

# *Mapping social networks to improve public service delivery*

A project with Neighbourhood Management  
in King's Lynn, West Norfolk

July 2011

This presentation captures the findings from a project between Neighbourhood Management in King's Lynn, the Young Foundation and Insight 1<sup>st</sup>, working with Netform social network analysis software.

The aim of the project was to use social network analysis (SNA) to explore relationships between residents and public agencies delivering services in Fairstead, a priority neighbourhood management area in King's Lynn.

Findings were used to develop practical work to improve the delivery of public services to residents on the estate.

The research elements of this project were carried out in 2007. The practical work spans 2007 to 2010.

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# 1. Summary of findings

- Social network analysis was used to explore how well public agencies were communicating with residents in Fairstead in King's Lynn
- And, to understand how social networks on the estate helped residents to find out about services and tackle problems
- The aim was to find well networked individuals living and working on the estate, and to bring this group together to work with the Neighbourhood Management to improve local services and community engagement

# Summary of findings

1. The study found 19 people in different agencies playing a pivotal role in sharing information about services in Fairstead
2. Neighbourhood Management, Safer Neighbourhoods Team and the housing association played key roles in this hub
3. Networking and day-to-day communication was strong within and between these agencies with regard to sharing intelligence and information about the estate
4. Networking activity did not extend to collaboration about decision making or problem solving – this was identified as a key area for development

# Summary of findings

5. Local schools and colleges were not connected to any of the information sharing, decision making or innovation networks; and were not well networked to each other
6. Networking activity between residents was very limited, in part because low levels of trust in public agencies, frustrations with service providers and difficulties in communicating problems to council services had created a sense of apathy in the community
7. Frontline staff who lived and worked in the neighbourhood were identified as an under-used resource, specifically as a source of local information and network to encourage local action

## 2. Introduction to Fairstead



# Neighbourhood management in King's Lynn

- £3.6 million SSCF funding to tackle deprivation in five neighbourhoods, awarded in 2006
- Fairstead identified as the priority neighbourhood
- West Norfolk Partnership (LSP) leading a multi-agency response
- Neighbourhood management introduced to lead delivery

# Fairstead in 2007

- Designed as London overspill housing in 1970s
- 5,000 homes (mixed tenure)
- Close to town centre but isolated practically (due to poor transport links) and socially
- Poor reputation locally
- Poor health and education outcomes
- High levels of anti-social behaviour and self harm



# Fairstead in 2007

- Perception among residents that estate is ‘forgotten’ and ‘abandoned’ by Council
- Burnt-out pub at centre of estate for 10+ years
- Few social amenities or community organisations
- Low levels of social capital
- Engagement with public agencies non-existent



# Fairstead SNA project

- This project was designed to support the Neighbourhood Management team develop practical initiatives to tackle long-term problems on the estate, focusing on engaging residents and improve public services
- SNA was seen as a valuable approach for exploring how informal social networks in the community could be brought into discussions and decision making about services
- Four key objectives were identified for the project

1. **To generate baseline data:** about the scope and quality of relationships between the local authority, public agencies, service providers and Fairstead residents against which to measure change
  
2. **To map the range and effectiveness of existing relationships between all public agencies working in Fairstead, and between these public agencies and Fairstead residents to:**
  - identify scope for improving partnership working and avoiding duplication between
  - identify key individuals/organisations within these networks who hold information, ideas or relationships that could be used to improve service delivery in Fairstead

3. **To talk to residents about informal social networks on the Fairstead estate:** that exist outside of recognised structures for community involvement, like Fairstead's SureStart or the community shop, to understand where agencies are failing to engage with pivotal individuals or social networks; and how these networks could be involved in future activities
  
4. **Use these findings to support the neighbourhood management team to develop practical local projects to improve community engagement and involvement**





# 3. Why use social network analysis?

# What is it?

- Social network analysis (SNA) investigates the nature of relationships between individuals and organisations and how these dynamics influence decision making and communication across a range of issues
- It can be used to identify how communication and networking could be improved and for identifying key networkers who might be ‘hidden’ outside of formal networks of power and influence
- In the context of understanding community dynamics, voice and influence it is a valuable tool for identifying local people with good ideas and opinions who should be involved in community engagement activities

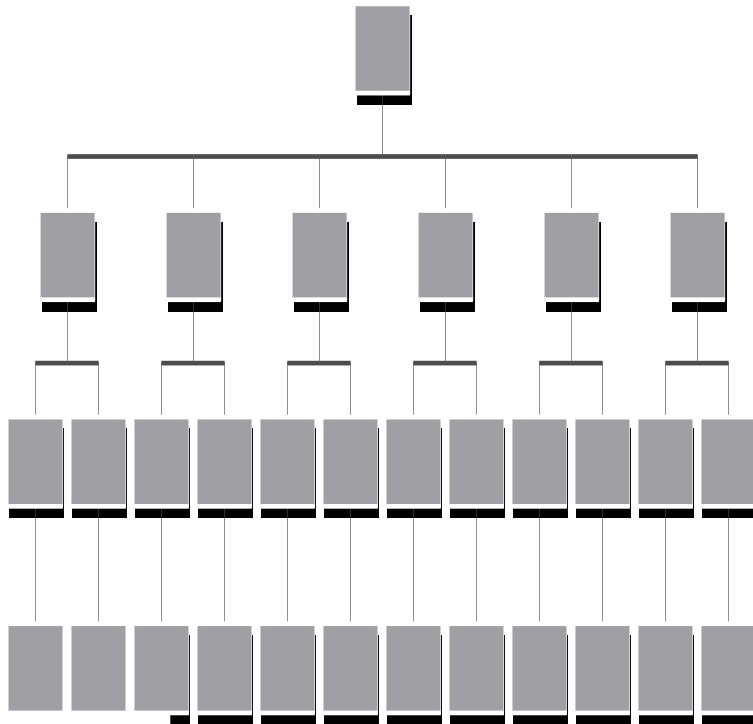


# What is it?

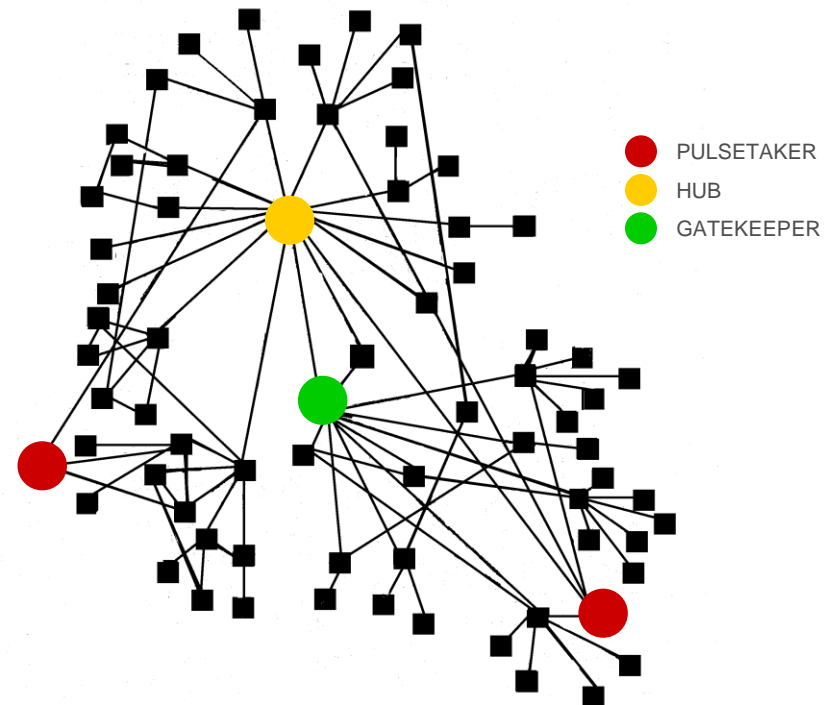
- SNA works on the principle that informal networks of trust and influence flow through and between organisations
- And between people who hold the most pivotal positions within these networks
- Often, these individuals play critical role in sharing information, innovation or decision making
- And can determine organisational successes or failures – but may not hold senior posts, be immediately recognisable in organisational hierarchies or fulfil an identifiable role in the community

# Hierarchies & Networks

Human Capital  
(HIERARCHY)



Social Capital  
(NETWORKS)

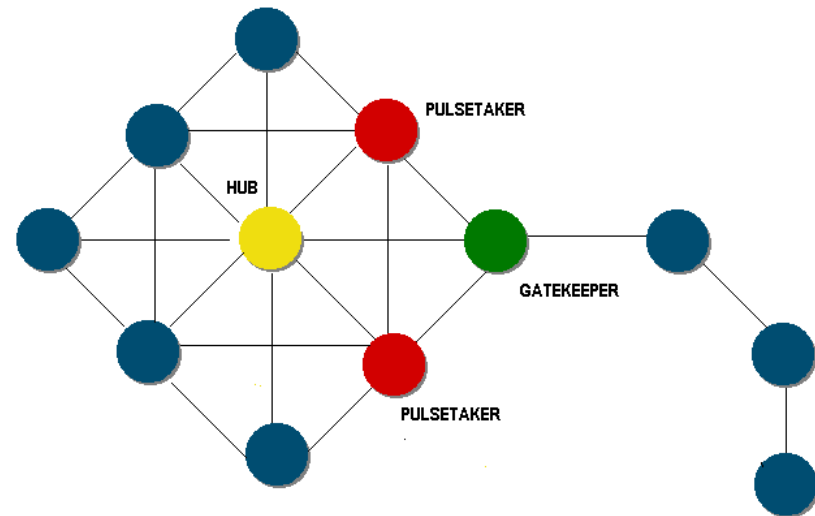


# *DNA molecule in every network*

**Hubs** are people who are highly and directly connected with many people; communicating and disseminating knowledge throughout the organisation

**Gatekeepers** link people and customers together acting as information gateways and brokering knowledge between critical parts of the organisation

**Pulsetakers** are subtle, having the maximum influence using the minimum number of direct contacts; they work through indirect means



Together these network positions account for the stability and flexibility of organisational culture

# SNA identifies

- Where collaborative effort is well ‘joined-up’ and where it isn’t
- Which organisations are connecting well with others and which aren’t
- As well as identifying individuals playing different roles – ‘hubs’, ‘gatekeepers’ and ‘pulsetakers’ it will identify:
  - the key ‘leaders’
  - the key ‘problem solvers’
  - the key ‘mentors’
  - the key ‘innovators’

# Netform's approach to SNA measures five main networks

1. Day-to-day communication within organisations
2. Innovation
3. Decision making
4. Seeking expert advice
5. Informal information - news and 'gossip'

# Why SNA in Fairstead?

- Geographically distinct – able to define community boundaries for residents and service providers
- Need for neighbourhood management to develop local social capital
- Need for different kind of evidence about service providers' local performance – not just official outcome measures
- Need to identify areas of strength: where are the good relationships that can be built on (in agencies and in the community)? And areas of weakness: where are agencies not working effectively? Not innovating sufficiently? Not communicating with residents and VCS?

# Adding communities to the Netform model

- Netform & Insight 1<sup>st</sup> approach to SNA had focussed on relationships in and between organisations
- Fairstead presented scope to innovate and adapt model to analyse relationships between community and services and within community as well
- Community perspective on agencies delivering local services would provide powerful evidence for improving service delivery



# 4. Fairstead project: SNA methods



# Fairstead SNA project

1. Online SNA survey of council and public agencies to understand dynamics of relationship between agencies and community
2. Qualitative research exploring SNA survey themes with residents, community groups and frontline staff in Fairstead to explore the dynamics of local networks and relationships with agencies from resident perspective; and to provide context and meaning to snapshot survey data
3. Fairstead household survey including SNA survey themes
4. Problem solving workshops – to present findings and develop practical responses

# Fairstead SNA project

Aim of the research to identify:

- Areas of strength: where are the good relationships that can be built on (in agencies and in the community)?
- Areas of weakness: where are agencies not working effectively? Not innovating sufficiently? Not communicating with residents and VCS?
- What scope and demand is there for developing community engagement projects? How can these build on existing (formal and informal) community networks?

# Who did we speak to?

- 154 people from 80 different agencies and organisations responsible for delivering local services
- 20 face-to-face interviews with people who live and work in Fairstead
- 248 residents interviewed in household survey

# Fairstead SNA survey population

## **Council, public agencies and service providers:**

- Senior decision makers, officers and frontline staff from relevant departments of the borough council
- Senior decision makers, officers and frontline staff from service providers such as police, PCT, and social services
- Senior decision makers, officers and frontline staff from other public agencies and partnerships operating in the neighbourhood

# Fairstead SNA survey population

## **People living and working in Fairstead:**

- Residents
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Local businesses
- Ward councillors
- Neighbourhood management team
- Community health workers, Safer Neighbourhoods Team, SureStart staff, housing association

# What did we ask?

- How well are the Council and other agencies communicating with residents and community groups?
- Are there enough opportunities for the community to influence decisions?
- How does information flow between agencies and around the community?
- Are there opportunities for information and communication to be improved? If so, how?
- How do information and social networks operate in the community?
- Who are key individuals people go to for local information, news and help?

# Measuring 5 networks

Between public agencies and these agencies and the community:

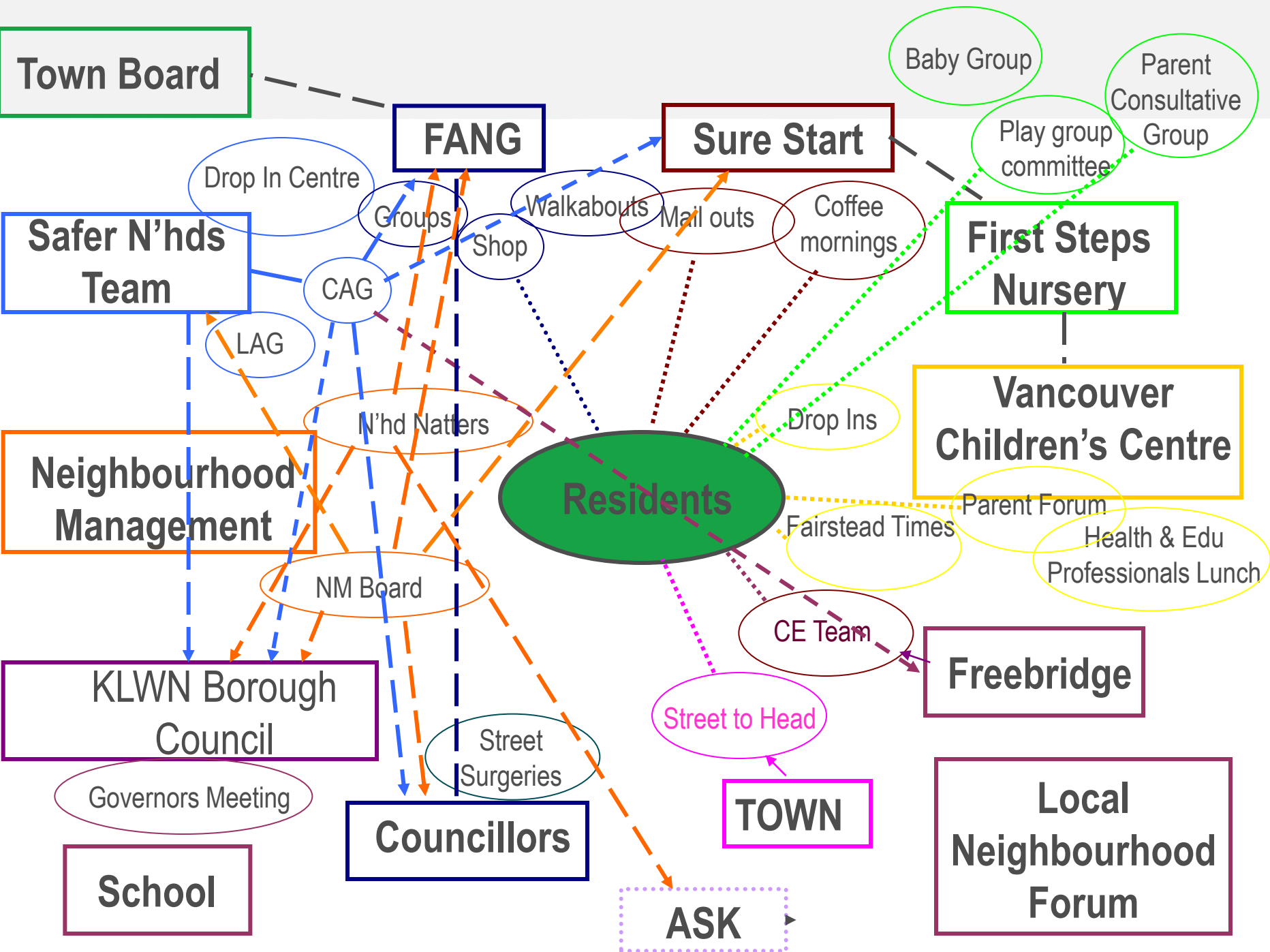
1. Day-to-day communication
2. Innovation: networks for finding new ideas
3. Decision making: networks for influencing and making decisions
4. Seeking expert advice: identifying formal and unknown sources of expert knowledge
5. Communication with residents, community organisations and elected members

# 5. Project findings



# Community perspective – summary

- Project confirmed extremely low levels of social capital among residents in Fairstead and little interest in engaging with agencies and local groups
- Residents described frustration with poor services and legacy of neglect as reasons for not wanting to get involved – not seen as worthwhile
- Complicated picture of local information sources and routes to engagement emerged



# Community perspective – summary

- People living and working in Fairstead felt the activity was uncoordinated and didn't address residents' basic information needs
- Schools were seen by frontline staff in Fairstead as a key channel to reach and engage parents but were isolated from all other frontline agencies
- Conclusion for neighbourhood management team was priority had to be improving service delivery and communication to demonstrate commitment to residents and make engagement worthwhile, before working to build social capital in the neighbourhood

## Four key themes emerged:

1. Consultation and representation
2. Access to information and communication
3. Networks and information flow
4. Trust and engagement

# 1. Consultation and representation

- Feeling that communication is generally poor between the Council/agencies and residents
- Feeling Council/agencies don't make an effort to engage residents widely
- People consulted are 'not representative' of the community
- Council does not act (sufficiently fast) on information gathered or feedback effectively
- Agencies feel that opportunities for consultation and involvement have improved (but residents don't think this)
- Recognition that many residents don't want to engage – 'feeling let down', 'time and access' barriers

## 2. Access to information and communication

- Basic information about services is hard to come by
- Sporadic/limited communication from Council
- No information about who to contact with problems
- Lack of information about community groups and what they do
- Residents ‘stumble’ on information about what is happening in Fairstead
- Council needs to be more active in getting information to residents to persuade people it is serious about improvements in Fairstead
- Too much local activity and information focuses on Centre Point community centre – residents ‘*afraid to come to Centre Point at night*’

### 3. Networks and information flow

- Lots of activity led by Council/agencies (Street Surgeries, Neighbourhood Natters, Community Action Groups, Walkabouts, Consultative Groups, Safer Neighbourhoods Team Drop-in centre) – but uncoordinated
- Need to improve links and communication between agencies and share information about different activities
- Some opportunities to make better use of connections that do exist between agencies and residents (Play Group Committee and Parent Consultative Group – Sure Start, Governors Meetings – Schools, Community Action Groups – Safer Neighbourhoods Team)
- Local Neighbourhood Forum “not effective”, “not well attended”, “not sure what it does”
- Need to communicate Neighbourhood Management Board activity to all local agencies

## 4. Trust and engagement

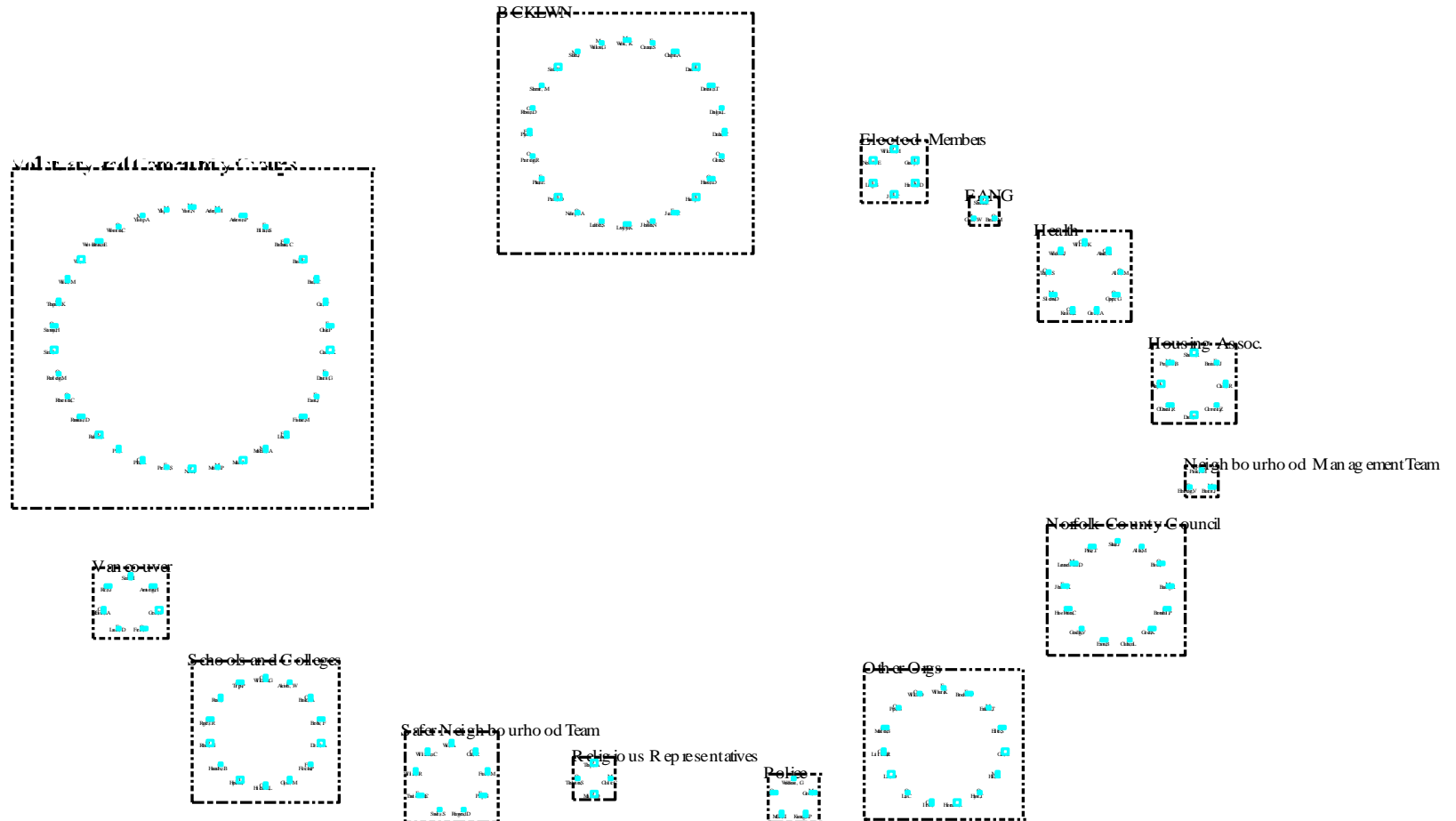
- Recognition that residents are “wary of authority” and need convincing that getting involved is worthwhile
- Need to demonstrate quick wins (beyond Centre Point) – hard to do when communication channels are weak
- Suggestions:
  - Improved communication about Neighbourhood Management
  - Better access and more practical responses from agencies would go far to demonstrate active change

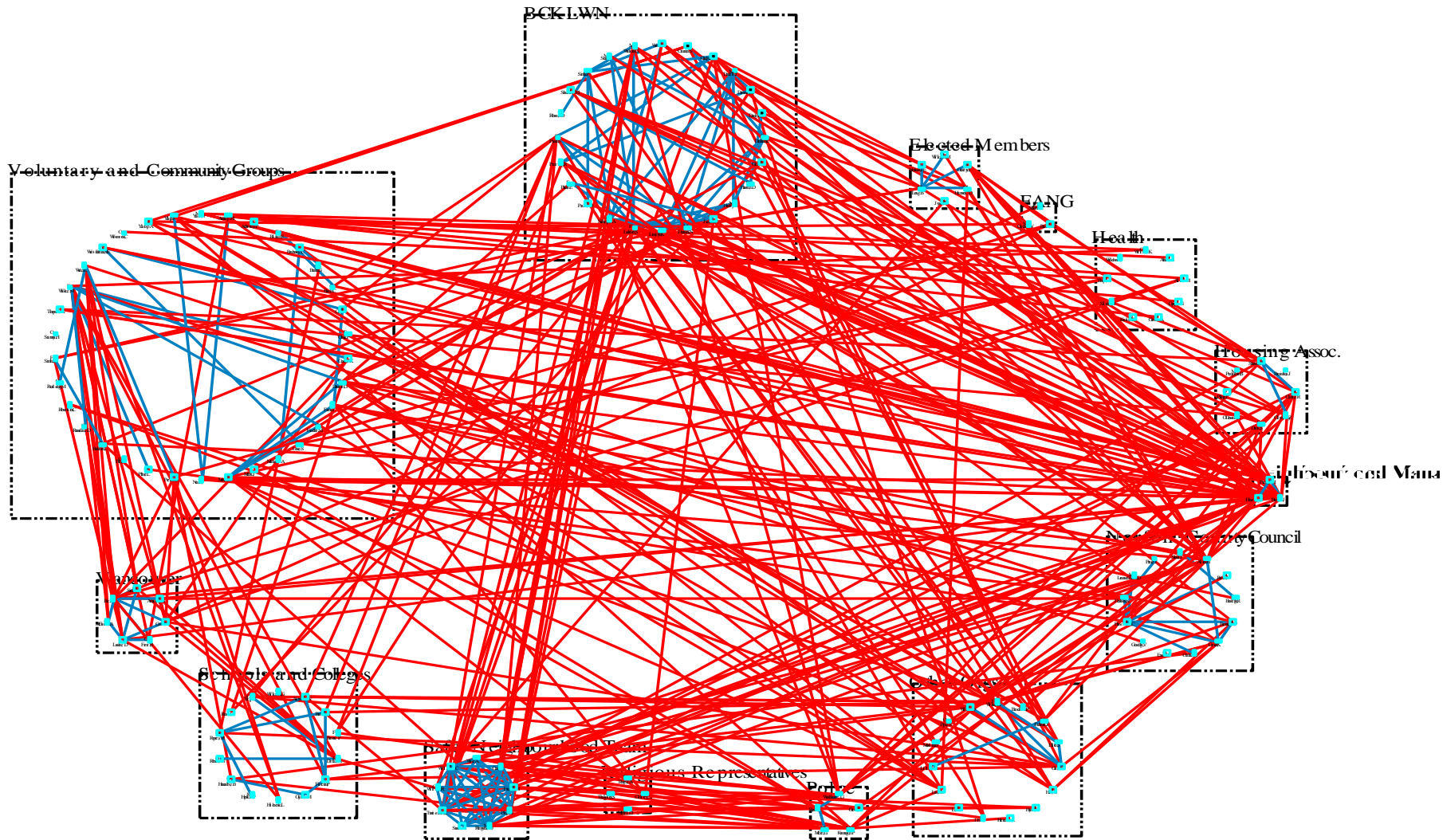


# Council & agencies survey – summary

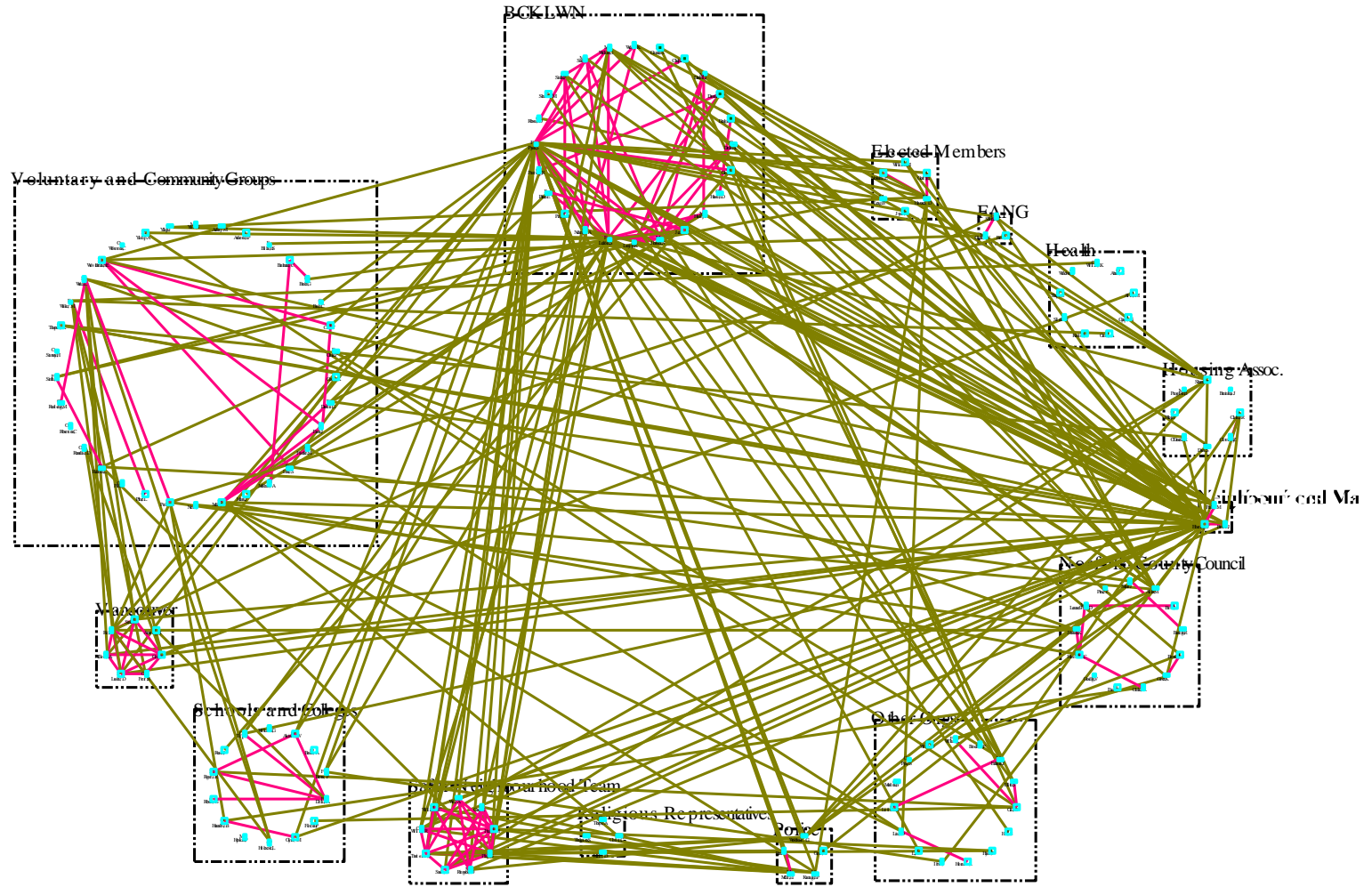
- The survey identified a common pattern across the five different networks – high levels of networking and communication between the council, the neighbourhood management team and the Safer Neighbourhood Team - with the housing association also well networked into day-to-day communication and decision making
- However, schools, colleges and health service providers were operating in isolation
- The survey identified 19 key individuals playing pivotal roles as information brokers and sources of expert advice across the five networks

# Fairstead SNA Survey population

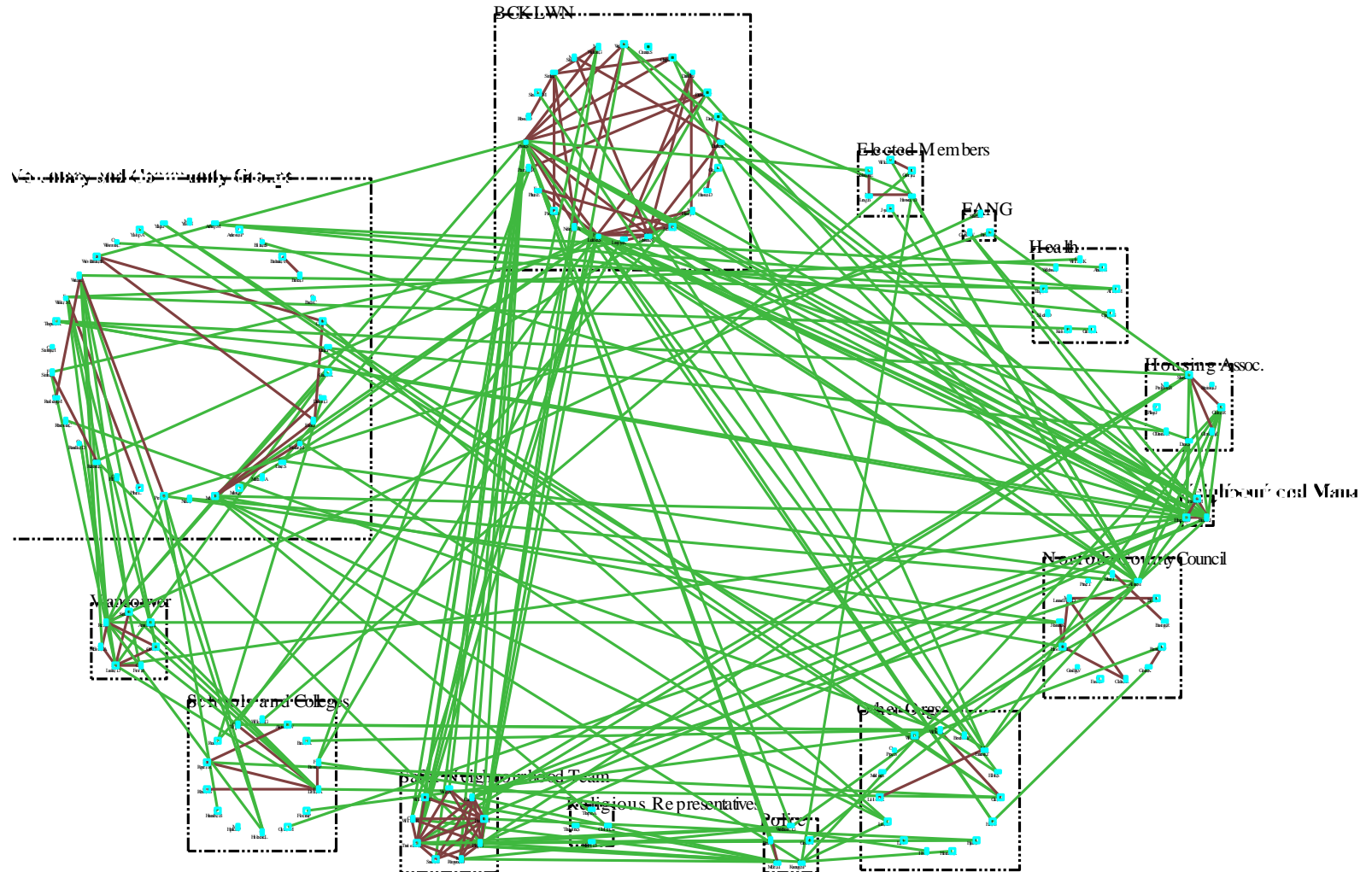




Day-to-day working – all links



Decision making – all links

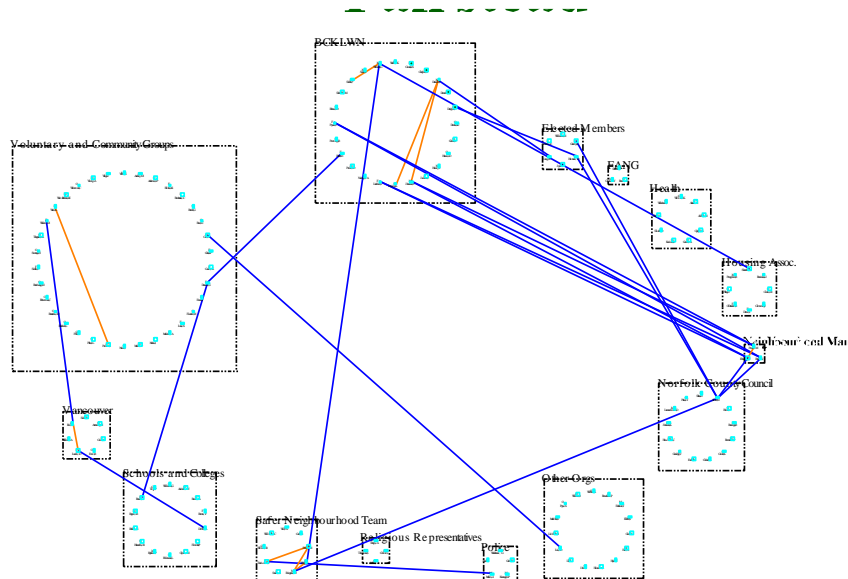


Expert advice – all links

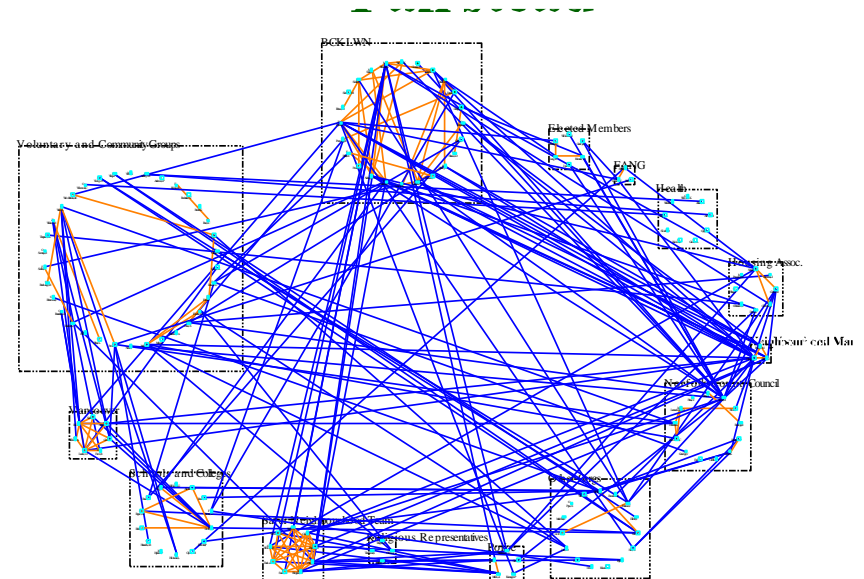


# Innovation networks

## Confirmed Links



## All Links



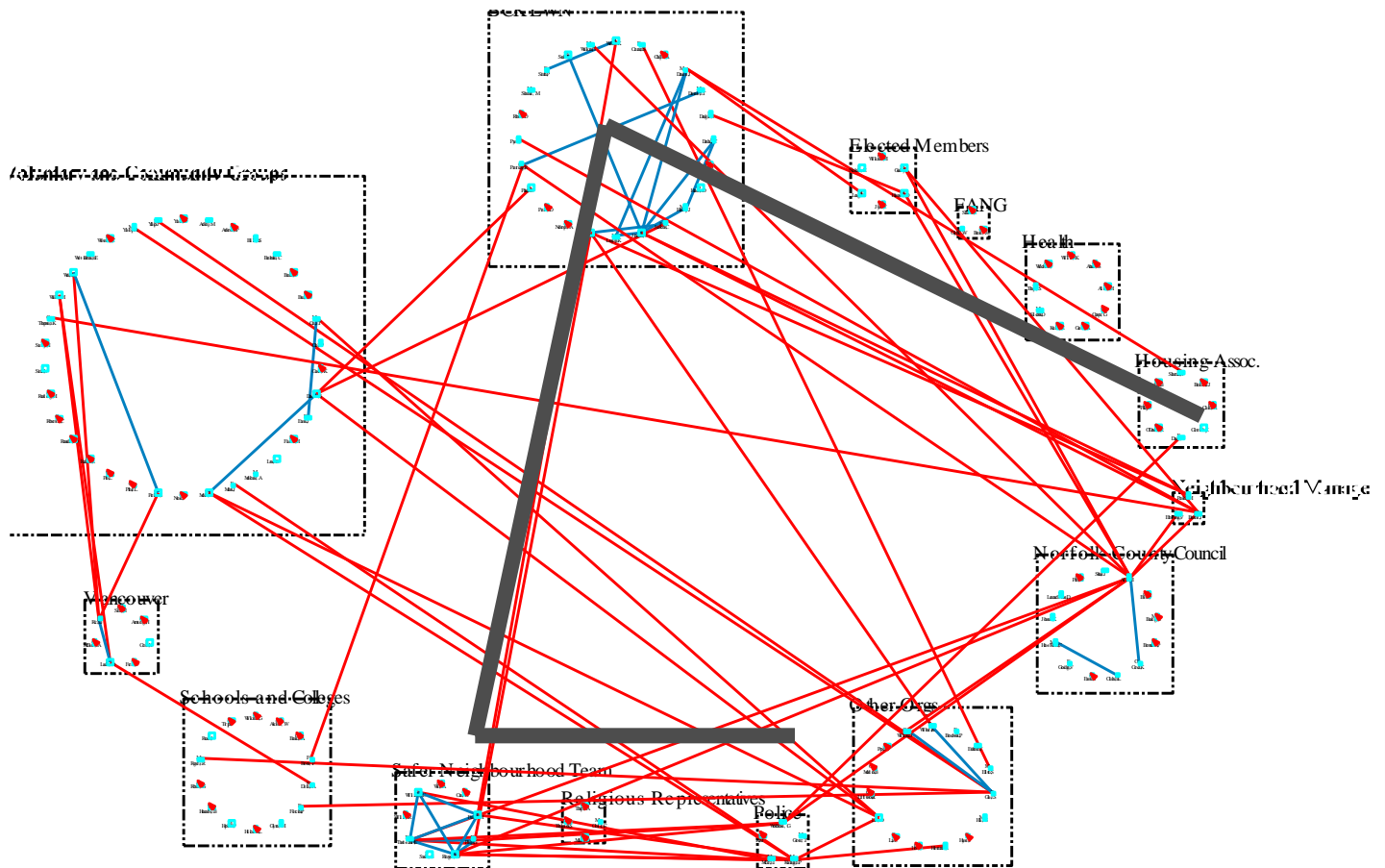


Informal networks – all links

- Survey identified high levels of networking between key agencies: Neighbourhood Management, Safer Neighbourhood Team and some council services (especially Highways and Public Realm)
- Housing association networked into day-to-day communication, but not into decision making, problem solving and innovation

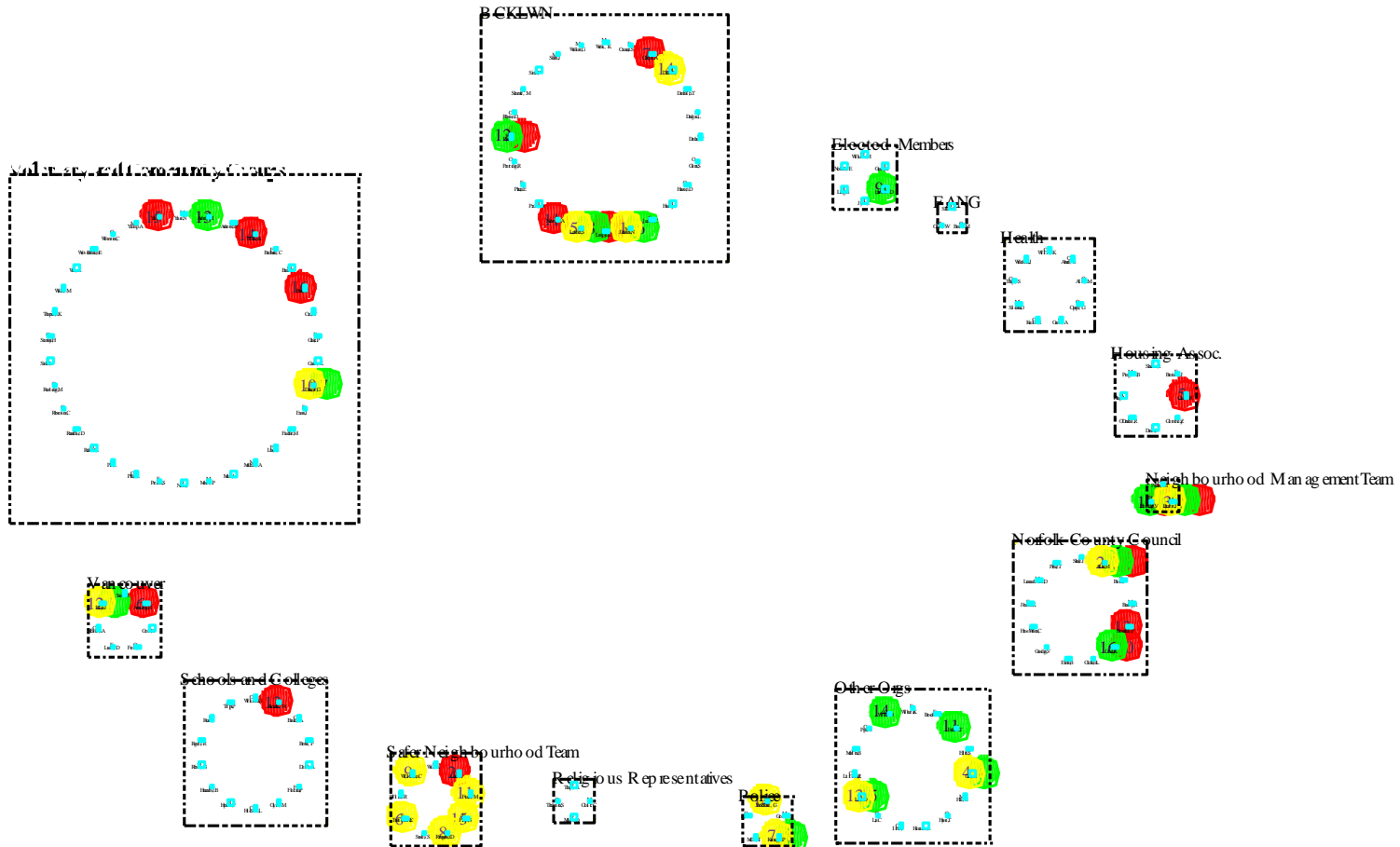


# Fairstead – key networks



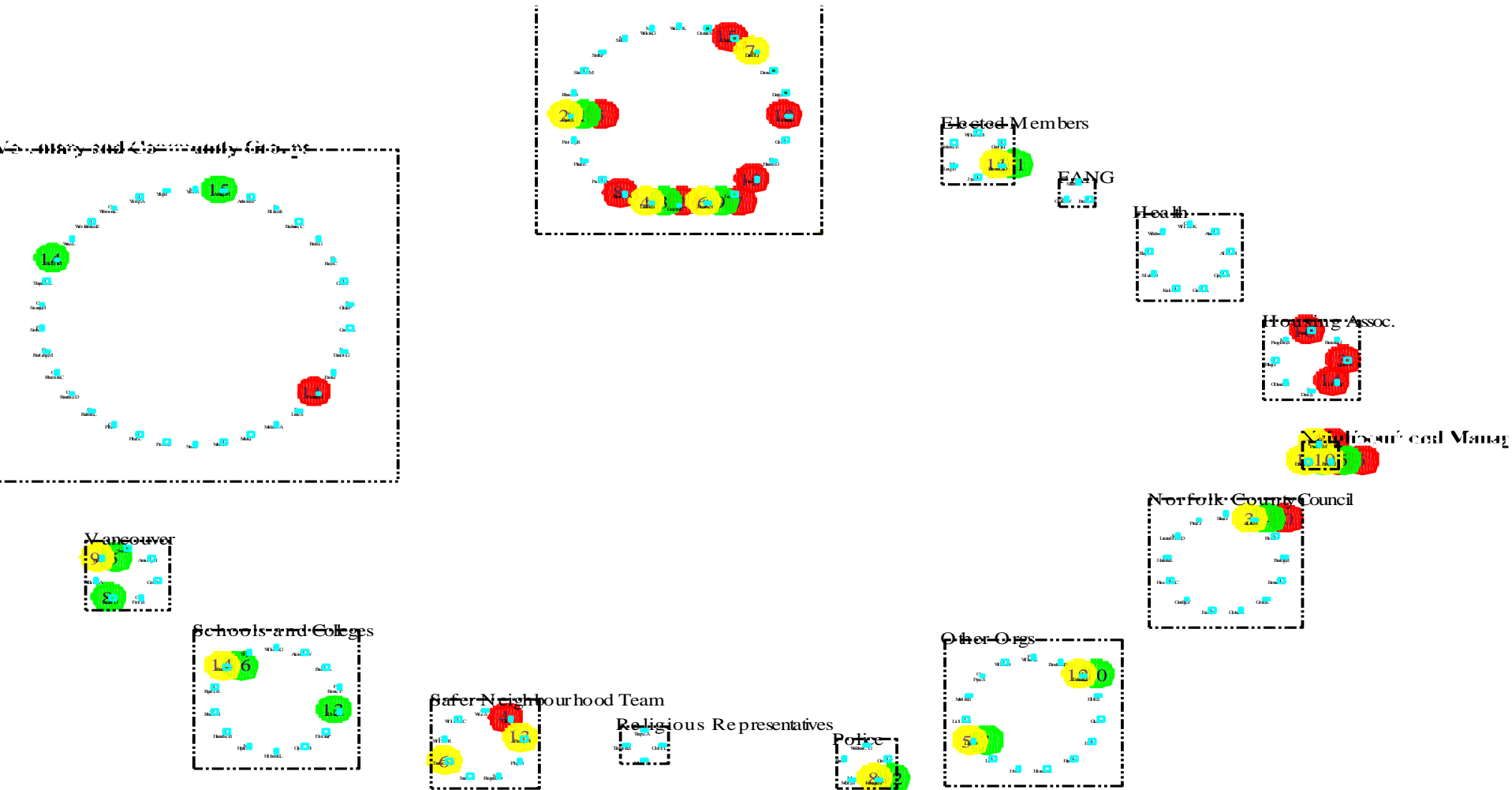
- The survey identified 19 key individuals in these five networks:

# Hubs gatekeepers and pulsetakers (HGPs)

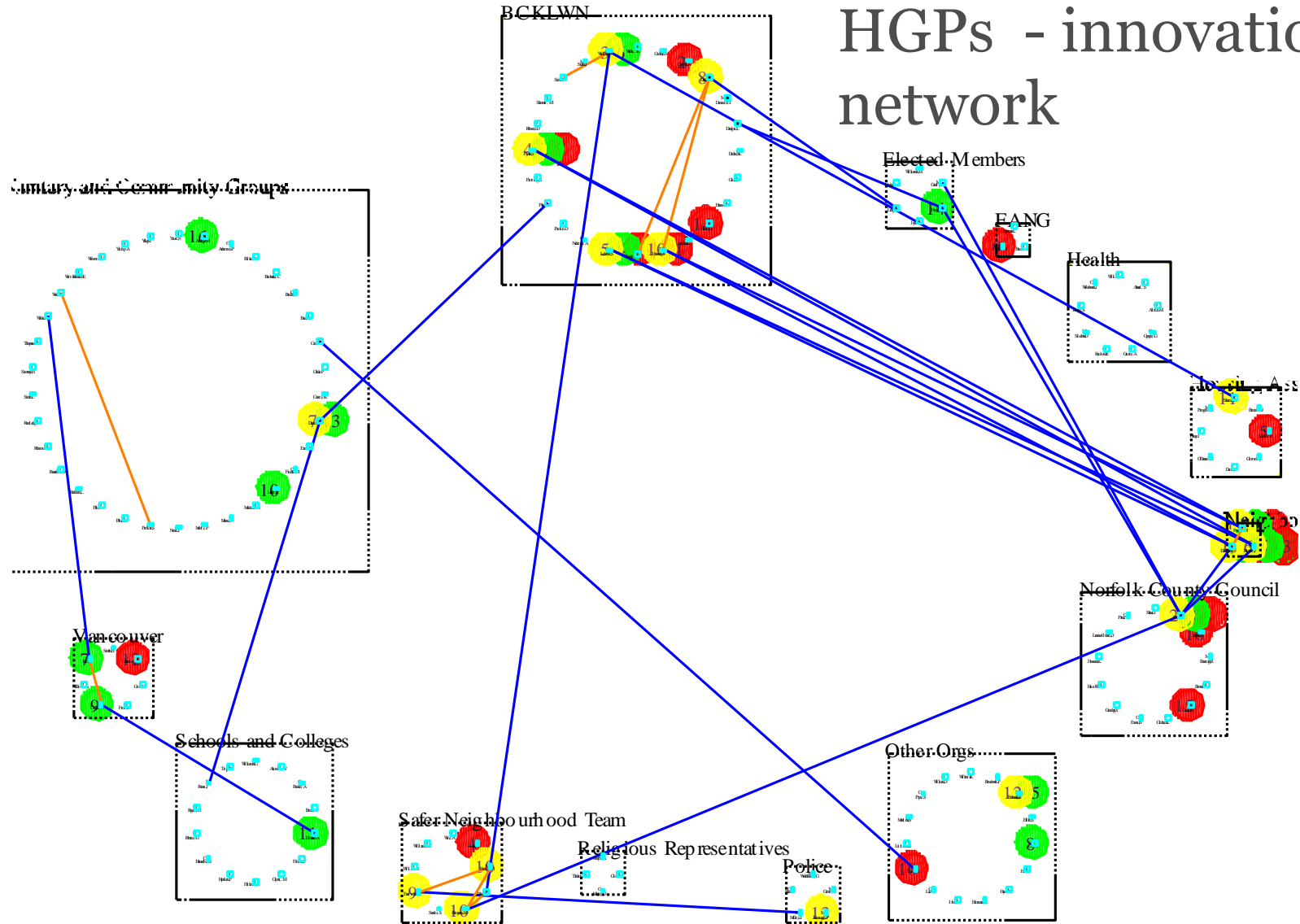


- Several individuals acting as ‘hubs’ in Safer Neighbourhoods Team, meaning many direct local connections and networking within the organisation
- Sharing this Team’s local knowledge with other local stakeholders and agencies was identified as a key objective

# Hubs, gatekeepers & pulsetakers in expert advice network



# HGPs - innovation network





# 6. Using networks to improve local services



# Step 1: stakeholder workshops

- 2007 – Bringing together residents, local groups, frontline staff, service managers and VCS to share SNA project findings and generate practical, collaborative ideas for improving communication and engagement with residents around service delivery
- A series of practical projects were devised:

## Step 2: Fairstead newsletter

- Launched to improve communication between agencies, local groups and residents
- Providing better information for residents about activities on the estate, services and community engagement

# Step 3: Fairstead Neighbourhood Charter

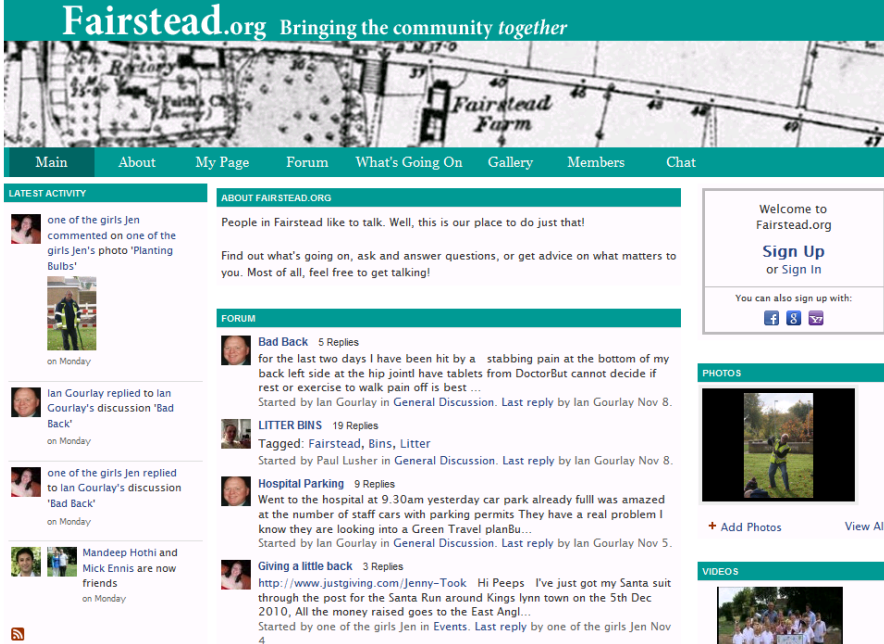
- January 2008 - Neighbourhood Charter around ‘cleaner, greener’ local environmental issues negotiated with residents and service providers
- Four-month process – residents and agencies working to identify issues on the estate and agreeing how to tackle them
- July 2008 – Fairstead Community Agreement was officially signed by dignitaries, residents and local organisations
- Reviewed every 6 months

## Step 4: Neighbourhood Partnerships

- 2009 – Introduced in Fairstead (and four other areas) to give residents opportunities to influence decisions and develop projects for where they live
- Open to anyone living or working on the estate – residents, councillors, voluntary and public sector workers and local businesses

# Step 5: Fairstead.org

- August 2010 – launch of social media website to connect residents and agencies
- Community driven
- Aims to improve communication flows



**Fairstead.org** Bringing the community together

Main About My Page Forum What's Going On Gallery Members Chat

**LATEST ACTIVITY**

- one of the girls Jen commented on one of the girls Jen's photo 'Planting Bulbs' on Monday
- Ian Gourlay replied to Ian Gourlay's discussion 'Bad Back' on Monday
- one of the girls Jen replied to Ian Gourlay's discussion 'Bad Back' on Monday
- Mandeep Hoti and Mick Ennis are now friends on Monday

**ABOUT FAIRSTEAD.ORG**

People in Fairstead like to talk. Well, this is our place to do just that! Find out what's going on, ask and answer questions, or get advice on what matters to you. Most of all, feel free to get talking!

**FORUM**

- Bad Back** 5 Replies  
for the last two days I have been hit by a stabbing pain at the bottom of my back left side at the hip joint! have tablets from DoctorBut cannot decide if rest or exercise to walk pain off is best ...  
Started by Ian Gourlay in General Discussion. Last reply by Ian Gourlay Nov 8.
- LITTER BINS** 19 Replies  
Tagged: Fairstead, Bins, Litter  
Started by Paul Lusher in General Discussion. Last reply by Ian Gourlay Nov 8.
- Hospital Parking** 9 Replies  
Went to the hospital at 9.30am yesterday car park already full! was amazed at the number of staff cars with parking permits They have a real problem I know they are looking into a Green Travel planBu...  
Started by Ian Gourlay in General Discussion. Last reply by Ian Gourlay Nov 5.
- Giving a little back** 3 Replies  
<http://www.justgiving.com/Jenny-Took> Hi Peeps I've just got my Santa suit through the post for the Santa Run around Kings Lynn town on the 5th Dec 2010, All the money raised goes to the East Angl...  
Started by one of the girls Jen in Events. Last reply by one of the girls Jen Nov 4.

Welcome to Fairstead.org  
**Sign Up**  
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*[www.youngfoundation.org/community-action-tool-kit](http://www.youngfoundation.org/community-action-tool-kit)*

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