

The 'Local People' Programme: Improving Social Connectedness in Deprived Communities

Authors

Woodward, J.¹, Button, D.², South, J.¹, Quick, A.², Bagnall, A-M.¹, Coan, S.¹, Southby, K.², Heisse, C.²

1. Centre for Health Promotion Research, School of Health and Community Studies, Leeds Beckett University, UK
2. New Economics Foundation, London, UK

Local People aims to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in deprived communities and neighbourhoods.

It does this by increasing social connections and the amount of control people have over their own lives and as a community.

It is a **People's Health Trust** initiative.

29 communities in England, Wales and Scotland took part.

Considerable challenges, including poverty and poor quality employment, exist in all sites. Many feel stigmatised.



There is **strong evidence** of increased social connectedness, both **within** and **between** social groups (bonding and bridging social capital) as a result of Local People support.

Inter-generational connections improved as younger and older people worked together.

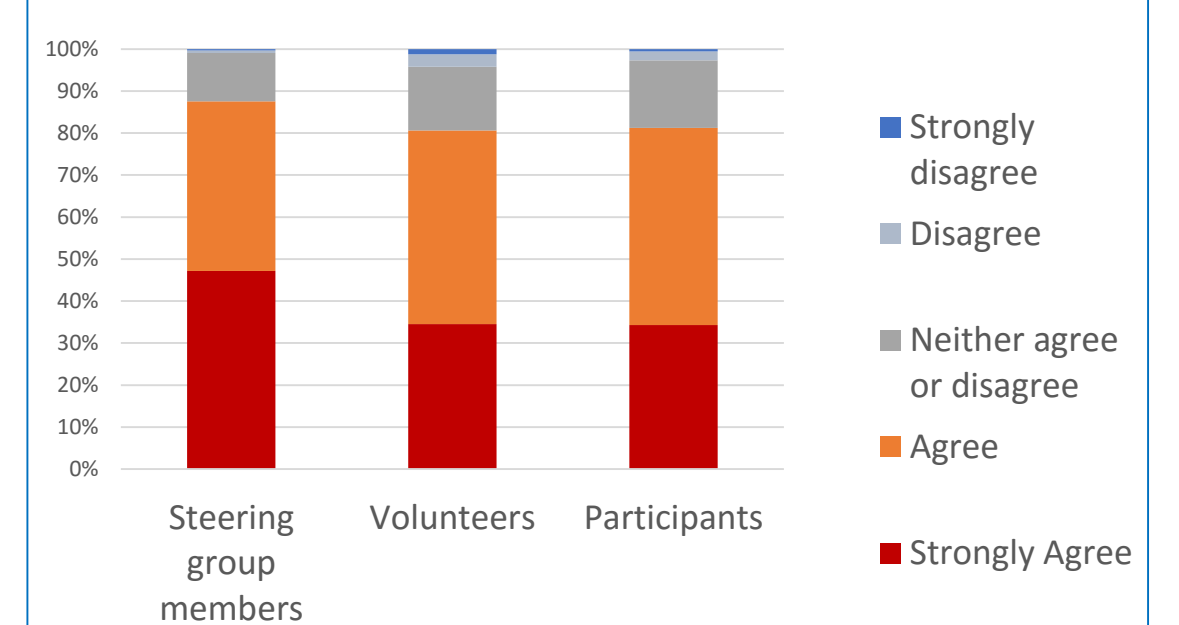
"We were going in the supermarket and this chap says, 'Oh hello, I know you. We've cooked for you.' Some of the lads. And we were so delighted that they'd speak to two old ladies, they were in a group of friends, but they come and spoke, and I thought how nice! And they were the ones that they thought were, oh, the rough crowd and this that and the other, the drop-outs, as they call them, but to me I felt how lovely of them lads to come and talk to two old women, especially with all their friends round them, you know."

Connections between estates improved as people came together to attend events or organise activities.

"It's helped to break down the barriers, people are finding it slightly easier to make friends because we've got the events and stuff they can come along to. But even if they don't see each other all the time, the divide between [Area 1] and [Area 2] is quite tricky as well because that main road breaks it in half. So, when we have the events on the avenue, that's like the sort of neutral meeting ground so to speak for everybody. So, that's the time when the two communities really do come together and mix and get to know each other."

Stronger connections are made when people are **more intensively involved** e.g. steering group members, as they work together to solve real issues.

Through Local People I am making new friends



Resident control aids social connectedness, even in communities facing considerable complex challenges

How do we know this?

A mixed method evaluation by the New Economics Foundation and Leeds Beckett University. Funded by the People's Health Trust, from 2017-2019. Including:

- 5 qualitative case studies, over 2 years, with c140 interviews
- A longitudinal survey (n=1089)
- Peer research, staff interviews and questionnaire, sites self-evaluation

People's Health Trust is funded through 12 society lotteries, in England, Scotland and Wales, operated through [The Health Lottery](#)

The Model

Local People puts residents in charge. They 'get together' to set priorities for action and deliver activities in their community.

In each site there is:

- A Local Lead, employed to facilitate the programme and support residents. Supported by a National Charity.
- A Steering Group, of 5 – 15 local residents, recruited by the Local Lead. They meet regularly to decide on priorities, allocate grant funding and organise activities.
- Grant funding. Groups can easily apply for funding to run activities or events.

Long-term funding and flexibility are also key to success.



What did Local People communities do?

A vast array!

Including; **Classes or Activities, Community Events, Area Improvement initiatives, Activism.**

Existing and new community groups were also actively supported.

