

Community Development Officer Proposal

Newport Supporting Community Capacity, Partnerships and Local Resilience

Newport is the heart of the Isle of Wight, home to schools, workplaces, community centres, voluntary organisations and a diverse population with a wide range of needs. Over recent years, the Community Development Officer (CDO) role has quietly built a powerful, interconnected network across Newport that supports residents, strengthens organisations and unlocks resources that would otherwise remain inaccessible. This work is not about delivering isolated projects; it is about weaving a web of relationships that multiplies impact across the whole town.

The examples below represent only a fraction of this work. Every week involves dozens of conversations, problem-solving moments and relationship-building opportunities that do not always show up in reports but collectively form the infrastructure that enables Newport's voluntary, statutory and community sectors to function more effectively. This paper sets out why investing in a two-day-per-week Community Development Officer role represents exceptional value for Newport Community Council and the wider community.

A Network That Works Like a Web - Not a List of Services, Community development is not linear. It works like a living web: one relationship connects to another, which opens doors to funding, volunteers, venues, services and wellbeing outcomes. Each connection strengthens others, meaning one piece of work rarely benefits only one organisation, instead, it generates multi-layered outcomes across multiple partners.

This web has been built through trust, presence, and practical support, not through signposting emails, but through real conversations, introductions, problem-solving and follow-through. Organisations now contact the Community Development Officer as a first point of support because they trust that solutions will be found. Much of this work happens daily through informal conversations, meetings, phone calls and chance encounters, creating momentum that cannot be replicated through transactional services alone.

PAN Together – Community Food, Skills, Employment and Wellbeing

The CDO supported PAN Together through:

- Volunteer policies and recruitment
- Community consultations shaping service delivery
- Kitchen promotion and training use through the WI
- Food supply restoration after temporary closure
- Funding advice and service promotion (employability and money management)

One particularly powerful outcome involved a resident with surplus allotment produce who initially resisted donating food due to stigma concerns. After a conversation and encouragement, he visited PAN Together, changed his perception, became a regular donor, and grew more involved in community life. This illustrates how relationship-based development transforms attitudes, not just services.

Pyle Street Pantry – Community Food, Energy, Health and Volunteering.

The Pyle Street Pantry at Newport Congregational Church has grown into a thriving community service through sustained Community Development Officer support. Support included:

- Location planning, shelving sourcing, stock management systems

- Recruitment of the pantry manager
- Volunteer policies Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Coaching staff through challenging situations
- Supporting funding bids including the Household Support Fund and National Lottery funding
- Providing First Aid Training, Volunteer Management Training and Bid Writing Training.
- Connecting pantry users with Footprint Trust and Sovereign Housing for energy, financial and tenancy support
- Promotion of room hire at the church

Through the CDO's relationship with Utilita, the pantry also received:

- Staff volunteering time on Pantry days
- In-store food collections and fundraising
- Discounted electricity for the church

This single connection created multiple outcomes: ✓ Food access ✓ Energy advice ✓ Financial resilience ✓ Volunteer opportunities ✓ Corporate-community partnership ✓ Reduced church operating costs None of this would have happened without the connecting function of the CDO.

DentAid Mobile Dental Bus – Reducing Health Inequalities

Through a chance conversation DentAid, the CDO, aware of the Island's severe access-to-dentistry crisis, worked directly with DentAid to advocate for increased provision. Outcomes:

- DentAid visits increased from once to twice per month
- Use of the Riverside Centre car park secured free of charge
- Central, accessible location established for residents

This directly reduced waiting times and addressed health inequality, achieved entirely through partnership-building, not funding.

Volunteer Fairs & Health Roadshows

The CDO organised large-scale Volunteer Fairs at the Riverside Centre:

- Over 650 residents attended the most recent event
- Nearly 60 voluntary organisations participated
- Many organisations gained 15–18 new volunteers each

Health Roadshows brought together: NHS services Long-term condition support groups Peer-led health organisations These events: ✓ Strengthen volunteering pipelines ✓ Reduce isolation ✓ Improve access to health services ✓ Enable organisational collaboration ✓ Build sector resilience Crucially, these are not one-off events, they are infrastructure-building tools that strengthen the whole voluntary ecosystem.

Newport Community Council & 64 High Street – Unlocking Local Assets

Through connections made at Pyle Street Pantry, the CDO supported a women's craft group, some members of this group used to attend a craft market where they could sell items they had made, unfortunately, they had lost their venue due to rising costs.

The CDO brokered access to 64 High Street with Newport Community Council, supported the group through meetings, and enabled the craft fair to restart. Outcomes:

- Increased use of council assets
- Income generation for local crafters
- Improved wellbeing and social connection
- Stronger relationship between residents and council

Beyond this, the CDO:

- Supported council officers with volunteer management training and policies
- Shared funding opportunities and updates on funds.
- Provided supplier contacts and sector intelligence for events
- Acted as a bridge between councillors, services and residents

Utilita Community Room – From Empty Space to Community Hub

When Utilita opened their Newport High Street community room, it stood unused. Through the CDO's engagement, it became one of Newport's most-used free community venues and was fully booked within months. Groups now benefiting who were introduced by the CDO include:

- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, enabling young people to participate without fees
- Women's Crafting group, with no funds the group would not be able to meet without Utilita meeting room.
- English lessons for Ukrainian families
- Community network meetings
- Community organisations, charities and support groups

Utilita's wider charitable programmes were also embedded into the community through this relationship:

- Free Refurbished football boots scheme for children and families
- Gardening project at the Riverside Centre, including donated tools and weekly volunteer support
- Sponsorship of the County Show voluntary sector area, enabling attendance without funding
- Sponsorship of the Winter is Coming event after introducing to the Footprint Trust
- Energy awareness workshops delivered through Scouts groups, schools and the WI

This one relationship created: ✓ Free meeting space ✓ Youth participation ✓ Physical activity access ✓ Environmental improvement ✓ Energy education ✓ Corporate social value delivery ✓ Support for Pyle Street Pantry via volunteers and energy discounts.

Again, one connection, multiple layers of impact.

Sector Alignment & Proven Models Elsewhere on the Island

This proposal aligns strongly with best practice across the Isle of Wight. Ryde Town Council and Ventnor Town Council already fund Community Development roles, recognising the strategic value of having a dedicated officer embedded in local networks. Sandown Town Council commissions Community Action to deliver this function on their behalf, a model directly comparable to what is proposed here for Newport. These councils have seen the benefits of having a trusted connector role that strengthens voluntary sector capacity, improves access to services, supports council priorities, and unlocks external funding and partnerships. Newport now has the opportunity to align with this proven, effective approach.

Added Value Through Commissioning Community

Action By commissioning Community Action, Newport Community Council would not only gain a known and dedicated Community Development Officer but also access to a wide and established pool of organisational expertise, including: Funding advice and bid development, Governance and compliance Volunteer management, Safeguarding, Community engagement, Organisational development.

This means the CDO would not be working in isolation but as part of a professional support infrastructure, enabling quicker solutions, stronger outcomes, and better value for money. The council gains both local delivery capacity and strategic organisational backing, a highly cost-effective model.

Why This Role Is Exceptional Value

This work cannot be delivered through signposting, email lists or service directories. It requires:

- Trusted relationships
- Physical presence
- Understanding of community dynamics
- Practical problem-solving
- Long-term commitment

Every example above demonstrates multi-layered outcomes:

- One connection → multiple organisations benefit One conversation → long-term structural change
- One venue → youth services, health services, voluntary groups, social inclusion
- One partnership → food access, energy advice, funding success, volunteering, wellbeing

In reality, these examples represent only a snapshot. The majority of impact happens through ongoing daily conversations, supporting volunteers, resolving challenges, spotting opportunities, preventing problems escalating, and quietly connecting people and organisations before gaps appear. This invisible infrastructure is what keeps communities functioning smoothly. This is systems-level impact, achieved through coordination rather than cost.

Risk of Withdrawal

Current funding for this role is ending. Without replacement funding:

- These networks will fragment, Partnerships will dissolve
- Opportunities will be missed
- Volunteer pipelines will shrink
- Community assets will be underused
- Vulnerable residents will lose access routes to support
- The infrastructure that has been quietly built will be lost, and rebuilding it later would take years.

Recommendation

Newport Community Council is uniquely positioned to sustain and grow this work by funding a two-day-per-week Community Development Officer role, delivered by Community Action. This investment:

- Aligns Newport with proven models in Ryde, Ventnor and Sandown
- Protects and strengthens existing networks Enhances council asset usage

- Unlocks funding, volunteers and partnerships Improves resident wellbeing and resilience
- Delivers exceptional value for money through access to Community Action's expertise

Most importantly, it ensures Newport continues to benefit from a connected, thriving, responsive community ecosystem, rather than fragmented services working in isolation.

Thank you for taking the time to read this proposal. I appreciate that it is detailed, but I felt it was important to clearly articulate the value and impact of this role for Newport and its communities.

I would be very happy to meet with councillors, either in person or by phone, to answer any questions, provide further detail, or discuss the proposal in more depth.

Suzanne Stant