



<b>Forum Area or Division:</b>	Carlisle - Carlisle wide
<b>Reference:</b>	CCGA/1997-24
<b>Group Name:</b>	The Laurie Brewis Trust (Heathlands Project)
<b>Community Development Officer:</b>	Jackie Hayhow
<b>Community Development Assistant:</b>	Joanne McKenna
<b>Amount Requested:</b>	£4,632.00
<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	£4,632.00

## APPLICATION REPORT

### Application Summary

The Laurie Brewis Trust is a charitable organisation located at Heathlands that provides activity groups for vulnerable adults in Carlisle and Brampton. The activities include art and textile groups and therapeutic seated aerobics. These activities are run under the banner of Better Together. Better Together's mission is to create inclusive communities for vulnerable people through activity, socialisation, and shared interest. This is designed to improve mental and physical well-being, instil educational skills, and provide sustainable friendship groups and resilient community networks. The goal of Better Together is to create a sense of belonging and community among vulnerable people by providing them with opportunities to engage in activities that they enjoy and that promote their well-being. By doing so, Better Together hopes to improve the mental and physical health of these individuals, while also helping them to develop new skills and form lasting friendships. The project is open to older adults, learning and disability groups, adults suffering from degenerative conditions, and adults suffering from poor mental health, and is designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all.

Better Together is a successful project that offers a program of community activities. The project has grown and now provides seven activities with an average of fifteen people attending each activity. The Better Together project has shown that there are many vulnerable people who want to socialise and can be helped by providing purposeful and well-designed activities that improve mental and physical health. Better Together creates an environment for socialisation and networking by utilising good venues and high-quality facilitators. This community investment will secure the running of three successful and established activity groups we currently run in the Petteril Community Panel area. These groups include Crafts at Harraby Community Centre with 20 participants, Seated aerobics at Harraby Community Centre with 35 participants, and Seated aerobics at Currock Community Centre with 15 participants. Each of these projects are established and well-attended. Further to this, it will help sustain us to provide community transport links through a 16-seater vehicle for those who would otherwise be unable to attend. This community investment will pay towards venue hire, transport, and facilitation. We currently work in partnership with iCan Wellbeing Group and Delicate Stitches who facilitate these activity groups. To keep these community activities running, we need your investment to ensure financial sustainability over the short term until we secure a larger funding bid (The National Lottery) with the aim to ensure these projects will continue to benefit local communities in the long term.

In recent years, and especially since the Covid pandemic, we have noticed that there are gaps in the services that support vulnerable people to engage in activities with others, leading to isolation. Community groups adapted to the needs of vulnerable people provide an opportunity to build relationships with others, gain skills and confidence, improve wellbeing, access support and advice, lead more purposeful fulfilling lives, and for some, can provide a route towards employment. With the benefit of assistance from the National Lottery, yourselves, and our charity reserves, we can continue to provide a wide range of groups that help older adults, learning and disability groups, adults suffering from degenerative conditions, adults suffering from poor mental health and isolated individuals. We aim to continue operating the three projects mentioned above in their current form. Each of the activities are at or near capacity, and charges to attend are £3 to £4. Participants would be challenged to pay more. LBT is able to cover shortfalls in provision costs from our reserves, including the use of our adapted vehicle. In addition to a facilitator, each group requires a trained, experienced, and flexible team member to support participants given their needs. This role includes driving participants to attend in our vehicle, ensuring the

group runs safely, leading and guiding volunteers, supporting individuals who may be distressed or confused, have physical challenges, need to discuss difficulties in their lives, or address a host of other issues as they arise.

This investment will help seventy people who currently attend these three activities to continue participating in them. It's important to run inclusive and accessible sessions like Better Together seated aerobics, which are physical, sociable, and fun. These sessions help people stay healthy and give structure to their day. Anthea, who attends seated aerobics at Currock, says, "I love getting out, chatting, and keeping my body moving. Just keep the activity going!" These groups provide participants with a regular, safe, and secure place to attend and offer a purposeful activity that they will enjoy. They also help people become part of a thriving local community.

Arts and textiles give people the chance to relax, get creative, and forget about troubles in their lives for a few hours each week. Kathy, who attends our craft class at Harraby, said, "I love these textiles sessions. They are always new and give me something to look forward to each week." Art is fundamental to our mental and physical well-being, just like exercise and meditation. Research by the Mental Health Foundation suggests that art helps boost confidence, making us feel more engaged and resilient. It can also alleviate anxiety, depression, and stress.

Community engagement activities are becoming increasingly recognized for their benefits and cost-effectiveness, particularly for isolated individuals. These activities help reduce social exclusion, loneliness, and demand on NHS services. Many individuals from hard-to-reach groups require activities that take into account their physical, mental health, or cognitive needs, as well as an open-minded and welcoming environment that encourages people with difficulty and disadvantage. By attending specialist community activities, participants gain confidence, friendships, engagement through participation, and a sense of purpose. This provides a springboard from which attendees can grow their participation in more mainstream activities.

Our aims are to:

Create strong communities and support networks. To keep people from feeling isolated and lonely, it is key to provide opportunities to meet in the community. We do this by providing an array of activities in Carlisle.

Increase confidence, independence, and wellbeing for beneficiaries. Allowing people the chance to participate in enjoyable, meaningful, and healthy activities in comfortable surroundings and sociable environments not only provides physical and mental wellbeing but also increases confidence and independence.

Provide continuous fun and meaningful activities for all vulnerable groups. One size does not fit all! We understand that a range of activities with different approaches are needed to make people enjoy and take part. We therefore develop and specialise our sessions to suit people's needs.

### **Key Themes Met**

Council aim - improve health and wellbeing of our residents.

Petteril investment priorities - Emotional / Wellbeing / Mental Health

Better Together is a project that aims to bring communities in Carlisle and the surrounding areas together by increasing transport links and providing a variety of activity groups. The project uses local community centres in key geographic locations to allow more people to attend and takes a holistic approach to building strong communities.

The activities offered by Better Together are designed to improve the mental and physical health of vulnerable adults. The project aims to help participants access activities that will improve their connections to the community at large, increase their confidence, and allow them to increase their ambitions. Social networking, fun, and activity purpose are the top priorities of Better Together's activities.

According to recent responses from beneficiaries, 71% of participants found physical health improvement (especially mobility), 89% stated that they had increased the size of their social group, 91% that their mental health/wellbeing had improved, and 72% felt they had increased their independence after 6 months or more of attendance. This shows how the Better Together project contributes to the Cumberland Council's aim of improving the health and wellbeing of residents and also one of the investment priorities for Petteril Community Panel - Emotional/Wellbeing/Mental Health.

### **Number of People Benefiting**

50 - 100

### **Breakdown of Project Costs**

Costs to cover for three months

£1,980.00 Seated Aerobics - Currock community centre

£2,094.00 Seated Aerobics - Harraby community centre

£1,752.00 Craft Textiles group - Harraby Community Centre

Income

£528.00 Seated Aerobics - Currock community centre

£1,392.00 Seated Aerobics - Harraby community centre

£768.00 Craft Textiles group - Harraby Community Centre

The Better Together Project has applied for funding from The National Lottery 'Awards for All' to keep these essential groups going. We

are expecting a response by April.

We plan to apply to The People's Postcode Lottery when the funding round opens in March.

We have been successful in funding applications from the following: The Lottery, The Lottery 'Funding For All', The Cumbria Foundation, The Postcode Neighbourhood Foundation and the Longtown and Brampton Rotary. These have funded the Better Together project for the last four years.

A breakdown of where the participants reside is appendix A

Investment recommendation

£2,000.00 - Petteril

£1,000.00 - Carlisle West

£500.00 - BFNC

**Previous CCC Funding**

£3,752.00 - 2022 from Cumbria County Council for a new community T-shirt printing group

**Grant Amount Recommended**

2,000

**Officer comments**

This investment is only for three months due to one funding stream coming to an end and they are waiting for an outcome from National Lottery and other providers

**Comments from Elected Member(s) / Neighbourhood Forum / Grant Panel**

**Member Signature:**

**Date:**