Ward 14 Area Partnership

February 2023

Thriving Places Drumchapel – Report

Introduction

Thriving Places in Glasgow was set up as a ten-year strategy to be delivered in 10 areas in Glasgow. In Drumchapel TP started in October 2016 and on completion of ten years, should terminate in 2026. With this date on the horizon, it is an opportunity to take stock and think about possible future developments.

Ever since Thriving Places (TP) initiated in Drumchapel, in 2016, TP has evolved. We have now established a small team of community development workers with a focus on democracy and local people's participation. The team consists of Charles Bailey and Tracy Mckenzie, both local people, with a rich experience in volunteering in the community and Michelle Donaldson, a community activist of many years in Garthamlock, who did her three-year student placement with Thriving Places. All three are Glasgow University graduates and are funded through the National Lottery as self-employed workers. Ted Scanlon, the fourth member of the team, funded through GCC and HSCP, is employed by Cernach Housing Association, the Thriving Places host-anchor organisation.

Since May 2018, TP has a space in the Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland charity shop in the shopping Centre, which works as a drop-in for any resident in Drumchapel, and at times, beyond. This report presents a summary of the activities that TP engages in, supports, or delivers in the community and suggests possible future developments.

"Living in Drumchapel" & the Community Connecting Plan

We conducted a piece of participatory action research between October 2017 and June 2018, funded by the Scottish Government Aspiring Communities Fund, which resulted in the report entitled "Living in Drumchapel" available on the GCC website together with a video of the report. From the report we extracted the main themes and produced a Community Connecting Plan. However, due to Covid restrictions we had to suspend the delivery of the Plan and readapt our work during lockdown. We contacted Scottish Government (SG) to propose that we use the fund to support different activities during the lockdown in Drumchapel, to which the SG agreed. We also used the SG funding as a trampoline to access further funding made available to support communities during the restriction periods.

Response to Lockdown

During the lockdown period we submitted three consecutive bids to funds made available by SG which were, the Supporting Communities Fund, the Recovery Fund,

and the Recovery Fund Uplift. We used these funds to support 44 families with devices to tackle digital inclusion, helped 142 families struggling to keep the house warm and feed their children, as well as workers who were furloughed with only 80% of their wages, on many occasions the minimum wage. We also used these funds to support 14 small local businesses like hairdressers, taxi drivers, window cleaners and others, all people who were not familiar with the benefit system as they had never accessed it previously.

Added to the challenges with covid 19 restrictions, some local organisations had their funding reduced and we managed to support 4 of these organisations with a small “bridge” fund until they accessed other funding sources. During the covid restriction period we funded “Halloween in the Hoose” 2021 and participated in the door-to-door distribution of food parcels on the day. We produced 2 editions of the Drumchapel News during this period, distributed to all 7858 families in the G15 area, informing of activities, services and organisations that could be accessed during the lockdown period.

Community Budgeting

Since 2017, we have engaged in four community budgeting initiatives with grants received from the Northwest Health Improvement Team. The process, from establishing criteria to approving the projects, is decided by the participants. It is an exercise in participation and democracy, learning as a community, how to administer an amount of public funds. To date we have supported a total of 61 small community projects with 16 in 2017-18 (10K), 14 in 2018-19 (15K), 16 in 2019-20 (5K), and 15 in 2020-21 (10K). We have available a further £3,500 for the period 2022-2023

Friendship House

Friendship House is a space where asylum seekers and refugees can meet every Wednesday in the hut adjacent to Essenside Church. TP funds these meetings with some food and together with other organisations engages with asylum seekers and refugees living in Drumchapel who need help with any issue, from form filling, to signposting to different agencies they require. Food from the Foodbank together with clothing donated is distributed by volunteers.

ESOL – English to Speakers of Other Languages

One of the main challenges facing asylum seekers and refugees is English. In response to this TP has organised ESOL classes, twice a week, in partnership with Glasgow Clyde College / Anniesland Campus. There is an average weekly attendance of 12 participants. Once completed a cycle of ESOL classes in the community, the tutor contacts the college about the possibility of the participants enrolling in more advanced English classes at the college.

Community Hub Research

At the Area Partnership meeting, at the beginning of 2019, the community was informed that GCC had set aside £20 million to install 6 community hubs in Glasgow, one of them in Drumchapel. At the same meeting it was agreed that the Community Council, supported by TP, would lead on consulting the community about this issue. Due to covid restrictions the consultation process took longer than previously planned. However, after 18 months of engaging with the community in door-to-door contacts, holding conversations in the Shopping Centre, and once eased the restrictions, organising several focus groups, this consultation process has now concluded. A report entitled the "Community Hub Report 2022, Hope on the Horizon," has now been produced. The report was launched in November 2022 where it was decided that an Action Group would be created to take this initiative forward and respond to the community's aspirations expressed in the consultation.

Linked to the community hub issue is the Community Centre which will be vacated by the NHS on 31st March 2023. We as TP took the initiative to convene several voluntary sector organisations to discuss how to keep the Community Centre under local control. This resulted in 17 voluntary sector organisations agreeing to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI), as a collective, to People Make Glasgow/Communities. The EoI proposes that the Community Centre be reopened by Glasgow Life on the 1st of April and the Collective will then start a process of participatory research with the community to find out the best way to transfer the Community Centre over to the community.

Activate Course

We have established a partnership with Glasgow University to deliver the Activate Course. The course focuses on community development, where community activists can further develop their skills and knowledge in community work. In 2021 we delivered our first Activate Course initially with 15 local people registered and the course concluded with 11 participants as some had to leave because of family and work commitments. The course has a duration of 40 hours spread over 10 weeks. For those who conclude the course, they are guaranteed an interview at Glasgow University with the possibility of enrolling in the BA degree in Community Development. Of the 10 who concluded, 2 attended the interview for the BA and were accepted.

Informing the Community

The community connectors work from the space in the Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland shop in the shopping centre. At least one of the team is there Monday to Friday from 10 am to 4pm. Every six weeks the team gives an update on TP activities to the Breakfast & a Blether forum. The team also meets regularly with the GCC and NWHIT representatives in the area and submits reports to Cernach Management Committee and staff as required. Four editions of the Drumchapel

News per year inform the entire community in the G15 postcode of the ongoing activities. Each edition is also uploaded onto the GCC Community Planning website to share the Drumchapel TP experience with other areas in Glasgow and beyond.

Some feedback from the community & voluntary sector organisations

"Thank you to Thriving Places, it is hugely appreciated by the whole family. You are all doing outstanding work that will be remembered. Keep up the fight."

"I am in shock, you do not know how much this means to me and my family, you guys are a God send. Thanks again"

"You are life savers, thank you again, this payment will really help us through the coming months."

"I think it is really important to continue the work you have done…to encourage more social activities and pull as many organisations together as possible to do this"

"Drumchapel would become more isolated without Thriving Places"

"Thriving Places has a role to play in making sure the community has a voice in the asset transferring in the community. The community needs to be heard in regard to this development and the best team to support this is Thriving Places"

"The team do a lot of support for the asylum-seeking families…and have been brilliant integrating families and the local community"

"Its (TP) communication and ability to bring people together have been excellent, providing a focus for collaborative action to address these issues"

"The staff care a lot about the people they work with and have valuable knowledge of community development and Drumchapel"

Funding Accessed in the period 2017-2023

Fund	Funder	Purpose	Amount	Activities
Aspiring Communities Fund	Scottish Government & European Social Fund	Research "Living in Drumchapel"	£23, 000	299 face-to-face interviews 150 online responses 200 copies of report Dnews special edition (7858 copies) Paid expenses to 6 local people who conducted the research
Aspiring Communities Fund	Scottish Government & European Social Fund	Delivery of Community Connecting Plan	£73,600	3 self-employed workers Initiated implementation of Plan Redefinition of activities approved by SG due to covid
Supporting Communities Fund	Scottish Government	Supporting Vulnerable Families & Small Businesses with one-off financial payments	£40,000	Financial payments (max £500) to 48 families struggling to access food, electricity, and gas
Recovery Fund	Scottish Government	Financial support for families	£55,140	Continued with one-off financial payments to 94 families Supported 4 local organisations struggling due to lack of funding Self-employed 2 local people

				as workers
Recovery Fund Uplift	Scottish Government	Digital Inclusion and food vouchers	£35,760	Funded 25 devises to workers and families 37 families received food vouchers
Digital Inclusion Project Fund	Glasgow Life	Digital Inclusion	£3,300	13 families received a device
HSCP/Northwest Health Improvement Team	Northwest Health Improvement Team	Community Budgeting	£50,000 (over 4 years)	Funded 61 small community projects
TNL Community Led Fund	The National Lottery	Community Connecting Plan	£150,000	Delivery of Community Connecting Plan
The National Lottery Cost of Living Fund	The National Lottery	To support families struggling due to the costs of living crisis	£21,900	Fund distributed to 7 voluntary sector organisations
Community Hub Fund	GCC/ People make Glasgow/Communities	Participatory Action research	£4,900	Participatory Action Research
Total	**Various sources**	**To deliver TP Community Connecting Plan in Drumchapel**	**£457,600**	**Wide range of activities to support individual and collective empowerment of local people**
Thriving Places GCC/HSCP 6 years	GCC/HSCP	Salary for Community Connector plus seed corn activities	**£252,000**	Guaranteed community connector in post and variety of seed corn activities

During the six-year period 2017-2023, building on the TP statutory funding of £252,000 from GCC and HSCP, TP Drumchapel has accessed a further £457,600 from other funding sources.

Reflecting on our Practice

Based on our 6 years of presence in Drumchapel and our research report “Living in Drumchapel”, we define ***the aim of Thriving Paces in Drumchapel as contributing to social change through the individual and collective empowerment of local people in Drumchapel.*** This implies engaging in a wide range of activities, both on an individual and collective basis. However, as community connectors, our focus, to reach our aim, is more about collective participatory activities. These activities include support for, or the creation of, relevant fora, whether thematic or issue-based, participatory budgeting, group creation and generating more local control over the individual and collective development of the people of Drumchapel.

To reach our aim, we regularly revisit what we are doing and reflect upon how the activities we promote, deliver or support are contributing towards reaching that aim. Our activities imply also creating groups of people who can lead and take forward, under local control, what local people would like to see happen in Drumchapel. From this perspective we are clearly prescriptive in our approach linked to creating an alternative narrative and practice to that which the dominant classes in society continue to force upon each one of us. As community development workers, we are contributing to fulfilling our own personal goals in life, supporting each other in solidarity, with care, believing in the possibility of social change and generating hope.

Aware of the constraints that exist at global, national, and local levels, we consider TP Drumchapel to be an ongoing learning process for all involved. Between December 2022 and January 2023, we asked a few representatives of voluntary sector organisations, currently working in Drumchapel, about how they see TP and if they had any suggestions about future development. The responses were all positive, with some suggestions on how to take the initiative forward. The main ideas that emerged were: TP has shown the ability to adapt its plans due to changes that have taken place over the six years; TP has a practice which brings people and organisations together; we are approachable and attend to local people, expressed in our ethos of solidarity and care; we have engaged with and supported many asylum seekers and refugees who have come to live in Drumchapel; we promote

participation and democracy; for many we are a last resort as there are many gaps in the system, and we inform the community about what is happening locally.

All these activities challenge us as a team to combine with a more recent urgent call for Community Development to reclaim its radical and sustainable agenda underpinned by participatory democracy & social justice. To this end our focus is on local people gaining more control over their personal and collective development, channelled through a wide range of participatory and democratic activities, generating hope, no matter what the challenges.

Next Steps

On completing six years in Drumchapel, and with the previously Glasgow-wide agreed timeline of ten years for the TP initiative coming closer, which in our case is 2026, we consider it appropriate and opportune to consider what would be the next steps for TP in Drumchapel, also in terms of structure. We have become a collective of four community development workers, with a daily presence in the CHSS shop from Monday to Friday, 10 until 4pm. We report back to Breakfast & a Blether, to GCC and HSCP through the two local representatives, and to Cernach HA as the anchor organisation, as well as to our funders.

Our practice has evolved over the past six years to the extent that TP in Drumchapel could be at the stage where another structure is required, perhaps to become an autonomous organisation. For this to happen we would need to continue with, if not the same, at least similar funding sources, which could support TP through a transition period. It could be considered by GCC/HSCP as implementing an exit strategy to comply with the ten-year deadline. We would also require support from the local community, local organisations, and the local elected members to take this process forward.

We are open to suggestions as to what would be the most appropriate way forward, also in terms of structure and will visit a range of options should the continuity of TP meet with sufficient support. GCVS has considerable experience in this field, and we will consult them on the different possibilities. Clearly, a meeting with GCC Community Empowerment & Equalities and HSCP will be necessary to inform of the

possibilities and consider any forthcoming suggestions. Cernach HA has already been informed of this discussion and is supportive of taking this process forward.

To help with the discussion we suggest some points which are the following:

- A future TP structure would be decided by those willing to take part in the process, with a strong, but not exclusive, focus on local people's participation
- We would look at a variety of possible structures, one which would guarantee an organisation created with, for and by the people, for example, perhaps a community trust or a cooperative or other
- To guarantee financial sustainability of a new TP organisation in Drumchapel we would need to count, initially, on the current funding sources, GCC, HSCP and TNL. If possible, we could try and attract the four community-based housing associations and GHA to make a commitment, which could be for a trial period of three years
- A new appropriate structure to sustain TP will require one that reflects the Drumchapel TP ethos and helps implement our practice. Our ethos is rooted in the principles of trust, care, compassion, solidarity, and a firm belief in the importance of local people's active involvement in decisions which affect their everyday lives, which we define as participatory democracy
- In terms of structure in the voluntary sector, in most cases, what we have seen is an adaptation, at times a direct application, of the statutory organisations' structures, which, it could be argued, are similar to the private sector. The voluntary sector requires more fluidity to be able to experiment new forms of participation and democracy, and the search for a new TP structure in Drumchapel could present itself as an opportunity to attempt something new.

Rethinking TP Drumchapel presents itself as part of an ongoing learning curve in search of ways to collectively combat poverty and inequality, promote social justice, challenge how society is currently organised and propose new forms of meaningful participation and democracy. We would like to invite as many contributions as possible about the future of TP and are open to participation in this process.

Charles Bailey, Michelle Donaldson, Tracy McKenzie, Ted Scanlon.