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| **NETWORK EVENT REPORT**  ***An Act of Kindness at Christmas***  **25th November 2020** | C:\Users\sjames\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.MSO\93E9A5CD.tmp |

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The virtual ‘An Act of Kindness at Christmas Campaign’ network event took place between 3.00 - 4.30pm on Monday 30th November 2020. 13 individuals took part from various community and voluntary organisations, Interlink and RCTCBC.

Discussion for groups offering community support in RCT due to the pandemic. The event covered:

* Working together on an ‘Act of Kindness Christmas Campaign’ to address loneliness and isolation
* Access to small grants for community support and to tackle loneliness and isolation
* ‘Trace, Track and Protect’ and communications

Simon James, Chief Executive, Interlink RCT, welcomed people to the meeting and gave some background on the purpose of the meeting. Unfortunately Rachel Rowlands form Age Connects Morgannwg and Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership (CTMRPB) has herself contracted Covid 19 and was not able join the event.

**2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

What came across is the ‘Act of Kindness at Christmas Campaign’ network event was the huge community effort taking place to support people throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf. Those taking part were well connected in the community, relied on volunteers and knew when to ask for help from others when they needed it. There involved ‘rock stars’ – well known and trusted people and community organisations within the community.

There were incredible examples of community support provided through Tonyrefail Community Network, Lee Gardens Pool, Hawthorne Covid 19 Community Support Group and Spectacle Theatre.

The network event reinforced the need for effective communications between those organisations responsible for providing up to date accurate and accessible information and to avoid duplication.

Key issues include:

* Jointly marketing and promoting what support is available in the community.
* Know who is doing what and where and address gaps with effective referral routes
* How vital social media is and access to on-line information.
* Community organisations are well placed to support those people who are not on-line.
* Community organisations are vital in providing emotional support to people as they have existing trusting social relationships with people who are lonely and isolated.
* Community groups are well supported, when they need it, by RCTCBC (e.g. Community Resilience Centres) and Interlink.

**3.0** **PRESENTATION**

**Rebecca Goodhand, Communications and Engagement Manager**

Rebecca is the Communications and Engagement Manager for the CTMRPB and was able to update the group advice and communications in relation to Covid 19 and more recently with Trace, Track and Protect. This helped to have regional and accessible consistent information going out to partners to support WG information and campaigns. For example, working with Cwm Taf People First on an easy read version of the rules to be followed during the ‘firebreak’.

**4.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS**

**Communications Workshop: What worked during Covid-19 and what can we build on to support people over Christmas and beyond?**

* Referrals took time to be organised effectively and to avoid duplication, and while there have been some ‘bumps’ along the way they are now in place.
* There was confusion about the role of Community Resilience Centres but they have become important in coordinating the support and addressing gaps not able to be met by the community.
* Social media was seen as a positive in general for contacting people and providing information.
* It is important to have clear two way communication, sending information out that is clear, consistent and accessible – there are too many sources of information and duplication of effort.
* Aware of the different needs from children to people who do not have access to on-line information, using existing organisations to send information, such as foodbanks and community groups.
* There can be an issue with ‘fake news’ with the strongest views often from those who are least informed. Important to respond to provide the right information and ‘fact checking’ one on one with individuals.
* A lot of people are struggling with mental health, and many have not left the house for months.
* Support is often provided one to one in the community with fewer ‘service’ referrals. This is based on existing relationships where people know and trust each other and how people are struggling naturally comes up in conversation.
* Small WhatsApp groups have led to informal support provided in the group chat – and this has extended beyond those with WhatsApp as people share the messages over the phone with others.
* The support can be provided at any time with calls often going late into the evening.
* Having a network of community organisations who are able to provide food when people need it and are not eligible for support / further support from the foodbank – people can often need constant support to feed their families not occasional food parcels.
* Interlink bulletins and social media work well alongside local community radio stations such as GTFM.
* Communications with TTP can be problematic as emails are not responded to and things happen so quickly there is limited time to inform people e.g. Abercynon TTP.
* Some organisations are now struggling to source volunteers as reliant on older volunteers.
* The same information was often distributed by several organisations and at times there were too many emails. This can often be overwhelming for one or two volunteers to keep abreast of what is going on.
* Organisations do not always communicate with staff on the ground.
* Facebook is really useful with groups with their own pages
* Nextdoor app is useful to support people to connect locally – a bit like ‘Facebook lite’.

**4.0 COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES**

**The Lighthouse Project / Tonyrefail Community Network**

Dawn Parkin, from the Lighthouse Project / Tonyrefail Community Network provided an example of the work being supported locally and plans for Christmas. This included birthday boxes, second hand clothing, activity groups, food and hampers, training volunteers supporting young people leaving care and fundraising. They ensure they all keep in regular touch with the Community Council, volunteers. They plan to get food hampers to all those who need it in the local area.

**Hawthorne Covid 19 Community Support Group**

Cathy Lisles supports Hawthorne C19 Community Support Group and are linked with the Pontypridd C19 network of community support groups. Regular information was received from Julie (Edwards) and Interlink. Some groups are now less active but with the links in the community and with RCTCBC, they think they are able to meet most needs, be independent and offer a safety net for those without family and friends. ‘Blown away’ by the volunteering effort, would like to think they have everyone covered but continue to reach out using all the techniques available.

**Lee Gardens Pool**

Diane Locke, Lee Gardens Pool are sending out 200 craft packs this week and planning to provide Christmas meals with the Feel Good Factory as they cannot get people together, and they provide weekly meals to local families as well as planning to give out over 100 Christmas hampers and pamper packs for young people as part of ‘Fit and Fed’ with Street Games.

**Spectacle Theatre**

Michelle, Spectacle Theatre have been providing food donations in the Rhondda and Cynon and aim to produce a nativity play to be performed in car parks of residential homes or if needed, pre-recorded and played in the homes.

**5.0 ROUND-UP AND UPDATES**

**Interlink RCT**

* We want to support and promote ‘acts of kindness’ over Christmas any local group can apply by email [grants@interlinkrct.org.uk](mailto:grants@interlinkrct.org.uk) for a £250 grant to help with any Christmas related activities.  This could include food and meals, gifts and volunteer expenses.
* Interlink will be producing a list of key services still available over the Christmas period.

**RCTCBC**

* RCTCBC Community Resilience Centre’s will continue to provide support over Christmas.
* RCTCBC has ‘Friend in Need’ (Age Concern) grants for 50+ befriending for constituted groups (Interlink can help where groups are not constituted)

**Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board**  
There is a new regional self-isolation helpline for Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

**Communications for those Who Do Not Speak English**  
There is a need for support and communications for those who do not speak English

**Laughing Yoga is available and work**  
Google ‘Nova Barton’