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Conference briefing

Resilient Communities

February 2020

By Sinéad Fitzsimons



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Foreword



This briefing document has been prepared ahead of our Resilient Communities conference on 27-28 February 2020, to help participants prepare, and to inform the discussions we will be having.

This conference is convening a diverse delegation of academics, policymakers, future leaders, private sector representatives, civil servants and community practitioners. We will be exploring challenging and innovative approaches that can lead the way towards more inclusive community life and opportunities for shared commitments, in the wake of events or developments that divide local populations.

We are grateful to our freelance Research Associate, Dr Sinéad Fitzsimons, for preparing this resource for us. Sinéad is attending the conference and will be summarising our key findings and drawing out practical recommendations for positive change, to inform our subsequent report.

In May 2020, we will be convening a smaller consultation, involving a broad spectrum of conference representatives and further specialists, to help review and refine Sinéad's draft report, before we publish it and present it to policymakers and practitioners on 22 September 2020, in central London.

I hope that you find this briefing useful in the meantime, both for the conference and your wider work. I look forward to seeing you at the conference, and I do hope you will enjoy your time at Cumberland Lodge.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edmund Newell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Canon Dr Edmund Newell

Chief Executive

Cumberland Lodge

About the author



This briefing document is written by Dr Sinéad Fitzsimons.

Sinéad is the Research Officer in Education and Development at Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

She is also a member of the University's Centre for the Study of Global Human Movement. Sinéad's research primarily focuses on the role of education in improving the well-being of individuals, communities and wider societies. Her work has involved a range of national and international development projects, including curriculum development projects with UNICEF and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education.

Prior to joining the University of Cambridge, Sinéad was a doctoral student and research assistant at Queen's University Belfast. During her time at Queen's, she conducted and contributed to several research projects relating to education in divided societies, which focused on contexts such as Northern Ireland, the Balkan region and Belgium. Through these projects, Sinéad gained valuable interdisciplinary insights into the intersecting role of a wide range of actors and areas of community life that contribute to social cohesion and peace-building.

Before entering academia, Sinéad taught History for over ten years in four different countries. Her experiences of teaching in a range of advantaged and disadvantaged areas sparked her passion for community development work, especially pertaining to the role of education as a transformative force worldwide.

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1

Overview

Strengthening community resilience is a goal for many communities across the UK, as they face unprecedented amounts of change and uncertainty. Events such as 'Brexit', divisive election campaigns, the Grenfell Tower fire, terrorist attacks, reductions in public spending, climate change and the refugee crisis are all examples of developments that are testing community resilience.

Research emerging from The Young Foundation – such as the Community Well-being Index – has illustrated that community resilience has complex and sometimes unexpected sources. Whilst public and philanthropic funding does support community resilience and longevity, the role of individuals and community groups cannot be ignored. In short, resilience emerges from a complex interplay between funding, resources, support and community actors. Alone, these elements will have a limited impact. But, working together can result in impressive transformations of community strength and resilience.

This conference briefing provides an overview of community resilience and how this term can be applied in the context of UK community development. Six avenues for strengthening community resilience are considered:

1. Collaborative and active citizenship
2. Partnerships with faith-based communities
3. Arts and culture initiatives
4. Sports and community leisure activities
5. The role of businesses
6. Education and partnerships with educational institutions.

Each of these areas will also be explored during the conference taking place at Cumberland Lodge on 27-28 February 2020. The aim of this briefing is to introduce key challenges, opportunities and models for community resilience building across the UK.

Combining this information with participants' expertise and perspectives will ensure rich and innovative discussions throughout the two days at Cumberland Lodge. During the conference, participants will reflect on how resilience can be fostered and improved, so that communities and community members can prosper when faced with change and adversity.

2

Introduction

Communities today are faced with unprecedented amounts of change and uncertainty. Although change is inevitable, the changes occurring in the UK, across all areas of life, have resulted in feelings of instability and uncertainty for many communities. Climate change, Brexit, unemployment, housing shortages, economic uncertainty, terrorism, increasing inequality and the migration crisis are examples of social realities that are testing the resilience of individuals and their communities. Supporting communities to not only survive but to flourish during periods of uncertainty and change is necessary. However, deciphering the most effective method for building community resilience is not an easy task, especially since what is required to build resilience in one community may not be effective in another.

Communities face specific challenges and opportunities, and respond to them in unique ways. Resilience-building initiatives must be developed and facilitated in ways that incorporate and respond to communities' unique identities. A recent study of factors that lead to community resilience, carried out by academics at the University of Stirling, found that developing resilience is a complex endeavour that requires both local/informal activity and national/strategic structures.¹ The complexity of the resilience-building process highlights the fact that collaborative and innovative thinking is required to achieve sustainable progress. Even though the process is different for each community, a consideration of the strategies that have succeeded or failed in the past can provide valuable insight into the resilience-building process.

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Cumberland Lodge has partnered with The Young Foundation to examine how communities can become more resilient to uncertainty, and to explore ways of helping fractured communities to reconfigure and unite in the aftermath of rapid change or disruption. The Young Foundation is a not-for-profit, non-governmental think tank devoted to social innovation, community development and the tackling of inequality, across the UK. The Young Foundation delivers a wide portfolio of research initiatives and community capacity-building projects across a range of sectors. It has published more than 30 reports relating to social innovation, education, community development, employment strategies, health and wellbeing.²

This briefing document provides an overview of current theories and approaches to building community resilience. It begins by establishing working definitions of four key concepts that are pertinent to discussions about community resilience.³ It goes on to consider potential avenues for building community resilience, including: collaborative approaches to local citizenship and local government; arts and culture initiatives; partnerships with faith-based communities; sport and community leisure activities; business and entrepreneurship programmes; and education and skills development.

The conclusion outlines key questions and lines of inquiry for conference participants. This will serve as a catalyst to initiate innovative discussions that will lead to evidence-based recommendations for more inclusive and resilient forms of community life.

Key definitions

The following four terms will be referred to throughout this briefing document:

Resilience

The term 'resilience' derives from the Latin root *resi-lire*, which means 'to spring back'.⁴ The term was first used by ecologists

referring to an ecological system that persists through changes of state,⁵ and by engineers referring to stability and resistance to external shocks.⁶ Today, the term resilience is frequently used across the social sciences.

According to the Stockholm Resilience Centre, a leading think tank on resilience research, social resilience should be seen as the 'ability of human communities to withstand and recover from stresses, such as environmental change or social, economic or political upheaval.'⁷ Keck and Sakdapolrak further develop this idea and argue that resilience involves the capacity of individuals, communities or regions to cope with, adapt to and transform risks, threats and hardship through absorptive, reactive, preventative and proactive community measures.⁸ In this way, resilience is positioned as a process or capacity, as opposed to a fixed quality.⁹ These two compatible definitions position resilience as a broad, multi-level concept that incorporates social, economic and environmental dimensions.

Community

Like resilience, the term 'community' is a contested concept that can be defined and applied in a variety of ways.¹⁰ For this briefing, a community will be defined as a place-based entity that can be as small as a neighbourhood or as large as a county.¹¹ However, communities must also be seen as dynamic and without definitive boundaries or members. In line with the 2018 Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper,¹² communities in the UK should be seen as a place 'where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.'¹³

Social cohesion

'Social cohesion' is a characteristic of society that shows the interdependence between individuals, and is characterised by the absence of underlying social conflict and the presence of strong social bonds.¹⁴ However, some academics argue that this definition no longer encapsulates the multiplicity of values and cultures found through contemporary social analysis.¹⁵ Taking this

into consideration, social cohesion can be defined as the ongoing process of prioritising wellbeing, fostering a sense of belonging, and developing voluntary and social participation of all members of a society. At the same time, the process should develop communities that tolerate and promote a multiplicity of values and cultures, and grants equal rights and opportunities to all.¹⁶

Social capital

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines 'social capital' as: 'the links, shared norms, values and understandings in society that facilitate co-operation within or amongst groups'.¹⁷ A key principle of this is the idea that the goodwill that individuals have towards others in their family or community is a valuable resource – and thus a form of capital.¹⁸ The OECD divides social capital into three types:

Bonds: links to people based on a sense of common identity ('people like us') – such as family, close friends and people who share our culture or ethnicity;

Bridges: links that stretch beyond a shared sense of identity, for example to distant friends, colleagues and associates;

Linkages: links to people or groups further up or lower down the social ladder.¹⁹

As a characteristic of communities, social capital consists of group attributes such as trust, reciprocity, collective action and participation. Such social capital can be a strong resource for resilience building. However, social capital can also lead to harm. For example, the tight bonds and deep trust within criminal gangs constitute a form of social capital, but this may not improve individual or community well-being.

Challenges to community cohesion and resilience

Challenges facing UK communities today are diverse and complex. Some challenges have existed for centuries. For

example, tensions relating to class structures have been documented in Great Britain from as early as the 4th century AD, during the time of Roman Britain.²⁰ Other challenges have emerged more recently, such as the divisions exposed by Brexit. Some challenges such as climate change and the refugee crisis are experienced globally whilst others affect specific areas, such as sectarian violence. Challenges overlap with one another and cannot be approached separately. For example, poverty and increased inequality relate to employment opportunities and access to education. Some challenges to communities emerge overtime such as urbanisation and rural depopulation, whereas others emerge quickly and unexpectedly such as the Grenfell fire.

Recognising the wide variety of challenges and uncertainties facing communities today highlights the need to develop resilience-building initiatives that are equally varied. Developing community resilience does not involve a one-size-fits-all approach. Each community's unique strengths and resources must be considered. The next section of this report will present various avenues and partnerships that can be drawn on to develop community resilience.

Strengthening community resilience

Resilience-building initiatives can draw on a range of partnerships and can be delivered in a variety of ways. This briefing looks specifically at resilience-building opportunities pertaining to collaborative and active citizenship, partnerships with faith-based organisations, arts-based and cultural initiatives, sports and community leisure activities, local business development and educational programming. To examine the potential of each of these avenues further, relevant research, policies and real-life examples are explored.

3

Collaborative and active citizenship across the UK

Meaningful collaboration between local government and communities can promote constructive forms of political participation and civic engagement which, in turn, can increase community resilience. However, research has shown that areas of government are failing to meet the needs of local populations across the UK. For example, numerous studies have shown that social work across the UK is experiencing a funding crisis, with families living in poverty being the most neglected.²¹ One study found that: 'High caseloads and frequent staff turnover, scarce support services, and an increasingly narrow, time-limited and risk-averse focus characterise much of children's social work in local authorities.'²² Examples like this illustrate that a significant discrepancy between the supply and demand of public services is exacerbating inequality and reducing community hopes for the future.²³

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The inequalities in investment across the UK have come under scrutiny over the last five years. Many academics, politicians, community leaders and representatives of the media have raised awareness about communities being 'left behind'.²⁴ Looking more closely at inequalities in community investment in England, the 2019 Young Foundation report, *Flipping the Coin: Two Sides of Community Wealth in England*, provides evidence that there is an inequitable distribution of public, charitable and philanthropic funding across different communities. This 2019 report explains that, even though a lack of funding greatly disadvantages communities, community groups can draw strength and resilience from other sources.

Researchers at the Young Foundation found that:

Draw[ing] from years of immersive work in cities, towns and villages across the UK, that often regardless of traditional economic indicators of prosperity, places can be rich with community life. Across the country we see communities taking control of assets and resources, stepping in and up to provide the activities, services and opportunities local residents want, and creating informal ways to build social connection and support. ²⁵

This is not to say that funding is irrelevant. Funding is undoubtedly a fundamental aspect of supporting community resilience. However, the report illustrates that, despite a lack of funding, communities are finding ways to connect, to create a sense of belonging and to resource themselves. Therefore, when looking for solutions and further understanding of community resilience, we must look at a whole range of cross-sector resources.

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Before considering the role of local businesses and faith-based organisations, below, we will look at government policies, from the national to the local level, which incorporate community resilience as a policy aim.

Community resilience policies

Historically, UK Government policies relating to community resilience have been inconsistent as to who should be primarily responsible. In the 1970s and 1980s, many references to community resilience focused on increased community responsibility and decreased state intervention.²⁶ For example, in 1987 former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, remarked: ‘... people must look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves, and then to look after our neighbour’.²⁷ From this

period onwards, successive UK Governments conceptualised citizens as being chiefly responsible for themselves and their families and neighbours.²⁸ This focus on individual responsibility was accompanied by cuts to government funding for social services. For example, between 1975 and 1977, the Labour Government reduced spending on housing and education.²⁹ In 1979 and 1980, the Conservative Government made additional cuts to education, housing and personal social services.³⁰

This focus on individual responsibility is still apparent in the 21st century. For example, a 2009 government-funded report argued that: 'if the Government takes greater responsibility for risks in the community, it may feel under pressure to take on further responsibility, thereby eroding community resilience.'³¹ Similarly, the 2011 *Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience* stressed that citizens must take 'responsibility for their own resilience and recovery.'³² This government report was released in the same year that the Coalition Government made significant cuts to public services, which ushered in the beginning of 'the new age of austerity'.³³

However, the discourse around community resilience within government policies and reports has, in some ways, started to shift. Criticism from the media, academics and politicians has drawn attention to communities struggling with high deprivation, and the corresponding disengagement of local governments. Recognising the need to investigate the issue further, the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement published its report, *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*, in 2018. This report acknowledged that events such as the EU referendum and the fire in Grenfell Tower have focused public attention on divided and isolated communities and highlighted the rising levels of anti-political sentiment amongst British citizens.³⁴ The Committee acknowledged that civic engagement programmes are often affected by government reshuffles, resulting in shallow roots and lack of follow-through for many initiatives. The report also critiqued the Government's efforts to increase community integration and participation, because it primarily focused on

ethnic minority groups and rarely mentioned the challenges faced by citizens with disabilities, LGBTQI+ communities, rural and coastal communities, working-class communities and others who feel marginalised in UK society.³⁵

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In response, the UK Government released the *Integrated Communities Action Plan* and the *Community Resilience Development Framework* in 2019. Unlike previous government reports, the 2019 Framework positions the Government as an equal partner in supporting community resilience. It stressed the need for collaborative and participatory approaches that include a range of stakeholders:

*The UK's resilience depends on all of us – the emergency services, local and central government, businesses, communities and individual members of the public... We will expand and deepen the government's partnership with the private and voluntary sectors, and with communities and individuals, as it is on these relationships that the resilience of the UK ultimately rests.*³⁶

This document marks a shift in rhetoric, attributing responsibility as much to individuals as to local government, businesses, communities and emergency services.³⁷ This view of a shared responsibility for resilience building allows for wider discussions of how community resilience can be developed and assessed. Although the Framework provides guidance for building community resilience and links to example initiatives, it fails to mandate any obligatory action by local government leaders. The only government legislation that the Framework draws from is the 2004 Civil Contingencies Act, which states that local authorities are under a duty to provide advice and assistance to the public in times of emergency.³⁸ The vagueness of this

legislation means there is very little legal obligation on local governments to support community resilience.

These government policies and reports represent the extent of community resilience policies put forward by the UK Government and within England. However, the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have developed their own active citizenship and civic participation policies and initiatives, which are reviewed in turn, below.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the concepts of citizenship and civic participation remain contested. Although Northern Ireland is part of the UK, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement ensures that the people of Northern Ireland can identify themselves as Irish, British, or both, and retain the right to hold both British and Irish citizenship.³⁹ Although the Good Friday Agreement enabled progress in terms of peace building, the process also raised questions about community structure and cohesion. For example, academics such as Hargie, Dickson and Nelson argue that, in several areas across the province, there are ‘fault lines’ dividing nationalist and unionist groups, which create strong homogenous communities but weak cross-community relations.⁴⁰ These fault lines transverse many social institutions, including sport and work.⁴¹ Although the Northern Ireland Executive strives to ensure equal funding across all communities, these fault lines can lead to a ‘separate but equal’ approach to community building which can perpetuate divisions across the broader society.⁴²

One example of a government programme aimed at supporting peaceful community participation and active citizenship is the Peace IV programme, which runs from 2014 to 2020.⁴³ This programme – which is jointly funded by the EU, the Northern Ireland Government and the Republic of Ireland Government – has been designed to foster participation and active citizenship, and explicitly promotes integration by supporting a range of activities that build positive relationships amongst people from different communities and backgrounds. Examples of such

activities include after-school clubs and holiday camps for young people, and projects to transform land into shared civic space.⁴⁴ Projects that received funding were deemed to be of a sufficient scale to have a transformative effect on local and regional areas and incorporated high quality design and sustainable development principles.

Phase I Evaluations of the Peace IV programme, released in 2018, revealed that there was positive impact in terms of increased respect for diversity and a positive predisposition towards others from different communities or cultural backgrounds. However, no change was evident for participants' understanding of their own identity and in-group identity.⁴⁵ The findings also showed that young people who participated in the programme reported a significant increase in their sense of personal agency, yet no change in their sense of community agency. Although these findings are only preliminary, they illustrate that effectively developing and facilitating community resilience programmes is not a simple task. Strategically planned initiatives to support community resilience may not have the predicted outcome regardless of the efforts and funding that are put in place beforehand.

Wales

Unlike in England and in Northern Ireland, the Welsh Government has elevated community resilience building into law. In 2015, the Welsh Government passed the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which required public bodies in Wales to work better with all people, communities and on another, and to prevent persistent problems such as health inequalities and poverty.⁴⁶ This Act identifies seven wellbeing areas that public bodies must ensure their work supports. Several of the wellbeing areas connect directly with community life, including: supporting resilience in all Welsh communities; supporting community cohesion; equality; and a vibrant culture across Wales. The Act requires public bodies to publish annual mission statements and reports illustrating their progress in each of the wellbeing areas. Although the Welsh Government's ambition to bring community

resilience-building into law is an exciting and innovative development, the strength of the Act in ensuring this is achieved is questionable.

This limitation is largely linked to the monitoring and policing process linked to the legislation. The progress reports written by the public bodies are assessed by the Future Generations Commissioner and the Auditor General for Wales.⁴⁷ The Auditor has said that, 'While bodies most commonly indicated that they did some or several things differently, they often failed to give a detailed explanation ... or provide specific examples.'⁴⁸ In response, the Welsh media have questioned whether the legislation has the power to make systematic change, since the Future Generations Commissioner is only able to 'name and shame' public bodies that do not behave within the spirit of the Act.⁴⁹ The environmental law specialist Haydn Davies argues that, in order for the Act to be successful, specific enforcement and accountability measures must be consistently implemented.⁵⁰ The Act has yet to be amended in order to ensure the legislation effectively delivers what was initially intended.

Although the 2015 Well-being of Future Generations Act has not been updated, the Welsh Government has released other policies and reports that have addressed community resilience issues. Similar to the 2018 report published by the House of Lords Select Committee, on Citizenship and Civic Engagement, Social Care Wales (commissioned by the Welsh Government) released a report in the same year entitled *Approaches to Community Resilience*. The report presented 11 recommendations for government and public bodies. These included: consulting local community groups and leading practitioners, establishing a cross-sector working group, working with health and housing partners, developing an assessment tool for resilience, supporting community infrastructure, and establishing a collaborative approach to community development.⁵¹

In response, the Welsh Government published its National Action Plan commitments for 2019-21. These commitments include the ambition to be more responsive and accountable to

citizens, by increasing engagement and collaboration with a wider range of stakeholders. The plan also outlines the Government's aim to take a more collaborative approach to local governance.⁵² Part of this objective involves strategically supporting rural communities with the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF).⁵³ Under the RCDF, the Welsh Government offers grants, primarily aimed at Local Action Groups (LAGs) and other community-based organisations. Its regional interventions are designed to prevent poverty, mitigate its impact in rural communities and improve conditions for future growth.⁵⁴

Although this action plan represents government commitments as opposed to legal obligations, the Welsh Government has budgeted funds to support the various initiatives outlined in the plan. This funding allocation illustrates the Welsh Government's intention to be actively involved in supporting the initiatives, unlike the Community Resilience Development Framework for England, which offers guidance to local government but does not offer any targeted funding.

Scotland

Like England, the Scottish Government released the Scottish National Performance Framework in 2018.⁵⁵ The framework does not dictate any legal obligations or strict monitoring strategies. Unlike the Welsh Government, public bodies are not required to publish progress reports for how their work is embodying the framework. The framework outlines specific national outcomes including one focusing on inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe communities where:

*[Citizens] live in friendly, vibrant and cohesive communities which value diversity and support those in need. [Citizens] are encouraged to volunteer, take responsibility for our community and engage with decisions about it. Communities are resilient, safe and have low levels of crime.*⁵⁶

Over the next ten years, the Scottish Government pledges to work with local government and community groups to deliver initiatives and funding that will help to achieve this vision of

communities. To track progress, the Scottish Government has identified eight national indicators that can be measured and monitored, including: loneliness; community ownership (number of assets, such as a community garden, in community ownership); access to green and blue space; and social capital (using the Social Capital Index, this considers social networks, community cohesion, social participation, trust and empowerment). Identifying these indicators is a valuable step towards ensuring monitoring and evaluation. However, since public bodies are not required to complete their own self-evaluation through progress reports, the responsibility of monitoring progress falls exclusively to the central Scottish Government. Since this 2018 framework has been introduced, no updated data pertaining to these indicators have been released.

Like Wales, the Scottish Government has allocated designated funding to support community resilience, in this case through the Investing in Community Fund. This fund is designed to 'empower communities... to tackle poverty, inequality and disadvantage on their own terms' and 'to promote a more responsive, community-led, place-based approach.'⁵⁷ This aligns with the ambitions of community growth and development set out in the National Performance Framework, focusing on deprived communities and disadvantaged rural and coastal areas.⁵⁸ Projects supported by the Community Fund have yet to release monitoring and evaluation reports.

Supporting and developing local leadership

A further example of an intervention that supports active citizenship, whilst strengthening community resilience across the UK, is leadership training. Local leaders can shape the success or failure of community programmes, and are integral in fostering social cohesion and community resilience. Developing the capacity of local leaders to advocate for and achieve community goals can be an effective means of developing community resilience.⁵⁹

Developing the capacity of local leaders to advocate for and achieve community goals can be an effective means of developing community resilience.

One such project is Civic Futures, a joint initiative by Dark Matter Labs, Koreo, The Young Foundation and the Greater London Authority (GLA).⁶⁰ The aim of the programme is to work with 25 community leaders to facilitate a collective knowledge-exchange and learning experience focused on peer relationships, enquiry and exploration, systems thinking and cooperation across London's civil society. Participants are a mixture of activists, artists, educators, organisers, connectors, technologists, carers, archivists and others, bringing a wide range of perspectives to discussions about transformative social change.⁶¹

Initiatives such as Civic Futures foster collaborative and active local communities, enabling individuals to build capacity to bring about positive, sustainable change in their local areas. Similar programmes are offered in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, although they are not always funded or delivered in partnership with local government. For example, the Inspiring Leaders programme, funded by Queen's University Belfast, offers young people currently volunteering in a position of leadership to participate in a four-day residential leadership programme.

It is worthwhile to reflect on who leadership programmes are accessible to, whether that be in terms of eligibility criteria, availability stipulations or travel expectations. Although empowering and training community members to effectively lead is a positive and commendable mission, barriers to participation often exist for certain individuals, and that has an impact on who is given a platform to lead change.

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Faith-based communities

Faith-based organisations and groups historically provided care, education, health provision and social support for communities before public services were introduced.⁶² In fact, many long-standing social service programmes and organisations in the UK originated from a faith affiliation.⁶³ Today, faith-based groups continue to fill the gaps in social support, especially for communities whose needs are not being adequately met by public services. For many of these faith-based groups, caring for and supporting communities is an integral part of their ethos and mission. Studies have shown that faith-based groups in the UK have often focused their efforts on the most marginalised and vulnerable in society, including: ‘destitute migrants and refugees; asylum seekers; adults with mental health, drug or alcohol problems; homeless people; and those living in, or on the margins of, poverty.’⁶⁴ Faith-based groups may also offer more ‘mainstream’ services such as play groups, youth provision and fitness activities. In short, the role that faith-based groups play in communities is complex and increasingly diverse.⁶⁵

Today, faith-based groups continue to fill the gaps in social support, especially for communities whose needs are not being adequately met by public services. For many of these faith-based groups, caring for and supporting communities is an integral part of their ethos and mission.

In some areas, faith-based groups play a central role in their community and may be the first point of contact for someone in distress. In addition, faith leaders may serve as leaders in their wider community. Given the status of some faith leaders, their support can have a significant impact on a community’s willingness to engage with a particular programme.⁶⁶ Faith-based groups can also offer access to other community networks.⁶⁷ This may be especially valuable in areas with a history of religious tension. For this reason, connecting with faith-based groups

whilst developing resilience-building initiatives can be helpful in ensuring success.⁶⁸ However, faith-based groups occupy a complex position in community building discourse, and some individuals and groups are strongly opposed to any interventions that involve them.

Some of this opposition derives from acts of violence and terrorism carried out by religiously-motivated individuals, which has led to stigmatisation and discrimination of entire religious communities.⁶⁹ Consequently, some funders view faith-based groups as problematic or ineffective for building social cohesion. A study on faith based charities in the UK found that:

Conflicting views on the role of faith in our society, and a high public awareness of a small number of negative impacts of faith and religion, can result in an attitude that is suspicious—and even hostile—towards religion and faith in some parts of the population, and in sections of the media.⁷⁰

Others oppose interventions from faith-based groups based on the fear that their services are a means of proselytising, rather than serving community needs.⁷¹ Furthermore, some view the funding of faith-based initiatives as a hindrance to the development of inclusive communities. Non-religious groups such as Humanists UK claim that:

The UK Government is increasingly encouraging religious groups to take on a role in local communities and pressing local government to welcome such religious groups as ‘partners’... However, there is strong evidence to suggest that what the Government intends amounts to new privileges for religion... In terms of social cohesion initiatives, religious groups and communities have been singled out by government as having a special importance and being in need of special attention and assistance, mostly in isolation from other communities and almost always to the exclusion of the non-religious.⁷²

These criticisms, in turn, can overlook the internal variability of faith-based groups and their initiatives. Faith-based groups vary substantially in terms of how openly they promote their

beliefs and, in some cases, they are not dissimilar to secular organisations working in the same area.⁷³ Nevertheless, it is important to consider whether individuals will disengage with resilience-building initiatives led by faith-based groups, and what steps might be taken to ensure that resilience is developed across the community.

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In some parts of the UK, government leaders and funding bodies have shown a renewed interest in faith group activities, as means of providing local services and supporting neighbourhood regeneration.⁷⁴ In some cases, local government and community groups have actively welcomed faith-based community interventions, particularly those that work with young children or the elderly.

An example of a faith-based organisation that is working towards peace and reconciliation across faith communities is St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace. St Ethelburga's is a Christian charity, based in London, that promotes social cohesion, understanding and peace through a wide programme of events. The Centre's work addresses three key social challenges: climate breakdown, refugee integration and community polarisation.⁷⁵ Although the centre is not funded by local government, it does receive funding from the Big Lottery Fund, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and over 20 other groups, associations and trusts.

In addition to offering a weekly church service and communion, the Centre organises workshops, training, community gatherings, refugee-run cooking classes, conflict coaching, leadership training, resilience training and spiritual ecology workshops, which are all open to the public.⁷⁶ It also offers a space in which community members can host their own community-

development initiatives, regardless of their faith background or beliefs. Although the Christian faith is a driving force behind the initiative, the work is inclusive of everyone regardless of their religious backgrounds.

Organisations such as St Ethelburga's serve as valuable and inclusive actors in promoting community resilience. However, in order to ensure effective partnerships with faith-based groups, an understanding of values, commitments, resources and limitations is required.⁷⁷

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5

Arts and culture

Twenty years ago, arts and culture based initiatives were perceived to be on the periphery of the community development process.⁷⁸ This view has since changed. Evidence has shown that art, as a medium, can enable individuals and groups to be more confident, skilled, employable and more active in the development of their local communities. In this way, arts and culture initiatives can make a significant contribution to enhancing community resilience.⁷⁹

The arts (which encompass performing, visual, literary and media arts) can address a broad range of civic concerns in creative, refreshing and cost-effective ways.⁸⁰ They have the power to connect cognitive reasoning, emotions and the senses – so that new perspectives and interpretations become possible. In addition to promoting resilience on an individual level, the arts can strengthen a community – for instance, by enabling the reconstruction of a group narrative after a tragic event and mobilise a community to take back control of their lives.⁸¹

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From a therapeutic perspective, the creation of art has been found to enable the retrieval and reprocessing of traumatic events which allows individuals to express themselves and progress their rehabilitation.⁸² This can be an effective way for children and adults to develop strength and resilience. In particular, adults who may find it challenging to express their emotions verbally may find that participating in the arts is a source of relief from emotional stress.⁸³

A key way that arts-based project can strengthen community resilience is by promoting interaction in public spaces, such as the

Open Studio method. Open Studio (OS) is a community-based arts practice, in which a publicly-accessible space is provided for the purpose of community engagement through art-making, often led by an experienced artist. OS can create a positive and safe space for dialogue through drop-in classes for all levels, community showcases and peace-building workshops. The OS strategy originates from a community-based therapy, inspired by Adler's 'Crucial Cs' play therapy framework: feeling connected to others, feeling competent in our skills and abilities, feeling that we count and are valued, and possessing courage to cope with challenges.⁸⁴

In addition to opening a social space to strengthen community relationships, OS and other similar arts-based initiatives have been found to develop skills that transfer to increased employability in areas such as software development, engineering and audio-visual industries.⁸⁵ Arts-based and cultural initiatives can also foster economic development within communities. For example, art created through arts-based initiatives – such as paintings, murals, music, theatrical performances and jewellery – may create new local industries and encourage local tourism.⁸⁶

Arts and culture-based community initiatives can also increase individuals' pride of place. By involving community members in the design, creation and upkeep of community places, exhibitions or performances, community members develop a vested interest in maintaining and celebrating these spaces. This can lead to an increased sense of pride and sense of responsibility. Research has found that if community members develop this communal sense of ownership, then they will also develop stronger bonds with the wider community.⁸⁷

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An example of a transformative arts-based organisation is the Stove Network.⁸⁸ Based in Dumfries, Scotland, the Stove Network has been acknowledged as a national leader in using arts and creativity to involve communities in shaping their own futures. This organisation's work merges three core areas: the arts, community development and social impact. The Stove engages the community, policymakers and creative workers with the aim of using the arts as a way to mobilise individuals to be agents of change. The projects put on by The Stove are welcoming and incorporate almost all artistic mediums. For example, the Reel to Real Cinema is a monthly screening of films outlining innovative ideas to initiate dialogue about positive social change.⁸⁹ The Lowland Project uses creative writing in the form of poetry, fiction, diaries and illustrations to create opportunities for a rich exploration of connection and belonging in Dumfries.⁹⁰ The resulting community repository of creative writing, which is still in progress, will hopefully be a valuable community asset that will foster a pride of place and of community for generations to come.

Although arts and culture-based initiatives have many strengths, there are also obstacles. Availability of funding and trained experts is a significant challenge for arts-based community development projects, since public funding for arts-based initiatives has significantly declined across the UK.⁹¹ Many community groups are unable to access the materials and, in some cases, the expertise. In some cases, local artists are being forced to relocate away from their communities in order to sustain their trade. This has meant that, in addition to a decrease of funding for arts-based initiatives, there has also been an 'artistic brain drain.'⁹² Brexit will potentially worsen this brain drain since the UK creative industries are set to lose more than £40m per year of EU funding.⁹³

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Some artists have expressed frustration about expectations that they should work for free, and concerns about how their creativity and skills are being positioned as voluntary social work.⁹⁴ For example, after Derry/Londonderry was awarded the UK City of Culture status in 2013, local artists reported that they had been asked to work for little or no pay and that organisers had urged artists to support their local community voluntarily.⁹⁵ In order to truly capitalise on the transformative powers of the arts and culture, additional funding must be secured and expertise respected, appropriately compensated and supported.

6

Sports and community leisure

Like the arts, sports can help to tackle social divisions, encourage community unity, raise confidence and improve physical and mental wellbeing. In addition, sport and leisure activities can foster a shared sense of purpose, accomplishment and effective management of conflict and pressure.⁹⁶ Physical activities and endurance sport can also support individuals to handle emotions effectively under stress, deal with anger and frustration and increase self-efficacy.⁹⁷ For young people in particular, participation in team sports can lead to positive peer relationships, a declining rate of anti-social behaviour, a stronger sense of belonging and higher self-esteem.⁹⁸ Sport can also serve as a catalyst for social and economic regeneration.⁹⁹ These benefits can significantly strengthen community resilience since, in addition to increased local community health, social networks can expand and economic opportunities are likely to arise.

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This transformative power of sport has been recognised by policymakers across the UK.¹⁰⁰ Sport policy is often interlinked to cultural, health and education policies and crime prevention.¹⁰¹ Research emerging from Sport England has shown that being active leads to benefits in five key areas - physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, economic development and community development.¹⁰² Their research provides evidence that sport can help to build more resilient communities by bringing people together regardless of age or identity, developing community pride and increasing social

capital.¹⁰³ These positive effects also extend to volunteers, spectators and to the wider friends and families of participants.

In addition to these social benefits, sports and community leisure activities are also a cost-effective medium for building community strength and resilience. For example, Parkrun has been described as a ground-breaking 'sustainable community lifestyle initiative',¹⁰⁴ and as a transformative social movement.¹⁰⁵ Parkrun began as a weekly five kilometre time trial for runners in Paul Sinton-Hewitt's running club, Ranelagh Harriers, in west London's Bushy Park.¹⁰⁶ Today, the event has evolved into a global force, with 577 Parkrun and junior Parkrun events in the UK and over 460 events across 22 countries.¹⁰⁷ To be as inclusive as possible, Parkrun organisers strive to minimise participation barriers. There is no upper age limit and children as young as four are allowed to participate. No special clothing is required, and there are no direct costs.¹⁰⁸ Studies have found that Parkrun has positive effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of participants, and leads to a strengthened sense of identity and a widened social network.¹⁰⁹

Sport and leisure activities also contribute to positive, welcoming community spaces such as parks and community centres. This can foster social cohesion, positive interaction and shared investment. For example, sports centres are often multi-functional hubs that add to community empowerment and community pride, and serve as a potential source of community tourism and revenue. Interactions with family, friends and neighbours create a stronger social network, increase the cultural capital of participants and provide community support.¹¹⁰ Therefore, even if community members are not personally participating in sport or leisure activities, this kind of shared space within a community enables the strengthening of resilience.

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Another example of a community-building sport that is having a positive impact on communities across the UK is boxing. Boxing is seen in many areas as a sport that has the power to bring people together, especially young people, and teach about health, discipline and respect.¹¹¹ Boxing clubs are also credited with promoting positive social behaviour and belonging, and in some cases preventing young people from entering into anti-social or even criminal activity.¹¹²

The Dale Youth Amateur Boxing Club, for instance, served as the 'social glue of the community' in the area surrounding Grenfell Tower.¹¹³ The club was located in the basement of Grenfell Tower and was therefore destroyed in the fire. It was subsequently relocated to a nearby car park, in order to continue its work with the hundreds of young people and adults who were members of the club. Recognising the rehabilitating role the boxing club had for the community, the architecture studio Featherstone Young offered to build the Dale Youth Boxing Club a new gym (documented by the BBC show *DIY SOS*).¹¹⁴ The club was reopened in September 2018 by London's mayor, Sadiq Khan – a vocal advocate for the community-building power of boxing. He said at the opening, 'What boxing does is give you is life skills: how to be magnanimous in victory, dignified in defeat, and a healthy lifestyle – how to keep you fit and active. But also, it gives you a family you can be part of, a sense of belonging. You cheer each other on and let's be frank, you stay out of trouble.'¹¹⁵ The new space also includes a multipurpose community centre, offering a platform for other types of creative engagement by local residents and a public space to come together.

Although sport can foster a positive community experience in many ways, it can also become a source of conflict between groups and can lead to further divisions.¹¹⁶ In competitive atmospheres, emotions can be heavily charged. To ensure that community sports programmes have a positive impact, specialists encourage participatory community involvement throughout the planning process. Sports-based initiatives must be planned strategically and involve the perspectives of a variety of local stakeholders, in order to succeed.

7

Business and entrepreneurship

Businesses form an integral part of communities. They serve as employers, trainers, investors and creators of community social space. Businesses can promote a cohesive and resilient local community, but they can also hinder community developments if community engagement is ignored. In order to promote community resilience, it is important that businesses co-operate and compete, which keeps money circulating. Circulation enables more community businesses to be established, increases employment, and boosts community assets in terms of spaces, services and expertise available.¹⁷ Importantly, a diversified local economy is also an essential characteristic of a resilient community. Locally-rooted organisations also have valuable insight into what the needs of the community are and how they can best be met.¹⁸

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Small and large businesses serve an important role in supporting community programmes and initiatives, by providing funding, resources and expertise. For example, businesses can support targeted development projects and research. The Young Foundation partnered with the Co-Operative Group to develop the Community Wellbeing Index, which maps how people across the UK conceptualise wellbeing within their communities.¹⁹ These findings were combined with data relating to access to education, community public spaces, transport links, housing, employment levels and other indicators for the strength and resilience of a community. By entering a postcode, users can access a community's wellbeing score and a breakdown of

various sub-categories, such as 'Culture, heritage and leisure', 'Equality', and 'Transport, mobility and connectivity'.¹²⁰ The index is a powerful tool for community members, businesses and local government to analyse the needs of their localities for free.

Businesses are also being called on by local communities to be more conscious of the environment and to be supportive of the social economy.¹²¹ Social economy refers to organisations that engage in economic activities with social and ethical goals. Businesses following this model attempt to achieve a synergy between economic and social aims.¹²² Social economy models create a strong engagement with local values and resources, such as land, traditional crops and dishes, and food that supports physical and mental well-being.¹²³ In addition, community markets, community gardens and community farming practices contribute to place-based culture and identity.¹²⁴ This type of social economy also supports knowledge-transfer, the skill and capacity development of the community, and increases cohesion and social capital.¹²⁵ By relying more on local assets, markets and expertise, community food enterprises have become financially self-sustaining and more resilient.¹²⁶

'Growing Together' is a Welsh initiative that supports community groups to access income, land and skills in order to make their community growing projects financially self-sustaining.¹²⁷ Between 2013 and 2018, over 70 training events were held with over 600 people attending; 38 groups received support from businesses with a total value of £234,655; and 295 groups generated alternative forms of income and increased their sustainability.¹²⁸ A similar initiative is taking place in Northern Ireland. 'Growing Resilience' is a five-year project aimed at increasing social capital and resilience in the community growing sector.¹²⁹ The programme supports volunteers to connect, share skills and strengthen their ability to work sustainably in a tricky financial landscape. Patricia Wallace, the Northern Ireland Development Co-Ordinator says:

'Community gardening makes a unique contribution to community development. It provides a communal space for people to come

*together to socialise and enjoy growing healthy fresh food. When we slow down to the pace of nature, we relax; giving real health benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing. When we grow food in a community space there are huge social benefits for ourselves and our community... This programme nurtures and sustains these groups, helping them to thrive into the future.*¹³⁰

Another initiative to support communities through businesses is the Business in the Community's (BITC) arc programme, in partnership with Social Enterprise UK. The arc programme supports businesses to connect with social entrepreneurs to collaborate, share skills and create sustainable benefits for the wider community.¹³¹ Inspired by the business development that emerged from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the need to create a lasting legacy for some of London's most deprived communities, arc was created to deliver in-depth business support and upskilling opportunities to help social enterprises grow. To date, arc has supported more than 150 social enterprises to grow which has created more than 5,000 jobs for local communities.

Changes in the way people are working is having implications on the strength of place-based communities. A recent trend in the UK that is broadening employment opportunities is homeworking. Homeworking provides increased flexibility, for example individuals are able to continue living in more rural areas whilst working for an urban employer.¹³² Homeworking can be a cost-effective option for employees and employers, as it decreases the cost of travel, relocation and work space. Although improved technology is opening up communication opportunities for homeworkers, the trend can have a negative impact on communities, by diminishing the social networks that are nurtured in traditional workplaces. This may render certain individuals more vulnerable to social isolation and hence may decrease community resilience.¹³³

The 2019 Cumberland Lodge Report on *Working Identities* investigates the changing world of work and its impacts on identities and people's sense of belonging.¹³⁴ The report highlights

that, in addition to changes in the nature and location of work, employment contracts have also been changing since the late 20th century. There has been an increase in 'more precarious, less secure and more flexible work, leading to the growth of the "working poor" and an increase in the number of people in need of multiple jobs.'¹³⁵ This shift is not conducive to building community resilience since it leads to increased uncertainty and potentially inconsistent economic and social circumstances for individuals and wider communities.

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8

Education

Schools and other education partners play an important role in supporting community development, increasing social engagement and strengthening community resilience.¹³⁶ Educational institutions can prepare communities for change and can promote peace, reconciliation and collaboration across groups. In addition, educational spaces can serve as community hubs and provide a neutral space for discussion. The role of educational institutions in supporting community resilience can be divided into three areas:

1. Compulsory schooling
2. Training and skills development for adults
3. Partnerships with higher education institutions.

Compulsory education and school-community partnerships

Although the home is usually positioned as the most influential learning environment, the school is often placed second, since it plays a vital role in shaping a child's future.¹³⁷ A child's school experience has a lasting impact on their development and future success as an adult.¹³⁸ In addition, communities with high levels of social capital tend to have stronger school-community relationships. Improving school-community relationships can, in turn, increase community social capital. Examples of these kinds of school-based community building services include: out-of-school-hours care, school information nights, and school events that are open to the wider community.¹³⁹

Research has shown that school-community partnerships can effectively support 'distressed' urban and rural areas. In this case, 'distressed' refers to area-based deprivation, poverty and high levels of social exclusion.¹⁴⁰ Within this method, schools expand beyond delivering academic and social support to also provide

health and social services to children, families and the wider community.¹⁴¹ Schools are an important link that can connect families to other support services. As well as supporting young people's academic development, compulsory education nurtures motivation, confidence and social well-being. All of these elements can help to foster community resilience.

High levels of young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET') can have detrimental effects on a community, partly because these young people are more susceptible to social exclusion, low self-esteem and depression.¹⁴² Communities with greater numbers of NEET members can experience higher levels of anti-social behaviour and even shrinking populations, due to residents relocating away from the area.¹⁴³ Between July and September 2019, there were 800,000 young people (aged 16 to 24 years-old) in the UK who were classified as NEET.¹⁴⁴ Evidence has shown that the largest NEET populations tend to be concentrated in particular towns and cities.¹⁴⁵ There appear to be two factors that have a particularly significant correlation with the likelihood of young people being out of education, employment or training: poor educational achievement, and low socio-economic status (especially for those growing up in communities marked by poverty and underperforming schools).¹⁴⁶ This highlights the way in which inequalities experienced by deprived communities across the UK can be perpetuated.

Training and skills development for adults

Supporting community members, both young and old, to secure employment and continue development is a common strategy in order to increase community cohesion and resilience. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills has found that strengthening an individual's skills and experience can support individual and community resilience by increasing the probability that people will be able to find and maintain employment.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, to foster individual and community resilience, support should include initiatives

that enable adults to return to education and to develop the specialist knowledge and skills that enhance their employability.

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One way in which the UK Government has tried to increase employment opportunities is through the apprenticeship levy that was introduced in 2017.¹⁴⁸ The apprenticeship system forms a key part of the UK's youth employment policy.¹⁴⁹ Skills centres across the UK also contribute to greater resilience through educational opportunities. The Southwark Construction Skills Centre is a shared strategic and developmental partnership driven by the Skills Centre, Southwark Council and Lendlease, a multinational construction company. The main aim of the centre is to increase employment and development opportunities for local people by providing training for those who either wish to enter or to progress within the construction sector.¹⁵⁰ The centre partners with local employers, community groups, industry leaders, further and higher education organisations and local stakeholders to drive industry improvement. The centre also runs school engagement activities.

Partnerships with higher education institutions

Higher education (HE) institutions can play an important role in supporting and developing community resilience. This involves removing barriers that inhibit students from participating in higher education, as well as building HE-community partnerships that share expertise, services and resources.

In many countries in which the HE system requires tuition payments, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds

are less likely to attend, compared to their more economically-advantaged peers. Over the last 15 years, the UK has moved to close this gap. In 2016, the Office for Fair Access (now the Office for Students) reported a 65 per cent increase in the number of students from the most disadvantaged areas entering higher education over the past ten years, which has led to the lowest ever difference in entry rates between students in England from the most disadvantaged and most privileged areas. Despite this progress, socio-economic inequalities remain in participation rates at selective universities, particularly those in the Russell Group.¹⁵¹

An example of an HE institution that is working against access barriers to support learner and community development is the Open University. Established in 1969, the Open University (OU) offers flexible and distance learning across the UK and in 157 countries worldwide.¹⁵² A central part of the OU's mission is to promote inclusion, diversity and development.¹⁵³ The OU has more than 168,000 students, all over the world. It has also welcomed more than 27 000 students with disabilities. This type of flexible and distance learning is enabling more individuals to access higher education and to further develop their expertise and employability, which is further strengthening their individual and wider community resilience.

HE-community partnerships enable groups to share expertise, services and resources in order to further develop their local communities. Research collaboration frequently takes place between universities and groups in their neighbouring community, and the Community-University Partnership Initiative (CUPI)¹⁵⁴ was established to support these initiatives. The CUPI supports community organisations and HE institutions to pursue research collaboration that benefits all partners and communities involved. Funding is available to support meetings, public engagement and to access required services. Such connections develop innovative insights and solutions to improve community life, whilst widening the skills and knowledge of those involved.

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Other HE institutions support community resilience by offering grants and expertise to fund local community projects and social development initiatives. For example, the University of Brighton supports the Bevy Community Pub,¹⁵⁵ a community-owned pub that reinvests all profits back within the community. The pub opened its doors in 2014 in the deprived area of Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, just outside of the centre of Brighton. The pub runs charity movie nights, a 'Dementia Café' for local residents, a '50+ Activity Club' for older people, a running club, photography and printing courses, singing groups, local food delivery to counter social isolation and various volunteer opportunities. They are also conducting a research project on how to effectively tackle loneliness, with the University of Brighton.¹⁵⁶ This HE-community partnership builds on the experience of The Bevy in tackling loneliness and social isolation through their various community initiatives and the university's expertise in developing digital health solutions. The project will involve The Bevy and the University Brighton working together with local communities to strengthen community resilience in the area, which could later be applied to other areas facing similar social challenges.

9

Conclusion

This briefing outlines how community resilience can be developed and strengthened through community-based initiatives and partnerships between individuals and groups. What has emerged is that, whilst the challenges faced by communities are complex and always changing, the desire to improve community life is a shared one. People and institutions have the ability to initiate and drive transformative change, aimed at improving places and the lives lived therein, through social action, campaigning, grassroots work and local leadership. Although local funding is key, it is only one part of the answer: funding alone will not lead to long-lasting developments in greater community resilience; community engagement and collaboration are essential for ensuring that funding is applied in effective ways.

Although local funding is key, it is only one part of the answer: funding alone will not lead to long-lasting developments in greater community resilience; community engagement and collaboration are essential for ensuring that funding is applied in effective ways.

The contribution of several key areas of community life to community resilience and social cohesion are explored above. In particular, this briefing highlights the community-building opportunities related to collaborative and active citizenship, faith-based communities, arts and culture, sport and leisure, business and entrepreneurship and education. Each section of highlights theoretical underpinnings and real-life examples to demonstrate how these areas of community life can be harnessed to equip communities to thrive in the face of adversity. In many ways, these areas are interconnected and must work collaboratively, across groups and time, in order to bring about effective change. The examples highlighted above demonstrate that effective community programming promotes inclusivity,

generosity and shared goals, rather than exclusivity, rivalry and competition of resources.

This briefing document also highlights the fact that communities each have a unique set of values, histories and experiences. Moreover, they are each composed of individuals with unique strengths, weaknesses, interests, hopes and fears. Communities therefore have distinctive human, natural and economic resources available to them. In order to develop and support community resilience effectively, efforts must be made to understand a community's unique identity. No one approach will be widely applicable, but there is still value in gaining insight from the experiences of other communities.

Resilience-building initiatives must also take into consideration the fact that each community possesses distinctive, complex power structures. In order to build community resilience, these power structures must be understood and worked through. It must be recognised that those who hold the least power in a community are often those least likely to be consulted or promoted and, hence, most likely to be forgotten. In order for holistic community resilience to emerge, inequalities, exclusions and hierarchies must be considered and deconstructed.

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Therefore, the methods and processes involved in fostering community resilience need to be distinct, and thoughtfully developed in order to suit the needs of a particular community. An effective social cohesion project in one context may lead to further social divisions and tensions in another, if applied thoughtlessly. Successful examples explored in this report are mitigating this risk by ensuring that programmes and initiatives are led by local citizens and that strategic planning is applied appropriately.

The question of who is, or should be, responsible for nurturing community resilience also emerges in this briefing. Some academics have critiqued government resilience campaigns, arguing that such policies place too much responsibility on community members and not enough on government responsibility.¹⁵⁷ This leads to the debate of whose money, time, skills and expertise should be relied on and drawn from, in order to strengthen resilience?

Key questions

In addition to providing a general overview of research and initiatives related to community resilience across the UK, this briefing document is also designed to spark questions.

Before attending the conference, we encourage you to reflect on the following questions and any others that might have emerged through your own reading:

- What other areas of community life can contribute to strengthening community resilience?
- How should community resilience be defined in order to ensure it fosters positive and inclusive communities?
- How can communities, community leaders and others be equipped with the resources they need to overcome challenges?
- How can effective external support be provided without disempowering community members?
- How can the national government support local communities in a way that does not perpetuate inequality?
- How can the government effectively and efficiently allocate funding to community-based resilience initiatives?
- How can community leaders be selected and trained in order to foster equality and inclusivity?
- How can resilience building initiatives also support social, economic and environmental progress?

- How can community resilience be monitored and evaluated across the UK?
- How can public bodies and other community actors be held accountable to ensure that their actions support and foster community cohesion and strength?

Throughout the conference at Cumberland Lodge, these questions will be used to provoke collaborative discussions and innovative thinking from participants. Participants will be encouraged to add their own expertise, experiences and perspectives, in order to foster rich dialogue and shape evidence-based and practically-informed recommendations that can help to inform resilience-building initiatives in the future.

10

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