

Empowering You in Swale 2024-27

The Empowering You in Swale Strategy aims to contribute towards Swale's Corporate Plan by bringing together a partnership response through community development projects, ensuring the needs of our communities are weaved into all that we do across the council.

In partnership with the Voluntary, Community and Enterprise Sector along with other key agencies it is intended to focus on bringing about social change and long-term sustainability for our communities.

We know what the statistical data and evidence tells us about our communities, however it is important for us to capture feedback from across a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the strategy reflects a true picture and allows opportunity to promote innovative solutions.

What do we mean by Community Development?

Community development enables people to work collectively to bring about positive social change. It is our aim to work collectively to promote positive social change within the borough, connecting with communities and our partners to understand what the key issues that are being faced and how we can come together to improve lives.

What are our priorities?

We want to make sure that we have identified the correct priorities within the strategy that will deliver for our communities and for the council over the next 3 years.

Through an initial consultation with our members, partner agencies, and looking at what the data tells us, we have developed the following four priorities:

Priority 1: Creating skilled, educated and working communities

Supporting improved access to education and training through continued development of engagement pathways that encourage increased confidence and promotion of activities through a partnership approach.

Suggested key areas of work:

- *Supporting the development of good skills, training and apprenticeships in the borough*
- *Improved access to education and training, including transport*
- *Post pandemic school attendance and related issues*
- *Supporting young people Not in Education, Employment or Training 'NEET'*

Priority 2: Growing healthy communities

Working collectively to reduce health inequalities in the borough by supporting place based solutions that fit outside of the statutory health profession and making the most of our voluntary, community and enterprise sector to deliver localised projects.

Suggested key areas of work:

- *Working collaboratively to reduce health inequalities in the borough and reduce loneliness*
- *Improved access to health care, including transport to appointments*
- *Promoting access to leisure facilities, as well as parks and open spaces within the borough*
- *Promoting better living conditions in the borough with an aim of reducing damp and mould in people's homes*

Priority 3: Empowering stronger, more sustainable communities

We will continue to develop innovative solutions to the difficulties faced by our communities, including the aftereffects of the COVID 19 pandemic, Cost of Living and Fuel Crisis' and day to day hardship. We will continue to work with the voluntary, community and enterprise sector to improve resilience and enable organisations to grow and thrive in the borough.

Suggested key areas of work:

- *Delivering a collective response to Cost of Living, fuel and other crisis'*
- *Data led targeted interventions such as benefit uptake campaigns and direct mailings to promote opportunities*
- *Improved awareness and information sharing of available services*
- *Development of a more resilient and sustainable voluntary, community and enterprise sector in Swale*

Priority 4: Developing strong partnerships that deliver for our communities

Strong relationships, not only with our communities but with our partners, are powerful in driving forward change and helping to initiate sustainable, long-lasting transformation. We are committed to continuing to build upon the footings we have made through existing partnerships and look to make meaningful new ones that will support our vision to tackle health inequalities, promote community safety, reduce poverty and create sustainable communities.

Suggested key areas of work:

- *Continued development of the relationship with Swale's voluntary, community, and enterprise Sector*
- *Delivery of the Community Safety Partnership and associated projects*
- *Develop relationships with Swales Business community to promote corporate social responsibility*
- *Building of strong partnerships with health partners including Medway & Swale Health & Care Partnership, East Kent Health & Care Partnership and the Kent Integrated Care Board*

What next?

We are in the process of developing a full strategy document that will encompass a more detailed plan of how we intend to deliver the priorities listed. However, we want to hear your views and capture your input to ensure that the strategy is truly developed in collaboration using the voices of our residents and partners to create a meaningful document.

We have created a feedback form where you can give us your ideas and thoughts about what is important to you, and we welcome ideas and suggestions of how we can link into all the great work that we know is already happening in the borough.

<https://forms.office.com/e/JinK1uSurp>

This survey will close on X and all the information collected will be used to inform the final strategy.

For more information contact communitydevelopment@swale.gov.uk