

# HIGHLY COMMENDED

Each year staff at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) nominate projects and initiatives that have achieved positive local change. This year's commendations were announced during the CLES summit in July. They highlight good work around some of the themes of this year's summit – creating resilient places and local transformative change. CLES was particularly interested in highlighting schemes that show the value of strong relationships, networks and connections across all sectors. **Clare Goff** takes a look at the three winners



## PENWITH PATHWAYS TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING: A NETWORKED APPROACH TO WELLBEING

health inequalities and boosting wellbeing.

As one wellbeing facilitator says: 'I look at the underlying causes to the health problems that have caused them to seek a doctor's appointment in the first place (e.g. social isolation) as well as more standard things such as weight management groups. I try to look for things like the walking project, Mobilise, which offers people a chance to be active and talk to people too.'

Extra activities such as yoga and healthy eating have been provided and a free counselling scheme set up to help patients

Concerned at the high numbers of people coming to their surgeries with non-medical conditions, GPs in Penwith wanted to find a better way to treat those suffering issues such as mild depression, isolation and addiction. Penwith Pathways to Health and Wellbeing was set up to signpost people towards wellbeing services from yoga and healthy eating classes to weight management and companionship.

The project created a one-stop shop for services, and wellbeing facilitator roles to guide patients through it. With much of its population living in rural areas, an online database in GP surgeries has helped even those in the most sparsely populated areas to find help, and the relatively small interventions are helping tackle broader issues of poverty and deprivation in the locality.

The project is run through the Penwith Community Development Trust but works on a multi-partnership basis, linking up with the local council, health centres and volunteer bureaus. GPs and other health professionals can refer patients to the wellbeing facilitators, who then identify and find solutions to health issues.

It was chosen for a commendation for helping to link primary care to the wide range of support offered by the VCS, creating a more holistic approach to tackling

talk through their issues. A volunteer befriending project, the Penwith Pals scheme, has proved crucial to the success of the project. Linking volunteers with those looking to make changes to their lives, it provides social and community interaction for both volunteer and patient. Befrienders provide companionship and support for those suffering from isolation, for example, helping older people complete simple tasks such as the daily crossword.

The project has proved a great success in helping promote ideas for wellbeing, improving social cohesion and building confidence and self-esteem among the local population. The accessibility and low cost of the activities has meant they have been readily taken up, while the single point of contact for referral has helped GPs who often don't have time to keep track to the services available for those in need of lifestyle interventions.

Those involved in running the project pinpointed its flexibility – helped by a partnership-based approach – as key to its success. Partners have been able to respond and adapt to the needs and successes of the project as they have emerged.

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