Building Community Capacity and Resilience

Evaluation Findings from a Two-Year Practice and Research Collaboration in Gloucestershire

barnwood

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Building Community Capacity and Resilience

Evaluation Findings from a Two-Year Practice and Research Collaboration in Gloucestershire

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Foreword

The origin of the creative collaboration behind the project that this report evaluates was in the development of an increasingly close relationship between a group of people working in four different organisations: Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, Gloucester City Council and Barnwood Trust. It began with conversation, sharing ideas and building relationships, growing out of a 'Stewardship Circle' that Barnwood Trust was piloting. The purpose of the Stewardship Circle was, broadly, to bring people together to explore the role of leadership in building neighbourhoods where we want to grow old and raise children, that is, places that are good places for everyone to live, thrive and take care of each other.

Barnwood Trust had been investing in introducing learning about, and the practice of, asset-based community development (ABCD) to Gloucestershire since 2012. ABCD had grown and developed largely in North America until the beginning of this decade, so there were very few UK-based practitioners from whom to learn. ABCD was understood by the partners in this collaboration to come under the category of strengths-based approaches. By 'strengths-based approaches' we mean ways of working that incorporate the positive strengths and assets that exist within a person, an organisation or a community, and using these as a starting point to build from to take action and/or address what is 'wrong'. There is a common misperception that taking a strengths-based approach means denying what is 'wrong', not working or difficult; the collaborators in this project did not. They considered that strengths-based approaches offer a constructive starting point from which to motivate people to take collaborative action, in order to enable actions to happen and to address issues and problems.

Barnwood had contracted with Cormac Russell, an international mentor in ABCD theory and practice, to assist it in developing ABCD practice in Gloucestershire, to support the Trust in enabling communities and neighbourhoods to be more inclusive of and welcoming to all who live here. This practice is contributing to the delivery of Barnwood's vision, namely, to create the best possible environment in Gloucestershire for disabled people and people with mental health challenges to make the most of their lives.

To support the learning of ABCD practice across the county, the Trust had developed an in-house team of Community Builders who were using ABCD as the basis for their practice of community building. They were learning by doing: working as Community Builders in neighbourhoods around the county in order to be able to support others to learn the practice too. Gloucester City Council was also beginning to support direct community building practice in one ward in the city. Likewise, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire was co-funding community building activity within a Gloucester ward.

In the course of the conversations in the Stewardship Circle, the people working in Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Gloucester City Council began to discuss with Barnwood Trust how people employed in those organisations and working directly with neighbourhoods might use ABCD practices in their work. They wanted to enable and facilitate more collaboration between residents and either Police Community Support Officers (from Gloucestershire Constabulary) or Community Engagement Officers (from Gloucester City Council). Through those conversations, the idea of seconding PCSOs and Community Engagement Officers into the Community Building team at Barnwood, for a fixed term period, emerged. The idea was that the staff who were seconded would learn through immersion in the practice and training and mentoring from Barnwood's Community Builders.

The people who were in the Stewardship Circle all wanted to learn themselves how to take a broadly more strengths-based approach to their work, and that of their organisation. Gloucestershire Constabulary was also exploring the potential of developing learning about taking a strengths-based approach to problem

solving. And Gloucester City Council was also considering how to take a strengths-based approach to all its service provision, including services like environmental health. This meant that all the partners were engaged in looking at practices within their organisation's service offering, and also within their organisational practice itself, to see how they could become more strengths-based. The collaboration sought to further this by providing training in strengths-based approaches to staff working in Gloucester at the Constabulary and City Council to help enable them to explore how they may be able to implement strengths-based practices within their professional roles.

The collaboration became formalised in 2016 with a head of terms with each organisation involved agreeing a collective set of broad aims and overall outcomes that they aspired to achieve through the collaboration, reflecting the particular focus of each of the partner organisations. This was seen to be important: it meant that the specific mission and purpose of each organisation was respected by the other partners. The report here provides an account of what the project did, what happened and what the more specific outcomes were.

The project involved few additional funds; these consisted only of a small grant which contributed to the salary of the Community Builder seconded from the City Council, plus a small amount of additional funding being put towards the Local Policing Survey (provided by Gloucester City Council). Primarily it involved the redirection of existing resources as the secondees were existing staff who were diverted into these roles for the period of the project. The mentoring and training costs entailed for these seconded Community Builders were met by including them in existing training and mentoring arrangements. The research capacity for undertaking the evaluation described here was part of existing capacity in the Constabulary and in Barnwood Trust: the decision to deploy the researchers into this project was strategic as it was considered that the project could be of longer term tactical utility to support decision-making about future strategic and resource planning. Incidental expenses were very low and met within existing resources. This collaboration between the research teams mirrored the collaboration across other teams within the four organisations during the project.

The original collaborators formed an 'Oversight Group' which met throughout the duration of the project to reflect on, and where necessary problem-solve, issues arising and developments in the work. At the end of the secondment period, the Oversight Group met to reflect on what they had learned from the process. Each organisation felt that they had gained something significant, and there were some common themes to the reflections. The Oversight Group used their reflections on the process to craft a set of key learning points for other organisations considering commissioning community building projects or activities, or developing practice project collaborations across sectors, which are set out in Appendix A.

What Next?

What has happened subsequently? The findings described in this report were discussed in all of the collaborating organisations, along with the organisational learning. As a result, each organisation is taking the outcomes and learning forward in ways relevant to its mission.

- Gloucestershire Constabulary's Neighbourhood Policing strategy now reflects a commitment to using ABCD practices in all neighbourhood policing and it is committed to enabling all PCSOs to use community building skills in their routine practice within the role of a PCSO. To that end, the PCSOs who were seconded have gone back into the Constabulary to share the practice through training and facilitation of the skills by working alongside other PCSOs.
- Gloucester City Council has taken the project further. As well as developing an asset-based approach to all its services, it has established the 'Gloucester Community Building Collective' as

an independent legal entity to enable community building to happen in every ward of the city. The Collective has a 10 year vision of Gloucester as a place where everyone can have a good life and where community building practice will lead to communities which are safe, inclusive, active, resilient and connected. Gloucestershire Constabulary will be placing PCSOs into the Community Building Collective from autumn 2019 onwards.

- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has challenged the erosion of neighbourhood policing and supported work leading to the new neighbourhood policing offer and continues to promote community building and strengths-based practices. This includes working with Gloucestershire Constabulary colleagues to develop practice and effect cultural change as part of the strategic direction of travel set out in the police and crime plan. Financially, the OPCC continues to invest in direct community building through the 'Gloucester Community Building Collective' and in complimentary activity such as Restorative Practice. Commissioning and grant-giving has also sought to fund activity closer to community.
- Barnwood Trust's Community Building team is increasingly working as a team of Community Building Guides, rather than place-based Community Builders themselves. The Guides use their experience of the practice to support anyone in any community across Gloucestershire who wants to use strengths-based approaches and ABCD practices to build more welcoming and inclusive communities.

We are excited to see this report come together, to describe what we have found to be a game-changing project with far-reaching impact, enabling the building of neighbourhoods where residents can, together, create the kind of communities they want to live and thrive in. If readers of this report would like to know more, or find out how the work is continuing to develop, you are very welcome to get in touch.

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Executive Summary

This report presents evaluation findings from a collaboration between four partner organisations in Gloucestershire which sought to promote asset- and strengths-based approaches. Gloucestershire Constabulary, Barnwood Trust, Gloucester City Council, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner formed the partnership with the collective aim of working together to empower citizen-led action to make Gloucestershire a great place to live.

This involved seconding PCSOs and a City Council employee to Barnwood Trust's Community Building Team to practice Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) in particular, as well as providing workshops on strengths-based approaches for a variety of professionals working in statutory and voluntary organisations in Gloucester[1]. These initiatives sought to promote a new way of working and to support local people to build their collective capacity and resilience.

The following collective objectives united the four partner organisations:

- Healthier communities;
- Improved community safety;
- Welcoming and inclusive neighbourhoods
- Citizens taking control over their own lives; and
- Places where people can come together.

The research methods were designed to collect data over an 18-month period that could evidence whether these initiatives were contributing towards the objectives being met. Researchers from Gloucestershire Constabulary and Barnwood Trust collected quantitative and qualitative data in two sites where community building and strengths-based problem-solving activities were taking place, as well as in two comparison sites. Both residents and professionals participated in the research to document the process, reach and impact of their involvement.

This summary shares key findings from the initiatives in relation to two main areas: Ways of Working and Impact for Residents and Community.

Ways of Working

Professionals who participated in the research were asked to share their views on and experiences of working in asset- and strengths-based ways. This included the Community Builders on secondment to Barnwood Trust to practice ABCD, as well as the professionals attending training on strengths-based approaches.

For those professionals who took part in the strengths-based workshops, a variety of common themes emerged within the data in the experiences they reported of working in this way, including a range of **opportunities** and **challenges**. The challenge of implementing strengths-based practices when working in a reactive and response-focused environment was cited, as well as being demand-driven and a lack of capacity.

[1]Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) was understood to come under the broader category of strengths-based approaches.

Organisational culture and **sufficient time to meaningfully engage with the community** were consistent themes identified across different data sets as being important conditions in enabling asset- and strengths-based approaches to be adopted.

A range of **personal and professional impacts** were described by those working in asset- and strengths-based ways as part of this project. For workshop attendees, this included feeling more able to describe the composition of local communities. Those seconded to Barnwood Trust's Community Building Team reported growing in confidence commenting, for example, that *'I'm not a number anymore.'*

The duration of personal and professional impacts appeared to be **particularly pronounced** for those who were seconded to work as Community Builders at Barnwood Trust. Reflections shared by the Community Builders, which highlight the professional learning generated through this process, include the comments of one seconded PCSO who described how *'I see the person now, not the crime.'*

In contrast, reference to strengths-based approaches was less prominent in how workshop attendees responded to scenario-based questions a year after the training took place. This indicates that for those professionals **where the intervention was in the form of workshops rather than secondment, changing practices appeared to be less sustained over time.** This may be due to the conditions and organisational culture in which these professionals were working, in contrast to the seconded Community Builders who were working away from their usual environment. It may also indicate the need for learning to be reinforced over time.

Within the report, the case study of the **Echoes#2 youth group** and other examples of workshop attendees adopting strengths-based practices indicates the impact that this work can have for residents and local communities. The case study of the youth group in particular, which has now been running for over two years, suggests that **when a professional's focus is based primarily on the interests and strengths of the community – and activities are established in partnership with local residents – their involvement is more likely to be sustainable in the long-term.**

Overall, the findings relating to ways of working include that:

- **Certain conditions** were felt to be important in enabling asset- and strengths-based approaches to be adopted by these professionals including:
  - Organisational culture, working practices and environment; and
  - Sufficient time and capacity to meaningfully engage with the community.
- **Professional and personal impacts** were reported by individuals now working in asset- and strengths-based ways, including:
  - Better knowledge about communities and strengths-based approaches to problem solving;
  - Hands-on experience of putting asset- and strengths-based approaches into practice;
  - Feeling better able to describe the composition of local communities;
  - Improved confidence and satisfaction with their work and
  - Feeling less frustrated by their job

Impact for Residents and Community

Residents participated in the research in a range of ways including via the Gloucestershire-wide Local Policing Survey, as well as interviews with individuals directly involved in community building activity. This was supplemented by interviews with the Community Builders.

The findings of the survey in particular provide **statistically significant evidence for the value of both professional and personal relationships, and their positive impact on perceptions of community cohesion, wellbeing, life satisfaction and, more broadly, perceptions of the police and fear of crime.** Analysis of the survey highlighted the interrelatedness of these domains, as well as indicating the value that participation in community groups and access to services has in contributing to improved outcomes in all of these areas. Although residents' perceptions of cohesion, wellbeing and life satisfaction did not increase universally across all the community building sites within the initial 18 months, the survey findings highlight the importance of initiatives which promote community connectivity in contributing to these domains. The report explores the operating context and demographics in each of the different sites which may account for the disparity in findings between areas.

Evidence gathered from interviews with residents living in the community building sites, who were involved in a range of groups, events and activities complements the survey findings. **All 10 residents who were interviewed identified a range of positive impacts, for themselves and/or other residents,** including establishing new relationships, taking part in new activities, and the value of involvement in feeling able to cope (for example, with a health condition). Examples were also given of how community events had been inclusive of people from a range of different backgrounds, such as by being free to attend or to take part in.

Residents in both community building sites also spoke about the role that community involvement, including events and groups, played in **contributing to feelings of cohesion** in an area. Recognising that the notion of cohesion is complex, multi-faceted and contested, the research focused on the perceptions and views of local residents, rather than seeking to measure any one definition of cohesion to see if it had increased or decreased. Residents living in these diverse areas spoke of organising and taking part in events and how *'you put everybody together on a day like that and it transcends language.'*

More broadly, the findings also indicated that community building can lead to **increased trust and confidence between residents and professionals.** The evidence suggests that Community Builders were trusted and accepted by the residents they engaged with and that these individual relationships also contributed to **improved perceptions of the police more generally**.

Overall, the research provides evidence for the **impact that working in asset- and strengths-based ways can have at both an individual and community level**. Key findings include:

- **The personal impact of involvement in community groups, events and activities on:**
  - Wellbeing; and
  - Life satisfaction.
- **The broader impact that meaningful connectivity has at community level on:**
  - Perceptions of cohesion; and
  - Fear of crime.

- **The impact of involvement and interactions on residents' perceptions of agencies on:**
  - The likelihood of local residents reporting crime;
  - Local residents' perceptions of police; and
  - Local residents' trust and confidence of receiving a good service.

Conclusion

The findings of the research suggest that these initiatives to promote asset- and strengths-based approaches have **contributed towards the five objectives** which formed the basis of the collaboration. Examples of evidence supporting each objective is given below.

In relation to the objective of developing **Healthier Communities**, evidence from this research highlights the value that involvement in community groups, activities and events had on residents' wellbeing and life satisfaction. This finding from the Local Policing Survey in particular is supported by qualitative data from residents themselves, who shared examples of their involvement in the community and the positive impact it had for them, including one resident citing that it '*all helps me to keep going.*' Benefits for professionals of working in this way included feeling less frustrated and having increased confidence in their work.

Data from multiple sources also indicates a contribution towards the second objective of **Improved Community Safety**. In both sites where community building took place, there were statistically significant increases in residents reporting in the Local Policing Survey that the police would treat them fairly and with respect. Residents interviewed in both areas also spoke about the value of community events and groups in improving perceptions of community cohesion.

Within the report, examples of community groups, events and activities (supported through the two initiatives) being financially affordable and attended by a diverse range of residents suggests a contribution towards the third objective of developing **Welcoming and Inclusive Neighbourhoods**. Such groups, events and activities included a community café which was established following a neighbourhood get together where residents discussed what they would like to happen in the local area. The idea for the Echoes#2 youth group also emerged following a World Café event and resident-run fun day. Both of these examples, supported by professionals involved in the two initiatives, provide evidence of a contribution towards the fourth and fifth objectives of **Citizens taking Control over their Lives** and of developing **Places where People can Come Together**.

Overall, the findings from a range of methods after 18 months indicate that the two initiatives have made a contribution towards each of the collective objectives, with positive impacts for both professionals and residents. Going forwards, there is scope for further research to track any long-term benefits. It would also be of value to explore how asset- and strengths-based approaches are applied in a wider variety of contexts, conditions and across multiple agencies, and any associated impact.

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Introduction

Introduction

In 2016, against the backdrop of changing police priorities – a move towards neighbourhood safety as opposed to neighbourhood policing, the austerity agenda and cuts to services and public spending, increased demand for services (including non-crime related demand) and a huge planned development for the county, four organisations came together to develop a new way of working and of supporting local people to build their collective capacity and resilience.

These organisations: Barnwood Trust, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Gloucester City Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire developed and implemented a partnership intervention around Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and strengths-based working that has formed the focus of this project. Together, they identified a collective aim:

Working together to empower citizen-led action to make Gloucestershire a great place to live

A set of collective objectives that united the partners:

- Healthier communities;
- Improved community safety;
- Welcoming and inclusive neighbourhoods
- Citizens taking control over their own lives; and
- Places where people can come together

Alongside this, the Constabulary developed some other objectives for the project that were specific to policing:

- To realise greater levels of community capacity and resilience through purposeful community building, utilising the principles of Asset-Based Community Development (see below for definition);
- To improve community safety through the generation of collective efficacy within communities;
- To effectively listen to genuine community concerns in order to enable an appropriate and effective policing response;
- To utilise strengths-based problem-solving in order to empower citizens and reduce dependency upon the police; and
- To increase public trust and confidence in the police.

The Evidence Base

The rationale behind the project and its evaluation was informed by contemporary literature on a range of topics. This included both policing literature (on community safety, public confidence, procedural justice and legitimacy), as well as community development literature (particularly relating to asset- and strengths-based approaches). Two of these areas in particular are briefly described below.

A key body of literature that underpinned the rationale for the project relates to **collective efficacy**

(Sampson, 2006)[2]. Whilst other evidence shows that the single biggest factor which makes people feel safe is how well socially connected they are and the extent to which they know their neighbours, Sampson argues that to actually make communities safer, people must be doing something together around a common purpose (for example, a neighbourhood watch scheme, a book group or a running group). This coming together around a common purpose is collective efficacy and when this is present, Sampson suggests, you will see a reduction in crime and disorder within communities.

Literature on **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)** also formed a key basis for the project and its approach. ABCD advocates for using the skills, experience, talents and enthusiasm of local individuals and communities to strengthen communities and families. It is based on the idea that strong communities are built by recognising, celebrating and harnessing the community assets that are already there.

Literature on ABCD highlights that it is built on four foundations (Kretzmann, 2010[3]; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993[4]; Mathie and Cunningham, 2003[5]):

1. It focuses on community assets and strengths rather than problems and needs
2. It identifies and mobilises individual and community assets, skills and passions
3. It is community driven – 'building communities from the inside out' (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993)
4. It is relationship driven.

While there is a wealth of literature on the theory underpinning asset- and strengths-based approaches, an evidence review carried out by Nesta in February 2016 (p.5)[6] looking at the impact of person-centred and community-centred approaches in relation to health and wellbeing highlighted that in terms of *'community asset-based approaches, the evidence is still at a much earlier stage of maturity.'*

In addition to providing evaluation data for key stakeholders, the research collaboration sought to contribute to this growing evidence base.

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[2]Sampson, R. (2006) 'How Does Community Context Matter? Social Mechanism and the Explanation of Crime', *in:* Wilkstrom, P. O. H., and Sampson, R. J. (Eds.) *The Explanation of Crime; Context, Mechanisms and Development.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

[3]Kretzmann, J. P. (2010). 'Asset-Based Strategies for Building Resilient Communities', *in:* Reich, J.W., Zautra, A., and Hall, S.J. (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult Resilience*. New York: Guilford Press

[4]Kretzmann, J. P., and McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, Ill.: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

[5]Mathie, A., and Cunningham, G. (2003). 'From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development'. *Development in Practice, 13*(5), 474-486.

[6]Nesta (2016) 'At the Heart of Health: Realising the Value of People and Communities'
Available at: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/at_the_heart_of_health_-_realising_the_value_of_people_and_communities.pdf

The Project

The project aimed to develop community capacity and resilience within Gloucestershire communities with a view to achieving the objectives laid out by the partner organisations. To do so, the collaboration contained two initiatives: firstly, community engagement and strengths-based problem solving and, secondly, purposeful community building.

1. Community Engagement and Strengths-Based Problem Solving

This element of the work sought to address practice and bring about a cultural change within the organisations by shifting from a deficit focus to taking a strengths-based approach. Approximately 30 staff from the Gloucester Neighbourhood Team, including all PCSOs, Neighbourhood PCs, Sergeants and Inspectors, and Gloucester City Council staff took part in five day-long workshops during the first eight months of the collaboration, alongside representatives from other agencies working in Gloucester City. The workshops aimed to provide the skills to problem solve in a way which draws solutions from local strengths and assets and develop long-term, sustainable solutions that ultimately will lead to a reduction in repeat demand and increase trust and confidence in services.

2. Purposeful Community Building

Four PCSO Community Builders were recruited from across the county as well as an officer from Gloucester City Council's Partnership Engagement team and seconded to Barnwood Trust's Community Building Team. For two years, these Community Builders would leave their traditional roles and practice community building – the facilitation of Asset-Based Community Development – in two sites in Gloucester: Barton & Tredworth and Westgate (in Gloucester City Centre). The PCSO Community Builders did not wear uniforms, were not asked to respond to radio and did not have to attend their usual commitments with the police (they did, however, have their organisation reflected on business cards and openly discussed their connection with either the police or council). This initiative aimed to catalyse citizen-led activity, and increase social connectedness and collective efficacy to build stronger and more resilient communities and, again, increase trust and confidence in services.

The Evaluation

The evaluation aimed to collect data to inform the project team's understanding of whether the collaborative objectives were being met and how the findings might inform future work. More broadly, the evaluation also sought to contribute to a growing wider evidence base on the impact of community building. Four sites in Gloucestershire were chosen for the research: the two intervention sites (Barton & Tredworth and Westgate) hosted Community Builders seconded to Barnwood Trust and two comparison sites - Cashes Green, Stroud, where community building was taking place by Barnwood Trust Community Builders (not seconded), and Whaddon, Cheltenham, where no community building was knowingly taking place at the start of the project.

In addition, interventions such as the strengths-based workshops (BlueLight Training) involved the Gloucester Neighbourhood Policing Team with representatives from other agencies such as the council, housing and diocese. The Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Cheltenham and Stroud functioned as a comparison group. Data collection involved gathering of time-sensitive information at key points throughout the 18 months in which the evaluation took place.

1. Community Engagement and Problem-Solving

The community engagement and problem-solving element of the research collaboration involved two key methods: The Local Policing Survey, and evaluation of strengths-based workshops (BlueLight Training). These were conducted and analysed by researchers at Gloucestershire Constabulary.

Local Policing Survey

Gloucestershire Constabulary carry out a survey with the residents of local communities, which asks about their perceptions of the police, any observed police activity, as well as levels of community cohesion and individuals' wellbeing and life satisfaction. This is known as the Local Policing Survey (LPS). For the purposes of this research, the Local Policing Survey was redesigned to reflect the principles of ABCD and strengths-based problem solving, by starting from a point of strength and opportunity rather than of problems, threats and challenges.

All measures within the survey are analysed using scales, which are formed using a number of questions relating to the same overarching theme. All scales have been tested for reliability, and measures within the survey include:

- Community cohesion
- Wellbeing[7]
- Life satisfaction
- Police legitimacy
- Trust and confidence in the police

Using a series of statistical tests, it is possible to determine whether relationships exist between the measures, i.e., whether responses for one measure may be a predictor of responses to another.

Although surveys are routinely undertaken on a monthly basis by an external research company, numbers collected over time are not representative at community level. Therefore, in order that responses to the LPS could be analysed and compared over time for the communities in the four sites, an external research company was commissioned to carry out street surveys at three points in time; December 2016, September 2017 and May 2018. At each time period, 100 surveys were carried out on a face-to-face basis in each of the four communities[8].

Strengths-Based Workshops (BlueLight Training)

Officers from the Gloucester City Neighbourhood Policing team, alongside colleagues from partner agencies, including Gloucester City Council staff, took part in five workshops on strengths-based problem-solving as an approach to community engagement and developing the capacity and resilience of communities.

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[7]We understand wellbeing in this report to be multifaceted as per the World Health Organisation definition of wellbeing which sees wellbeing as: 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (www.who.int). To this end, the wellbeing and life satisfaction measures within the Local Policing Survey are composite scores which ask individuals about having purpose and meaning in their lives, having supportive and rewarding social relationships, feeling able to contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others, their financial and work situations, their health, their living conditions and their lives overall.

[8]The external research company conducting the street survey sought to collect a representative sample of responses based on the demographic profiles of each area.

Evaluation of the impact of the training involved a number of methodologies, including:

1. Observations, to witness first hand any challenge, as well as change in the attitudes and practices of attendees.
2. Immediate feedback following attendance on the course.
3. Participant surveys, which were completed at the beginning of workshop one, at the end of workshop five, and one year after the workshops ended, to determine knowledge transfer and attitude and practice change over time.
4. Case study follow-up post training

These observations of the workshops and responses to the surveys were coded both qualitatively and quantitatively and compared with responses of neighbourhood officers in Cheltenham and Stroud (control groups who were not receiving training) to evaluate the impact of these workshops over time.

2. Purposeful Community Building

In September 2016, as part of the purposeful community building element of the project, four PCSOs from Gloucestershire Constabulary and an officer from the Citizen Engagement Team at Gloucester City Council were seconded to Barnwood Trust's Community Building Team. A multi-method approach was taken by Barnwood Trust's Research Team to collect data from Community Builders and residents involved in the community building[9]. This included regular 'download' interviews and people mapping sessions with the Community Builders, ethnographic visits to the sites, and interviews with local residents. Each of these methods will be described in turn below. The data was analysed thematically using NVivo coding software. The section on *'Community Building Processes, Principles and Practices'* presents findings on five key themes which emerged from this analysis.

All names of research participants have been removed and pseudonyms have been used in place of names for residents, community groups, events, and street names. Community Builders have also been referred to anonymously as either 'Community Builder' or, where appropriate, 'PCSO Community Builder.'

Community Builder Downloads

A total of 20 reflective interviews[10] were conducted bi-monthly over an 18-month period with the seconded Community Builders, to 'download' what had been happening over the past few weeks in each site. Eighteen of these interviews were with Community Builders in post for the entire duration of their secondment. This was in order to capture how the work unfolded and understand the process behind community building: what worked for each seconded Community Builder, the learning that was taking place, challenges that were encountered and how they were resolved by the Community Builders. Examples were also captured about how residents were engaging in groups, events and activities and the perceived impact of this involvement.

[9]This is part of a broader study being carried out on community building by Barnwood Trust's research team

[10]The focus of this report is on the experiences of the seconded Community Builders. The experiences of Community Builders based primarily at the Trust (including the Community Builder in Cashes Green) will be explored in further detail in subsequent publications.

People Maps

People maps were produced at six-monthly intervals for each community building site during the course of the research. This involved the Community Builders working in each site meeting with researchers to 'map' the connections they had made in the area, including with residents, professionals, groups and any associated events and activities. Typically, these were informal sessions in which the Community Builder started from the first connection they had made and proceeding to list the names and places they had connected with and any links developed across and between them. The 'maps' were produced live in the session by a local artist. Mapping sessions took place to correspond with time-series data being collected across the other research methods. At the first people mapping session for each site, the Community Builders' mentors were also present.

Figure 1 shows the timeline of this data collection:

	People Map One	People Map Two	People Map Three
Barton & Tredworth	February 2017	September 2017	March 2018
Westgate (Gloucester City Centre)	February 2017	September 2017	March 2018
Cashes Green	August 2016	May 2017	June 2018
Whaddon	*No data collected*		

Figure 1: Timeline of Data Collection (People Maps)

In the two intervention sites, people maps were completed at six-monthly intervals to capture connections at six, twelve and eighteen months. For Cashes Green, where community building activity before began the project, and an associated people map was already in existence, efforts were made to align the time periods for data collection to the intervention sites. For example, the second people map for Cashes Green was produced after twelve months of community building. Given that there was no purposeful community building activity in Whaddon, people maps were not produced for this area.

In Barton & Tredworth, some community building had been taking place by the City Council officer prior to their secondment and a people map was produced in August 2016. Data from this map is included in figures within this report for reference only, as this took place before the formal collaboration.

The maps themselves provide a visual representation of the connections made and transcripts of the sessions have also been qualitatively analysed and included in the findings. This qualitative analysis captured the process of building and sustaining connections over time and the nature of these connections. In addition, a quantitative approach was taken involving generating frequencies of connections appearing on the maps. There was some variation in what the Community Builders felt was significant to include on the maps but this method sought to generate equivalent figures. NVivo software was utilised to code new and repeated connections which appeared in the transcripts over time and any additional context about who the Community Builders had come into contact with.

Ethnography

Ethnographic visits took place within each of the four sites throughout the research period. Ethnography aims to provide a rich, detailed description of everyday life and practice. Such 'thick' description of the research sites can provide insights into place and process and complements the in-depth 'download'

interviews. Commonly, the method involves observation (of a place) alongside conversations with key individuals as the observed situation unfolds (participant observation). The ethnography was used to give both a rich description of the intervention sites and to observe, capture, and describe aspects of the community building process that might be difficult to articulate.

A total of nine ethnographic visits took place during the research fieldwork, with six of these visits involving observations of Community Builders on secondment to the Trust as they engaged with residents and groups. One of the visits to Whaddon, Cheltenham in June 2017 involved observations of PCSOs carrying out their traditional PCSO role. The second visit in the Cheltenham area took place in St Paul's in May 2018 and involved observing a PCSO Community Builder who was seconded to the Trust after two of the original seconded PCSO Community Builders returned to their former role.

These visits were carried out by an ethnographer employed by Barnwood Trust and provided a means of exploring and better understanding the process of community building, and also gave a sense of the impact of this work from the perspective of someone not directly involved in the project.

Figure 2 shows the timescales for this data collection:

	Visit One	Visit Two	Visit Three
Barton & Tredworth	October 2017	July 2018	--
Westgate (Gloucester City Centre)	April 2017	October 2017	May 2018
Cashes Green	May 2017	November 2017	--
Cheltenham (Whaddon/St Paul's)	June 2017	May 2018	--

Figure 2: Timeline of Data Collection (Ethnography)

Interviews with Residents

Interviews took place with 10 residents from the two intervention sites. Community events provided an opportunity for researchers to initially meet residents and in some cases, introductions were brokered by the Community Builders. Suggestions about which residents to invite to participate in the research were made by both researchers and Community Builders, based on discussions about the work that had taken place during 'download' interviews and people mapping sessions, as well as individuals who Community Builders thought might be willing to participate. Attending community events and visiting community centres also gave the researchers the opportunity to meet a broader range of local residents who might be interested in taking part.

All 10 of the residents who were interviewed had had contact with the one or more of the Community Builders based at Barnwood Trust, including the PCSO Community Builders and/or the Community Builder seconded from Gloucester City Council. They first came into contact with the Community Builders in a variety of ways including: meeting them at community events or groups; at workshops or training sessions; via face-to-face introductions when Community Builders were door-knocking in the area; through Barnwood Trust's website; or by introduction from another member of Barnwood Trust staff. In some cases, these connections originated from before the secondment start dates.

Of the residents interviewed, eight participants had previously participated in activities and groups prior

to their current contact with the Community Builders[11]. Some of these were linked to community centres in Barton & Tredworth and Westgate, however some referred to their involvement in different locations. For one resident, a lack of local groups and ongoing medical problems was a reason for not being involved in groups and activities prior to meeting a Community Builder.

Four of these residents described living with physical impairments, mental health conditions and/or long-term health problems. Three had received individual grants from Barnwood Trust and a further five mentioned applying for and/or receiving Small Sparks grants[12] for community groups or events.

During the interviews, all of the residents also spoke about their most recent involvement in the community, including organising and attending events, as well as a range of other groups and activities which they were engaged in.

These semi-structured interviews took place between September 2017 and July 2018. Participants were invited to talk about their experiences and share their views on a range of topics including: their local area, their involvement in the community, including any contact they had had with the Community Builders, as well as any broader life experiences. In a similar vein to the 'download' interviews, flexibility was given in terms of which aspects the interviewees wished to focus on.

Contextualising the Project

As alluded to above, there have been several notable factors to consider in collecting, analysing and interpreting the data. This section briefly outlines important factors for reference when reading the research findings.

Changes in Personnel

After the first six months of their secondments, the two full-time PCSO Community Builders (working in Barton & Tredworth and Westgate) decided to return to their traditional PCSO roles. The design and duration of the research collaboration had been intended to capture the work of four full-time equivalent Community Builders (including the Community Builder seconded from Gloucester City Council). However, due to these posts being vacated, the data instead relates to the work of three community builders working varied hours. With the remaining two PCSO Community Builders both being part-time, some challenges were experienced in the data collection phase in relation to availability to participate in research fieldwork and so certain timescales were adjusted to enable the fieldwork to take place.

Moreover, changes in personnel amount to more than simply the number of hours contributed to the project. Each Community Builder was recruited for the interests, passions and personal skills they brought to the role and the loss of these colleagues is equally a loss of these skills. Personal factors may impact on the way the work progresses, including understanding and knowledge of particular community groups, as well as professional and personal qualities brought to the work.

[11]This included involvement with local residents' associations, groups linked to churches or other religious organisations, youth clubs, cultural groups, refugee/asylum seeker associations, and arts and crafts groups.

[12]Small Sparks grants of up to £250 help fund start-up costs or equipment so that community groups in Gloucestershire can do things together with people where they live. This could be gardening tools to grow vegetables together, books or games to get a new club started, knitting needles, musical instruments, or something else. The groups should be inclusive and involve at least four people (of which one must have a disability) and are exclusive to Gloucestershire. For more information see: www.barnwoodtrust.org/grants

In both intervention areas, there were marked differences in the reported numbers of individuals engaged with during first people mapping sessions (where all Community Builders were present) and the second sessions (when these personnel changes took place), indicating the potential impact of these changes in personnel.

Understanding and Participation in Community Building

Some Community Building activity in Barton & Tredworth was already taking place prior to the formal commencement of this collaboration. This involved the later-seconded Gloucester City Council officer being guided by a member of Barnwood Trust's Community Building team. Whilst recognising that other agencies may also have been working in Westgate (Gloucester City Centre), it is worth noting that differing amounts of community building had potentially taken place in each site prior to the secondment.

Some residents in Barton & Tredworth were arguably already aware of what community building was, what it involved and why it was happening. Community Builders had already supported some community events in the area and this potentially helped in laying foundations for future work in the area.

Geographic Context

Although both areas are in central Gloucester, Westgate and Barton & Tredworth are geographically different areas. Given the proximity of Westgate to the city centre, many of the individuals Community Builders met in this area were not local residents but rather visitors or tourists to the city. Moreover, as Westgate is a large ward stretching across much of the city centre, Community Builders in this area chose to focus on particular, more residential, parts of the ward rather than attempting to stretch themselves across the whole area.

Barton & Tredworth, on the other hand, is a densely populated urban residential area, where there are multiple rows of terraced housing, and so meeting residents local to the ward was potentially easier in this area. Community Builders in this area also focused on certain parts of the ward, namely Tredworth in particular.

Barton & Tredworth is also the most ethnically diverse ward in the county: 51.7% of residents in this area are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups[13]. Whilst this is recognised as a strength and an asset of the area[14], there are also a high proportion of residents with English as an additional language[15] which potentially posed challenges for the Community Builders.

Individuals carrying out the research for this project have sought to be mindful of the uniqueness of each site, whilst also taking a consistent approach to research fieldwork and data analysis. In seeking to capture the process and reach of the community building, as well as the impact for residents and the wider community, the focus has not been on trying to compare and contrast the two sites. Instead, the research aims to document how Community Builders have gone about their work, the variety of activities which have taken place, and the spectrum of different types of impact reported by local people involved in the work in a range of ways.

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[13]Source: 2011 Census

[14]Gloucester City Council (2013a) Ward Area Profile: Barton & Tredworth
Available at: http://www.gloucester.gov.uk/business/Documents/Land%20and%20Property/Ward%20Area%20Profiles/Barton%20and%20Tredworth.pdf

[15]Ibid

Section One:
Ways of Working

Section One: Ways of Working

This section looks in detail at research findings on various strands of the two initiatives which all relate to professional practices and ways of working. This includes feedback about workshops on strength-based approaches (delivered to a range of professionals by BlueLight Training), as well as exploring the process, principles and practices of the Community Builders (seconded to Barnwood Trust).

Key findings in this section relate to the opportunities and challenges experienced by professionals in adopting these approaches, as well as indications of the benefits of working in these ways. This section presents the impact of working in these ways for both Community Builders and those professionals who took part in the workshops, as well as sharing several examples of how their work impacted upon community groups and organisations. Further discussion about the impact for residents in the two community building sites can be found in Section Two of this report.

Evaluation of Strengths-Based Workshops (BlueLight Training)

Attendees at the BlueLight Training predominantly consisted of the Gloucestershire Constabulary Neighbourhood Policing Team, however representatives from Gloucester City Council, Gloucester City Homes and individuals from other agencies were also present. A total of over 80 individuals from these different organisations took part.

As a reminder, the intended purpose of the BlueLight Training was:

> ***Community Engagement and Problem Solving:*** *To upskill all PCSOs, Neighbourhood Policing PCs, Sergeant and Inspector within Gloucester, together with local partners, through a series of five workshops to adopt a strengths-based approach to community engagement and problem solving. This will give attendees the skills to problem solve in a way which draws solutions from local strengths and assets, developing long term sustainable solutions and bringing about increased trust and confidence.*

An evaluation of the impact of the training involved a number of methods, including:

1. Observations, to witness first hand any challenge, as well as change in the attitudes and practices of attendees.
2. Immediate feedback following attendance on the course.
3. Participant surveys, which were completed at the beginning of workshop one, at the end of workshop five and one year after the workshops ended to determine knowledge transfer and attitude and practice change over time.
4. Case study follow-up post training

1. Observations

Paired Tasks

During the workshops, attendees took part in a number of paired tasks that were used to demonstrate the impact of focusing on personal and community strengths. These activities enabled individuals to recognise their own strengths, identify where their passions lie and what they are good at.

Essentially, the lesson learnt was that everyone in a community has different strengths and if these are brought together as a collective, the strengths grow in number. When this theory is transferred

to communities, it means that they can use their combined knowledge and/or skills to assist in the prevention of or response to issues or problems.

Following the tasks, researchers observed how the feeling in the room changed – people were definitely more positive, upbeat, chatty and happier.

An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry, Participatory Budgeting, World Café, Neighbourhood Agreements and Restorative Practice

The following concepts and ways of working differently were introduced to workshop participants, with examples of how they had been applied successfully elsewhere, the essence of which were as follows:

- What's strong and working
- Looking to the future
- Experimental process
- Enabling ownership
- Innovation / creativity
- Assisting in identifying and enabling assets in communities

An attendee explained that a cultural change is what is needed and felt that maybe these courses might be where it all begins. However, initial conversations tended to focus on how working differently is going to be a challenge.

Through observations, it seemed that most of the room were accepting of the strengths-based concept however, attendees spoke of challenges that may prevent change from occurring in reality. The following reasons were cited, which continued as themes during subsequent workshops:

- **Currently too busy, with too much work, less capacity**, e.g. we have x amount of crimes and x number of incidents and won't have the time to put this new way of working into practice.
- **We're reactive, never proactive** – there was mention that since the new operating model was introduced in July 2015, neighbourhood policing has diminished and officers and PCSOs have far less capacity to partake in what could be described as pure community work.
- **We are demand driven rather than community focussed**
- **Lost geographical ownership and knowledge** – we no longer know our communities and local people
- **Liability, risk assessment, health and safety** – some things are too hard to change because of existing legislation and policy. For example, not allowed to take food or cakes to certain events in fear of making someone ill ("it's gone too far").
- **Public expectation** – "I pay your wages; you should be sorting this out for me." Communities have become agency dependent.
- **Lack of support from middle managers** – "Why aren't 'leaders' doing this course – if they don't do it, that's a barrier in itself."
- **Different agencies have different agendas**

- **What about the Force Control Room?** – Dispatchers and call handlers should be on the course too.

Researchers observed that most attendees were actively participating in the workshops, sharing stories of change but also identifying barriers, as shown above. In addition to this, researchers saw and heard the following:

> "The person that I sat next to literally fell asleep."

> "In terms of body language, there were lots of faces in hands, yawning and looking disinterested."

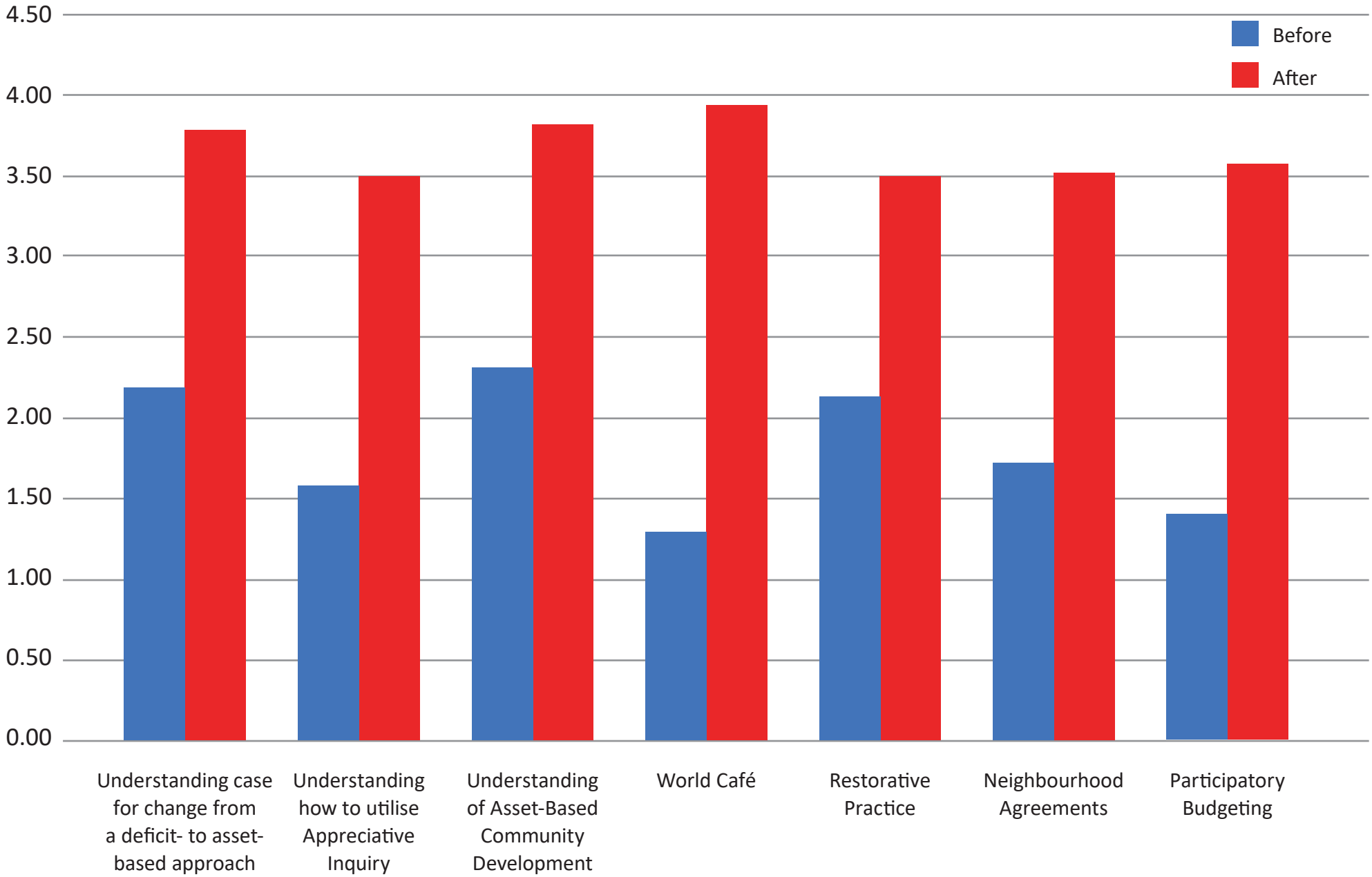
In conversations with Community Builders who attended the workshops, one was especially excited about their new role and was keen to show whether or not it is successful. At this point they felt they would like to continue working as a Community Builder once their secondment ends and not return to their traditional PCSO role.

While out of the room, some people were complaining about the actual training – some felt that they were being taught concepts that they already know or already do (mainly council and housing employees). A few were commenting that they do not have time to use any of the new skills. Others seem to have not understood the premise of the new way of thinking and have continued to focus on what agencies could do to tackle problems or issues – the trainer had to work with them to get them back on track.

2. Immediate Feedback

Following the third workshop, attendees were asked to complete a short questionnaire. This asked them to rate their knowledge of specific topics, comparing knowledge before commencing the training with their knowledge at the end of workshop three. The results are displayed in the Figure 3 below.

The chart demonstrates that from self-assessment, learning has been transferred and attendees better understand the concepts of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and the associated community engagement tools.


4.50
4.00
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3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
Before
After
Understanding case for change from a deficit- to asset-based approach
Understanding how to utilise Appreciative Inquiry
Understanding of Asset-Based Community Development
World Café
Restorative Practice
Neighbourhood Agreements
Participatory Budgeting

What have attendees done differently so far?

In spite of the challenges identified above, the workshops have been full of positive examples of how the principles of strengths-based working have been applied in practice.

Parking Outside Schools

In response to repeated complaints about parking outside a Gloucester school, a PCSO is now pulling together school children and parents to identify what they can do to help find a solution, rather than relying on the odd occasion that a PCSO is able to be there. The PCSO has had a positive initial response from those they have approached, including a regular complainant.

Somali 'Misper'

An officer explained how they had taken an alternative approach in their response to a persistent missing person - a young Somali girl continued to go missing from her parents' home which resulted in creating lots of work for agencies involved. Previously the officer would take the same approach of going and speaking to her and advising her not to do it again. Instead, the officer went and spoke to her to find out what was happening and why she continued to go missing and in doing so, they found out that there is a lot of conflict between her and her family as her parents are very strict.

During the conversation and the new approach, the officer found out that the young lady is interested in pursuing a career in health so they went to Young Gloucester who has a mentor scheme and they had a relevant mentor in health. The officer linked the girl up with this mentor (a retired nurse) and she is now much happier and her mum is really happy too. It was considered too early to tell whether this will stop her from running away in the future, or if it might point her in a slightly different direction. It was discussed that a potential barrier might be getting a 17-year-old to sit down with the mentor but so far it is a win-win situation because if there is no more running away it will save money and she is on a more positive route and she is happier.

3. Participant Surveys

Participant surveys were designed to be carried out at three points in time – at the beginning of the first workshop (Time One), at the end of the fifth and final workshop (Time Two), and finally, one year after the training had concluded (Time Three) in order to measure the transference of learning into the workplace. Questions included the following topics, as well as three scenario-based questions in which participants were asked how they would approach a particular situation that they may be faced with. For example:

- What's currently working well in the area in which you work?
- Areas for improvement
- Job satisfaction
- Public service motivation
- Emotional energy
- Pride
- Appetite for problem solving
- Knowledge and understanding of local communities, in terms of composition, engagement, crime, characteristics and inclusion, etc.

The surveys were completed by two groups; one that underwent the BlueLight Training (Gloucester based Neighbourhood Team and partner agencies) and the control group (consisting of police officers

and PCSOs working within the Neighbourhood Policing Teams within Stroud and Cheltenham), who had not received any training. Responses were coded in the same way so that the results for each of the groups could be compared.

The findings from Time Two, where participants shared their feedback at the point of completing the five-workshop series, will be discussed first. This includes their views on how prepared they were to work in a new way. We will then explore their views from Time Three when they had been back in the workplace for a 12-month period and contrast these with data from Time Two and Time One (prior to any training taking place).

Time Two Results – Following completion of Workshop Five

At the end of the survey in Time Two, respondents were asked to respond to two statements and a free text question.

Statement-Based Questions

'I am now better equipped to deliver a more asset/ strengths-based approach to problem solving'	• **56% said they 'agree' or 'strongly agree'** • **33% said they 'slightly agree' or 'neither agree nor disagree'** • **11% disagreed (some claimed they were already engaged in strengths-based activities so had learnt nothing new**
'I have utilised the approach in my everyday work'	• **33% said they 'agree' and 'strongly agree' combined** • **13% said they 'slightly agree' (suggested they were at the early stages of utilising the approach/trying out some methods)**

When asked what, if anything they had done differently since receiving the training, the responses were mixed however, the majority (19 respondents) described how they are thinking differently and have adopted a more open-minded approach to problem solving. This involves including communities and partner agencies, empowering citizens and focussing on the root cause.

"Pushing incidents back to complainants to come up with solutions – encouraging them to engage with others in the community."

"I took part in a World Café event with young people… It was brilliant for getting views and suggestions going forward. Although the event was about knife crime, we didn't mention knife crime until the young people did. Everyone had the chance to say something."

In contrast, the next most common response (made by seven respondents) is that they are not doing anything differently. One person said, "I have not got the time. My workload has increased and the demand on my time is even greater than it has ever been."

Five people described how the training received has made them aware of a new way of thinking and has broadened their knowledge base, which makes them better equipped to deal with the community. For example, "World café is a great technique and is something I will take forward."

Other respondents (four people) reflected that the process has enabled them to bring out and focus on the positive, encouraging others to take notice of what's working well, e.g. "Working together and having time and space."

Of the remaining comments, two people said that either they were using the approach already or they said that they plan to use the approaches, but have not yet.

Finally, one person said each of the following:

- Difficult to apply the principles in practice when we have statutory obligations to investigate crime
- This course has not taught me anything new
- Good refresher – re-branded version of old methods
- Job does not require it in my role

Time Three Results – One Year after the Completion of the BlueLight Training

Gloucester – Time One and Time Three Comparison

Within Gloucester, when comparing survey responses between Time One and Time Three, results were positive. There were higher levels of agreement that:

- Sharing their views on problem-solving is attractive
- They are aware of agencies, groups and individuals who may have an interest in community safety and crime prevention
- They feel they are able to support activities undertaken by community members in relation to community safety and crime prevention
- People are impressed when they tell them where they work

As well as these positives, reassuringly, respondents were less likely to:

- Feel frustrated by their job
- Feel at the end of their tether

Neighbourhood (NH) Team Comparisons

In terms of knowledge of strengths-based problem solving and the composition of local communities, the results by area, were as follows:

For those in the Gloucester intervention group, the following statistically significant differences were reported:

NH team feel more able to describe the composition of local communities	NH team feel more able to describe the impact of crime on victims and communities	NH team feel more able to identify factors contributing to patterns of crime

By contrast, their colleagues within the Cheltenham and Stroud combined control group (approximately 40 individuals) fed back that:

- NH team feel less able to identify factors contributing to patterns of crime
- NH team feel less able to describe characteristics of local communities in terms of crime & social exclusion
- NH team feel less able to explain social & environmental factors contributing to social exclusion

All Neighbourhood Teams – Time One and Time Three Comparisons

- All feel less frustrated by their job
- They feel like they aren't working too hard on their job
- Less likely to feel that working with people puts too much stress on them
- More in agreement that where they work reflects well on them
- More in agreement that they feel proud to tell others where they work
- People feel more able to describe the composition of local communities
- People feel they are more able to encourage communities to take ownership of actions to resolve issues they face
- People feel that more are impressed when they tell them where they work

When examining the results of some of the other questions within the survey, particularly in terms of the perceptions of officers and staff regarding their working environment, the wider impact of the rollout of the new Neighbourhood Policing Approach in January 2018, appears to be positive, across all Neighbourhood Teams.

Officers and staff working within the Neighbourhood Policing Teams were asked to describe, within a free text response, what is working well in their area. Within Gloucester at Time One, the most commonly mentioned themes were team working (27%) and partnership working (19%).

In contrast, when asked the same question at Time Three, Gloucester respondents were most likely to mention partnership working (34%), which demonstrates a 17% increase when compared with Time One and the second most reported theme was positive engagement with local communities (23%). Examples of comments made include:

> *"Having the time and flexibility to meet and chat to people in our community, it's helping me to build trust, having more meaningful conversations."*
> Time 3, Gloucester

> *"Good working relationship with local councillors, schools and businesses, when an issue arises, they know who to contact and as a team we deal as best we can"*
> Time 3, Gloucester

Scenario-Based Questions

Part of the questionnaire involved asking respondents to answer scenario-based questions. This involved providing three typical scenarios that the Neighbourhood Policing Teams may be faced with on a day-to-day basis and asking them to provide detail of the approach they may take in response. An example is included below:

Scenario

During the last 4 weeks there has been an increase in calls regarding Anti-Social Behaviour in the lower high street. This area has a large number of shops and cafes some of which are used by the students from the local college.

The calls regarding ASB increase after 2pm when the local drop in centre for homeless people with issues arounds drugs and alcohol closes and the calls received are to complain about customers coming out of the shops being accosted by the homeless people asking for money, often the alleged offenders are under the influence of alcohol and can appear aggressive.

The shop keepers and café owners are demanding that action is taken around this issue as they feel that their trade is being affected particularly the café owners who cannot put tables and chairs outside their businesses as the homeless people attending the drop in centre will either sit down and drink alcohol or harass their customers.

The drop-in centre has been spoken to and they are not able to change the timings of opening and feel that their resource is valuable in offering support to the homeless people who have nowhere else to go.

The local college has also expressed concerns about the amount of homeless people entering onto the campus and hanging around the entrance to the college, the student union have started a petition to demand action and have written to the Chief Constable to express their growing frustrations and have stated that certain people are threatening to take matters into their own hands if something is not done soon

1. What steps would you take to start to resolve the issue?

2. Please explain why you would take this approach

Figure 4 overleaf provides a breakdown of themed responses over time, with comparisons by area included.[16]

[16]RJ = Restorative Justice gives victims the opportunity to explain to offenders the real impact of their actions and get answers to their questions. It holds offenders to account for what they have done, makes them understand what they have done, take responsibility for their actions and make amends. It has a significant impact in reducing reoffending rates and increases levels of confidence and satisfaction in the Criminal Justice System. Restorative Justice can be used at any stage of the Criminal Justice System and can be used for resolving non-criminal harm such as low level ASB and neighbourhood disputes. Restorative Justice has the power to change people's lives

Time 1

- Similar responses between intervention and control groups
- Police taking the lead, encouraging community dependence, trying to seek diversions for the offender, eg. RJ.

Time 2

- Intervention group would give communities ownership of resolving issues, involving them in decision-making, using World Café.
- Control group took a police-led approach and would seek to punish the offender

Time 3

- Few differences in responses between intervention and control responses.
- Police / agencies taking the lead was the dominant theme, but handing issues back to the community and working in partnership to achieve a joint solution was the second most common theme.

Figure 4: Themed responses to Scenario-Based Questions Over Time

The results demonstrate that at Time One, all neighbourhood policing teams were more likely to take the lead in problem solving, which encouraged community dependence. By Time Two, there were clear differences in the approaches taken by the Gloucester Neighbourhood Policing Team, when compared with those in Cheltenham and Stroud. The intervention group in Gloucester were more likely to mention involving communities in decision making and giving them ownership for resolving problems. The control groups still took a police-led approach and sought to punish offenders.

By Time Three, the strengths-based approaches seen by the Gloucester Team at Time Two were less prominent in responses however still featured as the second most common theme, following police taking the lead. This demonstrates that new ways of working erode over time, unless the learning and behaviours are reinforced. It is also worth noting that, by Time Three, some of the other neighbourhood policing teams had started to receive their own inputs regarding strengths-based working, which may have influenced their approaches to the scenarios that were posed. However, we are aware that there may have been other environmental, policy and organisational factors that might also have constrained their ability to work in a different way.

4. Echoes#2 Youth Group – A Case Study

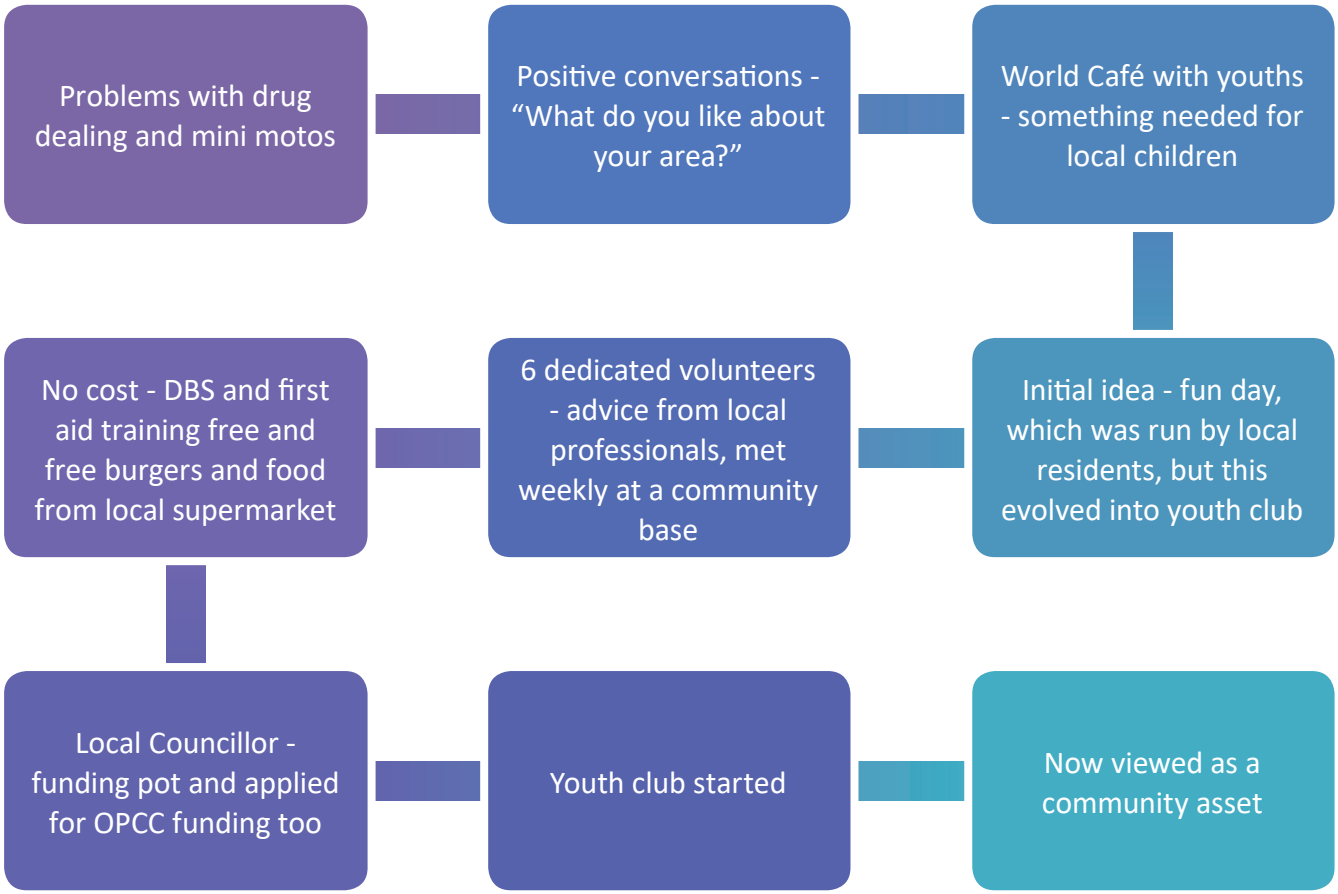
Following the workshops, a small group of police and agency representatives put into place and trialled some of what they had learnt during the BlueLight Training, which involved a different way of solving community problems within Coney Hill, Gloucester. Rather than focus on the problem, which in this case was perceived to be mini motos and drug use, conversations focussed on what's good about living in a community and what residents (including young people) would like to get involved in to build on those strengths. In October 2017, a representative from the Council and some of the PCSOs that work within Coney Hill were interviewed regarding their work to date.

The PCSOs described supporting the volunteers with DBS checks, organising food donations for the group and First Aid training, but otherwise, everything else was arranged by residents and so Echoes#2 youth club was established. The PCSOs often attend in their spare time with their own children and rather than attending in uniform the PCSOs, like all of the Echoes#2 volunteers, wear the youth-club branded t-shirts.

Speaking about the process itself, one of the PCSOs described what their role has been and the potential future impact for the community:

> *"They didn't know where to start, what to do, where to go. So, the agency role in this was creating the opportunity for them, it was giving them the helping hand and guidance. Now they don't need us there, but we're still a big part of it and it's great to be there. Now we can use it as the asset that it is, to engage with the kids, because there are now 40 children out there not causing problems, which is a benefit to us. That's crime reduction, so this asset has given us a massive boom in that area that's being supported by their community. Those 40 kids are going to grow up to become adults in Coney Hill."*

A summary of time lined activity can be described as follows:



The creation of the youth club has been argued to be behind a reduction in the numbers of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour within Coney Hill. The following headlines about the youth club featured within the local press:

How a new youth club saw anti-social behaviour plummet in one of city's most deprived wards.

Echoes#2 youth group has only been open for eight months and is being seen as the main cause for anti-social behaviour dropping by nearly 30 percent in one of Gloucester's more deprived areas.

The full story of the Echoes#2 youth club is available as a supplement to this report.

This section has focused on the views and practices of those professionals attending training on strengths-based approaches. The next section explores the experiences of the Community Builders seconded to work at Barnwood Trust.

Community Building Processes, Principles and Practices

This section gives an insight into community building processes, principles and practices as experienced and described by the Community Builders in Barton & Tredworth and Westgate. Material in this section is drawn both from 20 'download' interviews with the Community Builders, as well as observations by the ethnographer who visited each site. It gives an insight into the everyday role of the Community Builders, including their experiences of engaging with groups, organisations and community spaces. This section also helps contextualise discussion about the impact of this work as described in later parts of the report.

Starting Community Building

Beginning community building within the sites involved a variety of activities, including spending time visiting existing groups, hanging out in community spaces and cafes, walking around the area, and meeting with other organisations working in the locality.

A visit by the ethnographer to one of the sites at the early stages of the secondment captured how the Community Builder:

> *'… has been trying to go wherever they can find positive energy, people doing things, and as they walk around they make note of potential assets like an apparently unused hall, communal gardens and the park. They sometimes sit in local cafes striking up conversations with other customers; unfortunately a popular (and affordable) place has recently closed down and the more up-market places don't attract the kind of clientele they are seeking. They call in to churches, shops, and other 'bumping places' with a view to gently starting up conversations and making connections.'*

The value of being able to spend time in community spaces[17] was noted as a means for initiating informal conversations in another site at this stage:

> *'I would just be sat there doing some work, or speaking to Jim or David or doing whatever and that is like a natural conversation that was happening… Can't do the walking/talking thing yet.*[18]*'*

Such conversations were observed during an early visit to the other site by the ethnographer:

> *'As we walk away they (Community Builder) talk about how they are learning how to conduct these opening conversations without being too persistent or pushy. Light touch works best.'*

When talking about spending time with community groups that have already been established, one of the Community Builders described how:

> *'This is what I have trouble getting my head round- thinking why am I going to groups? Surely I should be finding other people who should be like, wanting be connected to other people, but you can't find people unless you connect to other people.'*

Engaging with groups was not only a feature of starting community building but prevalent throughout the whole community building process, as will be shown in later sections.

[17] See below section on 'Community Spaces' for further discussion on the merits and challenges of being involved at these places.

[18] Pseudonyms have been used within this section when referring to residents. Names of individual Community Builders have not been included.

Several challenges noted by the Community Builders at the beginning stages included:

- Not having an initial invitation from residents to do community building in the area – one intervention site was chosen based on the interests of organisations rather than being due to the motivation of residents
- The time taken to 'find a way in' to the area (i.e. to meet people or groups who might be interested in engaging). Again, this varied between sites and could sometimes take several months.
- Finding reasons to talk to people when not wearing uniform or responding to incidents (whilst recognising that uniform can also be a barrier to engaging in 'friendly conversation')
- Some individuals who Community Builders met and initially engaged with were not residents of the community building site (for example, individuals only visiting the City Centre)
- Community Builders were sometimes invited to attend a group but to play a role which they felt did not align with community building principles (i.e. being asked to organise things for residents rather than working alongside them)

Looking in more detail at the nature of such principles, discussed throughout the duration of the research fieldwork, there were a range of examples given by Community Builders of the values which were thought to underpin their approach.

- The importance of working in a resident-led way was highlighted by a Community Builder who described how:

  'It's not for me to be leading it but to support residents to do that, you know, and help them step up to their power as it were.'

In describing how they had helped a resident to set up a new group, this Community Builder highlighted how *'I've involved her in absolutely everything.'*

- The need to go at the pace of the residents was also emphasised:

  'As the role of a Community Builder is literally to go with the flow, to be patient, to build trust … And I'm not saying PCSOs don't do that but we don't have the luxury and the time to do that one.'

- The importance of both pace and being resident-led was also shared by another Community Builder who explained that:

  'When you find something that you're interested in you have to be very careful that you don't push it. So, I have to kind of monitor myself and make sure I don't go faster than the residents can travel.'

It was felt that working in this way offered a more sustainable approach in the longer-term once a Community Builder would no longer be working in an area:

> *'It's slow but I think what's happening is much more sustainable and you know, even if I'm not there things, they are still continuing to do things.'*

- The importance of authenticity was also highlighted, with an example shared of how activities such as door-knocking could embrace this:

  'For me door knocking is, it always works better if you've got the residents with you or you

> *support the resident I should say rather than you going on your own. Because they can say 'I'm your neighbour' and that's more real or more authentic.'*

As relationships were built with residents and groups, questions around when to step back from being directly involved, and how much ongoing support to offer, were raised:

> *'Even though we're trying to step back from stuff at the minute I'm still supporting people to do that and I feel like time is really crucial because I don't want to let them down at this point because I'm dealing with people who are very vulnerable and who do want that little bit of support.'*

This included encouraging and supporting individuals with mental health challenges to gradually become involved in the community, whilst also being mindful of the time-limited nature of the role. The Community Builder's comment suggests that the amount of time they support an individual for and the level of that support might vary according to the needs of the individual. A concern that Community Builders stepping back might also lead to residents no longer being involved in activities or groups was also raised.

Some of the Community Builders' learning at the early stages of their work was captured during an early ethnographic visit to one of the sites:

> *'They (Community Builder) say that they are learning how to listen rather than react, and are trying to ask fewer questions: in their day to day work police officers have to ask questions and take control of interactions. They are learning to be more flexible and open with the people they meet. Their role, as they see it, is to find people who are passionate about something, engage with them, and connect them up with others. It is not their job to organize or do things for them.'*

Everyday Practices

Looking at the everyday role of a Community Builder, a variety of different activities were described during the interviews, including engaging with residents and groups, as well as a variety of organisations and professionals. The below sections look at the Community Builders' engagement with each of them in turn, and the associated opportunities and challenges. The role of community spaces and the theme of time are also explored below, in relation to the community building process.

Engaging with Residents

Community Builders in Westgate and Barton & Tredworth engaged with a total of 221 residents during the 18-month period in which data about community building activity in these sites was captured[19].

Activities relating to meeting residents and making connections with them included:

- Going door-knocking in the local area, including in pairs with residents
- Taking the Barnwood Trust camper van out and pitching it in a local area
- Spending time at community centres to meet residents informally (occasionally helping clean them if it enables groups to meet or lending a hand with cooking at a group)

[19] Further data relating to the number of connections can be seen in the 'Reach of Community Building Activity'

- Arranging to meet residents again after making an initial connection, for example at local cafes or community spaces
- Linking residents to each other or to other forms of professional support (including to other teams within Barnwood Trust such as the Welcomers team, which offers one-to-one support)

Examples of the above included a follow-up meeting with a resident who a Community Builder had met whilst out with the camper van:

> *'So I then met with them as I said, I met with them in Asda café and they came with their friend and I linked them into the church on North Street, Revd. Jean, and I've also linked them into Alex who's the Welcomer, our Welcomer. And I did the same with [other resident].'*

Similarly, one Community Builder noted linking a resident to another Community Builder who was supporting a group of residents to organise a community event. The resident had since become so involved that they were '*actually owning it.*'

Looking at the examples given by Community Builders of how they built relationships and helped foster connections between residents, it was possible to identify a range of methods utilised within the work.

These included:

- Asking for contact details during a brief introductory conversation with a new resident and following it up with a timely text message/phone call(s)
- Offering support and building confidence- including supporting residents to say or do things they would like to do (such as trying an activity for the first time), as well as recognising their skills and achievements
- Nudging or giving gentle encouragement- for example, asking 'oh, have you been out to talk to residents yet?'
- Leading by example- including demonstrating what you might say on the phone when inviting someone you don't know very well to a get together or how to introduce yourself to your neighbours whilst out door-knocking
- Asking (challenging) questions- constantly asking who else can be included or invited and how can things be made sustainable?
- Helping keep momentum or holding a space- for example, when supporting residents to come together in a new group or at a time when a community centre is undergoing changes
- Not making decisions- being clear that decisions are for residents to make
- Bringing a personal dimension to the work- sharing your own experiences with residents, when appropriate, was felt to be a way of helping bring barriers down. This included, for example, mentioning being a parent to those attending a toddler group
- Suggesting other sources of support- for example, encouraging newly involved individuals to work closely with those who've been involved for longer when organising an event
- 'Chipping away'- helping other organisations working in the community to gradually develop their understanding about community building, including those who may appear resistant to it

Engaging with Groups

Reflections by the Community Builders about their work often involved discussing local groups within each of the sites and the roles which Community Builders played in relation to them.

As well as helping new groups to form, examples were given of how Community Builders engaged with established groups in the area. This was for a variety of purposes, including as a means of meeting new people (as noted above), but it also comprised helping groups involve a wider range of community members and invite new people in (sometimes to help re-energise and reshape them). Community Builders also helped with promoting positive relationships within existing groups and enabling different members to contribute their views.

A total of 44 community groups were engaged with in Westgate and Barton & Tredworth during the 18-month period of data collection. This figure includes work with pre-existing groups in these areas, as well as new groups which Community Builders supported residents to establish.

A sense of the value of consistently attending one pre-existing group was mentioned by a Community Builder who spoke of how *'just by attending, being there regular to that group, people are opening slowly, slowly to me.'*

However, challenges when attending pre-existing groups could also occur. Several examples were given of other organisations perceiving Community Builders to potentially be *'poaching'* residents and there was the perception that some organisations could be *'very territorial.'* In trying to navigate this with one professional, a Community Builder spoke of their response as being *'trying to kill them with kindness.'*

Community Builders also noted being mindful of how much to step in to support a group. An example of this, and how a Community Builder negotiated it, was shared in relation to supporting one particular community group:

> *'Every time I went there they kept on saying 'when is the event?' and I kept saying when you decide to get together, then I'm quite happy to come along and support you.'*

Examples were given of the ongoing advice and support Community Builders provided to new community groups, beyond assistance to initially help set them up. This included talking with one parent helping run a playgroup at which attendance started fluctuating. The Community Builder described suggesting to the parent:

> *'Do you think it might be worth trying to get some more supporters in, volunteers in first, get a good level of people to support it with you and then we can start advertising the actual group itself? Because in some weeks you could turn up and there could be ten mums there.'*

Such a response also aimed to ensure that the group was not reliant on the Community Builder's involvement in the longer-term.

During visits by the ethnographer to groups which Community Builders had helped establish, they observed their role as including the following:

> *I look around and can't see them (Community Builder); they might be chatting to people who are sitting outside in the shade. It is interesting that, even though they are busy, they are certainly not playing a dominant role but is very much a backup, helping out. Periodically, I see them talking to [group leader], looking round the room, obviously sharing ideas about how the space*

> *might be re-organised to accommodate the growing clientele. The people of the church are running this themselves. It is clear that this café is established, gaining in popularity, and that it will continue going from strength to strength.*

During observations by the ethnographer in both sites, it was noted that the Community Builders brought a *'light touch'* approach, trying not to be being too pushy, including bringing humour, but also:

> *'Watching, listening, welcoming, supporting, helping, problem solving, backing up, as well as all the practical tasks'*

And:

> *'Maintaining that delicate balance, encouraging and affirming, creating links, keeping an eye out for new people, providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere.'*

Support given to pre-existing groups in particular was noted by the ethnographer as including:

> *'…trying to connect [group leader] with other people who have similar energy and enthusiasm, and helping her to manage the success of her project.'*

The perceived benefits for those residents involved in community groups in the two intervention sites is further explored in Section Two.

Engaging with Organisations

In addition to supporting pre-existing and new groups, the Community Builders also highlighted working alongside a range of different organisations. This could provide both opportunities and challenges within everyday community building.

Examples were given of joint-working that occurred between the Community Builders and a variety of organisations and professionals. This included joint-working with other Community Builders and various teams at Barnwood Trust, who could support residents in different ways (such as with grants enquiries) or who could enable the Community Builder to further develop their practice (for example, through mentoring or shadowing). Examples of joint-working with external organisations were given, including connecting residents to services (such as adult education) and developing links with organisations running community spaces. Working with external organisations was also felt to be a potential stepping stone to meeting with residents.

In describing these interactions, a variety of areas to be mindful of were noted, including:

- Being mindful of not stepping on colleagues' toes (including when several people are working in the same geographic area)
- Being asked to do things not within the community building remit (either by external organisations or the organisation you are seconded from)
- Trying not to be too involved in agency-led groups or events
- Working with professionals with a different values base and who may disagree with or not fully understand the ABCD approach or not expect community building to be successful
- Organisations being critical of activities or events which the community are establishing and trying to mediate between them

- Some organisations being constrained in how resident-led they can be in practice (e.g. if working on a target-led project) or not wanting to engage at all
- Having to react to what other organisations are doing in the community (such as setting up new residents' forums or groups) which may impact on the community building work

Discussions about working with and amongst a range of organisations also included reflections about organisational culture and the value of being on secondment at the Trust.

Barnwood was identified as being a welcoming, friendly place to work, with a culture of trust and where it is ok to make mistakes. The Community Builders described how *'you feel safe to ask questions'* and noted the difference of working in an environment where *'you're not a number.'* This was often discussed in contrast to the organisations which the Community Builders were seconded from, where it was also felt that there was a lack of understanding and support for the ABCD approach amongst some colleagues.

During discussions with the ethnographer approximately a year into the project, one PCSO Community Builder discussed a perception that changes in police culture may be starting to emerge:

> *'Within the Trust, if you are struggling, face dilemmas or make mistakes, you can talk things through, get support and help. There is no shame. It is a very different thing in the police, where you might be reprimanded or laughed at. Within the Trust, they feel respected and valued. Different again in the police. They have been able to talk about these things with the PCSOs they have been training and they wonder whether this exercise might be signalling a change of culture within 'the police family'.*

Further discussion on the personal impact of this work for the seconded Community Builders themselves can be found in the impact section below.

Visits by the ethnographer to observe PCSOs in one of the comparison sites aimed to capture a sense of how their roles vary to that of a Community Builder. Challenges to engaging with the community were described by these PCSOs, including spending the majority of their time *'fire-fighting'* by responding to calls and to incidents in different parts of town. The value of spending time *'walking or cycling about on their beats'* was noted by them as enabling *'more opportunity to develop relationships'*, when they had the chance to be out in the community.

Reflecting on their traditional PCSO role, one of the seconded Community Builders also described how this role had become much more response-focused, allowing less time for what they described as *'silent working': 'where you just go out of the police station or that police point and you're walking around the town and people just give you work.'* It was felt that spending time doing this work helped prevent incidents from occurring in the first place and enabled trust to be built with local residents.

At the comparison site, one of the PCSOs also shared some reflections about community building training they had undertaken, with a key learning point being: *'helping people in the community take responsibility for changing things, rather than the more traditional approach of doing things for them or telling them what they ought to do.'*

Engaging with Community Spaces

The sections above give a sense of the importance that community spaces were seen to have for the Community Builders in the process of carrying out their work, including functioning as a place to initially

get to know residents and where groups could establish. The role of these spaces is explored in further depth here.

Over 90 different locations were noted during people mapping sessions, including spaces ranging from community centres and cafes, to streets and shops, to parks and pubs. Examples were given of some organisations offering Community Builders and groups the opportunity to use certain spaces for free at particular times. The Community Builders spoke about the role that particular places could play for residents and certain vulnerable groups, with two PCSO Community Builders describing them as potentially *'safe spaces.'*

Whilst a value of such spaces for residents and groups was highlighted, the Community Builders also identified challenges in identifying and utilising suitable spaces. A lack of *'neutral'* meeting spaces was highlighted by a Community Builder working in Barton & Tredworth, as many spaces in the area were affiliated (or perceived to be affiliated) to particular religious or cultural groups.

Other challenges included spaces being inaccessible, having poor facilities or limited opening times, being unsustainable to use in the longer-term (for example, due to maintenance issues), or having a negative reputation in the community.

Given these challenges, the difficulty that occurred when one space closed unexpectedly was also highlighted by a Community Builder who described how *'it's kind of put a stop to quite a lot of work that we had going on.'*

The role of the Community Builders in developing these spaces was described, including supporting those running a space to think about how it can be more inclusive and how they can invite a wider pool of people. Other examples shared included Community Builders *'holding a space'* and helping creating consistency, particularly at a time when one space was experiencing some uncertainties. Sometimes this involved being particularly hands-on, with one Community Builder describing helping with the gardening at one space after a group of volunteers did not show up. They described helping out in this way as being:

> *'a huge turning point for us because now we have a community centre that we can use for our community. And I've, and we have two people who, you know, they trust, there's a big trust now.'*

Time

A recurring theme throughout the data, discussed by all of the Community Builders during the 'download' interviews, was the role of time. This included at the beginning of the community building process in relation to the lead-in time it takes to find a way in, to build relationships, get your face known, establish your identity, and develop trust with residents. It also takes time to identify connectors, to understand community politics, and to create consistency with residents and groups.

The first ethnographic visit to one of the sites captured how the Community Builder:

> *'…is slowly getting to know their patch and some residents, but they are not yet well known: it takes time for people to recognize and trust them.'*

Throughout the community building process, the theme of time was also pertinent in relation to: the need to go at the pace of others, to be mindful of how much time you spend with particular individuals, and of how much time other people have to give. For example, a Community Builder described gradually getting to know one particular resident who was becoming more comfortable with them and how they

were 'biding their time' before inviting them to take part in other activities. As they explained:

> *'…that is something I am just biding my time with. And I feel like the more I'm getting to know Anne, the more comfortable she feels with me. I feel like we have to build that relationship first before we could go knocking on the door.'*

The need to sometimes wait for things to happen was highlighted, although things could also happen unexpectedly, as well as sometimes being limited by the time of year (such as less community activities happening in wintertime).

Time could also be taken up by adjusting to working in a new organisation, administration, attending meetings, and delivering or taking part in workshops and training.

This could be further complicated by working in a context where colleagues are working in the same area but on different days (including some being either part- or full-time), where it's necessary to adjust working hours to fit around when residents and groups are meeting, and when there is a time limit to your involvement in the community which makes it difficult to plan ahead.

Impact on Community Builders and Organisations

Impact on Community Builders

This section explores both the professional and personal impact of involvement in this work for the seconded Community Builders. This includes reflections on their prior and current roles, as well as learning and insights which would be taken back once their secondments finished.

An initial impact for the PCSO Community Builders when beginning their secondments was evident in their descriptions of a sense of culture shock. Moving from a seemingly strict culture of tasks, accountability and hierarchy, to one with an emphasis on personal wellbeing, where they were trusted to do their work without target-setting or boxes to tick, presented an initial challenge. As one of the Community Builders described:

> *'It's a huge culture shock in how things work. Even the environment of the office, it's been a lot harder than I expected'*

All the Community Builders made some comparisons of what they had noticed and felt during this period of transition.

As alluded to in earlier sections, a culture of support and personal investment was highlighted by several of the Community Builders as being a positive feature of Barnwood Trust, with one in particular valuing the *'focus on the little stuff, the little details*', whilst another described a more difficult shift to a new *'alien'* culture.

Contrasts were also made to the organisational culture at Gloucestershire Constabulary where support was in the form of *'gruff comradery'* and *'trench mentality'* where colleagues always had your back. Whether for better or for worse, the process of moving between two contrasting cultures was notable for all of the Community Builders during the early stages.

In the initial 'download' interviews, several Community Builders shared reflections on their first few weeks in the role, including learning about how their initial experience could've been improved and the

contrast between the two organisations made less stark. This included having more clarity about line management and clear lines of communication from each organisation; more structure and organisation in the early weeks of the transition; feeling a bigger part of the team (not being labelled as *'the PCSO Community Builders'*); and thinking about starting points - summer, rather than winter, so that more residents are out and about to meet and greet.

Despite some initial difficulties, as alluded to above, the three Community Builders who continued with their secondment after the first six months regularly spoke of the impact the work was having on their own lives. One Community Builder spoke about how:

> *'Because of the work that we have been doing about looking at our strengths and what we're good at, it kind of gave me the confidence to be myself.'*

Being encouraged to look at yourself as a person, as part of the process of community building, had prompted, for some, an emotional response and all three of these Community Builders reported a growing self-confidence. The impact on the Community Builders' confidence was also discussed in relation to their work environments and culture:

> *'Because here it's brought out the best in me and the confidence and people listen to me and I feel respected…I come to work and I actually love it. If we could snippet that into the police world, I'm sure we could get so many more people motivated in wanting to get the job done.'*

Whilst the transition from one culture to another had its challenges, there were aspects of the new culture which the Community Builders felt had had an impact on them and that were important to bring back into their organisations. All three of the Community Builders reported loving their job and some referred to specific aspects such as feeling respected and listened to.

A demonstration of this growth in confidence was reported by one Community Builder following a series of training sessions with their colleagues. The Community Builder felt they had been disrespected and described how the confidence they now had from their involvement in the work had enabled them to challenge their colleagues' disrespect rather than quietly accepting it. This was viewed by the Community Builder to be a significant change in them, which they attributed to being in another organisation doing a role based on different principles.

A sense of the personal impact for the Community Builders was also evident in one Community Builder, who had changed career several times, commenting how this was *'the best thing I've done.'* Comments were also made about how being involved in the work had *'made me feel more human again.'*

For one PCSO Community Builder, their role had given them the opportunity to see the positives of society and to build relationships with people who want to do something meaningful in their communities:

> *'We (the police) are the last port of call for pretty much everything. So you're not called out because somebody is having a great day. You're called out because somebody is at the end of their rope and they're on a bridge type thing. So you come in a bit cynical of the world, a bit tarnished, and I've got to say this has certainly done a lot of good to knock some of that tarnish off me…seeing all the positive has just been so nice. That there are genuine people out there who have their time, their money just to help others because they want to, is, it's fantastic…'*

Their involvement in the community building work was also reflected to be an opportunity through which they have been learning about themselves. One Community Builder in particular reflected how their involvement in this way of working and how *'I'm not a number anymore…I'm me and I know my strengths…and that's where I put my energy.'*

Other areas of learning for the Community Builders included learning about what they are comfortable with. In the case of one PCSO Community Builder who chose to return to their original role, the process had taught them they preferred structure:

> *'I've learned now that I really like to know where and when I am meant to be working. I like flexibility within that so I can get on with my job and I can choose to go to the community…but if I don't know how and when I'm meant to do that, that is too stressful for me.'*

During a visit by the ethnographer to one of the sites, a PCSO Community Builder reflected back on their previous role and how:

> *'…this work has given them the opportunity to focus on positive things rather than crime and bad behaviour. 'I see the person now, not the crime.'*

Impact on Organisations

A sense of the potential impact of community building activity for a range of organisations involved in and linked to the work in various different ways also emerged within the data.

Impact on Community Organisations

For several community organisations with whom the Community Builders had engaged, there were indications of potential change in how some members might relate to other residents or organisations.

One such site is a community centre historically affiliated to a particular cultural group, which has experienced some challenges in relation to a reputation for criminal activity taking place there. During an interview with a Community Builder who had spent time at the centre, they spoke about how they were encouraging residents to think about how the space could be more inclusive:

> *'…by my presence being there…it put the question back to [community centre] saying well, how inclusive are you making this? And it was something that one of the residents said but why isn't there…why isn't there more different ethnicities here?'*

Within another site, the example of a residents' association starting to change approach in how they engage with a range of other organisations was also shared. During an ethnographic visit to a Community Builder in one of the comparison sites, there was discussion about the local residents' association and its approach to *'social problems in the area'*:

> *'Primarily problem focussed, [residents association] was constantly criticising the police, the council and the university, creating a hostile and negative atmosphere as a result. However, now [residents association] seems more willing to enter into dialogue – sharing problems and solutions rather than allocating blame. This works much more effectively.'*

It is inferred that a Community Builder being present in the area and interacting with the association may have been one of the contributing factors to the organisation starting to change their approach. The group also received a Small Sparks grant from Barnwood Trust and *'organised a successful community litter pick, followed by tea at the café.'*

Impact on Gloucestershire Constabulary

The Local Policing Survey, described in further detail in Section Two, shows the impact of community engagement on public perceptions of the police. This was also suggested during an ethnographic visit to one of the community building sites:

> *'They (the Community Builder) feel that members of the community that they have engaged with, even in a very light-touch way, may perhaps be starting to see the police in a different light. They can see that the police are listening and want to build positive relationships. In this way, some assumptions, expectations and prejudices are being re-configured by their very presence.'*

Examples such as this, alongside the findings in Section Two, indicate positive impacts that being involved in this work is having at multiple levels: for residents, the community, and the Constabulary more generally.

Conclusion

This section has explored ways of working and the professional practices of a range of individuals who took part in strengths-based training and workshops, as well as the experiences of Community Builders seconded to Barnwood Trust.

For those professionals who took part in the strengths-based workshops, a variety of common themes emerged within the data in the experiences they reported of working in this way, including a range of **opportunities** and **challenges**. Despite attendees reporting increased knowledge in these approaches when giving immediate workshop feedback, the challenge of implementing strengths-based practices when working in a reactive and response-focused environment was cited, as well as being demand-driven and a lack of capacity.

Organisational culture and **sufficient time to meaningfully engage with the community** were consistent themes identified across different data sets as being important conditions in enabling asset- and strengths-based approaches to be adopted. Ethnographic observations of PCSOs in one of the comparison sites includes the reflection that the traditional PCSO role involves 'fire-fighting' despite recognition of the value of spending time developing relationships in the community.

A range of **personal and professional impacts** were described by those working in asset- and strengths-based ways as part of this project. For workshop attendees, this included feeling more able to describe the composition of local communities whilst those seconded to Barnwood Trust's Community Building Team reported growing in confidence, for example *'I'm not a number anymore.'*

The duration of personal and professional impacts appeared to be **particularly pronounced** for those who were seconded to work as Community Builders at Barnwood Trust. Reflections shared by the Community Builders, which highlight the professional learning generated through this process, include the comments of one seconded PCSO who described how *'I see the person now, not the crime.'* Other reflections from the Community Builders included that they were '*learning how to listen rather than react'* and *'learning to be more flexible and open with the people they meet.'*

In contrast, reference to strengths-based approaches was less prominent in how workshop attendees responded to scenario-based questions a year after the training took place. This indicates that for those professionals **where the intervention was in the form of workshops rather than secondment, changing practices appeared to be less sustained over time.** This may be due to the conditions and organisational

culture in which these professionals were working in contrast to the seconded community builders who were working away from the usual environment. It may also indicate the need for learning to be reinforced over time.

Within the report, the case study of the **Echoes#2 youth group** and other examples of workshop attendees applying strengths-based approaches in practice indicates the impact that this work can have for residents and local communities. The case study of the Echoes#2 youth group in particular, which has now been running for over two years, suggests that **when a professional's focus is based primarily on the interests and strengths of the community – and activities are established in partnership with local residents – their involvement is more likely to be sustainable in the long-term.**

Overall, the findings relating to ways of working include that:

- **Certain conditions** were felt to be important in enabling asset- and strengths-based approaches to be adopted by these professionals including:
  - Organisational culture, working practices and environment; and
  - Sufficient time and capacity to meaningfully engage with the community
- **Professional and personal impacts** were reported by individuals now working in asset- and strengths-based ways, including:
  - Better knowledge about communities and strengths-based approaches to problem solving;
  - Hands-on experience of putting asset- and strengths-based approaches into practice;
  - Feeling better able to describe the composition of local communities;
  - Improved confidence and satisfaction with their work; and
  - Feeling less frustrated by their job.

Section Two of the report will now focus on the impact for residents and wider community members involved in a range of groups, events and activities.

Section Two:
Impact for Residents and Community

Section Two: Impact for Residents and Community

Section One focused on professional practices and ways of working and this section will now explore the views and experiences of residents. This includes drawing on quantitative findings from the Gloucestershire-wide Local Policing Survey, as well as findings from interviews with individuals connected to the Community Builders working in the two intervention sites. This is supplemented by data from interviews with the Community Builders themselves where they described engaging with residents.

Key findings in this section relate to the impact of community involvement on residents' wellbeing, life satisfaction, perceptions of cohesion and of the police, and their fear of crime. Findings from the Local Policing Survey are complemented by the qualitative interview data in which 10 residents gave an insight into their involvement in community activity, their interactions with the Community Builders, and their views about ABCD and the local area.

Local Policing Survey Findings

The Local Policing Survey (LPS) is carried out by Gloucestershire Constabulary and asks residents about their perceptions of the police, any observed police activity, as well as levels of community cohesion, wellbeing and life satisfaction. The following results have been collated using data gathered during the period September 2016 – May 2018 (including 100 responses gathered in each of the four sites at the three points in time).

In order to examine the findings, numerous statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS (statistical analysis software) to assess the impact of community building activity across the sites, including whether specific police actions or activities impact on attitudes towards the police and perceived levels of wellbeing, life satisfaction and community cohesion. We were particularly interested in whether any causation could be found between or across any of the measures. Finally, police actions and activities in some cases could be ranked to establish which were the most influential in determining people's opinions of the Constabulary and their respective communities.

Key Findings from the Survey

A representative sample of residents across Gloucestershire and the four sites took part in the survey and the majority of respondents articulated that their local area is cohesive; they feel connected within their neighbourhoods and levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction were highly rated. Moreover, residents also commented that they have someone locally that they could ask for help if needed and in the most part, this was a spouse, partner or family member, and less frequently, friends and neighbours were also considered.

When asked to assess the police in their local area, the majority agreed, to some extent, that they were friendly and approachable and they also felt that they would be treated fairly and with respect if they had contact with the police for any reason. Respondents also agreed that the police would explain the reasons for their actions. In addition, if they needed to contact the police for any reason in the future, they felt fairly confident that they would receive a good service from Gloucestershire Constabulary. Finally, most would be fairly or very likely to report crimes or suspicious activity if witnessed, and provide information to help find a suspected criminal. On a more negative note, however, residents are more likely to worry about becoming a victim of crime than not to worry about it.

The flow chart below in Figure 5, demonstrates how all outcomes measured within the survey are interlinked and how all significantly impact on each other. The category in the middle – 'Police Activity'-

is the main theme that impacts on the categories surrounding it. The most positively influential of these activities being: **police working with the community** and **police attending community events**, both of which can be associated with building positive and meaningful relationships with residents.

If people see police activities and particularly relational activities such as police working in partnership with communities and engaging with residents at local events the arrows demonstrate a positive impact on all the measures, i.e. there is an increase in reporting, improved trust and confidence in police service, less fear of being a victim, etc. However, if there is no police visibility of this nature in the local communities, or they are seen responding to major incidents without explaining the reasons for their presence, the outcomes of the flowchart are more likely to be negative, i.e. people experience a greater fear of crime. This demonstrates the value of building informal relationships between the police and residents, and indicates that these relationships may play a role at a time when the police are present in a community for the purposes of enforcement.

The survey also asks respondents to think about any experiences that they have had involving the police and whether this is something that they have experienced personally, seen or heard. They are then asked whether this experience acted to change their opinion of the police. In terms of the diagram, opinion change only impacts on the three aspects that the arrows connect with; if opinion change is positive, they'll be more confident in the police service, etc., and the flow chart will continue in a positive way, and vice versa.

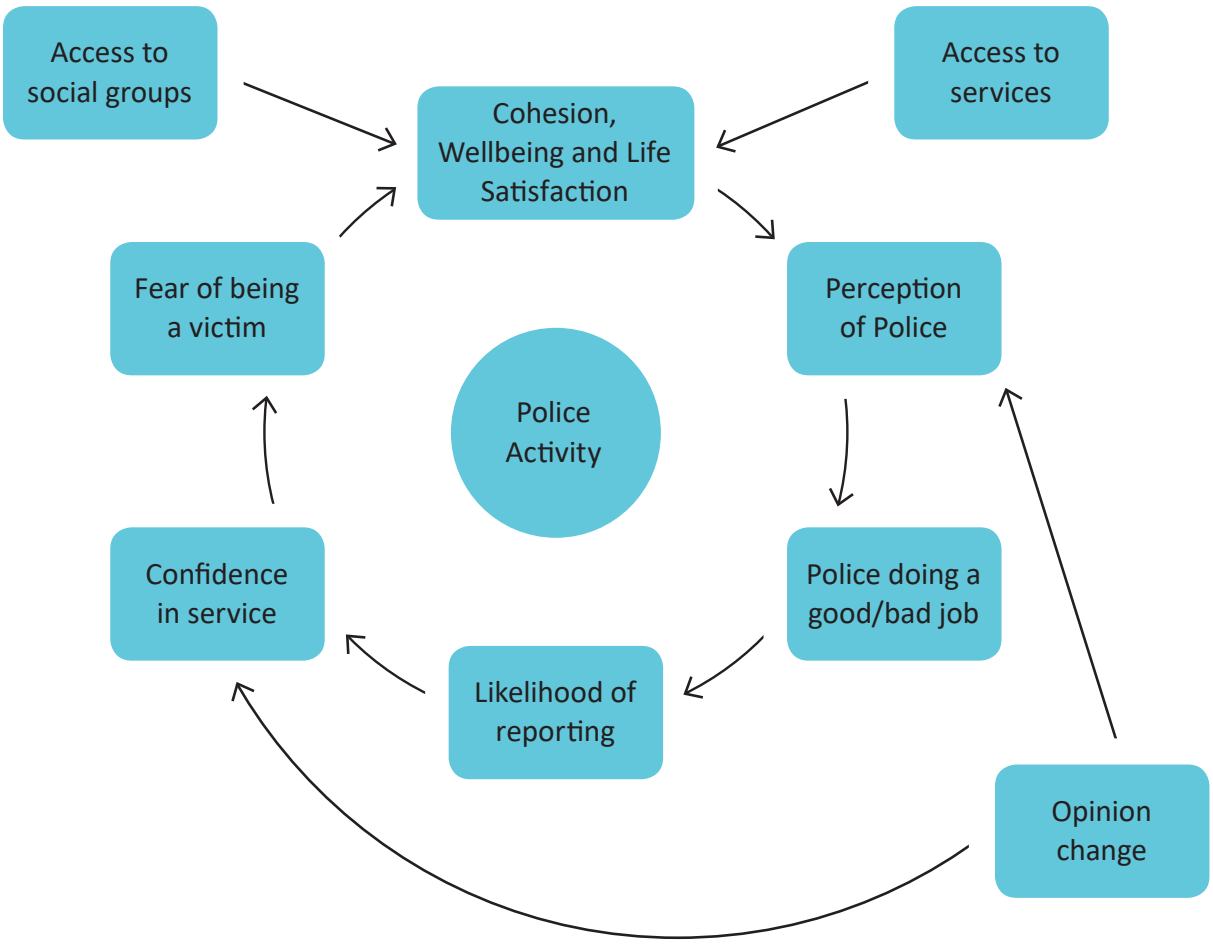
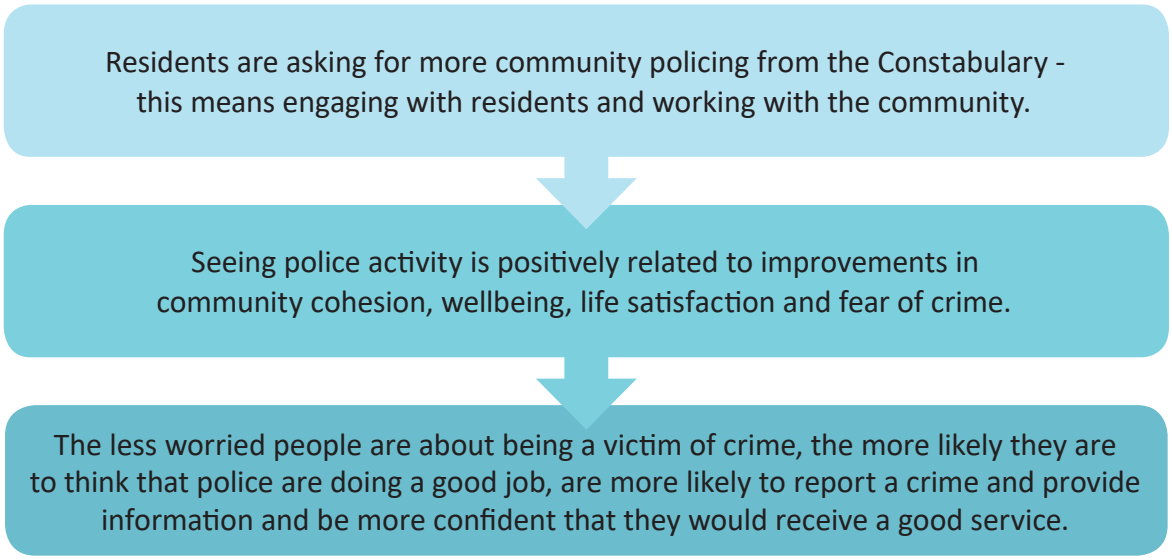


Figure 5: Relationships between Local Policing Survey Measures

Simply, the flow chart shows how one measure can impact on the rest, with police activity being the central causation. A summary is as follows:



Examples of comments taken from the survey are included below:

"Whilst understanding budgetary restraints, community policing and its value, particularly in rural areas should be acknowledged – a lack of policing in rural areas can eventually lead criminals to view these areas as, "police free" and will lead to an increase in all aspects of crime."

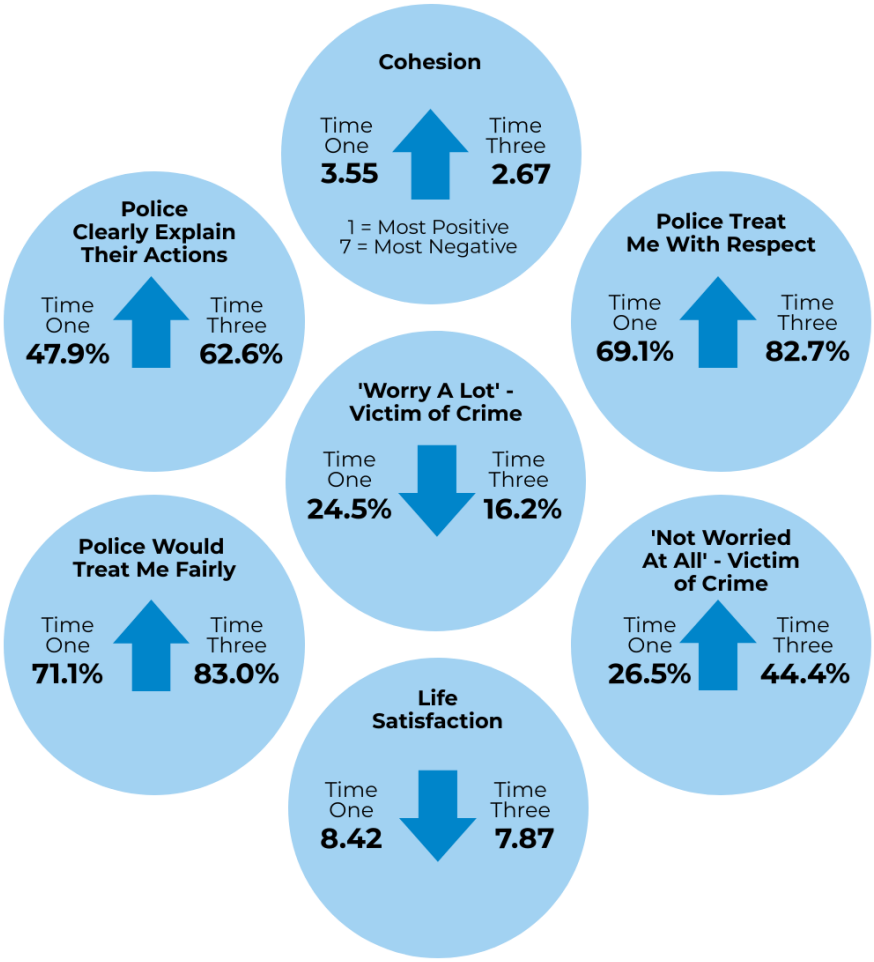
"It would be nice to see more on foot taking involvement in the community stopping to talk to residents."

Community Comparisons – Intervention vs. Control Sites

This section compares LPS results across each location between Time One (December 2016) and Time Three (May 2018)[20].

Barton & Tredworth – Intervention Area

Within the Barton & Tredworth area, when comparing the two points in time, statistically significant differences were identified for the following measures:



When asked what they like about living in their neighbourhood, the most commonly reported themes at all three periods of time were the people living in the area, their local area in general and the sense of community.

Respondents were asked whether or not they are able to access all of the services that they need, such as healthcare, shops or learning facilities and when comparing Time One and Time Three responses, there was no reported difference across the two time periods.

In contrast, when asked about access to social and community spaces, such as pubs, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, parks and open spaces, sports facilities, churches and community halls, perceived access saw a statistically significant decline when comparing Time One and Time Three responses. At Time One,

[20] Analysis was also completed after Time Two (September 2017), however, fewer statistically significant differences were identified at this stage.

32.2% of respondents said that they had access to the social and community spaces that they need, compared to 29.1% at Time Three. 33.3% said that they didn't have access at Time One, compared to 50% at Time Three. The qualitative findings with the Community Builders and residents, included below, further explore the role of community spaces and the value they have in community building.

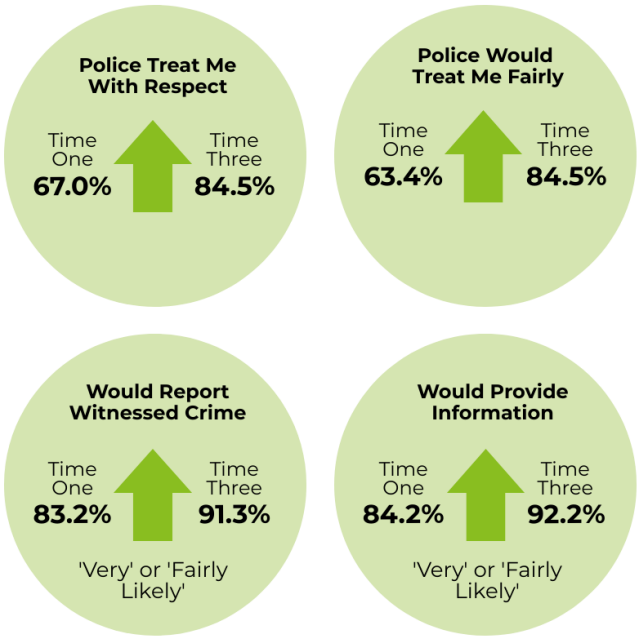
Respondents were also asked whether in the last 12 months, they have been involved with any groups of people who get together to do an activity or to talk about things, e.g. evening classes, support groups, sports clubs, keep-fit classes, etc. Over time, fewer respondents report that they are involved in groups (39.6% at Time One, compared to 23.9% at Time Three). The top three reported groups that people attended, across both periods were fitness, diet or sports groups or clubs. Although generally, being involved in groups saw a decline over time, residents reporting that they belong to groups relating to sport or fitness increased over the period from 26% to 50%.

In an open-ended question, the main reported reasons for not being involved in groups or activities were not having enough free time, or having other commitments. Interestingly, at Time One 40% of respondents said that their reason for not being involved was because nothing was advertised or suitable in their area, however, this had decreased to 2% at Time Three. Again, the qualitative findings below explore the Community Builder's role in establishing groups in the area and the nature of these. These are also indicated within the people map data below.

Although there are no statistically significant differences in responses over time when asked, 'How good a job do you think that the police are doing?', respondents were more likely to say that the police are doing an 'excellent' job at Time Three, than Time One (17.4%, compared to 12.2%) and encouragingly, less likely to express that the police are doing a 'poor' or 'very poor' job (5.5% combined at Time Three, compared to 19.4% at Time One).

Westgate – Intervention Area

When residents in Westgate were asked what they like about living in their area, the most commonly stated theme across all time periods was the close proximity of amenities, which were considered within walking distance. This would make sense given the closeness of the community to the town centre and Gloucester Quays.



Respondents were asked whether in the last 12 months, they have been involved with any groups of people, e.g. evening classes, support groups, sports clubs, keep-fit classes, etc. Over time, fewer respondents report that they are involved in groups within Westgate (61.4% at Time One, compared to 31.1% at Time Three). Again, the role and nature of groups is explored in the qualitative data below.

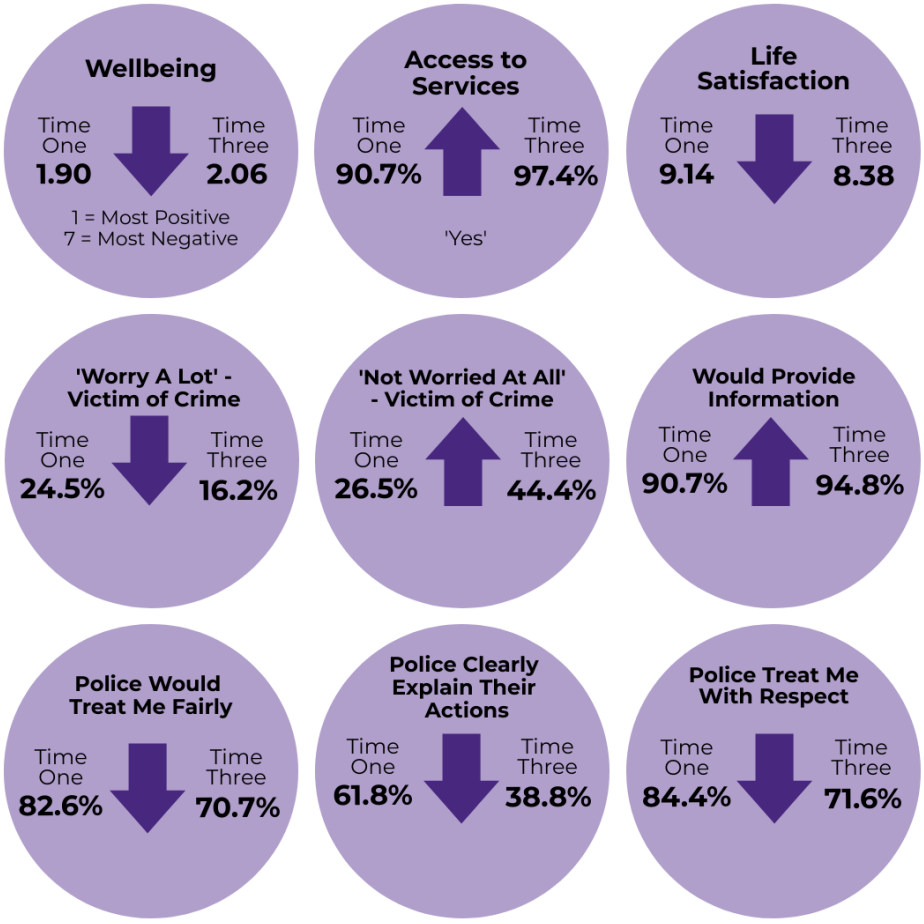
In terms of measures that saw improvements, at Time Three, respondents were statistically significantly more likely to agree that the police in the area would treat them with respect and treat them fairly than they were at Time One. When considering police legitimacy, respondents were more likely to say that they would report a crime that they had witnessed, and provide information to help find a suspected crime at Time Three than Time One.

All improvements related to perceptions of the police as opposed to improved community cohesion, wellbeing and life satisfaction. Worthy of note however, is that the Community Builder working within Westgate was been focussed on a relatively small area within the city centre, rather than across the wider boundary and so substantial impact across the whole of the community was potentially less likely.

Whaddon – Control Site

Whaddon was selected as a control site where community building was not knowingly taking place by either Gloucestershire Constabulary or the Barnwood Trust at the start of the two-year research period. However, it is worth noting that during this time period, PCSOs working in the area received some training in the principles of Asset-Based Community Development.

When comparing all of the measures within the LPS, the following differences in perceptions were recorded between Time One and Time Three:



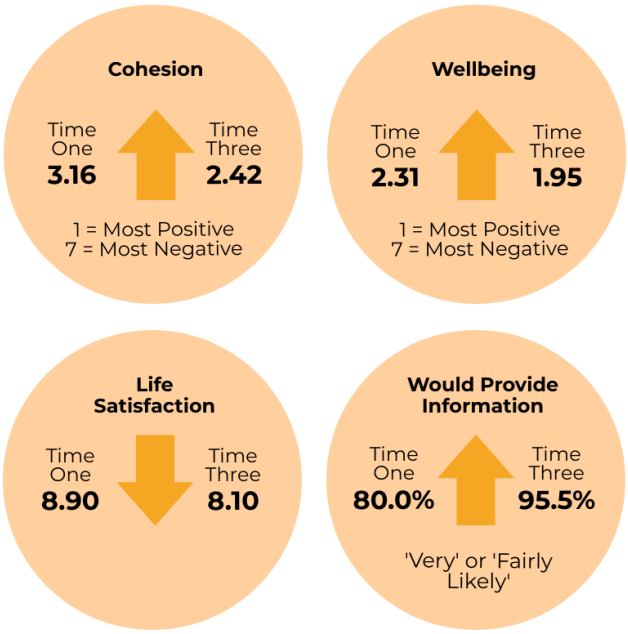
Although comparisons over time demonstrate improvements in community cohesion and a reduction in fear of crime, perceptions of the police were worse at Time Three than at Time One. This may be as a result of activity occurring in the wider context. During a day that the ethnographer spent with Cheltenham PCSOs, they describe that although, "most PCSOs prefer to patrol their patches on foot…as this makes it easier for them to get to know their communities", in reality, "these days they are constantly summoned to assist at incidents elsewhere in Cheltenham".

Equally, the PCSOs describe that sometimes getting to their respective communities can be problematic. As it is too far to walk, PCSOs catch the bus or obtain a lift, drive or cycle. They acknowledge that, "If they drive to their patch, they will try to park up and then walk within a half-mile radius of the van, so they can respond swiftly if they get called elsewhere." This may make it more difficult to spend dedicated and meaningful time in their communities, which may go some way to explain the LPS results. Further exploration of the differences between traditional PCSO roles and Community Builders is described in the Ways of Working section above.

Cashes Green – Control Site

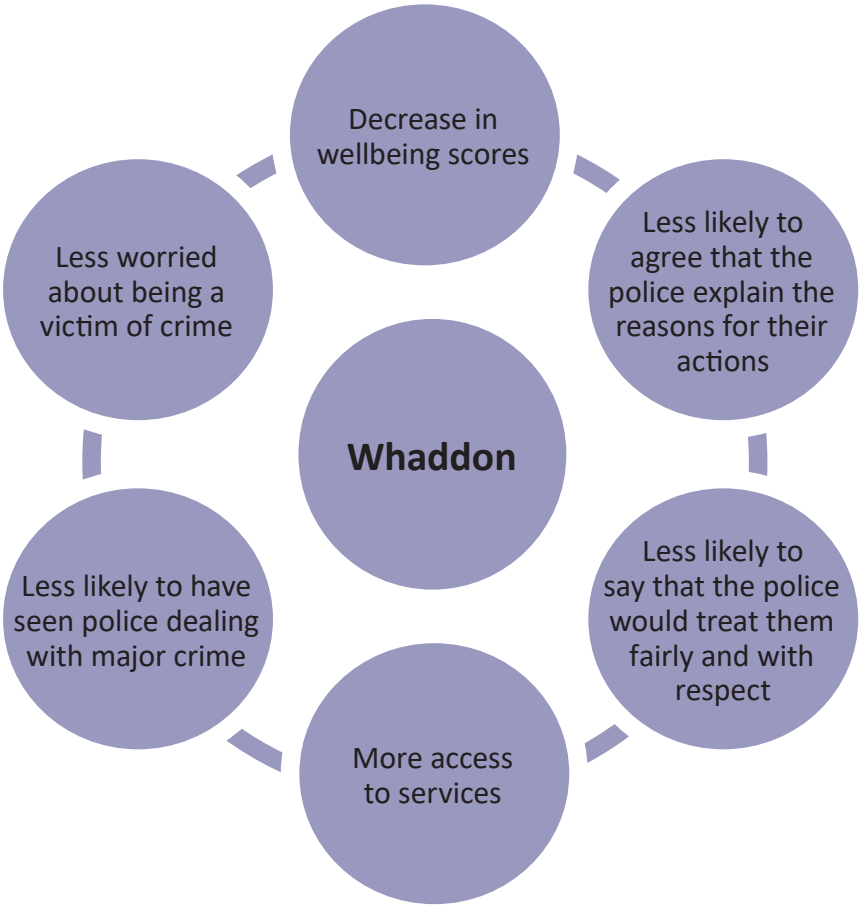
In Cashes Green, a Community Builder from the Barnwood Trust was working with the community prior to and during the intervention period, however they were not from a police background.

When comparing measures between Time One and Time Three, improvements were recorded in levels of community cohesion and wellbeing, however a decrease was reported for life satisfaction. Respondents were more likely to agree that they would provide information to help find a suspected criminal. Interestingly however, in the area where the Community Builder was not also a PCSO, improvements were not seen across the measures that relate to perceptions of the police. This suggests that through the PCSO Community Builders developing positive relationships with members of the communities, this impacts positively upon the residents' perceptions of the police, as well as impacting positively on levels of community cohesion, wellbeing and life satisfaction.

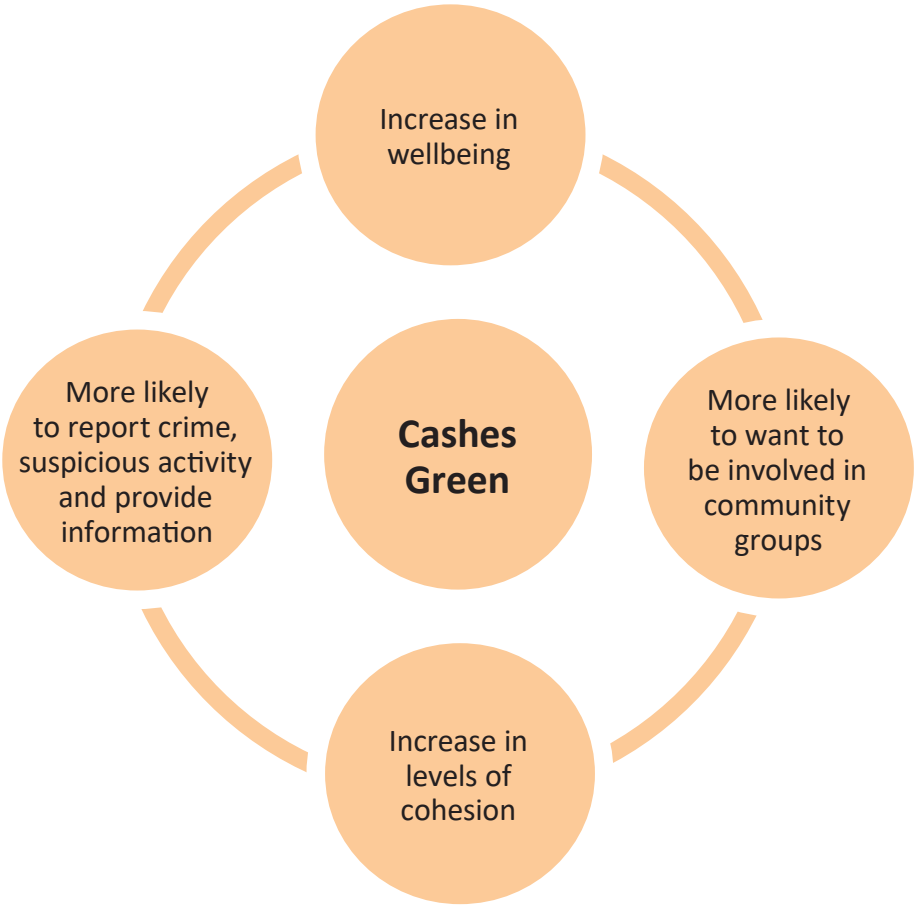


The graphics below show a summary of the statistically significant findings for each of the four sites.

Barton & Tredworth
Increase in levels of cohesion
More likely to say that the police are doing a good job
More likely to agree that police would treat them fairly and with respect
Less likely to have seen police dealing with major crime
Less likely to worry about being a victim of crime
More likely to agree that police explain reasons for their actions


Whaddon
Decrease in wellbeing scores
Less likely to agree that the police explain the reasons for their actions
Less likely to say that the police would treat them fairly and with respect
More access to services
Less likely to have seen police dealing with major crime
Less worried about being a victim of crime

More likely to provide information to help find a suspected criminal
Westgate
More likely to agree that police would treat them fairly and with respect
More likely to report a crime they witnessed


Increase in wellbeing
Cashes Green
More likely to report crime, suspicious activity and provide information
More likely to want to be involved in community groups
Increase in levels of cohesion

Community Cohesion, Wellbeing and Life Satisfaction – Community Comparisons

This section of the report provides a summary of changes to cohesion, wellbeing and life satisfaction measures and compares scores at Time Three with those reported at Time One. Improvements in community cohesion and wellbeing were reported in Barton & Tredworth and Cashes Green, whilst residents in Westgate and Whaddon reported a decline in wellbeing. All areas saw a decline in reported levels of life satisfaction. Although any changes cannot be directly attributed to the interventions, they are interesting nonetheless and are further explored below.

When comparing cohesion by community at Time One, respondents in Whaddon were reporting the highest levels and Barton & Tredworth the lowest (scores are out of 7, where 1 represents high levels of cohesion and 7 represents low levels of cohesion).

Over time, Barton & Tredworth have seen the most significant improvement in reported levels of cohesion, with a score increase from 3.6, to 2.7. In reality, this means that residents either 'agreed' or 'slightly agreed' with the statements regarding their neighbourhood at Time Three, compared to 'slight' agreement or a 'neither agree nor disagree' response at Time One.

Cashes Green was the only other community in which LPS results demonstrated similar levels of improvement for this measure. Scores across all communities for Time One and Time Three are included within Figure 6.

Cohesion	Time One	Time Three
Barton & Tredworth	3.55	2.67
Whaddon	2.96	2.53
Westgate	3.06	2.99
Cashes Green	3.16	2.42

Figure 6: A Comparison of Cohesion Scores, by Community Over Time

Similar results are seen for the wellbeing measure, with Barton & Tredworth and Cashes Green respondents reporting most improvement over time and Whaddon and Westgate seeing a decline. Again, scores are out of 7, with 1 positive and 7 negative and a breakdown by area is included in Figure 7.

Wellbeing	Time One	Time Three
Barton & Tredworth	2.20	2.02
Whaddon	1.90	2.06
Westgate	1.99	2.15
Cashes Green	2.31	1.95

Figure 7: A Comparison of Wellbeing Scores, by Community Over Time

Finally, for the life satisfaction measure, all communities saw a decline when comparing Time Three with Time One, although scores remain relatively high. In this instance, scores are out of 10 and this

time, a score of 1 is low and 10 is high. The average score at Time One is '9' and for Time Three, this has declined to '8'. The aspects of life included within the measure are varied, e.g. living accommodation, relationships with friends and family, local area, health, social life, financial and work situations. It is likely therefore, that there are many variables that have impacted upon these scores over time. A comparison by community is shown in Figure 8.

Life Satisfaction	Time One	Time Three
Barton & Tredworth	2.20	2.02
Whaddon	1.90	2.06
Westgate	1.99	2.15
Cashes Green	2.31	1.95

Figure 8: A Comparison of Life Satisfaction Scores, by Community Over Time

The next section will now focus on connections made by Community Builders in each area during the 18-month period and explore how they varied over time. This includes their links to residents, community groups and events, as well as organisations, professionals and locations.

Reach of Community Building Activity

This section discusses the nature and breadth of connections made by Community Builders in each site over time. As described in the Contextualising the Project section, the intervention sites each vary in relation to their geography and demographics. People maps were produced at six-monthly intervals and the infographics below give a sense of some of the trends observed when repeating these mapping exercises over time.

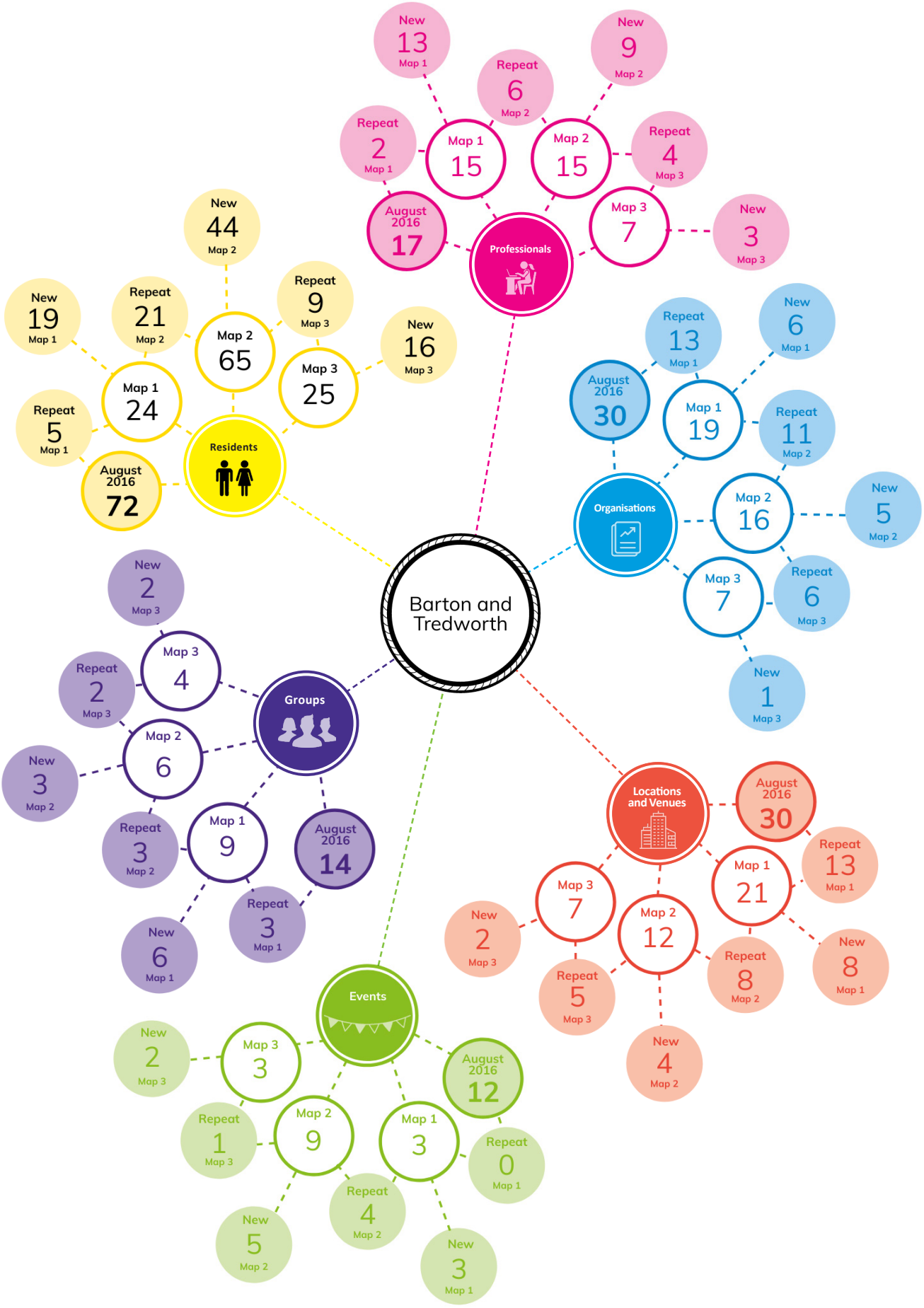
Figure 9 shows the total number of connections recorded by Community Builders in both the intervention and comparison sites where community building was taking place. The rest of the section then gives a more detailed overview of the connections made in the two intervention sites over time, including whether the connections documented were new or repeated from previous maps. These are each accompanied by summaries highlighting key findings and trends.

Variation between the numbers of connections made within each site during the 18 months of community building activity is evident in Figure 9, which shows the total number of connections made between Community Builders and different parts of the community within each area. These included their connections to local residents as well as to professionals working in the area, community groups, community events, organisations and different locations within the wards.

The figures included within this section and that in the section, Community Building Processes and Principles, indicate community building is not simply a process of meeting with residents and connecting them to one another. Within all three sites, although such connections were a large proportion of the Community Builders' reach, they made up fewer than half of the overall number of connections made by Community Builders. Instead, the figures suggest that community building involves working with professionals and organisations, making links with various locations and venues ('community assets'), supporting both existing and new community groups, and involvement in events.

Figure 9: Total Connections Made in Each Community Building Site during 18-Month Period of Community Building Activity

People Map Connections in Barton & Tredworth



Summary of Key Findings for Barton & Tredworth Maps

Residents

65 Map Two showed the highest number of resident connections.

Professionals

Fewer connections over time with professionals from statutory services.

Map One	Map Two	Map Three
40%	33%	29%

Moving away from those who typically provide a service, and towards those who work in guidance and support roles.

Organisations

Fewer connections over time with organisations but high proportions of sustained connections.

86% of connections in Map Three repeated from previous maps.

All 6 repeated organisational connections in Map Three sustained from Map Two (at least six months).

Locations and Venues

80% of repeated connections in Map Three sustained from Map Two.

2 connections with locations and venues in Barton and Tredworth sustained across all three maps.

Groups

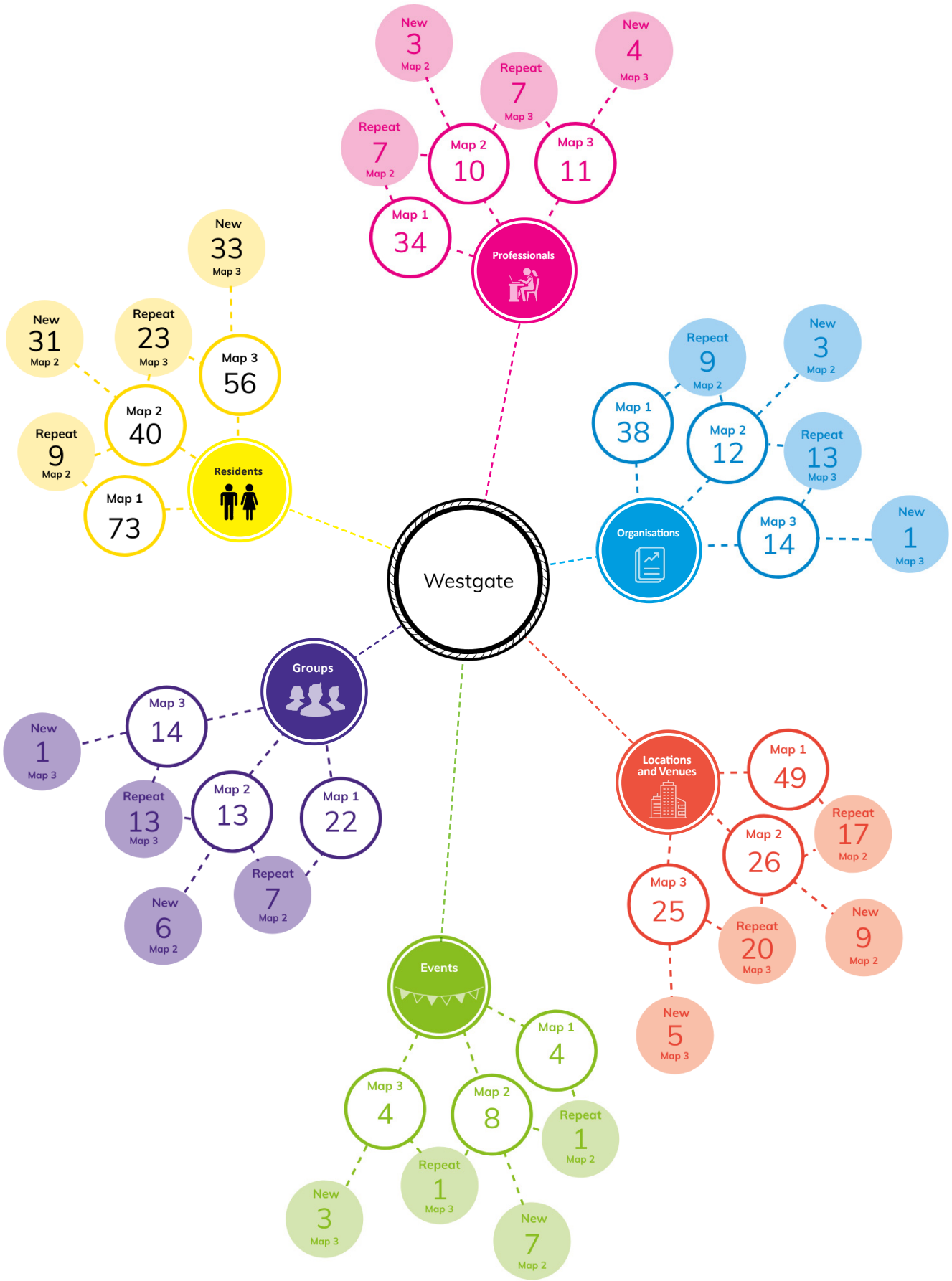
4 Number of connections with community groups recorded on Map Three.

None of these existed before the seconded Community Builders were in-post.

Events

9 Map Two showed the highest number of community events with which Community Builders connected.

People Map Connections in Gloucester City Centre



Summary of Key Findings for Gloucester City Centre

Residents

59% of connections in Map Three were repeated but largely from Map One.

Possible these were from when two PCSO Community Builders worked in the area and may have been 'new' to the remaining Community Builder.

Professionals

Consistently low proportion of connections with statutory professionals (approximately a quarter).

Only **3** connections with statutory services were repeated.

Organisations

3 of the repeated organisational connections on Map Three were sustained from the previous map (at least six months)

Locations and Venues

6 connections with locations and venues in Westgate were sustained across all three maps.

Groups

93% of connections with community groups on Map Three were repeated.

5 connections were sustained across all three maps.

Events

8 Map Two showed the highest number of community events with which Community Builders connected.

Overall, the data collected via these maps shows the reach of the Community Builders connections in each site and how this reach can vary by area. Through the analysis of the number of new and repeated connections it is possible to get a sense of the longevity of connections – whether they have been sustained over a period of six, twelve or even the full eighteen months – and to see the types of professionals and organisations the Community Builders have been able to connect with. For example, it is clear in both intervention areas that over time there is a greater attention being paid to organisations which are community-facing rather than having a statutory role in communities.

When viewed alongside the qualitative findings shared in the first section of this report on *Ways of Working*, the people maps provide further evidence of the variety and scale of connections built and relationships held by Community Builders. Whilst the mapping data gives an overview of the breadth of connections made by the Community Builders, it cannot alone show the depth of these connections. A sense of the quality of relationships built between Community Builders and residents in particular is presented in the following section.

Impact on Residents and Community

This section explores the impact of being involved in community groups, events and activities for residents living in Barton & Tredworth and Westgate. It primarily draws on material from interviews with 10 residents and is supplemented by data from 20 'download' interviews with the Community Builders and from ethnographic visits to the sites.

The interviews explored any personal impact for the residents involved in groups, events and activities, as well as their perceptions of the benefits of these initiatives for other residents in the area. All 10 residents reported a positive impact, either for themselves and/or for other people in the community and the nature of these impacts is described below.

Contact with the Community Builders

During the interviews, all of the residents talked about the contact they had had with the Community Builders. Examples were given of the Community Builders assisting individuals and groups to become involved in new activities or make new connections, as well as supporting pre-existing groups and community centres to develop their reach. There was variation in relation to the duration of this contact, ranging from having had several meetings with a Community Builder, to the resident knowing them for a year or more.

One resident who had been supported in looking for new activities described how they had had 'several chats' with a Community Builder and how:

> *'[Community Builder] talks to you as an individual but they know all the other agencies that are going on so they can broker connections. But that's what [Community Builder] does, they broker the connections, they don't set it up. And that gives you space and time to work out is this what I want to do.'*

Two other residents also described the Community Builders as having *'a lot of contacts'*, including *'professional connections'*, which could enable things to happen, with another summarising how they are *'excellent as interfaces.'* A fifth resident described the variety of connections the Community Builder had enabled them to make, including to residents in their local area, to special interest groups in the wider area, and to another professional (Barnwood Trust Welcomer). Reflecting generally on the Community Builder's role, one of these residents identified it as *'being good just to make people more comfortable within their community and what is their community. And I can see it working in getting people into the right places.'*

Examples were also given of practical help that the Community Builders had provided, such as pitching in with the gardening at community centres or helping with the cooking at community groups. This was in the context of helping new groups to form, as well as being a means of supporting pre-existing groups and community spaces. Support was given in the form of going door-knocking together and in filling out a Small Sparks application form when helping new groups to emerge. One resident also spoke about how a Community Builder connected them to another member of Barnwood Trust staff to enable them to apply for an individual grant to help purchase items to support their hobby.

One resident who had known the Community Builder prior to their current secondment, and was still in touch with them, reflected on the Community Builder's role in helping organise an event and how the Community Builder *'absolutely held it together'* and how it *'couldn't have happened'* without them.

Another resident who has been running a Small Sparks-funded group for several years spoke about the role that Community Builders could play in helping to promote their group as *'we'd love more people to come.'* For one resident who had been supported to connect with other residents to start a new local group, they noted the ongoing support of a Community Builder who continued to attend the group's meetings where they listened and chipped in ideas.

In describing these activities, several residents also reflected on the skills and attributes of the Community Builders, noting general aspects such as being *'easy going, very good with meeting people', 'very encouraging',* and *'a lovely, positive… wonderful person.'*

More specific comments included the value of Community Builders having local knowledge and insights, strong communication skills, being able to speak particular languages, and noting the value of the Community Builder bringing their *'own story'* and *'own journey.'* A sense of the quality and strength of the relationships which had been built between residents and Community Builders was evident in reflections such as *'everybody assumes that we've known each other for years.'*

Two residents also commented on what they thought the Community Builders might have learnt from attending pre-existing groups they are involved in, with thoughts including that it allowed them to see *'how we do things'* and *'why we do things that way instead of another way'*, as well as in getting to know the area and learning about what was already happening when the Community Builder was first starting work there.

Whilst the interviewees were not asked to directly comment on or evaluate the performance of individual Community Builders, reflections of this nature were nonetheless shared by residents in both Barton & Tredworth and Westgate. Such comments included:

> *'I think that those that have been placed with Barnwood Trust are probably doing a brilliant job, I know that [Community Builder] has because I've had a lot of contact with them.'*

Views on Asset-Based Community Development

As well as discussing the role of individual Community Builders, four of the residents interviewed also reflected on the model and principles of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) underpinning the work (although not always using these specific terms). One resident discussed this in relation to organising a community event and how:

> *'It's not the first sort of community event I've been involved in organising but I really liked the way that it was a lot more resident led than the things I've done before. And also that more people were involved… I felt there was actually a team.'*

Discussing the role of community development professionals, they commented that *'if you do everything, you're not actually building community, you're not actually building people's skills.'*

Two of the four residents identified challenges linked to the community building approach when working in particular areas or with certain individuals. One resident felt that the Community Builder they'd had contact with *'wants to sort of suggest things'* but is unable to do so due to the nature of the ABCD approach. However, they felt that this may have been less of a challenge if carrying out community building *'in an area which is more community minded.'*

Another resident commented they felt that *'sometimes yes, you do have to be alongside people to help them get something going',* taking more of a hands-on approach, particularly if some individuals have low self-esteem or self-confidence. They added, however, that *'I don't think that actually takes away from the ABCD model.'*

Although not referring to ABCD explicitly, the fourth resident shared their observations on the nature of the community building process and how it unfolds:

> *'It's amazing when you meet so, you do meet people and then some things that you've had an idea about start to fall in place because you've met so-and-so and you realise that could be possible.'*

This resident likened the process to gardening, in relation to needing to allow time for connections to bud and flourish:

> *'It's very similar to gardening in a sense that you can't do it instantly, you've got to let it grow and you've got to foster relationships and friendships and opportunities and it's like having a patch of soil that is very hard and very dense and very compacted and you've got to dig it through and you've got to apply the compost and the manure and fork it through and plant the seeds and all the rest of it.'*

Personal Impact for Residents

During the interviews, seven of the residents spoke in further detail about the personal impact of their current involvement in community groups and activities, which the Community Builders had supported to varying degrees. Feedback from the other three residents focused on perceived impact for other individuals and/or the wider community and all shared some general positive comments about the Community Builders, including those noted in the section above. It is interesting to note that the three residents who spoke about perceived impact for others, rather than any personal impact of their involvement, were all group leaders and this may explain in part why the discussion focused on impact for other group members and the wider community.

Of the seven residents who spoke about personal impact, one of these individuals had been involved in organising a range of community events and with a variety of local groups and described the *'really great relationships'* which they have made as a result of this. Discussing this in relation to contact with Barnwood Trust in particular, they commented that:

> *'Through Barnwood Trust I've also been able to make lots of links and make friends with people so that we can work together to bring each other to each other's events and things like that.'*

They identified that establishing these connections had been impactful not only for themselves, but also others around them, noting that *'having all these links is beneficial to them as well as to myself.'* A desire to continue being involved in the community in future was highlighted too, through the resident commenting that *'I love it and the more I do the more I want to do.'*

Three of the residents spoke about the impact of involvement for them in the context of their ongoing health problems, with one individual reflecting on how *'this all helps me to just to keep going.'* They felt that being involved in the community was not only helpful for themselves, but also enabled them in turn to help others:

'It's a roundabout because what I'm doing has actually helped me helping other people, helping other people help me… it is like a roundabout full circle of support and help in every avenue. So I mean, I'm pushing out like this but also in some senses I've gained something that's there to help me.'

The second of these three individuals spoke about the therapeutic value of taking part in particular new activities and how the distraction helps them cope with pain. Even once an activity or meeting has finished they described how *'it makes you feel stronger after that'* and *'you feel different in your body when you're stuck in the house after.'* This individual also mentioned a feeling of pride at a grant their community group had received which would potentially benefit others in the community. The third resident, who has mental health challenges and is involved in arts and crafts, had been supported by a Community Builder to find a venue for their group to meet. They described the value of taking part in crafts, commenting that *'it's my sanity really.'*

Another resident who has also been involved in organising community events, as well as developing community spaces, a general sense of fulfilment from being involved was described:

'When you do do something here, you know, the feedback is so positive and rewarding that … And especially when it involves anything to do with [particular hobby] that I, you know, that gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction and enjoyment as well. That's a sort of mixed bag of reasons why I do it.'

Similarly, a resident who had been supported by a Community Builder to look for new groups and activities to join in with described how the meetings with the Community Builder had been *'enriching'* and *'which led me to thinking actually yeah, I could do that.'* Following these meetings, the resident had independently started volunteering, which they described as being *'fun.'*

Of the three residents who mentioned going door-knocking with the Community Builders (in order to meet other residents), one individual described how they *'really enjoyed it.'* Another mentioned that they have since gone door-knocking independently and *'wouldn't have done that without them, sort of prior experience of [Community Builder].'*

One resident who attends a pre-existing group which a Community Builder had helped support described that being involved in this group has overall been *'life changing*' for them and noted that the Community Builder's support to run one particular event had been *'very good.'*

The personal impacts described by these individuals are supplemented by the findings from interviews with Community Builders themselves, where they discussed their perceived impact for residents in the community.

This included examples being shared of residents making new connections and friendships. One Community Builder described an individual they had supported to start a group who was forming a friendship as a result:

'This is a person that didn't even want to come out of the house. Didn't have any friends and now they've met somebody through the group and now they're going to the park… So it's actually this lonely person has connected, hopefully got a friendship now that they've got quite a lot in common.'

As well as joining groups, examples of residents taking part in activities such as door-knocking or attending wider community events were also highlighted as indicators of people beginning to get to know their neighbours. A Community Builder described how for one individual who had attended an event:

> *'They were saying it was really great because they said that's a nice person that they lived next door to and hadn't spoken to them. And they had a conversation at the [community event].'*

One Community Builder also recalled that a resident who'd taken part in door-knocking for the first time had fed back that it was *'a really good experience'* and it gave them *'an opportunity to actually talk to people.'*

Interviews with the Community Builders also identified a range of new activities that residents had become involved in as a result of their contact with them. This included:

- Leisure or sports activities (such as archery and gardening)
- Organising and running community events (including coffee mornings and annual street parties)
- Activities linked to starting groups (such as creating posters and going door-knocking together)
- Helping out with community groups or at community spaces (for example making teas and coffees)
- Visiting a local community centre for the first time
- Accessing educational opportunities (such as attending English classes or Food Hygiene courses) or linking up to support services (for example, for families with disabled children)

Describing the impact of taking part in these activities, one Community Builder recounted that a resident who'd been supported to start a group had *'come out of themselves'* and due to a growth in confidence was now *'firing all these ideas.'* This resident had remarked to the Community Builder that '*I just can't believe that I've got this to look forward to every week now.'* A growth in confidence was evident in another individual to who'd gone from simply sitting in a community space to now serving teas and coffees there.

In describing the links that they had made within the community, there were examples given indicating that the Community Builders had become somebody that residents could talk to. These comments included:

> *'Now they will come and sit down and talk and yeah, they've really opened up, you know.'*

A further example was shared by a Community Builder of a resident with mental health challenges who had contacted them by phone. The Community Builder described how:

> *'I got the phone call from them and I was so amazed because for them to ring me was massive. They couldn't speak very clearly on the phone and you could hear they were so nervous that they were like actually shaking when they were speaking to me, they couldn't … It took about ten minutes for them just to say who they were.'*

During a conversation in person with this resident at a later date, they told the Community Builder that it had taken them several hours to make the phone call and *'they said but I knew that you'd be okay and they said I just feel like I could like talk to you about some things.'*

Becoming accepted and trusted by residents was also noted as an important milestone:

> *'It's like I've become a familiar face. That kind of just … I just feel like being a presence in the place sometimes. It's so much more … Even though it takes a long time it's that journey of trust but then you actually, do actually get somewhere.'*

This was also captured within the ethnographic accounts, which included descriptions such as:

> *'They have really started to trust the Community Builder and now calls them if they are struggling with a problem.'*

Examples within the data also included Community Builders becoming accepted by residents from a range of different ethnic groups within the community, with the example given of a Community Builder attending an event at a community centre where:

> *'You could see how much we, where we, how much we'd come on because probably half that room I'd spoken to or knew of. And that to me was amazing… And I was the only White person sat down within that audience. And I had a great welcome.'*

Wider Benefits for Community Members

Within the interviews with the 10 residents, there was discussion of the perceived benefits that involvement in the community was perceived to have for others in the local area. This included benefits for other individuals directly involved in community groups, activities, and events, as well as a sense of the general impact that community building had in an area or for a particular population.

In discussing the benefits for other individuals involved in community groups, two interviewees gave a sense of how this provided a form of meaningful and sociable activity for those taking part. As one resident involved in activities alongside elderly members of a community group described:

> *'It gives them a little bit of pride in themselves in what they've done. Is that the right word? Do you know what I mean? That they've been able to achieve something. Because I know if you can sit at home, oh, I don't need to do that but you can do that in a social setting with a few people.'*

Another interviewee involved in a community group similarly described how they had encouraged people to come out of the house to take part in arts and crafts activities together, including to raise money for charity, which they noted could be meaningful for those who *'haven't got anybody to knit and sew for anymore.'* This interviewee also noted that such activities had helped one group member after experiencing a bereavement, providing a regular reason *'just to get out of the flat'* until they found their feet.

From the interviews with the residents, there were several indications of how community groups and events had sought to be inclusive to people from a range of different backgrounds or to people who might experience a range of barriers to taking part.

In relation to a neighbourhood get together that one resident had attended, they commented that *'I saw people in there that I was amazed had darkened the doors and the Community Builder had invited them.'* Discussing a resident who attended in particular, this individual noted that:

> *'Their carer brought them in a wheelchair. It was really good to see them. But somebody had taken the trouble to find Sam and invite them, you know, they live right up the other end of*

Church Street, I thought it was brilliant. So they must have knocked on every door.'

They also reflected on how a *'mix of people who've been involved in community stuff before'* as well as those *'who haven't been involved in building things'* before had attended. Another resident described organising the date for a community event to ensure it didn't take place during Ramadan.

An ethnographic visit which took place at a community café, which was established following the earlier neighbourhood get together, also indicated that it is a space which is welcoming and inclusive of people of a variety of different backgrounds:

'An A-Board on the pavement reads "Community Café, free refreshments, everyone welcome." An older woman is standing outside the church, scanning up and down the street. She sees me and crosses over, inviting me to come in for free tea or coffee.'

The café itself is attended by a range of people from a variety religious and cultural backgrounds, including from Jamaican and Muslim communities, as well as people of different ages and those with mental health challenges:

'It's 12.30 and the room is full…The room is noisy with chatter and laughter. The demographic here seemed very varied: all ages (from two frail-looking elderly ladies to a babe in arms, and three small children)…'

The value of groups or events being free to attend was mentioned in interviews with two residents. One resident noted how a community event, which the Community Builder had helped support, had been financially inclusive for lower-income families in the community and highlighted the impact that this had had:

'A parent said to me, just after the multicultural celebration they stopped me and said how brilliant it had been and they said that, it wasn't how we planned it actually, but they said I'm so glad you had it so close to Gloucester Carnival because they said I couldn't afford to take my kids at £2 a ride but they said they've had a brilliant day here and now they'll be able to, you know, they've had that bit of fun, they'll be able to go back to playgroup or school or whatever and say yeah, I went on the bouncy castle, I went on the rides.'

The theme of financial inclusion also emerged when discussing the impact of another community event for local residents in the same area, with one interviewee describing their desire for it to be inclusive to families living on benefits, and how *'that free cake is very powerful. Makes a big difference.'*

The impact that such events make in contributing to a broader feeling of inclusion and cohesion within this community, particularly amongst different ethnic and cultural groups, was also discussed by three interviewees. Talking about on event in particular, a resident described:

'People milling around and talking to their neighbours for me was the most positive thing. And different communities, because I live on Main Street, see it all the time, and we give each other those polite smiles as we walk past each other but the different communities don't actually mix that much. But you put everybody together on a day like that and it transcends language, it … All the kids are bouncing together on one castle, that totally transcends any cultural differences, any aggro about who stands on which corners and who plays in the park together. It was really inclusive and lovely. I really enjoyed it.'

The opportunity for such events to enable people from different cultural groups to come together was also described by another resident in reflecting on another event in this area:

> *'It's about celebrating our cultures and I think it's, you know, we've done our fifth one now and you know, apart from being a nice community day out, you know, it has given people the opportunity to experience other cultures.'*

Two residents from the other community building area also spoke about involvement in groups and events which brought together people from different cultural backgrounds and ages. Reflecting on the impact of taking part in such groups, one resident described how *'you become more open, more tolerant, more generous, more hospitable.'* For the second resident, such involvement was felt to be:

> *'The best antidote to all that other stuff which is really quite dark. And if people can just come together and appreciate each other even in just loose friendships I think that's half the battle.'*

Reflecting more generally on the benefits that such events could have at a community level, a resident described how:

> *'I think if you're organising an event, series of events and activity then I think that as I say, you know, relationships get, friendships get fostered. And that benefits at a very simple level the community. You know, social deprivation, loneliness, lack of understanding, all of those things happen when there isn't contact and when the community isn't involved or caring about each other.'*

In discussing the importance that these relationships and connections can have for an individual, another resident shared a reflection based on their own personal experiences:

> *'I know that terrifying feeling of I don't have anybody to help me. I don't have anybody to call. If I get taken sick in the middle of the night who's going to take my children. I can't get to the tip, I don't have a car, I don't have enough money to hire one. I don't drive, what am I going to do? But if you have connections then it works like those extended families or little villages that we used to live in hundreds of years ago before the industrial revolution. I don't have a car but Rob down the road has got a car and he needed the ironing done, he doesn't like doing that, so I will do this ironing and Gill will do his childcare and he will fix Gill's washing machine. And all of a sudden everybody has made friends, saved money, shared cake and we're all happier.'*

As well as providing opportunities for residents from different backgrounds to meet, potentially contributing to a sense of cohesion, one resident also described how community events could encourage people to take pride in their community and have a sense of ownership. Giving permission to children to colour on the street with chalks during one event was highlighted as an example of this:

> *'Giving kids chalk and telling them to draw in the middle of the road is a very powerful way of saying you own this place, this is your community, your neighbourhood, your street... And on the school run even a week later when it hadn't rained there were children saying I drew that, I did that.'*

It was felt that these types of events not only gave people pride in their local area, but would encourage them to share ideas and become more involved in future.

Three of the residents who were interviewed had been involved in organising a particular annual community event, although several of them described stepping back to enable new members of the community to become involved and *'to see that they can achieve that themselves.'* This resident in particular continues to take part in community groups and events, and gave a sense of how their experiences in organising this event would be useful in organising another future event:

> *'We'd like to put on an event on that day… But I don't know whether I can get all of that done in that short of space of time. We've done a [community event] so we should be able to do something.'*

The interviewees spoke about a range of projects and activities they would be involved with going forwards, including forthcoming community events and helping to develop a variety of community spaces. Further thoughts and views on the areas the residents live in are summarised in the following section.

Views of Their Local Area

As well as discussing the range of groups, activities, and events which these residents are involved in, the interviews also explored their broader experiences and perceptions of living in Barton & Tredworth and Westgate.

Looking firstly at Barton & Tredworth, two of the residents who have lived there for several decades described an overall *'sense of it being a community'* where *'there is a lot of goodwill around'* and that *'people will say hello and chat.'*

A number of changes to the area in recent years were identified, including an increasingly diverse range of ethnic and cultural groups living there. One of the residents described the growing numbers of Eastern Europeans that had moved into the area as *'one of the biggest'* changes taking place in recent years, with Tredworth previously being *'very much an Asian/Jamaican ethnic community.'*

An increase in the number of buy-to-let properties in the area was also identified and that this transience of tenancies *'does make it more difficult for people to get to know their neighbours',* although *'it's still doable.'* Interviewees also spoke of a perception that Tredworth is a place where people only intend to live for a short period of time, being *'the cheap seats',* before moving to more affluent suburbs in Gloucester such as Linden and Abbeydale. Although there was felt to be a high turnover of where people live, one resident commented that they and their neighbours would *'still notice if somebody was, hadn't been seen for a few days, somebody would say, "Have you seen them?"'*

This diversity of Tredworth was spoken about by one resident in positive terms when describing *'one of the beauties of it really, it is ever changing',* however particular challenges were also noted alongside this, including *'a lot of racism between communities.'* In trying to build bridges between different communities, they spoke about the need *'for people to understand that when it says community it means all of us',* including the *'White community'* as well as Asian, Jamaican and Eastern European communities.

One resident who is newer to the area described how they found living in Tredworth to be *'a little bit more stratified'* than where they had lived previously and that different communities *'exist but they don't really interact.'* In this context, they felt that *'catalysts like the (community event) is such a brilliant thing of pulling people out.'*

Another Tredworth resident also spoke about the importance of community involvement in making a difference to the area going forwards:

> *'There is so much that could be really good here. Equally we could be overrun by drugs and gun crime within years. This could go either way, Tredworth. We have a bit of a responsibility to make sure it goes the right way. Big community events are a good place to start to spread positivity. But the small stuff is equally important.'*

Those interviewed living in Westgate similarly spoke about the diversity of the area and quick turnover of residents, including both a growing number of Eastern Europeans living there, as well as the student population. One resident described how this made it difficult when trying to encourage other residents to become involved in the community as:

> *'It's completely all the time it's rotating. So trying to get people involved is really difficult.'*

This resident also reflected on the nature of the housing in the area, which is *'all flats'*, and how this could be a barrier to getting others involved.

As with Barton & Tredworth, there was also a sense that the diversity of the area was a positive aspect of living there, even though there could be friction between communities. As one Westgate resident described:

> *'People are welcoming…I love the fact that there is so many different nations living together. Doesn't mean that they get along. However, well, there's room to improve but I feel part of Gloucester, this is my home.'*

This resident had moved to the area in recent years and described it as *'the best in the world.'*

Another recent resident also shared positive views of the area, commenting that *'Gloucester is real, it's enchanting, I love it, so I'm really pleased I've come down here.'*

Comparing their new area to the one they used to live in, they spoke about how *'people smile and say hello in the street and I'm just getting used to it.'* Gloucester Park was also seen as being a good feature of the area, although the resident felt that it had an unwarranted reputation as being a dangerous space which meant it could be underused at times.

The graphics below give an overview of residents perceptions of the two areas:

Barton & Tredworth

Westgate

Conclusion

Section Two has primarily focused on exploring the views of residents within the four sites, particularly the impact for residents living in the community building sites. Residents participated in the research in a range of ways including via the Gloucestershire-wide Local Policing Survey, as well as through interviews with residents directly involved in community building activity. These findings are supplemented by interviews with the Community Builders, which involved discussion of their interactions with residents.

The findings of the survey in particular provide **statistically significant evidence for the value of both professional and personal relationships, and their positive impact on perceptions of community cohesion, wellbeing, life satisfaction and, more broadly, perceptions of the police and fear of crime.** Analysis of the survey highlighted the interrelatedness of these domains, as well as indicating the value that participation in community groups and access to services has in contributing to improved outcomes in all of these areas. Although residents' perceptions of cohesion, wellbeing and life satisfaction did not increase universally across all the community building sites within the initial 18 months, the survey findings highlight the importance of initiatives which promote community connectivity in contributing to these domains. The report explores the operating context and demographics in each of the different sites which may account for the disparity in findings between areas.

Evidence gathered from interviews with residents living in the community building sites, who were involved in a range of groups, events and activities complements the survey findings. **All 10 residents who were interviewed identified a range of positive impacts, for themselves and/or other residents,** including establishing new relationships, taking part in new activities, and the value of involvement in feeling able to cope (for example, with a health condition). Examples were also given of how community events had been inclusive of people from a range of different backgrounds, such as being free to attend or to take part in.

Residents in both community building sites also spoke about the role that community involvement, including events and groups, played in **contributing to feelings of cohesion** in an area. Recognising that the notion of cohesion is complex, multi-faceted and contested, the research focused on the perceptions and views of local residents, rather than seeking to measure any one definition of cohesion to see if it had increased or decreased. Residents living in these diverse areas spoke of organising and taking part in events and how *'you put everybody together on a day like that and it transcends language.'*

More broadly, the findings also indicated that community building can lead to **increased trust and confidence between residents and professionals.**

Community Builders working in the intervention sites described being someone who was trusted and accepted by the residents they engaged with. Residents too described a range of positive interactions with the Community Builders. The Local Policing Survey findings and evidence from ethnographic visits, also referred to in Section One, indicate the value that building these relationships can have for improving perceptions of the police in general.

The evidence suggests that Community Builders were trusted and accepted by the residents they engaged with and these individual relationships also contributed to **improved perceptions of the police more generally.**

Overall, the research provides evidence for the **impact that working in asset- and strengths-based ways can have at both an individual and community level.** Key findings include:

- **The personal impact of involvement in community groups, events and activities on:**
  - Wellbeing; and
  - Life satisfaction.
- **The broader impact that meaningful connectivity has at community level on:**
  - Perceptions of cohesion; and
  - Fear of crime.
- **The impact of involvement and interactions on residents' perceptions of agencies on:**
  - The likelihood of local residents reporting crime;
  - Local residents' perceptions of police; and
  - Local residents' trust and confidence of receiving a good service.

Conclusions and Closing Reflections

Overall, the findings of the research show that adopting asset- and strengths-based approaches to working in communities is complex for a multiplicity of reasons. This includes professionals having a different starting point for their conversations in the community, holding a web of relationships with multiple stakeholders, as well as requiring a degree of resilience in challenging their own organisational norms and values. For the professionals putting these approaches into practice in this collaboration, the support provided by those with common mind-sets has proved invaluable and despite some challenges they were more engaged in their work and reported higher levels of job satisfaction.

The complexity of carrying out this work for professionals on the ground is mirrored in the complexity of researching the impact of this work. A range of methods were utilised in this research to capture the nuances of this work and impact of it. Findings from a range of methods at this stage triangulate both in terms of the ways of working and emerging impacts which demonstrate positive outcomes for those involved. We are mindful that they only give a flavour of the initial outcomes and there is still further research that could be carried out in this area over a longer period of time to capture any far-reaching and long-term benefits. This includes to what extent there has been an impact and contribution towards the long-term vision for Gloucestershire as set out in the objectives of this collaboration.

The research has demonstrated that applying asset- and strengths-based approaches in practice varied to some degree by practitioner and community. Going forward, it would be of value to explore how these approaches are applied in a wider variety of contexts, conditions and across multiple agencies, and any associated impact.

We hope that the learning and initial evidence base generated through this collaboration is of use to communities, agencies and researchers when considering working in similar partnerships and complex environments in the future.

Appendix A: Key Learning for Stakeholders

We have grouped our key learning points below by relevance to a range of audiences. Principally our learning is of relevance to strategic leaders and managers within organisations wishing to collaborate on cross-sector projects, but we also have identified points relevant to people engaged in commissioning community building activity.

Key learning points for strategic leaders and managers implementing collaborative cross-sector projects

- *Create the conditions for strategic leaders from different organisations to come together*
  - The space afforded by the Stewardship Circle, away from the day-to-day pressures of getting the job done, through which leaders had an opportunity to develop trusting relationships with each other and to think and envision a different way of doing things, was critical. It was critical both for creating the project and also, through the Oversight Group, for sustaining it.
  - The Circle, and then the Group, enabled the project leaders in each organisation to develop a supportive solidarity between them which assisted in problem solving as operational or strategic issues were encountered in each organisation which could have impacted on the progress or future of the project.

- *Specific leadership qualities are required to enable leaders and managers to proliferate the practices learned within their organisations*

  Leaders need:
  - Bravery, an ability to hold your nerve and not to move to judgement about potential outcomes and obstacles too quickly are all critical qualities for ensuring the longevity of the partnerships.
  - A willingness to be maverick, combined with discernment about which organisational or practice rules can be 'broken' or at least challenged, make cross-sector partnerships and ongoing collaboration possible.
  - To be prepared to stand up for doing the right thing because they know it is the right thing.
  - To be consistent in both communications and the application of values fundamental to the application of the practices being developed.

- *Enable the conditions for collaborative cross-sector practice-based projects within each organisation*
  - Find organisational allies: put time into identifying like-minded people with a similar energy for the changes you are trying to encourage within your organisation, and develop a relationship with them.
  - Recruit people with the right skills for collaboration both within and outside the organisation's sector.

- *The relationship between leaders and managers in managing secondments*
  - Leaders need to act as a 'heat shield' for the experimental project team, explicitly supporting seconded staff, including by shielding them from the culture, pressures, expectations and ways of working of the organisation they have been seconded from, and representing their issues to their managers.

- Managers may need to be given permission to support and navigate organisational obstacles to be able to 'enable' seconded staff.
- Convene people in the organisation from which staff have been seconded from who are like-minded, and provide opportunities for them to influence managers who are resistant to facilitating the conditions for organisational change.

Key learning points for Commissioners investing in community building

- *Commissioning for outcomes from community building*
  - Invest in community building as an 'end in itself, not a 'means to an end.' Community building is a facilitation process enabling the achievement, in neighbourhoods, of people who are better connected to each other and who can then take the action they want to help those neighbourhoods be better connected and more resilient places.
  - Don't invest in community building because you want residents to start particular kinds of groups and activities, or achieve specific aims you or your organisation have for them.
  - Do invest in community building because you want to discover, grow, nurture and repair the networks, capabilities and social processes that make neighbourhoods thriving and resilient.
  - Be patient and open about the outcomes: it takes time to see evidence of the creation or repair of social processes because community building is not a quick fix, or a way of making communities do what commissioners want. It is about creating capabilities rather than manage dependencies.
  - Community building and broader underpinning systems change in social processes are intertwined, another reason for maintaining a longer-term investment in community building. If the investment is too short, and expectations that the change in the underpinning social processes will happen quickly, the initial investment in community building can be lost. Restoring social processes takes time.

- *The commissioning processes*
  - Chose commissioners/investors who are able to think and act longer-term and bring these into the project as early as possible, so that they have a vested interest in both the learning and the outcomes of the project.
  - Don't underestimate the importance of creating a shared understanding amongst commissioners and to recognise the different organisational approaches, norms and values in commissioning practices between different public sector partners.
  - Recognise the flaws in wanting (or needing) to demonstrate a short-term quantitative return on investment.
  - Recognise that people who might appear to be part of the problem (such as particular groups in society who are traditionally 'done to') may also be part of the solution. See the value of 'working with' a broader range of individuals in the knowledge that professionals don't hold all the answers.

- *Making decisions about where to invest*
  - When commissioning where you want community building to take place, consider the existing assets: people, geography, community spaces, economic factors, existing

organisations and groups, in order to understand what your starting point might be, to set realistic expectations for outcomes to be achieved in the first year or two.

- If you are just starting to commission community building, commission it in neighbourhoods where there is an existing energy for building community. This might include physical assets (such as a community venue), groups or individuals. You will potentially be able to see how it works sooner than if you commission it in a community where there is little existing energy for making local connections. Then use the examples from the first community to help demonstrate what is possible to other neighbourhoods.
- Beware of the temptation to host or second Community Builders into an environment of 'service provision', for example a public sector led community centre. Although the intent of strengthening engagement or connectivity is purposeful, it may lead to Community Builders being (or being seen to be) part of service provision.
- Recognise that community building takes a place-based approach rather than a cause-based approach. However, through taking this approach, there is the potential to contribute to addressing multiple causes within a place.

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