

# Children's Community Evaluation 2017 report

## February 2018



# **Children's Community Evaluation 2017 report**

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# Summary

This is the first annual report of the Children's Community evaluation being undertaken between 2017 and 2019 by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR), and the Centre for Development and Research in Education (CDARE), both at Sheffield Hallam University. It presents progress and findings from the first year of the evaluation.

## The Children's Community Model

Children's Communities are developed in response to evidence that, despite multiple and often successful interventions to address specific aspects of disadvantage or to improve services for children and young people, there are limits to what single initiatives working in isolation can achieve. Poorer outcomes for children and young people in disadvantaged communities persist, and many families in deprived areas face multiple challenges which have impacts across children's lives.

Children's lives are shaped by complex ecologies in which a series of 'systems' (which include family, school, neighbourhood, social and cultural contexts) interact to directly and indirectly affect outcomes. Initiatives which address only one aspect of these ecologies will have limited impacts and holistic, area-based approaches may offer opportunities to improve outcomes for children and young people living in the most disadvantaged areas. There is encouraging evidence that other similar approaches (notably the Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Neighbourhoods in the USA) that foster place-based, integrated and holistic support for children and young people from 'cradle to career' have improved a wide range of outcomes for children, young people and families living in targeted areas. Collectively, the Children's Community partnerships and stakeholders have agreed to a core set of principles which govern their way of working.

- The Children's Community is focused on tackling the link between social disadvantage and children's outcomes.
- The Children's Community is focused on simultaneously improving a range of children's outcomes.
- The Children's Community is collaborating with a wide-range of partners - with the ultimate aim of working across children's home, school and community lives and through different stages of childhood.
- The Children's Community is driven by a shared Theory of Change.
- The Children's Community has identified local community assets and is taking steps to make best use of them in achieving goals.
- The Children's Community is creating space for local networks to do more (finding the optimal level of support for families involving both professional services and community development).
- The Children's Community is tackling both presenting symptoms and underlying causes (responding to short-term priorities and bringing about longer term transformation).

- The Children's Community is oriented to prevention and early intervention.
- The Children's Community is creating new relationships, alliances and partnerships and is changing practice.
- The Children's Community is data and evidence informed.
- The Children's Community is helping to create a coherent local system of services and supports (rather than just layering a number of additional interventions over the existing system).
- The Children's Community is innovative and risk taking.
- The Children's Community is sustainable.

Each Children's Community has developed its own Theory of Change (ToC) which unites local stakeholders in an agreed programme of action to address priority needs and issues, and is embedded in principles for effective place-based working:<sup>1</sup> good governance and leadership which brings together a range of skills and resources; meaningful and sustained community involvement; effective use of evidence and data to inform interventions and evaluate progress; a co-ordinated and strategic approach, delivered by appropriately trained and skilled teams; and a longer time horizon to reflect the time needed to effect change.

## **The Children's Community Evaluation**

The Children's Community evaluation is guided by a set of research questions:

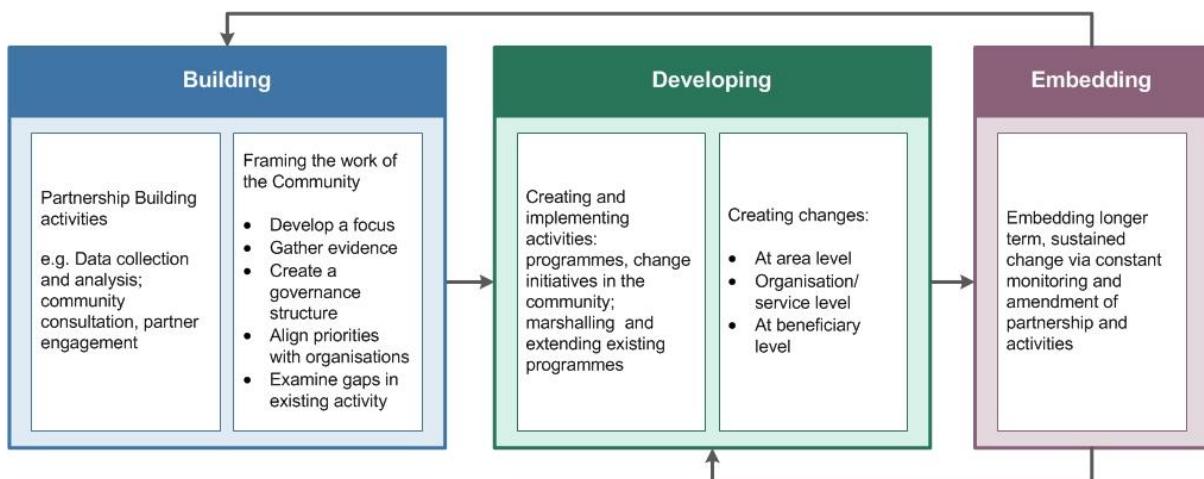
1. How and to what extent are Communities embodying the key principles of the Children's Communities model?
2. Is there evidence of Children's Communities working towards long term systems change?
3. How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?
4. How are the Communities progressing with developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and theory of change?
5. What evidence is there of impacts within services and systems?
6. What evidence is there of impacts for children and young people and families?

The evaluation model used to answer these questions takes a theory-based approach, drawing on systems and complexity thinking, to develop a systems-based Theory of Change model. We have developed an initial change model, drawing on the concept of a development model, against which to assess the progress and impact of the Children's Communities. The first draft is outlined below. This early model will be refined as the programme and evaluation develop, and as learning from the programme informs understanding of the ways in which the Children's Communities are progressing.

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<sup>1</sup> Place-based initiatives affecting outcomes for children and young people: A review for Save the Children.

## Initial ToC for Children's Community programme



## The Children's Communities

Three Children's Community sites are directly supported by Save the Children. These are Wallsend in North Tyneside, Pembury in Hackney (both launched in 2015-16), and Smallshaw-Hurst, in Tameside, which became the third Children's Community in 2017.

Dimension	Pembury	Wallsend	Smallshaw-Hurst
<b>Area</b>			
Geographical size	Housing estate comprising approximately 4,000 residents.	NE 28 postcode, comprising almost 45,000 residents.	Former designated local authority regeneration area comprising 15,000 residents.
<b>Socio-economic context</b>			
Population demographics	High proportion of BAME residents (88 per cent), and children and young people aged under 25, who make up 36 per cent of all residents.	Low proportion of BAME residents (6 per cent). Young people aged under 25 make up 28 per cent of local residents.	Proportion BAME residents (21 per cent) is similar to national average. Young people aged under 25 make up 36 per cent.
Employment opportunities	Hackney has a burgeoning economy with growth across a number of sectors including technology and hospitality. Challenge for the Children's Community is to ensure that Pembury residents who are in close proximity to much of this growth benefit equally to other Hackney residents and are able to access the opportunities arising.	Good public transport links to employment opportunities in Newcastle, but these are often not accessed by Wallsend residents. Large business park and major employers e.g. Accenture in proximity to Wallsend, but again reported not to be accessed by residents. Challenge for the Children's Community includes ensuring young people have relevant skills to access existing and future opportunities.	Although located within Greater Manchester, locally there are a relatively low number of jobs available. Low car ownership and expensive public transport are barriers in accessing areas with denser job opportunities within the City region. A challenge for the Children's Community is to increase work confidence and aspirations of young people and to help connect residents to work opportunities.
<b>Community</b>			
Meaning of community (sense of the Children's Community area as being a 'real'	Strong community identity; although there have historically been negative associations linked to reports of local residents'	Strong sense of place: local people feel belonging to Wallsend. Some differentiation within a large area (e.g. the enforced	The area comprises three distinct neighbourhoods. Residents and most professionals would not identify with Smallshaw-

community; sub-communities)	involvement in riots, there is recent evidence that this is changing and residents express positive views of the area. Consensus that overall, the area is well-managed, has good quality housing stock and lower levels of crime (compared to other areas in Hackney). Early evidence of gentrification, affecting London Borough of Hackney as a whole.	boundary of the main road splits the area). Professionals have a narrative of intergenerational poverty and worklessness following loss of heavy industry.	Hurst as a recognisable community. The area has previously been identified as a regeneration area for the local authority.
<b>Children's Community</b>			
Core Team	Two programme leads funded by host organisations (Peabody and London Borough of Hackney).	Core team funded by Save the Children: Executive Lead; Community Co-ordinator, Data, Impact and Evaluation Advisor.	Core team funded by Save the Children: Executive Lead; Community Co-ordinator, Data, Impact and Evaluation Advisor.
Focus	Three initial priority strands focusing on early years, young people and parenting. The Theory of Change assumes improved outcomes associated with enhanced services and increased personal and community resources.	Three strands focussed on early intervention ('getting things right early'), health ('fit for life') and children's future's ('realising aspirations').	Three strands focussed on parents, early years and learning; aspirations, education and employability; and being healthy, safe and supported.
Children's Community governance and leadership (role of schools; LA; housing; health services etc.)	Strong partnership working between social housing provider (Peabody) and Hackney Council (children, adults and community health) as driving force behind the Children's Community. Involvement of other agencies and local authority departments (e.g. schools, Hackney Learning Trust) is developing.	Established governance group, with three strand groups. Leadership driven from established schools partnership in Wallsend, linking to other key stakeholders.	The Children's Community is establishing its governance arrangements. A Save the Children staff team leads the Children's Community. New Charter Housing Association and Tameside Council are key partners.
Maturity of partnerships (pre-existing or being brought together).	Partnership developed as a result of stakeholder consultation post-2011 riots. Key priorities identified then (high levels of long-term unemployment and NEETs) led to development of a demonstration project which provided the basis for partnership between Peabody and Hackney Council and foundation for developing a more strategic approach through the Children's Community.	Partnership developed from an established soft school federation building on the extended schools agenda - developed over at least nine years. Other linked partnerships such as Tyne (now Family) Gateway drawn in, along with other stakeholders including Public Health, social services, CCG, police, local politicians and some voluntary and community sector organisations.	The Children's Community is in a development phase. Prior local partnerships are relatively weak. The staff team are engaging with local stakeholders with a view to developing strong partnerships.

## **Findings**

### **Pembury**

- Pembury is embodying the principles of the Children's Community approach in that there is a shared vision, bringing together agencies across sectors to focus on a long-term approach. A wide range of agencies are involved, although there is scope to work more closely with agencies which are not currently represented, and a need to move towards a more active engagement of representatives across all governance structures.
- The Pembury Children's Community has made much progress on developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and Theory of Change. There is a clear and agreed vision, articulated in the vision statement and Pembury 2025 statements and outlined in its Theory of Change document. Pembury, in common with other Children's Communities, would benefit from a clearer articulation of the theory and evidence behind the sequencing of interventions, over time and across children and young people's lives, so that there is a shared understanding of how the initiative will move beyond a series of piecemeal interventions to become more than the sum of its parts.
- There is clearly a huge amount of very positive work taking place with children and young people in Pembury. There have been new services developed and changes to existing services implemented. Peabody, in particular, has changed significantly the way it provides services to its communities through, and as a result of, its work through the Children's Community, and there is evidence emerging that Hackney Council is increasingly looking to Pembury to 'test and learn' innovative and new approaches.
- There is clear leadership, which is influential and trusted, although there is a risk that the programme is associated too closely with the work of Peabody and (some parts) of the local authority. A key next stage in the development of the programme governance is to review the shared ownership of, and accountability for, the Children's Community across all local agencies, and the degree to which this is driving change in services which builds on successful interventions.
- The small neighbourhood focus of the Children's Community in Pembury supports close engagement with the community and there is a sense that lead agencies know their communities very well. Pembury is a vibrant and active community, and the Children's Community benefits from the involvement of engaged residents. Documentary evidence and minutes of meetings confirms their influence on shaping interventions.
- Early evidence of the impact of the Children's Community in Pembury on improving outcomes for children and families suggests that there are a range of benefits associated with participation in Children's Community services including increased confidence and social activity, skills and employment.

### **Wallsend**

- In relation to embodying the key principles of the Children's Community model, Wallsend is in a strong position, being built on a central pre-existing school partnership, alongside a web of other linked partnerships in the area and beyond. There is shared understanding at a strategic level of the Wallsend Children's Community vision. There is effective use of evidence to develop activity, although research evidence use could be more specific. At an organisational level, schools and other organisations are open to partnership working.
- In relation to leadership and governance, strategic leaders of the Community are well positioned and trusted. Representation on governance groups is broad, with aims to develop this to include business, wider LA and residents' representation. There is a need identified to improve active engagement of new and existing members. The current leadership is well placed to leverage additional resourcing.

- In relation to progressing the local vision and Theory of Change, the Community is articulated as being part way through a journey to become embedded in the local area and organisational cultures. However, the Community lacks visibility and buy in from organisational and operational stakeholders, and the articulation of the relationship between the Children's Community and pre-existing, well understood and valued partnerships needs to be carefully thought through. Beyond this, profile building of the Children's Community in the local area is recognised as a priority. There is a need to develop a clearer, measurable set of expected outcomes for governance and leadership; for organisations and their staff; and for children, young people and families.
- There is evidence that the Community is bringing organisations and staff members together to support children (although this is variable and sometimes hard to disentangle from the pre-existing partnership working). It is, in some cases, seen to be acting as an enabler for staff to do their jobs more effectively. Communication between strategic leaders and operational staff in relation to the role of the Children's Community needs improvement to ensure new initiatives can be effectively implemented, although there are some examples of allowing operational level staff to develop and build initiatives to ensure they can work better.
- In relation to impacts for children, young people and families, it is too early in the programme to expect significant change, although early evidence suggests that there are positive outcomes associated with participation in interventions. These include reports of improved confidence and changed aspirations amongst pupils; and data on progress improvement from the Transition Mentor and Family Entrepreneur's work in one school.
- In relation to key contextual factors, the bedrock of previous partnerships is important. More broadly, the challenging funding context and strong accountability drivers within local agencies are barriers to effective working across boundaries.

### ***Smallshaw-Hurst***

- Although it is at a development stage, Smallshaw-Hurst is embodying many of the principles of an established Children's Community. It is developing a long-term and strategic vision, and has recognised in particular the need to move beyond the time-limited, project-based approach which has historically characterised investments in the area. Three strands of activity align to Children's Community principles: developing the evidence base, engaging stakeholders and developing the Theory of Change.
- The staff team has undertaken extensive engagement with local stakeholders to lay the foundations for establishing governance structures. Engagement with some key partners has been limited due to external factors. In developing the governance group it is recognised by stakeholders that it will be important to articulate the benefits of engagement and understand what partners want to get out of the Children's Community.
- In progressing the local vision and Theory of Change, the Children's Community has built upon extensive consultation, evidence gathering and a focused workshop to set out an initial draft series of Theories of Change. The team have found this process useful in highlighting how to think about the sequencing of activities to achieve longer term visions and objectives. It has also added legitimacy when engaging stakeholders. A key challenge for the Community is how to drive forward action and activity without an existing partnership or building to act as a focus for the work.
- The Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst is not yet at a stage where there are identifiable impacts on local systems and services, or measurable outcomes for children and families. A draft outcomes framework to identify the impacts on children and families has been developed through the Theory of Change process. In common with other Children's Communities this needs to be developed further to also consider impacts at the level of local services and systems.

- The development of the Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst needs to be considered in the context of substantial organisational change surrounding the Children's Community: key partners New Charter and Tameside Council are undergoing internal change processes, and there have been changes to key personnel within Save the Children. There have also been logistical challenges in setting up the Children's Community, notably establishing suitable IT and communications systems to allow remote working. Stakeholders identified additional factors that are likely to have a longer-term influence on the Children's Community. These include challenges in engaging local schools (which have their own sets of structures and targets that do not necessarily align with those of the Children's Community); and challenges in securing buy-in to the model from local partners and community members. One issue is the geography of the Smallshaw-Hurst area, which is a former regeneration area for the local authority but not a recognisable neighbourhood that communities or local stakeholder organisations align to. This has affected engagement and buy-in from stakeholders, particularly where service delivery boundaries do not align with those of the Children's Community area.

## Discussion

There has been a great deal of progress across all three Children's Communities, and in Wallsend and Pembridge a wide range of interventions to support children, young people and families are in place. At this point in the programme and evaluation there is more to report in relation to the **processes** of building partnerships and governance structures and delivering interventions than there is in relation to the **impact** of these activities, and the evaluation team is working with the Children's Communities and Save the Children to develop a relevant outcomes framework.

The findings demonstrate progress against the Theory of Change for each Children's Community. Each area is moving forward with developing its governance and leadership structures, although each aims to bring on board further key partners and engage them more actively in the next stages. Similarly, there are service and organisational changes including working together in new ways and some innovations in practice, and there are examples of early positive outcomes for children and young people.

The coming phase for the Children's Communities model, and for the three current Communities, is crucial. Whilst the two established Communities are clearly further ahead as established partnerships with shared aims, all three are part way along their 'journeys', and the sense is that all three -and the programme as a whole - will benefit from a clearer focus in relation to how the Communities are expected to work to achieve their aims, both to support stronger planning and sharper evaluation. The evaluation can support this next phase of development by working with each Community to establish a clear set of outcomes expected in the next phase and provide the means by which each Community can establish the data it needs to be collected for its own evaluation in the next period.

The result of this would be:

- An overarching change model for the Children's Community Programme.
- A bespoke evaluation plan for each Children's Community to inform the rest of the evaluation.

The evaluation team has begun to capture a number of elements of systems change across a set of aspects of the work of Children's Communities to help articulate what the work of the Communities might look like in different stages of development. Elements considered at this stage include governance, partnership working, leadership, activities, organisations and services, engagement, and communication. The intention is to translate these into an overall framework to allow the evaluation team to make judgments on progress in the next stages.

# Introduction

This report is the first annual report of the Children's Community evaluation being undertaken between 2016 and 2019 by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR), and the Centre for Development and Research in Education (CDaRE), both at Sheffield Hallam University. It presents progress and findings from the first year of the evaluation.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter two outlines the Children's Community model, and its aims and objectives in the context of evidence around improving outcomes for children and young people in deprived areas and place-based working. It also outlines the key principles to which the Children's Community partnerships and stakeholders will hold themselves accountable.
- Chapter three describes the methodological approach and research questions for the evaluation.
- Chapter four describes the three Children's Communities, and compares them, using a set of dimensions to lay out their similarities and differences.
- Chapter five presents the key findings of this phase of the evaluation, presented separately for each of the three Children's Communities, and organised around the key research questions.
- Chapter six presents a final summative discussion.
- Details on the research methods are contained in Appendix 1.

# 2

## The Children's Community model

This chapter sets the context for the report by reporting briefly on the evidence in which the Children's Community approach is located, and on the Children's Community model.

### 2.1. The evidence for Children's Communities

The Children's Community approach is rooted in evidence that, despite multiple and often successful interventions to address specific aspects of disadvantage or to improve services for children and young people, there are limits to what single initiatives working in isolation can achieve. Poorer outcomes for children and young people in disadvantaged communities persist, and many families in deprived areas face multiple challenges which have impacts across children's lives. A review of the evidence base for the development of a co-ordinated, place-based approach to improving outcomes for children and young people undertaken by the University of Manchester and Save the Children<sup>2</sup> reached six key conclusions:

- Children's lives are shaped by complex ecologies in which a series of 'systems' (which include family, school, neighbourhood, social and cultural contexts) interact to directly and indirectly affect outcomes. Initiatives which address only one aspect of these ecologies will have limited impacts and a **holistic, area-based** approach offers the best opportunity to improve outcomes for children and young people living in the most disadvantaged areas.
- There is a wealth of evidence available across a range of interventions that it is possible to improve various outcomes (including for instance, educational attainment, social and emotional wellbeing, health, engagement in risky or criminal behaviours, family and parenting), leading to a strong rationale for an approach which marshals a **co-ordinated suite of evidence-based interventions** to overcome some of the limitations of stand-alone, single-issue based schemes.
- The positive effects of specific interventions can also 'transfer' to improve outcomes in different areas of children's lives or later in time. Examples might include interventions which seek to address health inequalities but which also facilitate improved attendance and attainment at school, or the provision of high

<sup>2</sup> Dyson, A., Kerr, K. and Wellings, C. (2013) *Developing Children's Zones for England: What's the Evidence?* London: Save the Children.

quality early years and pre-school provision which equips children with the skills and capabilities to achieve good outcomes in later educational settings and into early adulthood. Whilst the causality of these 'transferred' effects is not always verified, there is good evidence to suggest that a holistic approach which addresses **all aspects of children's lives from 'cradle to career'** has the potential to achieve a greater impact than the sum of those associated with individual interventions.

- Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that there can be positive impacts arising from interactions between different strands of a **multi-strand intervention** leading to improved outcomes for children and young people, families and communities. These outcomes may be additional to, or beyond the scope and purpose of, the original intervention.
- There is encouraging evidence that other similar approaches (notably the Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Neighbourhoods in the USA) that foster place-based, integrated and holistic support for children and young people from 'cradle to career' have **improved a wide range of outcomes for children, young people and families** living in targeted areas.
- That this evidence leads to a compelling rationale for the adoption of a **place-based, co-ordinated, long-term and holistic approach to improving outcomes for children and young people in England**.

Such an approach is that which has evolved into the Children's Community model that is being supported by Save the Children in three communities in England: These are Wallsend in North Tyneside and Pembury in Hackney, London (both launched in 2015-16) and Smallshaw-Hurst, in Tameside, which became a third Children's Community in 2017.

## 2.1. The Children's Community Model

A Children's Community brings together key agencies and services to develop and implement a co-ordinated and locally-tailored strategy for making sustained improvements to the life chances of children and young people.

Each Children's Community aims to:

- Represent a **long-term, holistic and coordinated approach** to improving outcomes for children and young people across a local community.
- Be developed and owned by the local community and local stakeholders via a **principled process** through which local stakeholders
  - agree a **shared vision** for children in their community;
  - develop a joined-up strategy based on **an understanding** of what holds children and young people back locally, and the assets and opportunities that can be harnessed to improve their life chances;
  - take **collaborative action** to realise this vision.

The stakeholders within each Children's Community have signed up to

- A **shared framework**, made up of a set of core principles (see below), a shared process for developing a local Theory of Change and key issues to be addressed.
- Participation in a **national network** of Children's Community sites, which includes three sites which are directly supported by Save the Children.

## 2.2. Principles of Working

Collectively, the Children's Community partnerships and stakeholders have agreed to a core set of principles which govern their way of working, and against which the progress of the Communities will be assessed over the coming years. These are:

- The Children's Community is focused on tackling the link between social disadvantage and children's outcomes.
- The Children's Community is focused on simultaneously improving a range of children's outcomes.
- The Children's Community is collaborating with a wide-range of partners - with the ultimate aim of working across children's home, school and community lives and through different stages of childhood.
- The Children's Community is driven by our shared Theory of Change.
- The Children's Community has identified local community assets and is taking steps to make best use of them in achieving goals.
- The Children's Community is creating space for local networks to do more (finding the optimal level of support for families involving both professional services and community development).
- The Children's Community is tackling both presenting symptoms and underlying causes (responding to short-term priorities and bringing about longer term transformation).
- The Children's Community is oriented to prevention and early intervention.
- The Children's Community is creating new relationships, alliances and partnerships and is changing practice.
- The Children's Community is data and evidence informed.
- The Children's Community is helping to create a coherent local system of services and supports (rather than just layering a number of additional interventions over the existing system).
- The Children's Community is innovative and risk taking.
- The Children's Community is sustainable.

## 2.3. A place-based approach

As outlined above, the Children's Community model is explicitly **place-based**, reflecting the importance of the neighbourhood (in both its physical and social manifestations) as an influential aspect of children's ecologies. Whilst there is no prescribed geography or spatial scale for a Children's Community (as outlined below, the three Children's Community areas that are being evaluated as part of this programme are operating at different spatial scales) the approach recognises the need to respond to local issues and contexts and to harness local assets and capabilities to build solutions. Each Children's Community has developed (or is developing) its own Theory of Change which, whilst adhering to the core programme logic, unites local stakeholders in an agreed programme of action to address priority needs and issues, and which is embedded in principles for effective place-based working:<sup>3</sup> good governance and leadership which brings together a range of skills

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<sup>3</sup> Place-based initiatives affecting outcomes for children and young people: A review for Save the Children.

and resources; meaningful and sustained community involvement; effective use of evidence and data to inform interventions and evaluate progress; a co-ordinated and strategic approach, delivered by appropriately trained and skilled teams; a longer time horizon to reflect the time needed to effect change. The degree to which these principles are adopted by the Children's Community areas will be explored through the evaluation.

This chapter has outlined the Children's Community model and summarised the evidence supporting a holistic, place-based approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. The next chapter outlines the methodology for the Children's Community evaluation.

# 3

## The Children's Community evaluation

This chapter articulates the methodology for the Children's Community evaluation. Further detail on the research methods used is included at Appendix 1.

The Children's Community evaluation is guided by a set of research questions, developed by Save the Children. These are as follows

1. How and to what extent are Communities embodying the key principles of the Children's Communities model?
2. Is there evidence of Children's Communities working towards long term systems change?
3. How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?
4. How are the Communities progressing with developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and theory of change?
5. What evidence is there of impacts within services and systems?
6. What evidence is there of impacts for children and young people and families?

### 3.1. A theory-based approach

The evaluation model used to answer these questions is taking a theory-based approach, drawing on systems and complexity thinking, to develop a systems-based Theory of Change approach. This model was selected as it closely matches the conceptual basis of the Children's Communities.

The Children's Communities are designed to meet durable challenges by aiming to take a long-term approach focussing on a sequenced change process which the Community aims to move through by implementing activities and projects, which are reviewed, amended and replaced as the change process moves forward. There is a longstanding evaluation literature on the value of Theory of Change approaches in relation to such initiatives - what are often called in the US literature "Comprehensive Community Initiatives". A useful summary of some of the features of CCIs is provided by Kubisch, Connell and Fulbright-Anderson (2001, p83)<sup>4</sup> is included in Box 3.1 below.

<sup>4</sup> Kubisch, A. C., Connell, J. P., and Fulbright-Anderson, K. (2001) Evaluating complex comprehensive community initiatives: Theory, measurement and analysis. *Rebuilding Community: Policy and Practice in Urban Regeneration*, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 83-99.

### Box 3.1: Features of Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs)

- **Horizontal complexity.** They work across multiple sectors (social, economic, physical, political and others) simultaneously and aim for synergy among them.
- **Vertical complexity.** They aim for change at the individual, family, community, organizational and systems levels.
- **Community building.** They aim for strengthened community capacity, enhanced social capital, an empowered neighbourhood and similar outcomes.
- **Contextual issues.** They aim to incorporate external political, economic and other conditions into their framework, even though they may have little power to affect them.
- **Community responsiveness and flexibility over time.** They are designed to be community-specific and to evolve in response to the dynamics of the neighbourhood and the lessons being learned by the initiative.
- **Community saturation.** They aim to reach all members of a community, and therefore individual residents cannot be randomly assigned to treatment and control groups for the purposes of assessing the CCI's impact; finding equivalent comparison communities is also not feasible.

The approach underpinning - starting with a problem, working through the steps that would lead to its solution and then seeking appropriate means to move towards solution - is that taken by Theory of Change evaluation designs. Drawing on Connell and Kubisch (1998),<sup>5</sup> in essence, this approach aims to follow the process as laid out in Box 3.2 below.

### Box 3.2: Theory of Change Approach

1. Agree vision and endpoints/impacts: developing an agreed statement (or set of statements) of 'where we want to be'.
2. Then move on to starting points: do we have a good picture of where we are now in relation to these end points? If not what information do we need to gather?
3. Review activities: what activities are being put in place to move from the starting point to the agreed end point?
4. Check the expected intermediate outcomes that are going to be needed along the way e.g. after six months, after a year, etc.
5. Check: how will these activities lead to these outcomes?
6. Check context: what personal, organisational, systemic factors may support or hinder the mechanisms by which the activities will lead to positive change?
7. Subsequent stages follow: review of existing evidence behind the processes and mechanisms sitting behind the Theory of Change, and develop evaluation issues:
  - appropriate data sources
  - possible methodologies (exploring mixed methods, secondary analysis of sources, new primary and secondary data collection)
  - options for timings and relationships between different data methods.

<sup>5</sup> Connell, J. P., and Kubisch, A. C. (1998) Applying a theory of change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives: progress, prospects, and problems. *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives*, 2 (15-44), 1-16.

It is important to note that this is what we refer to as an ***open problem-based*** approach. This contrasts with what might be termed a more typical ***closed programme-based*** approach, which begins with a problem, and then selects an intervention to help overcome it, working through the steps from intervention via intermediate outcomes to final outcomes using a step by step logic model. Such closed, programme-based approaches are suited to bounded, well specified problems, such as improving outcomes in relation to a particular element of mathematics learning; they are unsuited to open, complex area-based initiatives, addressing durable issues and with multiple aims.

### 3.2. Building an overarching Theory of Change

In an internal interim report, written in October 2016 for Save the Children, programme funders and Children's Community leads, we noted that it would be helpful to develop an overarching **Theory of Change** for the programme as a whole, to identify the expected development of Children's Communities, and the mechanisms through which they expected to achieve the intended outcomes.

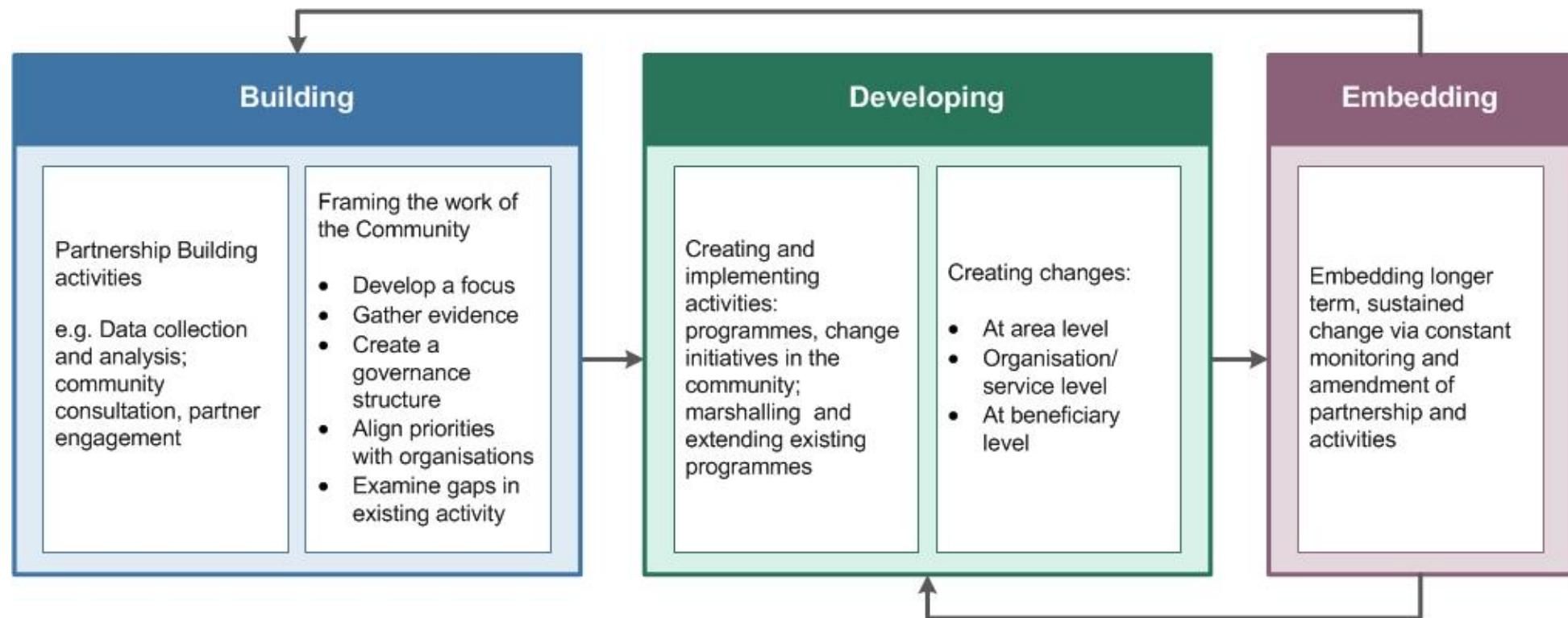
Figure 3.1 over the page lays out an initial change model for the Children's Community programme, utilising the concept of a maturity model, often used in the context of school improvement<sup>6</sup>. This early model will be revisited, and refined, as the programme and evaluation develop, and as learning from the programme informs understanding of the ways in which the Children's Communities are progressing.

In this model there are three distinct, but potentially overlapping phases: in the **building phase**, the community creates the Children's Community partnership, and undertakes early work to frame the approach - identifying issues, working out the focus, gathering evidence, creating a governance structure and aligning community priorities with the services and organisations engaged in it (as well as the core Children's Community principles). Some early, partnership-building activities and programmes may take place during this phase. The Community will gradually move into the **development phase**, when a coherent set of activities is implemented, and monitored in relation to changes they aim to engender in the short and medium term at different system levels. In the final, most mature **embedding phase**, the community becomes more self-sustaining and focuses on longer term change, necessarily continually monitoring and amending the activities undertaken and also monitoring and amending/extending the partnership in relation to governance and engagement of partners and stakeholders (indicated by the arrows).

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Hargreaves, D (2012) *A self improving school system: towards maturity*. National College for School Leadership Resource

**Figure 3.1: Schematic Theory of Change maturity model for Children's Communities**



### 3.3. Evaluating systems change

Treating the Children's Communities as local systems, interlinking with other local and national systems, implies that the change processes involved will display features of complexity. In particular, the change processes involved in Children's Communities are likely to have these features: non-linearity; emergence; adaptation; uncertainty; change in dynamical systems; and coevolution (Walton, 2016).<sup>7</sup>

We deal with these features in two ways. Firstly, working with the Children's Communities to develop their Theories of Change, we encourage them to consider change and their interactions **at different system levels** - in particular:

- area-based and strategic changes
- organisational, service level and operational changes
- beneficiary level personal changes.

This approach encourages consideration of dynamic, interactive, systemic change. Secondly, as the initiative and its evaluation develop, as evaluators we are mindful to observe Walton's features playing out, and encourage the Communities to expect and plan (as far as possible) for expected adaptation, and change which may be both non-linear (for instance many different activities or developments happening simultaneously) and sporadic (such as long periods of little apparent progress followed by tipping points).

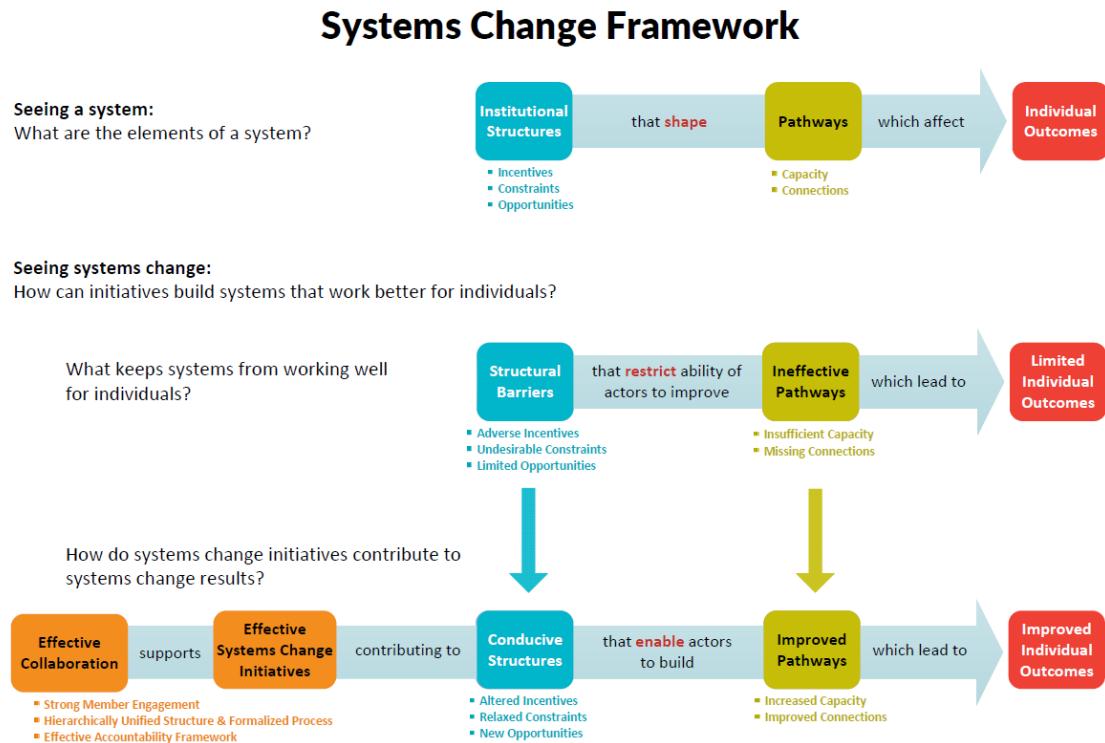
Table 3.1 sets out how each of the levels is addressed by each of the evaluation questions.

**Table 3.1: Mapping system levels to evaluation questions**

IMPACT	PROCESS		
	Area-level	Organisation level	Beneficiary level
How and to what extent are Communities embodying the key principles of the Children's Communities model?	✓	✓	
Is there evidence of Children's Communities working towards long term systems change?	✓	✓	✓
How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?		✓	✓
How are the Communities progressing with developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and theory of change?		✓	✓
What evidence is there of impacts within services and systems?	✓	✓	
What evidence is there of impacts for children and young people and families?	✓		✓

<sup>7</sup> Walton, M. (2016) Expert views on applying complexity theory in evaluation: Opportunities and barriers. *Evaluation*, 22 (4), pp. 410-423.

As well as gathering data through which to identify changes at different levels in local systems, the approach to evaluating the Children's Communities is also drawing on evaluative approaches which seek to capture and understand **the processes** through which collaborative or collective actions can lead to improvements in outcomes for individuals and communities. There are numerous models and frameworks for reference, drawn from international practice. An exemplar of an evaluation framework from the USA is provided below.<sup>8</sup>



Whilst we might want to adjust the terminology used in this exemplar to reflect a UK context and broader systemic factors, this framework is useful because it sets out a boundary for the system - in this instance a service, but we could also usefully extend this to a community of place - and an articulation of how we might expect the relationships between institutional structures and pathways to contribute to outcomes. In this model, structural factors (which might include funding regimes accountability frameworks and opportunities for service innovation and development) can restrict or enable the development of service pathways which lead to improved outcomes for individuals. Similarly, a 'How to guide' for collective impact (in this instance drawn from Australia), sets out a series of steps through which collective endeavours can lead to impact in local systems.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A Practical Guide to Evaluating Systems Change in a Human Services Context, Latham (2014).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/the-how-to-guide/the-mindset-and-leadership-needed-2/>

Components for Success	Phase I Generate Ideas and Dialogue	Phase II Initiate Action	Phase III Organise for Impact	Phase IV Sustain Action and Impact
Governance & Infrastructure	Convene community stakeholders	Identify champions & form cross-sector group	Create infrastructure (backbone & processes)	Facilitate & refine
Strategic Planning	Hold dialogue about issue, community context and available resources	Map the landscape and use data to make case	Create common agenda (common goals and strategy)	Support implementation (alignment to goal and strategies)
Community Involvement	Facilitate community outreach specific to goal	Facilitate community outreach	Engage community and build public will	Continue engagement and conduct advocacy
Evaluation and Improvement	Determine if there is consensus/urgency to move forward	Analyse baseline data to ID key issues and gaps	Establish shared metrics (indicators, measurement, and approach)	Collect, track, and report progress (process to learn and improve)

### 3.4. Outcome measures

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks outlined above, and working with Save the Children and the Children's Community leads to reflect on the Theories of Change in each Children's Community area we have begun to develop an initial draft set of outcome measures, through which to identify change at area, organisational and beneficiary levels. A set of outcomes that can be evidenced through secondary and administrative data is outlined at Appendix 1. Further work is needed to agree outcomes (and data sources) which are not available through these methods.

### 3.5. Establishing Impact

There is a significant issue with this approach in relation to assessing the counterfactual, as indicated in the last bullet in Box 3.1 above. In other words - how do we know, when randomisation is not possible, that any changes that we see in outcomes in Children's Communities wouldn't have happened anyway?

The starting point is to ensure that the Theories of Change are informed by evidence as far as possible of the positive impact of successful interventions. So, for example, interventions to improve readiness for school should reflect **well-evidenced prior approaches**. We need to be careful here, as in many cases evidence from short term trials that appear to show evidence may not carry through in the longer term (e.g. an intervention may show promising signs of impact in early evaluations but the impact dissipates as children grow older), particularly problematic for a long term change process like Children's Communities. So where possible, longitudinal impact data should be sought. This also indicates the importance of sequenced change processes, building on one another. There is also a need to balance evidence with room for innovation to respond to local needs. Other limitations of evidence-based approaches include that 'good' evidence is not always available, and that they have a tendency to privilege particular types of evidence (so, for instance evidence quality frameworks may rate quantitative evidence derived from RCTs above qualitative evidence derived from consultation with local communities). It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to suggest that any particular approach is 'right', but rather to suggest that the Children's Communities should seek to harness and utilise the various forms

of evidence in ways that support the aims of the local areas. This is likely to include evidence on area-based change processes, drawing for example on learning from other area-based initiatives such as the Harlem Children's Zone; and New Deal for Communities.

Secondly, careful (**mixed methods**) **process data gathering** needs to help disentangle where any changes in outcomes are plausibly attributable to the Children's Communities. For example, if a positive change is found in relation to pupil attainment outcomes in Key Stage 2, but the intervention that was supposed to lead to these was poorly implemented, then we can plausibly argue that there is some evidence that the change cannot be attributed to the intervention. There is useful work to draw upon here in developing 'small n' approaches (where n refers to the number of units of analysis for which data is available)<sup>10</sup>, which combine data from different methods and data sources to develop 'stories' of contribution and impact.

Finally, the evaluation needs to utilise appropriate baseline and end point data, and use - as far as is possible - relevant comparators. The evaluation is developing a bespoke data dashboard for each Children's Community, incorporating a number of data sources, and benchmarking change against local authority (where possible) and national comparators.

This chapter has outlined some of the key methodological challenges associated with evaluating a complex, open programme such as the Children's Community, and presented the framework being used to guide the evaluation. Further detail on evaluation methods and outcomes is attached at Appendix 1. The next chapter provides information on the three Children's Communities.

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<sup>10</sup> See for example: Mayne, J. (2011) Contribution analysis: addressing cause and effect, In: K. Forss, M. Marra and R. Schwartz (eds.) *Evaluating the Complex*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

# 4

## The Children's Communities

In this section we outline the features and approaches of the Children's Communities, mapping similarities and differences across the three Children's Communities and drawing out implications for programme and evaluation. Further details of the Children's Communities can be found on the Children's Community Network website: <http://www.childrenscommunitynetwork.org.uk/about>

### 4.1. Pembury

The Children's Community in Pembury developed out of partnership working between Hackney Council and Peabody to strengthen longstanding employment and youth work initiatives. The Pembury estate comprises more than 1,500 homes, which are a mix of social-rented and private tenure. The area has a high proportion of children and young people. It is home to just over 4,000 residents, 36 per cent of whom are children and young people under 25 years of age.

Pembury estate has **many assets** which support positive outcomes for children and young people:

- The estate has benefited from **investment** in recent years, including improvements to existing homes and the environment and the building of new homes.
- A **community centre** (opened in 2015) which delivers services to the local community six days a week, and provides a base for Peabody's youth work, employment and training, parent advice, community development and specialist housing teams, as well as hosting the local Children's Centre and a range of health and social care services and voluntary groups.
- A thriving **youth club** which engages over 90 young people each week and also provides holiday clubs and skills development.
- **Support for young children and their families** through Pembury pre-school, Brook/Linden Children's Centre and the Reading from the Start family literacy project.
- **Adult literacy, employment support, parenting and peer support** activities provided by Peabody, Hackney Council and the Hackney Learning Trust.
- **High-performing schools** in the local area which support children to make accelerated progress, particularly at secondary school.
- **A vibrant and strong sense of community**: in a recent survey carried out by Peabody, 85 per cent of residents were 'positive' or 'very positive' about being part of the Pembury community.
- **Buoyant local economies** which provide employment opportunities.

However, although the starting point for the Children's Community is to recognise and build on the talents and assets of the local community, the Children's Community strategy also acknowledges that children and families living in Pembury face challenges which can place **stresses on individual, family and community resources** and create risks to achieving good outcomes for children and young people. These include high levels of deprivation and child poverty, high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity, low levels of attainment amongst adults, high numbers of local children not ready for school, low levels of aspiration amongst young people and (although the area has a vibrant local economy) challenges accessing local employment opportunities. The area has also been subject historically to stigma and negative perceptions, evolving partly from the association of the estate with riots in 2011 which took place in nearby streets.

The Children's Community programme was launched formally in 2015-16 and involves the Council and Peabody as well as schools, local services and the voluntary sector. Its overarching ambition is to create co-ordinated and holistic support for children in Pembury which works across home, school and community and at all points in children's lives. The Children's Community has identified two early operational priorities which will help it to achieve this overall ambition:

- **Improving the connectivity of local services:** strengthening connections between services, and between services and residents; supporting service providers to think creatively and collectively about how they engage local residents and support them in a sustained and holistic way.
- **Harnessing local relationships:** supporting community development and the growth of informal networks to build a self-supporting and sustaining community.

**The Pembury Children's community aims to significantly improve the lives of the young people living on and around the Pembury estate over the next 10 years.**

A set of ambitions for the Children's Community are outlined in the Pembury 2025 statements.

- Pembury children are more ready for school.
- Pembury children and young people are in education, training and employment and are on their way to achieving their ambitions.
- Pembury children and young people are safe and secure.
- Pembury families experiencing poverty are on a long-term route out of poverty and more able manage financial difficulties.
- Both young people and parents are more connected to informal support networks that create opportunities and meet needs.
- Service providers can demonstrate that services are more accessible and joined up across children's school/home/community lives.
- We have developed a model that can transform children's lives and their neighbourhood.

The Pembury Children's Community Theory of Change assumes as its starting point that there are variable levels of individual and community resources within the area, that some children and families will struggle to access local services and that local services do not always provide co-ordinated and holistic support that meets people's needs. Key strands of the strategy therefore focus on developing new ways of supporting children and families to help themselves and to engage with co-ordinated services that are matched to local needs. The Theory of Change assumes that **more**

**co-ordinated and responsive services and increased capacity amongst local people will *together* over time improve outcomes for children and families,** and narrow the gaps between outcomes for children who grow up in Pembury and those who live in more advantaged areas.

The Theory of Change anticipates three interlocking mechanisms for change:

- enhancing services - co-ordinating and improving services so that children are supported in-the-round
- developing personal resources
- developing community resources.

These are being addressed initially through three strands of action, which are complementing and overlapping:

- getting things right early
- enabling young people to thrive in their teenage years and beyond
- increasing support for parents.

## 4.2. Wallsend

The Wallsend Children's Community covers the NE28 postcode of North Tyneside, and comprises people living in the four local authority wards of Wallsend, Howdon, Northumberland and Battle Hill as well as residents living on the boundaries of the wards of Riverside, Chirton, Collingwood, Killingworth and Valley. A total of 44,656 people live in this postcode area. Twenty eight per cent of the population of the Wallsend Children's Community are aged under 25 years of age.

There are 13 primary schools and two secondary schools in the Wallsend locality. The schools have formed a 'soft federation' partnership building on long-term partnership working in the locale to strive for success and share good practice across the partnership, and it is this partnership that is the driving force behind the Wallsend Children's Community. Building on the schools partnership, the Children's Community also incorporates children's centres and pre-school settings, health services, key local authority services, the police, youth providers, local churches and local charities.

Wallsend Children's Community theory of change sees **the fundamental cause of the area's problems as the loss of heavy industry, and the cultural dislocation which has followed from this.** This is seen to underlie many of the presenting problems for children and young people locally in terms of language development, educational achievement, youth unemployment and poor health.

**The Wallsend Children's Community Vision:** In response to the area's challenges, local leaders have set out an ambitious vision to build, over a generation - **by 2025 - a Wallsend where all local children and young people have access to exactly the same high-quality chances as those in more advantaged areas.** Wallsend's children will be doing well across health, education, well-being, softer skills (such as confidence and self-esteem) and employability. All these outcomes are interrelated and so in Wallsend we will do whatever it takes to give children the best possible start across their entire lives.

Goals associated with these outcomes include:

- Educational progress at all key stages for pupils in line with the best achieved elsewhere in the country including for the most disadvantaged pupils; and the achievement gap between the poorest and better off groups removed.
- Key health indicators including childhood obesity, dental health, mental health in line with the best achieved elsewhere in the country.
- Young people in Wallsend leaving education will have the same levels of entry to employment, and at the same skill level, further education and higher education, including the most prestigious institutions and courses, as other areas of the country.

The area has many community assets which can be used to deliver these goals.

The Wallsend Children's Community Theory of Change is to meet the challenges outlined above, utilising community assets, focussing on three strands of action:

- Early intervention to support children's learning – getting children on a positive pathway rather than address deficits later.
- Ensuring that children are 'Fit for Life' – making sure children are healthy (physically and mentally) and can engage with opportunities.
- Realising aspirations – empowering the community to support children to achieve their potential and behave in new ways.

#### **4.3. Smallshaw-Hurst**

The Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community comprises three neighbourhoods in Tameside: Broadoak and Smallshaw, Hazel Hurst and Hurst. It has a population of 15,045 people, 36 per cent of whom are aged under 25 years. The area has high levels of deprivation and child poverty, high levels of unemployment and people in receipt of disability benefits. The Children's Community is being led initially by New Charter Housing and Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. At the time of writing the Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community is working with the evaluation team to develop its analysis of local issues and refine a Theory of Change. Initial work with stakeholders has focused on **understanding the current situation and developing a vision** for the area.

##### ***What is the current situation?***

A Community Insights report has been produced which contains much valuable information suggesting that compared to Tameside and nationally the area has:

- lower child wellbeing indicators
- high numbers of single parent households
- high proportions of children in poverty
- high levels of youth unemployment
- higher numbers of young people without qualifications
- high numbers of claimants per job
- a high 0-15 population
- poor levels of health.

In terms of **assets**, the area has one high school with associated primary clusters. Another high school is located just outside the area boundary. A range of community

buildings in the area serve as a focus for engagement. The area has functioned administratively as a regeneration area for the local authority but contains three distinct communities. A key challenge for the Children's Community will be to address the impacts of physical barriers (a road dissects the area) and distinct and separate neighbourhood identities.

Over the coming months the Children's Community will develop a shared strategy for the area. Early analysis of data and consultation with the Smallshaw-Hurst community has identified three potential areas of action.

### **Themes for the Children's Community**

#### **1. Parents, early years, learning**

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators and have a huge influence on their development. Supporting parents to play an active role in their children's learning can make a valuable and lasting difference to children's lives and outcomes.

*Challenges: Quality of parenting, parental engagement with services, availability of community assets and school readiness.*

#### **2. Aspirations, education, employability**

Ensure every young person, whatever their background, can aim for the top and make the most of their talents, whether their strengths are practical, academic or both.

*Challenges: Quality of learning, skills, matching skills to opportunities, NEETs, youth unemployment and opportunities.*

#### **3. Fit, healthy, safe, supported**

Ensure children and young people are not adversely affected by poor quality environments and housing, leading to feelings of poor security, poor health and at high risk of becoming the victims and perpetrators of crime.

*Challenges: Oral health, substance misuse, mental health, obesity, A&E admissions, crime, outdoor/green spaces, provision of activities locally and support.*

Source: Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community

Whilst each Children's Community is adhering to a common programme model and set of principles, there are variations between the three Children's Communities (in terms of scale, focus and delivery). Table 4.1 outlines some key dimensions of similarity and difference.

**Table 4.1: Comparing the communities along a set of key dimensions**

Dimension	Pembury	Wallsend	Smallshaw-Hurst
<b>Area</b>			
Geographical size	Housing estate comprising approximately 4,000 residents.	NE 28 postcode, comprising almost 45,000 residents.	Former designated local authority regeneration area comprising 15,000 residents.
<b>Socio-economic context</b>			
Population demographics	High proportion of BAME residents (88 per cent), and children and young people aged under 25, who make up 36 per cent of all residents.	Low proportion of BAME residents (6 per cent). Young people aged under 25 make up 28 per cent of local residents.	Proportion BAME residents (21 per cent) is similar to national average. Young people aged under 25 make up 36 per cent.
Employment opportunities	Hackney has a burgeoning economy with growth across a number of sectors including technology and hospitality. Challenge for the Children's Community is to ensure that Pembury residents who are in close proximity to much of this growth benefit equally to other Hackney residents and are able to access the opportunities arising.	Good public transport links to employment opportunities in Newcastle, but these are often not accessed by Wallsend residents. Large business park and major employers e.g. Accenture in proximity to Wallsend, but again reported not to be accessed by residents. Challenge for the Children's Community includes ensuring young people have relevant skills to access existing and future opportunities.	Although located within Greater Manchester, locally there are a relatively low number of jobs available. Low car ownership and expensive public transport are barriers in accessing areas with denser job opportunities within the City region. A challenge for the Children's Community is to increase work confidence and aspirations of young people and to help connect residents to work opportunities.
<b>Community</b>			
Meaning of community (sense of the Children's Community area as being a 'real' community; sub-communities)	Strong community identity; although there have historically been negative associations linked to reports of local residents' involvement in riots, there is recent evidence that this is changing and residents express positive views of the area. Consensus that overall, the area is well-managed, has good quality housing stock and lower levels of crime (compared to other areas in Hackney). Early evidence of gentrification, affecting London Borough of Hackney as a whole.	Strong sense of place: local people feel belonging to Wallsend. Some differentiation within a large area (e.g. the enforced boundary of the main road splits the area). Professionals have a narrative of intergenerational poverty and worklessness following loss of heavy industry.	The area comprises three distinct neighbourhoods. Residents and most professionals would not identify with Smallshaw-Hurst as a recognisable community. The area has previously been identified as a regeneration area for the local authority.

Children's Community			
Core Team	Two programme leads funded by host organisations (Peabody and London Borough of Hackney).	Core team funded by Save the Children: Executive Lead; Community Co-ordinator, Data, Impact and Evaluation Advisor.	Core team funded by Save the Children: Executive Lead; Community Co-ordinator, Data, Impact and Evaluation Advisor.
Focus	Three initial priority strands focusing on early years, young people and parenting. The Theory of Change assumes improved outcomes associated with enhanced services and increased personal and community resources.	Three strands focussed on early intervention ('getting things right early'), health ('fit for life') and children's future's ('realising aspirations').	Three strands focussed on parents, early years and learning; aspirations, education and employability; and being healthy, safe and supported.
Children's Community governance and leadership (role of schools; LA; housing; health services etc.)	Strong partnership working between social housing provider (Peabody) and Hackney Council (children, adults and community health) as driving force behind the Children's Community. Involvement of other agencies and local authority departments (e.g. schools, Hackney Learning Trust) is developing.	Established governance group, with three strand groups. Leadership driven from established schools partnership in Wallsend, linking to other key stakeholders.	The Children's Community is establishing its governance arrangements. A Save the Children staff team leads the Children's Community. New Charter Housing Association and Tameside Council are key partners.
Maturity of partnerships (pre-existing or being brought together).	Partnership developed as a result of stakeholder consultation post-2011 riots. Key priorities identified then (high levels of long-term unemployment and NEETs) led to development of a demonstration project which provided the basis for partnership between Peabody and Hackney Council and foundation for developing a more strategic approach through the Children's Community.	Partnership developed from an established soft school federation building on the extended schools agenda - developed over at least nine years. Other linked partnerships such as Tyne (now Family) Gateway drawn in, along with other stakeholders including Public Health, social services, CCG, police, local politicians and some voluntary and community sector organisations.	The Children's Community is in a development phase. Prior local partnerships are relatively weak. The staff team are engaging with local stakeholders with a view to developing strong partnerships.

This chapter has reviewed the evidence for the Children's Community approach, outlined the delivery model and principles associated with the approach, and provided a brief introduction to the area and work of each Children's Community. The next chapter outlines the rationale for, and implementation of, the evaluation of the Children's Community programme.

# 5

## Findings

This chapter presents our findings from the first year of the Children's Community evaluation. The analysis draws on all data sources (see Appendix 1) to assess the progress of each Children's Community against the key evaluation questions outlined at Chapter 3.

### 5.1. Pembury Children's Community

#### Summary

- Pembury is embodying the principles of the Children's Community approach in that there is a shared vision, a bringing together of agencies across sectors and a focus on a long-term approach. A range of agencies are involved, although there is scope to work more closely with particular agencies which are not currently represented, which may include health service providers and commissioners, and some parts of the local authority. Going forward there is a need to move towards a more active engagement of representatives across all governance structures.
- The Pembury Children's Community has made much progress on developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and Theory of Change. There is a clear and agreed vision, articulated in the vision statement and Pembury 2025 statements and outlined in its Theory of Change document. Pembury, in common with other Children's Communities would benefit from a clearer articulation of the theory and evidence behind the sequencing of interventions, over time and across children and young people's lives, so that there is a shared understanding of how the initiative will move beyond a series of piecemeal interventions to become more than the sum of its parts.
- There is clearly a huge amount of very positive work taking place with children and young people in Pembury. There have been new services developed and changes to existing services implemented. Peabody, in particular, has changed significantly the way it provides services to its communities through, and as a result of, its work through the Children's Community, and there is evidence emerging that Hackney Council is increasingly looking to Pembury to 'test and learn' innovative and new approaches.
- There is clear leadership, although there is a risk that the programme is associated too closely with the work of Peabody and (some parts) of the local authority. A key next stage in the development of the programme governance is to review the shared ownership, and accountability for, the Children's Community across all local agencies, and the degree to which this is driving change in services which builds on successful interventions.

- The small neighbourhood focus of the Children's Community in Pembury supports close engagement with the community and there is a sense that lead agencies know their communities very well. Pembury is a vibrant and active community, and the Children's Community benefits from the involvement of engaged residents. Documentary evidence and minutes of meetings confirms their influence on shaping interventions.
- Early evidence of the impact of the Children's Community in Pembury on improving outcomes for children and families suggests that there are a range of benefits associated with participation in Children's Community services including increased confidence and social activity, skills and employment.

***How and to what extent are Communities embodying the key principles of the Children's Communities model? Is there evidence of Children's Communities working towards long term systems change?***

The Children's Community in Pembury has **gathered extensive evidence of community need**. There is a strong emphasis on developing services which respond to local people's experiences of living in the area, drawing on consultation with local residents, and informed by services' experiences of working in the area. The Children's Community in Pembury emerged from difficulties associated with riots in 2011, which although they occurred all over Hackney were associated particularly in the press with the Pembury estate. Early stakeholder consultation identified young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and long-term unemployment as priority issues and informed the development of the Pembury Pass project (providing job advice and employment support to 16-24 yr. olds in the area), which laid many of the foundations for the collaborative working between Peabody and the London Borough of Hackney which has been developed, and expanded, subsequently through the Children's Community.

Similarly, research on the barriers to work, training and education for parents in the area carried out in 2014 (including Pembury parents as researchers) informed the Pembury Pathways project, which provides advice and support to parents across a range of issues including employment, skills and training, childcare, parenting, volunteering and signposting to other services. A focus on understanding the links between deprivation and disadvantage and outcomes for children continued through ethnographic research carried out in 2015<sup>11</sup> which highlighted families' strong focus on child wellbeing, and that families were eager to improve their own lives and to support their friends and neighbours. It also found, however, that these families were often facing challenges associated with insecure housing and financial constraints, and a sense of 'just coping' which made it hard to plan for the future and to make the most of their situations. Strains on family resilience were seen to affect children in multiple ways: some adopted 'just keep going' attitudes; others were worried about safety or viewed their future with apprehension. In families where parents were secure and settled, there were positive impacts for the children: clearer plans, a more relaxed attitude to play and school, and excitement for the future.

Locating the Children's Community in Pembury in a 'fine grained' understanding of local community needs is important because it has directly informed the development of early interventions which have aimed to address multiple aspects of children and young people's lives. **There is a strong sense in Pembury that the CC is rooted**

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<sup>11</sup> Innovation Unit/ Peabody (2015) *Living in Pembury: understanding the experiences of nine families on the estate*.

**in the estate**, and delivering a vision that is shared between residents and statutory services, articulated by a strategic stakeholder interviewee:

*"So I think there's a shared vision, we know why we're there and there's a collective responsibility to deliver it."*

The small neighbourhood focus of the Children's Community in Pembury supports **close engagement with the community** and there is a sense that lead agencies know their communities very well. Pembury is a vibrant and active community, and the Children's Community benefits from the involvement of an engaged residents steering group. This is very positive. At this point the evaluation has not gathered the views of these stakeholders in relation to their impact and influence on the Children's Community, although documentary evidence and minutes of meetings confirms their influence on shaping interventions. Those stakeholders who were interviewed were aware that the Children's Community needs to continue to be proactive in its approach to community engagement and to look beyond the 'usual suspects' to ensure continued co-production with a wide range of community representatives.

Many of the early interventions have developed case worker approaches and one to one support to families and young people. These approaches, which focus on **developing integrated and holistic services** are integral to the work of the Children's Community in Pembury and are beginning to be embedded across a range of service areas. A recent example includes the Ready for School project which is working across early years, primary school and family support. There are also interventions supporting parents and young people. There is a developing portfolio of services for children and families in the area, and some emerging evidence of positive outcomes for beneficiaries. A challenge for the Children's Community going forward is to gather evidence around successful approaches and to build a consolidated pipeline of support across all stages of children's lives. A strategic stakeholder explained:

*"There is a lot going on - and it's about consolidating. I think it's about what do we actually focus on beyond April next year, so it's about prioritising - almost being able to step back and say we've tried a lot over the past two years, what's having the greatest impact? And if it isn't having the greatest impact is it that it's not working or is it that's it's not needed?"*

The Children's Community is focused on **working with, and building, local assets**. The Pembury Community Centre, located at the edge of the estate, although planned prior to the Children's Community has since its opening become an important focus for services, and is seen by local residents as an asset which is helping to build a stronger sense of community. In a small number of interviews with local residents conducted in this phase of the evaluation, interviewees highlighted the important role that the centre played in their lives, and that of the community, as a place that provides services and information to help residents to address their issues. It is also a place where residents said that they could make friends, and where they felt welcomed and comfortable accessing courses and activities.

The Pembury Children's Community has been a catalyst for **bringing together local agencies to develop new ways of working**. This has been a significant added value to the Community at this stage. Whilst it cannot be said that agencies in the area would not work in partnership in the absence of the Children's Community (the existence of a wide range of collaborative initiatives in the Borough which sit outside the Children's Community confirms that they would) there is a clear ambition for the Children's Community to deliver systems change over time. One strategic stakeholder interviewee articulated their understanding of the ambition for the Children's Community:

*"People that are delivering services in Pembury are willing to change what they're doing and flex to work within the Pembury Children's Community aspiration really."*

### ***How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?***

The Pembury Children's Community has in its early stages been closely associated with two lead agencies: Peabody and Hackney council. From the outset there was **clear leadership** (backed by staff time and resources) at strategic level in both organisations. This has been an important factor in raising the profile of the Children's Community and has facilitated the delivery of a range of interventions which were unlikely to have happened within the timescales that they have occurred in the absence of the intervention. There is clearly a huge amount of very positive work taking place with children and young people in Pembury. There have been new services and changes to existing services (e.g. co-location of services in the Community Centre). Peabody, in particular, has changed significantly the way it provides services to its communities through, and as a result of, its work in the Children's Community. There is clear leadership, although there is a risk that the programme is associated too closely with the work of Peabody and (some parts) of the local authority, and as the Children's Community matures there is a need to bring to the Children's Community Board a stronger sense of shared responsibility for driving work forward, articulated by a strategic stakeholder:

*"Actually, what are we going to take back to our constituent parts that we've contributed to make this better? Are we able to influence change within our organisations for all this that will make a difference?"*

Those stakeholders interviewed reflected that the early development of the Children's Community governance was characterised by **intensive work to build relationships across a wide range of services and agencies**. Interviewees described the importance of investing time in developing relationships to drive forward the work of the Children's Community. Strategic stakeholders explained:

*"In the early days we spread ourselves very thin and we did lots of, you kind of need to build relationships - but (it was important) that we had those relationships at the early stages to drive more focused interventions."*

*"It's heavy lifting, in forming the relationships with other organisations but they are absolutely what's the driver."*

This 'heavy lifting' is time, and resource, consuming, although the Children's Community has benefited from having funded officer time in Peabody and the local authority, which has supported both operational and networking activities. In terms of the latter, it has been particularly beneficial to have someone with a cross-cutting role in the local authority linked from the early days to the Children's Community. A strategic stakeholder interviewee described the impact of the role:

*(He) "has a role to support, and be kind of a go-between, between the council and the Children's Community which is really helpful because he would network the relationships from the inside and that helped us to get up to speed quicker about who was who - otherwise I would have been trotting around doing more of that."*

Indeed, other interviewees, at both strategic and operational levels, reflected that although the process of engaging stakeholders (particularly at operational and 'middle-management' levels) had taken some time, progress was perhaps in

advance of where the Children's Community expected to be at this point in its development:

*"We have got great buy-in at Chief Exec level and there has been lots going on 'on the ground' in the estate but there has been a lot of work to do 'in the middle' engaging middle managers and convincing people that this was the right way to go. It took a lot of time, we had to develop our Theory of Change and keep selling that to people, to identify and develop projects."*

*"We are ahead of where I thought we would be at this point. I thought we would need to spend a lot more time convincing middle managers and developing the Board and I thought we would need (project worker) full-time for another year at least when in fact we have been able to take her out for one day a week to support another project."*

The governance structures in Pembury have brought together a **range of local agencies**. Through both the Children's Community Board and the operational group, a diverse group of local agencies are involved in the Children's Community, meaning that there is reach for the Children's Community across multiple service areas. This helps to make connections between interventions and service areas and, as discussed further below, to identify opportunities for bringing additional activities and resources to Pembury or for transferring learning from Pembury to Borough-wide initiatives or those happening in other areas. There is a real sense of enthusiasm for the Children's Community across local agencies. The governance structures do not include all agencies that impact on children's lives, although this is not necessarily problematic and there has been a conscious decision on the part of the Children's Community not to intervene at this stage in service areas (e.g. crime and community safety) where existing partnership arrangements were felt to be working well. It is also important that governance structures remain fit for purpose - there is a risk that forums become unwieldy or unfocused if too many agencies are engaged on the basis of their role, rather than their potential to contribute to the overall aims of the Children's Community. Recent, and ongoing, work to review the operation and impact of the Board and operational groups is helping to ensure that they remain focused and relevant and that all the key partners are actively involved.

Interviewees highlighted some areas for further engagement. It has taken some time to involve local schools in Pembury Children's Community. Unlike in Wallsend, the Children's Community in Pembury is not preceded by a long history of joint working between the lead agencies and local schools. In addition, local schools have undergone a period of transition and improvement. However, key local primary and secondary schools have recently been engaged on the Children's Community Board and projects to support transition to primary school (Pembury Ready for School project) and supporting disadvantaged young people in secondary school are providing platforms for ongoing collaboration. There may be potential to engage health services more actively, particularly those that are involved in working with mothers and very young children, and to work more closely with areas of the local authority that are not currently actively engaged.

There is a strong commitment to **involving the local community** in the governance of the programme through a range of mechanisms and forums including resident representation on the Board, a residents' steering group, and ad-hoc opportunities for community or interest groups to inform the development of the programme. An example of the latter was a local Dads' group which attended a session of the Pembury Children's Community Board to work with Board members to co-produce ways in which services could better meet the needs of fathers. The Children's Community recognises the ongoing importance of ensuring a range of opportunities

for engagement, and the need to be mindful that all sections of the local population are enabled to have influence on the programme.

There is scope for a greater level of active **engagement from the voluntary sector**, particularly at the strategic level. There is extensive involvement of local voluntary and community sector organisations in the delivery of interventions in the area. Examples include a partnership with Family Action to support Somali families living on the estate and host a social prescribing service, collaboration with the Shoreditch Trust on a range of health initiatives, and a wide range of partnerships with local voluntary and community sector organisations to offer opportunities to young people. These include Bootstrap (apprenticeships), Tutors United (homework club) and Citizen's Advice East End (money management workshops). In addition referrals are made to many local organisations providing services or support to particular communities (for example, Praxis, for support services to vulnerable migrants). There is, however, a need to consider the potential for strengthening the engagement of the voluntary sector in the governance of the programme. A strategic stakeholder interviewee reported that local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations had not been actively engaged in governance thus far:

*"There is something about it they're still not getting - I don't know if it's that they don't see how it can add value to the sector, but we are trying to flip that, it's not about what the sector can get from something but what the sector can contribute."*

Continued efforts to engage the voluntary sector are important, not only because voluntary sector organisations have a central role in providing services to families and children, but also because the ambitions of the Children's Community to build capacity and resilience in the community (as reflected in the Pembury Children's Community Theory of Change) will be supported by the involvement of non-statutory agencies in the governance of the programme.

### ***How are the Communities progressing with developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and theory of change?***

The Pembury Children's Community has made much **progress on developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and Theory of Change**. There is a clear and agreed vision, articulated in the vision statement and Pembury 2025 statements and outlined in its Theory of Change document, which focuses on two key processes: helping people to help themselves and one another; and improving access to services and shaping services to meet needs. Logic models are being developed for the three priority workstreams (and a fourth 'systems change' strand) and an annual workplan drives activities against three-year objectives (currently 2016-19). A strategic stakeholder interviewee outlined their understanding of the vision for Pembury Children's Community:

*"I think the vision really is about that combination of looking at a place, involving residents and empowering residents and then thinking differently about the public services from the perspective of a child's journey."*

Pembury, in common with other Children's Communities would benefit from a clearer articulation of the theory and evidence behind the sequencing of interventions, over time and across children and young people's lives, so that momentum is maintained and there is a shared understanding of how the initiative will move beyond a series of piecemeal interventions to become more than the sum of its parts. An operational stakeholder identified the need for intermediate outcomes which would help to maintain momentum for the Children's Community:

*"I think something that is a 10 year programme needs to have a clearer, shorter timescale in place to keep up momentum cos otherwise everything is kicked into the long grass."*

As outlined above, there is a great deal of work to support children and families happening in Pembury. A key challenge for the Children's Community going forward is to **identify opportunities for the greatest impact**. Referencing this work to the evidence base on improving outcomes for children and young people would be beneficial, although the important role for innovation is also recognised. Evaluation of interventions (as in the Ready for School project) is important where innovation occurs and/or where there is not a strong evidence base and there is a need to consider whether additional capacity for local data collection and analysis is required for the Pembury Children's Community.

### ***What evidence is there of impacts within services and systems?***

There is **emerging evidence of impacts across many aspects of systems change in Pembury**. As outlined above, the Children's Community has acted as a catalyst to strengthen, and perhaps more importantly, focus partnership working around children and families in the area. This has led to new services and resources being developed. Examples include family support (the Pembury Pathways project), the Ready for School project, and free books for under five year olds. The community centre has been a focal point for developing many of these services, and although the concept of the centre pre-dates the Children's Community it is clear that it has influenced the development of the centre in terms of its offer to the local community. However, there is acknowledgement within the Children's Community that it needs to be more than one facility. As one strategic stakeholder described:

*"What makes this more than a particularly progressive community centre - cos we have other particularly progressive community centres - what makes this different?"*

The 'difference' that the Children's Community in Pembury is delivering is apparent in a number of ways:

It has **changed considerably the approach to community working in Peabody**, in that it has provided an opportunity to drive case-based and holistic working, informed by a Theory of Change approach and evaluated for impact. This approach has been rolled out to other Peabody estates and the organisation is developing the Children's Community model in other areas. It has also increased the visibility of Peabody across services in Hackney.

The sense of '**learning**' from the **Pembury Children's Community** is also **beginning to be applied to other service areas**. Within the local authority, for instance, the area is seen as an exemplar for place-based working and also a testbed for new initiatives. Recent examples include initiatives around contextual safeguarding and inclusive growth, both of which are Borough-wide activities which are separate to the Children's Community (and would have happened in the absence of the Children's Community) but where the local authority (through the work of the Children's Community lead) has identified Pembury as a potential case-study or pilot area for a wider initiative. Partly this is because Pembury is seen as a 'typical' Hackney community, providing a degree of confidence in learning which can be applied to 'scaled-up' activities. One strategic stakeholder commented:

*"There is a sense that if we do something on Pembury we could learn things for other areas of Hackney - it's quite a typical estate."*

This is important because although the small size of the Pembury Children's Community does bring benefits in terms of opportunities for flexibility, innovation and close community engagement, it also brings challenges in terms of relevance to commissioners and providers with wider geographical remits. Although it is early days, there is a sense that over time, evidence emerging from the Pembury Children's Community can inform Borough-wide approaches, as explained by a strategic stakeholder interviewee:

*"It's about activities coalescing around Pembury. There is high visibility within the local authority- people are buying into the approach. Anything interesting coming up will always be pointed in the direction of Pembury."*

The existence of **strong partnership networks in the area** which are able to respond to new opportunities is also beneficial, providing an 'easy' context in which to test out new approaches. One strategic stakeholder described it thus:

*"Having a readiness to be able to work in partnership, that there's an opportunity to do more and scale up what's done, that there's a funder that's looking for somewhere to put some funding around say children's health and through the partnership its well set up and to be able to receive that funding but not just spend it but bring it into that model."*

In the context of constraints in public sector spending it is not always possible to measure the impact of change through new initiatives. One impact might be the continuation of services which might otherwise have lost funding or been discontinued. There is some evidence that the **high visibility of the Children's Community may be a factor contributing to the continuation of services** which might otherwise have been vulnerable to cuts. One exemplar is the provision for young people through the Pembury youth club.

It would be wrong to overstate the extent of these impacts to date, but there is, as outlined above, a definite sense of the Children's Community gaining momentum and visibility in Pembury. A key next step for the Children's Community is to begin to expand evidence around sustained changes in practices and thinking on the part of local services.

A final point in this section relates to the sharing of local information and resources across services, which was highlighted by one operational stakeholder interviewee as an area in which the Children's Community could make a greater impact (subject to confidentiality constraints), particularly in relation to supporting those families most in need.

### ***What evidence is there of impacts for children and young people and families?***

At this stage in the evaluation, limited data has been gathered in relation to the impacts of the Pembury Children's Community on children, young people and families in the area. The evaluation team is working with the Children's Communities to develop data dashboards which will assess progress against a range of impact measures (outlined in draft at Appendix 1). At this point, the evaluation has conducted a limited number of interviews with parents and young people in Pembury, focusing on their experiences of Children's Community services (although they were not overtly discussed as such in the interviews) and views on life in the area. Although caution should be employed in drawing too much from these interviews, a number of key themes emerged from this research.

**Interviewees have very positive views in relation to the services provided:** In relation to the services discussed (support for parents from the Pembury Pathways

project, Ready for School Project and Pembury Youth Club, Homework club, and free books) interviewees were universally positive about their experiences. An important factor for all was the accessible and welcoming environment of the community centre, and the supportive approach of service providers.

**The Children's Community is engaging hard to reach families.** Families supported through the Pembury Pathways project are often new to the area, have limited contact with local services and may be experiencing isolation. Interviewees said that the approach of the support worker - which focuses on community-based outreach and proactive engagement - was vital in helping them to access services. Beneficiaries explained their experiences:

*"A massive difference, the way I see it I wouldn't be here if it weren't for (project worker), cos as much as I live on the estate, I'm not one to just join a social group, so it was for her to come in and show me these things and I don't think I'd know about the job." (Parent)*

*"I think she drew me in when she got me in to sign me up for the Book Start, she was like ok here's some books, we'll give you some books to help you and your child to help with reading as you're not in an institute yet, so she signed me up with that and encouraged me to join a group and left a few leaflets around, she left and came back later on, so it wasn't all on that occasion, this is what we have, what do you want to do, it was over time, it wasn't like intruding, I was still going on with my life but then here's this person that's come in whispering certain things and it opened me up and I was able to say I've got this issue, is it possible you can... and she'd say this is what I can do and this is what I can't do." (Parent)*

*"I'm quite reserved so I was a bit reluctant to hear what she was saying, I thought it's another door knock selling services, but then she was very personable and she got on with my son and started telling me there were things, she seen I just moved into the property and cos I came from temporary (accommodation) I didn't have any furniture or anything, so she was comfortable to sit with me on cushions and stuff and she said there's a lot of ways she could support me and to encourage my son to read, she told me about the Book Start project and my son could receive free books and she was telling me about all the things I can access and she told me it was free." (Parent)*

**Many families are accessing multiple services:** Parents identified a range of services that they were accessing, including support for young and older children, parenting, employment and skills. At this stage the evaluation does not have systematic evidence on the intensity of engagement with services across families in Pembury, nor of the effects on outcomes of accessing multiple services. This evidence will be collected through beneficiary surveys currently being developed with the Children's Community. There is also anecdotal evidence that take-up of local services (e.g. early years) is increasing, possibly driven by an increasing confidence in local service provision on the part of Pembury residents. Again, this will be an important aspect to explore as the Children's Community progresses.

**Beneficiary interviewees report a range of benefits** associated with their involvement with activities and services. These include increased confidence and social activity, skills and employment. Further evidence of outcomes for children and families will be developed in the next stages of the evaluation.

*"Yes it was important cos the books were quality books and my kids were entertained with them and we read together and from that I said there's no TV Monday to Thursday, we have a bookshelf and the books that are given to us we*

*read and they've got a passion now and they like to read books and I think that was important." (Parent)*

*"Yeah she feels independent, has that freedom, her confidence has grown and I feel she's got a group now that she can talk to and it's not always mummy or daddy and sometimes she has to watch what she says cos she's telling mummy and daddy and I feel she's here and a different side of what she's like, it's nice." (Parent)*

*"Yeah cos it teaches us like how to meet people, when we go onto trips we kind of meet new people that we've never met before, sometimes we'll see other youth centres that are at the place, sometimes we'll hang with them and make new friends everywhere. .... Yeah my self-confidence has gone up since I've come here." (Young person)*

*"All the activities that they have there (at the community centre) I try to join in. I think it does make you feel like you've got a bit of self-worth, cos I've been doing health and social care recently so for the first time in a long time I feel like I can probably go out and get a job now." (Parent)*

**Life in Pembury is changing for the better.** Parents and young people responded positively to questions around how Pembury is changing. Although (for young people in particular) there were ongoing concerns around safety, access to sport and leisure facilities and the quality of green space, on the whole interviewees felt that improved access to services and a focal point for activities was helping to increase a sense of community.

*"Just a very friendly place, when I was younger, like seven or eight, it wasn't really that friendly cos it had a lot of gangs and stuff, but since the youth club had come the whole place just got better cos everyone was just going to the youth club to be safe, if they were on the streets then they'll just be scared the whole time, wouldn't be able to have fun." (Young person)*

*"I think it's become more of a community now, there's a lot more to do than what there was before when I first moved here." (Parent)*

*"One side is the old side and this side is the new side so I'm on the old side, for me we've got a little park and a nursery and then we've got the houses around it, we've got two parks, one at the top and one in the middle, but I personally think the middle park needs improvement cos the only thing we have is a climbing frame, a seesaw and two swings. In the new side they've got a slide, the big swings and logs and stuff, a football cage, cos our side the kids can't play football cos there's nowhere for them to go and their parents don't want them to go on the other side cos they don't know their way around it, if their parents are looking for them they don't know where to go." (Young person)*

### **What are the contextual factors/barriers and enablers that are supporting or inhibiting these changes occurring [at policy; area; organisation; individual level]?**

Interviewees highlighted three key factors which are potential inhibitors to the work of the Children's Community. First, there are **constraints in terms of the public sector context**. Cuts to services, and misaligned accountability frameworks, can limit the potential and impact of place-based working. However, stakeholders emphasised the importance of a continued outward looking focus and maintaining emphasis on what is best for children and families in Pembury. One strategic stakeholder commented:

*"The political direction is for ... keep the partnerships, keep the community working, don't be isolationist, build local resilience ... that's partly as a reaction to overcome some of the austerity. Actually we've got to collectively take a leadership position here, and what's best for the community and the service users generally."*

The leadership position of the local authority is an important factor here, but equally important is the ongoing commitment of other lead agencies including Peabody.

A second issue is **employment**. Hackney has a flourishing local economy with growth in key sectors such technology and hospitality, and Pembury is well placed for employment opportunities across London. There is a need to ensure that Pembury residents and young people are appropriately skilled and supported to benefit from these opportunities. Local initiatives supporting residents to develop skills and access to employment opportunities have had some success, and there may be opportunities for the Children's Community to increase, or scale up, some of these approaches, perhaps linking in to wider employability and job creation initiatives.

Finally, a number of interviewees expressed concern about the impact of **gentrification** in the Borough. Pembury, along with other areas of Hackney has over recent years experienced increased pressures around housing affordability, driven by the changing housing market in the capital. The long term impacts of these pressures on the Children's Community are not yet known, although there are early signs of decreased turnover in social housing (which may also of course be affected by increased levels of neighbourhood satisfaction).

## 5.2. Wallsend Children's Community

### Summary

- In relation to embodying the key principles of the Children's Community model, Wallsend is in a strong position, being built on a central pre-existing school partnership, alongside a web of other linked partnerships in the area and beyond. There is shared understanding at a strategic level of the Wallsend Children's Community vision. There is effective use of evidence to develop activity, although research evidence used could be more specific. At an organisational level, schools and other organisations are open to partnership working.
- In relation to leadership and governance, strategic leaders of the Community are well positioned and trusted. Representation on governance groups is broad, with aims to develop this to include business, wider local authority and residents' representation. There is a need identified to improve active engagement of new and existing members. The current leadership is well placed to leverage additional resourcing.
- In relation to progressing the local vision and Theory of Change, the Community is articulated as being part way through a journey to become embedded in the local area and organisational cultures. However, the Community lacks visibility and buy in from organisational and operational stakeholders, and the articulation of the relationship between the Children's Community and pre-existing, well understood and valued partnerships needs to be carefully thought through. Beyond this, profile building of the Children's Community in the local area is recognised as a priority. There is a need to develop a clearer, measurable set of expected outcomes for governance and leadership; for organisations and their staff; and for children, young people and families.
- There is evidence that the Community is bringing organisations and staff members together to support children (although this is variable and sometimes hard to disentangle from the pre-existing partnership working). It is - in some cases - seen to

be acting as an enabler for staff to do their jobs more effectively. Communication between strategic leaders and operational staff in relation to the role of the Children's Community needs improvement to ensure new initiatives can be effectively implemented, although there are some examples of allowing operational level staff to develop and build initiatives to ensure they can work better.

- In relation to impacts for children, young people and families, it is too early in the programme to expect significant change, although early evidence suggests that there are positive outcomes associated with participation in interventions. These include reports of improved confidence and changed aspirations amongst pupils; and data on progress improvement from the Transition Mentor and Family Entrepreneur's work in one school.
- In relation to key contextual factors, the bedrock of previous partnerships is important. More broadly, the challenging funding context and strong accountability drivers within local agencies are barriers to effective working across boundaries.

### ***How and to what extent are Communities embodying the key principles of the Children's Communities model? Is there evidence of Children's Communities working towards long term systems change?***

There is, at a strategic level, **shared understanding** of the Wallsend Children's Community vision articulated - in the words of one strategic stakeholder - as "*trying to make sure that children and young people in this area have the same life chances as their peers, that children in disadvantaged communities have exactly the same life chances.*" There is also a shared understanding of the need to further engage key stakeholders, in particular children and families, building on the extensive community consultation and profiling previously undertaken to identify local priorities. There is a strong sense of place in Wallsend. It is identified as an area by interviewees and in the media, and professionals working across the local authority area and beyond characterise Wallsend, its population and its professionals.

Wallsend Children's Community has made **effective use of evidence** including the Health Needs analysis, local consultations and analysis of secondary and administrative data as well as extensive experience of working in and with Children's Communities, drawing these together to understand needs in the Children's Community area. There is understanding of the need to trial and experiment in relation to activities and interventions that the Children's Community might adopt: what one strategic stakeholder described as: "*test and learn so if it works there how can we learn from that and over time replicated in a different area.*" In the data analysed to date, there is little evidence of explicit use being made of prior research evidence to select and influence development of interventions, and sequencing - focussing on early intervention/prevention, with planned additional follow up activities - was not always clear.

Whilst the narrative of the development of the Children's Community indicates that the Wallsend Children's Community emerged from an established schools partnership, this is only part of the picture. Operational interviewees from across services and organisations belong to a **complex web of intersecting partnerships**, initiatives and collaborations, some of which are based in Wallsend (e.g. the soft partnership of Wallsend schools; High School clusters with primary schools; Wallsend Action for Youth (WAfY). Some cut across the whole authority (e.g. the North Tyneside Learning Trust), and others beyond (Family Gateway; Barnardo's network). Most of these predate the Children's Community in some form, and provide strong bedrock for the work of the Children's Community. For example, part of the 'World of Work' (WoW) offer is described here by an operational stakeholder (project) in relation to Wallsend's place within North Tyneside Learning Trust's work, and others describe belonging to multiple partnerships both within and beyond Wallsend.

From an evaluation perspective, this raises a **significant issue in relation to measuring the added value** of the Children's Community especially in relation to outcomes for children and young people. For example, WAfY has a range of key performance indicators, its own bespoke evaluation and predates the Children's Community, and WoW (including the 100 jobs element articulated as a key offer through the Children's Community) is available across the local authority area. Therefore, whilst the work of the Children's Community is enhancing the likelihood of the success of the projects this contribution is hard to measure given all of the pre-existing partnership working. This links to the fact that **schools in Wallsend are seen to be open to new initiatives** with a strong sense of the needs of their community, a holistic focus on the child and a strong history of collaboration and partnership working with other services and third sector organisations.

Alongside an **understanding of the whole child's needs**, strategic leads and operational stakeholders articulated a need to provide a pathway of opportunities described as a **pipeline** providing, where required, support throughout the childhood and teenage years.

### ***How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?***

The **complex set of partnerships** both within and beyond Wallsend is a particular feature of the area, requiring coordination at a Children's Community level. Here, **the role of specific well positioned and trusted leaders is important**. The Children's Community Chair was identified by a number of respondents as a key figure in driving a range of initiatives in Wallsend to improve outcomes for children and young people in the area. In addition, the role of the recently retired Children's Community strategic lead was also seen to be important since he, too, had a range of roles in relation to the various initiatives and partnerships involved (e.g. WAfY; the Mental Health Network). This indicates that the Children's Community needs to carefully manage the next steps of managing leadership and governance as the role hands over to the new incumbent.

Strategic leaders pointed out the **need for improved representation on the partnership** of key groups, especially business, which is being addressed. Senior local authority officer buy-in was identified by another strategic stakeholder as an area where increased engagement would be beneficial:

*"There needs to be an understanding of that political dynamic, a higher level political buy in to what's happening here. We need to start getting officers to understand what we're doing (beyond) the Director of Public Health... We need to get officer buy in at very senior level in the council. They need to see the impact of what we're doing and what benefit it is going to bring to the Borough."*

The core governance group was seen by some strategic stakeholders to work effectively; however, although Wallsend has a well-established governance structure, with a core group and three strand groups, there were concerns expressed by a number of Children's Community representatives about the **need to improve active engagement of new and existing members** of the governance group. Other comments from Children's Community strategic stakeholders related to the longer term, with some early ideas on how local partners might embed change following the end of the Save the Children support:

*"I would also like to see the partners perhaps taking an even greater strategic role but that might be coming down the line where save the children is sort of saying we're backing out now perhaps some of the big partners will say oh actually we could begin to take on that role, some of the partners like the YMCA who I think are doing a superb job in North Tyneside."*

In relation to the next stages of the partnership, it is recognised that **engagement of local people** to sustain progress is a crucial next step, described by one operational stakeholder as building "*key influences in the communities that will start to work in a positive way with other people*". This was mentioned by a number of other respondents.

A particular strength in Wallsend - building on the effective schools partnership - is the **ability to leverage additional resourcing**, for example Big Lottery grant funding which was seen to be accessed because of the shared vision.

### ***How are the Communities progressing with developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and theory of change?***

Strategic stakeholders emphasised a sense that the Children's Community is **part way through a journey**, which would provide further opportunities to leverage additional resources as the Community embeds. This was described by one strategic stakeholder:

*"call this Phase 2. Phase 1 was let's get the data. This is data driven. We've got the data the question is so what? What are we going to do with it? ... What are we going to put in place to have a significant impact on a particular data set."*

Senior leaders suggested that the activity of partners was working well, to develop projects in relation to each of the three strands. However, there is a mismatch between this perspective and that of operational stakeholder **staff working on the ground, who knew little about the work or focus of the Community**:

*"We do now know that (strategic lead) has been part of the strategic level of this but that hadn't filtered down...Inadvertently we're actually doing something to filter into this (the Children's Community), but it wasn't something that we were aware of. We weren't set up with the view of that we could link into this because we didn't know it existed."*

Another conversation around a different aspect of the Children's Community's work between a group of operational project-based stakeholders makes the same point, even though there was a direct link through the former Children's Community strategic leader. In fact, more broadly there was a large body of evidence from interviews undertaken during this phase of the study that the **Wallsend Children's Community is not well known or understood at the operational level**. This cut across all three strands of the initiative and staff working in schools, voluntary sector organisations and specific projects. This isn't to say there isn't an appetite for learning more. For example a school-based operational stakeholder noted:

*"Through (Senior Leadership Team in the school) I've heard of it and I know it was based... is there a community in America and one in Tower Hamlets where they have the initial ones?...It was interesting when we heard it was coming to us, being in the role I'm in with a careers head on and a pastoral side I'm very aware."*

Yet it is important in communicating the role of the Children's Community to **get the messaging right**. There was a sense from some interviewees of resistance to having the work of their longstanding pre-existing partnerships being seen to be overshadowed by or - worse - claimed as success by this new partnership which they know little about, and have no real stake in. A way forward was presented by one of the strategic stakeholders, who suggested a need to develop some clear, simple messages that all could buy into, emphasising that all the existing

organisations and partners' roles are helping achieve shared aims, and not being replaced by or marginalised by the Children's Community.

There were signs in several interviews that operational interviewees across a range of services and organisations were able to make sense of their role in relation to the life chances of the children in Wallsend in the way envisaged by the interviewee above, so this appears to be an achievable aim. An operational stakeholder (voluntary sector) suggested:

*"Our contribution to that [the Children's Community] is quite different from the other providers in that we are very much targeted youth one to one intensive support. It's very different to the other providers. Together we provide a menu of different provision for the young people and children in the Wallsend area."*

Another focus of the Children's Community in relation to the Theory of Change is **developing appropriate benchmarks**, for example in relation to aspirations. There is significant progress in relation to this emerging via the work of the data manager, and associated work such as a project funded by the Gatsby Foundation which includes a benchmarking component.

Looking ahead, a focus on **profile building** of the Children's Community was noted by several strategic stakeholders, for example:

*"My personal target is to get the community involved, to have Children's Community branding on every school... in the streets, people are aware of what it is and with a call to action about how to get involved."*

### ***What evidence is there of impacts within services and systems?***

Three in-depth case visits were undertaken in Wallsend looking at specific aspects of the work of the Children's Community: a primary school visit focussed on the early transition initiative, combining the use of Family Entrepreneurs and the entry to school Transition Mentors; a secondary school visit focussed on a set of WoW initiatives; and a visit to a voluntary sector organisation.

What emerged from each of these was, in the main, a set of pre-existing organisational cultures and commitment to partnership working, providing fertile soil for new Children's Community initiatives to develop. However, these cultures cannot be seen to be outcomes of the Children's Community. Nevertheless, there was evidence of some outcomes at service and system level in these in-depth case visits, and other areas covered in data gathering (in relation to Counselling, Mental Health, WAFY and the role of Higher Level Teaching Assistants).

Firstly, several operational interviewees felt that the work of the Children's Community was **bringing organisations together to enable them, and others to work together to support children more effectively**.

Secondly, and linked to this, the work of the Children's Community in supporting children's development in schools in particular was seen to be **acting as an enabler** for people to do their jobs more effectively.

There was evidence in the case visits of **strong engagement in developing Children's Community work**, for example, in a primary school, senior leaders helped recruit to a Children's Community post. There was also some evidence of meeting gaps, for example in relation to counselling. An operational stakeholder from a project suggested:

*"They didn't have any (support) or they might have accessed Action for Children just generally the services that are available to be able to do one off referrals. But they didn't have an integrated schools counselling service in their school. I don't know if some of the other schools do. They didn't. There may be some referral services that function in the area but due to funding restrictions services pop up all the time. Or they disappear quite quickly as well."*

However, in some cases the **links between the operational and strategic level** - discussed in the previous section in relation to communicating and understanding the role of the Children's Community - **are experienced as working less well**. In the words of a school-based operational stakeholder: *"I knew what the outcomes (of the Children's Community) were. They were trying to tackle the impact of poverty but in terms of how it would filter down from strategy I haven't got that clear line of sight around that."*

The knitting together of the multiple partnerships discussed earlier is currently seen as the work of the strategic group, rather than at all levels. On a more positive note, in one of the case studies - focussed on World of Work - the importance of **trusting operational staff to develop and run with a programme instigated at the strategic level** was recognised.

There were other impacts discussed, for example the **suggestion that families felt less intimidated** by a third sector organisation compared with statutory professionals.

There is strong evidence of additionality of the Wallsend Action for Youth partnership via survey and other data gathered via the separate external evaluation. However, as indicated above, it is very difficult to disentangle the additionality of the Children's Community's work on top of this separately funded project.

### ***What evidence is there of impacts for children and young people and families?***

As has been mentioned in earlier sections, the strong relationship between the work sponsored by or even funded by the Children's Community and work developed and led by earlier partnerships brings into question the additionality of claimed intermediate impacts from interviews and survey data gathered by the external evaluation team, and other evaluation work. These caveats notwithstanding, it is important to report these impacts as they link to the workings of the Theory of Change and therefore are plausibly related to the work of the Children's Community, at least in part.

Children interviewed in the Primary School case study, engaged in the "CV+" work of WoW talked about **confidence**:

*"Yes I'm more confident now that I've wrote it not just kept it to myself"*

*"I thought I'd keep myself to myself. I don't really like to go out there. Be around other people. I thought it wasn't going to work because I thought my ideas weren't going to make sense. I wasn't going to apply for it (a role in school that was available after CV+) and then realised that I've looked back and thought it's gone really well."*

Beyond this, though, the **difficulty in measuring longer term outcomes** was identified by operational stakeholders:

A range of evidence was provided in the Getting Things Right Early primary school case visit of the **impact of the Transition Mentor and Family Entrepreneur's work** as indicated in the box below:

### Vignette: Experienced impacts of Transition Mentor and Family Entrepreneur in one school

Impacts included **communication improvements**: (operational stakeholder - school): "We've had great success with them. They really are just talking, communicating, expressing, talking about their home lives" and **additionality of the post holder** - "(the mentor) was such a good appointment because of her breadth of experience working in nurseries, schools, setting with a range of different stakeholders. She sees the parents' view, school management point of view, the early years manager's point of view, the reception class teachers point of view"

**Impact on improvement data** was provided by the head teacher: "We want the best early years data we can have. Early years data on exit is in terms of how many children have achieved the Early Learning Goals. We want that to increase and our data showed that did happen. In a smaller school with the resources you have to be absolutely clear that you're tracking every intervention to see its impact. That's important in large schools, in two form entry schools. But it's so much more important in a one form entry school because our children count for a higher percentage statistically. So 100 per cent of 10 children each child is worth 10 per cent. So if you get it right for one. It's worth more in a smaller school to get it right for one child."

More detail was provided by a teacher "Average progress from September to July would be six steps.. If they're making more than nine steps of progress we agreed with our Early Years Consultants from the authority that was considered substantial and sustained progress using Ofsted speak. You can see our children some of them are making up to 14-15 steps progress in areas like communication, language, including those worked with by (mentor)... You can compare that and see where they've had the biggest issues and where the progress has been made."

Both family entrepreneur and mentor **helped in relation to Ofsted**: "Certainly when we had our Ofsted inspection last year having that data is a really big part of what we do....What we said is our two main areas for Ofsted objectives for development are literacy, reading, maths, through the school. Of course starting with us we need to get communication and language before they can do literacy. They need to be able to sit at a table and do some work before they can do maths. When I was able to say to the Ofsted inspector that we are putting in all of this focus on the prime areas so that when they start reception they can really start literacy and maths and that kind of focus. ... the fact that we had transition mentors and family entrepreneurs supporting that and the data showed as well was really useful."

**The Transition Mentor and Family Entrepreneur worked to support each other:** "What will then happen is the children go home enthusiastic about what's happened, talking about (mentor) and working in the little groups with her. It sows the seed at home of the work that came from the Family Entrepreneur... The way that she's worked certainly the data coming out from the children she's worked with and supported where they're making at least expected performance and the majority of them are making substantial and sustained progress"

"Whereas the Family Entrepreneur measurement of success is a spider's web. It's more subjective... It's not quantitative. There's very qualitative statements and judgements and the softer side...The Early Learning Goals help us to quantify what is the softer data because they're linked to moving, handling, personal development, expressing your feelings, being imaginative. There's very specific descriptors for goals so we can take the softer side, the qualitative side and quantify that... It's about progress.. If you're getting the progress right then the attainment will come."

In another case study, a school-based operational stakeholder discussed observed outcomes for children, particularly in relation to aspirations:

### Vignette: observed impacts on children's aspirations

A teacher noted how World of Work (WoW) had changed children's perceptions of university: "We had through the World of Work we had the speed dating event come in: I did a little bit of a session on careers with the children see what they could come up with themselves and most of the answers what would you like to be when you're older was a footballer, dancer a pop star that kind of thing, there was no mention of going to university or any kind of further education it was all kind of things they had just seen on the TV."

"World of Work came in delivered their session and then after that the children their aspirations had completely changed when we discussed it because they were talking about well I'll need to go to university to do this and that kind of thing so it really was a big change where the children were looking because I think some of our children will look back its kind of 3rd and 4th generation were they may not have had a job or a lot of their family haven't gone to university and further education so they hadn't heard it before suddenly that had been added in."

"In my following session definitely we did the 'what would you like to do when you're older' then I gave them a sheet saying 'what job is it now that you've decided' and it had things on it, one of the questions was 'do you need to go into further education if so what' and they actually sat for the entire session and looked up what they needed to do, where they needed to go what qualifications they needed to get in order to further it and get that job at the end of it and they really sat and focused on it they were really interested."

Beyond this, in relation to other work linked to the aspirations strand, an operational stakeholders noted they were **supporting younger children** and families.

Key strategic stakeholders were asked to consider **expected impacts in the next year** or so. Suggested focusses coalesced around **obesity reduction, being active, and school readiness**.

**What are the contextual factors/barriers and enablers that are supporting or inhibiting these changes occurring [at policy; area; organisation; individual level]?**

The **development from previous partnerships** was a crucial element, as articulated by strategic stakeholder:

"I've always been saying we've been building a Children's Community for over 10 years here and its evolved from extended services and within that very much drew together groups - two key groups being the Wallsend partnership of schools that soft federation of all 15 schools in the Wallsend area and then a youth provision group."

One of the barriers inevitably identified by a number of respondents is **funding**, with another being the reduced capacity of professionals (even in the context of **strong collaborative cultures** across Wallsend) to work together to effect change in a **narrow accountability-driven culture** as, for example, in schools.

Two external policy enablers, identified by strategic stakeholders, were the **external focus on the Early Years**, and **school's undertaking their own research**. One strategic stakeholder made the interesting point that **making changes with the potential for longer term effects can have a negative early impact**:

"There are some things the Children's Community will get involved in and do that's almost by their nature will stall progress a bit. I'll give you an example: when we came together just under two years ago one of the concerns was

*around child and adolescent mental health... if you provide councillors or mentoring, whatever intervention you put in to try and get to grips with mental health issues, often things get worse before they get better... It's going to uncover a whole host of other factors that then need to be dealt with. It's absolutely right that we do it... If by tackling the child and adolescent mental health issues has a detrimental short-term impact on some of the wider outcomes we're hoping to achieve then I'm happy to take the hit on that."*

A third issue highlighted linked to the **concept of social mobility**; for an area-based programme, a focus on the individual rather than the area risked - at an area level - creating positive outcomes for the individual but not for the area.

An issue referred to consistently was the **attitudes of parents and families** in engaging with the Children's Community. For example, several operational and strategic stakeholders discussed **breaking a cycle**. This linked to a current focus in Wallsend on parents, and the equally widely expressed view that young people in the area were unable or unwilling to travel for work, with discussion of intergenerational employment occurred in a number of interviews. It is, though, worth noting some nuancing here, especially drawing on the WAFY evaluation as one strategic stakeholder, there is aspiration but not opportunity or at least not a clear, perceived pathway to opportunity. Further, some of the claims around **lack of aspirations** were challenged. Therefore, the language around the people of Wallsend is important to get right if the community is to be engaged as true partner into the Community in the coming period.

### 5.3. Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community

#### Summary

- Although it is at a development stage, Smallshaw-Hurst is embodying many of the principles of an established Children's Community. It is developing a long-term and strategic vision, and has recognised in particular the need to move beyond the time-limited, project-based approach which has historically characterised investments in the area. Three strands of activity align to Children's Community principles: developing the evidence base, engaging stakeholders and developing the Theory of Change.
- The staff team has undertaken extensive engagement with local stakeholders to lay the foundations for establishing governance structures. Engagement with some key partners has been limited due to external factors. In developing the governance group it is recognised by stakeholders that it will be important to articulate the benefits of engagement and understand what partners want to get out of the Children's Community.
- In progressing the local vision and Theory of Change, the Children's Community has built upon extensive consultation, evidence gathering and a focused workshop to set out an initial draft series of Theories of Change. The team have found this process useful in highlighting how they need to think about how they sequence activities to achieve longer term visions and objectives. It has also added legitimacy when engaging stakeholders. However a key challenge for the Community is how to drive forward action and activity without an existing partnership or building to act as a focus for the work.
- The Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst is not yet at a stage where there are identifiable impacts on local systems and services, or measurable outcomes for children and families. A draft outcomes framework to identify the impacts on children and families has been developed through the Theory of Change

process. In common with other Children's Communities this needs to be developed further to also consider impacts at the level of local services and systems.

- In relation to key contextual factors, the development of the Children's Community needs to be considered in the context of substantial organisational change surrounding the Children's Community: key partners New Charter and Tameside Council are undergoing internal change processes, and there have been changes to key personnel within Save the Children. There have also been logistical challenges in setting up the Children's Community, notably establishing suitable IT and communications systems to allow remote working. Stakeholders identified additional factors that are likely to have a longer-term influence on the Children's Community. These include challenges in engaging local schools (which have their own sets of structures and targets that do not necessarily align with those of the Children's Community); and challenges in securing buy-in to the model from local partners and community members. One issue is the geography of the Smallshaw-Hurst area, which is a former regeneration area for the local authority but not a recognisable neighbourhood that communities or local stakeholder organisations align to. This has affected engagement and buy-in from stakeholders, particularly where service delivery boundaries do not align with those of the Children's Community area.

The Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community is at a much **earlier stage in its development** than those in Pembury and Wallsend. Although there has been a long process of discussion and planning for the Children's Community within lead organisations (New Charter Housing and Tameside Borough Council), a staff team (employed by Save the Children) has only been in post since June 2017. So far, the team has undertaken robust consultation to secure support and buy-in and begun to set out a draft vision and Theory of Change. The Children's Community has not yet set up a governance group or sought to formalise working arrangements with partners. The evaluation will not be able to assess the contribution and success of this initial activity until the development has been completed and delivery has begun.

In Smallshaw-Hurst the focus of the evaluation and data collection activities in this early phase has been on capturing evidence around the processes through which the Children's Community team has undertaken analysis of presenting issues and problems; developed the vision and Theory of Change for the Children's Community; and consulted with local residents and stakeholders to identify priorities for early action. The main data collection for the evaluation has been a series of focus groups with the staff team and a limited number of interviews with local stakeholder organisations. To protect the anonymity of the limited number of interviewees involved in Smallshaw Hurst we have not identified the provenance of quotes used in this section.

The rationale for a Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst is **high levels of inequality** across multiple outcomes such as educational attainment, mental health, anti-social behaviour and youth unemployment. The area has also seen substantial **cuts in services** (including the closures of its Children's Centre and reductions in local policing) and the area is poorly served by transport and facilities such as health care and shopping. This means it is difficult and arduous for people to get assistance and residents are often not aware of what help they can get. This is thought to contribute to low levels of service engagement. For example, there is low take up of free nursery places in the area. There has been little major investment in to the area, at least in the recent past. One exception is a secondary academy, which is a key local asset for the area, but this has recently undergone sponsorship through a Multi Academy Trust in response to the outcome of an Ofsted inspection. However, stakeholders reported that the Children's Community offers an opportunity for

**renewed collaboration** between local agencies, a chance to look at the area differently and to think beyond a set of ad-hoc projects to develop a strategic approach to **working with the local community** to supporting children and young people.

***How and to what extent are Communities embodying the key principles of the Children's Communities model? Is there evidence of Children's Communities working towards long term systems change?***

Although it is at a development stage, Smallshaw-Hurst is embodying many of the principles of an established Children's Community. There is consensus on the need for the approach to move beyond the time-limited, project-based approach which has characterised investments in the area to date.

*"One thing I'm really clear about and I think the team are, is the Children's Community mustn't just become a series of small projects, it must be more than that, it must look at how the system works in that area and what influences it can have to help enable systems change in the borough and isn't just seen as another three year project that's come in, chuck money at projects and off we go."*

Since June, when the staff team began in post, there have been three key strands of activity which align to the Children's Community principles: developing the evidence base, engaging stakeholders and developing their Theory of Change. Developing the evidence base has involved collection and analysis of secondary and administrative data and community consultations with approximately 70 residents and representatives of community organisations. Reflecting on the importance of this work identified its value for:

- Providing **understanding and context** about the area; this has been particularly important given the staff team had limited prior knowledge of the area.
- Identifying the **community assets** which the Children's Community will look to build up on.
- Identifying **key stakeholders** with whom the Children's Community needs to engage and providing evidence to inform discussions with them.
- Informing the **vision and Theory of Change** for the Children's Community.
- And in the future, identifying **what interventions have worked**: "Yeah it certainly needs using more, evidencing what's working, what isn't and feeding back into the model."

A formal **handover** period with the individuals who had been involved in the initial planning of the Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst could have made the evidence gathering process more efficient. This is explained in the following quotes:

*"We started almost a step back from where we should have been. I feel that we've been involved in the pre-planning stage, whereas we thought we were further on when we first started and then realised we're in the pre-planning stage cos we've got to come to grips with the history of the area, how it's come to be and who are those key people."*

*"I think in hindsight two key people left the programme... and they were the people who had all that knowledge....In hindsight I'd say you need some kind of hand over period and there needs to be some continuity with the people who devised the programme."*

As this following comment demonstrates, because there was no formal handover, developing the evidence base ended up being a piecemeal process:

*"it was quite piecemeal, we Googled a lot, we couldn't understand where the area had come from, why was it Smallshaw-Hurst, we quickly found out it was three distinct neighbourhoods, so we didn't get the connection. I knew from Googling that, at some point the council had drawn a line round Smallshaw-Hurst but we didn't understand why. Eventually we met the right people and we discovered that Smallshaw-Hurst traditionally had lots of other area-based initiatives so SRB (Single Regeneration Budget), way back in 2004, where partner agencies had tried various different methods of tackling problems, most recently it was Safer, Stronger Community, but all those things had been and gone and we needed to understand where that came from, alongside establishing positive relationships with local people and professionals. So that was a big thing that we needed to understand."*

The work to engage stakeholders in the area has been ongoing, with a few key organisations remaining to be contacted. Embedding the Children's Community firmly within the existing infrastructure is an important foundation for developing a shared vision and Theory of Change, and over the seven months since the staff team came to post getting professionals on board has been a priority. Interviewees reflected that who they are able to engage will determine the offer for the Children's Community:

*"I think we had to start with getting the professionals on board, cos what is our offer, that's what we needed to be clear about and for the first six months we didn't particularly know cos we were too busy trying to get to know people and finding our place in the world if I'm honest!."*

The approach adopted has been to prioritise buy-in from senior (or strategic) leaders in local organisations with a focus of conversations being introductions to the team, explaining the Children's Community model, gaining insights into the local area and community, and building networks.

*"The meetings with the partners so far its focus, it's not been about what we're going to do as a children's community, it's more been about introducing who we are and then getting their insights, whereas you might expect you'd be meeting them to discuss an initiative or how we're going to crack on, it's just been getting insights about Smallshaw-Hurst."*

A number of factors were cited as contributing to the success of this strand of activity. In particular:

- Having **senior buy in** from the local MP and a local stakeholder who was able to facilitate key contacts from her role at Tameside Council. These individuals were useful directly for initiating first contacts and indirectly, where they are mentioned as supporters of the Children's Community.
- Having the Save the Children **branding** was seen as adding a recognisable 'independent' name and legitimacy. One interviewee commented: "(having the) Save the Children brand has been useful.... the fact that it's on my email signature means I'm legitimate, not some random person."

Interviewees acknowledged that engagement has been **time consuming**. A number of factors were identified as impinging on the progress of this work: the number of local stakeholders to consider (which has grown organically over the past six months); the need to work with the timescales of organisations for example, the school calendar ("when they come back in September, we've got somewhere with

*"them but those relationships take so long to build up and we're now into Christmas, so you have to be aware of the school calendar")* and the challenge of gaining buy in to the Children's Community model.

One interviewee's comment summarises views on the challenges of gaining buy-in to the Children's Community model in the absence of pre-existing partnerships or projects.

*"A children's community is so conceptual as an idea, that's the other thing, that to communicate to somebody takes time, it isn't just this is what it is, boom, we're sorted in that relationship for life, it takes time."*

The prolonged emphasis on **relationship building** in the early stages of the Children's Community raises the question of whether the Children's Community could focus on some 'quick win' interventions as a way to build and cement relationships. Interviewees had mixed views, particularly in relation to whether it would be counter to the principles of Children's Community (see the quote below). An important factor is the limited extent of formal partnership working and resources in place through which to implement a 'quick win' project. There will be important learning from how the Children's Community seeks to engage organisations in the initial stages of delivery and how this affects the maturity of the model in Smallshaw-Hurst.

*"(If we implement) these quick wins we're kind of contradicting what we're saying about what a Children's Community is, cos it's not about a big cash investment, so it's really difficult to get people on board cos they're almost saying what's in it for me. So we go to schools and it's like what's in it for me, we're not bringing anything to the table as such, nothing tangible, but over a long period of time we'd like to improve outcomes for children, but that's about pre-planning and that's where we started, those relationships weren't there."*

One response to this challenge may be to identify a set of tangible, **practical elements** to the model which could be replicated in other Children's Community areas in the start-up phase. This is reflected in the work being undertaken to develop a change model for the Children's Community which is discussed at Section 3.2 of this report.

Another reflection is the need for a **year zero** in the early phase of a Children's Community. This would allow sufficient time for detailed evidence gathering and engagement with stakeholders, to build necessary networks before the Children's Community seeks to develop its vision, governance and plan of activity. Whilst there is no set expectation around the rate of progress for a Children's Community (which will vary according to local circumstances and opportunities), the following quote suggests that in Smallshaw-Hurst the Children's Community has experienced expectation, from both internal and external sources, to advance toward operational aspects of the programme:

*"I think when you're setting up a project like this you have to expect that there's a year zero where basically nothing happens apart from relationships are produced, I'm sure there are many people in Save the Children who are aware of that but actually that's not been communicated to us and from a few different places, not just Save the Children, there has been an unrealistic expectation that we're starting projects, doing this, that and the other, and some people have no idea what it takes to do it, that's fine but I think there needs to be that expectation of a year zero cos in other sectors when you set up projects like this, you know there's a year zero'.*

The proposed next steps for the Children's Community are to seek to embed more of the principles underpinning the approach. This will involve:

- **Establishing and formalising governance structures.**
- **Formalising relationships with engaged stakeholders:** "*A lot more about formalising things, the past six months it's been a bit organic, let's try and see where we're going and it's been a bit of a maze really, but I think next year we need to put a lot more structures in place so we know where we're at.*"
- **Refining and agreeing the Theory of Change:** "*Establishing the conditions of change now, we're formalising them all those different ways and just building on those relationships.*"
- **Moving beyond establishing buy-in with senior staff to working with frontline workers:** "*So that next level of engagement that you want about frontline officers, getting more into that tier now.*"

### ***How effective are leadership and governance arrangements?***

Establishing a formal leadership and governance structure is a key task for the Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community in the early part of 2018. The team leading the Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst is employed by Save the Children. This has been important in **positioning the Children's Community** as 'neutral' (i.e. not overly focused on agenda of either lead agency) and facilitating engagement. Interviewees commented:

*"It's allowed us in some ways to develop our relationships almost organically as a Children's Community and not from a New Charter or Tameside council perspective."*

*"...I think people who've worked in the area for a long time, sometimes they base it on their experiences and see limitations, and we've overcome a lot of those just cos we've got on with it ourselves. We wouldn't have spoken to the head teacher if we'd listened, we were told the head teacher won't speak to you, you need to go in and speak to the teaching assistants, but if we're going to get schools to buy in we need the senior leadership buying in, and apart from three they all have. So things would have been more structured but we might not have made those connections."*

There have been some initial challenges associated with this model. Being a remote Save the Children team, the Children's Community team in Smallshaw-Hurst found it hard to know where to go for help and support, at least initially. This challenge was magnified by a series of wider staffing changes within Save the Children management and support teams.

Reflecting on the staffing team's structure, one interviewee suggested that, given the importance of community engagement, there is a case to provide additional resource for the Community Co-ordinator post to be more than 3 days per week (0.6 FTE):

*"A lot of it's based on relationships and is three days community engagement enough, as we're going to move forward now? It has been fine for now while we're developing things, but relationships, momentums, three days, do we have enough capacity with the community engagement? That's my big question mark and that's something (the staff team) are going to have to be really conscious of and capture that moving forward now, we've got to get more to grips with both maintaining those relationships with partner agencies, which is something we do together, but also the community as well."*

The Children's Community's key partners are New Charter housing association and Tameside Council. The relationship with a stakeholder at Tameside is important for **facilitating access to data and people**. One interviewee remarked (the stakeholder) "*does really open doors and she will remove barriers, although we've not had to use her too much but we tend to drop her name.*" Wider engagement from departments in Tameside Council has been inconsistent and in particular the inadequate rating delivered by Ofsted for children's services in the Borough is impacting on capacity for involvement in the programme.

*"Tameside council have had a tough time cos of their Ofsted, so it's taken a while to build those relationships and for people to be honest with us, cos people have been really worried about their services and how they deliver things and they've had their own challenges to deal with so it's taken a while to start having those really honest conversations."*

New Charter has provided an important local base for the Children's Community. An interviewee remarked:

*"It's been very useful to have a base here. I think it's just been helpful and those community development people know who we are and we've built those relationships up a bit informally and it just gives us office space, I've been able to invite people here and I think that's been positive."*

Beyond this New Charter's involvement has been limited because changes within the organisation have dominated staff time. One reflection offered by an interviewee is whether New Charter would have contributed more if the individuals who were involved in the initial set up of the Children's Community were still engaged. An interviewee remarked, *"they definitely want to have an involvement but we're not quite sure yet how that relationship can develop and I think they will be really helpful but at this stage it's not been."*

To support ongoing effective partnership working between the Children's Community and New Charter and Tameside Council it is important to identify each organisation's priorities in terms of outcomes from the Children's Community. To date this question has not been raised, in part because the Children's Community team has been building its vision, but also because there has been reluctance to place demands on partner organisations that are dealing with significant internal issues. However the Children's Community is now at a point where it is appropriate to set meetings and seek clarification on expectations and responsibilities. An interviewee suggested.

*"And for New Charter and the local authority, if they're buying into this project, what are they hoping to get out of it, I do think we need to formalise our relationships more now with the council and New Charter so we understand this is what they want and they can then understand where we're at and we're all on the same page."*

### ***How are the Communities progressing with developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and theory of change?***

The Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community Theory of Change is at a development stage. Building on extensive consultation, evidence gathering and a focused workshop the team has set out an initial draft series of Theories of Change, focussing initially on three strands of action:

- parents, early years, learning;
- aspirations, education, employability;

- fit, healthy, safe, supported.

These initial three themes will act as a **platform to engage local stakeholders**. However there was a view amongst interviewees that as partnerships develop the Children's Community will start "*picking out what their (partner organisations) priorities are and that will be informed by their own knowledge, the data and the communities so it'll be much more of a shared these are the things we want to tackle*".

Reflecting the current stage of the Children's Community - it has no governance structure or formalised relationships with stakeholders - what is less clear is at this stage how the model will embed within, and influence, wider systems for children and families and what influence (if any) the devolution agenda in Greater Manchester will have on the scope, and focus of the Children's Community as it progresses.

Discussing the Theory of Change approach interviewees reflected:

- 1) The Theory of Change has helped the Children's Community team to think about **the framework for change**, the sequencing of activities, and about how their initial set of objectives can be achieved. Comments included

*"I think it's forced us to organise ourselves a bit, it's provided a framework for our general direction and something to use with the governance board to get that conversation going, otherwise we might have been there with a blank piece of paper forever."*

*"I think the questions are really helpful cos they force you to think about the sequence."*

- 2) The process of engaging stakeholders in developing the Theory of Change has helped **develop relationships and confirmed evidence** gained through data analysis and consultation. An interviewee suggested

*"I think it was positive for people there cos then they feel involved in it. I think quite a lot of the things they were saying were linked with things we'd already picked up, so it was positive in the sense of the people meeting each other and it maybe just confirmed what we were already thinking and how we were talking about things, so for us it was more of a confirmation."*

- 3) The Theory of Change has been important when engaging stakeholders as it adds **legitimacy and structure** to what the Children's Community is aiming to achieve:

*"Going into meetings with people and saying what we're doing is evidence based is so important, cos they know you're legitimate and they're interested and I've been able to say some of the data that we find and how we see what's developing actually might be really important for them cos they might be able to see stuff, not everybody, but some people also know what a Theory of Change is, so that's been quite useful cos they understand what evaluation methods we're using, but that's a general... cos I don't talk too much about it, it gives us a structure of where we're going and also how they can be involved and stuff."*

The team recognise that the next steps for developing and operationalising the local strategic vision and Theories of Change are twofold. First they need to formalise their **relationships with local organisations and the community**. These constituents are needed to act upon their Theory of Change and the potential of the Children's Community is highly dependent on the formalisation of relationships and buy-in of organisations.

The second step is to work with local organisations to develop and start to fulfil the Theories of Change. In particular, providing greater **clarity on the conditions for change** and developing a **series of activities** with partners. Interviewees suggested it would begin to provide structure for the Children's Community:

*"So next year for me is a lot more about formalising things, the past six months it's been a bit organic, let's try and see where we're going and it's been a bit of a maze really, but I think next year we need to put a lot more structures in place so we know where we're at."*

*"But we're going to meet with each of those theme groups next year and we think we've got two areas of work where we can work with two of the themes and there's a third theme which isn't as clear but maybe some of the work New Charter are doing with the Tameside Together maybe there's going to be an opportunity there."*

### ***What evidence is there of impacts for services and systems?***

The Children's Community is not at a stage of delivering impacts in services and systems. However it is recommended that an outcomes framework to measure progress and impacts on services and systems is developed as part of work for their Theory of Change.

### ***What evidence is there of impacts for children and young people and families?***

The Children's Community is also not at a stage of delivering impacts for children's, young people and families. A draft outcomes framework for children, young people and families is being developed as part of work for their Theory of Change.

### ***What are the contextual factors/barriers and enablers that are supporting or inhibiting these changes occurring?***

Six key contextual barriers were raised in a focus group with the Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community team. These are summarised as follows:

- 1) Smallshaw-Hurst itself is **not a recognisable area that communities or local stakeholder organisations align to**. As the following quote suggests this has affected engagement and buy-in:

*"I think it matters in terms of say positive stats, the careers service, we met with them and they have a case workers who work to ward boundaries and I'm sure that happens in loads of organisations, people have a responsibility for a certain area, so we're not aligning with them. If it's a council MP and it's their ward then they've got an interest in it, but we're not aligning with anyone else."*

- 2) **The engagement of key partner agencies is affected by internal issues** which are beyond the influence of the Children's Community.

- 3) There has been challenge in **engaging schools**. This is summarised in the following quote:

*"The meetings we've had have been quite positive, initially a few of them were a bit like 'why are you here?' but I think that's natural cos they have no idea who we are, schools are chucked so much stuff that they should be involved in, you need to do this, so that's quite difficult, but when I've had conversations with people they've ended up being quite positive, they've understood what we're trying to do and they started opening up about some issues they have and how we might work together."*

In addition the local Academy has been responding to an inadequate Ofsted rating. Through persistence the staff team has made positive progression in engaging local schools. One important factor has been the strategic decision to align outcomes to those of local school:

*"Also the schools are under a lot of pressure to reach their targets and outcomes, so the fact that Children's Community's outcomes are aligning with their outcomes and that we have evidence to show that Children's Community stuff can improve those outcomes in areas is useful."*

In 2018 the staff team is planning to cement engagement by running a learning event for all local schools. This is described in the following quote:

*"We very much want to get the head of the Academy on board cos we think she could really get the buy in and lead that schools partnership, cos there isn't particularly a schools partnership in place at the moment. So in the new year we're going to get some key speakers in and invite the schools, so other academics speaking to academics, cos I think that kind of works, some professional in the Children's Communities and also there's a guy who's Chair of the Wallsend partnership and he's a head teacher and he's been involved in that from the beginning, so get two key speakers and invite the schools in to talk about Children's Communities, we're hoping to do that in February."*

- 4) A key challenge for the team, which they raised repeatedly, is how they gain **buy-in to the Children's Community model** without a 'foundational asset' which can be used to drive forward the activity of others:

*"What we're doing isn't asset-based cos we're not working from the college or the housing association really and in the others it seems like Children's Community is led by an organisation who's aiming to align others with its cause and share its resources to change the way the local system works, whereas from our position we're just encouraging other people to do that, in a way we're a bit powerless."*

- 5) The change of key personnel within Save the Children and the absence of a formal **handover** period has slowed progress of the Children's Community in Smallshaw-Hurst.

- 6) A final contextual factor that has affected the team's delivery has been ineffective **systems** to allow remote working: *"Problems with IT have meant it's been very difficult just having communication, and a printer, for six months"*. Remote working has been rightly identified as important for the staff team to engage and work with local partners and the community.

This chapter has reviewed evidence against the key evaluation questions for the three Children's Communities. The final chapter discusses these findings and their implications for the programme and evaluation.

# 6

## Discussion

This report has reviewed the available evidence in relation to the progress and impact of the Children's Communities at the end of the first year of the evaluation being conducted by Sheffield Hallam University.

It is important to note that the first year of this evaluation does not coincide with the first year of activity in each of the Children's Community areas and as discussed in previous chapters each Children's Community is at a different stage in its development. Nevertheless, it is clear from the evidence presented that there has been a great deal of progress across all three Children's Communities, and in Wallsend and Pembridge a wide range of interventions to support children, young people and families are in place.

The evaluation questions look across different aspects of the Children's Community model and there is evidence of progress across all areas. At this point in the programme and evaluation there is more to report in relation to the **processes** of building partnerships and governance structures and delivering interventions than there is in relation to the **impact** of these activities, and the evaluation team is working with the Children's Communities and Save the Children to develop a set of relevant outcome measures. Draft outcomes at area and individual levels are outlined at Appendix 1. However, there is a need now to develop a programme-wide Theory of Change to articulate not only what changes have happened but why, and to identify a model and associated set of outcomes through which to capture evidence of local systems change associated with the Children's Communities.

The findings demonstrate progress against the Children's Community model in each Children's Community area. Each area is moving forward with developing its governance and leadership structures, although each aims to bring on board further key partners and engage them more actively in the next stages. Similarly, there are service and organisational changes including working together in new ways and some innovations in practices, and there are examples of early positive outcomes for children and young people.

### *Summarising the findings*

There are well functioning **leadership and governance** and arrangements in both established Children's Community areas, although some inconsistencies in the engagement of some partners suggest that there is ongoing need to continue to develop active partnership working across a range of stakeholders. In Smallshaw Hurst formal structures are not yet developed and wide ranging engagement and consultation is being undertaken to build relationships and lay the foundations for governance structures. Learning on this aspect of the Children's Communities includes:

- It has been crucial in all three Children's Communities to have a dedicated staff team to drive forward the development and implementation of the Children's Communities. The organisational location, wider roles and remit of the key Children's Community leads/staff are important in relation to communication and engagement of wider stakeholders. There are some identified benefits to having a team employed by Save the Children, (in terms of establishing a 'neutral' and external legitimacy to the programme) but perhaps more important are the benefits associated with leadership which is embedded in established and trusted local organisations which bring access to resources and other interventions, and provide a 'home' for the Children's Community which is recognised by stakeholders and residents.
- It seems to have been easier to establish leadership and governance in the Children's Communities that have built on existing partnership working. There is a need in the longer term however to ensure that the Children's Communities, and associated governance structures are identifiably different (and add value to) to existing partnerships and collaborations, and that this is recognised by all stakeholders, including those involved at operational and delivery levels.
- The engagement of agencies and departments in the governance of Children's Communities is affected by a range of factors which are beyond the influence of Children's Community structures. In particular, there are challenges in engaging organisations which are undergoing internal changes or are concerned with implementing improvements in response to negative inspection outcomes. Persistence, and seeking opportunities for service innovations which support agency objectives, have helped to build relationships.
- There is a need for the Children's Communities to gather data on the effectiveness of these governance arrangements in enabling changes to impact on services and then beneficiary outcomes.

Developing **Theories of Change**, has been helpful in bringing agencies together and developing shared long term visions for the Children's Community areas. There is evidence in all three Children's Communities of the 'added value' of this approach in bringing together a range of agencies to focus specifically on improving outcomes for children and young people. There is a need going forward for Children's Communities to articulate the outcomes of these processes and to identify from this what the set of activities in each area should be in the coming period. Intermediate measures of change need to be established in order to set objectives for 'good' progress over the short, medium and long terms. .

There is emerging evidence of impacts on **services and systems** in the established communities. In Pembury, there is an extensive network of activities to support children and young people, and the estate is providing a place to implement test and learn approaches which have the potential to inform wider interventions in the Borough. Learning around the benefits of a case-work based approach has been extended to interventions in key partner agencies. In Wallsend, there are some sophisticated organisational approaches from some schools in particular, which are working together well with other services - but there is a need to articulate the Children's Community additionality. Key learning from this aspect of the evaluation is the need to develop measures which capture sustained changes (both intended and unintended) to local systems and structures, and the degree to which these have been facilitated by different aspects of the Children' Community model. This is especially challenging in the contexts of widespread changes to local service delivery models in which the Children's Communities are working.

Some encouraging early evidence is available at this stage in relation to the **impacts on children and families**. Both established Children's Communities have gathered case studies and limited survey data to illustrate the impact of their work, and small-scale evidence gathering by the evaluation team suggests that beneficiaries are positive about the interventions in place and report a range of benefits to participation including increased confidence and sense of community. Further work is needed to increase the level of beneficiary data available at the local level and to integrate qualitative and survey data with individual and area-based secondary and administrative data (as outlined at Appendix 1).

The coming phase for the Children's Communities model, and for the three current communities, is crucial. Whilst the two established communities are clearly further ahead as established partnerships with shared aims, all three are part way along their 'journeys', and our sense is that all three -and the programme as a whole - will benefit from a clearer focus in relation how Communities are expected to work to achieve their aims, both to support stronger planning and sharper evaluation. The evaluation can support this next phase of development for the three Communities by working with each to establish a clear set of outcomes expected in the next phase and provide the means by which each Community can establishing the data it needs to be collected for its own evaluation in the next period.

The result of this would be:

- An overarching change model for the Children's Community Programme.
- A bespoke evaluation plan for each Children's Community to inform the rest of the evaluation.

Drawing on Figure 3.1, the evaluation team has begun to develop a model which encompasses elements of systems change across a set of aspects of the work of Children's Communities to help articulate what the work of the community may look like in different stages of development. Elements considered at this stage at the strategic level include governance, partnership working, leadership, activities, organisations and services, engagement, and communication. The intention is to translate these into a set of overall indicators of progress to allow the evaluation team to make judgments on progress in the next stages.

# Appendix 1: Research Methods

## Progress

The evaluation is designed to respond flexibly to local needs and priorities within the Children's Community areas. Whilst there is a common approach and an expectation around the scale of evaluation resource allocated to each Children's Community, the precise use of this resource (in terms of numbers and roles of interviewees, timing of research activities, use of different research tools and methodologies) varies according to a range of factors which include the stage of development for the Children's Community, and local capacity to undertake evaluation activity.

Evaluation activities over the first year of the evaluation have included:

- Developing Theory of Change reports for the Children's Communities in Pembury and Wallsend. The Children's Communities' Theories of Change are designed to recognise that long-term, systemic change is complex and therefore needs to be reviewed and altered as time moves on. Therefore, these documents will be updated as the evaluation continues. Work to support the Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community to develop its Theory of Change is underway.
- The evaluation team has worked with the three Children's Communities on developing 'data dashboards': specially designed data visualisation tools to help analyse and present key Children's Communities data clearly and allowing sub analysis to support the development of the Children's Communities as they move forward.

Data gathering in this phase of the evaluation has involved a number of tasks:

- **Semi-structured interviews** have taken place with strategic, operation and beneficiary stakeholders to review progress, assess the drivers and barriers to change and understand expectations of how each Children's Community will develop in the next stages and to create a baseline for the next stage of data gathering. A list of interviewees spoken to so far is outlined at Table A1.
- **Observations** at Children's Community governance and operational meetings; and engagement in programme-wide learning days.
- **Analysis of Children's Community documentation:** annual reports, minutes of meetings, research and data reports, other documentation as relevant.

The evaluation team has been working with the two communities to conduct **focussed evaluations** on one key initiative in each area, in both cases with an early years focus. In Pembury, this has focussed on the Ready for School initiative with the completion of interviews with staff, the development of a baseline survey of parents/carers and plans to undertake face to face work in the autumn. This evaluation is due to report in spring 2018. Wallsend Children's Community is taking a slightly different approach, with the Children's Community working together with the external evaluators on designing the evaluation of the Early Years Transition Service. Sheffield Hallam have been supporting the Data, Evaluation and Impact Advisor to design the evaluation, and will work together on data gathering and analysis.

The purpose of these focussed evaluations is both to provide early evidence of progress and impact in relation to a key area of importance in each Children's Community and to help develop tools and approaches that can be used in the evaluation as it develops, in particular survey tools that can be modified for use with children, young people and families supported by the Children's Communities in other ways. In subsequent years, other focuses (for example, initiatives relating to health or moving on from compulsory education) will be examined in a similar way.

Finally, the evaluation team has been working with the Children's Communities to **build local evaluation capacity**. Some of this work has involved thinking around issues associated with data collection and sharing in the Children's Community areas. It has also involved networking and training: data and impact officers have come together with members of the evaluation team to scope local data dashboards; and a workshop on participatory techniques for data gathering with young children for representatives of all three Children's Communities.

## Data Collection

**Table A1: Interviews and observations**

### Wallsend

Date	Role	Data collection method
28.09.17	CC Strategic Lead	Face to Face interview
28.09.17	CC Community Support	Face to Face interview
28.09.17	WAfY evaluator	Face to Face interview
28.09.17	Governance Group	Observation
13.10.17	HLTA (transition)	Telephone interview
23.10.17	Director of Counselling organisation	Telephone interview
30.10.17	Public Health Manager (Children) for North Tyneside Council.	Telephone interview
28.11.17	HLTA (transition)	Telephone interview
1.12.17	HLTA (Early Years transition)	Telephone interview
1.12.17	Early Talk Boost lead	Telephone interview
4.12.17	HLTA (transition)	Telephone interview
4.12.17	WoW Project Manager	Case visit re WoW project - High School 1, High School 2, Primary School 1
4.12.17	Lead for primary schools, WoW Project	
4.12.17	Lead for secondary schools, WoW Project	
4.12.17	Head of Careers, High School 2	
5.12.17	PSHE lead, Primary School 1	
5.12.17	2 x Y6 pupils, Primary School 1(CV+/WoW beneficiaries)	
28.11.17	Manager, Governance Group rep Voluntary Sector Provider	Telephone interview
5.12.17	Children's Services Manager, Voluntary Sector Provider	Case visit to Voluntary Sector Provider

5.12.17	Project worker, Voluntary Sector Provider	
5.12.17	Young person (1:1 support beneficiary)	
12.12.17	Nursery teacher	
12.12.17	HLTA (Early Years transition)	
12.12.17	Deputy Head	
12.12.17	Head teacher	
12.12.17	Primary teacher (Y1)	
12.12.17	3 nursery pupils with Transition Mentor	Observation

### Pembury

Date	Role	Data collection method
29/6/17	CC Strategic Lead	Face to Face interview
3/8/17	Strategic Manager, Children's Centre Services	Telephone interview
3/8/17	Lead, Young Hackney	Face to Face interview
16/8/17	Director of Community Programmes, Peabody	Face to Face interview
6/9/17	Group Director, Children, Adults and Community Health, LBH	Face to Face interview
28/9/17	Estate Based Teacher	Face to Face interview
28/9/17	Parent Advisor	Face to Face interview
28/9/17	Head of Children's Centre	Face to Face interview
25/10/17	Head of Policy, LBH	Face to Face interview
30/10/17	Head of Early Years provider	Telephone interview
30/10/17	Team Member, Young Hackney	Telephone interview
21/11/17	Beneficiary x 6	Case study visit: Face to Face interviews with parents of children taking part in Pembury Ready for School initiative
24/11/17	Head Teacher	Case study visit: Face to Face interviews Pembury Ready for School initiative
24/11/17	Foundation Stage Teacher	
24/11/17	CC Lead	Face to Face interview
19/12/17	Beneficiary x 4	Face to Face interviews with parents and young people supported by CC services

### Smallshaw-Hurst

Date	Role	Data collection method
21.09.17	Tameside Local Authority	Telephone interview
21.09.17	Housing Association Head of Neighbourhood Services	Telephone interview

21.09.17	Housing Association Neighbourhood team leader	Telephone interview
4.09.17	Public Health Manager	Telephone interview
13.12.17	Children's Community Staff Team	Workshop

## Draft Outcomes: Secondary and administrative data

Theme	Indicators	Suggested data sources
Education early years	Attainment: KS1	NPD
	Baseline data first x weeks at school	
	EYFS profile nursery and end reception	NPD
	Phonics screening Y1	NPD
	additionally	NPD
Education transitions	Under 5's provision	Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey
	attainment KS2, KS4, A-levels (NVQ equivalence)	NPD
	Progress 8 additionally or value added as use to be	LA data at GOV.UK
Destination post education	Attainment	NPD; ILR;
	School destinations	NPD; ILR;
	Higher education (attainment, course, place of study, funding ...)	HESA
Employment	Destinations	NPD; ILR;
	Benefits claims young people	DWP benefits
	Jobs and Employers	IDBR / BRES
Social/development - Personal emotional social	Wellbeing	Local surveys?
	SEN, exclusion, attendance, punctuality	NPD
Health and MH/Wellbeing	Dental	PHE reports at LA level. Check whether available at lower level
	Dental - child patients seen by NHS dentist	NHS digital/CCG
	Hospital admissions for dental decay	PHE
	Obesity	LA as part of National Child Measurement Programme
	infant/child mortality	PHE
	Hospital stays due to alcohol specific conditions (under 18s)	PHE
	Under 18 conception rate	PHE
	Birth weight	
	Reception prevalence of overweight	LA as part of National Child Measurement Programme
	A & E admissions 0-4 etc. and by condition	CCG: HES / SUS data
	MMR vaccination	PHE
	Hospital admissions due to self harm (under 18s)	PHE
Crime/ASB	ASB/Crime (HO) postcode	Collected by police and published by HO
	youth offending	
	Victimhood – Wallsend has data on youth	
Families deprivation	FSM	NPD
	Benefit measures	DWP / NOMIS
	Pupil premium	School website statutory information
	households in below income line; fuel poverty	
	Fuel poverty	
	Children in Need	
	Troubled Families	LA
Population change	Homelessness	
	Children in care	
Parenting	number of children	Census / mid year population estimates
	families	
	Breastfeeding initiation	NHS Maternity Services
	Breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks	PHE
	Smoking at delivery (birth)	PHE and NHS Maternity Services
Parenting	Parenting orders, penalty notices and parenting contracts	LA
	Looked after children (LA care)	LA