

September 2025

How Barnwood Trust is learning from work over the last 12 years



Introduction

Barnwood Trust looks after and gives out money to charities who help people in Gloucestershire.



Their aim is to make the county a fair place for disabled people and people with mental health conditions.



They have changed a lot in the last 12 years and wanted to look closer at what they have been doing.

This is so they can learn and do well in the future.



A research company called Brightpurpose looked at the Trust's work and wrote a report about it.

They asked 56 people who have worked with Barnwood, what they thought about:

- What difference the Trust has made in the county.
- How the Trust made a difference.





- What the Trust did well.
- What it did less well.



- What it might have missed that they could have done.



This review shows what Brightpurpose found out.

What Barnwood has done over the last 12 years



Brightpurpose looked at where Barnwood's work made a difference:

- In communities they aim to help.



- With partners they work with.

- With including people and making things fairer in Gloucestershire.



What did they find out?

In communities they aim to help:

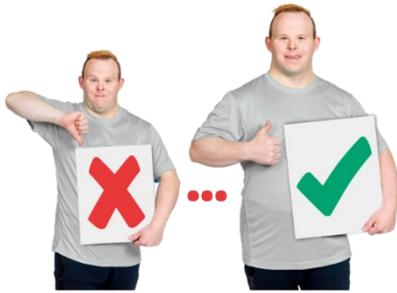
- People's voices are heard.
- They have better lives because:
 - Work done is based on what is needed.
 - They are listened to and are part of making things better.
 - Other partners they work with are better at including everyone.



With partners they found:

- Stronger relationships with other organisations at all levels.
- Better teamwork with partners.
- Less people and partners doing the same work.
- The way Barnwood works to build community made other organisations think and do things differently in:
 - Funding.
 - Making things fairer and including everyone.
 - Talking and listening to communities.
 - Being stronger for the future.





People said there is much more to do, but Barnwood has helped them to work in a better way.

This has helped make lives better for disabled people and people with mental health conditions.

How Barnwood made these differences



- **With actions:**
 - Meeting with organisations and people.
 - Keeping and sharing useful information.
 - Using information to make change.
 - Helping organisations to be skilled and strong leaders.
 - Looking at how they and other organisations are getting on.
 - Helping money get to where it is needed through others.



- **With how they act and how Barnwood is:**



- Living their aim for fairness and including people.
- Being open to learning, changing and sharing.
- Listening.



- Helping to show the way to other leaders and organisations.

- Being careful with their power.

- Rising to new challenges.

- Not thinking of themselves in a big-headed way.



- **What does this look like:**

- Being good with money.

- Independence - not being swayed by others.

- Being well thought of after years of being trusted.



These things make Barnwood have power.

People said these things make Barnwood stand out as being the most able to make change in Gloucestershire.

They said that there is always more to do but Barnwood are brave and really try to make a difference.



What people thought Barnwood did best to make change:

- Getting the right people together to help money be spent in the best way.





- Helping other organisations to think and work differently across the county.
- Getting money to places that needed it in the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Changing how Barnwood was run so that it was living its values.



- Keeping a store of useful Information and sharing this with others. This helps everyone make better services.



- Helping leaders to come together to learn, solve problems and think of ideas. This has made strong relationships across the county.

Learning from the last 12 years

What Barnwood did well

- Working with people with lived experience of disability and mental health conditions, rather than doing things for them.
- Planning about where money can be spent and being able to plan and help quickly when new needs come up.





- Staff are really good at working with people and organisations. This gives Barnwood strength in helping there to be change.

What Barnwood did less well



- The start of bringing Community Building into the county was bumpy. People in the community did not get on with it.

Barnwood saw this and changed how they went about it. This made things go really well and helped make long-lasting change.



- They could have been much better at telling people about changes.

There were some things that people had mixed feelings about:

- Barnwood had tried to reach lots of groups of people and has got better at this.

Some people thought there was much more to do to reach different ethnic groups in the county.

- Barnwood's office - Overton House – was made to have the best accessibility and is a great design.

But some visitors found it daunting and felt like they didn't belong there.





Looking to the future

What are the challenges for disabled people, people with mental health conditions and the organisations who support them?



- In the UK people are taking sides more at the moment. This can make people feel less safe and that they are not being included.



- Changes to benefits could make life harder and more stressful for people who already face big challenges.

- Changes to local services.



- Changes to the NHS make it harder to plan.



- Less money for services which means charities have less too.





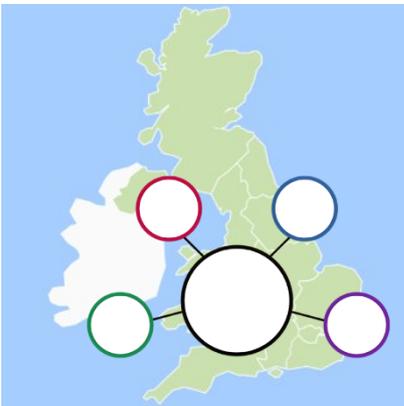
People think Barnwood will play an important part in working through these challenges in Gloucestershire.

They saw ways Barnwood can do even more by speaking up about issues that communities face.

They said Barnwood is trusted and people listen to them.



They think Barnwood should choose a small number of issues to focus on.



They think the focus should be on Gloucestershire, but Barnwood could share learning outside because they have good experience to share. This could help more people.