

Chapter 5: Communities and Social Cohesion

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Key findings

How does social cohesion impact on health and wellbeing?

- Social networks, capital, and cohesion are related terms that encompass the positive aspects of neighbourhood community life including relationships, ability for people to rely on one another, and sense of community and belonging.
- People with wider social networks and stronger social relationships have been shown to have better health outcomes:
 - Reduced mortality
 - Faster recovery from illness
 - Better mental health and wellbeing

Communities

- “Community” refers to a group of people connected to one another by shared a shared characteristic. They are often distinguished into communities of place or geography (e.g., the population of a village, residents in a care home, or students in shared accommodation) and communities of interest or identify (e.g., faith groups, LGBTQ+ people, or people living with a specific health condition).
- Loneliness and social isolation are associated with poorer physical and mental health: increased risk and earlier onset of dementia, depression and anxiety, suicide, long-term physical health conditions such as asthma and hypertension, and premature death from all causes. Physical and social infrastructure can help to mitigate loneliness and social isolation.
- Sense of belonging and trust in fellow residents can be low in a new community, especially during the early phases of development when occupation is low and there are few (if any) community facilities. This phenomenon is termed “New Town Blues” and presents as elevated levels of mental distress in the community.

Community development

- Community development is a process where people come together to take collective action on what matters to them and to engage in the design and delivery of future spaces. Community development may be performed either with or without the aid of community development professionals.
- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a form of community development that identifies and builds on a community’s assets and strengths rather than its problems and needs. Although evaluating outcomes from community development can be challenging, emerging evidence indicates that ABCD approaches may generate greater collective action than traditional

community development and support individual-, community-, and organisational-level outcomes.

- Community development officers (CDOs) are professionals who support community development, especially in this early phase of development. CDOs help to identify and address needs, concerns, and issues that affect new and neighbouring communities. CDOs work with communities to address these needs through making connections with relevant stakeholders and partner organisations, or potentially identifying funding sources to leverage.
- The voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE), are key partners in working to build community cohesion. A key strength of community organisations is their awareness and knowledge of local issues and culture within their specific areas. Organisations working at a neighbourhood level can offer a unique understanding of local people, their community and an opportunity to involve even those who are hardest to reach.
- Community forums aim to keep people aware and informed about future development plans, and act as a space to raise emerging or perceived issues to local authorities, housebuilders, or developers. Community leaders may act as part of, or external to, community forums, helping to champion the voices of a community and drive positive change.

Community safety

- Crime and community safety (whether objective or perceived) are important determinants of a community's social cohesion, utilisation of community facilities, and health outcomes, particularly mental health outcomes.
- Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are multi-agency groups that aim to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in their communities. The responsible authorities who make up a CSP are the Police, Fire and Rescue Authority, local authorities, health partners and probation services.
- Community resilience is the capacity for a community to be aware of, plan and prepare for, respond to, and recover from shocks and stresses, in both short- and long-term situations. Local resilience forums are the formal mechanism for preparedness, response and community resilience at the local level.

Recommendations

5.1	Local planning authorities should require developer contributions for community development officers in major new developments.
5.2	Community development officers should establish community forums in new major developments.
5.3	System partners should collaborate with the local resilience forum to encourage reporting of local incidents of flooding, which can be used to support funding to improve local flooding infrastructure.
5.4	System partners to work together with the LRF to develop a model for asset-based community resilience that can be applied across integrated neighbourhoods.

1. Social cohesion and health

Positive aspects of neighbourhood community life include social networks, social capital, and social cohesion. These concepts may be defined as follows:¹

- **Social networks:** how people and organisations are connected socially (e.g. the relationships between neighbours on a street)
- **Social capital:** a community resource involving social organisations such as networks and social trust to create a coordinated sense of belonging (e.g., the ability for neighbours to rely on each other in times of need – for instance, looking after one’s garden while being away on holiday)
- **Social cohesion:** a combination of the relationships between community members (social networks) and an overall sense of belonging (social capital). It may be defined as, *“a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and horizontal interactions among members of society as characterised by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioural manifestations”*.

Quantitative and reliable measurement of social cohesion is challenging as context matters; social cohesion differs based on many factors such as size of population, geographic location, and culture.²

People with stronger social relationships have been shown to have reduced mortality; inadequate social relationships are as harmful to health as smoking. One review of 148 studies (308,849 participants) found that people with strong social relationships had 50% lower risk of mortality than those with weak social relationships.³ This finding was consistent regardless of age, sex, initial health status, cause of death, and follow-up period. Additional studies have shown similar results with individuals who are socially isolated between two and five times more likely to die prematurely compared with those with strong social ties. Social networks can also improve recovery from illness.⁴

There is significant variation in social inequalities within urban and rural areas, not just between.⁵ In rural communities where public transport options are more limited, access to private transport (e.g., ability to travel by car) becomes a more important facilitator for social relationships. Individuals without the ability to travel by car (e.g., older age, physical or mental disabilities precluding driving, socioeconomic deprivation) may experience fewer social networks and benefit from lower social capital.⁵ Furthermore, poorer digital connectivity in rural communities can also contribute towards social isolation.⁶

A study of 88 individuals living in social housing in rural Cornwall 2017-2018 showed that a larger social network was significantly associated with higher measured wellbeing scores.⁷ However, when controlling for social cohesion (i.e., the quality of the social relationships), that association no longer existed. The authors concluded that interventions to improve wellbeing of resource-poor communities in rural areas must focus both on increasing the size of individuals’ social networks, but also developing a stronger sense of local community cohesion. Interventions should

account for social heterogeneity and cultural variation between urban and rural areas.⁸

There is growing school of thought of utilising an asset-based approach for community development. This means focussing on connections and potential in a community, instead of trying to address deficiencies. This method seeks to ensure long-term sustainability and utilise local expertise to strengthen communities.⁴ Identifying and utilising local health assets including individuals, communities and organisations enhance community capabilities to address health inequalities.⁹

C2 Connecting Communities is a specific model of community development that focuses on sustained partnership working to build social cohesion. Originally developed to tackle health inequalities in a Falmouth community, this model has since been adopted in multiple disadvantaged communities in England. Key factors to addressing health inequalities through building social cohesion include access to social resources including social networks and communal capabilities/resilience alongside control of resources and decision making.⁹

2. Communities

2.1. *What makes a cohesive community?*

“Community” refers to a group of people connected to one another by shared a shared characteristic.¹⁰ They are often distinguished into communities of place or geography (e.g., the population of a village, residents in a care home, or students in shared accommodation) and communities of interest or identify (e.g., faith groups, LGBTQ+ people, or people living with a specific health condition).^{10,11} Communities are dynamic; members enter and leave with the overall community being maintained by the ongoing shared characteristic.

The concepts of social capital, networks, and cohesion are all applicable within a community. Some communities are tightly connected or even have formalised membership, whereas other ones are only loosely defined. The greater the social capital and connectedness within a community, the greater support the community structure will have for health and wellbeing outcomes. A cohesive community is one with strong social capital, networks and cohesion.

The Local Government Association has produced a guide on building cohesive communities.¹² This guide emphasises that local leadership, particularly from appointed councillors, is the most important factor in fostering community cohesion. Beyond leadership, the guide describes a range of tools available to support community cohesion:

- Vision and strategy
- Data
- Equalities work
- Partnership working
- Commissioning

- Effective community engagement
- Community strategies
- Governance and scrutiny

The guide also outlines the role(s) of different service areas in supporting community cohesion:

- Early years, schools, young people and family services
- Public health
- Inclusive growth, skills and employment
- Housing, planning and local areas
- Culture and sports services
- Regulatory and environmental service
- Services for asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants

This guide, along with others (e.g., Public Health England and Involve) could be used to guide and support local initiatives to strengthen community cohesion across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.^{10,13}

Community cohesion can also be supported through the planning system and with considered design that aims to maximise opportunities for community interaction:¹⁴

- “Anchoring conduits” – places such as health or leisure facilities, schools, and libraries, which increase the frequency of neighbourhood networking
- Reducing “fragmentation” of a neighbourhood with streets with speeds in excess of 60km/hour, unpassable waterways, and trainlines
- Co-locating residential and commercial properties

The dynamics between new and existing communities are also important to consider. New developments are not always welcomed by existing communities, impairing social cohesion. There may be concerns over increasing traffic, insufficiency of public services to accommodate the increased population, disruption to local life during the construction phase, or a desire to resist a fundamental change in the character from rural to urban or suburban. Others may welcome new development, recognising the increased range of services and job opportunities that may result from the population influx. Existing communities often provide essential services until the new community has expanded to a critical mass where it can itself sustain assets and services.

Communication with an existing community and involvement in shaping plans which will affect them is vital. A continuous programme of engagement across the lifespan of the development can help bring the existing community along on this journey. Examples of these are the Community Forums held by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, which accompany the major growth sites in Greater Cambridge.

2.2. Loneliness, social isolation and mental health

Loneliness and social isolation differ.

“Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person’s desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person’s relationships. Loneliness is never desired and lessening these feelings can take a long time.

Social isolation is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships. People may choose to have a small number of contacts. When they feel socially isolated, this can be overcome relatively quickly by increasing the number of people they are in contact with.” – Age UK¹⁵

People more likely to report loneliness are those aged 16-24, female, single or widowed, living with a limiting mental health condition, people living in rental property, and people from Inclusion Health groups.^{16,17,1*} Loneliness is predicted of both poor physical and mental health, especially in teenagers and older adults. Specifically, loneliness has been associated with:^{16,18}

- Increased risk and earlier onset of dementia
- Depression and anxiety
- Suicide and suicidal ideation
- Increased risk of long-term health conditions (e.g., hypertension, asthma, osteoarthritis, migraine, back pain)
- Premature death from all causes
- Increased risk of hospitalisation and emergency department attendance
- Lower reported overall wellbeing

The place in which someone lives can influence their risk of experiencing loneliness:¹⁶

- *living in remote areas is associated with poor transport, reduced local activity choices, social isolation of minorities, poor digital connectivity, and lack of opportunities to socialise outside of school, which increases loneliness*
- *young people living in densely populated urban areas, including at university, that are rich in social opportunities*
- *living in greener, more walkable, and less populated areas is linked with lower loneliness*

^{1*} NHS England defines Inclusion Health groups as:

- People who experience homelessness
- People with drug and alcohol dependence
- Vulnerable migrants and refugees
- Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities
- People in contact with the justice system
- Victims of modern slavery
- Sex workers
- Other marginalised groups

- *individuals with a higher sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and higher trust in the inhabitants of their neighbourhoods feel less lonely and higher neighbourhood social cohesion has been associated with better mental- and physical health*

Sense of belonging and trust in fellow residents can be low in a new community, especially during the early phases of development when occupation is low and there are few (if any) community facilities. This phenomenon, termed “New Town Blues”, was observed in Cambourne, South Cambridgeshire, in 2007, when higher than expected rates of mental distress were noted in Cambourne, across social strata. To mitigate this, a series of recommendations were made to mitigate this effect, including:

- To ensure that community development is considered alongside physical development
- To ensure physical infrastructure is built to support social cohesion (E.g., community facilities)
- To require developers and planners to remedy early development deficiencies in later phases of development, adapting to emerging community needs
- To involve existing (adjacent) communities in subsequent phases of development

A meta-analysis published in 2022 examined 136 individual published studies of interventions seeking to reduce loneliness.¹⁹ This analysis concluded, “*Psychological treatment, social support interventions, and social and emotional skills training appeared to be the most effective intervention strategies in reducing loneliness but there is currently no strong reason to prefer one intervention strategy over another.*” However, the quality of evidence was low or very low, and thus results are uncertain. One important finding was that short-term effects (i.e., <4 weeks from the intervention) were comparable to long-term effects (1-6 months from the intervention). This suggests that short-term local pilots of interventions to reduce loneliness would be an appropriate response. These pilots should include pre- and post- data collection, alongside evaluations to establish their efficacy within the local context.

Bar Hill - Meet, Eat and Arts

Meet, Eat and Arts is a project organised by Cambridgeshire Libraries and Bar Hill Community Association (BHCA), supported by funding from the Europe Challenge Fund. The project aims to improve social cohesion and wellbeing for people seeking sanctuary and the wider community in Bar Hill. It is working to improve the mental health of people seeking sanctuary, tackle isolation, and connect them with existing residents to de-escalate mistrust.

BHCA facilitate a monthly community kitchen in a purpose-built community space with kitchen facilities. Library staff and BHCA members worked with the new arrivals to identify culturally relevant recipes. In the community kitchen new arrivals

and existing residents can cook together, sharing recipes, skills and techniques. The food is shared onsite in a communal eating area.

Participants then attend the library (a 3-minute walk) for an arts event running in the afternoon. These free-of-charge activities were be chosen by the community and comprise different art forms: music, puppetry, crafts or dance. Through workshops, participants are invited to share aspects of their own culture.

This project has received positive feedback, and future sessions are oversubscribed. Attendees report an increased sense of agency, validation and welcome through cooking, eating and participating in cultural activity with local community members. They also discover additional free resources and opportunities, available to them via the library, the local council, and in the wider community. This helps them improve their English, spend time productively, and prepare for participatory life in the UK beyond the asylum process.

Connecting guests with other services increases awareness of local support available at crucial moments (for example, people seeking asylum have a very short window of time to find alternative housing after their application is approved). The project provides new arrivals and local community members with chances to interact, collaborate, get to know each other and form friendships in an informal and positive environment, leading to greater community cohesion.

3. Community development

3.1. What is community development?

“Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action.” – Kenny & Connors (2017)²⁰

Community development is a process where people come together to take collective action on what matters to them. Done either with or without the aid of community development professionals. Community development should engage residents in the design and delivery of future spaces in their local area. This process helps to ensure residents’ voices are heard and needs are met, while embedding a sense of self-determination and belonging.

Community development is not just committees or community groups, singular events, leadership training or consultation (Figure 1). All these elements might be part of a valuable community development strategy however when considered in isolation, do not constitute community development.

Figure 1: Wheel of participation



Source: Dooris & Heritage (2013), adapted from Davidson (1998)²¹

Romsey Mill

Romsey Mill is a community development charity creating opportunities with young people, families and local communities across Cambridgeshire and in Peterborough, supporting over 2,300 individuals each year. Romsey Mill’s Youth Development Team prioritises developing relationships with 13-25 year olds who are facing considerable life challenges; co-creating positive activities, offering advice, skills development and guidance into education, training, and employment. Their work integrates community-based activities and young-person led projects, 1-1 support, mentoring, and alternative education in partnership with schools.

Romsey Mill's theory of change draws particularly on a youth development framework from work led by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.²² This framework in turns draws on extensive and overlapping research around Positive Youth Development approaches, Social Emotional Learning, Developmental Relationships and Developmental Experiences, and it was influential in the development of the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 2.0.²³

Below are the indicators and outcomes from the Romsey Mill Youth Development Annual Report for Northstowe 2024, highlighting the positive outcomes and the improved social cohesion and capital experienced by young people that the Romsey Mill outreach team engage with.

Developmental Relationships	Indicators	Actual
Outcomes	Young people expressing an improvement in confidence	71%
	Young people expressing an improvement in their ability to overcome challenges	76%
	Young people expressing an improvement in their ability to get on with others	88%
	Young people expressing an improvement in their wellbeing	82%
	Young people expressing an improvement in their skills	82%
	Young people expressing an improvement in making positive changes and decisions	65%
	Young people expressing an improvement in feeling safe in their community	83%
	Young people expressing an improvement in their ability to have a positive impact on others in their community	83%
	Young people expressing an improvement in hope for the future	76%
	Rating of Romsey Mill sessions out of 10	9.29

3.2. Asset Based Community Development

Many models of community development exist. The key to success is providing support early within new communities and having a flexible approach in which residents and stakeholders can influence the delivery model and outputs. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a form of asset based community development that begins the development process by identifying and building on a community's 'assets' rather than needs.^{24,25} Assets include physical spaces, skills, local knowledge, local groups and associations and networks as well as financial resources.

There are four pillars to ABCD:²⁶

1. A focus on community assets and strengths rather than problems and needs.
2. Identifying and mobilising individual and community assets, skills and passions.
3. Community driven – community builders build from inside out.
4. Relationship driven.

ABCD is an approach to sustainable community-driven development. Beyond the mobilisation of a particular community, it is concerned with how to link micro-assets

to the macro-environment. Often these can be unrecognised assets in their given context therefore the mapping and connection of these assets is essential to ABCD. Local social improvement and economic development can result when these linkages are made.

In 2021, a review of was conducted of studies investigating ABCD approaches, 2015-19. This review concluded that “strong case for ABCD and asset-based approaches, based on an understanding of community assets and the value of social relationships for people’s wellbeing”. While acknowledging that current data on mid- to long-term outcomes from ABCD is limited, the following changes were reported.

“Individual-level outcomes: including increased confidence, increased social connections and decreased social isolation, and increased empathy for others.

Community-level outcomes: including improved relationships, stronger and more inclusive social networks, increased collective agency or activism, increased sense of pride for marginalised communities and feeling of more hope.

Organisational-level outcomes: there was less evidence on organisational outcomes, although some stronger partnerships between organisations were reported and services becoming more aware of the need to work with the community.”

These findings highlight how recent literature shows an emerging evidence base for ABCD and how future research should focus on evaluating outcome data and community perspectives.

3.3. Community development officers

Community development is particularly important within urban expansions, fringe developments or new towns. A sense of community and place-making takes time to establish and often needs initial support. Community development officers (CDOs) are professionals who support community development, especially in this early phase of development.

CDOs help to identify and address needs, concerns, and issues that affect new and neighbouring communities. CDOs work with communities to address these needs through making connections with relevant stakeholders and partner organisations, or potentially identifying funding sources to leverage.

Specific roles of CDOs include:

- Enable and kick-start connections and opportunities for existing and new communities. Before community groups are established CDOs can run activities which bring the community together to identify what residents may be interested in and what groups they would like to see established. CDOs can then support residents to set up these groups.

- Keeping residents informed about changes, progress and what and where they can influence decision making
- Strengthen community and social infrastructure through partnerships and relationship building
- Facilitate good quality engagement opportunities
- Trouble-shooting and support to navigate the local systems / services
- Welcome new residents to a development, supplying welcome that provide information about how and where to access healthcare, education, opportunities to meet others in their community.

CDOs aim to equip residents with the tools and skills to sustain initiatives long-term and can continue to thrive independently. This may be in the form of providing them with training, giving them the confidence to set up new activities, the knowledge of where to potential apply for funding, or the support can be provided via [Hunts forum](#), [Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service](#) and [Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service](#).

CDOs are typically funded through section 106 developer contributions, as well as other sources such as local authorities (e.g., statutory Child and Family services). Some developers employ CDOs in-house, to ensure they have access to contractors and housebuilders within the development. In certain Districts there are also Community Liaison meetings in growth areas where representatives from developer teams (Housebuilders and Estate teams) combined with Local Authority (Planning and Community teams) and resident association come together in a round table format to help address issues that arise from emerging developments during the construction phase.

Community Development Officers in Northstowe

Northstowe, an ongoing new development in South Cambridgeshire, has two dedicated CDOs managed by a Growth Development officer. These roles are managed by the local district council and funded through the section 106 developer contributions. The CDOs have strong links into the council and have also forged good working relationships with other local organisations, such as the Town Council, the health service, the local schools, and VCSE organisations. By being based in the growing town, these CDOs are able to be on-hand for the new community, to become recognised and trusted faces and know what is happening in their local area to help signpost. Being dedicated to a geographical area and role, enables full commitment to be given to the development of that community.

The CDOs have been responsible for meeting with and encouraging new residents who wish to set up new groups and activities in the town. They have:

- Helped them apply for funding to get these initiatives going (arts, sports, board games, community cafe), providing ongoing support and promotion to others of the new activities.
- Been able to organise their own run events and join in with other larger event organised by others.

- Encouraged the new residents to come out and meet others in the town and enjoy the event while making new connections to others in the town.

The Northstowe CDOs are also linked into a network of other CDOs covering other new towns and settlements, enabling shared learning and creating a community of good practice.

Christ Church, Trumpington

Christ Church in Trumpington wanted to provide some support to the new settlements emerging in the local area. They noticed people were moving here from many countries, partly due to the international draw of working at biomedical campus and university. Within first 2 years, over 30 languages were spoken within one housing development in Trumpington. New settlers were finding it difficult to connect and feel settled. Utilising some funds provided by developer contributions and with support from a CDO, the church set up the [International Café](#), enabling new locals to meet and connect. They provided a safe space to practice English, to meet other new residents, and share recipes from their home-nations, to celebrate diversity and culture. 10 years on, this project is thriving and continues to provide a safe, welcoming space for those new to the community.

3.4. The VCSE sector

The voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE), sometimes known as the “third sector”, covers a broad remit of different organisations and groups that are key partners in working to build community cohesion. The VCSE sector includes local and national charities, residents’ and tenants’ organisations, faith and community groups and may include not-for-profit organisations such as social enterprises, cooperatives and housing associations. Some places have faith groups with a physical location (e.g., churches, mosques and temples), which often offer valuable welfare assistance and can be these groups can be powerful champions for community cohesion.

At a local level, smaller community organisations may form an integral part in community development. A key strength of these organisations is their awareness and knowledge of local issues and culture within their specific areas. Organisations working at a neighbourhood level can offer a unique understanding of local people, their community and an opportunity to involve even those who are hardest to reach.

Examples of organisations facilitating VCSE sector work include:

- [Support Cambridgeshire](#) provide a wide array of infrastructure support to the VCSE sector including providing information, training and advice, networking and championing. Importantly, all learning is shared across the system, not focused purely on top-down communication. For example, network meetings and forums enable learning between all system partners and Support

Cambridgeshire's Annual State of the Sector report distils learning for everyone's benefit.

- The Cambridgeshire County Council's Communities Team are well-placed to empower community groups. When a Community Group has an idea which they are passionate about, the Communities Team can actively listen and support them to grow their idea. For example, the Lighthouse in Ely has a vision for what their building might achieve in the future. The Communities Team and local system partners have offered support with:
 - Successfully applying for the Community Reach Fund for their new Cooking Club
 - Providing links to potential sources of support to achieve their vision (e.g., social enterprise advice and training)
 - Working with Integrated Neighbourhood partners to apply for larger funding pots to contribute towards shared aims (e.g., building adaptations to increase the flexible use of space)

Lunar New Year and Diwali events at Wintringham

The demographic of new communities can vary from the more established communities around them. Developer Urban&Civic's Communities Team at Wintringham has been working closely with residents on the new development to the east of St Neots to ensure a welcoming and inclusive approach to events and activities. One message that emerged clearly from the community was the aspiration for space to celebrate cultural traditions and share them with new neighbours to build understanding around each other's faith and cultural traditions. To support this goal, two events were held, one for Diwali and the other for Lunar New Year. Each event has been led by representatives of the featured communities, supported by the Residents' Association and the U&C Communities Team.

The first celebration focussed on Diwali and included a series of events including food, games, giving of gifts hosted in Wintringham Primary School during the day, and celebration of light in the development's plaza in front of the school in the evening. The second event focussed on Lunar New Year and enabled a range of families from Hong Kong who had moved to the development, but not necessarily connected, to meet up and share their traditions with the wider community. Both events were well attended and have also involved the school, which has focussed on the events and celebrations in lessons.

The Team and Residents' Association are now working with residents to plan events for future years.

3.5. Community forums and leaders

3.5.1. Community forums

A community forum is a public meeting where members of the community come together at a central location to share their ideas, opinions and concerns. Community

forums are typically facilitated by local government officers or councillors and include community members, local authorities, planners, housebuilders or developers, and other stakeholders. Early establishment of community forums aim to keep people aware and informed about future development plans. Ensuring community forums reflect and draw in neighbouring communities is an effective way of building both cohesion and resilience.

3.5.2. Community leaders

“Community leaders are laypeople who represent and speak for their community. They are grassroots leaders, as opposed to formally appointed leaders of institutions, or the socially and economically powerful. They can be leaders of communities of place, communities of interest, or communities of solidarity. The legitimacy and value of their leadership is found in their community links: rather than being formally appointed in their role, they emerge organically (although they may then be formally appointed in a leadership role in response to specific opportunities or structures). It can be easier to define a community leader by what they are not – they are not paid, they are not confined to a specific organisation or remit, and they do not necessarily have formal authority or positional power. Instead, they have influence through their relationships and ability to persuade.” – Local Trust²⁷

Community leaders should have an effective understanding of local agencies and interests – civic, transport, health, police, housing, leisure, education, faith, environment etc - and can navigate these to provide people-centred solutions. A review of literature published on community leaders concluded that interpersonal skills, strategy and vision development skills, and implementation skills were all important for community leaders to be effective.²⁷ Social infrastructure (e.g., CDOs, volunteer networks, seed funding) can be designed to support the emergence and sustainability of community leaders.

4. Community safety

Community safety is an important determinant of community cohesion. Increased neighbourhood crime is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, psychosis, and generalised psychological distress for residents.²⁸ For older adults, living in a neighbourhood perceived to be safe was associated with better psychological wellbeing.²⁹ Stronger social cohesion was shown to mitigate some of the detrimental psychological impact of living in a neighbourhood perceived to be unsafe.²⁹

Community Safety aims to address a wide variety of issues through a range of solutions (Table 1).

Table 1: Issues and Solutions related to Community Safety

Issues	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domestic Abuse• Neighbourhood safety• Discrimination and harassment• County Lines• Anti-Social Behaviour• Fraud & Scams• Radicalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Safety Partnerships• Policing• Safeguarding• Resilience• Serious Violence Duty• Cyber security• Prevent

4.1. Community Safety Partnerships

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.³⁰ CSPs bring together local partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in their communities. The responsible authorities who make up a CSP are the Police, Fire and Rescue Authority, local authorities, health partners and probation services.

Community Safety Partnerships look at what community safety issues people in the area are experiencing, such as antisocial behaviour or specific types of crime, and decides what actions to take to prevent or deal with these issues together.

Each year, community safety priorities for all the Cambridgeshire Districts and Peterborough are reviewed by their respective CSPs, with actions for the year ahead set out in their Community Safety Plans.

There are five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) delivering the Countywide Community Safety Agreement in Cambridgeshire and a sixth in Peterborough.

- [Cambridge City Community Safety Partnership](#)
- [East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership](#)
- [Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership](#)
- [Safer Fenland Partnership](#)
- [South Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership](#)
- [Safer Peterborough Partnership](#)

The data and the recommendations for each district is made via their strategic assessments [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Crime & Community Safety – Community Safety Partnerships \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#).

Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there is a joint [Community Safety Agreement](#) for 2022 to 2025. This agreement identifies areas that due to complexity or wider impact require countywide partnership action. These areas include:

- Domestic abuse
- Sexual Violence

- Violence against women and girls (including Female Genital Mutilation, Honour-based violence & forced marriage)
- Child criminal exploitation
- Mental Health
- Prevent
- Reoffending
- Road Safety
- Serious organised crime including human trafficking/modern day slavery
- Substance misuse
- Youth offending

A Countywide Community Safety Board oversees delivery of this agreement and has identified four high-harm issues requiring prioritised local action are Drugs, Serious Violence, Violence against Women and Girls, and Serious Organised Crime.

4.2. Secured by Design

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Paragraph 135 (f) states:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.” – National Planning Policy Framework³¹

The layout and design of the places people live, work, learn, and play can directly influence their safety. Secured by Design is an official police security initiative that aims to improve the safety of the built environment through considered design. This initiative has produced a range of design guides to support reduction and fear of crime in the built environment, including homes, schools, hospitals, and commercial premises. During the early stages of planning a new development, developers are encouraged to seek consultation and advice from the Police Designing out Crime Officers to ensure the Secured by Design principles are robustly incorporated. These principles include:

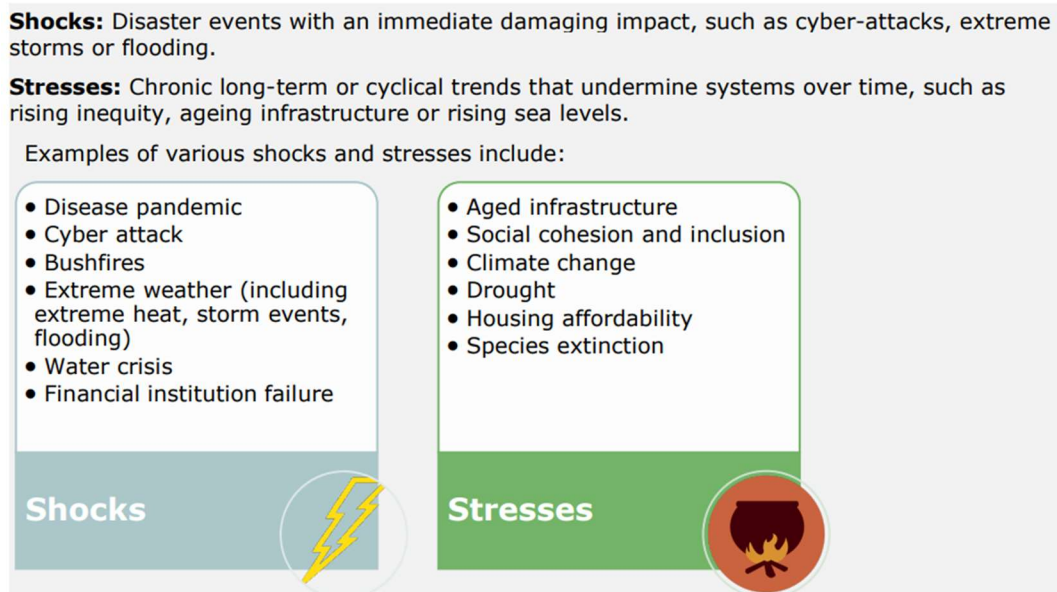
- **Physical protection:** Places that include necessary, well-designed security features.
- **Access and movement:** Places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security.
- **Safe routes:** Creating safe routes that are as straight as possible, wide, well lit, without hiding places and well-maintained and overlooked for security and provide a sense of security for all users.
- **Structure:** Places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict.

- **Lighting:** Ensuring appropriate and non-obtrusive lighting levels are achieved.
- **Private space:** Creating a clear separation between public and private spaces, avoiding public routes next to back gardens.
- **Surveillance:** Places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked.
- **Ownership:** Places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility, and community.
- **Activity:** Places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location reduces the risk of crime and always creates a sense of safety and territoriality.
- **Management and maintenance:** Places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.

4.3. Community Resilience

Community resilience is the capacity for a community to be aware of, plan and prepare for, respond to, and recover from shocks and stresses, in both short- and long-term situations (Figure 2).³² A resilient response in an emergency, is when communities respond using local resources and knowledge to help themselves in a way that typically complements the local emergency services. A community will be better prepared to cope during and after an emergency when everyone works together using their local knowledge. Resilience relies on social cohesion and is central to being a safe and sustainable community.

Figure 2: Shocks and stresses in the context of community resilience



Source: Infrastructure Australia³³

General emergency planning is conducted by [Cambridgeshire County Council](#) and [Peterborough City Council](#). Localised emergency planning is conducted by Local

Resilience Forums (LRFs). The LRF for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Prepared](#).

LRFs are the formal mechanism for preparedness, response and resilience at the local level. LRFs aim to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.

LRFs are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. These agencies are known as Category 1 Responders, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

LRFs are supported by organisations, known as Category 2 responders, such as the Highways Agency and public utility companies. They have a responsibility to co-operate with Category 1 organisations and to share relevant information with the LRF. The geographical area the forums cover is based on police areas.

LRFs also work with other partners in the military and voluntary sectors who provide a valuable contribution to LRF work in emergency preparedness. Community organisations are also essential partners to support resilience, such as [Communities Prepared](#) in the context of severe weather.

Swavesey Community Flood Plan

Swavesey is a village in South Cambridgeshire that has experienced severe flooding. In response, Swavesey parish council compiled a community flood plan that identifies local areas at highest risk of flood and a list of actions to be taken before, during, and after a flood, including evacuation protocols. This plan relies on a local flood action group and designates Neighbourhood Support Zones, each with a co-ordinator to support the plan's implementation in times of flood. The plan also keeps a list of local assets, such as emergency equipment, which can be used should the need arise.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Prepared

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Prepared are the LRF for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Its strategy lists 4 aims:

- To **support** society to improve their own resilience – because self-determination is at the core of co-production
- To **activate** the preparedness of those most in need – because better preparedness will lower demand, reduce diversity of need, and pre-position support for priority groups
- To **reduce** local risk and vulnerability of those most in need – because reducing risk and vulnerability will allow Local Resilience Capability to focus on the priority groups most in need
- To **unite** different parts of the system that work with priority groups or on resilience – so that our collaboration can benefit from system-wide additionality

The LRF applies 3 key principles to underpin these aims: co-production with the community, focussing on priority groups most at risk, and starting simply then growing.

The LRF draws local leaders together to discuss what Community Resilience means to them in their area, provides an 'offer' of training, and hosts educational workshops for wider groups. An asset-based approach is used to identify publicly controlled locations that could be used in times of emergency as Emergency Liaison points (ELPS) and could hold physical information and equipment for times when communication is a challenge, such as in a power outage. Local communities are supported to utilise their own expertise from within the community to fulfil various roles, with lanyards with roles and briefing notes prepared to be activated in times of an emergency.

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