

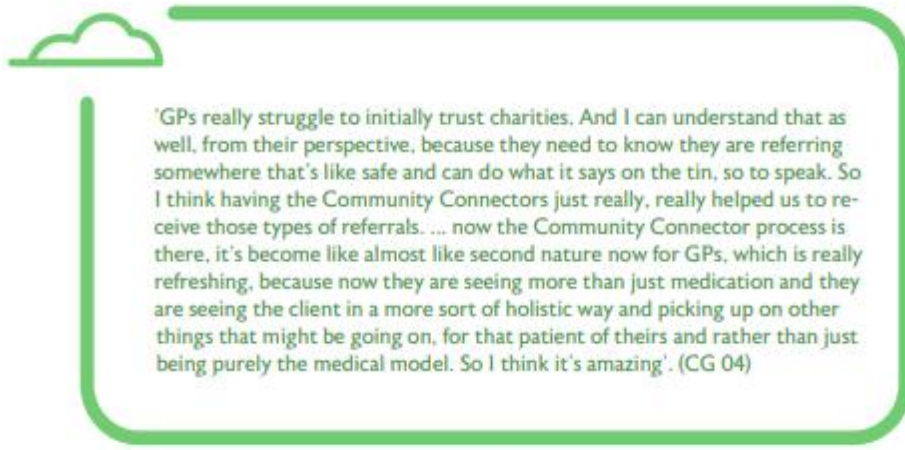
## Developing a new ecosystem of support

The Wellbeing Matters programme integrated well at a wider level with the new and emerging Living Well model, designed to help organisations think differently about mental health support. A key aim was to support Salford in focusing on people's skills, aspirations and experiences to build a different way of offering support and help — a shared goal between the two programmes. It is understood that the Living Well model will change the way mental health support is approached to help everyone who experiences mental health difficulties to work towards recovery, stay well, make their own choices and take part in everyday life.

The focus is on developing new ways for people to access support that:

- Recognises people's skills, aspirations and experiences
- Is designed by people with lived experience working together with service leaders, clinicians and commissioners
- Is easy to access
- Is located within community settings
- Helps to stop difficult times from getting worse:
- Supports people with relationships, housing, debt and employment:
- Is provided by communities, including voluntary sector, social enterprises and statutory services

Integral to the success of the programme was the formation of supportive and collaborative relationships that enabled the development of trust. Some participants in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector highlighted the lack of parity between level of resources invested in the Primary Care provider for link workers as amount of resource invested into the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector to support the social prescribing offer. Initial concerns emerged in this evaluation both from GPs interviewed as well as a participant from the Health Improvement Service team, who highlighted that the lack of resource could influence the capacity and ability of smaller community groups to receive referrals, particularly those adults made vulnerable by any number of physical or mental health issues. The GPs suggested that this may affect the smaller community groups ability to provide a consistent, safe offer. This is the gap workstreams 2 and 3 were designed to fill. One of the key benefits of the Community Connectors was their knowledge and understanding of the local community assets, which they used to provide reassurance. The following extract illustrates this point:



'GPs really struggle to initially trust charities. And I can understand that as well, from their perspective, because they need to know they are referring somewhere that's like safe and can do what it says on the tin, so to speak. So I think having the Community Connectors just really, really helped us to receive those types of referrals. ... now the Community Connector process is there, it's become like almost like second nature now for GPs, which is really refreshing, because now they are seeing more than just medication and they are seeing the client in a more sort of holistic way and picking up on other things that might be going on, for that patient of theirs and rather than just being purely the medical model. So I think it's amazing'. (CG 04)

This represents a big culture shift among GPs in response to the services provided by the Wellbeing Matters team and the improvements they can see in their patients.

The case study below helps give a sense from the point of view of a single community space of the ways in which the Wellbeing Matters programme brought everything together.

### Wednesday women's group



The Wednesday Women's Group has been operating for over 25 years providing a social space for women to meet at St Marks Church in Swinton. As part of the Community Connector Wellbeing Matters programme's asset-mapping this group was identified as a suitable referral route and have already welcomed a number of new people for social activity and conversation. Many of the ladies also meet up socially outside the group setting and have attended other sessions such as Tech and Tea (Inspiring Communities Together) and the Tuesday lunch club at Critchley Café (Age UK Salford) together.

Two of the ladies referred by the Community Connector have joined the Tuesday Club sessions on a regular basis as well as the Wednesday Group. One lady who has been very isolated for several years said going to the group **'was as if someone had turned a light back on in her life'**. She could now see options and felt included again.

The group have expressed an interest in increasing their offer and have applied for funding through the Active Ageing programme (led by ICT, administered by CVS) to deliver a physical activity project.

The group have been supported by the CVS Volunteering Development Worker to apply successfully for a Salford 4 Good award and are continuing to receive broader development support from CVS on future planning. The Volunteering Development Worker will now work with them to link them with other local groups and churches so that they can network and showcase the good work that is going on across Swinton.


This provides a more detailed sense of how the two workstreams within Wellbeing Matters work together and exemplifies some of the broader support provided to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise ecosystem as explored further below.

In many ways, this support was no departure from the traditional work of Salford CVS. As one staff member said, 'I think we know what we're doing in terms of capacity building our sector' (WBM staff 2). What the Wellbeing Matters programme actually did was to highlight just how far and effective a little funding could be in improving the capacity of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector groups to welcome social prescribing 'referrals'.

'I think what we've learned is actually you can achieve so much more if you've got a decent amount of capacity. Because prior to this programme, we do run a Volunteer Centre but on an absolute shoestring. So actually, giving us that additional capacity to focus on neighbourhoods and work more intensively with groups has made a huge difference. It's enabled those groups to capacity build themselves. So it's given them some of the tools they need, whether that's around recruiting volunteers, safeguarding, knowing things that they need insurance, but also accessing grants, you know, I think all of those things'. (WBM staff 3)

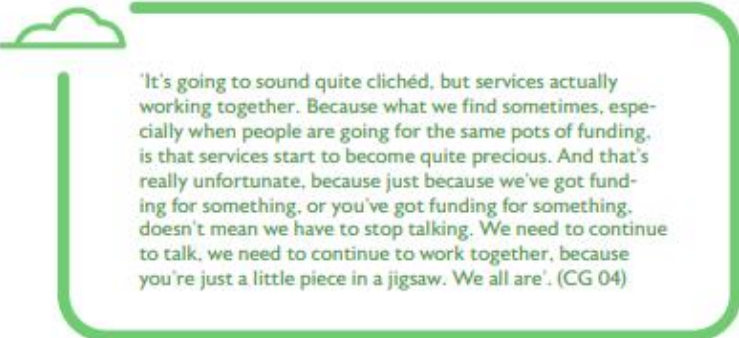


Other more established Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations needed different kinds of support, primarily longer-term funding to ensure staff security. Some who did not need direct services or support from Salford CVS themselves currently recognised the possibility that the funding for their current community development work might not be renewed. They saw CVS as an ongoing and very important resource able to support nascent organisations beyond the lifetime of specific grant-funded projects.



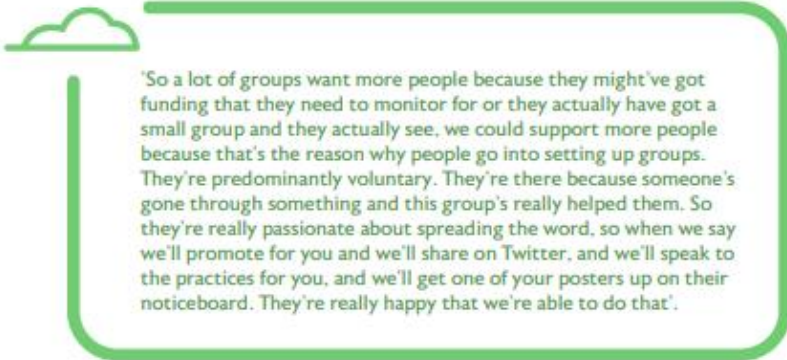
'...so if we don't get our funding renewed the ladies can carry on with the groups and learn how to put those groups together, apply for funding in their own right. And that is something that Salford CVS will be able to help with. So, I think we will be involved with them a lot more in the next six months'. (CG 05)

For such groups, CVS played a key coordinating and informational role. When asked what made a programme successful, they responded:




'It's going to sound quite clichéd, but services actually working together. Because what we find sometimes, especially when people are going for the same pots of funding, is that services start to become quite precious. And that's really unfortunate, because just because we've got funding for something, or you've got funding for something, doesn't mean we have to stop talking. We need to continue to talk, we need to continue to work together, because you're just a little piece in a jigsaw. We all are'. (CG 04)

While funding and training around safeguarding and governance were central to what most of those interviewed most valued, many also really appreciated Salford CVS's support around developing their presence and connection within communities through social media and the development of websites. This was recognised by the Community Connectors, who in turn worked hard to promote groups who wanted their help with that.



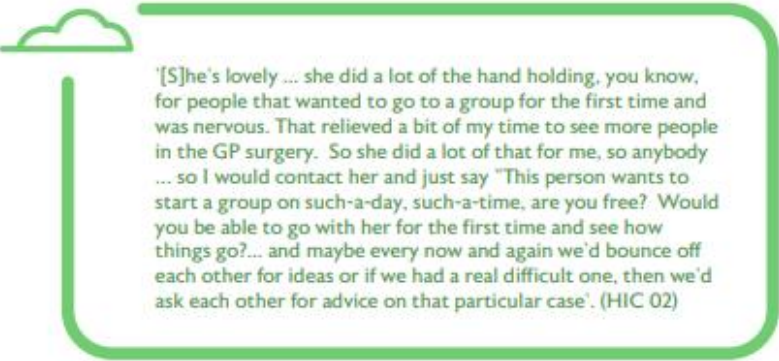
'So a lot of groups want more people because they might've got funding that they need to monitor for or they actually have got a small group and they actually see, we could support more people because that's the reason why people go into setting up groups. They're predominantly voluntary. They're there because someone's gone through something and this group's really helped them. So they're really passionate about spreading the word, so when we say we'll promote for you and we'll share on Twitter, and we'll speak to the practices for you, and we'll get one of your posters up on their noticeboard. They're really happy that we're able to do that'.

Community Connectors, through their relationships with some of the community groups, were also able to refer them back to the Volunteering Development Workers for additional support where needed. Groups echoed how much they appreciated this, as well as the infusion of new volunteers and connections to other groups and services that CVS and the Community Connectors helped facilitate. For one CVS staff member, this brought an additional benefit:



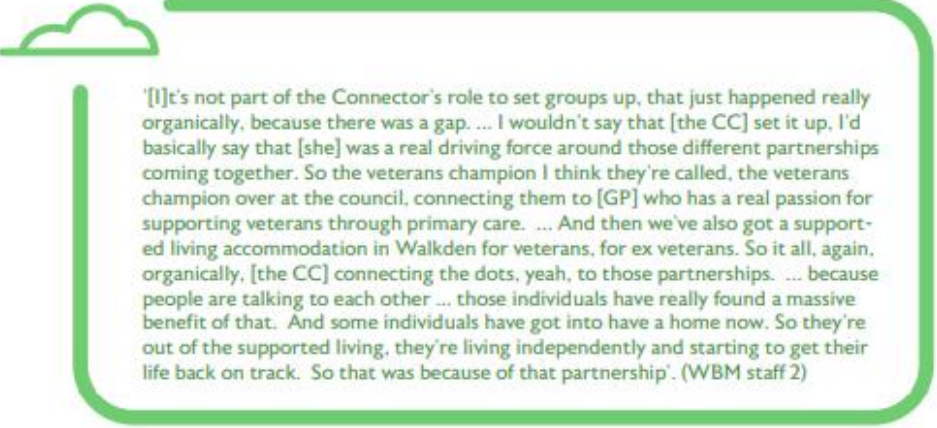
'I think in terms of the learning from workstream two, is that I don't think we've learnt anything phenomenal in terms of what's required, the ingredients to support volunteering and voluntary action within communities. So I think with the CVS we knew that. ... I think it has enabled them to raise some money and to do things a bit differently. It's injected new blood ... and also given them the opportunity to reinvent themselves a little bit'. (WBM staff 1)

One of the Health Improvement Service team commented on the Community Connector's ability to spend time outside the GP offices in supporting someone who needed it.



'[S]he's lovely ... she did a lot of the hand holding, you know, for people that wanted to go to a group for the first time and was nervous. That relieved a bit of my time to see more people in the GP surgery. So she did a lot of that for me, so anybody ... so I would contact her and just say "This person wants to start a group on such-a-day, such-a-time, are you free? Would you be able to go with her for the first time and see how things go?... and maybe every now and again we'd bounce off each other for ideas or if we had a real difficult one, then we'd ask each other for advice on that particular case'. (HIC 02)

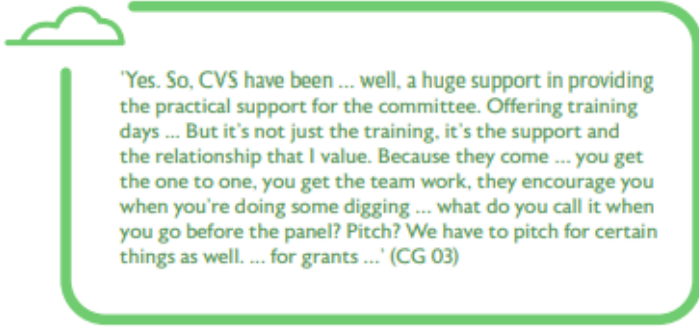
A final aspect of support emerged when gaps were encountered, where Community Connectors realised that they had a number of people with the same needs that no group existed to fill and helped facilitate the effort to develop something to fill it. As one staff member explained:



'[I]t's not part of the Connector's role to set groups up, that just happened really organically, because there was a gap. ... I wouldn't say that [the CC] set it up, I'd basically say that [she] was a real driving force around those different partnerships coming together. So the veterans champion I think they're called, the veterans champion over at the council, connecting them to [GP] who has a real passion for supporting veterans through primary care. ... And then we've also got a supported living accommodation in Walkden for veterans, for ex veterans. So it all, again, organically, [the CC] connecting the dots, yeah, to those partnerships. ... because people are talking to each other ... those individuals have really found a massive benefit of that. And some individuals have got into have a home now. So they're out of the supported living, they're living independently and starting to get their life back on track. So that was because of that partnership'. (WBM staff 2)

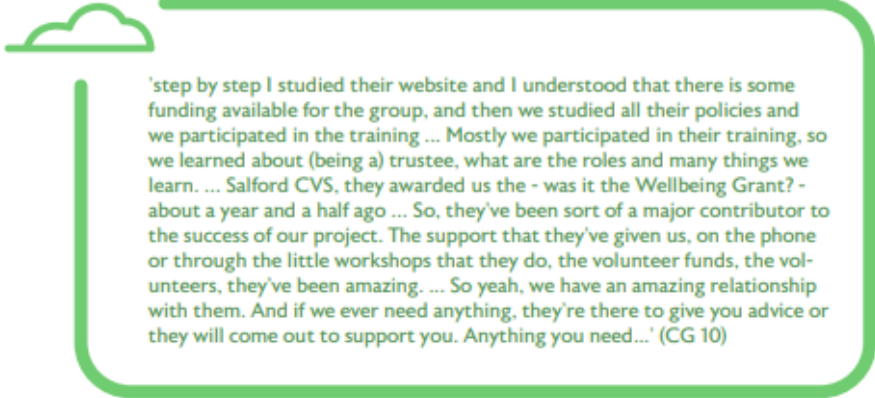
This emphasises the third key strength of the programme – the ability to develop meaningful connection to facilitate a holistic approach.

This was echoed by members of the community groups themselves who had been struggling with many of these capacity needs before this injection of funding and the extra support it allowed CVS to provide.



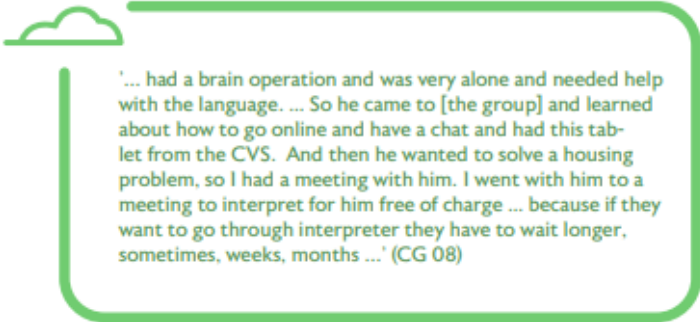
'Yes. So, CVS have been ... well, a huge support in providing the practical support for the committee. Offering training days ... But it's not just the training, it's the support and the relationship that I value. Because they come ... you get the one to one, you get the team work, they encourage you when you're doing some digging ... what do you call it when you go before the panel? Pitch? We have to pitch for certain things as well. ... for grants ...' (CG 03)

A number of the smaller community groups we interviewed had made the conscious decision to remain as informal as possible. Many were completely volunteer-led and staffed by retirees as a space to enjoy hobbies or crafts with others. Given the ability to talk through with CVS the different levels of organisation and levels of responsibility required to apply for different kinds of funding, they had opted to apply for the smaller pots of funding that supported them to buy supplies or cover expenses for workshops as well as support in finding adequate and affordable spaces and storage for their activities. They also felt more comfortable after training around issues of safeguarding. As one founder of a small community group told us:



'step by step I studied their website and I understood that there is some funding available for the group, and then we studied all their policies and we participated in the training ... Mostly we participated in their training, so we learned about (being a) trustee, what are the roles and many things we learn. ... Salford CVS, they awarded us the - was it the Wellbeing Grant? - about a year and a half ago ... So, they've been sort of a major contributor to the success of our project. The support that they've given us, on the phone or through the little workshops that they do, the volunteer funds, the volunteers, they've been amazing. ... So yeah, we have an amazing relationship with them. And if we ever need anything, they're there to give you advice or they will come out to support you. Anything you need...' (CG 10)

This same community group was able to quickly make a very big difference in people's lives through support with language. One example was a patient who:



'... had a brain operation and was very alone and needed help with the language. ... So he came to [the group] and learned about how to go online and have a chat and had this tablet from the CVS. And then he wanted to solve a housing problem, so I had a meeting with him. I went with him to a meeting to interpret for him free of charge ... because if they want to go through interpreter they have to wait longer, sometimes, weeks, months ...' (CG 08)