

Sustaining Community Leadership

3rd October 2024



Executive Summary Report

Introduction

On 3rd October 2024, Corra's Place programme, partners and communities supported by *Getting Alongside Communities*, met at Greyfriars Charteris Centre in Edinburgh to enjoy a day together exploring how to sustain community leadership.

Allan Farmer welcomed the audience, setting out the informal feel of the day which was aimed at making people feel comfortable while focussing on community voices, community skills and sustaining community leadership.

Gordon set the context for the day, placing current work in Getting Alongside Communities in it's '3 Ps' phase, one of Priorities, Plans and Partnerships to support communities further towards community leadership. Gordon also pointed out that the initial draft of each communities' plan – to help focus Corra and the community's work until March 2026, were around the hall and could be referenced throughout the day.

For the future, the three key areas of work are:

- Continue development of local infrastructure, spaces, places & resources.
- Identify legacy & long-term resourcing
- Actively delivering the agreed plan with communities & partners.

Leadership Embodiment and Exercises

Natalie from the Nest Wellbeing Group in Cumnock and Fraser, the local Community Co-ordinator there, have been training in Leadership Embodiment which is based on Japanese Aikido practices. They offered some of these practices to the group throughout the day.

The initial exercise was about remembering who we're supported by and developing a way to centre ourselves in the moment and remember that we're not alone in our work.

The second exercise was a creative activity where each group decorated a mannequin to represent 'embodied' community leadership.

Key feedback from this session was:

- Trees and rootedness were frequent metaphors for building a solid base for leadership.

“A tree is always there - it grows and gets bigger, and as a community group we can be that consistent strength for the community.” Stacie, Langlees

- We need whole system change to support the work communities want to do to have a real impact
- Points were made about needing all of your senses to embody leadership, listening carefully, using your voice well, seeing what was really happening, and feeling empathy for people in your community.

Community Conversations

(A fuller version of this session was produced and can be supplied)

The community conversations session took place in the ‘community living-room’, a pop up space designed to encourage informal conversation, while creating a feeling of safety and security. Three community leaders, Frances from Carbrain and Cumbernauld Community Hub, Fiona from Castlehill Empowering Women Group and Natalie from The Nest Wellbeing Group, Cumnock chatted with Community Co-ordinators Shazia and Janice and took questions from the floor.

In this session, community leaders and partners recognised that the current piece of work ensuring Corra’s programme comes to a good end had its difficulties but also opportunities.

Community members in a panel discussion noted how one of the main benefits of the programme had been having a dedicated member of staff who acted both as a trusted connector between communities and agencies, but also, who showed communities that they have the skills and increased their confidence to build positive futures.

Moving on to the future, communities recognised that community leadership is not easy, and takes a balance of working alongside, and inspiring others. The most important aspects for the short – to medium term in communities are:

- To support good quality relationships with partners and agencies (as human beings).
- Realistic and responsive forms of funding.
- Recognition of the hard work and deep understanding that lies within our community groups, and which can make a real difference to the future of communities.

National Context

After lunch, Carolyn Sawers set the scene for the national context, speaking of how it feels like we have been through a ‘long winter’ and how the challenge to us was to bring about spring. How do we do that? The answer, Carolyn suggested, was in the room - through community leadership.

Community Leadership discussion

The attendees broke into smaller groups to discuss what community leadership meant and how to support it properly. After feedback of three key points by each of the five tables, the following points arose:

- The importance of **leading together** came up from all of the tables- ensuring others are being lifted by our leadership, ensuring we stay accountable and bring other people on into these roles, recognising their gifts and skills.
- Communities need **spaces** in which to build their ideas and develop their leadership.
- There needs to be a proper recognition of **lived experience** in developing ideas and services, and we need to value this properly. We also need to work well with volunteers and match people's experience and skills to roles well.
- We need good **communication** within, across and outwith our communities. We need to be able to share knowledge and good practice and be taken seriously when we identify challenges.
- Funding needs to be responsive and appropriate. Funding should develop around communities needs, not the other way around.
- Finally, leadership can be a rewarding, but also uncomfortable role to take on, or be given.

Reflections & What's next? – Allan Farmer (@AllanDFarmer)

Allan wrapped up the afternoon by noting how throughout the day there had been references to leading with our heart. Allan reflected that his heart was full of everyone's contribution which had been honest, engaged and inspiring – and had filled his head with ideas.

What next for Corra:

- Plans on a Page - these are at an advanced designed draft – now there will be conversations with communities about the future and how to sustain that.
- Our Community Network continues in November in Methil. Anyone who would like to attend from communities should chat with their local Co-ordinator, or contact Cath.
- Corra will consider what has happened and been said during the day and how we can best support the future through resources & funding.

About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Our ways of working

At Corra we have a set of principles that we strive to put into practice across our roles as an employer, independent funder, charity and partner, as well as in our influencing activity.

We will:

- Listen and respond to people, communities and organisations and amplify voices that are less well heard – their wisdom is at the heart of Corra's approach.
- Build relationships, always working alongside others on the basis of shared power, mutual trust and shared learning.
- Pursue diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), trying to challenge structural discrimination and contribute to radical shifts in the funding sector.
- Be an open, trusting and flexible grant maker.
- Ensure we contribute to tackling climate change, through our investments, operations and grant making and encouraging others to take action alongside us.
- Be bold, taking considered risks and supporting others to do the same.

Date of publication: 24/10/24

Corra Foundation
Office Suite 30 Pure Offices
4 Lochside Way
Edinburgh EH12 9DT
e: hello@corra.scot
t: 0131 444 4020



www.corra.scot

(The) Corra Foundation is a charity registered in Scotland (No SC009481) and is also a company limited by guarantee (No SC096068).