Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory

Biddulph Works Together

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

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Title	Biddulph Works Together
Organisation	Biddulph Town Council
Category	Promising Practice
Poverty Impact	Mitigation
Introduction to the Project	

Biddulph Works Together is a partnership of organisations that work across Biddulph. Partners provide a range of opportunities and events for the community, from coffee mornings to community cinema sessions, craft activities and youth focused activities. The partnership is responsive to community needs and is promoted through the Town Council website and social media pages. They aim to help people in poverty but also to address other problems like loneliness. The partnership has identified needs within the town and sought to provide joined-up solutions to these, such as the provision of emergency food and fuel and a town-wide Christmas present appeal.

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?

Councillors felt they needed to do something as the cost-of-living crisis began to impact those who were most in need within the community. The Town Council already had good relations with a wide range of community groups, and called a meeting to see what partners could deliver. At first, the proposal was to turn the Town Hall into a warm space. This has taken place on some days of the week. However, they also provide food and warm spaces for people near to their homes, or within environments where they felt comfortable.

How did the idea for the project come about?

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies offered advice to the community. It became clear that needs could be met if they worked together to provide cost of living support, and so they created Biddulph Works Together.

Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?

No

Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?

Town councillors are the closest layer of government to residents, and they have a strong understanding of issues facing the community. The Town Council also had the capacity to move quickly to set up this project. The Town Council coordinated the first meeting of partners, and the project quickly grew from there with community groups keen to be involved.

Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?

Yes

Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?

No			**Yes**	xxx

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Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.	
Which organisation provided funding?	Biddulph Town Council and the National Lottery funded the initial idea.

Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?

No		**Yes**	xxx

Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.

Staff/Volunteer Time	
Facilities / Workspace	The town hall
Equipment	
Local Knowledge	Yes
Food and Drink	

What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?

No barriers identified.

What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?

Ideas generated by the community.

How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?

The project began as soon as the initial idea was formed.

Who made the decision to introduce the project?

The Town Council made the decision to introduce the project when it became clear that other partners were keen to be involved. A budget was allocated to fund food provision or items that could help with catering. This also funded the promotion of the scheme.

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	xxx
Yes, a pilot project	
Yes, a feasibility study	

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?		
No		
Yes	xxx	
There is an informal referral process.		
Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?		
Yes		
No	xxx	
Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?		
The Town Hall, social prescribers, or the groups themselves will identify people that may benefit from attending groups. Each group has its own social media presence, so will have people who attend after seeing this. Each group operates on a 'the more the merrier' principle.		
What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?		
Through the Town Hall, social media, and the social prescribers.		
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?		
No		
Yes	xxx	
Mostly through the website, social media or in person.		

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?		
No		
Yes	xxx	
There are volunteers and helpers in each of the groups.		
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?		
No	xxx	
Yes		
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? *If so, please describe below*.		
No	xxx	
Yes		

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?		
Sarah Haydon coordinates the Town Council activities, but each group is managed by a different team who meet together at the primary Biddulph Works Together sessions.		
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?		
	Yes	
	No	xxx
Sarah is also in contact with charities in the area and holds meetings to gather ideas.		
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project		
	Most of it	xxx
	About half of it	
	Just a small proportion of it	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Yes, meetings are held to discuss what people are concerned about.		
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?		
	No	xxx
	Yes	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?		
	Don't know	
	No	xxx
	Yes	
No. It operates to meet the needs and improve the town of Biddulph.		
Is the project part of any other strategy?		
	Don't know	
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Biddulph Town Council's Five-Year Strategy strives to support this type of partnership working.		
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this strategy?		
	Don't know	xxx
	No	
	Yes	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?		
	No	xxx
	Yes	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Please provide details of the external funding that was used secured to support this work?		
Which organisation provided funding?	Biddulph Town Council and the National Lottery fund the project.	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	N/A	
How much funding was secured?	£10,000 per year. This funds everything from the printing of promotional materials to providing emergency food parcels.	
For how long has funding been secured?	N/A	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?		
	Don't know	
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
	No	xxx
	Yes	
Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work		
	No	xxx
	Yes	

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What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?

The Town Council provides the funding for the project from its reserves. Each agency that wishes to deliver a new or enhanced service seeks funds from the Town Council. For example, there is a group that meets on a Tuesday morning (10 AM–12 PM). They wanted to support their current members and attract new members who may be in need. The asked if they could extend their session by an hour and provide a warm meal to those that attended the group. The Town Council waived the additional room rent and provided funding for food. The group makes pies, lasagne, and cottage pies, for example. They do so in advance of the session using the funds provided.

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Groups are well trained in safeguarding and food hygiene as part of their usual activities. This forum has provided the opportunity for volunteers to get involved in additional training such as bereavement or mental health awareness, at no extra cost to them.		
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
The Town Council staff are paid and some of the other agencies have paid staff. The Biddulph Works Together funding does not pay for staff costs.		
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Yes, they help set up different charity events and help serve food.		

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Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?			
No		**Yes**	xxx

Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?	
Facilities / Workspace	Projects use existing facilities.
Equipment	Projects use existing equipment, although the project has funded a new table-top fridge for a church group and new hot water dispensers for a voluntary group.
Local Knowledge	The knowledge of volunteers is essential to keep the offer relevant.
Food and Drink	Whilst the Town Council funds the purchase of foods, the scheme often depends on the generosity of volunteers to prepare the food for their sessions.

Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	
No	xxx
Yes	

Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	
No	xxx
Yes	

Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	
No	xxx
Yes	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?		
	No	xxx
	Yes	
No. Most of the evidence collected is anecdotal, but we know the number who attend groups, use the foodbank, and seek supermarket vouchers.		
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?		
	Yes	xxx
	No	
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?		
The individual agencies collect data at each session where they have received Biddulph Works Together funding.		
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?		
N/A		
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project?		
Informal feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. Community members state that the project is helpful and targets big issues within Biddulph. A piece of work completed by a community research team collected the following feedback. Those involved stated: it is "an excellent idea", that "the project has brought the town together", it has "helped the community to grow", that they are "proud to have been part of it", it has "helped us to understand the needs of Biddulph People", that they are "privileged to be a part of a great group of hardworking, positive people/volunteers", and that Biddulph Council are a "great Town Council, very proactive and community minded". Other feedback included statements such as: "I work in Biddulph, and I can see what benefits this project has had on the local community" and "we have established important networks; we've ensured we're not duplicating activity and resource and we're referring our community members to other groups that we're now aware."		

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What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?					
Number of users	**Yes**	xxx		**No**	
Profile of users	**Yes**			**No**	xxx
Experience of users	**Yes**	xxx		**No**	
Outcomes for users	**Yes**	xxx		**No**	
Anything else	**Yes**	xxx		**No**	
Information on other problems members may be facing is collected					

Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	
Yes	xxx
They always seek to respond to the community's problems to adapt and find new ways to help. The Town Council also wants to demonstrate to the community that this is a project that uses Town Council funds and has excellent outcomes.	

Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	
No	xxx
Yes	

Has the insight from the external organisation's evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	xxx
Yes	

Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	xxx
Yes	

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Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	xxx
No	
Yes	

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	
Making progress toward meeting Aims	xxx
Not making progress	
The project is ever-changing and adapting. They perceive that there will always be a demand for the project as it aims to keep improving Biddulph.	
What difference has the project made?	
Biddulph Works Together has eased some of the stresses expressed by the community by providing help, advice, and facilities to eat and stay warm whilst engaging in activities.	
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	
No	
Yes	xxx
Rising demand. Many new people are seeking help and attending events. They continue to provide warm spaces and free food, but by getting more people through the door, they have uncovered a wide range of other issues such as fuel poverty, loneliness, and health issues.	
Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?	
Yes	xxx
No	

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Has the project changed through time?		
No		
Yes		xxx
What changed		
Why has it changed		

Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		
No		
Yes		xxx

Yes, they originally had an event to help elderly people which has become a place for lonely people in the community to meet regularly and have a meal while talking to people. They have had the flexibility to grow and evolve and have found that the groups now tackle issues that are wider than their original aspirations.

In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?		
No		
Yes		xxx

Yes. They have multiple events each week that give hot meals to people in attendance while also tackling many other societal problems.

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?
They have a great group of people with their own interesting ideas, who also listen very closely to the community and aim to adapt to problems that the people of Biddulph are facing.

What, if anything, is working less well?
N/A

What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?
Involve people who are committed to improve their local area, and to support others who aim to do so. Provide hot food served at each event. Always be willing to adapt and to respond. Understand that volunteers are keen to support their community, but don't make this too onerous. They are a valuable resource.

Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?

	No	xxx
	Yes	

No, Biddulph Works Together aim to continue to serve the people of Biddulph. They hope to get funding from an external agency for an empowerment-type role. They have identified that there are a significant number of people within the community who do not know how to tackle issues such as getting repairs done or liaising with utility companies. This role would be a safety net for those that do not meet the threshold for social care support but need some support to tackle day-to-day challenges.

How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?
Yes, it would be possible to replicate this project, providing there is a team of people that work well together and a healthy meeting environment where different ideas are welcome.

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