



University
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South-West Social
Mobility Commission

Supported by



HEART OF THE COMMUNITY:

A study of The Reach Foundation's Cradle-to-Career Partnership



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About the South-West Social Mobility Commission

The South-West Social Mobility Commission was set up to bring about transformational change in education and employment outcomes for children and young people from under-resourced backgrounds. Chaired by Sir Michael Barber, it brings together a dedicated and passionate group of civic leaders from across the South-West peninsula to drive cross-sectoral work to break down the barriers facing young people in the region.

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- Cobalt Trust
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Foreword

By Andy Moreman, Chief Executive of Young Devon

This report is published at the beginning of a new year. As such, you may be thinking about resolutions. If you're the kind of person who manages to stick to those - well done! For the rest of us, perhaps instead of resolutions we can focus on new solutions, because that's what this report offers: potential solutions which could enable children, young people and their families to get the support they need to thrive in education and beyond.

Since you've made it to the second paragraph I think it's safe to assume that you either (a) enjoy reading or (b) are prepared to give it a go once in a while. On that basis I'm going to recommend a book to you: *Radical Help* by Hilary Cottam. As Hilary examines responses to the welfare state in the UK and emphasises the importance of starting by listening to the individual, you will find a lot in common with the ethos of the cradle-to-career models described in this report. There's a chance that this phrase Hilary uses will stand out for you just as it did for me:

“Relationships – the simple human bonds between us – are the foundation of good lives. They bring us joy, happiness, and a sense of possibility.”

There are times when we can lose sight of the transformative power of human relationships and this quote is my constant reminder. Throughout this report you will see the theme of relationships returned to time and again. Whether it is relationships between individual educators and the children, young people and families they see daily or the relationships school leaders have with partners which, necessarily, set the school in the wider context of its community - these relationships are central to the success of the work you will read about.

Here in the South West we're as challenged by the poor social mobility experienced by too many of our children and young people as we are blessed with outstanding countryside and fantastic coastlines. After years of economic and political change, we're obliged to find new ways to invest in those under-resourced families and unlock their potential, rather than accept the myriad barriers they face.

A cradle-to-career model for our schools and communities is one such investment we can make. Students of Henry Morris and the village college model implemented between the wars in Cambridgeshire may recognise similarities: a school deliberately bringing broader aspects of the community into one space to support lifelong learning. Under-resourced families often find it hard to locate or navigate the systems facing them and the support on offer. It may sound simple but this act of bringing a range of interventions together in one place can make all the difference - especially if that's supported by established, good quality relationships.

So, whether you're great at New Year's resolutions and reading this report at the beginning of the year, less good on the willpower front or just picking this up in sunny July, please read on and resolve to think through how the learning here could be applied in your community to unlock the potential of local children, young people and their families.

Executive Summary

Cradle-to-career models

Cradle-to-career (C2C) models aim to support children from birth (cradle) to early adulthood (career), typically through the coordination of a range of locally available programmes and services such as antenatal classes, parent-toddler groups, parenting courses, cooking and crafting sessions, and housing and debt advice (although what they do can be far wider – see box overleaf). School-centred C2C models do so using the school as a focal point through which to convene and offer this extra support. Yet, at a time when it is reported that one in five schools in England is offering a food bank for families struggling to put food on the table (rising to one in three in deprived areas),¹ what differentiates C2C models from more general support offered by schools?

In this report we explore several C2C models being developed by schools and multi-academy trusts in the South West and North of England, in partnership with The Reach Foundation, who have their own school-centred C2C model in Feltham, west London. Inspired by US models like the Harlem Children's Zone and Strive Partnership, The Reach Foundation's C2C partners are aiming to create better life chances for all children, and in particular those from under-resourced backgrounds whom current systems too often fail, through a combination of in- and beyond-school support.

We suggest two things in combination that define these school-centred C2C models:

First, is the **head teacher's role as community connector**. Having both real 'frontline' knowledge (of individual pupils, parents/carers² and other community residents) but also the influence to convene service providers and community leaders is something head teachers or school senior leaders are uniquely well-placed to do. Community connectors balance authenticity and civic leadership, able to 'zoom in and out', knowing the detail but also seeing the bigger picture. This enables them to perform a systems-connecting role at the community level – effectively joining up services and systems around families' needs whilst understanding the specific challenges on the ground. (See box on page 6 for an explanation of 'community'.)

Second, is a **prioritisation of long-term deeper relationships**. Developing relationships of trust with pupils, parents, and community leaders and residents is understood to be the central means of addressing the complex, chronic issues associated with poverty and deprivation that under-served families may be facing. Having good relationships with parents can help schools to have difficult conversations, for example around addressing pupils' attendance. But good relationships – cultivated over many years – can also be transformational in individuals' lives. In conjunction with better-coordinated and well-resourced local services, good relationships can support better mental and emotional health and empower people to help themselves and others in the community.

¹ www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/article/2024/jun/23/the-schools-debate-is-asking-all-the-wrong-questions-eva-wiseman?CMP.

² Going forwards, we use 'parents' in the text as a shorthand for parents/carers.

Some examples of the community support that C2C partner schools and trusts are helping to drive. This includes both immediate support and attempts to catalyse longer-term structural change in their communities.

- Setting up or supporting a community hub – as the four case study partners in this report have done. These hubs have a varied offer but most include a food bank, coffee morning (or similar) and craft sessions. A key rationale for a community hub is to build relationships between the school and parents and help parents to develop peer support networks and opportunities to find out about wider support that's available.
- Signposting families to support – for example, case study partner Cranbrook Education Campus's EX-5 Alive Hub sees Hub Manager Aynsley Jones provide a listening ear to families and signposting to early help where appropriate.
- Convening community leaders and organisations – for example, Holyrood Academy, one of the case study partners in this report, puts on a regular Community Leaders Breakfast to bring together community organisations in conversation. These can help to identify where local support exists, where there are gaps, and who in the community is being most impacted by specific issues.
- Supporting institutional capacity – for example, Cornwall Education Learning Trust is working with the Bodmin Town Team to increase the team's capacity for understanding how best to repurpose vacant units in Bodmin town centre to enhance outcomes for young people.

Replication at scale

Like many others impressed by the Foundation's C2C model at Reach Academy Feltham and its community work in the area, the biggest question we had was: 'how replicable is this approach elsewhere – in other parts of the country and without The Reach Foundation team?'

The work of partner schools and trusts goes some way to answering this question. It is still early days and we are often yet to see work translate into 'bottom-line outcomes' like higher school attainment or reduced community deprivation. But what we are seeing is a network of like-minded schools and trusts pioneering novel approaches for working in a joined-up way with their local communities. Across these schools and trusts, there is budding evidence of the benefits – in the cost savings created by earlier intervention or better join-up between organisations, and in the stories of individuals being supported by a more relational, joined-up approach.

Every model is slightly different, developed in its own context, with different priorities in mind – as shown by the case studies in this report. But there are common lessons to be learned across the development of different models, and common practices too.

Eight steps to develop C2C models

We suggest that eight steps to developing a successful model are:

- 1. Right time:** It being the right time in a school's journey – in particular, having achieved school stability and a strong record on teaching and learning, and C2C aligning with current school and trust priorities.
- 2. Trust buy-in:** Having a supportive trust or local authority that is on board with C2C priorities and potentially puts in place support, structures and funding.
- 3. Civic mindset:** The head teacher or C2C lead developing and inculcating in staff the belief that they can and should help change their community context.
- 4. Big picture thinking:** The head teacher or C2C lead believing in the benefit of taking time out from the everyday to reflect on wider objectives beyond narrow school attainment measures.
- 5. Intentionality:** Being clear on the 'why' behind every action to ensure the C2C model fits the school and community context.
- 6. Entrepreneurialism:** Being opportunistic and not being afraid to make asks; accepting that progress will be non-linear.

7. **Right staff:** Gaining staff buy-in; having the right people as 'thread leads'³; having consistency of staffing and continuity plans for if staff leave.
8. **Showing impact:** Finding different ways to demonstrate impact given the long-term and holistic nature of the endeavour; using 'wins' as proof of concept.

15 common practices

Meanwhile, there are 15 common practices being adopted by partners that we believe could reasonably be tried by all schools and trusts **even without developing a full C2C model**. Just as schools across the country are offering food banks as a response to the need within their communities, so the following 15 innovative practices could be adopted in a standalone way, as elements of school improvement or extra support. While these practices play a key role in supporting families, they don't incorporate the wider systemic work that C2C models look to address over the longer term.

1. More pupil, parent and community listening
2. Review of communication and language used with parents and community
3. Food banks and coffee meetings to develop relationships
4. External (non-school) person to talk with parents
5. Neutral space ('nan's front room') for conducting meetings with parents
6. Clarity in teaching and behaviour guidance/policy
7. Modelling of practice, including instructional coaching
8. Explicit focus on community disadvantage
9. Community leaders events
10. Asset mapping exercise and signposting to early intervention
11. Strong early years focus
12. Dedicated transition worker
13. Home visits
14. Shared spaces and activities between primary and secondary
15. Transition curriculum work

Implications for the school system

We believe C2C models are a powerful means of addressing the complexities of disadvantage at a community level. In austere times, they offer a means of tapping into existing services in an area and nurturing community capacity without the need for costly new interventions.

This doesn't mean that this work is easy. Finding leadership capacity, carving out staff time and finding funding for additional roles like a hub manager can be tough. It also doesn't mean the argument shouldn't be made for a reversal to the deep and damaging cuts that have been made to local services. But it does mean that in difficult times, school leaders can move from feeling like victims of circumstance to seeing and nurturing the abundance of energy, talent and opportunity in their communities that is both a resource for change and the very nature of change itself.

The Reach Foundation's Cradle-to-Career Partnership meanwhile is a model for how to scale C2C models: not as an expansion or replication of the Foundation's C2C model but instead as a community of practice of like-minded schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs) testing and learning together. The C2C Partnership has expanded rapidly but remains limited in scale by virtue of the intense support it provides, which enables it to effectively transmit its values such that partner C2C models abide by a common spirit rather than any kind of law. In its third year of operation around 30 schools and trusts were involved – although this has grown to 80 at the time of this report's publication⁴ – and The Reach Foundation sees groups of schools including MATs and local authorities as a key means of growing the C2C Partnership's influence.

One of the primary reasons for involving groups of schools is that if a model is to function from cradle to career it needs to be wrapped around an all-through school, or in the absence of this, one or more primary and secondary schools collaborating on a model within the same community. Groups of schools provide a good opportunity for the latter, especially given the limited number of all-through schools in England. Another reason for working with groups of schools is that they provide an opportunity for The Reach Foundation to

3 'Threads' are the topics covered within The Reach Foundation's C2C Partnership training programme. At the time this study was conducted, there were five threads: Developing Great Teachers; All-Through Curriculum; Embedding Strong Relationships; Serving Your Community; and Leading a C2C Model.

4 At the time the study was conducted, the C2C Partnership comprised around 30 schools and MATs largely clustered in the South West and North of England. Since then, it has further expanded and at the time of publication covers around 80 schools and MATs across much of the South of England and Midlands too.

scale its C2C Partnership more effectively than through single schools alone. United Learning for example has over 70 schools, supporting the potential to develop a large number of C2C models through a single partner contact.⁵

Ultimately, however, every C2C model is a neighbourhood-level approach to community change, premised on genuine individual relationships of trust and a joined-up system of local support. If there are

20,000 or so schools in England, school-centred C2C models are a realistic and practical way of reaching the 32,844 neighbourhoods across the country and of nurturing relationships with families spanning one to two decades. This offers promising potential for scalable, bottom-up community change as the C2C Partnership continues to grow.⁶

What do we mean by community?

In school-centred C2C models there are two levels of community, which are to some extent but not fully contiguous. The first are the neighbourhoods around the school⁷, which will include families of students attending the school, but also families of students attending other schools and residents without school-age children. The second is the school community, which includes all of the school's students and their families, some of whom may live outside the school's adjoining neighbourhoods. The Harlem Children's Zone for example was designated in this way, with the Zone's physical boundaries stretching to a certain number of blocks in each direction from the school although a proportion of students live outside the Zone.

In the school-centred C2C models observed, the nature of the 'zone' served by each model/community hub varies by place. For Holyrood Academy and Cranbrook Education Campus (CEC), the 'zone' is the town in which each is located: for Holyrood Academy, the town of Chard in Somerset (population c.14,290) and for CEC, the new town of Cranbrook in Devon (population 6,700+⁸). For King's Oak Academy, it is the area of Kingswood in Bristol/South Gloucestershire (population c.28,850), while for Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust it is the HU3 postcode area of Hull (population c.27,015). For the latter two in particular, the school community feels like a stronger basis for the designation of community than the area designation at large.

What is meant by community is therefore not always strictly defined but is instead a pragmatic way of engaging people who might have shared objectives or a shared sense of belonging, whether that be in relation to school or place.

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- 5 A case study example of how a MAT is approaching C2C is provided in this report. Cranbrook Education Campus has successfully developed a C2C model and its trust, the Ted Wragg Trust, is now working with The Reach Foundation to develop further C2C models through different schools in the trust.
- 6 It is worth noting that The Reach Foundation's national work has recently secured additional philanthropic funding to create an Accelerator Fund which will support C2C partners who are seeking to deepen the impact of their work, over time. C2C partners receiving support from the Accelerator Fund will form part of a national network of C2C partners leading change at an individual, organisational and systemic level across their school communities. The opportunity will be offered to partners who are completing the two-year C2C Partnership with The Reach Foundation. More information about the C2C Partnership is available at www.reachfoundation.uk/activities.
- 7 Neighbourhoods are defined as areas comprising roughly 1,500 people. There are 32,844 neighbourhoods in England. There are approximately 16,769 primary schools and 3,448 secondary schools in England, meaning each primary school serves roughly two neighbourhoods and each secondary school around ten.
- 8 Based on the 2021 Census – however the town has been growing rapidly as new housing is being built.

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Introduction

In the face of intergenerational poverty and intractable disadvantage gaps, school-centred cradle-to-career (C2C) models offer a potentially powerful way to improve outcomes for children and young people from under-resourced backgrounds. They are a local, relational, holistic approach to addressing the complexities of disadvantage within a community, bringing together schools, families and community actors to create a unified mesh of support for those who are most in need.

We believe that this approach could be transformative. With relatively limited additional resources, schools and trusts across the country are showing how they are changing lives, communities and systems – nurturing struggling parents, in some cases so that these parents go on to be community volunteers and leaders who support others; and reducing referrals to already stretched and costly acute help and social services.

Whilst each model is modest in its geographic reach – centring on one community – what is exciting is the potential for this work to be replicated in communities across the country. The Reach Foundation's Cradle-to-Career Partnership – set up by The Reach Foundation and inspired by their model in Feltham in west London – is a growing network of over 30 schools and multi-academy trusts who are pioneering the development of C2C models in communities across the country.⁹

This report presents the collected findings of research conducted over the course of two years with schools and trusts in the C2C Partnership. Through interviews with partner leaders, the report explores some of the core principles underlying the successful development of a C2C model. It also examines some of the innovative practices being tried by C2C partners that all schools

and trusts could be trying. These findings are supported by in-depth case studies of four school-centred C2C models, which show the unique pathways each school/trust has taken in developing its C2C model.

School-centred C2C models and the evidence so far¹⁰

School-centred C2C models build on the school's central place in a community to coordinate and facilitate access to a range of initiatives that address disadvantage across children's lives from before birth to early adulthood. Typically, but not always, they involve the set-up of a 'community hub', which provides or signposts parents and other community residents to a range of early intervention services, such as toddler groups, parenting classes and housing support.¹¹

At their heart are school head teachers or senior leaders who believe in a vision of a more cohesive community and who are able to coordinate community provision around the needs of its residents. In austere times, they are a model for tackling the complex, entrenched issues associated with poverty and deprivation by leveraging existing resources and working alongside communities to create meaningful, bottom-up change.

The cradle-to-career concept draws on initiatives like the Harlem Children's Zone and Strive Together partnership in the United States. These initiatives recognise that short-term interventions often produce positive but unsustainable effects.¹² Early years interventions for example might raise attainment for participants in pre-school tests only for these gains to disappear by age seven.¹³

9 At the time the study was conducted, the C2C Partnership comprised around 30 schools and MATs largely clustered in the South West and North of England. Since then, it has further expanded and at the time of publication covers around 80 schools and MATs across much of the South of England and Midlands too.

10 The following section uses some material from our earlier report, *Social Mobility in the South West* (Sim and Elliot Major, 2022).

11 Schools or trusts can still coordinate, convene and signpost children and parents to community-based services or initiatives, even in the absence of a physical community hub. For examples, see www.cradletocareer.uk/results/c2cleadership. In this report, Holyrood Academy is an example of a partner which hasn't set up its own community hub, but instead partners with an existing community hub based in the town centre.

12 See for example Tough (2009) for an account of Geoffrey Canada's motivations for starting the Harlem Children's Zone; www.strivetgether.org/who-we-are/our-history/#sub-menu.

13 For example, Blanden, Del Bono, Hansen and Rabe (2021).

A C2C model, by contrast, is not one intervention but an approach for bringing together a range of interventions in one place. By providing a tight web of support for families within a place, C2C models aim to create a sustained pipeline of change for children from before birth until early adulthood. And in the longer term, they aspire to create a 'tipping-point' of change at the community level that permanently disrupts cycles of disadvantage.¹⁴

The evidence on C2C

Our interest in C2C models was sparked by evidence around the extent to which schools influence educational attainment – despite being held responsible for it. Some attempts to quantify the variability in attainment attributable to schools put the figure at roughly 20%, with individual and family background characteristics being responsible for between 60% and 80%.¹⁵

Schools do influence attainment, of course. The school closures brought about through COVID-19 have shown just how powerfully they matter. Nevertheless, within education circles there has perhaps been too much of a classroom focus and too little attention paid to out-of-school factors. As various studies attest, good outcomes for children neither begin nor end with school – parental and community involvement is crucial to good educational attainment.¹⁶

Given that C2C models are comprised of an evolving array of initiatives operating in complex and shifting contexts, finding conclusive evidence of their overall impact is difficult. Instead, a combination of quantitative evidence of changes to outcomes combined with qualitative evidence describing how and why initiatives are addressing problems can give strong indications that a model is contributing to improved outcomes in an area.¹⁷

For The Reach Foundation's C2C model in Feltham, a combination of academic data, programme participation rates, participant feedback, anecdotal evidence and a clearly articulated theory of change

provide strong signs that the approach is having impact. Reach Academy Feltham's first set of GCSE results in 2017 placed it 16th in the country for pupil progress and 70% of children from its first graduating cohort went to university (compared with 20% across the local community). Feedback from participants supports the notion that the model's interventions are contributory factors in reducing barriers to good attainment. Anecdotally, health practitioners in the area have noted having capacity freed up by the Foundation's work.

Strive Together's partner case studies provide similar types of evidence. Operating since 2011 and consisting of around 70 C2C partnerships working in local communities across the US, the network shares individual case studies that articulate the mechanisms by which an initiative works, backed up by supporting data that provide evidence of impact.¹⁸

There have been some attempts at quantifying the overall impact of C2C approaches – in particular, the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). For example, Dobbie and Fryer (2011) measure the attainment of siblings and pupils living in and outside of the Zone to proxy a randomised controlled trial. Their study found no apparent attainment effects from the neighbourhood programme, but attainment benefits associated with the Zone's schools, although there has been some criticism of the evaluation methodology.¹⁹ Nevertheless, evaluations of specific activities within HCZ have typically been positive.

Given that the individual interventions being brought together within a C2C model should each be supported by evidence as to their efficacy, C2C as a whole should have a positive effect even if only as the sum of its individual interventions. Nevertheless, the premise is that a C2C model should produce benefits over and above the individual initiatives being provided. Dyson et al. (2012) argue this point in their analysis of Children's Zones in England, positing that it is plausible that there should be an impact beyond the benefits provided by the standalone programmes offered within a zone²⁰

14 Dyson, Kerr, Rafo and Wigelsworth (2012).

15 For example, Goldhaber (2002); Rasbash et al. (2010).

16 For example, See and Gorard (2015).

17 For example, Kerr and Dyson (2019).

18 www.strivetogether.org/our-impact/case-studies

19 Dobbie and Fryer (2011).

20 Dyson, Kerr, Rafo and Wigelsworth (2012).

and further, that it is plausible that such initiatives might “create a ‘tipping point’ in which environments which are ‘toxic’ to children’s development become supportive”.²¹ In other words, the approach has the potential to create systemic change.

Meanwhile, The Reach Foundation is developing a set of data indicators that aims to add quantitative robustness to the evidence on C2C. Their ‘C2C milestones’ are a set of data indicators, examined at the level of each child, encompassing both in-school and beyond-school outcomes at every phase of life from 0 to 25. For example, in the early years, indicators are likely to include: that a child has had certain vaccinations, has attended a childcare setting before Reception, has a weight and height in line with aged-related measures and has reached a good level of development by the end of Reception. The Foundation advocates that C2C partners track outcomes using the milestones in order to demonstrate improvement over time both at the individual pupil level and across cohorts. Tracking this broad set of indicators over time is a means of trying to capture quantitative evidence on what is a holistic and long-term endeavour. Having a common set of indicators across partners should contribute a strong evidence base on C2C models over the longer term.

What next?

Place-based interventions like C2C have become increasingly fashionable. This is unsurprising when top-down imposed interventions or the wholesale transplanting of interventions from one context to another fail to deliver as much impact as originally anticipated.²² Devolved, context-specific models are the obvious solution, but what does this mean in practice and what are the implications for scalability?

Whilst the Foundation’s C2C model has shown strong signs of success, what is less clear is which factors have contributed to its success and the extent to which this kind of success can be replicated elsewhere. Can this approach work outside of London, in larger schools and trusts with pre-existing school cultures, and without the dynamism, connections and deeply held knowledge of the team at The Reach Foundation?

This report examines the scaling of the C2C approach through The Reach Foundation’s C2C Partnership. As the next section explains, the C2C Partnership is a means of scaling the Foundation’s C2C approach whilst maintaining a tight grasp over its core principles – ensuring that despite the flexibility of the approach and its tailoring to context, how it is implemented across partner schools and communities is done well.

What the C2C examples in this report show are that: (1) this model of scaling is showing signs of success, with promising models being set up in various communities across the country; (2) as envisioned, each C2C model is tailored to its context whilst also drawing on some core principles and practices, which are summarised in this report.

This report aims to convey four things.

1. It summarises two core elements that underpin all of the school-centred C2C models observed;
2. It outlines some of the key enablers to successfully developing a C2C model – in ‘Eight steps to develop C2C models’;
3. It presents some of the innovative practices being tried by C2C partners that all schools and trusts could be trying, even if they don’t attempt a full-scale C2C model – in ‘15 common practices all schools can try’;
4. It describes, through the four case studies, the scope of possibilities being shown by C2C models across the country given their unique contexts.

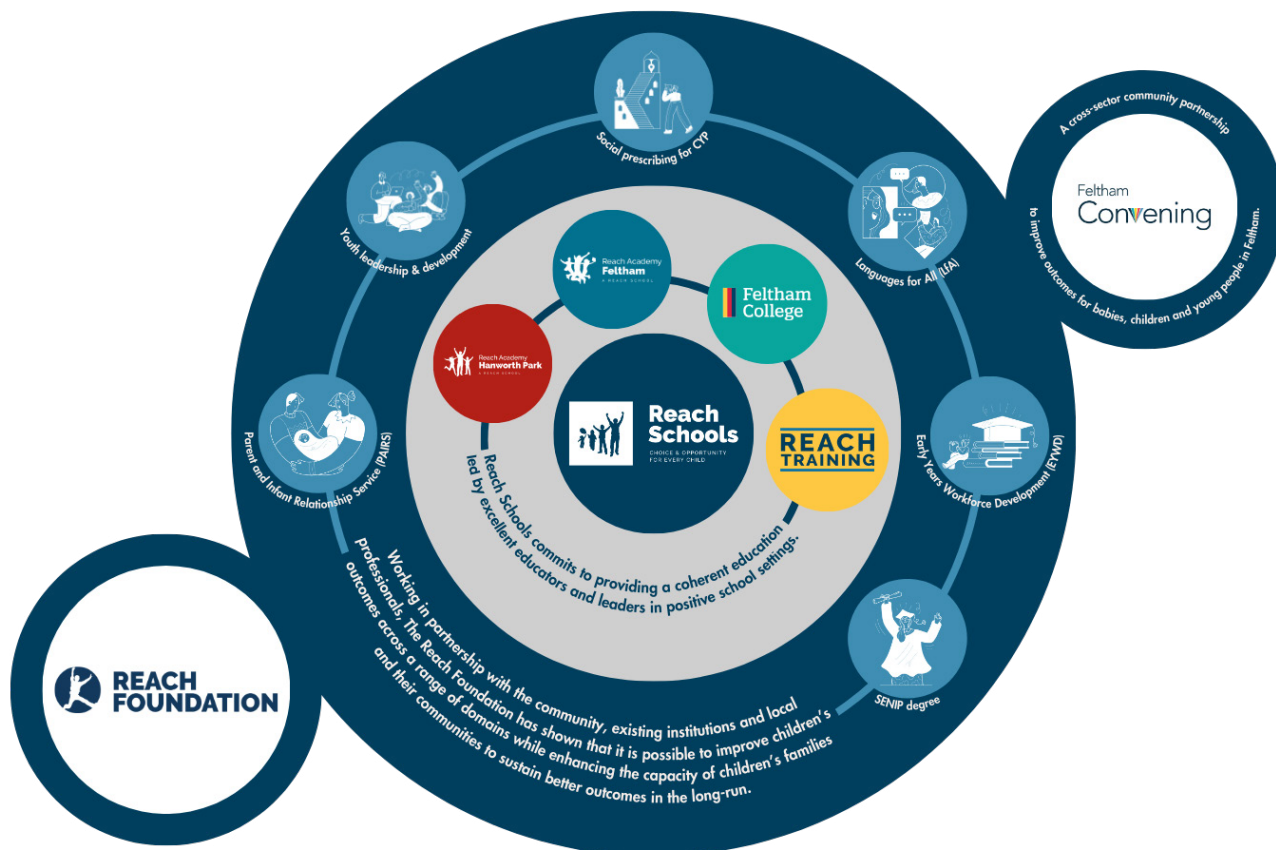
21 Ibid., pp.13.

22 One example of this is the UK government’s Full Service Extended Schools policy that ran from 2003 until around 2010. Evaluation evidence suggests that the policy led to improved outcomes for relatively small numbers of children and families but limited wider, area-based transformation as had been touted by the policy rhetoric (Hirst, 2022).

The Reach Foundation's C2C model and the C2C Partnership

The Reach Foundation's C2C model

The Foundation's C2C model can be summarised by the following graphic:



The model aims to combine two excellent all-through schools with a joined-up pipeline of community support for pupils, their families and the wider community in Feltham, west London, from before children are born until they embark on a career.

At its core are two schools. Reach Academy Feltham opened in 2012 as a small (two-form entry) free school, which is 'all-through' for children from ages two to 18. In September 2024, Reach Academy Hanworth Park opened next door to Reach Academy Feltham, offering three-form entry, with pupils recruited to its Reception and Year 7 classes.

The schools are premised on nurturing strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families; having high aspirations, with 'no pupil left behind'; clear expectations for teachers, pupils and parents around hard work and behaviour; and excellent teaching. When visitors are shown around the school, highlights include the consistency that can be seen across teaching and learning in every classroom – developed through

clear guidance and expectations around teaching and behaviour, instructional coaching for teachers, and a curriculum that is specified down to each lesson.

Additional support for children/young people and families – both within the school and local area – is provided by The Reach Foundation Feltham Team which 'reaches down' to ages zero to two and 'up' to ages 18 to 21. The Foundation's offer in Feltham is constantly evolving based on community needs, but currently it includes:

- Parent and Infant Relationship Service (PAIRS) – an integrated model of perinatal support for parents/carers and babies during the first 1,001 days;
- Social Prescribing for Children and Young People – in partnership with the NHS primary care network for Feltham & Bedfont and Groundwork;
- Youth Leadership and Development – various pathways for young people to engage in community organising including Young Researchers and Ambassadors;

- Languages for All – a programme to encourage more young people to study modern languages at A-level and university;
- Post-16 support – involving partnerships with various organisations locally, and including a weekly careers and opportunities bulletin; periodic encounters with employers; a Careers in the Curriculum initiative; visits to local colleges and universities; and organised work experience placements.

The Feltham Convening Partnership meanwhile takes a strategic look at community needs and seeks to address some of the community's most pressing problems through partnerships with other anchor organisations in the area like the local authority, other local schools, local universities, third sector organisations and faith groups. For example, in response to widespread recruitment and retention issues in early years practice, the school has developed its own local response in partnership with Kingston University and City & Guilds: offering Level 1 and 2 courses and a part-time foundation degree on-site in Feltham for those interested in embarking on a career in early years or for existing practitioners looking to upskill. It is also partnering with Kingston University to offer a Special Educational Needs (SEN) in practice foundation degree, with the aim of strengthening SEN provision locally.

The intention behind the combined model is The Reach Foundation's vision: "we want every child to enjoy a life of choice and opportunity". Repeated mantra-like at C2C Partnership events and training, the words are carefully chosen. Importantly, it centres the school's objective beyond narrow school attainment measures and on longer-term life outcomes, emphasising that what matters in children's lives goes beyond education and that schools play a role in nurturing this. 'Choice and opportunity' recognises that there is no one best life course – i.e. whatever young people go on to do in their lives can be equally valid – yet it also recognises that barriers to opportunities and pathways that constrain young people's options, such as poor educational attainment, can prevent this from happening.

This vision leads The Reach Foundation to specify four intended outcomes for children and young people – the things they aim to support children and families with in order to reach the overall objective that all children enjoy lives of choice and opportunity. These are for children to:

- Be safe and well-supported;
- Be healthy;
- Achieve well academically;
- Build strong, trusting relationships.

The Reach Foundation argue that these are the things that every child needs to thrive, but that the system is 'not securing these conditions for every child in England right now'. Instead:

- In England and Wales, half of all teenagers have witnessed or been victims of violence (Youth Endowment Fund, 2023);
- We are seeing record-high referrals for mental health services (NHS, 2022) and a gap in provision between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' (RCPCH, 2020);
- On average, disadvantaged pupils are starting school around five months behind their peers; this gap doubles in size by the end of primary school and almost doubles again by the end of secondary school; and
- One in four UK students are not satisfied with their lives (PISA, 2022) and 45% of children feel lonely 'often' or 'some of the time' (MHF, 2019).²³

If the above is the reasoning behind the vision, The Reach Foundation's second mantra – "great schools are necessary but not sufficient" – succinctly summarises the reasoning behind taking a school-centred C2C approach. This goes back to the point made earlier – that schools do matter, but so too do families and communities. The school's role is first to achieve excellence at what schools typically do to support safe, healthy, high-attaining, socially secure students. But it also has a key role to play in empowering families and communities to support these goals, recognising that children's lives span spaces beyond school, so schools cannot achieve these goals alone.

Schools act as the cornerstone of the model because they are the cornerstones of most communities. They are one of the few visible universal service providers remaining in many communities, the central everyday touchpoint for most children and families, and often the focal point of community life. They provide communities with an important physical asset – the school buildings and grounds within which groups can come together – and a body of human capacity, in the form of its staff, students and families. This is the powerhouse behind C2C models, if they can be meaningfully mobilised.

For The Reach Foundation, a key aspect of its model is the all-through nature of its schools, for two reasons. The first is that, as an all-through, a school is able to build long-term relationships with families, very often spanning over two decades where siblings attend – something that very few other organisations are able to do. The potential depth of this long-term relationship is the incentive for investing in building the relationship; there is the necessary time to build trust; and the rewards of parents' and children's own investment in the relationship can be felt by the school, not just after they are gone.

A second reason is that it enables the school journey to be made seamless – bringing within the school's control the transition points (nursery to primary, primary to secondary, secondary to post-16) that can be incredibly detrimental to children's outcomes. As well as smoothing the experience for children (for example by having Year 6 co-located on the same floor as Years 7 and 8), a key feature of the school is its carefully sequenced curriculum, which is specified down to the workbook level, for every subject from GCSE down to Year 1, to ensure knowledge is revisited and built upon from day to day and year to year.

Two other aspects of The Reach Foundation's approach are worth mentioning here. The first is the central focus placed on building relationships of trust: between members of staff; between staff and pupils; and between staff and parents. This individual relational approach underpins the entire C2C model – from every pupil having a staff member looking out for them, to the convening work with partner organisations across Feltham. A central part of The Reach Foundation's

approach to building relationships is the 'deep listening' it does with its families – stepping out of everyday school issues and genuinely and curiously asking: "What is putting pressure on you and your family?"

The second is being 'intentional' in everything it does: interrogating the rationale behind every one of its practices and making its policies and guidance as clear and explicit as possible, based on this interrogation of practices. In school, this helps ensure consistency across the behaviour and teaching practices of staff, which can be particularly beneficial to children from under-resourced backgrounds. And in wider, community-facing work, it can help schools to be efficient in what they do: ensuring they are clear about what they are aiming to achieve through their efforts, rather than spreading themselves too thin.

The C2C Partnership

The Reach Foundation's C2C Partnership is a training programme and partner network for schools and groups of schools interested in developing their own C2C model(s). Starting in September 2021 with an initial cohort of five partner schools/trusts, in 2023/24 – its third year of running – it comprised around 30 partners spread across two clusters in the South West and North of England.²⁴ Partners range from single schools operating a C2C model within their community to multi-academy trusts looking to develop a model across the whole trust.

The C2C Partnership provides partners with a packed schedule of training (in-person events and webinars) spread over two years; tailored support that includes visits from Ed Vainker, The Reach Foundation's Managing Director, and The Reach Foundation team; and £20,000 seed funding to support C2C development, to be used at any point over the course of the two years. Schools or groups of schools join in September, forming a cohort of like-minded educational leaders, amongst whom each can share learnings and gain inspiration. At the time of this study, there had been three cohorts, the initial cohort of which had completed the two-year intensive programme but remained part of the network.

24 The case studies in this report were compiled in 2023/24. In 2024/25 partners come from across the country and total approximately 80 schools/trusts.

In 2023/24, there were five 'threads' in the C2C Partnership programme:²⁵

- **Developing Great Teachers:** aims to improve teaching and pupil outcomes by developing teachers' knowledge and practice. Schools are encouraged to support teachers to have a clear understanding of what excellence looks like in their school and to experience effective, individualised professional development that enables pupils to receive high-quality teaching in every lesson.
- **All-Through Curriculum:** is about building a coherently sequenced curriculum that supports children to build their knowledge cumulatively, both within and between phases of their education. Schools are encouraged to backwards plan and align curriculum sequences ideally across all stages from nursery to sixth form, working with colleagues in different phases.
- **Embedding Strong Relationships:** aims to enable every child to have a strong support network based on positive, mutually respectful relationships, in particular by developing stronger links between schools and families. Encompassing staff-student, staff-family and staff-staff relationships, it looks to help schools systematically develop and sustain the depth of relationships required to support children, families and staff through their school journeys.
- **Serving Your Community:**²⁶ involves schools developing an outward community focus. Schools are encouraged to learn more about their communities through data, asset mapping activities and a listening campaign, and to convene meetings to jointly determine and prioritise key themes with members of the community. This forms the basis for a school's work to better support its local community based on an understanding of its needs and working in partnership with its members.
- **Leading a C2C Model:** covers leading the whole of a C2C model. It encompasses things like developing a C2C vision and finding capacity and funding for C2C work.

The first two threads focus on in-school components of the model, 'Relationships' spans both in-school and out-of-school relationships, while the 'Community' (now Local Systems Coherence) thread focuses on the out-of-school component. This is modelled on The Reach Foundation's assertion that 'great schools are necessary but not sufficient'. Schools or groups of schools appoint staff to lead each of the threads – a change from the C2C Partnership's initial incarnation, in which each C2C leader (typically a school head teacher) led on all of the then-six strands.

This, and other changes, have been a part of the continuous development of the programme itself. The Reach Foundation are keen to emphasise that the C2C Partnership is a work in progress. The aim is that the C2C Partnership will develop into a strong network of schools and groups of schools all with their own continuously developing C2C models, all learning from each other. The first year felt a bit more like a one-way street, with the majority of learning coming from The Reach Foundation. However, this has been changing as the C2C Partnership's structure has been refined and partners move further along with their models.

What is core to the C2C approach is that models will always be in a state of flux – always adapting to their changing context. What The Reach Foundation try to convey – in describing their own C2C model and the C2C Partnership – is a kind of confident humility: a fine balancing between a strongly articulated vision of the world they want to create and a humility about how to achieve this vision and the fact that they will make mistakes in their efforts to do so.

This is a relatively small scale-up as interventions go. But what this approach allows for is delivery of an intensive training programme and for The Reach Foundation to provide tailored support to each of the partners. Partners take part in national training days in Feltham that include tours of Reach Academy Feltham to see lessons in progress. And The Reach Foundation's leaders pay termly visits to partners to discuss the progress of each partner's C2C model. The expectation is that with dedicated support from The Reach Foundation, partner schools or groups of schools will set up and start delivering a C2C model during the initial two-year period.

25 For 2024/25, this has changed to four threads.

26 This has now become 'Local Systems Coherence'.

What this particular approach to scaling-up emphasises is modelling and practice – rather like the instructional coaching all teachers take part in at Reach Schools. There is a recognition of the failure of words to convey all of the intricacies of practice and context; instead, things must be tried out by people themselves in their own context, and improved upon with feedback from a friendly, experienced observer. In many ways, the scale of the C2C Partnership echoes the C2C approach: small enough to know all of the individual actors intimately but with a grand, holistic ambition – to change the system in Feltham; to share the model nationally.

Partners say that what works is the flexibility of The Reach Foundation's approach. This is not an attempt to replicate the Foundation's C2C model elsewhere – rather, The Reach Foundation are clear that there will be many C2C models (plural) that are right for their context. Partners recognise that they have come from different starting contexts with different strengths as well as different areas they want to develop. What they choose to take from the training programme into their school or group of schools is up to each partner. This is the impetus behind this research – understanding what this means in practice, now that partners have begun developing their own models.

It is worth noting that the C2C Partnership forms part of The Reach Foundation's wider, externally facing work that is about building capacity to create local systems change where it is most needed. Another set of partnerships it runs is at the individual level, developing the school and trust leaders of tomorrow across regions experiencing acute recruitment and retention issues. The aim is to develop great leadership that helps to close the pupil disadvantage gap across these regions.

Having started in 2021/22, SouthWest100 offers a two-year training programme and professional peer network for middle and senior leaders in Cornwall and Devon looking to make headship within five years. The programme involves a series of residentials – including three School Study Visits across England and the opportunity to participate in an international School Study Tour – enabling participants to take time out for intensive training and development and build close bonds with others in their cohort. It provides a pathway for career development within specific regions, encouraging individuals to stay where they might otherwise have left for development opportunities elsewhere. And it fosters an increased likelihood of collaboration and partnership between schools in the region down the line.

The programme has now expanded to include West100 (West Country – including Bristol and Somerset), Yorks100 (Yorkshire & The Humber), East100 (East of England) and Leading Trusts 100 (for prospective leaders of multi-academy trusts nationwide). Overall, The Reach Foundation aims to foster a pipeline of 100 school leaders in each of the above regions, and 300 trust leaders across the country by 2030.

Key findings

This section aims to answer the questions raised in the Introduction around the model's scalability. It is based on case study interviews and visits conducted with C2C Partnership leaders in their second and third year of participation in the academic year 2023/24, as well as interviews conducted with an initial cohort of partner leaders in their first year of participation, two years earlier.²⁷

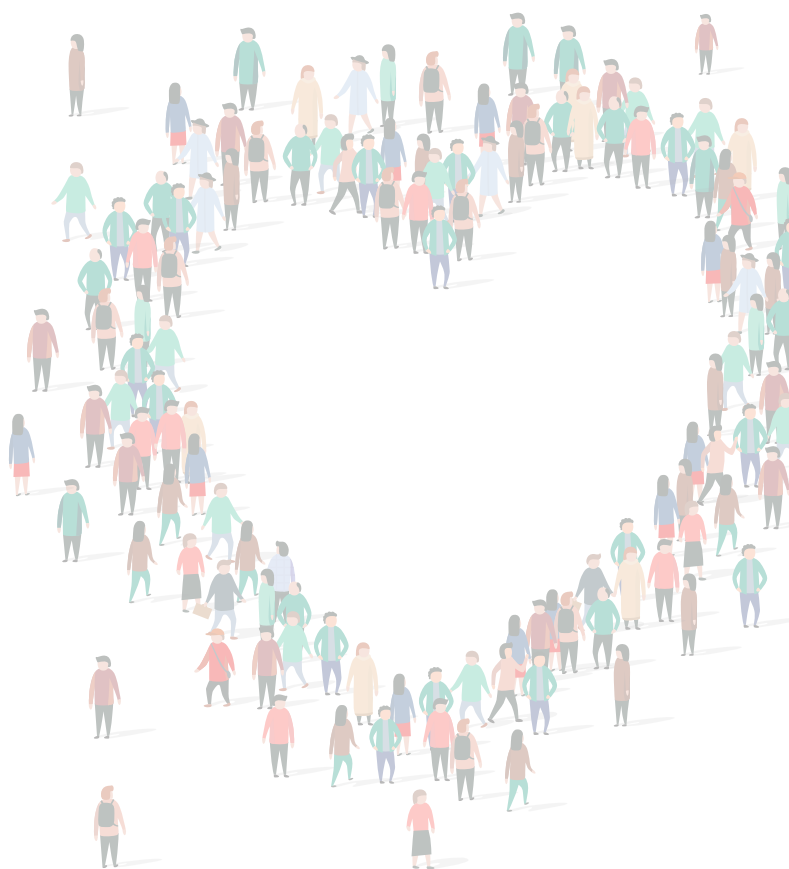
The findings are split into three sections:

1. Two core elements of a school-centred C2C model;
2. Eight steps to develop C2C models;
3. 15 common practices all schools can try.

The first section attempts to define the C2C models observed based on two core common elements, which in combination differentiate them from other beyond-school offers of support. These are the importance of the **head teacher's role as community connector and the prioritisation of long-term deeper relationships**.

The second section is for schools and trusts considering developing a C2C model. It summarises eight principles that existing partners have cited as key in the development of their C2C models. These include the **prerequisites** to starting C2C (being at the right point in your school journey and having a supportive school trust); **mindset** (having a civic mindset and thinking about the big picture); **approach** (being intentional and entrepreneurial); and **action** (getting the right staff involved and showing impact).

The third section meanwhile is for all schools and trusts. Without developing a full C2C model, what are the practical actions all schools and trusts can be trying? It summarises 15 innovative practices being tried by a number of C2C partners including home visits, community listening exercises and appointing a dedicated transition worker to support pupils through the transition between primary and secondary school. The 15 things are roughly split into three areas, which are all crucial elements in The Reach Foundation's C2C model: relationships (between the school and its pupils, parents and the wider community), community (engagement between the school and the people and organisations in its local area) and transition (points at which children move between schools, recognising that this is a particular area of weakness in the current system).



27 This initial cohort of schools/trusts were: Cranbrook Education Campus (also featured as a case study in this report); Dartmouth Academy; Dixons Academies Trust; Outwood Grange Academies Trust; and Wise Owl Trust.

Two core elements of a school-centred C2C model

Across the country, schools and trusts are going above and beyond to support their pupils and families. What makes C2C models different? We suggest it is two core elements, described below, that differentiates C2C models and makes them effective forces for change at the community level.

The head teacher's role as community connector

What is clear from the C2C models being developed by partners is the criticality of the head teacher (or other school senior leader leading the C2C model) as a 'community connector' – joining up different forms of support within a community through their intimate community knowledge and capacity for strategic influence. Having both real 'frontline' knowledge (of individual pupils, parents and other community residents) but also the influence to convene service providers and community leaders is something head teachers or school senior leaders are uniquely well-placed to do and what makes school-centred C2C models so compelling.

A common criticism around access to services is that service delivery happens in silos rather than working for individuals or families and their actual needs. This is often inevitable: systems end up lodging around processes, rather than flexing around different users. While the idea of breaking down these silos is frequently touted, this is harder to do in practice than in theory.

One of the real benefits of a place-based approach like C2C is the potential to orient services around service users at a localised level. And specifically *how* this can happen is through an individual who is able to 'join the dots' around individuals' or families' needs in a way that systems and processes cannot. This is about having one person at the heart of multiple systems, who understands the needs of 'systems users', and can connect up the right people to improve individuals' interactions and experiences with the different systems.

School head teachers are at a 'sweet spot' that affords them both strategic influence and authentic, practical community knowledge. The combination of these different levels of knowledge and influence allows them to perform a systems-connecting role at the community level, 'zooming in and out' between the practical and the strategic. The community level is the natural limit to

the scale of the model because this is the scale at which connections can be made within the mind of one person (the C2C leader).

This is not to say that the C2C leader is all-important, and that other school staff or community contributors don't matter. Staff and community buy-in are critical enablers to developing and embedding the model, and ensuring it is resilient to staff changes going into the future. The capacity afforded by wider school staff is vital to developing C2C work; important too is the role of the school building as a physical presence and community asset that can bring people together in its shared spaces and enable connections and relationships to be made.

Nevertheless, in the first instance, C2C leaders are vitally important to driving their C2C model forward by forging connections and joining the dots within their communities where things aren't currently working so well. As the models in this report go on to later stages of maturity it will be interesting to see how this dynamic shifts.²⁸

Prioritisation of long-term deeper relationships

Across C2C partners, building relationships of trust amongst teachers, pupils, parents and other community members is prioritised, because relationships are understood to be a vital means through which to address the complex, chronic issues associated with poverty and deprivation that under-served families may be facing. Relationships are both a means to an end and an end in themselves. For example, if schools can nurture relationships of trust with pupils and their families, they will be better placed to understand and resolve issues like a child's poor school attendance. But everyday positive relationships are also the basis for individual wellness and community action per se. Having positive relationships in their lives can help people to feel competent and capable of positive action, which can be transformational for themselves and others around them.

²⁸ For Cranbrook Education Campus, which is further into the C2C Partnership than the others documented in this report, Aynsley Jones, the Hub Manager, has taken on the critical role of 'joining up' support which CEC head Stephen Farmer had previously driven. Nevertheless, the importance of her continuity in post was emphasised by Stephen.

As Hilary Cottam argues in her book *Radical Help*²⁹, our current welfare system is set up to deal with acute issues to which effective fixes can be applied – for example, a broken leg: a plaster cast. Yet today, the biggest problems facing society are chronic in nature – loneliness and depression, for example. Chronic issues can't be fixed, only effectively managed. Cottam argues that in treating chronic issues, we need to shift our thinking from attempts at quick fixes, which don't work and provide little benefit to anyone (as people stay in the system, not getting better) to thinking about how such issues can be effectively managed by those affected, with the ongoing support of others.

In a world where issues can be easily fixed, efficiency is a useful indicator of performance because it drives being able to help more people more quickly. But efficiency drives – which in service terms often means seeing the greatest number of people in the least amount of time – often sidelines and compromises relational aspects of service delivery. For example, having an open-ended chat isn't something medical professionals often have time to do. Yet, this is the kind of ongoing support that is as likely to address complex modern societal ills such as poor mental health as the actual 'services' being provided, tracked and measured.

Cottam contends that positive relationships must be understood as the solution. Relationships are a potentially transformative force in people's lives.³⁰ And insofar as the people nurtured through positive relationships can go on to form positive relationships with others, there is the potential for a snowball effect of change. This is shown in the case studies in this report. One such example from Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust describes a parent who was struggling to cope, but through her relationship with C2C leader Claire Lundie, sought mental health support from her GP and went on to find employment and become a community volunteer – increasing the community's overall capacity for action.

C2C models involve believing in the power of people to create change. They recognise that 'doing to' communities isn't an option: they need to 'do with' – and doing this in a meaningful way involves forging genuine relationships of trust with community members. This means valuing people's experiences and skills, but also nurturing people where they may need support. In austere times, unlocking the capacity of individuals to act in service of themselves, their families and their communities presents a real opportunity. This is not to say that a relational approach should be viewed as an alternative to better-funded services; rather, it is a meaningful way of creating positive change *despite* widespread cuts to public services. A relational approach combined with better-funded services could bring about deep-rooted change.

The power of relationships to be transformational in people's lives is borne out by the stories told by people who have been socially mobile in their lives. Almost always, it is strong, supportive relationships with particular people (whether that be a parent, teacher, friend or mentor) that transforms people's life chances.³¹ We know this to be true, yet choosing to prioritise relationships isn't so easy.

What matters is schools prioritising an investment of time in building relationships. And this can be hard to do with so many competing priorities, especially when building genuine relationships means taking the time to have conversations that don't always have an explicit agenda or immediate expectation of some kind of return. Ultimately, this is something school leaders are taking on on top of their day-to-day work – whether that be turning up early to greet parents at the school gates, conducting 'home visits' to meet parents in their homes or sitting on community action boards. Even before joining the C2C Partnership, hours and sometimes years of work have gone into sitting on local committees and cultivating relationships within the community. Nevertheless, if schools can do this patient groundwork, the longer-term payback can be a snowball effect of connections and capacity for action.

29 Cottam (2018).

30 See also the Harvard Study of Adult Development: www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org

31 See for example Hashi Mohamed's 'Adventures in Social Mobility' at: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08lh7gf

Eight steps to develop C2C models

While the previous section describes two common core elements of partners' C2C models, there are eight additional common elements that have enabled partners to develop their C2C models. In this section, we outline the following eight key enablers.

Prerequisites	1	Right time	It being the right time in a school's journey – in particular, having achieved school stability and a strong record on teaching and learning, and C2C aligning with current school and trust priorities
	2	Trust buy-in	Having a supportive trust or local authority that is on board with C2C priorities and potentially puts in place support, structures and funding
Mindset	3	Civic mindset	The head teacher or C2C lead developing and inculcating in staff the belief that they can and should help change their community context
	4	Big picture thinking	The head teacher or C2C lead believing in the benefit of taking time out from the everyday to reflect on wider objectives beyond narrow school attainment measures
Approach	5	Intentionality	Being clear on the 'why' behind every action to ensure the C2C model fits the school and community context
	6	Entrepreneurialism	Being opportunistic and not being afraid to make asks; accepting that progress will be non-linear
Action	7	Right staff	Gaining staff buy-in; having the right people as 'thread leads'; having consistency of staffing and continuity plans for if staff leave
	8	Showing impact	Finding different ways to demonstrate impact given the long-term and holistic nature of the endeavour; using 'wins' as proof of concept

1 Right time

A prerequisite to developing an effective C2C model is it being 'the right time in a school's journey'. The 'right time' was described by various school and trust leaders as being when a school has established stability (across various aspects of school life including staffing, pupil behaviour and pupil outcomes). Leaders often described their motivation for joining the C2C Partnership in these terms: as deriving from their school or trust's commitment (or indeed their personal commitment³²) to improving outcomes for their students from under-resourced backgrounds and seeing C2C work as the obvious next step in achieving this.

Luke Robbins-Ross, head of Dixons Music Primary at the time of interview,³³ for example described being at the point in their school journey where this work

would have the biggest marginal impact on educational outcomes. With strong teaching, curriculum, systems and outcomes in place, it was his belief that working on engaging families and communities was now the element that would most contribute to improving outcomes for their students from under-resourced backgrounds.

For many partners, there was already an alignment between the objectives of the C2C Partnership and their school or trust's existing vision or mission of supporting children from under-resourced backgrounds. C2C was seen as a natural extension of what the school or trust was already doing – strengthening, deepening or systematising the supportive work they were already doing with families and communities.

32 In addition to the school or trust's commitment to improving outcomes for students from under-resourced backgrounds, a deeply held personal belief in this vision was also frequently cited by C2C leaders.

33 Luke is now Executive Director of Primary at The Brigshaw Learning Partnership.

The notion of prior school stability as table-stakes for C2C work resonates with The Reach Foundation's mantra that 'great schools *are necessary* but not sufficient'. C2C partners contended that in the absence of school stability, schools would struggle to find the capacity to maintain a focus on wider C2C objectives and should (rightly) have other priorities aimed at establishing good school practices before developing an outward community focus.

Having enough capacity to take on C2C work should not be underestimated. In the long run, the theory is that an effective C2C model will generate additional capacity through systems change: building strong relationships of trust with pupils, parents and the local community supports pupil attendance, positive behaviour and effective classroom teaching and learning and means less time will be spent 'firefighting' problems. But of course it takes time for positive effects to feed through. Developing a C2C model is therefore an investment in the future that requires stumping up resources in the present. Realistically, this can only be achieved by partners who are in a decent starting position, where such an investment isn't detrimental to present welfare.

While two and a half of the C2C Partnership's five threads³⁴ are about school practices (teaching, curriculum and part of the relationships thread), most partners thought that focusing on all five threads in two years would be too much. For most partners, the most exciting bit of what The Reach Foundation are doing differently is its community-facing work and having enough capacity to focus on this work is essential. While partners were engaging in improving school practices through the C2C Partnership, this was generally from a solid base involving tweaks to, and a consolidation of, existing practice.

2 Trust buy-in

Support at the trust or local authority level for C2C work is essential, where schools are part of a multi-academy trust or maintained or funded by the local authority. At a minimum, this involves a trust or local authority being on board with the motivation and objectives for a school's C2C work, given C2C's impact on priorities and resourcing. School leaders described the importance of bringing trust staff on the journey, alongside school staff. This was an important part of the C2C leader's work as they developed their C2C model. Further along the spectrum, trusts are not just

supportive of a school's C2C work, but actively involved in developing C2C models at the trust level.

Some of the ways in which trusts or local authorities can act as an enabler to C2C work include:

- Providing a sounding board for ideas and holding C2C leaders to account.
- Helping to 'translate' C2C Partnership training into the language of the trust; deciding on school improvement practices that might be collectively implemented across a group of schools.
- Providing common structures and funding for community hubs across groups of schools, and coordinating partners such as the NHS or regional or national charities that might operate across multiple hubs.
- Collecting and sharing lessons and best practice across multiple C2C models operating within a group of schools.
- Testing whether other schools in the trust or local authority are ready for a C2C model.

Examples of these various approaches in operation include:

- The Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust case study in this report shows an example of a trust supporting three of its schools (two primary and one secondary) in the HU3 area of Hull to develop a C2C model based on work already being done at one of its primary schools.
- Also documented in this report, following the development of a successful C2C model at the all-through Cranbrook Education Campus, the Ted Wragg Trust is supporting the development of further C2C models across primary and secondary schools in geographic clusters in Wipton in Exeter and in Plymouth. It is also supporting a network of school leads interested in relationships/community work across all of its circa 20 schools, in part as a means of gauging their readiness for full C2C work.
- Meanwhile, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, interviewed as part of the first cohort of C2C partners, joined the C2C Partnership at the trust level with a vision of developing a geographic cluster-based 'hub and spoke' model for schools across the trust.

34 At the time of the study there were five threads. There are now four threads.

3 Civic mindset

One of the most important aspects of the C2C process for many leaders was a mindset shift on their own part: specifically, developing a belief in their ability to change their community context, thereby altering their understanding of the role of the school within the community. This shouldn't be understood as schools forcing change on their communities in a top-down way. Rather, it is about school leaders realising that the context of their community (such as limited early years provision, poor transport links and the existence of hunger amongst children – as in the Holyrood Academy case study) is not immutable, and schools have a role to play in trying to change the facts on the ground.

Dave MacCormick from Holyrood Academy described this as having the mindset that:

- It is within the school's power and remit to change its community context rather than take it as given; and
- Head teachers possess the influence to convene others within their community and with that power a responsibility to do so.

C2C leaders described this mindset shift as empowering. In particular, where schools were contending with the legacy of a poor reputation or poor community relations, leaders found inspiration in the fact that an important part of this work was about shifting that dynamic and actively creating new relationships with the community and new terms by which the school could be understood within the community.

The notion of a civic mindset resonates with The Reach Foundation and the Confederation of School Trusts' proposition that trusts adopt a civic role in society.³⁵ This turns on the increasingly important role trusts are playing in the education system. As they grow in size and importance, multi-academy trusts will increasingly be required to demonstrate a contribution to society beyond their immediate responsibilities. C2C work provides trusts with a model for fulfilling these civic responsibilities whilst simultaneously improving the contexts within which their schools operate.

4 Big picture thinking

C2C partners recognise that attainment in tests cannot be the sole end goal of their work. Evidence from high-performing US charter schools show that strong school attainment does not necessarily lead to good post-school outcomes if learners are not equipped with the skills needed to succeed beyond the school classroom.³⁶ Attention needs to be given to factors beyond educational attainment that will stand young people in good stead over the course of their lives – including their physical and mental health and ability to develop positive social relationships.

The transition from school into whatever individuals choose to do next – as well as other key transitions throughout childhood – need to be carefully supported. This involves considering the child's journey through the whole C2C pipeline from cradle to career. Understanding the 'vertical data' of each child across this pipeline – as measured through various milestones in the early years, across school and beyond – can help schools to ensure that every child is being adequately supported to thrive.³⁷

C2C is about thinking about the bigger picture of what schools can and should be doing to support their children and young people to thrive. Various leaders talked about C2C helping them to focus on 'the things that would never be top of your list' as a head teacher. This is not because these things are not important – in fact, given that C2C starts with a discussion about the overall objectives you are trying to achieve, nothing could be more important. Yet amidst the everyday concerns of safeguarding, behaviour and GCSE results, a focus on what you are trying to ultimately achieve slips down the list. This is important work, but it never feels urgent enough to devote time to it.

As such, partner leaders valued the way in which the C2C Partnership forced them to step out of the everyday; to meet and discuss with others who shared similar values; and to reflect on the bigger picture. They talked about how very often the most useful element of a C2C Partnership conference day was the internal discussion between senior leaders on the train home, as

35 Townsend, Vainker and Cruddas (2023).

36 See for example fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/thoughtful-dated-criticism-no-excuses-charter-schools.

37 To this end, The Reach Foundation strongly advocate for schools or groups of schools to consider using some or all of the C2C milestones they are developing – a set of data indicators, examined at the level of each child, encompassing both in-school and beyond-school outcomes at every phase of life (for example, at the end of primary school: that a child achieves the expected standard in Key Stage 2 SATs reading; and that their weight and height is in line with age-related measures). For schools to feel more comfortable taking risks with this work (or for the work to seem less risky), ideally national accountability parameters would change to reflect these wider objectives rather than current narrow attainment measures.

they parsed the ideas and information that had been shared and reflected on what this meant for their own school or trust.

Big picture thinking is not an invitation to be idealistic or vague. The approach The Reach Foundation promote is along the lines of the 'double diamond' design process (imagine an accordion stretching out and then squeezing in): expansive in 'discovery' and 'development' phases, focused in 'definition' and 'delivery' phases.³⁸ This shift in focus and approach between different moments in the C2C process is key to developing an effective model.

For example, the open-ended question The Reach Foundation ask their families: "What is putting pressure on you and your family?" is very unlike the specific, school-related questions and conversations schools typically have with families. It invites people to open up and talk about the bigger picture. Yet if The Reach Foundation are expansive in their 'discovery' phase, they are laser-focused in the subsequent 'defining' phase – for example, in the articulation of their theory of change.

Claire Lundie from Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust takes a similar approach when she says, "attendance is an issue, but never the issue". Understanding the bigger picture is vital to supporting families at the pain points they are actually experiencing, rather than at the pain point the school is experiencing (in this case, attendance) – even if an objective in the end is to improve attendance.

5 Intentionality

Intentionality – or being purposeful about everything you do – is another key principle articulated by The Reach Foundation and its partners. Intentionality is about questioning, and thereby being able to articulate, why you are doing each thing you are doing. Being intentional enables two things to occur: first, it ensures a super-efficient focus on what matters (by first ensuring that you articulate what matters); second, it ensures that everyone in your organisation is on the same page about why you are doing each thing that you are doing (which can support both motivation and the standardisation of practice).

In the context of the C2C Partnership, what it further enables is a contextual response to different local community needs. As Katherine Ogden from King's Oak Academy noted, this isn't about taking The Reach Foundation's practices like the creation of a hub or instructional coaching and replicating them wholesale in your own setting. Instead, it is about taking the Foundation's 'thinking systems' – about community or excellent teaching, for example. For each 'thinking system', you then need to work out your objectives in relation to your local starting context, and the actions that will help you achieve these objectives. Given the extensive content covered in the C2C Partnership's five threads, being intentional also helps leaders to prioritise and decide what the focus of their evolving C2C model should be.

Examples of intentionality in practice include:

- Emily Simpson-Horne, head teacher at Dartmouth Academy at the time of interview³⁹, described the importance, early on in the process, of articulating her own 'elevator pitch' as to the school's C2C vision. As well as helping her to promote the model to potential funders, partners and staff, it enabled her to actively interrogate her own understanding of the approach and her priorities. In addition, questioning and articulating the reason behind every decision the school made helped bring clarity and focus to senior leadership meetings and to other internal and external meetings.
- Lee Wilson of Outwood Grange Academies Trust described a process by which he and other senior leaders filtered back the training they'd received through the C2C Partnership into 'the language of the trust' to achieve a fully conceived, joined-up approach rather than lots of add-ons that could lead to initiative overload. Thinking about which of The Reach Foundation's practices they might want to incorporate into their approach led to the Trust also reviewing which of their existing practices were and weren't core to their model of excellence, enabling them to shed some layers of complexity that had built up over the years. This culminated in a one-page visualisation of their model that could be easily communicated to all staff.

38 See for example www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-resources/the-double-diamond.

39 Emily is now head teacher at Matford Brook Academy.

6 Entrepreneurialism

A shift in approach to becoming more entrepreneurial was another significant change recounted by C2C partners. In line with the civic mindset that they should not take their context as given, an entrepreneurial approach requires schools to adopt a different mindset to what they may have been used to, with regards to how they acquire funding or pursue partnerships and other opportunities.

A key tip proffered by C2C leaders was to explore and be open to possibilities and to try things without worrying about the risk of failure. This can be seen across the four case studies in this report – highlighted by Dave MacCormick from Holyrood Academy's 'don't ask, don't get' approach to convening a Community Leaders Breakfast in Chard, and Stephen Farmer's 'throw it and see what sticks' approach to developing Cranbrook's community hub.

A key part of being open to possibilities is building relationships in a non-transactional manner but being opportunistic when moments present themselves. This can again be seen in the case studies – for example, in the upfront investments in time that Stephen Farmer and Katherine Ogden put into building relationships with their local authorities, which (although this could not be presumed) eventually resulted in collaborations on their respective hubs.

Ed Vainker from The Reach Foundation is a strong proponent of this approach to relationship-building. He advocates that it is about being open to all connections and generous with your time and resource – thinking about what you can offer people without expectation of any immediate return. In part, this is because being generous and helping people in this way is a good thing to be; in part, it is because you never know when a connection might prove helpful down the line. This helps you build a bank of favours, meaning it's easier to make an ask of people in future, should an opportunity present.

Another benefit of this approach is the snowball effect, described by many partners, in which one connection sparks another, which sparks another, so that the work develops a momentum of its own. This additive value to building connections is vital to C2C work having community impact at a scale beyond the individual reach of the school leaders and staff involved.

If the snowball effect is an example of the work reaching a fast pace, the flipside to partnership working

is the way in which it can sometimes move very slowly. C2C leaders talked about the need to come to terms with this, as well as the work's stop-start and non-linear nature. While it can be tempting for the C2C leader to push the pace, it is essential to ensure others are taken on the journey because the work cannot be done by one person alone. Creating sustainable change is about winning people's hearts and minds and this doesn't happen overnight – it is about taking small steps towards the overall vision.

Leaders noted that what was important was a willingness to try things and learn iteratively, to say to people that you won't always get things right, and to accept that the journey will be slow and circuitous. Worth remembering is that building relationships and strengthening the community are 'goods' in themselves as much as they are enablers to the C2C vision. C2C leaders advised taking stops or slowdowns as a chance to reflect and reset.

In the same vein, it is worth noting that C2C models involve a continuous evolution – that the work is never 'done'. While a model may reach a level of maturity, in which it runs with less reliance on the C2C leader as a driving force, to stay fit for purpose requires that it continuously adapts to its changing community context.

7 Right staff

C2C leaders talked about how essential it was to have the right staff involved in the model – in particular, thread and hub leads. What made people the right staff for this work? The key thing was being bought into the vision and believing wholeheartedly in the motivation and approach. This was more important than skills and experience. Community knowledge and connections, built up over time, are helpful in developing rapport and in facilitating the work of signposting families and residents to appropriate services. However, these can be developed through intentional practices such as being on the school gates in the morning to greet children and parents, talking with local community figures and business owners, and sitting on community action boards.

To bring staff on board, C2C leaders took various approaches including articulating the 'problem' (via statistics showing the disadvantages that community members might be experiencing, for example) and their C2C vision; showing staff prior work they had done and taking staff to visit Reach Schools and other C2C partners who already had a model set up; and engaging staff at all levels in training sessions around

various elements of C2C such as the importance of developing relationships with families.

To create capacity for the work, some head teachers restructured their senior leadership teams – as seen in the King's Oak Academy and Holyrood Academy case studies. By re-orienting roles around C2C priorities, or else carving out portions of roles to focus on these priorities, these head teachers embedded C2C into the school's business-as-usual. Often, this represented a promotion for staff, helping to build their buy-in, and was at relatively low cost, as the C2C work typically aligned with a prior role while including a few more responsibilities. The same approach could be replicated throughout the organisation by supporting existing staff to take on additional C2C work as a learning or development opportunity.

Consistency of key personnel is important. Most important is the continuity of the head teacher, given their vital role as connector, but having continuity across the thread leads is also vital. C2C leaders were employing various methods for managing this including having more than one lead on each thread in case staff moved on; ensuring a regular feedback mechanism between thread leads attending C2C Partnership training and senior leadership meetings; and a mechanism for discussing and embedding any C2C-related practices into the school or trust's overall approach.

8 Showing impact

Being able to show impact is vital to gaining the buy-in of both internal staff and external partners and is critical for obtaining funding. Demonstrating 'quick wins' can help people to understand the value of C2C work, bring them on board, and help them to communicate the work's value to others. Meanwhile, being able to show positive change over time is essential to sustaining the interest and motivation of those involved. Evaluating impact is also important in the continuous development of a model.

C2C work is multifaceted, aiming to tackle from different angles the disadvantages that might be preventing children and families from thriving. Improvements to in-school outcomes for students from under-resourced backgrounds is an end-goal for many partners, but there is a recognition that attributing changes in attainment outcomes to the C2C model is difficult – as noted earlier in the Harlem Children's Zone example. Despite this, tracking in-school outcomes is useful as a gauge of success.

Another important means of showing impact is capturing evaluative evidence from individual initiatives, such as the take-up and attendance of courses and groups; financial and in-kind contributions made such as the number of volunteer hours given; and the 'cost saving' to local authorities of these contributions as well as of preventative measures that reduce the likelihood of later, more costly interventions. The latter two of these, in particular, can help make the case for funding of initiatives – as noted in the Cranbrook Education Campus case study in this report. Evaluations of individual initiatives can also provide feedback from beneficiaries and volunteers, which can be used to hone delivery and assess if an initiative should continue to be part of the C2C offer.

Given that a C2C model is designed to be more than the sum of its parts, what matters beyond the individual initiatives being delivered through a school or hub is the collective impact of the model as a whole. Yet this can be especially difficult to prove. One solution is to actually show people the model in action – as The Reach Foundation do, when they invite visitors to tour the Reach Schools and see aspects of their community support. Dave MacCormick of Holyrood Academy argues that this experiential method is one of the best ways of getting people to understand what this work is all about, as it conveys elements of the model that cannot be easily articulated.

Videos are a way of reaching a broader audience in this regard, as are case studies or interviews with families or individuals who have been supported by C2C work. Both of these approaches have been tried by Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust – with the parent supported into volunteering and then paid work, mentioned earlier, sharing her story as a feature in the Waitrose magazine.

Ultimately, C2C models are best evaluated through a mixed methods approach, including:

- Development of a theory of change – both overall and for each thread – through which C2C leaders and thread leads articulate the mechanisms by which proposed activities will lead to stated objectives. This enables leads to identify measures of success and track these on an ongoing basis.
- Proxy measures that help to articulate a link between some of the wider C2C activities and in-school outcomes. For example, increased parental engagement at parents' evenings and pupils' attendance. While it isn't possible to prove a causal

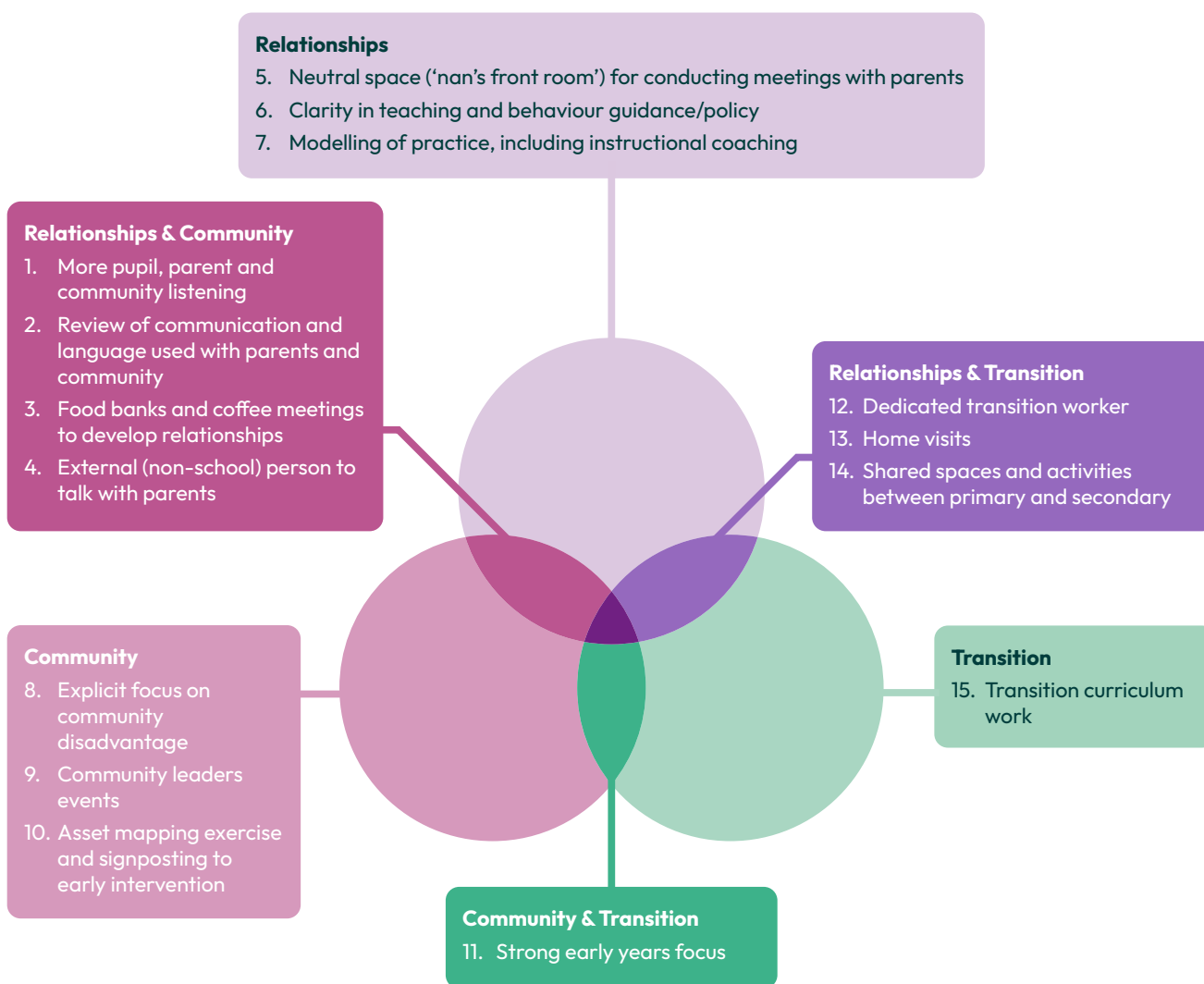
link between the two, you can hypothesise that improved relationships between the school and the home might have a positive impact on attendance.

- General school outcomes data, in particular for students from under-resourced backgrounds.
- Interventions data, both quantitative and qualitative, such as attendance numbers with demographic splits, identified impacts and participant feedback.
- General pupil, parent and community feedback – both formal (e.g. through parent voice) and informal (e.g. through social media and everyday conversation).
- Case studies that show through particular individuals' or families' stories the ways through which C2C work is having an impact. This can be particularly helpful in showing the importance of relationships and the ways in which various elements of a C2C model come together to help reinforce the support a family may be receiving over time.
- Stakeholder mapping that shows the developing network of relationships across the local system created by C2C work, like the Ripple Effect work featured in the Cranbrook Education Campus case study.⁴⁰
- Experiential approaches like showing people the model in action.
- The Reach Foundation's proposed C2C milestones, tracked at the individual pupil level over time, which will add another level of quantitative robustness to the evidence base across partners' models.

⁴⁰ Various tools are available for this kind of work. The Reach Foundation's Feltham Convening Partnership uses Kumu, updating the map every year to show the increased network of relationships.

15 common practices all schools can try

This section summarises 15 innovative practices being tried by a number of C2C partners, which could be things that all schools and trusts can try, without developing a full C2C model. The 15 practices broadly fall into three categories: relationships, community and transition – although there is overlap between these categories, as shown in the Venn diagram below.



15 common practices

1. More pupil, parent and community listening

Actively listening to pupils, parents and members of the local community has a number of benefits. Chief amongst these is helping schools to develop a better understanding of their community and the individuals and families living within it. Listening to families can help schools to learn more about their needs and concerns and the ways in which these are and aren't being supported – by the school as well as by other service providers. It can help to challenge assumptions that might be held by staff, particularly about families who are being under-served in the current system.

Taking the time to actively listen to pupils, parents and members of the local community also serves to open up the channels of communication through which relationships of trust can be built. As argued earlier, these relationships can be transformational for both individuals and communities. Active listening can also help schools to identify strong advocates and allies: pupils, parents and community members who are positive about the school and able to gain their peers' trust and support and bring them on board with what the school is trying to do.

There are a variety of ways in which listening can be done, as the case studies in this report show. At one end of the spectrum are the 'deep listening exercises' advocated by The Reach Foundation, involving open-ended conversations with parents and other community residents through use of the question: "what is putting pressure on you and your family?"⁴¹

But there are other less intensive means of listening that C2C partners were employing, such as greater use of pupil and parent voice surveys, as described in the King's Oak Academy and Holyrood Academy case studies. At King's Oak Academy, extended pupil and parent voice surveys deployed every other term were being used to gauge pupil and parent engagement with the school as well as identify any areas of concern. Meanwhile, at Holyrood Academy, Year 8 student belonging surveys were being used as a means of finding out which students might not be feeling a sense of belonging to the school and targeting support towards these students.

More informally, C2C partners were making the most of opportunities to connect with parents and other community residents, such as being on the school gates at the start and end of the school day, or at the food banks, coffee mornings and other events they were running (as noted later in this section). And they were also making the most of learnings from community organisations that conducted listening practices themselves or from their volunteers who had direct contact with different members of the community (as seen in the Cranbrook Education Campus case study).

2. Review of communication and language used with parents and community

Rather than framing some parents as 'hard to reach', schools should be thinking about how their communication and language might not be inclusive of all parents and taking steps to rectify this. As described in the King's Oak Academy case study later in this report, this could include auditing standard school letters to make sure they are clear and jargon-free, and scripting or issuing guidance around phone calls to parents, such as how staff greet parents and introduce themselves and the reason for the call.

The key aims of a review of communication and language might be to:

- Remove jargon and unnecessarily complicated or officious language that could be off-putting and potentially frightening for some parents, especially those unfamiliar with the school system or 'officialdom';
- Avoid deficit-framing with regards to pupils from under-resourced backgrounds and their families – singling out and labelling pupils or families as lacking in some way rather than identifying systemic barriers to children doing well in the current set-up;
- Simplify messaging to pupils and parents to ensure it is crystal clear and consistent, no matter which member of staff it is sent by;
- Provide easy-to-digest, bitesize information – potentially making use of video clips and text messages – to cater for busy or stressed parents;
- Consider different options for parent meetings and events, taking into account parents who may need to work or care for others in the evenings, single-parent families and/or those with English as an additional language;
- Ensure staff are clear on communication procedures, including which staff members should be involved at various points in communications with parents;
- Consider how the school presents itself to its local community – such as through Facebook – and how it might better communicate its current values and practices.

3. Food banks and coffee meetings to develop relationships

As noted earlier, one in five schools in England is now operating a food bank in response to the acute need amongst the families these schools are serving. But food banks can provide more than food. What the schools in the C2C Partnership have shown is that food banks can be a way of developing relationships with parents and other community residents. So can the coffee/lunch/warm space provision that schools put on – like Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust's 'Chat and Choose' or Cranbrook Education Campus's 'Home from Home' events.

⁴¹ The Reach Foundation have developed this approach based on training provided by Citizens UK, who have given training at C2C Partnership conference days and with specific partners. For further information on how to conduct deep listening exercises, see www.citizensuk.org

The physical spaces that schools possess are a massive community asset and utilising them to bring members of the community together is an opportunity to foster relationships and community ties.

4. External (non-school) person to talk and build relationships with parents

It can be helpful for schools to have a connection with a neutral, non-school person with whom parents can discuss issues they find difficult discussing with the school. A neutral third party, who is perhaps more associated with the community than the school, can help play a bridging role between parents/the community and the school.

For example, at Cranbrook Education Campus, the school's Attendance Project involved parents whose children's attendance was a concern being referred to Aynsley Jones, the community hub manager. As someone associated more with the community than the school, parents were able to open up to Aynsley about the out-of-school pressures they were facing in a way that they might not with school staff.

Schools can also use non-teaching staff to build rapport with parents as a starting point for developing better relations with parents going forward. For example, Wise Owl Trust, one of the trusts in the C2C Partnership's first cohort, employed two community-based members of staff (who happened to be former army personnel) to meet and greet parents and children on the school gates as a means of developing relations with those who might find it difficult connecting with school staff.

5. Neutral space ('nan's front room') for conducting meetings with parents

Recognising that many parents may have negative memories or perceptions about school and of being called to the head teacher's office, some C2C partners had set up a neutral space within which to conduct meetings with parents. These un-school-like settings can help to reset relationships between the school and parents and help in the building of relationships of trust.

Similarly, while office spaces are often regarded as 'neutral', individuals who have faced systemic disadvantages may associate them with unwelcome authority and a loss of personal control over their own circumstances. Such settings can lead to conversations starting on the wrong footing and being viewed as oppositional rather than supportive.

Designed to be 'like your nan's front room', spaces like the one being used by King's Oak Academy for meetings between the school and parents can alter this dynamic – reducing the perception of schools or teachers as unwelcome 'authority figures'. Clearly, if interactions and relations in the room do not reflect a more balanced power dynamic then such attempts could be seen as tokenistic. However, with the right intentions in place, this can be a good way to reset relationships between the school and parents.

6. Clarity in teaching and behaviour guidance/policy

Schools and trusts involved in the C2C Partnership either already had existing strengths across their teaching and learning and behaviour, or else were addressing these as a priority by developing clear policies, and processes to ensure their consistent application. This can include items like a teacher handbook that sets out the school's values but also specifies precisely how these should be manifested in the classroom; and a behaviour policy that sets out the school's overall approach, but also specifies very clearly the classroom behaviours that should result in particular merits and demerits, and clear escalation processes around negative behaviours.

Having explicit expectations around teaching and behaviour provides clarity and consistency for pupils, which can help them to better understand and benefit from the school system. It can also help them to feel as though they are being treated fairly – rather than arbitrarily – should their behaviour or the behaviour of others result in merits or demerits. This is especially beneficial to pupils from under-resourced backgrounds, who may feel that existing systems are unfamiliar or unfair, and who may be more at risk of negative unconscious bias from teachers.

7. Modelling and deliberate practice, including instructional coaching

Modelling and deliberate practice involves staff not only learning about a practice but seeing it being modelled and then practising it themselves. A Reach Schools' approach that several partners described adopting in their own schools was setting aside a small amount of time (often just ten minutes) during regular staff CPD sessions or all-staff meetings for modelling and deliberate practice. A staff member would model a particular set of actions that the school wanted to reinforce, before staff would try this out for themselves in pairs or groups of three, giving feedback to each other and then practising the actions again.

In a similar vein, many partners also adopted instructional coaching into their teaching and learning – assigning teachers to a mentor or to a small group of other teachers who would work with them to develop and improve their effectiveness through cycles of feedback, modelling, reflection and deliberate practice. This can be an effective way of improving teaching and learning practice and ensuring consistency across staff practice.

8. Explicit focus on community disadvantage

An explicit focus on community disadvantage recognises that disadvantage isn't a characteristic of individuals – i.e. 'disadvantaged students' – but a complex set of circumstances embedded within a place. By looking at a variety of data (such as health, employment and service provision statistics) and by listening to families, residents and community organisers about these circumstances, schools can gain a deeper understanding of the pressures of living in a particular place, and of why the school (system) may not be achieving for certain students.

An explicit focus on disadvantage also foregrounds the idea that schools should be seeing the achievement of their most disadvantaged students as a priority rather than an add-on to a standard focus on students from non-disadvantaged backgrounds (particularly where the latter are in the majority). By taking disadvantage as their starting point, schools will orientate their practices to work for their most disadvantaged students – with the notion that these practices should benefit all students.

9. Community leaders events

Convening local community leaders and volunteers can be a useful means of helping to join up service provision in an area and ensuring it is tailored to community needs. As Dave MacCormick from Holyrood Academy notes, this can lead to community-led 'quick wins' – as simple as two food banks in Chard having a conversation and ensuring that their provision going forward is complementary and not duplicative. Such meetings or events can also be a means of thanking community leaders and volunteers for their work and time, highlighting and sharing good practice, and invigorating them to continue doing what they do.

Schools are a strong, visible presence within local communities and possess physical spaces in which meetings can take place without significant additional cost. They are therefore well placed to convene community leaders events.

10. Asset mapping exercise and signposting to early intervention

C2C models use an asset-based approach in their work. This means recognising that existing organisations, networks and individuals possess a wealth of community knowledge, expertise and potential capacity for creating change if they can be nurtured and pulled together in a meaningful way. An asset-based approach means not reinventing or recreating provision, but instead making the most of existing resources in an area – signposting, convening and joining up existing services and activities – especially in an era of limited resource.

A useful first step in taking an asset-based approach is to conduct an asset mapping exercise: exploring what provision is available locally. This exploration can take many forms – from sitting down with Google and looking up domestic abuse charities, as described by Claire Lundie from Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust; to conducting community walks or pen-and-paper mapping exercises with pupils, parents and other community residents, finding out about the local places where people choose to spend their time. Linking such exercises to any community listening work can help schools to develop an understanding of the gaps between community needs and local assets, and where additional signposting, join-up or provision might be warranted.

All of the C2C partners who conducted asset mapping exercises were surprised by how much support was already available in their local area. Even for schools and trusts not developing a full C2C model, knowing the kinds of support available locally and being able to signpost children and parents to these forms of support could be transformational. Asset mapping also gives schools insight into the elements of their community that people value, which can serve as a platform for building engagement.

11. Strong early years focus

Many C2C models have a strong focus on early years. Intervening at earlier life stages should benefit schools in the long run: there is a wealth of evidence showing that attainment gaps associated with socio-economic disadvantage are typically formed before children even join school and are a strong predictor of later attainment, and later intervention is both more costly and less effective.⁴² Evidence from neuroscience also emphasises the importance of the early years (including the period before birth) as crucial for good brain development.⁴³

Further, during the time of this research (in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic), school leaders noted an increasing level of support needs amongst families of children joining their Reception classes. This added an urgency to their desire to support children and families at this earlier life stage.

Without developing a full C2C model, practical things schools could try include: offering physical space on the school site for services or activities such as health visiting and parent-baby groups; supporting transition between early years settings and the school by developing better links with feeder settings; and supporting the local early years sector with training opportunities (for example, in nutritional standards – see the South-West Social Mobility Commission's early years report).⁴⁴

12. Dedicated transition worker

For many children and their families, transition points – in particular the transition between primary and secondary school – can be difficult. Often, pupils are moving from a small, local school with one main class teacher and peers with whom they and their parents are familiar, to a larger and unfamiliar environment. This can be especially difficult for pupils who face additional barriers to learning or attending school.

Improving the links between primary and secondary schools is crucial to supporting a better transition process. One way of doing this is by secondary schools having a dedicated transition worker to work with its feeder primary schools, to learn about pupils who will be joining the school. Primary school teachers can give insights into each of the pupils and their families who

will be moving up to the secondary school, with the transition worker able to pass on notes to secondary staff. In particular, they are able to flag where pupils or their parents might benefit from small adjustments in teaching and learning or other school practices.

The transition worker can also use this information as a starting point for conversations during home visits, if the school is doing these (see below). And – as noted in the Holyrood Academy case study – they can also support with additional onboarding activities or conversations to support specific pupils when they arrive and during their first term at secondary school.

13. Home visits

Home visits involve members of school staff visiting families at their homes before children join a school. The aim of the visits is typically to:

- Meet parents and carers in an environment in which they feel comfortable and learn more about each child and their family;
- Set out expectations around the responsibilities of the school, pupils and parents – and in particular the collaborative partnership between parents and the school;
- Build trust between the school and each family – making it easier to have difficult conversations with parents further down the line.

While home visits can be time-consuming, many schools in the C2C Partnership took on this practice, believing it to be worthwhile in the process of relationship-building with families. Where time was limited, schools prioritised families joining from other trusts, for whom they had more limited prior knowledge.

14. Shared spaces and activities between primary and secondary

Schools and trusts in the C2C Partnership were trying out a variety of actions to help children and parents become familiar with secondary school before transition. In addition to secondary school taster days and induction sessions, some schools/trusts were organising activities for younger children at secondary school to help familiarise children and parents with going into these settings.

42 Heckman and Mosso (2014).

43 See for example <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/what-is-early-childhood-development-a-guide-to-the-science>

44 Mullen (2023).

For example, amongst Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust's schools in the HU3 area of Hull, the secondary Boulevard Academy began hosting the family 'Cook Together, Eat Together' activity that Chiltern Primary School had previously run, meaning families from Chiltern going into Boulevard to take part.

Meanwhile, at King's Oak Academy, the creation of a 'middle school' has designated a separate building and playground space for Years 5 – 8. This enables a slower transition between the differential practices associated with primary and secondary schools – such as parents no longer taking their children into school; being part of a much larger school; and separate subject teachers and subject classrooms. This can help reduce the frictions associated with transition.

15. Transition curriculum work

As all-throughs, Reach Schools have a fully planned and sequenced curriculum. Starting from the end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE), Reach Schools have backwards planned their curriculum down to the start of primary school in every subject to ensure that everything children learn builds on prior knowledge imparted by the schools. This is taken to the level of detail of every lesson – with subject workbooks for each year group setting out everything pupils will cover in each lesson that year.

This particularly benefits students from under-resourced backgrounds as the carefully planned curriculum ensures there is no assumption of prior knowledge – instead, everything builds on what has come before, allowing for a consolidation of knowledge as pupils progress through school. It also enables a degree of efficiency and effectiveness: with teachers spending less time planning lessons, they can spend more time practising how they teach. And the schools can more effectively cover lessons when teachers are absent.

Whilst coherence across the curriculum is an aim for many schools and trusts, this can be more difficult to achieve across primary and secondary when the set-up isn't centred around an all-through school. One practice that all schools and trusts could look to adopt is that showcased by Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust, involving specific transition work between Years 6 and 7 in particular subject areas.

In the Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust example, the Trust has developed an English workbook covering the last few weeks of term in Year 6 (after SATs) and first week or two in Year 7. Focusing on the topic of biography, pupils learn about and then write a biography of a famous person at the end of Year 6. They then revisit the topic at the start of Year 7, reviewing their previous work and writing an autobiography that serves to consolidate prior knowledge and skills and provide a benchmark piece of writing – and personal introduction – for their new teacher.

In context: four C2C case studies

The following four chapters present case studies from schools and trusts in the C2C Partnership who are developing C2C models in their own communities across the country. Three of the case studies feature schools in the South West of England (Somerset, Bristol and Devon), with one case study featuring a trust in the North of England (Hull), for contrast.

What the case studies show is how each C2C model has been developed within its own context. While there are some core enablers, learnings and practices that the partners have identified, as summarised in the previous section, the pathways taken by each partner have been formed as a result of being in a particular place at a particular time.

The case studies offer an insight into the scope of possibilities afforded by C2C models. In particular, these case studies highlight variation across the governance of community hubs – from support for an existing local community hub; to a partnership with the local authority on a government-backed Family Hub; to school-run hubs; and back to community ownership. This variation in hub governance is underpinned by a key concern within this work (and one that is yet to be fully resolved) around financial sustainability.⁴⁵

Another key aspect of variation is whether C2C models are undertaken by a school or by a multi-academy trust, and the extent to which trusts centralise elements of their C2C work – as noted earlier in this report. As more trust partners continue to develop their models, this will be an interesting area for future consideration.

Case study partner calls and school visits were carried out by Anne-Marie Sim between March and July 2024, and the case studies reflect the progress of each C2C model at that time.

The case studies are organised into roughly the same format each time, but with variation in the central part of the case study that deals with the particulars of the C2C model. The format is:

Introduction

- School context (*school name, location, size, age phases*)
- School and community disadvantage
- Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

The C2C model

- (*Variable sections depending on the C2C model*)

Conclusions

- Key learnings
- Key enablers
- Financial sustainability
- Measuring outcomes

⁴⁵ A recent development, however, is that The Reach Foundation's national work has recently secured additional philanthropic funding to create an Accelerator Fund which will support C2C partners who are seeking to deepen the impact of their work, over time.

This case study was written in spring 2024 and is not indicative of current progress of the C2C model, school or community context.

Holyrood Academy, Chard, Somerset

Summary

- Holyrood Academy has joined the C2C Partnership to address widening disadvantage gaps in school and in the local community.
- The focus has been on 'Community' – building relationships through a Community Leaders Breakfast and partnering with Chard Community Hub.
- The key learning Dave MacCormick, Holyrood Academy's head teacher, has taken from the C2C Partnership is shifting his mindset to believe that as a school head or CEO you have the power to make structural change within your community rather than taking your context as given.

This chapter is organised into the following sections:

Introduction

- School context
- School and community disadvantage
- Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

Holyrood Academy's C2C model

- Getting started: reaching down to primary and out to the community
- Community Leaders Breakfast: convening, connecting and coordinating
 - Working with the local authority: alternative provision within school and funding for an Area Champion
- Partnership with Chard Community Hub: supporting the growth of a community-facing offer
- In school: a focus on attendance and literacy

Conclusions

- Key learnings
- Key enablers
- Financial sustainability
- Measuring outcomes

Introduction

School context

Holyrood is a secondary academy for eleven- to 18-year-olds in the market town of Chard in South Somerset. The school has around 1400 students, 170 of whom are in sixth form. The school is the only secondary in the town and therefore serves the majority of its young population and those from surrounding villages.

The school is part of Blackdown Education Partnership, formed through a recent merger between Uffculme and Castle multi-academy trusts. The Trust favours giving schools a high degree of autonomy; all its schools – like Holyrood – are all in one-school towns, and there is a commitment to taking a place-based approach.

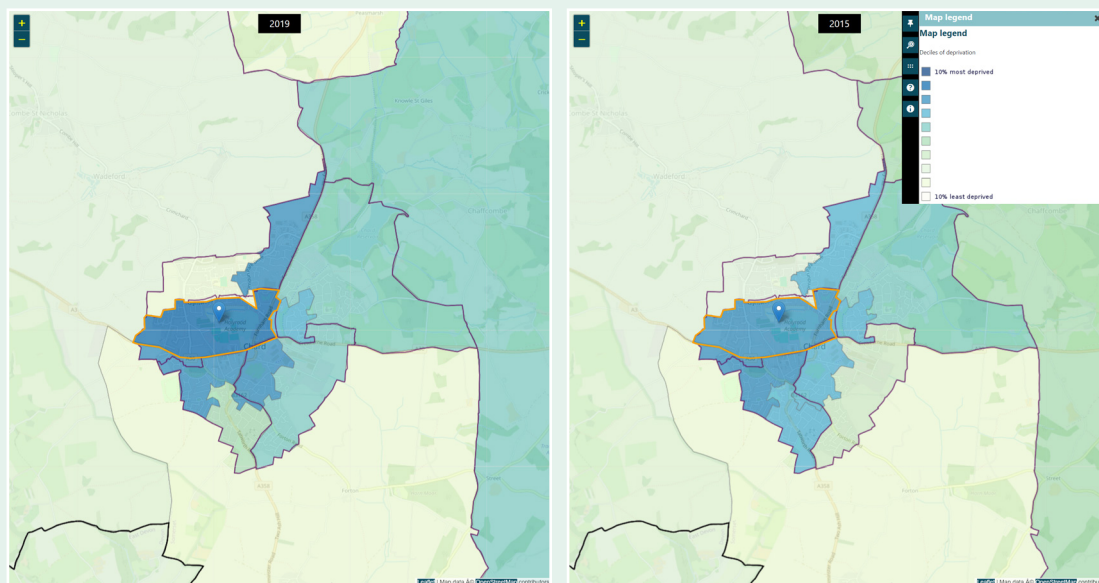
School and community disadvantage

Like many market towns in the South West, Holyrood's catchment includes areas of both limited and significant deprivation. Increasing levels of deprivation within the school population and town over the past decade is one of the motivations for joining the C2C Partnership.

The proportion of pupils at Holyrood in receipt of Free School Meals has grown significantly in recent years –

from 14% in 2017 to 28% in 2024⁴⁶ – although this does in part reflect the national trend.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) shows an increase in deprivation in Chard and surrounding areas relative to other places in the country between 2015 and 2019. The area in which the school is located (marked on the map) is within the most deprived quintile of areas in the country.



Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), 2019 and 2015⁴⁸

A significant worry going forward is the loss of jobs at two of the town's largest employers: in 2020, Oscar Mayer closed its food packing and distribution factory with the loss of 860 jobs, while in 2023, Brecknell Willis, which produces electrification equipment for railways, closed its production facility in the town.⁴⁹ Chard's largest employer Numatic, the maker of Henry vacuum cleaners, has expanded operations however this has not replaced all the lost jobs. Beyond Numatic, the town's major employers are the school and the Tesco superstore. The factory closures led to a spike in unemployment and appear to be playing out in terms of declining trends across a number of town-level statistics including income levels, safeguarding and domestic violence.⁵⁰

Dave MacCormick, Holyrood's Headteacher and C2C lead, highlights the town's fairly static population: many people grow up and stay in Chard, meaning multiple generations of the same families attending the school. There are positives and negatives associated with this. On the one hand, a rooted community presents a real opportunity to help shape long-term change. On the other, however, negative perceptions about the school held by former pupils can hinder the work they are trying to do, especially when these voices are amplified through social media. This can be frustrating – Dave feels – when the issues being called out may be things the school has worked hard to address and are no longer reflective of where the school is now.

46 Based on the school's internal data.

47 The rate nationally went from 14% in January 2018 to 24% in 2022/23.

48 [Indices of Deprivation 2015 and 2019 \(communities.gov.uk\)](https://communities.gov.uk).

49 www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/oscar-mayer-chard-factory-close-4632439; www.chardandilminsternews.co.uk/news/chard_news/23414221.brecknell-willis-production-transferred-end-year

50 This is suggested by rising pupil premium numbers and a noticeable increase in incidents dealt with by the school's safeguarding team and police reports to school.

Nevertheless, this highlights for him the importance of the work in building good relationships with the community. This is part of the mindset of believing you can actively change your community context – including the school's reputation in the community.

Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

The motivation for joining the C2C Partnership came from evidence of a worsening disadvantage gap across school outcomes since 2019, combined with an increase in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school.⁵¹ Dave was keen to understand who was doing something different with regard to disadvantaged pupils and The Reach Foundation's work in this space stood out.

Looking at examples of successful schools is something that Dave has done before – in particular during his time as a new Headteacher in early 2020, when the school was experiencing significant turbulence and poor outcomes. Dave visited schools that were doing things well and, with a strong staff team, was able to turn things around at Holyrood. Between 2020 and 2023, the school achieved rapid improvement and stability in its quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, safeguarding and welfare, leadership and management, and sixth form provision, culminating in the school securing a 'Good' Ofsted rating in February 2023.

However, despite this work, the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students at the school across all measured outcomes (safeguarding, behaviour and exclusion, reading, and academic attainment) has grown significantly since 2019.

This is what led Dave, alongside other Trust colleagues including Blackdown Education Partnership's CEO Lorraine Heath, to visit Feltham in July 2022. Dave found the visit to be transformational to his thinking – in particular in terms of what a school leader can do to intervene in the contextual challenges affecting children's lives. Dave was inspired by the planning of the school, the Hub and Our House⁵² and the way they linked together to address gaps in existing provision and wanted to bring this thinking into Holyrood.

Holyrood Academy's C2C model

Getting started: reaching down to primary and out to the community

Dave started this work by reaching out to Holyrood's feeder primary schools. The school worked with Manor Court and Neroche primary schools to better align their curricula. They have also seen an improvement in the relationship with the other primary schools in and around the town, including Avishayes School and The Redstart Primary School (now part of Cabot Learning Federation), with discussions occurring about how to better bridge the transition between primary and secondary.

Dave appointed Sam Davison as Assistant Head in charge of Community and Participation. Sam has developed the transition work they do: after Christmas, she and a dedicated transition teaching assistant visit all Year 6 students across the twelve primary schools that feed into Holyrood. She identifies key students, collects relevant information from the schools and meets families. She also coordinates with the Special Educational Needs team. Then, between September and Christmas, she helps new students bed in at Holyrood.

As well as reaching 'down' to primary, the other central focus for Dave has been reaching 'out' into the community. Staff conducted some listening exercises with students and parents and Dave started the Community Leaders Breakfast – detailed further below.

In school, Dave also rejigged the senior leadership structure to build ownership for some of the C2C work. He has ensured that every member of the senior leadership team has a community-focussed responsibility and a link to a community organisation. For example, one Assistant Head is a director of the Chard Community Hub and one Deputy Head is a director of the local youth club.

51 The term 'disadvantaged pupils' throughout this case study refers to a Department for Education-defined category of pupils "eligible for free school meals at any point within the past six years and students looked after by the local authority".

52 Our House started as a parent-led cooking group and became a peer support network for parents in Feltham, developing wider partnerships and a broader range of activities and support over time. It no longer runs in Feltham as the work has been subsumed into other service offers in the area. Since 2022, The Reach Foundation's hub-type work has evolved from a lot of direct delivery (under Reach Children's Hub) to much more convening work, signposting and a strong focus on systems change.

Community Leaders Breakfast: convening, connecting and coordinating

The community thread has been the central focus of C2C work at Holyrood.

The first thing Dave did was set up a Community Leaders Breakfast, which is now held every half term. Attendees include representatives from the Town Council, primary schools, healthcare, church and sports groups. Dave didn't know what the response would be when setting this up, but 50 people turned up to the first session, with good attendance at subsequent meetings.



Headteacher, Dave MacCormick, opening Chard's 9th Community Leaders Breakfast in May 2024

In the first meeting in autumn 2022, community leaders reflected on two key questions:

- “What are the barriers to living a happy, fulfilled and successful life for members of our community?”; and

- “Where are the gaps in service provision in and around Chard?”

This was followed by a subsequent meeting in January 2023 to further discuss what disadvantage looks like for their community, as well as what people had been working on, their big successes and who they wanted to connect with to further their work. That meeting was followed by a day trip to Feltham to see Our House and understand The Reach Foundation's Hub and early years work, and to work on service mapping and planning.

The group collectively decided on three priorities to work on:

- Universal early years provision: improving antenatal, perinatal and toddler provision in town;
- Food poverty: helping to feed hungry children;
- Transport: working with the Town Council and Somerset Council to improve transport links in and out of town.

In April 2023, Breakfast attendees discussed what made them ‘mad’, ‘sad’ and ‘glad’ within these agreed topic areas. This surfaced key community pain points – many linked to rurality – such as the loss of a baby group due to COVID-19 and lack of early years funding; the significant number of families not qualifying for free school meals despite being on low

Early Years	Public Transport	Hungry Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books from birth to school. • Volunteer readers at The Hub/at Pop Up places too. • Arts, sports, puppetry, cooking, drama, Lego, singing, music, nursery rhymes, McDonald's initiatives. • Link with Health Visitors and child minders – knowing who to directly contact. • Using parental expertise. • Build links with the library and local book shop. • Bolster the local early years provision through the establishment of an antenatal, perinatal and EY offer at Chard Community Hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopen local railway station at Perry Street - play a part in bringing the community together to support and develop a case for this. • Support cycle path routes/the extension of the current one - fundraise for the Business Plan and initial phases. • Lobby for improvements to bus services to link villages without a connection and ensure low fares for the foreseeable future. • Currently have £2 single fare guaranteed until December 2024. What after this? Local tax for free fares. Ongoing night buses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build awareness of the number of hungry children there are and the services in place to help overcome this. • Address the root causes of hunger - unemployment, cost of living, benefits. • Build working relationships with families to help promote the services available. • Free school meals for all ages. • Encourage students in schools and families at home to eat together.

incomes; and unaligned bus timetables and expensive public transport. It also surfaced local assets such as link-ups between Holyrood and local primary schools; community-based cooking training and a partnership between the local Tesco and free food apps; and a new night bus and £2 bus fares.

In October and November, the group agreed on actions across each of the three priorities, allocated roles and responsibilities, and looked to form week-by-week action plans. The local Citizens Chapter were invited and gave a training session on how to mobilise for community-led action.

Whilst steps towards achieving the actions above have begun (such as the recruitment of Megan to lead work on early years out of the Chard Community Hub – detailed later), Dave contends that simply bringing people into a room together is very often the key to creating change. Some ‘easy fixes’ have already happened simply by getting everyone together at the Breakfasts. For example, Chard has two food banks that until the Breakfast started had not been in regular conversation. Bringing them together has ensured their offers can be made complementary rather than duplicative.

Finally, another simple ‘win’ afforded by the Breakfast is the opportunity to give those in the voluntary sector in Chard recognition and thanks for the work they do. The school puts on free bacon rolls, tea and coffee for everyone attending, and at the start of each meeting showcases some of the work and successes that have been happening. This helps enthuse, motivate and give something back to people – many of whom are giving their time and skills for free.

What is clear from my visit is that Dave is really embedded in the community, within and beyond the school gates. Walking down the high street towards Chard Community Hub, Dave says hello to half a dozen people passing by, and in the Hub, Dave seems very much at home.

Dave says that ultimately the biggest driver of this work has been shifting his own mindset in:

- Believing that as a school head or CEO you have the power to make structural change within your community rather than taking your context as given; and

- Realising that as a respected civic leader within your community you have the influence and power to convene people, giving you both the opportunity and a responsibility to act.

Working with the local authority: alternative provision within school and funding for an Area Champion

Another example of a win-win approach that came about because of getting people in the same room has been the local authority agreeing to fund provision in Holyrood for children with significant cognitive (but not social or emotional) needs. Ten children at Key Stage 3 level who would otherwise have been sent to specialist provision are now in a hybrid system at Holyrood, with 60% of their time spent in a separate class with a dedicated teacher (with longstanding primary phase expertise, as students are attaining at early Key Stage 1 levels) and 40% of their time spent with peers in lessons and extra-curricular activities such as sport.

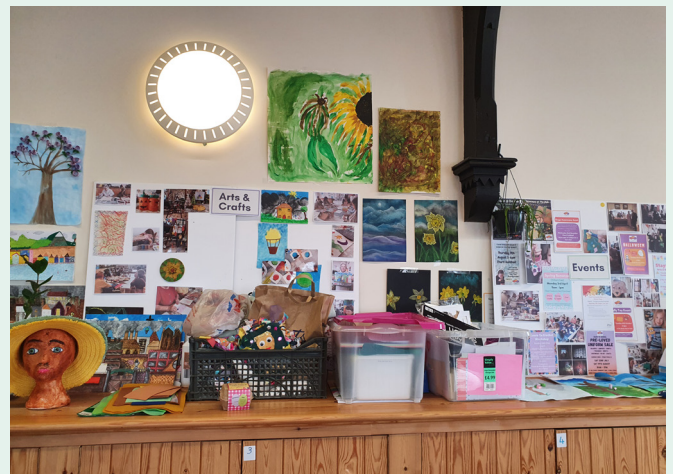
The benefits of this approach are that it enables a phased return to fully mainstream education and significantly reduces costs for the local authority. The cost to the local authority is around £55,000 per year for the dedicated teacher (with the total cost of provision being around £90,000), while sending children to specialist provision would cost around £35,000 per child per year.⁵³

Building on the success of this approach, the school has now established a provision for students with social, emotional and mental health needs based on the same principles, again in partnership with the local authority.

The development of this provision became possible by getting the local authority in the same room to talk about shared problems. Where there had previously been animosity towards the local authority, the relationship is now very positive.

In addition, link-ups with Somerset Council led the school and local authority to realise they had shared priorities around place-based development. Richard Selwyn, responsible for commissioning in the Council, is now providing £35,000 to fund an Area Champion, Ingrid, who will report into Dave. Ingrid will support with various elements of community development including fundraising efforts, such as grant bid-writing, to sustain the community work going forward.

53 For a more detailed account of Holyrood's Enhanced Learning Provision, see: cstuk.org.uk/news-publications/cst-blogs/intentional-inclusion-a-place-for-more-children-with-cognition-and-learning-needs-within-mainstream.



Roz and volunteers at the Hub; leaflets detailing Hub activities; artwork on the walls created by the Hub's art group

Partnership with Chard Community Hub: supporting the growth of a community-facing offer

The second thing the school has embarked on is a partnership with Chard Community Hub, a local community interest company (CIC) chaired by Roz, a former Assistant Director for Strategic and Transactional Services at Bradford City Council, who has been living in Chard for the past eight years. The Hub was established in 2022 and is funded entirely by donations; on the wall of Roz's office is a cardboard cut-out cheque from Numatic – the maker of Henry vacuum cleaners and Chard's largest employer – following one of their staff fundraising days.

The Community Hub had three volunteers and was operating out of a local shopfront as of last year. Dave notes that this was a great community asset, but the work being done wasn't necessarily strategic. By partnering, they've managed to secure funding for bigger premises to expand and upscale their work. 'Connect Somerset' – an initiative of the local authority that's encouraging place-based approaches to service provision – is providing the Hub's rent for a year, while the school is matching this contribution by funding (through fundraising activities) a Centre Manager/Early Years Lead, who starts in April 2024.



The community pantry and larder

The new Hub is in a brick building tucked down a lane off the high street, shared with a few other services. It has several spaces including a large room on the first floor (pictured above). When I visit, there's an art group taking place at one of the central tables with ten or so people in attendance. At another large table is a sewing machine left from the 'repair shop' that also runs on this day. There is a kitchen/bar area where Roz makes tea for us, next to a sofa and coffee table area. Beside this are leaflets detailing all the activities offered by the Hub. Dave says these were produced by the school, which lends a hand here and there where they have facilities or expertise that the Hub may not have. In another corner of the room there are racks of Holyrood school uniform, donated and available for sale or swap.

The Hub is staffed by volunteers who, through conversations with beneficiaries, are a great source of local knowledge about gaps and opportunities in service provision. As a CIC, decisions are made collectively between the directors and volunteers are encouraged to share their thoughts at regular meetings. This interaction with community members has led to suggestions and/or actions towards new groups being set up – for example, one volunteer is looking to set up a group for men to support with better mental health, after finding out about a similar group elsewhere and noting that there was little related provision in Chard.

Downstairs is a room that hosts the community pantry and fridges. The items in the fridges and larder are available free of charge daily to anyone in the community, while the pantry operates on a weekly basis and involves members paying a £5 fee for which they receive £25 worth of food.



Both spaces are a massive improvement on what was previously available, and figures show that the Hub is now reaching significantly more people than before. For example, in 2022, the newly established Hub helped with food provision on 84 occasions. In 2023, through the new partnership, this increased to just under 3,000 times.

One downside is that the former shopfront received passing footfall from the high street, which the new site doesn't. Social media (Facebook) is the main means through which people find out about the Hub, together with word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals in. Roz and Dave say that the Hub intentionally doesn't track the numbers of beneficiaries who are families of the school. While the school does refer families to the Hub, the intention is to keep the two separate such that the Hub remains open to the entire community.⁵⁴

The new Hub space provides for a small office for Roz and will be where Megan, the new Centre Manager/ Early Years Lead, will be based when she starts – in a few weeks' time. Megan is a former nursery worker and qualified social worker, as well as being a former Holyrood pupil. Her aim will be to establish a universal antenatal, perinatal and early years offer across the town. This will be funded and free at the point of access, with the intention of being well-attended by families from the most under-served areas of the town. Currently antenatal care can only be accessed in Crewkerne or Yeovil (a half-hour drive away but an hour-and-a-half travel by bus).

Further aims from her work will be to understand the emerging needs that come from an expanded early years offer and build stronger relationships with health

54 This differs from the tracking EX5-Alive does (documented in the later Cranbrook Education Campus case study), showing that schools are taking different approaches to evaluation.

and midwifery; and develop commitments to both early reading improvement and improved youth services to reduce knife crime and drug use across Chard.

Together with Ingrid, a further aim for Megan will be to secure funding to keep her role going beyond the year of funding for which the school have provisioned.

In school: a focus on attendance and literacy

Jonathan Black is Deputy Head for Attendance and Disadvantage.⁵⁵ This means he has vertical responsibility for attendance across Years 7 to 13 and horizontal responsibility for disadvantage across other areas of responsibility like safeguarding, behaviour and literacy. Part of this is an advocacy role: getting others to understand the issues around disadvantage and why they need to act.

Jonathan believes there are three central issues that are core to the disadvantage gap: attendance, literacy and behaviour.

To tackle attendance, the school has increased day-to-day contact with parents. This includes doing first-day calling where they may have concerns about a pupil, where in the past only several days of absence would trigger a call. This addresses post-pandemic changes in the pattern of absence, where many pupils are missing occasional days every week, often with parental consent.

The school challenges attendance by meeting with the child and then arranging a home visit to discuss with parents. After this, they consider whether more punitive measures, such as the fixed penalty notices introduced by the government, will lead to the intended outcome (of getting parents to get their child into school). In a quarter of cases, this may be effective, says Jonathan. But in the rest, it doesn't lead to the child going to school and only entrenches the negative relationship.

Jonathan is trying out several options, although staffing issues – such as difficulties recruiting a suitable Attendance Officer – have hampered some of this work. A comms campaign the school ran has had impact. They have also started collecting and directly following up on Student Voice for Year 7 students to plan for Year 7 to 8 transition.⁵⁶ Questions include how pupils feel about school, what they're proud of, what their favourite subjects are and what clubs they

attend. This helps the school to identify students who aren't well integrated, especially where there may be unseen issues, and identify what action to take. Follow-ups include for example hosting a family meeting and suggesting activities for students to join.

In addition, Jonathan is working with others to identify good practice, especially around persistent absence.⁵⁷ He has joined Somerset Council's working group on attendance and is hoping this will merge with Cabot Learning Federation's funded Attendance Hub.

While attendance is one lens through which to look at things, Jonathan says that Special Education Needs (SEN), behaviour and safeguarding are others – and issues are usually multi-factor. The school runs Student Action meetings to discuss their most at-risk children. Solutions might include the school adapting their practices or bringing children to a SEN screening to apply for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) earlier. They also make referrals into Family Intervention Services and the 'Tuning Into Teens' parenting programme that aims to equip parents with tools to help their teenagers better understand and manage their emotions.

In literacy, Jonathan says that the data was showing that gaps were widening for some pupils. The school had recently lost some key members of staff including the head of literacy. In response, they are producing a framework to drive consistency of practice through every subject. This will be a detailed map specifying what excellent writing/reading looks like in each subject through every year from Year 7. For example, it specifies the pre-loading of vocabulary in lessons (i.e. providing definitions of the key terms and then linking these to the knowledge being taught) and gives examples of this for each subject and year group.

Other interventions they are starting or renewing include tutor time reading and guided 'reading with a ruler'.

Last but not least, Dave says that in terms of behaviour and relationships, they have been doing work to make clear how they expect relationships to be within the school between staff and students, as well as with families. Some of this involves flattening perceived hierarchies: making sure conversations are happening 'on the same level' and with compassion. A lot more home visits are also taking place.

55 This was at the time of writing. He is now Executive Headteacher of Bridgwater College Academy.

56 Jonathan notes that this resonates with ImpactEd's recent 'Understanding Attendance' report (Jan 2024) that identified the transition between Years 7 and 8 as a particular challenge for attendance.

57 Persistent absence refers to when a pupil misses 10% or more of their possible school sessions.

Conclusions

Key learnings

Three key learnings Dave highlighted are:

- **As respected civic leaders, head teachers have significant convening power**

Dave has found – perhaps unexpectedly – that as a head teacher, he has significant influence and power in being able to bring people together round a table. Whether welcome or not, the role of head teacher carries weight and respect amongst other civic leaders and in a local community, giving school leaders the opportunity – as well as a responsibility – to do this kind of community coordinating work.

- **Don't ask, don't get – therefore, make the ask**

As noted earlier, Dave set up the Community Leaders Breakfast without any particular expectations in mind. On a similar basis of 'don't ask, don't get', Dave wrote to the local Tesco superstore. The store manager responded, agreeing to provide a free breakfast for every child at Holyrood from September 2023. This has gone down well with parents.

- **It's important to find the right balance between school and community work**

Dave says that there is a difficult balance between doing this work and continuing to be a good head teacher. He says that he has got this wrong a couple of times and has had to course correct. For example, at one point school staff were saying they hadn't seen him around as much (because of the work he was doing in building community relationships). Dave says this is something C2C leaders need to keep an eye on and rebalance when needed.

Key enablers

Four key enablers have been:

- **A mindset shift by school leaders in believing they can and should create change within their communities**

This has been the biggest thing Dave has learnt from The Reach Foundation and brought to Holyrood's C2C work. Dave says this needs to start with the head or CEO, as they have the biggest influence within and beyond the organisation.

Whilst this is empowering, it can also lead to taking your eye off the ball in school (as noted above) or worrying about things that are outside of your control. These

are both corrections Dave says he has had to make throughout the process.

- **Building relationships with organisations, in the community and beyond**

Dave is clear that this work is built on relationships – rather than a school doing things alone. This is evident in the Community Leaders Breakfast and partnership with Chard Community Hub, and in the work he is putting in to broker relationships between others. Dave notes that this relationship-building work started even before joining the C2C Partnership and that that prior work has been important to the success of the current work.

He also notes the importance of learning from others and contributing learning to others. He has taken learnings from other leaders in the C2C Partnership and has contributed lessons in how to lead this kind of work at groups including the Somerset Association of Secondary Heads, West100 and Somerset Education Strategy. Dave is also co-chairing the local authority's Thriving Schools thread across Somerset's 300 schools.

- **Being a larger school and creating capacity by offering staff development opportunities**

Dave believes that doing this work is likely to be easier in larger schools than smaller ones due to capacity. As described, Dave has made staffing changes in order to build capacity for this work within senior leadership and elsewhere in the staffing body.

Jonathan notes that Dave has done well at building capacity by creating development opportunities for staff, especially in the rung below Middle Leadership. For example, teachers wanting to go down the pastoral route can take on a development role as a Year Group Leader in which they are supported by an existing Year Group Leader.

- **Having the leadership team own all policies to reduce the impact of staff turnover**

Despite several thread leads on the C2C work changing roles or moving on, Jonathan thinks continuity of the work won't be a problem. All proposals go to the leadership team for critical review. Having the whole leadership team involved in refining all of the school's policies means they are owned by everyone rather than being personal or political projects. These all become part of a central, regularly updated 'Our Strategies' document and this makes handover less difficult as everyone is already familiar with them.

Financial sustainability

Holyrood has been successful in securing public money (from the local authority), business support (such as the partnership with the local Tesco) and grant funding. An avenue they are aiming to pursue but have not yet had any success in so far is securing private money from local wealthy individuals.

Part of Ingrid's role will be to secure further funding for her and Megan's roles, which are currently being funded for a year.

Measuring outcomes

The long-term aim of the school's wider work with the community is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These outcomes include the disadvantage gap at GCSE and key indicators across for example maths and literacy. In its latest outcomes, maths performance by disadvantaged pupils was better than the national average, but literacy was 0.75 worse.

While useful as a longer-term guide, it is impossible to develop clear cause-effect links between the partnership work the school is doing and pupil outcomes. Working within a community to build capacity is something that takes years to do, and within this longer timeframe, many other variables will be changing. For example, the declining town stats noted earlier mean that even if pupil outcomes were static or declining this wouldn't necessarily indicate that the work being done is having no effect – it could be that things would be much worse otherwise.

As well as tracking pupil outcomes, then, some of the more direct ways in which the current work is being measured are:

- The level of engagement with external organisations such as attendance at the Community Breakfast, partnerships, etc.;
- The reach and support of the Hub (activities run, number of beneficiaries, volunteers, donations, etc.);
- The school's level of engagement with families as measured through student and parent voice, and other listening activities.

Ultimately, Dave says, not everything can be shown through data. The other important way of demonstrating impact is by showing people how the work looks and feels on the ground – through visits to the school and Hub.

This case study was written in spring/summer 2024 and is not indicative of current progress of the C2C model, school or community context.

King's Oak Academy, Kingswood, Bristol

Summary

- King's Oak Academy's overall goal is to become the community school of choice not convenience for Kingswood, i.e. families in Kingswood want their children to go to KOA, rather than going there because it is the only local option.
- The focus has been on 'Relationships' and 'Community' - including conducting community listening, improving communications with parents and working with the local authority on a bid to start a Family Hub.
- The key learning Katherine Ogden, KOA's head teacher, has taken away is that leaders need to take the 'thinking systems' from The Reach Foundation rather than trying to replicate its practices wholesale. For example, KOA has had to adapt the behaviour policies observed at Reach Academy Feltham so that they work in the different context of KOA.

This chapter is organised into the following sections:

Introduction

- School context
- School and community disadvantage
- Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

King's Oak Academy's C2C model

- Getting started: listening to students, parents and the community
- Improving relationships: embedding consistent parent communications
 - Reviewing the school's communication with parents: building consistency into the system
 - Next steps: increasing accessibility and building out to the community
- Community: developing a Family Hub with the local authority
 - Summary of the proposed Family Hub at Rose Cottage
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King's Oak Academy

Introduction

School context

King's Oak Academy (KOA) is an all-through school for four- to 16-year-olds, situated within the Kingswood estate on the outskirts of Bristol. It is part of Cabot Learning Federation (CLF), a multi-academy trust with schools mainly in South Gloucestershire. KOA is the only all-through in the Trust.

The school is two-form entry from Reception to Year 6, but five-form entry from Years 7 to 11 and moving to six-form entry in September 2024.⁵⁸ This means that in Year 7 up to 120 students from 18 partner primary schools will join the students who have progressed from Year 6 at KOA. The school's Reception cohort joins mostly from two local pre-schools/nurseries, with the rest coming from twelve other providers in the area.

KOA recently changed to a three-phase structure: the Lower School (situated over the road from the rest of the school) caters for Reception to Year 4, Middle School for Years 5 to 8, and Upper School for Years 9 to 11. The three-phase structure aims to bridge the gap between primary and secondary transition. Middle School prepares children for some of the demands of Upper School whilst providing children and parents with some of the more familial environment associated with Lower School.

School and community disadvantage

Kingswood is an area of significant deprivation on the eastern edge of Bristol. The school is situated in a South Gloucestershire Priority Neighbourhood area indicating that the locality has significant levels of deprivation for multiple factors. For example, income, employment, education and crime are all ranked within the top 20% deprivation quintile in England.⁵⁹

58 KOA's planned admission numbers are 60 in Reception to Year 6 and 150 in Years 7 to 11. From September 2024 the school will be supporting a request from the local authority to increase numbers in Year 7 to 180 to support a growing population in the area.

59 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019.



The design of Middle School provides a continuation of some of the familial environment of Lower School – such as a central library space. There is also a playground exclusively designated for Middle School students, whilst other outdoor spaces are for both Middle and Upper School students

26.0% of students are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), whilst 27.4% qualify for the Pupil Premium. The proportion of FSM being claimed has increased by 5.1% over the last three years. This may point to a changing demographic but could also be due to the rise in financial hardship families in Kingswood are encountering as a result of the pandemic and increase in the cost of living. The school has a 'care bank' that supports families in hardship by providing food parcels (donated by staff and families), uniform and school equipment. 120 families were given financial assistance to support with a recent transition to a new school uniform.

The cohort is primarily White British and there is a large number of students whose parents, grandparents and close family relatives attended King's Oak Academy or another local school. This creates a strong sense of 'grown here' and 'community', both in Kingswood and within the Academy itself.

16.7% of the cohort has an identified special educational need and/or disability (SEND). There is a rising number of students with identified SEND in the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 year groups and currently there are 18 students who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The school makes a high number of referrals to the local authority's Access and Response Team (ART)⁶⁰ and Early Help (up from 23 in 2021-22 to 27 in 2022-23) for students for whom there are safeguarding concerns. The school has increased its internal specialist capacity in certain areas such as counselling in order to ensure continued support for its most vulnerable students.

Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

Katherine Ogden, KOA's head teacher, proposes that the overall goal for KOA is to become the school of choice, not convenience, for the Kingswood community. This means working closely with the local community for three key reasons:

- To improve the school's outward-facing reputation – in particular addressing the somewhat fractured historical relationship between the school and the community that is rooted in adults' poor experiences of school and legacy reputational issues;
- Because it is the school's civic responsibility to do good for the community and leave it in a better place than before – especially post pandemic with rising levels of financial hardship and need;

⁶⁰ Although the school has noticed a change in the threshold required for ART to accept a referral over the last twelve months, which they believe accounts for a decrease in children meeting the threshold.

- Because the twelve-year-plus relationship they have with families (as a consequence of the school's all-through structure) means there is an investment by families in the school that represents an opportunity to shape a local area.

The school is moving in the right direction: they have turned things around from a time when many parents would actively choose to take their children to a school further afield. For example, Katherine notes that previously they would never have been keen on showing visitors around the school on an impromptu visit (as occurs when I visit the school on a rainy Thursday that's also the last day of spring term). That she's confident such a visit will show the school in a good light shows how far they have come.

Katherine's current aims for KOA's C2C model are:

- To develop a strong, mutually respectful communication strategy with the school's families, multi-agency partners and local businesses in order to share information to support children more effectively – in particular, in mental and physical health, school attendance and employment;
- In collaboration with the local authority, to develop a pilot family hub – part of the government's programme that aims to join up and enhance services within eligible local authorities.⁶¹

The original motivation for joining the C2C Partnership was very different: Katherine came across the C2C Partnership somewhat by accident – via a webinar run by The Confederation of School Trusts in which The Reach Foundation were presenting their work. The C2C Partnership felt like a good opportunity to connect with other all-through schools, given how few there are nationally. This led Katherine to visit the Foundation's C2C model in Feltham. There, she was inspired primarily by the relationships and community threads and wanted to bring these to KOA.

King's Oak Academy's C2C model

Getting started: listening to students, parents and the community

Katherine has hired four new Associate Assistant Principals (AAPs) to drive both the relationships and community work and the school's Annual Implementation Plan which focuses on literacy, attendance and partnerships. The AAPs are in Literacy; STEM; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI); and Health & Community. All of the roles are existing staff members who now have additional responsibilities and have joined the wider Senior Leadership Team.

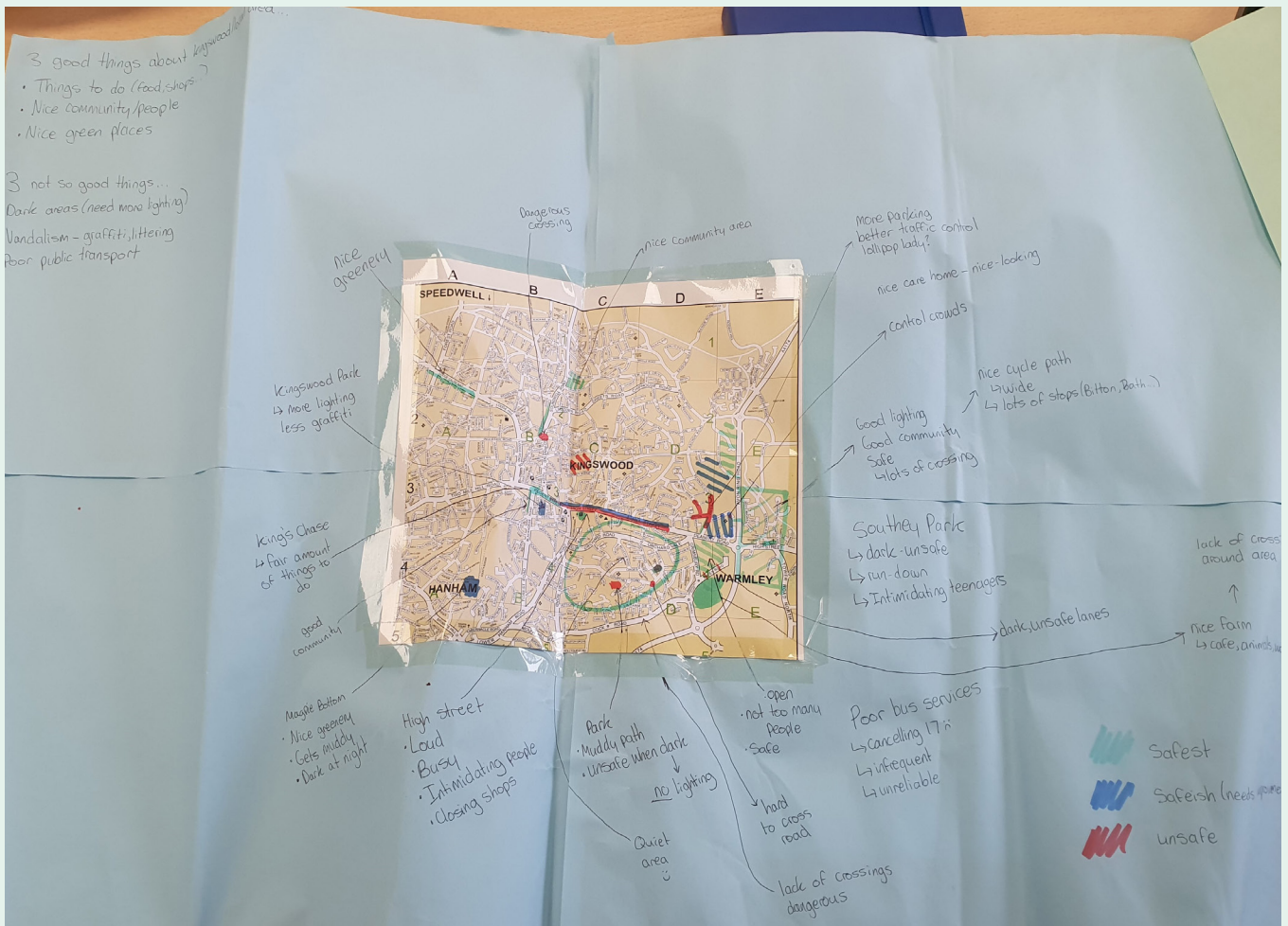
Working with the new AAP for Health & Community, James, the school's Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, Zoe, started surveying people locally. Visiting local parks, precincts and other community spaces, she asked: **“what is putting pressure on you and your family?”** (the question The Reach Foundation use to initiate open conversations with their families and wider community).

This initial research led Zoe to Connecting Kingswood, a collective of local public and third sector organisations who aim to increase community action through activities like the promotion of community events, services and volunteering opportunities. The school offers Connecting Kingswood a space in which to host community-centred meetings, and benefits from hearing first-hand concerns from the local community.

For example, representatives from the local council were keen to host a meeting to discuss concerns around safety. The school facilitated this meeting, also inviting parents who were interested in attending. This resulted in a mapping exercise involving community members as well as students highlighting areas of the community where they did and didn't feel safe.

At the same time, the school initiated a set of meetings to discuss what services a Family Hub should offer. These meetings involved South Gloucestershire Attendance and Exclusions, Trust staff, the school nurse, police community support officers, town clerk and representatives from the student council and parent-teacher association (PTA) groups. The PTA also ran coffee meetings to make sure parents' voices were heard.

⁶¹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme.



Student mapping of where they feel safe and unsafe in the local area

More generally, parent and student surveys are conducted every other term. Survey questions include all of those within the Ofsted framework as well as additional ones on feelings of belonging and views on the school. Parents access the surveys through all the usual channels including email and via the school website. Hannah, the new AAP for EDI, admits that at present response rates aren't representative of all parents (and certainly not those who might be harder to engage⁶²), with responses tending to come from the same set of parents each time. However, she believes that this will improve as the work on improving parent relationships progresses and giving feedback becomes normalised.

Additionally, the school's Family Liaison Lead runs weekly coffee mornings and parenting groups with approximately twelve to 15 families.

Improving relationships: embedding consistent parent communications

Reviewing the school's communication with parents: building consistency into the system

Ensuring that interactions with families are positive is one of the school's biggest challenges – and key to this is consistency in communications. The clearest message coming from the parent surveys was that communication from the school wasn't consistent, says Hannah, the new AAP for EDI. Whilst some staff were described as approachable, others were deemed to be the opposite. This is a particular problem as children move up through the school and parents have less regular natural contact with staff. Poor relationships with any one staff member with whom parents come into contact can mean student or family issues take longer to be picked up by the school.

62 Parents may be less engaged for a variety of reasons. Parents with whom the school have a lot of communication tend to be those who like to be actively involved and have the time to do so, as well as those with whom the school is regularly in touch regarding their child's behaviour or attendance.



Meetings with parents and children take place in a room that's been remodelled to look and feel like 'your nan's front room'. This can help to put parents and children at ease, re-framing the dynamic of conversations between families and the school

To address this inconsistency, Hannah has been working on reforming communication by all staff. Key to this is a draft Communications Framework she has written, which sets out frames for email-writing, phone calls and face-to-face conversations with families. These frames aim to embed throughout parent communications a 'kind and clear' tone (mirroring the school's values of 'work hard and be kind'), ensuring for example that the same language and tone of voice is adopted by all staff and that written communications are at a reading age that is inclusive for all parents (work Hannah has done together with the AAP for Literacy). She has also conducted audits of all the school's comms materials, such as reviewing its website to make sure the same principles are applied there.

A first step in this work has been to hold staff CPD sessions on the topic. These sessions have helped to uncover inconsistencies in the system, as well as build staff buy-in. For example, as well as uncovering inconsistencies in the tone of parent communications, there were also inconsistencies in where information could be accessed by parents and how staff directed parents to do so. This led Hannah to developing a single source-of-truth flowchart so that all staff follow the same processes when it comes to parent communication.

Within the CPD sessions, staff were placed into teams to work on different scenarios. Teams scripted phrases to use in their scenarios and then played these out in front of the others. Reflecting together on what did and didn't work well has enabled staff to co-create and buy in to a shared language to use going forward. From this work, Hannah has created a series of templates that set out opening and closing scripts for key discussion topics, guidance on how to listen to parents, and a shared language for key phrases – for example, talking about students' 'unsafe choices' rather than 'poor behaviour'.

Taking part in the C2C Partnership has offered ideas for good practice. One of Reach Academy Feltham's practices that they have adopted at KOA is how to conduct family meetings involving a child. Where previously staff would have met the child and parents together to discuss an issue, they now meet with parents first to thrash out and agree a joint response. This enables the school and parents to present a united front in subsequent meetings with the child, which in turn is more likely to lead to subsequent positive courses of action.

Next steps: increasing accessibility and building out to the community

Piloting of the framework is ongoing but the aim is to have finalised the phrasing templates by the end of the academic year in order to start rolling out training for all staff from September. The shared language will take time to embed, says Hannah, but once embedded it should create clarity and consistency in terms of understanding and expectations for both staff and parents. It should also aid in identifying and reflecting on what could be done better when a staff-parent communication episode goes wrong.

Further down the line, Hannah is keen to improve the accessibility of parent communications by turning key policies – for example the school's bullying policy, which is currently a highly formal document that few parents are likely to read – into short-form videos involving students. School bulletins could also be produced in video format. This is some way off for now, but the ambition is there.

In terms of measuring progress, the aim is to see an improvement in the perceived consistency of communication and staff approachability from parent feedback (both parent surveys and anecdotally). A further aim is to see an increase in the number of families engaging with the school from its current base of around 80 – 90 families. This would signal that the school was improving its engagement of parents and would also help the school to gain a wider view from different perspectives.

One notable problem the school has is in online opinions about the school that aren't reflected in current student voice surveys and are likely to be caused by a lag in perceptions based on former students' experiences from some time ago – for example that bullying at the school is a problem. The way to change this is by taking the same consistent 'kind and clear' tone in wider, external communications, says Hannah – including through the school's posts on social media and by showing the community wherever possible current students' experiences and how they present themselves.

Another element in taking forward the work on relationships is in creating an alumni network. 'Grown Here' will attempt to connect former students with the school, with the aim of supporting current students

through these connections and deepening relationships between the school and the community.

Community: developing a Family Hub with the local authority

Family Hubs: context⁶³

The government's Family Hubs and Start for Life programme aims to "join up and enhance services delivered through transformed family hubs in local authority areas, ensuring all parents and carers can access the support they need when they need it".⁶⁴ As recommended in the government's 'The best start for life' report, the focus of Family Hubs is on parents of 0-2 year-olds (or the first 1001 days, which includes pregnancy). However, Family Hubs are also intended to support families of children/young people up to age 19 (and 25 with special educational needs or a disability).

Family Hubs are intended to be 'one-stop shops' for a range of face-to-face support and information. Services provided by a Family Hub could include support for home learning; parenting classes; midwifery; health visiting; infant feeding advice; or perinatal mental health support. Meanwhile Family Hubs are also intended to help families access other support services (not directly provided through the Hub), such as support for people's physical and mental health; housing and debt advice; youth services; domestic abuse support; and other services run by charities.

So far, 75 local authorities have been announced as eligible for a share of £302 million to create new Family Hubs in their areas.

Summary of the proposed Family Hub at Rose Cottage

The central piece of KOA's C2C model is the development of an outward-facing Family Hub together with South Gloucestershire Local Authority. The aim is to provide a long-term, versatile asset for the community that offers an inclusive space to address community needs, promote community engagement and generate revenue to support children facing disadvantage. The intention is for the Hub to offer varied help for young people and their families that includes mental health support, parenting classes, adult literacy and numeracy, access into employment, cookery and life skills, and a food bank.

63 This context relates to the time this study was conducted around April 2024.

64 www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme.

Whilst many Family Hubs focus on babies and young children, the intention for Rose Cottage is to focus on children at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE) around the Year 6 to Year 8 age group. This would complement the local authority's plans for another Family Hub in Patchway that focuses on a younger age group, whilst addressing a perceived need around the limited existing resource and mental health support available for teenage children. Although evidencing the perceived higher risk of CCE in the community is difficult, contextual indications include the data around school attendance and NEET (not in education, employment or training), as well as some recent gang-related murders and attempted murders in the area.

The Cabot Learning Federation and South Gloucestershire local authority are working in partnership to renovate and transform a former caretakers' house (Rose Cottage) that is located over the road from the school into the Family Hub. Currently, building work is taking place and it is hoped that the Hub will open in Q1 2025 with the following providers serving as the initial groups that will be based in the Hub: Youth Workers, Primary Mental Health Teams, Kingswood Town Council, Police Community Support Officers, Resilience Labs, Creative Youth Network, Triple P Parenting Group and KOA Coffee Mornings.



Rose Cottage is a former caretaker's house located within the overall grounds of the school, but with its own outdoor space and entrance from the road

Partnering with the local authority: long-term vision and brokering responsibilities

A key motivation for working with the local authority on the Hub is the potential for long-term funding and resource to run the Hub. Having the local authority take on this responsibility longer term is crucial, Katherine says, because the school needs to think carefully about the time and investment they put in. Finding funding can be a time-sink and could mean school improvement suffers otherwise.

As Katherine notes, her thinking on this has undergone a huge change. Having been inspired by seeing The Reach Foundation's Children's Hub⁶⁵, she thought this was something she could replicate at KOA, having it up and running within six months. What she later realised is that the The Reach Foundation set-up is entirely different, with the hub-type activities in Feltham being run and funded by The Reach Foundation, which is supported largely by philanthropy, separate from Reach Academy Feltham. In the absence of a foundation, setting up and running a sustainable hub

65 The Reach Foundation's hub-type work has since evolved away from direct delivery under Reach Children's Hub to more convening work, signposting and a strong focus on systems change.

required a different approach. For Katherine, the local authority-led Family Hubs model is a means of building in this sustainable funding.

Brokering between the school and the local authority on funding and responsibilities is ongoing. The school's central offer is the use of Rose Cottage, a recently vacated caretaker's cottage, as the site for the Family Hub. In the short-term, the local authority are putting in an initial £10,000 and Cabot Learning Federation are putting in some central resource to transform the cottage into a suitable Hub site. Katherine intends to take the £20,000 C2C Partnership seed funding when the Hub is ready to kick off, to fund a Hub Manager for a year. Katherine's intention is that whilst in the first year or two the school will provide support, in the longer term the local authority will be responsible for funding and running the Hub. One question within the brokering is the extent to which KOA children will be accessing the Hub.

Currently, the two parties have agreed to pilot the Hub for a year. If it's successful, they will need to agree on the long-term structure.

Building relationships that lead to opportunity

Katherine's existing relationship with the local authority has facilitated this work. Katherine sits on South Gloucestershire Council's Children's Partnership Executive Board (which includes the Council's Head of People, the police and the Integrated Care Board) and is in the Council's Best Start in Life Network. She is also on the Council's Fair Access Panel and High Risk Group for children who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion, or are out of education.

Being engaged with these groups led her to think about how to influence South Gloucestershire policy and to sell the bigger vision of the Family Hub to them as the relationships have developed. The inspiration from The Reach Foundation's Hub and the opportunity of the vacated caretaker's house led to initial discussions about the Family Hub.

Work is just starting on writing the bid for the Family Hub. Katherine is working closely with South Gloucestershire Best Start in Life Network to develop the model – in particular, Kevin Sweeney, Strategic Lead for Early Help Partnerships, and Alison Sykes, Service Manager for EDT and Projects.

Preparing for the Hub: community programmes at the school

In the meantime, the school is running more community programmes as proof of concept for when the Hub gets going. Because these are taking place on the school site rather than in a separate Hub, the focus for now is on 'lower risk' projects such as cookery classes. To lead this work, Katherine has hired an AAP for Health and Community Partnerships – James.

One 'high-risk' programme they have set up is a Monday-night youth club at the school. The community has seen some high-profile incidents of violence amongst young people in recent times (not associated with the school) and there have been concerns over the way a local youth centre was being run. The goal of the youth club is to encourage children to come to a 'safe space' rather than hang out in local parks or elsewhere in the community in the evening.

As the youth club is outward facing (i.e. open to all young people rather than KOA students only), the school makes sure they are not seen to be running it. However, they keep close oversight so that they can work with agencies to share information that might come to light. This is until they are confident that it can run by itself at low risk. The programme is being paid for by Wesport, The West of England Sport Trust.

The school also hosts local authority-run Triple P parenting courses, which support parents of teenagers to reduce mental health, emotional and behavioural issues. These are not exclusive to KOA families, although the school can encourage their own families to attend, and a few do so. The school continues to run existing events that include the wider Kingswood community such as a summer festival.

At the employment end of the spectrum meanwhile the new AAP for STEM has been working on making connections with Bristol-based businesses such as Renishaw, Airbus and the Navy. Currently, the focus is on making open-ended connections – but opportunities they are looking to pursue include getting employers to run student engagement activities and developing business partnership arrangements including apprenticeship routes.

Conclusions

Key learnings

Two key learnings Katherine has taken from the last 18 months in the C2C Partnership are:

- **Taking the 'thinking systems' that The Reach Foundation presents rather than wholesale practices; focusing on 'why' you're doing something and making it work for your school setting**

Katherine notes that when she visited Reach Academy Feltham and saw aspects of the Foundation's community work, there were practices she saw that she immediately wanted to adopt at KOA. However, she found she couldn't replicate the exact work in a different context (as described above for KOA's Hub and below, for its behaviour system). Instead, Katherine contends that it's about understanding the vision and thinking behind what The Reach Foundation do – for example, the concept of building long-term deeper relationships with families – and then thinking about how you can do things at the right time and with the right staff for your own setting.

This means starting with the 'why' rather than the 'what'. Answering why you want to do something

enables you to do what works in your school setting rather than applying a short-term fix. A lot of CPD in education is about learning practices that you can adopt directly in your school, so this is quite a different approach.

- **Slowing down, managing your own expectations and working in a purposeful and developmental way for your school**

Katherine says that she was naïve in thinking they could do everything – including setting up a children's hub – in a year! From the work on relationships in schools, she's realised that trying to change everything in one go – whilst students and staff are still in school – is a bad idea. Meanwhile, with the Hub, she found that building something sustainable requires taking the time to build relationships first.

Katherine found that she needed to slow down to work in a purposeful and developmental way for the school, bringing people on the journey along the way. This has involved managing some of her own expectations for what she wanted to achieve from the two years of the C2C Partnership.

Behaviour system: realising that practices need to suit the school setting

One practice that Katherine observed when visiting Reach Academy Feltham (RAF) was their behaviour system, which involves staff going through a set series of cautioning and expectation-setting with a child in the event of negative behaviour incidents, followed by the child being sent to a reflection room. A parent meeting is then scheduled for the next day.

Behaviour at KOA was being done in a fairly ad hoc manner. The system at RAF appeared to tick the box for what staff at KOA wanted (being able to take a clear set of actions when a negative behaviour incident occurred) so Katherine decided to put the RAF system in place straight away. However, at KOA suspensions sky-rocketed and having next-day parent meetings started to take up all of Katherine's time.

Katherine says she realised they hadn't tackled the root cause of behaviour issues and didn't have in place the wider structures to support teachers and pupils in classrooms. For example, students were choosing to get sent to the reflection room, as this represented a break from lessons. Katherine notes that the context of RAF is also very different to KOA: scaling up a model that works for 60 children per year group to one that works for 120 isn't necessarily feasible. Nor is redesigning the ethos of a school and its internal structures while staff and pupils are still in the building, in contrast to RAF where systems could be built from scratch.

Katherine says that they learnt a lot in the term this happened and have rebuilt the system to something that is right for their school – with a set of clear warnings and expectation-setting; an out-of-class conversation for students to 'reset'; and reflection room time that extends into students' break-times.

The school now has a stable behaviour system, with a behaviour working group in which they trial new measures. They've also linked their work on behaviour to staff professional development and to their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team.

Katherine notes that as a more experienced head now, she wouldn't try to change everything all at once as she did then. More generally, Katherine has realised that it's not about taking specific *practices* from The Reach Foundation and replicating them at KOA but taking *key concepts* – such as the importance of relationships and consistency of communication, in this instance. It's then about getting the basics right for your school and realising that this probably takes longer to do than expected.

Key enablers

Four key enablers to developing an effective cradle-to-career model have been:

- **Strong prior relationships with external partners**

As described in the Family Hub section, building strong prior relationships with external partners has been vital to doing this work – and you need time to make these relationships first. This is something Katherine has learnt over time through hearing Ed Vainker from The Reach Foundation talk about this. Rather than simply asking for things, it's about forming mutually beneficial relationships – offering things to others first without expecting anything in return. This then carries a weight that means you can ask for things in future.

- **Getting staff and Trust buy-in**

Staff buy-in is vital for the sustainable and purposeful development of the school. Staffing shortages are a current barrier within the sector, but offering career progression routes with good professional development is a way of addressing the additional staffing needs of the C2C work – as KOA has done with its AAP roles.

Trust buy-in involves navigating trust politics, particularly as KOA are the only school in the Trust participating in the C2C Partnership. This has involved reading between the lines in Trust conversations and understanding how to 'sell' the work to different audiences within the Trust. Within this, it involves selecting the key elements of The Reach Foundation's work that they want to bring in and translating it into the brand and messaging of the Trust. Doing this work has made Katherine realise some of the internal dynamics of Trust politics!

- **Being focused and ensuring the C2C work joins up with school and Trust priorities**

Katherine has chosen to focus on the Relationships and Community threads of the C2C Partnership programme. The Trust curriculum and teaching and learning framework are fairly well-established within the Trust, so Katherine feels that working on these threads aren't pressing needs in the context of the multiple priorities they have. More generally, Katherine's view is that with the five threads there is a lot to do within two years – so maintaining a focus on what they really want to achieve is important.

Ensuring C2C joins up with school and Trust priorities such as the school's Annual Implementation Plan is important to keeping focus. The school's AIP for this year is focused on literacy, attendance and partnerships, which meshes well with the Relationships and Community threads.

- **The value of the C2C Partnership as a place to pause and think**

The key value of the C2C Partnership, says Katherine, is in pulling you out of school and into different settings, and getting you to experience different thinking systems. It gives you the time to step out of the everyday, think about the bigger picture and do some of the proactive planning that you usually never find time to do. What you end up thinking about – things like relationships and community – aren't ever the things that are at the top of your list as a head teacher. Yet, this wider thinking is important to do. It's like a nudge to keep these things on the agenda.

In addition, the C2C Partnership provides a space for networking with other leaders and sharing the experience with them – particularly in terms of the mindset shift. Through the C2C Partnership, Katherine has also made good links with other C2C partners and been to see other C2C settings such as Cranbrook, featured later in this report. Katherine notes that just having time for networking and thinking is extremely valuable. This is something she has tried to take into inset time at school through the inclusion of a 'trading floor' session where rather than be content-driven, colleagues simply exchange ideas.

Financial sustainability

The financial sustainability of the Hub is a key element of current brokering between the school and the local authority.

A big challenge for the school is its financial constraints. South Gloucestershire school funding is some of the lowest in the country (while nearby Bristol's is amongst the highest).

Katherine says that the school will continue to carve out time for staff for C2C work. The AAP roles are permanent so this is a long-term investment in the school vision/structure moving forwards. The provision for this work has been built into the AAP job descriptions and are identified within the academy improvement plan to ensure that it remains a core priority for the school.

Other costs involved include budget to visit other settings and release-time for staff to network. The school has left a small amount of budget for next year to support with this but recognise that it needs to be factored in longer term.

Measuring outcomes

There are various ways in which the school is tracking outcomes. Three key elements within this are having good quality assurance systems in place, looking at the data, and talking with students and parents. The school has quality assurance systems in place that include strong line management and internal and external audit and review processes, including those conducted by the Trust. The EDI work they've been doing forms part of this audit and review.

In terms of being the community school of choice, key metrics include:

- Number of first choice applications to the school;
- The school's Ofsted rating.

The school recently had an Ofsted visit, and will have another in twelve months, where they hope to be rated outstanding for early years and professional development.

For teaching and learning, the school's current targets are for attainment outcomes, suspensions and exclusions, and attendance to hit national average.

Additionally, getting a sense of how students and families feel about the school and the perception of the school in the community can be broadly tracked through:

- Informally, parent/student voice, collected once every two terms (as described in the Relationships section);
- Themes from the staff radio on behaviour (Katherine loops in regularly on this as it gives a good sense of what's happening amongst students on the ground);
- Attendance at community support events – aiming for this to continue being strong;
- Perception on social media – whilst they can't quantify this, comments on Facebook are helpful to understand and see.

A target input measure of community engagement is to be featured in the Kingswood Voice / Bristol Parent (local newspapers) every month.

In terms of careers guidance, the school aims to meet and go beyond the statutory guidance set by the Gatsby benchmarks. They also track the number of businesses they're working with successfully and who are adding value.

Finally, financial sustainability is a key metric and target.

This case study was written in spring/summer 2024 and is not indicative of current progress of the C2C model, school or community context.

Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust, Hull

Summary

- C2C model being developed across two primaries and one secondary within the Trust, located a short distance apart within the HU3 postcode.
- Focus is on improving transition and embedding across the three schools the 'Relationships' and Hub work that Chiltern Primary School have been doing.
- The plan is to build a bigger, central Hub on Chiltern Primary School's existing Hub site accessible by families from all three schools, with an extension of support particularly into the secondary sphere.

This chapter is organised into the following sections:

Introduction

- School context
- School and community disadvantage
- Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust's C2C model

- Existing Hub and relationships at Chiltern Primary School
 - The Hub at Chiltern Primary School: from 'Chat and Choose' to a network of activities
 - Building relationships of trust with parents through the Hub
- Next steps for the Hub: extending and expanding across the three schools
 - Taking the work on relationships into secondary
- Teaching and curriculum threads: ensuring approaches are consistent from primary to secondary phase
 - Teaching and learning: instructional coaching across the Trust
 - Curriculum: small steps around Year 6 and 7 writing

Conclusions

- Key learnings
- Key enablers
- Financial sustainability
- Measuring outcomes

Introduction

School context

Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust's C2C work involves two primaries and one secondary located within a short distance of each other in the HU3 postcode of Hull.

Chiltern Primary School (Chiltern) is a large, community-centred primary with pre-school for three to eleven-year-olds in the Hessle Road area of HU3. It is two-form entry with 457 children on its roll. St George's Primary School (St George's) – a short walk away through a pedestrianised walkway – is a small, one-form entry primary with pre-school (also for three to eleven-year-olds), with 210 children on its roll. The Boulevard Academy (Boulevard), a secondary for eleven to 16-year-olds situated just next to Chiltern, is five-form entry and has 771 students on its roll. Chiltern and St George's children make up over 50% of Boulevard's entry in Year 7, with the remaining children coming from other local primary schools.

Links between the primaries and secondary have been limited until recently – but Boulevard joined the Trust in September 2023, and this is what has prompted the current C2C Partnership work with The Reach Foundation.

Beyond HU3, Thrive has five further primary and two further secondary academies in Hull.

School and community disadvantage

The wards served by the three schools are some of the most deprived in Hull and England as a whole. Around 60% of children in the three schools live in St Andrew's and Docklands, which is one of the most deprived wards in Hull across multiple measures of deprivation.⁶⁶ A further 28% live in Newington and Gipsyville, which also ranks highly for various measures of deprivation.

According to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), 99.9% of the 816 children living in St Andrew's and Docklands are living in the 10% most deprived areas of the country. Life expectancy for men in the ward is the lowest in the city (and ten years lower than the England average), whilst excess weight and obesity in Year 6 is the highest in the city (32%). St Andrew's and Docklands also ranks second highest in the city for the number of young people who are not in

education, employment or training (NEET) (28 out of a city total of 321) and proportion of working-age people claiming Universal Credit (30%).

The percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals at each school is 54.2% at Chiltern, 42.2% at St George's and 42.8% at Boulevard.⁶⁷ Across the three schools, there are 250 children registered with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (18.5%) and 31 children with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) (2.3%). 6.1% of students at Boulevard are known to social care; this figure is 7.6% at Chiltern and 8.0% at St George's.

Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

The impetus for joining the C2C Partnership has come from The Boulevard Academy joining the Trust. Jonathan Roe, Thrive's CEO, spoke with Ed Vainker and James Townsend at The Reach Foundation⁶⁸, and whilst the Foundation's work fits well with the ethos of the Trust it is the 'all-through' nature of the three schools now being part of the same trust that makes the C2C Partnership seem like the perfect fit.

Chiltern Primary School has an established community hub that was set up in 2019 by Claire Lundie, Chiltern's Assistant Head and lead for Safeguarding, SEND and Attendance. Claire had previously worked in the school's Reception and Foundation Stages, where closer natural contact with parents had made her realise the vital importance and value of building good relationships with parents. Meanwhile, it was clear to her in her role overseeing safeguarding, SEND and attendance that all of these tied together, and parents were a crucial link.

Starting out with 'Chat and Choose' – a food bank followed by a coffee morning – Chiltern's Hub now offers a packed schedule of community activities, drop-in sessions and workshops – some run by staff and volunteers, some led independently by external partners. Alongside this, the school places emphasis on building strong relationships with families: for example, putting support in place for families who have been referred to social care.

⁶⁶ According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019).

⁶⁷ In May 2024 (Chiltern and St George's) and June 2024 (Boulevard) according to the Department for Education.

⁶⁸ Ed Vainker is The Reach Foundation's Managing Director and James Townsend is Executive Director with oversight of the C2C Partnership.

Evidencing the precise impact of the relationship-building work and Hub at Chiltern may be impossible, but attendance at the school is 96.4% and persistent absence 9.3%⁶⁹ – a strong performance by any school in the current context of school attendance, but especially so when considering the school's disadvantage profile. There are also no children at Chiltern on a child protection plan, as the school tries to intervene before families get to the point at which they would need one, says Claire.

By contrast, attendance at Boulevard is 82% and persistent absence 40%. Given that the schools cater to many of the same families, “there is work to be shared from the primary to the secondary settings to help families feel listened to and supported”, says Claire. The aim of the current C2C work is to make transition between the primaries and Boulevard stronger, and to embed the relationships and hub work at Chiltern in the other schools, especially Boulevard.

Kath Roe, Chiltern's Executive Head, and Claire Lundie are leading the C2C work. Claire also leads the 'Relationships' and 'Community' threads (which she sees as one joined-up piece), while two other members of Chiltern staff lead the 'Teaching' and 'Curriculum' threads. Leads from all three schools are involved in each of the threads.

Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust's C2C model

Existing Hub and relationships at Chiltern Primary School

Hub at Chiltern Primary School: from 'Chat and Choose' to a network of activities

Chiltern's Hub is housed in a large mobile portacabin located in its own small field next to the school. The mobile has separate access from the school, via a gate from the visitor's car park (and without direct access to the school, which is security-gated). The Hub is split into two large rooms: on the right as you enter is a kitchen area where cooking activities and the food bank take place; on the other side is a multi-purpose room where coffee mornings, workshops and the playgroup take place.

A wide variety of activities and workshops go on at the Hub including its flagship 'Chat and Choose' food bank/coffee morning, parenting and adult skills classes, different parental support groups, adult craft workshops and family activities like daily after-school Family Gardening and monthly 'Cook Together, Eat Together' events.



Chiltern's current Hub is housed in a mobile unit with separate access from the school

69 Persistent absence refers to when a pupil misses 10% or more of their possible school sessions.

Provision began in 2019, when the school joined Thrive. Claire was keen to start a food bank and coffee morning at the school and found Jonathan, the Trust's CEO, to be fully supportive of the idea. Rather than be known as a food bank, which could be off-putting for some parents, the activity is known as 'Chat and Choose': families pick six items for £1 (provided by the charity FareShare and laid out on tables by staff and parent volunteers), before moving into an adjacent room for tea, coffee and a chat.

Also in attendance are the school's pastoral team, SENCo and nurse – as well as a variety of external visitors. These visitors include the NHS Mental Health Support team; House of Light who provide perinatal mental health support; Home-Start who support parents with babies and infants; the Council's housing officer and Giroscope, a local housing charity. Claire found these organisations through an asset-mapping exercise she conducted when starting the Hub and continues to add organisations to the list – for example, she hopes to soon bring in Blue Door and Hull DAP (both of which provide support with domestic violence). Bringing these organisations to the coffee mornings

enables families to directly access key information and services (for example around health and housing) whilst facilitating sign-up to further activities and workshops.

In its original incarnation, Chat and Choose ran once a month. However Claire swiftly realised that this wasn't frequent enough to build relationships with parents. There was strong demand for the food bank from families so Claire upped the frequency. It now runs on a weekly basis, with visiting organisations rotating their attendance on a monthly basis. Up to 80 families attend every week.

Chat and Choose is a key route in to relationships with parents. The food bank brings people through the door while the coffee morning enables relationships to be built between parents and staff (and the other organisations that attend) and between parents themselves. However other activities can provide a route into further engagement with the Hub and school too. For example, local rugby club Hull F.C. run parent-child courses, incentivising families to attend through the offer of free match tickets and rugby balls. The sessions have helped bring dads in particular into the Hub and once involved they are more likely to sign up to further Hub activities.

Parental Engagement Timetable 2022/23						
	8:45 – 9:00	9:00 – 11:00	10:00-12.00	12.00-1.00	1.00-3.00	3.00-4.00 (After school)
Monday	RG on the gate – greeting parents	Henry course	Henry course	LUNCH	Craft WEA	<u>Cook together, eat together family cook and craft event</u> 1-3pm Parents cook together 3-4pm Families craft and eat Once a month
Tuesday	RG on the gate – greeting parents	English	English	LUNCH	<u>Anna Freud Parent and Carer engagement in child mental health course. 12.30pm-1.30pm starts 21.2.23 8 weeks</u> 1.30pm-3pm Warm space for tea, coffee	Family gardening
Wednesday	Playgroup/Bump to Baby		<u>Together over Tea – SEND parents</u> (Once a month-Northcott Outreach attending) Freshstart 11.15-12.15pm	LUNCH	Jigsaw families	Family gardening
Thursday	<u>Chat and Choose with workshop</u> Chat and Choos...		<u>Parent-led group</u> Mental Health Support Team- Laura Jolley	LUNCH	Adam Hawley Maths	Family gardening
Friday	RG on the gate – greeting parents	<u>Crochet parent workshop</u>	<u>Crochet parent workshop</u> Freshstart 11.15-12.15pm	LUNCH	Rocksteady	Family gardening

Example of the schedule at the Hub: Henry courses support parents to provide a 'healthy start' for children while Jigsaw Families is a six-week programme focused on family relationships. Adam Hawley from the local Co-op runs an adult maths and budgeting class, signing up parents from Chat and Choose through the offer of a free £10 voucher to spend in-store. 'Together Over Tea' is a monthly group run by Claire for parents of children with SEND



Top row: Chat and Choose. Above: Coffee morning at the Hub

Building relationships of trust with parents through the Hub

Claire emphasises that the key thing the Hub enables is the building of relationships of trust between the school and parents. Whilst these take hard work and time to develop, they provide invaluable 'relational capital' for when staff need to have difficult conversations down the line with parents – for example around their children's attendance or personal hygiene.

For some parents, the relationship with supportive staff members like Claire is vital. An example Claire gives is of a mum who listed Claire as one of only two people in her 'support network' when asked by social services. This parent's children were at risk of being removed from her care due to her house becoming deemed unfit for habitation. Claire began visiting her at her home

to help point out and demonstrate things she needed to do to maintain the upkeep of the house – something she was able to do in a robust way while still having the parent trust her. The impact has been that the parent has managed to improve the situation and keep her children at home, and Claire has been able to reduce her visits from weekly to twice termly.

For other parents, the relationships formed through the Hub – whether with staff or other parents – are key to them building the confidence they need to turn their lives around as well as become more active members of the community. This in turn increases the capacity of the community as a whole to generate positive action. Claire gives the example of a mum who had been struggling with her mental health during the COVID-19 lockdowns. School staff visited her at home, made a

GP appointment for her through which she accessed counselling, and later asked her to run Chiltern's Community Garden project. The parent relished the opportunity to do so, and the boost to her confidence has led her to talk about her experiences in the media as well as gain full-time employment at the local Smith and Nephew factory.

More generally, the Hub is a means of preventing social isolation, says Claire – something that became painfully clear during the COVID-19 lockdowns when Hub activities didn't run. Simply getting out of the house, having a warm place or safe outdoor space to go to, and talking with other people is critically important for many of the school's parents – supporting both their physical and mental health.

Next steps for the Hub: extending and expanding across the three schools

The plan for the Hub is to extend and expand the activities being run to cater for parents and families from all three schools, in particular thinking about the secondary offer. At the same time, Claire also intends to expand the physical Hub space to be able to run this extended offer. The current Hub is almost exclusively for Chiltern families, who are prioritised given current capacity. A few families from other schools do attend activities like the food bank and playgroup so long as this doesn't prevent Chiltern families from attending.

The intention is to build a central Hub for the three schools on the existing site but with roughly three times the space of the existing mobile unit. The additional space would be flexibly partitioned, allowing more activities to be run simultaneously and enabling the playgroup and workshops to be run in separate spaces, for example. It would also enable some of the organisations and individuals that currently attend Chat and Choose on a monthly basis such as Home-Start and the Council's Early Help team to have a permanent 'home' in the Hub.

The new Hub would take up more of the field in which the mobile sits but would still leave some outdoor space for activities such as community gardening to take place. Additional access to the Hub would be created through the concrete fence (seen in the image of the current Hub, towards the back). This entrance would open onto the pedestrian walkway that leads directly to The Boulevard Academy and links onto another pedestrian walkway that goes to St George's Primary School, enabling Boulevard and St George's families to

enter the Hub this way.

In the meantime, spaces (repurposed classrooms) have been set up within St George's and Boulevard to start running some Hub activities, with the support of Chiltern staff. Whilst the physical space at both schools is limited, this is a useful step in getting the extension of Hub activities going. For example, Claire says, they are looking to offer the Family Links programme for parents of older children, 'Talking Teens', at Boulevard, with Chiltern's Family Links officer who runs 'Nurture Together' (the ten-week version of this programme for parents of younger children) supporting Boulevard with this offer.

Meanwhile Boulevard staff are now attending Chat and Choose and the schools have agreed to relocate an existing monthly initiative that Chiltern run, 'Cook Together, Eat Together', to Boulevard. This initiative – originally set up to help families with the cost of living – sees parents and children come in to cook and eat a meal together. An additional benefit of relocating to Boulevard is that Chiltern children can become familiar with going into the secondary, potentially supporting with transition. This complements other activities that have been set up to support with transition, including running Year 6 after-school clubs at Boulevard; Year 5 taster days, in which primary students go into Boulevard to try out hands-on science and food tech lessons to build excitement for secondary; and ensuring more visits and planning are done for vulnerable groups.

One factor that will need to be taken into account is the effect on existing Chiltern families who use the current Hub. Claire says it will be important for Chiltern families to not feel like they're 'losing' their space. Key to this will be getting Chiltern families involved in showing the ropes to St George's and Boulevard families – in other words, showing them that they have a role and expertise to offer as the Hub expands.

Taking the work on relationships into secondary

Alongside the plans for Hub expansion, a central piece of the current work is taking the work on relationships that is already embedded at primary phase into the secondary phase. This is occurring on multiple levels.

At one end of the spectrum, whole school training at Boulevard is taking place to adopt some of the approaches embedded at primary phase. This includes trauma-informed practice and emotional coaching with parents such as encouraging parents to talk with their

children about feelings rather than consequences and using a language of curiosity ('I wonder if...' scripts).⁷⁰

At the more focused end of the spectrum, Claire is working with the Attendance Team at Boulevard to discuss barriers to attendance, with an emphasis on Chiltern's mantra that 'attendance is an issue, but never the issue'. In other words, poor attendance is typically a symptom of underlying issues that need resolving, rather than the actual issue to be addressed. This leads into discussion of how to develop relationships with parents, including modelling how to listen and talk to families with empathy, and thinking outside of the box to take an individualised approach to the issues families may be facing. Work is similarly happening with Boulevard's Heads of Year, modelling the same approach to building relationships with families.

Claire says that whilst everyone wants a template – and they do have an 'Attend Framework' that offers a student and parent questionnaire and handbook of strategies – the key lesson is that one size doesn't fit all. This has to come from building relationships with families, which takes hard work but is everyone's responsibility.

Ultimately, says Claire, this needs a mindset change: that this work is about making the difference to families. To bring Boulevard staff on board requires sharing the vision and the bigger picture and showing the impact of the work so far at Chiltern through case studies with families. These case studies also demonstrate how senior leaders need to lead by example, offering support and dedicating time to this – whether that be an Assistant Head visiting a parent at home and showing them how to clean their toilet, or staff being on the doors for the first 15 minutes of the school day to greet parents.

Teaching and curriculum threads: ensuring approaches are consistent from primary to secondary phase

Teaching and learning: instructional coaching across the Trust

In the 'Teaching' thread, the schools have decided to embed instructional coaching using the 'Teaching Walkthrus' book⁷¹ in order to streamline their CPD offer.

In the first phase of embedding the coaching, all staff focused on developing their practice around relationships, but since then, staff have been able to direct their learning to areas they would personally like to develop. Staff work in threes, with two teachers to a coach. Over the course of a five-phase cycle, they discuss what they want to work on, arrange an initial classroom 'pop-in' session with their group, work on modelling and deliberate practice with their coach, then arrange a second 'pop-in' for a few weeks' later, before reviewing progress.

Many teachers put a sign on their door to show what they're currently working on, and an open-door policy means that teachers are encouraged to visit each other's classrooms to develop best practice.

Whilst the initial plan was for all three schools to embark on this work together, Boulevard wasn't ready to start this when the others were. Instead, Chiltern and St George's have gone ahead with it, alongside a few other schools in the Trust. The aim is that this will help model the work for Boulevard and provide them with some learnings for when they start this work.

In the meantime, staff have developed several other smaller elements of join-up across the three schools including joint subject training days for staff. For example, in maths, Chiltern's maths lead – who is also a Maths Hub lead practitioner – worked with Year 6 and 7 teachers to develop a consistency of approach across classrooms, such as in the use of cold calling, mini whiteboards and counting bricks.

Curriculum: small steps around Year 6 and 7 writing

Work on the 'Curriculum' thread kicked off with all subject leads from Chiltern and St George's meeting with their secondary school counterparts. Laura Gibson, Chiltern's Assistant Head and Curriculum Lead, says that what they realised was that there are many other elements they need to get in place first before changing the curriculum. This includes addressing some of the inconsistencies across the phases in teaching and learning described above.

Instead of tackling all of the curriculum at once then, they have decided to take a particular focus on writing at the transition between Years 6 and 7.

⁷⁰ For example: "I was really worried about how you were feeling when you wanted to run away. I wonder if you thought you were going to be told off about what happened" or "I wonder if you were feeling really [angry/scared/overwhelmed/sad]".

⁷¹ Teaching Walkthrus: Five-step guides to instructional coaching by Tom Sherrington and Oliver Caviglioli

To start, Boulevard's English department together with Chiltern and St George's English leads and Year 1 and Year 6 teachers conducted a 'wonder walk' – mapping out the journey from Foundation Stage 2 to Year 11 and their expectations around writing at Key Stages 2 and 3. This revealed some key disconnects, such as expectations around grammar and handwriting in the primary phase leading up to Year 6 that are then less clear in secondary phase, with a marked emphasis in secondary on answering questions on a text.

The group then embarked on a Writing Transitions Project to create a pre-prepared work booklet for students to work on in the last week or two of Year 6 (after SATs) and first few weeks of Year 7. The content of the booklet is a focus on biography and involves students producing a piece of writing (a biography of a famous person) by the end of Year 6, and another piece of writing (their own autobiography) at the start of Year 7. As Boulevard students don't come only from Chiltern or St George's, the Year 7 element of the booklet has been designed to work as a standalone topic. However, the heads of other feeder primaries have been contacted and offered the booklet too, with four schools agreeing to join in with the project.

The benefit of this join-up is that students revisit a topic and consolidate their knowledge between the two phases, whilst being able to look back at their past work. For secondary teachers, the writing tasks provide a quality baseline in understanding students' writing abilities at the start of Year 7 and – where primary schools have also used the booklet – a comparison between students' Year 6 and 7 work that can help to ensure that progress is being made. Meanwhile, the 'autobiography' topic enables teachers to learn about their new students.

Preparation of the workbook is now complete, and this will be rolled out to current Year 6s this summer for follow-up in Year 7 in autumn. While this is only a small element of the curriculum, Laura believes that if successful it will provide both a positive example upon which to build further commitment to this agenda (especially in terms of staff finding the time to do this work) and provide a useful model for further work of this kind.

Conclusions

Key learnings

Three key learnings for Claire and the team have been in realising that:

- **The schools are at different places in their school journey and therefore have different priorities – meaning they sometimes have to go at different speeds or take alternative approaches when developing the C2C work**

Boulevard in particular is at a different stage of its school improvement journey and therefore has different priorities such as worries around behaviour. This impacts on what the school will prioritise and what it is possible to do with staff, children and parents. In some cases, this means the other schools pushing on first and providing a model for Boulevard to adopt later – as noted with the instructional coaching. In other cases, such as with the relationships piece, it's about showing the value and impact of this work in relation to key concerns such as attendance.

- **The schools may have differing existing classroom or curriculum approaches that make join-up more complicated**

For example, Chiltern and St George's have quite different curricula except in science and geography. In English for example, Chiltern have separate reading and writing lessons while St George's combine these into single English lessons. While this works for their respective schools, thinking about how they can create more alignment through the phases when the two primaries themselves have different systems complicates and adds to the work involved. This is an important consideration in realising the depth and timescale involved in items like curriculum change.

- **Creating a mindset shift amongst staff around the importance of relationships with parents is key – and requires 'selling the vision'**

As noted in the section on relationships, selling the vision to staff at Boulevard has been an important first step – particularly in the work on relationship-building with parents, where all staff have an important role to play and the work is hard and doesn't follow a cookie-cutter model. This involves showing all the staff at Boulevard the bigger picture – in particular, the impact the work has on families through case studies. It then involves modelling approaches – showing what good practice looks like and getting staff to practise this themselves.

Key enablers

Three key enablers to this work are:

- **Building staff relationships across the schools; consistency of staffing matters in this**

Building relationships between staff counterparts across the primary schools and with the secondary school has been a really important first step in the work. Thread leads have enjoyed getting to know their counterparts at the other schools and finding out expectations at different key stages.

The consistency of the team matters to this. In both of the primary schools, it is mostly the senior leadership team and heads involved, who are less likely to change positions, which affords a good level of consistency. At secondary level however, there has been a higher turnover of staff involved in the threads, as staff aren't senior leaders and change roles more frequently. This can make progress stop-start, as relationships need to be rebuilt within the team.

- **Support of the Trust CEO for the C2C work**

The support of the Trust's CEO was vital for the original Hub to get off the ground and continues to be important to the current C2C work, such as in supporting instructional coaching to be taken up across Trust schools.

- **Taking small steps and building on small wins to bring people onsite**

As noted in the curriculum work, starting small but using this to show positive impact and as proof of concept for further work, can be an effective way of winning people over – paving the way for bigger pieces of work further down the line.

Financial sustainability

The main financial outlay for Thrive's C2C work is in its Hub expansion plans, which they hope to finance through existing school funds. In terms of the ongoing work of the Hub, Claire says that costs are minimal: external organisations provide their services without cost; the school covers small things like tea, coffee and the electricity for the Hub.

In terms of organisation, Claire contends that all that is required is a member of school staff to open and lock the door of the Hub at the beginning and end of each day. External organisations, or particular staff members such as the Family Links officer or school nurse, otherwise run activities and workshops themselves. Activities started by the school like Chat and Choose typically involve a mix of school staff and parent volunteers.

A key part of this is that staff at Chiltern are bought into the work they do with the community: having staff on the gates or helping with the food bank happens because staff believe in the value of this work and, says Claire, because the school is 'efficient' in other areas therefore freeing up time for this work.

Measuring outcomes

As noted in the rationale for joining the C2C Partnership, taking the high standards achieved by Chiltern into Boulevard is a key aim for this work. School metrics including those around attendance and attainment are measures that Thrive Co-operative Learning Trust ultimately want to improve through the C2C work, particularly at Boulevard. Tracking pupil progress between primary and secondary pupils can be easily done now that the schools are within the same trust.

Engaging Boulevard families through an expanded central Hub is key to this. As such, a critical measure of success going forward will be the extent to which Boulevard families use the expanded central Hub. This can act as a useful proxy measure for increased parental engagement, which it can be hypothesised will lead to improved school metrics in the longer term.

Case studies and individual success stories such as those previously described are also important in demonstrating the ways in which the Hub and work on relationships can have positive impact. Again, demonstrating this at secondary level will be important as Thrive's C2C model develops.

This case study was written in summer 2024 and is not indicative of current progress of the C2C model, school or community context.

Cranbrook Education Campus, Cranbrook, Devon

Summary

- Cranbrook Education Campus (CEC) is in its third year of the C2C Partnership.
- The centrepiece of CEC's C2C model is the EX5-Alive Hub, a community hub based onsite at the school – although it will be moving to a separate site (across the road from the Campus) as a town centre development is created.
- Stephen Farmer, CEC's head of Campus, describes his approach to the Hub as “throwing things at it and seeing what sticks” – i.e. being open and broad-based about what the Hub will offer.
- Being at a later stage of development to some of the other hubs described in this report, the EX5-Alive Hub provides further insight into how to measure outcomes and issues around funding and governance.
- The case study also documents the approach to C2C being taken by the Ted Wragg Trust, of which CEC is a part, now that the Trust has joined the C2C Partnership at a trust level.

This chapter is organised into the following sections:

Introduction

- School context
- School and community disadvantage
- Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

Cranbrook Education Campus's C2C model

- Initial C2C priorities: teaching and learning; culture change; and the Hub
- The EX5-Alive Hub
 - The offer: local service delivery, free community space and additional parental support
 - Governance of the Hub: roles, funding and structures
 - Getting started: relationships and opportunities
 - Key roles: Hub Manager, Community Builder and Community Connector
 - Community input: from listening exercises to governance
 - Next steps for the Hub
 - Future funding: changing governance structures going forward
 - Moving to a new site and current Hub priorities
 - Further hubs for the Trust

Conclusions

- Key learnings
- Key enablers
- Financial sustainability
- Measuring outcomes



Cranbrook Education Campus

Introduction

School context

Cranbrook Education Campus (CEC) is an all-through school for two to 16-year-olds in the new town development of Cranbrook in East Devon, located six miles from Exeter. It is part of the Ted Wragg Trust.

CEC opened in September 2015. It is the only secondary-level provider in the town. At primary phase, there is one other school within the town – St Martin's C of E, which opened in September 2012 – as well as a school in the nearby village of Rockbeare.

CEC's population mirrors the town's growing population and young population. In its first year, the school had 31 secondary pupils, 34 primary pupils and 58 children in nursery. The total number of pupils across all the phases is now 985 (2023/24 figures), and whilst this remains slightly below the school's current capacity of 1,020, increasing numbers in the lower age groups mean the school will swiftly reach this capacity. For example, Years 3 and 4 at both CEC and St Martin's are over capacity.

To meet the growing demand of the town, CEC will be expanding to accommodate 1,200 secondary places and will retain its 420 primary places plus 86 full-time nursery sessions. There will be two additional primary schools and a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) school built within the town.

School and community disadvantage

As a new town undergoing phases of development, Cranbrook's population is continually changing. As of the 2021 census, the town's population was 6,743 residents, but this number has increased significantly since. A key demographic of the town is the size of its young population: the town is the 'youngest' in the country, with over 30% of the population under the age of 18 and fewer than 70 retired residents.⁷² This is in stark contrast to the rest of Devon and the South-West peninsula, which on average has the oldest population in the country, with nearby Teignmouth in Devon being the country's 'oldest' town.

The population contains a mix of both affluence and poverty. In the town's initial phases of development, there was a front-loading of affordable housing (43%), which Steve says led to some social problems that included some young people, with little to do around town, displaying antisocial behaviour – and that this carried over into school. The disadvantage profile of CEC's student body is broadly in line with the regional average: 26.2% of CEC's students are eligible for Free School Meals. 2.9% have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), while 11.5% are eligible for special educational needs (SEN) support.⁷³

72 Figures provided by Aynsley Jones, EX5 Alive Hub Manager.

73 Department for Education: Pupil population in 2022/2023.

A key issue in the town is a lack of facilities with limited things for young people to do. Phases of council housing have not yet been built, meaning there has been limited commitment so far to community development. In the town centre, there is a Co-op shop, pharmacy, charity shop, fast food outlet, cafe and the Younghayes Centre – a meeting space for groups and events. Plans for a large Morrisons supermarket have been repeatedly delayed. A country park is located within the town, which provides landscaped areas and fields.

There is limited employment within the town, with most adults working elsewhere. Key employers within the town are the two schools and, just beyond town, an Amazon, Lidl and DPD depot. There is a train station, with an hourly train to Exeter (ten minutes) and London Waterloo (just over three hours), and buses into Exeter, although these can be infrequent and unreliable.

Key social issues for the town include:

- A limited town centre offering, with little for children and young people to do;
- Limited extended family support: many young families without the nearby support of children's grandparents;
- A new community, without established channels of support and limited provision of services within town.

Motivation for joining the C2C Partnership

When I first spoke to Steve (Stephen Farmer, CEC's Head of Campus) in January 2022, near the outset of CEC joining the C2C Partnership, CEC was in the process of embedding their key priorities around establishing stability: resetting expectations around behaviour, curriculum and the culture of both staff and students. This was in response to perceived issues of low aspirations by some families, poor behaviour by some young people in town (driven by a lack of things for young people to do) leading to some poor behaviour in school, and the school having a reputation in the past for being 'too nurturing without having high enough expectations'.

Although the C2C Partnership had just started (its first cohort of five schools/trusts, which included CEC, joined in September 2021), Steve had in fact been working with Ed Vainker and the The Reach Foundation team for several years – having first come across their work in 2016 when he took up the CEC headship. This 'head-start' in terms of thinking and planning, and the consistency of Steve having been leading CEC over the

past eight years, is important to bear in mind in terms of the timescales within which CEC has managed to establish its C2C and Hub work.

In January 2022, CEC already had a Hub: given that it would be several years until the school would reach full capacity, Steve had managed to secure physical space within the school to house a Hub onsite. Steve described his C2C vision as being about community and service join-up in the zero to five age phase (in particular, providing antenatal support and two-year old checks, identifying speech and language issues early, and identifying vulnerable families before the start of school); in the secondary phase, to offer careers advice and guidance and opportunities with employers; and for there to be a person coordinating the Hub, with a long-term plan for funding.

Cranbrook Education Campus's C2C model

Initial C2C priorities: teaching and learning; culture change; and the Hub

The first thing that Steve concentrated on taking from The Reach Foundation were some of the training and tailored support on school improvement – in particular in terms of teaching and learning and staff culture.

In the first year of the C2C Partnership, Steve embedded fortnightly coaching throughout CEC's secondary phase. The school also created its own version of a teacher handbook, inspired by Reach Academy Feltham's handbook, that sets out very clearly their principles of excellent teaching and learning habits, which are now embedded at Trust level.

Meanwhile, visits by The Reach Foundation staff to CEC, especially to its primary phase, provided useful feedback on its staff culture, ethos and practice. This has helped establish what they look for in staff interviews, in recruiting staff with cultural fit. Steve contends that he will always look for matching values over higher degrees of experience, as teaching and other skills can be developed.

In early 2022, at the start of the C2C Partnership, the curriculum thread was on the backburner. In 2020, inspired by Reach Academy Feltham's subject booklets (which carry through their carefully sequenced curriculum into fully specified lessons throughout the year for every year group) CEC had produced its own pupil booklets across all of its secondary subjects.

However, joining up the curriculum across primary and secondary at CEC was complicated by the existence of a Trust-wide curriculum, and wasn't an initial priority for the school. Since then, however, work has begun on joining up the curriculum through the primary phase, with curriculum sequencing and whole year booklets complete at Key Stage 2 in most subjects, and consideration now being given to Key Stage 1 and Reception. As the only fully populated all-through school in the Trust⁷⁴, CEC has been driving this curriculum work, with five Trust-wide subject leaders based at the school.⁷⁵

At the outset of the C2C Partnership, CEC's Hub space was being let out to delivery partners from East Devon Council: midwifery, Action for Children (who are the contracted provider for Children's Centres in Devon)⁷⁶, family intervention and others. Whilst they hadn't yet done a listening exercise with the community, getting going with these 'basic needs' for which there were no facilities within Cranbrook felt like a good opportunity to get things off the ground quickly. The need for health visitors and midwifery was clear as Steve had heard complaints in the various community groups in which he sat about how far it was for families to travel for these services.

The EX5-Alive Hub

The offer: local service delivery, free community space and additional parental support

The Hub's work is labelled as EX5-Alive, immediately differentiating it from CEC. Broadly, the Hub delivers in three ways.

First, as described above, the physical space is rented to East Devon Council and other service providers, who

provide services such as health visiting onsite. Bringing these services into Cranbrook, through a single access point, helps to increase levels of engagement with parents and reduce costs relative to doing home visits. It also brings in a small revenue stream for the Hub.

East Devon Council now hold strategic meetings in the Hub. Co-locating meetings involving strategic decision-making with frontline work enables more responsive service provision, as issues can be quickly seen and addressed. For example, seeing health visitors delivering services in the Hub, and the time saved between visits, helped to open a space for discussion about further service improvements. Similarly, Aynsley Jones, the Hub's manager, was approached by Devon Mental Health Alliance to sit on East Devon meetings about mental health and is able to represent and advocate for community concerns and views (such as the fact that there is currently no mental health facility within Cranbrook).



EX-5 Alive food night



Cranbrook Culture Club quiz night

74 Matford Brook Academy is a new all-through school in the Trust, which opened in September 2023, although it currently only has a Year 7 cohort.

75 This is only a brief summary of CEC's work on curriculum. For more information, please contact the school, who are happy to share further detail.

76 Action for Children had the contract with Devon County Council (DCC) for delivering Children's Centres in Devon until March 2024. They are currently working with DCC over the next twelve months as DCC considers and consults on its plans for Family Hubs (the national government's policy on creating a network of single point-of-contact hubs for families with children up to age 19 and 25 for those with SEND).

Public Health	2x full time Community Health visitors, School Nurse and breast feeding support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,500+ appointments, 4 course with 368 ongoing engagement and 27 all school visits • £75,000 in appointments • £4,800 in courses • Without EX5-Alive there would be a 25% reduction in appointments due to travelling to home visits. This would equate to £41,000 less visits
CAMHS & MHST	Supporting children & young people who may be experiencing mental health surrounding for all schools in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52 Appointments onsite – £1,248 in saved hire costs • Less anxiety for young people in travelling times. It also offers reduced waiting times • £2,600 in appointments
Midwifery	Full time Midwifery Clinic. This was stopped in April 2023 due to needing a more clinical setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 550+ Appointments onsite • £44,000 in appointments • 25% increase in appointments

• A standard health visitor appointment costs £50 & a standard midwife appointment cost £80 as verified by the Nursing and Midwifery Council

Excerpt from the EX5-Alive 2024 Impact report – health services delivered onsite at the Hub

Second, the Hub provides space for community groups to use, free of charge. Examples include 'Home from Home' (a warm space with free community lunch and signposting, funded by East Devon District Council), the Cranbrook Food Hub (which provides food and vouchers for families), Cranbrook Culture Club (an international group to reduce isolation, funded by Devon Mental Health Alliance and Recovery Devon), Rainbows (a local Girl Guides group), Project SEND (a support group for parents of children with SEND), the Wellbeing Group (a wellbeing group run by female residents), Project Food (a cooking pilot programme for low-income families), Robot Reg (a pre-school phonics programme to assist with speech and language), Home Start (which offers a parent-child bonding group and peri-mental health support), Rediscover Church (which runs toddler groups and parenting courses for anxious parents/carers), ECI Declutter Workshops (which assist residents with decluttering their homes to improve wellbeing and finances) and ECI Champions (a training programme to support residents to confidently start or run community groups).

Third, there are projects and activities the Hub and school collaborate on together. One such example is the Attendance Project. The school identifies children whose attendance has dropped off, and calls parents, asking if they would like a referral into the Hub - i.e. consent for Aynsley to make contact with them. In many cases, parents prefer this option because it is an alternative to school procedures around attendance. Aynsley invites parents in for a conversation, finding out about difficulties they may be having, running through a menu of support and signposting them to help. She emphasises that nearly all the work she does at the Hub is with adults. In a small number of cases, parents may ask Aynsley to work with their children, but by and large the project is for adult support. It's also not for significant or complex needs: where these are identified, she will refer back to schoolsafeguarding.



Tiny Treasures Toddler group held at the Hub




Cosy Room in the Hub for conversations with parents and other residents

The Attendance Project has been a huge success for both the school and the Hub. Steve contends that being able to talk to Aynsley, who isn't a representative of the school and associated with 'school rules', really

helps parents to open up, which is the key to starting to address issues. This is especially helpful for parents who may have negative associations and trauma from their own school experiences, or who see school as 'the authority'. Taking a relational approach has meant that potential resistance to visiting a Hub within a school setting has been minimal. Parents including those who may have anxiety around school have said that they feel safe and supported in the Hub.

The Hub's work also complements the home visits the school conducts. All parents of children entering CEC in Reception or later in primary school are visited at home by members of the CEC team to identify areas in which they might benefit from support and to refer them to the Hub's or other agencies' services where this is the case. The school is now in the process of expanding the scope of visits to include Year 7 joiners from St Martin's, the other primary school in Cranbrook, whose families may not be familiar to the school or Hub.



Attendance Project

Signposting and referrals to Parental Minds to support parents with children presenting with mental health, Self Harm and SEN

- 63 Families assisted successfully with attendance and an increase in school attendance
- 19 supported and 11 did not need to be referred for emergency support. This resulting in a potential emergency statutory saving of £200,200 over the course of a year
- Direct Costs £2,592
- Funding £10,000+

Excerpt from the EX5-Alive 2024 Impact report – outcomes from the Attendance Project

Another project that has involved both the Hub and the school is around families seeking asylum. This large-scale project involves over 120 pupils, with East Devon Council having been given central funding as part of a government resettlement grant, which is largely supporting children in a local hotel. A team, involving the Hub and members of CEC's senior leadership team have worked together to settle families into the school in groups in a short space of time. This has led to the school being able to incorporate learnings into their standard admissions processes, leading to a strengthened inductions process.

While some projects between the school and Hub work well, others have been less successful. This has been the case in the youth opportunities/careers space. An example is a Young Enterprise project, which Steve decided to run through the Hub to make it open to all young people locally rather than only those at CEC. Whilst the young people involved came up with a great idea for a product (reusable menstrual products), ultimately they never got the business off the ground. Steve contends that the young people involved struggled to motivate and self-organise in the out-of-school environment. By contrast, within school, work on careers has been very successful, with all eight Gatsby benchmarks reached for the third year running. Careers content has been embedded within the curriculum, with every subject promoting thinking around the careers linked to the subject content within every content cycle.

Ultimately, Steve says that perhaps in contrast to The Reach Foundation's Hub⁷⁷ which took a more planned and 'intentional' approach to delivering activities, CEC's approach has been to be broad-based – to "throw things at it and see what sticks". This doesn't mean that they haven't done the community listening or asset mapping that The Reach Foundation have. Whilst they have done these exercises, the broad-based approach means they will typically take the opportunities that come their way instead of picking and choosing more precisely. Steve says that whilst this can become quite 'messy', it can also mean making the most of opportunities that come about and developing the potential of things that do 'stick' by incubating and growing them within the Hub.

Aynsley contends that CEC's Hub is a model for rural community hubs elsewhere. In rural communities, a key issue is the lack of services available locally. Often, key services will only be available in the nearest large town or city, many miles away. These will be inaccessible to many families, until the family reaches crisis point when transport may then be made available to them. What CEC's Hub does is offer a listening ear and signposting to services, drop-in facilities and community groups that can provide early help and support before families reach crisis point. Aynsley says that while the make-up of a Hub will vary depending on the community context – here, she gives the example of other towns in Devon probably needing things like chiropody for grandparents who may also play a role in the care of their grandchildren – the model of locally based, resident-centred early help remains the same.

Governance of the Hub: roles, funding and structures

Getting started: relationships and opportunities

A number of key elements were important to the establishment of CEC's Hub. One of these elements was a multi-year funding pot from Sport England, given to Cranbrook because of its identification as a 'low activity' area. The funding has been allocated to different strands, including the community and school strands that Steve has been involved with. Steve sits on the steering group for 'Move More', the community funding strand, which decides on how grants should be allocated. Some of the funding has provided grants for specific initiatives (for example the town's Nordic walking group), while some of the funding has been used to fund three roles connected with the Hub – Cranbrook's Community Builder, Community Connector and Hub Manager, described further below. School funding meanwhile has helped the school to purchase sports equipment and run after-school sports activities.

Another crucial element in getting started was gaining the physical space for the Hub. Whilst this was somewhat fortuitous, as Steve describes, it was also the result of significant personal time and effort invested in forming the relationships that led to this happening. It began with getting involved in lots of other community activities, not necessarily in a CEC capacity, such as sitting on the Town Council. He and Louise Moretta,

77 As noted elsewhere, The Reach Foundation's hub-type work has since evolved away from direct delivery under Reach Children's Hub to more convening work, signposting and a strong focus on systems change.

CEC's primary phase head at the time⁷⁸, would also try to spend additional time in the town (as neither of them lived there), walking the field after the school day, going to the Co-op shop where children went after school, meeting parents and trying to spread the word about the school to change preconceptions about it.

Convening partnerships and driving forward relationships has been critical in getting the work of the Hub going. Steve notes that forming relationships with people at all levels is important – from senior-level commissioners within organisations like the Council and NHS who can sign off on spending decisions; to the managers who are the 'doers' that put things into action; to the frontline staff like the health visitors who deliver services on the ground.

From an early stage, Steve has also been keen to share learnings from CEC's Hub with others. He has shown various visitors round the Hub including leads from other schools and trusts in the C2C Partnership and councillors and council staff interested in setting up hubs elsewhere.

Key roles: Hub Manager, Community Builder and Community Connector

The original roles associated with CEC's Hub were funded in the main by Sport England and involve collaboration between various organisations including the charities hosting the roles and the Wellbeing Cranbrook/Wellbeing Exeter alliance.

Of the three, Aynsley, the Hub Manager, came into role last – after the Hub had begun service delivery, and a little before EX5-Alive's first listening exercise in July 2022. Joining from the Town Council, Aynsley's role is half funded by Sport England and half by C2C Partnership seed funding for twelve months. She reports directly into Steve, although this temporary structure is soon going to change as the funding and governance of the Hub transition – as described later. Aynsley works four days a week and is fully based at the Hub. Her role involves liaising with all the groups that use the Hub, as well as running specific initiatives and providing the listening ear and signposting to individuals described previously.

Steve says that having an external Hub Manager role and ensuring the person in the role is the right person are key to CEC's C2C model. While thinking about family relationships is embedded in the value system of

school staff and while Hub services would for the most part continue to happen without a Hub Manager, what Aynsley provides is the personal coordinating touch – the connections and referrals – that really maximise the Hub's value. Aynsley and Steve have fortnightly catchups in which they discuss what is happening in the Hub, feed back and reflect on views they have heard from the community, and discuss gaps in provision and opportunities. For example, in their most recent meeting, they identified the upcoming school summer holidays as an area in which additional family support is required. They also noted a potential opportunity with Libraries Unlimited. EX5-Alive Hub updates are then communicated out to CEC parents and pupils in the school newsletter.

Andrea, Cranbrook's Community Builder, is funded by Sport England and hosted by Exeter Community Initiatives, a local charity that supports twelve other Community Builders across Exeter. Her role involves establishing connections between community groups in Cranbrook and helping these groups to grow. For example, if a group of residents wanted to start a club, she would support them with advice such as how to set up and apply for funding, structure the group internally and market themselves across the town.

Gemma is Cranbrook's Community Connector. Again, her role is funded by Sport England but hosted by Youth Genesis, a South West-based charity. Her role involves working with individuals aged eleven upwards who may be isolated – for example because they have no family in Cranbrook – helping them to make connections, such as by accompanying them to social opportunities in the community or introducing them to others with similar interests. Individuals can be referred in or self-refer. Gemma works three days a week and is based at CEC's Hub or at the town's Younghayes Centre one or two days a week, with the rest of her time spent out in the community.

Community input: from listening exercises to governance

In July 2022, CEC hosted its first EX5-Alive listening event. This consisted of three half-hour listening workshops with (separately) pupils, parents and other members of the community, followed by a one-and-a-half-hour workshop with the different adult groups altogether. Aynsley says that the Hub then effectively conducted listening exercises throughout its first year through its 'Home from Home' project. Home from

78 Louise is now head teacher at Whipton Barton Federation in Exeter.

Home provides a warm space for residents to attend. It also puts on events that include free cheese on toast, craft activities and a bouncy castle. Through attendees of Home from Home, they have listened to the views of over 250 residents.

Meanwhile, Aynsley and Andrea have worked together on mapping all the community groups in Cranbrook. One of their key findings was identifying the lack of a communications strategy in the town through which groups can advertise – in contrast to the established channels that might exist in a more established town.

The work also involved mapping the town's demographics and the types of communication that cut through to residents. What they found, says Aynsley, is that messaging needs to be very direct, straightforward and bitesize. With the majority of residents being young parents without older family members to support them, there is a trepidation about engaging in anything unknown. Baby Bonding for example needed to be labelled more clearly as Baby Massage. Meanwhile, a Home Start poster they put up initially had two responses; Aynsley redid the poster in the EX5-Alive style, stating clearly that it was a toddler group, and they received 35 responses.

Following on from the listening work and to ensure the Hub stayed community led, Aynsley and Steve set up a Hub steering group. However, this was not a success as its composition was too 'professional' – essentially comprising all the organisational leads involved in the Hub, who were well-connected with each other anyway. As a consequence, they have now moved governance to the Cranbrook Community Association, a local community action group comprised of between twelve and 15 members, with no stipulation on who can be members except Cranbrook residency.

The group previously met in the pub but were keen to use a space in the Hub. They now meet between fortnightly and monthly in the Hub and are involved in making key decisions about the Hub. They channel views from the community, which they glean from activities including polls and door-knocking.

Most recently, East Devon Council were looking to do a consultation and partnered with EX5-Alive as they found this to be the best means of reaching the largest number of residents. Through this partnership, they managed to reach 9,000 residents, with 2,500 good responses to the consultation.

Next steps for the Hub

Future funding: changing governance structures going forward

As the Sport England and C2C Partnership seed funding come to an end, continuing to secure funding to keep Aynsley in post is Steve's top priority. While room rental at the Hub provides a small source of revenue, it isn't enough to cover Aynsley's post. Service providers meanwhile have agreed to continue committing service provision at the Hub (for example, health visitors), but can't commit a percentage add-on for Aynsley's time. Funding has however been committed by East Devon Council to fund Gemma and Andrea's positions for another year.

An avenue Steve had been hoping to pursue was a Trust-level foundation to attract longer-term funding and provide sustainable support to the Cranbrook Hub as well as hubs being developed across other schools in the Ted Wragg Trust. The Trust has set up its South West Opportunities Fund, which is looking to bring in regional philanthropy and big grant funding, however the Fund is in an early stage and not at the point to support schools and the wider region.

Instead, Aynsley is pursuing funding from the National Lottery's Development Fund. Pursuing this funding has been complicated by the ad hoc nature of Aynsley's appointment and position. Steve and Aynsley have had to revise their application a number of times as under the current arrangement Aynsley reports into Steve and the Lottery do not directly fund schools. A bid they put in for £280,000 funding wasn't outrightly successful for this reason. The funder is keen to work in Cranbrook and have offered to develop a twelve to 18-month interim funding bid to address governance issues before they fund a longer-term, larger bid.

The proposal in the first instance is for the Hub to partner with (and make Aynsley a Director of) Inspiring Connections, a local CIC, before setting up a community-owned organisation for the Hub in its own right. This would be run by its directors, comprised of key groups within the community including organisations like CEC, professionals and residents. This new structure is intended to enable access to funding bodies like the National Lottery, whilst retaining community governance. These proposals need to be approved by Cranbrook Community Association.

In recognition of the importance of the Hub for both the community and school, central funds from the Ted Wragg Trust will support Aynsley in role for six months whilst the Lottery bid is being considered. This will enable the Hub to continue to operate, without a 'gap' in provision and the loss of vital roles like Aynsley's. In this interim period, Aynsley will report into Grace Williams, the Ted Wragg Trust's Strengthening Communities Leader.

Moving to a new site and current Hub priorities

A further change on the cards is the Hub's move out of the school and over the road. The Hub's location within the school was only ever intended to be temporary – making the most of the underused space while the school was under-capacity. Aynsley is working with the Town Council's steering group on plans for the new building. The steering group is discussing practical considerations such as the layout and storage facilities of different rooms, which includes playrooms, meeting rooms, rooms open to the local community and two clinic rooms to be let out to various professionals including for osteopathy, reflexology and other therapies.

Also being discussed is ownership of the running of the building and services, as the Town Council and other external agencies (Family Hubs/NHS) will be contributing a percentage to the running costs. The cost of the building itself should be covered by Section 106 funding made by the developers involved in the Cranbrook town development, given their responsibilities to provide infrastructure and amenities.

For Aynsley, meanwhile, a key priority for the Hub is around youth. This is a primary concern as the town currently has no youth strategy and yet will shortly be seeing its first wave of teens born in Cranbrook. This ties into another priority concern around safety in public spaces – both in relation to anti-social behaviour and road safety. Currently, key stakeholders (town and county councillors; police; local businesses; and social housing, education and youth teams) meet half termly for the Cranbrook Community Safety Group Meeting. The group invites external guests to discuss issues and help with strategies. For example, a recent meeting involving the charity Sustrans led to a student-led campaign around parking and pavements. A further priority for Aynsley is mental health and the lack of facilities in Cranbrook, as mentioned earlier. While CEC has an in-school mental health team, they are currently unable to make referrals for students as the external third-party agencies (NHS Mental Health Support Teams, Young Devon, YMCA and others) all have waiting lists.

Further hubs for the Trust

Meanwhile, the Ted Wragg Trust has joined the C2C Partnership at a trust level. Another school in Exeter (Whipton Barton Federation, where Louise Moretta, CEC's former Primary Head, is now headteacher), Matford Brook Academy and two schools in Plymouth (Marine Academy Primary and All Saints Academy) have been taking part this year. The aim is to develop two geographic clusters involving primary and secondary schools within these areas: with St James and St Luke's secondary schools joining the Whipton cluster and Marine Academy Plymouth, which is next door to the primary, joining the Plymouth cluster.

While developing a community hub is at the heart of each of these schools'/clusters' C2C models, what is right for each is very much context dependent. All Saints in Plymouth, for example, is working on getting its Hub set up for September 2024. However, the "throw it and see what sticks" approach that works so well in the new town of Cranbrook is not the right approach for the area of Plymouth where All Saints is located, where many existing community organisations and interventions are established. Instead, the school's newly appointed Community Engagement Officer is working closely with partners such as the Family Hub and YMCA (located just over the road from the proposed Hub) to ensure the work being done isn't duplicative and fills identified gaps.

The Trust has also hired a Strengthening Communities Trust Leader, Grace Williams, to support this and the Trust's wider work around community engagement. In addition to supporting Trust-level scale-up of C2C, Grace has been working with The Reach Foundation on a universal offer for the Ted Wragg Trust – essentially bringing some of the thinking from the 'Relationships' and 'Communities' threads of C2C to all schools in the Trust.

This year, the focus has been on family engagement, which will next year lead into the development of a Trust-wide Strengthening Communities Network. Every school in the Trust will have a senior leader attending the network alongside other staff who work in family engagement or community-facing roles. The network will enable the sharing of learnings across this type of work and provide a space for thinking differently. The idea is that it will raise awareness across all schools, without expectation – recognising that schools are in very different places in their school improvement journeys and some won't be ready for

full C2C engagement. As such, the network will also act as something of a school readiness check for full-scale C2C.

An example of the work being done with this year's family engagement cohort is an audit of how family relationships are being done in schools, with a view to this informing a school-specific theory of change and action plan for doing this work better. In particular, the cohort has looked at transitions between Reception and Year 1 and Year 6 to Year 7, taking a whole family lens rather than the usual pupil-level lens. At Marine Academy Primary in Plymouth, this work led to inviting staff from the local Family Hub to the school's annual welcome event. Three referrals were made on the day through the Family Hubs stand at the event.

In addition to the Network, work planned for next year includes:

- Working out a Trust-level set of values and principles around what a relational (or relationship-centred) approach means, so that this can be made explicit;
- Further listening work across the Trust's schools and more broadly, including conversations with the local authority leads for Plymouth and Devon Family Hubs to understand opportunities for example in co-location or collaboration;
- Developing a community 'dashboard' for all Trust schools that provides demographic, health and other contextual data about the local community within a 1.5km geographic radius of each school;
- Developing a local asset map for each school in the Trust;
- Developing schools' capacity for bid writing through the support of a bid-writing specialist.

Grace recognises that there is a tension between the school-level focus of C2C and the Trust-level scale-up but thinks that the connection into the Trust is vital. She emphasises that she is keen to make sure the learnings from EX5-Alive and Aynsley's knowledge are incorporated into what the Trust does, and that the Hub's connection with the Trust and support for Aynsley are developed going forward. Aynsley will be running some continuous professional development on community engagement and hubs at the Trust's Ted Wragg Institute.

Conclusions

Key learnings

- **Developing and embedding a C2C model takes time – and this requires consistency of leadership**

Whilst CEC joined the C2C Partnership in September 2021, Steve had been having conversations with Ed Vainker and The Reach Foundation team for several years prior. Doing C2C wasn't then something that CEC picked up from scratch three years ago; Steve had been laying many of the foundations for it – both internally and externally – over a number of years. Given the long-term nature of C2C work, this consistency of leadership (i.e. the head teacher being in role long enough to develop and embed the model) is crucial. Steve contends that within the school there is an element of robustness about the model now because it has been embedded in the school's strategy and values, in particular through senior leadership roles which tend to have a longevity to them.

- **Doing this kind of work is uncertain and unpredictable – progress can be fast, slow and stop-start**

Whilst Steve and Aynsley are immensely proud of what they've managed to achieve, it has been an uncertain and unpredictable process. Aynsley says, looking back, "we didn't realise how big this would go." The kind of community- and partnership-based work that is involved in developing a hub is by its nature something that can't be fully planned in advance, and this can lead to progress being stop-start, at times fast and at other times painfully slow. It is useful for C2C leaders to be aware of this and of the implications of this on planning, capacity and funding.

- **Forming relationships at every level: from those involved in commissioning to frontline workers**

As noted earlier, Steve describes as key the formation of relationships with professionals in the community including the local authority, public health and other statutory and voluntary service providers. Knowing the right people at every level of an organisation is important to getting things done effectively. This means knowing those who make commissioning decisions, in order to influence and get sign-off on strategic and funding decisions; the managers who are responsible for putting programmes in place; and the frontline workers who deliver services, understand on-the-ground challenges and interact with the community on a daily basis.

As the Hub Manager, Aynsley is now that critical link holding those key relationships. This highlights one of the central benefits of the community hubs developed by the partners involved in the C2C Partnership: the way in which its leaders are able to combine an intimate, personal knowledge of their community (i.e. knowing residents by name and understanding what their daily concerns are) with strategic thinking (i.e. being able to coordinate and convene effective, joined-up interventions at reasonable scale) – in contrast to the way in which a lot of statutory services are provided, where strategy and delivery are separated.

Key enablers

- **Being opportunistic, whilst investing time and effort in building strategic relationships**

As noted, the development of the Hub involved making the most of an opportunity that arose in terms of the space available at CEC – but this opportunity was also the culmination of the time and effort that Steve put in over many years prior, developing key relationships with the many partners involved, including the town and district councils, Sport England, Wellbeing Cranbrook/ Exeter and so on. Building relationships, but also not being afraid to ask for things when the time is right, have been important enablers.

C2C work relies on developing connections and starting conversations with a wide range of stakeholders, some of which may not lead to anything, but any of which could be the spark for a snowballing series of positive actions and consequences. This is what is shown in Aynsley's Ripple Effect work (see subsequent section on Measuring Outcomes).

- **Having the right person to manage the Hub**

Steve contends that having the right person to manage the Hub – and being able to sustain them in role – is critical. The Hub Manager is someone who needs to be able to connect with residents in the community; is connected in with the various professionals, networks and groups within a community; and can also be involved in strategic meetings and decision-making. While Hub services would continue to run without Aynsley, it is her convening and relationship-building role which unlocks the 'added value' of the Hub – making the Hub more than the sum of its parts because service provision is made relational rather than being transactional.

- **Thinking about the model as a whole, rather than threads in isolation**

Steve says that it's important with the C2C work to do 'whole model thinking' around what it is you want to achieve, rather than thinking about separated strands or threads, so that the work being done is complementary and reinforcing. In practical terms, CEC achieves this join-up by conducting half termly meetings for its school-focused thread leads to disseminate and share learnings. Each lead presents a one-slide summary to the rest of the group and discusses next steps to maximise collaboration and impact. As described earlier, Steve also catches up with Aynsley on a fortnightly basis to share learnings between the school and Hub.

- **Producing an Impact Report**

As described in the subsequent section on Measuring Outcomes, producing EX5-Alive's Impact Report has been a game-changer for Aynsley and the Hub, helping them to secure financial input from East Devon Council. Of particular value in securing funding has been quantifying the effective cost savings generated by the interventions offered through the Hub, such as a reduction in referrals to Early Help. More generally, the impact report presents the story of the Hub, its offer and outcomes in different ways, meaning it has been taken up by widely varied audiences who each find something that speaks to them in it.

Financial sustainability

As previously described, financial sustainability – in particular in terms of the long-term funding of Aynsley as Hub Manager – has been a key concern since the Hub was set up. Steve was aware that the large funding pot from Sport England would be time-limited,

and that further funding would need to be found. In particular, he was keen to secure long-term sustainable funding, rather than short-term pots of funding. This is something that Steve and Aynsley are still working towards.

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A place to discover, learn & improve opportunity...

BE PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Cranbrook Community Support

We are partnered with a dedicated field of professionals from across Devon to assist positive change

Connections & Growth at a glance

13,000+
Connections made through attendance, correspondence or advice

2300+	423	378
Number of Early year support and midwifery appointments	Number of people supported to engage in physical activity	Number Food Parcels
92	63	54
Number of Asylum seeking, refugee and migrant families supported	Families assisted with School Attendance with a positive impact	Number of groups supported by the Community Builder
47	41+	34
Households referred for debt support	Number of individuals referred to the Community Connector through ECI	Number of volunteers
24	18	5
Support with emergency services & mental health	Number of community events	Number of lives saved through emergency intervention

Excerpts from the EX5-Alive 2024 Impact report – contents page and summary overview

Measuring outcomes

One of the key pieces of work on outcomes the Hub has produced has been the EX5-Alive Impact Report. As well as reporting on the total number of connections, interventions, groups and beneficiaries supported during the Hub's first 18 months of delivery, it also documents the impacts from every individual initiative run through the Hub, including measures such as:

- Number of sessions run;
- Number of attendees/members or number of service uses and recurrence of use;
- Direct costs – the monetary cost of running the service over its duration;
- Funding associated with the initiative;
- Monetary value of volunteer hours given – for example, for 'ECI Champions' (a training programme to support residents to start or run community groups), an estimated yearly saving on volunteer hours of £28,700, based on twelve trained Champions, each working in the community for an average of four weeks;
- Monetary value of donations – cash or in-kind contributions – for example, £19,488 of food given to the Food Hub;
- Monetary value of the Hub's free room hire – for example, £420 of free room hire for Cranbrook Culture Club (an international group to reduce isolation), which runs its group meetings at the Hub;

- Number of successful outcomes – for example, for ‘ECOE Debt Service’ (signposting to Cranbrook’s ECOE Debt Advisor), 47 referrals resulting in a total debt reduction of £53,237 for residents;
- Reported feedback by beneficiaries – for example, 82% of attendees of Cranbrook Culture Club reported feeling happier and more connected to their community through engaging with the group;
- Estimated monetary value of savings to (other) public services as a consequence of the intervention, for example:
 - For the Attendance Project, 19 [families] supported and 11 did not need to be referred for emergency support. This resulting in a potential emergency statutory saving of £200,200 over the course of a year;
 - For ‘Conscious Living’ (a motivational and wellbeing coaching course with movement), a reduction in GP appointments on average by 50% with a potential saving of £80,000+;
 - For ‘Rediscover Church’ (which runs toddler groups and parenting courses), a potential saving of £145,600 based on eight families on parenting courses who did not need to be referred to Early Help;
 - For Public Health, a potential saving of £41,000 based on being able to do 25% more appointments at the Hub compared with doing home visits (where travel time needs to be factored in).

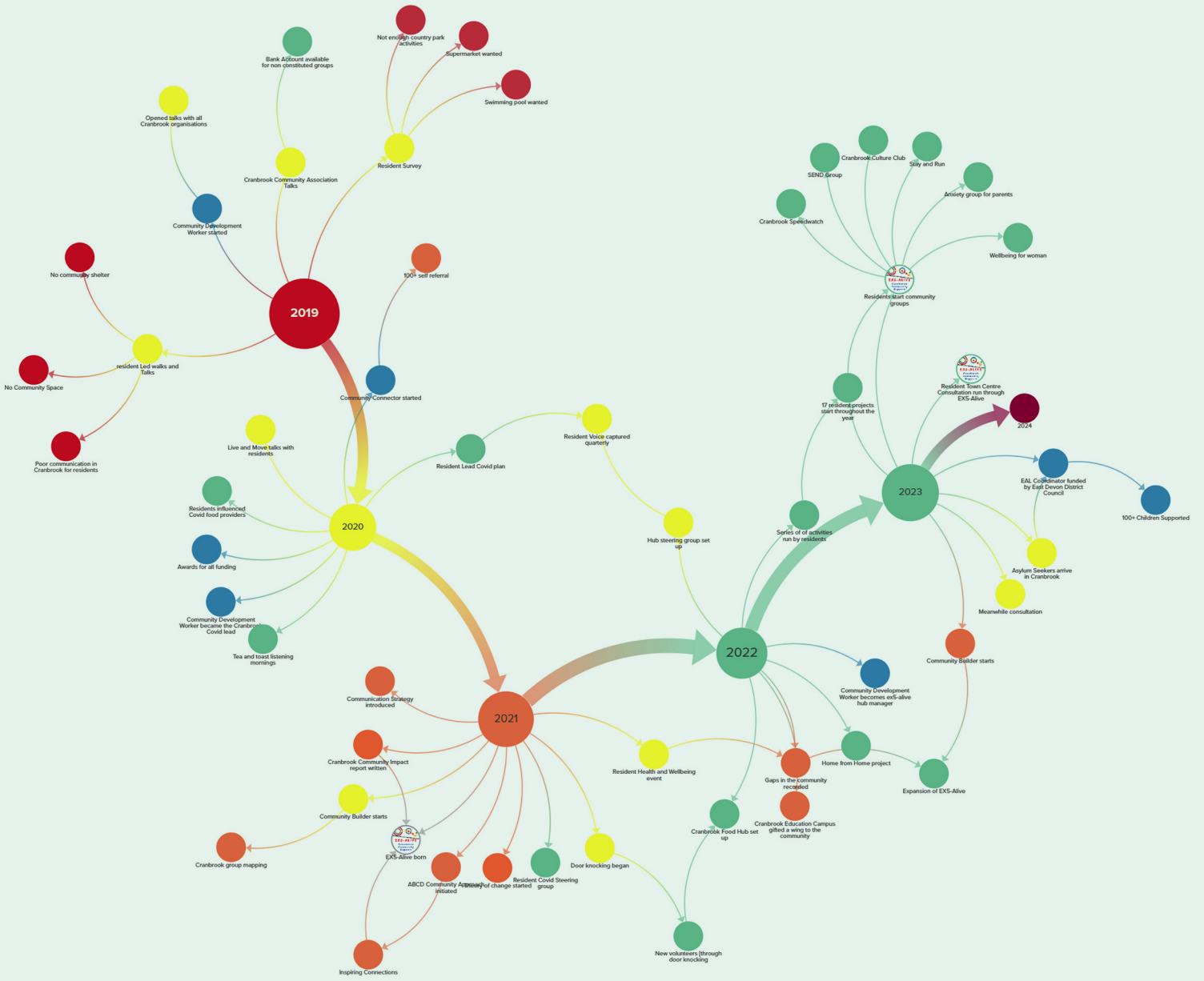
In terms of group/service attendance, the iPad-based signing-in system at the Hub collects this data automatically. Indirect costings were calculated based on reference to available statistics such as those on the costs of an Early Help referral. Insights were also gleaned from practitioners based at the Hub. For example, the health visitor savings described above were calculated by Public Health based on their measures of the time typically taken between home visits.

Aynsley says that producing this report has been transformational as it demonstrates on paper the good work of the Hub and speaks to so many different audiences. Being able to attribute monetary savings values to Hub-delivered initiatives has been vital in showing impact to stakeholders like the District Council.

Despite its hugely positive impact, Aynsley says that it isn’t an exercise she’ll be repeating. In order to document impacts from each individual initiative, she asked all groups to provide their figures as well as filter back views from their participants – something that was laborious and time-consuming to collate.

Going forward, she is instead working with the University of Plymouth’s SERIO team to collect quantitative and qualitative data from residents and users about the Hub. The SERIO team have created a questionnaire with 30+ questions that all groups will be asked to fill in from September. Facilitators for this exercise are currently being put in place. This piece of work will provide independently verifiable impact data and feedback about the Hub. She is also collecting case studies to give further insight into how the Hub is being used, such as whether people access the Hub on foot or through other means.

In addition, Aynsley is also working on mapping outcomes of a different kind. Using ‘Ripple Effect’ documentation, she is looking to show in a visual way the connections and conversations involved in building the community at Cranbrook since 2019. So far she has mapped over 100 stakeholders. The aim of the work is to give credit for conversations that have been the vital spark in moving people to action – and in particular the role of convenors or those ‘in the middle’ such as Wellbeing Cranbrook and the Hub. It should also help to document the evolution of community needs and concerns over time.



A timeline of Cranbrook resident involvement for community development: Ripple Effect documentation work-in-progress being completed by Aynsley

Conclusion

The cradle-to-career models explored in this study are about community, and specifically, about the school at – and as – the heart of the community. If communities are about human-level connection, schools are well-placed to support better-connected communities that enable the people within them to thrive. Head teachers can use their unique position as people with frontline knowledge and strategic influence within their communities to join the dots around local service provision. Meanwhile, as a universal touchpoint for most families across many years, it is conceivable that schools can cultivate sustained relationships with families at a depth that ensures children are supported from birth through to adulthood.

There is strong grassroots support for this work: four years into the C2C Partnership, around 80 schools and trusts are now involved. They are taking on this work in part as a reaction to the urgent need they are seeing in their communities, as families struggle with the cost of living, the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasingly stretched public service provision.

The biggest outstanding question from this study is around the sustainability of partners' C2C models – in particular, sustaining a community hub or community-facing work, but also funding the staff roles tied to C2C work. Schools and trusts are taking different approaches to the question of sustainability and it will be interesting to continue monitoring their progress.

One recent development offers promise in this regard. The Reach Foundation's national work has recently secured additional philanthropic funding to create an Accelerator Fund which will support C2C partners who are seeking to deepen the impact of their work, over time. C2C partners receiving support from the Accelerator Fund will form part of a national network of C2C partners leading change at an individual,

organisational and systemic level across their school communities. The opportunity will be offered to partners who are completing the two-year C2C Partnership with The Reach Foundation.⁷⁹

A more general question is how and why schools can be expected to take on this additional work in a climate of squeezed school budgets and where they are often already plugging gaps in the welfare system. There is a risk that if schools prove successful in developing their own C2C models without government support and alongside welfare cuts, future governments will continue to underfund schools and wider services.

C2C is not an alternative to better-funded public and third sector services. Rather, as Hilary Cottam argues, taking a more relational approach – as well as a more creative and entrepreneurial one – is a necessary change to better addressing the complex, chronic issues associated with disadvantage, like social isolation and addiction, which existing systems deal with poorly.⁸⁰ Together with better-funded public services, this could create a real difference to families' lives and to children's life chances.

Thinking about the bigger picture and being creative and entrepreneurial are not necessarily encouraged in the current system, with its high stakes and narrowly focused accountability regime. One means by which schools and trusts are reducing the potential 'risks' involved is starting C2C work only when the school's culture and teaching and learning are completely secure, and then by testing and trialling more innovative approaches.

79 More information about the C2C Partnership is available at: www.reachfoundation.uk/activities.

80 Cottam (2018).

Some schools – for example, Cranbrook Education Campus – have chosen to employ a non-teaching staff member to focus on this work, which ensures the work gets done without distracting teachers from their day jobs. Others – such as Holyrood Academy and King's Oak Academy – have chosen to create in-school leadership positions with time carved out for C2C work, which can help to build culture change within the school. Different schools and trusts will choose different routes depending on their context and the leader's preferences and vision. Ultimately though, for schools to feel more comfortable taking risks with this (or for the work to seem less risky), accountability parameters need to change too.⁸¹

This study has showcased some of the scope of possibilities afforded by C2C models, but there are wider possibilities still. As noted earlier in the report, some schools and trusts are looking to take more of a convening role in their approach to community – for example, Cornwall Education Learning Trust's work with the Bodmin Town Team and indeed the evolution of The Reach Foundation's own C2C model.⁸²

In these models, schools and trusts are moving from responding to immediate community needs to looking at how they can support long-term structural transformation.

It is early days in the lifetime of partners' C2C models, particularly in terms of measuring impact. We have seen glimpses of how schools and trusts have shown, or intend to show, impact, such as through school outcomes like attendance, proxy measures like parental engagement, case studies of individuals and families, the documentation of community connections and The Reach Foundation's C2C milestones. Further evidence of impact is still needed. Yet, having said this, there is a sense from speaking with C2C partners that even in changing leaders' and staff mindsets about what they can and should do in relation to their local communities, C2C has already had a big impact.

81 To this end, The Reach Foundation strongly advocate for schools/trusts to consider using some or all of the C2C milestones they are developing – a set of data indicators, examined at the level of each child, encompassing both in-school and beyond-school outcomes at every phase of life (for example, at the end of primary school: that a child achieves the expected standard in Key Stage 2 SATs reading; and that their weight and height is in line with age-related measures). For schools to feel more comfortable taking risks with this work (or for the work to seem less risky), ideally national accountability parameters would change to reflect these wider objectives rather than current narrow attainment measures.

82 The Reach Foundation's hub-type work has evolved from a lot of direct delivery (under Reach Children's Hub) to much more convening work, signposting and a strong focus on systems change. The early years hub work has evolved with the local authority's Family Hub work; the perinatal lead from Reach Children's Hub is now leading the roll-out of this work across the borough.

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