



# BwD Community Network And Community CVS Annual Conference

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May  
9:30am – 2:00pm  
Darwen Aldridge Community Academy



We were delighted to welcome 196 delegates to the conference and workshops  
96 VCFSE organisations were represented on the day.



Setting up &  
Signing in – The  
Annual  
Conference 2025  
begins.....



Everyone was welcomed  
by BwD Community  
Network Chair  
Vicky Shepherd CEO Age

Our First guest speaker  
was  
Martin Kelly from BwD  
BC he came along to  
talk about :Devolution  
& Local Government  
Reform



*Martin Kelly, Strategic  
Director, Growth and  
Development and Deputy  
Chief Executive BwD BC*



“A great opportunity to hear what plans are being put in place and what is happening within BwD”





“I knew a little bit about devolution and local government reorganisation beforehand, but I learnt a lot more about it from the two guest speakers who were excellent”

“It was interesting to find out what the future plans are for Blackburn with Darwen, and even Lancashire as a whole”



“Martin Kellys presentation, was very informative and interesting “



“It was good to link up with a couple of new partners, and to get chance to catch up with Martin Kelly. I also felt it was good for everyone to receive key messages at the same time, with the opportunity to ask questions”



Our Second Guest  
Speaker MP for Darwen &  
Rossendale Andy McNae  
came along to talk about  
the Priorities for Darwen



Andy McNae MP  
Darwen & Rossendale



“It was an opportunity to inform the MP of what matters within our community for small community and charity groups”





“Info about devolution from council and MP – useful update and perspective and chance to speak to them both”

“Both speakers were excellent both provided useful information on the next 3 to 5 years”





“It was really good to have an opportunity to learn a little from guest speakers ( very relevant) great to see the Darwen MP at the event “



Networking  
opportunities  
after the  
speeches and  
prior to the  
workshops



“What I found more useful was finding out about other services, possibilities and resources I wouldn’t otherwise know about. Direct and personal contact is best and most effective in networking and peer support”



“For me without a shadow of a doubt the networking was the most useful part of the event - great to see familiar faces, have a chance to connect with others in similar sectors “

“A Great opportunity for building new relationships and strengthening existing ones”



“Loved the networking, finding out what's available – Who does what, lovely venue – fab day “

“Fantastic event - great opportunity to network, wonderful venue, great people - brilliant !!”



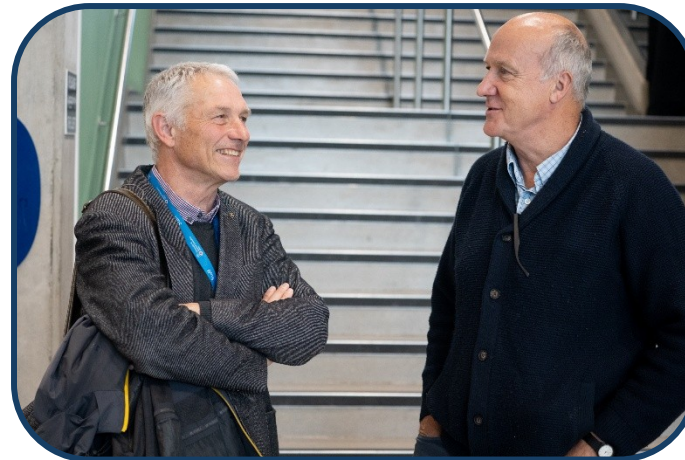
“It was an enjoyable and worthwhile event, with lots of networking opportunities”



“The marketplace was very impressive, lots of stalls, lots of people and I was able to get a lot of information about other organisations and what is offered in the community”



“I was able to network with fellow community members who are also very passionate about making a difference”



“Having attended many conferences over the years, across the country, this one was both informative and helpful. It felt authentic and a genuine opportunity to learn from each other and form/ strengthen bonds with other organisations”

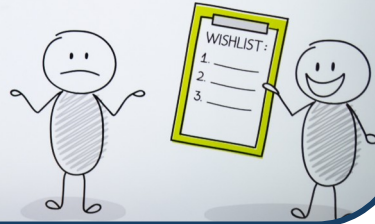
# Participation Workshop Volunteering

Delivered by Denise  
Hayhurst and Kate  
Lee  Community  
CVS



## Group activity Wish List

- How would you design your perfect volunteer process? ie What is needed to make volunteering easier?





“Vision for Volunteering insight from Denise and Kate was one of the best parts of the day for me”

“The workshop was really useful it was good to get together with people from other projects etc, to discuss volunteering, what works best and sharing ideas”

“Sharing information, opinions and ideas about local volunteering in Blackburn and the challenges at a local level”



# Prosperity Workshop Health, Employment & Skills

Delivered by Alison  
Abbott & Karen  
Wignall  
Blackburn with  
Darwen Borough  
Council

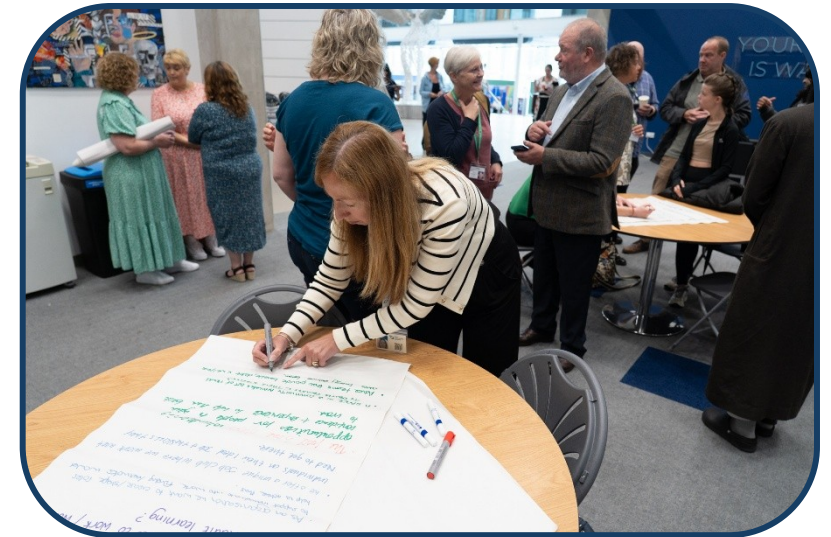






“Alison and Karen explained the programmes and offer in a way that everyone could understand. It was good for more organisations to get an understanding, Alison had great control of the room”

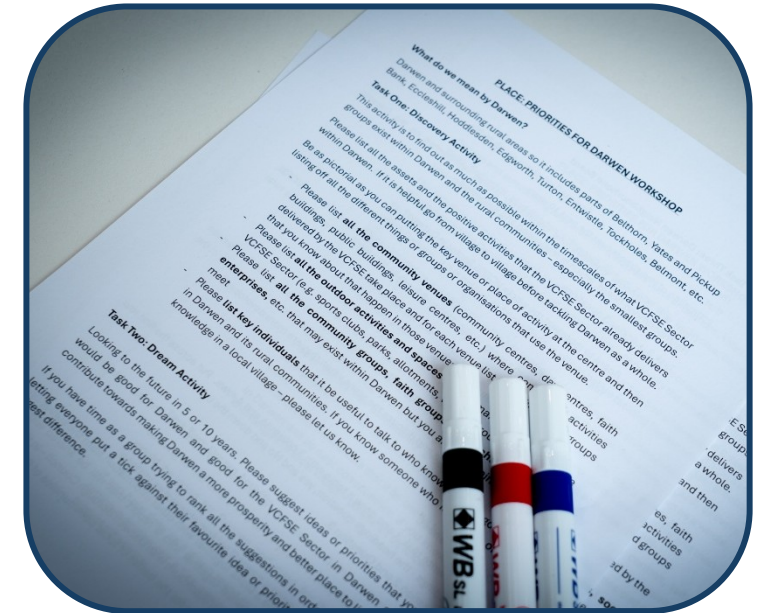
“I attended the ‘Prosperity’ event and learned so much about upcoming and new provisions available via Blackburn with Darwen Council e.g. Work Well and Connecting Futures. This will massively help me in my job role when supporting vulnerable claimants. The presenter was excellent and gave the information in easily digestible chunks, avoiding jargon and allowing time for questions”



“Very informative and digestible information of the upcoming/present provision available for unemployed/at risk of unemployment individuals - delivered really well”

# Place Workshop Priorities for Darwen

Delivered by  
Garth Hodgkinson  
CEO Community CVS







“Great opportunity to share ideas,  
took away new knowledge in  
Darwen and felt excited about the  
possibilities “

“Workshop excellent way to map out what is available  
and going on in Darwen - lots I didn't know, good mix of  
people round the table to share ideas and thoughts  
with. Priorities nice to know others were agreeing on  
some of the priorities - space for VCSFE groups to rent  
and create hubs for service users”





Feedback & Close  
Garth Hodgkinson  
CEO Community CVS



## Next Steps:

- **For Participation and Volunteering**
  - We will be developing a Vision and Strategy for Volunteering across BwD
  - We will be engaging volunteer managers and volunteers to develop this
  - We will be improving the support we provide to the volunteer ecosystem
- **For Prosperity (& health, employment & skills)**
  - We will be commissioning community insight work to better understand the contribution of the VCFSE Sector to 'health, employment & skills'.
- **For Place & Darwen in particular**
  - We will use information from the workshop to try and influence the Neighbourhood Plan for Darwen
  - We will ask for an event in autumn.







“I was unsure what to expect with the conference, but I was pleasantly surprised – there was so much variety and so many interesting providers and speakers invited that I learned a lot from”

“I personally found that the conference exceeded my expectation. The number and range of services present, the opportunities to exchange and connect and the new and valuable information about resources available and upcoming government changes were hugely valuable”



“The conference was really interesting and informative, bringing together a range of services, organisations and partners”

# Refreshments and Networking



“I thought it was a very well organised and put together conference. And brought together a very wide range of people including some hard-to-reach groups”



“I found the conference was organised very well with an unexpected large attendance. It was a very good networking experience with engaging workshops. Offering guidance and showcase local support options whilst giving informative and practical advice to take away along with advice to share with others”



“Brilliant to connect with other organisations who are working towards the same community goals”