

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

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Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS)

is a distinctive place-based approach to improving outcomes, services and opportunities for all children and young people in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. Focused on working with local people and organisations, CNS is working to reduce poverty, increase participation and capacity within communities, and support improvements in the poor childhood outcomes associated with disadvantaged settings. The approach is locality-based, has the empowerment of children and young people and communities at its core and involves children and young people in identifying priorities for their neighbourhoods.

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

Working in partnership, CNS also aims to expand the agency of children and young people for improved involvement in local decision-making based on what they value and have reason to value, thereby increasing the potential for child-friendly neighbourhoods, and improving the psychological and subjective well-being of children and young people.



CNS Bridgeton and Dalmarnock

The first Children's Neighbourhood Scotland (CNS) is in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock in the east end of Glasgow, an area in which over 45% of children live in poverty. CNS has facilitated and supported a number of activities to promote the participation of children and young people, families and local organisations in identifying shared priorities for action. This has included work with children and young people in local schools and youth and theatre clubs, community-walks with children to learn about where they play, and coordinating and facilitating local public service and third sector partners to address concerns about anti-social behaviour.

The CNS team has been working with children and young people in Bridgeton and Dalmarnock to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences of growing up in the neighbourhood, and to gain an insight into what factors influence their overall wellbeing. The team used a Capabilities Approach to establish a set of common goals that reflect the priorities of children and young people, and those of the stakeholders who work with them, using a range of research methods and approaches, including drawing, class debates, voting on priorities and group discussions. The children and young people are now developing skills to be co-researchers, and will conduct research with their peers. The aim of the work is to build children and young people's confidence, participation and capacity in decision-making in the wider neighbourhood and beyond.

What's next?

Building on our work in the Bridgeton and Dalmarnock, CNS is now setting up new sites in urban areas, a small town and a rural area, with the approach taken in each community being tailored to the existing infrastructure. The expansion of CNS in Scotland is supported by the national Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan as a mechanism to alleviate the impacts of child poverty.

CNS is not a quick fix, rather a long-term investment in sustainable cultural change. It offers an opportunity to build on existing capacity in local systems with an absolute focus on the development of children and young people in areas of high need.

The CNS approach

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.

CNS takes an area specific approach which is tailored and responsive to the demographics and existing activity in a local area. CNS works in partnership with children and young people, their families, local public, private and third sector organisations. Our approach involves a local co-ordinator located in the neighbourhood and supported by the CNS team which brings together different resources, brokers and facilitates connections and activity, provides strategic direction, evaluation and evidence, and supports development and learning across the sites.

Research and evaluation are integral to the CNS approach. We are continuously evaluating and researching our work and progress made to ensure that our learning and insights inform future developments, and support the development of local evidence-based solutions.



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