

Communities First Wessex (trading as Community First)

Community First: RASAC - strategy and sustainability

VISION

Community First seeks to be the leading Voluntary Service and Support Organisation in Hampshire, delivering vital community services and building voluntary sector capacity, creatively and with integrity. From April 2020 we will be delivering services and supporting member organisations across more than 50% of Hampshire.

One of our vital services is Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling (RASAC), which provides counselling to victims of current and historic rape and child sexual abuse, with clients ranging in age from 6 to 88. We also run RASAC-facilitated Peer Support Groups for both women and men.

In addition to developing the current services, our vision is to work towards providing a residential facility, offering counselling and other therapeutic interventions, over an intensive week of activities, for those suffering from sexual trauma. When those who have attended return to their own communities RASAC would put them in contact with their local sexual trauma support services for additional support and would also offer a Helpline. We are seeking accommodation and funding to put this service in place, which we plan to offer nationally.

VALUES

Throughout the services operated by Community First there is a passion for delivering superior experiences for members and service users and superior added-value for our commissioners, whilst enabling communities and individuals to optimise their capabilities. We have an entrepreneurial, supportive, action-centred culture, which values innovation and allows us to tailor our services and support to meet local needs. These values are embedded in the RASAC culture.

STRATEGY

Community First

The Community First strategy is to ensure our sustainability and development through diversifying our income streams by seeking new commissions, trading activities, service specific grants from target trusts and foundations and from the community through service specific innovative events. We will build scale and extend geographic diversification through organic growth and mergers, eliminating duplication of costs and services by managing centrally whilst focusing on local delivery.

The RASAC Service

RASAC, since its launch in 1995, has been funded by the Ministry of Justice (Since 2019, via the Hampshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner), Hampshire County Council, the NHS and again, in its own right, the Hampshire Office of The Police and Crime Commissioner. Currently, we are in the first year of two-year funding agreements with these major funders, which will take us through to 2022. To give the service greater certainty, there is a possibility that subsequent renewal funding, from the major funders, will cover a three year period, which would take us through to 2025. However, to reduce our dependence on the major funders and to create scope for providing additional services, we have begun to diversify our revenue streams through applications for funding from trusts and foundations, from community events arranged by a new Friends of RASAC Group, through renting counselling and office space, when available, to third parties and by offering counselling to private clients.

Being a part of Community First gives RASAC additional credibility with our commissioners, provides good governance, business development support, marketing assistance, back office support and access to the Community First Bank to which investment business plans can be proposed for new projects. The RASAC Service Manager reports to the Community First Head of Enterprise, who in turn reports to the Community First Chief Executive.

RASAC has been operating successfully and sustainably for nearly 25 years, maintains healthy Reserves and as part of Community First is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the service.

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