



Growing The Village Hub

COMMUNITY VOICES
OCT 2021 - MAR 2022

Our story so far

The idea...

In 2021, we teamed up with **Take A Part** to develop a new project called "Growing the Village Hub". We were interested in finding out whether art and culture could be a force for good in Community Capacity Building in our neighbourhoods of Stoke & Morice Town.

We also wanted to celebrate the local community spirit, and use art as a way to invite engagement with local nature and heritage, and vice versa.

We worked together to secure funding from Arts Council England, The National Lottery Awards For All, and Heritage Fund. This allowed us to hire artist & educator **Rachel Dobbs** as our new Creative Community Builder, and gave us a budget to start experimenting!

Rachel's key tasks have been:

- getting to know the community
- mapping out existing activity, skills, hidden talents & desires, and community assets
- identifying people who are fledgling leaders & facilitators
- introducing new ideas, techniques, and know-how
- building trust, relationships, confidence & capacity

Our ethos

The Village Hub is where we meet, create, care and grow.

Our mission is to build on existing community spirit, working with local people to bring a bit more colour into all our lives. We work on the frontline providing opportunities that enable anyone in our community to connect through learning, signposting, cultural activities and having fun in a safe and caring environment.

We want to create experiences, events, activities and solutions – with not for local people.

people
took part

393

times
so far!

What have we been doing?

New activities

Since the start of the "Growing The Village Hub" project, Rachel has worked directly with **54 community members** to help us grow our creative activity & thinking at The Village Hub.

This has led to us hosting a whole range of new creative activity that is setup, run & facilitated by community members.

Activities include:

- 12 x **Art Club** weekly sessions
- 3 x **Halloween, Christmas, Easter Activity sessions** focussing on seasonal crafts
- 1 x **Christmas Market**
- 5 x **Culture Club** sessions focusing on food, creativity & connection, culminating in a large-scale Community Feast in March 2022
- 5 x **"Getting Comfy With..."** skills development sessions on crowdfunding & Canva (3 x facilitated by Rachel, 2 x co-facilitated by community members)
- 6 x specialist creative craft **Hands On Demos** (Pyrography, Jesmonite Casting, Ceramic Plates, Block Printing, Leaf Pounding, Eco Printing)
- A new **Village Hub Shop** (selling art & craft products made by community members on a profit-share basis, to test new social enterprise models)













What do people think?

“

I had never been to The Village Hub before today. Loved the vibe and community, loved being creative and chatting to volunteers. I feel very uplifted and more connected to community. It was fab - thank you!

Clare - participant at Bottle Decorating Workshop

”



“

Rachel's always on hand to help others. She gave me a nudge in the right direction as to starting the art group up. She's always game for a laugh and willing to try new things. Always there to give a little push to help people along the way. A great listener and is great to brainstorm ideas with about new things to do in the hub or outings to organise.

Sue - founder of The Village Hub's Art Group

”

“

We're just buying a house on Park Street and moving to the area soon. Thanks for making us feel so welcome today. We're looking forward to coming back to join the Community Feast!

Katherine - participant at Culture Club

”





“

I wasn't too sure what to expect. I felt very welcome. The activity was so well organised. It was easy to feel comfortable as the staff were incredible. I've started to feel more part of where I live. Thank you all!

**Molly - participant at
Bottle Decorating Workshop**

”

“

I loved it!

Taking part has helped me feel more connected to my local community, new people, new ideas, and art & creativity.

I enjoyed pressing the flowers and learned how to set dye in vinegar.

**Joseph - participant at Leaf
Pounding Workshop**

”

”



“

Rachel is amazing. She takes action on community and individual ideas, bringing them out of people's heads or discussions and into fruition. Her approach is pitched perfectly for The Village Hub, offering her skills and expertise in a truly inclusive and authentic manner.

**Jade - Hub Volunteer
& member of
Sunset Sounds group**

”

“

I loved it that I was able to teach people a skill - crochet! I also enjoyed Sarah's poetry.

I felt like I have made a contribution and I have met new people, and I noticed new additions to The Hub.

**Suzie - participant at
Culture Club**

”

”



“

Thank you so much.

I haven't been out of the house with the kids all week and this was perfect.

participant at
Pumpkin Carving Workshop

”



“

It was great to be able to come to the funding workshop today.

It will be a great help to my friend with his crowd-funding for a new CD.

I hope to get involved with the Village Hub in the New Year!

participant at Crowdfunding Workshop

”

“

My daughter LOVES arts & craft!!

I'm so glad we found this today.

Thank you for our takeaway jar - she's going to really enjoy it

participant at Culture Club

”

“

It was great, and really easy to get started. I'm going to finish off my business cards and get them printed!

Alan - participant at
Getting Comfy With Canva Workshop

”

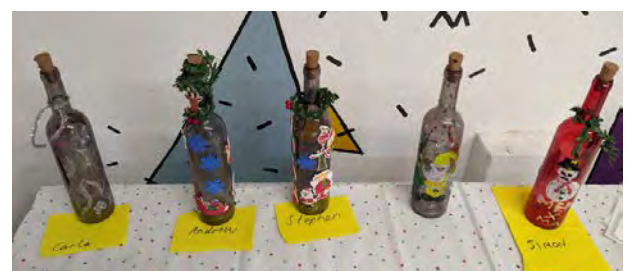
“

Rachel has brought the different groups at The Hub together through finding how they might cross over and enrich each other.

She also has great ideas and a very pragmatic approach that gets things happening.

Vicky - workshop leader

”



What difference does it make?

Confidence & capacity has grown

We have been growing! Since starting this project we now have:

- **3 regular groups now running** (arts, gardening, writing) with community members facilitating & managing budgets / resources
- New **large-scale mural** painted by a Alan from Normality Art in our Wildlife Corridor
- The Village Hub bid for & won a tender to deliver a new Green Minds project to work with PCA students on **3 new arts micro-commissions** in Stoke Village & Blockhouse Park
- Partnered with Vicky Putler from Thorody Flax on a **new funded project** exploring traditional crafts & community connection to nature
- New music group developing to run open-air acoustic **Sunset Sounds** sets in Blockhouse Park
- New **invitations from The Box** to engage with their collection, co-writing 1000 words on the painting Devon Lanes by Ben Hartley (National Gallery & Green Minds partner project)

Embedding creativity and art in all things we do

We are establishing a reputation for embedding art & creativity in all things we do, creating a quirky, eclectic feel to The Village Hub which puts people at ease when they come in – taking stigma away when people need help with accessing support or food. It has drawn people into workshops where they get to know others in a non-judgmental way.

The quality of what we're doing has also attracted local professional & semi-pro artists to our workshops & activities. This brings new conversations and a space for different members in our community to really get to know each other. Tips are shared in a very natural way, so no one feels like they are being taught or having to be the teacher.

This fits right in with our ethos of doing things “with not for people”.

Touching our lives

Some of our best outcomes are in the here-and-now when it would be tactless to interrupt a conversation to write stuff down as a quote, so some of the best work goes unheralded, except in the life of an individual.

Here are some snippets we'd like to share with you...

- Sue is having fewer visits to the hospital to deal with her chronic pain condition and unstable potassium levels.
- Helen has felt more confident at everyday life having been able to test her ideas and lead small workshops at The Hub.
- Mark is happy making friends and hanging out with people who do not have learning disabilities like him, but feeling part of the community regardless.
- Mark's mum enjoys taking him somewhere that she feels encourages her too.
- Graham loves volunteering so much he has brought his wife out to join in, which she was previously too shy to do.
- Lily's English language skills and ability to communicate has improved enormously since she first came to The Hub.
- Helen has felt more connected, and has explored making things with clay, pouring paint and other materials that she has not done since childhood, allowing her inner artist to flourish.
- Jane felt very nervous when she came to The Hub for the first time and couldn't stand the noise, but has been able to stay for the whole session now.
- Farrah has been selling some of her work in the Hub shop giving her pride and renewed determination to be a professional artist.



- Alan is moving his signature style onto pottery and wood engraving as well as mural painting.
- Andrew and his friend Steve painted bottles as handmade Christmas presents which they had never given before.
- Rachel introduced Karen, Diane and Aaron to a clever template that helped them figure out ideas and what was needed to make them work. Karen is now working on creating a local circular economy framework for the Village Hub to use in all its procurement processes thanks to this template.



We thank you for your
ongoing support of our
programme

be gentle with yourself
you are a child of the universe
no less than the trees and the stars
you have a right to be here

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thevillagehub.org.uk



LOTTERY FUNDED



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