UTTLESFORD COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH

COMMUNITY ACTION ZONES

Isabel Young / April 2018

THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF SOCIAL CHANGE

About The Young Foundation

Inequality corrodes people's lives, but it doesn't have to be like this. Bound by our shared humanity, we believe we have the power to shape the societies and communities we want to live in.

We confront inequality by working with people to create the changes that will lead to more equal and resilient communities.

How do we do this?

We find new ways of tackling social problems by working alongside communities, using the tools of research and social innovation.

We have created and supported over 80 organisations including: *Which? The Open University, Language Line, Social Innovation Exchange, School for Social Entrepreneurs, Uprising* and *Action for Happiness*.

www.youngfoundation.org

Author Biography

Isabel Young is Programme Manager for Communities at The Young Foundation. She has a long-standing commitment to tackling social inequalities, having worked in the third sector for a number of years on issues such as migrant social inclusion, therapeutic support for young people affected by parental separation, and gender-based violence. She is currently working on a number of projects at The Young Foundation, focusing in particular on community-led health and wellbeing.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Uttlesford Community Action Research: Community Action Zones project (CAZ), took a strengths-based approach to understanding social isolation and loneliness; focusing on people's social connections and networks, rather than assuming social deficit.

Drawing on our deep experience of working with communities across the UK, including Amplify projects in Northern Ireland, Wales and Leeds, we worked with local partners to create a pioneering, three-staged process to promote community-led social action to tackle isolation and loneliness: listening and observing through ethnographic research, dialogue and reflection through community events, and co-creating new approaches led by residents themselves.

Using the tools of community action research and social innovation, The Young Foundation and a local partnership[1] (hereafter 'the Partnership') worked in the Uttlesford region of Essex on the CAZ project, to support the people and organisations working to promote well-being and social connections in their communities.

We believe this is a powerful approach. As part of our research in Essex, we have gained new insights into the nature of people's social connections, how they feel about the communities they live in, and the extent to which social isolation and loneliness affect their daily lives. Our key findings show:

- **How growth and change inform peoples' feelings about their community**
- **How social isolation and loneliness affect certain demographics in particular, including young people, the elderly, and those less mobile**
- **The importance of narrative when exploring understanding of people and place**

As part of the CAZ project, we supported a range of community-led initiatives which address social isolation and loneliness in diverse and creative ways. These include:

- **A community-inspired musical**
- **A resident-led anxiety and stress management course**
- **Supporting a community hub to offer local events**

Our key recommendations to local partners and stakeholders include:

- **To offer ongoing support to the social action initiatives which emerged as part of the CAZ project**
- **To prioritise promoting social connectedness for those most at risk (young people, the elderly and those less mobile)**
- **To continue the dialogue using ethnographic research to further engage with communities**

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[1] The local partnership included Uttlesford District Council, Essex County Council, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, CVS Uttlesford, Volunteer Uttlesford, West Essex CCG and the Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Young Foundation and the Partnership have paved the way for understanding the national challenge of social isolation and loneliness in a nuanced way, informed by the voices of communities themselves. We believe our work in Uttlesford has the potential to be replicated in communities across Essex, and the UK more widely. In doing so, we hope that communities and those with the power to affect change, will feel better informed and equipped to do so.

Introduction

Between June and December 2017, The Young Foundation in collaboration with the Partnership, led the delivery of the action research project, Uttlesford Community Action Zones (CAZ). This was with the aim to increase social action and tackle social isolation and loneliness in three communities in Uttlesford; Little Bardfield, the Usterdale Road area in Saffron Walden, and Takeley and Little Canfield. The project was commissioned by Essex Partners[2] as part of a determination to address social isolation and loneliness, which are in themselves, distinct issues.

The Campaign to End Loneliness defines loneliness as a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship[i]. It happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that someone has, and those that they want[ii]. Social isolation on the other hand, is an objective state referring to the number of social contacts or interactions a person has[iii]. The two issues combined, have proven impacts to both physical health and emotional health, and affect millions of people across the UK[iv][v]. For example:

- Lacking social connections is a comparable risk factor for early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- Loneliness has a worse impact than well-known risk factors such as obesity and physical inactivity
- Loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26%.[vi]

The Partnership recognise that both loneliness and social isolation present a key challenge in relation to health, wellbeing and social care. Their aim was to understand more about the protective factors for tackling loneliness and social isolation; specifically the social networks and personal connections in local communities. Through identifying existing projects and also new ideas, the long term goal was for the Partnership to support local stakeholders to work together to best support the people and projects already contributing to community wellbeing and reducing loneliness and social isolation through sustainable, community-led social action. It was hoped that in doing so, social connections will be strengthened, and experiences of isolation and loneliness will decrease.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide the Partnership with project reflections on existing social connections in Uttlesford, which may then be used to guide their work with communities to tackle social isolation and loneliness. It is hoped that the Partnership will share the findings and recommendations documented in this

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[2] Essex Partners brings together representatives of the many organisations that deliver services to the people of Essex. Essex Partners is responsible for leading the development and delivery of the new vision for Essex, The Future of Essex, and recognises the importance of shifting to a system leadership model, collaborating across organisational, cultural and other boundaries to deliver better outcomes.

report with other key stakeholders, who may be best placed to support current and future social action across these communities.

Setting the Scene

This study took place in three communities in Uttlesford of varying size and scale, and therefore captured a range of experiences and perspectives on social isolation and loneliness. These areas were chosen for their capacity to tell their unique, community stories, but also in the hope that they may reflect life in similar locations across Uttlesford, Essex and the UK more widely.

The Rural Village - Little Bardfield

Image source - www.english-church-architecture.net/essex%20l/little%20bardfield/little_bardfield.htm

Little Bardfield is a small village with approximately 50 properties along a short stretch of road[3]. It has a population of around 264, 97.3% of which define themselves as White British, with an average age of 43 (as of the 2011 census)[vii]. The location was chosen to provide insight into very small, rural villages in Essex. Historically, Little Bardfield was an agricultural community, home to farming families and a small number of private land owners. In recent decades, the nature of the village has changed to become home to people who enjoy living in a countryside setting, but who have 'mobile' lifestyles and are able to travel for work and social activities. Most of the houses would be considered highly desirable and of significant value.

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[3] This number increases to approximately 100 houses when taking nearby hamlets into account.

The Diverse Town - Saffron Walden

Image source – photo taken by The Young Foundation team during pop-up research sessions (June 2017)

Saffron Walden is an historic and relatively affluent market town, and like all of the locations featured in this research, its position between London and Cambridge makes it desirable to commuters. The research was focussed on Usterdale Road, on the outskirts of the town. There are approximately 60 properties here, which are a mixture of social housing, privately rented and privately owned. Residents include families of different ages and retired people, and it is diverse in terms of income and employment. The neighbourhood also features a mixture of 'established' residents who have lived locally for a long time, and people who are newer to the area. This location was chosen to provide insight into a more economically and socially diverse community on the edges of an affluent market town.

The Expanding Neighbourhoods - Takeley and Little Canfield

Image sources (from left) – Priors Green estate (http://www.westhall-estates.co.uk/projects/Priors-Green-Retail-Parade-Takeley), a newly developed house for sale in the villages (http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/Takeley.html)

The neighbouring villages of Takeley and Little Canfield are joined together under the same parish, and comprise of a number of 'pockets' of housing. These include historic properties dating back to the 16th century, established communities and new developments that have been built within past 10 years. It is a popular area with commuters, due to the villages close proximities to Stansted Airport, London and

Cambridge. 4,716 people live in Takeley and the Canfields (the name given to the area more broadly), 93.8% of which define themselves as White British, with an average age of 37.9 years[viii]. Over the last 30 years, Takeley and Little Canfield have experienced extensive housing development and a rapid growth in population. However, infrastructure has not kept up with the pace of development. This area was chosen to provide insight into the rapid expansion of many neighbourhoods in Essex.

The Project Process

Following desk-based research, community asset-mapping and a series of meetings of the Partnership to establish background, The Young Foundation led delivery of the project over three phases (*illustrated in figure 1 below*), across a period of six months. These phases included:

1. **Listening and observing** – involving a series of conversations with residents in each neighbourhood, which ranged from short conversations (known as pop-up research), in-depth, semi-structured interviews and community discussion groups.
2. **Facilitating dialogue and reflection** – community events held in each of the three neighbourhoods in order to feedback the findings from the research, promote greater social connectedness and look ahead to community-led opportunities for social action on the issue of isolation and loneliness.
3. **Co-creating new approaches -** beginning in November 2017 and ongoing between community stakeholders and the Partnership, this phase involves building meaningful and well-paired connections to develop new and existing initiatives which promote social connectedness and challenge isolation and loneliness.
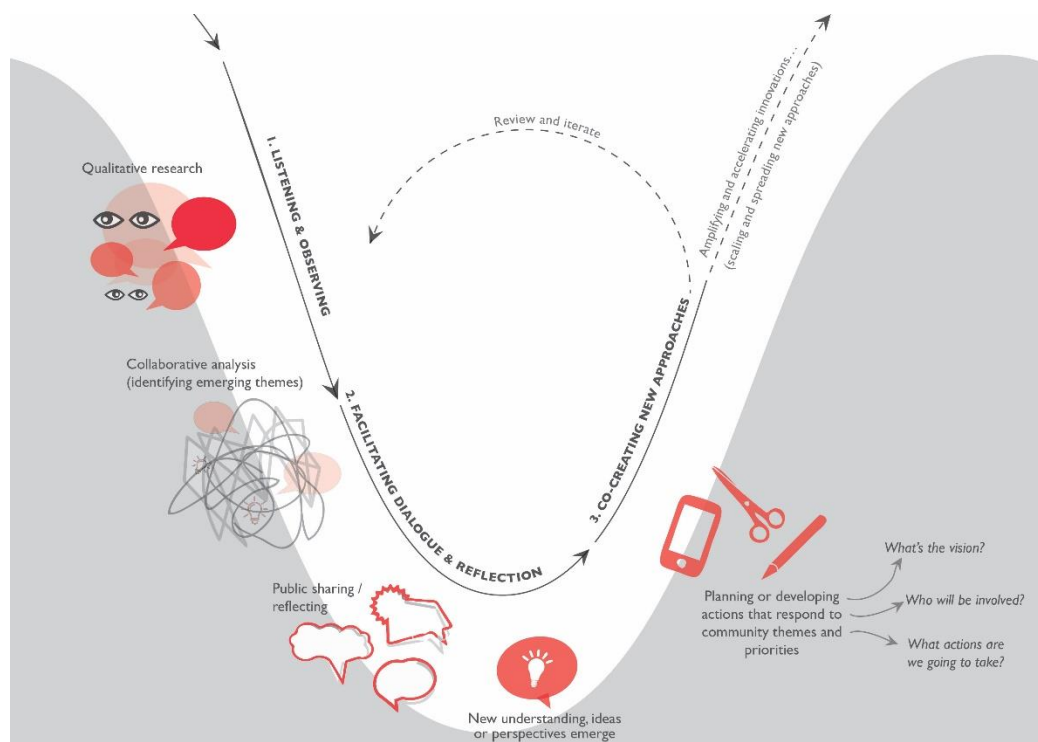

Figure 1: The Young Foundation action research and amplification model

1. Listening and Observing

The first phase of the research, 'listening and observing', involved a **range of methods** which aimed to address the following questions:

- How do the residents in each of the three communities focus on as part of the research feel about where they live?
- Do they feel that there is a strong sense of community in the area?
- What are the main strengths of their community?
- What are the main challenges they face as individuals and as a community?
- What are their primary relationships and networks like locally?
- What facilities and activities are available, and to what extent do they access them?
- What change would they like to see, if any, to improve social connectedness locally? And what might this look like?

Pop-up research

Figure 2 - visual prompt used during pop-up research interviews

The first method used were short, informal interviews on residents' doorsteps[ix]. The Young Foundation trained 11 members of the Partnership in introductory ethnographic research skills and ethics, to conduct pop-up interviews in each neighbourhood alongside researchers from The Young Foundation.

Researchers used visual prompts, in the form of speech bubble flyers (*see figure 2 above*), to encourage community engagement as part of the Young Foundation's strengths-based research approach. Residents were asked 'what makes your community strong?', 'who is your local hero?' or 'what makes you proud to live here?' as a way of beginning conversations and building rapport. Field notes templates were also used to write a reflective overview after a research 'session' (i.e. a morning spent door-knocking in one of the neighbourhoods). In total they conducted 95 informal

interviews across the three neighbourhoods[4]. The conversations were designed to provide insight and were not intended to be representative of each locality.

The benefits of a pop-up research approach is that it can generate a wide set of responses to a specific question or topic in a short period of time, and can feel less intimidating to those taking part. Informal conversations such as these, also often lead to further connections and more in-depth research activities such as interviews of discussion groups.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews

This method allowed researchers to ask more detailed questions, which were tailored to each neighbourhood using a specific interview guide for each.

The Young Foundation researchers conducted 12 face-to-face interviews (lasting between 45 and 90 minutes) with a variety of community stakeholders in each of the neighbourhoods[5]; ranging from local beauticians, to youth workers, counsellors, church pastors, and community volunteers. Demographically, they represented a mix of gender, and diversity of age ranges (from 20 to 80 year olds). Interviewees were selected using some desk-based research, from an asset map of local groups in each area developed by the Partnership, and from a natural 'snowballing' effect which occurred as interviewees recommended others to approach as part of the research.

Community discussion groups

The Young Foundation researchers coordinated and facilitated 3 community discussion groups[6]; 1 in Saffron Walden and 2 in Takeley and Little Canfield, adding further depth to the semi-structured interview and pop-up research data. As it was felt enough information had been gathered from the pop-up interviews with residents in Little Bardfield, it was decided that a discussion group would not be organised in this neighbourhood.

Discussion groups were held with around 6 participants on average (per group), and included teachers, scouts leaders, a pottery class instructor, café volunteers, ESOL teachers and more. Like the interviews, the age range of those who took part in the discussion groups varied greatly, and participants were mixed gender. Recruitment was done by sending invitations to take part to individuals on the community asset lists (such as local group leaders), via social media, email and phone.

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[4] 51 in Takeley and Little Canfield, 26 in Usterdale Road (Saffron Walden) and 18 in Little Bardfield. As a percentage of the total houses targeted, this worked out at a response rate of 25%, 46% and 41% in the three respective neighbourhoods.

[5] 6 in Takeley and Little Canfield, 5 in Saffron Walden and 1 in Little Bardfield.

[6] Also known as focus groups

Within the discussion groups, the following techniques were used:

Empathy acting – where an individual takes on the persona of another member of the community during a group activity. They are asked to respond to a range of questions from what they might imagine to be that person's perspective, thinking about how they might think and feel in a given situation. This technique encouraged participants to frame their answers about social connections, from the perspective of someone else in the community.

Personal networks mapping tool (*see Figure 3 below*) – to understand the types and level of connection people have with their community. This includes personal (friends and family etc.), community (clubs and faith groups etc.) economic (trips to the bank or the shops etc.), and statutory (public services such as the library or the doctors) connections. This activity helped to facilitate conversations about the personal connections people have, the social/community networks they feel part of, and what these relationships mean to them.
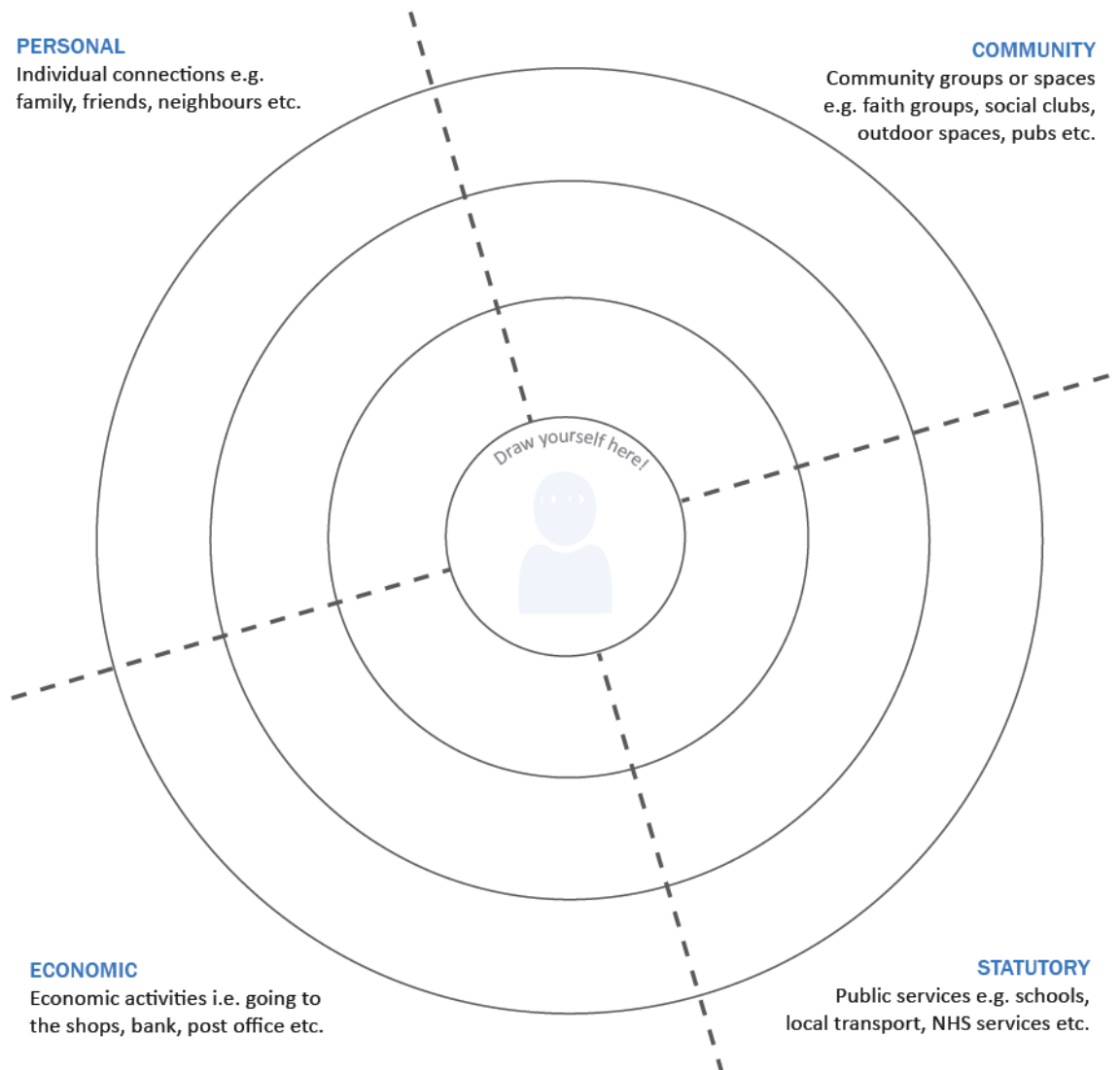

PERSONAL
Individual connections e.g. family, friends, neighbours etc.

COMMUNITY
Community groups or spaces e.g. faith groups, social clubs, outdoor spaces, pubs etc.

Draw yourself here!

ECONOMIC
Economic activities i.e. going to the shops, bank, post office etc.

STATUTORY
Public services e.g. schools, local transport, NHS services etc.

Figure 3 – The Young Foundation Personal Networks Mapping Tool

Analysis and further research considerations

- All of the research data was analysed using qualitative thematic analysis (*see list of terms*). This included the key themes and quotations drawn from the pop-up research, interview and discussion group notes (in addition to the personal mapping tool findings and researcher fieldwork notes), which were then collated as findings.

- At each stage of the research, discussions with local people were framed in the context of social connections and networks, as well as isolation. The methodology was fundamentally asset and strengths-based, in that whilst it was honest about the research purpose and what it was seeking to address, the process of inquiry approached in a way that did not focus on, or assume, social deficit.

- The focus on social connectedness was woven throughout each phase of the research process, from the materials used in initial conversation on residents' door steps, to the research illustrations fed back at the community events (*see figures 5-7 in the 'Dialogue and Reflection' section of this report*).

- Due to the small-scale and highly qualitative nature of this research, it cannot be considered entirely representative of those living in the three areas covered by the project. The aim of the research however, was not to make claims of representation, but to use the power of ethnographic methods to capture the experiences and stories of individuals living in these areas, which may otherwise go unheard.

- All quotations have been anonymised as part of this research. Where identifiers (such as occupations) are referenced, this has been so with the consent of the participant. The majority of quotations have been paraphrased, but there are also direct quotations included from each stage of the research processes.

Research Findings

A number of rich and interesting findings emerged from the three methods used as part of the research (*see figure 4 below*).

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importance of
infrastructure

narratives and
descriptors of
people and
place

growth and
change

social connections
and networks

isolation,
loneliness and
stigma

neighbourliness,
empathy and
understanding

current and
potential social
action
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Figure 4 – diagram of main thematic research findings

This report focuses on three key findings from each of the areas featured in the CAZ project. Each finding relates to social connections and networks as a way of understanding isolation and loneliness more broadly, and considers communities within the changing histories, infrastructures, economic and social conditions in which they exist.

Little Bardfield

Nature over Nurture

'*Quiet*', '*beautiful*', '*rural*' and '*peaceful*' were some of the words Little Bardfield residents used to describe their neighbourhood during the pop-up research. Whilst it is entirely normal to talk about a picturesque area of the Essex countryside with reference to nature, it is interesting to note the dominance of such descriptions in conversations centred on social connectedness.

This may be in part attributable to changes that have taken place in village over the last hundred years. Once a largely agricultural village with low literacy rates and high levels of poverty, it had a strong inward-looking sense of community. Yet gradually, long-term residents left. This included all but one of the young men who went off to fight in WWI and who didn't return. Over the years, people have moved in from elsewhere to create what was described by the Rev. Dr Robert Beaken, the parish priest as *"a community of people who have moved here from somewhere else"*.

Whilst during the pop-up research, residents explained how they still consider Little Bardfield to be a *"friendly"* and *"lovely place to live"*, it was also mentioned that there is *"nothing going on at all"* and that there is *"no focal point"*. With the closing of the school and the pub, and more recently the village hall, over the past few decades there has been a decline in the kinds of things which bring people together. As added by parish priest Dr. Beaken; *"little by little, the very few things there were in Little Bardfield around which the community could coalesce, closed"*.

This lack of infrastructure may be one reason why residents focused on natural surroundings when asked to describe their community, rather than using more people-based adjectives. For several residents, this lack was felt to have an immediate and negative impact on their sense of community and social connectedness. Little Bardfield was referred to as *"a 'through' village with no centre, geographically or socially"*, with *"not a soul around"* and a *"loose community"*. Some reminisced about how things used to be, and expressed a desire to recreate a stronger sense of community, like there had been before.

A village of 'weak ties'

The pop-up research findings suggested that relationships between neighbours in Little Bardfield are characterised by 'weak ties'. As opposed to 'strong ties', commonly found between family members or close friends, and often tight-knit communities, 'weak ties' are used to refer to individuals who may see each other in passing on the street, but have no real interaction beyond this (*see list of terms*). This may also feed into the idea of a "*loose community*" mentioned above.

Several residents commented that they knew and liked their immediate neighbours, but did not really know anyone beyond the end of their road. The relationships they did have with their immediate neighbours tended not to extend much beyond saying 'hi' to one another (particularly whilst dog-walking). A few people did add that they would help each other out if needed, however they did not expand upon of what this might involve.

(Voluntary) Social Isolation

For several residents, the existence of weak ties was not necessarily a bad thing. There was a sense that how the community exists at present, is largely the result of individuals' decisions to *"keep themselves to themselves"*. The rural and isolated nature of the village was what several residents liked about it, as they can commute to nearby Thaxted or Great Bardfield for any social needs they may have, such as seeing friends or taking part in a local club. For this reason, many residents noted the need to have a car to live in Little Bardfield[7].

Whilst the majority of residents appeared to be living comfortably and had elected independence, this is not to say that social isolation and loneliness are not issues in the area. Many said that they would know if one of their neighbours was feeling lonely or isolated. However, it is important to consider the extent to which the weak ties operating in the village, would allow for a lonely or isolated resident to be noticed, or indeed, to actively receive support from a neighbour. There was some concern expressed, that for people who could not rely on their family and friendship networks (said to be living mostly outside of the village), that as the population ages, isolation and loneliness may present itself as more of an issue. For instance, as there is no public transport in the village, the mobility of those who may not have access to a car, would be limited, and therefore exacerbate isolation.

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[7] Census data shows that there is around 206 cars in the area - an average of 2 per household *(see endnotes - Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics. Little Bardfield Parish Report)*

Figure 5 – Little Bardfield research illustration

Saffron Walden (Usterdale Road)

Held back by a narrative of affluence

There appeared to be a strong conflict between the reality, and the perception of Saffron Walden as an affluent town. The boutiques, high-end retail chains and coffee shops housed in historic buildings along the high street for instance, visually signify the town's rich heritage and largely affluent population, but were felt by some, to fail to meet the basic, daily requirements of residents. During the pop-up research, several people living on Usterdale Road drew attention to the limited number of affordable shops, and how they felt that the town did not reflect their needs.

One community stakeholder interviewed explained that relative poverty can be felt in the town by anyone on a household income of less than £30,000 a year[8]. He added that whilst this might be considered a high salary in other parts of the country, in Saffron Walden, it was an inhibiter to community engagement. Referencing his work with young people in the area, he explained that the cost of extra-curricular activities (such as £30 a month to play football), has left many lower-income families unable to engage in the kinds of activities others in the town can readily afford.

The impact this dominant narrative of 'affluence' has on mental health and wellbeing, including social isolation and loneliness, cannot be underestimated. It was said by a number of interviewees to be overshadowing existing inequalities, and issues related to drugs and alcohol, housing and homelessness locally. One interviewee who works directly with people from across the community, said that *"people who are falling into those situations where they need support feel extra stigmatised, because of the assumption that everyone here is fine and happy and wealthy"*. Another interviewee added that people feel a pressure to *"keep up appearances"* in Saffron Walden. Not only was this said to stigmatise those experiencing inequalities associated with deprivation, but it also limits the extent to which neighbours can build close ties with one another, and open up about the ways in which they are struggling.

Neighbourliness and Connectedness

On Usterdale Road, there was suggestion (both direct and indirect) that some residents were experiencing loneliness and social isolation. The roads' positioning on the edge of town was felt to add to this, with inadequate infrastructure (such as limited public transport), further impacting peoples' connectedness to the town. Changes to the bus schedule for instance, have meant that some residents on Usterdale Road are no longer able to go to the twice weekly markets in town, isolating them from the wider community.

Many residents on the road however, recounted anecdotes which signalled strong social connectedness, and overall, it appeared they did not feel social isolation or loneliness were particularly an issue in the area:

"My neighbours were so helpful when I moved in, they went out of their way...helped with gas and electric, mowed my lawn, they let me use their bath"

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[8] Higher than UK national average of around £27,000 (*see endnotes - Office of National Statistics (ONS). Home Employment and labour market People in work. Earnings and working hours. Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Statistical bulletin: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2013 Provisional Results*)

"The man on the end house always helps people out with bits and pieces"

"One lady goes round all the houses and takes meals to older people"

The number of social action initiatives encountered throughout the research, showed the well-established opportunities for social connectedness already existing in Saffron Walden more widely. This includes, but is not limited to, a number of activities run by the churches (such as Excel mentoring for young people at risk of exclusion, men's breakfasts, and visits to the elderly in residential homes), as well as an active U3A[9], Citizen's Advice Bureau and tourist information centre.

Social isolation across the ages

One particularly interesting finding was the suggestions that young people in Saffron Walden (and most likely many parts of the UK) experiences' of social isolation and loneliness are being overlooked. This was discussed by the majority of community stakeholders interviewed in the town.

Two interviewees who work directly with young people locally, described how having little to do that is affordable in the town, coupled with the dominant role of social media, was proving toxic to the lives of young people. Whilst it was recognised that social media can play an important role in connecting people, there was suggestion that the more damaging impacts have gone relatively unmonitored. One interviewee spoke about how the young people he worked with have shared stories of being bullied, not only at school but online at home, as social media platforms are in operation 24 hours a day. He added, that young people were also using sites such as Instagram to share personal pictures of them self-harming, to a small amount of followers on one of their many accounts, called 'privates'. The other interviewee added that the dominance of social media in the lives of young people in general, is contributing directly to social isolation and loneliness, and is eroding personal interaction skills and the benefits of support from physical social networks. It was suggested that in Saffron Walden, *"young people are a forgotten generation"* who *"are just crying out for someone to hang out with them"*.

As part of the pop-up research, in-depth interviews and discussion groups, it was also recognised that social isolation and loneliness may be an issue affecting the elderly population in Saffron Walden too. Similar to Little Bardfield, the combination of limited mobility and infrequent transportation were highlighted as adding to this issue. During an empathy acting exercise in one of the discussion groups, a volunteer befriender of the elderly, took on the persona of a lonely elderly man in the town. Thinking and feeling, from what she imagined might be his viewpoint, she conveyed a man with a wealth of knowledge and experience, but who was simply looking for someone to talk with from time to time. This depiction resonated with some of the elderly participants attending the discussion group, and encouraged a conversation about the importance of initiatives such as befrienders, as well as the possibility for intergenerational activities in the town.

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[9] University of the Third Age

Figure 6 – Saffron Walden research illustration

Takeley and Little Canfield

An 'ebbing and flowing' community

> *"These developments are causing the community to fragment, causing people to go their own ways and feel a disconnection from their community"*

A theme to emerge in all three areas of the research, the concept of 'growth and change' was most strongly noted in Takeley and Little Canfield. Residents talked about how the ongoing development of the villages was putting a strain on infrastructure and resulting in the *"ebbing away of the community"*. Whilst the questions of this research focused on *social* connectedness, it became increasingly important to recognise that people's personal networks and involvement in the community are also deeply connected to, and impacted by, *structural* issues.

Residents talked about their frustrations of not having a GP in the villages, despite the rapid growth in population[10]. This means residents of Takeley and Little Canfield have to travel to nearby Elsenham, and several people recounted how they often have to wait up to six weeks to get an appointment. Some also discussed the isolating nature of having to travel outside of the villages for work and social life, particularly as a 'parental taxi' for their children to be able to attend school and take part in extra-curricular activities.

Whilst several residents explained that they understood the need for new housing in the area, their frustrations were that Takeley and Little Canfield have come to feel like *"dormitory villages"*. This phrase was used to refer to the influx of residents employed by the nearby airport, and commuters to London and Cambridge, who were felt to do little more than sleep in the villages. This sentiment was echoed by some of the new and transient residents themselves, who discussed the difficulties of establishing roots in the community; *"it's difficult to belong anywhere due to changing shift patterns"*.

Empathy and understanding

As a community that has experienced a lot of demographic change, it can be noted how this feeds into struggles with empathy and understanding between the different members of the community. Factors such as stage of life, culture and perspective, were key influences in how residents felt about their neighbourhoods. More established residents spoke about how much things have changed in the last 40 or so years, and that the newer residents *"just do things differently to the way we do"*.

There also appeared to be divided opinion about levels of integration and welcoming amongst new and more established residents. A resident of Takeley and Little Canfield for the past four years said; *"I've never not felt welcomed"*. Whilst an active member of the community talked about being rebuffed in his attempt to welcome newcomers; *"we've knocked on new people's doors to welcome them and have literally been told to go away"*.

There were many residents however, who described how *"friendly"*, *"helpful"*, *"social"* and *"community spirited"* their neighbourhoods were, particularly for those with young families; *"it's nice [the children] can all grow up together"*.

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[10] As of the 2011 Census, there are nearly 5,000 people living in the area (*see endnotes – Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics. Takeley and the Canfields 2011 Census Ward. Local Area Report)*

There was little suggestion overall that social isolation and/or loneliness were felt to be an issue in the area. A few residents did express concern about some of their neighbours during the pop-up research. For example, one or two people mentioned that they worried about a couple of elderly widowers and a young man living round the corner, who they said might feel lonely or isolated because they are living alone, and rarely see anyone. Others said that if anyone was experiencing isolation or loneliness, then the local parish magazine 'The Grapevine', could be used to help them feel more connected to the community, as it is an excellent source of local information and activities. Interestingly, the vast majority of people who took part in the research in Takeley and Little Canfield, mentioned The Grapevine as an important local resource.

Evolving Engagement

Several residents mentioned the ways in which people connect with their community, and the extent to which they want to, have changed in the last few years. For some, this was a point of contention; they reminisced about how much stronger a sense of community there had been in the past. Others acknowledged that times have changed, and that people do not necessarily want to go to summer fetes and Christmas fayres any more. This mind-set was attributed in particular to those who commute from the villages, and are time-poor[11]. With the stresses of working long days in the city, it was said by one interviewee that *"sometimes at the end of the day you just want to come home, shut the door, and put Netflix on"*.

To ensure future social action, it was said to be vital that the younger generations are engaged now, so that they can bring *"new blood"* and *"energy"* into the community. It was also clear from the research, that there are numerous activities on offer in the area and that *"those who want to get involved, will get involved, and those who don't want to, won't"*. However, it was felt that activities for certain demographics (particularly young people, and also mothers with young children) were lacking, and that activities in general could be more affordable, as a way of promoting better community-connectedness.

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[11] i.e. they have little time to take part in community activities because of work or life commitments.
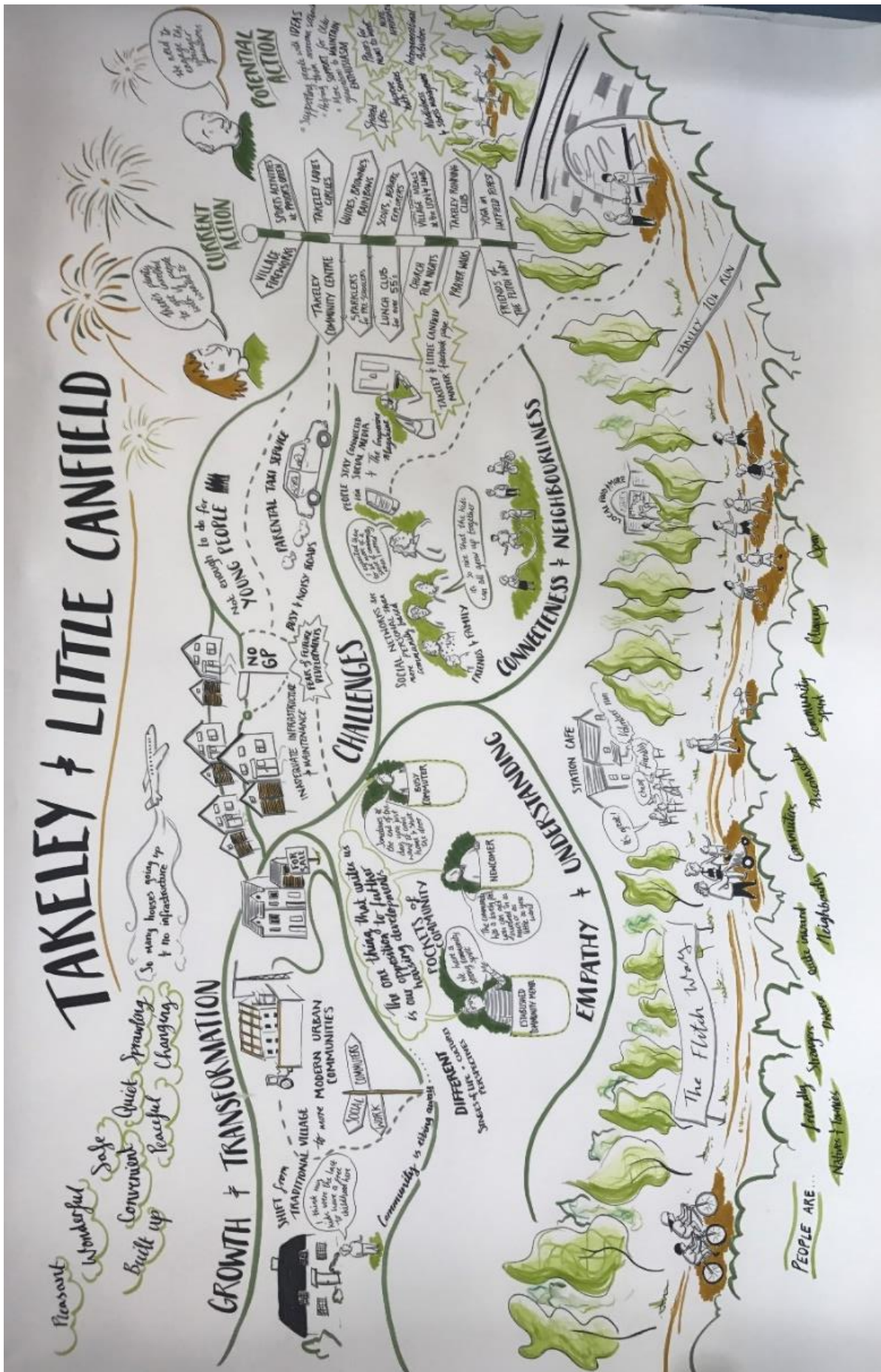
Figure 7 – Takeley and Little Canfield research illustration

Thoughts on the findings

- In all of the research locations, there appeared to be a certain sense of nostalgia for the way things used to be, particularly amongst more established members of the community (i.e. people used to be better connected).

- Concern was expressed for the wellbeing and sense of connectedness of those at the top and bottom end of the age demographic, and those on lower incomes, given the lack of affordable activities available.

- A sense of social connectedness appears to be strongly affected by physical connectedness and mobility/access, and the extent and rate of demographic shifts that have occurred in the research areas.

- Narrative of a place plays a strong factor in experiences of social connectedness and sense of isolation. This can be seen in how residents described their community (e.g. the focus on nature in Little Bardfield), the extent to which people identified with the area where they lived (e.g. the lack of representation felt by residents of Usterdale Road when discussing Saffron Walden), and dominant discussion of infrastructure (e.g. the frustrations expressed by the residents of Takeley and Little Canfield, who feel the strains placed on their community due to rapid housing developments).

- Many of the findings may be seen as representative of general/wider shifts in ways of interacting with neighbours and living in modern society across the UK as a whole. This may be telling about how people's lack of community engagement is in keeping with an insular culture existing in Britain today.

2. Facilitating Dialogue and Reflection

The Partnership worked together to design and deliver a series of community events to feedback the findings from the research, promote greater social connections and look ahead to community-led opportunities for social action on the issue of isolation and loneliness.

The events took place over a three-week period, from late-September to mid-October 2017, at community venues in each of the locations featured in the research. The activities held at each event, were designed to build relations and connections between residents. These included:

- **Continuing the discussion:** research findings were fed back to the communities using illustrations which visualised the key themes from the research (*see figures 5-7*). Residents were invited to engage with the research illustrations, and explore further thoughts about their community, social connections, and ideas for future social action. The research illustrations were interactive, and residents added their thoughts and suggestions on speech bubbles.

- **Creating connections**: an interactive stall, where residents designed and created their own fabric pendants to represent their community. All of the pendants were then strung together to form bunting. This activity was about visualising the importance of better social connections, as well as residents' hopes and aspirations for their communities.

- **Nurturing neighbours**: residents were asked to choose a neighbours address from a hat, and then decorate a teacup plant pot for them. They then planted a bulb which they had to nurture until it flowered, ready to be delivered to their chosen neighbour. The activity was about creating opportunities for residents to connect with one another, and develop a sense of collective social care.

- **Community anthems:** In Saffron Walden and Takeley and Little Canfield, a local singer-songwriter drew from the research findings, and created songs which highlighted the challenges of social connectedness in each community, and provided a call to action for people to come together.

Little Bardfield's Big Bonanza

Image source: photos taken by the Partnership at the event in Little Bardfield (20th September 2017). Permission to use photos obtained from subjects.

Aim: to respect the desire of many residents to *"keep themselves to themselves"*, but to provide an opportunity for those wanting more of a sense of community, to come together and take tentative steps towards strengthening their relationships with their neighbours (i.e. moving from 'weak ties' to 'strong ties').

Observations: residents who have lived in the village for nearly 20 years and never really spoken to their neighbours, appeared to truly appreciate having the opportunity (and forum) to go beyond just saying 'hi' to one another, and learn one another's names. Many people felt inspired by the event, and expressed interest in holding similar events in the future.

Our Local Get Together – Saffron Walden

Image source: photos taken by the Partnership at the event in Saffron Walden (7th October 2017). Permission to use photos obtained from subjects.

Aim: for residents of Saffron Walden (particularly those from Usterdale Road) to feel good about their neighbourhood, to showcase current community activities and successes, and to encourage residents to connect with what's already on offer.

Observations: The community anthem for Usterdale Road was well-received, and several attendees expressed interest in getting involved in future musical ventures in the community. The local community allotment group, led the 'nurturing neighbours' plant pot activity, and made connections which have proven beneficial to the development of their organisation. It was felt overall however, that attendance was not as high as hoped for – which highlighted the difficulties of promoting better social connections through community events (*this is discussed in more detail in the 'Learning' section of this report*).

TLC Community Bash

Image source: photos taken by the Partnership at the event in Takeley and Little Canfield (15th October 2017). Permission to use images obtained from subjects.

Aim: for those in attendance to feel good and enjoy themselves, to support residents to connect across their differences, and to feel more in control of what happens in their communities.

Observations: the research illustration was highly engaged with by attendees, and sparked much discussion about existing initiatives and potential gaps for further social action. It was mentioned how present the church was across the current action showcased in the research illustration. Several young mums talked about how important it had been to connect with available activities. There were a number of children in attendance, which is reflective of the make-up of the villages. The community anthem was well-received, and focused on shared lived experiences of residents, with the aim of building empathy and understanding amongst different pockets of the community.
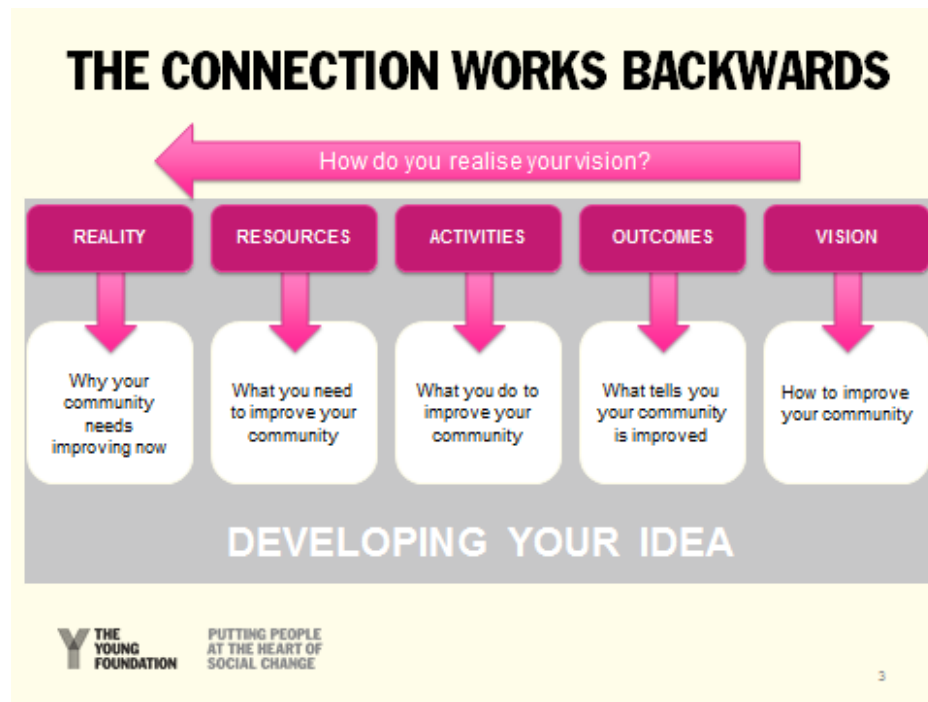
3. Co-creating New Approaches

THE CONNECTION WORKS BACKWARDS

How do you realise your vision?

REALITY	RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	VISION
Why your community needs improving now	What you need to improve your community	What you do to improve your community	What tells you your community is improved	How to improve your community

DEVELOPING YOUR IDEA

Figure 9 – social action support material

The final phase of the CAZ project began in November 2017, and will be ongoing between community stakeholders and the Partnership. It involves building meaningful and well-paired connections to develop new and existing initiatives which promote social connectedness and challenge isolation and loneliness.

The focus of the co-creating new approaches phase is reflective of the themes identified in the first two phases of the project, and the overall aim is to establish **recommendations, next steps** and **action points** that have the backing of all stakeholders. This phase involves:

- Using the **tools of social innovation** to support a diverse range of community-led initiatives to develop their ideas.
- Making **pairings between the Partnership and the community stakeholders** which make the best use of varied skillsets and expertise.
- Establishing a **small community chest**, enabling each community stakeholder to access capital as a way of kick-starting their initiative.

This part of the report showcases examples of the social actions which emerged from this research, and are currently being supported by the Partnership. The communities were sent the original research illustrations, including additional comments to have come from the events, as well as information on current and future initiatives coming to their neighbourhood (*see figure 10 below*).

Figure 10 – front side and reverse side of the Little Bardfield social action flyer (personal contact details have been removed)

Little Bardfield

During the Dialogue and reflection phase, residents at Little Bardfield's Big Bonanza discussed some of the community social actions they might like to see in the future, using the research illustration (*see figure 5*) as inspiration and a starting point.

The Partnership has gone on to support the community of Little Bardfield with the following initiatives:

1. **Regular community coffee mornings**

The **first coffee morning was held in mid-December 2017**, and operates on a rotational basis between households thereafter. The community leaders heading up the initiative hope it will be an opportunity "*for residents to get to know one another, have a chat, and just to come together at a time of year that can be quite lonely and isolating for some people*".

2. **A village fish and chip run**

The community members leading the initiative worked with the Partnership to set up the group on WhatsApp, which was then promoted amongst residents. Residents can join the group, and then organise amongst themselves for someone to make a trip to Thaxted or Great Bardfield to pick up dinner for their neighbours, who may not have the opportunity to do so otherwise.

3. **Events at the local cricket pavilion**

The dialogue and reflection event was hosted at the local cricket pavilion, and those from that, those running The Little Bardfield Village Cricket Club (LBVCC), took away valuable lessons. They realised that the way they had been

promoting community activities in the past, had not been an appropriate or effective as a way of reaching the residents of Little Bardfield. Rather than just relying solely on social media, they explained how they plan to publish their upcoming events in the Bardfield Times, leaflet-drop around the village, and ensure their fixtures board remains up-to-date. A new idea to come out of the event also included hosting a quiz at the pavilion in Little Bardfield, providing another opportunity for residents to come together in what is the village's only remaining community hub.

Image– a member of the Partnership working with a local resident to set up the WhatsApp group for the Little Bardfield Fish and Chip run. Taken by a member of the Partnership during a meeting with members of the community (24th November 2017). Permission obtained from subjects to use photos

Saffron Walden (Usterdale Road)

In Saffron Walden, there is already a number of community activities on offer, including but not limited to:

- The **Walden Wellbeing Walk-in** – a monthly drop-in session run by chartered psychologists and volunteers, where people can come to a safe space and chat about any issues they may be experiencing.
- **Fairy Croft House** – a community centre running a number of largely music-related activities for young people.

- **Saffron Walden Community Church** - hosts a number of activities such as a messy church for children, English for Speakers of Languages (ESOL) classes, men's and women's breakfasts, coffee mornings, and a kid's summer camp. It welcomes all members of the community, religious or not.

Of the initiatives which the CAZ project has gone on to support, two are new ideas (Saffron Walden: The Musical, and Suspended Coffee) and one is an existing project (Dig It Community Allotment).

1. **Dig It Community Allotment** has been using horticulture for a number of years as a therapeutic method for marginalised members of the community. The Partnership is working to support Dig It to develop a three-year business plan, using social enterprise models and financial planning as guides.

2. **Saffron Walden: The Musical**
   Following her involvement with the community events in Saffron Walden and Takeley and Little Canfield, a local singer/songwriter felt inspired by the research and will be leading on an initiative to tell community narratives through music. The role of the Partnership will be to support the development of the project plan, including volunteer recruitment and making connections with local organisations who may wish to get involved.

3. **Suspended Coffee Saffron Walden**
   A key community stakeholder interviewed as part of the research, talked about the importance of coffee shops as a way of tackling social isolation and loneliness, and promoting social connectedness in the community. However, with the unaffordability of many activities in Saffron Walden, for many people, coffee shops are inaccessible because they require a certain level of disposable income.

   A proposed solution to this that he is working on, with the support of the Partnership, is the set up a suspended coffee initiative in the town. This is where rather than just buying one coffee, someone buys two, ready for the spare coffee to be claimed later by someone else in the community. The aim is to create inclusive spaces in existing places, for all of the community to come together and connect, one cup of coffee at a time. The initiative is being carefully designed to avoid any potential issues around stigmatisation or misuse of the scheme, with reference to a number of other successful initiatives worldwide. The Partnership will support the initial planning and piloting stages of the project, as well as provide funding pathways for the promotional materials (such as flyers and posters) that will be needed to inform the community about the initiative.

Images (from left) – work on Saffron Walden: The Musical, preparing to pilot Suspended Coffee: Saffron Walden (December 2017). Permission obtained from subjects to use photos.

Takeley and Little Canfield

This was perhaps the most challenging of the three research locations, for several reasons, but predominantly because of the issues around empathy and understanding between different pockets of the community. Any future social action, needs to be about bringing these different groups together, whilst also respecting the degree to which people wish to get involved in the many community activities and initiatives already on offer. These include, but are not limited to:

- Takeley Running Club
- The Grapevine community magazine published by the Parish Church Council
- Station House Community Café
- Local Food (and more!) Green Café
- Lunch club for over 55s at Takeley Community Centre
- Sparklers for preschool children, parents and carers at Takeley Community Centre
- Little Canfield Village meals at the Lion and Lamb pub
- Church prayer walks
- Sports activities in the Priors Green Community Hall
- Village firework display
- Takeley Ladies Circle
- The Scouts, Beavers, Cubs and Explorers
- The Guides, Brownies and Rainbows
- Takeley 10k run
- Yoga in Hatfield Forest
- 'Takeley and Canfield Matters' Facebook group

Promoting better connectedness in Takeley and Little Canfield will take time, as well as ongoing effort and energy. The Partnership has committed to supporting the following actions in area:

1. **More local events and activities**

The local church is also very active within the community, and is working to connect more members of the community with the regular events and activities they put on: *"it's not about getting bums on seats [in the church], it's about getting bums off seats and into the community!"* The Partnership is working to support this church-led social action, initially through meetings between the church leader and a member of the Partnership, who will come together to look at how to make the most of the newly acquired community asset – The Old School. They also want to develop existing community events at the Silver Jubilee Hall.

2. **A local wellbeing course**

Two local counsellors will also lead on a new idea for social action to have come out of the research. Through their work in the community to date, they have supported a wide range of people facing mental health challenges. However, they feel the issue of stress and anxiety amongst commuters in the villages has been neglected until now. They are hoping to offer tailored support, including community workshops, supervision and weekly 'drop-in' clinics to promote increased wellbeing and connectedness locally. The Partnership will support the pair to develop their project and promote it via community gatekeepers such as GPs. In doing so, the project hopes *"to promote a healthier lifestyle and wellbeing"* for residents in Takeley and Little Canfield.

Learning

Whilst learning has been ongoing, members of the Partnership were asked to consider the following questions on the process at the end of The Young Foundation's involvement in the CAZ project (December 2017):

- What did you **enjoy most/value about the project?**
- What were the **success/challenges of the project**, from your point of view?
- Did you **learn anything**, or grow in confidence in any way during the project? If so, how might you apply this learning going forward?

Anonymised direct quotations from the Partnership's responses to these questions illustrate some of the key reflections on the project.

On connecting with the community:

The pop-up research sessions were clearly valuable to those who took part. Members of the Partnership described how beneficial it was to be allowed the time to go out into communities and talk to people face-to-face, using a newly acquired skill-set to do so.

"The most enjoyable part of the project for me was door knocking in all three areas... I think it is essential to get out and about into the community and this project really did do this. Individuals were also very pleased to see people trying to engage with the community"

"Being involved in the research-phase was useful for me personally – asking questions on a doorstep is not as easy as people may think so it was a learning process for me too".

On the research approach and findings:

Given the diverse nature of the findings which came out of the research, it was felt that the benefits of talking about social isolation and loneliness from a strengths-based approach were clear. The research was able to shed light on the actions communities are already taking to promote better social connectedness and celebrate the strengths of each neighbourhood, whilst also identifying the existence and nature of isolation and loneliness.

"The positive framing of both the research (e.g. using prompts that ask respondents to think about the strengths of their community) and the research findings (through the use of celebratory events and illustrated feedback) has highlighted how difficult conversations can take place with communities"

"I have learnt what questions will get the best rich information from that person in a short space of time. Going forward these skills will help me engage with more people who I meet in the future and I will feel more confident doing that now."

"I came away recognising that I really didn't know much about this community as I thought I did. I would adopt this approach in the future as I really feel you get to know the real situation of a community this way. The overall process has caused me to think in a different way about communities, its infrastructure, what is important to communities and the impact upon them if we get it wrong, especially in relation to new developments next to older ones".

On the community events:

Some of the events were more successful than others. The main learning from this was that more work needs to be done around different engagement techniques. The events could have benefited from earlier and more targeted promotion, as well as organised transport for less-mobile members of the community.

"A challenge [was] getting people to come to the events...particularly in Saffron Walden"

"I think the challenges were to get people engaged with the events which happened within the communities. I think sometimes people are nervous or unsure about new events coming into the area where they live. But the people who did come to the event I went to, did seem to be very interested and wanting things to happen within their area and were delighted to see that something was being done. Now the challenge is to really engage with people on an individual level, so that those people we spoke to who were lonely can get the help and social engagement they need."

On social action in the communities:

Change in any community takes time. Supporting social action initiatives as part of the project, could have benefited from being integrated into a longer process with ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The actions that have come out of the project, whilst met with excitement, will require ongoing commitment from all involved to ensure that they continue.

"We spoke to many individuals [who] wanted to voice their opinions about their community and we also met some individuals who stated that they were very lonely, so I am pleased to see that there is things happening to help people to engage more."

"The challenge is to sustain the start we have made and carry through properly proposed ideas".

On the process and the Partnership:

The project brought together a diverse number of partners. A key success of the project was the way in which it maintained momentum, commitment and collaboration across the board.

"The successes from my point of view were the bringing together of different partners to conduct the project, raising awareness/profile of this important topic within the district. Learning a new approach through our partnership with The Young Foundation. Understanding communities in our district better and the contrasts between them. Actually having face to face contact with people rather than just strategising. Being part of something that will cause change and have a legacy".

"[I most valued] actively involving the community within the project...it was a good example of working from the bottom-up and also trying to sustain any initiatives...I hope to use this experience in further work that we wish to deliver as a communities team."

"The project has enabled a range of partners to come together and to have better dialogue with the communities they serve. I'm excited to see how the Partnership will continue to support the emerging social actions going forward and to apply the learnings from the project in other areas."

Recommendations

Considering the research findings, community-led social initiatives and key project learning, The Young Foundation recommends the following three actions for the Partnership:

1. Offer ongoing support

The social actions which are being supported as part of the CAZ project are community-led initiatives. They will however, require the ongoing backing of the Partnership. This should involve open and informed channels to access the community chest, regular check-ins, as well as promotional, logistical and organisational support where necessary. **All requirements should be community-led, with the Partnership playing a supporting role.**

The Young Foundation recommends that the Partnership continue to meet regularly and check in on the CAZ social initiatives in a way that is reflective of the qualitative nature of the original research. The relationships made between community leaders and the Partnership, should be nurtured and centred on rapport-building. One way to do this is through ensuring there is ongoing clarity and ownership around the Partnership and social action pairings. **Inviting community leaders to future steering group meetings will help to ensure inclusivity, transparency and effective communication across the board.**

2. Prioritise social connections across the ages

"What are we doing to ensure that future generations have the skills and support they need to thrive?"

A number of residents who took part in the research, talked about how there is little for young people to do in the three areas of Uttlesford included in this project. A concerning elaboration on this point, was the suggestion that local young people may be experiencing social isolation and/or loneliness as a result. This was discussed in relation to the lack of local affordable activities, as well as the often damaging impacts of social media in their lives. **Social and emotional wellbeing of young people should therefore be a priority for the Partnership.**

This could include better support for existing youth organisations in Uttlesford, as well as improving access and affordability to activities. To address the impact of social media, the research found that there have been sessions run in local schools recently, but that they were felt to be lacking. Young people are the biggest group of social media users in the UK[x] and have technological skills and understanding which could benefit from being recognised.[xi] **Any support on tackling the issue of social isolation and loneliness, should therefore be led by, and for young people.** They should be recognised and respected as individuals who may hold innovative and self-led solutions to the issue of social isolation and loneliness amongst their peers.

An increased focus on young people, should occur alongside recognition and responses to the findings that other members of the community, **particularly the elderly and less mobile**, are also facing issues around social isolation and loneliness. This could include the development of **intergenerational activities**, which would unite groups experiencing social isolation loneliness across the ages. This suggestion was put forward

by a number of people who took part in the research. **Further development and support for existing befriending services in Uttlesford, may also be beneficial.**

Better information and improved ways of connecting with the services would also be advantageous. This might include extending services to areas such as Usterdale Road, or estates in Takeley and Little Canfield, for those identified as potentially lonely or isolated. Improving the ways in which residents are able to access activities locally, such as introducing more community buses or improving local bus schedules, may also work to improve community connectedness.

3. Continue the dialogue

The Young Foundation would recommend that the Partnership **continue to use the participatory research skills acquired through the CAZ project**. This could include regular pop-up research by having informal conversations with residents on a variety of topics, using a simple set of questions and visual prompts. The benefit of this method is that it allows those with authority to listen to the voices of the communities they serve, and be better informed about the issues and successes residents are experiencing on a day-to-day basis.

This technique may also be used to conduct **further research into social connections and networks**, in other areas of Uttlesford, or with specific groups such as young people or the elderly. Such studies would complement and expand upon the existing findings documented in this report.

As part of any further work on this topic, The Young Foundation would encourage the Partnership to **include community leaders or groups** interested in hearing from their fellow residents, in the research process itself. In doing so, it is hoped that communities will be better placed to showcase the diverse and creative ways in which they can, and are, addressing the issue of social isolation and loneliness.

List of terms

- **Empathy acting** – a technique developed and used by The Young Foundation. An individual takes on the persona of another member of the community during a group activity. They are asked to respond to a range of questions from what they might imagine to be that person's perspective, thinking about how they might think and feel in a given situation.
- **Loneliness** – defined as a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want. (Perlman and Peplau 1981, *see Campaign to End Loneliness[xii]*)
- **The Partnership** – used to refer to the collaboration between The Young Foundation and the local partnership of Uttlesford District Council, Essex County Council, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, CVS Uttlesford, Volunteer Uttlesford, West Essex CCG and the Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Board.
- **Personal connections mapping tool** – a technique designed to understand the types and level of connection people have with their community. This includes personal (friends and family etc.), community (clubs and faith groups etc.) economic (trips to the bank or the shops etc.), and statutory (public services such as the library or the doctors) connections.
- **Pop-up research** – a research technique, involving short and informal 'light touch' conversations with residents on their doorsteps. The Young Foundation included the use of visual prompts to can generate a wide set of responses to a specific question or topic (*see User research. Doing pop-up research in references for more information).*
- **Snowball sampling** – where research participants are identified, take part in the research, and then go on to refer researchers on to other participants.[xiii]
- **Social isolation** – described by Bernard[xiv] as an objective state referring to the number of social contacts or interactions a person has.
- **Strong ties** – influenced by Granovetter's[xv] work on interpersonal ties, and defined in this context as a set of strong connections between groups of individuals (such as those of family or close friends). This is characterised time spent together, the emotional intensity of the relationship, and levels of reciprocity.
- **Thematic analysis** – where researchers familiarise themselves with data and look for emerging patterns, coding the findings accordingly (*see B. L. Weathington, Cunningham, C. J. L. & Pittenger, D. J. [2010][xvi] for more details*).
- **Weak ties** - influenced by Granovetter's[xvii] work on interpersonal ties, and defined in this context as a set of weak connections between groups of individuals. This is characterised by a lack time spent together, emotional intensity of the relationships, or levels of reciprocity.

Endnotes

[i] Campaign to End Loneliness (2017). *Loneliness Research.* Available at: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[ii] Perlman and Peplau 1981, *see Campaign to End Loneliness (ibid)*

[iii] Bernard, (2013). *Loneliness and Social Isolation among Older People in North Yorkshire*. Page 3. Available at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/lonely.pdf>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[iv] Gil, N. (2014) *Loneliness: a silent plague that is hurting young people most.* The Guardian, [online] 20 July. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/20/loneliness-britains-silent-plague-hurts-young-people-most>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[v] Campaign to End Loneliness (2017). *Loneliness Research.* <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[vi] *ibid*

[vii] Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics. *Little Bardfield Parish Report*. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1170214012>. [Accessed 16th January 2018].

[viii] Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics. *Takeley and the Canfields 2011 Census Ward. Local Area Report.* Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1237327145>. [Accessed 16th January 2018].

[ix] Gov.uk Service Manual. *User research: Doing pop-up research*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-research/doing-pop-up-research>. [Accessed 16th January 2018]

[x] Elder, R. (2016). *99% of young British people use social media every week*. Available at: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/99-of-young-british-people-use-social-media-every-week-2016-8>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[xi] European Commission (2014). *Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability*. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/news/2014/documents/report-creative-potential_en.pdf> [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[xii] Campaign to End Loneliness (2017). *Understanding Loneliness*. Available at: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-loneliness/> [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[xiii] Atkinson, R. and Flint, J. (2001). *Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies*. Social Research Update. University of Surrey. Available at: <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU33.pdf> [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[xiv] Bernard, (2013). *Loneliness and Social Isolation among Older People in North Yorkshire*. Page 3. Available at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/lonely.pdf>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[xv] Granovetter, M. S. (1973). *The Strength of Weak Ties*. American Journal of Sociology. Volume 78, Issue 6, pp. 1360-1380. Page 1361. Available at: <https://sociology.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/the_strength_of_weak_ties_and_exch_w-gans.pdf>. [Accessed 8th December 2017].

[xvi] B. L. Weathington, Cunningham, C. J. L. & Pittenger, D. J. (2010). *Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research*. Research Methods for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. Chap. 17, p535. John Wiley and Sons Inc.

[xvii] *ibid*