



Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

West Dunbartonshire: An outline proposal

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Background

Every Child, Every Chance – the Scottish Government’s tackling child poverty delivery plan for 2018-2022 – contains the following commitment:

New Help for Children's Neighbourhoods

We will invest £2 million in the innovative Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, expanding its reach in Glasgow and into another urban centre, a small town and a rural community.

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland is a distinctive approach to improving outcomes for all children and young people in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. Based on experience and practice internationally, the approach is place-based and has children, young people and communities at its core. It uses the power of collective action, joining up efforts and services within a neighbourhood to prevent and reduce child and family poverty.

In Scotland, the first Children's Neighbourhood has recently been established in the Bridgeton and Dalmarnock neighbourhood of Glasgow.

The Scottish Government will extend our support in Glasgow, another urban centre, a small town and a rural community - so we understand how transferable the approach is to these settings where child poverty is also unacceptably high. We will invest £2 million in Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland over the course of this Delivery Plan (2018-22) to support this work.

The Children's Neighbourhoods approach involves a local co-ordinator in a child-friendly base - such as a nursery, library, community hub, or school, which is used and valued by the community. A management team looks after the programme locally, providing strategic direction, evaluation and evidence, and development and learning support across the sites. Vitrally, children and families are at the heart of the approach - all the outcomes identified, and all the actions to meet them, are developed and agreed locally between families and partner organisations.

Our support for expansion will help us reduce child poverty in a range of ways, but for these new pilots, we will explicitly target economic development and entrepreneurship. This has not been a strong feature of the approach in neighbourhoods in other parts of the UK or internationally, but the Scottish policy context, with its emphasis on inclusive growth, provides an ideal opportunity to test this model.

Resources

£2 million invested between 2018-22.

Impact Summary

Aims to ensure children living in poverty now can fulfil their potential, which may help prevent them living in poverty in adulthood. Some elements, such as the focus on economic development and entrepreneurship, may have the potential to impact on **all four targets** between now and 2030.

This short paper sets out the approach proposed to translate this commitment into reality, and considers:

1. Brief summary of the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) approach
2. The proposed organisational model
3. Exploring the potential: West Dunbartonshire
4. Learning and evaluation
5. Resource implications

1. Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland: the approach

Children's Neighbourhoods is a distinctive approach to improving outcomes for all children and young people in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. The approach is locality-based and has the empowerment of children, young people and communities at its core. Through a sustained emphasis on collective impact and the Christie Principles, it joins up efforts and services within a locality to reduce poverty, extend power within communities, and improve outcomes for children and young people. CNS seeks to work at the geographical scale at which services can best be coordinated in line with the needs of children, and efficiencies maximised.

The introduction of Children's Neighbourhoods in Scotland (CNS) draws on expertise, experience and the lessons learned from a range of placed-based initiatives internationally and nationally. 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 Peoples Zone, and experience elsewhere in northern Europe. Other examples include Strive Together and Harlem Children's Zone's (HCZ) in the United States.

Within Scotland, the first Children's Neighbourhood has been established in the Bridgeton and Dalarnock neighbourhood of Glasgow, through a collaboration between the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, the University of Glasgow, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership and Glasgow City Council. Other partners include Clyde Gateway, Children in Scotland, and Scottish Business in the Community. The local primary school provided the initial hub in this area, and a range of statutory, community and voluntary sector partners are committing to aligning their efforts to community-identified priorities, to improve life chances and opportunities for children and young people.

The Children's Neighbourhood approach connects with – and aims to bring together – policy and priorities from a range of Government portfolios, beyond social justice and child poverty. For example, it will:

- add a clear focus on children and young people's voice and outcomes within regeneration strategies

- support commitments to closing the attainment gap through addressing some of the ‘beyond school’ factors that impact on attainment
- help illustrate how economic development and inclusive growth can impact child poverty levels and the prospects for young people living in areas with high concentrations of poverty
- apply the community empowerment act principles within communities, for example through orientating participatory budgeting towards child poverty and better outcomes for children
- support the development of services in neighbourhoods to be more trauma-informed and resilience-building, in line with the aim of preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences

Therefore, while CNS is quite distinct from any one of these individual policy commitments, it can act as a glue to strengthen each of them and enhance coherence in their implementation at a local level.

2. Organisational model

The Children’s Neighbourhoods approach involves a local co-ordinator based within an organisation located in the neighbourhood (a child-friendly base used and valued by the community, such as a nursery, library, community hub, or school) and a backbone organisation which manages the CNS team, provides strategic direction, evaluation and evidence, and development and learning support across the sites. The backbone organization is based in the Social Research Hub in the Olympia Building in the East End of Glasgow.

The local coordinator is the visible expression of CNS in a locality, undertaking local needs assessment and asset mapping, ensuring clarity of children’s voice and enabling community empowerment, bringing key players and community members together, agreeing priorities and facilitating change. These coordinators are funded jointly by the local authority/CPP and CNS; and employed locally.

Collective impact is guided by five key principles:

- **Common agenda:** All members of the collaborative need a shared understanding of the issue and an agreed approach to tackling it.
- **Shared data and accountability systems:** For alignment and accountability purposes, those involved need to have common indicators of success.
- **Mutually reinforcing agendas and activities:** Action needs to be co-ordinated to avoid overlap and gaps.
- **Clear and consistent communication:** In order to build relationships and trust, establish common objectives, and build shared purpose and a guiding.

- **Backbone support organisation:** A separate organization is required to provide the administrative, logistical, and coordinating support necessary to create and sustain a successful partnership.

The backbone organisation provides the senior leadership across the CNS network, core infrastructure support, and undertakes the research and evaluation to inform the strategic development of the programme. It will focus on four key activities:

- Generating and applying research and evidence (knowledge exchange and utilisation)
- Convening local leaders (collective leadership support and facilitation)
- Supporting innovation within communities (co-production, entrepreneurship, new responses to priorities)
- Delivering the infrastructure to scale impact within and across areas (communications, network support, policy-linkage, methodological development)

This combination of senior and strategic support combined with local coordination on the ground are key features associated with the effectiveness of this model.

3. Exploring the potential: West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC)

Initial discussions with WDC have highlighted a local commitment to working with communities and focusing on areas with the highest levels of deprivation. The WDC strategic plan's overarching priority of reducing inequalities for the people of West Dunbartonshire and the three key council priorities of:

- a strong local economy and improved employment opportunities;
 - supported individuals, families and carers living independently and with dignity
- and
- meaningful community engagement with active empowered and informed citizens who feel safe and engaged

provide an excellent fit with the CNS vision, aims and aspirations of addressing inequalities, tackling poverty and improving outcomes for children, young people and their families with neighbourhoods.

CNS is a flexible, context-specific model that is designed to meet the needs of specific neighbourhoods and its design-based research approach is developed in collaboration with local stakeholders. However, two strands of activity are at the core:

(i) Design and development activity:

- Create even more effectiveness and coherence within the neighbourhood that makes a difference to outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- Broker, facilitate and support partnership and collaborative action between assets including people, organisations and services across a neighbourhood.

(ii) Research and evaluation activity:

- Draw on external research to inform our decision-making
- Undertake detailed analysis of contexts
- Undertake our own participatory research to identify key priorities for action and appropriate developmental approaches within the neighbourhood
- Assess activity to inform our work and monitor and evaluate impact of CNS

In undertaking a detailed analysis of context, CNS uses a range of data sources and engagement processes to identify targeted priorities for whole system change. CNS also works to facilitate and support key workers, leaders and the community to create the change. Our understanding is that these approaches would fit well with – and add additional momentum to – the ways of working being fostered in West Dunbartonshire.

We propose that CNS develops a strategic partnership with WDC to demonstrate that a place-based approach focusing on children and young people in WDC can tackle poverty, reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for all. CNS would thereby contribute to the community planning partnership's long-term investment designed to secure better lives for future generations within WDC.

4. Learning and evaluation

Because CNS is a new development in Scotland, learning and evaluation have a central role to play. The team has started to ensure that the necessary contacts and partnerships are in place with related developments in other parts of the UK and internationally. For example, Professor Chris Chapman is a member of Save the Children's Stronger Communities Programme, is a member of their Children's Communities Evaluation Advisory Board and is part of a research collaboration with Columbia University, NYC which provides access to HCZ. Furthermore the CNS team has visited the Shankhill Partnership, is part of a University of Manchester-based network and plans to run a series of seminars and learning exchanges to build on that experience and share learning.

A series of materials will be developed (frameworks, tools, case studies, facilitation materials etc) to support the implementation of CNS, based on evidence and experience. Our publications and findings are widely available and will link to other sites, including the Improvement Service's Community Portal.

We also propose WDC would be part of a CNS learning network for Scotland, which will provide peer support for the local coordinators as well as being a means by which coherence and good practice across the Scottish sites is strengthened and supported.

The CNS research and evaluation strategy sets out the approach that will be taken to assess whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. There are broad outcomes that will apply

to all sites (improvements to children and young people's health and wellbeing, educational outcomes, quality of place, and ultimately children's life chances), as well as neighbourhood-specific priorities. There will also be process evaluation to establish whether CNS programmes are developing the potential for collective impact with coordinated action across services and sectors, and whether there is a shift in power reflected by clearer voice and influence of the community and its children & young people.

The research design has taken into account those approaches used to research similar initiatives such as Children's communities (Dyson and Kerr 2013) and the more recently the Children's Communities Initiative conducted by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University Institute of Education (SIOE).

The overarching research questions for the CNS evaluation include:

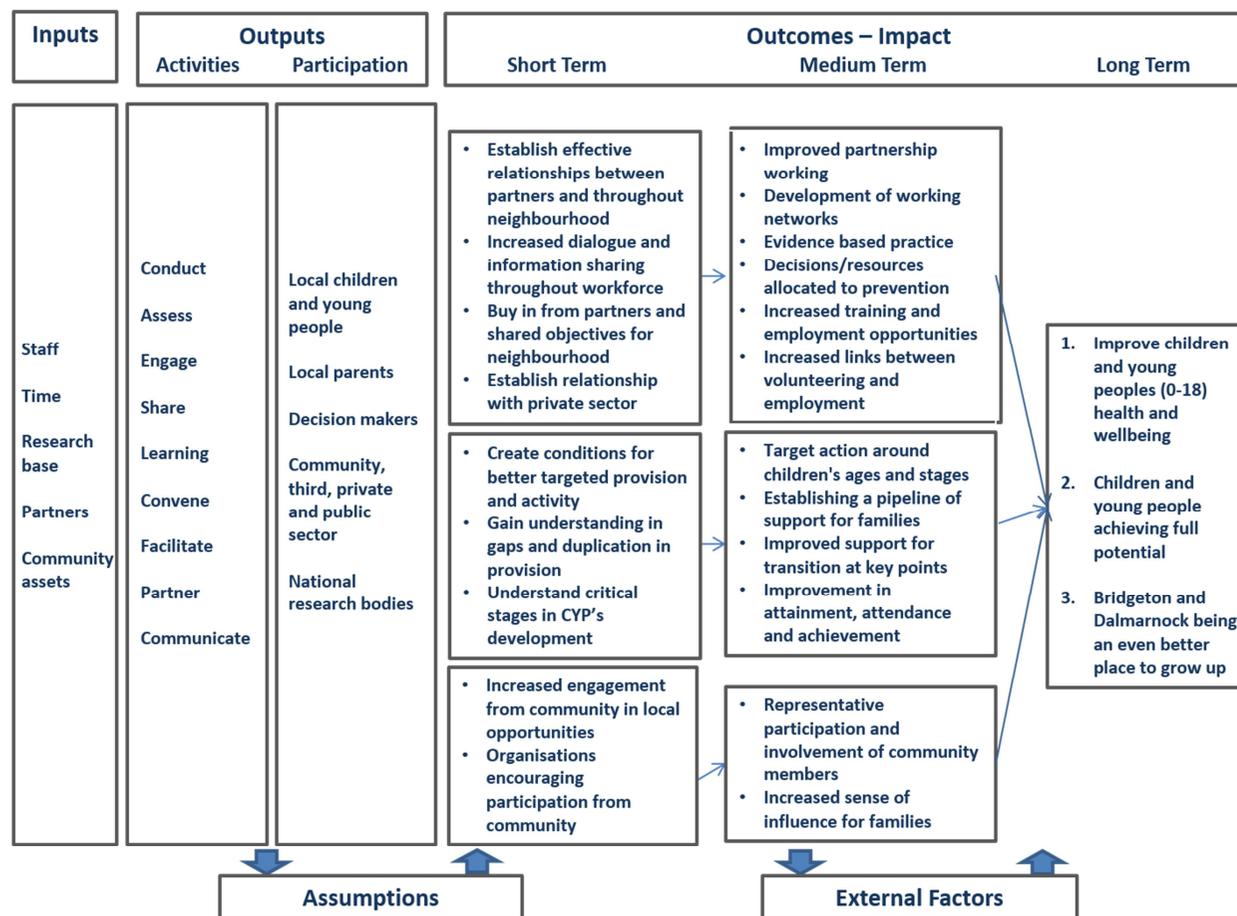
- How and to what extent are the key groups and actors within CNS embodying the principles of the CNS model?
- Is there evidence of CNS working towards long-term systems change?
- How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?
- How is CNS progressing with developing and operationalising the shared local strategic vision and theory of change?
- What evidence is there of impact and different ways of working within services and systems?
- What evidence is there of impact from CNS activity for children and young people and families?
- What evidence is there of impact from CNS on improving children's lives and raising attainment?
- What evidence is there of impact from CNS on improving families' lives?

A Theory of Change has been developed for Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, which underpins the research approach for that neighbourhood. This is attached as Appendix 1.

5. Resource implications and next steps

CNS will provide all backbone support and coordination, including rigorous research and evaluation activity against an ambitious theory of change. In addition CNS will provide 0.5 funding of a local coordinator post. Therefore the resource implications for WDC involve match funding for the local coordinator including on-costs and a small operating budget. This resource would be in the region of £40,000 per annum. We would be keen to establish a Children's Neighbourhood in West Dunbartonshire during 2019 as this would enable this neighbourhood to take maximum advantage of central government funding and run for the full three years in the first instance.

We hope that this short proposal provides helpful background to Children's Neighbourhoods and look forward to exploring opportunities for collaboration with WDC and Community Planning Partners.



Appendix 3: Theory of Change – Bridgeton and Dalmarnock Children’s Neighbourhood.