Assessing the individual and community impacts of Stalled Spaces-funded projects in Glasgow

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Executive summary

This study explored the health and wellbeing impacts of Stalled Spaces-funded projects on active participants and the wider community. Stalled Spaces is a Glasgow City Council project which provides funding for community groups to improve the quality of underused spaces through short-term lease agreements. A mixed methods approach was adopted which included a participant survey (n<105) and 12 semi-structured interviews with project leads (n=6) and volunteers (n=6). The research was conducted following conversations with Glasgow City Council staff involved in delivering Stalled Spaces, and was undertaken to improve understanding around how funding had impacted on the participants and communities involved. The learning from this research is intended to help shape the future development of Stalled Spaces, as well as other community-led approaches to regeneration.

Survey results indicate that people became involved for a variety of reasons, with 'improving my neighbourhood' and 'giving something back to my community' being the most important. A range of activities were undertaken at the sites included in the study, including general maintenance/clearing and the development of useable greenspace. Several sites also provided a functional space for growing food, planting, workshops and educational activities.

Survey respondents involved in Stalled Spaces-funded projects were more likely than the population of Scotland or Glasgow to provide positive answers to questions relating to the physical condition or social characteristics of their neighbourhood. In particular, participants were more likely to report feeling that they strongly belonged to their community, that they were able to influence local decision-making and that their area had improved in the last three years.

Around nine out of ten participants felt that their involvement in a Stalled Spaces-funded project had at least a slightly positive impact on their wellbeing and their feelings about volunteering. In terms of behavioural changes, approximately three quarters indicated that they had become more active and socialised with people that they had met through involvement. A similar proportion of respondents stated that they had developed new skills through being involved, with these coded as personal traits, transferable skills, vocational skills and skills related to gardening/growing.

Ninety two per cent of respondents indicated that they had gained something through involvement, with open ended responses being categorised as social opportunities, skills development, community benefits, personal benefits and gains related to gardening. For those that were aware of whether or not the project had led to subsequent community activity, most indicated that it had. Examples of community changes stemming from the development of sites included events, increased community buy-in, a range of spin-off activities and strengthened local partnerships.

Interview findings revealed that project leads considered poor quality environments to be common in parts of Glasgow, with vacant land contributing to this. Both project leads and volunteers suggested that working with others was important to their enjoyment of developing the site, and that the diversity of people involved had added to the experience. Working with other local organisations was considered to be important by most project leads interviewed, and young people were involved in the development of all but one of the six sites included in the study.

Individual impacts were commonly expressed through terms relating to personal development such as becoming more confident, gaining a sense of achievement and giving people meaning and purpose. Learning new skills and having more social opportunities were also important personal impacts. However, a number of challenges were outlined by project leads in delivering the projects that they had been involved in. In particular, the tension between delivering site improvements quickly and ensuring a rewarding experience for those involved was highlighted, as well as the persistent challenge of encouraging involvement. In addition, ongoing issues around funding and short-term land tenancy agreements were prohibitive in terms of planning for the future and sustaining interest. Despite this, there was strong agreement that support for community regeneration projects enabled a variety of benefits to be realised by those involved and their community.

Stalled Spaces funding has provided opportunities for people to participate in a diverse range of community projects across Glasgow. Survey results indicate that the initiative has had a positive effect on the wellbeing of participants, providing important opportunities for socialising, learning new skills and personal development. Although further funding has been obtained from elsewhere to help develop many of the sites included in this study, the results highlight a range of ways in which there has been a social return on the investment by Glasgow City Council.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study explored the individual and community impacts of Stalled Spaces-funded projects on health and wellbeing. Stalled Spaces is an initiative led by Glasgow City Council which allows community groups to apply for funding to develop community projects on vacant and derelict land. This has led to the development of 84 sites across

'The Back Garden', Finnieston

Glasgow (at the time of data collection), with 22 of these contributing to this study. The study adopted a mixed methods approach, which included a participant survey (n<105) and semi-structured interviews (six volunteers and six project leads).

1.1. Stalled Spaces

Stalled Spaces was set up by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association in 2010 to respond to the long-term issues of vacant land and stalled development. Since the decline of manufacturing in the 1960s, Glasgow has experienced a prolonged period of urban decay and stagnation, and despite substantial redevelopment, vacant and derelict sites across the city continue to present an ongoing challenge for city planners[1]. In an attempt to meet this challenge, Stalled Spaces was established to provide community groups and local organisations with funding and professional advice to enable them to take over unused land on a temporary basis.

Although originally set up to improve environmental conditions within the city during a period of economic stagnation and reduced demand for development, Stalled Spaces has given communities a greater say over land use decision-making in ways which have the potential to shape individual and community outcomes. Possible benefits identified by Greenspace Scotland prior to the launch of Stalled Spaces were: increased opportunities for community engagement; the development of local support for groups and partnerships; the establishment of green networks and growing spaces; educational opportunities; and improvements to the image of places[2]. Monitoring data has been collected on each project by Glasgow City Council. This

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has captured information on the demographic characteristics of participants, how many people have taken part, how funding has been spent, whether or not additional funding was received and any community benefits that were demonstrated.

In 2013, Stalled Spaces gained global recognition by winning the City to City Barcelona FAD (Fostering Arts and Design) Award for its contribution towards urban transformation. Recognition has also come through a national roll-out of the programme – led by Architecture and Design Scotland – which involves working with seven local authorities to support the development of 30 new sites. This is one of 60 national legacy programmes to be delivered as part of the sustainable theme for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games[3].

1.2 Stalled Spaces eligibility and funding

Stalled Spaces has received joint core funding of £50,000 per year from Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association since 2011, committed until 2017. This allows local groups or organisations to apply for grants for between £1,000 and £2,500, for use at sites that have been earmarked for development, but where construction has been delayed on vacant and derelict land or unused open space. This funding is intended to:

- *create opportunities for groups and organisations to carry out initiatives which improve the quality of the local environment on stalled development sites*
- *enhance the local environment through short, medium or long term sustainable initiatives to their local area*
- *have a positive impact on the appearance of the area, improve access to or use of facilities by local people*
- *engage and involve local people in making a difference in their neighbourhood[4].*

Applications for funding can be made by not-for-profit community and voluntary organisations that have a managing body, a managing committee, elected office bearers, a governing document and a bank account. As such, most recipients of Stalled Space funding have been registered charitable organisations, social enterprises, voluntary bodies or housing associations.

2. STUDY AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall research aim for this study was to better understand how Stalled Spaces-funded projects have impacted upon the health and wellbeing of the people involved and the wider communities in which they have taken place. Three research objectives were drawn up to help meet this aim:

1. To draw comparisons between Stalled Spaces participants and the wider population around their perceptions of neighbourhood issues.

2. To assess how involvement in a Stalled Spaces project has impacted, if at all, on the behaviour and wellbeing of the individuals actively involved.

3. To assess the impact of Stalled Spaces-funded projects on community life in areas in which projects have been delivered.
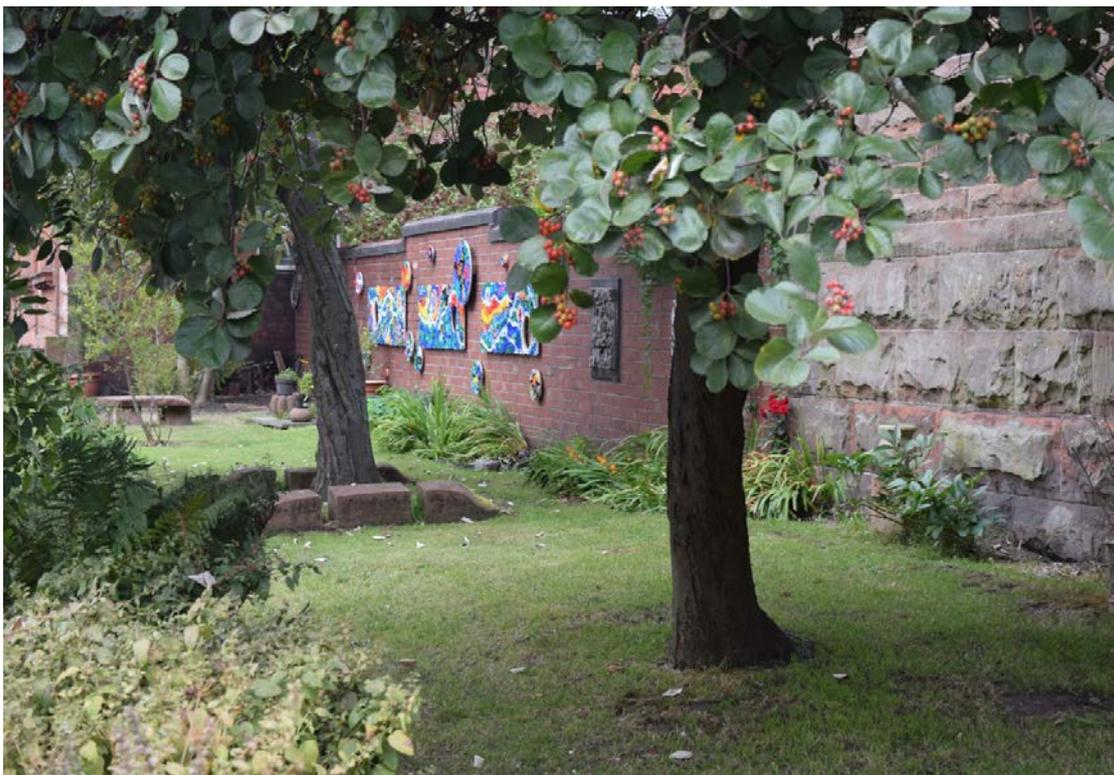
'The bottle top project', Govanhill

3. CONTEXT

3.1 Policy context

Stalled Spaces can be seen as part of a wider shift in the delivery of public services, with increased community input and leadership seen to be necessary for achieving better outcomes with fewer resources[5]. To ensure a more democratic and transparent system of land governance, the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill and the Land Reform Bill have been introduced to the Scottish Parliament for consultation[6,7]. Both bills are intended to strengthen the role of communities in the management of land and buildings through supportive policies, as well as making it easier and more appealing for communities to become involved in decision-making. The Land Reform Bill for Scotland was introduced following the establishment of a Land Reform Review Group, which put forward proposals which could:

> *"Enable more people in rural and urban Scotland to have a stake in the ownership, governance, management and use of land, which will lead to a greater diversity of land ownership, and ownership types, in Scotland"[8]*

In 2014, the Review Group submitted a report to the Scottish Government covering the main issues relating to land use, including a series of recommendations to assist communities to take ownership of land. The report outlined that in recent years significant progress had been made in terms of community-led regeneration across Scotland, despite there being limited powers for communities to deliver change. The report also stressed that community leadership and input into regeneration activity could be strengthened if conditions were created which enabled them to do so more easily.

> *"Creating opportunities for local communities and others to take over and regenerate vacant urban land in Scotland could potentially make a hugely important contribution to kick-starting regeneration where it is most needed"[7]*

To support change, the report recommended that the Scottish Government should develop a policy statement advising that all local authorities should have a 'Community Assets Transfer Scheme' to support the transfer of local assets to community groups. This Bill could make a significant contribution to the way in which land is managed in the future, affording greater powers to communities to develop

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vacant and derelict land where development has been stalled for a prolonged period. Learning from Stalled Spaces could contribute to improving understanding of how this can work in practice, how pitfalls can be avoided and what benefits community involvement in the development of land (be it on a temporary or permanent basis) can bring.

3.2 Vacant and derelict land in Glasgow

The current physical characteristics of Glasgow reflect the vast changes that occurred as a result of de-industrialisation in the late 1960s[9]; around 80% of vacant and derelict land in the city is attributable to this period of urban transition[1]. Vacant and derelict land accounts for around 6.8% of the Glasgow city region, which is a higher proportion than any other Scottish local authority area[10]. It is also a considerably higher proportion than in Manchester (2.2%) and Liverpool (4.6%)[i], which are former industrial cities with comparable levels of socioeconomic deprivation, but lower mortality rates[11]. Although this does not provide evidence of a causal link between vacant and derelict land and higher mortality rates, it does highlight a potentially important difference between socioeconomically similar cities.

Many challenges exist in terms of bringing forward land for development. Several vacant or derelict sites in Glasgow are contaminated and would be costly to remediate, while multiple or unknown ownership of sites can delay or prevent development[11]. In addition, through land banking, property developers have bought cheap land speculatively in the hope that it will become valuable for sale or development in the future. These issues have prevented development in many parts of the city, resulting in over a quarter of the area of vacant and derelict land in

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[i] Percentage figures for Manchester and Liverpool were calculated by dividing the total area of vacant and derelict land (ha) by the Local Authority area size (ha). Area figures were found at: https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/geoportal/catalog/main/home.page;jsessionid=F8D887F34B DA3B347B93FCC5F001581E (accessed November 2014)

Levels of vacant and derelict land in Manchester (Local authority) were retrieved from: http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadDatasetList.do?a=7&b=62751 61&c=manchester&d=13&g=6342340&i=1001x1003&m=0&r=1&s=1431611807820&enc=1& domainId=8&nsjs=true&nsck=false&nssvg=false&nswid=1280 (accessed November 2014)

Levels of vacant and derelict land in Liverpool (Local authority) were retrieved from: http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadDatasetList.do?a=7&b=62751 56&c=liverpool&d=13&g=6349952&i=1001x1003&m=0&r=1&s=1431612089789&enc=1&dom ainId=8 (accessed November 2014)

Glasgow remaining undeveloped since 1985[1]. Land-use maps of vacant and derelict land in Glasgow (as indicated by the brown shaded areas) are provided as three separate appendices.

3.3 Vacant and derelict land, greenspace and health

As an important contributor to the quality of the urban environment, greenspace has attracted significant attention as a resource for allowing people to escape the stresses of urban living[12,13], lead more active lives[14,15] and experience improved mental health[16]. In contrast, studies have shown that populations that are exposed to poor quality greenspace (sometimes in the form of vacant or derelict land) are more likely to experience worse social- and health-related outcomes such as increased crime[17], negative perceptions of safety[18] and even increased mortality[19].

As a less studied land-type than greenspace, vacant and derelict land is defined as that which is unused or which has been so damaged by previous uses that it is unsuitable for development without remediation[1]. Although the impact of this land use on health and wellbeing in the UK has received limited research attention, recent studies have found that cancer risk throughout life was more common in areas where high levels of deprivation were conflated with vacant and derelict land[20], and that people living in areas with high levels of unused land were more likely to suffer from a limiting long-term illness, have poor self-reported health or die prematurely[21]. Meanwhile, studies on cities in the USA have shown that greening vacant land can be associated with reduced levels of vandalism, violent crime, and lower levels of stress[18,22].

3.4 Neighbourhood regeneration and health

Tackling urban decay throughout Greater Glasgow has been a financially supported priority since the decline of manufacturing in the 1960s. In recognition of the unequal distribution of environmental burdens, early interventions included neighbourhood improvements relating to issues such as vacant land, pollution, litter and squalor and the absence of greenspace. More recent efforts to improve conditions in Glasgow have involved targeted regeneration programmes, primarily implemented through well-funded initiatives to provide new housing or deliver neighbourhood improvements. These initiatives helped to revitalise parts of the city through bringing contaminated sites back into use, stimulating economic growth and improving the

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aesthetic quality of some neighbourhoods[23]. However, despite these benefits, successive regeneration programmes have failed to reverse the unequal distribution of poor quality environmental conditions throughout the city[24,25].

The contribution of neighbourhood conditions to health and health inequalities in a UK context are well evidenced, and several studies have contributed to improving understanding around how health behaviours[26,27], mental health prevalence[28] and self-reported health[29] can be shaped by the built environment. In Glasgow, the impact of neighbourhood features on health has been a well-studied topic, particularly in relation to the impact of large-scale regeneration activity on health. Several studies on the impact of neighbourhood regeneration in Glasgow have been conducted as part of GoWell, which is a ten-year study of the impact of regeneration on health and wellbeing. Through cohort studies, cross-sectional surveys and qualitative research, a range of health indicators have been measured in relation to neighbourhood or housing changes within transformational regeneration areas[30]. This research has found that poor mental wellbeing can be associated with perceptions that the neighbourhood is of a poor quality[31] and that walking levels in regeneration areas are strongly associated with the availability of amenities, belonging to the neighbourhood and feeling safe[32].

3.5 Temporary approaches to land use

Brownfield development (whereby development takes place on previously used land) has been a planning policy for a number of years[33]. This has helped to protect greenbelt land and create more densely populated urban areas that are more walkable and socially cohesive[34,35]. Despite this policy, land ownership issues, contamination and limited demand for development has stifled regeneration in many urban areas, leading to calls for basic greening, urban agriculture and community gardens to be implemented as temporary urban land-use solutions[36].

Although temporary approaches to land-use remain relatively uncommon in the UK, strategies adopted elsewhere have been found to be an effective way of tackling urban decay[37], with a series of interventions demonstrating that the negative impacts of vacant and derelict land in urban areas can be ameliorated through relatively low cost environmental interventions. Examples of this include greening and the provision of basic amenities[38], urban forests[39] and managed wilderness areas[40]. These small

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scale environmental improvements share the common characteristics of being relatively cheap and simple to implement, and evaluations of their success have found that the changes delivered had helped to reverse negative perceptions around previous land uses. These findings are mirrored in a recently published systematic review on the role and function of informal greenspace, which found that interventions that helped to create a sense of legitimacy in unused spaces were important for improving people's perceptions about an area[41].

3.6 Community volunteering

Increasing levels of volunteering in the population is widely recognised as an objective that could bring individual and societal benefits. As well as offering a route to paid employment, volunteering can allow people to experience personal growth and make contact with others in ways that may not otherwise be possible. Several studies have contributed to increasing the evidence base on the potential health impacts of volunteering, with improved self-rated health, self-esteem and coping ability being found in volunteers over non-volunteers[42,43].

In addition to the well evidenced impacts of volunteering on individuals, communities can benefit from having a proactive and engaged population. For example, through activities such as time banking, which is a mutual volunteering scheme whereby participants give and receive services in return for time credits[44], citizens involved in a scheme in Glasgow were found to be more likely to engage with other community projects and put their existing skills to use during periods when they were not in employment[45]. As well as giving community members a sense of purpose, it provided a means for them to participate in the development or functioning of their community. This notion of positively contributing to community life was also important across a range of other community projects throughout Glasgow, which were included as case studies in a recent review on asset-based working in Scotland[46].

The range of benefits that can be accrued from having an engaged and charitable population points to there being particular value in increasing opportunities for volunteering throughout Glasgow. These potential benefits should be considered in the context of current volunteering rates in the city, which are lower than the Scottish average and are lowest in areas of socioeconomic deprivation[47].

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3.7 Community gardening as a pathway to better health

Community gardening as a way of utilising vacant land has been found to provide a range of individual and community health benefits[48,49]. As well as rewarding people with tangible outputs, studies have shown that community gardens can enhance social opportunities, improve access to food and nutrition, increase levels of physical activity and improve people's mental

'Shettleston Community Growing Project'

health[50,51]. Community gardens can also be a particularly useful resource for older people, as illustrated by two case control studies of allotment gardeners and non-users, which identified that negative social- and health-related indicators such as high stress levels and loneliness were less common in participants, and positive feelings around life satisfaction and contact with friends were more common[52].

Community gardens are a relatively simple way of utilising vacant land during periods where there is little demand for permanent development. Amid heightened concerns around issues of climate change and food security, there have been increasing calls for community gardens to be developed or expanded as a means of supporting community resilience and responding to future food shortages[53]. With rapid urbanisation reducing the proportion of the global population that are able to produce food[50], many urban areas contain land which could be used productively for urban agricultural purposes.

3.8 Summary of literature

The introduction of Stalled Spaces funding provides an opportunity for local people to shape regeneration in areas where traditional approaches have failed to deliver social- and health-related benefits. During periods when more permanent forms of development are not possible, community-led regeneration projects are a relatively low cost way of making area improvements. These projects have the potential to benefit individuals involved by allowing them to make a positive contribution to the development of their area and by reducing the negative health effects of poor quality environments such as vacant and derelict land (which is most abundant in areas of high deprivation). Also important, is that community regeneration projects such as

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those funded by Stalled Spaces can provide opportunities for involvement in volunteering and community growing projects, which can help people to develop new skills, make new contacts and participate in local decision-making; all of which can contribute positively to personal wellbeing and community cohesion.

This research sought to find out if these potential benefits to health and social conditions within communities were realised through the provision of Stalled Spaces funding. In conducting the research it was hoped that learning could be used not only to shape the future development of the initiative, but also for other locally-led regeneration projects.

4. APPROACH AND METHODS

The study adopted a mixed methods approach, which included a participant survey (n=105) and semi-structured interviews (six volunteers and six project leads). Survey participants were recruited from Stalled Spaces-funded projects which operated between 2011 and 2014, with an electronic link to the survey and hard copies being sent to project leads. Interviewees were selected from those who indicated on the survey form that they were willing to be contacted, which included projects from the north, south, west and east of the city. An information sheet was sent out to everyone prior to the interview taking place, and consent was obtained before each interview. No incentives were provided for taking part. Although the study was not considered to represent a risk to participants or cover issues which were of a sensitive nature, a number of ethical considerations were considered before embarking on the study. These issues were outlined in an application to the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences Committee on 28th April 2014, with the study being granted ethical approval on 20th June 2014.

4.1 Survey design and analysis

The survey was drawn up after reviewing relevant literature and through meetings with members of staff from the GCPH and Glasgow City Council. Seven established questions were included from the Scottish Health Survey and the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health and Wellbeing Survey to allow comparisons to be made between participants and the wider population. Demographic information was collected on factors that were considered most relevant to this study and useful for analysis purposes. The analysis was carried out by running frequencies for demographic data and cross-tabulations to assess differences by selected variables. It should be noted that the relatively low response rate and high levels of agreement in the responses meant that cross-tabulations were not produced for all questions.

4.2 Interview process and analysis

Interviews were carried out face-to-face using a semi-structured approach. The decision to interview both project leads and volunteers was taken on the basis that they would be able to offer different perspectives on the efficacy of the projects that they were involved in. While project leads were asked to provide an overarching assessment of the impact of the project on the participants that took part and the

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wider community, volunteers provided personal accounts of their experiences. These differences were reflected in the topic guides that were used to shape both types of interview.

For this research a thematic approach to the analysis was used. This allowed data to be coded and systemised as part of an iterative process. Initial codes were identified and the process was repeated continuously until stable lists were compiled. The coded data and key quotes were then sorted into relevant themes and sub-themes before being written up. The process aimed to identify both similarities and differences in responses, as reflected in the write up. In keeping with definitions of what constitutes good practice in thematic analysis[54], the process was carried out to make sense of most of the data obtained, rather than simply eliciting particular pieces of information which supported a particular argument.

Growing boxes at Stalled Spaces-funded sites

5. RESULTS

This section outlines the main findings from the research. Results gathered from the survey component of the study are provided initially, and interview findings are offered separately in the next sub-section. The findings are then considered collectively in the Discussion and Conclusions section.

5.1 Survey results

The survey captured information on the demographic characteristics of respondents, the activities undertaken and why people chose to become involved. Comparisons were also made with the wider population around neighbourhood issues, while individual impacts on health behaviours and wellbeing, and neighbourhood and community impacts were included to assess the impact of involvement.

5.1.1 Characteristics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of participants and the main variables used for analysing responses are provided in Table 1. One hundred and five people (n=105) completed the survey from 22 Stalled Spaces sites across Glasgow. This included an even split of men and women (50% each) across a spread of age groups. By ethnicity, most participants identified themselves as White (88%), with Black African being

Stalled Spaces-funded sites in study

the next most common group (4%). The ethnic composition of the sample and the percentage with a disability (23%) broadly reflected the Glasgow population[55,56].

More than three-fifths of respondents (62%) lived in areas that are classified as being in the 20% most deprived parts of Scotland. This was checked by matching postcode details with the Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation on the Scottish Neighbourhoods Statistics website[57]. Around three quarters of respondents were volunteers (77%) rather than project leads. Most respondents had been to the site at least once a week in the past six months (85%), and most had spent less than ten hours per week at the site (90%).

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| Table 1. Demographic profile of survey participants.	Number (%)
Gender (n=96)	
Female	48 (50)
Male	48 (50)
Age (n=97)	
Under 18	4 (4)
18-24	10 (10)
25-34	26 (27)
35-54	34 (35)
55+	23 (24)
Ethnicity (n=92)	
White Scottish	66 (71)
White English	9 (10)
White Irish	2 (2)
Any other White background	5 (5)
Black Caribbean	2 (2)
Black African	4 (4)
Any other Asian	2 (2)
Any other mixed background	2 (2)
Disability (n=85)	
Yes	19 (23)
No	66 (77)
20% most deprived using SIMD measure (n=79)	
Yes	49 (62)
No	30 (38)
Role in project (n=96)	
Project lead	22 (23)
Volunteer	74 (77)
Time spent at site in last six months (n=99)	
Once per week or more	84 (85)
Less than once per week	15 (15)
Hours spent at site per week (n=99)	
Less than 2	38 (38)
Between 2 and 10	51 (52)
More than 10	10 (10)

5.1.2 Activities undertaken

Figure 1 shows the range of activities that were undertaken across the participating sites, with most projects indicating that more than one activity had taken place. Although there is considerable overlap between some of the listed activities, the most

commonly cited were general maintenance/clearing and planting, which were both undertaken by more than 50% of participants. Growing food was the next most commonly cited activity (nearly 50% of responses), while around a third of participants indicated that their site was used for greenspace, educational space or art projects/installations.

**Figure 1: Activities undertaken at the site (n=98).**
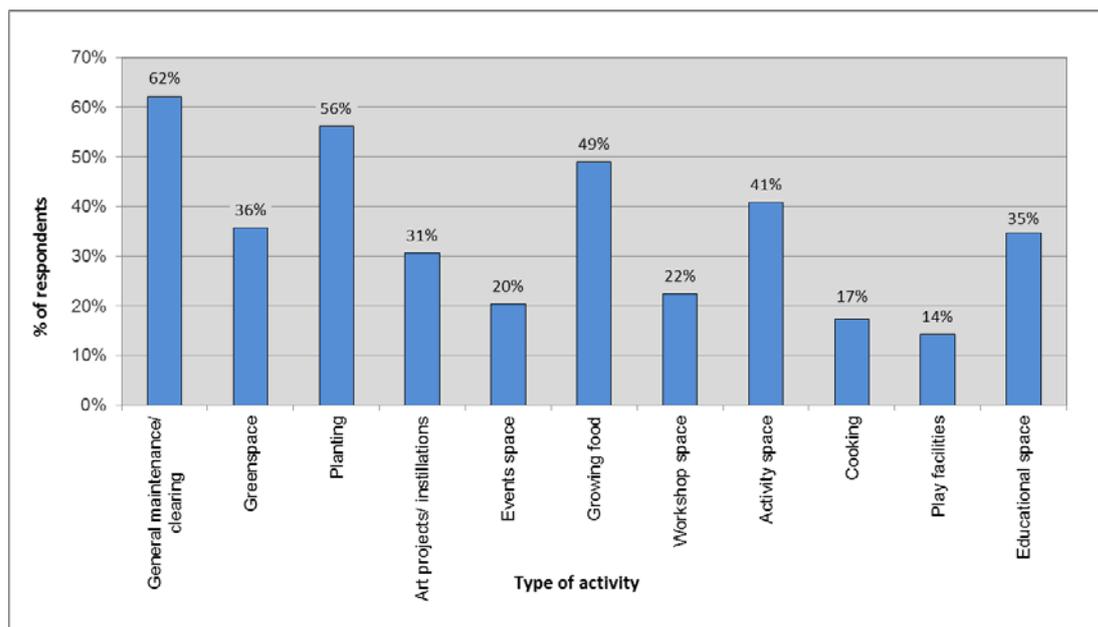
5.1.3 Reasons for becoming involved

People became involved for a variety of reasons (Figure 2), with findings displayed by order of those which were considered most important to least important. 'Improving my neighbourhood' and 'giving something back to my community' were the most important reasons for becoming involved, while 'relieving stress' and 'meeting new people' were considered important by the fewest participants. It is worth noting that all possible reasons were considered to be at least 'quite important' by over 70% of participants, suggesting that most people became involved for a variety of reasons.

Figure 2: Importance of reasons for becoming involved in project (n=90-95).
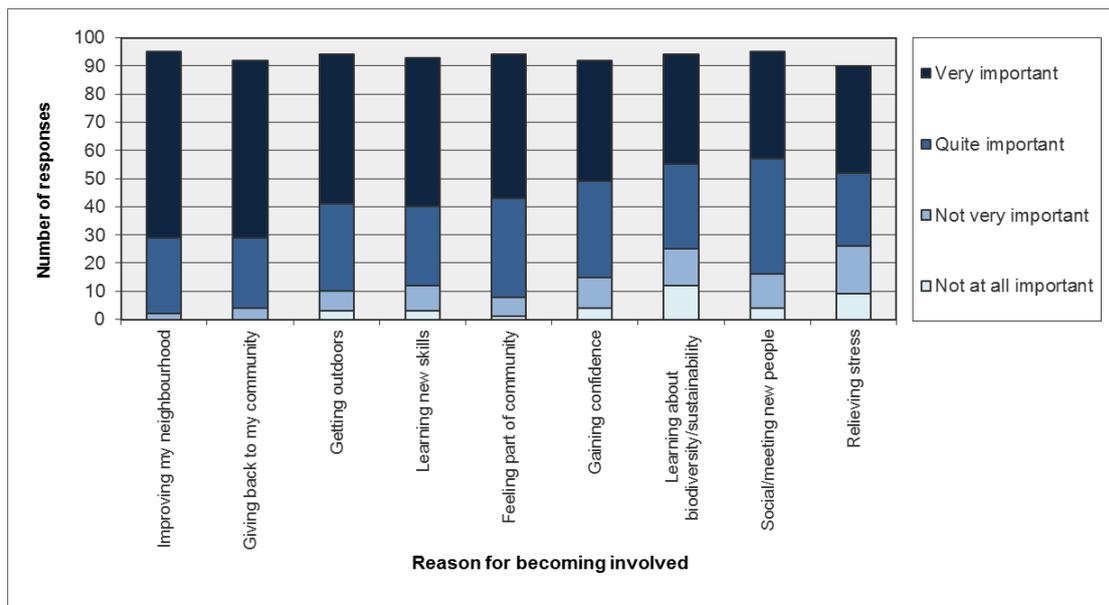
5.1.4 Demographic comparisons with Glasgow and Scotland

To enable comparisons between study participants and the Scottish and Glasgow populations, seven questions were included from the 2013 Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and the 2011 Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health and Wellbeing Survey (NHSGGC HWS).The SHS is conducted with a sample of the general population (n=9,920) to provide an overview of Scottish opinion on a range of topics relating to transport, communities and public service delivery. The NHSGGC HWS, meanwhile, provides a picture of public perceptions of health, illness and neighbourhood issues across the Greater Glasgow and Clyde region (n=6,101). Some of the questions used to make comparisons are included in both surveys, enabling differences to be observed across each survey.

Table 2 summarises the response differences across the three surveys. This shows that people in the sample were more likely to provide positive responses in relation to a range of questions relating to the environmental quality and social cohesion of their neighbourhood. In particular, respondents were more likely to report feeling that they strongly belonged to their community, that that they were able to influence decision-making in their local area and that their local area had got better in the last three years. A high proportion (85%) felt that vacant land was at least a slight problem in their area. Although there is no directly comparable question here, the NHSGGC HWS found that just 6% of the Glasgow population have a negative perception of

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vacant or derelict land in their area. Less striking differences were observed around neighbourhood rating, and although results from the SHS revealed that the same proportion of people felt safe walking in the neighbourhood after dark (84%), this was considerably higher than the NHSGGC HWS (68%). Finally, survey respondents were slightly more likely to report good or very good health than the sample from both other surveys.

Table 2. Summary of comparisons with SHS and NHSGGC HWS results.

| Survey question	Response	Stalled Spaces participants	Scottish Household Survey	NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health and Wellbeing Survey
How strongly do you feel that you belong to your community? (n=99)	Very strongly	**43%**	37%	22%
To what extent do you feel able to influence decisions affecting your local area? (n=99)	Strongly agree/tend to agree	**61%**	22%	N/A
How safe do you feel when walking alone in the local neighbourhood after dark? (n=97)	Very safe/fairly safe	**84%**	**84%**	68%
How would you rate your neighbourhood as a place to live? (n=99)	Fairly good/Very good	85%	**94%**	83%
In your opinion, has the area that you live in got better or worse to live in over the last three years? (n=98)	It has got better	**58%**	15%	N/A
How do you feel about vacant and/or derelict land in your local neighbourhood? (n=100)	It's a slight problem or worse	**85%**	N/A	6%[ii]
How would you rate your overall health? (n=97)	Very good/ Good	**79%**	74%	75%

The highest percentage of responses across the three surveys are in shown in bold.

[ii] The wording of the question is slightly different to that used for the survey of Stalled Spaces participants and is therefore not directly comparable.

5.1.5 Impact of involvement on wellbeing

Participants were asked to indicate how they felt their involvement in a Stalled Spaces-funded project had impacted on their own general wellbeing. Figure 3 shows that 89.5% felt it had a 'quite positive' or a 'very positive' influence on their wellbeing. When considered by selected demographic variables, results showed that men were slightly more likely to report very positive impacts than women, and that people under the age of 25 were more likely to report a very positive impact than older participants. However, there was little apparent difference in terms of impact between people that lived in the 20% most deprived parts of Glasgow to those from the rest of the city.

Figure 3: Impact of involvement on general wellbeing (n=95).
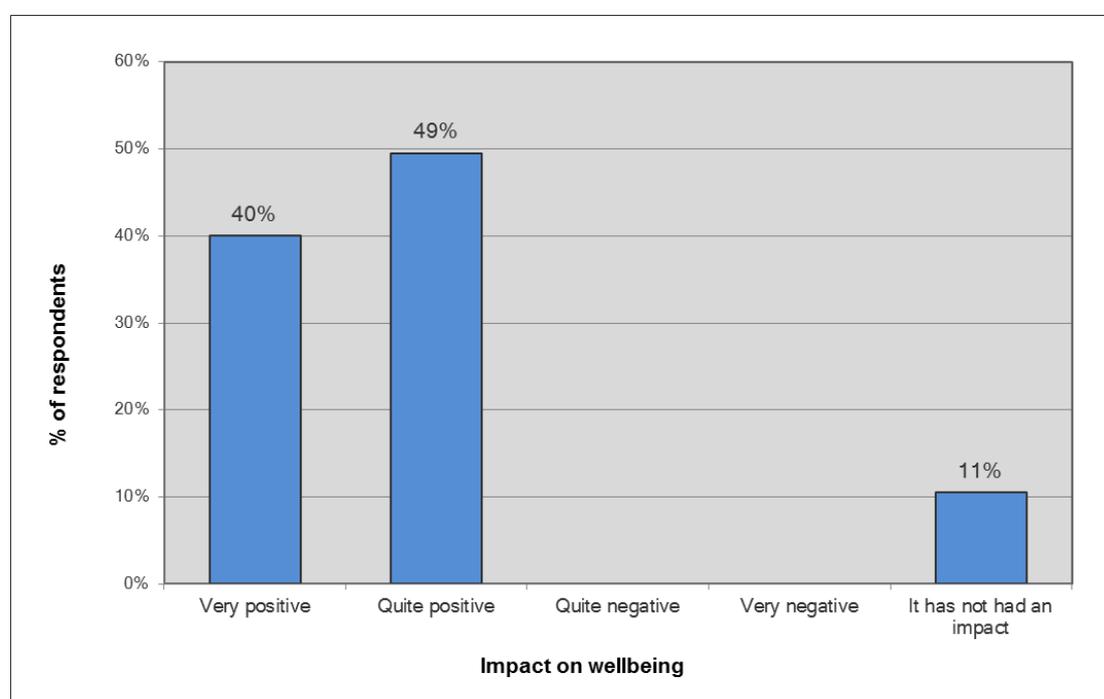

Physical activity levels

Seventy-four per cent of people reported that they had at least become a bit more active since becoming involved, with the remaining 26% indicating that their activity levels had not changed. Men were slightly more likely to report becoming much more physically active than women, although there was little difference observed by gender for those that reported becoming no more active. In terms of impact by socioeconomic deprivation, people from the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods were slightly more likely than those from the rest of the population to report becoming

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more active after becoming involved, and people with 'bad' or 'fair' health were more likely than those with 'good' or 'very good' health to become at least a bit more physically active.

Figure 4: Impact of involvement on physical activity (n=96).
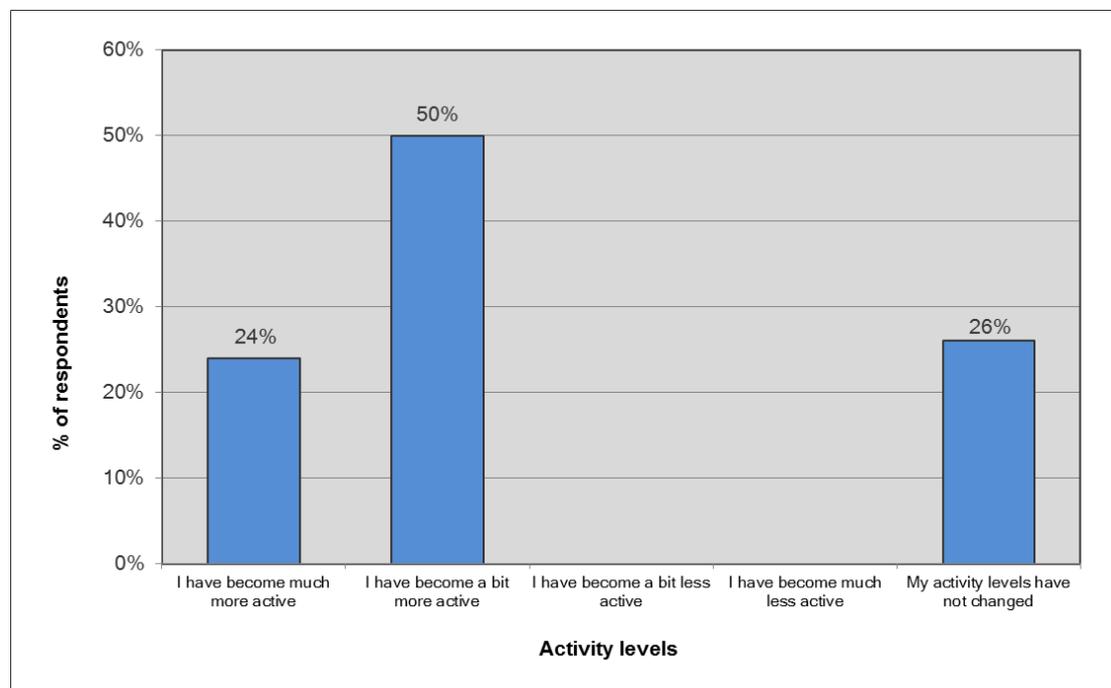
Gaining new skills

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents stated that they had gained new skills through involvement. Examples of skills were collected through open ended responses, with most falling under the skill heading of 'personal development',' transferable', 'vocational' or 'gardening/growing' (Table 3).

Table 3. Skills developed through involvement.

| Skill type	Personal development	Transferable	Vocational	Gardening/ growing
Code/example	Tolerance Interpersonal Listening New knowledge Social Confidence	Time management Following instructions Leadership Organisation Teamwork Communication	Administration/ office Event coordination Woodwork Maintenance Painting Landscaping Using power tools Art	Planting Horticulture Building relating to the garden

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Social activity

Seventy-five per cent of people stated that they now socialised with people that they did not know before getting involved in a Stalled Space project. Men were slightly more likely to socialise with others than the women involved, but there was little observed difference when considered by age. People who did not go on to socialise with others after involvement were more likely to report poor health, although it is worth noting that this was just 5% of the sample.

Feelings about volunteering

Over 50% of people surveyed stated that they felt a lot more positive about volunteering having participated in a Stalled Spaces-funded project (Figure 5). Almost all women reported feeling at least a little bit more positive compared with 80% of men. No respondents indicated that they felt worse about volunteering afterwards, and respondents over 55 were more likely than those under 55 to report feeling no different. Meanwhile, feeling more positive about volunteering appeared to be associated with continued community activity, as people who indicated that subsequent community activity had been sustained were more likely to answer positively.

Figure 5: Feelings about volunteering having participated at a Stalled Spaces-funded site (n=82).

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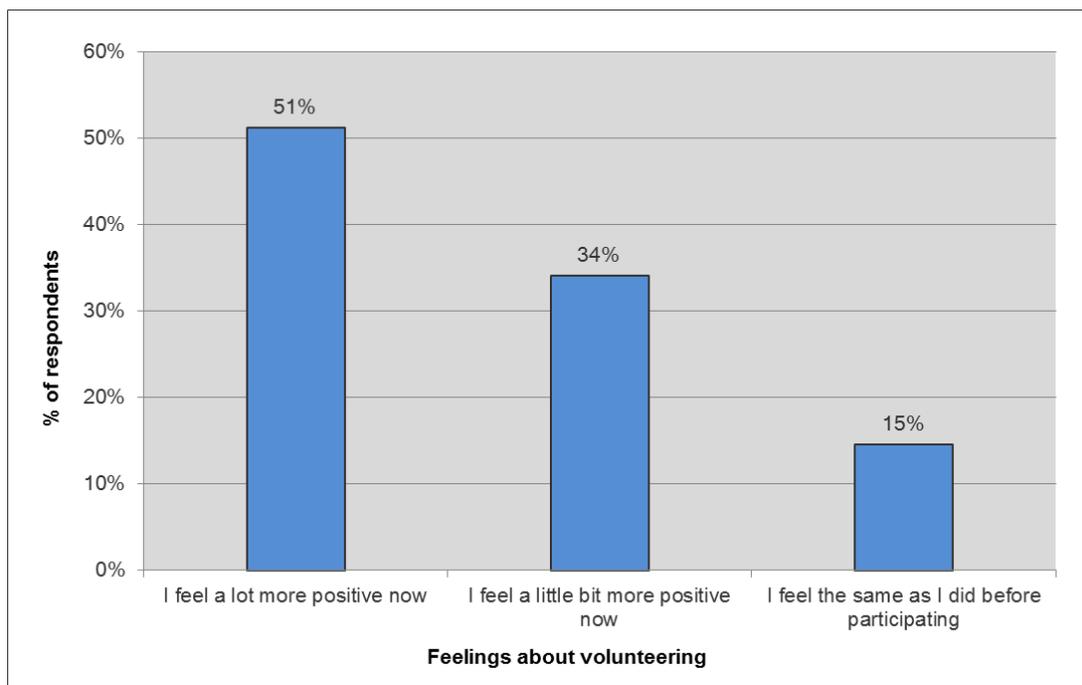
Expected gains from involvement

Ninety-two per cent of the sample indicated that they had gained something from being involved in a Stalled Spaces-funded project. These respondents were asked to list up to three gains they experienced in their own words (Table 4). Eighty people answered this question, providing 132 responses that fell within a theme (e.g. social, new skills, community benefits) which was covered by at least 5% of the sample.

**Table 4. Gains through involvement in a Stalled Spaces project (n=132).**

Gains	Coded response	Number (%)
Social	Social opportunities Meeting new people Making friends	28 (35%)
New skills	Vocational skills General skills	19 (24%)
Community benefits	Community involvement Safety Events Integration of community Community space Empowerment Extended networks	17 (21%)
Personal development	Confidence Trust Attitude	16 (20%)
Gardening	Gardening skills Types of gardening	16 (20%)
Health and health-related behaviour	General wellbeing Outlook Benefits for vulnerable groups Fitness Stress relief Eating habits	14 (18%)
Teamwork	Teamwork	8 (10%)
Knowledge and experience	Experience Knowledge	5 (6%)
Neighbourhood improvements	Neighbourhood improvements	5 (6%)
Environmental awareness	Environmental awareness	4 (5%)

Around a third of the responses came under the theme 'social', which was generally expressed by responses such as making new friends or meeting new people. The next most common responses related to the development of 'new skills', with several examples of vocational and general skill types being given. Around one-fifth of respondents mentioned gains which were grouped as 'community benefits', 'personal development', 'gardening' and 'health and health-related behaviour'. Responses relating to neighbourhood improvements or increased environmental awareness were cited the least.

5.1.6 Neighbourhood and community impacts

Participants were asked to consider the extent to which any changes delivered as part of the project had impacted on the quality of the neighbourhood. Figure 6 shows that nearly all participants expressed that it had at least improved the neighbourhood a little bit, and that no one felt it had made the neighbourhood worse.

**Figure 6: Impact of projects on the quality of the neighbourhood (n=97).**
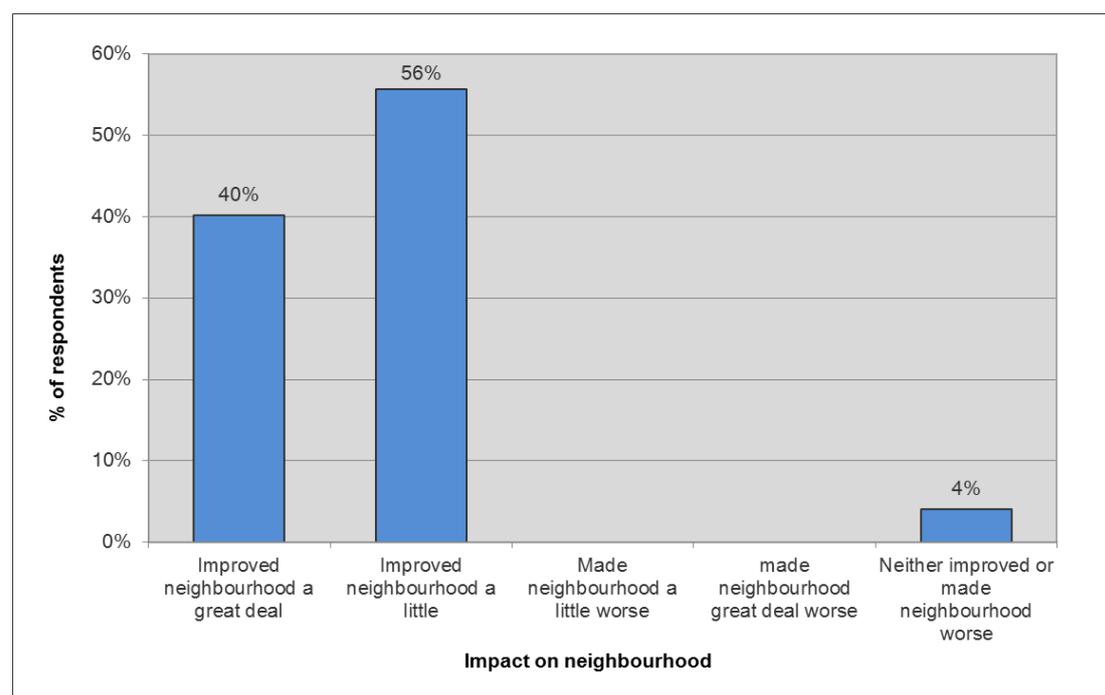
Integration of the community

Figure 7 shows that most people felt that their community had become at least slightly more socially integrated since they became involved in a Stalled Spaces-funded project. For those who did not feel it had become more socially integrated, most indicated that it had not changed.

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Figure 7: Social integration of the community (n=93).
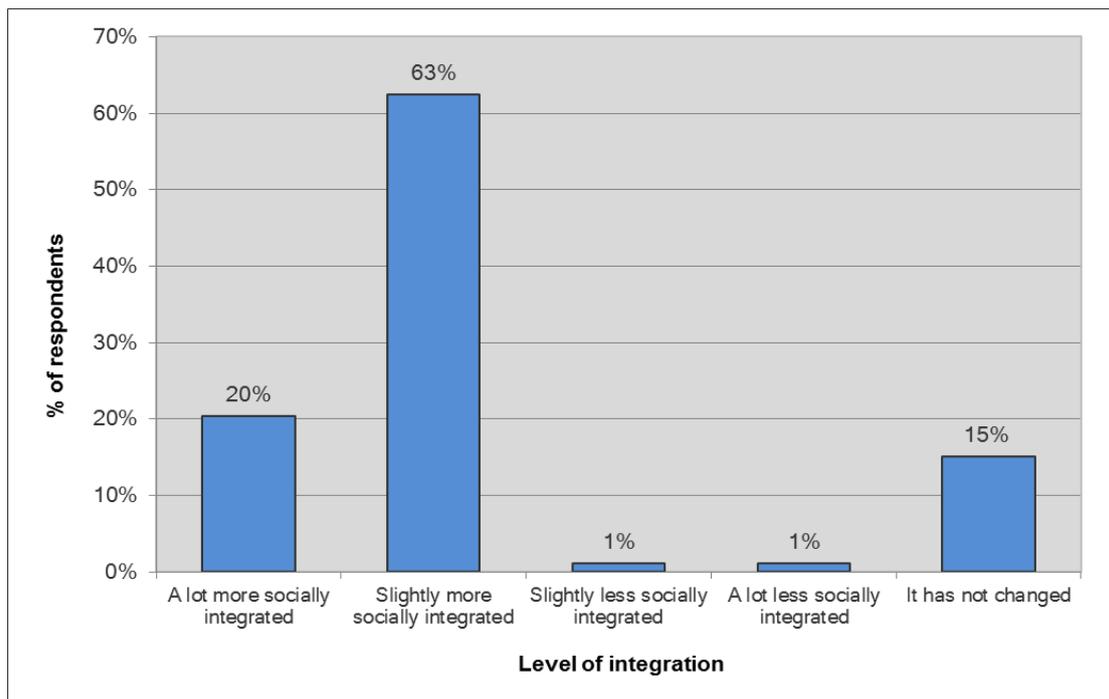
Subsequent activity in the community

Over 60% of respondents answered that the project that they were involved in had led to subsequent activity intended to benefit their community (Figure 8). Most of the remaining respondents were not sure if it had led to subsequent activity, and very few indicated that it had not led to anything else.

Figure 8: Subsequent community activity (n=94).
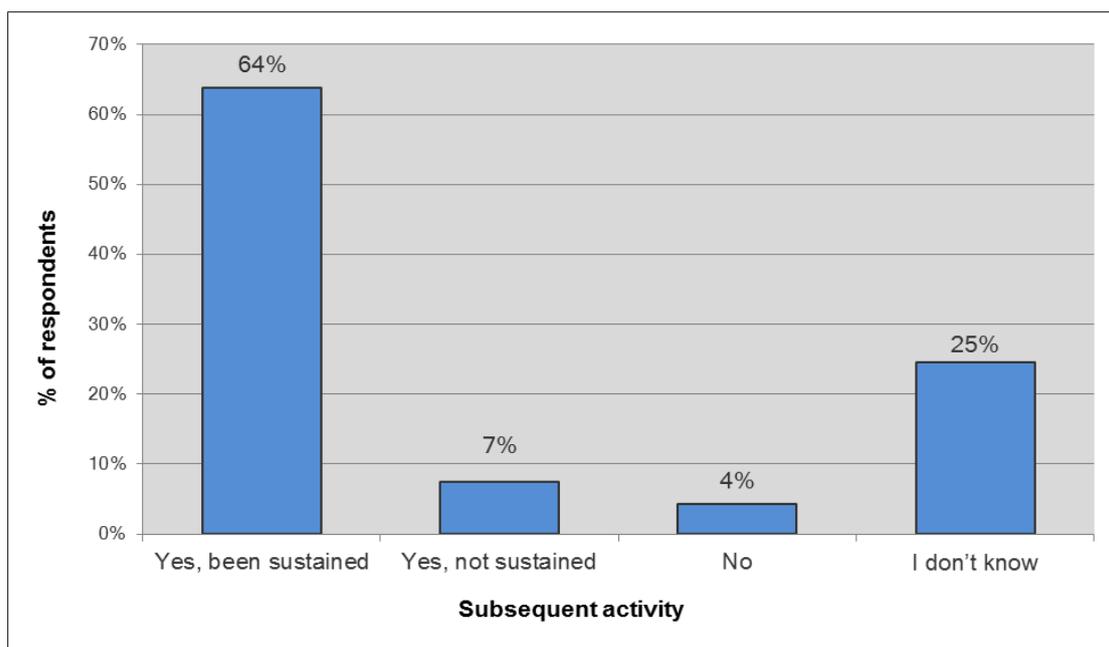
Participants were then asked to provide details of subsequent activities. These responses are summarised in Table 5 under thematic headings. Several community events took place at the site after it had been developed, often during holiday periods. It was also common for community buy-in for other community projects to increase, for greater interest to be shown in new local projects and for projects to be better looked after. Spin-off activities such as courses relating to the types of activities that were happening at the site were also common. Factors relating to health and health-related behaviours were also mentioned, such as becoming more active, changes to eating habits and recycling more. Finally, partnerships with other local organisations were established and several people commented on the importance of these for the long-term success of the project. It should be noted that the number of responses was just 50 for this open ended question.

Table 5. Subsequent community activities to benefit community (n=50).

Key theme	Coded responses
Events	Community days Holiday events (e.g. Easter, Halloween)
Community buy-in	New projects looked after Increased interest in greenspace projects Network of volunteers growing
Spin-off activities	More community activity now Course being run Learning used to influence subsequent projects Became a charity
Health behaviour and sustainability	Reduced food waste Recycling Health eating More active
Strengthening partnerships	Links to other projects Organisational partnerships Links to other gardens Links to schools

5.1.7 Summary

Demographic information collected shows that a cross-section of the Glasgow population contributed to this study. While projects shared the common theme of improving the natural or green environment, a range of activities took place across the 22 Stalled Spaces sites. Comparisons between Stalled Spaces

'*Craigton Community Garden'*

participants and the Glasgow and Scottish populations show some differences around neighbourhood perceptions. Although issues such as feeling safe when walking in the neighbourhood after dark and the overall neighbourhood rating reveal similarities across the surveys, Stalled Spaces participants were more positive about their ability to influence neighbourhood decision-making in their local area. They were also more likely to feel that their neighbourhood had changed in the past three years and that they belonged to the community. Further, the presence of vacant or derelict land was seen to be an issue by considerably more participants than those responding to the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health and Wellbeing Survey. These results raise the important question of whether involvement in a Stalled Spaces project has shaped these differences or whether people who chose to become involved already had a slightly different perspective on community life and their neighbourhood.

Most participants indicated that involvement in a Stalled Spaces project had impacted on them in at least a quite positive way, and these positive impacts were particularly high for those reporting poor health. In terms of physical activity levels, nearly three quarters of participants reported increases, with men more likely than women to report substantial increases in activity levels. A similarly high proportion of participants reported that they had gained new skills through involvement, with skills classified as being personal traits, transferable, vocational and those relating to gardening. Meanwhile, examples of gains varied, with social impacts, new skills, community impacts, gains relating to personal development, health impacts and those relating to gardening were all frequently cited.

Around three quarters of participants reported that they socialised with others afterwards, and that they felt at least a little bit more positive about volunteering

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having participated. Indeed, for all further measures of impact (quality of neighbourhood, community cohesion, subsequent community activity) between 70-80% of the sample provided positive responses, and an even higher number (92%) indicated that they had gained something from involvement. These quantitative findings on the health and wellbeing impacts are summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Summary of health and wellbeing impacts.

Health and wellbeing indicator	Summary of impact	Type of impact
General wellbeing	89.5% state involvement has had at least a slightly positive impact	Feelings
Opinion of volunteering	92% feel more positive about volunteering	
Physical activity levels	74% are more active	Activity
Social activity	75% socialise with people they met through becoming involved	
Development of new skills	78% have gained new skills	Gains
Perceived gains	92% feel that they gained something	

5.2 Interview findings

This section summarises the key findings from interviews carried out with project leads and volunteers. The findings are presented under the following headings which were created through thematic analysis of the interview transcripts:

- Neighbourhood and site conditions.
- Getting involved.
- Types of activity undertaken.
- Working with others.
- Impacts on individuals.
- Project legacy and community impact.
- Challenges.
- Future approaches to community-led regeneration.

5.2.1 Characteristics of interviewees

Six project sites contributed to the completion of interviews, which were carried out with seven men and five women. The interviews were evenly split between project leads (n=6) and volunteers (n=6), and the results presented here include quotes from both. Project leads are represented by the letters PL (1-6) and volunteers are represented by the letter V (1-6).

5.2.2 Neighbourhood and site conditions

At the beginning of the interview participants were asked to say a little bit about the site that they had been working at and the neighbourhood where it was situated. There was a strong indication from the project leads that poor quality environments and vacant land are commonplace in certain parts the city.

> PL1: *The level of facilities that's available as in cleansing, street cleaning is very low.*

> PL2: *When I first came here I was quite surprised at the level of derelict land or land that wasn't looked after.*

> PL6: *You see a lot of stalled space, a lot of unused spaces.*

Some project leads indicated that the poor quality of the environment in places was inevitable and part of a long term period of neglect. These sentiments seemed to suggest that they felt that many people had low aspirations in terms of seeing neighbourhood improvements.

> PL5: *I think you get used to seeing an area a certain way.*

> PL6: *There's a sense of being forgotten by the bigger picture of Glasgow in terms of amenities and facilities.*

In terms of the sites that had been developed or improved, it is clear from the comments that some of the former sites had been badly neglected and did not previously serve a positive function.

> PL1: *A dumping ground for everybody; washing machines, televisions, you name it.*

> V4*: It was just used as a dumping ground.*

> PL5: *People were a bit embarrassed about it who lived there, didn't like their visitors seeing it.*

5.2.3 Getting involved

People became involved and continued to attend for a variety of reasons. For some volunteers it was apparent that altruism played a crucial role in determining why they decided to get involved.

> V1: *It just felt like a good thing, felt like it would help my area.*

> V3: *To me it was starting something that would attract people.*

> V4: *I just wanted to help the area and give something back to the community.*

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Similarly, some of the project leads expressed the importance of being proactive about improving neighbourhood conditions.

> PL1: *We were just a group that got together because we were pig sick of the state of the place.*

> PL3: *I think it's important to take care of things around you.*

> PL4*: It's just my normal way of life, it's normal, it's natural to me and I think it's part of my thinking.*

For other people the chance to become involved gave them an opportunity to do something that they enjoyed or to learn about practices that interested them. For these participants it was apparent that although attending was part of their weekly routine, it was not something that they relied on for their own personal development.

> PL3: *Some people came because they like gardening or they wanted to learn about gardening.*

> V5: *It was active, it was co-operative, it was outdoors and it was green, greenspace.*

In contrast, some participants/volunteers had become involved as it gave them a sense of fulfilment in ways that could not be found through other aspects of their life. Some people who took part lived in challenging circumstances and were partly reliant on being involved to give them meaning and structure.

> PL2: *I would say that most of the five volunteers we had are affected by different aspects of their life like alcohol or drug abuse.*

> PL6: *Sometimes people feel stuck and they don't know what else to do with their time.*

> V6: *I've volunteered a lot, cos I've spent a lot of time out of work for one reason or another, always gave me something to do.*

Meanwhile, one participant was keen to stress that involvement had given her an opportunity to try something new.

>V2: *I guess I wanted to try something that I hadn't done before... None of us had really done anything like this before so I think there was a sense of adventure.*

5.2.4 Types of activities undertaken

As already revealed by the survey responses, a range of activities took place across the Stalled Spaces sites. Those involved in the interviews carried out a variety of tasks at the sites, ranging from manual work and maintenance, to gardening and the creation of art installations. Men were more likely to be involved in manual forms of work than women, while women took a more active interest in gardening. Although many people interviewed indicated that the level of maintenance required to make the site look presentable was a challenge, it was apparent that the changes that occurred at the space or the tangible outputs that it provided made it a rewarding experience.

>V6*: Anything I've helped build I'll take part ownership of and rightly be proud of it.*

>V3: *The sense of achievement that everyone had done this [building a polytunnel] was great.*

>V4: *I think it's the sense of achievement as well. You can say we did that, that used to be this and now it's something different.*

While there was generally a consensus that working at the site could be rewarding, the focus of the work differed greatly in terms of what each group set out to create in the longer term. For some groups there was a clear ambition to create a more attractive space than was there previously – often to provide a space for community events – while others had a stronger focus on creating a functioning space for learning and growing. For some groups there a degree of tension around the best way to develop the site, and it was expressed by some that a balance needed to be struck between the aesthetic elements of the garden and its functionality.

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PL5: *I had a very definite idea that it was a growing space but also a garden where people can just go and use it.*

V5: *I think the emphasis is on growing, but there is definitely a willingness to apply the aesthetic to the garden.*

V2: *I do think visuals are really important no matter what you are doing.*

5.2.5 Working with others

The groups involved in delivering the projects across the sites were very different in terms of their make-up and purpose. Some groups had a clear community orientation and comprised a group of volunteers with the collective aim of addressing community issues, while others were brought to work at the site as part of a learning programme (e.g. youth groups, school groups or adult learning groups). These groups participated on the basis that the project provided opportunities for learning or experiential benefits. One of the project leads interviewed had involved three established local groups to help to deliver the project aims. Most groups were reported to contain more women than men, and this was particularly the case for groups that had a clear community improvement focus, rather than those which were involved for learning purposes. In general, the groups were considered to function well, and many felt that the group diversity had made the experience more interesting.

V2: *I'd never met these people before and now I get on with them really well.*

V3: *People that come on a Friday morning don't tend to be people in full time employment, so there's a story to tell, and so that makes it interesting.*

PL1: *Just the fact we worked together was a big achievement too. And we all come from different walks of life; we're all different, completely different.*

For some groups, working with local organisations was important. Many groups had strong links with nearby schools, and local schoolchildren had contributed to the development of the site or benefited from its development. Five of the six project

leads interviewed mentioned the role of young people or school groups in helping to develop the site or to use it for learning purposes and events afterwards.

> PL1: *We've had all the kids from the school as well.*

> PL2: *Working with schools was very much a focus.*

> PL4: *The schools are doing things for us.*

> PL5: *The school use it and are going to use it a lot more.*

> PL6: *We've got a youth garden that's specifically for engaging young people.*

Overall there was a strong sense that working with other local groups and relevant organisations was worthwhile, even if it could present challenges at times. One group were keen to emphasise the importance of taking a whole neighbourhood approach, suggesting that understanding the role and priorities of local partners was important for delivering change.

> PL4: An*d we've managed to draw in every big stakeholder so they know what's happening in the area.*

> V4: *We're liaising with them and networking with them.*

A number of participants expressed a sense of pride about the journey that the group had taken over a short period of time, often from humble beginnings. This was generally expressed in terms of the transformations that had occurred at the site and their previous lack of belief that it would be possible to do so.

> PL4: *When we started we didn't know a thing.*

> V2: *If we can do this with just… I mean we did it in a month or something.*

> PL1: *We don't understand how we managed to get from the bit of waste ground to that in the space of time.*

5.2.6 Individual impacts

In keeping with the cited reasons for becoming involved and staying involved, the impacts on participants varied. While for some people the experience seemed to have quite a profound impact on their outlook and behaviour, others used the experience as a means of enabling them to take part in something that they enjoyed doing. For these individuals the experience was seen to have been beneficial, although it did not appear to be important for them in terms of making choices about the future. The main impacts are outlined below under theme headings.

Confidence

Project leads were generally quick to point out that participants had become more confident through becoming involved and participating over a period of time.

> PL3: *People are growing more confident in general.*

> PL5: *They are definitely more confident, even going out in the area.*

> PL6: *I think they've gained in very personal [ways], what may be seen as small ways, but personally they might be quite big. Transformations are happening to a lot of people.*

These observations were backed up by two of the volunteers, who expressed that involvement had been beneficial to them in negotiating social situations.

> V2: *I'm not really scared of people anymore and I'm just going to embrace it.*

> V6: *I'm not the quickest person at talking to people, but this kind of eases you in.*

A social space

As well as helping people to gain confidence in social situations, becoming involved was seen to provide a useful opportunity to meet new people. For some participants this made the experience more interesting, while for others the experience provided important new social opportunities.

PL 1: *We were all strangers before we started this and now we're a very close group.*

PL 3: *There were quite a few women that were a wee bit isolated that have become friends through it.*

PL5: *They got to know each other a lot more; there have been a couple of friendships forming there.*

A sense of achievement and pride

The sense of achievement and pride that people gained from being involved was the most widely cited impact for the volunteers.

V1: *I think it just gives me the satisfaction I've done something.*

V2: *I certainly have a sense of pride.*

V4: *I think it's the sense of achievement as well. You can say we did that, that used to be this and now it's something different.*

Similarly, project leads were keen to highlight their own sense of achievement and that expressed by the volunteers they had worked with.

PL2: *It seemed like some of the people were getting quite a sense of achievement.*

PL5: *I'm actually quite proud of it now and I quite like going in there.*

A space to give people purpose and meaning in life

For some people it was evident that involvement had given them a place to be and a sense of purpose, sometimes because other aspects of their lives were challenging or unfulfilling.

V6: *It was just to get me out of the house.*

> PL2: *Coming together for this project felt like something to get out of the house.*

> PL6: *I also think with the whole benefits cuts and welfare reform it provides a service, it provides wellbeing that can't be catered for elsewhere.*

A space for learning new skills

Both volunteers and project leads were keen to express the importance of learning new skills, either in the hope that it would lead to other things or simply for the enjoyment and wider benefit of doing so. The learning that people gained was generally linked to the types of activity they were undertaking (e.g. gardening or construction), although some people described aspects of learning which they felt could be more widely applicable.

> PL4: *Some people came because they liked gardening or they wanted to learn about gardening and they had a wee bit of garden themselves.*

> PL 2: *They learned about bird life, they learned about waste reduction, they learned about, you know, what it means to have a greenspace that is maintained.*

> V6: *It's something that gets me oot, gain new skills, hone the ones I already have and pass them on.*

5.2.7 Community impacts

Interviewees were asked to consider how their involvement had shaped subsequent activity, either personally or within the community. Almost all participants indicated that their involvement had played a part in shaping their own behaviour or subsequent community activities. From an individual perspective, involvement had sometimes made people more aware of other things happening in the area, provided them with an opportunity to gain certification for employment or helped them to generate ideas for future employment. From a community perspective, subsequent forms of activity were reported to have taken place, either as spin-offs from the development of the site or as part of a broader approach to engaging the community. This included a range of classes that were relevant to the development of the site.

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V3: *And there's been spin offs. There's been a carpentry course. There have been cookery courses.*

V5: *I haven't been personally, but they do workshops with GalGael.*

PL6: *And they've run different activities in the garden as well.*

Many of the gardens had held community events to officially open the site, while subsequent events had often taken place around holiday periods. Although not all events were well attended, some people felt that the space had become an important community resource for enabling them to take place in the future.

PL 1: *We do things like Halloween and Guy Fawkes, we've had Easter fairs.*

PL5: *We've had about four community events this year. It's the wee magnet that draws people in.*

V2: *One of the things I really loved was we had a sort of party to open it.*

In addition, some groups intended to, or had already gone on to make other improvements in the area.

PL1: *The group also had a hand in the swing park up at the school.*

PL2: *So this time we'll be working with local residents and we're going to get some flyers to people that live in the local area.*

PL 3: *We haven't started yet, but we've had enquiries from people who are interested in a community orchard.*

Some projects reported challenges in ensuring the long-term maintenance of the site, and most groups suggested that for sites to remain ordered and presentable they required regular maintenance. For many projects there was sufficient community support to ensure that this happened, but for others, getting people to commit to the site appeared to be more difficult. Overall though, there was a sense that changes resulting from Stalled Spaces funding had brought benefits to the community.

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5.2.8 Challenges

Although most interviewees expressed that the process of working together had been reasonably successful and had helped to forge community partnerships, it was evident that the groups involved had different ideas about how best to develop their site. For some interviewees there was a very clear focus on improving the quality of the environment as quickly as possible, but for others the impact of involvement on volunteers took precedence over tangible outputs or physical changes to the space. For most groups there was a sense that both were important, although for one group it was expressed that it had been difficult to meet both objectives. Despite this, the slow pace of change at the site appeared to have been compensated for by the noticeable changes in the confidence of the volunteers involved.

> PL6: *On the one hand it's been really useful for the people that have taken part and had a chance to develop themselves through that. On the other hand on the outside it seems like it's taken forever.*

> PL6: *I think the whole process thing is quite important. Sometimes even to the extent that it's not necessarily important what happens there, maybe what happens in the process is more important to individuals and people. Obviously there's a balance between the two [between the process and the physical changes to the site].*

The extent to which the groups were able to draw on existing local groups for support or rely on volunteers to help develop the sites varied, and it was apparent that the diversity of participation and the cultural norms with the communities involved differed. Many project leads were keen to express the challenges of encouraging community participation, either in terms of developing the site or for getting people to attend community events. To some extent this was seen to be inevitable.

> PL1: *I suppose who wants to come out on a Saturday and clean up somebody else's mess?*

> PL3: *I think they [the community] are afraid to be committed to something and say I will do that in case it ties them in.*

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V4: *People will stop and talk to you, but there's all sorts of reasons why they can't come and help.*

While expressing that they understood why many people did not get involved, almost all project leads expressed some frustration at the level of apathy that existed within the community.

PL1: *They want the benefits but they don't want to get their hands dirty with it.*

PL3: *The lack of funding and all that has meant that they [the Council] can't do it. People get reliant on that.*

PL5: *There's a nature of moaning and complaining about things but no' wanting to do things themselves.*

The level of apathy reported by some project leads prompted further questions around why this was the case, and what could be done to change public attitudes around taking responsibility for neighbourhood issues. Two project leads felt that a culture shift may be required to encourage more people to take ownership of existing community spaces, particularly those which had fallen into disrepair.

PL6: *There's still maybe a conceptual shift that needs to happen about what the commons [common land that is accessible to the whole community] are.*

PL3: *I think people think when they see something going on 'oh that's not anything to do with me'.*

Another issue for many groups was the fact that they had not been able to secure the plot on a permanent basis. This meant that they faced uncertainty over the future of the site and the extent to which it was worth investing time in. Where sites had been acquired on a permanent or a longer-term basis, there was more evidence of planning for the future, although it was expressed at one temporary site that efforts were being made to create a community asset on the basis that doing so would make it more difficult for it to be developed for other purposes (e.g. house building).

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> PL3: *I think we'll just keep plugging it because I think they [Glasgow City Council] recognise there is nothing in the plans; there's no greenspace in the plan.*

> PL4: *That's what we're hoping for with the [type of garden] garden, that we get it to such a stage that they [Glasgow City Council] see it as an asset and want to leave it.*

> V4: *I suppose part of the problem is we don't have the site permanently.*

A final frequently mentioned difficulty was the level of funding that was required to maintain the site or to begin new projects in the area. Without sustained funding it was generally considered that community-led regeneration could not happen.

> PL1: *Yeah, you do need that funding.*

> PL4: *It's funding that is the crucial part.*

> PL6: *It's difficult because in reality in takes more than £2,500 to regenerate an area.*

5.2.9 Future approaches to community-led regeneration

Despite numerous challenges, most project leads considered community-led approaches to regeneration such as those facilitated by Stalled Spaces funding to be worthwhile and important. Unlike some other approaches to engaging communities, practical work which was visible to other members of the community was seen to be a more effective way of getting people involved than other more formal routes. While a lot of small scale local regeneration efforts were regarded as being overly bureaucratic and undemocratic, taking a more proactive stance and having a regular community presence was seen to be beneficial.

> PL3: *Well, the whole idea of having this project is to get people more interested in the wider issues in their community, and it's a more practical way of drawing people in, rather than saying come along to a meeting.*

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There was also a sense that communities were able to make a positive difference to a neighbourhood's appearance, even if changes were only made on a short-term basis.

> PL6: *I think these types of projects and what people are doing with bits of land on short-term leases show that people can do things.*

> PL5: *I think it's a great idea, if you can get a small pocket of space within an area that can service something that the community want.*

> PL2: *I think there's potential for more spaces to be looked at and regenerated.*

5.2.10 Summary

These findings suggest that poor quality environments are commonplace in some Glasgow neighbourhoods. People became involved in Stalled Spaces projects for a variety of reasons, with some simply seeing it as an opportunity to do things they enjoyed (e.g. gardening or arts projects), and others using the opportunity to fill a void in their life. The comments provided point to the particular value of the sites for providing opportunities for people with complex needs, providing a space for learning and personal expression that may not be available elsewhere. Although all groups had a focus on improving the quality of the greenspace in an area, the focus of activities and changes that occurred at each space varied. While for some groups there was a strong emphasis on growing, others focused on developing a more attractive space for the community. Achieving both was considered by some to be difficult, particularly when funding was limited. Many of the participants involved spoke of the heterogeneous nature of the group they had worked with, often citing this as a positive aspect of being involved, as well as being something which made the achievements of the group more remarkable. An important functional aspect of many groups was the role of local organisations in helping to deliver the project, with local schools playing an important role in the development and maintenance of the site. Although challenges were outlined in terms of ensuring regular participation, continued funding and the long term sustainability of sites, project leads were in universal agreement that the projects being delivered with the support of Stalled Spaces funding were worthwhile.

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6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that Stalled Spaces projects vary significantly in terms of their operation, how activities are undertaken and what meaning participants attach to the spaces developed. Many sites included in the study were created with the primary purpose of improving the appearance of the area, but have also become

Regenerated community space, Govan

important activity spaces for community groups. In some instances physical regeneration has not been seen to have been effectively achieved, although the social opportunities provided may have resulted in less measurable positive outcomes. This is important to consider when assessing the success of each individual project, and the findings here suggest that the impacts of involvement should be accorded importance alongside more tangible and easier-to-measure outcomes such as changes to the physical appearance of the site or the number of people who participated.

This study, although small, points to there being considerable value in creating conditions for communities to contribute to the development of their area. These benefits pertain to the individuals involved (e.g. through meeting new people or developing new skills) and the communities in which they are taking place (e.g. through subsequent activities). Where it is not possible to retain sites for a long period, measures could be put in place to support local groups to find new opportunities within their area (e.g. by being alerted to the possibility of applying for funding to develop other sites).

Although policy shifts which grant communities more power over the development of community assets and land may strengthen their position to influence decision-making at a local level, only groups that are well enough established to take on such responsibility are likely to benefit from these changes. Findings from this study show that although a number of Stalled Spaces projects have been initiated in more deprived areas throughout Glasgow, low participation rates were common at many of these sites. This suggests that additional support may be required in some areas to encourage people to become involved or for groups to become well established.

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Stalled Spaces funding can provide opportunities for people with a variety of needs and aspirations. The results here show that people of different ages and backgrounds have benefited in a range of ways, some profoundly, others in a more everyday sense. While funding has commonly been supplemented by other forms of financial support, Stalled Spaces funding has contributed to the regeneration process throughout Glasgow and brought about other forms of local activity. Given that civic participation, employment and volunteering levels in Glasgow remain lower than in most other parts of Scotland, Stalled Spaces provides a potentially important route for people to experience personal gains and make a contribution to community life through the development of their neighbourhood.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was carried out to generate insights that could be used to shape policy and practice. Although not representative of the whole initiative, the findings provide sufficient insight to be used to assess how the initiative could be developed further in the future. The recommendations below outline a range of actions that might be considered by those involved in

Vacant plot, Woodlands

delivering the Stalled Spaces initiative or other community-led regeneration projects.

1. The positive findings highlighted in this study suggest that continued funding should be provided by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association (together with any other available funding streams) to initiate further Stalled Spaces projects across the city. With £2,500 being the maximum allocation for each project and core funding of just £50,000 per annum, Stalled Spaces represents a reasonably low-cost intervention.

2. Continued monitoring of Stalled Spaces projects – and monitoring of similar projects – should include questions relating to individual health and community-level impacts, with findings used to shape the continuous development of the initiative.

3. With vacant and derelict land being more prevalent in areas of socioeconomic deprivation, efforts should be made to promote community projects such as those funded by Stalled Spaces in these areas, and support could be given in areas where existing community groups are less established.

4. Interview findings revealed that Stalled Spaces-funded projects had been beneficial to adult learning groups and school groups. Promotion of the initiative to these groups could contribute positively to community life, help people develop new skills and encourage people to take more ownership of their local environment.

5. The success of Stalled Spaces at encouraging community-led regeneration suggests that the initiative is now an established and recognised name. Further marketing of Stalled Spaces and the creation of a network of projects, possibly through the development of Stalled Spaces Scotland, could help to raise awareness of opportunities for community-led regeneration and allow groups to share learning.

6. Although funding is supplied for projects to be set up on a temporary basis, land insecurity issues presented a challenge to the long-term success of some projects. Reducing levels of uncertainty for groups or providing continued ongoing support after a project has stopped running could encourage greater involvement over a sustained period.

7. Findings from this study suggest that approaches like Stalled Spaces should be promoted on the grounds that they have the potential to support social activity, local creativity, place improvement, skills development and more sustainable behaviour (e.g. recycling and local food production).

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