

## Question 16

To provide some background, The Befriending Scheme (TBS) provides friendship and learning opportunities for vulnerable people including those with mental health needs, older people, families, young people and families. We have a proven track record of providing a range of quality services for some of the most vulnerable people in Suffolk. We offer one to one befriending, a range of regular daytime, evening and weekend social clubs, training and volunteering opportunities. With a staff team of just 15, last year we worked with over 900 people, providing support, inspiration and development opportunities. We are also very proud of our superb record of volunteer recruitment, training and support and currently have a base of over 230 volunteers.

We have successfully managed a Care farm in Assington for the last 3 years on a small 1.4-acre site. The Care farm has been a great success and we now need a much larger space to increase activities and provide services to a larger more diverse group of vulnerable people.

We have consulted with local residents in Lindsey and businesses in the local area and will be offering open events /meetings to share information and promote interest in the project.

### Raising Educational attainment

We will be offering courses that will complement the hands on work experience at the Farm. We have a recent history of delivering quality training to the most vulnerable in our society and achieved Gold standard status from our funders Realise Futures in 2014. We have already engaged with schools and education providers to ensure that our services are available to young vulnerable people.

### Increasing economic growth

The project will increase economic growth by the continued development of small social enterprises which will include agriculture, (growing of herbs, vegetables, flowers), food and drink sales (café and farm shop) and tourism (Care Farm open to the public and it is hoped, perhaps even ultimately, respite accommodation in another building for disabled families.

### Supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.

We are an established charity with an excellent track record of providing quality services for some of the most vulnerable people in Suffolk. We have been commended for the preventative nature of our work and have demonstrated our value both by a SROI score of 4 :1, and by a plethora of successful case studies. Our core services are: one to one befriending, weekly, evening and weekend Hub group services in main Suffolk towns, projects that have included a fuel poverty mentoring service called Suffolk Switched On, a confidence building programme for young vulnerable mums a Sunday lunch club for lonely and isolated people. And more recently a mindful Mondays project for women suffering from ill mental health. We also provide customised training for our members and volunteers. The project will further enhance one of our core objectives of enabling people to regain or become more independent.

### Empowering local communities

Our CEO was the VCS representative on the Connect Sudbury (early adopter site for the roll out of Connect across Suffolk) programme since the beginning and was a member of the Project Board working closely with the CCG and ACS partners. She has a wealth of knowledge of the VCS and assisted the LAC's to increase their knowledge of the Voluntary and Community sector services available in the area. She is the Chair of Hive in Sudbury who along with the other Trustees , raised significant funding to purchase the UR redundant Church in Sudbury so that it could be turned into community building.

TBS has an enviable record of volunteer recruitment. We are proud of our over 230 volunteers throughout Suffolk. The Care Farm project will engage the local community by offering a wide variety of volunteering opportunities and free training. Our evidence shows that for many volunteers registering with us, the training, support and placement opportunities have enhanced their prospects of finding paid employment.

We have a regular stall at the Sudbury Farmers market and will promote the new project whilst selling the produce and gauge interest in a veg box delivery service.

### **Footnote**

We have recently been successful in securing a grant of £10k from The Colchester Catalyst Charity which now means that if this application for CIL funding is successful it will be the last piece of the jigsaw!

Shirley Moore – CEO May 2022