

delivered by:



Final Project Report

Round 'ere Widnes

Supported by:



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Exec Summary

Round 'ere was a project with a dynamic blend of academia and real-world implementation. Let's take a look through the highlights of Round 'ere, where we set out to achieve three objectives:

1

Objective One

Understanding Wellbeing in Widnes: The project successfully uncovered a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in Widnes. While some elements aligned with conventional definitions of wellbeing, such as good emotional, mental, and physical health, there were unique local dimensions. Residents emphasized the importance of respect for others and their town, recognizing the impact on personal and community wellbeing. Identifying early signs of deteriorating wellbeing proved challenging, however, residents acknowledged the potential of using data to monitor wellbeing.

2

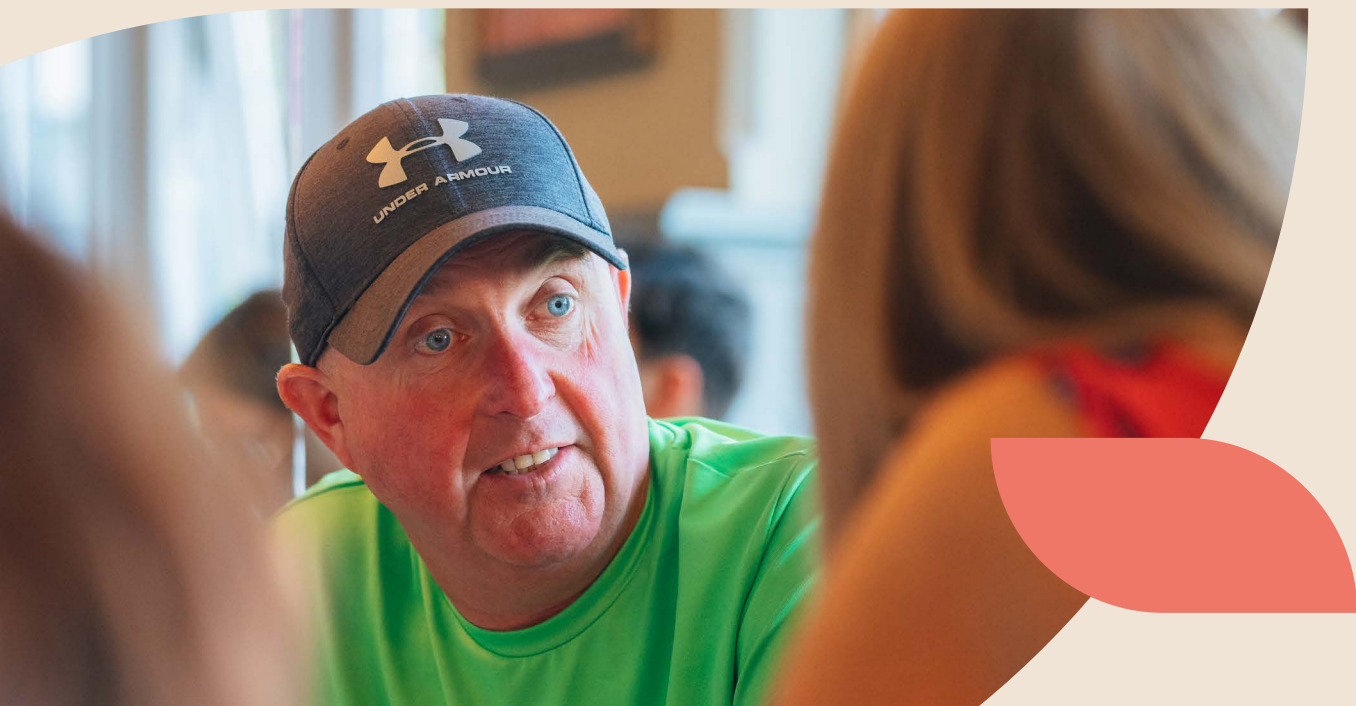
Objective Two

Imagining Better Solutions with Data: Our ambition to build a data commons designed by community, was met with a mix of curiosity and intrigue. While some residents didn't quite grasp the personal benefits, they were all ears to learn more about it. One thing that truly sparked their enthusiasm was the concern for those with limited data and digital skills and the need to prioritise future activity here.

3

Objective Three

Exploring Wellbeing Through Resident Perspectives: A diverse group of community researchers with varying ties to Widnes were recruited, trained, and conducted over 200 interviews, shedding light on residents' perspectives on wellbeing. Community researchers not only contributed valuable insights but also experienced personal growth, gaining confidence, self-esteem, and new social connections.





Next steps

Building on the insights we've gathered, we're excited to:

1. Share our discoveries with local stakeholders:

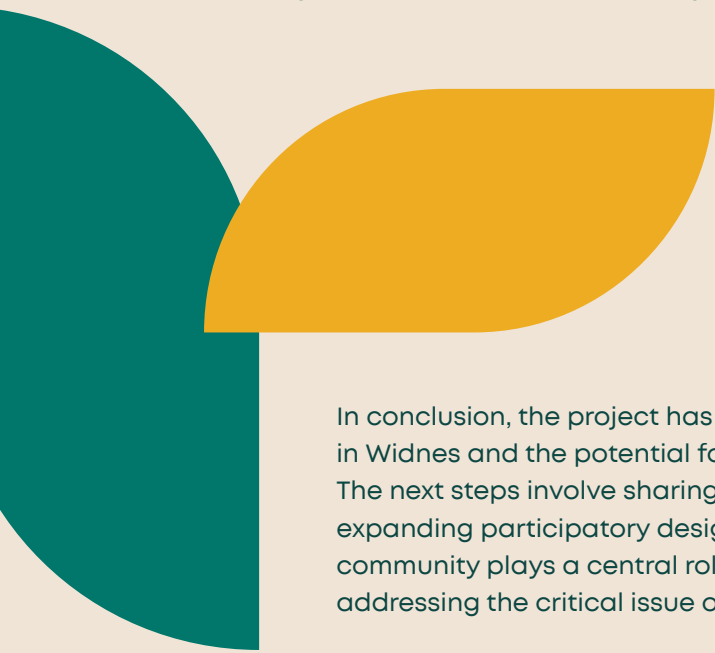
- ✓ Helping residents navigate help in Widnes.
 - ✓ Preserving and celebrating the nostalgic pride residents feel for their town, ensuring it shines for generations to come.
-

2. Community researchers and participatory design

- ✓ Expanding the approach within and beyond Widnes.
-

3. Data commons: The Build

- ✓ We're using the insights gathered to inform the build, it's set to go live in 2024.
- ✓ The real gem is the role the community wants to play - from contributing to data to ensuring its quality, governance and more. Creating an equitable data sharing community is the priority.



In conclusion, the project has provided valuable insights into wellbeing in Widnes and the potential for a resident-driven data commons. The next steps involve sharing these findings with local stakeholders, expanding participatory design efforts, and ensuring that the community plays a central role in the data commons project while addressing the critical issue of digital skills and literacy.

THE REAL GEM IS THE ROLE THE COMMUNITY WANTS TO PLAY



Who are we?

CAPACITY

Who are Capacity?

It's no secret that the public and third sectors are facing some tough internal and external challenges, and we need big ideas and brave leaders to tackle them.

That's where Capacity comes in. We provide the know-how, big-picture thinking, and hands-on time to get moving on the projects that really matter: the ones that make the biggest impact on the lives of everyday people.

In other words, you might call us a 'do-tank'. Unlike a think-tank, we also go on to do the stuff we've thought about. That means we're on the journey with the organisations we support; you won't find us producing a shiny report and leaving them to it.

We'll also get on with the job at hand (if the team wants us to), focussing less on the policies and procedures, and more on the people and real lives at the end of them. Our Northern roots stand us in good stead here; we're fiercely proud of our ability to understand our local people and places, keeping them with us along the way.

We also believe we're better off together. By that we mean: we want all sectors involved and all sectors represented. We aren't going to change public services for the better on our own, and neither is anyone else. Getting people together and encouraging them to talk to one another is one of the things we're best at.

As people, we enjoy the fact that we're separate from the system - a great system though it is, our independence and objectivity means we can take that big, important step back. We're not here lugging along baggage, and we try to avoid too much red tape - having said that, we know it's there and we respect and ably navigate it.

Speaking of teamwork, our people are a total mix - we all have different backgrounds and a wide range of expertise. That means we can apply a range of skills and viewpoints to the challenges we face and fill any gaps a team might have.

Our people are used to working with a range of clients and that means, whether you need us to sit at a Board table or be out and about with people in the community, we fit right in.

Ultimately, we want the North-West to be the best place to grow-up, grow-wise and grow-old. If we do this well, public services will work for every person, every time. And as for us? Well, we'll be out of job.



Who are the Civic Data Coop?

At Civic Data Cooperative we work across the Liverpool City Region, putting local people in control of their data.

We want to unearth the opportunities open data can offer, improve the trustworthiness of data sharing and ultimately rebalance the power; putting the needs of people, not the abilities of systems at the forefront:

Our everyday work has three areas of focus:

1. We explore what we can learn from data, creating recognised ways of working that start with the problem at hand.

This ensures we fully understand any community, system, or service challenges before we try to solve them. It's about encouraging people to understand data and how to use it, helping people across health and social care think about what we can learn from data and how this knowledge can be applied to improve things.

2. We imagine new ways of supporting local people's health and wellbeing. We take great pride in our role as a connector.

We join the dots between the social challenges data shows us, the insights of those working around those challenges and connect them to people who come up with ideas that can create real change. By committing to designing projects, services, and products together we ensure the end products are fit for purpose, supporting local businesses to achieve social and financial success. But, of course even with the best planning, things aren't always perfect, we also believe it's ok to fail, the work we do is about trying things out and learning from the experience.

3. We take the time to engage people from all walks of life, encouraging them to share their data for social good.

We want to challenge assumptions that data sharing is something to fear, and that rules around how we collect, store and use data are 'only about managing risk'. We do this by focusing on project themes that are of interest to the local people we're working with, speaking to them in plain English and exciting them about the change they can affect.

Along the way we want to share our work for the benefit of people across the UK. We want to support academics, businesses, providers and the public sector, helping them to learn from our work and think differently about how research is conducted, how services are delivered, and how good data can drive great social change.



What's this all about?

Bothered about making public services people services and curious to explore how data can play a role in this, CDC and Capacity joined forces, taking a participatory design approach to explore three key objectives:



Understanding what wellbeing means in Widnes

Services and decision makers collect information about communities to help them plan how to spend money on health and social care services. Typically, the things they ask questions about are things that the whole of the UK ask and have asked for decades. We think that some of these questions are hitting the target but missing the point. For example, diagnosed mental health conditions and drinking too much alcohol is information used to measure the wellbeing of a place. Whilst we don't disagree that these will contribute to wellbeing in Widnes, this project is about talking to local people to understand what they think contributes to their wellbeing and in turn how would we know if someone is starting to struggle.



Exploring this through the eyes of people who live in Widnes

Whilst the teams at CDC and Capacity are a great bunch, we know they're not the experts in the wellbeing of Widnes. Residents are the experts and have been central to this project as community researchers. They have helped us better understand attitudes, beliefs and behaviour and reveal the story behind the statistics.



Imagining better solutions with data

The information organisations collect about communities is rarely shared with them, we want to shift this culture and practice, but we were not sure what people would want to see or what they would use it for.

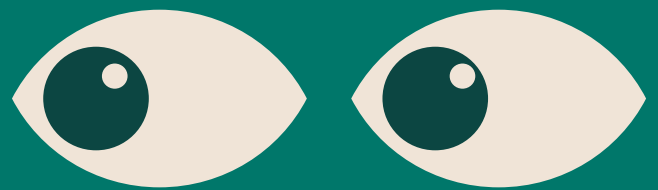
This project has pulled these three themes together to explore what wellbeing really means in Widnes and how we could make better use of data to improve how decisions about local services and spend are made.

This report tells the story of how we approached the project, what we heard and the lessons we'll take forward into future iterations. This will be supported by a number of research papers centred due to be shared in 2024.





RESIDENTS ARE THE EXPERTS AND HAVE BEEN CENTRAL TO THIS PROJECT



For the duration of this report we will refer to this project as taking participatory design or research approach. A participatory design or research approach creates an opportunity for designers and researchers to meet and identify with the end-user. As such, it plays a crucial role in creating user-centred solutions by actively involving end-users in the design process. Depending on the sector you work in you might call this sort of work a number of different things...

- **CO-PRODUCTION AND CO-CREATION**
- **PLACE-BASED APPROACH**
- **USER-LED DESIGN**
- **CIVIC DESIGN**
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
- **PEER-LED DESIGN**

Our principle we are championing; creating space for users and the community to influence decision-making alongside the community to increase the power they have in decisions made about them and their peers.



1. PLANNING AND DESIGNING THE PROJECT

Nov 22 - Feb 23



2. RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

March 23 - May 23



2. TRAINING AND ONBOARDING

June 23

What we did

The Round 'Ere Widnes Project ran for 10 months between November 2022 - September 2023, we split it into 6 phases:



3. COMMUNITY RESEARCH

July 23 - August 23



4. DISTILLING THE INSIGHTS

Aug 23 - Sept 23



6. CLOSING THE PROJECT

Sept 23



5. USING THE INSIGHT TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF A DATA HUB IN WIDNES

Sept 23

DECEMBER 2022

- Partnership agreement in place with CDC and Capacity
- Scope
- Project plan
- Risk register
- Agreed place / location (West Bank, Widnes)
- Stakeholder map
- Stage plan
- Clear roles & responsibility agreed
- Communication plan

Project name: Round 'Ere

PLANNING

Agreeing concept, scope

Literature review

Launch with local stakeholders

Ethics approval 1

1. Risk reg renewed
2. Reprofited project
3. Pivoted to widen / extend the area to cover the whole of Widnes

RECRUITMENT OF COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

- 402 Facebook link clicks
- 23,500 flyers & booklets distributed
- 45+ roadshow events
- 35 enquiries

Website / FB page / Flyers & booklets / Social media tiles

SELECTION OF COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

- 18 community researchers chosen

Research interviews 1

- 17 community researchers completed training
- 3 days of training
- 7 modules / topics covered
- 70 cooked breakfasts!

TRAINING OF COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

Training resources

Ethics approval 2

Data workshop 1

- 16 community researchers onboard

Sharing progress so far with stakeholders and sharing project ambition

ONBOARDING OF COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

Participant packs

Research interviews 2

- 100+ interviews completed
- 200+ transcriptions produced

Participant flyer / Social media tiles

PEER-PEER COMMUNITY RESEARCH (DELIVERY)

DATA HUB DESIGN

- 200+ transcriptions analysed

DISTILLING THE INSIGHTS

Research interviews 3

Data workshop 2

OUTPUTS:


- Insights report
- Project toolkit

Sharing results so far with stakeholders and building understanding of data

CREATING THE PROJECT'S LEGACY

Insights used to inform and develop 3+ research papers

SEPTEMBER 2023



Supporting this report is a toolkit which includes all of the resources that were created and tested in the project.

These range from recruitment material, training plans and methods for organising community insights. Please look here if you're looking for the nitty gritty details. A summary of our overall approach is outlined below:

1. Planning and designing the project



- This is a research project with a heavy delivery focus. This required us to blend the requirements for both research and practical project delivery together. For example, consideration to ethics approval alongside getting the project going.
- We centred the project plan around delivery against the three objectives and were tempered by the project budget of £280k.
- The project was supported by a steering group, made up of researchers across policy, life sciences and communications.
- Before diving into recruitment, we spent time understanding what wellbeing means and what this looks like in Widnes through desktop research.
- Choosing the community to deliver the project with. We spent time getting to know Halton, shortlisting wards and connecting with local stakeholders to understand their perspective on where the project could work.
- We knew the look and feel of the project would be a key enabler for engagement, so we designed a project brand.

2. Recruitment campaign



- Recruitment key messages and methods were designed.
 - Beyond the campaign, we also designed a clear recruitment process from initial engagement, through to more detailed conversations, interviews and booking into training sessions.
 - A series of engagement activities took place, from communication on social media, to meet and greets with local businesses, to promotional events at markets and in shopping centres, through to flyering across neighbourhoods and putting posters up in key bumping spaces across Widnes.
 - A team of 14 community researchers were recruited.
 - Community researchers were interviewed about their expectations of the project by the University research team prior to starting their training.
 - Several touchpoints were had between the community researchers and project team ahead of the training to answer any queries and ensure training was accessible.
- 

3. Training and onboarding



- Informed by the objectives we wanted to achieve, alongside the experience of our recruited community researchers, we designed a training package based on the Heseltine Institute's Clubmoor Toolkit, to equip the team with the knowledge and skills to:
 - Design a tool for research.
 - Deliver engagement across Widnes.
- Each training session had clear objectives, resource packs, and a team with expertise to lead a range of teaching and coaching activities.
- Before the first training session, every community researcher had a 1-1 conversation with the team to create space for any questions, allay any concerns and get under the skin of what the community researchers hopes and fears for the training and project were.
- Training was delivered over 3 days in a function room within a local pub and alongside the formal learning, this created an opportunity to create a shared safe space to agree ways of working both within and beyond the training.
- The research method and tools were designed as a group, the chosen tool was semi structured interviews.
- 14 community researchers completed the training and were excited to get stuck into community engagement.
- University researchers interviewed each community researcher after the training to ask about their experiences of the training and their expectations for the research phase.

4. Designing the Research Tool and Research interviews



One objective within the training was to co-produce the research tool. Following some basic training around research methods and tools, the community researchers explored the benefits and drawbacks of a range of tools. Surveys and interviews were the most favoured, with a dotmocracy proving interviews as the chosen research tool.

The research team worked with community researchers to design the questions in the survey, exploring both purpose of the questions alongside language nuance and ordering.

Alongside the training and design of tools, all community researchers completed interviews with the research team. These were an opportunity to understand people's experiences, perceptions, and readiness for going live with the research.



5. Community research



- As part of the training, all community researchers completed a personal research plan. This summarised the work they intended to complete, who their target audience were, how they would recruit them and when they planned to carry out the engagement. This acted as both an individual plan and gave us collective oversight of the teams intended activities.
- Support kit was provided which ranged from mobile phones, tablets, and dictaphones to enable the interviews to be collected and shared.
- Alongside the personal research plans, participant packs were also shared which included ID badges, consent forms, information sheets and risk assessments, alongside the interview guide and other formal documentation to support the engagement.
- Engagement went live and community researchers were supported through:
 - **On-call support and drops ins.** The team had an on-call phone for researchers to contact at any point with any concerns or debrief needs. Alongside this, several drop-in sessions were run for any face-to-face communication. These were largely used for tech queries rather than content arising from the research.
 - **A WhatsApp group ran for the duration of the project.** Community researchers used this mainly for administration needs and the project team found it helpful to communicate this way, especially for specific events so all researchers could be contacted in a fast and efficient way. A separate WhatsApp group was set up by choice by the community researchers to keep in contact and arrange social gatherings to enable them to carry on building friendships and relationships that had developed throughout the initial training sessions.
- Community researchers were paid for the time in gift vouchers or via university bank transfer, this meant that all of the team had to record and claim for their time which created a series of administrative tasks for both community researchers and the project team.
- 207 interviews were completed, with each researcher completing an average of 10 over a period of seven weeks. One researcher, however, went far beyond expectation completing over 80 interviews.
- Most interviews were completed within peer networks, however some were completed with strangers in public spaces, such as Victoria Park.
- Community researchers were interviewed by the University research team after completing their interviews to ask about their experiences of taking part.



6. Distilling the insights



- All the interviews were recorded on a device and shared with the team.
- The next step was to get these transcribed, this was completed through a combination of human and AI transcription.
- Once all the raw data was collected, our next step was to make sense of it. With 207 interviews, this was a significant amount of data to explore. To support this, several key steps were taken to help us theme and understand what the community researchers had heard:
 - Codifying the data - Through understanding the transcripts, we built a framework of codes. We did not start with preconceived notions of what the codes should be but allowed the narrative from the raw data to build the code from the ground up.
 - From here, the project team distilled some key insights. Based on patterns identified in the raw data, we clustered similar insights, prioritised loudest insights and found gaps where we needed to better understand things.
 - Taking the key insights, we delivered a workshop with community researchers to play back some assumptions and add levels of depth to our understanding. The workshop centred across the following key insights:

**PERSONAL
WELLBEING**

**WELLBEING
SUPPORT
IN WIDNES**

**COMMUNITY
WELLBEING**

**SATISFACTION
WITH SERVICES**

**CHANGES
WANTED/
NEEDED**

**DATA AND
DATA LITERACY**

- Thematic analysis of the insights will be taking place alongside this as part of the research work package of the project including analysis of the interviews done by the University research team on the experiences of the community researchers.



**START WITH
DATA**



**GROUP INTO
THEMES**



**DEVELOP CODE
FROM THE DATA
AND THEMES**

7. Using the insight to explore the role of a data hub in Widnes

Insight from the project is being compiled into this project report to steer improvements for residents in Widnes. Alongside this, is a bigger ambition to use the insight to catalyse energy around the design of a data commons. Two workshops attended by community researchers and local stakeholders were delivered to design the data commons.



8. Closing the project

The role of community researchers: The community researchers have been key to the successful running of the project, strong connections and relationships have been built. It has been important to keep them engaged throughout the project and provide support at each stage of the way. Following the end of the project, they were given the opportunity to meet again for a final workshop to discuss their findings and insights and to share the insights and themes that the project team had identified to ensure they agreed. Each researcher was provided with a card and small gift as a token of our appreciation which was very well received.



Closing the loop with stakeholders

Following the completion of the research, it was necessary to share findings and insights with other stakeholders and those that we have supported the project. These were delivered through:



Toolkit: All resources from the project alongside case studies from the project



Insight report: Capturing the approach and learning



Podcast: In conversation with the project team, sharing learning to support future projects



Academic papers: Presenting the findings from the research



Supported by a range of **video interviews, footage and photographs** from the project



Summary of lit review



Prior to launching the community recruitment, the University research team conducted a short, scoping literature review of similar projects that engage community on data and wellbeing place-building.

A qualitative thematic analysis of ten articles showed limited existing research and extensive heterogeneity on participatory research with community and data systems. We extracted lessons learned, methodology descriptions and justification about each project. In particular, the literature demonstrated that data participation activities cannot make a community. And existing structures and assumptions around community and perceptions of data itself will influence the success and relative failure of a project. We took the lesson to carefully consider the siting of the project and how we invited community into the methodology and design.

Title	Year	Authors
Surfacing Small Worlds through Data-in-Place	2017	Siân Lindley, Anja Thieme, Alex Taylor, Vasillis Vlachokyriakos, Tim Regan, David Sweeney
Examining the role of urban street design in enhancing community engagement: A literature review	2016	Nadha Hassen, Pamela Kaufman
Data and life on the street	2014	Alex S Taylor, Siân Lindley, Tim Regan, David Sweeney
Evaluating Complete Streets Public Engagement Practices Results of a National Survey	2020	Aashna Jain, Lisa Cintron, Charles T. Brown, James Sinclair
Measuring Wellness: An Indicator Development Guide for First Nations	2015	Bronwen Geddes
Personal well-being in the UK, quarterly: April 2011 to September 2021	2022 (2021 results)	Julia Douglas-Mann, Eleanor Rees
Public Health Engagement in Complete Streets Initiatives: Examples and Lessons Learned	2019	Christina Sansone, MPH, Jill Sadowski, Jamie F. Chriqui, PhD, MHS
Data-in-Place: Thinking through the Relations Between Data and Community	2015	Alex S. Taylor, Siân Lindley, Tim Regan, David Sweeney, Vasillis Vlachokyriakos, Lillie Grainger, Jessa Lingel
Systematic scoping review of indicators of community wellbeing in the UK VERSION 1.2 August 2017	2017	Anne-Marie Bagnall, Jane South, Ben Mitchell, Gerlinde Pilkington, Rob Newton, Salvatore Di Martino
Community-led Research Training Toolkit	2021	Heseltine Institute

What we heard

We explored the transcripts to build a coding framework. This was created to support us to organize the key insights.

This framework supports our exploration of the project objectives around understanding what wellbeing means in Widnes, how wellbeing is cared for in Widnes and how a data commons could contribute to wellbeing in Widnes.

This section outlines the key insights community researchers heard:

1

WHAT WELLBEING MEANS

- ✓ Personal wellbeing
- ✓ Community wellbeing

2

CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

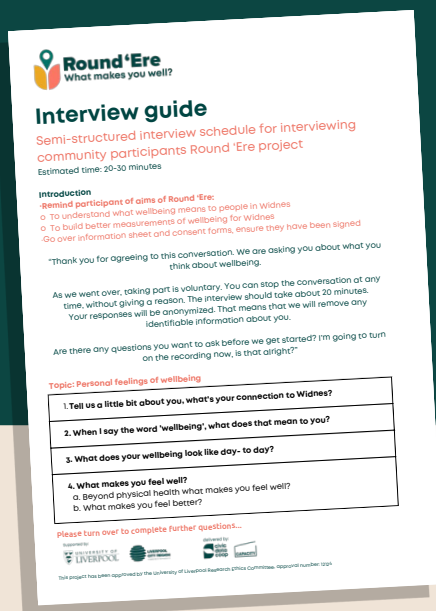
- ✓ Wellbeing initiatives or services in Widnes
- ✓ Satisfaction with these services
- ✓ Changes wanted or needed in wellbeing services

3

DESIGN OF THE DATA COMMONS

Data:

- ✓ Personal and family
- ✓ On Widnes
- ✓ Data literacy



[DOWNLOAD THE INTERVIEW GUIDE >](#)



6.1 What wellbeing means to people in Widnes

1a. Personal wellbeing

When we asked people about their personal wellbeing, they usually started with a description of what wellbeing means in a general sense. When probed a little further, residents started to break down what some of the things that contribute regularly to them feeling well and showed us that wellbeing is affected by many factors.



“PEOPLE’S WELLBEING CAN VARY DEPENDENT ON THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES, SUCH AS THEIR HEALTH, HAVING ENOUGH MONEY, A JOB....)”

“WELLBEING IS HAVING GOOD HEALTH; BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL. YOU NEED GOOD FACILITIES TO HELP YOU LEAD A FULL AND ACTIVE LIFE.”

“ON THE SURFACE, I WOULD SAY, MOST PEOPLE PROBABLY THINK ON THE SURFACE IT’S NOT BEING OVERWEIGHT, IT’S EATING HEALTHILY, IT’S EXERCISING REGULARLY, BUT I SUPPOSE THAT’S JUST LIKE A SUPERFICIAL WAY TO THINK OF IT. THINGS THAT ARE ADVERTISED ARE GEARED TOWARDS PHYSICAL WELLBEING; I SUPPOSE IT’S BECAUSE MENTAL WELLBEING IS HARD TO MEASURE. YOU CAN’T HAVE AN ADVERT ON TELLY TO SAY ‘DO THIS TO BE HAPPY’ ‘GOS IT’S NOT ALWAYS GOING TO WORK. IT’S GOING TO BE DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE AND IT’S GOT TO BE MORE PERSONALISED.”

“I’VE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH NOT TO HAVE ANY MENTAL ILLNESS, THANK GOD, BUT I AM SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE. I VOLUNTEER WITH A CHARITY WORKING WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES. THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IS ROCK BOTTOM BECAUSE OF EXPERIENCING TRAUMA IN THE COUNTRY THEY CAME FROM OR ON THEIR WAY HERE... I DO A LOT FOR THESE PEOPLE BUT SOMETIMES I FEEL OVERWHELMED BECAUSE THERE’S SO MUCH ILL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH... PEOPLE LIVING IN LIMBO, AWAITING A LONG TIME FOR DECISIONS TO BE MADE” “THE GOVERNMENT AREN’T HELPING AT ALL...”



Under the umbrella of health these 3 topics came up frequently as something that rooted people’s idea of good wellbeing:



Emotional, mental, and social health - this was often connected to spending time with friends and family or some connection to others within a trusted social circle.



Physical health - getting out for a walk, going to the gym or eating healthily gave residents a good sense of wellbeing.



Spiritual health - faith, religion or a conscious connection to the cosmos also was also spoken about frequently as something that gave people a sense of peace, belonging, or satisfaction.

Less often, we also heard people mention having a good work-life balance, being able to help others and having hobbies (usually grounded in arts and culture). Security was mentioned, either in a financial or safety sense and we heard a lot of people talk about how their physical surrounds affected their wellbeing, sometimes explored as a connection to nature or proximity to places where you could see natural environments.



“

“SOMETIMES, I FEEL VERY CLOSED IN BUT THEN I GET OUTSIDE IN AN OPEN SPACE AND FEEL DIFFERENT.”

“GREEN SPACES ARE IMPORTANT TO ME. YOU CAN WALK-UP, OR JUST SIT THERE.”

“THINKING ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS, I HAVE REALISED I DON'T KNOW AS MUCH AS I THOUGHT I DID ABOUT WELLBEING AND MAYBE I SHOULD THINK ABOUT MY WELLBEING MORE OFTEN AND INVEST MY TIME IN TRYING TO IMPROVE IT.”

”

Human connection

When asked ‘what makes you feel better’ overwhelmingly people spoke about needing other people to be around for a chat to get things off their chest, a trusted person who might re-assure them or to talk something over with or.

“

“I HAVE A CHAT WITH [NAMES PERSON CLOSE TO THEM] BUT IT NEVER GETS ME DOWN TO THE POINT WHERE I'M FEELING REALLY LOW.”

“FOR ME IT'S BEING ABLE TO HAVE TIME MYSELF. IT SOUNDS SO CLICHÉ BUT IT'S A BIT OF SELF-CARE. I'M NOT THAT INTERESTED IN GOING TO THE GYM OR GOING FOR A RUN. FOR ME, MY WELLBEING IS ABOUT DOING SOMETHING FOR ME THAT I WANT TO DO, NOT BECAUSE SOMEONE ELSE TELLS ME TO DO IT.”

“SOMETIMES I RELY TOO MUCH ON OTHER PEOPLE TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER, BUT YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO MAKE YOURSELF FEEL BETTER TOO. IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE A SUPPORT NETWORK AND IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO HAVE ONE 'COS I KNOW NOT EVERYONE HAS THAT. I KNOW IF I'M NOT FEELING GOOD, I CAN GIVE MY MUM A CALL.”

“SEEING PEOPLE AND TALKING TO PEOPLE IS GOOD, 'COS OTHERWISE YOU GET CAUGHT UP IN YOUR OWN MIND.”

“I'VE BEEN A WIDOWER, I HAVE LEARNT TO COPE NOW... THESE ARE MY LESSONS... IT'S TALKING TO PEOPLE, CONTACT WITH PEOPLE, DOING SOMETHING USEFUL AND SOMETHING THAT USES YOUR BRAIN.”

”

We heard some other more nuanced examples of activities people might do to lift themselves up. These were activity based, and based on personal interest, such as music, volunteering, cooking or arts and crafts. We heard some residents say that this would take their mind off things or just give them a rush to support their own personal wellbeing.

“

“DOING THE VOLUNTEERING OR DOING THINGS FOR OTHER PEOPLE - IT KEEPS ME YOUNG AT HEART.”

“GOING OUT - WE REALLY LIKE LIVE MUSIC; YOU CAN'T BEAT LIVE MUSIC.”

”

Life stage variation

Anecdotally, older people held different views about personal wellbeing compared to younger residents. Older people's sense of self was in a more optimistic place, they were satisfied with their achievements, their family, their community and articulated a rounded sense of feeling content.

“

“I’VE GOT A HEALTHY AND HAPPY FAMILY; I LIVE IN A NICE HOME, AND I LIVE A GOOD LIFE.”

“I’M ABLE TO GET OUT AND EXERCISE, I’VE NOT GOT ANY INCAPACITIES, I’M QUITE LUCKY REALLY. I WALK BETWEEN ONE AND THREE CIRCUITS OF THE PARK EVERY DAY.”

”

Younger people were craving more, wanting more connection and achievement. We got a sense that younger peoples measure of success was not as content or as clear cut, they are striving and wanting more from Widnes. This was articulated as more tangible things for example, activities to take part in over summer holidays.

“

“THERE IS NOTHING TO DO IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS, THE YOUTH CLUBS AREN’T HERE ANYMORE, AND WE’RE STUCK FOR ANYTHING TO DO.”

“WE CAN GO TO PARKS BUT THERE’S NOTHING TO DO INSIDE. IN THE TOWN THE SHOPS ARE ALL CLOSING.”

”

Similarly, parents and grandparents with young children, emphasised that there could be more connection and choice available across Widnes for their families and we got a sense that there wasn’t as many activities as possible for different age ranges for them to enjoy or be engaged with.

“

“WHEN I WAS YOUNG THERE WERE LOADS OF ACTIVITIES AND YOUTH GROUPS BUT THERE’S NOWHERE FOR THE YOUNG ONES TO REALLY GO NOW.”

“MY GRANDSON IS 15 AND THERE’S NOTHING FOR HIM TO DO. HE GOES TO THE GYM WITH FRIENDS BUT OF AN EVENING THERE’S NOWHERE FOR HIM TO GO, THERE’S NO CLUBS FOR TEENAGERS SO THEY TEND TO JUST RIDE THEIR BIKES UP AND DOWN THE STREET CAUSING HAVOC AND THE POLICE MOAN, BUT THERE’S NOTHING FOR THEM TO DO.”

”

Getting around to places

We also heard about the challenges people experience moving around Widnes. There was a recognition that transport links aren't great, a dream for more hyper local amenities and a plea to services to stay physically present, not just relying on digital offers.



“I AM A SINGLE OLDER LADY WITH SOME MOBILITY LIMITATIONS TRYING TO GET TO WHERE I NEED TO GO WHEN I NEED TO VIA PUBLIC TRANSPORT. BUT IT’S REALLY HARD. IT’S IMPORTANT FOR ME TO BE OUT AND CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE FACE TO FACE, NOT DIGITALLY. THERE ARE THINGS OUT THERE FOR ME TO BE PART OF BUT GETTING TO AND FROM THEM IS HARD.”

“EARLY EVENINGS FEEL ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE... NOT ALL TAXIS ARE ACCESSIBLE FOR ME AND THE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICE I USE DURING THE DAY CLOSSES AT TEA TIME.”

“LET’S BE HONEST, HALTON IS MADE UP OF SEVERAL SMALL VILLAGES AND TOWNS WHICH MAKES IT HARD TO GET AROUND. OUR TRANSPORT LINKS AREN’T GOOD ENOUGH AND ALTHOUGH OUR SERVICES COVER THE WHOLE OF HALTON, GETTING FROM ONE SIDE TO ANOTHER ISN’T EASY.”

“I’M PRETTY CONFIDENT, SO MOST OF THE TIMES I DO FIND A WAY TO GET AROUND BUT LOTS OF PEOPLE CAN’T AND ON A BAD DAY IT’S EASIER FOR ME TO JUST STAY AT HOME RATHER THAN FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GET AROUND.”

“TRANSPORT HAS BEEN STRIPPED BACK SO PEOPLE CAN’T TRAVEL TO WHAT’S ON ANYMORE.”

“IT’S SO DIFFICULT FOR SOME PEOPLE TO GET ACROSS THE BRIDGE NOW TO ACCESS SERVICES IN THE REST OF HALTON.”



**IT’S IMPORTANT
FOR ME TO BE OUT
AND CONNECTING
WITH PEOPLE**

1b. Community wellbeing

Building on personal wellbeing and expanding this to a macro community level across Widnes, we heard that community wellbeing relies on two key factors: **people and place**.

People

The factors connected to people were expressed in detail such as having a **supportive community** and someone you could rely upon to talk to, and a sense of togetherness or community spirit. People wanted to feel connected to each other and show respect to their peers. People had a sense that some Widnes residents show signs of poor wellbeing, in the way they hold themselves or present themselves to others, but others really expressed that 'Wids' are generally positive people who are generally happy and satisfied.

“

“WHEN YOU’RE WALKING AROUND TOWN SOMETIMES YOU CAN SEE IT IN PEOPLE- THE WAY THEY WALK ROUND TOWN, THE WAY THEY INTERACT WITH PEOPLE AND LOOK REALLY DOWNTRODDEN, HEADS BOWED AND NOT SMILING.”

“I’M AMAZED ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN WIDNES, I THINK PEOPLE ARE HAPPY, I SHOULDN’T BE SURPRISED, I MARRIED A WIDNES GIRL! SOME PEOPLE GET DOWN AND OUT, THEY GET UPSET AND I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT. IT’S A PERSONAL ATTITUDE THOUGH AND YOU HAVE TO GET UP AND OUT.”

“THE WAY PEOPLE SOCIALISE ROUND HERE IS TO GO FOR A DRINK. THERE ARE SO MANY BARS, SO MANY PUBS, THAT’S HOW YOU COULD EASILY GET IN WITH A SOCIAL GROUP.”

“GET WALKING – GET OUTSIDE. GET OUT AND SEE PEOPLE, WALKING IS A GOOD WAY OF DOING THAT.”

”

For people to play a role in good community wellbeing, we heard that indicators were based on the way we interact with each other. **Respect for and kindness** towards one another were important foundations, as well as an understanding of **‘community values’** from a young age which would be instilled at the young age and maintained through life.





Place

Public places, services, and privately owned assets, we heard, need to be plentiful; people want to feel like they have **a choice of things to do, see and visit**, for adults and children.

“

“THERE ARE SO MANY SHOPS CLOSING, AND WE HAVE A LOT OF CHARITY SHOPS IN WIDNES. SO GOOD COMMUNITY WELLBEING IS HAVING MORE OPTIONS THERE.”

“THE KIDS IN [FAIRFIELD] PARK - THEY'RE REALLY ENJOYING THEMSELVES, THE PARENTS DON'T HAVE TO PAY, IT'S THERE EVERY DAY. KIDS PLAY AND PARENTS SOCIALISE WITH EACH OTHER.”

”

The enabling factors for assets to contribute to community wellbeing included **accessibility** (easy to travel to and open at the right times), **affordability** (cheap or free), **availability** (opportunities to be involved and we need to know about it).

Residents acknowledged that these factors were reliant upon ‘the system’, which is made up of decision makers such as the local council or national government, and a sense of community ownership and responsibility that things needed to be cared for and looked after in order to preserve them.

“

“[AT THE FOODBANK] PRE-COVID WE USED TO SIGNPOST, INVITE PEOPLE IN FOR A CHAT OR A NATTER. ONE HELPED THE PERSON; ONE PATTED THEIR BACK AND ONE MADE TEA AND TOAST AND WE'D LOOK AFTER THEM. WHEN COVID CAME WE HAD TO CHANGE. NOW BAGS ARE PRE-PACKED, YOU GET WHAT YOU GET, THERE'S A BIT OF CHOICE IF YOU HAVE A PET FOR EXAMPLE. YOU DON'T GET PAST THE LOBBY YOU GET PASSED A PACK AND YOU'RE IN AND OUT. DEMAND HAS ALSO GONE THROUGH THE ROOF; WE HAVE LESS SPACE BECAUSE WE HAVE MORE FOOD TO STORE. WE'RE NOW GETTING A LOT MORE FAMILIES, IT USED TO BE MOSTLY SINGLE PEOPLE, BUT YOU CAN SEE PEOPLE ARE UNDER MORE PRESSURE THESE DAYS.”

”

Poverty was spoken about. An ask to local agencies for these needs to be tackled first before **‘the bells and whistles’**. An ask for universal help, a place for people to get the help they need. This was tempered with an acceptance that local government, although perceived as being responsible for this, does not have the resources to respond due to national decision making and funding cuts.

Pride, respect and belonging to Widnes

Lots of pride was spoken about the town, grown from the history of Widnes both its industrial heritage and rugby success. The generations closest to these periods of time were most proud, the nostalgia from this powered their hope for the future.

Connected to this, any critique comes from a constructive place, people want Widnes to thrive, have its best interests at heart and have hope for **'Widnes to be great again'**.

Paired with this was a fear that this community identity and pride is connected to the older generations and there was a rumbling of concern about how this pride is instilled in younger residents. An acknowledgment that the pride of the 'glory days', is connected to having lived them. For younger residents, their connection to this is through their family roots and for the pride to remain, we need to cultivate the next generation of successes.

“

“WIDNES HAS BEEN MIGHTY; WE’VE DONE GREAT THINGS.”

”

Wellbeing at work

The role of work and how this can contribute to good and poor wellbeing was shared.

“

“I FEEL LIKE A COG IN A MACHINE [AT WORK], I’M NOT LISTENED TO, AND I WONDER IF I’D FEEL BETTER IF I DIDN’T WORK. WHEN I DO NEED HELP, I CAN’T GET IT BECAUSE IT ONLY EXISTS DURING WORKING HOURS. IF I WAS ON BENEFITS, I’D BE ABLE TO GET MORE HELP.

WHEN YOU ARE ON BENEFITS YOU GET THINGS LIKE YOUR CHILDCARE COSTS COVERED, YOU CAN GO TO YOUR APPOINTMENTS AS AND WHEN YOU NEED WHEREAS RIGHT NOW, I’M WORKING IN A JOB I DON’T LIKE - FEELING REALLY SQUEEZED PAYING FOR NURSERY AND I CAN’T GET TO THE HELP I NEED BECAUSE ITS ONLY AVAILABLE 9-5... WHEN I’M AT WORK.”

”

Interestingly, it raises the question of what success in our job market looks like? What is work and what is good work?

“

“IT’S GOOD THAT WE HAVE MORE JOBS ROUND HERE NOW, BUT THEY’RE NOT GOOD JOBS. I WANT A JOB WHERE I AM NOT JUST A COG IN A MACHINE, I WANT AUTONOMY AND AGENCY AT WORK.”

”

6.2 Contribute to community building

The second objective we explored was anchored in community building. We wanted to know what assets exist across Widnes to understand people's awareness and understanding of what was available, good and what could be better.

2a. Wellbeing initiatives or services in Widnes

When residents spoke about what services and initiatives exist in Widnes for wellbeing, residents organised these into assets or community groups. Within these two categories were subcategories including physical and mental health, places for leisure, parks and green spaces, and community-based centres or hubs.



Generally, residents listed the assets or services they were familiar with, but rarely categorised them as good or bad without being asked further questions, recognising they contributed towards wellbeing but not mentioning why or how they contribute.

Most residents would list a few places they were aware of or could see around them, but felt unaware of the extent of services that might exist in the area. Residents reflected less on the things that exist that contribute to their own personal wellbeing, instead trying to think of places people in the community could go to improve wellbeing or receive support e.g., food banks are necessary because 'if you can't afford to eat you will feel stressed'.

People often **praised community led initiatives**, such as Park Run but regularly **felt frustrated at statutory health services** waiting lists and accessibility.



“NOT EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT [COMMUNITY CONNECTORS] – THEY CONNECT PEOPLE TO SERVICES AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE. THEY HAVE PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKING AT MENTAL HEALTH SPECIFICALLY, AND PEOPLE WHO CONNECT SERVICES TO PEOPLE”.

“THE WAITING LIST FOR A CHILD TO GET ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH IS FRIGHTENING.”

“THERE’S A LOT BEING ROLLED OUT –SUCH THE CARE CHEMIST – WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO HELP PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY AND HELP GPs, BUT PEOPLE DIDN’T KNOW IT WAS HAPPENING. WHEN I ASKED WHY THEY WEREN’T TELLING PEOPLE THEY SAID THEY DIDN’T WANT TOO MANY PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT BECAUSE THEY WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO COPE.”



I know what help I need, but I can't get it...



“I KNOW WHAT I NEED, BUT GETTING THE HELP IS HARD... I CAN MAKE 100 CALLS. ONCE I’M IN, ITS GOOD BUT GETTING IN IS HARD” THIS WAS REFERENCED IN RELATION TO GP, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT ALONGSIDE BENEFITS, ADVICE AND INFORMATION SERVICES.

“THE THOUGHT OF ASKING FOR HELP IS HARD ENOUGH, THEN KNOWING HOW HARD THE PROCESS IS PUTS YOU OFF... AND THINGS THEN GET WORSE AND THE PROBLEM SNOWBALLS... FOR SOME PEOPLE, THEY HAVE NO HOPE IN GETTING HELP BECAUSE THEIR EXPERIENCES HAVE FAILED THEM. THEY NOW EXPECT THINGS NOT TO WORK FOR THEM, AND THEY DON’T BOTHER.



People said they usually start at the council website for all problems, a fairly weighty expectation that the local authority should be responsible for navigating help.

Getting help is even harder for people who don't have brilliant English and harder again for people who can't use computers. **“Even when services are face to face, quite often you are then directed to a computer to sign up for things.”**

People relied on services being promoted to them to know about them. Residents would look on social media or neighbourhood forums to take a view of what was on and what they might want to spend time doing. Others relied on word of mouth (particularly around events), community centres or noticeboards, the Halton Council Website or local publications such as the Halton Link.

There was a distinct difference between residents who worked within the local council or a public service, and those who did not. People working for these organisations often shared that they were more likely to know about what's going on, or have better methods to find out, than those you don't.



“ONE HALTON IS DEVELOPING MORE PARTNERSHIP WORKING. THERE’S A REALLY GOOD COMMISSIONER WHO’S TRYING HARD - EVERYONE’S SHORT OF MONEY BUT IF WE COLLABORATED MORE, WE COULD GET A LOT MORE DONE. I’D HOPE THAT IN 10 YEARS’ TIME WE WERE DOING MORE OF THAT, MORE COLLABORATION.”



Parks and green spaces were mentioned frequently, as places to get into nature. Some parks, such as Victoria Park also have a café, ice cream parlour and a butterfly house to visit so offered more than one feature to residents if they were to visit. Parks and other places where you could visit with children were mentioned a lot as places families can go to spend time, burn off energy and meet other families.

Spotlight on Spike Island

Spike Island is a popular park in Widnes, located between the Sankey Canal and the estuary of the River Mersey, situated near the Catalyst Science and Discovery Museum and has a rich history.

It was even the site of a music concert by The Stone Roses and focus of a British comedy film in 2012. Spike Island was mentioned by a significant number of the residents, but it’s contribution to wellbeing split opinions amongst the community.

People listed it as a place of note, but there was an undertone of frustration that the area had been neglected and fallen into disrepair. People valued it for its green space and connection to Widnes’ industrial heritage, and as a place that people from outside of the community would visit that was unique to Widnes.



2b. Satisfaction with wellbeing services

Universal services for physical and mental health were clearly extremely important to residents, most people listed assets such as GPs, dentists or some sort of health service in their conversations. Here we can assume that people understood these assets to be an important part of Widnes fabric that offers people support with their wellbeing.

We heard people talk a lot **about services that helped people connect with each other**, such as outreach programmes that 'help children find something to do' or the importance of connecting care home residents to what's going on in the community. Similarly, when visiting parks or getting outdoors we heard about the benefits of meeting other people or families and being able to get out into nature to improve how you we are feeling. Often people were pleased with the proximity of green space, to be able to walk to a nice environment was something that felt unique to many people in Widnes.

“

“IT'S IMPORTANT WE DON'T LOSE THE THINGS WE HAVE. THE PARKS ARE BRILLIANT, WE NEED TO ENSURE THEY ARE KEPT NICE.”

”

Residents expressed a lot of **frustrations about the accessibility of services**. Overwhelmingly, people felt that there should be better promotion of what's going on locally both in terms of service provision, but also in terms of clubs and groups to join and events that are happening. People **weren't sure of where to look to get to this information**, with some residents referencing that things such as a local magazine or the local paper that no longer exists used to be a good place to find out what's going on and felt frustrated that they wouldn't know where to start looking if they needed to.

“

“SOME ARE HIDDEN AWAY - SOME PEOPLE AREN'T AWARE; WE ALL RELY ON TECHNOLOGY OR THE INTERNET. IT'S GOING THAT WAY THAT YOU NEED TO DO EVERYTHING [ONLINE].”

”

People spoke about services being overwhelmed, making it very difficult to get appointments or being added to long waiting lists. There was a general dissatisfaction with GPs and local healthcare and because they were difficult to access, people felt 'fobbed off' and not treated with respect, and as such they felt powerless in the face of inadequate service, which was ultimately unaccountable and unchangeable. Inability to physically see a doctor was also mentioned, and the consequences this has for the GP's surgery as a place for communicating other services and initiatives.

“

“YOU HEAR HORROR STORIES OF BEING DROPPED BY CAMHS AS SOON AS THEY TURN 18, IT'S HORRIBLE AND WAITING LISTS ARE SO LONG. YOUNGER PEOPLE COMING UP NOW I THINK ARE MORE LIKELY TO USE SERVICES [IN THE FUTURE].”

”

2c. What changes Widnes needs or wants?

We heard people wanted to have more accessible healthcare, more hyper-localised community centres that are properly subsidised so that they aren't oversubscribed and can serve as hubs for information and support. Some stressed that these should especially provide support and activities for young people so that they feel part of their community. Others focused on an improved town centre to operate as a beating heart for the wider community, with a wider range of choice of places to go and things to do which would be an improvement on the current state of the town.

People spoke again and again about needing one place to go to find out what's on, or see what services would be available to them, and this could take the form of a hub, a newsletter or something that resembled the old local newspaper that no longer exists.

“

“I'D HOPE THERE'D BE MORE WELLBEING TYPE SERVICES (LIKE A ONE STOP SHOP FOR WELLBEING WHERE PEOPLE COULD JUST POP IN, HAVE A CHAT HAVE A COFFEE - SOMETHING PARTICULARLY FOR MEN).”

”

One resident stressed that they would like better visibility of what work is happening to improve wellbeing, so that people felt more informed or reassured about how services are delivering for local people. Another person wanted to know that system leaders and decision makers were **connected into the community** and were seeing for themselves the struggles or experiences residents were having to give them a view into the reality of local life.

“

“THERE'S A LOT OF WORK GOING ON AROUND WELLBEING AND THERE A LOT OF SERVICES BEING COMPLETED, I CAN'T AGREE THAT WHAT THE SERVICES THEY ARE IMPLEMENTING IS OBVIOUS TO THE COMMUNITY.”

“IF LEADERS HAD MORE LIVED EXPERIENCE OR EXPOSURE TO WHAT LOCAL PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING, IF THEY WORKED IN A FOOD BANK FOR A DAY, THEY'D BE BETTER INFORMED.”

”

Others spoke about how they would like to see people take more pride in the local area, from understanding and appreciating its local history, to respecting and looking after local assets and the appearance of the town.

“

“WIDNES ISN'T A PLACE I'D ASSOCIATE WITH WELLBEING. IT'S FULL OF POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE AND THERE ARE HISTORICAL LINKS WITH IT BEING A DIRTY AND INDUSTRIALISED PLACE.”

”



Hope for change tempered by local agency

People felt that the changes they hoped to see were unlikely to happen, especially under the current financial status of the government and austerity which affect the amount of money available to local council.

“

“CHANGE WILL TAKE A LONG TIME, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO MONEY IN THE END, COUNCIL HAVE ‘X’ AMOUNT OF MONEY AND THEY ARE LIMITED IN WHAT THEY CAN DO WITH IT, BUT YOU CAN SEE THINGS GOING DOWN AND IT DOES AFFECT PEOPLE’S WELLBEING.”

“OUR LOCAL COUNCIL CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH BECAUSE THEY ONLY GET GIVEN SO MUCH, HOW DO THEY MAKE THAT STRETCH? I IMAGINE DECISIONS ARE COMING FROM A HIGHER LEVEL, SO I DON’T THINK THE LITTLE TOWN OF WIDNES HAS A LOT OF SAY OVER WHAT DECISIONS THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING.”

”

A general lack of power and autonomy came across in most of the interviews. Many of the interviewees felt neglected and unable to make changes in their local area themselves, either through being overworked, uninformed, or generally just not feeling involved in local decision making. None felt like they were empowered to make improvements themselves, but also didn’t feel confident that local leaders were properly considering their interests.

Residents showed little trust in both local and national decision makers, that the ‘powers that be’ don’t care about the town and have no interest in making it a better place to live for the whole community.

6.3 Design of the Data Commons

While not a primary goal of the community interviews, we asked about knowledge around wellbeing-related data. Any discussion around data surprised people. People had not considered what localised wellbeing data might exist, or how they would go about accessing it if they wanted to. Some had considered data, but only through a lens of more corporate structures such as social media outlets, or how their privacy might be compromised or breached in ways beyond their control.

“

“I’VE ONLY EVER THOUGHT ABOUT MY DATA BEING USED, ONLY REALLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.”

“I DON’T KNOW IF THEY DO STUFF LIKE LOCAL SURVEYS, I SUPPOSE YOU COULD FIND OUT OR THERE’S PROBABLY SOMETHING SOMEWHERE.”

”

Despite the confusion, there was curiosity and interest to learn more about the role of data.

“

“I’VE NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT MAYBE I SHOULD LOOK INTO IT.”

”

3a. Personal and family data

The main driver for interest to access to health information would be if it was to meet an immediate need or if it had a clear purpose.

“

“I TRIED TO GET TO HEALTH RECORDS ABOUT MY MUM WHEN SHE WAS IN A NURSING HOME, BUT I CAME UP AGAINST BARRIERS, IT NEVER HAPPENED.”

“I WOULD JUST ASK MY FAMILY; I’VE NEVER BEEN TO LOOK ON A WEBSITE ABOUT MY HEALTH OR COUNCIL RECORDS. I KNOW I CAN LOOK ON THE NHS APP FOR MY MEDICAL RECORD.”

”

3b. Data about Widnes

People weren't sure where to look, presumed it would be time consuming and ultimately didn't care enough to really have an opinion on the role of data at place.

There was a recognition that knowledge across Widnes for things like service availability would be helpful but wondered if it was more useful to decision making rather than residents.

“

“IT WOULD BE GOOD TO BE ABLE TO LOOK AT A RANGE OF INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT EXISTS AND HOW TO ACCESS THINGS LIKE GROUPS AND SERVICES.”

”

When engaged in the concept of a data commons, the expectation was that it would be a physical space akin to a library and used as a service. Navigation to help use this asset was essential.

3c. Digital literacy

There was acknowledgement that data literacy was a real spectrum, those with jobs where data was worked with, felt comfortable knowing about where to go and how things were stored and accessed, whereas a lot of other people had little idea about what was available or how they could access information and, in some cases, were quite fearful of technology. Concern was raised around people with low or no digital literacy and that this could reinforce inequalities.

“

“I DO KNOW, BECAUSE I WORK FOR THE COUNCIL AND KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO GO TO GET INFORMATION AND DATA ABOUT MYSELF.”

“ANYTHING IS EASY TO ACCESS IF YOU HAVE THE INTERNET, BUT NOT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THE INTERNET.”

“I KNOW I COULD ACCESS MY OWN MEDICAL OR FINANCE RECORDS AND HOW I COULD DO THAT BUT NOT MY FAMILY'S. I WOULDN'T KNOW HOW TO ACCESS INFORMATION OTHER INFORMATION STORED ON ME, LIKE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START.”

”

6.4 Key takeaways

Good personal wellbeing is made up from emotional, mental and physical health which is maintained through regular human interaction and spiritual connection. The components which contribute to these vary according to life stage and a challenge to maintaining good personal wellbeing is when the physical connection to the help is compromised.

For **community wellbeing** to exist, it's clear that residents expected people to have virtues, without these principles of respect people expected wellbeing at a community level to be inexistent. For assets to contribute to community wellbeing, they needed to be respected (treated well), looked after (invested in and maintained) and kept relevant (so people want to continue using them).

Places where people can come together as a community are an important enabler, and we must create a blend of personal and community wellbeing to instil a pride of place in Widnes.

Overall, residents understood the role of power in society and that the community can contribute to upholding or maintaining assets and community wellbeing, but that many of the fundamental contributors to wellbeing are controlled by local and national governments.

“

“I’VE BECOME AWARE OF THE INEQUALITIES IN WIDNES, I DIDN’T REALISE THAT GAP HAD BECOME SO BIG. THERE ARE POCKETS OF THE TOWN WHERE THINGS HAVE JUST BEEN LEFT TO GO TO WRECK OR RUIN.”

“IT NEEDS TO BE MADE THE NORM TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF [AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH], WITH WIDNES BEING AN INDUSTRIAL PLACE AND EVERYONE WAS WORKING IN FACTORIES AND STUFF I DON’T THINK THE PRIORITY WAS LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF, IT WAS JUST WORKING TO PROVIDE FOR YOUR FAMILY. WE NEED TO MAKE IT NORMAL TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.”

”

Navigating help was the loudest insight. Most people we spoke to want to be able to access one central place to get trusted information. There’s therefore a reliance on “services/anchor organisations” to be informed and to be shouting about their provision and service, or part of a centrally organised and governed place to understand what exists to support wellbeing.

There was an underlying feeling that it is easy to know about what services and initiatives there are if you know where to get it from, but that in general, people aren’t sure where to start.

People spoke about Widnes with a nostalgic glow, and many shared good feelings about the town, at the same time of being conscious that it’s not the same Widnes they remember from growing up and recognised that change has happened and although hopeful, we need to act now to prose the pride of the town.

A data commons is a concept resident don’t fully understand the benefits of. Whilst there was no opposition to its purpose or potential, it wasn’t clear how it could benefit residents. Despite this, there is a curiosity to hear and learn more about it and a plea to focus on data skills and literacy alongside the build of the commons.

What we learnt about our approach

7.1 Planning for the project

Choosing a place with the conditions for success to deliver a project like this is an essential consideration in the planning process, coupled with the key lines of enquiry within the project. In our case, we chose wellbeing as our key line of enquiry as we knew this had universal importance to communities and was something we'd heard system leaders share concerns over, especially against the backdrop of COVID.

The place was a little bit trickier. To do this well, we knew there were a range of variables for us to think about. Ranging from places where we had existing relationships, the readiness of communities and the level of engagement activities already taking place. Both over engaged and under engaged places would not be the ideal for a project like this. We worked with One Halton and place-based community leaders to find the perceived sweet spot community.

Some key learnings that we took from this phase:

- ✓ **Agreeing the purpose of the project and having a shared understanding of what this means** across the project team. Having SMART objectives, underpinning the project for the full 10-month period was essential to the project staying focussed.
- ✓ **Getting to the nuts and bolts of the project operations quicker.** We hit a few hurdles along the way when planning the core operational functions of the work. We needed to seek advice from the University about how to make this project accessible for local people who might not want an income to disrupt any benefit payment they received. We settled on two methods of payment in the end: vouchers or bank transfer via the University.
- ✓ We learnt about the **balance of power in decision-making** on the project, understanding which team member or organisation had the ultimate sign-off on all the multifaceted elements of project design, approach, and delivery in order to keep pace and harness our own strengths as a team. In the future it would be sensible to plot out all the points we might want to collect feedback, data or information that could contribute to the research, so we don't limit the amount of information we can collect throughout the project to help us evaluate our approach and respond with changes.



- ✓ Reflecting on our approach, we could have been **clearer on expectations of community researchers**. More interviews than we expected took place, which resulted in an increased demand on transcription and overall project resource.
- ✓ **Conducting true participatory design takes time, patience, and flexibility**. All these factors combined means you need to have the resource and expenditure to create the conditions for peers to influence, inform and lead the scope and design of the work. Combining this with the formal structures of a university and a budget naturally means some of the well-meaning intention of the work is eroded in order to deliver on time and within budget. In future iterations, we would like to see community researchers playing a more central role in informing the design of the core materials of the project, such as the communication materials and research questions. Where we identify their skills within the training, we want to use these better to deliver the work and create more opportunities for community researchers to get involved in the detail or challenge decisions being made by the project teams.
- ✓ From a data collection perspective, there were **already existing and robust structures** to think about how we would store data and information, which was a great foundation when organising and coordinating such a complex and data-heavy project.

Our top 3 recommendations for 'planning the project':



1. SPEND TIME MAPPING, RESEARCHING AND REALLY UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHOSEN PLACE and work closely with system partners to embed the project with people who support it, maximising local knowledge about the reality of what life is like.



2. HAVE HONEST AND IN-DEPTH CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE PROJECT TEAM EARLY on about how the planning, research and delivery will work hand-in-hand and what challenges or limitations might influence the project.



3. PLAN MORE TIME THAN YOU THINK YOU NEED! Participatory design deserves to be nurtured and grown slowly and organisational structures might slow down your delivery as you work through the milestones of the work.



A Spotlight on project risk

Initially our project was focused on a micro-community within Halton. We worked with system leaders to shortlist several areas based on conditions for successful recruitment of Community Researchers.

With lots of community engagement experience behind us, we expected a successful place to recruit would be a place the system had some insight on to ensure they were mobilised to get involved, balanced against historically not been overly consulted by system-led projects.

After several conversations we landed on West Bank as our focus area. We mapped potential stakeholders with a similar interest to the objectives of this project and started to engage with them in order to build genuine relationships and trust amongst members of the community. We spent time meeting people in the places that they naturally gather to talk to them about the work hoping the recruitment would snowball and pick up more local people along the way.

We spent 2 months working day to day across West bank, distributed over 100 posters, shared over 500 booklets and has hundreds of conversations with residents, local organisations and businesses. This led us to recruiting 2 community researchers.

Spending time with and getting to know the people in the community gave us some insight into life in West Bank. There is a clear community identity grounded in the length of time families have lived there over generations and past industries and institutional structures that local people gathered around. With the disappearance of some of these structures there were feelings of being 'left behind' or people who had moved to the area more recently being 'not like us', with some strong White Nationalism tensions underlying these feelings.

Residents were also bothered about the waterside and how this had been neglected by the council over time, as well as concern a growing number of HMO's in the area resulting in fractures in the community.

These factors presented us with some barriers to recruitment, people were less available than we had hoped or were apathetic to join or trust a research project in the midst of community tension.

As a result of the project risks associated with the original place we decided to expand our area into the whole of Widnes and relaunch our recruitment campaign with the entire town including West Bank as part of this definition.



So, what does this tell us?

Understanding the characteristics of a local area is much more than spending time walking around it and having conversations with organisational and system delivery partners. Sometimes these leaders may not have a full grasp on community feeling. Therefore, due diligence of area should be thorough and personal, in order to the understands complexities of a place.

But we also learnt a few things about good community engagement and connection:

- **When choosing a place, try and pick a place with communities within communities** - without this you have one single point of failure. If you are not already a trusted member of a community, and they don't accept the project you have nowhere else to turn.
- **Trust must be built through action** - people have to see with their own eyes that engagement leads to action.
- **Investing in a place takes time** - we need to be patient and put in the legwork.
- **Communities want control and power over activity on their doorstep.** Where anger can lead to hate or anti-social activity, we could be carefully harnessing this energy to positively organise or build capacity more effectively.

7.2 Recruiting people

Central to the delivery of this work was recruiting a team of community researchers to lead the conversations with residents. As you've seen in our 'spotlight on risk' section, our recruitment process was not linear. Managing risk takes a different shape with every project, each nuanced to the focus and place. The best way to mitigate this is to consult local experts and carry out extensive due diligence research on your area. We managed our risk of project failure by expanding our initial area of West Bank into the whole of Widnes to expand our pool of residents to engage and employ in the engagement.

Of course, this takes time and resource. Building and nurturing trusted relationships with members of the community does tip into creating a fantastic, diverse, local, and engaged team of community researchers who really want to make a difference.

The journey to get there wasn't easy; we had to remain flexible and let things grow organically. We recognised that different people have different wants, needs and agendas that they overlay with the project work, and we wanted to be adaptable to work with all of these aspirations and needs whilst managing expectations. This balancing act is tough, managing relationships, setting expectations, and delivering practical project work against the research timeline is a fair few things to juggle! We can't recommend enough the need to get the messaging around recruitment right from the start to represent each organisation's values and aspirations for the work equally.



Key learning for recruitment

- 1. Conversations with local people** talking about rates of pay, tips people from polite to interested, people want to be paid for their time. We paid a set amount to attend our training sessions and research interviews, £20 per interview and £50 for training. After that, researchers could work as little or often as needed, dictated by the numbers of interviews they carried out. We paid everyone £15 an hour for any fieldwork or preparation to carry our research.
- **People were motivated by our themes** - wellbeing and data. We thought data would scare people off, but it had the opposite effect and residents got it! We were surprised when talking about how the project was rooted in data this got people talking and on board.
- **Running fieldwork over summer works well**, people have time and want to pick up flexible hours. A couple of our researchers told us this was a great way for them to make some extra money to put towards Christmas time.
- **Being clear on what we are asking of researchers helps to reassure them.** Explaining that local people and local voices are important to the project went a long way in getting people to consider getting involved, people were motivated by doing something for their community. We noticed some nervousness from some researchers about just how many interviews they would be expected to do, so managing expectations from the start helps to quash any fears. We also tried to mine their local expertise at every opportunity – for example asking them where would be good to do the training meant that we found somewhere people enjoyed the food and felt comfortable.
- **Total assets used in recruitment:** 400 booklets, 300 posters, 5 stands/roadshows in bumping spaces, >1000 conversations with local people.





Shopping centre banner stands

The support we're provided by the NHS, Councils and other community organisations is designed using information they hold about us.

But are they using the right information to understand what we need and make good decisions?

We think it's time you had a bigger say in what information gets used, so let's find out - what makes West Bank well?

Find us on Facebook: /RoundEreWestBank



This project has been approved by the University of Liverpool Research Ethics Committee, approval number: 1294.

Refer a friend cards/digital images

Worried about not having previous experience?
Don't let that stop you. The project wants people who are inquisitive and comfortable chatting with others in our area. (All training & equipment will be provided)

Want to find out more?
Message us today, text WIDNES to 07883 724 273 and we'll get in touch

Community venue posters

Could you be a Community Researcher in Widnes?
Or do you know someone who could?

Could you be a Community Researcher in West Bank?
Or do you know someone who could?



Information and voucher booklets

WHAT MAKES WIDNES WELL?*

WE'RE LOOKING FOR PAID COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS IN WIDNES

*Just so you know there are no wrong answers.

FEEL WELL, ON ME.

Give your friends and family a little bit of what they need.

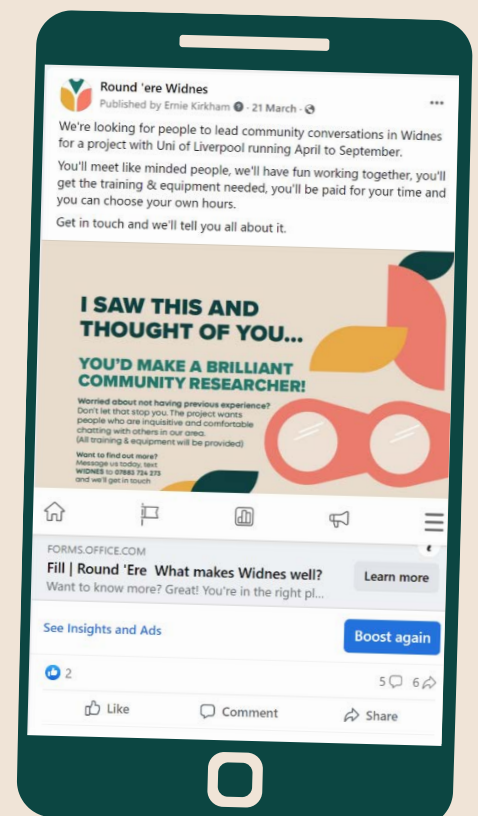
- 2. Keeping ‘fieldnotes’ helped us to flush out what was and wasn’t working** in our approach. Reflecting on this weekly, along with the KPIs we’d achieved and how many new enquiries or recruits we had on board helped us to focus energy in the right places. Over the two months recruiting in West Bank, and a further month recruiting in the wider Widnes, the contrast between the two recruitment sprints was clear; expanding our area increased the appetite to get involved and we saw a better conversion rate of interested people enrolling into the project over less time.
- 3. We think that having the University of Liverpool logo present on our communications meant people trusted the research was legitimate.** Here we also believe this status attracted a bright pool of recruits who were interested in furthering their own development via a respected higher educational institution. Naturally though, many of our enquiries, despite many hours of nurturing and trust building did not convert into final recruitment, and we know that future projects like this should expect a similar appetite to enquire, slightly reduced availability to get involved and an expectation that some people will drop out along the way due to other commitments or detachment with the project approach or themes.
- 4. Places we know got good traction:** We wanted our methods to recruit our research team to be diverse and inclusive, using a combination of in-person, paper-based and digital assets to get in front of and connect with people to introduce and advertise the opportunities to get involved.



Our big wins here were social media, where 3x paid ads on Facebook specifically targeting the Widnes area over a few weeks reached a greater number of people than we were able to meet face to face in 3 months. For the amount of effort to reward we would highly recommend setting up a **project Facebook group**, targeting Facebook paid adverts and posting about the work in local groups where local people are likely to read about the work. We often saw that these posts would be shared, or friends of people would be tagged in the original posts, so we saw first-hand how social media can amplify your message across communities.

Posters in various locations across Widnes also resulted in a high number of warm enquiries, where locals had seen information about the work on public noticeboards and in waiting areas. Surprisingly to us, amongst some of the more popular places people noticed our posters were pharmacies, with at least 4 enquiries coming from conversations with our teams here or posters at various pharmacies across Widnes.

The conversation time was often delayed with this method though and fewer enquiries tipped into actual recruits, and lots of time was spent by the project team getting collateral pinned up, or flyers left in waiting rooms or on noticeboards, with some organisations not allowing us to display the information at all.



We did encounter some problems breaking through into place-based community locations such as supermarket community champion groups. In almost every case here we found the groups to be inaccessible or unwilling to meet or promote the work. We also had varying degrees of support from local political figures who were nervous about what a conversation on wellbeing would unearth, and if they would be politically targeted by dissatisfied or frustrated residents if seen to be starting a conversation about the impact data has on local services associated with wellbeing or health.

At the start of the project, we expected we would be able to partner well with local organisations, VCSEs or volunteer groups to promote the work and learn about how our team could support and promote other complementary initiatives run by local people. This is perhaps where we were most surprised to not receive the support and access to existing volunteer groups or mailing lists and found that we needed to spend more resource than expected self-promoting the work.

Once we expanded into Widnes, we also hosted several 'roadshows' with a stall set up at local bumping spaces, such as Widnes Market, Green Oaks Shopping Centre and on the concourse of the DCBL stadium on a Rugby League match day. There was a high cost involved with hiring space in these venues, with a similar conversion rate overall to other collateral-heavy methods.



Activity	Hopeful enquiries
Deeper conversations with interested members of public	59
Enquiries followed up with no or little response - awareness about the project from unknown activity	32
Number of people who engaged in training	16
Number of people who completed training and went on to complete research	14
Poster/flyer/booklet	9
Facebook adverts and groups	7
Vikings match	4
Face-to-face with the project team in local assets	3
Library	3
Word of mouth	1
School	1
Green Oaks	1
Market	1
Roadshows	-

5. Getting support from system partners: Alongside our community researcher recruitment phase, we also strengthened our connections with system partners to raise awareness about the project and its objectives, aiming to get buy in from local organisations into the creation of the data hub. Early on we had conversations with One Halton and the local Voluntary Centre for Action(VCA), as well as statutory service leaders to promote the work and understand where there were opportunities to overlap learning with existing knowledge or initiative.

We ran an online introductory workshop inviting stakeholders from across Widnes to attend, to talk about the research project, our ambition for the data hub and tee up working with these organisations in future phases to tip the research into action. People were interested and curious to hear more, particularly about the data commons. We know for future sessions we should run these in person and locally to the organisations here we're trying to engage. By doing this we hope we will form a close network of allies who support the existence for data hub and are keen to listen to the findings to create change for good in Widnes.

We also found that by engaging local organisations in our recruitment phase to catalyse meeting residents in the places that they regularly use, we were able to discuss using community 'bumping spaces' as a way to understand where we would be the most effective use of our time in meeting local residents and recruiting in Widnes. These conversations with the likes of the VCA, the Rugby League Stadium, shopping centres and other public services were a good way to tee up the future phases of the work as well as provide opportunities to run our 'recruitment roadshows' raise awareness with residents.

Our top 3 recommendations for 'recruiting people':



1. EXPECT RECRUITMENT TO TAKE A LONG TIME AND BUDGET FOR IT IN YOUR PROJECT PLAN.

People get more familiar with the work once they see it advertised a few times. Keeping relationships warm over this time takes a lot of handholding with each individual but done well you create really trusted bonds.



2. GET YOUR COMMUNICATION COLLATERAL OUT EARLY

online and on place-based noticeboards, this will do some of the hard work for you. Even months after the project was underway, we still got some interest coming through to get involved.



3. FIGURE OUT WHAT IS AND ISN'T WORKING IN YOUR APPROACH

and put your energy into the things that are giving you results within your means.

7.3 Training people

Once we had our 16 eager residents recruited and ready to get started, we moved into our training phase. We had a mix of brilliant people, with a diverse group of skills and varying levels of exposure to research. Some had been through university educations, others perhaps hadn't gone to university but were interested in adult learning, for others this was their very first plunge into the world of research.

We had to consider how to make the training for this research as accessible as possible to people across this varying scale of experience. We had an ambitious amount of material to get through across three main sessions. We also wanted this training to go beyond pushing out information and make the spaces as safe as possible to let everybody contribute to the overall design of research and influence what methods the group would use to conduct research, and the questions we might ask to draw out our insights.

Here are some key learnings we took from delivering our training:



- ✓ Across 16 residents we **initially planned on running six training sessions, but soon realised that's a lot** of time to expect a group of individuals with different routines to commit to in a working week. We managed to review our training material to split the training in three sessions, jam-packed with activities and exercises to bring the project to life. Within these sessions we wanted to create the conditions for participatory design and research, discuss what we meant when we said 'data' and 'wellbeing' and talk about the practical elements of the work and how we expected the researchers to be involved.
- ✓ We followed these **3 sessions with an evening mop-up session** for individuals who missed one or more of the main sessions. This mop-up summarised our training and helped us to review our research questions ready for sign off.
- ✓ At each session we provided all the materials for our community researchers, including printouts of activities, branded notebooks, and a folder for each person to take away and come back with all their personal items. We wanted to give the project a **strong sense of 'brand'** to associate with and organise ourselves around.
- ✓ After asking the trainees where they thought we should deliver the training, we knew that we needed to **deliver the training in the Cookhouse Pub**, as numerous people told us it was a well-known, respected pub in the area **'that does a great breakfast'**. We wanted the training to happen in a place that didn't feel like a traditional classroom setting so that people could relax into the project in a place that felt familiar to them and their community. We made sure we booked a big breakfast or dinner in for everyone and had enough tea, coffee and treats on hand to show our researchers how much we appreciated them being there. This also allowed us to create space to get to know each other a bit better, giving the project more of a human shape than how you might think of traditional research being carried out.

Feedback from our community researchers told us that, despite fitting a lot into each session each researcher could follow the content well and didn't find the training overwhelming, despite adding that we could build in some more 'breathing time' to think about the approach to the project. We had positive feedback on our facilitation of the session, where we pulled together well as one homogenous team to deliver our expertise on the various components of the learning. One researcher did tell us that we could have been clearer from the start about what role we played in the project, and why each of us was there on any specific training day, to avoid feeling like they were being watched or observed – in the future we now know not to overcrowd the room and to make sure everyone is playing a clear role in the delivery of each session.

As we reviewed how people were feeling from one session to the next, we could see our community researchers grow in confidence and appetite to get going.





REMEMBER, WE HAVE A FULL TOOLKIT OF RESOURCES IF YOU WANT TO DIG INTO THE TRAINING RESOURCES FURTHER.

These factors combined meant that we saw...

- ✓ **Good attendance at training**
- ✓ **Low dropout rate.** Two out of 16 researchers to who participated in training decided not to proceed with the project. One due to other time commitments and one due to our chosen method.
- ✓ **No conflict during the sessions** – we set the ground rules at the start, and everyone respected these.



What surprised us?

They got the data thing! We thought we might have to spend more time talking about how this project was rooted in data and what this meant, but everyone understood it from the start. This group really wanted to create change and were motivated by their longstanding love of the place or desire to see their families grow up there with good opportunities. Seeing them come together as a group was special, they showed each other kindness and trust and cared for each other early on.

We ended up with 14 fully trained, brilliant, local, and bothered people who have a real vision for what they want Widnes to be like a place to grow up and grow old, but these community researchers also have a foot in reality and understand that change takes time. Regardless of any frustrations they had about Widnes or differences they had from each other, each of them wanted to come along on our journey and we're proud to have each of them represent this project amongst their peers.

Our top 3 recommendations for 'training people':



1. PLAN YOUR SESSIONS AND CONTENT, MAKING IT AS INTERACTIVE AS POSSIBLE. Squeezing a lot of content into a few sessions is tricky, and you don't want to cut corners. Spend time thinking about how to clearly position the research and manage the expectations for change with the team.



2. SHOW THE RESEARCHERS YOU VALUE THEM. Make sure your team is learning in an environment they are comfortable in, with good food and plenty of refreshments and time to get to know each other.



3. GATHER FEEDBACK FROM YOUR RESEARCHERS AS YOU GO and be flexible to changing your delivery based on where the residents need more support.



7.4 Doing the research

Once recruitment, training and research interviews were complete, we waited for the next round of ethics approvals to get started on the research. This wait delayed us getting started by 4 weeks, and within that time, we continued to hold the relationships, be transparent about the ethics process and check-in with the community researchers to answer any questions and organise any required documents, technology, and feelings about getting started. Because of the nature of co-production, we wanted the final approved materials to be developed alongside and with the researchers. This meant only submitting to ethics once they had time to review the research method and process.

We were lucky that this wait didn't result in people stepping back from the project, the appetite was still there to get started as soon as we got the OK from the ethics board to start the research.

7.5 Managing the team

The reality of managing a team of newly fledged researchers is not far from what we expected. Once ethics signed off the community engagement, we could arm our researchers with a **'Participant pack'** which gave them all the details about the project in one tidy folder.

Here they could find each of the following:

- **What to do in an emergency or if you have a problem**
- **When they could check in with the project team at regular meetups**
- **Individual ID badges**
- **Where requested a digital tablet or dictaphone to record interviews**
- **Participant Information sheets**
- **Participant Consent forms**
- **Instructions on how to get informed consent**
- **Consent forms for carrying out research in a public space**
- **Interview guides**
- **Gift cards sign out forms**
- **Mental health information to give to residents with signposting to local and national services**
- **A certificate to show they had completed their project training**

It would have been the preference of many of the researchers to have some of this information digitally, rather than as printouts. In the future, where possible, we would prefer to save the core documents about the organisation of the project onto the devices, before handing out any tech.

We also hit a few bumps in the road when managing our tech and didn't carry out the necessary tests to make sure community researchers could use, save, and share files and recordings easily. After initially giving out some iPads purchased by the University, we soon heard back from the team that they couldn't log onto these devices as they needed a University of Liverpool email address and passcode. This stalled 3 of our researchers, whose technology had to be returned and replaced for an android tablet instead, where we didn't have this problem. Over time, we noticed that most researchers preferred to use their own smart phones to records interviews and share them over WhatsApp with the Capacity team, as this was the quickest way of file sharing. The two residents with Dictaphones had the fewest number of problems, and found this method easy to use, with little need for support.

During the training session, we agreed as a group that it would be best to organise ourselves in one place so that everyone saw all the updates at the same time. We agreed that we could do this best in a WhatsApp group, and this way the delivery team could coordinate people quickly and send out updates effectively. This group chat also became a place where community researchers supported each other and organised to meet up socially.

Understanding the experiences of the researchers - we didn't account for this in the ethics process, but it's important for the experiential evaluation of the project.

We saw the researchers come together to support each other and even saw them arrange to meet up with each other outside of paid time to enjoy each other's company and deepen their own connections - something we didn't anticipate at the start of the work.



7.6 Carrying out the engagement

Throughout the research phase, we received some feedback from the community researchers about things they thought were going well or felt difficult.

Below are some of the things they told us:

Recruitment & Training

Many researchers commented that the recruitment was very well organised, and they felt instantly at ease when they made contact with our project team. Researchers were recruited through many different means, some having seen a local flyer, while others found out about it via social media. Researchers commented how approachable the team were and how well things were explained and as they learned more about the project, the more they wanted to be involved.

“

“I SPOKE WITH (PROJECT TEAM MEMBER) AND I FOUND THE PROCESS VERY EASY. EVERYTHING WAS EXPLAINED REALLY WELL AND WENT INTO DETAIL ABOUT THE PROJECT AND WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED.”

”

Overall, researchers were very happy with the training. They found speaking to others and sharing thoughts and ideas was helpful and some commented that it has improved their confidence. Others commented that it allowed them to deepen their knowledge of wellbeing and learn about research methods. Most researchers commented that the venue was a good set up and a perfect place to conduct the training.

“

“LEARNING ABOUT RESEARCH METHODS WAS VERY USEFUL FOR THINKING ABOUT HOW TO APPROACH THE RESEARCH TO BEST ACHIEVE ITS AIMS.”

“I LEARNT THAT I AM AN APPROACHABLE PERSON AND IT HELPED ME TO BE MORE CONFIDENT. IT HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND THE PEOPLE OF WIDNES AND GAVE ME MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOCIETY ROUND ME.”

”

Details of how the research felt to conduct

Some researchers commented that they would have liked the opportunity to practice their skills a little more before conducting the research and get used to asking the questions. Some, in retrospect, felt that some of the questions were a little repetitive and, in some cases, confusing – especially around the data section. Researchers told us they struggled to explain to residents the questions about wellbeing data, and that residents would often hesitate with their answer, or seem confused about the questions or prompts in the interview guide.

“

“THE DATA QUESTIONS CONFUSED INTERVIEWEES, AND IN MY CASE, THE INTERVIEWER TOO. I DIDN'T FEEL CLEAR ENOUGH ABOUT THE QUESTIONS TO REWORD THEM.”

”

Some researchers felt that the personal questions about people's own wellbeing came too soon within the order of questions and found that some individuals were hesitant to begin with but opened more throughout but overall, there was a good range of questions from personal experiences, community experiences and data experiences.

“

“I THINK WE HAD A GOOD SET OF QUESTIONS, AND WE HAD A GOOD PLAN FOR CARRYING OUT THE FIELDWORK. THE DATA QUESTIONS DIDN'T REALLY ELICIT MUCH RESPONSE FROM PARTICIPANTS, BUT THIS MIGHT BE INFORMATIVE IN ITS OWN WAY. THE SEMI-STRUCTURED NATURE OF THE INTERVIEWS ALLOWED FOR FLEXIBILITY.”

”

Some researchers felt like they needed to stick exactly to script, following the interview guide word-for-word, and worried if they adlibbed that it might somehow disrupt the findings of the research. Others were more comfortable using their own language to frame the questions to residents, and would often add further prompting questions, to get closer to the detail behind the initial answers.

“

“I WOULD ENCOURAGE RESEARCHERS TO FEEL CONFIDENT IN EXPANDING ON RESPONSES TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER INSIGHTS BY THE INTERVIEWEE.”

”

Practical elements of the project

Researchers raised that they would have liked to collect data on the residents around their protected characteristics. They believed that having these insights would help us to understand the context and nuances of our research better and support our findings when we were presenting the results to people working in the public sector or local services.

We also heard that some residents felt nervous or shy to go on record talking about their feelings of wellbeing and would have liked the option to write out answers instead.

“

“BEFORE I INTERVIEWED PEOPLE, I TRIED TO MAKE THEM COMFORTABLE AND RELAXED BUT AS SOON AS A MICROPHONE IS SWITCHED ON, MANY, EVEN CONFIDENT PEOPLE, SEEMED TO CLAM UP OR BECOME FORGETFUL.”

”

Researchers also fed back that it would have been good to have a hub in which they could work from and have members of the public come to partake in the interviews, some thought this would have helped to get a broader number of people involved, whereas others were happy that they got to work outside and felt they met a lot of different people.

Some researchers would have liked to have interviewed more people to cover a more diverse range of individuals.

“

“I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO VISIT ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE ISOLATED, I THINK THAT WOULD HAVE GIVEN A REALLY INTERESTING INSIGHT.”

“I HAD EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE RESEARCH.”

”





Overall thoughts on the project

Overall, researchers were glad that they got an opportunity to be involved. They enjoyed the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and work as part of a team. Many commented that there was a good diverse mix of people and that they felt very supported throughout. They also commented that the training was thorough, and they felt that their confidence had improved.

“

“IT APPEARED A REALLY GOOD MIX OF PEOPLE HAD BEEN RECRUITED AS COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS. A LOVELY ATMOSPHERE AT ALL THE TRAINING SESSIONS I ATTENDED AND ANY ONE TO ONES I HAD WERE WELL CONDUCTED AND FELT SUPPORTIVE. THE GUIDELINES WERE REALLY HELPFUL, AND THE PAPERWORK WAS GENERALLY USER FRIENDLY.”

“THE TEAM RUNNING THE PROJECT WAS FANTASTIC – WELCOMING SUPPORTING, CLEARLY VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND GOOD TEACHERS. THEY HELD EVERYTHING TOGETHER AND MADE THE WHOLE PROCESS VIRTUALLY EFFORTLESS FOR ME.”

“I LOVED THE WHOLE TEAM AND REALLY ENJOYED MIXING WITH SUCH A DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHICH HAS BENEFITTED ME PERSONALLY.”

”

A few researchers commented on the type of research that took place and felt that there was value in conducting interviews in different ways such as gaining written responses as well as audio recordings, which they felt would have given more time to the interviewee to think about their responses and possibly gained a better insight.

“

“ON REFLECTION, I THINK THERE IS VALUE IN HAVING BOTH AUDIO AND WRITTEN INTERVIEWS. I FOUND THAT SOME OF THE AUDIO INTERVIEWEES CLAMMED UP AND I THINK THEY COULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE THEIR ANSWERS. SOMETIMES THIS GIVES A MORE THOUGHTFUL AND CONSIDERED ANSWER.”

”

It was clear that the researchers are passionate about the wellbeing of residents in Widnes and there was a real hope that the outcome of their research would be listened to and bring changes for people.

“

“I WOULD HOPE THAT THE RESEARCH MIGHT FIND ITS WAY TO LOCAL LEADERS AND THEY CONSIDER ITS INSIGHTS FOR IMPROVING OUR AREA. I’M NOT SO OPTIMISTIC THAT MUCH WILL COME OF IT IN THE SHORT OR MEDIUM TERM, BUT I CAN SEE THAT WORK LIKE THIS IS VITAL IF SOCIAL SCIENCE IS TO MAKE ANY STEP TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE.”

“I REALLY HOPE THAT OUR INPUT WILL BRING ABOUT AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE WELLBEING OF PEOPLE IN WIDNES AND THAT ANY CHANGE IS PERSON FOCUSED NOT JUST BOX TICKING.”

”

Our top 3 recommendations for 'doing the research':



1. MAKE SURE YOUR TECHNOLOGY AND FILE-SHARING PROCESSES ARE TESTED AND ROBUST

before launching your research to avoid lots of hours troubleshooting problems. We found that Dictaphones were the easiest technology to manage and simplest to use.



2. LET THINGS GROW AS ORGANICALLY AND ITERATIVELY AS POSSIBLE

within the framework of your project, try and plan for these landing points right at the start.



3. HELP RESEARCHERS TO REFINE THEIR INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

and create opportunities to let the researchers discuss what they find easy or hard during the interview.



OUR COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS GREW IN CONFIDENCE

A note on participatory design in action

The elements we think we did really well in co-designing with our community researchers are:

- ✓ **Listening to the place where training should happen to move learning out of the classroom and into somewhere where people feel truly comfortable**
- ✓ **Exploring and agreeing on a research method for the project**
- ✓ **Understanding the core components of all questions that we would use in our interview guide**
- ✓ **Delivering the research**
- ✓ **Troubleshooting operational problems across the research team**



We've grounded this project by working collaboratively with our recruited team but can say honestly that there is much room for more co-design in future work. With more time and resource, we would have liked to spend more time using the unique skills our researchers identified in their training to compliment the project. There have been several natural landing points in the project where researchers could have been involved to check and challenge our approach and findings.

Nurturing these skills our team already possessed in line with the pace we were delivering this project would've required more time and training than we were able to give to the work on this occasion.

Other opportunities to check, challenge and create could have been:

- ✓ **Transcribing interviews** - but it must be noted here that bias would need to be managed very carefully.
- ✓ **Attending more insights and coding workshops**

The next stages of this project should consider how to strike a balance between time spent delivering and organically growing an iterative co-designed research project. This level of organisation, training and delivery should be measured against what is possible in the view allotted time and of the Research Ethics Board at the University.

7.7 When the results are in - making sense of what we heard

Working across Capacity and Civic Data teams meant we have a blend of approaches to distilling insight. Alongside this report, there will be several academic write ups which will provide full detail of the findings.

For this report, please see the toolkit for how we make sense of insights.

Our top 3 recommendations for 'making sense of what we heard':



1. USE YOUR RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND THEMES

to inform the overall structure of your findings.



2. UNDERSTAND THE VOLUME OF WORK ATTACHED TO LISTENING OR READING THROUGH RECORDINGS AND INSIGHTS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

If you've set clear expectations of the community researchers at the start, you will have good visibility of this! Make sure your team is aware how much of this work is assigned to them to allow the time to un-pick all your insights.



3. AGREE THE METHOD YOU WILL USE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR RESEARCH IS SAYING

- each organisation might do this different!



7.8 Wrapping up the project

Towards the end of the project, we held two workshops as an opportunity to play back insights and design the data commons.

Attended by community researchers and stakeholders connected to the project, the key insights to inform the data commons were:

Consideration to ways of working

- The data commons is only as good as what goes into it. A concern that inaccurate data could lead to wrong assumptions.
- Security of this sits with the owners of the data commons.
- The rules for the data commons need to actively involve residents, stakeholders and experts in this field.



JENNY



HEIDI



CHRIS

Benefits

- We (services) gather more data than we intend to and usually don't use it. This could be a platform to maximise the information we already hold but don't use.
- Lots of information is hidden and not linked, this could help.
- The intelligence created from this could make Widnes better, we can see 'who is missing' and help to 'stop bad things happening'.



ZEINAB



BRIAN

Fears

- How can we create a community in a digital setting? Digital by default creates exclusion.
- Data and digital literacy across residents and stakeholders will prevent the success of this.
- Whilst the concept is attractive, there is some apathy towards the value of this—we really need to understand what the data commons needs to be and do to add value to existing ways of working.



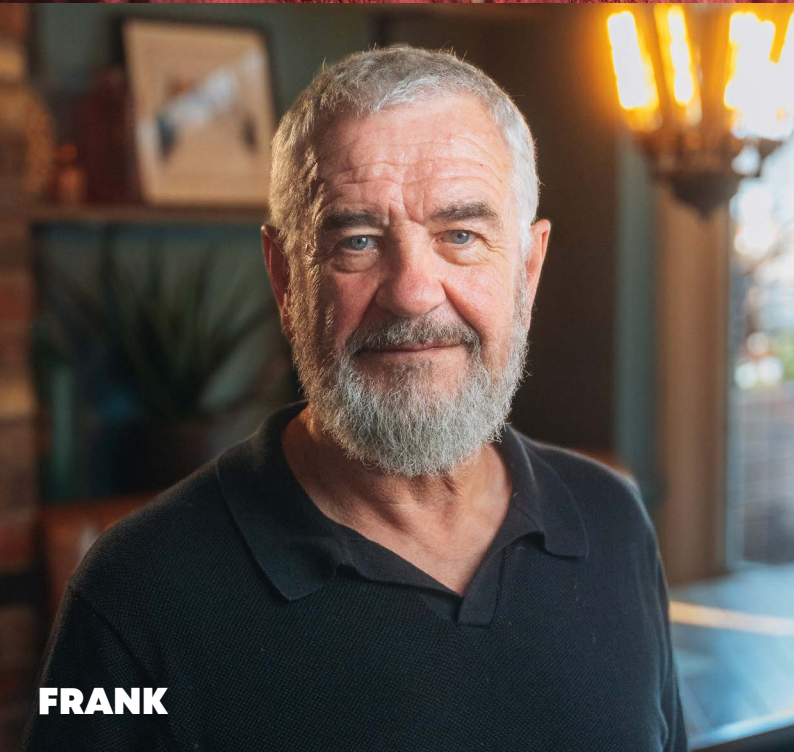
JACQUI



LEA



DIANNE



FRANK

**IT HAS BEEN
CLEAR THAT
FRIENDSHIPS
HAVE
FORMED**

Wrapping up the project

We captured the learning and feedback of the project through several outputs, created across the team:



Toolkit: All resources from the project alongside case studies from the project



Podcast: In conversation with the project team, sharing learning to support future projects



Supported by a range of **video interviews, footage and photographs** from the project



Insight report: Capturing the approach and learning



Academic papers: Presenting the findings from the research



This was the first in a planned series of projects, it was important for us to capture and communicate learning which is why such a range of outputs were created. These were created across the project team, drawing on a blend of skills and experiences.

Our top 3 recommendations for 'wrapping up the project':



1. GIVE YOURSELF TIME AND BUDGET FOR A GOOD ENDING.

You have done a lot of work and learnt loads, it's important that you don't rush here and have a good exit. A good exit will mean your project learning is shared well and more likely to have impact beyond your project.

2. CLOSE THE LOOP. You will have several outputs to share with people, alongside opportunities to influence as a result of your project learning. Prioritise the people you want to connect with and make time to do this.



3. REFLECT, REVIEW, AND CELEBRATE. Things will largely go to plan, but there will always be changes you would want to make if you were to repeat or scale your project. Ideally, recruit a facilitator who has not been part of the direct delivery team to facilitate your project evaluation to give the team a bit of challenge through a more objective perspective. Celebrate. Enjoy the achievement of bringing the project to a close. The relationships you have built through the project.

Impact



At the start of the project, we set off to achieve three big objectives. Whilst this report has outlined lots of learning, it's important for us to consider what difference this project has made compared to what we expected it to make. We'll take each of these in turn:

Objective one: Understanding what wellbeing means in Widnes

We have a rich understanding of what wellbeing means in Widnes. Some of this is in line with how the world would describe wellbeing, 'good emotional, mental and physical health'. Whilst other components did have a local variation, residents expected people to have respect for other people and Widnes; without this there would be a strain on personal and community wellbeing.

We struggled to identify what the early signs for deterioration in wellbeing might look like. People confidently spoke about what thriving wellbeing looked like, but the absence of wellbeing wasn't articulated as clearly. That being said, residents recognised the information our daily activities generate and could see a role for using the information to better understand when things are not working.

Objective two: Imagining better solutions with data

With an ambition to build a data commons, designed by residents we were keen to get a sense from residents about how they would want to benefit from such an asset. The jury is still out on this one, it is clear that residents don't fully understand the value a data commons would bring, however this is tempered with a curiosity to hear and learn more about it. There is sign up to the vision of a data commons but a level of apathy about how it would personally benefit. Whilst there was a level of apathy around the value of a data commons for individual benefit, there was real animation about the risk this creates for residents with low data and digital skills and literacy. Residents quickly became concerned about the inequity that could be created without an increase in digital and data literacy.

Objective three: Exploring this through the eyes of people who live in Widnes

We recruited, trained, and supported a diverse bunch of community researchers with a range of connections to Widnes. Some have lived in Widnes their entire lives; some have recently returned, and some have recently moved from other places in the UK and beyond. What each of the community researchers had in common, was a genuine curiosity to get under the skin of what wellbeing means to the residents of Widnes and hope that the insights generated from the project would be a catalyst for change.

17 community researchers held over 200 interviews with residents of Widnes over a 2-month period. These insights have been shared in the report and will be expanded on in the academic papers. Community researchers have been central to the project. They have helped us better understand attitudes, beliefs and behaviour to reveal the stories behind the statistics.





Unexpected consequences

Researchers were asked if there were any unexpected things to come out of the research and while some commented that they realised their views about Widnes very much mirrored what interviewees said, there were a lot of personal things that come out of it for them, which they were not expecting. Many commented on how much confidence and self-esteem they had gained whilst being involved with the project and how much this has helped them with their own wellbeing and their own career and life paths.

“

“IT WAS CLEAR THAT DOING THIS KIND OF SOCIAL RESEARCH WAS IMPORTANT FOR MY OWN WELLBEING, ESPECIALLY LEARNING FROM OTHER LOCAL, WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE WHO WERE FAR MORE CONSIDERED, INSIGHTFUL, AND HETEROGENOUS THAN THEY OFTEN TAKEN TO BE IN OUR CULTURE. I HOPED TO BE AN ACADEMIC RESEARCHER BEFORE THE PROJECT BEGAN, BUT IN THE MORE PHILOSOPHICAL FIELD OF POLITICAL THEORY. THIS PROJECT HAS MADE ME CONSIDER A MUCH MORE SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC AND EMPIRICAL TRAJECTORY FOR MY RESEARCH CAREER.”

“I REALLY WELCOMED THIS OPPORTUNITY BUT DIDN'T REALISE QUITE HOW MUCH UNTIL I ATTENDED THE TRAINING. I 'RETIRED' RATHER MORE ABRUPTLY THAN INTENDED (DUE TO COVID) AND I THINK THIS HAS GIVEN ME THE 'WIND DOWN' THAT I HADN'T BEEN GIVEN. I IMPROVED MY SELF-ESTEEM AND I THINK I HAVE MADE A COUPLE MORE FRIENDS ALONG THE WAY! IT HAS MADE ME THINK MORE ABOUT THE WELLBEING OF PEOPLE IN THE TOWN AND PARTICULARLY THE LACK OF FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.”

“I'VE LEARNT THROUGH THIS PROJECT THAT I AM APPROACHABLE, I CAN HOLD CONVERSATIONS WITH STRANGERS, AND IT'S GIVEN ME THE CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ON PAID WORK.”

”

What did the Community Researchers say about their time?

Community researchers have commented on how much they enjoyed working together and it has been clear that friendships have formed and they continue to meet outside the project for social occasions.

What next?

Building on insight gathered through the Round 'ere project, we have three clear next steps:

1. Share insights with local stakeholders

We recognise the value of the insights generated in the project for people who are making decisions about services in Widnes and will work with colleagues to share what we have heard. Of particular interest to us were:

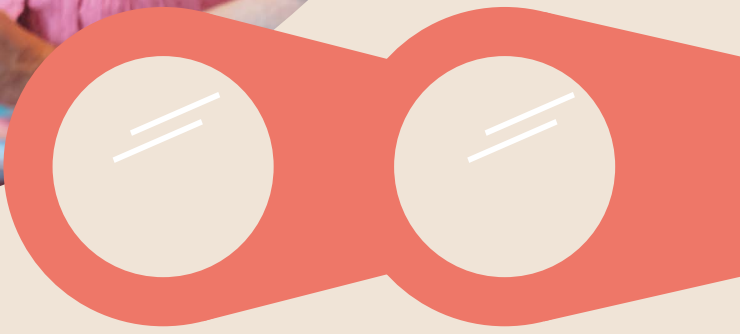
- ✓ **Navigating help is hard in Widnes:** Once people have help in Widnes, they spoke positively about it. However, people are struggling to know where to go for help and when they are trying to navigate the myriad of pathways, they find it overwhelming and frustrating. How can services across Widnes tackle this?
- ✓ **Pride in place:** People spoke about Widnes with a nostalgic glow, many shared good feelings about 'the good old days'. There is real pride in being from and living in Widnes. Although this glow was consistent across residents, there was a concern that without 'new Widnes success', the nostalgic pride would die out with the next generation. How can Widnes retain its pride? How are we celebrating local success?

2. Community researchers and participatory design

The approach we designed has given us insight to inform user centric solutions for wellbeing services alongside giving steer for considerations the data commons needs to explore to be effective, engaging and user friendly.

The fostering of ownership and engagement seen in the project is something we want to build on within Widnes and beyond. We are actively planning on scaling up this project, focussed on deploying participatory design methodology to public sector problems, creating space to truly listen to communities and the people they support to start to work on the fundamental changes our city region needs to make a bigger and bolder difference to local people.





3. Data commons

The insights from this project will feed into the design of the data commons. With plans, for prototypes to go live in 2024, the team at CDC are working with a range of stakeholders to design a solution that really unlocks the value of data across the LCR, working with the principles of collaboration and responsible data use.

Ambition from the team at the CDC, is that community is integral to the success and sustainability of a data commons. Insights from the project, steer us closer to the role community (in Widnes) want to play. This looks like:

- ✓ **Data contribution**, “I’m happy to share my data.”
- ✓ **Data quality**, “Can I help clean and curate?”
- ✓ **Data governance**, “I want to help set what good practice looks like.”
- ✓ **Collaboration**, “Involve me in data projects.”
- ✓ **Data access**, “Access to data isn’t my priority... I can’t get an immediate gain, but I do need open and equitable access.”
- ✓ **Feedback and improvement**, “I want to help shape the functionality, useability and features to make it as good as it can be.”
- ✓ **Advocate**, “I can encourage others to participate and use it.”

Superseding all the above, is challenge about consideration for future projects having an increased focus on enabling data skills and literacy. There was a fear that without community data skills and literacy we would widen inequalities. Without energy to increase skills here, we will be unable to empower residents to make informed decisions or benefit from the resources available in a data commons.



PEOPLE SPOKE ABOUT WIDNES WITH A NOSTALGIC GLOW



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This project has been approved by the University of Liverpool Research Ethics Committee, approval number: 12124