

# Community-led approaches to reducing poverty in neighbourhoods

**Richard Crisp**

**Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research  
Sheffield Hallam University**

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# Outline

- Context
- Methods
- Definitions
- Findings
- Implications

## Growing policy interest in community-led activities

- Shift from tackling neighbourhood-based disadvantage through top-down, deficit model to asset-based development driven by:
  - **Declining funds:** Austerity + dismantling of regen
  - **Public service reform:** Pressure to diversify provision + focus on prevention
  - **Political narratives:**
    - Tackling dependency
    - Empowering communities

## Divergent paths across the UK

- 'Death' of regeneration in England...?
  - End of top-down ABIs (NDC, HMR)
  - New structures of sub-regional governance (LEPs, CAs, metro mayors)
  - Laissez-faire localism (Neighbourhood Planning, Community Rights)
- ...but grass greener north of the border?
  - Strategic commitment to regen (Achieving a Sustainable Future)
  - Explicit focus on tackling disadvantage (Community Empowerment Act, 2015)

## Impact of welfare reforms by 2014/15\*

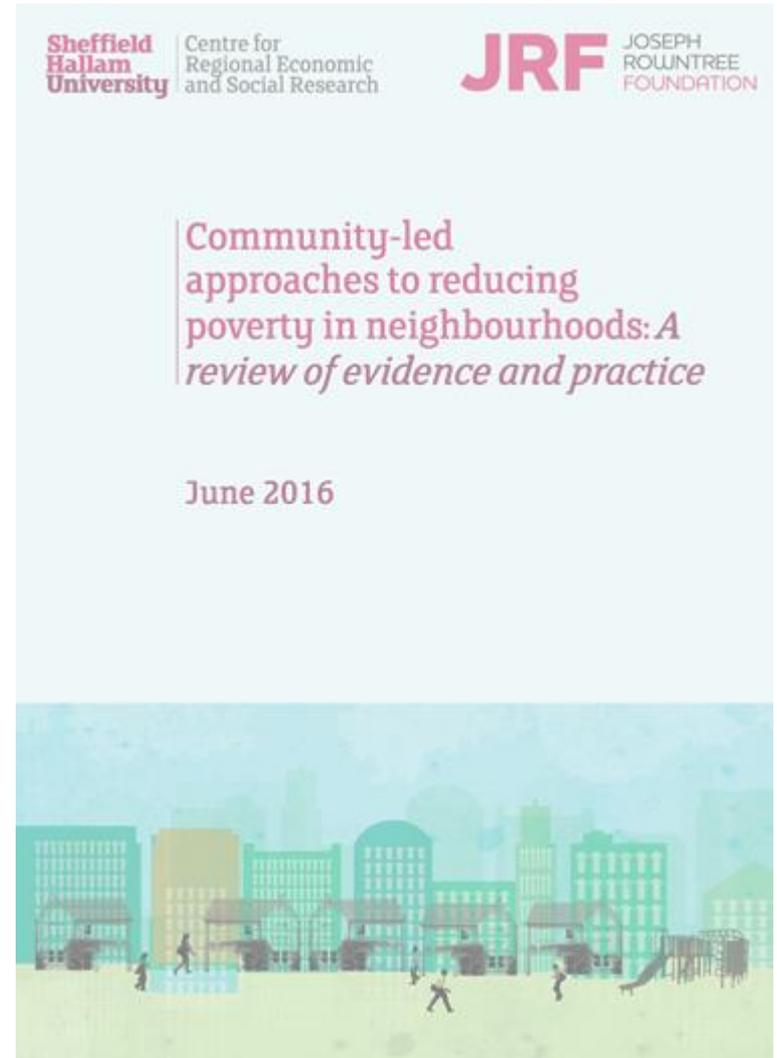
Local authority	Estimated loss £m p.a.	Loss per working-age adult £ p.a.
Glasgow	259	620
Inverclyde	32	600
<b>West Dunbartonshire</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>580</b>
<b>Dundee</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>560</b>
North Ayrshire	49	560
Aberdeenshire	48	290
Shetland Islands	4	270

\*All impacts by 2014-15 except DLA by 2017/18, incapacity benefits and 1% up-rating by 2015/16

Source: Beatty and Fothergill (2014) *The Local Impact Of Welfare Reform: A report for the Scottish Parliament*

# The research

- Typology of community-led approaches
- Interviews with 10 stakeholders
- Analysis of c.400 documents
- Poverty impacts, drivers and barriers, scalability and transferability
- Limited evidence base



# Poverty: Meaning and measurement

	Material poverty	Non-material poverty
What it means	'When a person's resources are not enough to meet their basic needs' (JRF, 2014)	Lived experiences of poverty e.g. poor health, low educational attainment, poor quality housing
How to measure it	Income Material deprivation ----- Jobs Employment Worklessness Enterprise Living costs (e.g. food, fuel or housing)	Education Health Housing Community safety Physical environment Social interaction Community cohesion Community empowerment
Nature and timing of impact	Prevention, pockets or prospects?	

## Community-led approaches: our definition

*'Activities undertaken by individuals, groups or organisations within defined geographical neighbourhoods in order to achieve social, economic or environmental objectives defined by participants with minimal external control'.*

# A typology of community-led approaches

- Voluntary action
- Community organising
- Social action
- Community economic development
- Community involvement in service delivery

# Voluntary action

<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve quality of life</li><li>• Provide services to meet need</li><li>• Develop individual capacity</li><li>• Opportunities for interaction</li></ul>
<b>Core activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteering</li><li>• Capacity building</li><li>• Service delivery</li></ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food banks</li><li>• Parents and toddlers groups</li><li>• Welfare and debt advice</li><li>• Sports + leisure clubs</li></ul>



# Community organising

<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build capacity, power and influence of residents to improve quality of life</li><li>• Foster grassroots forms of self-help and mutual support</li></ul>
<b>Core activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support groups to identify problems and solutions</li><li>• Help residents develop skills to participate</li></ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Organisers; Community First</li><li>• Neighbourhood clean up</li><li>• Fun days</li><li>• Campaigns to save local services</li></ul>



# Social action

<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mobilising to achieve social justice</li><li>• Changing policy</li><li>• Influencing allocation of resources</li><li>• Changing power relations</li></ul>
<b>Core activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campaigning</li><li>• Developing coalitions</li><li>• Mobilising residents</li><li>• Asserting political power</li><li>• Direct action</li></ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Living Wage campaigns (Citizens UK)</li><li>• Resisting development or gentrification (Focus E15)</li><li>• Occupations to stop closure of services</li></ul>



# Community economic development

<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve income and resources</li><li>• Support local economic development</li><li>• Develop and control assets for community benefit</li></ul>
<b>Core activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Running enterprises</li><li>• Providing access to low cost credit</li><li>• Acquiring, developing and managing assets</li></ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Credit unions</li><li>• Social enterprise</li> <li>• Urban farms</li><li>• Community energy schemes</li><li>• Community-led housing</li></ul>



# Community involvement in service delivery

<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve or create services through community involvement</li><li>• Co-production</li><li>• Build social capital</li></ul>
<b>Core activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying needs/consultation</li><li>• Co-production e.g. in design, delivery, commissioning, management or evaluation of services</li></ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Neighbourhood planning</li><li>• Community Right to Challenge</li><li>• Our Place</li><li>• Participatory budgeting</li><li>• Reshaping health + social care services</li></ul>



# | Findings

What does the evidence tell us about the impact of community-led approaches on poverty?

## Voluntary action

- Long tradition of grassroots voluntary action e.g. Westlands/Riverlands community groups
- Evidence of improvements on 'non-material' poverty - well-being, social interaction and perceptions of area (e.g. Hickman et al., 2015)
- Less evidence of material improvements although some exceptions e.g. Murton Mams
- On-going support essential to sustain commitment...
- ...but compromised by cuts and shifting priorities during hard times

## Voluntary action in depth: Food banks

- Rapid growth (c.500) shows meeting immediate material needs (*pockets*)
- Can also improve well-being through social interaction
- Trussell Trust franchise model shows food banks are transferable and achieve scale
- But still just a short-term, emergency fix...?
- ...or food bank 'plus' model + social action approach may improve *prospects* too?

## Community organising and social action

- Diverse range of activities e.g. Poverty Ends Now vs. Focus E15 Mothers
- Gov't-funded programmes (Community Organisers, Neighbourhood Challenge) provide little evidence of poverty-related benefits
- Notable impacts on *pockets* of social action:
  - changing practices of payday lenders (Thrive)
  - Living Wage campaigns
- Success factors = leadership, strong CVS orgs able to contribute funding - won't work everywhere?
- Potential to scale up into citywide/national campaigns

# Community economic development

- Wide range of activities

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community enterprises</li><li>• Community-based housing association</li><li>• Community business</li><li>• Community co-operative</li><li>• Community credit union</li><li>• Community development corporation</li><li>• Community development finance initiative</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community energy schemes</li><li>• Community housing trust</li><li>• Community development trust</li><li>• Community land trust</li><li>• Local exchange trading scheme</li><li>• Neighbourhood enterprise</li><li>• Community-owned village halls</li><li>• Time banks</li></ul> |
|---|---|

Adapted from Bailey (2012)

- And high hopes: sustainable local income; employment oppo; autonomous enterprise; filling gaps in services under Austerity.

## CED in depth (1): Credit unions

- Community-based credit unions can benefit *pockets* and/or *prevent* poverty through access to low cost credit...
- ...but limited penetration among low income households.
- Significant challenges in serving low income communities
- Number of success factors need to be in place: strong leadership; committed volunteers; business acumen; high quality IT systems; and a strong sponsor body.
- Start up financing and on-going subsidy may be necessary to achieve growth *and* maintain social objectives

## CED in depth (2): Community-led housing

- Wide range e.g. cohousing, CLTs, community self-build, housing co-ops and self-help (empty homes) housing
- Can have positive short-term impacts on *pockets* by providing affordable housing, lowering fuel costs and employment e.g. Helmsdale and District COHP
- Training + volunteering oppo can improve *prospects*
- Poverty outcomes depends on who accesses housing
- Scale of benefits likely to be small
- Success depends on access to finance; local skills and expertise; organisational capacity; and partnership.

## Final reflections and policy implications

- Wide range of material and non-material benefits - more likely to impact *pockets* and *prospects* than *prevent* poverty
- Context matters i.e. local infrastructure, skills + capacity, access to finance + assets, and partnerships
- Most community-led activities unlikely to achieve poverty reduction *outcomes* at significant scale...
- ..but shouldn't always use quantitative benchmarks - *process* matters too
- Policymakers may be disappointed if they expect communities to fill the vacuum left by cuts + welfare reform
- Need to align wider funding for regen/eco development with community-led activity
- More research necessary to understand + advocate for CLAs