

The Impact of Swansea Council for Voluntary Service Community and The Potential Disadvantages It May Face

Throughout history people have always been taught about the importance of community and immersing yourself within one. To have the support of a community can mean a sense of belonging can be felt from being surrounded by like-minded individuals who have the same attitudes, beliefs, values and the same focus when wanting to meet a specific goal (Standford Social Innovation Review, 2015). The value of community can also mean that the quality of life can be felt by those within it from ensuring life is lived to the full such communities being able to provide always having somewhere to go, people to turn to in times of need and offer different types of support including medical, physical and financial support. (Grinde, 2009, p. 588). Within this report included will be the findings of the impact that one distinct community has within the Swansea area including a background on the community, further communities it supports with examples and the challenges that this distinct community has faced and may face within the future.

The Distinctive Community

Swansea Council for Voluntary Service

A very distinctive community within Swansea is Swansea council for voluntary service, the creation of this community came from the need to help the smaller voluntary communities within the surrounding area which is up to 300 and those who volunteer within these communities. The community of Swansea council for voluntary services sets out to be a hub that can provide help, advice, information and guidance to these voluntary communities and be a voice of representation when they need it. The community was founded in 1969 from when Swansea City Council realised that voluntary initiatives needed to be developed further including providing better support to voluntary communities (Swansea Council Voluntary Service, 2016). The community is made up from like-minded individuals who want to make a difference within voluntary communities from including actual volunteers from the communities they support to be able to offer a direct insight on how to help, specialist that are knowledgeable in how to make a difference through their actions and those with qualifications that offer insight into the government and policies that need to be followed that ensure they are going down the right path while making a difference (Swansea Council Voluntary Service, 2015).

Examples of the Different Communities that are Supported

The Neighbourhood Project

Our neighbourhood Project sets out to help communities within the Swansea and Neath that are at a less advantage when it comes to health promotion. The project provides support through volunteers which all share the same end goal which is trying to better enrich those within the communities' lives. The neighbourhood project does this through making healthcare more accessible within the communities such as setting up healthcare services that are in demand within the area that otherwise can't normally be accessed, promoting the sharing of knowledge and information to improve wellbeing and using existing resources that the community has but ensuring they are being

used to their full potential and make an actual difference for health promotion within the community (Swansea Council for Voluntary Service, 2019).

Within communities that have poor health outcomes from inequalities in healthcare services, resources or poor attitudes that community typically has towards the importance of health promotion, projects such as our neighbourhood are vital. When health promotion is encouraged within these communities it can have many affects from empowering individuals to take charge of their own health and want to make a difference for themselves to teaching them on what tools they need to maintain a healthier lifestyle (South, 2014, p. 82). It also encourages other changes that benefits their whole community such as communities being around for longer from improved health, healthcare resources will become more available for those within the community who truly need it and allow the discovery of other healthcare services that can make a difference than just those that concrete on the existing common health problems that community has faced due to poor health promotion (Kumar, Preetha, 2012, p. 7).

The Dementia Community

Another community that benefits from Swansea council for volunteering service is the dementia community, the community provides this community by encouraging volunteers to form friendships or long-term support relationships with those with dementia to help improve the social aspect of their life (Swansea Council for Voluntary Service, 2019). The volunteers are instructive to encourage those with dementia to use services that the Swansea dementia community provides from them all of which will encourage their social abilities such as helping them visit the dementia hwb throughout Swansea that are available which offer support and information on the condition for those living with it, participate in group activities that are specific po those with dementia like group walks or coffee mornings to sport clubs created that carry out of sports that help those with dementia but also offer a social element by members having the same illness resulting in relationships being created from being able to relate to one another (Dementia Friendly Swansea, 2023).

For someone living with dementia the biggest impact it has is with their cognitive development which includes ability to interact with others, participate in conversations, speak for themselves or be able to join in with social activities. However, with this programme setting out to superficially empower those with dementia maintain their social skills from the encouragement of using the services that are available to them, those cognitive symptoms can be felt a little less than those with dementia not having any social interaction. The changes that social interaction for someone with dementia can bring is to be able to maintain relationships that were created before their diagnosis, recognise social ques and communicate with confidence including starting and keeping up conversations. (Maki *et al.* 2020, p. 514).

The Mental Health Community

A third community which is hugely impacted by the community of Swansea council for voluntary services is the mental health community within Swansea, they are supported by the multiple programmes that are ran to provide support to those within Swansea who are struggling with their mental health.

One example of this is a programme ran by them called the mental health and well-being projected. This project encourages volunteers to provide social support to the victims of ill mental health by supporting and accompanying them to take part in social activities that are outside their normal comfort zone in order to build self-confidence and social skills, encourage to take back their life

before their mental health took over by carrying out activities they use to love and seek out like minded individuals who are also struggling with mental health through support groups in order to have support from people who understand. The purpose of this community supporting the mental health community with social support is to be an advocate to them to remind them what life was like before mental health took over their life (Swansea Council for Voluntary Services, 2015).

A second example is the mental health forum this community runs, instead of being a support to the mental health community via volunteering to specifically help an individual person, the forum is a place where a wide range of volunteers come together to support the mental health services throughout Swansea. They support the services through being a direct advocate for the patients using the services by making sure the services are providing the highest standard of care possible, truly understand the needs of their patients and to establish wide channels of communication between all those involved in the progress of a patient's journey within the mental health service system to ensure the outcome of the patient's journey is clear. The forum meets on a regular basis to get updates from service providers and service users to ensure any changes that they are fighting for are being seriously considered and taken on board (Swansea Council for Voluntary Service, 2018).

For those struggling with their mental health one of the biggest effects either they have an anxiety disorder or depression their social interaction, confidence and abilities is one of the first things to be affected, so by communities like the Swansea council for voluntary service providing social support to the mental health community can make the world of difference. Social support encourages an individual to maintain their social skills and not shy away from social interactions, maintains their confidence of not letting their mental health getting the best of them in social situations and reminding them they have a community to depend on when needing extra encouragement when needed to perform outside of what they are comfortable with. By having social support for someone with a mental disorder can make the world of difference on how they value their life and attitude to wanting to live life without having their mental health affect their life (Harandi, Taghinasab and Nayeri, 2017, p. 5218).

Findings of the Swansea Council for Voluntary service Community

With the findings this report has discussed there is no denying the positive impact the Swansea council for voluntary service community makes through supporting so many other communities within Swansea, however as this community is based on volunteers this means there is a possibility that at some point, they may see themselves at a disadvantage or being challenged to continue to make a difference.

One disadvantage or challenge this community they may find is a struggle to recruit volunteers, as this community as shown the importance volunteers make to them as they are at the forefront of every support programme they run to help communities, as the cost of living continues to soar most volunteers are unable to commit or spare hours to volunteer to support the different communities from having to choose to work in a job where they get paid, sign up to work additional hours and be tighter with their budget such as making journeys that cost additional petrol money they have no budgeted for and no longer can afford (Turner, 2022).

A second issue for this community could be the availability of providing support to communities from volunteers only being available only at certain times from every demanding increase that will be seen as the years go on (Southby, South and Bagnall, 2019, p. 908). For example, as we are an ageing population by the year 2050 there will be a record number of people over 60 years old, which

means with an ageing population comes conditions that develop with old age such as dementia (World Health Organisation, 2022). An additional problem for this issue would also be if the cost of living continues then so will the rate of people struggling with their mental health (Swansea University, 2022). The demand these issues will put on communities such as Swansea council for voluntary service will be increasing the number of volunteers, they provide to help these communities.

Swansea council for voluntary service community ability to provide support to other communities in need cannot be question from the community wanting to help all different health and social communities either that is socially or emotionally. This community has shown what an impact it makes to other communities within Swansea and the importance of volunteers. With what the world is currently going through the cost of living and being an ageing population does hold a potential threat to this community but only if it lets it. This report has shown the findings this one specific community within Swansea has made with examples of the further communities it supports and potential challenges the community may face as the years go on.

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