Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland: Helping children and young people to thrive

Dr Jennifer McLean, Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) is a distinctive approach to improving outcomes for all children and young people in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. The approach is locality-based and has the empowerment of children, young people and communities at its core. In this Year of Young People, CNS involves children and young people in identifying priorities for their neighbourhoods.

Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland Scotland

What is a Children’s Neighbourhood?

A Children’s Neighbourhood is a community-based initiative that brings together people, resources and organisations in a neighbourhood area, so that all of those things can work together better to improve the life chances and opportunities for the children and young people living there. Through a sustained emphasis on collective action and the Christie Principles, it joins up efforts and services within a locality to reduce poverty, extend power within communities, and ensure that the poor childhood outcomes associated with disadvantaged settings are improved.

CNS is working with local people and organisations to provide a coherent and focused approach to improving opportunities, tackling the attainment gap and reducing health inequalities. It builds on and unlocks the assets, resources and intelligence of the community and those working there.

Making a difference together

Drawing on expertise, experience and learning from a number of children’s community-based initiatives from across the UK and internationally, CNS draws on the insights and principles from these approaches and has developed them into a model that will work in our Scottish context and which is able to be tailored and responsive to the neighbourhoods we are working with.

The initiative focuses on joining up efforts within and across public sector organisations and the local third sector to provide a continuous pathway of support from pre-birth to adulthood. This approach aims to achieve and promote ‘collaborative impact with co-ordinated action’ across the community.

Working in this way ensures a shared vision and ambition for children and young people, a shared understanding of local issues and priorities and an agreed plan for progressing areas of action.

Our approach involves a local co-ordinator based within an organisation located in the neighbourhood and a ‘backbone organisation’ that brings together different resources, brokers and facilitates connections and activity and which manages the CNS team, provides strategic direction, evaluation and evidence, and supports development and learning.

A focus on Bridgeston and Dalmarnock

Bridgeston and Dalmarnock in Glasgow is the first Children’s Neighbourhood in Scotland. CNS has developed activities, frameworks and tools to support better health and educational outcomes for young people. Community engagement and co-production is at the heart of all actions.

We have undertaken a detailed analysis of context and developed our theory of change, in partnership with local organisations and services, which sets out what CNS is aiming to achieve in the short, medium and long term and also mapped out how we might best achieve it. We have also undertaken a range of community-led activities and engagement opportunities to identify shared priorities across the most significant phases of children’s lives and into adulthood. These will drive our future activities and our plans going forward.

We are also researching and evaluating our work and progress to ensure that our learning and insights are fed into future developments, ensuring that we develop local evidence-based solutions.

Bringing it all together

Children’s Neighbourhoods is not a quick fix, rather a long-term investment in sustainable cultural change. We believe it offers an opportunity to move from delivering important, but individualised, initiatives to a way of working that provides an overarching synergy focussed on the development of children and young people in areas of high need, and building capacity in local systems.

For further information:
Dr Jennifer McLean, GCPH
email: Jennifer.mclean@glasgow.ac.uk • Tel: 0141 330 2614 • www.gcph.co.uk
Web: childrensneighbourhoodsscotland.com/
Follow us on Twitter @CNScotland

References

Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland is an initiative coordinated by the University of Glasgow, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, and Glasgow City Council working with public, private and third sector partners.