

**North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership
Peoples Panel**

Focus Groups Report 2018/19

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1.0 Introduction

This report details the main findings to emerge from focus group research carried out by Lowland Market Research on behalf of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership with regard to issues raised in the recent Peoples Panel consultation.

1.1 Background

The North Ayrshire People's Panel consists of a representative cross section of approximately 2,000 North Ayrshire residents who have volunteered to providing feedback to the partners of the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership through an annual postal survey and other research methods. This feedback is intended to guide the work and priorities of the Partnership and its individual partners.

The most recent survey of the Panel took place in the autumn of 2018 and provided information on public views and priorities across a range of thematic areas; 1,317 panel members responded to this questionnaire. A large-scale postal survey such as this often gives rise to a need for further interpretation and investigation. To facilitate this additional research requirement, a programme of six focus groups has been developed, one within each of the Council's Locality Planning areas.

1.1 Objectives and Methodology

The broad thrust of the focus groups is to ascertain people's views and opinions regarding a variety of topic areas, including;

- Outdoor activity
- Healthy Eating
- Basic Income
- Community Justice
- Social isolation and kindness

In addition to these there were specific questions asked only of people living in specific localities.

Lowland Market Research recruited participants for a programme of six focus groups (one group in each of the six Locality Planning areas). It was endeavoured to have each group contain 8 participants and each was developed within the confines of the research budget to reflect a broad cross section of the population covering both socio- demographic indicators such as age and employment status as well as from the different geographical areas. As the table on the following page outlines, 44 people took part across the 6 focus groups.

The table below summarises the group composition and the geographic area where the group participants come from.

Group Composition

Group	Locality Planning Area	Location	Group Composition	Number of participants
1	North Coast and Cumbrae	Largs	Cross section of age, gender and employment status	7 participants
2	Irvine	Irvine	Cross section of age, gender and employment status	8 participants
3	Three towns	Ardrossan	Cross section of age, gender and employment status	8 participants
4	Garnock Valley	Kilbirnie	Cross section of age, gender and employment status	5 participants
5	Arran	Brodick	Cross section of age, gender and employment status	8 participants
6	Kilwinning	Kilwinning	Cross section of age, gender and employment status	8 participants

1.2 Topic Guide

The topic guide has been structured using the following themes that have been highlighted in the recent People's Panel questionnaire.

Topic Guide

Introduction – breaking the ice, having people in the groups thinking about the area in general terms.

- What do people like about living in North Ayrshire
- What do people dislike about living in North Ayrshire.

Outdoor Activity

Green health is improving health and reducing health inequalities by making more use of the outdoors for green exercise/nature based activities such as walking, cycling, outdoor play, conservation work, growing or volunteering in the outdoors.

1. *What existing knowledge do people have about green health activities available to them and what makes people engage in them*
2. *What are the benefits of being in the outdoors*
3. *What are the barriers to accessing activities in the outdoors*

Healthy Eating

1. *In your community what things could help increase healthy food purchases? (Prompts: Community centres serving food, mobile food pop ups? Cafes? More/better shops)*
2. *What would you ask local retailers to do to increase the amount of fruit and veg/ and healthy food people buy locally? (Prompts: Is it about promoting the benefits of a healthy diet, is it cost, availability of healthy food?)*
3. *What's your understanding of a healthy diet? (Prompts: Types of food, what are key reasons that might prevent you from eating more of these types of food, i.e. shops, time, cost)*
4. *What is your understanding of what a portion of fruit and veg is?*
5. *What activities around food and learning would be appealing to you? (Prompts: Is this about cooking specific food or nutritional information for wellbeing? Cooking your own produce with friends and family. Themed nights. Forming a cookery group?)*
6. *What things would most encourage you to start growing your own food? (Prompts: Is it information? Would you growing veg in garden space, allotments, house/window box)*

Basic Income

A basic income is an income unconditionally paid by the government to every individual, regardless of whether they work and irrespective of any other sources of income. It replaces many means-tested payments such as Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit (but not housing or disability benefits) and is high enough to cover basic needs (food etc). Most models suggest at least £73.10 per week for an adult of working age, in line with current benefit.

1. *Can you tell me what you know about Basic Income?*
2. *How do you think a Basic Income could benefit you?*
3. *How do you think a Basic Income could benefit other people?*

Community Justice

Community Justice is the collection of individuals, agencies and services that work together to support, manage and supervise people who have committed offences, from the point of arrest, through prosecution, community disposal or custody and alternatives to these until they are reintegrated into the community. Local communities and the third sector are a vital part of this process which aims to prevent and reduce further offending and the harm that it causes, to promote desistance, social inclusion and citizenship.

1. *Can you tell me what you know about 'community justice'*
2. *Do you think that people who have offended in the past and have served their sentence (either in prison or in the community) should have the opportunity to 'wipe the slate clean' and move on in life?*
3. *What are the benefits of someone who has committed an offence serving their sentence in the community rather than being sent to prison?*

Social isolation and kindness

1. *Do you think loneliness is an issue for people in your locality area? If so, for whom and what do you think are the challenges?*
2. *Do you think you can rely on neighbours in an emergency/ for practical help / for emotional support?*
3. *Do you think people are generally kind?*
4. *Have you helped someone who needed it in the last 12 months / how?*
5. *Do you (or not) experience kindness? For example, do you think people are treated with kindness in places such as GP surgeries, libraries, social services, police and public transport? Where else do you (or not) experience kindness?*
6. *Do you have any ideas about what might help people to feel less lonely in your locality area?*

Locality Specific Questions (asked at each specific locality focus group)

Arran

1. *Do you have difficulty attending appointments, social gatherings or activities due to assistance or transport issues? If so what might help you?*
2. *Is your housing suitable for your current needs regarding cost, location and size of accommodation? If not how could this be addressed?*

Garnock Valley

1. *What are the greatest barriers to moving around...*
 - a) *Within Garnock Valley?*
 - b) *Beyond Garnock Valley?*
 - c) *What might potential solutions be?*
2. *Do you think there are enough of the right facilities and amenities for young people in Garnock Valley?*
 - *If not, what sort of facilities and amenities should there be?*
3. *How might we work together to increase work opportunities in Garnock Valley?*

Irvine

1. *How can services within a locality work better together responsive to the needs of their community*
2. *What could be done to give more power to people*
3. *How could we get more people involved in dealing with local issues*

Kilwinning

1. *Have you noticed the new traffic and parking signs in Kilwinning main street?*
 - *Did you know they were planned and put up as a result of the work of the locality partnership?*
2. *In terms of the local environment:*
 - *Is there any specific area in Kilwinning that you feel needs to be focussed on? If so, what do you feel needs to be done in this area?*
 - *Are you aware of the various allotments within Kilwinning, and do you think these are publicised enough?*
 - *Did you know that Kilwinning Community Events Group arrange clean up/litter picking days? How do you think these could be publicised to attract more volunteers?*

3. *Do you know how people can access services in Kilwinning to help support and better prepare them for employment*

North Coast

1. *What's your experience of how people in your community might be struggling to make ends meet?*
2. *What sort of help and advice do you think communities might need with managing money?*
 - *Do you know how people can access services which can help with financial worries such as unmanageable debts or managing your household budget*
3. *What's your perceptions about the pressures on young people and their ability to cope with stress? Do you have any ideas about what more could be done to support them?*

Three Towns

1. *The Three Towns have a Long connected Coastline- What could we do to encourage more people to visit and make active use of the Promenade, Beach and Coastline?*
2. *Growing Food and promoting healthy life styles is a priority for Three Towners - What more can we do to encourage wider participation in food growing, production and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through growing and the promotion of free access to food?*
3. *Community Centres are managed by trusted community Associations representative of local people- What can we do to encourage greater involvement of the community in the identification of local need and the delivery of local services?*

The discussion guide used in each focus group was the same. This report endeavours to outline the areas where members of the different groups have common view experience with regard to the issues discussed and where their experiences contrast.

1.3 Report Structure

The following sections of the report are structured around the topic guide used and outlines in both narrative and bullet points the types of responses and comments received during the focus groups. The bullet points give rich examples of specific perspectives with regard to the subject matter highlighting clearly and contextualising the more general narrative.

Qualitative research by its nature produces a large amount of information; the report has therefore been segmented into discrete sections to aid understanding. **Readers should be careful, however, not to view each section in isolation but maintain an awareness that many of the issues are inter-linked and should be assessed and actioned in a joined up manner.**

2.0 Research Outputs

2.1 Introduction

Participants in the focus groups were asked to state what they liked and disliked about living in North Ayrshire.

Likes

In terms of what they liked, one of the main things that people liked best was the countryside and for many the sea/coast. The proximity to the coast and countryside was very important to them.

In addition to this the fact that they are not too far from Glasgow and Glasgow airport was a big plus.

Other things that people liked included;

- Nice quiet areas
- Safe, clean and tidy
- Cheaper house prices
- Good schools
- Not so built up like the city
- Good transport links to Glasgow
- Always lived here, used to it

Dislikes

One of the main things that people disliked about living in North Ayrshire was the lack of good jobs in the area and the requirement to travel to Glasgow for many people to secure good well paid employment.

Other issues that were common across the 6 groups included;

- Road works and potholes
- Closure of community centres in many neighbourhoods
- Lack of activities and services for children and young people
- Closure of local banks
- Poor Police presence

Some locality specific dislikes included;

North Coast and Cumbrae (Largs)

- Traffic queue for the ferry slip – 2 hour queue for the ferry. Traffic cannot get down the road and the Police need to create a one way system to cope

Three Towns (Ardrossan)

- The beach needs tidied up

Garnock Valley (Kirbirnie)

- No Police in Kirbirnie – come from Irvine
- Lack of banks – for instance none in Beith

Kilwinning

- No public toilets
- Poor street lighting at times – for instance at under passes

Arran

- Lack of affordable housing for young people
- Lack of secure well paid jobs on the island

Irvine

- Not confident to walk about at night
- More Police and community wardens required

2.2 Outdoor Activity

Participants in the focus groups were asked to think about outdoor activities, specifically green health. Green health was defined for them as- *“Green health is improving health and reducing health inequalities by making more use of the outdoors for green exercise / nature based activities such as walking, cycling, outdoor play, conservation work, growing or volunteering in the outdoors”*.

What existing knowledge do people have about green health activities available to them and what makes people engage in them.

The term “Green Health” was one that the groups were not familiar with to describe some form of exercise that they may take outdoors. The types of exercise/activities that people will undertake included walking, running, cycling, fishing and gardening. People generally stated that they just went for a walk or went out on their bike rather than describing it as “Green Health” or outdoor activity.

The level and intensity of exercise also varies from a gentle walk with a dog in the countryside or along the beach, a cycle along a cycle path with the family to more serious activities such as running 10km or cycling 50 miles.

Examples of activities which members of the groups stated specifically included;

North Coast

- Using the cycle path from Largs to Fairlie. People also walked along the beach and used Kelburn Park

Garnock Valley

- Using the cycle path from Beith to Lochwinnoch, go sailing on Lochwinnoch and walk in Eglington Park

Three Towns

- People will walk along the beach at Ardrossan.

Kilwinning

- People used Eglington Park and McGavin Park

Arran

- Walking in the countryside, going down to the beach and sailing

Irvine

- Walking in Eglington Country Park and go down to the beach

Over and above these types of activities, people were aware of or took part in activities such as;

- Park runs
- Outdoor activities at Kelburn Park
- Golf
- Fishing
- Allotments
- Walking
- Dog walking
- Hill walking

Why do people engage with these activities - What do they see are the benefits of being outdoors

The main reason people stated to take part in outdoor activities was that they “enjoy being outside and it makes them feel good. People like the fresh air and being outdoors. They think it is good for their health, both mental and physical. People will often undertake outdoor activities as a family, it gets them all out together.

- Several people in the Largs and Irvine groups said that it helps them to lose weight. A few of these people participated in walking groups who met up weekly to get exercise but also to meet people and socialise
- In the Arran group several of the older members of the group stated that getting out for a walk in the countryside or on the beach keeps them active and “*gets them out of the house*”.
- For the younger members of the focus groups, several said that they enjoyed getting out with their children. It provided some good family time and got everyone, adults and children alike away from screens.

Other reasons for engaging in outdoor activities and the associated benefits included;

- Keep fit and active
- Fresh air
- Gets them moving
- Better than being in the house
- Helps people to socialise and to develop friendships
- Good for the kids – gets them off their tablet or phone and encourages them to use their imagination.
- Switch of from the stresses and strains of life
- Get balance right, clear head
- Bit of me time
- Health – mental and physical
- Fresh air
- Can be educational
- Can help with meeting people/socialising
- Grow their own food, good for health and beneficial moneywise

What are the barriers to accessing outdoor activities?

One of the main barriers to accessing outdoor activities is the weather. Many people in the focus groups stated that it is often wet and cold in Scotland. This put a lot of people off engaging in outdoor activities throughout the winter months, and even in the summer when the weather can also be unpredictable.

Apart from going for a walk, many other people said that a major barrier was that they just didn't know what to do or what was available. Several people from Largs and Kilwinning stated this, although it was a common theme among people in all of the groups. It would be good if there was more information about what was on and how they could engage with it. Some people said that they did not feel motivated and if there were organised activities that they could engage and join in with they would be more likely to take part in them. More information through social media such as Facebook would be useful, as would an App showing local outdoor activities.

For other people in the groups it was a time factor. They have busy lives and are often unable or unwilling to fit more things in. For instance *"By the time they have travelled home from Glasgow from work they are tired and can't be bothered"*. A couple of people from the Arran group stated that they commuted on and off the island each day and by the time they got home it could be quite late. This was also mentioned by people in Kilbirnie and Ardrossan.

Comment was made by people in Kilbirnie that in some parks and open spaces there were kids and young people hanging about sometimes that perhaps made them feel unsafe and could be intimidating.

The types of things that put people off engaging in outdoor activities include;

- The cost of clothing/bike etc
- Fewer organised activities being available in their communities. People would like to see a wide variety of outdoor activities being available
- Beaches needing cleaned
- Some activities can be expensive such as those at Kelburn Park
- Feeling their needs to be a commitment to regularly attend organised outdoor activities rather than just being able to drop in and out of them
- Allotments – perception is that they are big and expensive. People would like to try them but they need to make them smaller and easier to manage. They also need more information on them.
- Lack of facilities available for young children – for instance poorly maintained play parks

2.3 Healthy Eating

In your community what things could help increase healthy food purchases?

When discussing healthy foods and healthy eating, most people in all of the groups felt they understood what they should be eating. Members of the group in Largs said that they knew what they should be eating but healthy food can be expensive. In most of the groups it was discussed that healthy food tends to be more expensive than other types of foods, and unhealthy foods also tend to be more convenient to purchase and eat. The groups felt that healthy foods therefore need to be cheaper, tastier and more convenient/quicker to prepare. The availability of cheap unhealthy foods needs to be addressed. People

gave examples of the types of choices they have available to them. For instance 5 donuts for a £1, 6 bags of crisps or 4 bars of chocolate for £1. This is compared to a bag of grapes or apples for £3. These types of choices can make it difficult to always be healthy.

Members of the focus groups said that they think it would be a great idea if there were community centres serving healthy foods. Comments were made however that in many areas the community centres had closed. The members of the Largs group said that they did not have a community centre in Largs anymore. Some people commented that they have seen community enterprise cafes elsewhere, such as in Glasgow, and it would be great to have these in their communities.

People said they would like to have more shops selling cheaper healthy foods. Members of the Ardrossan Group said that they don't tend to eat as healthily in the winter, this was echoed among other groups such as Irvine and Kilbirnie. They stated that when it is dark and wet and they get in late from work, they tend to eat stodgy comfort food.

People in Ardrossan said they would like to have cookery demonstrations and be given ideas on how to make healthy cheap meals. Many people said they would like to be shown how to make healthy food taste nice, be shown how to make healthier versions of the things they like such as pizza and curry. They want more information so they can create more variety in the healthy meals they cook.

Members of the Kilbirnie group said that they would like advice on how to plan, prepare and cook healthy affordable meals. People spoke about batch cooking meals and freezing them. They wanted support to do this because they felt they soon run out of ideas and then revert back to their old ways.

What would you ask local retailers to do to increase the amount of fruit and veg/ and healthy food people buy locally?

As stated previously, people understood what a healthy diet should look like and what they should be eating. Most people indicated that there are plenty of opportunities to buy healthy food in their area. For instance in Largs there is a large Morrison's, an Asda in Ardrossan and a Tesco in Kilbirnie to name but a few large well stocked supermarkets. Even on Arran, members of the focus group stated that the local Co-op stores were generally well stocked with fruit and vegetables and other healthy foods.

Most people said it wasn't really about availability of healthy foods or a lack of understanding of what they should be eating, the big issue is that it needs to be cheaper than the alternatives and they need more ideas on what to cook that are tasty, easy and quick.

There was also discussion about reducing the availability of unhealthy foods. Some people felt that it is too easy to buy pizza, chips, chicken dippers etc from the supermarket and put them in the oven.

Members of the Irvine and Kilbirnie groups stated that the preparation of healthy meals and the creation of meal ideas can put them off. If retailers could have healthy meals/ingredients pre prepared, pre packed and portioned up for people that would help. They indicated that a service like the Hello Fresh meal boxes which have all the ingredients provided in proper portions for 2/3/4 people from which you make a healthy and tasty meal would be great. Something that is all thought through for them and all they have to do is cook it.

What's your understanding of a healthy diet?

Most people understood what a healthy diet consists of. They mentioned the need for a balance in what they ate. There was a requirement for fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, potatoes, rice, bread and pasta and to cook more homemade meals from scratch rather than heating up pizza and chips or a microwave ready meal.

People provided long lists of things they should be eating including;

- 3 proper meals a day
- Eggs
- Fruit and veg
- Home cooked food, cooked from fresh
- Soups
- Fish
- Fruit juice
- Meat, chicken
- Baked potatoes and tuna
- Lots of water
- No sugary drinks
- Less processed food
- Cut down on snacks

The key reasons that people stated for not eating a more healthy diet included;

- Salad and vegetables are expensive
- A ready meal is made in 2 minutes and costs £3
- They lead busy lives and things need to be quick
- They have bad habits
- They want things to be affordable, easy, tasty, varied
- They have been brought up in a culture of eating in a more unhealthy manner
- Costs puts them off – easier to buy a pizza
- Need more ideas and how to cook healthy interesting meals

What is your understanding of what a portion of fruit and veg is?

Most people knew what a portion of fruit or veg is. They all mentioned the 5 portions a day recommendation for fruit and vegetables and some people mentioned that a third of your dinner plate should be vegetables. Examples given by people in the focus groups of what a portion of fruit and veg is were as follows;

- A piece of fruit like an apple, banana or an orange
- A small handful of vegetables, half a tin of peas or beans
- A glass of fruit juice

What activities around food and learning would be appealing to you?

Many people in the focus groups would really like to go to cookery classes. People in Largs said that they would like to go to some sort of cookery club. One of the participants in the Kilwinning group mentioned that he had gone to cookery classes at the Cook School, which he said had been given as a present, but which are expensive. Most people said that they would like to do something like that in their local community. They would like some kind of cooking club for instance where they learn how to cook healthy, tasty and varied meals and also have the opportunity to meet people.

Examples of the types of food they would like to cook includes;

- Curry
- Italian food like pizza and lasagne
- Fish
- Healthy chicken dishes
- Other things from scratch/fresh

People also commented that they would like to be able to go along to classes with a list of ingredients that they have been told to bring along and prepare and cook a variety of meals for their family that they could then take home to feed them for several days. In this way they would learn new skills, meet people and have meals all ready to be heated up for later in the week saving them time and making their life easier through the week. This type of activity could involve their children as well. It could be undertaken in local high schools, people mentioned Largs Academy for instance, that have cooking facilities children use during the day.

Several people in the Kilwinning group mentioned that Centre Stage comes to Kilwinning sports club on a Friday. This is an organisation that allows people to take fresh homemade food home by putting in a donation.

All of the participants in the focus groups stated that any activity must be fun and show them how to make quick, easy, tasty and healthy meals. They are not particularly interested in the nutritional information of the food merely that it is healthy, easy and quick to cook, balanced and tasty and above all not expensive.

What things would most encourage you to start growing your own food?

The main barrier for people to consider growing their own food is a lack of knowledge and understanding of how to do it. They would require more information and examples of what they could grow and how they could grow it on a small scale.

Several people mentioned allotments or community gardens. They spoke about the allotments in Ardrossan and the Fairlie Community garden. They thought these were great ideas and could be used to provide them with more information and advice.

There is a perception that gardening and growing food takes a lot of time and effort and can be expensive. They want to be shown that it can be done easily, cheaply and that they will get something useful to eat from it in the end. Comment was made that growing vegetables seems like hard work when you can buy it cheaply in Aldi for instance. Other people said that they felt it would be complicated, hard work, expensive and at the end of it all they might not even get anything worth eating.

Some people in the focus groups stated that they had grown things themselves such as raspberries, tomatoes, chillies, sweet peppers and herbs. This was primarily done in pots on the window sill or in the back garden.

The main ways people stated that would encourage them to start growing their own food included;

- More information on what to grow and how to grow it
- Provide support and advice on what to do
- Advice on the materials and equipment required
- Training on how to grow things
- Grow bag that you just open up and water and up grows potatoes or other vegetables
- Need to know when to plant/start and how to do it
- Feeling that it could be expensive to buy in everything that you need to begin with
- Space, support, knowledge, materials/equipment
- People need some quick wins to get them into it

2.4 Basic Income

Participants in the focus groups were asked what they knew of the term/concept of a Basic Income.

What is Basic Income

In all of the focus groups most people did not know what Basic Income was at all and had never heard of it. Only 2 people in the Ardrossan group said they knew about Basic Income due to the fact that they worked in the employment sector.

The groups were then informed about what a basic income was.

Basic Income – Definition

A basic income is an income unconditionally paid by the government to every individual, regardless of whether they work and irrespective of any other sources of income. It replaces many means-tested payments such as Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit (but not housing or disability benefits) and is high enough to cover basic needs (food etc). Most models suggest at least £73.10 per week for an adult of working age, in line with current benefit.

How do you think a Basic Income could benefit you?

Most people thought a Basic Income would be useful to them. Only one person in the Kilbirnie group was not keen on the idea as he stated he would “just get hammered for tax”.

One person in the Largs group said that they would love to be gifted £73 per week. It would give their children a holiday and pay for treats. It would also mean they could spend more time with the kids rather than taking overtime or extra shifts to help make ends meet.

A participant in the Kilwinning group said that said that £73 per week is nearly their rent and that it would transform their life.

Several people in the Irvine group said that the additional money would reduce their stress levels and would allow them to budget better. One example given was that they would be able to put £10 in the gas meter instead of £5.

Other examples of how it would benefit people in the focus groups included;

- Eat healthier – would be able to afford it
- Spend more time with their family
- Would not need to rely on overtime shifts
- Help with childcare costs
- Pay off debts
- Save it up
- Pay for a car to go to work – especially useful in North Ayrshire
- Travel expenses
- Maybe do less shifts and have more time with their family
- Would top up poor wages
- Pay off debt
- Help with maternity leave
- Pay council tax
- Bit extra to do fun things to keep healthy – like go swimming

How do you think a Basic Income could benefit other people?

Most people in the focus groups thought that the concept of a basic income would be beneficial to a lot of people in the same way that it would be beneficial to themselves. It would help people pay off some debt, and potentially create more family time for them as they may not have to work as long hours or take overtime. It may also pay for activities or days out with children or allow people to save for a rainy day.

If some people were taking less overtime or doing shorter shifts it might also free up some jobs/employment opportunities for other people. It might encourage some people into work. If the basic income replaces existing benefits then people already on benefits will not see any uplift in their income. However for people in work it would be a bonus. It could mean that if people who currently receive means tested benefits went on to secure a job, they would get the basic income on top which would significantly increase their income. This would be a real incentive to take a job and come off benefits altogether.

Comment was made that a lot of people in North Ayrshire are in low paid jobs. The basic income would benefit people on minimum wage and bring their earnings up to a more liveable wage.

Over and above all of the above, the basic income would potentially have more money buzzing about the local economy. People might spend more in the local shops thus keeping shops open and making communities feel more vibrant and successful.

2.5 Community Justice

Can you tell me what you know about 'community justice'?

Community justice in most people's eyes was things like community service. People who have committed a crime and have been told to do 200 hours of community service for instance, undertaking activities such as painting fences, picking up litter or decorating old people's houses. It is a way of people paying back to the community for things that they have done wrong.

Do you think that people who have offended in the past and have served their sentence either in prison or in the community should have the opportunity to 'wipe the slate clean' and move on in life?

People were unsure about having "criminals" wipe the slate clean. They were of the view that if you have committed a crime then you need to be punished for it and in some ways part of the punishment is to have that offence follow you through life. After a discussion regarding the variety of crimes that people may commit most people thought that you should have the opportunity to wipe the slate clean but with some important caveats and other constraints.

- Firstly, it would depend on the offence. It should not be allowed for paedophiles, violent crimes like murder or crimes where people get life in prison.
- Secondly, the person would need to show remorse and a willingness to change their behaviour
- Thirdly, they would need to show that they can stay out of trouble for a significant length of time, several years at least.

What are the benefits of someone who has committed an offence serving their sentence in the community rather than being sent to prison?

The initial discussion among all of the focus groups was that they were unaware of any community based sentences being undertaken in their community. They do not see any evidence of this happening. People think it should be noticeable either by having the actual people being very visible when undertaking community service or by having signage/advertising that tells people that a particular activity has been undertaken by people undertaking community service. These activities could be cleaning the beaches, picking up litter on walkways, tidying parks or painting fences for instance.

The benefits of someone serving their sentence in the community rather than being sent to prison would be two fold. 1. The community would receive a benefit by having jobs or tasks undertaken to improve it and 2. the person would receive a benefit by not having a prison sentence and possibly gaining a skill which could improve their life.

Community benefit

- Help the community and the people in it
- Make environmental improvements to the community through activities such as litter picking, cleaning the beaches, painting fences etc
- Help vulnerable people in the community through painting houses, gardening and other jobs for people who are less able
- By making the tasks visible it may deter other people from committing crimes

Personal benefit

- Learn a new skill or trade
- Can help stop people from re-offending by helping them to respect the community in which they live
- Helps people gain confidence and a feeling of self-worth
- Allows people to give something back to the community
- May create an opportunity to break the cycle of offending and move into either a training or job opportunity

2.6 Social isolation and kindness

Do you think loneliness is an issue for people in your locality area? If so, for whom and what do you think are the challenges?

People in most of the focus groups initially stated that loneliness is an issue for elderly people in their area. They stated that there is very little for elderly people to do and that the closure of community centres contributes to this. This was a view right across all of the 6 focus groups

The discussions inevitably moved on and people began to discuss loneliness among other groups of people. People in Kilwinning for instance mentioned that younger mums and single mums can face issues with loneliness. They stated that when people get stuck in the house with nothing to do they lose their confidence, and don't feel that they are able and capable of doing things. One mum stated that if she didn't go out to work or do the school run she wouldn't talk to anyone all day.

People in the Irvine group said that it also included young people who are out of work or not in education or training, mums with young children, as spoken about in the Kilwinning group and people who have disabilities.

The issue of younger people feeling isolated was spoke about in the Largs group. People were aware of suicides which had been reported in the newspapers often caused by loneliness and exacerbated by issues including drugs, not much to do, poorly paid jobs and difficulty in getting affordable housing.

Much of social isolation is linked to financial situation. In the Irvine group they said that if people are on benefits or in a poorly paid job they find it difficult/unaffordable to go out and socialise. Members of the focus groups felt that there should be more facilities/activities available for people to engage with in their community. These could be;

- Drop in centres to pop in and have a coffee and a chat. People commented about local churches in some areas which had cafes where people could pop in and get a bowl of soup and meet people.
- Community cafes
- Mother and toddler groups
- Other activities that people could engage in such as walking groups and exercise classes

In general, people stated that there needs to be more, different and varied activities and initiatives to encourage people to get out and engage and meet people. Most people stated that there were fewer and fewer places in their community where people could meet up and socialise. The issue of community centres closing was raised time and again in many of the focus groups not least of all the Largs group.

People felt there also needs to be better communication about what is available and how people can participate and join in. This could be through an app on their phone which has all the activities in the area, what they entail, where they are and how to participate. Lots of people said that going to an activity the first time can be difficult, people can be a bit embarrassed to go along. Getting passed that initial hurdle is difficult. If there was an easy way to initially engage with a group or activity through an online contact this may assist some people.

Do you think you can rely on neighbours in an emergency/ for practical help / for emotional support?

Some people in the focus groups said yes to this whilst others said no. It depends on what is happening and what the issue is. People in the Arran and Largs groups were most likely to state that there was a feeling of community spirit and that their neighbours would help them in an emergency. For some people living on Arran the distance to their nearest neighbour can be an issue, in that they are not living in housing estates right next to people.

People were more likely to state that they could rely on their neighbours for practical help or assistance in an emergency rather than emotional support. For instance, they would help with taking the bins out or getting some shopping if someone is ill or the weather is so bad that they cannot get out. Members of the groups said that they have helped and been helped by others in these types of situations, for instance this was mentioned by people in the Kilwinning and Largs groups. However most of the focus groups were not so sure about emotional support, they did not think people are as keen to discuss emotional issues with neighbours.

Some people just do not expect this from their neighbours. People don't really know their neighbours in the way they might have in the past, they tend not to interact with them and as such don't look for any type of support or assistance. In the Ardrossan group for instance some people stated that they did not know who their neighbours were.

Do you think people are generally kind?

Most people in the focus groups did think that people are generally kind though people in the Ardrossan group stated that there was a perception that this is getting less and less. People in Kilwinning said they did not think that people in general would want to do anything bad or nasty or unpleasant to them. They will be polite and courteous, but whether other people would actually be kind made the groups less sure.

Members of the Irvine group said that people are kind to other people that they know. They are wary though of strangers/people they don't know, even if they are neighbours. People on Arran said that "people do appreciate the effort if you are kind".

In the Kilbirnie group people said that being kind is a much more involved and active interaction, and most interactions people have are quite passive. They will do what they have to do but not go that extra mile to do it better or be specifically kind.

Have you helped someone who needed it in the last 12 months / how?

People in the focus groups have helped people they know or neighbours in a variety of different ways. About half of all the people in the groups said that they have helped someone in the past 12 months. Someone from Largs mentioned that an elderly woman fell on the pavement and a member of the focus group sat with her and got her water and called her husband. In Kilwinning someone said that she helps a neighbour with managing the different tablets she takes so that she doesn't get confused and in Ardrossan one person said that he had helped an old man who had fallen out of a taxi drunk. He called an ambulance and sat with the man.

Other ways in which they have helped people have included;

- Helped an elderly neighbour in with her shopping
- Gone to see an old man he knows to see if he is OK
- Help at her sons local school – volunteer
- Visit people through the church – elderly and housebound to see if they are OK
- Help friends and family – move furniture
- Check that an elderly neighbour is OK
- Taken a neighbour to the doctors
- Went shopping for a neighbour when the snow was really bad and she couldn't get out
- Helped take wheelie bins out and back in again

Several people in the groups also stated that they had been helped by other people in the past year. This included help with shopping in the snow, help with cutting down bushes and another person who was helped by random people when her car had broken down.

Do you (or not) experience kindness? For example, do you think people are treated with kindness in places such as GP surgeries, libraries, social services, police and public transport? Where else do you (or not) experience kindness?

Most people feel they are generally treated well, perhaps not with kindness but treated nicely. As stated previously, the groups felt that kindness tends to be something you may get if you have a more detailed and involved interaction with someone. Most interactions people have with each other tend to be quite superficial and so they are generally treated courteously but that is about as far as it goes.

The groups felt that contact with people in GP surgeries and libraries is generally polite and courteous. Comment was made that in the GP, the receptionist goes into far too much detail about your personal issues in front of everyone and there is no confidentiality. They felt there is very little understanding or compassion with regard to how people might be feeling or how sensitive they may be about certain personal issues.

On public transport, it was discussed that some drivers are friendly and some are not. People still experience drivers who move away from a bus stop before people have the opportunity to sit down. This can be quite dangerous for older people and not at all thoughtful or kind.

With regards to interaction with the Police, most people stated that there is not much in the way of a Police presence, so they have very little contact with them and as such have almost no knowledge about whether or not they are kind.

People stated that some doctors are not kind and can be very workmanlike in their approach. People would expect a bit more in the way of kindness and compassion when engaging with a doctor.

In general people stated that there is a lack of manners sometimes and a lack of respect shown for people in a wide variety of situations. One of the most obvious is when driving. Some felt that people show very little consideration when driving and can actually be very aggressive/display road rage to other drivers and pedestrians.

Do you have any ideas about what might help people to feel less lonely in your locality area?

As already mentioned several times, people in many of the focus groups spoke about the closure of community centres in their area. The people in the Largs focus group stated this often, and the need to have more community centres to enable people to meet up would help people feel less lonely.

Most of the groups feel that there needs to be more organised events and activities in their area where people can come along and meet and socialise. The closure of community centres in many different areas reduces the opportunity to have places where activities can be organised.

People would like there to be more community events that bring everyone together from the youngest to the oldest in their area to create a sense of community spirit. They spoke about events that had been organised previously such as the gala day in Kilwinning, firework nights in Ardrossan and T in Saltcoats (a mini T in the park event). Other events could be things like street parties or large organised walks along the sea front.

In addition to these larger community based events people also mentioned specific activities for different members of the community. These included;

- Community centres, places for people to drop in and meet – have a tea/coffee and a bowl of soup
- Friendship club
- Befrienders
- Tea dances
- Mothers and toddlers groups
- Lunch clubs
- Reminiscing groups for older people
- Get togethers at local community centre

The groups felt that it is also important that there is more information and support available to encourage people to take part. There needs to be better awareness of the activities, possibly promoted through an app for younger people or through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.

2.7 Locality Specific Questions

2.7.1 Arran

Do you have difficulty attending appointments, social gatherings or activities due to assistance or transport issues? If so what might help you?

Most people in the focus group stated that the only way to reliably travel round the island was to have your own transport. If people were to rely on public transport they would find it difficult to be anywhere on time or have to leave a long time in advance of their appointment.

Comments were made regarding poor public transport around the island, these included;

- Less than frequent services
- Services that don't start early or finish late enough
- The cost of journeys

For younger people this is even more of a problem as they do not have the option of having their own transport. They have to rely on their parents or public transport and as such they would like an improved public transport service.

In addition to this, members of the focus group also said there were;

- Poor lighting on the roads should you be able to walk
- Poor road surfaces for cycling
- Travel and transport for young people round the island is difficult. The bus service is poor and needs to be improved.

Over and above the issues within the island itself, people also stated that the ferry service can often be unreliable. This was particularly so this year when one of the ferries serving the island was taken out of service for repair. The resulting cancellations of services was very disruptive to people on the island when they were trying to get to and from the mainland. They mentioned that there was long queues for the ferry and sometimes they were unable to get on certain crossings due to the fact that the ferry was so busy.

The types of improvements people would like to see to help them with regard to transport issues included;

- More reliable ferry service, with better provision when a ferry is being repaired.
- Better public transport service - cheaper fares, better timetable, more reliable buses
- Improved roads – road surface and lighting

Is your housing suitable for your current needs regarding cost, location and size of accommodation? If not how could this be addressed?

Members of the focus group stated that their housing in general was suitable for their current needs. Housing is expensive on the island due to the number of people wanting to buy places as holiday accommodation. It is also expensive for young people who live on the island and many live in caravans.

Some of the housing is not as close to employment opportunities on the island as people would like. Many people work in the hospitality industry and start work early in the morning and finish late in the evening. Lack of accommodation close to work coupled with a poor public transport system early in the morning and late at night makes their life quite difficult.

All of the group stated that the following issues need to be addressed with regard to accommodation;

- More affordable housing to rent and buy
- More varied house sizes with between 2 and 5 bedrooms to accommodate young people, through families to older households.
- More accommodation that is affordable at or near the areas of main employment opportunities on the island.

2.7.2 Garnock Valley

What are the greatest barriers to moving around...

- a. ***Within Garnock Valley?***
- b. ***Beyond Garnock Valley?***
- c. ***What might potential solutions be?***

Public transport within and beyond the Garnock Valley was variable. People commented that there was no competition in the bus service in the area with most services provided by Stagecoach and a bit by McGills. This in their view meant that buses don't run late in the area with no real services much after 10pm, not enough early services and a poor Sunday service.

In addition to this there is only an hourly bus service up and down to Glasgow and down to Ardrossan

People in the focus group thought that more competition among the bus operators may help to bring more bus services both within the Garnock Valley and beyond. As stated above they felt that there needs to be more early and late buses, more frequent services during the day and a better Sunday service.

Do you think there are enough of the right facilities and amenities for young people in Garnock Valley?

Members of the focus group stated that the services available were acceptable when children are young, around primary school age. Comment was made that once they get to high school/academy age there is very little for them to do. People stated that they need to go to Kilmarnock or Glasgow for the cinema for instance.

The group stated that there needs to be more activities and services for teenage young people. They mentioned places like Radio City or more drop in centres/ cafés.

They said there is a swimming pool in Dalry but no proper leisure centre in the area. They didn't like the Portal in Irvine as it is not like the Magnum which had a big swimming pool and ice rink etc. People thought there should be more hobby type activities as well as sports available in the area. There should also be more uniformed organisations like the army cadets, bb's scouts and guides to provide activities for young people.

How might we work together to increase work opportunities in Garnock Valley?

Members of the focus group felt that a variety of things need to be done to increase work opportunities in the Garnock Valley.

Many people stated that there are no big employers in the area. The Council and other economic development agencies need to promote the area and attract large employers. This could be done by showing employers that there is a big and able workforce in the area who are dynamic, skilled and hard working. As part of this, people stated that there needs to be a proper dual carriageway to the area. The A737 is a single carriage way and not quick to get into the area. The group felt that employers need good communication links to central Scotland which would encourage them to locate to the area.

In addition to this, there should be more apprenticeships for young people and better training for the work force in general to make sure they have the appropriate skills. Members of the group stated that local people could volunteer to help and inform young people about the different types of careers and jobs there are available.

By doing the above, it could develop/keep jobs in the area, keep people in the area and in doing so generate better jobs with better pay. This could result in people spending more money in local shops which in turn would create other jobs and make the area more prosperous.

2.7.3 Irvine

How can services within a locality work better together responsive to the needs of their community

What could be done to give more power to people

How could we get more people involved in dealing with local issues

Most members of the focus group said that they had assumed that public services already work together when developing and providing services to them. They spoke about the Council providing care services to elderly people in the community working together with the health service. The focus group indicated that a broad range of public services should be coming together at an early stage with representatives of the community to assess the needs and priorities of the community and to develop services accordingly.

Partners should be looking at how the services they provide interact with each other. For instance, assessing the costs relating to vandalism in an area resulting in planning better services for young people. Similarly, looking at the costs of having an older person in hospital compared to providing a suitable service to look after them in their home. People in the group thought that if the overall costs of providing services in an area were taken into consideration across all sorts of public organisations, then a more holistic approach to service delivery could be developed. At the moment they mostly tend to see each public service doing their own thing.

Most people are not fully aware of public sector organisations working together. They would like these linkages made obvious to them by communicating clearly how the services they receive have been developed in a coherent and cooperative manner.

Participants in the Irvine locality indicated that it would be a good thing if there was more public engagement in local decision making

Communication and involvement

An initial stage in getting more people involved and giving them more power would be to improve people's awareness that they can actually become involved in this. Most people in the focus group had very little understanding that this was an option.

They could be informed of this through the following means;

- Posters and notices in shop windows, libraries, sports centres, doctors surgeries etc
- Flyers and leaflets through their door
- Adverts in the local paper
- Social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest for instance

People would like to be heard and give their opinion about issues that are important to them and the area in which they live. Most people though would rather not commit too much time to do this. To encourage them to participate more they would like to see very obvious and real changes to the services they receive to make them feel that their involvement is actually worthwhile. They would also like to have the ability to spend real money on the services they believe to be important, not just be a talking shop with no power.

The ways in which people would like to get involved in dealing with local issues vary from the very "light touch" to a more involved and detailed level of participation. These could include;

- The opportunity to comment on issues either through an online survey or Facebook
- Having people from services more visible in their local area who they can chat to informally, for instance in supermarkets or sports facilities.
- Meeting representatives of services in and around where they live – possibly as an annual/biannual walk around the area to talk through the issues.
- Engage with representatives of local community groups through some sort of forum
- Quarterly public meetings where representatives of all the service providers in an area could come along and consult on their plans and services they deliver with a representative cross section of the community.
- Finally, only for those people who would like to be fully engaged, there should be the opportunity for ordinary members of the public to attend and engage with service development and planning meetings.

2.7.4 Kilwinning

Have you noticed the new traffic and parking signs in Kilwinning main street? Did you know they were planned and put up as a result of the work of the locality partnership?

About half the people in the focus group said that they had not noticed any new parking and traffic signs in Kilwinning main street. A few people mentioned the disabled parking and taxi parking, stating that it had been there for a while. No-one in the focus was aware that they were planned and put up as a result of the work of the locality partnership.

In terms of the local environment: Is there any specific area in Kilwinning that you feel needs to be focussed on? If so, what do you feel needs to be done in this area?

The types of improvements that people within the focus group would like undertaken include;

- More shops and better variety of shops in town centre
- More play parks for the children
- Better lights in the underpasses
- Pennyburn needs brightened up

Are you aware of the various allotments within Kilwinning, and do you think these are publicised enough?

People said that they have seen the allotments when they drive past them. They are on the bus route so are quite visible. Apart from that they don't really know very much about them. They stated that there is no information sent out and that they would like to know more.

Members of the focus group stated that it would be good to have an open day at the allotments to find out more about them, begin to understand what it entails and to potentially enquire about getting one.

Did you know that Kilwinning Community Events Group arrange clean up/litter picking days? How do you think these could be publicised to attract more volunteers?

Focus group participants gave a variety of suggestions regarding how people could be encouraged to participate in clean up/litter picking days. These included publicising them through organising and developing other community based activities that people might come along to such as a fireworks night. Events such as these can develop a sense of community in other ways which will encourage people to engage with the clean-up/litter picking days.

People also stated that members of the community could be informed and encouraged to participate through the following communications channels;

- Social media such as Facebook. Instagram, Pinterest etc
- Flyers through their door
- Signage/posters in shop windows, sports centres, libraries, doctor surgeries etc
- Notice boards in town.
- Have volunteers come into the town centre and talk to people about it.
- Other websites/Facebook pages such as the Housewives of Pennyburn pages

Do you know how people can access services in Kilwinning to help support and better prepare them for employment?

Knowledge of services to support people and better prepare them for employment was very limited. One person said that there was something at the Stevenston Library and another mentioned the employability hub at Ayrshire College where people could get advice and help with regard to C.V.'s, applying for jobs and other support. People also thought that there may be help available through the job centre.

2.7.5 North Coast

What's your experience about how people in your community might be struggling to make ends meet?

Many people in the group said that it is expensive to live in Largs. There is a perception that people in other areas think that everyone in Largs is well off and as such they feel they do not get the same amount of services as other parts of North Ayrshire. Comment was made that the cost of living is expensive, issues mentioned included;

- Council Tax
- Travel and Transport
- Food

... all being expensive.

They stated that many people are on low wages and that the foodbanks are very well used, especially at this time of year (Christmas). Members of the group also stated that it is difficult for people to save and they have little money for extras or treats or days out.

What sort of help and advice do you think communities might need with managing money?

People mentioned that there was no Citizens Advice in the area from which to get advice on various issues. They also stated that there was no credit union which they thought would be useful to help people save and to borrow small amounts of money at a reasonable rate of interest.

The type of advice and support people would benefit from included;

- Help with getting out of debt
- Advice on budgeting
- Advice and information on where to access affordable credit
- Shopping and feeding a family in an affordable way
- Managing monthly or quarterly bills such as household energy bills whilst being paid weekly

In addition to the above, members of the group said that better paid jobs in the area would also be a big help.

Do you know how people can access services which can help with financial worries such as unmanageable debts or managing your household budget

Most of the focus group did not know of anything in the area that could provide people with this type of service. They thought that Citizens Advice would be a good service to have for this. One person

mentioned the “Money matters” service that she had heard of but didn’t know how or where to access it. She thinks you would need to go to Irvine for this.

What's your perceptions about the pressures on young people and their ability to cope with stress? Do you have any ideas about what more could be done to support them?

People commented that they had noticed in the local news that some young people have committed suicide recently in the area. They are aware that young people are facing pressures that can be very stressful in this day and age.

They mentioned that the types of stress and strain that young people face include;

- Young mums on universal credit experience stress – trying to care for young children and finding it difficult to make ends meet
- There are not a lot of local jobs, people have to travel up to Glasgow to get work. This adds a couple of hours onto their day and they get home late and tired, not able to do things in the evening.
- Housing is expensive and there is little opportunity to get affordable rented accommodation wither through the council or housing associations.

Members of the focus group stated that people need help with jobs, housing, travel, managing money and accessing training opportunities. If these issues were to be addressed the levels of stress would be significantly reduced.

2.7.6 Three Towns

The Three Towns have a long connected Coastline. What could we do to encourage more people to visit and make active use of the Promenade, Beach and Coastline?

The type of things that people stated would encourage more people to visit and make use of the coastline included;

- More events and activities for people to come and participate in/experience
- Improve the area, many of the shops are closed and derelict and need to be improved
- There needs to be more things open at night – places for tea and coffee or other places to meet
- Have some form of fun park for children
- More activities and events
- Clean up the beach/coastline
- Activity equipment for adults in parks and on sea front – for example outdoor gym machines
- Have things for children and adults, to do things as a family/intergenerational groups

Growing Food and promoting healthy life styles is a priority for Three Towners. What more can we do to encourage wider participation in food growing, production and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through growing and the promotion of free access to food?

Most people said that they needed more information on how to grow things and what they should grow. People need to be taught how to do easy quick win things. For example, growing things on window sills, in small pots etc. They need to be shown that it is easy and not complicated. Members of the group talked about growing potatoes in plastic bags and chillies and cherry tomatoes in small pots.

To make this happen people would need places to get cheap seeds and other plants and vegetables things to grow along with the things they need to grow them in and other advice to make it all work properly.

In addition to this they would like to get more ideas for cooking with different vegetables and opportunities to share what they have grown and swap different vegetables among groups of people.

Community Centres are managed by trusted community Associations representative of local people- What can we do to encourage greater involvement of the community in the identification of local need and delivery of local services.

Members of the focus groups said that the following should be undertaken to encourage greater community involvement.

- Members of the community want to be supported by professionals to create some easy quick wins for people in the community to see the benefits. Many people in the community don't have lots of time but would be willing to help out for an hour or two so if their limited time contribution could be supported by some professional input.
- Develop activities and events that people in the local community would come along to and then engage with them to develop further initiatives that they would like.
- Make real cash available to do things in their community
- Develop integrated activities for young and old, families and other mixed generations to come together.

In general, people stated that things need to start slowly, confidence and capacity needs to be built and local communities need ongoing support to make things work.