



INVITATION TO TENDER

Shifting Power: Community Centres in the Hands of the People
Evaluating the Journey from Disempowerment to Ownership

Overview

Worcester Community Trust (WCT) is seeking an evaluator to work with us to explore to what extent we can support local communities to manage and direct their local community centres. Our centres are situated in areas labelled as ‘deprived’, where many people face financial hardship and have been disempowered by various systems and organisations ‘doing things for or to them’.

You will work with us to explore whether this creates barriers to them playing a more active role in the running of their local community centres, and what methods we could use to break down these barriers and develop a community led model of delivery. We want to explore what the ongoing support provided by our organisation may need to look like to make this successful and to develop a mutually agreed hybrid model for managing the centres.

Rather than delivering services to communities, WCT will work with communities, discovering what is strong and what skills people have to offer, focusing on **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)** and nurturing local leadership.

The two-year project will pilot and evaluate the co-creation of a shared vision for community centres in two communities in Dines Green (primary site) and Tolladine (secondary site). Local residents will be supported to gain the confidence and skills needed to either co-deliver or independently deliver activities, supported by WCT as an enabling organisation, promoting inclusive allyship. WCT will play a light-touch mentoring role, remaining quietly present, but available to support with challenges that occur along the way.

Rather than setting our hubs the goal of being seen as ‘centres of excellence’, in Asset Based Community Development, we must first endeavour to be seen as ‘centres of possibility’, by the communities we sit within – providing opportunities for imagining futures, fostering a can-do culture that breaks down barriers, invites curiosity and sends positive ripples through the neighbourhood. We want to be perceived as a trusted host organisation, gently testing comfort zones and providing fertile ground for emerging ideas.

Outcomes and Indicators

Key outcome 1:	Local community members will feel more connected, able to overcome obstacles and identify the support they need to flourish as a connected, empowered community.
Outcome 1 progress indicators:	There will be an increase in the number of different community members engaging with WCT. Community members will have more confidence and be developing their own activities, asking for support only when needed, driving change and feeling more powerful.
Key outcome 2:	Local community members will have been supported to develop a vision for their community centre and an achievable plan to implement this vision.
Outcome 2 progress indicators:	A plan for the Green Hub will have been co-developed by WCT and the local community. Community members will have been exposed to a range of different operating models and options and been supported to identify barriers and explore solutions including training or opting for WCT to continue to manage certain aspects.

Key outcome 3:	WCT will have learnt what practical steps and support are required to enable community members to play an active role in the management of their local community centre.
Outcome 3 progress indicators:	<p>A range of training and support methods will have been tried and tested through formal evaluation and community stories of most significant change.</p> <p>WCT will have developed a draft strategic plan for implementation of a hybrid model.</p>

Our History

Worcester Community Trust was set up in 2010 to join three charities together, taking on the management of community centres owned by Worcester City Council and taking on youth and community work on behalf of Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council.

What We Do

Worcester Community Trust is a registered charity that runs six community hubs in the city of Worcester; The Green Hub, Horizon Hub, KGV Hub, Tolly Hub, Ronkswood Hub and Warndon Hub. Our hubs, which are all in areas of 'multiple deprivation', provide crucial facilities for community use, as well as activities and services that empower people of all ages. Through our projects, we deliver a wide range of services that make a difference to the daily lives of people in our communities, including support with domestic abuse, welfare, job clubs, social isolation, youth work and more. Our centres are available to hire for a wide range of community organisations too, providing even more for the local community.

Evaluation Brief

We are seeking an evaluation partner to deliver two phases of evaluation for an initial two-year Asset Based Community Development project, encompassing foundational Learning & Relationship Building, in the first instance, which will inform recommendations for a further Visioning & Planning phase as we explore a sustainable, community-led vision for our hubs.

One of the key learning points will address to what extent disempowerment may play a part in the community's willingness or ability to take on the running of their community centre.

Throughout this process, we expect a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation, which actively involves stakeholders, such as project beneficiaries, community members, staff and partners, in the design, implementation, analysis, and use of monitoring and evaluation activities. This is to empower the communities involved in the process and encourage the buy-in of local ownership.

Project Title:

Shifting Power: Community Centres in the Hands of the People

Evaluating the Journey from Disempowerment to Ownership

Lead Organisation:

Worcester Community Trust (WCT)

Duration:

2 year project.

Project start date: 1st Feb 2025

18-month evaluation.

Evaluation start date: 1st August 2025

Year 1: Learning & Relationship Building.

Year 2: Visioning & Planning.

Funder:

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Evaluation Fee

	Year 1 budget Learning & Relationship Building	Year 2 budget Visioning & Planning	Total
Evaluation & Facilitation	£3,000	£5,000	£8,000 (including VAT and all travel and expenses)

Phase-1: Learning & Relationship Building (immediate, with completion in February 2026)

Whilst our long-term goal is for community members to be empowered to take ownership of their community building, we first need to invest in building strong relationships, which will be the emphasis of Phase-1 of this project. We will need to start small and develop alongside one another - the things of most importance will be learning, going at the *speed of trust* and figuring stuff out together.

We will pilot this project in and around The Green Hub, in Dines Green, where we have already begun to embed the principles of Asset Based Community Development. To support this work, we require the evaluation partner to create a baseline Evaluation Framework for the project, guiding the development of successful models and principles, before we apply the learning in our other centres in the future.

We will also develop a series of events that every person in the local community is welcome at and can interact with their neighbours. These will be driven by community members; they will be supported by our members of staff to the level that community members feel they want. E.G they may want access to food hygiene training, to offer a community meal, or someone to help them to write a risk assessment that may be required if they want to hold an event.

Alongside this activity, we will benefit from external facilitators or undertake training to ensure that community engagement is a fun, accessible, participatory experience, offering different methods of engagement at different times of the day and week, to facilitate different people's needs. We want to bring communities together so that they work together for change, supporting them to develop community-led projects, potentially furthered by our micro grants.

We will start this work through the development of a team of volunteer community connectors; local people who enjoy speaking to others. We will work with them to develop their skills and confidence to be able to engage with their neighbours through events such as door knocking or involving them in hosting conversations at community events. This will increase their neighbours' opportunities to be more involved in community activity and drive participation.

To ensure we remain on track and build in the necessary time to reflect on our approach, we anticipate regular, monthly contact with the evaluator and that they will guide us in the design and content of our data capture and monitoring materials and processes. Hub staff will be responsible for ongoing data capture as advised by the evaluator, with the evaluator providing direction where necessary.

We plan to create a programme that enables people to be actively involved in the discussions, decisions, delivery and development of their local community centre. The evaluator will be required to attend and observe this activity at our primary site, The Green Hub in Dines Green, interviewing partners, community members, volunteers and both project delivery and permanent staff.

Phase-2: Visioning & Planning (February 2026 – February 2027)

We believe that supporting stronger, sustainable connections between people and their local resources can help rebuild and create collaborative, thriving local economies for all. Phase-2 will take us into the second year of what could be a journey of ten years or more, supporting people to be better connected, lead on an aspirational vision of what they want their local community centre and neighbourhood to be, and to take collective action to make this happen.

We want to open up a space to experiment – to try out ideas and approaches that are 'locally-grown', innovative, and sometimes even a bit risky – and to learn from those experiments, both from what has gone well and from what has proved more difficult. We'll use Phase-2 to continue providing microgrants, which will support the set-up of projects, for example for equipment, training, room hire, support with marketing, etc., for the first year while they get established.

When we have started building a significant number of connections during Phase-1, and more people from the local community feel that their voices are being listened to, that they have influence and skills to offer, and they have developed trust in WCT, we will begin the journey of exploring the community's appetite for more ownership of the community centre. Only then will we be able to contemplate a long-term vision for developing a Community Association.

These efforts will continue to be led by two members of staff, a Community Builder and a Project Manager, with the Head of Community Based Services having oversight of the project.

The Community Builder will work at a neighbourhood level to build confident, more connected communities. They will be on the ground, developing a team of volunteer community connectors, holding learning conversations to discover the assets from across the local area and mapping these, improving links between people, local groups, and initiatives in the community and enabling increased community activity. Uncovering the key community assets and skills of local people who can begin to shape change and influence outcomes in their area.

The Project Manager will be responsible for developing the project, leading on the facilitation of larger group events with the community, establishing a Community Association with local people and organisations, mobilising community members, building relationships with partner agencies, sourcing training, attending meetings to champion the ABCD model, designing monitoring tools, capturing learning and implementing change where necessary. They will have line management responsibility for the Community Builder.

Main Outputs

Phase-1: Learning & Relationship Building (Completion Feb 26)

1. Design a baseline Evaluation Framework that meets the requirements of our outcomes and answers any evaluation questions, and delivery of a mixed-methods approach to evaluation.
2. Review Phase-1 (Learning & Relationship Building) activity and produce an evaluation report of this activity to inform Phase-2 (Visioning & Planning) delivery.

Phase-2: Visioning & Planning (Completion Feb 27)

3. A report at the end of Year-1 (January 2026) that evaluates the impact of its delivery so far and key learning points, that provides recommendations for Year-2 and be utilised in further funding bids.
4. A final report at the culmination of Phase-2 (February 2027) that evaluates the impact of the project, key findings and including insights that we can share as models of good practice.

Methodology

The evaluator is free to utilise whatever methodology they wish, though dialogue with staff and key members of the local community would form a major part of the evaluation. We may expect the contractor to collect some quantitative data, but the major focus would be on qualitative data from direct discussion.

We would expect the contractor to use less traditional methods and a participatory approach; building relationships of trust where participants feel confident to give open and honest feedback, including what has worked and what has not and why.

We will support the contractor by ensuring they have access to our staff and facilitating links with community members and partner organisations throughout the project lifecycle. As well as invitations to key events, focus groups, training session, activities, etc., that may help to shape the learning and evaluation.

In all cases we expect the contractor to operate to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and data protection management. We would expect that a full report outlining the contractor's findings to be presented to us on completion of the project.

Evaluators need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to be able to interview clients, if WCT are not present.

Risks & Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Trauma/conflict in communities	External training on resilience and trauma-informed work.
Community fatigue and burnout	Emphasis on shared responsibility, boundary setting. Use flexible, light-touch tools; embed evaluation in fun events.
Distrust in WCT	Transparent communication, storytelling, visible staff presence.
Bias towards success stories	Emphasise learning over proving; value failures as insight.
Staff capacity strain	Distribute evaluation roles across team / use of external facilitators.

Use of Evaluation Findings

Findings will be used to:

- Understand the next steps required to develop a community-led management model.
- Inform WCT's long-term strategic direction and partnership development.
- Share lessons with funders, local councils, and peer organisations.
- Contribute to national conversations on community ownership in areas of low social economic output.

Longer Term

- Refine and scale the community-led management model across all six WCT centres.

Tendering Process

Stage	Deadline
Closing date for questions	17/06/25
Closing date for tender submissions	26/06/25
Interviews (online or face to face)	08/07/25
Deadline for signing contract	25/07/25
Expected start of project	01/08/25
End of project	31/01/27
Deadline for evaluation	28/02/27

Your Proposal should be a maximum of six sides of A4 and should include the following information:

- Contact details for the organisation.
- Name and contact details of the lead evaluator.
- Your understanding of the brief and the wider context within which the project sits in the community.
- Experience of evaluating Asset Based Community Development projects – or a detailed understanding of the strengths-based approach to community development.
- Experience of evaluating projects which are delivered across several sites and by a range of staff, partners, volunteers, and community leaders.
- Ability to travel to and embed within the primary hub site in Dines Green, Worcester (and its surrounding communities).
- Experience of working with and successfully engaging diverse communities, including those who've experienced trauma or conflict.
- The outline Evaluation Framework you would propose implementing (this could be an example of one you have delivered for a similar project).
- A detailed timetable for carrying out the work, highlighting key milestones, deadlines, suggested meetings and progress reports.
- Any tools or methodologies you propose to use as part of delivering the work.
- Allocation of budget against stages or tasks outlined in your methodology, with a breakdown for Phase 1 and 2.
- Quality assurance and approach to risk management (including ethical considerations).
- Your ideas about how you will present the evaluation findings to us and to others.
- Evidence of professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

In addition, please provide examples of (or links to) two recent, relevant evaluation reports or products.

Responsibilities and points of contact

Questions and/or Proposals should be submitted to Darren Kench, Community Development Project Manager (ABCD) at Worcester Community Trust.

Darren Kench, Community Development Project Manager (ABCD)

Leads implementation of project development and coordination, monitoring, evaluation and oversight of events, with support of Community Builders.

Line management of Community Builders

Email: darren@worcestercommunitytrust.org.uk

Mobile: 07561 858809

Jenny Gage, Head of Community Based Services

Overall responsibility for commissioning and embedding learning at organisational level.

Line management of Community Development Project Manager

Email: jenny@worcestercommunitytrust.org.uk

Mobile: 07767 100859

Scoring

Your Proposal will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Understanding of the brief (20%)
- Evaluator's knowledge of the project's area of work (20%)
- Experience and track record of the team (20%)
- Suitability of proposed methodology (40%)

Contract

A contract will be offered until end of February 2027.