

# Exploring the Social Value of Community Assets in Wirral



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# Community assets

**The role of communities, and community development, has a key role to play in the reduction of health inequalities. We know that deprived areas are characterised by risk factors such as poor housing, poorer air quality, higher crime rates, less green spaces and more traffic (Marmot, 2010).**

Health inequalities are also borne out of uneven distribution of education, parenting skills, social capital and family and community networks (Marmot, 2010). Reducing inequalities is one of the functions of England's new public health system (Department of Health, 2012) which came into force in April 2013.

Focusing on the assets available within communities provides a vehicle to strengthen resilience and reduce inequalities. An asset-based approach to community development highlights the assets that are already within the community; these include community associations, such as gardening groups, arts groups, physical activity groups and churches; institutions, such as libraries, schools and hospitals; and the people living within communities. Community assets have the power to improve social capital, connect people within communities, provide support and advice, and support collective action.

Kretzman and McKnight (1996) identified that assets should be located and connected, in order to maximise the impact and power. Although we know the potential power of community assets, there is a lack of evidence about the type, level and breadth of impact that community assets have. Exploring the public health impacts, outcomes and the value of community assets is important in understanding how they support people who may otherwise require use of low-level primary health or social care intervention. This project aimed to map the community assets in Wirral, and measure their impact using a social value approach.

This report provides a summary of the project methods and findings. Full copies of each evaluation report can be found at <http://www.cph.org.uk/publications/expertise/population-health/>.



# Exploring the social value of community assets in Wirral

The Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Centre for Public Health (LJMU) has developed research to explore the social impact of community assets in Wirral.

The research aimed to understand the types of community assets in Wirral, using a robust methodological approach, which involved:

- Evidencing the social value and impact of community assets in Wirral on individuals and their communities, with a particular focus on their impact on mental health and wellbeing
- Developing a framework to identify the types of community assets in Wirral
- Categorising assets using a qualitative research methodology
- Evaluating a representative sample of community assets, using a social value approach

For the purpose of this report, community assets are defined as people and networks, supportive family, friendships and community networks; and can include employment security; opportunities for voluntary service; life-long learning; safe and pleasant housing (Hills et al 2010).

Assets are any resource, skill or knowledge which enhances the ability of individuals, families and neighbourhoods to sustain their health and wellbeing (Foot 2012).



# Identifying community assets

**With a population of approximately 310,000, Wirral has more than a thousand services, projects and initiatives that run with the aim of improving health and wellbeing small communities, while others are delivered in towns across Wirral and extending into Merseyside and the North West.<sup>1</sup>**

**This project aimed to gain understanding about the types of community assets in Wirral.**

## Identification:

To identify types of community assets in Wirral, a database was designed to capture information about the assets, and enable these to be analysed thematically.

Community assets were initially identified by applying methods from qualitative methodologies, including expert interviewing and thematic analysis.

<sup>1</sup> This has been estimated based on the number registered with Wirral Well, an online directory of health, social care and wellbeing services and events.



## Expert interviews and snowballing sampling

Asset identification began through expert interviews with senior public health managers with knowledge of health inequalities and community assets. These included one Public Health Consultant, senior public health managers and service commissioners working in the Wirral.

The expert interviews followed a semi-structured interview approach, and explored issues such as their role, their understanding and perceptions of community assets in Wirral, and their awareness of specific community assets, and perceived impact of these on individuals and the community.

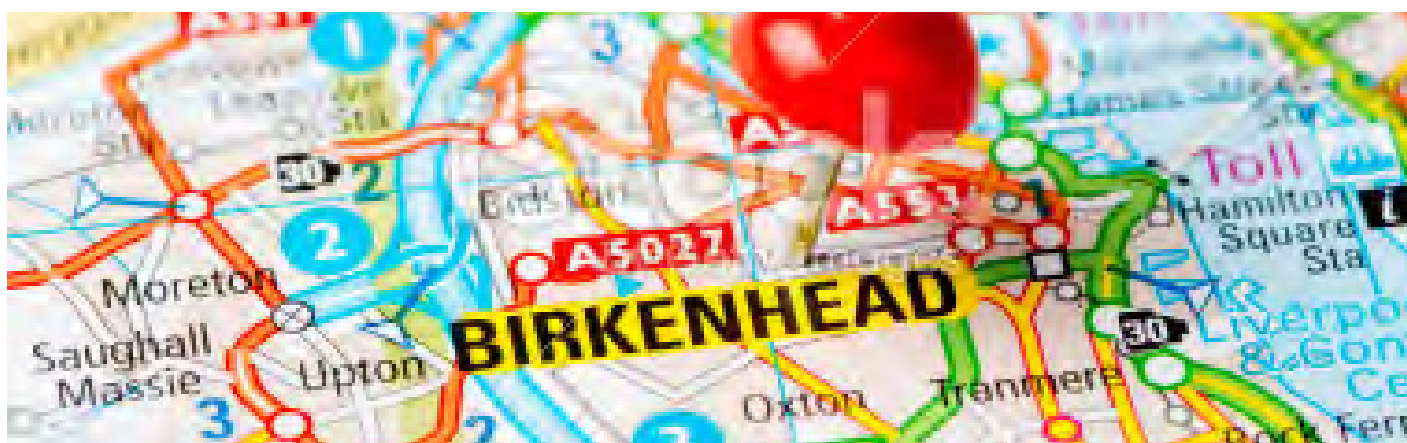
These expert interviews generated details of Wirral community assets which were then followed up by the lead researcher, and led to a snowball sampling approach for the identification of further community assets in Wirral.

Here, information about other assets was gathered through telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews with key asset representatives, or through Internet resources.

## Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Once identified and information was gathered on each asset, a series of inclusion/exclusion criteria applied. This included: that the majority of the service delivery was in the Wirral; was not a profit-making business; had not been wholly commissioned by Wirral NHS; and, if based on a national model, this had been localised for Wirral. Those assets that did not follow these inclusions were excluded from the database. For the purposes of the database, where many projects existed (e.g. support groups, scouting groups and charities) at different venues across the Wirral, but were identical and covered the exact same categories, only the first project identified was included on the database and other identical projects were excluded. This was to ensure that the database was a representative sample of the assets on the Wirral, and was not a directory of services.

Details of the community assets which met the inclusion criteria were recorded on a Microsoft Access database along with information relating to the main aim/s of the asset, the asset location/s, funding arrangements, costs, reach, and the length of time that it had been in existence.



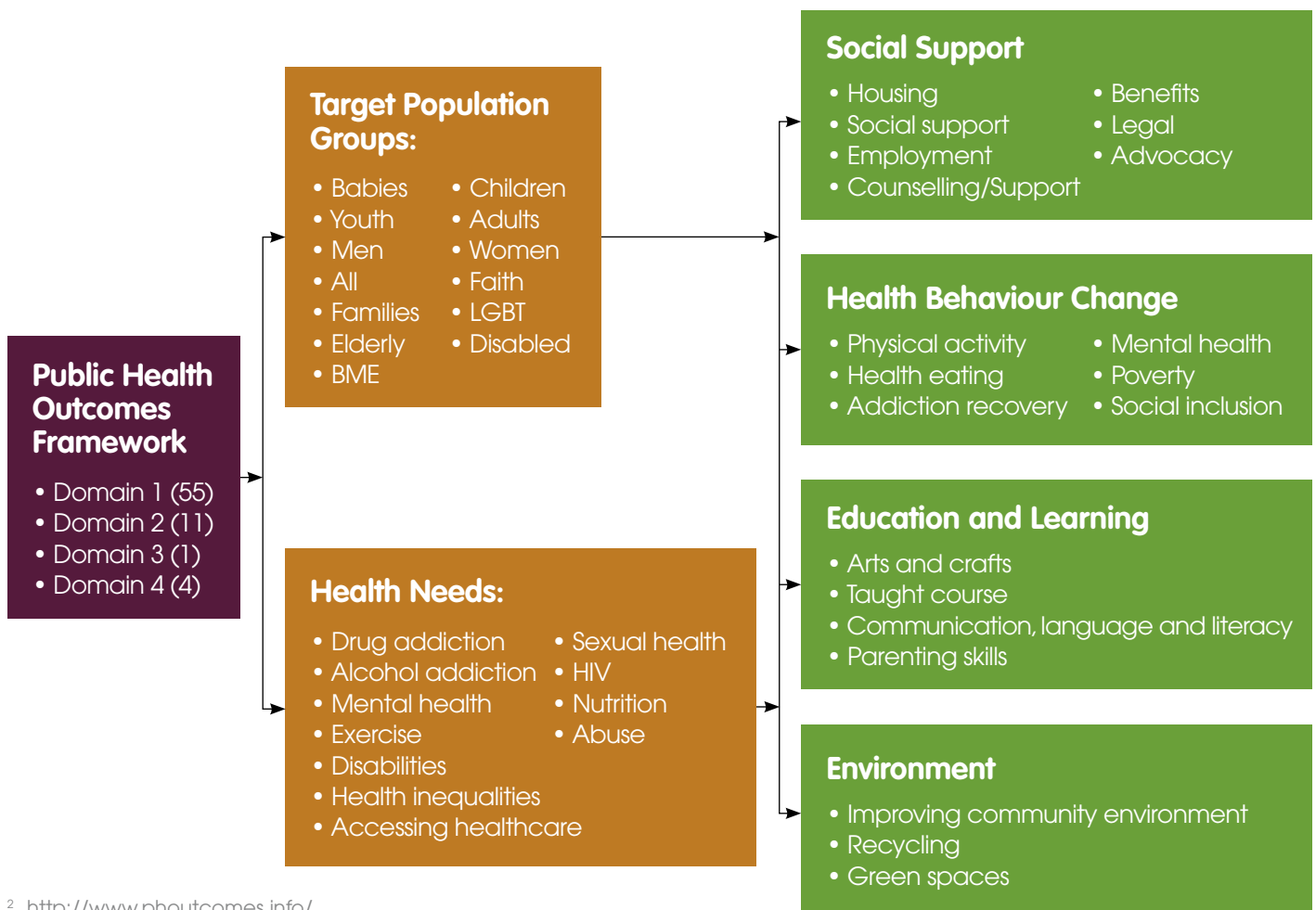
# Categorisation of community assets

To enable understanding of the contribution of community assets to public health, assets were initially categorised using the four Public Health Outcomes Framework domains<sup>2</sup>:

- Domain 1) Improving the wider determinants of health
- Domain 2) Health improvement
- Domain 3) Health protection
- Domain 4) Healthcare public health and preventing premature mortality.

Having been assigned one or more of the above domains, a number of further categories were applied to each community asset, which identified who the asset targeted and associated health need. A number of further sub-categories were also applied relating to health behaviour changes and type of service offered. The process of identifying and thematically analysing Wirral community assets continued until saturation was reached. A total of 58 community assets were identified using this approach, and represent the range and types of community assets that exist in Wirral. Figure 1 shows the categories and sub-categories which represent the range of community assets in Wirral.

**Figure 1: Categories and sub-categories of community assets in Wirral**



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.phoutcomes.info/>

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## Linking Community Assets to Public Health Outcomes

Categorisation showed that community assets in Wirral predominantly contribute to improving the wider determinants of health; covering aspects related to health, wellbeing and health inequalities (n=55).

The community assets categorised as falling within domain 2 involve supporting individuals to live healthy lifestyles, making healthy choices, and reducing health inequalities.

One community asset was categorised as falling into domain 3; the health protection domain. This asset was an organisation which aims to protect the population from major incidents and threats, including Chlamydia outbreaks and HIV treatment.

Community assets within the fourth domain focused on reducing the number of people living with preventable ill-health; examples of such assets include substance misuse support and recovery programmes.

## Demographics

Although this project did not seek to geographically map the community assets in Wirral, it is useful to consider the demographic perspective.

Community assets were delivered either across Wirral (for example, The Quays and Advocacy in Wirral), within a specific Wirral community (for example Friends of Arno and Oxtan Fields), or were national projects delivered on a local or regional model (such as ARCH Initiatives, Hope Clubs and Irish Community Care).

## Characteristics of Community Assets

Many of the community assets in Wirral targeted specific population groups, such as mums and babies, the elderly, disabled, and women or men only groups. A range of assets were available to anyone.

Most of the community assets were funded through multiple sources. Some of the community assets were registered charities, organisations, or groups, and at the time of data collection, the NHS contributed to a number of assets.

Almost all of the community assets had no set timeframe for delivery; only two were deemed short-term with a definitive end-point. None of the assets were identified as permanent, mainly due to sustainability and available funding streams.

## Education and Learning

Education and learning was a feature in half of the community assets identified through this research, with most involving a taught course such as sexual health, language courses, parenting skills and cookery courses. Some community assets involve reading, arts and crafts.

## Social Support

Many community assets in Wirral were structured around group meetings, with the aim of reducing social isolation and involving people in their communities. Some of these types of assets offered some type of counselling or mentoring, and some offer support in accessing benefits, housing, employment and legal affairs.

Education and learning was a feature in half of the community assets identified through this research



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## Environment

A number of community assets aimed to improve the community environment and green spaces, such as projects to clear alley-ways, hang flower baskets in the local area, using communal areas to plant fruit and vegetables, and encouraging waste management and recycling.

## Health Behaviour Change

Many community assets in Wirral provided support to people with specific health needs, including sexual health, cancers, addiction and recovery. Many of these assets also fell within the social support category.

A number of assets were also identified as contributing to a reduction in health inequalities; these assets were working to reduce the gap between deprived and affluent areas in Wirral, lessen the impact of inequalities, and offer support and guidance in accessing healthcare.

Many assets aimed to specifically address mental health needs. Many focused on supporting substance misuse and recovery. A number of assets offered sexual health support, some of which were specifically related to HIV. Some assets addressed healthy living and provide support for overweight and obesity, nutrition and physical activity.



# Selecting community assets for evaluation

Once the assets had been categorised, a representative sample were evaluated using a social value approach.

Eleven community assets were selected using a stratified sampling approach to ensure that the assets were representative of the categories and sub-categories identified through the research.

The following assets were evaluated:

- Big Heritage
- Ferries Families
- Fruit to Suit
- Get Into Reading
- Incredible Edible
- Invisible Injuries
- Life Expectancy Wirral
- Stick 'n' Step
- Taiko Drumming for Health
- Wirral Environmental Network
- Wirral Foodbank

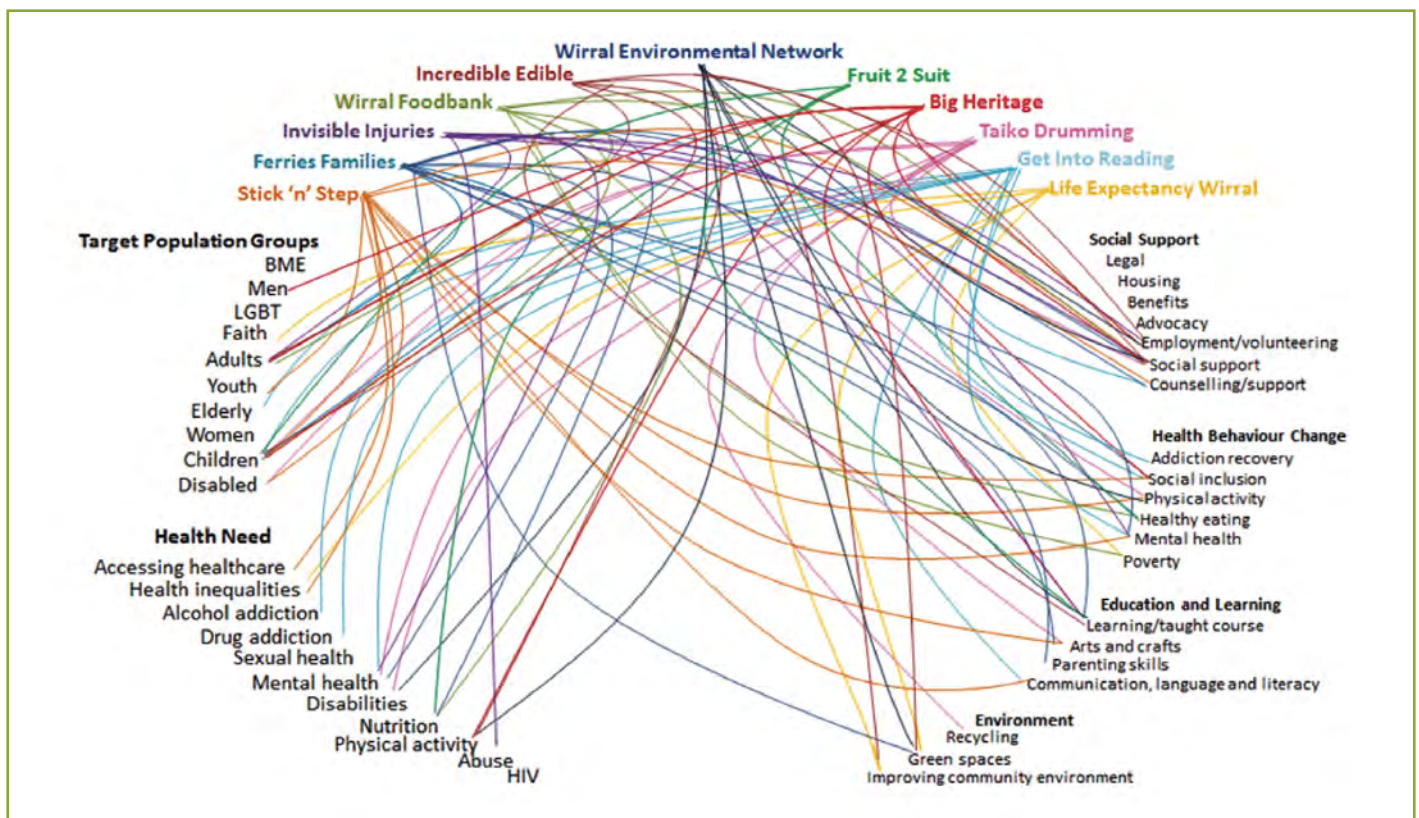


Figure 2 shows these assets, and the range of categories and sub-categories that they each represent.

# Measuring the impact of assets

To reflect the Public Value (Social Value) Act 2012, the community assets were evaluated using a social value approach, to explore the social value created by community assets. This approach enabled exploration of the immediate benefits of assets to the people who use them, and exploration of the impact of assets on wider social, economic and environmental factors.

Figure 2 Community assets selected for evaluation



Community assets were evaluated using a social value approach

# Evidencing social value

## What is Social Value?

Social value considers the benefits of a project, activity or initiative on the community as a whole. The Public Value (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public bodies in England and Wales to commission and procure services that will improve social, economic and environmental wellbeing. Commissioners are required to consider the collective benefits that are generated when awarding contracts. Focusing commissioning on social value not only has economic benefits in terms of ensuring value for money in public spending, but also benefits communities and societies as a whole. Through the Public Value (Social Value) Act 2012, public bodies, voluntary organisations and social enterprises are encouraged to measure the social value that they create.

## Asset Evaluations

### Social Value

Evaluations of the eleven community assets took place over a two year period. Social Return on Investment (SROI) and social value case studies were deemed the most appropriate methods to explore social value. Five community assets were evaluated using an SROI methodology, and six using social value case studies.

Commissioners are required to consider the collective benefits that are generated when awarding contracts



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## Social Return on Investment (SROI)

SROI involves assessing the social, economic and environmental impact of an asset by directly engaging with key stakeholders. The SROI process involves identifying changes that occur as a result of an asset, and the subsequent impact this has on individuals, their family and the wider community. The analysis uses a combination of qualitative, quantitative and financial information to estimate the amount of 'value' that is created or destroyed by the project, which is typically expressed as: 'for every £1 invested in the project, £X of social value is created' (Nicholls et al., 2012).

SROI evaluation involves three distinct stages: a scoping exercise, engagement activities and logic model.

The first stage of the SROI process is the scoping exercise, which involves working with asset staff/ volunteers to understand the asset and the perceived impact it has on those engaging with it. This scoping exercise also identifies key stakeholders to include in the research, and considers the best approaches to engaging with them during the next phase of the SROI. During this scoping stage, the purpose, background, resources, activities and the timescale is discussed and agreed upon with members of the asset team.

Following the scoping stage, a number of engagement activities are undertaken using a range of mixed methods; these include interviews, focus groups, case studies, and surveys. These engagement activities inform the development of a logic model, which is used to highlight the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the asset, and is fed directly into the SROI calculations.

The SROI ratio is calculated by assigning proxies or values to each main impact that is reported by stakeholders, and analysing this in terms of the amount of money put into the project. The financial values are sourced from either the stakeholders themselves, or using proxy indicators, such as from a database of financial proxies designed specifically for informing SROI analyses ([www.globalvalueexchange.org](http://www.globalvalueexchange.org)).

In order to determine the SROI ratio, the financial calculations are entered into an MS Excel impact map, and analysed to determine the SROI. The final ratio takes into account deadweight, attribution and drop-off and the final calculation is represented as a ratio of £1:X.

## Social Value impact Case Studies

In cases where a full SROI was not possible (due to availability of financial data, resources or time constraints), a social value case study was undertaken.

Here, information was gathered as part of the scoping exercise, which involved meetings and interviews with key stakeholders who deliver, lead and receive support from assets. Sessions with key stakeholders outlined the service offered, identified categories and subcategories and outlined asset aims and objectives. This provided evidence of the social impact of the asset.



# Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis

## 1. Get into Reading

**Categories and sub-categories: Domain 1, children, elderly, mental health, social support, learning/taught course, counselling/support.**

Get into Reading was set up in 2002 at St James library, Birkenhead and initially ran for six weeks with £500 of funding. The project started as a reading group to help with adult literacy but quickly evolved into a social group with health and wellbeing benefits, as evidenced by this evaluation. The project expanded to cover the whole of the Wirral, and there are now more than 100 groups, reaching around 600 people each week on the Wirral alone. Sessions are held in libraries and schools as well as care homes and schools. Get into Reading has expanded and is run across England and Wales and in Denmark and Australia.

A key aspect of the project is working with volunteers, who can receive training to go on to facilitate and deliver their own reading groups elsewhere (in businesses, organisations or charities). Volunteers also provide planning and administrative support for the groups.

The SROI evaluation focused on three reading groups: an open group based in Wallasey library; sessions among looked-after children and delivered in a mutual setting such as a carer's home or in the Lauries Centre, Birkenhead; and sessions delivered with people using a substance misuse recovery service at Arch Initiatives, Birkenhead.

The SROI engagement activities were planned around the specific needs to of the groups. For the library-based open reading group and the Arch initiatives recovering addicts group, two focus groups with a follow-up questionnaire were used to determine the financial value of changes in stakeholders' quality of life. This was supplemented with case study and stakeholder interviews. For



looked-after children, group and one-to-one interviews were held with Get into Reading staff in attendance. Techniques such as Draw and Write were used to actively engage the children, where they were asked to compile a four-page booklet on life before the reading sessions and now, which they could draw, write and design as they wished. Secondary analysis of monitoring data was also carried out on monitoring questionnaires collected by the organisation.

Get into Reading has expanded and is run across England and Wales and in Denmark and Australia.



The evaluation showed that for every pound put into Get into Reading, a social return average of £6.47 was generated. This incorporates: looked-after children £7.00; open group £6.38; and recovering addicts' group return of £6.04.

Four key themes emerged from the evaluation, related to social inclusion, confidence, mental health and wellbeing, and skills. The evaluation found that Get into Reading created reading communities, resulting in new friendships, a newfound love of literature and acceptance of others. There were many outcomes associated with these changes that were often interlinked, which included socialising more often, which for some led to learning or gaining new skills. Confidence and empathy was reported as a result of the sessions, which led to better understanding and acceptance of others, and consideration of their views. Often, group attendees reported feeling relaxed and stress-free after sessions, and actively looked forward to weekly sessions.

Many group attendees felt empowered by their own achievements in the reading groups and had become involved in volunteering within their own communities. Many donated both time and effort to their reading groups, or to other, usually third sector, organisations. Some stakeholders had progressed to find paid employment as a result of the new skills and confidence and because of the experience they had gained through Get into Reading. Moreover, many of the benefits were experienced by all group members, irrespective of their individual needs or personal circumstances.

The evaluation found that Get into Reading created reading communities, resulting in new friendships, a newfound love of literature and acceptance of others

## 2. Life Expectancy Wirral

### Categories and sub-categories: Domain 1, faith, health inequalities, poverty, green spaces, improving community environment.

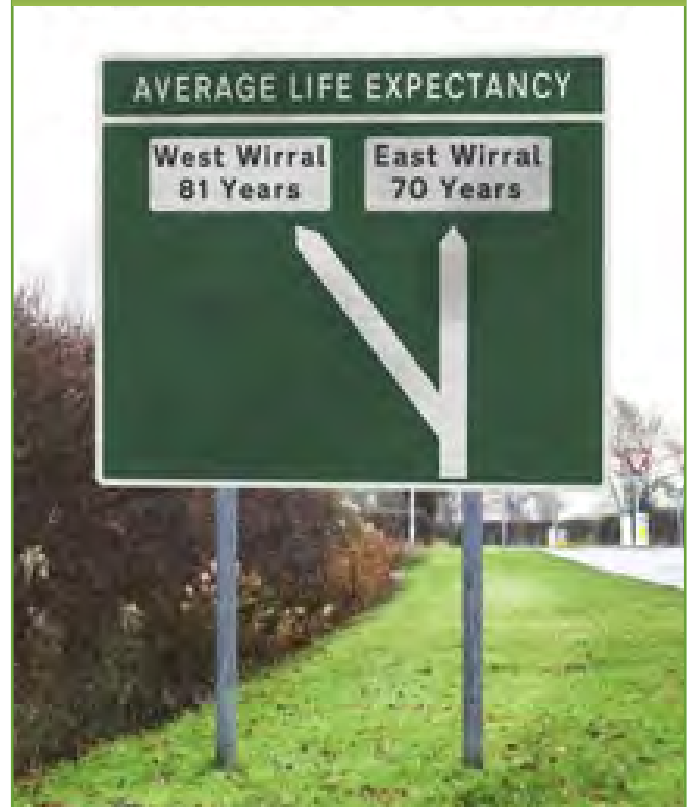
There is an eleven year life expectancy gap between the poorest and most affluent areas in Wirral. In a bid to reduce this, Life Expectancy Wirral was set up by the Right Reverend Bishop of Birkenhead, Keith Sinclair. This involved pairing churches in a deprived ward with churches in an affluent ward to build lasting working relationships. Life Expectancy Wirral's work has also involved putting on events to raise awareness in churches of poverty on the Wirral and to encourage them to take action. Their work builds partnerships with other sectors to help enable Christian communities to respond to the issues surrounding the unacceptable differentiation in life expectancy on the Wirral.

The SROI engagement activities involved a series of interviews and a focus group to determine the financial value of changes in stakeholders' quality of life. As part of this evaluation, a questionnaire on the use of green spaces was distributed and analysed. Secondary data from feedback forms completed after attendance at Life Expectancy Wirral events were also analysed.

The SROI evaluation found that for most stakeholders, the positive changes were related to: social factors, mental health and wellbeing, partnership working and new skills. Many of these were interlinked, however the strongest themes were social and partnership work. Stakeholders reported that the initiative helped to build, develop and sustain relationships between the church and public bodies, and resulted in action as part of its Green Spaces initiative to encourage more people to use and benefit from their local amenities. The work of Life Expectancy Wirral also helps provides an understanding about the wider determinants of health by learning more about what contributes to poverty, how it affects health and how this knowledge can be harnessed to improve communities' quality of life and overall health and wellbeing outcomes.

Life Expectancy Wirral created **£5.53** of social value for every pound input. The initiative created many successful social outcomes for its stakeholders, including friendships, reduced isolation and increased inclusion. This evaluation found that the initiative also had the added effect of boosting mental health and wellbeing by making people feel good about themselves while being engaged, fulfilled and stimulated by the initiative.

### Let's work out our differences







The social benefits of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral were very positive: individuals became more socially included within their communities, there were improved community networks and many Wirral-wide partnerships had been created and sustained. There was also more understanding of poverty and the situations experienced by other members of the community from both the affluent and deprived areas of Wirral. Mental health and general wellbeing was reported as having improved as result of being included and active members of their community. Through engagement with

Life Expectancy Wirral, many stated that they had learnt personal qualities such as empathy and confidence, and had developed a range of new skills including supporting others and sharing expertise. The initiative had further reinforced individuals' faith, which for most resulted in feelings of being Christian and helping others. The vast majority of people involved in Life Expectancy Wirral were volunteers and as such this created much social value, improving both quality of life in stakeholders and general wellbeing.

Mental health and general wellbeing was reported as having improved as result of being included and active members of their community

### 3. Taiko Drumming for Health

**Categories and sub-categories: Domain 1, children, disabled, disabilities, mental health, physical activity, arts and crafts, recycling, social support.**

Taiko Drumming for Health was originally set up by two drummers in their late sixties as a diversionary project for young people living in a deprived community in Wirral. The project quickly grew and developed as a project, teaching people how to drum in a fun way.

In ten years, the project has expanded so that there are currently seven unpaid volunteers delivering classes across the Wirral; in primary and secondary schools, in adult learning centres and care homes. Around 140 drums have been made as part of the project, some of which have been specially designed and adapted for disabled individuals. Sessions have been taught to thousands of children and their troop has performed at cup games, festivals and shows.

Taiko drumming sessions run for approximately one hour and involve a blend of drumming beats, choreography, and practicing beats and rhythms. The sessions are usually led by two drummers (sometimes more for sessions with disabled adults). Carers and support staff join in with disabled adults, and drummers were encouraged to actively join in sessions by suggesting tunes to drum along to.

The research specifically focused on two beneficiaries of Taiko Drumming for Health: disabled adults and primary school age children (aged 6-11 years). The SROI engagement activities to identify the wider impact of the project on stakeholders, included interviews and focus groups with disabled adults and children.



This evaluation found that for every pound input Taiko Drumming for Health, a social return on investment of **£8.58** was generated.

The SROI evaluation found that the main outcomes for all stakeholders could be categorised into three themes: social, mental health and wellbeing, and new skills, many of which were interlinked. For example, mental health and wellbeing had largely improved as a result of engagement with Taiko Drumming for Health, mainly due to the social aspect of the sessions and the wellbeing brought about by drumming.

The social aspect was also considered the most important theme of the drumming sessions, which led to an increase in socialising for both children and disabled adults. Linked with greater socialisation was the sense of social inclusion. Disabled adults felt more included in their community: the drumming sessions combated loneliness and isolation, and for many the groups were something positive to look forward to, and the only opportunity they had in the week to socialise outside of their homes or the day centre.

For children, the educational aspect meant that they were becoming better at music whilst having fun, and that they were able to follow musical notes and were progressing onto more complicated drum rhythms during the sessions. The choreography involved with performances meant that the children were also learning complex dance and rhythm techniques.

Taiko Drumming for Health aimed to bring communities together and empower individuals by encouraging vulnerable and excluded members of society to drum together and perform in public as part of a troop. Many drummers reported learning new skills as a direct result of engagement with Taiko Drumming for Health, including personal skills and qualities such as confidence and self-esteem and reduced shyness. Many had performed in public at an event or show, and this had led to a sense of achievement and pride.

This evaluation found that for every pound input Taiko Drumming for Health, a social return on investment of **£8.58** was generated.



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## 4. Ferries Family Groups

### Categories and sub-categories: Domain 1, children, mental health, nutrition, counselling/support, social support, healthy eating, parenting skills, arts and crafts, green spaces.

Ferries Family Groups was set up in 1988 by parishioners at St Mark's Church in Rock Ferry, Wirral, who wanted to reach out to members of their community who were experiencing difficulties and hardship. The group wanted to offer a support network for families that include group meetings, courses, parenting skills and socialising opportunities. Ferries Family Groups aim to empower individuals and families to make positive changes to improve their family life.

Over 25 years, its original family group has extended to six areas on the east side of the Wirral peninsula, and include: Bebington, Bromborough, Eastham, New Ferry, Rock Ferry and Tranmere. Each family group consists of up to 16 adults who meet each week for two hours. Led by trained volunteers, the groups help anyone who need support, whether as an individual or family. Individuals are referred into Ferries Family Groups by a range of healthcare professionals and local agencies for support with a number of hardships, including: risk of depression, isolation or socially exclusion, special needs, or are experiencing particular issues relating to housing, money or health.

In the past year, 128 families have been supported by Ferries Family Groups, with a total of 65 new referrals from a range of local agencies and organisations. Support is offered by four paid members of staff and around 40 volunteers working more than 8,000 volunteer hours in a year – the equivalent of over four full time employees.

The research specifically focused on two Ferries Family Groups that meet in Bebington and Rock Ferry.

This evaluation shows that for every pound input into Ferries Family Groups, a social return on investment of **£5.20** was generated.

Three themes emerged from the evaluation: social, mental health and wellbeing, and new skills. Within these themes, stakeholders reported a number of outcomes which were often interlinked. For example, mental health and wellbeing had largely improved as a result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups which led to parents making positive lifestyle changes, which in turn resulted in a better quality of life. This also had the effect of making families feel more included in their communities.

The social aspect was also considered an important theme. The family groups had resulted in an increase in socialising, making new friends and attending other Ferries Families events, courses and family fun days. Linked with greater socialisation was the sense of social inclusion. The support groups combated loneliness and isolation, and for many the groups were something positive to look forward to, and the only opportunity they had in the week to socialise outside of their homes.

Most stakeholders reported learning new skills as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups, including personal skills and qualities such as confidence and self-esteem and reduced shyness. Many were also empowered to gain qualifications, training and employment and some had gone on to volunteer, within Ferries Family Groups and elsewhere. Children's confidence had also grown, allowing them to want to go on school trips, where they had not previously.



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## 5. Stick 'n' Step

**Categories and sub-categories: Domain 1, children, youth, adults, disabled, mental health, physical activity, social support, arts and crafts, communication, language and literacy, counselling/support.**

Stick 'n' Step was set up as a charity in 2002 to support families who have children with cerebral palsy, a neurological condition which affects movement and coordination. Stick 'n' Step works with around 70 families from across the North West of England and North Wales, who are supported through the use of conductive education (CE), an approach which encourages development of new abilities and skills to promote independence and social inclusion.

The evaluation involved qualitative data gained from 13 stakeholders who participated in a number of engagement activities including focus groups and interviews. The evaluative SROI involved looking at the impact of the charity on participants in the past twelve months. Engagement activities were conducted, which included interviews and focus groups. A further case study interview was also held.

Three main themes of impacts emerged from the evaluation, based around social, mental health and wellbeing benefits and the learning of new skills. Social benefits related to meeting of new people, making new friends and feeling more socially included in society. Mental health and wellbeing had improved with many respondents stating they felt happy and relaxed after attending Stick 'n' Step. Having learnt new skills which had enabled them to make improvements in their mobility, and the pain reduction that came with CE sessions, many young people reported feelings of pride brought on by how hard they had worked to achieve personal goals set out as part of their holistic programme of care when they first attend Stick 'n' Step.

The evaluation found that for every £1 put into the charity, **£4.89** of social value was generated. Most of this value was related to the learning of new skills that were important for everyday functioning, including walking. This had then led

to greater feelings of independence. Attending Stick 'n' Step was reported as being life changing for many as it resulted in usually being pain-free for the day that they had attended their CE session. An increase in mobility meant that young people were able to do more and were no longer as reliant on parents/carers to support them when doing everyday tasks.



# Social value case study findings

## Wirral Foodbank

Wirral Foodbank was set up in 2011 to deal with an urgent need in Wirral. Since then, it has been the fastest growing foodbank as part of the Trussell Trust, a nationwide network of foodbanks.

In the first seven months of 2013, 3,127 vouchers were issued, providing food to 6,934 people, including 2,533 children. A total of 500kg of food is distributed every month from 28 distribution centres in churches and community centres across the peninsula.

The Foodbank is an initiative in which non-perishable food is donated by the community and shared out to those most in need. Foodbanks aim to help individuals and families in crisis by providing free emergency food for three days (a total of 10 balanced meals).

At Wirral Foodbank there are no salaried members of staff and the project is run completely by volunteers. Its Birkenhead-based warehouse stores approximately 55,000 kilos of food which are then delivered to 28 distribution centres across the Wirral.



## Social value impact case study findings:

**Public Health Outcomes:** Domain 1 Improving wider determinants of health.

**Categories:** Population group – all; Health need – nutrition; Health behaviour change – nutrition; Social Support – friendships, volunteering.

Wirral Foodbank provides a much needed service to thousands of residents across the peninsula who find themselves in short or long-term hardship. The social aspect of the distribution centre means that voucher recipients are put at ease and have a warm, friendly environment and someone with whom they can chat to, if needed. The service is a lifeline for many, helping to reduce stress and worry at very difficult times. Recipients receive more than just food, but they also have the opportunity to learn more about facilities in their communities: many distribution centres are based in community centres, churches and children's sure start centres. As a result, churches especially, have reported an increase in church numbers.

## Big Heritage

Big Heritage Wirral engages museums, schools and communities with the past, bringing together young and old to discover more about their heritage during a number of organised events. The events aim to bring communities together while discovering their outdoors.

The Community Interest Company delivers history-based community programmes to children in schools as well as targeted groups for older men. One of its projects, Discover Bromborough, has resulted in 328 members of the community assisting in excavations - 318 who had never experienced archaeology before; 1600 hours of community volunteer time; 45 tonnes of soil excavated; and, 5272 individual finds discovered, washed, identified and recorded. Big Heritage is also expanding, having delivered events and heritage-themed events and educational workshops to around 40,000 people during 2013.

Big Heritage has also set up its 'Finds Without Frontiers' initiative, which takes archaeology and history out of museum collections and brings them to the very heart of the community they belong to. On display in the Pyramids shopping centre, Birkenhead, includes archaeological finds from Wirral covering the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Viking, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods.

## Social value impact case study findings:

**Public Health Outcomes:** Domain 1 Improving wider determinants of health and Domain 2: Health Improvement.

**Categories:** Population group – Adults, school children; Health need – exercise; Health behaviour change – social inclusion; Education and learning – history and heritage; Social support – friendships, volunteering.

Big Heritage links together a range of community members with a shared goal of understanding more about their past. The digs and events encourage interest in history and more understanding of the communities and its past. The nature of the digs also support exercise and encourage social inclusion. The social enterprise helps to raise educational aspirations in many socio-economically deprived areas in Wirral and provides inspiration for affecting positive social and environmental change through its many events and workshops.



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## Wirral Environmental Network

Wirral Environmental Network is an environmental education charity set up to promote and facilitate ethical and environmentally friendly lifestyles. The project aims to increase education about preservation of natural environments, ecological sustainability, natural resource conservation, waste management, recycling, and the principles of Fairtrade in Wirral.

The project is led by volunteers who run a number of initiatives, including allotment groups to promote growth of own fruit and vegetables locally; basic gardening, productive gardening, and grow your own vegetables courses.

### **Social value impact case study findings:**

Public Health Outcomes: Domain 1 Improving wider determinants of health.

**Categories:** Population group – all, disabled adults; Health need – exercise; Health behaviour change – physical activity; Education and learning – taught courses; Social support – friendships, volunteering; Environment – allotment groups.

Wirral Environmental Networks links communities together under the goal of learning more about the community environment as well as gardening and cooking. The charity actively engages with both younger and older community members. Those getting involved with planting of flowers or maintaining of green spaces around Wirral enjoy exercise and fresh air while learning new skills and socialising among supporters. Wirral Environmental Network encourages individuals to get together and to be physically healthier while improving the environment.

The charity actively engages with both younger and older community members





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## Fruit to Suit



Fruit to Suit delivers fun and engaging business and enterprise programmes to primary and secondary schools. Their programmes develop and encourage entrepreneurial skills along with a greater understanding of business planning which are combined through the establishment and operating a long term, sustainable healthy tuck shop business. Fruit to Suit assists both pupils and school staff in learning business skills while encouraging and promoting healthier eating and snacking among schoolchildren. After an initial training session led by Fruit to Suit, the pupils use their skills to run their own healthy food tuck shop business in school, where they are in charge of stock, ordering, promotion, sustainability and development of a business model.

The initiative offers business skills to children which covers vital skills at Key Stages 2 (life skills), 3 (employability skills) and 4 (entrepreneurship skills). The healthy tuck shops aim to educate school pupils around healthy snacking, while making healthier snacks more widely available. Any profits made from the school-run tuck shops are fed back into the tuck shops and the schools which run them.

### **Social value impact case study findings:**

Public Health Outcomes: Domain 2: Health improvement

**Categories:** Population group – children; Health need – nutrition; Health behaviour change – healthy eating; Education and learning – taught courses.

Fruit to Suit helps to make healthy snacks readily available to children whilst helping to instil business skills and work ethics. Children have a sense of achievement from working in the tuck shops and learn responsibility and work experience skills. The small businesses that the children run also support instil a sense of community as children help to decide where and how profits are spent – with some being used to purchase new playground equipment which further encourage healthier and more active lives.

## Invisible Injuries

Invisible Injuries works with individuals suffering from trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, alcohol or drug dependency and anxiety disorders. The charity offers a programme of support, which aims to enable emotional recovery. Treatments include emotional coaching and therapy. Coaches delivering the sessions have first-hand experiences of trauma and use this to empathise while offering support. The charity is in its infancy and its services are free, with donations for those who can afford it.

The charity offers the four-day Change programme, which supports individuals to address negative emotional feelings to move forward in their life. Over the four-day Change programme, a range of techniques are used, including the Spectrum Therapy and Emotional Coaching techniques, which uses a talking approach to revisit negative emotions associated to earlier life experiences. The approach helps individuals to logically learn from their past experiences allowing them to move forwards and change problem behaviours. Practitioner and coach training sessions also are offered to support those who want to start helping others.

### **Social value impact case study findings:**

Public Health Outcomes: Domain 1 Improving wider determinants of health and Domain 2: Health Improvement.

**Categories:** Population group – adults; Health need – mental health, support group; Health behaviour change – mental health; Education and learning – taught courses; Social support – friendships, volunteering.

Invisible Injuries supports individuals to make positive changes to their lives, which can have wide ranging quality of life improvements. There were reported mental health and general wellbeing improvements. For some, they were able to move forward with their lives, overcome mental and general ill-health, deal with their addiction recovery and were able to rebuild relationships with friends and family members. For some the Change programme had led to new volunteering opportunities and work experience. Many were also spurred on to support others who had similar experiences to themselves.

## Incredible Edible Hoylake

Incredible Edible Hoylake is a voluntary community group who take unused or forgotten space around the Hoylake and Meols area, in order to plant and grow healthy food. This community food is then free for anyone to pick and eat. The group was set up in a bid to make use of waste land and to provide a much greener environment for local residents. Run entirely by volunteers, groups and individuals dig, plant, weed and grow fruit and vegetables in communal spaces – there are currently around 20 different growing venues including a train station and nearby parks. The initiative aims to make the local community less dependent on food that has travelled or is produced elsewhere while encouraging residents to eat more healthily by growing their own or eating locally grown produce. Incredible Edible Hoylake also aims to use the project to bring members of the community together, irrespective of age or circumstances while taking part in socialising and forms of exercise. A number of events are held during the year that help make use of surplus grown fruit and vegetables, including a soup kitchen using pumpkin around Halloween and Christmas Tree festivals which bring the community together.

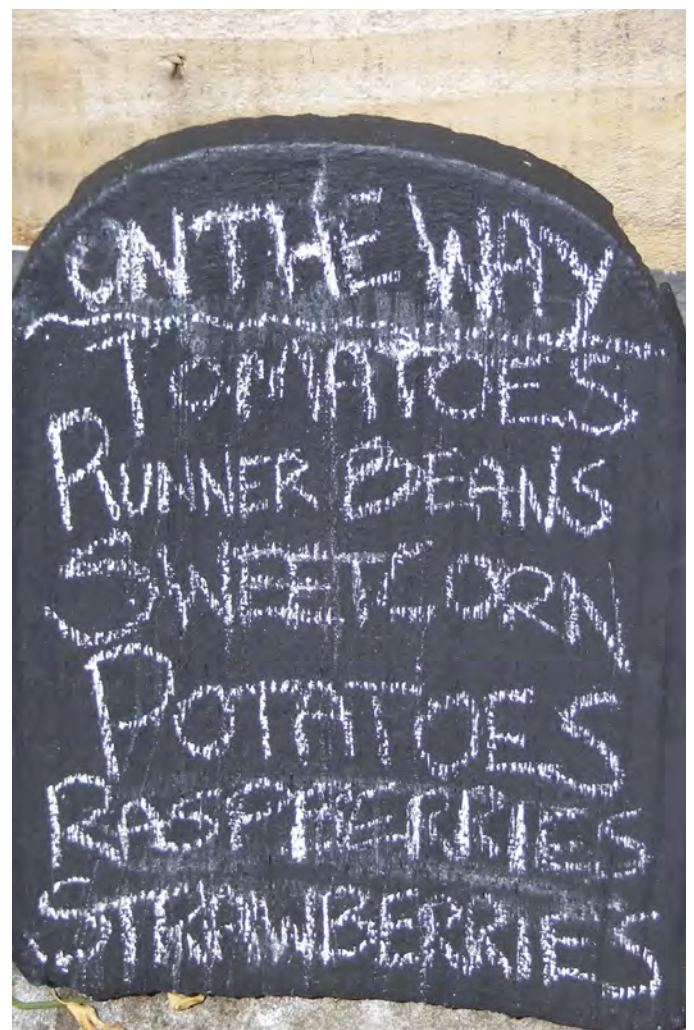
Run entirely by volunteers, groups and individuals dig, plant, weed and grow fruit and vegetables in communal spaces

### Social value impact case study findings:

Public Health Outcomes: Domain 1 Improving wider determinants of health.

**Categories:** Population group – all; Health need – exercise and nutrition; Health behaviour change – physical activity; Social support – friendships, volunteering; Environment – allotment groups, green spaces, improving community spaces.

Incredible Edible brings members of the community together, regardless of circumstances or age. The group motivates people to get outdoors and improve their community environment while meeting new friends. In doing so they are out in fresh air, exercising and eating healthier, freshly picked fruit and vegetables. Events help to publicise the project and bring the community together. Volunteers enjoy what they do and feel good at the impact the project is having on the local area.



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# Community asset evaluation findings

Four main themes emerged from all eleven asset evaluations, which were often interlinked: mental health and wellbeing, social, new skills, and faith.

These findings reflect the reported outcomes and impacts experienced by individuals directly engaging with all assets, which serve as a representative sample of all assets in Wirral.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

All assets were found to have a positive impact upon health and wellbeing, particularly mental health. In many cases, those engaging with assets experienced a range of illnesses and mental ill-health such as cerebral palsy, physical disabilities, substance addiction, anxiety and depression. While the assets could not cure an illness or condition, they did serve to empower, improve and make life more comfortable. Many assets also sought to increase mobility, especially in the case of Taiko Drumming for Health and Stick 'n' Step. For those experiencing a range of mental ill-health, improvements were wide ranging, from improved positivity to reduction in symptoms and less reliance on medication. Individuals felt less stressed and anxious. All individuals looked forward to the regular get-togethers as part of engagement with the asset and this had very positive results on how they felt.

The routine of sessions or classes also had a positive impact on how individuals felt, further supporting the notion that all looked forward to attending and asset attendances were the highlight of their week.



"I'm not as down as I used to be. I do get out and about now but I couldn't at one stage. Knowing there is someone there has made a big difference" (Ferries Family Group parent)

**"Without Stick 'n' Step I would not be able to walk now." (Stick 'n' Step attendee)**

"There are facilities for people with serious mental health problems, but not much for people with depression. I've seen how much it has improved the mental health of other members in the group too" (Get into Reading attendee)

**"It's a good way to keep out of hospital" (Get into Reading attendee)**

"Without the project I would be putting more pressure on my family and doctor. I could possibly be on tablets as well. I just wouldn't have the outlet to vent my frustrations and anger that you get with everyday life" (Ferries Family Group parent)

**"I am on top of the world with it all" (Get into Reading group attendee)**

"Being involved in the project has boosted my wellbeing. It's got the feel good factor. Being there for others is good for me, it gives me a boost" (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)

**"Your heart bumps and it's bouncy and energetic. It puts a smile on my face" (Taiko Drumming for Health attendee).**

## Social

Every asset contained an element of the social: the very nature of assets meant that it brought individuals, often from very different backgrounds, together over a shared event, meeting or activity. This helped to combat isolation and was a starting point for many new friendships. Some individuals reported that prior to becoming involved with the asset, they were otherwise at home, without company, bored or “doing nothing”. The get-togethers often resulted in meeting of new people, and the making of new friends. A happy consequence

of the asset was socialising outside of the group or session. Many went out on trips or met up for coffees and meals with the new friends they had made. As a result, many individuals were sharing new experiences and trying new things that they would not have otherwise done. This was further supporting the local economy and adding to the networks that were being created through the assets. For volunteers, the benefits were great for them also. They made friends and had the opportunity to do more things, and this, combined with the skills they were learning and imparting with volunteering brought much social value.

“Outside the group I am isolated. I do nothing else all week” (Ferries Family Groups parent)

**“Life Expectancy Wirral is not just about reducing life expectancy gap, it’s more low key, it’s about people knowing each other” (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)**

“They do make friends and it’s lovely seeing unlikely friendships. When you have younger ones in the group, the older ones look after them and help them out. It becomes a group, we’re all together. They make friends and it’s lovely” (Stick ‘n’ Step worker).

**“It exercises social muscles.... muscles that they need to use to move on in life” (Get into Reading attendee)**

“People here have been through what I’ve been through and you know that there is light at the end of the tunnel. You know you’re going to get through it because they have. When you come here no-one is judgemental, nobody is angry or kicking off – it’s good support and good advice. We’re all here to hold each other’s hand” (Ferries Family Groups parent)

**“I’m proud. I like my friends here, I enjoy doing it, I like the opportunities”. (Taiko Drumming for Health school pupil)**

“It’s a support group without the tag, it’s something which comes naturally out of it” (Get into Reading attendee)

**“There has been a real development of friendships. We are aware of people in different situations” (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer).**

“The drummers live in a much better community as a result of drumming. They look forward to it, to you, and they notice when someone’s not there and ask after them. There is a sense of a team” (Taiko Drumming for Health volunteer).



## New Skills

The learning of new skills often occurred as a natural part of the asset and involved an element of self-improvement, whether this was a newfound love of literature, drumming or learning to walk unaided, or developing personal qualities such as greater confidence and self-esteem or learning to be more acceptable of other people's opinions. For some, volunteering was the new skill, where they combined past experience or a personal need to want to help out or support good deeds. The reciprocal act of volunteering meant that it was offering a vital service to the community, but that it was also satisfying personal goals and achievements while making volunteers feel good about themselves and the knowledge that their volunteering was purposeful.

"I can feel happier that I can walk and not crawl. I thought I would never be able to walk but with Stick 'n' Step I have learnt to walk" (Stick 'n' Step attendee)

**"They (Get into Reading sessions) do seem to make a person intellectually and mentally fitter, but at the same time, they're blocking potentially destabilising cravings that can come into mind if it's not occupied"** (Get into Reading attendee and volunteer)

"It's made me more confident. Before (the group) I was really shy in group settings especially initially. It has given me some more confidence" (Ferries Family Groups parent)

**"In the beginning the families are facing issues such as their child is different to anyone else and they are scared. They don't know where to go or what to do and coming to Stick 'n' Step gives them hopes, strength to deal with all the things and they learn how to play with their child, how to help, how to do things, how to have a lovely time together without struggling, and that's the most important thing in the early stages"** (Stick 'n' Step worker)

"You are learning about yourself, getting in touch with your emotions" (Get into Reading attendee)

**"I now had time to learn more about how we were going to grow as a charity, and help new mums in those grey days that we've come through. I was going through a pretty good time then as H was progressing, and I was becoming more confident in my roles as mum and therapist. It was nice to give a little bit of support to new parents"** (Stick 'n' Step trustee)

"I feel confidence definitely improved. The families feel that there's that back-up if they need it, especially if they had a bad day. As their confidence builds they naturally did not need that as much. I think that's a really good progression and shows the development of parents" (Ferries Family Groups service provider)



## Faith

Many assets had a link to faith, whether it was because it was church-run, or was the meeting place for group meetings and activities. Many assets were supporting communities through faith, and in return, faith was becoming more relevant for communities.

Many faith-based projects such as Life Expectancy Wirral were being delivered by the Church of England Diocese of Chester, however, this did not mean that it was only for those of this particular faith. In fact, many denominations were involved in the initiative and a great many partners were supporting the ethos of its work. The initiative was a social campaign to raise awareness of poverty, but to further highlight what the church could do, irrespective of individuals' faith.

Engaging with faith-based assets made people feel good about themselves as they were helping others in their communities, and across Wirral. There was an aspect of reciprocity with elements of both giving and receiving.

Many assets were supporting communities through faith, and in return, faith was becoming more relevant for communities

"We are called upon to do more than go to church and not merely talk about your faith. It is about showing love, being honest and offering opportunities for others" (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)

**"The church plays a big part of the community and while people in the community may not necessarily turn to the church for faith reasons, the church still plays a role" (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)**

"People need a local, safe and unjudging place where they can get help, and this is what the church can do" (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)

**"The great thing with Life Expectancy Wirral is that it is so open and a real diversity of partners that sit around the table. That has to be a good thing" (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)**

"I would completely fail to see how you could address issues of life expectancy unless the whole of society is engaged in that process" (Life Expectancy Wirral volunteer)



## Motivation: A personal story and empowerment

Another important theme that emerged from all asset evaluations was the motivational aspect of those delivering and driving the assets forward. Many assets were set up and delivered by individuals who had very personal stories to share who had a need and want to support others. Ultimately, these individuals help to set-up, shape and deliver services around their own experiences, but through engagement with others, and from newfound networks, these assets developed into the projects and initiatives which were evaluated as part of this project.

Jane Davies set up Get into Reading groups more than ten years ago with just a £500 budget; following retirement, Peter Crawford and Ken Taylor co-set up Taiko Drumming for Health as a diversionary project to bring new life to bored youngsters living in Rock Ferry; Stick `n` Step was set up by families of children living with cerebral palsy who had no form of support network; Ferries Family Groups was set up by a local church having realised a need to support its deprived community; Life Expectancy Wirral was led by the Right Reverend Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead in response to vast health inequalities he experienced in his work; and Invisible Injuries was developed by war veterans to support others experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and general life traumas to enable them to having meaningful, happier lives. These are just a few examples of the drivers of assets and whose stories help to make assets meaningful for others.

Assets also are supported and most often delivered by volunteers, which creates much social value. Volunteers choose to become involved, and for many their work was seen as a vocation. They were empowered by the work they did and felt it was supporting their community. Individuals were happy to help out as much as they could, without payment, often because it was worthwhile and meaningful for them.



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## Conclusions

All assets, regardless of initial aims and objectives, had a marked impact upon health and wellbeing, and particularly on mental health. Our research has shown that community assets help individuals to feel positive about themselves, and provide a sense of purpose.

Community assets engage with individuals, helping people to overcome loneliness and social exclusion. This was particularly so for more vulnerable members of society, such as the elderly and those with disabilities. Social networks were important for supporting improvements in confidence and self-esteem, in giving individuals a focus of the day, and for making people feel valued.

Community assets provided people with the opportunity to become involved in activities such as volunteering, learning new skills and work experience. Many people reported that the support network of the assets meant they no longer needed to rely as much on medication, and that in some cases, further spells in hospital and rehabilitation had been avoided.

The social value created by five community assets ranged between **£4.89** and **£8.58** – meaning that for every one pound input in to the asset (for things such as salaries, building costs and rent, management fees, travel and stationery) a total of at least £4.89 was

generated in social value. Most of this value was created by the impacts and benefits of engagement with the asset, but also from volunteer workforce. For example, evaluations created social value through socialising, spending money in their local economy on the cinema, meals, coffee and cake and on theatre trips and travel. There were also savings made directly to health and public services where GP appointments and medication was avoided or reduced. For recovering drug and alcohol addicts, engagement with assets had led to renewed familial relationships and reduced money worries through debt advice, food donations, as well as support agencies and networks.

Overall, the five assets where SROI analysis was carried had a combined input of **£449,291.80**, collectively creating **£2,310,903.40** in social value.

Over 1,400 people were involved in just these five community assets where SROI evaluations were conducted; which does not include family members and wider community networks. The six social value impact case study evaluations involved several more thousand individuals. Considering the population reach of just eleven community assets, our research shows that the potential impact of assets are wide ranging: community assets do not just impact upon the individuals who engage with a project or initiative, but also their family and friends, and the wider areas in which they live, work and socialise.





# Implications of findings

Understanding more about the nature and role that community assets play in reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing helps commissioners, service providers, professionals and communities to be better informed about the resilience of communities in developing and sustaining assets, instead of relying on public services and primary and secondary health and social care.

This research has found that community assets are thriving across Wirral, often driven and sustained by motivated individuals with personal experiences which spur them on to help others. The uniqueness of community assets is that they may be developed often without strategy, aims or objectives and with little or no paid staff. The networks that these assets created helped to further expand and change them, driven again by the needs of those engaging with it. Some community assets are created within communities where a health need has emerged, which may not have necessarily been identified by either professionals or businesses. Assets are quick to change, quickly expanding with the support and assistance of the networks that it has created.

Understanding and evidencing the social value of community assets has shown that four key impacts emerge, which are often interlinked: mental health and wellbeing, new skills, social and faith. Through our research process, we can be confident that one or more of these impacts will be an outcome of a community asset. These outcomes are not often considered at the creation or development phase and for many, their impacts were not often considered in relation to improvements in mental health and general wellbeing.

The nature of joining communities together with a shared interest or asset encourages socialisation and prevents isolation and exclusion. This can help to improve mental health and general wellbeing, and the friendships that are often created further support the local economy with the cost of leisure activities and socialising in general.

This research provides important evidence about the impact of community assets on individuals, and the wider ranging benefits on the communities these assets serve.

Networks that these assets created helped to further expand and change them



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# Limitations

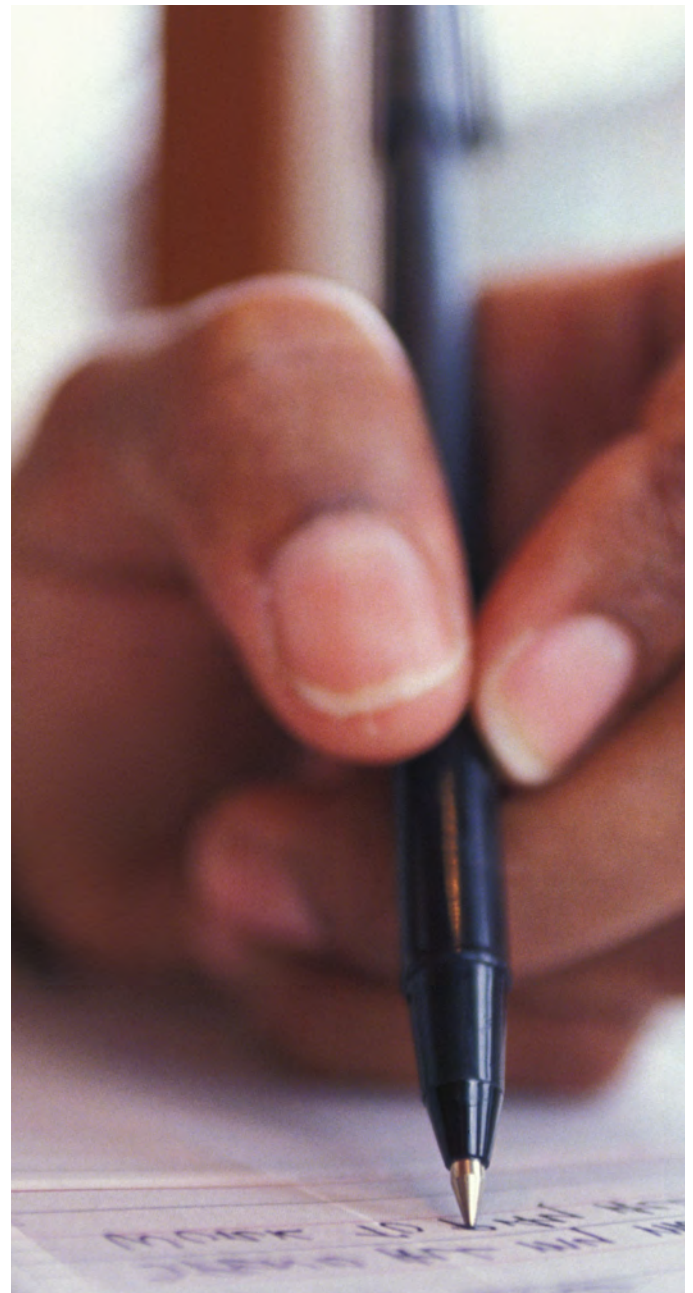
SROI attempts to quantify the unquantifiable (for example, the value of self-confidence for an individual, or for increased friendships). It was often quite difficult to elicit meaningful financial outcomes from participants. Adopting a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and by directly engaging with stakeholders for whom the assets have meaning, ensured robustness of the methodology. The SROI analysis itself is dependent on the responses given by the research participants, which were subjective to that group at a particular time-point. On a number of occasions where group members were not able to arrive at financial amounts themselves, financial proxies were derived at using known proxies used elsewhere in other research or from examples given during qualitative data collection (e.g. cost of a mentoring course, or NVQ course). While the numbers involved in the research for each asset were quite small, these were a good representation of the groups and individuals involved.

This two-year asset impact study has involved engaging with at least 110 individuals, including asset leads, service commissioners, volunteers and asset beneficiaries, who have helped to shape appropriate research engagement activities, while defining for themselves the social value created by their engagement with the asset. This has ensured that the opinions and experiences of such individuals are a true reflection and are typical of actual impacts and outcomes achieved by the community asset

The SROI figure is important in understanding the social return on investment generated by each asset, and the benefits experienced by the wider community

## Comparing SROI results and ratios

It is important to note that the SROI ratios cannot be compared among assets; the ratio offers an insight into the social value that is created, and this is not an actual financial representation of what has actually been spent by stakeholders. The SROI figure is important in understanding the social return on investment generated by each asset, and the benefits experienced by the wider community.



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