



## Case study: Oldbury Court



Oldbury Court is a social housing estate, built after the second world war, in Fishponds on the east side of Bristol. It is approximately 1,000 homes and on indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) an area (Lower Super Output) falls within the bottom 3% for England. The community centre has closed and the local pub is run down and a year ago there were no community groups and spaces for people to come together as neighbours, share experiences, ideas and to be able to create things together. But despite the neighbourhoods deficits and

the hardships people face, it is also full of people who have interests, skills and passions who want to make a difference where they live.

*“I am going door knocking because I want to bring the community together to create a better environment. So far, people have been very welcoming and positive about getting involved. Not everyone is interested but that’s alright.” Said Chrissie.*

A group of neighbours started holding events on the local greenspaces to bring people together and then have gone door knocking around Oldbury Court. They have been asking their neighbours what they are interested in and looking at ways they can connect people together with similar interests to start community activities, building stronger social networks and for people to take action on issues which they care about. This work has been citizen-led but has been supported by the Care Forum Asset Based Community Development Project funded by Bristol Ageing Better. The project focuses on older people but realises that community life is more than that, it’s about bringing everyone from all different backgrounds and ages together.



A year on and this is their story from the older people involved...

Two older people, Veronica and Chrissie have been involved in door knocking and have helped organise a couple of events in their neighbourhood and Chrissie has helped organise a street party. They went and pitched for funding and were awarded £1000 to organise a food sharing event as part of food connections week in June. They went and knocked on neighbours doors to get people interested and to encourage people to come and share a dish from their country. Together with other residents they talked to over 150 households.

Around 80 people came and joined them on the local greenspace and a feast was shared bringing many people together from different cultures. This hasn’t been seen in Oldbury Court for years, an event solely organised by neighbours for neighbours. Young people played games such as sack racing, three legged race and tug of war. They



bounced on the bouncy castle or got their face painted while parents talked and shared food together.



**Veronica**



*“My main thing is to bring people together, youths and elders. To me, it’s like this community hasn’t got anything to bring people together. People are shut in their houses and they haven’t got anywhere to go. My thing is sports, I’m mad for sports, any sports like cricket, running etc. That’s how I got involved putting on a few activities for the youths. I would like to have a youth club for children living in Oldbury Court. Maybe we could find the next Usain Bolt? I would like to support young-people to get more opportunities and to develop themselves further.*”

*It makes me really happy to get together with people at our events, interacting together. It makes me feel like I belong to the area as well as doing something positive at the same time. It’s made a difference to me, I’ve met new people and I look forward to us getting together. It’s made a difference to our community, bring new people together, having events and having lots of fun. I hope people take it in their stride and get involved in what we are doing. It’s about participating and getting involved, building friendships and a stronger neighbourhood for the people and ourselves.”*

## Chrissie



*“I was new to the area and I wanted to get to know people, the character of the place and the characters in the place. I’ve been engaging with neighbours through door knocking and the coffee group and letting people know what activities are taking place and encouraging people to become involved. It has given me a sense of purpose as well as a few meaningful activities to undertake. I think it has encouraged people, especially older people, who might be social isolated, to think about what they can contribute and to have some companionship.”*

## Friends of Oldbury Court



Through door knocking different people talked about how there weren’t any meeting spaces for people apart from the pub and that didn’t appeal to everybody. There was nowhere for local people to come together and some people talked about how they didn’t get much social contact during the week. Through these conversations five local people came together who shared a similar interest and the Friends of Oldbury

Court was born. They wanted to create a space where they could meet their neighbours, have a cuppa and build friendships. They looked for a venue and the local children’s centre offered them a free space. The Care Forum purchased a selection of teas and coffees and the essential biscuits! Posters were designed, printed and delivered to every household and they now host a monthly coffee gathering. Chrissie and a few other residents have been organising the monthly coffee gathering.

## Pat



*"I use to work in the day centre at the top there, in Downend a few years ago. I got to know a few people there but it has closed down now. I didn't realise until recently so there are less places to go and meet people especially if it's not so easy for you to get around. There wasn't anything happening here until we started doing things.*

*I've got involved to get to know people I suppose and I enjoy going. It's nice to meet people because I live alone at home it's good for me to get out, meet local people and have a chat to young or old. I know when the coffee morning is coming up as I have to charge my scooter and get things ready. For me, it's about meeting different people and having some company.*

*I've been feeling better in myself since being involved in things. It gets me out the house and gives me contact with people and it's something I look forward too. My role is to look after all the refreshments at home and make sure items are topped up. On the day I make people a drink, put out the biscuits and chat to people."*

## Jerry



*"When my neighbours knocked on my flat and asked what was I interested in and would I like to do something, I was interested to get involved 'cause it would help me get out of the house, give me something to do, meet new people and help the community. I've been involved in the coffee gathering where we have a good chat and think about what else we could do in the neighbourhood. It's been brilliant and we get more people to join us each time we hold it. It's made a lot of difference to me, I've met new people and we've helped bring other people together. I would like to see a little*

*park down by the shops or other activities for children. If they have more things to do there will be less damage around the neighbourhood.”*

**Julie**



*“I got involved because there is a lack of anything else to do around the place. When I first heard about holding a coffee get together I thought it might be a one off event and I was not sure if anything would come of it. I’m amazed that we got it off the ground and we found a place for free.*

*I know my immediate neighbours but that’s as far as it goes but the idea of meeting new people seemed good even though I was nervous. Everyone has been easy to talk to and their enthusiasm has helped me along. I think, even though we are small group, and it tends to be the same faces, we have become a friendly gathering. It’s the beginning of building a sense of community with people who aren’t my immediate neighbours.*

*I would be really interested in being involved in a book club where I could meet a few more people and it would encourage me to read a bit more.”*

**Dorothy**



*“I’ve got involved because I want to see people. I live on my own and I very rarely see anybody. The things is, most of my friends are elderly, some of them live too far away so it’s difficult to meet. The only person I talk to at home is myself unless the phone rings. Being involved means I see somebody. I don’t have to talk if I don’t want to but I get some company.*

*By doing these activities I hope it will help other people in the neighbourhood. Take the Love and Care Food Fair I was surprised by how many Muslims live in our neighbourhood, it's a very diverse community. I thought it was good to see the children getting along and different cultures mixing. I had to leave because the music gave me a headache but I lent my neighbours some bin bags and I went back and helped them tidy up.*

*I have told other people about the coffee gathering, usually older people to try and get them to come along. It offers opportunity for older people who might not have a lot of social contact to come out and meet new people. A lot of older people say they cannot walk so well and are unable to get about.*

*Other things I would be interested in, I haven't really thought about it. At home, I do a lot of reading so I could get involved in a book club or something similar. I knitted my first garment when I was eleven and I'm eighty now so that is a skill I could share with a few neighbours."*

