



Our Communities: Voices of Our Community

Community Survey 2024

Gloucestershire
Gateway Trust

community-driven development

Contents

Introduction.....2

Together in Matson.....4

The Venture Community Hub.....6

The Nelson Trust.....8

ReadWithMe.....10

Play Gloucestershire.....12

Matson Residents Group.....14

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.....16

GL4 CIC.....18

GL Communities.....20

Fair Shares.....22

All Pulling Together.....24



Gloucestershire
Gateway Trust

community-driven development

Introduction

Since 2018, Gloucestershire Gateway Trust has conducted annual community research, giving voice to the insights and concerns of our local communities. This work has become an invaluable part of the toolbox to ensure trustee decisions stay connected with community realities and emerging issues through a collaborative and inclusive approach rooted in action research principles.

In 2024, we have once again shifted our approach. Each of our funded community partners selected a colleague or volunteer to participate in basic research skills training during July. These community researchers were then empowered to tell stories reflecting the challenges and successes faced by their communities, utilising some of the techniques they learnt to gather data through the summer.

This report showcases these community stories, each representing a unique perspective and set of skills. We are deeply thankful for the guidance of our longstanding collaborator Professor Mary Brydon-Miller from the University of Louisville, whose academic leadership in active research, international connections and love of our partnership continues to make a huge difference and contribution to our work. GGT Trustee Martin Simon, brought his expertise in Asset-Based Community Development to the table, ensuring a strengths-based focus in our research. We are also very grateful to Leonie Burton and Professor Abigail Gardner from the University of Gloucestershire for their inspiring training sessions to the group on qualitative and creative research methods, as well as continued support for GGT, the GEM project and community partners over many years.

Finally can I say congratulate the researchers who participated in this project. We are grateful for their efforts, motivation, participation and for producing some insightful research that would not have been possible without them.

We invite you to explore the pages that follow. They contain the voices of our community partners, volunteers and colleagues who stepped up to tell the stories that shape our community today and contribute to its future.

Jason Dunsford

Deputy Chief Executive
Gloucestershire Gateway Trust



Gloucestershire
Gateway Trust

community-driven development

A summary of findings

This year's community research focus was on providing training and support to our community non-profit partners to identify and investigate questions based on their own experience and practice. These questions ranged investigations of individual impacts of programs and services to the kinds of learning that volunteers take away from their experiences of working with these organisations. One theme that came up across a number of these projects was the importance of relationships.

Whether it was the mutual support found among the women in Pain Warriors group at the Redwell Centre or the Read with Me volunteers, the human connections were the key to fostering positive change and growth. Another common theme was the impact not only on those who receive services, but on the volunteers and staff as well. The Play Rangers from PlayGloucestershire described both short- and long-term impacts of their experiences, and, of course, mutual benefit for volunteers is the core principle behind Fair Shares.

The capacity building aspect of this year's project around evaluation tools was showcased by the broad range and creativity of the research methods our partner organisations adopted and carried out. At the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, for example, researchers used printed placemats to gather data about who was using the café at Robinswood Hill. While the Nelson Trust project included examples of some of the artwork produced by clients to illustrate the impact of their services. The reports also demonstrate a range of ways of communicating the results of the research including quotes, photographs, word clouds, graphs, and testimonials to share findings in an engaging and easy to understand manner.

Going forward continuing to support this focus on capacity building around research and evaluation will provide our organizational partners with the tools to assess their programs and services effectively, enhancing their ability to better understand and communicate the impact they are having on our communities.

Professor Mary Brydon-Miller

University of Louisville



Gloucestershire
Gateway Trust

community-driven development



Hidden Disabilities with Possibilities

By Kerry Dyer and Claire Fletcher

Pain Warriors is a group that was set up 8 years ago who meet up every Tuesday morning at The Redwell Centre, in Matson.

Pain Warriors is targeted at women who suffer with either mental health conditions and/or chronic pain conditions, ranging from back pain, chronic limb/joint pain, fibromyalgia, ME, osteoarthritis, and the list goes on!!

These conditions leave people feeling lonely, isolated, depressed, anxious, unable to work, eat properly, take part in physical activity, and enjoy a 'normal' life.

We asked the group of ladies 5 questions about their Hidden Disabilities, and this is what we found:

What are your disabilities?

- Fibromyalgia
- Osteoarthritis
 - ME
- Visually impaired
 - Agoraphobia
 - Endometriosis
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
- Functional Neurological Disorder

An NHS Digital survey* found that the prevalence of chronic pain amongst adults was 34% and it was more common in women (38%) than in men (30%).

132,538 people live in Gloucester (2021 census). 107,091 of those people are aged 16+. This means that potentially, there are 36,411 people (34%) living in Gloucester alone, that suffer with chronic pain conditions.

*NHS Digital, 2019

How does having a disability make you feel?

The responses received were feelings of:

- Loneliness
- Isolation
- Painful
- Upset
 - Sad
- Worthless
 - Angry
- 'Why me?'
- Anxious
- Nervous
- Scared
- Challenging
- Hard/difficult

What are the limitations of your disability?

A lot of women said they experience problems within their limbs and struggle to walk, their mobility is affected. One woman hasn't been able to sit down for years and suffers with constant pain all over her body.

Not being able to work. Brain Fog. Memory problems, low self-esteem, no confidence. Nausea, muddled speech. Unable to shower/wash properly, lack of energy and fatigued all the time. Unable to leave their house, go out in the community, socialise with people, family or friends.

We found that most of the woman suffer with not just one limitation, but a multitude of them. This makes it hard for them to function on a day-to-day basis.

What could society do to support you?

We found that within the group there were two particular areas that kept coming up when we asked this question. These were awareness and judgement.

Most of the women feel that there is not enough awareness/information on the range of hidden disabilities within the community. This means that they are finding that people within the community being judgemental towards them. Because the disability can't be seen, and the person looks 'normal', people will make comments, stare, or give funny looks. Some of the women feel that because they do not have a walking aid, or look different, people don't believe there is anything wrong with them and it makes them feel like they are being a fraud!

Also, most of them mentioned that more support from the NHS is needed.

What has been your possibility from your disability?

For a lot of the women, coming to The Redwell Centre has been made possible. A safe environment, with other women who suffer with similar conditions. Not being judged for who they are, how they speak and how they mobilise around. The centre has helped make this possible. It has helped the women build up their confidence, talk about their disabilities and mental health conditions. Seek help and guidance, which they weren't able to do before.

Some ladies have been able to return to their studies, go back to college and learn. This has been made possible from the help and support of each other and the centre.

Some ladies have been able to go for a walk, go to the theatre or enter a shop for the first time in years. This group and the Redwell have made this possible for them.

What we would like to do:

- We would love to be able to promote the group more, let the community know that we are out there to help and support. We would like to have people come in and help the ladies with self-care, meditation and how to manage better with their disabilities.
- We would like to be able to do more activities, so that the women can enjoy themselves.
- We would like to grow the community's knowledge on hidden disabilities, maybe hold an event where the community can attend and ask people about their conditions, hand out information leaflets and get the local doctors' surgeries/ social prescribers involved too.

[Click here to view our story](#)



Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

community-driven development



Who Needs Play?

By Caroline, Katie & Billie - The Venture

This report collates findings from surveys and interviews conducted with adults, parents, and children over the summer at The Venture and during summer trips to understand the role and importance of play across different age groups. Data was collected through 39 parent surveys, 62 video interviews with children, and photos of observations of play activities.

Children’s Perspectives on Play

Favourite Types of Play

Children overwhelmingly associate their most enjoyable play experiences with social interactions, particularly playing with friends. Outdoor activities, sports, and arts and crafts were frequently mentioned as favourite forms of play. Surprisingly, gaming received little mention, contrasting with common perceptions about children’s leisure activities or perhaps related to what children define as play?

Emotional Impact of Play

Most children reported feeling “happy” when playing. Conversely, the inability to play evoked negative emotions such as sadness, boredom, and anger. These findings highlight play’s crucial role in children’s emotional regulation and well-being.

Screen Time Awareness

Most children acknowledged spending too much time on devices, demonstrating a self-awareness that could serve as a starting point for discussions about balanced screen use and diverse play activities.

Perceptions of Adult Play

Interestingly, most children believed that adults should play too. Their reasons ranged from “it’s fun” to allowing adults to “get their inner child out,” showing an intuitive understanding of play’s benefits for all ages. However, some children felt adults shouldn’t play due to work commitments.

Adult Perspectives on Play

Favourite Types of Play

For adults, social gatherings emerged as the most popular form of play (36%), followed by music and dance (15%), and playing with children (15%). Outdoor activities (10%) and board games (5%) were also mentioned. Notably, gaming received no mentions among adults.

Importance of Play

Adults overwhelmingly recognised the importance of play in various aspects of their lives, mentioning: social skills, confidence, motivation, community connections, health and fitness, mental health, dealing with conflict, teamwork and happiness.

Impact of Not Playing

Most adults reported that the inability to play negatively affects their mood and mental health, underscoring the therapeutic and stress-relieving aspects of play for adults too.

When I can't play I feel sad and angry because I'm bored

When I can't play I feel uncomfortable

Yes, grown-ups should play – it could help bring out their inner child

No grown-ups shouldn't play – they have too much work to do

Dads should play yes, but not mums they need to rest

VIDEO 1

VIDEO 2

VIDEO 3

Parental Perspectives on Children's Play

Children's Favourite Types of Play

Parents stated with a large majority that their children's favourite form of play was to go outdoors. Arts and crafts were also popular while gaming was surprisingly low and only mentioned once.

Importance of Play

Parents demonstrated a high awareness of play's benefits for their children, rating it as extremely or moderately

important for various aspects of development, including social skills, confidence, school achievements, and mental health.

Impact of Not Playing

Parents indicated that lack of play would negatively affect children's mood and result in increased screen time.

Screen Time Concerns

77% of children felt that **they** spend too much time in front of screens.

A very large 92% of children felt that their **parents** spent too much time on screens such as their phone, tablet or computer.

59% of parents believe **their children** spend too much time on screens creating social isolation, hindering social skill development, and decreasing motivation.

64% of adults believed **they** spend too much time on screens creating lack of motivation, social unavailability, less time spent with children, neglecting housework, and reduced sleep.

My mums always on her phone



Challenges in Play

Adults felt that work commitments, childcare responsibilities and tiredness in general were the main challenges to engaging in play themselves. Most parents did not report significant challenges in providing play opportunities for their children but work commitments, a lack of transportation and no access to a garden was mentioned.



Play is not just a childhood necessity but a vital component of human well-being across all age groups. Children intuitively understand its importance, adults recognise its benefits, and even parents acknowledge its crucial role in their children's development.

For children, play is fundamental to their emotional well-being, social development, and overall happiness. It serves as a primary medium for learning, self-expression, and forming relationships. The negative emotions associated with play deprivation underscore its essential nature in childhood.

For adults, play continues to be a significant factor in maintaining mental health, fostering social connections, and achieving work-life balance. The recognition of play's importance in various life aspects suggests that adults understand its value beyond mere entertainment.

Conclusion: Who Needs Play?

The comprehensive data from our surveys and interviews provides a clear answer to the question "Who Needs Play?":

Everyone does!

Playing makes me feel good because I get to play with my friends



When I'm playing I feel happy and excited

Yes grown ups should play because its good to have grown ups playing with us



THE NELSON TRUST

The Nelson Trust - From isolation to Community: How has Art Psychotherapy at The Nelson Trust impacted your life?

By Karina Burt

Hearing the Journey - The Art Therapy research project at Gloucester Women's Centre aimed to understand the transformative journey of women who access the program, exploring their experience and the therapeutic, life-changing impact after engaging in Art Psychotherapy. This project was developed with a focus on qualitative data, including an interview, artwork and feedback. The project was developed by exploring in-depth one woman's story, as told by her, capturing how accessing Art Psychotherapy supported her growth from isolation to reintegration into community life. It also explores the common wording used in feedback from women accessing Art Psychotherapy.

The images shown in our gallery are a selection of art and photography created during the Art Therapy and Health and Arts groups. Art Therapy supports clients who are vulnerable, and many who are impacted by adverse childhood experiences dealing daily with complex trauma responses and may be caught in addictive cycles whilst our Health and Arts group involves women's well-being, promoting active lifestyles and offering opportunities to reconnect with the local community and to one another. It provides creative, therapeutic, and active groups to help clients get out of their homes, learn and develop healthy coping strategies which involve the simple activity of walking and art making. We have spent time in and around Gloucestershire, walking in green spaces, visiting museums, and art galleries, making art and reflecting on how walking in nature can support our mental health. During our walks and art making, we explore our thoughts surrounding our journeys, our physical and emotional health, observing how nature behaves, producing colour, shape, and sound that we can all take pleasure in experiencing.

Gallery: the women's Art and photography whilst accessing Art Psychotherapy and the Health and Arts group at The Nelson Trust.



Our Word Cloud explores words and feedback by the women, before (in black) and after sessions (in colour).



Observations - The women who access The Nelson Trust, come to us with varying levels of multiple and complex needs, often at crisis point and with a need of intensive support. The women offered Art Psychotherapy do so as part of a trauma-informed approach where Art plays a key role in supporting women in making positive steps forward in their lives in addition to our 9 pathways of support.

Conclusion insights – Art Psychotherapy has a lasting and, in some cases, life-changing impact on those who access it. The project has identified how creativity and therapy can often give women who access it a way to find their own pathway through their trauma or challenge, opening doors that some did not think were possible. As a Charity, we will strive to be in a position to share the long-lasting, life-changing impact that Art Psychotherapy can make on a woman’s life with all women who walk through our doors.

Interview – The voice and art of one woman, spoken in her own words within this video and with a selection of her images created within sessions, communicates the many functions of art therapy she has embodied throughout her 3-year journey – restorative, developmental, educative, resourcing, and supportive. She explores, reflects, and expresses that the provision of a therapeutic intervention is a way to communicate and explore thoughts and feelings that has sometimes been difficult to talk about whilst making connections between past and present experiences. Our client identifies Art Psychotherapy as providing a confidential, non-judgmental, safe space to share these experiences; also observing this to be a space where she felt less isolated, where she could explore her personal difficulties, support her understanding of her strengths and potential whilst developing confidence, motivation, and creativity. Being offered a safe space to share personal narratives, our client voices her exploration of the art materials and dialectic themes encompassing safety, protection, isolation, relationships and trust, identity, vulnerability and control, and resilience.



Observational impacts

Poem inspired by the words of our Art Psychotherapist, Anon and Poem written by the interviewed client – summary of how Art Psychotherapy at The Nelson Trust has impacted their life

In a safe space, colours may flow, where silenced truths are free to show; for women who feel bruised and sore, Art Therapy can open a healing door

The shadows of trauma are intricate and deep, and in strokes of paint, their pain may seep

But creativity ignites a gentle light, guiding them through the darkest night

Here, connections bridge the past, in each creation healing is cast

It is a canvas for their fears and dreams, a refuge where their spirit redeems

Through art, they find a voice once stilled, a path to strength, where wounds are healed, in every line and vibrant hue, resilience grows, and hope rings true.

My monster feeds on chaos
It's all we have ever known
Day in, day out
Haunting me
clamouring desperately
for its next slice of lunacy

Now I fight with calm
and childhood like energy
I paint my scars
with every colour of the rainbow
I place my nightmares
in every pretty scene

Reclaiming my own history
making beauty out of misery
Blade to brush
Pain to pen
I slash the paper
Not my skin

The flood gates open
a different kind of rush
Feel, don't flee
Own these memories
It doesn't have to be perfect
Or make any sense

Just let it out
You've found hope
Maybe we can
Build a home
With peace
And curiosity

POEM WRITTEN BY INTERVIEWED CLIENT

People who have contributed:

- Karina Burt – Art Psychotherapist
- Georgia Eyles – Digital and Communications Officer

- Catherine Harder – Photography
- Faith Sanderson – Regional Manager
- Our wonderful client who wants to remain anonymous

Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

community-driven development



What motivates individuals to volunteer as reading volunteers with Read With Me?

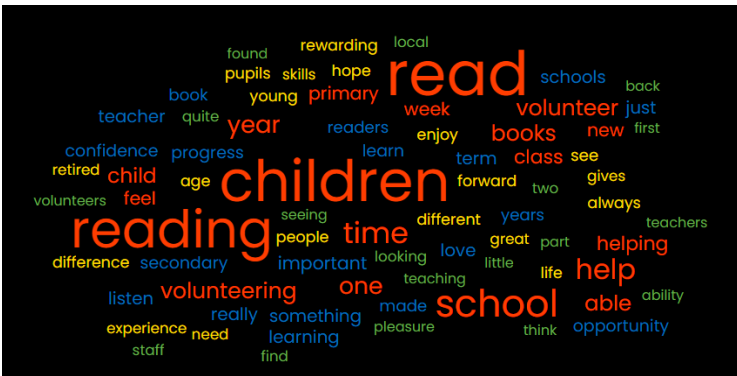
By Sarah Cocker

We chose this subject as we consistently have the highest number of enquiries on Go Volunteer Glos.

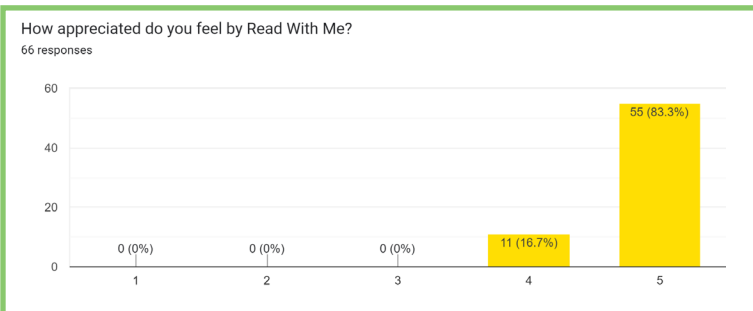
Data collection

We surveyed 66 of our 350 volunteers through google forms and also asked them to write a testimonial about why they volunteer. We also asked some volunteers to record voice notes and videos.

Our volunteers come from across Gloucestershire and range from 16 - 88! We entered all the testimonials and this was the outcome:



We also performed a qualitative analysis on the testimonials which established common themes.



The results from the Google form show that all of our volunteers feel appreciated and that their time is being used effectively and is having an impact on the children. We think that this leads to them telling their friends and others about their role which in turn, leads to more volunteer enquiries.

CLICK THESE LINKS TO VIEW:

1. Personal fulfilment and enjoyment: This included the pleasure of building relationships with children, enjoying the process of reading with them and seeing their progress.

[Personal fulfilment - volunteer: Erin](#)

[Personal fulfilment - volunteer: Linda](#)

2. Making a difference/giving back: Many volunteers expressed a desire to give back to the community, some mentioning the impact of COVID-19. There was a strong sense of social responsibility and the rewarding feeling of contributing to others' growth.

[Making a difference - volunteer: Tom](#)

[Making a difference - volunteer: Doug](#)

3. Concern for literacy and educational impact: A significant number of volunteers highlighted the importance of reading skills for children's educational and future success. They recognised that literacy is foundational for learning and are motivated to improve children's life chances.

[Concern for literacy and educational impact - volunteer Angie](#)

4. Opportunity for personal growth and learning: Volunteers appreciate the chance to develop new skills, learn about themselves and stay mentally active through their volunteering. They enjoy engaging in meaningful work after retirement or a career change. On the other hand, we also have young volunteers who comment on the skills it has given them for future careers, many choosing it as a step towards teaching or working with children.

[Personal growth and learning - volunteer Graham](#)

Challenges

The analysis also demonstrated some challenges facing children and schools.

- **Language**

Many children arriving from other countries unable to speak English.

A growing number of children unable to converse in sentences in Early Years and beyond, mainly due to lack of parental input.

- **Lack of time/pressure on schools**


Many volunteers highlighted this as a reason to volunteer in the first place.


Conclusion


The evidence illustrates the broader impact of Read With Me, showing the programme goes beyond improving children's literacy skills. It also fosters confidence, emotional resilience and a love of learning in the children and at the same time offers volunteers a meaningful way to give back and find personal fulfilment.


We have spent a lot of time getting the offer and support right for our volunteers which has led to volunteers feeling appreciated and they share this with others.

We are now on a firm footing and in a position to scale the operation. We plan to continue to build and have agreed as a team that we will aim to increase to 500 volunteers by May 2025.


"I have grown in confidence as I have got to know the readers..."
Paul, Volunteer


I am delighted to have the opportunity to be a volunteer with Read With Me. I look forward to spending a few hours each week listening to children read and discussing with them the books they are reading. The children always seem keen to read and it is very rewarding to watch their skills develop. Helping them to read and answering their questions has also challenged me to improve my understanding of our language!
Volunteering gives us the chance to use our existing talents, learn new skills.
Doug, Volunteer



Knowing how busy and hard-pressed class teachers are, I hope that allowing the children to have these short, individual sessions is beneficial to them and will instil a love of reading. Read with Me is a supportive, well-structured organisation and I always feel valued as a volunteer.
Ann A, Volunteer


It's a joy to be investing in the next generation and to see how keen the children are to learn to read, with me.
Jenny, Volunteer


I've only been volunteering for 4 weeks but can already see the amazing scheme it is. I love to see the children's faces when they come to read to me - some even asking, "Can I read a bit more?"
Gill, Volunteer


I can honestly say that being a reading volunteer is probably the most rewarding and enjoyable thing I have ever done and am looking forward to the start of the new term.
Jayne, Volunteer


Seeing kids' confidence grow, is one of the best rewards. Read With Me gives me so much happiness and validation from witnessing their progress. Encouraging them to believe in themselves, is further reward and inspires me to carry on. At the end of term two years ago, the teacher thanked me for my time and that rippled through the class. Last year, a pupil thanked me for my time and for the encouragement I had given him. This, too, was followed by more thanks.
Simon I, Volunteer


As my class teacher regularly says to me "Don't ever underestimate the benefit that you give to these children"
Sue S, Volunteer


"I cannot remember a time when I couldn't read, the knowledge & enjoyment this skill has given me is boundless. Reception & Year 1 is the age group I have been supporting; and it has been wonderful to help them go from unsure quiet voices to vying as to "Can I read first today?"
Reading is vital for their futures!"
Val P, Volunteer



What do young people gain from volunteering?

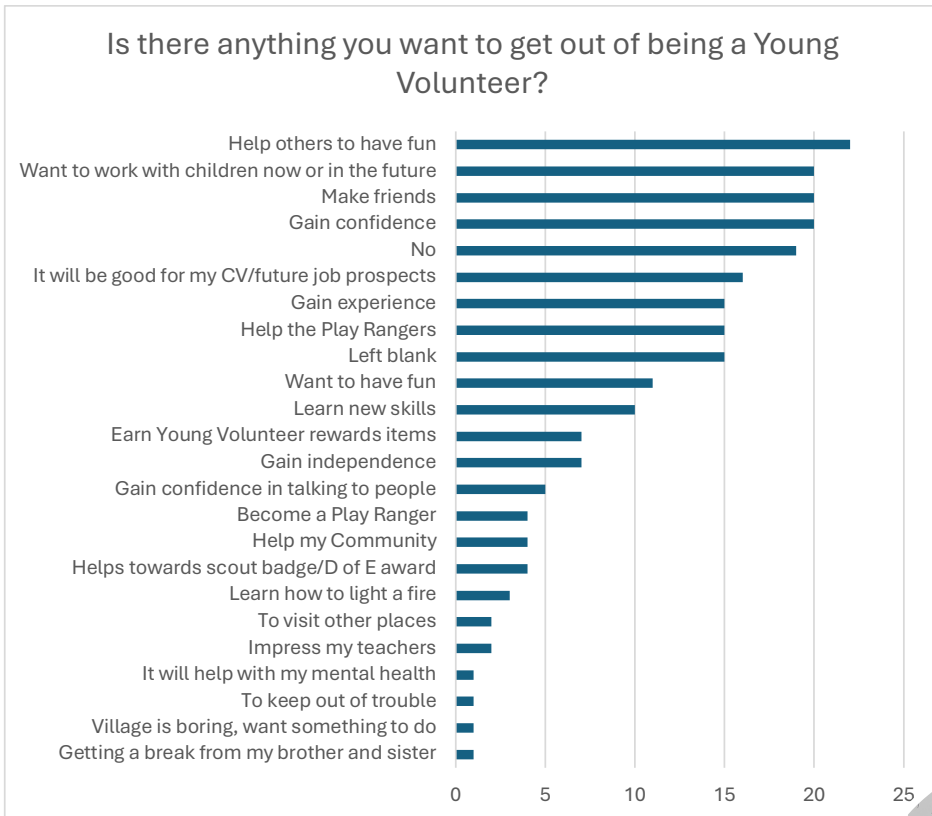
By Helen Logan

We have approached this in two ways: firstly, by looking back through Young Volunteer application forms where we ask the question 'Is there anything you want to get out of being a Young Volunteer?' and analysing the responses; secondly, by asking some of our former Young Volunteers to reflect on their experiences and what they think they actually gained.

We looked at 141 application forms, filled out by children aged between 10 and 16 years old. The children gave 225 responses (including left blank) and some gave more than one reason, which is why there are more responses than forms.

The biggest response was that children wanted to have fun and help others to have fun. This suggests that when the volunteer role is seen as being fun, and not just a responsibility, children are likely to sign up.

Several of the more popular responses related to children wanting to improve their confidence and make friends, feeling that this would be easier to achieve as a volunteer than as an individual. One of the roles of Young Volunteers' is to greet newcomers and talk to children who are a bit shy of joining in, the status of the role makes this easier and also provides practice in approaching new people, with support from the Rangers.





Other children were focused on more specific goals and were thinking about building their CV or gaining experience working with children as this was something they wanted to do in the future.

Surprising results were the 19 children who said that they weren't looking to gain anything from the experience; one child said 'No, I just want to help'.

When we started the scheme, the children involved in developing it specifically wanted rewards for reaching milestones like 100 hours volunteered. However, this is only mentioned by 7 children as something they were looking to gain.

We also approached ten former Young Volunteers via email and phone and in person, and we received 9 responses.

All 9 mentioned the confidence they gained from being a Young Volunteer and they felt that this has helped them in later life and in their careers. Five of the nine mentioned that they had been shy children who gained the skills to talk to others during their time as Young Volunteers; this reflects the results from the application forms, that needing help to gain confidence with new people and situations is a concern for many children and that volunteering can be a good way to achieve this goal. Five mentioned residential trips and training courses that they had done with Play Gloucestershire and other Young Volunteers from across the County; four of these mentioned that they were still friends with other Young Volunteers they had met on these events. One highlighted that as a volunteer they had met children from very different backgrounds and circumstances to their own but had been able to make friends, having the volunteering experience in common. This is a learning point for us, as we haven't run as many of these in recent years but they are clearly highly valued.

The responses match up well with the findings above, suggesting that volunteering can offer children what they are looking for and possibly more than they were aware was possible when they applied to the scheme. One of the respondents mentioned meeting the King (Prince Charles at the time) while representing Play Gloucestershire at the opening of Gloucester Services.

Of the nine former Volunteers, one is now a full-time employee with Play Gloucestershire, two are current apprentice Rangers aged 16 to 18 doing paid work, and six went all the way through from signing up as Young Volunteers to working with us as sessional Play Rangers but have now moved on to their own adult lives and careers.



It completely set me up for the trajectory I'm on now

JOSH R, CURRENTLY TRAINING IN THE RAF



Being a young volunteer and growing up with Play Rangers has given me confidence to do things that make me feel unsure and explore places around the world.

FORMER YOUNG VOLUNTEER LOLLY, NOW A TEACHER



I was always very shy and wouldn't chat to anybody but being a Young Volunteer helped me with this and gave me the needed confidence and voice which has helped me ever since.

NICOLE, NOW 28 AND A MOTHER



There's people that I met when I was twelve, that I'm still friends with.

ELLIE, NOW A PLAY RANGER



shy child
residential trips
meeting people from elsewhere
skills
training days
confidence
experience
being in the team
gained patience
the king
make a fire
fun
made friends
responsibility



Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

community-driven development



Do you have a Voice?

By Atlanta Harrison and Penny Liddicot

We used an asset-based approach to create a network of conversations, using the same framework with all conversations to aid analysis of trends and priorities. We held conversations with the following residents of Matson and Robinswood:

- Case Study of a volunteer
- Coach trip to Weston Super Mare, telephone interviews of parents
- Community Conversations with the Matson and Robinswood Residents group

Presenting the data

Case Study

Our volunteer has lived in Matson for 6 years, he moved here from Bristol and after suffering from a bad mental health episode he reached out to the Ewe Space where he began volunteering for a partner organisation this led to a brief period of employment. Our volunteer also became Chair of the Matson and Robinswood Residents group before personal circumstances meant that he had to step down. He is now back volunteering at the Ewe Space and participated in our framework of questions where he feels able to have a voice in things that affect him locally and feels able to contact the right people to influence decisions about where he lives. Following on from our Community Conversation framework where it asks residents if they have any ideas for projects and activities, he is currently doing some research into starting up some self-help groups around grief and risky drinking. Things that he has personally been affected by. At the Ewe Space the M&RRG will support him to make this happen.

Coach Trip to Weston Super Mare

The Residents Group organised two coaches to take families to Weston Super Mare, we took 43 Adults and 51 Children. Over 50% of the children were entitled to free school meals which was the criteria for the funding to pay for the coach, so the coach travel was free to families. Nearly 10% of the children had Special Educational Needs and predominately boys. Parents that went on the trip agreed to a telephone interview and we used our framework of questions to ask participants if they felt they had a voice, what they loved about where they live, if they felt engaged by the Matson and Robinswood Residents Group and what the group could do to support them in finding a way that suits them to have a voice and support them to become more involved in influencing change.

Members of the Matson and Robinswood Residents Group

Over a period we used active listening with residents already involved in the group to give a snapshot of how they feel about being involved in positive social action and if it gives them a feeling of having a voice to influence decisions about where they live and how they could improve engagement and participation with more residents.

Results of the Community Conversations held with Residents of Matson and Robinswood.

Question – Do you feel you have a voice?

Yes - How	No - Why
Through the Residents Group	Private Tenant
Going in to the Ewe Space	Not always able to explain properly
Talking to the Councillors	Confidence if not listened to
Posting on Social Media	Not knowing the people

Question – What do you love about where you live (most common answers)

The Community	Matson Sheep	Green Open Spaces
The Ewe Space	Walks	My Neighbours
Primary Schools	The People	Community events

Question – What would you like where you live to look like in 5/10 years

More things for children and young people to do	Clean and tidy, less fly tipping, people taking pride in their community
Better housing, no damp and mould, not having to lug prams and shopping up many flights of stairs	More community activities and events to bring us together

Question – Activities and Events

There's already a lot going on.	With support I would help with organising events.
I'd like there to be more self help groups	We loved the Outdoor Cinema
Coach trips are great	Picnic benches in the Rose Garden
A dog walking group, as there's so many lovely walks to go on. Company for owners	Opportunities to be creative for those that don't like sports or technology

The analysis will help the M&RRG prioritise activities, events and awareness raising campaigns. Through listening and agreeing achievable actions they will gain trust and respect plus build positive relationships with fellow residents and other organisations and agencies. They will bring new residents to the group by changing the way they engage i.e. not all meetings or Facebook posts. We asked residents how they found out about the group – they said by attending events and family activities, going to the Ewe Space, some were already involved, saw it advertised on Facebook, but some residents said they hadn't heard of the resident's group at all. We also found out that residents felt they didn't have time or didn't like

meetings. Their caring responsibilities or work stopped them participating. In summary, the Matson and Robinswood Residents Group are a small group of residents that are passionate about making a difference. They give their time voluntarily and put on good quality activities during school holidays and larger annual events the Picnic On The Green for four years and the Matson Music and Food Fest for two years. Residents provide an outreach advice service at the Ewe Space and drop-in sessions are residents led and include coffee mornings, arts and crafts plus mental health etc. The long-term aim in 3 years' time is for the M&RRG to take over the lease of the Ewe Space which will put them firmly in the driving seat for community led action.



How is the café at Robinswood Hill viewed by the community who use it?

By Rhys Howell

What we did

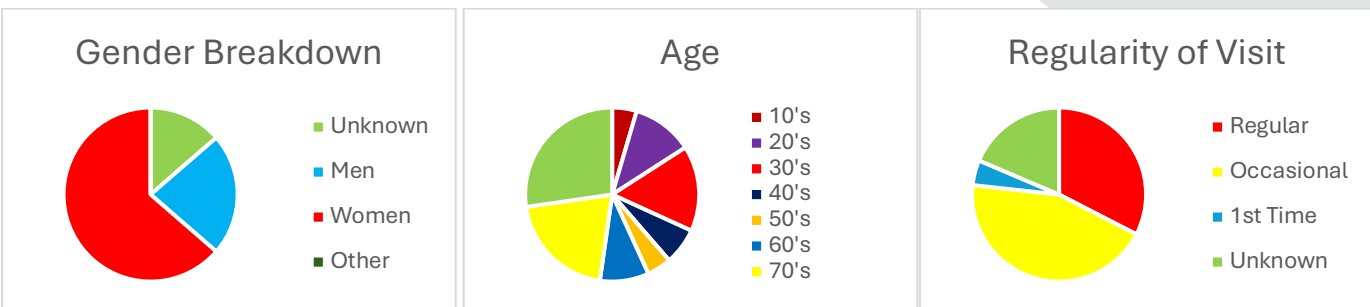
We opted for a self-directed and self-selecting method of data collection. For a period of 3 weeks (26th August to 15th September), questionnaire placemats were left on the tables in the café. They were double sided, one side targeting adults and another children.

On the adult side we were particularly looking for a freeform response to the question “What five words would you use to describe the café?” and a Likert scale regarding 14 questions. Once completed or covered in coffee (whichever came first), they were removed and replaced with a fresh one for the next customer. We then compiled the data from the completed questionnaires and analysed it.

Data

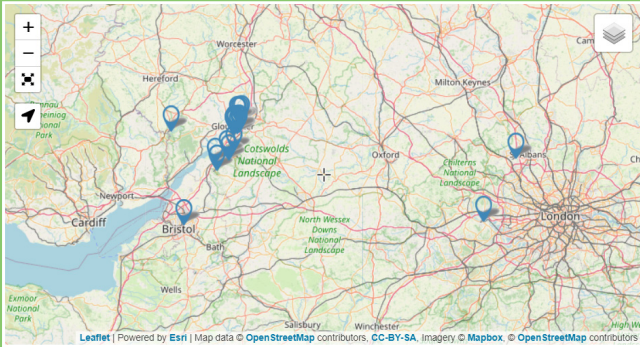
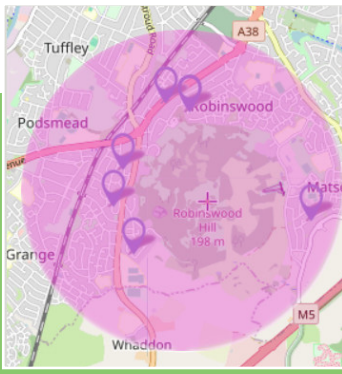
We found the child side didn’t produce any useable data. As such we have not included any data from this in the report. We have however a selection of drawings submitted.

With regards to the adult side, we had a total of 44 respondents. The demographic breakdown was as follows:



21 of the respondents provided postcode data. As expected the majority of the visitors lived within Gloucestershire (18) but only 6 lived within a mile of the Robinswood Hill.





(Top) Visitors within a mile of Robinswood Hill
(Bottom) All Visitors to Robinswood Hill Cafe

From this we have extrapolated that 28% of café visitors are uber-local, 57% are local travellers (Gloucestershire Residents) and 15% are visitors (From outside of Gloucestershire).

5 Words Results

Of a possible 220 possible submissions, 159 answers were submitted and these were comprised of 81 different words(or phrases). Of these the most popular were Friendly (15 people), Welcoming (14 people) and Good (8 People). We have compiled the results into a word cloud to reflect this. 95% of the comments are positive but there are some negatives.



“What do you Think? - Likert Results

To analyse this we assigned a numerical score to each response (1 for Strongly Disagree up to 5 for Strongly Agree). By averaging the scores we were able to get a picture for the general strength of feeling that visitors had for the café. We have replicated what the average response were below:



It is interesting how the café is viewed as a community hub and more than a café to most people but is not seen as a particularly important place for the majority of respondees. This may be due to the woolly nature of these questions (What do we mean by Community Hub? What do we mean by “important”? What do we mean by “More than a Café”?)

Conclusions

- The café at Robinswood Hill is a valued community asset which is of multiple benefits to the visitors.
- The café is generally well loved, as are the staff.
- Whilst a large proportion of visitors are “uber local”, there is a large proportion who are “local travellers”.
- We would like to do further analysis into the granular results and how they correspond with demographics and locations. Are the regular “local travellers” finding as much of a communal experience as the regular “uber locals”? Is there a gendered difference to experience of the café?
- It is interesting how the age demographic skews towards the older end and that women outnumber men almost 3:1.
- From this we would want to do further work on expanding the demographic reach of the parts of the community finding the café to be a valuable community asset.
- As GWT we would also like to utilise the café to a larger amount to connect people with the work of the trust and nature in Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

community-driven development



What Does Culture Mean To You?

By Ellie Maynard and Nicola Winstanley

At GL4 we wanted to uncover stories of how local cultural experiences (groups, events and workshops) support the lives of local people, and how provision and access could be improved. To answer these questions, we visited three family events taking place during the summer holidays; The Venture Play Session at The Venture in White City, Redwell Open Access Play Session at The Redwell Centre, Matson, and a children's dance workshop at Matson Library.

**"It takes a village... and this is ours"-
Debbie**



Left to right: Debbie, her son Marshall and Jessica

We heard that local culture blossoms in community hubs, and makes a positive contribution to the upbringing of local children. Jessica and Debbie have children with complex needs, and described the events, workshops, trips and day-to-day support at The Venture as "a lifeline for a lot of parents", especially during the summer holidays and for lone parents. Community hubs offer children cultural opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have access to, and teach them essential life skills. The culture of welcome and acceptance at The Venture makes children confident, caring, and tolerant of others. It also breeds mutual respect between children and adults. Community hubs provide much needed social support for parents. We heard that multi-age activities, in particular, give parents much needed 'adult time' to give and receive mutual support. People told us that local events and activities must be free or low cost, because additional household spending is not an option for the majority of local families.

"It's a cycle" - Cody



Left to right: Cody, play session attendee, Cody's sister and family friend

We heard from two young adult volunteers who had formative cultural experiences at The Venture as children. Cody has always been a regular attendee, and took part in their creative community projects from the age of seven. She has volunteered at The Venture on and off since 2017, and considers it a vital learning environment that is helping her to overcome low self confidence and anxiety, and giving her the experience she needs to pursue a career in childcare. James is an MA student who volunteers as a sports coach for young men with additional needs. He attended The Venture after school, and believes this prevented him, and other local boys, from falling in with the "wrong crowd". Growing up in White City gave James a drive to succeed and a passion to give back to his community. He is inspired by local people, who are "grafting to keep it going, because they enjoy the environment, they enjoy the culture and they want people to keep in it". By offering his free time, James receives professional experience, and a meaningful opportunity to help out in the community. He believes the local culture is self-sustaining, but feels it deserves to be better recognised, resourced and promoted so that every local child can benefit from it, as he did.

“By being part of one group you become part of the community” - Helen

We heard that groups, events and workshops improve people’s quality of life. Karen told us that being a single parent of an only child could make her and her son very insular. But local free events and workshops mean they get regular opportunities to leave the house and socialise. She told us that she sees her son’s energy increase when he’s exposed to different creative and cultural experiences, and thinks he’s the boy he is today partly because of the groups and workshops they’ve taken part in together. Helen moved to Matson a year ago to be closer to her children and grandchildren. She usually struggles to make friends,

but after joining the rose garden group at the Phoenix Centre, she feels like part of the community. Friendships have formed within the group; they are planning outings together, and Helen recently joined a choir with another group member. An outdoor cinema event in the rose garden introduced Helen to even more community organisations, and local people often stop to show their appreciation for their hard work. This is helping Helen to settle into her new home and community. She told us that taking this time for herself is partly responsible for her feelings of improved health.



Helen (left) and her granddaughter Norah

Conclusion

We found that groups, events and workshops at community hubs are particularly supportive of family life. They provide practical and emotional parenting support, and social, cultural and educational opportunities for children, which can have a significant positive impact on how they grow into adult members of the community. We found that groups and workshops can be landing places for newcomers, gateways into further community engagement, and places to find and be with friends. At GL4 we plan to further explore the impact of creative and cultural events, groups and workshops in Matson through our events and participation programmes, and armed with this new research, will continue to fundraise to help more local people access free or low cost creative cultural experiences in the local area.

LISTEN TO OUR AUDIO HERE

Are Veterans forgotten in Matson, Gloucester?

By Albert Gardiner

1. Introduction:

The research project sought to look at to what extent veterans living within the Matson ward feel included and valued. I was particularly drawn to this theme as I recognise that there is often a stigma associated with members of the veteran community. I therefore wanted to know whether on the back of the inclusion of the UK armed forces veterans question as part of the census 2021, had led to an improvement in terms of their needs being met by service providers and others who support veterans, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The research took place between August 2024 and September 2024 and included the views and experiences of veterans and individuals working in the community. The

research consisted of a short questionnaire and a follow up conversation with a veteran, where he shared his story. In addition, the project also undertook consultations with small number of people working with veterans to look at what main barriers preventing and potential bridges enabling veterans to access services in general.

2. Data:

According to the 2021 census, 1,853,112 people in England and Wales reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces (3.8% of usual residents aged 16 years and over). Of the UK armed forces veterans in England and Wales, 76.3% (1.4 million people) previously served in the regular forces, 19.5% (361,000 people) in the reserve forces, and 4.3% (79,000 people) served in both the regular and reserve forces. 37,000 UK armed forces veterans (2.0%) lived in communal establishments and the remainder (slightly over 1.8 million, 98.0%) lived in households. There were 1.7 million households (7.0% of all households) with one or more persons who had served in the UK armed forces.

Country code	K04000001
Country	England and Wales
Previously served in regular UK armed forces (number)	1,413,296
Previously served in reserve UK armed forces (number)	360,770
Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces (number)	79,046
Has not previously served in any UK armed forces (number)	46,713,261
Previously served in regular UK armed forces (percent)	2.9
Previously served in reserve UK armed forces (percent)	0.7
Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces (percent)	0.2
Has not previously served in any UK armed forces (percent)	96.2

Figure 1: Almost 1 in 25 people aged 16 years and over in England and Wales were a veteran of the UK armed forces. Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

	Number				
	Previously served in regular or reserve UK armed forces: Total	Previously served in regular UK armed forces	Previously served in reserve UK armed forces	Previously served in both regular and reserv UK armed forces	Has not previously served in any UK armed forces: Total
Cheltenham	4,401	3,380	818	203	94,034
Cotswolds	4,384	3,510	681	193	71,930
Forest of Dean	3,915	3,145	604	166	69,132
Gloucester	5,123	4,106	793	224	101,816
Stroud	4,794	3,725	866	203	95,401
Tewkesbury	4,799	3,951	643	205	72,554
Gloucestershire	27,418	21,818	4,405	1,195	504,867
South West	264,750	212,657	40,584	11,509	4,471,093
England	1,737,781	1,325,353	338,520	73,908	44,269,176
England and Wales	1,853,112	1,413,296	360,770	79,046	46,713,261

Census 2021 data for Gloucestershire indicates there were 27,418 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces, equating to 5.2% of the 16+ population. This is just over 1 in 20 people aged 16 years and over in Gloucestershire. The proportion of armed forces veterans was higher in Gloucestershire than it was nationally (3.2%), but slightly lower than the South West regional average (5.6%). Out of the 6 Gloucestershire districts, all had a higher proportion of armed forces veterans than the national average.

3. Key findings from the Questionnaires

The first questionnaire focussed on the views and experiences of veterans. This consisted of 3 questions. The second questionnaire focussed on the views and experiences of frontline service providers who support members of the veteran community.

A total of 10 responses were received. Respondents were all male veterans.

- When asked to indicate where they lived, only 2/10 respondents identified that they lived within the Matson and Robinswood wards. 5 came from Innsworth and 3 from Tewkesbury.
- When asked to indicate whether they preferred to access services within their locality, 10/10 respondents stated that they preferred to access services outside of where they lived. When probed further, 5 respondents stated that they felt less awkward whilst others enjoyed meeting a wider group of people at larger gatherings. Example given: Royal Legions or Service Coffee morning events.
- When asked to indicate whether feel more accepted within society 6/10 respondents stated that they did not feel accepted. 2 respondents said this did feel more accepted as they had moved on with their lives. 2 respondents were unsure of how to respond.
- In terms of the questionnaire for frontline service providers, I was able to speak to 5 people.
- When asked whether public perception had changed towards members of the veteran community, especially on the back of the census 2021, all felt that society was more accepting.
- When asked whether they felt that there were potential barriers preventing members of the veteran community from accessing local services, service providers commented that many individuals opted to travel to events held outside of the locality due to the fact that in some areas the provision was very limited. Individuals preferred to travel to groups where there was more of a community or an established activity.

- When asked whether they feel that there were individuals not accessing existing services, all felt that this was the case. However, one respondent stated that there are a significant number of military veterans registered with Gloucester Health Access Centre and Matson Lane Surgery,

Feedback provided by GL Communities from a local resident:

When I was referred to the Wellbeing Service 5 to 6 months ago, I was not in a good place. Working with the team has helped my mental health a great deal. I am now in a much better place. I have made new friends and feel part of a little family. Steve very kindly took me to the Service Veterans 'coffee morning' at Gloucester Rugby Club which I thoroughly enjoyed. I continue to attend on my own.

In terms of the conversation with Shaun, I came away with the sense that members from the veteran communities found great strength in seeking support from their own and did not want to be a burden. This was evidenced by the fact that he tended to prefer to socialise with fellow veterans as there was a mutual understanding.

Conclusion

The research project sought to identify the extent to which veterans living within the Matson ward feel included and valued. Whilst I was only able to speak to 2 individuals, it was clear that they were able to identify sources of support. Whilst there are an increasing number of agencies set up to work with members of the veteran community, it was hard to identify many living within the catchment area. A consideration for further exploration would be to look at the question through the lens of those accessing health provisions, especially those designated as a Veteran approved agency.

'It's the People!': How Do Social Connections Support Wellbeing in the Local Community?

By Kathy Williams

In 2023, Fair Shares celebrated 25 years of service in Gloucester, and feedback from participants highlighted the organisation's key strength: "It's the people!" Responses underscored the value of social connections, with quotes like "the friendships and the social side" and "new people I never would have crossed paths with." Participants frequently noted feeling part of the community and valued the supportive relationships they formed.

The World Health Organisation's 2023 report highlighted the severe health risks of loneliness, equating it to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, illustrating the critical need for social connections (Guardian, 16/11/23). Research from the Bennet Institute for Public Policy underscores that even brief interactions, such as a chat with a neighbour, create "weak ties" that significantly contribute to wellbeing, proving that connections don't have to be deep to be beneficial.

Fair Shares

community time banks

To explore these dynamics within Fair Shares, we surveyed 37 participants (from a total active membership of 200) about their social connections through the organisation. Participants listed between 6 and 47 contacts, with an average of 17. They were asked whether each contact was a 'friend' or 'someone they know' and if they would feel comfortable asking them for help. Participants reported a range of 2 to 34 people they could rely on for help, with an average of 10.81.

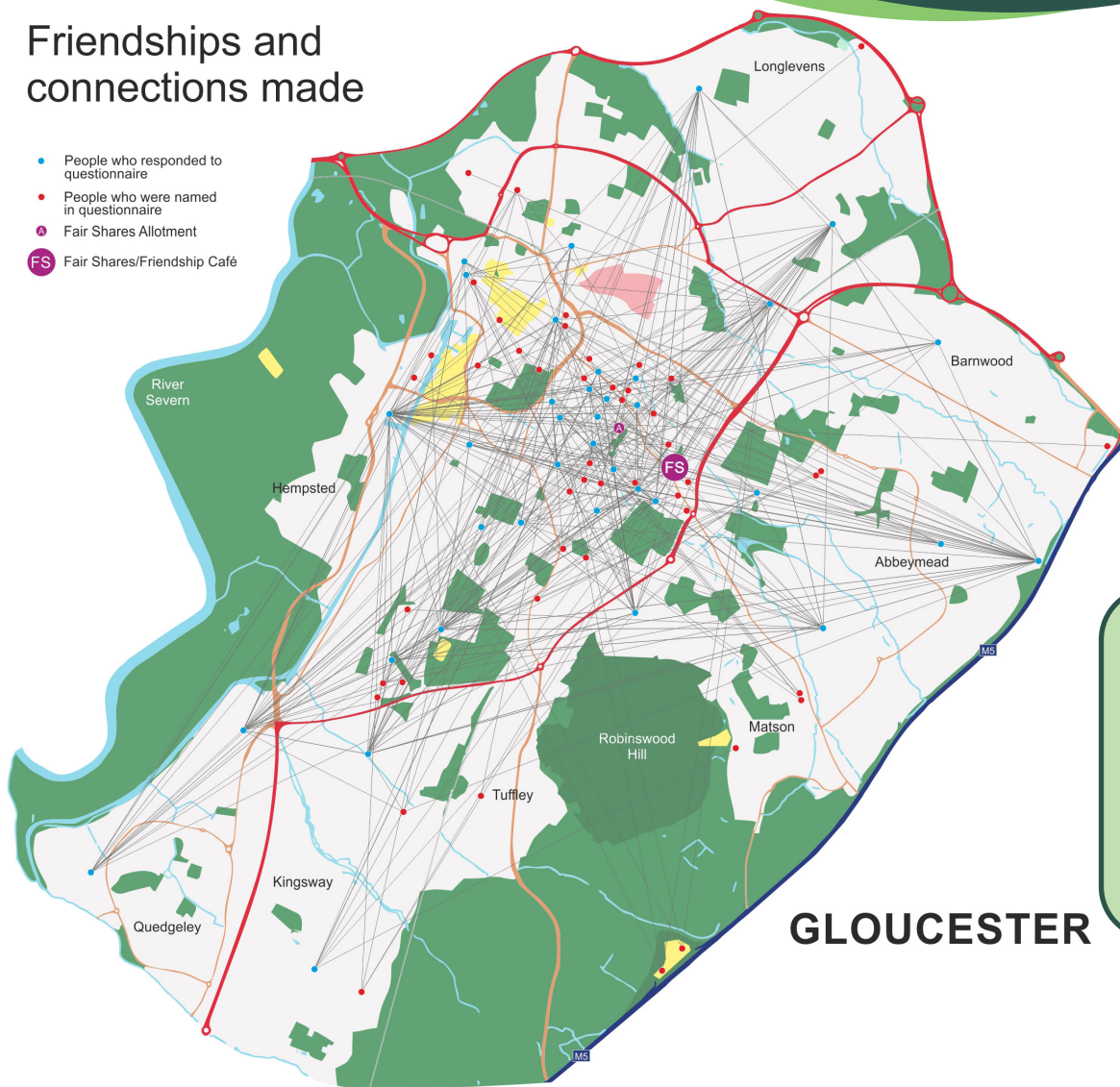
Despite varying definitions of friendship, all participants identified individuals they felt comfortable to ask for help even if they did not identify the person as a 'friend'. They identified that within Fair Shares there is an atmosphere of mutual support, with comments such as "There is no judgement"; "The help goes both ways – nobody is better than anybody else" and "You can turn to anybody for help."

Many also noted enhanced wellbeing and a strengthened sense of community: "I feel like I've got some pride in Gloucester, that's down to being in Fair Shares" and "Fair Shares has brought us all together."



Friendships and connections made

- People who responded to questionnaire
- People who were named in questionnaire
- Fair Shares Allotment
- FS Fair Shares/Friendship Café



GLOUCESTER

Click below to see how connections, friendships and timebanking links formed



To further understand these connections, we interviewed pairs of participants who identified each other as friends. Their discussions revealed the evolution of their relationships and the impact they had on their confidence and sense of belonging. sense of community: “I feel like I’ve got some pride in Gloucester, that’s down to being in Fair Shares” and “Fair Shares has brought us all together.”

Participants report that friendships and connections in the community are beneficial to their wellbeing and sense of value. Fair Shares provides a structure to support these connections, and gives people an opportunity to seek and offer help to each other.

Friendships and Connections Made



Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

community-driven development



Supporting our Community

By Jacky Edwards

Undertaking the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust survey has given the directors and management committee members at APT some interesting insights into our way forward to support the community of Stonehouse.

The survey was undertaken at the APT Family Fun Day and also at various community activities around the town. This gave us a wider range of residents in the area to have an input in to our future activities

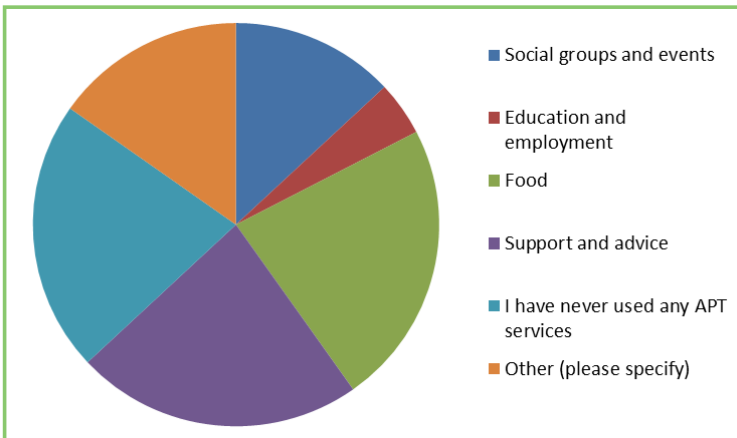


Question 2

What is the most effective way to hear about APT and other community activities? This question shows us that over 77% use social media and 61% prefer a printed newsletter with lower numbers using word of mouth and poster boards. This has helped us to make the decision to extend the delivery area of our quarterly newsletter. During July we delivered to an area of the town that is on the south side of the A419 which has no community facilities. We will now extend our deliveries to further areas within Stonehouse and make copies of the newsletter available to other parish councils within the GL10 area.

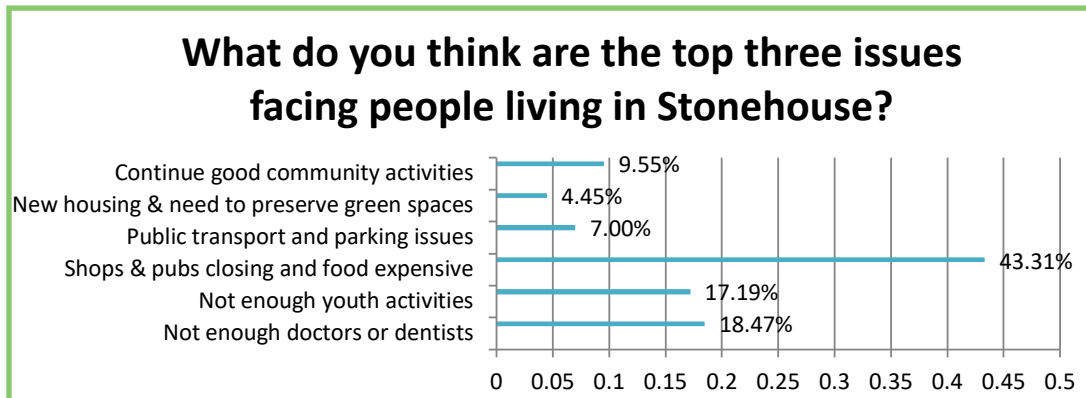
Question 1

Have you ever used APT for any reason? Out of the 54 responses, over 75% have used APT for one reason or another but only 7.41% have attended education and employment sessions. This is an area we would like to increase, and are currently running Multiply courses but will look to engage with the Stroud Valley's Project to use an employment mentor to support people looking for work.



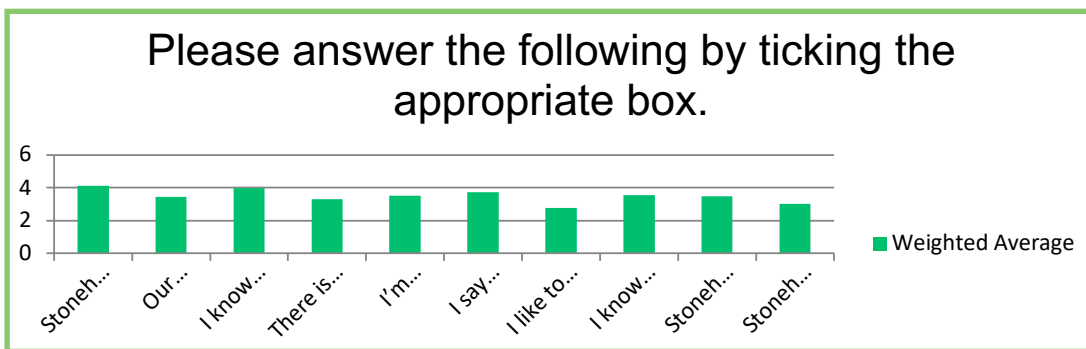
Question 3

What do you think are the top three issues facing people living in Stonehouse? From the three sections there are 27 answers that state there are not enough activities or clubs for young people. We currently work alongside The Door team who provide the youth club provision in Stonehouse and will be discussing with them if there are ways we can extend the provision and perhaps revisit the youth provision that was originally held at APT. We now have a member of the APT volunteers on the Town Council Events group which will make it easier to feed-back ideas given to us on this question of the survey.



Question 4

In the fourth question there were ten options to choose from, covering areas in Stonehouse such as “Stonehouse has a great Community spirit”. There were choices from “strongly disagree” though to “strongly agree” on all the sections of the questions. This has shown us that those people that answered the questionnaire feel that Stonehouse has a great community spirit and that our local community provides a good variety of family activities. These were the two areas with the highest number of votes. The lowest number of votes was for the question “ I like to volunteer” which is understandable, but APT has been very lucky recently, gaining three new volunteers over the summer period.



The last two questions concerned people’s post codes and age, which has been very useful to see where those residents attending our Family Fun Day and local activities come from and what the age ranges were. Because the GL10 area has expanded rapidly with the building of the new Great Oldbury Estate we now realise that we need to undertake more activities within the estate. The estate now has a primary school and it’s own parish council, so in the lead up to Christmas APT will be making contact with them to discuss future activities and support for the families. The team at All Pulling Together are very grateful for the chance to undertake the survey and going forward will look to provide more activities as required by the residents of Stonehouse and the GL10 area.

Get in touch

Gloucestershire Gateway Trust, City Works,
Gloucester, GL1 4DF

Gloucestershire
Gateway Trust

community-driven development