

Connected Communities

In-control / TLAP
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Connected Communities – study and support team

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Centre for Citizenship and Community - who are we?

UCLan – research, evaluation, community engagement, courses

Associate team – health, social care and public services – senior experience in health, social care and public service sectors – commissioning, management, strategy, housing, leadership, service improvement design..

RSA Connected Communities team – action research, network analysis, policy development, thought leadership and organisational change
supported by a multi-disciplinary network drawn from RSA's Fellowship.

Royal Society for Public Health – extensive expertise on accredited course and organisational development in public health, arts and cultural perspectives.

Personal Social Services Research Unit (London School of Economics) – extensive expertise in social services and health research, economic modelling; financial analysis.



Centre for Citizenship and Community

Vision

Across public policy domains, services that are designed to integrate in everyday practice, the social value of empowered communities and their assets and networks to wellbeing and inclusion outcomes.

Mission

To support integrated 'thinking and action' for the policy, research, learning and innovation required to achieve the vision.

Strategy

To deliver this mission in health, social care and across the range of public service settings with a model of change that integrates research with innovative design and learning from practice experience.



Why Community?

Strong evidence for value of connection

In mental health:

- People with MH problems amongst most isolated in society ⁽¹⁾
- Vulnerable adults frequently have restricted social networks as result of marginalisation and stigmatisation in the community ⁽²⁾
- Good evidence for association of positive and supportive relationships with positive wellbeing ⁽³⁾
- Social networks are key aspects of social capital and social capital is seen as increasingly important for mental health and wellbeing ⁽⁴⁾
- Positive social capital can lead to improved personal, occupational, income, status, and activity outcomes ⁽⁵⁾

(1) Department of Health, 2010 ; (2) Bigby, 2008; (3) Webber et al.2011; Bowling, 2011; Brugha et al., 2005; Aked et al 2008; Kawachi, Subramanian & Kim, 2007 ; (5) Lin, 2001.

‘The less a community knows about itself and its citizens’ capacities, the easier it is to fall into a pattern of seeing the community and its people only through a ‘needs’ perspective. The more a community becomes familiar with itself and its citizens, the more obvious it becomes that what is good about a community far outweighs whatever needs it might have’⁽⁵⁾

(5) Kretzmann, J. and McKnight, J. (1997) *A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing The Community Skills of Local Residents*. Chicago IL:ACTA Publications



Centre for Citizenship and Community – theory of change, key strands

Change through networks

Imaginative community networks are key to social action and new approaches to governance at all levels*

Social value capture

Community engagement is imperative to local empowerment *and* to unlocking the social value – the unseen assets – of community

Organising for inter-dependence

Building from ‘the multiple practices of reciprocity’ (Taylor); public services/communities; bonding and bridging communities; individuals and social networks

A culture of co-production

Public service organisations with a ‘literacy of community’, ‘complexity–capable’ co-production: design, development and delivery = innovation

(*See Tapscott, RSA Journal Spring 2013)

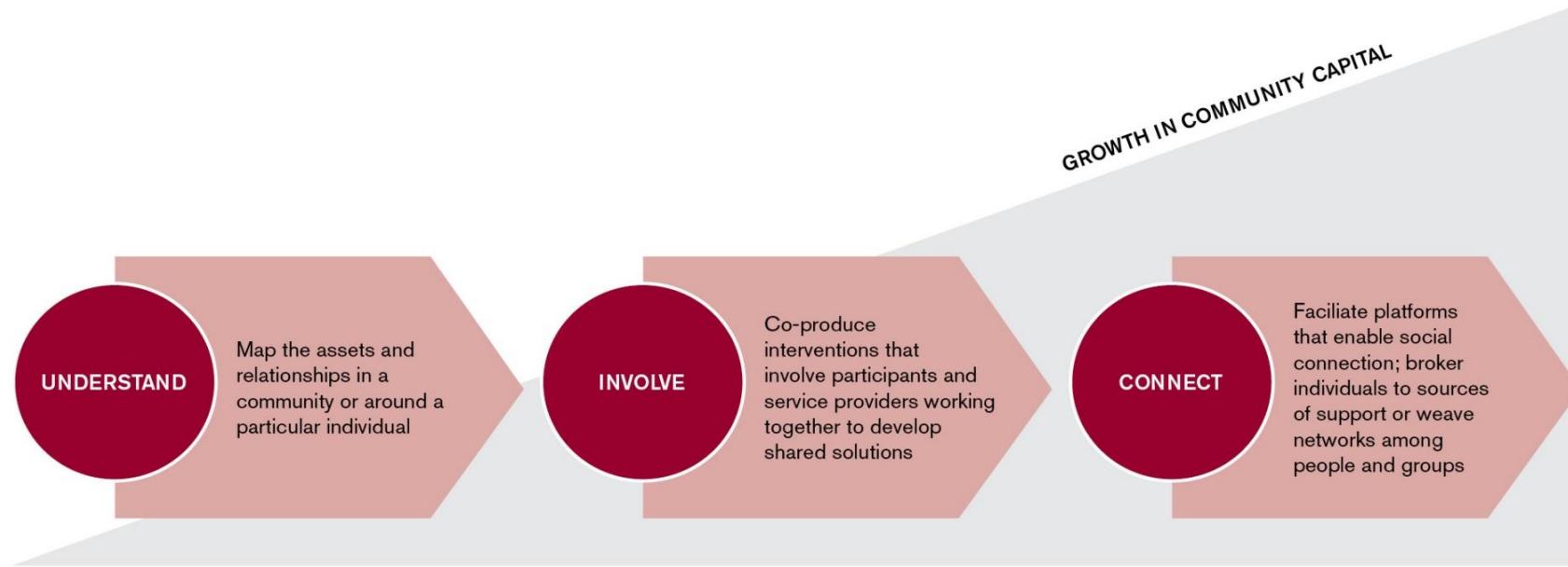


Connected Communities - Summary

Action research project to explore how the community dimension of people's lives contributes to well-being and can be developed to analyse how different interventions build resilient, inclusive communities and empower individuals to take greater control of their lives through relationships based on shared concerns and mutual trust.



Theory of change: Understand, Involve, Connect



We suggest that community capital can be grown through a way of working that follows the Connected Communities principles of *Understanding* the local situation, relationships and patterns of isolation, *Involving* people in creating a solution, and aiming to *Connect* people to one another to reduce isolation and create more connected communities.

What does a networks perspective add?

A: Information that is Topographical /Historical / Associational /Relational, Asset- based

Topline findings from initial Connected Communities work (2011):

- 25% can't make change through networks – lack connections; 2% completely isolated
- 'Familiar strangers' (postmen, streetsweepers, quizmasters) are under utilised resources
- Those who are isolated/disadvantaged don't make use of networks they have, and also need richer connections
- Opportunities (especially for employment) more likely to arise from people we don't know very well who have connections to other networks
- Weak ties are strong only when they connect different networks of strong ties, along which ideas, innovations, information and artefacts flow.
- In our sample, 50% of the unemployed and 38% of retired people are in the isolates group, as compared to 20% and 16% for the employed and students respectively.
- Those isolated from influence are less socially connected overall. Such people are not only more isolated from agency/power, but also just more isolated.
- This will increase general feelings of a disconnected community, which in turn breeds less connectivity: [if I think my neighbours don't say hello, I am less likely to].
- In terms of community resilience and resources, being in the isolates group stops these people becoming others' assets. In terms of policy and interventions, the less connected a network is, the harder it is to spread positive behaviour and change through contagion effects.
- The more isolates we have, the more blocks there are, with contagion depending on key players. Can we increase peoples' connections to power, and thus their sense of agency over their own lives, simply by encouraging and enabling them to socialise?
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Connected Communities – A study in seven sites

- Examination of ways in which community-based networks are formed, their purpose and function
- Map the inter-personal and collective behaviour of these networks in each site in each site at different points in time, using a social network survey and wellbeing scales (Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and ONS Life Satisfaction)
- Identify ways of understanding the assets and needs of these local networks
- Co-design community level interventions to meet local needs
- Evaluate pilot interventions to gauge the economic and wellbeing value of interventions based on social networks
- Project sites: Murton, Liverpool 8, Tipton, Bretton, New Cross Gate, Littlehampton, and Bristol



Connected Communities Programme – the method

Two key components: i) deliberative community engagement; ii) social network mapping and analysis

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Deliberative community engagement:

- coordinating support from a statutory agency *and* a third sector umbrella partner in each setting to:
- support local community members to become researchers of their own communities;
- training workshops to enable effective approach and co-design local information show cards;
- complete surveys of social networks and wellbeing (social networks of almost three thousand people surveyed).

Social network mapping and analysis

- using range of software packages (eg: UCINET, NodeXL, Gephi, Pajek) to produce sociograms;
- social network maps ‘played back’ to local people in inter-active public events from which:
- an intervention with the local community is co-produced for subsequent evaluation.

Model in Practice – Murton, (pop c 7,500)

Research: phase 1 - *duration: six months*

- Social network survey tool developed for use in each of seven sites
- Volunteer community researchers recruited by local 'umbrella' org: East Durham Community Trust (EDT)
- UCLan produced training materials to enable survey completion
- 25 Community Researchers recruited by East Durham Trust (umbrella org)
- 18 Community Researchers trained by UCLAN (2-3 days)
- 10 days spent in field by researchers
- 500 questionnaires collected by community researchers, using door knocking approach
- [UCLAN University Certificate of Attendance awarded to researchers; 2 researchers moved into employment]
- Social network analysis (SNA) undertaken
- Follow -up focus group discussion (6 community researchers) to explore experience of participation
- Dissemination event (well attended by community members) organised by EDT to relay the results of the SNA. Findings showed single mothers to be one of most isolated groups and with lowest wellbeing scores.

Survey – focused on obtaining information on where people go for advice or information and who they connect with

We asked:

- Where people go locally
- What resources, places and groups are used/visited locally
- Where people get their information from
- Any barriers locally?
- Personal networks: who do people rely on?
- Help and trust: who do people go to?
- Who are the known activists locally?
- Who links local people to authority?
- Are there any links between networks and wellbeing?

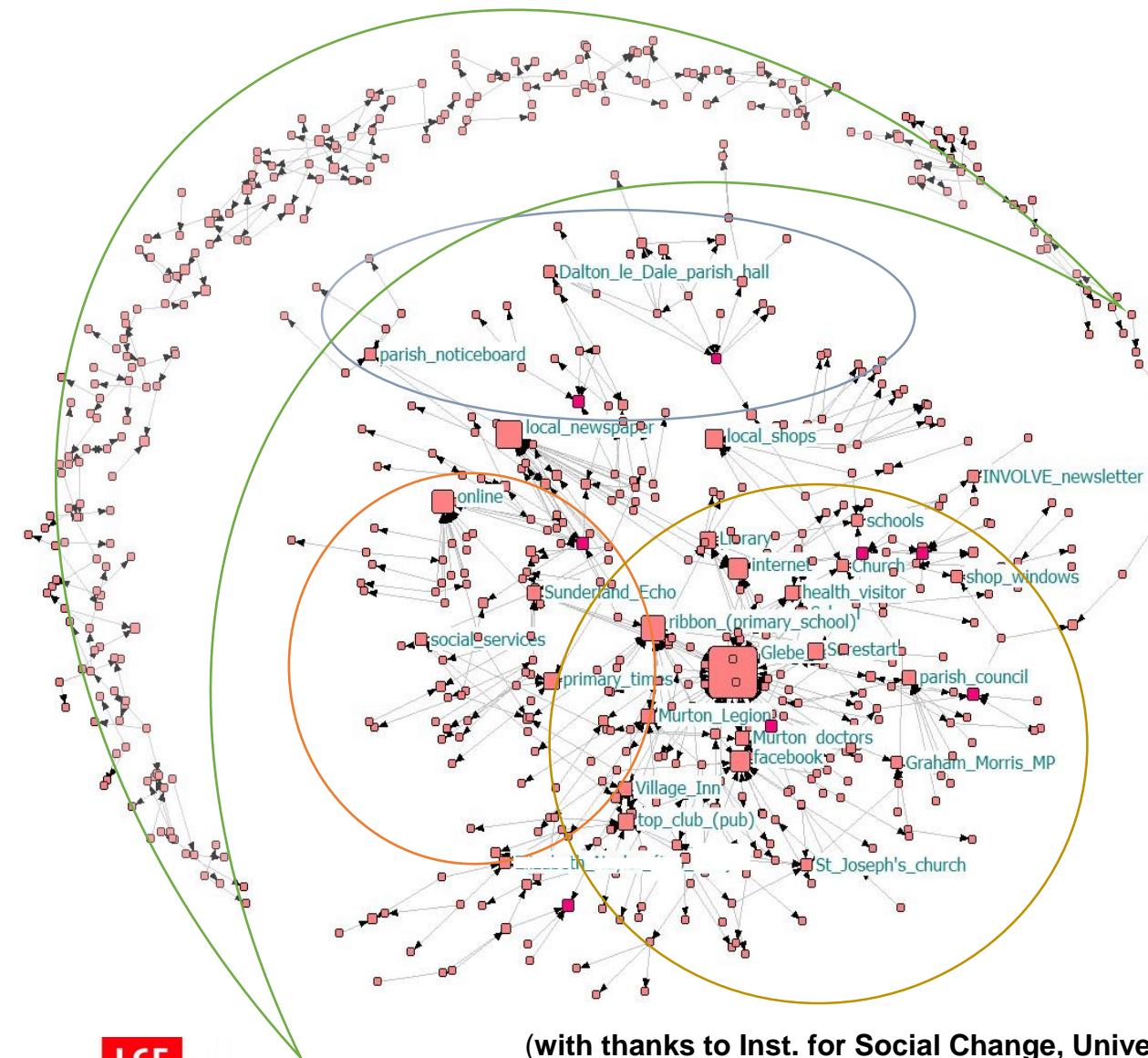
Social Network Mapping and Analysis, Murton

In answer to question: Where do you go or who do you speak to in order to find out what's going on in your local area?

Information pathways were split between people who tended to just go to their friends (the orange crescent) and people who go to local resources.

These people then tended to split further into:

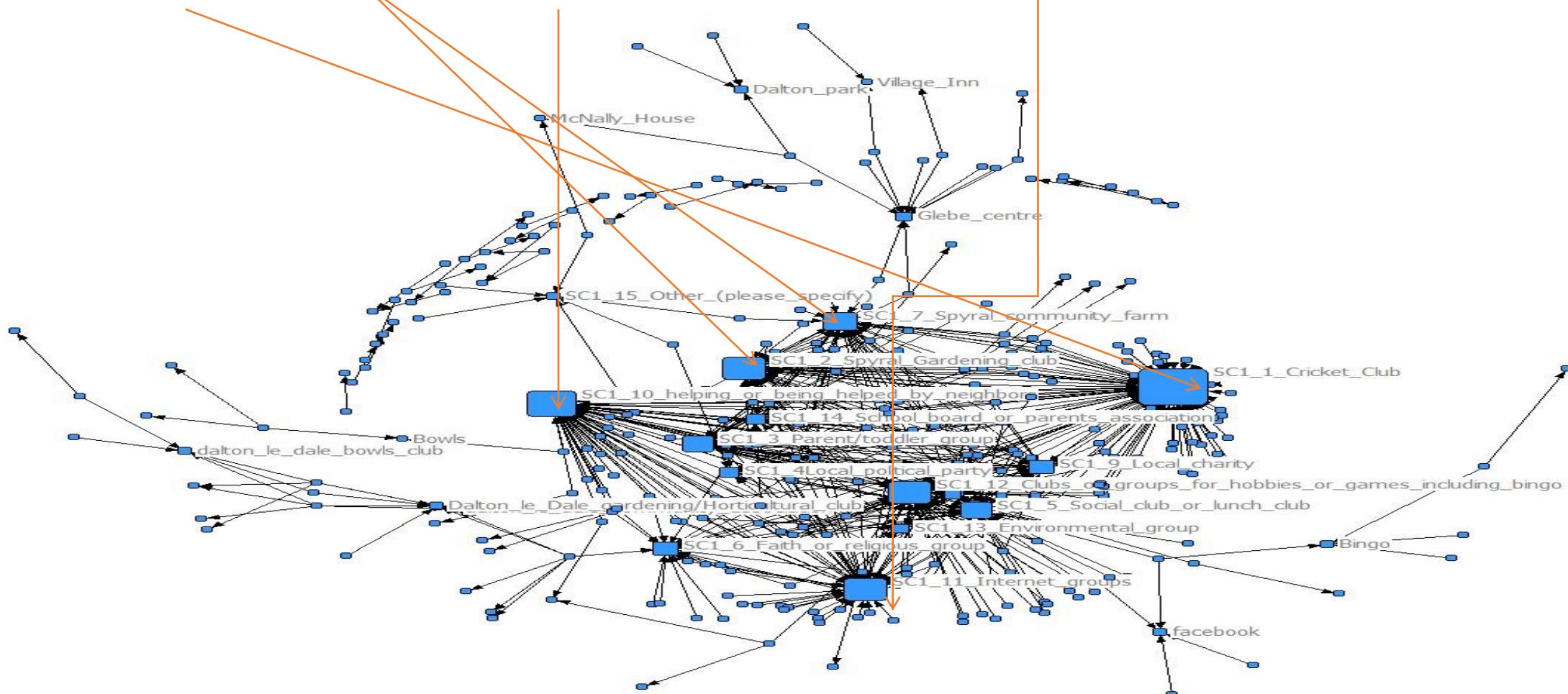
- people who get info though the parishes and Dalton le Dale (blue);
- People who get info online/newsletters etc..(red)
- People who go to Glebe, Murton Legion and Murton more generally. (purple)



(with thanks to Inst. for Social Change, University of Manchester)

Types and place of groups and activities

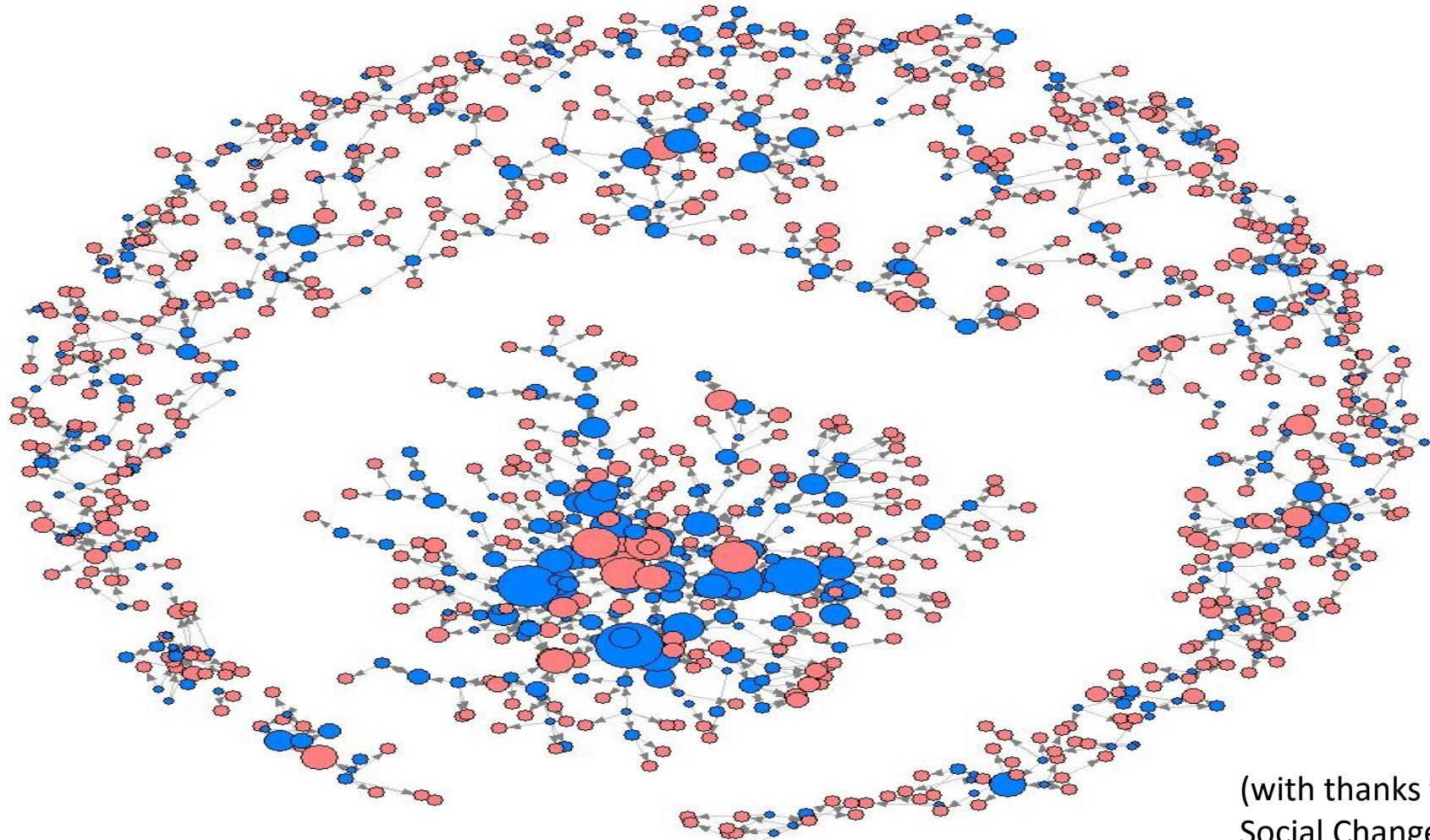
Cricket, Gardening, helping others and the internet were particularly popular



In answer to question: "Please tell me what types of groups, activities, and organisations you take part in"
(with thanks to Inst for Social Change, University of Manchester)

People's support systems are interconnected...

Blue= respondent,
Pink= named person.
Size= times
mentioned



(with thanks to Inst for
Social Change,
University of
Manchester)



Model in Practice (Murton)

Research: phase 2 – *duration: nine months*

i) Pilot for Intervention project:

- Consideration of focal point for potential intervention strategies to improve local networks; from phase 1 data highlighting particular and greater than expected isolation and low wellbeing scores for single mothers, agreement to target this identified group in establishing potential interventions.
- EDT carried out further work to identify the single mother cohort.
- UCLan provided 2 days further data collection training.
- Completion (over 2-3 weeks) and analysis of further questionnaires (n.250) with wider community on perceived issues for single mothers.
- Face to face Interviews (n.15) with single mothers
- Guided discussions with Focus Groups (2, involving 19 participants, recruited from localised advertising, local community groups, mail shot, health professional referral) to establish why single mothers in Murton were socially isolated;
establish what intervention activity may lead to people being better connected.
- The research activity with target cohort was an intervention in itself since it brought a number of isolated single mothers together who decided to remain in touch with each other after the focus group discussions.



Research: phase 2

ii) intervention project

Having completed focus groups with isolated single mothers and one to one interviews, with funding support from Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, local steering group established intervention project to provide a model of engagement for single mothers in Murton aimed at extending the social networks of participants, improving their social inclusion and making a positive contribution to mental wellbeing. It envisaged that the intervention would provide a case study for potential duplication in other communities.

Specifically, the intervention sought to facilitate the formation of a Single Mother Group in Murton which would:

- be open and inclusive
- be sustainable in the longer term
- be perceived as 'additional' in terms of venue and activity
- represent, over its lifetime a forum within which to gauge effects on mental health and wellbeing effects

Research: phase 3 – duration 18 months

Evaluation and outcomes

- The Murton mam's group has gone from strength to strength with the **group formally constituting itself and securing funding from various sources** including CCG (health commissioners) to continue.
- The mothers' reported **gains from participation include employment, volunteering, benefits to their children and reduction in medication use.**
- The success of the programme has led to a **roll out to surrounding villages with three additional Mam's groups** now having been established.
- Social inclusion was the most commonly cited benefit for participants in the programme, with individuals reporting that they were **less socially isolated and had significantly wider social networks** when compared with their situation pre-programme. Many were now actively encouraging others to take part in community projects. **Cost benefit analysis by LSE points to consequent cost effectiveness.**
- An indirect benefit of the local project was the contribution it made to **keeping a convenient, supportive and well-regarded community hub facility open and viable**, through utilising spare capacity; creating links with other local community programmes and thereby generating beneficial options for other individuals and groups.
- The sites set a context in which **individuals could feel encouraged to engage (or re-engage) in paid or unpaid employment and in a variety of volunteering activities**. Volunteering creates additional capacity which is often of social and economic value in its own right.

Case Study: Murton Mams, East Durham



Case Study: Networking the networks in Tipton

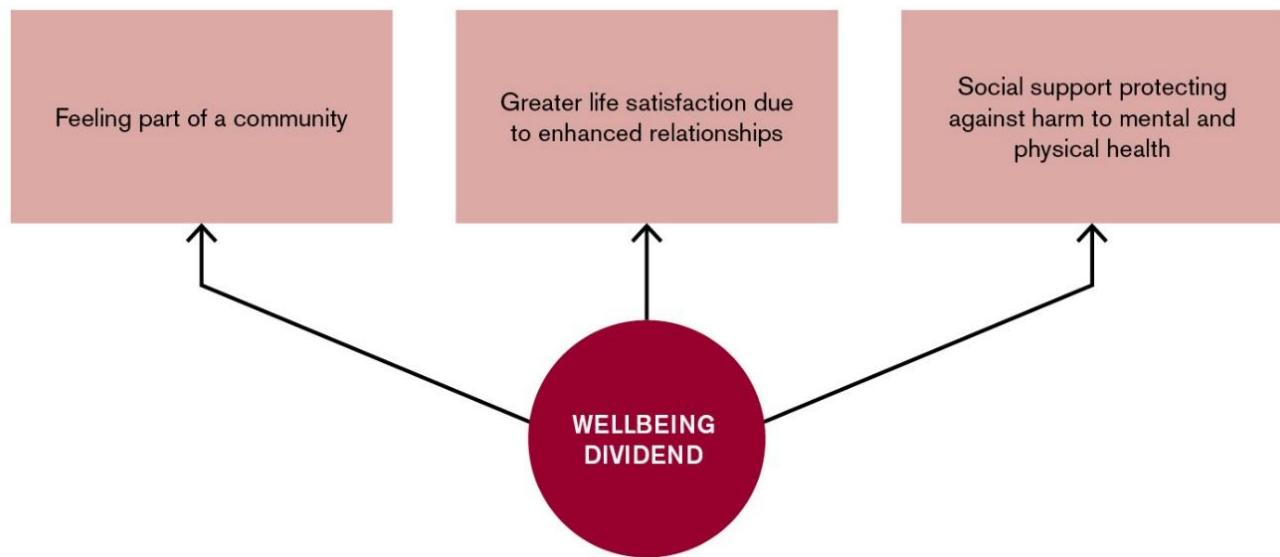


Connected Communities Programme, key findings

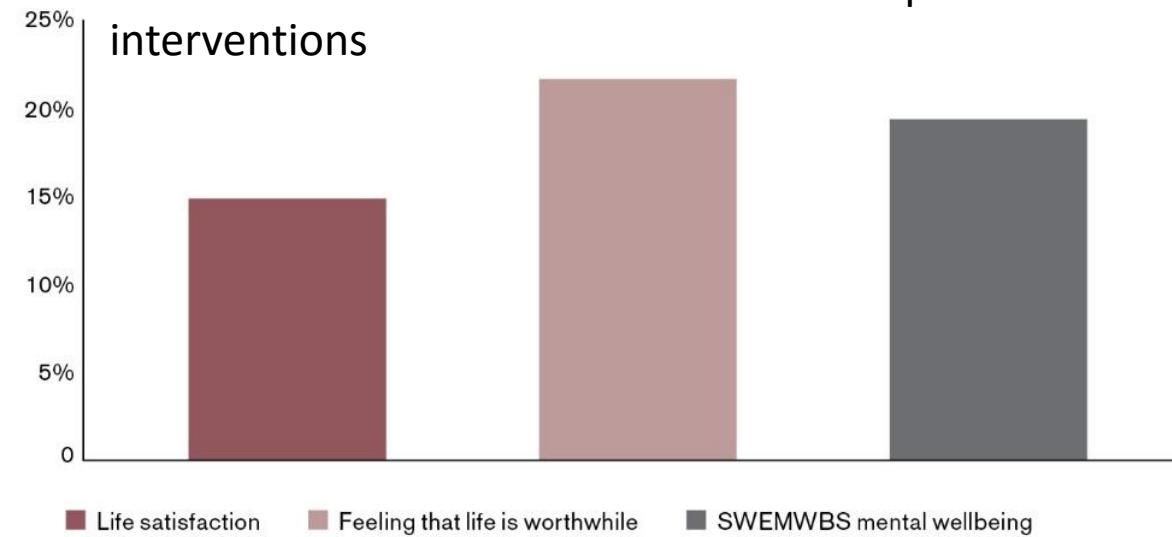
include:

- Proactively investing in **community capital** through interventions that support social relationships produces social value, this can be expressed as 4 kinds of dividend.
- Strengthening the case for the association of community participation and wellbeing: people who said they feel part of a community are more likely to report high subjective wellbeing - and those who said there was something stopping them engaging in their community are the least likely.
- Relationships are key to subjective wellbeing: social isolation is more closely linked with low wellbeing than other factors: age, unemployment or long-term illness.
- Access to community capital is uneven – 60% of those surveyed said they did not know anyone who can change things locally.
- There is a vital role for public services in helping to weave, support and broker relationships within communities

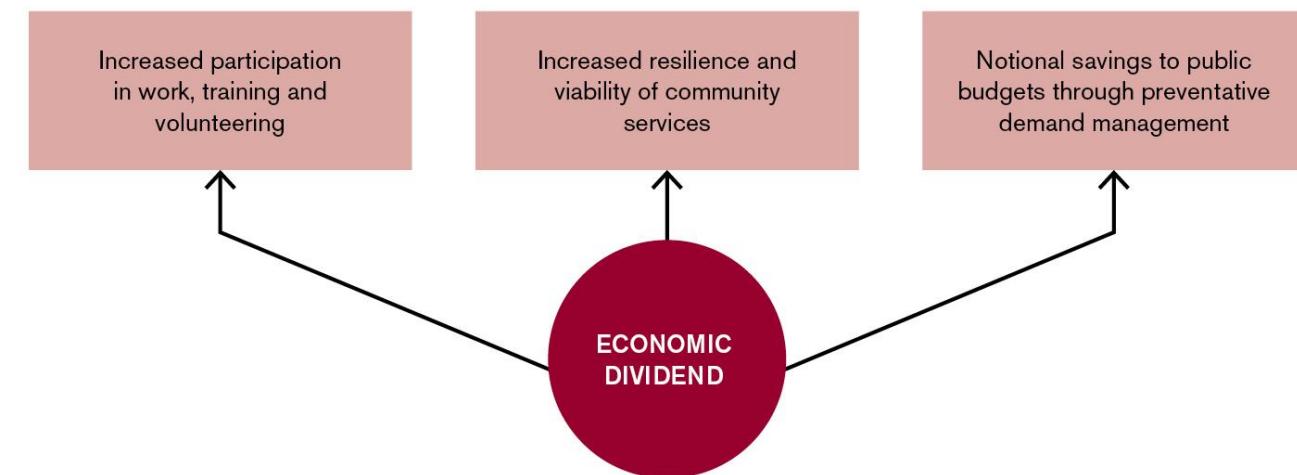
A wellbeing dividend



Participants' average increase in wellbeing measures after Connected Communities pilot interventions

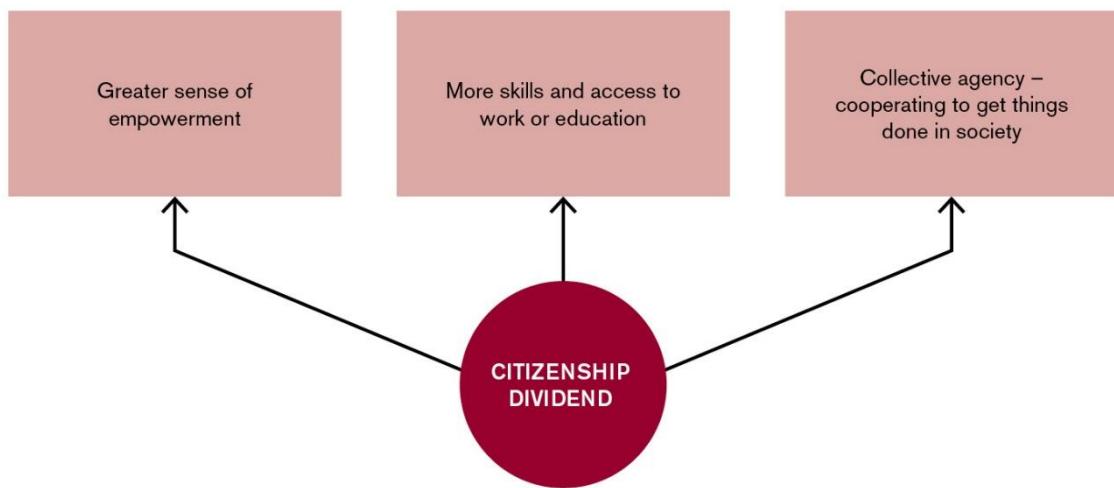


An economic dividend



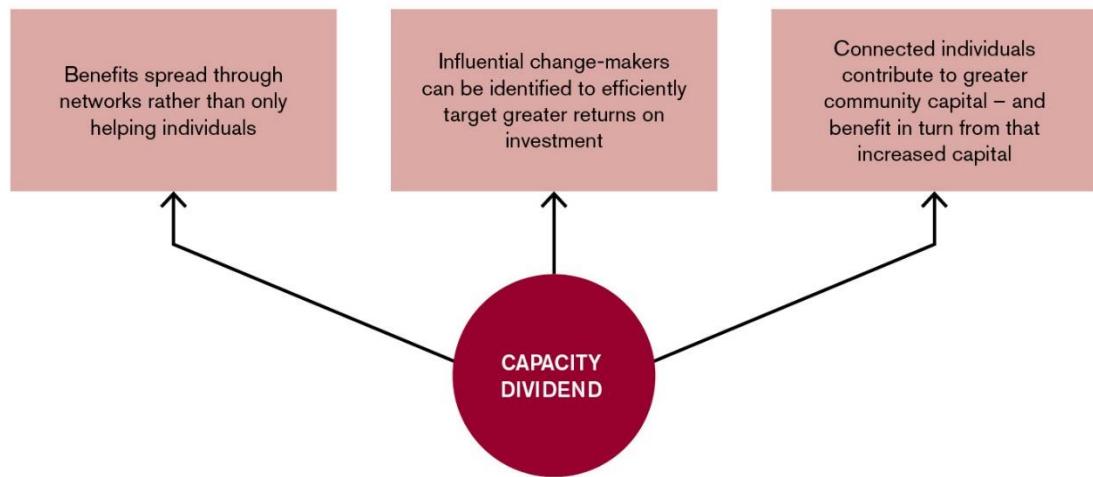
- In one intervention, reductions in participants' use of certain NHS services resulted in savings of 34% in economic analysis carried out by LSE.
- Participants were significantly more likely to be in training or education than before the Connected Communities project started.
- Several participants found jobs and said that this was due to the confidence and connections they gained through the project.

A citizenship dividend



- After taking part in the Connected Communities projects, participants said they were feeling more useful, better able to make decisions, and deal with problems.
- People with no social connections scored 8% lower in measures of empowerment.
- Feelings of hopefulness and determination seem to be contagious!
- Many people who took part in these projects started volunteering in their communities – in Murton they were eight times more likely to volunteer after taking part in Murton Mams than they were before.

A capacity dividend



- The ‘network effect’ means that benefits get passed on to friends and family – and the wider community.
- Many of our projects identified well-connected ‘change-makers’ who are good at making things happen. Involving these people in new community projects can help to connect people into other networks as well as forming friendly connections inside the project.

Reflections on findings

- Report reflects an important start in illuminating community capital, and its dividends and in showing what can be achieved with what might be thought of as a practicable shared '*literacy of community*'.
- There appears to be high intrinsic value in using social network analysis carefully to enable people to re-visualise who they are to each other.
- The programme demonstrates that community-led action and targeted interventions can strengthen local communities, and that substantial benefits can be derived as a result:
- Connections, and even the capacity to connect, are assets that can and should be harnessed, appreciated, protected and cultivated, *but*:
- Time, patience, empathy, deliberation are all necessary parts of the approach.
- Non-statutory duties of public services must not be seen simply as 'soft' extras that represent easy savings; these roles are potentially crucial points of collaboration and engagement between the state and communities. Developing beneficial social networks within communities needs to be proactively supported rather than simply assumed.

Reflections on findings 2

- Like most research on the efficacy of such initiatives, we show important but modest gains in comparison to more top-down interventions:
- By their nature, these locally specific, relational, emergent methods depend hugely on the quality of the people implementing them, the context in which they are working and the relationships they are able to build.
- The power of findings in such research depends upon values and framing. This leads to an important conclusion:
- In making the case for community based policy interventions we cannot depend on traditional approaches to evidence and outcomes measurement alone;
- The impact of Connected Communities is to be found also in the intrinsic gain of community members participating *as agents* in its process.
- The study adds weight to the idea that solutions which rely upon and foster agency among citizens are of higher value than those that treat citizens as mere service consumers or clients.

Connected Communities approach: challenges 1

Data treatment

- Social Network Analysis software programmes require matrix format for data, rather than case by variable arrangement.
- Range of SNA packages to use, e.g. UCINET (with NetDraw); NodeXL (free Excel plug-in); Gephi (visualisation options); Pajek (large networks).
- Significant challenge is to work out whether an alter named in one person's network is the same person as that named in another person's network: is 'David' mentioned in Steve's network the same 'David' as mentioned in Manjit's network? Lots of cross-referencing, detective work, testing, and sometime respondent follow up required.
- Careful design of questions and information required from respondents key to ensuring network is as simple to construct as possible.
- Any network mapped will only be part of the total set of interactions, defined by questions asked of respondents (and respondent recall): keep in mind when undertaking SNA studies and designing network interventions.

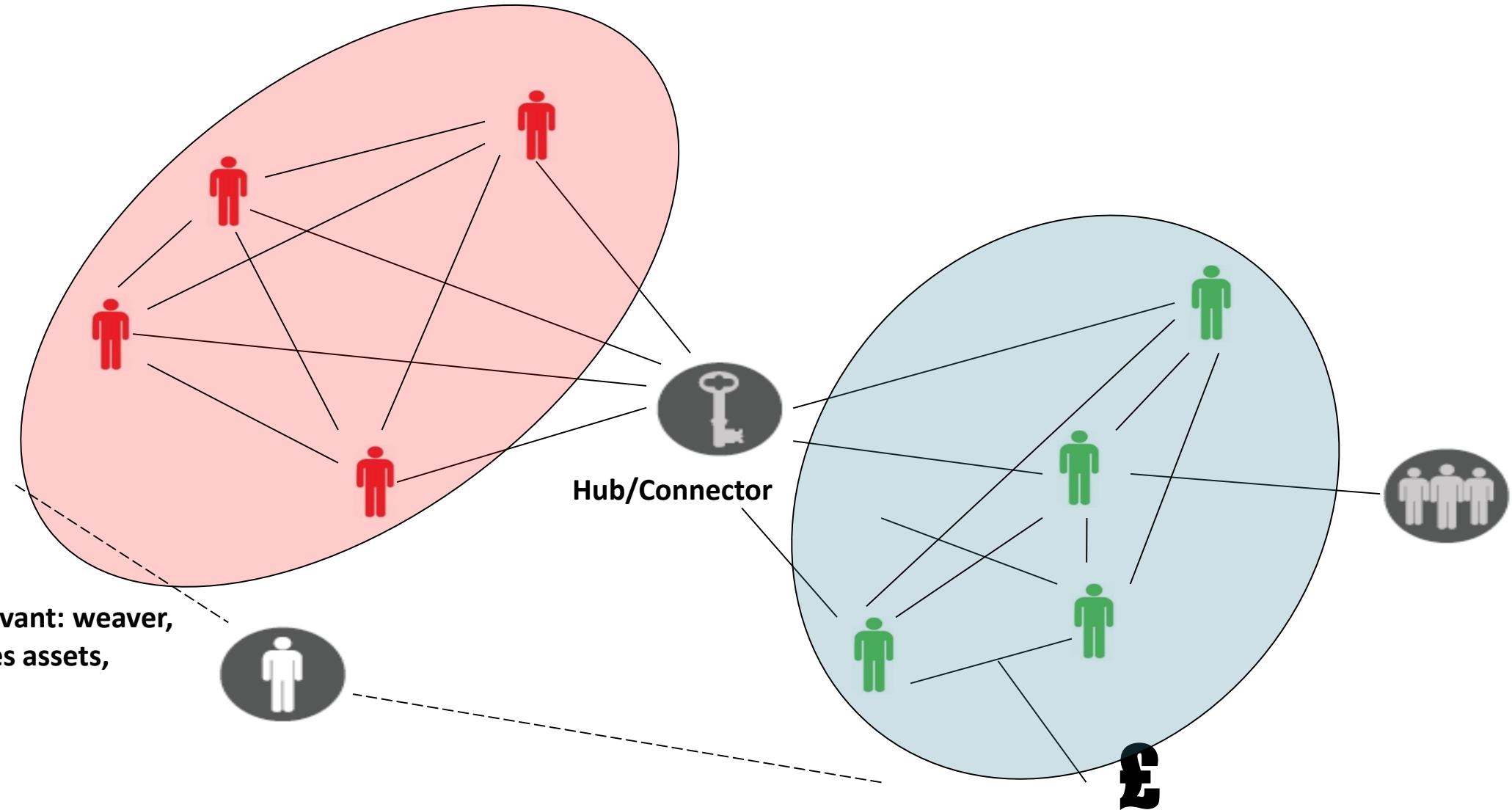
Connected Communities approach: challenges ²

- Requires **shift from delivery to co-productive ‘mindset’**; from a hierarchical to a system position; from transactional to a relational perspective.
- The role of the ‘agency’ is to enable, to promote autonomy, and contribute its resources as part of change-making, rather than ‘delivering change’; about ***enabling a system of assets***.
- A relational approach requires people who can relate – with empathy and respect for others; openness and awareness of the limits in what they can do/offer. **Building trust and relationships is a pre-requisite for network-based interventions.**
- **Agency must:**
 - **be able to respond in a timely way to momentum of the community;**
 - **have culture and systems capable of supporting *emergent* outcomes, rather than prescribed outputs;**
 - **understand that ‘community’ is both a mechanism for belonging, active citizenship and wellbeing, and:**
 - **something that houses conflict, barriers and problematic norms and behaviours;** –
 - **bringing the reality of community into awareness - and working with it is an important part of the approach.**

Connected Communities approach: challenges 3

- Requires capacity within the agency to train in the approach and participate alongside community members, so must have relationship with local community, or be prepared to develop one.
- Requires an on-the-ground presence to support community members.
- Accepts a trade off: data quality generated by community research less consistent than that collected by experienced professionals; but makes use of - and strengthens local capacity and relationships.
- Need technical capability to design network research instruments, analyse and interpret data and design and evaluate 'network-intelligent' interventions.
- Should have financial means to seed low cost network-intelligent interventions.
- Accepts risks in weaving community networks: project timetables may not go to plan; interventions may fail.

Connected Communities – role of public services



‘No society has the money to buy, at market prices, what it takes to raise children, make a neighbourhood safe, care for the elderly, make democracy work or address systemic injustices...the only way the world is going to address the social problems that are dumped on it is by enlisting the very people who are now classified as ‘clients’ and ‘consumers’ and converting them into co-workers, partners and rebuilders of the core economy’

Cahn E (2007) It's the core economy stupid: an open letter to the non-profit community 19 December 2007 in *The new wealth of time*, Nov.2008, New Economics Foundation, London



Thank you

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