

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 19 January 2022

**Report Title**

Findings from Spotlight Review on Rotherham Community Hub

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**

Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor  
katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

Findings from the Health Select Commission spotlight review held on 13 September 2021 on the befriending service and support for loneliness and isolation provided by the Rotherham Community Hub during the pandemic

**Recommendations**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and response:-
  - a) That the excellent work of Rotherham Community Hub be commended, especially in respect of the befriending service which helped relieve loneliness and isolation throughout the pandemic.
  - b) That Members be encouraged to add the Community Hub to their ward priorities and e-bulletins to better support vulnerable residents and families.
  - c) Whereas the current Community Hub model is due to end in March 2022, should there be a further evolution of the Community Hub model, that an update be brought in 12 months' time.

**Appendices**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**  
Health Select Commission – 25 November 2021

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Findings from Spotlight Review on Rotherham Community Hub

### 1. Background

- 1.1 To fulfil a statutory requirement, the Community Hub was rapidly mobilised during March 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 Crisis, which left many vulnerable people without a way to get food, medicine, or emotional support during isolation. Coinciding with the launch of the Food Bank, the new Community Hub offered a simple route to request support or to volunteer. From the outset, Hub staff identified a trend of isolation and loneliness among people who were shielding or isolating during COVID-19. The Community Hub coordinated the joint response of Council services and the voluntary and community organisations sector (VCS).
- 1.2 Hub continues to provide support, and as of September 2021, 522 people had received loneliness and wellbeing support through the Hub. Many more people had received assistance in other ways, such as financial hardship support, business support grants, emergency food parcels, and emergency accommodation to prevent homelessness and PPE distribution. A total of 6, 679 requests for help had been received and 1, 286 offers to volunteer.

### 2. Key Issues

- 2.2 The Hub has transitioned since March 2020 from the purely COVID-focussed service into a broader model that has led to strong, efficient partner working. This asset-based, collaborative approach means residents with complex needs can get the right support even pertaining to multiple areas of their lives. The Hub brings a variety of resources within reach, which can help Members in their ward work as well. When Members encounter constituents with complex needs, the Hub can be an efficient pathway to help. Members are invited to include the Hub in their ward priorities and in e-bulletins, which directs targeted activities to those wards.
- 2.3 Financial sustainability is a significant challenge moving forward from the pandemic because the Hub is currently funded from time-limited grants. The main grants that support the hub are the Practical Support Grant and the Contain Outbreak Management Funds, both of which are due to end soon. The Community Hub model will therefore continue to evolve as the pandemic enters recovery phase. This will require political direction, and an evidence base is being amassed in order to support next steps.
- 2.4 The Hub work has also emphasised what we can all do to be a good neighbour and make an impact to reduce isolation and loneliness in the lives of people around us. Much of the most compelling evidence of the success of the Community Hub is rooted in soft intelligence, the qualitative feedback received from service users, but the effectiveness of this work has been measured also by required Public Health assessments designed to measure their journey at the beginning and end of each intervention. Reviews have also taken place in November 2020 and June 2021.

The partnership takes referrals from anywhere in the Borough, as currently

2.5 funding allows for face-to-face intensive loneliness support to help people who have been isolated transition back into social activity.

2.6 Potential volunteers are welcome and can be directed to sign up with Rotherfed or Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR). Volunteer numbers have dipped slightly, as some opportunities have closed; however, numbers are beginning to climb again.

#### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 Members will have regard to consultations with their constituents in their formulation of scrutiny priorities and lines of inquiry. Recommendations from scrutiny are produced as outcomes of consultation with Members in their roles as elected representatives.

#### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 The timetable for implementing recommendations is a matter reserved to the directorate responsible.

#### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

6.1 There are no financial or procurement implications from the report.

#### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

7.1 There are not legal implications arising from this report.

#### **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

#### **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 The implications for vulnerable adults, children and young people are set out in the body of the report.

#### **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 There are no equalities or human rights implications directly arising from this report.

#### **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

There are no direct implications for emissions or climate change arising from this report.

#### **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 The implications for partners are set out in the body of the report.

### **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 There are no risks of mitigations arising from this report.

#### **Accountable Officer(s)**

Emma Hill, Acting Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*Report Author: Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor  
katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk*

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