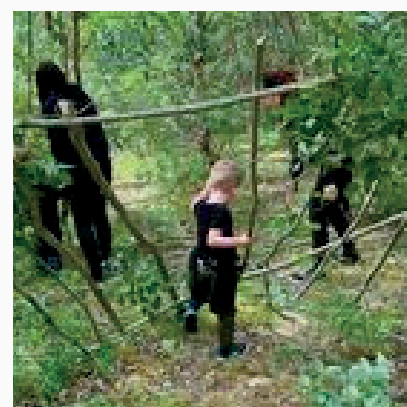




SNAPSHOT

It has been an exciting year with the focus on bringing the community together. Building relationships, creating spaces and opportunities. To do this we worked with a variety of partners and community members to create these spaces to support the community connect together post pandemic.

- Empowering women's group
 - The group is a space for women to come along , be together to share their thoughts, feelings and look at ways to build confidence , build social relationships and have fun.
- Dumbarton West Community Action Group
 - The group is in a development stage of creating consultation approaches that would support the community to connect, share views and contribute to the development of an action plan for the community.
- Connecting the community
 - Throughout the year we have been working with a number of partners to bring the community together through a variety events and creating new opportunities for community participation.
- Community Space
 - Developing space and making it available and accessible for community activity.

Empowering Women in Dumbarton West

Women expressed feelings of loneliness, isolation and feeling overwhelmed following the end of the pandemic during conversations with Janice, Community Co-ordinator for Corra Foundation. Janice spoke with Fiona about setting up a women's group, primarily for women aged 35+. This was the age range who felt they had the most responsibility within the family environment. It was decided to use the community room within the office space at Levenvalley Enterprise Centre, central within the area of Dumbarton West. The group was promoted face to face as well as through social media. It was decided to run the sessions on a Friday morning to suit the needs of the group, with flexibility if required.



The first session was held in March 2022 and the group began with four to six women attending weekly. It was decided the group would run different activities to allow for flexible attendance by the women. With having varying responsibilities, women find it difficult to attend the groups every week so the format of a varied programme suited the needs of the members. During the year, more members began to attend. Currently there are eight members who attend on a regular basis.

It was decided to organise a programme of taster sessions to introduce the women to different activities. Fiona and Janice regularly chat to the women to ask them what kind of activities they would like to try. It became apparent that holistic therapies were a popular choice by the women. Fiona sought a holistic therapist to deliver different types of therapy for the women to try. The therapist attends the group on a monthly basis to deliver different techniques to the group.

“Look forward to coming to the group, can learn anything new we want to.”

Other activities which have been delivered are art and craft based; decoupage; making bottles for Christmas using recycled products. Sewing activities like embroidery, crochet and hook and eye. Some of the activities have been centred around cultural events such as women's day, looking at the role of women in society' Christmas events and looking at our emotional well-being using different strategies of coping outwith having the holistic therapist.

Whilst activities can be planned for a session; the flexibility of the group encourages members to be able to offload should this be more suited on the day. Often cake, hot drinks and good chat is a great session for the group and encourages the women to chat about their issues, and have a laugh. The group continue to flourish in learning new skills: a new programme has been devised incorporating four different themes: chat and goodies, arts and crafts, holistic and open week where the women decide what they want to do. Receiving Comic Relief funding will enable the new programme to be delivered. The group are opening a new bank account to enable other funding to be applied for. The group engage in activities outside their comfort zones such as cold water swimming and an overnight stay.

Having delivered the group for a year there has been a change in the confidence of the group members. At the beginning of March 2022, a few members were unsure of what to expect.

The group, has increased the members' confidence and raised self-esteem. With this change, members suggested other activities for the group to try and challenge ourselves. As the facilitator, I look forward to continuing to deliver the activities to the group as well as learning new skills.



Dumbarton West Action Group

In 2022, the Action Group wanted to create a neighbourhood plan for the Dumbarton West community. They invited West Dunbartonshire Council Communities Team along to help support them to take on the responsibility of devising a new neighbourhood Place Plan which would be adopted by the Council. For this document to be devised a consultation with the local community would have to take place. In order for consultation to



take place it was decided to hold a stakeholder event first to seek opinions of professionals and to find out the best approach for consulting with their clients, how we can work together to connect everyone and to bring a more transparent and cohesive approach

It was decided to invite stakeholders from across the various sectors: statutory, third sector and voluntary to come together to express their opinions during an event.

The event was held in the local community centre, the Phoenix within Dumbarton West area, central to where community projects operate from. The event was hosted by the Action Group comprising of a presentation then engagement with the invited guests.



Throughout the evening there were some exciting conversations and connections being made. These thoughts were recorded and a report has been written which will help shape the next stage of the process.

Over the coming year, the group will be hosting events and creating a consultation which will hopefully inspire the community to become involved, shape new ideas and support the development of change in their community.



Connecting the Community

Supporting participation and bringing the community together has been a focus, looking at ways we can reconnect post-pandemic, trying to create spaces that would allow the community to come together and have fun.

Over the years, events have been popular amongst the community and a create way to bring people together, chat and have fun without an agenda. They allow a space for people to talk and share thoughts and feelings in a supportive space. To support participation it was important to reconnect the partners in the community by reaching out to them to bring new and old events to life.

Throughout the year, Corra ran a variety of activities with the support from West Dunbartonshire Greenspace park rangers, TRACS storyteller, Knowetop horticulture project (Alternatives) and the Phoenix. These activities included den building, walking story trails, teddy bears picnics and a Halloween event. Due to the demand in activities and the cost of living the community were asking if a bus trip could be arranged so they can have an affordable day out of their community without the cost, stress and planning needed to do this.

This resulted in a day trip for 106 people to Five Sisters Zoo. Community members covered travel costs with support from Corra towards planning and entry costs. The trip was a success, and the community would like a repeat of this and we are looking at ways at supporting them to do this again which is affordable and a new experience.

At Christmas, the Community Event Group hosted their first Family event since 2019. As always, this event saw 120 people from Dumbarton West come together to celebrate, have fun and reconnect in their community.

All events were supported by community members or partner organisations. Developing these connections allows a variety of activities for the community to engage in, builds relationships up with partners, and provides opportunities for the community to share their ideas and hopes for the future.



What have we learned?

As the cost of living continues to make a impact in our communities it has been important to create opportunities and safe spaces within the community. Working with partners, community members and using social media has been a powerful way to reconnect, listen and create new and exciting opportunities in the community.



What have we learned? contd.

Throughout the pandemic, communities were firefighting, ensuring the safety of the community but this year we focused on engagement. Going back to basics by working on bringing people together, creating spaces for new ideas and bringing existing opportunities together.

We are still seeing the impact of the pandemic with issues such as mental health and wellbeing, poverty and fuel insecurity having an impact in the community. Corra are continuing to work with the community and partners to support these challenges, including finding ways to offer safe spaces to talk about these issues.

What happens next?

Corra will continue to support the development of community space within Levenvalley to bring to life the ideas of community members, some which are being developed through a further phase of Comic Relief, community-led grantmaking. This will see £17,000 of funding come into the community with a real focus on mental health and wellbeing.



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People in Place - Moving Forwards

Communities are facing a critical moment of transition as they begin to emerge from the pandemic and grapple with the rising cost of living. We are seeing and hearing, in addition to deep and difficult issues, new priorities emerging and an urgency to act from community members.

The time is now! We know from communities, local authorities and other partners that this a 'moment in time' for communities to create changes that address immediate issues and to truly imagine a better future.

To support that process, we will focus our work around three key elements.

- Priorities – we know that communities' priorities are changing. We can play an important role in supporting priorities to be shaped and shared.
- Plans – supporting communities to set out their priorities and actions to achieve them in a 'community-owned' plan.
- Partnerships – we have a key role to play in connecting with partners who can help to produce the plan and/or help deliver on community priorities.

These 'three P's' help build upon the strong foundations – of skills, knowledge, trust and relationships - that have been established to date and will continue to be instrumental in the work.



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