

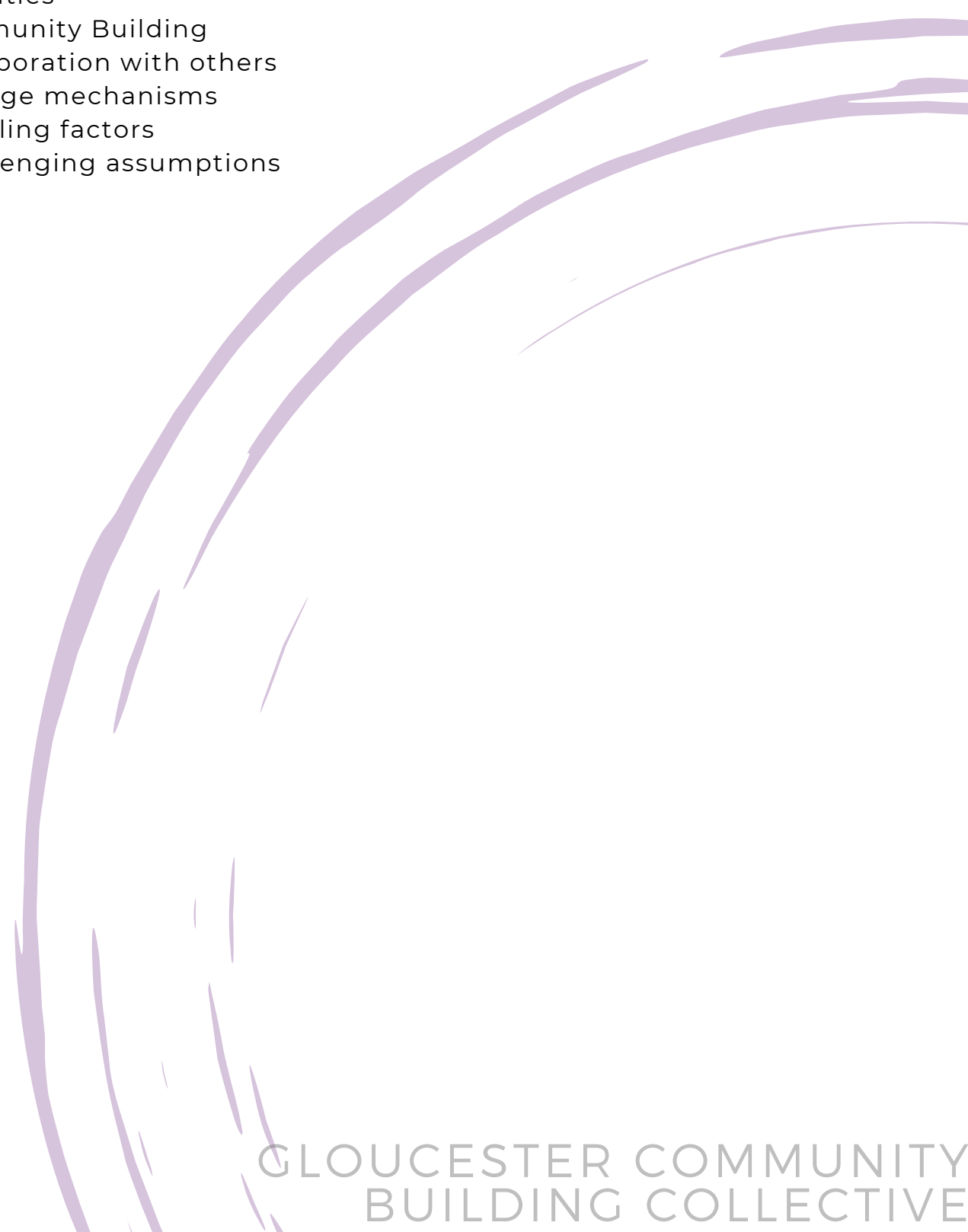
THE ORY OF CHANCE 2022



GLOUCESTER COMMUNITY
BUILDING COLLECTIVE

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SUMMARY

Gloucester Community Building Collective has developed this Theory of Change to describe how its activities lead to the outcomes and impacts it aims to achieve.

We work alongside people to encourage them to make meaningful connections with one another and their community, to pursue their interests and to be valued for their contributions which in turn builds thriving, resilient and strong communities.

This theory of change is the foundation for our strategy, approach to evaluation and communications. This will be kept under review as our work develops and we learn what works in Gloucester to make it a great place to live, where everyone can have a good life.

VISION

Gloucester is a great place to live, where everyone can have a good life.

MISSION

Bringing about people led action to realise their dreams and passions for themselves, their neighbourhoods and communities.

VALUES

People-led.

Strengths-based.

Relationship Focused.

Rooted in local communities.

Inclusive.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Building connections and neighbourliness between individuals in communities has multiple positive impacts [i] and are a foundation for social change across several areas. People are more likely to feel:

- healthier, [ii][iii] safer,
- less lonely, [iv]
- pride in where they live or who they are,
- more in control and able to act
- better able to deal with emergencies and “shocks”
- to participate more in civic life

Statutory organisations also benefit because people are less likely to see services as their first port of call and they will be more active participants in shaping services that better meet their needs.

Currently, in many neighbourhoods, or in communities that span geographies, people feel isolated. They do not feel connected either to each other or to the organisations and institutions that influence their everyday life

People or communities are often seen as a set of problems that need to be addressed by services. Solutions are imposed from the outside that undermine people or do not meet their needs. As a result, people lose control over their lives and services are overwhelmed. This can be particularly true for certain individuals or communities that are in some way marginalised, e.g., economically, and so are wrongly believed to be unable to contribute.

However, we also know that everyone has strengths. We all have skills, talents, ambitions that we can and do use to make connections for ourselves or to do something for others.

Gloucester Community Building Collective is a Community Interest Company that works alongside people in neighbourhoods across Gloucester to build connections before they are needed.

Our team of community builders work with them to identify what is strong in their neighbourhood, to use their own skills and passions to connect with each other, build lasting relationships and develop their vision for the future, allowing communities to grow in neighbourliness, confidence, and power.

There is a fantastic ecosystem of formal and informal community groups and organisations in Gloucester. GCBC works closely with others to make connections and increase the capacity and resources available in communities. GCBC's team of community builders also work alongside organisations such as Health Services, the Police and Council teams to promote and encourage an approach that looks at what is strong and not wrong in communities including providing training, mentoring and secondment opportunities.



2.0 TARGET GROUP

Gloucester Community Building Collective aims to develop community building across the whole of Gloucester in partnership with others including citizens themselves. Our work is inclusive of everyone who lives here.

We aim to ensure that communities are in the driving seat and continue to connect in ways that make sense to them, supported but not led by our team of skilled community builders.

3.0 IMPACT

The sustained long-term impact of community building is:

- Increased social connectedness, citizen-led activity and collective efficacy

Leading to

- Stronger, more resilient, and more powerful communities able to act on a range of social issues.





4.0 OUTCOMES

For individuals

- Forming meaningful connections, friendships, and groups
- Increased wellbeing
- Getting involved in new activities
- Having things to look forward to
- Fulfilment in being able to pursue passions and interests
- Growing in confidence and taking control of their life

For neighbourhoods and communities

- Welcoming and inclusive neighbourhoods
- Vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods
- increased resources held within communities or accessible by communities,
- a sustained role for communities in delivering social change
- more decisions made by citizens (not for or with) with the state/public sector in support

For Gloucester and beyond

- More equal and trusted relationships between communities and organisations
- More inclusive and equal communities
- A rebalanced relationship between citizen and state

5.0 ACTIVITIES - WHAT WE DO

5.1 COMMUNITY BUILDING

We have a team of community builders who work in neighbourhoods, alongside residents to unearth individuals' skills, talents, dreams/things they care enough about to act, to discover what they already have in their communities e.g., informal groups, local places, things they do to help each other out, their stories, the people who are natural community connectors.

We then support them to act, sometimes providing small amounts of seed funding where needed. We stand alongside them as they begin to explore citizen-led change, connecting them to other organisations and activists.

Discover

We spend time in neighbourhoods, meeting the people that live there, hearing about their ideas, passions, and thoughts. We help people to discover the skills, talents and opportunities that exist within their communities.

Connect

We encourage people who want to use their ideas, talents, and interests to take action where they live. We help them create fun ways to come together that inspire, motivate, build friendships and mutual support.

Mobilise

As more and more people are involved and connected to each other, community builders encourage people to take on new projects that interest them such as improving a local green space, setting up a new IT group, or starting a community business.

Create a Movement

We believe in sustainable people-led change. We invite communities to join the movement, supporting each other to gain the power, resources, funding, and influence to make Gloucester a great place to live, where everyone can have a good life.



5.2 COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHERS

We build partnerships and networks locally and amplify our impact by connecting with other organisations to:

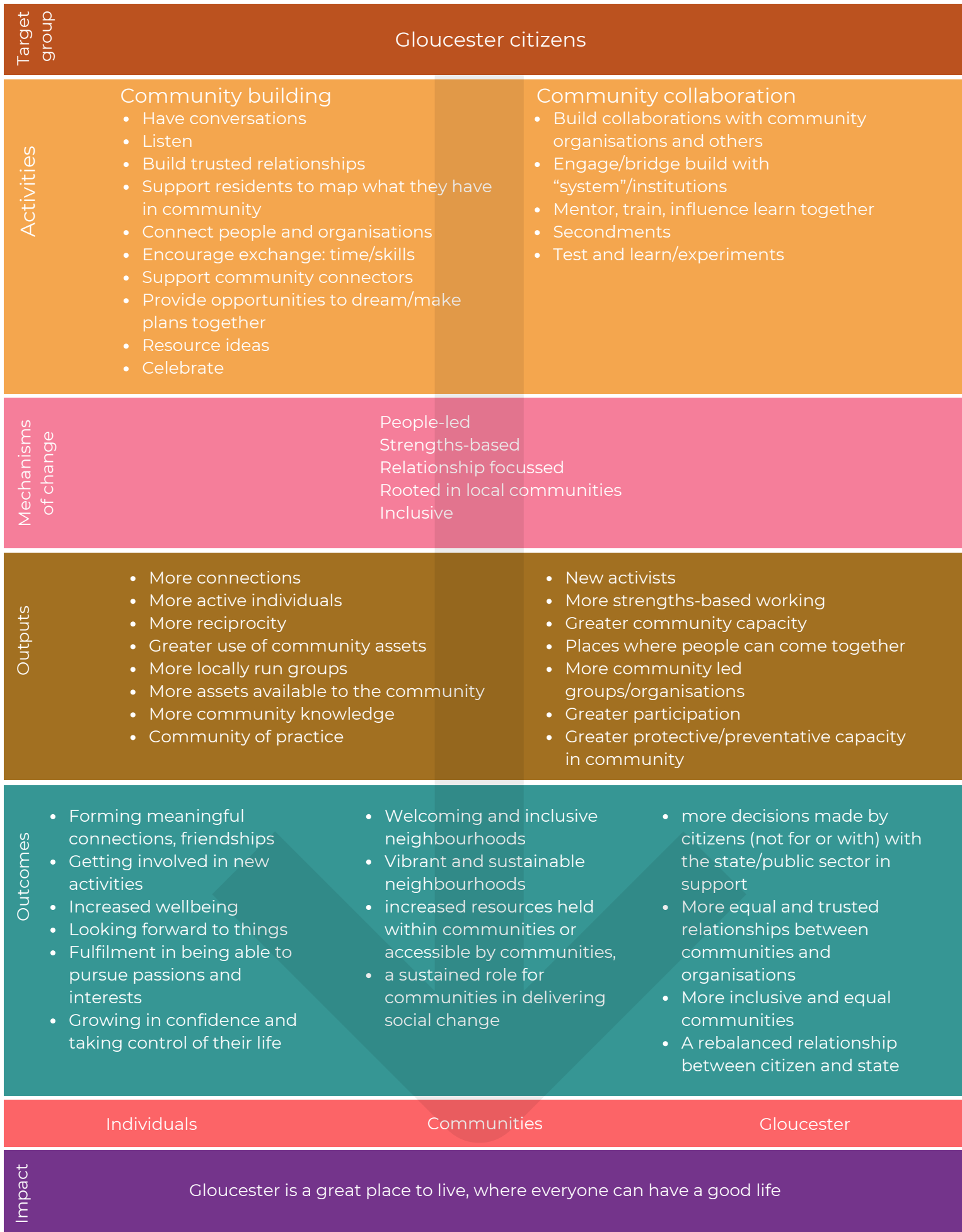
- Build capacity for change
- Engage with statutory organisations and businesses to influence how they work with communities
- Mentor, train and learn together
- Support secondments across organisations to influence ways of working and build capacity
- Carry out the shared test and learn experiments in support of our aims
- Unlock more opportunities for Gloucester residents and more citizen-led action

6.0 CHANGE MECHANISMS

GCBC 's work is based on strong values. We are:

- **People-led.** Residents will lead the change they want to see in their community. The role of the organisation is to be the catalyst, through building community capacity. It does not advocate for or align with political parties or candidates but works closely and constructively with everyone.
- **Strengths-based.** Communities are abundant, full of strengths and assets. The starting point is to unearth these strengths and connect people and assets.
- **Relationship Focused.** Through intentionally building relationships between residents and with each other, the organisation will create a culture of trust that enables effective collaboration.
- **Rooted in local communities.** Whilst there are challenges on a global scale, there are many solutions that can be found at a local level, where solutions are owned by local people. The organisation will come alongside communities, supporting them to find solutions from the ground up.
- **Inclusive.** Everyone in a community is valued, so inclusion will be at the forefront of GCBC's work.







7.0 ENABLING FACTORS

These include:

- Securing longer term more strategic investment that recognises that this work takes time, and the wider outcomes are longer-term
- Working with community-led organisations to achieve change
- Engagement of other sectors in Gloucester who benefit from and have an interest in strong, resilient, and powerful communities
- Community ownership of this work and a community-led governance model

8.0 CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

This Theory of Change is based on what is known now. It does not take into account the “evolutionary change” that takes place and interacts with planned change in the real world. Our core measure centres around connections made and there is evidence or research that social connectedness impacts across several social domains. Our innovation must include finding new ways to identify, understand and measure changes in communities both in terms of the impact of the Collective but also the wider impacts as we work with others. This requires further work.

As the CIC seeks to work with new funders and investors, there are several considerations in relation to capturing data that will demonstrate our impact. These may include:

- Possibility that there could be a demand for quantitative measurement, which may require investment in baseline measurement and a comparison group. This could inadvertently steer communities (and community building practice) towards results that matched perceived external expectations.
- Because the ABCD approach is designed to give space to communities to shape their own activities, at their own pace, predicting results is not only difficult but also risks the kind of intervention that undermines that control.
- Evaluation design should place a stronger emphasis on participatory methods, which includes tools that communities would use themselves to generate data. This ensures more ownership and control lies with the community.
- Theory of Change is often used for evaluation purposes. Evaluation approaches tend to favour quantitative rather than qualitative measures, ignoring the maxim that “Everything that counts cannot be counted and everything that can be counted doesn’t necessarily count.”

It is intended that this Theory of Change takes this into account through encouraging learning outcomes to be captured in addition to other direct outputs and outcomes from the community building and by looking at innovative approaches to evaluating our work.

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[ii] 'People with stronger networks are healthier and happier'
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[iv] DCMS; Office for Civil Society 15th October 2018 A Connected Society: A Strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change



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