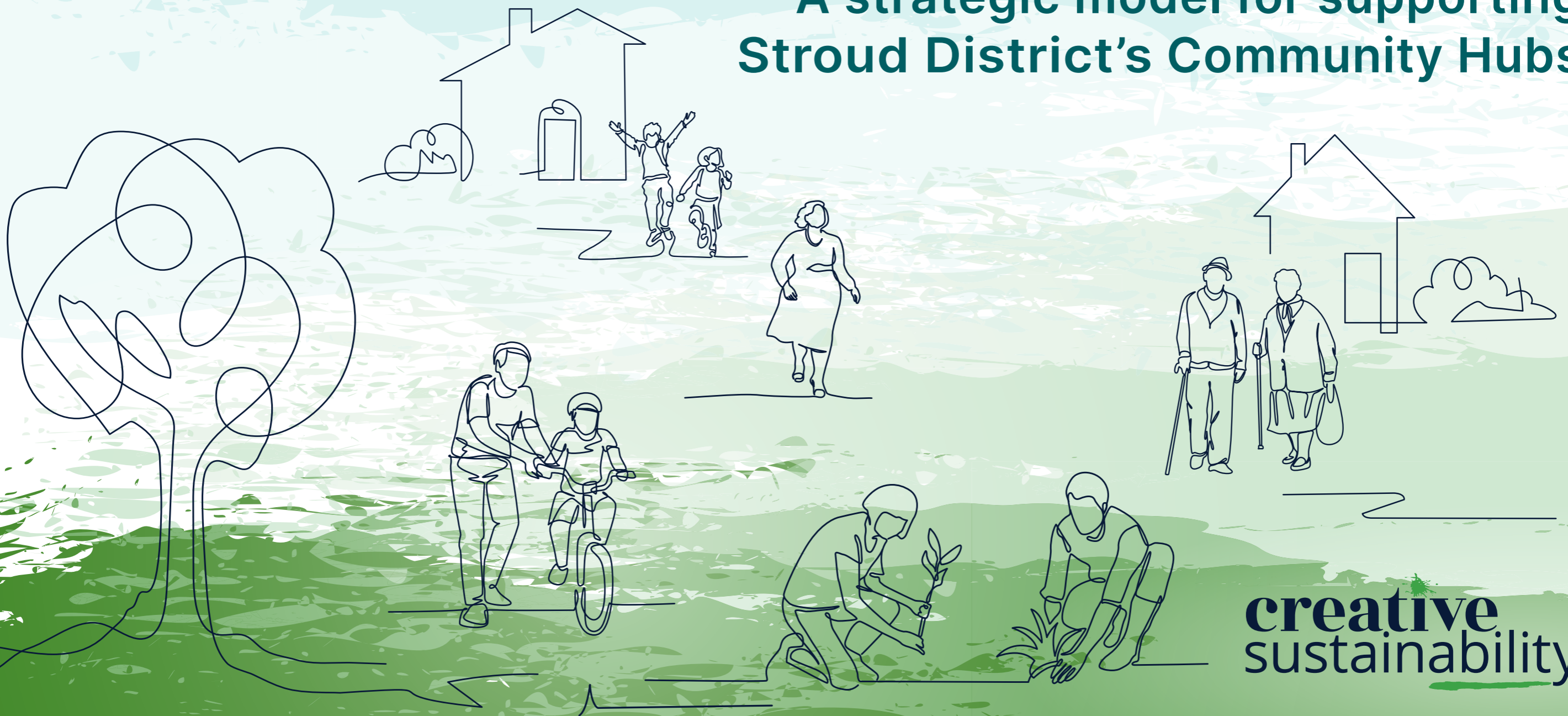


Theory of Change

A strategic model for supporting
Stroud District's Community Hubs



A strategic model for Stroud District's Community Hubs has the potential to create an inclusive and resilient district-wide network that is fit for both current purpose and perma-crisis, and an uncertain future with sudden shocks and unknown challenges.

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns from March 2020 spurred a remarkable response from local communities to find immediate and innovative ways to support one another and tackle the challenges they faced. Local organisations, neighbours and community leaders galvanised to form mutual aid groups, community hubs and street to street care initiatives emerged overnight, challenging the concept of reliance on the public sector and redefining the role of community in the 21st century. Recognising the urgent need for a strategic approach that would sustain a stretched community sector and leave nobody behind, Creative Sustainability began to explore what a resilient system for Stroud District looks like.

Using our five community development principles - user-led, asset based, inclusive, real world and ongoing - we have been working with many and multi-sector partners to design and establish the underpinning support needed for a well-resourced and connected system of hubs, so they can meet the many different needs and purposes of their communities as they see fit. With better health and well-being for all people and communities at the heart, the system can support climate adaptation, food resilience programmes, address the cost-of-living crisis, and foster stronger, more cohesive neighbourhoods. Hubs can support the day to day needs and wants of marginalised and isolated people, refugees and asylum seekers, disabled and older people, families and young people. The system generates local jobs, opportunities and investment in places that most need it, by default.

This theory of change is the accumulation of four years of pre and post covid learning at Creative Sustainability, bringing together the collective knowledge and learning of many people and organisations. It describes what resilience looks like for communities in the Stroud District and what we need to do to get there. Funders, community leaders, public and community sector organisations can use this model to engage in discussions and devise approaches that support our Stroud District communities in these uncertain times.



Mission

Community Sector Strength

A connected, resilient and collaborative community sector in Stroud District, ready and able to respond to the needs of people and communities

Partnership Working

Best practice collaboration between public and community sectors to support shared aims for people and communities

Community Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive, resilient communities that can support mental, emotional and physical health and well-being for everyone

Objectives

1. More skilled, confident and resilient community leaders, volunteers and staff

2. Increased financial support and confidence to plan, commit and develop hubs where they are most needed

3. A more sustainable network that includes everyone across the district equitably

4. Greater shared understanding of functions, practice and models of community and public sector organisations

5. Raised understanding of the community hubs model as critical element in meeting local authority strategic plans and Integrated Care Partnership ambitions

6. Increased understanding of the whole community sector, and communities within it - both place-based and with common unity

7. Every community hub is a safe, welcoming and healthy place to be

8. Seamless provision across place and common unity, to ensure everyone is included and can access the support they need

9. Resilient community leaders, volunteers and staff who are willing and able to support their communities

10. Everyone has places that welcome them, that suits their particular need for common unity

11. People and communities have access to the support that they need in their local place or in a specialist hub

Activities

Governance support, advice and training: structures and constitutions, policy, finance, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), leadership and management, recruitment and Human Resources (HR)

Crowdfunding platform for emergency funding allocation and equitable distribution of generic funding

Thirty local hubs are developed across the district to serve their geographical community, are asset-based and community-led, with many models, and supporting hyper-local action when needed

Bi-annual cross-sector partnership workshops to explore principles, practice and processes for best practice collaboration, and memorandum of understanding (MoU) drawn up

Communications workshops to establish communications strategy and content for platforms, press and partners

Formal association with hubs by their elected members, with board representation or equivalent

Area facilitators work with hubs to identify their needs for support and training across all areas using a self-assessment tool twice a year

Ongoing mapping of the whole district by geography to evaluate existing provision, identify gaps and explore asset-based community development opportunities

Area facilitators provide peer to peer support sessions and 1:1 when needed

Rolling training programme of minimum health and safety, inclusion and safeguarding for all hubs

Resources are readily available to hubs with training to use them confidently, for signposting people to agencies, specific support or other hubs with specialist provision, or for emergency care

Health and safety support, advice and training for volunteers and staff

Support, advice and training for small bids and crowd-funding for individual hubs

Five district area facilitators support, guide and advocate for hubs in their area, facilitate them, share resources, capacity and information

Stroud District Council joins Locality, shares good practice with neighbouring local authorities on 'Keep it Local' and commissioning the community sector, asset transfer, contracts, sustainable funding and burden of risk

Network representatives form oversight group, meeting to oversee objectives, report and advocate for the network

District and area facilitators work with the network to identify key barriers to successful collaboration with the public sector, and work with the steering group to establish how to support community sector to overcome them

Expert roles work across the network to provide support where it is needed, with clear materials and plans

Ongoing mapping of specific provision and themes for specific communities, with ongoing evaluation of needs and gaps in the district

Area facilitators flow information and resources through from the expert and coordination roles as and when needed by community hubs

Specialist hub leaders hold open days and networking meetings to show inclusion in action

Area facilitators support with advice, connections and co-planning sessions, to host external agencies and expertise that can give people specific support they need

Bid writing for the whole system, including trusts and foundations and tenders for district wide commissioning

District-wide operational capacity to generate resources and information, map provision and identify gaps, facilitate area coordinators and specialist hubs and supporting roles

Regular presentations and workshops with public sector stakeholders to communicate opportunities and threats, affect policy decisions and funding priorities. To include the Integrated Care Partnership, Local Strategic Partnership, and all Councils

Five specialist hubs develop according to existing strengths, to focus on marginalised and minoritised communities and to share best practice across the network

8 asset-based roles develop to support the network with food resilience, governance, safeguarding and health and safety, volunteers, finance, evaluation, partnerships, health and wellbeing



Creative Sustainability is a community Interest Company based in Stroud Gloucestershire.

Our Mission...

...to create inclusive, resilient communities that can support mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing for everyone.

Community – people with Common Unity – experiential, geographical, social, cultural, systemic.

We are a Values-led Organisation...

- **INCLUSION:** ensuring inclusion of marginalised people, supporting their autonomy, raising expectations and access to opportunities for work, leisure, belonging and health
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** developing knowledge and understanding of social, climate and natural environment issues, strengthening resilience of people and our local communities
- **EMPOWERMENT:** advocating for people and communities, facilitating them to become more enabled, empowered and have a confident voice in their local and global community.

