



**Children's  
Neighbourhoods  
Scotland**

**Children's  
Neighbourhoods Scotland  
Annual Report: 2020/21  
May 2021**

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# Foreword

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) annual report which provides an update and overview of progress during 2020-21.

As I write this foreword on the anniversary of the first 'lockdown' announcement, we are now in the situation of working our way out of a second national lockdown, and attempting to restore social, educational, and economic normality. Put simply, it has been an extraordinary year.

It is also clear that the pandemic has had a disproportionately negative impact on the lives and outcomes for children and young people from our most disadvantaged communities. The pandemic has shone the spotlight on, and exacerbated, inequalities in our poorest neighbourhoods. It is in these neighbourhoods that CNS serves to support and strengthen, the pandemic has made the work of CNS more relevant and important than ever before.

Whilst it has been an extremely challenging year, I am immensely proud of the response of the CNS team. During the initial lockdown, the team expanded the programme to document and investigate the impact of the pandemic on children and families. The findings have been shared with local and national government to inform the development of recovery advice and guidance in 'real time'. The CNS team have also continued to support our neighbourhoods both in person and online, as described in Section 3 of this report. This report is an opportunity to celebrate the work of CNS during 2020-21, and to acknowledge and thank the team for their dedication during this time.

The CNS team has also been busy building strong foundations in all six of our sites. The programme is now working in neighbourhoods in urban, town and rural settings and has expanded the team of community-based Local Coordinators. The Local Coordinators have worked tirelessly to build relationships with partners and add value to efforts on the ground in the most challenging of circumstances. The pandemic continues to impact the programme, and the team has responded by reflecting on and adapting activity as the context evolves and conditions change.

During these extraordinary times, CNS has managed to build effective partnerships and expand influence and reach, enhance impact, and share the learning from the programme across Scotland and beyond. A growing number of international collaborations are putting the CNS approach on the international stage as a leading example of innovation that is rooted in Scottish values, traditions, and ambitions.

Finally, I would like to thank the Scottish Government and our other funders, who without their ongoing investment and support we would not have been able to progress this timely and distinctive approach to improving the life chances and opportunities of children and young people. A sustained commitment to the approach will be required if we are to make progress on these intergenerational issues in a post-COVID world.

*Professor Chris Chapman*



*Principal Investigator  
Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, University of Glasgow*



# 1. Introducing Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

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Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) is a place-based programme working to improve outcomes for all children and young people in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. In partnership with children and young people, their families, and local public, private and third sector organisations, CNS is supporting efforts to reduce poverty and increase participation and capacity within communities. CNS is focused on strengthening the voices and promoting the priorities of children and young people and supporting partnerships and collaboration between organisations and services.

Place-based approaches have the potential to mitigate the effects of structural inequalities and improve outcomes for individuals and families living in areas of disadvantage.<sup>1</sup> CNS recognises that the effects of poverty are often geographically concentrated: with some areas experiencing higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation than others, and people's life chances being shaped by where they live.<sup>2</sup>

While it is evident that a number of complex issues affect children and young people's life chances and opportunities, it is clear that children and young people growing up in poverty face the greatest challenge in reaching their full potential.

CNS adopts a holistic, community-led, context-informed approach, driven by the views and involvement of local people and professionals. With a focus on making sustainable change in the lives of children and young people, CNS provides support over time and across the range of contexts, in which young people learn, grow and develop.



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<sup>1</sup> McBride, M. (2018). *Place-based approaches to support children and young people*. Glasgow: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> White, J. (2018). *Children's social circumstances and educational outcomes*. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland.

## Where is CNS working?

A total of six CNS sites have now been established and work is underway across all CNS communities as described in detail in Section 3. CNS is working in the urban communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, Castlemilk and Drumchapel in Glasgow city, Radnor Park in Clydebank in West Dunbartonshire, and the rural community of Rigside and the small town of Lanark in South Lanarkshire (Figure 1).

The first CNS site in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock was officially launched in March 2018. Our second site in Clydebank commenced in September 2019, and in October 2020, the CNS sites in Castlemilk, Drumchapel, Rigside and Lanark were established.

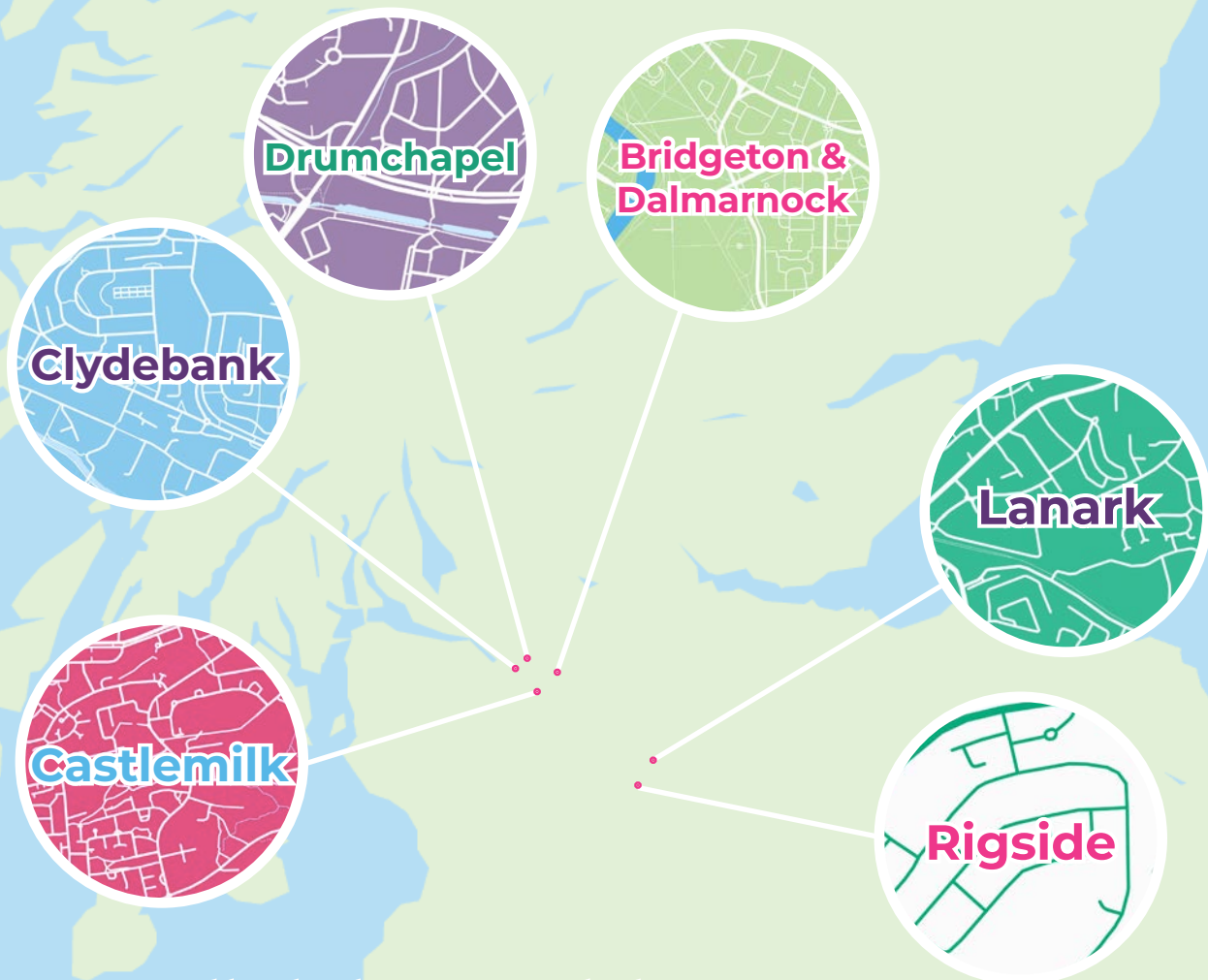


Figure 1: CNS neighbourhood sites across Scotland

# How CNS works

Building on our learning from the development of CNS to date, and drawing on the experiences and lessons learned from children’s initiatives nationally and internationally, CNS has developed a model of community- and place-based working tailored to the neighbourhoods CNS works with, and to the wider Scottish context.

Working in urban, small town and rural communities enables CNS to explore the transferability, sensitivity, and suitability of the approach in different geographical and socio-economic contexts and to make a contribution to the evidence base and literature on place-based approaches in practice. Early in the programme it was also decided not to restrict the age of children and young people that might be involved, and to have geographical site boundaries that were fluid in nature. This allows the programme to be as inclusive as possible, promoting engagement and participation across age groups, whilst maintaining a focus on the areas CNS is working in.

In all CNS activity, the focus is on building relationships to support local, strategic and community engagement and action. The COVID-19 pandemic brought the importance of this to the fore as local community-based and public sector organisations adapted and responded to the needs of local children, young people and families. The CNS reaction and response to the pandemic is discussed in detail in Sections 3 and 5.

Working across a range of communities, CNS activity in each neighbourhood focuses on promoting the priorities of children and young people; and supporting partnerships and collaboration between organisations. Priorities for action are distinctive to each area, responsive to existing local activity and

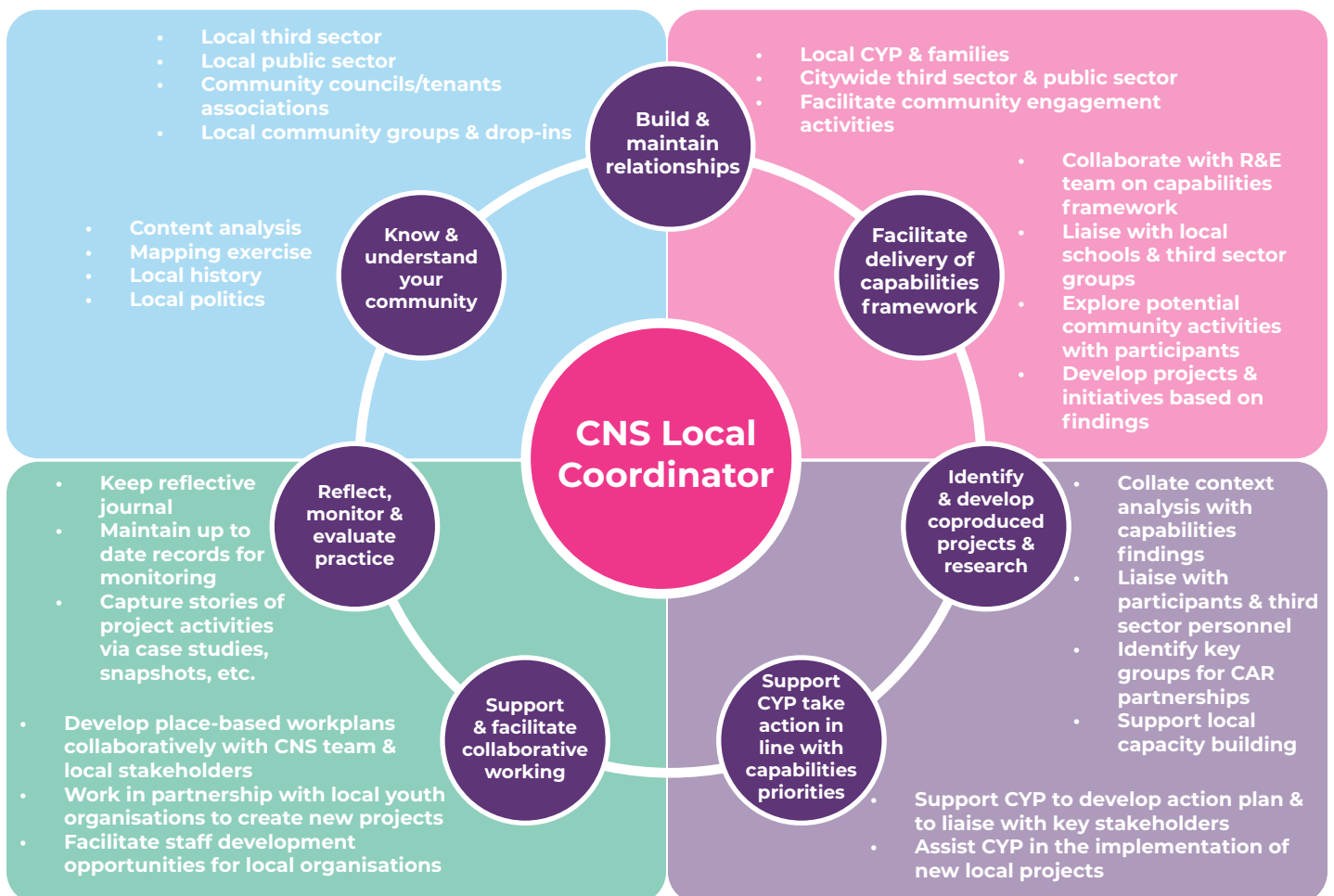


Figure 2: Overview of Local Coordinator skills and attributes



demographics, and focused on developing context specific responses and local solutions. This work is led by a CNS Local Coordinator, who is based in the neighbourhood and is the visible presence of the programme locally. In alignment with the Community Learning and Development Standards Council [Competences Framework](#), CNS Local Coordinators bring a range of attributes and skills to the role, as shown in Figure 2 above and described in detail in Section 3.

CNS has an embedded research and evaluation team. This distinctive operational aspect of CNS strikes a balance between supporting the development of the programme and maintaining a critical distance as evaluators. A variety of research approaches are being used in the programme, some of which will run throughout; some will be repeated at different intervals; while others are short-term in nature. Detail on our research and evaluation approaches and progress and learning from our COVID-19 research programme are presented in Sections 4 and 5.

## CNS Partnerships and support

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland is a partnership between the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) working with public, private and third sector organisations. CNS benefits from the ongoing financial and practical commitment and support of a number of partners.

CNS continues to be supported by the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan; [Every Child, Every Chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022](#) through the Helping Families in Other Ways range of actions, and a number of funders from the public and private sector. These include Ballie Gifford, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership and Glasgow City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council.



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

The diversity and number of partners, variations in size, context, demographics and existing local collaborative networks and structures differ significantly across the sites.

## The CNS Team

CNS brings together a team with a breadth of experience and knowledge of community and youth development and engagement, education, health and wellbeing and health inequalities. This is underpinned by an understanding of the social determinants of health, the impact of poverty on life chances and life opportunities and the circumstances which support children and young people to grow up in good health and to participate in and contribute to their community and society. Members of the team also have substantial experience as researchers in the evaluation of complex interventions and in participatory and collaborative projects in community settings.

The CNS Programme team provides management of the CNS team and resources, with a focus on day-to-day operational direction and delivery, partnership working across and within sites, and the sharing and dissemination of learning. The CNS Senior Leadership Team guides the strategic direction of the programme. The governance of CNS sits with the University of Glasgow.

## The CNS operating context

Using place as a focus enables CNS to connect with and contribute to the evidence base around priorities and strategies focused on children and young people in areas with high levels of disadvantage across the public policy spectrum. A number of national policy documents and strategies frame and guide the work of CNS and the context in which the programme operates.

In Scotland, policy in relation to children and young people is driven by the Children and Young Peoples (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Scottish Government's desire to make Scotland 'the best place in the world in which to grow up' and by the recently passed United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill 2021. A range of policies are in place to tackle child poverty and inequality, build resilient connected communities, ensure that all children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens, and that public services are built around individuals, families and communities.

The CNS operating context this year has also had to quickly adapt and respond to changing COVID-19 regulations and restrictions and to influence and contribute learning to the recovery agenda (see Sections 2, 5 and 6).

## Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an unprecedented impact on society. This impact has been particularly harsh for children and families, especially those already experiencing poverty and disadvantage. Parents and children have been faced with new and evolving sources of stress. Local and



national policy now have a focus on enhancing and maximising opportunities for children and young people as a group disproportionately impacted by the economic, educational and social disruption of COVID-19. The pandemic has also highlighted the relationship between income and health.

Since the start of the pandemic, CNS has helped to shape recovery responses and planning through contributions to the Glasgow City Council Public Health Oversight Board and Social Recovery Task Force, and the ‘communities and collective endeavour’ focus of the Scottish Government’s Social Renewal Advisory Group (see Section 6 on CNS Impact and Influence). These groups and policies recognise the immediate responses to the pandemic aggravated existing vulnerabilities with regard to poverty and socioeconomic inequality.<sup>3</sup> It is acknowledged that actions are required to better respond to the needs of specific groups, including people experiencing digital exclusion, access to transport, food poverty and insecurity and the most marginalised groups.<sup>4</sup> This aligns with the findings and recommendations from the CNS COVID-19 research programme (see Section 5).

## University of Glasgow

The CNS operating context is strengthened by our positioning within the University of Glasgow. This distinctive feature of CNS places a community-based programme within a higher education setting. Similar placed-based initiatives often have university partners but their role is mainly evaluative. Being within the university brings a number of benefits to CNS, including being seen as an indicator of quality and rigour due to the reputation of the institution, access to a large range of expertise and resource, and providing the University-employed Local Coordinators local neutrality.

Programmes like CNS also articulate well with and support the development of the civic university agenda. This is the commitment by the University to working in the wider interest of Glasgow and Scotland by pledging to put the economy and quality of life in the community top of its list of priorities.<sup>5</sup> This includes their capacity, resources, opportunities, and responsibilities to support the places where they are based to solve some of their most pressing social and economic problems.

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<sup>3</sup> *Turning the Tide Through Prevention: Public Health Strategy 2018-2028*. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. [www.stor.scot.nhs.uk/handle/11289/579831](http://www.stor.scot.nhs.uk/handle/11289/579831).

<sup>4</sup> *Remobilisation of Services Plan*. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (June 2020). [www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/261446/item-13-paper-20\\_29-nhsggc-remobilisation-plan-comb.pdf](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/261446/item-13-paper-20_29-nhsggc-remobilisation-plan-comb.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Civic University Agreement. [upp-foundation.org/leading-universities-pledge-commitment-to-local-communities/](http://upp-foundation.org/leading-universities-pledge-commitment-to-local-communities/)

## 2. CNS Programme Development 2020/21: Progress, Achievements and Insights

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The last 12 months have been a time of challenge, change and progress for CNS. In late March 2020, the CNS team, like many others, quickly moved to home working with a clear focus on continuing to develop, expand and strengthen the impact and reach of the programme from our new environments.

This report as a whole captures the progress of the CNS team during 2020-21, a year incorporating two COVID-19 lockdowns, a year of working within changing COVID-19 local and national restrictions, and a year of adapting and responding to shifting contexts and needs. During this time, as described throughout this report, CNS has provided ongoing support to our CNS communities and the organisations that work within them, continued to build relationships and partnerships, contributed evidence to inform the recovery phase of the pandemic, and build strong foundations for the ongoing programme. In last year's CNS annual report, a number of key priorities for the year ahead were outlined. Despite the unprecedented challenges of 2020, the CNS programme has delivered these key pieces of work and gone beyond what was expected.

This year has seen the expansion and development of the CNS team. Four new Local Coordinators joined the team in September 2020 to lead the work in the communities of Castlemilk and Drumchapel in Glasgow city and the communities of Rigside and Lanark in South Lanarkshire. The recruitment of the new Local Coordinators was undertaken in partnership with colleagues from the third and statutory sector in each area. The programme now has a dedicated Local Coordinator in each of our six sites, with locally tailored work underway in each area (see Section 3 for an overview of the work in each CNS site). Although the sites are contextually and demographically different, the approaches taken in these communities by the Local Coordinators demonstrate a shared set of principles and ways of working.

### *Building relationships and partnerships*

The importance of investing time in building and maintaining a wide range of relationships is a cornerstone of the approach taken by CNS. We absolutely recognise that the ability to improve outcomes for children and young people does not rest with a single organisation; it requires concerted and aligned action across a range of organisations, sectors, and policy and practice areas. The pandemic challenged and changed the ways the CNS team communicated with partners, as described in detail in Section 3. The team quickly moved to working with partners through digital platforms. As the restrictions eased, team members took the opportunity for face-to-face meetings where possible.

### *The impacts of COVID-19*

CNS' position working closely with communities meant that at the onset of the first lockdown in March 2020, the programme was well-placed to capture the early lessons and insights from local responses to the COVID-19 crisis. A new programme of research was quickly developed to capture the impact of COVID-19 on children and families and to highlight how communities and organisations were responding. The research was carried out with staff from the frontline organisations who were supporting vulnerable families across different geographical and socioeconomic contexts (from April to September 2020). This meant that CNS was able to contribute to the understanding of the impact of the public health emergency on children and families. A synthesis of the findings from this programme of research is presented in Section 5.

During this time, CNS worked hard to provide timely and accessible evidence outlining and assessing the community impacts of the pandemic to partners and local and national

policymakers. A series of COVID-19 Insight papers (starting in April 2020), detailed research reports and short briefings (see Section 8 for details and links) have enabled CNS to contribute to the evidence-informed intelligence about the impact of the pandemic on communities and offer suggestions for future responses and investments in the short and medium-term recovery phase.

### *The Capabilities approach*

The CNS use of the Capabilities Approach, described in further detail in Section 4, continues to be an underpinning feature of the programme, with interest and participation from partners, schools and children and young people respectively, even during the pandemic. The approach is a framework for understanding and measuring wellbeing, which prioritises the capabilities people need to live ‘a good life’. Using this approach enables children and young people to identify and create a framework about what is important to them which then provides direction to CNS Local Coordinators in responding to these areas of action.

Research conducted by CNS further demonstrates that children and young people can and should be at the heart of setting their goals for wellbeing. The approach has been designed to work across a range of different contexts and modes of delivery. Initially undertaken as a face-to-face model with

small groups, the approach has been digitalised and can be delivered using either medium. In West Dunbartonshire, the research identified that mental health and wellbeing was a priority for local children and young people.<sup>6</sup> This learning is informing the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership’s work in taking forward the recommendations from the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Task Force (see Section 4).



### *Sharing learning*

Awareness and interest in the work of CNS has also grown over the last 12 months. Team members continue to take opportunities to share the work of the programme alongside insights and learning from our research and community elements of the programme. The growing influence and impact of CNS is discussed in Section 6 and a list of the resources and reports published during 2020 is presented in Section 8. Work continues to develop and update the CNS website and expand the reach of our social media channels, both of which are key mechanisms for sharing the work of and learning of the programme.

<sup>6</sup>*Developing a capabilities wellbeing framework with children, young people and stakeholders in Clydebank, West Dunbartonshire.* [childrensneighbourhoods.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CNS-WD-Capabilities-Report-Nov-2020.pdf](https://childrensneighbourhoods.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CNS-WD-Capabilities-Report-Nov-2020.pdf)



### 3. CNS Communities: Local Activities, Progress and Learning

Each Children's Neighbourhoods site has a Local Coordinator based in the neighbourhood. This section presents updates on activity, progress and learning from our six sites from March 2020 to the end of February 2021. This period encapsulates two national COVID-19 lockdowns and significant restrictions, including the ability to travel to CNS sites, to visit schools and local organisations and to meet with individuals and groups.

# Bridgeton & Dalmarnock

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on children, young people and families in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, as well as the local third sector, schools and statutory services. Overnight, the local community and services had to adapt to a new way of living and working. The CNS Local Coordinator in the area worked to reconnect with local partners virtually through facilitating a local Third Sector Forum and providing a mechanism for information sharing in a quickly changing context.

Bridgeton and Dalmarnock was the first Children's Neighbourhood site in Scotland and was established in 2018. These are two separate neighbouring communities in the north east of Glasgow and have a combined population of approximately 7,500 people, of which just over 1,300 are under 15 years of age. Estimates of male and female life expectancy in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock are 5% lower than

the Glasgow average, that is, 3.4 years less for men and 2.6 years less for women. Single parent households make up for more than half of all households with dependent children. The rate of claiming unemployment- and disability-related benefits is higher than the Glasgow average and levels of deprivation and child poverty are also significantly higher than average. The communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock historically have some of the most concentrated levels of socioeconomic disadvantage in Scotland and demonstrate real potential for growth and development.

The communities of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock have felt the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the local socioeconomic circumstances. Many families have relied on emergency food provision and welfare support, and social isolation and poor mental health have become more prevalent.

## Progress

### *The local Third Sector Forum*

At the onset of the first national lockdown in March 2020, the Local Coordinator reached out to local partners and organisations to offer support with the coordination of emergency food provision and activities for children and young people. The Local Coordinator developed and circulated a bi-weekly update of available support and activity to partners working in the area. Play packages and food parcels were also provided to Possibilities for Each and Every Child (PEEK) and Baltic Street Adventure Playground (BSAP) for local families.

During this time, the Local Coordinator worked to maintain and further develop relationships with local partners and individual organisations. These conversations led to the establishment of a local multiagency Third Sector Forum for Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, organised and facilitated by the CNS Local Coordinator. The Forum has been meeting since August 2020 and provides a space for local organisations to come together, share information, build awareness of their work, support each other, and identify opportunities for partnership working. This has included Church House and Thriving Places working together to deliver the Rose Voucher Scheme, which supports low-income families to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, and the CNS Local Coordinator working with the Community Links Practitioner (CLP), Family Action in Rogerfield and Easterhouse (FARE) and St Mungo's Academy to develop a community wellbeing project for children, young people and their families.

### *The Wellbeing Project*

Emerging from early conversations with local youth organisations, and the findings from [CNS research exploring the impact of COVID-19 on children and families in Glasgow communities](#) (see Section 5), the importance of supporting mental health and wellbeing in the recovery phase

of the pandemic was clear. With a background in community mental health, the Local Coordinator, working with local organisations, developed a community-based mental health and wellbeing project, which focusses on early intervention and prevention and offers choice and information about the supports available.

Working in partnership with the local CLP, GP practice and Bridgeton Community Learning Campus (BCLC), the project started outdoors when restrictions eased in August/September 2020 with a focus on engaging families. Two outdoor engagement events, reaching over 50 children, young people and adults, were held before the project had to be put on hold due to the tightening of COVID-19 restrictions in October 2020. The main themes emerging from the engagement events included:

- Children and young people were happy to be back at school but missed having places to go after school
- Everyone had found lockdown hard; people were aware of the impact of having to stay at home on their mental health and wellbeing
- Suggestions for “What keeps you well?” and future wellbeing activities included: walking groups; activities for children; arts and crafts; music; yoga; mindfulness; reading; healthy food; staying connected via social media.



Working with FARE and St Mungo's Academy, the Local Coordinator has now started facilitating the wellbeing project through online workshops with young people, parents, and staff at the school. Three separate groups have been established and currently offer a variety of taster sessions. The participants have co-designed the workshops by providing feedback and sessions have also provided a space and opportunity for engagement and relationship building.

With the easing of restrictions, the project will move to face-to-face sessions at St Mungo's and BCLC. The Local Coordinator is also working with Baltic Street Adventure Playground to develop an outdoor shelter which can also be used as a space for the wellbeing project. Other local organisations have also expressed an interest in working together on the project as restrictions ease.

Work is also underway with participants of [CNS research which explored the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugee and migrant families](#) (see Section 5). Local organisations in Bridgeton and Dalarnock have also expressed an interest in exploring, further understanding and raising awareness of the barriers faced by refugee, migrant and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities locally.

## Next Steps

The ongoing need to support local families in Bridgeton and Dalarnock with food provision, mental health and wellbeing and social isolation is clear. Going forward, the Local Coordinator will continue to ensure that the wellbeing project is informed and influenced by local children, young people and families, in order to make sure that it is a project which works for them. Their voices and the outcomes of the project will be used to inform and influence the recovery process. The CNS Local Coordinator will also develop these multiple mini-wellbeing projects into an area-wide project. Building on the wellbeing project, St Mungo's Academy has expressed interest in participating in the CNS Capabilities research and discussions with FARE and MCR Pathways<sup>7</sup> are underway to enhance home-learning and digital support for the children and young people who need it. The Local Coordinator will also continue to facilitate and develop the local Third Sector Forum. The Forum will also be an important arena to inform the next steps for CNS locally and facilitate further engagement with local children, young people and families.



<sup>7</sup> MCR Pathways is a nationwide Mentoring Programme and charity that provides disadvantaged young people with a mentor. [mcrpathways.org/](http://mcrpathways.org/)



# Castlemilk

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The establishment of CNS in Castlemilk has focused on building relationships with local organisations and professional networks and supporting the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery planning. The Local Coordinator has worked with local organisations and partners to establish where CNS activity might be focused.

Situated on the southern border of Glasgow, Castlemilk shares boundaries with three other local communities: Fernhill, Croftfoot and Simshill, with the Cathkin Braes Country Park providing a natural border between the community and neighbouring local authority, South Lanarkshire. Castlemilk was built to help tackle the severe overcrowding in inner city Glasgow after the end of the second world war. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s a mix of tenement and multistorey flats were erected forming a skyline which would become synonymous with the area. Originally built to house circa 34,000 people, recent years have seen local housing associations redevelop the area, shifting away from multistorey flats towards family appropriate properties. Today the population of Castlemilk is around 14,000 with approximately 4,700 of these residents under 24 years of age.

With a strong history of social activism, Castlemilk sees a diverse range of support services and third sector organisations working to combat the impacts of poverty on the community. Local services worked tirelessly during the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen and streamline the

services already on offer, as well as responding to the increasing need by providing additional support. The pandemic and associated restrictions has also impacted on the ability of services and the CNS Local Coordinator to engage directly with the community.

## Progress

A CNS Local Coordinator was appointed to the Castlemilk community in September 2020, and although starting during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Local Coordinator has met and worked with staff from a range of local organisations and services, including Indigo Childcare Group, The Jeely Piece Club, Urban Roots and Castlemilk Youth Complex as well as Cassiltoun and Ardenglen Housing Associations, the local schools Millar Primary School and Castleton Primary School, St Mirin's Out of School Care, and staff from the Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership. The Local Coordinator has also been introduced to local residents at the forefront of community activism in the area.

The Local Coordinator is now an active member of two professional networks in the area: Castlemilk Together and The Resilience Hub. Castlemilk Together is a network of local frontline professionals working in Castlemilk to provide emergency support to the residents. Since the first national lockdown Castlemilk Together have focused on providing dignified food provisions and support with fuel costs and

emergency situations for Castlemilk residents. The Resilience Hub is a network of partners promoting and embedding trauma-informed practice<sup>8</sup> in all areas of statutory and community work within Castlemilk, with the aim that the community can become more resilient.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in the autumn of 2020, the Local Coordinator was able to support the Food and Fun programme, organised by Castlemilk Together, and attend events at Cassiltoun Housing Association, Castlemilk Youth Complex, Barlea Sports Complex and Ardenglen Housing Association to meet community members and local children and young people.

Millar Primary School has begun the Capabilities research and Castleton Primary School will also be involved (see Section 4). Delivery of the model will commence when COVID-19 restrictions allow, with the Local Coordinator working with each school to develop a tailored digital delivery programme to meet the needs of the children.

The Local Coordinator has also engaged with a large number of young people at various youth sessions across the community, including youth drop-in sessions at Castlemilk Youth Complex, Indi Youth Out of School group and the Youth Advisory Board at Cassiltoun Housing Association. Following meeting the young people at the Youth Advisory Board, the Local Coordinator is now designing and delivering weekly sessions with two key aims: to increase the number of participants in the group, and to create a toolkit that other housing associations can use to increase youth engagement. The sessions will continue to explore what has worked well as well as the barriers and enablers to successful participation in the group, developing soft skills, and strengthening community relationships. Members of the Youth Advisory Board are actively involved in securing funding, decision making, and evaluation for a wide range of activities within the housing association and wider community. The CNS Local Coordinator will be working with the group to help them make sure their work impacts across the community.



## Next steps

The Local Coordinator will be working with the Resilience Hub to generate an action plan based on their strategy document and support resulting actions. These sessions will be facilitated by Dr Oliver Escobar (Senior lecturer in Public Policy at University of Edinburgh) and focus on how the network can impact on the community. Working with the Youth Advisory Board at Cassiltoun Housing Association, the Local Coordinator will be supporting the young people to deliver presentations to other groups of young people to encourage participation in the group, and to take their youth engagement toolkit to other registered social landlords with the aim of increasing engagement from young people across all housing associations in the area. Early discussions are also underway, facilitated by the Local Coordinator, to bring the local youth advisory groups together to form a Castlemilk Youth Network which will feed into and provide access to the existing professional networks on the issues directly facing young people in Castlemilk.

<sup>8</sup> A trauma-informed approach aims to provide an environment where a person who has experienced trauma feels safe and can develop trust.



# Drumchapel

The CNS Local Coordinator has spent time since taking up post meeting and working with local organisations and youth services to understand the landscape in the area and what 'community' means to children and young people here.

Drumchapel is a post-war social housing scheme built to tackle inner city overcrowding in the 1950s. Drumchapel is situated in north-west Glasgow, towards the western boundary of the Glasgow City Council local authority area but also sharing a boundary with West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire. A loss of industry in the 1970s saw unemployment in the area soar, and subsequently the area has been affected by poverty for a number of decades. Designed to house around 34,000 people, the population of Drumchapel is now 13,000. Garscadden Woodland surrounds part of the area offering almost 5 miles of woodland space and nature reserves, and subsequently 93% of children in the area live within 400 metres of green space.

Drumchapel is directly served by five primary schools and one secondary school. Drumchapel is also well served by third sector organisations looking to offset the impact of poverty on the community and has a strong ethos of partnership working to achieve maximum impact for service users.

## Progress

A CNS Local Coordinator started working in the Drumchapel community in September 2020. Taking up post during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although most of the work has had to be done remotely, the Local Coordinator was able to engage with a wide range of local partners and local charities including 3D Drumchapel, G15 Youth



Project and COPE Scotland, team members from Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, Glasgow Life, Thriving Places, the local GPs and Police Scotland. The Local Coordinator was also invited to join the local professional network Drumchapel Early Years Network (DEYN).

Through early conversations with community partners, it was clear that the COVID-19 pandemic had magnified local social and economic inequalities, and more families than ever needed support.

Conversations about affordable food provision also took place, and at the request of partners, the Local Coordinator investigated the community food pantry model which exists in several other communities across Glasgow city. Although, in the short term, establishing a Drumchapel-specific pantry was not feasible, the Local Coordinator was invited to a meeting with The Scottish Pantry Network and DRC<sup>9</sup> Youth Project about the new North West Community Pantry in nearby Yoker, and the possibility of access to it for Drumchapel residents. The Scottish Pantry Network subsequently secured funding to provide free transport for Drumchapel residents to the Pantry. The Local Coordinator

<sup>9</sup> Dumbarton Road Corridor



then worked with local organisations to support the promotion and uptake of the Pantry service within Drumchapel.

DEYN is a key partner for CNS in the local community. The work of the network was paused during the pandemic as local organisations and services working with children and families adapted and responded to local need. As meetings restarted, network members recognised that there was an opportunity to share learning and reprioritise the aims of the network. As a result, the Local Coordinator organised and co-facilitated development sessions alongside Dr Oliver Escobar (Senior lecturer of Public Policy at University of Edinburgh). Using a process of dialogue and deliberation the network members identified barriers and enablers to participation within the community and access to local services, considered how to involve the wider community, and formulated an action plan. The plan also includes further sessions and space for the network to consider the potential service barriers exacerbated by the pandemic and to capture learning from the emergency response of organisations. Feedback from network members who participated described these sessions as highly productive and effective, and supporting the network aim of making ‘Drumchapel the best place in Scotland to grow up’.

The Local Coordinator is currently delivering online sessions exploring young people’s experiences during the pandemic. The sessions with P6 and P7 children from Langfaulds Primary School are exploring their understanding and interpretation of ‘community’ and what changes they would like to see in their area. These sessions will provide a foundation to

the forthcoming Capabilities research which the young people will be taking part in following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

Throughout the Drumchapel community there is a keen sense of willingness to collaborate, communicate and pool resources. CNS will continue to work with local partners to ensure that the support offered by the programme contributes to existing and future work.



## Next steps

The Local Coordinator will continue to work with the members of the Drumchapel Early Years Network to support the implementation of the action plan, with the ownership of agreed tasks being spread across the network. The Local Coordinator will also continue working with groups from Langfaulds Primary School, and when safe to do so, will deliver the Capabilities research in the school. The Local Coordinator will be looking to work in partnership with local youth groups to develop a youth network for the area.

# Radnor Park, Clydebank

The work of CNS in the Radnor Park neighbourhood of Clydebank throughout 2020/21 has been reflective of the education and third sectors as a whole; continually adapting to new circumstances and needs. In the early months of the COVID-19 national lockdown, CNS focused on providing support to local organisations and providing online activities for local young people.

The Radnor Park neighbourhood sits in central Clydebank, around a ten-minute walk from the nearest train station (Singer) and the Clyde Shopping Centre, the main hub of shops and restaurants for the town. Housing in the area is primarily comprised of terraced and semi-detached properties owned by West Dunbartonshire Council, and high-rise flats owned by Clydebank Housing Association. The child poverty rate of the area is 33%, and the area has high unemployment rates and low-quality housing. Assets in the local area include Clydebank Health Centre, Clydebank Community Hub and Y Sort It youth charity; all of these buildings are sited within less than 500ft of each other. There are four schools in the area: St Eunan's Primary School, Kilbowie Primary School, Clydebank High School, and St Peter the Apostle High School. The local partners in the area include Y Sort It and West Dunbartonshire Council. Y Sort It is currently the only organisation that offers free provision for local children and young people, including street play sessions, youth groups, mentoring for those who are care-experienced, and a group for young carers. Y Sort It works across the West Dunbartonshire area, and has worked hard to maintain services and provision for children and young people during the pandemic.



## Progress

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a quick change of direction in CNS activities in Radnor Park. Like the staff of many other community-based organisations, the CNS Local Coordinator was unable to spend time in the community. The newly established Creative Club and Family Group were both put on hold, as were plans for Get Involved Radnor Park and the Community Cafe. For CNS, the early stages of the initial national lockdown (March to May 2020) focused on supporting local organisations and exploring in partnership the different options and opportunities for children and families in Clydebank during this challenging time. The CNS Local Coordinator also continued to liaise with the schools in the area. A number of areas where CNS resources, provision and support to the community were identified, as described below.

As restrictions eased, the focus of CNS moved to some local activity, including a new collaboration with the local Radnor Park Tenant's and Resident's Association (TRA), who had been exploring the possibility of renting an empty shop in the area to develop it into a community space. During the summer of 2020, the CNS Local Coordinator worked with the TRA and West Dunbartonshire Council to explore the options for the development of the space. However, new COVID-19 restrictions in October 2020 resulted in the temporary postponing of development, with plans to continue to explore this venture once restrictions ease.

The CNS Local Coordinator worked with the Outreach team at Y Sort It. Cooking classes, fitness classes and support groups were provided to support the health and wellbeing of local children and young people. This included an online dance project led by a local freelance artist from Clifftop Projects (an organisation based in West Dunbartonshire that had previously collaborated with Y Sort It). The dance sessions were pre-recorded, promoted through Y Sort It's networks, and made available to all young people. A Glasgow-based community artist was also employed to provide free art packs and classes for children.

In July 2020, the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions allowed for outdoor activities with a limited number of participants. CNS ran a weekly juice stall in Radnor Park to provide free healthy snacks and food parcels for community members. The stall also enabled the Local Coordinator to talk to local families about types of provision and activities that people might be interested in taking part in following the lockdown period. Over the course of 20 weeks, the juice stall saw high engagement from a range of community members, with regular visitors and positive feedback from those who came along, and new relationships built between CNS staff and the local community. In November 2020, the juice stall had to be stopped due to the re-tightening of COVID-19 restrictions.

## Next Steps

A number of new developments, including the gardening and raised beds projects with local primary schools, and child-led participatory action research projects, are ready to get under way as soon as restrictions allow. Early conversations are taking place about the development of a local Dad's group, building on the Bumps and Babies group, and reflecting the role of dads in the development and wellbeing of children. Discussions are also taking place with HSCP colleagues about the local partnership roll-out and implementation of the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM)<sup>10</sup>, and the role of play and activity in minimising the increase of drug initiation and misuse among local young people. Building on previous discussions with the Radnor Park TRA and West Dunbartonshire Council, CNS will undertake a feasibility study exploring the potential for a community space in the area.

<sup>10</sup> Icelandic Prevention Model: a community collaborative model designed to influence risk and protective factors related to reducing substance use among young people.



# Rigside

The establishment of CNS in the village of Rigside in South Lanarkshire has focused on developing relationships with local partners and stakeholders and supporting existing provision in the area. Rigside is unique amongst the communities CNS works in and this brings a different set of challenges and opportunities.

Set in a rural landscape in South Lanarkshire, Rigside is a small post-mining community, lying approximately five miles south of the town of Lanark. As of 2016, the population of the village was 630, and there were 65 pupils on the village primary school roll, in four composite classes. Rigside is serviced by one convenience store, a roadside takeaway, a primary school and nursery, doctor's surgery, and community hall. Both Rigside and the nearby smaller village of Douglas Water are notably decreasing in size; both villages have recorded a year-on-year decline in population since 2001, and numerous houses have been demolished by the local authority, leaving gap sites in their wake.

The village has very limited transport links, with a bus service running between the neighbouring village of Glespin and Lanark via Rigside. Social isolation is one of the main issues facing families in the community. A school bus is provided for local children to attend secondary school in Lanark, but the lack of transport options outside school hours limits the ability of young people to take part in any after-school activity. While older residents would normally have access to several weekly social activities held in the community hall, there are no regular activities or clubs aimed at children in Rigside.

## Progress

Since taking up post in September 2020, the Local Coordinator has focused on establishing relationships with partners and providers already working in the area. The health improvement charity Healthy Valleys has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to creating change at a local level and have been a crucial contact for the Local Coordinator in getting to know the village. The Local Coordinator has also met with members of the community who shared positive perspectives of living in the village, commenting on the benefits of close-knit relationships between residents, whilst also expressing the desire to improve amenities and access to resources.

An early focus of the Local Coordinator was assisting with the running of the community food larder, which is coordinated by Healthy Valleys and hosted in the community hall. The larder, which is supported by South Lanarkshire Council, was set up in March 2020 in response to the national COVID-19 lockdown. Assisting at the food larder has given CNS a presence in the village, meeting key stakeholders in the community and local children and young people. Ensuring the sustainability of this food provision will be a key action for the Local Coordinator, working with Healthy Valleys.

The Local Coordinator has developed a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with the team at Rigside Primary School. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the school has placed a strong emphasis on developing pupil

wellbeing and readiness to learn, and already ensures that the voices of children and young people are centralised in school decision-making processes. The Capabilities research will build on this and is due to commence in Spring 2021. Although the Local Coordinator has not been able to work in a face-to-face way with pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions, Bonfire Night art packs were made up and distributed to all pupils, by way of an initial introduction. The packs contained art materials for a project, and a small postcard with contact details for and information about the Local Coordinator. These packs were well received, and more are planned for 2021. A photography project with Primary 6/7 pupils was planned to create a 'postcard from Rigside'. Although this had to be postponed due to the lockdown it will be restarted when restrictions ease.



The Local Coordinator has also initiated discussions aimed at creating a gardening and growing space for pupils at Rigside Primary School. At present, the playground requires upgrading and pupils have limited access to green space. The Local Coordinator has worked with the school's STEM Coordinator to create a proposal for a 'growing together' project, which will improve the learning environment and enable the children to take their learning outdoors. This project will be supported by Clydesdale Community Initiatives (CCI), a local farm-based social enterprise who support people facing barriers to inclusion. CCI have agreed to support the project in its initial stages by providing five site-based planting and growing sessions, followed by two sessions at their base. Pupils will be able to use any food produce grown in their food technology lessons. They will learn about how to cook healthy, nutritious meals. Any additional produce grown will be donated to the food larder, extending the reach and health impact of the community project.

## Next steps

Looking forward, the Local Coordinator will conduct research into the future sustainability of the food larders being run by Healthy Valleys, as there is interest in moving provision to a pantry model. Additionally, the Local Coordinator is seeking to establish a Clydesdale Valley Food Providers Network, which will create a space for the range of organisations who are working in food provision to share practice and support one another. The Local Coordinator will also continue to work with Rigside Primary School and Lanark Grammar in undertaking the Capabilities research and will use this as a basis for planning participatory projects with children and young people from the village. The Local Coordinator will also continue to work alongside Universal Connections, Healthy Valleys and CCI in developing activities for children and young people as we move through and recover from the isolating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Lanark

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The establishment of CNS in the small town of Lanark has focused on building relationships and working with with local organisations, schools and services. The Local Coordinator has worked to develop a good understanding of the local area, and to identify opportunities where CNS activity may be focused and add value to existing work.

Lanark is a historic market town and Royal Burgh situated in the heart of the Clyde Valley in the central belt of Scotland. With a population of close to 10,000 it is a town steeped in history and tradition with its annual famous Lanimir day festival celebrating its rich cultural heritage. With its location being at the heart of a large agricultural community a substantial amount of its focus is towards serving and supporting the rural communities which surround it. The surrounding area is one of natural beauty, and the UNESCO World Heritage site of New Lanark and the Falls of Clyde also sits nearby.

The town is served by four primary schools and one secondary school located close to the heart of the town. Lanark Grammar, with a school roll of nearly 1,100 pupils, is attended by pupils from the surrounding areas and local “Lanarkians” from the town itself. Local statutory and public sector youth providers offer a number of services and provision for young people and there is an opportunity for a greater range of activities to be made available.

Lanark is a town of contrast in relation to affluence and social mobility, with areas of wealth sitting next to areas with higher levels of disadvantage.

## Progress

The COVID-19 pandemic and periods of lockdown did make it challenging for the Local Coordinator to progress work directly with children and young people in the Lanark area. Due to the restrictions, local statutory youth providers and schools had to minimise access to their infrastructure for young people, and local voluntary sector organisations largely reduced or put on hold their activities.

The initial focus of work for the Local Coordinator has been to meet with local organisations and individuals, introduce the work of CNS, and discuss future opportunities to work together. This has been a valuable process for the Local Coordinator to gain a good understanding of the area, the work already taking place, and the possibilities for partnership working which could yet take place.

A strong positive relationship has developed with local third sector organisation, Healthy Valleys, who work extensively in Lanark and the wider Clydesdale area and operate several projects aimed at supporting the community. This relationship has led to the Local Coordinator working with Healthy Valleys to support the delivery of the foodbank in the Smyllum area of Lanark and, in doing so, gaining a greater understanding of the needs and context of this community.

Building on this piece of work and the developing partnership, the Local Coordinator and Healthy Valleys have secured a lease on a shop



front in Smyllum that would enable the growth of the foodbank, and provide a community base and a space for CNS and Healthy Valleys to work with children and young people.

Prior to Christmas 2020 the Local Coordinator worked with a number of local organisations including Healthy Valleys, Universal Connections, Kits for Kids and the local social work team, to provide presents and other support to families who needed it. The Local Coordinator was able to support the programme via a toy collection in Tesco Lanark. This piece of joint work resulted in a large number of children, young people and their families receiving support. It has been agreed that this working group will continue in 2021. The Local Coordinator has also worked with young people participating in local youth provider, Universal Connections, winter school leavers' programme. This programme aims to educate and support young people moving on from school to the world of work and adulthood. The young people highlighted a lack of available options in the area, both socially and professionally, and a need for most to travel out with their area to access a broad range of opportunities. This theme is further expanded in the [CNS literature review exploring rural poverty and social exclusion](#).

Relationships have also been developed with two primary schools and Lanark Grammar, all of whom have expressed a desire to participate in the CNS Capabilities research (see Section 4), which aims to encourage young people to be part of the decisions that affect them, explore what is important to them and what change they would

like to see in their communities. This research will get underway with the easing of local COVID-19 restrictions and provide a focus for the work of CNS going forward.

## Next Steps

The Local Coordinator will focus on developing a number of engaging activities and projects for young people in Lanark to build and strengthen relationships with them and further develop awareness of CNS in the area. The Smyllum shop front will be developed as an engagement space working with Healthy Valleys. This work will sit alongside the Capabilities research in local schools facilitated by the Local Coordinator, who will also continue developing ideas and opportunities for a local youth participation project with other local organisations. Discussions are at an advanced stage with the South Lanarkshire Active Schools Team and the Outdoor Team to deliver joint pieces of work offering both outdoor play and sports and wellbeing activities to young people in Spring 2021.





## 4. CNS Research and Evaluation: Progress and Learning

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, plans for much of the CNS research, including the Capabilities research and participatory action research projects, had to be put on hold and a new programme exploring local responses to COVID-19 was quickly developed.

CNS research and evaluation activity is organised into four areas, with distinct sets of research questions and methods. A brief update on this activity during 2020-21 is provided below and an overview of the COVID-19 research programme is presented in Section 5.

From January to March 2020, 18 Capabilities workshops were delivered across one primary and one secondary school involving 36 children and young people aged 10 to 14 years. The resulting [Capabilities wellbeing framework](#), published in November 2020, highlighted key concerns such as having a safe and warm place to live; food and clothes; enjoying good relationships with friends and family; feeling safe; being healthy and feeling happy and confident. Mental health emerged as a top priority for

children, with proposed actions for change including dedicated counselling provision in schools, extensive peer support, accessible community activities and a holistic focus on wellbeing in schools. The framework informed the West Dunbartonshire response to the recommendations from the Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Force.

The Capabilities Research model was adapted for delivery in a digital environment to ensure we can be flexible in our approach to how we work with children and young people. A review of youth participatory action research theory and practice was also undertaken to inform the development of new participatory action research projects in the CNS sites once the easing of restrictions allows.

From Spring 2020 the pandemic became the dominant driver for the neighbourhood context analysis research (see Section 5). The activity in this workstream has been modified to include a clearer pathway for data, including interviews, to feed into participatory action

research projects, and build on the Capabilities work in schools.

The timescales and activity of the process evaluation workstream had to be adapted due to the impact of COVID-19 on programme activities. Although the planned work across CNS sites was affected, insights from this workstream, covering the last year, are informing programme design for the year ahead.

The outcome evaluation workstream has seen the development of a survey tool to assess one of the programme outcomes: 'To improve collaboration between existing local networks and create new networks (if necessary) to improve the wellbeing of children and young people'. This online tool is being used to gather evidence on collaboration in existing and emerging local networks that CNS is engaged in. The survey is designed to provide a self-reflection tool for local networks and to evaluate the role and participation of CNS in them.

Over the last year, members of the research and evaluation team have contributed to policy and practice seminars; international conferences and seminars; and engaged with several local policy networks and national organisations. This included running a well-attended webinar on Capabilities with colleagues at I-Sphere at Heriot-Watt University.

## Next steps

In 2021-22, the research and evaluation team will continue to share the findings from our COVID-19 research programme by working with policy and practitioner groups who are engaged in COVID recovery and social renewal. We will contribute to wider discussions about place-based working by sharing our learning through international conferences and academic publications. Imminent publications include a micro-briefing on COVID-19 and young people produced in partnership with GCPH.

The online delivery of our Capabilities programme will begin in April 2021 in a number of schools, both primary and secondary, using a digital model developed with Local Coordinators with a view to moving back to face to face delivery as soon as possible. Support will also be provided for local activity planned by the Local Coordinators and participatory action research projects will be developed in the CNS sites.





## 5. Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on communities: Learning from CNS research

Following the announcement of a UK-wide lockdown in March 2020, the CNS team undertook a programme of new research to understand the impact of COVID-19 on families, children and young people, and local services. The study also explored the nature of collaboration between different organisations and across sectors and captured service providers' perspectives on future priorities.

Remote fieldwork took place within two Scottish local authorities, Glasgow City and South Lanarkshire and included a diverse range of service providers. Research interviewees were selected based on service area, role, and sector and were recruited through contacts with research stakeholders. The range of service areas included: family support, education, housing associations, childcare providers, volunteering, social work and child protection, culture and leisure, youth and community work, community engagement, health improvement, and voluntary sector intermediary bodies. The research took place between April and September 2020. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone or on video conferencing software. The research met the highest standards of ethical research conduct, research integrity, data management and data protection, as set out by the University of Glasgow.

Our findings highlight the experience of increased financial insecurity as a result of loss

of or disruption to employment, delays in the payment of Universal Credit (UC) for the high numbers of people and families claiming UC for the first time, as well as the increased costs for families being at home full-time. Frontline workers in both local authorities expressed concern for families who were previously 'just coping' and had now fallen into poverty due to the pandemic. Migrant families in Glasgow were particularly vulnerable to the economic impact of the pandemic given higher pre-existing levels of poverty, insecure employment, and a lack of access to social security. Food insecurity, a key issue affecting many families, particularly in the early stages of lockdown, was complicated by the complex nature of rural poverty and the existence of pockets of 'hidden deprivation' in South Lanarkshire.

Housing inequalities shaped families' experiences of lockdown across the research programme but in slightly different ways; in some high poverty neighbourhoods in Glasgow the rate of household overcrowding is over 30%, meaning families were at higher risk of virus transmission as well as having less access to outdoor space or sufficient indoor space. Migrant families' reliance on the private rental sector or Home Office asylum accommodation made them particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. Geographical isolation was raised as a significant concern for families living in rural areas in South

Lanarkshire. The reduction in already limited and expensive public transport options, and limited food supplies available in local villages, resulted in the pandemic exacerbating the sense of isolation already felt by many rural residents.

Frontline workers in all studies stressed that the loss of social relationships and support networks, both formal and informal, placed an additional burden on families during lockdown. For recently-arrived migrants and refugees, the isolation caused by lockdown disrupted the social integration process, with the closure of schools restricting children's opportunities for both practising their English and building social relationships. Parents struggled with the pressures of supporting their children's learning at home, particularly when accompanied by additional barriers such as language proficiency and literacy in the case of many migrant families. It is however also important to note that some families enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time together, and some children benefitted from a release in the pressures of attending school. However, there was a strong concern that the pandemic would exacerbate existing educational inequalities for children living in high poverty neighbourhoods.

Across Scotland and the UK, the pandemic resulted in a remarkable voluntary sector response. After the first national lockdown was announced, statutory services suspended or reduced most of their services and community and voluntary organisations took the lead in mobilising resources. After an initial focus on emergency food provision, voluntary organisations expanded their support to families to address other practical needs such as fuel poverty, digital access, and emotional support. Both local authorities streamlined their funding application processes and allowed voluntary organisations to repurpose their grants to meet the urgent needs of families.

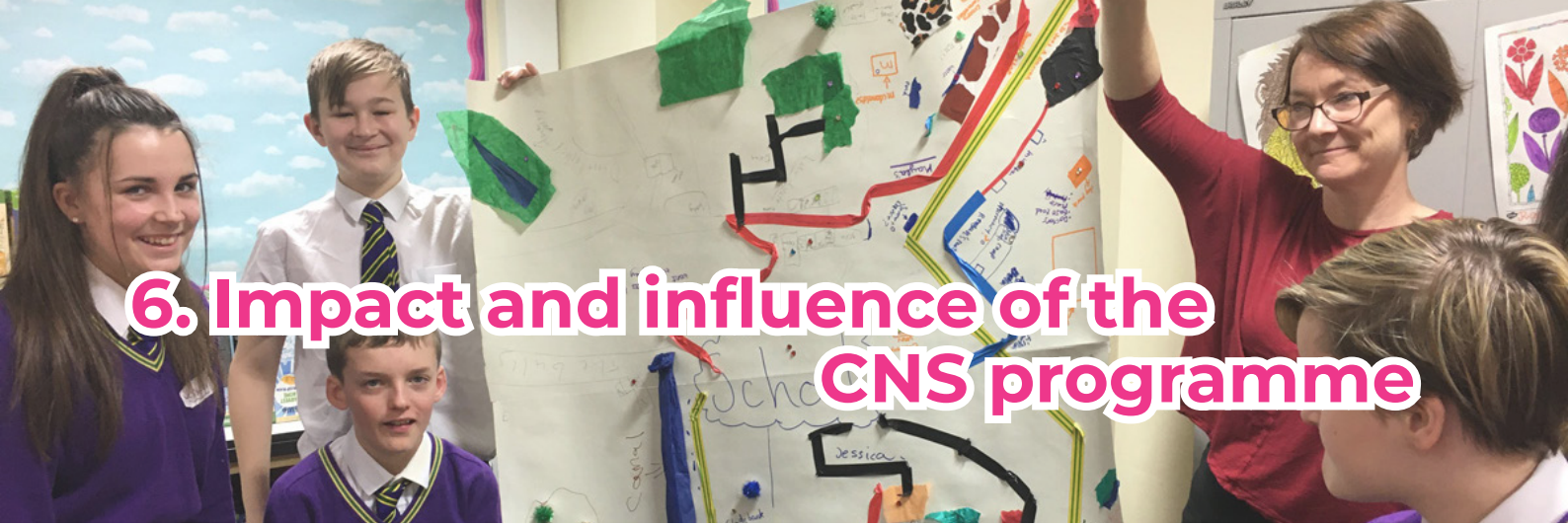
With the loss of face-to-face contact from statutory key workers such as teachers, social workers, and doctors, voluntary sector workers were key to building and maintaining trusting relationships with members of the public. Interviewees reported that people in high-poverty neighbourhoods were feeling isolated and trapped and were fearful of authority,

including health services. Frontline voluntary sector staff invested significant effort in the relational work of maintaining contact with these families by delivering both practical support (organising food deliveries) and emotional support (regular phone calls, online activities).

The nature of cross-sector collaboration differed across the two authorities, and this influenced the ability of local services to innovate to meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations. In one of the authorities, all formal meetings with the voluntary sector were temporarily suspended when lockdown was first announced. Leaders of public services conducted strategic meetings on emergency response planning without representation from the wider voluntary sector. In the other local authority, the third sector interface (TSI) was involved from the outset in strategic 'resilience planning' with the leaders of public services. At a local level new local coordination networks were established. Initially only the larger voluntary sector organisations were invited to attend the networks, but local officials and voluntary sector intermediaries quickly recognised the need for a more inclusive approach and expanded their membership to include smaller, locally embedded charities and community groups. Both sectors shared learning, built trust, and pooled resources to sustain and support voluntary services.

Local cross-sector networks enabled a targeted, place-based service response that could be adapted to the specific needs of different communities. In neighbourhoods where there was social stigma attached to using foodbanks, public officials and voluntary organisations designed new approaches to food provision such as pop-up larders, food pantries and community hubs. These innovative local solutions relied on the relational skills of local voluntary sector organisations with local people and collaboration with key local officials.

All detailed research reports, briefing papers, short Insights papers and associated literature reviews published from this programme of research are presented in Section 8 of this report and can be viewed on the [COVID-19 page of the CNS website](#).



## 6. Impact and influence of the CNS programme

The last 12 months have also seen the reach and influence of the CNS programme increase. The activity undertaken by CNS is informing local and national policy, decisions, and investments. Furthermore, CNS research and resources have helped draw out contextual, policy and practice implications for both local and national stakeholders.

The CNS team have used the Capabilities approach in their work with children and young people. This framework is well-suited to contributing at a number of levels, from school and community decisions, to national policy debates. Through dialogue and discussion, the Capabilities approach is a key mechanism for children identifying what is most important to them, and enables their voices to be heard in the planning of activities, services and policies that concern them. The frameworks that have been developed with children and young people so far share some key priorities, these include: 'a safe and warm place to live, food and clothes'; 'good relationships with family and friends'; 'good mental and physical health'. Children and young people have also offered some positive suggestions for action at local and national level to achieve these goals, such as improved career advice across primary and secondary school and extensive peer support networks.

### Informing local and national policy

At a local level, CNS reports, briefings and literature reviews have offered qualitative insights into different experiences of COVID-19 to a number of groups. These have included Glasgow City Council's Poverty Leadership Panel, Public Health Oversight Board, and Social Recovery Taskforce, as well as the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership's mental health group. Our rapid response research into the impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged communities provided evidence to partners, with [early Insight papers](#), shared between April and November, highlighting the pandemic's effects from the perspectives of children and young people, families, frontline workers, refugee and migrant families in Glasgow, and those living and working in rural areas.

At national and international level, CNS evidence and insight has informed and contributed to a number of publications. These include the [International Council of Education Advisers \(ICEA\) report: Expert view on Scottish education](#), and a number of Scottish Government publications such as [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact of school building closures: equity audit](#), [Coronavirus: impact on children and young people and families – evidence summary](#), the Scottish Government's COVID-19 Education Recovery Group and the national [Social Renewal Advisory Board Report, 'If Not Now, When?'](#)

Our research has also contributed to the wider body of learning about the adaptability and validity of the Capabilities approach, when working in practice in a number of settings.



# 7. Forward Look: 2021/22

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought health and health inequalities into sharp focus. It has been clear from the early stages of the pandemic, and from our CNS research, that some groups have been more affected than others. CNS will continue to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and provide support to our local partners and sites as required. The team will integrate learning from the COVID-19 research into the wider work of the programme over the coming year and reframe to take account of the new landscape we now work in. We recognise that COVID-19 will be part of the ongoing stories for the communities we work in for the foreseeable future.

Next steps for our community-based activity and research and evaluation team are outlined in Sections 3 and 4, respectively. This final section outlines further programme priorities and activities for the year ahead for the period April 2021 to end-March 2022:

- With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, CNS Local Coordinators and members of the research and evaluation and wider programme teams will be able to restart face-to-face engagement in CNS sites with partners, local organisations, schools and children, young people and families.
- Local Coordinators will continue to actively seek opportunities to network and to share and support practice, learning and development across CNS sites and beyond.
- CNS and the Poverty Alliance will jointly undertake a qualitative research study involving parents in Glasgow, including a short Capabilities-focused exercise to explore the barriers and enablers to participation in local decision-making. A report for the Challenge Child Poverty Partnership will be produced.
- CNS is exploring how it can support and further contribute to the work of the Glasgow City Social Recovery Taskforce. In partnership with the Community Engagement teams at GCPH and Glasgow City Council, children and young people will lead and develop participatory action research projects based on their priorities from the Capabilities research.
- CNS will host a roundtable event in early Summer 2021 for local and national policy makers to further explore the required actions for change which emerged from the evidence, learning and insight gathered from the CNS COVID-19 research programme.
- CNS will continue to synthesise learning and findings from across sites and from our programme of research, drawing out the contextual, policy and practice implications. These will be shared widely and with CNS communities, local community and voluntary sector organisations, public service, policy and practitioner audiences in a range of formats and ways.
- Climate change has featured in the wellbeing frameworks created by children and young people and CNS is seeking opportunities for our young researchers to engage in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) during 2021. CNS is working with the SMART Climate Action Project which aims to engage young people in climate action and energy use through interaction and participation with sensor technologies.
- As part of an international programme of activities, CNS will look to use the Capabilities approach, collaborative inquiry, and student voice to explore issues relating to climate change between Scotland and Chile.

# 8. CNS Publications

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During 2020/21, CNS produced a significant number of publications, research reports and briefing papers. All CNS publications can be found on the [CNS website](#).

## COVID-19 research reports and briefings

### Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on children and families in Glasgow

- The impact of COVID-19 on families, children and young people in Glasgow
- Research Briefing: Family Wellbeing in Glasgow
- Research Briefing: Local Service Responses
- Research Briefing: Collaboration

### Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable migrant families

- Refugee, asylum seeking and Roma families during the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from frontline workers in Glasgow

### Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on children and families in South Lanarkshire

- The impact of COVID-19 on families, children and young people in South Lanarkshire
- Research Briefing: Family Wellbeing in South Lanarkshire
- Research Briefing: Local Service Responses
- Research Briefing: Collaboration

## COVID-19 Insight papers

- Early insights into the COVID-19 response: initial research (April 2020)
- The impact of lockdown on children and families: lessons from frontline practitioners (April 2020)
- The third sector: a collaborative response to supporting families (May 2020)
- Drawing out lessons from the hubs: reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic (June 2020)
- Refugee and migrant families' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic: insights from frontline practitioners in Glasgow (July 2020)
- Rural experiences of COVID-19: Insights from frontline practitioners (September 2020)

## Research and Evaluation

- Capabilities Research Model
- Local Research Overview
- Developing a capabilities wellbeing framework with children, young people and stakeholders – Clydebank, West Dunbartonshire

## Literature Reviews

- Moving from vulnerability to resilience in the COVID-19 recovery phase: A review of resilience-building for children, young people and families
- Migrant families and the COVID-19 pandemic: A review of the literature on pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities
- Children and young people and rural poverty and social exclusion: a review of evidence

A number of accompanying [blogs](#) have also been written by team members over the last 12 months, reflecting on their experiences of the pandemic, sharing insights from our work and research, and summarising and highlighting key points from our reports and reviews.





## Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

This report is published by Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland. It was written by Dr Jennifer McLean, with contributions from across the CNS team.

### About us

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

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



Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland is funded by Scottish Government.



### Get in touch

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