



## 2018 Conference Report

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# Thriving Places Conference 2018

The first Thriving Places Conference was held in the Lighthouse in Glasgow city centre on 26 March 2018. The aim of the conference was to bring together people actively involved in Thriving Places (and within Locality Planning in Govanhill) to reflect on progress to date and consider how it could be improved upon.

This report presents a summary of the main discussion points at the conference. The conference agenda, presentations and films shown on the day can be found at the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership website: <https://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk/>

## Conference Attendance

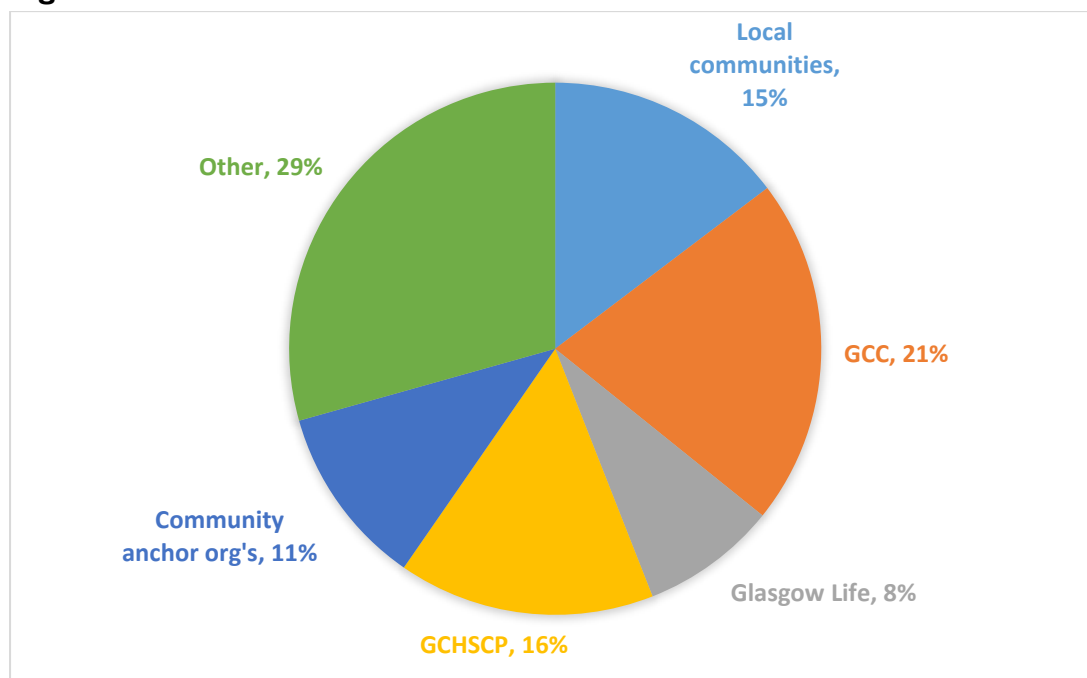
A mix of community representatives, practitioners and managers were invited to the event. Practitioners worked for a range of organisations within the public and third sectors. Local community representatives and key local workers were initially identified by Community Organisers and Partnership and Development Officers. Invitations were sent to all of these people, but other people were encouraged to attend through local steering groups and word of mouth. Senior and citywide staff from partner organisations were also invited through various official channels such as committees and working groups.



The conference was attended by 109 people, 16 of whom were local residents. 10 of the local residents were from Priesthill and Househillwood. Nearly half of all attendees were from three organisations, with 23 people from Glasgow City Council, 17 from Glasgow City HSCP and nine from Glasgow Life. All 8 Community Anchor Organisations involved in Thriving Places were represented at the conference. Figure 1 shows a percentage breakdown of attendees. Other attendees included a number of Third Sector Organisations, Housing Associations and Community Planning Partners.

There was a roughly equal number of attendees from each of the three Community Planning Sectors, with 26 people from the North West, 27 from the North East and 27 from the South. The remaining 29 attendees work at a citywide level.

**Figure 1: Conference Attendees**



## Questionnaire Results

We asked all attendees to complete a short questionnaire about Thriving Places. The questions were designed to help us find out if people understood the principles and outcomes of Thriving Places, and also to find out what Thriving Places meant to each person.

45 attendees completed the questionnaires, a bit less than half the people who came to the conference (a response rate of 41%)<sup>1</sup>. 11 of the 45 respondents stated they lived in a Thriving Place, whilst 35 people stated they worked in a Thriving Place. Only 6 people both lived and worked in a Thriving Place.

Every respondent agreed that they understood what Thriving Places was trying to achieve (60% strongly agreed with this) and most people (80%) felt a connection to Thriving Places. However, around two thirds (62%) of respondents were unsure whether or not local people knew about Thriving Places. A quarter of people (24%) did not feel local people knew about Thriving Places. Around half of respondents (54%) agreed that Thriving Places had helped build community spirit; over a third (34%) were unsure.

Just under two thirds (62%) of respondents felt Thriving Places had strengthened links between local services, local organisations and local residents. Again, a third were unsure if this was the case.

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<sup>1</sup> There was a wide disparity between the proportion of local residents who completed the survey (69%) and representatives from organisations (37%).

We asked attendees to tell us what Thriving Places meant to them, and 91% of respondents answered this question. Table I provides a breakdown of the main themes people suggested, alongside some examples of what people said.

**Table I: What Thriving Places Means to People**

Theme	% of Responses	What People Said
<b>Community involvement/ community development</b>	59%	<i>'It means looking at community assets + building on them by making connections'</i> <i>'Thriving Places means services, groups, organisations, people working together for the common good of the area. Positive, empowering and the community realising they can make real change. Passionate about community development.'</i>
<b>Local people</b>	44%	<i>'Thriving Places to me is about bringing the community together to achieve positive outcomes to challenge what they face on a daily basis but also to integrate all ages and backgrounds'</i> <i>'Working towards a better healthier community place to live. Creating opportunities for our young people and taking care of our aging population'</i>
<b>Organisations and services working meaningfully with local communities</b>	29%	<i>'An opportunity to get it right to listen, understand and let local people drive the work in making their communities the place they want to live'</i> <i>'TP is an opportunity to move beyond words to action - to re-connect the community to itself, to the decision-makers and to change the way things are done for the positive'</i>
<b>Organisational Capacity Building</b>	12%	<i>'[I]n very early stages of involvement with TP - trying to create a strong staff base to drive it forward.'</i>
<b>Partnership working</b>	12%	<i>'It's a resource for co-ordination of partner activity across communities, and allows local assets (physical and social) to be maximised.'</i>

## Table Discussion I: The Experiences of Thriving Places So Far

The experience of Thriving Places has been different across all the local areas. Some attendees emphasised their positive experience whilst others underlined a sense of frustration with a slow pace of change. This is to be expected as local communities have different needs and circumstances and the work is at different stages across the city.

Views on community involvement differ across Thriving Places. It was noted, for instance, that the Thriving Places Conference had a relatively low number of community representatives in attendance. Examples were given of increased consultation of local communities, such as the Shandwick Square Shopping Centre charrette in Easterhouse, whilst other attendees suggested that greater community engagement was necessary.

Consultation and engagement are different in terms of purpose and process, the former asks people what they think while the latter is about building relationships with local people. Few examples were provided of local people being involved in the design or delivery of services. Visible change was seen as a good motivation for more local people to get involved.



Many people suggested that communications could be improved within and between Thriving Places and between strategic and local levels of decision making. Alongside that, some attendees stated that partnership working in their area could be strengthened. On the other hand, some people stated that partnership working had improved due to Thriving Places.

A common theme was that people felt there was a lack of continuity in Thriving Places. The delay in funding decisions and the turnover in Community Organisers/Connectors were particular concerns.

## **Table Discussion 2: What Needs to Change to Build on Thriving Places?**

A common theme for building on Thriving Places was to enable and encourage greater community involvement. Many attendees noted a need to engage specifically with young people and 'quieter' local people. It was suggested that building relationships informally was particularly effective through, for example, tea dances, pop up events, soup bikes, breakfast networks, community lunches and community markets. Several attendees suggested making community centres more accessible for local groups by setting lower booking fees.

There appears to be a need to promote more effectively local activities, local services and opportunities for local people to become involved in Thriving Places. It was suggested that all local organisations should help promote Thriving Places. Communications could be improved through community newsletters and better use of social media.



It was suggested that committing funding over a three year period would help reduce the turnover in Community Organisers/Connectors. Developing a safety net in the event that a Community Organiser/Connector does move on was also suggested, for example, building the capacity of local community groups. Increased community control was put forward, particularly supporting community representation on steering groups to move Thriving Places towards becoming community-led. Priesthill and Househillwood Thriving Place was given as an example of a good balance between being community-led and having buy-in from services and organisations.



Some discussion focused on ensuring to provide feedback to local communities and partners on actions - *'doing and reviewing'* – and demonstrate how Thriving Places has affected ways of working. Sharing learning better was also put forward as a way to improve Thriving Places.

Defining a clearer role and responsibilities of community anchor organisations, partner organisations and local communities was identified as a key issue by some. People also mentioned that it should be clearer how Thriving Places is progressing locally and across the city.

## Open Discussion

It was suggested that communication to local communities should be better, letting local people know what was happening locally and how Thriving Places would bring about change. It was emphasised that different methods of communication should be used, rather than relying solely on social media or updates to websites. It was stressed that information should be presented without any jargon.

Local knowledge was seen as extremely important and several people suggested ways of engaging with communities, but a common theme was to work with existing groups in local places, for organisations to coordinate their community engagement or to piggyback onto community events. For example, it was suggested that people could be engaged through pop-up stalls at a gala day as well as setting up community consultation events. A key point was to really listen to people and understand their aspirations for the local area.

There are good things happening in communities alongside Thriving Places, it was emphasised. Thriving Places was just one way of helping local communities; one part of a jigsaw.



## Recommendations

The conference produced lots of comments and suggestions that inform the following recommendations. These have been grouped under two headings: *Building on Thriving Places* and *Increasing Support for Thriving Places*.

### I. Building on Thriving Places

Findings from the survey and the table discussions clearly identify that the promotion of Thriving Places, community involvement and communications should be improved. Below are some potential ways of strengthening these aspects of Thriving Places.

- **Produce a Thriving Places Charter:** It was suggested that a Thriving Places Charter could provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of communities, community anchor organisations and services. The charter would contain refreshed principles and outcomes in plain English to ensure that the language used is clear and understandable. In addition to the charter, partnership agreements will be put in place with all Community Anchor Organisations across Thriving Places.
- **Promoting Thriving Places and Improving Communications:** There is a clear need to increase the awareness of Thriving Places amongst both local organisations and local communities, and to inform people of what is happening in local areas. Informing local people of local community groups, services and activities was identified as being important. Asset mapping is one way of gathering this information, but it is necessary to keep this information up to date and to let local people and services know what is going on in their areas. A signposting project that involves both local practitioners and local people would be an effective way of building

on asset mapping, rather than just relying on word of mouth, as well as strengthening links between local people and services.

As well as signposting, information materials need to be placed and maintained in key local locations including community centres, church halls and GP practices. Keeping key websites up to date and making effective use of social media is also important. Reviewing and updating partner websites and working with local communities to keep community pages up to date is also required. Non-written materials (such as short films or GIFs) can be useful for informing a wider audience of local people.

- **Improving Consultation, Engagement with Communities and Organisations Working Meaningfully with Communities:** There is a clear need to join up consultation and provide feedback more effectively, with a focus on doing, not just asking. This means using consultation as a driver for community engagement, partnership working and/or local communities being involved in the design or delivery of services, as well as reducing the feeling of communities being consulted to death, especially if visible actions result from the consultation.

Pillars of consultation, engagement and representation need to be put in place across all Thriving Places. There are methods that work well, such as community breakfasts, but there needs to be applied consistently across all ten areas. Engaging with hard-to-reach or marginalised groups and making sure that equalities is built into the action plans of Thriving Places should be ongoing priorities. An issue that needs to be addressed urgently is the level of community representation on local steering groups.

## 2. Increasing Support for Thriving Places

In the first table discussion many people felt there was a lack of continuity in Thriving Places, particularly with regards to funding and the turnover in Community Organisers/Connectors. The following actions would strengthen continuity.

- **Bring Together Existing Staff to Support Thriving Places:** There are a number of existing staff who support Thriving Places on a periodic or consistent basis. Formally recognising this and building Thriving Places into those staff members' workplans would provide more ongoing support to local steering groups, as well as a safety net in the event of a Community Organiser/Connector moving on. This team would focus on:
  - supporting community involvement and building the capacity of community groups and partners to enable local communities to work with organisations to design or deliver services,
  - working with local communities, services and organisations to update the Locality Plans and produce annual progress reports for local communities,
  - identifying and applying for additional funding for Thriving Places on a citywide basis,



- supporting the local Thriving Places Steering Groups and strengthening the link with the citywide Locality Planning Steering Group,
  - enabling partnership working,
  - strengthening communications to and from communities, ensuring information online is up-to-date,
  - designing and co-ordinating consultations and analysing data, and
  - monitoring and evaluating Thriving Places.
- **Ensure Consistency and Continuity of Funding:** All Thriving Places are mainly funded by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership. Some of the Thriving Places get funding and in-kind support from community anchor organisations and/or additional ad hoc funds from the Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership. External funding has also gone into some Thriving Places through, for example, the Spirit of 2012 and the Aspiring Communities Fund. This means that different areas get different levels of funding which results in Thriving Places having a different impact across the city.

More consistent levels of funding will potentially ensure more consistent results across the Thriving Places.

Committing funding over two or three periods would have a greater impact still. This could be achieved through additional funding from more Community Planning Partners and other funding sources.