



Together
We Thrive



We Are
NOT Going Back

February 2022
Registered Charity number: 1092567

Foreword

Tracy Rudling,
CEO of Community360

We now have an opportunity to push for an equitable, productive and more prosperous future that improves everyone's quality of life. Our collective experiences of the last eighteen months have shown how much can be achieved when we work together and target our skills and resources. As a leader within the voluntary sector, I am hugely proud of the work undertaken in the local area by volunteers, community groups and partner organisations.

Recent experiences have also shown us what we value and why we will not go back to 'normal', when for many 'normal' is an unsustainable, prejudiced or imbalanced set of conditions.

We have listened to and recorded many of the challenges our voluntary and community sector and local citizens have been facing. We have documented what they have achieved and seen what is strong.

Our ambitions are to build on these strengths to provide a framework for positive action in the future. The potential prize is community development that makes the most of the full range of local assets and enables our communities to thrive. Through continuous collaborative working and integrated partnerships, with targeted funding and a commitment to people at the heart of what we do, we believe we can achieve more to reach our shared goals. This report is our call to further action. We thank everyone who has contributed their insight in its production.

Tracy Rudling
Chief Executive Officer



Community Engagement

These are the ways in which we have gathered data

Surveys

By engaging with local voluntary and community groups through regular surveys and gathering feedback, we have been able to monitor the state of the sector by capturing information about the operation, challenges and opportunities faced by leaders and local citizens.

Asset Mapping

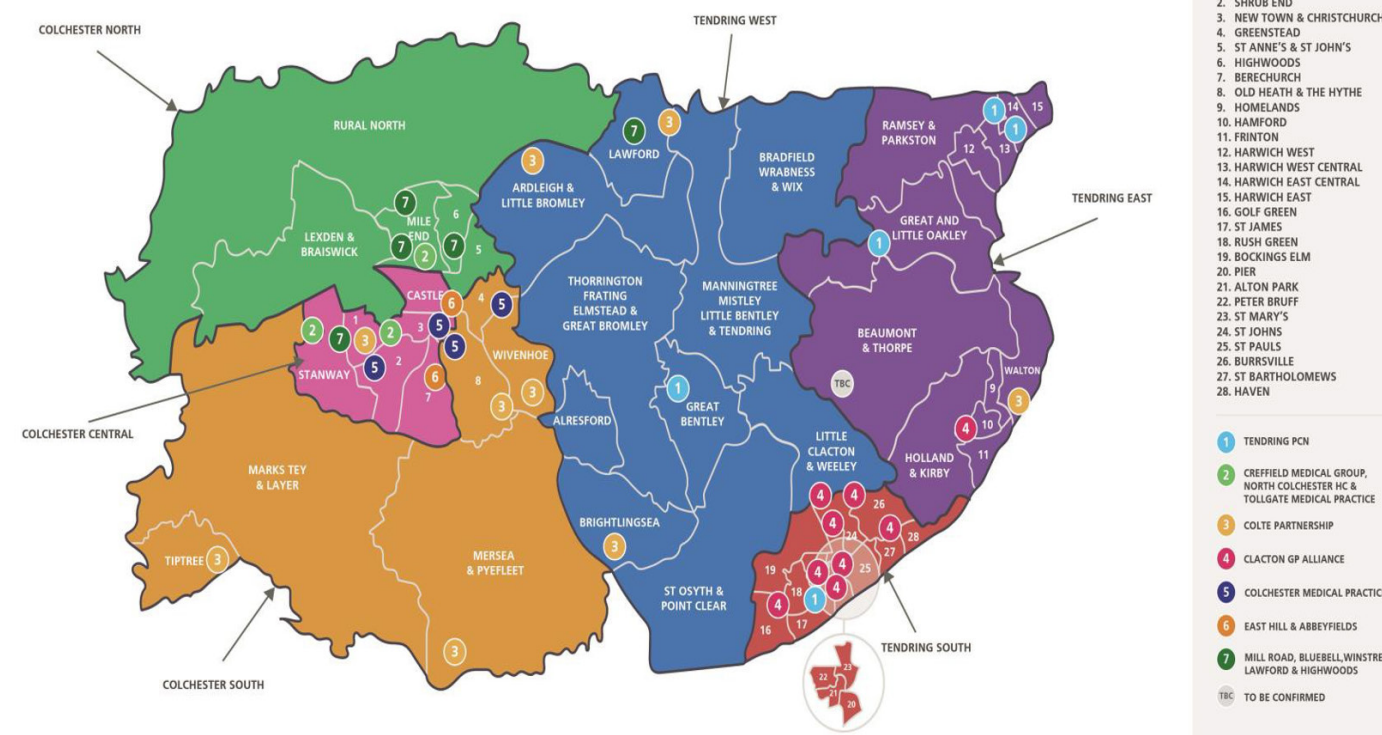
The community assets map, refreshed for 2020 and commissioned by the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance, highlights the strength of local action across our six neighbourhoods and the valuable role that assets play in the lives of local people, with particular reference to their health and wellbeing.

Deep Dives

Working with Healthwatch Essex and CVS Tendring, we are producing a series of reports looking in more detail at the role of community groups in supporting people at all stages of life. The first looks at the experiences of children, young people and families.

Neighbourhoods

The North East Essex Alliance is in the process of developing neighbourhood models of care which will bring together multi-disciplinary teams based within designated areas. A part of the work is to develop neighbourhood profiles and assess data through programmes such as Population Health Management, which the voluntary and community sector is contributing to.



Community Engagement

These are more of the ways in which we have gathered data

North East Essex Communities Responding to Crisis

In October 2021, C360 published a commissioned report from the University of Essex who collected the testimonies of organisers.

Their insight was generously given between October 2020 and February 2021 when the interviewees and their families as well as their staff, volunteers and service users were under great pressure. This report is a milestone, not an end-point.

As the country emerges from a succession of lockdowns and faces an extended period – a complex, multi-faceted ‘long COVID’ – of recovery and reorientation, this process of gathering and analysing evidence must continue.

If we are serious about the human dimensions of recovery, we must ensure that the data we draw on are ‘stories’ as well as ‘numbers’. We hope that one of the many powerful messages this report delivers is about the value of lived experiences as evidence, as an indispensable resource for organisational and sectoral learning.

MA Placement

C360 regularly hosts MA students on placement to conduct research. We hold an archive of over 40 interviews with volunteers, including volunteers supporting individuals through the pandemic, to understand what motivates, influences and impacts on their roles.

A copy of the asset mapping and oral histories report can be downloaded here – www.community360.org.uk/insight/



Community Assets

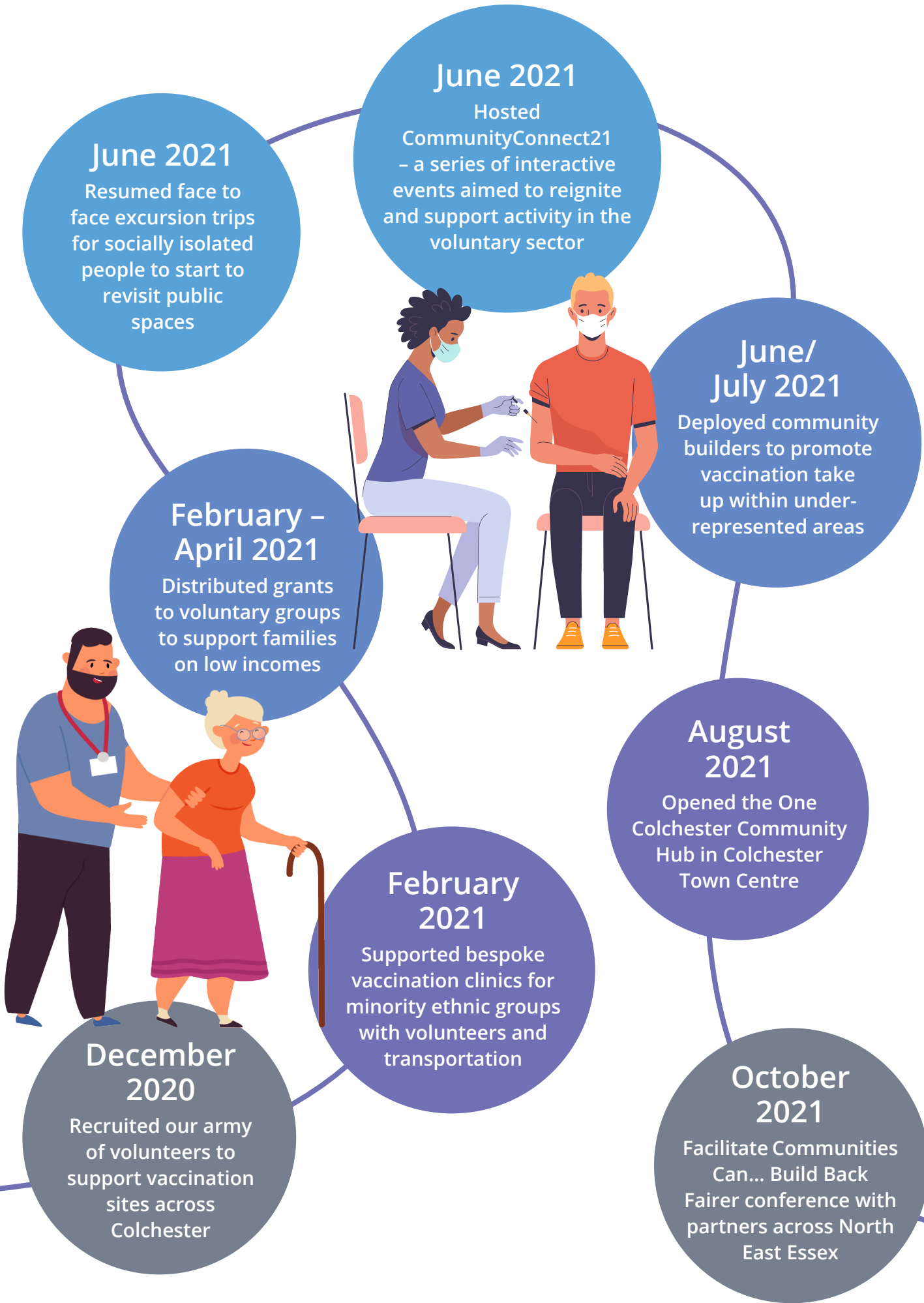
What is an asset?

- Our assets are our people, volunteers, places, open spaces, faith communities, arts and culture groups, friends and neighbours, businesses, events and seasonal activities.
- Without them our communities would not have been able to respond as effectively to the pandemic and would not have the understanding needed to support effective change. Dedicated, caring, skilled and creative people are responding to local challenges. Through them we can build a positive culture that recognises:
- The Power of Information – by knowing more about our place and the local assets, people can support each other more
 - Unique and Impactful Solutions – the range of activities and skills used by the sector are diverse, often tailored to specific needs and are innovative
 - Building Strength through Trusting Relationships – voluntary action is enabled by connecting citizens and assets in an open way
 - Reflects Sense of Identity – whether identifying with a place, people or interest
 - Community Ownership – the need for people to participate in designing, managing and developing activities

Community Hub

At the beginning of the pandemic, an exceptional community response was generated across Colchester. Volunteers came forward, and continue to do so, to undertake a range of roles such as delivering food parcels, prescriptions, conducting welfare calls and supporting the vaccination rollout, to name but a few. As the district CVS and Volunteer Centre, C360 has worked side by side with our partners at Colchester Borough Council, One Colchester and the North East Essex Health & Wellbeing Alliance to support those most in need.

Our Journey



Allocated **650** Winter Warmth packs containing information and essential items



Community Transport assisted **419** citizens to vaccination appointments



118 Volunteer Winter Resilience Ambassadors recruited to provide support, advice and guidance to Colchester citizens

Recruited **533** new Volunteers through Colchester Volunteer Centre



Reached **2,409** people through the Winter Resilience programme

Supported **12** vaccination sites across Colchester with volunteer recruitment & coordination

Assisted VCS partners to access over **£750,000** of additional funding



Supported **2,836** citizens to be discharged home from hospital through the community transport scheme



Worked with **587** VCSE groups across all C360 programmes

Delivered **523** Food Parcels to shielding citizens

Conducted **14,758** Welfare calls to CEV and isolated Colchester residents



Volunteers have welcomed **60,911** citizens at vaccination centres to receive their COVID-19 jab

11,759 hours invested in Community Hub activity by VCSE staff and volunteers

4,110 'Category A' shielding citizens contacted to provide advice, guidance and support



84 Befriending volunteers supported **437** Colchester citizens with weekly welfare calls

Volunteers have given **5600+** hours supporting vaccination sites

A team of **241** Volunteers have supported vaccination sites across Colchester

232 'door step' welfare checks conducted by Community Transport Drivers and volunteers

Distributed **1,531** items of furniture through the Essential Living Fund

91 families received support from the Essex Family Support service

What our leaders have learnt and experienced

Pam Donnelly, Strategic Director for Customers and Partnerships, Colchester Borough Council and Chair of the One Colchester Partnership

'It was a time that was characterised by collaboration, engagement, goodwill, and a willingness to get on with a shared view about our job to support the community – other people would do other things – but that would be our job, both in the Borough Council and across One Colchester. It was a time of working together and it wasn't characterised by any tensions or problems. We were clear about our purpose.'

'I think it is a really important lesson that whether the sun is shining or not, the vulnerable remain vulnerable. Elderly people, immobile people or families struggling to feed their children – their needs don't go away.'

'[I am most proud of the] community response and I don't think that'll ever get recognised by the community – there'll be no plaudits for it – that's fine. But my goodness if it hadn't been there, I think the whole community in Colchester would have been worse off. I'd say the community response has been amazing and, of course, it's now set relationships that will survive over the next few years.'

Tracy Rudling, CEO, C360 and Vice Chair of One Colchester

'We didn't even understand to what extent this pandemic was going to exacerbate to or how long it was going to be, so we just started to do what we thought was going to be helpful in our local community and what our local hub offer might look like. For me, it was that first week of March where we started to think "Ok, let's start mobilising" – the voluntary and community sector, public services and create a collaborative to work together on this. That was the start for me really.'

'We immediately came together as, probably, 20 organisations across public services, police, cultural organisations, the voluntary and community sector, health and Essex County Council – so there was a whole raft of us coming together to look at what we thought we could do on the ground, individually and collectively, that would start to make a difference and we know things moved quickly. Really quickly. Suddenly we were in a lockdown. Suddenly we found that Community 360 was being asked to be the local hub offer, which meant distributing food parcels, ensuring that our clinically extremely vulnerable people had the support that they needed and the wrap-around support that they needed. That they had food, they had medication, they had the phone calls. Very quickly we found ourselves in all over Easter making 7000 calls to clinically extremely vulnerable people and responding to an emergency situation – a crisis situation – which was then ongoing. Making those regular phone calls to people that just needed, sometimes, a listening ear because never had they found themselves in a position where actually they weren't allowed to go out.'

'So we've gone through all these different iterations of lockdown, [then] back out there again. I suppose for us, the workforce, it's not really changed because we have still been doing seven days a week and we're still going to continue to do that. There's a kind of "We can't go back", that this is the new format. We'll always be a 7-day a week agency now.'

Community organisers champion and support local residents across the Borough. Their staff are skilled and connected to their purpose very strongly. Their experiences highlight complexities, challenges and opportunities.



Maria Wilby
Director, Refugee Action Colchester

Refugee Action Colchester has been a vital support system to refugee and migrant communities in the Borough for a number of years and has continued to experience increasing demand through 2020 and into 2021. Maria's comments reflect on work during the Winter period and national lockdowns, highlighting the person led approach many VCS groups have adopted to prioritise people's needs.

'That's the difference this year that the complexity of the clients – so we have had slightly more clients than we've had in previous years but the complexity and the amount of time we're spending with each client is about triple... It's largely because of COVID, so the issues that people are facing are more complex because of COVID and then solving them is more complex because of COVID. It's that huge responsibility of being the only group who's involved with them, and who's supporting them. We tried to track how many texts and phone calls we get outside of hours, during the week, and it came back as 27 hours. That's outside my normal office days, so it's a lot. I do sometimes initiate those texts because we are worried about people who have said they're feeling suicidal or not sure how they're going to cope. You go home at the end of the day and you worry about that because there aren't the services here to deal with them. It's not what we are trained to do, we've become very expert in lots of things because we've had to do them...'



Alistair McGarry
Chair, Youth Enquiry Service

Youth Enquiry Service. The Colchester and Tendring Youth Enquiry Service supports children and young people aged between 11 and 25 across North East Essex.

'The reality is that there is no coherent provision. There is a tapestry, well I would say a bit more of a spider's web, because there's lots of gaps in provision... you know if you're a young person with challenges you'll get good support from schools because schools are generally good, but beyond that and beyond what they can provide it's a lottery really. It depends what mix of services are available in your local area and then the accessing of services, such as mental health services for young people are so overwhelmed. It doesn't matter how you re-polish it, there is too much demand and of course the reality of this, and in a horrible way, it's taken COVID for people to recognise mental health is something more than a 'bit of an illness'. Unfortunately, I think there is an iceberg of need that is going to come out over the next year or so.'

Extracts taken from North East Essex Communities Responding to Crisis
[Click here to read the full interviews](#)



Steve Brown
Chief Executive Officer,
Beacon House

Beacon House works at the forefront of emergency and essential support needs by assisting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

'What we did notice was that a number of individual people who had supported us, and some companies who had also supported us, started to drift away – unsurprisingly because I think a lot of people were under severe personal and financial pressure and companies felt it as well. Thankfully, finance in the whole COVID period so far, right up until today, has not been a problem. However, if it goes on much longer, it's going to become a problem, unless those COVID specific grants are repeated or become a regular income stream, because the deficit financially from the other areas still exists'.

'I think if you were to be looking for a silver lining that's come out of a COVID cloud, top of the list would be enhanced relationships and operational working partnerships with other organisations. That would be absolutely top of the tree. Often, and I've seen it before, both in life and in business, that when a crisis occurs, not only do people step up but people also recognise, accept and maybe even articulate, perhaps when some of their pride goes out the window, that 'we can't do this on our own – we need help'. There have been a number of forums created within the town and there's been sharing of information, there's been communication, there's been offers of help and acceptances of help. You know of our relationship with people like Colchester Borough Homes... that relationship particularly has become much, much stronger now. We're also working even more closely with the police. I wouldn't say there are any brand-new relationships, but I think that the relationships that were there maybe had been a little bit 'arm's length' – and are now much closer. We've (all) looked at it and said "well, actually why are we duplicating services?" You know you're particularly good at that, so we'll cease to do that but we're particularly good at this, so why don't you cease do it and we'll meet the need together.'



Peter Dutch
Founder, Anti-Loo Roll
Brigade

The Anti-loo Roll Brigade was formed in response to the pandemic. Operating informally as a Facebook group, the network had significant reach into local communities and provided solutions to everyday needs. The group is now a Community Interest Company and continues to encourage voluntary action.

'We're forging new partnerships and just working with different people all the time. And they're all ongoing – some dip in and out but that is the beauty of what we've created, it has linked up all these people. You know so that if someone comes to me from one area and says, "Oh we need this Peter, you got any ideas?", I can link them up with someone who they might never have met or spoken to before and get them access. Yeah, we linked up with pretty much everyone and that for me was one of the amazing things – by September, October last year (2020) that we were already providing support to all these people. It was always for me, just re-iterated the crying need for something like this because all these people I've started working with they're all amazing people...'

'Some of them have reached out to us, some we've reached out to, some have just joined the page and got what we're about and we just forged relationships with so many people, it's impossible to remember how they all started to be honest.'

Group Comments

Befriending Service

I have been surprised by...

"The increased confidence in and support for charities – especially those like our that look after the needs of those impacted by the pandemic. A positive financial outcome for last year although 25% of funding was from 'emergency sources' and we cannot be confident that such channels of support will be present post the worst of the pandemic."

Community Group

We have been challenged by
"Time for getting together, even on Zoom, to get training and production of policies and procedures done."

Community Group

I am most proud of...
"Partnership work, fast response thanks to flexibility"

Adults Service

I have been impressed by
"The feeling of community, and strength as a team supporting each other and caring for ours and our clients health and wellbeing."

Volunteer Programme Leader

I am most proud of

"The amount of volunteers that we've supported to support communities. Yeah, I'd say that's one of the most proud things that we've, I've achieved."

Families Service

"We have been heartened by the enthusiasm and loyalty of volunteers and families..."



Volunteer Experiences

PAT DE BURCA is a volunteer befriender and has been helping Community360 since September 2020.

Pat is an 80-year-old retired RAF Officer having served for 32 years. He flew as a Navigator on Canberra and Vulcan Bombers. The 2nd half of his career he was an Air Traffic Controller and has travelled extensively and was even in Berlin when the Wall came down!

Pat said: "I am delighted to be able to offer some form of support to those leaving care from the hospital. I really think they benefit from the Home from Hospital service; it helps them to feel more confident and generally happier. I hope I am that 'friendly voice of support' at the other end of the phone. I would particularly encourage men to get involved, gentleman often like another male counterpart to talk to"

ALISON WHEELER

"It has been fantastic meeting all the patients and fellow volunteers. All the ladies I have been calling have really appreciated my calls and by helping at the Primary Care Centre, is helping the country to get back to normal by getting as many people vaccinated as possible."

MICK WOOD

'It has been great to meet new people (and make friends) like the other volunteers. It has been quite stimulating and has got the "grey cells" working again after being in lockdown.

However, to see the joy from people's faces when you have managed to help "make their day" by doing something quite simple like picking up a wheelchair for them to help get around, making sure they are well, and generally trying to make them relaxed if they are feeling slightly anxious is extremely rewarding.'

Cameron Wolmarans is currently a Biomedical Sciences Student at Essex University. His role for Community360 is a hospital call back volunteer and befriender and has been helping for 6 months.

"I was looking for a volunteering role that would allow me to give back to my community. Additionally, I am interested in becoming a doctor, so I wanted to get some experience in a caring role. I had previous experience volunteering and wanted to do it again on a more regular basis."

He added: "I really found the role to fill a gap in the healthcare system. After someone gets back from the hospital everything is a bit manic and, in some instances, life may never be the same again. Whilst I knew my role was small, I believed that helping someone pick up the pieces after their rather daunting experience can be the first step to returning to some semblance of normality.

Moreover, after further research about Community360, I saw the scope of what they do, it really inspired me to take part in something I knew would have a positive benefit to people's lives."

"My role involves me calling those who have recently been to hospital to assess their practical, mental and clinical needs to ensure a smooth transition to living at home again. I enjoy interacting with people and hearing about their current well-being. The reason for this enjoyment is that I see the magnitude of having someone listen to them about their problems and how it can have a positive impact on somebody."

So why volunteer? The contribution that volunteers make can improve your employment prospects and gain new skills, knowledge and experience, including meeting new people and to get to know your local community. It can help your own self-esteem and you can make a difference to the lives of others and the community you live in.

HAZEL LINSCOTT

"It feels like one of the greatest things I have ever done," said Community360 vaccine volunteer Hazel Linscott.

She is urging more people to spare a few hours to help out.

"I have worked for many years in an office environment, but during lockdown I had no choice but to work from home. I felt I needed to do something outside my four walls and try and help people in the community." Explains Hazel.

She added: "I heard about Community360 and the work they were doing helping the NHS with the vaccination programme at different locations around the local area. I wanted to play a part in trying to put an end to this awful time and so decided to put my name forward to help.

I started volunteering at the beginning of the year and haven't looked back since. It is so fulfilling; you meet some wonderful people and I get great satisfaction of being part of an amazing group of volunteers. I feel that without the volunteers helping the NHS this vaccination programme would not have been as successful as it has been, we are making a difference to get this world back up and running again and that to me is what it's all about."



Communities Can... Build Back Fairer

On Monday 11th October 2021, 285 people attended a virtual, interactive conference to explore the challenge of health inequalities in North East Essex.

Co-ordinated by a partnership of public and voluntary sector agencies, the meeting featured a keynote address from Professor Sir Michael Marmot with themed presentations from Cormac Russell, VCSE and health sector leadership alongside researchers working with them.

Voluntary sector also implies that it is free and therefore less skilled and or important. We know that this is absolutely not the case. We must invest and cherish these valuable assets.

Wonderful to see the enthusiasm and feedback from attendees – such determination to do better and learn from the past that we need to harness.

We must think about the human rights of our citizens and not about tokenistic engagement, integration can be exclusive

Very very powerful I like reducing the dependency encouraging collaborative support than top down support

Useful Links

Communities Can... conference recording
<https://youtu.be/dVDrqO5aYVE>

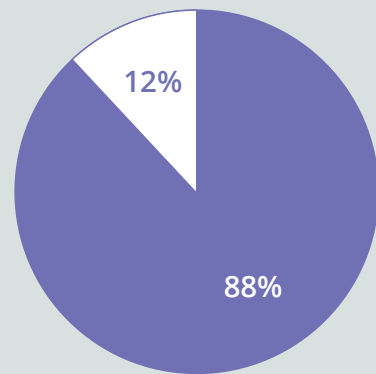
Slides and reports (including NEE Communities Responding to Crisis)
www.community360.org.uk/insight/



4.4 stars (out of 5) from attendee reviews

Top priorities now

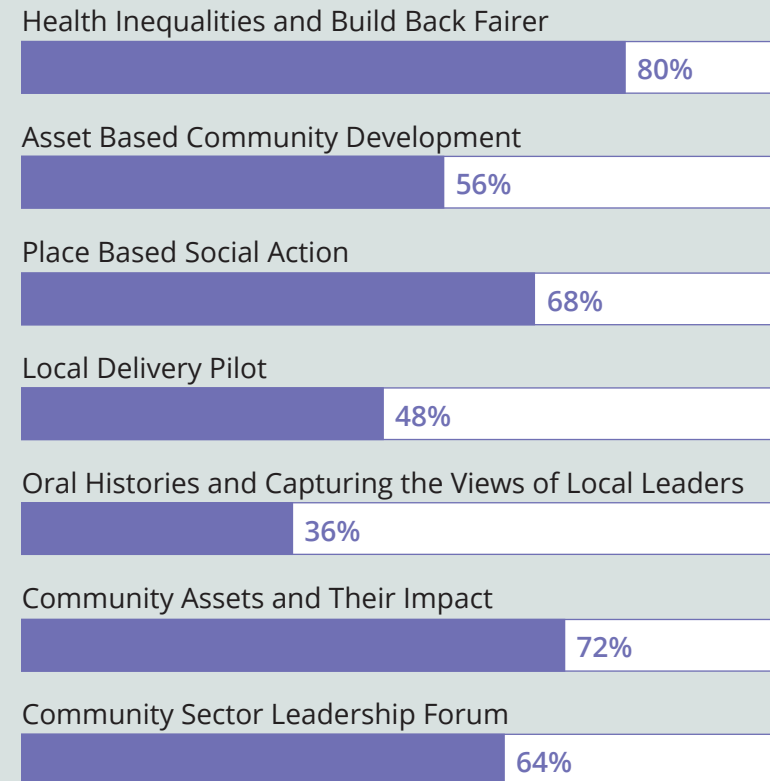
1. Mental Health
2. Financial Support and/or Housing
3. Physical Health Needs



88% of people providing feedback would like to take part in a future event

12% may wish to upon finding out more

Respondents would like to explore these topics further...



The event has galvanised local commitments to tackling inequalities and established a framework which can shape how we move forward together

Focus on prevention	Target investment in communities	Prioritise children and a better start in life	Tackle local infrastructure needs, for example affordable housing and community transport	Collaborate – 'Truly and genuinely listening, engaging'	Support Better Mental Health and Wellbeing	Address Standards of Living and Income
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Pledges were made, that include...

I am happy to pledge my active support and that of Action for Family Carers in supporting efforts to reduce health inequalities in North East Essex – through participation in working groups, contributing knowledge and expertise in working with carers of all ages and their families across Essex.

James Clarke, CEO

We will keep speaking out and collecting data to demonstrate how the systems are not meeting the needs of our community.

Maria Wilby, Refugee Action Colchester



Now we must act through Phase II of our commitment to tackling inequality and strengthening the non-profit sector. This will be co-ordinated through the **Marmot Community Sector Leadership Forum**.

C360 will bring together a number of anchor organisations that are playing a role in representing the sector at a place level, building on the success of the One Colchester collaborative.

We want all groups to be visible, equal and contribute to quality of life in our Borough through One Colchester, and will be actively looking to recruit members to this newly formed leadership Forum.

One Colchester is the local multi-agency strategic partnership that exists to provide an opportunity to pool and deepen understanding of our Place, and to collaborate towards a shared plan to meet the strategic needs of the whole Borough.

Now we must respond to our experiences and build on what's strong

OUTCOMES	AMBITIONS
Use what we know to best effect	<p>We must all retain a Place Based Social Action approach, investing in the assets in our communities. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marmot Community Sector Leadership Forum for CEO leadership and development • Providing access to training and infrastructure resources • Opportunities to share and collaborate on use of resources and data sharing • Creating platforms to share learning and stories
Address inequality as a system and improve the lives of people living locally	<p>We must support local community leadership, no matter what size and scale, to facilitate change.</p> <p>Through a dedicated inequalities workstream, sitting under the umbrella of One Colchester, we will undertake joint working.</p> <p>We will develop a Phase II programme of work following our conference in the Autumn of 2021 to focus on the topic with Sir Michael Marmot and develop a phased approach to tackling inequality across the Borough.</p>
Value and grow our volunteer community	<p>To cultivate the culture of volunteering that we have seen nationally and locally throughout the pandemic we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate a regular programme of recognition of volunteers • Connect with employers to embed volunteering and Corporate Social Responsibility programmes within their workplaces • Work with pandemic response volunteers to transition to new or similar roles • Continue a programme of developing neighbourhood level volunteering opportunities
Manage funding appropriately and minimise bureaucracy	<p>We will ask funders to provide multi-year or repeat funding that also considers infrastructure investment and implements less bureaucratic processes.</p> <p>C360 will facilitate opportunities for funders and community groups to engage directly and to build productive relationships. We will work directly with the One Colchester Funding Panel that will co-ordinate development with partners from the public sector and across the health and social care system.</p> <p>C360 will undertake a review of the capacity and investment in the VCS in the Borough to identify gaps, opportunities or risk areas. This work will inform commissioners and fundraising or resource management strategies.</p>

OUTCOMES	AMBITIONS
Collaborate more – it has been essential and will remain so	<p>The One Colchester partnership provides an established forum at Strategic and Delivery Board level for system wide partnerships to develop. This must be maintained.</p> <p>The One Colchester Community Hub is open and serving a central hub in our Neighbourhoods programme of work. The Hub will provide a model for other locations in the Borough, dependent upon need and opportunity.</p> <p>Our ambition is to concentrate on place and enhance the role of neighbourhoods within system working, including effective networks and locations of activity.</p>
Prioritise wellbeing in the sector	<p>We will support the wellbeing of key workers and volunteers through an enhanced provision of activities, education and consideration.</p> <p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events to focus on the topic and identify areas of specific need within the sector • Promotion of existing opportunities for training and support, e.g., Mental Health First Aid and the like.
Be open to possibilities – challenge ourselves about what we already do	<p>Provide more opportunities for communities to identify and express their unmet needs and the solutions that will have the greatest impact on improving their lives. Seek creative solutions which accept risk as a companion of change and do not be afraid of progressing</p>
Be informed by the experiences of communities and act in partnership with them – challenge our understanding of what we think we know	<p>Embed community voices into all that we do, formally and informally, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating representative roles and offering training or support to make this possible • Providing accessible ways to feedback and engage with system-wide decision making • Learning from how people about how they want to be involved and increasing opportunities to do so • Engaging with a wide range of community networks, such as facebook groups and local associations • Working with community ambassadors and leaders to collaborate



Community360 exists to assist members of the public, voluntary and community organisations by providing passionate, intelligent leadership in Colchester, Braintree, Essex and beyond.

Our vision is for a less unequal society. Our ambition is to use our efforts and influence to reduce inequalities and increase opportunities.

The values by which we work are:

- **LEADERSHIP**

We seek to provide passionate, intelligent leadership for our communities.

- **COLLABORATION**

We maximise our impact by building partnerships to work with communities.

- **HONESTY**

We maintain a reputation for integrity and trust.

- **CREATIVITY**

We are open-minded, we challenge how things are done and develop new approaches.

- **INCLUSIVENESS**

We seek to involve everyone, are friendly and caring.

- **EXCELLENCE**

We value quality in everything we do.



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