

## **The Balsam Centre – Allocation of Healthy Living Centre Funding for 2016/17 (Executive Decision)**

*Assistant Director:* Helen Rutter, Communities  
*Service Manager:* Tim Cook, Area Development Lead (East)  
*Lead Officer:* Tim Cook, Area Development Lead (East)  
Sue Place, The Balsam Centre Project Manager  
*Contact Details:* tim.cook@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01963) 435023

### **Purpose of the Report**

To update members on the position at the Balsam Centre and to consider the allocation of funding ring-fenced for Healthy Living Centres.

### **Public Interest**

Supporting and helping the Balsam Centre to improve the work of voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across Area East

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that members:

- 1) Note the report
- 2) Award the £10,000 ring fenced for Healthy Living Centres to the Balsam Centre for the delivery of the work programme.

### **Background**

The Balsam Centre was established in 1998, with the purchase of the former memorial hospital in the centre of Wincanton. The project was established to specifically meet the needs of Wincanton and the surrounding area (this includes some 40 settlements with a population of 30,000) due to an identified gap in services in the area, particularly in mental health services. Extensive refurbishment of the building and the setting up of services was enabled through a Lottery grant and support from a range of funders, including SSDC.

The Balsam Centre delivers a range of integrated health and wellbeing projects and initiatives, most of which directly link with physical activity, healthy eating and mental health support alongside participation in community based activities, supported social engagement and learning.

The Centre is still referred to as a Children's Centre but since the contract with Somerset County Council to deliver child and family health and social services has ended, activity is very limited.

SSDC has supported the Balsam Centre through both core funding and project grants, since it began. In the past, core funding has been allocated through the Healthy Living Pooled Fund; a budget set up jointly by SSDC, NHS Somerset and SCC, and reported annually to the South Somerset Health and Wellbeing Partnership (SSH&WP).

Members will recall that this budget was originally established to support Healthy Living Centres across the whole of the District but as the only eligible organisation is based in Area East, the budget was transferred and subject to local monitoring by AEC.

Members approved the allocation of funding for 2015/16 at the January meeting.

### **The Balsam Centre – Hub for Service Delivery**

The Balsam Centre's strong partnership approach has been built up over many years with Health & Social Care, Schools, Children Centre's and local charities, local authorities, housing associations as well as their own projects such as the Growing Space (on site social and therapeutic horticulture) and the 'Men's Shed' initiative.

The presence of other key services helps to provide integrated, seamless services that make people using the Centre feel safe, welcome and supported. The C.A.B runs a twice weekly outreach session on a drop in basis to offer help with a range of issues including welfare benefits and debt management advice. The Centre has exceptionally strong links with the local health visitors' team and works closely with Children's Social Care, local schools, pre-schools, and other partners supporting families. The centre is also the operational base for South Somerset Community Accessible Transport which helps to ensure that transport solutions are built in to all service delivery.

The Balsam Centre continues to focus on reducing health and social inequalities, in particular working with individuals and families who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and have little other support. The project is particularly successful at working closely with people to improve their own, and their families' life chances.

The role of the centre as a community hub has been strengthened by work being done as part of the Symphony Pilot which is working with partners to improve health & wellbeing in the town. The partners have a vital role in making referrals to the 'Like Minds' programme, underpinning and endorsing its role

This work has been particularly effective in developing a strong relationship between the new Health Coaches, based at Wincanton Health Centre and staff at the Balsam Centre.

There has always been a strong focus on mental health and this has been reinforced through securing the 'Like Minds' project, a successful Big Lottery application (Reaching Communities).

### **Like Minds**

The Like Minds project started on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015. Like Minds works with people experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions, whether diagnosed or not. To date the project has worked with around 200 people.

The project provides one to one counselling as well as facilitated and peer support groups. It is available to anyone living within the area of benefit, for whom there is currently limited, or no other support. Within this broad spectrum of potential beneficiaries there are two target groups: young people, especially those who are self-harming and older people who are isolated or lonely.

To date 2165 contact sessions have been provided, of these around 690 have been one to one counselling.

A second counsellor, (one counsellor already being in place from the previous Wellbeing programme), was appointed in November 2015 on a two day a week contract. A mindfulness therapist was appointed to work with groups but did not continue due to her personal circumstances. Two project workers were subsequently recruited, one working with young people and one with older people.

The current situation is that both counsellors have full take up and between them are providing around 40 counselling sessions a week. The project workers are running six groups between them, including a Youth Drop-In and a Dementia support group.

The project has continued to develop relevant partnerships, with Yarlinton committing 25% of the required match funding for Year 2. There are improved relationships with the secondary schools, the NHS locally, including the Health Centre and Health Coaches, Verrington Hospital and the Alzheimer's Society.

Apart from the hiatus caused by the therapist who left, numbers of people being seen have been lower than predicted due to the overwhelming need for therapeutic support in this area attracting people in need of help, but with more severe and enduring support needs than the project was expected to cater for. Work with this group takes considerable time and client 'turnover' is therefore reduced.

The Balsam Centre's 'Like Minds' project is carefully monitored, using a range of performance monitoring indicators and measures against their identified project outcomes.

<b>Outcome 1</b>	People of all ages will have improved access to mental health support and recover or manage their conditions better
<b>Outcome 2</b>	People who are lonely or isolated will have increased opportunities to socialise in their own communities.
<b>Outcome 3</b>	Young people will have greater confidence and self-worth and improved school, family and work relationships.
<b>Outcome 4</b>	People of all ages will be able to enter or return to employment, training or learning.

### **Like Minds Case Study**

A man in his forties, a teacher with a wife and teenage child, experiencing a complete breakdown as his work life and relationship with his wife ended simultaneously, he lost his home. He came in at a very low ebb, completely defeated. Although he was someone who was naturally very creative he was unable to find any pleasure or therapeutic value in the social and creative activities of the Centre. His need was for sustained one to one support over a longer period of time. As he slowly started to regain his mental health he was encouraged to find part time work, then, as his confidence grew he was able to return to full time employment. He is now in a new relationship and feels life is good.

### **The Balsam Centre – Community Building**

The Centre continues to generate income from use of the building and marketing the building is an ongoing priority. The weekly 'Loose Ends' café continues to make a big difference and has increased footfall and increases local understanding of the centre and the services available. Total weekly 'uses' of the centre exceed 1000 with a range of community groups meeting and running classes/activities which include Painting and Drawing, Health Walks, Pilates, Textiles, Job Club, Beginners' IT and Patchwork and Quilting. There is a strong Volunteering project with around 60 active volunteers.

The full range of projects run at the centre is presented in appendix A.

### **Financial Implications**

There is £10,000 transferred to Area East from the Healthy Living Pooled fund for allocation in 16/17. If members agree the above recommendation, this will all be allocated for this year.

### **Council Plan Implications**

Focus Four: Health & Communities: encouraging communities to be healthy, self-reliant and with individuals who are willing to help each other.

### **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

None as a direct result of the report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The loss of services designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in target communities is likely to have a significant effect over time.

### **Background Papers**

N/a

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