

Trusting. Hopeful. Proud. **Confident.** Active.  
Strong. Resilient. A well-kent face. A neighbour.  
A friend. A volunteer. A father, a mother, a son  
and daughter. **Healthy.** Happy. Growing. Loving.  
Community. Neighbourhood. A proud place. A  
history and a future. Friendly. Strong. **Determined.**  
Cafés, shops, and murals on walls. Family  
homes and street parties. Together. Home.  
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**Local people building  
flourishing communities.**



“

Link Up has been an amazing experience for the community. As a volunteer in the café, I have observed how much of an impact it has had with everyone involved ... it has changed many lives for the better.

Link Up participant



# For people to thrive, three things really matter: supportive relationships, confidence and self-esteem.

Seven years of Inspiring Scotland's Link Up programme has demonstrated beyond doubt that these three things are not only fundamental human needs essential for individual wellbeing, they are the foundations on which individuals and communities can change things for the better.

By putting these fundamental needs at the heart of our work, Link Up has given thousands of people – many amongst the most vulnerable and least heard in our society – a new sense of hope and purpose in life.

This has meant people creating a brighter financial future for themselves and their family by engaging with employment, training and higher and further education.

It has meant people relying less on support from over-stretched health and social care systems because they are making improvements to their own life and the lives of others.

It has meant local people having a renewed sense of pride in their communities. They are becoming active citizens who work to ensure local services and decision-making processes work with and for local people, addressing the issues that matter to them.

That these things have been achieved in a time of scarce resources and growing inequality demonstrates the power of the Link Up approach and its potential. This work must continue and must be done at a scale proportionate to the magnitude and depth of the problems our communities face.

Without radical action, individual and community wellbeing will deteriorate in the face of further cuts to public spending over the next decade, deepening poverty and disadvantage. Supporting the fundamental human needs of confidence, supportive relationships and self-esteem must be at the heart of how we work in communities if we want to turn around the fortunes of our most deprived areas.

Link Up can be the bold response we need to deliver the social, economic and democratic renewal which is so long overdue.



**Celia Tennant**  
Chief Executive  
Inspiring Scotland



# Link Up is among the largest and longest-running individual and community wellbeing projects in Scotland.

It supports people with some of the most challenging life experiences living in our most deprived communities to flourish.

Link Up facilitates community self-development by creating supportive, trusting environments for local people to build the connections and confidence they need to address the issues faced by them and their community.

Through their expertise, compassion and focus, our locally embedded Link Up workers help community members to build the confidence, self-belief and supportive relationships that enable them to not only fulfil their own potential, but that of their community too.

They build the confidence in people to seek work for the first time. They put in place the self-belief that they and others can support their own recovery from addiction. They help develop the supportive relationships that enable communities to stand together to defeat eviction. They bring people together, and together local people change things for the better.





## Involvement:



**21,000**

People involved in Link Up between 2012 and 2018



**66%**

had never taken part in community activity before



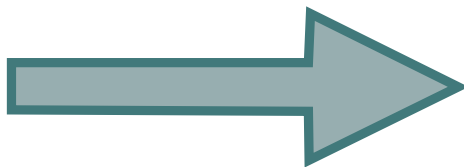
**1,300**

went on to help run local activities

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## Cost effectiveness:

Generating more than three times as much in economic benefits as it costs to run, Link Up is highly cost-effective. Because people make the changes they want for themselves rather than turning to more expensive interventions, it also reduces the burden on statutory services. Link Up provides a sustainable path to long-term improvements in health and wellbeing – something most statutory services are not structured to support.



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## Principles:

Link Up works.

It works because it builds the supportive relationships, confidence and self-esteem that are the foundations of change. Change that is decided, enacted and achieved locally.



# Addressing fundamental human needs so people can transform communities.

Every person can change things for the better. But if you want to change things – in your life, in your community, in society – you need to have the confidence to do so, the self-esteem to believe in yourself and people around you who believe in you and can support you.

Confidence, self-esteem and supportive relationships are fundamental human needs. Yet far too many people in far too many of Scotland's communities lack these things. And so, making positive changes – whether for themselves, their families or in their communities – feels impossible.

The uncomfortable truth is these basic human necessities are often overlooked when public bodies and social organisations try to tackle the entrenched social problems faced by many of Scotland's communities. This is why these problems seem so impossible to overcome.

**Link Up is different.** We put the creation of supportive relationships and the building of confidence and self-esteem at the heart of our work. When you do that, these seemingly impossible to solve problems can be and are overcome.

Link Up started in 2012, in the midst of major social, political, economic, and demographic shifts. Yet, with investment from Scottish Government, and additional funds from local authorities, trusts and foundations and private philanthropists, Link Up has been able to support tens of thousands of people across some of our most vulnerable communities to flourish and change things for the better. For themselves, their families and their communities.

As the public sector takes stock of the impact of 10 years of austerity and considers the significant challenges of the next decade, Link Up offers valuable lessons on the role public bodies can play in addressing entrenched social issues. Our success shows that they should strategically support organisations that are building the foundations on which sustainable individual and community transformation can take place.





# Case study: Ashleigh, north-west Kilmarnock

**“I finally have a plan for the future. I know what I want to do with my life.**

For Ashleigh, joining Link Up’s North West Archery Club in 2015 was the spark for a period of remarkable change for her; one which has given her, perhaps for the first time in her life, a sense of direction and purpose.

Ashleigh was a young carer for various members of her family throughout her childhood and early adolescence and severely bullied at school. As a result, she left school with “no qualifications, no experience, and zero confidence in myself or my abilities”.

Now in her thirties, Ashleigh has lived with severe depression for most of her life. She was diagnosed as having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder at 14 years old and, in 2012, a condition known as Non-Epileptic Attack Disorder, believed to be the brain’s response to overwhelming stress.

Joining the Archery Club was a significant milestone for Ashleigh. “It was very difficult and scary for me as I hadn’t socialised properly in longer than I could recall.” However, the welcoming environment and support from her husband and the Link Up worker meant she was soon attending on her own. She even became club secretary.

The impact of this was material: “I felt like for the first time in a long time, my depression wasn’t going to hold me back, my confidence was growing, my seizures reduced, and I had support from people other than my family.”

Ashleigh’s sense of personal control continued to increase. Supported by Link Up, she went on to complete training in Archery Coaching, Child Protection, Mediation and Conflict Resolution and gain a REHIS certificate for Kitchen Food and Safety Hygiene. This encouraged her to get her Personal Bar Licence enabling her to get her “first proper job and first ever payslip”.

Ashleigh’s belief in herself and what she is capable of achieving continues to help her through her bad spells. It has also been instrumental in giving her a renewed purpose. Her graduation from Glasgow University’s Activate community development course in 2018 is testament to this.

It has enabled her to access an HNC Working with Communities course at Ayrshire College and she is applying to the University of the West of Scotland to do an Honours degree in Community Education.



**“I have an ability that I wouldn’t have been able to recognise if I didn’t have the luck to encounter a worker who believed in me, and even when I was having a meltdown or being unreasonable, still didn’t give up on me and gave me opportunities I would never have had otherwise.**

**Because I am now stronger, I can be stronger for my family. I am improving my life and getting educated so that I can help someone in the way that I have been helped. The help and support I have received has been life changing, not just for myself, but for my family and that is something that I can never repay but what I can do, is help others.**



## Link Up today

Link Up is at the core of Inspiring Scotland's efforts to realise a Scotland without poverty or disadvantage.

Today Link Up operates in nine communities: Craigmillar, Leith and Muirhouse in Edinburgh, Gorbals and Possilpark in Glasgow, Gallatown in Kirkcaldy, north-west Kilmarnock, Saltcoats in North Ayrshire, and Whitfield in Dundee.

Historically, these areas have been defined by their problems by people who don't know or live in them. But Link Up starts with the strengths of local people; their passion, energy, skills, knowledge and experience.

Our Link Up workers, embedded in the community and given the time and flexibility to get to know local people, have harnessed these strengths to support local people to do the things that matter to them.

These activities, which are created and led by local people, can be gardening, cooking, arts, crafts, sports and music.

They can be fruit and veg co-ops, bike clubs, community-run cafés and shops. Or support groups, childcare, bingo and film nights. Link Up is what the community wants it to be and it is open to everyone. And that matters.

By doing things together – often just for fun – people have built trusting, supportive relationships with others. And as these relationships have developed, the person's view of themselves and the community they live in becomes more positive.

Through collective activity people share and learn skills, meaning their confidence and self-esteem grows. In turn, this has created a ripple effect, generating support networks which strengthen resilience and motivate people to help themselves, one another, and their community.





**64%**  
of people feel  
more confident  
thanks to  
Link Up



It works because people care about their communities. Because they live, learn and work in them. They are not visitors – it's their place. And when they connect as neighbours, friends and colleagues, they can achieve remarkable things in a way that works for them. They self-direct change to meet their own needs, not ever-shifting, externally set outcome targets.

**“ Seeing so many people get involved in organising things like the local Gala and toddler groups, play groups, out cycling and doing pottery!! It's inspiring and is why I want to go to University and help bring about the same kind of change in other communities. People matter and people care. They just need somebody to care about what they care about!**

Link Up participant

Beyond shared activities, local people in Link Up areas have made transformative, sustainable and positive changes in their community including setting up a residents' association and establishing a locally run social enterprise.

**“ If it hadnae been for Richard, I would never have come back, but the fact that he is so kind and gentle and was aware how nervous I was... he came over with the worst cup of coffee I've ever had, but it meant so much at the time.**

Link Up participant

These changes are what many public-funded programmes want but fail to achieve. The difference with Link Up is that they are decided, enacted and achieved wholly by local people because the confidence, self-esteem and supportive relationships of local people are put in place first.

This idea is supported by an expansive evidence base including research from former Chief Medical Officer Sir Harry Burns, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, What Works Scotland, Carnegie UK and Scottish Government's Justice Division. Each of these pieces of research argues for the importance of individual and community wellbeing in tackling social issues.

# Case study: Tammie, Whitfield in Dundee

Having struggled with substance misuse for most of her adult life, Tammie has used her volunteering experience through Link Up to turn her life around.

Because of Tammie's circumstances, her daughter went into her grandmother's care in 2016. Wanting to be a positive role model for her daughter and to regain custody of her, as well as strengthening her relationship with her mother was a driving force for Tammie.

**I** am learning that it is OK to ask for help. I don't just try and cope on my own if I am struggling. I know that Link Up are there to help me. Volunteering keeps my mind occupied and I am talking about things now instead of being numb.

Through volunteering with Link Up, Tammie initiated some fundamental changes in her life. Where she was previously isolated, she built new relationships with people in her community. She has learned many skills, including first aid and food hygiene. She uses her lived experience to help others recovering from addiction by volunteering at cooking groups, organising nights and events, and leads a group on health walks to help improve mental health and build support networks. She also volunteers with Morning Call and Blether Buddies, giving socially isolated older people someone to talk to.

Tammie now represents local people and Addaction as part of a network of volunteers and agencies who meet regularly to discuss ways to change attitudes and policies towards addiction and recovery. Through this she has become involved in helping set up a Recovery Café and Drop-in.

The group will offer a safe place for those needing extra support as well as activities to aid them in their recovery such as arts and crafts, guitar lessons, CV and job application writing workshops.







Tammie's commitment to making a difference to others in her community is evident by her graduation from Glasgow University's Active Community Development course in 2018, and she was honoured at the 2018 Volunteer Awards with the prestigious Kathryn McKenzie Make a Difference Award. Tammie has recently been appointed to the Fairer Dundee Commission in the role of Community Commissioner, and is applying for peer support roles within the North East, looking to put her passion for helping others into action in her professional life.

Most importantly, Tammie is back with her daughter. She has been substance free and on a methadone programme for 24 months, and was granted full custody of her daughter over a year ago. Tammie's desire to be the best mother she can be has definitely been realised. Her daughter has everything she needs and is performing well at school, she even receives Star Pupil Awards regularly.

Tammie has also improved her relationship with her mother, who visited Link Up to see what Tammie was doing with the project. Reflecting on that experience, Tammie said that her mother had said she was proud of her, which is something that she had never heard before.

Tammie has become more self-aware and reflective, and has her sights set on her future with her family. The changes that Link Up has helped Tammie make are things she never thought possible, but with the right support, belief, and confidence building, all have become reality.



**I never dealt with things properly before. I am now learning to deal with my feelings instead of numbing them with drugs, which is what I would have done in the past. I am learning to think better of myself.**

**Because of Link Up I am getting to meet new people. I am recognising that different people think and feel differently and that is OK. I feel so much more confident now and I am putting myself forward for new things, which I wouldn't have done in the past.**

# The difference Link Up makes: transforming individual lives.

For every £1 invested, Link Up delivers economic benefits equivalent to between £2.14 and £3.53. These economic benefits range from costs avoided because of reduced use of statutory services, GP or hospital visits, to re-engaging with the community and increased levels of employment. Link Up also contributes to large one-off costs being avoided including long-term hospital stays, involvement with the criminal justice system and suicide.



I found myself at the community centre but if I'm honest I wasn't going there for help, I was going to say goodbye. I'd had enough, I felt like I'd messed everything up, I didn't think there was any point in living but I needed people to know how much their support meant to me. I was crying, shaking, coughing and sweating.

I was so ashamed. I felt as though I'd let everyone down. That day was probably one of the worst of my life but it was also kind of good.

I sat in your office and you asked me if I was thinking about suicide and I said yes. The relief that came from that was big. That probably doesn't make sense but I felt lighter from saying it. We chatted for hours and by the end of the day I still felt horrible but I felt stronger.

You said that you would see me tomorrow and I made a decision to make sure that I would see you the next day. And I did, I was still in a state but I was one more day into being clean.

Link Up participant to their local Link Up worker

**52%**

feel more able to cope with life

**80%**

of people have more friends

**89%**

think their community is a good place to live

**24%**

gained a new qualification

**63%**

feel physically and mentally healthier

**83%**

feel they have the skills they need



# The difference Link Up makes: transforming whole communities.

By December 2018, Link Up had reached over 21,000 people, with almost 1,300 helping to run local activities. Its longevity and scale owe much to the fact that Link Up helps people to improve their lives and the lives of others in their community in a cost-effective way.

These economic benefits all stem from the small, human changes Link Up can help people make. Through support built on compassion and kindness, and local activities in safe spaces free from judgement, human – not statutory – needs are met. People build their own supportive networks and find other ways to cope.

With these things in place, people are then able to make transformative changes for the whole community.

## Since 2012 Link Up participants have:

**Established an award-winning Tenants' and Residents' association**  
giving local people greater influence over decisions made about where they live.

### **Set up and operated a community shop**

providing a place for learning events and a way of supporting people affected by benefit cuts and food insecurity.

**Fought and won a campaign to stop the eviction of almost 200 tenants**  
securing long-term affordable housing for a key part of the community.

### **Established a local bike social enterprise**

bringing employment and training opportunities to the community.

### **Taken over management or ownership of community assets**

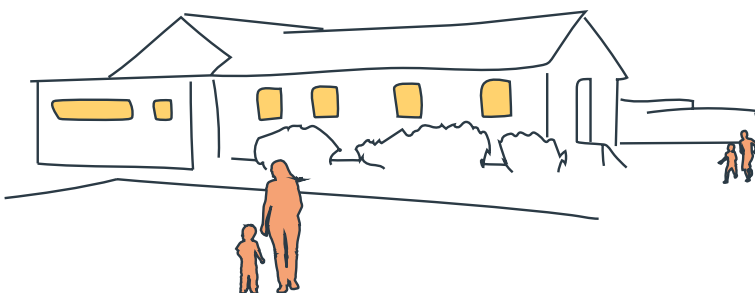
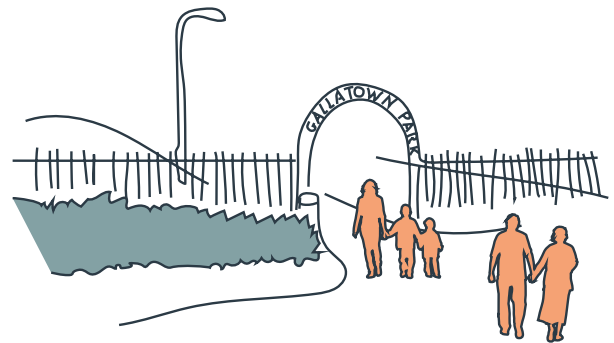
securing multimillion pound investments and creating new services and activities that better meet the needs of their community.

# Link Up Gallatown: local people and organisations working together for a better future.

Link Up began in Gallatown, an area of Kirkcaldy and one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland, in 2012.

The local people already had the skills, knowledge and motivation to reverse their community's fortunes. What they needed was the confidence, self-esteem and supportive relationships to make it happen.

Link Up helped to nurture these fundamental human needs and harness those existing strengths so that the community could build a new vision of what it wants to be and begin making that vision a reality.



**Community run internet café**

**Parent and toddler group**

Immediately, local people got to work. They established the Gallatown Gala Community Group to re-establish the local gala day as a key annual event. With support from the Link Up worker, the group quickly became the leading force in Link Up Gallatown and began raising funds for other Link Up projects.

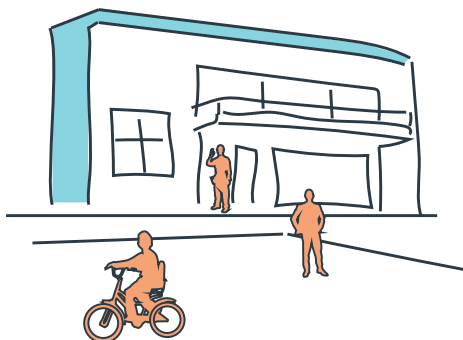
They have made widescale community change possible by: re-establishing an internet café to improve online access for people on benefits; tackling loneliness and food insecurity through a community café, cooking club and food parcel provision; and improving access to childcare by supporting the development of a new parent and toddler group with local childcare providers.

Within the first two years of Link Up Gallatown, 22 volunteers had secured employment, many for the first time, 25 people secured education and training places, and over 100 gained qualifications and skills awards. To date, 2,600 people have engaged with Link Up Gallatown projects.

In 2014, supported by the local Link Up worker, a small group of local people started a bike club based out of the local bowling club. Today it is a thriving social enterprise offering training and cycle activities to local people.

Link Up has created an environment which fosters personal confidence and self-esteem and the support networks to drive local collective action.

It was clear that Link Up was working in Gallatown and people wanted to see it develop and grow but needed a physical space to make it happen.



### **Gallatown Gala Bike Hub:**

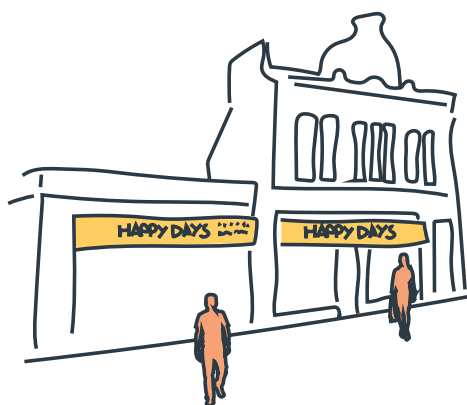
The community-led social enterprise employs two part-time workers and a dozen volunteers.

It offers repairs, rentals and recycled bikes and runs activities, maintenance and training programmes.

More than 40 people have taken part in recognised cycle training programmes.

In response, Kirkcaldy YMCA, the host organisation for Link Up Gallatown, initiated a community asset transfer to take over and redevelop the former Gallatown Bowling Club – already a key base for Link Up.

The space will be an inclusive community facility intended to host indoor and outdoor activities, assist people in poverty and crisis and provide learning and training opportunities.

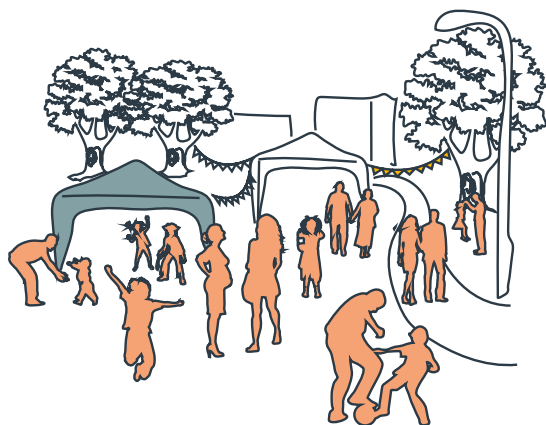


**Community Group HQ**

**Cooking club**

**Community café**

With over £750,000 in funding for capital and running costs already secured, work on the site will begin in September 2019. Every step of the way, local people will guide what the space becomes and ensure it meets their needs and their vision for Gallatown – always.



**Annual Gala and regular community fundraising events**



“

I've done cooking and gardening, I've written poetry, I've played football, I've done stuff on anti-sectarianism and worked with refugees. I'd never have done stuff like that if it wasn't for the group.

Link Up participant



# **We know what works:** Lessons from the past seven years.

Through our evaluations, case studies, feedback and impact measurement, we have discovered that four factors stand out as critical to Link Up's success.

## **A non-judgemental environment**

**Open to all and engaging the most vulnerable**

**Kind, flexible, supported workers**

**Accepting and working with complexity**

## **A non-judgemental environment**

Link Up is about people and their potential, not the problems they have or challenges they experience.

Our workers understand that everyone has talents, strengths, and passions, and that they have a right to be heard and a contribution to make. For these things to be realised, people need safe places, free from judgement and pressure, where their confidence and self-esteem can grow, and supportive relationships can flourish.

Our workers create these environments. As well as cultivating trust with community members, they help community members to begin trusting one another. These trusting, reciprocal relationships develop on people's own terms, with local people setting the agenda and determining the pace at which they engage and how they engage.

With local people exercising this choice and control, Link Up becomes a natural part of community life, rather than part of a prescriptive project or intervention.

In this environment, local people from different backgrounds and with a range of different experiences and challenges in their lives can engage with one another, develop trust, understanding and empathy and address their own needs and wants together.

# Open to all and engaging the most vulnerable

Link Up is open to everyone. Link Up participants know that it is first and foremost for them – as individuals, as families, as communities – and not about predetermined targets.

Link Up treats people as people, not statistics or demographics, acknowledging their individual circumstances and experiences.

Because of this, Link Up has a unique ability to engage some of the most vulnerable in society; people struggling with mental and physical health conditions, addiction, loss, loneliness, domestic violence and trauma. Those whose voices are least heard.

This is possible because our workers are genuinely interested in and take the time to understand people's lives. They support people in their pain, loss and anxiety, and celebrate in their triumphs, joys and victories. This helps build resilience and aid recovery, including for those affected by trauma.

## Case Study – Link Up Men's Group

Link Up helps run a Men's Group in Possilpark with around 20 regular participants. Of these, 13 struggle with mental health issues including anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and schizophrenia. Additionally, 9 of the 13 disclosed that they have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The benefits the men have experienced as a result of the supportive relationships they have built from the group are remarkable:

- 3 have entered a recovery programme, and a further 2 have been in recovery and have been alcohol/drug free for more than 2 years
- 2 are now able to access the group without the help of a befriender
- 2 have accessed other community-based services
- 1 has gained full-time employment
- 4 have gone into volunteering
- 1 has engaged with a professional counselling service
- 4 have achieved a food hygiene certificate
- 2 have successfully graduated from Glasgow University's 50hr community development programme, 'Activate'
- 7 have graduated from a local Employability Course



# Kind, flexible, supported workers

Link Up works because of our workers; the kind of people that they are and the support they can provide to local people. There are three factors that make an outstanding Link Up worker:

## Kindness:

Our workers are compassionate and kind. They believe fundamentally in the power of people and are driven by a desire to help others. Their work in Link Up is aligned with their purpose, goals and values in life. They are self-aware and learn from and translate their own experiences to help others. They are calm and confident and determined to improve the lives of others no matter the barriers they may face.

## Flexibility:

We let our workers be themselves, giving them the freedom to use their personal attributes and the autonomy to help people in the ways they need. This allows them to start from a person's strengths, not their problems or weaknesses, and work in ways which encourage people's own confidence and self-esteem to grow. We give our workers time to build relationships and to understand local people and the local community. This means they can respond to individual needs and the local context. Collectively, this allows our workers to try different approaches to overcome challenges and make sure they get it right.

## Support:

The job of a Link Up worker is enormously challenging. Therefore, we provide wraparound support to our workers. This includes close support from an Inspiring Scotland Performance Advisor and quarterly reflective practice meetings with other workers. Workers are also trained to identify people who are dealing with conflict, loss, trauma and suicidality and help them cope with those feelings. Self-care forms a core part of our training. This enables our workers to remain healthy, focused, and provide the best possible support for the long haul.

Together, these three factors give our workers the strength to persevere and the tools to make a real difference to people and the community they live in.



**“ You sort me out, you make me think about stuff, you encourage me, you help me to do stuff for myself and you never judge – even when I’ve done something daft – you just smile and say “let’s go and have a chat”.**

**I’m much more confident now, I’m no saying my life is perfect cause it’s not. I’m just saying that I know there’s people I can go to for help and I can come to the group and forget about all the crap stuff for a bit. That’s huge for me.**

Link Up participant to their local Link Up worker

# Accepting and working with complexity

Link Up works because it accepts that communities are complex, fragile, messy and challenging. Each community is unique so there is no one-size-fits-all way to create lasting, positive change in the communities which need our support.

Link Up acknowledges this complexity but applies a methodical approach to navigating it.

First, it takes time. Creating lasting change in communities which have previously been defined by deprivation will never be achieved in a community planning, political or budgetary cycle.

It will take a generation or more. That's why no aspect of Link Up is time limited. We have been running Link Up since 2012 and know we need to be here for the long haul.

Second, at the heart of complex communities are the people who live in them. That's why Link Up's approach begins by connecting people and building the fundamental human needs of confidence, self-esteem and supportive relationships.

Third, these foundations help create an environment in which local people feel able to make the positive changes they want and need – for themselves, their families or in their communities.

By beginning with and being driven by what local people want, Link Up is never prescriptive. Instead it becomes what works in each local context.





“

It is a lifeline for people and without Link Up people wouldn't be able to do these things. It is having a positive effect on other people's lives; it is giving the people their spirit back and hope for our community again.

Link Up participant





## Case study: Chris\*, Gorbals in Glasgow

In his 50s, Chris has led a violent life. He has been involved in gang activity and spent long periods in prison. He had attended mental health support groups and clinics over a long period and had been held in secure units for severe mental health issues. He felt “he had no control” over his actions and felt aggressive much of the time.

Chris got involved in Link Up Gorbals through the creative writing group at the Barn, the base for Link Up in Gorbals. At first, he was frustrated and angry with the world around him, particularly with how he had been treated by state services and as an ex-offender. He said: “I had 14 years of near isolation feeling bitter...I had become branded as a ‘type’”.

Chris made it clear he was not planning to “make pals” and rarely engaged with others. Initially, even making eye contact was a struggle for him, but his first encounter at the Barn took him by surprise.

“I thought they’d be no different to everywhere else I had gone. Instead I found it more like people helping people.

The workers took a genuine interest in Chris. He said it felt as if he had really been heard for the first time in many years. Steadily, he began to feel safe and welcomed at the Barn and was encouraged to think about what made him feel good about himself and to focus on his abilities and gifts.

Slowly, Chris revealed an extensive knowledge of physical training which led to him setting-up a small gym at the Barn, providing free exercise classes for local people. He was encouraged to make an application to a local participatory budget initiative and secured £250 for gym equipment, followed by another £500.

Chris was particularly keen to work with those who, like him, are on the fringes of society. He earned the respect and trust of some of Gorbals’ hardest to reach young people who would not usually engage with organised youth services. He is now a community assessor and mentor for young people participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Chris’ growing self-confidence and trust in Link Up staff led him to disclose that he had been “really badly harmed as a child by a stranger” – something he felt the ‘system’ never took seriously and he never got support for.

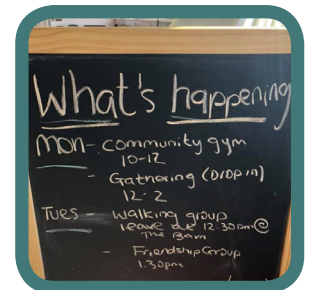
His reflection on this experience and growing confidence acted as a catalyst for him to try to “put a wrong right” by speaking to the police and Victim Support. Although sympathetic, both services could offer little help.



This was a real setback for Chris. But, with the support of staff, he sought criminal injuries compensation only to be told he, like anyone else with a criminal sentence of five years or more, is permanently disqualified from this service. With Link Up support, Chris is challenging this law as discriminatory and argues that he seeks justice for his nine-year-old self, who is innocent.

In May 2018, Chris experienced another setback. He was reassessed for his Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit and had it removed despite a clear mental health issue diagnosis from several medical professionals. For Chris, this was devastating both financially and emotionally, seeing it as a continuation of state persecution against him.

The PIP decision started to unravel the positive developments Chris had worked so hard to achieve. By Christmas 2018, he was speaking about harming those behind the decision and suicide.



“I now think about my actions outwith the Barn as I feel I represent the Barn.

However, once again rallied by the belief and support shown to him by Link Up, Chris challenged the decision. With support from the Link Up worker, Chris argued at a tribunal that changes introduced to PIP assessments were unlawful because they discriminate against people with mental health problems. His PIP benefit was reinstated in February 2019.

During his time with Link Up, Chris has gone from feeling isolated and driven by anger to being a respected member of the community. What's clear from Chris's comments is that the changes in him are to a large extent a result of the kindness, belief, and natural, human relationship he has developed with the Barn staff. The sense of belonging he experienced gave him purpose, and this purpose facilitated a sense of responsibility and accountability. "The Barn loved me, and it made me realise I had never shown anyone else love".

The approach taken by Link Up can bring about positive changes in individuals and their wider communities in a uniquely powerful way.

The change in Chris has been extraordinary; his depression and rage diminished, he is more in control of his actions, and his efforts to support others in the community have been reinvigorated.

*\*Chris's name has been changed for this case study.*

# Rising to the challenges of the next decade: the role of the public sector.

Over the last seven years, Link Up has been able to support tens of thousands of people because of the commitment of our investors, including Scottish Government, local authorities, trusts and foundations and private philanthropists, to fund a groundbreaking way of working.

Their willingness to test, over a substantial period, a new way of working with an overt focus on the power of confidence, self-belief and supportive relationships to enhance individual and community wellbeing was radical. Link Up's success is testament to their belief and commitment.

Link Up's success so far has also been crucial for the people it supports. The period in which Link Up has been operating has been one of major social, political, and economic upheaval, adding increasing pressures for people already living in challenging circumstances.

The next decade will be no different. Challenges such as increasing in-work poverty, housing insecurity and social isolation, combined with declining social infrastructure will continue to affect the most vulnerable in our society. And costs will only continue to increase.

The public sector will play a pivotal role in determining whether or not disadvantaged communities are equipped to meet these challenges. The lessons from Link Up suggest the sector's role needs to be reimagined to make the substantial changes needed and with the urgency they require.

Fostering the fundamental human needs of supportive relationships, confidence, and self-esteem needs to be a priority. It needs to be the cornerstone of how we work in communities and it needs to be done at a scale never seen before. The public sector must be at the heart of this effort.



# Addressing poverty costs money. **But not addressing it costs a lot more.**

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The cost of widespread ill-health, housing insecurity and long-term unemployment adds up.

We cannot afford to spend what little budget we have ineffectively. Link Up has proven to be a cost-effective, preventative way of working which reduces demand on over-stretched public services. Crucially, it is one which is embraced by the communities in which it operates, meaning people get engaged, stay engaged, and make change happen.

Link Up must be at the heart of a collaborative approach between all sectors and local communities. The material social, economic and democratic renewal that is so long overdue in our most deprived communities depends on it.

We know that a partnership between local authorities, NHS boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships and local community organisations which focuses on fundamental human needs as the foundation of individual and community wellbeing can achieve this renewal.



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**Being involved in Link Up has had such a big impact on my life. Before, I was just out for myself and didn't think much about others...I've realised I get a buzz out of supporting people.**

Link Up participant



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