2020

Reflecting on the journey of this year at High Hopes for Halliwell-being, we have grown and developed our activities, events and influence, which has then been paused during Covid-19 lockdown. We are now looking to re-establish existing groups, alongside supporting people isolating and shielding, but also extend our impact in the future.

The story of our year

- Staffing

High hopes for Halliwell-being has been in a development stage this year with the new part time Community Development worker, Sharon Bolus, starting in July 2019. The two part time Peer Community Workers (Steph Stather & Becky Fraser) have continued to develop new activities and events at the centre, as well as support the existing groups.

- Development of existing groups

Over the past year, we are pleased that our existing groups have continued to grow in numbers.

Our **Fun Days Parent & Toddler Group** now has 15–20 children per week making use of the toys, games, and song time. Parents and Carers are making good connections and building supportive relationships.



Our **walking group** remains small but consistent, with 4-6 people attending and they have explored lots of new local areas and ice cream places too! The feedback from the group is that they have built some real friendships from this connection. Our group leader went through a bereavement, and a walking group was so helpful to him at that time. It has enabled him to support others going through a similar experience.

Our **internet café and coffee morning** attracts around 10 people each week, coming in mostly to chat and enjoy a healthy lunch. It is great to see them converse over a wide range of subjects and share connections and life stories. Individuals have also made use of the computers and support to access online-only offers for household bills, type up minutes of community resident meetings, and access emails on new devices, for example.

Both the **Keep-fit and Chair Yoga** groups have expanded in number, now drawing in 10-15 people each week. People tend to opt for one group, so we are encouraged in the growth of



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people accessing weekly exercise classes and by the number for whom this is the first exercise class they have opted for.

- New groups

We have had several new groups, some have used the facilities for a set period, while others are establishing themselves as ongoing groups.

Time to Shine - started a new session in our building in March 2019, the numbers grew to around 20 children, parents and cares. They are a dance group who work with children with special educational needs. The group moved to a different location at the end of September, as the increased numbers meant parking issues were becoming an increasing challenge with our local parking restrictions at that time of day, and the challenges of people with physical disabilities needing parking closer to the building.

Young at Heart – This was a 16 week intergenerational project from September to December run by a local group, who are passionate about providing opportunities across age barriers. 6-8 people per week enjoyed their Wednesday afternoon crafts, baking and activities sessions both older people and toddlers.

Creative Writing - Started in October with a small number of people. It's a fun activity for beginners who would like to learn to write poems and stories. This group met on a Monday morning from 10am-12noon but have now changed to Thursday afternoon 12:30-2:30pm. Now attracting 6-10 people per week, we have also seen a big impact in the confidence with which people interact with each other as well as in their writing.

A few weeks ago, they had to write about what **St Paul's Community Centre** meant to them using all the letters in bold. Here are some of their words: Sharing, teaching, playful, attentive, unity, inviting, superior to other centres, commanding exterior, omnipotent, magnificent, materials, inclusive, togetherness, yoga, conversation, everyone, nearness, reliability.

Bolton Parent Carers wanted a venue for their Clubbersize, an exercise class which provides respite for parents who care for autistic children. This was an established group attracting around 8-10 people per week from November to December. They found a different venue for the exercise class, but did use the centre for their Christmas party, particularly making use of the upstairs meeting room and the Santa's grotto that we had set up for an autistic-friendly grotto.

Sounds Right Phonics Class – Began in January 2020, again a new class expanding the work they do. It has established itself with 6-8 children, parents and carers enjoying a fun and educational session on a Monday morning.



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- Partnerships

High hopes for Halliwellbeing and Halliwell Befriending Service hosted a Christmas party for all their user groups, it was great to fill the hall to nearly capacity and celebrate with so many different people who use the centre. (76 people in attendance). We had a meal, as well as a quiz and a raffle. It was a lovely afternoon and encouraged people to make more connections across the community.



Hafway and Halliwell Befriending service have run a few Afternoon Teas as intergenerational events, with the young people involved in creating and serving the teas for the older generation to enjoy. Although both projects and their members use the building extensively, it's rare for them to have an opportunity to use the same space due to the challenges of making it a safe and secure place for them all.



Suzanne Hindle is a local tour guide and also works at All Souls Community Centre, (based in another part of Halliwell). She was commissioned to hold some heritage walks around the local area, and through our partnership with her, some of them started from our Community Centre, with 26 people joining the walks from this centre. Suzanne Hindle also organised a group walk with other Churches/Community Centres, walking to each of the centres, having a look at what opportunities are available at each centre, called a 'Tea & Tower walk.' We were pleased to be a part of this and connect with other people in our area – 33 people came to this event.

We are working closely with Halliwell UCAN Centre and the area manager Shaheen Sameja and Suzanne Hindle from All Souls community centre. We have agreed to meet up every 6-8 weeks to discuss what is happening at each centre, share any problems and see if we can work together on any of the projects, we also share the information with our service users. We feel it's important to work together in partnership for us all to succeed

We have a good working relationship with Bolton CVS and access their training programme for staff and volunteers and with their support we are working towards the Bolton Quality Mark, which shows that we provide quality services and have good systems in place to ensure we are in good shape for the future.



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- Events & Fundraising



In our second year we have continued to plan new community events, and develop existing ideas – here's a brief outline of our events:

Halloween Quiz night – on the 30th October; this was well attended with 75 adults and children, attracting familiar faces as well as new people to the centre.



Christmas Fayre – On the 23rd November; once again in partnership with Halliwell befriending service and HAFWAY. The event included a Santa's grotto, run by Hafway volunteers, and performances from a local school choir. Our space for stalls was fully booked by local people with a variety of handmade products, including people who were exhibiting for the first time, including young adults. We had lots of positive feedback about how warm and friendly the event was, as well as appealing to a variety of ages.



Christmas meal – We organised a trip for 46 of our local people to go to a local Toby Carvery, this was a wonderful afternoon with lots of laughter and chatting.



Pantomime – Aladdin was being performed at our local theatre, Albert Halls in Bolton and it was great to gather a group of people to enjoy this event. It inspired people to go who had not been before.

- Building developments

We had been struggling with a significant amount of echo in our main room, which was making it difficult to hear people speak, especially for people with hearing difficulties and during large events. Following various fundraising activities, we were able to install acoustic echo dampening boards, which has made a significant improvement in people's experience and ability to enjoy conversations at all our groups and events.

We have also been working on developing the outside area of the community centre, the yard has been cleared of rubbish, a side gate installed to secure the area and we now have a storage shed and summer house in the yard. Our young people now have a retractable basketball net and have enjoyed using the space (during the winter and spring). We are looking forward to developing gardening projects and a 'Men in Sheds' group to use the outdoor space.



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- Covid-19

Since the middle of March our centre has been closed due to the lockdown restrictions, but our volunteers have continued to support our users through providing shopping and meals, as well as friendly phone calls to support those isolating alone. This has been an extremely challenging time for the country and individuals, we are pleased we have managed to support people in this time.

Both Sharon Bolus and Steph Stather were furloughed from March to June, and have been working part-time, during July and August, towards re-opening our activities and the centre, and Becky Fraser has continued working but with reduced hours. Her role has been to maintain our social media presence, support volunteers, fundraise and deal with any matters arising.

In addition to the individual support, we were pleased to be able to deliver 'Creative Care Kits' to many individuals who are connected to both High Hopes for Halliwellbeing and Halliwell Befriending Service. These were a collaborative project by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and voluntary sector organisations to provide quality resources for older people who don't have access to the computer or internet, and therefore limited access to resources to help them during lockdown.



- Online and digital support

We have been working with Public Health to run training sessions looking at informing our volunteers and supporters about the NHS test & trace systems, as well as providing opportunities to ask questions around the guidance on how to respond to this pandemic.



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We had 2 successful online sessions, which were well attended, however plans for further 'in-person' sessions are currently on hold due to our local lockdown.

Steph has been developing our activities online by creating a Whatsapp group for people to share ideas and communicate, to which she has also been sending weekly quizzes. Steph has also been developing a weekly zoom quiz, following the success of her zoom training sessions. This has been valuable for connecting our volunteers and supporters.

How we have involved people from our community?

We love that our projects are led by our local volunteers, such as the walking group, as well as Fun Days Toddler Group. We are proud that High Hopes for Halliwellbeing has facilitated a partnership between a local childminder and parents who set up and run the activities, and some volunteers from the local church who come to make brews and snacks for them.

Other groups such as the Chair Yoga and Creative Writing, have come from members of our community who expressed an interest in attending these activities, who we have been able to support by getting funding and sourcing tutors to enable them to begin. The groups have then advertised through their social contacts as well as ours to build the attendance, so the projects become sustainable. We are currently working on projects to improve the yard space at the back and specifically a 'Men in Sheds' project in response to requests and interest from different individuals.

Lastly, a local florist moved into a premise across the street at the beginning of the year and expressed a desire to run some community-based flower arranging classes. The lady has lots of experience working in community and a passion to reduce social isolation, we have been working with her to advertise these classes and generate interest.

The difference we are making?

Our last evaluation report (September 2019) evidenced improvements in social interaction, confidence, community cohesion and involvement. We are proud of the impact the projects are having on individuals. Here are some quotes from people using the centre.

"Before I started coming to St Paul's Community Centre I had mental health and anxiety, in just the short time I've been coming it's helped me a lot and gets me out of the house to interact with some lovely and kind people."



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“I was going through a bit of a bad patch in my life before I found the creative writing course it has been given me a focus, something to look forward to each week.”

“I felt very welcomed into St Paul’s Community Centre, at 65 it’s given me a new belonging and a pleasure to try creative writing.”

“I enjoy coming to St Paul’s as everyone is friendly and they encourage me to get involved in various activities, e.g., Arts and crafts, creative writing and gardening. My life is now a lot fuller than it was and I have more things to look forward to. I have more friends than I used to have as well.”

“St Paul’s Community Centre has made a huge difference to my life. It has provided me with countless good times and excellent opportunities to occupy myself. Activities include computer studies, film group, creative writing classes, playing pool, dominoes. Games-I could go on....”

We are equally proud of the journeys people have made, one of our volunteers Chantelle began volunteering with us through Bolton College. Initially very shy and struggling to remember the processes involved. We have seen her grow in confidence in completing tasks and interacting with users. Chantelle struggles with learning disabilities, but she has persevered in learning and is now able to complete her role independently. She loves being involved in the sessions and has volunteered at events and completed a First Aid training course.

One of our members engaged with the community centre after expressing an interest in the ‘Men in sheds’ project. Discovering the diversity of activities, he has since got involved in the Creative Writing, plus the Activity Group and Luncheon Club run by Halliwell Befriending Service. Earlier we mentioned a list of words from our Creative Writing group. The reliability word was from this gentleman he said that he could rely on us to put things in place for the community.

His strengths are building raised beds and growing plants and vegetables, and he is happy to show other people how to do this. We are looking forward to seeing this man contribute to other people developing new skills and confidence, just as he has done.

What we have learned?

One of the key learning experiences we want to build on, is how to help people from the community who have great ideas to develop those ideas into a thriving project. The impact of seeing things change is inspiring people to generate more ideas, to talk about and get excited about future plans.



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3 key areas we have focused on are:

1. Developing 'trips and experiences' – Following the success of the pantomime trip in December, we had booked a coach trip to the Bakewell Markets, for which we had sold every ticket. We were excited at the response and were looking at interest for a more family-orientated trip to the beach at Lytham, in response to people's comments. Many of our local families don't own a car, and therefore have limited access to places like these, as well as often lacking the confidence to plan trips into new and unknown places.
2. Another barrier to accessing these experiences is often money. We are increasingly aware that although we make every effort to minimise the cost, people were struggling to access all the events that were happening. Steph Stather has developed a savings-plan where individuals can 'pay-in' money on a weekly basis towards trips and events.
3. Our last area of development has been the outside area of the community centre. Originally the back yard was dominated by the inadequate toilet block which was removed as part of the renovations in the first year of our Lottery funding. This has increased the available space, which has been used in a limited fashion for community events such as our Community Fayres and Afternoon Teas. Our Fun Days Toddler group has been very interested in making use of the space, as has Hafway.

The challenge has been to develop this space in consultation with all our groups to make it usable for a diverse range of activities. Making the area safe and usable for toddlers meant installing a side gate and providing storage for the donated ridealong toys. The young people want space and a basketball net, while it was particularly important for our older generation to choose the right kind of garden furniture that would support backs and at the right height.

We have secured funding for a shed, summerhouse, outdoor furniture and equipment to create pots with a potting area for the community centre. Both the young people and the older people are looking forward to growing plants and vegetables, especially as many homes in Halliwell lack garden space to do this. The 'men in sheds' projects is looking to make use of the Parish centre outside space, also previously unused. Practically this means it can run alongside the Halliwell Befriending service crafters group, and also means it's separate from the space the Toddler group and young people are using. This was felt to be better with the tools and type of work being developed.



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The challenge is to keep the conversations about the space inclusive so that everyone has a voice into sharing the space. For example, our young people use the community centre in an evening, while our older people use the centre during the afternoon and our parents and toddlers prefer mornings! It is great that each group feels at home in the building and there is a sense of ownership so that people care for the building. This is about learning to build a more cohesive sense of community, about communicating shared needs and desires.

How we are changing what we do?

Covid-19 and the lockdown measures put in place have obviously meant massive changes to what we are able to do. We have supported individuals in the local area, but most of our work has been paused.

As we look forward to re-opening the centre, alongside the practicalities of risk assessments and cleaning schedules, we have been looking at what services need rethinking and what our community will need.

Being outdoors is beneficial both from the risk of infection and the mental health impact, so we are continuing to prepare the outside area. Groups like our walking group are easier to adapt for the current situation, other groups such as our exercise classes may need to be phased in at a much later stage. In the interim, we are convinced that projects that promote social connection, mental health, and support digital skills such as our Friday morning internet café are a key initial step towards normality and encouraging people to connect safely, and may need to run on more occasions to accommodate smaller numbers.

We are continuing to think about our online presence and helping people to connect online, this includes discussions around how we support people without access to the internet, and people who need supporting to learn the digital skills necessary to access online sessions.