



Specialists in **Creative Placemaking** and
Asset-Based Community Development
through Pod-Working

Connecting People-to-People and People-to-Place

**Quiet Voice Methodology™ in the
Community Health Paradigm**

**A project commissioned by
Woodbury, Exmouth and Budleigh (WEB)
Community Health and Wellbeing Board**

Littleham, Exmouth 2023-2024

EVALUATION REPORT

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Summary

In 2023 the WEB Community Health and Wellbeing Board (WEB), in partnership with Westbank, Exeter commissioned Interwoven Productions CIC to use Quiet Voice Methodology™ (QVM) to form an issue-based "Pod" [working group] of Littleham estate residents.

These individuals were to be specifically drawn from those who would not normally participate and who are resident on the Littleham local authority built estate itself. This was so that the Board could gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of the lived experience of residents within that environmental and socio-economic context and the factors that impact their health and wellbeing.

It was also intended that this Pod should become an animated and bonded group of individuals who, as a result of the project, would feel empowered and motivated to continue to positively represent and act for their own community into the future.

A community Pod was successfully formed by March 2024 and they quickly identified that anti-social behaviour presented by young people, manifesting in car vandalism and verbal and physical abuse, was causing high levels of stress and inhibiting physical activity.

They also identified environmental problems in the local play park that were causing waterlogging and raised this with the local authority. Remedial works have now been completed.

The Pod created a new form of soft, neighbour-to-neighbour consultation where they were able to gather deep qualitative data from other estate residents which has since been used to inform funding applications for other projects. They hosted two inter-agency meetings with youth provision providers and local authorities that has resulted in action that has demonstrably reduced incidents of anti-social behaviour. An incredible result in such a short timescale.

They are going to continue to work together and have negotiated for themselves, within the existing work of The Wave at the Littleham Leisure Centre, a regular meeting place and a way to continue to provide a "listening ear" for their neighbours, under the continued governance of Interwoven.

The intention at the beginning was that "they would be supported and empowered to research, frame and present the assets and the challenges of their own community." In fact they've achieved far more than that and, in reducing anti-social behaviour and encouraging activity again at The Crescent Play Park, have already positively impacted health and well-being in their own place.

The project demonstrates the efficacy of Quiet Voice Methodology in the community health paradigm.

Project Structure

Work started in September 2023 and the activity was broken down into three stages:-

Stage One:-

- i. Stakeholder Liaison to asset map current services in and take their view.
- ii. Use of QVM to reach estate residents, particularly those who would not normally participate (ie. "Quiet Voice").
- iii. Formation of a residents' "Pod".

The term "Pod" describes a pivotal part of this methodology. This recognises that community activism is much easier when shared. When you bring a group of residents together to consider and present what is important to them, they're enabled to support each other, sharing skills, knowledge and resources to bring a project to fruition. We have come to realise that, whilst any activity chosen by the Pod has value, the truly lasting positive impact is the confidence and resulting animation this brings to the individuals involved and, indeed, to the broader community.

Stage Two:-

Pod devised activity/events designed to frame and present their place on their own terms. The Pod to be enabled to identify the issues/themes that are most important to them, to research them and then present their findings back to WEB and other stakeholders in a way that is most meaningful to them.

Stage Three:-

The Pod to be encouraged to reflect on the process in terms of their personal journey, how impacting the process has been on their community and whether they feel that their work has been 'heard' and valued by stakeholders.

Objective 1 – Partnership Liaison – stakeholder meetings

What we wanted to happen

We were keen to understand current statutory and third-sector provision in the area and gain the provider view of the factors that impact resident health and wellbeing. We were also keen to introduce the intention of creating a residents' Pod in order to facilitate ongoing connection between residents and stakeholders.

We planned to make 4 trips to Exmouth from Exeter and spend 8 hours in stakeholder meetings.

What actually happened

As it turned out, in the first 6 months, we made 12 trips to Exmouth to see 26 stakeholders, spending around 22 hours in conversation.

Sue Lake – WEB
Sam Burnett, The Wave
Sarah Forde, Seachange
John Astley, author of *The Littleham Estate*
John Elms, Littleham Leisure Centre Manager
Tamsin Phelvin, Active Devon
Ellie Barnes, East Devon VCSE Network
Tim Chappell, Open Door
Mick Cox, Men's Shed
Mark Gerry and Steve Brint, Space
Cllr David Poor (via Zoom)
Jamie Clayden, EDDC Home and People (via telephone)
Anna Matthews, Littleham *Squilometre*
Amanda Kohn, Westbank
Stephen Spratling, DCC/NHS (via Zoom)
Cllrs Graham Deasy, Mark Williamson, Michael Rosser, Nick Hookway, Anne Hall and Brian Bailey
Tom Paddon, Littleham Primary School
Rev Steve Jones, Littleham Mission, Exmouth Coastal Churches
Ian Taylor, Exmouth Community College
Kay Burnett, The Wave

Observations and recommendations

We spent far more time than originally intended in stakeholder liaison but it has allowed us to gain a sense, not only of the local service provision but also where the community 'energy' on the estate lies.

Main observations

There's a clear nexus of energy and positive community activity at the Littleham Leisure Centre facilitated by The Wave and the Littleham Mission. The Community Café, Community Fridge (with warm space gathering in the winter months) and Community Garden (with the associated Connect and Grow initiative) provide the focus of extremely important community activity that is highly valued by the residents we spoke to. The work and dedication of Sam and Kay Burnett (also estate residents) of The Wave can't be spoken of highly enough.

Exmouth Coastal Churches also still runs the only youth group on the estate at the Littleham Leisure Centre, other initiatives having ceased during Covid lockdown. Plans for the development of the Capel Lane site as a community focus, under the leadership of Rev Jones are ambitious and important.

The very successful Men's Shed, supported by Open Door and held at the Clayton House on Salterton Road provides an important service for men, with a large and thriving membership. Mick Cox very kindly facilitated two separate opportunities to ask their participants if they were resident on the estate. Interestingly, at the time, none said they were although we now have a Pod member, M, who is resident on the estate and is a member of Men's Shed, so the response may not have been completely accurate.

We were welcomed by Mark Gerry and Steve Brint from Space to the Hive in Exmouth who introduced us to A, who has become a Pod member and now attends Pod meetings with her mother, S. We learned that Space do have participants from the estate, even though the Hive venue is in Exmouth town. We understand now that the Hive is closed and Space has moved to another venue in Victoria Road.

Tamsin Phelvin, Ellie Barnes and Amanda Kohn all kindly joined JoJo Spinks in Behavioural Mapping of the estate's green spaces at The Crescent, The Green and John Hudson Way, gathering quantitative data on green space use and taking the opportunity to talk to local residents. It became clear during this work that although the Littleham estate is blessed with green space, it is not being used consistently for physical exercise or community activity.

A combined meeting was kindly arranged by Exmouth Town and East Devon District Councillors so that all could gain a sense of the project. Their response was friendly and positive and they asked Cllr David Poor to be a conduit between them and the Pod.

Meetings with Tom Paddon of Littleham Primary School and Ian Taylor at Exmouth Community College gave us a useful insight into their view of the problems facing families and young people, included below under Pod devised activity.

Conversations with Sue Lake, Sarah Forde, John Astley, Stephen Spratling were all friendly but all were happy to share that they didn't have a strong understanding of the health and wellbeing factors experienced by Littleham estate residents specifically and were interested in the results of the project.

In trying to find a time to meet and talk with Jamie Clayden (finally achieved by telephone - a friendly and useful talk), the strong sense from EDDC is that community-involved staff are stretched to the limit. Jamie ran some Warm Space sessions at Bidmead and the monthly Littleham Chat and Chill. She was mentioned very positively by one resident who lives on Bidmead Close. The hire of meeting space at the Bidmead Centre is very efficiently run by EDDC staff and at a very competitive rate. This has been extremely useful in arranging Pod meet ups and discussion.

Dr Overton felt that he had little to add as his project was more concerned with blood pressure screening and encouraging physical activity. We were unable to arrange a convenient time to meet.

Jenna Grace at Esteem had to postpone any meeting until after a premises move.

We gained an email response from PC Lindsey Dell confirming that her role in community is limited to school presentations rather than liaison. She referred us to Inspector Grant Leitch, the Neighbourhood Inspector for Exmouth and Ottery who shared some useful thoughts via email.

Recommendations

We spent more time than intended in these meetings and they were useful but it is interesting to note that none of these providers, unless prompted by specific questions from the Pod, raised the issue of anti-social behaviour on the estate as an important limiting factor in health and wellbeing, causing high levels of stress and inhibiting physical activity. This underpins the importance of taking the time to gauge the lived-experience of residents before creating project plans.

Objective 2 – Quiet Voice invitation activity

What we wanted to happen

We wanted to use a range of QVM techniques designed to reach deep into the community, finding individuals who are resident on the estate, who would not normally participate in community activism. These techniques include:-

- Behavioural Mapping
- Social networking/posters
- Many conversations in places of community activity – i.e. proximity work/"being there"
- Referrals from stakeholders

What actually happened

We successfully employed each of those techniques to build a Pod of 10 individuals, all resident to Littleham's estates.

Evaluation of aim to create a Pod of estate residents who would not normally participate

Member	Resident in local authority built housing	Member of other groups	Runs other groups
A	Y	Y	A is a part-time staff member at Space
D	Y	D is a Carer and uses Carers services	N
E	Y	E & M participate in ex-servicemen groups	N
J	Y	N	N
K	Y	Y	Founder of Daisy Chain, a local cancer support group
M	Y	Member of ex-servicemen groups and Men's Sheds	N

P	Y	P participates in a range of local social activity groups	N
S	Y	Currently studying with Open University	Previously involved in EDDC supported setting up Littleham Community Youth Club
St	Y	Previously a school governor	N
(J)	Y	(J) is not an active Pod member – as is a full-time Carer but has kindly contributed insight via daughter K	N

It's clear that we successfully built a Pod from estate residents, rather than from the more affluent parts of Littleham and the advantages of this in terms of the deep understanding of the important issues and their motivation to address them is clear.

Of the 10 original members, 8 stayed with the project until the *Our Youth* event in July 2024. Six now intend to carry on into the future and they have been joined by 2 new members.

A note on referring to the "Littleham Estate"



We learned that reference to "the estate" doesn't have real meaning for residents. Firstly, it's problematic because there are other pockets of local authority built housing in other parts of Littleham and at least one Pod member felt those should be included in the project. Another member felt that *"Being called the estate undermines the folks who live here. It sounds the village and estate are like them and us"*. It could be that there is some stigma attached to being from an estate and that was why we didn't get any hands up when we asked Men's Shed members if they were estate residents. We also encountered something like this on asking the question "are you from the estate?" during our Behavioural Mapping observations.

In an extremely positive move the Pod have changed the name of their group from "All About the Littleham Estate (AALE)" to "Littlehamsters" which they feel is more inclusive. This was the brainchild of one Pod member, J, and, after a little discussion and adjustment in the WhatsApp group, was warmly adopted by the rest. This has allowed them to find their own identity. J has even designed a clever and attractive logo and we'll be gladly adopting that in future Pod communications and have invested in yellow polo shirts for future Pod-led community work.

Behavioural Mapping

This is a technique borrowed from Placemaking and described in the Project for Public Spaces Placemaking Handbook 2018. It means spending time in open spaces making systematic record of the type of activity taking place there. Training and standardisation may be required if the quantitative data is to be rigorously analysed but, for this project, its main benefit was 'proximity'. Being in that place for extended periods of time, is an important part of QVM. The mapping activity provides data and a richer understanding of where people are gathering and how they are using their shared spaces but it also gives the observer a reason to be there and, crucially, invites residents into conversation. Ideally, they will approach the observer out of curiosity. Often though it's necessary to smile and start the conversation with a question. We were particularly impressed with how friendly and open the conversations were. It's certainly our experience that the people of Littleham are full of humour and warmth.

We conducted six Behavioural Mapping exercises between September and November 2023 on The Green, The Crescent and John Hudson Way. This allowed us to have many conversations with residents and those passing through, usually walking dogs.

What we learned while Behavioural Mapping

There are some benches that seem to be used and we have learned that these were facilitated by a residents-group brought together by the EDDC Community team. (We have since met with them). One Pod member has mentioned, as a carer for her husband, that more benches would be useful on their walks.

The Green, The Crescent and John Hudson Way don't seem to be used consistently for community gathering or exercise. They are passing-through places rather than a "third-place", i.e. a place where local people want to stop and gather. However, some residents did fondly recall a EDDC led community event on the Crescent and the orchard planting on John Hudson Way. There was a strong sense that more activity of this type would be welcome.

We successfully recruited K (and J) to the Pod during a Behavioural Mapping exercise on John Hudson Way.

Social networking/posters

We used a combination of facebook/Tiktok and Instagram to raise awareness of the activity and stimulate conversations.

We found Tiktok to be useful in that the videos have a wide and immediate reach, with a potentially younger demographic. It was successful in stimulating some discussion but we didn't recruit Pod members through Tiktok. One Pod member did note that seeing video proof that we had been active on the estate for some time did give reassurance that the project was rooted in their place and meant that my face was familiar when we met in person.

Facebook allowed us to have the widest range of conversations because it can be used to create a campaign of communications on different stimulating themes. For instance, we ran a Good Neighbour Awards campaign and were pleased to present two awards to local residents.

We also created a set of postcards based on Littleham scenes that we shared on facebook and had printed to include in goodie bags as a thank you for participating in the first Pod meeting. Four Pod members joined us because of these facebook campaigns.

We postered all around the estate and in local shops including the Tesco and Lidl's supermarkets on Salterton Road. No Pod member has mentioned that they've been influenced by the posters but it is possible that the posters have had a communications "layering up" effect.

Referrals from stakeholders/local activists

Two Pod members were gained through referrals from Space and two from local community activist Gill Gegg.

Conclusions and recommendations on Quiet Voice invitations

Behavioural Mapping, the facebook campaign and referrals were the most successful approaches although it was important in building a social-networking campaign to include evidence of continued proximity and to ensure that the communications are conversational, rather than just one-way project notices. So the Tiktok videos, the many conversations on, and images of, the estate plus the Good Neighbour campaigns were all very useful.

It is also incredibly important to allow the Pod to find their own identity in terms of the place and the Group name. Fortunately the Littlehamsters were swift to take up this challenge and all of the discussion around the name and the logo helped define their purpose and identity.

We're blessed to have A and S in the Pod. A is twenty year old and gives the Pod an important youth perspective. A was a referral from Space that we are grateful for.

Objective 3 – Pod formation

What we wanted to happen

We wanted to bring together a group of 8 to 10 individuals who would research, frame and present their experience in terms of the health and wellbeing of their community.

What actually happened

We successfully brought together a Pod of 10 individuals all keen to explore the health and wellbeing factors that impact life on the estate. Some are service-users but that is not the basis on which they've been invited into the Pod. We held the first full meeting (attended by 7 of them) on 2nd March 2024.



The Pod continue discussion, between meetings, in a dedicated WhatsApp group.

We presented the Assets and Challenges that we had gathered in conversation with residents and stakeholders (listed in previous Interim Reports) and based discussion around that. The Pod quickly and enthusiastically expanded and clarified the lists, adding more detail and updating information.

Assets

We reported that residents had spoken positively, in the Autumn, about the new play park. However, one Pod member explained that after an extremely wet Winter and Spring it is now almost unusable because of mud. This will be returned to below under Pod devised activity.

We also learned that the very popular Space youth provision was closed at the time of the meeting and was moving premises. There was a sense that there were fewer estate participants there now.

In discussion of the estate's green spaces it was noted that parking on the grass, particularly at The Green, is common. This is something that we had also observed during Behavioural Observation.

There was strong agreement that the people of Littleham estate are its greatest asset.

Challenges

From the beginning, the conversation was dynamic, positive and focused on potential solutions. We were actually incredibly impressed by how prepared the group was to dive into the issues that matter. In fact, it was clear that a strong motivating factor in participation was the chance to deal with the important issues. They were fearless and excited by the opportunity to make a difference. Several references were made to "care" and "love" for their community. Three strong themes emerged and have now become the focus of further Pod-devised activity:-

- 1) Anti-social behaviour/loss of youth provision/drug-dealing and associated anti-social behaviour.**
- 2) The Carer's experience and the potential community role in that.**
- 3) People don't seem to be using the green spaces for exercise or community activity – why not?**

Conclusions and recommendations

Being invited to make a difference, with the promise that the Pod will be heard by WEB Community Health and Wellbeing Board and its associated stakeholders, has been an important motivation to participate.

Objective 4 – Pod devised activity 1

What we wanted to happen

We envisaged that the Pod would present their view of their what life on the local authority built estate is like without further action.

What actually happened

Actually, Pod discussion went immediately to solution-finding around the three themes and instead of presenting a simple "Our Littleham" statement they moved straight to more fact-finding and planning around potential answers.

We had not originally envisaged that the Pod would participate in stakeholder meetings but they quickly identified the need to get better informed, particularly around the issue of anti-social behaviour and youth provision. In March 2024 P joined me in an informative meeting with the Rev Steve Jones about the current church youth group and J joined me in a fact-finding session with Ian Taylor at Exmouth Community College. J, A and S then joined me in an impromptu discussion with Kay Burnett of the Wave at the Littleham Community Café about the potential of developing more youth services from the Littleham Leisure Centre.

In April there was a youth sub-group meet up where they consolidated what had been learned so far.

Challenges identified and Pod devised activity

1) Anti-social behaviour/loss of youth provision/drug-dealing and associated anti-social behaviour.

This challenge promoted the greatest discussion and activity. The Littlehamsters were keen to be part of finding a solution to this. It soon became clear from subsequent WhatsApp discussion that there was a spate of car vandalism in the summer of 2024.

2) The Carer's experience and the potential community role in that.

This theme has prompted less activity so far but suggestions at the first Pod meet up included dropping information about Carer's services on postcards all over the estate (possibly on the existing postcards). There are Carer's in the Pod and even in that small group there seemed to be differing understandings of the services available.

There was also some discussion of holding a regular community-run Carer's drop-in space where residents can find a soft landing and informal support before referral to existing services and this will be returned to below.

1) People don't seem to be using the green spaces for exercise or community activity – why not?



P identified that the play park has become a quagmire and expressed frustration that investment had been made in the play park without forward planning for poor weather. This seems shortsighted in the context of the more extreme weather patterns that we have been experiencing.

In the context of health and wellbeing and the reasons that people aren't using the green spaces, it is particularly pertinent.

The Littlehamsters tried to take action and offered their volunteering efforts to EDDC to try and find a temporary solution to get families back into the play park.

Conclusions and recommendations

The offer of volunteer help was not welcomed by EDDC but the Littlehamsters were informed by Cllr Anne Hall on 29th October, that thanks to the Littlehamsters bringing this to Streetscene's attention, these works are now complete and they're hoping this will encourage families back into the play park throughout the winter, thereby inhibiting the anti-social behaviour witnessed there.



Photographed by J, of the Littlehamsters, on 22nd October 2024

Objective 5 – Pod devised activity 2 – The Easy Speak *Our Youth* event – 20th July 2024

What we wanted to happen

Again we expected that the Pod would take much longer in the discussion phase and would still be refining what they wanted to say about life on the estate/s.

What actually happened

The Littlehamsters moved much more quickly and decisively than that. They met in April and in May to discuss and decide a date for a soft consultation event with their neighbours where they could find out more about residents' experience of anti-social behaviour on and around the Littleham estate. They discussed the venue and timing and how to make the event attractive to local families. Settling on 20th July 2024 they determined that it would be important to provide games and activity for children so that the adults could talk freely and at length. They recognised the need to set the room attractively with bunting and balloons and to provide refreshments. They also undertook to make personal invitations to families they knew on the estate.

This planning proved to be incredibly important and the success of the event was fully reported shortly afterwards in "Littleham Community Coming Together - *Our Youth* Event 20th July 2024" Report and Data Analysis.

All of this allowed the Littlehamsters to make these recommendations:-

"Outreach

The Littlehamsters themselves and those interviewed all described an environment of periodic stress and fear that is restricting physical activity out of doors and negatively impacting mental health and wellbeing.

Usefully though, it appears that there are three particular manifestations of anti-social behaviour by young people on the Littleham estates that are creating this. That is the abuse at The Crescent Play Park, the spate of car vandalism and the apparent increase in County Lines drug dealing. So this gives us a very clear indication of where to start any outreach work. All of these things are visible on the street and these are the young people that we need to address.

Given that the Youth Worker for the church intends to conduct outreach in the first instance and that workers at Space have some recent experience of conducting outreach in town, and Cllr David Poor has expressed an interest in resurrecting youth provision on the Littleham estate, **it would seem very logical to arrange an inter-agency meeting to at least share insights and plans. The Littlehamsters would like to be a part of this."**

It became clear that these young people were known and identifiable and this proved to be crucial in effecting positive outreach and change in the next stage of this work.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Easy Speak, neighbour-to-neighbour, consultation event proved to be a very relaxed, comfortable but incredibly informative way of gathering lived-experience insight from estate residents and provided a significant springboard for positive action.

The presence of various stakeholders, including local and Devon Councillors, health and wellbeing professionals and church workers gave the Littlehamsters confidence that they were being heard and making a difference.



The fact that they designed what the event should look like themselves and that they hosted it together, sharing roles on the day (providing refreshments, setting up and taking down, providing games and activities, taking testimony from their neighbours and chatting with stakeholders) shows how resourceful and effective community action can be. The Littlehamsters have, in effect, designed a brand new “soft”, neighbour-to-neighbour, “Easy Speak” consultation technique, for gathering lived-experience data, that can be rolled about again and again. **This introduces a fascinating potential in the community health paradigm – that residents themselves are best placed to consult with their own neighbours. With just a little support in governance and data analysis they are more than capable of providing valuable insight into the health and wellbeing of their community.**

[Objective 6 – Pod devised activity 3 – Inter-agency “Youth” meetings](#)

What we wanted to happen

After the successful *Our Youth* event it became clear that the Littlehamsters were keen to continue be part of solution-finding around the anti-social behaviour problem. We hoped that they would continue to be active and to be part of the solution-finding.

What actually happened

In fact, they remained passionate about finding positive solutions that didn't victimise and alienate young people and were keen to liaise with youth provider experts to explore ways of reaching out and positively impacting young lives. This compassion, empathy and willingness to be part of the solution was a striking feature of their response that created an environment of positive discussion that was noted by stakeholders:-

"I wasn't sure what I was walking into but last week's meeting was very positive. It tends usually to be a bit more combative". "Fantastic to see so many residents come together in a positive way"

Matt Roberts, Anti-Social Behaviour & Community Safety Partnership Officer, EDDC

"You [JoJo Spinks} have enabled residents to feel listened to by the police, council and other authorities and this has given a reassurance to those who are struggling within the community. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the re-framing of the Littleham Crescent play park and look forward to setting up the Football4all once the funding has been secured. Together I feel that as a group we can achieve great things, with all the different skills and knowledge within our local community."

Nick White, Youth and family worker, Exmouth Coastal Churches

It was significant that the Neighbourhood Police officers attending, far from receiving criticism, received a round of applause as they left the meeting.

The Littlehamsters hosted two inter-agency meetings, one on 17th September 2024 (Appendix One) and one on 20th October 2024 (Appendix Two).

Between these two dates there was significant escalation of anti-social incidents. Whilst this was very unfortunate for the residents involved it did serve to highlight and validate the findings of the Easy Speak event in July. In October, the older group of young people, already identified by the Littlehamsters, stopped a bus and terrorised passengers and the driver. This was witnessed and filmed by residents including Tim Chappell of Open Door, Exmouth.

At this second meeting Matt Roberts, the Anti-Social Behaviour & Community Safety Partnership Officer for East Devon District Council, was able to gather direct information from residents about a specific address in Littleham. The observation of the Littlehamsters that the young people involved were known and could be sourced was acknowledged by all present and solutions discussed. These included joint action by the Police Neighbourhood Team and the Community Safety Partnership in the first instance.

At a subsequent informal Littlehamsters' meet up on 12th November, K was able to report that she had received an email, as one of the residents directly affected, from Matt Roberts, confirming that they had issued a Community Protection Warning under Section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to the identified address. The email provides assurances that they will continue to work with Devon & Cornwall Police to address issues of anti-social behaviour in the wider community.

K was able to say that, at that point (12th November 2024), anti-social activity appeared to be significantly calmed.

This means that the research that the Littlehamsters conducted with their neighbours and the meetings that they convened have positively impacted, directly and demonstrably, on the quality of life in Littleham. They are rightly proud of this impact and it has done a great deal to galvanise their desire to continue as a group.

More than this, there were other strands of work suggested (Appendix Two):-

- 1) "That we support the plans being prepared by Sam (Burnett), Nick (White) and Neil (Collins) to provide specific outreach to 8 of the individuals displaying the most extreme behaviours. This is going to require a funding application. **Sam, Nick and Neil are currently building a proposal.**
- 2) That we support Cllr Poor's plans to provide activity for the remainder of young people that might be considered to be on the periphery of this activity and are in danger of being drawn into more extreme behaviours, working in collaboration with Exmouth Camp. **Cllr Poor is currently negotiating the release of some funding for this.**
- 3) That we support Nick and Claire White's plans for a Football for All initiative to run on Monday evenings through the winter on the MUGA in the Crescent Play Park. This is in response to smaller scale anti-social behaviour there exhibited by a younger group. **Nick White** reported that EDDC had turned down a Community Initiative grant to provide equipment so this still needs £1000 support.
- 4) Members of the Littlehamsters Resident Group still feel that a longer term plan for ongoing Youth provision in the area is desirable. **KJ** mentioned a possible boxing club and they would like to keep this on the table."

The Littlehamsters report from the *Our Youth* event is informing these funding applications and individuals from the Pod have volunteered as marshals for the proposed Football for All initiative at the Crescent Play Park. Unfortunately, a funding application to East Devon District Council for equipment was turned down and there was some resistance to using the MUGA from Streetscene but planning for each of these initiatives is ongoing.

Conclusions and recommendations

All of this positive, targeted and impactful activity far exceeds expectation. We predicted that the project would galvanise a group of Littleham residents to make a clear lived-experience statement that other agencies could build on. They more than achieved this by designing a brand new, resident-led, consultation approach and gathering invaluable qualitative data that is now informing various funding applications.

More than this, their clear and directed focus on the issue of anti-social behaviour on the estate has meant that the police and local authorities have been able to take quick and effective action and there are other, longer-term, positive interventions planned.

Objective 7 – Littlehamster Reflections

What we wanted to happen

We wanted to make a record at the beginning of the project, from each Pod member, of the responses to a series of questions designed to assess their degree of animation. I.e. how active were they in their community. We also planned to bring them together at the end of the project to record their reflections. The “Animation evidence” questions were.

1. Are you currently training/learning new skills?
2. Do you share your skills and knowledge with others?
3. Do you critic your local services? Have you reported local problems?
4. Do you organise events/gatherings?
5. Do you volunteer/help neighbours?
6. Have you taken part in greening/making trails/refurbishing common spaces?
7. Would you know how to go about making a case for change with the powers that be?

What actually happened

It turned out to be very difficult to ask the Littlehamsters to give up precious time for these interviews. This was because asking for volunteered time is always an imposition on people’s lives and although they were keen to give time to making plans and discussing how to make a difference, these questions felt somewhat irrelevant and intrusive. However, we interviewed six out of the ten Littlehamsters.

Number of “yes” responses (out of 6) interviews:-

1. Are you currently training/learning new skills?
1/6
2. Do you share your skills and knowledge with others?
1/6
3. Do you critic your local services? Have you reported local problems?
2/6
4. Do you organise events/gatherings?
1/6
5. Do you volunteer/help neighbours?
1/6
6. Have you taken part in greening/making trails/refurbishing common spaces?
0/6
7. Would you know how to go about making a case for change with the powers that be?
1/6

When it came to recording their reflections in a group, again, some declined because they felt it wasn’t moving things forward. But five did contribute and they provided a recorded interview reflecting on the project.

The transcript of this interview is provided in Appendix Three. For some individuals in particular, these reflections, in comparison with their original interviews, mark a significant journey.

"the great thing about this group is that we feel that we've got some not just the connection to where we live, but that we can do something positive, you know, by getting the right people together and getting them talking, whereas if we hadn't helped to make that connection, maybe that wouldn't have happened."

". I think it's hard to, you know, the beginning, it's hard to kind of work out and get through to these people as an individual, you know, without being in the group, you're sort of powerless, really, because you don't know where to start and how to approach people, and even really the means of contact, you know, to get people to hear what you're saying to begin with. But once, once you found, we found a way to do that through JoJo and the group. And you know that we have, we created, or we found channels and routes to be able to communicate with people and let them know what's going on and make contact with them. And that's a massive thing, you know."

"I could see how it's always, you know, just gave me confidence to think, well, if I can get involved in this, maybe I'd get involved in other community things".

"truthfully, from my husband's and my perspective, we hadn't got a clue where to go for funding or anything. We're a bit more wiser today, but we're grateful that the funding was provided and we could do the families day that we did."

Moving forward

The Littlehamsters have been able to negotiate with Sam and Kay Burnett of The Wave to use the side Lounge at the Littleham Leisure Centre to meet on a Tuesday (at the same time as the Littleham Community Café). They will use this as their regular meet up but also to host an Easy Speak-type space for residents so that they can find a welcoming place to air concerns. The Littlehamsters will not be providing advice, just a listening friendly ear. With the permission of participants they will be able to make referrals and also to host guest experts, for instance on services for carers and using green spaces. In this way they'll be able to move forward on the other issues they identified at the beginning of the project but also to join up with the existing community energy at the Leisure Centre, providing a valuable service to their neighbours and a connection between residents and local providers.

They've signed an Interwoven Pod Licence meaning that they can continue to do this under the mentorship of JoJo Spinks and covered by Interwoven's governance.

Conclusion and recommendations

It's clear that there's a conflict between asking people to give up their time to come into discussion with you about taking positive action in their community and then trying to extract from that volunteered time in order to record data for evaluation.

Having said that, there's good evidence here that there was low community action at the outset that has significantly increased in the course of the project. Confidence and knowledge has been gained that has enabled them to feel heard and empowered.

The fact that they have negotiated a role for themselves within the existing community activities at the Littleham Leisure Centre is wonderful evidence of their intention to carry on. They also actively participate in the EDDC run "Littleham Together" meetings.

It is because of this successful animation that we see the demonstrable impact described above.

Objective 8 – Reward and Recognition

What we wanted to happen

We were keen to reinforce the positives in community action and the fact that their activities have been recognised and valued.

What actually happened

We provided a Pod Celebration Event at County Hall on 16th November 2024. This was in fact combined with presentations to seven other groups making a larger event, including 10 local authority councillors. We showcased the work of the Littlehamsters which provoked very positive response in the room and Cllr Nick Hookway made the presentation.



K, of the Littlehamsters, receiving an award from Cllr Nick Hookway

What worked well in the Project

It's clear that Quiet Voice Methodology and community animation in Littleham has been incredibly effective in identifying the most pressing issues, as perceived by residents, on and around the estate. Enabling and empowering residents to focus on those, on their own terms, has been incredibly motivating, meaning that positive impact has been witnessed within a very short time.

The fact is the Littlehamsters' proximity to the problems, and their own lived-experience, has provided a much deeper and richer understanding of the health and wellbeing priorities, and led to much swifter, targeted action, than could be possible via any other route.

The Easy Speak Event

One of the most extraordinary successes was their design of a new way to gather lived-experience data – the Easy Speak event. This has several advantages over the traditional, survey approach prepared and delivered by external providers:-

- 1) The Littlehamsters were able to target the invitation to those who shared the same environmental and socio-economic context. As we know, pockets of deprivation in Littleham exist cheek by jowl, in a geographic sense, with much more affluent households. We have also experienced that individuals in those affluent households are more likely to respond to surveys. So, this sensitive targeting, that can only be achieved by Quiet Voice individuals themselves, is essential in order to gain a true reading of the impacting factors in the areas most affected.
- 2) Encouraging the Littlehamsters to devise, plan and execute the data-gathering event was an essential part of building confidence and empowerment in the Pod. Inviting local stakeholders had the unpredicted affect of allowing them to feel heard and that their efforts were being valued and witnessed. The Littlehamsters needed little help in making the event happen, only a safety net of governance for their plans. All of the required skills were already in the Pod and together they hosted the event admirably.
- 3) The data they collected has already been used by others in funding applications to take action around the anti-social behaviour problems. In this instance Interwoven used the Constant Comparative Approach to analyse the interview data and prepared the report but there's no reason why these skills can't be transferred to individuals in the Pod for the future.
- 4) All of this means that the Littlehamsters have created a new form of "soft", neighbour to neighbour consultation, providing deep, targeted qualitative data. A technique that can be rolled out again and again. It has already provided the community connections and information necessary to make meaningful impact on the anti-social behaviour problem. It's potential in other areas of health and wellbeing is extraordinary.
- 5) For their part, the Littlehamsters have negotiated for themselves a smaller-scale version of this and intend to host a monthly, resident-led, Easy Speak, listening space at the Littleham Leisure Centre working in collaboration with Sam and Kay Burnett of The Wave and supported by the governance of an Interwoven Pod Licence.

The Littlehamsters, as individuals, also report the increased confidence and knowledge needed to continue taking action for the benefit of their neighbours. They've identified the means and mechanism to do this by developing their own relationship with other community activity, particularly with The Wave and the Youth Worker for Exmouth Coastal Churches.

The lessening of anti-social behaviour, in such a short span of time, is a massive achievement but their role in prompting deep, longer-term solutions that focus on empathy and care for young people is true testament to the efficacy of community animation and the community health paradigm.

[What didn't work in the Project and why](#)

We found it difficult, at nearly every turn, to work effectively alongside East Devon District Council. The responses from Streetscene regarding proposed volunteering at the Crescent Play Park and then later permission to use the MUGA felt drenched in red-tape and we, at Interwoven, had to work hard to ensure that the emerging Littlehamster group weren't discouraged.

The EDDC Community Team's decision to run a traditional, survey consultation at the same time as the Easy Speak event felt unnecessarily dismissive of the resident-led work already happening. Turning down the funding application for the Football for All equipment, again, seemed disconnected from the will of the residents and the energy forming around this and the other youth initiatives.

Having said that Interwoven acknowledges and values the relationships it has built with individuals within EDDC, particularly the positive community work of Deirdre Ryan and Jamie Clayden and is impressed with the swift action taken by Matt Roberts. We hope to continue to work on those positive connections into the future.

Conclusions and recommendations

Quiet Voice Methodology and its potential to create effective community animation has been thoroughly demonstrated and validated. It's been a pleasure to work with the Littlehamster group and to watch their personal and collective development. To have achieved impact on the remedial works at the Crescent Play Park and to have demonstrably reduced anti-social behaviour are extraordinary outcomes in such a short space of time. Their extended plans and the action they've been able to prompt in others, are true signs of deep, informed and connected community work.

There are things that will make this work easier in the future.

- 1) Consideration of the least intrusive and time-impacting way of collecting base-line evidence for animation at the beginning of a project. Volunteered time is precious and people need to know that their time is purposeful. Group recorded discussions rather than individual surveys make sense in this context.
- 2) They also need to know that they are being heard and that their efforts are effective, so good join-up with the local authority, and different departments in that authority, needs to be brokered at the outset.
- 3) Keeping things in a rigid timetable with a specific end date is not conducive to effective community animation. Community groups move at their own speed, dictated by available volunteering time. Individuals will be affected by the serious issues of life (one Littlehamster was widowed during the project). End of project dates have no meaning for them and therefore collecting feedback and reflection is potentially confusing as many felt they were only just starting.

Commissioners of QVM and other community animation projects might like to reconsider traditional approaches to timetabling, evaluation and inter-agency working to allow for more flexibility and cross-organisational working.