

# More Communities at the Centre

Evidencing Community-led Health



# Contents

Introduction .....	3
In Summary .....	4
The community-led health logic model.....	5
Collydean Community Connections, Fife.....	6
Craigend Resource Centre, Inverclyde .....	14
Just Like Us, Glasgow .....	20
Old Knock School, Isle of Lewis.....	26
The Ripple Project, Edinburgh .....	34

## Table of Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Community-led health logic model .....	5
<b>Figure 2:</b> Collydean Community Connections logic model.	13
<b>Figure 3:</b> Craigend Resource Centre logic model .....	19
<b>Figure 4:</b> Just Like Us logic model .....	25
<b>Figure 5:</b> Old Knock School logic model .....	33
<b>Figure 6:</b> The Ripple Project logic model .....	43

# Introduction

CHEX is delighted to publish these new case studies, undertaken in 2015, which tell the stories of five different community organisations working to improve health outcomes in their local community. Located in the Western Isles, Fife, Edinburgh, Inverclyde and Glasgow they reflect the creativity, expertise and determination that enable local people to work towards a healthier community. While they have different starting points, a mixture of expertise and experience and varying levels of support, they all have a common goal of involving community members in the health priorities that matter to them.

This is the second edition of our Communities at the Centre publications and significant changes have taken place since the first edition two years ago. People have become energised through the Scottish referendum on independence and new opportunities have emerged through the integration of health and social care and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. However, low income communities continue to struggle with austerity measures and the onslaught of 'welfare reform'. The encouragement to build community assets and co-produce local services still has a long way to go. The evidence however shows that community-led health organisations continue to grow and findings from research, evaluations and case studies highlight their significant contribution to informing health policy and practice development.

In addition to the text, we've included a logic model for each case study showing the inputs, processes, activities, intermediate and long term outcomes for each organisation. The models show both commonalities in approaches such as engaging communities in dialogue about health issues, but also highlight the different activities used in working towards intended outcomes. We know from service providers and policy makers that highlighting these commonalities can help them to understand the translation of theory into practice, facilitating the transfer of such initiatives into new areas.

## Acknowledgements

We very much appreciate the enthusiasm and commitment that the five organisations have given in sharing their learning through these case studies.

## Funders

We thank NHS Health Scotland for funding us to research and publish these case studies.

# In Summary

## **Collydean Community Connections - Fife**

Having consulted local people in Collydean through a door-to-door survey, Collydean Community Connections organised a programme of activities that brought together the two halves of Collydean as well as older and younger people. The programme was supported by Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance, who provided a development fund and a part-time support worker. The work was initiated by four local agencies and organisations, but was underpinned by a commitment to community-led approaches. This has led to sustained enthusiasm and energy from residents and commitment from local agencies, despite the initial support coming to an end. External evaluation has shown how the work has complemented and brought added value to mainstream ways of working.

## **Craigend Resource Centre - Inverclyde**

Craigend Resource Centre began its work 20 years ago and, having been developed by and for local people, has gone from strength to strength. Brian Power, project co-ordinator, who has worked at Craigend for 19 years, recently told local newspapers: *“People who came in as babies are now returning as adults with their own children. It started as a shell of what people would like to see in the area but we had to move with the times and we worked with the government and national agencies on health and employment issues.”* Our case study of this long standing community-led organisation describes how it began and how it continues to respond to locally identified need.

## **Just Like Us - Glasgow**

Just Like Us is an organisation that grew out of the trauma felt by those who lost someone close to them as a consequence of drug or alcohol use. Turning such an overwhelming experience into positive support for others is the motivation that spurs them on. This case study describes how they go about providing that support and the benefits that result for those who come to their weekly drop-in sessions in a local church hall.

## **Old Knock School - Isle of Lewis**

Despite having its own strong sense of geographic identity, the community of Point on the Isle of Lewis lacked an ‘everyday’ hub where people could catch up and bump into others they hadn’t seen in a while. A group of active local people took it upon themselves to take over a disused school and convert it into a community building containing a shop and café. Despite a long wait getting the building into community ownership, the group drew on assets such as retail expertise and pre-existing community networks to overcome challenges and set up the shop and café as a successful social enterprise. By investing profits back into the community, the initiative will benefit local people socially, economically and also in terms of health. The story behind Old Knock School illustrates how much can be achieved by a small group of people with a shared goal to benefit their wider community as well as the importance of early stage support to community groups.

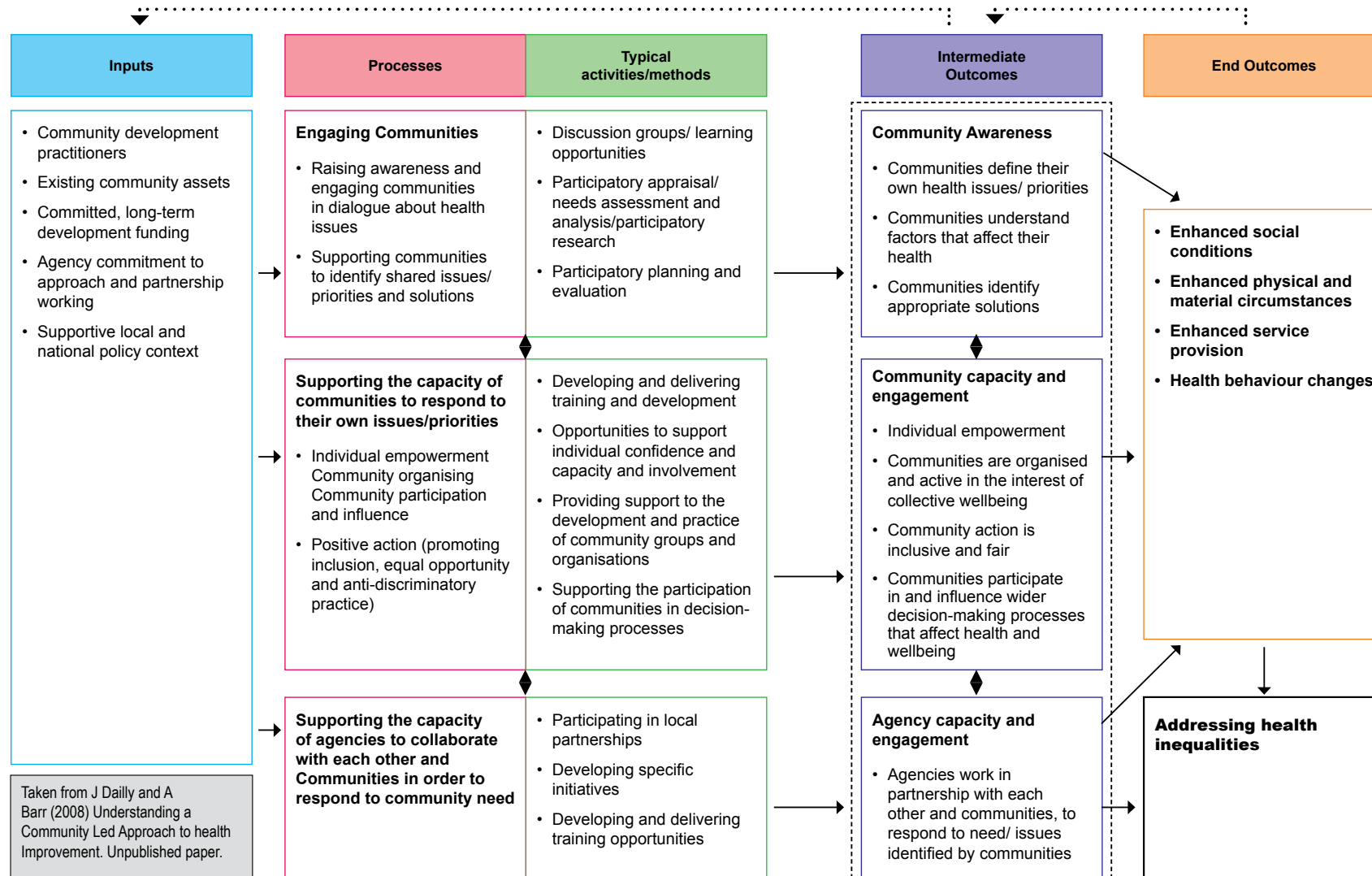
## **The Ripple Project - Edinburgh**

From its beginnings in 1996, the Ripple Project has existed to meet the needs of local people in a very specific area in the East of Edinburgh. Today it provides a wide range of activities involving young and old alike. The difference it makes to people’s lives is significant. With local people still in control of its future in its Management Committee it looks set to continue its work of providing local opportunities for years to come, continuing the process of the ‘rippling’ out effect which provides the positive changes from which the organisation derived its name.

# The community-led health logic model

This model shows how community-led health contributes to a range of outcomes that help tackle health inequalities. For each case study we use this model to illustrate the particular ways in which each organisation achieves these outcomes

Figure 1: Community-led health logic model



# Collydean Community Connections

*Bringing people together*



Having consulted local people in Collydean through a door-to-door survey, Collydean Community Connections organised a programme of activities that brought together the two halves of Collydean as well as older and younger people. The programme was supported by Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance, who provided a development fund and a part-time support worker. The work was initiated by four local agencies and organisations, but was underpinned by a commitment to community-led approaches. This has led to sustained enthusiasm and energy from residents and commitment from local agencies, despite the initial support coming to an end. External evaluation has shown how the work has complemented and brought added value to mainstream ways of working.



## Setting

Collydean in North Glenrothes, Fife is a neighbourhood of contrasts and creativity. A mixture of housing tenure, green space, roads and paths split the neighbourhood in two. A thriving primary school, nursery and church are some of the well respected and well used facilities, but historically, the area has been characterised by two communities, 'top' and 'bottom' Collydean. Whereas the 'top' has, in general, good housing and standard of living, the 'bottom' is placed in the lowest 15 percent according to the Social Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Collydean Community Connections (CCC) aimed to bridge this gap with opportunities for the whole community to come together and take action to improve the health of all residents.

## Starting Point

CCC was one of six community health initiatives funded by Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance (FHWA) in 2012. The Alliance committed to funding a number of community-led projects and invited bids from across Fife. A local partnership of Fife Employment Access Trust (FEAT) – a mental health organisation in Fife

supporting people into employment, Glen Housing Association, the local primary school and Fife Shopping and Support Services – a local voluntary organisation providing home shopping and housework service – succeeded with their bid. The bid provided the framework for planning, delivery and evaluation. It outlined the intended health outcomes together with required resources and processes to work through. Funding was allocated to employ a part-time community worker with a development fund to resource a programme of activities that would respond directly to local needs, ideas and energy.

Crucial to the work was contact and involvement of local people who had not previously been engaged with any community activity. Building relationships with existing community groups and agencies was viewed as integral to supporting the work. Interestingly, the Partnership Group did not want to prioritise time on meetings to establish a new community group with members, structures and decision-making processes. Rather, they aimed to establish new ways of working with values and processes that could be developed, built on and sustained over many years by all local groups and agencies.



## Working towards Positive Change

The community work post and resources provided a real catalyst for change. Very quickly people began to be contacted and a surge of enthusiasm mobilised people into thinking about different possibilities for the area. The community worker was a local person, who knew many people and brought her own knowledge of the area to her role. The work-base was a small, comfortable cottage that was central to both the 'top' and 'bottom' of Collydean. It became the hub for people to drop-in, meet together and chat with the community worker about taking forward ideas. All age groups began to associate with the cottage; a new experience, as previously it had been primarily used as an admin facility for FEAT until 2012 and then for Fife Shopping and Support Services.

In the first year, priorities were focussed on methods and approaches to: get people's attention, get them interested, find out what they needed, find out what they could offer and work with them to put ideas into action. A door-to-door survey found out much about the neighbourhood, including information on age, employment status and mobility. Significantly, the survey highlighted that many people were unaware of who their neighbours were, what was available for them and what they could do to bring about change for themselves. In addition to eliciting information, the survey enabled the community worker to make contact with everyone in the area and build trusting relationships to encourage people, who hadn't done so previously, to participate in community activities.

The survey findings and further discussions revealed both concerns and ideas which could provide helpful solutions. Suggestions included:





better use of the abundant green spaces, different uses of the local neighbourhood centre, opportunities for creative homework sessions for school children, provision of free fruit for school children, promotion of cycling and cycle maintenance, drama sessions for children and young people, use of computers and Internet, job search facilities, outreach work with teenagers and leisure activities for everyone – a long list of priorities.

The pressure was on to deliver an effective and sustainable response. The Partnership Group, the residents and the funders were all keen to get action underway quickly. The last thing people wanted was another ‘talking shop’ and to end up being consulted again because nothing concrete had happened. A number of activities got off the ground, such as: developing play and planting areas in available green spaces; work with the primary school to involve children in designing a logo; intergenerational cooking with children and older people; work with the Job Club to support job searching; and work with the Tenants’ Association to broaden-out interest. To keep people connected, Collydean Counts community newspaper was produced and circulated to every household and a Facebook page was set up, and widely used. Furthermore, ‘open days’ were organised to bring people together to share information, try out new activities and have fun. Participatory budgeting<sup>1</sup> was initiated to enable residents to decide and prioritise certain expenditures. This led to the purchase of sewing machines, a real boon for several residents who developed a sewing class and started to make their own clothes.

These were all very tangible activities. One of the less tangible, but equally positive activities was the strengthening of community spirit and co-operation between different parts of Collydean. The divisions that had previously been experienced began to dissipate and people started to get a sense of identity that led to collective action on behalf of the whole community.

## Why is this community-led health?

The starting point for residents coming together around health needs and wanting a better quality of life for everyone was not the community themselves. Although community members were involved in the Partnership Group that responded to FHWA’s invitation to bid for funding, the work was initiated by four local agencies and organisations that were aware of health needs and wanted to take advantage of a funding opportunity to address those needs. Key to a community-led approach was that the bid was underpinned by a commitment to create the conditions whereby community members could determine the processes and activities that would lead to and affect positive change.

The funding for community work support was central and, although the criteria for this support did not specify that there was a need for a local person, having a local person in this post proved to be a great advantage. In addition to having essential community development experience, the appointee had extensive knowledge of the area, existing networks and contacts.

At each stage, much effort was put into involving residents in different processes, which proved a challenging task. While people seemed happy to identify ideas for change, there was often an expectation that the community worker would then take forward and act on these ideas herself. Consequently, there was a requirement to constantly reinforce the support for people to sustain their interest and address barriers that prevented long term involvement.

The external evaluation<sup>2</sup> undertaken by Glasgow University on the six community-led projects in Fife highlighted the different roles undertaken by community work support. The evaluation highlighted that the support involved:

---

1 See [www.pbscotland.scot](http://www.pbscotland.scot)

2 Evaluation of the Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance Community-led Projects: Final Report (2014)

*“consistently supporting people to engage in the project, constantly consulting with people about needs, facilitating groups and supporting the delivery of project activity”.*

In Collydean, the community worker provided these roles with much enthusiasm and energy. The evaluation also identified a number of challenges involved in this support role. For example: community-led approaches may involve a willingness to take risks, with no guarantees that intended outcomes will be met. However, community-led approaches can also produce positive unintended consequences. For example, one retired professional person took on the teaching of IT, and a qualified drama teacher started running story-time classes for pre-school children.

The process of building and sustaining a community-led initiative is a skilled and painstaking task. In Collydean, now that the building blocks have been put in place there is an ongoing challenge to strengthen processes, make things happen and demonstrate impact for sustained development. FHWA's initial funding is now finished and the paid community worker support has stopped. However, there remains much enthusiasm and energy from residents and commitment from the local agencies and organisations to continue the work. Glen Housing Association has now appointed a Community Worker with the main aim of developing the use of the neighbourhood centre and building on the work carried out by CCC. Findings from the street audit undertaken





by Living Streets are being prioritised for future action. Progress is well underway on the new play park area. One of the partners, FEAT, has also presented to FHWA on the outcomes of the project, which has led to them being invited to contribute to the development of a training course on asset-based approaches to improving health and wellbeing. All of this is regularly updated and shared on CCC's Facebook page.

## Lessons & Learning

### Use of existing knowledge

We have learned much in Scotland about the pit-falls of investing time-limited funding into neighbourhood community initiatives. History and evidence have taught us that, without strategies to build investment, flourishing community activity can be undermined with unfulfilled expectations and negativity towards any future involvement. The Partnership Group in Collydean was well aware of these

pit-falls and was keen to ensure that effective processes were put in place to achieve long term development.

However, there was a real tension between wanting to do things quickly, to capitalise on the enthusiasm fostered by the project, and at the same time taking the necessary time to build the capacity of community members and local agencies/organisations towards long-term community development.

The group consistently returned to their intended outcomes and used the external evaluation to manage their activity and plan for life after the funding allocation from FHWA.

### Understanding community-led health approaches

Community-led health is not a straightforward approach to improving health and tackling health inequalities. CCC's experience shows there are many different stages, processes and skills required to ensure that communities are supported to establish new activities, maximise

opportunities and continue to participate in working through problems and progressing towards real health improvements. People responded in different ways from being pleased to receive information and participating in the survey to getting actively involved and taking on responsibility to determine further development. The latter was the hardest to achieve. While people responded positively to being asked what they wanted, it was more difficult to encourage them to become actively involved and stay involved to ensure long term change.

## Community Work Support

The community work support was fundamental in sparking initial interest and bringing people together around common areas of concern. People from across the whole neighbourhood recognised shared interests in developing the green space areas, diversifying use of the neighbourhood centre and creating community wellbeing across the community. In addition to sharing areas of common concern, they also shared a mixture of skills and ideas and found joint solutions to complex problems.

As a result of the support, CCC has gained new skills, learning effective methods of working with the wider community. One approach the group was supported to carry out was the door-to-door survey. This, in turn, generated a lot of community priorities which the group had to then find ways of responding to. Here, the support worker was invaluable once again, helping the group to explore and try out innovative methods such as participatory budgeting, which will sustain participation and lead to community ownership.

## Getting the Message Across

In seeking to be inclusive of all community members and engage with local organisations and agencies, CCC made effective use of social media and created opportunities to consistently raise awareness about its work and developments. Interaction on Facebook kept people informed of events and developments like the Spring Fete and the installation of the Zip Slide at Magnus Drive Park. Local traders

were kept up-to-date, which proved invaluable when a shop allowed use of car parking space to assist with the landscaping of the park.

## Demonstrating Impact

The compiling and use of evidence required for both self and external evaluation retained a clear focus on the benefits of community-led health. The external evaluation compiled evidence of how the projects were employing community-led principles and approaches and how they both complemented and brought added value to mainstream ways of working. This evidence has helped to sustain interest and potential resources from local agencies such as Glen Housing Association together with sharing the outcomes further afield than Collydean.

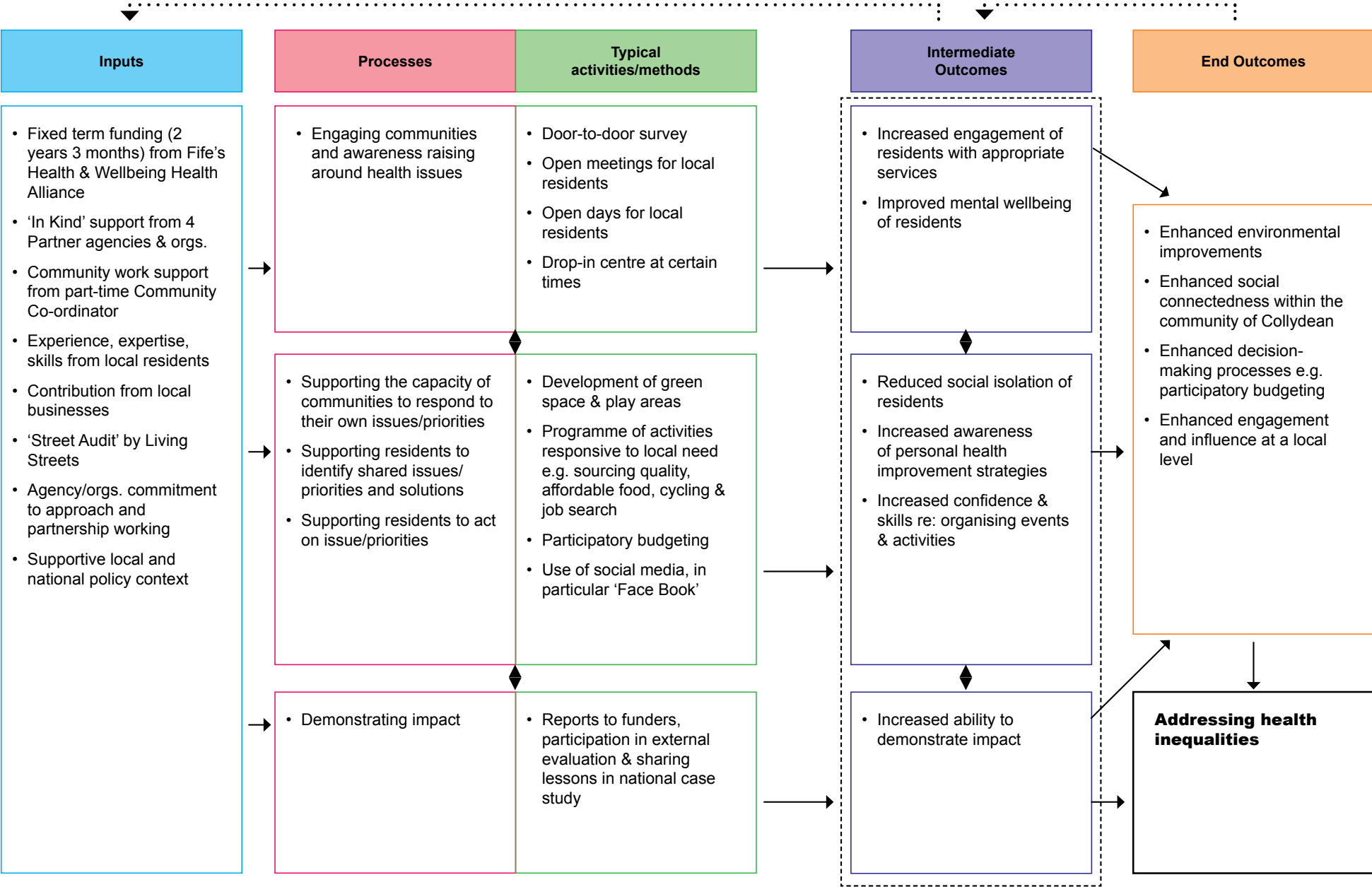
The Partnership Group is continuing to use the evidence in addressing the ongoing challenge of securing additional resources and promoting the positive health outcomes from their community-led health way of working.

Since developing this case study, a new charity has been established to take over the running of the centre called Collydean Community Centre, and the contact details below remain the same.

### Contacts:

Duncan Mitchell  
Manager of Lead Partner  
Fife Employment Access Trust (FEAT)  
6/7 Hanover Court  
Glenrothes KY7 5SB  
01592 759371  
Duncan@journeytowork.co.uk

Figure 2: Collydean Community Connections logic model



# Craigend Resource Centre

*Through the generations*



Craigend Resource Centre began its work 20 years ago and, having been developed by and for local people, has gone from strength to strength. Brian Power, project co-ordinator, who has worked at Craigend for 19 years, recently told local newspapers: *“People who came in as babies are now returning as adults with their own children. It started as a shell of what people would like to see in the area but we had to move with the times and we worked with the government and national agencies on health and employment issues.”* Our case study of this long standing community-led organisation describes how it began and how it continues to respond to locally identified need.



## Setting

Craigend Resource Centre sits in a cul-de-sac on McLeod St in Greenock, but for the people of East Central Inverclyde it is at the heart of their community. It has been there for 20 years and thousands of people use its facilities, services and courses every year. In the last 20 years Inverclyde has seen many changes in its infrastructure, with new shopping complexes, upgraded housing and new leisure facilities. But the challenges of supporting local people who suffer some of Scotland's most serious health inequalities remain. Centres like Craigend are pivotal in providing opportunities for local people, tailored to the needs they themselves have identified.

## Starting Point

In 1995 local resident Jean Robertson was approached to lead a group of local people in the building of a much needed resource centre in East Greenock. Urban Aid provided the initial funding and since then a variety of funds have sustained the Centre, its staff and volunteers. Currently, core funding is received from Inverclyde Council, with the rest derived from income generating activities through the Centre's 'trading arm'. This includes the busy community café and salad bar and provision of outside catering contracts. Individual grants and short term funding provide additional courses or activities throughout the year.

## Working towards positive change

The key to what happens at Craigend is how it involves local people in its activities. Brian tells us:

*"The café is a great way to get people through the doors and word of mouth means that plenty of folk do that. Once they are here we provide a welcoming atmosphere and we listen to them and what they need which means they are more likely to come back."*

Amongst the services Craigend provides is access to washing machines and driers. Both



of these services were provided as a result of listening to local people.

Building a trusting relationship with local people is viewed as crucial to the Centre's community development approach to its work. When people get to know the Centre and what it has to offer they may find themselves here for a full day.

*"They maybe come in here get something to eat, do a course, get their washing done while they are here and have their kids looked after in the crèche. That makes a big difference for some folks and they spread the word and so others come too."*

People who have benefitted from what Craigend has to offer can become motivated to continue in a process of positive change in other ways within their community.

*"When they realise what a difference it has made they are more likely to volunteer here, or with other local organisations and become more active in their community in general."*

The more local people become active citizens, the more the whole of the community benefits. After being involved in Craigend people often



go on to become involved in local Housing Associations, School Councils and other local structures. One group of parents, who held meetings at Craigend, canvassed for traffic calming measures on a busy road. When local residents approached the Council on a future occasion traffic calming measures were provided without a campaign.

Given the longevity of the Centre people who first arrived as babies or children taking part in play schemes are now returning as play leaders themselves – evidence of the continued need of the Centre’s services and the relationships built with local families.

Initially, most of the programmes of support run at Craigend had a focus on children and young people. There has often been a focus on parent support due to the high number of lone parent families in the area.

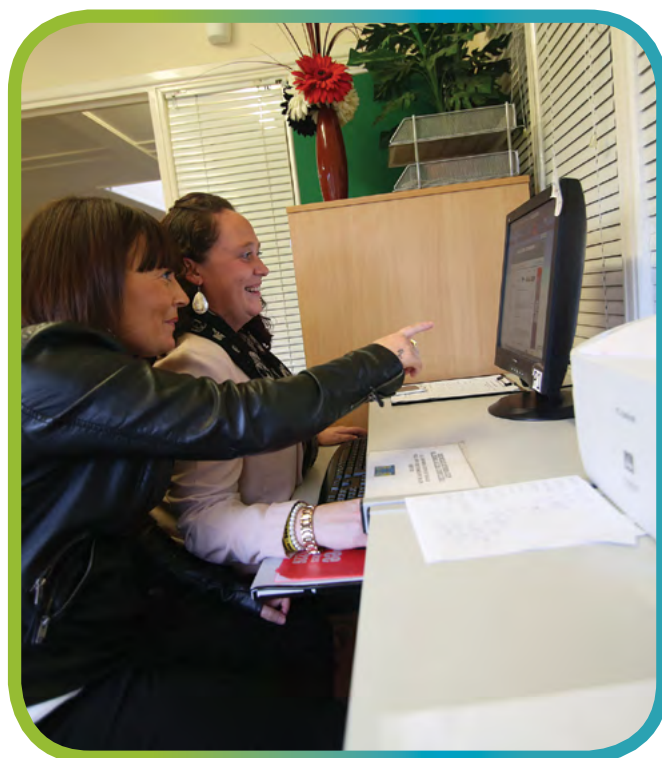
In more recent years the focus has been on employability, training and health. Craigend has an impressive programme of varied support around these themes.

Their most recent success was a 10 week men’s health course funded by the local Health Improvement Fund. The course was

fully subscribed with 20 men taking part and a waiting list of a further 14, demonstrating the local interest and need that was being met. The course took participants through a series of workshops looking at all aspects of health and wellbeing. Some participants have radically changed their daily routines by increasing their physical activity levels and adopting healthier eating habits. Activities like this are complemented by the community café’s salad bar which provides freshly prepared salads and pasta. Staff at the Centre thought that people would only be interested in salads in the summer but the salad bar is popular throughout the year.

Having existed for 20 years, Craigend’s latest development is to consider expanding the space they have by building a new facility. This would provide more space for a bigger hall and more customised rooms. Initial progress has been slow while they have negotiated for transfer of a piece of land from the local authority.

In the meantime the existing buildings continue to buzz with activity with regular groups being supported within the Centre. Their programme of activities includes parent support, a bipolar support group, computing skills classes, sign language classes, older people’s groups,





sewing groups, music groups and the ever-busy community café and salad bar. In addition, they organise a summer programme of activities for parents and children and a series of outings to leisure facilities and places of interest. At weekends families can hire the hall for family celebrations like wedding anniversaries and birthday parties.

## Why is this Community-led Health?

Craigend is run and managed by a Board of local people. The initial funding for the Centre was secured by local people and the programmes of work and activities and services are fully informed by what local people identify as their priorities. Centre Manager Brian Power ensures that regular formal surveys are undertaken looking at what they have to offer and whether any new developments would be beneficial to local residents. Treasurer Jean Robertson acknowledges how important it is to keep up to date with what people are looking for:

*“More important than formal surveys we listen to what people tell us, we keep our ears to the ground - staff, volunteers and board members. We are available for people to speak to at any*

*time. That’s how we know what is going on. That’s how we know what people need. Then we do our best to provide it.”*

Taking a community development approach is seen as key to what is done at Craigend. Brian speaks of asking in many partnership settings *“How does that empower the community?”* and he speaks hopefully of a time when ‘true empowerment’ might become a reality.

*“True empowerment is when local people control the purse strings.”*

Those involved with Craigend believe that people all have hidden potential. They see it as their role to support individuals and groups in their part of Inverclyde to realise their full potential and, by doing so, to enhance the quality of life for all.

## Lessons and Learning

When asked to reflect on learning over the years Brian Power, Centre Manager responds by saying.

*“Being here and being available to people is one of the most important things we do.”*

Joint and partnership working is also seen as important, although not without its challenges.



*“We do our best to work in partnership with other local organisations and to maintain our contacts with both the Council and the Health Service. That is not always easy especially when structures are constantly changing and decision making is made at different levels and in different ways.”*

Although the Resource Centre has long standing relationships with statutory sector organisations it also values its independence.

*“It’s important for people to understand we are not part of the Council, local people are responsible for what happens here and it’s an important message for others to understand too.”*

Although income generation is an important part of Craigend’s activity they are clear that chasing profits for its own sake is not what they are about.

*“We don’t want to be just a business; we need to keep a balance so that we still provide services. We come and go with people a bit. Sometimes we know that a local group has few resources so we may provide them with a place to meet if they need it.”*



When describing the changes he has seen over time, Brian speaks of a time when people outwith the immediate vicinity of the Centre wouldn’t come to its activities. They felt this was a ‘bad area’, and they were worried about their car being stolen. Now people come from all over the place:

*“Perceptions of this area have changed not just because the housing stock has been upgraded, and local people from here have played their part in that too, but because we have created a welcoming atmosphere here. Staff and volunteers alike make sure that anybody coming through those doors is welcome. Even delivery men who might have travelled far to get here – we give them a cuppa and a friendly welcome and they spread the word that this is a good place to come to.”*

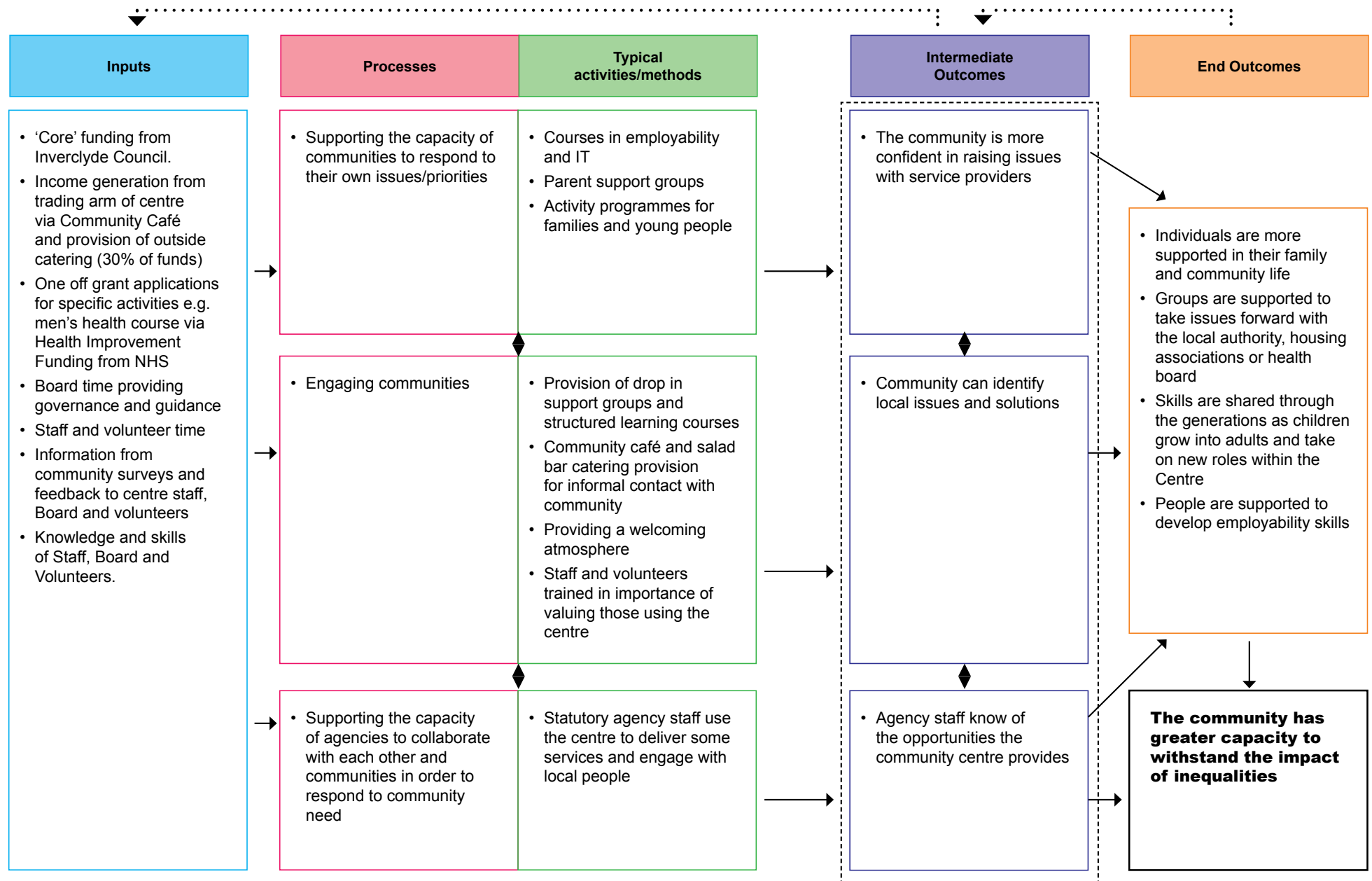
Although Craigend is a local organisation, it values its links to national organisations. They have encouraged the ‘cooking bus’ to come and park up at their premises to provide cookery lessons locally. They have also been the recipients of nationally acclaimed awards including the Healthy Living Award which they won in two consecutive years. Similarly, they won the Healthy Living Award Plus for two years running.

In this, their 20th year, they are hoping to contact those who have benefitted from their services and to join with all of them in a major celebration. They have much to celebrate and it will be easy to highlight the many examples of the positive differences they have made to many lives.

### **Contacts:**

Craigend Resource Centre  
McLeod St, Greenock, PA15 2HD  
01475 786739  
craigend@talk21.com  
www.craigendgreenock.org.uk

Figure 3: Craigend Resource Centre logic model



# Just Like Us

*Turning Lives Around*



Just Like Us is an organisation that grew out of the trauma felt by those who lost someone close to them as a consequence of drug or alcohol use. Turning such an overwhelming experience into positive support for others is the motivation that spurs them on. This case study describes how they go about providing that support and the benefits that result for those who come to their weekly drop-in sessions in a local church hall.

## Setting

Milton is perceived by some of those living there as a “*forgotten part of Glasgow*” with a sense that resources are not often enough allocated to their community. When asked what are the most important issues for them, community members soon mention alcohol and drugs. They also speak of isolation and people struggling to survive. However, while recognising the challenges facing their community, many people in Milton are very active in ensuring that people work together to bring about positive change for their community. There is a thriving community garden, a busy community campus and aspirations for a new building to provide an ‘urban haven of peace’.

Within that picture of vibrant community activity the churches also play their part. Although people in churches on a Sunday may be low in number, local churches still provide support and encouragement to ‘grassroots’ organisations struggling for their survival in the local area. One such organisation supported by a local church is Just Like Us.

## Starting Point

Just Like Us grew from the experience of its founder members, Lorraine Buchanan and Gerry Murphy, who both lost people close to them through alcohol or drug addiction. They speak of watching people who, although in touch with many professional services, never seemed to be provided with the support that they needed. Lorraine speaks of watching somebody struggle over a 20 year period despite contact with a raft of professionals in both the statutory and voluntary sector.

*“Some professionals want to help people by telling them what to do, without fully understanding the root causes or the process of change.”*

The frustration and anger this engendered in those left behind became the catalyst to do things differently and to work to support others to avoid the same fate.



Gerry, a qualified counsellor, realised that he needed insight into his own approach to life and feels that without it he, like many other professionals, was not well placed to guide others through a process of change. He feels that “*the power of example*” is crucial to this role and that

*“Professionals want to help people by telling them what to do without looking at themselves. Our lived experience means we have an increased empathy and understanding which means we can better support others with similar issues.”*

Just Like Us became connected with the Colston Milton Parish Church, where they regularly meet, through a third person called Lainey Daley. Lainey introduced Lorraine and Gerry to the church, which provided Just Like Us with a meeting room. Their first ‘drop-in’ Monday evening group saw eight people arrive. The current Minister of the Church Christopher Rowe spoke of Lainey as working with those who were “*struggling the most*” and described her as “*plugged into everything, a real door opener.*”

## Working towards positive change

From the first drop-in group numbers grew and it was found that a two hour session was not enough to allow people to work through the breadth and depth of life’s challenges. Lorraine and Gerry developed work sheets that

people could take away to work through in time away from the group setting. The sheets were developed around common themes, such as Overcoming Barriers, Thinking Patterns and Understanding Addictions.

Lorraine and Gerry are very clear that the work they do is not simply peer-led support with a model of weekly drop-in work and no follow up. Both of them spoke of providing support 24/7 by being available at the end of a phone; for conversations in the street; at home or in the shops – wherever people may find them. Those they support know they will not be turned away and that support and an active listener is theirs for the asking.

In 2005 Lorraine and Gerry published a book called *The Power of Example*. They also developed a structured course which people work through. They deliver seminars, provide work sheets, have developed film resources available on YouTube and distribute DVDs. This, along with the quality of personalised support they offer, is key to their success in supporting people to make the positive changes they desire. People in the group speak of having their *“lives given back”* to them. Although originally developed for people with addiction and mental health issues, it can work for anyone and can be a mechanism *“for prevention or a cure”*.

A visitor to the group at their drop in will find group members willing to share their deepest most personal stories of life before and since joining the group. They speak of people who had been on methadone and a cocktail of

prescription drugs to deal with their addiction and mental health issues for more than a decade. People in these circumstances come to the group and *“relatively quickly”* work through deep seated personal issues to become ultimately and sustainably drug free.

One person tells their own story by saying

*“I came here a bit broke, angry and upset – feeling very down. They made me realise what was harming me was my own thoughts. Over a very short period I was able, with their support, to change my thinking – now I have custody of my own son again. That would have never have happened if I hadn’t come here.”*

Another says of himself

*“I was basically unemployable because of my alcohol problem. Now having worked my way through various courses I have testimonials about how good I am as an employee.”*

Lorraine speaks of carrying anger, of reacting to things as her parents had done and how she unconsciously learned that behaviour - but with support from Gerry she has learned to react differently to things.

*“I wanted to do things differently for my children so that what they learned was different from what I had learned.”*

One person speaks of the ‘recovery model’

*“I don’t see myself as ‘being in recovery’. My ‘recovery’ is in the past, I recovered. Now I am living”*



There is no question that for many of the group the role of Christopher as an understanding and approachable member of the clergy has also been integral to their healing process. Although the group gratefully accepts the church hall for their meetings they are very clear that they are not a Christian organisation and all are welcomed and offered support.

## Why is this community-led health?

Just Like Us came from individuals coming together around a shared issue to see how they might offer others in their community a better way forward. The group draws on the lived experiences of its founder members and the skills and resources they have developed. Within the group people share what they have learned of their own coping strategies to offer support to others.

Their whole focus is on wellbeing and living life fully. They aim to support people to reach their full potential with the appropriate support and at a pace that is set by them. This is challenging, in-depth, long term, deeply personal work requiring commitment and stamina from those who undertake it. However, seeing people who are able to turn their lives around and flourish in their new-found roles in life brings a great sense of achievement for all of the members of the group, each of whom plays their part. Structurally, the group has grown and developed so that some of those who were previously 'service users' now have roles within the committee that guides the work of the organisation. Others go on to take a lead in group activities, e.g. volunteering in the Conversation Café and offering peer support to new members.

## Lessons & Learning

This is work that requires investment of time and commitment. Having it recognised by professional bodies is an ongoing challenge. In the past the group have been invited to present to medical students who described their input as *"very powerful"* and were *"staggered by*



*the level of success"*. Yet, in dialogue with statutory service providers, even those within the strategic planning structures have described their ongoing struggle for recognition as *"battling against an institutional agenda"*. This is confirmed by one member of the group who sits within a local Alcohol and Drug Partnership and who has drawn to the Partnership's attention successful courses and initiatives of which he has personal experience. However, to date, he has not been able to persuade them to invest in piloting such community-led approaches.

This means that there is little or no structured support for the group and its activities. Christopher speaks of his frustration with this situation and asks

*"Why do some people have to give over their whole lives to this, there must be a better way?"*

Despite these challenges it is known that the most recent strategic document relating to alcohol and drugs speaks of the value of the 'lived experience' of those who have 'recovered' and members of Just Like Us hope that this may offer them an opportunity to have their contribution recognised more fully.

The group has grown and developed over the years of its existence, adapting its methodologies and resources according to the results they have and the feedback received from members.

Although originally set up to support people in the local community of Milton, members of the group now come from far and wide – as word

has spread of the results they can achieve. On a typical day the group welcome people not only from Milton, but also the West End of Glasgow, areas south of the Clyde and further afield.

They know that the number of people who have come through group work over the years is at least 165. However one member alone said that over the last three to four years they have referred 30 people to Gerry for counselling. Others send people to Christopher, who is considered -

*“a trustworthy person who will deal with sensitive issues and won't let you down like others might.”*

Christopher in his turn says that he gives out Gerry and Lorraine's phone numbers to many people on a regular basis. Some of those people will show up in group work statistics, however, many will have received intensive support by phone and personal visits and not be counted through the group's registered numbers.

Members of the group speak of how impromptu meetings with local people can lead to process of intensive support.

*“The ripples spread ever wider. Gerry gave me DVDs. I used them and found them really useful and passed them on saying to the next person ‘don't leave them in the house. When you're done with them pass them on to the next person’. That way we keep on helping more and more people.”*

The group aspires to become self-sustaining through sales of their resources and training. The most recent development is that their training course is being considered by the Open College Network for an academic accreditation rating.

While the positive changes brought about by this group's activities are increasingly recognised, they, like many other small local organisations, find that identifying suitable support for the resources they need is an ongoing challenge. The group's structured and highly experienced approach to supporting people by building 'resilience for life' is



impressive. This is particularly evident when you meet those who have benefitted in person and experience their passion that this should be available to others and properly resourced.

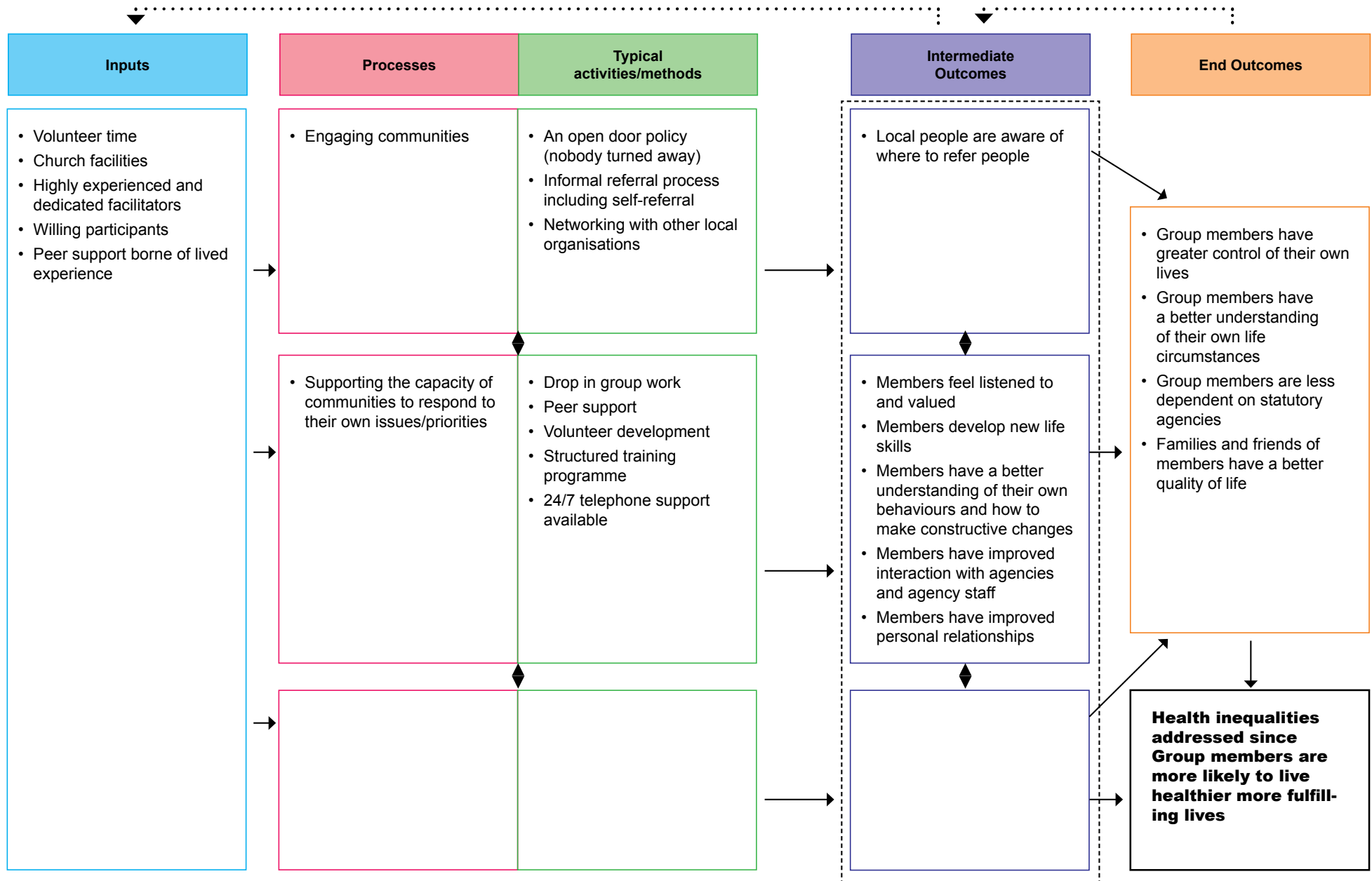
The work of Just Like Us epitomises asset-based, person-centred, co-produced approaches, which are currently at the forefront of policies in health and social care. This includes the restructuring of public services in the ongoing integration of health and social care. If the interest in such approaches is to be credible then the appropriate resourcing needs to be provided to organisations such as Just Like Us since they are at the forefront of applying these principles on a daily basis. Learning from their experience can lead the way for others who lack the experience of putting these principles into practice. We can only hope that recognition of the value they bring will be fully recognised with the appropriate allocation of resources in the future.

### **Contacts:**

Just Like Us  
C/o Colston Milton Parish Church  
Egilsay Crescent  
Glasgow G22  
justlikeusmilton@gmail.com  
0141 564 1138 (the manse)



Figure 4: Just Like Us logic model



# Old Knock School

*Investing in the community*



Despite having its own strong sense of geographic identity, the community of Point on the Isle of Lewis lacked an ‘everyday’ hub where people could catch up and bump into others they hadn’t seen in a while. A group of active local people took it upon themselves to take over a disused school and convert it into a community building containing a shop and café. Despite a long wait getting the building into community ownership, the group drew on assets such as retail expertise and pre-existing community networks to overcome challenges and set up the shop and café as a successful social enterprise. By investing profits back into the community, the initiative will benefit local people socially, economically and also in terms of health. The story behind Old Knock School illustrates how much can be achieved by a small group of people with a shared goal to benefit their wider community as well as the importance of early stage support to community groups.



## Setting

Point is a peninsula stretching north-eastwards from Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. It is connected to the rest of Lewis by a thin strip of land, which, at its thinnest point, is around 100m wide. This has the twin effect of adding to the sense of rural isolation, whilst also giving the 2600 people who live in Point their own distinct sense of community. However, whereas in years gone by neighbours worked as teams cutting peats together and helping each other out when times were hard, over the years self-sufficiency has been eroded due to improved infrastructure, bringing in such things as food deliveries from supermarkets. One result of this was that residents felt they no longer had a community focal-point where they could bump into one-another and socialise.

## Starting Point

A small but dedicated group of around twelve locals has been active on Point since at least 1998. The local Rudhach community newspaper has been reporting on local news and events for nearly fifteen years and Ui Church Trust has been working to preserve the 14th Century remains of St Columba's Church for around ten years. More recently, Point and Sandwick Development Trust (PSDT) has successfully installed a nine megawatt wind farm on the Point peninsula for community benefit. Point Agricultural Show has also been running each year since 2002.

Much of this work resulted from discussions at the Community Council, which most of the active community members have been involved in at one time or another. Liz Chaplin, Secretary of the Ui Church Trust traces plans for the wind turbines and the Church restoration back to Community Council meetings which she attended in the early 2000s. Similarly, George Macdonald, Chair of the community newspaper committee, recalls that a community survey was conducted by the Community Council in 1998, which highlighted the need for the newspaper.

In 2011 the same group of active locals embarked on a new initiative – the establishment of Point Financial Trust in order to procure the two former school buildings from the council and to find a use for them. Subsequently, this was narrowed down to one building, Knock Primary, after the other, Aird Primary, was damaged beyond repair by wind. Fortunately, Knock School was the better quality building having been refurbished in the 1990s.

Although the group didn't immediately decide what the building would be used for, one idea proposed early on and supported by community survey responses was to use it for a community shop. A Member of the Trust, Norman Macleod, had plenty experience of running a shop in Point with his brother that delivered all over Lewis. Having retired and closed the shop, Norman was as aware as anyone else in the community that there was no local place to buy essential goods. He remembers: *"Once we closed the shop in Bayble – my brother and I – it wasn't possible to get a bag of sugar or a box of matches or a newspaper in Point, without going up town."*

At initial meetings held in the local community centre, the group thought they'd have the schools within a couple of years. However, delays in building the new school for the area meant that the buy-out had to be put on hold until the old school building had stopped being used. Eventually, the group was allowed to buy and develop the building using a combination of bank loans and interest free loans from private donors. Volunteer board members then put a lot of hard graft into the development of the shop, which was opened in March 2014.

Now, the shop and the café are open from Monday to Saturday, and plans have been developed to build a mezzanine level to split the shop into two separate floors, one for the café and the other for the shop. Furthermore, the shop and café are supplemented by a heritage museum, and the building is used to house other local community projects such as Point and Sandwick Power and the Rudhach community newspaper. The Financial Trust

is also in negotiations to try and buy the land across the road, to be used for a porta cabin to keep the shop open while the building work is going on. Talks are ongoing with potential funders to secure the money needed to carry out these extensions.

## Working towards Positive Change

Providing a convenient place to buy essential goods is at the core of the group's vision, as is making it easier for people to catch up with each other on a regular basis. Prior to the shop and café, it was impossible to buy a cup of coffee without going to Stornoway and, unlike in neighbouring communities, there was also no central place to meet. Old Knock School is able to provide both of these through selling a diverse range of products, from fresh foodstuff to bespoke postcards, all at competitive prices.

The shop and cafe benefits local people directly in terms of helping them make an income. Five

full time staff are employed and local young people are paid to work in the café after school and during holidays. Furthermore, the shop sells a wide range of local produce that chain supermarkets aren't flexible enough to supply. An example is the local butcher, who has ceased his mobile van trade and concentrated on selling his produce through the shop. This has resulted in a great saving and therefore makes his business more viable. Another local resident makes oatcakes and shortbread for the shop to sell. Whereas her baking would be too small a concern to go to the supermarkets, in the community shop she sells out every day.

*"All the butchers, bakers and candlestick makers are so grateful because of added business."* (Norman)

Local projects also benefit, such as the Ui Church Trust, which produces books, mugs and key-rings for the shop to stock, helping the charity raise funds to maintain the church. In this way the shop helps enhance tourism in the area. Due to its relative isolation and lack of





well-known tourist attractions, Point might not be as popular a destination as some other parts of the Western Isles, but the shop is part of the effort to bring more visitors to the area. It has such a good reputation for selling a wide range of good quality local produce that customers regularly travel from as far as Ness in the far North of the Island and Harris in the South to visit the shop.

Indeed, the range of fresh food contributes to the healthy diets of local people. The shop's central belt-based supplier often comments on the quantity and variety of fresh fruit and vegetables that is sold as compared to what is available on the mainland. In addition, the shop is currently negotiating with suppliers to provide Polish and Latvian produce to attract local Polish and Latvian people who might otherwise have to travel to Inverness for these goods. It is hoped that this is likely to enhance their sense of inclusion within the local community.

## Why is this community-led health?

Point Financial Trust consists of about ten board members, all of whom are local community members with some involved in partner organisations. Many more local people are ordinary members of the Trust. A lot of voluntary hours have been put into the development of the building to make it what it is today. Norman tells how he and others “*burned many a midnight candle putting up shelves and knocking down partitions*” when the shop was set up originally. Likewise, associated projects, such as Point and Sandwick Development Trust and the Ui Church Trust, rely on volunteering in order to manage them and make them a success. A good example of the community pulling together is the promotional booklet, *A Guide to Point*, produced by the Ui Church Trust and the Community Council, which has had around 13 or 14 contributors, all unpaid volunteers.



The development of Old Knock School and the other projects has been continually informed by the priorities of the wider community. A number of community consultations have been conducted since the island-wide consultation in 1998. For instance, the Community Council led an extensive consultation in the early 2000s, in which ideas for both the shop and the historical work were first suggested. More recently, a fairly informal community consultation has been conducted regarding the plans to extend and develop the shop and café further. The plans were put on display within the shop and advertised widely, and people were able to submit their ideas in writing or in person whilst visiting the shop or café.

Although any profits from the shop are currently being used to repay loans, any future profits will be used for the benefit of the local community in Point. At the moment the Trust envisages that the development of other local voluntary and community projects will be supported. This is similar to the plans of Point and Sandwick

Development Trust, which plans to benefit local and island-wide community projects once existing loans are paid off. In the case of the wind turbines, however, the dividend will be significantly greater and is estimated at £20m over 25 years. The community is being consulted on how this income should best be spent, and the Trust's current Community Development Business Plan is informed by a 2012 community consultation.

## Lessons & Learning

It is often the case that a community organisation benefits from the expertise of the individuals involved and Norman's forty-plus years of experience as a shopkeeper has made a substantial contribution to the shop and café's success. In addition to having the commercial expertise to know what to buy and how to sell it, Norman has built up a list of contacts in the trade, as well as an understanding of the local market, which enables him to source goods at

competitive prices. Moreover, he has been able to gradually develop the business without overstretching himself.

*“Our major supplier now won’t supply any new customer until they have been established for five years, but we got round this because of my previous business relationship with them. They are really competitive. We’re able to sell loads of stuff cheaper than supermarkets, and we’re also selling lots of stuff that the supermarkets won’t touch. Locally made produce, some foods, some dry foods, loads of postcards. You can get a bespoke postcard, with the person’s name on it, or written in Gaelic.”* (Norman)

Another advantage of having commercial experience is knowledge of, and relationships with, potential funders, including banks and private financiers. Based on its previous dealings with Norman, the local bank was happy to provide loans towards establishing the shop. A personal touch also helps, and the Trust has received loans from people with connections to the island but who no longer live there. One funder provided an interest-free loan after popping in for a cup of coffee whilst visiting the island on holiday.

Where possible, Norman has negotiated deals that have been vital to get the community shop and café off the ground. This includes tradesmen who were happy to delay payment until the Trust could afford to pay them for their work. The arrangement with the present major supplier means that payment is continually four weeks behind, which allowed the shop to pick up business without having to invest even more. This has been an invaluable arrangement for a community organisation embarking on a new venture with the attendant financial risks inherent in setting up such a project.

The whole ethos behind the development of Old Knock School, and possibly the secret to its success, is that the community feels a sense of ownership over it. Liz says she and other community members think of the shop as theirs. Crucially, the shop wasn’t ‘parachuted in’, since the community had discussed and planned it over a period of time. The Trust may have taken the lead in planning the shop’s

development and making it a reality, but they knew they had the backing of the wider community throughout. Therefore, although there were plenty of challenges along the way, the general feeling of support from the public eased their anxieties and helped them see the project through.

A person who Liz, George and Norman credit with helping many of the local community projects get off the ground is the former community development worker for Western Isles Council, Jane Mackintosh. Jane regularly attended Community Council meetings in the late 1990s and early 2000s, supporting them to conduct community consultations and encouraging them to develop a community plan. Liz feels that the community benefitted from having an independent, knowledgeable source of support:

*“She supported it but she also knew that the community council stood in its own right. She wasn’t part of it, but she came to most meetings. And she’s the one who got us into community consultation, helped us with methods, helped us with funding and knew the right sort of people to contact.”* (Liz)

The group’s view is that they are fortunate to have received such support, which came just at the right time. There is currently no equivalent support available.

The community has also been supported by Third Sector Hebrides, who have helped them to apply for funding for the various community activities. Statutory agencies have also provided funding, with Western Isles Health Board funding some of the consultation work in the past. George sums up how valuable this support has been, by stating: *“You’re very fortunate if you can get the right people, instead of scrabbling around in the dark.”*

In its first year and a half of operating, the shop and the café have been continually busy and have managed to earn enough income to start paying back loans. As a successful social enterprise, the initiative should be sustainable for the foreseeable future. In terms of benefits to health and wellbeing, those involved in the

work are clear that the shop and cafe have had a beneficial impact on the social fabric of the area, acting as a hub for people to meet and chat on a regular basis, and even bump into people they haven't seen in years. This, in turn, has a positive effect on people's mental wellbeing. They also highlight the mix of health and environmental benefits from people being able to get their shopping and a cup of coffee without having to go into Stornoway.

*"In terms of the mental health of people in the community I think it's very positive. Also, in a very small way, it helps with the environment because we're all driving into town less. For us, it's two miles to Old Knock School as against six miles into town."* (Liz)

Moreover, those behind the various community initiatives in Point now have increased confidence and greater sense of control over what happens in their community. There is a real sense of achievement within the group, with a drive to achieve more in future – which they almost certainly will!

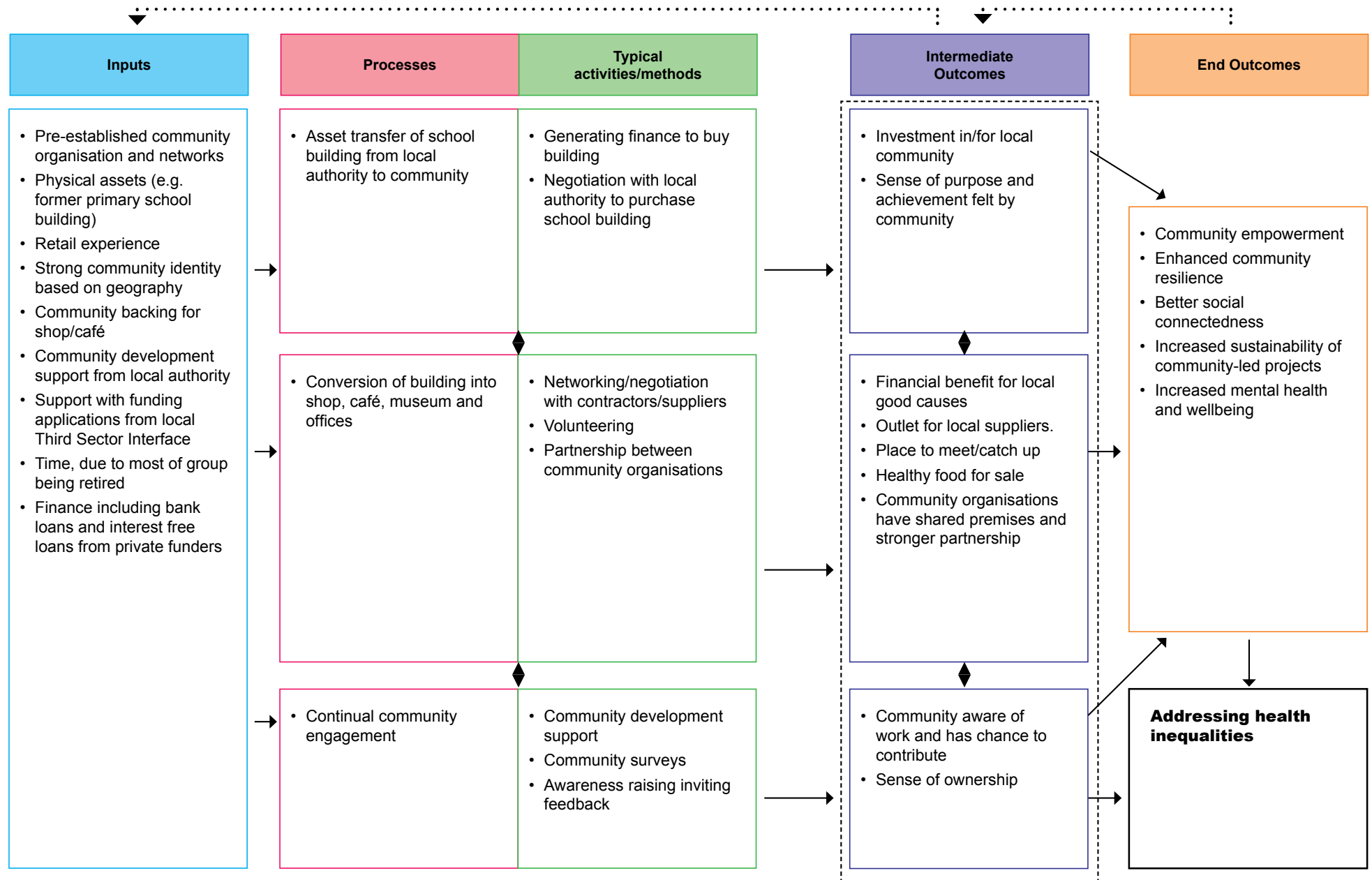
### Contacts:

Norman Macleod  
Old Knock School  
Point, Stornoway  
Eilean Siar, HS2 0BW  
01851 870713  
norman.macleod.14@gmail.com





Figure 5: Old Knock School logic model



# The Ripple Project

*A hub of activity*



From its beginnings in 1996, the Ripple Project has existed to meet the needs of local people in a very specific area in the East of Edinburgh. Today it provides a wide range of activities involving young and old alike. The difference it makes to people's lives is significant. With local people still in control of its future in its Management Committee it looks set to continue its work of providing local opportunities for years to come, continuing the process of the 'rippling' out effect which provides the positive changes from which the organisation derived its name.



## Setting

The Ripple Project is located in the heart of Restalrig and Lochend, a neighbourhood in the east of Edinburgh City Centre. The unusual name of Restalrig means 'ridge of the miry land' or 'boggy field' and the area has a rich history going back to the 5th century where a village, farm-lands and castle are documented. Fast-forward to the 21st century, in which Restalrig is an area with a strong identity and distinct boundaries. Sandwiched between Leith to the north and west, Craigentenny to the east and Meadowbank and Northfield to the south, Restalrig and Lochend has retained a strong geographical individuality. The area comprises mainly public housing and private tenement flats, with two multi-storey buildings of seventy six flats in each block. In the 1990s this was the fifth poorest area in Scotland. Lochend Park provides expansive green space where seasonal activities are held for children and adults.

Over the last few decades local people have come together and organised in various ways to maintain this strong identity and improve the overall wellbeing for people of all ages. The Ripple Project has been a key agent in this process, in a prominent street location it is a central point for signposting and developing community activity, so much so that it was the first Community Hub to be established in Edinburgh.

## Starting Point

The Project was started in 1996 by a local Church, led by its parish minister Ewan Aitken. Community development approaches were used to bring community members together and support them in meeting the needs of vulnerable community members. In the beginning the project was based in the Church offices and ran activities in the church halls and other locations until in 2010 when it settled into a purpose built community building. The Centre was previously owned by YWCA Scotland who subsequently moved out of the area. It was then purchased by the current landlords, Port

of Leith Housing Association through a Scottish Government grant awarded to allow the building to be preserved for community use under the management of the Ripple Project.

In the mid 1990s despite its high levels of deprivation Restalrig and Lochend's compact boundaries resulted in it often being overlooked, missing out as a priority area for funding and resources. Consequently, when the Ripple Project started there was a real need for an organisation that would listen to, work with, and respond to the concerns and priorities expressed by local people. Its values and ethos were underpinned by personal and collective empowerment and although the Church was originally the mainstay of volunteers and resources, there was a strong determination that the organisation would be open to all and responsive to all local residents. The Project's name was carefully selected with the intention of ensuring that the impact of its work would ripple out from individuals to families and so to the wider community. Initially, health outcomes were not explicitly identified as the Project's main reason for being. One management member expresses this by saying

*"It was a safe place for people to come to, share their worries and know that people would listen to them."*

Over the years, health outcomes have become more clearly identified in the Project's work.

*"We want to improve people's health and we do! Mental, physical and psychological health are improved through various activities like Listening Place, the walking groups for able and less able people, developing cooking skills and healthy eating and supporting young people to build positive relationships."*

The commitment to local governance was demonstrated through the establishment of a local Management Committee, a structure which remains in place to the present day. The immediate and long term demands resulted in the need for paid staff to provide the core service of developing ideas and co-ordinating diverse activities. At the heart of the organisation, volunteers were the people who

delivered the service, providing mutual support and taking forward new initiatives that respond to the changing needs of local residents. The organisation now involves over 130 volunteers a year in project delivery who help Ripple to deliver their wide range of services to different age groups. These include a daily lunch club and weekly social club for older people with door-to-door transport and youth services such as a Drop-in Café with leisure and sports activities, workshops and other developmental opportunities. A young person's sexual health service is delivered in partnership with a local medical centre. Other services which are provided include a 1-1 listening support for people in crisis, walking, knitting and creative writing groups and a community café. The project also produces a popular community newspaper, The Speaker which is delivered for free to 6,500 local homes each month.

The employment of staff, development of activities and upkeep of a building unsurprisingly required applications for funding. Over the years the Project has been successful in attracting

funding from both public and private sources. The City of Edinburgh Council, Cashback for Communities, Children In Need, Paths for All, the Henry Smith Charity, the Tudor and Robertson Trusts, Sainsbury's and the Bank of Scotland, are just some of the funders that have contributed to development of the Project's work. The organisation's desire not only to sustain existing services, but also to grow and develop has led to awards from the People's Health Trust for innovatory initiatives such as Catering for Change, which is a multi-stranded project focusing on the many ways food can make a difference in people's lives. In addition to the core cookery, healthy eating and making the most of a small budget elements of the course participants can choose from a wide additional menu in relation to their individual needs and interests. Options include cooking in a catering environment, employment support, customer service skills, till operation, food hygiene qualifications, creating community connections, confidence building, managing fears and anxieties and other self-development tools and techniques.





## Working towards Positive Change

The Project's commitment to listen consistently, respond and work alongside the community has produced a Hub for positive change. In responding to expressed need and seeking possible solutions a diverse programme of activities has emerged. The flexible approach to working with and involving people has not only resulted in responsive services, but also opportunities that have led to change and positive health outcomes. A management member stated:

*"We are a gateway to new opportunities. We want to remove the barriers that stop people doing things and trying out new things."*

Removing barriers to participation is one of the many ways that people are supported at the Ripple Project. One older woman came to them and got involved in their Catering for Change programme. She disclosed that she had dyslexia but that this had never been diagnosed and she had left school unable to read or write. She had always been saddened by her lack of formal qualifications. Ripple made special arrangements for her to take her Food Hygiene Certificate exam with the questions

being read out to her and she passed, telling staff how proud she was to finally have an official certificate. Since then her new-found confidence and self-belief has helped her to go on to become a pivotal volunteer in their café passing on her skills to others.

## Opportunities

The commitment to creating opportunities in which individuals can reach their full potential has resulted in innovatory youth work including outreach work on the streets and work with girls and young women. It has led to young people participating in Ripple Buddies, a mentoring group between older teenagers from the local High School and primary school children and Ripple Xpress, a drama group for primary school children. The Summer Programme for children offers different opportunities for fun and adventure outwith the area.

Trips to Foxlake Adventures in Dunbar and Perth Swimming Pool are all aimed at widening horizons of new places and experiences. While these programmes are supported by volunteers they are driven by youth work staff who work alongside volunteers in delivering the programmes.

For some community members volunteering opportunities have led to securing employment in skilled jobs with real satisfaction.

*“We know that several of our volunteers have secured jobs because of the experience gained at Ripple. Especially those that have taken part in training like Catering for Change.”*

Although opportunities like Catering for Change have developed the required skills in cookery, and healthy eating, they have also contributed greatly to building confidence and self-esteem. They have helped people to feel and think more positively about themselves and encouraged them to try for jobs they wouldn't have considered beforehand.

More opportunities exist through which people with complex needs are helped to talk through their issues and develop solutions that they feel are right for them. A management member talked about the value of Listening Place.

*“You become a trained listener to help people talk through their problems, which can be varied and complex. People can talk about their relationships, family problems, bereavement, lack of confidence – anything that's really worrying them. It's a free and confidential service with a volunteer, whose job it is to listen and help the person to find solutions for themselves.”*

A highlight of the day and/or week for many older people is the daily lunch club and the weekly Friday Club. Volunteers work with the members in identifying the programme they find most stimulating and fun. Sometimes it's a musical session with pupils from the local High School or sometimes it's a session with the local councillor.

The toddler group, computer group and the knitting network are all delivered entirely by volunteers who often have similar backgrounds. This enables groups to develop according to the needs and interests of their members.





## Why is this community-led health?

### Local people determine what matters to them

The Ripple Project actively encourages and supports local people to become involved in community health activity aimed not only at improving their own health, but also the health of the wider community. The Project uses methods that help people both articulate their own health priority, e.g. the Listening Place, and then to work with others to address that priority and offer opportunities and services accordingly.

A process of continually listening, responding and acting together has established a community resource that brings about better health and stronger health outcomes for those involved.

### Community volunteering & leadership

Local people have volunteered for many reasons. However, a common motivation that shines through is about having a stake in and responsibility for an organisation that can improve things for others in the community. The building of social connections and the approach to being open and inclusive of everyone enables the involvement of volunteers from different backgrounds.

The commitment to building opportunities that lead to leadership skills, taking responsibility and enhanced status is encouraged through taking on a leadership role for new ideas and encouraging new membership on the Management Committee.

One volunteer describes it in this way:

*"It's great to try out new things. I like to make suggestions and I am really pleased when others want to run them."*

## Tackling health inequalities

Health inequalities are addressed through various processes and services. For example: improving access to services by offering localised services such as the Sexual Health Drop-In for young people and the Advice Service and Employment Service. Accessing these services through the Hub provides a warm and friendly atmosphere, along with anonymity, confidentiality and an approach that is non-judgmental.

The management committee and staff are consistently committed to building personal and collective empowerment. Different processes are created to reach out to and involve people who do not usually engage with services or community activity. Barriers to involvement are addressed with the provision of responsive resources such as: community transport for older people and their carers attending the lunch club and Friday Club and providing a crèche for Catering for Change participants. Costs are kept to a minimum, for example the Hub Grub Café offers healthy and affordable meals and free internet access.

## Local People report improved health outcomes

Information provided by people using services at the Ripple project provide rich material to include in reports to funders. Local people's testimony of how their health has improved is compelling evidence of the effectiveness of this organisation.

*"I am now cooking from scratch much more often and making healthy meals for my family. Such easy to follow recipes. I now also volunteer in the community café two days a week which I love."* (Fiona)

*"Catering for Change is aptly named. It made a difference to my life. Before I could not cook anything. Now I can."* (Billy)

*"When I first got in touch with the Listening Place I was not in a very good place at all. I had depression and anxiety but with the wonderful support I received my life has changed for the better. Now I am volunteering and going out more. I have more confidence than I ever had and able to cope with problems as they arise now."* (Client)





*“The Speaker gives lots of local news and information about what’s going on in the community. I found out about the walking group and the knitting group which I enjoy going to.”* (Christine)

*“A local man joined the lunch club a month after the death of his wife, whom he had cared for ten years. Benefitting from increased social contact, among his fellow lunch club members he has become reacquainted with a neighbour he had not spoken with for several years and a lady he was at primary school with.”* (Volunteer)

*“The group has made me realise how bad smoking is for me and other people so now I tell my family and friends about the facts to try get them to stop.”* (Jack, 15)

*“I enjoy the workshops because we learn about different things like bullying, drink, drugs, sex and politics.”* (Aiden, 14)

*“We did some workshops on mental health and I was able to share my worries about a friend with staff.”* (Young person, 13)

## Lessons & Learning

### Responsive to need, development support and building assets

Over the last 19 years, the Ripple Project has adopted a model of practice in which it is responsive to expressed need, offers developmental support and succeeds in building assets for the whole community. This has been achieved by consistently engaging with community members, finding out what matters to them and then supporting them to be part of the solution. Fundamental to the approach has been a value-base that supports and enables people to develop their potential. Time, effort and resources have created opportunities through which local people could try out things to improve their own health and then share their experience and knowledge with others. This is the ripple effect in action!

### Never standing still

Being creative and never standing still have been at the heart of the Project. This, combined

with identifying community need, being aware of external influences through the national and local strategic policy and practice drivers have impacted on the Project’s desire to embrace change. Change is often challenging, but willingness from local people to be involved and shape things has kept the Project engaged and relevant and helped it to test new approaches to its work. A strong caring ethos ensures that new activities are introduced at a pace that allows people to become involved and maintain that involvement.

### Networking & Partnership Working

The networking and relationships built with other organisations and agencies has resulted in the Hub being central to hiring out space and working in partnership with other local services and organisations.

A management member talks about the Ripple Project not being able to or indeed wanting to offer all services to everyone.

*“We know what we’re good at and we’re not about trying to do everything with everyone. But we know that people do need other services and if it’s possible the Hub will offer that space.”*

Consequently, the Project hosts other specialist agencies to supply Benefits Advice and Employability Support services at the Hub on a weekly basis and Community Safety staff, and Housing Support officers also hold regular surgeries there. In addition the Community Midwives run regular classes for parents-to-be and Dr Bell’s Family Centre run a weekly crèche on the premises.

### Sharing the message

The SPEAKER Community Newspaper has been a mainstay of the Project’s activities for many years. The paper plays a key role in informing, engaging and celebrating community activity. It is not solely a platform for the Project; it highlights what’s happening with other community organisations, together with inputs from the local elected members and 4 churches in the area. This is the main channel of communication, but there is a recognition that social media has a strong part to play and could be further developed.

## Influencing local policies

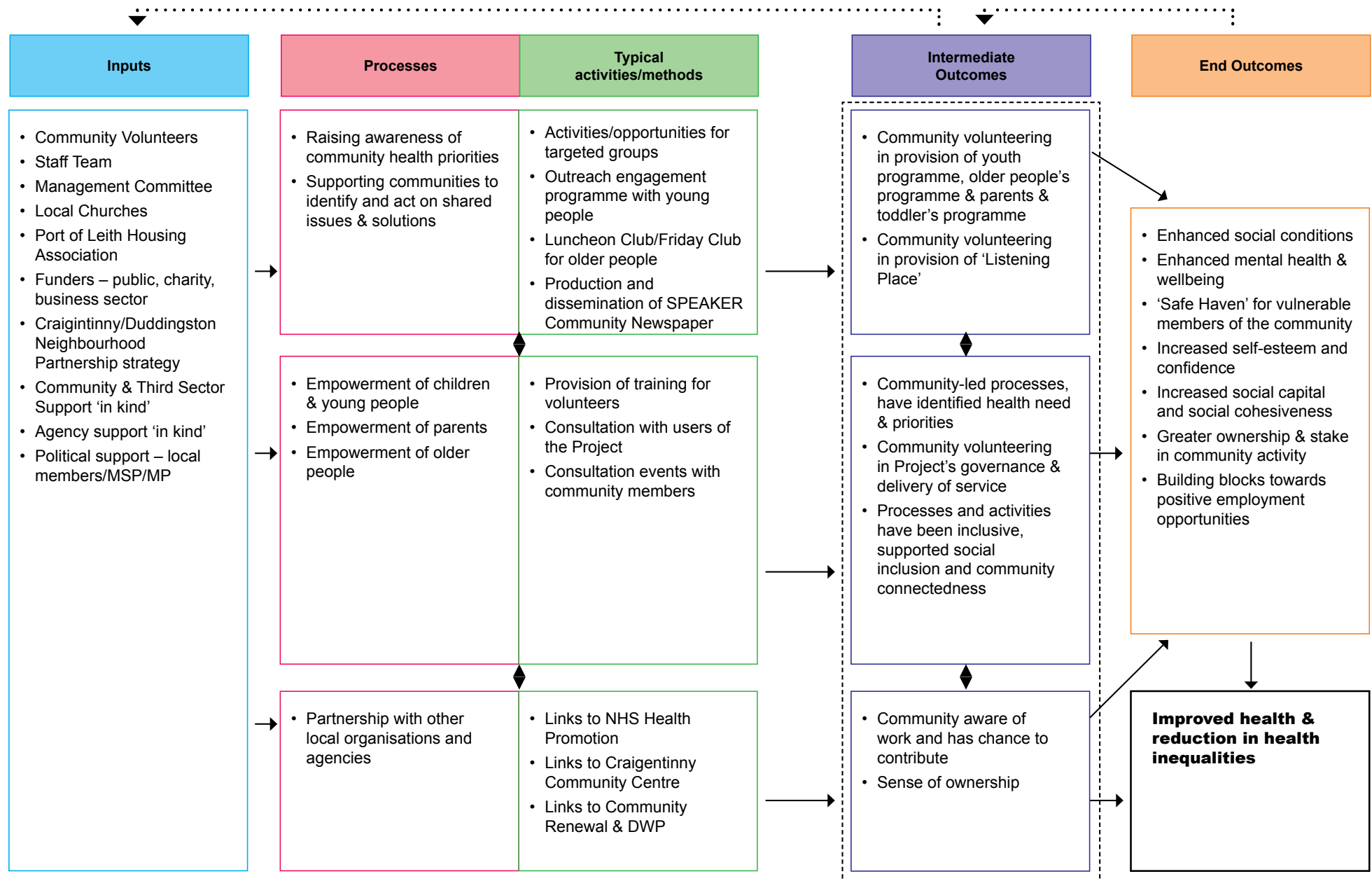
The Project Manager is one of the voluntary sector representatives on the local Neighbourhood Partnership Board and the project also participates in a number of the Partnership sub-groups including Community Safety and Health & Wellbeing. This enables the raising of priorities and issues articulated by users and management members. The Partnership influences the direct delivery of priorities related to health and wellbeing, families and young people, environment and community safety. Given the high levels of deprivation concentrated in a small area, the issues in Restalrig & Lochend can be different from those in other areas of the Partnership or have a greater impact, so it is important to have local voices around these tables speaking up for the community and for the sector working to serve it.

### Contacts:

Liz Ferguson, Manager  
Restalrig Lochend Community Hub  
198 Restalrig Road South  
Edinburgh EH7 6DZ  
0131 554 0422  
rippleproject01@btconnect.com



Figure 6: The Ripple Project logic model



Scottish Community Development Centre  
Suite 305 Baltic Chambers  
50 Wellington Street  
Glasgow, G2 6HJ  
t: 0141 248 1990  
w: [www.chex.org.uk](http://www.chex.org.uk)

