

# Higher Folds Community Centre

## Evaluation of the BIG Lottery funded project

Into the Future  
2008-2013

and

continuing evaluation of further  
progress to date



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## Higher Folds Community Centre – Into the Future 2008-13

### Self-evaluation of the project – at August 2014 and continuing evaluation of progress to date

#### 1. Introduction and methodology for our self-evaluation

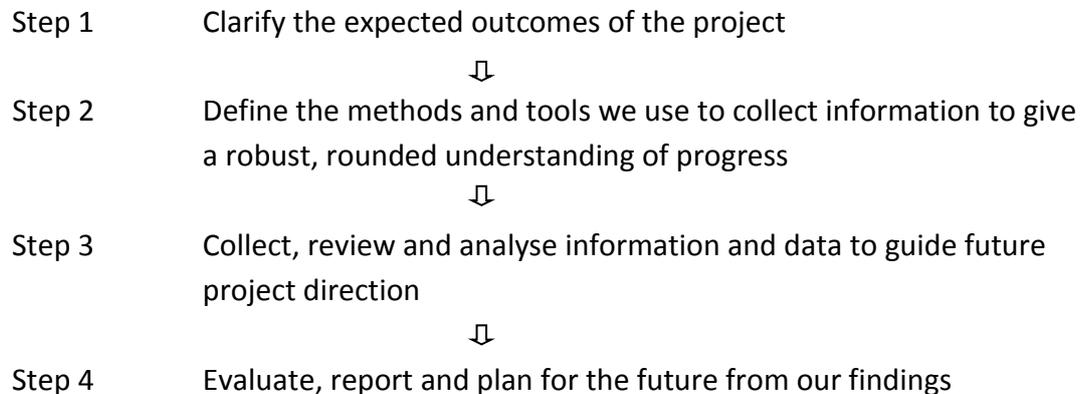
1.1. Self-evaluation of the BIG Lottery funded project “Into the Future” and further evaluation since the end of the funding period has been carried out by the staff of Higher Folds Community Centre, who managed the project, with contributions from other stakeholders including:

- Beneficiaries, existing customers and potential customers of the project whose issues we were addressing and whose needs it was our aim to meet through our activities.
- The Management Board of the Community Centre, who had strategic responsibility for delivering the project.
- Volunteers and tutors who took an active part in delivering the project.
- Partners in the project, mainly Wigan Council through the Deal for Communities and other public, private and third sector partners involved in the work of the Community Centre as a community hub.

1.2. To carry out the evaluation we used three sources of guidance:

- BIG Lottery Fund – Understanding self-evaluation
- Charities Evaluation Service – first steps in monitoring and evaluation
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Evaluation Resource Pack

1.3. From these we used a four step approach to evaluate the work of the project, as follows:



1.4. Each outcome will have an information collection tool or method to gather the data about project users.

1.5. The evaluation will also consider the effectiveness of Board, staff and volunteers in delivering the project.

## 2. The work of the project – Into the Future 2008-13

2.1. The project had six planned outcomes these were:

<b>Outcome number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Planned number of beneficiaries</b>
1	People will have better life chances through training	8,800
2	Local people gain IT skills in the IT Suite	200
3	Local people attend confidence building	2,000
4	Active citizens attend citizenship development activities in Wigan and Greater Manchester	440
5	Older people to attend healthy eating and exercise classes	3,500
6	The benefits of the project will be sustained longer term, after funding from BIG ends	Ongoing

2.2. In its work Higher Folds Community Centre has the following objectives:

<b>HFCC Objective</b>	<b>Links to project outcome number</b>
To improve the fitness and health of local people	5
To improve life skills and chances of employment	1,2,3,4
To reduce isolation	1,2,3,5
To be an effective organisation	6

2.3. To meet the strategic priorities of Wigan Council which are:

Strategic priority	How the priorities will be achieved
<b>Confident places</b>	By improving economic and social opportunities; developing an attractive, accessible and lively borough, with a prosperous economy as the location of choice for investment
<b>Confident People</b>	By Protecting vulnerable groups and enhancing self-reliance. Improving life opportunities and independence for everyone to start well, live well and age well; particularly for those most dependent on public services.
<b>Confident Council</b>	By re-focussing its reduced resources towards early intervention and prevention to achieve more for less – integrating public services around whole life issues to build self-reliance and maximising community assets

2.4. BIG Lottery Reaching Communities aims include:

- People having better chances in life, including being able to get better access to training and development to improve their life skills
- Strong communities, with more active citizens, working together to tackle their problems
- Healthier and more active people and communities.

2.5. The planned BIG aims and outcomes, Higher Folds Community Centre objectives and Wigan Council strategic priorities have a planned link to address issues and meet needs for the benefit of the local community in their day to day lives.

2.6. The project, centred on Higher Folds Community Centre, is aimed generally at people living in the WN7 postcode and specifically the 3,500 residents of the Higher Folds estate which is geographically isolated.

2.7. Our market research in 2012 through Local and National statistics shows the following:

- Higher Folds North is in the bottom 1% of generally deprived communities in the United Kingdom.
- Higher Folds South is in the bottom 10%.
- Both communities are among the most deprived in Wigan.
- GCSE attainment is well below the national average.
- Income deprivation level is higher than Wigan and the UK.
- Child development at age 5 is 20% lower than UK.
- Unemployment is 50% higher than UK average.
- General health is 30% worse than UK average.
- Levels of binge drinking and poor eating habits are higher than the UK average.
- Emergency hospital admissions are 26% higher than the UK average.
- Life expectancy is 5 years less than the UK average for both females and males.

2.8. These are the conditions the Centre works in and the issues facing local people. The Project, Into the Future, takes action to address these issues and meet the needs of stakeholders. These statistics will form the benchmark to improve on for any future projects.

2.9. Surveys and previous evaluation

2.6.1 Prior to the External Evaluation there is little evidence of large scale consultation with users of the project. Consultation was through users completed customer questionnaires and these unanimously felt the Centre was a great place to visit and the project was doing what it promised.

2.6.2 The External Evaluation by G & M Associates was the first true measure of the success of the project and to evaluate the project they interviewed users and stakeholders who all felt the project was a success, numbers using the project exceeded the originally planned numbers and the project was giving value for money to funders and users.

2.6.3 Wider consultation on the project took place after 2011 and this is discussed in more detail in section 5.3.

2.10. Reporting on progress of the project

2.7.1 In July 2011 the Centre appointed a new Manager to develop and improve the progress of the Project.

2.7.2 Ongoing reporting on the progress of the project and involvement of staff and volunteers was improved as follows:

- BIG Lottery continued to receive their annual returns showing performance against each planned outcome.
- Board received regular reports on the progress of the BIG Lottery funded project at their formal monthly meetings.

- Staff were included in the discussion around reports to Board on the progress of the project. Volunteers were involved as appropriate and given more praise for their valuable work.
- Wigan Council received regular updates on progress through meetings involving local Councillors and the local Town Manager.
- Other public services were also given updates as required through the Higher Folds Strategic Group meetings and other media as appropriate.

### **3. The methods and tools we used to collect our information and monitoring data**

3.1. Monitoring data on people using the project was collected by keeping attendance records for each session. The summarised information shown in the table in section 4.1 shows performance for each project outcome.

3.2. Project user's progress was tracked to ensure they gained benefit from the Project to address their issues. Examples of project users and their achievements are in section 4.

3.3. We also collected data to ensure equal opportunities for activity users.

3.4. The following data and information collection and management methods and tools are used to understand the progress and success of the project:

- Stakeholder meetings with partners in delivering the project including:
  - Higher Folds Strategic Group (includes local public service and other partners working on the Estate)
  - Wigan Council
  - Trust in Leigh
  - Other public services
- Customer surveys – face to face, through customer comment cards and through comments on social media
- Board reports and minutes covering:
  - Strategic direction of the project
  - Financial management of the project
  - Use of resources on the project. Staff, equipment, volunteers and premises
- Annual Report of the Higher Folds Community Centre
- Volunteer health check, recruitment and training
- Governance health check, strategic management and training

#### 4. Review and analysis of the information and data and End of Grant Return to BIG Lottery

4.1 To measure the performance of the project and provide Board, BIG Lottery and others with information on the project recorded data against each planned outcome was:

Outcome number	Description	Planned number of beneficiaries	Actual number of beneficiaries	Successful based on numbers attending
1	People will have better life chances through training	8,800	26,820	✓
2	Local people gain IT skills in the IT Suite	200	210	✓
3	Local people attend confidence building	2,000	2,590	✓
4	Active citizens attend citizenship development activities in Wigan and Greater Manchester	440	330	
5	Older people to attend healthy eating and exercise classes	3,500	13,480	✓
6	The benefits of the project will be sustained longer term, after funding from BIG ends			See section 7 for actions taken to provide a long term future for the Community Centre

4.2 In summary the performance against planned each Outcome was:

#### **4.3 Outcome 1 - People will have better life chances through training**

All milestones were exceeded except “call centre training”. A planned course was cancelled due to the continued unavailability of the trainer.

Particularly successful were:

- Brownies
- Family drop-in sessions and youth activities

The milestones were comfortably achieved during the project and we have used these sessions to develop future activities in the Centre to ensure we continue to be a well used, popular venue.

Work Clubs enjoyed an increase in popularity as training improved in partnership with Job Centre+ and also “drop-in” sessions were introduced for people who were unable to attend formal sessions.

Improved budgetary training was developed with Wigan and Leigh Housing to support their tenants through difficult economic times.

TH a young mum from the Higher Folds estate came to the family drop-in sessions on Monday and Thursday mornings with her young child.  
She later volunteered to work in the group and took advantage of the training around preparing for work and also gaining IT skills.  
This led to part – time work in the Nursery and TH is now a full-time employee and training towards being a Deputy Manager.

#### **4.4 Outcome 2 - Local people gain IT skills in the IT Suite**

All planned milestone targets were exceeded.

Bedford High School have continued to use our IT Suite to train disaffected young people and have supplemented the IT course with other outreach work from the Centre.

The Work Club and IT courses have ensured the number of people using the Centre for IT training has exceeded expectations.

The Centre now has Wi-Fi throughout the building and other rooms have been used to deliver IT courses using our lap-tops and customers bringing their own equipment.

There are numerous examples of people gaining benefit from using the IT skills courses.

Two young people now volunteer at Youth Group and teach other young people social media and use of software skills in the Group.

A number of older residents learnt how to get online and access the internet for benefits and other general living information.

Another volunteer in the Centre, HL, studied the European Computer Driving Licence in the IT Suite. This led to her being given a modern apprenticeship and she is now an employee of the Community Centre.

#### **4.5 Outcome 3 – Local people attend confidence building**

Confidence building has been popular during the life of the project.

We have had to redesign some activities to engage with local people and this has centred around the Work Club, work with the School for Social Entrepreneurs and work in the Youth Club and activities involving SureStart, Gateway and Wigan and Leigh Housing.

A great success has been work we have developed with 5 Borough's (Health) Partnership, Dementia UK and Alzheimers UK around confidence building and activities for dementia and stroke sufferers.

Confidence building courses in the Community Centre have proved a great success, mainly with younger women.

One example is JH, who has now formed her own small company As in Eden, has since become a local clergy and did lead the most recent confidence building course.

The examples mentioned in 4.3 and 4.4 also attended the course.

Six attendees from the latest courses have also formed their own businesses and five have gained employment through their new skills. The self-employed have included a cruise boat singer and a high quality buffet service.

Another example has been the regular reading group for those living dementia, those recovering from a stroke and their carers which encouraged all attending to play an active part in reading popular books based on local and historical subjects.

#### **4.6 Outcome 4 - Active citizens attend citizenship development activities in Wigan and Greater Manchester**

This did not meet the planned number of beneficiaries. There has been a dramatic decline in this area of activity, with very little opportunity to find a solution to meet our desired outcome and milestones.

Wigan Council have cancelled their residents forums and Wigan and Leigh Housing have allowed the Residents Association to disband. Alternatives have not yet been identified by either organisations to allow us to offer "citizenship" opportunities.

In an effort to give some decision making opportunities to local people we have set up a group called "Parent Voice", which is made up of local people who want to have a say about developing facilities for young people. Their thoughts are helping us shape our future plans.

Nothing really developed from this. At the Centre we tried to deliver our own version of the course without any interest from local people.

The success from this initial failure has been the creation of Parent Voice (now Community Voice) a group of local parents who are working in the community to support local families who are isolated. They meet in and use the Community Centre for their activities which include, support for single parent families and families living with autism.

#### **4.7 Outcome 5 - Older people to attend healthy eating and exercise classes**

These milestones have been very comfortably achieved due to the popularity of the activities. The Centre is very well used by older people seeking advice on their diets to improve their health, taking part in moderate physical activity and taking part in arts and crafts activities. A trainer attends our older persons group every week to run a fitness session.

The physical activity classes have included a measured weight loss, fitness improvement session and proved popular.

The Friday Golden Years club has always included an arm-chair exercise session regularly used by 20+ people. This has now been developed into a weekly Tai-Chi session and we are joined by residents and their carers from Heathside Adult Centre for those living with dementia. Wigan Leisure Trust ran their “Lose Weight Feel Great” session at the Community Centre. This was initially aimed at women but due to the course content and popularity was attended by men as well. Everyone who attended lost weight.

#### **4.8 Outcome 6 - The benefits of the project will be sustained longer term, after funding from BIG ends**

Every effort has been made to make the Community Centre more sustainable and we have taken advantage of the opportunities presenting themselves to us in particular and generally to the third (charitable and voluntary) sector in Wigan.

The Management Board are acutely aware of the need to ensure the sustainability of the Community Centre to address the issues of local people and meet their needs. The activities of the Centre are constantly reviewed and new activities and opportunities are considered for their effectiveness and viability. We work very closely with Wigan Council to support their strategic priorities, to be part of the Deal for Communities and they in turn invest in the Centre through the Community Investment Fund. The Centre has also opened a 2 Year Olds Nursery to address local early years issues and meet a need not provided locally.

Our present Vision is “To be the centre of excellent community facilities and business events in Higher Folds and surrounding areas of Leigh”.

This vision is changing with more emphasis on addressing issues and meeting needs providing community facilities and helping and supporting local businesses, both existing and start-ups and those people wanting to improve their employment prospects. This is something our Management Board are continually reviewing but to put it simply, we always aim to be a true community centre being a community hub available to and used by everybody in the community.

During the project “Into the Future” we continually improved through the following actions:

- A Business Plan and Marketing Plan were commissioned with funding from Reaching Communities Fund.
- The Centre Manager completed the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses course to give the Centre the business skills to be economic, effective and efficient in its operation. Only 1/5 applicants are accepted on this course which includes organisations from all sectors.
- A Growth Plan for the Centre was developed from this course to give the Centre strategic direction. This is regularly updated.
- The Centre is a member of Manchester Business Growth Hub who provide business development training.
- Board have recently completed training through Wigan and Leigh CVS to improve their strategic thinking
- We have developed partnerships with:
  - Wigan Council who have designated the Centre as a community hub and invested in the Centre through the Deal and Community Investment Fund
  - Wigan Council for training courses in the Centre
  - 5 Boroughs Partnership to deliver courses for the elderly
  - Wigan Leisure Culture Trust for health, leisure and sporting activities for young people and new projects to involve many young people
  - Wigan and Leigh Housing to involve local people in using the Centre more
  - Wigan and Leigh Voluntary Sector Assembly, the Centre Manager is a Board member, who are involved in reshaping the third sector in Wigan Borough for the benefit of all stakeholders to continue delivering high quality public services
  - Resolutions Family Mediation Service who are BIG Lottery funded and work with isolated families in the local community
  - Trust in Leigh around volunteering opportunities and training to improve employment prospects

- An Early Years 2 Year Old nursery has opened and managed by the Community Centre. This has recently been extended to include a pre-school nursery.
- We are working closely with Wigan Leisure Trust and Sport England to develop sport and leisure facilities on the site.

Most of these actions have resulted from consultation with our existing stakeholders on what they would like to see and use the Centre for in the future. Regular consultations and surveys have taken place across the life of the present funded project.

The progress against milestones has been recorded and measured regularly and reported annually. Surveys have confirmed the quality of our activities and numbers attending have supported this.

Generally progress has been good to excellent and we have responded to changes where necessary with your approval.

With the failure of the “citizenship” opportunities we responded as soon as practical with the new residents group Parent Voice. This group has been very effective and we expect they will play a vital role in shaping our future.

## **5. External evaluation of the project and latest surveys**

### **5.1. A brief summary of the External Evaluation**

The External Evaluation by G & M Associates was the first true measure of the success of the project and they interviewed users and stakeholders who all felt the project was a success, numbers using the project exceeded the originally planned numbers and the project was giving value for money to funders and users.

### **5.2. Recommendations by G & M Associates**

5.2.1 G & M did make a number of recommendations to improve, which included:

- Board should become more strategically focussed, not dwell on operational issues.
- There should be a regular agenda item on Board meetings to allow Board to see the progress of BIG Lottery and other projects and facilitate strategic decisions on project work.
- Board training on strategic management.
- Review of promotional material.
- Review of Business Plan and Annual Report and Accounts.

5.2.2 One area **not** mentioned by G & M was the need to consult more regularly and in greater numbers with local residents, both users and non-users of the project to understand if needs were being met.

### **5.3. Actions taken following the evaluation by G & M Associates**

5.3.1 The following actions were put in place:

- The Board Agenda was redesigned to cover the following items:
  - Good governance (minutes, matters arising, future items)
  - Managing the risks (Money, staff, health and safety)
  - Planning for the future and strategic planning (Community engagement, update on, planning and reviewing the BIG funded project “Into the Future” and other projects,
- Board members were given training, delivered by CVS, on Board Governance accredited by the Open College.
- A new brand, website, Facebook page and Twitter account were created to help the Centre and project communicate better with existing and potential users.
- A Growth Plan was developed in conjunction with Board and working with stakeholders to identify future plans for the Centre. The Growth Plan is regularly reviewed to take account of stakeholder requirements and financial developments affecting the Centre.

#### **5.4. Surveys on the project**

5.4.1 To understand local issues and needs from different perspectives and to gauge whether they are being addressed there have been a number of surveys of local residents, both users and non-users of the project and the Community Centre since the External Evaluation by G & M Associates in 2011. These have included questions on the project “Into the Future” and also what people feel is required to address issues and meet their needs in the future:

5.4.2 November 2012 – a questionnaire was delivered to households on the Higher Folds estate, 450 people responded, 48% of those delivered.

5.4.3 December 2012 – the Christmas party was consultation day.

5.4.4 In April and July 2013 we consulted local people again and since April 2014 have been carrying out a house to house survey on the Estate to capture people’s thoughts on the success of the “Into the Future” project and future plans. This survey is ongoing and will continue into the foreseeable future to continually capture the thoughts of local people.

5.4.5 The surveys generally reflected the strategic priorities of Wigan Council who feel that the issues and needs of local people have not particularly changed and future work on the estate should continue in the same direction as previous years.

**5.5 In summary so far,** users of the “Into the Future” project and together with stakeholders, including Wigan Council and BIG, thought the project had been a great success. Clearly, there is still much work to be done to address local issues and meet the needs of local people and Higher Folds Community Centre is in an

ideal position and is the right organisation to provide services and support to local people as public services ability to do so rapidly reduces.

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations from the project “Into the Future” – moving forward**

### **6.1. What worked**

6.1.1 Generally the project was a great success.

- Used by considerably more people than originally planned.
- Popular with users who benefitted greatly from the project.
- Financially well managed, the project delivered within budget.
- Good feedback from users and stakeholders.
- Worked well in partnership with stakeholders, especially Wigan Council.
- Identified many possibilities for the future of the Community Centre to address local issues and needs.
- It was value for money for funders.

### **6.2. What didn't work**

6.2.1 In the early years of the project:

- Consultation with users of the project was limited to customer questionnaires when they were using the project.
- There was no wider consultation on the estate.

6.2.2 Board did not take a strategic view of the project until it was identified in the External Evaluation and they received guidance and training.

6.2.3 Marketing and promotion of the project was limited, especially digital marketing via the website and social media.

### **6.3 What we could do better**

6.3.1 Looking back at the project there are number of things we could have done better.

6.3.2 **Community engagement** was needed to identify potential future customers and alert people to the activities of our project. This has been addressed to some degree by the recent surveys including the ongoing house to house survey and the daily use of digital media to contact people and let them know of our activities and collect their views.

6.3.3 **Review and improve activities.** The activities of the project had become static and there was a danger issues weren't being addressed needs weren't being met. Gaps had appeared. The activities at the Centre were in danger of becoming stale and needed freshening up. This has now happened as we continually research and establish the needs of partners and local people.

6.3.4 **Work with partners.** We are doing considerably more work with partners now from the public, private and third sectors to ensure we meet local needs in the

best possible ways. The main partnership working is through the Wigan Council Deal for Communities.

- 6.3.5 **Continually improve the skills of Board.** The Board of the Community Centre, who strategically directed the project, benefitted considerably from training they received. Before this they had been too immersed in the day to day running of the Centre rather than the strategic planning for the project.
- 6.3.6 **Continually improve the management of the Community Centre.** The business of managing the Community Centre is important to the success of this and future projects. Continual improvement happens in the areas of financial management, staff development, building improvement and management and building partnerships and working relationships with other organisations working in the local area.
- 6.3.7 **Introduce new activities to be more self-sustainable.** During the project the only trading activities were around room hire on a casual and wait and see basis. This is now more proactive, the 2 Year Olds Nursery has been established and we work with the Council and other agencies to make best use of facilities at the Centre to generate trading income.
- 6.3.8 **Realise and develop opportunities.** There are two local businesses who rent office accommodation in the Community Centre and contribute towards our sustainability. One is Resolutions Family Mediation who are also funded by BIG Lottery, the other is an IT company who provide support to local businesses.

#### **6.4 Benefits to users**

- 6.4.1 Users certainly benefitted from the project. The number of people who used the project far exceeded expectations and the activities they took part in addressed the needs of local people identified in the planned outcomes.
  - 6.4.2 User surveys confirmed they and stakeholders were happy with the project and this was confirmed in the External Evaluation.
  - 6.4.3 Recent surveys have confirmed people are happy to use the project and the Centre and have confirmed their future needs.
  - 6.4.4 Wigan Council have invested in our role as community hub as they recognise our contribution to the local area and support we offer to their role as they operate with reducing resources.
- 6.5 Board, Staff and volunteers have all played a vital role in the project delivery, confirmed in the External Evaluation. They have all benefitted from training and development and will be integral in the future of the Centre.
- 6.6 The Project gave value for money, again the External Evaluation confirmed value for money was true of the project. This is confirmed by the financial monitoring to Board,

the management of cash flow and financial reporting to BIG, Companies House and the Charity Commission.

6.7 To keep the Project on track and give strategic direction the Centres Vision, Mission and Values have been reviewed as the project progressed. They are available to view at the Centre’s website [www.higherfolds.co.uk](http://www.higherfolds.co.uk)

6.8 Overall the project was a great success and feedback and evaluation has confirmed this. Other funders and stakeholders have continually invested in the Community Centre and its activities and we plan for this to continue in the future.

6.9 There has been continuing investment in the Centre and continual improvement and development in our work is explained in more detail in Section 7.

6.10 The next project “The Hub of the Community” is planned and many activities are in place already to address issues and meet the local community needs identified by:

- The strategic priorities of the Deal working with Wigan Council.
- The strategic priorities of other local public services.
- The strategic aim and priorities of BIG Lottery Reaching Communities funding - bringing real improvements to communities, and to the lives of people most in need.
- The results of our surveys of local people, both users and non-users of the Community Centre and “Into the Future” project.
- The Objectives, Vision, Mission and Values of Higher Folds Community Centre and 2 Year Olds Nursery.

6.11 The continuation project “The Hub of the Community” project plans to deliver the following outcomes:

<b>Planned outcome</b>	<b>Wigan Council The Deal strategic priorities and Vision 2015 - 2020</b>	<b>BIG Lottery Reaching Communities Aims</b>	<b>HFCC Objectives</b>
The fitness and health of local people will be improved by using the health improvement and sporting activities of the project	Live well	✓	Improve fitness and health
Local unemployed people will have improved employment skills and prospects through the basic and	Live well	✓	Improve life skills and

vocational skills training delivered by the project.			chances of employment
Use of the social activities provided by the project will reduce isolation of older and vulnerable people	Age well	✓	Reduce isolation
Young people will have improved life skills leading to better personal resilience and understanding of the impact of negative behaviour from their involvement in the regular activities of the Project	Start well	✓	Improve life skills

6.12 With further funding from BIG Lottery the next phase of the Higher Folds project plan will become a reality to address the issues faced by residents of Higher Folds and meet their many and complex needs.

## **7. Further developments at the Centre since July 2013 when the BIG Lottery funded project “Into the Future” ended**

- 7.1. The success of and lessons learnt from the BIG Lottery funded project “Into the Future” has driven continual development and review of the activities of the Centre with our major partners for the benefit of all stakeholders.
- 7.2. There is a clear need for innovation of our activities, and to review and develop activities and groups to continue the success and sustainability of the Centre.
- 7.3. A strong working relationship has been formed with Wigan Council through the Deal for Communities, Delivering the Vision 2015-2020 and the Community Investment Fund. As the Council resources have reduced and their ability to deliver local services has also reduced the Council have invested £80,000 over a two year period to develop the Centre as a community hub to address local issues and meet local needs. The work of the Centre to meet Council strategic priorities has been around:

### **Employment**

- Working with people wishing to improve their employment prospects. This has generally been on a one to one basis as the principle of a traditional class based Work Club is not proving effective at present, although our plan is to provide a formal setting in the Centre and we are working with Trust in Leigh and Power in Partnership Training Centre to introduce these formal sessions in early 2016.
- There have been some notable successes in the past eighteen months:
  - Three local people are now employed by the Centre and in the Nursery in the Centre.
  - One local person is a modern apprentice with the IT Company based in the Centre.
  - One local person is employed part-time by Resolutions Family Mediation who are based in the Centre.
  - Five new businesses have been created in the past year following on from the Participatory Budget event in the Centre. These are small businesses around arts and crafts and working with children and families with ongoing issues and needs.
  - Two people who the Centre supported have set up a catering company and also work in the local catering industry.
  - The number of individuals visiting the Centre for advice and one to one sessions has increased. 5 in 2014 up to 13 so far in 2015.

- A joint working project with Joining Communities an organisation working with people with mental health issues who wish to improve their employment prospects.

## **Young People**

### **7.4. Youth Group**

- The weekly Youth Group has gone from strength to strength. Over 70 children are on the register and attend regularly. The planned programme of activities including trips to places local children rarely get the opportunity to visit have considerably improved the life skills of children aged between 5-15 and has reduced the anti-social behaviour in the local area.
- Visits for over 50 children have included East Lancashire Railway and Manchester United Stadium Tour.
- Planned themed activities have been around monthly themes, healthy eating and living, effects of smoking and drugs, conflict resolution, sexual health, dog and animal welfare and gardening as well as regular activities associated with a youth club.
- Greater Manchester Police statistics show there has been a reduction of 70% in the number of reports of anti-social behaviour on the nights we hold activities for young people.

7.5. The Centre has opened a 2 Year Olds Nursery and subsequent pre-school nursery which has helped isolated families give their children a strong start in their early years education. After six months the 2 Year Olds Nursery was rated as “Good” by Ofsted and the Council feel we are now delivering “Outstanding” sessions. We also work with the local primary school, St Gabriel’s to ensure we are preparing our children for a smooth transition when they start primary school.

7.6. To engage with another group of children we have supported a team of local volunteers who have formed Leigh Folds Junior Football Club. Since June 2015 over 60 local boys and girls have joined the Club, which has 5 mixed junior boys and girls teams in local leagues and 1 girls team. The Club use the Community Centre as a base for their meetings and home matches and we work together to engage with the local community. Since the Club was formed there has also been an increase in attendance at Youth Group and at the Wigan Athletic KICKS community football sessions at the Centre on Monday nights.

7.7. Brownies and Guides have recently received an injection of cash and increased numbers which has in turn increased their vibrancy and popularity.

## **Isolated families**

7.8. To support families who are either isolated or face issues affecting their daily lives we work in partnership with:

- 7.8.1 Community Voice – a local group who are identifying isolated families and guiding them to join in socially and giving advice, guidance and opportunities to improve their lives. A number of successful events have been run jointly with the Community Centre and these regularly attract over 30 families.
- 7.8.2 Resolutions Family Mediation – is an organisation based in the Community Centre whose main role is to improve the lives of children and the knock on effect on their families by resolving conflict in their lives. They have had many referrals from our partners, the Centre Nursery, St Gabriel’s school and the Council Gateway service.
- 7.8.3 HMRC re tax and benefits advice – hold a weekly advice service in the Centre every Thursday. On average 3 people per week use this service.
- 7.8.4 Wigan Citizens Advice Bureau and Wigan Advice Network have an advice point in the Community Centre. Local people can contact CAB through Skype and take advice without leaving the estate and travelling to Wigan, 8 miles way.
- 7.8.5 The Centre also holds a monthly social activity for families called Family Gang. Essentially it is a Saturday morning club for families to get together, do activities, eat together and generally socialise to improve local harmony.
- 7.8.6 This is followed by Hope Group, formed to support families living with Autism and other similar conditions.
- 7.8.7 Jigsaw Group meets every Tuesday to support families living with Autism.

### **Isolated older people**

- 7.9. Older isolated people and those living with dementia and other age related issues can come to the recently created games sessions and bingo which we run in partnership with Age UK for Higher Folds people. An indoor bowls competition is planned for January 2016. Older people also use the long established Monday Craft Group and Friday Golden Years.
- 7.10. If a snapshot of groups had been taken at the end of the previous project “Into the Future” then the picture today would be totally different. To ensure our community engagement it has been essential to regularly review activities and drop unpopular sessions at the same time give displaced people the opportunity to take part in new activities. There are now many more regular local groups in the Centre and as a result increased numbers.
- 7.11. One bonus of the changing structure of the activities, events and groups has been the increase in the number of volunteers. We presently have eight and these people are gaining valuable work experience and we also give training support to help achieve their full potential.

7.12. The Centre has become much more business-like in its approach to delivery and is supported by Manchester Business Growth Hub. As well as creating the Nursery and generating regular income the Centre has also let two office spaces in the Centre, giving further fixed income. One to Express IT Solutions and the other, Resolutions Family Mediation.

7.13. Reports to Board are much more business-like and Board receive information which helps them focus their thoughts on improving our role as a community hub.

7.14. A major event this year and in the history and development of the Centre was the Greater Manchester Police Participatory Budget event “We Decide” held in January 2015 in the Centre and in partnership with the Centre. 110 people turned up on a cold January day to vote for their favoured projects.

Ten local groups made a bid for and each received up to £2,000 each to develop activities and events in the Centre and on the estate to address the issues of local people. The groups had to meet the strategic priorities of the Wigan Council Deal and involve local people. Recipients of the money included, Brownies, Youth Group, Family Gang, Golden Years, Hope Group, Jigsaw and others. So far over 300 people have benefitted from the resultant activities.

7.15. The latest market research by ourselves and the Council shows the many issues still facing the area, these are:

- Facts and figures about the Higher Folds area:

	Higher Folds North		Higher Folds South		Wigan
Category	%	Number	%	Number	
Population – total		1,598		1,591	
Aged 0-16	19.9	318	23	366	
Aged 17-64		1,007		964	
Aged 65+		234		219	
Number of households		796		642	
Households with no adults employed	52.3	416	41.3	265	35%
No adults employed – with children	7	59	10	65	5%
No adults employed – no children	45	357	31	200	31%
Dependent children in those households	24	192	35	225	30%

Dependent children aged 0-4	11	90	15	94	12%
Children in poverty	33.8		37.4		18.9%
Benefits claimants	35	370	24	245	15%
Index of Multiple Deprivation		66.6		45	
One person households – all ages	25	395	11	167	
Aged 65+	6	101	4	59	
With a long term health problem	39	313	32	208	29%
With long term health problem with children	6	45	8	51	5%
With long term health problem no children	34	258	24	157	24%
Residents over 16 with no qualifications	39	491	31	385	27%
With 2 A levels	5	62	8	96	11%
With degree	4	45	6	69	10%
With professional qualification	4	56	8	98	11%
Children with good Early Years development	28		46.7		55.1%
Adult population taking part in sport/activity of moderate intensity on Higher Folds	19.9		19.9		
Residents day-to-day activities limited	30.2		23.4		
Residents with poor/very poor health	11.9		9		
Life expectancy - males	74.3		74.3		77
Life expectancy - females	76.3		76.3		80.8
Annual Anti-social behaviour incidents		186		69	
Annual Youth's causing annoyance incidents		54		14	

7.16 In reality little has changed since the statistics were last studied. The statistics above show that in the Higher Folds area:

- The number of residents is constant, 3,200+
- There are 1,438 households
- The age mix has been constant. 684 under 16, 1,971 between 17 and 64, 453 over 65.

- People unemployed and benefits claimants remains higher than the Wigan level and more than 50% higher than UK average
- Both areas are more deprived than Wigan and much more than UK level
- Almost double the number of children live in poverty compared to the Wigan level
- General health is more than 35% worse than UK level
- Life expectancy rates are lower than Wigan and UK levels
- There is low level of sporting and activity participation compared to Wigan generally
- The level of early years development is lower than Wigan and UK

7.17 There have been many successful cases as a result of the project “Into the Future” and the partnership working with Wigan Council. However as we have delved deeper through our joint working it has become clear there are still many issues to address and individual cases to support which we are approaching through our partnerships with Wigan council, Greater Manchester Police and others. This situation will potentially worsen as public services cope with reduced budgets. To alleviate this impact Higher Folds Community Centre has been designated a community hub by Wigan Council to act on their behalf in such cases.

7.18 To further emphasise the need for the Community Centre as a community hub, Wigan Council have announced they will be closing their 16 Sure Start centres in early 2016 to be replaced by a network of community hubs. Apart from Higher Folds Community Centre the next nearest “hub” will be over 3 miles away.

7.19 In its document; “Our Vision: Confident Place – Confident People 2015-2020”, Wigan Council has stated it will:

- Support an aging population to live healthier and longer
- Support adults with chaotic lifestyles
- Support children to be school ready
- Build on the strength of communities
- Increase the skill levels of the population and reduce unemployment
- Support flexible delivery of services in communities
- Have integrated services with families and communities at heart
- Support start well, live well, age well strategies
- Invest in community led solutions
- Work with partners
- Empower the community

7.20 These actions reflect much of what takes place at Higher Folds Community Centre.

## **8. Summary of developments since the end of the “Into the Future” project**

- 8.1. From the first project “Into the Future” we learnt we could be successful by working with our partners, especially Wigan Council and by communicating and consulting with the local community.
- 8.2. Regular communication and consultation is essential to be able to respond to the requirements of local people and partners and we have developed this over the past eighteen months through house to house visits and extensive use of social media.
- 8.3. The partnership with Wigan Council has developed and we are part of their plans for their Vision 2015-2020.
- 8.4. We learnt there were a number of things we didn’t do well or could have done better and plans and actions have been put in place to improve these.
- 8.5. We are building on our successes these will help us be more effective in the future.
- 8.6. We have opened a Nursery and leased 2 offices to local organisations. These generate regular income to make the Centre more financially self-sustainable.
- 8.7. Board and staff are continually trained to meet the demands of the changing environment in which the Centre works.

## **9. The planned project “the Hub of the Community”**

- 9.1. Centre has planned a new project “The Hub of the Community” to build on the success of the project “Into the Future”.
- 9.2. It will be based on the successful activities of the first project, building on the successes of the past eighteen months since the end of the first project and incorporating the work we are doing with Wigan Council and other partners as part of the Deal for Communities to address local issues and meet local needs.
- 9.3. The project will address the issues of:
  - Health and well-being of local people
  - Isolated families and older people
  - Improving skill levels and reducing unemployment
  - Young people having better chances in life
- 9.4. To enable “the Hub of the Community” to be a success funding will be required to cover the cost of employing project staff and paying for the various activities to deliver successful outcomes for Higher Folds people.
  - The fitness and health of local people will be improved by using the health improvement and sporting activities of the project.
  - Local unemployed people will have improved employment skills and prospects through the basic and vocational skills training delivered by the project.
  - Use of the social activities provided by the project will reduce isolation of older and vulnerable people.
  - Young people will have improved life skills leading to better personal resilience and understanding of the impact of negative behaviour from their involvement in the regular activities of the project.

