

Community Paradigm

What is Community Paradigm?

The Community Paradigm, how public services might need a radical change. It describes a different understanding of power. It recognises that when your overarching goal is to prevent illness, crime, or personal crisis arising in the first place, then power needs to be 'shared' with individuals and communities.

Prevention can ultimately only be **successful** when those at risk of illness, crime or crisis take the necessary steps to **prevent it themselves**, with the **supportive influence of communities** and networks around them.

This is harder to achieve when power and resources are 'locked up' in the institutions of public services overwhelmingly concerned with acute response, rather than prevention.

Why consider the community paradigm shift?

1. Communities' should be respected to source and deliver support
2. Public services would be stronger – and sustainable
3. Empowered communities flourish more and are happier and healthier
4. Community Power is key to greater equality
5. Community Power builds resilience to the environmental and other crises
6. Co-development of community-led, locality-based services is guided by the principle that local families and communities have the knowledge, skills and assets to know how best to respond to challenges and to thrive.

What is a community?

“any network of individuals collaborating more or less formally to achieve a shared socially beneficial goal”.

Such a community can operate geographically (for example across a neighbourhood) or around a specific interest or need (such as supporting victims of crime) or both. As an approach, community power needs to take account of the very diverse variety of size, goals and working styles of different communities in different areas. Defining the notion of ‘community’ too precisely would disempower many communities and make it harder for them to improve their lives.

Steps to community paradigm shift

- Embedding within Early Help and Prevention approach
- System and council-wide engagement and development – funding shift
- Allowing communities to have much greater say over the decision that affect their lives
- Actively working with communities to support those in need of help or care and to address local challenges
- Shifting the culture of organisations away from the top-down, ‘we know best’ mindset to one that recognises the best solutions are to be found in communities not institutions

Vehicle to deliver the shift

The concept that underpins the **Talk Community approach** in Herefordshire model are the principles of a community paradigm approach. There is potential to build on the current offer to widen the breadth and scope of the focus.

There is scope to take a truly preventative approach by investing heavily in the voluntary, community and faith sectors linked to universal services, who can work together to support children and families at the very earliest opportunities before problems become too complex and embedded.

The opportunity to build the 'local offer' without the constraints of public service bureaucratic processes and rigid procurement and accountability frameworks should allow for the many social capital/community assets to thrive through local flexible, delivery and ownership

Next steps

- How does this approach align with the H&WB strategy?
- Adopting this as a system approach, what does this mean for Herefordshire? And how we work as a system?
- What would we need to change to make this a reality?