# Review of the community-led regeneration approach as delivered via the People and Communities Fund

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

**social research**

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# Executive Summary

**Background**

With a key focus on building community capacities and skills, the People and Communities Fund (PCF) addresses two priorities: tackling poverty and social inclusion by supporting local Community Anchor Organisations such as Registered Social Landlords, Community Development Trusts, and voluntary sector organisations. With a distinct focus on community engagement and co-production, PCF supports local communities to address their needs, identify their aspirations, develop skills, and bring about positive change. A range of different thematic areas and activities are funded, including training, advice, community services, employability, mentoring and volunteering. The fund aims to achieve lasting change and improve lives.

This study explored if and how the PCF and its community-led/co-production approach is effective in contributing to positive and sustainable change for individuals in some of the most disadvantaged communities across Scotland.

**Methodology**

The study aimed to understand how the community engagement and co-production process works in PCF funded projects and if the Programme achieves the outcomes it is intended to achieve.

The study applied a mix of desk-based and primary research methods involving Community Anchor organisations (delivering the PCF funded project), beneficiaries (service users and volunteers) and partner organisations. All study tools were designed in a bespoke manner in line with the PCF Theory of Change (ToC), which showed how the planned resources (inputs) and activities were intended to lead to change in learning and action, and ultimately contribute to positive and sustainable outcomes for people and their communities.

Using qualitative research techniques including Realist Evaluation, the study focused on exploring how the 12 sampled projects effected the participants, what changes have been reported and how achievements have evolved through participation. The study method and information about how the projects were sampled is presented in Chapter 2 and detailed in **Appendix A**.

The 12 selected PCF funded projects are delivered by community-based organisations of various size, thematic focus and organisation type across Scotland. The intensive fieldwork of the study engaged with 136 community organisation staff, partner organisations, beneficiaries and volunteers. The selected projects are summarised in Chapter 3 and five are presented as more detailed case studies in a separate document.

## Co-production Models

'Co-production', a delivery method which distinguishes the PCF from other regeneration approaches is increasingly recognised as a new way to deliver public services that enable positive and sustainable outcomes for people and their communities.

On the basis of the research findings, five co-production models were identified by the study team illustrating how the 12 projects implemented the co-production approach. It was clear that there is no 'one size fits all' model and that co-production needs to adapt to the different circumstances of the local communities, their organisations and target groups.

For example, Chapter 4 shows that in more single-issue projects such as training in a particular skill set, the co-production process can involve in-depth interviews and ongoing engagement with the trainee through providing feedback channels to help improve service delivery and design new services (Model 1). Whislt in a multi-issue environment, co-production can involve a wider range of services that are available for an individual to help build trust and develop essential life-skills before volunteering can contribute towards strengthening confidence and building self-respect and forming part of a pathway towards accessing new opportunities and life chances (Model 5).

The study has identified highly successful cyclical approaches where former service users can become volunteers and mentors for the next cohort of service users through which employability skills and confidence of the former service users can be substantially enhanced. At times, this was combined with the intensive involvement of partner organisations offering work placements as well as employment opportunities creating lasting change for individuals.

## Benefits derived from the PCF approach

The detailed analysis of the research findings is presented in Chapter 5 and describes how all participant groups benefited from PCF.

Common to all stakeholders was that the co-production process effectively facilitated the building of trust and strengthened relationships between all participant groups. There was also strong evidence that in the majority of cases, PCF supported an increase in community engagement/co-production.

> **'We had no hope of success with our community group, now we have'.** *A beneficiary*

> **'I love my job, I never thought I would say this'.** *A beneficiary*

The beneficiaries often experienced life changing, empowering impacts through participation in PCF funded activities, were able to improve communication skills, benefited from increased well-being, and self-worth.

The study workshops provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their experience with the PCF funded

> **'[The Community Anchor] has become my family'.** *A beneficiary*

initiatives. This was often very personal with participants sharing their stories, which in many cases have resulted in life-changing achievements.

**'The staff inspired me and encouraged me to be ambitious'.**
*A beneficiary*

The study identified a number of enablers that have led to a successful implementation of the PCF approach:

- Person-focused approach;

- Ability to offer access to a diversity of services;

- Good and close partnerships with other organisations;

- Linking social inclusion with employability pathways via volunteering;

- Flexibility and time to allow for personal development;

- Funding for work placements;  and

- Involving partner organisations with a social remit such as social enterprises.

**'Being given the opportunity, we now can believe in ourselves, we have purpose in our lives now'.** *A beneficiary*

The research findings also identified a number of barriers. Importantly this included that the current benefit system discourages benefit recipients from volunteering as their benefit payments would be stopped (i.e. if you are fit enough to volunteer, you are fit enough to work). This stands fundamentally in the way of a pre-employability pathway that uses volunteering as a successful way of building vital employability skills.

Other minor barriers included the annularity of funding, consequent delays with the programme commencement and varying levels of familiarity with the co-production process.

**Realist Evaluation**

In Chapter 6, the findings and the qualitative analysis of outcomes, is put into context of the PCF ToC and the detailed Realist Evaluation analysis. This technique identifies what lies at the heart of PCF implementation, triggering early positive outcomes for the majority of participants (**Appendix A** provides more technical detail).

At the core of PCF success lies the intensive, person-focused support provided by the community organisations from the outset, engaging with individual service users. This triggers feelings of trust, confidence, pride and belonging which create the basis for individuals to achieve important and sustainable outcomes.

Being able to access a wide range of activities and being encouraged to take up opportunities has enabled beneficiaries to improve skills, knowledge and understanding, including improved well-being, social inclusion and increased social capital thereby also helping to tackle poverty and promote social inlcusion in a sustainable way.

These achievements frequently enabled people to increase their engagement with the community organisations and elsewhere, by volunteering and contributing to the co-delivery of services (often to other new service users).

Following a consideration of refining the ToC, the Chapter finishes with a validation of the existing ToC on the basis of findings across all areas of the research.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Chapter 7 concludes that the co-production approach and intensity of engagement between the funded community organisations, their partner organisations, and the beneficiaries was key in bringing about positive change, and helping to address social inclusion and poverty.

The PCF approach successfully created the right context for personal development, capacities and skills to emerge. This was particularly clear in community organisations that were able to nurture and support seldom heard, disadvantaged individuals.

The study findings have confirmed that:

- PCF funding was central to achieving considerable positive change in beneficiaries' lives through gaining skills and capacities which impacted positively on their community engagement; and

- The co-production process enabled community organisation staff to gain a deeper understanding of their target groups and helped to improve partnership engagement between organisations at operational and strategic levels.

The key recommendations are that consideration should be given to:

1. Continuing with, and building on, the PCF approach i.e. supporting community-based organisations with experience in co-production.

2. Further defining the concepts and terminology around co-production to help increase awareness amongst stakeholders.

3. Raising awareness of different community engagement and co-production models to facilitate sharing of experience to maximise the potential of each model.

4. Extending the PCF funding period in recognition of the time frame projects realistically require to address the multiple needs of their target groups.

5. Formulating characteristics to differentiate projects more appropriately than by 'themes' which currently overlap within activities. This could range from introducing greater flexibility into the application form (e.g. multiple choice) to restructuring themes and activities, and how they link to one another.

6. Reflecting on the refined ToC and further clarify the definition and activities with regard to co-production.

# 1. Introduction

This study was commissioned by the Scottish Government to assess the community-led regeneration approach as delivered via the People and Communities Fund (PCF).

The research was conducted by a collaborative research team consisting of EKOS Economic and Social Research (Lead Consultant) and Avril Blamey Associates.

## Background

The PCF was launched in 2012, as the main revenue fund underpinning the Scottish Government's approach to community-led regeneration. The Fund supports local organisations to grow and strengthen by delivering outcomes that meet the identified needs and aspirations of their communities. It is exclusively for community anchor organisations[1], such as Registered Social Landlords and development trusts. Other recipients have included community sports clubs and neighbourhood centres.

The purpose of the Fund is to provide revenue funding that enables projects or services to either become more self-sustaining or to deliver a lasting legacy for the local community (robust applications for capital funding are also considered). The PCF is not intended as a long-term source of funding.

Since its launch, PCF has supported hundreds of community-led projects with grant funding totalling approx. £50m. In 2015/16 this equated to 197 projects which received funding totalling £12.9m; circa £10.9m in 2016/17 for 186 existing PCF projects; and £8.6m in 2017/18 to support 169 continuation projects as a transition year for the fund.

Funded projects have covered a range of target groups and types of project activity, aligned with current core aims of tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion (including mitigation of welfare reform). This has included support for training/upskilling, community facilities, diversionary activities for young people, healthy eating initiatives, tackling fuel poverty, and employability. Projects are required to demonstrate how they will make a real difference to disadvantaged people, irrespective of whether they live in an urban or rural area. The study was aware of the thematic diversity of the projects when reviewing the ToC and when assessing achievement.

Applicants must demonstrate compliance with a number of eligibility criteria, including a track record of successful project delivery in the community and crucially, community control and/or community representation within the organisation's decision making structures. The emphasis on community control and

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[1] Community Anchor Organisations have strong links to their communities and usually stimulate high levels of voluntary activity. They are well placed to spot the talent and opportunities in their areas and have the energy and creativity to nurture and exploit those. Increasingly, these organisations take an enterprising and assets based approach to their work.

community representations within applicant organisations is a unique aspect of the PCF approach. As such, PCF funding is designed to support those community organisations with experience in the community-enagement and co-production process.

The existing community-engagement structures have also had an impact on the type of delivery models used in PCF projects depending on their specific circumstances.

## Study Objectives

The principle aim of this research study was to 'Explore the effectiveness of the community-led approach, as delivered through the PCF, in contributing to positive and sustainable change for individuals'.

The study brief identified the following study objectives, to:

- 'Test' if the PCF approach is operating as intended;
- Identify mechanisms used to deliver PCF activity;
- Evidence where and how the PCF approach contributed to change;
- Use evidence to inform understanding for whom the approach works/does not work, and why;
- Explore the circumstances and context for results to emerge/or not (including unexpected results); and
- Understand the role of barriers and enablers in delivery, why and for whom.

The required fieldwork was implemented with a sample of 12 PCF projects, each managed by a different community organisation, together with their target communities/groups and partner organisations.

A comprehensive fieldwork programme including consultations with stakeholders, volunteers, and beneficiaries involving face to face, group and individual telephone interviews being undertaken.

## Report Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: 'Study method and who was involved' provides an overview of the study methods and research tools used, the sample frame of projects and concludes with a reflection of study issues experienced.
- Chapter 3: 'Projects' offers a summary of each project included in the research.
- Chapter 4: 'Co-production approaches' presents a number of co-production models that have been identified on the basis of the research findings.

- Chapter 5: 'How participants benefited from PCF' describes the key findings from the research distinguishing between developments in co-production and community engagement, perceived achievements and unexpected results. The Chapter further discusses some of the more detailed outcomes at programme level by participant group.

- Chapter 6: 'Theory of Change and What lies at the Heart of PCF Implementation' offers some insight into the detailed approach of Realist Evaluation, starting with the review of the Theory of Change of the PCF, and progressing to some detailed analysis of the research findings articulating evolving realist theories.

- Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations is structured in line with the study objectives, bringing together the key findings of the overall research. Recommendations are highlighted in text boxes.

- A number of Appendices provide detailed methodology descriptions, further detailed research findings, mainly in the form of graphs and tables.

- In addition, five Case Studies have been produced (available in a separate document).

## Report Audiences

There are a number of audiences who are potentially interested in the findings of this report. This includes the Scottish Government as funder of the Programme, community organisations, other stakeholders such as relevant partner organisations, and other strategic players interested in developing co-production initiatives to help improve their service delivery or Corporate Social Responsibilities policies.

While the report focuses on the key findings, an appendix provides further detail for those audiences who are interested in the more technical detail of the research method and detailed findings.

# 2.  Study Methodology

## Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of the study approach and the methods that have been applied by this research.

As some of the methods and terms used are highly technical, a glossary is provided at the end of the report. In addition, a more detailed explanation of the study methods is presented in **Appendix A**.

## Study Approach

The study integrated a number of elements from the following research approaches:

- Realist Evaluation;
- Theory of Change (ToC) Review;
- Qualitative Comparative Assessment (at programme level – across all projects researched); and
- Contribution Analysis.

As indicated above, the design of the study incorporated a Realist Evaluation approach, which is a theory-based method with a focus on how and why participants of a particular initiative benefit.

While more conventional evaluation or impact assessment studies are often content with establishing that certain benefits have been achieved, the Realist Evaluation approach goes further by exploring the reasons why and how the benefits have been achieved. Through this deeper approach, it is hoped that more learning can be extracted to inform future initiatives.

The study centered on the ToC of the PCF Programme as devised by the Scottish Government. The ToC represented the underlying assumptions and aspirations of why and how the Fund would be helpful in addressing a set of identified needs.

The existence of a ToC represents good practice by enhancing the clarity of purpose (why funding is made available), specifying the approach for Programme intervention (how PCF is supposed to be used), and making the objectives and anticipated outcomes of funding transparent (what is expected to be achieved).

Reviewing the ToC and its assumptions for implementation and anticipated achievements was a key aim of the study to test if the PCF Programme is working as intended.

## Study Methods

Based on the research aims, the study sought to understand how and why certain approaches and models operate within PCF and how outcomes have been achieved.

The study applied a mix of desk-based and primary research methods. All study tools were designed in a bespoke manner in line with the existing PCF ToC. The study tools focused on exploring what changes have been reported by participants, how these changes have developed in practice and what mechanisms contributed to these outcomes in varying contexts.

## Primary Research Participants

As the promotion of co-production is one of the key aims of the PCF, our research needed to engage with a range of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the programme to cover all angles of co-production.

Therefore, our fieldwork engaged with the following participant groups:

- Community Anchors – these were the community-based organisations who were responsible for the delivery of the PCF funded initiative The study engaged with staff of the Community Anchors directly involved in delivering PCF funded services;
- Partner Organisations - those organisations that supported the Community Anchors through joint working, signposting or referrals of service users/people in need; offering additional services to project beneficiaries, or being directly involved in the delivery of the PCF project;
- Volunteers –community members who volunteered because of a desire to help the Community Anchor and a motivation 'to do good' in the community, or local people with the same motivations, but previously (or concurrently) themselves service users. Here, volunteering is often part of gaining employability and other transferable skills; and
- Beneficiaries – this group includes those community members in need of support, receiving and/or participating in the services funded by PCF.

## How projects were selected

The sample frame for the research was based on a Scottish Government randomly selected cross-section of 25 projects which received PCF funding in 2015/16. Of the 25 pre-selected projects, the study was resourced to select 12 of these projects for the research.

We have applied the following rationale to capture and compare what were seen as important programme characteristics within the ToC:

- In order to compare results between the projects and between different participant groups, the study method needed to focus on thematically similar projects. The following three themes were chosen in this context:
    - Training and Upskilling, and Employability Training (five projects);
    - Advice/Support Service (Benefits) & (Combination) (four projects); and
    - Volunteering and Peer Mentoring (three projects).
- Within each theme, we sought a good spread across the sectors of applicants/Community Anchors to explore if a successful implementation of PCF depends on a particular sector:
    - Voluntary Sector (four projects);
    - Community Development Trust (three projects);
    - Registered Social Landlord/Housing Associations (HA) (three projects); and
    - Social Enterprise (two projects).
- The sample of 12 projects also allowed for a range of target groups to be presented:
    - whole community (three projects)
    - young people (a frequent target audience in PCF) (three projects);
    - rural community (two projects); and
    - ethnic minorities (one), women (one), those at risk of poverty (one), and other vulnerable groups (one).
- There was a mixture of community organisations with dates of establishment ranging from 1968 to 2009, with more than half (seven) established since 2000.
- The average project size reflected that of the PCF total population. The 12 selected projects had an average (mean) PCF award of £85,470, ranging from £20,000 to £185,000.
- Geographically, the project sample spread across Scotland, including the Western Isles, the Highlands, Argyll and Bute, and across Lowland Scotland, **Figure 2.1** (over)**.**

**Figure 2.1: Map of Project Locations**
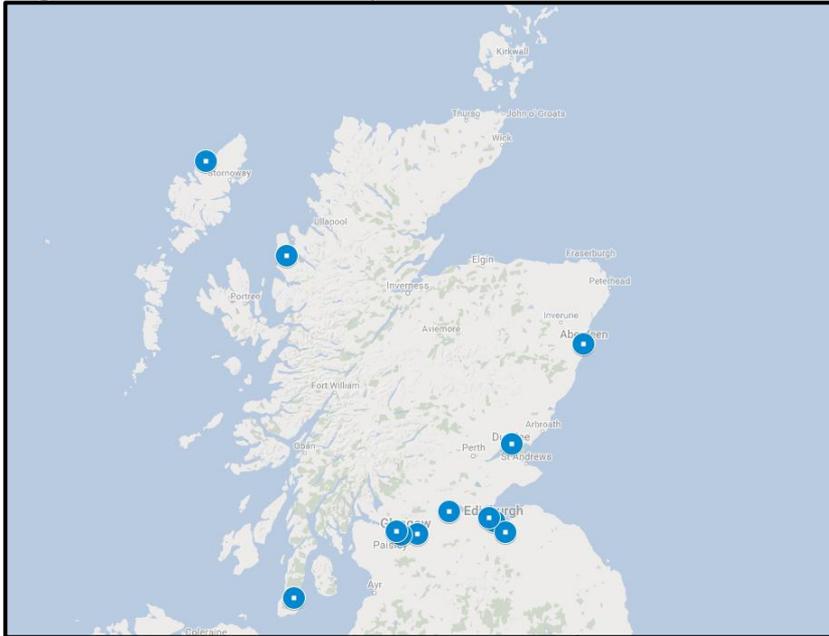


## Detailed Research Tools

The research was carried out primarily by conducting workshops[2] with Community Anchor staff, volunteers, project beneficiaries and partner organisations, supplemented by telephone interviews where appropriate.

The workshops consisted of a number of interactive activities, partly engaging the whole group including sharing of experiences, reflection and self-reporting of achievements and partly involving more individual work (with assistance where required) to assess:

- Co-production levels (Development Ladders);
- Outcomes from the support (group work with a 'Ketso' workshop toolkit); and
- Detailed learning journeys (Mini Interviews).

Full details of the research tools used can be found in **Appendix B**.

## Study Points to Note

- Although only a sample of 12 projects was selected from the 197 projects funded in 2015/16, the views of 136 individuals were captured by the study. The research findings present examples of how the PCF approach has operated in these 12 cases rather than the Fund as a whole. Therefore, the findings and conclusions should be **understood in relation to the 12 projects alone**.
- Delivery of the intensive fieldwork, write up and analysis was managed within a tight schedule, together with the set-up of workshops with stakeholders and

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[2] In total, 11 workshops were conducted. Due to project completion and dispersal of staff, one project was exclusively researched through telephone consultations.

beneficiaries. Thanks to the commitment of the participating projects, the study was completed timeously, although more time would have allowed for wider, and greater participation.

Note should be taken with regard to the following aspects of the sample and the fieldwork findings:

- Although drawn from a random sample of 25 PCF funded organisations, the 12 projects involved in the study were selected in line with the sample frame, but essentially volunteered their participation and identified their own partner organisations and beneficiaries to attend the workshop (self-selection at project as well as beneficiary level). Although open and honest feedback from all participants involved in the study was encouraged, this could indicate why the study findings are overwhelmingly positive.

- The study methods used in the primary research were all based on self-reporting techniques (i.e. individuals were asked how they felt, how they experienced their learning journey, what impacts this had on their lives, etc.). Baselines or validated pre and post measurement scales were not available or feasible to use given the timescales, engagement opportunities with the projects and available research funding.

**Appendix A** outlines further limitations specifically relating to Realist Evaluation (as an approach).

# 3. Projects

## Introduction

**Chapter 3** presents a summary of the projects that have been selected for the research. A short commentary from the researchers has also been added in a text box relating to each project and the primary research findings.

## Overview of the Type of Community Anchors

The community organisations in charge of delivering the PCF funded initiatives are subsequently referred to as 'Community Anchors' and a general overview has been provided in **Chapter 2** with regard to the sample frame.

The study research provided further insight into the type of Community Anchors participating in the research:

- All of the surveyed organisations employed between 5 and 28 members of staff, with an average of 14.

- All but one of the Community Anchors works with volunteers.

- All of the Community Anchors were well established, with all of them receiving funding from multiple sources and all of them undertaking community needs assessments prior to receiving PCF funding. In many cases the 2015/16 needs assessments were based on previous PCF funded work.

- Prior experience of community engagement was generally assessed to be high, with two groups judged to have a medium level of experience.

- Most of the groups demonstrated a high level of person-focused, bespoke delivery, with two groups judged to have medium, and one a relatively low level of bespoke delivery.

- Almost all groups had a high level of focused and dedicated community engagement, with two pursuing a medium level of engagement, usually backed up by a relevant strategy and/or vision in place.

# Projects Overview

## Theme: 'Training and Up-skilling' and 'Employability'

## Blairtummock HA – EHRA Modern Housing Apprenticeships



Easterhouse Housing and Regeneration Alliance (EHRA) represent the eight community HAs and co-operatives that operate in the Greater Easterhouse area of Glasgow (Easthall Park Housing Co-operative; Blairtummock HA; Calvay HA; Gardeen HA; Lochfield Park HA; Provanhall HA; Ruchazie HA and Wellhouse HA).

This project was delivered by Blairtummock HA in conjunction with TIGERS (a local training provider), and provided work-based placement training within these HAs for unemployed young people from economically disadvantegd areas in the East End of Glasgow.

They were given access to training and mentoring to help them gain valuable skills and work experience, ultimately leading to sustainable employment within the social housing sector.

The project has been successful in achieving its objectives – with 14 out of the 16 young people taken on moving on to positive destinations (either becoming employed in the social housing or third sector, or moving into further or higher education).

**Researchers' Observations:**

**This is a good example of how community partners (HA staff) and beneficiaries (apprentices) benefit from the positive experience of the project albeit in a more traditional separation of responsibilities and distinct roles (HA designing and leading the project delivery; young people benefiting through apprenticeship learning).**

**There were several unexpected benefits/outcomes – several community partners commented on the increased 'energy' within, and revitalising of, the workplace when young people were recruited. This benefit was also felt by other community members (i.e. customers of the HAs), who commented positively on the new, cross-section of young members of staff.**

**The apprentices were able to demonstrate a clear progression from no prior community involvement to involvement across various roles with positive effects on their confidence and engagement activities. This was driven by their apprenticeship/employment in customer facing roles (rather than contributing to co-delivery).**

# COMAS – 20 More

The 20 More project run by COMAS works with people of all ages living in the Dumbiedykes area of Edinburgh who are workless or living in low income working households to deliver a service that improves weekly household income by at least £20.

The project provides whatever is required by each beneficiary, from benefits advocacy, debt advice, budgeting, utilities reviews and employment support. Beneficiaries have been clearly very affected by the project, and it has made a difference to a number of local people. The project provides more than just a service to help people to become better off – the project has also improved community cohesion and pride significantly, with various other community activity groups forming as a result.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**This project is a good example of co-design: COMAS places great emphasis on involving local people to work together to find the solutions which work for them, as opposed to simply telling local people how they will benefit. The project made a real difference to the beneficiaries. For example, the project provided more than just a service, by also acting as a community hub for local people.**

**The creation of a community trust within the Dumbiedykes area has done a lot to create a lasting sense of community which previously did not exist. Those who have engaged with the 20more project have found it very beneficial (e.g. staff members have a huge sense of pride in what they do and can see what a positive difference it makes to community members, and beneficiaries have gained, above all, structure in their lives and a support network they know they can trust).**

# Dundee International Women's Centre (DIWC) – Pathways to Learning

**Dundee International Women's Centre**
Engagement, Education, Self-Empowerment

DIWC has delivered projects and services for women from diverse communities for over four decades.

A new centre, built in 2006, enabled the organisation to provide increased service provision/community engagement and develop new services according to community needs. The centre caters for a wide range of needs, including cultural diversity training, employability training, work placements, childcare, catering, advice and mentoring, educational classes, life skills, etc.

DIWC works to provide a holistic service catering for women's social, educational, employment and personal development needs whilst taking into consideration their previous experiences and putting steps in place to overcome family, community and cultural barriers to participation through a programme of services and partnership work.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**Substantial user-focused service delivery. Holistic approach, seeing the person in her totality of needs and building on the potential of each person. Offering a person-focused approach and encouraging uptake of a wide range of activities is at the core of this initiative to develop everyone's potential step-by-step. People feel safe and comfortable and have a keen desire to 'give back', help others, and volunteer.**

**Core person-focused values and needs assessment approaches are well established at DIWC. There creates a very positive atmosphere that encourages service users to remain involved and feel part of a community.**

# Fyne Homes/Inspiralba - Inspiring Locally Grown Employability in Argyll



Inspiralba is a social enterprise that assists community based organisations to turn their ideas and aspirations into robust, sustainable business activities. They have been managing this project on behalf of Fyne Homes, to deliver environmental and employment objectives.

The project promotes social enterprise as an employment option for unemployed people, and young people and adults who live in the local rural area, and who face barriers to employment for a variety of reasons.

Beneficiaries are either offered supportive and inspiring work experience placements with existing social enterprises, or are recruited to the Vital Sparks programme – this supports local people in turning their social enterprise ideas into solutions for the challenges their community faces. The work placements help people to gain a range of skills and confidence – as well as raising their profile in the wider community – whilst the newly created social enterprises provide encouragement to other individuals with ideas, and may create further employment opportunities in this rural area.

These social enterprises were ideal to support people who were often unemployed as a result of physical and mental health barriers or who had addiction issues, as they could offer the flexibility and additional support perhaps not found in more traditional employment models. In addition to the benefits gained by the unemployed young people and adults, the social enterprises themselves benefited greatly from employing extra staff.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**The strong capacity of the social enterprise sector to provide the necessary holding and nurturing environment for vulnerable beneficiaries has been highlighted by this project. Also, the importance of work placement payments to beneficiaries (in lieu of losing benefits) has been emphasised as strengthening the feeling of self-worth and esteem (quote from a beneficiary: 'if they pay me, it must be true that I do well, it's not just words').**

**Some of the beneficiaries had experienced significant mental and physical health improvements since engaging with the project and working in social enterprises. There was also a sense that the social enterprises benefited from the provision of volunteers, as they tended to be in need of 'extra helping hands'.**

# Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project – Growing Gardeners

Growing Gardeners is a developing local gardening social enterprise managed and operated by Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project (Y2K) for the benefit of people living in and around Midlothian. The project trained young people aged between 13 and 24 years, developing their employability skills and other support work to help them find employment. The services provided by the project extended to the maintenance of local green space, delivery of community workshops, talks and information sessions, and partnership working with local schools.

The project helped to address local youth unemployment, and increased financial independence and disposable income levels. Each trainee recieved bespoke support (skills and confidence building etc.) from the project's dedicated Youth Worker.

The project also included strong relationships with local schools by providing 10-week work experience placements for young unemployed people (two days per week, unpaid). A number of young people who were excluded from school also benefited from unpaid 10-week work experience placements in consultation/partnership with the relevant school(s).

Y2K intended to progress towards the full self-sustainability of the Growing Gardeners project via a social enterprise approach. The aim was to provide the delivery of a highly affordable gardening service for the local community by 2018, including the provision of ongoing training placements to be offered on a long-term basis for the benefit of the local community.

However, due to a number of issues including the limited PCF funding period, the aspiration of establishing a social enterprise for/with this service was not achieved. Extra support for social enterprise development might have been appropriate. In addition, the annualrity of PCF funding resulted in the loss of four staff employed by the project who moved on to other posts. Now, with the successful extension in place until March 2018, the project is resuming with replacement staff being recruited.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**This seem to have been an effective and successful project in terms of service delivery (filling a gap that had been created by cuts in Local Authority services and combining this with community-led employability activities). All four trainee gardeners have found employment following their participation in the project. The project was also successful in offering work placements to many school pupils on a continuous and rolling basis – the placements were used as rewards for good behaviour in school.**

# Theme: 'Advice/Support Service'

## CFINE – AHEAD+

Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) is a charity and social enterprise that offers a range of food-related services for economically disadvantaged people in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, including:

- Food bank;
- Operator of Fareshare Grampian which distributes food which otherwise goes to waste in the North East;
- Operator of a network of dozens of community food outlets which distribute high quality produce at affordable prices in local areas; and
- Community Training Kitchen which offers cooking lessons and other transferable skills.



CFINE is lead partner of the PCF funded AHEAD+ programme, working in partnership with Grampian HA, North East Scotland Credit Union and Pathways (an employability charity) to deliver a holistic service to low income, disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable people in the North East of Scotland.The services delivered benefit a large number of people – from those that receive in-depth financial advice and take up volunteer opportunities, to those that receive more light-touch support, such as making use of one of the regional food distribution centres.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**An organisation that delivers a holistic range of complementary services and offers a number of opportunities to local people. CFINE works very well in partnership with a large number of organisations (with many of which it co-locates), and has a large number of volunteers working both at the CFINE HQ in central Aberdeen, in the surrounding areas of the city and Aberdeenshire - delivering food in local communities, this includes a community kitchen, café, and shop.The food bank service brings people in need to CFINE, who are then befriended to build trust so that other needs can also be addressed.**

**There are elements of co-production with service users becoming volunteers and then sometimes employed as staff members. There is a strong element of community consultation and a person focused approach is applied. There are a number of social enterprises established off the back of support from CFINE in conection with food in the community (training kitchen, allotment).**

# Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – Falkirk Area Welfare Benefits Advice Support Unit

The Falkirk Area Welfare Benefits Advice Support Unit (herein referred to as 'the Falkirk Advice Project') works in partnership with Falkirk, Grangemouth, and Denny and Dunipace Citizens Advice Bureaus, and Falkirk Council to deliver welfare benefit advice to those in need.

The service is designed to complement CAB and council services and to specifically work with people in particular need and offer them in-depth support to address their benefit needs. This can often include meeting them in a place where they feel comfortable such as their home.

The primary benefit that beneficiaries have gained from this support is financial – in that they are able to obtain welfare benefits they are entitled to, or successfully appeal against benefit sanctions, etc. They also experience numerous other benefits, such as being referred to other relevant support services, or feeling that they have regained control of their lives.

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**Researchers' Observations:**

**PCF funding enabled the CAB to deliver a separate targeted advice service regarding welfare benefits. Recent changes to benefits have increased the numbers needing advice and this service complements mainstream CAB and Council advice services allowing them to offer targeted support to people in crisis.**

**The levels of co-production with service users is limited as it is more or less a traditional support model of advisor/advisee. However, Falkirk CAB appears to have greatly improved its links with partners at a strategic level, particularly between the CAB and the Council. One of the major benefits for beneficiaries was that the project enabled services to be delivered in the community – generally in their own home. This allowed services to be delivered more easily to disabled and elderly people and made people more comfortable, and at ease to receive advice. There are ideas for the future, for example including delivering services in places such as nursing homes, etc.**

**The annualrity of PCF funding has been found to cause a degree of disruption to the service.**

# Horshader Community Development Trust (CDT) – Horshader Rural Support and Connect Project



The Horshader CDT is a community-owned charitable trust which provides a variety of services to the local rural community, including providing grants to other local community organisations through the proceeds of a community wind turbine.

The PCF funding has allowed the Trust to deliver a local community transport and handyman scheme, primarily aimed at elderly and disabled people in the area, and to fill a gap left by reduced local authority services. For many beneficiaries, Horshader CDT provides services that they trust and gives them back their autonomy. The scheme has been very well received by the local community, however, this popularity has meant that it can be stretched at times as there is only one PCF funded service delivery staff member.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**This scheme is delivered by a mature community organisation in a remote, rural area. The Trust runs its own community funding programme from revenue generated by a community wind turbine. The organisation has also recently opened a community café and charity shop.**

**The PCF funded rural bus service is a replacement for a Local Authority funded transport service which was discontinued some years ago. The project provides lifeline services to elderly and disable people. The handyman service has also been particularly useful for elderly and disabled people.**

**The organisation has strong links with the local community and provides a range of services, particularly targeted at more vulnerable people. Regarding 'co-production', clients of the handyman or minibus services provide some direction, e.g. what work they require or where they need to go, but are not involved beyond that given the nature of the client group. However, any feedback provided by the clients in an informal way is used to inform the development of new services.**

# Next Step Initiative (NSI) – Inspiring Transformation

Established in 2009 as a charitable voluntary organisation, NSI employs five members of staff and focuses on engaging with the African and Caribbean communities in Scotland.

The key objectives of the organisations are to reach out to individuals of the African and Caribbean community, help build capacities and skills, improve the quality of life, and support the integration of these Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities into the civic life of Scottish society thereby addressing key issues of employability, financial inclusion and social enterprise.

In addition to reaching out to local companies (to arrange work placements), NSI operates in close collaboration with a wide range of more strategic organisations including partners such as Police Scotland, the University of West of Scotland (Africa Forum), Glasgow HA (Wheatley Group), Historic Scotland, HMRC, and many others. The partner organisations benefit from NSI's access to the beneficiary group (to increase awareness and understanding of the specific needs, to deliver improved services and improve their equality and social responsibilities).

**Researchers' Observations:**

**A well thought through approach working at multiple levels of engagement for all involved. This project is a good example of co-production at strategic as well as service user level (where corporate social responsibility meets community engagement).**

**Well established organisation providing a range of services to African abd Caribbean communities in Scotland. Evidence of strong partnership working with other agencies and employers - with mutual benefits. Social enterprises have been launched off the back of support from NSI including catering services, virtual media business, private taxi company and a business mentoring company.**

## Theme: 'Peer Mentoring' and 'Volunteering'

## Castle Rock Edinvar HA/Fresh Start – Helping Hands

Fresh Start is an Edinburgh based homeless charity which delivers a variety of services including:

- 'Hit Squad' service that assists people with decorating their new home;

- Community gardens;

- Community kitchen including cooking lessons; and

- Social enterprise which conducts PAT testing and also works as an employability programme.

Castle Rock Edinvar HA acted as the lead on the project and funded Fresh Start to expand a number of their activities to the Craigmillar area of Edinburgh including setting up a new community garden and kitchen, and carrying out cooking lessons and Hit Squad activities.

Beneficiaries of these sevices are generaly those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Beneficiaries receive a number of benefits through the support, including: financial benefits, increasing their skill levels, increasing their confidence, making friends, and accessing volunteer opportunties.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**This project is embedded in the community with an established pool of volunteers who give their time to help others. The project has identified the need to help homeless people at risk of poverty to adapt to new homes, learn new skills, socialise etc. There are good relationships with partner bodies across the public and third sectors – who make referrals when necessary. Of two volunteers at the workshop session, one is hoping to use the experience to enter the police, the other is now involved in a local charity.**

**This project is a good example of effective service delivery. It is led by an established community organisation which delivers the same services at a different location in the city. PCF supported the expansion of the services to Craigmillar. In terms of co-production and co-design, due to the type of support provided (getting homeless people into homes), service users tend not to be engaged for very long. The organisation is in the process of creating a Service Users Group which will include a group of former service users to advise on delivery improvements. The plan is to have people on the group for a limited time and to train replacements from amongst more recent service users.**

# DRC Generations – Mentoring Transition Support Service
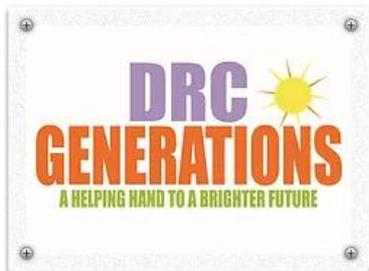
DRC Generations is a community controlled voluntary organisation which actively engages with local people in the Dumbarton Road area of Glasgow, meeting the needs of both individuals and of the community.

PCF funding supported a wide range of activities, including promoting awareness of addictions (particularly drugs and alcohol) through peer mentoring – and many of the children receiving this awareness training then go on to become peer mentors themselves; family activities; community events; and an outreach and support service.

This work ensures that sustainable support is provided to the community, an increased number of local people engage with their services (and take up volunteer positions), young people are provided with appropriate age-related information and advice relating to addictions and, one-to-one support and signposting to other services is delivered effectively.

The work carried out by DRC Generations is linked to a number of partner organisations and community groups, and all groups are closely involved in the development and delivery of the services. This project has managed to develop more in-depth initiatives through the co-creation process, and there are very strong relationships and trusting bonds between DRC Generations and their partner groups.

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**Researchers' Observations:**

**DRC Generations activities and services have evolved over time and have been built on the learning from previous and continuing support provision in a complementary, integrated fashion. It became clear when talking to staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries that the support provided by DRC is very much integrated in the local community.**

**This is a good example of co-creation and co-delivery – all groups (including schools, parents, young people, local community) are involved in the development and delivery of the services. Community members feel that they are listened to, and that they can voice their opinions as and when needed. Service users were very positive about their experience and many had gone on to volunteer. All groups described DRC Generations as a family or community, with everyone viewed equally. There was a high level of co-creation in 2014 which has continued in 2017.**

# GALE – Volunteer Development

The GALE Centre is at the heart of a very rural community in Gairloch in the Highlands. The Volunteer Development Project has enabled the GALE Centre to increase activities and services through the creation of a dedicated Volunteer Development Officer, who works to support the expansion of the volunteer opportunities within the GALE Centre for all community members, with the aim of increasing social inclusion within the local area.

Since its inception, the project has increased its partnership working and is currently in discussions to continue to expand its joint services e.g. working with local community groups, social care, and with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to increase employability opportunities.

Staff members are proactive in consulting with volunteers and community members to help determine local needs, and volunteers are encouraged to provide input into the development of activities/service and provide suggestions and/or improvements for delivery. The project brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and has enabled people to interact with groups they may not have previously engaged with.

**Researchers' Observations:**

**The GALE Centre is at the heart of a remote, rural community. The Volunteer Development Project has enabled the Centre to increase its activities and services through the creation of a dedicated Volunteer Development Officer position (funded by PCF). Many staff members identified this role and the clear implementation structures as the key factors in the project's success.**

**Staff members actively consult with volunteers and community members to determine local needs and attend to suggestions for improvements of delivery. The benefits of the volunteer training contribute to improved service provision in the local community, but has also helped the volunteers to feel more included and connected with their community.**

# 4.   Project Co-production Approaches

## Introduction

This Chapter presents five models of how Community Anchors addressed co-production in their community engagement approaches. The models were identified and designed by the study team following the research of the12 projects. As such, the observations of the researchers with regard to how the Community Anchors engaged with their communities and target groups, and how their activities involved other partner organisations informed the design of five models. The models, therefore, are research findings in their own right and seek to differentiate the various co-production approaches used by the Community Anchor organisations.

The PCF approach to community-led regeneration operates in a multi issue environment, thereby supporting a wide range of community organisations, themes, and target groups. This influences the way in which projects engage with their communities. Reflecting this context, the study was able to identify a number of approaches in which the Community Anchors implemented their PCF funded activities.

The following presents five models highlighting the multi-dimensional approach of the Programme/Community Anchors and their ability to adapt to different local environments, project topics and target groups.

The Models are numbered merely for the purpose of identification and we are not suggesting that one model is necessairly better than any other. Community organisations need to respond to different circumstances and environments which determines the kind of co-production that can be implemented.

The projects have been allocated to their respective models, yet it should be noted that in reality, overlaps exist between the approaches.

Case studies have been produced for each model and are available in a separate document.

## Understanding Co-production

Integral to our research approach was to acknowledge the underlying core principles of PCF associated with community-led regeneration, which are community engagement, co-production, and co-delivery.

The definitions of the terms overlap to some extent and although the PCF programme documentation primarily refers to 'community engagement', it was agreed to use the term 'co-production[3]' as set out by six guiding principles:

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[3] The term 'co-production' is used inter-changeably with 'co-delivery' and 'co-design'. However, 'co-delivery' (actual delivery of services by a number of stakeholders) is different to 'co-design' (a number of stakeholder groups informing and designing services).

- Recognise people as assets;

- Build on existing capabilities;

- Mutuality and reciprocity;

- Peer support networks;

- Break down barriers; and

- Facilitate rather than deliver.

**Figure 4.1** was also used to inform the design of some of the primary research material (Development Ladders) focusing on exploring the extent to which PCF stakeholders are applying a co-production approach.

**Figure 4.1: Co-production Process**



Developing equal and reciprocal relationships

Coercing · Educating · Informing · Consulting · Engaging · Co-designing · Co-producing

Doing To
trying to fix people
who are passive
recipients of services

Doing For
engaging and
involving
people

Doing With
in an equal
and reciprocal
partnership

Adapted from Slay and Penny (2014)
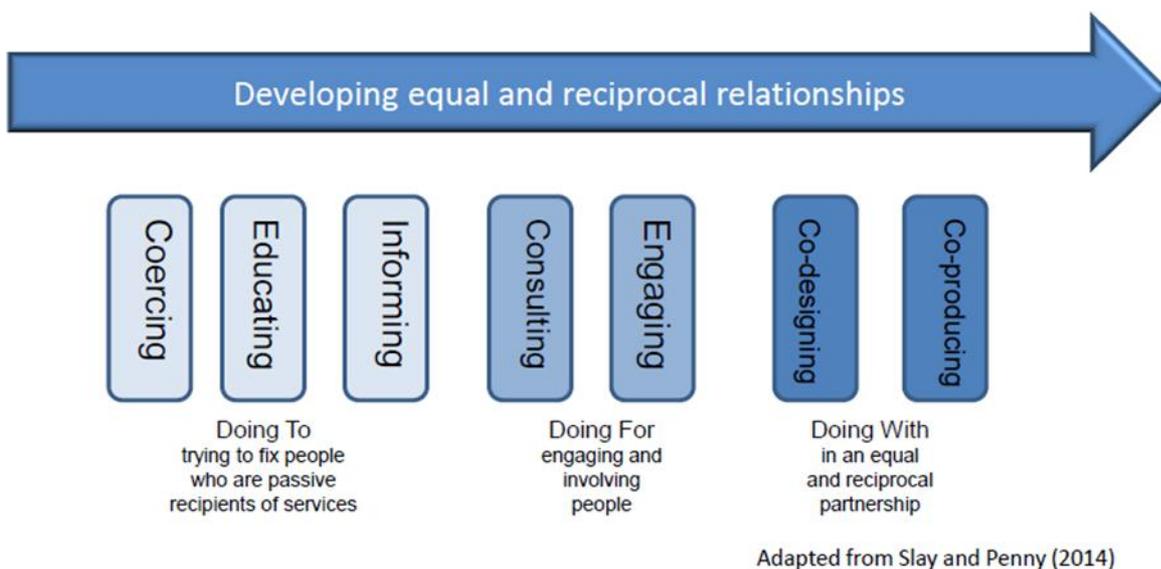
The Scottish Government's Regeneration Strategy *'Achieving a Sustainable Future'* places support for community-led regeneration at the heart of its approach, recognising that the changes required to make all communities sustainable will only be achieved when communities themselves play a part in delivering change. The Scottish Government breifing also recognised that there are different levels and types of involvement represented by the range of dynamics between actors; moving from 'doing to', to 'doing for' and ultimately 'doing with'.

# Co-production Models

## Co-production Model 1: Traditional, Integrated Service Delivery

Model 1 describes a co-production approach which focuses on providing services to a particular target group in need of specific services, such as financial advice or improved access to local services. Most projects used the service provision (in many cases delivered by volunteers) to find out what other needs the beneficiaries have in order to develop new initiatives.

The role of partner organisations (at strategic level, or other service providers) is usually to signpost/refer beneficiaries to the project and vice versa.

Projects which are closest to Model 1 include:

- The Falkirk Advice Project
- Helping Hands;
- Horshader Rural Support and Connect project; and
- Growing Gardeners.
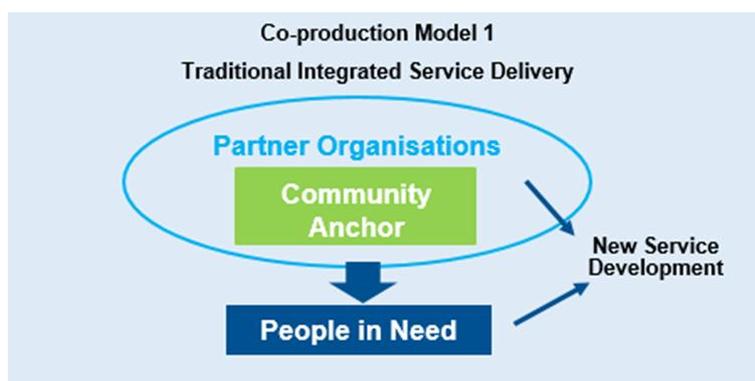


## Co-production Model 2: Focus on Employability and Skills Development

Model 2 engages with the target group beneficiaries more actively, by involving them in work placements and other training initiatives. The focus is on developing the skills sets of the target group individuals (which also includes volunteer development).

Usually, the recipients of the training are placed within the Community Anchor organisation or with other partner organisations.

The role of the partner organisations is to signpost/refer suitable candidates for the training/work placement and/or provide work placements in their organisation.

Projects which are closest to Model 2 include:

- EHRA Modern Housing Apprenticeships; and
- Volunteer Development.

## Co-production Model 3: Two Level Engagement

In Model 3, the partner organisations take on a more central role in the delivery of the project, involving them not only in providing work placements, but also in in-depth development support due to the multi-level needs of the specific target group.

PCF support worked at two levels, (1) through partner organisations gaining capacity and fulfilling their social policy remit, and (2) by supporting beneficiaries to gain employability and life skills.

PCF funding supported work placements in social enterprises (partner organisations) tapping into the social focus and nurturing environment of the social enterprise rationale in view of the multiple needs of the beneficiaries. The support benefits the beneficiaries as well as the social enterprises.



Projects which are closest to Model 3 include:

- Inspiring Locally Grown Employability in Argyll.

## Co-production Model 4: Social Inclusion and Employability Progression

In Model 4, the Community Anchor delivers services (e.g. food, advice) to beneficiaries in need and further engages them through a diversity of other activities to help them progress in their personal and employability development. Here, a particular focus is to encourage service users to become volunteers in the Community Anchor as part of their employability skills development.

The volunteers (previous service users themselves) will then engage directly with the next cohort of service users. In many projects, this progression has led previous service users to succesful employment or start up of their own social enterprise.

Projects which are closest to Model 4 include:

- AHEAD+;
- 20 More;
- Mentoring Transition Support Service; and
- Pathways to Learning.
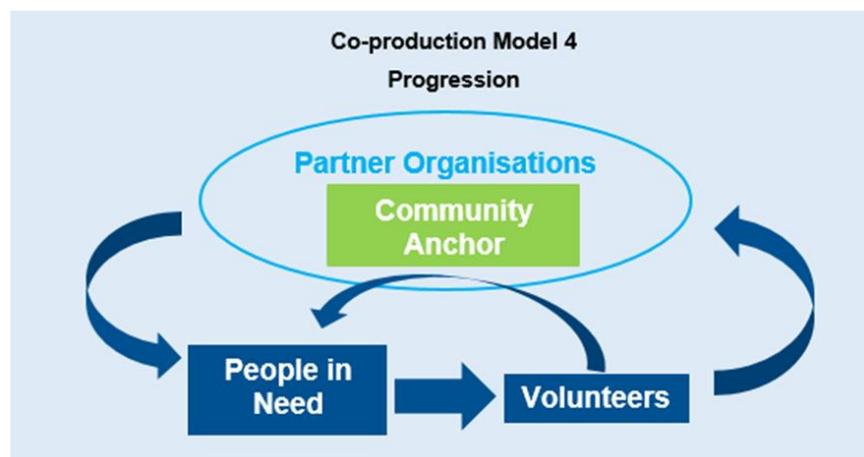
**Co-production Model 5: Double level integrated progression model**

Model 5 represents both Model 3 and 4 combined. Alongside delivering a diverse range of support services to the beneficiary groups, the Community Anchor maintains strong links with other strategic and local organisations.

The partner organisations offer work placements, volunteering places and have a strong self-interest in working with the Community Anchor through which they are enabled themselves to reach and work with the target groups (for example, to implement their Corporate Social Responsibilities policies or service improvement targets regarding social inclusion).

At the same time, the beneficiaries are progressing from service user to volunteer positions within the Community Anchor to progress their skills attainment, delivering mentoring to new service users, and progressing to employment or starting up their own social enterprise.

Projects which are closest to Model 5 include:

- Inspiring Transformation

Co-production Model 5
Double Integration Progression

Partner Organisations

Community Anchor

People in Need

Volunteers
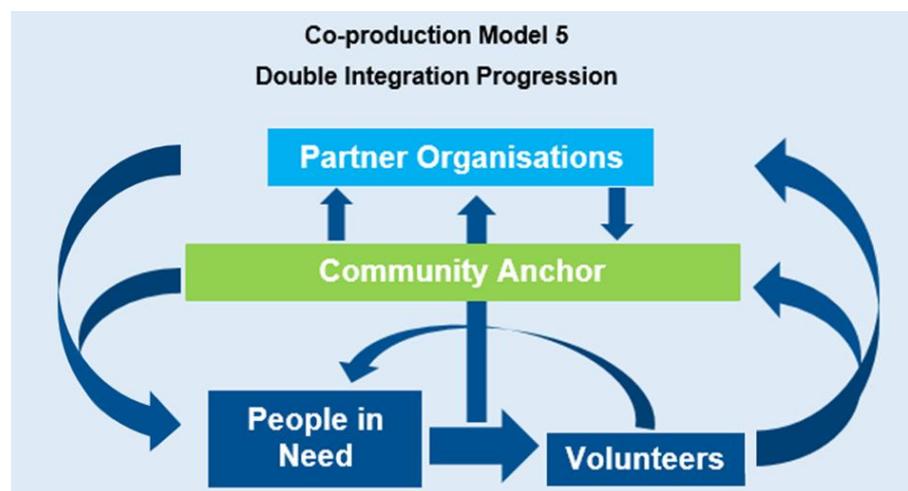
# 5. How Participants Benefited From the PCF Approach

## Introduction

This Chapter presents the key findings from the primary research at Programme level (i.e. the findings across all 12 projects), including some comparative qualitative analysis according to the different project themes, stakeholder groups and project models.

The findings were drawn from intensive workshop activity and individual telephone interviews with those who could not attend a workshop. The workshops incorporated group work so that experiences could be shared between the various stakeholders in a co-productive sense, but also enabled participants to tell their own learning journey and how they were able to have benefitted in the way they did (the workshop tools were chosen and designed by EKOS, bespoke to PCF and its projects).

The Chapter reports on the key findings only. Full primary research findings are presented in **Appendix C**.

## Developing in Community Engagement and Co-production

The study explored the extent to which the PCF approach had enabled stakeholders to further their community engagement/co-production activities with each other.

Each workshop included an interactive exercise whereby Community Anchor staff (including partner organisations) and beneficiaries were asked to identify which type of community engagement activities they had participated in in 2014 (taken as a baseline) and to identify those activities in which they are currently engaged in.

A Development Ladder design facilitated this group exercise. By filling in the various steps of the ladder, participants could see the extent to which they had developed their community-engagement and co-production capabilities over time, and distance travelled towards achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes. The importance of the exercise was in identifying progress made, not which step of the Development Ladder has been reached.
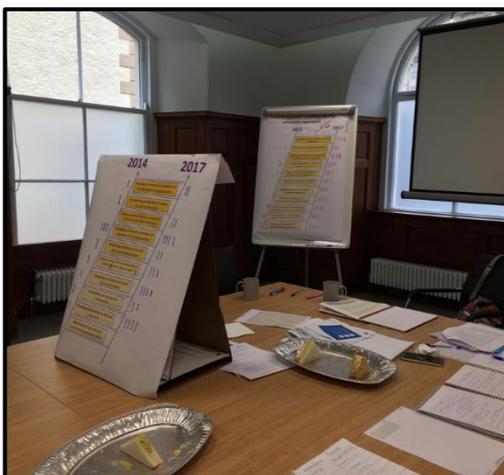


**Table 5.1** (over page), outlines the levels of co-production at 2014 (taken as a baseline), levels of co-production today (2017) and the level of change observed (low, medium, high) by participant group. This is presented for the 11 projects that have participated in this exercise according to their associated Co-production Model.

The findings of the Development Ladder exercise have been assessed in terms of the extent of progress made by the participants whereby staff and partners formed one group and the community members another group.

**Table 5.1: Levels of Co-production in 2014 and 2017 and Change Experienced**

| Model | Staff and partners | | | Community Members (Service Users and Volunteers) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 | 2017 | Change | 2014 | 2017 | Change |
| 1=Traditional | high | high | low | high | high | medium |
| 1=Traditional | medium | medium | medium | low | high[4] | medium |
| 1=Traditional | high | high | medium | n/a | n/a | low[5] |
| 2=Employability and Skills | medium | med/high | med/high | low | med/high | high |
| 2=Employability and Skills | medium | high | medium | low | high | medium |
| 3=Two level support | medium | medium | medium | low/med | high | high |
| 4=Progression | low | med/high | med/high | low | high | high |
| 4=Progression | high | high | high | low | high | medium |
| 4=Progression | high | high | low | medium | med/high | medium |
| 4=Progression | medium | medium | med/high | low | high | high |
| 5=Double progression | medium | med/high | med/high | medium | high | med/high |

Note should be taken that the assessment of Co-production development / change was also based on the pattern across the ladder regarding the number of participants indicating progress at different levels each. This resulted at times in a higher or lower score regarding the development over time – this cannot be shown on this table and an average score was therefore applied.

The table shows that the extent of community engagement was fairly mixed for Community Anchor staff and partner organisations and either stayed the same or increased slightly until 2017. At times, although the level of engagement stayed the same, some projects were able to increase the intensity of their engagement with the target groups (reflected in a 'high' or 'med/high' score).

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[4] High impact in co-production development due to quality of community anchor delivery and engagement

[5] Exercise not undertaken, assessment by researcher observations

The table further shows that there has been clear positive change across the board for community members, with almost all projects achieving positive change and an increased scale of community-engagement since 2014.

The type of co-production model does not appear to have an effect on the extent of change achieved in community-engagement, as no clear pattern emerges.

## Perceived Achievements

It was important to capture the perceptions of participants regarding their achievement, i.e. what they felt were their key benefits and effects from participation in their respective project. Community Anchor staff, partner organisations, and community members (service users and volunteers[6]) were asked to identify their immediate associations with the PCF project and what it has meant to them.

Each participant was given time to think about their achievements before the findings were shared with the group. This encouraged the group to reflect on their outcomes, which often triggered further recognition of achievements gained from project engagement. Answers were grouped into common themes and aggregated.



The 'Ketso' workshop facilitiation method was used as outlined in **Appendix A**.

The most commonly identified achievements were broadly similar across all three participant groups, with more friends, increased community involvement, new skills and improved relationships the most common.

Looking at the findings by participant group, it shows that community members were the most likely to identify improved confidence and skills, whilst partners most often identified expanded services and improved relationships as their key achievements. **Figure 5.1** presents the detailed findings.

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[6] Volunteers were grouped with the service users (representing beneficiaries), while partner organisations were grouped with Community Anchor staff (representing delivery agents)

# Figure 5.1: Outcomes identified[7] by Participant Type
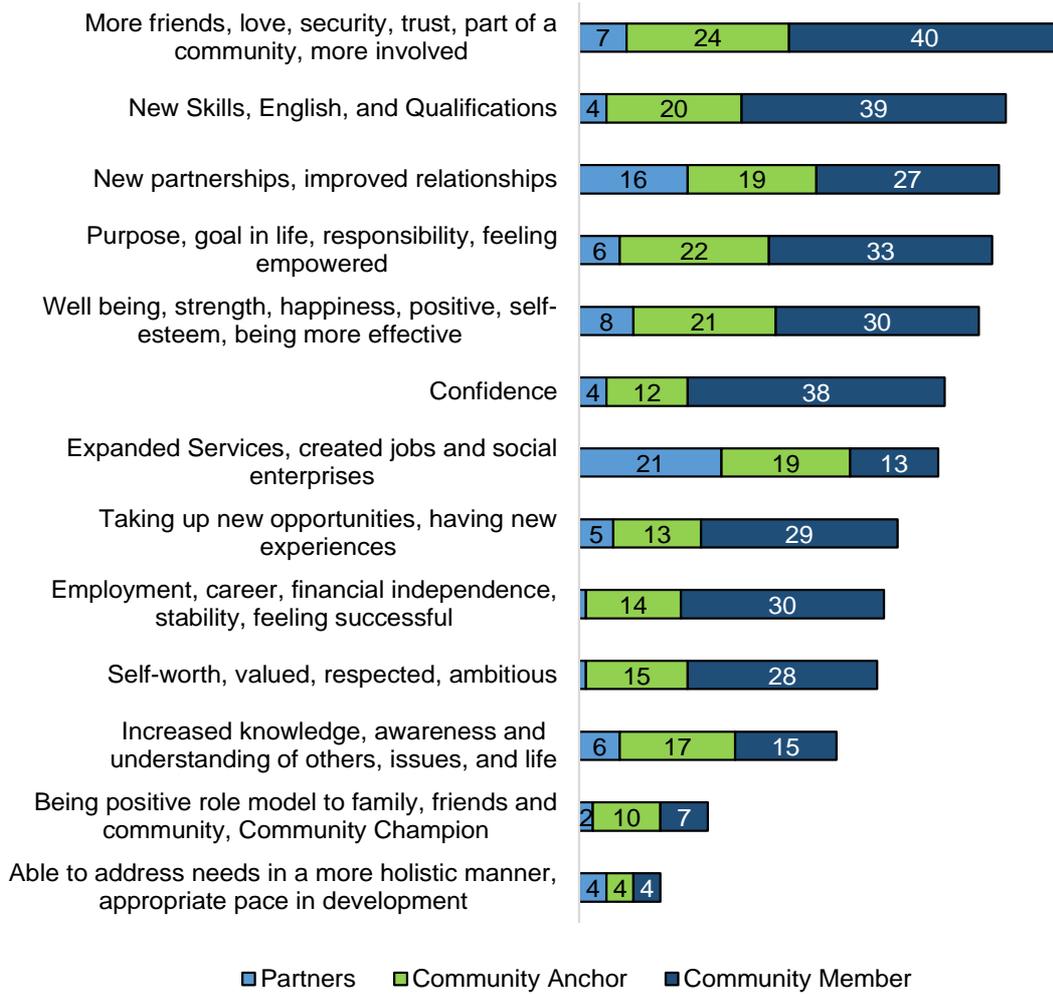


Partners N=19, Community Anchors N=34, Community Members N=56

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[7] Participants identified a number of outcomes according to their personal experience at this stage. Therefore, the numbers in the graph do not equal the number of participants.

## Unexpected Results

Workshop participants were also asked to identify any outcomes that they had not expected to emerge through PCF project engagement. The three stakeholder groups reported the following (in no particular order):

### Partner Organisations

- Realising that anything is achievable with effective partnership working, there is always a solution; increased knowledge and confidence; developed new relationships with staff/volunteers.

- Growing confidence not only in beneficiaries but also in staff; people realising their abilities.

### Community Anchor Staff

- Positive impact on my family and my children – they are more ambitious; more inclined to volunteer themselves.

- New energy in offices; positive feedback from participants; Investor in Young People accreditation.

- Increased partnership working; strengthening relationships between Community Anchor and the wider community; learnt more about the area; witnessed greater cohesion throughout all activities and services; seeing people learn new skills and applying them; new friendships.

- Showcase different skills and cultures; the achievements and sense of pride developed by the young people involved with the project; the enjoyment of working in schools (when I didn't think I would).

- Becoming more sensitive to the needs of others ; improving people's English; tourists now visit our shop; the garden; Kids Enterprise; mentally ill people giving a sense of belonging; doll making enterprise.

### Community members/beneficiaries

- Made new friends; having a less stressful lifestyle since becoming involved; my confidence has been boosted; more aware of everything that the community organisation is offering.

- Found a sense of purpose; enjoying helping others; developed new friendships/relationships; developed new skills; improved access to expanding local services.

- Being better able to cope, getting compliments, realising that I am valued.

- Positive impact on family and children – following the good example of their mum or dad or carer, family members of service users are more ambitious; more inclined to volunteer themselves.

## Detailed Outcomes at Programme level

The final session focused on exploring further detail of the learning journeys of each PCF participant.

The emphasis was to identify in greater detail how and why the previously identified outcomes were achieved, what enabled participants to succeed? Working in pairs, alone or supported by a study team member (if preferred), participants used mini interviews to help them through this exercise.

This part of the workshop was most closely aligned with the requirements of the Realist Evaluation approach used in this study.



Following the workshop, the learning journeys described by the participants were coded into Realist Evaluation terminology of Context/ Mechanism/ Outcomes (please see Glossary for explanation of these terms).
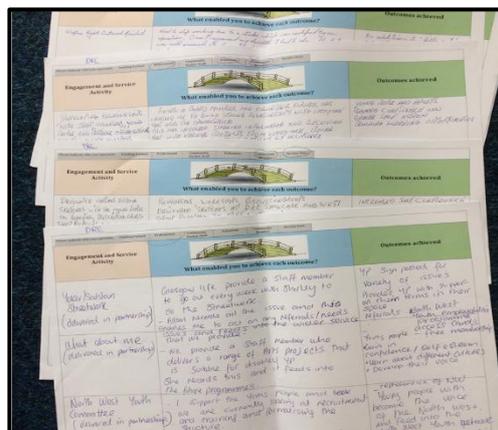
**Contexts**

In Realist Evaluation, contexts are the type of activities engaged with, services received/delivered including the quality in terms of one-to-one or group settings (the study looked at all three participant groups and their experiences, therefore findings include the perspective of those engaged in service delivery as well as those receiving the service).

The contexts which interviewees most commonly experienced were generally around the initial stages of project engagement, such as **being made to feel welcomed**, completing a **needs assessment**, being able to **review needs assessments** throughout the engagement, and **being pro-actively encouraged** to **contribute through volunteering**, and **to take up opportunities and training**.

Community members were most likely to experience social contexts such as **being made to feel welcome** and **being able to socialise and network**. Community anchor staff emphasised the greater levels of **opportunities** and **diversity of services** which they were able to offer, whilst partners identified **awareness raising and co-delivery opportunities**, **Figure 5.2**.

**Figure 5.2: % Experiencing Each Context by Participant Type**
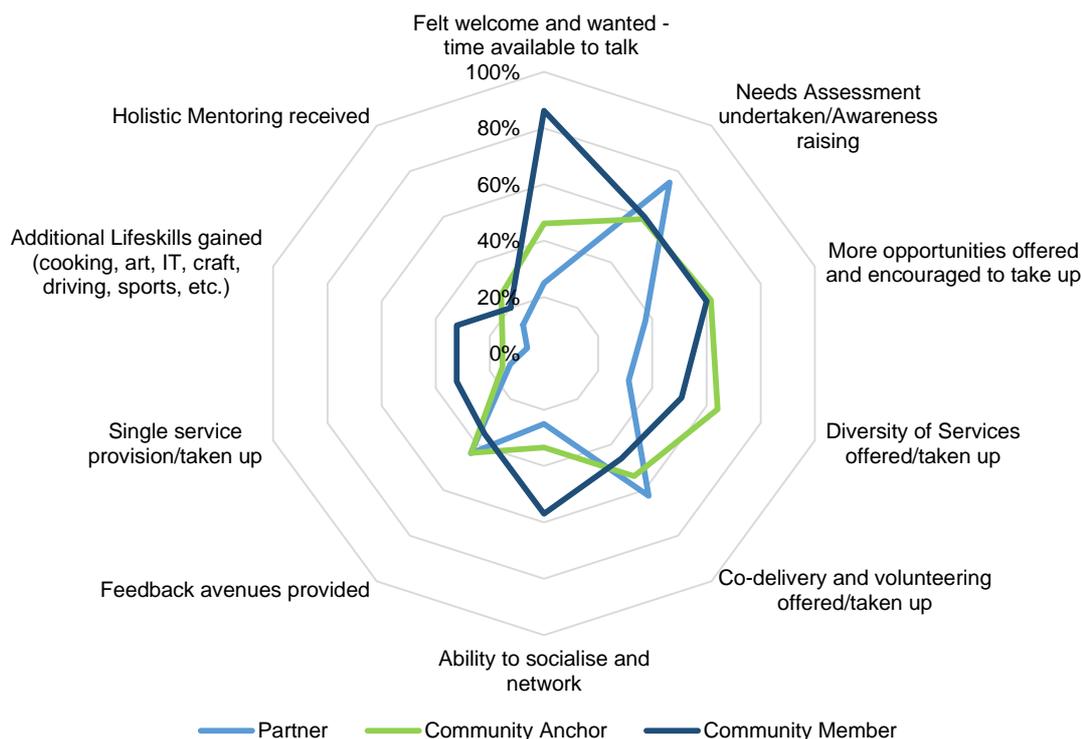


Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

As presented in **Appendix C**:

With regard to the project themes; training and upskilling, and advice/support services projects have more identified contexts than volunteering and mentoring projects.

In terms of the models of co-production; workshop participants were more likely to identify contexts the higher up the co-production ladder they were, particularly with regard to the social contexts such as being made to feel welcome and socialising.

**Short-Term Outcomes**

The logical sequence of the Realist Evaluation approach is looking at Contexts 'firing' Mechanisms that lead to Outcomes. However, for practical reasons and ease of working with this approach, following the identification of contexts, workshop participants were first asked to consider the outcomes that they have experienced. This linked directly to the previous exercise. Now the outcomes had to be attributed to the different contexts the participants had identified. The differentiation between short-term and long-term outcomes was made by the research team during the coding of the collected information according to ToC specification.

Community members are the most likely to identify an **increase in skills**, **knowledge or understanding** and **improved aspirations**, whilst partners identified **increased engagement**, **improved connectedness** and **better partnership working** as key outcomes, **Figure 5.3**.

**Figure 5.3: % Experiencing Each Short-Term Outcome by Participant Type**
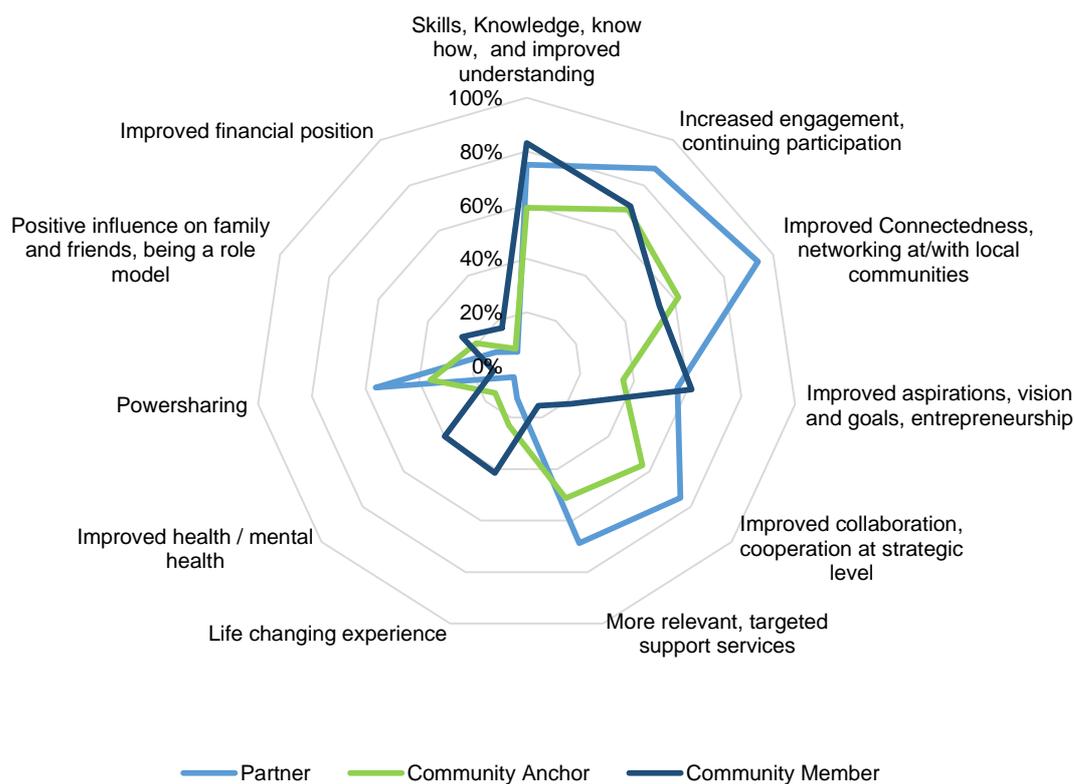


Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

As presented in **Appendix C**:

When a project delivered training and upskilling activities there was a greater level of short-term outcomes reported regarding an increase in skills, knowledge and understanding, increased engagement, and life changing experiences.

There is a clear difference between the different models of co-production, with traditional methods having a relatively low-level of short-term outcomes and the two level support and double progression models having a higher level.

**Long-Term Outcomes**

In general, a lower level of long-term outcomes were identified than short term-outcomes, which is unsurprising given that long-term outcomes by their nature take longer to evolve.

The most common outcomes identified by community members were **improved well-being** and **improved life chances** whilst for partners, **improved social capital** and **more sustainable and improved service provisions** were more prevalent. The two positive effects on service provision were also the most frequently mentioned long-term outcomes for the Community Anchors, **Figure 5.4**.

**Figure 5.4: % Experiencing Each Long-Term Outcome by Participant Type**
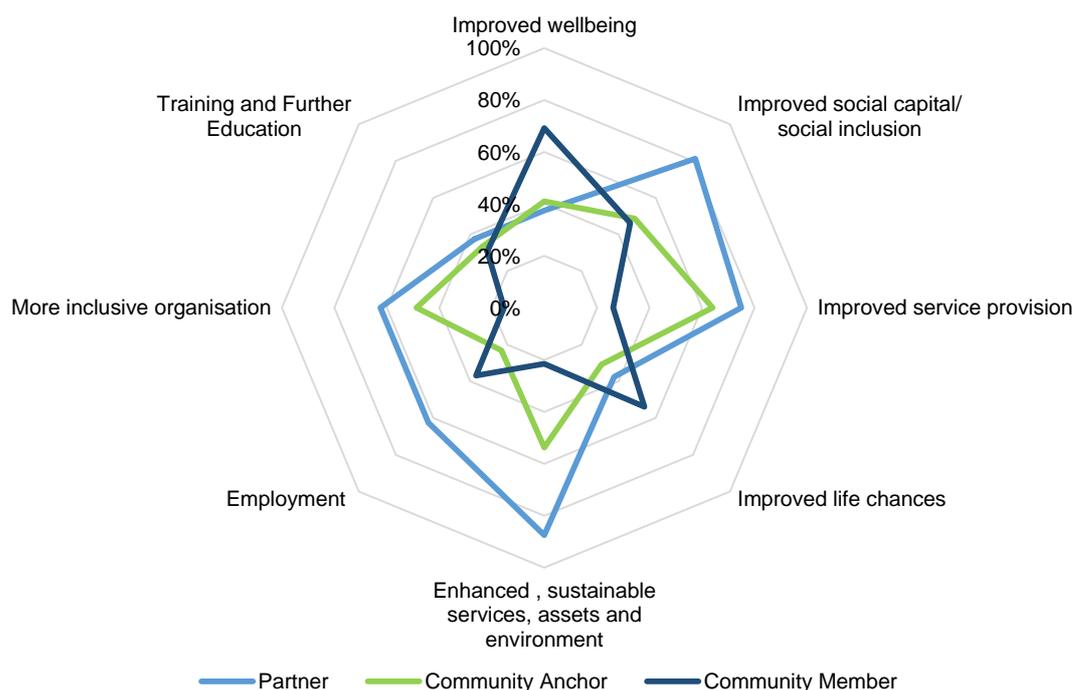


Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

As presented in **Appendix C**:

In projects focusing on delivering advice and support generally the fewest long-term outcomes were identified, but with strengths in improved service provision and improved social capital being readily apparent. In projects focusing on training and upskilling generally had the highest level of long-term outcomes with improved wellbeing, improved life chances and employment being the most common.

With regard to the co-production models; similar to short-term outcomes, the traditional model (Model 1) sees comparatively few long-term outcomes, whilst the two level support and double progression models have the largest impact, particularly on employment and improved social capital.

**Mechanisms**

In Realist Evaluation, mechanisms are the psychological responses of the participants' to the changes experienced as a consequence of engaging in the activities and services delivered. In this sense, the workshop participants were asked to consider how they thought the project/activity engagement enabled them to achieve the outcomes they have identified. For example, attending a training course does not necessarily lead to a achieving a successful outcome.

For all three participant groups together, the top two identified mechanisms were **trust/relationship building**, and **belonging/connectedness**. In addition, for community members, other commonly identified mechanisms concerned personal development, such as **confidence, self-esteem, self-worth** and **pride**.

Additional strong mechanisms for partners included **ownership**, **reciprocity** and **sense of influence**. For community anchors, **trust/relationship building** and **belonging/connectedness** were the key mechanisms identified by the majority, **Figure 5.5**.

## Figure 5.5: % Experiencing Each Mechanism by Participant Type



Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

As presented in **Appendix C**:

Projects focusing on training and upskilling, and volunteering and mentoring generally experienced a greater level of identified mechanisms than projects delivering advice / support services, particularly around issues such as pride, ownership, empowerment and self-esteem.

By co-production model: we can broadly see a greater level of mechanisms experienced as we move from the traditional model to models with greater levels of co-production, with the two level support and double progression models identifiying a greater variety of mechanisms.

# Summary Findings by Stakeholder Group

This section summarises the findings from the above diagrams and presents the experienced contexts, outcomes and changes by participant groups.

**Contexts, Outcomes and Mechanisms reported by Partner Organisations:**

**The majority of participants representing partner organisations identified the following manner in which the PCF approach worked for them:**

**Providing context through:**

- Awareness raising; and
- Improved co-delivery/offering volunteering opportunities.

**Achieving outcomes:**

- Improved connectedness, networking with local communities;
- Increased engagement;
- Improved collaborations and co-operation at strategic level;
- Offering more relevant, targeted support services
- Enhanced sustainable service provision;
- Improved performance regarding social inclusion;
- Being a more inclusive organisation; and
- Employment gains.

**Enabling positive mechanisms in areas such as:**

- Increased trust and relationships;
- Increased ownership and commitment;
- Reciprocity;
- Sense of influence; and
- Achieving a sense of making a difference.

**Contexts, Outcomes and Mechanisms reported by Community Anchor staff:**

**The PCF approach worked for the majority of participants representing the Community Anchors in the following manner:**

**Providing context through:**

- Offering a diversity of services; and
- Offering more opportunities.

**Achieving outcomes:**

- Improved connectedness, networking with local communities;
- Increased engagement; and
- Improved service provision.

**Enabling positive mechanisms in areas such as:**

- Increased trust and relationships; and
- Sense of influence.

**Contexts, Outcomes and Mechanisms reported by volunteers and beneficiaries:**

**The majority of participants representing community members (service users and volunteers) identified the following manner in which the PCF approach worked for them:**

**Contextual environment:**

- Feeling welcomed and wanted;
- Being able to socialise and network; and
- Being encouraged to take up opportunities.

**Achieving outcomes:**

- Improved skills, knowledge and know-how and understanding;
- Improved aspirations, vision and goals, entrepreneurship; and
- Improved wellbeing.

**Enabling positive mechanisms in areas such as:**

- Increased trust and relationships;
- Improved confidence;
- Improved self-esteem; and
- Increased pride.

# 6. Theory of Change and What Lies at the Heart of PCF Implementation

## Introduction

**Chapter 6** presents findings from two ToC workshops and the Realist analysis of the mini interview data which were captured at the project workshops.

In Realist Evaluation, 'mechanisms' contribute to, or cause, outcomes. Contexts (including intervention activities and strategies) are believed to 'fire' mechanisms. As such, contexts do not influence outcomes directly and independently, but through the firing of 'mechanisms'. The Glossary at the end of the report provides further detail. The aim of Realist Analysis is therefore to identify and refine specific Context, Mechanisms and Outcome Configurations (CMO-Cs).

> **CMO-C example: participating in a bespoke training course (context), meant the beneficiary felt the course content and delivery methods were relevant (mechanism) to their goals, so motivating them (mechanism) to complete all of the course and achieve a qualification (Outcome).**

This chapter deals predominantly with attempts at refining learning about what were important underlying mechanisms linked to the most frequently reported outcomes. On this basis, a small number of CMO-Cs are developed to demonstrate some of the core mechanisms and their relationships to outcomes and contexts of the PCF. As such, this Chapter should not be seen as the main learning about the impact of the overall PCF approach but as providing a partial explanation as to why the outcomes described in **Chapter 5** have occurred, reinforcing these findings and informing the conclusions and recommendations.

An outline of the Programme's ToC and Realist approaches is detailed in **Chapter 2** and **Appendix A**. These approaches were requested by the Scottish Government to identify and refine the theories and assumptions underpinning the PCF.

The theory-driven approaches included the following research and design activity:

- A Research Advisory Group workshop took place before the fieldwork which clarified the original PCF ToC, agreed underlying assumptions and identified the key contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of interest to the review;

- These key contexts, mechanisms and outcomes informed the design of the overall review, coding framework and analysis;

- The learning from the workshop focused the research on early (rather than longer-term) outcomes achieved for anchor organisations and staff as well as beneficiaries;

- The workshop process identified co-production as the most important context – this led to the design and use of specific research tools (the development ladders and the mini interviews); and

- A second workshop was conducted after the fieldwork to present findings and consider how these should be incorporated into a revised ToC.

# Figure 6.1: Original Theory of Change

| Inputs | Outputs | | Change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Activities | Participation | Learning | Action | Leaning and actions contribute to positive and sustainable 'outcomes' |
| People in the community's knowledge, time and reflections on lived experiences<br><br>Community anchor organisation forms and structures (for community member involvement e.g. panels, forums, community board members etc.)<br><br>Community anchor organisation resources<br><br>Partners and professionals' expertise and time<br><br>Partners' Strategies for community engagement that makes clear the aims, objectives and outcomes deriving from activity<br><br>PCF Funding (accessed directly by community anchors) | Community anchor works with people in the community to identify the issues in need of addressing using: surveys, focus groups, public meetings, informal methods and so on. (Engagement)<br><br>Community anchor works with local and national delivery partners and people in the community to decide what should be done about the issues; using workshops, meetings, study visits and so on. (Co-production)<br><br>Community anchor takes responsibility to deliver the action identified; using management of initiatives, ongoing community feedback and so on (Co-delivery). | A cross section of people from the 'community'<br><br>Community anchor organisation<br><br>People in the community who are beneficiaries of services (don't necessarily participate until 'action' phase)<br><br>Local and national delivery partners, ideally including community planning partner involvement.<br><br>Professionals | People in the community gain understanding of:<br>- local area<br>- other community members<br>- ways to participate<br>- professional culture<br>- potential influence<br><br>People in the community are motivated to:<br>- think about local issues and solutions<br>- engage<br>- participate<br>- communicate<br>- aspire<br><br>People in the community gain skills including:<br>- confidence<br>- communication skills<br>- engagement skills<br><br>Community Anchors, CPPs and Professionals gain improved understanding of:<br>- community issues<br>- local context<br>- community priorities<br>- the value of community-led work<br>- potential solutions<br>- what works and what doesn't | People in the community:<br>- participate<br>- make social connections<br>- develop their skills<br>- access services<br>- support each other<br>- respect and trust each other and professionals<br>- co-operate with professionals<br>- influence decisions<br><br>Community Anchors, Partners and professionals:<br>- co-operate with community members<br>- respect and trust community members<br>- share or give away power to community members<br>- enable/facilitate community members' participation<br>- develop their skills<br>- respond to community members' needs and priorities<br>-change their working practices<br><br>People in the community benefit from:<br>- increased range of accessible services<br>- increased co-ordination of services<br>- improved access to services<br>- improved management of services<br>- potentially increased ownership and management of community assets | Tackling Poverty<br>- People have improved life chances<br>- People have improved wellbeing<br><br>Social Inclusion<br>People in the community:<br>- are empowered<br>- are resilient<br>- have social capital<br>-have sense of belonging<br><br>- Barriers to participation are removed<br><br>- Community is cohesive<br>- Community is inclusive<br><br>- People live in healthy environments<br>- People live in safe environments<br>- People have access to quality services<br>- People have access to quality facilities<br>-People have access to sustainable services and facilities for the long-term |

# ToC Assumptions and Realist Contexts Mechanisms and Outcomes

The initial PCF ToC was the focus of the first workshop and is presented in **Figure 6.1** (above).

The key underlying ToC assumptions and learning from the workshop were:

- An acknowledgement that the population/community needs assessments conducted by PCF projects were most likely completed prior to or as part of the PCF application process rather than post funding;

- Re-affirming that co-production was a necessary programme ingredient/activity and a 'unique selling point' of PCF (and indeed a pre-defined condition for funding);

- The process of co-production would bring benefits for all stakeholders, i.e. Community Anchors, staff, partner organisations, and beneficiaries;

- Tailoring support /services on the basis of beneficiaries' needs was expected as part of the co-production process to develop bespoke /personalised support or services;

- The PCF approach requires a long timeframe to achieve significant target population impact within and across funded projects, given the focus on our most disadvantaged communities. As such the research focused on short-term outcomes for Community Anchor organisations and beneficiaries who had sustained engagement with the PCF project;

- PCF is primarily a catalyst for improvements in Community Anchor organisations, their co-production processes and the development of bespoke/tailored and ideally sustainable services;

- The services enabled by PCF may in time be scaled-up and/or support the partners such as the Community Planning Partnership (e.g. via Service Level Agreements);

- The initial ToC model had not separated anticipated programme mechanisms from outcomes. This was done following the first workshop to help the study address the realist questions of 'why' change had /had not occurred; and

- PCF underpins the ethos of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

**Table 6.1** highlights examples of the priority contexts, mechanisms and outcomes identified at the first ToC workshop. These were generated as independent lists rather than linked CMO-Cs.

**Table 6.1: Examples of PCF ToC Priority Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes**

| Contexts | Mechanisms | Outcomes | Negative/unintended outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Target groups** Whole community, BME communities, young people, rural communities | **Beneficiary** Confidence, self-worth, perception of control, pride | **Beneficiary** Knowledge and skills, employability, improved finances, social/networks capital, wellbeing | **Beneficiary** Isolation, dependent |
| **Theme** Training, advice & support | **Staff/Partner/ organisation** Trust, legitimacy, reciprocity | **Staff/Partner organisation** Skills, improved: partnerships, motivation | **Staff/Partner organisation** Overstretched, demotivated, cynical |
| **Type of Community Anchor.** Development Trust, Registered Social Landlord, Social Enterprise, Voluntary Sector | **Volunteer** Achievement, fulfilment | **Volunteer** As for beneficiaries | **Volunteer** De-motivated |
| **Community Anchor characteristics** Experience level, co-production process/ experience, volunteer support, extent of service tailoring | **Community Anchor** Reputation | **Community Anchor** Improved: engagement, collaboration, sustainability | **Community Anchor** Overstretched, conflicted |

The coding framework and all research tools were, therefore, developed to uncover learning about changes in a range of anticipated short-term outcomes - those in Community Anchors, partner organisations and engaged beneficiaries, and to investigate the mechanisms and linked contexts most likely to have contributed to the achievement of these outcomes.

## Evolving Realist theories /CMO-C's

Realist Evaluation is interested in why, as well as whether, an intervention works, and in why it works in some contexts and not in others (e.g. for some people in certain situations and not others). In order to understand why an intervention does or doesn't work realist analysis follows a particular sequence of steps:

- first, outcomes are established;
- then, mechanisms that are present when outcomes are or are not achieved are identified; and
- finally, the contexts associated with those mechanisms that have contributed to the desired outcomes are explored.

This learning is then used where feasible to establish/refine more specific CMO-Cs.

**Frequently Reported Outcomes and Mechanisms**

The most frequent outcomes reported across all participants (n=120) - those reported by more than half (n=60) - are shown in blue on the right-hand side of **Figure 6.2** (over page). Those outcomes bordered by red were also the most commonly reported by beneficiaries (n=65). Those with green text were the most commonly reported by Community Anchor staff (n=39).

**Figure 6.2** also presents the most commonly reported mechanisms (independent of outcomes) across all participants – those reported by more than half of participants (n=60) are shown in in yellow. Again, red borders and green text indicate mechanisms most commonly reported by sub groups – beneficiaries and anchor staff respectively.

The other mechanisms shown in **Figure 6.2** represent those relatively less commonly reported overall – these have no fill or border colour. It should be noted that these were still recorded by many participants (although less than half) and some were more strongly linked to specific outcomes than those mechanisms most commonly reported independent of outcomes. They have, therefore, still contributed to outcomes.

**Interpreting Figure 6.2**

**The outcome of 'Improved skills, knowledge and undertsanding' was reported by more than half of all participants (coloured blue). Broken down by participant group, this outcome was also reported by more than half of the beneficiaries (bordered in red) and more than half of the Community Anchor staff (green text).**

**By comparison the outcome of 'Improved aspiration' was reported by more than half of overall participants. Broken down by participant group, the colour codes show that more than half of the beneficiaries experienced this outcome, but a smaller proportion of Community Anchor staff.**

**Similarly the mechanism of 'pride' was reported by more than half of all participants. Broken down by participant group, this was also reported by more than half of the beneficiaries but by less Community Anchor staff.**

**However, the mechansim of 'belonging/connectedness' was reported by more than half of all participants and more than half of each of the sub groups - beneficiaries as well as Community Anchor staff.**

# Figure 6.2: Frequently Reported Outcomes and Mechanisms
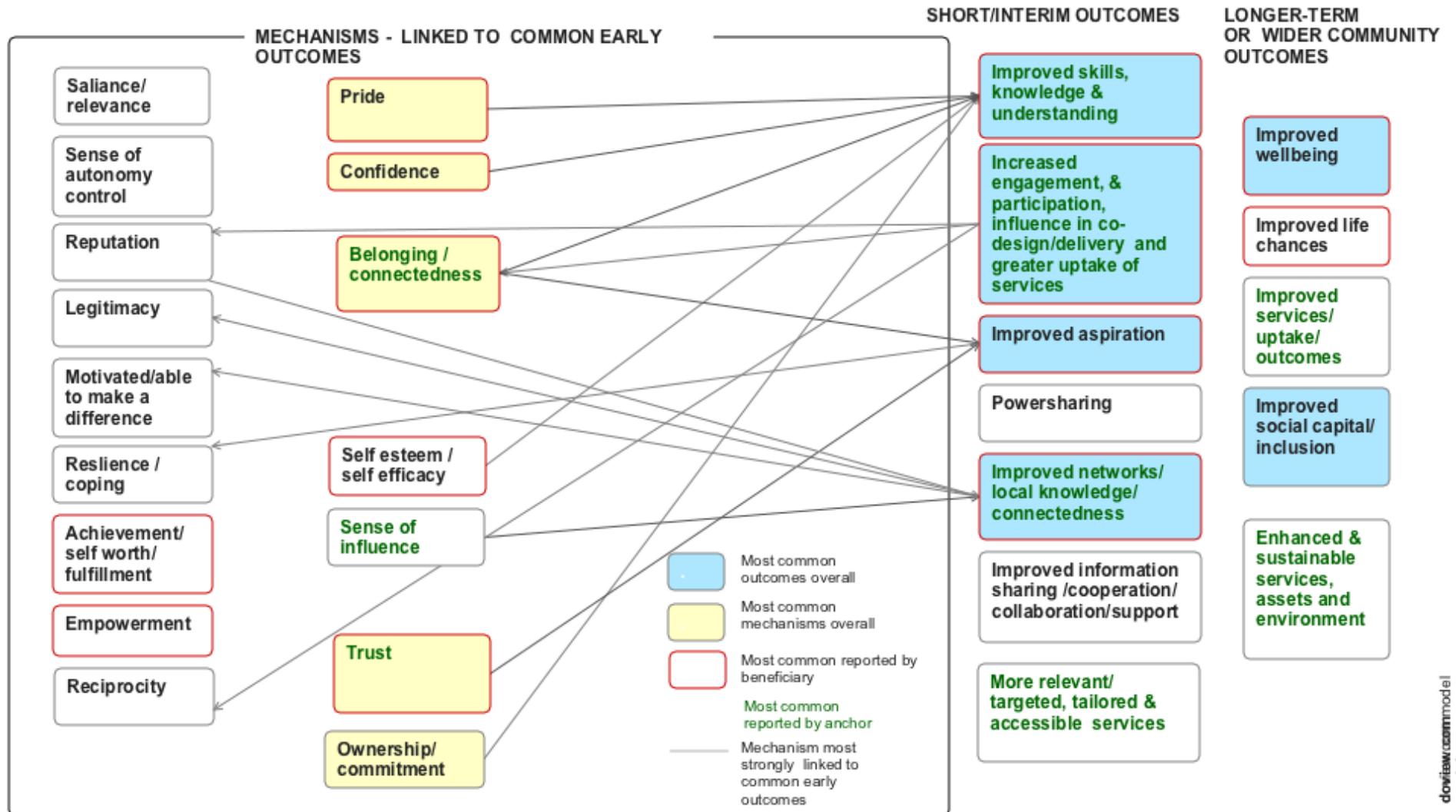
## Mechanisms associated with Commonly Reported Short/Interim Outcomes

Further analysis focused on the mechanisms most strongly associated with the commonly reported short/intermediate outcomes (from all participants). **Figure 6.2** shows via arrows the mechanisms most often reported when specific common outcomes were recorded as 'present' compared to 'not present'[8].

> **By way of an example, when participants reported the outcome of 'improved skills, knowledge and undertsanding' they were more likely to report feeling pride, confidence, self esteem and trust than any other mechansims.**

Subsequent analysis (where possible) identified the mechanisms most strongly linked to the commonly reported outcomes by the sub groups (beneficiaries and Community Anchor Staff) as well as overall participants – using the same method. Figures illustrating these associations are contained in **Appendix D**. Again, other mechanisms on all of the models may contribute to the short-term outcomes but not as strongly as those linked.

## Contexts Most Frequently Reported in Relation to Common Mechanisms

Context data were recorded from the mini interviews. These interviews were used to uncover participants' personal journeys, their feelings and experiences about aspects of PCF project processes. An analysis similar to that conducted for the links between mechanisms and outcomes was undertaken to assess the frequency of the project contexts that were present when the four most common mechanisms (belonging, pride, confidence and trust) were.

**Table D.3** in **Appendix D** shows the results of the above analysis. The areas highlighted show where the highest levels of reporting for each of the measures conducted was found.

The key findings of the analysis presented in the Appendix D (Table D.3) are summarised below in **Table 6.2** (over page):

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[8] This judgement was made not based on the frequency that the mechanisms were reported when the outcome was present or the difference in frequency between the outcome present and not present but on the difference after the figures were adjusted for the respective population sizes. This accounted for the fact that when an outcome was frequently reported the number of participants in the 'outcome not present' population were substantially smaller that the 'outcome present' population.

**Table 6.2: Most frequently reported contexts of the four common mechanisms**

| Common Mechanism | Most frequently reported Contexts |
|---|---|
| Trust | 'Trust' was experienced where a detailed assessment of needs was conducted, where people felt welcomed, had time to talk and where an opportunity to network and socialise was given. |
| Belonging | 'Belonging' was experienced where a detailed assessment of the community member's needs was conducted and more opportunities were offered or encouraged. The ability to socialise/network and the provision of feedback may also be important for 'belonging'. |
| Pride | 'Pride' was experienced when people felt welcomed and had been given time to talk as well as having a needs assessment and the ability to socialise/network. |
| Confidence | The contexts associated with 'confidence' are a needs assessment and having/being encouraged to take up more opportunities as well as the diverse services being offered and taken up. |

The most consistently associated contexts across the range of mechanisms were:

- The range of 'opportunities on offer/encouraged';
- A 'needs assessment offered';
- Being 'made welcome/having time to talk'; and
- 'Opportunities to network and socialise'.

Provision of feedback was associated with belonging but not consistently with the other frequently reported mechanisms.

The context of 'co-delivery and volunteering' was reported as a frequent context in relation to belonging and pride based on simple frequencies but not consistently across all the measures or across other common mechanisms on which we focused. However, the responses to the development ladders reported in Chapter 5 clearly indicate that many Community Anchors were already experienced across several areas of engagement and co-production whilst many beneficiaries reported progression upwards on the ladders, thereby demonstrating the positive contribution of the community-led approach.

The contexts most frequently associated with the common mechanisms illustrate that the strengths of PCF projects are their bespoke/personalised support leading to tailored opportunities from a wide range of services. The findings from the group work in the workshops reinforce this learning.

## Validation and Revision of the Theory of Change

The Realist Analysis and ToC workshops reinforced findings detailed in **Chapter 5**. Together the findings have confirmed or refined several aspects of the initial PCF

ToC in relation to activities and outcomes as well as associated mechanisms and contexts.

**The timing of community needs assessments**

Assessments of population/target group needs for developing key services were conducted prior to PCF funding. However, many projects provided ongoing assessment of the needs of their beneficiaries as part of delivering person-focused services. This was delivered throughout the PCF implementation period.

**Anticipated PCF outcomes**

All participant groups (Community Anchor staff, beneficiaries and partner organisations) reported many positive outcomes from PCF. The **most commonly** reported outcomes were:

- Improved skills, knowledge and understanding (overall and for Community Anchor staff and beneficiaries);

- Increased engagement and participation, influence in co-design, delivery and greater uptake of services (overall and for anchor staff and beneficiaries);

- Improved networks/local knowledge and connectedness (overall and for anchor staff);

- Improved aspiration (overall and for beneficiaries);

- These outcomes were all anticipated as part of the learning, action changes or sustainable actions in the original ToC; and

- Anticipated long-term outcomes such as improved well-being & social capital were also commonly reported overall, and improved life chances reported by beneficiaries specifically.

The above adds support for these 'claims' in the initial theory.

**Underlying mechanisms**

The initial ToC also mentioned anticipated changes in confidence, trust and inclusion/belonging. These were confirmed by the research. They are shown in the revised ToC as commonly reported mechanisms associated with the key outcomes listed above.

**Key contexts**

The initial workshop re-affirmed that co-production was a necessary programme ingredient/activity and a 'unique selling point' of PCF. Co-delivery/volunteering was not one of the most consistent or common contexts highlighted by the Realist Analysis. It was, however, reported by more than half of participants and the evidence from the development ladders and project level data suggest that co-production (or elements thereof) were present in all projects studied. Many participants had strengthened their skills/experience in co-production through

involvement in PCF funded initiatives. A number of models are presented in Chapter 3 to show the various approaches used.

The most frequent/consistently reported contexts along with reported outcomes such as 'improved social capital', 'developing networks and connectedness' all align with the wider elements of co-production (e.g. building on assets and doing this for and with people, and tailoring support) detailed in the community engagement standards/continuum of co-production shown earlier in this report.

**The revised Theory of Change**

The revised ToC has incorporated the above learning and is shown in **Figure 6.3** (over page).

The revised version has separated out mechanisms of change (illustrated in the initial ToC as learning, or behaviour changes) and highlights the most common mechanism operating within PCF as well as the key outcomes achieved.

The key activities have also been revised in line with research evidence.

## Figure 6.3: Revised Theory of Change

Arrows have been added showing specific links between activities (contexts) and mechanisms that were evidenced by the research. The arrow for activities are grey/dashed to differentiate where they overlap. The arrows linking outcomes to influencing mechanism are coloured according to the outcomes to which they relate.
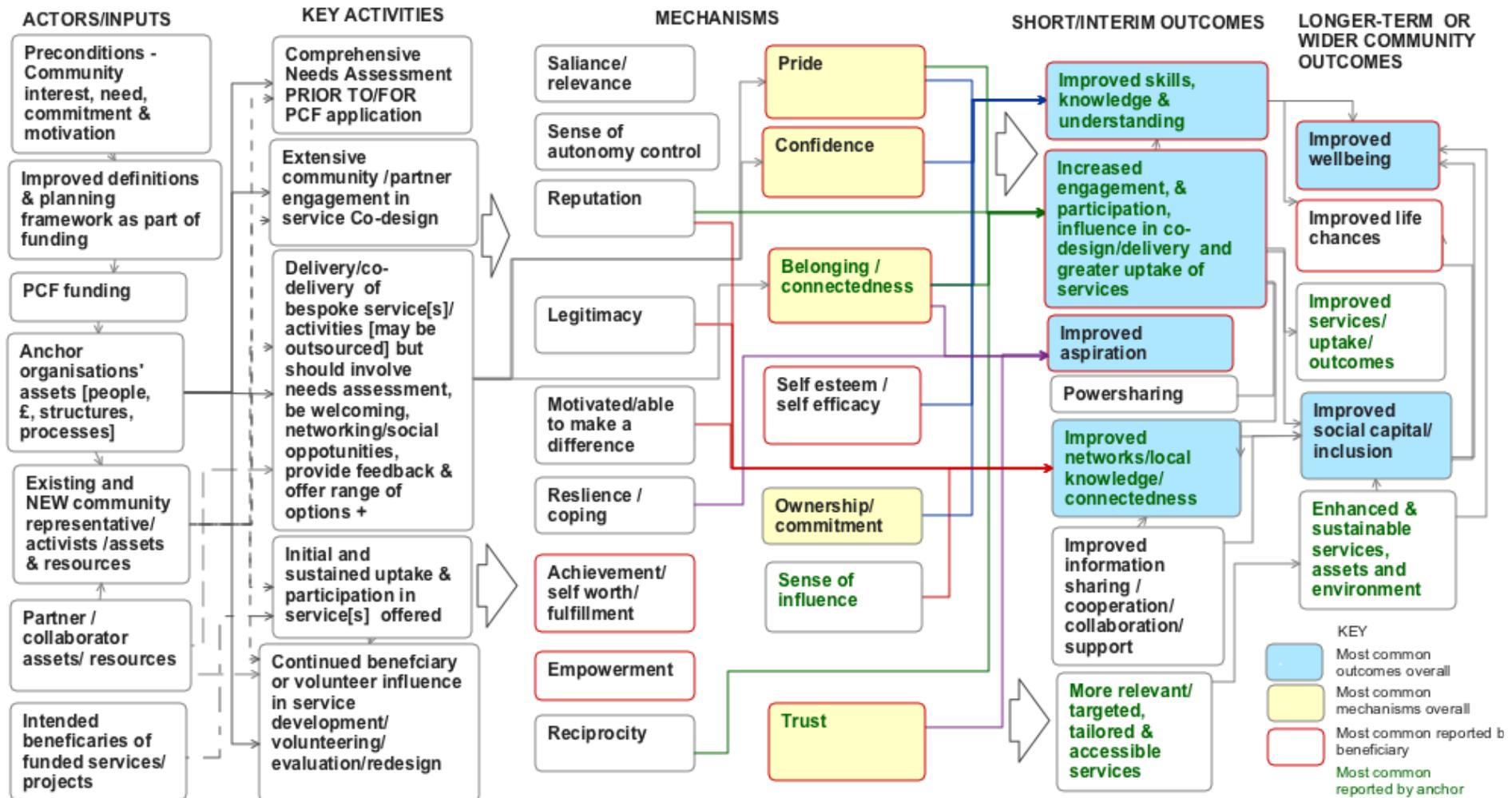
# Lessons for Future Support Programmes

The range of positive outcomes reported indicates that engagement and co-production are associated with benefits from PCF implementation for Community Anchors, partner organisations and beneficiaries.

The Realist Analysis highlighted some of the strongest relationships between service provision (aspects of context), changes that were experienced by most PCF stakeholders and outcomes achieved suggesting that if certain contexts can fire certain mechanisms, then positive outcomes can be achieved.

The following tables highlight where the Realist Analysis has contributed to developing more specific CMO-Cs rather than links between mechanisms and outcomes or context and mechanisms independently as detailed above. CMO-Cs are where theories are described in more detail in terms of a context triggering a mechanism which in turn contributes to an outcome. Ideally the more specific these are the better in terms of programme improvement and transferring learning. Such specificity, however, often requires multiple related research studies.

**Table 6.3** illustrates that there was evidence that outcomes related to improved knowledge, skills and understanding are influenced by the mechanisms shown. These mechanisms in turn seem to be influenced by several similar contexts.

**Table 6.3: CMO-Cs for Improved Knowledge, Skills and Understanding**

| Key for Tables | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Code** | **Context** | | | |
| 1 | A wide range of opportunities and encouragement to take them up | | | |
| 2 | Needs assessment | | | |
| 3 | Welcome and time to talk | **The presence of Contexts** | **May help trigger Mechanisms** | **To achieve Outcomes** |
| 4 | A diversity of services offered /taken up | 1,2,3 & 4 | Confidence | Improved knowledge and skills |
| 5 | An ability to socialise and network | 1,2,5 & 6 | Belonging /connectedness | |
| 6 | The provision of feedback | 1,2,3 & 5 | Pride | |
| 7 | Co-delivery | 7 | Ownership and commitment | |

**Table 6.4** illustrates the mechanisms and contexts associated with improvements in engagement, and participation, influencing co-design/co-delivery and greater uptake of services. The mechanism of 'belonging' in turn may be influenced by the

provision of personal needs assessment/awareness of the issues raised and being welcomed and provided with time to talk.

**Table 6.4: CMO-Cs for Increased Engagement and Participation**

| The presence of Contexts | May help trigger Mechanisms | To achieve Outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| 1,2,5,& 6 | Belonging /connectedness | Increased engagement & participation, influence in co-design/delivery and greater uptake of services |
| Unable to differentiate | Reputation | |
| Unable to differentiate | Reciprocity | |

The above emerging CMO-Cs and the other patterns in the data reported in this chapter are a guide to which mechanisms and their associated contexts may have played the strongest role in achieving PCF reported outcomes. This supports the refinement of general theories contained in the ToC towards more specific CMO-Cs. These refined theories could be further elaborated or tested in future research to further clarify which contexts and mechanisms are not simply associated with outcomes but which are necessary and sufficient to cause, or contribute with others, to anticipated PCF outcomes.

# 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

## Introduction

Chapter 7 presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study by bringing together the findings from desk-based and primary research, Realist Evaluation assessment and ToC considerations.

The Chapter is structured in line with the study objectives set out in the study brief.

## Testing the PCF Approach

The findings of the study have confirmed that the ToC for the PCF is operating as intended.

The sample of 12 projects has shown throughout that participation involved those community organisations and individuals in need as anticipated and targeted by the PCF. The co-production approaches that were observed through the research differed according to the project's specific circumstances whilst addressing the key priorities of the PCF: tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion.

The research evidenced that all areas of change anticipated by the PCF approach have been achieved. These include:

- Learning - Community Anchors, partner organisations and beneficiaries gained knowledge, skills and increased their understanding. Overall findings of the research showed that staff often felt more motivated in their jobs due to their increased understanding of the target group's needs;

- Action - Community Anchors and people in the community improved their engagement with each other, made more social and professional connections, developed trust and closer partnership working, improved and extended their working practices through co-production processes; and

- Positive Outcomes - PCF funding has contributed to reducing poverty through enabling people to take up employment opportunities and to enhance their employability and financial capability skills. The Programme has also improved life chances and wellbeing. Social inclusion has been successfully achieved through increasing people's social capital and by building their skills and capacities. These outcomes have 'empowered' people to take up more opportunities including volunteering and employment. The 'confidence' which has been built allowed people to feel that they belong to, and are more connected to, their communities. Participants are, therefore, increasingly able to take up a much wider range of opportunities and community engagement activities.

- In turn, community anchor organisations have been able to become more inclusive, offering a wider spectrum of services to their local communities and increased their partnership work with other organisations.

**Recommendation 1**

**The evidence suggests that the approach delivered via the PCF is effective and successful. Consideration should be given to continuing with, and building on, the PCF approach for community-based organisations with prior experience in co-production.**

## Co-production – an underlying ambition

Community engagement and co-production is the foundation of the PCF in terms of how best to tackle poverty and promote social inclusion. The programme makes this a specific requirement through its eligibility criteria. However, the ambition that individual projects should also foster and develop their co-production activities could be made more explicit in the PCF application form. Nevertheless, the research study has found comprehensive evidence that organisations as well as beneficiaries and project partners have increased their engagement, collaboration, co-delivery and co-production activities with and between each other during the PCF funding period.

More could be done by PCF commissioners to further define the concepts and terminology around co-production and engagement to ensure that needs assessment, co-design/creation, co delivery/implementation and joint evaluation/review are understood to be elements of co-production. In addition, the Programme should emphasise the importance of co-production processes to increase awareness and action amongst stakeholders. At the moment, these different terms are often used interchangeably.

**Recommendation 2**

**Consideration should be given to further define the concepts and terminology around co-production and community engagement to help increase awareness and action amongst stakeholders.**

## Co-production Models Used to Deliver PCF Activity

The study has identified five implementation models, demonstrating that PCF is delivered in different contexts which determine the extent to which co-production is used. For example, in projects delivering specialised services (money and benefit advice) or specifically targeted training initiatives (modern apprenticeship, or volunteer development programme), co-production is mostly applied through in-depth interviews, signposting, facilitating ongoing feedback and development meetings with service users.

In a different setting where, for example, social inclusion plays a significant role, co-production can be achieved in a much more in-depth manner. For the latter, the study identified highly successful cyclical approaches where former service users can become volunteers and mentors for the next cohort of service users through which employability skills and confidence of the former service users can be substantially enhanced. In other projects, this was combined with an intensive

involvement of partner organisations offering work placements as well as employment opportunities creating lasting change for individuals.

The study has validated that partner organisations are important players in **all** co-production approaches. The extent of their involvement and their motivation varies ranging from providing signposting and referral services , to joined-up or even co-located service provision, from being an integral project delivery agent to being a direct beneficiary of the project themselves (seeking to fulfil their Corporate Social Responsibility policies or seeking to work with and through the beneficiaries themselves).

The study further showed that a 'one co-production model fits all' approach would not be able to address the many different circumstances and target groups involved in the programme. It is, therefore, appropriate for PCF to enable a wide spectrum of co-production approaches to be used by projects so that they can respond in a bespoke and flexible manner to the local and thematic needs relevant to the individual contexts of individual beneficiary groups.

> **Recommendation 3**
>
> **Consideration should be given to raising awareness of different community engagement and co-production models to facilitate sharing of experience to maximise the potential of each model.**

## How the PCF Approach Contributed to Change

The study method and tools were designed to identify how PCF contributed to change and why individuals achieved outcomes.

All approaches used in the study clearly identified that the intensity of engagement between service provider and the service user / community member was key in bringing about positive change.

Crucially, PCF projects contributed to positive change by providing person-focused, tailored support and bespoke services for people with multiple needs. Often, this involved multi-dimensional service delivery focusing on building social capital and life skills. For the beneficiaries/service users and volunteers this process has also led to increased engagement in co-delivery and co-production. At the same time, this benefited Community Anchors and their partner organisations leading to increased understanding of existing needs and subsequent improved service provision.

**Bringing about positive change**

This research has identified that, at the core of the PCF, service providers were able to offer a caring, welcoming and nurturing environment for those in need. The research findings clearly show that this was of crucial importance for people to sustain their relationship with the Community Anchor and continue with their respective learning journeys. Feeling respected, not being judged, learning to

express themselves, developing social capital and skills, being encouraged to take up opportunities, all raised confidence levels and created a new belief in themselves that many people thought was impossible for them to achieve.

**Flexible funding**

Although an assessment of the PCF and its programme structures was not within the remit of the review (and for this reason the following findings are not included in the main body of the report), the relevance of providing flexible and multi-annual funding was mentioned frequently in the interviews with Community Anchors. PCF grant support provided the finances for the required resources which were all important to achieving this level of in-depth engagement and positive change for those involved.The study findings indicate that PCF was relied upon for its flexibility, seen as an acknowledgement of the challenges faced by the Community Anchor organisations.

That said, nurturing long-term disadvantaged people back to wellbeing, so that they re-gain capabilities to contribute to society and gain employment must be understood as a long-term process, with invariable fluctuations of engagement and disengagement along the way. This requires a support programme to be long-term and flexible, as such, empowering the delivery bodies to exercise their expertise and community-based approaches.

The necessity of a long-term approach to support those with multiple needs is not reflected well by the one-year funding cycle. Therefore, most Community Anchors needed to access PCF funding for a number of years to enable them to deliver change. The need to apply for funding each year disrupted one project completely (i.e. all staff moved on to employment elsewhere). Dealing with long-term, multiple needs of the target groups, PCF necessitates more long-term funding to offer Community Anchors a degree of stability, certainty and continuity.

> **Recommendation 4**
>
> **Consideration should be given to extend the PCF funding period to acknowledge better the longer time frame projects need to address the multiple needs of their target groups.**

# Where the PCF approach does not contribute to change

The study was unable to evidence any circumstances where the PCF approach has not worked apart from two projects encountering problems with the annualrity of funding, which reportedly caused substantial problems for the affected initiatives (i.e. losing staff).

As the participation in the study was on a voluntary basis a possible bias towards capturing more positive feedback exists (it is less likely that dissatisfied beneficiaries or partners spend their time in workshops or interviews).

## Understanding for Whom the PCF Approach Works

The qualitative comparative analysis presented in **Chapter 5** showed that the PCF approach worked differently for partner organisations, Community Anchors and beneficiaries. However, a common benefit reported by all three groups was the experience of having gained more trust and better relationships between each other.

### Partner Organisation

Overall, primary research findings indicate that partners were able to differentiate a large number of distinct benefits from participation. This is most likely due to being one-step removed and being able to observe change and effects more clearly, therefore identifying more benefits from their PCF engagement than any other participant group.

Most frequently mentioned outcomes included the increased engagement and connectedness with local communities, being a more inclusive organisation, and improved progress towards social inclusion.

### Community Anchor Staff

For the majority of Community Anchors, PCF helped to increase the extent of their co-production engagement with the community through which they were able to develop more effective services, and build better relationships and trust with their beneficiaries and partner organisations. A further positive change was that this created an improved sense of influence and understanding of the needs of the community/target group.

For those Community Anchor organisations with high levels of co-production at the outset of PCF funding, the PCF project implementation led to an intensification of engagement (i.e. more contact with community members, more volunteers employed, more opportunities offered for community members to become involved in decision making).

### Community Members/Beneficiaries

The majority of all beneficiaries reported that they had achieved improved skills, knowledge, aspirations and a sense of well being and belonging.

The most prominent positive changes reported included increased 'trust', 'confidence', 'self-esteem' and 'pride' and 'opportunities'. In many cases, beneficiaries believed that the welcoming, encouraging and appreciative environment which their Community Anchor offered provided the context for these achievements to evolve. Importantly, the more positive outlook on life that many have managed to achieve is closely related to a wide range of employabilty and other transferable skills that they have developed.

For most beneficiaries, PCF activities enabled them to increase their participation in co-delivery and co-production with their respective Community Anchor organisation.

In seven projects, there was a substantial increase from not being involved with the Community Anchor to now sharing co-delivery, volunteering opportunities and being board members. Only in a small number of cases (three projects) did PCF beneficiaries enjoy reasonable levels of co-production at the outset of engagement. In these instances PCF projects were used to intensify their engagement. In the remainder of cases (two projects), medium levels of change in co-production were observed.

## Circumstances and Context for Results to Emerge

For sustainable results to emerge in terms of increased community engagement as well as gaining employment or progressing to training and further education, people need to have a certain level of confidence and social capital.

The research findings indicate that PCF funding has successfully created the right social and cultural environment for those personal development skills to emerge, primarily by funding community organisations who are able to nurture and support those seldom heard, most disadvantaged individuals until they have gained sufficient self-esteem and self-worth to progress. As such, gaining confidence, skills, social capital, self-esteem and self-worth were fundamentally seen as a pre-requisite for building employability skills and addressing poverty in a sustainable manner.

The vast majority of projects involved in the study addressed both PCF priorities 'social inclusion' and 'tackling poverty'. In view of the beneficiary groups targeted by most projects, the combination of both makes sense.

To successfully address the needs of economically and socially disadvantged people requires the Community Anchor to offer a flexible and diverse range of services and activities. The study has shown that a diverse range of activities (ranging from social interaction, personal development and life-skills, to employability and social enterprise creation)is most effective in engaging with economically and socially disadvantaged people to build trust, confidence and create a connectedness to the Community Anchor and its staff and volunteers. This then forms the basis upon which improved life chances, skills and wellbeing are being created.

> **Recommendation 5**
>
> **Consideration should be given to formulating additional characteristics to differentiate projects more appropriately than by 'themes' which currently overlap within activities (e.g. social capital building as a pre-requisite for addressing poverty and employability issues).**

In this context, recent evidence from behavioural research emphasises that behaviour change necessitates improvement in three areas: capabilities,

opportunities, and motivations[9]. There may be some value in encouraging projects to identify the activities or strategies that will contribute to these core aspects of behaviour change as part of funding applications and using such information to characterise projects according to the balance of their focus as well the domains in which they may work e.g. employment, food, etc. This may better indicate their likely contribution to key mechansims and outcomes.

**Unexpected Results**

In terms of unexpected results that have emerged through PCF project engagement, partner organisations were often surprised about what can be achieved through community engagement. Project involvement raised their knowledge and confidence levels in engaging with the target groups.

Similarly, Community Anchor staff did not expect the extent of positive energy that has been created by projects and how this has affected their staff and even their families.

For community members/beneficiaries, engagement with the PCF initiative provided a wide range of unexpected results mostly in the area of improved wellbeing, boosted confidence levels, and new friends. Many reported a new sense of purpose in their lives. Many were surprised that they were 'seen as a person' and respected. This has enabled them to now help others in need. There was also surprise regarding the ways in which the improved sense of wellbeing reflected positively on their families and children.

## Barriers and Enablers in Delivery

A number of barriers and enablers towards successful delivery of the PCF approach were identified at project and programme levels.

Identified enablers were:

- **Person-focused approach**: this is at the core of triggering successful outcomes. It is essential to have time to engage with the service user to identify his/her needs and develop a trustful relationship and ability to support the individual in a variety of ways. Effective co-delivery and co-production processes require a continuous process of reviewing peoples' needs and opportunities.

- **Diversity of Service provision:** Funding community organisations able to offer a wide range of inter-linked services to address multiple issues of disadvantage and deprivation (either through in-house provision, co-located or in close partnership with other organisations).

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[9] **COM B behaviour model [link to recommendation in conclusions regarding evidence base and using this as means of ]**
Michie, S.van Stralen, MM. West, R. The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. Implement Sci. 2011; 6: 42.   https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3096582/
**Re-Aim  http://re-aim.org/about/what-is-re-aim/**

- **Advanced partnerships with other organisations**: effective co-delivery and co-production processes require a continuous process of reviewing the complementarity and inter-linkedness of services and opportunities.

- **Directly linking social inclusion with employability development via volunteering**: a step-by-step approach to nurture socially excluded people into wellbeing provides a very effective approach to build confidence and self-esteem when combined with informed guidance into volunteering.

- **Flexibility of the Programme** to accept that progress for seldom heard groups can take time and might need to accommodate temporary drop-out for individuals to return at a later date.

- **Funding for work placement** to compensate for lost benefit payments enables higher levels of beneficiary participation.

- **Incorporating partner organisations with a social remit** into direct PCF delivery, e.g. social enterprises and private sector companies with Corporate Social Responsibilities policies and aims.

Barriers included:

- The current **benefit system discourages volunteering** by benefit recipients (i.e. if you are fit enough to volunteer, you are fit enough to work). This stands fundamentally in the way of a pre-employability pathway that uses volunteering as a successful way of building vital employability skills.

- **The annularity of funding** is too short for most projects to address multiple needs of seldom heard groups. In most cases, confidence and building of self-esteem and self-worth takes a long time after being socially excluded for many years.

- **Delays with programme commencement** – particularly for project-specific funding, can be disruptive for small community organisations, resulting in them potentially losing staff.

- For less experienced community organisations, accompanying assistance and **awareness raising of co-production approaches** would be helpful (e.g. building strategic relationships with other service providers at a locality level).

## Need for a Revised ToC?

The PCF ToC has been substantially confirmed by the findings as reflecting a realistic set of expectations for how co-production processes can lead to positive change in those who participated in the study.

There are a small number of areas where refinement could be undertaken, and this is primarily regarding the use and definition of terms used (as suggested in Chapter 6).

For example, PCF implies that projects would assume a community-wide scope, such as developing or delivering a community development strategy, a

neighbourhood action plan, getting involved in participatory budgeting and such like. In this context, the ToC mentions 'thinking about local issues and solutions', understanding the 'value of community-led work' implying that the whole community would be a partner in a PCF project. However, apart from one rural project, most other initiatives researched in this study, while positively impacting on the wider community to some considerable extent, were nevertheless focusing on the needs of a particular target group rather than the needs of the entire community as a whole. While the difference is subtle, the ToC could therefore refer more specifically to 'people in need' and 'target groups' in addition to the terms it currently uses such as 'community members', 'communities'.

Similarly, the projects selected to be part of the study did not relate well to some parts of the PCF ToC aiming for 'increased ownership and management of community assets' and 'improved management of services'. It is, therefore, less clear how PCF is intending to achieve these outcomes. Having said this, the study only included a small number of projects and might have missed those that have targeted wider community projects more specifically.

Rather than being pro-actively promoted and encouraged, co-production is implicitly assumed by PCF, subsequently awareness raising of this underlying programme aim is low.

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**Recommendation 6**

**Consideration should be given to reflect on the refined ToC provided in the findings and further clarify the definition and activities with regard to co-production. Encourage greater clarity among projects about the strategies (and other elements of context) that are anticipated to lead to changes in mechanisms and outcomes.**

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**Additional, more subtle observations**

In cases where projects aimed at delivering services via a social enterprise model this proved successful in those initiatives that dealt with existing, well-established social enterprises (providing work-placements). However, even in these cases, the success of the projects depended heavily on the availability of funding - for example, to replace lost benefit payments for the participants. In cases where the social enterprise was supposed to be created as part of the PCF funding period, lack of wider funding support and short-term funding periods of PCF made this very difficult (Growing Gardeners project). In those cases where social enterprises were created alongside the core services, these initially tend to be fairly small scale.

Although the PCF programme differentiates projects into a number of themes (such as volunteering, training, advice and support), the study found that projects tend to offer a holistic mix of activities covering all themes in order to provide a people-focused, multi-dimensional approach enabling each beneficiary to take up a range of diverse services and activities.

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **Realist Evaluation** | Realist approaches are suited to exploring causality and understanding *why* interventions do or do not work for specific groups in different contexts rather than simply whether they work (Pawson et al 2004). Realist approaches identify, test and refine the theories that underlie interventions (Pawson et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2013). Theories are the ideas and assumptions held by stakeholders –communities, practitioners, commissioners, participants and academics - about interventions. Theories explain how and why programmes are expected to/have result(ed) in intended (or unintended) outcomes in different contexts (Pawson et al, 2006). <br><br> Realist evaluators use the terminology of contexts, mechanism and outcomes. |
| **Contexts** | Contexts include factors such as the: setting; group targeted; resources, and, the types of activities or strategies used in interventions. From a service user point of view, contexts were mostly interpreted as 'activities engaged with' or 'services received', including if these were group or one-to-one activities. |
| **Mechanisms** | Mechanisms are reasoning/psychological responses of the participants' (or organisations') to the resources/changes in context brought about by the intervention (Wong et al., 2013). These responses result in intended or unintended programme outcomes. Contexts 'fire' mechanisms, through which outcomes are enabled/achieved. |
| **CMO-C** | The programme theories uncovered in realist evaluation are described as Context, Mechanism and Outcome Configurations (CMO-Cs). Crucially, CMO-Cs postulate *how and why* an intervention should/or does work. It explains how by intervening and altering a context a mechanism is triggered causing/contributing to the intended or unintended outcome (Pawson et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2013). |
| **Theory of Change** | Theory of Change is a comprehensive description (usually in the form of a table) of how and why desired |

| | changes and outcomes are expected to emerge from a number of actions planned and investments undertaken It describes the starting position (why is there a need for investment) and maps the route towards the intended outcomes by describing the various activities or interventions planned by a fund or programme. |
|---|---|
| **Community Anchors** | Community Anchors are the community-based organisations who were responsible for the delivery of the PCF funded initiative The study engaged with staff of the Community Anchors directly involved in delivering PCF funded services. |
| **Partner Organisations** | Those organisations that supported the Community Anchors through joint working, signposting or referrals of service users/people in need; offering additional services to project beneficiaries, or being directly involved in the delivery of the PCF project. |
| **Volunteers** | Community members who volunteered because of a desire to help the Community Anchor and a motivation to do good in the community, or local people with the same motivations, but previously (or concurrently) themselves service users. Here, volunteering is often part of gaining employability and other transferable skills. |
| **Beneficiaries** | This group includes those community members in need of support, receiving and/or participating in the services funded by PCF. |

# Appendix A: Detailed Study Method and Limitations

The study integrated a number of elements from the following research approaches:

- Theory of Change (ToC) Review;
- Realist Evaluation;
- Qualitative Comparative Assessment (at programme level); and
- Attribution Analysis.

ToC Review: The rationale and logic of the ToC was jointly reviewed with the Study Research Advisory Group at the outset and at the end of the study. This included a detailed consideration of all ToC aspects as presented in the PCF ToC such as Inputs, Outputs (activities and participation) and Change (learning, action, outcomes).

The findings of the first ToC workshop further clarified the theoretical assumptions underpinning the programme and the success criteria, and therefore provided the basis for the project sample and fieldwork tools/material to be developed in line with Realist Evaluation principles.

Realist Evaluation: Realist approaches are suited to exploring causality and contribution, and to understanding why interventions do or do not work for specific groups in different contexts rather than simply whether they work[10]. The approach therefore fitted the study requirements well. Realist Evaluation and theories of change identify, test and refine the theories that underlie interventions[11].

Realist Evaluators use the terminology of contexts, mechanism and outcomes (please also see Glossary):

- Contexts include factors such as the: setting, groups targeted, resources and, the types of activities or strategies and approaches used in interventions;
- Mechanisms are reasoning/psychological responses of the participants (or organisations) to the resources/changes in context brought about by the intervention (Wong et al., 2013); and
- Outcomes are the intentional or unintentional changes brought about by the intervention for individuals, organisations or the environment.

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[10] Pawson and Tilley (2004) Realist Evaluation. London: Cabinet Office.

[11] (Pawson et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2013).

The programme theories uncovered in Realist Evaluation are described as Context, Mechanism and Outcome Configurations (CMO-Cs). Crucially, CMO-Cs postulate *how and why* an intervention works. It explains how by intervening and altering a context, a mechanism is triggered causing/contributing to the intended or unintended outcome[12]

Based on the range of themes funded by PCF, there are many potential theories within the PCF. The study team therefore, needed to agree with the Scottish Government in the ToC workshop the most prevalent and promising theories to be tested and refined to determine an appropriate sampling framework, methods and analysis (see sample frame description provided opposite)

Qualitative Comparative Assessment: While relevant quantitative measures were mostly extracted from PCF documentation (project application and/or monitoring reports), the fieldwork programme focused primarily on capturing the qualitative evidence from project staff, benificiaries and partners involved in PCF. This included the qualitative dimension measuring intangible project outcomes, learning journeys and social impact often associated with personal development, social capital, positive changes in relationships, attitudes and behaviours, skills, health and well-being, and quality of life improvements.

Contribution Analysis: In addition to assessing the extent to which change has been achieved, the fieldwork explored perceptions of how much of the achievement was contributed by/attributable to the PCF approach in view of other funding sources used by the community organisations or other factors potentially contributing towards the changes that have been reported.

In the context of a qualitative impact assessment, contribution analysis needs to make the prioritsed assumptions and theories explicit and use these to inform decisions about the focus of the subsequent analysis[13]. This aids transparancy. The primary research sought to understand the contextual factors and conditions associated with particular mechanisms and outcomes.

A substantial amount of information was gathered, which enabled the exploration of patterns of contexts [including PCF strategies/activities] and mechanisms associated with self-reported outcomes. The findings from the primary research have been compared with the intervention logic (ToC) of the PCF and presented in the second ToC workshop with the Study Research Advisory Team.

**PCF Project Themes/Types**

Advice/Support Service
Community Facility
Confidence and Skills Building
Diversionary Plus
Employability Training
Energy Efficiency/Fuel Poverty
Family Support
Health Improvement
Healthy Eating/Cooking
Intergenerational Work
IT Skills Training
Older Peoples Project
Peer Mentoring
Training and Upskilling
Volunteering

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[12] (Pawson et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2013).

[13] Befani, B. and Mayne, J. (2014) Process Tracing and Contribution Analysis: A Combined Approach to Generative Causal Inference for Impact Evaluation. IDS Bulletin 45(6): 17-36  https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/7348

# Limitations regarding a pure Realist Evaluation approach

By applying the Realist Evaluation approach in a practical grass-roots setting, the review has been subject to a small number of limitations.

- In light of the underlying values, principles and aims of co-production within PCF, cross-participant group work was a required aspect of the fieldwork programme. In each workshop therefore one element of data collection was completed as a whole group (e.g. included partners, anchor organisation staff and projects beneficiaries). This supported the sharing of project experiences and thereby triggered a process of individual reflection and recollection of everyone's own learning journey. Although the fieldwork also included detailed and intensive individual work to capture each person's own experiences, the data and findings of the group element of the fieldwork could not be individualised for the purposes of the Realist Evaluation approach (which works on the basis of highly individualised responses and views group work as a methodological weakness). The group findings were used to report at programme level and to be a consistency check with the individual data, whereas the individualised findings (delivered by the 'Mini Interview' session) were the source for coding findings in a more Realist fashion.

- A total of four researchers were involved in coding. This required a detailed understanding of the Realist Evaluation terminology and care to calibrate each other's interpretation of the terms in light of the mini interview reports from 120 individuals participating in this aspect of the study. Considerable effort was taken to prepare all researchers in-depth and to find a joint level of understanding of the terms used to avoid variations in coding. The 'mini interviews' were conducted and written up individually or in pairs by participants as part of the workshop in the presence of researchers but using the participants /beneficiaries own language. These were subsequently coded by the researchers according to the outcomes and mechanism identified in the prioritised CMO-C /theories. Participants told their own personal outcome stories/journeys rather than being asked exactly the same questions. This meant there was not full and consistent data sets for each CMO-C/theory. This, as well as further limitations in timing and funding, meant that the analysis sought out patterns in contexts and mechanisms according to the presence or absence of outcomes. It did not use emergent methods such as Realist Evaluation-specific Qualitative Comparative Analysis or Contribution Tracing to further validate these patterns/associations. Data on projects' contexts were gathered from the mini interviews as well as the preparatory interviews with the project main contact and/or from project applications and monitoring reports. As such our findings formulate theories that will require further research and validation.

- The study included beneficiaries who had only recently joined the PCF initiative[14]. Although they were able to report on early improvements, they all expected more change to happen in future (this included aspirations such as taking up a voluntary position in the Community Anchor, pursuing training objectives, finding a job, setting up their own social enterprise).

- Not all mechanisms or outcomes may have been explicitly reported in the mini interviews, but may still have been experienced and reported in the group sessions of the workshops as part of the study (or remained unreported).

- The same range of mechanisms were mostly present whether an outcome was reported or not – however the frequency of them varied. Our analysis is based on the frequency not present in every case or complete absence of the mechanism. The association would be stronger were the latter the case, however, in a complex multifaceted intervention, such as PCF, this may never occur. The same issues are true in relation to the analysis of contexts linking to mechanisms. We should, therefore, acknowledge the parallel contributions from the other reported mechanisms and contexts to outcomes triggering mechanisms respectively.

- As agreed in the first ToC workshop, the Realist Analysis focused on the short-term (or early) outcomes as anticipated by the PCF.

- Beneficiaries attending the workshops were selected by the projects and all reported positive outcomes. This confirms that many positive changes can be achieved with engaged participants. Study data/analysis, however, tells little about the impact on the less engaged, or in terms of project reach or scalability. Many of the participants were embedded within projects and had long-term relationships (over one year long). It is likely that Community Anchor organisations would need substantial time to achieve a relationship of this nature. Additional timeframes would also be necessary if these relationships are being delivered as part of sustained services alongside wider reach and population impact. Delivering intense bespoke support to large numbers of clients, target groups or wider populations is likely to be very challenging.

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[14] An estimate would be that around 10% of the beneficiaries participated for no more than six months with the Community Anchor.

# Appendix B: Detailed Research Tools

## Assessing Co-Production levels

To assess the levels of co-production from all participants' perspectives, two 'Co-production ladders' were designed and used in the workshops (one for Community Anchors and Partner organisations reaching out to the community and one for Volunteers and Beneficiaries seeking to get involved with Community Anchors) illustrated in **Figure B.1** (below).

**Figure B.1: Co-Production Ladders**
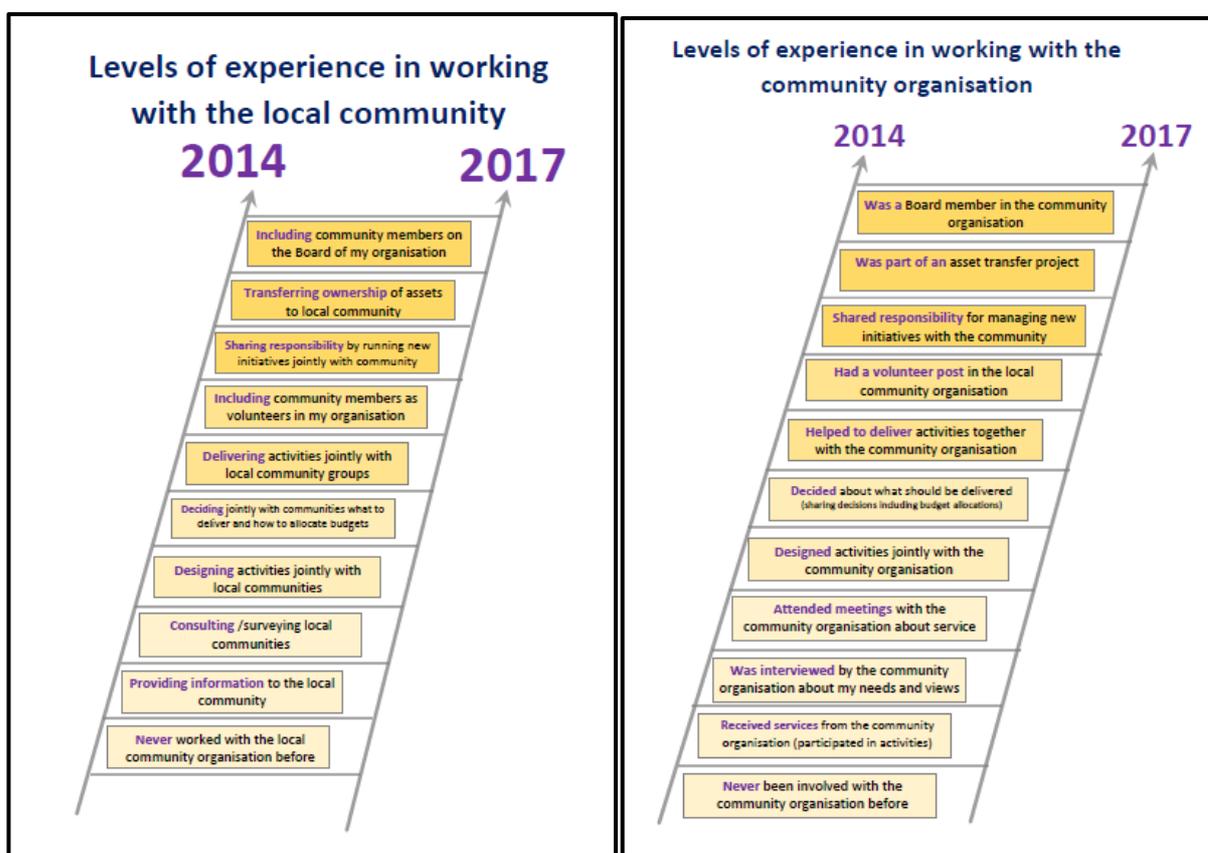


Each participant was asked to identify whether they were involved in each stage of co-production, ranging from providing information to the local community, to sitting on the board of the community group.

Completed Development Ladders demonstrate actual project co-production pathways since 2014. **Figure B.2** (over) shows some examples of completed ladders and typical findings: a lack of progression amongst community anchor staff and partners due to existing high levels of co-production and large amounts of progression among community members and beneficiaries.

**Figure B.2: Completed Co-Production Ladders**
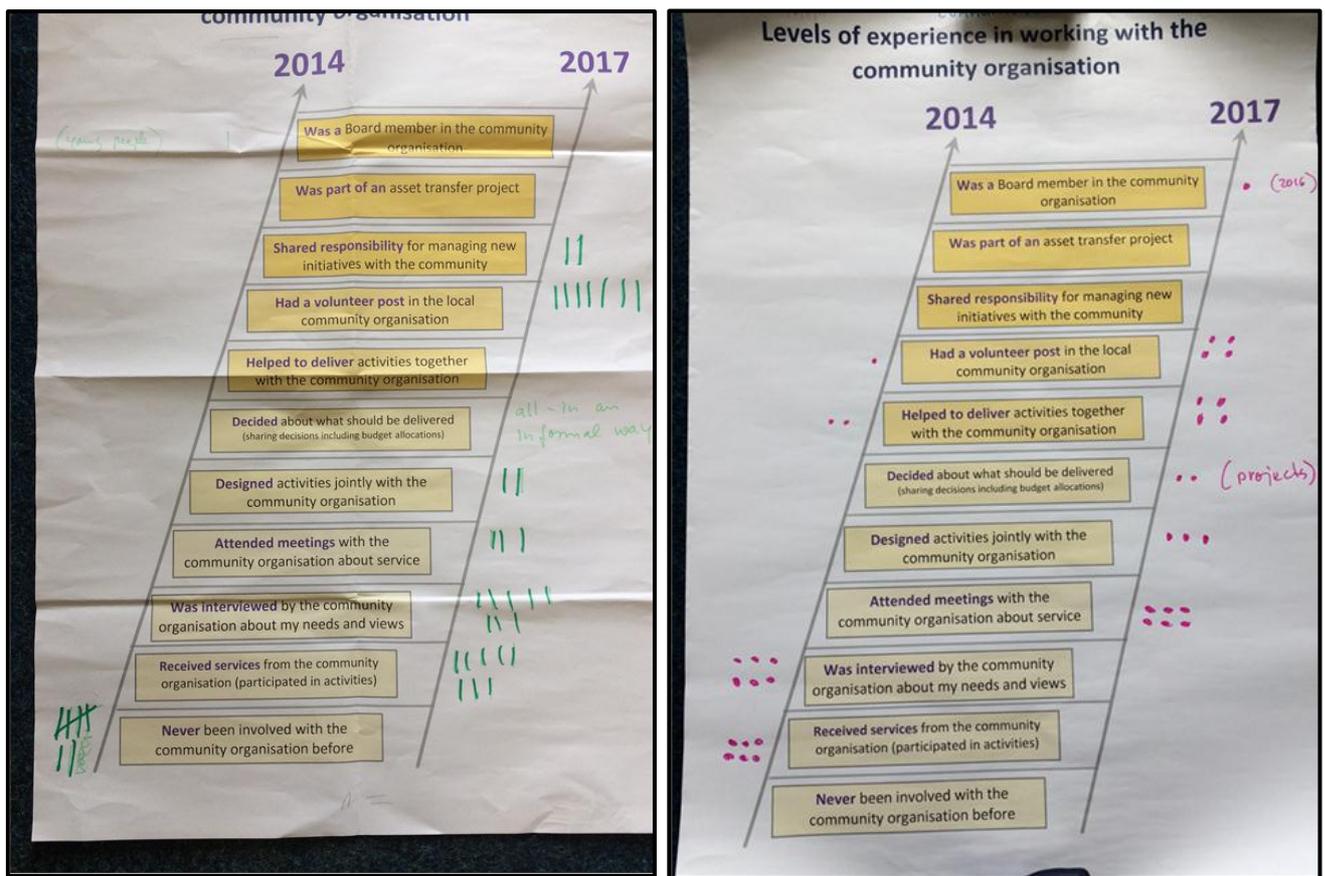


## Thinking About Achievements

In order to identify what kind of effects (outcomes) and achievements participants experienced from the projects, the Ketso workshop facilitation kit was used. This was generally conducted as a combined exercise with all workshop participants and involved each participant writing what they had achieved on 'leaves' which were supplied to them. Each type of participant was supplied with a different coloured leaf:

- Community members – Green;
- Community Anchor Staff – Orange; and
- Wider Partners – Grey.

Once particpants had written their achievements, each leaf was placed on the Ketso mat and grouped by theme. **Figure B.3** shows a completed Ketso kit, and key themes and type of participant are easily identifiable through the groupings and colours.

**Figure B.3: Completed Ketso Kit**



## Exploring the Learning Journey in Detail

The next stage involved more detailed investigation of workshop participants' individual learning journeys. This took the form of 'mini-interviews' which asked participants to identify what activities they undertook, what outcomes stemmed from these activities, and how these activities led to these outcomes. **Figure B.4** presents examples of completed mini-interview sheets.

**Figure B.4: Completed Mini-Interview sheet**
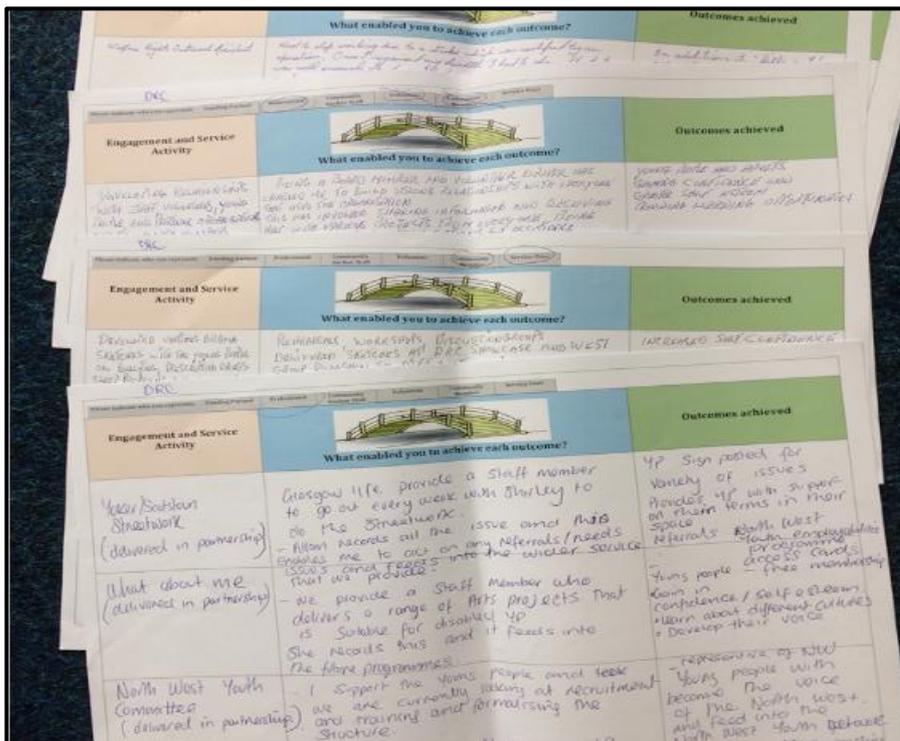
# Appendix C: Additional Primary Research Findings

## Self-identified Outcomes and Results

Participants were asked to identify what effects/outcomes and achievements they had experienced through participating (delivering or receiving services) in the PCF funded project. Each participant could identify as many as he/she felt relevant (it is for this reason that the numbers in Figure C.1 do not equal the number of participants).

The most commonly identified outcomes across all three participant types were broadly similar: more friends/community involvement, new skills and improved relationships. Community members were the most likely to identify improved confidence whilst partners most commonly identified expanded services and improved relationships, **Figure C.1**.

### Figure C.1: Outcomes identified by Participant Type



Partners N=19, Community Anchors N=34, Community Members N=56

72
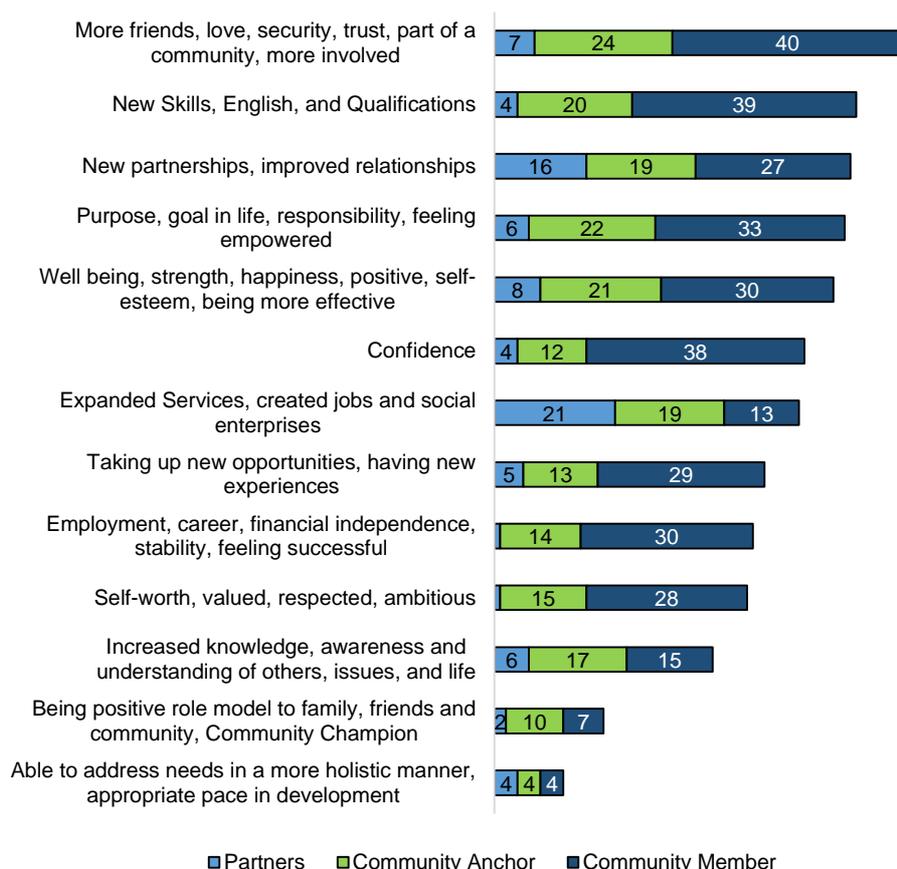
In terms of themes, advice/support and volunteering/mentoring was likely to result in improved relationships and community interaction, while training and upskilling resulted in new skills, **Figure C.2**.

## Figure C.2: Outcomes identified by Theme



| Outcome | Advice/support service | Training and upskilling | Volunteering and mentoring |
|---|---|---|---|
| More friends, love, security, trust, part of a community, more involved | 22 | 21 | 28 |
| New Skills, English, and Qualifications | 10 | 39 | 14 |
| New partnerships, improved relationships | 28 | 17 | 17 |
| Purpose, goal in life, responsibility, feeling empowered | 25 | 21 | 15 |
| Well being, strength, happiness, positive, self-esteem, being more effective | 27 | 18 | 14 |
| Confidence | 12 | 25 | 17 |
| Expanded Services, created jobs and social enterprises | 39 | 10 | 4 |
| Taking up new opportunities, having new experiences | 15 | 18 | 14 |
| Employment, career, financial independence, stability, feeling successful | 17 | 21 | 7 |
| Self-worth, valued, respected, ambitious | 16 | 16 | 12 |
| Increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of others, issues, and life | 4 | 21 | 13 |
| Being positive role model to family, friends and community, Community Champion | 5 | 10 | 4 |
| Able to address needs in a more holistic manner, appropriate pace in development | 5 | 7 | |

■Advice/support service  ■Training and upskilling  □Volunteering and mentoring

Advice/support service N=29, Training and upskilling N=44, Volunteering and mentoring N=36

73

The progression model tended to yield the most outcomes across the board, but also had the most participants, **Figure C.3**.

**Figure C.3: Outcomes identified by Co-Production Model[15]**



■1=Traditional  ■2=Employability and Skills  ■3=Two level support  ■4=Progression
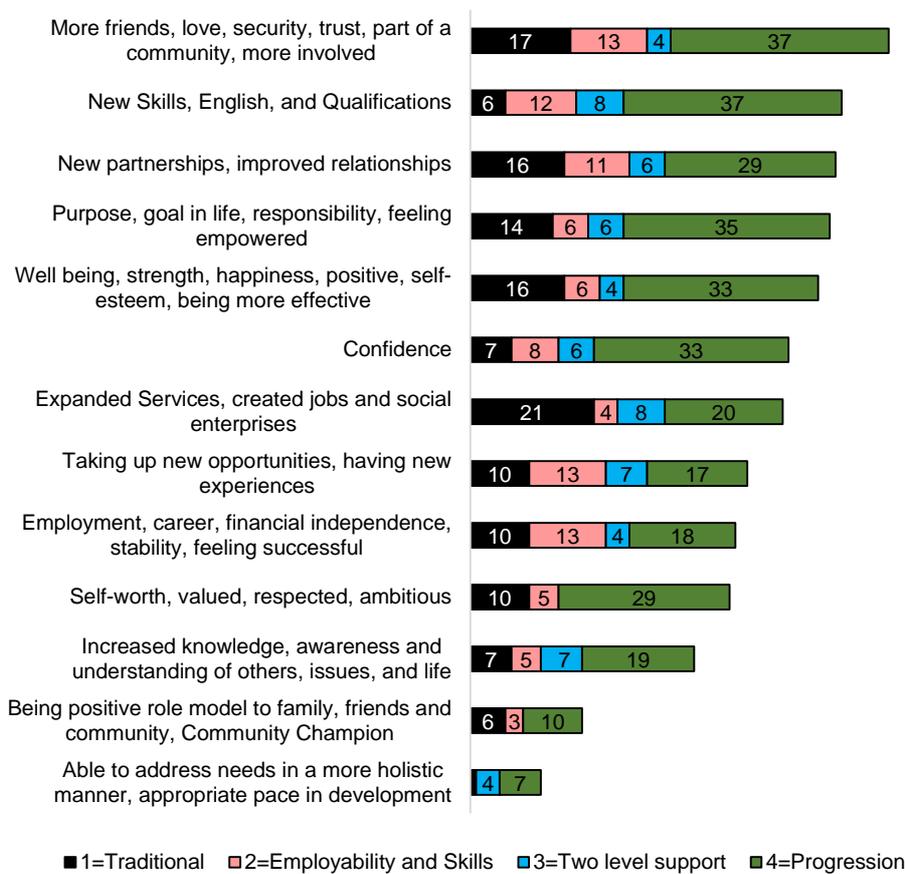
Traditional N=30, Employability and Skills N=20, Two level support N=12, Progression N=56

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[15] Exercise not conducted with Level 5 Project

# Context

The contexts which interviewees most commonly experienced were generally around the initial stages common to most projects, such as being made to feel welcome, needs assessment and being encouraged to take up opportunities, **Figure C.4**.

**Figure C.4: % Experiencing Each Context**
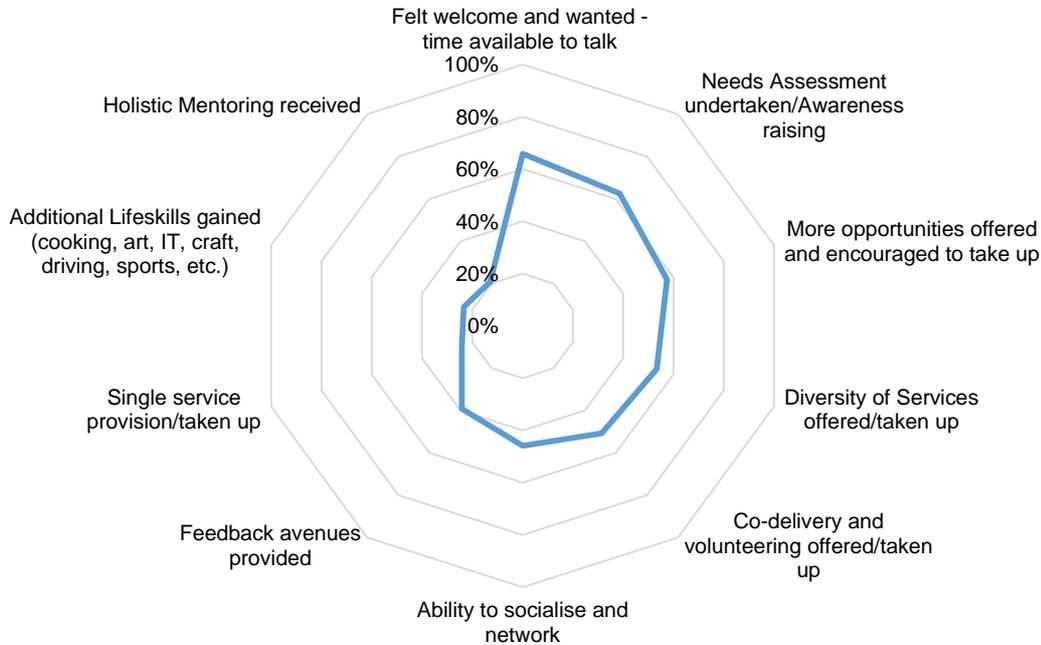


N=120

Community members were most likely to experience social contexts such as being made to feel welcome and being able to socialise and network. Community anchor staff emphasised the greater levels of opportunities and diversity of services which they were able to offer, while partners identified awareness training and co-delivery opportunities, **Figure C.5**.

## Figure C.5: % Experiencing Each Context by Participant Type
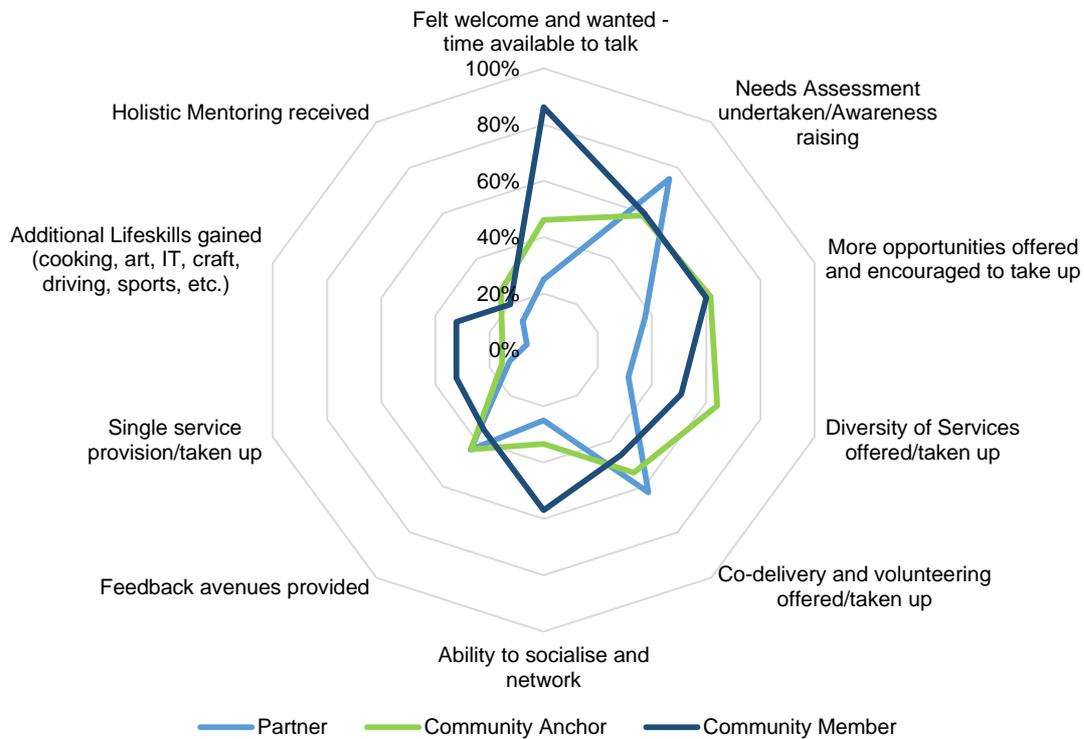


Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

With regard to the project themes; training and upskilling, and advice/support services projects have more identified contexts than volunteering and mentoring projects. This is not surprsing given the diversity of local service provision, **Figure C.6**.

**Figure C.6: % Experiencing Each Context by Theme**
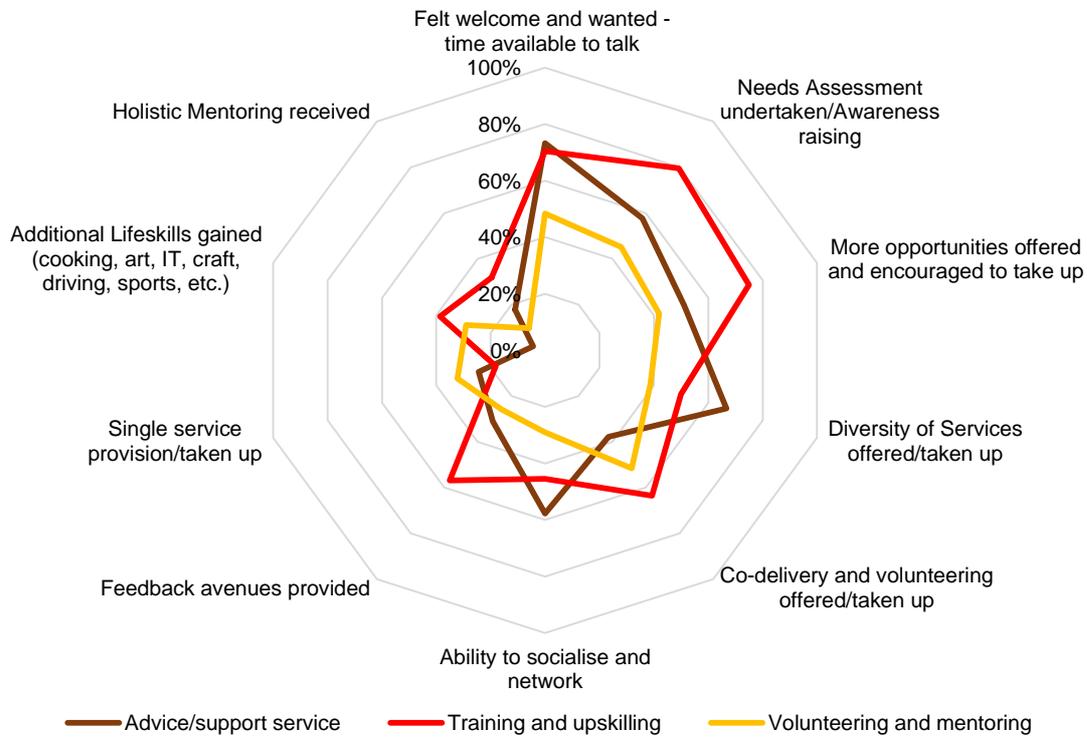


Advice/support service N=31, Training and upskilling N=44, Volunteering and mentoring N=45

77

In terms of the models of co-production; workshop participants were more likely to identify contexts the further along the co-production ladder they were, particularly with regard to the social contexts such as being made to feel welcome and socialising, **Figure C.7**.

**Figure C.7: % Experiencing Each Context by Co-Production Model**
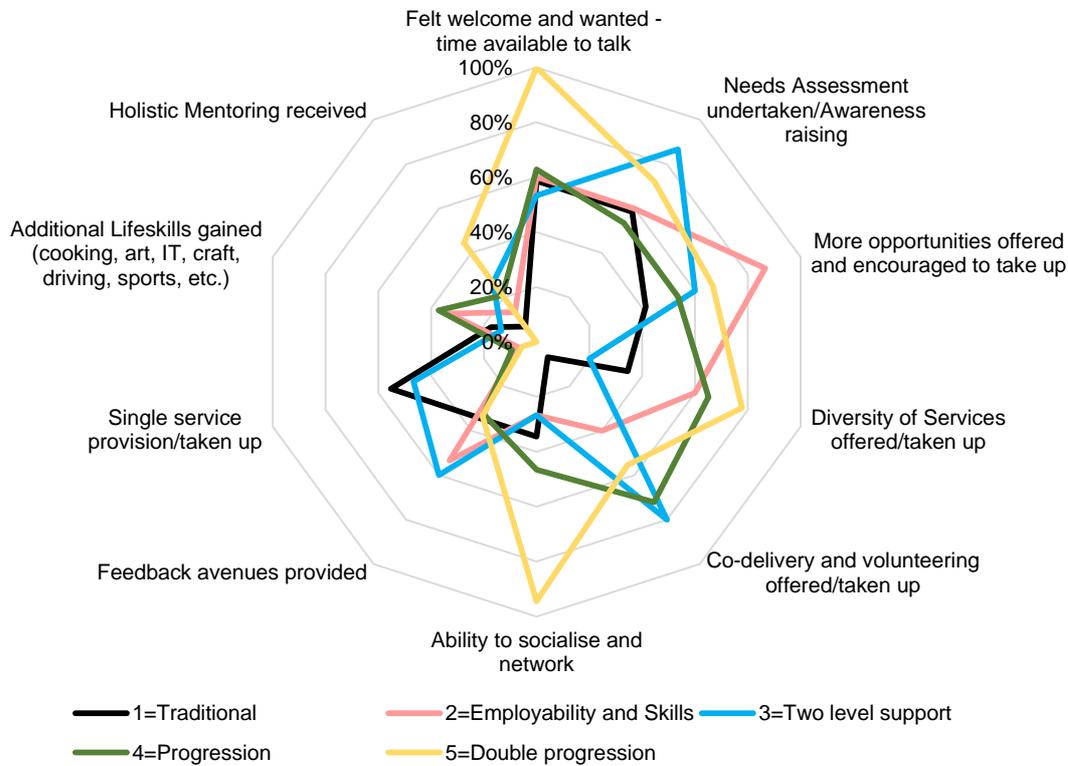


Traditional N=29, Employability and Skills N=15, Two level support N=15, Progression N=43, Double progression N=18

# Mechanisms

The two most commonly reported mechanisms were concerned with relationships with others, trust/relationship building and belonging connectedness, whilst most of the others concerned personal development, such as confidence and pride, **Figure C.8**.

**Figure C.8: % Experiencing Each Mechanism**



N=120

Regarding the mechansims experienced by community members (service users and volunteers) there is a more or less even split between relationship and personal benefits, however, partners almost all identified trust/relationship building as a key mechanism, **Figure C.9**.

**Figure C.9: % Experiencing Each Mechanism by Participant Type**



Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

Broken down by project theme; training and upskilling, and volunteering and mentoring programmes generally achieved a greater prevalence of identified mechanisms than advice/support services, particularly around issues such pride, ownership, empowerment and self-esteem, **Figure C.10**.

**Figure C.10: % Experiencing Each Mechanism by Theme**



Advice/support service N=31, Training and upskilling N=44, Volunteering and mentoring N=45

By co-production model, we can broadly see a greater prevalence of mechanisms experienced as we move from the traditional model (Model 1) to models with greater levels of co-production, with the two level support (Model 3) and double progression models (Model 5) experiencing the most mechanisms, **Figure C.11**.

**Figure C.11: % Experiencing Each Mechanism by Co-Production Model**
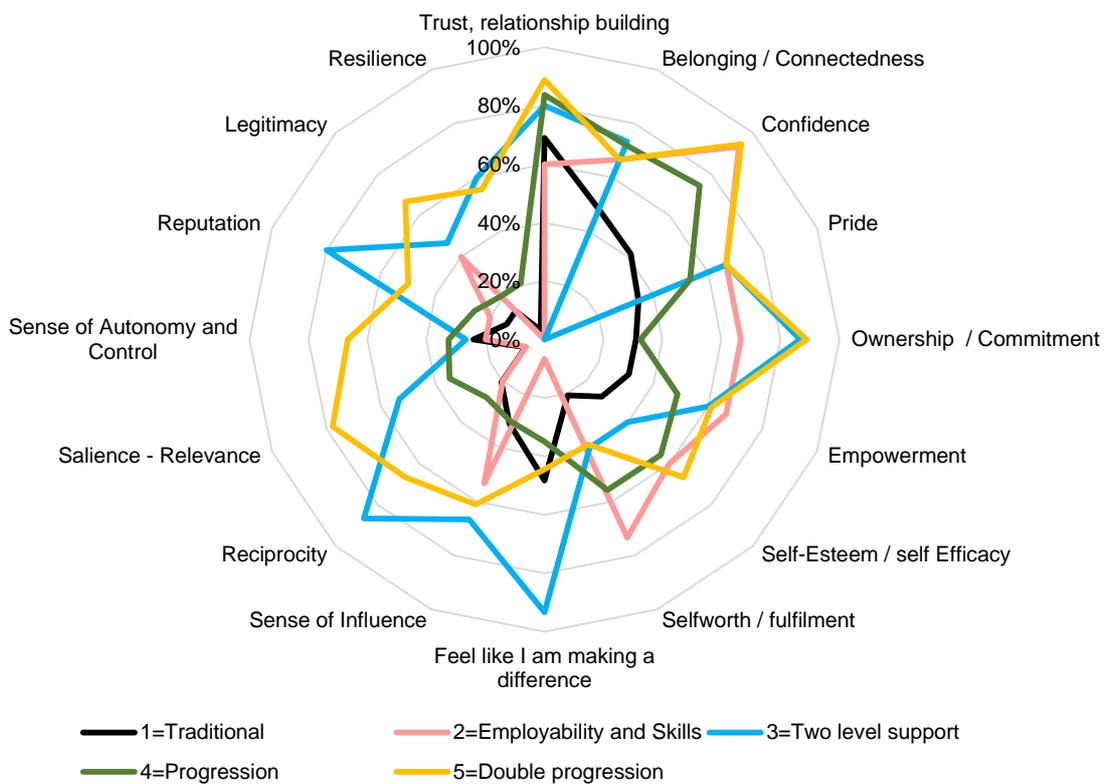


Traditional N=29, Employability and Skills N=15, Two level support N=15, Progression N=43, Double progression N=18

## Short-Term Outcomes

The most commonly identified short-term outcome is an increase in skills, knowledge or understanding, followed by more social outcomes such as increased engagement and improved connectedness with local community, **Figure C.12**.

**Figure C.12: % Experiencing Each Short-Term Outcome**
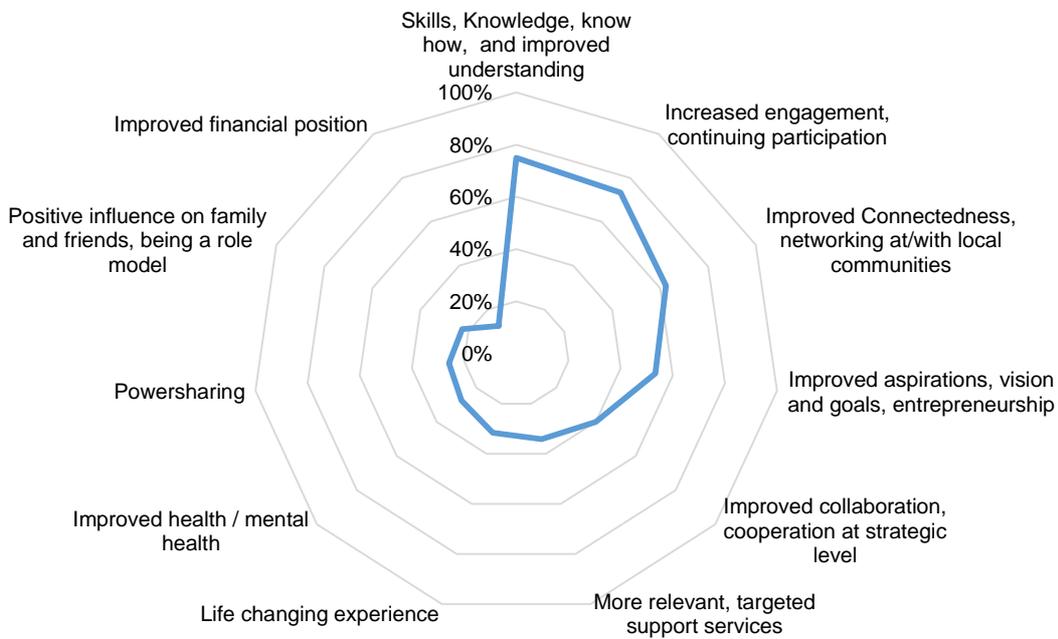


N=120

Community members are the most likely to identify an increase in skills, knowledge or understanding and improved aspirations, whilst partners identified increased engagement, improved connectedness and better partnership working as key outcomes, **Figure C.13**.

**Figure C.13: % Experiencing Each Short-Term Outcome by Participant Type**
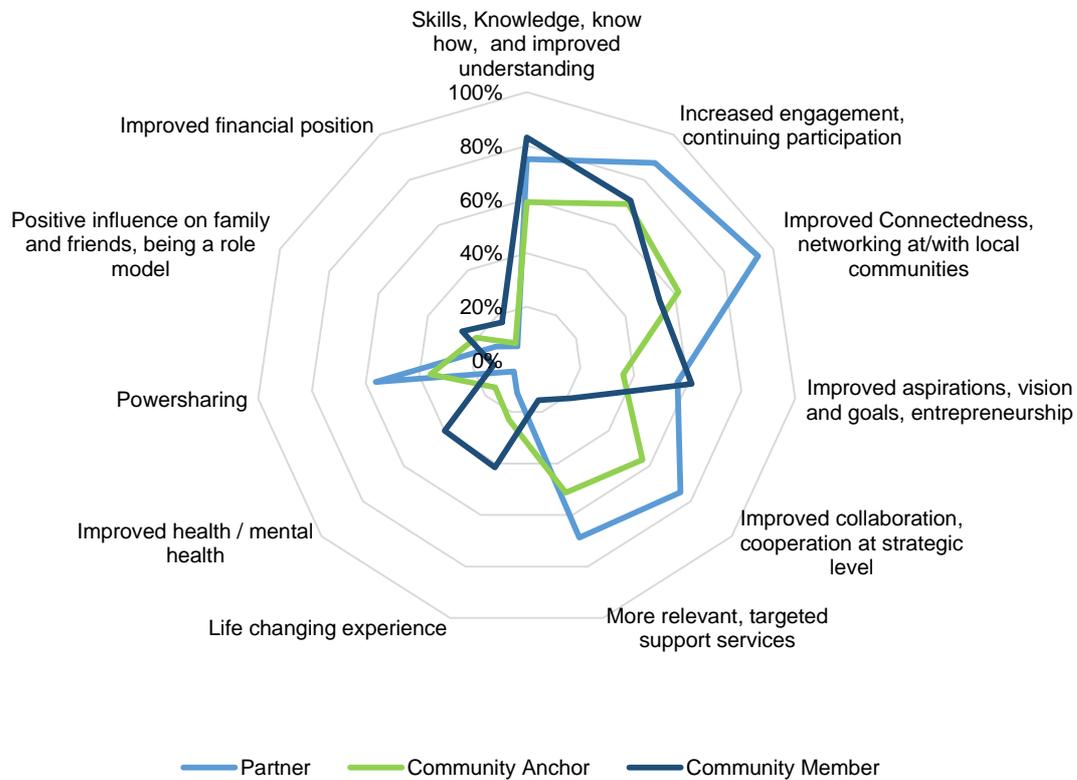


Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

Considering the three PCF themes; training and upskilling projects have a greater level of short-term outcomes, having the highest levels of increase in skills, knowledge and understanding, increased engagement and life changing experiences, **Figure C.14**.

**Figure C.14: % Experiencing Each Short-Term Outcome by Theme**
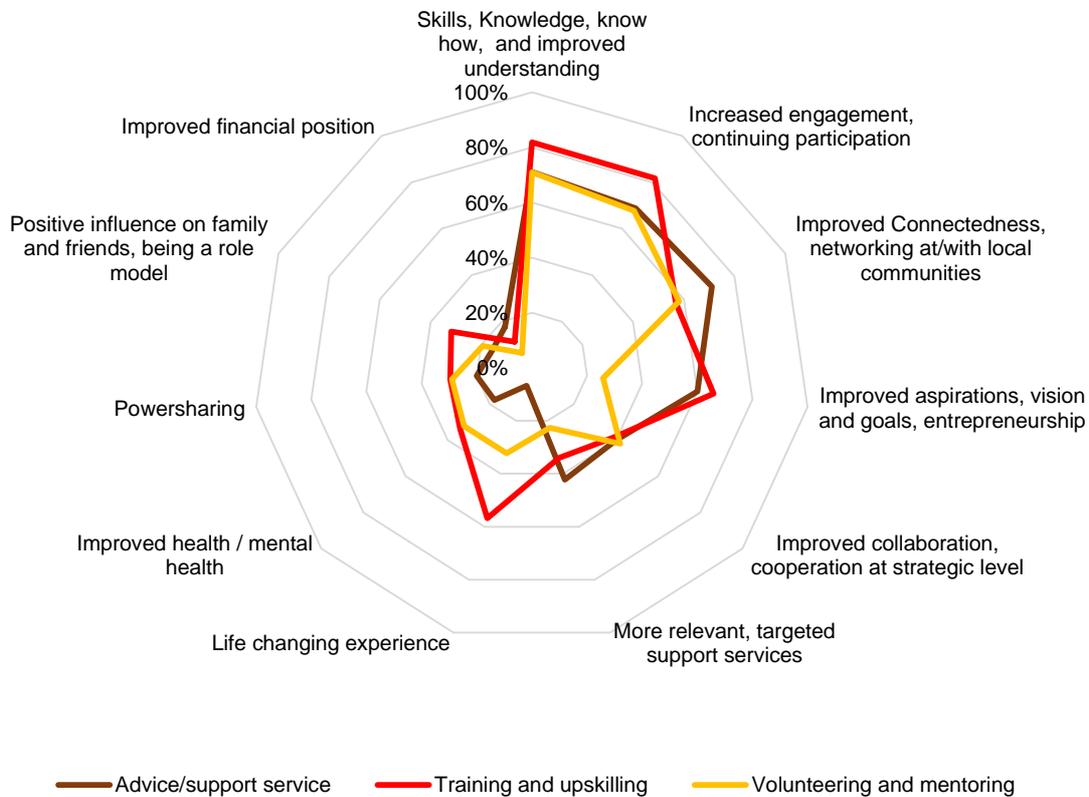


Advice/support service N=31, Training and upskilling N=44, Volunteering and mentoring N=45

In terms of the co-production models; there is a clear difference between the different models of co-production, with traditional methods having a relatively low-level of short-term outcomes and the two level support and double progression models having a higher number of short-term outcomes, **Figure C.15**.

**Figure C.15: % Experiencing Each Short-Term Outcome by Co-Production Model**
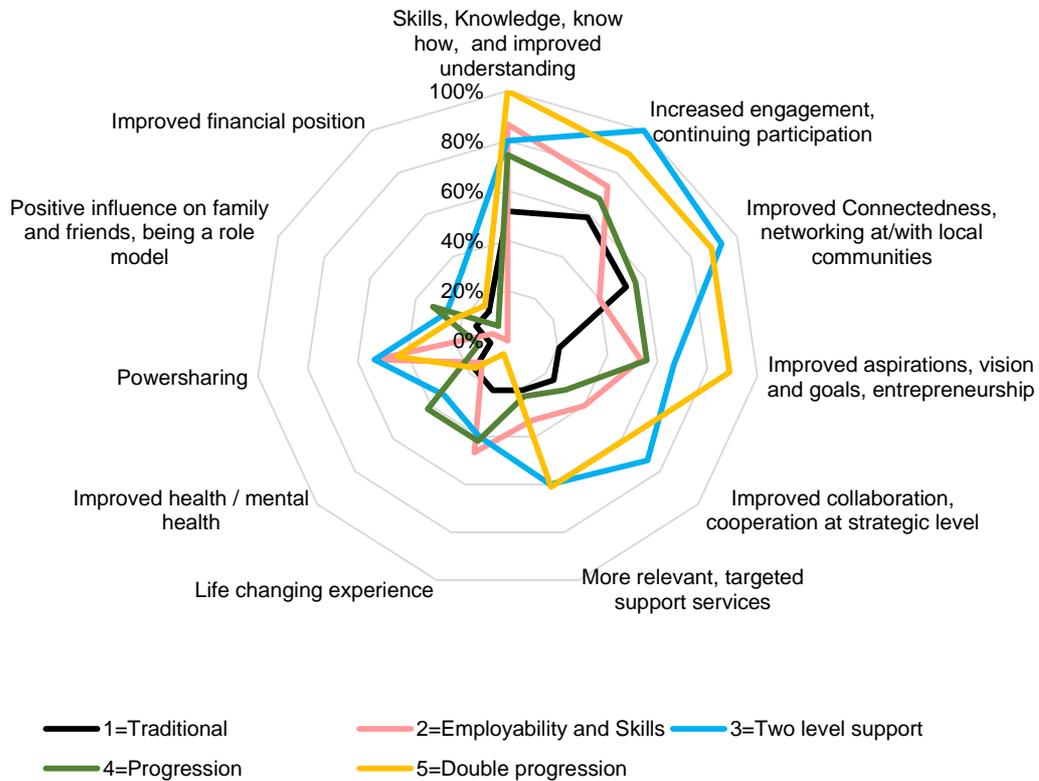


Traditional N=29, Employability and Skills N=15, Two level support N=15, Progression N=43, Double progression N=18

# Long-Term Outcomes

In general a lower number of long-term outcomes was identified than short-term outcomes, which is unsurprising given that long-term outcomes by their nature take time to become apparent. The most common long-term outcomes identified were improved well-being and improved social capital, **Figure C.16**.

**Figure C.16: % Experiencing Each Long-Term Outcome**
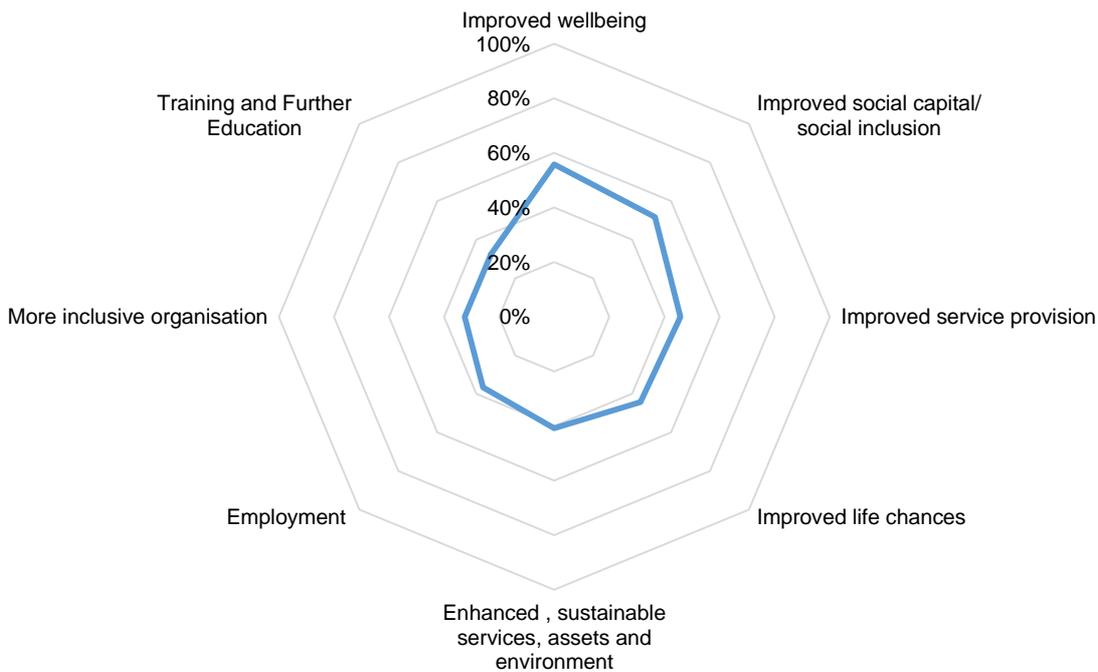


N=120

The most common outcomes identified by community members were improved well-being and improved life chances, while for partners improved social capital and improved service provisions were more prevalent, **Figure C.17**.

**Figure C.17: % Experiencing Each Long-Term Outcome by Participant Type**
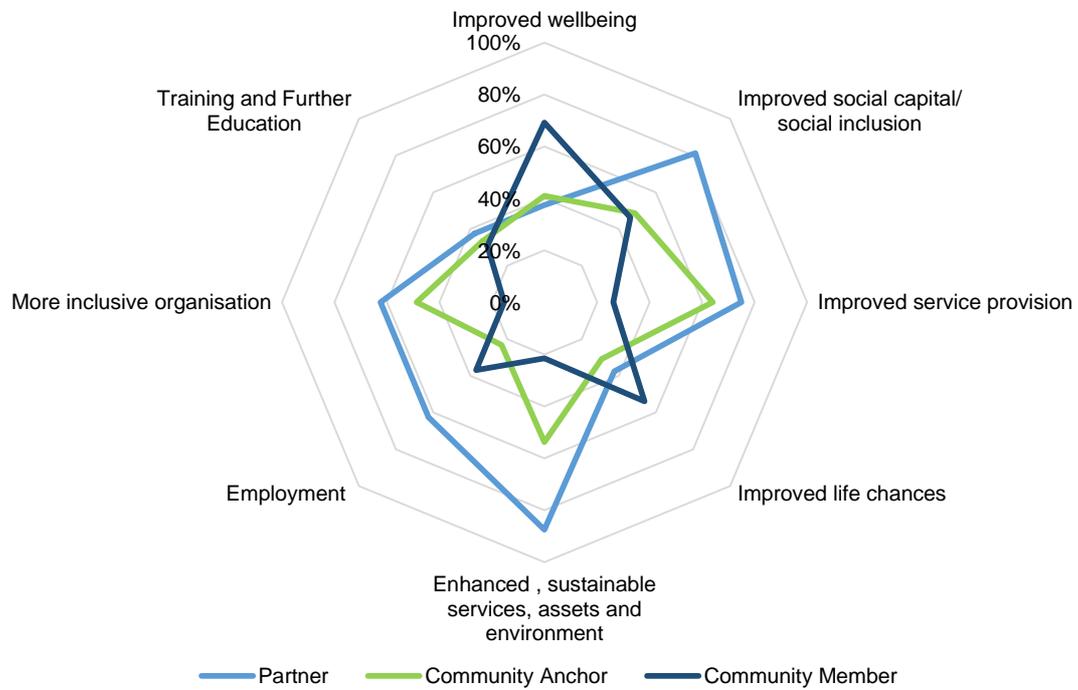


Partners N=16, Community Anchors N=39, Community Members N=65

In terms of the projects themes; advice and support generally has the fewest long-term outcomes identified, but with strengths in improved service provision and improved social capital. Training and upskilling generally has the highest level of long-term outcomes with improved wellbeing, improved life chances and employment the most common, **Figure C.18**.

**Figure C.18: % Experiencing Each Long-Term Outcome by Theme**
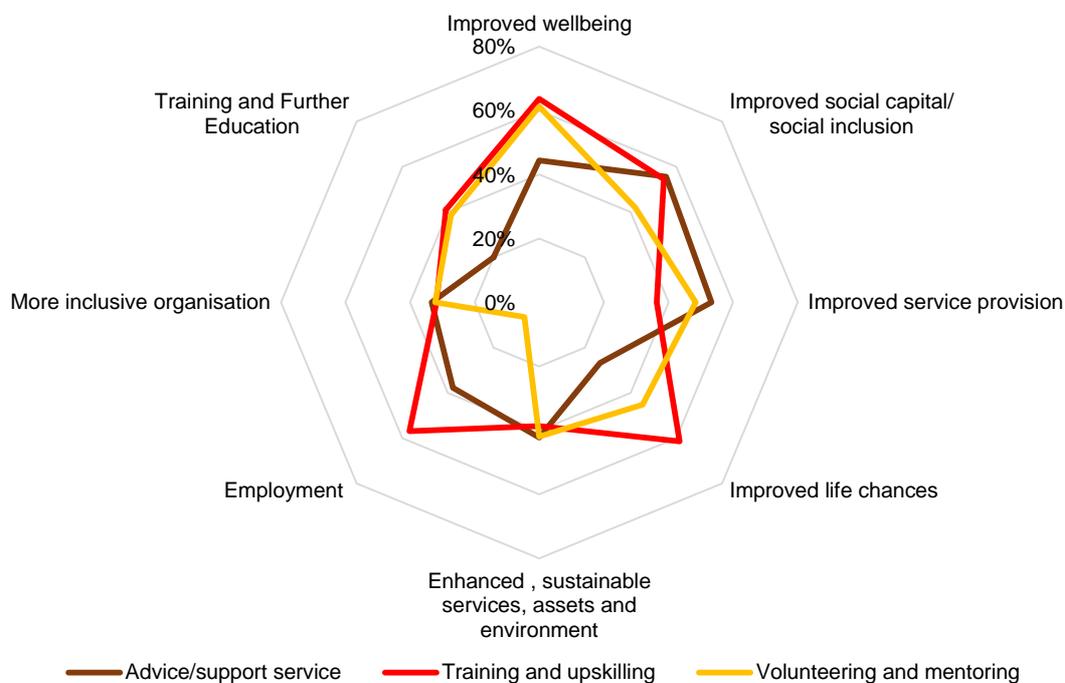


Advice/support service N=31, Training and upskilling N=44, Volunteering and mentoring N=45

With regard to the co-production models; similar to short-term outcomes, the traditional model sees comparatively few long-term outcomes, whilst the two level support and double progression models have the largest impact, particularly on employment and improved social capital, **Figure C.19**.

**Figure C.19: % Experiencing Each Long-Term Outcome by Co-Production Model**
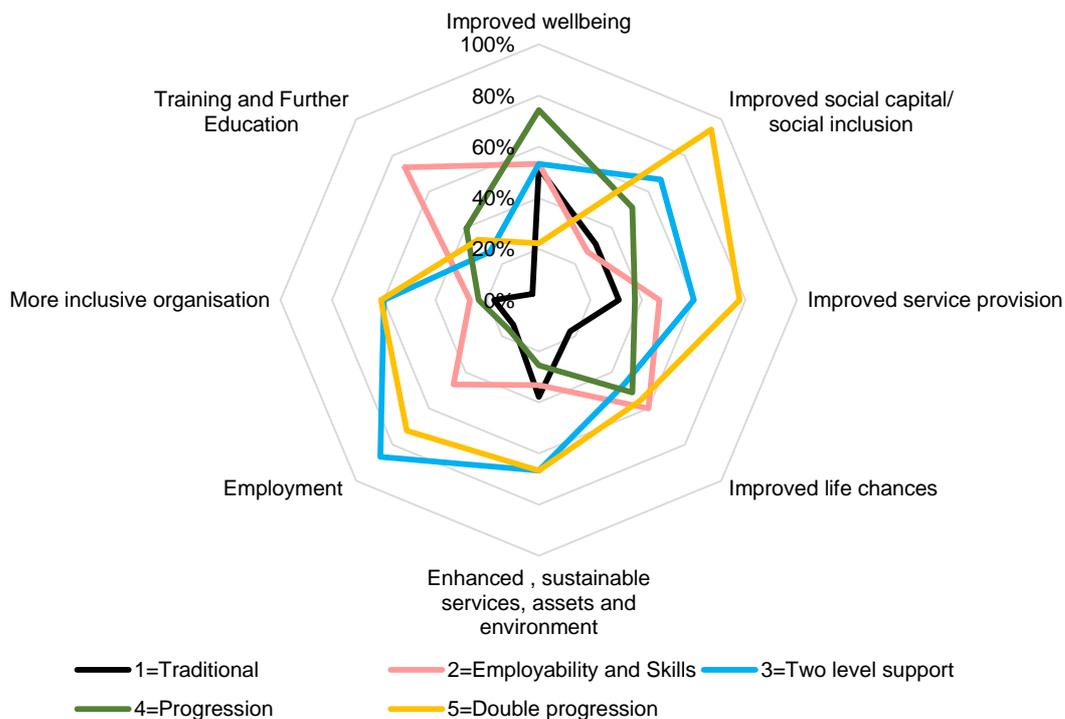


Traditional N=29, Employability and Skills N=15, Two level support N=15, Progression N=43, Double progression N=18

# Appendix D: Full Mechanism Tables

The following tables illustrate the mechanisms most strongly linked to two key commonly reported outcomes: "Improved skills, knowledge and understanding" and, "Increased engagement & participation, influence in co-delivery/design and greater uptake of services."

The models show the mechanisms most strongly linked by the sub groups (beneficiaries and Community Anchor Staff) as well as overall participants –based on differences in the frequency of reporting of any mechanisms when these outcomes were present or not; using a figure adjusted to account for differences in the denominators in the two groups. Other mechanisms may contribute to the short-term outcomes but not as strongly as those linked.

**Figure D.1: Mechanisms Linked to Knowledge and Skills**
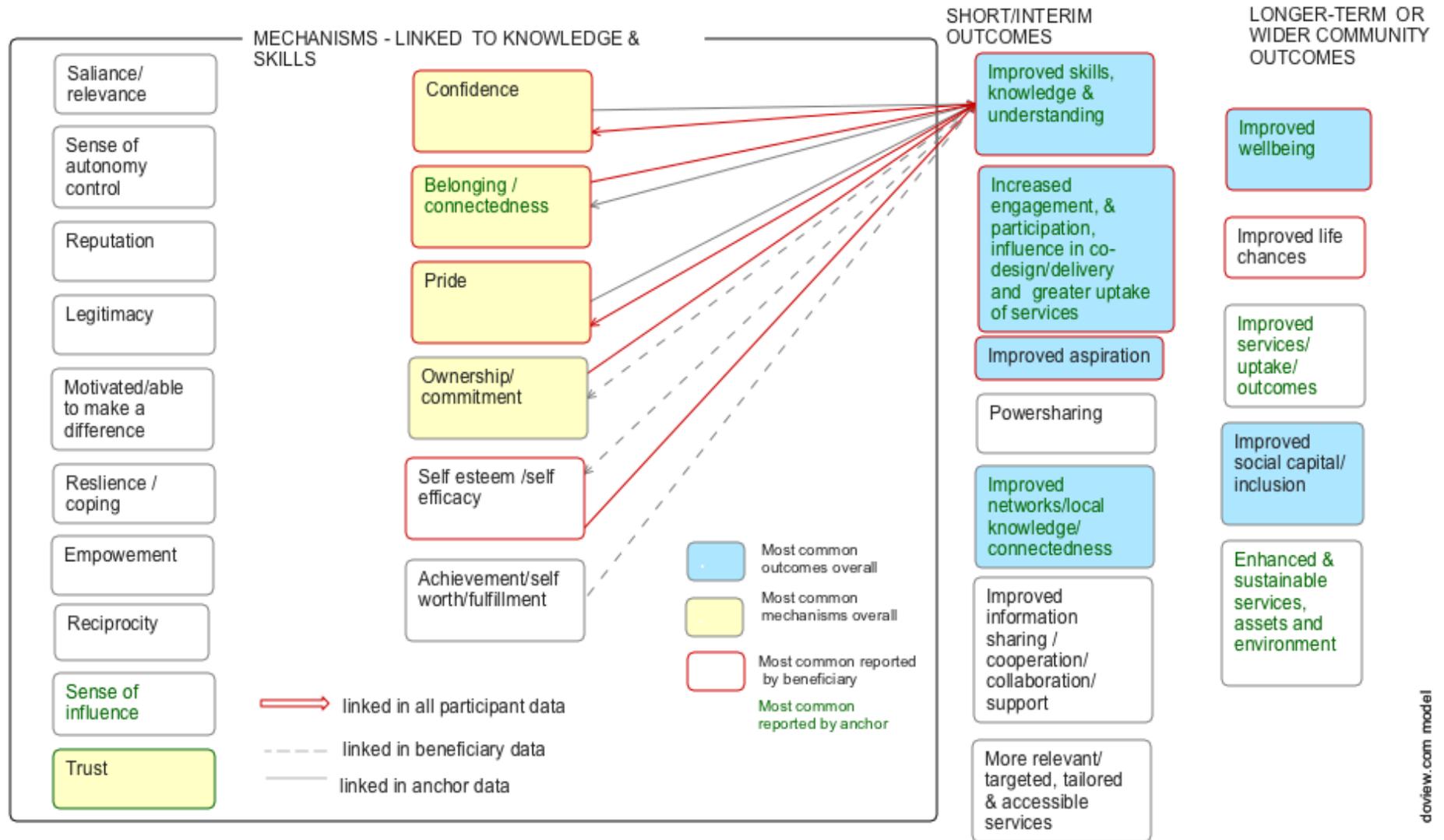
# Figure D.2: Mechanisms Linked to Engagement/ Participation
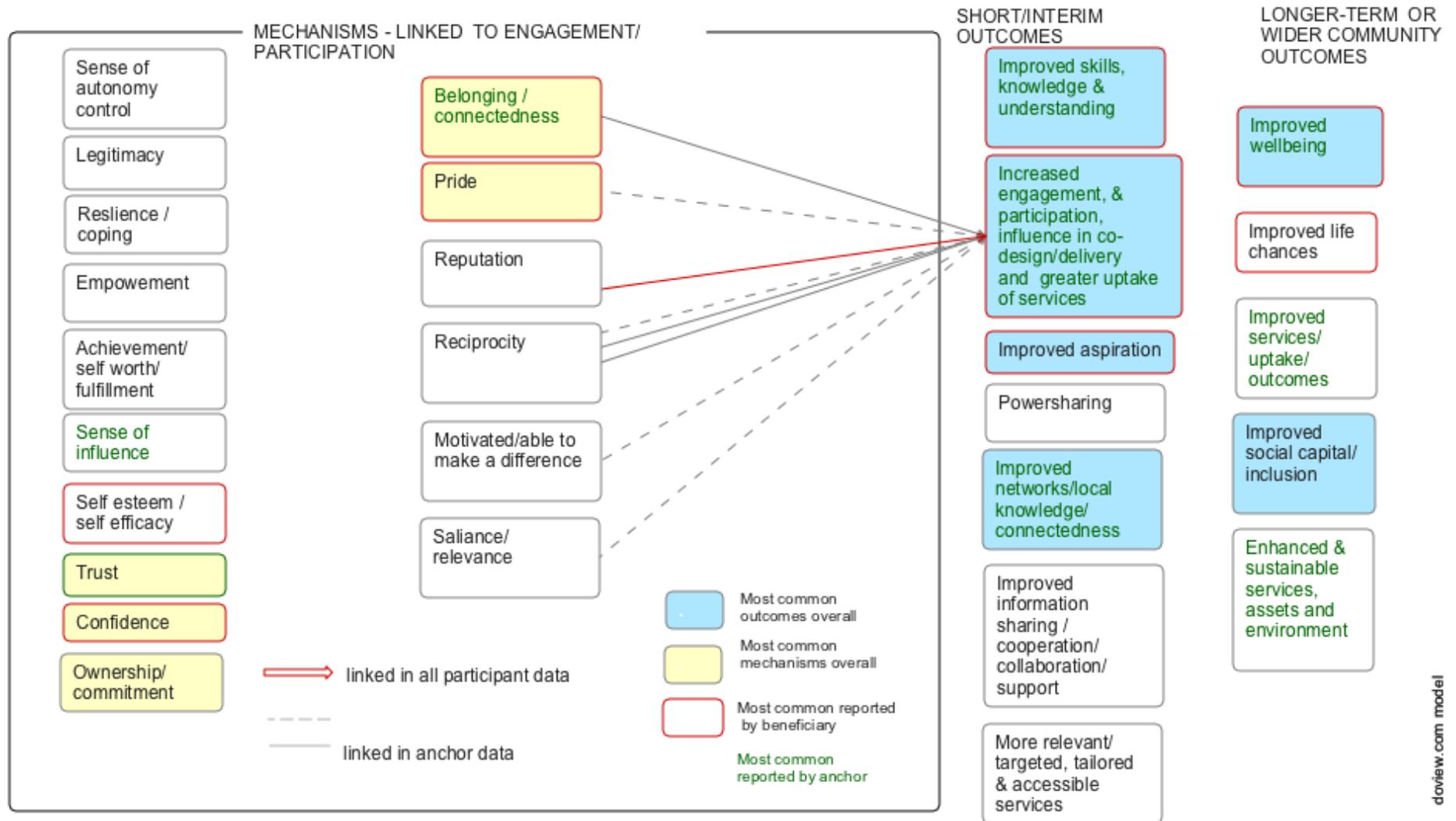
## Contexts Reported Linked to Most Common Mechanisms Associated with Key Outcomes

Context data were recorded from the mini interviews. These interviews were used to uncover participants' personal journeys, their feelings and experiences about aspects of PCF projects processes. An analysis similar to that conducted for the links between mechanisms and outcomes was undertaken to assess the frequency of the project contexts that were present when the four most common mechanisms (belonging, pride, confidence and trust) were.

This judgement was made not based on the frequency that the mechanisms were reported when the outcome was present nor the difference in frequency between the outcome present and not present but on the difference after the figures were adjusted for the respective population sizes. This accounted for the fact that when an outcome was frequently reported the number of participants in the 'outcome not present' population were substantially smaller that the 'outcome present' population.

Again, judgements were made using the difference in frequency of the presence of the contextual issues when the mechanism was and was not reported. Where the number of participants reporting the mechanism was greater than the number not reporting it, the analysis was repeated estimating the difference in frequency based on an adjusted figure that multiplied up the 'mechanisms not present' figures by that same multiple. This was to reduce the likelihood that the association was simply random/due to an artefact.

# Figure D.3: Contexts Reported Linked to Most Common Mechanisms Associated with Key Outcomes

| MOST COMMON MECHANISM | CODE/VALUE | CONTEXTS REPORTED LINKED TO MOST COMMON MECHANSIMS ASSOCIATED WITH KEY OUTCOMES –MINI STORIES | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | DIVERSITY OF SERVICES OFFERED /TAKEN UP | SINGLE SERVICE PROVISION/TAKEN UP | ADDITIONAL LIFESKILLS GAINED | NEEDS ASSESSMENT UNDERTAKEN/ AWARENESS RAISING | WELCOME/TIME TO TALK | HOLISTIC METNORING RECEIVED | ABILITY TO SOCIALISE /NETWORK | MORE OPP. OFFERED /ENCOUARGED | CO-DELIVERED/ VOLUNTEERING *Reported by 61 out of 120 participants overall – unlinked to mechanisms | FEEDBACK AVE. PROVIDED |
| TRUST [N=93] | PRESENT | 49 | 22 | 24 | 63 | 67 | 24 | 49 | 58 | 47 | 44 |
| [N=27] | NOT PRESENT | 15 | 7 | 4 | 12 | 12 | 1 | 6 | 11 | 14 | 3 |
| | DIFF 1 | 34 | 15 | 20 | 51 | 55 | 21 | 43 | 47 | 32 | 41 |
| | ADJ DIFF | 4 | 1 | 12 | 27 | 31 | 21 | 31 | 25 | 5 | 35 |
| BELONGING [N=78] | PRESENT | 43 | 14 | 23 | 54 | 53 | 20 | 43 | 48 | 45 | 41 |
| [N=42] | NOT PRESENT | 21 | 9 | 5 | 19 | 24 | 5 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 6 |
| | DIFF 1 | 22 | 5 | 18 | 35 | 29 | 15 | 31 | 33 | 29 | 35 |
| | ADJ DIFF | 11.5 | 0.5 | 15.5 | 25.5 | 17 | 12.5 | 25 | 25.5 | 21 | 23 |
| PRIDE [N=65] | PRESENT | 35 | 13 | 21 | 46 | 50 | 21 | 37 | 44 | 37 | 28 |
| [N=55] | NOT PRESENT | 28 | 16 | 7 | 29 | 29 | 4 | 18 | 25 | 24 | 19 |
| | DIFF 1 | 7 | -3 | 14 | 17 | 21 | 17 | 19 | 19 | 13 | 9 |
| | ADJ DIFF | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| CONFIDENCE [N=71] | PRESENT | 48 | 8 | 21 | 47 | 56 | 18 | 42 | 48 | 39 | 29 |
| [N=49] | NOT PRESENT | 16 | 21 | 7 | 28 | 23 | 7 | 13 | 21 | 22 | 18 |
| | DIFF 1 | 32 | -13 | 14 | 19 | 33 | 11 | 29 | 27 | 17 | 11 |
| | ADJ DIFF | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

**N OVERALL =120**

**How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this social research publication:

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact Hannah.Davidson@gov.scot for further information.

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