Appendix 2 - Impact Statement – Places to Connect Programme

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Library Service has, since returning to regular service provision after the Covid-19 pandemic, seen an increase in people using libraries for longer periods of time and for more non-traditional uses.

To help to combat loneliness and isolation brought about by closure of other community venues, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the ability of people to heat their own homes, the library service has provided more space and activities for local communities.

The chance to meet with people in a warm, clean, safe space with friendly and welcoming staff who would not judge or question people's reasons for being there is seen as vital.

As part of the Places to Connect programme, three 'Coffee and Craft' days were set up at three libraries with 95 people attending these events. Feedback received includes the following:

"This was a fab session, there was a good community spirit, I can't wait for the next one."

"I only intended to stay for an hour but ended up staying all day. It was great to sit and chat with people, I hadn't seen (NAME) for years!"

"This Library is excellent! It's really given me a lift to be here today."

Due to the success of these events, 8 other events were organised and attended by 239 people. In considering feedback, a crochet club has been established at Treorchy Library and 'Community Puzzle' tables set up at several libraries. These allow people to sit for extended periods of time in the library either on their own or with other community members.

Feedback from two Ukrainian settlers who attended events has led to a 'Coffee and Chat' group in the library for people whose first language is not English. The success of this group has led to discussion of further groups.

These events have increased the wellbeing and confidence of many of our community members and resulted in more diverse use of library spaces.