



**Children's  
Neighbourhoods  
Scotland**

# **Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland Annual Report 2019-2020**

# Contents

Foreword 3

1. Introducing Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland 5

2. CNS Programme Development 2019/20: Progress, Achievements and Insights 9

3. CNS Communities: Local Activities, Progress and Early Learning 11

4. CNS Research and Evaluation: Approaches, Progress and Early Learning 16

5. The CNS Response to COVID-19 20

6. Forward Look: Plans for 2020/21 21



# Foreword

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It is my pleasure to introduce and welcome you to the first Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) Annual Report, which provides an update and overview of the development of the programme and features some of the activities undertaken during 2019/20. CNS is a partnership between the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) that has been developed as a response to one of the wicked issues of our time. Despite record levels of investment, levels of child poverty in Scotland continue to rise and children growing up in poverty continue to fall behind across a broad range of outcomes.

CNS is a distinctive and innovative approach that brings together people, organisations and other resources in a local area so that they can all work more collaboratively to promote better lives for the children and young people living there. Put simply, CNS aims to ensure that activity within a neighbourhood has more impact than the sum of its parts. Through collaboration and partnership working CNS supports practical developments on the ground within communities including building children and young people's capacity and engagement whilst researching and evaluating activity. This research and development approach draws on the expertise and experience within the University and GCPH and combines this with local insight and intelligence from within the community and across the public, private and third sectors.


The first pilot site was officially launched in 2018 in the communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock in the east end of Glasgow and was subsequently supported by the Scottish Government's [\*Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan \(2018-2022\)\*](#) to expand to a further five sites in a range of urban, town and rural settings. Over the past twelve months the programme has appointed key staff including a Programme Director who has put in place the systems, structures and processes required to run a complex programme across multiple sites. As new sites have been identified and established the CNS research team have undertaken contextual analyses and research with children and young people.

We have also appointed Local Coordinators for each CNS site who work with community members and local organisations on a daily basis. Much of the work over the past year has focused on building relationships at strategic and operational levels and developing a locally tailored offer that meets the specific needs of that community. As the programme evolves and expands over the next twelve months our research and evaluative activity will inform and refine the approach taken locally, support community activity and develop networks to share learning and lessons between CNS sites, across Scotland and more widely through our national and international networks.

On March 20th this year, all our lives underwent a significant change. Nowhere was this more stark than in the neighbourhoods that we work in. The response to COVID-19 by the CNS team, those working on the ground and the communities themselves has been remarkable. The CNS team developed a programme of rapid response research that has collected evidence about how communities have responded to the pandemic and to document some of the impacts it is having on children, young people and their families. Since April, the production of regular CNS insight papers have informed both national and local policy and practice relating to COVID-19.

As we move into recovery and the eventual easing of the lockdown restrictions and begin to experience the 'new normal', CNS will use research evidence and collaborative practices to reflect how best the programme can add value and contribute to improving the lives of children and young people in the communities that it works with. I know I speak on behalf of the whole CNS team when I say that we are very much looking forward to working with all of our partners over the coming year, and building on the strong foundations we now have in place.

*Professor Chris Chapman*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chris Chapman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

*Principal Investigator, Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland*



# 1. Introducing Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland



Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) is a distinctive community-based approach to improving outcomes for all children and young people in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty.

CNS works in partnership with children and young people, their families, local public, private and third sector organisations to support efforts and services to reduce poverty, increase participation and capacity within communities, and to help tackle the issues currently making it difficult for children

and young people to live happy and healthy lives. CNS activity is driven by the views and involvement of children, young people and their families, community members and local professionals. Using place as a focus enables CNS to connect with and contribute to the evidence base around priorities focused on children and young people in areas with high levels of disadvantage across the public policy spectrum rather than focusing on one area (e.g. education). See Figure 1.



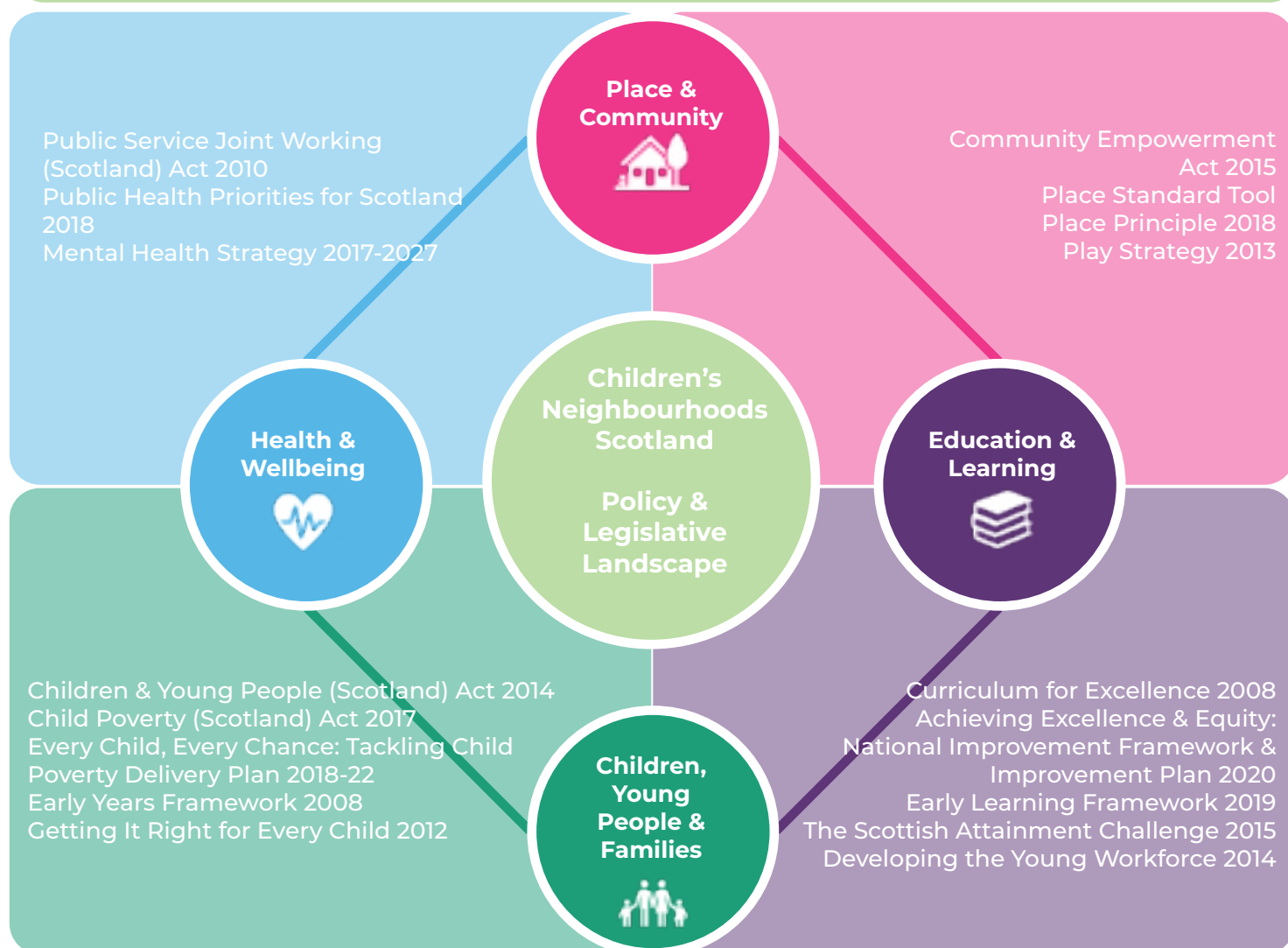


Figure 1 - Cross-policy nature of CNS

## CNS Partnerships

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland is a partnership between the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) working with public, private and third sector organisations. CNS benefits from the financial and practical support of a number of partners. CNS is supported by *Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (2018-2022)* through the Helping Families in Other Ways range of actions, and a number of funders from the public and private sector. These include Baillie Gifford, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership and Glasgow City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council.

Partnership working is a central principle of CNS and the team work with a wide range of partners. These include community and voluntary sector organisations; established local network groups; schools, teachers, out of school childcare services; housing associations; health improvement teams; community learning and development, education services and social work teams.

CNS has brought together a team with a breadth of experience and knowledge of community development, education and health (see Section 7). This is underpinned by an understanding of the circumstances and factors which influence and support children and young people to grow up in good health and to participate in and contribute to their community and society. Members of the team also have substantial experience as researchers in the evaluation of complex interventions and in participatory and collaborative projects in community settings.

The CNS Senior Leadership Team guides the management and strategic direction of the programme. The CNS Advisory Group is being re-established with membership from national and local funders, academics and Business in the Community. The group provides guidance, advice and a critical perspective to the programme team. The governance of CNS sits with the University of Glasgow.

## What is the CNS model of working?

CNS draws on expertise, experience and the lessons learned from several children's community- and place-based initiatives nationally and internationally. These include Children's Communities in a number of sites across the UK such as the Children First Pioneer Projects in Wales, the Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone, the Colin Early Intervention Community, Strive Together in Cincinnati and Harlem Children's Zones in New York. CNS has drawn on the insights and principles from these approaches and has focused on developing a Scottish model which can be tailored to the neighbourhoods CNS works with. Working in urban, small town and rural communities will enable CNS to examine the transferability of the approach into different contexts and make a contribution to the existing evidence on place-based approaches. From early site identification to the establishment of a new site, CNS focuses on building relationships to support local, strategic and community buy-in and developing a context-specific response (see Figure 2).

Working across a range of communities, CNS activity in each neighbourhood focuses on increasing the voices and promoting the priorities of children, young people and their families; and supporting partnerships and collaboration between organisations and services. Priorities for action are distinctive to each area, responsive to the demographics and existing activity in the area and focused on developing local solutions. This work is led by a CNS Local Coordinator, who is based in the neighbourhood and is the visible presence of the programme locally (see Section 3).

CNS has an embedded research and evaluation team. This unique operational aspect of CNS strikes a balance between supporting the development of the programme and maintaining a critical distance as evaluators. A variety of research approaches are being used in the programme, some of which will run throughout; some will be repeated at different intervals; while others are short-term in nature. Detail on our research and evaluation approaches, progress and early learning can be found in Section 4.

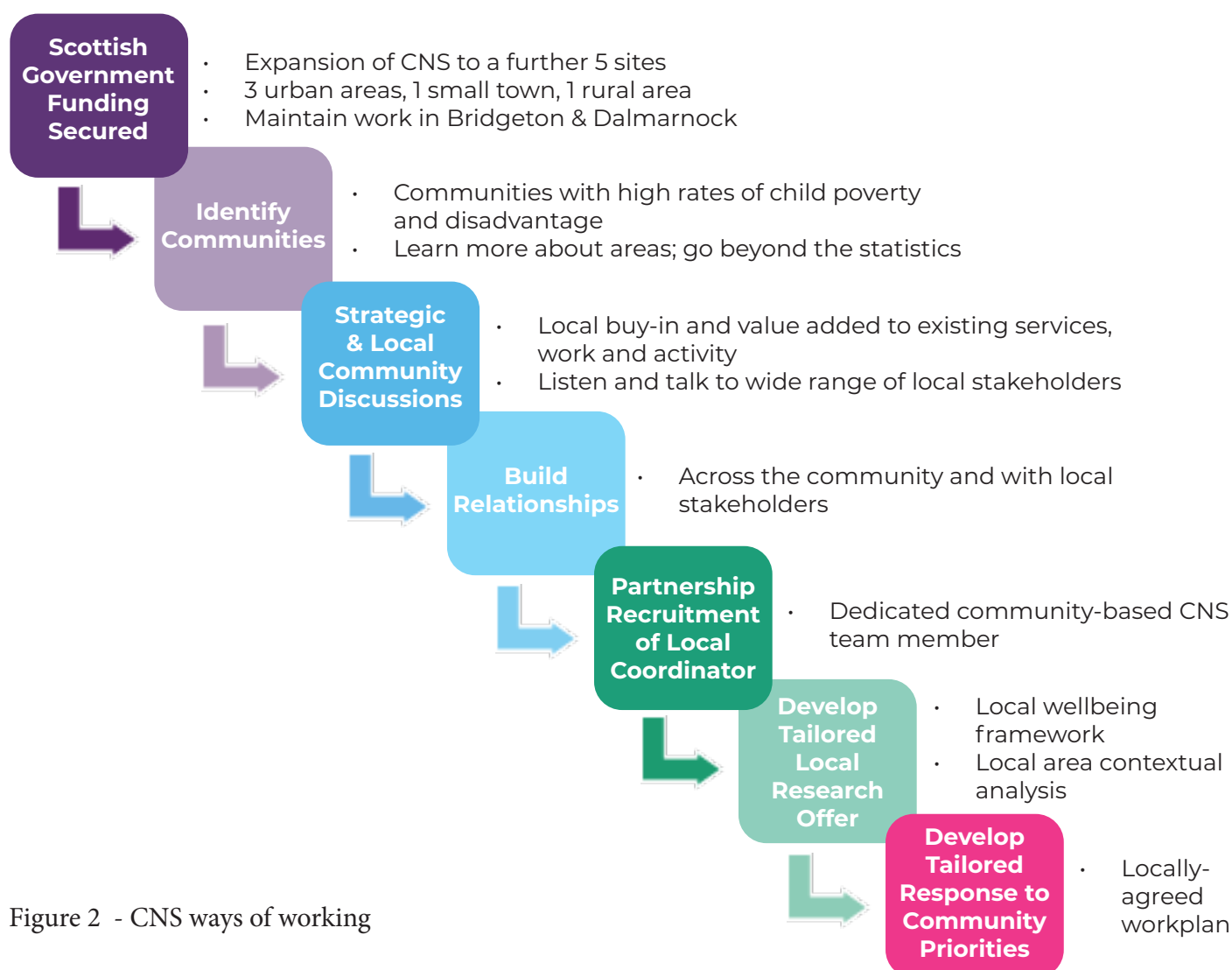


Figure 2 - CNS ways of working

## Where is CNS working?

A total of six CNS sites will be established over the duration of the programme - four in urban areas, one in a small town and one in a rural community. All sites are now identified, and work is underway across all six CNS communities. At present, there are two CNS sites, one in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock in Glasgow's east end and Clydebank in West Dunbartonshire. Two further sites in Glasgow City are in development and are located in the communities of Castlemilk and Drumchapel. The rural and small town sites are being established in the South Lanarkshire communities of Rigside and Smyllum respectively.

An overview of the activities, progress and early learning from Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank can be found in Section 3 of this report. The set-up of the remaining four sites has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see Section 5 for information about the CNS response to the pandemic.





## 2. CNS Programme Development 2019/20: Progress, Achievements and Insights

### *Progress & early achievements*

The last 12 months have been a time of development and progress for CNS. Building on and learning from CNS's early work in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, a new CNS site was launched in October 2019 in the Radnor Park community of Clydebank, West Dunbartonshire. Over the last six months, the four remaining CNS sites have been identified. Activity has focused on local partners and building relationships across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to enable both the Local Coordinator and research activity to begin as quickly as possible at site set-up.

The identification of CNS sites was based on the consideration of several criteria. These included the rates of local child poverty, socioeconomic and demographic profile data, securing practical and financial support from host local authorities and crucially support from the community and voluntary sector to ensure that the work of CNS would fit with and add value to existing local efforts. A number of employment model options for the Local Coordinators were also developed, however all partner local authorities opted for the University of Glasgow as the employer.

Over the last year significant effort has gone into developing and setting up management and governance systems. These include setting milestones for programme delivery, work planning across the team, financial management systems, risk register, reporting arrangements and the development of a set of programme-specific policies. A distinctive feature of CNS is that research and evaluation is integrated into programme delivery. This year has seen the publication of the [Evaluation Strategy](#), including a programme Theory of Change and four research workstreams.

The strategy enables the management of the team's multi-site work and innovative mixed methods approaches to evaluating complex interventions. The CNS team now

includes dedicated support for administration and communications. This year has also seen the partnership recruitment of two Local Coordinators for the communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank. A further four Local Coordinators are currently being recruited for the new Glasgow City and South Lanarkshire sites. Our work in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank, is presented within Section 3 of this report. Although the sites are contextually and demographically different, the approaches taken in these communities by the Local Coordinators demonstrate a shared set of principles and ways of working.

Awareness and interest in CNS have grown over the last year. Team members have taken opportunities, formally and informally, to share the aims, ambitions and approaches of the programme across a range of audiences, from local meetings to national and international conferences. There has also been interest in the approach CNS is taking and the focus on place from a number of local authorities beyond those the six sites are located in. The work done to develop and update the CNS website and use of social media channels will continue to be key vehicles for sharing the work of and learning from the programme.

### *Emerging insights and early learning*

A number of themes have emerged which frame the work of the programme and the approach taken by the team over the last 12 months. Alongside learning from our community-based engagement and research and evaluation activity (as presented in Sections 3 and 4), these themes reflect the insights gained from the expansion of CNS.

## Building relationships across communities & organisations

Building partnerships and relationships across the wide range of individuals and organisations working in CNS is at the heart of the approach taken by the team. It is clear from our experiences over the last 12 months that doing this takes significant time and effort. CNS has taken a very open approach with communities to outlining what the programme can offer and exploring the potential to add value to existing services, resources and activity and the response has been positive from those involved.

This partnership approach also applies to the recruitment of the Local Coordinators, the agreement of work plans and a locally tailored research offer. This research offer focuses on understanding what research is needed by the community and how it can support both existing and new activity. The Capabilities approach is a core part of the research offer from the Research and Evaluation team in all sites. The [Capabilities Research Model used by CNS](#) allows for the generation of a wellbeing framework at a number of different levels – from small groups of children and young people to community-wide. This approach is both replicable across sites and flexible to suit the local context. The range of approaches taken by the CNS team therefore allows for unique local learning as well as collective learning from across sites to be captured, synthesised and shared.

## Connecting & Collaborating

A common theme that has emerged in our work to date is a request from local partners for CNS to provide support and extra capacity to further develop collaborative working between organisations. In some areas a large amount of high-quality activity focused on children and young people already exists. Local partners see a need to connect these existing cross-sector services and activities into a more coherent and

planned offer for children and young people in the area but recognise they lack the time and capacity to make this shift in a systematic way.

## Positioning & Supporting

CNS is positioned within and governed by the University of Glasgow. This has brought a number of benefits to the programme, many of which were unforeseen at the outset.

Locating CNS in the University of Glasgow is a visible expression of the changing nature of the role of the university beyond traditional understandings of academia. It provides a vehicle to bring together academic expertise with local intelligence and practice-based knowledge to achieve a clearer understanding of what works for improved outcomes. The team has also been able to draw on the human and physical resources of the University to provide new experiences and opportunities for children and young people in CNS sites.

As employees of the University members of the CNS team are also more likely to be seen as neutral and impartial in the community because they are not from a local public or third sector organisation. This has enabled team members to act as facilitators in spaces which can be contested and politicised due to the scale and long-standing nature of the issues they face.

Although this positioning brings many benefits, there are also challenges in being part of a large institution. Working within the systems and processes of the University, such as procurement and recruitment, CNS has had to work to build relationships with teams across the University and to find ways to work within these arrangements while ensuring that the programme remains adaptable and responsive in aspects of engagement and delivery with local communities and partners.

### 3. CNS Communities - Local Activities, Progress and Early Learning

Each Children's Neighbourhoods site has a Local Coordinator based in the neighbourhood. The Local Coordinator is the visible expression of CNS in a community, facilitating collaboration with local organisations, families and children and young people, and aligning efforts to support change.

This report presents updates on activity, progress and learning from Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank from October 2019 to the end of March 2020.

# Bridgeton & Dalmarnock

A large number of organisations work with children and young people in the communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock. The CNS Local Coordinator has spent time (since taking up post in October 2019) meeting with local organisations and local youth services to understand the local landscape and what matters to children and young people. Time has also been dedicated to building relationships with organisations across the communities and seeking to support communication and coordination across local youth organisations. Building on the Capabilities research in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, the Local Coordinator developed a workplan in response to local priorities.

Bridgeton and Dalmarnock was the first Children's Neighbourhood site in Scotland and was established in 2018. These are two separate neighbouring communities in the north east of Glasgow and have a combined population of approximately 7,500 people, of which just over 1300 are under 15 years of age. This area was chosen because of the commitment and

capacity of a number of innovative local leaders and organisations to improving children and young people's wellbeing and outcomes, as well as it being part of the Thriving Places agenda. The communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock historically have some of the most concentrated levels of socioeconomic disadvantage in Scotland and demonstrate real potential for growth and development.

Estimates of male and female life expectancy in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock are 5% lower than the Glasgow average, that is, 3.4 years less for men and 2.6 years less for women. Single parent households make up for more than half of all households with dependent children. The rate of claiming unemployment and disability related benefits is higher than the Glasgow average and levels of deprivation and child poverty are also significantly higher than average.

The communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock therefore present opportunities to work in partnership across the neighbourhoods to improve the circumstances, chances and prospects



for children, young people and families. There is substantial investment, action and activity in this area by partners in these communities and from across the City in an attempt to tackle generations of poverty and disadvantage and to improve a wide-range of outcomes for children and young people living in the area. As well as being a Thriving Places community, there are a number of long-standing and highly-valued local third sector organisations, primary and secondary schools, working in the area.

## Progress to date

In the early months of the Local Coordinator role in Bridgeton and Dalrnarnock, an extensive asset-mapping process was undertaken, and conversations held with over 30 public and third sector organisations working in the area and with local people. Time was also spent with Possibilities for Each and Every Kid (PEEK), as well as play and youth sessions delivered by local youth organisations, including Baltic Street Adventure Playground, Dalrnarnock Youth Project (DYP), Church House and St Mungo's Secondary School. This provided the Local Coordinator with a good understanding of the local area, and where CNS activity might be focused. It also helped to establish relationships with local organisations, the community and children and young people.

In the local area people have participated in numerous consultations over the past few years, in connection with the Commonwealth Games and its legacy, and local services and facilities. During conversations with local organisations it was highlighted that local residents do not feel that they are listened to by large public services, feel let down and frustrated by the lack of community spaces and shops in the new housing developments and the quality of amenities in the area.

There is important and extensive work already happening for young people in the area and some local service providers have suggested that there is space for this to be more joined-up. They also highlighted a lack of an appropriate space for young people to drop-in and access support. Youth provision at present is delivered in

structured sessions primarily for younger young people (8-12 years) with a limited number of sessions and services available for older young people aged 12-25 years. Instances of young people engaging in risky behaviour have been reported in the local area causing tensions. Practitioners have highlighted the need for more youth provision and support for older young people.

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*"I understand they're bored and have nowhere to go, but it's still frustrating."*

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*"I think this area needs a local youth centre, that's really what's lacking."*

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Local youth organisations agree that an open youth-led space is required to support and provide opportunities for young people. Following discussions with organisations, the Local Coordinator will work with interested organisations to look at this.

The Capabilities research has been completed in Dalrnarnock Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School (see Section 4). The Local Coordinator is working with the schools to action the children and young people's wellbeing priorities. Starting in late summer 2020, the Local Coordinator will work with the University of Glasgow's Community Learning and Development department to deliver an adapted version of the Activate Course for local children and young people.



## Next steps

A range of projects and activities are planned for 2020-21; these will be adapted and changed as required to take account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Local Coordinator will continue to work with local youth organisations including, Baltic Street Adventure Playground, Bridgeton Community Learning Campus, Church House, Dalmarnock Youth Project and PEEK. Part of this work will be focused on seeking ways to support greater coherence in the wide range of high-quality activity available for children and young people in the area and include looking at the range of youth work opportunities that are available for older young people.

As mentioned previously, the young researchers and a local youth organisation will be taking action on their wellbeing priorities that were identified through the Capabilities research. Work is also planned to take a more detailed look at the role and availability of advocacy in the area and where there is potential for the development of this.



# Clydebank

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The establishment of CNS in Radnor Park neighbourhood of Clydebank, West Dunbartonshire has focused on the gaps in provision for children, young people and families in order to increase activity and opportunities and to build relationships with the community. The Local Coordinator, since taking up post in October 2019, has worked with local partners and stakeholders to develop inclusive CNS projects in the area.

The Radnor Park neighbourhood sits in central Clydebank, around a ten-minute walk from the nearest train station (Singer) and the Clyde Shopping Centre, which is the main hub of shops and restaurants for the town. Housing in the area is primarily comprised of terraced and semi-detached properties owned by West Dunbartonshire Council, and high-rise flats owned by Clydebank Housing Association. The local child poverty rate is 33%, and the area has high unemployment rates. A number of Syrian families were resettled in Radnor Park in 2016.

Local assets in the Radnor Park area include Clydebank Health Centre, Clydebank Community Hub and Y Sort It youth charity. Other community centres in Clydebank area, namely Centre 81 and the Community Sports Hub, are in the adjacent Whitecrook neighbourhood. Local

CNS partners in the area include Y Sort It, West Dunbartonshire Council, St Eunan's Primary School, St Peter the Apostle Secondary School, and Kilbowie Primary School which will take part in CNS activities during in 2020. Working across West Dunbartonshire, Y Sort It is the only local organisation that offers free provision for local children and young people, including street play sessions, youth groups, a young carers group and mentoring for those who are care-experienced. Fresh Creations, the creative arts branch of the organisation, and the Buddy Up mentoring programme closed at the end of March 2010.

The CNS Local Coordinator for Clydebank is based in the Y Sort It office building. In the community, CNS aims to co-create new projects and activities which provide opportunities for local children and young people to have fun, build friendships and develop new skills and interests. CNS will also work with community organisations to support engagement and the involvement of local people in training and voluntary opportunities. Developing these opportunities for community engagement and provision for local children and young people using the facilities of the Clydebank Community Hub is a focus for CNS.



## Progress to date

The early part of the Local Coordinator role in Radnor Park primarily involved getting to know local children and young people and meetings with a range of local organisations, including Working 4 U (West Dunbartonshire Council), local primary and secondary schools, NHS Health Improvement Team, NHS Health Visiting Team, Community Links Scotland, Education and Library departments (West Dunbartonshire Council) and West Dunbartonshire Community Volunteering Services, where it was noted:

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*“There isn’t much for young people to do outside of school, they need social spaces.”*

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This meeting, in particular, highlighted the need for the increased provision of free activities in the community as a key area for development. A workplan was developed as a result of this early work. The Radnor Park Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) organised the local Christmas Party, with CNS setting up a young people’s choir to perform at it. The Local Coordinator also worked with the council’s resettlement team to involve families they had worked with in this event - several of whom provided traditional Syrian desserts for the party. The Creative Club has seen a steady rise in numbers throughout the first month:

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*“The fact that the group is building in numbers each week, and that new people are coming along, that’s a big deal.”*

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The Creative Club is structured around the varying interests of participants and activities are driven by this. Through participation with the club, young people will be supported to attain a Bronze Arts Award, a nationally recognised qualification. Young people have given initial positive feedback on the visual art sessions:

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*“I like it when we just get to paint because it’s relaxing.”*

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*“When do we get to do singing again?”*

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Social media was used to raise awareness of the Creative Club, and staff at schools in the area were asked to let young people know about it as well. Local teachers have voiced their support for the group:

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*“There’s a craft club running after school? That’s fantastic, I’m going to send some of my S5s along tonight.”*

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A new parent and toddler group, Bumps and Babies, was established in March 2020, with a large number of local families attending:

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*“I’m just so glad that this is on. I don’t drive, and everything else is too far away. I live just over there so having something to bring them to and get out the house is brilliant.”*

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This new group was created in response to the lack of local provision for young families. The parent and toddler group was set up to help with this and to provide a place for families to meet and play together. The Local Coordinator will work with the families that come along to develop the group and look at what else might be needed.

In addition, the Local Coordinator has worked alongside the Research and Evaluation Team to facilitate Capabilities workshops in schools (see Section 4). The workshops offered pupils a chance to get to know the Local Coordinator and to articulate their priorities for their neighbourhood. The outputs of the Capabilities research will inform the further development of local CNS activities.

## Next steps

A range of projects and activities are planned for 2020-21; these will be adapted and changed as required to take account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Local Coordinator will work with young people from the local area who have an interest in community development and offer them experience and training opportunities in this area. CNS will also start a Community-led

café in the Clydebank Community Hub providing an intergenerational space for local residents. In addition the Local Coordinator will work with the TRA to set up a Community Hub in a local shopfront and a family club that will be run from the Community Hub to provide a family friendly social space in the community.

Existing activities and groups, like the Creative Club and Bumps and Babies, will continue to develop and grow with other opportunities being put into place as required.

## 4. CNS Research and Evaluation - Approaches, Progress and Early Learning

Learning and evaluation play a central role in CNS, with a dedicated and integrated research and evaluation team working across all CNS sites. This section of the report presents the work and progress from research activities in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank, early learning across the programme of research and evaluation and plans for 2020-21.

The CNS evaluation will seek to establish the effects CNS activities are having on promoting collective impact and their role in expanding the agency and voice of children and young people within their localities, as described in Section 3. The evaluation design is based on an innovative mixed methods approach, drawing together quantitative and qualitative data, with an emphasis on place and underpinned by the Capabilities approach. The CNS [Evaluation Strategy](#) was published in October 2019.

CNS research and evaluation activity is organised into four areas, with distinct sets of research questions and methods, the purpose of each of these is described below.

### 1. Neighbourhood context analysis

The strength of the CNS approach is that it is embedded in the local contexts and realities of neighbourhoods with high levels of child



poverty. The situated nature of the programme provides an opportunity to gain insights into the everyday challenges and complexities of place-based change. This research workstream draws on the contextual knowledge and expertise of local stakeholders and integrates this knowledge with local and national data. This research workstream supports the Capabilities work with children and young people by identifying local barriers and enablers to children and young people achieving their goals and providing an analysis of the contextual conditions for change.

## *2. Establishing capabilities goals with children and young people*

The Capabilities Approach is concerned with the task of addressing poverty through the improvement of quality of life (Sen 2009). Wellbeing is conceptualised using the Capabilities Approach, a multidimensional framework for evaluation, where capabilities are the freedoms and opportunities that a person has in practice to achieve their goals. The aim of this research workstream is to support children and young people to consider what services and activities are vital to their wellbeing in the school and wider community, and to identify the barriers and enablers to children achieving these. Children, young people, and local stakeholders inform the goals at a local level through a programme of participatory research that involves developing research skills and conducting research.

## *3. A process evaluation to assess how the programme works in practice*

The CNS process evaluation is assessing the delivery, progress of and reaction to the activities undertaken by CNS. Data gathering is focussed on analysis of reflective diaries and monitoring tools developed to capture the programme as it is delivered in practice, with close reference to the CNS theory of the change.

## *4. An outcome evaluation to establish and measure impact against shared goals*

The CNS outcome evaluation is examining how CNS activities can strengthen the agency and voice of children and young people at multiple levels of influence – within and beyond the neighbourhood. The aim is to examine the experiences children and young people and front-line staff involved in the programme, feeding back

how this can be improved to contribute to local planning and delivery and national outcomes.

## *Progress and early learning*

A number of key themes have emerged from the context analysis research in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank that offer learning for CNS and partners. Similar points of learning have been identified as highlighted below, alongside specific learning for each neighbourhood illustrating the importance of a tailored approach in each context.

### *Community spaces and activities*

The quality, quantity and accessibility of community spaces strongly featured in stakeholder interviews and interactions in both neighbourhoods. In Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, there is a good range of activity provided by a number of local organisations.

These are important community assets for children and young people in the local area. Stakeholders however noted that the quality and consistency of provision is often undermined by a lack of funding, staff shortages, and a lack of provision for older young people in the area.

In Radnor Park, youth provision is more limited. Y Sort It, the only youth services provider in the area, offer an excellent service to children and young people across West Dunbartonshire through activities such as Street Bikes and mentoring for care-experienced young people. Children and young people have been actively involved in the design of newly developed play spaces, however stakeholders felt that there should be more opportunities for local children and young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them.

Bureaucracy in accessing some community spaces limits the activities on offer to children and young people and their families. In Radnor Park, the Hub Community Centre has potential to be a valuable community asset but is currently an underutilised space due to the venue hire costs and a no open-door policy for members of the



community to interact unless they are attending a specific activity. In Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, local charities can use the facilities of Crownpoint Leisure Centre, however additional costs, for floodlighting for example, can be prohibitive.

## Collaborative working

In Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank, there is a strong collaborative working ethos shared by frontline workers from statutory and third sector organisations. Stakeholders discussed the formal and informal networks they utilised in their work to support children and young people and their families. Informal networks were regarded as being more effective than formal processes, which due to heavy workloads made little time available for attending structured meetings.

There was also a sense that collaborative working often required workers to operate 'outside of their day jobs'. Stakeholders also noted that funding and resources are key to successful collaborative working and responding effectively to the complex needs of local families.

## Capabilities and wellbeing

CNS has developed frameworks of children and young people's capabilities goals in four schools across the CNS sites in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and Clydebank. The Local Coordinators are working with children and young people and partners to take forward actions and activities based on the priorities identified in the development of their local wellbeing frameworks.

The identification of capabilities goals has been carried out with children and young people from Sacred Heart Primary School, Dalmarnock Primary School, St. Eunan's Primary School and St. Peter the Apostle Secondary School. The participating children and young people, aged seven to 14 years, were identified by their schools and all took part in the [Capabilities Research Model](#). The model is delivered over a number of sessions in the school setting, but is flexible with timescales agreed with school teams

to contribute to school improvement planning processes where possible. The programme combines the exploration of capabilities with the development of research skills. Following a small group programme, pupils are supported to carry out research across their school to develop a school-wide framework of priorities for wellbeing. On completion of Capabilities analysis, each



school is provided with a poster, summarising research priorities across their school community. Co-researcher pupils are also supported to present the findings back to the school.

Across the four participating schools, the willingness of children and young people to engage in critical thinking on the effects of poverty and the priorities for wellbeing has been marked. Findings across all schools highlight the following commonalities:

- Children and young people from all schools gave high priority to material concerns. These include *having a job, having a safe and warm place to live, and having access to good quality nutrition*. Formal education was seen to instrumental to employment, but children also expressed frustration in not being able to access a range of opportunities and information on different types of occupations. Some of the youngest participants were able to articulate the benefits of community-based housing associations and all groups raised concerns

over access to healthy, nutritious food due to a lack of local provision, low income and poor eating habits, both in school and in the local neighbourhood.

- *Positive relationships were viewed as essential to good mental health and happiness.* Children and young people had a keen awareness of the stress experienced by parents and guardians, including through unemployment, low income, lack of space and insufficient opportunity for parents to access social support networks of their own. Young people at secondary school identified a lack of mental health services in the local community as a significant issue, as well as the opportunity to build and utilise skills through peer support and buddy systems.
- Children with additional support needs highlighted the *importance of their relationships with pets* and found these relationships more positive and often easier to negotiate than those with friends or family. These children and young people noted the economic barriers to owning a pet and proposed government support for this, particularly where families were adopting a rescue animal.
- Participants groups articulated the right to *live a long life*, so that they could achieve their goals. Several children and young people remarked on the reduced quality of life of their parents and guardians due to chronic ill health, and the impact this had on children's activity levels.

The outcome evaluation research to date has focused on learning about and better articulating the activities and the collaborative work undertaken in order to identify the key mechanisms of change for CNS.

This has included, for example, creating an outcome evaluation survey tool focused on capturing the mechanisms and outcomes in relation to collaboration for frontline services. The design of the outcome evaluation tool seeks to capture drivers of collaboration, dynamics and initial information on short term outcomes of collaborations between front line staff and the CNS programme. This survey tool will be used twice in CNS sites to capture changes over time. A second tool will capture the views of children and young people. The development of these tools has been informed by a review of the theoretical literature on collaboration, interviews with stakeholders and learning from CNS sites.

This year's research has identified that the type of collaboration that takes place in communities is often informal, driven by personal relationships between key partners that exist outside formal structures for collaborative working (e.g. community planning partnerships). Whilst formal collaborations and structures exist, local collaboration is often driven by a desire to 'get things done'.

## 5. The CNS Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on society and the communities we live and work in. This impact is particularly stark for children, families and those already experiencing poverty and disadvantage. As the coronavirus situation has developed, community organisations have quickly adapted and changed how they deliver their services and support their communities, especially their most vulnerable citizens.

The work of the CNS team has also changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as providing direct support for CNS sites where possible by, for example, the provision of resources or collating and sharing local response information, we are also undertaking COVID-19 research in partnership with our colleagues at [Policy Scotland](#) and [The Network for Social and Educational Equity](#). The new research study is now underway to explore and understand the impact of COVID-19 on families with children, and how services and organisations are responding to it. This is being done by looking at the experiences of a variety of services and organisations dealing with COVID-19, taking in the perspectives of families.

The research will be carried out across a number of CNS sites using a range of methods. It will seek to gather the views and insights of those who provide and deliver services in communities. The detail of the research, including the aims and research questions can be found on the CNS website.

A series of short insight papers will be published to share the emerging findings. These will be shared with national and local partners to inform planning. These briefings can be [accessed on the CNS website](#). Early recurring themes from interviews with service providers highlight:

- The demand for support in high poverty areas is increasing day on day.
- Families in crisis are more obvious – there is no hiding place anymore. The boundaries between families that are coping and not coping are increasingly blurred.
- Local level responses from the voluntary and community sector organisations to COVID-19 varies in coherence and speed of response. Where there is already a high level of community connectedness, existing infrastructure and collaborative structures it has been easier to mobilise support for vulnerable children, young people and their families.
- Smaller local organisations who are working at the front line play a hugely significant role in helping to ensure that families in need of support are not missed. The relationships with the community and local intelligence found in small, third sector organisations are particularly valuable and important in ensuring the right support gets to the right families.
- Frontline workers have explained that they are seeing increasing numbers of families struggling to cope with the impact of lockdown. This is particularly challenging when parents are dealing with existing issues such as poverty, mental health problems, addiction, or domestic violence.
- Frontline workers in the third sector are anticipating a ‘mental health storm’ as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown.
- Families are experiencing ‘financial fragility’, particularly if they were precariously employed, and coping with increased fuel and food bills. Food insecurity has been responded to well by services, and provision of food parcels and regular hot meals to families has been greatly welcomed in terms of ‘easing the burden’ on parents.



## 6. Forward Look: Plans for 2020/21

This section outlines our priorities and activities for the year ahead for the period April 2020 to end-March 2021. CNS will continue to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as required. The team will continue to progress the research outlined in Section 5 and will integrate learning from the research into the wider work of the programme over the coming year.

### *CNS programme delivery*

A further four Local Coordinators will be employed to support our community-focused work in the new two Glasgow City and two South Lanarkshire sites. This will be done as soon as the COVID-19 restrictions are eased. Recruited in partnership with funders and stakeholders, the Local Coordinators will engage with children and young people, families and partners in each site to establish priorities for the community, support opportunities and activities for local involvement and participation, and develop and maintain strong partnerships and relationships with local organisations. Local Coordinators will actively seek opportunities to network and to share and support practice and learning across CNS sites and beyond.

Early CNS research with local stakeholders identified a lack of capacity and skills in evaluating programmes and activities with confidence and assessing, reporting and demonstrating impact. In response, and working with Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS), CNS will provide in April and May 2020 a programme of evaluation training and capacity building workshops for community-based colleagues. Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation sessions are now being delivered online. An additional specialist workshop on evaluating with children and young people is also planned.

### *Research and evaluation*

The CNS Research and Evaluation team will undertake a number of key areas of work across the four workstreams during 2020-21. This research activity be informed by discussion with partners in sites based on the local research offer.

Insights from new neighbourhood level data and area profiles will be reviewed to capture any changes to the local context due to new interventions, activities or policy changes.

The Capabilities research and co-researcher training for children and young people will be conducted in the four new CNS sites. The Capabilities process will produce wellbeing frameworks for participating schools and youth organisations. Where possible, a combined wellbeing framework for each site that incorporates perspectives of families, local organisations and services will be developed.

To compliment the context analysis and Capabilities work, participatory action research using digital and interactive technologies, will be undertaken with children and young people to develop outputs for use in promoting their voice in relevant decision-making forums.

The process and outcome evaluation activity will use a range of data sources, including surveys of front-line services and children and young people, to identify emerging themes and areas of interest within and across sites. Collaborative action research projects, working in partnership with local organisations, will explore local issues and concerns in more depth.

## Sharing learning

We will synthesise learning and findings from across sites, drawing out the contextual, policy and practice implications. These will be shared with our CNS communities, partners and stakeholders in a variety of ways. For example, this will include reports, briefing papers, journal articles, website and social media outputs, and presentations and events. There are a number of CNS events currently planned:

- A research seminar to share different models for using a Capabilities Approach, co-hosted with I-Sphere from Heriot Watt University.

This will be accompanied by the publication of a range of related resources for use by practitioners and others with an interest in the approach.

- Hosting a UK-wide knowledge exchange event to provide an opportunity to share COVID-19 research and learning.
- Hosting the UK Communities Network meeting to share the work of the programme with partners undertaking similar work across the UK.





# Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

This report is published by Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland.

## About us

A children's neighbourhood is an initiative that brings together people, resources and organisations in a neighbourhood area, so that all of those things can work together towards better lives for the children living there.

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland is a collaborative centre, developed by Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Policy Scotland and Robert Owen Centre at the University of Glasgow.



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