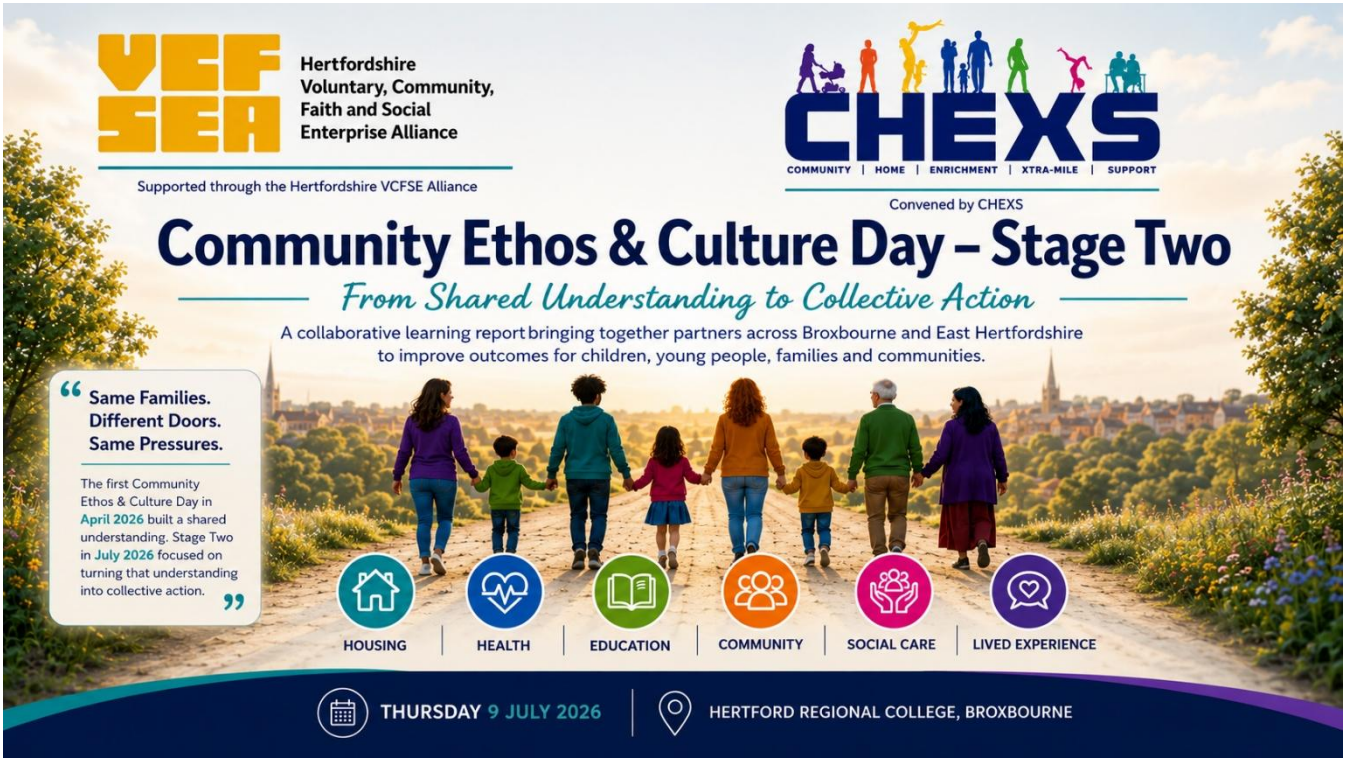


This report captures the discussions, shared learning and priorities that emerged during the second Community Ethos & Culture Day, held on **9 July 2026**.

Building on the first Community Ethos & Culture Day held in April 2026, the event brought together colleagues from health, housing, education, social care, voluntary and community organisations, alongside people with lived experience, to explore how stronger relationships and collective action can improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The report provides a record of the discussions that took place, the recurring themes that emerged across sectors and the priorities collectively agreed to guide the next stage of co-design.

The findings are drawn from evidence gathered throughout the morning, including lived experience, a family case study, facilitated table discussions, workshop activities, participant feedback and theme voting. Supporting workshop materials, together with the evidence that informed this report, are included within the appendices to provide a transparent record of how the findings and priorities were reached.

Journey from Shared Understanding to Collective Action

April 2026	→	July 2026	→	November 2026
Shared Understanding		**Shared Learning**		**Collective Action**
Community Ethos & Culture Day – Stage One		Community Ethos & Culture Day – Stage Two		Community Ethos & Culture Day – Stage Three
WHY we need to work differently together		**HOW** stronger collaboration could improve one family's experience		**WHAT** we will co-design, test and learn together

Each stage builds on the previous conversation, moving from shared understanding, to shared learning, to practical collective action.

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Executive Summary

In April 2026, partners from education, health, housing, local government, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and people with lived experience came together to explore one simple but important question:

How can we work better together around the children, young people, families and communities we all serve?

Rather than focusing on individual organisations or services, the first Community Ethos & Culture Day encouraged participants to step back and see the wider picture. It recognised that people do not experience life through organisational boundaries. They experience one connected journey where education, housing, health, financial pressures, relationships and community all influence one another.

That first conversation helped us identify seven themes where stronger collaboration could make the greatest difference: Communication & Information Sharing, Joined-up Working, Community Strengths, Earlier Conversations, Trusted Relationships, Transition Points, and Access & Thresholds. Rather than moving directly into solutions, participants agreed these themes should first be tested through lived experience and a shared family journey before deciding where collective effort should be focused.

The second Community Ethos & Culture Day, held on **9 July 2026**, was designed to take that next step.

Journey from Shared Understanding to Collective Action

Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
April 2026	**9 July 2026**	**12 November 2026**
Shared Understanding	**Shared Learning**	**Collective Action**
Explored why we need to work differently together.	Tested the emerging themes through lived experience, one family's journey and cross-sector discussion.	Co-design practical approaches, test them together and continue learning.

Each stage builds on the previous conversation, moving from shared understanding to shared learning and into practical collective action.

The morning began with Sally Hudson sharing her family's lived experience and reflecting on CHEXS walking alongside her family since 2011. Her story demonstrated how trusted relationships, consistency and community support can change outcomes, not only for children and young people, but for whole families and communities.

Participants then explored one anonymised family case study through the perspectives of education, health, housing, children's services, local government, the voluntary and community sector, alongside people with lived experience. Working together, they identified where earlier conversations could have taken place, recognised the strengths already surrounding the family, explored the barriers they faced and considered how organisations could work together differently.

Although each organisation initially viewed the family's circumstances through a different professional lens, the discussions consistently arrived at similar conclusions. Participants recognised that stronger communication, better connections between organisations, trusted relationships and making greater use of existing community strengths are fundamental to improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

The seven themes that were identified and consolidated following the first Community Ethos & Culture Day were then reviewed, challenged and tested before participants collectively agreed the priorities to take forward.

Collective Priorities

Priority	Agreed Focus
1	Communication & Information Sharing
2	Joined-up Working
3	Community Strengths

Participants also recognised that these priorities are strengthened by trusted relationships, earlier conversations, effective transition points and helping families access the right support at the right time.

The purpose of the day was never to leave with a completed action plan. It was to build a shared understanding of where collective effort could make the greatest difference before moving into co-design.

Next Stage

Community Ethos & Culture Day – Stage Three	
Date	Thursday 12 November 2026
Time	10:00am – 1:00pm
Venue	B3 Living
Focus	Co-design practical approaches around the agreed priorities

The ambition is not to create new services or structures. It is to strengthen the relationships, communication and collaboration that already exist, making it easier for children, young people and families to access the right support earlier and experience a more connected community.

1. Building on the First Conversation

In April 2026, CHEXS brought together partners from education, health, housing, local government, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and people with lived experience for the first Community Ethos & Culture Day.

The purpose of the day was not to discuss individual organisations or services. It was to develop a shared understanding of the experiences of children, young people and families and explore how organisations could work more effectively together around the people and communities they all serve.

One message quickly became clear.

1.1 People don't experience organisations. They experience life.

Although each organisation has a different role and responsibility, families rarely experience their challenges in isolation. Housing, education, health, financial pressures, relationships and community are all interconnected, with changes in one area often influencing many others.

Through facilitated discussion, participants recognised that improving outcomes depends not only on the quality of individual services, but also on the strength of relationships between organisations, the confidence to work together and the ability to have earlier conversations before challenges reach crisis point.

The discussions were focused around seven themes that reflected where participants believed stronger collaboration could make the greatest difference:

Seven themes identified during Stage One

Theme	Why it mattered
Communication & Information Sharing	Helping people connect the right support at the right time.
Joined-up Working	Reducing fragmentation between organisations.
Community Strengths	Building on the skills, relationships and assets already within communities.
Earlier Conversations	Identifying challenges before they escalate.
Trusted Relationships	Creating confidence for families to ask for help.
Transition Points	Supporting people through key changes in their lives.
Access & Thresholds	Making it easier to receive support before reaching crisis.

Rather than moving directly into solutions, participants agreed these themes should provide the foundation for the next stage of the journey. Before designing practical action, it was important to test whether they reflected both the experiences of professionals working across different sectors and, most importantly, the lived experiences of children, young people and families.

See Appendix 1 – ***Community Ethos & Culture Day Report (April 2026).***

The second Community Ethos & Culture Day was designed to build on this shared understanding. Rather than asking why collaboration matters, participants explored how stronger relationships, earlier conversations and shared understanding could improve the experience of one family before collectively identifying where future effort should be focused.

What Stage One Achieved

✓	Created a shared understanding of the experiences of children, young people and families.
✓	**Identified seven emerging themes** where stronger collaboration could improve outcomes.
✓	**Recognised that people experience life, not organisations.**
✓	**Agreed to test the themes** through lived experience and one family's journey before deciding collective priorities.
✓	**Established the foundation** for Stage Two and the move towards co-design.

1.2 Key Insight

The first Community Ethos & Culture Day established a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing children, young people and families.

Rather than moving directly into action, participants agreed that these themes should first be tested through lived experience and a shared family case study. This provided a stronger evidence base for identifying where collective effort could make the greatest difference before moving into co-design.

Readers who did not attend the April session may find it helpful to read Appendix 1 – Community Ethos & Culture Day Report (April 2026) before continuing.

2. Purpose of the Day

The second Community Ethos & Culture Day was designed to move the conversation from **shared understanding towards collective action**.

Rather than revisiting the discussions from April or focusing on individual organisations and services, participants came together to explore one family's experience through a shared lens. By placing children, young people and families at the centre of every discussion, participants were encouraged to step beyond organisational boundaries and consider how different services, sectors and communities contribute to the same journey.

Every participant, regardless of their organisation or professional background, worked through the same anonymised family case study using a common set of structured questions. This ensured every voice carried equal weight and discussions remained focused on the family's experience rather than organisational priorities.

Workshop Design

Participants were invited to:
✓ Consider what their organisation might notice first.
✓ Explore the pressures and strengths surrounding the family.
✓ Identify where earlier conversations could have made a difference.
✓ Recognise how different organisations each hold part of the wider picture.
✓ Test the seven themes identified during the first Community Ethos & Culture Day.
✓ Collectively identify where future collaboration should be focused.

An important principle underpinning the day was that no organisation was expected to arrive with the answers. The workshop created a shared learning environment where different perspectives could be explored openly, challenged respectfully and brought together to develop a more complete understanding of the family's experience.

By combining lived experience, a shared family case study and facilitated table discussions, participants moved beyond assumptions to identify common patterns that emerged consistently across the room. Those recurring patterns provided the evidence needed to test the existing themes and identify the priorities for the next stage of co-design.

Building Towards Co-design

Stage	Purpose
April 2026	Understand **why** stronger collaboration matters.
July 2026	Explore **how** organisations experience the same family's journey and identify opportunities to work differently.
November 2026	Co-design **what** practical approaches will be tested together.

*The workshop presentation used throughout the day is included in **Appendix 2** and illustrates how each stage builds on the previous conversation.*

2.1 Key Insight

The purpose of the day was not to solve every challenge facing children, young people and families. It was to create a shared understanding of where collaboration has the greatest potential to make a difference, providing a strong evidence base for the next stage of co-design.

3. The Journey Through the Morning

The morning followed a carefully structured process that enabled participants to move from individual professional perspectives towards a shared understanding of one family's experience.

Each activity built on the previous one. Rather than beginning with organisational updates or discussing services, participants were encouraged to step into the experience of a child, young person and family, recognising that people do not experience education, health, housing or community organisations separately. They experience life as one connected journey.

The programme was designed to ensure that every participant, regardless of organisation or role, contributed equally to the conversation. By the end of the morning, the room had moved from individual observations to shared priorities, creating a strong foundation for the next stage of co-design.

The journey unfolded through four connected stages.

The Journey Through the Morning

Stage	Purpose	Outcome
1. Beginning with Lived Experience	Hear one family's story.	Ground the day in lived experience.
2. Seeing One Family Through Different Lenses	Explore the same case study together.	Build a shared understanding.
3. Recognising the Patterns	Identify recurring themes across organisations.	Discover common challenges and opportunities.
4. Testing and Prioritising the Themes	Challenge and prioritise the themes collectively.	

3.1 Stage One – Beginning with Lived Experience

The morning opened with Sally sharing her family's journey.

Sally first connected with CHEXS in 2011 and, more than fifteen years later, continues to support other families through SPOCAN (Supporting Parents of Children with Additional Needs). Her story demonstrated the long-term value of trusted relationships and how early support can strengthen not only one family but also enable people to give back to their community.

Rather than describing services, Sally described what it felt like to navigate uncertainty, advocate for her children and build the confidence to seek help. She reflected on the difference it made when professionals worked together around her family rather than expecting her to navigate different organisations alone.

One example particularly resonated across the room. When concerns arose regarding one of her children, the school's first response was not simply to make a referral elsewhere. Instead, they contacted CHEXS, who were alongside the family within thirty minutes.

For many participants, this illustrated what effective partnership working looks like in practice. It was not defined by organisational structures or referral pathways, but by trusted relationships, confidence in one another and knowing who could provide the right support at the right time.

Sally's story set the tone for the rest of the morning. Sally's story and the family case study formed the foundation for every activity that followed and are included within the workshop materials (***Sally's full lived experience is included in Appendix 3***).

The conversation was no longer about organisations.

It was about people.

3.2 Stage Two – Seeing One Family Through Different Lenses

Participants were then introduced to the same anonymised family case study. The case study formed part of the workshop materials used throughout the day (***The family case study is reproduced in Appendix 4.***)

Working in mixed tables representing education, health, housing, children's services, local government, the voluntary and community sector and lived experience, every participant explored exactly the same family using the same structured questions.

Participants explored:

Question	Purpose
What might your organisation notice first?	Understand different perspectives.
What pressures is this family experiencing?	Recognise challenges.
What strengths already exist?	Build on assets, not just problems.
Where are the opportunities for earlier conversations?	Identify preventative opportunities.
What support already exists across the community?	Recognise existing resources.
How could organisations work together differently?	Explore collective action.

Although organisations initially identified different concerns, it quickly became clear that nobody was looking at different problems. Each organisation was seeing a different part of the same family's life.

Sector	What they noticed
Housing	Financial pressures and tenancy concerns.
Education	Attendance, behaviour and wellbeing.
Health	Physical and emotional wellbeing alongside unmet health needs.
Children's Services	Safeguarding, resilience and emerging thresholds.
Voluntary & Community Sector	Trust, relationships and community support.

As participants shared their perspectives, individual observations gradually combined into a much richer understanding of the family's circumstances.

3.3 Stage Three – Recognising the Patterns

As discussions developed across the three tables, common patterns began to emerge.

Although participants approached the discussion from different professional perspectives, they were not identifying different problems. They were each seeing different parts of the same family's experience.

Common Patterns Emerging

✓	Families often struggle long before reaching crisis.
✓	Different organisations each hold part of the wider picture.
✓	Community strengths already exist but are not always connected.
✓	Trusted relationships make it easier for families to seek help.
✓	Earlier conversations create opportunities for prevention.

Rather than focusing on organisational boundaries, conversations increasingly centred on the family's experience and the opportunities that existed to improve it.

By the end of the table discussions, the room was no longer talking about individual services. It was identifying the recurring themes that connected every organisation's experience. ***(A summary of all facilitated table discussions is included in Appendix 5)***

3.4 Stage Four – Testing and Prioritising the Themes

The final stage of the morning brought everyone back together to test the seven themes identified during the first Community Ethos & Culture Day.

Participants reviewed each of the seven themes against the evidence emerging from the case study discussions. They were encouraged to challenge the themes, identify anything that had been overlooked and add further observations before collectively deciding the priorities for the next stage of co-design. (***The voting results are included in Appendix 6***).

Only after this process were participants invited to vote on where they believed collective effort could make the greatest difference.

The purpose of the vote was not to decide which themes mattered most. Every theme was recognised as playing an important role in creating a more preventative and connected system.

Instead, the vote identified where partners believed the next stage of co-design should focus, providing a clear direction for the Community Ethos & Culture Day in November 2026.

3.5 Key Insight

By taking every participant through the same lived experience, the same family case study and the same structured discussions, individual professional perspectives gradually became a shared understanding. The priorities identified at the end of the morning were therefore grounded in collective evidence rather than individual organisational viewpoints.

4. What We Learned Together

Although each table included representatives from different organisations and professional backgrounds, the discussions consistently arrived at similar conclusions.

Housing, education, health, children's services, local government and the voluntary and community sector each viewed the family through a different professional lens. Individually they saw only part of the family's circumstances. Collectively they developed a much richer understanding of the family's challenges, strengths and opportunities.

Rather than producing three separate sets of findings, the discussions revealed a series of recurring messages that emerged consistently across the room. Together, these now provide the evidence underpinning the next stage of the Community Ethos & Culture Day journey.

4.1 Families experience life, not organisations

Perhaps the strongest message to emerge throughout the morning was that families do not experience their lives through organisational boundaries.

Housing may notice rent arrears or concerns from neighbours. Schools may recognise changes in attendance, behaviour or emotional wellbeing. Health services may identify missed appointments or deteriorating physical and mental health. Children's Services may become aware of safeguarding concerns, while voluntary and community organisations often build the trusting relationships that encourage families to seek support in the first place.

Each organisation holds an important part of the picture, yet no single organisation sees the whole story.

Participants recognised that many of the challenges facing children, young people and families are interconnected. Financial pressures, domestic abuse, housing insecurity, caring responsibilities, mental health and social isolation rarely exist in isolation. Instead, they influence one another, creating layers of complexity that no single organisation can fully understand alone.

The discussions reinforced that improving outcomes depends upon bringing these different perspectives together around the family rather than expecting families to navigate multiple organisations independently.

Different organisations see different parts of the picture

🏠 Housing – Financial pressures and tenancy

🎓 Education – Attendance, behaviour and wellbeing

❤️‍🩹 Health – Physical and emotional wellbeing

👨‍👧 Children's Services – Safeguarding and resilience

🤝 Community & VCFSE – Relationships, trust and practical support

Together we see one family's journey.

4.2 Families often struggle long before anyone realises

Across all three tables, participants described families carrying significant pressures long before they ask for help.

The discussion highlighted that families often:

✓	Feel overwhelmed before asking for help
✓	Worry about being judged
✓	Don't know where to turn
✓	Continue coping until problems escalate
✓	Reach support only after significant pressure has built

Participants recognised that children often hide their own worries, while parents frequently avoid seeking support because they fear judgement, worry about being seen as failing or simply do not know where to go.

Several participants reflected that by the time families reach statutory thresholds, they have often been managing increasingly complex challenges for months or even years.

The discussions also highlighted families who may not meet formal eligibility criteria for targeted support but are nevertheless experiencing considerable pressure. These families can remain largely invisible within the system despite needing help long before crisis develops.

The opportunity identified by participants was not simply to respond more quickly once difficulties become visible, but to create more opportunities for earlier conversations before challenges escalate.

4.3 Trust comes before support

Participants consistently recognised that people are far more likely to seek help when trusted relationships already exist.

Throughout the discussions, trust was described as the foundation upon which earlier conversations, effective communication and joined up working all depend.

Families repeatedly telling their story to different organisations was recognised as frustrating, exhausting and, in some cases, re-traumatising. Participants spoke about the value of warm introductions, trusted professionals and someone who could help families navigate support rather than expecting them to manage increasingly complex systems on their own.

One practical idea that emerged across several discussions was the concept of a trusted "hand holder" or navigator. Rather than creating another service, participants described someone who could build confidence, connect organisations and help families access the support that already exists.

The discussions reinforced that relationships are not an additional element of effective support. They are the foundation upon which effective support is built.

"Trust comes before support."

Participants consistently recognised that earlier conversations, effective communication and joined up working all begin with trusted relationships.

4.4 Communities already hold many of the answers

Alongside recognising challenges, participants deliberately explored the strengths already surrounding the family.

Existing Community Strengths

Community Assets Identified
Schools
Community organisations
Parent peer support groups
Libraries
Community supermarkets
Holiday activities
Local businesses
Specialist advice services
Voluntary organisations

Participants also highlighted a range of existing resources, including local directories, financial support, community activities and specialist advice. The challenge was rarely the absence of support. Instead, it was ensuring that both families and professionals knew what was available and felt confident connecting with it.

This shifted the conversation away from creating new services towards making better use of the relationships, knowledge and community strengths that already exist.

Participants repeatedly recognised that stronger communities are built by connecting existing assets rather than continually creating new ones.

4.5 Better outcomes depend on better connections

By the end of the morning, discussions had moved beyond identifying problems towards recognising practical opportunities for improvement.

Participants were not calling for another strategy, another referral pathway or another standalone service.

Instead, they consistently described opportunities to strengthen how organisations work together.

These included:

Participants identified opportunities to strengthen:

✓	Earlier conversations
✓	Communication between organisations
✓	Professional relationships
✓	Awareness of existing services
✓	Warm introductions rather than passive referrals
✓	Confidence to contact colleagues directly
✓	Better use of community strengths

Perhaps the most significant conclusion from the morning was that many of the greatest opportunities already exist.

The challenge is not necessarily creating more support.

It is creating stronger connections between the support that is already there.

4.6 Key Insight

Despite representing different organisations and professional backgrounds, participants consistently arrived at similar conclusions. This gave confidence that the findings reflected the collective experience of the room rather than the perspective of any single organisation.

The greatest opportunities identified were not centred on creating new services, but on strengthening relationships, communication and community connections around children, young people and families. *Detailed table discussions are included in Appendix 5.*

5. Testing the Themes and Identifying Priorities

The purpose of the second Community Ethos & Culture Day was not to create a new set of priorities. The seven themes had already emerged during the first Community Ethos & Culture Day through collective discussion involving partners from education, health, housing, local government, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and people with lived experience.

The July session was designed to test whether those themes continued to reflect the experiences of organisations working with children, young people and families and whether anything important had been overlooked before moving into the next stage of co-design.

By combining Sally's lived experience, a shared family case study and facilitated discussion, participants were able to challenge, refine and strengthen the themes using practical experience rather than theoretical discussion.

As conversations developed, participants repeatedly returned to the same seven themes identified in April:

Stage One Themes Tested

Theme	Purpose
Communication & Information Sharing	Improve communication across organisations and with families.
Joined-up Working	Strengthen collaboration around the same family.
Community Strengths	Build on the assets already within local communities.
Earlier Conversations	Create opportunities before issues escalate.
Trusted Relationships	Build confidence to seek and offer support.
Transition Points	Improve support during periods of change.
Access & Thresholds	Help families receive the right support earlier.

Although organisations approached the family from different professional perspectives, the discussions consistently reinforced the relevance of these themes. Participants recognised how closely they were connected and how progress in one area would naturally strengthen another. Earlier conversations depend upon trusted relationships. Better communication supports joined-up working. Stronger community connections make it easier to identify concerns before they reach crisis.

Rather than representing separate pieces of work, the themes described different elements of the same preventative approach. Participants increasingly recognised that these were not competing priorities but interconnected parts of the same preventative approach. Progress in one area would naturally strengthen the others.

5.1 Challenging the Themes

An important part of the process was ensuring that participants were not limited to the existing themes.

Throughout the morning, "What patterns are emerging?" boards were available to encourage participants to record additional observations, identify gaps or suggest themes that they felt had not been captured through the original framework.

This created space for participants to challenge the existing thinking rather than simply confirm it. The additional observations recorded by participants are included within the workshop feedback appendices.

Several additional observations were recorded, including:

Participants also highlighted:
Strengthening support for seldom-heard communities
Recognising the needs of teenage parents and young carers
Involving additional partners such as Safer Places and Police Community Support Officers
Recognising where Team Around the Family arrangements already demonstrate effective joined-up working

Rather than replacing the original themes, these observations added greater depth and highlighted opportunities for future discussion.

Throughout the discussions, participants also recognised that Trusted Relationships and Earlier Conversations were woven through almost every conversation, regardless of which theme was being explored. Although Community Strengths received the third highest number of votes, there was a strong sense across the room that trust and earlier conversations enable all of the agreed priorities rather than existing as separate pieces of work. Participants repeatedly reflected that stronger communication and joined-up working are far more effective where trusted relationships already exist.

What this told us

The relatively small number of additional suggestions reinforced confidence that the seven themes identified in April continued to reflect the experiences shared throughout the day.

5.2 Collective Prioritisation

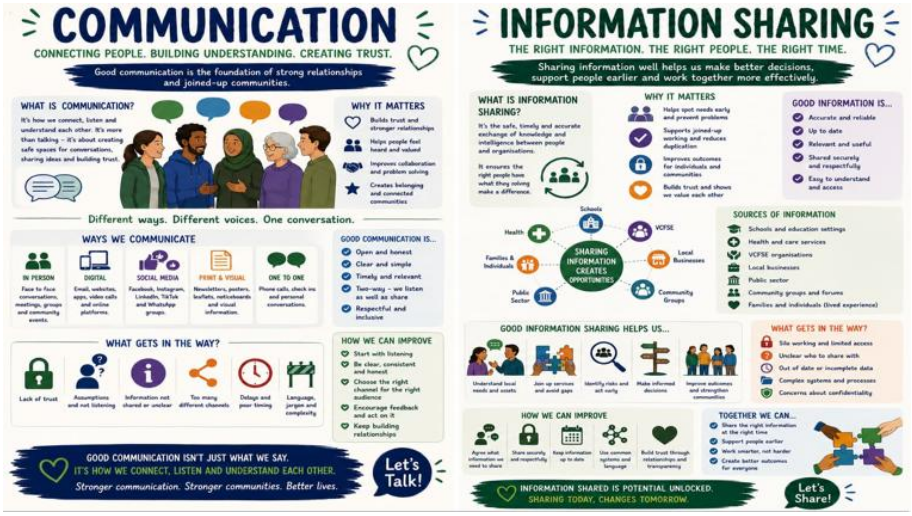
Having tested the themes against lived experience, the family case study and the discussions taking place across the room, participants were invited to identify where they believed collective effort should be focused over the coming months.

The purpose of the voting exercise was not to determine which themes were the most important.

Every theme was recognised as contributing to stronger prevention, earlier intervention and improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

Instead, participants were asked to consider where collaborative effort could have the greatest impact as partners move into the co-design phase.

<u>Communication & Information Sharing</u> Total votes = 14



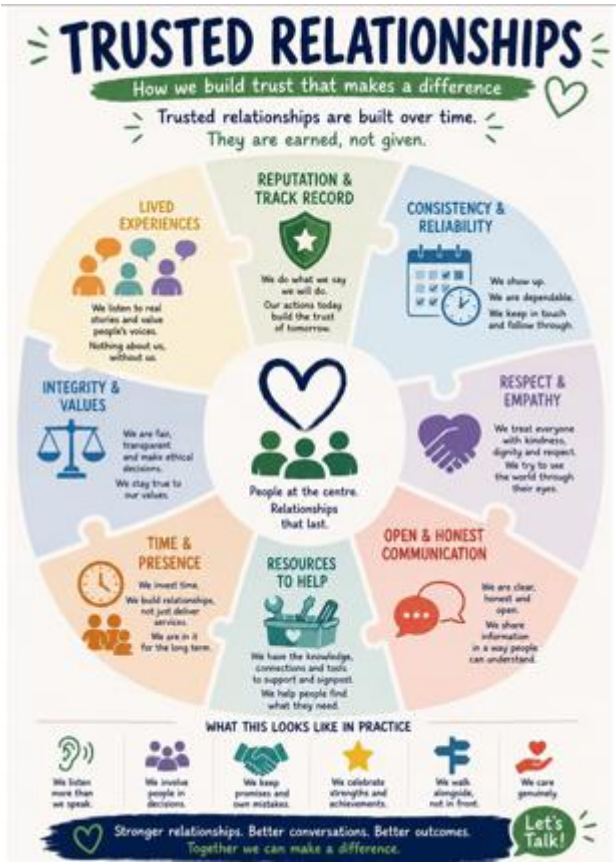
<u>Community Strengths</u> **Total votes =** 13



<u>Joined-up Working</u> **Total votes =** 12



<u>Trusted Relationships</u> **Total votes =** 9



<u>Transition Points</u> **Total votes =** 2



Access & Thresholds **Total votes =** 1



Following the discussions, the three highest priorities identified by participants were:

5.2.1 Communication & Information Sharing

Participants consistently identified communication as the strongest opportunity for improvement.

Discussions focused less on technology or shared databases and more on strengthening relationships between organisations, improving awareness of existing support, creating clearer routes into services and reducing the number of times families need to repeat their story.

Communication was recognised as being most effective when it flows through trusted relationships rather than organisational boundaries.

Why this matters: Better communication enables earlier conversations, reduces duplication and helps families access the right support sooner.

5.2.2 Joined-up Working

Participants highlighted the importance of moving beyond referral pathways towards genuinely collaborative working.

This included developing stronger relationships between professionals, understanding one another's roles, making warm introductions and working collectively around the same family rather than alongside one another.

Many participants recognised that stronger professional relationships naturally lead to better experiences for children, young people and families.

Why this matters: Joined-up working creates a more coordinated experience for families, reducing fragmentation and strengthening collective support.

5.2.3 Community Strengths

The discussions also highlighted the importance of recognising and building upon the strengths that already exist within local communities.

Participants identified schools, voluntary organisations, businesses, peer support, local groups and community resources as valuable assets that often remain underused or disconnected.

Rather than creating new services and hubs, there was strong support for making better use of the knowledge, relationships and resources already available across Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire.

Why this matters: Building on existing community strengths makes support more accessible, sustainable and rooted in the places where families already live, learn and connect.

5.3 Enabling Themes

Although Earlier Conversations, Trusted Relationships, Transition Points and Access & Thresholds received fewer votes, participants were clear that these themes remain fundamental to creating a more connected and preventative system.

Rather than viewing them as lower priorities, they were recognised as enabling themes that underpin the three priorities identified for co-design.

Trusted relationships create the confidence to seek support. Earlier conversations help prevent issues escalating. Transition points provide predictable opportunities for earlier intervention. Access and thresholds influence how easily families receive the right support at the right time.

These themes will continue to inform the work as partners move into the next stage of the Community Ethos & Culture Day journey.

5.4 Key Insight

The voting exercise did not determine which themes mattered most. It identified where participants believed collective effort should be focused first.

The priorities were grounded in lived experience, tested through shared discussion and collectively agreed rather than predetermined. ***The complete voting results are included in*** **Appendix 6*.***

5.5 Building on the Conversation

The Community Ethos & Culture Day has been designed as a three-stage journey, moving from **shared understanding**, to **shared learning**, and then into **collective action through co-design**. Each stage has a distinct purpose, with each building on the evidence and learning generated by the previous one.

During the closing discussion, participants reflected on whether further consultation should take place before moving into the co-design phase. It was recognised that, whilst some participants from the first Community Ethos & Culture Day in April were unable to attend the July workshop, the session also welcomed new participants who had not been involved previously, bringing additional perspectives and experience into the discussion.

Participants acknowledged that Stage One had already provided the opportunity to explore the experiences of children, young people and families and collectively identify seven themes through open discussion. The findings from that event are included in **Appendix 1**, providing a transparent record of how those themes were developed and why they were considered important.

The purpose of Stage Two was therefore not to repeat the consultation undertaken in April. Instead, it was designed to test those themes through lived experience, a shared family case study and structured cross-sector discussion. Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to challenge the themes, identify gaps, suggest additional themes and share different perspectives before collectively agreeing where the next stage of work should focus.

Whilst surveys, questionnaires and written feedback provide valuable opportunities to gather individual opinions, they cannot recreate the shared learning that occurs when people come together to explore the same experiences from different perspectives. Throughout the morning, participants listened to lived experience, explored the same family journey, heard the perspectives of colleagues from education, health, housing, social care, local government, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and community representatives, and were able to question, challenge and build upon one another's thinking. The value of the process was not simply in collecting individual views, but in creating a shared understanding through collective discussion.

The evidence presented within this report therefore reflects more than a collection of individual responses. It represents the collective learning that emerged through facilitated discussion, lived experience, shared reflection and respectful challenge. The detailed table discussions, participant feedback, additional observations and voting results included within the appendices provide a transparent record of how the conclusions were reached.

During the closing discussion, participants considered whether the process should return to a further stage of consultation or progress into co-design. Following discussion, the collective view of the room was to maintain momentum and move into Stage Three, whilst ensuring that organisations and individuals who had been unable to attend either of the previous events could still become involved. It was recognised that the combination of the Stage One Report (Appendix 1), this Stage Two Report and the supporting appendices provides a shared evidence base, enabling additional partners to understand the journey to date and contribute meaningfully to the November co-design session.

The Community Ethos & Culture Day remains an open and evolving process. New partners are encouraged to join the journey, contribute their expertise and help shape the practical approaches developed through co-design. The agreed priorities provide the shared starting point for that work, ensuring the collective learning from Stages One and Two is carried forward into practical action rather than repeated through another round of theme identification.

6. From Shared Understanding to Collective Action

The second Community Ethos & Culture Day marked an important milestone in a longer journey of collaboration across Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire.

The first session created a shared understanding of the experiences of children, young people and families and identified seven themes where stronger collaboration could make the greatest difference.

The second session tested those themes through lived experience, a shared family case study and structured discussion, providing confidence that the priorities identified reflected the collective experience of the room.

Those priorities now provide the foundation for the next stage of the journey.

Continuing the Journey



6.1 The Next Stage

The third Community Ethos & Culture Day, taking place on the 12th November 2026, will move from discussion into co-design.

Rather than revisiting the same conversations, participants will work together to develop practical approaches around the three agreed priorities:

- Communication & Information Sharing
- Joined-up Working
- Community Strengths

The purpose will not be to design large-scale programmes or create new organisational structures.

Instead, partners will explore realistic actions that can be tested together, building on the relationships, knowledge and community assets that already exist across the local area.

The intention is to identify approaches that are practical, achievable and capable of being refined through learning together.

6.2 Building on What Already Works

One of the strongest messages to emerge throughout the morning was that many of the ingredients needed to improve outcomes already exist.

Schools, health services, housing providers, local government, voluntary organisations, community groups, businesses and residents all bring valuable knowledge, relationships and resources.

The opportunity identified by participants is not to replace these strengths with something new, but to strengthen the connections between them.

By improving communication, increasing awareness of available support and building stronger relationships between organisations, it becomes easier for families to access the right help earlier and experience a more joined-up system of support.

6.3 Testing Small Changes

Participants recognised that meaningful collaboration develops over time.

Rather than attempting large-scale change, partners agreed to begin by testing small, practical improvements together. Successful approaches can then be refined, shared and built upon over time.

The November session will provide an opportunity to explore how small, practical changes can be tested collaboratively before considering how successful approaches might be developed further.

This reflects a shared commitment to learning together rather than assuming that one organisation already holds the answer.

6.4 Measuring Success

Success will ultimately be judged by the experiences of children, young people and families rather than the activity of organisation.

Instead, participants recognised that success should be reflected in the experiences of children, young people and families.

This might include:

- earlier conversations taking place before problems escalate
- stronger relationships between organisations
- increased confidence to make warm introductions between partners
- greater awareness of local support and community assets
- families finding it easier to access the right support without repeatedly telling their story
- organisations learning together and continually improving how they work alongside one another.

The intention is that the Community Ethos & Culture Day becomes more than a series of events.

It becomes an ongoing process that strengthens relationships, encourages shared ownership and supports a more connected approach to prevention and early help across Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire.

6.5 Key Insight

The Community Ethos & Culture Day is not intended to create another partnership forum or another strategy. Its purpose is to create the conditions for organisations to learn together, strengthen relationships and test practical approaches that improve the experiences of children, young people and families.

7. Conclusion

The second Community Ethos & Culture Day demonstrated what can happen when organisations create the time and space to learn together.

By bringing together partners from education, health, housing, local government, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and people with lived experience, the day created an opportunity to step beyond individual organisational perspectives and explore one family's experience collectively.

Although participants approached the discussion from different professional viewpoints, they consistently arrived at similar conclusions. Each organisation recognised different aspects of the family's circumstances, yet together those perspectives created a much richer understanding than any organisation could have developed alone.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the day was not simply the three priorities that emerged through the voting. It was the confidence participants developed in the process that led to those priorities. Every participant heard the same lived experience, explored the same family case study, worked through the same structured questions and had the opportunity to challenge the emerging themes before collectively agreeing where future effort should be focused.

This ensured the priorities presented in this report reflect the collective experience of the room rather than the perspective of any single organisation. Together with the supporting appendices, the report provides a transparent record of the discussions, evidence and learning that informed those conclusions.

Throughout the day, one message remained constant:

People don't experience organisations. They experience life.

Creating better outcomes therefore depends not only on the quality of individual organisations, but on the strength of the relationships between them.

The Community Ethos & Culture Day is not about creating another partnership, another strategy or another layer of governance. It is about strengthening communication, trust and collaboration so that organisations can work more effectively together around children, young people, families and communities.

8. The Journey Continues

This Community Ethos & Culture Day was never intended to produce all the answers in a single morning.

Its purpose was to strengthen shared understanding, identify where collective effort could make the greatest difference and create the conditions for organisations to begin testing new ways of working together.

Throughout the discussions, participants consistently recognised that education, health, housing, social care, local government, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and local communities already share many of the same ambitions. Although each organisation brings different responsibilities and perspectives, children, young people and families experience one connected journey rather than separate services.

The next stage of the journey will take place on **Thursday 12 November 2026**, when partners come together for the third Community Ethos & Culture Day.

Building on the three agreed priorities—

1. **Communication & Information Sharing**
2. **Joined-up Working**
3. **Community Strengths**

Partners will work together to co-design practical approaches that can be tested, refined and shared across organisations and communities. The focus will be on starting small, learning together and building on the relationships, knowledge and community strengths that already exist across Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire.

Success will not be measured by the number of meetings held or actions completed. It will be measured by whether children, young people and families experience earlier conversations, stronger relationships and a more connected community when they need support.

The conversations held in April created a shared understanding. The July session tested that understanding through lived experience and a shared family journey. November provides the opportunity to turn that shared understanding into practical collective action.

This report captures one stage of that journey. The real measure of its success will not be the report itself, but the difference we make together for children, young people, families and communities across Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire.

About this work

The Community Ethos & Culture Day has been convened by **CHEXS**, in partnership with colleagues from health, housing, education, social care, local government, the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, businesses and people with lived experience.

The work is supported through the **Hertfordshire VCFSE Alliance** and is helping build stronger relationships across organisations, so children, young people and families experience earlier support and a more connected community.

This report forms part of an ongoing journey of shared understanding, shared learning and collective action. Organisations wishing to contribute to the next stage of co-design, or explore opportunities to build on the learning within this report, are encouraged to get in touch.

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Appendices – Evidence Base

The findings presented in this report have been developed using evidence gathered throughout the Community Ethos & Culture Day and the supporting activities that informed each stage of the process.
The appendices provide a transparent record of how the workshop was designed, how discussions were facilitated and how the findings and priorities presented within this report were reached. Together they enable readers to explore the evidence that underpins the shared learning and collective priorities identified throughout the day.

Appendix	Supporting Evidence
Appendix 1	Community Ethos & Culture Day Report (April 2026)
Appendix 2	Workshop Presentation and Resources (9 July 2026)
Appendix 3	Sally Hudson's Lived Experience
Appendix 4	Family Case Study
Appendix 5	Facilitated Table Discussion Feedback
Appendix 6	Theme Voting Results
Appendix 7	Attendee List
Appendix 8	CHEXS Theme Posters

Appendix 1
Ethos and culture day report - April 26

Appendix 2
CHEXS Ethos and Culture Day Stage 2 9th July 2026

Appendix 3
Lived Experiences - Sally Story

Appendix 4
Family Case Study

Appendix 5
Table Discussion Feedback

Appendix 6
Theme Voting results

Appendix 7
Attendee List

Appendix 8
Theme Images - July 2026

The appendices demonstrate how the Community Ethos & Culture Day moved from shared understanding, to shared learning, to collectively agreed priorities, providing a clear evidence base for the next stage of co-design.