

Evaluation of the Link Up Programme Inspiring Scotland

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Inspiring Scotland proactively tackles tough social issues by investing in portfolios of charities, each addressing a different social issue. www.inspiringscotland.org.uk



Link Up has been funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities Programme for the three years ending 31 July 2014. CashBack takes the funds recovered from the proceeds of crime and invests them back into activities for young people and communities across Scotland. www.cashbackforcommunities.org.uk

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Executive Summary

1. Link Up is an innovative asset-based programme operating in ten local communities. It has been funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities Programme for the three years ending 31 July 2014. This report evaluates the impact of Link Up over this period, including the extent to which it has contributed to the outcomes of the CashBack Programme.
 - 89% of participants thought that their community was a good place to live (compared to 66% before involvement in Link Up);
 - 63% felt healthier than before;
 - 52% felt more able to cope with life than before;
 - 83% felt that they had the skills they needed (compared to 47% before); and
 - 34% had started volunteering as a result of involvement in Link Up activities.

Overview: Outcomes for Individuals

2. This evaluation of Link Up has found that Inspiring Scotland has successfully delivered its asset-building approach in ten communities in Scotland. There is clear evidence that this has had significant positive personal impacts for those residents who have been actively involved in these communities. For instance:
 - Link Up activities provide social networks that previously did not exist (often for people who were isolated);
 - participants benefitted from significant increases in their confidence and skills;
 - participants in Link Up activity have become much more involved in community activity, including as committee members of community organisations and as volunteers;
 - community integration has been strengthened in some areas, particularly in relationships between people of different ages and people with different cultures;
 - many participants in Link Up activity have developed the knowledge and confidence to influence what happens in their area; and
 - significantly more participants thought that their community was a good place to live after they had been involved in Link Up activities.
3. A survey of 178 people actively involved in Link Up locally shows the following changes as a result of engagement in Link Up:
 - the number of people who are involved in community activity has more than doubled (from 34% to 74%);
 - there has been a substantial growth in the number of people with a lot of local contacts (from 52% to 95%); and
 - nearly two thirds of participants (64%) felt more confident.
4. These initial changes have led to other wider changes for individuals actively involved in Link Up. For example, our survey shows that as a result of involvement in Link Up activities:
 - feel healthier, both physically and mentally;
 - feel better able to cope with life;
 - feel they have the skills they need; and
 - have started or are actively seeking a job or training.
5. There is also good evidence that the changes that are brought about by active involvement in Link Up can go well beyond outcomes which are directly linked to social capacity and skills building. There is a strong logic to suggest that the changes individuals are already experiencing, which are directly linked to social capacity and skills building, will lead to longer-term changes to their lives and life opportunities. We found that, since being involved in Link Up significant proportions of people:
 - Our survey also indicated that 24% of participants had gained a qualification and 6% had got a job or work placement. It is estimated by Inspiring Scotland that there have been 1,150 people with a regular involvement in Link Up. On this basis, it could suggest that nearly 300 people have gained a qualification and nearly 50 people have gained employment so far as a result of their involvement in Link Up activities.
6. These sorts of outcomes can be life changing – and the extent of change for some of the participants can clearly be seen from reading the case studies at Appendix 2.
7. All of this allows us to conclude that Link Up is very much delivering its intended outcomes for individuals involved in the programme and is delivering against the outcomes of the CashBack for Communities Programme, which funded Link Up between 2011 and 2014.
8. In addition to outcomes for individuals, the Link Up logic model sets out a number of specific intermediate outcomes for the programme at a community level, which reflect the community level outcomes in the CashBack for Communities Programme's logic model.
- 9.

Overview: Outcomes for Communities

10. There is no doubt that many of those actively involved in Link Up activities have an increased level of community activity; that they report better community integration and cohesion; that they feel that they have greater capacity to influence what happens; and that they have an improved perception of their area as a place to live. In this sense, the community level outcomes identified in the logic model are being delivered.
11. We also identified positive examples where Link Up had supported the development of community groups, which are delivering wider community benefits.
12. However, at this stage in the development of the approach, the evidence does not yet show that the positive changes for individuals are impacting significantly beyond the actively engaged Link Up participants, into long-term wider changes in their communities.

An Innovative Use of CashBack Funding

13. By investing in Link Up, the CashBack for Communities Programme provided Inspiring Scotland and the Scottish Government with an opportunity to test an innovative asset-based prototype. As this did not fit neatly into the CashBack Programme's other investment, this carried an element of risk, but also the opportunity to:
 - learn about how asset-based approaches could work in practice and the impact that this might have;
 - share learning about what works (and what does not) in a way that other areas could learn from;
 - allow the CashBack Programme to evolve in ways that it had not done before; and
 - assess the benefits of using CashBack funding to build an evidence base about new approaches.
14. There is now a shared appreciation of the value of asset-based approaches, and the effectiveness of the Link Up model. However, the linking of asset-based approaches to a wider approach to tackling inequalities is new territory. Consequently, there is a useful discussion that needs to take place about how effective asset-based approaches can lead to a reduction in inequality.
15. It seems to us to be important that the Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland clearly articulate how this approach might be taken forward and engage in a wider discussion about how the impact on inequality of asset-based approaches could be maximised.

Recommendations

16. Section 5 contains a number of recommendations based on the learning from this evaluation. The eight recommendations are summarised here.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Inspiring Scotland should review the logic model to ensure that each of the outcomes for individuals are measurable and that there is a new set of strategic outcomes for communities that would focus on the changes in the wider community.
- Inspiring Scotland should develop clear indicators matched to each outcome that each Link Up area would gather. The number of indicators should be limited to a manageable level and clear guidance should be provided on how these would be gathered.
- Inspiring Scotland should consider developing a template for focused case studies, which demonstrate the changes for individuals and communities in a way which is able to reinforce the messages coming from progress against the outcomes.

Wider learning from Link Up

- Inspiring Scotland should review with Link Up workers and national and local stakeholders the most effective ways of linking the effective asset building work being carried out through Link Up with the rapidly emerging work on service users and communities influencing the design and delivery of services and the co-production of local plans, policies and practices.

Sustainability and replicability

- Inspiring Scotland should continue (and, if possible, extend) its discussions about support for the current established Link Up areas.
- Inspiring Scotland should consider how the programme could be extended or replicated by others. In suggesting this, we recommend that the guiding principles (including community control; an autonomous dedicated worker; and an accessible local budget) should be retained but that different delivery methods could be tested.
- The Scottish Government should consider its own role in continuing to support the wider learning from the programme. It should work with Inspiring Scotland to develop shared expectations regarding this, for any future funding or joint working – whether in the current areas or in a wider setting.

1 Introduction and Method

Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the findings of an evaluation of Phase One of Link Up. Link Up is an Inspiring Scotland programme which has received funding of £2.19 million over three years from the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities Programme. The current phase of funding ended on 31 July 2014. Funding has been continued for a further year by the Scottish Government through the Safer Communities and Public Health Divisions. This evaluation has been undertaken to understand the impact of this initial phase and the outcomes it has delivered, in line with requirements of the CashBack for Communities Programme.¹

Inspiring Scotland

1.2 Inspiring Scotland is an innovative venture philanthropy organisation. It was developed to respond to the needs of Scotland's charities and works to improve the lives of Scotland's most disadvantaged people. The focus of Inspiring Scotland has been on tackling youth unemployment, increasing play opportunities for children, improving early years support and helping to empower people living in Scotland's most vulnerable communities improve their lives. It provides significant long term funding and development support to Scotland's charities to achieve this.

1.3 The core funding programmes it delivers are:

- 14:19 Fund – supports young Scots make successful transitions from school into education, training and employment.
- Go2Play – builds on the success of the initial Go Play programme, and invests in a portfolio of play ventures to support the expansion of play rangers.
- Link Up – provides a model for community building which has been implemented in ten communities. It encourages residents to come together, build new relationships and start to address the challenges they face.

1.4 In addition, Inspiring Scotland works with the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust to deliver the BP Young Leader's Programme and supports two criminal justice charities. It also acts as the Scottish Government's delivery partner for the CashBack for Communities Programme. In this role it provides support and advice to funded organisations, and provides programme management and evaluation expertise to the Scottish Government. Because of Inspiring Scotland's role in Link Up it was decided that it would be appropriate for programme management of Link Up to be handled directly by the staff in the Community Safety Unit who are responsible for CashBack.

CashBack for Communities Programme

1.5 The Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities Programme takes funds recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and invests them back into communities. It focuses largely, but not exclusively, on providing opportunities for young people aged 10 to 25 years old to take part in free sporting, cultural, educational, youth work and employability activities. CashBack provides funding across Scotland, but it has a focus on communities particularly affected by crime and deprivation. The Scottish Government has invested and committed over £74 million, recovered from the proceeds of crime, in young people and their communities throughout Scotland.

1.6 The CashBack programme in the main supports national sport, cultural and youth work organisations to undertake or support activities for young people. It has also supported a number of smaller scale projects relating to young people in areas like employability, early years and mentoring.

1.7 By deciding to invest in Link Up, the CashBack for Communities Programme provided the Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland with an opportunity to test an innovative asset-based prototype. As this did not fit neatly into the Programme's other investment, this carried an element of risk, but also the opportunity to assess the benefits of using Scottish Government funding to build an evidence base about the benefits (or drawbacks) of new approaches. So, as well as the impact that the Scottish Government hoped for from Link Up for individuals and communities, it also expected value from the learning from testing a new approach.

1.8 Link Up is different from the other projects supported by CashBack. Although it certainly does engage young people, it has a focus on all members of the community. The intention was that support from CashBack for three years could allow the Link Up programme to test and explore two principles of asset-based approaches:

- Connecting People: How better relationships, networks and connections between people in a community can improve wellbeing and enable individuals to get the support they need from within their community.
- Giving and Confidence: How enabling people to use their assets to provide mutually beneficial activities and be part of their own solutions, rather than defined as a 'problem', can increase their confidence, self-esteem, efficacy and resilience.

- 1.9 It was inspiring Scotland's expectation that these changes for individuals would result in wider changes for participants relating, for example, to healthier life-style choices, increasing educational attainment, re-engagement with employment and increasing community activism.
- 1.10 This three-year period would allow Inspiring Scotland to assess the early benefits and consider how to sustain and develop the approach if it appeared to be successful.
- 1.11 Although Link Up is distinct from other CashBack projects, its outcomes are broadly similar and can all be related to the CashBack outcomes, as demonstrated in Appendix 1. It follows that in evaluating Link Up against its outcomes, we are also evaluating Link Up against the CashBack outcomes – and Appendix 1 sets out in a simple table the significant progress that Link Up has made in delivering CashBack outcomes.

The Link Up Programme

- 1.12 The Link Up Programme recognises that despite large levels of investment, problems in some of Scotland's most deprived communities have persisted. People in these areas continue to experience significant social inequality; struggle to create sustainable livelihoods for themselves; and find the other pressures of modern life challenging. As a result, they may have lower expectations and aspirations.
- 1.13 Link Up supports local people doing things together and helping each other. The logic is that by doing this:
- people build new trusting relationships;
 - people enhance their view of themselves and the community they live in;
 - individuals and communities are more resilient and have greater capacity to address the challenges they face; and
 - through this, the result is improved individual and community health and wellbeing.
- 1.14 Link Up operates in ten areas across Scotland, often defined by the issues affecting them rather than their strengths. The programme is delivered in partnership, by Inspiring Scotland and ten local host organisations. Table 1.1 shows the areas and host organisations involved.

Table 1.1: Areas and host organisations in the Link Up Programme

Area	Host Organisation
Alloa, Clackmannanshire	Hawkhill Community Association
Gallatown, Fife	Kirkcaldy YMCA
The Gorbals, Glasgow	Crossroads Youth and Community Association
Larkfield, Greenock, Inverclyde	Action for Children
Leith, Edinburgh	Bethany Christian Trust
Muirhouse, Edinburgh	Muirhouse Youth Development Group
NW Kilmarnock, E Ayrshire	East Ayrshire North Communities Federation
N Motherwell, N Lanarkshire	New Opportunities Project
Possil, Glasgow	North Glasgow Housing Association
Whitfield, Dundee	Scottish Association for Mental Health

1 Introduction and Method (continued)

- 1.15 Link Up funds the employment of a Link Up worker in each area and provides funding for local expenditure. The funding covers, activity costs, community engagement and a small host management fee. In each area, the host organisation employs and supports the Link Up worker. Inspiring Scotland provides ongoing support to each area, and monitors progress and delivery.
- 1.16 Link Up takes an asset-based approach to delivering change within these areas. The programme specifically looks to build on the strengths of each community and its residents. It uses these to establish activities local people want to see happening and works to increase their capacity to run these activities. The main outputs or activities are not decided in advance of discussions with members of the community in each area. Instead, the Link Up workers engage and work alongside local people to identify, and then facilitate activities – such as cooking, gardening, sports, crafts, cinema, music and social groups. Link Up activities aim to bring different people together, with local people actively participating in running activities and benefitting from the programme. Over time it is anticipated that the activities and the networks created through these activities will become sustainable and an ingrained part of community life.

Asset-Based Approaches

- 1.17 Link Up can be described as using ‘asset-based’ principles, but does not follow a particular asset or community development model. Asset-based approaches have been much discussed in Scotland over recent years. The language has been a feature of many recent policy documents, but there is limited structured evidence of the impact of these approaches in practice in Scotland. It can be argued that the language that has been used is a new way of describing the best forms of community development, which have, over a number of years, tended to become under resourced and more service driven.
- 1.18 In parallel with the development of Link Up, there was a flurry of important policy documents which specifically referred to asset-based approaches and the importance of capacity and resilience in creating stronger communities. A few examples from 2010 and 2011 are:
- **Child poverty** - In November 2010, the Scottish Government produced a consultation document Tackling Child Poverty in Scotland: A Discussion Paper. The three key principles of the Scottish Government’s approach to reducing child poverty were early intervention and prevention, an asset-based approach and a child centred approach. The discussion paper suggested that an asset-based approach could build the capacities of individuals, families and communities to manage better in the long term.
 - **Health** - Also in November 2010, in his Annual Report for 2009, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Scotland, Sir Harry Burns, stated that current efforts to close gaps in life expectancy and mortality have had limited success and that a more upstream, asset-based, approach to improving health outcomes is needed. This would enable people to use their skills and abilities to actively improve their own health and the health of their communities. Much of this approach builds on the work of Aaron Antonovsky who identified that adults who as children achieved a sense of coherence in their early lives, cope better in difficult circumstances. They are able to make the world comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. This highlights the importance of people having control over their lives. Sir Harry Burns argues that removing control from people is likely to result in people suffering ill health and that the direction of travel to the creation of better health in Scotland should be to connect and empower people.
 - **Public service reform** - In 2011, the Commission on the future of Public Services (chaired by Campbell Christie) concluded that public service reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use and prioritise public expenditure on services which prevent negative outcomes arising. Priority should be given to working closely with individuals and communities to understand their needs; maximise their talents and resources; support self reliance; and build resilience.

1.19 At the same time, co-production (essentially joint design of services by the users and providers of those services) has become an important element of public policy and practice. Also the Scottish Government is currently steering its Community Empowerment Bill through Parliament, following an extensive consultation period. The Bill is intended to introduce opportunities for people to have greater influence on what happens in their community. The Government state that this can lead to many benefits and that 'Communities can often achieve significant improvements by doing things for themselves, because they know what will work for them. They become more confident and resilient; there are often opportunities for people to gain new skills and for increased employment as well as improved access to services and support. These in turn can lead to improvements in a wide range of areas such as crime, health, and reducing inequalities'.

1.20 It is in this broad context that Link Up has been working with local communities to establish asset-based approaches which are then monitored and evaluated. The lessons learned should then inform the further development of asset-based approaches in Scotland and beyond.

Other Evaluations

1.21 An interim evaluation² of the Link Up Programme was undertaken in March and April 2013. The evaluation focused on the Link Up model and approach rather than the outcomes the programme was aiming to deliver. This provided an early view of the extent to which the model and approach were operating as intended. At that time (only 12-15 months into the operational phase of the programme) Link Up had engaged nearly 4,000 participants and 300 volunteers in 55 different activities.

1.22 This interim evaluation found that the main factors leading to the success of Link Up included the skills and attributes of the local worker and the flexibility to deliver Link Up activities according to local needs. Recommendations included developing opportunities to provide further support to Link Up workers through mentors and web-based forums.

1.23 Additionally, in the spring of 2014, Inspiring Scotland commissioned the economic consultancy firm, Matrix, to undertake a preliminary examination of the

monetary value of the impact of the initial phase of work to end December 2013. Their work did not seek to provide a full cost benefit analysis. Rather, it sought to make tentative estimates of the economic and wellbeing benefits associated with the approach and to compare these with the cost of the programme.

1.24 In economic terms, the consultants found that Link Up had produced benefits of £2.2million. The wellbeing benefits derived by participants and volunteers amounted to £3.8million, giving a total benefit of £6 million at the end of December 2013. These benefits compare to programme costs over the same period of £1.7million.

Method

1.25 Inspiring Scotland commissioned us, ODS Consulting, to conduct an evaluation of Link Up in May 2014. This covered the financial years 2011/12; 2012/13; and 2013/14 - essentially the whole life of the programme. Building on the interim evaluation, the focus was to understand and articulate the impact of the programme by:

- exploring the extent to which the programme has delivered its intended outcomes;
- assessing the contribution of Link Up to CashBack outcomes and priorities for change; and
- indicating how the programme delivered wider transformational outcomes.

1.26 This evaluation also examines the extent to which the programme has reached individuals who do not typically engage in local services or activities.

1.27 The research involved a mixed methodology, which included:

- a desk review of monitoring and evaluation material collected for each area, including case studies;
- interviews and focus groups with Link Up workers, volunteers, participants and local stakeholders, carried out through visits to each of the ten Link Up areas;
- interviews with strategic stakeholders, selected with advice from Inspiring Scotland and carried out face-to-face or by telephone; and
- a self-completion survey with programme participants.

1.28 Copies of discussion guides are available on request.

² Independent Interim Evaluation of Link Up, Clarity, 2013

1 Introduction and Method (continued)

Review of existing monitoring and evaluation data

1.29 Monitoring and evaluation information gathered by Inspiring Scotland from each Link Up site was reviewed, with a particular focus on identifying evidence of outcomes for individuals and wider community outcomes. The information included a very wide range of documents, including:

- activity evaluation reports from 2012-13 and 2013-14 (typically between one and three group activities were evaluated in each area, each quarter);
- periodic individual case studies;
- quarterly local area reports;
- Link Up reports prepared by Inspiring Scotland for the Scottish Government (as part of the reporting on the use of CashBack funds); and
- activity monitoring data, including quarterly project participation records.

Gathering the views of Link Up workers, volunteers, participants and local stakeholders

1.30 We visited each Link Up project to undertake interviews and focus groups with the Link Up workers, volunteers, participants and stakeholders (including host organisations). Where a key participant was not available on the day of our visit, a follow up telephone interview was arranged. Semi structured discussion guides were used for interviews and focus groups. We spoke to 90 people across all project areas. Table 1.2 shows a breakdown by area of those involved in the local discussions.

Table 1.2: Local participants in the research

Area	Project worker	Volunteers & participants	Stakeholders	Total
Alloa	1	15	5	21
Gallatown	1	6	2	9
Gorbals	1	6	3	10
Larkfield	1	4	0	5
Leith	1	1	2	4
Muirhouse	1	3	3	7
NW Kilmarnock	1	6	2	9
N Motherwell	1	5	3	9
Possil	1	5	2	8
Whitfield	1	3	4	8
Total	10	54	26	90

1.31 Notes from each discussion were transcribed and key points and quotes documented. We agreed with all participants that we could use appropriate quotes from them in the report and that these comments would not be attributed to them. Fieldwork was completed in mid-July 2014.

Gathering the views of strategic stakeholders

1.32 It was agreed that six strategic stakeholders from Inspiring Scotland and Scottish Government would be interviewed. This happened in July 2014 through a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. A semi structured discussion guide was used.

Survey of programme participants

1.33 We developed a short self-completion survey to find out more about the impacts that involvement in Link Up projects had brought about for those participating. Link Up workers distributed the survey to a range of people who were actively involved in local projects. The survey was available as a paper-based questionnaire or an online survey.

1.34 About 30 surveys were issued in each of the ten Link Up areas. In total, 178 surveys were completed by active programme participants (out of an estimated number of 1,150 active participants). This sample size gives a 95% confidence level and confidence interval of 6% in relation to active participants. There was a spread of responses across all ten areas (although the response from Gorbals was lower than elsewhere). A sample of active participants was selected by the local worker and more than half of those invited to participate did so.

Overview

1.35 About 270 people were consulted as part of this research. The numbers are broken down in Table 1.3. In addition, we reviewed a significant number of reports and documents relating to the activities, outputs and outcomes of the Link Up project. These included case studies, which gave more detail of the impacts that the programme had for individuals. We have included four of these case studies in Appendix 2. Two use the participant's own words and two were written by Inspiring Scotland. We have not sought to verify the content of these case studies, but they are entirely consistent with our findings of the type of transformation Link Up can bring about.

Table 1.3: People consulted during research

Method	Source of data	Number
Case study visits	Link Up workers	10
	Volunteers and participants	54
	Stakeholders including host organisations	26
Strategic interviews	Inspiring Scotland	2
	Scottish Government	4
Survey	Self-completion paper survey	178
Total		274

2. Project Development and Delivery

Introduction

2.1 This section of the report considers the development of the Link Up Programme and explores views on the approach and the ways in which the programme has been developed and supported. The section includes the views of Link Up workers, strategic stakeholders and representatives from the host organisations.

The Model

2.2 Link Up is a partnership between Inspiring Scotland and ten locally-based charities. During the period covered in our evaluation it was being delivered in ten areas across Scotland. The geographic locations of these Link Up projects are often defined by the issues faced by the community – through measures like the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, for example. Link Up focuses on the strengths of the community – and builds on their capacity and assets.

2.3 Although what Link Up does is determined by what people in each of the individual local communities want and their local assets, there are some common principles guiding the development of the programme.

- local people are active contributors and participants in the activity – not recipients of services;
- activities are inclusive to all community members, and not based specifically on need;
- existing community assets and ‘what works well’ are developed and supported;
- social connections for individuals and communities are supported;
- outcomes such as self-esteem and self-worth are recognised as important and encouraged; and
- individuals and communities are supported to sustain activity and connections.

2.4 To achieve this, Link Up workers engage and work alongside local residents to facilitate activities that the residents would like to undertake. All the activities aim to bring members of the community together, and get local people actively participating in their running.

2.5 Before pursuing an activity with local people, Link Up workers consider three criteria:

- Will the activity bring people together that might otherwise not have connected?
- Are people able to participate on an equal footing?
- Can the activity be sustained (for example, is ongoing funding required and is the activity capable of being led by local people)?

2.6 Link Up was careful not to pre-determine local outcomes – as this could breach the principle of decisions about activities being taken by local people. However, it has been helpful for them to develop a logic model for the project which set out the type of activities, outputs and outcomes that would be expected as a result of the Link Up approach. This is shown in Figure 2.1.

2.7 This logic model was also important in terms of reporting to the Scottish Government on the outcomes delivered through the CashBack funding received by Link Up. The outcomes set out in the Link Up logic model can be related directly to the wider CashBack Programme logic model (see Appendix 1).

The role of the Link Up worker

2.8 Each of the ten areas has a Link Up worker, employed by a local ‘host’ organisation. The Link Up worker has a budget (of up to £15,000 per year) to work with local people to develop their own projects and activities. Inspiring Scotland see the role of the Link Up worker as crucial to the success of the programme. This view was reinforced by wider stakeholders. The worker requires to have experience of (informal) community development and the right values and ethos. Local workers need to care and see local people as prime contributors – and be brave enough to engage on this basis.

“It is almost a vocational job – they need that commitment.” (Host organisation)

“It wouldn’t work without a project worker – she is the drive behind everything.” (Volunteer, Female, Whitfield)

Figure 2.1: Link Up Logic Model

Activities	Outputs	Aim 1: Outcomes for Individuals	Aim 2: Outcomes for Communities	National Outcomes
<p>Activities that increase social contact/connections between individuals and groups in the community.</p> <p>Activities that involve individuals participating/using and giving their skills and assets.</p>	<p>Number of hours of community activity.</p> <p>Number of new activities.</p> <p>Number of new and existing participants in activities.</p> <p>Number of volunteers involved in activities.</p>	<p>Increased levels of social interaction for individuals, which will in itself reduce isolation.</p> <p>Stronger connections and improved relationships based on trust and reciprocity between people in the community.</p> <p>Improved confidence and self-esteem.</p> <p>Improved health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Improved perception of their community as a place to live.</p> <p>Improved resilience and self efficacy.</p> <p>Development of new skills.</p>	<p>Increased level of community activity.</p> <p>Better community integration and cohesion.</p> <p>Increased capacity and motivation to influence what happens in their community.</p> <p>Improved perception of their community as a place to live.</p>	<p>We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger.</p> <p>We live longer healthier lives.</p> <p>We live in well designed sustainable places where we are able to access the services and amenities we need.</p> <p>We have strong resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.</p>

2. Project Development and Delivery (continued)

What makes this approach different?

2.9 Inspiring Scotland believe that there are particular elements that make Link Up different in its approach to other programmes. These include:

- Local people decide what happens and how – and the local worker helps with the practicalities of making this happen.
- The model and approach gives space to take risks.
- The type of workers (with a commitment to asset-based work) that are recruited.
- It is genuinely ‘bottom-up’ and crucially does not go in with pre-set outcomes for the community.
- The local pot of funding is essential in allowing people to act quickly to do the things that local people want (subject to normal accountability).

“For other projects they develop an idea, and apply for funding. If they don’t get it, they don’t do it. This project tries it and then looks at whether it can be sustained.” (Host organisation)

“The big difference is that Link Up takes the time to listen to the community and finds out what their needs are.” (Link Up worker)

2.10 Some local stakeholders emphasised the importance of having access to dedicated funds, with the authority to act on community views. This was seen as unique to this programme. Another local stakeholder believed that Link Up worked from the same philosophy as Community Learning and Development (CLD), but that CLD is distracted by many other things, whereas Link Up is totally focused. Because of this it is able to grow organically and, as a result, can take people with it.

2.11 Through our self-completion survey, participants and volunteers were asked what it was they thought was different about Link Up. The fact the activities are inclusive was seen as a key difference by participants and volunteers. They also thought the programme was different in the way it built local networks; welcomed people; did things the community wanted; and built on local assets. The understanding of the worker and the respect they gave the community was also a feature. Table 2.1 shows the results from the 166 survey respondents who answered this question.

Table 2.1: Survey analysis: Why is Link Up different from other local activities?

It is open to everyone	90%
It gets different people talking together and working together	85%
I feel welcomed	83%
It does things that the community wants – not ideas from outside the area	80%
The worker understands and respects our community	77%
It values and uses the skills, strengths and interests of local people	74%
Things get done	72%

Getting Started

2.12 The first challenge for the Link Up workers was to identify what communities wanted. The Link Up workers did this in a number of ways in each of the ten areas, but there were some common approaches:

- **Conversations with local people** – It was important that Link Up workers were approachable in their communities and spoke to people directly to find out more about what they wanted to do. In some areas the Link Up worker was already known – and this was helpful.
- **Visiting existing organisations** – Link Up workers visited people and groups within the community to gather their views on what it was about the area they liked, disliked and wanted to change. These conversations helped to identify interests as well as the communities’ skills as workers could tap into local knowledge about individuals’ interests.
- **Community events** – Link Up workers tapped into existing events where local people came together and used this as an opportunity to find out more about what interested them. Also, specific events were organised to encourage the community to come together. Evenings of entertainment and food were organised simply to get people together and talking. Workers used a range of innovative methods including a pop-up beach, a pop-up farm, a pop-up museum, a community song and film, large-scale interactive maps. These events were also used by workers to gather views and test ideas.

- **Asset mapping** – Some Link Up workers undertook a process of mapping the whole area in terms of services and amenities; getting local people involved in the mapping process. This helped to identify buildings, services and facilities that could be used for Link Up activities.
- **Taster sessions** – Link Up workers then took some of the suggestions from the community and organised taster sessions to test out the viability and interest in the activities.

“Local knowledge is important – they’ll say ‘that wifey at number 6 hasn’t been out for a week’ which will influence the approach of people chapping doors, speaking to one another, inviting them to events and then we take it from there.”
(Link Up worker)

“Everything that has developed has come from ideas suggested by the community.” (Link Up worker)

Getting Started - Gallatown

The host organisation in Gallatown held an Adult Learning Day for members of the community, which included a baking competition. This was intended as a bit of fun, but the community embraced the challenge and enjoyed taking part in baking activities. As a result, Link Up started a cookery club building on the enthusiasm of the community, but with an underlying aim of improving local people’s diets and general health.

“People don’t eat enough food, or they spend their money on takeaways.”

The idea of the cookery club was to encourage people to attend for eight weeks, to learn how to make food on a budget. A crèche was provided which was necessary to allow parents to attend. The cookery club has now been running successfully for two years. It works with one paid member of staff coordinating the activities and with volunteers who work on a rota basis.

Getting Started - North Motherwell

Local people were initially engaged when they were asked to contribute to a community film and song which reflected their positive memories and aspirations for the community. A ‘Listener’s Event’ was then held for over 200 local people where everyone was invited to give their ideas about the type of activities they believed would make North Motherwell a ‘better place to live’. Volunteers who had attended this event said that these engagement activities had been well received by the community.

“There were thousands of ideas – they have been very successful.”

Working with Others

- 2.13 Partnership working was seen as a successful aspect of the Link Up approach. A large number of organisations were working in partnership with Link Up including local voluntary and community projects, community councils, schools, local sports clubs and public sector organisations, such as councils, NHS, and Police Scotland.
- 2.14 Partnership working seemed to work best where the approach was flexible, with the partners understanding the ethos of Link Up and what it was trying to achieve. For example, in Hawkhill, the Violence Reduction Unit of Police Scotland were already working with NHS Forth Valley to develop an asset-based approach to community involvement. In this sense, the partnership with Link Up offered the potential to complement existing work and improve outcomes for the community.
- 2.15 Working in partnership with other organisations has helped Link Up to:
- connect with a wider range of stakeholders, groups and individuals;
 - avoid a duplication of services or of existing information; and
 - create opportunities for accessing additional funding sources.

“It enables Link Up to have a greater reach.”
(Link Up worker)

“I felt consulted – it was clear they (Link Up) were not trying to duplicate, but look for gaps.”
(Stakeholder)

2. Project Development and Delivery (continued)

2.16 There were also benefits for partner organisations who reported the following (specific) benefits for their organisations:

- a reduction in anti-social behaviour;
- an increase in the take up of their services, from people who might be considered hard to reach;
- local people being more willing to speak to the police; and
- Link Up making it easier for organisations to engage with the community and to talk to them about specific issues – like their health or being able to refer them onto GPs.

“People in trouble aren’t used to being treated well. They expect to be treated badly by people in authority. But given a bit of humanity, they react positively and are more confident and less aggressive.” (Partner)

Relationship with the Host Organisation

2.17 Each Link Up project is based within a host organisation. These are charities based in the area. The majority of Link Up workers had a positive relationship with their host. They reported being given ‘freedom’ to carry out the Link Up activities as they saw fit and had ‘carte blanche’ to undertake their work.

2.18 Host organisations were selected by Inspiring Scotland to ensure a ‘good fit’ and one which would be mutually beneficial for the organisations and Link Up. For example, host organisations tended to work with similar groups of people particularly those disengaged from their communities and those from areas classified as suffering from deprivation. In finalising decisions about which host organisations to work with, Inspiring Scotland undertook a due diligence exercise and assessed the ability of the organisation to help deliver the Link Up approach.

“(Host organisation) and Link Up tie in well together. Both projects are working with people who have had their life choices taken away and as a result, are not able to build their capacity.” (Link Up worker)

2.19 However, a small number of Link Up workers had found it necessary to distance themselves from their host organisation when trying to engage with the community. They found that local people had suspicions of, or stereotypes about, particular organisations, which hindered the Link Up worker’s ability to engage with them. In these cases, Link Up workers chose not to use any branding that associated them with the host organisation which they felt allowed them to engage more effectively with members of the community.

“Some of the community see themselves as ‘activists’ and they saw (the host organisation) as authoritarian. I knew I would have to be different so I have no name badge or branding to identify me as an employee. I wanted the community to have ownership of the project and not (the host organisation).” (Link Up worker)

2.20 Most had more positive reactions from the community about the host organisation. In one example, the central location for the majority of the Link Up activities was the local community centre – the location of the host organisation. This was seen as positive as the community saw the centre as a ‘one stop shop’ where they could become familiar with the staff and volunteers.

2.21 The host organisations reported benefits of their involvement with Link Up. These included:

- heightened awareness of community issues;
- increased profile in the community;
- shared belief in asset-based approach, for example building a community asset approach into the host organisation’s policies and practices; and
- improvements to their own organisation’s activities.

“We have been based in (local area) for 30 years. We ran a group but probably didn’t have many community connections. It has put us on the map.” (Host organisation)

Host Organisation - Crossroads

In Gorbals, the host organisation, Crossroads, spoke of the period when Link Up was being established and how there was a need for the organisation to understand that Link Up had a different approach that required flexibility – something that was at odds with the outcomes the host organisation was trying to achieve. The host organisation felt that Link Up had encouraged them to refresh its approach and to go back to their roots.

“Things had to happen quickly in the beginning, and it took a lot of flexibility on the part of the host organisation to let it.”

“Our outcomes for young people have been quite tight and target led and this has changed since Link Up began as we have acknowledged that process is often the important thing and that it’s not all about numbers or certificates.”

Relationship with Inspiring Scotland

2.22 Inspiring Scotland Performance Advisors provide support to Link Up workers in a number of ways. They:

- provide induction training for Link Up workers;
- organise and facilitate regular meetings of all Link Up workers;
- prepare quarterly reports for each area;
- meet with Link Up workers regularly (typically every two to four weeks) to discuss how work is progressing, provide support on evaluation, and support workers to explore the extent to which they are applying Link Up principles; and
- provide specific support on development activities – such as community engagement.

2.23 Most felt that Inspiring Scotland was available and accessible when necessary, and did not try to meddle in the day-to-day work of local projects.

2.24 The comments about the relationship with Inspiring Scotland were very positive and included:

- having the freedom to undertake activities;
- giving confidence to try new things;
- providing support and advice; and
- availability should they be needed (‘always at the end of a phone’).

Perceived Successes and Challenges of the Approach

Successes of the approach

2.25 Link Up workers and stakeholders identified a range of factors that led to the success of the approach taken. Those most commonly mentioned were:

- **Link Up worker** – Stakeholders and volunteers stated that the role of the local project worker is integral to the success of the programme. The Link Up worker’s ability to drive the programme and to spend time building relationships with the community was vital to its success.
- **Access to funding** – Link Up workers commented on the benefits of having local funding available to them to allow ideas to get off the ground quickly (often in days or weeks) to maintain the enthusiasm and momentum of the community.
- **Freedom** – Link Up workers felt that a key success of the approach was that there was no ‘pressure’ in the form of specific targets to meet and therefore they had freedom to work with the community and react to their suggestions rather than having a pre-set plan of activity.
- **Engaging with people** – It was seen as vital for the Link Up workers to be visible in the community and to ‘get out there’ to where the people are. Engaging with local people in their ‘comfort zones’ was a key success factor.
- **Changes in individuals** – A major success of the approach is the change for participants involved in Link Up. Workers and stakeholders commented on the approach being successful as it helped individuals recognise they had assets to offer their community.

“Being seen out in the community so that people became familiar with me was important.” (Link Up worker)

“The change in people themselves – you hear feedback from families about the change in their relatives.” (Link Up worker)

2. Project Development and Delivery (continued)

Challenges of the approach

2.26 Link Up workers had faced a number of challenges in getting Link Up programmes started. Some challenges were shared by several of the projects. In most cases ways have been found to resolve the initial challenges faced.

- Gaining trust – One of the first challenges Link Up workers experienced was trying to build relationships with the community. Often this was difficult because individuals were disengaged and were suspicious of the Link Up approach.
- Articulating interests – Some Link Up workers reported that some people had become so disengaged that it had been difficult to explore their interests and to come up with activities they might wish to pursue.
- Recognising skills – Link Up workers said that often local people were not comfortable talking about what they were good at, nor were they good at recognising their skills and potential.
- Working with volunteers – Link Up workers reported some challenges in working with volunteers, including building their capacity, instilling the importance of attendance and managing their expectations over leadership roles – as not all volunteers were cut out for roles with responsibility.

“Gaining the trust of the community has been the biggest thing. We are dealing with a lifetime of drink, and drugs and jail spells which all leads to aggressive behaviour and people are wary of you – they think you want something in return.” (Link Up worker)

“People had no idea what they wanted – they’ve no hobbies, no ambition and low aspirations – they’re just busy with their day-to-day.” (Link Up worker)

Monitoring and Evaluation

Local area quarterly reports

2.27 As part of Inspiring Scotland’s performance monitoring processes, quarterly performance reviews are undertaken by Inspiring Scotland’s Performance Advisors in collaboration with local workers and their host line manager. The output from these reviews is incorporated into a quarterly local area report by the Performance Advisor. These reports cover expenditure against budget; project outputs and milestones (including a breakdown of activity numbers); project outcomes and social impacts; and local developments. These can also include other qualitative information including case studies; quotes from participants; photographs of activities and events; and creative methods of demonstrating the impact for individuals.

2.28 Since September 2013, Link Up workers have been required to produce at least one detailed qualitative evaluation report each quarter. This can be either:

- an evaluation of at least one group activity (for example, a cooking group); or
- a case study (reviewing the journey and outcomes for an individual participant or volunteer).

2.29 A standard evaluation report form is used to report outcomes for group activities, but case studies have no set format. In each area, Link Up workers are expected to consult with participants and volunteers to identify which three or four outcomes in the logic model (as shown earlier in this Chapter) are most relevant to the group, and identify the most appropriate methods for measuring progress towards these. To date much of this evaluation activity has focused on outcomes relating to increasing social networks; improved relationships; improved health and wellbeing; and development of new skills. The reports outline a range of quantitative and qualitative information about the outcomes for individuals and include information on the sources of evidence.

2.30 Comments on monitoring and evaluation from local workers included:

- The quarterly evaluation reports were beneficial, even if quite time consuming and detailed.
- The monitoring and evaluation process was quite open, flexible and creative.
- The requirements for local reporting on CashBack were incorporated within the wider process (although in one case the worker expressed concern about having to report in a different way to the host organisation and Inspiring Scotland).
- The advice from Evaluation Scotland (which was provided to support the expansion of local evaluation) had helped to improve understanding of the monitoring and evaluation requirements in completing the quarterly reports.
- Some Link Up workers felt that, in the light of experience, there was an opportunity to streamline the information requested to allow a greater focus on the key measures.

Recording Feedback - Hawkhill

Groups and activities taking place in Hawkhill use a system of gathering information which they call a 'talking stick'. The person holding the stick can talk, without interruption while they feedback on activities. Often speakers are asked if they can be quoted, and this is captured and presented onto the 'visions board' alongside photos which help to demonstrate the impact of the project.

Link Up Programme quarterly reports

2.31 Each quarter, Inspiring Scotland provides an overall report to the Scottish Government. It follows a similar format to the local reports (on which it draws heavily). It contains financial information; progress against milestones, outputs and activity levels; local area updates; outcomes; successes, challenges and key learning points.

Future Development

Sustainability

2.32 Sustainability of the Link Up approach has been considered from the start. Sustainability might take a number of forms. For example:

- Some individual projects within the Link Up areas have become self-sustaining and no longer receive direct support through Link Up.
- In one area, a charitable trust is investing in the approach. This will allow all work there to be developed without further support from the Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland.
- Other charitable trusts are considering expanding the current approach to new areas.
- One local authority has provided financial support to one Link Up area and others are considering either supporting existing approaches or taking the approach to new areas.
- Discussions are also taking place with NHS Boards, local authorities and regeneration agencies.

2.33 In discussions with the Inspiring Scotland and Link Up workers, it was felt that (especially taking account of the time required to build community engagement before undertaking the first activities) three years from start was a relatively short time to develop evidence of all the impacts and to move to a longer term sustainable approach. Some Link Up workers felt that there was a need for further capacity building and support before local projects or activities could become self-sustaining. This would help build community confidence and skills so that they could confidently take on the running of these activities. Workers noted that further funding and resources would be necessary to deliver this.

2.34 In addition, strategic stakeholders raised the different, but related, issue of replicability. Could this approach be taken by others and replicated effectively, perhaps in slightly different ways? This issue is discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

2. Project Development and Delivery (continued)

Lessons learned from the approach

2.35 We asked Link Up workers to share the lessons they had learned from establishing projects in their communities. There was a wide variety of views, with a number being raised more frequently:

- **Recognise your assets** – this includes people and their skills as well as buildings and local amenities. Link Up workers spoke of the benefits of carrying out community mapping exercises to be aware of the assets at the start of the process.
- **Groundwork** – some Link Up workers spoke of their initial enthusiasm and urgency to get projects up and running, but that this could easily get “out-of-hand”. They spoke of the importance of planning and having the right people and processes in place.
- **Time to develop** – while Link Up has an ethos of responding to the community and being ‘asset-based’ it is also important to let things ‘bed-in’. While there was an element of ‘trial and error’ about many of the projects, workers suggested they needed time to develop and for initial challenges to be resolved.
- **Invest in volunteers** – many of the programmes relied on volunteers and workers were quick to acknowledge that good volunteers were hard to find and should be nurtured and not exploited.

“Don’t call it quits too soon – there are always peaks and troughs.” (Link Up worker)

“It has been successful because of all the work put in at the start.” (Link Up worker)

“When you find a nugget – like a good volunteer, you have to not wear them out, as good volunteers are hard to find.” (Link Up worker)

3. Project Activities and Participation

Introduction

3.1 Each of the ten Link Up projects submit data to Inspiring Scotland containing information about the volume of Link Up activities, types of activities, and the number of participants and volunteers involved in activities. Information is also gathered relating to the age and gender of participants involved in activities. This section reports on some statistical analysis of this data.

3.2 A range of sources were used to gather this information, including:

- quarterly local reports and evaluations in 2012-13 and 2013-14;
- local case studies gathered throughout the duration of the project;
- Link Up reports prepared by Inspiring Scotland for the Scottish Government; and
- activity monitoring data including quarterly project participation records.

Overview of Project Activities

3.3 The range of Link Up activities is varied, as it reflects what participants in each community want. We have grouped the activities under six broad headings, each of which covers a range of diverse activities:

- **Arts and crafts** – this takes many guises, including classes in, sewing, craft, creative writing and photography. Music includes guitar groups, drumming and DJ workshops.

- **Sport and exercise** – physical activity is popular in Link Up projects. The types of activities include cycling, athletics, football, circuits, street dance and archery.

- **Food and health** – this includes lunch clubs, breakfast clubs, community meals and gardening projects which allow people to grow their own vegetables.

- **Social and cultural** – this includes a community cafe; a cinema club; a pop up museum; a befriending group; bingo; and an intergenerational group.

- **Community action** – this includes residents and tenants associations; community information; litter picks; and other environmental projects.

- **Common interest groups** – these projects engage particular groups in the community and include parent and family groups; youth groups; and gender based groups.

3.4 There have been 72 individual Link Up activities offered across all areas, throughout the duration of the project. We have grouped these into the six broad categories described in Paragraph 3.3. Table 3.1 shows the spread of Link Up activities offered by area, across 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Table 3.1: Range of activities 2011 - 2014

Area	Sport & exercise	Social & cultural	Common interest	Arts & crafts	Community action	Food & health	Total
Alloa	4	2	3	0	1	0	10
Gallatown	2	0	0	1	2	1	6
Gorbals	0	2	0	6	1	0	9
Larkfield	2	0	1	1	1	0	5
Leith	1	1	2	0	3	1	8
Muirhouse	3	2	0	3	1	2	11
NW Kilmarnock	1	3	0	0	2	1	7
N Motherwell	1	1	2	1	0	0	5
Possil	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
Whitfield	1	3	1	0	0	2	7
Total	15	15	12	12	11	7	72

Note: Some activities, especially those labelled 'Common interest' and 'Community action', also gave rise to events for the wider community such as gala days, fun days and pop-up beaches.

3. Project Activities and Participation (continued)

The balance of activities is very different from area to area, reflecting the community input into designing the local activities. However, most activities are fairly traditional. Some are delivering social good and others are developing infrastructure assets – such as establishing new and active community organisations, or services.

- 3.5 Each proposed project is tested before it is included in the programme and has to meet a range of requirements including:
- Will it bring people together?
 - Will people participate on an even footing?
 - Is the project sustainable (or can it become sustainable)?
- 3.6 Local workers in each Link Up area recorded the number of hours during which participants were able to be involved in activities in their area. Table 3.2 shows the number of activity hours recorded for each project area (rounded to the nearest full hour), for 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14.
- 3.7 Project activity hours increased significantly as projects progressed, almost tripling between 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Levels of Participation in Link Up Activities

- 3.8 Local workers record the numbers of participants engaging with Link Up activities, in each project area. Table 3.3 sets out the numbers of new participants in the three years of Link Up activity. Clearly, most of the projects got into their stride during 2012/13. With over 8,000 different people involved since the local projects became operational, it is clear that the activities have had a wide reach. Of these, Inspiring Scotland has made a conservative estimate that over 1,150 people are regular participants in Link Up. In keeping with the programme's principles, activities have been developed to encourage a wide range of people to become involved. However, in some cases activities have focused on engaging specific groups - including men of working age and older, people affected by drug and alcohol problems, families, children or homeless people.

Table 3.2: Activity hours

Area	Start Date	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Alloa	Feb 2012	0	71	296	367
Gallatown	April 2012	0	285	707	992
Gorbals	June 2012	0	136	358	494
Larkfield	Nov 2011	12	120	398	530
Leith	Jan 2012	0	71	254	325
Muirhouse	May 2012	0	144	344	488
NW Kilmarnock	Dec 2011	42	281	351	674
N Motherwell	April 2012	0	202	495	697
Possil	Feb 2012	0	170	414	584
Whitfield	June 2012	0	76	649	725
Total		54	1,556	4,266	5,876

Table 3.3: Annual number of new participants in Link Up

Area	2011/12 New Participants	2012/13 New Participants	2013/14 New Participants	Total New Participants
Alloa	0	273	142	415
Gallatown	0	333	508	841
Gorbals	0	222	307	529
Larkfield	46	176	158	380
Leith	0	358	464	822
Muirhouse	0	547	406	953
NW Kilmarnock	97	368	322	787
N Motherwell	0	597	535	1132
Possil	0	593	815	1408
Whitfield	0	311	494	805
Total	143	3,778	4,151	8,072

3. Project Activities and Participation (continued)

Levels of Volunteering in Link Up Activities

3.9 Local workers also record the numbers of individuals involved in volunteering to support Link Up activities. Table 3.4 sets out the numbers of new volunteers in the three years of Link Up activity. With over 500 different people involved in volunteering, this represents a significant investment of local people's time in local activities. Of these, Inspiring Scotland has estimated that at least 130 people are regular volunteers.

Table 3.4: Annual number of new volunteers in Link Up

Area	2011/12 New Volunteers	2012/13 New Volunteers	2013/14 New Volunteers	Total New Volunteers
Alloa	0	33	4	37
Gallatown	0	55	38	93
Gorbals	0	5	7	12
Larkfield	1	10	8	19
Leith	0	22	12	34
Muirhouse	0	4	13	17
NW Kilmarnock	35	77	21	133
N Motherwell	0	56	39	95
Possil	0	18	30	48
Whitfield	0	32	31	63
Total	36	312	203	551

Gender and Age Profiles of Participants

3.10 Project workers gathered information about the age of Link Up project participants, across 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14. There was a change in the way that the information was gathered between 2012/13 and 2013/14. In the first two years, there was a single age band for all participants who were over 30. In 2013/14, this was split into a larger number of age bands. We have estimated the breakdown of older age groups in 2011/12 and 2012/13. An overview of this information is summarised in Table 3.5.

3.11 In total, over three-fifths of participants (61%) were younger people under the age of 29, the broad demographic on which CashBack normally focuses.

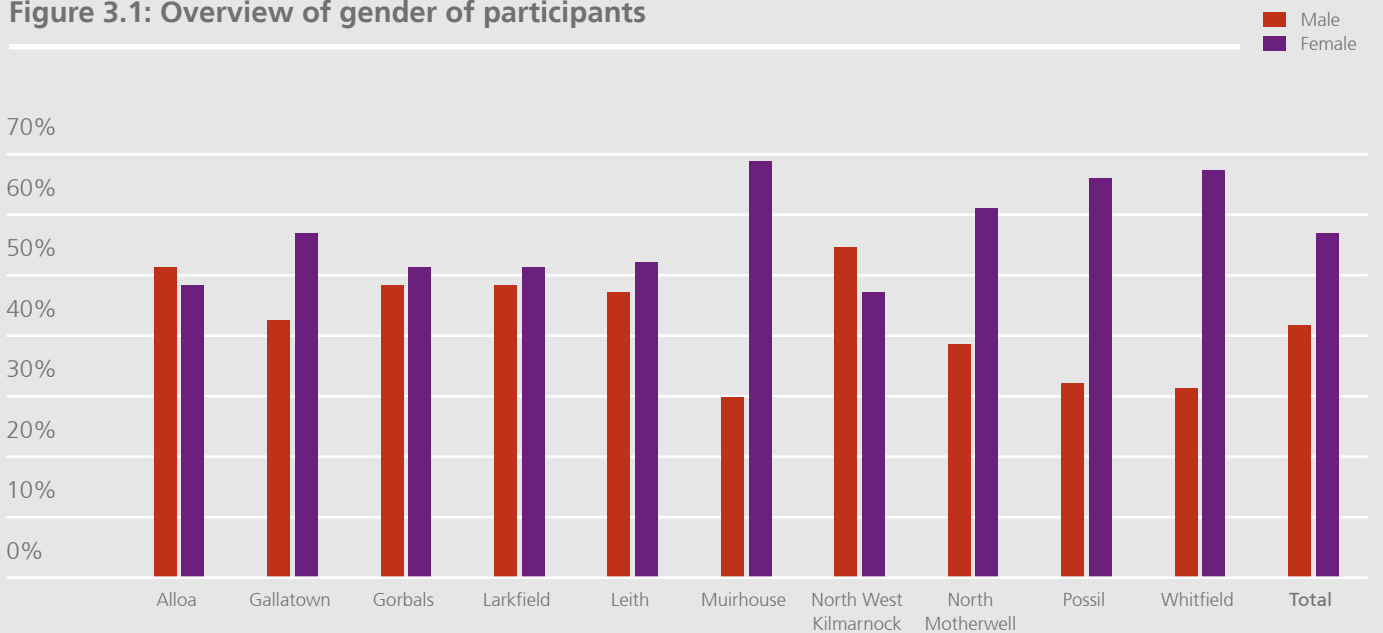
3.12 Local project workers gathered information about the gender of project participants. An overview of participant gender breakdown across the programme by area is included in Figure 3.1

3.13 Women made up 59% of participants. The larger proportion of women involved in Link Up reflects the experience of many community projects. In some areas, this also reflects the activities that the community decided to undertake, including specific activities for women in some areas.

Table 3.5: Age profile of Link Up participants

Age Range	Total
0 to 11	31%
12 to 18	12%
19 to 29	18%
30 to 59	28%
60 and over	11%
Total	100%

Figure 3.1: Overview of gender of participants



4. Outcomes for Individuals and Communities

Introduction

4.1 This section of the report considers the progress that has been made towards achieving the outcomes for individuals included in the Link Up logic model. The full logic model is shown in this report at Figure 2.1. The outcomes that will be considered in this section are:

- increased levels of social interaction for individuals, which will reduce isolation;
- stronger connections and improved relationships based on trust and reciprocity between people in the community;
- improved confidence and self-esteem;
- improved health and wellbeing;
- development of new skills;
- improved perception of their community as a good place to live; and
- improved resilience and self efficacy.

4.2 These outcomes are considered in turn in the first part of the section and we then consider any other outcomes for individuals that may have been achieved as a result of the programme. As noted earlier, the outcomes reflect the outcomes contained in the CashBack logic model.

4.3 The information for this section is drawn from analysis of the discussions with volunteers and participants in each Link Up area and from the survey of participants. There were 54 volunteers and participants involved in discussions with us and 178 participants returned a survey form.

4.4 In addition, the evaluation reports on activities produced by Link Up workers contained a range of information about outcomes for individuals. Because this is generally based on qualitative data gathered in a range of ways, and over different time periods, aggregation of this information is not straight-forward. However, the information contained reinforces the messages from our discussions and surveys and we have included some of this in the example boxes contained in this section.

Outcomes for Individuals from the Logic Model

Increased levels of social interaction

4.5 The rationale for the Link Up Programme was underpinned by the benefits that could be achieved by people meeting and engaging with others in the community. This would build networks among local people, some of whom would have been unlikely to be part of networks beyond their family and may feel isolated within the community.

4.6 Two-thirds (66%) of respondents to our survey of participants said that they had never taken part in community activities in their local area before becoming involved in Link Up activities. This demonstrates that participants in Link Up activities include a significant proportion who would not normally engage in community activities, suggesting that the Link Up approach is engaging people who may be considered “hard to reach” and that they have increased their levels of social interaction as a result of becoming involved.

4.7 In our local discussions with participants and volunteers, many spoke of the difference their involvement in Link Up activities had made at a fundamental level, by giving them a reason to leave the house.

*“Before, I was just sitting in the house watching TV, or sitting in the bookies with no money.”
(Volunteer discussion, Male, Hawkhill)*

“I am not the world’s most social person. I was always chronically shy. The project has helped me work on this.” (Volunteer discussion, Male, Gorbals)

*“Prior to becoming involved with Link Up we did very little in the local area. Now because of Link Up initiatives both my son and I have new interests and have extended our social networks.”
(Survey respondent, Muirhouse)*

Photography club, Gorbals

Volunteer A joined the photography club as much to learn new skills as to meet new friends. He has since widened his social circle and he now socialises with other participants from the group outwith their photography club.

"I joined a group to be part of a group. At the most basic level, it gets me out of the house, but now we all go out and we have such a laugh."

He felt this overall experience had improved his confidence and he feels less isolated and more active in the community.

Women's group, N Motherwell

In North Motherwell, the women's group (8 participants) organised a series of social events for the community to bring people together and reduce isolation. Three events were run between November 2012 and June 2013, including a cookery demonstration. Ninety-six percent of the women who attended the cookery demonstration said they had met new people in their community and all said that they would welcome similar future events.

"I don't get out of the house much now and it was good to meet so many women of all ages."

Stronger connections and improved relationships between people in the community

4.8 Results from the survey of participants suggest that a substantial proportion had increased the level of contact they had with others in their community as a result of being involved with Link Up. The survey showed that 52% of respondents felt that they had a lot of contact with people (other than family) in their local area before their involvement with Link Up, but after involvement in Link Up, this proportion rose to 95%.

4.9 From our discussions with participants and volunteers, it was clear that involvement in Link Up activities had led to improved relationships and stronger connections for the community. Most commonly, this related to:

- **Creating intergenerational relationships** - different age groups who might not normally mix, were now coming together in discussion groups (for example, one for local men), or, for example, in arts and crafts classes. The participants indicated how highly they valued these relationships.

- **Feeling less intimidated** - participants reported improved relationships between young people and older generations. Older people were less intimidated by younger people because they were getting to know them by undertaking the same activities through Link Up.
- **Breaking down barriers** - participants spoke of an increased acceptance of people from ethnic minority communities as well as people with disabilities. Volunteers reported that some ethnic minority families from neighbouring areas had wanted to move to their community, as they perceived it to be more welcoming and safer for their families.
- **Mixing with new people** - in a similar way, participants and volunteers spoke of meeting people, from different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs, which had helped them to respect the opinions of others.
- **Settling in** - some people we spoke to had recently moved to the community and found that they had been made to feel welcome through Link Up activities.
- **Reduced isolation** - participants and volunteers spoke of how at a fundamental level, Link Up gave them a reason to leave the house and to socialise with others.
- **Providing respite** - for example, one participant was a full time carer, and attended the Link Up activity as a form of respite and 'something different' to do - others saw it as a change from their normal day-to-day pressures.
- **New lease of life** - Link Up activities had encouraged some participants to 'come out of retirement' while others had found new friends. Some participants said that since their children had now grown up, they no longer had the "connections that were made at the school gates."

"You meet new people.....you'd never have met some of the older ladies before, and it's great because they can give you advice and help with your kids and that." (Participant discussion, Female, Gallatown)

"More people are keeping an eye out for each other, which is why I got involved." (Participant discussion, Male, Leith)

"There is more acceptance of diversity." (Volunteer discussion, Female, North Motherwell)

4. Outcomes for Individuals and Communities (continued)

Bike Maintenance project, Gallatown

In Gallatown, young people had historically used the lawn bowls club ground for their trail bikes. This had led to “tense relations” between the older people and teenagers in the area. Link Up negotiated the use of the bowling club facilities to help start their bike maintenance project. Local people donate their unwanted bicycles and volunteers get together to fix them up. The renovated bicycles are then passed onto the community for use at a reduced or no cost. Link Up pay the bowling club for use of the facilities and this has led, in turn, to some of the older people coaching the young people in mechanics.

The older people have relished this opportunity to engage and are now looking to apply for funding so that they can get involved in other community activities – such as starting a disabled bowling club.

“This was a group of people facing extinction with no clue about how to fight back – and now they are applying for funding and getting a business plan together, and the relations with the whole community are better.” (Link Up worker)

Inner Circle group, Possil

In Possilpark, a relatively new men’s group, has started. It is a very diverse mix of individuals - including some who are retired, unemployed and previously isolated or disengaged. The project worker has worked with the group to help them harness skills and abilities, build confidence and change attitudes and behaviour.

The men have been involved with activities including poetry and art and more recently have made strong links with UNIS (Uniting Nations in Scotland). UNIS is a group for refugees mostly from Syria, Sudan, Iran and Iraq, supported by the local police. The men visited the group one evening to meet its members. This gave everyone involved the opportunity to improve their understanding of the community. From that point on, relationships developed which are ongoing.

Participants spoke of the group allowing them to mix with different people, reducing their isolation, helping them develop new skills, learning about other groups and volunteering opportunities, and developing stronger support networks.

“I have learned about different cultures and experiences.” (Participant)

“They met UNIS refugees and perceptions changed.” (Link Up worker)

“The relationships I have made have helped me grow in confidence after a debilitating illness where I was unable to leave the house for a time, and more recently helped me cope as a new mum.” (Survey respondent, Leith)

Improved confidence and self-esteem

4.10 During the survey, 57% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were lacking confidence in being around others prior to becoming involved in Link Up. Following involvement in Link Up, the number expressing this view fell sharply to 23%. In response to a separate question, almost two-thirds of survey respondents (64%) said that they now felt more confident dealing with people as a result of their involvement in Link Up activities.

4.11 In our discussions with participants and volunteers, most felt that their confidence had been boosted as a result of being involved in Link Up activities. Many spoke of being encouraged and supported by Link Up workers and volunteers to try new things. There were many wide ranging examples of things that demonstrated participants’ new found confidence. Some examples were:

- undertaking public speaking on behalf of Link Up – encouraging others to join in;
- joining a local running club;
- volunteering for the Boys Brigade and the local mothers and toddlers group;
- volunteering for an anti-sectarian project;
- applying for a college course in Community Development;
- volunteering for a local healthy living initiative;
- volunteering for the Samaritans; and
- (in more than one case) studying for qualifications through further education courses.

“I feel more confident in myself and my self-esteem is better. Before, there were days when I didn’t want to get out of bed.” (Participant discussion, Female, Gallatown)

“I never got involved with anything as I was always in the house and never really came out the door at night unless I really needed to. Now, through Link Up, I am doing more for my community and myself. It has boosted my confidence so much that I am now doing things that I previously would never have dreamed of.” (Survey respondent, Hawkhill)

Arts And Crafts group, Gallatown

Link Up encouraged this individual to come to an arts and crafts class – something she had never tried before. She enjoyed the camaraderie among the group of women taking part and found her confidence increased. She was encouraged by the Link Up worker to volunteer to sit on the Parent Teacher's Association of her son's school and has found new skills and confidence through meeting new people. She was recently elected the Chair of the PTA and has been involved in helping the school to recruit a new Head Teacher. She has been on the interviewing panel and has also attended other meetings where she has represented the school.

"I have to attend meetings where there are local councillors and other important people, but now I feel confident in their company – better at articulating myself."

Improved health and wellbeing

4.12 From the survey, there is clear evidence of participants and volunteers having an improved sense of health and wellbeing as a result of their involvement with Link Up. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of survey respondents indicated that they felt healthier after their involvement in Link Up activities. This included both their mental and their physical health.

4.13 In our discussions with participants and volunteers, we heard of a wide range of ways in which being involved in Link Up activities had improved participants' health and wellbeing. Examples included:

- **Increased healthy eating** - Link Up activities involving allotments or community gardens have increased awareness of healthy eating and encouraged people to try new foods. In Larkfield, volunteers had been making wooden grow boxes for schools to grow their own vegetables.
- **Increased physical exercise** - some participants had been encouraged to try new physical activities as part of Link Up and were reaping the benefits of their increased exercise. For example:
 - o in Larkfield, there was a successful martial arts club;
 - o in North Motherwell a running club had increased activity levels;
 - o there was a women's football team in Hawkhill, which was encouraging more women into sport; and
 - o an archery club in North West Kilmarnock was helping people with mental health and addiction issues to become more active.
- **Improved mental health** - participants reported an improvement in their mental health and general outlook on life. Participants and volunteers spoke of their increased positivity now that they have 'something to look forward to'.
- **Increased awareness of health** - stakeholders commented on the increased sense of health and wellbeing among participants. In Hawkhill, NHS Forth Valley gave awareness raising presentations to Link Up participants and then carried out health checks. There is now also a 'drop-in' clinic where people can go for information and advice about their health and increased opportunities for physical activity. Because of these activities, delivered through partners including Hawkhill Community Association, the Violence Reduction Unit and Link Up, health professionals reported that participant's eating habits had changed and that people were eating more healthily and more regularly. There had also been changes in smoking habits, with participants reducing, if not always stopping, smoking. This had led to small, but not insignificant, improvement in the health of participants.

"I've dropped two dress sizes since I started on the football team." (Participant discussion, Female, Hawkhill)

"I have changed to a healthier lifestyle and eating habits, which have resulted in me losing a fair bit of weight, giving me lots more energy with my children." (Survey respondent, Female, Whitfield)

Archery club, North West Kilmarnock

One of the participants at the archery club in NW Kilmarnock had battled addiction issues for several years. This participant was in the army, but a serious car accident left him disabled. He became addicted to amphetamines and cannabis – using these daily. Since being involved in Link Up and specifically the archery club, he no longer uses drugs and has secured a full time job as a door steward.

"Archery is his focus and his life. He has got so much invested in it." (Link Up worker)

4. Outcomes for Individuals and Communities (continued)

Lunch club, Whitfield

In Whitfield, Dundee a lunch club has been helping people to eat more healthily and raise awareness of the benefits of healthy eating. The lunch club provides hot, nutritious meals and has helped to encourage people to cook healthy meals at home. An evaluation of the lunch club conducted in September 2013, indicated that people were eating more healthily and “felt better” after eating nutritious meals at the lunch club.

Development of new skills

4.14 Survey respondents were asked about their skills before and after their involvement with Link Up. Just under half of respondents (47%) agreed, or strongly agreed they had strong skills before they participated in Link Up activities. Following their involvement in Link Up activities, this figure rose sharply to 83%.

4.15 In our discussions with participants and volunteers, we heard of a wide range of ways in which being involved in Link Up activities had helped participants to develop new skills. Some examples were:

- first aid courses;
- food hygiene courses;
- health and safety courses;
- healthy eating certificates;
- cooking certificates;
- experience in public speaking;
- learning how to organise and run events;
- researching ideas;
- developing communication skills;
- building negotiation skills and entrepreneurial skills; and
- becoming more tolerant.

“I just come in for a natter and a catch up ... (but, as a result) ... I’ve done lots of courses on food hygiene and nutrition and I’ve now got umpteen certificates.” (Participant discussion, Female, Gallatown)

“My first talk, I was bricking it. I said to myself ‘I’m not going in there – there’s hundreds of people’. But once I did it, I felt great.” (Volunteer discussion, Male, Hawkhill)

“I’m 100% more confident now than I was. I’ve been on courses, on training on how to manage meetings and how to run groups. I’ve done a first aid course too. My skills have definitely got better.” (Volunteer discussion, Female, Hawkhill)

Gardening group, Larkfield

In Larkfield, one of the volunteers had been unemployed for six months. He knew the Link Up worker personally and was encouraged to get involved in a gardening project which built grow boxes for use in schools. Although he had no real interest in gardening, he decided to try it out and found that he had a skill for woodwork and for working as part of a team. He has recently completed a six week course in community development and plans to continue volunteering as well as applying for jobs in community development.

“I enjoy it. It’s not about paid work, it’s for the experience and it’s better than being unemployed – it keeps you in a good work ethic.”

Creative Writing group, Gorbals

In Gorbals, a number of participants in the Creative Writing group used their new skills to complete application forms for a course at college. They were able to demonstrate their relevant experience and this led to them securing full time placements.

Improved perception of their community as a place to live

4.16 There was a marked increase in the number of survey respondents who indicated that they thought their community was a good place to live (89%) after being involved in Link Up, compared to before their involvement (66%).

“I think Link Up has been an amazing experience for the community. As a volunteer in the café, I have observed how much of an impact it has had with everyone involved, and I’m sure it has changed many lives for the better.” (Survey respondent, North Motherwell)

4.17 Our discussions with participants and volunteers also indicated an improved perception of their community. For example:

- **Pride in the area** – there were examples of litter picks and cleanup projects by volunteers who now took pride in their local area.

- **Looking out for one another** – there were a number of examples of members of the community looking out for older residents. This included taking food from community cafes to older people in their homes, or telephoning those who hadn't been seen for a few days to check they were fine.
- **Reduced fear of crime** – in one area, fruit and vegetables grown in the community garden were delivered to older people, by young people, in an attempt to get different generations of people understanding one another better.

“It wasn't a community before Link Up. Now there is more for the community to get involved in – the garden, the women's group, the football and the kids too.” (Participant discussion, Female, Hawkhill)

“They chap the door of the older person and say 'here's a cabbage' and now that has helped to reduce the fear of crime as it's seen as an act of kindness and has a massive effect on breaking down barriers.” (Stakeholder, Hawkhill)

“It's seen as a good place to live.” (Link Up worker)

Archery club, North West Kilmarnock

In North West Kilmarnock, a survey of the archery club undertaken in February 2013, indicated that 78% of participants thought that Link Up had improved people's perception of the community as a place to live. Some felt that the club has improved the area and its image.

Improved resilience and self-efficacy

- 4.18 These were not terms that were used in a community setting and did not form part of our survey or discussions. However, through our evaluation and those undertaken by Link Up workers, there is evidence to support the conclusion that resilience and self-efficacy have improved. Involvement in Link Up has resulted in participants having a combination of stronger local networks; greater confidence and self-esteem; improved health and wellbeing; new skills; and improved perception of their community.
- 4.19 Additionally, the logic being tested around individual transformation, is that it proceeds as follows:
- By doing things together, people meet new people (or, more formally, make social connections). This allows people who may have very limited connections to develop new relationships and emotional ties. This builds confidence and leads to a widening network of contacts.
 - People learn a new skill or undertake a physical activity. This brings further personal confidence and, given that skills are learned or activities undertaken in a group, reinforces the deepening and widening of social connections.
 - People use their learning or skill to help others (for example to support a youth group or lunch club). This reinforces confidence, reduces any sense of dependency and increases self-worth.
 - As a result, people have different aspirations for the future and begin to take greater control of decisions about what they are going to do with their life.
- 4.20 Our evaluation and other evidence gathered by Link Up suggest that this logic is reasonable. Indeed, the final step points to an increasing self-efficacy, where an individual takes deliberate decisions about how they can influence their future in a positive way for example to engage and be less isolated; to make decisions about life-style choices around alcohol, drug and tobacco consumption; or to re-engage with employment. Our findings (which are summarised in sections 4.33 to 4.39) and the individual case studies included in Appendix 2, support the conclusion that this outcome is being realised by a significant proportion of the individuals who are actively involved in Link Up.

Review of changes as a result of involvement in Link Up activities

- 4.21 Survey respondents were asked to indicate the things that had changed for them as a result of their involvement with Link Up. Several participants had gone on to positive destinations such as volunteering (34%), gained a qualification (24%) or got a job or work placement (6%). In focus groups, participants spoke of their feelings of accomplishment and achievement.
- 4.22 Others had gained important softer skills such as feeling more confident around others (64%), feeling able to cope with life (52%) and having more friends (80%). Table 4.1 contains all the responses to the question about the changes for participants as a result of their involvement in Link Up. There were 167 respondents to this question.

4. Outcomes for Individuals and Communities (continued)

Table 4.1: Survey analysis: Changes as a result of involvement in Link Up activities

Changes	Total
I have more friends	80%
I have new skills	64%
I feel more confident dealing with people	64%
I feel more healthy (mentally and/or physically)	63%
I feel more able to cope with life	52%
I have started volunteering	34%
I have got a qualification	24%
I have got a job or work placement	6%

*"I'm using skills I didn't know I had."
(Participant discussion, Female, Whitfield)*

*"Although I gained a highly respected qualification through the scheme, I value the friendships and bonds created through the activities I volunteer with more highly."
(Survey respondent, Male, North West Kilmarnock)*

*"The new skills and ability to negotiate with people, with confidence."
(Participant discussion, Male, Larkfield)*

4.23 Participants and volunteers we spoke to had an increased sense of self-worth. When asked how they would be spending their time, if they had not been attending Link Up activities; the majority indicated they would be 'lazing about' and not undertaking any activities at all.

*"I wouldn't even have gone shopping before, just locally but not to a big supermarket. You wouldn't get me in a big store because I had no money so I felt inferior and unwelcome."
(Volunteer discussion, Female, Hawkhill)*

*"Link Up has given me more friends and the confidence to learn more and cope more with things that come my way."
(Survey respondent, Female, North Motherwell)*

Examples of Outcomes for Individuals

In Gallatown, the Link Up worker gave the following example of an individual who had made a change to their life through Link Up.

"There is a great example of someone who used to put their kids in a taxi to school which was about five minutes away and then went back to bed. They joined the cookery club and this gave them a reason to 'keep their clothes on' – it gave them a support network, they made friends, spoke to neighbours and this person lost six stone just by eating better and getting active as well as reducing their medication for depression."

In NW Kilmarnock, one participant had recently joined the archery club. She has five children and was described as "isolated" by the project worker as she was also caring for her husband who suffered from mental ill-health. She had not worked in over 15 years, however she joined the archery club and through that, she joined a local youth project. She has now secured a paid job related to the Commonwealth Games.

Outcomes for Communities

4.24 The final part of this section considers the progress that has been made towards achieving the outcomes for communities included in the Link Up logic model. The full logic model is shown in this report at Figure 2.1. The outcomes for communities are:

- increased levels of community activity;
- better community integration and cohesion;
- increased capacity and motivation to influence what happens in the community; and
- improved perception of their community as a place to live (which is also included in the outcomes for individuals).

4.25 These outcomes are similar to intermediate outcomes included in the CashBack logic model. According to the CashBack logic model, the intermediate outcomes are expected to be delivered in the medium term rather than the short term. The logic of the Link Up approach is that people are empowered and supported to build their own capacity and that it is possible, wider community outcomes might be achieved after this stage. Given that most of the activities that are helping to build the capacity of individuals have been running for less than two years, it is natural that more limited progress would have been made at this stage in relation to community outcomes.

4.26 The focus of monitoring and evaluation work by Link Up to date has been on the outputs and outcomes for individuals. This monitoring and evaluation work makes clear that the changes for individuals brought about by involvement in Link Up activities have had an impact on their communities. For example:

- the substantial growth in the percentage of participants that are involved in community activity (from 34% before Link Up to 74% after);
- the significant number of people who, as a result of involvement in Link Up activities, are involved on the committees of local community organisations;
- the intergenerational work and positive discussions among people of different cultures and beliefs is reported to have improved integration and cohesion in some areas;
- the significant number of people who, as a result of involvement in Link Up activities, have the knowledge and confidence to influence what happens;
- nearly half the volunteers in the Dundee lunch club believed that they could make positive changes to their community and could influence what happens in their community;
- three quarters of participants surveyed from the children and families group said that they liked living in Possil and more than half believed that more positive things would happen in the area in the future; and
- overall, 89% of participants thought that their community was a good place to live (compared to 66% before involvement in Link Up).

4.27 There is no doubt that:

- those actively involved in Link Up activities have an increased level of community activity;
- many report better community integration and cohesion;
- they feel that they have greater capacity to influence what happens; and
- they have an improved perception of their area as a place to live.

4.28 So, it can certainly be stated that progress is being made to deliver these wider community outcomes.

4.29 However, to a large extent, these outcomes only apply to the active participants in Link Up. This is a fairly small pool in relation to the total number of people living in the ten areas. Of course, the actions of participants (in becoming involved in community action; in promoting community cohesion; in influencing what happens in their area; and in promoting an improved perception of their community)

will have some direct wider benefit, but there is still a question as to whether the impact of Link Up activities will lead, in time, to improvements in the wellbeing of the wider community.

4.30 Emerging evidence suggests that this is possible. For example, in some communities Link Up is already leading to wider infrastructure changes which are bringing about changes for the community as a whole and have the potential to increase their impact over time:

- In Muirhouse, Tenants and Residents of Muirhouse (TRIM) is emerging as a strong and active community organisation. It has played a very active role in sharing information within the community, and is becoming involved in discussions with local services and policy representatives.
- Also in Muirhouse, a community shop has been established which is providing affordable food to local people, and providing a focus for local activities and events.
- In Gallatown, the bowling club, which was close to closing, has been developed and strengthened to a point where it has a business plan in place and is applying for funding.
- In Gallatown and Leith activities are bringing together older and younger people, which are already leading to benefits for the local community.
- In Possil the work between the men's group and asylum seekers group is also breaking down barriers, and integrating people from different parts of the community.

4.31 Evidencing that this change is taking place on a more widespread basis will be a challenge. In relation to these wider impacts, there will be a question of what can be attributed to Link Up and what can be attributed to other factors to work in the community. Additionally, Link Up is a young programme and widespread community changes can take a considerable time to develop and take effect. And the resources available through Link Up locally are tiny, when considered in relation to the total public sector resources being spent in the areas in which Link Up operates.

4.32 These are significant considerations for Link Up and it would be extremely helpful to develop a well-founded theory of change or logic model. This model would help to describe the way in which the changes for individuals in a community, can lead to wider improvement in the ability of the community to use its assets effectively and to improve the outcomes generally for that community.

4. Outcomes for Individuals and Communities (continued)

Overview of Outcomes

- 4.33 This section has highlighted information from our research, which demonstrates that being actively involved in Link Up activities has made a real difference for many people. This is reinforced by the case studies in Appendix 2. Additionally, in terms of the logic underpinning Link Up, progress is clearly being made. Our survey of people actively involved shows the following have resulted from involvement in Link Up activities:
- more than doubling the number of people who are involved in community activity (from 34% to 74%);
 - a substantial growth in the number of people with a lot of local contacts (from 52% to 95%); and
 - nearly two thirds of participants (64%) felt more confident.
- 4.34 These initial changes have led to other wider changes for individuals actively involved in Link Up. For example, our survey shows that as a result of involvement in Link Up activities:
- 89% of participants thought that their community was a good place to live (compared to 66% before involvement in Link Up);
 - 63% felt healthier than before;
 - 52% felt more able to cope with life than before;
 - 83% felt that they had the skills they needed (compared to 47% before); and
 - 34% had started volunteering as a result of involvement in Link Up activities.
- 4.35 Our survey also indicated that 24% of participants had gained a qualification and 6% had got a job or work placement. It is estimated by Inspiring Scotland that there have been 1,150 people with a regular involvement in Link Up. We applied the figures from our survey to these 1,150 people, rather than the total of more than 8,000 participants in Link Up. On this basis, it could suggest that nearly 300 people have gained a qualification and nearly 50 people have gained employment so far as a result of their involvement in Link Up activities.
- 4.36 We then compared these figures to the separate estimates that are gathered by Link Up workers as part of their monitoring. When the local workers' estimates for the ten areas are totalled, the figures are that:
- 55 people had gained employment as a result of involvement in Link Up activity (and another 120 had expressed a desire to get a job);
 - 82 participants had earned Food Hygiene qualifications;
 - 218 other participants had achieved different qualifications; and
 - 42 participants had entered a university, college or other training course.
- 4.37 The figures derived from two completely separate methods are remarkably similar and give additional confidence that they represent a reasonable estimate of the outcomes achieved as a result of active involvement in Link Up in relation to gaining qualifications and employment.
- 4.38 There is also evidence that, as improved outcomes are achieved for individuals, this is beginning to translate into wider community outcomes and an increased interest in local people to shape what happens in their community and, in some cases, what local services should look like.
- 4.39 The evidence also supports the conclusion that Link Up positively contributed to the outcomes being sought by the CashBack Programme. This is highlighted in more detail in Appendix 1.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

5.1 This section considers all the evidence analysed as part of this evaluation. We begin by reviewing the main findings in relation to the delivery of outcomes and then set out conclusions about the extent to which Link Up has:

- delivered its intended outcomes (as set out in its logic model in Figure 2.1), and contributed to CashBack outcomes, in all ten areas;
- contributed to far reaching change for local people involved in the programme; and
- successfully engaged individuals who do not typically engage with other activities.

5.2 We then consider the main learning emerging from the programme, and discuss issues of sustainability and replicability. Finally, we make a number of recommendations.

To What Extent has the Programme Delivered its Intended Outcomes for Individuals?

5.3 Inspiring Scotland has successfully delivered its asset-building approach in ten communities in Scotland. There is clear evidence that this has had significant positive personal impacts for those residents who have been actively involved in these communities. For instance:

- Link Up activities provide social networks that previously did not exist (often for people who were isolated);
- participants benefitted from significant increases in their confidence and skills;
- participants in Link Up activity have become much more involved in community activity, including as committee members of community organisations and as volunteers;
- community integration has been strengthened in some areas, particularly in relationships between people of different ages and people with different cultures;
- many participants in Link Up activity have developed the knowledge and confidence to influence what happens in their area; and
- significantly more participants thought that their community was a good place to live after they had been involved in Link Up activities.

5.4 All of this allows us to conclude that Link Up is very much delivering its intended outcomes for individuals involved in the programme, as set out in the logic model in Figure 2.1 and is delivering against the CashBack outcomes (as shown in Appendix 1). The list of positive outcomes for active participants is impressive considering the relatively short time in which Link Up has been operating. Based on the evidence gathered, we are confident these outcomes are being delivered for individuals in all ten areas – although there are, of course, variations in the number and characteristics of the people involved in each area.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations (continued)

To what Extent has the Programme Brought About Wider “Transformative” Change for Individuals?

- 5.5 There is also good evidence that the changes that are brought about by active involvement in Link Up can go well beyond outcomes which are directly linked to social capacity and skills building. There is a strong logic to suggest that the changes individuals are already experiencing, which are directly linked to social capacity and skills building, will lead to longer term changes to their lives and life opportunities. We found that, since being involved in Link Up significant proportions of people:
- feel healthier, both physically and mentally;
 - feel better able to cope with life;
 - feel they have the skills they needed; and
 - have started or are actively seeking a job or training.
- 5.6 There is also evidence that many active participants are moving in to positive destinations following involvement in Link Up: a third of participants in our survey had started volunteering, a quarter had gained a qualification and 6% had got a job or work placement, since being involved. Given the increased skills and confidence that participants have gained, it might be expected that the number of positive destinations for them will further increase over time.
- 5.7 These sorts of outcomes can be life changing – and the extent of change for some of the participants can clearly be seen from reading the case studies at Appendix 2.

To What Extent has the Programme Brought About Changes at a Community Level?

- 5.8 The Link Up logic model in Figure 2.1 sets out a number of specific intermediate outcomes for the programme at a community level, which reflect the community level outcomes in the CashBack logic model. The CashBack model suggests that such changes could be brought about in the medium term. It is important to remember that 2011/12 was an initial start up year when members of each of the local communities worked with the Link Up worker to identify the most appropriate activities for each area. In 2012/13 and 2013/14, activities have been developed across all ten areas. So, generally work in these areas has been underway for about two years.
- 5.9 There is no doubt that many of those actively involved in Link Up activities have an increased level of community activity; that they report better community integration and cohesion; that they feel that they have greater capacity to influence what happens; and that they have an improved perception of their area as a place to live. In this sense, the community level outcomes identified in the logic model are being delivered.
- 5.10 We also identified positive examples where Link Up had supported the development of community groups, which are delivering wider community benefits. Good examples of this include the establishment of the (increasingly) influential TRIM and the community shop in Muirhouse, and work to strengthen existing community groups (such as the bowling club in Gallatown or the Friends of Lorne Primary school in Leith).
- 5.11 However, at this stage in the development of the approach, the evidence does not yet show that the positive changes for individuals are impacting significantly beyond the relatively small group of Link Up participants, into long-term wider changes in their communities.
- 5.12 Through Link Up, Inspiring Scotland and the Scottish Government set out to test an asset-based approach, which drives change not just for individuals – but also for communities. We believe that there would be great value in Inspiring Scotland, with the support of the Scottish Government, promoting a discussion with a wide range of public and voluntary sector partners about how best asset-based approaches can help to ensure that the changes for individuals can lead to reduced inequalities for the communities in which they live.

Has the Programme Successfully Engaged Individuals Who Do Not Typically Engage with Other Activities?

5.13 The programme has allowed local people in individual areas a great deal of freedom to shape the way in which activities have been selected, promoted and delivered. This is one of the key strengths of the approach. It appears the programme has been very successful in engaging people who do not typically engage in other activities or services. Some of these people have been very isolated, and the impact of the programme has often been extremely significant for them. Importantly, there is evidence that involvement in Link Up has led participants to become involved in other local community activities.

How Sustainable are the Changes in the Ten Areas?

5.14 Everyone involved in Link Up has been clear from the beginning that the programme should, over time, strengthen individuals and communities so that the support of a Link Up worker is no longer required. However, there is recognition that this takes time. There is some justifiable concern that if the programme finished at the end of the current agreed funding period, the full potential of the programme will not be realised. In reality, many of the communities involved are under-resourced. At this stage, there are unlikely to be sufficient numbers of volunteers involved, with the skills and confidence needed, to sustain many of the established activities at this stage. We believe that Inspiring Scotland should continue to work to secure funding to allow wider community outcomes to be evaluated, and beneficial activities sustained.

How has the Programme Supported Policy Makers and Others Understand and Embed an Asset-based Approach?

5.15 The Scottish Government supported the approach through the CashBack for Communities Programme for three years (to July 2014) and the Safer Communities Division and the Public Health Division have agreed to provide funding to March 2015. By investing in Link Up, the CashBack for Communities Programme and Inspiring Scotland were provided with an opportunity to test an innovative prototype which did not fit neatly into the CashBack Programme's other investment. This carried an element of risk, but also enabled both parties to:

- learn about how asset-based approaches could work in practice and the impact that this might have; and
- share learning about what works (and what does not) in a way that other areas could learn from.

5.16 Additionally, the Scottish Government's investment in Link Up:

- allowed the CashBack Programme to evolve in ways that it had not done before; and
- assessed the benefits of using CashBack funding to build an evidence base about new approaches.

5.17 Because of the reporting required of CashBack projects, the Scottish Government has been in regular discussion with Inspiring Scotland about the impacts that Link Up has had. This was initially most notable in terms of the outcomes for individuals, but recently there is emerging evidence of community impacts. This has enabled Inspiring Scotland and the Community Safety Unit to share learning and consider how the lessons from Link Up should inform future development of asset-based approaches.

5.18 Inspiring Scotland has shared its learning about asset-based approaches and has supported policy makers – particularly in the community safety and health fields, but increasingly across other policy areas – develop their understanding and knowledge of asset-based approaches. In supporting this, Inspiring Scotland has been responsive to their emerging needs, and worked with them to successfully promote understanding of the concept with a range of policy makers – for example, making major presentations to the Building Safer Communities Learning Network and the 2014 NHS Scotland conference; contributing to the 2013 Equally Well Review and the 2013 Carnegie Trust publication Enabling State Report – From Rhetoric to Reality.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations (continued)

- 5.19 Both Inspiring Scotland and the Scottish Government wanted Link Up to generate learning for the future application of an asset-based approach in Scotland. There is now a shared appreciation of the value of asset-based approaches, and the effectiveness of the Link Up model.
- 5.20 The linking of asset-based approaches to a wider approach to tackling inequalities is new territory. However, the impressive outcomes being delivered for individuals who are actively involved in Link Up and the emerging evidence around the potential for change at a community-wide level, suggest there is merit in exploring how asset-based approaches such as Link Up can lead to a reduction in inequality.
- 5.21 This will require the Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland to engage with public and third sector bodies to consider how the model and approach can be adapted, shared or replicated in order to influence the development of asset-based approaches more widely. Additionally, Inspiring Scotland should seek to ensure that funding (from whatever source) is available to allow the Link Up approach to continue to be tested and evaluated in the areas where they are currently operating to move towards evidencing wider changes for communities.

Recommendations

Monitoring and evaluation

- 5.22 Inspiring Scotland should review the monitoring and evaluation system that it uses. It currently gathers and reports on a huge quantity of information every quarter (as well as annually). This is natural, given the prototype nature of the programme and the desire to gather learning and apply it more widely. However, in the light of the experience over the last two years, there would be value in reviewing the information gathered. We recommend:
- Inspiring Scotland should review the logic model to ensure that each of the outcomes for individuals are measurable and that there is a new set of strategic outcomes for communities that would focus on the changes in the wider community.
 - Inspiring Scotland should develop clear indicators matched to each outcome that each Link Up area would gather. The number of indicators should be limited to a manageable level and clear guidance should be provided on how these would be gathered.
 - Inspiring Scotland should consider developing a template for focused case studies, which demonstrate the changes for individuals and communities in a way which is able to reinforce the messages coming from progress against the outcomes.

Wider learning from Link Up

5.23 Inspiring Scotland should review with Link Up workers and national and local stakeholders the most effective ways of linking the effective asset building work being carried out through Link Up with the rapidly emerging work on service users and communities influencing the design and delivery of services and the co-production of local plans, policies and practices. This might involve:

- Using the 'Asset-Based Community of Practice' (a networking and information sharing forum jointly run by Inspiring Scotland and the Big Lottery) to consider how best to link the asset building work with wider approaches to improving local outcomes. This might involve considering with community planning partnerships how this could be achieved without losing the vision of the community determining the activities undertaken through asset-based approaches.
- Inspiring Scotland continuing to identify opportunities for existing local areas to work closely with emerging approaches, which identify as asset-based approaches. One example is the Thriving Place approach contained in the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement, which specifically talks about using asset-based approaches and co-production. Both Gorbals and Possil are in the initial batch of three Thriving Places and there is an opportunity, which Inspiring Scotland has already begun to explore, for Link Up to identify an appropriate role in what is a fairly cluttered community landscape. This is one example of an increasing number of place based initiatives being promoted by Community Planning Partnerships and others, which may provide opportunities for collaborative asset focused work.

Sustainability and replicability

5.24 Funding from Scottish Government Safer Communities and Public Health Divisions is currently in place until March 2015. There is currently no indication of future Scottish Government funding beyond this. Inspiring Scotland is currently in discussion with a number of charitable and public sector bodies about supporting Link Up in the future and although there have been positive responses to these approaches, a refocusing and re-engineering of current public spending and services towards asset-based approaches will not be quick. This makes it less likely that public bodies will feel able to support the approach financially at this time.

5.25 In light of this, we recommend that:

- Inspiring Scotland should continue (and, if possible, extend) its discussions about support for the current established Link Up areas.
- Inspiring Scotland should consider how the programme could be extended or replicated by others. In suggesting this, we recommend that the guiding principles (including community control; an autonomous dedicated worker; and an accessible local budget) should be retained but that different delivery methods could be tested.
- The Scottish Government should consider its own role in continuing to support the wider learning from the programme. It should work with Inspiring Scotland to develop shared expectations regarding this, for any future funding or joint working – whether in the current areas or in a wider setting.

Appendix 1: Summary of evidence in relation to CashBack outcomes

Link Up outcome	CashBack short-term outcomes	CashBack intermediate outcomes	Summary of evidence
Increased levels of social interaction for individuals, which will in itself reduce isolation	Increased participation in positive activity	Sustained participation in positive activities	Strong evidence of change for individual participants – Monitoring data gathered by Link Up demonstrates the programme has reached previously isolated people and has increased their participation in positive activities. For a relatively large proportion, this participation is being sustained through the programme.
Increased level of community activity	There is increased community-based interaction Participants are more involved in community-based activities	Sustained participation in community-based activity	Strong evidence of change for individual participants – Monitoring data gathered by Link Up demonstrates that participants are now more likely to be involved in wider community-based activities. ODS evaluation suggests that many participants were previously isolated, and they now have improved connections and relationships with other local people.
Stronger connections and improved relationships based on trust and reciprocity between people in the community	Participants develop positive peer networks and relationships	Increased supportive social networks and feelings of belonging	Strong evidence of change for individual participants – ODS evaluation found that participants had experienced increased contact and improved relationships with other local people. This was supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence. Emerging evidence of change at a community level – ODS evaluation identified examples of wider community level change (beyond Link Up participants) but suggests further work is required to understand the impact at a community level over the longer term.
Improved health & wellbeing	Increased involvement in structured pro-social and healthy activities	Sustained improvements in health and well-being	Strong evidence of change for individual participants – Link Up reporting and the ODS evaluation identified strong qualitative and quantitative evidence to suggest participants have experienced improved health and wellbeing outcomes. No evidence of change at a community level at this stage – ODS evaluation did not explore these changes at a community level. This should be measured in the longer term.
Improved confidence and self-esteem	Greater confidence and self-esteem among participants	Sustained improvements in self-esteem and confidence	Strong evidence for individual participants – Link Up reports and ODS evaluation identified qualitative and quantitative evidence which shows participants have improved confidence and self esteem.

Link Up outcome	CashBack short-term outcomes	CashBack intermediate outcomes	Summary of evidence
Development of new skills	<p>Increased opportunities to develop interests and skills</p> <p>Participants demonstrate new skills and positive changes in behaviours</p>	More participants progress into a positive destination	<p>Strong evidence for individual participants – Link Up report and the ODS evaluation identified strong qualitative and quantitative evidence in relation to increased opportunities, new skills and positive changes to behaviours.</p> <p>There is also good evidence that individuals have progressed to positive destinations. Given the distance most Link Up participants are from secure employment, it is likely to take some time for positive destinations to be secured for many.</p>
Improved resilience and self-efficacy		Increased horizons and improved outlook amongst participants	<p>Emerging evidence for individual participants - By its very nature, resilience and self-efficacy will become evident for individuals over time, and in response to the challenges they face. But the ODS evaluation and Link Up reports identify individuals who appear to have experienced these changes. Longer-term evaluative work could explore this area further.</p> <p>No current evidence at a community level – Further evaluative work is required to understand changes in resilience at a community level.</p>
Increased capacity and motivation to influence what happens in their community	Participants have influenced the opportunities available to them in their community	Increased community esteem and capacity to shape local development	<p>Strong evidence for individual participants – ODS evaluation and Link Up reports have generated quantitative and qualitative evidence which demonstrates increased capacity and examples of influencing activity.</p> <p>Emerging evidence at a community level – There are some examples emerging of increased community esteem and capacity. However, longer-term evaluative work is required to understand the extent to which community esteem has changed as a result of the programme.</p>
Improved perception of their community as a place to live		Improved perception of the community as a place to live	<p>Strong evidence for individual participants – ODS evaluation demonstrated an increase in the number of people feeling their community was a good place to live – although levels were relatively high to begin with.</p>
Better community integration and cohesion		Better community integration and cohesion	<p>Emerging evidence at a community level – although ODS evaluation and Link Up reporting identified examples of improved integration among individuals, there is limited evidence of a community level impact at this stage. Further evaluative work is required to understand the extent of this in the longer term.</p>

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Introduction

The following case studies have been provided to us by Inspiring Scotland. Darren's and Tessa's stories are in their own words. Mary's story and the Muirhouse Project are written by Inspiring Scotland.

Link Up Case Study 1: Darren's Story (Gorbals)

In Darren's own words (July 2014).

I moved to the Gorbals in the summer of 2011. The only social outing I had was the choir at Lodging House Mission. From there I joined the choir at the church and for the first 6 months this is all I did in the Gorbals.

Before living in the Gorbals I stayed in the east end of Glasgow and was an east end boy. My life revolved around football, drinking and fighting. Leaving the east end was the first step in leaving a part of my life that I needed to get away from.

I had a fire in my house in the Gorbals over Olympics 2012 and all I did was drink. I had just stopped being homeless and being a smack head. I had nothing and was too proud to take anything off anyone. I remember sitting alone in my flat drinking for days on end and I tried to kill myself by taking an overdose and woke up days later. There wasn't any moment that made me get up off my arse but I realised if I didn't stop drinking I would be even worse off or dead. I took what I had which was the choir and the local library and looked for more stuff to do.

I started volunteering at Bridging the Gap and it helped change my perspective about groups of people I previously had negative views about, such as asylum seekers and refugees. I started to see the world in a different way but my old life was always calling back to me.

It was at Bridging the Gap that I met Lynsey and John from Link Up and began conversations about things that I would like to be doing in the Gorbals. A few people suggested a Creative Writing group and I had always had an interest in Creative Writing. When I heard that Link Up was starting a group, I felt it was something I really needed to have in my life. I always used poetry to help me through stuff but I could never show anyone. The creative writing class gave me the opportunity to write down my thoughts and share them with a class. It was one of the most difficult things that I came across, just expressing my feelings. Even though I knew these people, there was a barrier there. My hands would be shaking trying to read out what I had wrote and sometimes I would get angry, roll it up and throw it in the bin. Writing wasn't a problem, saying it was the problem.

I was meeting new people every week and everyone brought with them something different to the class. I was coming to get rid of some of the shit in my head but I got caught up with what everyone else was doing. It wasn't just about me but it was about all of us and all of our stories. It wasn't just you going along to creative writing but it was going with everyone else that made it special. When the volunteer and group leader Alex started the session she would come in and for 20 minutes just talk about her week. I think this relaxed me and it's what grabbed my attention. For the first time I was sitting with someone who made me believe in myself and my writing.

This was my week –the choirs, BTG and Creative Writing. In the midst of it I stumbled across the Link Up drumming and guitar groups. For the first year I was there every Wednesday. I wouldn't have lasted so long if the instructors weren't there. That was my week. Drums, guitar, the choirs and creative writing. My only structure for the week. Those 4 things. It was my friend Mo's idea to start guitar. I went from having nothing to do to having things to do 4 days a week.

The Scottish refugee council here asked us to come along and be in a documentary about the high flats. It was called 'a view from here'.

http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/news_and_events/latest_news/2205_presenting_16_performances_of_a_view_from_here.

Going in to it I was really confident because I spent the last 14 months in creative writing and every week you got feedback and support from your group. We ended up not only writing our own parts but directing them and starring in them. They even ended up taking these pieces to the museum at Kelvin grove art gallery as part of the Glasgow Mela festival.

<http://www.glasgowmela.com/saturday/Pages/A-View-from-Here.aspx> .

I worked with the Scottish Refugee Council for a year on this project. From here I joined the Citizens Theatre Community Collective. This was the beginning of 2014. I did a small show called 'Belong'.

<http://citz.co.uk/whatson/info/belong/>.

That was my first time on stage. There were 15 different people from many different countries who were all citizens of Glasgow. This is where I caught the acting bug, but, more significantly, it is the first time that I felt I was representing something more than myself. I felt like I was part of something bigger. I saw the old me and I also saw this new me transforming and often these two were at conflict with one another so this wasn't always a smooth process, but a journey with many up's and down's.

I felt proud to be part of that magnificent cast. Here I was on stage with all these lovely people performing all these songs. I'm still friends with 4 of these people now and we continue to work together. It was a real turning point for me.

Now I genuinely feel like I could get up on stage and say anything to anybody. That's the thing, I could go home and write something tonight and be able to perform it in 2 days. This has always been there; it's just taken a lot of prying out.

People always tell me I speak from the heart and this means a lot to me. I did work with the poverty truth commission. I had to speak for 7 minutes in front of 200 people and all they told me before I went out was to speak from the heart. And I did. And I felt immortal. Comfortable and in total control. With the Poverty Truth Commission I wrote and starred in my own short film called 'No Ball Games', which tells the story of where I am from and what it was like for me and people like me growing up.

<http://www.faithincommunityscotland.org/turn-up-the-volume-on-poverty-21-june-2014-4/>.

I've performed in front of 3,000 people this year. This is a massive achievement, considering a year ago I couldn't read out from a bit of paper without shaking.

Sometimes they say that the people make the person and I feel that's what has happened with me and the people I've met through getting more involved in my community. I feel now I'm representing them, the people of the Gorbals. When my friends and people in the Gorbals come to support me I feel like I'm performing with them. Everyone is so encouraging and it is so alien when people say positive things to me. At first I was like 'fuck up' and I didn't believe it. I think it's one of those reflective moments I'll have when I'm 80 and I'll look back to my life in 2014. You don't always believe you're going where you're going, but when people say that kind of stuff it's like getting a big cuddle.

Appendix 2: Case Studies (continued)

Link Up Case Study 2: Tessa's Story (Gallatown)

In Tessa's own words (April 2014).

I come from the Gallatown in Kirkcaldy. Poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and lack of opportunities have had a massively detrimental impact in the Gallatown and it has been in serious decline for years. I spent most of my life thinking this is how life is - but why should it be? We are not statistics; we are people and deserve to give ourselves the best possible chance at anything we choose and want to be and how we want to live. I want a better place for my family and friends to live, better prospects, a safe and secure community we're proud of – not just my community, but the whole of Scotland.

Around 2 and a half years ago I lost my job and had to give up volunteering with Rotaract because of my financial situation, dealing with my health issues and the mental health situation of someone close to me. This led me to become really socially isolated and compounded my problems. Luckily for me, 2 years ago I met the Gallatown Link Up worker and got involved in some local activities. This took away some of the stress and allowed me to get back into volunteering locally – knowing that I could help out at an activity, in my own community and also benefit by getting a bite to eat and making new friends, was a huge benefit. I began to realise I had something to offer and by having access to a variety of opportunities in my own community, I started to build on my skills which also helped me regain some of the confidence and self-belief I had lost.

I have been involved in Link Up almost from day one, starting from the Great Gallatown Scone-Off which developed into the Gallatown Hot Pots cooking club and has now been running for almost 2 years, the Family Fun Days and Soggy Sports - now the Gallatown Youth Club. Getting involved in these projects and helping out made me feel good about myself as well as giving me something productive and fun to do, instead of the usual normal day-to-day activities of vegetating in front of the T.V. or going on benders for days on end. Being involved in the Link Up projects gave me something to get up for in the morning.

Most of my family have been involved in one if not all of the projects and I have seen the difference it has made, not just to them or me, but all the people in the community that have got involved so far. Before Link Up, everyone was sceptical of local services, outside organisations, groups and even each other - I'm not saying that's not the case anymore, but we are supporting each other in and out of groups now and work with local services and organisations.

The differences that being involved in community projects range from things like: my mum was having a down day not too long ago and one of the girls came round with a bar of chocolate to cheer her up. I got home and my mum told me what had happened - the fact she had given her a bar of chocolate was nice, but what meant more was that she had thought of her, this would never have happened before. The cooking group, Gallatown Hot Pots, started off as healthy eating initiative which developed into a cooking group where they used to come in and cook - everything was set up and organised, the dish was decided and then everything was put away again by a few of us. Now the group decide what they want to cook, work within a budget for ingredients and manage their equipment. As well, they are now beginning to discuss opening a community café and are making a recipe book.

One of the most important projects for me was Soggy Sports – which started with a couple of us taking a group of bairns up to the local park and having a kick about and play rounders. This developed into the Gallatown Youth Club, where I was really lucky to get a Youth Work position. The Youth Club is run in 1 room in the local Bowling Club. We have a room, tiny bit of storage and access to an even smaller kitchen, but with help from the young people and local volunteers, we have come up with creative ideas, utilised the space we have and have a really successful youth club with around 20 young people attending every Tuesday night. I really enjoy being a Youth Worker and it never feels like I'm 'working'.

Around the same time I started my Youth Work post, I got an opportunity to apply for a youth work apprenticeship with Kirkcaldy YMCA and was successful in getting a place. Part of the apprenticeship is studying for HNC Working with Communities at Fife College. I didn't even know what a Youth Worker or Community Worker was until I started volunteering through Link Up and now I'm an apprentice youth worker. I work another 16 hours per week on top of this as a paid youth worker. I complete my HNC in June and I've applied to University to study Community Learning and Development. I left school with almost no qualifications and to be on the verge of going to Uni is still hard to believe.

For me, Link Up has been life changing and I've seen a huge change in a lot of people I know around the community. Seeing so many people get involved in organising things like the local Gala and toddler groups, play groups, out cycling and doing pottery!! It's inspiring and is why I want to go to University and help bring about the same kind of change in other communities. People matter and people care. They just need somebody to care about what they care about!

Link Up Case Study 3: Mary's Story (Whitfield)

As written-up by the Link Up Worker in Whitfield (September 2013).

Background

Mary is 48 years old and has lived in Whitfield for 35 years. She had a hard childhood and when her dad became ill when she was 34, began caring for him. Her mum was a big part of the community and set up a lot of things within the area.

Mary met her partner when she was 17, who is the father to her son that she had at 20. Her partner was in the care system as a child and was in and out of prison due to drug related issues, a significant issue in Whitfield in the 1980s. Mary spent all her life visiting prisons to see her partner. They eventually separated, and had an on off relationship due to the drug issues but he would always be supportive of her and her son.

Mary's partner died at the age of 36 (her son being 16), a year after her father passed away. During the same time her son started to display behavioural problems and attended a specialist school. Mary believes the death of his father – which he took very badly - may have been the trigger.

During some of this period Mary worked as a cleaner and then in a supermarket. However, these jobs were for only short periods as she had to stop working due to her own health deteriorating and caring for her family. In her own words, "Life wasn't stable".

Mary never stopped to grieve the death of her partner or father and didn't let people in or show that she was actually starting to become depressed and lonely. She added that although she has met hundreds of people through living in Whitfield, she has also lost a lot of people, probably around 15-20 family members within the last 10 years.

As a result of the combination of the above factors, Mary didn't want to go out and lost confidence in going out and speaking to people. As she explains: "All my life has been around drug issues, health issues, caring issues and death. I was lost at that point in my life. It was all too much! I had hit rock bottom but didn't know it".

Through visiting a psychologist and speaking to a friend about her experience, Mary became aware that she never gave herself time - "I have always put everyone first before me" - and was really depressed. All she was trying to do was to keep herself going.

Getting involved in Link Up

Before Link Up was established in Whitfield Mary wasn't involved in any activities or groups within the community. She had always wanted to get involved, but lacked the confidence and skills to join a community group. That began to change when she met the Link Up Worker and was asked what she thought local people would like to see happening in Whitfield? This gave her the push she needed to get involved in the Link Up Lunch Club and Fruit & Veg Stall.

At the time of writing this case study (September 2013), Mary had been involved as a volunteer at the Lunch Club for six months. Her role has included: cooking, cleaning, supporting, and in her own words, "trying to make people feel happy and relaxed and comfortable. Our staff and volunteers try to give top class service to our community. We chat to people, listen to them and I love it. It's great for our community spirit and to talk about healthy foods".

Outcomes

Mary's involvement in Link Up has contributed to a number of key outcomes for her personally.

Improved health and wellbeing

The experience of volunteering in the Link Up groups has had a material impact on the way Mary perceives herself: "It's made a great difference to my life. It has made me feel happier and more confident knowing that I'm trying to help others. It has made me realise there is a lot out there you can give to others in many ways. Volunteering for link up has really helped me emotionally and given me great satisfaction knowing that I am trying to make someone else's life better. As I should know, everyone needs support in life at times and it is so rewarding and has made me have a positive outlook on the future."

Develop new skills

Link Up has given Mary opportunities to gain new skills and take part in training that she never thought she could ever do, "I didn't believe in myself". This included a training course on food hygiene which involved a test at the end. This was the first test she had undertaken since leaving school and was a significant challenge for her – "I was freaked-out" by the whole experience. However, as testament to how far she has come, Mary completed the course and passed the test.

Appendix 2: Case Studies (continued)

Continuing health issues make employment difficult for Mary, but she acknowledges that if she could work, her volunteering experience has “given me the skills and the confidence to do that”. It has also given her confidence in meeting new people and has allowed her to see the possibility that she is capable of volunteering in other places and going into new volunteering situations. As she says, “now at my age I need to open my own path”.

Improved perception of community

Mary has always been aware of deprivation in Whitfield and recognises its presence still. However, where in the past she questioned, “What is the point? What is there actually to do in Whitfield?” she recognises that the many problems in her own life had prevented her “from opening [her] eyes to the things going on around her in her community”.

Additionally, she is starting to see the potential of the community through her involvement in Link Up: “It has been great for our community. It brings people together and it makes a great difference to people’s lives as they can meet people and learn new things. It gives us somewhere to go instead of being in our homes, to meet friends and help support each other. It is a life-line for people and without Link Up people wouldn’t be able to do these things. It is also having a positive effect on other people lives, it is giving people of Whitfield spirit back and hope for our community again”.

Link Up Case Study 4: Muirhouse Project

Developed by Inspiring Scotland to highlight the potential of working in an assets-based manner. It focuses on the impact of the programme in Muirhouse (January 2014).

“What’s bingo, bananas and a long-overdue haircut got to do with assets?”...

...they’re part of what happens when you get local people to share time together, using their strengths to help each other develop and run activities they want to do. In this case, local residents in Muirhouse, North Edinburgh.

The story starts with two women in their fifties that sorely missed their regular bingo nights which had stopped due to the closure of the hall. Link Up presented them with the opportunity to start a new monthly bingo night provided they organised and ran the event. They jumped at the chance and with a little money and support from their Link Up Worker (Julie), Muirhouse’s new bingo night started in September 2012 – it’s still going strong and regularly has over 50 players.

Most participants on that first night came along for fun; a night out with their friends and possibly to meet new friends. ‘A’ was one, but in the course of the evening acknowledged to Julie how important it was for her that the area revived its sense of community spirit. She wanted to do more, but lacked the confidence and know-how to get started.

Over the course of the next eight weeks, Julie provided organisational and a little emotional support to help ‘A’ put on a Halloween party for over 100 local kids. By December ‘A’ was taking a lead role and put on a Christmas Party for local children. Her confidence and self-belief growing, ‘A’ explained to Julie in January 2013 that she felt there was a real need to develop a supportive social space for people impacted by drug and alcohol issues in the area. This was something she felt personally strong about, her own life having been impacted by her mother’s drug addiction.

By May 2012, ‘A’s’ vision had become a reality, with a weekly Open Café catering for between 6-12 local men and women taking place in the newly-formed Community Shop (more about this below). ‘A’ was instrumental in making this happen, working with Julie to: recruit volunteers (including the two women who had set-up the bingo); enlist the support of a local woman who is a part-time drugs worker at Barlinnie Prison; and, put on training with the assistance of North Edinburgh Drug & Alcohol Centre.

The café continues to be well attended and for the participants provides a highly valued time in the week where life is a little more ordered, 'normal' and they can be themselves. For one attendee, 'B', the café initiated a much more significant journey.

'B' is in her forties and has had a drug addiction for over 20 years; as a result of which she has had one of her children removed from her and put into the care of her eldest daughter. After attending the Open Café for a couple of weeks, 'B' expressed an interest in learning to cook. With the support of the local volunteers running the café, weekly cooking sessions started – initially just for 'B', but now catering for others attending the Open Café. This marked the start of a significant and rapid (albeit still fragile) transformation for 'B'.

In ways Link Up is now beginning to understand (not covered here), 'B's' involvement in the Open Café and the cooking sessions began to increase her self-confidence, gave her new skills and enabled her to begin helping others (she teaches others to cook now). This has begun to turn-around B's view of herself, how she relates to the rest of the world and her behaviour: she is taking greater pride in her appearance (including her first hair-do in 20 years!); her level of drug taking has diminished significantly (she has stopped her daily sessions with her 'friends'); and, she is seeking support from the Café volunteers and a local voluntary group (Circle) with her interactions with social services around access to her children. Additionally, her local GP contacted her recently to check she was OK as he had not heard from her in weeks – prior to this she had been contacting her GP 2-3 times per month because she was feeling suicidal.

At the same time the bingo was starting, three local residents approached Julie for help setting-up a tenants and resident's group in Muirhouse. Almost one year later, Tenants and Resident's in Muirhouse ('TRIM') is thriving and recently won the prestigious 2013 Tenants Group of the Year Award by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland (TPASS).

At the heart of the group are its volunteers (now numbering 16 and contributing over 608 hours of volunteering in the past six months to December 2013) and in particular, 'C'. 'C' is a local family man who is in full-time employment and prior to getting involved in TRIM had done no volunteering – he now averages 14 hours per week. Like 'A', Link Up appears to have ignited a desire and self-belief in 'C' to do more for his community. This has been transformational for him, but his honesty, commitment, organisational and negotiating skills and perseverance have delivered huge benefit to the people of Muirhouse.

'C', with Julie's support, has been instrumental in establishing a successful website and Facebook Page (in one case a single post reached 19,000 people) for TRIM. In addition, TRIM has an established presence in the area with the Community Shop (previously the local butcher's). These premises were first used by Link Up as part of a community engagement exercise in December 2012, but the success of that event created a 'movement' to utilise the shop on an on-going basis. TRIM took on the lease in April 2013.

The Community Shop is open five or more days a week and is staffed solely by local volunteers. It is used by 60-80 people daily now. Firstly, it acts as an information hub where local people can find-out what is going on locally – several local groups have reported improved attendance. The shop also acts as a social hub, and not just for the Open café members, where local people often meet to have a tea or coffee. Additionally, the shop has become an increasingly important provider of fruit, veg and other healthy food stuffs, for example from week 1 to week 24: banana sales rose from 10 to 360; the number of products rose from 6 to 110; and, weekly sales have risen from £31 to £413.

In short, TRIM is effecting positive change in the Muirhouse area both directly through the shop but also by giving local people a voice and acting on their behalf to make a difference. In one case the group did a survey of broken lights in the area and within two weeks almost 80 light bulbs had been replaced by the Council. The effectiveness of the group was also highlighted recently when an employee in the local Edinburgh City Council office acknowledged staff sometimes use the TRIM name to get things done internally: "This comes from TRIM".

So...that's what bingo, bananas and a long-overdue haircut have got to do with asset-based working.

Inspiring Scotland

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