

**‘Positive People’ to help Somerset’s most disadvantaged people into work.**

A partnership of five Somerset organisations has secured a Big Lottery Fund grant to help Somerset’s most socially excluded communities return to employment, education and training.

The new programme, called ‘Positive People’, will help over 1,000 individuals who are out of work to build their skills, confidence and motivation. This will include people with disabilities, mental health issues, ex-offenders, homeless people and people over 50. Support for individuals will include basic literacy and numeracy skills, help to master digital technology, and preparation for work including job search.

The programme aims to benefit local communities by reducing poverty and anti-social behaviour. It will also contribute to the growth of the local economy with employers having access to a pool of people with the relevant skills to meet their needs.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS) and Pluss will begin to deliver the £4 million programme in early 2017 for the next three years. The core partners are Pluss, Abilities, Inspired to Achieve, Cosmic and Community Council for Somerset. There are also 41 additional partners across Somerset (*listed in note 2*).

Keeley Rudd, CEO for CCS, said “This is wonderful news for Somerset, it will create long-term and life changing differences to individuals that need support. CCS is now well placed to support a wide cross-section of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Somerset, through “Positive People” and through our own Village and Community Agent project, we can see real, positive transformations for many people.”

Pluss’ Chief Executive, Steve Hawkins, said “Positive People will support hundreds of disadvantaged people across Somerset into sustainable employment.



“Securing the funds to deliver this programme is a proud moment for all five organisations. Our Somerset partnership will deliver significant positive social change at a time when local devolution means Somerset is taking on more responsibility for its own future.”

Positive People has been co-designed over the past six months by a range of stakeholders including representatives from local communities, Somerset County and District Councils and the Heart of the South West LEP.

Positive People (*part of the Building Better Opportunities programme*) is a new project jointly funded by the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund.

## ENDS

### Notes for editors

1. CCS supports people who live and work in Somerset communities. We do this through a range of diverse projects which bring together people who care about local community life in Somerset. We focus our energy on helping you and your community on a personal level with our Community & Village Agent projects, supporting very vulnerable people in Somerset, & with our Community Involvement Team, who support Parish Councils and Community Groups - providing a consultancy service, and bid writing support, the results of which enable Parishes to draw down funds from County, and apply for national funding and grants.

See [our work](#) to see what projects are running across Somerset.

The Somerset Village Agent project is a project of CCS and now covers half of the county. The Village Agent project continues to grow from strength to strength. The team has better geographical coverage, reaching even more people and providing support in ways appropriate to local people. The project uses paid, part time, highly trained individuals living in the parish ‘clusters’ they support. They help to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable and lonely individuals and statutory and/or voluntary organisations which offer specific solutions to identified needs.

Village Agents offer a signposting and referral service with a difference.

Village Agents work with all ages dealing with a wide variety of issues, although a considerable number of their clients are elderly and involves social care issues. Helping to solve these problems may, ultimately, help the elderly to remain living independently for longer. Village Agents also have the role of helping to shape services by feeding back to the appropriate body information about gaps in service e.g. transport provision.



They can also motivate and support a community to respond to a local need by working together to address issues e.g. by helping them to set up a coffee morning for a group of lonely people or start a volunteer car scheme.

2. The additional partners in the bid are Action for Blind, WECIL, Action4Inclusion, Adventure Education Trust, Albemarle, Battling On, CAB Mendips, CAB Sedgemoor, CAB South Somerset, CAB Taunton, Careers South West (CSW), Cascade, Community Council for Somerset, Conquest Centre, Creativity Works, Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, Dangerous Dads, Engage, HCT Group, Homestart West Somerset, Learning South West, Mind Taunton Somerset, On Ya Bike, Pop Up Business School, Pre School Learning Alliance, Princes Trust, RIO, Royal Association for Deaf people, Somerset Coop Services, Somerset Rural Youth Project, SPLAT, Surf Action, SW Lakes Trust, Sylvan Adventures, The Growing Space, The Trussell Trust, University of Plymouth-Serio and Yarlinton Housing.



## 1. Building Better Opportunities

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It puts people in the lead to improve their lives and communities, often through small, local projects.

It is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by National Lottery players for good causes. Every year it invests over £650 million and awards around 12,000 grants across the UK for health, education, environment and charitable purposes.

Since June 2004, it has awarded over £8 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people.

The project has received over £4 million of funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund as part of the 2014 – 2020 European Structural and Investment funds Growth Programme in England. The Department for Work and Pensions is the Managing Authority for the England European Social Fund programme. Established by the European Union, the European Social Fund fund help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support skills development, employment and job creation, social inclusion and local community regenerations. For more information visit [www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding](http://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding).

