



Community Safety Research 2021

Project 2: What Makes A Safe Community?

MainStreet Consulting

May 2021

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Introduction

Preparation of this report has been informed by the rapid literature review, questionnaire results (largely from CSP leads, SCSN members and relevant partners) and discussion with several community safety leads and other key stakeholders. In preparing the report, the consultants have sought to consolidate, distil and interpret these views in relation to wider context issues and the *ambition* for community safety for the people of Scotland.

Knowing that it is more than just the absence of crime and the presence of police that makes a safe community, the research has explored the relationship between the 'actors' in the system to understand more about their sphere of influence. Looking at the role of relationships and networks and how a sense of belonging and self-determination can contribute to making a community safe has further developed this understanding. The role of place, participation and resilience has also been explored as key factors in relation to the making of safe communities.

To present a response to the question '*what makes a safe community?*', the project has sought to take account of theoretical models and concepts whilst always retaining a focus on the practical implications for community safety professionals, the communities themselves, SCSN and others. Considering what makes a safe community can be understood as a *foundation* question in relation to the overall research project. The review of partnership working, skills & learning needs, championing evidence and experiences of community safety has been informed by the issues and ideas that *what makes a safe community?* explores. This part of the report is therefore intrinsically linked with other aspects of the overall project.

Research process

The SCSN undertook some research on partnership working in 2012, 2013 and 2014. The changing landscape of community safety was reviewed in a report by Hayley Barnett published jointly by Scottish Government, SCSN and CoSLA in 2018 and a community safety narrative written by Tricia Spacey and published by the same partners in 2019.

Taking account of these studies and ideas emerging through other parts of the literature review, focus groups in March 2021 specifically addressed the question: 'what makes a safe community?' Stakeholders brought a range of experiences and perspectives including local authority, third sector, funding agency, independent expert and academic. The agenda for these sessions was structured as follows:

- What are the factors that cause people to feel safe in communities?
- Perceptions of safety
- Underlying issues
- Early intervention & prevention
- Relationships

Prompted by this agenda, group discussions addressed these issues, made links across the agenda and identified additional issues. Further work was then undertaken to review relevant literature and to hold conversations with additional stakeholders. There are several ways in which a response to the question 'what makes a safe community?' could be framed. As determined through the desktop research, surveys and focus groups in early 2021, several components of 'A Safe Community' were identified and captured in the high-level systems map (Appendix A).

Basic safety principles

A safe community is founded upon basic principles of safety in relation to both personal safety and safety within the public realm. A person can be at risk of harm due to risks they encounter within the community in which they live, the relationships they have, their circumstances, behaviour, life stage, etc. Basic safety principles are therefore a matter of concern for every individual but can also be understood in relation to neighbourhoods, communities and groups. A consideration of what makes a safe community should therefore aim to understand the importance of community dynamics as well as risk factors at play at various macro and micro levels including personal, local, group, online.

The scope and range of interrelated community connections are *complex*, and it is within this context of complexity that community safety operates. Whilst complexity undoubtedly presents challenges, it was notable that one of the focus groups focused extensively on complexity as the main opportunity for community safety and many

individuals spoke positively about complexity as the context within which community safety can be developed. This complexity could be described as a 'rich tapestry' of social systems, infrastructure and actors operating at various levels including national, local and neighbourhood. Noting that community safety can be understood as an integral feature of many other priorities that communities and decision makers care about, it would seem that community safety is able to unite partners very positively in the pursuit of common goals.

To consider safety at community level and in relation to wider complexity is not to ignore personal and individual safety. However, it is also important to recognise that rather than existing in binary opposition, public and private spaces operate at a variety of levels that overlap and intersect. Some of the ways in which safety is experienced in this way (at the public/private interface) were noted by SCSN: *'in order to delivery community safety effectively consideration needs to be given to fostering the wider social conditions which impact upon it. Social conditions mean such things as social networks, relationships, social participation, community cohesion and empowerment.'* National Performance Framework Review, briefing paper, Oct 2018

In general terms, senses of justice and injustice can underly the experiences of individuals living within geographic communities. For some individuals there is perhaps the danger that the concept of community idealises unity and common values in ways that do not always allow for differences in identity, activity or belief (Iris Marion Young, 1986). Another way to think about the relationship between the individual and the public sphere is to recognise that people often come together on the basis of a variety of affinities but also - often within their geographic community - on the basis of being in contact with people of differing approaches and attitudes. Operating within this context, community safety work often intervenes in relation to specific issues experienced by individuals (such as substance abuse, unintentional harm) as well as operating at other levels including universal (e.g., fireworks safety information, school education programmes), in response to particular episodes of unsafe activity (anti-social behaviour incidents, damaged infrastructure) and to resolve issues of environmental safety (fly-tipping, dog-fouling, etc.).

It may be tempting to some to view the absence of crime as the best measure of a safe community, but this approach tends to focus on identifying problems, needs and deficiencies rather than the strengths that exist within communities. Instead of using a deficit model to focus on the idea of some communities being particularly unsafe, community safety professionals have argued that it is important to take an asset-based approach to better understand how communities can draw on their strengths to build greater resilience. This approach is well understood and set the tone for all focus group discussions. If 'absence of crime' is not an adequate definition of safety, so the idea of attaining 'basic safety principles', it is not alone enough. Where there is discontent in relation to safety, addressing the causes of that discontent will not in itself create contentment. Successful community safety work supports basic safety principles and goes beyond this by seeking to respond to need, anticipate need, empower, build resilience and strengthen identity. This may work particularly well when basic principles of safety are addressed (upholding and supporting the basic principles of safety for communities and individuals) which then allows a safe community to be made by communities working together to co-produce safety through a process of empowerment, involvement and creativity.

Perception of safety

The research process included a review of the many definitions of community safety used in recent years on the assumption that this would be a helpful way to support an understanding of the question: *what makes a safe community?* However, the process highlighted a different issue which is the extent to which safety means different things to different people. Its meaning is also impacted by differing situations, circumstances, beliefs and perceptions. In view of this, the report has focused attention on different aspects of perception in an attempt to better understand the factors that make a safe community. Perception is also a particularly important feature of the research on experiences of community safety undertaken as part of this project which builds further on '[Experiences and Perspectives of Community Safety](#)' undertaken for SCSN in 2020 by Robyn Bailey, Researcher, Scottish Government.

Seen to be safe

Responses through the questionnaire initially suggested that only a minority saw the design and management of the built environment as being of significance. However, the quality of the environment was a key theme through the focus groups and the significance of the appearance of local areas emerged as one of the strong features making communities feel safe. Dark streets, litter, graffiti, dog fouling, poorly maintained property, neglected green spaces, etc. make an area *look* unsafe. Improving the quality of neighbourhood environments and sustaining this level of 'clean and tidy' achieves a sense of safety that is not only good value it is also clear evidence that a neighbourhood is valued by its residents and by the authorities charged with supporting local safety.

The discussion went further to consider community empowerment by reflecting on the extent to which some communities could be supported to *demand* minimum standards of quality in relation to the appearance of their local areas where previously there had been an acceptance of poor standards as the norm. One participant noted that this is indicated by the simple sense that 'someone is watching over this space' and another noted how important sharing the responsibility for achieving 'clean and green' had been for a local greenspace that had previously been seen as unsafe.

Felt to be safe

Community safety operates in the territory of perceived safety vs reality; yet explaining real risks does not necessarily assuage feelings of anxiety about safety. For example, it was noted in one of the focus group sessions that social media posts about dog thieves operating in an area may well cause dog owners to feel that their local park is unsafe even if no incidents of dog theft have actually taken place there. Whilst newspapers and television have influenced perceptions of relative safety for many years, the advent of social media has amplified this effect by generating a lot of exchange of views around macro level safety issues as well as specific smaller scale local safety issues. This can cause a disproportionate level of anxiety, especially when social media discussion generates misunderstandings and misinformation that can be widely circulated. Considering what makes a safe community in this context suggests that more could be done to engage positively with people through social media, stimulate and support

discussion, counter misinformation and encourage involvement in local activities to strengthen community safety.

Another important feature of feeling safe discussed through the focus groups was psychological safety. As well as recognising concerns about a range of safety issues putting the psychological safety of individuals at risk, the value of 'agency' was noted. Agency is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices and can be particularly important to achieve for individuals who have had their ability to make decisions limited by their circumstances or the actions of others and may feel unsafe as a consequence. '[Responsible](#)' was also discussed as a process of empowerment for individuals to take on a task which might previously have been undertaken on their behalf or may not have been recognised as a responsibility at all. Whilst there was a recognition of the danger of a range of different types of harm pushing against improvements in relation to agency (*can I do something/anything?*) and personal responsible (*should I do something/anything?*), there was a general conclusion that there was potential to improve and empower how individuals feel about their safety through this form of empowerment.

Even where significant negative forces such as poverty are impacting heavily, it was noted that it is often the lack of choices and absence of advocacy that cause people to feel unsafe and there is potential to support and improve through greater social connection and empowerment. The needs of 'at risk' individuals were not extensively discussed, although the questionnaire did note that the majority are 'reasonably to very confident' about targeting on the basis of *difficult to reach* (*difficult to engage* being a more appropriate term). In response to the statement: 'we have a good understanding of the needs and interests of vulnerable communities and how safe they feel', 23 of 50 respondents answered 'yes' and 22 answered 'to some extent'. This would suggest that further engagement is required and that there is further potential to improve feelings of safety for many vulnerable communities around Scotland.

Understood to be safe

The provision of information about safety has been an important feature of community safety work for many years including aspects of injury prevention: road safety, water safety, home safety. Much of this work aims to have a universal reach including, for example, safety advice for young people organised through the formal education system. As well as encompassing a range of services and professional skills, community safety is also understood to be an integral feature of other policy priorities including Community Planning, Community Learning & Development, Children & Family Services, Economic Development, Health & Social Care, Education, etc. This suggests that community safety is understood as a relevant concept (as well as a relevant range of services and skills) by a range of public service professionals, elected members, third sector professionals, etc. The term 'safe' is a central feature of the National Performance Framework. Local Outcome Improvement Plans support this and the significance of community safety in relation to many LOIPs was noted in focus groups.

It may be that there is a paradox here: the understanding of community safety in this wider policy and service context can support a view that community safety is everywhere, integral to the achievement of many important and well recognised outcomes. Conversely, it may be that community safety is somewhat 'lost from view' in this context. It may also be understood somewhat simplistically at times as just a series of responsive services (anti-social behaviour response, fly tipping, etc.). Also, alongside this (sometimes confused) understanding of community safety in a policy/service context, the term 'community safety' may not be a term that is particularly well understood by community groups and individuals. Further work to consider how a better understanding of community safety can be created using succinct messaging could therefore be very useful.

Although this research was not able to explore this issue in further detail, it may be that helping key decision makers, fellow professionals and a wider range of stakeholders to understand more about what community safety is and how it can contribute to the achievement of many positive outcomes would be a useful project to explore. Essentially, this may be a question of 're-branding' and possibly also considering the use of language to ensure that the community engagement, development, resilience and

empowerment work is understood as a central feature of the work and the deficit model approach is not allowed to take root. For professionals and decision makers, this may be aided by a review of the way in which evidence is gathered, analysed and presented.

For communities, fellow professionals, wider stakeholders and the general public at large, the concept of *championing* may be particularly useful to consider when seeking to make a community safe. Much may be achieved by developing a shared understanding of community safety with all stakeholders which takes account of particular localities, circumstances and times. This may be especially important if there are any misconceptions about what community safety is such as a deficit-based understanding that is overly focused on crime statistics as the only measure of safety, a service delivery focused understanding (services are simply delivered and received by communities), etc. During this research there was some suggestion that referencing 'harm reduction' could be a useful way to frame conversations about what community safety is and there may be other language to convey understanding that is better than the term 'community safety'. More work would be required within wider partner networks and also with the general public, but it may be worth SCSN exploring this. The potential may be there to achieve greater levels of understanding that would strengthen and develop partner relationships and better engage communities which would ultimately be an important contribution to the making of safe communities.

For individuals around Scotland and the communities to which they belong, community safety is no less than a quality-of-life issue. How community safety is understood and discussed holds great potential for the future of community empowerment, resilience and identity and for the greater use of co-production when planning community safety activities. One example of the importance of basic information about safety within communities was noted in one of the focus groups. Communities value: "*knowing where to go, knowing that they join-up, knowing that something will get done*". This kind of baseline can serve as a foundation for mutual understanding between communities, community safety workers and others. Understanding is also informed by context and whilst there will always be a wide and varied range of very local context issues at play, the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an extraordinary change of context for the whole of Scotland. It seems likely that awareness of safety and ambition

for safer communities locally will have increased due to the enormous change to community experience brought about by the pandemic. Issues of significance likely to have been affected and with implications for the longer term include mental health, domestic abuse, and online crime.

Another indicator of growing community interest in safety may be the threefold increase in sign-ups to the Scottish Neighbourhood Watch alerts system that occurred during the first lockdown in April and May 2020. This initiative is also an example of the further potential of social media where real-time targeted information (at ward level) with advice, do's/don'ts, signposting on personal, household and online safety is communicated and cascaded on. Greater use of social media by trusted professionals and community groups may also help counter the wider problem of the circulation of misinformation, especially where issues can be explored, interpreted, explained, and reviewed in a specifically local context. This may also serve to draw attention to the assets of the local community and away from the anxieties invoked by more general safety misinformation such as unfounded conspiracy theories, scams, wrongful advice, etc.

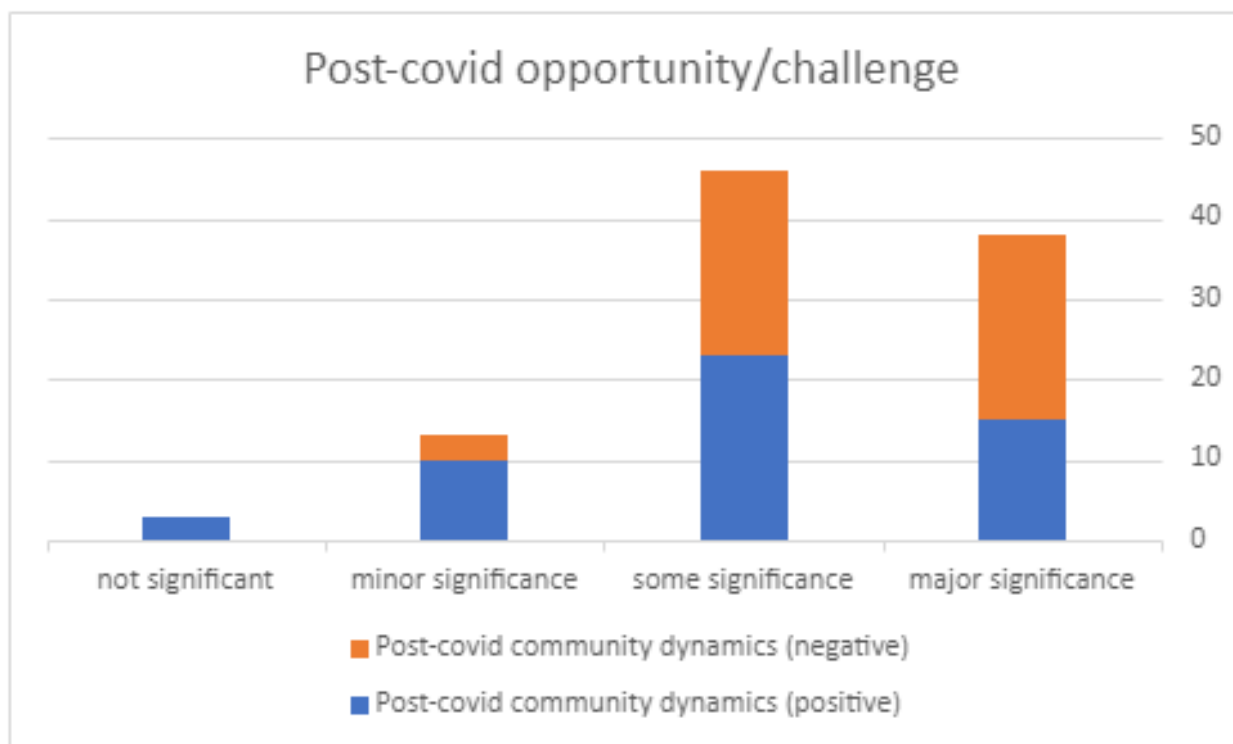
Digital Safety

It was noted in focus group discussions that support agency interventions to date had mainly focused on digital inclusion with concerns around safety being focused primarily on keeping children and young people safe online. Covid has impacted for these issues including a greater awareness of the significant difficulties associated with 'digital poverty' and an increase in online crime. Some specific and growing threats of harm were mentioned, such as the danger of harm to vulnerable women using the internet to access sex work. Lack of safety online was discussed quite extensively and was recognised as one of the most significant threats to safety. The overall conclusion of the discussions was a general sense of concern; really effective solutions to these difficulties have yet to be identified. However, online safety was considered as an issue that should be a feature of any empowerment agenda and increased awareness was also frequently referenced as a way to help individuals avoid harm. The vast majority of respondents to the questionnaire saw community safety in a digital context as being of

some or of major significance. This was also the case for digital communication as a community engagement tool and the focus groups confirmed this appetite. As using social media and other digital platforms more to communicate and engage is something that community safety workers can immediately affect, it may well be that the efforts to make communities safe could focus on this *positive* aspect of digital communication. This links well with other aspects of a community empowerment agenda which can contribute positively to the development of community resilience, strengthened identity and opportunities for co-production.

Sense of place

The concept of place-making is a particularly useful one when seeking to make a community safe. The six qualities of positive placemaking are described in the Scottish Government 'Creating Places' policy as Distinctive, Safe and Pleasant, Easy to move around and beyond, Welcoming, Adaptable and Resource Efficient. Placemaking and community identity in relation to place are also likely to have been significantly impacted by the experience of lockdowns and the ongoing pandemic. There is much speculation about the longer-term impact and particularly how senses of place that may have changed very little in recent years may now become transformed. When asked through the questionnaire the extent to which they regarded post-Covid community dynamics to be *negative* in relation to the future safety of communities, the vast majority saw this as being of some or major significance. The extent to which *positive* post-Covid community dynamics were regarded as significant was lower with 20% stating that this was of minor significance. The pandemic is ongoing at the time of writing and the medium- and long-term consequences have yet to become evident. However, the current conclusion through the research shows that most people working in community safety anticipate negative consequences and further work will need to be undertaken to understand this and support future planning.



SCSN Community Safety survey, February 2021

As previously noted, the importance of the built environment was seen as relatively unimportant through the questionnaire, but the focus group sessions were very much more positive about the importance of ensuring good quality local environments. The Scottish Government announced a decision to explore the concept of the 20-minute Neighbourhood in its Programme for Government in Nov 2020. A 20-minute neighbourhood, as developed in the City of Portland in the USA, is a place with convenient, safe and pedestrian-oriented access to the places and services people need including all shopping, school, parks and social activities. This may generate new ideas about how a sense of place can be further strengthened and kept safe and may prove to be particularly relevant post-pandemic as a way to 'build back better'. This kind of initiative is an interesting addition to existing work to develop place-making. The 'big picture' of place, perhaps with a renewed focus on localism, will be a highly important context for community safety work to be further reviewed and developed. As with many aspects of the place-making agenda, a post-covid review may also generate different kinds of ideas and initiatives when considered from a rural perspective. The particular qualities of small towns have also been noted during the pandemic and there may be

other changing community dynamics that will occur beyond a simple rural/urban distinction.

Where placemaking is successful this will often have community safety as an integral feature. A sense of place is extremely important for community identity and pride and the desire to protect, improve and enhance the local environment will often provide a focal point for engagement on local safety issues. The growth in interest in Neighbourhood Watch under lockdown is evidence of increasing interest in making the connection between sense of place and sense of safety. The concept of community anchor organisations has developed significantly in recent years and presents opportunities for considering how communities are made safe in the context of place. Developed through the Scottish Community Alliance, the community anchors approach was recognised in Scottish policymaking through the Community Empowerment Action Plan 2009 and the Regeneration Policy 2011. Many community development trusts and community-controlled housing associations have pursued this approach and other local community organisations are also able to draw and build from it. The multi-purpose/holistic approach of community anchor organisations provides a range of options for action including economic development, service provision, community-building, leadership and advocacy. The potential in relation to community safety is possibly still to be fully realised and could perhaps be explored jointly at the strategic level by the SCSN and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (to which many community anchor organisations belong). Community anchors are community-led and often community-controlled organisations aiming to be responsive to their local context. It seems likely that these organisations would be well positioned to progress community safety on a community-led basis. It was noted through the focus groups that many communities have a really strong sense of pride which is very much rooted in the strengths and unique features of their place. Viewing community safety through the lens of placemaking offers more opportunities, especially when the full extent of post-covid community dynamics become apparent and the appetite for being connected and engaging locally is renewed.

Good community safety work is often characterised by a complex network of multiple partner relationships that could be described as a form of collaborative leadership.

Focus group sessions included descriptions of these networks and their complexity in positive terms that demonstrated how they were able to strongly support an 'asset-based' approach and help build community resilience. How communities feature in terms of this collaborative leadership model would require more detailed research, but indications are that there are some models of good practice and that integrating a community-led approach into complex networks of collaborative leadership can only strengthen the making of safe communities. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that there is considerably more potential to be 'community-led' as only 50% of respondents identified this as a means by which community safety issues are currently identified and prioritised. The questionnaire also highlighted a need to develop confidence in relation to placemaking. Levels of confidence about creative placemaking were not particularly high – only 3 of 48 respondents were very confident and 17 had low or no confidence.

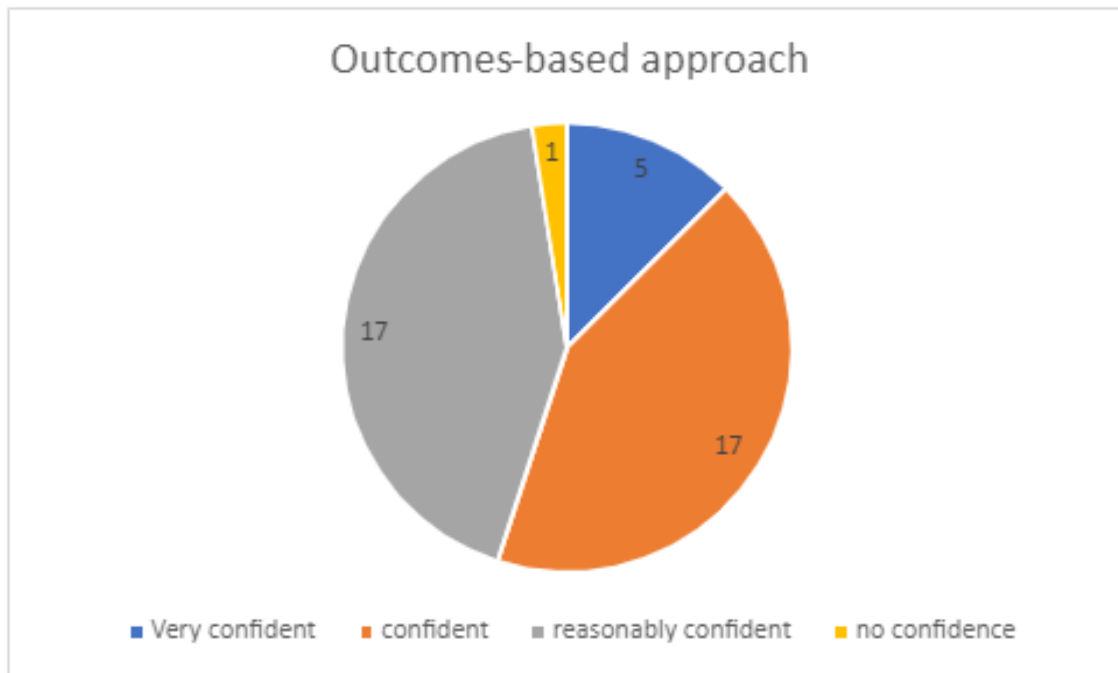


SCSN Community Safety survey, February 2021

Complexity, outcomes, theory of change

If looking at crime statistics doesn't answer the question 'what makes a safe a community?', perhaps the best tool for understanding the making of safety within the context of complexity (and planning for it) is an outcomes-based approach. Positioning community safety work strategically within national and local planning was reflected upon through both the questionnaire and the focus groups with the balance of strategic/operational understood to be an important one to get right.

In some cases (and perhaps when addressing some particular types of risk of harm), there was a desire to ensure that operational delivery received the priority focus it requires on an ongoing basis. Positioning community safety work strategically was often referenced alongside the need to lobby, advocate for and promote the value of community safety. There was evidence through the questionnaire of further potential to support CSPs to strengthen the position of community safety work in relation to planning for local outcomes. 39 of 48 respondents to the questionnaire were reasonably to very confident about an outcomes-based approach, but 8 had low confidence and 1 had no confidence.



SCSN Community Safety survey, February 2021

Community safety work is arguably particularly suited to being understood in terms of outcomes (including interim and long-term outcomes) and in relation to the [Christie principles](#) which suggests further potential to advocate for community safety work in these terms and support local work to articulate the needs and benefits of community safety. There may also be potential to review where and how some aspects of community safety work are positioned within the national/local infrastructure. For example, are there economies of scale that can be achieved by local authorities joining together to develop joint programmes as has previously been the case for an initiative such as the [Risk Factory](#) ? As well as joint working across geographical boundaries, there is likely to be potential in further developing existing good practice work with Third Sector on the basis of reviewing scale and scope. Partnership working with both Third Sector Interface and Third Sector organisations on specific community safety issues was reported as quite strong or above by 38 of 49 respondents but significant numbers also reported that these relationships were 'neither strong nor weak' or 'weak'.

A focus on outcomes in front line service delivery as well as more strategic planning levels is also important and may provide an additional impetus for reviewing the outcomes-based approach in community safety work. In addition to the strategic outcomes identified through the National Performance Framework and Local Outcome Improvement Plans, community safety often also supports people's personal outcomes, especially for people who are vulnerable or causing concern. Referring to their audit of Self-Directed Support, Audit Scotland (2019) advises that "public bodies should monitor and report the extent to which people's personal outcomes are being met and use this information to help plan for future processes and services."

An outcomes approach remains challenging to develop and implement and further support for this through SCSN could be very beneficial. Support for this approach can also come from using a *whole system approach* which may be a particularly appropriate way to respond to complexity. This approach uses a dynamic way of working by bringing stakeholders together (including communities) to develop a shared understanding of the challenge and integrate action to bring sustainable long-term systems change. Also very relevant for dealing with complexity is a *theory of change* approach which defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify the necessary preconditions for the achievement of those goals. Working with stakeholders using this approach was noted

through the focus groups as a way to 'try stuff' in a bold, imaginative and collaborative way.

Conclusion

Acting 'in concert'

When seeking to make communities safe, there is a clear understanding that has emerged over the last 20 years that working in partnership is central to the achievement of success. The value of partnership working between professionals appears to be well understood and firmly established in Scotland. Moreover, and perhaps in response to the ever-growing community safety (CS) agenda and ongoing development of the environment as a highly complex one, the activity described in focus groups showed some evidence of working 'in concert'. Acting in concert is a process where two or more parties team up together to reach the same result based on significant degrees of co-operation. It can be understood as a step on from basic partnership working and is an approach that may be particularly suited to collaborative practice with engaged communities.

Collaborating with communities

In addition to partnership working between professionals, many documents reviewed for this research have pointed to the importance of involving communities as meaningful partners in all aspects of civic life to achieve the greatest levels of success for many important objectives including community safety. The research suggests that there is potential to strengthen this approach through an authentic process of collaboration that engages, involves and empowers communities. This goes beyond simple consultation and ensures that the danger of being tokenistic can be avoided.

One potential pitfall when seeking to engage communities was noted by a participant in the focus groups: 'the more affluent and more articulate know how to engage and access services' and another pointed out that 'individuals can silence the ones that really matter'. Opportunities to engage meaningfully may need to be based on a supportive and proactive process to empower communities to find their voice. As another focus group participant noted, 'there are obstacles to effective community engagement: 'hard to reach' can sometimes mean 'easy to ignore.'', Further embedding a community engagement approach in community safety work would not only harness the power of communities it can also be a feature of a refreshed approach to early intervention and prevention principles.

Other important principles emerging through the research include the value of understanding the 'making communities safe' project from new perspectives and with different approaches. There is evidence of interesting thinking within the literature and amongst CS professionals which could be developed further by SCSN through support for pan-Scotland collaborative processes such as action learning (as referenced in the partnership working and section of the report).

Partnership working, skills and learning needs:

The wide range of connections between community safety, statutory services and organisations can serve as both a strength and a potential weakness. Despite having so much to offer in the pursuit of common goals, community safety is in danger of being side-lined at times due to its non-statutory nature. It is important that advocating for community safety and its further potential takes place at the national level to support awareness of and evidence of CS strengths. This has been achieved well by SCSN to date and remains an important ongoing project. Many of the key stakeholder partners operate nationally as well as locally and SCSN can play an important role at the interface between the national and the local.

Sharing best thinking:

The community safety agenda is constantly growing, and this research has shown that to tackle the question 'what makes a safe community' requires actors to operate in an extraordinarily complex environment and be subject to an ever-growing number of pressures and demands. Cutting through the complexity to identify 'what works' has been a learning process for CS professionals to date. Julie Berg points to an important distinction between *thinking* and *practice* and suggests that there is greater potential to shift the focus from 'sharing best practice' to 'sharing best thinking' when seeking to govern harm and support prevention. The research has uncovered what appears to be an appetite for this amongst many CS professionals and other stakeholders which may well be shared by communities themselves. Many focus group participants were working dynamically and imaginatively in a complex and sometimes constrained context. This positivity, in the face of significant social and financial challenges, was palpable and is a very important strength supporting the ambition to make Scotland's communities safe.

May 2021

APPENDIX A - Safe Community systems map

The key assumption underlying this high-level systems mapping exercise is that a safe community is influenced by a wide variety of factors. The system is the sum of all the relevant factors and their interdependencies that determine a “safe community” for an individual or a group of people.

The map as developed is based on a core engine: a limited set of interconnected loops that captures the essential dynamic of a “safe community”. The working definition of “safe community” is a *“liveable community, where people can go about their daily activities in an environment without fear, risk, harm or injury”*.

These loops are ‘variables’, as determined through desktop research, surveys and focus groups with members, partners and other interested stakeholders in early 2021.

How is this useful:

- It shows that community safety is complex and it operates in a complex environment (difficult to disentangle cause & effect, identify solutions)
- Shows that collective actions are needed from multiple stakeholders to shift the system
- Highlights that influences are at local, regional, and national levels.

