

Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

A data informed approach: a how to guide to capturing local qualitative/community data



About this guide

This document has been prepared by the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme. It sets out our experience in capturing local qualitative data and narrative through engagement with local stakeholders and community organisations and provides a practical guide to the processes used so others can replicate it.

It covers the following:

- What is the purpose of the qualitative data gathering process?
- What did we do? How we collected and analysed the qualitative data.
- Areas of inequality discovered.
- How we shared our findings.
- The challenges we experienced.
- Capturing the learning from the process.
- What happens next?

This document was produced in November 2023 after completing the process for six Shaping Places for Wellbeing Project Towns.

Introduction and Purpose of Qualitative Data Gathering Process

One of the overarching ambitions of the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme is reducing inequality through a place-based approach. To support a clear focus on what the inequalities are specific to each Project Town, we wanted to include qualitative as well as quantitative data to build a narrative of inequalities and assets in each town.

The Community Link Leads across each of the Project Towns were tasked with taking a community and people-led approach to understanding the issues relating to place allowing for a local narrative to be built that can support or challenge the quantitative data. This qualitative data gathering approach allows us to move beyond numbers and statistics to gain insight on the people behind them and build a clearer picture of a town than quantitative data alone.

Having developed relationships with local community organisations and groups we sought to advance our understanding of a range of factors listed below through three key actions:

1. Conducting a review of existing qualitative data and reports of engagement exercises.
2. Sense checking quantitative data for accuracy and anything missing.
3. Capturing the lived experience of those community groups and stakeholders working with the population groups experiencing inequality.

Purpose of the Qualitative Data Review

- To identify what previous engagement had been recorded across the Project Towns and what were the findings?
- By undertaking a review of existing qualitative data identify key priorities around place for the demographic most impacted and using existing data to inform conversations and avoiding consultation fatigue in communities.

Purpose of Sense Checking Quantitative Data Profile

- To support the ongoing qualitative and quantitative data gathering related to key inequalities to identify demographics most impacted. Connecting with community organisations and stakeholders to sense check this data.
- Ask the question, did community groups and stakeholders view the inequalities highlighted in the quantitative data profile as an accurate reflection of the Project Town?
- To identify other issues locally that were not highlighted within the quantitative data profiles.

Purpose of Stakeholder/Community Group Engagement

- To connect with community organisations to understand the needs of the demographics most impacted by key inequalities in relation to the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes.
- To identify the general areas of shared learning across the Project Towns that can influence how effective community engagement is carried out.
- To promote the understanding of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes amongst local organisations.

What did we do?

The style of approach that the Community Link Leads took was an informal one that prioritised building relationships with those active in the community. The key processes used included a qualitative data review, sense checking the data profile and engaging with stakeholders and community groups.

Qualitative Data Review

Step 1 – Desk-based research

Community Link Leads requested relevant existing qualitative data reports from each Shaping Places for Wellbeing Steering Group, local stakeholders and community and/or third sector organisations. A thorough process of research using search engines was also conducted using a variety of terms such as *'[town] neighbourhood plan'*; *'[town] inequality'*; *'[town] survey/engagement'*.



Diagram: Desk-based research process used within Alloa Project Town

Around 60 reports were reviewed across each of the Project Towns, examples of reports include Burnhill Neighbourhood Plan; Clydebank Waterfront Plan for Place; Wallacetown Improvement Strategy; and Dunoon Ferry Consultation.

Step 2 – Analysing findings

Each report was analysed to identify the key findings and the links to place. Where possible, findings were linked to the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes. Reflections on the processes used and engagement levels were also provided along with any considerations on the impact of each consultation.

Step 3 – Sharing results

Findings of each review conducted within the Project Towns were pulled together into a qualitative report for each town entitled “*What we’re hearing in our communities*”. These reports were updated by each Community Link Lead throughout 2023 and shared with local Steering Groups and local stakeholders. The findings helped to shape some of the priorities within the Project Towns. These reports can be accessed [here](#).

Sense Check Quantitative Data Profile

Step 1 – Engaging with local stakeholders

An essential aspect of developing the quantitative data profile for each Project Town was sense-checking the findings with local community groups and stakeholders. It was important to identify any gaps where an inequality had not previously come to the fore and to develop conversations around what is behind the data, building a narrative around the issues of inequality. In doing so we were also exploring what these groups require from their place.

Additional notes

Some Project Towns used different additional methods of quantitative data engagement depending on what was identified locally as being beneficial. Some examples of processes used are:

Data ‘deep dive’ Session: Some Project Towns provided an opportunity for local stakeholders to come together to spend time considering the data profile and identify the key inequalities and assets within the towns.

Data Explanation Template: A data explanation document was developed in Rutherglen that can be used across towns and neighbourhoods to provide more information around how the data profile is put together and what some of the data means locally.

Step 2 – Feedback on findings

The findings from Step 1 were shared with the Programme Team and to the analysts from Public Health Scotland Local Intelligence Support Team (LIST). Where appropriate, additions were made to the data profile to reflect those findings from Step 1, including clarification on topics, new information provided and change in language used.

Step 3 – Sharing updated Quantitative Data profile

The updated version of the data profiles was shared with local stakeholders and community organisations reflecting any changes that had been made.

In Rutherglen, using this process ensured that the proximity of the population living close to derelict land became one of five key inequalities, something that would not have occurred using data alone.

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

Step 1 – Establishing relationships with local stakeholders and community groups

Using a variety of resources and networks available, the Community Link Leads sought to build relationships with local stakeholders and groups to build trust around the Programme. Some 'warm' connections and introductions through the Steering Groups were made with organisations including Health Improvement Teams and council departments. 'Cold' connections were formed through identifying local grass roots and third sector organisations and making contact.

Resource tools used

Most contacts were identified through established networks stakeholder mapping and sense-checked against the Third Sector Interface or other service in the area including:

[Argyll & Bute Community Directory](#)

[Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface](#)

[South Ayrshire Lifeline](#)

[Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire Locator](#)

Step 2 – Maintaining relationships and information sharing

The most effective relationships were found to be a two-way process of information sharing about the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme and local stakeholders and community groups informing the Programme with knowledge and lived experience. Updating people about the progress of data profile development and how their voices have been reflected in assessments and future plans was essential to the maintaining of relationships.

Bringing partners and community groups together in a room was one of the strengths attributed to the Programme with positive changes being made as a result. This was down to time spent developing relationships and building trust in communities, sometimes previously let down by other programmes.

“We hadn’t had such a range of partners come together like that before to discuss our community and our priorities for the area. The report from the session was great to read and will be really useful for things like funding applications.” (Lizzy McDonald, Burnhill Action Group member)

Step 3 – Reporting on Stakeholder engagement findings

The findings from local stakeholder engagement have been collated into the qualitative reports, updated regularly and fed into more formal reporting through Place and Wellbeing Assessments. Findings from stakeholder engagement and conversations have fed into over 25 Place and Wellbeing Assessments across the Project Towns. These assessments should accurately reflect those findings. The key themes emerging from stakeholder engagement have also been gathered into individual infographics for each Project Town and shared more widely.

Areas of inequality

To date, the key areas of inequality emerging from the qualitative data are similar across each of the seven Project Towns, with some towns experiencing inequalities unique to them, for example the proximity to derelict and contaminated sites in Rutherglen and people in Dunoon feeling a disconnect from resources and services by its geography and transport links.

The key areas of inequality emerging across each of the Project Towns are:

- Mental health and its links with the cost-of-living crisis.
- People with problem substance use, including alcohol.
- People experiencing poverty, with a focus on children.
- Carers and people with caring responsibilities and the support required.
- People living with ill health and dying prematurely.

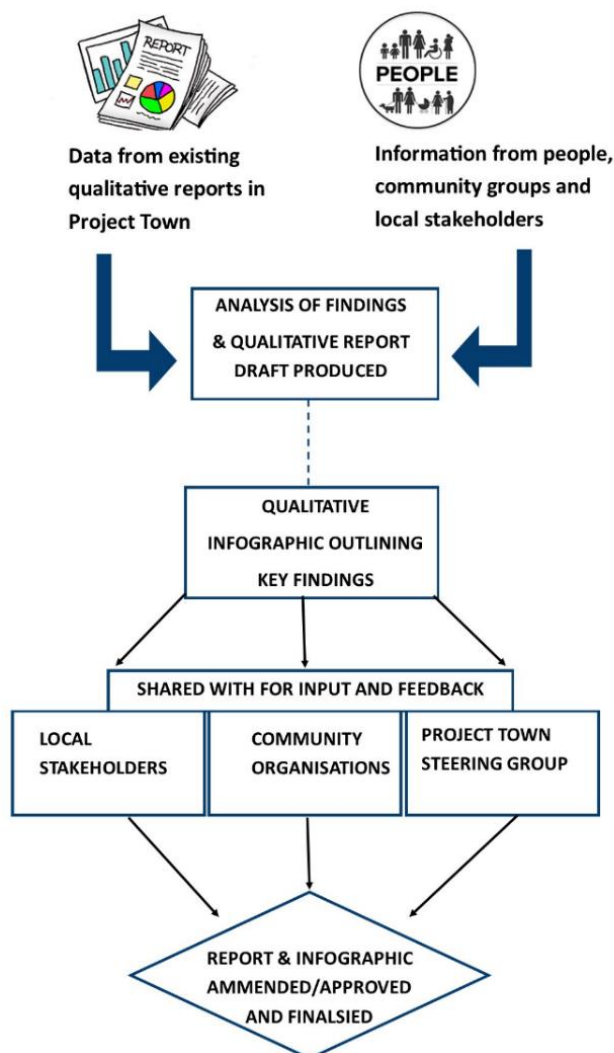
Each inequality emerging from the qualitative data outlined above was supported by the information contained in the data profiles for each Project Town. Other learning not attributable to the quantitative data, such as the stability of the local third sector or a lack of trust in formal institutions were recorded as findings. In some situations, findings from engaging with community groups shed light on key inequalities not, at first, captured in the quantitative data – the proximity to derelict land in Rutherglen and the impact on people living there being one such inequality.

Intersectionality, although not a word used in everyday language, was a theme that many conversations on inequality alluded to and, thus, requiring explanation. For example, consider someone (fictional) from an ethnic minority with an insecure tenancy living in Alloa who is an unpaid carer, has a zero hours contract and experiences depression. The way these multiple identities and disadvantages intersect and compound is complex, and would likely result in significant inequality and reduced health and wellbeing.

Sharing our findings

Throughout the engagement process one of the frustrations often cited within communities was a lack of follow up regarding consultations and community engagement by organisations. As a result, capturing and presenting our findings in an accessible and informative way that reflected accurately what had been said was, and is, a central part of the process with community groups, local stakeholders and statutory services involved. The flow chart below outlines the processes used from the data gathering phase to the sharing and presenting of information to participants in the process.

Diagram: Process of Qualitative Data Gathering and Sharing



The themes and emerging ideas captured in this report were identified by the Community Link Lead. There is therefore a degree of subjectivity and personal

interpretation inherent to the findings. To address this, Project Towns took different approaches.

Alloa: A 2-page summary of the emerging ideas was sent to the local stakeholders the Community Link Lead had had a conversation with for sense checking. Stakeholders were invited to share any comments they had, particularly if they thought anything was missing or misrepresented the experience of the communities.

It is important to note that the findings within the reports and infographics mentioned are of a snapshot in time for each Project Town. As a result, each Project Town will update the findings within 6 months of the date the report and infographics were produced.

Sharing Our Findings: Formal place-based assessments

The Place and Wellbeing Assessments carried out on plans and strategies specific to each of the Project Towns have both benefitted from access to previously gathered qualitative data through stakeholder engagement but have also been an excellent source of information gathering themselves. In the context of the Burnhill Neighbourhood Plan, this Place and Wellbeing Assessment formed part of a series of community engagement events with a family hub and with young people prior to a wider neighbourhood survey process. Similarly, in Alloa during the assessment process people shared meaningful stories from people they have spoken to through their job roles and from their personal experience - the impact of inaccessible public transport or leisure opportunities for disabled people being one example. These are comments that were not raised through other methods used, but a focus on the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes referencing public transport or play/recreation provided a platform for these stories to emerge.

Capturing people's thoughts and identifying recommendations for future improvements and recording these against each of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes provides an opportunity for people to bring local knowledge to a

plan, build and strengthen relationships and taken ownership of the assessment process. Examples of Place and Wellbeing Assessment reports can be found [here](#).

Challenges we experienced

- Identification of inequality issues through stakeholder engagement but being unable to access data which could qualify that. The **limited amount of publicly available data** on mental health is an example of this.
- Identifying what is **researcher bias** and/or **perception** when picking up on themes of inequality due to the methods used in the research process – e.g. more conversational and relational rather than formal surveys.
- Recognising that by **using organisation representatives at times to reflect on local issues** and facilitate the voice of communities/residents to be heard, there needs to be an allowance for bias towards the group's purpose and/or thoughts on an issue. There is a balance to be achieved, as by taking this approach this enables the Programme to avoid engagement fatigue in communities; to work through local networks as identified by the Steering Groups; and to avoid unnecessary new consultations.
- Making the quantitative data **more accessible** to everyone, including community organisations recognising people use and understand data and statistics differently. By doing so, supporting community groups and organisations to enhance funding applications and develop plans for new projects.
- The **importance of building trust** with local stakeholders and community organisations who may have lost trust in other services and have seen organisations come and go in their communities before.
- How to **incorporate outlier thoughts** within the process, ensuring everyone's view is valued.
- How do we include findings and feelings from those engaged that may be considered **'controversial'** or **'critical'** within reports, staying true to what is being said.

Learning from the process

Value of Qualitative Data

- Statistical data doesn't tell us about a community's lived experience of a place, of the positive assets that exist or of different services and support in the same way local knowledge does.
- Qualitative data allowed people to question the statistical data and to provide clarity on the reasons for the quantitative findings, previously unknown insights have been made available to decision-makers.
- Qualitative data provides an insight into areas not captured by quantitative data or, at first glance, quantitative data that does not appear 'significant' but in reality, is of huge importance within a community.
- Qualitative information sharing across organisations is highly valued – being able to share in-depth qualitative data from people with lived experience has opened up new possibilities to decision makers.

Sense checking

- Ensuring the information gathered accurately reflected what had been heard was an important part of the process, as was sharing findings with our partners and stakeholders which allowed for a more detailed understanding of the impact of the inequalities outlined.

Assets-based approach

- By not focusing solely on quantitative data a qualitative approach enabled us to look at assets within communities and how some of the inequalities identified in the quantitative data were being met locally – providing a more positive approach to looking at a place.

What More Needs Done

Using quantitative and qualitative data for supporting decision making

- A key theme emerging from engagement across each Project Town was that communities are seeking quality community engagement that goes beyond traditional consultation towards co-production, co-creation and co-design approaches. Engagement that builds trust as well their own capacity to becomes involved. This is particularly true for community groups experiencing inequality where the priority can be the impact of issues such as food and energy poverty rather than having a voice in decision making. There is more to be done to ensure that progress towards this is made and that the local voices of those experiencing inequality are at the heart of decision making. Without this focus the risk is that the voices of those who are already enabled with capacity and knowledge are the only ones influencing decision.
- In order to support partners when making decisions that impact on a place, we will continue to use the data gathered to feed into our Place and Wellbeing Assessments. Both the quantitative and qualitative data provides a crucial perspective on those demographics who have most to gain from a reduction of inequality and needs shared into the decision-making process.
- It is hoped that this report may act as a starting point for teams taking a place-based approach to think about the specific needs of those population groups experiencing inequality and a means to improve understanding of their needs and assets.

Continued engagement by Community Link Leads

- As new quantitative data will become available over the lifetime of the programme, so too will qualitative data. The Community Link Leads will

continue to engage with stakeholders and community organisations to ensure key themes emerging are captured in the qualitative report and used to support decision making locally and nationally.

Updating findings

- Stakeholder conversations are an ongoing part of the Community Link Lead's work, and we continue to review new data and explore opportunities to facilitate data sharing and collaboration as raised by the stakeholders contributing to this work. Findings contained within each of the Project Towns reports will be updated by early 2024.

To stay up to date on our latest news, learning and reflections about the Shaping Places for Wellbeing programme you can follow us on X, formerly Twitter, (@place4wellbeing), or check out our [web pages](#) for more information.

