



COMMUNITY RENEWAL:  
LIFTING NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

# A FINAL EVALUATION ASSESSMENT

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June 2025



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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[IT] RAISED ASPIRATIONS AND FOSTERED HOPE

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“

LNT HAS SHOWCASED AN ALTERNATIVE AND MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES

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## Introduction

This report presents the final evaluation assessment of Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) project up to February 2025. It has been produced by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, which was commissioned by the Community Renewal Trust to serve as the learning and evaluation partner for the period 2020 to 2025.

Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together is a radical project which is testing an alternative solution to addressing poverty at a neighbourhood level. LNT is rooted in a Systems Thinking approach: working from a set of principles and holistic working methods that look at the whole person or whole family rather than leading with a specialism. It has two key aspects:

- **Engaging and listening to individuals and families** in the target neighbourhoods – using established community development processes and case management processes – to explore whether it is possible to help them lift themselves out of poverty, and what support would they need.
- **Reorganising existing resources and public services** around what they need, working holistically and with different system behaviours. This acknowledges that existing support structures were often fragmented, overly specialised, and siloed.

Developed by Community Renewal Trust, the project was awarded £2.1 million in grant funding from the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). This funding enabled testing and learning of the LNT approach in two neighbourhoods. Community Renewal Trust directly lead the project in the Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays area of Edinburgh, which is the primary test of change neighbourhood. Additionally, Building Futures East ran a similar project in the Walker area of Newcastle upon Tyne, using a sub-grant and guidance from Community Renewal Trust. This second neighbourhood provided an opportunity to explore how the LNT model could be replicated in a different context.

Although the funded phase of the project has ended, Community Renewal Trust continues to operate the model and the team delivering it remain branded as *Community Renewal Lifting Neighbourhoods Together*.



THEY COULDN'T DO ANY MORE...THE SUPPORT THEY OFFER. THEY DO A LOT FOR PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY. I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN MY LIFE. THEY ACCEPT YOU. THEY'RE GREAT.



## The evaluation of Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together

Three research questions guided the evaluation:

- **HOW HAS COMMUNITY RENEWAL: LIFTING NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER PROVIDED AND EVIDENCED A DIFFERENT, MORE EFFECTIVE, APPROACH TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS?**
- **WHAT PROGRESS HAS COMMUNITY RENEWAL: LIFTING NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER MADE TOWARDS LIFTING THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OUT OF POVERTY?**
- **WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT WHETHER AND HOW THE COMMUNITY RENEWAL: LIFTING NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER MODEL CAN BE REPLICATED?**

The project was originally intended to run from February 2020 – following a six-month development phase – until July 2024. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the timeline was restructured, extending the project through to the end of February 2025. Therefore, the evaluation primarily focuses on activities carried out between April 2022 and December 2024. The evidence presented is based on a mixed methods approach.



## How has Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together provided and evidenced a different, more effective, approach to support residents in the neighbourhoods?

The report demonstrates how Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together has provided compelling evidence for a different, more effective way of supporting residents and communities. Key aspects that enabled this include:

- LNT's **system influencing work** has promoted alternative – more integrated and preventative – approaches to support neighbourhoods. This has taken a bottom-up approach: establishing working relationships amongst frontline services and practitioners, and integrating a more joined-up person centred, holistic way to provide support to residents based on Action Learning.
- Community Renewal Trust built on emerging evidence about how to best to support system change within their delivery of the LNT model. A key development was the emergence of a set of values or system behaviours that captured the essence of the successful aspects of the LNT approach. These were: **trust, trustworthiness, learning, building on strengths, being alongside the community, achieving prevention and inspiring transformation.**
- Proactively engaging residents – primarily via door knocking, their Pantries and Point of Care testing – enabled LNT to become known in the neighbourhoods as well as identifying and reaching broader groups of residents, many of whom had 'hidden needs' and who were not accessing services.

- Person-centred support facilitated a depth of knowledge and understanding about residents, their needs and their goals. This enabled support that matched the realities of people's lives and focused on transformative change – rather than surface-level crisis needs. The empathetic person-centred support promoted client engagement and the achievement of their personal outcomes, or at least progression towards desired outcomes.
- The LNT project provided evidence on the advantages of holistic, co-ordinated packages of support around the individual. This included: engaging and communicating to a broad range of stakeholders about the LNT model; integrating the LNT model in the delivery of commissioned services; bridging residents and services through LNT caseworkers; facilitating co-location of services to improve accessibility and collaboration.
- Increasing the community's capacity to support itself by creating volunteering opportunities, supporting the establishment of community groups and facilitating community action to enable the communities to co-produce hyper-local responses. This has raised aspirations and fostered hope that they can affect change.



## What progress has Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together made towards lifting the neighbourhoods out of poverty?

The report examined the progress made by Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) in its efforts to lift the two neighbourhoods out of poverty. The assessment was guided by an evaluation framework that focused on the steps in the change process and the intermediate outcomes expected along the path to achieving LNT's ultimate objective. Evidence from four distinct sources was then analysed to determine whether LNT has made measurable progress toward reducing poverty in the targeted neighbourhoods.

Summarising the findings:

- There is strong evidence that the LNT Neighbourhood Teams have **proactively engaged neighbourhood residents**. Notably the team in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays engaged at least 1,447 residents, equivalent to 39 per cent of the neighbourhood's population over three years.
- LNT has provided **significant ongoing personalised support to its clients**. A quarter of residents received at least some sessions of support as a formal client with the multi-disciplinary Neighbourhood Team. This has been praised by clients who report very high level of satisfaction in the support that they have received from LNT.



- LNT has **effectively supported clients in achieving or making strong progress toward their personal goals**. Available data on progress against client's goals reveals 92 per cent of goals were either achieved or the client had made positive progress against. Unlike narrowly focused initiatives, LNT addresses a broad range of needs. For example, in 2024 alone, the team in Bingham, Magdalene, and The Hays helped the equivalent of 10% of the neighbourhood's unemployed population into employment – demonstrating potential for long-term poverty reduction.
- LNT has made **significant progress in enhancing social infrastructure, coordination, and the community's ability to support itself**.
- While there are **early signs of better outcomes in LNT neighbourhoods compared to similarly deprived areas**, conclusive evidence of a measurable reduction in overall poverty is limited. This is partly due to the availability of external data and the shorter-than-expected project delivery period.

## What have we learned about whether and how the Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together model can be replicated?

The report presents **compelling evidence in support of an LNT-style model of neighbourhood support** – demonstrating its effectiveness both in enhancing the provision and experience of support services, and in achieving meaningful outcomes for clients.

Five core components of the LNT approach were identified as central to its success.

- **Systems influence work.** LNT provided foundational work and context to coordinate a bottom-up, systems-thinking approach to service delivery.
- **Proactive ongoing engagement with the neighbourhood.** The LNT teams prioritised proactive and continuous engagement with residents, becoming a visible and trusted presence within the communities. This approach enabled them to identify and reach a broader and more diverse group of residents, including many with 'hidden needs' who were not previously accessing services.
- **Person-centred support** facilitated a depth of knowledge and understanding about residents, their needs and their goals. This meant support was tailored to the realities of people's lives, focusing on transformative change rather than simply responding to immediate crises.
- **Re-orientating services** so that they provide holistic, co-ordinated packages of support around the individual. systems-level coordination helped break down silos and ensured that support was more responsive, integrated, and aligned with residents' real-life needs.

- **Providing support and resources to increase the community's capacity** to help itself. LNT invested in strengthening the community's ability to support itself, recognising that sustainable change requires empowered residents and active local networks. This activity contributed to a stronger sense of agency, resilience, and long-term sustainability within the community.

The approximate annual cost of frontline delivery in each neighbourhood – excluding seconded posts – was £110,000 (in 2024 terms). This figure provides a useful benchmark for budgeting and planning similar initiatives elsewhere.

The LNT experience aligns with the broader evidence base on the realities of systems change processes. These processes are often messy, ambiguous, complex, and challenging, and can sometimes be uncomfortable for those involved. The two neighbourhoods had success in implementing and evidencing the LNT model by taking a bottom-up approach to affecting the system. The bottom-up approach involved integrating the LNT principles into their own practices and building networks of frontline practitioners who began collaborating in a more integrated and cohesive way.

The following practical aspects emerged to support the success implementation of the LNT approach:

- Implementation of systems-based approaches requires a **focus on values** and not just methodology. Community Renewal Trust identified two sets of values. The first set comprises the core values of the LNT approach: lead with trust; recognise that trustworthiness is the foundation of strong relationships; and adopt a continuous learning mindset that embraces failure as part of growth. Alongside these they have outlined four 'pedagogical values' when supporting people: building on strengths; being alongside people as opposed to sticking with them; being involved in resilience and prevention; and Inspiring transformation.
- Network development was driven by the **formation and growth of relationships centred around a shared interest in working in a more integrated way**. This practitioner-led approach fostered collaboration and innovation at the operational level, where integrated working could be most effectively realised.
- **Action Learning and visioning sessions (including three horizons)** with frontline staff proved to be highly effective in navigating operational challenges and identifying the best ways to support individuals. It encouraged reflective practice across professional disciplines, supporting service integration and fostered the development of innovative approaches, while embracing failure as part of the process.
- Using existing **support services as mechanisms to engage the community**. For example, the Neighbourhood Team in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays used their welfare advice service as means to engage new residents who are in need of support. This turned what was previously a transactional waiting-list based advice service into a community engagement tool.
- Provide capacity and coordination to **galvanise community action** to empower residents to pursue and cocreate improvements. This raises the community's **expectations and a sense that it can help itself**.
- **Involve those with lived experience in the delivery of services**. People with lived experience may have a deeper appreciation of the complex, interrelated challenges clients face. Their personal insights also enabled them to offer more informed and empathetic perspectives on effective support.



## FRANKIE'S STORY

Frankie was referred to LNT by the East End Women Programme hosted by Building Futures East. She had participated in the Freedom Programme for domestic abuse recovery. At her LNT Holistic Assessment, Frankie shared that she was living in fear, had PTSD, and felt like “a shell of the person she once was”. Isolated, vulnerable and struggling to leave the house, Frankie disclosed she was being financially abused by a local criminal but was too frightened to take action.

Despite her trauma, Frankie remained in recovery from past alcohol misuse, having previously been through rehab. She committed to weekly appointments with the LNT team and, over time, began to rebuild her confidence. Within four sessions, she broke free from the financial abuse and found the courage to volunteer herself in the community.

With a background in probation and various community services, Frankie brought her financial inclusion expertise and natural people skills to the role, supporting vulnerable residents to access benefits, debt support, and other vital services. Despite ongoing health challenges, she showed up consistently, becoming a trusted voice and advocate for her community.

As a volunteer, Frankie then helped local residents access over £500,000 in benefits and grants. Her lived experience, warmth and unwavering determination have had a clear and transformative impact on those around her in her own community.

Wanting to ensure the service continues, Frankie has now stepped into the role of Chair of Thriving Walker, helping to shape the next chapter for the soon to-be charity. Her story is one of strength, hope and community empowerment in real action.

Frankie is well described not only a survivor, but as a changemaker, and is described as a beacon of hope for Walker as a neighbourhood.



\* Some names and all case study photos have been changed to preserve anonymity where applicable.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

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OF RESOURCES

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## 1.1.

This report presents the final evaluation assessment of the Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) project up to February 2025. It has been produced by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, which was commissioned by Community Renewal Trust to serve as the learning and evaluation partner for the period 2020 to 2025.

The assessment builds on previous outputs from the evaluation, including:

- A baseline assessment, completed in 2021, which examined the initial conditions in the two neighbourhoods at the start of the LNT project and developed a framework for evaluating its impact.

- A Covid learning report, completed in 2022, which established learning from the first 18 months of the project as well as LNT's contribution to the COVID-19 response in the two neighbourhoods. This report reflected how the project's early years were largely redirected toward addressing the immediate challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An interim evaluation assessment, completed in 2023, which reviewed the progress of the LNT model and assessed its achievements to date in supporting the neighbourhoods in tackling poverty.

Community Renewal Trust is a small charity group founded 2003. It currently consists of three community anchor organisations and two social enterprises. Only one of the community anchor teams, with an office in Bingham, Edinburgh, were involved in this project.



## 1.2. The Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together Model

Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) is a radical project which is testing an alternative solution to addressing poverty at a neighbourhood level. Although the funded phase of the project has ended, the team that delivered it continues to operate the model and remain branded as *Community Renewal Lifting Neighbourhoods Together*.

Developed by Community Renewal, the project was awarded £2.1 million in grant funding from the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). This funding enabled testing and learning of the LNT approach in two neighbourhoods. Community Renewal Trust directly lead the project in the Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays area of Edinburgh, which is the primary test of change neighbourhood. Additionally, Building Futures East ran a similar project in the Walker area of Newcastle upon Tyne, using a sub-grant and guidance from Community Renewal Trust. This second neighbourhood provided an opportunity to explore how the LNT model could be replicated in a different context.

The £2.1 million budget included several one-off costs, such as hosting national conferences, developing website resources, and commissioning learning activities. The cost of delivering the project in each of the two neighbourhoods was approximately £620,000 over six years. This evaluation examines those delivery costs in detail.

LNT has two key aspects:

- **Engaging and listening to individuals and families** in the target neighbourhoods – using established community development processes and case management processes – to explore whether it is possible to help them lift themselves out of poverty, and what support would they need.
- **Reorganising existing resources and public services** around what they need, working holistically and with different system behaviours. This acknowledges that existing support structures were often fragmented, overly specialised, and siloed.

Community Renewal Trust and Building Futures East Neighbourhood Teams worked street-by-street in their respective areas, systematically engaging households using a *Listening Conversation* methodology. These conversations aimed to build new relationships, understand household situations and identify their needs and goals. Households that wanted to receive support to lift themselves out of poverty were supported by a case manager, including using a *Holistic Conversation* methodology.

The LNT approach responds to experience that, despite numerous and often successful interventions to address specific aspects of poverty and disadvantage, or to improve services, there are limits to what single initiatives working in isolation can achieve. Poorer outcomes for households in disadvantaged communities persist, and many of those living in deprived areas face multiple challenges which have impacts across their lives. As explained in detail in the baseline report, LNT is rooted in evidence that:

- A **holistic, area-based** approach offers the best opportunity to address poverty and improve outcomes for those living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.<sup>1</sup>
- A **co-ordinated and holistic approach** to service delivery is required to overcome some of the limitations of siloed, single-issue based delivery.
- Evidence suggests **multi-strand services** led to improved outcomes in addition to, or beyond the scope and purpose of, the original intervention.<sup>2</sup>
- Better quality and more cost-efficient services are required to ensure support is sustainable.<sup>3</sup>
- People's needs are better met when they are involved in an equal and reciprocal relationship to **co-produce** services and support.<sup>4</sup>
- Other similar projects which foster place-based, integrated and holistic support have **improved a wide range of outcomes** for those living in targeted areas.<sup>5,6</sup>

### 1.3. The evaluation of Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together

This report presents an assessment against the following three research questions that guided the evaluation:

- How has Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together provided and evidenced a different, more effective, approach to support residents in the neighbourhoods?
- What progress has Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together made towards lifting the neighbourhoods out of poverty?
- What have we learned about whether and how the Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together model can be replicated?

The project was originally intended to run from February 2020 – following a six-month development phase – until July 2024. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the timeline was restructured, extending the project through to the end of February 2025. This evaluation primarily focuses on activities carried out between April 2022 and December 2024.

1 Knight, A. D., Lowe, T. Brossard, M. and Wilson, J. (2017) *A whole new world: funding and commissioning in complexity*. Newcastle: Collaborate for social change.

2 Knight, A. D., Lowe, T. Brossard, M. and Wilson, J. (2017) *A whole new world: funding and commissioning in complexity*. Newcastle: Collaborate for social change.

3 Locality/Vanguard (2014) *Saving money by doing the right thing: Why 'local by default' must replace 'diseconomies of scale'* London: Locality.

4 Pollard, G., Studdert, J. and Tiratelli, L. (2021) *Community Power: The Evidence*. London: Local Trust

5 Batty, E., Harris, C., Leather, D., Pearson, S., Wilson, I., Carter, C., Coldwell, M. Stiell, B. and Willis, B. (2020) *Children's Communities final evaluation report*. Save the Children UK

6 Crisp, R., Fletcher, D.R., Parr, S. and Wilson, I. (2020) *West-Yorkshire Finding Independence (WY-FI): Effectiveness, outcomes and impact - Final evaluation report 2020*. Sheffield: CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University.

The evidence presented is based on a mixed methods approach including:

### **INTERVIEW/GROUP INTERVIEW WITH LNT MANAGERS/ TEAM LEADERS**

Multiple rounds of annual interviews were conducted with LNT managers in both neighbourhoods to understand their LNT approach and the progress made. These interviews explored both the delivery of the initiative and efforts to integrate the LNT model into the wider system.

### **INTERVIEWS WITH LNT FRONTLINE WORKERS**

Multiple rounds of annual interviews were completed with LNT frontline workers in both neighbourhoods to understand:

- Their experience of delivering the LNT model.
- How the LNT model fits within, and interacts with, other parts of the system.
- What factors supported or constrained their delivery of the LNT model.
- What difference the LNT model made.
- How the LNT model could be refined to address key challenges.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Researchers spent four days in each neighbourhood shadowing frontline workers and observing their interactions with clients. These observations provided deeper insight into how the LNT model was delivered, how it interfaced with and integrates into existing services, the user experience, and the impact the LNT model made to the lives and experiences of residents.



## CLIENT INTERVIEWS

Forty in-depth interviews with LNT clients were completed over two periods of fieldwork, in 2023 and 2024. These interviews were split evenly between the two LNT neighbourhoods. They included a proportion of longitudinal interviews with the same client in both fieldwork periods. The interviews covered:

- Clients' initial characteristics, situations and needs.
- How they became involved with LNT.
- What support they have received from LNT and their views on this support.
- What difference this support made and whether particular aspects of LNT or other factors (such as the pandemic) had helped or hindered their situations.

## LNT CLIENT DATA

The evaluation included an assessment and analysis of monitoring data collected through a bespoke Microsoft Dynamics database developed specifically for the project. This system collated individual-level case records for LNT clients. The data analysed included the number and nature of engagements, caseworker notes from Holistic Conversations (initially referred to as Holistic Assessments), the goals set by clients and the progress made toward those goals in follow-up assessments.

## SECONDARY AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Finally, the evaluation drew on a limited number of secondary and administrative data sources to assess neighbourhood-level change. The data sources analysed were: claimant unemployment rates, housing assistance claimant rates and levels of deliberate fires. The analysis examined trends over time – from before the LNT project begun to the most recent available data – and compared changes in the LNT neighbourhoods to benchmark areas. These benchmarks included similarly deprived neighbourhoods within the same local authority, and the broader parent local authority. Although the evaluation methodology outlined in the LNT Baseline Evaluation report intended to use Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data, this was ultimately unavailable.

### 1.4. Structure of the report

The remaining sections of this report are organised as follows:

- Chapter 2 considers how has Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together provided and evidenced a different, more effective, approach to support residents in the neighbourhoods. This includes a synopsis of the system change activities undertaken.
- Chapter 3 assess what progress has Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together made towards lifting the neighbourhoods out of poverty.
- Chapter 4 summarises the evidence and considers what have we learned about whether and how the Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together model can be replicated?

# 2

## HOW HAS LNT EVIDENCED A MORE EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS?

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LNT HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS A CASE STUDY EXEMPLAR OF HOLISTIC, INTEGRATED WORKING ... TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY.

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## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents evidence of how Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together has demonstrated a different approach to supporting residents and communities.

LNT is a radical project which is testing an alternative solution to addressing poverty at a neighbourhood level. Its approach responds to experience that, despite best efforts, there are limits to the current way services are provided and what single initiatives working in isolation can achieve. Consequently, poorer outcomes continue to persist for households in disadvantaged communities, where residents often face multiple, interconnected challenges that affect many aspects of their lives.

LNT is rooted in a Systems Thinking approach: **working from a set of principles and holistic working methods that look at the whole person or whole family rather than leading with a specialism.** Systems Thinking is a holistic approach to work that focuses on the way that constituent parts (e.g. particular services or agencies) interrelate and how systems work over-time and within the context of larger systems. Underpinning Systems Thinking approaches are both visible and intangible aspects that promote joined-up, holistic working. These include local multi-agency strategies and plans, leadership, partnership working between services, and information sharing.

A Systems Maturity and Behaviours Framework was developed by the evaluation to inform, and understand, how LNT has supported a more effective, joined-up local system – one that supports neighbourhoods and enables residents to thrive. The framework outlines a progression of increasing levels of maturity, representing a shift toward more organised, systematic ways of working. It focuses on the processes of local systems change and highlights the role of LNT as an agent of change within that system. The framework

captures both structural and behavioural dimensions, offering a lens through which to assess how local services collaborate, evolve, and align around residents' needs.

The chapter is structured around six aspects related to LNT's delivery that were identified as promoting more mature systems of supporting the neighbourhoods:

- System influencing work.
- Supporting systems change within the delivery of LNT.
- Engaging and identifying those in need.
- Person-centred support focusing on individuals' aspirations, building on their strengths and assets.
- Reorganising holistic, co-ordinated packages of support around the individual.
- Supporting the capacity of the communities to develop its own solutions to help itself.



## 2.2. Systems influencing work

This section highlights the impact of LNT's system influencing work in promoting alternative – more integrated and preventative – ways of supporting neighbourhoods.

At the outset, it is important to consider the context that required LNT had to reorient its systems influence work from what was originally planned. While some contextual factors – such as the COVID-19 pandemic – were unique, they primarily served to amplify challenges that would have been encountered in achieving systems change regardless.

The planned approach was characterised as top-down: aiming to secure and leverage strategic and managerial-level support from key public sector agencies, such as the City of Edinburgh Council and local public health teams. LNT intended to partner with these agencies, gaining committed resources who would align to the LNT model. This model would include a reorientation around clients, joined-up holistic support and a focus on prevention and transformation. Crucially, this shift in mindset and practice was expected to cascade downwards to those involved in frontline service delivery within the neighbourhoods.

Significant work went into securing the buy-in from senior strategic leaders within key agencies. However, there were significant challenges in obtaining the resources and operational commitment needed to change how services function on the ground. Interviewees suggested this was due to resistance embedded within existing system structures, which are inherently less adaptable to change. Additionally, the public sector faced substantial financial pressures, leading to a predominantly reactive mode of service delivery – focused on individuals in immediate need or crisis. In this regard a specific obstacle – which was explored more in the Covid A specific obstacle – explored in more detail in the Covid Learning Evaluation Report – was the timing of the LNT project's intended launch with public sector workers in February 2020. This coincided with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in two years during which staff were necessarily focused on pandemic response. This was followed by recruitment and retention challenges, as well as the cost-of-living crisis that emerged in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Given this context, LNT shifted its approach from a top-down model to one that was more bottom-up. This new direction focused on building strong working relationships among frontline services and practitioners, and embedding a more joined-up, person-centred, and holistic method of supporting residents. By integrating this approach into everyday practice and demonstrating its benefits, the aim was to generate upward influence within the system – ultimately leading to changes in how services are designed and commissioned.



To this end the LNT team's system influencing work focused on four main areas:

First enabling work within the neighbourhoods, **bringing together practitioners from different sectors**. Before the LNT project, as is typical in many neighbourhoods, staff networks were limited. Existing networks tended to be ad hoc, often formed through chance encounters or personal connections. NT's interdisciplinary team played a key role in strengthening these relationships. One notable area of progress was its partnership with public health, through which an informal practitioner networking group was established, focused on Bingham and Magdalene. The LNT interdisciplinary team supported much of the foundational work that was needed to bring in other practitioners. This informal network created opportunities for practitioners to learn about each other's roles and responsibilities, as well as build up a localised network of practitioner contacts – promoting more integrated working across services – and who can share information, learning and best practice. In addition, LNT has been instrumental in establishing and developing the East Synergy Group – a new place-based network for Greater Craigmillar, which includes Bingham, Magdalene, and the Hays. LNT also leads the newly formed Community Wealth Building Alliance for Bingham and Magdalene, which brings together 13 local partners to promote inclusive economic development and community-led growth.

Second, **providing an understanding and evidence on the neighbourhood**. Through its work, Community Renewal's LNT team has come to be regarded by stakeholders as one of the few organisations with an in-depth knowledge of community needs in Bingham, Magdalene, and the Hays. This insight was developed from its proactive engagement with residents as well as its support for community empowerment in the neighbourhood. This was seen as being especially important because Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays were relatively unfamiliar to many stakeholders, particularly when

compared to neighbourhoods such as Leith and Muirhouse. In the early years of the project, the LNT team reported that many public sector workers lacked even basic awareness of Bingham, including its location, despite it being in the 1% most deprived data zones nationally. The work of the LNT team – and Community Renewal Trust more broadly, has helped raise attention on Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays within the City of Edinburgh. As a result, stakeholders such as councillors and service providers now have a more visible and active presence in the neighbourhood.

Third, has been **facilitating joint working with practitioners across sectors to co-create innovative ways to address issues identified in the neighbourhood**. This has been grounded in an Active Learning Set approach, working with members of the informal network of practitioners. It has involved:

- Identifying issues and challenges within the area, often drawing on Community Renewal's insights.
- Exploring and challenging the issue from each practitioner's perspective.
- Collaboratively developing action plans that aim to address the issue.
- Implementing this plan.
- Follow up meetings to reflect on the actions, outcomes and learning with a view to refine practice.

Finally, LNT has been recognised as a case study exemplar of holistic, integrated working across agencies – focusing on prevention and transformation to address the social determinants of poverty and inequality. Though LNT, Community Renewal Trust has demonstrated how resources from the wider area can be channelled into a neighbourhood like Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays. This includes staff seconded into the team from broader contracts delivered by Community Renewal Trust, all coordinated together to build trust and collaboration between practitioners. In terms of service delivery, LNT has showcased an alternative and more effective use of resources and practitioner capacity, by partnership working and supporting people in a holistic way, based around principles of person-centred support. This has shifted perspectives on how to support people in a way that that builds their confidence, set around ‘hope’ for practitioners and clients. This has been achieved in part through three rounds of team visioning, a three horizon’s facilitated planning process, one-to-one support from the Tavistock Institute for team members as well as the previously mentioned Action Learning sessions.

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LNT HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS A CASE STUDY EXEMPLAR OF HOLISTIC, INTEGRATED WORKING ACROSS AGENCIES – FOCUSING ON PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMATION TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY.

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EXAMPLES OF INTERNAL AND PARTNERSHIP SYSTEM CHANGE EXERCISES

Below is an example output of one of the visioning day exercises from 2020:

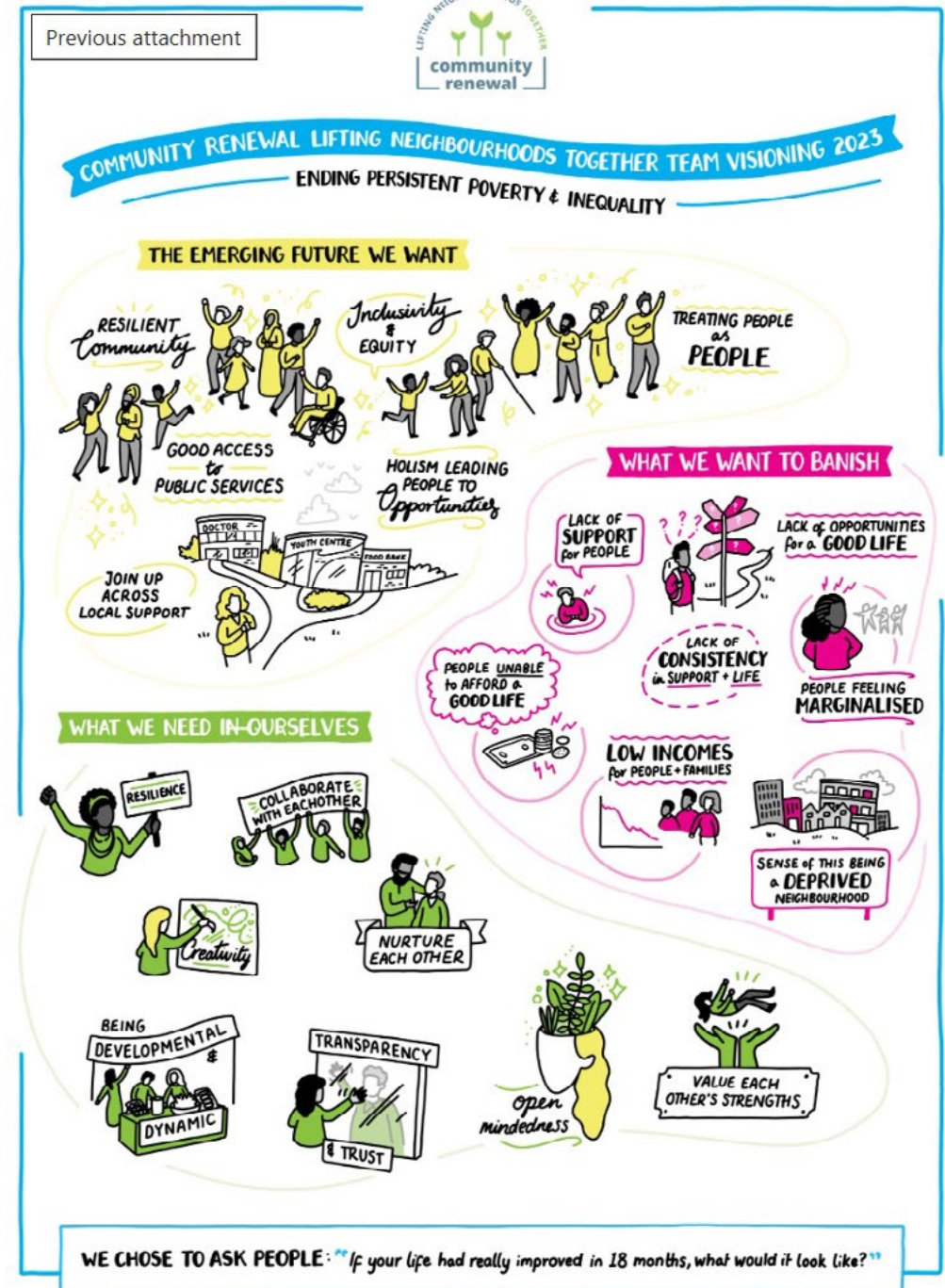


Opposite is the synopsis of the 2023 Three Horizon visioning review exercise:

### 2.3. Supporting systems change within the delivery of LNT

Community Renewal Trust, in leading the LNT project, also built on emerging bodies of evidence about how to best to support system change through their delivery of the LNT model. They reported that key learning emerged from their **use of System Behaviour Influencing Tools**, which included:

- Three Horizon sessions in 2020 and 2023.
- Work around system mapping in 2020-2022 including visioning and stepping stone sessions.
- Work with Tavistock Institute 2021-2023 using one-to-one interviews with team staff.
- Action Learning Sets internally and externally (including with volunteers) 2023-2025.
- Discussions with co-locating (or “Time Donor”) service including SDS, DWP, SSS, HSCP and CAB.



In addition to the learning and insights outlined above, a key development was the **emergence of a set of values or system behaviours that captured the essence of what made the LNT approach successful**. These could be shared within the team, within Community Renewal Trust's wider work and with external stakeholders whom LNT wished to influence towards better system behaviours. This resulted in the following set of delivery values:

- **Trusting** – our impact is built on choosing to place trust in people.
- **Trustworthy** – our trustworthiness is what makes our relationships grow.
- **Learning** – our work is about learning, so we celebrate success but also appreciate failure.
- **Building on strengths** – our aim is always to build on strengths: we reject paternalism.
- **Alongside communities** – our aim is always to stay alongside people for as long as it takes.
- **Achieving prevention** – our choice is to be proactive so we can achieve prevention, build resilience and find the right people.
- **Inspiring transformation** – our focus is always inspiring towards transformation, rather than incremental change.

Each of these values emerged from the experience of delivering LNT. They were developed alongside statements of intent that lay behind them, and supported by an online training course (including assessed coursework) to allow the values to be embedded into practice from 2025 onwards. Although this was after the end of the evaluation period it represents a key legacy of the project, aimed at sustaining and scaling the LNT approach.

The LNT team has **shared this learning about best how to support system change** in the following ways:

- Co-leading the establishment of new local practitioner networks looking at engaging with wider place-based community delivery including ESG (established with local third sector orgs in 2024), Craigmillar Community of Practice (established with Public Health and housing 2022) and the Bingham/Magdalene Community Wealth Building Alliance (established with local community organisations and local services in 2023).
- Delivering eight practitioner workshops on Fostering Hope, with over 100 attendees.
- Hosting three all-day conferences with 390 attendances.
- Additional learning and sharing opportunities including in Angus, County Durham and with groups of visiting Swedish, Polish and UK civil servants.



## 2.4. Proactively engaging residents

The baseline report identified that many residents in the two neighbourhoods had unidentified and / or unsupported needs. This was due to a combination of factors: limited capacity within services to engage people beyond their existing client-base, and high levels of distrust and disconnection among residents towards the services available to them.

In response, a core feature of LNT has been the work of the Neighbourhood Teams, who go street-by-street in their respective neighbourhoods, systematically engaging households in a Listening Conversation. This **proactive, community-based engagement – primarily through door-knocking – was seen as a defining element of the LNT approach and a key factor underpinning its success:**

**"I think the door knocking is really useful. It is useful to like get out into the community and the people who don't know who we are definitely like, raise an awareness of who we are and explain our services. I think we do get some footfall from the door knocking."**

**"sometimes things come out of door knocking, so our knitting group came out of door knocking"**

In addition to door-knocking, LNT has successfully engaged residents through a variety of other proactive channels. For example, the Walker team utilised Point-of-Care health testing at a local Aldi store to connect with residents around specific health conditions. Similarly, the Bingham, Magdalene, and the Hays team engaged with residents through The Hays Pantry – a community food initiative they run in partnership with others – as well as through a range of Streetwork community events, such as the Bingham Summer Gala, co-organised with local residents. These diverse engagement routes enabled LNT to reach hundreds of additional residents, particularly working families who are often unavailable during door-knocking hours.

“

AT LEAST 39% OF RESIDENTS IN BINGHAM, MAGDALENE AND THE HAYS WERE ENGAGED... AND 25% BECAME CLIENTS WITH AN AVERAGE 6.8 SESSIONS OF SUPPORT."

”

As the project evolved, these alternative modes of proactive engagement became increasingly common and effective. They built on the strengths of door-knocking while also addressing some of its limitations, offering more flexible and inclusive ways to connect with a broader range of residents.

Client interviews highlighted that door-knocking played a **crucial role in raising LNT's visibility within the neighbourhoods**. It enabled the team to **identify and reach a broader range of residents** – many of whom had hidden needs and were not accessing existing services. As a result, **the support provided was more preventative** than it might otherwise have been, helping to address issues earlier and more effectively.

Attempts were made in 2019 and 2021 to use ACORN and MOSAIC household data to make engagement more systematic. However, these data sources did not prove effective in enhancing the process or generating meaningful insights in this context. Instead, a mapping system was used to systematically track household engagement – recording which households had been approached, successfully reached, or had become regularly engaged with the project.

There is evidence expanded upon in Chapter 3 that at least 39% of residents in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays were engaged and a record of that engagement created.

## 2.5. Person-centred support focusing on individuals' aspirations, building on their strengths and assets

The delivery of LNT is based on principles of person-centred practice. These include:

- Attending to an individual's circumstances, needs, and preferences
- Involving them in service planning
- Respecting and maximising the individual's choice and control
- Being strength focused
- Facilitating engagement in the service
- Providing meaningful support activity in manageable stages that promote experiences of success.

(Louw et al., 2017; McCormack & McCance, 2016; Waters & Buchanan, 2017).

At the heart of this person-centred practice is a Holistic Assessment methodology for case management, developed and refined by Community Renewal Trust over more than 15 years.

The methodology is built around a central question "**what would a much better life look like for you in 18 months?**" This question is considered so fundamental that it is now displayed prominently on the wall of the Bingham, Magdalene, and the Hays team's office. The approach uses a standardised form comprising 14 questions which prompt a holistic consideration of family relationships, social networks, health, housing, finances and long-term goals. Following the assessment the client and case manager work together in co-production to develop a set of personal goals and prioritised actions.

These are then ranked by the client based on their current situation and the importance of each goal to them.

Review periods are determined in partnership between the case manager and the client. During each review, the client is asked to assess how much progress has been made towards their goals by assigning a percentage value to each. The review also provides an opportunity for the client to add, remove or adjust their goals and priorities. This flexible approach acknowledges that clients' circumstances and aspirations may evolve over time, and therefore their goals – and the support they receive – must adapt accordingly.

One of the key outcomes of the LNT project is the development of a formal training programme for the Holistic Assessment methodology. This training has been recorded and made available on an online learning platform, allowing both staff and external partners to learn the approach and receive certification upon completion of the associated coursework.

Staff consistently reported the **Holistic Assessment method as an extremely effective framework for engaging residents** – a view that was echoed in client interviews. They recognised that the approach enabled a deeper understanding of residents, their needs, and their goals, fostering more meaningful and personalised support: **"they are really useful for its aims of getting like a holistic idea of what's going on for someone and for setting goals"**.

Experienced staff in the field expressed strong support for the Holistic Assessment method, noting its advantages over other tools they had used in previous programmes. They highlighted that LNT's model of delivery places greater emphasis on long-term, sustained transformational change, rather than solely addressing immediate crisis needs:

**"I think that the Lifting Neighbourhoods Together work is trying to work a level above to try and break down the generational unemployment so that the kids in the family see that there can be a better life."**



CLIENTS WERE OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE ABOUT THE PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORT PROVIDED BY LNT.



Several, for example, spoke about how the support they received prevented further deterioration of their mental health and even protected them from life-threatening outcomes:

**"if I hadn't have met [staff member], I would have committed suicide. I got an awful lot of support."**

**"I wouldn't be here ... I probably would have tried to overdose again."**

Where participants mentioned that they were also receiving of support from public services, they were asked to compare those experiences with the support provided by LNT. Two participants currently receiving employment support through the central government's Jobcentre Plus expressed clear preference for LNT's employment support offer. When asked why, one

male respondent remarked, **"it's more one-to-one... Jobcentre is more rushed"**. He went on to say how their case workers' personal knowledge of his circumstances and profile made it **"easier"** to get support. Another female respondent also preferred LNT over the Jobcentre because meetings are **"always successful"**, and **"they are very fast"**.

Clients often highlighted the role support played in achieving personal outcomes – or at least making progression towards them. Synthesising evidence from client interviews, three key factors were identified as underlying LNT's effectiveness in contributing to outcomes.

The first is the manner that support is delivered by LNT caseworkers. In interviews with frontline staff, respondents unanimously identified **empathy** as an essential competency required to deliver LNT. As the excerpts below demonstrate, this was echoed by beneficiaries, who frequently placed emphasis on the caring and empathetic approach staff took in their roles:

**"it doesn't matter what your situation is, no one looks down at you' ... 'they treat you like a human'. 'If [LNT] wasn't here, I wouldn't know where to get help"**

**"they make you feel welcome'... 'If I need help, I can always ask, they are here"**

**"They couldn't do any more'... 'The support they offer. They do a lot for people in the community. I've never experienced anything like that in my life. They accept you. They're great."**

Empathy promotes client engagement and facilitates the second key factor underlying LNT's effectiveness in support clients: its **relational approach**. By providing a safe, non-judgemental, and professionally bounded space, clients are encouraged to articulate both their goals and the challenges or barriers they face. This enables staff to develop a deep understanding of each client's circumstances, eliciting the information needed to create personalised support plans. These plans help clients address barriers and move toward achieving their goals.

For example, one interviewee explained how she first engaged with LNT seeking help to find work. She explained that, unlike other services, her LNT employment advisor regularly followed up with phone calls to check on the steps she took towards her goals and to find work. This approach was particularly effective after the advisor learned that the client struggled with mental health issues that affected her motivation, but responded well to gentle encouragement. The application of 'soft pressure' – motivated by a desire not to disappoint her advisor – helped instil confidence, hope, and belief in her ability to pursue her goals. She also described how her advisor significantly improved her CV and shared valuable knowledge, particularly about job opportunities compatible with her childcare responsibilities - information she would not have otherwise accessed. Without LNT's support, she said she would **"probably be at home sleeping"**. Instead, at the time of interview, she was preparing for a job interview and planning to apply for a college course.

“

THIRD, LNT WAS REPORTED AS EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING ISOLATION AND FOSTERING SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT WITH SUPPORT – PARTICULARLY AMONG INDIVIDUALS WITH HISTORIES OF VIOLENT ABUSE.

”

Several interviews noted that LNT staff not only assisted them in leaving abusive relationships but also provided crucial support in adjusting to life beyond those experiences. As one participant shared, **"[LNT activities] kept my mind occupied... It's done me the world of good... It's given me confidence"**.

For some women, LNT offered a safe space to connect with others who had similar lived experiences, including volunteers who had also faced domestic violence. This environment enabled them to share their stories, form new friendships, and build a sense of community beyond their former relationships. More broadly, the value of community, friendship, and belonging emerged as a vital aspect of LNT's impact for both men and women, offering participants a renewed sense of connection and ongoing support.

There is evidence expanded upon in Chapter 3, that at least 25% of residents in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays were engaged as clients and received an average 6.7 sessions of support.

## DONNA'S STORY

Donna was referred to the LNT Bingham team by her local GP Community Link Worker, having reported that she felt isolated with very few relationships and the ones she had were not healthy for her. She found it hard to communicate with any support services or had previous relationships with support break down.

Donna connected with an LNT team member who led a Holistic Conversation to get to know Donna better, the situation she was in and the challenges she faced.

At first Donna couldn't look anyone in the eye. After sessions establishing trust, it became clear that Donna was not just isolated but was surrounded by some very negative relationships and at risk of being taken advantage of. The LNT case worker worked alongside Donna to address the challenges she faced – giving her agency and voice as well as a place to talk. She was supported in advocating for herself in her dealings with external public support services like housing and social services.

A theme emerged in sessions that she needed support to build resilience, so Donna could establish boundaries and focus on priorities. This was ongoing, and took some time, but eventually Donna felt ready to take steps to address her isolation.

The LNT team was simultaneously supporting several local community groups and events to establish, so there was an opportunity to introduce Donna to some of those to address her loneliness. She attended a summer jewellery

workshop, enjoying it so much she went on to attend a silversmith course which she graduated from.

She started attending a new sewing group set up by local residents and held in the LNT neighbourhood hub. She has joined the new People's Shed in Bingham with LNT funds.

After spending several sessions establishing a trusted relationship, Donna reports she is starting to lead a transformed life. Not only does she no longer require an advocate, but she no longer requires the support services she previously accessed. She better understands how to access public service support with assertion. She now has friends and has established boundaries within her relationships.

Donna now says "I am so proud of myself". Demonstrating her new found confidence, she took the enormous step of presenting her personal story on stage at the LNT national conference and she is working on establishing her own peer support groups (completing a formal training course in peer support methodologies) so she can impact positively on those around her in her community to lead healthier, happier lives.



\* Some names and all case study photos have been changed to preserve anonymity where applicable.

## 2.6. Reorganising holistic, co-ordinated packages of support around the individual

The LNT project is rooted in a Systems Thinking approach, bringing stakeholders together to work from a shared set of principles and holistic methods. This approach focuses on understanding the whole person – or whole family – rather than leading with individual specialisms.

The baseline assessment identified significant strengths in the quality, knowledge, and expertise of many organisations and individuals working in the two neighbourhoods. However, strategic and operational structures served to reinforce siloed working within separate workstreams. There were limited examples of joined-up, holistic collaboration between services, as well as minimal information sharing and preventative approaches. Consequently, no formal pathways were in place to support clients. Moreover, existing support pathways were inconsistent and often relied on the personal experience and professional networks of individual staff members. This informality created challenges, most notably:

- Referrals were often not the most effective and efficient pathway for individuals. Instead, referral processes were shaped by factors such as personal connections ('who knows who'), confidence that a referral would be promptly picked up and acted upon, and the persistence of both workers and clients in following up on referrals.
- Informal pathways often broke down when staff and services working in an area changed, for example when funding ended.
- Without clear pathways, individual staff often felt they had limited control over how the overall system functioned. This reinforced siloed working practices and hindered the development and realisation of more integrated and holistic approaches to service delivery.

Starting from this baseline, the LNT project set out to promote and evidence an alternative way to support residents: one that reorganised support into holistic, co-ordinated packages centred around the individual. Four key areas where LNT has made notable progress toward this objective are as follows:

Firstly, the LNT Neighbourhood Teams successfully **generated strategic interest** from agencies and made considerable efforts to engage and build buy-in with local services and stakeholders. They established interest in the LNT model to explore and testbed new ways of working. Added to this, they leveraged community and resident-level evidence – gathered through proactively engaging the community – to build relationships with other service providers. By sharing this evidence, they began to foster partnership working. However, some LNT staff noted that these efforts were not always productive as anticipated, due to changes in organisational staffing, structure and capacity. They reported often finding themselves to be the driver in trying to bring relevant parties together and maintain momentum around strategic needs assessments.

Secondly, the Bingham, Magdalene and Hays team **integrated the LNT model into their delivery of other contracts** that they were delivering in the area. These included a youth contract, a community development grant, a city-wide employment contract, and a Scottish Government grant for nutrition and climate. This adaptation yielded significant benefits and offered learning on how the LNT model can be embedded into everyday working practice.

However, this integration also highlighted challenges – particularly the tension between the rigid performance monitoring requirements of traditional contracts and the flexibility that is central to LNT’s principles. For example, most employment service contracts include key performance indicators (KPIs) and specifications such as: a limited set of predefined outcomes with evidence requirements; expectations around client engagement patterns and timeframes; prescribed activities; and targets related to client groups and geographic boundaries. In contrast, LNT adopts a more inclusive, flexible, and client-led approach. This is not to suggest that the LNT model is incompatible with contract delivery, nor that KPIs and specified activities should be abandoned. It is reasonable for funders to set accountability measures, and LNT staff acknowledged that targets can help guide their work. However, there is a clear need for collaboration with commissioners to better align contractual frameworks with the principles and delivery style of the LNT model.

Thirdly, the LNT Neighbourhood Teams provided **a vital bridge between services and the community** – connecting clients to the support that they needed and were entitled. Evidence from client interviews revealed that many residents were distrustful of statutory services and had limited awareness of their entitlements. This was best underscored by the importance of the benefits advice and support provided. LNT workers helped clients identify the benefits they were eligible for, assisted with completing application forms, and facilitated communication with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), often resulting in increased household income. Flowing from this benefits advice, LNT staff also supported clients in accessing other financial assistance, such as fuel vouchers. Interviewees further highlighted LNT’s impact in helping them navigate complex service systems, for example by supporting access to mental health services through their GPs.

For services, LNT **built strong relationships with key community-based partners**, such as GP social prescribers, GP practices, mental health services, housing providers, and, advice and welfare organisations. These partnerships were mutually beneficial, as many of these agencies needed to reach the communities with whom the LNT Neighbourhood Teams had already established trust and rapport. As a result, some partners were able to offer drop-in services directly to LNT clients, enhancing accessibility and integration of support.

Finally, LNT **enabled the co-location of services** within the two neighbourhoods, bringing essential support directly into the community. This approach promoted knowledge sharing and joint working among services using spaces provided by Community Renewal and Building Futures East. For example, prior to LNT, Bingham was described as a 'desert' of public services, with minimal community activity and few services located in or near the area. This lack of local provision significantly impacted residents’ access to and uptake of support. In response, the LNT team proactively worked to host services within its Community Renewal offices, helping to bridge this gap and improve service accessibility.



## 2.7. Supporting the capacity of the communities to develop its own solutions to help itself

A core value of LNT is the belief that local people possess considerable skills, knowledge, and experience along with a willingness to pull together to support one another. However, this potential is often latent or constrained by a lack of agency and infrastructure within the neighbourhoods. In response, LNT adopted a community **capacity-building role**, enabling the communities to **co-produce hyper-local responses** so they can tackle their own problems. The LNT teams have worked closely with residents to identify their aspirations, foster empowerment and build community the capacity. They have supported residents to establish and take ownership of groups aimed at providing peer support: **"you're running the show [name of resident], what do you want to do?"** These have included groups aimed at alcohol support, kinship groups, health and leisure groups and supporting the community Pantries. The groups supported and enhanced the work of LNT as well as providing a range of benefits for participants, such as improved wellbeing, health and fitness, reduced isolation, and greater capacity for self-managing conditions:

**"We help each other. We've all got problems, mental and physical health. But those that are more down, we seem to get them up a bit."**

**"I find it invaluable to come down here both mentally and physically. If I didn't come down here I think I would be very lonely, isolated, cut off. I think mentally, if you're on your own a lot you have thoughts that could take over your mind, negative thoughts, whereas if you have group to come down to, your minds not wandering off and thinking about stuff like that."**

**"[The alcohol support group] gets us out, I've become more social, not hide it, talking about it. I wasn't getting any help from anybody, banging my head against a brick wall and then I come here."**

Finally, interviewees highlighted the contribution LNT has made to increase the community's capacity to support itself. Several respondents described taking on voluntary roles within the project – such as organising weekly knitting or arts and crafts groups, or by assisting at the local pantry. These activities not only strengthened the reach and impact of LNT but also generated a range of personal benefits for those involved, including companionship, reduced isolation, improved mental health and wellbeing, and support in managing addiction.



## PAULA'S STORY

Paula met a member of the LNT Bingham team while the team were doing outreach hosting a pet food pantry. The approach of the team was to try to create new relationships and seek a means to have a follow up appointment of any sort to get into what matters to them.

The team member conducted a Listening Conversation, briefly asking them about themselves, the area and their needs. This resulted in an opportunity for a follow up meeting with more detail on benefits which was something she wanted to talk about.

We found that DWP had decided she had received an overpayment from Carers Allowance and Universal Credit. We were able to collaborate with a team member from Citizens Advice who were collocating with the LNT team to fight this overpayment claim and the result was £2,500 of arrears being written off.

Realising that the team were well placed to support her in her efforts to live out of poverty, Paula agreed to a more detailed assessment of her work and benefits needs. After several more sessions explaining the benefits system and considering her wider life circumstances, a successful claim was made for Adult Disability Payment which was worth £5,600 a year.

Taking a holistic and whole-family approach the team member was also able to make an introduction to housing specialists and together Paula's son's housing issues were dealt with. Her partner has also become a client of the LNT team to improve their wellness and income.

It was clear that more was needed to support Paula's mental health – she had disengaged help previously because she found it overwhelming. A specialist within the team who could work on resilience and coping with mental health needs took on more of this in one-to-one and groups support settings.

While she had not entered work and remained on low-income, her finances were already significantly changed as was her approach to life.



\* Some names and all case study photos have been changed to preserve anonymity where applicable.

## 2.8. Summary

This chapter has demonstrated on how Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together has provided compelling evidence for a different, more effective way of supporting residents and communities. Key achievements include:

- **LNT's system influencing work has promoted alternative – more integrated and preventative – approaches to support neighbourhoods.** This has taken a bottom-up approach: establishing working relationships amongst frontline services and practitioners, and integrating a more joined-up person centred, holistic way to provide support to residents based on Action Learning.
- **Community Renewal Trust built on emerging evidence about how to best to support system change within their delivery of the LNT model.** A key development was the emergence of a set of values or system behaviours that captured the essence of the successful aspects of the LNT approach. These were: trust, trustworthiness, learning, building on strengths, being alongside the community, achieving prevention and inspiring transformation.
- **Proactively engaging residents** – primarily via door knocking, their Pantries and Point of Care testing – enabled LNT to become known in the neighbourhoods as well as identifying and reaching broader groups of residents, many of whom had 'hidden needs' and who were not accessing services.
- **Person-centred support facilitated a depth of knowledge and understanding about residents, their needs and their goals.** This enabled support that matched the realities of people's lives and focused



on transformative change – rather than surface-level crisis needs. The empathetic person-centred support promoted client engagement and the achievement of their personal outcomes, or at least progression towards desired outcomes.

- **The LNT project provided evidence on the advantages of holistic, co-ordinated packages of support around the individual.** This included: engaging and communicating to a broad range of stakeholders about the LNT model; integrating the LNT model in the delivery of commissioned services; bridging residents and services through LNT caseworkers; facilitating co-location of services to improve accessibility and collaboration.
- **Increasing the community's capacity to support itself** by creating volunteering opportunities, supporting the establishment of community groups and facilitating community action which raised aspirations and fostered hope that they can affect change.

# 3

## WHAT PROGRESS HAS LNT MADE TOWARDS LIFTING THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OUT OF POVERTY?

“

I JUST WANTED TO TALK. I GOT MORE THAN WHAT I THOUGHT...I GOT SOLUTIONS.

”



### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the progress that Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together has made towards lifting the neighbourhoods out of poverty. To assess this objective, it is important to outline the steps in the change process and identify the outcomes that are likely to be observed along the way. This provides a framework against which progress can be evaluated, helping to determine how and to what extent the neighbourhoods are being lifted out of poverty.

The main steps in the change process are:

- **Proactively engaging neighbourhood residents.** This can be assessed in terms of, for example, door knocking activity, the numbers of clients engaged and participation in specific activities – such as services provided by LNT, community events, health case management and Point of Care testing.
- **Support provided.** This can be assessed by the number of needs assessments completed and goals identified, the number of client engagements, the categories of support provided and client feedback on their experience of the support that they received.
- **Supporting clients to achieve or make progress towards their goals.** This can be assessed by, for example, progress against goals, the numbers of clients supported into work and training, evidence on supporting clients with income maximisation and other self-reported outcomes by clients.
- **Supporting the neighbourhoods to help themselves.** This can be considered by, for example, the number of community groups supported and volunteer opportunities provided.



- **Reducing the neighbourhood level experience of poverty.** This can be assessed by comparing neighbourhood level indicators of poverty to similar neighbourhoods.

The subsections in this chapter assess the evidence against each step in this framework. This has been structured around the four different evidence sources:

- Client monitoring data collected by the two Neighbourhood Teams.
- Additional evidence from the two Neighbourhood Teams.
- Interviews with clients who have benefited from LNT support.
- Neighbourhood level data.

The final subsection then provides a summative assessment of overall progress.

### 3.2. Monitoring data collected by the two Neighbourhood Teams

This section presents an analysis of the client monitoring data recorded by the two Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together Neighbourhood Teams. These data provide valuable insights about the situations clients were facing when they first engaged with the Neighbourhood Teams, what goals they identified, the support they received and the difference this has made to them. Client-level data offer arguably the best data to assess the progress and potential of LNT. They overcome some of the limitations of neighbourhood data which may not capture the impact of LNT given LNT's delivery focused on working intensively with a relatively small number of residents.

The two neighbourhoods used the same monitoring system, which records the following types of information:

- Client information, including their contact details, socio-demographic characteristics (such as their date of birth, gender, nationality and first language) and with a listen conversation and a holistic assessment had been completed.
- Engagement information, including when the engagement took place, the mode of the engagement and a thematic classification of the activity taking place, as well as case notes.
- Holistic assessment information, including goals set, their importance and progress made.

However, the results from the monitoring data should be interpreted with caution. In most cases, the data cover a relatively short period of post-pandemic deliver – from January 2022 to December 2024. Additionally, many client records are incomplete, reflecting common challenges in data collection for projects like LNT. The nature of the support provided, and the often informal or sensitive contexts in which it occurs, can make it difficult to consistently capture and record activities, progress, and outcomes. Efforts were made in the later stages of the evaluation to improve the completeness of data collection, particularly to inform policy discussions around service delivery. Nevertheless, gaps remained. Despite these limitations, the analysis provides a valuable illustration of the types of outcomes LNT can be expected to deliver and the potential impact of its approach.

The client data show the **achievement of LNT in engaging many neighbourhood residents as well as the extent of support that was provided**. Over the period January 2022 to December 2024, 2,065 clients were recorded, which is approximately 15 per cent of the population aged 16 years and over in the two neighbourhoods. This suggests approximately 25 per cent of the population aged 16 years and over could be engaged as clients if this level of client engagement was maintained over a full five years of LNT delivery.

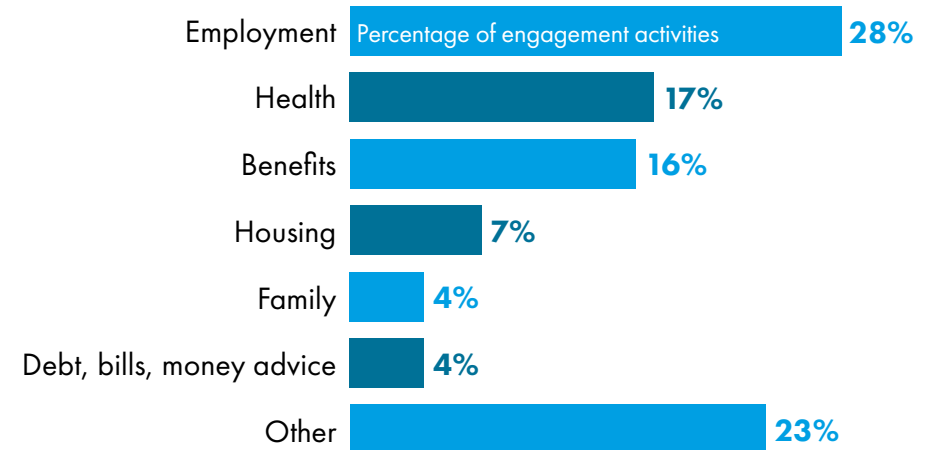
Of the total number of recorded clients, 1,447 were in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays, which is just under two fifths of its population aged 16 years and over. This means just under two thirds of the population aged 16 years and over could be engaged as clients if this level of client engagement was maintained over a full five years of LNT delivery in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays.

Further analysis of the client data shows

- 1,018 clients had a recorded attended engagement; 941 clients in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays and 77 clients in Walker.
- There were approximately 6,200 attended engagements, which implies on average 6.1 attended engagements per client with a recorded attended engagement; this average was higher in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays (6.4 engagement per client) compared to Walker (2.0 engagements per client).
- 446 clients (44 per cent) had more than one attended engagement; this proportion was similar in both Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays and Walker.

As part of monitoring activity Neighbourhood Team workers recorded the nature of the activities undertaken when they engage with clients. Figure 3.1 shows employment (28 per cent), health (17 per cent) and benefits (16 per cent) focused activity each accounted for just over three fifths of engagement activities. The next most common activity was housing (seven per cent of activities).

Figure 3.1  
Nature of engagement activities with clients



A key feature of the LNT model is its emphasis on listening to individuals and families through established processes to understand what they hope to achieve and what support they need to lift themselves out of poverty. As part of this approach, clients participate in a holistic assessment where they agree on and set personal goals. These goals are revisited in subsequent meetings to assess progress using a scoring metric. The evaluation has used this evidence to examine both the nature of the goals being set and the effectiveness of the LNT model in helping clients achieve – or make progress toward – their goals.

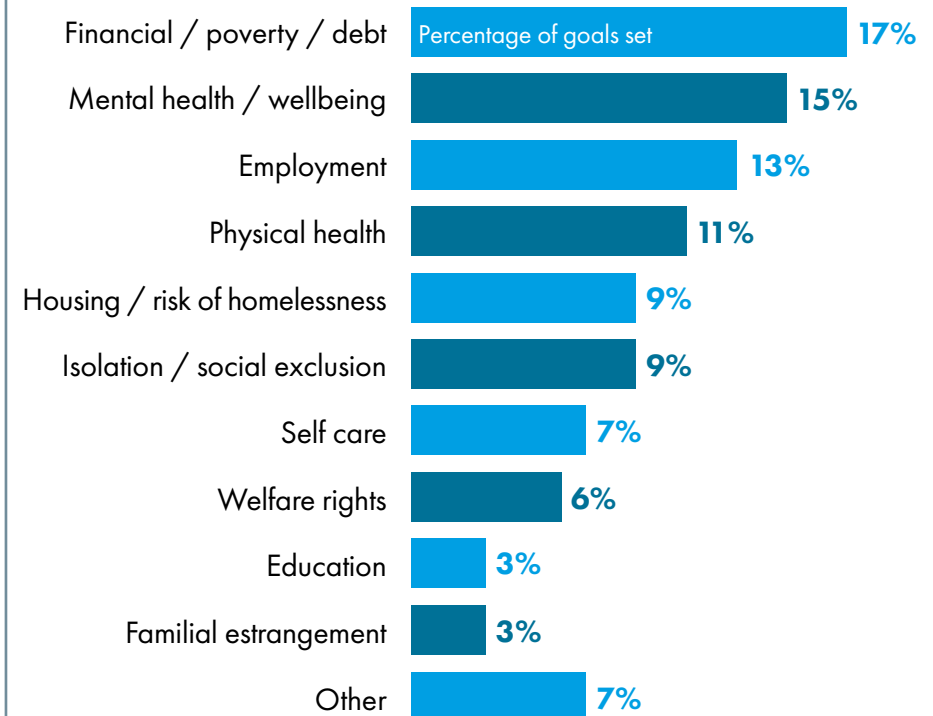
Figure 3.2 indicates the nature of goals that were set by clients in their holistic assessment. This is based on partial data that has been recorded on the monitoring systems by the Neighbourhood Teams. The recorded data show that financial / poverty / debt related goals were the most common category of goal, accounting for 17 per cent of all goals. The other most common goal categories, each accounting for over 10 per cent of goals, were mental health and wellbeing (15 per cent), employment (13 per cent) and physical health (11 per cent).

The **goals set by clients reflect the varied and holistic nature of what they hope to achieve and the support they require.** In general, most goals represent intermediary steps on a pathway toward more transformational changes in their circumstances related to poverty.

An important measure of LNT's impact is its success in supporting clients to achieve their goals they have set. Follow up, Holistic Assessment information is only available for 29 clients from Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays who had provided outcomes for a total of 66 goals. Of these 66 goals: 13 (20 per cent) were 80 per cent or more completed, with positive being made against a further 48 goals (73 per cent). This means 61 of 66 goals (92 per cent) were either achieved or the client had made positive progress against.

While this outcomes data provides only a partial picture, it clearly demonstrates that **LNT has been highly successful in supporting clients to achieve – or make meaningful progress toward – their priority goals.**

Figure 3.2  
Categories of goals set by clients



### 3.3. Additional evidence from the two Neighbourhood Teams

This subsection summarises evidence gathered more informally by the two Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together teams, highlighting additional client outcomes and community activities.

#### BINGHAM, MAGDALENE AND THE HAYS

Sample evidence collected by the Bingham, Magdalene, and Hays Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) team for this evaluation covers the period from April 2024 to December 2024. It reveals they knocked on 358 new doors in the Bingham and Magdalene areas and re-knocked on 52 homes in the Hays area. This led to 44 listening conversations, which helped strengthen the Neighbourhood Team's relationship with the community and deepened their understanding of local needs.

Since April 2024, the LNT Neighbourhood Team has supported 2,693 individual shopping visits at its Pantry – an average of approximately 76 shoppers per week. The Pantry offers financial relief by providing lower-priced food and is run entirely by volunteers in partnership with LNT. Currently, 13 volunteers contribute a combined total of 66 hours of service each week. Beyond food provision, the Pantry also serves as a hub for outreach, enabling the Neighbourhood Team to engage with residents in need and offer holistic, transformative support. In response to community interest, the Pantry has hosted a range of drop-in support events, often in collaboration with partner organisations. These have included sessions on digital skills, local job fairs, and energy advice events.

Additional community events and activities during the sample period in 2024 included a community cookery course, a community soup group, an over 50s event, and a peer support health group. Similar activities have taken place in each previous year. As detailed below, these activities played a key role in systematically engaging new households within the neighbourhood while also adopting a capacity-building approach to further support those already involved.



IN 2024, THE LNT NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM SUPPORTED 52 LOCAL UNEMPLOYED RESIDENTS INTO EMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING 32 INDIVIDUALS FOR WHOM THERE IS SPECIFIC EVIDENCE OF SUSTAINED WORK LASTING AT LEAST SIX MONTHS.



This represents a significant achievement for three key reasons:

- **Overcoming multiple barriers:** Many of these clients were initially far from the labour market, facing multiple barriers to employment. LNT's support not only helped them secure jobs but also addressed the underlying challenges they faced
- **Providing a pathway out of poverty:** For most individuals, especially those experiencing poverty, accessing and sustaining employment is a primary route to long-term financial stability and improved well-being
- **Representing meaningful local impact:** The number of unemployed residents supported into work in just one year equates to approximately 10% of the total number of unemployed individuals in the neighbourhood – a notable local impact.

Furthermore, 45 clients were supported into training opportunities designed to facilitate future transitions into employment. These included qualifications such as CSCS cards, SIA security badges, First Aid at Work, and REHIS Food Hygiene certificates.

In 2024, 40 clients received support focused on self-care and the self-management of mental health and chronic pain. This included both one-to-one support and group sessions, such as a dedicated group on pain management.

The Bingham, Magdalene, and Hays LNT Neighbourhood Team continued to second an in-house benefits advisor from another project they manage in the area. Over this 12-month period, the advisor supported local clients in securing £127,254.06 in increased benefits and £51,067.46 in one-off lump sum payments.



The Bingham, Magdalene, and Hays LNT Neighbourhood Team has also coordinated or supported a variety of community events and groups. These activities have helped engage local residents, raise awareness of the team's presence in the area, and foster new connections with external organisations. Events and groups supported include:

- Afternoon Tea for over 50's (45 attendees)
- Art Buds Halloween session (6 families)
- Christmas Community Dinner (38 attendees)
- 8-week cooking course (6 attendees)
- Peoples Shed, a twice-weekly wood working project with 6 regular attendees, two of which have become session leads and undertake training from the Edinburgh Tool Library and their first aid at work certs.
- A knitting group with 8 attendees on average a week
- Community Conversations/forums, held in each of the three communities – Bingham, Magdalene, and the Hays (totalling six events in 2024). These forums invited local residents to engage in open discussions about issues that matter to them and to explore community-led initiatives for local improvement.
  - One key outcome was the resolution of the 'No. 4 bus issue,' which led to the council investing in a new local link bus service connecting surrounding areas to local shops.
  - In Magdalene, conversations sparked the development of an emerging community-led project focused on enhancing local gardens, verges, and tree/grass maintenance. This initiative is being developed in partnership between a local resident and the Magdalene Community Centre Management Committee.

## WALKER

The following bullets summarise an example of the evidence collected by the Walker LNT Neighbourhood Team:

- 5,050 doors have been knocked leading to 196 residents being supported through 1-1 case work.
- The team have completed 645 Point-of-Care health testing which has identified 128 residents with higher than recommended levels on a range of health tests.
- The following outcomes have been supported:
  - 37 residents were supported into work
  - £590,281 increased benefits/other financial support (not including those supported into work)
  - 390 residents have received benefits advice with 166 receiving support to make an application
  - 72 residents were supported to improved complex mental health issues
  - 324 food parcels were provided
  - 21 residents now volunteering for LNT and have been
  - LNT has supported or established 16 community groups
  - The community groups that they support have has 4,897 attendances. In addition, they have had 619 attendees at supported community events.



### 3.4. Interviews with clients who have benefited from LNT support

This section presents findings from in-depth qualitative research with clients who have benefited from LNT support. The evaluation team conducted 40 in-depth interviews with LNT clients, evenly split between the two LNT neighbourhoods, across two fieldwork periods in 2023 and 2024. These interviews explored several key areas, including how and why clients became involved with LNT, the nature of the support they received, their views on that support, and the difference it has made in their lives.

#### HOW THEY BECAME INVOLVED WITH LNT

While financial difficulties were pervasive across the sample – as might be expected – few participants identified them as the primary reason for engaging with LNT. Instead, most respondents cited mental and physical health issues, often compounded by social isolation, as key factors that led them to seek support. One participant mentioned **"giving back to the community"** as their main motivation for getting involved. Only two participants referred to unemployment or employment support as a reason, and only one explicitly sought benefits advice. Although, this may reflect the persistent stigma and shame often associated with claiming benefits or actively seeking to maximise entitlements. Nevertheless, these findings highlight how LNT beneficiaries often receive a wide range of support that extends beyond their initial reasons for engagement. In some cases, this enabled individuals to benefit in ways they had not anticipated when they first connected with the service – **"I just wanted to talk. I got more than what I thought...I got solutions"** – highlighting the value that holistic approaches to support can provide.

#### CLIENTS INITIAL CHARACTERISTICS, SITUATIONS AND NEEDS

Most interviewees **presented with multiple, intersecting needs that often compounded one another**, with some rooted in traumatic experiences such as domestic violence. Several female participants specifically cited fleeing domestic violence as a central reason for seeking support from LNT. Histories of drug and alcohol misuse were also reported among the sample. Widespread difficulties in affording basic essentials – such as food, gas, and electricity – were evident across interviews. Physical and mental health concerns were prevalent, often interlinked. For many, mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation were both a cause and consequence of social isolation, creating a cycle of vulnerability that LNT support aimed to break.



### WHAT SUPPORT HAVE THEY RECEIVED FROM LNT?

Interviews reveal that beneficiaries had received support in one or more of the following ways:

- Benefits advice and maximising entitlements
- Food aid
- Managing gas and electricity
- Money management (debt advice)
- Accessing voluntary work
- General mental health support (e.g., listening to current issues and histories of abuse and trauma, confidence building, improving self-esteem)
- General physical health support (outdoor wellbeing sessions, exercise-related classes)
- Participation in community events (improving social contact, facilitating new friendships and a sense of community)
- Employment support (help with CV's and cover letters, interview skills, interview preparation)
- Support with drug and alcohol misuse
- Miscellaneous help (e.g., materials for gardening).

Individuals often **received multiple and varied forms of support throughout their engagement with LNT**. Wherever practicable, this was tailored to the needs and wants of each service user. As one participant noted **"they personalise your support, they have like a care plan for you."**

Both observations and interviews with beneficiaries highlighted how LNT staff consistently went above and beyond – not only to manage immediate crises but also, where possible, to improve clients' long-term quality of life. For example, in one case, staff helped a beneficiary acquire materials for her garden, which she described as an important contributor to her overall wellbeing.

Beneficiary interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about LNT. As is covered in sections 2.3 and 2.4, this reflected the following aspects:

- The caring and empathetic manner that staff provide support. This promoted client engagement and fostered trust as well as supported the following three factors.
- The relational approach that underpins LNT: staff take time to listen deeply, gaining a thorough understanding of each client's circumstances to tailor support that aligns with their goals.
- Supporting clients to access the services and financial support; LNT helps clients navigate and access the services and financial assistance they need and are entitled to, reducing barriers and improving outcomes.
- Increasing the community's capacity to support itself: By offering volunteering opportunities and supporting the establishment of community groups, LNT strengthens the community's ability to support itself and fosters long-term resilience.

### WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS THIS SUPPORT MADE?

LNT supported the interviewees to a range of positive outcomes, including:

- Improved confidence, self-esteem, lifestyle and well being
- Improved independence and management of health conditions and addiction
- Reduced social isolation, anxiety and depression
- Improved access and use of services
- Increased benefit income and financial management skills
- Access to affordable food
- Taking up volunteering opportunities.

This evidence suggests that LNT has proactively engaged previously underserved residents in a more effective and meaningful way. By providing and reorienting support to strengthen key personal and community assets, LNT has helped clients become better positioned to make sustained progress out of poverty. This approach stands in contrast to many traditional public services, which are often perceived as reactive and focused on addressing single issues through short-term 'quick fixes.'

These outcomes were consistently reported as beneficial and, in many cases, life-changing. They have helped lay a foundation for clients, building resilience and enabling them to take meaningful steps forward. This aligns with LNT's application of the Three Horizons Approach. Evidence from the interviews demonstrates that LNT has been effective in:

- Horizon 1: Conducting holistic assessments of clients' current situations and addressing immediate needs.
- Horizon 2: Supporting clients to influence and improve their circumstances, making them better prepared and more capable of pursuing transformational change over time.

However, while LNT has undoubtedly improved its clients' lives in multiple ways, the interviews emphasise the degree and timescale of support that will be required to fully, and sustainably, lift households out of poverty (Horizon 3). This is due not only to the often deep-rooted and complex needs faced by clients, but also to the broader economic, political, and social structures that continue to hinder progress. These structural challenges have been further intensified in the period of the evaluation by the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.



## GARRY'S STORY

Garry was referred by DWP to the LNT team who were working in his neighbourhood around the corner from his home. They were in their 40s and had been out of work for a long time – looking fruitlessly for opportunities as a mechanic. They had living at home with their parents as during the pandemic they needed to give up work and become an unpaid carer. Sadly, they had both died during the covid pandemic leaving Garry feeling “isolated” and “depressed”.

He presented to the LNT team simply as looking for any job for the short-term but in exploring their long term desire they identified that they wanted to work as a bike mechanic.

At the same time the team had been working with other local organisations and this had set up the opportunity to host a bike repair course in the (at the time) empty garage attached to the LNT neighbourhood hub in Bingham. The conversations and support continued with Garry, including looking at CVs and confidence building. Working on their anxiety around interviews a caseworker held practice sessions and mock interviews. To aid employability he was enrolled on a first aid course to enhance his CV and employability. A different member of the LNT team provided support around coping with anxiety and depression – working especially on bereavement support.

With the good fortune of being able to arrange a bike course for Garry and a cohort of other community members, Garry enjoyed and completed the course going on to do a six month paid job as a bike mechanic.



\* Some names and all case study photos have been changed to preserve anonymity where applicable.

### 3.5. Neighbourhood level change

The baseline report developed a multidimensional impact and outcomes measurement framework to assess the success of LNT in lifting the two neighbourhoods out of poverty. The framework's indicators were chosen to reflect key multi-dimensional measures of poverty that were widely recognised as well as regularly updated and available. However, delays in the release of key public datasets – most notably the Scottish and English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD/IMD) – have limited the framework's ability to track progress over time. These indices, which were central to the original outcomes framework, have not been updated since the LNT baseline assessment. Although, as the evaluation progressed, concerns emerged regarding the appropriateness of using Scottish and English Indices of deprivation as primary indicators of LNT's success. Specifically, the indices were found to oversimplify complex forms of deprivation and did not adequately reflect the types of support LNT clients required and received. Annex X.XX of this report provides a separate stand-alone resource to explain why IMD/SIMD may be less effective as measures of progress in this context than originally anticipated.

This final evaluation's assessment on progress in lifting the neighbourhood out of poverty after 2.5 years of delivery is limited to:

- Claimant unemployment rates.
- Housing assistance claimant rates.
- Levels of deliberate fires.

Taken together, the evidence presented below suggests that there has been **relative improvement in the LNT neighbourhoods** compared to similar areas without LNT intervention. While it is not possible to attribute all of this progress solely to the LNT approach, the findings – when considered alongside the broader evidence in this chapter – make it plausible to conclude that **LNT has been a contributing factor** to some of the observed improvements.

It is also important to note that, while there has been relative improvement in the LNT neighbourhoods compared to similar comparator areas, the absolute levels of disadvantage on key neighbourhood indicators remain significantly higher (i.e., worse) than those observed in their parent local authority and regional averages.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The latest claimant unemployment rate for Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays is 6.7 per cent (Figure 3.3). This is over three times that for the City of Edinburgh (1.8 per cent) and Scotland (2.0 per cent) as a whole. In Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays the unemployment rate has increased from 6.1 per cent in January 2020 to 6.7 per cent in January 2024. Pre-pandemic the neighbourhood's unemployment rate was already on an upwards (worsening) trajectory, increasing to around six per cent. During the main part of the Pandemic – April 2020 to May 2021 – the unemployment rate in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays increased to levels around 12 per cent. The unemployment rates have declined since, though remaining above 5.7 per cent.

The latest unemployment rate for Walker is 8.8 per cent, which is around double that for Newcastle (4.5 per cent) and the North East (4.1 per cent). Figure 3.4 shows the overall trend for Walker has been of a decline in the unemployment rate from 10.8 per cent in January 2020 to 8.8 per cent in January 2025. Pre-pandemic the unemployment rate was steady, between 10.4 and 11.0 per cent. This increased to levels above 15 per cent between May 2020 and May 2021, during the worst of the Pandemic. Since May 2021 the unemployment rate in Walker has declined although remaining above 7.9 per cent.

Although unemployment has remained persistently high in the LNT neighbourhoods, both saw improvement relative to their parent local authority over the period January 2020 to January 2025. However, it is not possible to attribute the relative improvement to LNT. The relative improvement is likely to have been for a range of reasons, including both neighbourhoods starting from higher rates.

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 compare the unemployment rates for the LNT neighbourhoods against bespoke comparators for each neighbourhood. The purpose of using comparator areas is to provide an indication of a counterfactual scenario – that is, what might have happened in the LNT neighbourhoods in the absence of the LNT intervention. This is important because changes – both positive and negative – are likely to have occurred regardless, due to a wide range of economic, political, demographic, social, and technological factors operating at local and broader levels. However, it is important to emphasise that these comparators are illustrative approximations of a possible counterfactual. As such, while they offer useful context, it is not possible to directly attribute observed differences between the LNT neighbourhoods and comparator areas solely to the LNT approach.



The comparators were established by first computing the average SIMD/IMD score and population size for each LNT neighbourhood. Comparator areas were then constructed by identifying a small cluster of Data Zones (in Scotland) or Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs in England) within the same local authority area. These clusters were selected based on their similarity in both deprivation levels and population size, allowing for a more meaningful comparison with the LNT neighbourhoods.

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate that the LNT neighbourhoods followed a broadly similar trend to their comparator areas before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, since June 2021, there is some evidence that the LNT neighbourhoods have experienced relatively improved claimant unemployment rates compared to their comparators, particularly when contrasted with the pre-pandemic period. This relative improvement is visually more pronounced in Walker, although it is important to note that Walker did not experience the same spike in claimant unemployment during the peak of the pandemic (April 2020 to May 2021) as its comparator area. This underscores the influence of other contextual factors that affect the comparison and reinforces that it is not possible to attribute the entirety of the observed differences to the LNT intervention alone.

Figure 3.3:  
**Unemployment rates in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays and its comparator neighbourhood, January 2020 to January 2025**

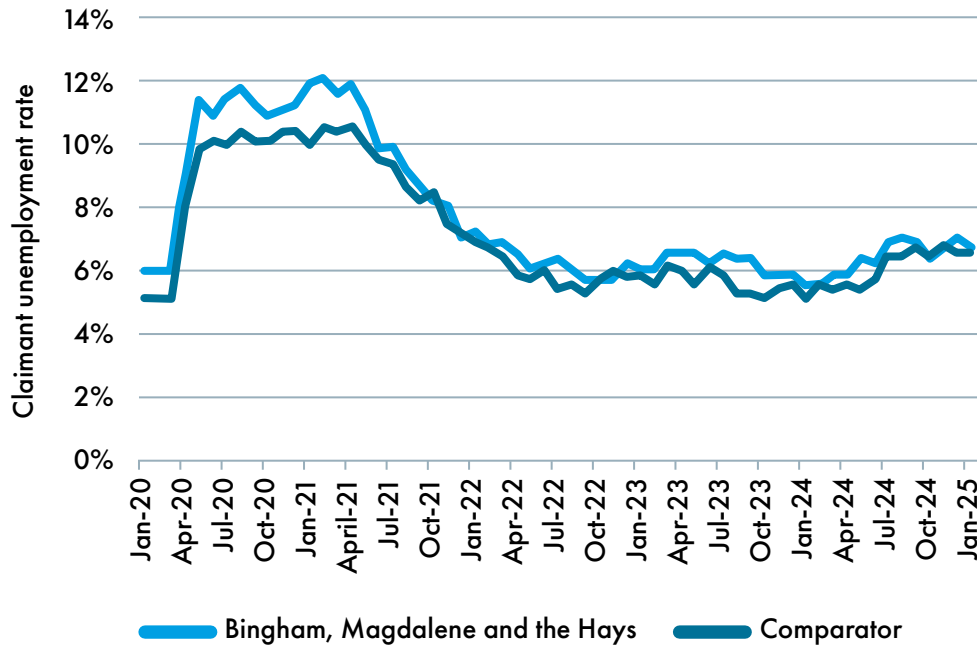
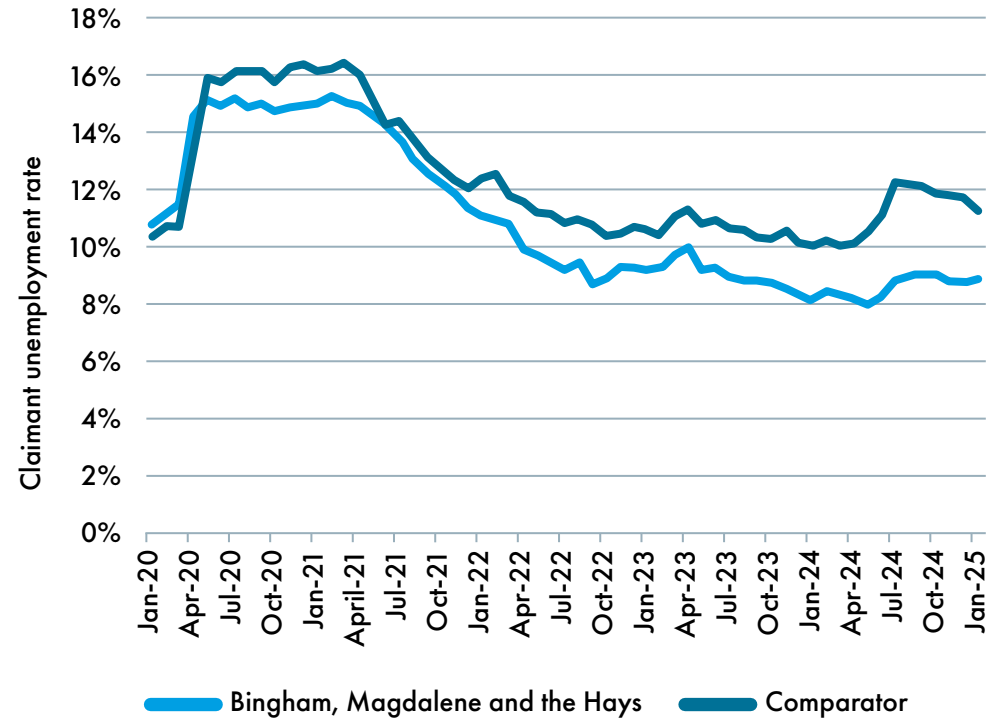


Figure 3.4:  
**Unemployment rates in Walker and its comparator neighbourhood, January 2020 to January 2025**



### HOUSING ASSISTANCE RATES

This subsection examines housing assistance claimant levels, which are the percentage of households claiming either the Universal Credit housing element or Housing Benefit. In a poorer neighbourhood, this rate would be expected to be higher. However, it is not a sufficient measure of poverty on its own. Nevertheless, housing assistance levels serve as a strong indicator of low income in a neighbourhood, as they are specifically designed to support those struggling with housing costs.

Housing assistance – whether through the Universal Credit housing element or Housing Benefit – helps low-income individuals and families pay their rent, whether in social or private housing. Therefore, higher claimant levels generally indicate a greater proportion of low-income households. This is particularly relevant in the following analysis, which compares changes in claimant rates over time in LNT neighbourhoods with those in matched comparator areas.

In Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays there is some evidence that housing assistance claimant levels have improved compared to their comparator area (Figure 3.5). The claimant rate in the LNT neighbourhood changed from 40.2 per cent in January 2020 to 43.8 per cent in November 2024. Whereas the claimant rate in their comparator areas increased from 42.8 per cent to 56.3 per cent over the same timeframe.

However, it is worth noting that while there is an indication of relative improvement compared to the comparator area, the housing assistance claimant levels remain significantly higher than for the City of Edinburgh (17.2 per cent in November 2024) and Scotland as a whole (21.6 per cent in November 2024). The evidence for the Walker LNT neighbourhood is also less conclusive (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.5:

### Housing assistance claimant rates in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays and its comparator neighbourhood, January 2020 to November 2024

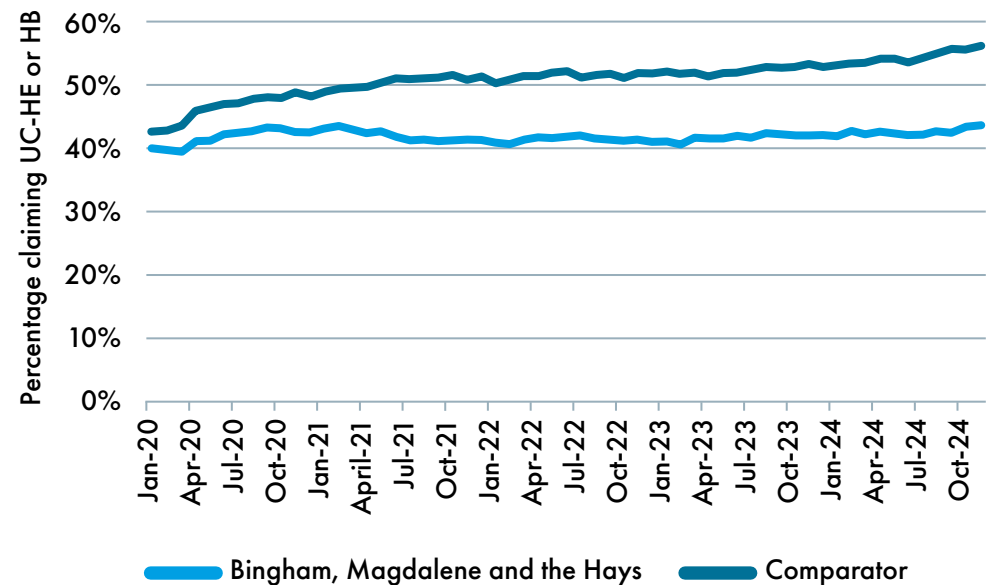
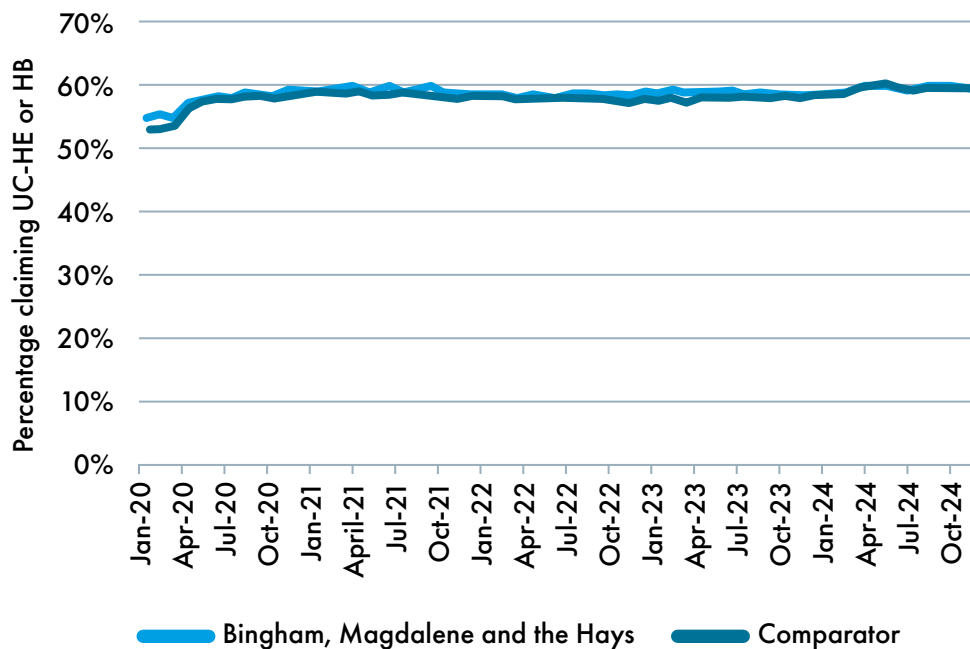


Figure 3.6:

### Housing assistance claimant rates in Walker and its comparator neighbourhood, January 2020 to November 2024



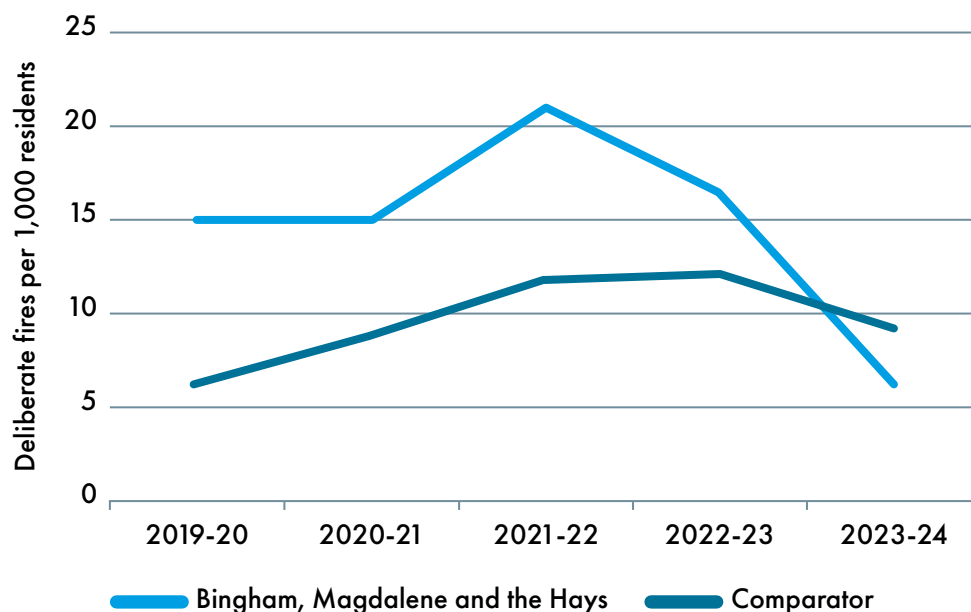
### DELIBERATE FIRES

This subsection examines evidence on recorded fires using data from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics. It compares the rate of deliberate fires in the Bingham, Magdalene, and The Hays LNT neighbourhood with that of its comparator area. While not a comprehensive measure, the rate of deliberate fires can offer valuable insights into levels of crime, antisocial behaviour, and perceptions of safety within the neighbourhood.

Figure 3.7 shows how the level of deliberate fires in the Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays LNT neighbourhood changed between 2019-20 and 2023-24 compared to its comparator. Overall, there has been a substantial reduction in the absolute levels within the LNT neighbourhood, as well as a notable improvement relative to its comparator area. In each of the years 2019-20 to 2021-22 the level of deliberate fires was at least 6 fires per 1,000 residents higher in the LNT neighbourhood. However, the difference reduced to 4 deliberate fires per 1,000 residents in 2022-23 and in 2023-24 the level of deliberate fires was lower (3 deliberate fires per 1,000 residents) in the LNT neighbourhood compared to its comparator.

Figure 3.7:

### Deliberate fires per 1,000 residents in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays and its comparator neighbourhood, 2019-20 to 2023-24



### 3.6. Summary

This chapter has examined the progress made by Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) in its efforts to lift the two neighbourhoods out of poverty. The assessment was guided by an evaluation framework that focused on the steps in the change process and the intermediate outcomes expected along the path to achieving LNT's ultimate objective. Evidence from four distinct sources was then analysed to determine whether LNT has made measurable progress toward reducing poverty in the targeted neighbourhoods.

Summarising the findings:

- There is strong evidence that the LNT Neighbourhood Teams have **proactively engaged neighbourhood residents**. Notably the team in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays engaged at least 1,447 residents, equivalent to 39 per cent of the neighbourhood's population over three years.
- LNT has provided **significant ongoing personalised support to its clients**. A quarter of residents received at least some sessions of support as a formal client with the multi-disciplinary Neighbourhood Team. This has been praised by clients who report very high level of satisfaction in the support that they have received from LNT.
- LNT has **effectively supported clients in achieving or making strong progress toward their personal goals**. Unlike narrowly focused initiatives, LNT addresses a broad range of needs. For example, in 2024 alone, the team in Bingham, Magdalene, and The Hays helped the equivalent of 10% of the neighbourhood's unemployed population into employment – demonstrating potential for long-term poverty reduction.
- LNT has made **significant progress in enhancing social infrastructure, coordination, and the community's ability to support itself**.
- While there are **early signs of better outcomes in LNT neighbourhoods compared to similarly deprived areas**, conclusive evidence of a measurable reduction in overall poverty is limited. This is partly due to the availability of external data and the shorter-than-expected project delivery period.

# 4

## SUMMARY: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT WHETHER AND HOW LNT CAN BE REPLICATED?

“

...SUPPORT MATCHED THE REALITY OF PEOPLE'S LIVES AND SUPPORTED A FOCUS ON TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE RATHER THAN SURFACE LEVEL CRISIS NEEDS.

”



## 4.1. Introduction

Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together is a radical project which is testing an alternative solution to addressing poverty at a neighbourhood level. Grounded in systems thinking principles, the project is built around two key components:

- Engaging and listening to individuals and families in the target neighbourhood – using established community development processes and case management processes – to find out if it is possible to help them lift themselves out of poverty, and what support would they need.
- Reorganising existing resources and public services around what they need, working holistically; recognising that support currently available is disjointed, specialist and siloed.

This report has provided an assessment of the Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together project. It has focused on whether LNT has evidenced a different and more effective approach to supporting residents in targeted neighbourhoods. It also assessed the project's progress in achieving its overarching goal of lifting these neighbourhoods out of poverty.

This final chapter summarises this evidence by considering three questions:

- What is the case for seeking to replicate the LNT model.
- What are key aspects of the LNT model that should be replicated.
- What learning emerged about how to replicate the LNT model based on the experience of the LNT Neighbourhood Teams.

## 4.2. What is the case for replicating the LNT model

This report presents **compelling evidence in support of an LNT-style model of neighbourhood support** – demonstrating its effectiveness both in enhancing the provision and experience of support services, and in achieving meaningful outcomes for clients.

Chapter 3 highlighted the success of the LNT Neighbourhood Teams in engaging a relatively high proportion of residents within their respective neighbourhoods. Many of these individuals had previously not been receiving the support they needed, underscoring the project's role in promoting a more preventative and inclusive model of support. This approach addressed a critical gap in both neighbourhoods, where no other organisations were focused on building capacity and relationships at the local level – particularly among underserved residents. In total, the LNT Neighbourhood Teams proactively engaged 2,065 residents, many of whom had not been accessing the help they required. Of these, 1,447 residents were from Bingham, Magdalene, and The Hays – representing 39 per cent of that neighbourhood's population over the three-year period.

The Holistic assessment conversation method facilitated a depth of knowledge and understanding about residents – their circumstances, needs and goals.

By adopting a holistic, person-centred approach, the Neighbourhood Teams were able to connect clients with the support that they truly need, reorientating support around the individual. This method proved highly effective in helping clients achieve the personal goals they had set for themselves.

For example, the Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays Neighbourhood Team recorded client assessed goal outcomes for a sample 29 clients. Collectively these clients had provided outcomes against 66 goals. Of these 66 goals: 13 (20 per cent) were 80 per cent or more completed, with positive being made against a further 48 goals (73 per cent). This means 61 of 66 goals (92 per cent) were either achieved or the client had achieved positive progress. Whilst this outcome data represents only a partial picture, it clearly demonstrates the LNT approach has been highly effective in supporting clients to achieve or make progress towards their priority goals.



A further example of the effectiveness of the LNT approach is the employment-related outcomes achieved by the Neighbourhood Team in Bingham, Magdalene, and The Hays. In the most recent year of the evaluation, the team supported 52 clients into employment, including 32 into sustained employment lasting six months or more. This is a significant achievement for two key reasons:

- **Dealing with client complexity:** Most of their clients faced multiple barriers to employment and required coordinated, holistic support across agencies. Traditional employment programmes often struggle to support such clients effectively, leading to practices such as creaming (prioritising easier-to-help clients) and parking (neglecting those with more complex needs).
- **Providing a pathway out of poverty:** For many individuals, especially those in long-term unemployment, accessing and sustaining employment is a primary route out of poverty. These outcomes therefore represent not only individual success stories but also progress toward LNT's broader goal of reducing poverty at the neighbourhood level.

Client interviews reinforced the success of the LNT approach in helping individuals achieve their personal outcomes. They also highlighted the positive experiences and high levels of satisfaction clients had with the support they received. In particular, clients valued the holistic and person-centred nature of the support – often contrasting it favourably with previous experiences of more fragmented or impersonal services.

The evidence was less conclusive regarding whether overall neighbourhood-level poverty had reduced. For example, unemployment rates remained persistently high in the LNT neighbourhoods throughout the evaluation period. However, there is some indication that conditions improved relative to similarly deprived comparator areas. This outcome is not unexpected, given the backdrop of multiple unforeseen and unprecedented events over the four years of delivery, which intensified the need for support and increased the risk of poverty in these communities. Additionally, the intensive delivery model of LNT – focused on deep, personalised support – means that only a relatively small number of residents can be supported at any one time. As a result, the likelihood of observing measurable, neighbourhood-wide change within a short timeframe is limited. Therefore, it is likely too soon to expect clear signs of impact at the neighbourhood level, despite promising individual-level outcomes.

As well as improving client outcomes, the evaluation highlighted the strength for LNT's neighbourhood systems-focused approach, demonstrating its potential to drive broader, structural change within communities. The LNT approach meant:

- **There was a clearly defined geographical area of focus**, which allowed for targeted interventions addressing both local opportunities and structural disadvantages. For example, limitations in transport infrastructure were identified as barriers to accessing employment and support services – highlighting how place-based challenges can directly impact residents' ability to improve their circumstances.
- **Solutions were tailored to address the unique challenges, disparities, and inequalities faced by the neighbourhoods.** These interventions were grounded in a deep understanding of each area's specific social and economic context, and were shaped by the resources, opportunities, and services available locally.

- **A holistic view of support was taken which integrated services across multiple domains.** While the overarching aim was to lift residents out of poverty, the approach recognised that poverty is often the result of multiple, interrelated factors. As such, both preventative (to stop residents from falling into poverty) and transformative (to help residents escape poverty) interventions needed to address several aspects of a person's life simultaneously. This marked a clear departure from traditional, siloed, service-led models, instead placing the individual at the centre of a coordinated and comprehensive support system.
- **Local residents and community groups became active participants in identifying challenges and co-creating solutions within their neighbourhoods.** This participatory approach fostered a strong sense of ownership, collaboration, and community cohesion. As a result, it contributed to greater resilience and is likely to support more sustainable, community-led support systems and outcomes over the long term.

The value of this was highlighted by LNT neighbourhood workers and local stakeholders.

### 4.3. What aspects of the LNT model should be replicated

Having made the case for replicating an LNT model of neighbourhood support, this subsection identifies key learnings from LNT that should inform future implementations and replication. Drawing on the analysis in Chapter 2, five core components of the LNT approach were identified as central to its success. These elements should be considered essential in any effort to replicate the model in other neighbourhoods to achieve similarly positive outcomes.

First, **systems influence work**. LNT provided foundational work and context to coordinate a bottom-up, systems-thinking approach to service delivery. Crucially, LNT also played a neighbourhood representation role, building the capacity to engage with strategic leaders and service managers. This helped to establish their interest in and commitment to the LNT model, reinforcing its influence at both operational and strategic levels.

Second, **proactive ongoing engagement with the neighbourhood**. The LNT teams prioritised proactive and continuous engagement with residents, becoming a visible and trusted presence within the communities. This approach enabled them to identify and reach a broader and more diverse group of residents, including many with 'hidden needs' who were not previously accessing services. By building relationships and trust over time, the teams were able to offer support that was both timely and relevant, helping to close gaps in service provision.

Third, **person-centred support** facilitated a depth of knowledge and understanding about residents, their needs and their goals. This meant support was tailored to the realities of people's lives, focusing on transformative change rather than simply responding to immediate crises. The empathetic and individualised nature of this support fostered strong client engagement

and helped residents achieve – or make meaningful progress toward – their personal goals.

Fourth, **re-orientating services** so that they provide holistic, co-ordinated packages of support around the individual. This included LNT:

- Engaging a broad range of stakeholders to build understanding and buy-in for the LNT model.
- Embedding the LNT approach within the delivery of a range of commissioned services.
- Demonstrating the bridging role of case workers in connecting residents with appropriate services.
- Creating opportunities for co-location of services which in-turn enhance accessibility and collaboration.

This systems-level coordination helped break down silos and ensured that support was more responsive, integrated, and aligned with residents' real-life needs.

Fifth, **providing support and resources to increase the community's capacity** to help itself. LNT invested in strengthening the community's ability to support itself, recognising that sustainable change requires empowered residents and active local networks. This included: creating volunteering opportunities to foster local involvement; supporting the establishment and growth of community groups; and facilitating community-led action that raised aspirations and nurtured a belief among residents that they could influence change in their neighbourhood. This activity contributed to a stronger sense of agency, resilience, and long-term sustainability within the community.

#### 4.4. What learning emerged about how best to implement a new approach to supporting neighbourhoods

This section outlines key learnings on how best to implement the LNT approach, drawing from the experience of the two participating neighbourhoods. The approximate annual cost of frontline delivery in each neighbourhood – excluding seconded posts – was £110,000 (in 2024 terms). This figure provides a useful benchmark for budgeting and planning similar initiatives elsewhere.

The LNT experience aligns with the broader evidence base on the realities of systems change processes. These processes are often messy, ambiguous, complex, and challenging, and can sometimes be uncomfortable for those involved. Uncertainty, conflict, and a lack of shared understanding about the nature and necessity of change are common. Moreover, systems change efforts are vulnerable to unanticipated or sudden developments, requiring ongoing adaptation and flexibility.

Such processes may also challenge existing norms and practices, which underscores the importance of securing buy-in from all stakeholders. Without this, resistance can emerge, potentially undermining progress.

In the case of LNT two interrelated factors affected the implementation of the approach.

Firstly, a series of unexpected and unprecedented events over the five-year period severely disrupted elements of the LNT model and exacerbated poverty in the target neighbourhoods. Notably, the first Covid-19 lockdown occurred in the same month that LNT delivery was scheduled to begin. With agreement from all stakeholders, activities were rapidly redirected towards

community-level Covid mitigation, and nearly all public sector offers of contributions to LNT were withdrawn. The subsequent context – characterised by very low economic growth, high interest rates, high inflation, and contraction in the capacity of the public sector – further constrained efforts to deliver transformational change: lifting the neighbourhoods out of poverty. At the same time the Covid-19 pandemic and then the cost-of-living crisis disproportionately impacted deprived communities. Leaving more households in, or at risk of, poverty as well as deepening experiences of poverty. As a result, the neighbourhoods were in greater need of support to minimise the exacerbation of poverty. While there is strong evidence – highlighted throughout this report – that LNT complemented and enhanced the capacity of existing services, particularly those under increasing strain. It is also clear that these external events disrupted the planned delivery model and constrained the scale and visibility of outcomes within the evaluation’s timeframe.

Secondly, LNT faced significant challenge in securing the anticipated involvement from public sector services. The original model was premised on assumptions about the commitment and involvement from public sector stakeholders. This ranged from senior leaders at the strategic level to frontline workers. Crucially it would include time-doners from public sector agencies who would be seconded into the neighbourhoods, working to LNT principles. However, this did not materialise despite significant efforts and progress being made by the LNT teams, particularly work aimed at gaining the buy-in of strategic stakeholders.

Several key lessons emerged from this experience that are relevant to those seeking to implement new approaches to work, particularly within the public sector:

- When budgets become squeezed, collaboration generally becomes harder because agencies focus on their own budgets and making sure it goes on where they see the most immediate need.
- There can be resistance and cynicism about new ways of working which affect the engagement of stakeholders and the malleability of service delivery.
- A linked problem is the need for upfront investment in resources in combination with a reality that it takes time to observe results from new ways of working that focus on prevention and transformation.
- The public sector at any one time will be facing multiple often contradictory priorities. While a move to preventative, systems thinking approaches may be a priority, there are alternative priorities that are often judged more pressing (such as reducing unemployment number) which can run contradictory.
- Finally, there is learning that strategic leaders alone are rarely the most effective level at which to secure buy-in from time-donors or commitment to working according to LNT principles. In fact, it was suggested that tensions may have arisen when LNT made assumptions about commitments that had not been discussed or agreed upon at the appropriate operational levels within agencies. Systems change therefore needs to be seen as consistent action at, and across, different levels: strategic planning, governance and leadership, service delivery as well as community involvement and outcomes.

In response to this context, the two neighbourhoods have had success in implementing and evidencing the LNT model by taking a bottom-up approach to affecting the system. This contrasted to the original plan, which aimed to work top-down, gaining the buy-in of strategic leaders and cascading the approach downwards. Instead, the bottom-up approach involved integrating the LNT principles into their own practices and building networks of frontline practitioners who began collaborating in a more integrated and cohesive way.

As part of this the following aspects have emerged:

First, the implementation of systems-based approaches requires a **focus on values** and not just methodology. Community Renewal Trust reflected that they initially concentrated on applying a methodology – a set of tools designed to support people in a more integrated and holistic way. However, through the delivery of the LNT project it became clear that prioritising values before strategy and methodology is essential. Based on their experience, Community Renewal Trust identified two sets of values. The first set comprises the core values of the LNT approach: lead with trust; recognise that trustworthiness is the foundation of strong relationships; and adopt a continuous learning mindset that embraces failure as part of growth. Alongside these they have outlined four ‘pedagogical values’ when supporting people:

- Building on strengths
- Being alongside people as opposed to sticking with them
- Being involved in resilience and prevention
- Inspiring transformation.

Each pedagogical value is accompanied by detailed explanations and guidance tailored for both managers and practitioners. These values offer valuable insights that other organisations can adopt and integrate into their own service delivery. To support this, Community Renewal Trust has developed internal learning courses for each value, designed specifically for their staff and volunteers.

Second, network development was driven by the **formation and growth of relationships centred around a shared interest in working in a more integrated way**. Rather than establishing a single, overarching partnership, both LNT neighbourhoods organically developed multiple networks – particularly among frontline practitioners rather than managers. This practitioner-led approach fostered collaboration and innovation at the operational level, where integrated working could be most effectively realised.

Third, **Action Learning and visioning sessions (including three horizons)** with frontline staff proved to be highly effective in navigating operational challenges and identifying the best ways to support individuals. Action Learning encouraged reflective practice across professional disciplines, which not only supported service integration but also fostered the development of innovative approaches to trial with clients. This aligns closely with the LNT value of continuous learning, which includes embracing failure as part of the process.

Fourth, **using their existing support services as mechanisms to engage the community**. For example, the Neighbourhood Team in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays used their welfare advice service as means to engage new residents who are in need of support. This turned what was previously a transactional waiting-list based advice service into a community engagement tool. While continuing to help clients access benefits, the service

now also connects individuals to community events, facilitates conversations to identify support needs, and helps guide them into appropriate services.

Fifth, **galvanising community action, raising expectations and a sense than it can help itself**. For example, the Neighbourhood Team in Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays helped coordinate the community in a bus protest campaign. Although the campaign did not achieve immediate success, it played a crucial role in mobilising community involvement and drawing attention to local issues. It brought the neighbourhood's concerns directly to local councillors and bus service providers, ultimately leading the council to fund a free bus service to replace the reduced one. This experience has also raised community expectations regarding neighbourhood conditions and empowered residents to pursue further improvements.

Finally, and linked to this last point, has been the value of **involving those with lived experience in the delivery of services**. While this was not an original aim of the LNT approach, it became increasingly evident as the project progressed. Many of the staff who most closely aligned with LNT principles and contributed to positive client outcomes were found to have some form of lived experience themselves. A working hypothesis is that such individuals may have a deeper appreciation of the complex, interrelated challenges clients face. Their personal insights also enabled them to offer more informed and empathetic perspectives on effective support.

## AMANDA'S STORY

To reach those most in need, especially residents in local tower blocks, LNT in Walker set up an outdoor community stall with hot drinks and creative activities, supported by Newcastle City Council. This is where Amanda engaged the team first as they set out to systematically meet new people across the neighbourhood.

Amanda had grown up in a household affected by drug and alcohol misuse. Ten years ago, she became dependent on crack, heroin, and alcohol. Amanda describes how she made the heartbreaking decision to place her children for adoption and eventually she became homeless.

Determined to change her life, Amanda relocated to Walker and began a methadone programme while sleeping on a friend's sofa, later moving through a hostel to a flat in the tower blocks. Despite what she describes as constant exposure to drugs and violence, Amanda moved forward in recovery. However, she talks about how the environment around her in the neighbourhood severely impacted her mental health, leaving her scared to leave her home.

She needed help to moved accommodation and Amanda continued to face daily discrimination: "I still look like a smack head," she says, describing how people judge her appearance rather than her progress, worsening her sense of vulnerability.

“

I LOVE IT HERE, I AM NOT JUDGED AND I AM TREATED LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN BEING NOT AN ADDICT.

”

Amanda began attending LNT led activities at Treetops, receiving vital support from the LNT team around benefits, mental health, and wellbeing. Focussing on resilience and fostering positivity and hope quickly made her a valued part of the community. She was supported to become a volunteer, providing refreshments and uplifting those around her. She volunteers weekly and has taken an ever growing role.

Amanda's progress was nearly derailed when serious health issues emerged which required more support from the team and those around her. She feels she was repeatedly dismissed by healthcare services and reports visiting A&E thirteen times in two weeks before finally receiving appropriate care but only after advocacy from the LNT team in Treetops.

With ongoing support, Amanda is now a recovery peer mentor and Community Connector, she supports others facing addiction and homelessness. She has also shared her recovery journey with professionals and completed a health and social care course. Amanda now dreams of becoming a Health Care Assistant in A&E, aiming to give others the compassionate care she was once denied.



\* Some names and all case study photos have been changed to preserve anonymity where applicable.

**ANNEX ONE**  
**REFLECTIONS ON THE**  
**USE OF SCOTTISH**  
**INDEX OF MULTIPLE**  
**DEPRIVATION IN THE**  
**EVALUATION**



The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a widely used measure of small area-based – neighbourhood – deprivation in Scotland. Equivalents exist in England and Wales as well as other nations. The measure combines seven different aspects of deprivation – known as domains – into a single composite deprivation index. These seven domains of deprivation are: income, employment, education, housing, health, crime and geographical access. Underpinning the seven domains, the latest 2020 release has 32 individual indicators.

The SIMD works by measuring concentrations of deprivation at data zone level. Data zones are small, geographically defined areas of Scotland used to produce local statistics. They typically have a population of 500-1,000 residents and provide a standard, stable ‘neighbourhood-level’ geography for local statistics. The use of data zones provides a fine grained picture of local conditions in Scotland’s neighbourhoods that might be overlooked in analysis based on larger areas, such as council wards or local authorities. SIMD is used by the Scottish Government, and other stakeholders, to identify areas where concentrations of multiple deprivation are highest so they can target policies and resources at the places in the greatest need.

While Community Renewal Trust’s Lifting Neighbourhoods Together (LNT) programme is innovative in its delivery model, it shares commonality with most place-based initiatives in aiming to tackle levels of neighbourhood deprivation. Consequently, SIMD was identified by Community Renewal Trust and its evaluators as a key metric for assessing the programme’s success. With the success of LNT being judged by the Bingham, Magdalene and the Hays neighbourhood making a significant improvement on the SIMD. However, during the evaluation process, concerns emerged regarding the appropriateness of using SIMD as a central measure of success. These concerns raised important questions about its suitability for capturing the full impact of the LNT approach. These concerns relate to

- SIMD being an area-based measure of deprivation.
- SIMD domains not aligning with the lived experience of deprivation for LNT clients.
- SIMD indicators are mostly not reflective of the support that LNT clients received.
- Many SIMD indicators are unlikely to be sensitive or malleable within the timeframe of the LNT programme.
- The timing and release schedule of SIMD data do not align with the LNT programme.
- SIMD being a relative measure of area deprivation.

The following paragraphs outline these concerns in turn.

There are three factors that relate to **SIMD being an area-based measure of deprivation** for Scottish data zones which mean the effects of LNT are averaged out:

- LNT reach within the neighbourhoods: as with many place-based initiatives, LNT has, within a few years of delivery, only been able to support a fraction of households in the overall neighbourhood. As a result, SIMD data – aggregated at the area level – dilutes the programme’s impact, with the successes among supported households obscured by the larger number of residents who did not receive support.
- The population density of the LNT neighbourhood’s data zones: the data zones that make up the LNT neighbourhood are densely populated urban areas. This means that deprivation is likely to be highly concentrated, requiring the programme to reach a significantly larger number of households to shift the average SIMD score meaningfully.
- A boundary mismatch: There is a misalignment between the core area where LNT has focused its efforts and the boundaries of the SIMD data zones. This mismatch further contributes to the averaging effect, as the SIMD zones include a substantial number of households outside the programme’s target area.

Taken together, these factors suggest that individual-level data is far more likely to reveal the true progress and impact of the LNT programme than area-based measures like SIMD.

The second concern relates to the **SIMD domains not aligning with the lived experience of deprivation for LNT clients**. SIMD is a composite measure of neighbourhood deprivation that combines 32 indicators grouped within seven domains of deprivation. Each of these domains is unequally weighted to reflect their perceived relative importance. While this methodology aims to provide a balanced view of deprivation at the area level, it does not fully capture the realities faced by LNT clients, as evidenced by the types of support they received (see Figure 3.1). For instance, SIMD places greater weight on domains such as ‘education, skills and training’ and ‘geographic access to services’ – aspects that were not frequently cited by LNT clients. In contrast, issues related to ‘housing’ and ‘family’ were common themes in client support needs, yet these domains carry less weight in the SIMD calculation. The implication of this is two-fold. First some of the positive client outcomes supported by LNT will not be captured, or will be underplayed, within SIMD. Second, SIMD may overemphasise forms of deprivation that were not central to the support needs identified by LNT clients, further weakening its ability to reflect the programme’s true impact. As a result, SIMD may not be a fully appropriate or sufficient measure for evaluating the success of LNT.



Furthermore, the **specific indicators within each of SIMD's seven domains often do not reflect the types of support LNT clients received.** This weakens the plausibility that LNT could meaningfully influence the underlying data used in SIMD, making any impact more indirect or tangential. A clear example is the SIMD housing domain, which is based on indicators such as levels of overcrowding and access to central heating. In contrast, LNT's housing-related support focused on helping clients access appropriate and affordable housing, maintain tenancies, receive homelessness support, and secure repairs and maintenance – areas not captured by SIMD's housing indicators. Similarly, the SIMD health domain includes measures such as the standardised mortality ratio, critical illness factor, emergency hospital stays, and low birth weight. However, LNT's health-related support centred on helping clients diagnose, manage, and access services for both physical and mental health conditions – again, areas not directly reflected in SIMD. The employment domain is one area where there is closer alignment. SIMD measures the percentage of the working-age population classified as employment deprived, including those unemployed or receiving Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, or Severe Disablement Allowance. However, even here, SIMD does not fully capture LNT's emphasis on supporting clients into sustained, meaningful employment or 'good work.' In fact, there is a risk that LNT's efforts could unintentionally worsen SIMD scores if individuals previously disconnected from the labour market begin receiving benefits, thereby increasing the count of employment-deprived residents.

In addition to not reflecting the types of support LNT clients received, **many SIMD indicators are unlikely to be sensitive or malleable within the timeframe of the LNT programme.** Examples include the standardised mortality ratio, average travel times to services, levels of overcrowding, and the proportion of school leavers progressing to university. These indicators

tend to shift slowly over time and are heavily influenced by broader structural factors beyond the control of LNT. As a result, it is unlikely that any measurable impact of LNT would be observable in SIMD data during the evaluation period.

The next concern relates to the **timing and release schedule of SIMD data.** This issue became particularly evident during the LNT evaluation, when an anticipated update to SIMD was not released as hoped toward the end of the evaluation period. SIMD does not follow a fixed release schedule, with previous updates occurring at intervals ranging from two to six years. This unpredictability makes it difficult to rely on SIMD as a key outcome measure within the evaluation framework of a place-based initiative. Even if a new SIMD release had occurred during the evaluation, it is unlikely that the data would have covered a sufficient timeframe to capture the effects of LNT. For example, SIMD 2020 is primarily based on data from 2017 – or earlier for some indicators. If a new SIMD were released in 2025, it would likely reflect data up to 2022, which predates the period when LNT's delivery had fully ramped up. This raises a further question about whether SIMD 2020, based on 2017 data, is even appropriate as a baseline for assessing change and evaluating the impact of LNT. The significant lag between data collection and publication limits SIMD's usefulness for timely and accurate impact assessment. The final concern about the appropriateness of SIMD is due to it being a relative measure of area deprivation. SIMD ranks data zones across Scotland, including those within the LNT neighbourhood, based on their level of deprivation compared to others. This means it does not provide an absolute measure of deprivation that can be tracked over time to assess change within a specific area. Instead, it only allows for statements about whether a neighbourhood's relative position – compared to other data zones – has improved or worsened. As a result, even if the level of deprivation in the LNT neighbourhood has decreased in absolute terms, this may not be reflected in SIMD rankings if other areas have improved more significantly.

For these reasons we advise caution when using SIMD to evaluate the success or progress that has been made by a place-based intervention in tackling deprivation. Without understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the measure it is eminently possible to draw the wrong conclusions about an intervention. It is important to develop an evaluation framework with a range of types of measures that are appropriate and reflect the activities of the intervention at hand. The use of Theories of Change and develop of programme logic models can help this process. While SIMD is likely to remain a relevant measure this will likely be amongst a range of other individual, and area-level metrics.

For these reasons, we advise caution when using SIMD as the primary tool to evaluate the success or progress of a place-based intervention aimed at tackling deprivation. Without a clear understanding of its strengths and limitations, there is a significant risk of drawing inaccurate or misleading conclusions about an intervention's impact.

It is essential to develop an evaluation framework that incorporates a diverse range of measures – both individual- and area-level – that are appropriate to the intervention's activities and intended outcomes. Tools such as Theories of Change and programme logic models can support this process by clarifying the pathways through which change is expected to occur. While SIMD is likely to remain a relevant and useful measure, it should be considered as one component within a broader, more nuanced evaluation strategy.



# ANNEX TWO EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT IN THE CITY OF EDINBURGH

“

IN 2024, THE LNT NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM SUPPORTED 52 LOCAL UNEMPLOYED RESIDENTS INTO EMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING 32 INDIVIDUALS FOR WHOM THERE IS SPECIFIC EVIDENCE OF SUSTAINED WORK LASTING AT LEAST SIX MONTHS.

”



This annex provides an overview of employment and employment support in the City of Edinburgh. It has been produced by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research as part of its work on the evaluation of Community Renewal: Lifting Neighbourhoods Together. Interviews were held with commissioners, contract managers and providers of services. The appendix uses evidence from interviews undertaken for the evaluation as well as analysis of publicly available data. It contains:

- An overview of the Edinburgh labour market
- Challenges facing the Edinburgh labour market
- An overview of Employment support in Edinburgh
- Reflections on the change in client support needs in Edinburgh.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE EDINBURGH LABOUR MARKET

This section outlines the positive economic situation and outlook for the City of Edinburgh.

The latest evidence shows Edinburgh (81.4%) has the third highest employment rate across Scotland's 32 local authorities. This is nearly seven percentage points higher than the rate for Scotland as a whole (74.5%). Between 2014 and 2024 employment grew by 5.2% which is higher than for Scotland as a whole (3.8%). Furthermore, forecasts suggest Edinburgh will continue to see employment growth in excess of that for Scotland as a whole:

- Between 2024 and 2027 employment in Edinburgh is forecast to grow by 3.5% compared to 1.8% for Scotland as a whole.
- Between 2027 and 2034 employment in Edinburgh is forecast to grow by 4.6% compared to 1.2% for Scotland as a whole.

Edinburgh's claimant unemployment rate (2.6%) is lower than the rate for Scotland (3.1%). However, it ranks only the 14th lowest amongst Scotland's 32 local authority areas. The aggregate rate for the City of Edinburgh also masks the fact that there are small areas of the City with high levels of claimant unemployment. For example, 80 of Edinburgh's 597 data zones (areas with a population between 500 and 1,000 residents) have a claimant unemployment rate that is 5% or higher, including 2% of Edinburgh's data zones which have a claimant unemployment rate of 10% or higher.

www.nextstepedinburgh.org

“Has been fantastic for me - I would...”  
“Helped me immensely...”



A notable feature of Edinburgh's economically inactive population is the concentration of who are students: 37.5% of Edinburgh's economically inactive population are students compared to 23.8% for Scotland. Whereas Edinburgh has a low proportion who are long term sick: 16.9% of Edinburgh's economically inactive population are long term sick compared to 33.7% for Scotland.

Half of Scotland's total number of employee jobs in financial and insurance activities are located in Edinburgh. The sector accounts for 11.4% of the employee jobs in Edinburgh, compared to just 3.3% in Scotland. Edinburgh also has higher concentrations of employee jobs compared to Scotland in the following sectors: accommodation and food service (related to its tourist economy), education (linked to its universities) and information and communication.

The evidence shows Edinburgh has a high proportion of senior and professional jobs. Over three fifths (61.6%) of the those in employment are in jobs with a SOC code 1-3; which include: managers, directors and senior officials, professional occupations and associate profession occupations. This compares to just 48.5% for Scotland as a whole. Consequently, median pay levels are also higher in Edinburgh compared to the levels for Scotland. For example, the gross median weekly pay for a full-time job in Edinburgh is £801.70. The equivalent for Scotland is £739.70.

Edinburgh has a more highly qualified population compared to Scotland as a whole. In Edinburgh, 68.8% of residents aged 16-64 have a degree or higher, compared to 54% for Scotland. Whereas only 4.0% of Edinburgh's population aged 16-64 have no qualifications compared to double that (8.0%) for Scotland.

## **CHALLENGES FACING THE EDINBURGH LABOUR MARKET**

The main challenge raised for Edinburgh's labour market is ensuring it has access to the labour force to fill jobs and support the anticipated economic growth.

Analysis by Oxford Economics forecasts a requirement for a further 48,700 people to meet the number of job opening over the period 2024 to 2027. A further 108,100 people will be required to fill openings between 2027 and 2034. Most of these people, 81%, are required for replacement demand, i.e. to cover openings generated by people leaving the labour market. This includes people retiring due to the City's aging workforce, dropping out of the labour market for health reasons, moving away or changing jobs. The remaining fifth are required to meet the expansion in demand due to economic growth.

Oxford Economics also forecasts the qualifications and skills that will be required as well as the key occupations where people will be needed. Their analysis highlights a growth in demand for skilled workers in specialist occupations and sectors. For example, they forecast:

- 70% of the people required will need SCQF 7 or higher. Level 7 equates to Advanced Highers and will need the capability to have responsibility for implementing or supervising complex services within a defined, familiar or supervised structure. Jobs may involve the management of resources or people within defined areas, working at professional level with others to gain an understanding of current professional practice.
- The occupations requiring the largest numbers of people are likely to be science and tech professionals; teaching and research professionals, corporate managers and business and public service associate professionals.

This is consistent with the views of stakeholders who were interviewed as part of the research. They described concerns about worker shortages as something that may hold back Edinburgh's growth potential. Interviewees identified key areas for new job growth in the sectors such as renewable energy and the green economy. These jobs, in growth sectors, are likely to be well paid but will require specific skills and technical expertise. Conversely the number of jobs that require no qualifications, which is already low, is likely to reduce further in the future. Therefore, residents with no or low qualifications will have limited employment options. Those opportunities that do exist are likely to be for low paid and in low-quality employment.

A key resulting question for the system to tackle is how to enable a pathway to these jobs (for example those in STEM) for those who are currently don't have the skills, expertise or experience. Addressing this is important to support the growth of the City of Edinburgh's economy and ensure people, and by implication specific neighbourhoods, don't miss out on the anticipated jobs growth and higher wages.

Other aspects raised by stakeholders included:

- In-work progression. Insufficient investment and funding are available for training and skills development among those already in work. This is reported to slow career progression and hinder economic growth.
- Supply of appropriate graduate jobs. While there has been growth in demand for skilled workers, the number of entry level graduate jobs has not increased in line with the number of graduates. This means unemployment is increasingly prevalent for graduates, with associated negative consequences for individuals and the economy. Individuals may experience lower wages, reduced job satisfaction, limited career advancement opportunities and negative health and wellbeing effects. For the economy,

underemployment can hinder economic growth due to lower productivity and potential wastage of human capital.

- Access to employment opportunities. Travel costs were reportedly increasing as well as public transport routes becoming less convenient. This has meant the appeal and practicality of some jobs has reduced, particularly for low paid in-person work.

## **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT IN EDINBURGH**

Edinburgh has seen a change in the employment support landscape, mirroring the situation nationally. Prior to 10-15 years ago employment support was a mixed economy with a range of suppliers involved in assessment and referral, delivery of skills and training, job search and in-work support and funding. This support was mostly central funded by Westminster.

From 2008 a more focused national agenda started to emerge. This included the introduction of Skills Development Scotland in 2008 as well as national strategies for career, advice and guidance in 2011, youth employment in 2014 and a career education standard in 2015.

In November 2014, The Smith Commission outlined new powers for the Scottish Parliament including powers on employability which would become enacted through The Scotland Act 2016. With these new powers the Scottish Government made two key introductions in 2018:

- Fair Start Scotland – Scotland's first fully devolved employment support service, was launched, offering personalised support to those struggling to find work.
- No One Left Behind – which set out a new Scottish approach to

employability provision, focusing on individual needs and building on their strengths, so as to provide more effective and consistent support to those who are further removed from the labour market.

Fair Start Scotland was led by Scottish Government, and delivered by private and third sector providers as a national payment by results programme. It targeted those with health needs, disabilities and experiencing long term unemployment. Based on evidence for 2018 the average cost per job start was £6,754. However, there was a significant difference in cost across participant group characteristics. This programme ended in 2024 for new referrals without a direct successor programme, instead with an expansion of No One Left Behind funding.

Scottish Government devolves the management of employment support to local authorities, who can either run the delivery in-house or commission it out. There remains significant control of approach and reporting retained by Scottish Government. Local authorities do have control over how the support is delivered, which can be tailored to the locality's needs. Local Employability Partnerships have a strategic role. In Edinburgh management of many major employability projects are delegated to Capital City Partnership (CCP) who are an Arms Length Body of City of Edinburgh Council.

CCP's core functions include:

- Informing and supporting the development of Edinburgh's Jobs Strategy, ensuring alignment with the city's economic goals.
- Organising and managing contracts with funded employability services, ensuring effective delivery and accountability via management of performance and outcomes.

- Coordinating partnerships among public, private, and third-sector organizations to tackle employment-related challenges.

Aligning with 'No One Left Behind' the support provided by services in Edinburgh is designed to be person-centred, addressing individual needs and circumstances and building on their strengths. Employment support in Edinburgh is mainly targeted at people facing specific barriers. The most significant focus is to those with disabilities, long-term health conditions and/or mental health challenges as well as parents. Other groups that are target with support include: young people, people involved with the criminal justice system, and ethnic diverse communities.

It should be noted that there are additional notable investments in Edinburgh's employment support from NEST and UKSPF programmes.

Reflecting on employment support in Edinburgh, concerns were raised by stakeholders in relation to the focus on specific groups and the use of outcomes-based funding.

Edinburgh's commissioning of employment support tends to focus on services targeting specific groups. It also reflects budget limitations that mean it cannot afford to fund comprehensive services that respond to everyone needs equal. However, the focus on those in the highest needs has led to reactionary employment services. Concerns were raised that this stops preventative work with those with mild support needs who may struggle in the labour market, often cycling in and out of work. This in turn may lead to more serious needs and issues for these groups' later on. The focus can also be challenging to employment support providers who must be selective over who they can support: refusing support to potential clients who don't exhibit given need as they will not enable the organisation to receive funding. At the same time

providers are set in competition with each other to identify and support people with specific needs, rather than working together.

Outcome-based funding, such as payment-by-results – has become commonplace in commissioned employment services. It is seen nationally as an approach to incentivise service providers to focus on achieving meaningful, measurable employment outcomes rather than just delivering services. It is also believed to improve the quality and effectiveness of employment services by aligning them with the interests of the funder, leading to a focus on the desired employment outcomes (for example focusing on specific groups) and potentially greater cost-effectiveness. While these benefits are foreseen, feedback from service providers and understood by local commissioners reported that outcomes-based funding puts pressure on delivery organisations to achieve their outcome target to fund their costs. Some suggest it can lead to ‘creaming’ and ‘parking’ of clients. This occurs where providers focus their effort on claimants who are likely to be easier to support into employment. On the other hand, clients who are deemed more challenging receive a reduced level of support – counter to what is needed. To address this situation, a suggestion was made to reward the impact of providers on the progress made by clients towards the labour market. Service providers also suggested there should be flexibility in how successful employment outcomes are evidenced. Currently providers have been accused of exerting undue pressure on clients who have achieved an employment outcome, so they can gain the evidence for their outcome payment. In some instances, successful employment outcomes go unclaimed if the necessary evidence cannot be gathered to evidence the payment.

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE CHANGE IN CLIENT SUPPORT NEEDS IN EDINBURGH**

This final section highlights perceived changes to the client groups receiving support, as reported by employment service providers.

It is reported that historically, until at least 2015, those accessing support were almost all White Scottish and long-term unemployed. These clients would present with multiple, often complex, support needs including mental health issues, substances abuse, housing issues and involvement with the criminal justice system.

While the number of clients with these characteristics remains high and increasing, proportionally there has been an increase in clients from an African or Eastern European background. This has had two main implications on support. First many claimants need support with their immigration status. However, there is a reported lack of support for this in Edinburgh, with only one statutory provider of legal support. Second there are issues related to educational attainment. In general clients from African and Eastern European backgrounds have qualifications and work experience in their home country. However, these are not automatically recognised by employers and there is a high cost to translate qualifications to their UK equivalents. This means employment providers cannot place such clients into jobs that need qualifications. Instead, they are directed into lower paid jobs which do not require qualifications, and which are unrelated to their previous work experience.

To watch videos featuring more information  
and client interviews please click the links below



Bingham,  
Magdalene  
and the Hays



Walker



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