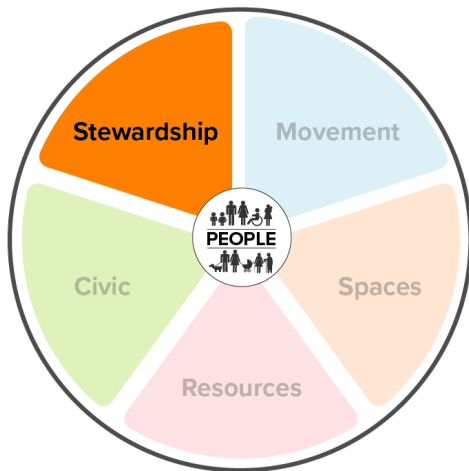


# Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

## Influence & Control: Impact on Clydebank's Community



**Influence & control can have a positive impact on people when everyone is empowered to be involved in a place in which:**

- Local outcomes are improved by effective collaborations between communities, community organisations and public bodies.
- Decision making processes are designed to involve communities as equal partners.
- Community organisations co-produce local solutions to issues.
- Communities have increased influence over decisions.
- Democratic processes are developed to be accessible to all citizens.

**This is why it is one of Scotland's Place & Wellbeing Outcomes.**

### The evidence tells us<sup>1</sup>:



Sense of control has been described as 'believing that you can influence and shape your own life'.



A sense of control can lead to more empowerment and a sense of purpose.



Empowerment can help reduce isolation and can be beneficial for mental health and wellbeing.



A high sense of purpose has been associated with a reduced risk for all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events.



Lack of control can lead to poorer health outcomes such as increased risk of heart disease, depression, anxiety and stress.



Designing with the community, rather than for it, makes end-users more likely to feel ownership of, and connection to, a final product.



People living in socio-economic deprived areas feel less confident about being involved in decision-making than less deprived areas.



People with a long-term health condition or disability can feel less empowered in decisions about their neighbourhood.

1. Source: [Evidence Behind Place Standard Tool & Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

## Indicators for Influence & Control in West Dunbartonshire & Clydebank<sup>2</sup>

'I can influence decisions affecting my local area'.

- **13% adults in West Dunbartonshire agree with this statement. (2019)**
- **This has decreased every year since 2015 and is consistently lower than Scotland.**

**There are fewer community owned assets in West Dunbartonshire than in other parts of Scotland.**

**44.9% voter turnout at 2022 Local Elections in West Dunbartonshire.**

- **This is lower than the 2017 turnout.**
- **Clydebank Central 41% and Clydebank Waterfront 42% Wards had the lowest voter turnout across West Dunbartonshire.**

**No Participation Requests have been received for Clydebank, with 1 received across West Dunbartonshire.**

## What we heard from a range of communities, organisations and practitioners in Clydebank in 2023

### Community Empowerment

Many local community groups and third sector organisations feel that supporting and enabling community empowerment is inconsistent across service areas in statutory organisations. Lack of knowledge on the Community Empowerment Act and limited understanding on the benefits of empowering communities were cited as key factors for it not being enabled.

While there are some opportunities available through Asset Transfer and Participatory Budgeting, there is a perception that community empowerment isn't always valued and subsequently not factored into decision-making at a senior level.

A range of local organisations perceive West Dunbartonshire Council as being reluctant to relinquish any power to local communities and highlighted this undermines confidence that decisions are made in the best interests of neighbourhood communities.

Concerns were raised in particular to asset transfer activity, including:

- Very low numbers of asset transfers in Clydebank and generally across West Dunbartonshire.
- Lack of local awareness amongst the local community that asset transfer is a possibility.
- The need for a comprehensive and regularly maintained register of local asset ownership and bequeathments.
- Lack of joined up working between Council service areas to provide a cohesive approach to asset transfer enquiries and applications.
- Recent cuts in support and resources available for local groups to build capacity and comprehensively address sustainability issues in asset transfer proposals.

Community management of assets prior to and in place of asset transfer was highlighted as established locally. Groups not yet prepared to adopt a more commercial approach have welcomed this.

2. Data Source: [Scottish Household Survey](#); [West Dunbartonshire Council](#); [Community Ownership in Scotland](#); [The Electoral Commission May 22](#)

**“Mainstreaming participatory budgeting, known as community budgeting locally, is key to helping us address long-standing inequalities in Clydebank.” (WDC Team Leader)**

In contrast, there has been a high level of involvement in local participatory budgeting initiatives, with 459 local groups and over 17,950 local people participating. A total of £971,000 was allocated to 305 groups through this approach over the past seven years.

Community budgeting has also encouraged collaboration across service areas, including the Communities Team, Greenspace, Regeneration and West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership.

Suggested improvements to local community budgeting initiatives include:

- That the quality of proposals is as important a determinant of success as the number of potential voters.
- Support is available for groups to develop proposals.

## Decision making concerns

A wide range of representatives expressed concern about local decision-making processes and their effectiveness, suggesting they are not bringing about change that local stakeholders want. Two neighbourhoods in Clydebank don't currently have an active Community Council.

Suggested improvements to decision making:

- Promoting the importance of community involvement to local decision making.
- Reviewing current community involvement processes and how it's communicated.
- Collaboration between statutory and third sectors and joined up working between council service areas.
- More support to promote community councils, encourage involvement, support recruitment, recognise their statutory role and input into how public funds are spent.

**“There is a poverty of aspiration amongst communities. They feel that they are not worthy of being part of the decision-making processes being made that directly impact them and their community.”**  
**(Community Council Forum member)**

**“Communities are still considered from a deficit perspective, as a level of demand which we feel needs to be met. Recent initiatives exploring citizen involvement are offered in the context of financial challenges. That's understandable, but the message is not empowering. Opportunities for collaboration at service design stage would be a more positive way of underpinning an empowerment culture. This would probably mean giving more power to innovate to the front-line staff most engaged at community level.”** (Third sector representative)

## Community engagement – fatigue & frustration

Whilst community engagement fatigue was often referred to, many went on to explain that this apparent apathy and reluctance to engage stems from a growing frustration and feeling of powerlessness which has emerged following years of perceived tokenistic consultation and limited opportunities for meaningful engagement from public partners.

Suggested improvements to encourage greater community involvement:

- Provide clear explanations of decision making through regular dialogue.
- Opportunities to engage are offered in-person, including localised neighbourhood level opportunities.
- Engagement offers the opportunity for meaningful discussion and the community feeling listened to.
- Reach out to 'seldom heard' voices and equality groups and ensure opportunities are fully accessible.

**“Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), the Council and West Dunbartonshire Community Transport Action Group developed a solution for citizens with health or mobility issues who need an alternative to public transport to attend health appointments. The Action Group provide volunteer drivers, the council supply a suitable vehicle and support, and SPT provide funding and expertise. A great example of how we can pool our resources.” WDC Officer**

## **The need for collaboration**

The value of collaborating was mentioned by a wide range of stakeholders with concerns of a current lack of partnership working both within public bodies and with the community / third sector.

The need for collaborative approaches to tackle local issues at early planning stages was highlighted, especially with current budget constraints, with recognition that when all partners bring their knowledge, expertise and resources together, much more can be achieved.

The established relationships the third sector have with local communities is recognised as one of the key strengths they bring to collaborative working. Their ability to engage and involve local people in service design and delivery, identify and develop solutions to local issues and provide opportunities for people to connect was acknowledged by a wide range of representatives.

However, many third sector organisations do not feel valued or regarded as equal partners by the public sector, particularly relating to decisions that have an impact on the work they do.

## **Communication**

The importance of communication featured in most of the local conversations.

There was positive feedback on opportunities to come together and exchange information (both online and in-person), with reference made to the Community Response Network previously facilitated by Clydesider Creative Ltd and the monthly Networking Forums facilitated by West Dunbartonshire Council for Voluntary Sector.

**“The guest speakers from NHS service areas are really informative, particularly the patient transport engagement. Hopefully our points raised are taken forward.”**  
*(Disability Charity Volunteer)*

There was a general appeal for improved communications, from raising awareness of community empowerment and the benefit it offers local communities to providing clear and accessible information on decision making processes and opportunities for local people to engage. The need for more signposting to both local and national sources of support for local groups was also highlighted, particularly in enabling them to build capacity to confidently engage with community empowerment opportunities, such as asset transfer and participation requests.