

An impact assessment of the Great Yarmouth Family Connectors project

On behalf of East of England Local Government Association and Great Yarmouth Borough Council



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Those who participated in the interviews are thanked for the time they gave up to take part.

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Summary

1. This report is an independent assessment of the impact of the Family Connectors project which operates in the Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House area of Great Yarmouth.
2. The project began in March 2014 and this assessment was carried out in February and March 2015.
3. The remit of the assessment was to analyse:
 - ❖ Strengths of the project
 - ❖ Areas which should be reviewed and reconsidered
 - ❖ Challenges implementing the project
 - ❖ Whether the project had achieved its stated aims or whether it had achieved any unstated aims
 - ❖ Whether the project presented good value for money
 - ❖ Any key learning for any other area or Local Authority wishing to adopt the model
4. The first part of the assessment is a short literature review of the theory and other examples of the approach – known as Asset Based Community Development. This approach starts from the basis of looking at the assets of the community as expressed through:
 - ❖ The practical skills, capacity and knowledge of local residents
 - ❖ The passions and interests of local residents that give them energy for change
 - ❖ The networks and connections (social capital) in a community, including friendships and neighbourliness
 - ❖ The effectiveness of local community and voluntary associations
 - ❖ The resources of public, private and third sector organisations to support a community
 - ❖ The physical and economic resources of a place that enhance well-being
5. The aim of the Family Connectors project is to improve well-being by increasing these “assets” in the area.
6. The Family Connectors project is funded through the East of England Local Government Association. Following a bidding process £24,250 was provided.

7. The assessment reviewed performance information collected by the project itself. The way this information was collected and summarised was robust given the acknowledged difficulties of measuring outcomes (which was echoed in similar projects identified through the literature review).
8. The underlying performance shows that, to date, 169 benefits have been recorded to families through the project. With some families or individuals having more than one benefit.
9. Positive results are also shown through records of the interactions between the Family Connectors and residents, and three short case studies.
10. Interviews were also held with 26 people to help assess the impact of the project.
11. The consensus was that the project had connected well with residents living in the area. Two people interviewed, Councillors Robert Connell and Penny Linden were both of the view that “the Family Connectors concept is really good and their strengths are that they know the community and get people together.”
12. The project has achieved its impact in a number of ways
 - ❖ The promotion of existing events, which has resulted in more people attending.
 - ❖ New events have been set up and others are being encouraged.
 - ❖ As well as raising awareness of events the Family Connectors have supported residents’ ability and willingness to engage with these events.
 - ❖ Residents have reported increased confidence in undertake actions again, no longer needing the support of a Family Connector.
 - ❖ Residents also report actions which increase the capacity of the community as they pass on information they have received from Family Connectors. This is can be considered a multiplier effect.
 - ❖ A number of interviewees were of the clear opinion that the project has supported the Troubled Families agenda.
 - ❖ As part of testing value for money and impact, interviewees were asked whether if the money were available again it should be spent on the Family Connectors project. They were of the view that this would be the right thing to do, a strong indication that the project represented good value for money. One interviewee said “I would like to see this rolled out across the borough. This is head and shoulders above anything else”.

1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report is an independent impact assessment of the first year of the Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Family Connector project. The Family Connector project began in March 2014.

1.1.2 The brief for the assessment work was to examine and report on:

- ❖ The strengths of the project
- ❖ Areas which should be reviewed and reconsidered
- ❖ The challenges of implementing the project
- ❖ Whether the project had achieved its stated aims or whether it had achieved any unstated aims
- ❖ Whether the project presented good value for money
- ❖ Any key learning for any other area or Local Authority wishing to adopt the model, and any challenges in rolling the project out to another area

1.1.3 The specification for the work also asked for a literature review of Asset Based Community Development and background on Government Policy on Early Help Agendas and working with Troubled Families. It asked for interviews with a range of people engaged in or impacted by the project and these were:

- ❖ People who lived in the area
- ❖ Those working on the project
- ❖ Those who worked in services alongside the Family Connectors project

1.1.4 Work on this assessment started on 9th January 2015, with interviews starting in February.

1.2 How the review was carried out

1.2.1 The work was carried by obtaining and analysing information about the project from a number of sources. Documentary information was obtained from:

- ❖ Background documents such as the bid for funding for the Family Connectors project, which was made to the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA), and also minutes of meetings which were requested and supplied.
- ❖ Other published material about the project e.g. press releases, job advertisements, and material from other websites.
- ❖ The Family Connectors project was asked for the performance information they collected.

1.2.2 An important part of the review was the interviews held with key stakeholders. These were semi-structured interviews focusing on the questions in the review's brief. More detail is given in Chapter 5 Interviews with stakeholders. Great care was taken to ensure that those who were interviewed came from a range of different organisations and that

residents were included. The Family Connectors project understandably selected the residents for interview from those known to them. However great care was taken in all the interviews to ensure that those who participated were able to freely express any views they held.

1.3 Structure of the Report

- 1.3.1 Chapter 2 provides background by looking at literature about Asset Based Community Development. This sets out a framework for the Family Connectors project.
- 1.3.2 Chapter 3 gives more background from national Government policies and approaches on Troubled Families and Early Help. This is followed by information on the objective of the project - what it was seeking to achieve. The Chapter goes on to set the local context for the study by giving some background about the area in which the project operates.
- 1.3.3 The report then summarises information collected by the project in terms of quantitative measures and the qualitative information on which these were based. It also reports on case studies provided by the project team.
- 1.3.4 Chapter 5 gives findings from the interviews carried out. These gave information not only on the Family Connectors project itself but were also able to reflect on lessons which might be applied to similar projects being established in other areas. These are reported in Chapter 6 Guidance for similar projects.

2 Literature Review of Asset Based Community Development

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of literature about asset based community development (ABCD). The Family Connectors project can be seen as one with an asset based approach. The literature review is therefore a background which helps set out what asset based approaches try to achieve and, more importantly, how they work.
- 2.1.2 The review of asset based community development not only covers the theory but also provides examples of projects that follow the approach. This allows a degree of comparison between the Family Connectors project and other ABCD projects so that similarities and differences can be observed.
- 2.1.3 The review also, to a degree, allows lessons from other asset based community development projects to be added to findings from this assessment.
- 2.1.4 After explaining how the literature review was carried out this Chapter goes on to summarise definitions of asset based community development and contrast this approach with other approaches. It then summarises the main elements of the asset based approaches and goes on to give some examples of projects in the UK. These include some projects working in different types of area (e.g. rural as opposed to urban areas).

2.2 How the literature review of was carried out

- 2.2.1 The literature review had two main elements. Firstly the places which would be searched and secondly the search terms used.
- 2.2.2 The primary place of search was Cambridge University Library and Databases. Cambridge University Library is a legal deposit library and is entitled to claim, without charge, a copy of all books, journals, printed maps and music published in Britain and Ireland. The Newton Catalogue was used. It allows searching for words, phrases or names anywhere in the catalogue record.
- 2.2.3 The second element was considering the search terms (what was being looked for). The following terms were used in the search: *asset based community development*, *family* and *connector*.
- 2.2.4 Searches on key words and phrases found different numbers of objects or links depending on the words and phrases used. A search based on any of the words *asset based community development* returned 727,734. A search on the terms "*family connectors*" and *asset* returned 0 results. A search using "*community connectors*" returned 575 results and the search for "*family connectors*" returned 36 results.
- 2.2.5 The searching of lists which returned many results was prioritised by looking at the most recent first and focusing on those studies in published journals (as opposed, for example,

to those in newspaper articles). The large number of potential results found through the searches was caused by the use of the words of relevance to other subjects, for example the terms *connector* and *development* returned many articles on electrical circuitry.

- 2.2.6 As can be seen from the next section (2.3) asset based community development considers assets as not just being physical objects. For this reason findings from articles such as Bearing fruit: Good practice in asset-based rural community development (Development Trusts Association, 2008) were not included as this report fundamentally looked at physical assets (i.e. buildings). Similarly, Healey (2014) examines recent English experience in citizen-generated local development initiatives. This study also mainly considers physical assets.
- 2.2.7 Searches were also made of the World Wide Web through a number of different search engines.
- 2.2.8 Finally, another way of finding relevant references was by checking the more recent references and looking at the studies they referred to.

2.3 What is asset-based community development?

- 2.3.1 The first articulation of asset based community development comes from Kretzmann and McKnight (1996)¹. They contrast two approaches responding to the effects of the “economic shifts” experienced by cities in the USA in the 1970s and 1980s. They see these resulting from a decline in industrial jobs in cities. The commonest approach to community development is that which focuses on a community’s needs, deficiencies and problems. The second path they report (and recommend) begins with the identification of a community’s capacities and assets.
- 2.3.2 An issue in what they have identified in the first approach is that residents begin to accept the map of “deficiencies” as the only guide to the reality of their lives. This can result from:
- ❖ Viewing the community as a list of problems and needs which can lead to a fragmentation of efforts to provide solutions. It also does not acknowledge the community’s own problem-solving capacities.
 - ❖ Making resources available on the basis of needs can have negative effects on local community leadership.
 - ❖ Providing resources on the basis of the needs map underlines the perception that only outside experts are seen as the route for providing real help. This does not strengthen the relationships that count most for local residents: neighbour-to-neighbour links of mutual support and problem solving.

¹ “Based on extensive inquiry into the characteristics of successful community initiatives in the U.S., John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann at the Institute for Policy Research (IPR) at Northwestern University, articulated ABCD as a way of counteracting the predominant needs- based approach to development in urban America” (Mathie and Cunningham , 2002 page 4)

- ❖ Targeting resources based on the needs map directs funding not to residents but to service providers.

2.3.3 The main elements of what Kretzmunn and McKnight have identified as a deficit approach to community development are set out in Table 1 and these are contrasted with those from an asset based approach.

Table 1 Comparing the deficit approach to community development with an asset approach

The Deficit approach	The Asset approach
Starts with the deficiencies and needs of the community	Starts with the assets of the community
Responds to the problems	Identifies opportunities and strengths
Provides services to users	Invests in people as citizens
Emphasises the role of agencies	Emphasises the role of civil society
Focuses on individuals	Focuses on communities, neighbourhoods and the common good
Sees people as clients and consumers receiving services	Sees people as citizens and co-producers with something to offer
Treats people as passive and done to	Helps people take control of their own lives
“Fixes” people	Supports people to develop their potential
Implements programmes as the answer	Sees people as the answer

Source: Hudson (2010)

2.3.4 Since the work by Kretzmunn and McKnight other studies have recognised asset-based community development as an alternative to needs-based approaches (e.g. Mathie and Cunningham, 2002). Burkett (2011) is clear that “frameworks such as ABCD have gained a popular following, taking root outside professional and university contexts, and attracting genuine grass-roots interest” (page 573).

2.3.5 Asset based community development is seen as an increasingly used approach to community development – “strengths-based practice appears to be a popular approach to social work practice. Increasingly, it has become the approach of choice in community work, with the “asset- based community development” model being utilised ... internationally” (Ennis and West, 2010).

2.4 What are the assets in asset based approaches?

2.4.1 An important element of asset based community development is the identification of a community's capacities and assets. Hudson (2010) sets out a definition that an asset can be any of the following:

- ❖ The practical skills, capacity and knowledge of local residents
- ❖ The passions and interests of local residents that give them energy for change
- ❖ The networks and connections (social capital) in a community, including friendships and neighbourliness
- ❖ The effectiveness of local community and voluntary associations
- ❖ The resources of public, private and third sector organisations to support a community
- ❖ The physical and economic resources of a place that enhance well-being

2.4.2 The approach they suggest would be based on a map of assets to recognise the skills and capacities of residents. The strategy starts with what is present in the community: the capacities of residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area: not with what is absent, or with what is problematic.

2.4.3 Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2012, page 180), in their review of asset based approaches in a number of projects in Scotland, set out four key values and principles of an asset based approach:

- ❖ Working with people, rather than seeing them as passive recipients of services – 'doing with' rather than 'doing to'
- ❖ Helping people to identify and focus on the assets and strengths within themselves and their communities and supporting them to use these assets to make sustainable improvements in their lives
- ❖ Supporting people to make changes for the better by enhancing skills for resilience, relationships, knowledge and self esteem, including through building mutually supportive networks and friendships which help people make sense of their environments and take control of their lives
- ❖ Shifting control over the design and development of actions from the state to individuals and communities

2.5 Examples of area-focused asset based community development projects in the UK

2.5.1 The literature review found a number of recent or current examples of asset based community development in the UK.

2.5.2 The Big Lottery Fund launched "Improving Futures" in March 2011. This set out to provide up to £26 million to transform outcomes for children living in families with multiple and complex needs across the UK. A note in 2013 (Big Lottery Fund, 2013) gives details of the 26 projects, each of which has been awarded up to £900,000 to deliver their project over 3–5 years. Four of these projects have an asset-based approach (see Table 2).

Table 2 Big Lottery Improving Futures projects which have asset based elements

Name of project	Location	Length of project	Funding Awarded	Number of families supported
Gateway – Levenmouth Partnership Family Support	Fife	3.5 years	£896,717	500
Empowering Families	Midlothian	5 years	£899,081	300
Brighter Futures	Wandsworth	3 years	£899,920	120
Croydon Family Power: Giving Children a Head Start	Croydon	3 years	£899,991	3,031

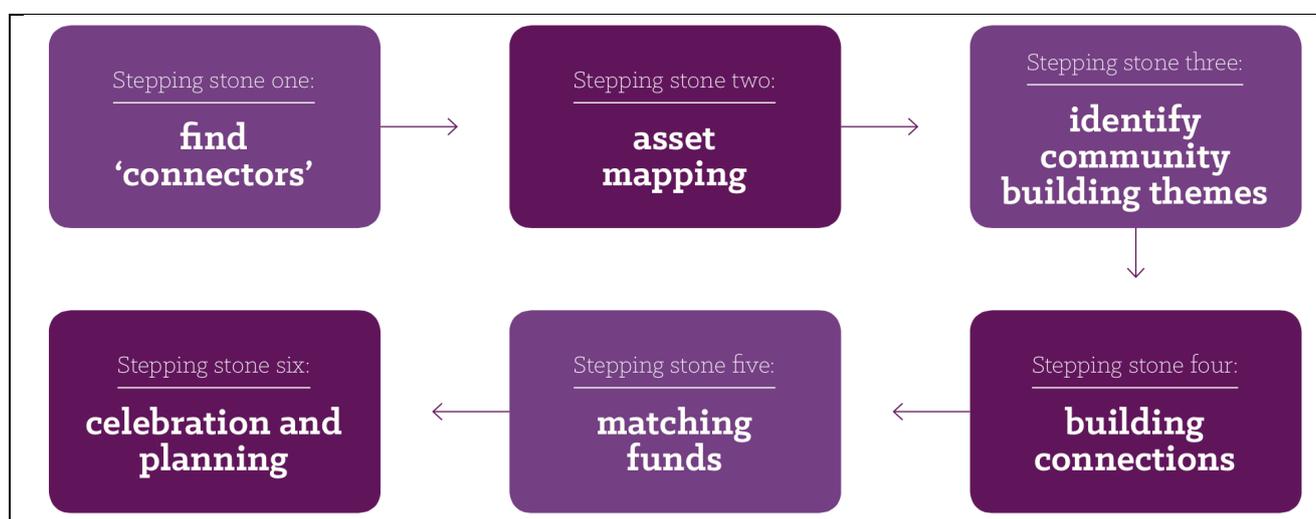
Source: Big Lottery Fund (2013), and Big Lottery Fund website [<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk>] "Search past grants"

2.5.3 These four projects had a variety of approaches, aims and ways of working. The elements which seems particularly aligned with the asset based concepts are given below:

- ❖ **The Gateway project** addresses an identified gap in services by engaging with families whose circumstances are being adversely affected by issues such as unemployment, poverty, substance misuse, or domestic violence, but who are not yet perceived as eligible for core statutory provision. One element is Family Mentors who will act as mentors/coaches supporting family members themselves to identify their needs and consider ways in which to address them. The project team will identify individuals with the potential to become volunteers, making a difference in their community, and giving something back. Volunteers may provide support to families, as buddies and advocates, or 'shadow tutors'.
- ❖ **Midlothian Sure Start's Empowering Families** project will take an asset-based approach to enable families with multiple risk factors take control of their situation and make positive changes. The programme will focus on families that have not yet been referred for child protection. From the details in the document the project seems to be professionally led but it is stated that an asset-based approach builds on Midlothian's Parenting and Family Support Strategy, ensuring parents and carers are at the heart of decision-making and solutions for their families.
- ❖ **Brighter Futures** supports children and their families who are recovering from the experience of domestic violence. The project is intended to build assets in the community through sharing of practice between larger and smaller partners – including reaching out to additional local grassroots organisations and training volunteers.
- ❖ **Croydon Family Power: Giving Children a Head Start** is asset-based and has 'universal' and 'targeted' elements. As part of Croydon's Asset-Based Community Development approach, the project will train 60 adult and child family connectors. These will develop new peer-led projects and social networks, as part of a 'community asset mapping' process that identifies and enhances local resources for more families. There are elements targeting harder to reach families, they will enable parents to navigate local services, brokering intensive support where needed and these will be delivered by six trained family navigators.

- 2.5.4 More information about the project in Croydon is given through a project report (Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development Pilot Project, 2014a). Figure 1 is a diagram of the overall approach used for asset development in this project. A number of methods were used in the project including: workshops, ideas fairs, a monthly community of practice, mentoring sessions, and Asset Maps (Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development Pilot Project, 2014b, pages 8 and 9). The terminology in this project is slightly different to that in the Family Connectors project in that **Community Builders** were appointed to identify **Connectors** who lived in the community and provide them with training support.
- 2.5.5 The outputs from the project are recorded as 77 connectors and also 77 community projects (Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development Pilot Project, 2014b, pages 10).

Figure 1 Six stepping stones model of asset based development



Source: (Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development Pilot Project. 2014a), page 9.

- 2.5.6 Unsworth R, et. al. (2011) report on a year-long process of action research by a community interest company in the UK called '**Leeds Love It Share It**' (LLISI). This project is more about research and understanding across a city than specifically trying to increase community development through an asset based approach in a neighbourhood. Nevertheless there are lessons of relevance. Their findings include:
- ❖ Realising potential: under-utilised assets. The under-utilised potential was seen across skills, social networks and land assets. The report notes that Richmond Hill lacked a community hub that could help facilitate, cohere and thicken social networks, develop social capital and strengthen community identity. (Some interviews for the Great Yarmouth Family Connectors project also commented that it did not have a *central* base in the neighbourhood).
 - ❖ Plugging the leaks: localising resource use and economic activity. This puts forward the advantages of using resources for the community within the community. The study

found that the community venues in one area - Richmond Hill - sustained 655 employees. However, only 26% were from the local area: mostly cleaners and cooks.

- 2.5.7 The Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2012) profiled the work of 19 projects in **Scotland** to illustrate how asset based approaches are currently being applied. The projects reviewed do not include either of the two projects in Scotland funded by the Big Lottery. Key activities are listed for the projects reviewed, and each is listed with a different activity. Examples of these include peer mentoring, traditional skills, home support, mental wellbeing, and family relationships and community connections.
- 2.5.8 The report includes a helpful short summary on each of the projects. These give more information about the purpose, their activities and whether these have changed over time. It also considers the extent to which the project's work can be considered asset based. The summaries look at the strengths of the projects and the challenges they face. There is also a section on how success is measured.
- 2.5.9 The conclusions of the review were that there was an overwhelming sense of support for asset based approaches for health improvement. The Glasgow Centre for Population Health considered that five main themes came from the research:
- ❖ **Balancing.** The case studies raise questions about how projects and initiatives, and statutory services, might offer greater flexibility by becoming more participant-led.
 - ❖ **Connecting.** Both the research literature and the findings from the study highlighted 'building connections' as a fundamental principle of asset based working. The research reinforced the importance of making and sustaining supportive connections between people and across organisations to maximise capacity, skills, knowledge and, crucially, a sense of the common good, to bring about positive change.
 - ❖ **Learning and earning.** The research sought to uncover evidence that asset based approaches improved health and reduced health inequalities. There was anecdotal evidence from the projects to support this. However, few projects had systematic evaluation and measurement plans in place (i.e. assessing the significance, worth or quality of their work) and so there was little hard evidence of impact.
 - ❖ **Empowering.** The research found projects to be focused not only on delivering short term outcomes or measurable impacts, but on equipping individuals with a set of core values, skills and abilities to manage and overcome future difficulties in their lives and crucially, to have a sense of worth and purpose.
 - ❖ **Being human.** The research uncovered a strong belief, amongst staff and participants, that mainstream services have lost an element of meaningful human interaction, becoming delivery focused and process driven.

2.5.10 The Children's Inclusion Partnership (CHIP) is an example of asset-based community development in north **Glasgow**² (Scottish Community Development Centre, 2011). CHIP was set up as a community development project linking families, children and communities. Its aim has been to help the community to make the most of its assets.

2.5.11 The following community assets were considered important in the area:

- ❖ A network of locally initiated community organisations which had formed in response to locally defined need
- ❖ Long-standing older community activists who were able to connect with younger generations
- ❖ Young adult activists who had grown up with an awareness of the effectiveness of collective community action
- ❖ Housing organisations with a strong commitment to the 'wider action' agenda and to local participation in their governance
- ❖ Partnership working between community groups, organisations and individuals
- ❖ Trusting relationships between the above
- ❖ External voluntary organisations with a long-term commitment to supporting local initiatives
- ❖ Buildings and spaces available for community use, including a community centre

2.5.12 CHIP was reviewed by Angus Wood, the Children's Service Manager from Barnardo's. In the published review the resources made available to CHIP for the project are not clear. However it was considered that CHIP had played a role in helping the community to make the most of its assets. The report notes that in 2009/10 CHIP had direct contact with 28 adults and 92 children. Many more people were engaged through the work of a number of locally based groups. It is not clear how CHIP had connected with these.

2.5.13 At the time of the review the following activities in CHIP were noted:

- ❖ Environmental work with children and families with a focus on bringing vacant and derelict land back into community use. The work is carried out in partnership with local youth organisations, housing providers and community groups.
- ❖ In pre-5s establishments, facilitating the participation of parents and children in improving their local 'micro environments'. This includes planning, fundraising and hands-on work.
- ❖ A photography-based, intergenerational 'living history' project which brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from a neighbourhood that has been through a large amount of change in recent years.

² The specific area is Possilpark, for more information see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Possilpark>

2.6 Examples thematic asset based community development projects in the UK

2.6.1 The previous section provides examples of asset based community development focused on particular areas. ABCD has also been used in what might be termed thematic approaches i.e. based on particular needs. This section gives some examples of these.

2.6.2 Fisher, B. (ed.) 2011 provides an introduction of community development to people working in health. The relevance of the review, for those working in health, are seen to be:

- ❖ The strong evidence that strong social networks protect people against the impact of stressors - mental or physical.
- ❖ Social networks have been shown to result in multiple beneficial outcomes, apart from health. These include improvements in crime rates and anti-social behaviour.
- ❖ The evidence seems clear that community development can improve community health through building social capital through building social networks.
- ❖ The evidence is clear that involvement of local people can make significant impact on the responsiveness of local services.

2.6.3 Health assets are taken to mean the resources that individuals and communities have at their disposal which protect against negative health outcomes and/or promote health status. The assets can be social, financial, physical, environmental or human resources: for instance education, employment skills, supportive social networks, or natural resources. Fisher's view is that asset based approaches complement the conventional model by:

- ❖ Identifying the range of protective and health promoting factors that act together to support health and well-being and the policy options required to build and sustain these factors.
- ❖ Promoting the population as a co-producer of health, rather than simply a consumer of health care services, and so reducing the demand on scarce resources.
- ❖ Strengthening the capacity of individuals and communities to realise their potential for contributing to health development.
- ❖ Contributing to more equitable and sustainable social and economic development and so the goals of other sectors.

2.6.4 Giuntoli, G., Karina K., and South. J. (2012) carried out an evaluation of the Altogether Better Asset Mapping in Sharrow and Firth Park, Sheffield. This explored a model by which trained Community *Health* Champions (CHC) were used to undertake an inventory of the physical and social assets³ linked to the health and well-being of their communities and neighbourhoods.

³ which can be also known as asset mapping

- 2.6.5 The exact role of the Community Health Champions is not clear in the report. One aim of the project was to build on the success of trained voluntary Altogether Better CHCs working in neighbourhoods with the poorest health. Two training days were held for the CHCs. While twelve attended the first training day only seven came to the second day and four stayed until the end of the programme.
- 2.6.6 The key findings from this research were that:
- ❖ Undertaking the asset mapping was a steep learning curve for most stakeholders and volunteers
 - ❖ The Community Health Champions were key for the development and successful completion of the Asset Mapping
 - ❖ Local events were a successful way to carry out asset mapping
 - ❖ Successful sharing of assets among local residents led to some promising stories on how asset mapping can lead to valued outcomes for the participants
 - ❖ Beyond the outcomes for the participants, running the Asset Mapping project led the delivery organisations to make some immediate changes in their approach to the public
- 2.6.7 Baker (2014) examines developing and implementing a robust asset-based approach in the context of public health. The undertaking of asset mapping on a city-wide basis highlighted a number of limitations due to the number of assets (for example the large number of community organisations or buildings). It is not clear how this project met many of the criteria of asset based community development as no community engagement is reported.
- 2.6.8 Best D. et al. (2013) provide, within the context of the national English Drugs Strategy, a case study of an initiative attempting to access and link “recovery champions”. The champions were seen at three levels:
- ❖ strategic: leaders such as service commissioners and senior managers
 - ❖ therapeutic: typically workers in specialist services who understand and embrace the philosophy of recovery
 - ❖ community: people already in recovery who will be encouraged to mentor and support others in their local communities
- 2.6.9 One of the underlying models for the approach was asset-based community development. This was translated into attempts to develop a core group (the recovery coalition), links to supportive and sympathetic workers and specialist services, and a map of the assets that could be tapped into across the area.
- 2.6.10 Fox (2013) reports on the wider application of asset-based development through a discussion document on “personalisation relational approaches” to social care and housing. This noted that ‘asset-based’ approaches are often highly cost-effective, because they work with and help sustain contributions from communities and from older people themselves, supporting rather than inadvertently replacing or undermining ‘real’

relationships (Fox, 2013, page 5).

2.7 Summary

- 2.7.1 Asset based community development is an approach which seeks to build on a community's own problem solving capability rather than taking a view that a community has "needs".
- 2.7.2 A community's assets take a number of forms. They can be social, financial, physical, environmental or human resources: for instance education, employment skills, supportive social networks, or natural resources. These assets are used through links between residents of areas through different networks including those from living in neighbourhoods, families, and those provided through existing local organisations.
- 2.7.3 A common starting element of asset based projects is the creation of a map of the assets of the community.
- 2.7.4 Work to improve a community's assets frequently involves supporting residents in an area to become better placed to provide their own support in the future. This can be seen as increasing a community's capacity.
- 2.7.5 In addition to supporting individuals by increasing their knowledge or skills an important part of asset-based development is increasing the networks which residents have access to. This is seen as increasing the support available to them.
- 2.7.6 A complementary approach in asset based community development is work to increase the number of opportunities that residents have to network.
- 2.7.7 Some projects concentrate on an area and then the residents in the area. Some projects are focused on specific types of residents, frequently families. Some approaches to asset based community development have the aim of the improvement of a community's assets to achieve an outcome, frequently better health.
- 2.7.8 Asset based development can be seen as cost effective. This approach is often through volunteers, they do not use "professional' employees.
- 2.7.9 Although there is reasonable agreement on what asset based development is, the literature review has not found many examples of how its success has been measured, other than through qualitative appraisals (i.e. the views of participants).

3 Context for Family Connector Project

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The purpose of this Chapter is to provide some information about the area in which the Family Connector project operates and also the project's history. The intention is to give some background to the project to enhance understanding of some of the points made in the interviews. It starts by giving an introduction to some contextual national Government policies.

3.2 Troubled Families Policy

3.2.1 An important part of the background is the national Troubled Families policy and programme, established by the Government in 2011⁴. The aim was to target action and intervention on those families most in need. A broad definition was those families who met 3 of the 4 following criteria, that they:

- ❖ Are involved in youth crime or anti-social behaviour
- ❖ Have children who are regularly truanting or not in school
- ❖ Have an adult on out of work benefits
- ❖ Cause high costs to the taxpayer

3.2.2 Another way of capturing this is recognition that “the moment some children are born their life chances are simply written off. From day one their lives are defined by the problems that surround them - drugs, alcohol, crime, mental illness and unemployment - they grow up in chaos and their own lives are chaotic”.⁵ Table 3 gives more detailed information on issues which can characterise Troubled Families.

3.2.3 The reasoning behind the policy was twofold. Firstly it was recognised that the current ways of addressing the Troubled Family's needs were not fully effective. The main factor was a lack of co-ordination between agencies - who each dealt with aspects separately and not in an effective or coordinated way. Troubled Families often have a whole host of agencies involved with them. This can bring problems as families become confused by overlapping professionals, assessments and appointments. It becomes harder to assess the progress of the family. The frequency of problems transmitted from one generation of the same family to another is cited as demonstrating that existing measures were not effective.

3.2.4 The second aspect of Troubled Families policy was the desire to move resources to deal with preventing problems rather than spending it on dealing with the effects or consequences of problems. Spending on helping families to solve and prevent problems in

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-troubled-families-turn-their-lives-around#actions>

⁵ Speech by the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, 17 October 2011. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/its-time-to-stop-leaving-problem-families-in-crisis>

the longer term included early intervention programmes such as Sure Start⁶, programmes addressing child protection (such as intensive family interventions) and mental health programmes (such as Multi-Systemic Therapy). Reactive spend was defined as money spent reacting to the problems the families caused. For example, spend on dealing with excluded pupils, the costs of taking children into care (such as fostering and residential care), the healthcare costs of alcohol misuse, welfare benefits and Accident & Emergency costs.

Table 3 Characteristics of Troubled Families

- Housing Issues
 - Family at risk of becoming homeless
 - Housing enforcement actions taken against family
 - Family has poor housing conditions
 - Family is homeless
- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), offending and crime issues
 - ASB of family members
 - Criminal convictions of family members/ex-offender
 - ASB enforcement actions taken against family
 - Children are at risk of offending
 - Children are offending
 - Adult is offending
- School exclusion/attendance problems
 - Children at risk of school exclusion/serious attendance problems
 - Children excluded from school
- Parenting and care issues
 - Poor parenting
 - History of social care referral
 - Relationship breakdown
 - Children at risk of going into care
 - Child Protection Plan is in place
 - Family includes a young person carer
- Domestic violence, substance misuse, and mental health issues
 - Family has domestic violence problems
 - At least one adult in the family has substance misuse problems
 - At least one adult in the family has mental health problems
 - At least one child in the family has substance misuse problems
 - At least one child in the family has mental health problems
- Employment, education, debt
 - Family is without paid employment
 - Family has serious issues with debt
 - Intergenerational worklessness

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013, The Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families, Annex A.

⁶ Sure Start has been defined as a programme which aims “to work with parents, carers and children to promote the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of children aged four and under, so that they are ready to flourish when they start school”. See: <http://www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3834>

- 3.2.5 It was estimated that there were 120,000 Troubled Families in England and that that £9 billion was spent annually on “Troubled Families” - which translated into an average of £75,000 per family each year. Of this money an estimated £8 billion was spent reacting to the problems these families have and cause and £1 billion was spent on helping families to solve and prevent problems in the longer term⁷.
- 3.2.6 The Troubled Families programme reported three basic models that areas were using to deliver the interventions needed to their families⁸:
- ❖ **Family Intervention:** larger families and/or those with very challenging behaviours and a multitude of issues require a very intense and persistent level of contact each week.
 - ❖ **Family Intervention Light:** smaller families and/or those with fewer needs, may mean it is possible to deliver an intensive intervention with a family but with higher case loads for family workers.
 - ❖ **Family Intervention Super Light:** in some areas, some families are allocated a ‘lead worker’ dedicated to them, but the worker continues to be based in and work from their existing service. In this way, the expertise of a very wide team is shared.

3.3 Government Policy on the Early Help Agendas

- 3.3.1 The Government’s policy on early help is exemplified by that on Early Intervention. This policy area seeks to produce benefits for children aged 0–3 and for older children up to 18. It is focused around the promotion of social and emotional development which can significantly improve mental and physical health, educational attainment and employment opportunities. Early Intervention can also help to prevent criminal behaviour (especially violent behaviour), drug and alcohol misuse and teenage pregnancy (Allen, G 2011, page xiii).
- 3.3.2 The rationale for Early Intervention investment is that many of the costly and damaging social problems in society are created because children are not given the right type of support in their earliest years, when they should achieve their most rapid development. (Allen, G 2011, page 3.)

⁷ Further information on the calculations is provided in Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013B, The Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/79377/20130208_The_Fiscal_Case_for_Working_with_Troubled_Families.pdf

⁸ Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, Working with Troubled Families: a guide to the evidence and good practice, page 39
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/66113/121214_Working_with_troubled_families_FINAL_v2.pdf

3.4 Background and aims of the Family Connectors⁹ Project

- 3.4.1 The Family Connectors project is built upon four years of a neighbourhood-based approach to service design in an urban Great Yarmouth neighbourhood¹⁰. This approach was realised through Den Life Changes - a 'life-skills' project run by local parents from a community house to offer informal peer support to other parents in need. The Den was run entirely by local residents and offered sessions on everything from cooking, budgeting, running a home and parenting through to using the network to offer support on more complex issues such as depression, drug and alcohol misuse, behaviour issues including anti-social behaviour and domestic violence¹¹.
- 3.4.2 What was observed in this project was that people were more likely to listen to peers than others, including those in more "professional" roles.
- 3.4.3 Den Life Changes were winners of the "Community Citizens of the Year" at the Norfolk Safer Community awards in June 2011.
- 3.4.4 The Den Life Changes provided examples of the benefits from people in the community who "spread the word". A specific example was given of how this worked in the tidal surge (flooding) of 2013/14. Some people who were linked to "the Den" encouraged each other to phone other people to spread the word of the flood and the need to evacuate. They were particularly able to connect with people who might be considered more vulnerable.
- 3.4.5 The aim of the Family Connectors project was to develop more formal arrangements which would help this activity be carried out more often and for other reasons. These roles and benefits were seen as assisting other programmes and policies - of which Troubled Families was an important one.
- 3.4.6 From the background described, resources for the Family Connectors project was secured through a bid to the East of England Local Government Association's (EELGA). EELGA had established funding designed to promote local innovation which would compliment the national Troubled Families agenda.
- 3.4.7 The bid to EELGA was not for another "service" to be delivered to families meeting relevant criteria. It was about facilitating and nurturing natural connections and building social capital within a community to better provide enhanced resilience and mutual support for those families facing crisis or in turmoil, recognising those families as part of a broader network of relationships within communities.

⁹ The terms Family Connector and Community Connector are considered interchangeable

¹⁰ <http://www.eelga.gov.uk/innovation-programme/troubled-families.aspx>

¹¹ <http://www.norfolk.police.uk/newsandevents/newsstories/2012/july/thedenlifechanges.aspx>

3.4.8 Bids to EELGA were assessed using the following criteria. These were that the project should:

- ❖ Demonstrate an innovative new service or approach to developing a broader strategy for helping troubled families, for example by focusing on prevention (beyond early years), wider support services and building community capacity
- ❖ AND/OR Demonstrate an innovative approach to scaling up effective interventions
- ❖ Demonstrate relevant multi-agency working
- ❖ Have widespread application and not be geographically restricted in any way
- ❖ Demonstrate cashable efficiencies or increased productivity and there must be evidence of a measurable Return on Investment

3.4.9 An underlying principle of the role of Family Connectors was to build community capacity to better sustain future support needs e.g. the creation of family clubs, neighbour sharing and bulk-buying schemes and social activities. The aim of the Family Connectors was to support families in need by connecting them with other families, their community or appropriate services.

3.4.10 The summary provided by EELGA was:

“The programme builds upon four years of a neighbourhood- based approach to service design in an urban Great Yarmouth neighbourhood – Southtown. The Den Life Changes - a ‘life-skills’ project run by local parents from a community house to offer informal peer support to other parents in need was featured as a national case study by the Centre for Social Justice and as a successful model for early intervention building on an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. The project is seeking to develop this model to recognise the value of growing and nurturing a community asset-based approach by developing the role of Community Connectors.”¹²

3.4.11 The funding secured from EELGA (in March 2014) was £24,250.

3.5 Location of the Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House area and neighbourhoods

3.5.1 The Family Connector project operates within the Local Authority District of Great Yarmouth and the town of Great Yarmouth¹³. Within Yarmouth it has been established to operate in the area of Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House. Figure 2 is a map of the area.

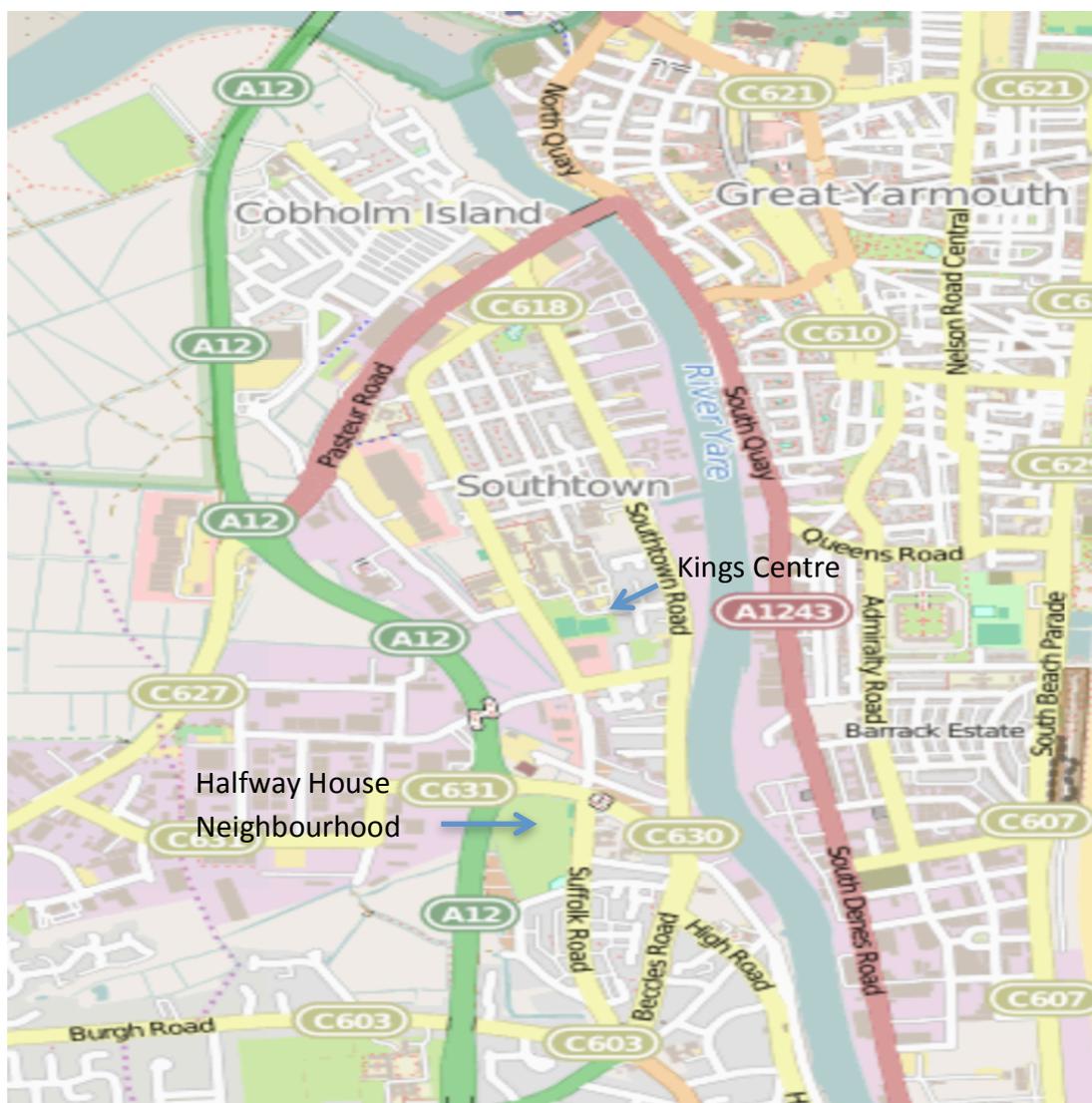
3.5.2 The whole area is situated between the River Yare and the A12, separated from Great Yarmouth town centre by the river, with the crossing over the Haven Bridge. The town centre is about 1.7 miles from Halfway House (the part of the area furthest away). There are two major roads to cross on that journey.

¹² <http://www.eelga.gov.uk/innovation-programme/troubled-families.aspx>

¹³ Also known as Yarmouth which will be the term used in this report.

- 3.5.3 Residents interviewed were clear that central Yarmouth (and facilities there) was a significant distance away in terms of the time taken to get there. This meant that facilities within the neighbourhood were easier to use and access, for example in terms of looking after children while the parent is working.
- 3.5.4 The area covered by the project can be divided into three: Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House Halfway House. The Cobholm neighbourhood is that in the north; the triangle bounded by the A12, the River Yare and Pasteur Road (A1243). The Cobholm Primary Academy is located within Cobholm¹⁴.

Figure 2 Map of Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House



Source: © OpenStreetMap contributor

¹⁴ http://www.inspirationtrust.org/our_schools/cobholm_primary_academy/

3.5.5 South of Cobholm is Southtown. This is similarly bounded to the west by the A12, by the River Yare to the east and by Pasteur Road in the north. Its southern boundary is William Adams Way. Within the Southtown neighbourhood are the Southtown Primary School¹⁵, Edward Worlledge Community Primary School¹⁶ and Great Yarmouth College¹⁷.

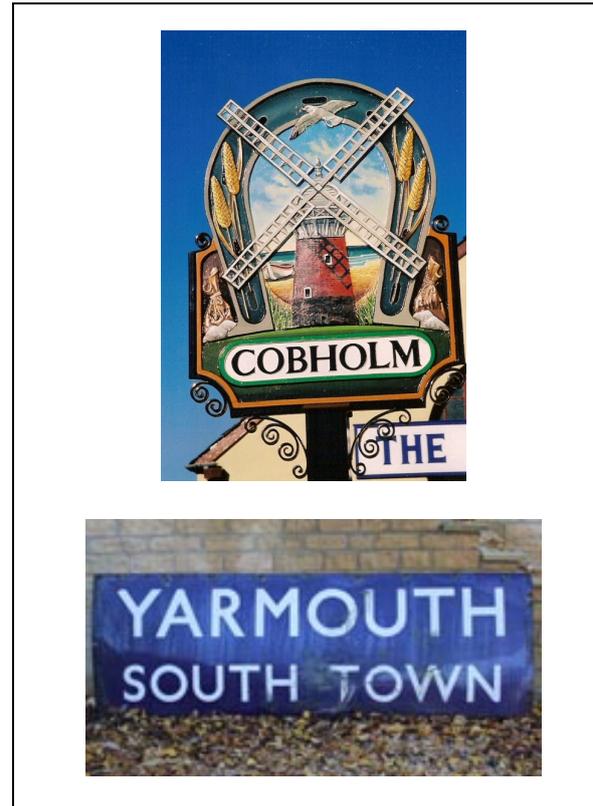
Figure 3 Images from Cobholm and Southtown¹⁸

3.5.6 The southernmost part of the area is known by some as Halfway House. It is the area bounded by the A12 to the west, Beccles Road to the east, William Adams Way to the north and Burgh road to the south. Southtown Common is at the northern edge of this area with football and cricket pitches, a pavilion and other facilities.

3.5.7 The division of the area covered by the Family Connectors project into three neighbourhoods was not questioned by any of the people interviewed and was positively referred to by many. It is an interesting perspective to note that the residents interviewed were asked to give a name to the area they lived in, and the following were put forward:

- ❖ Bradwell
- ❖ Cobholm
- ❖ Gorleston / Halfway House
- ❖ Southtown

3.5.8 There is a relationship between these names given by residents as to where they lived and those adopted for the project as a whole. Though there is not an exact match.



¹⁵ <http://www.southtownprimaryschool.com>

¹⁶ <http://www.edwardworlledge.norfolk.sch.uk>

¹⁷ <http://www.gyc.ac.uk>

¹⁸ Sources: a) <http://www.picturesofengland.com/England/Norfolk/Cobholm/pictures/1101696> B) <http://www.weatherjackwx.co.uk> C) <http://www.berneyarms.co.uk>

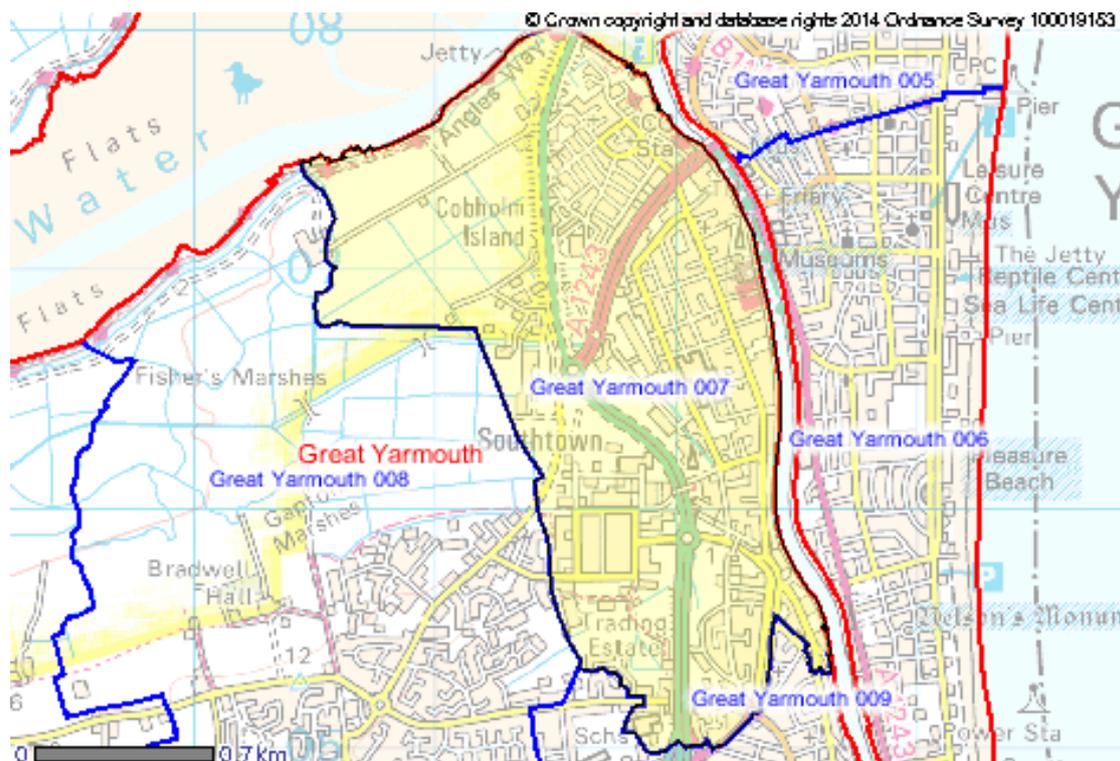
3.6 Characteristics of the Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House area

- 3.6.1 The population of the area as a whole (Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House) was 7,100 in according to the 2011 Census¹⁹. Figure 4 shows the area for which the figures in the section refer. It matches closely to that in which the Family Connectors operate (and which is shown in Figure 2).
- 3.6.2 The population had an average age of 32: younger than the population than Great Yarmouth (43 yrs) or England (39 yrs). To illustrate this, 24 % of the population of the Cobholm, Southtown, and House were aged under 16 in 2011 while this was 18% for Great Yarmouth and 19% for England.
- 3.6.3 The Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House area has a higher proportion of families who have dependent children²⁰: just over half of the families (52%) have at least one dependent child. This compares with 40% for Great Yarmouth. And in Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House just over one in ten families (11%) have a child who is aged under 5.
- 3.6.4 Figure 5 shows the proportion of households in the area which are deprived, according to information from the 2011 Census of population. Different aspects (dimensions) of deprivation are considered through:
- ❖ Employment (any member of a household not a full-time student is either unemployed or long-term sick)
 - ❖ Education (no person in the household has at least level 2 education, and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student)
 - ❖ Health and disability (any person in the household has general health 'bad or very bad' or has a long term health problem), and
 - ❖ Housing (Household's accommodation is ether overcrowded, with an occupancy rating -1 or less, or is in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating).

¹⁹ 2011 Census, table KS102EW

²⁰ Defined as aged 0 – 15 in a household (whether or not in a family) or aged 16 – 18 in full- time education

Figure 4 Map of census area for background information



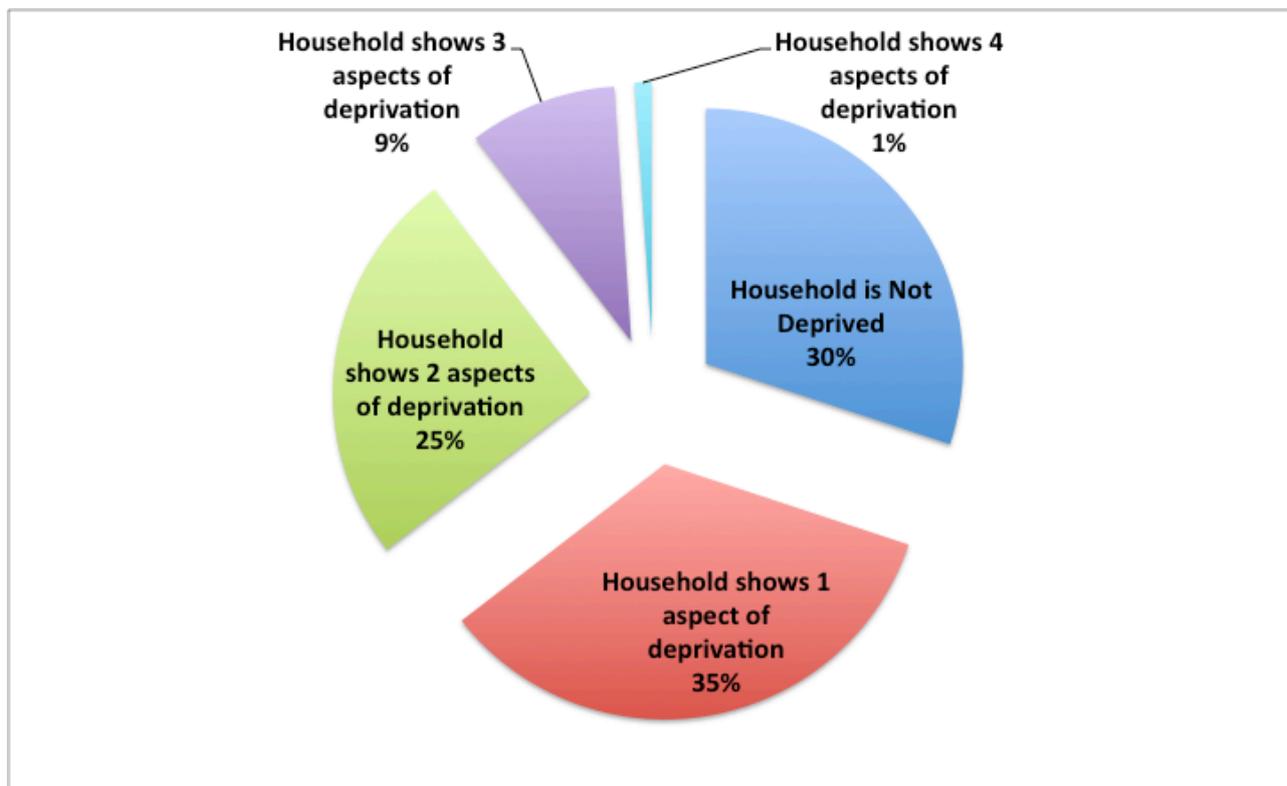
Source: Office for National Statistics, Great Yarmouth 007 (Super Output Area Middle Layer)

- 3.6.5 In the area 70% of the households are considered deprived by these measures. This is slightly higher than that for Great Yarmouth as a whole where 67% would be considered deprived. In England the comparison is lower: 58% of households would be considered deprived.
- 3.6.6 One in ten (10.4%) of the households in the area experience deprivation in either three of four of the above dimensions. The proportion in Great Yarmouth, at 7.6%, is lower. Again, the level in England as a whole is also lower, 5.7%). This information is shown in Figure 5.
- 3.6.7 Another way of considering deprivation is through using the latest index of multiple deprivation (IMD) for England (2010)²¹. All of the Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House area is in the worst 25% of deprived areas in England. The Cobholm neighbourhood is in the most deprived 10% of areas²².

²¹ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2010>

²² The lower super output area 007D which includes areas south of what might be considered Cobholm (to the east and west of Southtown), is ranked 2,173 out of the 32,482 lower super output areas in England, as defined in 2001, and where 1 is the most deprived.

**Figure 5 Proportion of households considered deprived
in Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House**



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census, QS119EW.

3.7 Community Development Infrastructure

3.7.1 As well as giving very brief descriptions of where the areas are and a few aspect of the people who live there, it is helpful to have some information about what might be called the “community development infrastructure”. This includes local residents, community groups, youth clubs, voluntary organisations, schools, and other providers of statutory services. The reason for drawing attention to this is that the strength of these is one of the factors which many of the interviewees felt was important in the work of the Family Connectors project. And something which should be taken into account if anything similar were being established in another area.

3.7.2 Great Yarmouth Borough Council support three Neighbourhood Boards in the borough’s urban areas to enable local residents to shape the neighbourhoods in which they live by working closely with the Borough Council and other partners - such as the Police, Health Services and the County Council²³. There are three boards, one of which - Make it Happen - covers the neighbourhoods of Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House (see Figure 7 for a diagram). This is the where the Family Connector project operates.

²³ <http://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/community/neighbourhoods-communities/index.htm>

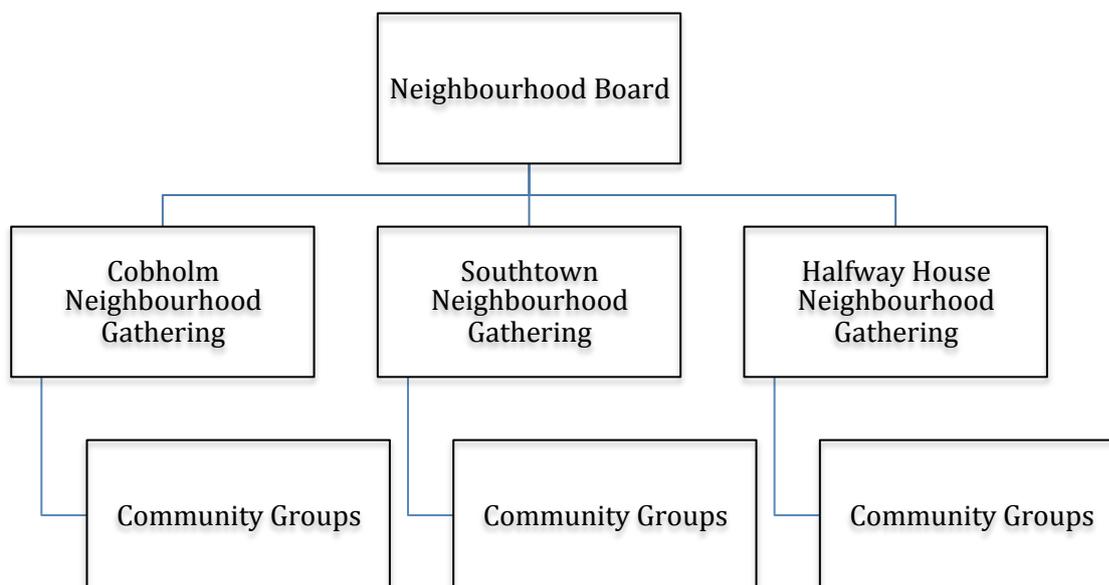
Figure 6 Make it Happen in Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House



Source: Great Yarmouth Borough Council

<http://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/community/neighbourhoods-communities/make-it-happen/index.htm>

Figure 7 Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House, neighbourhood gatherings



3.7.3 In this area there are three neighbourhood gatherings: one for each of Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House. These are informal monthly gatherings, intended to be opportunities for local residents to get together to discuss things that are a priority to them in the neighbourhood. The discussions from each of these are brought together in the bi-monthly Neighbourhood Board meetings.

3.7.4 From the minutes of the Neighbourhood Board meetings held on 2nd October 2014 and 3rd December 2014, the Board has 16 members: Councillors and officers from Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Norfolk County Council, residents, the Police, and the Health East Clinical Commissioning Group.

3.7.5 Table 4 shows events and initiatives discussed at Make it Happen Neighbourhood Board in October, December 2014 and February 2015, giving an indication of the number and variety of events discussed.

Table 4 Events and Initiatives considered by the Make it Happen Neighbourhood Board

C Card work on Southtown Common
Carols on the Common
Cobholm Community Garden
Cobholm Family Friday Parent and Toddler Group
Community Glossens
Cuppa on the Common
EMA Group
Evening Gatherings
Heart Start
Jobs for January
Just the Job
Norfolk Says No Coffee Morning
Police and Crime Commissioner Grant at Claydon
Rendezvous Craft Club

Sources: Agendas of Make it Happen Neighbourhood Board, October 2014, December 2014, February 2015

4 Performance management information from the Family Connectors project

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section looks at performance as measured *by* the Family Connectors project. It starts by explaining how the information is collected and interpreted. It then looks at the number of benefits measured with performance indicators. Finally there are three case studies collected by the project and which demonstrate another way of showing benefits delivered through the project.

4.2 Quantitative measures of performance

4.2.1 The Family Connectors project has established a set of 11 performance measures to help assess the impact of the project. These look at what would be considered positive results for families or members of families and which might result from the work of Family Connectors.

4.2.2 The attribution of families or family members to the indicators is based on the (written) recording of conversations with people in the area who the Family Connectors have met (and who live in the area). There is a notebook for each Family Connector in which the conversations are recorded (usually at the end of the day). From these conversations there is then a process of assigning the feedback to the measures of performance.

4.2.3 A number of examples are shown to illustrate how the records of the conversations are assigned to performance indicators. The list of performance indicators used is shown in Table 5. And below are examples of four conversations from which the benefits were attributed to the performance measures.

Example 1 Positive benefit to family and attribution to indicator

Conversation	Indicator(s) allocated to: The family or family member would ..
"Jane works nights. She has three children including two one year old twins. She would be helped by being able to get them into a nursery so she can have a short rest. The Family Connector spoke to a nursery and found they had places. She forwarded this information to Jane."	1.1 report they have a larger social network
	4.1 have accessed appropriate services that have enhanced their families' well being
	4.2 report their knowledge on where to find/how to access/ confidence in approaching relevant services has increased
	5.1 ...have joined a group, club or team in the Southtown area or surrounding areas

Source: Family Connector's project, performance reporting notes. The name of the resident has been changed

Example 2 Positive benefit to family and attribution to indicator

Conversation	Indicator(s) allocated to: The family or family member would ..
At a coffee morning the Family Connector noticed a lady with a toddler who was sitting alone. She had moved into Yarmouth two weeks ago and didn't know anyone, the Family Connector invited her to sit at a table with other Mums.	1.1 report they have a larger social network

Source: Family Connector's project, performance reporting notes

Example 3 Positive benefit to family and attribution to indicator

Conversation	Indicator(s) allocated to: The family or family member would ..
The person told the Family Connector that they had been directed to go to the Citizen's Advice Bureaux to find out about financial help she could get. The Family Connector told her about another organisation which would be able to provide her with more information connected with the neighbourhood.	4.1 have accessed appropriate services that have enhanced their families' well being
	4.2 report their knowledge on where to find/how to access/ confidence in approaching relevant services has increased

Source: Family Connector's project, performance reporting notes

Example 4 Positive benefit to family and attribution to indicator

Conversation	Indicator(s) allocated to: The family or family member would ..
Attended East Norfolk 6 th Form volunteering fair. Spoke to 39 young people, took contact details and put them in touch with local groups that needed volunteers	2.1 ...have accessed educational courses or activities that enhance life skills or employability
	7.1 ...have shown that they recognise their own strengths
	7.2 ...have put their strengths and skills to a new use

Source: Family Connector's project, performance reporting notes

4.3 Results from quantitative performance measurement

4.3.1 Table 5 shows the indicators and the numbers achieved by 2nd February 2015 (from the project's start in April 2014). These are also shown in Figure 8.

4.3.2 The decision on what conversations to include and which indicators to assign the effects to is made by the Neighbourhood Development Officer and the Neighbourhood Manager. The robustness to this process is demonstrated in that not every conversation "recorded" is assigned to a performance measures.

- 4.3.3 The results shown in Table 5 are not a count only of the number of families or family members where there has been an impact - as one person can be regarded as having more than one benefit. The count can be considered as the **number of measured impacts** from the Family Connectors. 169 impacts were recorded in the 10 months from the start of the project. Although monthly data has not been reviewed, it would not be unreasonable to expect more impacts to be made (per month) as the Connectors gained experience, settled into their roles and changed what they did to concentrate on more effective work²⁴.
- 4.3.4 The impact experienced most often (39 times) is that the family or family member “would feel more confident getting encouragement, advice and support from friends and the community, both generally and/or in the event of a change in circumstance”. Figure 9 shows the number benefits from each of the indicators. The five indicators (1.2, 4.2, 1.1, and 5.1) with the greatest number of benefits together account for 105 or 62 % of the total.

Table 5 Performance and indicators used by the Family Connectors project

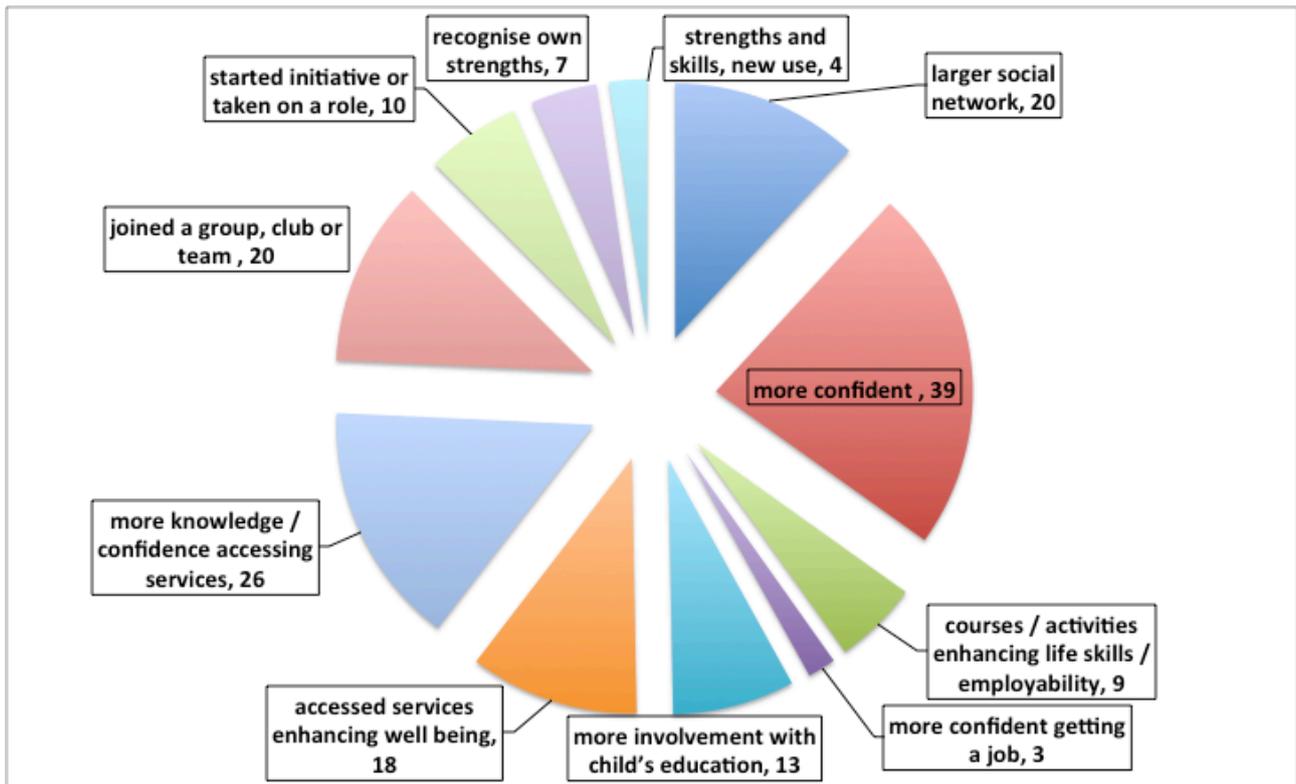
Indicator: Would family or family members...	Achieved by 2nd February 2015
1.1 ...report they have a larger social network	20
1.2 ...would feel more confident getting encouragement, advice and support from friends and the community, both generally and/or in the event of a change in circumstance	39
2.1 ...have accessed educational courses or activities that enhance life skills or employability	9
2.2 ...feel more confident about their chances of getting a job	3
3.1 ...have increased their involvement with their child’s education, either at school and/or through extra- curricular activities	13
4.1 ...have accessed appropriate services that have enhanced their families’ well being	18
4.2 ...report their knowledge on where to find/how to access/ confidence in approaching relevant services has increased	26
5.1 ...have joined a group, club or team in the Southtown area or surrounding areas	20
6.1 ...have started their own initiative or taken on a role in a current one (e.g. a project, activity, club, team, charity, business..)	10
7.1 ...have shown that they recognise their own strengths	7
7.2 ...have put their strengths and skills to a new use	4
Total	169

Source: Family Connectors project

Note: the total is not the total number of families benefiting as any family may experience more than one benefit.

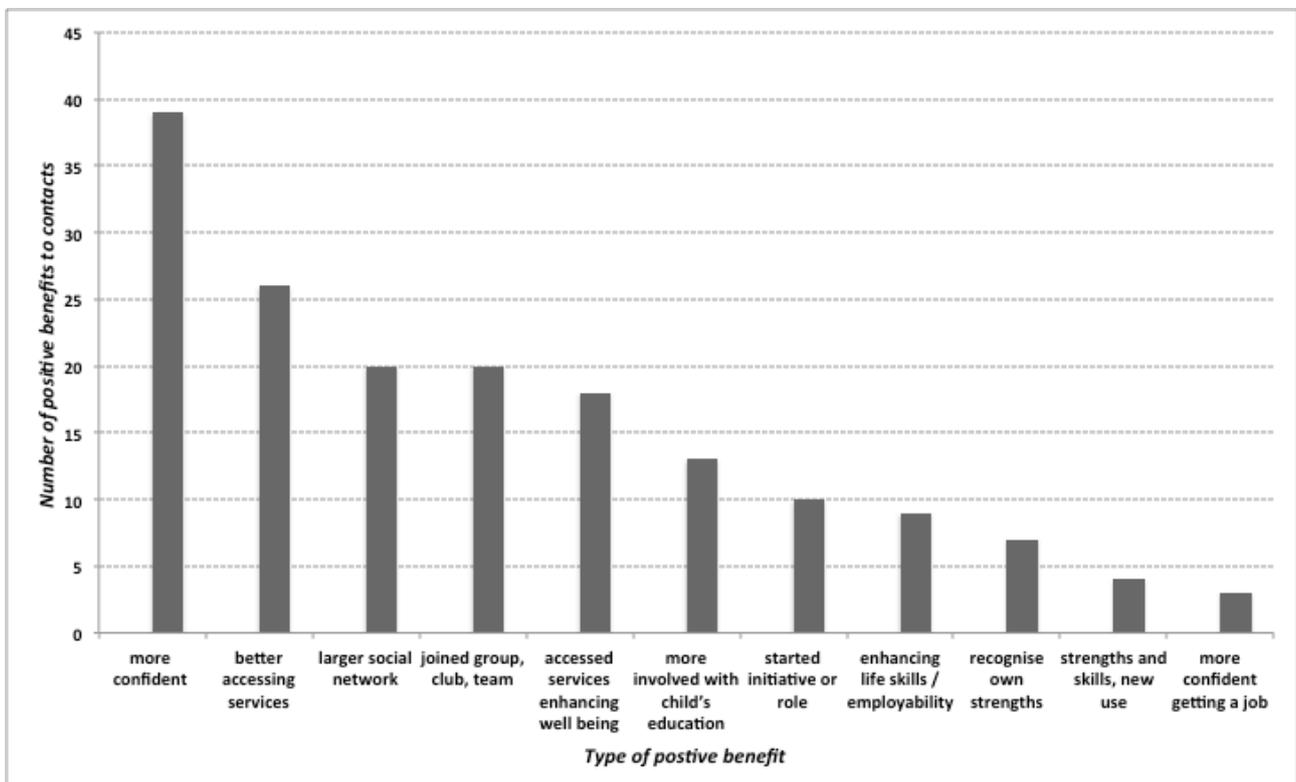
²⁴ The flexible approach was picked up by a number of interviewees

Figure 8 Performance on indicators used by Family Connectors project



Source: Family Connectors project

Figure 9 Number of positive benefits to contacts, by type of benefit



Source: Family Connectors project

4.4 Quantitative performance measures – discussion

4.4.1 For any quantitative measure of performance there will be reasons why it might not either measure all the benefits or may overestimate some benefits. Applying this to the quantitative measures used by the Family Connectors project and how they are recorded shows a number of factors that might result in either underestimation or overestimation of the benefits.

4.4.2 The following are reasons why the performance measures may not capture all the benefits:

- ❖ The family or family member benefitted but the Family Connector has not had a conversation with the person to be able receive that information. There might be many reasons for this, for example the family or person might have moved away from the area (possibly using information provided through a Family Connector).
- ❖ The conversation took place but is not recorded or not recorded in sufficient detail to allow it to be allocated to a performance measure. Examination of the conversation records showed occasions where it was likely that a benefit might have been delivered but, since this was not explicitly stated or recorded, it was not counted as such.
- ❖ The benefit happened but in the conversation the beneficiary did not pass on all the information needed to assign what happened to a performance measure.
- ❖ Direct contact with a Family Connector is only one part of the process of delivering benefits. If their actions raise the capacity of some people then this in turn might have beneficial impact on other residents. For example, if a person has started their own initiative or club (performance measure 6.1) then this might allow other residents to join the club (performance measure 5.1). This would be a benefit from the Family Connectors project but would not be directly attributable to the project through simple conversations.
- ❖ There might be a sequential benefit for the same person, but at a later time. So one person might develop a larger social network (performance measure 1.1) and this might result in a later increase in their knowledge on where to find/how to access / confidence in approaching relevant services (performance measure 4.1). It would be difficult to record the second effect.
- ❖ The time between action and effect may make it difficult to record the attribute within the lifetime of the project. As a simple example, if one activity promotes an annual event it might be that a person who has not heard of it cannot attend in the first year but goes 12 months later.

4.4.3 There are some factors which could result in over estimation of the benefits:

- ❖ Misattribution of effects. This is intended to simply mean that the effect happened but the reason for it was not directly attributable to the Family Connectors. For example a resident might have heard about a club independently of the Family Connectors but, when talking to a Family Connector, reports that they have joined the club and this is recorded as being due to the Family Connector.
- ❖ Double counting. This can be the simple counting of the same effect twice. It could be that the same resident meets two Family Connectors and repeats a similar story and this is not picked up when the conversations are assessed.

4.5 Family Connectors case studies

4.5.1 As another way of demonstrating the impact of the Family Connectors, the project has themselves documented three case studies (shown below).

4.5.2 These illustrate the benefits to three people, two are mothers with children and one is an elderly resident. Contact was made directly and also through the intervening promotion of an existing facility.

Case Study 1 Eve

Eve is a parent with three children that attend nursery and primary school. One of Eve's daughters has ongoing health needs and she has to attend a specialist clinic to receive treatment for her. Eve is currently unemployed and has a father with health needs; Eve regularly buys shopping for her dad and attends Drs and hospital appointments with him.

Eve met Jade at the school gates and got chatting. Jade and Eve spoke about attending a new walking group together and the regular monthly neighbourhood gatherings hosted in her community. Eve attended the gathering and began walking once a week with the walking group. On the regular walks Eve revealed that she had recently completed a basic accountancy course, and that she was keen to find somewhere to use her skills. Jade connected Eve into the local community centre that was looking for new treasurer.

Eve joined the community centre committee, and continued to meet with Jade to discuss other ideas for projects in the local community. Eve was keen to launch a parent and toddler group and with Jade and Priya's help she was able to apply for some funding and launch a new group. The group was has since moved to he local primary school and is linked to the school aims of developing a new Parent Teacher Association.

Eve has grown in confidence and is much happier to speak out, and to give her opinion. Since being on the Community Centre Committee she has taken part in review meetings with the Borough Council and has been liaising directly with the school about toddler group. This boost in confidence has led to Eve developing a business plan for a Social Enterprise and seeking advice, independently of Make It Happen, on how to progress this.

Source: Family Connectors project, names have been changed to preserve anonymity

Case Study 2 Megan

Megan is a retired resident in her 70s with children and grandchildren. She lives alone and has increasingly felt isolated and lacking in friends.

The Family Connectors widely promoted the Family Summer Holiday Activity Craft Klub (SHACK) on social media, with posters and with leaflets in the book bags of all children in the three local primary schools. The SHACK is a “stay and play” club that runs for two days each week in the summer holidays. It is £1 per child for the whole day and children are provided with a wide range of activities including crafts, sports, dance, trips and bush craft activities.

Meg attended the Family Summer Holiday Activity Craft Klub (SHACK) with her grandchildren and met some new residents and chatted to Jane. Jane introduced her to a local active resident called Jean who was happy to talk about the other groups going on in the local area.

As a result Megan began to attend the Rendezvous Craft Club on a Wednesday morning with Jean and Jane. Meg has become a key volunteer at the club, offering ideas for crafts and helping to serve tea and biscuits. Since attending the Rendezvous club Megan has a bigger group of friends and a regular activity to look forward to. This has reduced her isolation and has increased her overall wellbeing. She is noticeably happier and more active in her local community.

Megan has also become a regular face at the SHACK holiday club, and has taken her grandchildren to the Christmas Party and the October Half term Halloween event. This has given her an affordable way to occupy her grandchildren, but has also provided a way for Megan to bond and enjoy structured positive activities together.

Source: Family Connectors project, names have been changed to preserve anonymity

Case Study 3 Bev

Bev has two children at Primary school. She is a single parent and lives in the Make It Happen area.

Bev was unemployed and struggling with her finances. Her payments on her house were hard to find and she was stressed about money. One of her Children –Tyrone has behavioural difficulties and is currently being assessed for ASD. Bev increasingly felt isolated and begun to experience early signs of mental ill health.

Bev was supported by one of the Family Connectors. She accessed information and support from DIAL who helped her claim for benefits she didn't know she was entitled to. This extra money meant that she has been able to maintain her mortgage payments and worry less about finances.

Bev also began attending a weekly coffee morning run by the connectors, where she has spoken to other parents about her situation and gained new friendships. This weekly opportunity to talk to others has reduced Bev's isolation and has increased her feeling of wellbeing. In addition, she has attended the local low cost summer holiday activity club with her children. This has resulted in her children finding new friends and Bev being able to spend quality time with them.

Since working with the Family Connectors, Bev has applied to volunteer for a local charity where she hopes to develop skills that will help her look for work in the future. She has also accessed support from the Target Opportunity service and revised her CV and begun applying for suitable jobs.

The Family Connectors see Bev at least once a week and have also been able to help her access local schemes such as Computers for Carers.

Source: Family Connectors project, names have been changed to preserve anonymity

4.5.3 The benefits to the residents shown through these case studies include:

- Reduction in isolation e.g. new friends, membership of new social groups
- Increased confidence e.g. job applications to positions which would not have been considered previously
- Improved physical well being e.g. through physical exercise
- Additional resources for the individual acquired e.g. claiming of benefits entitled to
- Additional skills and experience for the individual e.g. development of a business plan, re-writing of CV
- Greater involvement by which others in the community can benefit (e.g. setting up and involvement groups and activities)
- Impact on family as a whole e.g. quality time with children, grandchildren taken to community club children finding new friends

4.5.4 Information from the case studies can start to indicate indicative value for money from the project. For example in the case of Bev, it could be inferred that the work of the Family Connectors has prevented or at least helped to prevent repossession of her house with consequential emergency housing costs. An approximate cost for this was reported to Clackmannanshire Council as being £13,000 (Head of Housing and Community Safety, 2013, p 78).

4.5.5 Another way of drawing attention to the potential impact of work by the Family Connectors is that the average cost of a conventional “intervention” to assist a family, based on costs in Essex, would be around £16,000 (Department for Communities and Local Government. 2013B. Page 21).

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 The performance information from the Family Connectors project is collected in a robust way. A number of different benefits are recorded and there is a way of doing this that would be sufficiently replicable in other projects to allow for comparison.

4.6.2 As the next Chapter shows, many of the people interviewed about the project had the view that what it was set up to achieve was intrinsically hard to measure.

4.6.3 One of the aims of the project was the prevention (of more serious events). Standard performance management approaches focus on counting things that **have happened**. To some extent prevention can be measured by looking at the events which it is hoped to prevent (for example unemployment or ill health). But these might increase due to outside events. For example, in Great Yarmouth unemployment might increase if the decline in oil prices led to fewer oil or gas related jobs (a significant local industry). Prevention is difficult to measure without a similar area or group of people to make a comparison with.

- 4.6.4 Although the aim of the Family Connectors project was to reduce serious problems, one impact might be to increase some activity that in general it would be hoped people would not need or do. For example, certain benefits might be available to support families paying energy bills if they can't afford this. Giving information about schemes like these is something done by the Family Connectors. So while in general it would be hoped that fewer people would need to take up such schemes, one result of the Family Connectors could be to help more people eligible for the schemes to use them, so increasing take up.
- 4.6.5 There are some simple additional measures of performance that other projects have used and could be used by the Family Connectors project. These would include:
- ❖ Number of events attended
 - ❖ Number of leaflets etc. distributed
 - ❖ Number of groups supported and any changes in the numbers attending these after the support was given
- 4.6.6 These measures would be about the process and not fundamentally about the outcomes. Nevertheless they would provide information about the activity of the Family Connectors and this can be important for organisations providing funding.

4.7 Conclusions

- 4.7.1 This Chapter has reviewed performance information collected and provided by the Family Connectors project. This has been both quantitative measures and also more qualitative information.
- 4.7.2 It is recognised that the full impact of a project such as the Family Connectors is inherently hard to measure.
- 4.7.3 The basis for the performance measures recorded by the project comes from notes of conversations made by the Family Connectors. What is in these conversations is then assessed to see whether it can be matched to a benefit of the project.
- 4.7.4 Not every conversation is matched to a benefit and the process can be seen to have robustness through this.
- 4.7.5 Individual families can experience more than one benefit.
- 4.7.6 It is clear that the performance measures used are likely to undercount the benefits experienced by families in the area.
- 4.7.7 The performance information recorded by the project provides measures which are as good as those used by other projects as seen in the literature review.
- 4.7.8 There are some simple additional measure which could be introduced to provide additional information on what the Family Connectors do.

4.7.9 The next Chapter records information from a number of people interviewed for their views on the Family Connectors project. This allowed information which would not routinely be collected to be used for the impact assessment.

5 Interviews with stakeholders

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The purpose of this chapter is to summarise views put forward in the interviews held as part of the impact assessment. It starts by explaining how the interviews were carried out and the safeguards that were put in place to allow those interviewed to give their opinion.
- 5.1.2 The next section summarises the views expressed by the interviewees on any strengths they saw from the Family Connectors project. The Chapter then goes on to capture the relationships between the project and the Troubled Families work. These relationships were part of the successful bid for funding. The evidence is then reviewed on whether the project achieved its stated aims or whether it achieved any unstated aims. Finally the Chapter deals with whether the project presented good value for money.

5.2 The conduct of the interviews

- 5.2.1 In total 19 interviews were held with 26 people to contribute to the impact assessment of the Family Connectors project. The names of those interviewed are given in Appendix 1 People interviewed for the assessment.
- 5.2.2 The interviews were held between 4th February 2015 and 17th February. Two people were “interviewed” more than once, simply to pick up on issues not covered in the first interview.
- 5.2.3 Nine of the interviews were held face to face, and 10 were held by telephone. Of the interviews held face-to-face 6 were with more than one person. These were where two or three people were interviewed at the same time. Where the interviews were held with more than one person it was made clear to those interviewed in the group that they did not have to agree. The views of all the participants in group interviews was encouraged by prompts to any who were not expressing views as directly as others.
- 5.2.4 The interviews were on discussions around four issues:
- The interviewees’ experience of the impact of the Family Connectors project
 - How the Family Connectors project operated – things it had done well and ways in which it might be improved
 - If the project was implemented in another area then what might be the issues to consider
 - If the resources allocated to the Family Connectors project were available again whether they should be used for a similar project or used for something else

5.2.5 An essential part of the process of assessing the impact of the project was the statement made at the start of the interview that views would not be directly attributed to the individuals who made them unless the interviewer made a direct request to the individual for permission to do this and this request was agreed. This was to allow those interviewed to express any views they might have.

5.3 The strengths of the project

5.3.1 The project has connected well with the local communities. This was the overwhelming view of the residents interviewed who also gave positive examples of the impact of the Connectors project.

5.3.2 The Connectors have developed links with existing organisations (e.g. clubs or societies). These have been supported in a number of ways including: practical support at events, publicity and communication, and handling administrative aspects critical to running a group.

5.3.3 A key factor aiding this has been the Family Connectors having and gaining knowledge of existing activities in the area. As one interviewee said: “you can’t signpost people to an activity if you don’t know about it”.

5.3.4 One strength of the project has been the flexibility in adapting the way that it has worked to focus on what has worked well. Two things that were tried in building up connections were “meeting Mums at the school gate” and also trying to build connections at locations such as bus stops. When these were seen to be not as successful as anticipated the emphasis was changed to working with existing structures such as events and meetings. Action was also taken to build new networks either by establishing some new meetings (such as a coffee morning set up by one Connector) or by encouraging or supporting organisations to set up new meetings or groups (for example working with a school to build the recognition that a Parent Teacher Association would add value to school and community links). The help for groups has included researching what the expenses of new activity might be and helping to access funding that the organisers did not know about.

5.3.5 The work of the Connectors has increased the number of people attending events. One particular group they have added their support to has been the Family Summer Holiday Activity Craft Klub (SHACK). Over the period of the project this has moved from having between 10 and 20 children attending to between 30 and 40.

5.3.6 The Family Connectors project has also set up a new activity through establishing a coffee morning for new parents. It is clear that residents benefit from this as a way of developing new connections. Thought needs to be given on helping this get to a position where it can maintain itself and the Family Connector could move on to other activities.

- 5.3.7 One of the aspects of the Family Connectors work has been to increase people's awareness of things they either would be entitled to or that would benefit them. It is clear as well that the assistance has gone beyond just increasing awareness, it has included helping with engagement with these services. The view of one interviewee was that the Family Connectors have worked with families not just by pointing them in the right direction but also supporting them when the families needed to engage with agencies or organisations.
- 5.3.8 Some of the residents were asked whether the assistance by a Family Connector had given them the skills or capacity to do a similar activity without this direct support. One interviewee reported that if the Family Connectors project were run again she would not need their help as the support they have provided her now has increased her confidence.
- 5.3.9 Another strength of the project is that some of those who have been helped can pass on the same advice or help to others. One reported that a Family Connector had helped to set up a Christmas event and get other people to come along. The Connector also got information on helping people deal with money problems. The interviewee now knows about this information and passes it on herself.

5.4 How the project has supported the Troubled Families agenda

- 5.4.1 This section is intended to set out more specifically the role that Family Connectors have had in relation to the Troubled Families policy. Many of the benefits identified have a wider application. However all of these were specifically identified in the context of discussions with the interviewees about Troubled Families.
- 5.4.2 It was clear to most people interviewed that the one of characteristics of the neighbourhood was that it included many families with multiple issues and could therefore be classed as "Troubled". However it is also the case that families would not recognise themselves with the label "Troubled".
- 5.4.3 One aspect of the Family Connectors project is that it is designed to work around how people live their lives. Many interviewees noted the positive impact for the Connectors in not being seen as "professionals". This allowed families and individuals to approach or open up to a Connector on issues which they would be concerned about raising with a "professional".
- 5.4.4 A Family Connector would not be constrained in giving advice that what was needed but "belonged" or was the responsibility of another organisation. This is a way of avoiding one of the issues seen as preventing effective help for Troubled Families – that support was fragmented between different agencies. Family Connectors do not replace professional intervention but can help families and individuals seek advice and help as the family want.
- 5.4.5 As para 3.2.3 noted "Troubled families often have a whole host of agencies involved with them, often focusing on the individuals within that family. This can bring problems as families become confused by overlapping professionals, assessments and appointments."

The way the Family Connectors work avoids these problems.

- 5.4.6 It is important though to note that the Family Connectors project was not about “case work”. There was no suggestion that the names of the Troubled Families would be made known to the Connectors and with a view that the Connectors would directly work with these families.
- 5.4.7 It was an aim of the project to work on “early intervention” which could also be termed “prevention” or “early help” - to provide advice and support which would act to prevent families reaching the stage where they might be classed as “Troubled”. Many interviewees were of the opinion that it was a great strength of the Family Connectors project that they were the most effective way of connecting families to services. The benefits of this connectivity were seen as:
- ❖ When the Family Connector helps a family connect to services that the Family needs then this frees resources in another service that the family might have interacted with (and who might then have spent time referring the family on to the service they needed).
 - ❖ The Family Connectors are in a position to identify need at an early stage and so reduce the demands on a service if the family does engage with them (this can be termed being “referred down”).
 - ❖ Family Connectors have provided help for individuals connecting with services. Beyond simply telling the person that a service exists help can also be provided to secure better engagement. For example helping assemble or prepare information or “paperwork” that might be needed.
 - ❖ The need for engagement with a particular service can be prevented if action by a Family Connector allows the family to access to more appropriate resources (this could be another service or resource the family are entitled to).
 - ❖ As well as connecting families to services, the Family Connectors can deliver benefits by connecting services to other services.
- 5.4.8 In order to increase the Connector’s ability to give greater attention to families with greater problems, or to focus effective attention, a process was put in place so that when conversations were noted then “flag up signs” such as “finance” or “caring for a relative” could be used to help follow up actions.
- 5.4.9 Links with the Troubled Families programme were maintained. Figure 10 is about a conference held in Great Yarmouth to examine community driven approaches to the Troubled Families agenda. Part of this was an in-depth look at the Family Connectors project including talks / presentations by the Connectors themselves. This conference also raised the profile of the project within Great Yarmouth. A number of the people interviewed thought the conference was a considerable success: “great examples of the work were given”. The conference was “really encouraging and people were very keen on the idea” (of the Family Connectors project).

5.4.10 One interviewee gave the view that the Connectors “had had a great impact on Troubled Families”. And, in relation to Troubled Families, Philip Beck, Acting Locality and Integration Manager for North, East and Broadland, Norfolk County Council Children’s Services considered that the Family Connectors were “one of the most important and effective connections for those families”.

Figure 10 Flyer for Troubled Families conference in Great Yarmouth

GREAT YARMOUTH, GREAT FAMILIES
community driven approaches to the Troubled Families agenda

Keynote speaker:
Ian Brady, Deputy Director
Troubled Families Team,
Department for Communities and Local Government

We welcome you to an interactive learning event, focusing on supporting families and connecting communities!
When: 9:30am-3:30pm Friday 3rd October, Where: Kings Centre, Queen Anne's Road, Great Yarmouth, NR31 0EL

To book on your place at the conference please fill in our online booking form at www.eelga.gov.uk/events/great_yarmouth_great_families

#gygf2014

What is the event about?
The day will take an in depth look at two innovative projects that have taken place over 2014 in Great Yarmouth and across the County. There will be an opportunity to meet the Family Connectors working in Southtown and Cobholm and the Great Yarmouth Norfolk Family Focus Team. It will also give you a chance to see how working within neighbourhoods and among local communities individuals can access help earlier and build strong foundations for families.

Who should attend this?

- Commissioners responsible for Troubled Families and Early Help Agendas
- Managers and Team Leaders who direct or implement work with families
- Elected members responsible for Children, Families and Communities
- Front Line practitioners supporting families
- Those genuinely committed to working in a more effective way to support families

Where will it be?
The event will be held at The Kings Centre, Queen Anne's Road, Southtown, Great Yarmouth, NR30 0LE from 9:30am – 3:30pm. Parking will be available, and the building can easily be found if travelling on the A1 bus and alighting at Halfway house. Lunch will be provided.

#gygf2014

Meet the families
Get a chance to meet some of the families that work with our Family Focus team. Ask them questions about their experiences, learn about some of their successes and put a face to a family!

Visit a community-led wellbeing project
Community Roots is a local community garden and growing project run by MIND and lots of local volunteers. Come and see how the project positively effects the local families and speak to volunteers about how being involved in the project has made a difference to their lives.

Talk to family connectors
Explore the achievements of our Family Connectors! Learn more about their approach and how they work in the community alongside parents and local groups. Talk face to face over lunch and ask questions about our EELGA funded work.

If 'Click Here' does not work, visit http://www.eelga.gov.uk/events/great_yarmouth_great_families/

funded by:
East of England
Local Government Association

VOLUNTARY NORFOLK
Make It Happen
Norfolk County Council
GREAT YARMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Source: <http://www.eelga.gov.uk/documents/conferences/2014/3%20october%202014/event%20flyer%2003.10.14.pdf>

5.5 Has the project had achieved its stated aims or achieved any unstated aims?

5.5.1 The assessment of whether the project has achieved its stated aims naturally depends on what these were. The aims can be taken from the funding application to EELGA. As shown in para. 3.4.8 these were that the project should:

- ❖ Demonstrate an innovative new service or approach to developing a broader strategy for helping troubled families, for example focusing on prevention (beyond early years), and wider support services and building community capacity
- ❖ AND/OR Demonstrate an innovative approach to scaling up effective interventions
- ❖ Demonstrate relevant multi-agency working
- ❖ Have widespread application and not be geographically restricted in any way
- ❖ Demonstrate cashable efficiencies or increased productivity and there must be evidence of a measurable Return on Investment

- 5.5.2 Evidence gathered through the interviews and published documents supports the achievement of these aims. This backs up the evidence provided to and accepted by EELGA in awarding the money. None of the people interviewed, including those providing related services, expressed any view that the Family Connectors project replicated work that was already carried out.
- 5.5.3 A number of those interviewed represented other agencies or services with responsibilities related to aspects of family life in Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House. They were of the view that the Family Connectors project did support multi-agency working. It was noted that one of the benefits of the Project was making agencies themselves more aware of work carried out by other agencies.
- 5.5.4 The issue of whether the project has widespread application and would not be geographically restricted in any way is answered in Chapter 6 Guidance for similar projects. The examples of other asset based community development projects in the UK, the opinion of the South Norfolk Community Connectors project and the interviewees was that projects similar to the Family Connectors would work in other areas. The lessons gained from the Family Connectors project should make success more likely.
- 5.5.5 Another aim was that the project should demonstrate cashable efficiencies or increased productivity and there must be evidence of a measurable Return on Investment.

5.6 Whether the project represented good value for money

- 5.6.1 The issue of whether the project represented good value for money was tested through the interview process by people being asked whether, if the same money were available again, it would be better spent on something else.
- 5.6.2 The vast majority of those interviewed were of the strong opinion that the Family Connectors project was good value for money. One interviewee was clear that the type of help provided through the project was “really effective”. In their view messages “from the top” were often ignored and a “small nudge” can be more effective. The interviewee, who was not directly connected with running the project, supported it and would invest more if possible as they considered it a worthwhile project. They would like to see it rolled out to more areas.
- 5.6.3 Nick Clarke (Locality Development Manager – Public Health East Region Physical Activity Alliance Coordinator – Public Health England) was of the view that “this is the way to commission future services”.
- 5.6.4 An alternative view was put forward by one resident who considered that if the same money were available again it could be spent directly on existing clubs and activities in the area.

5.6.5 The literature review provided some information on other projects which are running or have taken place in the UK. There is only partial evidence on the impact of these or the resources spent: for example as shown by the projects supported through the Big Lottery Fund “Improving Futures” programme (see Table 2). Where sufficient information is available to make a comparison, there are no projects where there is an obvious return on investment greater than that achieved by the Family Connectors project.

5.7 Conclusions

- 5.7.1 This Chapter has looked at the view expressed by the people interviewed as part of the assessment.
- 5.7.2 The consensus was that the project had connected well with residents living in the area.
- 5.7.3 One success has been through the promotion of existing events which has resulted in more people attending.
- 5.7.4 Some new events have been set up or are currently being encouraged.
- 5.7.5 As well as raising awareness of events the Family Connectors have supported residents’ ability and willingness to engage with them.
- 5.7.6 Residents have reported increased capacity through the confidence to undertake an action again without needing the support of a Family Connector.
- 5.7.7 Residents also report actions which increase the capacity of the community, by passing on information they have received from Family Connectors. This can be considered a multiplier effect.
- 5.7.8 A number of interviewees were of the clear opinion that the project had supported the Troubled Families agenda.
- 5.7.9 Interviewees thought that if the money were available again then it should be spent on the Family Connectors project. This is a strong indication that the project represented good value for money.
- 5.7.10 Councillors Robert Connell and Penny Linden were both of the view that “the Family Connectors concept is really good and their strengths are that they know the community and get people together.”
- 5.7.11 One interviewee said “I would like to see this rolled out across the borough. This is head and shoulders above anything else”.

6 Guidance for similar projects

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The purpose of this Chapter is to draw attention to aspects of the Family Connectors project which would be beneficial to consider in setting up a similar project in another area.
- 6.1.2 Much of the information comes from interviewees who were asked what lessons might be learnt from the Family Connectors project and which could be applied if a similar project were to be set up in another area. Its important to note that the points made in this Chapter also reflect views on what is seen to have worked well in the Family Connectors Project. It captures “lessons learned” and things which might be done differently if the Family Connectors project were to be run again.
- 6.1.3 The views were given by those who worked on the Family Connectors project and also those who worked in different organisations – particularly Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk District Council.
- 6.1.4 The chapter starts with a summary of the neighbouring South Norfolk Community Connectors and its linkages with the Family Connectors project. It then goes on to summarise points gathered through the interview process (Chapter 5) and which should be of relevance for similar projects in other areas.

6.2 South Norfolk Community Connectors

- 6.2.1 South Norfolk have established an “Early Help Programme”. The aims of which are:
- ❖ strengthening support for communities and universal services, enabling families to be more resilient and reduce the need for intrusive crisis level interventions
 - ❖ ensuring help and support is available as soon as needs emerge
- 6.2.2 As part of this two Community Connectors²⁵ were recruited and started work in December 2014²⁶. The purpose of the posts was given as to:
- ❖ encourage families to access support earlier than they might
 - ❖ offer support and advice, gain the trust and confidence of families and provide practical assistance to ensure local people can access the right services at the right time
- 6.2.3 As with the Family Connectors, and as part of asset based community development, the intention is to provide opportunities for residents to find ways of supporting one another. This should reduce *reliance* on agency intervention.

²⁵ The posts were advertised as “Family Connectors” but the name was changed to be one which would be more aligned with the area

²⁶ <http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKNORFOLK/bulletins/e002db>

- 6.2.4 The Community Connectors are intended to play an important role in facilitating and developing active community participation (in the rural area around Diss in South Norfolk). They will seek to gather the views of residents and motivate individuals to become involved in volunteering, peer support and service development.
- 6.2.5 The (Yarmouth) Family Connectors played a strong part in the recruitment of the Connectors based in Diss. They have shared the learning they gained in their roles and provided advice and training. They are offering peer support to the Community Connectors in South Norfolk and this is “massively appreciated”.

6.3 Lessons for setting up a Connector project

- 6.3.1 Throughout the interviews, two points were made that would play a significant part in considering whether to set up a similar project in another area. These were that:
- ❖ Great Yarmouth Borough Council has a **strong history of community development**. The experience gained through this has allowed the Family Connectors to operate in a supported environment, and this has been considered as significant in the success of the project.
 - ❖ As with any project, Family Connectors works within the context of the community in which it operates. **The Cobholm, Southtown and Halfway House area is compact**. If a similar project to Family Connectors were to operate in a different type of area then some changes in the way it worked should be considered. This would apply to a rural area where the population will be more dispersed, or an area where many residents worked outside the area.
- 6.3.2 There are some decisions to be taken before a project is started. The matters to consider, based on the experience in Yarmouth, are: finding a base, determining how many Connectors might be needed and then recruiting people to these posts.
- ❖ Having a **base in the area**. The importance of having a place where people can drop in was mentioned by many interviewees. There are clear advantages in having a place accessible by as many people as possible (i.e. a central location). Of course it's likely that there are only a limited number of places available to choose from, each of which will have different advantages and disadvantages. In addition to location factors to consider, other issues might include the rooms and other facilities available as well as any other associations a place might have – e.g. if the organisation which owns or runs the facility has particular associations.
 - ❖ **The number of Connectors** needed. This should take account of the area and the budget for the project. There are strong advantages in each Connector having one neighbourhood or area to work in. However the extent to which this is possible will depend on the number of areas or neighbourhoods within the remit of the project and its budget. Having more Connectors will increase the overheads of the project in terms

of management time as well as other resources such as IT. Having more Connectors may increase the overall skills available for the project (as they may have different skills and aptitudes). It may also increase the resilience of the team and its ability to support the people in it. Having more Connectors would also provide greater resilience if one should leave or be unable to work. However within a fixed budget then each Connector will have few paid hours if there are more posts, reducing the accessibility of a single known person to residents.

- ❖ **Role description:** Family Connectors ... don't have to be called family connectors. In the new project in South Norfolk the term "community connector" is being used. That term has also been used in other projects.
- ❖ **Finding the right people for the job.** It has been a clear asset to the project that the Connectors are not seen as part of "officialdom". This point was made by a number of the people interviewed. One interviewee was clear that if a person is a "professional" (e.g. a social worker) then they are seen as coming into your life forever. A (successful) Family Connector is someone who can be seen as from the community and who can be seen on friendly terms. They are not a person who has to report back to an organisation or someone else. They are not there to make judgements. It is important that the advice given is seen as based on personal experience and not "learned from a book".
- ❖ **Existing knowledge of the area** is a great asset for people who are Family Connectors. This greatly helps working with people who live in the area and in providing advice about local resources.
- ❖ **What makes a good Family Connector** can be difficult to identify in terms of specific skills in recruitment, but generally sensitivity, empathy, and being a "people person". A genuine care about the community is a good starting point.
- ❖ Given that communities consist of both men and women there might be some advantages in having Connectors of both genders. However the same could also be said of the age of connectors and whether they have or have had children.

6.4 Lessons for running a Connector project

6.4.1 A number of issues were mentioned when considering how the work can be run once it has started.

- ❖ **Induction and training** is important to help Connectors adjust to what may be different roles to those they have had previously. For example those carrying out the role may be transferring from previous "task based" jobs – where what is done and progress is straightforward to measure. For example, what would help might be training in new skills such as developing relationships with / approaching people you don't know.

- ❖ **Managing the work.** Support for the Family Connectors needs more than just a “once a week” check in. The freeness in the nature of the role means that the Connectors should have regular access to support, advice, guidance and management, so that they can best navigate and support communities to become better connected. It’s important to provide assurance to Family Connectors that actions are having results. Some effects may be hard to measure and will take time to have an impact. It can take 12 months to develop relationships with vulnerable people.
- ❖ Develop a **forward plan** by building on what existing organisations in the area do, for example the events they may be planning to hold.
- ❖ Following on from this, it’s also important to have **flexibility in plans and activities**. Some activities may work better than others and there should be the scope to try different options. For example, plans need to be adapted to the weather. Some activities can be done indoors while some will be outdoors.
- ❖ As part of the activities may include supporting events a **small budget** to assist this or other activities would help.
- ❖ **Providing awareness and clarity on the role to other agencies and organisations.** There is an advantage to the work if other agencies are made aware of what the role will do, so they can link with it and provide information which will help. There may be some organisations with concerns about overlapping roles with Connectors and so discussions with these should help reduce these concerns.
- ❖ A number of those interviewed stressed the importance that **the role of Family Connector is not seen as one which handles “case work”**. As an example, the point was made that the Connectors were not part of a referral system into “troubled families”. If the work was being supported in its aim then some care was needed to prevent the Connectors becoming a role to which other agencies “passed families”.
- ❖ **Succession planning** was raised as one element that should be considered. This is part of helping those engaged in working on the project continue to develop, and so planning for what might happen as a result of success in this

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
ASB	Anti Social Behaviour
CHC	Community Health Champions
CHIP	Children’s Inclusion Partnership
EELGA	East of England Local Government Association
IMD	Index of multiple deprivation
IT	Information technology

Appendix 1 People interviewed for the assessment

Name	Role	Organisation
Emily Allard		Resident
Hank Allcock		Make it Happen Board, Cobholm
Philip Beck	Locality and Integration Manager	Norfolk County Council
Cass Boursell		Resident
Jade Brackley	Family Connector	Voluntary Norfolk
Nick Clarke	Locality Development Manager – Public Health East Region Physical Activity Alliance Coordinator	Public Health England
Robert Connell	Councillor Southtown and Cobholm Ward	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Helen Cooper		Resident of Bradwell
Joe Crabb	Community Roots Co- ordinator	Great Yarmouth and Waveney Mind
Lauren Downes	Early Help Development Manager	South Norfolk District Council
Emily Dyble	Eastern Community Worker	YMCA
Tim Eyres	Head of 11-19 Strategy & Commissioning	Norfolk County Council
Rob Gregory	Group Manager - Neighbourhoods and Communities	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Louise Hampton	Neighbourhood Manager	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Margaret Jennis		Resident of Cobholm
Charmaine Lamb	Family Connector	Voluntary Norfolk
Penny Linden	Councillor Southtown and Cobholm Ward	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Priya Loomba	Neighbourhood Development Officer	Voluntary Norfolk
Kay Masters	Resident of Gorleston / Halfway House	
Holly Notcutt	Community Development Manager, Neighbourhoods & Communities	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Jane Palmer	Family Connector	Voluntary Norfolk
Jean Pretty		Resident
Simone Reade	Resident of Cobholm	
Hannah Shah	Senior Manager	East of England Local Government Association

Name	Role	Organisation
Reg Taylor	Vice Chair of Neighbourhood Board	Resident of Halfway House
Angie Wright		Resident of Southtown

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