CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Co-designing a Socially Connected Glasgow Strategy for Scotland’s largest city

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Tricia Imrie¹, Diane Wilson¹

¹: Impact Funding Partners, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Introduction: Impact Funding Partners (IFP) was commissioned by Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership to lead and co-produce the delivery of the Socially Connected Glasgow Strategy. The development of the strategy considered how best to progress the Maximising Independence ambition of reducing health inequalities and improving health with a particular focus on how best to ensure local people and organisations are connected across the city to help reduce isolation and loneliness. It was imperative key groups most affected by social isolation and loneliness are engaged fully in the development of the strategy.

Aims, Objectives, Theory or Methods: IFP introduced Human Centred Design as the process, working alongside an expert designer from the National Centre for Design at the V&A Dundee. The design-led process and tools were introduced through a series of online meetings. Organisations were identified to participate who are uniquely placed to represent a key stakeholder group, and whom are champions for social justice in Glasgow. The design process ensures that we fully understand the problems that we need to solve, from the most important perspective: the people who experience the issues themselves. The experience of these groups of people, and their voices, then shape solutions.

Highlights or Results or Key Findings: Against all the Social Determinants of Health, Glasgow fairs very poorly internationally and has the lowest life expectancy in Scotland. The burden of depression, anxiety, mental illness, substance misuse, alcohol dependency, smoking and interpersonal violence are key drivers contributing to our burden of disease, even more so in Glasgow. The impact of social isolation and loneliness on individual’s physical and mental wellbeing has been well documented. It increases the risk of stress, anxiety and depression and doubles the risk of dementia. Partners agreed the vision for “People in Glasgow to be socially connected and to flourish”, defined the intended impact for the strategy, identifying challenges, mapping stakeholders, priorities and examining existing policies and frameworks which inter-connect. The consultation stage was completed in December 2021. Partner organisations have carried out more than 125 interviews with people from communities of interest, communities of identity and communities of place across the city.

Conclusion: The design-led approach puts the people of Glasgow at the heart of the process in order to develop creative and innovative solutions. By March 2022 a fully accessible strategy will be produced alongside an implementation plan. This will be illustrated with stakeholder video interviews and photographs.
Implications for applicability / transferability, sustainability and limitations: In December 2018, Scottish Government launched its strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness, defining the vision of a Scotland where individuals and communities are more connected, and where everyone has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships. Glasgow is pioneering as the first city to develop its own Strategy.