

Shaping Places for Wellbeing - Dalkeith Project Town

What we're hearing in our communities

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

December 2023



Introduction

This report presents the work of the Community Link Lead working on the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme in Dalkeith, with support from the Communities and Lifelong Learning and Employability worker. It reviews previous qualitative data or formal community engagement and gathers insights from conversations with community organisations and local stakeholders. It adds qualitative, narrative, and experiential data to the Programme’s understanding of inequality, place and wellbeing in Dalkeith. It details the process the Community Link Lead undertook and provides further information on the key topics captured in this summary infographic.



In this Report

Dalkeith Key Areas of Focus.....	p4
Approach.....	p6
Emerging Themes from the Quantitative Data.....	p9
Unmet Needs and Challenges.....	p11
Feedback Relating to the Wellbeing Outcomes.....	p15
Emerging Themes - All Project Towns.....	p18
Next Steps.....	p19
Appendix A Groups/Organisations Spoken With	p22
Appendix B – Reports Reviewed	p23



Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

Shaping Places for Wellbeing is a 3-year programme, running until March 2024, which is being delivered by Public Health Scotland (PHS) and the Improvement Service (IS) jointly with local authorities and NHS local boards. The Programme has funding from The Health Foundation and Scottish Government.

The Ambition of the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme is to:

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



The Programme objective is 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 to make choices that improve their wellbeing. These are called Scotland's [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#).

The Programme is supporting seven 'Project Towns': Alloa, Ayr, Dunoon, Clydebank, Rutherglen, Fraserburgh and Dalkeith. Each Project Town has a Steering Group, made up of local authority and local health board representatives, to provide oversight and direction. In each Project Town there is a Project Lead and Community Link Lead.

The role of the Community Link Lead is 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 Dalkeith and a citizen focus on understanding the communities needs and aspirations.

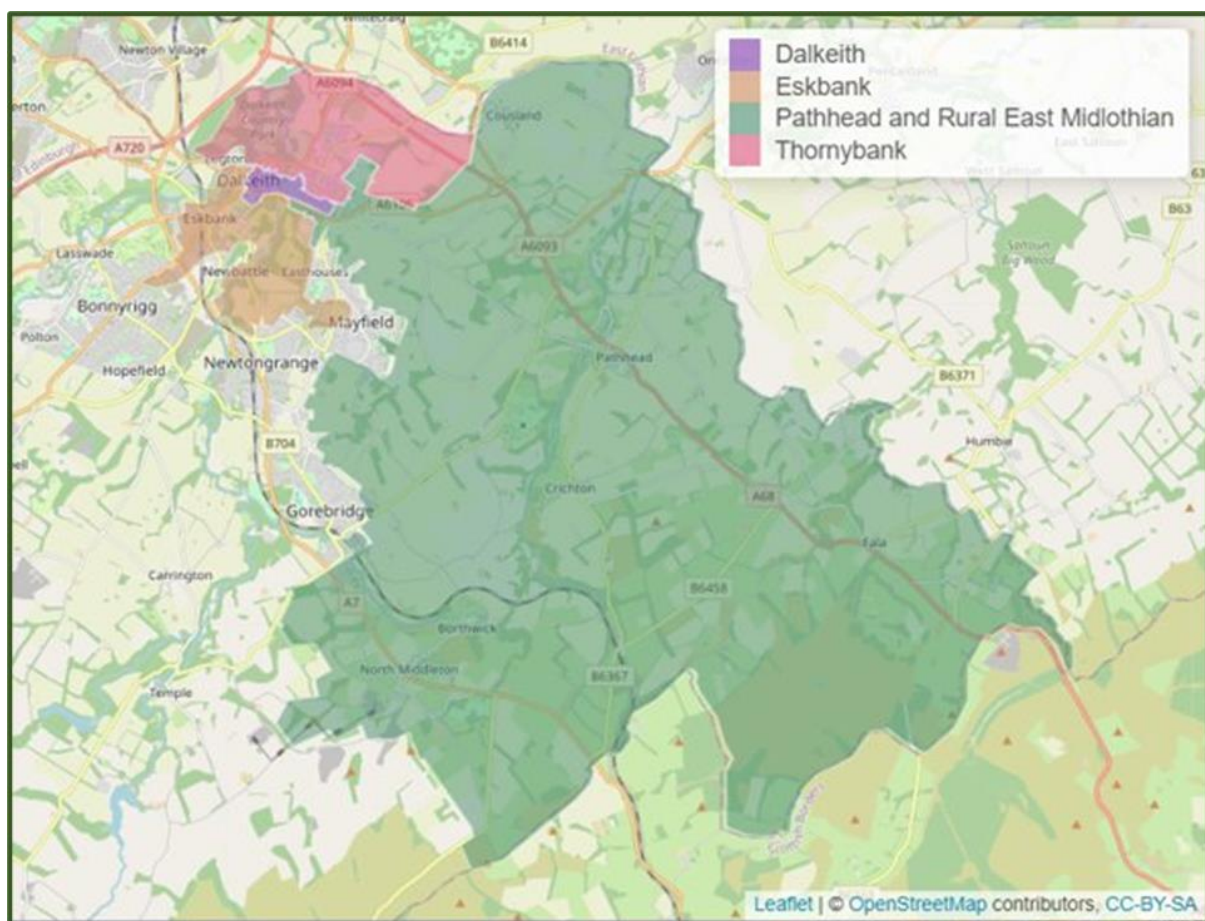


In Dalkeith, a Communities and Lifelong Learning worker with Midlothian Council, was partially embedded in the Shaping Places for Wellbeing team and worked alongside the Project Town team to support the work of the Community Link Lead.

Dalkeith Key Areas of Focus

To get a better understanding about inequalities in Dalkeith, the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme gathered data with the support of the Public Health Scotland's Local Intelligence Support Team (LIST). This data has been used to highlight the people within the town who are being impacted most by poor health and wellbeing.

Central Dalkeith and Woodburn is covered by the intermediate zones Dalkeith and Thornybank with some cross over into neighbouring areas of Eskbank and Pathhead and Rural East Midlothian. For this reason, the quantitative data profile widened the area to include these 4 intermediate zones. It has a population of 20,376.



The data for Dalkeith highlighted four key areas of focus. These are:

People experiencing barriers including income and accessing services:

In some of its areas, Dalkeith has significant levels of deprivation, where many residents face economic and social challenges, including limited access to resources and opportunities.

Poverty, Including Child Poverty:

Poverty is a pervasive issue in the community, impacting both individuals and families. The level of child poverty is of particular concern, as it can have long-lasting effects on children's well-being and development.

Crime:

Crime rates is higher in Dalkeith intermediate zone compared to Midlothian and the surrounding intermediate zones.

Substance Misuse:

Dalkeith faces a notable challenge related to substance misuse, particularly concerning alcohol. The rate of alcohol-related admissions to hospitals is higher than the average for Midlothian, underscoring the need for substance misuse prevention and support services.

An infographic providing a further summary of the quantitative data profile will be published soon.

Addressing these key community issues will require collaborative efforts from statutory, community organisations, and residents to develop comprehensive strategies that increase access to resources and opportunities, reduce poverty, enhance safety, and address substance misuse effectively. Resulting in increased wellbeing for those people living, working, and visiting Dalkeith.



Approach

This report, and accompanying infographic, aim to bring to life the above data. Taking a qualitative approach, we hope to better understand Dalkeith 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

The approach involved a comprehensive online search and review of documents that reported on previous qualitative data or formal community engagement. This included reports that were identified with input from members of the Shaping Places for Wellbeing steering group, local stakeholders, and third-sector organisations. Reports reviewed were from the last 5 years and specifically targeted documents that included formal community engagement efforts, aiming to unearth the primary concerns and capture the first-hand experiences affecting the residents of Dalkeith. The reports are detailed in Appendix B.

Conversations

Additional insight into the experience of those who live, work and relax in Dalkeith was gathered by approaching local community groups, organisations and practitioners. The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Dalkeith 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 Dalkeith, as much as they were an opportunity to gather information. Given this nature of the conversations, they varied in length and focus.

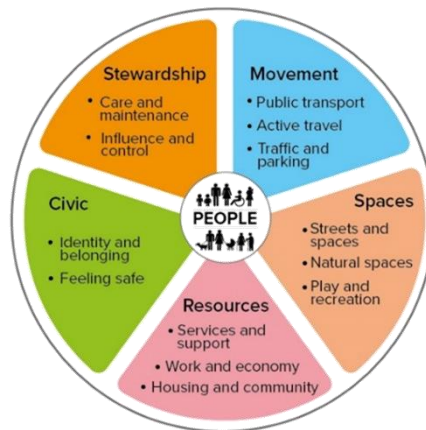
Local knowledge from the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Dalkeith Project Lead and the Steering Group provided initial contacts. Further introductions often followed these conversations, and from local networking opportunities. The inequality groups identified by the quantitative data profile also prompted connections to be made. It was of course not possible to talk to an exhaustive list of people in Dalkeith, 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 their own lived experience of an overall picture of the collective challenges 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. The organisations are listed in Appendix A.



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 Place and Wellbeing Outcomes were used as a lens to frame conversations, and to interpret and capture the things we heard. 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.

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, the Community Link Lead sense checked the emerging themes with Stakeholders who 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. In Dalkeith, the Communities and Lifelong Learning worker also sense checked the findings in the report and added additional insights.



Emerging Themes: From the Qualitative Data

The summaries below detail the recurring ideas emerging from the documents reviewed and conversations had. 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. It is a snapshot of what we've heard from communities.

Existing Highly Valuable Support

The qualitative data research has brought to light various needs and challenges within the town of Dalkeith. Additionally, it has revealed a recurring theme of appreciation for the invaluable support provided by organisations. In particular those belonging to the Third Sector supported by volunteers, especially those supporting the following:

Mental Health: Offering a lifeline to individuals, adopting a person-centred approach to those facing emotional challenges.

Income Maximisation: Community members recognise the efforts of organisations helping individuals and families maximise their income, thereby alleviating financial hardships and promoting financial stability.

Community Transport: The provision of community transport services by Third Sector organisations is greatly appreciated, as it ensures that individuals, especially those with limited mobility, can access essential services and social activities.

Family Support: Several organisations and their volunteers actively contribute to family support services, offering assistance and guidance to families in need.

Food Pantry: Those volunteers operating the food pantry are acknowledged for addressing food insecurity, ensuring that vulnerable community members have access to nutritious meals during challenging times.

Support for Older People: Volunteers and organisations supporting older people receive recognition for enhancing the quality of life and well-being of older people through companionship, assistance, and social engagement.



Youth Engagement: The contributions of organisations and volunteers who actively engage with young people, providing mentorship, educational support, and recreational activities that significantly contribute to the personal development and growth of youth in our community is acknowledged as invaluable.

Long-term Disability Assistance: Individuals with long-term disabilities benefit from the invaluable support provided by these organisations and volunteers, which enhances their quality of life and independence.

Recovery Support: Organisations and volunteers actively assist individuals on their journey to recovery from various challenges, including addiction and mental health issues, fostering resilience and hope.

Support for Carers: Support provided to those caring for individuals in need is recognised as a lifeline, contributing to the wellbeing of both carers and recipients.

Support for Refugees: The community recognises the efforts made by organisations to support refugees from countries such as Syria and Ukraine, in their integration and inclusion into the community.

Gardening Groups: Community gardening initiatives led by volunteers, particularly evident in central Dalkeith, promote environmental stewardship, community bonding, and the beautification of public spaces.

Mental Health Groups: Particularly those which attract men are acknowledged as valuable contributing to promoting healthier lifestyles.

Cultural and Arts Programmes : Cultural and arts organisations, such as the Dalkeith Arts and Dalkeith Museum, contribute to the enrichment of community life and the preservation of local heritage, fostering a sense of pride and cultural identity.

Whilst recognising that Third Sector organisations, alongside government services have made a positive impact, the presence of limited resources, and in some cases reduced resources, have reportedly left some needs unaddressed.



Unmet Needs and Challenges

Several themes emerged from conversations and reports from community organisations around the unmet needs and challenges some of the community are facing in Dalkeith.

Poverty

A key theme throughout conversations in relation to poverty was health and inequalities. It was felt that poverty is linked to poor mental health, feelings of stress, stigma, and hopelessness. There are issues around access to affordable food and physical wellbeing. The food pantry in the Woodburn is highly valued however it is only open one afternoon a week. A lack of access to nearby, free or low-cost activities was also mentioned as challenging, particularly in the Woodburn area.

The importance of income maximisation and support to negotiate the benefit system was regarded as crucial. Dalkeith and District Citizen's Advice Bureau support in the Marc Building, St John's and Kings Park Church Café was highly valued.

“Most vulnerable people are not raising their head to ask for support- often it is only if a school raises an issue on their behalf”. Family Support Worker

Poverty symptoms exacerbated

Feedback from community organisations was that the symptoms of poverty have been increased by several factors, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The rising cost of living has led to situations where vulnerable people including young families and older people report being forced to choose between heating and eating.

Budget cuts have strained essential services. Some organisations have reported that a reduction of funding has led to reduced counselling services affecting many vulnerable groups.



Mental health

Organisations noted an increasing need for mental health assistance because of life's various challenges, such as low incomes, family problems, housing needs and caregiving duties. Some community workers expressed feelings of burnout trying their best with limited resources to support people in difficult circumstances. There appears still to be an issue with stigma surrounding mental health, hindering people from seeking the help they need. Particularly with men, ethnic minority and veteran communities.

The need for more assistance for individuals dealing with long-term mental health conditions was cited. It was reported by several organisations and individuals themselves that the closure of previous services in the area left a gap which may increase the risk of people reaching a crisis point.

Support services reported that ex-offenders can face significant challenges upon release. This included feelings of safety, delays accessing medical support and benefits such as Universal Credit.

Substance misuse

Reports from advice services indicated that transport costs can sometimes prevent those in recovery from attending appointments, therapy, or support group sessions.

Communication

Several organisations said that having a centralised location like a One Stop Shop or Hub would be advantageous. In person and online. It was noted that many valuable local resources exist, but not everyone is aware of them. It was suggested that increasing the presence of notice boards and newsletters would help keep people who are not online informed.

Some organisations indicated that they are currently not actively promoting their services due to overwhelming demand.



Awareness

In discussions, several points relating to awareness were identified. This included opportunities such as utilising resources like the ALLIS an online information system for people to find out what services and activities are happening in Dalkeith.

Organisations, especially those supporting young families, older people, ethnic minorities and veterans, reported a lack of awareness of benefit entitlements amongst the people that they assist. This lack of knowledge was compounded by some groups' fears of stigma in asking for help. Additionally, concerns were raised about the awareness of support available for those in work, on low incomes, particularly regarding accessibility during their working hours.

Travel

A lack of accessible transport appears to be a significant challenge for those with mobility difficulties. The level of demand for community transport is high, requiring booking to be made two weeks in advance.

In terms of active travel, the need for improvements in road maintenance, the hill gradient between Woodburn and Dalkeith, and introducing cycle lanes that connect Dalkeith centre to the wider area were raised. This would support safer cycling. There was also mention of the need for more safe bike parking.

Enhancing bus routes, connecting to places like the country park and the train station, was often raised. The reintroducing of e-bikes and providing access to adaptive bikes was also suggested as offering valuable solutions.

Volunteering

Several organisations welcomed the prospect of recruiting additional volunteers to support their services, however, there is a perceived apathy relating to people's willingness to get involved. More positively there is a rise in self-led initiatives, such as the Dalkeith Guerrilla Gardeners, indicating a shift towards grassroots efforts.



Although not formally recognised as volunteers, some organisations referred to service users helping support activities.

In community access to services and activities

The value of support services and activities being made available in the heart of communities was echoed by many organisations. There was an acknowledgement that introducing more opportunities could possibly act as a replacement for potentially harmful activities like drinking and gambling, cited as “something to do” by those accessing specialist support services.

It was recognised that Midlothian has a great Midlothian Active Choices programme, but it currently doesn’t reach the Woodburn area, resulting in a gap in the provision of free access to leisure opportunities promoting physical exercise.

Several outreach projects have been perceived as impactful and there is a real desire for more of the same. A suitable space to accommodate them however is a challenge. The possibility of a larger community building in the Woodburn area resulting from the upcoming feasibility study of the Marc building may provide a solution, depending on funding being secured.

Carers

Amongst the unmet needs reported for carers, was overnight respite provision. More understanding from employers to support carers in the form of offering reduced working hours or flexible schedules, was regarded as required.

Those with housing needs

A lack of affordable suitable housing was reported an unmet need. It was understood that inappropriate housing caused stress and anxiety especially for those whose needs had changed due to various circumstances.



Ethnic minority groups

Experts in providing resettlement support to refugees suggested that an increased provision of information in different languages, including application forms and information relating to utilities would be helpful.

Feedback Relating to the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

Movement

Public transport
Active travel
Traffic and parking

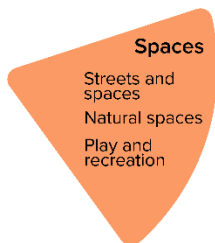
Movement: Transport links to the town centre were regarded by some people as a barrier to accessing work, activities, services, and volunteering opportunities. It was indicated that Community Transport was valued as a support to older people and those with mobility challenges to access recreation and support services. Demand for existing services is high, resulting in a requirement to book trips two weeks in advance suggesting that securing more resources might increase the services available. Feedback from Grassy Riggs older people group indicated that some participants are limiting visits to food pantry on a Friday due to the expense of having to take a taxi.

It was suggested that more could be done to support active travel, particularly safe cycling. Examples given were improved road maintenance and more trusted safe places for bike parking. It was expressed that road maintenance around town centre is deterring even the most experienced of cyclists. The lack of cycle lanes connecting Dalkeith town centre to other areas, and steep gradients between areas such as Dalkeith town centre and Woodburn are also reported as barriers. The siting of the school campus to the north of Woodburn, away from the centre of the Dalkeith area, is also a disincentive to active travel. Considering a reintroduction of e-bikes and opportunities to access adaptive bikes, were ideas also shared.

Improvements to transport routes out with the town centre and to and from Country Park and train station were also raised as having the potential to make an impact. As was improved electric charging opportunities. It was reported that although bus stop facilities had been built in Easter Langside the area has been left without a bus route.



There was praise for excellent walking routes, which could be publicised more perhaps with the opportunity of creating a heritage/mystery trail, though these are predominantly circular leisure routes, rather than direct routes from A to B.



Spaces: Research pinpointed significant challenges: spaces for youth, accessibility and affordability of activities to the Country Park, and limited toilet facilities in the area.

The area of Woodburn was described by some residents as a feeling like a “forgotten place” in terms of investment and lacks spaces for the development of community activities. The space available in the MARC building is very limited. The loss of the community centre from Woodburn, which was shut over a decade ago, is still keenly felt by the community. It was also reported that the Cowden Pavilion had not been allowing lets since Covid-19, leaving (groups such as the Wednesday morning toddler group) without a venue.



Resources: Organisations supporting people with mental health reported that the closure of the Orchard Centre left a gap in support opportunities for those experiencing long term mental health conditions.

Another challenge being a lack of out-of-hours support.

A reported lack in special needs nurseries, day centres for older people and overnight respite for care givers were identified as services that could provide valuable support.

The funded feasibility study for a new MARC building in Woodburn is regarded as an opportunity to improve connection to support opportunities and activities more locally.

Some organisations suggested that improved communication and increased thematic networking could help with identifying opportunities with new and existing resources, commenting that face-to-face networking helps build a rapport.



There was an appetite to recruit more volunteers to support the development of services however a perceived apathy of people wanting to get involved.

Improved information provided in digital and non-digital formats, including multilingual resources was reported as required. A "one-stop shop" with face-to-face assistance was repeatedly referenced as lacking, noting that some services have not reopened their doors post-pandemic, leaving neighbouring organisations feeling burdened.

Unmet housing needs was suspected as contributing to subsequent mental health problems.

More lead time in funding opportunities supporting summer activities for young people could facilitate collaborative projects.



Civic: There is a need to identify further opportunities which could lead to the reduction of alcohol and drug misuse in the community.

It has been reported that young people are using their free bus pass to congregate on buses. Some perception of playparks feeling unsafe.

Identify opportunities for community groups to seek funding for projects that foster an increased sense of belonging and Civic Pride.



Stewardship: Community spirit is evident in Dalkeith and a shared passion for helping one another. Existing volunteers, such as the Dalkeith Guerrilla Gardeners, exemplify the positive impact of stewardship, serving as inspiration for others to engage in community action.

The community expresses a desire for meaningful engagement and expresses frustration at being consulted without seeing follow up action. They seek feedback and tangible outcomes from their contributions to surveys and consultations. There is a desire to co-create local solutions.



Emerging Themes- All Project Towns

Community Link Leads discussed emerging themes from conversations with Third Sector and community organisations. Across the seven Shaping Places for Wellbeing project towns, (Alloa, Clydebank, Dalkeith, Dunoon, East Ayr, Fraserburgh and Rutherglen) they identified some key themes from conversations:

- **Communities value joint working and partnership approaches**, with the importance of communities taking a lead role in bringing people together. *“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 useful for things like funding applications.”* (Burnhill Action Group member)
- **Communities want strong and clear communication from and between all stakeholders**, with an emphasis placed on two-way communication and transparency. Inaccessible language can have an impact on people’s capacity to engage with consultation processes, etc.
- **Trust in formal/statutory services has been lost for both individuals and community stakeholders**. 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.
- **Communities are seeking quality community engagement** that goes beyond traditional consultation towards coproduction, cocreation and codesign *approaches*. *“A lack of communication or consultation leads to a lack of community buy-in”* (Burnhill resident)
- The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme and other ‘neutral’ organisations have been valued in our Project Towns for bringing people together.
- **Short-term funding has a significant negative impact** on third sector projects and place-based working.

Next Steps



The findings captured in this report have already started being fed into Place and Wellbeing Assessments of a range of plans, strategies, and decisions in Dalkeith. It will also be used to determine how Shaping Places for Wellbeing can support the embedment of recommendations made. It is hoped that the findings will be embedded in decision making affecting Dalkeith, to ensure the voice of the community is being heard. The Community Link Leads will act 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. The information in this report will be fed into the National Leadership Cohort, to encourage change at a national level.

Conversations with local community members, organisations and practitioners are an ongoing part of this 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. The report will be updated at different stages across the rest of Phase 1 of the programme.

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 Dalkeith 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.

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.

Review date

This report will be reviewed in February 2024.

Contact

Any comments, feedback or questions about this report can be directed to:

Jane.deary@improvementservice.org.uk

Jane Deary

Dalkeith Community Link Lead

Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

Appendix A

ORGANISATIONS MET
CAB – General, Gambling Support. Men’s Mental Health
Central Dalkeith & Woodburn Pantry
Dalkeith and District Community Council



Dalkeith Arts
Dalkeith Guerrilla Gardeners
Dalkeith Horticultural Society
Dalkeith Museum
ENABLE
Grassy Riggs
Hcl - Community Transport
Health in Mind
Housing – homeless support team
MARC Furniture
Melville Housing
Midlothian Council Refugee Resettlement Support
Midlothian Voluntary Action
One Dalkeith
Play Midlothian
Police Scotland
Red Cross
St Johns and Kings Park Church Café
Sure Start
Thistle Foundation



VOCAL
Volunteer Midlothian

Appendix B

DESK-BASED RESEARCH AND REPORTS PROVIDED/IDENTIFIED BY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



Child poverty in Midlothian- PHS April 23

Mental Health in Midlothian- MEAP April 21

European Social Fund Aspiring Communities Fund Final Report - Findings Woodburn and Central Dalkeith Development Project

Dalkeith Town Centre Regeneration Engagement Insights Summary July 2022

