

2. Community empowerment

The Challenge

Undertaking high quality participatory research and decision-making is challenging (1). Studies have employed systems-based approaches for community involvement (2-4), and there is evidence that these approaches impact both community capacity building and intervention sustainability (1, 4-5). However, these studies are the exception and have yet to be tested in urban green and blue spaces (UGBS).



Community Kitchen Garden with WHALE Arts, Edinburgh

Underpinning approaches

Implementing more collaborative approaches, we focus on key community issues such as homelessness, cost-of-living crisis, and developing resources that communities want, leading to impact for research and communities (1,5). Through our co-production framework we are using approaches to enable community co-production transformation in all WPs, from considering systems approaches to data linkage.

Empowering and democratising the research process: We are developing citizen science based approaches such as The OurOutdoors App spotteron.com/ouroutdoors which can be used as an evaluation tool, and/or can empower communities by collecting the data they need most.

Developing community research capacity: In Edinburgh, we are testing how best to implement a community-embedded researcher approach; three have been employed to work with partners and local communities to undertake a range of activities.

2. Community empowerment

Giving a voice to those seldom heard: Examples include community journalism training delivered by University of Edinburgh, hosting seminars by organisations such as the Mae Murray Foundation and Making Space for Girls, research focusing on homelessness, refugees, and people living in low income areas.

Putting communities at the heart of the evaluation process: Connswater Community Greenway have involved communities over all waves of research and held group model building workshops involving local communities with stakeholders. Extensive community co-production work was the basis of the recent climate resilience work. An evaluability assessment process with Dock Branch Park focused on what the community wanted as well as other stakeholders in defining indicators of success.

Giving communities a 'place at the table': Our Community Steering Group is one of our main advisory groups and provides advice on training and resources needed and makes decisions on the use of the Innovation Fund. WP6 is looking at the role of citizens in UGBS decision-making.

Providing the resources to focus on community issues: Our Innovation Fund will focus on topics identified by communities. The community wealth building and community asset transfer work and the analysis on UK UGBS inequalities and preventable deaths in WP5 will inform local decision-making and policy processes.

Linking NCDs with issues that matter to communities: Our conversations with communities suggest that the issues that matter to communities in relation to UGBS include: climate change, conflicting use of spaces, community planning process, and reducing anti-social behaviour.

Pathways to Impact

Our seminars are available through our YouTube Channel (youtube.com/GroundsWellConsortium) including a video on intervention development with an organisation for those experiencing homelessness. We are currently writing up one approach to the community researcher model (used in a project for New Scots (refugees, migrants and asylum seekers). We will bring all these together in a toolkit, via co-production workshops, bespoke training and a community empowerment conference in Year 5.