COMMUNITY CAPITAL

How purposeful participation
empowers humans to flourish

CSJ The Centre for
Social Justice

Contents

About the Centre for Social Justice

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions. The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst disadvantage and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in Government thinking and policy. The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five 'pathways to poverty', first identified in our ground-breaking 2007 report, *Breakthrough Britain*. These are: family breakdown; educational failure; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

In March 2013, the CSJ report *It Happens Here* shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the Government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

The CSJ delivers empirical, practical, fully funded policy solutions to address the scale of the social justice problems facing the UK. Our research is informed by expert working groups comprising prominent academics, practitioners and policy-makers. Furthermore, the CSJ Alliance is a unique group of charities, social enterprises and other grass-roots organisations that have a proven track record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The 13 years since the CSJ was founded has brought with it much success. But the social justice challenges facing Britain remain serious. Our response, therefore, must be equally serious. In 2019 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice in this nation.

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Disclaimer: Participation in the working group does not indicate that each participant agrees with all the points raised or recommendations published.

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This report demonstrates the value of people that work at the 'speed of trust' with their communities. Recognising the issues is one thing, but recognising the assets, and nurturing these to become the norm, is the way society needs to be.

Amy Butterworth, Make It Happen, Birkenhead

Too often our people are written off as NEET when in fact they are an asset to our community. The CSJ get this and we commend the report for capturing the reality of lives lived in poverty which are characterised by powerlessness.

Beverly Llewellyn, Arts Factory Ltd, Ferndale

This report highlights the transforming power of relationships – which is our greatest tool. Our door is always open, and young people flock through it to escape boredom and purposelessness. The CSJs diagnosis is spot on. If we want to distribute wellbeing, we must start with strengthening community.

Sandra James, Inclusion Ventures, Jaywick

Foreword

The vote to leave the European Union was a vote to restore a sense of home. Far from parochial or myopic, a sense of home fosters other important values. It is through a secure connection to families, institutions and places, that people develop norms of reciprocity such as obligation, loyalty and sacrifice.

G.K. Chesterton famously said, 'Don't ever take a fence down until you know the reason it was put up.' However, as this report laments, too many of the institutions of our civil society – once prized assets – are no longer guarantors of the stability which spawns shared meaning to, and purpose in, human lives. Consequently, the mutual recognition of a sense of belonging to the same place is at risk.

Yet, as long as there are people, there will remain organic groupings seeking to build 'little platoons' where compatriots feel at home with whom they share experiences, interests and values. Here, 'platoon members' realise the fruit of their own social contribution as they actively participate in the life of a community. Far from being abstract, communities enjoy all kinds of meaningful exchanges on the basis of reciprocity – not merely transactions – so mitigating inequality and the powerlessness it might otherwise seed.

This report seeks to refocus our sights on the human assets we all have; the social contribution each of us make, and, the resultant wellbeing we all feel. There is much more to flourishing communities than finance and funding, but we need well-stocked libraries, well-maintained village halls and well-run youth organisations, as well as small family businesses, churches, pubs and clubs, to foster an abiding sense of home across our great nation.

Rt Hon Sir John Hayes CBE MP,
Chair of the Working Group

Executive summary

Introduction

This report maintains that community engagement (purposeful participation) affords people social capital. And social capital depends on social infrastructure, that is, face to face, local networks of people that congregate in our libraries, village halls and youth clubs. Such places are a life line for so many of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged people. This report should be read as an attempt to shape an alternative framing of issues which demonstrate that community is the cure for a society made sick by isolation, selfishness and rootlessness. This straightforward idea is too often missed by policy makers who work towards meeting targets – sometimes the wrong targets. We hope that others might build on the ideas set out in this report and that it might provoke a step change in the ambition of government, to pursue human flourishing.

The reason the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is interested in purposeful participation in deprived areas, is because intelligent policy making means not only understanding the non-financial elements of poverty, but also the non-material, experiential elements of poverty. Indian Economist and Philosopher, Amartya Sen, maintains that relational deprivation is intrinsic to poverty insofar as poverty is more than what is financially affordable, but also being characterised by individual capabilities. We found that the routine experience of those most vulnerable and disadvantaged Britons is of diminished capabilities, best described as powerlessness.

There are a number of interlinking cultural, social and economic forces at play which frustrate relational connectivity across the UK. In the UK today, family breakdown, the departure of local economies, and bureaucracy in public services, has changed the face of relationships, employment and participation, to the detriment of purposeful participation in community.

We spent six weeks in Birkenhead, Clacton and The Rhondda Valley, conducting focus groups across the breadth of civil society organisations in order to understand the outcomes of purposeful participation in the life of a community.

Purposeful participation

We must enable humans to flourish through fostering responsibility and belonging. And this depends on empowering communities to drive purposeful participation.

Adam told us that if he was not playing bowls that morning, he would likely be 'at home, drinking, bored'.[1] Surely social contributions should have parity of esteem with economic data because relationships are exponentially more significant for life satisfaction than financial or material assets. GDP includes estimates for the market value of the illegal drug trade and prostitution, but the invaluable support offered by families, neighbours and local community groups are left out of economic equations, even though unpaid work was valued at approximately 56 per cent of GDP in 2014.[2]

We confuse monetary value with intrinsic value at our peril. Household income and other siloed measures such as healthy life expectancy remain important and relevant, but lives can still be lived in misery, alive and afloat. Other outcomes should have parity of esteem.

Enabling humans to flourish

Our young people are more than economic units 'not in education, employment or training'. Each has assets and talents which are best realised through purposeful participation. Once realised, we found that many assumed a responsibility to others, recognising their unique and important part to play in the life of a community. This builds confidence and can open doors to employment.

Pat at Treherbert Bowls Club was relying on her daughter to help care for her husband, but since joining the group, has found other people who are willing to lend a hand. Transience is proving problematic. We need places to be populated with those who are best placed to support our most vulnerable and disadvantaged people where they are, committed local friends and family. Purposeful participation in the life of a community can improve a sense of belonging. The social mobility agenda too often fuels ambitions which see people dislocated from communities, stripping them of human capacity.[3] A genuine rebalancing of our economy need not assume that only power of potential earning attracts people to live and work in places. Social and cultural assets play their part too.

Empowering communities

The purposeful participation that fosters responsibility and belonging among individuals depends on social infrastructure in places, making local authorities a key enabler of this agenda. We need the physical places that enable people to come together and so forge strong relationships that foster interdependence, rather than leaving people in need dependent on state services. Those best placed to manage such assets are those that see the potential in sustaining social infrastructure. Too often, local authorities' financial constraints prevent them from sharing this vision. Cutting cherished, but discretionary, social infrastructure such as libraries is a false economy.

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1   Focus Group, Treherbert Bowls, Treherbert, April 2019
2   Office for National Statistics, 'Women shoulder the responsibility of 'unpaid work'', November 2016, accessed via: www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/womenshouldertheresponsibilityofunpaidwork/2016-11-10 (11.07.19)
3   Centre for Social Justice, *The Future of Work: Regional Revolution*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2018

We found that community groups 'go the extra mile' and consequently gain the trust of 'clients' of statutory welfare services, making them extremely well informed about both individuals' assets and needs. For instance, the trust that social prescribers gain allows them to reduce unnecessary barriers that may prevent a client from seeking advice. Services must stop dealing solely with individuals and start building relationships with local networks of support, harnessing the trust that exists within them.

We commend Wigan Council for renewing a 'social contract' with their residents; empowering communities to use their assets to reduce dependency and foster human flourishing.

Conclusion

Economic independence without social interdependence may indicate a secure income but cannot assure human flourishing. Material contributions set apart from the flexibility to raise children, look after loved ones and participate in voluntary activity may look good for headline economic statistics, but places unsustainable pressure on public services. Our research demonstrates that strong communities enable human flourishing through tackling the powerlessness central to the daily experience of poverty. And we commend Wigan Council for their asset-based approach to empowering community. The Government must recognise the untapped potential in civil society through decentralisation, this can be harnessed by supporting those best placed to serve the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Summary of policy recommendations

Recommendation 1: Measure what matters

Government must pursue a new agenda to enable human flourishing by measuring what matters.

We recommend that central government be placed under a new duty to improve the wellbeing of the nation through boosting purposeful participation at a local level; measuring what matters. Local authorities should be responsible for capturing data on levels of participation in social infrastructure - which may differ in kind depending on the place – allowing central government to monitor the social fabric across the nation.

The data submitted by local authorities will indicate progress towards improving purposeful participation. Gauging national policy against the data provided will drive government activity across every department to incentivise the strengthening of local relationships, as well as investment in local authorities for the purposes of improving levels of participation to deliver on this new national outcome.

Recommendation 2: Review the Universal Credit claimant commitment

We recommend that the Government introduce an 'asset-based' element to the claimant commitment by incorporating volunteering, or other community-based purposeful activity. At their discretion, work coaches should be empowered to instruct claimants to reserve 10 of the 35 expected hours per week for this purpose. We believe that this will improve claimants' wellbeing while job-seeking, making it a more productive period. This may be particularly appropriate for younger claimants with little work experience. Job Centre's should work with local Councils' of Voluntary Services (CVS) and social prescribers to find the right opportunity for their claimants.

Recommendation 3: Create pride in places

We recommend that grant funding be made available for organisations to run campaigns inviting residents to vote for a plaque, or other noticeable emblems (such as the name of a park or road), in every town, every year. Once placed, an education provider should deliver a package to primary schools to ensure pupils learn more about the place they live through the commemoration.

Recommendation 4: Re-imagining the high street from the bottom up

We recommend that the government support community groups to establish CLT's through replicating 'Enabling Hubs' for high street renovations.

Recommendation 5: Secure the sustainability of youth provision

We recommend a National Youth Infrastructure Fund to enable youth clubs to keep up their good work, without fear of losing the next bid or failing to secure another donation. The Government should commit substantial investment over the next ten years, creating an endowment to ensure that youth centres will never close. The funding will be hard-wired to every local area, and when joint bids are in place, a community owned enterprise will be empowered to get on with serving local young people and building their assets.

Recommendation 6: Boost community asset ownership

We recommend that all local authorities establish a community ownership strategy which includes the necessary commitment to invest in the provision of ongoing support for community groups to make a success of asset transfers.

Recommendation 7: Trust and invest in communities

We recommend all local authorities invest in community empowering initiatives though small-scale funding to local community organisations with ideas that align with wellbeing priorities. Alongside the funding, support in the form of council mentors and bidding advice should be made widely available.

Recommendation 8: Implement a full Universal Support programme

We recommend that DWP revisit the plan to implement a full Universal Support programme. The support should split the roles of decision-makers and advocates, with work coaches performing the former role and third party organisations performing the latter. Work coaches should direct claimants to a wide range of local third party organisations – such as charities – who are well placed to offer tailored support for a range of issues, as well as advocacy or mentorship. Such organisations should receive funding for their contribution as well as legal permissions to access the claimant's data in order to assist with their claim. Advocates must regularly report to the work coaches.

Introduction

This report is not only about public service reform, it is fundamentally about relationships.

Unlike many other policy papers which relate to a specific policy area with a dedicated Government Department attending to the issues of the day, this report is focussed above these silos. This is because the subject matter – relationships, and how to build them at a local level to create a sense of community – is complex, spanning several policy areas and operational at every level in society. While the following report will touch on education, housing and health, it does so because success in each case depends on recognising that relationships are the key to transforming the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Britons – see Figure 1. This report seeks to recommend how to empower places to tackle the social problems they face. We are delighted that the Ministry for Housing and Local Government have announced a Communities White Paper to 'renew government's focus on building stronger communities across England', and urge the new Ministers to continue with this work.[4]

Political context

In his lesser-known but highly significant third report of 1948, 'Voluntary Action', the architect of the modern welfare state, Sir William Beveridge, argued that 'social advance' relies on voluntary action. 'Ceaselessly the State has extended its activity in fields in which voluntary action has pioneered', he contended.[5] It was voluntary institutions that initiated schools, hospitals and the social insurance system that would become the welfare state. Yet for Beveridge, the creation of the welfare state did not make the voluntary sector redundant. Instead he argued that voluntary action remained vital to meet other needs and to do things that the state 'should not do' or was 'most unlikely' to do, and that 'there is a need for political invention to find new ways of fruitful co-operation between public authorities and voluntary agencies'.[6]

> And yet more is necessary than this. For between those walls—the one around our island and the one around our homes—is a large space. This is the field of civil society. Here people congregate for all the business and pleasure of life, performing the transactions of love and profit which make the nation grow. These transactions are, or should be, private, mediated where mediation is necessary through independent institutions, constructed and maintained by free people.
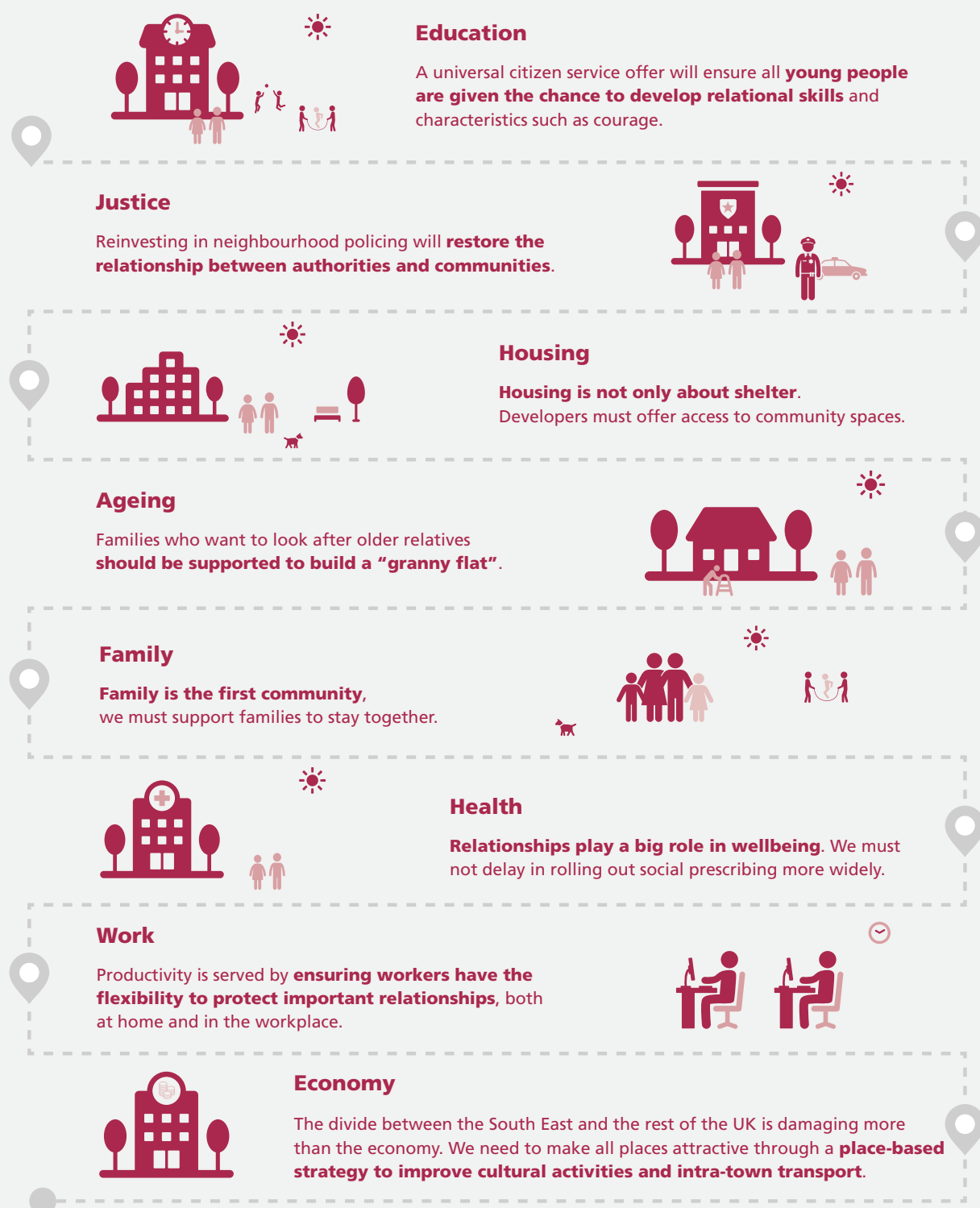>
> **Danny Kruger, On Fraternity**

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4 Ministry for Housing and Local Government, *By deeds and their results: How we will strengthen our communities and nation*, Whitehall: 2019
5 Centre for Social Justice, *Something's Got to Give: The state of Britain's voluntary and community sector*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013
6 Ibid

Figure 1: The reach of a community formation policy agenda

Education

A universal citizen service offer will ensure all **young people are given the chance to develop relational skills** and characteristics such as courage.

Justice

Reinvesting in neighbourhood policing will **restore the relationship between authorities and communities**.

Housing

Housing is not only about shelter.
Developers must offer access to community spaces.

Ageing

Families who want to look after older relatives **should be supported to build a "granny flat"**.

Family

Family is the first community,
we must support families to stay together.

Health

Relationships play a big role in wellbeing. We must not delay in rolling out social prescribing more widely.

Work

Productivity is served by **ensuring workers have the flexibility to protect important relationships**, both at home and in the workplace.

Economy

The divide between the South East and the rest of the UK is damaging more than the economy. We need to make all places attractive through a **place-based strategy to improve cultural activities and intra-town transport**.

This is precisely what the Government's civil society strategy calls for. A renewed commitment to the principles of The Compact, a coalition document which sets out how government and civil society can work together in partnership for the benefit of communities.[7] And both our previous two Prime Ministers have expressed a desire to harness the capacity of civil society.

Almost 10 years ago in 2009, just before he became Prime Minister, David Cameron set out his vision for a 'Big Society' where he called for 'catalysing and galvanising social renewal'.[8] Similarly, five months after assuming the office of Prime Minister, Theresa May expressed her desire to build a 'shared society' with a focus on 'the responsibilities we have to one another; a society that respects the bonds of family, community, citizenship and strong institutions that we share as a union of people and nations'.[9]

Why is it that both Cameron and May shared an ambition to see the strengthening of civic bonds for the good of society, yet delivered tokenistic policies which did not mark the fundamental shift necessary to genuinely empower and enable communities to make a difference, apart from the state. In reality – for policymakers – change from a bottom up approach supported by government, can only come about through the genuine devolution of power to organisations closer to communities, or to the communities themselves.

This needs to be done. And Brexit demonstrated the urgency with which this needs to be done. For in rootless Britain, nothing and no one will grow as they could and should. The Local Trust have published an initial iteration of their 'Community Needs Index', and found that ward level areas with an absence of key community assets, low levels of investment, inadequate infrastructure and poor participation, were more likely to vote leave.[10] These areas lacked the social infrastructure which facilitates people coming together and with a collective voice, the chance to make themselves heard.

Defining community

The term 'community' can be used to refer to different things. A group of people who share a certain characteristic, or interactions on a social media platform. But, the CSJ is interested in the experience of community for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people. By which we mean face to face, networks of people who congregate in our libraries, village halls and youth clubs. These are located, rooted, communities, small enough to enable meaningful contribution, accessible, and existing immediately outside our own front doors.

It is important to make clear that community is distinct from, but related to, other important resources such as the voluntary sector, and, more broadly, civil society. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) defines civil society as 'individuals and organisations when they act with the primary purpose of creating social value, independent of state control'. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) estimates that, in the UK, there

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7   HM Government, *Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for* Everyone, London: HM Government, 2018
8   Speech by Prime Minister, David Cameron, The Big Society, 10 November 2019
9   Speech by Prime Minister, Theresa May, The Shared Society, 8 January 2017
10 As written on Local Trust's website, What does being 'left behind' mean in practice?, accessed via: https://localtrust.org.uk/news-and-stories/blog/what-does-being-left-behind-mean-in-practice/ (11.07.19)

are 390,000 such organisations that sit somewhere between government, individuals, and businesses – see Figure 2.[11] While this report draws from all such organisations, our primary focus is the engagement in local networks of people, regardless of size or sector.

Social Scientist, Robert Putnam, is known for popularising the term 'social capital'. While financial capital provides recourse to material assets, social capital, as Putnam puts it, provides 'networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives'.[12] Such networks afford people the opportunity to contribute to a wider community which, he continues, make us 'smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy'.[13] The Office for National Statistics (ONS), measures social capital using the following indicators: personal relationships, social support networks, civic engagement, trust and cooperative norms and views of the local area.[14] For the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the UK, social capital means having local people to rely upon who can be readily found to help in our libraries, village halls, youth clubs or, simply, in the house next door, to provide the informal welfare which reassures, supports, advises, and cares for people so saving them from isolation and dependence.

However, given the reality of varying qualities of social capital, Putnam makes the case for 'bridging' to other social networks. While social capital enables the wealthy to further enrich their lives through given networks, it is rarely considered how to extend this advantage to those lower down the socio-economic scale. The Journal of Poverty and Social Justice points out that while more affluent people in mixed tenure neighbourhoods are unlikely to mix with their poorer neighbours, they are more likely to support policies to increase benefits and redistribute income.[15] However, places of informal interaction such as school gates, libraries and parks certainly foster more genuinely mixed networks.[16] Again, social infrastructure is the empowering force.

There are of course alternative views and it's important to consider them. Louise Casey's explanation of the 'intergenerational transmission' of social problems such as poor parenting, violence, and low aspirations, demonstrates a cautious estimate of the efficacy of social capital in alleviating poverty.[17] Defined by social scientist Robert Putnam as 'networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives', it is largely accepted that social capital makes a positive difference to people's lives.[18] Casey makes the important point that this can be extended beyond the home, for example to gangs, where the influence exerted over younger members by the community is destructive.

However, we must not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The vast majority of familial structures are constructive and must be protected and supported. Besides which, what is the alternative? Isolation is no cure for the failure of intergenerational transmission. Networks of people are a fact of life, and isolation from them, if anything, makes the individual more vulnerable to the forces of destructive communities, like gangs. This is just one reason why

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11   HM Government, *Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone*, London: HM Government, 2018
12   Harper R, and Kelly M, 'Measuring Social Capital in the United Kingdom', London: Office for National Statistics, 2003
13   Putnam R, '*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*', New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010
14   Harper R, and Kelly M, 'Measuring Social Capital in the United Kingdom', London: Office for National Statistics, 2003
15   *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, vol 23, no 3, 189–201,Policy Press 2015, accessed via: http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/175982 715X14448122286274 [19.09.19]
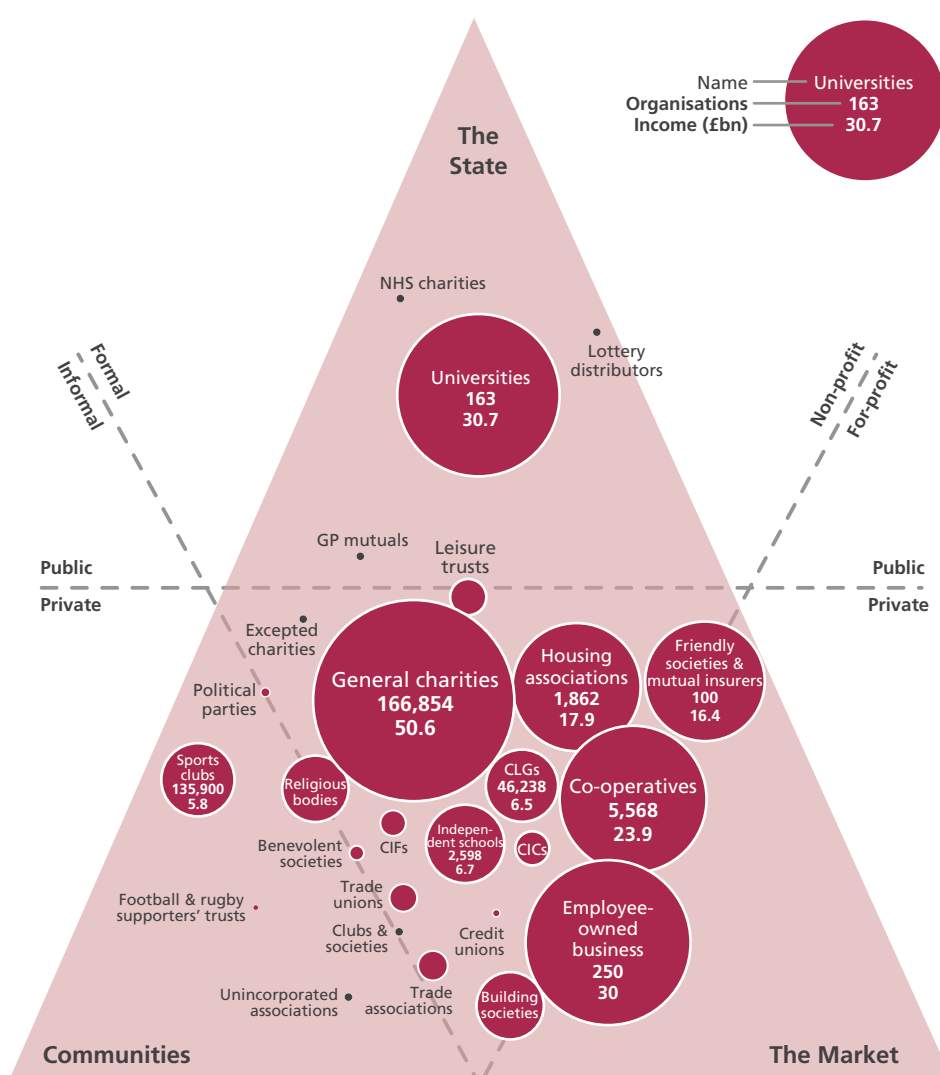16   Ibid
17   Department for Communities and Local Government, Listening to Troubled Families, London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012
18   Harper R, and Kelly M, 'Measuring Social Capital in the United Kingdom', London: Office for National Statistics, 2003

the CSJ is unapologetic in its defence of the importance of stable family life, and marriage as an effective institution to provide personal meaning and purpose through togetherness. Family is the first community. So when this breaks down, replacements form. This can be seen through an examination of fatherlessness and gang membership. Professor Carolyn Pape Cowan and Philip Cowan found that where there is positive father involvement, children do better 'on every imaginable scale'.[19] It is therefore no surprise Croydon's 2019 review of vulnerable adolescents shows that three quarters (72 per cent) of children grew up in a fatherless family.[20] The lesson is that given the rate of family breakdown, social infrastructure – the train tracks for social capital – is all the more vital in order to prevent destructive networks filling the void. We must ensure the accessibility of alternative outlets where there is family breakdown, to prevent gangs filling the void.

Figure 2: The breadth of civil society

Source: NCVO

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19 Pruett M, Pruett K, Cowan C, and Cowan P, 'Enhancing father involvement in low-income families: A couples group approach to preventative intervention. Child Development', Child Development, 88(2), 2017, pp. 399–407

20 Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, 'Vulnerable Adolescents Thematic Review', Croydon: Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, 2019

Community and poverty: powerlessness

First, let us be clear about our definition of poverty. The CSJ has long contested the measure of poverty currently used by the Government which states that households with an income below 60 per cent of the median household income have a 'relative low income'.[21] This method of measuring poverty is purely financial and far too crude to account for the complexities of need, and, because it is simplistic, it encourages the wrong solutions. Based on well over a decade of engagement with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, we are clear that there are multiple, and often interlinked, 'pathways to poverty'. These are, family breakdown, poor educational attainment, addiction, serious personal debt and worklessness. Intelligent policy making means not only understanding the non-financial elements, but also the non-material, experiential elements of poverty.

Networks of people that are accessible, local, familiar and offer support, are vital for many living in our most deprived towns. Our most deprived towns and cities are in receipt of immense levels of welfare in the form of benefits and services. In these areas, many local people are well rehearsed in their own impediments as a means of proving their need and protecting their support; enlisting on the next Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programme and applying for the latest benefit has for them become a mode of living, a way of life. This constant regimen is reducing individuals' bandwidth to determine their own next steps. And it is why a sense of powerlessness is particular to people who experience poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) reports that having 8 to 9 close friends reduces the odds of being poor by about 45 per cent.[22] While this, helpfully, provides an explanation of why relationships matter,, it does not tell a story about what it is like to experience poverty.

A study called 'The Voices of the Poor' recorded one respondent saying 'Poverty is pain: it feels like a disease […] It eats away one's dignity and drives one into total despair'.[23] Amartya Sen, maintains that relational deprivation is intrinsic to poverty insofar as poverty is more than what is financially affordable, but also about what is within your capability. Such capabilities are not merely physical. Sen identifies relational capabilities such as to play, express concern for others, control one's own environment, not be humiliated and even to imagine. Similarly, former Chief Economist at The World Bank, Kaushik Basu, argued that a sense of belonging is a determining factor in improving capability.[24] Basu warns of a 'societal equilibrium' when people are treated as marginal over a period of time. Basu says 'forces develop that erode their capability and productivity, and reinforce their marginalisation', and such people learn to not participate, and others to exclude them from society.[25]

The human experience for those most vulnerable and disadvantaged is one of reduced capabilities, or, powerlessness. Not only because having no money is disarming, but also because facing countless hurdles is disempowering.

I like money and nice things, but it's not money that makes me happy.
It's people that make me happy.
Bulgarian woman, Voices of the Poor[26]

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21 Francis-Devine B, Booth L, and McGuinness F, *Poverty in the UK: statistics,* London: House of Commons Library, 2019

22 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *'How are poverty, ethnicity, social networks related?'*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015

23 Samuel K, Alkire S, Zaavaleta D, Mills C, and Hammock J, 'Social isolation and its relationship to multidimensional poverty, Kim Samuel, Sabina Alkire, Diego Zavaleta, China Mills & John Hammock, *Oxford Development Studies,* 46:1, 2018, 83–97

24 Ibid

25 Ibid

26 Samuel K, Alkire S, Zavaleta D, Mills C, and Hammock J, 'Social Isolation and its Relationship to Multidimensional Poverty', OPHI Working Paper 80, Oxford University, 2014

CSJ Community Capital Survey

We surveyed almost 100 charities, social enterprises, community groups and council services, to understand the sector's thinking with regards to the efficacy of community engagement to tackle poverty.

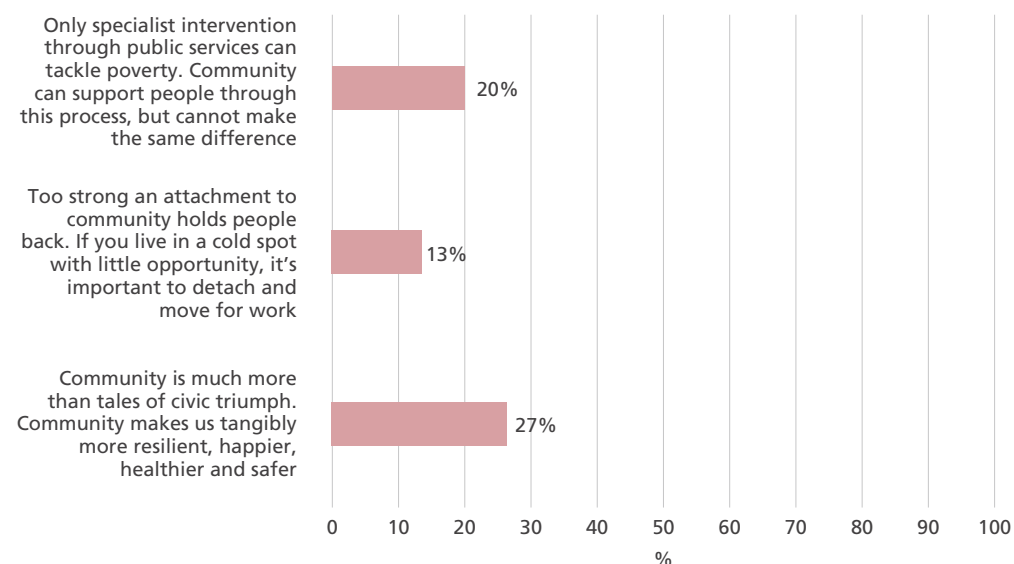Figure 3: Which of the following best describes community?

Figure 4: Community complements statutory services by supporting people, but cannot significantly work towards the relief of poverty
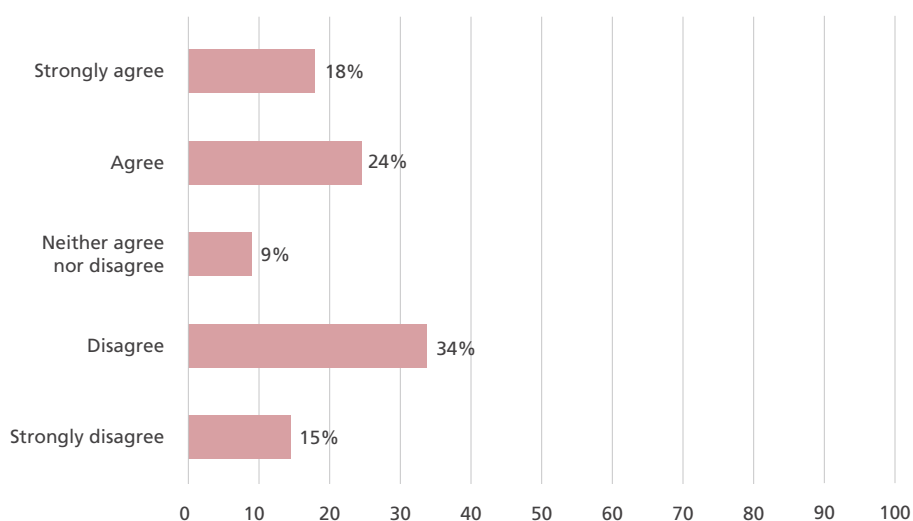
Figure 5: Community can do vital work that statutory services cannot such as build resilience and confidence in people
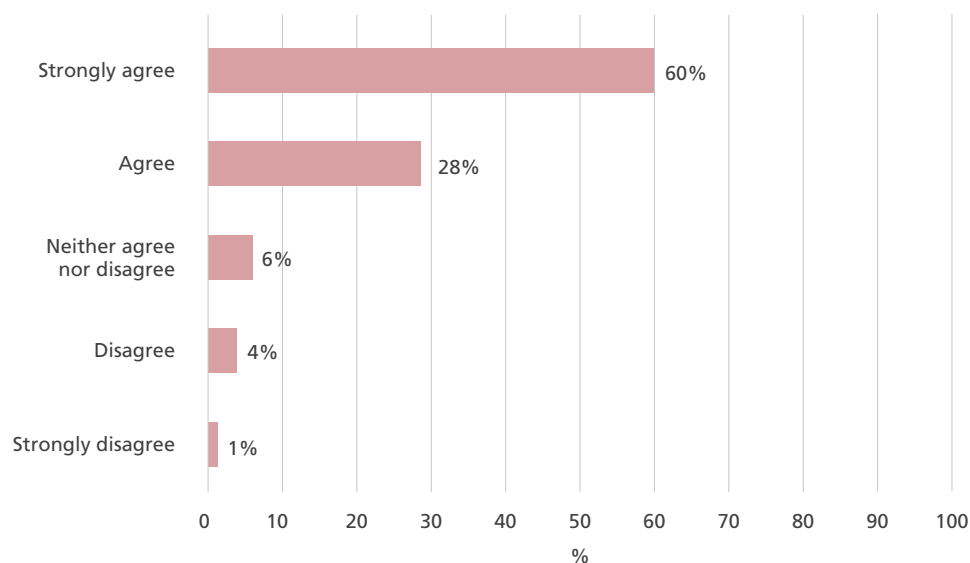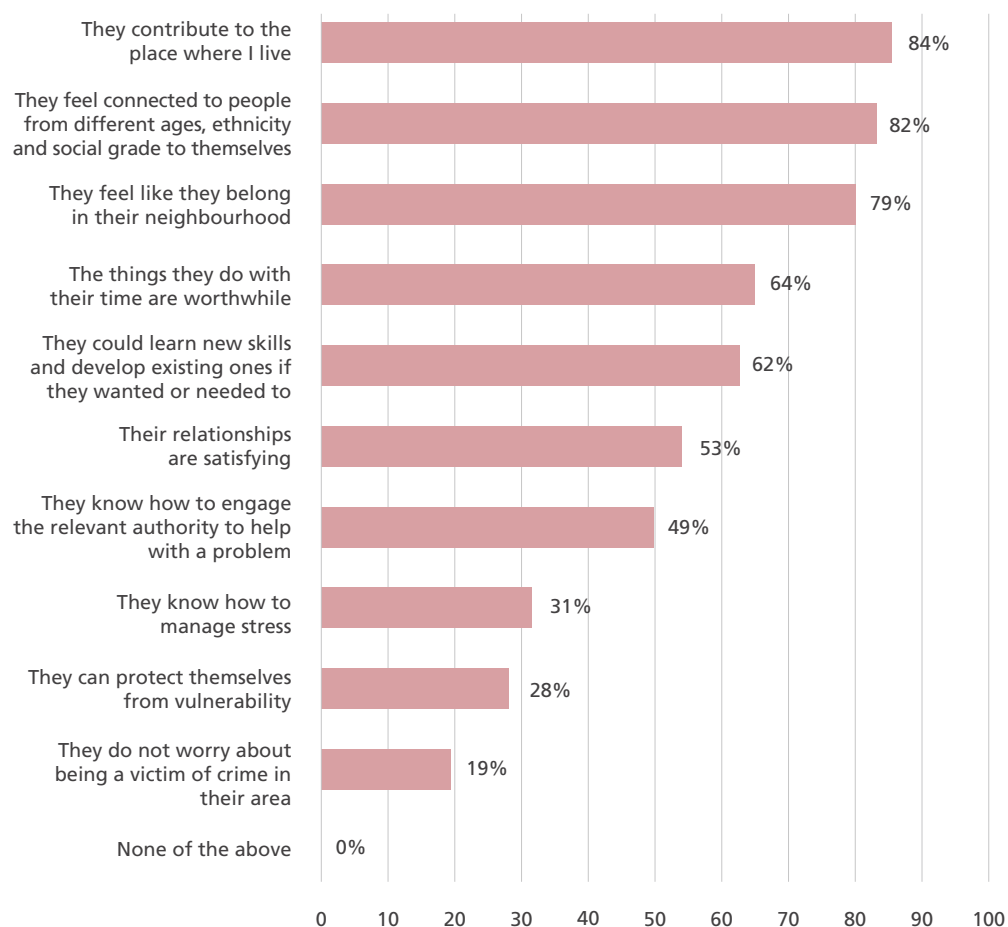

Figure 6: Which of the following do you think is more often true of those who are engaged in community, compared to those who are not?

These survey results highlight a number of interesting observations from those who engage regularly with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the UK. There is a general agreement that community does have a part to play in the relief of poverty, though there remains an important place for statutory intervention.

Hypothesis

Discovering the outcome of engaging in the life of a community is a complex investigation which does not lend itself to simply number crunching existing data. For this reason, to make more sense of the human experience of poverty, we broke down our hypothesis into two parts – first that community engagement provides poverty mitigating outcomes, and secondly that it provides poverty reducing outcomes. The most important finding was that wellbeing is enhanced through the empowering activity of contributing to a community. Building communal ties and so securing roots undoubtedly set people up to achieve more challenging outcomes such as improved education and secure employment.

> We talk about childcare, equality, rights, but not enough about family and relationships. We tend to be paternalistic, technocratic and statist. We talk about retail offers and 'delivering services to people' and neglect to ask how we can help people to help themselves.
>
> **Jon Cruddas, Labour MP for Dagenham and Rainham, Lecture at The Mile End Institute**

The state of
the nation

New York Times Columnist, David Brooks, writes, 'the great challenge of our moment is the crisis of isolation and fragmentation, the need to rebind the fabric of a society that has been torn by selfishness, cynicism, distrust and autonomy'.[27] Brooks' naming of autonomy as a malaise, rather than an ideal, challenges modern western assumptions about what 'the good life' comprises. We know that when presented with a choice between financial and social capital; money and relationships, humans do not always act in their own economic interest, instead preferring to remain bound to family and friends.
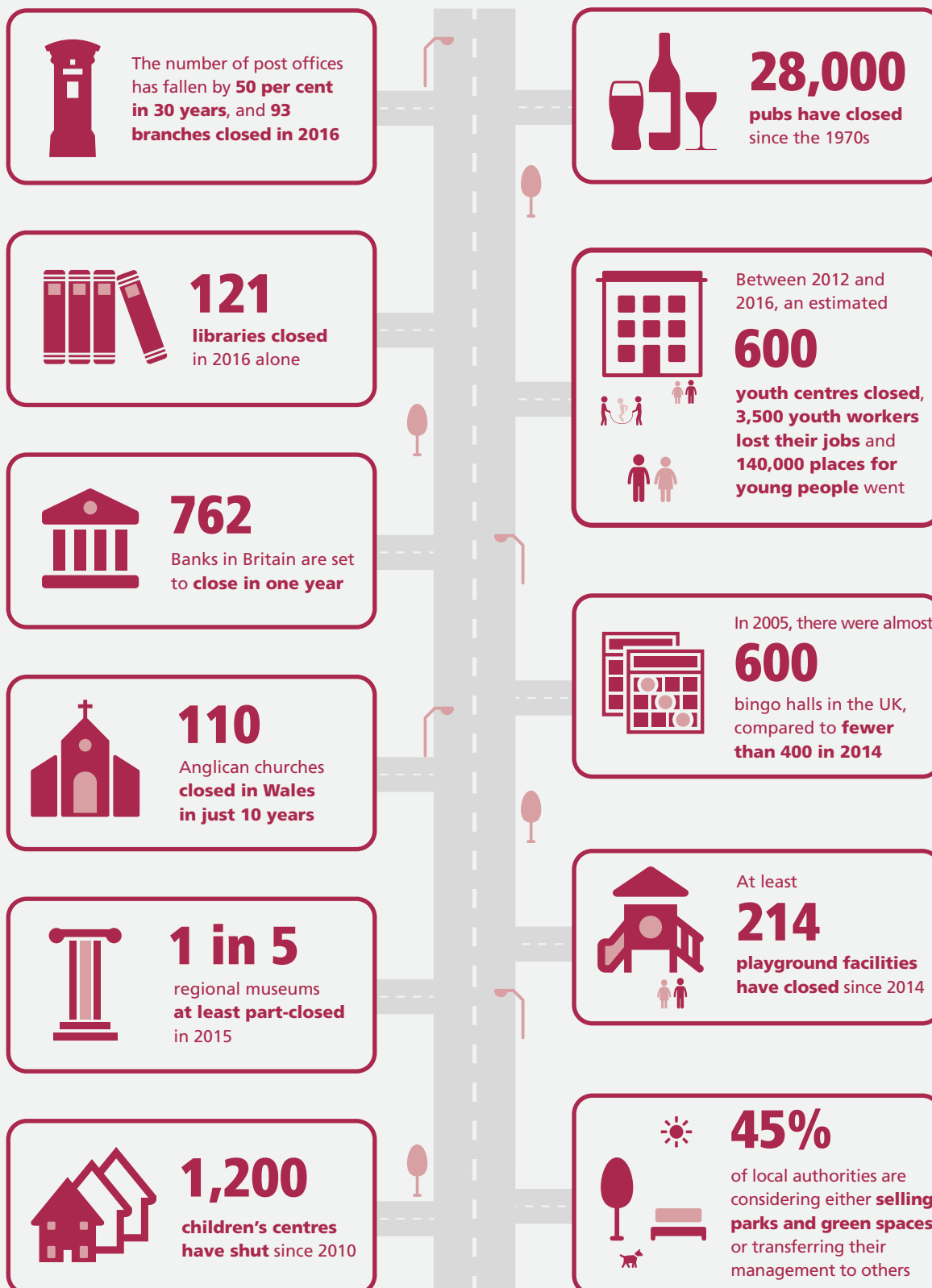
However, there are a number of interlinking cultural, social and economic forces at play which frustrate relational connectivity across the UK. In the UK today, family breakdown, dependence on technology, the disintegration of local economies, and bureaucracy in public services, has changed the face of relationships, employment and participation, to the detriment of purposeful participation. The remainder of this chapter will explore these instances.

> If you ask why concepts like community, place and belonging have suddenly come to occupy a central place in political discourse, then you will quickly light upon the obvious fact that those aspects of the human condition are, in modern conditions, all under threat.
>
> **Roger Scruton, The Architecture of Social Isolation**

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27   Brooks, D The New York Times, *The Death of Idealism*, 30 September 2016

Figure 7: Decline of social infrastructure

The number of post offices has fallen by **50 per cent in 30 years**, and **93 branches closed in 2016**

28,000 **pubs have closed** since the 1970s

121 **libraries closed** in 2016 alone

Between 2012 and 2016, an estimated **600** **youth centres closed, 3,500 youth workers lost their jobs** and **140,000 places for young people** went

762 Banks in Britain are set to **close in one year**

In 2005, there were almost **600** bingo halls in the UK, compared to **fewer than 400 in 2014**

110 Anglican churches **closed in Wales in just 10 years**

At least **214** **playground facilities have closed** since 2014

1 in 5 regional museums **at least part-closed** in 2015

45% of local authorities are considering either **selling parks and green spaces** or transferring their management to others

1,200 **children's centres have shut** since 2010

Source: Gregory D, Skittled Out, London: Local Trust, 2018, Part One

The crisis of isolation and fragmentation

We are losing our social infrastructure. That means, as Dan Gregory puts it, 'the places and structures and buildings or clubs that enable people to get together, meet, socialise, volunteer and co-operate [...] This is not what happens – it's the stuff that supports stuff to happen'.[28] Just last year, the Local Trust found a serious decline in such places, as Figure 7 shows. Gregory has produced excellent analysis of social infrastructure for The Local Trust. He maintains that much depends on long-term sustainable enterprise and industry, as with financial capital, so maintaining a stock of social capital depends on firm structures.[29] The loss of social infrastructure is exacerbated by the fact that groups that meet in council-supported venues such as community centres are now facing charges to use venues which were once cheap or free to use.[30]

Data on loneliness also indicates a crisis of isolation and fragmentation. Over 9 million people in the UK – almost a fifth of the population – say they are always or often lonely.[31] And this is not necessarily generational. The Intergeneration Foundation reported that a sense of belonging – 'belonging wellbeing' – has declined by 32 per cent since 2005 among 20–29 year olds, indicated by falls in volunteering, interest in politics and religious observance, all of which are all strongly associated with a sense of belonging.[32]

However, this decline in social activity sits in a wider context.

The decline of local economies has meant longer commutes, out of town shopping and less time spent with friends and family. In fact, 60 per cent of Citizenship Survey respondents reported work commitments as the reason for not participating in volunteering-related activities.[33] Commuting may have something to do with this. The average distance and length of commuting journeys have increased in recent years, but while distances are highest in rural areas, the duration is greatest in London, meaning Londoners commute at comparably low speeds.[34] These trends suggest that more people are spending less time in town, adding to a diminished connectivity between people and place.

The CSJ has long held that work is the best route out of poverty, but not only for the acquisition of financial capital. Fukuyama argued that 'the workplace also draws people out of their private lives and connects them to a wider social world. That connectedness is not just a means to the end of earning a pay check but an important end of human life itself'.[35] Centre for Cities observe that struggling cities have replaced industrial jobs with low-skill monotonous work, swapping cotton mills for call centres and dock yards for distribution sheds'.[36] Take the rise of 'uberisation' in the 21st century job market – the use of digital technology to facilitate transactions between clients and providers, bypassing

28 Ibid
29 Gregory D, Skittled Out, London: Local Trust, 2018, Part One
30 McCabe A and Phillimore J, 'All Change? Surviving 'below the radar': community groups and activities in a Big Society', *Third Sector Research Centre*, September 2012
31 Campaign to End Loneliness, accessed via: www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/ (30.08.19)
32 Intergenerational Foundation, Press Release, Young People Are Lonely – New Research Reveals, 9 August 2018, accessed via: www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Young_People_Are_Lonely_Press_Release_Final.pdf (11.07.19)
33 Haldane A, Speech by Chief Economist, Bank of England, *'In giving, how much do we receive? The social value of volunteering'*, 9 September 2014
34 Department for Transport, Commuting trends in England 1988–2015, London: Department for Transport, 2017
35 Samuel K, et Al, 'Social Isolation and its Relationship to Multidimensional Poverty', OPHI *Working Paper,* No. 80, November 2014
36 Swinney P and Thomas E, *'A century of cities: Urban economic change since 1911'*, London: Centre for Cities, 2017

'middle-men' – means that some work no longer comes with the corollary benefits it once did, or are disappearing altogether with the ONS forecasting 1.5 million jobs at risk of automation.[37]

It is not right to conclude that the erosion of social infrastructure indicates diminishing demand for relational connectivity. We need to protect what is left and rebuild what has disappeared. Not because it is necessarily economically expedient, but because people find meaning in belonging to a local community of people – interdependence on other keeps people well, enabling humans to flourish – roots matter.

> That opportunity to "build a life in the places where they grew up" is a conservatism that sounds very different to that of the 1980s when Norman Tebbit urged unemployed Britons to "get on their bikes" as his father had done and look for work in other parts of the country. In explaining a shift from a conservatism of freedom to a conservatism of locality and security I'm not advocating the total eclipse of one in favour of the other—simply a rebalancing.
>
> **Tim Montgomerie, The Future of Conservatism**

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37 ONS, The probability of automation in England: 2011 and 2017, March 2019, accessed via: www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/theprobabilityofautomationinengland/2011and2017 (30.08.19)

The place-based research: Birkenhead, Clacton-on-Sea and The Rhondda Valley

We spent six weeks in some of the most deprived places in the UK, conducting focus groups across the breadth of civil society organisations in order to understand the outcomes of community engagement (purposeful participation) for people in Birkenhead, Clacton and The Rhondda Valley. The principle unit of analysis was relationships between members, and more broadly, membership of a group.

The places we visited are often described as 'left behind areas'. The Local Trust defines these as places which suffer from both social and economic challenges, as well as a lack of the community or civic assets required to enable them to respond to these challenges.[38] Unsurprisingly, the Local Trust's analysis of left behind areas found some social problems to be more severe where there was an absence of key community assets, low levels of investment, inadequate infrastructure and poor participation.[39] We hope that the remaining chapters demonstrate the strength and virtue of such communities, in spite of the economic challenges they have faced.

38 As written on Local Trust's website, *What does being 'left behind' mean in practice?*, accessed via:
    https://localtrust.org.uk/news-and-stories/blog/what-does-being-left-behind-mean-in-practice/ (11.07.19)
39 Ibid

Birkenhead

Birkenhead is a town, or 'second city', on the east side of The Wirral peninsula and on the west bank of the River Mersey, facing Liverpool. Four out of five public transport trips on The Wirral are by bus and 28 per cent of households do not have a car.[40]

Across The Wirral, there is a 10 year life expectancy difference between the wealth of the west side, and the poverty of the east side, around Birkenhead, broadly separated by the M53.[41] Of UK cities, Birkenhead has the third lowest weekly workplace earnings, averaging at £428 in 2017.[42]

The local economy in Birkenhead is shipbuilding. Among others, Cammell Laird's shipyard is known for building Britain's first guided missile destroyer, HMS Devonshire in 1960, and more recently, Sir David Attenborough research ship, 'Boaty Mcboatface'. The Independent reported that in its 'heyday', Cammell Laird employed 40,000 people, today it employs 1,200.[43]

Birkenhead Park is reported to have inspired Frederick Law Olmsted's design of Central Park, New York, referred to by CEO of Central Park Conservancy as the 'father' park.[44]

Who we met with

Make It Happen is a second hand shop in Birkenhead town centre. Unlike a charity shop, if money is a barrier, customers are offered the chance to give back through other means such as volunteering. This helps customers realise their own assets and potential to contribute.

The Reader is a national charity which run adult reading groups. There are several across The Wirral run by volunteers. The reading groups people together to read and tackle social isolation through fostering local relationships.

Ferries Family Groups run various programmes to support mainly women in the important role they play in society as parents. Ferries Family Groups regularly run peer support groups, parenting classes and therapeutic craft sessions.

The Hive is an Onside Youth Zone in Birkenhead town centre with wide reach across The Wirral. It's unique four-way partnership between the local authority, the community, the private sector and the young people who are asked to contribute 50p per visit, ensures its sustainability.

40 Wirral Council, Wirral's Transport Strategy 2015–2020, Wirral: The Wirral Council, 2016
41 Liverpool Echo, The M53 divide; how Wirral is split between poverty and wealth – and what we can do about it, 2 September 2018
42 Centre for Cities, *Cities Outlook 2018*, London: Centre for Cities, 2018
43 The Independent, Cammell Laird closure to end Mersey shipbuilding, 3 December 1992
44 Ibid

The history of modern Birkenhead owes much to the 19th Century and the growth of shipbuilding. Workers came from far and wide to work in the rapidly expanding docks and associated industries, and the population grew from just 200 in 1821, to over 110,000 by 1901.

The people who came to Birkenhead worked hard for little money, to build a better future for the generations to come. Today's community spirit reflects those values: family is important, people look out for each other. Such was the dominance of the shipyards, that within the last decade as a Parish Priest in Tranmere, I noted that all the male funerals I took at the beginning of my ministry were for former apprentices from Cammell Laird.

De-industrialisation and the decline of ship-building in the latter half of the twentieth Century had a big impact on the working-class communities of Birkenhead, while heavy investment in retail and leisure in recent years across the river in Liverpool places a shadow over the town centre it is difficult to cast off.

Birkenhead made a very significant contribution to the era of heavy industry, but the effects of the long decades of industrial decline are not hard to find. There remains a very strong sense of community, particularly in the North End where families lived in close proximity in the tenement-like Dock Cottages.

Rev Keith Addenbrooke, with thanks to St James Birkenhead and local historian Jayne Phennah

Heavy investment in retail and leisure across the river in Liverpool places a shadow over the town centre it is difficult to cast off

Clacton-on-Sea

Clacton is the primary population and economic centre in the Borough of Tendring and sits on the South East coast.[45] The town is a popular retirement destination, with well over half of residents over the age of 60.[46] The town neighbours the most deprived areas in the UK, Jaywick, once a holiday resort of 'chalets', the housing is now in a very poor state and many blame so-called 'slum landlords'.

Clacton developed as a coastal resort, however, due to improved accessibility by public transport, fewer overnight stays mean that many bed and breakfasts have been converted into houses in multiple occupation (HMO). Many residents suffer social problems and some of the licenses are held by residential care companies.[47]

'Celebrate-on-Sea', a plan to transform the seafront and regenerate the wider town, lists the assets of Clacton as good quality beaches, family entertainment facilities and a committed local community.[48]

Who we met with

Inclusion Ventures (IV) is a youth club in Jaywick, the most deprived area in the UK. IV opens its doors several times a week to support young people where possible through offering advice, guidance and role models.

A Seated Yoga class in Clacton helps older people to exercise for just £1. The class is part of a wider project, Healthier Independent Longer Lives (HILL). HILL are lottery funded and co-produce projects with local people and train and support volunteers to ensure projects' sustainability.

Lads Need Dads (LND) is a CSJ award-winning charity which support boys who lack the presence of a father figure. Through school referral, LND provide the boys with local male role models in the form of mentors, and opportunities to learn practical life-skills and volunteer in the community.

A Walk and Talk group organically formed out of regular members of a local community group which promotes activities for people in recovery. The group regularly walk along the coast and enjoy camaraderie as well as tea and cake.

45   Regeneris Consulting Ltd, Tendring Socio-Economic Baseline, Manchester: Regeneris Consulting Ltd, October 2013
46   The Guardian, *Brexit-on-sea: Why do voters on Essex's protected coast want out of Europe?*', 21 June 2016
47   As written on Tendring District Council's Website, Index of Registered HMOs, accessed via: www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/
      default/files/Index%20of%20Registered%20HMOs%202018%20Website%20version.pdf (11.07.19)
48   Tendring District Council, *'Celebrate-on-Sea: Putting the fun back into Clacton!'*, Tendring District: Tendring
      District Council, 2010

Clacton was developed through the early part of the 20th century and much of the town was built before WW2. Many of the original houses along the sea front were built by and for wealthy families from London as holiday homes. Clacton District Hospital was built early in the 20th century and still stands on the same site. It used to train nurses in the 50's and up until the early 80's.

There is far more social life now in Clacton than when I was growing up but far more visible poverty than I remember too. The town centre, which used to be the hub of the area and a meeting place is not like that anymore

Gill Elkins, Secretary of Jaywick Sands Community Forum and Jaywick & Tudor Residents Association

The town centre, which used to be the hub of the area and a meeting place is not like that anymore

The Rhondda Valley

The Rhondda Valley is in South Wales and is made up of two valleys; the larger Rhondda Fawr and the smaller Rhondda Fach.

Penrhys is the most deprived area in The Rhondda – an estate which in 1992 lost some two thirds of houses to demolition. Currently, unemployment on the estate is reportedly above 90 per cent.[49]

The Rhondda's countryside and open spaces covers 80 per cent of the borough.[50] The Independent reported that in 1913, the coalfield of Southern Wales grew to be the richest in the UK, providing employment for a quarter of a million miners extracting a fifth of Britain's total per year. The settlement of Pontypridd grew from a population of 1,000 to 150,000 in the late 19th and early 20th century.[51] Once considered an 'Urban District', the Valley is now largely rural.

Rhondda Fawr has train stations lining the Valley, while Rhondda Fach has not had a passenger service since 1964 when it was discontinued following cuts.

Who we met with

The Arts Factory is a space in the heart of Ferndale which offers recreational activities as well as educational courses for local people who feel 'written off'. The Arts Factory encourage volunteering and employ many former users.

Treherbert Bowls Club has operated in the village for over 100 years. They welcome locals of all age and abilities to participate. The club transports members who are less mobile to the grounds, host sessions for primary schools and run bowls for young people every weekday evening during the summer term.

Llanfair Uniting Church run several community projects, such as a Café, a 'Nearly New' Boutique, a Playgroup, and a Launderette. The residents of Penrhys are extremely familiar with the local Church which regularly advocates on behalf of the community.

Mary's Sweet Shop is a not for profit registered community company which was set up at personal expense for the sole purpose of serving the community as a place for local people to meet, and to train young people in retail through work experience.

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49   Wales Online, The notorious Penrys estate: what happens when planners get it wrong, 10 December 2017
50   Rhondda Cynon Taf Borough Council, *Countryside Access (Local Access Forum),* accessed via: www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/Countryside/CountrysideAccessLocalAccessForum.aspx (23.07.19)
51   The Independent, *More than a century on, ghosts of one of Britain's worst mining disasters still haunt the Welsh valleys*, 11 April 2018

The discovery of coal resulted in a huge rise in the population and the infrastructure followed it. During this time, cottage hospitals, chapels and schools were built to meet the need of the growing population, along with leisure facilities like theatres, public houses and social clubs.

Even though there was full employment, wages were low and the standard of housing was very basic, everyone relied on the support of each other to survive. Occasionally there would be an accident in the mines and the family would lose the main provider, but everyone would rally around to support that family.

Since the demise of the coal industry, other industries have provided employment but not on such a grand scale. The railway lines from Treherbert has been

scaled back to a single line, and we have lost all the things we built in the 20th century. Even our swimming pool, only 20 years old and cost a million to build has gone. The standard of living in the country has risen but the standard of living here has not kept pace.

We are an ageing population and the younger generation must leave the valley because of lack of the opportunity. Despite this situation there is still a strong sense of community and a willingness to try to lift the gloom. Volunteers who organise mini rugby, junior bowls clubs and brownies are essential to get people to smile again.

**Clive Sheridan,
Treherbert Bowls Club**

The discovery of coal resulted in a huge rise in the population and the infrastructure followed it

Methodology

This report is built upon a literature review to explore views about the efficacy of community engagement in relieving poverty. We also surveyed almost 100 civil society organisations to gather their views on the matter, which informed our approach to the focus groups.

Place-based research is methodologically appropriate for the analysis of face to face engagement in local networks, as this is necessarily place specific. The data represents outcomes attributable to the analysis of community engagement; individuals' membership of local networks of people.

In order to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the UK, we selected places ranked at the bottom of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). We also looked for geographical diversity and variance in local economic profile. In order to ensure good attendance and participation, we ran focus groups alongside the organisations' usual timetable of events meaning that we were unable to screen participants to ensure a particular composition.

We commissioned one researcher to complete preliminary visits to Birkenhead, Clacton and The Rhondda Valley in the final weeks of 2018. This provided the opportunity to meet with people who were strategically placed to introduce us to community groups in the area, as well as gain a better understanding of each place and the people that live there. We met with a total of 74 individuals during this period. Our researcher then set up four focus groups in Birkenhead and Clacton and three in The Rhondda, ranging from half a dozen to two dozen participants. We also conducted ad hoc interviews with other project leads and users.

Our focus groups reflect the diversity of civil society. Some were formally constituted charities contracted to meet specific client needs, while others were 'below the radar' organisations simply facilitating social interaction among local people. We recorded each focus group and the outcomes expressed represent subjective wellbeing as self-described by participants.

Enabling humans to flourish

"

Several people have probably
told me, 'You don't need people,
you're quite content within yourself'.
It's not strictly true, I like people.

Focus Group, Rhondda Arts, Ferndale, April 2019

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing helpfully defines wellbeing as that which describes 'how we are doing' as individuals, communities and as a nation and how sustainable this is for the future'.[52] It is important to make clear that whilst wellbeing has diverse connotations, this report maintains that it encapsulates much more than health outcomes. It is about what matters most to people, and their agency in bringing such things about. We find that it is through purposeful participation in community that people experience a sense of responsibility for – and belonging to – people and places. For this reason, the CSJ prefers the term 'human flourishing' to 'wellbeing'. Human flourishing is expressive of Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia coined some two millenia ago and refers to the the act of living well and so to enjoy the 'the good life'. Crucially, Aristotle contended that this is most effectively and truly achieved in community.

> 'Man is by nature a political animal. And therefore men, even when they do not require one another's help, desire to live together; (although) they are also brought together by their common interests in proportion as they severally attain to any measure of well-being. This is certainly the chief end, both of individuals and of states'.[53]

The recommendations which append each finding focus on efforts to enable human flourishing and so enable the common good.

The ONS National Wellbeing Measures include subjective and objective data. In their process of selecting the indicators, the ONS sought to understand what matters most to people as well as taking account of empirical 'objective' indicators such as life expectancy and employment. It is important to note that while subjective wellbeing is self-described, there is a correlation between subjective and objective wellbeing. Authors of 'The Objective Benefits of Subjective Well-Being', demonstrate that happier people experience higher income and even exhibit preferable behaviours.[54] Studies also show that isolation can be as bad for people's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, indicating that investing in measures to improve wellbeing would save money by preventing health and social problems.[55]

The idea that purposeful participation in communities enables human flourishing is not new. The ONS uses indicators such as people to rely on; belonging to a neighbourhood; volunteering; and participation in arts, culture and sports, to measure wellbeing. This helpfully widens the scope of wellbeing beyond a health context, and this report also seeks to suspend silo thinking in order to understand the broader impact, leading us to a tenable concept of human flourishing. It is of crucial importance that any any central push to improve human flourishing must place a strong emphasis on relationships. We find that relationships play a key role in facilitating the realisation of personal agency, which cannot be experienced in isolation.

The Cares Family rightly expand on wellbeing, focusing on the importance of a sense of belonging, which the Barnwood Trust has found influences the extent to which individuals feel accepted, valued and able to take on a role in society.[56] Liverpool John Moores University

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52 What Works Wellbeing, *What is Wellbeing*, accessed via: https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about/what-is-wellbeing/ (25.07.19)
53 Giovanola, B. and Fermani, A., 2012. Ethics, economic organizations, and human flourishing: Lessons from Plato and Aristotle. In Leadership through the classics (pp. 273-287). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
54 De Neve J.E, Diener E, Tay L and Xuereb C, The objective benefits of subjective wellbeing, in John Helliwell, Richard Layard and Jeffrey Sachs, *World Happiness Report 2013*, New York: UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network
55 As written on Campaign to End Loneliness' Website, Threat to health, accessed via: www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/ (11.07.19)
56 Fletcher C,*Wellbeing: the importance of belonging*, Cheltenham: Barnwood Trust Research, April 2015

emphasises a different outcome. Their evaluation of the work of Ferries Family Groups found that members developed new skills, alongside typical reports of improved health and wellbeing.[57] Our hypothesis, that purposeful participation both mitigates the experience of poverty, and can move individuals towards a situation where poverty is reduced, is an important distinction. Many focus group participants reported 'soft' outcomes of engagement, such as increased confidence or raised aspiration. However, reports of 'hard' outcomes such as learning new skills were also present. For some individuals the former preceded and led to the latter.

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57   Roach G, Whelan G, and Hughes L, *An evaluation of the social value created by Ferries Family Groups in Wirral, Merseyside*, Liverpool: Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership, August 2013

chapter one
Purposeful participation

What we heard

Engaging in the life of a community enables people to experience a sense of purposeful participation, mitigating a sedentary lifestyle.

At Lads Need Dads in Clacton, several young people told us that if they had not been present that evening, they would be sitting at home either gaming or watching a film, alone or with a family member. Phil at The Hive youth zone in Birkenhead described his life before he got involved; 'Literally nothing even came out of my life'.[58] Similarly to the young people of Clacton, their elderly fellow-residents told us that if they were not at seated yoga, they would have 'No one to talk to, only four walls. Watching the television full of repeats all the time'.[59] Patrick at the Arts Factory described how 'My wife and I were now getting to the stage where we needed to be taken out of ourselves' before joining.[60]

Among both older and younger participants, there was an apparent desire to contribute to a life outside of their front door, taking opportunities to share their gifts and talents, and enjoy those of others. And this should be seen as productive insofar as participants were making a social contribution to the life of a community.

Moreover, recreation can displace damaging habits. At Treherbert Bowls Club, many bowlers had lost a spouse, including Adam, who said that if he was not playing bowls that morning, he would likely be 'At home, drinking, bored'.[61] Clearly, involvement in local activities contributes to physical health. The Bowls Club ensures regular mobility and the arts club has noticed an improvement in the balance of older members since they have started to run tai chi classes, preventing falls.

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58   Focus Group, The Hive, Birkenhead, April 2019
59   Focus Group, Seated Yoga, Clacton, April 2019
60   Focus Group, Rhondda Arts, Ferndale, April 2019
61   Focus Group, Treherbert Bowls, Treherbert, April 2019

What this tells us

Though different, social contribution should have parity of esteem with economic contribution because relationships are exponentially more significant for wellbeing than financial or material assets.

There is an important discussion to be had about different kinds of capital. In his book, 'Bowling Alone', Putnam said 'financial capital – the wherewithal for mass marketing – has steadily replaced social capital – that is, grassroots citizen networks – as the coin of the realm'.[62] It is important to recognise that social contributions produce social capital and this is of huge benefit to our country, including to the economy. All of which is under-represented in public policy research. Christiaan Grootaert at the World Bank maintains that 'social capital is the glue that holds societies together and without which there can be no economic growth or human wellbeing. Without social capital, society at large will collapse, and today's world presents very damaging examples of this'.[63] Grootaert goes on to identify the problem as a fundamental mismatch in the form of capital typically used to determine economic growth, and the way in which the economic actors interact and organise themselves to generate growth.[64]

The inclusive growth movement, expertly articulated by Stephanie Flanders, promotes the idea that the Government should make social and economic policy work together more closely. But this will only happen once it is recognised that they can in fact positively impact upon one another. Flanders says, 'Good social policy is a fundamental driver of economic success, and vice versa'.[65] This is logical because a healthy economy requires healthy workers.

Emerging evidence emphasises 'wellbeing creation' as opposed to 'wealth creation'. The Centre for Economic Policy Research found that less than 1 per cent of the variance of life satisfaction is explained by income inequality.[66] In fact, since 2014, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been publishing data on wellbeing, having been instructed to do so by David Cameron when he assumed office in 2010. The National Wellbeing Measures find that after self-reported wellbeing, life satisfaction is most determined by marital status – see Figure 8. Revealingly, more significantly so than income. Yet, being unemployed and economically inactive is a determinant of low life satisfaction. This demonstrates the priority humans give to their relationships and their contribution to the labour market, but not necessarily for the financial gains.[67]

This is not surprising. The Grant Study, a 75-year longitudinal study of 268 healthy Harvard students, demonstrates the significance of wellbeing creation for the wider corollary benefits it brings.

62   Putnam R, *'Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community'*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010

63   Grootaert C, 'Social Capital: the missing link?', *Social Capital Initiative working paper series*, No. 3, The World Bank, Washington DC, 1998

64   Ibid

65   Royal Society of Arts*, 'Inclusive Growth Commission: Making our Economy Work for Everyone',* London: Royal Society of Arts, March 2017

66   Clark A, Fleche S, Layard R, Powdthavee N, Ward G, 'Origins of happiness: Evidence and policy implications', *VOX, CEPR Policy Portal*, December 2016

67   Ibid

'So what have we learned? What are the lessons that come from the tens of thousands of pages of information that we've generated on these lives? Well, the lessons aren't about wealth or fame or working harder and harder. The clearest message that we get from this 75-year study is this: Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period.'[68]

This recognition of wellbeing as something which can be improved and pays dividends in term of keeping people well and therefore less dependent, is underrepresented in the discourse around productivity. Productivity translates into Gross Domestic Product (GDP) divided by all hours worked by all workers.

We should no longer ignore the inextricable link between social and economic health. In fact, theory dictates that employment growth may be associated with slow growth in productivity as more people in work increases the risk of inefficiencies which hamper productivity.[69]

In 2017, Mercer reported that commuting appeared to have a significant impact on mental wellbeing with longer-commuting workers 33 per cent more likely to suffer from depression, 37 per cent more likely to have financial concerns and 12 per cent more likely to report multiple dimensions of work-related stress, along with a higher likelihood to lose out on sleep and be obese.[70] And, the University of Waterloo cited time scarcity as a cause of stress which is exacerbated by caring responsibilities and increased commuting times, and that individuals with a partner suffered greater life dissatisfaction due to the stress associated with time away from family.[71] Given that commuting can negatively affect mental and physical health, it is no surprise that the University of Cambridge found that someone with a commute of less than 30 minutes was 7 days more productive per year than others with longer commutes.[72] Piecing what we know about commuting, stress and productivity together, Shaun Subel, Director of Strategy at VitalityHealth said, 'These results demonstrate the significance of the daily work routine in influencing individuals' health and productivity'.[73]

While work is the best route out of poverty, we should not be indiscriminate when it comes to the kind of work. Some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged people should not be pushed into work for the sake of it if the nature of the work is not suitable. We met Julia in Rock Ferry who had been advised by the Job Centre to take a zero-hour contract at a bank. Recovering from domestic abuse and having recently moved house with her children, Julie did not feel up to yet another significant challenge and was really enjoying making new friends at the local café where she volunteered and found a support network. Julie is being productive through her social contribution. Every situation is different, but when it comes to welfare, it's important that the end goal is the genuine relief of poverty. This means that our indicators should include, but be much broader than employment, accounting for wider determinants of wellbeing.

GDP includes estimates for the market value of the illegal drug trade and prostitution, but excludes voluntary activities such as caring for others.[74] The invaluable support offered

68   Waldinger R, 'What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness', November 2015, accessed via: www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness/transcript (11.07.19)
69   Pessoa J. P. and Van Reenan J, The UK Productivity and Jobs Puzzle: Does the Answer Lie in Wage Flexibility?', *The Economic Journal*, Volume 124, Issue 576, May 2014, pp. 433–452
70   Mercer, *Long Commutes Costing Firms A Week's Worth of Staff Productivity*, 17 May 2017, accessed via: www.uk.mercer.com/newsroom/britains-healthiest-workplace-flexible-working-and-commuting.html (11.07.19)
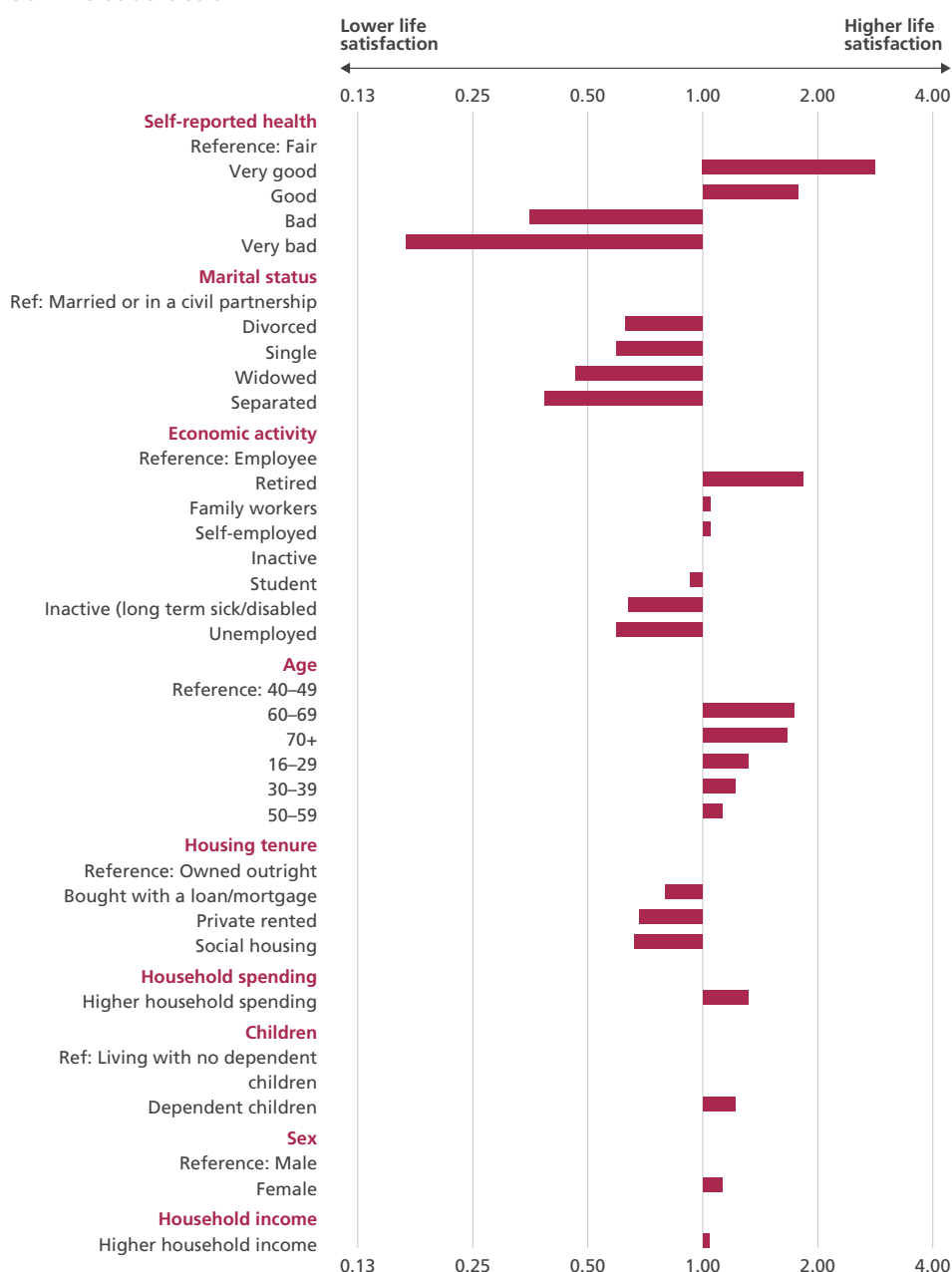71   Forbes, *'Want to Be Happier? Change Your Commute or Change Your Attitude'*, 7 December 2014
72   Mercer, *Long Commutes Costing Firms A Week's Worth of Staff Productivity*, 17 May 2017, accessed via: www.uk.mercer.com/newsroom/britains-healthiest-workplace-flexible-working-and-commuting.html (11.07.19)
73   Ibid
74   The Guardian, *'GDP is a mirror on the markets. It must not rule our lives'*, 20 November 2014

by family, neighbours and local community groups are left out of economic equations. In fact, the ONS found that unpaid work in 2014, that is volunteering and domestic tasks such as childcare, valued £1.01 trillion, equivalent to approximately 56 per cent of GDP.[75] That said, monetising such value is antithetical. Professor of Economics at the University of Manchester, Diane Coyle, points out that there is a 'profound ambiguity about whether or not value is money and money value'. Since many of us value the things that money can't buy, so should government.[76]

Figure 8: Personal and economic wellbeing: what matters most to our life satisfaction?

Source: ONS

75   Office for National Statistics, 'Women shoulder the responsibility of 'unpaid work'', November 2016, accessed via: www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/womenshouldertheresponsibilityofunpaidwork/2016-11-10 (11.07.19)
76   Coyle D, *Value*, Bristol: LGT Vestra, accessed via: www.lgtvestra.com/shared/.content/publikationen/lgt-vestra-downloads/the_school_of_life/4-Value-by-Diane-Coyle_en.pdf (11.07.19)

Recommendation 1: Measure what matters

Government must pursue a new agenda to enable human flourishing by measuring what matters.

What is clear from the data set out in Figure 8, and in the chapters to come, is that relationships are central to human flourishing. Family is the first community and the government must therefore be unapologetic about strengthening families. However, there should be a wider agenda in place that seeks to strengthen the social infrastructure that enables the formation of communities that foster responsibility and belonging, as chapters two and three demonstrate. As Figure 1 makes clear, there is great scope across a range of government departments to embed this pursuit. Though seemingly disparate, policies to boost flexible working, granny flats and character education all serve this agenda.

In the 2018 Autumn Budget Red Book, GDP was mentioned 84 times. It is unhelpful to suggest that the pursuit of economic growth and wellbeing are mutually exclusive. However, economic strategy is inextricably linked to people and the produce of the labour market. A healthy economy depends on healthy people so it is imperative that the right emphasis falls in the right place. We confuse monetary value with intrinsic value at our peril. Household income and other siloed measures such as healthy life expectancy remain important and relevant, but lives can still be lived in misery, alive and afloat. Other outcomes should have parity of esteem.

In 2014 the ONS began publishing wellbeing data which includes 10 domains and 43 indicators including economic and social outcomes measuring objective and subjective wellbeing. These measures are broad in scope and much of the data could be more effectively captured, interpreted and engaged with by first tiers of government. The ONS domain 'what we do' measures volunteering and participation in sports and arts and culture. This is captured by the Understanding Society longitudinal study where 40,000 households are surveyed annually.

However, there are many more expressions of purposeful participation than volunteering and sports and arts and cultural activity, and an annual national survey is not the best device for capturing all such engagement which may differ greatly across regions. Furthermore, given such participation depends on the social infrastructure which is necessarily place-based, local authorities are a key enabler of this agenda and it must therefore mark a shift away from delivery towards empowerment.

Central government must concern itself with measuring what matters, and we know that purposeful participation is the empowering force that enables people to realise their responsibility and cultivate belonging.

We recommend that central government be placed under a new duty to improve the wellbeing of the nation through boosting purposeful participation at a local level; measuring what matters. Local authorities should be responsible for capturing data on levels of participation in social infrastructure – which may differ in kind depending on the place – allowing central government to monitor the social fabric across the nation.

The data submitted by local authorities will indicate progress towards improving purposeful participation. Gauging national policy against the data provided will drive government activity across every department to incentivise the strengthening of local relationships, as well as investment in local authorities for the purposes of improving levels of participation to deliver on this new national outcome.

We commend the excellent work of The Local Trust, Grant Thornton, Office for National Statistics, Social Progress Imperative, The What Works Centre for Wellbeing, Baron Layard and the many other individuals and organisations who are seeking to map data and develop methods to measure indicators of subjective and objective wellbeing.

chapter two
Realising responsibility

What we heard

Purposeful participation allows people to realise their own skills and assets. Once realised, we found that many assumed a responsibility to others, recognising their unique and important part to play in the life of a community. This builds confidence and can open doors to employment.

At The Hive youth zone, Clare told us 'When I first came, I'd just been kicked out of college, I don't know, my behaviour and that and my outlook on, I don't know, just life in general, was quite bad. I didn't really have any worries or anything, I just did what I wanted'.[77] Here, having 'no worries' suggests that Clare felt that there was very little in her life to attend to and nothing of value for her to protect. This changed when she joined The Hive. She told us, 'Getting involved in the different opportunities, like The Hive and stuff, has made me sort of grow and see a better outlook, and given me more motivation'.[78] Clare is now training to be a ski instructor.

Similarly for older working age people, who may have lost confidence through long periods of unemployment, engagement in the life of a community can act as a motivator. An external evaluation by Ferries Family Groups quotes one member saying, 'Tomorrow I'm signing off JSA and becoming self – employed. I know it's only cleaning but I decided I've got to do something. Without Ferries Families I wouldn't have done anything. I'd have just let it drag on'.[79] Among older participants, confidence related to courage and a 'can do' attitude. For instance, one new member of Treherbert Bowls Club, Heather, told the group that after she visited her daughter in France last Christmas, she did not feel inclined to return this year. Since joining the group, she has a restored desire to keep in touch with her daughter and now plans to return.

There are skills and patterns of positive behaviour that cannot be learned and nurtured in isolation, and arguably, not even through education. At Lads Need Dads, Luke described his journey to us. 'I just wasn't good in school, and I wasn't learning enough, and my grades were going nowhere […] Then, I don't know, I just got better, through the programme'.[80] He went on to tell us about improved social skills which have enabled

77 Focus Groups, The Hive, Birkenhead, April 2019
78 Focus Groups, The Hive, Birkenhead, April 2019
79 Roach G et al, *An evaluation of the social value created by Ferries Family Groups in Wirral, Merseyside*, Liverpool: Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership, August 2013
80 Focus Group, Lads Need Dads, Clacton, April 2019

him to maintain stronger bonds with his family, particularly his Nan, 'I was like a loose cannon in my family […] as the course went on, I started to get more perceptive to other people's emotions'.[81]

Many people we met were claiming out of work benefits for a wide range of reasons, and many of the groups we visited encouraged their members to start volunteering. At Make It Happen, customers are invited to volunteer as a means of giving back to the shop if money prevents custom. For instance, Dave now irons regularly in exchange for shopping. And Karen told us, 'I'm having difficulty finding work around children and it's keeping me out of going under, depression wise […] I suppose experience-wise and work-wise, I'm gaining so much more'.[82] Similarly, Julie, another mother who attends Ferries Family Groups said 'I think it's just built my confidence up again, thinking, 'I can do this, it's fine, it's normal to have problems' […] I was having a hard time, myself, with my little boy. And then, from there, meeting all these people, I've now just starting volunteering. That's what I want to go into now, support work'.[83]

Other volunteering opportunities emerge more serendipitously. Elderly wheelchair users started joining the Walk and Talk group in Clacton. After Mark began pushing the wheelchairs regularly, and building friendships with the users, he started visiting and volunteering at their care home.

What this tells us

We need to build skills for life which are foundational to skills for work, and these are best developed in communities where people can realise their capability and find the confidence to assume responsibility.

Mary who has run a sweet shop in The Rhondda for seven years told us how she has to teach many basic skills – such as preparing tea and coffee – to those on work experience who lack confidence. She commented that many young people simply do not get out of the house much anymore, to the detriment of key social skills. She is right: The Guardian reported in 2016 that three-quarters of UK children spend less time outside than prison inmates.[84] The UN guidelines for prisoners require 'at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily'.[85]

Work experience and volunteering provide many opportunities for softer skills to be nurtured. However, there seems to be confusion about the rules on volunteering while receiving benefits such as Job seekers Allowance (JSA). The rules state that job seekers are free to volunteer, but must prove that they are still looking for work, be available to attend a job interview within 48 hours' notice and keep to job centre appointments. Volunteering may also count as taking 'reasonable action' to find a job.

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81 Focus Group, Lads Need Dads, Clacton, April 2019
82 Focus Group, Make It Happen, Birkenhead, April 2019
83 Focus Group, Make It Happen, Birkenhead, April 2019
84 The Guardian, *Three-quarters of UK children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates-survey*, 25 March 2016
85 United Nations, General Assembly, Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, 13 May 1977, accessed via: www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/UN_Standard_Minimum_Rules_for_the_Treatment_of_Prisoners.pdf (11.07.19)

We have received anecdotal evidence that some claimants are cautious about telling their work coach about volunteering, in case it is misconstrued as neglecting their job search. Those on benefits related to a disability are extremely careful not to give the impression that they can do more than they are actually capable of. We were told that such claimants are well versed in the things that they are unable to do and feel pressurised to demonstrate these inabilities in order to protect their allowance, so would therefore be nervous to volunteer.

All this make little sense given that volunteering can be a path to employment and many of the groups we engaged with, such as the Arts Factory, routinely employ former volunteers. Aware that it can be of immense benefit to job seekers, allowing them to experience the satisfaction of making a social contribution, we want to see more job seekers volunteering free from fear of sanction.

We know too that the DWP do not disagree. They have issued advice about time banking, stating that for Universal Credit claimants, time banking can count towards job seeking. The basic principle of time banking is one of reciprocity – one gains credits for sharing an asset – time or a particular skill – which can then be exchanged. This advice takes an 'asset-based' approach. 'Don't feel you haven't got anything to offer as everyone can do something. You may not have some plumbing skills that mean you could offer to fix dripping taps, but you could walk a dog or two, or help out at a local community event'.[86]

The 'claimant commitment' is key to ensuring that claimants retain agency in receipt of welfare. And the more claimants' assets can be reflected in this commitment, the more they can experience their own capacity to contribute to the welfare system.

Case Study 1: Tempo

Tempo work in communities across the UK to develop an infrastructure for volunteering. They note that many people are hesitant to ask for help, but the reality is that there is a volunteer base waiting to be activated. Tempo use a time credit system to ensure reciprocation is a permanent fixture of volunteering with Tempo. The time credits can be spent in the community, often council commissioned services such as leisure centres. Tempo tell Sarah's story.

'A friend of mine asked if I wanted to help out at a community event: I applied glitter tattoos for an afternoon and earned my first three Time Credits. In the beginning I didn't even know what these little slips of paper were, but just getting some recognition for my time was a great feeling. Spending Time Credits in and around Cardiff gave my son and me the freedom to have a life outside of the house. As a single mum, I didn't have much cash for 'fun stuff'. My confidence rocketed and thanks to all my volunteering, I got a job working for a local charity as a Family Support Worker and Volunteer Coordinator. In 2016 I was named 'Community Development Worker of the Year' by the Local Heroes Award.'[87]

86   As written on The Daily Jobseeker's Website, *'Time banking – help others and help yourself at the same time'*, accessed via: https://dailyjobseeker.tumblr.com/post/139453975156/time-banking-help-others-and-help-yourself-at
87   And insert footnote: Tempo, Building Community Together, 2017, accessed via: www.wearetempo.org/impact2017/ [10.09.19]

Recommendation 2: Review the Universal Credit claimant commitment

Introduce an 'asset-based' element to the Universal Credit claimant commitment by incorporating volunteering into 'expected hours'.

We recognise that Universal Credit (for claimants who are not prevented from working) is designed to replicate a working week, and therefore preparing for work must be a full-time focus. We believe that volunteering is largely preparatory as it provides claimants with regular social interaction, the opportunity to learn new skills, and in some cases, it can lead to employment. Volunteering is an asset-based activity as the claimant is treated as a contributor rather than a recipient. Currently, such claimants are allowed to volunteer through securing a 'relevant deduction' of expected hours, but many are cautious to raise this possibility for fear it may be construed as neglecting job seeking duties.

We recommend that the Government introduce an 'asset-based' element to the claimant commitment by incorporating volunteering, or other community-based purposeful activity. At their discretion, work coaches should be empowered to instruct claimants to reserve 10 of the 35 expected hours per week for this purpose. We believe that this will improve claimants' wellbeing while job-seeking, making it a more productive period. This may be particularly appropriate for younger claimants with little work experience. Job Centre's should work with local Councils' of Voluntary Services (CVS) and social prescribers to find the right opportunity for their claimants.

chapter three
Cultivating belonging

What we heard

Whether looking after a son, daughter, grandparent or spouse, the African proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child' rings true. Belonging to a rooted community gives rise to voluntary mutual aid which provides invaluable informal welfare.

Several members of the Treherbert Bowls Club reported that the club offered respite from caring duties for spouses. Pat was relying on her daughter to help care for her husband, which was putting strain on her relationship with her daughter. Since joining the bowls group, Pat has found other people who are willing to lend a hand. This has allowed her daughter to attend to her own family, and improved their relationship.

Young Mums are also in particular need of social infrastructure for respite purposes. Hannah at Ferries Family Groups in Rock Ferry said 'I'll hold my hands up and say I've been maybe a better parent since I've been coming, because I've taken time for myself, whereas usually, like I said before, I stay in the house'.[88] Hannah describes how taking time out during the day with other Mums helps her to relax and prepare for her children to return from school, in turn enabling her to better care for her children.

When children grow older, many inevitably move away from family, and it becomes harder to sustain the same level of intentional support. Felicity at The Reader group on The Wirral regrets how she failed to notice that her daughter, who was living in high rise key worker accommodation in London, was suffering from post-natal depression. And there are consequences for those left behind too. Another member, Karen, who had been widowed eight years told us 'It's [The Reader] just something to look forward to and go to. But, yes, it's a lonely life. When I think I had a houseful and now there's just me'.[89]

Interestingly, we found that transience is present among the older population, as well as young, as people seek to retire outside the city or move closer to family for support. Amanda at the seated yoga class described her experience of moving from Dagenham and getting involved. 'Well, I've never ever done anything like this before because I've never known like a community centre, do you know what I mean? When I lived in Dagenham, I had everyone round the corner to me, so I could just go out and do whatever but when I moved down here…'.[90]

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88   Focus Group, Ferries Family Groups, Rock Ferry, April 2019
89   Focus Group, The Reader, Wirral, April 2019
90   Focus Group, Seated Yoga, Clacton, April 2019

What this tells us

Transience is proving problematic. We need to foster belonging to ensure places are populated with those who are best placed to support our most vulnerable and disadvantaged where they are, committed local friends and family.

Latent capacity

Beryl at The Reader remarked, 'And, apart from anything else, so many girls and women work and, if you've suddenly come from being in work to being at home, in all probability you don't have the network of friends, because they're probably in work, while you're home'.[91]

There was certainly a time where there was more slack in society with people available during working hours to invest in the social infrastructure which enabled for social mixing, busy town centres, and ensured a steady supply of local volunteers to help where needed. Historically, women fulfilled this role. The female employment rate in the UK is currently at a record high of 71.4 per cent, 1.65 million more than the decade before.[92] However, of all economically inactive people, there are still 56.8 per cent more women than men.[93] The total number of people in the UK aged 16 to 64 who stay at home, are retired or not looking for work amounts to well over 10 million people – around a quarter of the working age population.[94] There is vast capacity to contribute among this people group. Chief Economist at the Bank of England, Andrew Haldane, heralds our ageing society as an opportunity to double our volunteer army as the total number of surplus hours is estimated to rise to up to 16 billion each year by 2050. As chronological age rises, but biological age declines, people will be looking for purpose, with or without work.[95]

There may be another reason as to why it feels as if there is a lack of capacity, or slack, across the UK.

Localising the social mobility agenda

The social mobility agenda is a noble one. LSE economists Lee Elliot Major and Stephen Machin helpfully describe it as an agenda to correct the fact that 'too many of us are destined to end up on the same rungs as our parents'.[96] This is an important point and reflects valid concerns mentioned earlier in this report regarding intergenerational transmission. However, surely the answer must be to pursue a level playing field where there are opportunities for all people in all places, with a bias for action in our poorer towns and cities. But too often social mobility is expressed as the ambition to see young people dislocated from their home town to discover the prosperity of the South East, the grandeur of Oxbridge or the booming City of London.

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91 Focus Group, The Reader, Wirral, April 2019
92 Powell A, Women and the Economy, House of Commons Library, March 2019
93 Nomis (Labour Market Profile – England, May 2019 data), accessed via: www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957699/report.aspx (11.07.19)
94 Ibid
95 Civil Society, '*Fourth Industrial Revolution 'could almost double volunteering resource*'', 23 May 2019
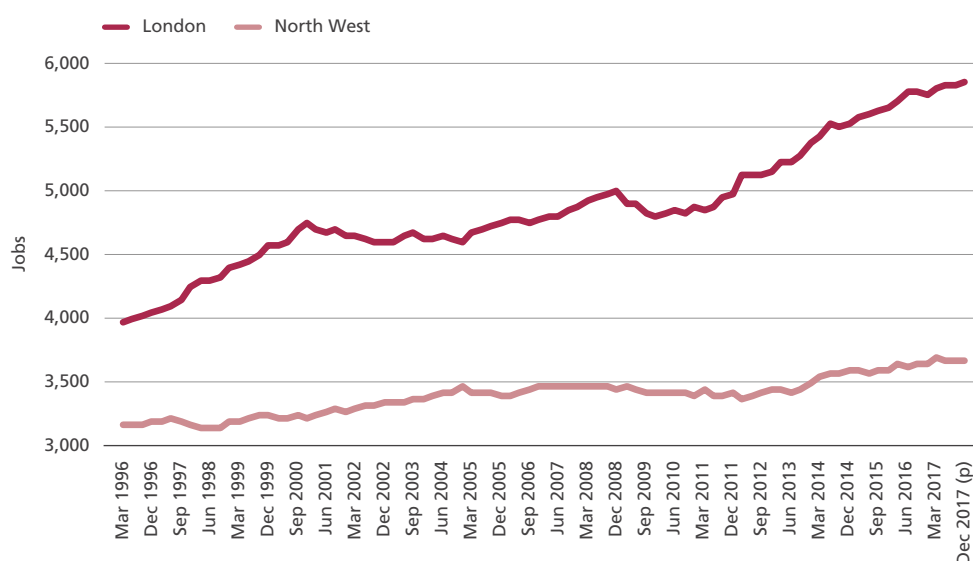96 The London School of Economics and Political Science, *'David Cameron, David Beckham, and the UK's social mobility problem'*, 4 January 2019, accessed via: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/cameron-beckham-and-social-mobility/#Author (11.07.19)

The South East now attracts an unprecedented number of people for work. Our report, 'The Future of Work: Regional Revolution', found that of the 3.2 million new jobs created since 2010, 31 per cent of them have been in London and a further 15 per cent of them in the South East. The London jobs market grew by 49 per cent between 1996 and 2018, twice the average UK rate of 25 per cent.[97] London accounted for 13 per cent of the UK population in 2018, but 17 per cent of all jobs, and nearly a third of all job growth.[98]

This is remarkable, even for a capital city. Not only an international centre for fashion, art, theatre, film and tech, London is home to both the political and financial sectors too. Compare this with Germany, where the political capital is Berlin and the financial hub in Frankfurt, with strong industrial and media centres in Munich and Hamburg. Across the pond, the political, entertainment and tech centres are shared across Washington DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively.[99]

It is worth noting that PWC reported that in 2017, 55 per cent of their graduate intake were recruited to roles outside London, but still, the flow of graduates to London from all areas remains extremely strong. Figure 9 show how London compares to the North West in terms of job creation.

Figure 9: Job creation – London vs North West

Source: Centre for Social Justice, The Future of Work: Regional Revolution, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2018

Maintaining that London-centricity is problematic is uncontroversial. But Norman Tebbit's solution to patchy opportunity – 'get on your bike' – is certainly contentious. It is important to preserve nuance in this debate because it is true that some places do not serve school-leavers as well as others, but it is also true that a mass-migration to the South East is by no means inconsequential. We need social mobility but it need not be delocalising. Former Education Secretary, Justine Greening MP, addressed the Social Mobility Commission (SMC)

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97   Centre for Social Justice, *The Future of Work: Regional Revolution*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2018
98   Ibid
99   BBC, *London Centric*, 2015, accessed via: www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-248d9ac7–9784–4769–936a-8d3b435857a8 (23.07.19)

saying, 'all the years I spent growing up in Rotherham where I was aiming for something better […] a better job, owning my own home, an interesting career, a life that I found really challenging […] I knew there was something better out there'.[100] She is not wrong, but we must ensure a genuine choice to remain at home, close to family and friends is maintained. We can do so by levelling the playing field. This is, of course, a much more complex task than it is to allow places like Rotherham, or indeed The Rhondda Valley, to suffer a mass exodus of working age people, or 'brain drain'.

Human priorities

Moving for work seems to vary across socio-economic backgrounds. Just 10 per cent of people moving regions for work were previously out of work, suggesting internal migration is a phenomenon primarily affecting those higher up the income distribution.[101] For instance, Sunderland is now known for being home to one of the biggest car manufacturing plants in Europe, providing thousands of skilled mid-wage jobs. However, Sunderland as a city still has one of the lowest employment rates (69.3 per cent, 2017) and one of the highest welfare spends per capita (£3,924, 2014).[102] In short – there are jobs in Sunderland, but local people do not get enough of them.

Humans are not always motivated by economic interests alone. Our report 'The Future of Work: Regional Revolution', highlights a study which found that in the US, low income families make job and living decisions based on what was in the best interest of their relationships. Skobba and Goetz established that 'relationships, rather than neighbourhoods, appear to be the driving factor in residual mobility and decision making for low income families. In the absence of financial resources, people are an essential source of capital'.[103] Here, low income families did not react to prices in the labour market if it meant detaching from friends and family, on whom they may be dependent for accommodation or other purposes. Similarly, the SMC recently found that over three times more students in the lowest social class group commute to university from home than the highest group, meaning that commuters are less likely to take part in spontaneously organised social activities and are 'missing something' central to the student experience.[104]

Are they missing out? And if so what are they missing? And should this really be a chief concern for the SMC? Or does the human interest in preserving relationships matter more? Perhaps the appeal of home for the student relates to enjoying membership of a local sports team or church, or perhaps the student has caring responsibilities. Surely these are noble reasons. While such norms seem more prevalent in lower classes, perhaps this is to their advantage. On observing the East End of London in the 50s and 60s, Michael Young drew attention to the important role of working-class extended families that 'operate continuously as agencies for mutual aid of all kinds'.[105] This protected the provision of

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100 Speech by The Education Secretary, Justine Greening, 'Unlocking the potential of a new generation', 30 March 2017

101 Clarke S, *'Get a Move on? The decline in regional job-to-job moves and its impact on productivity and pay'*, London: Resolution Foundation, 2017

102 Centre for Cities, Data Tool, 2016, accessed via: www.centreforcities.org/data-tool/dataset/the-great-british-brain-drain#graph=map&city=show-all (11.07.19)

103 Centre for Social Justice, *The Future of Work: Regional Revolution*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2018

104 Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2018–19: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, London: Social Mobility Commission, April 2019

105 Centre for Social Justice, *The State of the Nation Report: Fractured Families*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2006
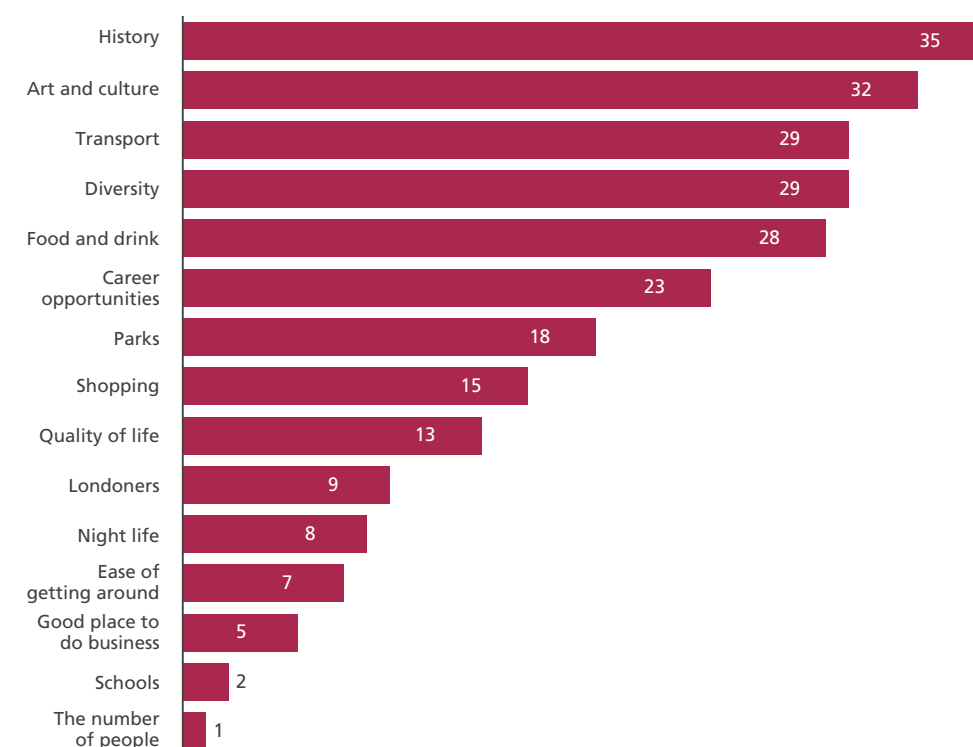
interested adults in a child's life and a greater sense of rootedness. The combined effect of the physical dispersal of kinship groups is that grandparents no longer play the same central caring role in families as they once did.

Genuinely rebalancing the geography of opportunity should be the priority, rather than seeking an equality of outcome by pursuing middle class norms for all. Teacher and commentator, Michael Merrick writes, 'In a contest between home and academic flourishing, some choose home. Not because of ignorance, but because of a refusal to shed heritage as the participation fee'.[106] Giles Fraser also contends, regarding social care, 'many have cast off their care to the state or to carers who may have themselves left their own families in another country to come and care for those that we won't'.[107]

Place-making

The SMC rightly point out that social mobility is 'about being able to live where you grew up if you choose and not being held back in life because there is a lack of opportunities in your region'.[108] But this choice is not always determined by earning power. One of the best means of attracting people to cities and towns is by investing in cultural assets – museums, art installations, green spaces, music, restaurants and bar venues. YouGov polling shows Londoners were most attracted to intangible quality of life factors in London and least attracted to London by the cost of housing – see Figure 10.

Figure 10: The best things about living in London, according to Londoners

History	35
Art and culture	32
Transport	29
Diversity	29
Food and drink	28
Career opportunities	23
Parks	18
Shopping	15
Quality of life	13
Londoners	9
Night life	8
Ease of getting around	7
Good place to do business	5
Schools	2
The number of people	1

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106 BBC, *Socially Mobile?,* 30 April 2018

107 UnHerd*, Why won't Remainers talk about family?*, 22 February 2019

108 Social Mobility Commission*, State of the Nation 2018–19: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, London: Social Mobility Commission, April 2019

Economic assets are not the be all and end all. Cultural assets are extremely powerful drivers of personal fulfillment and the common good. And UK City of Culture demonstrates this. For instance, the Hull City of Culture evaluation report found the following outcomes:

● An audience of 5.3 million attended over 2,800 events, cultural activities, installations and exhibitions

● 95 per cent of Hull residents attended at least one event

● Nearly 800 new jobs have been created in the visitor economy and cultural sector since 2013

● Over 60 per cent of ticket-buying audiences were first-time bookers

● 75 per cent of those who visited Hull in 2017 stated that it changed their perception of the city for the better

● Volunteers supporting Hull's City of Culture year have so far given around 300,000 hours of their own time – equating to 34 years[109]

As well as economic opportunities, people are attracted to cultural assets. The Government should work hard to make every place an attractive place to grow up, reside in, and move to, by investing in the co-production of cultural assets with residents. Social infrastructure, particularly cultural assets open to local participation, encourage a range of people to invest in our towns and cities, improving the volunteer base and command commitment.

In fact, Henry Olsen, Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington DC, attributes Levittown's success in bucking the trend of economic breakdown in the 1980's to local pride – people enjoyed an 'actual sense of community – that people think of themselves as Levittowners'.[110] Olsen says, 'They glowingly spoke of things much of America has lost: neighbours who knew their neighbours, kids playing together in the streets, block parties every summer. Here people still knew and trusted each other, there was no trace of giving up'.[111]

Creating places which are attractive, where people want to remain in and contribute to, requires fostering a sense of belonging to that place. And our focus group participants told us that marking place-specific festivals, events, anniversaries or occasions promoted positive engagement in the area.

109 Thrive, *How do we evaluate cultural success?*, 22 March 2018, accessed via: https://wewillthrive.co.uk/resources/blogs/how-do-we-evaluate-cultural-success (11.07.19)
110 UnHerd: Audiocast: *How dead-end jobs killed small-town pride*', 9 July 2019, accessed via: https://unherd.com/2018/07/audiocast-dead-end-jobs-killed-small-town-pride/ (11.07.19)
111 UnHerd, *The flyover town that dodged decline*, 30 May 2018

Recommendation 3: Create pride in places

People invest in places when they feel pride in places. Extend a plaque scheme across the UK.

The English Heritage Blue Plaque scheme was founded in 1866 and exists to celebrate significant relationships between people and place. Chair of English Heritage, Baroness Andrew OBE says 'They are one of the best ways of highlighting the historical associations of buildings, and – time and time again – they have demonstrated an enduring ability to foster community interest in local history and the historic built environment'.[112] Other local authorities, civic societies and voluntary groups also run their own schemes but many are ad hoc or only run for a specified time. There are around 1,800 plaques in the capital, under half of which are administered by English Heritage.

We recommend that grant funding be made available for organisations to run campaigns inviting residents to vote for a plaque, or other noticeable emblems (such as the name of a park or road), in every town, every year. The plaques need not only commemorate famous people, but also current examples of local people who hold iconic jobs or have tirelessly served their community in meaningful ways over many years. Once placed, an education provider should deliver a package to primary schools to ensure pupils learn more about the place they live through the commemoration.

Why places matter

While proving statistically that the decline in social infrastructure directly causes instances of isolation and fragmentation would be problematic, it would be equally misguided to suggest that the loss of such places is of little consequence.

We surveyed over 200 people attending Birkenhead Central Library over a 3 day period, and found that while over a quarter were there to check out a book, almost the same amount were there to either use the internet or to seek help and advice. Libraries are known to local people as familiar and informed places, and they are important for these purposes, just as much as they are for accessing literature.

Research commissioned by The National Trust, 'Places that Make Us', conducted a Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (FMRI) study to understand the 'visceral but intangible' relationship between people and places more deeply.[113] They found that the brain automatically generates a positive emotional response to places with personal meaning. 86 per cent describe an important place as being part of them, 58 per cent agree that they 'feel like I belong' when visiting this place, and 61 per cent say that they try to protect the place that is most important to them.[114]

Similarly, though many high streets may no longer function as the principle places to shop, they remain important for other social purposes. Authors of 'People Make Places', Mean and Tims, describe the high street as a 'self-organising public service' by virtue of its capacity to create a geographical focus and meeting place, drawing people to it and

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112 English Heritage, *Celebrating People and Place: Guidance on Commemorative Plaques and Plaque Schemes*, London: English Heritage, 2010
113 Ibid
114 The National Trust, *Places That Make Us*, Swindon: 2017, P6

enabling the creation of new shared experiences.[115] In fact, a survey by the Design Council in 2014 found that 85 per cent of people felt that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on the way people feel.[116]

It is precisely because of the meaning that people find in places that the decline of spaces such as our high streets is of such great concern. Community-led initiatives and cross-stakeholder working in Anfield and Margate respectively, seek to restore and build places in order to strengthen communities.

Internet retail, store closures and consumer preferences for multi-purpose shopping experiences have contributed to the radical change in the retail sector.[117] The Centre for Retail Research found that in the year to August 2018, 28 retail companies ceased trading, affecting 2,085 stores and 39,000 jobs.[118] Ordinance Survey data, which examined 88 major town centres across England and Wales, reported that the average 'toll' of store closures equates to at least 40 shops per town centre since 2013, with Stoke-on-Trent losing a mammoth 23 per cent of its 415 stores in just five years.[119]

The rapid rise in online shopping reflects a dramatic behavioural and culture shift, changing high streets irreversibly. The Housing and Local Government Select Committee are right to recommend that 'High streets and town centres must adapt, transform and […] make an asset of their physical retail space and their staff by creating opportunities to interact with customers that cannot be found online'.[120] This reflects the fact that, as Barclaycard report, the 'experience economy' describes new spending trends with consumers splashing out on entertainment and visits to pubs and restaurants.[121] And WH Smith was recently rated the worst high street retailer, based on a Which? survey of 7,700 shoppers, because of a poor 'in-store experience'.[122]

Whilst the Future High Streets Fund and recommendations that online retailers pay their fair share in tax indicate that the Government are properly concerned about our high streets, we must also respond to the specific cultural pressures. We should welcome radical reinvention of the high street from the bottom-up, inviting communities to advise on what is in demand, and to have a hand in supplying it. The Local Data Company found that the 'vacancy rate' of all high street retail premises has risen for the first time since recording began in 2012, and sits at 11.2 per cent.[123] This is an opportunity for re-invention, and we saw examples of this in Birkenhead. Last Christmas, the Hive youth zone, which is familiar to many residents, occupied a pop-up space in the market to sell Christmas gifts.[124]

115 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *The Social Value of Public Spaces*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2017
116 Baulkwill A, *Lots of conviviality,* The Garden, September 2002, pp693–697
117 Rhodes C, *Retail sector in the UK*, House of Commons Library Research Paper, 29 October 2018
118 Ibid
119 The Guardian, High street crisis deepens: 1 in 12 shops closed in five years, 30 January 2019
120 Parliament UK, 'Government responds to Committee's 'High streets and town centres in 2030' report', May 2019, accessed via: www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/housing-communities-and-local-government-committee/news/high-streets-2030-govt-response-chairs-comments-17–19/ (11.07.19)
121 Barclaycard PLC, Press Release, Consumer spending grows 4.4% in October propped up by entertainment, while the retail sector continues to struggle, 5 November 2005, accessed via: www.home.barclaycard/media-centre/press-releases/Consumer-spending-grows-4-point-4-per-cent-in-October.html (11.07.19)
122 BBC, *WH Smith 'worst' retailer in UK, says Which? survey*, 29 May 2019
123 Rhodes C, Retail sector in the UK, House of Commons Library, October 2019
124 Wirral Globe, *Budding entrepreneurs from The Hive open new shop*, 17 December 2018

Case study 2: Homebaked, Anfield

Across the river from Birkenhead in Anfield, 'Homebaked' employs local young people and attracts loyal customers. Occupying a prime location just outside the football stadium, Homebaked have secured a hospitality contract with Liverpool FC, supplying pies to around 40,000 football fans on match days.[125] In 2012, Homebaked formed a Community Land Trust (CLT) and were awarded grant money to refurbish neighbouring premises for both commercial and residential purposes and plan to train young people in design and construction in the process.[126] Homebaked are leading a local conversation about what their high street should look like, collectively planning with other residents through a project called 'Build your own High Street'.[127]

Homebaked, as the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee recommend, occupy the 'intersection of human life and activity' where activity-based spaces are created primarily for social interactions rather than financial transactions.[128] We must do more to incentivise enterprises like Homebaked in order to ensure the usage of high streets as meaningful meeting places.

> We don't want to sit back and accept things being done to us. We say stop, say no, and change the situation for the better.
>
> **A member of the Homebaked CLT steering group**[129]

Case study 3: Turner Contemporary, Margate

The deprived town of Margate has been dubbed 'Shoreditch-On-Sea' for the 1,830 people who have moved from the capital to Thanet district in 2017, many of whom were attracted from the creative scene in East London.[130] The opening of the Turner Contemporary is responsible for much of this migration, and a social value report published in 2016 details significant outcomes for local retailers – largely through increased footfall – such as 'entrepreneurial spirit', 'feeling part of a community of retailers', and a 'sense of civic pride'.[131] Since the gallery opened, 48 per cent of visits have been made by people who travelled to Margate specifically to visit Turner Contemporary.[132]

But the 'place-making' agenda need not be left to arts and cultural minds alone. In Margate, a diversity of stakeholders bought into plans to regenerate the town. For instance, in 2011 the Environment Agency funded a £6 million project to build a new sea defence in Margate. The agency consulted with the Margate Renewal Partnership, who ensured that the steps added value for place-making purposes. The steps now function as both a sea defence and an attractive place for locals and tourists to gather and enjoy the sea view.

125 Homebaked, Homebaked in the Guardian, June 2017, accessed via: http://homebaked.org.uk/now/in_the_media/homebaked_in_the_guardian/ (11.07.19)

126 The Guardian, *'This is not about gentrification': the pie shop reviving an Anfield street'*, 19 April 2017

127 As written on Homebaked's Website, Homes and Shops, accessed via: http://homebaked.org.uk/community_land_trust/homes_and_shops/ (11.07.19)

128 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, High streets and town centres in 2030-: Eleventh Report of Session 2017–2019, February 2019, accessed via: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/1010/1010.pdf (11.07.19)

129 As written on National Community Land Trust Network's Website, About CLTs, accessed via: www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/what-is-a-clt/about-clts (11.07.19)

130 Kent Live, *These Londoners left the capital for Kent and they don't regret it*, 17 July 2018

131 Turner Contemporary, *Social Value Report (15/16)*, Margate: Turner Contemporary, 2016

132 Ibid

Turning a space into a place – where people feel a sense of attraction and belonging – is beneficial on a number of levels, both socially and economically, and should therefore be considered by a diversity of stakeholders.

Recommendation 4: Re-purposing the high street from the bottom up

Enable local people to supply the demand for the high street.

Our high streets no longer serve the purpose they once did. While we need not resuscitate the street, it remains vital for place-making purposes and should not be left to fall into disrepair. We must ensure that the high street remains populated with enterprises which are in genuine demand. There is no reason that high street buildings could not be used to host community activity such as youth centres, parent toddler groups or book clubs. Community Land Trusts (CLT) provide a mechanism to achieve this.

CLT's are community led bodies who own land and buildings that have been transferred by the land owner for its preservation by local people who collectively own it. Section 79 of the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) helpfully defines a community land trust as that which is established 'for the express purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental interests of a local community'.

We recommend that the government support community groups to establish CLT's through replicating 'Enabling Hubs' for high street renovations.

Recommendation 5: Secure the sustainability of youth provision

Remove the insecurity of funding for youth centres so prevalent in government.

As mentioned a sense of belonging – 'belonging wellbeing' – has declined among younger people. If we are to turn the tide, youth provision is vital. The ONS has recently released data showing that young people are less likely to say they belong to their neighbourhood than older adults (55% versus 64%) and more likely to say they feel lonely often or always than older adults (8% compared with 5%).[133]

Many of the young people we spoke to cited boredom as a factor in their engaging with facilities. However, we know that boredom can also drive young people into much more destructive networks. In 2017/18 26,700 children and young people were cautioned or sentenced, 4,500 knife and offensive weapon offences were committed by children, and the number of children held in youth custody on remand increased by 19 per cent in a year.[134] So with nearly 85 per cent of young people's time spent outside of school, we must ensure the provision of youth clubs to divert young people into places where their confidence and aspiration is built up.[135]

However, the issue is not the youth provision, but its funding is unstable and future unsustainable. The organisations we met with were constantly applying for grants and bidding for contracts, and many remarked that too often organisations compromise effective models and local focus in order to meet contracted outcomes, rather than get on with doing what they do best. Funding is too

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133 Office for National Statistics, *Neighbourhood belonging and community engagement by age group*, July 2019, accessed via: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/youngpeopleandtheirneighbourhoods (25.07.19)
134 Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board, *Youth Justice Statistics 2017/18: England and Wales*, London: Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board, 2019
135 Social Mobility Commission, Press Release, Social Mobility in Great Britain: fifth state of the nation report, 28 November 2017, accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-in-great-britain-fifth-state-of-the-nation-report (11.07.19)

dependent on individual stakeholders and political will, resulting in a postcode lottery. It is high time we put an end to the endless cycle of growth and shrinkage in our youth provision and put in place a permanent network of high-quality youth services across the country.

We recommend a National Youth Infrastructure Fund to enable youth clubs to keep up the good work, without fear of losing the next bid or securing another donation. The Government should commit substantial investment over the next ten years, creating an endowment to ensure that youth centres will never close. The funding will be hard-wired to every local area, and when joint bids are in place, a community owned enterprise will be empowered to get on with serving local young people and building their assets.

part two

Empowering communities

"

Family Groups is nurturing,
nurturing, nurturing.

Focus Group, Ferries Family Groups, Rock Ferry, April 2019

We have seen that purposeful participation in community that enables humans to flourish depends on relational settings where social contribution is made possible, by social infrastructure. How do we create the communities that stimulate responsibility and belonging? In Part Two, we explore the necessary conditions to enable this human flourishing, and identify that there can be no replacement for social infrastructure. The same outcomes could not be achieved apart from the facilitating of social contribution, and the independence of such groups is key. While there is an inbuilt propensity in public sector welfare services to create dependence on systems, as services are designed to meet needs to justify the spend, this same pressure does not apply to the same extent in the social sector where asset-based outcomes are more readily accepted.

Edmund Burke described the families, communities and other social networks that make up civil society as 'little platoons'. And these platoons sit in between the individual and the state. While the state designs services top-down, centrally distributed and separate from human relation, community offers something very different. Communities operate on the principle of reciprocity where the social link between individuals is more important than what is exchanged. Each and every member is an asset to the other, and an agent in their own story. Too many of our statutory welfare services fail to treat people in this way. We must acknowledge the limits of state intervention and realise the efficacy of engaging in the networks of support that are best placed to wrap around the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society.

It is for this reason that this report is not exclusively about public service reform. It is about the assets that are already owned by communities, and demonstrating the potential for such assets – if realised and harnessed – to improve life chances for local people. The recommendations that append the following findings are toward local authorities as the devolved bodies which hold the power that ought to be shifted downwards once more.

It should be recognised that the devolution agenda empowers local authorities but simultaneously disempowers central government to control devolution beyond the local authority level. The Government do however, have clear intentions. A government wellbeing update document states 'Localism and decentralisation policies, including the range of community rights and budgets, should lead to increasing community participation and engagement, responsibility and feeling of control of local areas and promote co-design and co-production of local services and policies – all important aspects of social capital and people's wellbeing'.[136] It is also worth noting that outsourcing is not the same as devolution. There is virtually no power shift in outsourcing services to the voluntary sector, dictating the terms and conditions and, as Alex Smith puts it, 'replace its own public sector bureaucracy with a third sector bureaucracy'. We need to be making connections, not just payments. So, how do we create communities? Well nothing can be done artificially, from the top-down. Empowering communities to develop social infrastructure as they see fit is the best way to ensure the sustainability of our libraries, youth clubs and village halls.

This is the right ambition for the devolution agenda which recognises that localising policies serve human flourishing. Some local authorities understand how to use the powers contained in the Localism Act 2011, others do not.

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136 HM Government, Wellbeing Policy and Analysis: An Update of Wellbeing Work Across Whitehall,
    London: HM Government, 2013

chapter four

Sustaining social infrastructure

What we heard

The support offered by community groups cannot be replicated by public sector welfare services which pursue independence rather than foster interdependence.

There are concerns that tendering process' and funding structures incentivise organisations to prove that certain needs have been met purely by delivering certain prescribed outcomes. This can mean sustaining the need can become more expedient than meeting it. As one charity worker put it, deliberately 'half fixing people'.[137]

In fact, we heard from one organisation that their contracted outcomes related to employability, but in reality, they work towards a much broader set of 'softer' outcomes including social inclusion, mental health and new skills, and still many do eventually enter employment. This should not imply that the social sector is less ambitious for those they help, but simply that they are better informed about the hurdles that must first be overcome if employability is to be sustainable and the time that this may take. This means that the length of contracts awarded by local authorities, which can be as short as 6 months, or even 3 months for an extension, are problematic.

Make It Happen will not receive charitable status. The point of tension is their asset-based model of engagement which does not align with an agenda to meet needs. For instance, at Make It Happen nothing is free. This dignifies customers and gives them the opportunity to consider how they might contribute to the shop, financially or through other means. This focus on people as assets is shared across much of the social sector. Make It Happen pursue this kind of engagement rather than spend resources on building a referral mechanism or identifying need. Make It Happen see assets before needs.

For many, it is ordinary everyday activities that make the greatest difference. For instance, in Clacton, the self-explanatory 'walk and talk' group – unsurprisingly – delivers on health and wellbeing outcomes set by NHS England and contracted through other specialist agencies in Tendring. However, activity is no more complicated than simply walking while talking and stopping for a cup of tea, but sadly this has now become the kind of activity that people need to be referred to by specialists.

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137 Focus Group, Make It Happen, Birkenhead, April 2019

What this tells us

Too often, local authority budgeting decisions operate on a false economy – failing to realise the potential in the local assets so integral to the fabric of social infrastructure.

There is much focus on reducing dependence on public services as being both good for people and good for public finances. However, complete independence is a misguided outcome concealing the reality that people have varying degrees of incapabilities and that we can be both 'capable and needy', simultaneously.[138] Is not every life lived through mutual interdependence? Independence from welfare should be considered a good outcome, but only if we have thriving social infrastructure that allows for the formation of networks of support that do not wax and wane depending on structural funding. We need places that are there to stay, to which people can turn up day after day without having to prove eligibility. Rather than being defined as 'not in education, employment or training', membership of community groups allows people to experience a sense of contribution, belonging and responsibility.

But the local authority owned land, buildings, and services that make up our social infrastructure and facilitate community groups are not ordinarily protected in statute, but are discretionary, and are therefore often the first to be subject to cuts in a time of austerity. In fact, a New Local Government Network survey found that only one third of councils feel they will financially be able to provide discretionary services beyond 2023 and may cut back to the legal minimum, and this drops to 22 per cent for local authorities with social care responsibilities.[139] Interestingly, local authorities do have a duty to provide 'comprehensive and efficient public Library Services for all persons desirous to make use thereof' under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Nevertheless some – seemingly many – planned closures are legislatively compatible.[140]

A 2018 National Audit Office (NAO) report on the financial sustainability of local authorities notes that local authorities have protected spending on adult and children's services while spending on 'more discretionary' areas has fallen. Adult and children's social care services have seen a reduction of 3.3 per cent and an increase of 3.2 per cent in real terms, respectively. But spending on planning and development fell by 52.8 per cent in real terms, and spending on cultural and related services also fell by 34.9 per cent'.[141]

Cutting cherished but discretionary services is a false economy. Discretionary services can alleviate pressures on statutory services by preventing dependence on services such as adult social care which are consuming larger and larger proportions of local authority budgets. The NCVO's invaluable UK Civil Society Almanac of 2016/17 found that organisations delivering social services continued to receive the largest amount of income from

138 Samuel, K, Alkire S, Diego D, Mills C, and Hammock J, Social isolation and Its Relationship to Multidimensional Poverty, *Oxford Development Studies*, 46:1, 2018, 83–97

139 New Local Government Network, *NLGN Leadership Index: Most Local Authorities Will Only Deliver The Bare Minimum in Five Years' Time*, 9 August 2018, accessed via: www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2018/18304/ (11.07.19)

140 Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, A Local Inquiry into the Public Library Service Provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council, London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2009

141 National Audit Office, *Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities 2018*, London: National Audit Office, 2018

government (£5bn), accounting for 45 per cent of their total income, while culture and recreation charities received just £1.2bn.[142] Government money makes up 49 per cent of the total income for organisations working in employment and training.[143] See Figure 11.
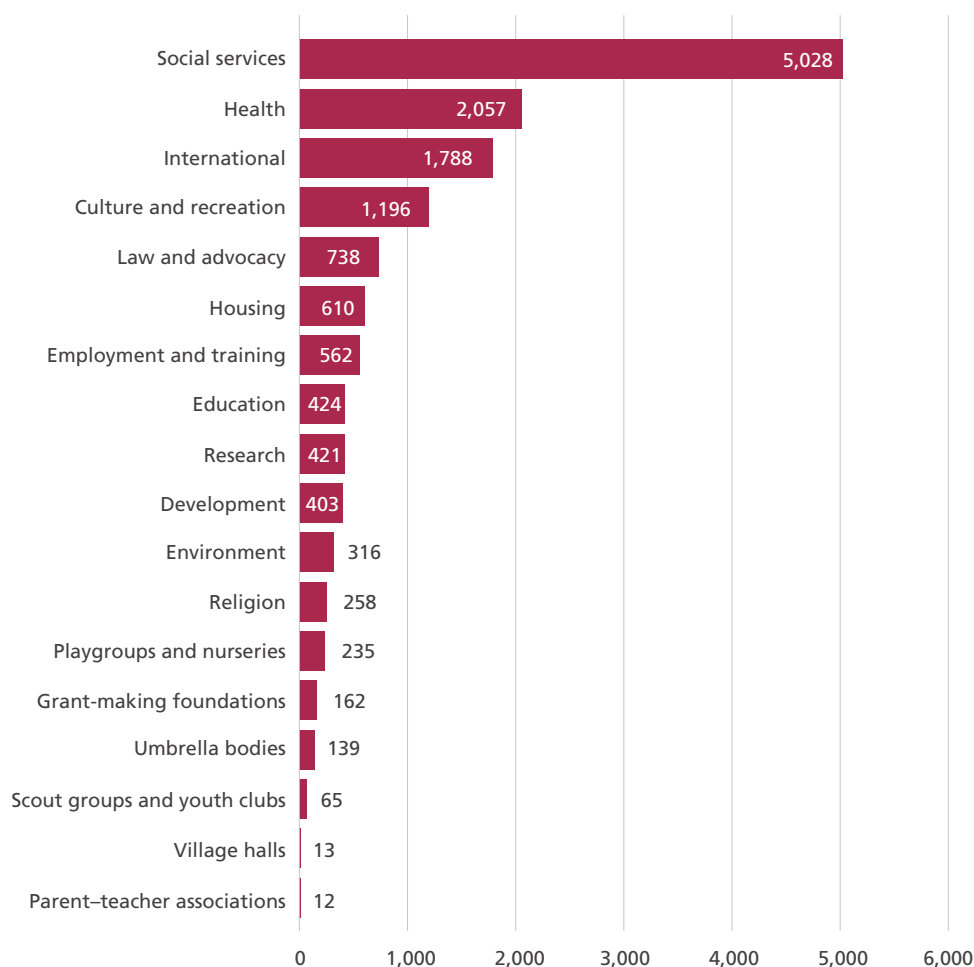
More significant than central government cuts, local authorities have to deal with a rising demand for social services. One local authority has bucked the salami-slicing trend, seizing the opportunity provided by a need to make savings by renewing a social contract with local people. Wigan Council have adopted an asset-based model of community development (ABCD) in order to reduce demand on their services – saving money – as well as empowering communities to do more for themselves through provision of thriving social infrastructure that serves human flourishing and promotes the common good.

ABCD recognises the damage done by merely trying to meet needs, and that building assets is a much more sustainable way of tacking social problems. In practice, rather than servicing a community with new interventions on short-term contracts, laden with eligibility criteria, ABCD seeks to resource pre-existing and well-established assets. These include soft assets such as individual gifts and talents, social networks, and community groups, and harder assets such as local institutions, land and buildings. Through engagement with these assets, individuals can find interdependence on others, preventing dependence on public services.

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142 As written on NCVO100's website, 'How much do voluntary organisations get from government?', accessed via:
    https://data.ncvo.org.uk/sector-finances/income-from-government/ (11.07.19)
143 Ibid

Figure 11: Voluntary sector income from government by subsector, 2016/17 (£m)

Subsector	£m
Social services	5,028
Health	2,057
International	1,788
Culture and recreation	1,196
Law and advocacy	738
Housing	610
Employment and training	562
Education	424
Research	421
Development	403
Environment	316
Religion	258
Playgroups and nurseries	235
Grant-making foundations	162
Umbrella bodies	139
Scout groups and youth clubs	65
Village halls	13
Parent–teacher associations	12

Source: NCVO

The CSJ do not believe that placing further centrally imposed ring-fences on local authority spend, reducing discretionary spend even further, is the right course of action. Instead, as Wigan has achieved, a greater synonymity with communities' priorities should result in a more organic directing of funds to the local assets that local people cherish.

chapter five
A new social contract:
The Wigan Deal

This chapter examines how Wigan Council have, through a 'deal' with business, communities and other local stakeholders, asked for their cooperation in return for support. There are many iterations of this deal which we will explain further, but the uniqueness of the approach is Wigan Council's trust in local people to make good decisions. The typical relationship between local authorities and the communities they govern is far less intimate, with many electors not knowing who their local councillors are. However, Wigan Council have sought to develop a greater synonymity with local people by trying to better understand their assets and needs.

We were told by the current Chief Executive of Wigan Council that their move to asset-based working has required investment in behavioural change. Wigan's in-house 'Wigan Experience' which supports employees to understand their role in asset-based working was awarded the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's Experience of the Year.[144]

Asset-based community development

In 2010, The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reported that Wigan Council would be the third worst affected by austerity, and indeed £160 million has come out of their budget.[145] Against this backdrop, Wigan established 'The Deal', a social contract between Wigan and local residents where Wigan asked, in exchange for measures such as freezing council tax, that residents participate in activities such as looking out for neighbours who might be vulnerable, staying healthy through diet and exercise, volunteering and supporting local business. The King's Fund report found that while financial pressures focused minds, The Deal grew at the intersection of two agendas, saving money and improving lives.[146]

Through The Deal, The King's Fund estimates that Wigan will have saved £149 million over the decade from 2010/11 up to by 2020/21.[147] Despite saving £30 million on adult social care and public health, by 'making better use of individual assets and tailoring care to

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144 Wigan Council, Corporate Peer Challenge Wigan Council 9th-11th October 2017 Feedback Report, Wigan: 2017
145 The King's Fund, Donna Hall; the Wigan Story, 21 November 2018, accessed via: www.kingsfund.org.uk/audio-video/donna-hall-wigan-story (11.07.19)
146 The King's Fund, *A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal*, London: The King's Fund, 2019
147 Ibid

personal needs', Wigan has seen life expectancy improve by 7 years in the most deprived areas.[148] And, Wigan has also seen a reduced demand for formal services; 8,818 people in 2013/14 to 7,782 in 2016/17.[149]

Case study 4: Beatrice, sheltered accommodation resident

Wigan Council tells the story of Beatrice who is 83 years old and living in sheltered accommodation. She suffers from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. She has two children, one visits regularly but the other lives in Canada. After a fall, she lost confidence and stopped going to afternoon tea sessions in the communal dining room. She worries about her health and goes to A&E frequently. The Social Care Officer (SCO) noticed that Beatrice's son, who lives in Canada, had bought an iPad for her to contact him on, but it remained in its box. The SCO arranged for Beatrice to be taught how to use the iPad by someone from the library. She was nervous to attend the first session in the communal dining room, so the SCO accompanied her. Beatrice has really enjoyed meeting other residents in the communal dining area and feels that her quality of life has improved. She also feels that day care is no longer needed and doesn't see her GP or go to A&E as often as she once did.[150]

Case study 5: Sue, Wigan Council

Wigan Council tells the story of Sue, a Social Worker who has adapted to the new way of working. She says. 'It is my job to assess the strengths of individuals and their community. To help people connect with each other, understand relationships and networks of informal ties. My mission is the promotion of individual wellbeing'. She talks about how she helped Jenny, a fluent French speaker, living in a nursing home and suffering from dementia. Sue says 'This hidden talent was shared with others and it was found that another resident in the home could also speak French. They were brought together and enjoy sharing their passion for the language. This experience was magical because this enabled both individuals with severe dementia to maintain their skills'.[151]

For this model, social infrastructure is far from discretionary, it is absolutely vital. The Nineteenth Century French diplomat, de Tocqueville said 'The more it [the state] stands in the place of associations, the more will individuals, losing the notion of combining together, require its assistance. These are cause and effect that unceasingly create each other'.[152]

Just three years after the financial crash, and austerity measures were introduced, the 2011 Localism Act provided local authorities with new powers to innovate in order to deliver better value for taxpayer's money. The Act provided local authorities with greater freedom to make more local decisions on matters previously determined centrally. This built on existing general powers of competence, allowing councils to use their discretion to do as they saw fit, while meeting statutory service obligations. But have local authorities

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148 Wigan Council, 'The Deal Conference', 27 September 2017, accessed via: www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/The-Deal/
  Deal-conference/TheDeal-Conference.pdf (11.07.19)
149 Ibid
150 Wigan Council, *The Deal for Adult Social Care Case Study*
151 Wigan Council, *Sue Cordiner Social Worker: Community Mental Health Team*
152 Norman, J. and Ganesh, J. Compassionate Conservatism: What it is and why we need it, London: Policy Exchange, 2006

made the most of this? There are two asset-based functions that are particularly conducive to empowering communities to maintain social infrastructure which facilitate the activities which we know keeps people well.

Wigan employed asset-based devices that we recommend all local authorities should use to promote human flourishing. These approaches are designed to empower communities to look after themselves, based on a recognition that they are best placed, through local understating, to perform this function. Both of the following actions require the local authority to be bold enough to invest in devices which reflect a more synonymous relationship between the local council and the community.

Community asset transfers

Guidance issued in 2003 related to the Local Government Act 1972 by giving local authorities 'General Disposal Consent', which granted greater freedom to exercise discretion in the disposal of land.[153] For as little as £1, 'where it is clear it is for the good of the community' assets could be sold to a range of community-based organisations. Importantly, the specified circumstances envisaged are that assets are to be disposed of to promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing.[154]

However, while the communities are often best placed to ensure the accessibility and sustainability of cherished sites like parks and libraries, there remains a barrier to local authorities and communities working together – in fact, Wigan claims to have kept all libraries open through the co-location of services.[155]

Local authorities often use assets as sources of revenue as central government have reduced their grants. The local authority attitude to 'assets' as generators of money, rather than generators of social value, remains a problem. HM Treasury makes clear that such assets are 'not for its own sake or for the creation of profit'.[156] Instead, 'value for money' is defined as social benefits optimised, not monetary value for the public sector alone.

In 2017, local authorities reported more than £2.5bn of surplus assets.[157] And yet, according to Locality, on average 4,131 publicly owned buildings and spaces are sold off each year in private sales to the highest bidder, including 951 to Starbucks, 120 to Odeon cinemas and 605 to Sainsbury's.[158] Despite the Government's increasing commitment to this policy – setting up an Asset Transfer Unit (ATU) to provide advice and support – just 41 per cent of local authorities had a community ownership strategy or policy in place in 2018.[159]

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153 Department for Communities and Local Government, Circular 06/03: Local Government Act 1972 general disposal consent (England) 2003 disposal of land for less than the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained, London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2003
154 Mark Sandford, Assets of Community Value, House of Commons Library, Commons Briefing Papers Sn06366, 28 April 2017
155 Wigan Council, *Council of the Year Wigan Council submission,* 2019
156 HM Treasury, 'Value for money and the valuation of public sector assets', London: HM Treasury, 2008
157 Bruni F, Marks R, Newman S, and Ruseva V, Economic Appraisal of Community Asset Transfers, London: Pro Bono Economics, 2017
158 Locality, 'The Great British Sell Off: How we're losing our vital publicly owned buildings and spaces. Forever', London: Locality, 2018
159 Ibid

We spoke to a number of community activists who told us that asset transfers are sometimes seen as 'liability transfers'. Many community groups are motivated to make a success of assets, but lack the know-how to manage the bureaucracy which comes with being responsible for public spaces. This does not reflect a collaborative relationship between local authorities and communities.

Wigan Council, as part of The Deal, empowered communities through promoting asset transfers and supporting recipients to manage the asset, and have made substantial social returns. Re-purposing buildings for community use might mean that residents are in closer proximity to support, reducing the Council's spending on transport to another location. Wigan Council actively invites community groups to express interest in assets, and offer ongoing support through a third party to asses 'readiness' and ensure the transfer is successful.

Case study 6: The Beehive Community Centre

The Lindale Hall Adult Day Centre was located in one of the most isolated areas of the Borough and there are very few other community buildings in the area. It was underused, offering limited activities just two days per week. The asset was transferred to a new formed group, Beehive Community Group, who secured £10,000 in investment start up funding from Wigan Council. Now the Centre is open up to seven days a week seeing around 300 visitors each week. It is run by one part time paid staff and ten volunteers. The Beehive Community Centre now runs a Café and Luncheon Club, Children's groups, Dance & Fitness Groups and Advice Services. The transfer reduces capital liability for the Council and the Centre can now attract additional external funding not available to the Council.[160]

There is an important debate to be had around the over reliance on volunteers to sustain social infrastructure, and the impact that this has on the labour market. NCVO report that 15,500 volunteers have been recruited to run libraries between 2010 and 2016.[161] However, the reality is that it is often those who are willing to help without a wage that are best placed to help because they already have a basic concern to improve the wellbeing of neighbours.

Members of the Treherbert Bowls Club in The Rhondda Valley are a fine example of concerned local activists. Jim, the project lead, told us that in the absence of a football pitch, young people were trespassing on the bowling green to play football. When he invited them to play bowls, the anti-social behaviour ceased. Treherbert Bowls Club now run bowls for young people every evening during the summer term which advances intergenerational relationships in the town.

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160 As written on Wigan Council's website, Community Asset Transfer Case Studies: Case Study 1 Beehive Community Centre Mosely Common (formerly Lindale Hall Adult Day Centre), accessed via: www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Community-asset-transfer/Beehive-Community-Centre-Case-Study.pdf (11.07.19)

161 NCVO100, The Future of Libraries and Volunteering, 29 March 2016, accessed via: https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2016/03/29/the-future-of-libraries-and-volunteering/ (11.07.19)

> **Recommendation 6: Boost community asset ownership**
>
> *Boosting community ownership of local land and buildings will help ensure that cherished space becomes a genuine asset to the community.*
>
> Community asset transfers long predate the Localism Act, but the practice is not as widespread as it could be as a culture of risk-aversion has prevented much needed innovation. Wigan have invested in asset transfers by ensuring support is available to those who express interest.
>
> **We recommend that all local authorities establish a community ownership strategy which includes the necessary commitment to invest in the provision of ongoing support for community groups to make a success of asset transfers.**

Community investment funding

In 2015/16, 84 per cent of local government funding went to larger voluntary organisations (incomes of £10m to £100m).[162] Local authorities should mitigate against bias for the most cost-effective providers, which are often larger but have limited community intelligence. This can be done through small scale grant-making for community groups to kick start initiatives which align with Council objectives. Such grants are designed to populate civil society by improving the number of activities and groups to which people can be referred. We visited a charity called Involve Northwest who deliver the 'Connect Us' project (funded by Wirral Public Health) and administer just £250 grants to members of a community who want to make a difference. One resident used a grant to purchase equipment to tidy up a green space on their road. Following his action, the resident reported a marked reduction in anti-social behavior which has previously centered on the green.

Trusting communities

While some social sector advocates have argued that local authorities should tender less and give more grants, reducing the bureaucratic burden on charities, Wigan have replaced grants with investments.

Rather than grant-giving, Wigan describe their initiative designed to get more money into the hands of local people who are well placed to respond to local needs, as 'investing'. This language marks a more collaborative relationship. The guiding principle of the investment fund is the expectation that, with the support of the Council, projects should be self-sustaining. However, relevant councillors are notified of unsuccessful applications to consider the feasibility of funding through other means.

The King's Fund report that instead of rigid performance indicators, monitoring is now based on the high-level goals which the recipient organisation have a key role in setting.[163] Crucially, a Council Scrutiny Committee found that 'the community has taken responsibility and ownership for designing, producing and presenting a Deal for

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162 NCVO100, Rebalancing the Relationship Between Large and Small Voluntary Organisations, 15 March 2019, accessed via: https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2019/03/15/a-new-project-to-rebalance-the-relationship-between-large-and-small-voluntary-organisations-bidding-for-contracts/ (11.07.19)
163 The King's Fund, *A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal*, London: The King's Fund, 2019

Communities Investment Fund support package' which recipients have found to be a 'flexible and supportive programme, in which there was an equal relationship between Wigan Council and the funded groups'.[164]

While a grant suggests that there are no strings attached, an investment demonstrates a closer relationship with the community and greater trust in their ability to spend public money well. Voluntary sector leaders explained to the King's Fund that apart from the fund, the wider support package which includes help to develop and scale the support and named mentors, has given recipients the 'credibility and confidence' to apply for additional money from other funders.[165] Since 2013, Wigan Council's Communities Investment Fund has invested £10 million in community and voluntary organisations within the borough, which has leveraged a further £5.5 million of external funding.[166]

Former Chief Executive, Donna Hall said 'You know your local area better than we do which is why we have created the opportunity for the community to take control and make a difference'.[167] As of September 2018, the Council Scrutiny Committee found that the Community Investment Fund, through supporting local groups, had achieved the following:

- over 460,000 attendances at groups across the borough

- 11,413 community activities delivered

- 4,175 residents diverted from front line services

- 142 residents supported into employment

- 965 volunteers delivering 23,088 hours of support across the Borough

- 5 organisations securing national and regional recognition, totaling 7 awards

- 2 organisations receiving the Queens Award[168]

An internal evaluation estimated that over the first four years, the fund delivered a social return on investment of £1.63 for each £1 invested, with the main financial benefits coming from supporting people into employment, reducing demand for health, social care and other public services, the provision of food parcels and volunteers' time contribution.[169]

One of the most persistent arguments against devolution to both local authorities and communities themselves is based on a concern about a so-called 'postcode lottery' as some organisations will inevitably provide better services than others. While the role for the centre is to regulate quality and ensure innovation, fear of patchy delivery suggests undue faith in central government to provide quality services for all. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that more direct democratic involvement, such as oversight of procedure and better mobilisation of of citizen concerns, correlates with more cost-effective governance.

164 Wigan Council, *Confident Council Scrutiny Committee,* 2018
165 The King's Fund, *A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal*, London: The King's Fund, 2019
166 Ibid
167 The Doctor, *Prescribing Hope*, London: BMA, 2019, p3
168 Wigan Council, Confident Council Scrutiny Committee, 2018
169 The King's Fund, A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal, London: The King's Fund, 2019

Author of 'Democracy pays', Anthony Zacharzewski[170] points out that Councils already spend large sums on budget consultation documents. In 2007, The London Borough of Lambeth spent £60,000 on its budget consultation but £20,000 is more typical.[171]

Participatory and deliberative decision making, where decisions about public services are devolved to the community, are commonplace in other countries such as Poland and North America. Even Tower Hamlets ran a 'You Decide!' campaign where residents, councillors and service providers voted on how to spend £280,000.[172] This project eventually totalled £5 million. Given the control of money dictates where power lies, participatory budgeting is exemplary in its efforts to empower communities. In this way, the public are convinced that their voice matters and meaningfully and directly informs decisions that affect them.

The New Local Government Network has conducted extensive research into forms of participatory decision making around the world and found a unique model in Gdansk.[173] Here, there is evidence of genuine power shift to communities, demonstrable in the risk taken by authorities. Gdansk hold Citizens' Assemblies which are more than just advisory having direct power to make city policy and spend city funds. Around 60 people, representing the city's population, gather over four days to identify recommendations on which they vote. Proposals that receive support from more than 80 per cent of participants must then be enacted.[174]

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170 Zacharzewski, A. *Democracy pays: How democratic engagement can cut the cost of government*, London: The Democratic Society, 2010
171 Ibid
172 Local Government Association, 'Tower Hamlets, 'You Decide!'', 12 December 2016, accessed via: www.local.gov.uk/tower-hamlets-you-decide (11.07.19)
173 Lent, A. and Jessica Studdert, J. *The Community Paradigm: Why public services need radical change and how it can be achieved*, London: New Local Government Network, 2019
174 Ibid

Recommendation 7: Trust and invest in communities

Empowering local people who want to make a difference, to make a difference, can foster the purposeful participation that reduces dependence and enables human flourishing.

Risk-aversion due to financial constraints means that local authorities are failing to see what communities can do for themselves when empowered to do so, which saves money in the long term. There are several organisations who provide exemplary funding and support packages such as UnLtd, Nesta, UK Community Foundations and other strategic grant makers.

We recommend that all local authorities invest in community empowering initiatives though small-scale funding to local community organisations with ideas that align with wellbeing priorities. Alongside the funding, support in the form of council mentors and bidding advice should be made widely available.

Since parish councils are the first tier of government, where in place, the dispensation of the parish precept could be a suitable mechanism for such purposes.

chapter six
Harnessing community

What we heard

Community groups go the extra mile and consequently gain the trust of statutory welfare service 'clients', making them extremely well informed about both individuals' assets and needs.

Given the strength of relationships within community groups, members enjoy the informality of the support. The project lead at Make It Happen put it like this. 'When I'm not well, I want a hug. […] I don't want to talk on the internet. I want to be loved'.[175]

We heard from participants that they felt nurtured by the groups they attended. For instance, at Ferries Family Groups, Sally told us that she was nervous about attending for the first time, but 'They got me making the tea. That really helped'. Victoria agreed that, 'They do really go out of their way to nurture, and it's all about the little things that mean such a lot'. And Kerry, 'So friendly. So friendly […] You're just generally relaxed, really. It's like being in your sitting room'.[176]

Another distinctive feature of community groups is the flexibility of support. While local authority managed programmes tend to exist to meet a specific need and can be short-lived, social sector organisations have a bias toward action. Karen at Ferries Family Groups told us, 'Whenever I was in hospital with it, there was always somebody from Family Group who would visit. Because I was mostly in, there were never big gaps where I didn't have access to Family Group […] I have mental health issues and they've always been there, through all the trauma of losing children'.[177]

This kind of continuity was also present at The Hive youth zone. When we asked about growing too old to attend The Hive, Fran said 'But they don't just drop you […] it's not just, 'You've turned 20, bye,' it's a slow kind of thing'.[178] This is in stark contrast to her friend who told us 'I was in CAMHS counselling and, as soon as I turned 18, they were like, 'You're fine, bye.' […] And it was a bit ridiculous because, just because you've turned 18, it doesn't mean that, whatever that issue is, is solved'.[179]

175 Focus Group, Make It Happen, Birkenhead, April 2019
176 Focus Group, Ferries Family Groups, Rock Ferry, April 2019
177 Focus Group, Ferries Family Groups, Rock Ferry, April 2019
178 Focus Group, The Hive, Birkenhead, April 2019
179 Focus Group, The Hive, Birkenhead, April 2019

It was clear that many people rely on community groups for the extra support that other services do not adequately provide, such as IT assistance or form-filling. And many participants remarked that they would be contacted if they did not turn up as expected. It is no surprise that statutory welfare service 'clients' open up to people in their community more than their work coach or other service personnel with the power to reward or withdraw money. One local authority revealed that they primarily deal with individuals' problems, apart from their network of support.

We heard from customers at Make It Happen who had experienced endless frustrations at the job centre, primarily due to admin errors. Cath was asked if she was job seeking even though she was already eligible to receive her pension. And Simon found maintaining disability benefits so challenging that he eventually gave up. Both were exasperated by the assumption that they were computer literate.[180]

What this tells us

S*ervices must stop just 'dealing with' individuals and start building meaningful relationships with local networks of support, harnessing the trust they epitomise.*

In 2015, Citizens Advice Bureau found that GPs in England were spending 19 per cent of their time on non-health issues, primarily related to relationships, at an implied cost to the health service of £400 million a year.[181] GPs reported not being able to respond in an integrated way, with the vast majority signposting patients to external agencies.

We welcome the roll out of social prescribing which is a means of enabling primary healthcare professionals to refer patients to other support networks including arts activities, gardening, cookery, and a range of sports. Importantly – there is a solid evidence base supporting its merits. An evaluation of the Tower Hamlets pilot found improvements in mental and physical wellbeing, increases in sociability and communication skills, the acquisition of new interests and skills, and a reduction in the number of visits to a GP.[21] From a return on investment perspective, a 2018 evaluation found that every £1 invested in social prescribing generated an annual social return of £2.30 – that's £864,800 per year for health and social care in Tower Hamlets.[23]

However, a senior research fellow at UWE warns that the remaining barrier to social prescribing is the need to boost the social infrastructure that is expected to deliver the prescription.[24] Dr Bird, a GP and advocate of social prescribing in Newham says 'The next stage has to be that social movement where the culture changes, people take responsibility'.[25]

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180 The Doctor, *Prescribing Hope*, London: BMA, 2019, p3
181 Citizens Advice, *A very general practice: How much time to GPs spend on issues other than health?*, London: Citizens Advice, May 2015

Interview with social prescriber

We interviewed a social prescriber who told us that she has the trust of her patients, that her colleagues in the job centre would be unlikely to gain because they represent an authority with the power to withdraw benefits, and may therefore be feared. We were told that social prescribers collate extremely detailed histories in order to understand preferences and capabilities and any other relevant personal information. This means that social prescribers can reduce unnecessary barriers that may prevent a client from seeking advice. For instance, an unfamiliar bus route may make a client feel uneasy about attending a new group. Or, a client might require a detailed description of an entrance to a building that is hard to find in order to feel confident in attending for the first time. The social prescriber will be aware of this potential and often attends activities with patients in order to help them integrate (although this practice is not that widespread across the borough). A good working relationship between social prescribers and work coaches is essential to ensure vulnerable and disadvantaged people receive adequate advocacy.[182]

Community groups are also privy to intelligence that other welfare services struggle to obtain, making them effective advocates. Mechanisms of the state are limited in their capability to capture the complexity of people's lives, which increases the likelihood of ill-informed decisions and ill-targeted support, which may inadvertently damage pre-existing networks of support. For instance, while a client might avoid telling their work coach all the relevant facts constituting their complex story, trusted people like their vicar, youth group leader or even a hairdresser may well have crucial information that could help to inform decisions about support.

While the state offers a service, the social sector supports people. The latter is characterised by nurture which is often reported to be missing from places such as job centres. There is, of course, an important balance between the need to nurture and the need to not create dependency through over-generous or un-dynamic support. It is important to be simultaneously ambitious for people, as well as recognising that capabilities must be grown, which takes time.

The RSA has found that 'familiar strangers' such as postal workers are better recognised and more valued by local people than their Councillor.[183] And we commend the loneliness strategy for its creativity in using postal workers to check up on older people as part of the 'Safe and Connected' pilot.

Social prescribing and the 'Safe and Connected' pilot all seek to provide the 'carrot' so desperately missing from some services. Both sectors, the public and the voluntary – rightly – have distinct jurisdiction, which is why outsourcing to the social sector can create animosity between parties, as much of the power remains with the public sector. What we need is greater synonymity between them.

Could this principle be extended beyond public services? In the Harvard Business Review, Deborah Mills-Scofield argues that 'The historical division between social and non-social

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182 Centre for Social Justice, Interview with social prescriber, 2019

183 Royal Society of Arts, *Social Networks Key to Community Regeneration*, 14 September 2010, accessed via: www.thersa.org/about-us/media/2010/09/social-networks-key-to-community-regeneration (11.07.19)

business and 'purpose' vs. 'profits' is artificial and antiquated'.[184] Given the simplicity of signposting, it does not seem unreasonable to train other – 'familiar strangers' – to offer similar signposting support.

In fact, the Scottish Government, as part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, have introduced 'Participation requests' that allow community bodies to request to participate in a public service to improve outcomes, and the public body must agree. This could include offering volunteers or even proposing that the service delivery is handed over to the community body.[185]

There are a number of examples of using 'familiar strangers' for the purposes of outreach and signposting.

Case study 7: Involve Northwest, Zero Tolerance to Domestic Abuse Business Quality Mark

A charity on The Wirral, Involve Northwest, offer training to local businesses to recognise the signs of domestic abuse who then achieve the 'Quality Mark', indicating that personnel have the skills to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and respond appropriately. Those in public areas are may also become a 'Safe Point' which indicates to victims that help can be found in that place.[186]

Case study 8: The Cares Family, Winter Wellbeing

Similarly, The Cares Family have trialled a form of outreach for their Winter Wellbeing project by engaging GP surgeries, Hospitals, Pharmacies and Local businesses. In their evaluation of the project, Cares report that they spoke to staff at over 90 businesses in Southwark and Lambeth who agreed to publicise the project, and as a result Cares received 35 calls.[187]

Case study 9: Wigan Council, Eyes and Ears Campaign

80 per cent of Wigan Council's 4000 staff live in the Borough, meaning that they have a good level of local knowledge and some of the more public facing staff, such as those collecting bins, cutting grass and litter-picking, are these 'familiar strangers'.

Wigan therefore trained their environment staff to spot safeguarding concerns, while doing their normal day to day jobs. Staff are encouraged to report anything they see or hear which is out of the ordinary in order to identify vulnerable residents and prevent crises. Reports are referred to the borough's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which encourages information sharing.

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184 Harvard Business Review, *Every Business Is (Or Should Be) a Social Business*, 14 January 2013
185 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act: summary, accessed via: www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/ (12.09.19)
186 As written on Involve Northwest's Website, Domestic Abuse Team: Leapfrog, accessed via: www.involvenorthwest.org.uk/index.php/services/leapfrog-project (11.07.19)
187 South London Cares, *Winter Wellbeing: 2017/18 Evaluation Report*, London: South London Cares, 2018

Wigan's Director of Environment, Paul Barton said:

'In one case concerns about a female who was caught with a low level shoplifting offence were reported and on investigation from the safeguarding hub it was discovered the female was currently homeless and had health issues.

Thanks to the referral accommodation was found for her and her flat was furnished using local charities and community resources. She is now also registered with a dentist and doctor, is volunteering with a local community group and is being supported to find permanent employment'.[188]

Recommendation 8: Implement a full Universal Support programme

Universal Credit must be accompanied by Universal Support

There is a clear need for Universal Support. Universal Support was first conceived to be implemented alongside Universal Credit to help claimants achieve 'greater independence and personal responsibility'.[189] Its purpose was to provide claimants with very complex needs access to tailored support. Trials between 2015 and 2016 showed that while the need for Universal Support was there, flawed designs, variation in service delivery and confusion of data sharing prevented full benefits being yielded.

The DWP Select Committee concede that Universal support is 'woefully inadequate'. They report 'in its current form Universal Support is far from 'universal' and all too often offers very little in the way of support'.[190] Citizens Advice have been contracted by the Government to carry out a slimmed down service, known as Help to Claim. However, Help to Claim has limited scope which is constraining its impact. More funding is required to ensure the scheme is effective in providing a more holistic system of support.

In order for our new welfare system to be more than administrative, we need to ensure the right people are tasked with supporting those with uniquely complex needs. Currently, the role of the work coach is somewhat contradictory. As both an advocate and a decision-maker, work coaches must identify failures to comply with claimant commitments which undermines their role as an advocate and can lead to a lack of trust between work coaches and claimants.

We recommend that DWP revisit the plan to implement a full Universal Support programme. The support should see the role of decision-maker and advocate split, with work coaches performing the former and third party organisations performing the latter. Work Coaches should direct claimants to a wide range of local third party orgainisations – such as charities – who are well placed to offer tailored support for a range of issues, as well as advocacy or mentorship. Such organisations should receive funding for their contribution as well as legal permissions to access the claimant's data in order to assist with their claim, and beyond. The advocate must regularly report to the work coach.

188 New Local Government Network, *Why Staff Are Eyes and Ears of Our Communities*, 20 April 2018, accessed via: www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2018/why-staff-are-eyes-and-ears-of-our-communities/ (11.07.19)

189 HM Government, Summary: Benefit Sanctions, 28 October 2018, accessed via: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/1667/166703.htm#_idTextAnchor000 (11.07.19)

190 Ibid

Conclusion

Our research demonstrates that local networks of rooted people forming cohesive communities provide a life line for many of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged people. They provide informal welfare and crucially enables human flourishing through tackling the powerlessness so pervasive to the human experience of poverty.

Community, facilitated by social infrastructure, need not cost the earth, but the returns are incomparable with state interventions – which though it offers a much needed safety net, rarely best transforms the lives of those most struggling. Which is why Government must recognise the potential of civil society, and in the spirit of decentralisation, harness social capital by working in closer proximity with those best placed to support the most disadvantaged, securing the common good.

This report also raises critical questions about the assumption that we should be striving for economic independence. Economic independence without social interdependence may indicate a secure income but does not, of itself, comprise wellbeing. Economic contribution set apart from the flexibility to raise children, look after loved ones and participate in voluntary activity may superficially appear satisfactory, but places unsustainable pressure on public services and fails to deliver the common good.

There is a seismic shift occurring in our culture, a turning away from the brashly new, from the quick and insubstantial, from the individualistic material measures of personal fulfilment. We are reaching once again for connection, belonging, and a sense of meaning which goes beyond immediate gratification.

In too many parts of Britain, for too many people, the dilution of community brought about by a series of coincidental social changes – the reduction in the number of places for communities to gather such as youth clubs, libraries, book clubs and sports pitches, as well as family breakdown – mean that the chance to foster a shared sense of belonging through participation has been inhibited. The resultant effect on diminished prospects for human fulfillment sapped the common good and weakened the ties that bind us.

Now is the time for central and local government to recognise the severity of this problem and respond, and that must mean measuring what matters.

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