

# Communities Can...

A collaborative approach | 2021



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## ONE Colchester

The **ONE Colchester Partnership** takes a **System Leadership** approach bringing public and voluntary sectors together with key partners and citizens, to ensure a collaborative approach maximising opportunities for **Colchester**, with a focus on **Health & Wellbeing, Community Safety and an Inclusive Economy**.

### The development of our Approach

2020 was a challenging year, yet the response to the pandemic showed **the strength of our communities** and the effectiveness of the relationships built within the ONE Colchester Partnership.

The future holds challenge for all sectors and for a fairer more inclusive society. ONE Colchester partners recognise the need to listen, learn and collaborate.

Our aim is to develop an approach that puts improved health and wellbeing at its heart.

**Communities Can.** The response to the pandemic proved this with an approach that mobilised the strengths and assets that exist within our communities around a common goal and we aim to build on this approach for the future.

### Stages of development

Research and Insight, including:

- ▶ “Asset mapping” undertaken by Community 360
- ▶ In-depth research on community assets in our area led by Anglia Ruskin University
- ▶ The State of Life survey on the impact of the pandemic on our communities
- ▶ The latest data from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Public Health England and others

Engagement and collaboration between partners

Our Strategy for Connected Communities



## Introduction

**Strong and resilient communities are and always have been fundamental to the wellbeing and prosperity of our Borough.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and will continue to have a profound impact on our communities and the way in which we work together to serve them.

Just prior to the pandemic, the report **'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years on'** highlighted that across England, inequalities have continued to grow and blight communities such as ours.

This situation has been compounded by COVID-19: existing inequalities in Colchester are likely to be exacerbated. The pandemic has not affected all equally.

The way in which communities themselves and organisations that serve and represent our communities were able to come together, put boundaries aside and work to a common goal, provided clear evidence of the strength and effectiveness of this approach.

**This collaboration, in tandem with our focus on reducing inequalities, will allow us to, echoing the title of the December 2020 COVID-19 Marmot Review, to "build back fairer".**



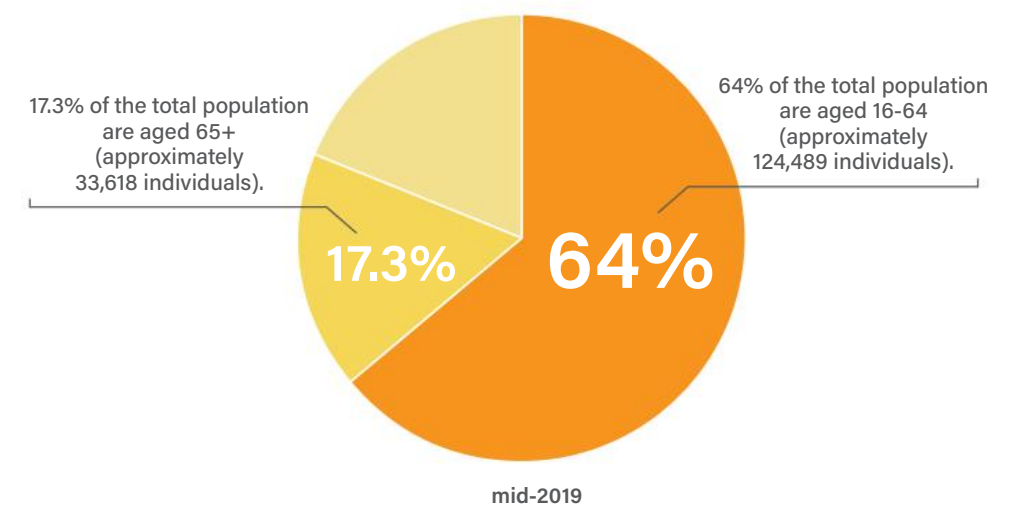
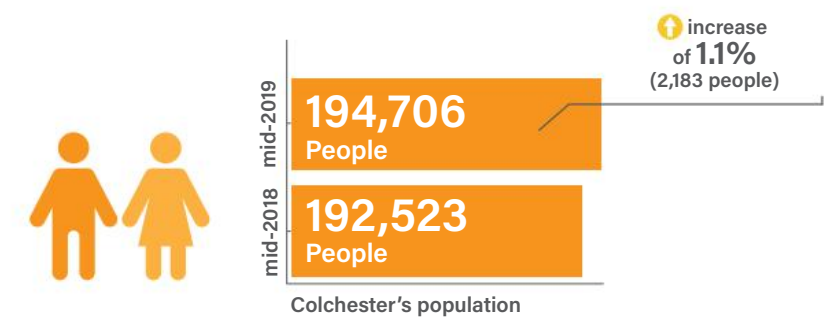
## Case for Change - Our Communities

Colchester's communities are multiple and overlapping. Communities may include small geographic neighbourhoods, allegiances based on shared characteristics or associations based on common interests.

Some communities are long-term, while others may rise in response to an issue or concern. Residents are likely to be members of many different communities with varying degrees of commitment and / or attachment.

Different communities face different challenges, challenges often multiplied by the pandemic which, for example, disproportionately affected our black and minority ethnic communities and those already impacted by inequalities.

Colchester remains one of the fastest growing boroughs in England, and, with that growth has come change in the demographic profile of the Borough, which is evolving into a less ethnically homogenous location.



Source: Office for National Statistics 2019 mid-year estimates



The Borough remains roughly in the middle, nationally, in terms of **deprivation**, but this overall average hides stark differences within Colchester, with the most and least deprived areas often bordering one another.

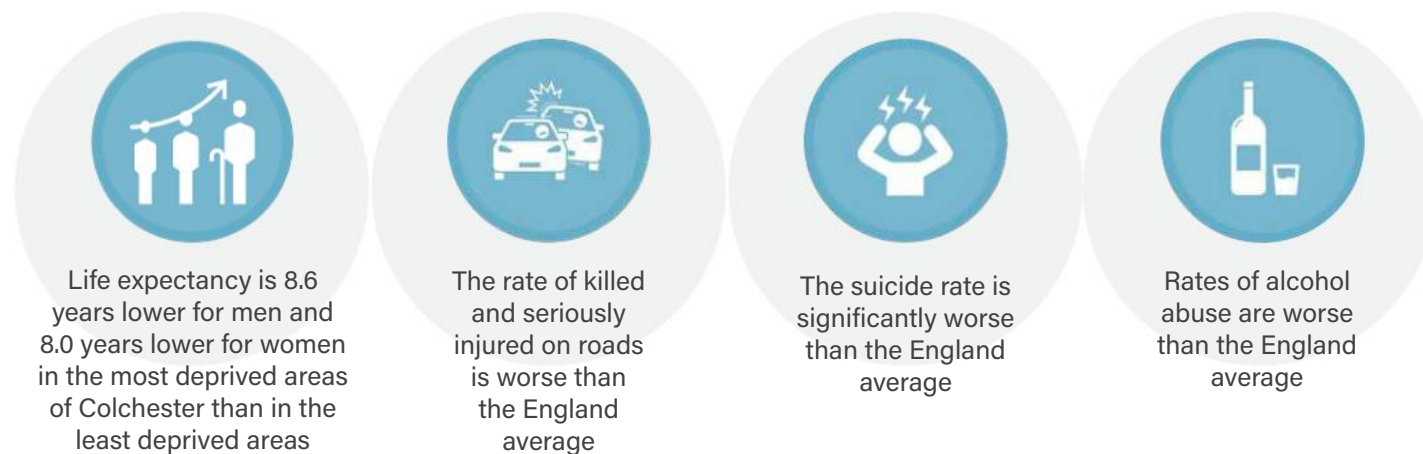
## English Indices of Deprivation 2019 COLCHESTER

Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



Source: MHCLG - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall picture of health and wellbeing across the Borough was mixed with specific concerns around mental wellbeing, as well as inequalities in health outcomes for different localities and communities.



Source: Public Health England, 2020]

## Case for Change - Our finances and Service Demands

The effects of the pandemic are likely to hit the finances of One Colchester Partners hard, at the same time as our services are going to face increased demand.

Likewise, the resource challenges facing our **health and social care services**, other **statutory bodies** and our **local voluntary community services** is significant.

A worsening of the financial and wider resource situation, in combination with a likely increase in demand, means we have no choice but to **do more with less**, to **work smarter**, and to **work together**. The pooling of our resources, where ever possible, will provide maximum impact.

Furthermore, while the pandemic has created challenges for the future that are still not fully known, it has also brought communities together, increased volunteering, and has transformed the way services are delivered. We can learn from this and ensure this cohesion helps our most vulnerable communities to further develop resilience during the challenges ahead.





POPULATION GROWTH OVER THE LAST DECADE

21,606 **11%**



**COLCHESTER HISTORY**  
BRITAIN'S FIRST CITY WITH A HISTORY DATING BACK OVER **2000 YEARS**

**COUNTRY PARK SPACE**  
**1,051**  
ACRES ACROSS THE BOROUGH



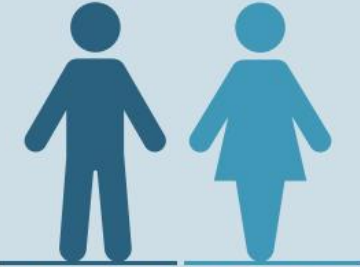
**£18M FOR TOWN BID**

FOR TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS, FACILITIES FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE, IMPROVED DIGITAL PROVISION INCLUDING 5G AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WALKING AND CYCLING



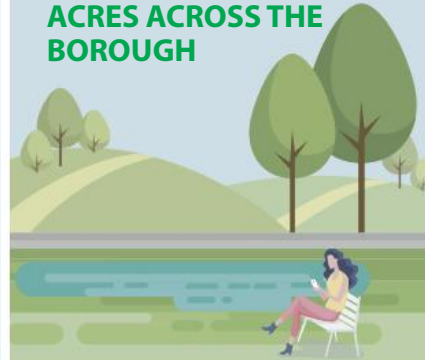
**POPULATION GENDER SPLIT**

Male 97,008 Female 97,687



49.8% 50.2%

**PARKS AND GREEN SPACES**  
**372.69**  
ACRES ACROSS THE BOROUGH

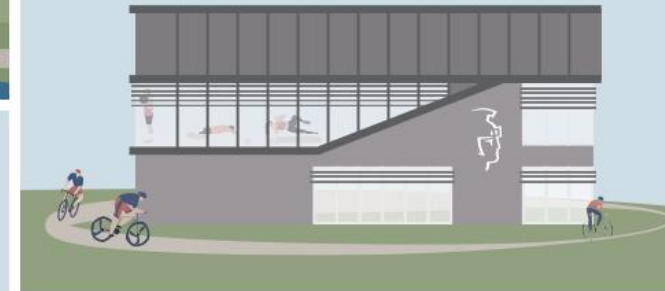


**HOME TO ESSEX UNIVERSITY**

**15,000** STUDENTS FROM MORE THAN 130 COUNTRIES



**HOME TO THE NEW NORTHERN GATEWAY SPORTS PARK WITH A 1-MILE FLOODLIT CYCLING TRACK**



**COLCHESTER POPULATION**  
**194,706**



NUMBER OF MUSEUMS/HISTORIC SITES

**20** ACROSS THE BOROUGH



PERCENTAGE OF SOCIAL RENTED PROPERTIES IN COLCHESTER

**14%**



**65** HALLS, COMMUNITY CENTRES AND FAITH CENTRES SERVING AS WIDER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

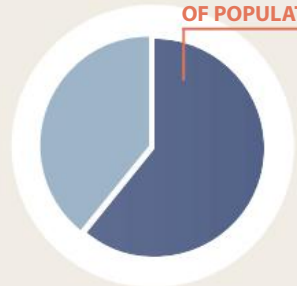


**42 MILES OF RIVER / COAST**



**124,489** WORKING AGE POPULATION (16-64)

**64%** OF POPULATION



**24** ALLOTMENT SITES ACROSS THE BOROUGH



**14** SPORTS AND PLAYING FIELDS ACROSS THE BOROUGH



**35,000** ADULTS VOLUNTEER AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH



**COLCHESTER ORBITAL**  
**14-15 MILE** CIRCULAR WALK AROUND COLCHESTER



**NATURE RESERVES**  
**396.79** ACRES ACROSS THE BOROUGH





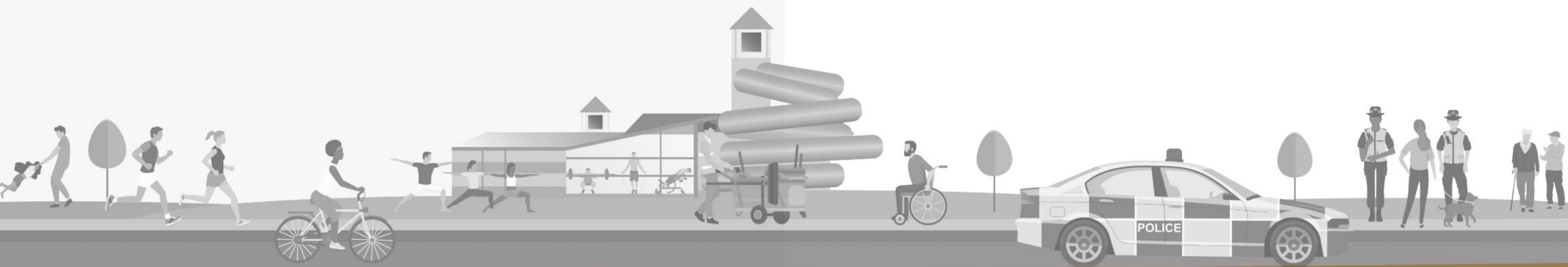
# Our Aim

Our aim is to support the growth of inclusive, bottom-up, community-driven and citizen-led change that lessens the impacts of pre-existing inequalities.



We recognise the power that already exists within our **communities**. We want to facilitate our communities to reach their **full potential**, create and lead change for themselves, be **more resilient** and make greater use of the **assets and strengths** that exist within. The potential for asset-based approaches to help build connected and resilient communities has been underscored by the system-wide pandemic response.

**The purpose of this document** and approach is also to define agreed principles that inform how we aim to work together and alongside communities in the future. A **coordinated** and **consistent** approach, making full use of all the resources available across partnerships, reducing duplication and co-producing so communities they feel **connected** and **empowered**.



## Our Approach:

# Together we Can

Working together, as **ONE Colchester**, is a strength. Organisations and agencies in Colchester are working together with a much greater focus on problem prevention and reducing inequities - the unjust and often avoidable differences affecting peoples' wellbeing based on personal circumstances and where they live.

Systems thinking in our place, now more than ever, recognises the need to shift from a **'deficit' to a 'strengths' based approach**. It is no exaggeration to recognise this as a paradigm shift in the way local government and its partners operate. To make this work this we need

to broaden the conversations and relationships beyond the usual institutions such as local authorities and health services and work with individuals and community groups on their terms, and in their places, actively seeking to nurture and grow what is strong in everyone.

This approach - an **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)** approach - focuses on creating positive social change by identifying and building assets within a community. **'Assets' include community associations, local services, informal groups and networks, and local businesses as well as the skills, knowledge and commitment of residents.**

**ABCD** places emphasis on strengthening relationships within communities and on community-initiated activities, as communities themselves are regarded as the primary building blocks for change.

The more familiar 'deficit' approach focuses on problems, needs and deficiencies in a community. It tends to lead to the design of services or interventions led by organisations and institutions that fill the gaps and attempt to fix the problems. Evidence suggests this approach can draw people into statutory services at the expense of helping them build independence and resilience.

Research commissioned by the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance in 2020 showed **the strength of community assets** in our Borough and the crucial role they play in helping build resilience among our communities.

We believe that a key role of the public and voluntary sector is to **support citizens and communities** to discover, connect and mobilise the assets that exist, and to encourage the development of new assets where there are gaps.

The health of our physical environment is essential to the health and wellbeing of our communities too, and our approach is one that seeks not only to protect our environment, but to encourage active involvement of our communities in **protecting and using our natural assets**.





## LEVEL 0 - fragmented

LEVEL  
0

Deficit model, focused on what's wrong.

'Demand' rather than 'needs' led services

Leadership is centralised; power and accountability with professionals and institutions

Money/funding seen as the key resource

Success is service outcomes, measured mostly by institutional stakeholders

## LEVEL 1 - focussed

LEVEL  
1

Identification and enhanced understanding of primary community assets (local and within community control)

Discover existing community connectors

Inclusive learning conversations and listening campaigns

Pilot participatory budgeting

'Step down' the servicing of unnecessary demand and false supply

## ROADMAP | SERVICE DRIVEN APPROACH THROUGH TO ABCD

LEVEL  
2

## LEVEL 2 - enhanced

Primary assets made visible and supported to mobilise and connect with each other

Leadership is local with a widening circle of volunteer citizens accountable to the community

Widespread participatory budgeting

Services considered secondary to community based solutions and 'needs' led

## LEVEL 3 - transformed

LEVEL  
3

Empower and enable communities to use internal assets, resources and skills to find solutions and build self-reliance

Strength based and citizen led model, where services are

minimised or co-produced

Community fosters a sense of independence, pride and possibilities, commanding or generating its own income





## Our Core Principles

Our approach has **four Core Principles** which act like a compass and guides our work with Communities :

### Relationships build a Community

Connect, build and link to multiply the capabilities of individuals.

### Asset-based approach

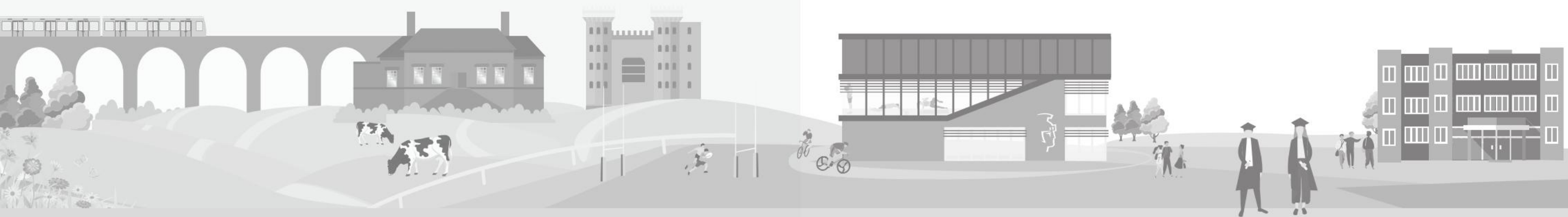
Focus on what is 'strong not wrong' so start with strengths and examples of what works, this helps to inspire and motivate people.

### Citizen-led approach

Focus on what people can do for themselves and what help they need, this involves identifying community builders, organisers and connectors.

### Inclusive approach

Everyone has a voice and opportunities to create space for those who are most marginalised.



## Our Partnership in Action

Along with all the incredible effort and activities throughout the pandemic we have a **strong foundation** on which to build our approach. There are some existing programmes and partnerships that are aligned and will play an important part of our approach going forward, these include:

- ▶ **The North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance** which, brings together authorities, commissioners and providers of health and wellbeing services. Working together to tackle the causes of ill health, focus on prevention and looking to adopt a Neighbourhood approach to improved health and wellbeing. This **'Live Well'** approach also places ABCD at its heart.



- ▶ **The Essex Local Delivery Pilot (LDP)** is a new and exciting initiative, led by Active Essex, to build healthier, more active communities in three Essex districts, including Colchester. An active lifestyle creates huge benefits for the **health and wellbeing** of individuals and families, as well as making local communities more vibrant, connected, and resilient.
- ▶ Work that has been undertaken to **Map the Assets** that exist within **Communities** so we understand what we have and where it is. It is also includes qualitative research into the importance of those Assets to the people who use them.
- ▶ **Digital Transformation** that is shifting how customers can access services across the Council and Health providing wider accessibility and access to information and advice.
- ▶ **Climate Emergency Declaration** by the Council driving a new approach to environmental sustainability which includes community led initiatives and behaviour change.
- ▶ **Build Back Fairer** philosophy being included in the Economic Strategy with emphasis on **jobs, housing and opportunities for all**.
- ▶ Co-produced, community led activities with key **Cultural Sector partners**.



## Looking to the future:

### Next steps

We will spend time and resource ensuring that our people are trained and aware of what ABCD is and how to help support our ambitions.

We will consider our approaches and policies and how much they reflect this citizen-led approach and where they don't we will work to change them.



We will focus funding opportunities to activities and initiatives that support this approach.

We will look to co-produce what we do with communities and local leaders and work collaboratively with each other.

We will look at more pooling of assets across Colchester, be they people, funds or buildings.

We will continue to engage with our most vulnerable and marginalised communities, working to reduce the inequalities that exist among and between them.

Ultimately, we will work towards, in Marmot's words, a "fair distribution of health and wellbeing" for our communities.



1

## ABCD spreading the knowledge....

The LDP comprehensive 2021 training programme in Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is well under way. The training is provided by our LDP partner Nurture Development. The first Essex-wide course made up of 8 live learning modules finished at the end of March,

and the second course started this week. Each course trains 20 organisations, and by the end of 2021 over 100 organisations will be trained in how to apply ABCD methods to enable local communities to use their own energy and passion to become more active.

2

## Working together for cleaner air

The main source of Colchester's pollution is exhaust fumes which impact on the health of local people and have been linked to 1 in 20 deaths in the borough.



The Council, together with Clean Air Colchester, a local voluntary group have brought together passionate people to build Clean Air Colchester's network of volunteers and develop resources to support their work going forward.

A community led initiative including work to understand and listen to what people know and feel about air quality in Colchester and the impact it has on health. In total over 3,000 people shared their views and helped shape how to move forward.

An local Group, determined to make a difference has formed to bring together Clean Air Colchester, local residents and representatives from businesses and community groups, including Our Colchester, EnForm and the Mosque.

They have been key in developing the look, feel and direction of a borough wide engine switch off campaign - CAREless Pollution and are supported by a network of

52 stakeholders who are helping to spread the word. A team of local volunteers have received training on delivering engine switch off activity to enable them to confidently carry out their own activities.

As part of the CAREless Pollution campaign community resources such as posters, car stickers, a school's toolkit and a short film have been developed. Training workshops and mentoring sessions are being planned to provide practical support and advice to local groups on delivering clear air communications and organising activities.

These efforts are harnessing local passion into a collective voice and the development of training and resources will enable communities to act now and in the future.

What is exciting is this is just the beginning, a first step in working towards cleaner air for everyone! To find out more about the project and what's happening next visit [colchester.gov.uk/cleanair](http://colchester.gov.uk/cleanair).



### 3 Reducing isolation and exclusion through digital access

The Digital Access Support Team based at Colchester Borough Council provide a front facing service within the community, where individuals have a person to go to in order to gain assistance with using smart technology and online services. Here, CW tells of her experience.

“I am very lucky the Digital Support Group help me to understand they are patient, kind, don't tell me off, teach me however many times I ask... I used to sit at home and wait for the phone to ring... Now I do not stay at home on my own, I am not lonely at home all the time, now I talk to people, visit people and laugh with people, life is good and all due to the digital groups help.

I am more confident, I have lots more confidence, before I wouldn't do anything, wouldn't touch anything, in case I break it

now I can have fun with it, I have lots of confidence and will try it and I know if I break it, they will help me fix it and teach me so I can do it for myself next time.

But the most important learning for me has been on the mobile phone and being able to talk to my brother who is in Malaysia, I have not seen him since 2012 but now I talk to him all the time, especially video chatting, so I get to see him as well.

I didn't even have a mobile phone before, now I don't know what I would do without it.”



### 4 Community 360: Providing essential support through the pandemic

Community 360, the umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sector in Colchester rose to the challenge of helping support the borough's most isolated during lockdown.



“JB lives with her daughter who has cerebral palsy and her son who has mild cystic fibrosis. JB has several chronic health conditions herself including severe arthritis, diabetes and IBS. Together they manage, but when the lockdown hit, they were worried about how they would get shopping and pick up prescriptions.

JB is one of many helped through the pandemic by Community 360.

Regular prescription pick-ups were organised straight away which was a huge relief.

However, accessing food then became an issue. JB received 9 food parcels, she has become one of our regulars and always like a good chat when completing her food order. She particularly liked the Easter Eggs at Easter. From time to time JB has been a bit strained financially so it was agreed that payments would be delayed to accommodate, with all shops paid for at set later dates.

During this period JB also took up the offer of welfare calls and

has received 9. She is always jolly when she is called her even though she was finding staying indoors tough. She is a real character and in particular loves to go to the Clacton Theatre and is an avid pen pal writer!

By June it was agreed that JB no longer needed the calls as the 'new normal' was emerging and she was feeling less isolated. Put in touch with a gardener and cleaner. Has said that she can now actually see out of her windows now without the weeds getting in the way. She was starting to feel worried because her neighbours had started to complain and she didn't know what she was going to do. She said her new gardener was tip top and she wouldn't hesitate to recommend him.

JB is very grateful for the support received her during the pandemic [or the pandemonium as JB calls it!] and will continue to use the welfare pack and prescription pick-ups until she feels more confident about going out in her wheelchair again.”



## 5 Giving back to the community: Project Nova

Project Nova supports Colchester's military veteran community. In this 'I-Poem', created from interviews with one Project Nova client by researchers at Anglia Ruskin University we hear about SM's story and how we has journeyed from being helped to helping others in his community.

“I felt like a human being, support from everybody else in the group was incredible  
I'm struggling with a lot of it I was doing gardening and landscaping  
I've done lots of projects and designs - I felt so chuffed  
I volunteered to do the reading and the gardening because that's something I can do  
I've got the social taking me for everything I've got because I'm 'fit to work'  
I might not be alive in 13 months' time I can't do too much, working in the shop is allowed because it's counted as therapy.  
I'm lucky if I can get into town and back without getting out of breath and in pain.  
I would have committed suicide I'd have checked out long ago.  
I've been stopped 5 times  
I fight to stop committing suicide every day  
I have fucking killed people  
I've been in positions where I've had a gun at someone head  
I shoved a gun in somebody else mouth

I've been lucky that I got picked up by Nova  
I fight to stop committing suicide every day  
I've got to justify why I want to be alive  
I have to keep telling me every day I normally prefer flight - if I do fight I know what's going to happen  
I was diagnosed in 2013 with kidney, liver failure and COPD  
I'm living on borrowed time; they say 'you've got 3 years left'  
I've been dry and haven't smoked for six and a half years  
I got past that time  
I'm a stubborn bugger  
I was determined to prove them wrong  
I like being alive  
I've got a lot to look forward to I'm very lucky in a lot of ways  
I try to help other veterans where I can  
I recently got an award for helping people who are suicidal or depressed.”

## 6 Giving residents the power to decide on funding decisions: The Colchester Borough Homes Community Fund

“The Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) Community Fund makes grants and awards to local charities and community groups throughout the Borough. All monies awarded are considered by our Resident Panel to select the projects they feel would be most beneficial to their local community. Throughout each calendar year, the Community Fund helps distribute £40,000 of funding to local projects and organisations. All applicants need to ensure CBH tenants and leaseholders can access the project the applicant aims to provide. CBH can help applicants connect with tenants and leaseholders, should they require it.

This year we introduced the “Support in the Community” page to the CBH website. All recipients of the Community Fund share various details including what their service provides and how local people can access it.

This new approach offers reassurance that CBH Customers can access projects, makes available this information to the CBH Customer and informs all internal and external partners the impact of CBH activity in the local community.”





**Together We Can**