

Community-led approaches – Community Hubs

This resource forms part of a series by Healthcare Improvement Scotland on community-led approaches.

Community-led approaches are an approach to the design and coordination of the way services operate. They emphasise relational care and support centred on outcomes – finding out what really matters to people and bringing in the care and support from across the system. Community-led approaches better meet people’s needs in the community, and by doing so reduce the need for more downstream services. For more information on this series or community-led approaches please contact his.transformationalsystemchange@nhs.scot.

There are four key components to community-led approaches:

- **ensuring community-based access (covered in this resource)**
- support driven by [good conversations](#) between services and those they are supporting
- co-ordinated service response that enables people to receive holistic support without facing siloed services
- maintained connections between services and those they are supporting to ensure someone has a consistent relationship that enables better access to support

1 What are Community Hubs?

Community hubs provide a base for community-led approaches. They are open spaces where health and social care and voluntary groups work together. This supports local needs, enhances health and wellbeing, and lessens the burden on primary and secondary care. The best hubs are where the community already gathers and connects. Often, these are not public sector buildings.

They are places for:

- [good conversations](#)
- drop-in clinical services
- support groups. and
- pop-up clinics

“It is easy, and less daunting to come in for information and a quick chat about something that has been worrying me”

Community hub user

The aims of community hubs aim to:

- **increase access** - community hubs are easy to reach and help people get support quickly. They base themselves in the community and work to reduce waiting times
- **prevent negative outcomes** – community hubs help people early on, so their health does not get worse. They also help people find support for other health issues, like loneliness. They address factors that can harm health, such as poor housing
- **work based on a person-centred design** – community hubs offer many kinds of support. This person-centred design lets care stay flexible. Working together improves how we organise care. Voluntary services also help people set personal goals alongside clinical care
- **empower** – people have more control over their care. They can see what services are available and have more choices

2 What do they look like?

2.1 located in the community – community hubs should be easy to reach. Great places include leisure centres, community halls and centres, and shopping spots, including cafes, in the city centre. It is about being where people are. This will make it easy for them to drop in as part of their daily lives, not feel like they are heading to an appointment.

Example - Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership offer a flexible space based in a shopping centre. The space includes:

- clinical areas for vaccinations and check-ups
- community spaces for talks with voluntary organisations, and
- workshop areas for activities and group support.

I learned about services I had no idea about”

Community hub user

2.2 Includes a blend of providers – community hubs bring together various providers. This helps people find the right support. Services can also work together to think about how to best support someone together. The key to success is joint working across third sector services, social work, and health services.

They could have the following from statutory services

- social workers (variation in which roles)
- community nursing
- senior access social workers, and
- home care representation.
- administrative support
- community mental health support
- community connectors
- integrated rehab teams
- technology enabled care teams.

They could be joined by third sector organisations such as

- mental health and wellbeing
- recovery from addictions
- cost of living support
- independent living employability
- unpaid carers support
- safer mobility
- home safety
- women’s and men’s health
- managing long term health conditions

They may also host a range of clinical services like

- blood tests
- vitamin B12 injections
- chronic disease management
- health visitor checks
- respiratory clinics
- Spina Bifida health checks
- atrial fibrillation health checks

Community hub’s services need to align with the needs of local communities. Think about how often certain conditions occur, the local population, and the area's deprivation levels. As you work with communities, you will discover what supports people's wellbeing. This knowledge will help you grow.

“I learned about services I had no idea about”

Community hub user

2.3 A welcoming atmosphere - Community hubs should be a warm physical space. One that includes nice places to sit, refreshments, and decorations. Some hubs have 'greeters'. Their job is to welcome people. These staff members help people feel at ease and show them what is available.

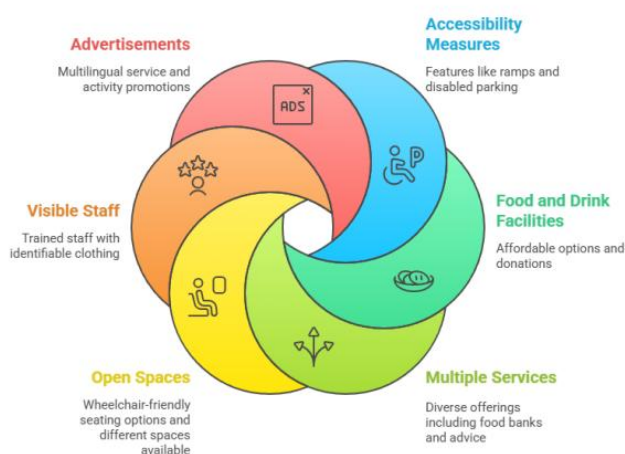


Diagram taken from 'Community Spaces: Learning and research' by Robin Miller, Chloe Waterman, Caroline Jackson and Katie Stone.
[ARC Nov gathering slides 05_11.pdf](#)

3 The culture and ethos of hubs

Community hubs need the right culture and ethos to work well. Services should be open to collaboration and trying new approaches. It is not just about sharing the same space; it is about changing how we operate.

There needs to be an emphasis on whole person and whole system. You can find more detail on what this looks like in the resources on ['good conversations'](#) and ['coordinated service response'](#).

3.1 Whole person – community hubs should be designed so people can talk freely about their needs. They should also feel they have support options to explore while visiting. There is a shift away from directing people along condition specific pathways. Community hubs help us understand each person better. They have staff on-site who can bring in the services they need.

3.2 Whole system – community hubs can be central to building relationships and networking. They help staff and services view themselves as part of a larger care system for people. They aim to break down service delivery silos. They encourage professionals to find out how support from one service can enhance progress in another.

54% of people at the Aberdeen Community Hub said they accessed services they would not have otherwise.

"It is great being able to hear about other services and projects that I can link people into".

- Hub staff member

"I feel that when people ask for help, even if I can't provide that, I'll know someone who can."

- Hub staff member

4 Additional resources on hubs

In January 2026, the University of Birmingham, King's College London, and the National Development Team for Inclusion published [a report](#). This report evaluates community hubs. This resource offers great details on what makes a community hub effective. It also includes a checklist of key aspects to consider.

"The findings from this research demonstrate that whilst no one type of community hubs fits all, considering the key aspects of 'locate,' 'navigate,' 'promote' and 'populate' can help to guide the development and review of hubs."