

Making Connections:

Stories of Welcoming Community in Fife



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Stories of welcoming community in Fife

Introduction

From March to August 2016, Kayle Turner and Laura Jonsen, community builders in Cowdenbeath and Methilhill, invited residents to share and celebrate stories of building a welcoming community.

On three separate occasions in Cowdenbeath and twice in Methilhill, local residents came together to share their own personal stories of what they felt was important in building a welcoming community. With the support of Rob Vincent working for Nurture Development, stories were shared and discussed in small informal groups. Everyone then reflected together on what the stories showed about building communities and what it is that makes a difference to local people.

These were really enjoyable events and people spoke passionately about their experiences of connecting with other local people, and how they appreciated the support and generosity of other residents, and the importance of being accepted for who they are.

This report presents the stories that people shared, in their own words, with accompanying illustrations by illustrator Karl Whitely. The illustrations help to bring the stories alive. The report also pulls out some of the key elements that people feel are important in building a welcoming community.

Even though the project was short by community development standards and the stories were only gathered over a period of a

few months, they illustrate the importance of community building and help to give a sense of it's potential impact over time. The stories provide a snapshot of the value of community building efforts, and begin to show the range of areas where it can impact on local lives.

If you are interested in getting involved in this kind of work in Fife, please do contact Kayle or Laura through BRAG:

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Gathering stories of welcoming community

People from Cowdenbeath and Methilhill came together regularly to share and reflect on stories of their community efforts. It is hoped that these stories can inspire others to get involved, to help everyone be clearer about what it is that matters in building a welcoming and inclusive community, and to get a sense of how community building efforts have helped make a positive difference to local lives. By sharing and comparing stories with community groups in other parts of the County there is also potential to take that inspiration and learning further and wider.

The present project used asset based community development as part of the Family Nurture Approach implemented by the Education & Children's Services Directorate of Fife Council. The commitment to invest in an early intervention and preventative programme provided opportunities to think differently, test new approaches and most importantly engage in a different conversation with local communities.

Gathering, sharing and reflecting on stories of community action is also a way to look at the contribution of this initiative over time, and the difference it is making to local lives. For more about this approach to learning from stories see: <http://e-mops.ning.com/page/most-significant-change-resources-and-links>

Story Catching - How it works



About what is important to them in building a welcoming community.



When building a welcoming community.



And inspire others to get involved.

Summary of stories

The following stories show the difference made to local lives through people getting together around a shared interest or issue. The full stories can be found on the following pages.

Getting the word out there

A woman returned to Cowdenbeath to have her baby but had lost touch with people and didn't know anyone locally. She met a family support worker who was running baby classes, so felt able to go to them having that connection. This led to her going to more baby groups, her social circle expanding, and her doing some training courses. Many folks still don't know about the local groups, so she is trying to put a leaflet together that advertises all of them. She found companionship in the groups and wants others to have the support that has been important to her.

Making the connections

A new father moved to Cowdenbeath with his wife just after his boy was born. He became the full time carer but initially felt quite isolated and lonely, spending long days at home. With encouragement from a local community nurse went to a baby group, a bit anxious about being there as a father, but found it really welcoming and friendly. He now goes to something every morning and is helping to get the word out to others. Helping all the kids now promises a future in 5 or 10 years where the area will flourish with happy and confident kids.

Things for the children

A mother of three got drawn into running the toddler group at the school. Surprised at how many people don't know about the

group, she is always telling folk about it. Doing concrete things like revamping the toddler room has really built her confidence, as has doing a range of training courses. Like others, she links her own skills and input into the community to making a better future for local children. She wants to see a youth club and activities for primary school children too.

Never give up

A woman lost her husband five years ago and so is a single parent. She never minded being in the house alone and was quite self-sufficient, but after a chance meeting at a family evening started to help out at the toddlers group. She enjoys helping where she can and the companionship of working together with others and being accepted for who she is.

Children at the heart of the community

A woman worked full time as a nursery nurse but felt she was missing out on her own children. When she stopped her job, looking after them on her own was hard, with one of them being quite unruly in public and making it awkward going to groups. She met another mum on the school run and started going to the toddlers group where she feels really welcome. She does a lot of activities with her daughter who loves cooking and as her children grow, she wants to remain involved to help provide things for other children.

Meeting people

A young woman from Eastern Europe helped at a craft fare at Christmas decorating plates and cups and making use of her artistic skills. One of the women she met has taught her daughter to knit which she loves. Her and her daughter have grown in

confidence after making new friends. She likes to be out of the house, keeping the connection with others.

Celebrating Grandad

A young student organised a Marie Curie Cancer fundraiser in remembrance of her Granddad in the back room of a local café. Local people donated things, set up stall and did face painting. She got a real sense of the support of the local community and got closer to her family who got more involved than she expected. She gained confidence and a renewed sense of purpose.

Music is my thing

A young student who knew the young woman who had lost her granddad got involved in the commemoration by playing music for the event. This built his own confidence and interest in organising more events in future. It also gave him a sense of the diverse contributions of other residents and a strong sense of community - something that is often seen as 'lost' to the past.

The Summer Programme

A group of residents organised a programme of summer events for local children and families. Residents led three of five days of activities each week over the holiday. They each had their own ideas and led different activities. When the community builder who had helped them plan the programme hurt her back, they continued on with the plans themselves. Other residents contributed a generator, a bouncy castle and others resources to make the events a success.

Getting involved

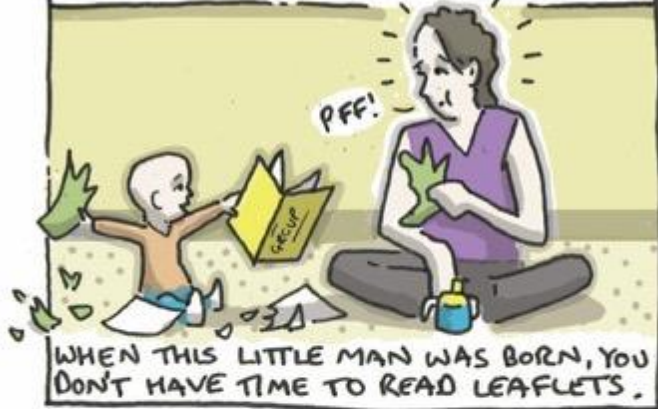
A mother organised a family night with help from the community builder and a council worker. Her children gained experience and confidence and the family built relationships with others locally. Her experience has given her confidence and lead to a different conversation with the council where she feels she is able to put forward her opinion and get local priorities and ideas heard.

We did it

Another woman involved in organising the summer programme of events for local families and children highlighted the importance of finding things to do for local youngsters. She was proud of what they had achieved with the summer programme and the new relationships and friendships built. She had grown personally in confidence and skills and had a greater sense of the friendliness and contribution of others in the local community.

'Making Connections'

I MOVED FROM ABERDEEN, BACK DOWN TO COWDENBEATH, TO HAVE A FAMILY NEARER MY FAMILY. BUT I HAD LOST CONTACT WITH MY OLD SCHOOL FRIENDS



I MET THE LOCAL FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER AT A NEW BEGINNINGS COURSE.



THEN I FELT ABLE TO GO ALONG TO THE BABY CLASSES SHE RUNS ONCE I KNEW HER.

AFTER THAT, I WENT TO MORE BABY GROUPS AND MY SOCIAL CIRCLE GREW.



THERE'S A SURPRISING NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO DONT KNOW ABOUT THE TODDLER GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY. SO WE PUT OURS UP ON FACEBOOK



WE ARE TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER A LEAFLET THAT ADVERTISES ALL THE DIFFERENT GROUPS AND TO GET IT OUT EVERYWHERE AND LET PEOPLE KNOW!



I REMEMBER GOING TO A BABY GROUP EARLY AND JUST CRYING BECAUSE I HAD HAD SUCH A BAD NIGHT.



Getting the word out there

I am from Cowdenbeath originally but I was living in Aberdeen. So I went to university there, I was working up there. And then my husband and myself decided we were going to have a family so I thought rather than being in the city, I'd rather do it back home in Cowdenbeath with all my family roundabout me. So I moved back in the June and found out I was pregnant in July. I had lost contact though with my school friends and things like that, that I knew. So I was going back socialising again.

When this little man was born, you know you get a bundle of leaflets and things like that, don't you, but you don't have time to actually look at them really. And I went along to visit a health visitor to get him weighed. I bumped into someone I'd met at an antenatal class and she was telling me about the New Beginnings class at the council to help us. And then next week I got a letter from the health visitor to go along to that class and it was at that class that I met the local family support worker, Shirley. And because I met her at that class I then felt that I was able to go along to the baby classes she runs in the area because I knew who she was.

So from that I went along to the baby groups and I met a lot of people, my social circle kind of expanded a bit because everybody up there had babies and kids and we were all going through the same sort of thing. And then of course he got older so we left baby group and started going along to the toddler groups and things like that. And some of the toddler groups obviously the numbers go up and down because people go to nursery and things like that. And a lot of the groups at the moment went down in numbers because they've just gone off to nursery. And so it was difficult that there wasn't any, especially for me the first one.

So through the local support worker I got to do my book club training, and through Kayle we did 'play way' training, so that I actually felt like I was able to support the group voluntarily. So we

were doing things and nobody has come back to me and said what gives you the right to do this thing because you're just a mum, but I did the courses so that I could actually do it for the kids.

And because of that at some of the courses a lot of people were asking me where local groups are and where they do this kind of work and things like that. And then there's a surprising amount of people out there that don't know where the toddler groups are in the community and don't know what's happening and there's been discussions on Facebook and somewhere, Yummy Mummies group that you know, new mums visiting the area and don't know where the groups are and things like that. So through that, we were able to put our toddler group on Facebook, and then a lady got back with a private message to the group and said, you know, can we come along to book. I was no, no, come along and if you find me on the day I'll tell you about all the local groups in the area. So I did that with a lady last week.

Because there is a toddler group on every day in Cowdenbeath and I've been speaking to each of the people that run each of the groups to just sort of say can we get a community leaflet done that can advertise all the groups ... I know the health visitors can't promote one particular group because that would look like favouritism, but if we put a community leaflet together we can sort of advertise all the groups as a community and every single group has been happy with that.

So I've kind of done a rough copy and Kayle has come on board and printed it off for me as a community building thing. I always find that I see people walking past with a pram I kind of want to stop them and go do you know about this group? That's why I was thinking about a leaflet because I was always repeating myself, every toddler group I go to, I go, "Do you go to many toddler groups in the area? Do you know about this one and that one?". So it was kind of like trying to get the information out there and bringing groups together, and with the first one try to set up a committee and

get everybody to meet up. Because I don't actually want to run that group, I want it to be run as a committee so we've got Alan on board and Kirsty comes in and helps it as well, it's part of the community. Yes, just trying to get numbers up.

At the moment it's toddler groups because he's a toddler but obviously as he gets older he is going to need other things. It's all for the kids. I want them to have somewhere to go to in the community rather than nothing. And not many people can actually afford things, like swimming that's expensive, you know, we are lucky he's got that and not many people can afford that. What you can do in the community for the kids. So you get them at a young age and then you can get them all the way through actually.

I remember when he was a baby going to the baby group and just crying because I'd had such a bad night and I went in early and I just broke down and if it hadn't been for Shirley actually going 'you're alright, do you need this or need that'. And that is what we need to do for other mothers out there that don't have anything, and especially new mums. A new mum I spoke to last week she's like, "I don't know anybody. Another new mum that came down last week was from Ireland, she'd moved across to be with her partner, had a young baby, didn't ken anyone, you know, so getting the word out to them to actually know where the groups are.

But yes, it's just support and I wanted other people out there that don't have that, you know, might not have a family, might be a single parent even and don't have the support of family roundabout them. I've not got anybody to look after him outside the family and Crèche facilities and things like that in the area are really bad at the minute, you know, there's no, there's one at the leisure centre but it's only open from 9.15 to 12.30 Monday to Thursday. There's nothing on the Friday. All the toddler groups are on in the morning so if I want to go anywhere in the afternoon, there's no crèche facilities. If it wasn't for the support of friends and things like that.

What does this story show is important for building community?

Meeting people and sharing experience can reduce feelings of isolation: "I don't know what I'd have done if it wasn't for the groups and meeting new people and things like that. I mean, what do you do with kids everyday, you know, and as a new mum. I didn't ken what to do and it was just like I said I went to one actual group one day I canna cope, he's not slept and this and that. And just for somebody to say hold on a minute and you just go and get yourself a cup of tea or something, just that support is so important... everybody up there had babies and things like that and kids and we were all going through the same sort of thing".

Meeting people often leads to further connections and opportunities: "I went along to the baby groups and I met a lot of people, my social circle kind of expanded...." "... through the local support worker I got to do my book club training, and through Kayle we did 'play way' training.... but I did the courses so that I could actually do it for the kids."

More people need to know about toddler groups and other groups that are already there: "there's a surprising amount of people out there that don't know where the toddler groups are in the community and don't know what's happening

Getting support from others makes all the difference and many people want to pass that on to others: "I wanted other people out there that don't have that, you know, might not have a family, might be a single parent even and don't have the support of family roundabout them... that is what we need to do for other mothers out there that don't have anything, and especially new mums.. you know, so getting the word out to them to actually know where the groups are."

'Getting the Word Out There'

WE MOVED TO COWDEN BEATH FROM EDINBURGH TWO WEEKS AFTER HE WAS BORN. WE WANTED TO LIVE SOMEWHERE SMALLER.

WITH MORE OF A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

I HAD BEEN SELF EMPLOYED, BUT AFTER THREE MONTHS MY WIFE WENT BACK TO WORK AND I BECAME CARER.

THREE MONTHS IN, WE WERE ON THE SOFA WATCHING PEPPA PIG AGAIN, JUST HIM AND ME. I THOUGHT...

...THIS CAN'T GO ON

FOR HIS SAME OR MINE!

I FELT QUITE ISOLATED AND LONELY.

I GOT A LEAFLET AT THE DOCTORS SAYING WHAT WAS ON IN THE AREA

I'M A BIT APPREHENSIVE BEING A DAD YOU KNOW

THEN ONE OF THE COMMUNITY NURSES RIGHTLY SAID I WOULD HAVE TO BITE THE BULLET.

I WENT TO A GROUP AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL. I WAS ANXIOUS, BUT WAS MADE REALLY WELCOME

WE WENT EVERY WEEK

BUT IT WAS ONLY THE ONE

I STILL HAD REALLY LONG DAYS, WITH MY WIFE OUT THE HOUSE EARLY AND BACK LATE

IT WAS FRUSTRATING, KNOWING MORE WAS ON IN THE AREA, BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO FIND IT

BUT PEOPLE TOLD ME ABOUT THE CLASSES

I GO TO FIVE MORNINGS A WEEK NOW

MON WED FRI

I'VE MADE FRIENDS TOO. AFTER BEING QUITE DEPRESSED, WE ALL LOVE LIVING HERE NOW

IT'S FUELLED MY FIRE TO GET INTO THE COMMUNITY TO GET STUCK IN. I'M HELPING WITH THE COMMUNICATION, SPREADING THE WORD

IT'S MADE QUITE A DIFFERENCE ALREADY

THE MORE I PUT IN, THE MORE HE'LL GET OUT. THE WORK WE DO NOW, WILL BENEFIT KIDS IN FIVE/TEN YEARS TIME. THEY'LL BE HAPPIER AND MORE CONFIDENT

Making the connections

I moved to Cowdenbeath seventeen months ago, two weeks after he was born. I'd been living in the city, in Edinburgh, in Leith for twenty years, rented flats and this was after a lot of research and deliberation of various places we decided to move to Cowdenbeath. One of the reasons was that we wanted to move somewhere smaller that might have a sense of community, so that he can grow in somewhere that is a little bit more innocent than Edinburgh. It wasn't really the kind of place that I'd want him to go out of the front door really. And so we moved here. And I was self employed before that and the wife works full-time in Edinburgh and after three months she went back to work and we decided that I would be full-time carer and she would continue working in the city.

So after three months I was sitting in the house just him and me. We don't know anybody in the area. No family, our family live really far away, so literally it's not even like they can come round every second weekend. There really was nothing. After a few months it was getting a bit silly, him and me stuck on the sofa watching Peppa Pig. This cannot go on. Both for his sanity and my sanity. Bored to tears really. I felt quite isolated and lonely. I was thinking what have I done moving here. Although I had friends in the city, I wouldn't necessarily want them looking after him.

Life completely changed. And after going through, taking him to the doctors for something, I picked up one of those leaflets that told you what was on in the area. So then I probably looked at it for a few weeks and still did nothing about it because I felt apprehensive being a dad taking a baby to a baby group, I guess. I just felt a bit anxious about it all and obviously at that time when he was younger you're knackered and you're not necessarily thinking straight you know. Oh, it was ... Sometimes it just felt like the easy option to sit on the sofa or try and fill the day at home. But that became increasingly difficult. And one of the community nurses or health visitor said that I would have to bite the bullet. That sort of

resonated with me and I thought yeah, she's right, this really can't go on, for his development and for my sanity.

And also felt that that was, I'm not living up to the reason we moved here, I didn't move here to sit in a house all day, I moved here to get involved and start, kind of start a new life with him and bring up my kids. So I went along to a baby group at a primary school and yeah, I didn't know anybody there. I just turned up one day, felt pretty apprehensive to be honest, pretty anxious about it. Everyone was incredibly welcoming, incredibly friendly. We went back to that every Wednesday for the first few months but even then it was only one thing a week and the rest of the week was still a really long week and my wife worked long hours, she'd leave the house at seven and get home at seven as well. So long days.

But then speaking to the people ... Well, he was still only six months old, I realised that it also wasn't really appropriate to take him to toddler groups out there. He was very clingy to start with. I find that since we went to the baby group he has become more relaxed and that, that's really good. And then speaking to some people, Shirley and Kayle and ... Oh, have you heard about this group. I hadn't and I'd looked on the Internet and I just didn't know about them. I felt quite frustrated actually thinking I can't believe there's nothing to go to but I believed there was nothing to go to. I'd spoken to a couple of other people and I saw, every time I went outside I saw loads of folk with kids walking the streets. I thought oh, maybe there just isn't. I thought that's pretty weird, there's a town of 40,000 people there must be something. And wrote it off and I felt there's obviously nothing, there's obviously just one or two things a week.

And that sort of fuels my fire of thinking I want to get involved in the community if that's the case but then since then I've been, people shared information and told me oh, this and that, why don't you come along to that and now we go to five groups a week, every morning. Which has been very good for his development. I've

noticed a total change in him as you can imagine compared to having me sit in the house. He didn't use to be like this at all, he used to be really clingy. He's very confident. I'm really happy with that, he's made friends, I've made friends. People have been incredibly friendly, welcoming to me which is .. We're not coming from here, knowing everybody here I find it really very important.

I'm not getting all emotional but like I actually felt quite depressed shortly after he was born because there is nothing, sit in the house all day, this is a bad move and it's quite ... A year later quite I think the complete opposite and it has just been the best move ever. He's having fun. We've got a routine now. We get out every morning. We are out for two or three hours a morning which is beneficial for me as well because I don't have a car so I walk to and from every playgroup which is a half hour exercise I'm also getting as well. It tires him out so he wants to have a sleep in the morning so I can take my lunch in peace.

It won't last too long but we have another one on the way so. And it's another boy so I know that I'm going to be going to these playgroups for quite a few more years longer. And that's part of the reason I thought as well, don't be a wallflower, get involved, get stuck in. The more I put in the more he'll get out of it. And I even started to think at a more abstract level that if we help all the kids now in five, ten years time the younger kids will pick up from them, the entire area will flourish and the kids are confident and happy and have better social skills, better communicative skills, and for that reason I've been helping out with some of groups and helping out a bit with the communication, trying to spread the word, I really rather enjoy living here which has been a real turnaround in a year.

I've been helping get some stuff out and about. It's made quite a big difference already so I think that's about it.

What does this story show is important about building community?

It takes time to get to know people and get involved: "What I've learned is that you don't get instant results. Things won't change instantly... everything takes time, to meet people, for people to introduce you, and a bit of trust and people getting to know you. You turn up at a group people aren't instantly necessarily going to go you should come to all the groups. More dads have been turning up, but it takes time, and you can't expect instant results".

Meeting other people locally is important for everyone's wellbeing: "Over the days I have noticed an exponential improvement in his development and my development and happiness and just generally quality of life. And that's all come about by the community and the way that they've accepted us, not just going to the toddler groups. I lived in the city for 20 years, I worked in the city, I can walk in the city and not know anybody. I walk down Cowdenbeath high street and the thing is people don't even know you say hello. When we first moved here I was quite taken aback. Weird, do they know me. But I found it really incredibly friendly place which is quite shocking for someone who's not used to it and it's really rubbed off on me. And now I've started saying hello to people. They smile, I smile, everyone is happy for two more seconds of the day.

Information about what is already out there is important: "I hadn't [heard about the group] and I'd looked on the Internet and I just didn't know about them. I felt quite frustrated actually thinking I can't believe there's nothing to go to but I believed there was nothing to go to ... but then since then people shared information and told me oh, this and that, why don't you come along to that and now we go to five groups a week, every morning".

'Things For The Children'



Things for the children

Well, I'm a full-time mum. I've got a twelve year old and I've got seven year old and a three year old. I got roped in in running the toddler group in here. And over the months we've tried get the word out about the toddler group being here because actually not many people know about the group. Thomas is at nursery so I speak to the mums there as well. I actually find myself sometimes even stopping and seeing people that I've known for years that I haven't spoken to them and say to them, 'got a wee bairn? - there's a toddler group'.

And actually it's the same as with others, my confidence has grown so much in the last couple of months where we actually do something and deal with things. Like, as you can see we are trying to revamp the toddler room, with a lot of meetings with the head teacher. We got it the first day of the holidays - basically got it all out and worked with the after-school club who rent this room. And that's one thing I never actually thought I would do. As I've said before I've never been one for confidence. I preferred working with animals because I didn't have the confidence to work with people. I actually went to college and I've done animal care when I left school. And I was going to work with horses but I fell pregnant so I had to leave that.

And then had my daughter, and then I fell pregnant with my oldest one and there was no groups or anything available that I knew of where I was living. And there was nothing here at all really for me to do when she went to nursery. And then I fell pregnant with my middle daughter when my eldest one went to primary school. And then we moved to Cowdenbeath and even then there was no information about anything that was on in the area. So I walked out to take her and pick her up from school and then back and I was in the house all day on my own. And then when my middle one went to nursery I met Kayle, she had her oldest at nursery and we got talking. We became friends but then we sort of drifted apart because Kayle started working again, then we become friends again because Thomas is the same age as her one, and Kayle helped in the backroom here and that's really why I'm here.

I've done a complete home course. I've done paediatric first aid course and I basically said any course you want me to go on, give me a shout and I'll do it. Because the more I learn the better it's going to be because my oldest one is twelve and there's nothing for their age bracket around here. And the more courses I can go the more help I can give out in the community. I would like to have somewhere in here like a youth club for ages like my oldest daughter and the youngest one because there's nothing for primary school age. And there's nothing really for teenagers apart up at the community centre on a Friday night and that's it. The rest of the time I spend worrying about them because she's walking the streets with her pals.

What does this story show about building community?

Finding things for children to do and to be safe is a big motivation: "The key thing is getting children from a young age, toddler group, then nursery, they play together, develop friendships and basically be secure and safe. And then when they get older at night time when they want to go to their pals, I want to be able to say you can go to this group because at the moment there's nothing apart from activities that I pay for my daughter. I want somewhere that will only cost 50 pence for a youth club in an evening, but there's nothing out here. That's my goal to try and help build that in the community".
".the other thing is building relationships with people here, so when the kids go to another kids' house you know they're safe because you know that person, so you've got a safer area".

Getting involved can boost confidence and lead to further opportunities and reaching out to others: "my confidence has grown so much in the last couple of months where we actually do something and deal with things.... I've done a complete home course. I've done paediatric first aid course..
".over the months we've tried get the word out as much as we could about the toddler group ... I actually find myself sometimes even stopping and seeing people that I've known for years that I haven't spoken to them and say to them, got a wee bairn? - there's a toddler group".

'Never Give Up'



Never give up

I am a single parent, not through choice, I lost my husband about five years ago. And being in the house didn't actually bother me, I was quite happy, I put the kids to school, I would come home and that would be me. Twenty month after he died I passed my driving test, and that's probably been the best thing I've ever done in my life apart from my kids, when I passed my driving test. Going out and meeting people didn't actually bother me either. I was quite happy being in the house on my own with the kids or when they were at school I would try and lose myself like with TV, and every room in the house had music on or something like that, just so it was a bit, I didn't feel I was home alone.

And then I went to a family group with Marie and I met Kayle. I am the kind of person that I don't care if somebody likes me or not. I just plod on. I say what I say and if you don't like it tough. I've no desire to be liked. If you treat me with respect you get the exact same back. I have got my oldest is 21, he's working.

I've become a mum myself when I was 15 and it was probably the hardest time at that point. Going to toddler groups like Gingerbread and things like that and it was all older mums and you sort of got like a wee bit stigmatised sort of thing. I still went for his sake.

He's such an amazing laddie, he's got his own car, a girl, an amazing job. He's even got a wee bairn, which I was quite shocked that he was a dad. I've got three in the house, two of which have got ADHD and two have got dyspraxia. And at some point along the line I still look after my mum who has, she's not able bodied but she's not wheelchair bound either. But she does have one of those electric scooter things.

And I help out quite a bit, trying to help Kayle and help where I can, things like that. I actually think that it wasn't for going on a Wednesday night and meeting Kayle and doing other things... because really the only people I spoke to was when I come to the school to pick up my son. I got one at college, one at high school, one at primary. But when you have got loads of other emotions going on, not just for yourself, but you've got your kids there and it's not been easy but it's been, one of the hardest jobs. But I wouldn't change it for a minute.

If I can help Kayle wherever I can or even somebody at school that I know then I must admit I am one of these folks that I am only going to help you if I like you.

What does this story show is important about building community?

Meeting other people locally can be a source of friendship and mutual support. Even when people are quite self sufficient, getting to know people locally can be rewarding for companionship and mutual support: "It's only been in the last few years that once a fortnight me and my sister met in town for lunch and that was really my only like adult date sort of thing. But with meeting Kayle, I mean Kayle phones me nearly every day, I see her nearly every day, but meeting knew folk you find, since I didn't know Sian and I didn't know Amanda. Just meeting other folks I think".

An initial meeting can lead to further involvement: "I actually think that it wasn't for going on a Wednesday night and meeting Kayle and doing other things... because really the only people I spoke to was when I come to the school to pick up my son".

'Children At The Heart Of The Community'

I'VE GOT A SEVEN YEAR OLD AND A THREE YEAR OLD. I WAS A NURSERY NURSE UNTIL MY DAUGHTER WAS THREE.

BUT REALISED THAT IT WASN'T WORKING

I WAS WITH OTHER PEOPLES CHILDREN BUT I WAS MISSING OUT TOO MUCH ON MY OWN.

WHEN I STOPPED WORK, SUDDENLY BEING AT HOME WITH TWO OF MY OWN 24/7, WAS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY.

ACH NO! GET OUT O' THERE!

UNTIL YOU ARE IN THAT SITUATION YOURSELF, I DON'T THINK YOU REALISE.

WITH OTHER CHILDREN, YOU HAND THEM BACK AND GO HOME.

WITH YOUR OWN

YOU HAVE THEIR LIVES IN YOUR HANDS

IT'S BEEN HARD, BUT IT'S BEEN THE MOST WORTHWHILE THING I'VE EVER DONE.

DYLAN'S A TYPICAL BOY, HE'S INTO EVERYTHING. MY DAUGHTER, I CAN TAKE ANYWHERE AND SHE'LL BE GOOD AS GOLD.

WITH DYLAN IT MAKES IT A BIT AWKWARD GOING OUT TO PLACES.

BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE LOOK AND ASSUME THAT, YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE NO CONTROL.

I PAY FOR A LOT OF EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO KEEP THEM OFF THE

I DON'T WANT THEM HANGING ABOUT OUT THERE

EVERY OTHER NIGHT WE GO SOMEWHERE

MY DAUGHTER LOVES COOKING. APPARENTLY SHE'S GOING TO WIN JUNIOR MASTER CHEF WHEN SHE'S TWELVE

DYLAN'S MOVING ON TO THE NEXT STAGE, BUT I'D LIKE TO STAY ON AND HELP, TO HELP THE KIDS SUCCEED IN WHAT THEY WANT TO DO IN LIFE

SO ANYTHING I CAN DO IN THE COMMUNITY TO HELP THEM, AND IF IT HELPS OTHERS AS WELL, THEN THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

‘Children at the heart of the community’

I’ve got a seven year old and a three year old. I worked full-time as a nursery nurse until my daughter was three and realised that the working, I wasn’t actually with my own child, I was with other people’s children but I was missing out too much with Amy. So I was made redundant but it actually came at a time where I was thinking about stopping anyway and then a couple of months later fell pregnant with this one.

Working in a nursery with twenty kids was no bother. Suddenly being at home with two of my own 24/7 the responsibility was just ... Until you’re in that situation I don’t think you realise ... You’re dealing with other people’s children but of course they’re not yours, the responsibility is not only yours, you hand them back and go home. With your own you have two lives in your hands. And it’s been hard but it’s been the most worthwhile thing I’ve ever done. My daughter is seven now, she goes to school. Dylan starts nursery after Easter holiday one day a week.

Dylan is a typical boy. Dylan is into everything and my daughter is completely different. I can take my daughter anywhere and she’ll be good as gold, she’ll behave whereas Dylan you get what you see. And it makes it a bit awkward for going out places because some people look at you and assume that, you know, you have no control, so it’s quite awkward to take him out and you don’t want him to miss out, but at the same time you don’t talking about you.

We moved to Cowdenbeath in the summer of 2014 and Amy started the school here and that’s how I met Sharon walking up and down to school. Her son is in Amy’s class, we got friendly and then Sharon started to go to toddlers here. We feel really welcome and now we come every week. Dylan is moving on to the next stage but I’d still like to stay and help out. With him going to nursery now looking to go back to work myself, I’m happy going back, but I don’t want to take anything away from my kids as well looking to do child-

minding so that I can still be there for them and do every holiday as well.

I pay for a lot of extra-curricular activities for the kids to keep them off the street. I don’t want them hanging about on the street, I don’t want that, so Amy on Tuesday night, every other night we’re out. She absolutely loves cooking and apparently she is going to win Junior Masterchef at twelve.

For me it’s now to make sure to go out to have lots of things for them to do, keep them busy to help them succeed in what they want to do in life. So anything that I can do out in the community to help them and it will help other people as well then that’s why I am there really.

What does the story show is important about building community?

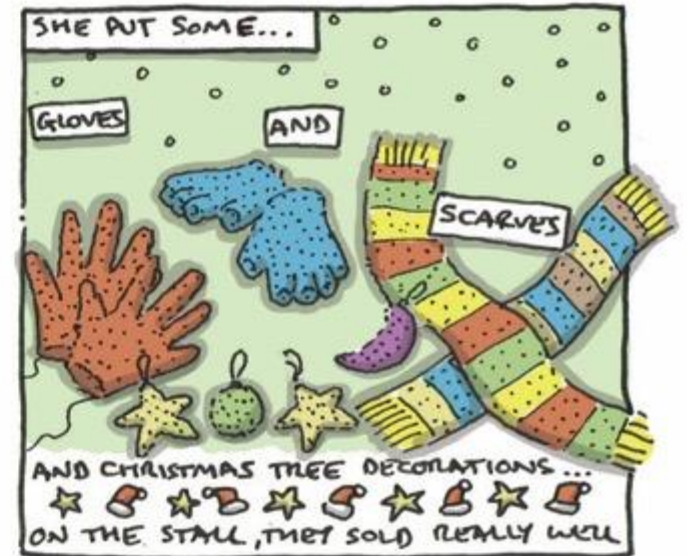
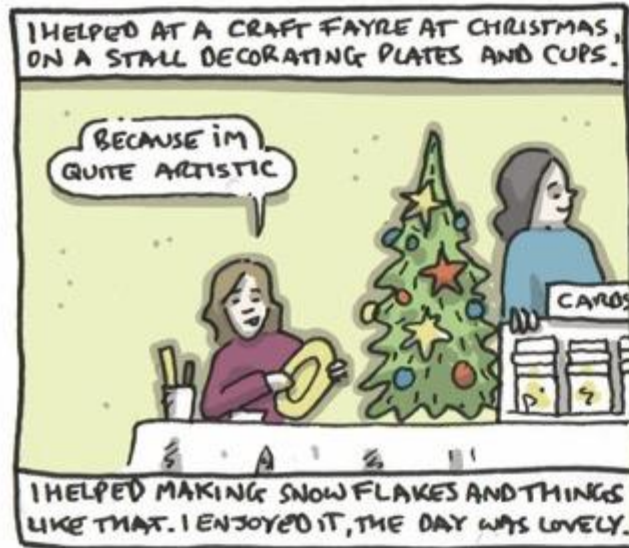
Concern to find things for kids to do as they grow is often a motivating factor in people getting involved

“I’d say the main thing would be finding things for them, everything else leads up to that, my main goal is make sure that they have things”.

Community groups are best when they make everyone feel welcome and not judged

“.. it makes it a bit awkward for going out places because some people look at you and assume that, you know, you have no control, so it’s quite awkward to take him out and you don’t want him to miss out, but at the same time you don’t talking about you... We feel really welcome here and now we come every week”.

'Meeting People'



‘Meeting people’

I can tell you personally I am a little bit more confident because I always used to be shy, talking to other people this was not me. For my kids as well, because they met current kids and other kids as well. So my daughter, she enjoys knitting and she wants to continue with this. So I think this is good idea, to do these sort of things for kids and other people, to meet other people and to improve their social skills.

I helped out at a craft fair at Christmas decorating plates and cups, and I helped making snowflakes and things, since I am quite artistic. I enjoyed the day, it was lovely. I spoke to Laura, and Laura’s mum, and other people.

Laura’s mum does knitting and my daughter, she was so excited about doing knitting. I can’t do it, I can do lots of things but not knitting. So she was excited because Laura’s mum she said she’d done some gloves and some examples of scarves and these things and small decorations for Christmas trees and it was lovely. So Andrea, she put it on the stall and it sold.

Laura’s mum was teaching her to knit, and encouraging her. And she can explain better how to do it. Yes, she is very good. So she continues at home and she wants to do that now.

It would be nice having something for the kids and then they can go say for example after school or weekends. An arts club or activities for sports, anything

What does this story show is important about community building?

Community activities and initiatives are important focus for meeting other people, reducing isolation, and new opportunities

“Meeting people and getting out of the house, you know, don’t sit at home all the time. Just go out, do some activities and that’s good for everybody, for kids, for adults. So keep the connection with other people, not just on my own in my own social network”.

Concerns for finding things for children to do are woven into people’s efforts to connect with people locally

“It would be nice having something for the kids and then they can go say for example after school or weekends so arts club or activities for sports, anything”.

'Celebrating Grandad'

MY GRANDAD PASSED IN JANUARY...

January 2016
Loving Husband
Father
and

... I WAS REALLY CLOSE TO HIM.

I DECIDED I WAS GOING TO DO SOMETHING FOR HIM AND HELP OTHERS AT THE SAME TIME.

FUNDRAISER
IN AID OF
MARIE CURIE
CANCER CARE

MUSIC!
FACE PAINTS
STALLS!
FUN!!

THERE WAS A LOT TO ORGANISE. I TALKED TO LAURA, THROUGH COLLEGE, ABOUT EVENTS AND SHE HELPED ORGANISE ONE.

PEOPLE DONATED STUFF, AND MONEY. THE LADY IN MY CLASS MADE...

DAFFODIL CAKES!

SOMEONE ELSE MADE HEDGEHOGS OUT OF BOOKS!

WE RAISED £215 FOR AN EXTRA TWENTY HOURS OF NURSES TO HELP PEOPLE.

AS WELL AS BEING A PERSONAL THING FOR US, IT SHOWED THAT THE COMMUNITY CARED.

AW WOW

BOOKS/HOLES

CAKES

I WAS AMAZED AT HOW MUCH PEOPLE WERE PREPARED TO HELP.

MY FAMILY HELPED. I KNEW THEY'D COME, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT THEM TO HELP OUT.

SOME OF THEM DID FACE PAINTING

RAAAA!

ONE OF THEM DID NAILS.

WE NEVER REALLY TALKED ALL THAT MUCH, BUT SINCE THIS, WE HAVE GOT CLOSER.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A PERSON WHO SAID, 'OH! I CAN'T DO THAT!'...

BUT THIS HAS GIVEN ME THE CONFIDENCE TO KNOW THAT I CAN ACTUALLY GO, AND DO... THAT!

IT'S REALLY MADE ME FEEL LIKE I'VE GOT A PURPOSE NOW.

Celebrating Granddad

Well, basically I have been talking with Laura through college, and because I was looking at events, she helped me do an event. And my granddad actually passed in January and it was with cancer and Marie Curie helped and I was really close with my granddad. You wouldn't believe how close we were.

So I decided that I was going to do something for him and to help other people at the same time. So I decided I was going to do a fundraiser and raise money for Marie Curie. So to organise that there was a lot of work so I had to get a bit of help. So in five weeks I think it was, five weeks and we managed to get quite a few people, even people that came in here, they'd come in for, like lunch or something that would come through and donate. We managed to raise £215 for Marie Curie which gave, it's an extra twenty hours for nurses to go out and help people and stuff.

I made a Facebook page and added everybody on my Facebook to try and get them and a lot of people donated stuff and money, the lady in my college class, she made cakes and like she put like a little daffodil and that as well for Marie Curie. And someone else she made hedgehogs out of books, she was folding the pages to make hedgehogs. Like everybody donated a wee bit whether it was money or something to sell. A lot of them family came and helped and some of them did face painting and somebody was doing nails in here, so everybody so we came with a lot.

The fact that all my family helped was a bit of a surprise. Because I knew that they would come but I didn't expect them to help and they've been. I was amazed as how much people were willing to help us in doing that.

It did show that the community cared, but like people that I didn't even know came in and donated a wee bit. Like some people came in and were interested to see what was going on just out of interest, but you could also tell that when people knew what it was, you could tell that they did want to donate. It was amazing how much people were donating.

What does this story show about building a welcoming community?

There is often a reservoir of goodwill and support in the community that may not be apparent until events bring it out: "I think it shows as well that you really can count on people sometimes, when you may think that there is no help or support there, people surprise you and come out with that help and support. It is really important, that means a lot to people...I was absolutely surprised how they came and did a show to support her."

Many people are ready to provide contributions of their own to support community events which combine to make things work: "So it meant so much to us and made an effort everybody, absolutely 110% effort to come and show their support and do what they can to help. Face painting and hedgehogs, everybody just did what they could to help" "this woman who lives around the corner, and she said I'll pop in with some bracelets for you and she sat up the whole night before making extra ones because she said I've got about ten bracelets for you, I'll bring them round and she got them round and it was over thirty. So it was just like, it was people making an effort to work for her and to make Ellie happier so she could then feel she'd helped."

Organising community events can really build confidence and give people a strong positive feeling about their connections with others: "I've always been a person who said oh, I can't do that... doing that thing has really given me that confidence to know that I can actually go and do that and to know what I'm doing either organising, do that hard work, it's really made me feel I've got a purpose in life"

An event is not only about it's main focus – it is also about the pleasure of developing and building relationships with others: " it was a really, really nice atmosphere. And people were just happy. Jack and his friends were really happy" "It was like with my family as well...we never really talked together very much, if we see each other in the street we'd say hello and that, but since [organising this] was just amazing seeing us all together... it has brought my family closer as well."

'Music Is My Thing'

ERIN WAS DOING THIS EVENT FOR HER GRANDAD AND I WANTED TO HELP. LAURA ASKED...



A FRIEND AND I GOT TOGETHER AND WE REHEARSED A FEW SONGS.



I STARTED MESSAGING EVERYONE I KNEW TO SAY...



WE LEARNED SOME OLDER SONGS, LIKE JOHNNY CASH AND THE ANIMALS, EACH TIME WE PLAYED ONE, LAURAS MUM HAD A MASSIVE SMILE ON HER FACE.



IT DID GIVE MY CONFIDENCE A BOOST, PLAYING IN FRONT OF A BIG CROWD.



EVERYONE WAS DOING THEIR OWN THING, TRYING REALLY HARD, HELPING OUT...



Music is my thing

Well, there's not much to it. Obviously I knew Erin was doing this event from seeing her at college. And I'd always wanted to help and there's no many things I'm good at if I'm honest but obviously guitar and music that's my thing, that's always been my thing so what I actually did, Laura asked Erin is there anything Jack can do to help because he's good at guitar.

So I had to ask a few friends first because I'm not confident with my singing, so I asked a few friends to see if they could sing with me. And a couple were busy but one of my friends said he'd definitely be up for it and I've actually not been in touch with him for a while either so that's been good to see him as well. So we had just organised a wee get together to see what we could do. I just wanted to help because I knew how much it means to have support and I know how much it meant to her.

So we got together and we rehearsed a few songs and that. And then I just started messaging everyone I knew to say look, please come and please come to this event. It would mean so much to us if you can make it. Some people couldn't make it and said they were sorry and you knew they meant it. And I just felt good knowing that people were there for you because I knew I was able to help, it made a difference to the event as well, it made a difference to the event so people could sit back and listen to the music.

I had been in a band before, we used to practice together. I hadn't had any gigs or that but I'd been used to practising with him which made it even better because we knew sort of the same songs after that practising together. Even we played songs at the event that we've never played before as well. We asked around about old classics, some songs we just looked them up

and we started playing them. It did make a difference. And any time we played older songs like Johnny Cash or the Animals or something, Laura's mum would just have a big smile on her face. And she'd just come over and looked at us like I can remember that song.

It was quite funny getting down because we missed the bus and everything and it was chaos. We didn't even have guitar cases for the guitars so carrying about guitars in our hands around the streets and coming down here on the bus.

And it was just like a sort of good feeling that you could make a difference, you could help. I loved playing in front of a crowd as well so it was building confidence with the guitar and stuff. It was just brilliant all around for every reason. It was just really good.

The heart of it for me is really how much we made a difference for Marie Curie and how like we sort of like... if Erin's granddad was watching we've made him proud I think. Because of what we did for him because we did do this event in his name, no other way about it. That's what was the heart and soul of the event was and what brought people together and it's why people gathered, I think, Erin's family and my family came down. Again like, a loss is a sad thing but it does bring people together and made a difference for Marie Curie.

What does this story show is important about building welcoming community?

Taking part in community events can build confidence and inspire people to do more: "I definitely think that it give me a big boost of my confidence for playing as well....I'm not very

confident in my singing but when he started singing it sort of got me going, got me singing as well and for the first time I actually didn't mind people hearing me sing.... I definitely want to go and do music events and maybe even sing at them and play guitar at them. Because that's what I've always wanted to do since I was a kid. It's one of the things I feel I'm good at. So going on to do music events and singing, stuff like that, even if it's for charity to raise money that is great for me. I absolutely love my music and it will boost my confidence. I think that's helped a lot"

Being part of community events is personally rewarding:

"Everybody had a very good time. That really affected me and Erin it really made us happy a sense of accomplishment. Erin has worked so hard on this, worked so, so hard. I think definitely a sense of accomplishment there for her how well it turned out."

"this place was full and it just made me so happy, it brightened up the day because it was so full. I never expected it to be that full, everybody had a smile on their face. Everybody was happy"

People make their own different contribution: "Everybody was doing their own thing, everybody doing their sort of activity and everybody loved it I think even though it wasn't a big huge outdoor event with rides and that, everybody still had a good time.... I think absolutely everybody did try their best, 110% tried their best, whether that's coming down, and making stuff, doing that."

Young people care about community, it is not a 'thing of the past': "I think it shows as well that you really can count on people sometimes, when you may think that there is no help or support there, people surprise you and come out with that help and support. It is really important, that means a lot to people"

"What I liked about it was that the boys that came down, all of Jack's friends gave of such a positive impression to people about teenagers... Because a lot of the time teenagers get portrayed as being, they're not interested in doing anything, they just loll about, they're lazy, can't get out of bed. But the boys all came down, they all helped, helped tidy up at the end, carried boxes... I think that they felt they were helping and you could see it on their faces that they were happy about that."

'The Summer Programme'

A GROUP OF US, WITH HELP FROM KAYLE, PUT TOGETHER A SUMMER PROGRAMME...
 TO ENTERTAIN THE KIDS IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS
 FOR EACH OF THE SIX WEEKS WE MADE UP A PROGRAMME FOR THREE OF THE FIVE DAYS.

WE ALL HAD OUR OWN IDEAS AND PLANNED IT TOGETHER TO MAKE A GOOD VARIED LIST OF ACTIVITIES. WE DID...
 CRAFT SESSIONS ON MONDAYS
 TEDDY BEARS PICNIC IN THE PARK ON A WEDNESDAY
 AND FAMILY WALKS ON FRIDAYS AROUND GOLDEN BEATH

WHEN KAYLE HURT HER BACK, WE TOOK IT ON OURSELVES.
 WE HAD SOME GOOD SUPPORT FROM COUNCIL STAFF
 HELPING WITH SOME SESSIONS AND SPREADING THE WORD

I USED MY BOOK BUG TRAINING
 FOR PEOPLE THAT CAME TO THE TEDDY BEARS PICNIC.

WE ALSO DECIDED TO DO A COMMUNITY BBQ, AT THE END OF SUMMER.
 IT'S A WEEK ON SATURDAY WHEN MORE PEOPLE ARE BACK
 ALL PLANNED BY OURSELVES
 LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE OFFERED SUPPORT ON THE DAY AND EVEN A BOUNCY CASTLE AND A GENERATOR!

ALL THIS HAS HELPED WITH MY CONFIDENCE A LOT, PLUS MY KIDS HAVE HAD THINGS TO DO...
 AND OTHERS TO SOCIALISE WITH.
 WHICH IS A BIG THING FOR ME
 AND...
 ... THROUGH THIS I'VE MET SOME GOOD FRIENDS

The Summer Programme

A group of people from the local area got together and with the help from Kayle, we decided to put together a summer programme to entertain the kids while the summer holidays were running. We had something for three days out the five days overall. There were the craft sessions at Trinity church on a Monday. Wednesday there was a teddy's bear picnic in the local park. Friday was a family walk to different areas of Cowdenbeath.

A few weeks before the summer we had grouped together and spoke about the activity's we were planning for the different sessions. Were we going to have a theme for each or keep the same theme for the whole week across the different sessions? We all had different ideas and brought them together to make a great programme for the kids and families. When Kayle hurt her back, we then took this on by ourselves, just calling her if we needed any help. We also had a lot of support from the council staff. Shirley came and helped on some sessions and Emma Fyfe helped arrange different visitors to the trinity church sessions.

I mostly helped with the Teddies bear picnic. As I had just carried out my Book bug training I felt comfortable to offer that as a service to the people that came along. Although a couple of sessions were cancelled because of the torrential rain, we had a few families come along and join us. Some weeks were busier than others but we all got together to do the same thing. Meeting new people too.

We also decided to do a community BBQ at the end of the summer and planning for this has been ongoing. We have pulled together people from the community to help. People have offered

things like generators and bouncy castles and others have offered support on the day. We are having it a week on Saturday, we had planned to do it sooner but we thought a lot of people are away over the summer and deciding on a date was becoming a nightmare. We have been very lucky in that we haven't need to ask for any help from officials but have managed to kind of plan it all ourselves. I'm very much looking forward to it – even if it rains!

I feel I now know more people and my confidence has grown a lot. I have young kids and to help them socialise and have more to do in the area has been a big thing for me. Though this have met some good friends and I like helping out and enjoy the work that we have been doing together and hopefully we can do more in the future.

What does this story show is important about building welcoming community?

People are able to make their own distinctive contribution to organising events that make up the overall programme

Working with others in the community builds relationships and confidence, with the potential for future joint activity

Positive experience of working together gave a group of residents the confidence to take the initiative and lead a significant part of the programme, even when the community builder was not available

Other residents contributed resources and support to make the events happen

'Getting Involved'



Getting Involved

I had a bit of input at the start of the summer programme but I couldn't get involved as much as I wanted to because of different issues. Though I have been working with Kayle and Mari from the council to set up another family night with help from Cowdenbeath Primary school where we want to hold it. We got some people who want to come along and I would like continue working with them to make sure we can get it up and running.

Before when we had it running my boys loved it and it was really good at allowing us to slowly get to know people. My boys have ADHD and Dyspraxia so this helped me a lot so they had something to do help me keep my sanity!

My eldest Daughter, Georgia, became a volunteer and that brought her out her shell a wee bit too. I have gotten close to a few folk too which has helped me in a few different ways as well.

I'm really looking forward to the BBQ; I think it will bring a load of folk together in the one place. I've defiantly been able to see more Community spirit in the last few months which I think is important not just for our generation but for my weans too.

I'm involved in the Trust, which is a group that meets to discuss ideas around developing the local area. I have more confidence now to speak to council staff and be able to say my opinion to them. I'm looking forward to being involved in different things in the future like the workshop that is coming up for the trust. Gives the local community a chance say what they want. And no be told what they want.

What does this story show is important about building welcoming community?

Organising community events like the family night can be a good way to get to know people and give a focus for getting together with others.

Getting children involved also builds their relationships and confidence

A greater feeling of community spirit can give people a feeling of confidence and purpose

The confidence gained from organising things with fellow residents has a knock on effect in that people are better able to express their opinions to the council

'We Did It'



We did it

I love helping people and for me that has been the most important thing in doing this. I helped plan the summer programme and I know that the sessions have been a hit, though we haven't really had the numbers that we would of hoped for, I think the weather had bit to play in that- it still went well and I have enjoyed the different stages of doing this.

I have 3 kids and having something to do in the summer that was free and local was a big benefit to me as my family are low income earners.

I met different people and enjoyed that too. I think that we were able to do things for ourselves and we decided what we wanted to do. The council we good at helping out with different things like visits from the Fire brigade and Police, the play rangers also came along too but we asked them to do it when we wanted. Which worked well.

We have the BBQ which has been fun to organise. It been, for me, a learning thing where I've gotten to know a lot more folk in the area and made more friends. I've felt more confident in asking folk for things too. It nice to see how generous and nice people are even if before I thought they weren't very nice people. Just shows that you never judge a book by its cover.

I've done a lot of training things through Kayle too. I've helped share ideas for starting the family night and looking forward to it starting. I really think by doing all this, it's helped me add to my skills and make me a lot more confident then I was and I really think it's because of the work that I've done and the support of friends that have helped that. I've just started my driving lessons and hoping to be passed by Christmas.

What does this story show is important about building welcoming community?

The motivation for getting involved in the community is often linked to concerns to see opportunities for local children.

Meeting other residents is rewarding in itself, but also tends to lead to further connections and greater awareness of what locals have to offer

Residents who have developed confidence through working together are better able to negotiate appropriate involvement from agencies and the Council.

New connections and confidence tend to lead to further connections in a ripple effect.

Key things highlighted across the stories about building welcoming communities

A number of common things emerged in discussion of the stories, which highlight important aspects of what it takes to build welcoming communities

- **For many their motivation to get involved in the community is closely linked to their concerns around finding things for children to do to keep them interested and secure.** Many residents explicitly linked their own individual efforts to connect with people locally with a vision of a community that had places and spaces for children to be engaged, happy and safe. In this way people can see the connections between building good relationships locally, finding things for children to do and children's future relationships and wellbeing.
- **A lack of information and awareness of existing groups on the part of many new parents was a common theme in many of the stories.** This led to a concern to publicise the groups and to residents trying in different ways to spread the word about them; from personal recommendations to producing a leaflet of all local groups.
- **Meeting people locally and sharing experience can reduce feelings of isolation and be a source of friendship and mutual support.** Even when people are quite self sufficient, getting to know people locally can be rewarding for companionship, support and wellbeing.
- **Meeting people often leads to further connections and opportunities as well as growing confidence and reaching out to others.** For many residents, getting involved in one group quickly led to other new connections to groups and activities. For several people this included doing training and building their own skills and the growth of personal confidence.
- **Getting support from others makes an important difference to people locally and leads many to want to pass that experience on to others and find ways to help others to get involved.** A

common thread in stories was a move from isolation to appreciation of local support, to recognition that others needed the same.

- **The first step to get involved is often very hard. Making the initial personal connection, or being encouraged to come along or accompanied by someone are important.** Often people felt anxious about going to a group or activity but were encouraged or able to go with someone they know or be sure someone they knew would be at the group. This highlights an important aspect of community building efforts. In addition it was recognised that it often takes time to get involved, to get to know people and to make those connections.
- **Residents can and do organise events and groups for themselves** and are able to draw on diverse contributions from the local community which they don't always realise are there until they try.
- **The confidence gained from working together with other residents can lead to a different conversation with the council,** and an ability to express local concerns and priorities.
- **Community activities and initiatives often have a practical focus (such as children's activities or knitting together) but are equally important as a focus for meeting other people, reducing isolation, and companionship.**
- **Groups that welcome everyone regardless of their circumstances make people feel comfortable and come back.** It is important to recognise people's individual contribution and particular set of skills and experiences. In a number of examples people felt welcome regardless of particular personal challenges and this was important for their motivation to stay involved.
- **'Community spirit' is not just a thing of the past** – many residents enjoyed the experience of others being willing to get involved and help out.



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