

# Together Through Tough Times

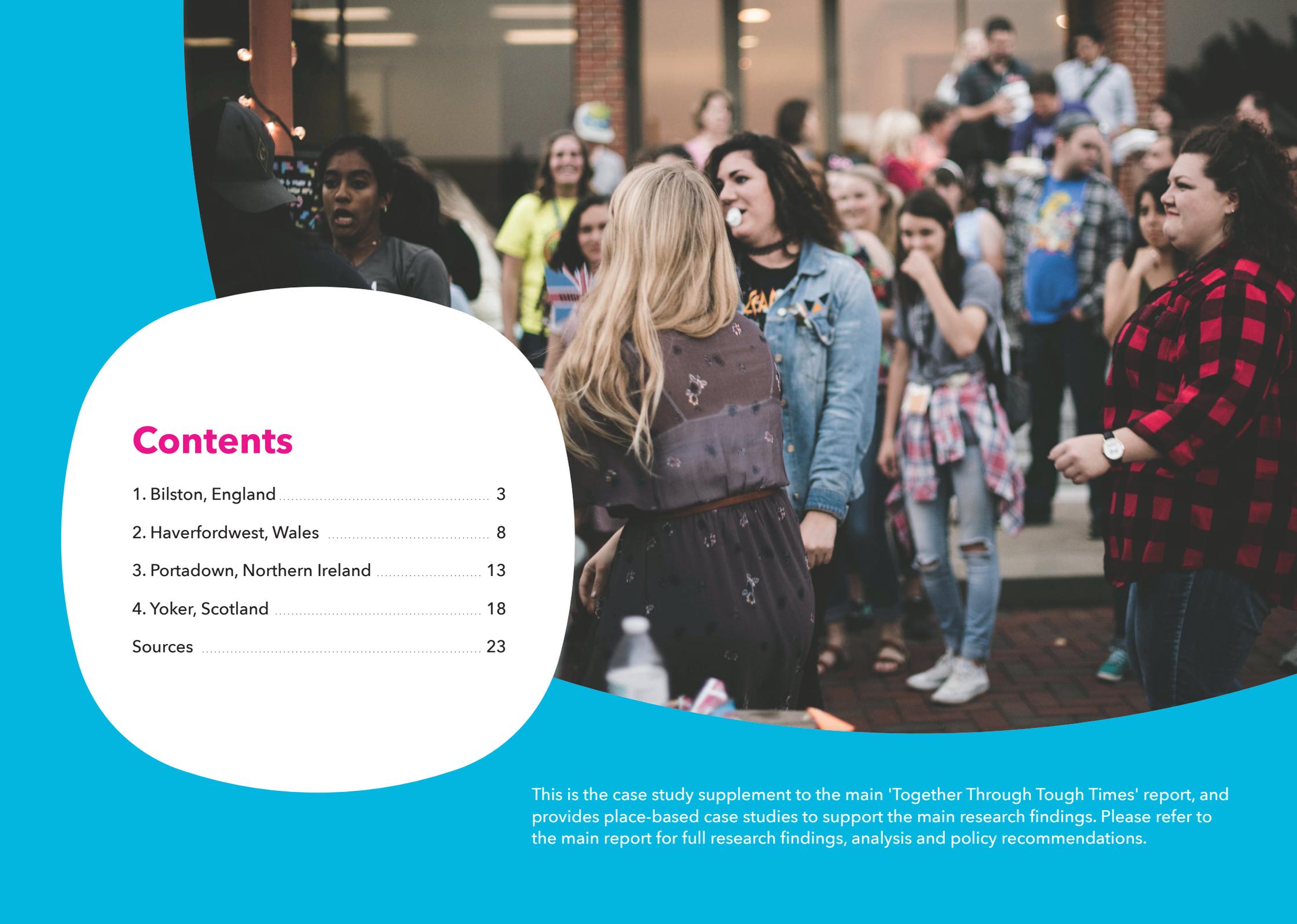
The power of community to support  
mental wellbeing across the UK.

Community case studies



in partnership with





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This is the case study supplement to the main 'Together Through Tough Times' report, and provides place-based case studies to support the main research findings. Please refer to the main report for full research findings, analysis and policy recommendations.

## Case study:

# Bilston, England

Bilston is a market town in Wolverhampton's suburbs with a population of 32,000 people.



## Community measures

% population working age: <sup>1</sup> .....	64.5%
% population from minoritised ethnic communities: <sup>2</sup> .....	27.2%
Unemployment rate: <sup>3</sup> .....	9.8%
Average household income: <sup>4</sup> .....	£16,493
Average house price: <sup>5</sup> .....	£152,382
Property price to income ratio: <sup>6</sup> .....	8.96
Public green space: <sup>7</sup> .....	3.4%
Crimes per 10,000 population: <sup>8</sup> .....	1,384
General election turnout: <sup>9</sup> .....	53%
Local election turnout: <sup>10</sup> .....	24%
Petition signing per 1,000 population: <sup>11</sup> .....	45.35

## Co-op Community Wellbeing Index data overview<sup>12</sup>

- Wellbeing: Above England average
- Economy: Below England average
- Strengths: Equality, education & learning and transport, mobility & connectivity

## Research participants

- 10 local residents (incl. 3 recently bereaved)
- 7 community groups and organisations

## Key challenges identified by the community

- High and persistent unemployment
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Physical environment and access to services
- Cohesion: with smaller close-knit communities who are not always friendly or welcoming

# What does resilience look like in Bilston?

## Community Approaches

“People are quite habitual [in Bilston], they tend to do the same things at the same time, so they make friends and see familiar faces. It might be fish and chips on a Friday or Sunday roast dinners or buying certain things on certain days. All these interactions make people feel better; they know that if they go to the fruit and veg store at midday quite a lot of people they know will be there. And if ‘x’ isn’t at the store at his normal time, someone will ring him to see if he’s okay. My dad does this - he checks up on people.”

Community organisation representative (migrant support), Bilston

- **Resident support networks:** It was noted that Bilston has vibrant clubs and pubs which are particularly important for the town’s older residents. It is common for residents in Bilston to check up on each other when they have broken from their usual routines, for example, if a ‘regular’ was not seen at the butchers or the pub at their usual time or had

not attended the local darts club. Support and mutual aid between neighbours were also felt to be common in Bilston, and this has been important during coronavirus.

- **Resident-led peer support:** Following the suicides of several young men in quick succession in their community a few years ago, a group of residents took it upon themselves to establish an online mental health peer support group. The Facebook group has several hundred members and has become a space where residents from the Bilston and surrounding area share mental health challenges and offer support and advice to each other. Since the outbreak of coronavirus, activity in the group has increased, as people have sought support for challenges associated with the pandemic, such as increased isolation, anxiety and depression.
- **Community centres.** Bilston has a network of community centres that host a range of activities and services. This includes IT classes, English lessons, pre-school groups, friends and neighbours’ coffee mornings and senior citizen lunches. The town benefits from the Bilston Resource Centre that focuses on providing employment, advice and training for residents and they have

good links with the local job centre. The Resource Centre has recently established a community café, which provides paid and voluntary roles for residents returning to work as well as food and a welcoming space (pre-coronavirus) for the town’s older and vulnerable residents.

- **Bereavement Information Hub:** Residents benefit from a Bereavement Information Hub based at the Bilston People’s Centre. The Hub provides an informal friendly place for residents to talk to others who have experienced loss and grief. The group helps residents to form self-supporting support networks, and has trained volunteers so that they can facilitate conversations with people who have experienced bereavement and loss.
- **Base 25.** Base 25 is a youth charity that provides a wide range of support for young people including anger management, counselling, and interventions to tackle anti-social behaviour, gangs and sexual exploitation. Bilston is one of five areas in the Wolverhampton area that benefits from an area-based team delivering street-based mental health interventions and, following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, an expanded digital counselling service.

## Structural Factors

“Compared with Wolverhampton, Bilston seems a lot more vibrant. In part that’s to do with the free parking which encourages people from outside the area and increases footfall. This helps local businesses to thrive. Wolves doesn’t have this. Wolverhampton is not vibrant, businesses are closing; it’s not what it was. But in Bilston on a market day it’s always busy.”

Community centre representative, Bilston

- **Public spaces: A vibrant town centre.**

Despite the town centre being a bit 'run down' in places, participants emphasised that Bilston’s high street, and markets were popular with both locals and with people from the surrounding areas. It was suggested that customers appreciated the good value and range of shops and stalls and free parking which was not common in neighbouring towns. With good levels of footfall and viable local businesses, Bilston had a vibrancy and buzz that many surrounding areas lacked. This meant that residents were more likely to see familiar faces and to stop and chat.

- **Good public transport.** Many highlighted that Bilston was well served by public transport. There are trams that can take you into Wolverhampton, a good bus network, and easy connections to Dudley. This supported employment opportunities and access to a range of services that had been centralised in Wolverhampton.

- **Outdoor spaces and leisure centre.** Local outdoor spaces help some residents to maintain their mental health and wellbeing through finding peace and quiet or doing exercise. The town also benefits from a large recently built leisure centre, which several residents highlighted as being important to their wellbeing. As well as the therapeutic benefits of physical activity, residents talked about the social benefits of taking part in exercise classes and of seeing regulars at the gym or swimming pool.



## Identities, historical narratives and context

**“It has a strong identity; the local councillors would tell you that. Because Bilston was always Bilston. It merged with Wolverhampton in my life time, and sees itself as separate. I just think it’s such a well-established community, with generations of families who have been there a long time. People tend to move to an area where they already have some connection. So you get strong communities who have only experienced slight changes.”**

**Local authority representative, Bilston**

- **Identities & belonging:** Close-knit communities and a sense of belonging. It was emphasised that many families in Bilston have deep roots in the area, with older generations having worked in the area from when larger industrial employers were based there. New generations often choose to live close to where their parents and grandparents are based. This has created stable and close-knit communities who can support each other in times of need, but there is the risk that this bonding social capital restricts the growth of bridging social capital.
- **The town’s distinct Black Country identity:** Residents, especially the older ones see themselves as ‘Bilstonians’ and will point back to a time when the town was administratively separate from Wolverhampton, which has contributed to the sense that the town has its own distinct identity and history.

- **Friendliness:** Many participants emphasised that Bilston was a friendly place, and this was seen as one of its main strengths. Because the town’s hubs were well used, there was a strong chance that you would see people you knew or recognised. Many talked about a culture of saying ‘hi’, of speaking to regulars at the pubs, and of stopping and chatting. Several residents emphasised that acting in this way was an important part of maintaining their mental wellbeing.
- **Humour in the face of adversity:** A number of participants observed that in Bilston people faced with adversity sometimes used humour to make light of problems, to signal their stoicism and to raise their spirits. It was suggested that this was common in the Black Country, where working class communities had often faced adversity as industry and prosperity had declined. While humour supports a friendly local identity and was identified as a common coping strategy, it was suggested that it stops people talking about mental health. Humour means that some people were not always open about admitting they had problems and might only seek support only when they reached a crisis point.



## Resilience in action:

Kasia is 25-34 years old and moved to Bilston more than six years ago. She has three children and is separated from her partner.

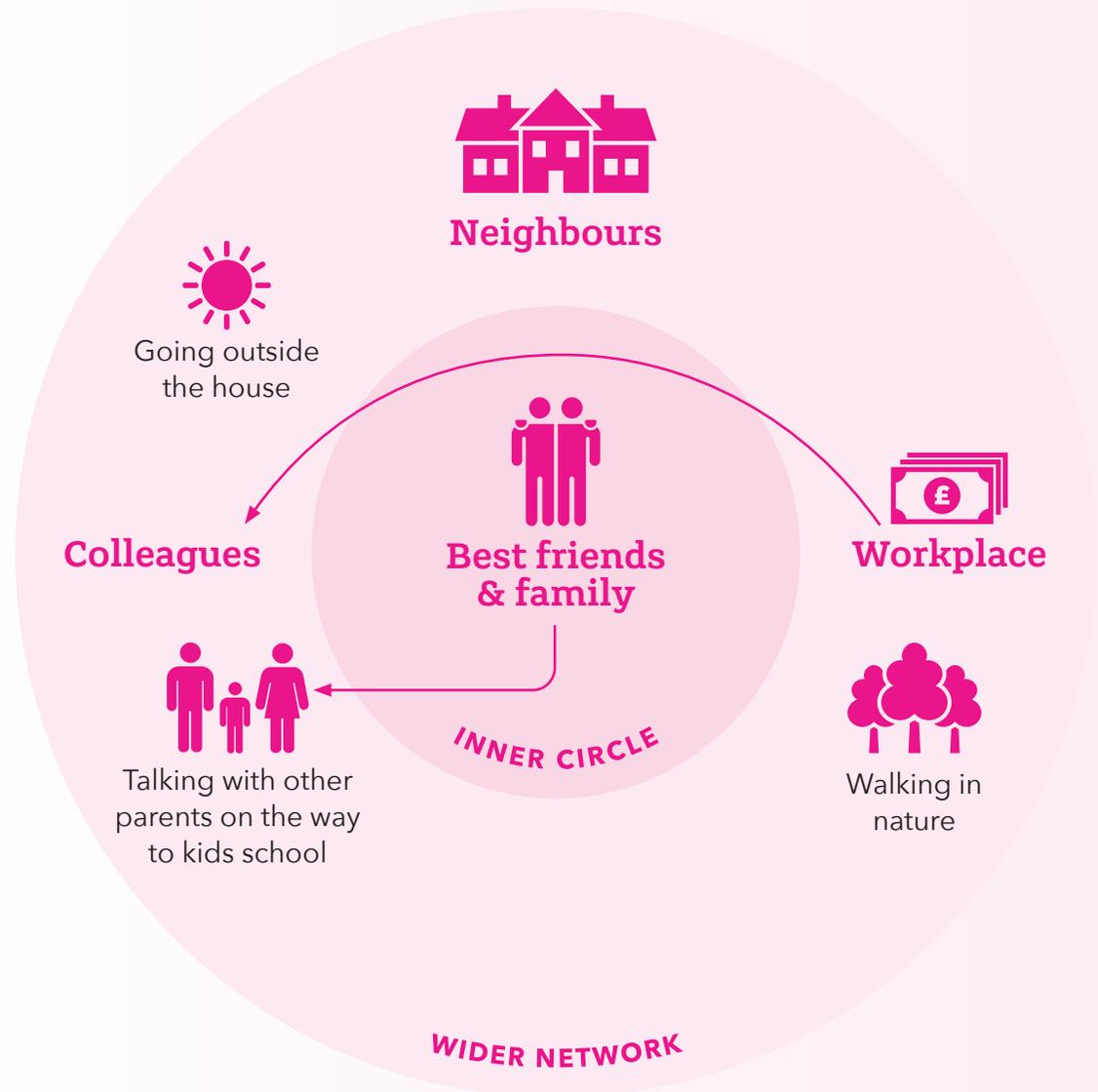
In her inner circle are her **family** - her children, and her parents who are from Poland, who she chats to online. Her mum is the first person she would call with a problem.

She has a small number of **close friends** - who are non-judgemental - and who she can always have a long chat with, and they will listen to her. Without family and friends, she feels that things would be much harder.

She feels that her children are something positive to fight for, and that they keep her focused.

In her outer circle there are a few **neighbours** she can rely on. If she goes back to Poland, one will even feed the cats - she trusts them enough to give them her keys. Kasia feels that it is nice to have people near you that you can trust. One of her neighbours is a retired paramedic, so he is a good person to know. She'll also regularly chat to parents on the **school run**.

Kasia **works** as a chef in a community café. Cooking relaxes her and she has made friends there. They usually talk about food; it is something they are all passionate about and the time flies when she's doing a shift. It is very good for her mental health. To keep well she needs to go outside regularly. She gets so much from being **in nature**, and any space outdoors can help her; she really hates to be stuck inside.



## Case study:

# Haverfordwest, Wales

Haverfordwest is the county town for Pembrokeshire with a population of 14,474. It is surrounded by countryside.



Photo © Dylan Moore (cc-by-sa/2.0)

### Community measures

% population working age: <sup>13</sup> .....	63.5%
% population from minoritised ethnic communities: <sup>14</sup> .....	7.6%
Unemployment rate: <sup>15</sup> .....	4.9%
Average household income: <sup>16</sup> .....	£17,467
Average house price: <sup>17</sup> .....	£163,659
Property price to income ratio: <sup>18</sup> .....	8.75
Public green space: <sup>19</sup> .....	4.8%
Crimes per 10,000 population: <sup>20</sup> .....	1,778
General election turnout: <sup>21</sup> .....	70%
Local election turnout: <sup>22</sup> .....	44%
Petition signing per 1,000 population: <sup>23</sup> .....	36.83

### Co-op Community Wellbeing Index data overview<sup>24</sup>

- Wellbeing: Above Wales average
- Economy: Below Wales average
- Strengths: Equality, education & learning, health, culture, heritage & leisure

### Research participants

- 10 local residents (incl. 3 young people)
- 9 community groups and organisations

### Key challenges identified by the community

- Lack of non-seasonal, good quality jobs
- 'Gloomy' town centre with few shops
- Lack of employment/training opportunities, and activities for young people
- Anti-social behaviour in public spaces
- Substance misuse among <40 age group

## Community approaches

**“A large number of third sector organisations within a small radius, that are accessible and offer a drop-in service, so you can feel better in an hour. People often go off the boil if you say ‘let’s meet within a month’.”**

**Community network organisation representative**

Community approaches are actions or initiatives undertaken by local community groups and organisations or residents. In Haverfordwest this included:

- **Wide range of mental health support and drop-in services.** Haverfordwest has a wide range of services and initiatives that directly or indirectly support mental health resilience, some aimed at the general community and some catering for specific audiences/issues. Many interviews mentioned Get the Boys a Lift, a coffee store with mental health drop-in services that was set-up via crowdfunding by a group of

young men to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention. It is mainly used by the 16-30 age group, especially young men, who do not meet NHS criteria, face long waiting lists, do not know where to go to for help and/or have been previously let down by the system. Others mentioned the importance of Mind Pembrokeshire’s Resource Centre, which provides evening drop-in services when nowhere else is open.

- **Mutually supportive voluntary and community sector.** Community organisations spoke of each other in a supportive, generous manner and described informal co-operation e.g. referring clients to each other, or help given when starting out. The local Voluntary Sector Network – Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) – was considered to provide ‘glue’ between services e.g. through its Community Connectors, networking events, helping new community groups get established and/or signposting residents to the most appropriate service.

- **Clubs, leisure and social activities/spaces.** Local residents spoke of the importance to their own mental wellbeing of being able to access sports, leisure and creative activities outside their own home e.g. organised clubs, the gym and/or leisure centre, or local pubs and cafes. Some interviewees noted lockdown had increased appetite for virtual activities: a young carers’ group increased its reach when it moved online, and an adult carer said activities such as a local art group moving to Zoom had enabled her to participate in the community more than ever before.



- **Volunteering.** Two residents had become involved in volunteering, both encouraged to do so by people they had worked with to improve their own mental wellbeing. They spoke in highly positive terms of the effect on their self-esteem and sense of purpose. Another young resident was about to start as a volunteer mentor at school. A resident who had never been involved in volunteering said that ‘coronavirus kindness’ had changed his view of volunteering and he now planned to do this next time he was between jobs.

- **Mental health support in schools.** School or college was a key source of support for the three young residents interviewed, from individual, empathetic members of staff or more formal roles such as the student welfare service or youth worker. The latter are part of the local authority youth service which also runs youth activities and has a portacabin in the skate park which can be used as a hub for involving young people. Young residents spoke of the skate park and the library as places where they could relax.

- **Places of worship-led support.** While the role previously played by places of worship such as churches and chapels are considered to have declined, one resident spoke of how her local church (which she did not attend herself) ‘radiated love’ and was an organising point for local community events and a foodbank. Another resident spoke of how their local church had provided psychological support to parishioners during the pandemic; and the importance of faith in maintaining her personal mental wellbeing.

## Structural Factors

“It’s a huge thing, it’s peaceful. Nature is beautiful in itself, to have it unblemished in the area. It offers opportunities to go out and have some fun time, or personal time. Building up memories.”

Resident, Wellbeing and resilience map workshop

- **Public infrastructure and resources.** Several community organisations noted that Haverfordwest benefited from its status as the county town in terms of its infrastructure and resources. It is the transport hub, has public buildings such as the council, schools and colleges and general and psychiatric hospitals. Some community organisations also spoke of resentment in surrounding areas about this investment compared to the rest of Pembrokeshire.
- **Access to nature.** The easy access to green open spaces enjoyed by Haverfordwest residents, both within and around the town, was commonly identified as a key supporter of mental resilience. This had been particularly important during the lockdown when many residents went for walks e.g. along the town’s river, the local racecourse or the country immediately around the town. The coastline is also 15 miles away, but access to this requires a car or the ability to pay for transport. A youth worker noted that a recent trip she had organised to the local coast had been the first time some of the young people had ever visited it. A young resident expressed frustration at how expensive it was to get out of Haverfordwest and visit friends who lived elsewhere, or just get a change of scene.



## Identities, historical narratives and context

“Mental health is very much talked about in Haverfordwest. It makes it normal. It’s very much acceptable to say ‘I have mental health problems, anxiety’ – it’s accepted – more so than in other places I’ve worked. People step forward to help, rather than stepping back.”

Youth organisation representative

- **Friendliness and belonging.** Local residents and community organisations emphasised the friendliness of Haverfordwest. People check on and offer help to neighbours, and it remains small enough that you can feel that you belong, and know and are known by others – e.g. you get to know the faces of the people who use the same supermarket. Public spaces such as local pubs or the street provide a welcoming atmosphere to those from outside the local neighbourhood or town. However, some residents also spoke of a decline in the everyday neighbourhood estate spirit e.g. estate-based community celebrations and get-togethers are now a rarity compared to previous generations.

- **Looking out for others.** Local residents and community organisations were able to cite examples during and before the pandemic of people in neighbourhoods, schools and churches ‘pulling together’ to support local people at times of trouble; e.g. raising funds or goods for families after crisis events such as a house fire, bereavement, accident or illness. They spoke of a community where people look out for each other, in a town which is still small enough to enable this to be effectively put into practice.

- **Acceptance of mental health.** Community groups emphasised the open, accepting and supportive attitudes found in Haverfordwest towards mental health, even compared to other locations in the same county. This was evident in resident interviews, with nearly all willing to discuss issues around their own mental health. Both community groups and a couple of residents mentioned Mind’s annual mental health awareness celebration within the town. Young residents spoke of the prominence of mental health and wellbeing in school/college discussions and activities.

## Resilience in action: Chloe

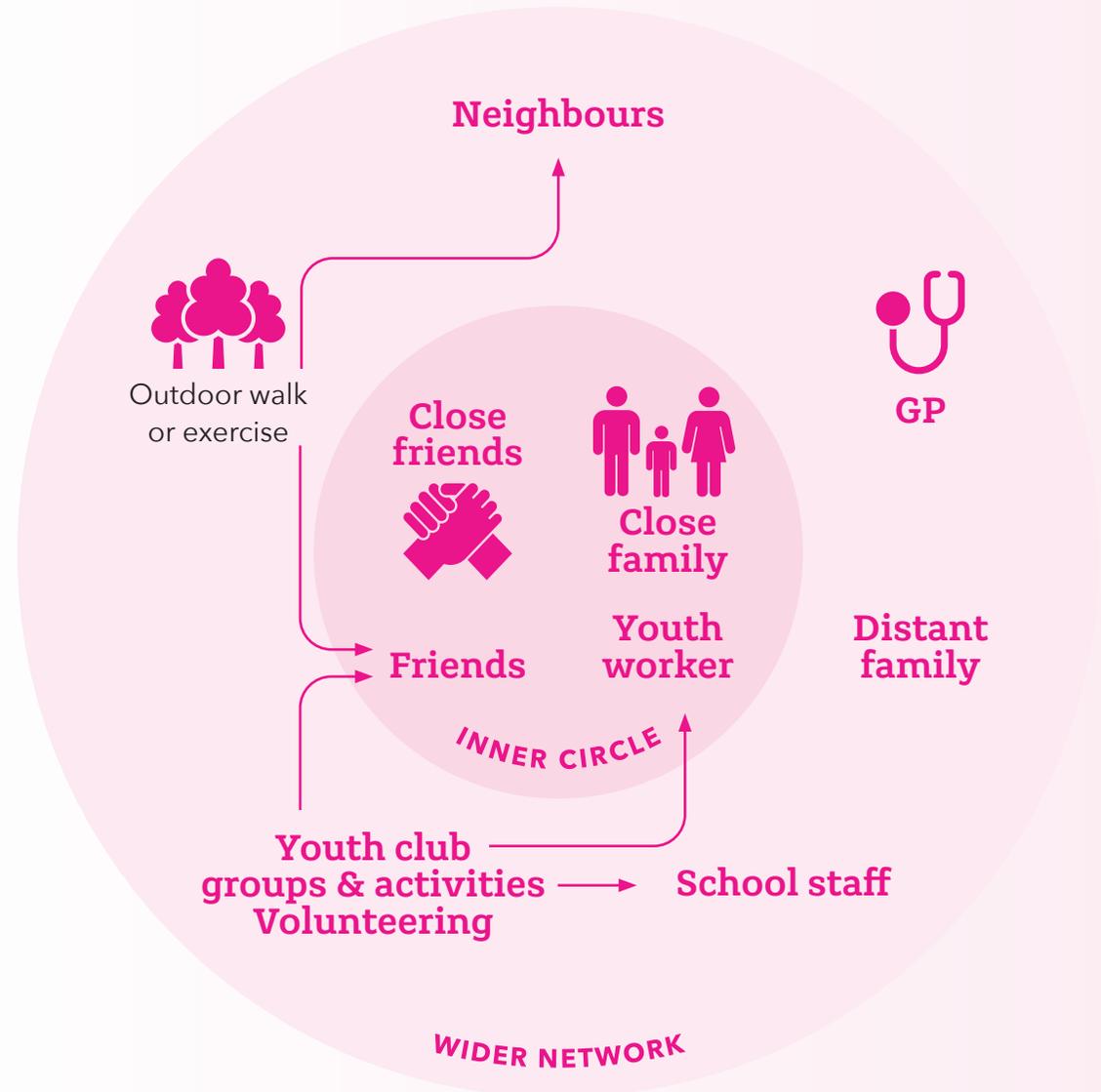
Chloe is aged 16 and has lived in Haverfordwest for several years.

Chloe's **parents and school youth worker** are the main support for her mental health and wellbeing. She completely trusts her parents especially her Mum to understand whatever she is going through, and to keep it confidential. She feels she could always go to her school youth worker for support, and found a school referral to counselling helpful.

The **GP** is trusted as a 'last resort': their advice about managing the stress of online schooling was helpful. There are limits to what Chloe would want to tell friends: she would not want to burden them too much with her problems.

**Youth groups** and **volunteering** are a big part of Chloe's life and wellbeing. She accessed these initially through her school youth worker. They provide a 'reason to get up in the morning' and give her a voice and further opportunities for involvement.

Chloe enjoys spending time with close friends, e.g. during the pandemic going for long walks in **green outdoor spaces** which enable them to open up to each other about how they are feeling. A structure of twice-daily short walks has made Chloe more productive and better able to manage the stress of online schooling.



## Case study:

# Portadown, Northern Ireland

Portadown is a town in the larger Craigavon area within the County of Armagh. It has a population of around 22,000.



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### Community measures

% population working age: <sup>25</sup> .....	65.0%
% population from minoritised ethnic communities: <sup>26</sup> .....	2.3%
Unemployment rate: <sup>27</sup> .....	4.9%
Average household income: .....	not available
Average house price: .....	not available
Property price to income ratio: .....	not available
Public green space: <sup>28</sup> .....	1.2%
Crimes per 10,000 population: <sup>29</sup> .....	924
General election turnout: <sup>30</sup> .....	58%
Local election turnout: .....	not available
Petition signing per 1,000 population: <sup>31</sup> .....	36.14

### Co-op Community Wellbeing Index data overview<sup>32</sup>

- Wellbeing: Above Northern Ireland average
- Economy: Below Northern Ireland average
- Strengths: Education and learning, culture, heritage & leisure, equality

### Research participants

- 10 local residents (incl. 3 recently bereaved)
- 10 community groups and organisations

### Key challenges identified by the community:

- Isolation of older, rural population especially during the coronavirus pandemic
- Tension with newer migrant population through competition for jobs and resources
- Legacy of the Troubles on mental health and high suicide rate
- Public and private substance abuse
- Anti-social behaviour
- Historic division within the town under the surface

## What does resilience look like in Portadown?

### Community Approaches

**“Strong relationships with schools and community groups. I’m not interested in just delivering training and education. We build relationships for ongoing support and we’ve done that in Portadown/Craigavon and that’s how resilience is built.”**

**Mental health and wellbeing organisation representative**

- **Social media support groups.** Local Facebook and WhatsApp groups are an important resource for sharing emotions and mobilising action. During lockdown residents gained support through local social media groups where people shared struggles. Facebook groups also mobilised support. For example, people raised money for a family whose house was burned down, and a local resident organised a weekly kayak clean-up campaign in the river Bann.

- **Individual resilience activities.** Several local community organisations deliver activities that help improve people’s individual resilience. For example, local church groups organise sport, prayer groups and singing that bring people together. Youth groups have embedded a self-affirmation approach within their work where young people are challenged to do activities that build self-confidence. Migrant support groups help new community members with practical English and integration.

- **Community based health and mental wellbeing support.** The Southern Trust and Action Mental Health provide wellbeing and mental health support through a community development approach. The Southern Trust piloted a community health worker programme in Portadown where local community workers were trained to deliver wellbeing sessions for residents. Action Mental Health build long-term relationships with community leaders and empower them to support local people and signpost when needed. Alongside this, the national ‘Take 5’ programme was a wellbeing resource mentioned by a few community workers and residents that enables them to maintain their own resilience and speak to others about mental wellbeing.

- **Strong network of voluntary and community sector organisations.** There are a lot of active community organisations in Portadown organised around religious or residential communities. The church, residents’ associations and cultural centres for new migrant communities all offer significant support for the communities that they serve, but there is limited collaboration between them (although some say this is changing particularly in terms of the coronavirus pandemic response). These organisations support residents daily by offering an informal space for people in those communities to drop in and find support and form strong local connections. These hubs are vital in responding to shocks – seen through the coronavirus pandemic response – and they are places people congregate following local tragedies like suicide.

- **Local leadership.** VCS organisations are led by passionate community leaders that are embedded in their local communities and often draw upon experiences of the Troubles to drive their community work. There are some concerns that these leaders were aging and no new ‘leaders’ in their 30s or 40s are emerging.

## Structural Factors

“I think the local council also invested a lot in the opportunities – through groups and that sort of thing so they have worked out what they can offer to help people.”

Female resident, 65-74, Portadown

- **Outdoor spaces.** Local outdoor spaces help residents to maintain their mental health and wellbeing through finding peace and quiet or doing exercise. This mostly focussed on developed walking and cycling paths on the river Bann and Craigavon lakes. The rural location makes countryside walks and parks accessible for some residents as well.
- **Funding and local authority support.** Community workers in Portadown area are keenly aware of funding opportunities through the lottery and local government. They often feel confident applying for funding for community projects - especially in relation to cross-community work.
- **Infrastructure.** Portadown benefits from good central location with transport links to both Belfast and Dublin. It also has established local employers - the Craigavon hospital as well as local manufacturing at Moyes Park. Although employment is often not well paid, people thought there were reliable jobs locally.



## Identities, historical narratives and context

**“Everyone knows each other and helps out. As soon as something happens it’s on Facebook and everyone helps out. There is pride in the town and helping each other.”**

**Female, 25-35, Portadown**

- **Close-knit, family-based community.**

Residents and community organisations emphasised that Portadown is a community of strong family bonds. Many families have lived in the area for generations, which can provide a strong support network for everyday responsibilities such as childcare as well as crisis support in times of need. These strong bonding social capital rests upon shared history and enables residents to navigate some of the complexities of local community.

- **Friendly, divided and tolerant.** Residents and community organisations described a complex day to day life in Portadown that is on one side a friendly “small village” but also “a divided town”. The friendliness has its roots in welcoming hospitality – a place where people always smile, say hello and look out for each other and supports bridging social capital. The divisions refer to the legacy of the Troubles, and the sense still from residents that division exists “under the surface” in the places people live and socialise. Many residents and community workers feel that the arrival of new European migrants has changed the balance of the town in a positive way and given a new attitude of tolerance over division. They emphasise how sports clubs, integrated schools and workplaces continue to support the development of bridging social capital.

- **Willingness to help.** Residents, local community groups and organisations emphasised the willingness of Portadown people to help each other. At a community level this was seen through the number of volunteers, and in social media appeals the amount of engagement when people need help locally. Several residents took pride in the way residents have helped each other during the coronavirus pandemic. In particular, residents took pride in the level of help and support between communities.

- **Toughness through adversity.** All interviewees linked community resilience to the Troubles. At an individual and community level all interviewees had some lived experience of the Troubles – either as an adult or a child in the 1980s and 90s. There was a belief that the town and people will recover from hardship, as well as an appreciation for peace and good times and increasing tolerance. The challenges are the under-lying trauma that makes itself evident in high suicide rates and prevalence of mental health problems.



## Resilience in action: Fiona

Fiona is 25-34 years old and has lived in Portadown her whole life.

Fiona's **fiancé, friends, parents and cat** are her main support network. She offers support to her shielding parents. Her fiancé lives in the next town and is her main day-to-day emotional support. Friends offer weekly connection and an opportunity to unwind with Zoom calls, walks and a glass of wine.

Fiona lives on the edge of town and can access **green space** easily. She walks the canal towpath alone to clear her head and switch off as well as smile and say hi to local people.

Fiona is **active in a few local hubs**. She gains a sense of purpose **volunteering** in her local church and community association - making PPE and calling vulnerable residents. Her **faith also calms** her when she is feeling overwhelmed. She is a primary school teacher and youth leader, and she has built friendships in both roles. In particular the 'banter' with **colleagues** and young people helps her wellbeing.

Her parents introduced her to these hubs growing up, and she **does recognise that Portadown can be a difficult place for new arrivals**. During lockdown she has connected more with her neighbours who are Eastern European and discovered many shared values around family and community as well as day-to-day practical support.



## Case study:

# Yoker, Scotland

Yoker is a former shipbuilding community in north west Glasgow with a population of 12,295.



Photo © Thomas Nugent (cc-by-sa/2.0)

### Community measures

% population working age: <sup>33</sup> .....	69.3%
% population from minoritised ethnic communities: <sup>34</sup> ....	15.4%
Unemployment rate: <sup>35</sup> .....	10.7%
Average household income: .....	not available
Average house price: <sup>36</sup> .....	£112,473
Property price to income ratio: .....	not available
Public green space: <sup>37</sup> .....	9.2%
Crimes per 10,000 population: <sup>38</sup> .....	385*
General election turnout: <sup>39</sup> .....	72%
Local election turnout: <sup>40</sup> .....	44%
Petition signing per 1,000 population: <sup>41</sup> .....	55.80

### Co-op Community Wellbeing Index data overview<sup>42</sup>

- Wellbeing: Above Scotland average
- Economy: Slightly above Scotland average
- Strengths: Education and learning; culture, heritage and leisure, health

### Research participants

- 9 local residents (incl. 2 young people)
- 7 community groups and organisations

### Key challenges identified by the community:

- Lack of quality jobs in the local area
- Lack of facilities and activities for young people
- Public and private substance abuse
- Anti-social behaviour
- Lack of public space
- Limited integration of minoritised ethnic communities

\*This statistic includes the surrounding areas of Knightswood and Scoutstoun, and so is not fully representative of the crime rate in Yoker itself. Crime rates for the Yoker area alone were unavailable.

## Community Approaches

“[Yoker has a group of] very enthusiastic, socialist people from 40-50 years ago... building it up [after deindustrialisation], weaving those important community bonds and relationships – it has been established over a long, long time.”

Community network organisation representative

- **Local leaders.** A small group of passionate community leaders that run key community organisations have driven the development of Yoker’s voluntary and community sector. However, while these leaders had taken steps to get other residents involved with running the community (and the different groups within it), there were also concerns among local groups that no younger, identifiable ‘leaders’ had emerged since. Some of the residents interviewed were also unaware of who the community leaders in Yoker were, which suggests that not everyone has been reached through community engagement.

- **Strong signposting network of voluntary and community sector organisations.**

Yoker has a network of closely linked community organisations. The strength of this network is supported by regular, informal contact between group leaders (many of whom have been in post for a long time, trust and know each other well) and a shared ethos that local groups exist first and foremost to support the local community. In practice this meant that residents who were struggling with their mental wellbeing or other problems could approach any organisation that they trusted for support and, if needed, would be easily signposted or have a community response built around them.

- **Shared knowledge between organisations.**

More ‘formal’ community organisations in the area help smaller community projects to grow and prosper. This included examples of the local Resource Centre helping new, smaller groups navigate governance documents, or supporting members of the community to set up a local peer support group. Elsewhere, local projects such as a Men’s Shed have grown out of Yoker Parish Church.

- **Taking care of the community.** There were stories of residents creating Facebook groups where they discuss issues that are affecting the community and how to respond to them. There were also examples of residents helping to support and grow local ideas and businesses. For example, one resident created Yoker’s ‘Braw Wee Garden’ – a small stone garden on the local cycle path created by a local woman. Residents have since added features to ‘grow’ the garden. The garden also has a Facebook page.

- **Individual resilience activities.** Several local community organisations deliver activities that help improve people’s individual resilience. For example, local youth charity DRC Generations supports young people to identify challenges that other young people face in and come up with solutions in response. Other groups have embedded self-affirmation approaches in their work, such as a local church singing group regularly reminding people of their value as part of their sessions.

- **A shared vision.** Local community organisations employed a consultant to help create a shared, cross-community vision for Yoker to inform the local five-year statutory plan for the area. This shared vision supports organisations to work towards a set of common goals across their different communities and also helped local organisations to demonstrate their suitability for local council funds. The local Voluntary Sector Network also helps local organisations to have a shared voice to inform local funding, planning and service delivery decisions.



## Structural Factors

**“Yoker Resource Centre is an umbrella organisation... different projects [are based there] but they are all part of same family... [it fostered] a family approach, they were all on each other’s boards, all personally involved in projects, that brought knowledge and expertise and forced partnerships, learning and helping each other.”**

**Community representative**

- **Community hub.** The presence of a single Resource Centre (that multiple community activities emerged from) was felt to have fostered close collaboration between organisations and across neighbourhoods. In contrast, surrounding areas with multiple centres were felt to be more fragmented with weaker collaboration between groups. The centre was also seen as an obvious first point of call when people had problems or queries, though some residents felt it had suffered of late due to a lack of funding and activities.

- **Infrastructure.** Yoker was felt to benefit from good bus and train links into and out of Glasgow. This enabled local people to look for work in Glasgow (which helped to mitigate the lack of jobs in the local area), but also provided people who could afford to travel with an easy connection into rural countryside outside of Glasgow.
- **Outdoor spaces.** Local outdoor spaces help some residents to maintain their mental health and wellbeing through finding peace and quiet or doing exercise. This ranges from walking through quieter side streets away from Dumbarton Road Corridor to the cycle path along the River Clyde (though this could be littered). A few residents also highlighted the importance of small patches of green space in their neighbourhoods; these were places where neighbours could bump into each other and chat. Yoker’s park, however, was often avoided as those in surrounding areas were within reach and nicer.

## Identities, historical narratives and context

“Yoker is a pragmatic community... they see an issue and do something about it rather than have meetings for years discussing how something needs to be done. This isn't a community ... [that] chases the latest funding focus, this is a community that sees a problem and works together to find a solution.”

Mental health and wellbeing organisation representative

- **Close-knit, family-based community.**

Interviewees described Yoker as a community of strong family bonds. Many families have lived in the area for generations. These extended family networks help people to manage everyday responsibilities (e.g. childcare) and mitigate the effects of crises. However, not all residents had family members (or strong relationships with them) in the local area. Several of these residents felt isolated as a result.



- **Warmth and friendliness.** Interviewees described Yoker as a friendly place where “everyone knows everyone” and “looks out for each other”. This was a complex identity perceived to be a blend of Glaswegian sociableness and a shared community experience of shipyard deindustrialisation and the hardship that followed. The geographic layout of Yoker - with most facilities located close to the Dumbarton Road Corridor - also meant that people regularly saw and had opportunities to say ‘hi’ to each other.

- **Pragmatic culture.** Community groups and organisations identified Yoker as a ‘pragmatic community’ that was used to solving its own problems. Interviewees perceived that Yoker has, historically, been neglected by the local council. This - combined with the group of local leaders that moved from unionism to community activism after shipyard deindustrialisation - is perceived to have created a community that supports local organisations and works together with the resources they share to solve problems.

## Resilience in action: Mary

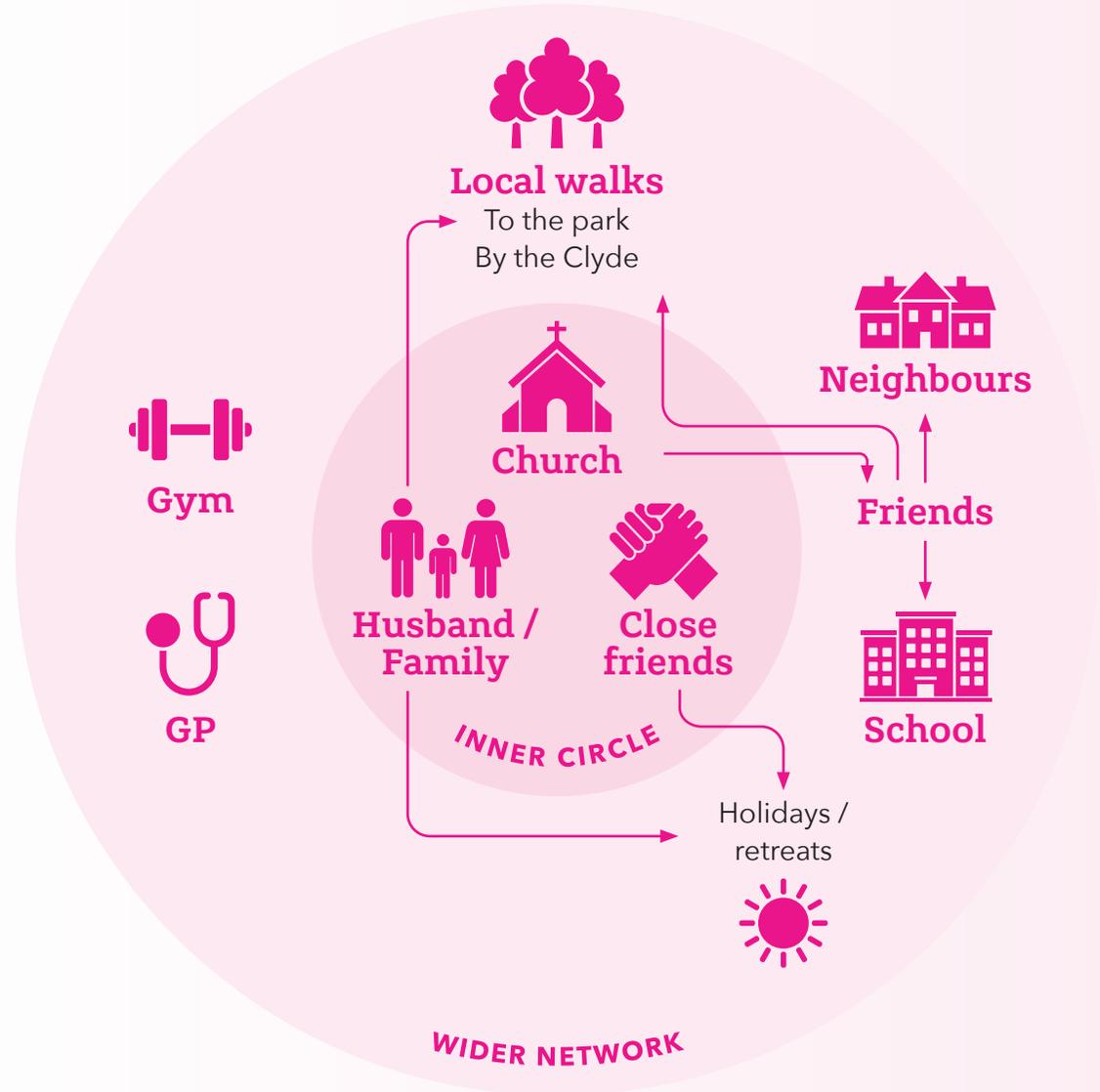
Mary is 25-34 years old and moved to Yoker less than five years ago.

Mary's **husband, family** and **close friends** are the main support factors for her mental health and wellbeing. They are able to spot and respond to changes in her mood because of how well they know her, and they can also support each other through similar/shared life experiences. Her family also help her with childcare.

The local **church** is also a big part of Mary's life. It supports her mental wellbeing through making her feel part of something bigger. Practising her faith with others gives her a strong sense of belonging through shared beliefs, values and activities. She also volunteers there to help others.

Mary has made friends with other parents through her children's **school** - people she could ask to go out for a coffee just to chat.

Mary maintains her mental health through physical activity in **outdoors** and in **local facilities**. She walks along the cycle path by the River Clyde in Yoker, but goes to the gym in neighbouring Scotstoun as they have better facilities for her children.



## Sources

- <sup>1</sup> ONS - 2011 Census (KS102EW)
- <sup>2</sup> ONS - 2011 Census (KS201EW)
- <sup>3</sup> ONS - 2011 Census (KS601EW)
- <sup>4</sup> ONS Income Estimates
- <sup>5</sup> Rightmove.co.uk (Feb 2021)
- <sup>6</sup> Land Registry, ONS Income Estimates
- <sup>7</sup> Ordnance Survey, Geolytix Physical Geography pack
- <sup>8</sup> Data.police.uk
- <sup>9</sup> Electoral Commission, ONS - 2011 Census
- <sup>10</sup> Electoral Commission, ONS - 2011 Census
- <sup>11</sup> Government Petitions, ONS - 2011 Census
- <sup>12</sup> [Co-op Community Wellbeing Index \(2019 data\)](#)
- <sup>13</sup> ONS - 2011 Census (KS102EW)
- <sup>14</sup> ONS - 2011 Census (KS201EW)
- <sup>15</sup> ONS - 2011 Census (KS601EW)
- <sup>16</sup> ONS Income Estimates
- <sup>17</sup> Rightmove.co.uk (Feb 2021)
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- <sup>22</sup> Electoral Commission, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>23</sup> Government Petitions, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>24</sup> [Co-op Community Wellbeing Index \(2019 data\)](#)
- <sup>25</sup> NINIS - 2011 Census (KS102NI)
- <sup>26</sup> NINIS - 2011 Census (KS201NI)
- <sup>27</sup> NINIS - 2011 Census (KS601NI)
- <sup>28</sup> Ordnance Survey, Geolytix Physical Geography pack
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- <sup>30</sup> Electoral Commission, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>31</sup> Government Petitions, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>32</sup> [Co-op Community Wellbeing Index \(2019 data\)](#)
- <sup>33</sup> Yoker and Scotstoun Neighbourhood profiles, Scotland Census 2011 (NB: data only available for 16-64)
- <sup>34</sup> Yoker and Scotstoun Neighbourhood profiles, Scotland Census 2011
- <sup>35</sup> Yoker and Scotstoun Neighbourhood profiles, Scotland Census 2011
- <sup>36</sup> Rightmove.co.uk (Feb 2021)
- <sup>37</sup> Land Registry, ONS Income Estimates
- <sup>38</sup> IMD Scotland
- <sup>39</sup> Electoral Commission, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>40</sup> Electoral Commission, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>41</sup> Government Petitions, British Census Survey 2011
- <sup>42</sup> [Co-op Community Wellbeing Index \(2019 data\)](#)



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