

Rural Rother Community Network

Overview: The Rural Rother Network was held on Wednesday 17th November 2021, 9.30 – 12.30 at the Emmanuel Centre, Battle.

This was a face-to-face event. Covid precautions were in place in line with current government guidance. The agenda included opportunities for:

- **Speed Networking,**
- **Hearing updates on some current opportunities and developments**
- **Joining a workshop around supporting volunteers and paid workers to return to, or remain in, their roles when experiencing health issues.**



Attendance: 23 non RVA participants attended from the following 16 organisations and groups across voluntary, community and public sectors.

- Adult Social Care ESCC
- Battle Town Council
- Bexhill Community Allotments
- Bexhill Diabetes Support Group
- Caring Homes Group
- Collaborate CIC
- Energise Sussex Coast
- Groundwork South Together South
- Children's Services ESCC
- Rother District Council
- Rother Seniors Forum
- SUSTRAN Travel
- SSAFA
- Sara Lee Trust
- Sussex Community Development Association – Let's Get Working
- The Pelham



A further six participants were unable to attend on the day.

Feedback from Participants: 11 evaluations forms were completed on the day. Participants were asked to rate the event on overall quality of the content, how the event was described, whether they would join another RVA event, how useful it was and booking process. All rated the event 4 or 5 (good or very good) on each count. Participants said about the event:

“Really enjoyed attending” and “Lots of words – all good”

Asked about future training needs participants said:

- HR related for organisations that aren't big enough to have HR
- Getting Volunteers involved
- Recruiting the right volunteers
- Confidentiality, GDPR compliance
- Marketing



Content of the morning:

Speed networking:



This kicked off the day where participants were encouraged to share information and make connections with as many people as possible in the room. Noise levels when everyone is talking is always an issue, but this was a very popular part of the morning.

“Loved speed networking”

Updates:

1. HAIRE (Annette and Teresa RVA)

Healthy Ageing through Innovation in Rural Europe is funded by the Interreg 2 Seas programme and co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. It aims to empower older people, 60 plus to define what support they need, participate in the design of services, and develop solutions for themselves. In Rother the project is focussing on Rye, Robertsbridge and surrounding areas and during 2020/21:



- recruited and trained 16 volunteers who have held 76 Guided Conversations with older people,
- analysed over 200 hours' worth of information about Health and Wellbeing,
- commenced follow-up guided conversations and
- held events around the key themes that emerged from these conversations, reducing loneliness, accessing information, managing change and staying active.





Over the coming year the team will be working with the local community to test some of the ideas that have been generated and, by working closely with Rother District Council, will ensure that what we have learned supports the development of Rother District Council's Age Friendly Rother initiative to improve the experience of older people across Rother. If you would like to more about HAIRE than please contact Teresa Flower email: Teresa.flower@rva.uk.com

You can read more about Age Friendly Communities here: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/uk-network-age-friendly-communities> or about the local commitment here: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/news/rother-confirmed-as-an-age-friendly-community/>

2. Marketing (Betty RVA)

MARKETING

RVA Newsletter – first Monday of every month

- Next Newsletter – Monday 6th December 2021
- Deadline for submission – Thursday before

RVA Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Indeed) @rotherVA

- Template for sharing information about your organisation:
 - Short text which includes a link to
 - 1-2 photographs (.jpeg, .jpg, .png) OR 1 short video



Rother Voluntary Action supports to voluntary sector by sharing relevant community news and updates. Community members are invited to submit entries to the monthly newsletter, which is published on the first Monday of every month. December newsletter will be delivered to people's inbox on 6th December. Deadline for submission is Thursday the 2nd of December.

A new template for sharing news and updates on Rother Voluntary Action social media platforms.

- **Word limit:** 100 words (280 characters for Twitter)
- **Attachment:** photographs in the following formats: .jpg, .jpeg, .png (ONLY)
- **Website link** or **contact details** as appropriate.

Members may submit information/news for publication via our [website form](#). We kindly ask members to indicate the platform(s) on which they wish to have their submission published.

3. Making it Happen (MiH) SPARKS events (Jackie RVA)

As part of the MiH project RVA are working with the community to deliver a SPARKS event in January 2022. This aims to:



- bring people together around food to celebrate community successes;

- share experiences, stories and knowledge about positive things that exist locally;
- identify local priorities for action;
- invite local councillors, funders or others who work in the area to come along to listen and discuss priorities with local residents;
- involve local residents in developing plans and allocating a community budget.

A budget of £2000 has been allocated to be fund ideas that are presented. The event will be held on 17th January 2022 at St Marks Church, Little Common Bexhill and is open to community groups, local councillors and others that work in the areas of Bexhill, Sidley, Pebsham and Eastern Rother - Making it Happen localities.

Look out for updates on the RVA website and book you place via the Eventbrite link that will be available soon.

4. Funding (Joe RDC and Debbie RVA)

Joe Powell - Head of Housing and Community Service at RDC gave an update on Household Support Grant. Here is a link to the webpage to access the Household Support Grant as well as more details on the scheme criteria.

[Household Support Fund – Rother District Council](#)



Debbie explained a little about RVA’s General Infrastructure offer. “It is the term used for RVA’s ‘Core’ work with our community groups. Incredibly diverse, we aim to listen, make resources available, help with Project plans, legal structures and funding. At all times being your critical friend”. For more information contact: office@rva.uk.com

5. Community Wellbeing: Connected People and Places (Lewis - Collaborate)

Lewis Haines, Head of Practice at Collaborate CIC updated the network on the Community Wellbeing: Connected People & Places project. Through this project local authorities in East Sussex, the NHS, the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VSCE) sector and others are working together – with the support of Collaborate CIC – to improve community wellbeing and tackle loneliness. Over the last few months Collaborate have been hearing from partners and residents about what makes them feel connected to their local area and what could be done to make them feel more connected and would like your help to make sense of what they’ve heard, bringing your experience to complement their insight.



Loneliness is a serious problem in our communities, and we all need to tackle it. It can have an enormous impact on people's lives, their relationships and their wellbeing. In 2018 24% of people in Rother said they feel lonely living in their local area 'often' or 'some of the time'

While most of us experience loneliness at some point in our lives, there are some groups who are at particular risk of loneliness; for example, young people, older people, those who are out of work and people living with a health condition or disability. Those with a heightened risk of loneliness are also likely to have been hit harder by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As people who work or volunteers directly with residents in East Sussex, the network were invited to attend an online interactive workshop to share their valuable knowledge and expertise you hold. This will help develop new ideas of how we can – as a system – tackle loneliness in East Sussex in the future. Please sign up on Eventbrite and join our interactive online workshop for the area you work in or would like to attend on one of the following dates:

- Hastings - Tuesday 30th November (1pm-3pm) [link](#)
- Eastbourne - Wednesday 1st December (10am-12pm) [link](#)
- Lewes - Friday 3rd December (10am-12pm) [link](#)
- Rother - Tuesday 7th December (1pm-3pm) [link](#)
- Wealden - Wednesday 8th December (10am-12pm) [link](#)

This is a chance to explore how we can create a more connected and less lonely East Sussex. If you have any questions please contact Taj: tajwar@collaboratecic.com

6. Community Networks (Teresa RVA)

Teresa Flower, Project Lead with RVA shared information about the future of Rother Voluntary Action Community Networks. As we move into 2022 RVA will be refreshing their Community Networking offer. We have listened to what people have told us that value about the current networks but also what they would like to see more of moving forward. This is captured in the slide included below:

Rother Community Networks moving forward

Build on strong foundations– maintain and develop what you value most:

- Networking
- Learning from each other
- Sharing ideas and opportunities

Strengthen the offer by:

- Prioritising cross cutting themes you identify
- Facilitating learning opportunities
- Supporting collaborative working across sectors
- Listening, recording and reporting on what you tell us expertise, challenges, opportunities, successes
- Develop mechanisms to ensure the voice of the Community and voluntary sector is heard and influences decision making





A programme of Community Networks and related learning opportunities will be launched early in 2022.

The new offer will be based on significant feedback gained at previous networks and the recent RVA AGM.

For more information contact: Teresa.flower@rva.uk.com

Workshop: Supporting volunteers and paid workers to return to, or remain in, their roles when experiencing health issues (Jackie - RVA and Margareta – The Sara Lee)



Jackie Saul Hunt (RVA - Community Development Worker) and Margareta Mayhew -Pilaar (Counsellor Manager - The Sara Lee Trust) presented a workshop around the I Know How Project 'Roadmap'.

This project has received funding from the Interreg 2 Seas programme 2014-2020 co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund under subsidy contract No 2S06-034.

The I Know How Roadmap (draft pictured above) highlights the stops and trajectories that people may experience when they are diagnosed with a long-term health condition. The purpose is to enable employers to think in advance about best practice around supporting someone with a long-term health condition to remain in, or return to, work or volunteering roles. The aim is that this will result in a culture shift within working environments

This workshop offered the opportunity to discuss the road map and implications for organisations groups participating in the Community Network.

Updates will be shared at future Community Networks. For more information please contact Jackie Saull-Hunt on Jackie.saul-hunt@rva.uk.com or call on 07765710337.

THANK YOU!

RVA would like to thank everyone that participated in the November Rural Rother Network and made it such an interesting and productive morning. Please encourage people in your own networks to join us in the future.

We look forward to seeing you next time.