**Community & Belonging Forum (CBF)**

**Living Rooms Proposal (For discussion)**

The idea for Living Rooms derives from the SpaceMax initiative that has mobilised volunteers to support people in Battersea that are experiencing overcrowding.

The CBF’s main focus is on tackling Loneliness, Isolation and Mental Health (particularly Anxiety and Depression, and we are aware that overcrowding, that is particularly pronounced in Battersea, can be detrimental for health.

The idea is simple: local people may have skills in Carpentry, Electrical technology (including IT), Interior Design, Architecture, DIY, Plumbing, space management, etc; if these skills can be harnessed and mobilised to help transform peoples living spaces through de-cluttering, redesign and efficiency measures (environmental quality improvements) – the effects could be profound.

Following the principle that CBF wants to bring partnerships together to pool resources and to facilitate others to deliver projects – the Living Rooms proposal suggests establishing a ‘pilot’ project to see if the idea has potential.

Following another principle that CBF is not a service provider but a vehicle for community engagement and development, the people involved in Living Rooms will be equally concerned with building relationships with the expectation of a degree of reciprocity between ‘providers’ and ‘beneficiaries’; where the latter may in turn contribute the stock of community capacity in the BLSW11 area.

**How?**

If the CBF endorses this proposal we can then produce a ‘prospectus’ or Living Rooms project description, to use as a means for consulting with organisations in Battersea that might be interested to taking a lead in the mobilisation, recruitment and training of volunteers.

The recently launched Wandsworth Volunteer Brokerage Service (<https://volunteer.wandsworthcarealliance.org.uk/vk/volunteers/index.htm> and the appointment of a dedicated volunteer coordinator for Battersea could provide a vehicle for promoting the idea and recruiting volunteers.

Through another strand of the CBF programme (Action Research) we will be able to identify local residents that are living in overcrowded accommodation and contact them to consider options.

The pilot could be used to test the idea practically, with evaluation built in to the project plan so that after (say) six months an assessment can be made on its viability, lessons learnt and options for going forward.

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