

# Connected Communities with Cumbria Constabulary

## Promoting Community Capital in Vulnerable Localities

November 2018



The Centre for  
Citizenship and  
Community  
*Inclusion and Connected  
Communities in Policy and Practice*



  
University of Central Lancashire  
**-WESTLAKES-**

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This programme was edited by Suzanne Wilson, Research Fellow in Social Inclusion and Community Engagement, University of Central Lancashire. For more information, please contact Suzanne on [swilson21@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:swilson21@uclan.ac.uk)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Forward

Neighbourhood policing has been cited as priority in both national and local contexts. As discussed in the recently published Civic Society Strategy, the role of the police and community have to play together in civic society is paramount.

*“The Policing and Crime Act 2017 supported that diversity of voluntary roles by enabling chief officers to designate a wider range of powers on volunteers”.* The Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP, Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service

*“Crime is a social phenomenon and society, as well as the state, needs to play its part in stopping it”.* Rory Stewart OBE MP, Minister of State for the Ministry of Justice

In Cumbria communities need to be more forthcoming in identifying their issues and concerns, the police need to be more responsive in that regard to provide support where it is needed but to focus more on upskilling volunteers and communities to deal with their issues. We believe this will provide significant benefits in terms of demand reduction across all partners (not just in terms of crime reduction, it will make communities more resilient).

Alongside this, local tasking processes need to be more responsive to local needs and current concerns so we need to instil some confidence in our people that this is the right way to go. ‘*Connected communities*’ will assist them in developing that confidence.

### Superintendent Gary Slater

Neighbourhood Policing and Local Focus Project  
Cumbria Constabulary

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Neighbourhood Policing in the UK

Neighbourhood policing has a complex history with various definitions and meanings, dependent on individual's "own values, experiences and expectations of policing" (College of Policing, 2016a, p. 11). In their evaluation report of neighbourhood policing, Quinton and Morris (2008) identified the following key principles:

1. An organisational strategy for the police, partners and the public to work together to solve problems, improve neighbourhood conditions, and increase feelings of security;
2. Integrated with other policing functions (e.g. protective services, investigations and response);
3. Requires evidence-based deployment of neighbourhood policing teams against identified need;
4. Establishes dedicated, accessible and responsive neighbourhood policing teams;
5. Locally dependent, and is flexible and adaptive to local conditions;
6. Requires the police to work with local people to identify the problems that are most important to them, and to influence local policing priorities;
7. Establishes collaborative partnerships between other agencies and the public for problem solving;
8. Uses the national intelligence model as a basis for deployment;
9. Requires effective community engagement, communication and feedback;
10. Needs rigorous performance management against local plans and commitments.

Despite a decline in the focus on neighbourhood policing, the National Police Chiefs' Council's (2016) commitment to neighbourhood policing has been underlined in the Policing Vision 2025, which includes a focus on prevention and vulnerability, multi-agency place-based approaches, and local service integration, bringing the approach back into the focus of national and local policy. Furthermore, in the most recent police effectiveness review, the HMICFRS propose that the benefits of effective neighbourhood policing include:

1. A better flow of vital community intelligence, including matters relevant to national security;
2. Promotion of community safety and feelings of safety;
3. Prevention of crime and disorder;
4. Protection of vulnerable people;
5. More resilient communities less reliant on police support;
6. Enhanced police legitimacy so that forces are policing effectively by consent (HMICFRS, 2018, p. 33)

In order to effectively implement an effective neighbourhood policing strategy, engaging communities is identified as being “essential” (College of Policing, 2017b, p. 1).

*Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines: Engaging Communities*

Community engagement proposes to build trust, respond to people’s needs and empower communities to take greater ownership of local problems. The desired outcome of this process is a reduced demand on the police in the long term (College of Policing, 2017a).

Within this, five key areas were identified for effective community engagement:

1. Mapping and planning: developing a detailed understanding of the communities in the local area as well as the barriers to and opportunities for engagement;
2. Providing access to information: providing the public with access to information about neighbourhood policing;
3. Agreeing priorities: involving communities in a structured process to identify problems, agree local priorities and hold the police to account for progress;
4. Empowering communities: helping people, where appropriate, to play more active roles in the policing of their local area;
5. Senior support: the support of supervisors and senior leaders.

The above review has provided a summary of national policy and guidelines surrounding neighbourhood policing. Within this, the importance of an approach sensitive to the context of communities was stressed, along with partnership collaboration.

## Neighbourhood Policing in Cumbria

The Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner has stressed a focus on neighbourhood policing in order to make Cumbria “even safer” (CPCC, 2016). Within this, two priorities refer to community engagement in neighbourhood policing:

Your Priorities for Cumbria: Working with the local community, the Police and partner agencies to:

1. Get feedback from members of the public across the county to understand what they think the Police’s priorities should be;
2. Support and enable community groups to prevent and tackle crime and disorder in their area.

A Visible and Effective Police Presence: Working with the local community, the Police and partner agencies to:

1. Look at how we provide visible uniformed policing in our communities;
2. Make sure the Police are engaged in our local communities to understand local issues;
3. Make sure the Police understand and are tackling the types of crimes which are affecting people today;
4. Collaborate with other forces and agencies in specialist areas;
5. Make improvements in the areas which recent inspections of the Police found could be done better;
6. Make sure the Police are ready to deal with threats which develop in or affect a wider area than Cumbria, including civil emergencies/natural disasters, terrorism, cyber attacks, organised crime and public order (CPCC, 2016, p. 5).

As part of this approach, six community hubs are in the process of being developed, under the supervision of Superintendent Gary Slater and Sargent Georgina Bell. One of these hubs, situated in Whitehaven, Copeland has been working with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in the implementation of a ‘*connected communities*’ approach within two communities in Whitehaven

An overview of the ‘*connected communities*’ approach will now be provided, followed by a rationale for the application of ‘connected communities’ as a framework for community engagement in neighbourhood policing.



### 3. THE 'CONNECTED COMMUNITIES' APPROACH

#### *An overview of 'connected communities'*

The University of Central Lancashire's (UCLan) Centre for Citizenship and Community have developed the '*connected communities*' approach (Parsfield, et al., 2015). This is an action research strategy to explore how the community dimension of people's lives contributes to well-being and can be developed to analyse how different interventions build resilient, inclusive communities and empower individuals to take greater control of their lives through relationships based on shared concerns and mutual trust. This process can serve to enhance community capital, the sum of assets including relationships in a community and the value that accrues from these. The '*connected communities*' approach is purposefully a fluid, bespoke approach, responding to the nuances to each community (rather than a fixed methodological framework). The table below summarises the key features which make up the approach:

Recruit and train community researchers	Community researchers are recruited, usually through local voluntary sector partners. These individuals are resident in the communities being researched, and receive accredited training in research methods, data protection and health and safety
Survey residents.	Community researchers survey residents using a questionnaire completed via a face-to-face interview through door-to-door enquiries. The questionnaire captures the personal and demographic characteristics of each respondent (age, gender, employment status etc), and data about their subjective well-being through nationally validated well-being research survey tools.
Social network analysis and well-being analysis.	All respondents' surveys are aggregated using social network analysis computer software (UCINET and Gephi), in order to create a 'network map' of all the social relationships reported by all the respondents in each locality, providing a visual representation of who knows who in the study area. This analysis enables researchers and affiliates to understand patterns of connectivity and isolation specific to each area and to identify key people, places and institutions that are (or had the potential to be) central assets within networks that bring people together.
Community playback	Data is played back through workshops in each locality to share the findings with local residents and partners, including the volunteer community researchers where possible. Reflexive conversations initiated by playing back this data, including visualisations of social network maps for each area, are a key catalyst for intervention projects which seek to use the community's assets to tackle local issues relating to social isolation or low well-being.

Co-production of intervention project	Attendees at the playback workshop reflect upon the research findings, as well as their personal insights into local assets and problems, and work with local partner organisations to design and run projects that attempt to respond to the issues that emerge.
Evaluation report	Throughout the course of the approach, data will be gathered in order to provide an evaluation of the projects' impact upon participants' social networks and well-being which can contribute to sustainability plans to embed the benefits and lessons of the process in the local area.



*Rationale for the application of 'connected communities' as a framework for community engagement in neighbourhood policing*

The 'connected communities' approach will now be applied to the national and local priorities and guidelines for neighbourhood policing. The table below outlines how 'connected communities' compliments the guidelines for community engagement in neighbourhood provided by the College of Policing (2017):

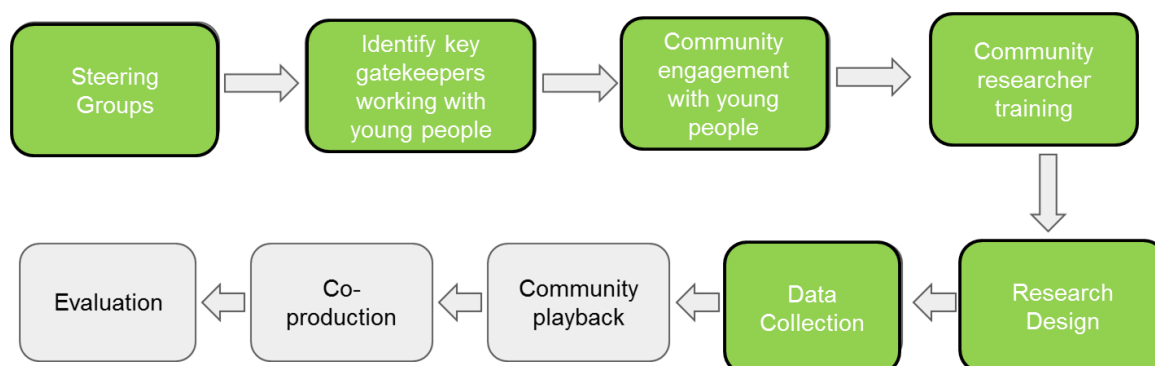
Mapping and planning	<p><i>Initial mapping:</i> Initial desk-based community mapping using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation will provide a map detailing the most vulnerable communities in Cumbria. These communities will be targeted as the focus the 'connected communities' research.</p> <p><i>Social Network Analysis Mapping:</i> Social network analysis will produce social network maps, allowing the identification of groups of people in communities who may be vulnerable. Previous usage of social network analysis has focused on gang and youth violence. For example, Gunnell, Hillier and Blakeborough (2016) tested the use of social network analysis in policing using police intelligence data, as a tool to improve understanding of gangs and to help direct law enforcement activities. In their book applying social network analysis in predictive policing (Tayebi &amp; Glasser, 2016) the method is used to identify potential criminal activity by analyzing the relationships between offenders to fully understand criminal collaboration patterns. Thus, the use of social network analysis purported through the 'connected communities' approach provides an original contribution to literature on neighbourhood policing.</p> <p><i>Cumbria Community Mapping:</i> A Cumbria wide implementation of 'connected communities' would produce a map illustrated the specific challenges and solutions identified through the 'connected communities' programme mapped out across Cumbria.</p>
Providing access to information	Through interacting with the community at all stages of the approach, interaction between the police and residents can provide communities with access to information about the police, along with other information deemed important, for example, information about health services.
Agreeing priorities	Through the process of community feedback and co-production, the community and police can work together to agree priorities, along with strategies to address these issues.
Empowering communities	The ethos behind 'connected communities' is centred around empowerment. Evidence from previous projects has demonstrated improved well-being, capacity and sense of citizenship in community members who have participated in the work.

From a local perspective, the '*connected communities*' approach clearly satisfies the priorities set by the CPCC, as summarised below:

Your Priorities for Cumbria: Working with the local community, the Police and partner agencies to:	
Get feedback from members of the public across the county to understand what they think the Police's priorities should be	Through community engagement across the approach the Police will have opportunities to receive feedback from the community. Specific feedback will be provided through the social network analysis questionnaires.
Support and enable community groups to prevent and tackle crime and disorder in their area.	The process of training community researchers and working with community members in the co-production and co-delivery of an intervention to support vulnerable members, skills and competencies can be developed in community groups to help build resilience and capacity.
Visible and Effective Police Presence: Working with the local community, the Police and partner agencies to:	
Look at how we provide visible uniformed policing in our communities	Community engagement is the foundation of the ' <i>connected communities</i> ' approach, requiring the police to develop a consistent presence within communities.
Make sure the Police are engaged in our local communities to understand local issues	The whole process, from recruiting community researchers and conducting door to door research, to the co-production and delivery of an intervention to support the community, has the potential to ensure the police are engaged in local communities, understanding local issues and the types of crime that are impacting upon them.
Make sure the Police understand and are tackling the types of crimes which are affecting people	
Collaborate with other forces and agencies in specialist areas	The collaboration between Cumbria Constabulary and UCLan combines knowledge and expertise in specific areas.

#### 4. CONNECTED COMMUNITIES WITH CUMBRIA CONSTABULARY: PROMOTING COMMUNITY CAPITAL IN VULNERABLE LOCALITIES

During 2018 Cumbria Constabulary have been supporting a 'connected communities' research project which sought to involve young people from vulnerable localities in their own community research and intervention design.



##### *Community Engagement, Community Researcher Training and Research Design*

Since January 2018, the research has been working with young people from Mirehouse and Woodhouse, Whitehaven, in exploring issues relevant to their community and providing research skills training. These young people acted as Community Research Assistants during the data collection phase.

##### *Community Researcher Training & Research Design*

Four one-hour training sessions were provided to 15 PCSOs and officers held at Copeland Hub, Whitehaven. Sessions consisted of an introduction to the 'connected communities' approach and an overview of the young people the local project involved. Research skills training was provided, which was complimented by the expertise in data collection methods previously gained through the street-smart surveys. This expertise also made a significant contribution to the design of the final survey that was used, which went through several versions, as advised in each training session.

##### *Data Collection*

A total of 14 PCSOs and police officers supported the Community Research Assistants in their data collection. Meeting at either Mirehouse Community Centre or St Peter's Community Hall at Woodhouse, the PCSOs and officers were paired up with one or two Community Research Assistants.

Within the data collection, the role of the PCSOs and officers was to chaperone and support the young people in their data collection experience. The Community Research Assistants chose which streets to survey and the degree of input they had in the survey interview process. For example, some young people felt confident to

independently ask residents all survey questions and write responses, whereas others felt less confident and may have simply knocked on the door of residents.

A total of 35 data collection sessions in across communities took place, spanning across 15 days in the Easter and Summer school holidays.

	Mirehouse		Woodhouse	
Easter	3 days	9 sessions	4 days	8 sessions
Summer	4 days	7 sessions	4 days	11 sessions
Total	7 days	16 sessions	8 days	19 sessions

Results revealed that older people and people with long term health problems were the most vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation, and we are currently identifying key partners to work collaboratively on a programme of co-produced intergenerational projects.

### *Measuring Impact*

A number of measures were used to understand the experience of data collection on both the police officers and young people:

- Immediately after a session completion, all researchers were invited to provide feedback about the experience.
- A focus group was held with a selection of police officers and PCSOs involved (n=7)
- Mini focus groups were held with young people from Woodhouse involved (n=13)



## Findings

The initial feedback and focus group data have been triangulated to provide an overview of the self-reported experiences of the police and young people working together.

### Feedback from Young People

*Perceptions of the Police:* One of the anticipated outcomes of the police officers and young people working together was an improved perception of the police. The young people interviewed initially described that their perceptions of the police were not influenced by working with officers, as “police are people too”. It was felt that this was influenced by officers being un-uniformed in most cases, which will be discussed later.

*“They are nice people they are just normal people they are not any different”*

However, when this issue was explored in more detail, it emerged that spending time in the community with the officers did indeed improve perceptions of police. By getting to know officers on a personal level, whilst they were supporting their community, it provided an alternative to seeing the police enforcing the law.

*“Why you seen them you always seen them in action...but been with them you see how nice they are and they change your perspective”*

It was reported that this experience of working with police officers built on previous contact with the police, for example, from meeting police at school and talking to the young people about issues such as anti-social behaviour and bullying. The young people also reported that they knew that they had not done anything wrong, so had nothing to fear with working with the police.

*“I just talked to them like I knew them...they were funny and made jokes with you”*

*Role of the Police in Civil Society:* Young people’s understanding of the role of the police in their community was not on the interview schedule, but both focus groups mentioned the importance of the police of maintaining order society, and that this was highly valued by the young people.

*“Without the police we’d have nothing, everything would be stolen and it would just be a total wreck”*

*“When I see the police I know there's a less chance of something going wrong tonight because I know they would stop it”*

Some young people felt that by being engaged in work to support their community they were in fact supporting the police, freeing up police time. This reflection on their role in supporting the police suggests that young people's concept of who they are and what they mean to the community evolved, where they perceive their role as an active citizen, rather than placing all responsibility on the police.

*"As much as they help us, if they're really busy, I also think of it as helping them. If we're changing the community they're going to be more free"*

*"I suppose the police helping us with everything, we can still make our own changes and have our point of view, so we can all have our say in everything that we do"*

*The Experience of Working with the Police:* Young people reported enjoying their time in the community with the officers. In particular, young people provided accounts of feeling empowered doing community research in the community, supported by the police.

*"You get more respect when you're knocking on people's doors"*

Within this, confidence and self-efficacy were enhanced, in being allowed to safely talk to strangers and go into different areas of the community, where they may not have previously been allowed to go. The issue of safety was further acknowledged, particularly when other young people or adults were observed to be swearing or drinking in the street. This is an issue salient to many of the young people interviewed, and the overwhelming response to working with the police from this perspective was "I felt safe".

*"I think with the police you have a bit more power because they run the place"*

The level of support offered by officers, who acted in a 'chaperone' capacity was also felt to have been helpful in developing the young people's confidence and self-efficacy. By providing autonomy (rather than authority), the young people had ownership over the locations visited and the degree of involvement in the interview process.

*The Impact of the Uniform:* Throughout the data collection process both young people and officers reflected on the impact of working with officers in and out of uniform. The table overleaf provides a summary of the main issues identified.



Support for uniform	Opposition for uniform
<p>Some young people felt like they were treated with more respect when accompanied by a uniformed officer.</p> <p>It was reported that residents were more likely to answer the door when the young people were accompanied by a uniformed officer.</p> <p>The young people who were accompanied by a uniformed officer were observed to be excited by this and seemed proud to be working publicly with them.</p>	<p>Some young people expressed concern that some residents may be intimidated by uniformed police knocking in their doors.</p> <p>Other young people were also worried that people may assume that they had been in trouble with the police.</p> <p>As accounts above have suggested, being in civilian clothes may have served to overcome any reservations or insecurities about working with the police.</p>

### Feedback from Police Officers

*Greater Understanding of Local Issues:* Assumptions that the main issues perceived in the community would be crime related were challenged.

*“as a police officer, if someone had said to me, what’s the biggest issue [in the community], I would have said ASB and drugs. And the biggest issue that I found from the questionnaire that we’d done was mental health...so that really surprised me”*

It was felt that these responses differed from those collected through the previous ‘street safe’ surveys, suggesting that answers were influenced by the perceived role of the interviewer, and that perhaps more honest answers were provided within the community researcher role.



The openness and honesty displayed by the community was an outcome of the research.

*“I don’t think I expected anybody to be as open...you’re knocking on the door, the questions that we asked were quite personal”*



During the training some officers expressed concern that residents would not be honest with young people, particularly those surrounding mental health and loneliness. As the first statement from the officer demonstrates, mental health was frequently cited to be an issue challenging residents in the communities, with residents disclosing this, and other personal information, to young people.

*Strong sense of community:* Another preconception of the communities interviewed was the assumption that there would be poor community ties, when in fact, this was often stated and the strength within both communities.

*“I was expecting no one to really know each other...a lot of people said they loved where they lived, its where they'd grown up, they'd spent all their lives there, there family has been there”*

The role of a shared history and strong community identify was felt to bind the community together, with both communities showing pride in their membership.

*Support and Empowerment:* Officers reported that they enjoyed the role of supporting the young people in their research, supporting them to feel more empowered.

*“It was nice to be able to support the girls so that they were able to do this. Allowing them to be able to do what they felt comfortable with but to also offer support where it was needed”*

Most officers interviewed reported enjoying this role, and could see the wider impact this would have on the young people.

*“I liked working with the children; they were really enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy being involved in something that would better their community. It was nice to see that they had been working on a litter campaign and making posters for awareness about this in their spare time. Particularly, for example - when we completing the questionnaires, litter seemed to be a sore spot for the community within the area. It was nice to be a helping hand for the kids to feel successfully involved”*

A case study of how one PCSO actively responded to their data collection experience will now be provided. This case study also provides an example of the impact that can result from pro-active community engagement.

## Case Study: Mirehouse Litter Pick

The 'connected communities' approach provides police with an improved understanding of the community, and an opportunity to support young people to build resilience in their community.

During her time doing data collection with young people in Mirehouse PCSO Shelley Smith reflected that many residents were concerned about litter in their community. In response, Shelley organised a litter pick, involving the young people who participated in data collection.

During this time PCSOs Shelley Smith and Jackie Rafferty spent time talking to the young people about where they feel safe and after finding drug paraphernalia educated young people about the dangers of taking drugs. The litter pick attracted the attention of other young people in the community, sparking a conversation about the future litter picks and gave Jackie the opportunity to introduce herself as the PCSO for the local area.

### Impact:

- Young People: The young people involved reported pride and enjoyment in participating in the litter pick, along with an increased familiarity with the police.

*"I did the litter pick to help the environment; I enjoyed it a lot, especially getting to know [the police] more"*

*"This is something I am proud of doing"*

- Community: An immediate benefit to the community was less litter.
- Police: The presence in the community enhanced police visibility and improved the PCSO's understanding of the area, and potentially contributed to the public image of the police in the community. This also improved knowledge of community groups are operating in the area, and resulted in initial discussions about further litter picks.



## 5. DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Supporting Vulnerable Localities to Identify Their Own Issues
  - a. What is currently being done to support vulnerable localities to be more forthcoming in identifying their issues and concerns?
  - b. What are the challenges in supporting vulnerable localities to be more forthcoming in identifying their issues and concerns?
  - c. How can the police use '*connected communities*' to support vulnerable localities to be more forthcoming in identifying their issues and concerns?
2. Police Responsivity
  - a. How responsive are the police to issues identified by vulnerable localities?
  - b. What are the challenges in responding to issues identified by vulnerable localities?
  - c. Where do the police need to be more responsive in that regard to provide support where it is needed?
3. Community Upskill and Resilience
  - a. How do the police upskill volunteers and communities to deal with their issues?
  - b. How can this be built on using a '*connected communities*' approach?
4. Demand Reduction
  - a. How can '*connected communities*' contribute to demand reduction across all partners:
    - i. In crime reduction?
    - ii. In making communities more resilient?

## 6. NEXT STEPS

1. *Continue with current programme:*
  - a. Community playback: Survey results will be played back to community members, stakeholders and young people.
  - b. Design: Young people will work with community stakeholders and community members to design their own intervention to enhance social networks in those identified as being vulnerable to loneliness or social isolation.
  - c. Implementation: Young people will be supported, with funding, to implement their projects to enhance social networks in their community.
2. Working group: A working group of interested parties will be established to further look at how the '*connected communities*' approach can be implemented within the police.
3. *Consultation Dissemination:* The input generated through consultation with police personnel will be used to produce a feasibility report of the implementation of '*connected communities*' across Cumbria Constabulary. The report will be circulated throughout the police for further discussion.

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