



Overall Report

Clackmannanshire Economic Regeneration Trust SCIO (CERT)

e-centre

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1 Introduction and Background

Clackmannanshire Economic Regeneration Trust (CERT) was established in July 2020 with the vision of helping *Clackmannanshire become a vibrant place to live where people are happy, healthy and where opportunities, connections and supports are available for all*. CERT works actively alongside the community and in partnership with others, to influence positive change and create opportunities for the people of Clackmannanshire.

CERT recognises that the barriers and constraints to achieving our vision are complex and multiple and are undertaking a range of projects and research to seek to address these. Further information on CERT can be found at www.clacksregen.org.uk. Some of CERT's largest projects are:

- **Positive Moves** – a joint programme with Clackmannanshire Works which helps residents of Clackmannanshire who are seeking work or considering steps to employment. Tailored support is offered for ages 16-67 facing challenges through a key working structure and supports available include work qualifications, confidence building, travel cost assistance, money advice, IT skills, volunteering, work experience, and job search skills.
- **Multiply** - provides support to boost people's literacy and ability to use maths. The programme is for over 19s and is delivered throughout Clacks through workshops and one to one tutoring supports.
- **Database of Provision** - An online, searchable database of existing supports and programmes is in place including over 200 projects from over 100 organisations who are actively providing support to Clacks residents.
- **Childcare**. We have completed a major investigation into Childcare in Clackmannanshire and have identified priority areas for action including establishing after school childcare for all primary age pupils, increasing the number and retention of childminders, increasing nursery provision and work to improve the working of the childcare labour market

To support this activity, CERT is an SQA Approved Centre.

In all our work we have discovered that the most effective support is informed by the needs and views of the residents and clients we are seeking to support. In the delivery of Positive Moves and Multiply the programme continually evolves and changes to meet the needs of the clients and by being based around a key working/one to one engagement model it ensures that we meet the needs of the clients.

For other projects and activities it is less easy to change the structure of the activity during the project, particularly when the project is short term and timebound.

Subsequently, with the support of the **People's Postcode Lottery Trust**, we have undertaken an exercise to proactively seek the views of residents of Clacks on what would best help them.

This exercise sought to follow the principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design which adopts the principle of those who are in receipt of support/have needs are best placed to determine what supports should be provided and are best suited to them – rather than the more traditional top down programme design approach.

Each group was provided with a question to answer such as “how to improve your ability to get a job”; or “what would improve your health and wellbeing”. They were then supported through a series of 4 facilitated workshops which were undertaken by consultants Rebecca McFarlane and Janet Biggar.

Each group was provided with £1,000 to spend on an identified project to help their group. No restrictions or boundaries were given to the use of the funds provided.

From this work, the appointed consultants supported the groups to develop their proposals to spend their £1,000 funds, but also reported on the general discussions identifying issues and challenges the groups faced.

It is hoped that this information will be used to inform the development of future supports to these groups in the future and by wider group of support organisations.

2 The Groups

CERT approached a wide range of existing groups to identify their interest in the project, with a view to selecting groups with different members and interests. This was achieved through contacting our existing partners and through promotion via social media. This process was not without its challenges and there was substantial effort required to explain the concept and approach of the project and to set up each group.

At the time of writing 6 groups have completed this process. One group, of school children via Lornhill Academy withdrew after 2 sessions due to timetable conflicts and difficulties in commit to the required time. We are working with the Virtual Head Teacher of Clacks Education to identify appropriate use of the £1,000 to support school children following further consultation with school children.

2.1 Young People

We partnered with Connect Alloa, a youth group based in Alloa involving participants aged 11 to 16 who tended to have issues with school attendance and social isolation. The question put to the group was “What would help the wellbeing of young people in Clackmannanshire”.

The group discussed what they liked and thought could improve about living in Alloa and then identified areas which would improve Clacks:

- have safer outdoor spaces
- improved career advice in school
- better mental health support – both in school and outwith.

After discussions they designed a “lock in” event for the building when the young people would be able to bond, feel connected, get to know each other better and feel safe while doing a range of different group activities. They also identified a clean up litter picking session in Tullibody to help improve outdoor spaces.

2.2 Men’s Mental Health

We partnered with the Wee County Men’s Shed (WCMS) to explore Mental Health. The Men’s Shed is a nationwide movement which is targeted at men, who are less likely to engage in formal and informal communication on mental health.

Based in Tillicoultry, the WCMS has c30 core members who attend the drop ins which run 3 morning a week. The group was asked to consider “What can we do to improve men’s mental health?”.

Initial discussions were held identifying the issues and problems they faced. In particular they identified particular problems for the over 50s who are unemployed and a common feeling of being “useless”, having little to do which leads to poor mental health.

The impact of Covid which has led to a reluctance to socialise and leave the house was noted, which had directly led to a decrease in users of the facility post Covid.

WCMS were clear that they offered a safe space and peer support for people, but felt that there was more they could do to make their offering attractive and to reach more people and support more men around the county. This in turn would help increase the scale of mental health improvements.

They chose to use their funds to improve the accessibility of their existing space by decluttering, adding storage and through offering more activities such as games events. They also sought to improve the outreach and promotion of WCMS and the explaining the benefits of membership. This outreach would include existing members reaching out to others in the community and the use of leaflets and posters.

At the time of writing this report, they are working to complete the installation of a ramp to enter their premises.

2.3 A Community

We partnered with Sauchie Active8, a community group and they considered the question “how could mental health and wellbeing be improved in Clacks”. The group started by considering what was good about living in Clackmannanshire and the Sauchie Active8 group. They reported that Sauchie Active8 made them feel able to share what they felt, feel valued, have a relaxed blether without danger of judgement and peer support.

The group considered what might be useful to improve Clacks, particularly for parents and identified:

- projects to give parents time to themselves
- opportunities for the whole family to do including family activities over the summer
- more projects that will engage teenagers
- activities that would help people explore their wider personal goals and interests

- activities that would encourage social engagement face to face particularly for those who suffered anxiety post Covid – “Getting Outdoors”

The group decided to spend their funds on camping equipment to allow small groups to borrow the equipment and go camping for two nights and well as camping pitch hire, helping members of the community to get outdoor and improve engagement and family activities.

2.4 LGBTQ+ Adults

We partnered with the newly formed Forth Valley Lavendar Room which, based in Alloa, was formed to create a community, sense of belonging and provide a safe space for its LGBTQ+ members. They were asked the question “How could the wellbeing of your group be improved”. This group had rich discussions which identified some of the barriers for the community, particularly in the workplace. These were then subsequently discussed in more detail in later workshops:

- many of this community suffered from poor mental health
- many have experienced negative treatment from colleagues
- there is a general lack of understanding from employers of LGBTQ+ issues
- a sense that workplaces and community spaces are not “safe spaces”

The group identified a wide range of potential projects including an advocacy services, projects to help employers and individuals to find out more about employment rights, services to employers on how to support people and for parents of children from this group and securing safe spaces in schools.

After consideration, the group decided to focus on establishing a dedicated web site aimed at employers and employees/individuals providing a source of information, advice and support.

2.5 Over 50s

Unlike the other groups, CERT proactively set up a workshop session by inviting a group of individuals who are participants on the Positive Moves programme, were over 50, and unemployed or economically inactive.

This group were asked to consider the question “What are the barriers to finding and improving employment for your community and what could be done to help overcome these barriers?”

All members were actively seeking work and identified barriers of:

- Concern about the impact of being in work they did not value and in particular its impact on their mental health and where they were not using their existing skills and experience;

- Importance of finding their purpose. For many in their previous employment they had secured a purpose however now in considering the limited range of jobs locally they felt that they would not provide them with any meaningful purpose and would prefer not to work than be in those jobs. Some of the group were already volunteering and they felt that this helped to fill a gap in their life and provided them with a role which might eventually lead to employment
- Limbo. For those who are over 60 there was a feeling of being “in limbo” until pension age
- Quality of Support. While their experience of individuals working in the employability support system was positive, they did not feel they received genuine, person-centred support. The requirement for continual job applications for inappropriate jobs to avoid sanctions from the job centre was highlighted
- Struggling with technology. With more and more job applications being undertaken on line, weaknesses in IT or dyslexia are major barriers
- Employer attitudes. Employers are looking for hugely detailed and extensive recruitment approaches for simple, entry level jobs. The use of many of these including psychometric tests and others was seen as unnecessary
- Transport – poor and expensive public transport to get to where the jobs are.

In response to this, the group have decided to establish a peer group “50 plus Matters” to meet regularly for those who are looking to work and in their 50s and 60s. This group has an identified mission and vision and will operate as a weekly drop in, in a venue to be identified in Alloa where there would be peer support and they would also invite different groups/speakers to their sessions.

At the time of writing, the group is actively setting up a voluntary association and they will be using their £1,000 to fund the venue hire and other associated costs which is hoped will support the start up of their group for c6 months.

2.6 Childminders

Separately CERT have been working to encourage an increase in the scale of childcare provision in Clackmannanshire. This is in response to the identification of lack of childcare being a major barrier to parents returning or starting work.

The project provided a vehicle to help a group of existing childminders in Clackmannanshire to come together, air their concerns and views and to identify a series of supports that would help them continue to operate and through this would encourage more childminders to start.

Initially the childminders identified a wide range of issues and concerns including:

- unlike other local authority areas they did not have a development officer to support them

- the paperwork for the care inspectorate and other regulatory bodies was extensive and often inconsistent between inspectors
- the level of support available from the Scottish Child Minders Association and the council was limited
- there was no parity of esteem between childcare provided by childminders and that provided by public sector nurseries with reports of parents being strongly encouraged to move children away from childminders and a feeling they are regarded as a second class option for childcare
- childminders were struggling financially and we later discovered that the vast majority did not pay themselves the living wage

From these discussions a number of projects were identified:

- provision of training for childminders especially in Paediatric First Aid, Child Protection and Food Safety
- improved information to parents to understand the child care options they have (including childminders)
- improved networking and peer support for childminders.

As a result, the funding has been used to deliver course in Paediatric First Aid and Safeguarding.

CERT is continuing to work with this group

2.7 Young People at School

We partnered with Lornhill Academy Pupil Parliament who held 2 workshops. Unfortunately because of timetabling conflicts, the group did not complete their participation.

This group identified a number of positive things about living in Clacks including sports and recreation activity, and places to eat especially in Alloa and charity shops and donation centres. They also identified areas for improvement:

- State of parks and green spaces in a poor state and equipment often broken
- Recent loss of some leisure facilities
- Accessibility of other leisure activities (where transport is a challenge)
- Poor access to mental health support
- Not always safe walking from schools.

Early discussions identified projects such as organised litter picking and campaigning to councillors to set up improve leisure services.

At the time of writing we are working with the Council Education department to develop an alternative use of the project funds.

3 Conclusions

It is clear that the process of Let Us Decide has provided an impetus and vehicle to encourage existing (and newly formed) groups to consider what they would like to see happen with their own group and more widely. Without this project, this exercise would not have been undertaken or would have happened at a later time.

This project has helped to form or strengthen 3 new groups who are providing peer support and have potential for expanding into wider activities.

The use of the £1,000 grant for each group provided an encouragement for participation in the project. In most cases the funds were used for small but impactful purchases, many of which are available for ongoing use by the group (eg camping equipment, games, web sites, long term room rental and others). The provision of the £1,000 is seen as an essential “hook” to secure engagement and the project would have been very challenging to deliver without this element.

For some of the groups, their conclusions from this exercise were unexpected and do not align with existing public sector supports. This is in part due to the constraint of the potential that a £1,000 budget places on aspirations.

For CERT, in going forward, from this exercise we will now:

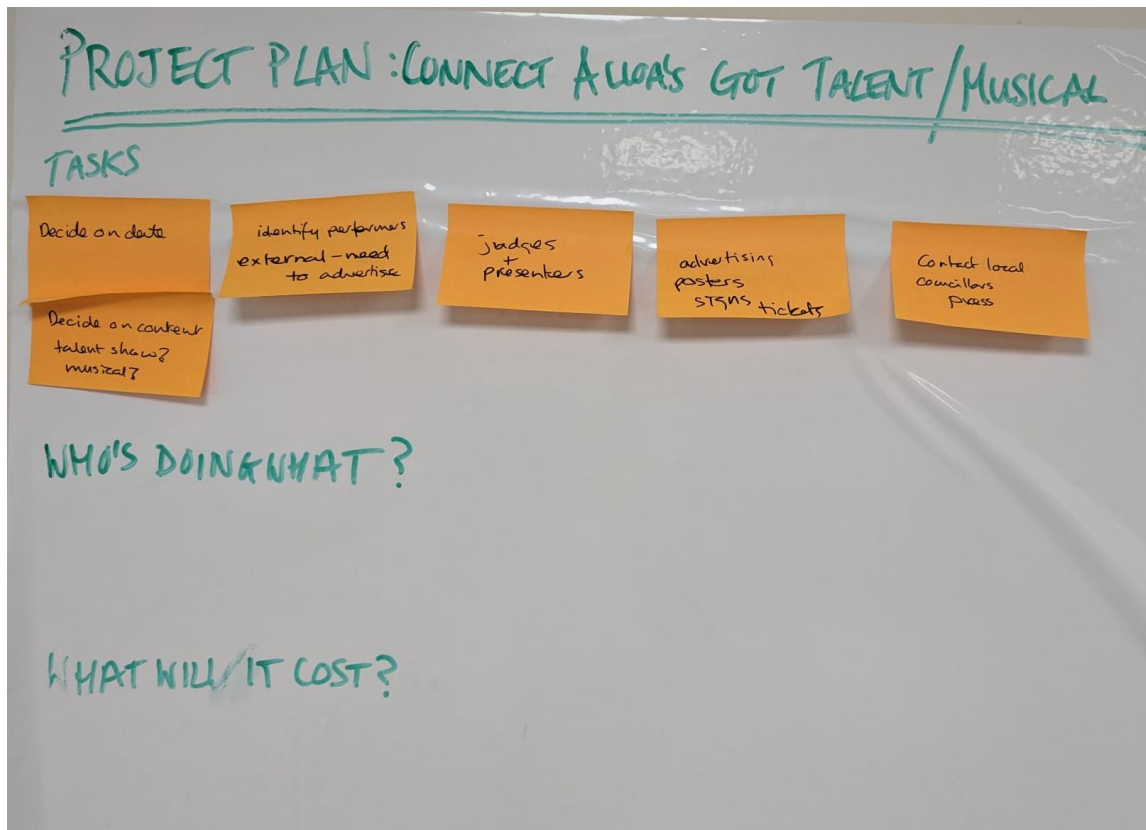
- (I) Work to ensure the clients/users/beneficiaries of all our activities have a greater input on what we do. This exercise has shown that groups often want something quite different from what the “supporters” think they do or should want. While we will not be able to offer £1,000 as a budget for incentive, we hope we can engage and involve these groups through innovative approaches
- (II) Mental Health is a common theme in many of the groups, at times exacerbated by post Covid issues. CERT has started an investigation into Mental Health supports and activities with a view to stimulating an increase in supports in this area
- (III) Working alongside other CERT activity to increase quality accessible childcare in Clackmannanshire, we will continue to work alongside the Childminders in a range of topics.

Annexes

- A1 Young People
- A2 Men's Mental Health
- A3 A Community
- A4 LGBTQ+ Adults
- A5 Over 50s
- A6 Childminders
- A7 Young People at School

A1 Young People

Connect Alloa, Clackmannanshire



Project Title: Stay Connected!

Context

This report sets out the results from a series of 3 workshops in May/June 2023 with Connect Alloa, a youth group based in Alloa.

The workshops were facilitated by Rebecca McFarlane and Janet Biggar and included a mixture of participants aged from 11 to 16 years. The group participants varied each week and was supported by their Youth Worker Lou. Participants tended to have issues with school attendance and social isolation. Most were vocal throughout the sessions and engaged well in the activities.

The aim of the Let Us Decide workshops was to discuss and develop a project idea that the young people at Connect Alloa could deliver that would help improve wellbeing for young people in Clackmannanshire. The group only had three workshops because they worked on the project with Lou between the sessions.

Rebecca would like to thank the group for their enthusiastic participation and commitment to the project.

An Overview of the workshop discussions

In workshop 1 the group were asked to discuss what they liked about living in Clackmannanshire and then what they felt could be improved. An overview of what was discussed is outlined below. Like with many discussions with young people, at times it was challenging to extract information from them. The facilitators worked hard to keep them on topic and provide explanations for their comments.

Positives

The young people provided a list of things they liked to do, they talked about there having lots of things to do (interestingly this contrasted with the group at Lornshill who felt there wasn't much to do now the Leisure Bowl has closed) The examples of places they could go to/things they could do included: McDonald's (when groups of teenagers are allowed in), KidzWorld, Army Cadets, and various other Youth Groups (including Connect Alloa).

Once they had outlined the things they liked to do, the discussion moved on to what could be improved in the county. The following outlines their main suggestions.

1) Have safer outdoor spaces:

Participants noted the poor state of the local parks and green spaces (e.g. the Delph). They talked about the abundance of broken glass, and the litter problem, with bins overflowing etc. They also talked about the older teens who hang around the outdoor spaces drinking, smoking, playing rough – the younger ones said that this behaviour makes them feel unsafe, particularly in the winter when it is dark.

They felt it would be much better if there was somewhere for the 10- to 14-year-olds to go that felt safe.

2) Better careers advice in school

The groups talked about their experiences of careers advice in school. They reported that they currently get very little time with an advisor and the advice you get is not very good. The main activity young people do in relation to career advice/support is PSE worksheets – however they described these as ‘rubbish’. A specific example of a bad experience was: one participant had a clear idea of what he wanted to do, however it was clear that he had not been given any specific advice on how to pursue this line of work and develop his passion effectively.

3) Better mental health support

Many of the participants reported that they suffered from mental health problems. They also described their limited experience of support in their schools. They felt it could be much better; at the moment they are experiencing very long waiting lists, and many young people are not getting the support they need.

They felt it would be good to have the following available:

- Something to support young people when in school – e.g. group/peer drop ins
- Linked to this would be drop-in wellbeing sessions - so not as ‘extreme’ as mental health condition, just someone to talk to when feeling anxious, stressed, lonely etc., they felt this might help to reduce the escalation of conditions/experiences.
- Have a someone in school who will listen properly.
- Advocacy support to get their voices heard.

They also felt that support through the local health centres could be better, there are currently long waiting lists and young people are not able to access support when needed.

In workshop 1 they group started to think of some initial project ideas. They included:

- Something around Career support
- Something around mental health support (Have a look into Keep the Heid)
- Something around the parks – green spaces and improving them? Making them more accessible and safe.

After the session the group were given some ‘homework’ to think about what project they could do that would help to improve things for young people in Clackmannanshire. Workshops 2 and 3 were then delivered to ensure they had a clear idea and plan.

Spending the £1000

The group decided that they would like to spend the money on a series of three ‘mental health’ days over the summer, autumn and winter 2023. The sessions were designed to be varied to give everyone a chance to get involved.

The group put together a list of activities and expenses that totalled. The details of the sessions and the proposed costs can be found in the table below:

Session	Why
1: A Lock-In – The group are ‘locked-in’ to the building for the whole day – they do agreed activities and ‘bond’ as a group. During summer holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This format was inspired by lock-down. • They have done it before and everyone enjoyed it. • Participants get a chance to have fun together and ‘bond’ with other members of the group. • They all have to decide what they’re going to eat and do – together as a team. They then plan menus and organise shopping, cooking, activities etc. • Group activities will include: Live Action Role Play, Tie Dyeing t-shirts, gaming, cooking. • Youth Scotland youth worker to come and support some activities
2: Clean up the Delph : a litter pick at the Delph community park in Tullibody. Date tbc – probably in summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group wanted to do something in the local community. • Good to work as a team and do something outdoors • They will work with other local organisations to deliver including: Alloa Rotary Club (Refreshments and support), Josh from Fife (equipment) • Need to speak to Tullibody Development Trust to see what they do at the Delph too.
3: ConnectAlloa’s Got Talent : A talent show at Christmas time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an opportunity for the group to come together and show off and celebrate their various talents. - It will be open to the public and therefore a good way of telling the wider community what the group does. - There will be lots to do to organise the show which gives lots of people an opportunity to get involved – e.g. designing posters and tickets, advertising, decorating hall, preparing food, presenting the show, rehearsing etc. - Advertise in Alloa Advertiser, - May feature local band/other talents

Project Overview

Group:	Connect Alloa		
Project Title:	Stay Connected	Project Lead:	Dave Crosier and Lou Carberry
The question posed at the start of the workshops: <i>What can we do to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing?</i>			
Project Idea: Stay Connected – a series of three group sessions that encourage participants to get together, connect with each other and have fun. The final session (Connect Alloa's Got Talent) will also invite others to come and get involved with the group. The project will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide a range of activities to encourage young people to get together, feel connected, and try something new. ○ Provide opportunities for the group to work with other organisations – e.g. Youth Scotland and Alloa Rotary. 			
How does the proposed project answer the question posed at the start of the workshops: The project will provide a range of activities to encourage young people from Connect Alloa to get together, try something new and stay connected. The idea came from discussions during the first session about the need for more mental health support as well as more things for the young people to do – the group felt that having more activities together would help support better mental health among the group. The three sessions are all designed to be different to encourage as many participants as possible to be involved and have fun. The final session (Connect Alloa's Got Talent) will invite those from outwith the organisation to get involved in the group, therefore raising awareness of CA, with the hope that they will be able to encourage new people to join the organisation and ultimately support more isolated young people in Clackmannanshire.			
Project Background:	Connect Alloa is a local youth charity tackling social isolation and loneliness among young people in Clackmannanshire. They host regular youth group sessions where they play games, chat and get creative. The group is open to any young person aged between Primary 7 and 19 years old. They are a very inclusive group with a wide range of young people attending on a regular basis.		

	The group decided on the series of three sessions as they have the potential to engage all age groups and encourage people to connect with each other. It also encourages young people to explore what they like to do, try new things, develop useful skills like menu planning and budgeting, and make new friends.
Project Benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See table above for reasons why the group chose the specific sessions.
Project Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide fun activities for the young people to do - To develop the skills of the local young people – planning, budgeting, performing etc. - To improve the mental wellbeing of participants - To encourage participants to connect with each other and raise awareness of Connect Alloa.
Project Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A series of three sessions run in summer, autumn and winter.
Success Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group run 3 activity sessions in summer, autumn and winter - Group learn new skills - Group feel more connected and have fun - Positive feedback from participants - Connect Alloa attracts new young people to join the group.
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining enthusiasm – must be supported by a youth worker
Project Team Members:	Varied

A2 Men's Mental Health

Wee County Men's Shed



Project Title: The Howff

Introduction

This report sets out the results from a series of 4 workshops with the Wee County Men's Shed (WCMS) held in March and September 2023. The workshops were facilitated by Rebecca McFarlane and Janet Biggar. The aim of the workshops was to discuss and develop a project idea that the WCMS could deliver that would help improve men's mental health in Clackmannanshire. Each workshop included at least eight members of the Men's Shed, with five of those attending every session.

Context

The Wee County Men's Shed is a charity based in Tillicoultry, Clackmannanshire, it is a member organisation of the UK-wide Men's Shed Association ([UKMSA Men's Sheds Association](#)). Men's Sheds are local groups where men can come together to build, fix and restore projects and themselves.

The Wee County Men's Shed (WCMS) is open 3 mornings a week and is for those aged 18 years and over. They have around 80 men on their distribution list, but the core group is closer to 30. The group provide a safe space for men and time to themselves. The sessions run as drop-ins and members are invited to do what they like, whether that's in the workshop on projects, or in the social space also known as the 'howff'.

Let Us Decide (LUD) involved the WCMS because one of the target groups of the LUD project is 'men over 50yrs'. During workshop 1 the group identified and discussed some of the issues facing men over 50, particularly those that are no longer in employment. The most common response was that those who are unemployed often feel 'useless', they have little to do, and this then often leads to poor mental health.

Another issue highlighted was the ongoing longer-term negative impact of COVID on people's willingness to socialise and leave the house. The group have seen a noticeable decrease in those who attend regularly now, compared to before COVID.

While the WCMS offers a safe space and peer support for people, the group felt there is still more they could do to reach more people and support more men around the county. They know that improving WCMS's ability to provide effective peer support for each other could help improve members' mental health, improve physical health, and improve people's willingness and ability to get back into work – where this is feasible. To this end, as part of the LUD project they decided to focus on:

- Clearing up the warehouse / workshop space. It is currently very cluttered and the group acknowledged that this was making it difficult to work in, keep organised and would put people off coming to the group. While acknowledging that it can be challenging to keep a

workshop environment tidy, there was a need to improve how things are currently organised.

- Make the space more accessible so that everyone can enter and enjoy being in the building
- Developing more activities within the 'Howff' to encourage more social interaction – they want to 'bring life back into the howff'
- They also recognise that they need to focus on developing their links with other WCMs and also other organisations in the county – e.g. the Health Centres, Maggie's Centres, as well as other charities supporting people in Clackmannanshire.

More detail is provided in the remainder of this report.

Project Overview

Group:	Wee County Men's Shed		
Project Title:	The Howff		
The question posed at the start of the workshops: <i>What can we do to improve men's mental health?</i>			
<p>Project Idea:</p> <p>The Howff – Improving its accessibility and outreach</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the Howff's accessibility so it can be a usable space again 2. Improve outreach to encourage previous members to come back and new members to join. 			
<p>How does the proposed project answer the question posed at the start of the workshops?</p> <p>Making the howff and WCMS premises more accessible enables more men to come and use the facility, therefore offering more opportunities to support improved mental health within the community. Improving outreach also means that more people are aware of the WCMS and therefore more likely to use it.</p>			

Project Background:	<p>The Howff is a warm central social space within the Wee County Men's Shed base in Tillicoultry. It houses the kitchen, comfy sofas, table and chairs for meetings, and a screen with computer hook up. It is also very cluttered and full of 'stuff' which makes it less effective as a social space and not accessible for those who may have accessibility issues. The men reported that it is not used like it used to be before COVID, pre-COVID it was used much more, men were more sociable within it and would sit in the room to chat. It also provided a space for those who weren't comfortable in the workshop.</p> <p>In addition, a large number of men have not returned to WCMS after COVID, the men are keen to reach out to them to see if there's anything they can do to encourage them to come back. The men are also keen to find out what else people may want to use the Howff space for as it's not been discussed for a long time.</p>		
Project Benefits:	<p>The benefits are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the WCMS – they have an accessible and welcoming space that can be used for its intended purposes – a sociable, safe space for WCMS members. - Members – a space where they can socialise but also a space for those who can't/don't want to be in the workshop but still want to be a useful member of the team - Wider stakeholders – more options for signposting men who may be living with poor mental health. 		
Project Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve the accessibility of the Howff - To improve the accessibility of the WCMS premises - To improve outreach to non-active members and organisations who could encourage new members 		
Project Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A more accessible Howff – clear of clutter, comfortable yet more organised, new activities on offer - A more accessible premises – including accessible toilet and ramps where necessary - An agreed approach to outreach – contacting non-active members, new organisations, partners etc 		
Success Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased numbers of men using the WCMS within 12 months - Positive feedback from active members 		
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity of volunteers - Leadership 		
Resource Costs: No more than £1000			Other Costs:
The group were unable to specify exactly what the money would be spent on initially, they agreed some scoping work needed to be done in order to develop their full 'shopping list'.			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	

Ideas for activities in the Howff:

- Basic art classes
- Jigsaws and board games
- Daily Newspapers
- Pyrography
- Model kits

Project Update

(6 months after initial session)

In September 2023, Rebecca re-visited the group for an update. The following gives an overview of the progress they had made:

The team had made some fantastic progress on the proposed plan, they had:

- Cleared the Howff
- Cleared the entrance to the building – and have made it into an area to sell their workshop products.
- Filled the storage unit with excess equipment and materials (this still needs further organising)
- They decided they don't want to have daily newspapers in the Howff, they're not sure they would be read, and the money would be better spent on other things.
- They have been increasing their networking activities – they are now part of the Volunteering Managers group and go along to the CTSi Community Breakfast.
- They have a man from Romania coming along to the shed to help him learn English.
- They have created a WhatsApp group of the local men's sheds – Bert leads on this. He has also been along to the Comrie men's shed and Grangemouth men's shed – this has extended their radius and will be useful for support from others.
- Following Jon stepping down as Chair they have reviewed their governance and roles within the organisation. This has led to them introducing new roles within their governance structure. E.g., Membership Secretary (Charlie) who has started to make a list of those members who have not been back for a while and who need chasing up.
- As part of their governance review, they also have 2 new working groups:
 - Membership
 - Health & Safety and training commitments

Actions not complete:

- An accessibility review by an external organisation to provide advice on what they need to do to make the building and Howff more accessible (primarily disability focus).

- As a result, they haven't progressed the work to make the Howff more accessible i.e., with a ramp (this is something they can make themselves once they know what they need).

The group has had a lot of discussions and change since March, they have a new leadership and have had a review of their governance, including PVG compliance. They have had support from CTSi and will be doing some training as a result, such as health and safety, risk assessments, renewing equipment etc.

Their running costs are huge (projections are between £8,000 and £16,000 over winter) and they are looking into possibly closing the workshop over the winter – or installing a suspended ceiling to keep the workshop warmer. They would, however, like to keep a social offering available to continue to support the men who use the shed over the winter (which can also be a time for reduced mental health). They have not spent any money yet and still see it as a 2-stage process:

Final comments

We asked at the end of the session if the group would have done the work on the premises and their governance review if it hadn't been for their involvement in Let Us Decide and they said no. Being involved in LUD gave them the impetus to get on with doing something positive for the group.

A3 A community

Sauchie Active8, Sauchie, Clackmannanshire



Project Title: Carry on Camping

Context

This report sets out the results from a series of 4 workshops with the Sauchie Active8 group based at Sauchie Hall, in June/July 2023. The workshops were facilitated by Rebecca McFarlane and Janet Biggar. The aim of the workshops was to discuss and develop a project idea that Sauchie Active8 could deliver that would help improve mental health and wellbeing in Clackmannanshire. Rebecca would like to thank the group for their enthusiastic participation and commitment to the project.

The group decided that they would like to spend the money on setting up a camping project whereby small groups could borrow camping equipment and go camping for up to two nights.

Project Overview

Group:	Sauchie Active8		
Project Title:	Carry On Camping		
The question posed at the start of the workshops: <i>What can we do to improve the group's mental health and wellbeing?</i>			
Project Idea: Carry on Camping – Creating a project that will encourage and facilitate groups to go camping. The project will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide equipment for a camping trip for up to 6 people – including tents, stoves etc. ○ Run some taster sessions to learn camping skills (e.g. building campfires, menu planning) ○ Develop a 'Active8 Camping Handbook' to document the trips, what's worked, what hasn't worked, and tips and tricks for others. 			

How does the proposed project answer the question posed at the start of the workshops:

The project will be set up so that people can borrow equipment and then be given advice and guidance and equipment to have a fun camping trip. This project will support 5 groups to go camping during the summer/early autumn of 2023 and the sessions will be run as a taster / trial activity with the aim of opening it up to other groups in the future.

Being outdoors and connecting with others helps to reduce social isolation, learn new skills, and gets people to think about what they can do on their doorstep. Camping also helps to develop a sense of adventure and build aspirations. All of these things help to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Project Background:	<p>Sauchie Active8 is a local charity run within Clackmannanshire to address the health and well-being needs of local residents. They are a registered charity based in Sauchie Hall and aim to engage the community in a programme of lifelong learning by offering a range of inclusive activities and opportunities.</p> <p>The group decided to choose camping as a project because it engages all age groups and encourages people to connect with each other and nature. It also encourages people to get outside and make the most of what their local area has to offer.</p>
Project Benefits:	<p>Giving the participants the skills, guidance and equipment to go on a camping trip will help the group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn new skills – e.g. being outdoors, budgeting, menu-planning, trip planning, First Aid - Connect with each other - Connect with nature - Learn about what's on your doorstep - Build a sense of adventure
Project Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop the skills of the local community - To improve the health and wellbeing of participants - To encourage participants to connect with each other and nature.
Project Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A bank of camping equipment that can be used by the group for camping trips for up to 6 people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Linked to this, the group will develop an approach to how the equipment is going to be managed e.g. booking it out, making sure it's not damaged and when there is damage how that is going to be replaced etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A taster session in August (free), run by Sharon at Clacks Education Community Learning and Development, to help build camping skills. - A 'Camping Handbook' to help guide others and track experiences.
Success Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group learn new skills - Group run up to 5 successful camping trips - Equipment is available to be used by others next year. - Positive feedback from participants - More participants take part next year
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget (e.g. to replace broken equipment, transport etc)

A4 LGBTQ+ Adults

The Forth Valley Lavendar Room



Project Title: Overcoming the Barriers

Context

The [Forth Valley Lavendar Room](#) is a space for LGBTQ+ adults to gather and share skills and experiences. The group exists to create a community, sense of belonging and to provide a safe space for its members.

The group welcomes all LGBTQ+ people aged 18 and over, including those who are questioning their identities. It is strictly an alcohol and drugs free space. The group exists to create a community, sense of belonging and to provide a safe space for its members. The group welcomes all LGBTQ+ people aged 18 and over, including those who are questioning their identities. It is strictly an alcohol and drugs free space.

Forth Valley Lavendar Room are involved in Let Us Decide which focuses on improving employment experiences and opportunities for various communities in Clackmannanshire. The task for the group was, over a series of four facilitated workshops, to identify a project idea and develop it into something that will benefit their LGBTQ+ community, with a focus on employability. They were offered £1000 to spend on the delivery of a project.

The four workshops were delivered over four consecutive weeks on a Wednesday evening in September 2023, at the group's base in Alloa. The format of the workshops was:

Workshop 1: discussion of barriers to employment and in-work experiences.

Workshop 2: discussion on how barriers/issues could be overcome and initial project ideas.

Workshop 3: finalise project idea and start to think about what it will involve.

Workshop 4: finalise activities and budget spend.

Workshops were attended by between 6 and 11 participants with ages ranging from 18 to 43 years. There was a mixture of people who were either in work, had been in work, or were looking for work. Most participants contributed fully to the discussions every week.

Prior to the first workshop the group was given a task to consider the following questions:

- What are the barriers to finding and improving employment for your community?
- What could be done to help overcome these barriers?"

These questions were used as the basis for the discussion through the series of workshops and for the development of the project idea. The following sections provide an overview of the discussions from the first workshop where the group discussed the barriers to employment and the in-work issues they face.

Identified barriers for the LGBTQ+ community

Main barriers

In brief, the following list shows the main barriers discussed during workshop one. The subsequent sections go on to provide more detail on these topics.

- Many suffer from poor mental health.
- Many have experienced negative treatment from colleagues.
- There is a general lack of understanding from employers of LGBTQ+ issues leading to a lack of in-work adjustments (including for disability, long term health conditions, mental ill-health).
- A sense that workplaces (and community spaces) are not 'safe spaces'.

Experiences within the workplace

Mental Health in the workplace

Most participants had experienced poor mental health in the workplace and this had then impacted their work experiences, for most, this was as a result of their identity or other protected characteristic.

“ I have tried to talk to my employer about my mental health, but it is difficult. I have a speech impediment, as well as being foreign, and Queer. I end up losing time at work and that affects my work and my mental health. I feel like people don't take me seriously. People don't see the real me, they see some gay guy from abroad who stammers. I feel I am labelled and face a lot of prejudice.

Where I work there is a very macho environment, I have been there 5 years and have had disciplinary twice because of mental health issues. I feel like it's very hard for me to tell them about the actual reasons. When you're Queer there is a feeling that they are treating you differently and they don't find space for you to talk. ”

Most felt they couldn't be honest about their mental health status, despite employers saying they will be supportive.

“ It's still a risky place to admit to mental health issues. Employers tell you they will make adjustments for your mental health but then when it actually comes to doing something, they don't – so you have to hide your issues.

When you have mental health problems, some days you just can't function. You then can't go into work, but you don't feel like you can say anything, so you end up taking a sick day.



Work culture

The group shared their, and their friends', experiences of working in local companies. One person talked about their friend's experience at a large local employer; they had taken three years to come out at work due to the macho 'lads culture' and a sense that they didn't feel safe being open about their identity.

"my friend was working in a very macho pub environment, they were having panic attacks before going into work."

Being 'othered'

Participants talked about their experiences once they had been 'outed' or had come out at work. They felt that their LGBTQ identity had then become their whole identity and people felt they had the right to mock them; they felt they were treated differently to their other colleagues.

"I'm doing my best to be myself, but I feel like they (colleagues) joke with me more than they do with the others."

"They joke about Grinder too much; it makes me feel uncomfortable and I don't like it. I feel sexualised. I don't want to be labelled as the gay guy who uses Grinder, but they don't see anything else. Why can't they just treat us like humans? We have other interests. Just get to know us as humans."

Another talked about colleagues' insistence on 'mis-gendering' and how that makes them feel.

"I'm happy if people make a mistake but are then willing to learn [when they mis-gender you] – it's when people are arrogant and don't care that they've made a mistake and don't try to improve, then it's an issue."

The result of such treatment means that individuals end up "masking and disguising" themselves which makes them feel they are "the odd one out" which ultimately impacts negatively on their mental health.

Tokenism

The group also talked of tokenism and ‘tick boxing’. The discussion was in the context of organisations that have appeared to achieve the [LGB charter](#), but the in-work reality does not live up to the charter’s expectations. It’s more of a tick box exercise that an employer can then use as a marketing tool, but it’s not something they are genuinely able to live up to.

“they may have achieved the charter, but that does not necessarily make them a safe space for LGBTQ+ people.”

“I still worry that people will judge if/ when I come out. I don’t want to be stigmatised or tokenised.”

Discrimination

Most had stories of discrimination in the workplace, below there are two stories from individuals.

“ I used to be a staff nurse in a care home, my colleagues found out I was a lesbian and it felt that they then started to speak to me in an inappropriate way. It’s assumed that once you come out you’re attracted to everyone – which is ridiculous. My mental health deteriorated while I was in the job, which brought on my epilepsy, and I was dismissed because of that. There was no conversation about how they could try to make it work for me. They called me in for a meeting, didn’t offer any representation, and then I was dismissed. They said they couldn’t depend on me. I was detained under the mental health act, but I don’t want to have to put that on my job applications, but I know I should. Employers want to know what you’ve been doing in the time that you’ve been off work. ”

“ I failed a job application due to my cognitive abilities test – for the Scottish prison service – I failed because I didn’t have enough time to answer the questions. When I asked for more time, they gave me an extra 3 mins. In other places, I’ve been put on a performance review. But there are some days when I just can’t speak but they didn’t seem to care and didn’t ask me what the reasons might be, they just gave me a letter. ”

Lack of support and information

Participants reported that there is very limited local support about anything related to the LGBTQ+ community. There are no other adult support organisations (other than the Lavendar Room).

Regarding the workplace more specifically, participants talked about it being very hard to find out information about employment rights, or the adjustments they have the right to ask for from their employers. They reported that the promise of support often doesn't materialise.

"Employers don't care".

They also reported that information available through Clackmannanshire Council is poor, and local online information sources are often out of date.

Limited support means individuals often suffer from social isolation and, particularly younger more vulnerable ones, are more likely to get in with the 'wrong crowd'. This situation has the risk of leading to drug and alcohol abuse. Participants noted that rates of alcohol and drug abuse, as well as addiction, tend to be high in the local LGBTQ+ community, recovery support is lacking.

Neurodivergences

Participants discussed the issues and prejudices faced by those with some form of neurodivergence, e.g. Autism.

"I have got the qualifications and experience but because of my autism, I struggle in a typical workplace."

"I often find that at work you can't talk about things, so support then isn't available within the organisation, and it becomes more of a struggle."

"I find it hard to socialise outside of work; other people seem to find it difficult to deal with certain characteristics."

"There is a lot of intersectionality – my Queer issues often add onto the discrimination I face due to my neurodivergence and disability."

The job market

The group also discussed the state of the job market in Clackmannanshire. While most of the observations were more about the job market in general, one individual stated that since in-work experiences can be so bad, living on benefits was preferable as it allows them to avoid the prejudices they experienced in work, which had a detrimental impact on their mental health.

“The jobs around Clacks are not well paid, many find they are better off on benefits, particularly when they don’t feel safe or understood or are bullied at work.”

Some additional illustrative quotes about the local labour market are provided below:

“Entry level jobs don’t exist anymore; you need a year’s experience for an entry level job – but there’s no way to get that experience if it’s an entry level job.”

“You do a course but then there’s no entry level job to go to.”

“You can’t get an apprenticeship if you have nothing to back it up.”

“Public transport, and therefore getting to work or interviews etc is very expensive.”

Education

There was a short discussion on education – particularly further and higher education. One participant talked about their poor experience of Open University, stating that their course was not set up for those who are neurodivergent, and they were not getting the support they needed, no adaptations were being offered or made.

Another talked about their struggle with getting support / adaptations made in a local college, saying the equipment to support those who are hard of hearing had not been functioning for a very long time.

“Inclusion is not a reality for many.”

Wider society

The group discussed the impact of wider society and public perceptions on their experiences. There was some agreement that the wider trans debate / culture wars are negatively impacting on public opinion and treatment of those in the LGBTQ+ community.

“you’re always seen as some form of ‘other’.”

“People don’t see you as non-binary.”

“People seem to want to fit us into a box.”

Feeling safe

Related to wider societal attitudes, the group talked about the noticeable increase in anti-social behaviour in Alloa and how that impacts negatively on their ability to be themselves when out in public.

“Anti-social behaviour is really bad at the moment; we really fear for our personal safety.”

“I don’t feel as safe and comfortable being out.”

“I don’t feel safe holding hands with my partner.”

“You can’t go out and be yourself in certain areas of Alloa town centre, you feel vulnerable being outside.”

“You’re afraid to be who you are.”

“I’m concerned for my safety because people are pricks and there’s so much narrow-mindedness around at the moment.”

Overcoming the barriers – FVLR project idea

During workshop two, the group discussed some ideas for overcoming the issues highlighted during week one. The main ideas are outlined in the table below:

The Idea	The discussion during week 2
Support service providing advocacy / vouching for someone	This would be a useful service for anyone who needed to change their name or their identity in any way, not just LGBTQ+ people. e.g., those escaping from abuse, people coming out of care, those going through adoption,
Make it easier for individuals to find information and support regarding employment rights	Many don't know their employment rights; they can be very confusing – don't know where to go and sometimes it can be hard to interpret the information.
Specific service for employers to provide info on how to support people	It was decided to group this with the stonewall and rainbow mark ideas
Stonewall checklist / charter – mandatory training	This could be provided by the group if employers needed support
Scottish Government Rainbow Mark	Advice about ensuring it is implemented effectively could be provided by the group if employers needed support
Support for parents of queer kids	Somewhere for parents to go to if they have questions – not that employment focused, and something the group could focus on later down the line once they are more established.
Developing safe spaces in schools	The group works with adults, so it was felt that this wasn't a good area to focus on. It's good to acknowledge that there is a lack of support within schools.

The group decided on a project that would provide advice and support to employers through a dedicated website.

The group's final project idea:

- To develop a dedicated FVLR website aimed at employers *and* employees/individuals. The website will be a source of information, advice, and support.

What they want to achieve from this:

- To provide support for employers so they can manage their workplaces better.
- To make workplaces feel safer and more inclusive for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Happy healthy employees are better for all – safe and supportive workspaces also help reduce the likelihood of poor mental health amongst staff – leading to better retention and recruitment.
- To raise awareness of the FVLR group in case there are others out there that would benefit from being part of it.

Website content

During workshop three, the group spent some time thinking about what they envisaged being on the website. They acknowledged that some employers may be struggling with the current discussions around LGBTQ individuals, particularly considering the current public debates / ‘culture wars’, and that it may take time for them to ‘get their heads around’ some of the issues that come up in the workplace. This resource is here to help them and offer a ‘safe space’ for employers to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Initial ideas of content:

Target group	Suggested content
Employers	A ‘helpline’ number offering tailored advice and support (phone call or zoom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting as a sounding board – being a safe space for employers to ask questions – even those they may feel awkward asking. - Offering a realistic, yet personal touch from someone local (i.e. who lives in Forth Valley and knows the area well)
	Signposting to other support and advice (e.g. the national organisations such as Stonewall, and other local organisation who can help)
	Advice on how to manage various scenarios, e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeping people safe when they’ve come out (or have been outed) at work. - What happens through the transitioning process? - Handling a discrimination case (from the perspective of supporting the individuals) - Making reasonable adjustments – how to ask, how to communicate with staff - Dealing with homophobia / transphobia in the workplace
	Implementing the various Charters - e.g. Stonewall, SG Rainbow Mark – how to make it a reality in the workplace
	Case Studies and testimonials
	FAQs (Frequently asked questions)
Employees	Know Your Rights – Legislation – LGBTQ, disability, mental health
	Information on how to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - come out in the workplace - ask for reasonable adjustments (letter templates) - write a grievance – templates etc - report homophobia/transphobia/queerphobia up the management chain - whistleblowing
	Signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unions - ACAS - Stonewall
	Advice/support line (zoom, phone) – friendly person to talk to if needed
	Forum
	FAQs (Frequently asked questions)

The aim is for the website to have a ‘Donate Now’ button so that those who use the services can support the organisation (although this is not a prerequisite to using the resource).

A5 Over 50s

50 plus Matters



Title: Peer Support Group

Context

This group was convened by the Clackmannanshire Economic Regeneration Trust (CERT). The group is made up of a mixture of men and women, they are all over 50 and currently out of work for a variety of reasons. They were not a previously established group and did not all know each other prior to the first meeting, but had a range of common interests and challenges.

The group was convened to be involved in an initiative, managed by CERT, called Let Us Decide. The wider Let Us Decide project focuses on improving employment experiences and opportunities for various communities of interest in Clackmannanshire. The task is for the group, over a series of four facilitated workshops, to identify a project idea and develop it into something that will benefit people like them in their community, with a focus on employability. They have £1000 available to spend on delivering their project.

The group attended four workshops on Friday mornings in November and early December 2023, at the CERT offices in Alloa. The format of the workshops was:

Workshop 1: discussion of issues to employment and in-work experiences.

Workshop 2: discussion on how issues could be overcome and initial project ideas.

Workshop 3: finalise project idea, activities and budget spend.

There was a gap of 3 weeks in between workshop 3 and 4 during which time the group continued to meet without a facilitator to progress their idea.

Workshop 4: update facilitators and rationalise what can be done with the budget. Agree a plan for the following 6 months and how to spend the £1000.

Workshops were attended by between 3 and 6 participants with ages ranging from 52 to 63 years. All participants contributed fully to the discussions every week.

Prior to the first workshop the group was given a task to consider the following questions:

- What are the main issues to finding and improving employment for your community?
- What could be done to help overcome these issues?"

These questions were used as the basis for the discussion through the series of workshops and for the development of the project idea. The following section provides an overview of the discussions from the first workshop where the group discussed the issues they face when it comes to employment and their experiences of being in-work. The remainder of this report then outlines their project idea and how they plan to deliver it, with ongoing support from CERT.

Identified Issues for the over 50s

For workshop one, the group were well prepared for the session and keen to talk. None of the participants were currently in work. A couple were volunteering, all were actively looking for work. The session ran like a facilitated discussion, all had something to say about their experience. The following provides an overview of what was discussed and highlights the main issues that the group identified when thinking about work, looking for work, and being in work.

- **Concern about the impact of being in work they did not value:** participants discussed the issues around having work they did not enjoy and the impact this had on their mental health. The reasons for not enjoying the jobs varied, from problems with work colleagues (especially the younger generation), to the role not using their skills and experience, or not feeling valued. Participants felt reluctant to apply and accept a job when having that job could do more harm than good when it comes to their mental health e.g. increased stress, as well as a potentially negative impact on their physical health. Since the jobs available in Clackmannanshire are often low skilled and poorly paid, they felt the additional income gained from the job, above what they were getting through Universal Credit and other benefits, did not compensate for the potentially negative impact the job may have. They therefore decided that not being in paid employment was preferable at this stage in their life.
- **Finding their purpose:** The group also discussed the importance of having a 'purpose' in life. For some, when in paid employment their job had given them this purpose and they were struggling to find that again in the jobs that were available locally. Much like the previous point, as they aged they were more reluctant to take on paid employment that did not provide them with a meaningful purpose. Two participants said they would rather not have a job than one that they hate, and again, would rather be on benefits.

"What's the point, I don't need the money".

"I need the stimulation and the 'purpose' but I'm also worried about the stress related to some of the jobs out there, I'm worried I wouldn't cope."

- **Volunteering:** those who had volunteering roles, which was approximately half of the group, said that their volunteering helps to fill the gap in their lives that a lack of employment creates. Volunteering allows them to do something they enjoy, and helps them to find their sense of purpose, as mentioned above. One participant also recognised the importance of volunteering to help build a good quality CV, and how volunteering can eventually lead to paid employment.
- **Limbo:** Those over 60 years discussed how at this stage in their life they felt like they were in 'limbo'. They explained the strange feeling you get when you're unemployed and looking for work but you're also not far off pension age, so you know you will not be in a job for very long when you get it. At times this can also be a de-motivator.
- **Quality of Support:** All the group participants had had experience of working with Job Coaches from Clacks Works. While most had positive things to say about the individuals they had received support from, they also felt that they were not receiving 'coaching' and felt that there was limited genuine, person-centred support available. They wanted to stress that this is not the fault of the Job Coaches concerned, however also felt that if a better coaching approach was taken then the outcomes could be improved. They also felt similar about the private recruitment providers:

"Agencies like 'Indeed' should be trying to get people into work – not just churning out the ads."
- **The job-hunting process:** Participants talked about the requirement to do daily job hunting and applications to avoid sanctions from the Job Centre. They discussed how the daily Job-

hunting / application process is like 'going through the motions' in order to keep the Job Centre happy – very few jobs, if any, are jobs that they want to do. They felt this process was meaningless and a waste of time for all involved (applicants, employers etc).

"I'm applying for jobs every day to keep myself straight with the Job Centre, but there's not been one of them, in four months, that I've actually wanted to do. I'm just applying for the sake of it. I'm 63 and have health conditions, most of the jobs aren't even suitable."

- **Struggle with technology:** The group discussed the barriers faced due to the increased use of technology in the job hunting / application process. Since everything now is done online, they felt this made the process difficult and not user-friendly, and was particularly difficult for one participant who has dyslexia.
- **Inappropriate methods used through the employment process:** Linked to the previous point is the increasing use by employers of digital technologies throughout the recruitment process. For example, the group mentioned the psychometric testing done for many jobs, including entry level jobs. Participants felt the processes used felt inappropriate for the level of job being applied for, meaningless, and do not test the 'human', including people's true skills or previous work experience.

"Now for shelf-stacking in Asda you have to apply online, but you need a degree to work out how to apply online."

"All the reading tests/quiz, they're difficult for people who have dyslexia."

"It's really hard for people with neurodiversity, you find yourself panicking and overwhelmed, even if you're not a technophobe."

- **Generational differences:** All talked about their dislike of working with the younger generations – 16- to 30-year-olds. They generally don't enjoy working with young people, and feel they have a bad attitude. Again, many of the low-skilled jobs locally have a large proportion of the younger generation working in them.
- **Employer attitudes:** The group also talked about negative attitudes towards them from employers. They felt their work experience isn't valued by the employers and in general they are not treated well or respected as 'older' workers.

"Bigger companies are reluctant to look at making the adaptations needed to support you to do your job if your health/disability is an issue. Older people's feelings aren't taken into consideration, and nor is our life or work experience."

- **Transport issues:** the group also talked of the issues in relation to poor and expensive public transport provision.

"The jobs are in the 'middle of nowhere', you can't get transport to get there and it's expensive when you can."

In response to the issues identified through their discussions, the group used workshop two and three to decide on a project idea that might help them overcome some of the issues they had

discussed. The remainder of this report sets out the idea they agreed on and their plans for its delivery.

The group's project idea:

- To run a peer support group for people like themselves to discuss and support each other in relation to employability and being out of paid full-time work in their 50s and 60s. The group will be informal, drop in and will arrange input from relevant agencies and other sources of support and advice.

What they want to achieve from this:

- To provide an opportunity for people to talk, support each other and share information and experiences.
- Through this to better equip people to find fulfilling and purposeful employment (paid or voluntary) that meets their needs.
- To provide a source of support for people who have challenges related to health (physical or mental) or disability that raise barriers to working.

How this will work:

The group have met up in between the workshop sessions and have spent some time thinking about how they envisage the group will run and what it should feel like. It is important that it is informal and welcoming, in a pleasant, easy to access venue, with tea, coffee etc available.

They have some initial ideas about input to the group from, for example, Clackworks, CAB, JC+, etc. but would like the group to be responsive to the needs and wants of members – so an early meeting would be devoted to discussing the sorts of input group members might find helpful.

Work completed by end of workshop 3:

Following attendance at three facilitated workshops the group had achieved the following:

- The group had a first draft of a statement of purpose and had identified and costed a venue as well as some initial thoughts about running costs. They had begun to think about how they might promote the peer support group and about channels to do this through, messaging and cost of promotion.
- They had some initial discussions with staff at Clacks Works, CTSi and CERT who are interested in supporting them to develop the idea.
- The group had discussed the things they need to do to get this project off the ground and continued to meet weekly until Christmas to develop their plan. CERT provided a room and refreshments for these meetings and supported in other ways where appropriate (introductions, signposting, etc):

Activity following Workshop 4

There was a gap of three weeks between workshop 3 and 4, which took place on 15th December 2023. The time allowed the group to develop their ideas and thoughts relating to the list above. When Janet and Rebecca attended the 4th and final workshop the group gave an update on their activity and discussions since workshop 3 and their priorities for the coming months:

Action 1: They had decided on a name for the group and defined the roles and tasks of the group members:

- Name for the group: *50 Plus Matters – Take Time to Talk*
- David: Admin Role
- Kate: drop-in café manager
- Jackie: Development Worker

All 3 will be supporting each other.

Action 2: they had worked on developing the purpose and values of the group and finalised their mission statement

Purpose of the group:

- Help improve the “herd” mindset.
- Help people in the community.
- Provide a service, including Active Listening, and help to tackle loneliness.
- Peer support
- Activism - They want to do some campaigning and encourage young people to be involved. (facilitators advised this may be an issue for grant fundraising).
- Advocacy
- They want it to be progressive, not just for ‘old people’.

Values

- No airs or graces.
- We are not for profit, any money that comes in is re-invested.
- Needs to be community driven – all about empowerment.
- Make sure meetings are fun.

Mission Statement

Our objective is to provide a supportive and dynamic peer community dedicated to addressing the everyday issues affecting the health and wellbeing of people aged 50 and over.

Statement of Purpose

By fostering a collaborative environment where we can enjoy open and frank discussions, we aim to equip our members with the skills, resources and confidence needed to thrive in today’s evolving landscape. Together we embrace change, celebrate diversity and champion the notion that lived experience is an asset.

Adopting an informal “drop in and chat” approach, without set meetings or agendas, we aim to empower our members with coping strategies, that would improve their ability to adapt to an ever-changing world.

We see this as a great journey with a positive destination, where we help one another, through listening and simple chat, to navigate our way through modern life’s dead ends and hidden pitfalls.

By making positive moves to tackle loneliness and social isolation, we hope to return to our members, their self-esteem and sense of purpose. The ideal is that by enabling our members to achieve mindfulness and mental wellbeing, we can make a positive impact on the local community.

Additional points about the group

- Social enterprise project, Set up as a social or community enterprise

- Set a up drop in
- Interact with the “economically inactive.”
- Monthly talking points. (Issue of the month)
- Address the barriers to employment, to spur on further conversations.
- Get guest speakers, i.e. Job Centre, Clacks works, CAB etc.

Acton 3: They have accessed support and information from other organisations.

- They have been accessing support through Stirling Uni and STEP - intro to enterprise/business. They have been very impressed with the support and will attend more sessions in 2024
- They have also had conversations/discussions with CTSi about the structure of the organisation and whether to be constituted.
- Job centre have agreed to refer people to the group.
- They plan to approach the following organisations to raise awareness of the group and invite them to provide monthly speakers:
 - Job centre
 - Clacks Works
 - Men’s Shed
 - CAB
 - Mental Health Nurse

Action 4: they have considered what they need to be conscious of as they develop their idea – including the challenges.

- It’s important to get the right **structure** for the group – they are in conversation with CTSi about this.
- Challenges identified:
 - Staying focussed – there are lots of ideas. It’s good to be ambitious, but equally important not to try to run before you can walk.
 - Agreeing and deciding correct structure for the group/organisation
 - Preference is for it to be a social enterprise / community Interest Company (however not sure the current ideas for income generation are sufficient to be economically viable)

Action 5: they have identified priorities/ tasks for the coming months:

- Marketing and Promotion – Facebook page, posters, leaflets, etc
- Networking
- Agree and progress the set-up company/organisation structure.
 - They want to have the company set up by March 2024
- Identify funding (access to funding will depend on organisation structure)
- Launch in newspapers etc.
- Identify and agree premises – Jackie has been doing a lot of work finding premises and building relationships with local organisations. He has met the owners at the Co. Lab in Alloa who run a digital marketing company and have community space that fits the ethos of the 50 Plus Matters group. From January they are keen to use their coffee shop and meeting space to run their sessions and help build their ‘brand’.
 - Long term goal – to own their own premises.
- Consider Ideas for income generation.

- Raffles
 - Discos
 - Merchandise – t-shirts, pin-badges
- Development of the drop in to be launched in Spring – March/April 2024 – run it 1 day a week for 6 months.
 - Launch with a 1980s disco / fundraiser.
- Do some training- Active Listening, business startup.
- Work in collaboration with other local groups/organisations

A6 Childminders

Let us Decide – Workshop 1 Report

Wednesday 25th October 7pm to 8.30pm

Attendees: 15 childminders from across Clackmannanshire

Focus: Childminders

Facilitators: Claire Murphy and Jean Hamilton. RM taking notes.

The Group has a Clackmannanshire Childminders FB page [Facebook](#)

Notes from flipcharts

General discussion on issues:

- We have childcare places but they're not being filled.
- Main issues:
 - o Lack of awareness:
 - Parents don't understand the system – what are funded places, how can they be used – so they take the 'easy' option i.e., nursery.
 - People don't know what provision is available.
 - Nursery staff don't understand what childminders do.
 - o Nurseries take the children – don't explain that parents can use nurseries *and* childminders if they wish.
 - Nurseries can be quite ruthless.
 - o Health visitors aren't explaining the childcare system properly to parents, so parents just go to nurseries.
 - HVs don't see CMs as professionals.
 - CMs don't feel they are treated well by HVs.
 - o Stigma – people think children will just sit in front a TV at a childminder's.
 - o SCMA – don't provide much support.
 - They used to provide a Development Officer to support the local childminders – this isn't happening anymore.
 - DO used to provide; awareness raising, promotion of the services, training, meetings, networking, chat and support, a voice for local CMs.
 - Now the only benefit they get from SCMA is liability insurance.
 - Training hub is not great – not well set up and they can't get logged in.
 - o Lack of access to good training
 - Group would happily do training together if it was available.

- Main ones are:
 - Child protection
 - First aid
 - Food hygiene
- Would also like refresher courses on certain topics.
- ASN would be good too.
- No real/genuine back up support (i.e., from Clacks Council or SCMA)
- They are now losing children a lot sooner due to the changes in when children can go to state-funded nursery – i.e., at 3 years old.
- Care Inspectorate:
 - Paperwork can be an issue.
 - Inspections are inconsistent.
 - Experience and requirements seem to depend on who you get as your inspector.
- Childminding can be isolating and undervalued by other professionals and the council – CMs don't feel they are taken seriously.
- Food regulations: if they give children food they have to be registered as a 'food business' with the council. At the same level as a takeaway/restaurant. This is very time-consuming and often not worth the hassle.
- They get a lot of unreasonable requests from shift-working parents. They can't provide the flexibility that the parents demand. Parents only want to pay for the service when they use it.
- Local childcare pilot
 - Lots of questions
 - Who is eligible?
- Local Childminder training pilot – Clacks Council and SCMA are offering intensive support to a new group of CMs – but the current group have not been contacted about it and feel they need support before a new group is trained – why are the council not supporting them? Why are the council not communicating with them?
- Clackmannanshire Council are the biggest problem for the group.
- All CMs in Clacks feel the same way.

Despite the issues raised above, demand for childcare remains high.

What we would like:

- Somewhere to advertise when we have spaces.
- Mentoring / supporting new childminders to help them get settled into the role.
- Support with training, networking and information sharing

“We just want somebody to fight our corner.”

Childminders – workshop 2 – RM notes

Wednesday, 22nd November 2023

Points Raised

- Feels like each county operates differently – i.e. the way childcare is managed in Falkirk is different to Clackmannanshire
- There are also discrepancies between how nurseries manage the funded hours – i.e. they don't all take a universal approach – this means it is confusing for the parents/carers.
- The approach used by the childcare providers – i.e. the nurseries, does not adhere to the rhetoric around 'the funding follows the child'. Nurseries are often prioritised for the funding, particularly the council-run ones.
- Also inconsistencies with how the Care Inspectorate carries out inspections – individuals seem to have very different experiences
- Some have had referrals from Health Visitors – which was welcomed. Another had a referral from the Child Poverty coordinator – which was also very welcome – this could be a key person (as well as the Health Visitors) to link in with to raise awareness of childcare provision and how the system works. Do Health Visitors get any information / guidance / training on how childcare works?

2 things that the group would benefit from (possible use of the LUD money)

- Training
 - o Paediatric First Aid ([Daisy First Aid – Kirsty C](#) Email: stirling@daisyfirstaid.com)
 - o Child protection
 - o Food Hygiene
 - o Lower priority – social media and marketing (business gateway offers this)
 - o Would appreciate the sessions being f2f rather than online.
- Raising awareness
 - o Parents/carers don't always understand how childcare provision and childcare funding works – this is not helped by the (what feels like) continuous change in policy and allowances and eligibility criteria etc #
 - o Parents/carers don't always understand what childminders do – what they do differently, how are they better?
 - o Childminders should not be an 'add-on' on the Clacks Council website – they should be integral to the provision advertised on the website. This should be done by area not by provision type. I.e. provision in Tillicoultry should include council nurseries, private nurseries *and* available childminders in the area. There should be **equality** on the website.
 - o In addition, the information on the clacks website is very jargony – not layman friendly at all.
 - o The process for finding appropriate childcare should be simplified and clearer. E.g. how many people actually understand the funding, eligibility, or enrolment arrangements for eligible 2s??
 - o Need to identify the key stages for when people receive information on childcare (*I would suggest ASAP – not waiting until they are 2*). *Would also suggest a survey with parents to find out what information they wish they'd had when thinking about*

childcare – what questions should you ask, how do you find out what you're entitled to. What would have made life easier for them? What are their issues/concerns/questions in relation to the various childcare providers.

Childminders (CM) – Workshop 3 – Claire Murphys notes

Monday, 12th February 2024

Points Raised

Childcare Provider Survey

Claire Murphy discussed with the group the findings of the childcare provider survey that the CM's had completed. It was confirmed that parents were generally happy with overall performance of their CM service but rated poor for availability.

It was also queried why many CM's do not offer spaces for children with ASN and this was said to be due to potential difficulties with the additional 1:1 care that would be needed which would mean a CM would need to take on fewer children overall which is not a financially viable option.

It was also raised that most CM's do not pay themselves the real living wage which they confirmed is due to the fact that they could not afford to do this as it would mean raising costs to parents which they feel they would not be able to afford.

It was also mentioned that Regulations, Finance & Cashflow and Inconsistent demand for spaces were their biggest business challenges and that they wanted support programs to Complete regulatory paperwork, Grants and Networking with other CM's.

None of these results came as a surprise to the CM's and it was mentioned whether it would be useful to have some training sessions on regulatory requirements, which had a mixed reception. This will need to be discussed with the group as a whole to see if enough interest.

Training Programs

We discussed the training programs that most of the CM's had taken part in as part of the project. All CM's that had listed themselves for the three training programmes:

- Child Protection
- Food Hygiene
- Paediatric First Aid

should have now completed these. It was also mentioned that the Food Standards Agency had free courses available that CM's could access if they wanted to try additional courses on, for example allergy awareness.

Allocation of Funded Hours

It was again raised by the CM's that they are unhappy with changes being made to how parents can use their Govt funded hrs allocation. Parents now have to allocate a certain block of hours in a day to secure that place on a regular basis, however a parent may not require all the hours that they have to book. This means that parents are having to use funding for hours that they are not necessarily using on that day, making them unavailable to use on other days/elsewhere. This means that there is a knock on effect to parents not then having enough funded hours to also use with CM's. This is making it even trickier for CM's to get funded hrs with parents as it is already very difficult with nurseries using the bulk of them.

Eligible Two's

CM's also raised issue that some families were being missed from being notified about eligibility for their two year olds even though they meet the criteria. CM's have fed this back to L.A and an - **Action agreed** that this would also be brought up at the FWP meeting

Delays in funded hrs payment to CM's

A number of CM's were not happy with delays in receiving their payments when the person whose responsibility it is to process these payments is off sick. They are unhappy with the timescales, with 7 working days to process a payment then 30 days to transfer funds. If someone is off sick, they have to potentially wait for 2 months until a payment can be processed which they feel is unfair

Request for Progress Updates

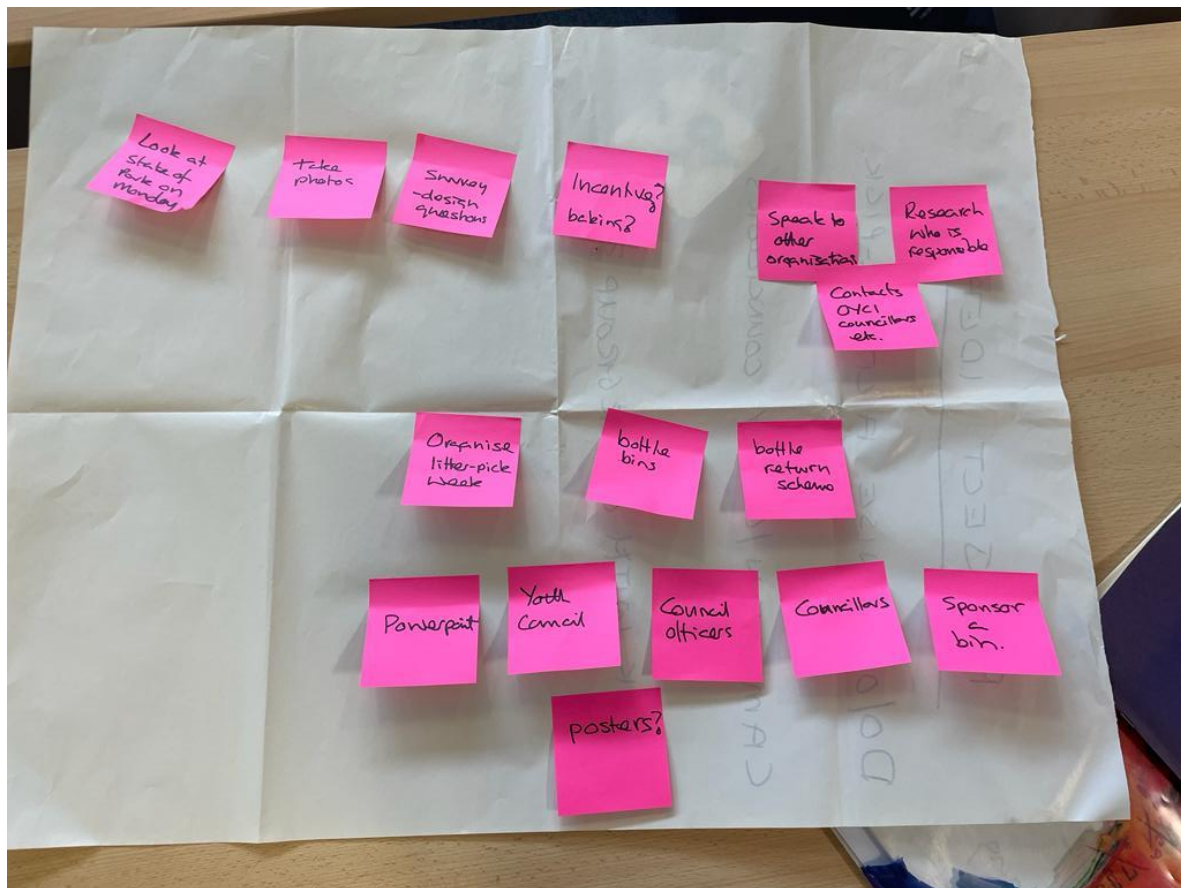
CM's would like to be given updates on what is happening with regards to the work being done to educate Health Visitors on the use of CM's for funded childcare hours and also an update on the feedback that was given on inconsistencies with the Care Inspectorate inspections and what if any changes have been made since.

Clacks Childminders Website

Jane McMillan brought up the idea of all CM's setting up a website which would help advertise services and could be updated regularly. She agreed to send out a message to all CM's in Clacks to see who would want to do this as this would require time contribution has to be all involved to keep ongoing costs down. (Latest update on this is that not many CM's were keen on the idea, so she has decided that it is not worth pursuing).

A7 Young People at School

Lornshill Academy Pupil Parliament



Only two workshops were completed with this group before they decided to pull out of the project due to time constraints. This report outlines their initial discussions and ideas and the project they would have progressed had they had the time to do so.

Workshop 1: Friday 12th May 2023, 10am to 11.30am

Number of participants: 5, all girls from S3, aged 14, Members of the Pupil's Parliament

The group started with a discussion about what they liked about living in Clackmannanshire – what does the county have to offer? The discussion then went on to things that they would like to improve. The following provides a brief overview of the main points that came out of that discussion.

The positives about living in Clackmannanshire for a teenager

- Lots to do
 - Sports and other extracurricular activities
 - Parks and outdoor spaces
- Good facilities in the school
 - You're encouraged to be active
 - There is lots of choice
 - it's made fun
- Creative opportunities available too, e.g.
 - Dance
 - Music
 - Debating
 - Chess
- Good transport links
 - To Stirling
 - Cycle path network
 - Easy for young people to get around (free bus travel)
- Lots of charity shops and donation centres
- Lots of places to eat – esp. in Alloa
- Close to good quality higher and further education opportunities – and apprenticeship opportunities too (e.g. Diageo)

What could be better?

- State of parks and green spaces
 - Dirty

- Bins overflowing and not emptied
 - Grass too long (so much can't open gate)
 - Bumpy grass rubbish/not safe for playing footie
 - Older teens hanging around drinking
- Some leisure facilities lost recently (leisure bowl) which was good, fun, affordable and accessible with a range of activities
- So accessibility of that type of leisure now further away and not easy to get to
- Busses can be unreliable
- Access to mental health support (this one didn't come out spontaneously but was prompted by us)
 - Waiting lists long
 - Parental consent required???
- Play equipment on factored estates never fixed (e.g. broken slide)
- Safety walking to and from school

Initial project ideas

The group were tasked with thinking about some ideas that could make things better. There was some consensus on something around the state of parks/green spaces

- Do/organise litter picking
- Campaign/lobby councillors (e.g. petition to get the leisure bowl open again) The new proposed facility is in the bottom end of Alloa and it's not safe for younger kids to walk there.
- Open to working with ConnectAlloa and combining budgets and effort if they also decide on this topic

'Homework' for next time

- Think about practical projects
- Talk to Ms Gray and see if she has any suggestions or can support them to form/think through potential ideas for a project
- Talk to other young people, friends, family
- Make notes of any ideas and bring them along

'Homework for facilitators'

- Look into who might be the local councillors and appropriate people within the council
- Find out how much they consulted with young people when they made decisions regarding the new facility
- Does the council have a young persons' advisory group ?
- RM to speak to OYCI about possible 'play in a week' facilitators or anyone who could support the production of a short film

Workshop 2 notes

Date: Wednesday 24th May 2023, 10am to 11.30am

Number of participants: 6, all girls from S3, aged 14, Members of the Pupil's Parliament. The group was also joined by Ms Gray.

- The session started with a general recap of what we had discussed at the last session. The conversation developed into attitudes of adults towards teenagers, but also how teenagers feel about each other.
- They are not allowed into McDonald's in groups after 5pm, or local shops, so there are limited things they can do.
- Teenagers aren't liked or welcomed but there's nowhere else for them to go other than parks and greenspaces which aren't well-maintained
- Discussion developed onto thinking about the project idea. Why do people litter? Is it because there are not enough bins? Is it because the bins are in the wrong place? What would change people's behaviour towards keeping the green spaces nicer?

General discussion/Ideas:

- Incentives – people respond to incentives
- Electric bin in Edinburgh zoo
- Protests
- Posters
- Campaign
- Could we run a big campaign and then see if it has any impact?
- Could we link with other organisations that also work with young people?
- Should we speak to other organisations who are responsible for green spaces, e.g. the council, the Development Trust, YP orgs
- Could we do a survey about the park

We decided to progress the idea of 'improving Clackmannanshire's green spaces – focussing on The Delph' in Tullibody.

Project idea development

What do we want to achieve? We want better green spaces for young people to feel hang out and feel safe

The aim is twofold:

- To raise the awareness of those in power who are in control of the greenspaces and the impact it has on the community when the parks/green spaces are not being appropriately maintained.
- See what actions the young people can take to improve the spaces themselves – can they influence positive behaviour change?

Park the team are focussing on: The Delph in Tullibody

Project Steps/tasks

1. Assess the damage

Actions:

- Take photos and assess area
- Survey / questionnaire users – use home baking to encourage people to take part
 - o What would be the biggest thing that would help improve the park?
- Do a litter pick

2. Speak to other organisations

Actions:

- Find out what else is going on in the county
- Find out who's responsible for keeping the area nice and how to get in touch with them
 - o What are the issues? Why do they struggle to keep the spaces nice? Have they done anything previously to stop bad behaviour?
 - o Other orgs/people
 - Elected Councillors, Cllr Lindsay is the "Spokesperson for Education - Champion for Children & Young People " glindsay@clacks.gov.uk
 - Youth Council, Jennifer Gibson, cljgibson@flipclacks.org
 - OYCI – Ochil Youth Community Improvement, local youth organisation who engage young people in the Hillfoots.
 - Tullibody Civic Centre – run by Tullibody Community Development Trust www.tullibodycdt.org.uk; enquiries@tullibodycdt.org.uk

Find out what other areas are doing e.g. Seren mentioned an area in the Trossachs that had taken the bins away – what works elsewhere??3.

3. Put findings together and develop campaign

Actions:

- Pull all the findings together –
- Develop campaign - Produce posters, article for local paper, short film

4. Deliver Campaign

5. Measure impact

Actions:

- Go back to park to see if it has improved
- If so, great!
- If not, why not?
- Report impact of campaign to the organisations involved at the beginning of the process.

‘Homework’ for next time

- Do some scoping work and find out what else is happening.
- Develop the plan further –
 - o Who is doing what and when?
 - o How much will it cost?
- **Decide amongst the team – what is it that you want to achieve from the activity?** And work backwards from there