



The Place of Kindness

Combating loneliness and building
stronger communities

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who have given so much of themselves in this project. It is your openness, honesty and thoughtfulness in expressing experiences of kindness which makes this report possible. I am particularly grateful to the seven partners who agreed to collaborate in the project, a brave step which deserves recognition given our analysis about the role of organisations. I am also grateful to the Advisory Group for their insight, support and challenge. I am indebted to Martyn Evans and Jennifer Wallace of the Carnegie UK Trust and Ilona Haslewood of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for the opportunity of taking this work forward and their support in doing so. I have benefited enormously from discussion of this work with Julia Unwin, and finally thanks go to Rebekah Menzies of Carnegie UK Trust for helping me to explore our communities and keeping me company on lots of long car journeys.



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Contents

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	3
A note on approach	4
1. Introduction	5
2. What do we know about what enables and inhibits kindness?	7
3. What did we do?	11
4. What did we learn?	15
5. What is getting in the way?	24
6. Action for Kindness	29
Annex 1: Partnership stories	30
Annex 2: References	44
Annex 3: Advisory Group	46



Foreword

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Carnegie UK Trust both have longstanding interests in evidence-based approaches to enabling and empowering people and their communities in order to promote thriving places and wellbeing.

With isolation and loneliness recognised as major challenges, and widening inequalities and social polarisation, now is the time to be focusing on kindness. A focus on our responsibilities and abilities as individuals and our power to make a difference.

This project emerged from JRF research which shed light on the complex infrastructure of relationships and acts of kindness which can have a significant impact on the quality of our lives. This is a second stage of our project on kindness. In the first (Ferguson, 2016) we tried to set out the evidence and thinking on the subject. In this stage, we engaged directly with people who want to explore and talk about kindness in their work, their lives and their communities, and test whether we should, and indeed could, do anything to support and encourage kinder communities.

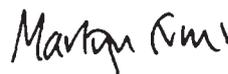
Talking about kindness in a public policy context doesn't sit comfortably with most of us. It feels both too personal and too ephemeral. Talking about, and valuing, being friendly, generous and considerate might appear both 'soft' and also too glib. Especially when people face so many real and substantial barriers to achieving social and economic wellbeing

But it's important to talk about that which makes us uncomfortable; which challenges us; which involves taking a risk. What we've discovered over the past nine months

are powerful examples of where kindness and everyday relationships can affect change and support the wellbeing of individuals and communities. In short, the report finds kindness is a necessary ingredient of successful communities however certainly not a sufficient one.

But there are major factors that get in the way of engaging and encouraging kindness both in individuals and organisations. These include real and imagined rules relating to risk; funders and policy makers valuing the formal and organisational over the informal and individual; and modern definitions of professionalism and good leadership crowding out everyday kindness and intuitive human interactions. These things that 'get in the way' are not to be dismissed. But this report indicates they should be balanced with a greater confidence and support for the power of goodwill, affection, warmth, gentleness and concern.

Please read, consider and share this report. We would like to hear from you. Both for and against these issues! We will be continuing this work by engaging with individuals and communities to share and build on our learning, and with key stakeholders on the challenging questions this report raises.



Martyn Evans
Chief Executive
Carnegie UK Trust



Dr Jim McCormick
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Diagram 1: Executive Summary

WHY DOES KINDNESS MATTER?

Reducing social isolation, tackling loneliness and improving wellbeing

Providing the building blocks for community empowerment through positive relationships and values

FACTORS THAT AFFECT CULTURES OF KINDNESS

Levels of inequality – poverty and disadvantage impact on our ability to form and maintain relationships

History and culture – places have their own distinctive stories that impact on their culture of kindness

Individual experiences – individual biographies, mental health and resilience impact on our community relationships

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO KINDER COMMUNITIES?

WELCOMING PLACES

- Places free to use
- Warm hospitality
- Places free from agenda
- People make places

INFORMAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Make kindness visible
- Give permission to act in kindness
- Create opportunities for connections
- Make an effort to connect and act in kindness

VALUES OF KINDNESS

- Be kind to yourself
- Take responsibility
- Trust people
- Recognise and celebrate kindness
- Notice and question values

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF KINDNESS?

PERSONAL RISK

Concerns about opening ourselves up to risk when we interact with each other appear to dominate our thinking when engaging with those outside our direct family and friendship groups.

REGULATION

Organisations have become adept at managing risks of human interaction through regulation and policies. While essential and important these unintended consequences impact on our ability to act in kindness.

PROFESSIONALISM

The dominant model of dispassionate professionals may impact on the ability of those in positions of authority to act in kindness.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

In measuring what we can, we often fall short of measuring what matters. Narrow performance indicators can crowd out flexibility, in turn reducing the ability to act in kindness.

ACTIONS FOR KINDNESS

We need to think and talk about kindness, questioning our values. The very act of thinking and talking about kindness encourages us to be kinder.

Leaders need to empower people to act in kindness. This is particularly important for those who provide services, be they public, private or charitable.

Governments need to remove the barriers to kindness. We need to explore this carefully and consider what steps can be taken to support people to act in kindness.

A note on approach

The key question for this project is ‘what could we do to encourage kinder communities?’ It is not a traditional research project, nor does it present an experiment and evaluation.

The project has involved personal exploration of what might enable and inhibit kindness in a range of communities, based not on a formal methodology but a less structured engagement with a range of organisations and individuals. I have deliberately approached the question from emotions, listening to and observing the people who live and work in different areas, and noticing my own feelings responding to experience and atmosphere. However, in attempting to identify what could be done, it also seemed important to apply a level of rigour to thinking about the nature of kindness and to avoid thinking about it purely in terms of individual emotion. I have applied analysis based on the earlier evidence review (Ferguson, 2016) but also mindful of learning from twenty years of experience in public service in Scotland, in roles spanning research, analysis and policy. What emerges are the voices of the people I have spoken to (all of whom have kindly given permission for their

stories to be used; we have anonymised some names) overlaid with my own perceptions to marshal arguments. This approach seemed to fit the initial analysis that found limitations in our tendency to apply organisational solutions to social issues and our approach of evaluating interventions. I have experienced no little discomfort in exploring the initial premise that what we were interested in happens beyond organisations and indeed that organisations often present barriers. For the record, while observing and bemoaning a lack of agency in communities, this should not be taken as support for withdrawal of the state. It has been both liberating and difficult to leave aside more formal methodology, to connect with emotion and write from the heart.



Zoë Ferguson
Carnegie Associate



1. Introduction

Kindness is important. It is at the very heart of our ability to generate wellbeing and the power for change. Drawing attention to our experience of kindness has the potential to disrupt the way we think about society, to change both what we do and how we do it, and challenge existing relationships both as professionals and as individuals.

Kindness makes sense to people. It is language that is easily used, however uncomfortable it may make policy makers. From Barack Obama, who notes that his daughters are smart and beautiful but more importantly, kind; to our conversations with Maureen and Isabella in Maryhill, who struggle to get people to accept the kindness they have to give, we can all talk about kindness. And surely that universality of understanding makes sense if we are to affect social change for the good rather than merely provide service solutions.

Kindness is also difficult. Whilst it might be tempting, and indeed true, to think that the world would be a better place if we could all be kinder to each other, we recognise there are very real reasons why that is easier said than done.

This work on kindness is a joint project bringing together the Carnegie UK Trust's work on the Enabling State, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's programme of research on risk, trust and relationships which has investigated how everyday help and support happens in informal relationships between individuals and in neighbourhoods. The project aimed to test what, if anything, could be done to encourage kinder communities. We worked with seven different organisations to explore and, in some cases, test new ideas around the importance of places and opportunities to connect, and the intrinsic values underpinning our interactions and relationships.

This report documents the learning from that project and in doing so, highlights questions and issues to be addressed in the Carnegie UK Trust's forward agenda exploring the potential for kindness in wider contexts.

There is a growing body of evidence that shows that positive relationships and kindness are at the heart of our wellbeing. The researchers who undertook the JRF Liveable Lives project (Anderson, Brownlie & Milne, 2015) likened their work to spraying water on a spider's web, making visible the taken for granted infrastructure of relationships and acts of kindness which make a significant impact on the quality of our lives. We know that resilient individuals have at least one strong emotional attachment, access to wider support and positive community experiences. The quality of our relationships in all the contexts in which we operate are important. For example, we know that a positive relationship with an adult outside of the home contributes to positive outcomes for disadvantaged young people, and that people in hospital who experience a caring touch (not just to perform a procedure) recover better.

The interaction and balance in those relationships has shifted hugely in the post-war period. The creation of the welfare state replaced largely non-existent or costly, inequitable and frequently inaccessible services at a time of national crisis. Decades later, requirements have multiplied and expectations have been raised. Alongside ever more demands on public services, changes in family structures and growing geographic mobility threaten the bonds that hold communities together. We are increasingly recognising growing isolation and loneliness as a significant problem in modern society. We recognise the impact on health and wellbeing and also the cost to society of lack of social connections. Isolation and loneliness is not just a problem for those experiencing it; it is eroding solidarity in society as a whole.

This is accompanied by an erosion of trust in institutions. The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2017) reveals that trust is in crisis around the world. The general population's trust in all four key institutions – business, government, non-governmental organisations and the media – has declined broadly. The majority of respondents now lack full belief that the system is working for them. We see both the erosion of trust in institutions and solidarity in society feeding fear and driving people to protect their own interests. The rise in populist movements in several Western democracies speaks to this fear.

We need to resist a jump to institutional solutions, and think instead 'beyond services,' while recognising the vital platform provided by the state and voluntary sector. It is striking talking to older people the extent to which their notion of neighbourliness goes well beyond what would be considered normal nowadays. Without being unhelpfully nostalgic and recognising well understood shifts in society underpinning behaviour changes, we have also found that people miss this sense of community spirit. They would rather have a good neighbour than someone paid, or indeed volunteering, to spend time with them.

“Davy,” who has inhabited two contrasting worlds – one of deprivation, crime and violence, and another of the professional voluntary sector and policy – says he has seen more real kindness in the former and expresses his disappointment in what he sees as wrapped-up, marketed ideas more about someone's success than about another's need.

The Carnegie UK Trust's work on the Enabling State has charted the shifting relationship between the state and individuals, and proposed a route map which would help the state become an enabler, handing back to communities and individuals the power to shape and contribute to their own wellbeing (Elvidge, 2014). We recognise one of the key challenges in realising the ambitions of empowerment is in developing

intrinsic values such as community and caring for each other. We will not find the answer in services, programmes or projects but in the humanity of individuals.

We believe the key may lie in understanding and acting to remove what gets in the way of kindness.

The JRF research highlights and explores the risk we feel in engaging with others and asking for or giving help within relationships. As a result, we increasingly seek more formal routes to be helpful in our communities and perhaps now measure our kindness in contribution to organised charity rather than our individual interactions with people. As we formalise relationships through organisations, our attitude to risk stifles kindness with bureaucracy. In institutional settings, we are concerned with discrimination and as a result, rely on working through processes and procedures in the same way with everyone, rather than responding to difference in human connection. Regulation or, perhaps more accurately, the interpretation of regulation, is getting in the way of countless opportunities for people to come together and express care for each other.

Shug, in Gallatown, Kirkcaldy, suggested a weekly kickabout in a local park with parents and kids. After a couple of weeks of gathering, he was challenged by local football clubs and the local authority to produce his risk assessment paperwork and identified child protection lead. Shug continued informally until the weather turned colder and they were forced indoors. At this point, a couple of volunteers took on running the club on a paid basis and an inevitable formality followed.

In this report we:

- rehearse what we know about what enables and inhibits kindness;
- review what we did in the Kinder Communities project;
- document what we have learned from that work, focusing on **places, opportunities and values**; and
- identify key factors that get in the way of kindness, raising issues and questions for future work.



2. What do we know about what enables and inhibits kindness?

At the outset of this project, we looked at relevant evidence and sought to understand what factors might enable or inhibit forming and maintaining everyday relationships and the capacity to act in kindness. This section briefly rehearses our findings first published in 'Kinder Communities: The power of everyday relationships' (Ferguson, 2016).

In that report we discussed a definition of kindness. Rather than repeat it here, we feel that 'kindness' is a term which has been discussed with such openness we should take at face value what people mean. Language does matter – some may find 'kindness' off putting either because of its moral overtones or because it draws attention to something they would rather keep low key – for example, they might prefer to describe help as a 'wee hand' rather than an 'act of kindness.' However, in spite of these nuances there is certainly a universality of understanding beyond many policy terms.

Enablers and barriers fell into three broad areas: structural inequality, history and culture and individual experience. What is important to note in considering this evidence is that whilst there are factors relating to the relative disadvantage of where we live, neighbourhoods can have very different atmospheres in very similar conditions. We also looked at 'what works' in encouraging kindness.

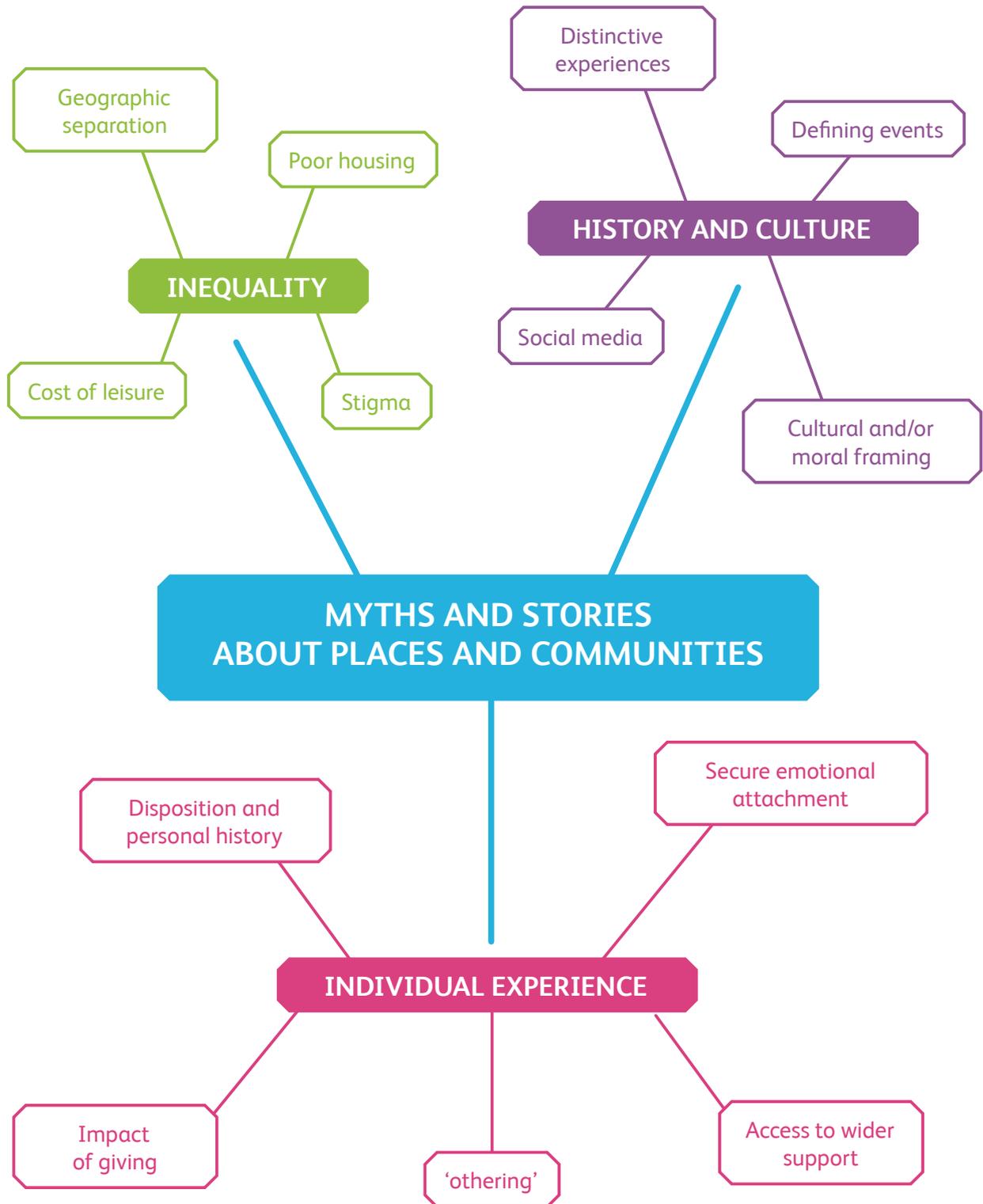
Structural inequality

It is well understood that poverty and disadvantage impact on levels of social capital. It is common sense that poor housing and the cost of leisure inhibit making and maintaining relationships (Dodds, 2016). The geographic separation of individuals and families experiencing poverty concentrate disadvantage

and stigma, with the result that people living in the least deprived areas are almost twice as likely to say that most people can be trusted compared with people in the most deprived areas (61 percent and 34 percent respectively) (Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2013). Other types of inequality impact on both the ability to make and maintain relationships and the nature of resulting isolation and loneliness. For example: differences in male and female experience; migrants; young people; lone parents and older people.

Notwithstanding the clear impacts of inequality on social capital, it does not explain all variation. JRF research has pointed to a need for a more nuanced understanding of the differences between neighbourhoods that on the surface appear similar in terms of deprivation indices (Batty & Cole, 2010). They suggest that housing, transport and labour markets can make qualitative differences. The Glasgow Centre for Population Health study of excess mortality in Glasgow (Walsh, McCartney, Collins, Taubault & Batty, 2016) has also found deeply political reasons for differences, concluding that decisions to 'skim the cream' of the city's population to rehouse its 'best' citizens in new towns left the city with 'the old, the very poor and almost unemployable,' and a legacy of premature death.

DIAGRAM 2 – ENABLERS AND BARRIERS



History and culture

The Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) three cities study (Seaman & Edgar, 2015) further explored differences in social capital in areas of similar socio-economic circumstances, looking at:

- psychological outlook, for example aspirations and preference for immediate or delayed gratification;
- individualism;
- family life, for example experience of family break up;
- social mobility; and
- distribution and form of network links.

The findings highlight differences which in part can be linked to distinctive experiences (for example, deindustrialisation has been experienced in different ways, leading to greater geographic separation from employment opportunities in Glasgow), and defining events which shape the history of a city (for example, the Hillsborough tragedy is seen as instrumental in forming strong social solidarity across class divides in Liverpool). Distinctive histories shape cultural and moral framings in communities.

Individual experience

Individuals experience and respond to circumstances in different ways. Resilience literature (Seaman, McNeice, Yates & McLean, 2014) highlights key characteristics of resilient individuals as: having at least one strong emotional attachment; access to wider support; positive community experiences and disposition. The Liveable Lives stories (Anderson Brownlie & Milne, 2015) show that ‘disposition’ rather than being an inherent quality is at least, in part, shaped by individual biography. The GCPH pSoBid study (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2013) has shown that, for those in more favourable circumstances, health outcomes are better regardless of personality characteristics. However, for those in more deprived circumstances, personality traits are significant and important predictors of mental wellbeing

and health related behaviour. To a degree, good mental wellbeing and the trait of extraversion (sociability, optimism and impulsivity) help to protect against the consequences of poor circumstances. Telfer, who as part of the JRF project kept a journal of her bid to be a ‘good neighbour’ notes: ‘It is all very well this being neighbourly when you’re in a good place, but when some horrible things have happened, you really don’t want to talk to anyone’ (Telfer, 2015).

How we see ourselves in relation to those around us is also important. We might want to identify with our community leading to positive cohesion, but there might also be reasons for distancing ourselves. The GCPH three cities study (Seaman & Edgar, 2015) identifies a process of ‘othering’ as a strategy of maintaining an identity of being respectable, hard-working and deserving, of individuals distancing themselves from communities perceived as being problematic. How individuals choose to act within their circumstances is important and it is recognised that giving support can be as important to wellbeing as receiving (Dodds, 2016) and indeed that giving support can be the prompt for others to act in kindness. Telfer notes: ‘One thing I hadn’t expected was that being a good neighbour is as much about receiving as giving’ (Telfer, 2015).

Stories

The nature of inequality, distinctive histories and our individual experience intersect in the stories that grow up around places. Those narratives of place in turn shape our responses to individuals in those places. For example, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC, 2016) has explored how people in Dennistoun understand the relationship between stories of place and personal narrative and identify eight tropes: violence, friendliness, culture, sickness, disconnection, working class, male dominant, beauty. The Liveable Lives study (Anderson Brownlie & Milne, 2015) also notes the importance of ‘myths’ at a city-wide level in framing the way in which we approach



relationships. Glasgow's reputation as a friendly city in part frames how Glaswegians behave, however interestingly, it was to some extent seen as superficial and different from friendship. Negative narratives can be seen to be perpetuated by the use of statistics by organisations seeking resources for the area and representation in the media.

What works?

The next obvious question is whether we can identify anything that is happening currently to strengthen everyday relationships and kinder communities. Finding relevant evidence is tricky, as there appears to be a mismatch between what we are talking about – relational experience in communities – and sources which tend to focus on the transactional, for example, evaluation of the impact of interventions. This could be interpreted as a time lag between the direction of policy development and the evidence approaches which support that development (Ferguson, 2015).

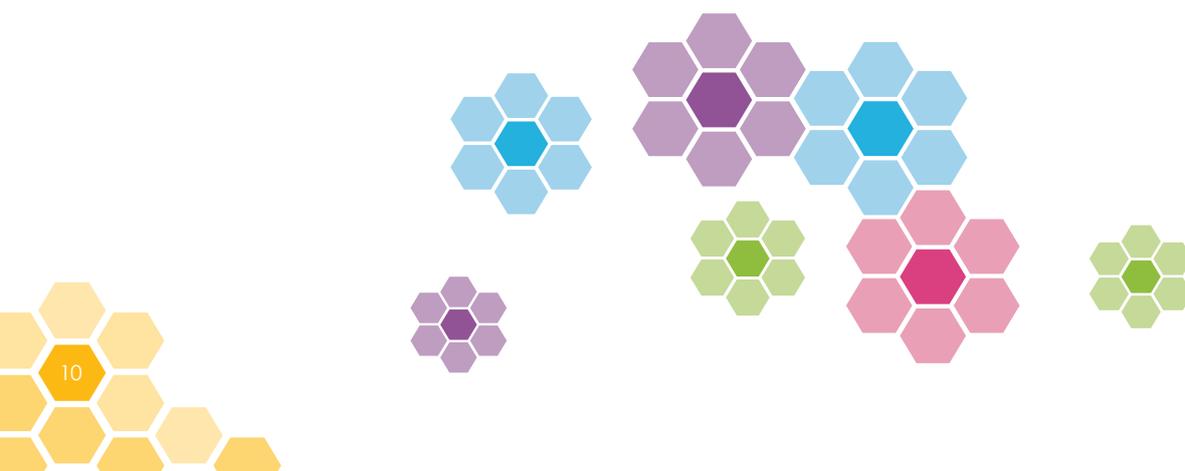
Elements of existing approaches may be important in encouraging kinder communities, but tend to jump forward to community empowerment in purpose rather than considering the strength of the community in looking after one another as an outcome in its own right.

An apparent paradox in looking at the evidence is that what is identified as successful depends on organisations and what we are talking about exists beyond organisations. This perhaps reflects our tendency to jump

to institutional solutions or at least solutions defined by our institutional context. All of the organisations consulted highlight key workers as the preeminent factor in their success. Link Up has analysed what makes their key workers successful and identify the following features: alignment of personal goals and values with the organisation, i.e. drive to help others and deliver change; strong self-awareness; and a sociable, calm and stable demeanour. Where we have increasing understanding about the crucial relationships between community organisations and communities, we have less understanding about the relationships within the community. The evaluation of Chance to Thrive (Kennedy, Watt, Jaquet & Wallace, 2015) and Our Place (Curry & Reid, 2015) also highlight a number of other issues inherent in current approaches:

- overlapping / conflicting groups focused in narrow silos;
- non-local leadership;
- difficulty in handing over to volunteers; and
- expectation of provision both from communities and from organisations.

Given that we need some level of organisation to do anything, it is worth thinking about how to overcome this apparent paradox. It is perhaps not overly productive to think too long on whether you can encourage kindness without organisations but rather: What kinds of organisations support relationships and kindness in communities and how? How can we ensure a lightness of touch in intervention? How do we ensure that sustainability is about the community and not just the organisations?



3. What did we do?

Our work over the past nine months has tested and developed a theory of change (outlined in the executive summary). The starting point for our theory of change was to identify why kindness is important.

The exploration of evidence shows that everyday relationships and kindness are fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Whilst people may be members of communities which are not geographically bounded, we focused on neighbourhoods. In an increasingly virtual world, we still live in real houses, on real streets, and rely on direct contact with people to make our lives work. In the context of growing isolation and loneliness, it is worth shining a light on the infrastructure of connections and values which underpin our relationships, and remain largely invisible and taken for granted. In addition to the contribution to wellbeing, the evidence indicates that this infrastructure of connections and values underpins community cohesion, participation and engagement. With increasing emphasis on genuine community empowerment, and well-documented uneven confidence to engage and participate across communities, it is also worth considering the potential to encourage kinder communities as a starting point in both increasing and levelling the capacity for community empowerment. We argue that whilst a discussion of everyday relationships and kindness in neighbourhoods might on the surface appear to have little relevance in the face of the urgent challenges of austerity and increasing inequality, these concepts are at the very heart of our ability to generate wellbeing and the foundations upon which the power for change can be built.

Combating loneliness and improving wellbeing

We know relationships are crucial to wellbeing. There are well-documented strong associations between higher social capital and lower

mortality. A recent meta-analysis shows 26 percent, 29 percent and 32 percent increased likelihood of mortality over an eight year period, irrespective of age, due to experience of loneliness, social isolation and living alone, respectively (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Relationships impact significantly on physical and mental health. The GoWell study finds that residents in three high rise estates in Glasgow often attribute health problems to adverse relationships, and whilst they welcome changes in physical living conditions, believe improving relationships in their community would have more impact (Egan & Lawson, 2012). The Office for National Statistics finds that personal wellbeing is higher among individuals who know and regularly talk to neighbours, and that people's satisfaction with where they live is more affected by getting on with neighbours than by quality of housing (ONS, 2015). The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (uwaterloo.ca), on the basis of significant public engagement, identifies community as the most important of eight domains of wellbeing. There is a growing recognition that wellbeing is a more relevant measure of progress in society than GDP as we have seen diminishing returns on increasing wealth on quality of lives in the post-industrial world (Wallace & Schmucker, 2012).

Empowerment

ONS identify positive relationships with neighbours as playing an important role in improving social cohesion, levels of trust and feelings of belonging (ONS, 2015). As such, they can be seen as a pre-condition for an Enabling State (Elvidge, 2014). Intuitively, it makes sense



that if we care more for each other in our communities, we are less dependent on services. However, it is important to highlight that the concept of an enabling state is not one of a hollow state which simply withdraws and leaves communities to get on with it, and it recognises that there is an unequal confidence among communities to create the power for change. The Enabling State (Wallace, 2013) recognises culture and values as a key factor in change alongside the fiscal challenge, intergenerational tensions and environmental limits to growth. We are more likely to act in accordance with dominant values than new information. One of the key challenges of realising an enabling state is in developing intrinsic values (such as community and caring for each other) and the unequal confidence to engage makes this harder in some areas than others.

We built a theory of change under these outcomes which drew on evidence and proposed that, notwithstanding significant underpinning factors influencing the relationships and extent of community spirit in neighbourhoods, there might be practical steps which could encourage kinder communities. These practical steps focused on places, opportunities and intrinsic values.

Places

'Third places' (Oldenburg, 1999) are essentially the places which are not home or work, and provide the spaces in which we make connections. In a policy context, we tend to think of public amenities like community centres, but the JRF research showed the importance of Tesco in Maryhill, providing a hub for regular interactions. This chimes with a recent article about the role of McDonald's in the US (Arnade, 2016). Arnade suggests that where wealthier Americans turn to therapists in the face of challenges, others without resources turn to each other; and McDonalds, as well as providing

cheap and filling food, is preferred to non-profits for its safety and freedom. This led us to think in broad terms about the places which provide the settings for connections and relationships.

Opportunities

In addition to places, a purpose to connect can be required. Many community projects provide purpose related to specific interests (for example, knitting), personal characteristics (for example, lone mothers) or organising to effect change. However, the RSA Connected Communities project (Morris & Gilchrist, 2015) identifies that it is not necessarily the number of connections that are important, but being able to make sense of those connections, and that lack of diversity in networks is damaging. This suggests we should think about the potential for specific interests or characteristics to be excluding to some and to some extent to create weaker networks, and the limitations of moving to purposeful community development where relationships are weak. We are interested in exploring light touch ways of giving permission to engage and providing boundaries which would mitigate the perceived risk of personal involvement.

Values

Some sources (for example Price, 2015) assume that making connections is sufficient in strengthening support for one another within communities. However, our analysis suggests that connections and kindness are distinct and that kindness does not necessarily follow if connections are made. We have found that people broadly understand the shifts underpinning where we are now as a society but also that a sense of community spirit is generally missed. This is borne out by the Fairer Scotland conversations (Scottish Government, 2016) – people want more trust and respect for one another. We want to think about how we might reassert the intrinsic values of caring for one another within communities.



We worked with seven partner organisations (in Scotland, but where the resulting learning has wider applicability) to explore their experiences and in some cases to test new ideas, focusing on places and opportunities to connect and the intrinsic values underpinning our interactions and relationships. We worked with:

- **U-Lab in Scotland**, to test whether a challenge to undertake an act of kindness would impact on noticing our connections and behaviour;
- **Food Train Friends in Dumfries**, to test wearing a 'Friendly Dumfries' badge aiming to give permission to engage and provide boundaries for relationships;
- **Inspiring Scotland's Link Up programme in Hawkhill, Alloa**, to explore the stories of our neighbourhoods and how they inform our behaviour;
- **Glenavon Tenants Association in Maryhill, Glasgow**, to test using outdoor space to

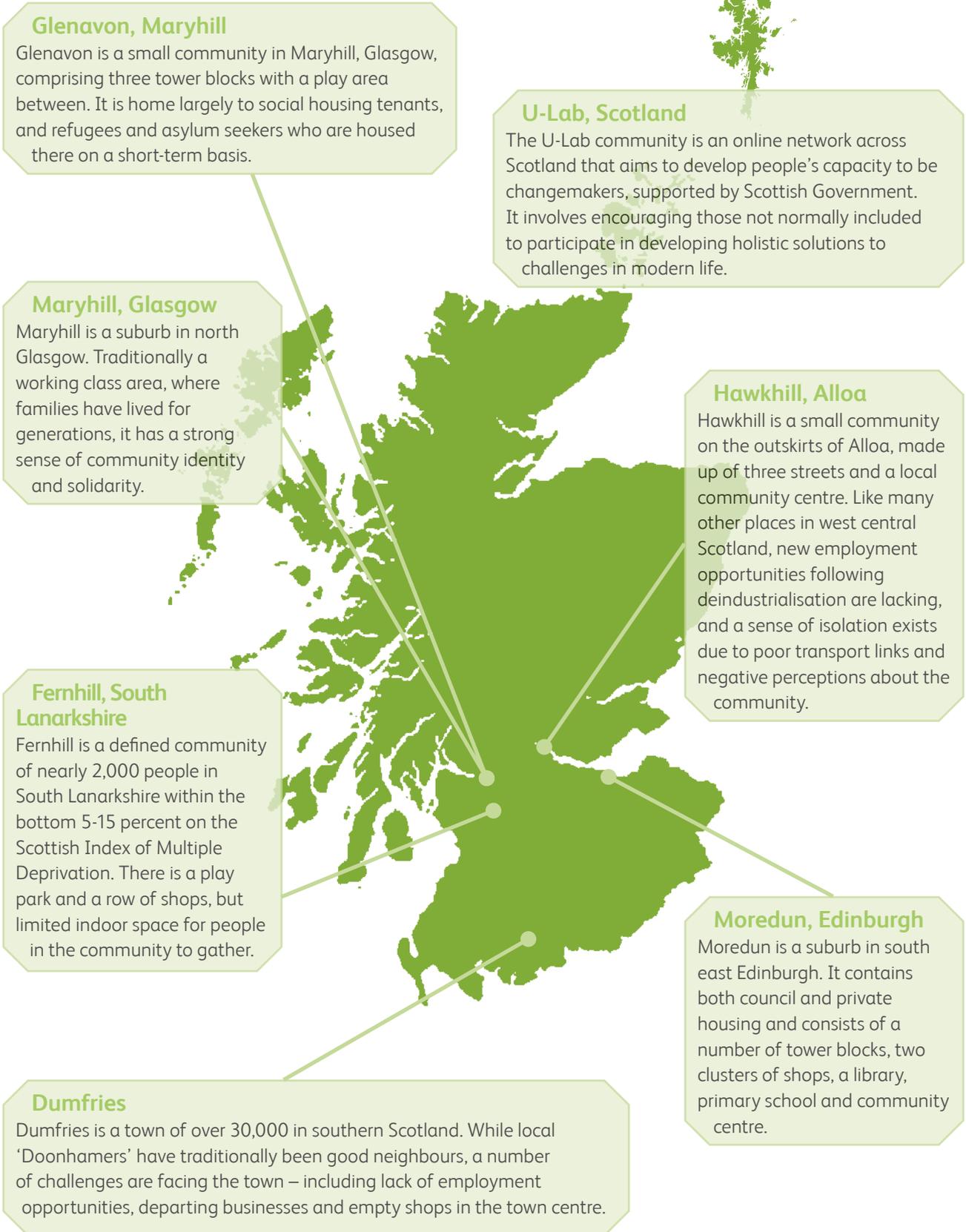
gather, and stepping back from laying on events for the community to encourage more participation and sharing;

- **Tesco Maryhill in Glasgow**, to explore what is behind the findings from the JRF Liveable Lives research that Tesco acts as an important community hub in Maryhill and staff often go out of their way to help and support the community showing great kindness;
- **Cyrenians in Edinburgh**, to follow development of their Community Cook Clubs aiming to provide more opportunities for people to prepare and share food; and
- **Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland in Fernhill, South Lanarkshire**, to collaborate on their place-based programme to explore the role of kindness in community empowerment.

Our approach was to listen to and observe people living and working in these communities and to draw out learning from our perceptions.



DIAGRAM 3 – THE COMMUNITIES OUR PARTNERS ARE WORKING IN



4. What did we learn?

Perhaps the first key learning point from our experience is that the underpinning factors (structural inequality, history and culture and individual experience) really matter, and that it is difficult to imagine practical steps which could work equally well in different circumstances.

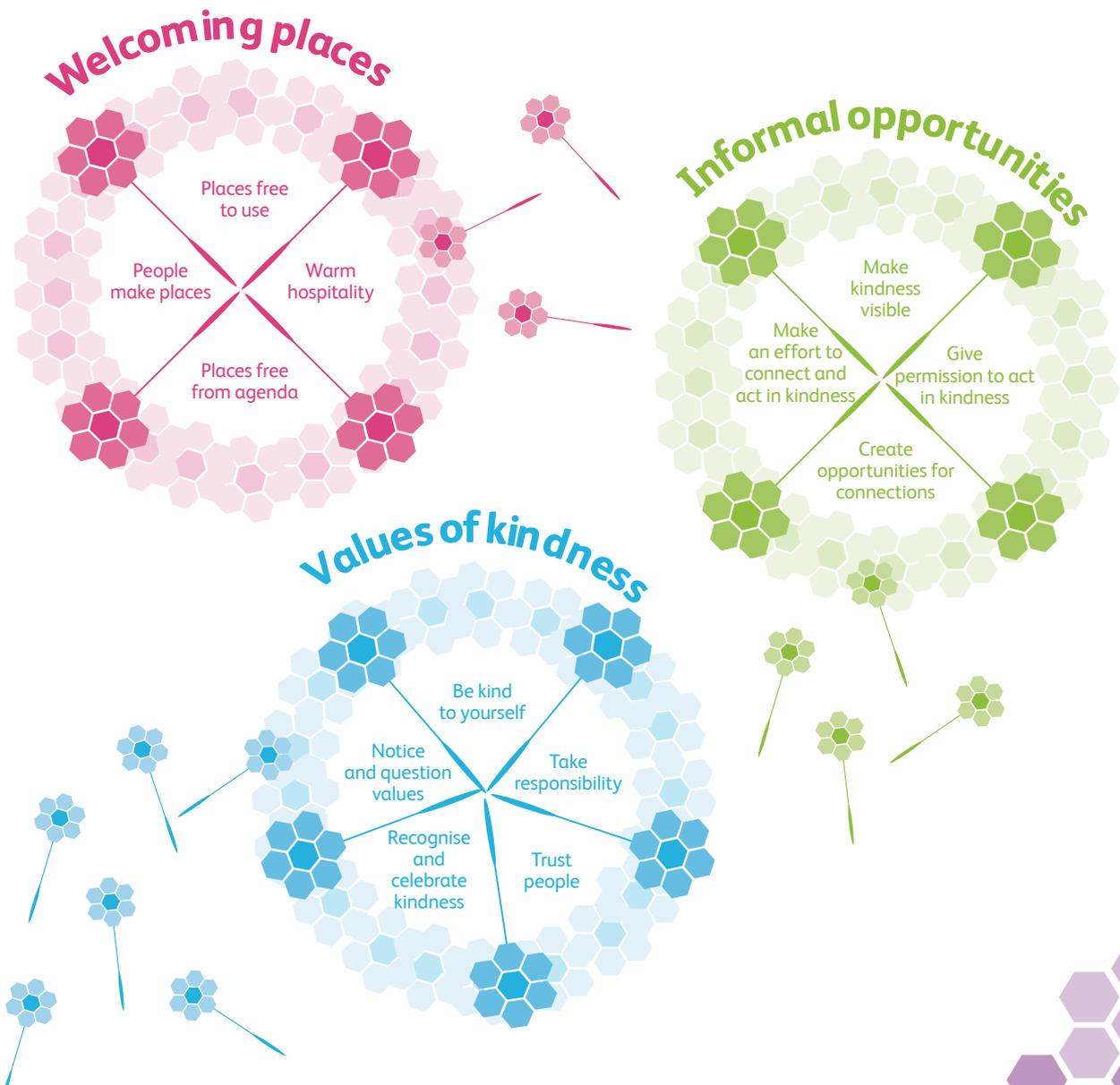
One of the questions we have returned to time and again in the course of our work is why neighbourhoods which look very similar on paper can have very different atmospheres.

In some, there was a genuine feeling of warmth and friendliness, in others a sense of no one engaging much with each other or even of being visible, and in others again a feeling of tension and potential for conflict.

The individual stories from our partnerships are included at Annex 1. Here, we explore the extent to which we find evidence to support the theory of change.

The theory of change aimed to test the potential for practical steps to encourage kinder communities focusing on: places; opportunities for connection; and the intrinsic values underpinning relationships.

DIAGRAM 4 - HOW CAN PLACES, OPPORTUNITIES AND VALUES ENCOURAGE KINDNESS?



Places

We are interested in the places we have to gather or even just bump into each other, and the impact the nature of those places has on our ability to connect and to deepen our connections to form relationships. It is perhaps helpful here to make a distinction between physical space and civic space.

Physical space

Poorly designed physical space has a strong negative impact on the ability to make connections and ease of managing relationships within the community. In Glenavon, Maryhill, we wanted to explore the tenants association's observation that more people tended to attend events held outdoors than indoors and to encourage greater use of picnic tables in a small central park area. Isabella and Maureen, from the tenants association, put up posters to suggest a regular shared lunch at the picnic tables during the summer weeks. No one took up the suggestion. Joining the ladies for lunch one day, we discussed why that might be. In part, the fact that even on a warm summer's day the area between the three tower blocks is windy and cool was obvious. In addition the feeling of being overlooked from the towers above is ominous, and the empty shops and concrete landscape don't create a welcoming atmosphere. The impact of tower block living is well documented and spending just a little time in the environment you can feel how it might be harder to engage with neighbours.

In Glenavon and Hawkhill, the sense in which the community was thought of as limited to a small area by clear boundaries seemed to make things more difficult. Glenavon, for example, where the tenants association meets with apathy, contrasts markedly with the Tesco Extra store which serves the wider community of Maryhill. The experience there shows Maryhill to be an extraordinarily engaged and kind community. When a small, defined community is isolated from the wider area, it seems to concentrate tension in relationships in the area. There is also no doubt that the experience of poverty and disadvantage can be made even

more difficult in these circumstances. For example, the experience of deindustrialisation and lack of replacement employment, an experience common to west central Scotland, seems intensified in Clackmannanshire perhaps due to poor transport links and a particular cultural isolation. In Hawkhill, this effect has perhaps been compounded as the community was stigmatised locally as being a place few people wanted to live and having a notorious reputation for crime and anti-social behavior. In addition, in the early days of the Link Up project, there was a sense of 'othering' within the community, with residents perceiving there to be a social pecking order between the three main streets.

Of course, the scale of the way in which you think about a community is often not a choice that can be made consciously by individuals. There are natural boundaries, for example a busy road or a railway line, which become firmer over time as the history and stories of the neighbourhood solidify in people's minds. The individuality of stories and sense of identity also emerged. In Hawkhill, a storytelling project found there was no clear narrative about what community meant to the people living there. Some identified with Alloa, some with Hawkhill and some to the particular street they lived on, and in fact most talked about the community centre rather than the community. There were clear differences in the sense of identity of older and younger people, with many older people keen to remember it how it was rather than define how it is. There were many differences of opinion about what was important, the chronology of events and the role of individuals in shaping what might be thought of as community.

It seems important then to take account of physical space and natural neighbourhoods and to design in features that could improve relationships, or at least not make things more difficult. This chimes with learning from the Carnegie Prize for Design and Wellbeing (Places that Love People, 2014). For example, does focusing projects in a small defined community further entrench boundaries, and

would involving a broader area help widen perceptions? And in Glenavon, for example, the practice of housing a large number of refugees and asylum seekers for short periods of time before they are allocated more permanent housing makes any sense of community for the neighbourhood feel untenable. In fact, in the circumstances, the continued determination of Isabella and Maureen to care for the people who live there and create community is remarkable. To a certain extent Scotland's Place Standard (placestandard.scot) does this, but perhaps the factors underlying belonging, connections and welcome need to be explored in more depth as they are not as obvious as those to do with transport links or parking, for example.

Places matter. They have their own intrinsic warmth and much of this is because of the people. The point is less about identifying types of communities than about trying to work with the grain of each. Physical design matters hugely too. Kindness and connection can be prohibited by design and perhaps just as easily could be made possible.

Civic space

We have visited a number of community centres in the course of our work and talked about their role. They differ greatly. Some, though it should be noted very few, provide free space for people to gather. The majority, due to declining local authority funding, charge rental for groups to use space, impacting greatly on accessibility. This is an issue particularly in areas like Fernhill, in South Lanarkshire, where there is no alternative space, for example shops or cafés, for people to come together.

The quality of the space throws up some counter intuitive findings. In Fernhill, a modern purpose built community centre has replaced the run down 'pavilion.' While the new centre is spacious, light, well-appointed and clean, it is not as well used by the local community. This could be due in part to how comfortable people feel in the centre – perhaps a space that is a bit rough around the edges can be more appealing.

Food and drink tend to help create a welcoming atmosphere. A café creates a focal point for connection and conversation. In Tesco Maryhill, we have often seen groups gather for a good couple of hours chat. The Cook Club in Moredun invites people to come along to prepare and share a meal together (pizza and spaghetti carbonara on the day we were there). People wander between the kitchen and café area, some cooking, some making teas and coffees for others, and some just chatting. The warmth created by food cooking is palpable. At the Glasgow Women's Library, everyone is offered tea or coffee from enormous pots and in good china when they arrive. At the event we attended there, people brought and shared their lunch and stories. Perhaps a café in the new community centre in Fernhill would bring more people in beyond just those attending specific activities.

The main reflection though is that people make places. The accessibility and welcome is created largely by the people who use places and particularly by those in charge. In community centres where staff are entwined with the lives of local people there can be more control of the agenda than in more neutral places. Even where extensive local consultation underpins the offer in centres, there is still an agenda and decision making process which means that some groups / activities gain space and / or feel welcome, while others don't.

The store manager at Tesco Maryhill is clear that while they run countless community projects providing specific opportunities for people to come together, it is the attitude of staff which is the most important factor in creating a welcoming store. They have deliberate policies to empower staff, giving them freedom to judge situations and to speak in their own voice.

Buildings matter, but they do not alone promote kindness. The atmosphere is largely created by the people who use, and particularly those who manage, spaces.

Opportunities

We are interested in opportunities for interactions. There is evidence that low level interactions – for example, a chat with a known member of staff at the checkout, a greeting from a neighbour in the street – can make a difference to the quality of daily life for people who might otherwise be isolated and / or lonely. These low level interactions can be important in their own right insofar as they contribute to ‘background emotions’ associated with familiarity, comfort and trust. They can also be building blocks for more substantial and significant interactions.

Speaking to customers in Tesco Maryhill, we found many isolated older people were shopping every day or so to break their day up with some human interaction. When asked if they took part in any activities or groups which could provide connections, a number said they didn’t like anything organised. They prefer this more casual interaction perhaps because there are no expectations of their contribution or continuing obligation. It is worth noting that speaking to customers who were not isolated or lonely they noticed the warmth and kindness shown particularly to older people in the store and valued it, not minding a longer wait in the checkout queue. This evidence of what people value contrasts with increasing automation which is reducing the incidence and quality of these sorts of encounters and exchanges.

Food Train Friends in Dumfries launched a ‘Friendly Dumfries’ badge to create permission to start a conversation. Speaking to a number of badge wearers (all previously volunteers with Food Train Friends as befrienders) it was clear that they were all very open, friendly people anyway, so it was unlikely that simply wearing a badge made them more inclined to approach people. However, Margaret noted that wearing a badge had made her more aware of her openness and she felt she had been smiling more and that people responded to her smile (rather than noticing the badge). Colin felt he had been stopped more often than normal to

give directions and felt that might have been because of his badge. Mary had been asked about her badge twice and both times the response had been ‘that’s a really good idea.’ All felt that older people were more likely to engage than younger. Colin felt younger people are too busy with life’s pressures to stop for a chat and are also more likely to be connecting digitally than be present with the people around them. There are some positive indications in this pilot project, but it would probably require a bigger push to make a real impact. In Vancouver, their ‘say hello’ badge has been supported by their Engaged City Taskforce involving 22 key organisations since 2012 and it is promoted relentlessly in the media and through events. Four years on, the taskforce claim to have shifted the dial on exposing something people didn’t want to talk about and let people know that the city thinks it is their role to participate in breaking down barriers on loneliness (Kassam, 2017).

The Kinder Scotland Challenge invited people to undertake a suggested act of kindness every day for 21 days in January 2017. Although 370 people signed up to take part in the challenge, feedback was limited to a handful of people providing comments online and a discussion with members of the Glasgow Buddhist Centre’s U-Lab coaching circle who acted as host for the challenge. Experiences ranged widely with some readily embracing the suggestions and enjoying the results, to others finding it more difficult, perhaps reacting to the Americanised language of the emails and / or struggling to see the purpose or find the right opportunity. We discussed the difference between random acts, which involved acts of kindness for strangers sometimes involving a connection and sometimes entirely anonymous, and ‘not so random’ acts which involve people the participant knew or at least might be likely to see again. A number of the participants reflected that they found random acts more challenging but also more rewarding. Whilst random acts of kindness sometimes prompted opportunities for

connection which might result in conversation, it would be unlikely that they result in relationships. The key learning from the group seemed to be that the impact of undertaking an act of kindness is in the transformation of the participant rather than benefit for the recipient.

A number of the organisations we worked with provide more planned, formalised opportunities for people to make connections. In Glenavon, the tenants association persevere putting time and effort into events laid on for the community. There is very little contribution or even participation from the community. For example, a free trip to the pantomime was poorly attended despite a good number of residents having signed up to go, and the Christmas carol concert we attended involved more people working for the local housing association or other organisations than it did residents. In Hawkhill, we experienced a similar lack of participation in events which required a lot of thought and effort for those organising. However, there is no doubt that more formalised opportunities which bring people together can be hugely valuable. We visited Resonate Together in Alloa, which provides numerous creative opportunities for people to come together. The warmth created in their space (an industrial unit) is extraordinary and the stories shared by staff, volunteers and participants testify to the importance of the relationships they have formed through the opportunities provided. One lady we spoke to in a knitting group spoke movingly about overcoming

the loneliness she had experienced following bereavement and developing dementia since joining the group.

At the Moredun Cook Club too the opportunity to connect with others once a week in this setting seems invaluable. “Kirsty,” who had suffered abuse from partners and had given her three children up for adoption, has great difficulty now in leaving her home and engaging with people due to mental health problems. She had come for the first time to the Cook Club and was arranging to meet a couple of others later that week to attend another community event. “Pete,” who was attending the Cook Club for the second time, previously hadn’t left his home for several years.

It is difficult to pinpoint why some organised opportunities work better than others. The relationship people have with the organisation and particularly individuals in leadership roles seems important. At Resonate Together they do not distinguish between staff, volunteers and participants. At Moredun, Cammy (the local minister) sits alongside recovering addicts having been through the same experiences himself. However, it is also important to say that we have seen empathy, love and care poured into initiatives that haven’t worked.

Opportunities matter, but they don’t automatically promote kindness. We need to be able to take risks to engage informally.

Values

We believe it is important to think about the intrinsic values underpinning our connections and relationships. Many people spoke to us about their background, parents and faith in shaping their values. In general we also found that whilst people understand the economic and social shifts which underpin changing values they miss a sense of community spirit. Here we have tried to explore the ways in which we might begin to surface and question our values.

Members of Friendly Dumfries who themselves may have become isolated or lonely following retirement, illness or bereavement, noted that while it is important to have available opportunities to connect with others, the most important factor is your own mental attitude. As Bill said 'it's all your own making.' Margaret talked about the need to feel comfortable in yourself, and that for many who have had their time filled with work or family commitments, the absence of those commitments can leave them wondering who they are. She found mindfulness meditation helpful in coming through a difficult period. She also noted that people often bemoan a lack of community, but think it is someone else's job to fix it. This expectation that 'community' is someone's job to deliver was also separately noted by Lorraine, the Dumfries Town Centre Ambassador. Margaret feels wearing her badge has made her more aware of her own role in creating community.

This is a common sentiment we have encountered in communities. In Glenavon, for example, Isabella and Maureen feel that people who live in the flats expect the tenants association to provide 'community' without putting anything in themselves. Of course part of that expectation may indeed be fueled by the efforts the very few involved in the tenants association continue to go to for the wider community. In Hawkhill, David, the Link Up worker is frustrated that he can access money for the community, but no one seems to have ideas for what to do. When you learn a bit of the background to the neighbourhood over the last few years it is easier to understand this lack of initiative. For a very small neighbourhood in a

relatively short space of time, Hawkhill has received a lot of intervention to support change in people's lives from a range of organisations. In common with experience in other areas, people often welcome directed intervention where leadership is provided to establish groups and activities which are valued. The difficulty comes when the initiative ends or the impetus for activity becomes tied to a limited number of individuals. This was reflected on during our conversation with Andrew, Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, who points to the boom in community funding following the Good Friday Agreement transferring power to local politicians and sucking the power out of a civil society which had played an important role until that point.

Neighbourhoods are made up of individuals and we discussed the impact of individual experience and psychology in the original analysis. Bearing that in mind over the past nine months, the impact of dominant personalities within the community has been striking. The impact can be positive. In Tesco Maryhill, for example, the culture of kindness is no doubt supported by corporate policy and leadership, but perhaps more it has grown from the influence of a small number of long standing members of staff who exert a natural rather than hierarchical leadership role. Norah and Rhona talk about living by their values and about feeling that their colleagues are like a family. They make an effort to make new starts welcome and help them to understand the way they like to work in the store, for example, no one uses mobile phones in the staff room as that is their space to be there for each other. The impact can also be negative as we have seen in a number of areas where local leadership, albeit well intentioned in looking after the community, becomes controlling and stifles collaboration.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the values underpinning the culture of kindness in Tesco Maryhill arise from. Speaking to people in the store, a number of foreign customers note that Scotland is friendly and kind (for example, Paula from Brazil says there is more social distinction in roles in her home country and that it would be

considered rude for someone in a serving role to start a conversation – she prefers the openness in Glasgow), which some narrow further to Glasgow and local people then might narrow again to Maryhill.

Thinking about why Maryhill might be particularly kind could lie in its distinctive history. Unlike many other traditional working class areas in Glasgow, Maryhill was not broken up to rehouse people in new towns or peripheral housing schemes. It retains its roots and there tend to be more extended families and continued generations of families living in the area which has helped to bond the community. The manager notes that giving to charity is consistently higher than in neighbouring more affluent areas, which suggests a solidarity borne from not having much. Jan, a customer in the store, also talks about the differences she has experienced moving ‘over the bridge’ from a more affluent part of the west end of Glasgow. She has consistently found people in Maryhill more open, friendly, generous and kind. We have already mentioned the strong values of a few dominant members of staff in the store who take natural leadership roles. They will talk about just ‘doing what anyone would do’ when in fact they are going well beyond what most would do. One example is the story of a staff member giving an older lady a lift home with her shopping when it was snowing, and giving over her phone number for the woman to call for a chat if she ever felt lonely. There is no doubt also that these are values which are supported and consolidated by corporate policy. Staff are trusted to be themselves, to judge and manage relationships, and kindness is recognised, rewarded and celebrated.

The reflection from those participating in the U-Lab Kinder Scotland Challenge that the impact of undertaking an act of kindness is more in the transformation of the participant rather than benefit for the recipient suggest that this kind of initiative may have more to do with changing intrinsic values than in creating connections and increasing relationships – and should then be judged in that context. There could well be value in challenging the stoicism and emotional reticence which might characterise our national psyche in this way. A number of the Glasgow Buddhist Centre’s group who had previously tested a kindness challenge found that their first experience had proved more meaningful and enjoyable as they had been part of a small group who had met face to face to discuss and share experiences. A number of those who had found the challenge more difficult reflected that even if they had not undertaken the suggested acts of kindness, they had noticed others and their attitudes to them more, and had made some changes. For example, being more likely to be aware of and approaching someone who might need help, and in giving money to people begging. This echoes the findings from the JRF Liveable Lives research that keeping a journal and noticing, in many cases, small acts of kindness gave new insight into relationships and made participants think about their own behaviour. A number of conversations around this work have highlighted the lack of opportunities to explore and question our values.

Intrinsic values matter. Just noticing and asking ourselves what kind of society or community we want to live in makes a difference.

Outcomes

Our hypothesis was that everyday relationships and kindness are fundamental to wellbeing and necessary pre-requisites for other types of community activity and empowerment. The Carnegie UK Trust's work on the Enabling State (Elvidge, 2014) notes that a key challenge in realising genuine empowerment is in developing intrinsic values such as community and caring for each other.

Combating loneliness and improving wellbeing

The existing evidence on the connection between relationships and wellbeing is strong. This is confirmed by our experience. A day spent at Tesco Maryhill, or with Friendly Dumfries, is likely to include shared stories, laughter and quite possibly hugs. Many of the connections we have observed, and more importantly become part of, have personally cheered my soul. The opposite is also true and it is discouraging to see people who are failing to find connection and kindness in their community.

It is also clear that kindness and positive relationships are not enough in themselves to create wellbeing. Visiting the Moredun Cook Club is both heartwarming in the evidence of mutual care and support, but also a salutary reminder of the limitations of community. We noted in talking about enablers and barriers that poverty and disadvantage can make it harder to form and maintain relationships. This is intuitively true, but does not necessarily preclude kindness as both the findings from Tesco Maryhill and the great kindness witnessed at Moredun attest. The kindness evident at the Cook Club no doubt makes people's lives better, but it is hard to see how far it can impact in circumstances which reflect the impact of adverse childhood experiences, poverty, deprivation, austerity, neighbourhood hostility, addiction and inadequate responses from the state. These people need a greater sufficiency from the state to improve incomes, housing and health.

Empowerment

The connection between kindness and empowerment is harder to document due to the short time we have had to observe and test the connection. Do we see greater empowerment in communities which are kinder? Certainly in Tesco Maryhill we see a high level of empowerment of staff and also of the community, and a sense of those groups owning and directing what goes on in the store. This spills into the community with a high level of individual responsibility taken for caring for people. There is much less agency evident in the very kind group of people involved in Moredun Cook Club. However, they have had much less time to form as a group and are operating on a far smaller scale.

In terms of wider agency and control we have been testing with the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland the hypothesis that one of the factors underpinning a lack of take up of available funding and community activity in some neighbourhoods may be a lack of strength in relationships and care for one another in the community. Although early days, initial work to understand the community actually appears to show a strong and positive community identity and relationships. The barriers in translating that into empowerment seem to lie in a real lack of places to gather and in the actions of local organisations to control activity. Can we encourage empowerment through kindness? In Fernhill, the Foundation has been working with the local community to understand aspirations and together deliver a range of approaches to meet these. Their starting point for conversation has been the relationships of support in the community rather than the map of services. This has enabled them to identify individuals to work with and a wider sense of what people want for their community.

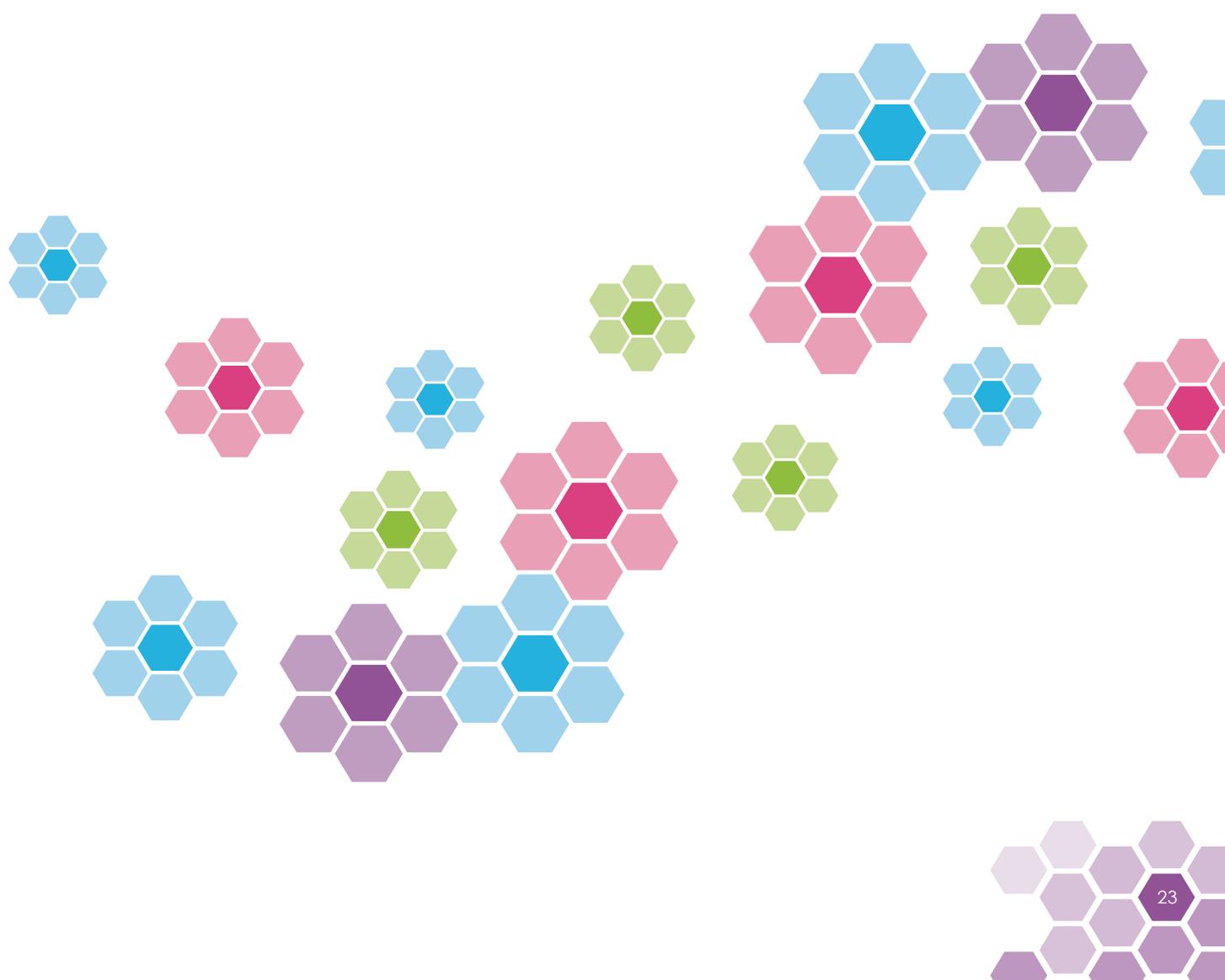
We will continue to engage with the Foundation in their work in Fernhill to explore whether it makes a difference if empowerment is based in kindness and how that might impact on our notion of what matters in communities.

A couple of other organisations we have encountered during this project are notable for their approach to combining empowerment with kindness. WEvolution brings together small groups, mostly of women. They begin meeting on a weekly basis and saving small amounts of money together. They move quite naturally to think about what they might do together with the money they have saved and start small enterprises. The progress of some of these groups over a few years is significant. One group runs a successful lunch club in the local church, and a laundry business, and has several thousands of pounds in reserves. Importantly the groups also lend to each other, saving on expensive loans. Noel, Director of WEvolution, calls this the economics of friendship.

Neil, Chief Executive of the Social Enterprise Academy, talked to us about their work encouraging young people (many of whom are disengaged from school) to think about what

they care about in their community, and to think of a business idea to address that issue. One group of boys in the Scottish Borders were annoyed that older people seemed afraid of them. They set up an events business, including putting on tea dances for older people. The idea has proved very popular – the young men managed to establish a successful business which provides valuable social contact and breaks down perceptions between generations.

These ideas of building enterprise on the basis of friendship and what we care about both seem to provide particularly powerful routes to empowerment, and perhaps go some way to answering our previous question about what kinds of organisations encourage kindness in communities.



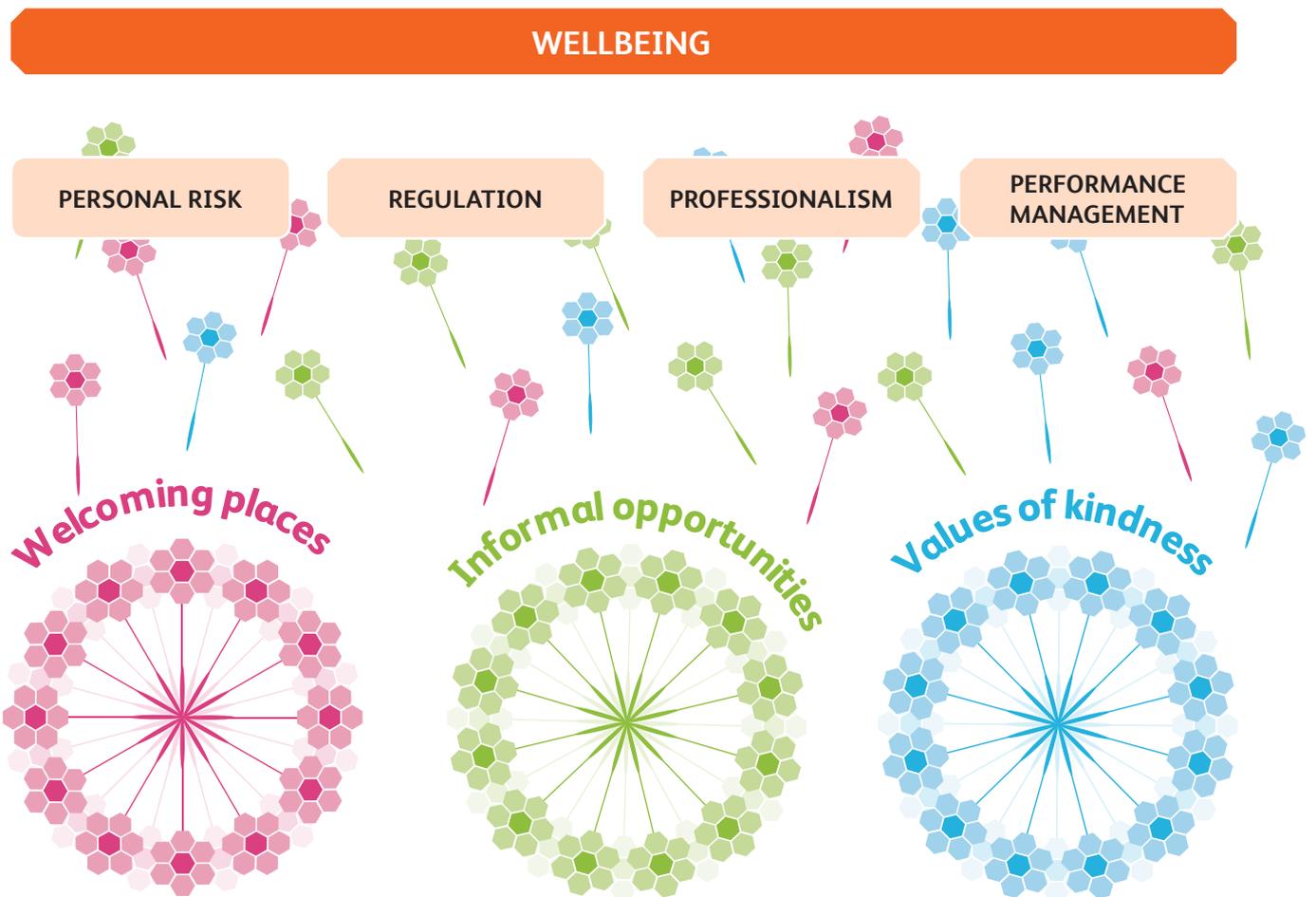
5. What is getting in the way?

While we have identified some steps that individuals and organisations could take to encourage more kindness, we believe the key may lie in understanding and acting to remove what gets in the way of kindness (illustrated in Diagram 5 below).

Our work so far has focused mainly on community and civil society. In beginning to think separately about the institutional level, we have found a striking coherence in the issues to be addressed and a relationship between the way barriers to kindness act in the different

spheres of life: in our everyday relationships, our relationship with civic society, and with institutions. This centres on our attitude to risk both personally and institutionally, and the measures we put in place to manage risk.

DIAGRAM 5 – WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF KINDNESS?



Personal risk

The JRF research highlights and explores the risk we feel in engaging with others and asking for or giving help within relationships. There is a risk of getting involved in difficult situations, of being asked to give too much, of being seen as needy or even of being rebuffed. We have seen different attitudes to personal risk. In Dumfries, the women involved in Friendly Dumfries are less likely to approach young men for a chat as they feel it is more risky. All are less likely to approach young people, perhaps not so much because of feeling at risk, but because they don't feel they have anything in common. Difference in gender, age, race and economic circumstances can increase the risk we feel in engaging. In Glenavon, Isabella and Maureen, though very open themselves, report that other long standing residents are unlikely to approach the refugees and asylum seekers in the area (though obviously there are reasons other than risk which impact here). Perhaps the reason "Davy" has seen more real kindness in his prior existence of crime, violence and poverty is the very fact that people who are themselves in extreme situations have little to risk in engaging with others. And, perhaps part of the appeal of truly random anonymous acts of kindness, for example buying and leaving chocolate bars in a vending machine or paying for the next person to come into a café without actually meeting them, is the lack of risk.

Of course, the risk may be real or perceived. Early in this project, not while I was working, I encountered "Maggie" on the street. She said she had just been discharged from hospital and had no money or food in her flat. I offered to help her to the corner shop, buy whatever she needed and take her home. On her walking frame she couldn't actually get to the shop and I had to get my car to take her back to her flat. She was distressed and I was concerned about the conditions in which she was living. I found details of social work visits and called a number in the folder. I was advised to call the police, they would take her to hospital, and she

would be assessed and not discharged until an appropriate care plan was in place. I waited a couple of hours with her, during which time it became clear that she was delusional, telling me stories of being attacked by police officers. I was relieved when the police came. The next day, my partner checked and found her at home in the same condition, having apparently been assessed as fit to be at home on her own. He wondered if we should start dropping in every day to check on her, help make food, etc. I felt I couldn't take on that responsibility. I was afraid of dealing with "Maggie's" mental instability and frankly the squalor of her existence. I was afraid too of being drawn in deeper and the risk that she would accuse me of harming her, as she had done with others. It felt too much and instead, I made a number of calls to social work to ensure they had a plan in place.

The contrast between my own, very limited, response to need and risk and what I have seen in Tesco Maryhill is thought provoking. One customer told us how when her husband became ill, a member of staff from Tesco brought shopping and flowers and a wheelchair to take her husband out for a walk. When he died, several colleagues attended his funeral and one day soon after, when she was upset in the store and had taken something without paying, she was treated with understanding and kindness. Norah picked up and hugged an autistic child having a fit and told off customers who were looking disapprovingly at the child and parent, making it clear he was not just misbehaving. When you ask colleagues at Tesco if they ever feel risk in approaching customers, or of becoming involved in difficult situations, they say they are just doing what anyone would do. Does the accumulation of low level interactions at the checkout in Tesco allow relationships of trust to be built? Does being part of a corporate group, with a particular reputation, shield against personal risk? Does the sharing of values in Tesco build confidence in confronting risk?

In general, we tend to perceive greater risk in engaging with people than we did in previous generations. Changing attitudes to abuse have meant we have exposed injustices which previously would have gone unnoticed and the explosion in media and communications has made us more aware of crime. The evidence is not that we live in a world where more horrible things happen now, but rather that we know more about it. Whilst obviously it is a good thing that injustices are uncovered and dealt with, the fact that we have a greater awareness has impacted disproportionately both on the way we go about our everyday lives, for example kids not being allowed to go out to play on their own, and the way organisations regulate and operate to manage risk, in many ways planning to avoid the worst failure at the expense of the potential greater good.

Key questions:

- Why do we tolerate different levels of personal risk?
- What kind of risk is it appropriate to take ourselves in our communities, and what is the job of the state and / or voluntary organisations?
- How might we build confidence in approaching risk?

Formalising relationships

We see evidence that we increasingly seek more formal routes to engage in our communities, in many ways to deal with the risk we feel in engaging informally. For example befrienders who are generally open, helpful people anyway, often say they prefer their formal befriending rather than informal roles as they have understood boundaries to the relationship and a 'get out of jail card' if things get difficult. In Fife, we spoke to Rhona, Strategic Manager of Fife Gingerbread providing support for lone

parents. She notes that while lone parents who have benefited from their services are keen to help other families as volunteers, they have little empathy for immediate neighbours and distance themselves from their problems. We discussed why it might be more attractive to volunteer than to help informally. There is clearly an element of risk management in being part of an organisational rather than personal effort, as noted by the befrienders.

There may also be an element of status in being identified with an organisation which might be attractive. Hilda, of COPE in Drumchapel notes the evolution from client to volunteer as a helpful transition in building skills and confidence. However, it is also worth noting that formalising through volunteering in this way also creates intrinsically unequal relationships. It is no doubt a good thing that people want to help others and that we see that expressed through volunteering. However, it does seem worth questioning what we are missing in the decline of informal engagement and the extent to which we need to formalise relationships. George volunteered with an organisation to bring isolated older people together for a tea party at his home in a rota system. After several months of volunteering, he reflected that the organisation had not actually had to provide much more than the idea as permission for him and the other volunteers who wanted to do something positive in their community.

Key questions:

- When and why do we identify ourselves as a neighbour / friend / volunteer / professional?
- To what extent do we need to formalise relationships?
- How might we encourage more informal relationships and learn from experience?

Risk management and regulation

In many of the examples we have looked at, there appears to be a low threshold between informal and formal. For example, Shug's story of being asked for a risk assessment and child protection lead to continue with a weekly kickabout in the park with parents and kids. Declan, from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in Northern Ireland, talked about his experience of setting up community gardens, and wondered why often a group's first action will be to identify the risks involved and their second to put in place bureaucracy to manage the risk. They are trying to encourage less focus on risk and a move away from committees and processes to 'loose collaborations.' It was understandable that one of Scott's early concerns with Friendly Dumfries was that someone wearing a badge might do something inappropriate and we should perhaps have disclosure for all participants. It took the confidence and reassurance of his chief executive, Michelle, to take the risk.

Often we have seen a lack of confidence in interpreting regulation in relation to specific situations as a barrier rather than the regulations in themselves. Paul and Maureen, the regional and store managers respectively for Tesco Maryhill, talk about developing a culture of asking 'can we?' Maureen notes that it is often her deputy manager who will highlight potential problems and regulations and she who makes the decision to go ahead. It takes confidence, quite often but not always associated with experience and seniority, to take risks. The use of kitchens in community centres and other public buildings seems entirely random and the limitations to use are put down to regulation. Some are free to anyone to use, others if they are paid for, others limited to use by those with food preparation qualifications and others again only used by trained staff within the organisation. This is illustrative of many examples where the interpretation of regulations as they apply to human relationships rather than physical things is getting in the way of opportunities for people to come together and express care for each other.

Key questions:

- To what extent does regulation really manage risk?
- Do we need to change regulations?
- How can we build confidence in interpreting regulations?

Professionalism and leadership

The focus on risk and regulation can also be seen to have contributed to the growth of professionalism. At a community level we see the increasing transfer of informal to formal, and the creation of hierarchical structures and process to manage risk. The common evolution of small community based organisations to compete for funding, in no small part to sustain the organisation and protect employees, leads to a focus on professionalism. This would be no bad thing if our definition of professional was more human. Asking people in the course of this work what 'professional' meant to them, we were overwhelmed by the coldness of responses. People focus on authority, knowledge and efficiency. This is no surprise if you look at a selection of professional codes, which seem to focus on detachment and cool judgement. In the community as in other sectors, people strive to be valued and we have perhaps valued academic, technical and specialist skills above kindness, love and humanity. Just looking at the care sector, where carers are recruited on the basis of qualifications rather than evidence of their empathy, are paid minimum wages and are not given time to conduct their work with care, provides a shocking indictment on our values as a society.

There are clear associations between our notion of professionalism and what we then value in employees, and more importantly in leaders. In order to succeed leaders need to be able to manage a complex system. In many of the community situations we have discussed, local leaders, no doubt with the best intentions for their communities, have become enthralled in the hierarchy and the structure of decision

making for, rather than with, their community. The belief we have placed more widely in the value of leadership per se in solving our problems may also be in part to blame. The time and resources invested in identifying, learning from, creating and developing leaders perhaps drives a yet greater wedge between the professional and the citizen and compounds the belief that you must have unique skills in order to make change happen. Whilst we are perhaps beginning to recognise the limitations, or even detrimental impact, of some approaches to leadership and are beginning to value humanity and relational approaches, there is a failure to adequately underpin what we say we value in the policies which really drive behaviour.

Key questions:

- How can we build more human notions of professionalism?
- Do we need to challenge our notions of leadership?
- How might we better reward kindness, love and humanity?

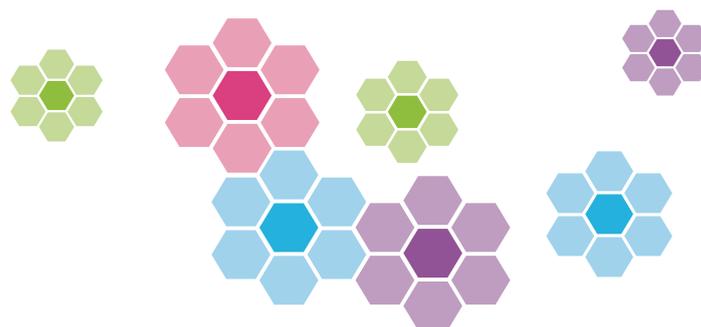
Performance management

Evidence plays an important role in the increasing professionalisation of activity in communities. While the increasing focus on evidence is good in principle, it is often let down by measuring what we can rather than what matters. In the competition for funding, community and voluntary sector organisations are being focused on narrow outcomes through performance frameworks. This can drive perverse behaviour away from preventative

approaches underpinning holistic wellbeing. For example, a focus on employability demonstrated in achieved qualifications meant that one organisation which had previously offered cooking classes to some of the most vulnerable in the community were incentivised to direct activity to the more able if they were to achieve the targets required for funding. There are similar effects in public services where the association of one sector with a narrow set of outcomes, and strong performance management, leads staff to be pulled away from activity which could result in wider wellbeing. There is a lack of trust in delivery organisations and in front line staff. This is largely a response to failure and an attempt to manage risk. If outcomes are set, procedures specified and processes to make individuals and organisations accountable, then we control for risk and we avoid failure. To a certain extent, this is true, as can be seen in the success of the patient safety programme in reducing infection contracted in hospitals, for example. However, it is also true that the micro-management of outcomes at organisation and programme level is not driving improvements in wellbeing for individuals and communities.

Key questions:

- What are the levers which really drive professional behavior?
- How can we align performance management with values of kindness and humanity?
- How will this impact on funding?



6. Action for Kindness

All of us have a responsibility to care for those around us in our communities.
We all have a part to play in reducing loneliness and building stronger communities.

Kindness feels ephemeral. As individuals we can, and often do, comment on how society feels uncaring and we feel remote from our friends, neighbours and wider community. Too often we conclude that there is little that can be done about this, we are after all, busy and living complicated lives. Social issues like loneliness and isolation are seen as problems to be addressed by government and charities, not by ourselves.

There is no doubt much that government can do to create the conditions for kindness, particularly in reducing inequalities and in providing access to social support mechanisms for those who require them.

And yet, the nature and scale of the challenge is too big to be left to government and charity.

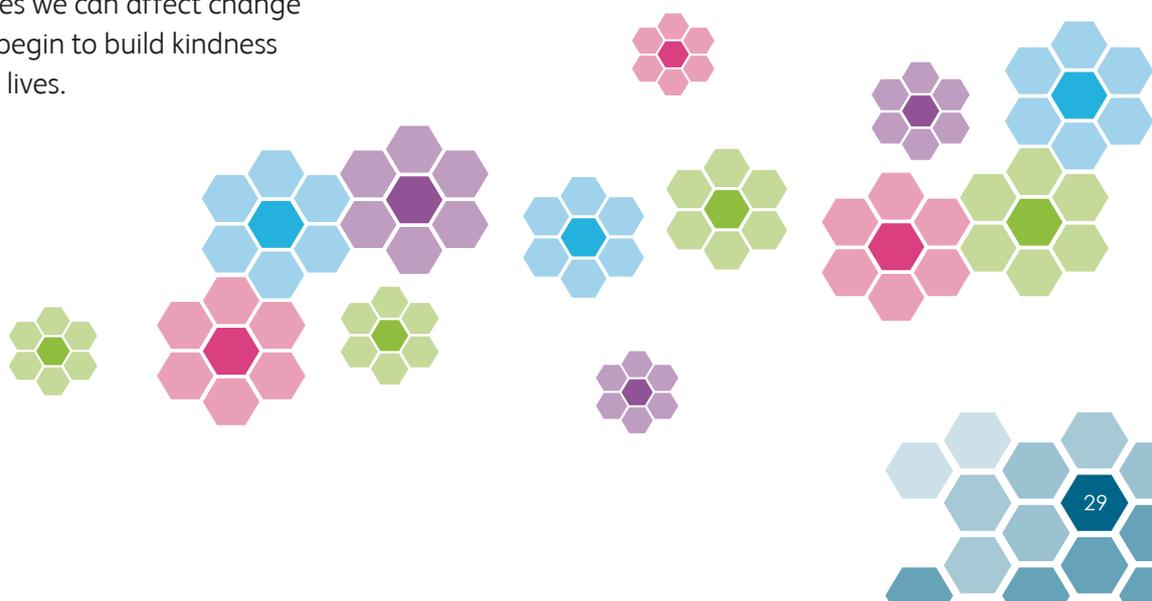
If we wish to live in a caring society, then we too will have to behave in ways that show kindness.

The biggest contribution that government may be able to make is to give us back permission to act in kindness by balancing messages on risk with messages about the value that they place on a caring society.

The projects that we have observed and encouraged show that with a focus on places, opportunities and values we can affect change in our behaviours and begin to build kindness back into our everyday lives.

Our 'call to action' is therefore not just to government but to all of us. We are asking:

- People to come together through whatever forums they normally meet to discuss how they can build more kindness into their lives. These forums might be friendship groups, parents associations, youth clubs, chambers of commerce or any of the multitude of civil society organisations. Recent experiences of the Big Lunch and The Great Get Together show how these activities can be encouraged and amplified. Our evidence is that the very act of thinking and talking about kindness encourages us to act in kindness.
- Organisations that provide services, be they public, charitable or private sector, to think about how they can remove cultural and procedural barriers and encourage employees to act in kindness.
- Governments, at all levels, to explore the unintended consequences of risk and performance management on society's ability to act in kindness and to consider what steps it can take to reverse these impacts.



Annex 1: Partnership stories

PARTNERSHIP 1 | U-LAB



Noticing 'not so random' acts of kindness

One of the key pieces of learning from the JRF Liveable Lives project was that the experience of taking part in the research had a significant impact on participants. They were asked to keep journals logging all the interactions involving giving or receiving help and support. Many reported that keeping a journal and just noticing, in many cases small, acts of kindness gave them new insight into their relationships. Some realised that they were more connected than they thought, others that the people they could rely on were perhaps not the ones they would have thought of immediately, some were giving without receiving or even, in some cases, they had no contact with others at all.

U-Lab is a massive open on-line course which aims to develop people's capacity to be changemakers. This involves encouraging those not normally included to participate in developing holistic solutions to cross-sectoral challenges in modern life. Scottish Government supported a new cohort of participants, beginning in September 2016.

The U-Lab participants were invited to take part in a 21 day Kinder Scotland Challenge in January 2017. A U-Lab coaching circle, from the Glasgow Buddhist Centre, acted as hosts for the challenge. Participants who signed up were encouraged to commit to undertake a different act of kindness every day, in an attempt to change the experience of dark and cold January. We wanted to explore any differences in participants' experiences of random and 'not so random' acts of kindness – those which take place in the context of connections and neighbourhoods and form



relationships, and as such, may be more laden with meaning and risk. A [YouTube](#) video was made to explain the idea and encourage participation.

The coaching circle had been inspired by the course talks given by Nipun Mehta, and used his US based Kind Spring site to host the challenge. Challenge participants received daily emails that contained prompts of kind acts they could undertake that day, for example buying a coffee for the next person to come into a café, sending a letter to an old friend or leaving anonymous messages chalked on the pavement.

A total of 370 people signed up to participate in the Kinder Scotland Challenge, including many from U-Lab, the Scottish Recovery Consortium, See Me Scotland, NHS groups, the island of Shapinsay, and Visit Scotland. With the help of Visit Scotland, an [article](#) on the Kinder Scotland Challenge appeared in *The Scotsman* on December 29.

Of the 370 people who signed up to the challenge, feedback was limited. Nine people provided comments via the participant survey hosted on Kind Spring. Some of the comments included:

- “Have noticed I feel very happy and less critical. Think it must be reading all the happy emails and doing some of the kind acts.”
- “It was great and created some really good communication with people as well making me really think about my intentions when I was preparing for the kindness. It was really useful to have the daily prompts.”

We met with the host team to share experiences of participating in the challenge. Experiences ranged widely with some readily embracing the suggestions and enjoying the results, to others finding it more difficult, perhaps reacting to the Americanised language of the emails and / or struggling to see the purpose or find the right opportunity.

We discussed the difference between random acts, which involved acts of kindness for strangers sometimes involving a connection and sometimes entirely anonymous, and ‘not so random’ acts, which involve people the participant knew or at least might be likely to see again. A number of the participants reflected that they found random acts more challenging but also more rewarding. Whilst random acts of kindness sometimes prompted opportunities for connection which might result in conversation it would be unlikely that they result in relationships. The key learning from the group seemed to be that the impact of undertaking an act of kindness is in the transformation of the participant rather than benefit for the recipient.

This suggests that this kind of initiative may have more to do with changing intrinsic values than in creating connections and increasing relationships – and should then be judged in that context. There could well be value in challenging the stoicism and emotional reticence which might characterise our national psyche in this way. A number of those who had found the challenge more difficult reflected that even if they had not undertaken the suggested acts of kindness, they had noticed others and their attitudes to them more and had made some changes, for

example being more likely to be aware of and approaching someone who might need help and in giving money to people begging. This echoes the findings from the JRF Liveable Lives research that keeping a journal and noticing, in many cases, small acts of kindness gave new insight into relationships and made participants think about their own behaviour.

Hosting the challenge on the Kind Spring site brought both benefits and difficulties. It is free to use and set up for the challenge, and there are additional resources and international connections close to hand. In this challenge, the host group did not alter many of the challenges or daily emails, though there is a facility to do so. One of the difficulties was that the emails sometimes went straight to junk mail. Others felt there were too many emails, and the language and cultural references (American) were not right for a Scottish audience. It was hard to feel the cohesiveness of a national challenge on the news feed. Many of the participants posting were from outside Scotland and were regulars on the site and only a small number of Scottish participants submitted posts.

The host team had tested the Kind Spring site over two challenges and could compare their experience of having done their first challenge as a small group, and then as the large national group. They did notice the difference made without having the face-to-face catch up during the challenge about how it was going. The direct contact adds depth and allows for people to share what’s not working for them and to be inspired by what might be working for others.

Key learning points for potential future initiatives include:

- the need for wide and high profile buy in and extensive publicity
- using language and tone which fits our cultural context
- the importance of sharing experiences with a small group.



Permission, shared values and boundaries

Our initial exploration of evidence showed that people often feel there is risk involved in engaging with others and in giving or asking for help within relationships. There is a risk of getting involved in a difficult situation, of being asked to give too much, or of being perceived as needy or even of being rebuffed. One of the JRF studies included a comment from one participant who said: 'Why don't you just go out and give an old lady like me a hug today?' On reflection, there are lots of good reasons why people don't behave this way.

We worked with Food Train Friends to create the Friendly Dumfries project. This practical approach involved making the Food Train Friends befriending boundaries available to anyone in the community who wanted to be a 'friend.' We wanted to see if providing light touch permission, values and boundaries encouraged comfort in connecting and in interactions. Friends registered on the Food Train website or completed a simple form and 'pledged' to support values and a few simple boundaries. Friends also wore a 'Friendly Dumfries' badge, to identify themselves as friends in the Dumfries community.

Talking to Lorraine Wilson, Dumfries Town Centre Ambassador, who is six months in to a year-long contract to revitalise the town centre, gave us a good sense of the issues facing the community of Dumfries.

The main concern is empty shops and associated maintenance of the buildings and appearance of the town centre. People are not coming into town because it is run down and there is a lack of choice in shops and new businesses are not taking premises because there is a lack of footfall. Parking is also a problem, with a lack of spaces close to the town centre that would make it accessible for people who find mobility difficult.



Tour buses tend to park at White Sands and accessing the town centre from there is can be difficult. People tend to go to Carlisle or Glasgow for shopping instead.

Lack of employment opportunities in Dumfries means that young people don't come back to the town after university. The main employers are the council, NHS, and police.

There are lots of community groups who want to get involved in the community, but there is a lack of willingness to give up control from the local authority. There is a mentality of continuing to do things the way they have always been done. 'Doonhamers' in general tend to be fairly set in their ways and can be adverse to change. There is also an expectation among people in the community that 'community' is for someone else to deliver.

Friendly Dumfries was promoted in the local press and media and to date, 55 people have signed up, including members of the fire brigade, a prominent local businessman, and the Dumfries Town Centre Ambassador.

Five months after launching, we visited Dumfries again and met with seven Friendly Dumfries supporters (all volunteers or staff with Food Train Friends already).

In general, the group didn't feel that people had approached them because of their badge although some noted they had been asked for directions more often than normal and wondered if it might be because of the badge. Mary had been asked about her badge twice, and when she explained the response was that it was a really good idea.

It was clear that the members we spoke to are all very open, friendly, helpful people anyway so it is unlikely that wearing the badge has had much impact on changing their behaviour. However, Margaret noted that wearing the badge made her feel more aware of her openness and she felt she was smiling more at strangers and that people were smiling back more than she might have expected.

All felt that older people were more responsive than young, and the women in the group felt they were more likely to chat to other women than men. Jane noted that she would be unlikely to chat to young men – it felt more risky. Colin felt that younger people are too busy with life's pressures to stop for a chat, and also that visitors are more likely to engage than local 'Doonhamers.' Bill noted that he too had spoken to tourists and their comment had been that Dumfries was very friendly.

The group pointed out that they thought it was more difficult to engage people in a chat in the winter when everyone is rushing from one place to the next.

All of the members are people who themselves may have become isolated or lonely following

retirement or bereavement. We discussed why some people become isolated or lonely and others don't, and Bill said 'all of it's your own making.' They recognise how important your own mental attitude is – more important than the availability of opportunities to connect with other people. Margaret talked about the need to feel comfortable in yourself and that for many who have had their time filled with work or family commitments, the absence of those commitments can leave them wondering who they are. She found mindfulness meditation helpful to her in coming through a difficult period, being able to enjoy 'me time' and begin to choose how she spends her time, rather than 'fill' time.

Most of the group use social media and find it useful to keep in touch with friends and family who are not close by. However, Jane noted that it can be a double edged sword and that it can make you feel lonelier to see other people very busy on social media. All recognise the value of personal communication, whether face to face or for example a handwritten card.

Margaret noted that people often say there is a lack of community, but that they think it is someone else's job to fix that. She feels wearing her badge has made her aware of her own role in creating community. She said that individuals make community, and everyone has a part to play.

There are some positive indications in this pilot project, but it would probably require a bigger push over a longer period of time to make a real impact.

Shaping Stories

Learning from Inspiring Scotland's Link Up programme shows that lack of social connections, low self-esteem and lack of confidence are fundamental barriers to individual change, and when these factors are prevalent across a significant proportion of the community's population that community's ability to look out for each other, to organise and effect larger scale change, is inhibited. Link Up engages further upstream than many initiatives and concentrates on building new connections, developing confidence in social settings and working effectively in groups.

The storytelling exercise in Hawkhill (a Link Up project area) was initiated by Building Safer Communities (BSC), a collaborative programme using improvement methodology established by the Community Safety Division in Scottish Government. In early 2016, members of the BSC team supporting the Hawkhill community asked Inspiring Scotland if they could facilitate a trial evaluative storytelling exercise in the area.

Reflecting the interests of Scottish Government, Inspiring Scotland and Carnegie UK Trust, the storytelling exercise sought to achieve four key objectives:

- To create a record of change (the good and the bad) from an individual and community perspective that simultaneously provides a resource that local people, the BSC programme, VRU (Violence Reduction Unit) and Link Up can use. In the case of the latter three, the story also supported each organisation's evaluation efforts.
- To engage existing participants and new people from Hawkhill, using this as a catalyst to stimulate new activities / groups.
- To build new / enhance existing relationships between local people, and local people and local workers (including the Link Up worker).



- To provide insights into the extent to which the asset-based project (the local project title for the collective work for Link Up, VRU and Hawkhill Community Association) has helped and / or hindered the creation of a more positive narrative about Hawkhill.

The Village Storytelling Centre was engaged in June 2016 to develop and deliver a process capable of meeting the objectives set out above. They were provided with a detailed briefing on Hawkhill and its recent developmental history including the role of the VRU, Link Up and Hawkhill Community Association in advance of their work commencing. Dougie, the appointed storyteller, utilised a range of techniques such as storytelling, story sharing, and story creation, alongside other art forms where appropriate. He also used personal, true storytelling and fiction (allowing people the safety of expressing themselves in a 'one step removed' manner) to elicit past and current experiences and perceptions, and to facilitate people to identify opportunities for enabling individual and community-led change in future.

The following groups based in Hawkhill Community Centre participated: Hawkhill Community Centre staff and volunteers; Man Up Group; Blether and a Biscuit Group; Youth Group; the Nifty Fifties and wider community centre users.

The key output from the exercise, a 38-page booklet entitled 'Hawkhill: A Community Story,' tells participant's stories and experiences of living in Hawkhill and Alloa, including the history of the development of the Hawkhill Community Centre since it opened in 2003. The latter includes the 'battle' to save the centre and the contribution of the VRU, Link Up and centre staff and volunteers. The stories also included local folklore and fictional stories crafted by local young people. It illustrates a high awareness amongst local people and centre users of the challenges which continue to face the Hawkhill community, and highlights the often competing priorities of making the Hawkhill Community Centre sustainable financially whilst continuing to meet the needs and aspirations of local people who want to influence how it should be used. It also captures a wide range of aspirational goals of local people and centre users. Many of these reflect the desire for new types of activity to be started and community events to be run. A copy of the 'Hawkhill: A Community Story' was distributed to every household in Hawkhill in early December.

The process told us:

- There is strong individuality to stories. For a small neighbourhood, there is no clear narrative about what community means to the people living there. Some identified with Alloa, some to Hawkhill and some to the particular street they lived on, and in fact most talked about the community centre. There were clear differences in the sense of identity of older and younger people, with many older people keen to remember it how it was rather than define how it is. There were many differences of opinion about what was important, the chronology of events and the

role of individuals in shaping what might be thought of as community.

- Scale matters. The sense in which the community was thought of as limited by clear physical boundaries seems to make things more difficult, concentrating any negative aspects to the relationships in the area. For example, the experience of deindustrialisation and lack of replacement employment, an experience common to west central Scotland, seems intensified in Clackmannanshire perhaps due to poor transport links and a particular cultural isolation. In Hawkhill, this effect has perhaps been compounded as the community was stigmatised locally as being a place few people wanted to live and having a notorious reputation for crime and anti-social behavior. In addition, in the early days of the project, there was a sense of 'othering' within the community, with residents perceiving there to be a social pecking order between the three main streets.
- Whilst clearly people have valued the efforts of various interventions in the area, there is a clear sense of a continued expectation of projects and events being laid on for the community and a lack of confidence in taking on for themselves.
- The community centre exerts a strong influence with many people seeing 'community' as synonymous with 'the centre' and to some extent defined by it rather than as a community in their own right.
- The purpose and ownership of the story is important. For the agencies involved this 'evaluative' story helps track the impact of intervention. It is worth asking whether that perspective might, for local people, inherently perpetuate the sense of looking to organisations to provide 'community.'

PARTNERSHIP 4 | GLENAVON TENANTS ASSOCIATION (MARYHILL)

A space outdoors

Our exploration of evidence highlighted the importance of the nature of the places we have to connect and interact in our communities. Looking at the evidence suggests we should think beyond the places we might generally tend to think of, and be aware of the potential for places which include some, excluding others, of stigma and the sense of comfort and safety different members of the community will feel in different places.

In our meetings in Maryhill, community representatives noted that often when they held events outside they had much higher participation than events held indoors. Speculating on why that might be, they felt that members of the migrant community might feel more apprehensive about going in somewhere they haven't been before. There might also be a sense of mistrust of public or voluntary sector run places.

The tenant's association had recently upgraded a small central play area and put in a number of picnic tables. We thought it would be worth encouraging more use of this space drawing on the ideas of the importance of outdoor space and sharing food.

The tenant's association advertised a regular picnic for anyone who wanted to come along to bring their own lunch and something to share if they felt like it. The aim was to see if, with very little encouragement and no sense of provision or running by an organisation, we could generate more community spirit. No one took up the suggestion.

Joining the ladies for lunch one day we discussed why that might be. In part the fact that even on a warm summer's day the area between the three tower blocks is windy and cool was obvious. In addition the feeling of being overlooked from the towers above is ominous, and the empty shops and concrete landscape don't create a welcoming atmosphere. The impact of tower block living is well documented and spending just a little time in the environment,



you can feel how it might be harder to engage with neighbours.

Scale matters too. In both the small defined communities we visited (Glenavon and Hawkhill) the sense in which the community was thought of as limited by clear boundaries seemed to make things more difficult. There is a contrasting experience in Glenavon and the Tesco store which services the wider community of Maryhill. The experience there shows Maryhill to be an extraordinarily engaged and kind community. Limiting to a small defined area seems to concentrate any negative aspects to the relationships in the area. In Glenavon, for example, the practice of housing a large number of refugees and asylum seekers for short periods of time before they are allocated more permanent housing makes any sense of community feel untenable.

We made further attempts to engage with residents in Glenavon to explore the experience of living there, attending a carol concert at Christmas, and putting up posters to invite residents to speak to us. We had no responses, confirming Isabella and Maureen's own experience of lack of engagement.

In common with other areas we visited, there is a sense that people expect 'community' to be provided without putting anything in themselves. Of course part of that expectation may indeed be fuelled by the efforts the very few involved in the tenants association continue to go to for the wider community. However, it is difficult to see how to reverse that expectation. Certainly the suggestion of bringing and sharing lunch together over last summer was not successful.

Valuing kindness

Research in Maryhill, Glasgow, by JRF (Anderson, Brownlie & Milne, 2015) revealed that Tesco is an important community hub, and that staff often transcend their formal roles and go out of their way to help and support people in the community, often showing great kindness.

We conducted a number of interviews with Tesco management, staff (colleagues) and customers over the period October 2016 to February 2017 to explore what contributes to their culture of kindness.

Our interviews with management uncovered a strong message of how corporate policy has been important in fostering the role that Tesco plays in the Maryhill community. Paul McCarter, Store Director for Tesco in West and Central Scotland, explained how Tesco had made a deliberate policy decision to put the wellbeing of colleagues at the core of their ethos, the rationale being that if colleagues are happy at work they will provide good service. A key principle of Tesco's approach has been giving colleagues permission to be themselves at work.

Key elements of shifting the ethos across the group of stores include: prioritisation of colleagues, customers and community in key performance indicators (previously priorities being profit and financial management); involvement of colleagues in decision making and actively responding to colleague and customer ideas (which notably resulted in holding weddings with an Elvis impersonator down one of the aisles on Valentine's Day); rewarding and celebrating examples of colleagues going beyond their formal roles to act in kindness (for example, one colleague at the Maryhill store helped an elderly couple home with their shopping every day for over a year. No one knew about these actions, until the elderly man passed away, and his widow



wrote to the store to thank them for what their colleague had done. His actions, which may have resulted in a reprimand for not concentrating on his core task five years ago, were celebrated in a newsletter and he was taken out for lunch); and Community Champions who play a pivotal role in defining the relationship between stores and the community running numerous projects (including a homework club, delivery of fruit to schools, an ecology and gardening group, and food bank support).

We spoke with a group of five colleagues, who between them had nearly 40 years' experience at Tesco Maryhill. Our conversations with colleagues provided an equally positive story of kindness in the store, and the community more broadly.

The colleagues we spoke to see the store as a kind place, where colleagues and customers are 'like a big family.' They say they feel valued at work, and that their views are listened to and taken into consideration by management. However, their own personal sense of values seems more important in shaping their behaviour. One colleague said she feels rewarded and privileged by what she can do for people while working. She said: "I am glad I can do that for him," when talking about an old man who can't pack his shopping bag and is very particular about how it should be done.

They feel the store revolves around older people, children and families. In particular, there are a lot of older, isolated customers who come into the store on a regular basis (sometimes daily). Colleagues often look out for regulars to make sure they are in when expected, ask family members to communicate to them if a relative will not be shopping, and if they are ill, if someone will be visiting them. One colleague we spoke with had helped an older woman home with her shopping one day when it was snowing. She gave the woman her phone number, telling her to phone if she ever felt lonely. The woman returned her kind gesture by knitting her a hat and scarf. The colleagues we spoke with said that customers often approach them on the street when they are out of uniform to say hello and have a chat.

The colleagues we spoke with all seemed very skilled in judging situations, and carefully and sensitively managing relationships with customers. They feel there is a significant degree of trust placed in them and other colleagues to manage tricky situations. They feel confident helping customers who may at times have carers with them, or others who have special needs and perhaps require greater support. When asked if they thought about the risk involved in getting into some of the situations they described, they said they were 'just doing what anyone would do.' They did indicate that while they are comfortable managing complex situations, other colleagues who are less confident might ask for support from someone more experienced or senior.

As well as showing kindness towards customers, the colleagues we spoke with also told us about the importance of strong relationships and kindness amongst colleagues. In the Tesco Maryhill staff room, colleagues said that no one uses their phone or tablet, and if they wish to do so then they go outside. They make a particular effort to talk to one another, protecting the time and space as theirs. They feel that social media is damaging to relationships.

Maureen, the store manager says that whilst the community projects are no doubt important it is the attitude of colleagues and the informal everyday relationships which follow that have been most important in creating the atmosphere of kindness in the store.

We also spoke to a number of customers. Most were older, lived locally, and have shopped at Tesco Maryhill for a number of decades ('since it was the co-op'). They tend to shop on a daily basis, appreciating the time Tesco colleagues take to have a chat with them. One elderly customer said it is 'a nice part of the day and helps pass time,' also commenting that the interaction with colleagues is important to her, as she doesn't like participating in organised groups or clubs.

Customers spoke about how the colleagues at Tesco Maryhill are particularly kind. One customer commented that she chooses to shop there because she feels valued as a person, and isn't rushed to finish her shopping and leave. Another commented how he likes how a number of the staff remember him, and pick up on previous conversations they've had. Another customer has a similar experience when her son brings her in to do her shopping every Monday, and staff say: "How are you today Mrs Jackson?"

A few customers commented that they had noticed that the staff are particularly kind towards older people. They like the way older customers are treated, and don't mind waiting longer in line at the checkouts while an older customer and colleague have a chat.

Some of the customers we spoke with told stories of colleagues going above and beyond their formal roles, and acting in great kindness. An older lady recounted how when her husband became ill, a Tesco colleague brought shopping and flowers, and a wheelchair to take her husband out and about. When he died, a number of colleagues came to the funeral, and were very supportive over the period following his death. One day she was in the store and became

upset, and took things without paying. The Tesco colleagues were understanding and helped her, and did not take any formal action.

A number of customers commented on the café space, and the way it acts as a hub for people from the community to meet and chat. One customer commented how she likes that there is plenty of room, and she never feels like she is moved on too quickly. Another said the café fills a space for older people in the community.

Many of the customers we spoke with also talked about the kindness that exists in the Maryhill community, and Glasgow more broadly. A number mentioned that Maryhill is a traditionally working class area where people have lived all their lives, and where their parents and grandparents have lived for generations. Some customers thought that this contributed to a strong sense of community solidarity. Many customers made the comment that while they live alone, they know they have people close by who they can rely on, including neighbours and family members.

A few customers mentioned that the traditional Maryhill community has changed over the years. One older man mentioned that Maryhill is nowadays a depressing place that's 'down in the dumps,' largely due to unemployment. Another two customers made similar observations, and focused on problems with drugs and alcohol that had changed the nature of the community. One customer commented how this has changed how she feels interacting with people in the community. She said she is often wary of helping people on the street in vulnerable situations, because she doesn't know what she might be getting herself in to.

Others commented how kindness and an open and welcoming approach is a distinctly Scottish characteristic, particularly compared to England. One customer moved to Glasgow after 37 years of living in London, and at first found it quite surprising but now likes to be asked 'what are you having for your tea?' when at the checkout.

We spoke to a number of customers who were not originally from Scotland. One customer from Brazil who has been in Glasgow for two years said Glasgow in general is a welcoming, open city and there is less social distinction in roles. She commented that in Brazil it would be considered rude for someone in a serving role to start a conversation. Another customer who has lived in Maryhill for around ten years, coming originally from Slovakia, said he finds the store welcoming and thinks that openness and friendliness is a general Scottish characteristic. He said that people in Glasgow are approachable and will generally help you with anything.

From the customers we spoke with, we got an overwhelmingly positive story of kindness in Tesco Maryhill, and the wider community and city of Glasgow. The people we spoke with largely attributed this to the fact that many of the colleagues working there are local to Maryhill, and the area has a strong history and sense of community that has endured over the generations. Only one customer, with experience in management, mentioned that Tesco management must have had a positive role to play in allowing colleagues to be themselves at work, and encouraging and valuing kindness.

Our conversations with management, colleagues and customers at Tesco Maryhill revealed:

- strong corporate support is important and can give permission for people to be themselves and act in kindness, with results that benefit customers, colleagues and the bottom line
- corporate policy is probably not enough on its own and in Maryhill strong community identity and values underpin the culture
- dominant personalities play an important role in setting tone. We were struck by the influence of the long-serving colleagues we spoke with in creating a culture of kindness, openness and respect amongst the colleague team, in turn spreading out to customers
- informal relationships seem more important to people than formal organised activities.

Someone to eat with

We undertook two community meetings in Maryhill, one of the areas where the JRF Liveable Lives research was conducted, to share findings and explore what we might do to encourage kinder communities. In those meetings, sharing food was identified as a useful way of both building connections and a practical expression of caring for each other.

Over the last year, Cyrenians have been exploring the role of food in meeting their objectives – supporting people excluded from family, home, work or community. Their activities, including a farm community, community gardens, cooking classes and running Fareshare distribution of surplus food in Edinburgh and Lothians, have potential to link with many aspects of the food system. However, conversations with service users revealed stark priorities – what is important to the most excluded in our society is something to eat and someone to eat with. In fact, what came through their stories most strongly was the need not just for physical nutrition, but the need for the connection and warmth of sharing food with others.

With this in mind Cyrenians have established a number of Community Cook Clubs providing opportunities for people to come together to prepare and share food.

The Moredun Cook Club runs on Tuesdays from 2-4pm at Moredun Community Centre in Edinburgh. It is a collaboration between Cyrenians and the local church. The community centre provides the kitchen and café at no charge. Amanda (the Community Cook Club Project Coordinator) plans recipes, sources food from Fareshare and helps participants to prepare a meal. Cammy, the Minister, and other members of the church also help with the food and talking to folk who come along.



We went along in April 2017, around six weeks since starting up. Around a dozen people were there (less than the previous week, when 24 had been there).

For such a short time in operation, the club already seems to have an atmosphere of ease and comfort among participants. People pop in and out of the kitchen, some helping with food (pizza and spaghetti carbonara on the day we visited), and others making tea or just chatting. There is ready banter.

We spoke to “Kenny.” He told us he was a recovering cocaine addict, 72 days clean. He attributed his success to the spiritual programme he is part of. He prays twice a day and attends meetings with other recovering addicts who provide mutual support. He was there with his partner (also in recovery), who although she had said she couldn’t be bothered, was busy making spaghetti. They have both been enjoying the cook club.

We also spoke to “Jim,” also in recent recovery. He too was finding helpful purpose in faith but was not part of a formal programme. He also feels friendship and community is important in his recovery. He knows many of the people at the club and in the local area, but despite the warm atmosphere at the club says it can be a difficult place to live. There are people waiting to spot and prey on vulnerability. He told us he had

gone into children's homes at the age of seven and that from there he had been homeless for 15 years. He has struggled with addiction for 30 years. He is separated from his kids' mother, but says the one good thing in his life is his kids.

"Kirsty" was there for the first time. She finds it difficult to go out and to engage with people due to mental health issues. She has suffered abuse by successive partners and given up three children to adoption. She knew a couple of the men there who had suggested coming along. They showed a lot of support to her, but she joked that she needed some younger girl friends.

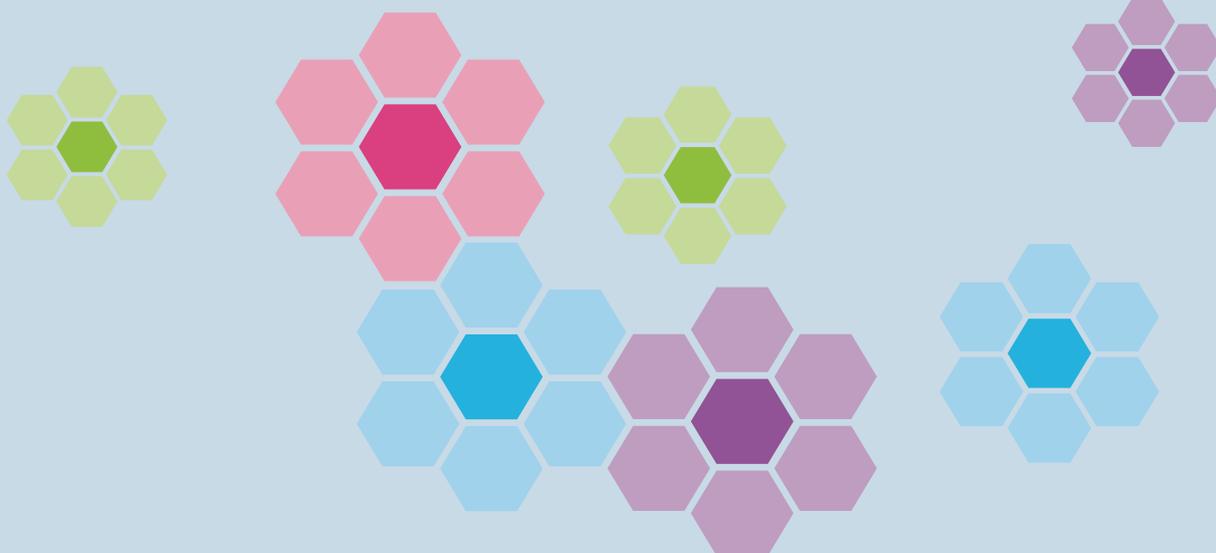
One man there, who we didn't speak to, hadn't left his flat for some years.

We asked Cammy what he thought was important in turning people's lives around in the way several at the club seemed to be. He said both faith and community. He himself is a recovering addict, has experience of prison and

changed his life through faith. He also recognises the importance of supportive relationships and talks of the difficulty for addicts of having to give up negative friendships and form new connections.

The Cook Club seems to provide opportunities to do that and the atmosphere created by preparing and sharing food informally together seems helpful. However, the visit was also a salutary reminder of the limitations of community. The circumstances of people there speak to the impact of adverse childhood experiences, poverty, deprivation and austerity and inadequate responses from the state.

The questions of whether kindness in communities can be a starting point for empowerment or merely mitigates the worst effects of disadvantage remains. We saw a lot of kindness in the room, but little hope of wider change without concerted structural change.



From kinder communities to empowerment

The Foundation has identified communities which have had limited or no support from the independent funding community over many years and which experience high levels of deprivation. They have developed a place-based programme with fellow funders to work alongside communities and partners to appreciate the distinctness of each local area, to understand the aspirations of the local community and to deliver a range of approaches to help meet these. The approach relies on a pledge between the community, the Foundation and the local authority, promising an equal, respectful and mutually supportive relationship.

Our hypothesis, based on the assertion in the Enabling State (Elvidge, 2014) that one of the key barriers in empowerment is in developing intrinsic values of community, is that there may be a connection between a lack of activity in accessing grant funding and weakness in connections, interactions and relationships in those areas. If that is the case then it will be important that the approach takes time to develop these foundations, rather than moving too quickly to organising to effect change.

We have followed the development of the place-based programme in Fernhill in South Lanarkshire asking:

- is less activity in accessing grant funding related to relationships and kindness in the community?
- can you build empowerment from kindness?
- does it make a difference if empowerment is based in kindness?
- how would we know if a difference has been made?

Fernhill is a defined community with distinct boundaries with a population of just under



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2,000 and within the bottom 5-15 percent SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) area. Housing in Fernhill is largely rented from the local authority and the West of Scotland Housing Association. There are very different standards in housing quality.

From conversations so far, there is a sense that people feel Fernhill is a great place to live, and people are connected and kind. Language is important. People feel it is easier to accept help if asked 'do you want a wee hand?' rather than 'do you want some help?' People accepting help don't want to feel as if they are a burden, and those offering help understand this. People also feel they want to 'pass on' kindness if they have received it, but that this is not necessarily directly reciprocal. Older people tend to remember more overt, open kindness. There is a feeling in the community that kindness still happens but may be less visible, instead happening behind closed doors as there is a lack of interaction in the community. There is a Fernhill Facebook group which is widely used.

In Fernhill there is a play park and a row of shops, but no indoor spaces to meet other than the church and the chapel, and the community centre. Parents and carers gather outside the shops after school drop off when the weather is warm, as do men during the day. The lack of communal space is limiting new relationships / groups forming, and existing groups are not meeting on a regular basis.

There are some negative views about the new community centre in comparison with the 'pavilion' which it replaced, which was seen as the heart of the community. The pavilion was

in poor condition, but widely used at little or no cost by community groups. In contrast, the new centre is perceived by many residents as being 'intimidating' in its layout and expensive to use (it is largely used by groups from outwith the area, as it is relatively cheap in comparison to other centres). Residents say the new centre doesn't have a welcoming atmosphere, and people feel that they can't come in unless they are taking part in a specific activity. There is no café and the foyer space is not well used by the local community. There is a kitchen which is available for hire along with the hall but this can be costly, particularly for small groups. There is an unsupervised gym for over-15s, but residents find the monthly £40 charge, and the concession rates, expensive. Although a lovely building, the regular groups are not able to personalise the space and as such there is a missed opportunity to soften the look of the building and create a community feel.

There are no registered charitable organisations based in Fernhill and no community education or development. All services are accessed outwith the area, including a food bank in Rutherglen.

People would like to see:

- more access to outdoor space and natural play equipment
- more new houses
- use of the golf course
- increased free community groups, especially for under 5s and teenagers
- free access to football pitches
- free internet access in a community site (most noting it would be useful for homework)
- a relationship with the private school in the area (which no one from the area attends). The school has offered use of space after school hours, and use of minibus at weekends and holidays
- 'Fernhill Rising Again' (a quote from May, a local resident who set up and attends the seniors group).

Key points so far are:

- the Foundation's engagement has focused on who you go to in your community for help rather than where the services are. This has allowed a picture of the nature of the community rather than just a map of services to be built, and identified key 'kind' people to involve in developing work.
- the engagement work so far seems to indicate a connected and kind community, but with real issues around lack of space to come together, and some issues in the approach of organisations (primarily the leisure trust) in controlling what space there is. The theory we are testing is whether lack of activity in accessing grant funding is due in part to lack of connections and kindness. That does not seem to be the case in Fernhill and the real issue is in barriers created by organisations.

Following publication of this report, the intention is to take the findings and actively apply to the next phase of work in Fernhill – for example, the need for more agenda free places to gather. We will follow the next phase of work to identify what difference is made and to what extent the focus on kindness makes a difference. We intend to work with the Foundation and other partners to further explore the connection between kindness and empowerment, aiming to refine our notions of what matters in our communities and how we might measure what matters.

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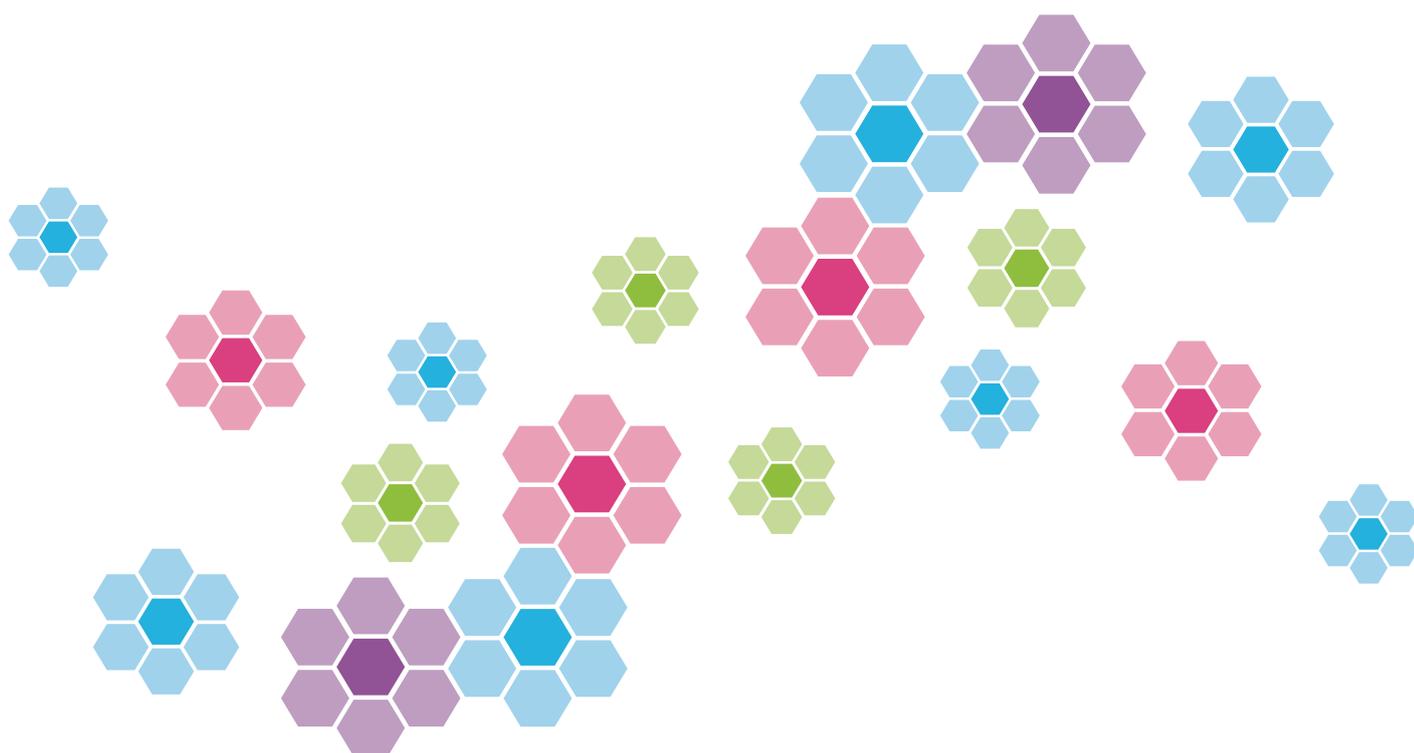
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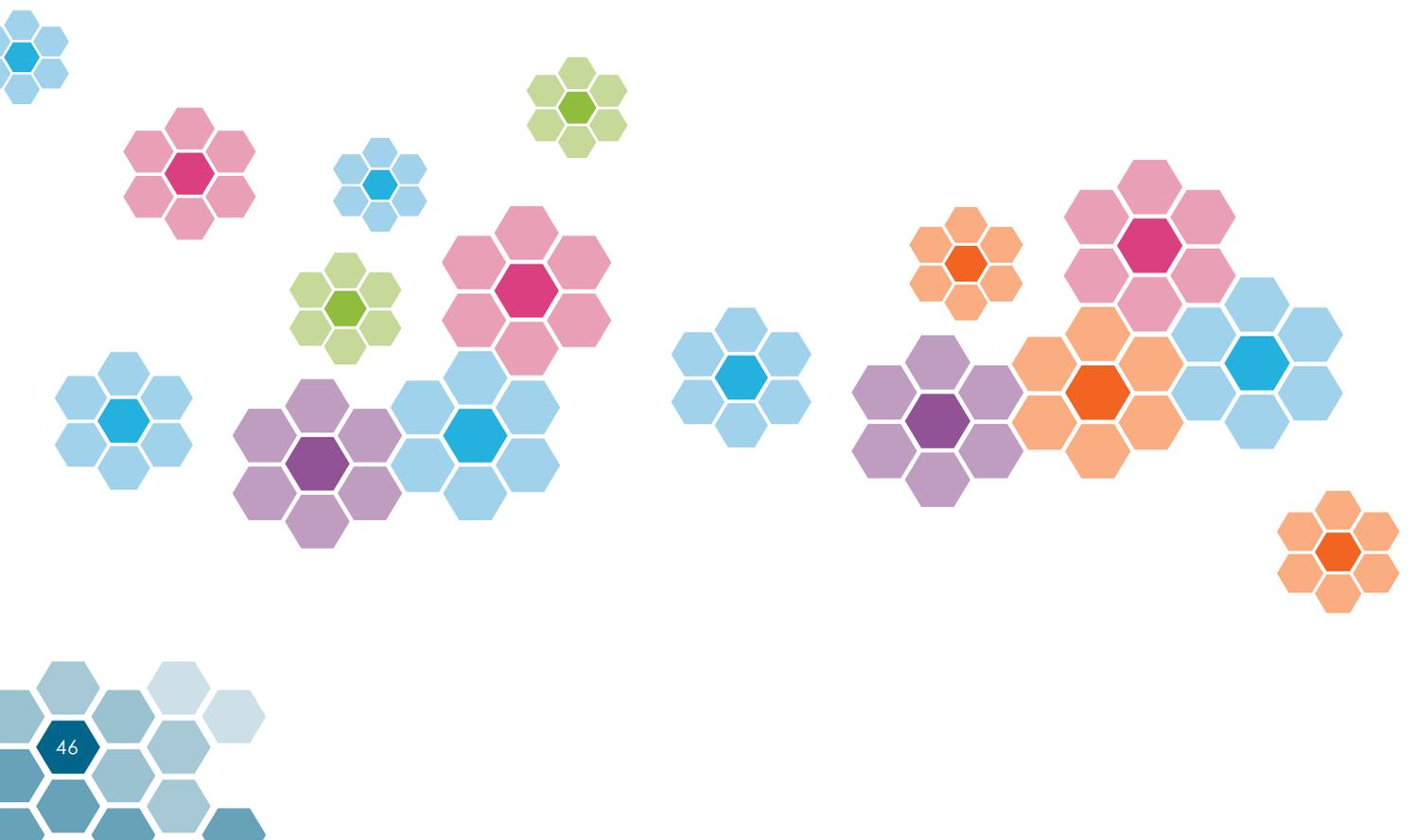
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ISBN 978-1909447691



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