Community Engagement – A proposal for a new component within training/education programmes, particularly for post-16 students with EHCPs, to assist them in Preparing for Adulthood.

Research and Development Project: Final report - October 2019

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Sarah Poultney, GCC Lead for Post-16, commissioned *Active Impact*'s Philip Douch to lead a research and development project during spring/summer 2019. Philip produced an interim report in June. The final report (October 2019) which follows is 'final' only in the sense that there are conclusions drawn and suggestions made as to what should happen next.

1.2 The research was set up to explore ways of progressing the final delivery priority of Gloucestershire's Joint Strategy for Children and Young People with Additional Needs, including SEND (2018-21):

'*All agencies working with children, young people and young adults with additional needs will focus on helping them to prepare for adulthood* – this will include support to prepare for higher education and/or employment; support to prepare for independent living, including exploring what decisions young people want to take for themselves; support in maintaining good health in adult life; *support in participating in society, which includes support in developing and maintaining friendships and relationships.*'

1.3 The research also sits alongside and matches the aspirations of the Council's Education Directorate's draft Inclusion Charter. That Charter will seek to ensure that all children will be entitled to participate in the full spectrum of opportunities an education setting can offer, both socially and academically, and over time 'reducing the potential marginalization of those with additional needs, social isolation and deprivation'.

1.4 Specifically the research sits within the remit of the 'Post-16 Education Vision for Gloucestershire (2019-22)':

'To ensure that there is a sustainable and responsive post 16 system which provides the skills and experience to enable young people to become independent, to play an active part in their community and to move into employment.'

'There should be the opportunity to .... play a role in their communities and to learn how to access support from these same communities'.

'There should be community pathways in place for those young people who need them.'

1.5   The research has implications not just for Education but also for Health and Social Care. Preparing for Adulthood is a multi-agency responsibility. Some young people with EHCPs will be eligible for social care funding to help with this transition, whilst under the Care Act 2014 one of Adult Social Care's responsibilities is to arrange the provision of preventative resources that can be accessed by those who require support but who do not have eligible needs.

1.6   As for Health, research by Lunstadt (2015) shows that the consequences of loneliness from being socially isolated are as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Further research shows loneliness contributes to a significantly greater risk of people developing various debilitating health conditions (for details see https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/). Helping to enable a socially connected life is therefore a significant protective factor.

2.0   Community Engagement – A Top Priority? The Business Case.

2.1   In recent years the Council has recognised the value of disabled adults having a job, principally for their own sense of wellbeing but also for the reductions in statutory spending that follow from each person who is employed and contributing rather than being simply a 'service-user'. A significant investment in employability has been made, such that the employment rate of adults with learning difficulties/disabilities is now 23 per cent compared to the national average of 6 per cent and a starting position in Gloucestershire of 5.9 per cent in 2013. Supported by the investment in the Forwards Employment Service, post-16 providers now see employment as a prime outcome for those with EHCPs wherever possible.

2.2   In regard to Transition to Adulthood the next logical development should be to invest in initiatives that will facilitate Community Engagement. For those people in employment, some such engagement may follow as a direct result of the connections made from having a job.

2.3   However, there will be others who do not manage to extend their links beyond the hours spent in the workplace. They will join the significant number of young people with EHCPs who are not able to find employment – all of whom are potentially at risk of living largely unconnected lives. Again, as with employment, if we can enable people to become part of the social fabric, not only will this enhance their own sense of wellbeing but it will also reduce their need for other statutory services.

2.4   Accordingly, whilst our principal driver should be facilitating disabled young people's right to a connected and fulfilling life, we also need to make best use of limited resources. The way forward is the same – prioritising the investment of time and money that will promote socially connected lives.

2.5   The period of post-16 education and training is absolutely critical in achieving this Community Engagement. In coming years there should also be greater priority placed on such engagement from much earlier in children's lives. See section 7.2 below. But the post-16 years are the final opportunity to address this issue - the last time in their lives when every young person is receiving funded support from the state. A small proportion will go on to receive adult social care funding but, for the majority, if we cannot help them become part of their communities before they leave formal education, it may be hard for them to achieve it when funded assistance is no longer available.

2.6   Whilst asserting the importance of community engagement, it is important to recognise that some people simply do not want that engagement with other people and should certainly not be forced into it. It is ok to choose to be solitary.

2.7   However, some people choose to be solitary because they have not yet been given the range of opportunities they need whereby they can find something that they would like to be doing alongside other people. Extending the choices for disabled young people to connect with others is therefore important.

2.8   Currently, the types of activity championed in this report tend to happen both in the county and elsewhere because of the beliefs of an individual, or the commitment of a single school or college, or the enthusiasm of a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisation. Sometimes the activity fades with the passing of a key person or the unavailability of further short-term grant funding. Encouragingly, much is already happening. The Council now needs to identify and assert Community Engagement as a high priority, coordinating developments and driving progress.

2.9   Gloucestershire has the opportunity to make Community Engagement part of what is expected; a routine entitlement available across the board for those with EHCPs and other socially isolated young people whilst they are in their post-16 provision. To achieve this will require a shared belief in its importance, a lead from the Council's members and officers, and a willingness from providers and the Council itself to spend time and money in new ways.

2.10   It will also require that both GCC staff and others who share responsibility for drawing up EHCPs should understand the importance of Community Engagement and ensure that it routinely becomes a key element given due weight when discussing and drafting each EHCP. The research suggested that currently EHC Plans often remain principally an Education plan and that social outcomes are too often marginalised.

2.11   This finding is reinforced by the 2018 RIP:STARS research project conducted by disabled young people under the auspices of the University of Coventry (https://ripstars.net/) . Their first recommendation as to how EHCPs should support disabled children and young people was that the plan should enable them 'To access their

community and support inclusion in youth services, sport, arts, drama and other activities that are important to them'.

2.12   In 'Special or Unique: Young People's Attitudes to Disability' (2019), Evan Odell of Disability Rights UK concludes his research with a number of recommendations, including this key one for the Department for Education: 'Assign greater importance to socialisation in the development of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and encourage schools to make the social inclusion of disabled pupils more of a priority. The EHCP creation framework proposed by the RIP:STARS project (Franklin et al., 2018) provides a useful starting point to make social inclusion a key indicator of the effectiveness of EHCPs. EHCP guidance should include forming and sustaining friendships as an outcome; young people with EHCPs should be asked about their social group as part of the EHCP process.'

> *'Being able to be a full and active part of your local community should be made possible for those that wish to be, and no matter how hard a parent tries it is an almost impossible task without some specialist help to achieve this. By reducing the isolation and encouraging friendship these young people will ultimately become less of a drain on council, social care and health budgets so surely the sooner these changes are made and EHCPs really do cover all the young people's needs the better.*
>
> *Gloucestershire should show other councils how this can work and make real differences rather than waiting for another authority to take it on; these young people have been isolated for far too long already.'   (Parent carer)*

3.0   Background and Purpose

3.1   The original research project plan included the following statement of background and purpose (sections 3.2 to 3.9):

3.2   Too many disabled young people currently become isolated and/or spend their time beyond their immediate family only with people who are paid to be with them. Then, if and when the professionals are removed, the young person can become marooned and everything can fall back on the family.

3.3   We would like the role of some of the professionals within the education and training system to change to address this issue. We are looking for a focus not just on providing activity, education or training 'in house' but on *facilitating* activity and connections which involve the young person meaningfully with other citizens – so that there are parts of the adult world beyond 'provision' and 'services' to which the young person can contribute and from which they can gain friendship and support.

3.4   For some young people such activities and connections might arise at least in part from involvement in paid or voluntary work; for others the engagement in their community may be wholly through social and leisure time activities.

3.5   The purpose is to foster not just as much independence and self-reliance as may be possible for each individual but also a sense of greater connection with their community and of inter-dependence with supportive fellow-citizens. The aim is to move beyond providing opportunities for 'going out into the community' and rather to establish ongoing engagement with one or more groups in that community and especially to support relationships with individuals from that community.

3.6   A direct consequence of the young person's involvement in training and education should be that they are not just 'prepared' for adulthood but have already become established members of identifiable parts of the adult world.

3.7   Such engagement is in itself of personal and social value for their lives as adults. It may also provide the basis for each young person to develop a Circle of Support around them, whether formally or informally, whereby there is a group of people interested in their wellbeing and 'rooting for them' into adulthood.

3.8   This also offers reassurance both to young people and to their families that there can be significant other support available, either when parents wish to share some of their responsibilities or if they become unable to fulfil them.

3.9   The intention is that links with activity groups and with fellow citizens will help to embed disabled young people in their communities – and that this will facilitate ongoing relationships and assistance that resides with friends and local people rather than with professionals. The professional role is to facilitate those things to happen.

4.0   The County Council's provisional intentions

4.1   The original research project plan included the following statement of the Council's provisional intentions:

Sept 19 - June 20	Each education and training provider offers a Community Engagement component to part of their student cohort for the new academic year.
	All providers share their learning in order to develop with GCC a Community Engagement component for Sept 2020 as a required element of the learning programme for each young person with an EHCP.

Sept 20 - June 21	Community Engagement component contractually required of education and training providers by GCC for all students with an EHCP.

5.0   The research and development process

5.1   A summary of the process used to conduct the research is included at Appendix 4.

5.2   The writer would like to thank all those who gave their time and thought in discussing Community Engagement and helping to determine what should be included in this final report. He also wishes to acknowledge the huge commitment made by staff in support of those they teach and support.

5.3   It is clear from meetings and site visits that there is already excellent work being undertaken in relation to community involvement across many different post-16 providers. This report avoids ascribing good practice to individually named post-16 providers, as that might unfairly imply that one is somehow 'better' than another. Even if this were desirable, the nature and extent of the research would not enable such judgements to be formed.

5.4   Nor is the report designed as some kind of 'inspection' document for any individual provider. Where it makes suggestions for future action, these are offered as being worth consideration by all providers. For each suggestion some providers will simply nod and say that they are already doing this; for others it may be a welcome new idea; and for others it may not seem appropriate - though, nonetheless, the writer hopes that real consideration will be given to ways of working that might currently feel unfamiliar. The intention is that the report will encourage more ways of promoting Community Engagement.

5.5   The sharing of existing practice and future plans, followed by reflection on the success or otherwise of new initiatives around Community Engagement, will be a critical learning tool for post-16 providers, as it will for the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The writer is grateful to Cathy Bradshaw of The Apperley Centre (the post-16 department of The Shrubberies School) who has provided an overview of their existing good practice for this report. It is reproduced in full at Appendix 1. Similar sharing amongst interested parties would be invaluable.

6.0   Meaning of 'Community Engagement'

6.1   During the research the meaning of 'Community Engagement' was refined to include the following types of activity:

- A range of opportunities for learners to become established in **places and/or activities** where they feel they are welcome, so that their involvement there could continue once their formal education/training programme has ended. Such opportunities might include activities with non-disabled people and with disabled people.

- A range of opportunities for learners to meet and be given any necessary support to establish **relationships with people** beyond members of their family and members of staff at their post-16 provider, so that their involvement with those people could continue once their formal education/training programme has ended. Such opportunities might include relationships with non-disabled people and with disabled people.

- Opportunities for learners and their families to establish a **supportive network** of people around them, so that these supportive people's involvement could continue once a learner's formal education/training programme has ended.

7.0   Changes of emphasis to the project proposals provoked by the research

7.1   *The target group.*

7.1.1   At the outset the target group for the research was named as 'post-16 students with EHCPs'. In listening to respondents throughout the research process it became apparent that the target was in one sense more specific and in another sense more wide than this suggested.

7.1.2   There are some young people with EHCPs who are already well connected and engaged in their community. So the real target is actually the disproportionately large percentage of those with EHCPs who are also socially isolated.

7.1.3   Many people, especially staff at FE Colleges and independent training organisations, pointed out that there is also a large swathe of learners who do not qualify for an EHCP but who are equally prone to social isolation. So the suggestions that follow may well be of value to that group of young people as well.

7.1.4   It swiftly became clear that the students who might benefit from greater Community Engagement include a very wide range of young people. Each post-16 education and training provider is different; their intakes are different; and each individual within each cohort is uniquely different. It is important to recognise that the reality of enabling Community Engagement for those with the most complex requirements can be massively more challenging than for others.

7.1.5   Accordingly we should not be seeking to impose uniform expectations but expanding the ways in which practitioners can choose to work for the benefit of each young person's engagement with the community.

7.2   *Not just post-16.*

7.2.1   Over and over again contributors to the research stressed that isolation does not just suddenly arise in the post-16 period. The lack of connectedness for children and their families very often starts at a young age. So taking steps to address this at post-16 is only part of the solution.

7.2.3   Many of the ideas in this report could and should be applied from the early years and throughout pupils' time in school. This is especially important for those children who attend special schools at some distance from the family home, as natural community links are often missing when disabled children are not in class with other local children and when their parents are not meeting other local parents at the school gates.

7.2.4   Similarly, much in this report will also be of relevance for providers of residential care, housing and supported living services for those students who go on to live away from their families after the end of their formal education provision.

7.2.5   There may also be lessons for strategic planners and commissioners responsible for planning future supported housing options. If high priority is properly to be placed on the primacy of neighbourhood activity and relationships, thereby enabling disabled young adults to feel that they truly belong somewhere, then siting specialist accommodation in smaller towns, close to where young people have grown up and where they may find local activity and welcoming neighbours, can be more beneficial than looking at larger conurbations where there may apparently be more 'services'.

7.3   *The isolation of families.*

7.3.1   The social isolation of young people, especially disabled young people, can often be intimately tied up with the social isolation of their parents – which itself may frequently be caused or exacerbated by the fact that they have a disabled child. So if we are to address disabled young people's isolation, we may also have to address the isolation of their families. The report makes a number of suggestions in this regard.

7.4   *Establishing where a young person will live when they finish their formal post-16 education and training.*

7.4.1   Getting a young person used to being involved with activities, places and people in the area where they live is fundamental to many of the ideas in this report. Ideally, that work embeds them in the place where they will be living long term. A pre-requisite is therefore to be making plans for long term residency as early as possible. There is still value in discovering that you can be part of any community, but it is clearly best to help people to become part of where they will be living once they leave their post-16 provider.

7.4.2   It is unlikely that post-16 provider staff will have good knowledge about areas far from a provider's own geographical base – or the time to facilitate engagement there. This recognition is one of the key drivers for the report's suggestion of establishing a central team of people who can support students' Community Engagement in different parts of the county.

7.4.3   Nonetheless, geographical proximity may not always be crucial. It is the ease with which continued involvement can be maintained that is critical.

7.5   *On-line relationships*

7.5.1   It is also the case that many young people have a social life on line, and being involved with other people through social media and gaming will be another way in which ongoing relationships can be developed. See, for instance, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/disability-47064773

7.5.2   There are dangers in navigating the on-line world safely, and many providers already help to explore this territory with their students. Whilst there is a proper commitment from many professionals to foster face-to-face relationships, it is also important to recognise that it is increasingly a societal norm amongst non-disabled people to have significant engagement with their peers through their portable devices. For some disabled young people, such on-line engagement may not only be an opportunity to be part of the normality shared by their non-disabled peers but may also be a more manageable first step than direct personal contact.

7.6   *Safeguarding – opportunity and risk.*

7.6.1   There has been understandable concern about the implications for schools and colleges of one particular aspiration in the original project proposal and interim report – i.e. that post-16 providers should be aiming that a young person 'meets with some regularity

with one or more people socially - informally outside of any organised group – who is neither in their immediate family nor is paid to be with them.'

7.6.2   This final report discusses the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance on 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and recognises that it may prove impossible for schools and colleges to take responsibility for enabling such informal social contact to happen without contravening the guidance. It would clearly be wrong for the report to propose a course of action that is in opposition to statutory guidance and which would potentially undermine a provider's Ofsted safeguarding judgement.

7.6.3   Nonetheless, the aspiration remains important - that we should be helping young people to meet people informally outside of organised groups, just as the majority of their non-disabled peers do without a second thought. This is normal life, and we need to explore ways in which those with EHCPs or otherwise socially isolated can be helped to share in that life as far as possible.

7.6.4   There is a real tension between the proper need to keep young people safe and the need to enable them to find a place in the wider world, developing relationships with other citizens. There are various ways in which community development organisations are seeking to achieve this, and it is the writer's hope that in Gloucestershire post-16 providers can contribute their knowledge and experience to discussions with the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector about how this might be done, even if there may be limitations as to what schools and colleges can take direct responsibility for themselves.

7.7   *The nature of involvement with members of the wider community.*

7.7.1   It is important to stress that the involvement of volunteers, of peers or members of the wider community is not designed to replace the essential skilled care and support that many individual young people may require – especially those who have the most complex conditions and demanding requirements. There is no agenda here to replace proper skilled personal support by introducing well-intentioned untrained citizens instead. That would be unfair and inappropriate both for the disabled young person and for the person exposed to responsibilities they are unfitted to meet.

7.7.2   The involvement with other non-professional people is to increase social engagement, not to remove care and assistance. Where professional assistance is still required, the professional should still be present. The young person may simply also be spending their time with one or more other people who have a very different reason for being there.

7.8   *GCC's contractual requirements.*

7.8.1   The original research proposal envisaged post-16 providers trying out a variety of ideas during the 2019-20 academic year, sharing their learning and helping to enable the Council to introduce appropriate contractual arrangements that would require a Community Engagement component in the curriculum from September 2020.

7.8.2   The extent to which the Council can make such requirements, and the speed at which change can realistically be introduced, each suggest that that original ambition may need revising. Nonetheless, it remains the case that the Council and the county's post-16 providers should work towards ensuring that Community Engagement has an increasingly high profile within the post-16 education and training experience.

7.8.3   There is much that the Council can contribute to this agenda, both through Education and Social Care, and there is potentially a preventative contribution from Health that will also need further exploration. The post-16 providers themselves are well placed to build on what they already do, and this report outlines many ideas that can help in making such progress.

7.8.4   The report also suggests that there is likely to be a significant role for the Voluntary and Community Sector, either in partnership with schools and colleges or by being commissioned directly. Where this is the case, it will remain important for opportunities to be coordinated with due reference to each individual's education and training provider, as it is there that the young person spends the majority of their time beyond their family life and where he or she is likely to be best known.

8.0   Where should Community Engagement take place?

8.1   In most instances 'Community Engagement' will actually imply 'neighbourhood engagement', as the aim is to ensure that young people become embedded with places, activities and people with whom it is practically possible to continue to be involved. Whenever possible, building connections close to where they will be living after leaving their post-16 provision will therefore usually be critical. In a predominantly rural county, transport may well be a restricting issue – see section 12.4.

8.2   There are differences of opinion as to whether there should be any hierarchy of desirability in regard to the sort of engagement young people might have with others in the community. The research identified four distinct arenas where young people might share activities with others:

- On a specialist site for disabled young people.
- On a specialist site, with a mixture of disabled and non-disabled young people.
- Out at an ordinary community site but specifically for disabled young people.

- Out in the community, mixing with non-disabled people.

8.3   There was broad agreement that shared interest and activities, things to do alongside other people and places to go, are central to the process of becoming engaged. There should be opportunities to share social activity and potentially friendship with both disabled and non-disabled people. Success might be judged not by the particular choices that individuals may make, but in the fact that a wide range of opportunities is genuinely offered – and that those opportunities succeed in provoking, promoting and supporting the building of belonging and the development of ongoing relationships.

9.0   Community Engagement – risk factor or protective factor?

9.1   Community Engagement by definition enables disabled young people and other citizens to spend time with one another. Having greater levels of contact with members of the public raises legitimate concerns as well as opportunities. How safe will vulnerable young people be if they are introduced to people, some of whom may be unsupervised and/or un-checked? Equally, how safe will vulnerable young people be when they are out in the world in future if they are restricted in their youth to contact with family and professionals, especially when for many young people professional support is either reduced or removed once formal education finishes?

9.2   Enabling students to learn about developing personal safety is already part of many post-16 providers' curriculum. Freda Briggs' work - eg 'Developing Personal Safety Skills for Children with Disabilities' - is one useful source. Extending this exploration to involve discussions with parents is discussed later in this report (see sections 9.14, 9.16 and 12.2.1, 12.2.2 and 12.2.10).

9.3   The research revealed huge strength of feeling about safeguarding issues in relation to the prospect of greater community engagement. Everyone was committed to young people's best interests. But there was significant disagreement about how those interests might be met. We need to find a balance of risk and opportunity; as one headteacher put it, we should perhaps 'assume the best and plan for the worst'.

9.4   Schools and colleges are led by the DfE's 2018 statutory guidance (revised for September 2019) for young people aged under 18 - 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Anyone who '*performs an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives*' is seen as a volunteer. And the guidance states that '*Under no circumstances should a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.*'

9.5   This guidance appears to rule out a school or college taking responsibility for introducing their students to members of the public without running checks on them all and/or having a member of staff physically present with members of the public at all times.

9.6   Whatever the legal position, there is also understandable concern from staff about a school or college being held liable if they foster links with members of the community who might turn out to have nefarious intentions and over whose contact with a young person the institution subsequently has no control.

9.7   Equally, it is one of the basic tenets of the Mental Capacity Act that everyone aged 16 and over has the right to make decisions and that such a decision does not have to be the 'right one' as perceived by other people. There is also a principle of 'least restrictiveness'. As Peter Bates of the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) has written, 'It continues to be hard for some workers to envisage that a disabled person may have connections with citizens that are entirely unregulated by the State, and consequently, they can fear that facilitating such relationships will somehow incur liability for anything that might go wrong in the future. Health, social care and education organisations and those that commission them need to be clear that they are facilitating the uptake of entirely informal relationships, through a process of skilled transition from regulated serviceland to unregulated community.'

9.8   There are clearly tensions here. Since the point of Community Engagement is that young people should be supported to become part of their community, not dependent on professional presence, this is difficult territory. It certainly appears as if schools and colleges could not take a lead in such work, even if some of them might wish to. The Council's Safeguarding Education Manager should be invited to become part of future discussions about what might be considered appropriate.

9.9   There are numerous examples of reputable organisations, often community development organisations, whose practice does promote this type of Community Engagement. Timebanking UK, represented in Gloucestershire by Fair Shares, the longest established Timebank in the country, has specifically explored safeguarding issues with the DBS service with whom they have reached the conclusion that, whilst its staff may be subject to DBS checks, its members are not seen to be engaged in 'regulated activity' and are therefore not eligible for DBS checks. The leading national inclusion specialists Inclusive Solutions also bring disabled and non-disabled people together without running DBS checks on participants.

9.10   Nonetheless, both Fair Shares and Inclusive Solutions take safeguarding very seriously. For instance Inclusive Solutions have developed a practice that keeps people's safety at the forefront of everyone's thinking – such as avoiding a vulnerable member going somewhere with only one other member and discussing together what might be unsafe and how to mitigate the dangers for each particular person in each unique set of circumstances.

The building of multiple connections in people's lives is seen as a protective measure in itself, meaning that there are trusted people to turn to and talk with if anybody is concerned about what is happening to themselves or a fellow member of the group.

9.11   Such community development organisations are acting in tune with the views and experience of Beyond Welfare, a community-building organisation originally set up in Iowa, USA, which focuses on 'natural' rather than 'special' safety measures. There is an argument that it is not being vulnerable that puts you in jeopardy – it is being vulnerable *and isolated.*

9.12   'We have had many community conversations about this. We used our Thursday night gatherings to engage the community in setting the 'policy'. We have a policy that, with the little kids, at least two adults/care providers are present so that there is an accountability/protective structure. With the youth, yes pairs or threes to assure the same. The reality is that people get hurt in spite of protective measures, in all kinds of situations. We opt not to do 'background checks' because they are not a community structure of protection, they are an institutional 'solution'. And – if they truly worked we would not be seeing so much abuse in foster and institutionalised care where background checks are required. So we opt for a community/relational approach. It is also our experience that even people with a history of challenging behaviours behave better in a circle of community. Good news also is the knowledge that we have not had an abuse incident in our 12 years of building community." (Beyond Welfare)

9.13   Similar views were expressed in the research by those responsible for work at The Butterfly Garden in Cheltenham, Kingfishers Treasure Seekers and Fair Shares, where staff make it their business to get to know participants well within their sensitively managed communities. It should be noted that in all the structures mentioned in sections 9.9 to 9.13 there is a 'micro-community' that consciously builds relationships with vulnerable members and provides responsible oversight rather than just pitching people out into the wider world.

9.14   Gloucestershire would benefit from continuing discussions about how to keep people safe when linking in with their wider community. Parents as well as professionals have widely differing views about what they feel is appropriate for their children.

9.15   During the research process disabled young people themselves expressed a wish to be opened up to the real world, saying for instance that College was 'all about safe'. There was a presumption that 'I won't be allowed to do it' and that 'I can't do something because of lots of ifs, buts and maybes'. Tellingly, there was a recognition from one young person that there were potential risks, but this was accompanied by an eloquent plea to professionals to 'Come with us to the danger'.

9.16   Provocations to think more widely about risk management as well as risk avoidance in this field could usefully be sought by inviting conference, training or workshop

contributions from Peter Bates at the National Development Team for Inclusion. Events mixing parents, education professionals, disabled adults and third sector community development workers could be especially productive. Not everyone will agree with one another. But being open to new thinking and keeping the debate alive is important as we explore ways of enabling vulnerable young people to become part of the community.

9.17   In recognition of people's differing perspectives about the safety of Community Engagement this report seeks to suggest a range of different types of engagement. Amongst these suggestions different institutions and organisations should find ideas which they, their young people and families will feel comfortable to develop.

10.0   Trying out ideas that promote Community Engagement

10.1   Section 11 of this report sets out a wide variety of initiatives that providers might take to promote Community Engagement. It's designed as a 'pick and mix' or a 'toolbox', readily at hand so that in due course the most suitable ideas can be chosen for any particular individual. As greater emphasis is placed on Community Engagement as a key outcome of the post-16 experience, education and training providers and the VCS are also likely to develop new ideas of their own, which can be added to this 'toolbox' for all to share.

10.2   Current post-16 providers already offer differing amounts and types of Community Engagement - some of which meet the definition at section 6.1 above. Whilst recognising some of the challenges, there is considerable support amongst those providers for making Community Engagement an even more significant priority. Building on what is already offered and sharing successful methods with one another should be part of the future development of this work. See Appendix 1 for an example of what is happening at one particular provider.

10.3   In the longer term – although this is unlikely to happen formally in time for the academic year 2020-21 as proposed in the Council's Provisional Intentions (see sections 4 and 7.8.2 above) – the Council should explore the best mechanisms for ensuring a heightened priority for Community Engagement in the curriculum of each post-16 provider. The Council's Lead for Post-16 is already clear that such developments should be established in conjunction with those providers themselves so that it is a shared enterprise rather than something merely dictated by the local authority.

10.4   To facilitate this process it is recommended that each post-16 provider should try out one or more of the ideas in section 11 of this report with a small number of students during the academic year 2019-20. It is further recommended that the Council liaises with providers so that, wherever possible, each idea is trialled by two or more post-16 providers. This is partly so that they can support one another in exploring new territory and partly to

reduce the possibility that success or failure of an idea can be attributed to the strengths/ weaknesses or good/ bad fortune associated with a single implementation of a particular idea.

10.5   It is not envisaged that special school sixth forms, colleges and independent training providers will be in a position to implement all of these ideas themselves. Nor would it be realistic. Their young people vary widely and their own philosophies and staff skill-sets vary too. Some of the ideas will be best provided by third sector organisations, either in partnership or sub-contracted by post-16 providers or commissioned directly by the County Council. Alternatively young people may be best introduced and supported into some initiatives through the setting up of a specialist central team, similar to the Forwards team.

11.0   The toolkit of ideas for Community Engagement

11.1   *Identifying current reality for individuals.*

11.1.1 Peter Bates of the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) has produced the excellent resource of the Inclusion Web. This enables any professional to explore with a disabled person the parts of their lives in which they do and do not have meaningful links with places and people – and to serve as the basis for taking person-centred action to address significant absences of connection. http://peterbates.org.uk/home/the-inclusion-web/

https://prezi.com/mpgaw2ck0qi7/how-to-use-the-inclusion-web-2016/

11.1.2 The use of the Inclusion Web can be valuable for some young people in identifying their current situation and then re-visiting it later in their post-16 provision to see how things have changed. The Outcomes Star, currently being introduced at GlosCol, could serve a similar purpose. Staff should also be on the look-out for other useful tools that could be employed and shared with colleagues across the sector.

11.2   *Information-sharing.*

11.2.1 All post-16 education and training providers should know about the widest range of opportunities available to their students in relation to Community Engagement. This report serves as the beginning of such information-sharing. The gathering of information and its sharing amongst providers should be ongoing. The Local Offer, Your Circle and the You're Welcome website (currently being re-purposed by Active Impact to offer a 'rolling news' service of events and activities that truly welcome disabled people) can contribute to this process. Post-16 providers themselves and third sector organisations can approach one another to find out in more detail about what is on offer.

11.2.2 Additionally the new 'Future Me Gloucestershire' initiative aims to transform how young people in all parts of the county find and engage with information that is important to them and which helps them to prepare for their adulthood. Current access to information is arbitrary and often dependent on a young person having access to people who can give good advice or via a Google search. This means that young people are not always being supported in making the best decisions for their future. Future Me is being created as an information source that is intuitive and reflects the questions young people have with regards to growing up and planning for their future. Rather than young people needing to know what they are looking for, the resource responds to the questions young people may have.

11.2.3 It may also be useful for providers to establish links with the various different agencies that provide the Community Wellbeing Service in each area of the county. https://www.google.com/search?q=gloucestershire+community+wellbeing+service&rlz=1C1CHBF_enGB809GB810&oq=gloucestershire&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j69i59l3j69i60j69i61.4409j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 The service can provide initial links with things that are going on in their locality, since it offers one to one support for individuals and can signpost or refer people to activities and groups available in their area. This may be particularly important where a young person's local area is some distance from their post-16 provider's location.

11.2.4 The recently instituted Know Your Patch meetings are other good sources of knowledge and local community contacts, whilst the group of around 40 organisations involved in delivering the county's GEM project also serve as a trusted network of providers committed to the development of disadvantaged young people.

11.3 *Introductions to 'created micro-communities' - and regular participation in them.*

11.3.1 Post-16 providers should consider introducing students to existing places whose primary purpose is not activity-provision but a truly open welcome and a prime focus on relationship-building. Different places will suit different people but such places are all likely to put a high value on community, inclusion and relationships. The research has identified some such places, but there are very likely to be others. Accordingly the following are given as examples rather than an exhaustive list:

- The Butterfly Garden, Cheltenham
- Access Bike, Stroud (Creative Sustainability)
- Kingfisher Treasure Seekers, Gloucester
- Fair Shares, principally Gloucester
- The Drop-Ins/Community Hubs for disabled people run by GCC and Inclusion Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, Cirencester, Forest of Dean (Coleford), Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury

11.3.2 Such places effectively create their own micro-community for their members – places where everyone is known and each person is valued. Participants are not so much 'out in the wider community', with the worries that may bring, as 'in a specific community', with the reassurances that may bring by virtue of being part of a trusted group with responsible leadership.

11.3.3 Feeling that you 'belong' in a place or group - and often that the organisation is bigger than just the bits of it that you yourself are involved with – is important for building real engagement. Being able to contribute to that place or group, rather than simply being a 'service user' or 'beneficiary' is also highly significant. Successful organisations of this type frequently stress the importance of participants being able to build trust in the organisation by building trust in individual staff members.

11.3.4 There is value in sizeable operations such as most of those named at section 11.2.1 being able to work with significant numbers of young people. Equally, especially in less densely populated parts of the county where the number of disabled young people could not support a larger piece of provision, small-scale personalised initiatives may be a more realistic way of those with EHCPs engaging with other local people.

11.3.5 Both the Council and post-16 providers should continue to be on the look-out for other organisations that are founded on open welcome and personal relationships, as they can provide a level of safety that many professionals, parents and young people highly value.

11.3.6 Post-16 education and training providers already have links with many of these smaller local organisations. The more of these links that can be developed, the better. As far as possible connections should be made with places and activities that interest the individual, rather than concentrating on one or two organisations to which the majority of students are routinely introduced.

11.3.7 It is also important to recognise, however, that many disabled young people have had relatively limited experience and do not necessarily know what will interest them. So introducing them to a range of people and places that will welcome them enthusiastically may often help them to realise that they actually have an interest in something that they were previously unaware of. Offering this type of 'taster' may be more realistic at first with a group of students rather than on an individual basis.

11.4   *Creating new 'micro-communities'.*

11.4.1 The national organisation Inclusive Solutions, founded by two Educational Psychologists, has established what they call 'Community Circles' – www.inclusive-solutions/circles/community-circles/ Circles are set up to include both vulnerable

participants and allies from the local community, with everyone sharing skills, talents, gifts and resources. Meetings are warm and informal but structured so that members eat food together, tell one another what is new and good in their lives, and then share wants, needs and offers – prompting mutual actions outside of the meeting.

11.4.2 Inclusive Solutions is also exploring the idea of setting up a Community Circle within a school, college or training provider, potentially involving parents as well as students. It would provide support both to young people and their family. Each family might also be encouraged to invite one or two trusted people to join the group as allies. Inclusive Solutions would be keen to pilot this work in Gloucestershire.

11.4.3 In addition to linking young people into existing groups and activities, it may be that setting up something new that is small and customised is the best way forward. The Barnwood Trust's Small Sparks Grants of up to £250 can enable four or more local people to do something they enjoy together if at least one of them wanting to enjoy the activity 'has a disability or mental health problem' and if all of them are prepared to contribute their time, energy and talents. Help could be offered to young people and their families to complete the Barnwood application form and establish their own little group.

11.4.4 Leonard Cheshire's Opening Doors project and the Independence Trust's Community Autism Support and Advice service (specifically for those with autism) are also able to support small groups of disabled people to establish subsequently self-managed activity groups.

11.5   *Offering carefully managed inclusive activities.*

11.5.1 There are various opportunities to promote inter-action between socially isolated young people and their better connected peers. It is not enough to invite non-disabled young people to 'come along' or to encourage disabled young people to go to places where they will come across non-disabled people. Situations need careful management, so that young people are enabled to get to know one another by taking part in a shared activity that each finds interesting.

11.5.2 It may be possible to expand an activity that already happens in order to link young people together and promote the possibility of new relationships. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, for instance, could be run for a group of disabled young people in conjunction with a group of non-disabled young people – either drawn from a local school, from within an FE College, or by liaising with groups such as Scouts and Guides.

11.5.3 Where socially integrated students (both disabled and non-disabled) are engaged in Enrichment or Community Service activity, it is worth looking at how they can assist isolated disabled peers by sharing activities both on site and off. Encouraging ongoing relationships

between such participants is a key part of the professional role. This can be facilitated if the initial choice about who is brought together pays due attention to the likely practicality of connections being maintained once the initial planned activity has finished.

11.5.4 As well as exploring the possibilities of offering this type of inclusive experience directly, post-16 providers can also encourage students to take advantage of similar opportunities provided by third sector organisations. *Active Impact* has a well-established *Of Course We Can* programme, through which 25 activity events a year are available to mixed groups of disabled and non-disabled young people run by a variety of partners with a wide range of expertise. Young Gloucestershire are also about to set up new programmes designed for disabled young people to take part and expand their experience with one another and with members of the wider community. When the county's new provider of National Citizen Service programmes is established for 2020, there will be opportunities for individuals there as well.

11.5.6 Care may need to be taken in situations where a participant works more slowly than others or has a level of competence that could impact negatively on a group or team of which they become a member. They are unlikely to be welcomed and truly included if their involvement impacts negatively on what others are trying to achieve - a truth that may actually apply to anyone seen as insufficiently competent, irrespective of whether they have any impairments or not.

11.5.7 Professionals and activity leaders will need to be conscious of whether participation or excellence is the goal of their activity – and whether other participants recognise this. It may be especially valuable to identify activities in which individuals can take part side by side at their own level of ability without reducing the level at which their peers may be able to operate. Inclusive rock-climbing, for instance, might work better than inclusive football. Equally, we should be very careful not to make assumptions that a disabled young person will necessarily be less competent in a particular field of activity than their non-disabled peers.

11.6   *Building one-to-one relationships and promoting friendship.*

11.6.1 It is not possible to make friendships happen. Ultimately friendship is a choice that two people make of their own volition. It is possible - and important - to create the circumstances in which friendship might grow. After several years working with families who have disabled children, the Allsorts charity in Stroud decided that Friendship should be one of its declared top priorities.

11.6.2 Accordingly professionals should be looking to manage into existence the types of opportunity that introduce people to one another in an enjoyable shared activity, especially

for those young people who are not managing to enter into relationships 'naturally', other than perhaps with parents or paid staff.

11.6.3 Professionals should also be on the look-out for the spark of such relationships and, where possible, providing more chances for those people to spend time together, alerting their families to the budding link and encouraging its development in young people's lives beyond school or college.

11.6.4 Where there are other more socially connected young people as learners at the same post-16 institution, opportunities could be sought to make connections by inviting people to 'buddy up' with isolated young people. There needs to be a purpose for this to be real – eg to help with their studies, or to share an activity they both enjoy.

11.6.5 In wholly specialist education environments other more socially connected young people, especially non-disabled peers from other schools, colleges or youth groups, could be introduced to disabled young people through shared activities; sport may be a particularly attractive vehicle for such introductions.

11.6.6 Opportunities for disabled and non-disabled pairs to go and volunteer together could also usefully be explored.

11.6.7 Slightly older young people, perhaps drawn from the county's universities, could act as 'older brothers and sisters'. Confident disabled young adults could also be recruited to act as mentors.

11.6.8 In some circumstances, with the isolated young person's permission, staff should consider explaining the nature of that isolation and enlisting someone who understands and would like to help.

11.6.9 This openness about somebody's isolation mirrors some of the practice involved in setting up a Circle of Friends, usually established in mainstream schools, whereby the classmates of a lonely or struggling pupil are enabled to understand how s/he may have very limited contact with people outside of family, followed by an invitation to form a group that meets regularly to offer help. Conducted well, there are invariably too many volunteers.

11.6.10   In passing, it should be noted that Gloucestershire's Educational Psychology service can provide training and support for schools wishing to set up Circles of Friends. The Council might wish to encourage the use of Circles of Friends by publicising and centrally subsidising this charged service to make its take-up more affordable.

11.6.11   This research project has identified three organisations in Gloucestershire which specifically support one-to-one relationships for disabled people through the recruitment of volunteers – Building Circles, Leonard Cheshire and the Independence Trust. It may well be that there are others as well. The Glos Assistants website also provides a noticeboard

through which disabled people can seek paid or voluntary assistants, either for care needs or simply for someone to share time and interests.

11.6.12   Building Circles has established one of the largest networks of volunteer/disabled person pairings in the country. They have achieved this by making careful matches through shared interests or likely character compatibility and by offering good support to volunteers – all backed up by group activities that develop a sense of belonging to something bigger than just a pairing.

11.6.13   Building Circles can already welcome young disabled people aged 18-plus and they are keen to explore expanding their service to include young people from the age of 16. This would potentially provide an ongoing link to a trusted person over a long period of time. A relatively small investment in Building Circles to achieve this is suggested at section 13.3.1 below.

11.6.14   Leonard Cheshire already runs a one-to-one volunteer support scheme, focused particularly on the 18-28 age group, and is currently exploring with GCC and the Learning Disability Partnership Board its possible expansion along similar lines to the Gig Buddies scheme in southern England. Gig Buddies recruits volunteers to go out and stay up late at music events with young adults who have learning disabilities/difficulties. Leonard Cheshire is looking at buddying across a wider range of interests than only music.

11.6.15   The Independence Trust has the recently assigned GCC contract for Community Autism Support and Advice. It recruits and trains peers with autism to accompany others and also helps bridge people with autism into community provision.

11.6.16   Another way to help people engage with their local community is simply to find activities/places that they are interested in and accompany them there. These do not have to be specially designed to welcome disabled people; they are just the same things that anyone else might choose to go to – eg the local church; the gym; a drama group; a community choir.

11.6.17   The role of the professional in this initiative is to find out what the young person may be interested in trying and then facilitating their involvement. It is likely to entail a conversation with whoever runs the group and a conscious approach in conjunction with the leader to seek the assistance of one or two members of the group who would be interested in looking out for the young person's needs.

11.6.18   This type of community engagement is in many ways the most 'natural'. If lots of activities routinely did this, there would be much less need for 'special projects' to address the social isolation of many disabled young people. There are some inherent risks associated with vulnerable young people linking with members of the public in this way, but interestingly there may be less chance of finding yourself with an abuser than in a dedicated

project to which dangerous volunteers know they can go in order to get access to disabled people.

11.6.19   An added protection might be to formalise the relationship by asking the member of the public to become an officially DBS- checked volunteer through an established agency like Building Circles. That might be preferred by some. But it removes the ordinariness that everyone else is entitled to as a citizen of simply joining things and making friends with some of the people there.

11.6.20   The need for a wide-ranging exploration of acceptable and unacceptable risk in relation to Community Engagement is considered separately at section 9 above.

11.7   *Building networks of support around an individual and their family.*

11.7.1 Young people and their parents benefit enormously from knowing that there are people on their side, rooting for them as allies. Some families will have developed such a network informally. Many will not. Some will have had support from a key worker, school or voluntary organisation to establish such support. For any young person and family who wants such a network, it should be our aim to have facilitated one by the time that the young person's post-16 provision ends. Everyone who wants it should have the ongoing support of one of these Circles of Support as they go out into the world.

11.7.2 What has traditionally been called a 'Circle of Support' is now – a little confusingly given that Inclusive Solutions give the same name to a different mechanism – often known as a 'Community Circle'. To avoid confusion, this report calls these clusters of people rooting for a young person a Circle of Support.

11.7.3 The core idea of a Circle of Support is that a few people known to the young person and their family are formally invited to meet together periodically. They discuss what the young person would like to be doing in the coming months and years, and they pool their brains to come up with ideas as to how they can help it happen. They are not expected to do all the hard work themselves but to share ideas and seek out other contacts who might be able to help as well.

11.7.4 Members of a Circle are generally not there in a paid capacity (though a Circle may include professionals who choose to be there); nor would it be part of a personal assistant or carer's paid role to be a Circle member (though again they might be invited in an unpaid capacity). Members are a bit like active godparents; people who know and like the young person – family members, neighbours, friends, past teachers, leaders or fellow-members of community groups, or sometimes volunteers recruited specifically for their interest in being in a Circle.

11.7.5 The organisation 'Community Circles' focuses its work on expanding the number of people who have a Circle of Support around them. They produce an excellent free set of resources, available on-line, explaining how to set up a Circle. https://www.community-circles.co.uk/ Some families will be able to do this on their own if shown the resources. Others will need some facilitation, either by a professional or by a volunteer recruited by a professional.

11.7.6 In addition to offering these ways of building lightly structured support, providers should make families aware of the various family support organisations in the county – eg Forest Pulse, Allsorts and The Spring Centre – as well as various social media forums. The county's recently revived Parent Carer Forum, currently hosted by Active Impact, can help with information.

12.0   Potential areas of County Council investment

12.1   *A central team specialising in Community Engagement.*

12.1.1 Post-16 providers will be able to offer some new opportunities through their own staffing. The type and extent of those opportunities will vary from provider to provider. In addition there is general recognition that a central team, similar to Forwards for employment, would be an important component of any serious commitment to Community Engagement.

12.1.2 The success of Mark Joyce's temporary role as a Community Placement Broker has indicated the potential for such a team. Especially given the fact that many students at post-16 are with providers who are based a considerable distance from where they live/intend to live, it is often not practical for their education/training provider's staff to know about or go with them to places, activities and people in the local area where each student will be living after their formal education finishes.

12.1.3 It would be helpful to have a central team who develop expertise in the various processes identified in this report for helping disabled young people become members of community groups, supporting them into the communities of which they will be part in the long term. Such a team could be established in-house or commissioned from the VCS. It should be established to dovetail with the work of Adult Social Care's Enablement Team and the Transitions Team. Learning from what works in supporting adults with autism from the CASA team at the Independence Trust could also help in establishing such a team effectively. Any new service should also liaise with the staff of the Community Wellbeing Service. Post-16 providers should be able to call on this proposed central team to support students with whom they are working.

12.1.4 If such a team were established in-house there might be an advantage in it becoming a separate part of the Forwards service, as this would give it immediate credibility with most post-16 providers. The disadvantage could be that Community Engagement might be seen as the 'poor relation' of a service that was established initially to promote the specific aim of increased employment.

12.1.5 Wherever such a team were to be established, it should be a priority to include disabled people with lived experience amongst the team members – as role models for the young people themselves, their families and to the community groups that might welcome them.

12.2   *Training and Support.*

12.2.1 The pilot parent training course run by Janine Smith has successfully brought together small groups of parents of pupils with SEN at the same school for mutual support and learning, sharing some activities with their children and having some conversations only with the other parents.

12.2.2 These courses could be offered much more widely, and there is considerable interest in having additional or parallel sessions set up specifically to address how best to balance risk and opportunity in the community – exploring what amount of contact people feel comfortable with and how best to manage acceptable levels of risk. Once they have left their post-16 provision, these judgements will rest entirely with the young people themselves and their families. We need to have assisted them in considering how they wish to manage this area of their lives in the future. Building Circles is also beginning to explore setting up a training course for parents on 'letting go', involving parent facilitators in its delivery.

12.2.3 It is very possible that the cost of such 'family learning' training can be met from adult education budget sources.

12.2.3 Training is available from Community Circles - https://www.community-circles.co.uk/ - in how to set up what have traditionally been called Circles of Support, but which are now also described as Community Circles. As mentioned above (section 11.7.5) they also make excellent resources available online at no cost to anyone who wishes to set up a Circle of Support/Community Circle.

12.2.4 The Council should consider bringing together a variety of people interested in setting up such Circles to learn in advance how to do so and then to keep in touch with one another about effective practice as the realities unfold.

12.2.5 The Independence Trust in Gloucestershire can also offer training in relation to setting up Circles of Support. ACSYL also has local expertise in this field.

12.2.6 As suggested at section 11.6.9/10, the Council might consider subsidising the cost to schools and colleges of purchasing training from the Educational Psychologist team on establishing Circles of Friends.

12.2.7 The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) offers training on 'Strategies for supporting individuals to build connections'. The training is based on its comprehensive Social Inclusion Training Pack (a hard copy of which is available through Active Impact), exploring how staff can support people sensitively in community settings. That pack includes dozens of practical examples of how individuals have been included in community activities. The principles are well outlined at http://peterbates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/almostinvisible03-2.pdf

12.2.8 The training in 'community mapping' offered by NDTi may be of use for those staff charged with developing awareness of the range of opportunities that might be made available to their young people.

12.2.9 NDTi also offers a day's training for teams to explore the balance of Risk and Opportunity in their working culture.

12.2.10 Peter Bates at NDTi could also lead sessions on risk and safeguarding concerns in the field of community engagement. Mixed groups of parents, disabled adults and professionals could profitably explore this territory together (see 9.16 above). Underpinning ideas are referred to in Appendix 2 and usefully outlined here - http://peterbates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/modellingriskmanagementininclusivesettings.pdf

12.2.11 Finally, and crucially, investment of senior leader time in a training/preparation programme for a range of staff will be required to ensure that Community Engagement becomes a priority for everyone responsible for discussing and writing EHCPs.

12.3   *Third sector provision and direct Local Authority provision.*

12.3.1 Building Circles currently provide one-to-one friendship support to adults with learning disabilities/difficulties over 18, plus some social groupings. See Sections 11.6.12/13. They are very interested in expanding their service to offer similar links to young people from 16 upwards. For around £15,000 per annum they could offer friendship support to between 20 and 30 young people.

12.3.2 The Council could also consider investing further in the work of ACSYL, who already provide intensive support to a small number of individuals who are particularly socially isolated with a view to engaging them in their community. Their commitment of time is more intensive and correspondingly more expensive. Real costs of expanding the numbers of people whose needs they meet would be around £54,000 for ten people in Year One and

£75,000 for maintaining those ten and adding another ten in Year Two. Currently individual personal budgets often contribute to these costs.

12.3.3 ACSYL's work has significant similarities with the Inclusion Facilitation provided by Inclusive Solutions, where the oversight of an Educational Psychologist is an additional factor in intensive work to help a young person develop a 'good life', characterised by the facilitation of community engagement. The Council should consider tapping in to the experience and expertise offered by Inclusive Solutions in this field.

12.3.4 Inclusive Solutions could also be invited to train or run a model pilot programme in the provision of Community Circles, either in the community or specifically for those with EHCPs in an individual school or college. See section 11.4.1/2.

12.3.5 The Council should consider contributing further funding to the types of provision described in section 11.3.1, as they can all evidence the impact of their work on disabled young people's lives. In most cases, the Council would need to take a non-traditional commissioning approach rather than investing in specific outcomes to be met either for the organisation or for each individual. The investment should be as a commitment to the process of open welcome and the building of relationships – trusting in the existing evidence that from that process will come individual and unpredictable outcomes of connectivity with other people and the community (as well as personal growth). As an example, see Appendix 3 where Fair Shares staff describe how such an arrangement might work for them. This is not to say that Fair Shares is 'top of the list' for such investment, but to give a real example of how such non-traditional commissioning investment might work.

12.3.6 In addition to considering support for existing provision, the County should seek to discover and support – or indeed provoke and initiate - similar values-based provision in other areas of relatively high population density, where provision can realistically draw on significant numbers of people – see section 11.3 and 11.4.

12.3.7 After various recent reorganisations of its Enablement service, any additional investment in the Council's own Drop Ins/Inclusion Hubs would benefit from being linked to a commitment to maintain a consistent role and level of staffing for several years. A commitment to similar long-term support for the Drop Ins/Hubs run by Inclusion Gloucestershire would help to create the security for staff that enables long-term relationships to be established with those who attend.

12.3.8 The Council should consider liaising with The Barnwood Trust and its Community Spaces initiative to identify, seek out and potentially support other provision which has core values of being welcoming and inclusive of disabled people. Those with EHCPs can then be offered links to such organisations.

12.4   *Transport.*

12.4.1   Accessing the local community can sometimes be impossible without access to reliable transport and/or the confidence to use it. Continued investment in Travel Training will remain an important consideration in relation to Community Engagement.

12.4.2   Community Connexions and a collection of organisations under the umbrella of Forest Routes currently provide community transport across the county. At present the focus is principally on older people needing transport between 9.00 and 5.00 on weekdays. However, the service is potentially equally available to disabled young people and can ensure safe customised door to door travel arrangements. To provide a regular service to an individual is not cheap, however.

12.4.3   Leonard Cheshire are about to take on the chairing of the revived Transport group, originally set up as part of the county's Building Better Lives programme, and its work should be aligned with the Community Engagement agenda.

12.4.4   Leonard Cheshire are already exploring the use of school minibuses, which often lie dormant in evenings, weekends and holidays. Many vehicles owned by care homes are also currently under-used. This exploration should be linked with the work done by the Gloucestershire Minibus Scheme in enabling organisations to share their minibuses with others - http://www.glosminibusscheme.co.uk/default.htm

12.4.5   The Council and that revived Transport Group might also like to explore the tricky territory of members of the community offering to use their own cars in much the same way as citizens frequently offer lifts to one another socially. There is an interesting discussion paper on this topic from Peter Bates of the National Development Team for Inclusion at http://peterbates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Can-I-give-you-a-lift.pdf

12.4.6   Indeed informal transport arrangements are likely to be the cheapest and easiest to set up if we approach the challenge differently. Our first instinct should perhaps not be to ask 'how can we as a provider get someone there?', nor 'how can we train someone to get there themselves?', but 'how can we connect that person with someone else who will get them there?' That is a community solution rather than a service solution.

12.4.7   The county's VCS Alliance has recently conducted a major piece of research into making available an app that can link those looking for lifts with those able to offer lifts. The Transport Group and the wider Council should give serious consideration to investing in this, as it could potentially facilitate transport not only for disabled young people but also for many others of all ages who are socially isolated.

13.0   Who might share responsibility for an expansion in Community Engagement?

13.1   'Added value non-qualification activity that supports the students' goals and is integrated into the study programme' is one of the Department for Education's required elements of post-16 education provision. Fundable activity includes 'Non-qualification hours – employability, enrichment and pastoral'. This includes 'enrichment, volunteering or community activities organised by or on behalf of the institution.'

13.2   The Code of Practice states (section 8.39 to 8.40): 'Where young people have EHC plans, local authorities should consider the need to provide a full package of provision and support across education, health and care that covers five days a week, where that is appropriate to meet the young person's needs.

Five-day packages of provision and support do not have to be at one provider and could involve amounts of time at different providers and in different settings. It may include periods outside education institutions with appropriate support, including time and support for independent study. A package of provision can include non-educational activities such as:

- volunteering or community participation
- work experience
- opportunities that will equip young people with the skills they need to make a successful transition to adulthood, such as independent travel training, and/or skills for living in semi-supported or independent accommodation, and
- training to enable a young person to develop and maintain friendships and/or support them to access facilities in the local community.

It can also include health and care related activities such as physiotherapy. Full-time packages of provision and support set out in the EHC plan should include any time young people need to access support for their health and social care needs.'

13.3   The Council should explore with post-16 education and training providers which elements of Community Engagement might best sit within the post-16 curriculum, and which might be more appropriately offered by the third sector or by a central team. Some customised support might also be triggered by an individual's EHCP.

13.4   FE colleges generally publish course details well in advance of their annual intake and welcome students from outside county borders with a curriculum offer that is consistent for all commissioning Local Authorities. Amending course content would be an important step and might well require some negotiation not just with the institutions themselves but with other commissioning Authorities. The Council should therefore consider raising the Community Engagement agenda with the West of England (post 16) Board, seeking buy-in from the neighbouring Local Authorities.

13.5   There might be value in the County seeking to commission some elements of Community Engagement directly from the third sector, perhaps bringing together senior commissioners from Social Care and Education to explore how best to achieve this and how best to align or combine budgets to do so.

13.6   In bringing together opportunities for young people to access greater Community Engagement through a combination of post-16 provider, central team and third sector activity, it should be recognised that the post-16 provider is the professional body which has the most contact with each young person at that stage of their life. All parties may wish to consider whether they wish to see the post-16 providers as having a principal focus on Preparing for Adulthood and becoming more explicitly 'the place at which and from which all elements of education, health and social care are coordinated'.

13.7   Once decisions are reached, led by the Council, about the extent to which this report will drive future work, an Implementation Group should be set up to include post-16 providers, parents, disabled adults and VCS representatives alongside statutory officers from Education, Social Care and Health.

13.8   There should also be opportunities for the post-16 providers to share their existing and emerging practice and to discuss developments amongst themselves - either being given protected time to do so as part of existing network meetings or in occasional new sessions dedicated specifically to Community Engagement.

14.0   Funding sources

14.1   Some of the initiatives suggested in this report could be taken by individual post-16 providers at no additional cost by re-prioritising the allocation of existing time and money. Involvement in some activities might be funded on an individual basis as part of a young person's Education, Health and Care Plan.

14.2   Some activities could be funded from outside of the usual education, health and social care budgets. Such activities would include family learning training programmes, which are potentially fundable through Adult Education. Some of the new activities suggested in this report might also be eligible for money from the Community Learning Fund.

14.3   Particular inclusive activity programmes, set up for disabled and non-disabled young people together, could potentially be funded by applications made by the provider (either alone or in conjunction with a partnering VCS organisation) to grant-making bodies that support a particular type of activity (eg arts, drama or sport).

14.4   If greater Community Engagement is to have its proper place of priority, however, it will also need funding from a variety of statutory service budgets. The Council will need to

consider how highly it values Community Engagement and determine any allocations or re-allocations of funding accordingly. Given the recent government announcement of some proposed enhanced funding for SEND, the moment is perhaps opportune.

14.5   The Post-16 High Needs budget is potentially the most significant source of funding. The Council should consider using some of this budget differently in future in order to facilitate greater opportunities for Community Engagement.

14.6   In reaching any such decisions the Council should involve representatives from the same cross-section of interested parties listed at section 13.7 above as prospective members of any Community Engagement Implementation Group.

14.7   In addition both children's social care and adult social care budgets might contribute towards the funding of new initiatives. Conversations with Health commissioners should also take place, as there is considerable preventative benefit for disabled people's future health in being established members of their community (see section 1.6 above).

14.8   The Council should also recognise the financial strain under which both Further Education and Social Care are already having to operate. Continued representations to national government on further upgrades to High Needs, FE and Social Care budgets should be part of the commitment.

15.0   Assessing the impact of new ideas in practice

15.1   Suggestions within this report regarding measuring impact are inevitably tentative, as it is the writer's role to make suggestions for action rather than to take the decisions based on those suggestions. Depending on what decisions are subsequently made, it is likely that some of what follows may be useful in measuring the impact of any changes that are instituted in order to promote greater Community Engagement.

15.2   Where possible, information should be sought through post-16 providers on the destinations of those students with EHCPs who have benefited from new Community Engagement activities. 'Destination' in relation to Community Engagement, however, is not so much 'where are they now? ' but rather 'what connections with places, activities and other people have been established and maintained?' and 'how well do they and those that care for them feel that they are supported by family, friends and members of the community?' It would be useful to ask ex-students and their families what did or did not happen in their post-16 education to contribute to how satisfied they are/are not in regard to their level of social connectedness.

15.3   It may be hard to establish a baseline with which to compare such future destination information, though encouraging the tracking of students who have recently left through standardised questions across the different providers could begin to achieve this.

15.4   Using a tool such as the Inclusion Web (see section 11.1 above) with students at the outset of their post-16 experience and again as they progress through that phase of their education could provide valuable evidence of success, readily linked to whatever interventions that had been introduced to assist them.

15.5   The Outcomes Star, currently being introduced at GlosCol (see section 11.2), might be another useful tool to measure progress. The exploration of these and other potential tools for identifying, planning and recording progress should form part of the ongoing discussions between the Council, its post-16 providers and the third sector.

15.6   Commissioning an independent external assessment of progress being made, either from University researchers or from an education/social research agency could provide not only some summative analysis of what had worked and why, but the expert's early involvement could also provide some formative guidance as to how best to identify and measure success from the outset.

15.7   An analysis of individuals' EHCPs from pre-16 onwards should also be able to track two vital elements of the intention to give a higher priority to Community Engagement – firstly, whether there is evidence of movement towards greater Community Engagement for each individual, and more fundamentally, to establish whether there is a higher priority being given to such engagement in EHCPs across the board than has been the case in the past.

15.8   Whatever decisions are taken as a result of this report, finding agreed ways of evidencing the success (or otherwise) of those developments which are pursued will be critical to ensuring that we all learn what works. That in turn will enable the Council to invest increasingly effectively, maintaining and extending the type of work that genuinely helps to transform social connectedness and fosters the better lives that disabled young people deserve.

Philip Douch, Active Impact, October 2019.

Appendices follow

Appendix 1 – Current good practice at The Apperley Centre

This year we have had community projects on a weekly basis with:

Gloucestershire Orchard Trust

This involves contact with other volunteers who are non-disabled.

Martin Hayes - 07900 985679. https://glosorchards.org/home/

Stonehouse Community Allotments

This involves contact with other volunteers who are non-disabled.

https://www.fairshares.org.uk/projects/stonehouse-allotment-project/

Wheels for All

https://cycling.org.uk/locations/gloucester-wheels-for-all

After some very hard work from a number of partners, most noticeably Leonard Cheshire there is a now regular presence of inclusive cycling activities in Gloucester at Blackbridge Athletics Track.

Access Bike in Stroud

This involves contact with other volunteers who are non-disabled.

https://www.accessbike.org/

The Pulse Disability Swim in Dursley

https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Services/13222

Everyone Active Gym in Stroud

This involves contact with other gym members who are non-disabled.

On a modular basis with:

The Hub and Pop-In at Stonehouse Community Centre

This involves contact with other people who are non-disabled.

http://www.stonehousecommunitycentre.co.uk

Weekly work experience at The Butterfly Garden for students who choose this.

http://www.thebutterflygarden.org/

Weekly work experience at the local Co-Op for students who choose this.

** *All of these (except the local Co-Op) can be continued once pupils leave school.*

Last year **Stonehouse Canal Trust** was also part of the community curriculum and will be offered again next year:

https://cotswoldcanals.com/

Treasure Seekers in Gloucester have also been welcoming and students have participated in this on a modular basis, and can choose to continue when they leave school

https://www.kftseekers.org.uk/treasure-seekers-hub

Comments:

- I would like to outline Gloucestershire Orchard Trust in more detail. Currently Martin Hayes who runs the Monday volunteer sessions is very welcoming and happy for anyone to contact him about coming along to volunteer. There are various tasks and activities that volunteers can take part in including harvesting apples, planting trees,

making fences, clearing pruned branches from the footpaths, cutting up branches into smaller more manageable pieces, making bug and bee friendly hotels, weeding and sowing wildflower seeds. The apples harvested go into making Trust Juice and the community benefits from the work of the volunteers.

- Community allotments in any area are also an invaluable way to make new friends and participate in a shared interest.

- Setting up activity groups in local care homes are also a good way for students and residents to make new friends with shared interests.

- Forwards have really helped one student access work experience through school with our support, which they are now able to continue with in the summer holidays, with transport organised through social care by Forwards.

- We also hold parents coffee afternoons around themes such as supported living and benefits where parents can meet others and gain support for services.

- As a group of Post-16 Departments in special schools we also hold an annual Transitions event for families and Post-16 students in special schools across Gloucestershire. We invite Forwards, Social Care providers and community groups such as those above from across Gloucestershire, to meet students and families and talk more about what they do and post-school opportunities.

Next year we plan to trial a free weekly community craft club at The Apperley Centre open to members of the public and any students who are interested. We have advertised it in The Stonehouse News and are asking people to register for it, to minimise risk and keep numbers manageable. We will hold it in our meeting/staffroom to which there is controlled access, to minimise risk to our students and the people who come along.

Cathy Bradshaw - Assistant Head Teacher

Head of Further Education, The Apperley Centre, The Shrubberies School

Appendix 2 – Risk management in inclusive settings

The following is an extract from 'Modelling risk management in inclusive settings' by Peter Bates and Wendy Silberman for NDTi.

By promoting opportunities for social inclusion, services increase the likelihood that service users will spend more time with people considered to be 'out' of the risk assessment and management process, and it is thereby assumed that risk increases to (and from) them. Most people who have used services have also been in contact with members of the public. However, in promoting social inclusion, services get more actively involved in promoting people's access to ordinary community facilities. Staff may not have thought through the implications of this beyond making a general assumption that risk and responsibility will increase as their control over the person's life decreases.......

We offer below a summary of some of the key features that need to be thoughtfully explored together in managing risks. Such a process includes:

• Involvement - of service users and their relatives in risk assessment and management. Staff must understand what service users and others want, how they view their own risks and what responsibilities each person has in managing risks effectively.

• Positive and informed risk-taking – so that quality of life is maximised while people and communities are kept as safe as can be reasonably expected within a free society.

• Proportionality – as risks become more severe, so the amount of detail and the number of people who may become involved correspondingly increases. The management of the risk must match the gravity of potential harm.

• Contextualising behaviour – why did this person behave in this way? At this time? In this situation? Is it likely to happen again in similar circumstances? What influence does culture, religion or gender offer to understanding the behaviour? Can you distinguish between the static and dynamic risk factors?

• Defensible decision making – there is an explicit and justifiable rationale for the risk management decisions, based on adopting a proactive and investigative approach to gathering and evaluating information in respect of risk – what has worked and failed in the past.

• A learning culture – so that organisations avoid fear and blame and learn from mistakes of the past in order to continually improve. There is a culture that acknowledges rather than hides early warnings or near misses and openly explores explanations through the sharing of risk between team members.

• Tolerable Risks – "To tolerate a risk means that we do not regard it as negligible or something we might ignore, but rather we need to keep under review and reduce still further if and as we can". (Royal Society, 1992)

Appendix 3 – Possible investment –

How Fair Shares might work with young people with EHCP

Reciprocity – giving and taking is at the heart of everything we do

Background: Fair Shares has been established since 1998 and was the UK's first time bank. Our work continues to be based on time banking, a two way volunteering system that values people for the time they give and receive and the contribution they make to the community. We support people to help each other, share experiences and make friends. We encourage everyone to work together to build supportive, sustainable and resilient communities.

'Fair Shares is based on an approach which uses time banking as a Community Development tool which promotes our value systems of acts of kindness. People give and receive. Some may give or receive more but ultimately there is giving and receiving which changes the lives of both and of others.'

Our Premises: Our Gloucester time bank is based at the rear of the Friendship Café in Painswick Road. We have access to the main hall where we hold group activities and have a separate fully equipped wood workshop and an allotment nearby. All the premises used by participants are on the ground floor.

Our Staff are experienced in working with groups and individuals, and have experience of supporting people with additional needs, who lack confidence to participate and may have poor or limited communication skills. All staff have DBS Enhanced status checks and have undertaken safeguarding and first aid training. Staff are supportive and will help set up activities but are not necessarily available throughout the activity. Depending on the level of support needed, people may need to bring a support worker.

Our Participants: We have around 300 participants in Gloucester with around 150 people active at any one time. Anyone can join Fair Shares, provided they engage with the ethos of giving their time to others (and in return receiving help). Most of our participants have mental and /or physical health conditions, learning disabilities or have experienced economic disadvantage.

Young People Project: We are unable to work with young people below 14. Many of the young people who join the project have had difficult school or family experience, many feel

anxious about themselves, or felt out of place at school and sometimes bullied. They face self-confidence and self-esteem issues that impact on their day to day lives. Our project provides practical activity often as a group but can be individually, developing some practical skills and physical activity alongside a subtle approach to mentoring and coaching. We want the young people to become more self-reliant and be more willing to give things a try.

Our approach to meeting the needs of young people with disabilities or additional needs, addresses:

- Social exclusion – we know that the young people may have experienced difficulties in building social networks and friendships, and our work provides the opportunity to do so in a supported environment, as well as access to the 'safety net' of the wider time bank.
- Independence – the young people may have had few opportunities to develop independence away from family and support systems.
- Confidence – particularly for those who have not succeeded in school environments, self-esteem and lack of confidence can be a real issue – our work enables people to build confidence and try out new activities at their own pace.

All our community activities are real and meaningful. Some young people have said '*It's the first time I have been thanked for doing something*'.

What we can offer: We recognise that not everyone can give to the same extent nor in the same way and time banking enables people to give as much or as little as they feel capable of. People with health conditions often find they have good and at other times less good days. Time banking allows for that fluctuation. Our approach is tailored towards the needs of people who are less likely to participate in community groups or formal volunteering. The activities provide a safe and supportive space for people who may not be able to engage in other groups or traditional volunteering due to, for example, a lack of confidence and self-esteem or support needs. Participation may then increase this confidence and support allowing them to go on to engage with further volunteering or pathways to work.
We offer opportunities for people regardless of age to be part of community activities. This includes 1:1 activity and group activities. Activities currently include:

Weekly lunch group and pool group, a Craft group, Wood workshop, Thursday Allotment group, Trips throughout the year to places of interest, One to one activities.

We are always interested to hear of new activities that participants want to do and are willing to help with.

Outcomes: In all our activities the outcome we seek to facilitate is more social interaction. Time banking is the tool which enables this to happen as an organic process. We don't necessarily 'buddy' people up. Whilst doing something together conversations emerge over time. This is not a requirement or a given. For some people the physical presence of other

people can help them feel part of that group, even if they don't interact much with them; it's possible to be in the group, feel part of the group, gain benefit from the group, without making a new 'friend'. We do find that friendships develop and then take place beyond the realm of Fair Shares. We are not always aware of this; it is sometimes revealed in casual conversation. We don't have resources to track this in a coherent way.

Capacity to work with those with EHCPs: To maintain our approach of working with the individual, getting to know them, building trust and confidence and finding out what works for them is resource intensive**.** Working with young people, especially those who have not had a wide exposure to being in a mixed setting, often requires a more focussed approach initially. They may have little experience of being with a wider group, may lack confidence or have anxiety about being in such a group, yet may not be in a position to undertake practical activities on a one to one basis.

How we would monitor and evaluate EHCP work: Our principal source of information is feedback from people. This may be as a result of sitting down and having a formal chat or it may be an informal chat as they pursue their activity or at a social event . We undertake themed evaluations (Young people/ older people/ people with health conditions etc) and surveys. We seek feedback from our stakeholders. It takes time for people to settle into activities and develop trust so therefore we don't seek feedback until people have been involved for at least 6 months. We provide funders' reports where required. We are rarely funded to undertake evaluations, yet it is vital to evidence the impact of what we do.

Funding: We raise funds primarily for our organisation through grants and trusts which accounts for 89% of our income. A high proportion of our income is through annual grants, which means we are constantly seeking new and different approaches to funding. Annual funding whilst very welcome creates a higher risk to the organisation's sustainability and costs the organisation more in fundraising resources. Therefore we are increasingly seeking more 3 or more year agreements. Whilst we want to include more people from all and any background in our activities we know that our current staffing resources are at the limits of what we can offer. If we were to take more young people with EHCPs we would need to consider what additional resources are required to support the work. Whilst volume would be an issue we would not want a price per head approach. We would need to employ additional resource.

Time broker/evaluator/case study collector 22.5 hours per week @ £22,200 + pension, NI	£15,000
Training/ DBS/ travel etc	£1500
Office + management costs (finance . CEO , office etc)	£5000
Total	£21,500

This does not include any specialist equipment or resources we might need for specific individuals.

Numbers: In terms of numbers 15-25 seems realistic. They wouldn't all be attending all the time and for some it may be a relatively small amount of time. We would need to know beforehand that they had an EHCP so that we could ensure we were capturing information and were able to track individuals. There would also need to be a conversation about the degree of difficulty and complexity for the young person. If lots of them had very complex needs then our capacity would be at the lower end of the number or even fewer.

I think it would need to be a 12-18 month pilot approach to test out how it works from our and the Council's perspective. It would be the case of 'best endeavours '. If we recruited a new person to take on this role and the numbers didn't work out we could not afford to have money taken back, though the individual would be recruited on a fixed term contract.

Appendix 4 – The research process

In the course of his research Philip visited each of the following post-16 education and training providers to speak with appropriate senior staff members:

- Bettridge School
- National Star College
- St Rose's School
- Alderman Knight School
- Heart of the Forest Community Special School
- Apperley Centre, Shrubberies School
- Hartpury College
- South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
- Cirencester College
- Gloucestershire College (GlosCol)
- Ruskin Mill College
- William Morris College
- Prospect Training Services
- Bridge Training

In addition there were two meetings of a Reference Group, which included staff from some of those post-16 education and training providers, County Council officers, leaders of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, parents of disabled young people and disabled young adults themselves.

Face to face meetings were held with senior Adult and Children's Social Care staff and with a cross-section of VCS providers, with some of Inclusion Gloucestershire's peer mentors and members of its Gloucester Inclusion Hub.

Useful insights reflected in the report came from a Canadian research paper called 'Voices of youths on engagement in community life: a theoretical framework of belonging' - https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1583551

An Interim Report was shared with all who had been consulted and its availability and an invitation to feed back was publicised through the VCS Alliance and GRCC e-news bulletins.

Web research triggered by the National Development Team for Inclusion also took place.

Thanks are due to all who have contributed in any way to the production of this report.

It became evident that there is always more to discover and that there are doubtless more people with whom valuable conversations might have taken place. Whilst this particular piece of research is now complete, continuing discussions and sharing of ideas and information should continue.