



Strengthening Community Ties: Jan's Story

The Beginning:

Jan moved to Swillington last year, seeking a fresh start and a sense of belonging. While she had a fulfilling career and a passion for sewing and creative pursuits, she initially experienced isolation within her new community on a Leeds City Council Retirement Life Housing unit. Determined not to spend another winter isolated, Jan reached out to Joanne from LS14 Trust, who referred her to Sarah Hart, the Community Builder for Rothwell Area at Community First Yorkshire (CFY).



"The smiles and laughter at our events are a true measure of success. Jan's initiatives have genuinely improved our community's mental health and well-being" **Community Member**



Swillington Primrose House craft group



The Journey:

Their first meeting over coffee in the summer marked the beginning of a significant journey. Jan shared her idea of utilising a warm space at Primrose House, recognising its potential as a valuable community asset. With Sarah's support, Jan organised her first event, "Fishy Friday," in August. The event, themed around the RNLI anniversary, saw 11 attendees, some of whom discovered they were neighbours despite residing on the same street for over two decades. The success of "Fishy Friday" sparked a series of community events, fostering connections and resilience among residents.

Jan's initiative received support from the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) pathfinder site, which provides resources and guidance. The project has encountered some challenges. The cancellation of a planned coffee morning in September highlighted the need for shared responsibilities and increased group capacity. Furthermore, some long-term residents initially expressed reservations. However, Jan's unwavering commitment, coupled with Sarah's consistent support, maintained the project's momentum.

The Impact:

The regular Friday morning sessions at Primrose House have become a thriving hub for creative activities, social interaction, and mutual support. Jan's sewing skills not only bring joy to residents but also generate funds for charitable causes and promote sustainability. The community's growing involvement is now driving plans for the establishment of a tenants and residents association, with ongoing support from Sarah and tenant engagement officer, Louise Yeadon.

The impact of ABCD on Jan's initiative is evident. The positive atmosphere at events reflects the improved mental well-being and strengthened social connections among residents. Jan's efforts are actively contributing to a more inclusive and supportive community where individuals feel valued and connected. Her passion and generosity are inspiring others to become involved, fostering new friendships and a stronger sense of community.

Looking ahead, Jan and the community have ambitious plans. They are currently exploring the feasibility of a sewing café, the development of community growing spaces, and the organisation of a community-wide celebration for the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. Jan's journey with CFY and ABCD serves as an inspiring example of how individual initiative, combined with the identification and mobilisation of community assets, can transform lives and build thriving, resilient communities.

"I've met some lovely people from my community, and I look forward to seeing them on a regular basis." Jan



"Jan's passion for bringing people together has been truly inspirational. Her efforts have created a more connected and resilient community."
Community Member

"I love these catch ups, and I've started being creative at home and make things to share."
Abbi (Volunteer)

Friday Morning Session

