

Community Hub

A culture of activity can be developed in the most unlikely of spaces. St Philip's Hub is proof that if you approach things in the right way, with a positive frame of mind, great things can happen.



From the outside St Philip's Community Hub looks like your typical local church, it was built in the 1950s and has a huge steeple. But when you walk in through the old entrance the space is not what you would expect to find. Within the fully functioning church there are a burst of active games, table tennis, table football, and pool for adults and children. Towards the back of the nave you will see a fully functioning kitchen and café which can seat around 40 people, and is host to a mix of community groups/activities. there is also a sofa area with flat screen TV, without a pew in sight. The space is fantastic, it is the epitome of a multipurpose space, but it wasn't built overnight.

“St Philip's is here for the whole community, regardless of faith, or lack of. It is here for everyone.”

Reverend Sarah Watson, who lives locally and runs the space was instrumental in developing the space from a church, used for a couple of hours a week, into a building used most days by various people from all different faiths and backgrounds. Originally Rev Sarah's vision was to reposition St Philip's into the fabric of the community. The desire to do something started because the congregation was ageing which is common around the country. Young people are not going in the numbers they used to, was there a way of engaging with new and a more diverse section of the community? This was the starting point for an application to the Church's own Strategic Development Funding. Sarah started with a blank piece of paper and began engaging the community in October 2019. She didn't know where to start, she began talking and building connections with people and local organisations. Then the pandemic came into all our lives a couple of months later. During Covid Rev Sarah started volunteering in the community which enabled her to better build relationships. This enabled her to find out what people wanted and needed in the community without any preconceived ideas.

The theme was an all too common one. There is nowhere in Chaddesden for the community to meet, socialise and congregate. There are some café's in town but a lot of people can't afford to spend £10 on a coffee and lunch even before the travel expenses to get there.

After extensive conversations they found out that a sense of community, activities and social spaces were missing. Rev Sarah says **“Listen to your community, communities have long been done to, and not consulted. It is so important, to find out what is important for them.”**





Sarah's dream is to grow St Philip's even further, she'd love for someone in the local community to run the café as a Social Enterprise and make a sustainable venture that can open daily. She'd like even more activities, particularly support groups and physical activities.

They searched for cafes and spaces they could utilise to meet these requirements and provide local services and an affordable space for people to go. They realised they could better utilise the great space within the church. They removed the traditional church pews and replaced them with flexible seating.

They applied and received £20,000 funding from Derby Homes to complete much needed renovation work for the kitchen. Sarah spent a lot of time building her networks and putting together funding applications, working alongside Derby Homes, Active Derbyshire and Move More Derby. The Care of Community Fund also helped with café furniture.

The church was aging, with weeds growing inside the lesser used rooms. Move More Derby were great at listening and engaging with the community and gathering information on which activities would suit best. Active Derbyshire awarded money from Sport England's Young People Fund to pay for the sporting equipment, pool tables, TV Screen and table tennis table which has been much used.

Prior to this space being opened up, some of the community may not have been able to afford some of the activities on offer and so was a way to bridge the gap between what people wanted and what was affordable locally.

Sarah spends quite a lot of time looking for funding opportunities, she has successfully won funding from The Co-op Community Fund, ASDA, Derwent Neighbourhood Board, and from the Church of England. Members from the local GoodGym have helped with volunteering to save costs during renovations, painting fences, doing DIY and moving furniture. A local Design Agency designed the branding for free due to the relationships Sarah holds in her community.

Rev Sarah and her amazing team have done a great job transforming the space from a run down and old building into a bright, inclusive and modern community space, used by a variety of local people for lunch, faith, community engagement, physical activity and health and wellbeing support.

But Rev Sarah would love more. She's passionate that the community have somewhere local they can go for more activities and opportunities to support their wellbeing. This means more volunteers to run clubs and activities within the space. Currently the weekly programme includes a Men's mental health support group, Dads' group, a toddler group, craft club, a grief support group, a menopause support group and Zumba classes are being explored.

The café is open on Wednesday's and Thursday, on Wednesday's the space is run by Derby Adult Learning Service, who use it as work experience to train the young adults with learning difficulties/disabilities, as well as running the craft club. Many groups are run in conjunction with Derby County Community Trust, who also help host a monthly Saturday Full English Breakfast with a cuppa for £3.50.



before...



... after



The space prides itself on its inclusivity and the Church is part of the 'inclusive church' network, spreading the message that the Church is for everyone, from neurodiversity to members of the LGBTQI+ community, to those with learning difficulties.

Many members of the long standing Church congregation have taken well to the new space, partaking in a café style church service where they have a coffee before their Sunday service and a game of Table Tennis. They have two different services catering for the different demographics of traditional and non traditional.

● **Top Tips and key learnings**

- Listen to your Community, communities have long been done to, and not consulted. Find out what is important
- Seek help and build relationships to find common goals
- There is a lot of help out there if you show passion and commitment. Keep a positive mindset to enable change.
- Working and collaborating with local partners helps to convert ideas into actions and activities and can be used to share local insight on the needs of residents in the community

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