

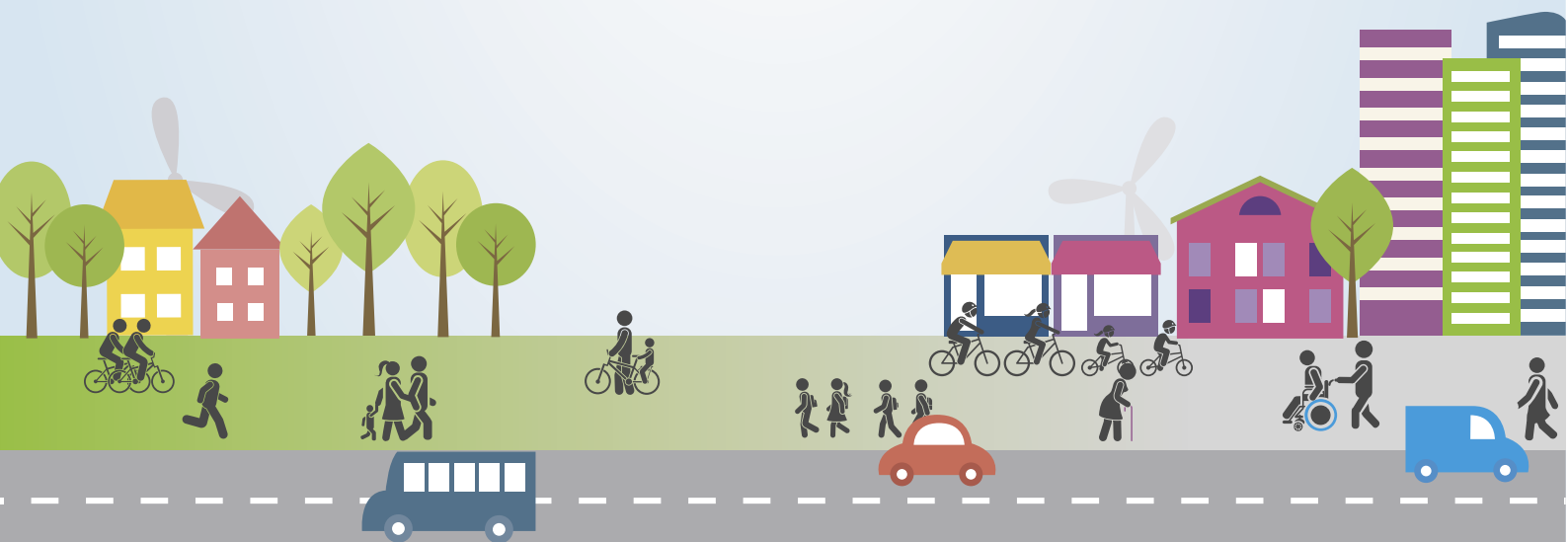
Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

Alloa Project Town

What We Heard in our Communities

A qualitative report on the findings from stakeholder conversations and a review of engagement documentation

Final Update: October 2024



Introduction

This report presents the work of the Community Link Lead working on the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme in Alloa from Nov 2022 – June 2024. It reviews previous qualitative data or formal community engagement and gathers insights from conversations with local representatives of community groups, organisations and services. It adds qualitative, narrative and experiential data to the Programme’s understanding of inequality, place and wellbeing in Alloa.

This report details the process taken and provides further information on the key topics captured in [this summary infographic](#).



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Shaping Places for Wellbeing

Between 2022 and June 2024, the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme worked locally in seven towns across Scotland supporting councils, health boards and other stakeholders working with them to develop resources to take a place-based approach in their decisions and actions. The Programme has been delivered by Public Health Scotland (PHS) and the Improvement Service (IS) jointly with local authorities and NHS local boards. The Programme received funding from The Health Foundation and Scottish Government.

The ambition of Shaping Places for Wellbeing ambition is to:

Improve Scotland's wellbeing by reducing the significant inequality in the health of its people while addressing the health of our planet.



Shaping Places for Wellbeing aims to deliver on this ambition by promoting the long-term preventative impact of the places we live, work and play on the wellbeing of those using them. This work is anchored in embedding the evidenced features that we need to get right in every place to enable people make choices that improve their wellbeing. These are called Scotland's [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#).

The seven Project Towns supported by the Programme 2022-2024 were: Alloa, Ayr, Dunoon, Clydebank, Rutherglen, Fraserburgh and Dalkeith. Each Project Town had a Steering Group, made up of local authority and local health board representatives, to provide oversight and direction. In each Project Town there was a Project Lead and Community Link Lead. The role of the Community Link Lead was to facilitate connection between community groups/third sector and the Programme, acting as a crucial bridge between being informed by data on health and wellbeing for Alloa and a citizen focus on understanding the communities needs and aspirations.

While the Programme is no longer supporting Local Project Action in Project Towns, the Shaping Places for Wellbeing approach continues to support anyone in Scotland looking to take a place-based approach. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing place-based approach combines three key elements:

- Knowing what **people** in an area are experiencing
- Understanding the evidenced features every **place** needs
- Considering the impact of the **decisions we are making** on both of these.





Images: edited from Clackmannanshire Council (<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/visiting/maps/>)

Alloa

Alloa is the principal town in the Clackmannanshire Council area. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme worked in Alloa between March 2022 and June 2024. During that period, the Programme undertook seven [Place and Wellbeing Assessments](#) of documents and decisions that impact upon Alloa as a place. These were - Draft Interim Climate Change Strategy and follow-up on next Climate Change Strategy; Wellbeing Hub Location and follow-up on the Wellbeing Hub and Lochies School's site plan and landscaping; NHS Forth Valley Healthcare Strategy 2016-2021; Local Development Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives; and Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

With support from our partners at Public Health Scotland Local Intelligence System Team (LIST), the Programme set out to use quantitative data as a starting point to understand the perspectives of the groups most impacted by inequality and what they need from their place. This data profile has identified four key groups experiencing significant inequality.

These people are:

- Those experiencing deprivation in Alloa South and East
- Those with problem substance use, involving alcohol
- Those experiencing poverty, with a focus on children
- Those experiencing ill health and dying prematurely

[This infographic](#) provides a further summary of the quantitative data profile.



Approach

This report, and [accompanying infographic](#), aim to bring to life the above data. Taking a qualitative approach, we hope to better understand Alloa resident's, particularly those most impacted by the inequalities identified above, experience of place.

Purpose

In each of our Project Towns the Community Link Leads were tasked to:

- Connect with community organisations to understand the needs of demographic most impacted by key inequalities to experience the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes.
- Undertake a review of existing qualitative data to identify key priorities around place, for the demographic most impacted.
- Support ongoing qualitative and quantitative data gathering related to key inequalities to identify demographics most impacted. Connect with community organisations to sense check this data.
- Promote understanding of the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#) amongst local organisations.

The Community Link Lead took an informal approach that prioritised building relationships with community stakeholders.

Documents

Documents that report previous qualitative data or formal community engagement were reviewed. Members of the Alloa Shaping Places for Wellbeing Steering Group and other stakeholders were asked for any relevant documents. Google searches, including but not limited to terms such as “Alloa + engagement”; “Alloa + community consultation + report”; “Clackmannanshire + engagement + report”. Reports from some consultations undertaken by Clackmannanshire Council were found on their consultation database [Citizen Space](#). Documents reviewed were from the last 5 years.

Find documents:	Consider excluding:	Think about:	Identify:
shared by stakeholders	older than 5 years	the type of engagement	document's conclusions
through web search	with no access to “raw” qualitative data from consultation/engagement	respondent demographics	key topics related to place
on Citizen Space		geographic coverage	key topics related to inequality
		any limitations	key illustrative quotes



Conversations

Additional insight into the experience of those who live, work and relax in Alloa was gathered by approaching local practitioners and representatives of local community groups, organisations and services. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Alloa Community Link Lead held conversations either in-person or via Teams. They were informal and offered a place to build relationships and provide information about the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme in Alloa, as much as they were an opportunity to gather information. Given this nature of the conversations, they varied in length and focus.

Local knowledge from the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Alloa Project Lead and the Steering Group provided initial contacts. Further introductions often followed these conversations, and from local networking opportunities. The inequality groups identified by the quantitative data profile also prompted connections to be made. It was of course not possible to talk to an exhaustive list of people in Alloa, and the resulting ideas identified should be understood in this context. It is recognised that some sectors may be overrepresented, whilst others are absent.

Conversations were mostly with representatives from organisations or practitioners working locally. They were able to share an overall picture of the collective experience of the people these organisations/practitioners worked with. Some individuals could offer perspective both in their organisational capacity and as a resident, but this was ad hoc.

Sense checking

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 reduce this, a 2-page summary of the emerging ideas was sent back 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 felt anything was missing or misrepresented the experiences of their communities. They were also invited to share any quotes or case studies to enrich this report.



Sources and conversations

Conversations

The ideas captured in this report were gathered from over **40 conversations** involving **50+ individuals**. Most of these were one-to-one conversations facilitated by the Community Link Lead, but also include group discussions the Community Link Lead joined.

A list of the groups/organisations the Community Link Lead has spoken is in [Appendix A](#).

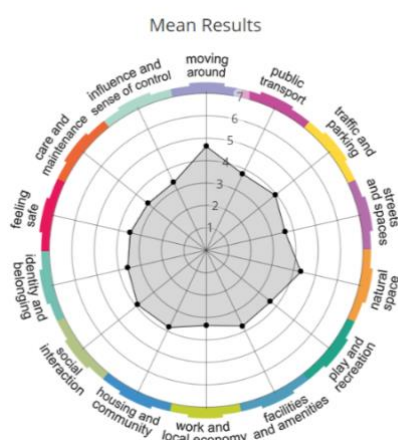
A key message from community stakeholders was a wish for their expertise and experience supporting their communities to be more fully **recognised, valued and supported** by statutory services and decision makers. We hope that readers of this document may take some time to learn more about some of the groups/organisations they are not already aware of through the information provided in [Appendix A](#).

Engagement and consultation documents

Including the Place Standard Tool exercises below, a total of **14 pieces** of formal consultation/engagement were reviewed. A list, with key findings and conclusions identified, is provided in [Appendix B](#). Not all documents seen are currently published in the public domain. Those that are available online are linked in [Appendix C](#).



Place Standard Tool



Mean results: PST for Alloa Town Centre

A Place Standard Tool (PST) exercise for Alloa Town Centre^{1 2} was undertaken by a partnership in 2019. The partnership involved Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface (CTSI), Alloa First, Clackmannanshire Council and Kingdom Housing Association.

The average scores across all areas were quite low. The areas scoring highest were natural spaces and moving around. The lowest scoring areas were feeling safe, work and local economy, influence and sense of control and care and maintenance.

The results of this PST exercises were used to inform a number of projects and developments for the Town Centre, including Alloa First's CCTV initiative and the Primrose Street development. In developing the Alloa South and East Action Plan 2021-2026, a Place Standard Tool exercise was also undertaken for that specific Alloa South and East community. The average results were similar to those for the town centre, if slightly higher. When broken down by age group, there appeared to be a steep drop in average scores by people age 65+.

CTSI led another Place Standard Tool exercise for Alloa Town Centre in Spring 2023. Another Place Standard Tool exercise was administered by Clackmannanshire Council in 2024 as part of the evidence gathering for their Local Development Plan 2. When the results of these exercise are publicly available, it will be important to understand, incorporate and reflect on these.



Emerging ideas

The summaries below detail the recurring ideas emerging from the documents reviewed and conversations had, as they map against the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#). What do people in Alloa, particularly those most impacted by inequality, want decision makers to know about their place, health and wellbeing?

This report is not an exhaustive representation of the topics raised, but those raised by multiple stakeholders across sectors and thus suggest a more collective, shared experience of place. It is a snap shot of what we've heard from communities between December 2022 and June 2024. Please note that the majority of conversations occurred between December 2022 and August 2023.

The quantitative data profiles give a clear picture of some of the inequalities in our towns. However, we're conscious of the potential for this to lead us to be rather deficit focused – highlighting the negative aspects of a place. Community development approaches encourage us to focus on 'what's strong, not what's wrong'. The work of the Community Link Leads allows us to understand the assets communities already have. For Alloa, this includes the natural environment; heritage; community spirit and their third sector. True to the conversations we had, this report again highlights areas for improvement but also looks to capture those assets. A star is used to draw your attention to these assets - ★

Mapping themes against the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes



The Place and Wellbeing Outcomes provide a set of outcomes for all stakeholders to work towards for the places they live, work, learn or relax in. Based on [shared evidence with the Place Standard Tool](#), the outcomes fall into five overarching themes, with 13 Outcomes as illustrated below. More information and context can be found in [this briefing paper](#).



The Community Link Lead [identified key findings and conclusions from the reviewed documents](#) and pulled out those relevant to the Outcomes. The Community Link Lead took notes during/following each conversation, and similarly used these to identify ideas that related to the Outcomes.

People

People are at the centre of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes.



Identified inequalities

The people we spoke to generally agreed that the inequality groups identified by the quantitative data process were an accurate representation of the issues in Alloa.

People experiencing deprivation in Alloa South and East.

Alloa South and East was consistently identified as an area of high need. Organisations working in Alloa South and East spoke of the importance of the relationships and trust they've built with the community over periods of many years. It was also indicated that personal experience of living in Alloa South and East was valuable when also working in the area, as it gave a true understanding of the community.

People with problem substance use, including alcohol.

People also agreed that problem substance use was an issue, particularly for some living in Alloa South and East. Whilst the quantitative data profile identified problem alcohol use as particularly high, practitioners also reported concerning drug use and near fatal overdose rates. The relationship between substance use and mental ill health was highlighted.

Practitioners expressed concern that service referral criteria can prevent vulnerable individuals from accessing the support they need – i.e. substance use limiting access to mental health services, and mental illness limiting access to recovery services. Practitioners described the often-chaotic lifestyles of people with problem substance use, reducing their health and wellbeing.

The impact on those around the individual with problem substance use was also raised – impact on families, but also on communities. Increased crime and violence, and so reduced sense of safety in communities, were associated with problem substance use.

People experiencing poverty, with a focus on children.



A growing need for community organised support for children and young people was highlighted, which people attributed to the cost of living crisis – e.g. second hand uniform bank organised by a parent council. For families experiencing poverty, the provision of wrap-around childcare is crucial to allow parents to access services and employment.

- ★ The Clackmannanshire Child Wellbeing Project was cited as having made positive steps in addressing this barrier, supporting schools and community providers to ensure wrap-around childcare and activities are available free of charge.

People experiencing ill health and dying prematurely.

Health practitioners agree that ill health and early mortality is an issue in Alloa. However, most local groups/organisations and residents did not speak about this problem specifically – instead they spoke about the many other health, wellbeing and place factors that we know can impact on life and healthy life expectancy.

Additional themes

In addition, a few topics were raised that do not directly relate to another of the Outcomes, but should be considered when thinking about how *everyone* can experience the Outcomes.

Carers are a population that are often hidden, but unique additional needs from their place. People may not identify themselves as carers – providing care may be an act of love, or familial duty for them and therefore not feel they need services or support.

Official records may miss a significant number of carers in their measures.

For example, Carers Allowance case entitlement per 1,000 in the 16+ population may be used as a measure. Alloa South and East has a rate of 56.7 per 1,000 in Alloa S&E compared to 26.7 across the whole of Scotland, and 19.7 or 29.2 in neighbouring Alloa West and Alloa North respectively.

This already indicates an inequality, but may still not accurately capture the level of unpaid caring in Alloa. Carers Allowance has specific eligibility criteria, including that the carer must be providing over 35 hours/week care. This criterion alone potentially excludes a large number of carers, not to mention the additional criterion.

Mental health is a priority. Mental ill health and poor mental wellbeing affects a lot of Alloa communities. There is limited available data on the population's mental health, so our quantitative town data profile alone is unable to reveal a comprehensive picture. It was recognised that poor mental health can be both a contributing factor to, and a consequence of, other inequalities. Indeed, people working across a range of sectors spoke of how mental



health interacts with other challenges people are experiencing like poverty, substance use and isolation. Suicide was repeatedly raised as a concern in Alloa, particularly for those most impacted by inequality.

There appears to be generational cycles of trauma, experiences and behaviour. There is a recognition by practitioners and people working locally of cross-generational experiences for some families – like poverty, unemployment, substance use, caring responsibilities, mental ill health.

“As a Service working in an area of significant socio-economic deprivation, childhood trauma and adversity are part of our daily landscape. We often work with families who are experiencing the effects of complex, intergenerational trauma. We frequently work with parents who were themselves clients of our Service as children.” – Clackmannanshire Educational Psychology Service³

Intersectionality⁴ is “a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking.” Although intersectionality is not a word that is used in everyday language⁴, most conversations alluded to this.

For example, consider someone (fictional) from an ethnic minority with an insecure tenancy living in South East 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.

Movement

Poor connectivity and public transport links between Alloa (and other villages in Clackmannanshire) to other hubs in the region, like Stirling or Falkirk is a significant problem. This is despite Clackmannanshire feeling well situated in central Scotland.

People particularly highlight the impact this has on access to secondary and tertiary healthcare services, training and employment opportunities.

Movement
Public transport
Active travel
Traffic and parking



“Due to having to use more than one bus and trying to tie up the bus times, this can often result in long waits for people, often standing in miserable weather, it is very time consuming and the journey will take longer than the actual appointment or visit.” – Clackmannanshire resident

“Well, yeah, locally, specifically transport is a humungous barrier. So, there’s a lot of talk and a lot of focus and there has been ever since we started [Organisation] and it’s no matter. So, I don’t know what the solutions are around that, but I’d like to be in on the conversation.” – [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) Research Participant.

Accessibility of public transport for those with disabilities or mobility issues was highlighted as a concern. Cost of public transport is a barrier for those facing the greatest inequality, for whom car ownership is also likely not to be an option.



Wimpy Park



Snowy Ochil hills above Alloa



Gartmorn Dam Country Park

Spaces

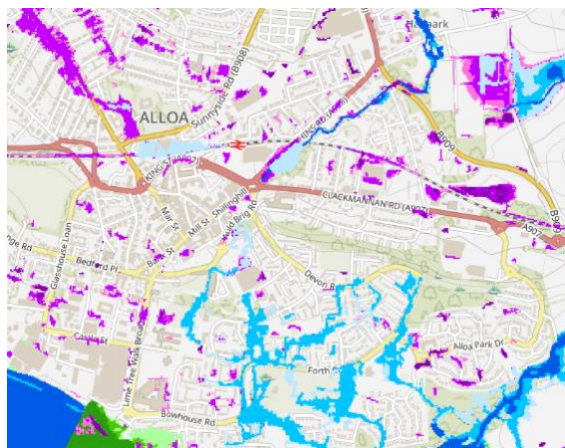
Green space is abundant across Clackmannanshire and the natural environment valued.

“So yes, I like the hills, I need them, I don’t know if you can see them out the window, they’re right there...Yes, so it’s great to just be able to look out the window and see the hills, it’s very grounding.” – [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) Research Participant.



However, access to green space locally for people living in Alloa needs to be improved. Feedback gathered during the PST exercise in 2019² suggests that people perceive Alloa to be in a beautiful area with a lot of potential, but it needs to be better maintained to be more appealing for tourists and so residents can feel proud of their town.

There is a desire for town centre regeneration. Although it was not generally phrased in such a way, a sense of the importance of 'local living' and '20 minute neighbourhoods' came through in conversations.



Flood risk is a worry for some residents. The impact of flooding on people's access and use of their gardens and local green space was noted. People also described how surface water flooding limits their movement – particularly those with mobility issues, reduced confidence or without access to a vehicle.

Image from [SEPA](#) showing areas at risk of river flooding (blue), surface water flooding (purple) and coastal flooding (green)

We understand that it can be challenging to gather feedback from community groups and residents on some Place and Wellbeing Outcomes (e.g. active travel), or on themes around planet and climate change, when people's priorities are things like food or fuel poverty. We need to recognise these as barriers to engagement with some topics rather than assuming that people are satisfied.

Cost is a frequent barrier to accessing leisure opportunities, especially since the cost of living crisis.

★ **Volunteering** was identified as cultural strength Clackmannanshire and it is enjoyed. However, as more people are feeling the impact of the cost of living crisis, opportunities are increasingly limited for those without certain time and financial freedoms.

Volunteering could be understood as a recreational activity (Play and Recreation – Spaces Outcome) as well as an opportunity for improving employability (Work and Economy – Resources Outcome).



“And I started off volunteering...and now I’m working in it, and I think you have to bring your heart to work, you know, which is quite important.” – – [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) Research Participant.

Resources

Unemployment/low employment opportunities are a challenge. But employment support services are valued by many.



“That there probably isn’t enough opportunity in the county ... Maybe Stirling’s a bit better because it’s a bigger area. Falkirk as well. But, yes, I don’t think there’s enough opportunity and maybe they could do something about that.” – [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) Research Participant.

Inaccessible services can deepen inequality. Access to GP services was particularly highlighted as an issue for some of Alloa’s most vulnerable residents.

“[poor] access to GP’s, which further exacerbates the health inequalities of those most in need across the local communities.” – practitioner working in Forth Valley.

Lack of service provision can be frustrating, particularly when compared to other regions. People feel they’re losing out in a “postcode lottery”.

“You can’t get your hearing aids checked in Clackmannanshire at all, you have to travel to Stirling and that isn’t always an option.” – Clackmannanshire resident.

De-centralised local services are needed. This was particularly highlighted as it relates to the identified transport difficulties living in Alloa who are trying to access health and social care services, employment and training opportunities.

“A sense of place, history and local culture is crucial to the successful delivery of services that address the dignity of those using them.” – from Forth Valley Food Needs Assessment⁶.

“Many of the comments [...] spoke about local access to services, or services closer to people rather than centralised. It was about bringing services to people, for example ‘Local hubs, open to everyone’; services that are ‘accessible locally, when needed’; ‘better access to health



professionals in the village’.” – from Health and Social Care Partnership strategic engagement⁵.



Focus on service access

A range of factors were raised during conversations relating to service access. These included, but is not limited to:

- **Waiting times.**
- **Lack of face-to-face contact.** Especially since the COVID-19 lockdowns, many services have moved to remote operations which is not suitable for everyone. Automation of services, including things like self-checkouts, is not welcomed by all, particularly many from older generations.
- **Digital or phone access.** Some people cannot afford phone or internet access. Cost of living crisis further impacting this as people prioritise purchasing food.

“There is no real access to the council - you can no longer walk in to speak to someone about a concern. What if people don’t have access to a phone to book an appointment?” – resident.

- **Digital literacy and information availability.** A lot of services, organisations and groups predominantly use online platforms to share information. This creates a barrier for people who don’t have internet access or aren’t confident/don’t want to be online.
- Questioning the idea of “hard to reach” demographics, instead asking whether services are reaching out to people in the right way.
- **Routine.** Some populations facing inequality, like those with problem substance use, have chaotic lives and may not be able to e.g. phone a GP practice first thing in the morning.
- **Disability/sensory impairment.** Concerns about the physical access to services, including transport or facilities.
- **Cognition/attention for navigating complex systems.** People sometimes feel they have to act as their own care coordinators to navigate complex health and social care systems, which can be even harder for some people. Mental ill health, neurodiversity and problem substance use can all impact people’s cognition and attention.
- **Self-esteem.** Some people don’t believe they are worthy of help, feel like they do not matter.
- **Mistrust.** When people have been let down by services previously they may be reluctant to access services again.



Services need to be more flexible, responsive and joined up. Practitioners are finding that people don't fit the criteria for any services and so end up falling through the cracks. People emphasise that "one size does not fit all". Particularly in employability services, there needs to be wrap-around support that addresses the other factors that can impact employability – e.g. mental health support, childcare, transport access.

- ★ Third sector and community providers are often able to deliver this support and services where statutory services are not able.

"It's preventative support. The fact there's no conditions attached to it is great – something like this is hard to find. I've tried to get previous support, but I don't seem to meet the criteria, this PEC doesn't seem to have this barrier and I really liked that about it." – Pre-Employability Clackmannanshire (PEC) participant quote taken from Qualitative Evaluation report¹⁰.

Inadequate and insecure housing needs to be addressed, particularly for those with problem substance use or who have experience in the criminal justice system. Insecure and unsuitable tenancies cause additional stress, perpetuating mental ill health and substance use. People also described how individuals may be allocated housing far away from their social support networks, or out-of-area requiring them to re-register with services in order to access support.

The way homes are used, and commuting patterns, reduces community cohesion. There is a perception that areas of Alloa, and Clackmannanshire, are inhabited by people who work and relax in other places. Alloa therefore doesn't see the economic or community benefits from having these people live there.

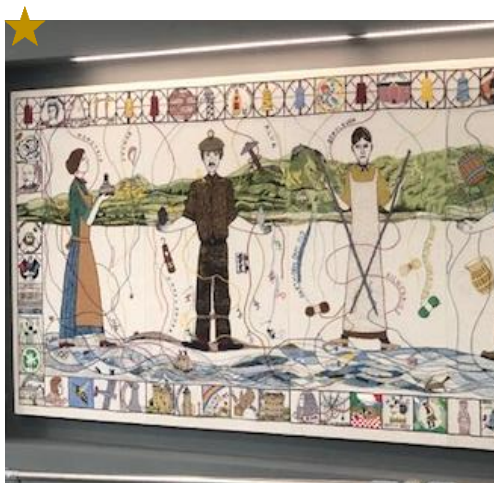
"...most of my neighbours with their ring cameras and their Audis and whatever else, you know, don't use the amenities in the village and don't engage with the village. They get in their cars and they drive to the supermarkets. They get in their car and they go on the motorway. You know, they don't actually engage with the place where they live or the community that they're living with..." – [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) Research Participant.



- ★ **Good community spirit** and resilience is recognised as a real strength of Alloa communities. There is a question for some however, of whether this has been forged in part due to the under-provision of services and being forced to “do it for themselves”.

Division exists between some neighbourhoods, despite the recognised strong community spirit within them. Scoring in the two 2019 PST exercises² (Town Centre, and Alloa South and East) suggest that Alloa South and East residents feel safer and greater sense of belonging in their local neighbourhood than in the town centre.

"Growing up in Alloa, I was acutely aware of the divisions between different neighbourhoods in the community and the barriers and limitations that these perceived differences put on people. Specifically, within education and friendship groups. Now, as a parent living in the same community, it is disappointing to see that they still exist, that parents are stopping their children from playing together because they live in 'less desirable' areas - the belief that this somehow makes them a less desirable friend. [...] Parents are also affected, being excluded from conversations in the playground and social media groups based on where they live. " – Alloa resident



The [Clackmannanshire Tapestry](#), inspired by the Great Tapestry of Scotland, is a community project led by CTSI. The tapestry depicts give key industries in the country: glass-working, mining, yarn spinning, brewing and weaving. Created by 39 volunteer stitchers, and through the COVID-19 lockdowns, the tapestry is a representation of not just of Clackmannanshire's heritage but also of the community's spirit and resilience.

- ★ **A strong sense of history and identity** is linked to past industry in Alloa and Clackmannanshire. Unfortunately, the same sense of productivity and pride is not as strong today.

"There is no pride in Clackmannanshire." - resident



5 out of 10 members of one local community group said they intend to leave Clackmannanshire as soon as they can.

There is a sense of fatalism in some parts of the community – an expectation across generations that things will not change, and that their wellbeing will not improve. Some residents described almost feeling a sense of identity tied to this hopelessness and perceived lack of opportunity – a sense that *‘if things are bad, we might as well be the worst’*. Practitioners also referred to this sense of fatalism, feeling it came from both communities and sometimes from their colleagues.

Violence is a daily reality for some parts of the Alloa community e.g. domestic and gender-based violence, coercive relationships in young people, violence between drug users.

Minoritised communities can feel unsafe.

"We won't hold hands in certain areas within Clackmannanshire/Alloa. It isn't safe for us to show that we are together locally" - lesbian couple.

Third sector and community groups were again identified as important in addressing some of these challenges, and their role in helping build a sense of belonging.



Case study: Youth-led Pride Event, Connect Alloa

"The youth-led pride event was a fantastic opportunity for young people to take control of what matters to them. Through support and funding from Youth Scotland, the young people stated exactly what would happen in the day focused solely on LGBTQ+ community and allies.

It was a brilliant day where young people wanted to really make themselves seen and heard for who they are, celebrating their differences and similarities.
From planning a venue, to the route we would walk, to the food we would have, the decorations, flags, and makeup - all this was planned by the young people with navigational support from an exceptional team of youth workers.

Taking this as a 'first step' and testing the water, we hope next year will be bigger and better with more time to plan and get more of the community involved. It was amazing for me to support people on a journey they won't forget anytime soon and show them that Alloa may not run Pride events right now, but Connect can fill that gap – and led by young people too."

- Dave, Project Leader, Connect Alloa



Stewardship

Issues with maintenance of both the natural and built environment were raised. People referred to potholes or vandalism. There appears to be a sense that poor maintenance reducing the pride residents feel in their place, which in turn makes it less likely for the community to take care of it.



★ [Wimpy Park](#), a historic walled garden in Alloa South and East, is a positive example of the community leading the care and maintenance of a local space. Members of the Wimpy Park Community Group described the minimal vandalism or anti-social behaviour they have experienced in the park compared to other local spaces, and attribute this to the sense of ownership and belonging the community feel here.

Community and third sector initiatives do not always feel valued by statutory services. Often these groups and organisations have been working in Alloa for decades, their staff and volunteers being residents and community members themselves. They are experts in delivering services in their towns and they want better partnership approaches where statutory/formal services are willing to learn from them.

*“Who better to help solve problems and issues within communities than the local people? **Give us the tools, support and resources we deserve and need and genuinely work along with us to make our community a better, safer place to live** where we can all support each other to tackle the issues lots of people are struggling with such as mental health, poverty, lack of opportunities, unemployment, general health and well-being.” – Alloa community group.*

Communities have become disheartened by consultation processes. People feel that decisions have already been made and that therefore their input is not meaningful. As a result, some people are choosing to disengage entirely.

“[Members] prefer to keep themselves separate from the discussion as they don’t want to get their hopes up for change.” – Alloa community group when asked for feedback.

Even when services are genuinely interested in hearing from communities, if people don’t perceive this to be true, then there is still a risk of missing their voices – and often those are the communities already experiencing significant inequality.

“People see things they think need changed, but don’t feel they have the power to influence.” – Alloa PST partnership²



Shared learning

The Community Link Lead's identified some key messages that were common across our Project Towns (six Community Link Leads were in role at the time of writing – Alloa, Ayr, Clydebank, Dalkeith, Dunoon and Rutherglen). These ideas largely related to *how* communities would like to be engaged, and desired ways of working.

Communities value joint working and partnership approaches, believing this would save time, money and resource for all involved.

“There is no real community engagement anymore. What ever happened to community engagement? Don't get us wrong, there are some like-minded staff within the local authority who genuinely try really hard to engage with communities, but they are few and far between, and the resources they have are virtually non-existent, with budgets being squeezed all the time.” – Alloa community group.

Communities want strong communication from and between all stakeholders. They value two-way communication and transparency. Inaccessible language can have an impact on people's capacity to engage with consultation processes, etc.

*“The council has poor communication skills. They don't hear the public and they never tell the public anything either. **They need to work on how to connect with their people again.**” – Clackmannanshire resident.*

Trust from both individuals and community stakeholders in formal/statutory services has been eroded. Partnership working, transparent communication and collective decision making would help build this.

Stakeholders value information sharing across organisations – e.g. shared learning and best practice; data sharing and support. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme and other 'neutral' organisations have been valued in our Project Towns for bringing people together.

Communities are seeking quality community engagement that goes beyond traditional consultation towards coproduction, cocreation and codesign approaches.

Short-term funding has a significant negative impact on third sector projects and place-based working.



Next steps

There is hope for change.

"I feel as if there's a new wave, I don't have any answers for it at all, but I feel as if there is a new wave, a new opportunity to find a way to do this. But we're never going to do it in silos. We keep perpetuating the same old, same old, so we'll still get the same results..." – [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) Research Participant.

The findings captured in this report have fed into Place and Wellbeing Assessments of a range of plans, strategies and decisions in Alloa, and to guide the subsequent embedment of resulting recommendations. The Community Link Leads acted as a bridge between decision makers and the communities they serve. Improved consideration of place in plans and strategies also filters down to support provision and delivery in communities.

"In terms of strategy links, it's really important in my field to ensure that what we are doing at grassroots level can be followed all the way up to local or national level. This allows us to ensure funders know exactly where we stand and why the project is needed without them needing to know the local area. As sport and physical activity progresses more towards intentionally intervening in improving people lives we are focusing more on a Theory of Change model, looking at how a project would have impacts on individuals, communities and Scotland. Having hooks into wider strategies allows to evidence why the projects would have impacts at community and national level, even when we have no way of monitoring this specifically." - community sports hub officer in a local authority.

Gaps and limitations

The narrative and experiential data gathered through this exercise has been valuable. It must be understood though that this exercise does not constitute qualitative research, nor is it a piece of community consultation. It is hoped that this report may act as a starting point for teams taking a place-based approach to working in Alloa to think about their communities' needs and in particular the needs of those experiencing inequalities. The report is intended to inform and shape further, more focussed, research, consultation or engagement.

The conversations held were limited by the Community Link Leads own capacity and other workload, and by the capacity of organisations to respond to meeting invitations.



Indeed, one staff member the Community Link Lead approached explained they didn't have the staff capacity to have a full conversation – *“as an independent and very busy organisation, they usually don't have the luxury of time or resource to be involved in things like consultations – their focus is on service delivery for their communities.”*

It is important to consider the voices and insight we may be missing when relying on organisational representatives or practitioners to speak for community members' experiences. Further or different insight may be gathered directly from community members, service users and residents.

It was challenging at times to identify relevant documents for review. It was often not possible to access “raw” findings from consultation or engagement work, though it was referenced and used to inform reports, strategies, papers and ultimately decisions. Those reviewed were predominantly undertaken by larger or statutory organisations. Inevitably, there will be significant engagement undertaken by, for example, the community and third sector but which may not have been immediately available via online searches. Many projects have reporting and evaluation requirements which often contain rich feedback and local data, like [one example from an employability project](#) that was identified and included in this review. The Community Link Lead did not have capacity to request access from groups/organisations to these type of documents for this review, but it is important to acknowledge the potential insights these documents could provide for future work.

Contact

If the Shaping Places for Wellbeing approach sounds like something you would like to know more about, please contact Irene Beautyman, Place and Wellbeing Partnership Lead on placeandwellbeing@improvementservice.org.uk or follow us on X @place4wellbeing to keep up to date with all of our latest news.



Appendix A – Representatives spoken with

This is not an exhaustive list, allowing individual contributions to conversations to remain anonymous. In several cases, the Community Link Lead had conversations with multiple teams/projects from the same organisation but the organisation is only listed once below..

Group discussions include:

- Alloa Climate Change Forum facilitated by Clackmannanshire Council
- 2x Community Breakfasts facilitated by Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface
- 3x 'Transport and Travel Connections Meeting' facilitated by the Alloa Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme
- Parkway Court residents group coffee morning

Group/organisation	Learn more about their work
Alloa First (BID)	Learn all about the different businesses and organisations in Alloa. Shop locally online .
Clackmannanshire Council	Find information about the Council services . Citizen Space is their consultation database, which includes links to open consultations.
Clackmannanshire Economic Regeneration Trust (CERT)	Find out about CERT's work , including their Positive Moves project which helps local individuals in Clackmannanshire seeking work or considering employment steps.
Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface (CTSI)	A 'single door' access point for a wide range of support and services for charitable organisations, community and voluntary action groups, volunteering and social enterprise in Clackmannanshire. See their upcoming events .
Connect Alloa	Learn about this local youth charity tackling social isolation and loneliness among young people
Dial-a-Journey	Learn about and register for their 'door-to-door' transport service for people with mobility problems who are unable to use conventional public transport.
Dignity in School, Children's Parliament	Visit their Dignity in School Hub to learn about their projects building the capacity of primary schools to take a children's rights-based approach.
Falkirk & Clackmannanshire Carers Centre	Find out more about their services for carers of all ages, or make a referral.
Forth Valley Lavender Room	Find out more about this space for LGBTQ+ adults to gather, share skills and experiences.



Forth Valley Men's Shed	Follow this Men's Shed on Facebook .
Forth Valley Sensory Centre	Learn about the Centre where people with a visual or hearing loss, their friends, families, carers and the wider community can access quality services and advice from our partner organisations. Info about New Clacks Hub .
Gartmorn Dam Country Park Development Trust	Learn more about the Trust's work to maintain and enhance the park and natural environment, and help the local community to take ownership. Visit Gartmorn Dam .
Parkway Court	Hanover Scotland sheltered accommodation in Alloa.
NHS Forth Valley	Deliver NHS services across Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Falkirk.
Police Scotland – Clackmannanshire	Find information about the Clackmannanshire area command.
Reach Out with Arts in Mind	Find out about Reach Out's work as they celebrate 30 years of facilitating creative experiences to improve wellbeing.
Resonate Together	Learn about Resonate's mission to support local people to live fulfilling, meaningful and sustainable lives. Weekly activities .
Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs	Learn about the services SFAAD deliver in Forth Valley or make a referral.
Transform Forth Valley	Find out about their services to support individuals and families who are impacted by substance use and/or societal, financial or health inequalities. Their Time 4 Us service supports children and families impacted by substance use.
Wimpy Park Community Group	Follow this local park group on Facebook .

Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project

Additional insight was provided by the [Changing Intergenerational Relationships Project \(University of Stirling\)](#) who are currently undertaking research in the region. They generously shared insight and quotations emerging from their research interviews. Changing Intergenerational Relationships is a project in the Connecting Generations research programme of the Centre for Population Change. The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant number ES/W002116/1). The Principal Investigator at the University of Stirling is Professor Alison Bowes (a.m.bowes@stir.ac.uk).



Appendix B – Additional engagement and consultation documents

Some projects have undertaken multiple pieces of engagement, and the below table lists the overarching project rather than each individual document.

Piece of work/organisation	Date(s)	Key relevant findings/considerations
Strategic Commissioning Plan and Locality Planning engagement Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health and Social Care Partnership ⁵	Sep-Nov 2022	Clackmannanshire wide public engagement. People feel family and friends most support their health, but also exercise, environment and nature, good income, and access to culture and heritage. People find access to services is the main barrier to looking after their health and wellbeing. People are interested in health improvement – focus on wellbeing rather than illness. The services people most want to access include GP and mental health support.
Sustainable and Dignified Solutions to Food Insecurity in Forth Valley: A Food System Needs Assessment NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement Programme Board, Forth Environment Link, BiGGAR Economics ⁶	Aug 2021	Forth Valley wide engagement with food service user and voluntary/community and public sector providers. Advocates a whole-system approach to address food insecurity. Identifies poverty as the central issue, for people both in and out of employment. Access (e.g. cost, availability, transport, digital skills) to good food is a problem. Intersection between mental ill health and food insecurity. People working in this sphere wish for more training and skills.
Budget Consultation 2023/24 Priorities – Phase 1 Clackmannanshire Council ⁷	Jan 2023	Clackmannanshire wide public engagement. People do value green space, transport links and Clacks communities, but equally feel these could all be improved.

		<p>The cost of living is a key concern for people, along with poverty and inequality. Community safety, crime and anti-social behaviour are also concerns for people. People would like to see service and infrastructure investment prioritised – support services, education, employment and leisure.</p>
<p>Alloa South and East Action Plan engagement</p> <p>Clackmannanshire Community Planning Partnership.</p>	2018-2021	<p>Engagement with Alloa South and East residents. Some undertaken with backdrop of COVID-19.</p> <p>People feel there is a need to develop youth opportunities and life-long learning. Young people want a voice.</p> <p>People's main concerns are health (including mental health), employment & income and education.</p>
<p>SEIC Young Pathfinders Launch engagement notes</p> <p>Scotland's International Environment Centre – Stirling University, Clackmannanshire Council, Forth Valley College⁸</p>	Nov 2021	<p>Engagement with young participants from schools across Clackmannanshire. Young people seeking climate awareness raising, solution finding and skills development through involvement with Scotland's International Environment Centre (SEIC).</p> <p>Belief in community problem-solving.</p> <p>Would like pathway to take ideas to decision makers.</p>
<p>Clackmannanshire Leisure and Wellbeing Provision engagement</p> <p>Clackmannanshire Council Leisure and Wellbeing ⁹</p>	2020-2022	<p>Clackmannanshire wide public engagement. Some undertaken with backdrop of COVID-19.</p> <p>People are motivated to engage in leisure opportunities for their wellbeing, fitness, mental wellbeing and socialising (with friends or family).</p> <p>Use of open spaces for exercise is important to people – walking is a popular activity. Expense and travel are barriers to leisure engagement.</p> <p>People want accessibility to be a priority for leisure provision.</p>

Pre-Employability in Clackmannanshire (PEC) Interim Reports and Qualitative Evaluation Clackmannanshire Economic Regeneration Trust ¹⁰	2022	Engagement with participants from across Clackmannanshire on PEC. Mental health presents a significant barrier to employment. Participants valued the open and responsive nature of the project. Highlighted the project's impact on 'softer outcomes' like participants' confidence, wellbeing and motivation which may be missed if exclusively focusing on attainment and employment destination.
Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment Clackmannanshire Community Justice Partnership	2022-2023	Engagement with practitioners and people with lived experience from across Clackmannanshire. Advocates whole system approach to ensure joined up services. Highlights needs around mental health, substance use, employment and housing for those involved with or leaving the justice system. Identifies need to embed lived experience.

Appendix C - References

- ¹ [Place Standard Tool exercise - Architecture & Design Scotland](#) case study.
- ² [Place Standard Tool exercise – Alloa town centre](#) PowerPoint can be downloaded from CTSI.
- ³ [The importance of trauma-informed approaches in education – the impact of implementing a brain-based approach to supporting learners across a Scottish Local Authority](#) – article from Clackmannanshire Educational Psychology Service, Taylor and Barrett (2021) in International Journal of School Social Work: Vol. 6: Iss. 2.
- ⁴ [Using intersectionality to understand structural inequality in Scotland: evidence synthesis](#) from the Scottish Government.
- ⁵ [Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Commissioning Plan and Locality Planning](#) results of online survey.
- ⁶ [Sustainable and Dignified Solutions to Food Insecurity in Forth Valley: A Food System Needs Assessment](#) commissioned by NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement Programme Board.
- ⁷ [Budget Consultation 2023/24 Priorities \(Phase 1\)](#) feedback published on Citizen Space.
- ⁸ [SEIC Young Pathfinders Launch engagement notes](#) found in Appendix 2 of this Council paper.
- ⁹ [Clackmannanshire Leisure & Wellbeing Preliminary Analysis of Data – Phase 1](#) summary PDF publicly available.
- ¹⁰ [Pre-Employability in Clackmannanshire Interim Reports and Qualitative Evaluation](#) available on CERT's website.

