



## Still Listening, Still Learning: Personal Outcomes in 2025 and Beyond

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**Story title:** Seen and Heard: Stories from Linlathen

**Overview: Can you tell us what is the piece of work, practice or initiative that you want to tell us about?**

A few years ago we decided we wanted to take a new approach to tackling poverty in Dundee. As a Community Planning Partnership we already had city wide and ward wide strategies in place. We wanted to focus in on more localised approaches, given increased concerns about rising poverty and inequalities. We used the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data and identified two areas covering two data zones each. Following some initial consultation work, we had a good response from Linlathen, an area with a population of just under 2000, with very high rates of unemployment and poverty. Linlathen is one of the 10 most deprived communities in Scotland.

Since then, we have had several waves of engagement work with local people. We started by using PhotoVoice, which involves people taking photographs of the topic of interest which in this case was life in Linlathen (something good, and something not so good), and people sent in their pictures with a comment about what it meant to them.

After the photovoice work we did one to one interviews of up to an hour with a smaller number of people. These were informal chats really about what was good and bad about the neighbourhood, developed from the photos as a starting point. What became clear very quickly was concern about mental health and poverty and the barriers this presented to employment. Some of the key ideas and needs that people came up with included:



Improving financial wellbeing through easy access to benefits and wider financial advice and reducing the cost of living where possible

Improving mental health and wellbeing

Improving the look and feel of the area through it being cleaner and tidier

Young people in particular wanted more activities in the local area

The third stage of engagement was work with a film maker from Aberdeen who co-produced films with local people, including themes relevant to the areas above as well as local efforts to tackle food poverty and the need for viable employment opportunities.

**What have you had to do differently and what made this possible?**



We have had our Fairness Initiative up and running in Linlathen for a couple of years now. Amongst various activities which have stemmed from this have been the multi-agency drop-ins which usually get about 40 people coming in for a variety of reasons. Some folk only come in the odd time with a specific inquiry; others are regular attenders. A real benefit to people is that they can find answers to some of their questions on their

doorstep and having the different agencies present means people are finding ways to improve their situation that they might not have considered otherwise.

The DWP has been running an Employability Pathfinder at the same time as our initiative. Using their data on household benefits, they targeted over 80 families, finding very high levels of mental health problems (around 2/3) creating barriers to progress.

We have a multi-agency board, and the community is represented on that. However, the key to making progress has been the local steering group with several local folk involved as equal partners. We had 25 folk and partners at our last meeting.

**Has this helped to keep a focus on what matters to people in face of current challenges?**

Local people feel that they have been listened to and many of those involved in the various phases of engagement, with the steering group and some of the initiatives that have sprung from the work, feel they are making a contribution to their community.

**What have you noticed in terms of outcomes or impact?**

Some of the other benefits for local people include:

Improved social connection, and mental health and wellbeing through 90 young people attending youth work provision 3 nights a week, dozens of families attending family support sessions and a new facility for children with additional support needs

Improved meaningful activity and employment prospects with dozens of local people gaining college qualifications through flexible learning or moving into volunteering roles

Improved financial wellbeing through money advice, leading to gains of more than £100,000 that we know about

Reduced cost of living through home insulation project and energy advice



One concern some partners had was whether the time invested in Linlathen would take time and energy away from other parts of Dundee. What we found in practice is that the closer interagency work that has happened in Linlathen has increased connections between agencies, which was much needed after covid, and that has benefits outside of the area too. There has been an informal spread of good practice to a wider area through agencies working more collaboratively.

**How did this make you feel?**

I feel very motivated by this work. I am more convinced than ever of the importance of tapping into community assets to effect change. If we had tried to make decisions about tackling unemployment and poverty on the basis of our initial desk work only we would have missed the point.

**What have you learned through this?**

I already viewed partnership working as important to making things work for people. I also knew that loneliness and social isolation can have devastating effects on mental health and wellbeing. However, this project has amplified how important the power of connection is. By working together, the agencies involved can do more with the same resource; and through local people connecting to each other. For the agencies, new possibilities open and people can find and channel ideas, motivations and possibilities.

**Anything else you want to tell us?**

We are working on our evaluation now and hope to have that drafted this summer.

You can see videos from Linlathen residents here:

Employability Barriers <https://vimeo.com/757594036/366a96219b>

Changing Values <https://vimeo.com/757588447/cd896cc751>

Housing <https://vimeo.com/757586763/51a4475133>

The Food Larder <https://vimeo.com/757567018/0270254cf7>

Green Space <https://vimeo.com/757555704/14ccdccae>

Making Of <https://vimeo.com/759919993/acc875a6fc>