Community Connections Essex Local Learning

Full Report

This is a report on community engagement and participatory action research.

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1.   Introduction and Background

This project seeks to understand the community connections and support between people at a neighbourly level, and the approach and resources that people think would help grow these connections. Community Connections refer to locally and organically formed connections and sustained activities rather than services deliver.

Community Connections Essex Local Learning aimed to find methods for hearing:-

- local knowledge and insight about connections between people living locally and the support that they offered one another.
- local suggestions around the kinds of things that might increase or deepen meaningful community connections.

The project began in the aftermath of Covid-19 Lockdowns.

This report describes the *Community Connections Essex Local Learning* project's theory, actions, impacts, and learning. It describes the co-productive and participatory methods we used to undertake conversations with people within a small local area.

Essex County Council wanted to understand more about involving local community members in thinking around how to "*create a system which embeds prevention within communities and wider support networks, enhancing individual and community assets*[1].

Community Connections Essex Local Learning is a collaboration between Essex County Council, the University of Essex and residents and organisations living and working in four hyperlocal areas[2] in Essex within the wider areas of Laindon, Dovercourt, Canvey Island and Parkeston, between January 2021 and June 2022.

The project has been funded by the University of Essex Impact Acceleration Account and resourced by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It is affiliated to the National Institute of Health Research (NHIR) East of England Applied Research Collaboration (EoE ARC) as part of the *Inclusive Involvement in Research for Practice Led Health and Social Care* theme, of which the authors are members.

Ethical review has been undertaken by the University of Essex. We gained consent from the local people we spoke to use their words and quotes in a non-identifiable way.

This report documents the actions, achievements, learning and methodologies developed to undertake 'Street Conversations', to identify people who would like to do more to increase connections within their local community and, to engage local organisations in the Project Group to co-develop a sustainable and low resource intensive model to build community connections, assets and resources.

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[1] Getting Change Started, A guide to devolving meaningful power to communities Essex County Council and FutureGov, March 2020

[2] By 'hyperlocal' we mean a small neighbourhood, the physical geography of which varies according to population density: the hyperlocal area might be exemplified as a few neighbouring streets in town or perhaps a collection of farms in a more rural area. The population size of the hyperlocal area is variable. The meaning of 'hyperlocal from Oxford Languages is 'relating to or focusing on matters concerning a small community or geographical area'.

The Project Group initially began with University of Essex and Essex County Council members and grew to include representatives, Basildon Borough Council, Castlepoint CCG, Community 360, CVS Tendering, Healthwatch Essex, and the local community organisation NEST.

2.   Summary of Actions and Achievements

- Established a strong collaborative partnership between the University of Essex and Essex County Council to complement each other's knowledge and strengths and engage the resources within their organisations.

- Identified four areas of high health and disability deprivation in Essex using statistical data. Consulted with Essex County Council and local organisations to agree hyperlocal areas and to ensure that these had not been saturated by previous research and support interventions.

- Built a strong and structured multi-agency Project Group including community leaders and local organisation representatives from each of the four hyperlocal areas, to meet monthly and co-produce the project through a flat-based model of collaboration and decision making, and a wider network of stakeholders.

- Co-produced methodologies to engage residents and community members to capture local knowledge about community connections, cultures, assets and resources, and understand the main local issues affecting people's lives, including 'walkabout research', 'letterbox drop', 'street conversations', and 'follow up contact'.

- Proactively engaged residents who would not usually participate in scheduled events and research questionnaires in four sets of 'street conversations' in the four hyperlocal areas.

- Produced local area summaries sharing knowledge about community connections in the four hyperlocal areas, and methodological insight on the model development.

- Made follow up contact with participants who gave their contact details and wanted to receive area summaries.

- Facilitated follow-up interviews with interested participants to understand the structures and support that they wanted and needed to make community connections, build community resources and assets, and become community catalysts. See Section 6 on Community Catalysts

- Connected potential community catalysts with Project Group members to work together to build community resources and assets.

- Presented to Essex based forums and alliances of Health and Social Care organisations, local Councils, and Voluntary Sector Organisations to discuss learning, embed the project in local thinking, and further collaborate on community engagement and building resources and assets.

- Discussed and shared coproduction and meaningful involvement methodologies and approaches with members of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) East of England Applied Research Collaboration (ARC).

- Sourced Follow-on-Funding from the University of Essex Impact Acceleration Account, between July and December 2022, to further develop structures to engage and support Community Catalysts.

3.   Aims, Objectives, Outcomes

There is a substantial body of knowledge on healthy communities, social capital, and the component parts which help communities to thrive. The literature demonstrates that community connections can empower local people to improve individual and collective wellbeing, whilst reducing dependence on state provision of Health and Social Care. The literature stresses the value of having a sense of purpose, social bonding, and connectedness. See Bibliography

The Department of Adult Social Care at Essex County Council aims to make Essex a place where people support one another to live their lives to the fullest. It has begun to scope the ways that it can *"create a system which embeds prevention within communities and wider support networks, enhancing individual and community assets"*. (Getting Change Started, A guide to devolving meaningful power to communities Essex County Council and FutureGov, March 2020).

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, there was wide recognition of the impact that local community connections had on enhancing individual and collective health and wellbeing. Across the UK, news reports highlighted local community connections - from good neighbourliness to formal volunteering - which enabled many of those advised to "shield" to receive food, medicine, and companionship. Community connections also appeared to increase local resilience to pandemic-associated impact including mental and physical health and well-being, stress, worry, fatigue, loneliness, isolation, and anxiety. Neighbourhoods with greater community activity and support appeared to emerge as more resilient than others. See Bibliography

Community Connections Essex Local Learning was interested in identifying and understanding connections and support at a hyperlocal level. We wanted to learn more about:-

- how connections form and develop,
- the kinds of community activities that people are involved in and the kinds of activities they would like to be involved in,
- the challenges and opportunities for community connections and participation in community life, and
- the mechanisms that could grow, support, and enhance sustainable connections and activities.

We took as a premise that everyday challenges and the need for support are greatest in populations with a high prevalence of health deprivation, disability, and mental health needs. The rationale that a community's level of need and capacity to respond to that need from within is influenced by income deprivation and having a higher proportion of older-aged residents, also guided the choice of four hyperlocal areas.

Community Connections Essex Local Learning has sought to identify and to understand social connections and support in areas of high-need in alignment with the vision of Essex County Council to *"put communities at the heart of Adult Social Care"*.

Aims

Essex County Council Adult Social Care, is scoping ways that it can devolve power to strengthen and empower communities, moving decision-making closer to residents and communities to

enable the development and delivery of provision that matters to people (Essex County Council and FutureGov, 2020). It is anticipated that this move to a more local community-based model will require further integration of statutory and voluntary services working with local residents to ensure that people find and receive the right support at the right time and maintain their independence and quality of life.

Community Connections Essex Local Learning sought to co-produce a deepened understanding of meaningful connections, which support and enhance individual and collective health and wellbeing, between people living local to one another. We sought to understand the challenges and opportunities from the perspective of local residents, to help inform strategic and commissioning decisions that enable and enhance community assets and resources.

Community voice is at the centre of this co-productive, participatory action approach and the methods used to engage and consult with people who aren't so often heard.

Our aim has been to create a sustainable legacy that empowers hyperlocal communities to engage in and contribute to decisions about community development beyond the lifetime of this project.

Objectives

- Increase knowledge around meaningful community connections and activities that enhance individual and collective health and wellbeing

- Understand what local statutory and voluntary services and community members and collectives could do to protect and nurture the kinds of community connections that support local health and wellbeing

- Empower individuals and communities to influence and inform future commissioning considerations and decisions to improve local health and wellbeing

- Find methods for hearing:-

  o local knowledge and insight about connections between people living locally and the support that they offered one another.

  o local suggestions around the kinds of things that might increase or deepen meaningful community connections.

Outcomes

- Local communities, statutory and voluntary sector services work together to recognise and enhance existing assets and potential health and wellbeing initiatives.

- Individual and community assets are enhanced

- Local communities are empowered to take action that enhances local individual and collective health and wellbeing

- Essex County Council identifies and implements policy and practice that supports community development to enhance individual and collective health and wellbeing

- Health problems are prevented and de-escalated within communities and wider support networks without the need for state intervention

4.   Methodology, Actions and Learning

Choosing the Hyperlocal Areas

The selection of the hyperlocal area was based on (a) statistical data, (b) conversations with people who work in the areas, (c) Observations on walks and drives around each four areas, and (d) Conversations with people in each area.

a)   Indices of health and disability deprivation, and prevalence of older people

To compile evidence for selection of the four hyperlocal areas we began by mapping the Health Deprivation and Disability domain of the English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (MCHLG) which provides a summary measure of premature death, illness and disability, acute morbidity and mood and anxiety disorders. It shows areas with high prevalence of health deprivation and disability. The map at figure i shows 60 areas in Essex with particularly high levels of health deprivation and disability, highlighted in purple. Together these areas constitute the 7% most deprived areas in terms of people's health and disability. Areas outlined in red indicate the 10% most deprived on the composite measure of multiple deprivation which includes income, employment, crime and access to services. The majority of purple shaded and red outlined areas are in Tendring (35), Basildon (10) and Colchester (10) with others in Harlow, Braintree and Castle Point.

b)   Conversations with Social Care, Health and Voluntary and local community organisations and representatives and Project Group members with local knowledge

Members of the Project Group contributed information from their various networks about identified areas which had recently been involved in high intensity engagement or intervention activities. Together they agreed on four potential areas to engage local residents in street conversations. These were in Laindon, Dovercourt, Canvey Island; and Parkeston.

c)   Observations on walks and drives around each four areas and Conversations with people in each area

The researchers then visited the potential areas to learn more about them. During these visits they had impromptu conversations with people, and identified community resources, including local shops, cafes and pubs, community halls and observed notifications of organised events and activities.

On walks researchers discussed the project with those who wanted to talk, including shop keepers, postal workers, social/community workers, and residents. They also met with volunteers and staff at local community organisations. All this information fed into the agreement about the choice of the four hyperlocal areas.

i.   Map1. Essex LSOA Health Deprivation and Disability
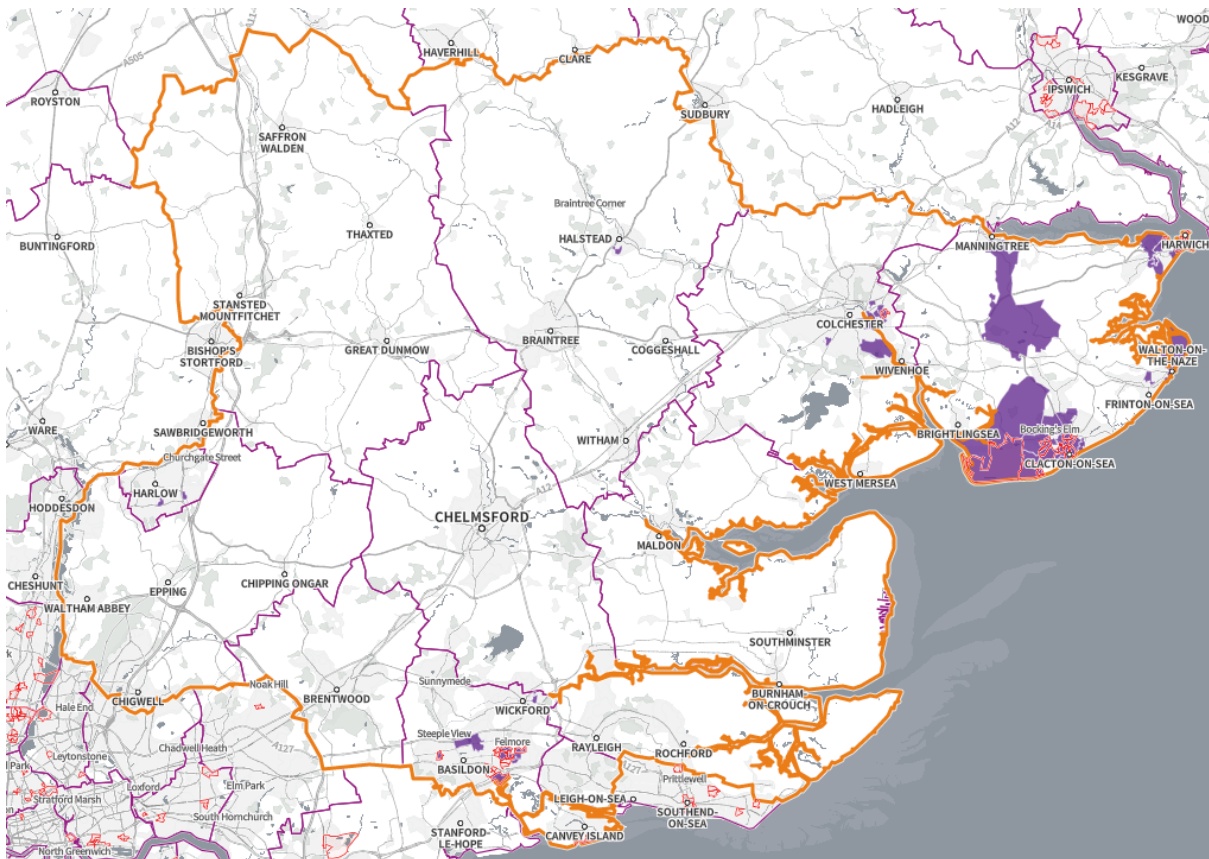
Ultimately, a decision was taken to choose areas that were similar and different using the following factors.

- how 'cared about' an area seemed, e.g., litter, fly-tipping, maintenance of housing, maintenance of street furniture and facades, and crime

- how much or little community activity there appeared to be, e.g., community spaces, notice of clubs and events

- the composition of local residents, e.g., social or private rental and homeowners, rehoused, older people, people living alone

Hyperlocal areas within Laindon, Dovercourt, Canvey Island; and Parkeston were finalised by the Project Group. We chose locations with a reasonable level of footfall to be able to talk to enough residents and achieve sufficient participants. In each area the researchers tried to position themselves when and where people might have more time for conversations, for example when they are not travelling to work or school, and found areas with light and space where people could feel safe, but not trapped or obliged to stop. Consultation with local organisations and representatives yielded local knowledge about the best places and times to conduct street conversations.

Letterbox Drop

A few days before the street conversations, the researchers posted project information sheets through the letterboxes of between 70 and 120 households and businesses within each hyperlocal

area. These informed residents and business about the project, invited questions, and offered arranged appointment times on request.

During the letterbox drop the researchers spoke with local residents and workers on the street. They also took opportunities to meet with local services and organisations. They explained the project, answered questions, and discussed the project. Some residents opted to arrange a time when they could hold a more in-depth conversation at a particular place or by phone. Some residents left their contact details so they could receive further information about the project.

This phase introduced the project to a number of people within the hyperlocal areas - who in some instances cascaded this knowledge to others - and found a number of people who wanted to be involved.

Street Conversations

We visited Laindon in November 2021, Dovercourt in December 2021, Canvey Island in April 2022 and Parkeston in May 2022. We approached people in the street and informed them about the project. We explained that we were interested to learn what was like to live in the area, the ways in which local people did or didn't support each other, and whether they would like to do more with others in the local area.

We did not formally collect the demographics of people as this was not conducive to the approach and timeframe of the conversations. However, through offering a chair or to walk alongside people, we helped facilitate the involvement of various people: older, with different life experiences, with various mental and physical disabilities, with children and with dogs, and with places to get to. Our sample probably over-represents dog-walkers who were more likely to be out and about than others!

The Street Conversation methodology engaged people as they walked and was not so conducive to longer conversations. There was insufficient time and privacy to enquire about participants individual diversities. We opted to document the perceived or mentioned age and gender of the person and whether they had a visible or mentioned disability, or mentioned caring roles. The nature of our conversations around support and well-being meant that many participants referred to either their own health or disabilities, or their caring responsibilities. These included experiences of depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, loneliness, diabetes, dementia, Alzheimer's, cancer, and the responsibilities of caring for children, older people, and those with disabilities.

People talked freely about the local area and community. When participants fell silent, the researchers prompted with questions such as whether they knew people locally, if they ever spoke or did anything together, or did anything to help each other. The conversations tended to evolve quite naturally, following the interests of people in the street.

All conversations took place between 10 and 1pm on weekdays, with lengths of conversations ranging between 5 and 30 minutes. Length of conversations was impacted by the seasons, the weather conditions, and the time and willingness of participants to talk.

 ii. Table to show the number of people involved in street conversations.

	Laindon	Dovercourt	Canvey Island	Parkeston

Number of information sheet letter box dropped	70	120	80	100
Number of people informed about project on the street	14	20	5	13
Number of people engaged in Street Conversations / Parkeston Luncheon Club	10	16	16	8/7=15

During fieldwork the researchers heard from people of different political views and different views about what would be best for the community, about amenities and ways of life. The researchers were able to engage with and listen to local drug users, as well as those who lamented drug dealing and saw drug dealing and use as integral to the decline of community space. Researchers felt that these conversations on the same day and at the same location with people from different walks of life and different views and values were made possible in part by their "outsider" status. The researchers were trusted as independent and impartial, and they were able to respect and value whatever people wanted to share about their neighbourhood and the community. This perception of impartiality would likely have been affected by the presence of people strongly affiliated to particular political parties or local government organisations.

5.   People's Views – Street Conversation summary

This section shares the emerging themes from street conversations in all four hyperlocal areas. It has developed from the four area summaries produced after street conversations in each hyperlocal area (available on request).

Born and Raised or New in Town

In each of the four hyperlocal areas, those who were *"born and bred"* there tend to have strong community connections with the place and their neighbours, and family living nearby. Friendships between neighbours had been forged over the decades, through growing up together, going to school together, through attending clubs, and through small unarranged events (such as cats being trapped under decking) leading to conversations.

> *I just went to see my friend, we went to school together, that's a long time ago. His wife died. She used to put the bird seed every day up at the top on the sea wall. She was missed by everyone, even the birds. (CI6)*

> *We stop and we chat when we bump into each other. We chat in the street when we see each other. If I was in trouble would ask them. We ask them for normal neighbourly stuff. Picking up the bins, move cars (CI12)*

When neighbours had lived near each other across generations, their relationships appeared to be particularly strong.

> *I live next door to my parents and the other side we live next door to an elderly gentleman who have known him since I was born really. My Nan and Granddad used to live in my house before I moved there and he's lived there all of the time I have been alive. Both me and my wife do things for him. Cooking dinner every night, taking him to the bank or doctors, popping in and helping in the garden and stuff like that always helping. We see him once or twice a day. (CI2)*

Meanwhile, some participants in all areas had moved from larger towns and cities, especially in Laindon and Dovercourt. Typically, they had been re-housed into the area or re-located for work. Researchers spoke with people who had been re-housed in the area who found their new neighbourhoods quiet and culturally different to where they had come from. Some had been moved from place to place. These people did not have extended family in the area and also received less community support than those who had grown up in the area. There was broad agreement that local communities could do more to welcome newcomers. It was intimated that people of a different background or culture might find it especially difficult to be accepted.

> *People aren't always welcomed so much because they come from a different culture mainly to what we've always had down here, well not always had, but you know what I mean. The older generation find it harder to adapt I think (DS11)*

The difficulties of getting settled in a new area were highlighted by one participant in particular. This person had been in town for a number of weeks and expressed real difficulty in getting registered with a GP: she was turned away from one surgery who said they were not taking any new patients, the second surgery she tried told her to go to the NHS England website to register. At the time of speaking she did not know how to do this and had therefore not registered with a GP. This person had moved here two months previous and not yet spoken with anyone local at all: the

conversation she had with the researcher was the first time she had spoken with anyone in the street.

Whilst some connections were deepened during lockdowns, there were also people who had missed involvement with the local community during this period, and newcomers who had not had the usual opportunities to meet their new neighbours. Long term Dovercourt residents were keen for newcomers to enjoy Harwich's coast and its heritage, and some felt that that it was their role to share the best of the area with newcomers.

Long term residents were more likely to be home owners than newcomers who typically rented (private and social). In Parkeston and Dovercourt it was observed that renters don't have the same stake in the community as home-owners. Local landlords were reported to do little toward maintaining the properties. More limited connections with locals seemed correlated with the perceived lower level of concern for the area's maintenance and improvement. For example, renters were reported as more likely to drop litter and less likely to stop and talk with their neighbours in the street where that litter is dropped. Conversely those who spend time talking with neighbours in the street are more likely to be involved in cleaning up the local area, arguably because they care more about where they live and the people who live there. Young people were also reported to be more likely to litter-drop with some older residents felt that they showed less respect for the area than others.

People said renters were less likely to be involved in local community life and also less likely to know someone who could help them in a time of need.

> *At my end of the street people would probably help each other out with a problem because most of them have lived there for years so you would help each other. The other end of the street is different, not such a community as the properties are mostly rented out and people haven't lived here long (DS11)*

Changing Society

In the small village of Parkeston many of the people spoken with still felt like they did know and speak with most of their neighbours, but long-term residents from Canvey Island, Dovercourt and Laindon were clear that community spirit and life had been stronger in the past. They remembered the old days, when *"everyone knew everyone"* and they were *"in and out of each other's houses"*, and said it was different now.

> *… there's not that community spirit we had in the days where you could leave it open that's gone. 20 years ago I could come home from school and there were a mobile phones there wasn't the Internet and my mum was out like so I would go round my aunties and if my auntie wasn't in I would go round my other aunties and if she wasn't in I would go round my nans and get the bit of string and key out of the letter box and let myself in. It was based on family and friends really (CI13)*

> *I lived here in the 70 s and felt a sense of community then. I belonged to a church, a young peoples church, there was a lot going on. I think the community was quite good, it was a lively in area and is changed so much now. With everything that's changing in the country. Its different times. You look back and you think it wasn't like that then, it was easier for you then to get help when you needed it. (CI14)*

Everybody used to get together there's a lot of things now that he's gone there is not that community spirit (CI14)

Laindon participants remembered that when they had come to live on the estate decades previous, the local council officer had helpfully introduced neighbours to each other with similar interests. Long term residents across the hyperlocal areas observed a change in community life across the UK as a whole and speculated on reasons for this, making particular reference to the influence of technology making society more global, the faster pace of life these days, and how mothers now often go out to work.

Community Support

Most neighbours appeared to greet each other and said there were people who *"would help if you needed help"*. However, in each area there were also those who said that they did not speak to anyone locally and that did not feel that they could turn to neighbours for support.

Meanwhile work and caring responsibilities reduced the abilities of participants across all hyperlocal areas to take part in local activities. Full time workers and carers are less in touch with their neighbours than other residents with more disposable time.

Examples of the kinds of local support that some gave and received included collecting children from school, walking dogs, shopping, housework, doing DIY together, checking on the house when its empty, and generally looking out for each other and checking everyone's alright, offering a friendly ear to people going through difficult times, visiting each other, walking together, and sharing a beer at the pub or allotments.

In two Parkeston interviews, participants spontaneously remarked that they would move house if they didn't have such good neighbours. Whilst not all Parkeston participants felt they were part of the 'community', most did feel that neighbours would help them if they asked. Not everyone was invited to the main jubilee celebrations: some events overtly excluded children whilst others were invite-only. For the majority however the overwhelming sense was of a community people could count on - whether or not they were part of the in-crowd – for help as and when it was needed.

On Canvey Island strong connections and caring activities were shown between neighbours who had lived next to each other for long periods of time. Neighbours particularly supported older generations by bringing food to each other, shopping or helping around the house and garden. Neighbourly support changed over time according to needs, altering the relationship between neighbours.

I used to care for two old people anyway both of them have passed sadly but I used to go round to make the cup of tea have a chat... My neighbour was looking after someone she couldn't do it anymore so I got involved and then there was a man he lived on my road and we used to talk as friends, anyway I used to go in and help him have a wash and stuff like that for about seven years. (CI9)

In Laindon some participants expressed disappointment that support coordinated during lockdowns had come to an end, saying that they were still willing to shop for others and befriend those with limited connections.

In Laindon and Dovercourt connections were hampered by local crime and the fear of crime. In Dovercourt and Laindon, people said that they didn't feel safe in the area, particularly at night

when *'It's pitch black'* (DC2). They said more street lighting and police presence would reduce their fears in the evening.

> *There's one light. A lot of people are scared to walk down the alley after dark which is perfectly understandable. (DC5)*

Participants in Laindon and Dovercourt reported that they were too frightened to go out during twilight and dark hours. In Laindon, children and families did not use the playground because it was littered with drug paraphernalia.

A number of people in Dovercourt explained that they purposefully kept their heads down to avoid conflict. Here drug use is problematic, overt and usual as one pair of residents reported in the following quotes:.

> *It's not too bad living round here. There's a drug problem obviously.   The drug problem's the main thing. It's open and during the day. The young people see it.*

> *You can't look at people. If you look at people, they'll say, 'What the [pause] you looking at?'. The majority of them, they're trying to impress they're mates, and they belong in gangs.*

> *We just keep our heads down. Don't like drama. We'll keep ourselves to ourselves if that's alright. (DS6)*

Another person described the area as having '*a lot of drama*' and expanded that *'we're always on Crimewatch'*.

There were different reports about police presence in Dovercourt: one person said they would like to see more police and complained that they don't come straight away when they're called, whilst another laughed as he told us that *"police do patrol this area quite frequently because a lot of things do happen around here. They come a couple of times a day, usually to visit someone".*

In Laindon, there was mistrust between neighbours because of drug dealing in the area, which contributed to reduced community connections (and increased isolation). The approach and actions of the housing association and police to monitor and address this activity have not yet alleviated the high level of dealing activity.

Community Activities

In Parkeston community life was supported by a range of activities organised by the councillors and volunteers including daily litter collection by a group of volunteers, fundraising for community park and football team, Luncheon club, and Jubilee celebrations and gatherings. The councillors also put together a (usually monthly) newsletter, the printing of which is funded through local advertising.

People at Parkeston luncheon club told the researchers they felt comfortable and accepted. The space and activity was hosted by a local councillor who welcomed groups and individuals and mingled between the tables. The club offers a space where people of different ages and from different walks of life can connect and enjoy their time together.

In Laindon participants were aware of few or no local initiatives that inspired connections between local people and families. Local provision includes Laindon Centre and Working Men's Clubs. These organisations enabled connection for some residents but membership fees which were a

prohibitive barrier to access for some people who said they would like to join local events at these places if money were no issue.

In Dovercourt especially, the majority of participants told us they would appreciate more options of things to do locally. There was a call for a wider offer of things to do and places to go that facilitated more opportunities for community connections. Discussion about activities led to a mapping of resources and activities in and around Dovercourt by age group, alongside associated issues elicited from participants.

On Canvey Island, research participants shared that the majority age of residents was over 60 years. There appeared to be few opportunities for intergenerational connection, excepting those which took place within families or which took place between families with children. There are also limited resources, such as clubs or amenities, where young adults can socialise, mix, or connect and they therefore go outside of the area for social activities.

> *"No it's not vibrant colour community everyone is sort of Mum and Dad age in their sixties". (CI2)*

> *I think there should be more for younger people really they should be a lot more parks for my little man's growing up. I don't think there's a lot for them. (CI11)*

> *We feel like we're the youngest on the street. There is another young person opposite but we don't see him. (CI14)*

> *There's a lot older generation in Canvey and the younger generation just accepts that you just need to travel to Benfleet or London or somewhere. We spend time in the Benfleet clubs, there's not great options here really. If you looking for a club for younger people then it's not the place to be (CI15)*

On Canvey Island there were church and community groups available for older residents, although the strength and frequency of these was unclear from conversations.

> *I know an old lady. She is 99 years old she goes out to clubs. All her friends have died so she's on her own and the younger women that are there really don't look out for her too much. She has a friend across the road my brother does a bit shopping for her and takes her some lunches (CI14)*

Some Canvey participants noted a lack of peer support groups for carers and expressed interest in helping setting up community to establish mechanisms of community support.

> *There's nothing for dementia on the island. There are a few dementia people on the island and I'd like to chat and think that you're not doing all on your own thinking (CI16)*

> *I would have interested in making chat spaces, especially on a dementia basis and for parents of children with special needs. Everything costs and that's what I found difficult. Like a drop in once a week couple of hours or even once a month to so start with. (CI18)*

In all four areas, whilst there was recognition of a need to connect with older and more isolated residents, however, engaging young people in positive activities emerged as the primary concern: with a shared concern around the limited range of positive activities available to young people locally. In Dovercourt and in Laindon participants particularly expressed concern that young people without positive intervention are at serious risk of turning to vandalism, drug misuse and dealing.

Our parents used to do things but nowadays there's nothing anymore for the kids. It's a bit worrying really... ... I just see them hanging around the streets and I just think they're all going to end up on drugs or selling them cause that's all the next step... .... Parents don't have time to organise anything, or money (DS13)

Teentalk in Dovercourt is well-known locally for offering young people support for emotional wellbeing, including special needs and lived experience of domestic abuse. Teentalk also empower young people to co-design and deliver positive activities. Some participants felt that Teentalk was not appropriate for people 'without' mental health problems, and others said that people are put off joining in Teentalk activities for fear of being stigmatised as having mental health problems.

In both Dovercourt and Laindon, participants expressed a sense of injustice about the allocation of public resources and how other areas in close proximity (such as Clacton and Basildon town) appeared to receive greater funds to provide activities for young people.

Community Spaces

Canvey participants reported a specific culture of greeting people when on the seafront, saying hello to everyone, often not knowing their names. Walking dogs brings people together for casual conversation.

We don't know people by name we just talk to them they're just dog owners. We wouldn't know if someone wasn't here (CI3 & 4)

It's quite nice to take the dog out in the mornings down the beach. Everyone's quite friendly in the morning, saying hello to each other and you see the same faces. I think the beach makes everyone feel a bit happier. As soon as you get off of the beach no one says hello and good morning which is fine but it's a general observation. Everyone says morning on the beach (CI15)

In Parkeston the playground, playing fields, park and free to use basketball courts were enjoyed by those spoken with. The local allotments were mentioned as a place to garden, relax and meet friends, though it is not as well-used as it was in times gone by. The river was also mentioned as a place which was more of a community resource in times gone by: one said there used to be lots of swans and fish but not anymore as it needed a clear up.

Shared spaces such as the seafront, parks and playgrounds can enable community connections. There is a perception of openness to conversation on the seafront in particular (although some also used this space as a place for private reflection). However, community space is not only nature and greenery: the closure of the Laindon shopping centre was noted by many to have reduced the local opportunity for connections to be made between people as they shop. Laindon residents are disappointed that plans to rebuild the shopping centre do not include a community space such as a café. Participants in Parkeston, Dovercourt, and especially in Laindon, commented that they would like more local shops. They explained this would not only be convenient, but would provide more opportunities to bump into neighbours.

The impact and importance of the aesthetics of these four areas was clear. Some spaces appear to predispose different kinds of people to interact. For example, the poor maintenance of playgrounds in Dovercourt and Laindon discourages families from going there. The playgrounds are

instead occupied by young people who are not engaged in positive activities and lack other places to meet.

In Dovercourt participants lamented the general look of the area, with extensive fly-tipping.

There are parts that are a little bit less desirable, like where we are right now [laughs]. I do the school run so I walk past here every day and it's quite depressing seeing all of this [gestures toward fly tipping]. It's everywhere. (DS7)

Participants were aware that fly-tipping impacted on the local area and the people who live there.

The sooner something else is built there, the better! (DC4)

If the area was cleared up, people might respect it a bit more. (DC5)

Dovercourt people proposed steps that could be taken to eliminate fly tipping for the long term through providing practical means for people to dispose of unwanted items, such as local facilities where people could dispose of unwanted beds and sofas or local collections of unwanted goods. Other suggestions were painting walls to make them look nicer; making public facilities harder to damage, (eg stainless steel toilet facilities in the local park); and so on. It was not however straightforward to resolve the issues. In one area with concentrated fly tipping, it was explained that the site owner had made efforts to put up boards around their property, but these had been stolen and the problem persists.

In Dovercourt, people wanted the council to do more to reduce levels of littering. In contrast, residents of Parkeston and on Canvey Island have organised themselves to maintain and improve the local area. On Canvey Island seaside murals and painted benches at Concord Beach on Canvey Island brought community pride, and facilitated conversations about the history and culture of their local area. *Friends of Concord Beach* is a community organisation which has supported the development of murals along the length of the seawall for approx. 1.5 km. This organisation has gained grants and sponsorship from residents and businesses to provide and maintain benches along the stretch of the seafront. They arrange regular beach cleans and have worked to raise funds and establish processes with the Environment Agency to install a water fountain and paddling pool.

I know the Concord Beach community do a lot down here. They keep the beaches clean for the children, they keep all these pools clean for the children. That's part of it. I think it's great. People come down and do a painting on the wall makes it looks bright, and enables people here to say, this is our community. (CI14)

These murals have never been defaced, meaning there is pride and respect of their beauty and worth across all generations on Canvey Island. (CI3)

I like the murals along the front I think what it does what it brings its colour and also the togetherness where it gives you something to talk about so that you can talk to people as a way that was great was a net and yeah but I saw that as well and that gets people talking. (CI6)

In Parkeston a rota of volunteers had been established to coordinate daily litter picking.

 "The Friends of Concord Beach" on Canvey Island and the Local Councillors in Parkeston - has established and coordinated activities to contribute to community pride and increase community

connections showing the importance of motivation, time, resources, organisation and leadership skills by community catalysts. See section 6 on Community Catalysts.

<u>People who want to do more</u>

Whilst the focus of the street conversations was on 'Community Connections', participants raised topics which affected them. Some in Dovercourt just wanted to keep their heads down and stay out of trouble, others were keen to join together to do something positive for and with the local community.

> *We should try and do something together. I haven't got the money to do anything but I could put the time in. I've got time and I'd love to help… … I'd just like to do something for the kids and for the community. Otherwise it's just going to go downhill. (DS13)*

On Canvey Island, there were many potential Community Catalysts who could be engaged further with second conversation.

The strong community in the hyperlocal area within Parkeston village is – at least in part - attributed to the support and facilitation offered by two popular local councillors, described as "an absolute diamond" and "a Cadillac". People said they enjoyed a moan and a bit of banter with the local councillors.

6.   Community Catalysts

Community Catalysts are residents who show an interest in undertaking actions locally which support other residents or community activities building community resources and assets. Potential Community Catalysts have been identified through the street conversations.

In initial street conversations at the close of 2021, the focus was on community activities, assets and connections. Later conversations in Spring 2022, researchers additionally asked about the barriers or facilitators which support local residents to connect with or support neighbours.

In early 2022, following the first set of street conversations in Laindon and Dovercourt, interviewees who would or wanted to do more with and for their local community were identified. The project team called these people Community Catalysts and provided them with real examples of how social microenterprises and community advocacy groups were set up to bring inspiration. These people had the potential to act as catalysts to spark more meaningful connections with others living locally and researchers realised that structures to meaningfully engage and support self-identified community catalysts after street conversations was needed. Members of the Project Group recognised that they were well-positioned to facilitate support for potential "Community Catalysts".
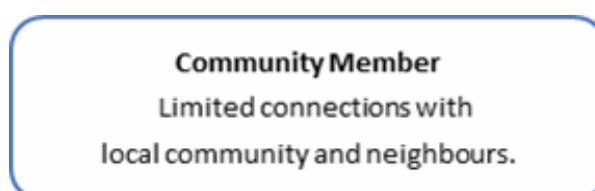
Follow- on funding has been awarded to develop structures to meaningfully involve and support Community Catalysts between July and December 2022. This involves providing examples of the Community Catalysts role to enable visualisation, (such as setting up coffee chats, or visiting neighbours, gardening, shopping) and to provide skills for community catalysts to undertake future street conversations and provide a community voice in groups and forums. Follow up conversations therefore need to share the mechanisms of support which can be provided by Project Group organisations and to understand individual needs, motivations, and circumstances.

In the street conversations on Canvey Island (April 2022), more conversations about community activities and community support and how participants felt about it were encouraged. One half (8 out of the 16 participants) showed an interest in the role of Community Catalyst, to provide local support for local residents. The community culture on Canvey Island might be a significant factor in producing this high number of participants who showed an interest in the role and this high percentage may be reduced in areas with a different community culture.

The four sets of street conversations in the hyperlocal areas led the project team to develop a scale that identifies potential Community Catalysts.

Interview participants expressed whether they wanted to engage with neighbours or be involved in community activities; were interested in attending groups, local events, or community activities; or wanted to be involved in arranging community activities; or were organising community activities.

 iii. Community Catalyst identification scale

Community Member
Limited connections with
local community and neighbours.

Active Community Member
Active connections with
local community and neighbours.

Potential Community Catalysts
interested in being more proactive, could
benefit from support

Active Community Catalysts
sets up groups or community resources or
builds community assets or coordinates
neighbourhood activities

1. **Community Member**

   May have limited connections with local community and neighbours.

   Participants were not interested in being connected with the local community or neighbours.

2. **Active Community Member**

   Has active connections with the local community and neighbours.

   Participants wanted to attend established community groups, or wanted support at home, or to connect with and do things with neighbours and local people.

3. **Potential Community Catalyst**

   Interested in being more proactive, could benefit from support.

   Participants stated that they were interested in doing more to make things happen locally, in supporting their community and knowing more about becoming a Community Catalyst.

4. **Active Community Catalysts**

   Sets up groups or community resources or builds community assets or coordinates neighbourhood activities.

   Participants were already Community Catalysts and either setting up groups or community resources, building community assets, or supporting neighbours individually. These people may benefit from being part of a local Community Catalyst network and some additional support.

Potential Community Catalysts are classified as residents in category 3 and the follow-on phase will engage these residents further after initial street conversations.

The project team presented the project findings and concept of the Community Catalysts to people and organisations online in October 2022. Participants endorsed the model to hold Street Conversations, engage Community Catalysts and connect them to the organisations working in hyperlocal areas. The organisations represented at the event saw a model to work collaboratively to support Community Catalysts as beneficial. They agreed with the project team that local community connections (and therefore wellbeing) would be maximised through creation of a pivotal coordination role around the role of Community Catalysts. This role could not only support the process to find potential Community Catalysts and support them to take action, but also connect them with the local infrastructure of place-based organisations to further grow coordinated assets and sustainability.

> *"Essentially, we are all looking to seek and find Community Catalysts and there is a need for coordinated working at a hyper-local level. The bit that needs investment in, is that being present, in the community having the conversations part, finding those local people that are interested and how we support them. The core thing that has been missing is the work that you are doing, finding those people directly [Community Catalysts]".*

Online Participant 11.10.2022

The Follow-on phase will further hone the scale and develop structures of support around Community Catalysts. Street conversations will aim to engage participants in categories 3 and 4, arranging additional conversations to explain more about the project and the support already available to support them from Project Groups members in growing community connections. Participants will be asked what further support would be beneficial to encourage their involvement as Community Catalysts, working with other place-based organisations.

The first project phase has enabled the development of the concept of the Community Catalysts. It has began the process to identify and support Community Catalysts and has enabled the identification of support structures which will be underpinned by the values of 'meaningful involvement'. It has shown that street conversations enabled identification of potential Community Catalysts in hyperlocal areas and that enthusiasm and momentum can be maximised when follow up conversations are arranged almost immediately after the initial "street conversation".

Forming a group of supported Community Catalysts could enable the growth of community voice and provide mechanisms of support. On Canvey Island this could assist residents to inform the local Council about their concerns about planning and building.

7.   Barriers to Community Involvement

Summaries of each area's street conversations were shared with the residents who had taken part and who had provided their contact details. At the same time, people were offered a second conversation.

The researchers learnt that interviewees who provided contact details should be contacted within a short timeframe to offer a follow up a conversation on a one-to-one basis.

The people interested in having a follow up conversations tended to be those who had expressed a strong interest in arranging community activities or those who were already Community Catalysts. Second conversations were also arranged with people who were apprehensive about becoming involved in community activities and who agreed to talk about the barriers to becoming more active in their local community.

iv. Table to show number of people contacted after street conversations.

	Laindon	Dovercourt	Canvey Island	Parkeston
Number of people contacted after street conversations	9	7	7	7
Number of people responding to follow-up text/email/letter	5	1	-*	-*
Number of second interviews	2	1	1	1
Potential Community Catalysts	0	1	8	1

*Follow up contacts initiated September 2022.

Initial Street Conversations and Second Conversations revealed the barriers and concerns people have which deter them from starting up or being involved in community activities. Six inter-related barriers were identified, alongside potential actions to address these The Conclusion and Next Steps of this report show the actions that will be taken in the Follow-on phase.

v. Barriers to Community Involvement

1. Personality
Being involved in community activities is not compatible with everyone's personality.
I want to just sit with one person and have a chat. I'm not one to go up and say hello, how are you? It's my personality really. I think there is a type of person who could do that. I could certainly could do it for family and friends, that's fine I don't know if I could take that step out to strangers' (LDs1)
Follow-on phase actions :- Use meaningful involvement methodologies to understand the small changes in environments and methods of communication which might enable some individuals to find comfortable ways to become more involved.

2. Levels of confidence
Some people do not feel they have the confidence to contribute to community activities and events and are unsure how to start something new.
I'm not sure…. I'll talk to my daughter and I know what she will say……go on, go and do something (LDt3)
Follow-on phase actions:- provide support for people to grow their confidence and their skills, and provide the right environment for them to feel purposeful in community activities.

3. Local support and inspiration
Some people would like the support of local groups and people around them if they were to become involved in community activities. They would not like to start something alone. Some people would like to contribute to the activities inspired by other people, groups and activities.
I don't really have any apprehensions about getting involved in a new group. I think I would be quite up for joining in and helping-out as it happens. I'm not terribly motivated about doing things individually but if other people want to get it going, I would help out (LDt1)
Follow-on phase actions:- Connect local people together who express an interest in becoming involved in community activities. Provide details of local groups and activities. Encourage partnership and collaboration to develop new groups and activities.

4. Safety and trust in the area
Local areas where people feel unsafe and want to 'keep their heads down' creates barriers for people to become involved in community activities.
'I think I'm too old to be involved in community activity…. I mean I know people sell drugs here and I know the family that sells drugs and they have boys on bikes delivering it which is not very nice but then again, that's what they do. I'm not scared because as long as you keep your thoughts and things to yourself. I mean I would never report them. (LDt3)'

Follow-on phase actions:- Work with residents and support them to have a voice to address the concerns of local residents, to alleviate their fears around safety.

5. Caring Responsibilities and Employment
Both caring and financial responsibilities restrict time to be involved in community activities
'My work and my children who all have disabilities or needs is all I have time for. I don't have time for luxury groups. There is really nothing around here. It is hard not being in contact with other parents, but there isn't anything near, the closest thing is as a support group that is impossible to get to on public transport, its 5 miles away. When they were babies there was quite a lot, but since they pass preschool there's nothing' (LDt4)
Follow-on phase actions:- For those keen to participate more in community life, offer support to make community connections or undertake community activities in time and space alongside or around their caring and other responsibilities. (For example, after 5pm meet ups, parent and child groups or groups for disabled people and their carers)

6. Responsibilities around community activities
People expressed reluctance at starting a community activity through fear that the demands of the activity would escalate and there would be nobody to turn to, or people would have no one to hand over the responsibility of the activity to if they were no longer able to continue.
'I would like to see some more volunteers come along. I get a bit concerned sometimes, I'm getting older and not in great health and I'd like someone to come and take over the reins a bit. How that would happen I don't know. We are always on the lookout for that person but I don't know how you find the person. We just hope someone will come along. People say to me 'why don't you do this or that….a life long wish of mine is to hear someone say 'I would like to do this or that' as part of your group. (CIs1)
Follow-on phase actions:- Build a group of local Community Catalysts to support each other, bring individual skills, to be aware of community activities and contribute to their development.

8.   Dissemination

Information sharing and engagement of the wide-ranging stakeholders of the *Community Connections Essex Local Learning* took place throughout the project in order to facilitate opportunities for feed-back and involvement. Project group members presented at forums and groups across Essex to share information about actions, methodologies and people's views. Summaries of findings in the hyperlocal areas were disseminated as they became available. Researchers attended the Micro Enterprise Change Groups, Regional Alliances, Essex County Council Adult Social Care Managers and Commissioners, and various local partnership groups. Through these meetings the project team reached over 300 people from voluntary and community organisations, local authorities and the NHS.

The overwhelming response from these people and organisations was positive, revealing much interest in the model developed through *Community Connections Essex Local Learning*. Meeting attendees welcomed further involvement in *Community Connections Essex Local Learning*, hearing residents' "views on the ground", contributing their own knowledge and suggestions, and asking the project team to return to update their groups at a later stage. Some were concerned that this project duplicated other projects and there was discussion around differences and similarities. There was broad agreement that *Community Connections Essex Local Learning* offered something unique. People offered to cascade information about the project and opportunities to get involved across their networks. They observed synergies with other work in Essex on co-production, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), post-pandemic work to grow community assets, and the local Levelling Up strategy to Improve Life Chances, and made suggestions as to how other projects could dovetail. The Project Group grew to incorporate new members as a result of their suggestions of relevant people and organisations who would like to be involved. The researchers have been invited to return to groups at the close of the project to share findings.

Learning from these presentations included having more than one *Community Connections Essex Local Learning* representative present at engagement meetings to enable the collection of suggestions, questions and contacts whilst presenting. Although dissemination presentations produced follow on actions, funding was not available to respond to these. The project would have benefited from further dissemination resources to facilitate follow on actions and additional activities such as connecting with local, national, and international Community Asset, Co-production and Meaningful involvement projects and processes; attending meetings with other projects; and using social media such as Twitter.

9. Conclusion

The methodology and approach developed through this project has been met with interest by Essex County Council, Project Group members and wider academic circles. It builds community connections, resources, and assets, enables community voice, and can be emulated in other local areas and local authorities with appropriate allocation of co-ordination resources and expertise.

This model poses an appealing framework to elicit local knowledge and build community connections, resources, and assets with restricted level of resources. It uses Expert by Experience, meaningful involvement, coproduction, and empowerment methodologies to engage, train and support Community Catalysts which in turn enables a sustainable legacy after implementation.

During this project, local organisations have become engaged in the Project Group to co-produce this sustainable and low resource model of intensive hyperlocal engagement. The development of these locally developed models will continue through the next phase.

Through conversations in dissemination activities, this model aligns with co-production, place based, community building, and microenterprise strategies of Essex County Council Adult services. Public Health, Local Government organisations, and local Voluntary and Community organisations who have expressed an interest in the impact created if the model is rolled out across Essex.

Presentations to forums and groups across Essex have enabled the sharing of insight, and built synergies with Statutory, Voluntary and Community organisations around community engagement and asset building in Essex which will continue.

Street conversations with residents have inspired residents to think more about what they can do to increase their connections with others locally, and underlined the value of these in improving local health and wellbeing.

Community Connections Essex Local Learning has developed a model to engage communities, build community assets and raise community voice. Learning from the project has the potential to be shared further through the development and publishing of academic papers.

10. Next Steps

Follow-on funding has been sourced from the University of Essex Impact Acceleration Account for the next stage of the project between July and December 2022, to engage more Community Catalysts and build support structures around them.

The focus of the Follow-on project (July to December 2022) is to further develop the model. A toolkit will be developed including street conversation methodology, avenues to support interested Community Catalysts to engage in or build community activities, materials to train Community Catalysts to conduct street conversations and support structures to involve Community Catalysts in dissemination activities.

Impact from this Follow-on project will create networking possibilities between local organisations to support Community Catalysts, enhance the skills and confidence of Community Catalysts, and allow for opportunities for community connections and assets to grow, both from street conversations and processes to connect Community Catalysts.

The Follow-on project will allow continued work between the University of Essex, Essex County Council and Project Group members to further develop the wider impact and sustainability of this project and model. It will further develop methodologies and support structures to engage, train, and support local Community Catalysts to undertake street conversations in their local areas and to develop their skills and confidence to be active voices in the project group, dissemination actions to local and regional forums and groups. It will produce local knowledge about community assets, community connections and structure mechanisms to build local community voice.

Community Catalysts will be connected to available resources such as the micro enterprise hubs or CVS services and supported by Project Group members in a networked environment to ensure their interest and motivations are supported.

The Project Groups members will continue to meet monthly, to network, co-produce the project, and provide the environment to support Community Catalysts.

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12. Appendices

Appendix 1

Laindon Street Conversation quote summary

Laindon residents say

I am worried about the old people they have nothing. The pensioners have got nowhere to go if they don't drive.

We think there is still a lot of people out there who will offer help and assistance to neighbours when situations call for it

She makes herself a cup of tea at my house upper house I make a cup of tea at my house and we have a chat.

We do a lot for the neighbours in our street. We were doing all the shopping during covid. I was a volunteer shopper

There is no lights on the playground. That light doesn't work, that light doesn't work. Actually, there are no lights as soon as you hit Laindon

This project is about giving local people a voice - we need it

I can't remember the last time I saw a community officer

Doing something for someone else makes you feel better

There is a lady on the corner that has seem me grow up and nobody bothers to check in with her, you know

Parents won't take their kids there. You have to clean it before. If you walk past you see half a dozen older kids sitting in there you are not going to let your kids in there in the morning. I used to come over here to the playground every day and pick up needles

Do you know your neighbours? Yeah Do you have them in your phone? No

All of the little gardeners used to come out. They use to put a little pot outside. Help yourself to the beans. They don't do that anymore, because no one can be trusted.

In the past when we moved into a estate the local council officer introduced neighbours to each other with similar interests

They do their estate inspection in the day, you don't see the truth during the day. So they know clearly there is a problem because they say they wouldn't walk around here at night, but we have to.

Dovercourt Street Conversation quote summary

Dovercourt residents say

"Where I live it's really close knit and everyone looks after each other… We all help each other… We've got a communal garden… people are out in the garden and working from home"

"I do feel sorry for the youngsters growing up cause there's not a lot for them to do"

"You can't look at people. If you look at people, they'll say, 'What the [pause] you looking at?' "

"Here and everywhere you go you've got a weed problem. You can smell it"

"If the area was cleared up, people might respect it a bit more"

"People aren't always welcomed so much because they come from a different culture mainly to what we've always had down here, well not always had, but you know what I mean. The older generation find it harder to adapt I think"

"We should try and do something together. I haven't got the money to do anything but I could put the time in. I've got time and I'd love to help… … I'd just like to do something for the kids and for the community. Otherwise it's just going to go downhill"

"We just keep our heads down. Don't like drama. We'll keep ourselves to ourselves if that's alright"

"Community Spirit is the answer"

"At my end of the street people would probably help each other out with a problem because most of them have lived there for years so you would help each other. The other end of the street is different, not such a community as the properties are mostly rented out and people haven't lived here long"

"There are parts that are a little bit less desirable, like where we are right now [laughs]. I do the school run so I walk past here every day and it's quite depressing seeing all of this [gestures toward fly tipping]. It's everywhere"

"There's one light. A lot of people are scared to walk down the alley after dark which is perfectly understandable"

Canvey Island Street Conversation summary

Canvey Island

Strong family ties and family generations living near each other on Canvey Island enables strong caring relationships. Community Connections between residents are predominantly made through generations living on Canvey Island, being neighbours, growing up together, going to school together, or through having children of the same age.

I know the Concord Beach community do a lot down here. They keep the beaches and pools clean for the children

The murals are beautiful it's lovely. It gives history and the things that go on in the area. It really brightens up your day and gives you something to look at. It brings colour and also togetherness, something to talk about

"Once upon a time Canvey was a hive of activity. People coming and going but now it seems to have a lul. I lived here in the 70s and felt a sense of community then".

"In lockdown, a neighbour and his wife did my shopping and stuff like that. They came into the garden. No I don't do any groups or coffee mornings."

"There are always new houses being built on Canvey is a lovely area what that's why everyone goes down here"

I know my neighbours well enough. We don't go for dinner together. We stop and we chat when we bump into each other. If I was in trouble would ask them and we do normal neighbourly stuff like picking up the bins

"No it's not a vibrant community everyone is sort of Mum and Dad age in their sixties".

There's nothing for dementia on the island.

I speak to loads of people along here all the time. I know the dog's by name I don't know people by name, its terrible.

"Everybody used to get together there's a lot of things now that he's gone there is not that community spirit"

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Parkeston Street Conversation summary

Parkston residents say

Would you like to be involved in any other way?

Yes, it's just the time. And my parents are both very elderly and need a lot of help so I do a lot for them. Even on my day off, it's not really a day off. I'm shopping for them and everything. C2

It's not as good as it used to be living round here, because the majority of housing is now rented out. There are a few undesirables about, but you get that anywhere... on the whole, it's a good crowd of people and most of them you've known for the majority of your life S4

I keep wanting to move but then I think well where am I going to get any good neighbours like I've got now? S2

I would like the area smartened up a bit. There was an old bungalow here which has been derelict for years and it was knocked down a couple of years ago but there's been nothing done since. C1

Everyone gets along. Used to live in XXX. It's more of a community round here. It's the people that make it. Everyone looks out for each other really. We've got the shop, the pub. Everyone knows each other because it's very small. A lot of people have been here all their lives. S3

There isn't much to do around here for the older kids, the teenagers... A safe place for them to go. C2

There's a bit of a monopoly in this village on the things available. As far as I'm aware everything's run through the council and there's a slight socialist overtone to it... There's a very narrow range of people who are accepted... I don't think I'll be going to the jubilee. As far as I'm aware the main things going on round here are by invite only... ... I expect it's the usual cronyism or clique element. It's not generally open to the public as far as I'm aware. C3

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