

Link Up's Relevance in a Justice Context

Link Up is making a significant contribution to the delivery of Scottish Government's Justice Strategy by:

- Addressing the psycho-social factors that can cause individual criminal activity or increase the risk of unintentional harm.
- Giving individuals the support, confidence and skills to choose alternative life-courses.
- Building social connections & community trust, making people proud of where they live & supporting them to look out for each other.
- Stimulating community-led action to increase community resilience and development.

Appendix I details the extent of this contribution (both in terms of crime and unintentional harm) in the context of the Building Safer Communities' Vision for Scottish Neighbourhoods in 2020. Additionally, although Link Up is not overtly about crime reduction or working with ex-offenders, key elements of its approach are recognised (Scottish Government, "What works to reduce crime? A summary of the evidence", 2014) as responses capable of reducing crime. These are considered below.

Addressing the underlying causes of crime

Link Up's approach simultaneously helps individuals to establish strong positive relationships with others in their community and to build confidence and self-esteem. These factors help to build social-attachment and can positively influence an individual's understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour resulting in for example, increased self-control. They can also contribute to increased self-efficacy with individuals proactively seeking to improve their own and their family's circumstances (e.g. accessing support, reduced drug and alcohol consumption, healthier eating, participation in physical exercise, re-engagement with employment). For many, this can mark the beginning of a material shift away from what has been a chaotic lifestyle.

Over the long-term we believe that a combination of people making improvements in their own lives and looking out for each other, along with a greater take-up and co-production of services, will lead to sustained reductions in inequality at a local level. This will be important in overcoming the "concentrated disadvantage" that is recognised as a key element contributing to disorder and crime.

Deterring offenders by making sure the cost of offending is greater than the benefits

At a wider community level, Link Up is contributing to increased community cohesion and a sense of belonging. This has been a catalyst for increased community organising to increase community participation and to work together to address local issues. This "collective efficacy" has included working with Police Scotland and other service providers to design and implement solutions to reduce crime (e.g. in Muirhouse) as well as the development of a culture of "community guardianship" (e.g. in Hawkhill and the Gallatown).

Reducing the opportunities for offending

Whilst not designed as a diversionary programme, Link Up has engaged over 14,700 people and developed almost 900 local volunteers. By their own admission, many have commented that had they not been involved in Link Up groups/activities there is a risk they would have been engaged in anti-social behaviour or worse. Others have explained that Link Up provides a small part of the week where they feel in control and removed from their normal chaotic lifestyle – a breathing space that helps them destress and reduce anxiety.

For some, being involved in a social grouping has given them new social skills, support networks and introduced them to positive role models (e.g. young mums in Gallatown and Muirhouse + young girls in Whitfield). These can be important protective factors that stop criminal activity.

Intervention with offenders to reduce the risk of reoffending

Many aspects of the Link Up approach discussed above reduce the risk of reoffending: development of pro-social networks, enhanced family/friendship ties, increased self-efficacy and motivation. Additionally, Link Up has enabled many individuals to effect transformational change for themselves and their family. These are recognised as being important preventative factors in terms of reoffending.

Inspiring Scotland has measured these changes through its own evaluation activity, the most recent exercise being concluded in September 2016. The following table presents the results of this activity:

Indicator	Total No. Cases since 2012
Secured Employment	71
Secured a University/College/Traineeship position	52
Attained Other Skills/Competency Based Qualification	357
Reduced Alcohol Consumption	41
Reduced Tobacco Consumption	42
Reduced Illegal Drugs Consumption	21
Reduced Daily Medication	37

Link Up workers are central to the delivery of these outcomes, providing intensive support to amongst the most vulnerable in society. At their best, Link Up workers operate pastorally often helping to lift people out of 'dark places'. For example, in a 12-month period most Link Up workers will encounter at least 1-2 local people who are feeling suicidal. They will also be supporting a far greater number of people dealing with trauma, bereavement, abuse and/or coping with mental health issues.

These issues are known to be contributory factors towards criminal activity and harm. For example, research by the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice¹ highlighted that many young men attribute a traumatic bereavement experience to an increase in their substance misuse, behavioural issues, entry into prison. Conversely, the research also suggests that young people involved in offending behaviour are more likely to experience multiple traumatic or parental bereavements than the general adolescent population and can lead to a downward trajectory including depression, comorbidity, poor education outcomes, low self-esteem and risk taking behaviours.

Recognising the significance of these issues, Inspiring Scotland continues to invest in worker training:

- Mediation and conflict resolution.
- Addiction and recovery.
- Suicide awareness and prevention.
- Bereavement.
- Trauma (due Spring 2017).

Complementing their community development expertise with skills in these areas, Link Up workers are providing support that helps vulnerable people (including ex-offenders) to cope better with materially significant conditions and experiences.

Finally, Appendix 2 provides examples of the type of change Link Up has been able to achieve at an individual and community level. The stories are drawn from our work in Muirhouse (N Edinburgh) and have both a direct and indirect bearing on the Building Safer Communities Programme's Phase 1 and Phase 2 objectives.

¹ CYCJ, "Factsheet 25 - The ripples of death: Exploring the bereavement experiences and mental health of young men in custody", May 2014.

Appendix I: Link Up’s Contribution to the Building Safer Communities Vision for Scottish Neighbourhoods (June 2015)

Vision Statements	Link Up’s Contribution Across 10 of Scotland’s Most Deprived Communities
<p>People feel part of and proud of their neighbourhood, know their neighbours, and are willing to participate in activity to improve their local area. Public spaces are clean and accessible and vandalism is rare. There is a strong element of self-policing in the local neighbourhood. People rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live and are happy to stay within the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people who thought their community was a good place to live increased from 66% pre-involvement in Link Up to 89% ¹. • Link Up has contributed ² to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 71 people securing employment ○ 52 people securing a university/college/traineeship ○ 357 people attaining a skills/competency-based qualification or award • Number of people reporting they had the skills they needed increased from 47% pre-involvement in Link Up to 83% ¹. • A bike social enterprise established in Gallatown (Kirkcaldy) • Four community cafes established • Two community shops established • Award winning tenants and resident’s association established in Muirhouse (N Edinburgh)
<p>There is much less stigma about the local neighbourhood and new local businesses and community-led cooperatives have sprung up, creating a vibrant, friendly and safe environment, as well as opportunities for employment and training. The community is defined by its strengths</p>	
<p>People are much more confident to speak up for their area and take the initiative to get things done. Demand for local services and levels of complaints have fallen dramatically as has levels of crime, disorder, danger and harm. People think their area is a great place to live and are positive and hopeful about the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link Up has reduced the pressure on a range of local services producing real net financial benefits to society of between £3.64m and £6m by end December 2013 ³. • A range of public services are referring their service users to Link Up groups including GPs, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers • Two Recovery groups established by local residents • In Hawkhill (SE Alloa), the assets-based project run by VRU, Link Up and Community Centre Management has resulted in material improvements in crime rates beyond that which might have been expected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 40% reduction in recorded crime over the five years to 2015; ○ 41% reduction in calls to the police over the previous 3 years to 2015; and, ○ 66% reduction in anti-social behaviour calls over the same period without any significant increase in police patrols and activities
<p>A wide range of local community groups, support networks and social clubs have been established by citizens keen to improve their local area. These groups have a wide social reach and most people know who in the community to contact if they want to report a problem or offer up a solution. People look after each other and help each other out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 14,700 participants in Link Up with almost 900 volunteering • Over 80 different activities and groups established – all informed by what local people wanted to see happening in their community • Number of people involved in community activity more than doubled from 34% pre-involvement in Link Up to 74% ¹. • Number of people reporting they had a lot of local contacts grew from 52% pre-involvement to 95% ¹. • 57% of people agreed/strongly agreed that they were lacking confidence being around others prior to their involvement in Link Up. This fell to 23% post-involvement ¹. • 66% of those taking part in Link Up had not previously been engaged in any form of community activity prior to their involvement in Link Up ¹.
<p>People feel safe to walk around their neighbourhood after dark because it is well lit and designed, they know their neighbours and trouble is rare.</p>	
<p>People are treated fairly and equally. People are tolerant of difference and people from different areas and groups interact positively with one another.</p>	
<p>People take care of their health and wellbeing and levels of both are improving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% of people reported that they felt healthier since their involvement in Link Up ¹. • 64% of people felt more confident since their involvement in Link Up ¹. • 52% of people reported that they felt better able to cope with life since their involvement in Link Up ¹. • Almost three-quarters of the activities/groups established involve physical activity or the development of new skills
<p>References:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ODS, “Evaluation of the Link Up Programme”, October 2014 2. Link Up internal evaluation activity 3. Matrix, “Economic Evaluation of Link Up”, June 2014 	

Appendix 2: Stories of Change from Link Up Muirhouse (N Edinburgh)

This appendix summarises four examples of the type of change (for individuals and community) effected through the Link Up project in Muirhouse, North Edinburgh. This includes impacts directly and indirectly related to the BSC programme's objectives around reductions in crime and unintentional harm. The stories were collated in early 2016. Similar stories are available from all other Link Up projects.

A's Story

- 42 years old.
- A heroin user for ten years.
- Was homeless for a period.
- "I am not like many drug users and without blowing my own trumpet I am quite a smart guy, I like to read, I am well-travelled and have done many different jobs from being in the army, a chef to horse trainer (working with Zara Phillips). My life has taken many twists and turns and find it amazing that my life was so hampered by drugs. I suppose I feel lucky in the sense that I take full responsibility for my drug taking, some people have a tendency to blame others/things that have happened to them and they are stuck in that place".
- Got involved in Link Up through the Open Café: a weekly café held in the community shop established by Link Up for local people impacted by addiction.
- In 2015, after 16 months, managed to reduce his daily methadone in take from 140ml to 0ml. In his own words: "I wasn't keen to engage with services or rehab. I went to my doctor and asked if I could reduce my methadone and do what's called a community detox, it actually took a fair amount of persuading of my doctor!! I wonder if sometimes it's easier just to keep people stable. My doctor was fearful that I would start using heroin again I suppose. It has taken me 16 months to reduce from 140ml and I can now proudly say I am clean. I have been clean for 6 months now. The last 30ml were difficult and my body struggled to adjust on occasions and I needed to be really mentally strong".
- Is currently starting a placement with CAN, Community Action North – a collaboration between Link Up, North Edinburgh Arts and the Council's Total Craigroyston initiative. 'A' is seeking to become a support worker helping those who are homeless and/or with drug issues. He is really interested in what are the turning points for people getting into recovery and as part of his placement, will visit other recovery projects and seek to bring the learning back into Muirhouse.
- He is just finishing his SMART facilitators training and is keen to start up his own recovery group in North Edinburgh.
- He is also considering starting an Open university degree in psychology.
- Despite his progress in the past 18 months, 'A' remains vulnerable and at times feels isolated.

B's Story

- 35 years old and lives with her partner and 2 children in west Pilton.
- Suffered from Mental health issues for around 14 years.
- First got involved in Link Up through the archery group and has been an Archery instructor for around 2 years now.
- She is also secretary of Tenants and Residents in Muirhouse ('TRIM' – see below) and volunteers in the Community Shop.
- Helped establish a local ADHD group with another local parent and her Link Up worker. In her words: "I've got more confidence now, big style, I've always lacked confidence, like never had confidence in myself but I feel like when I walk into the room for the ADHD group, I feel

that I could actually help people with this, and make them feel a bit better about their situation cos that's a crappy situation to be in, living with a kid who's got ADHD, no day's the same. But it's still in its early days but I do think it's gonna make a huge difference to the area."

- 'B' commented that volunteering has really helped her to gain in confidence and helped her to tackle her depression. In her own words: "...I'm happier now and I'm not as stressed out as I used to be or so easy to burst into tears and I can be more consistent with [my kids] as well cos I wasn't very good beforehand, they used to get away with a lot, I was quite lazy. It has actually made quite a huge difference, I'm not the same person I was 6 years ago, that's for sure. It really is a good start to get out the house...even if it's just a couple hours a week cos it gets you out the house, gets you meeting other people... I should be happy for what I have and get on with it really. I think I just wallowed more than I really needed to and I needed a kick up the bum and volunteering helped with that."

C's Story

- 46 years old and has 2 sons aged 13 and 15.
- She tragically lost her 3 children and partner in a house fire around 20 years ago. This extremely traumatic experience has haunted 'C' since.
- Got involved with Link Up around three years ago by attending various community events including community meals and bingo.
- In the summer of 2015, she lost her partner (father to her sons). This was a very difficult time and brought back many terrible memories for 'C'.
- In December 2015, a local woman died who had worked in the local new agents that 'C' visited daily. Moria had cancer and died within 6 weeks of diagnosis. Her children were left unable to pay for her funeral. 'C' sprang into action arranging to help the family by fundraising for elements of the funeral and persuading the local Link Up worker to hire a space for the family to come back to for a cuppa and sandwich after the funeral as they couldn't afford anything.
- 'C's' resilience and ability to think of others is a true inspiration to others in her community.

TRIM

- Tenants and Residents in Muirhouse ('TRIM') formally started in September 2012 from 3 local people who felt that Muirhouse needed a tenants group. Link Up supported the group through this early phase.
- Today, TRIM regularly sees 16-20 local people attending their meetings.
- They have a facebook page with 3,700 people liking it and the most popular post was read over 19,000 times. There is no other local platform which sees this amount of local people participating.
- Quoting directly from the TRIM website - TRIM covers all tenants and residents in Muirhouse – from Council, Housing Association, Private Lets and Owner Occupiers. We want to work in partnership with all groups and landlords to make Muirhouse a better place to live for everyone. We aim to build on the positives, deal with the negatives and take an active part in the regeneration of the area. We are interested in the area as a whole, we want people to be proud of where they come from and we want them to feel that they are part of a strong, vibrant community that cares about them and their families.
- In its first year, TRIM dealt with over 51 resident issues ranging from, broken lighting, dampness to missed bin collections and everything in between.
- TRIM has played a pivotal role in working with the Council, Police and other agencies in helping to tackle unprecedented levels of youth crime in the community. In late 2013, the chair of TRIM (Robert) and another Link Up volunteer (Kelly) were invited to speak at a Gold

command meeting. They were asked to make the experience of local people living in the community with these problems real. This was fruitful both were invited back with the Command Group explaining that they will look to Robert and Kelly's future responses as a measure of their success in tackling the problem.

- TRIM, with Link Up and City of Edinburgh Total Craigroyston, played a co-ordinating role during the search for the missing child, Mikael Kular in January 2014. Their chair was a key community representative.
- TRIM developed and now runs the local Community Shop, which is open six days a week selling produce and acting as a local hub for community events and information sharing. In the words of one senior local worker for the council: "As well as access to affordable food, local people have been more able to access information and advice from statutory and voluntary bodies in a welcoming venue. Between 60 and 80 people visit the shop every day to buy food and find out what's going on in the area." *Henry Coyle, Housing and Regeneration Manager, City of Edinburgh Council.*
- TRIM won the Tenant Participation Advisory Service's 2013 Tenant and/or Resident Group of the Year Award. The nomination was submitted by City of Edinburgh Council, Housing and Regeneration Manager.

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