



Developing Street Associations in Low Income Neighbourhoods

Final Evaluation Report

March 2015

Prepared by:
Angus McCabe and Amy Burnage



With support from:
Third Sector Research Centre



Contents:

Introduction: Evaluation Purpose.....	3
The Origins of Street Associations.....	3
The Street Associations Model	4
Policy Context.....	6
Evaluation Methods.....	7
Developing Street Associations in Low Income Neighbourhoods	8
Area Profiles	9
Identifying Streets	11
Launching Street Associations.....	12
Early Meetings and Events	15
Sustaining Street Associations.....	19
Key Findings	21
Next Steps and Recommendations	28
Appendix - Street Association Publicity Samples.....	32

The Barrow Cadbury Trust is an independent charitable foundation, committed to bringing about socially just change. We provide grants to grassroots community groups and campaigns working in deprived communities in the UK, with a focus on Birmingham and the Black Country. We also work with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society.

Introduction: Evaluation Purpose

The following evaluation of Street Association activities in Walsall and Solihull was commissioned as a requirement of Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT) funding. The aims of the evaluation are to:

- develop an understanding of what works in piloting the Street Association's model in deprived/low income communities
- identify the outcomes of involvement for those active in Street Associations in the target areas as well as the facilitators of, and barriers to, participation
- assess the perceived wider community impacts of the initiative in the target neighbourhood
- share and disseminate key lessons in terms of what works in implementing Street Associations in deprived/low income communities.

The current report covers the period from late September 2014 to the end of March 2015 and builds on an interim paper submitted to Uturn UK CIC in January 2015. It provides a context to the development of Street Associations initiative, an overview of progress to date against the outcomes anticipated in the original funding proposal to BCT and recommendations for action.

The Origins of Street Associations

'The problems with community are the key to what is wrong with society....social isolation, a lack of links between the generations...The goal is re-creating community.'

Martin Graham - Street Association Founder/Co-ordinator

Uturn UK was founded in 2010 and became operational over 2011 following a launch event (June 2011) at the Blue Coat School, Harborne, Birmingham. At this point Street Associations became the 'brand' of U Turn, a registered Community Interest Company.

Initial funding was secured from the Esmée Fairburn and Tudor Trusts to pilot the Street Association concept. In initial pilots operated in Harborne, Quinton and Weoley Castle - all relatively affluent neighbourhoods in South Birmingham - with contracts with Local Authorities to 'roll out' street Associations in, for example, Walsall and Staffordshire. there were a number of pilot initiatives in Birmingham and, to date, some 71 Associations have been formed with direct/hands-on start up support from the Co-ordinator, plus a further 50 areas accessing 'starter packs' via the website. A 'satellite' initiative has now also been funded through East Cheshire Council. This is being overseen by the current Co-ordinator with a local activist recruited to lead the project.

These pilots were internally evaluated through a survey of 100 members of Street Associations in Birmingham. This aimed to 'test' the original idea of building a stronger sense of community through social events and 'house meetings'. Overall, the findings were positive, indicating that respondents felt that activities had:

- assisted community cohesion (88%)
- made the street a friendlier place (99%)
- Improved feelings of community safety (67%)
- Helped personally to reduce feelings of social isolation (44%).

Further, of core group members active in organising local events (55%) over two thirds reported an increase in confidence and self-esteem. Building on the pilot programmes and the outcomes of the internal evaluation, Street Associations successfully applied to Barrow Cadbury Trust to develop the programme in low income neighbourhoods.

The Street Associations Model

There are a number of street level initiatives in the UK. These range from Neighbourhood Watch, Street Angels and Street Wardens (community safety) through to Street Champions (working for improved neighbourhood environments) and Near Neighbours (building community cohesion). The model has also been used to target specific groups, for example, children (Streets Alive) and older people (Age Friendly Streets). More recently, street based on-line tools, based on the assumption that neighbours are more likely to talk to each other once they are connected using social media, have also been developed: see for example <https://www.streetlife.com>.

Each of these initiatives has a stated objective (e.g. promoting community safety or cohesion). Whilst Street Associations may share these goals, there is a very different starting point. Namely, developing social connections at a street level with no pre-set objectives or agenda; but with an expectation that informal care and support will be enhanced by encouraging 'neighbourliness' and social interaction.

'I asked, what would help to recreate society and build supportive communities? I felt that the key was organising social events like quiz nights, which bring people together. The emphasis is on the social. Other things may happen, but the starting point is always social events - for their own sake as a way of getting people together'

Martin Graham: Street Associations Founder/Co-ordinator

A Local Councillor, interviewed in Solihull, also commented on this difference in approach/philosophy:

'The thing with Neighbourhood Watch, for example, is it starts with the idea that there is a problem. And people can find that quite threatening. Street Associations is about social things, bringing people together to enjoy themselves. It's a lot less threatening to get involved and it does build a sense of neighbourliness which I think round here had gone out of the window a bit.'

Similarly, a Big Local representative interviewed on the Cars Estate, Solihull, commented:

'I think Big Local missed a trick by not organising events like this (Christmas Party). Big Local is a big ask of local residents - spending £1 million over 10 years to tackle local problems. It's a really big ask here where people don't necessarily know, or possibly trust, their neighbours. So things like this could have been a sort of foundation to build on.'

The Street Association model has also been adapted for the current BCT supported initiative. In the earlier pilot phase, core group members (responsible for organising events) were recruited at public meetings. As volunteers, they then undertook street surveys, organised events and house meetings with minimal ongoing support from the Co-ordinator after the initial start-up. In Solihull and Walsall, the process has been:

- working with the local authority to identify specific estates and streets
- door knocking by the Street Association Co-ordinator and partner to complete base-line surveys and assess initial interest
- organising free barbeque events at which attendees were directly approached to join the Street Associations
- using community venues (rather than people's houses) for meetings 'as a safe neutral space where people feel comfortable coming together' (Marin Graham interview)
- more intensive involvement in event planning/core group meetings and at events themselves
- post event support.

Policy Context

Martin Graham described the origins of Street Associations as sitting and reflecting on what might help 're-build communities'. It is, however, perhaps no co-incidence that Street Associations started over 2010 and a General Election with a strong emphasis on 'broken Britain' and the creation of 'the Big Society'.

Street Associations has not, therefore, evolved in a policy vacuum. Rather the initiative sits with three key government agendas; localism, asset based community development and the promotion of health and wellbeing.

'Asset based approaches are concerned with identifying the protective factors that support health and wellbeing. They offer the potential to enhance the quality and longevity of life through focusing on the resources that promote the self-esteem and coping abilities of individuals and communities.'¹

Each of these policy areas stresses the importance of social networks, and the development of social networks where these are weak, as a means of meeting policy objectives in austere times. Strong social connections can help re-configure services, at times of cuts, towards prevention and early intervention.² Overcoming social isolation can

¹ McLean, J. (2011) *Asset Based Approaches to Health Improvement: Redressing the Balance*. Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Glasgow

² Department of Health (2013) *Wellbeing: why it matters to health policy*. DoH, London

both add years to life and improve the quality of life.³ Community connectedness can build resilience and the capacities of individuals and communities to overcome difficulties and conflict.⁴ Social networks can build more cohesive and sustainable communities.⁵

Thus, whilst Street Associations may be, at present, a small scale and socially focused initiative (rather than necessarily questioning or addressing structural disadvantage within and between communities), it does have a close fit with ‘big picture’ national policy initiatives.

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation adopted a mixed methodology which involved:

- supporting Street Associations in re-designing street surveys to obtain more fine grain data on peoples’ perceptions of their neighbourhood
- a short literature review to place the initiative in a wider policy context
- reviewing internal Street Association materials (eg. reports, minutes of meetings etc.)
- scoping and follow up interviews with the Street Association Founder/Co-ordinator
- face to face and follow up interviews with Street Association core group members
- observations at core group meetings and events
- vox pops interviews with participants in Street Association events.

Evaluation activity at the local level is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 - Summary: Evaluation Activity

Activity	Armstrong Drive, Solihull	Vauxhall Crescent, Solihull	Scarborough Road, Walsall	Kingsley Street, Walsall	Total
Observation Sessions	3	2	3	2	10
Interviews with	4	5	6	4	19

³ Morgan, A. and Ziglio, E. (2007) Revitalising the evidence base for public health. *IUHPE: Promotion and Education Supplement 2*, pp17-22. Foot, J. and Hopkins, T. (2010) *A Glass Half Full: How an Asset Based Approach Can Improve Community Health and Wellbeing*. Improvement and Development Agency, London

⁴ Young Foundation (2013) *Adapting to Change: the role of community resilience*. Young Foundation, London

⁵ Putnam, R (2000) *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster, New York:

core group members					
Vox pops: adults attending Christmas events	8	10	10	9	37
Vox pops: children attending Christmas events	12	8	4	3	27
Follow up interviews with core group members	3	2	2	2	9
Exit focus groups with core group members ⁶	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (8)	1 (3)	4 (19)

In total:

- 19 interviews were undertaken with core group members - 9 from Smith's Wood and 10 from Pleck. Of these, 13 were with women and 6 with men, 5 with BME adults. A total of 19 members attended four final focus groups over March 2015.
- 37 vox pops interviews were undertaken with adults attending Christmas events - 18 from Smith's Wood and 19 from Pleck. Of these, 25 were with women and 12 with men, 10 with BME adults.
- 27 vox pops interviews were undertaken with children attending Christmas events - 20 from Smith's Wood and 7 from Pleck. Of these, 13 were with boys and 14 with girls, six with BME or mixed heritage children.

Developing Street Associations in Low Income Neighbourhoods

'Working in some lower income areas, it has also become clear that starting Street Associations is doubly needed, in that residents are often separated by a climate of fear or mistrust and antisocial behaviour.'

Street Association Application to Barrow Cadbury Trust

Aside from exploiting local knowledge around the most suitable streets for piloting Street Associations in low income areas, potential sites were shortlisted for their proximity to suitable community venues. This was seen as vital for this stage of piloting through offering 'neutral spaces' for social activities. In both Solihull and Walsall, potential streets were identified through links with local councils.

⁶ Figure in brackets indicates number of participants.

Area Profiles

Cars Estate, Smith's Wood, Solihull:

The Cars Estate is in Smith's Wood, Solihull. Around 3,500 people live in the area, in houses and maisonettes completed in the early 1970's. There is a roughly even pattern in terms of housing tenure with 50% owner occupied and 43% in rented social housing. The estate is bordered to the north and east by the M6 motorway and the A452. The estate is a wave 3 Big Local area and is in the process of undertaking a neighbourhood profile and a community needs assessment exercise.

Smith's Wood as a whole is a Super Output Area and amongst the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Deprivation levels in Solihull showed the highest percentage increase on the Cars Estate between 2007 and 2010.

The area is predominantly white working class, with 9.6% of the population from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. It has a higher than average (23%) school age population. Census data indicates that 54.5% of residents are in employment, with 4.2% categorised as economically inactive - with an unemployment rate of 8.7% - over double the rate for the authority as a whole. Unemployment rates are particularly high amongst lone parents and between 39% (Cars West) and 36% (Cars East) of adults have no formal qualifications. Life expectancy is the second lowest in Solihull with an average of 77.9 years and the second highest premature death rates.

Smith's Wood has the lowest levels of resident satisfaction with the place they live in Solihull and is below the authority average on community cohesion scores and feelings of safety after dark and has crime rates above the Solihull average.

Source: Solihull Observatory: 2103 Ward Profile: Smith's Wood

Map of Cars Estate, Smith's Wood, Solihull



Pleck, Walsall:

Pleck lies to the south of Walsall and consists of terraced, semi-detached and detached houses with mixed tenure patterns: 67% owner occupied, 18% social housing and 17% private rented. The ward is much more deprived than the borough overall, with an estimated score that makes it the 3rd most deprived ward out of 20 in Walsall. The area consists of 15,041 residents and is ethnically mixed with 41% of the population classified as

White British (compared to 80% for Walsall as a whole) and 44% as Asian - predominantly Muslim. This represents a substantial change in the area profile between the 2001 and 2011 Census.

The population of Pleck is younger than the average for Walsall as a whole and attainment levels at GCSE are almost half the rate for Walsall as a whole and 34% of adults have no qualifications. The unemployment rate is 9.1% compared to 6.8% across the borough as a whole. Overall crime rates are higher in Pleck than other wards, though domestic burglary, vehicle crime and criminal damage are in line with Police authority statistics.

The Walsall Place Survey (2008) found that:

- 66.7% of residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live (Walsall = 71.4%)
- 72.0% agreed people from different backgrounds get on well together in their area (Walsall = 70.9%)
- 30.7% agreed they can influence decisions in their local area (Walsall = 22.7%)

Source: Walsall Council: 2011 Ward Census Data: Pleck

Identifying Streets

In Walsall, the Street Associations coordinators were put in touch with the community liaison officer for Walsall police, who suggested Pleck would be a good area to target. Kingsley Street and Scarborough Road were then selected through the police and with the support of the manager of the Kingsley Fellowship Klub (a suitability community venue) and the vicar of the church on Scarborough Road who offered the use of their facilities. Walsall Housing Group contributed £1,500 to the project.

In Solihull, the local council played a greater role in supporting the launch of the Smith's Wood Street Associations, both in awarding a £3,000 grant and encouraging connections with the Big Local committee on the Cars Estate. Through this relationship, Vauxhall Crescent was recommended as a suitable site and the Co-ordinator identified Armstrong Drive/Cowley Close, with these streets having access to Auckland Hall which could accommodate both indoor and outdoor community events.

Launching Street Associations

The four Street Associations were initiated by the coordinators conducting a door-knock survey about community spirit on each of the selected streets, to explore how people felt about their street and to hand out free tickets to a barbeque where the project would be launched. The Street Associations Co-ordinator estimated that around 90% of those who answered the door across the four streets agreed to participate in the survey, with all those who responded being offered a ticket to the barbeque.

Image 1. Kingsley Street Launch Barbeque



The results of the survey across the four streets are captured in Table 3 below. As a baseline, the survey demonstrates a general sense that an increase in community spirit would be welcomed, but with the Co-ordinator reporting some negative responses around antisocial behaviour, neighbour nuisance and racism, sampled in Table 2:

Table 2: Sample of Negative Comments from Survey

Residents' Responses to Questions on Community Spirit
"It'll take a miracle to get community spirit going on this street"
"There is a climate of fear on this street"
"It's hard here"
"The kids from that house are uncontrollable. They'll sit on your car, damage things"

"I don't want to mix with the people that live on this street"

"They just play their loud music at all times"

"We need something for the kids. They just play football on the streets"

"There used to be community spirit"

"There's a fear factor here"

"I lived here until I was 14, moved away for 10 years and now I'm back. The community spirit we had then has completely gone. I don't recognise the place"

"The kids just came to the window shouting at me, swearing. [In tears]. It was horrible. I don't want anything to do with anyone"

Table 3: Baseline Survey Results

Area and households	Armstrong Drive/Cowley Close (90 households)	Vauxhall Crescent (90 households)	Scarborough Road (100 households)	Kingsley Street (100 households)
Completing survey	25	38	56	57
Neighbours known by name (average)	13	6	6.5	12
Number of real friends (average)	4	2.3	2.5	5
Can call neighbour for help when ill? (%)	89	73	73	73
Are you lonely? (%)	0	11	16	27
Is there a community spirit? (% yes)	72	32	38	42
Would welcome an increase in community spirit? (% yes)	91	81	94	95

The barbeques themselves were held in the identified community venues (with a commercial barbeque purchased with a grant from the West Midlands Police Property Fund), where the coordinator introduced Street Associations and its objectives. Core group

members (who would be expected to take the Association forward) were also asked to sign up at this stage.

Image 2. Vauxhall Crescent Launch Barbeque



The approach taken here differed to the first round of pilots, with the coordinator approaching people individually to talk to them about core group participation, rather than inviting people to volunteer publically.

- At Kingsley Street, around 35 people eventually attended the barbeque after the coordinators knocked on doors to remind them of the event. 15 people signed up to the core group by providing contact details.
- At Vauxhall Crescent around 40 people attended the barbeque. 4 people were recruited to the core group. This later grew to 7, as a result of the coordinator then organising a fireworks display as a secondary recruitment event, attended by around 70 people.
- Around 50 people attended the barbeque at Scarborough Road and 14 people signed up to the core group.
- The weakest attendance was at Armstrong Drive, where just 15 adults and 15 children attended. There were no volunteers to the core group, until one resident recruited 5 others to form a group. Armstrong Drive then also held a fireworks display where around 100 attended and eventually formed a core group of 12 people.

Image 3. Scarborough Road Launch Barbeque



Image 4. Armstrong Drive Firework Display



Early Meetings and Events

A key learning point from the first of the core group meeting, which was held at Kingsley Street, was to have a meeting time, date and venue booked prior to the recruitment events for all other streets to avoid losing momentum. This was latter supported by exit focus groups which added ‘having a forward plan for events, rather than one off things, would help keep people involved’.

At Kingsley Street meetings, volunteers reduced from 15 to 9 between the barbeque and first meeting, and later to five people who organised and contributed to the Christmas party. Around 60 tickets were sold to the Christmas party at the Kingsley Fellowship Klub, with attendance of approximately 40 adults and children. The group arranged food, a raffle, a Santa visit for the children, an arts and crafts table, pass the parcel and party bags.

Image 5 . Kingsley Street Christmas Party



Prior to the Christmas event, members introduced the idea of establishing a street level Neighbourhood Watch. In support of this, seven of the local community policing team attended the Christmas event. The police have met with the core group to formalise the partnership with Neighbourhood Watch. However, in final interviews in March 2015, the core group felt that 'it was not strong enough yet to form a Neighbourhood Watch'. They also expressed concerns that earlier Neighbourhood Watch initiatives in the Pleck area 'were the same old people talking and not really changing anything.' More positively, the group are circulating an advisory leaflet around the street on dealing with anti-social behaviour, planning a VE Day celebration, a recruitment drive for additional volunteers at the end of March, and are applying for additional funding via the Near Neighbours Programme for a summer coach trip.

At Scarborough Road, where the first core group meeting happened less than a week after the barbeque, 12 of the 14 volunteers attended and this group remained stable across four meetings leading to Christmas. At the Christmas event, 87 tickets were sold and around 60

people attended. The emphasis of this party was fundraising for the neo-natal unit at the local hospital, with a raffle, auction, henna, face-painting and a nail bar all intended to generate funds. Free activities for children such as games and a visit from Santa were also provided, and food was donated from local residents and businesses. Support was also generated locally for the raffle and auction prizes.

Image 6. Scarborough Road Core Group Meeting with Local Police



To celebrate the success of the Christmas party, core group members met informally for a social on Boxing Day. The group plan to run social street events at least every four months (currently proposed is a barbeque, summer party, and seaside trip). The Street Association has registered as a Neighbourhood Watch, supported by the local community policing team, to enable residents to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour locally.

After the fireworks display, where 15 households contributed food, the core group at Vauxhall Crescent stabilised before the Christmas event at around six 'committed' people. Approximately 90 tickets were sold for the Christmas party at Auckland Hall, and around 60 people attended. Three core group members took the lead on this event, drawing in eight others to help with organising food, decorations, activities (including children's games and crafts) and a raffle. Prizes for this raffle and food for the buffet were all contributed by core group members. Unlike Pleck, Vauxhall Crescent had no interest in setting up a Neighbourhood Watch and has focused on social activities. An Easter Egg hunt, Big Lunch, "Camp Out" on the green and a seaside coach trip are all planned and advertised in for the coming year - with potential financial support from Big Local also

being explored. At time of writing' Vauxhall Crescent is the most advanced of the four Street Associations in terms of planned events for 2015.

Image 7. Vauxhall Crescent Core Group



At Armstrong Drive, the slow start at recruiting core group members increased after the firework display, to around 12 members. Of these people, two group members took the lead on the Christmas event, drawing in others to contribute. Food and raffle prizes were donated by residents and core group members, and it was agreed that decorations provided by Vauxhall Crescent would be shared with Armstrong Drive for the event. Arts and crafts, games, a disco and a Santa's grotto (created by the Vauxhall Crescent core group) were also organised. Just over 40 residents attended the event, also held at Auckland Hall. Following on from the Christmas Party, a children's Easter event has been proposed, as well as a party for older residents on the Drive, and a Big Lunch in June.

The Coordinator expressed a general feeling that the launching of the Street Associations went well across the four streets, despite a number of complex issues, but that it was far more labour intensive than expected. He suggests that the work is 'more relational than organisation' and relied heavily on building trust and relationships. It is anticipated that central coordination would be required for approximately a year to support the establishment of Street Associations in low income areas, and to nurture strong relationships with the core groups.

‘The middle classes tend to be self-starters. Here (Walsall) it has involved much more hand-holding just to give people the confidence that they can come together and organise things.’

Martin Graham: Street Associations Founder/Co-ordinator

Image 8. Armstrong Drive Christmas Party



Sustaining Street Associations

The Street Associations’ Co-ordinator and partner acted as the initial catalysts for establishing the four Street Associations in Walsall and Solihull by organising bonfire and barbeque events to recruit to core groups. The organisation of the Christmas events was much more of a ‘shared venture’ - with local people providing much of the food, activities, equipment and raffle prizes, but with support from the Co-ordinator. Between September 2014 and March 2015, this support has also involved attending and/or co-ordinating:

- Seven core group meetings at Scarborough Road
- Six core group meetings at Kingsley Street
- Five core group meetings on Armstrong Drive
- Four core group meetings on Vauxhall Crescent

This contrasts with the experience in earlier pilots, which involved the Co-ordinator in attending a community event to publicise Street Associations - followed by attendance at one meeting/event and subsequently occasional ‘light touch’ support.

It is interesting to note that Vauxhall Crescent, which has formally met on the fewest occasions, is the most advanced of the Associations in terms of planning events in 2015 - and has the youngest membership. This has been facilitated by keeping the group in touch with each other, and engaging a wider network, to organise through the use of social media - in particular, Facebook.

At Scarborough Road, the core group have held the most meetings of the four Street Associations and its attendance is reported to be around 10 people at every meeting. Unlike in the other three streets, where exit focus groups indicated a loss of momentum and attendance around the core groups since Christmas, Scarborough Road is regularly meeting and planning. There is real enthusiasm about extending the core group to ensure a significant number of people are involved in every meeting to share workload and “take the pressure off every person having to attend every single meeting to keep things going”.

Across the other streets, groups report that some of the pre-Christmas momentum had been lost, in part because of ‘having busy lives’, but also due to the gap between the Christmas events and post-Christmas meetings, and the four month run up to possible Easter events. Further, whilst there was a wider pool of people who could be drawn in to events, fewer were able or prepared to ‘sit in meetings when it’s a dark night and cold...and they don’t like meetings anyway.’ This was a particular issue on Kingsley Street in Pleck, where core group members mentioned fear of anti-social behaviour as a factor in restricting people’s willingness to attend evening meetings.

The four Street Associations are, therefore, at different stages of development, with Kingsley Street and Armstrong Drive appearing particularly fragile. Whilst the implications of this are discussed in the findings and recommendations section of the report, it is important to record the sheer volume of local resident support in terms of volunteer time, donations of goods and producing, for example, publicity materials (see appendix for examples)

Key Findings

Street Associations has successfully negotiated access to four streets in two low income neighbourhoods in Walsall and Solihull (see area profiles). The aim is to meet the target of eight streets (Interim Progress Report to BCT) through the recruitment of a further four streets in the spring of 2015. The view of the Street Association Founder was that these four low income neighbourhood pilots had taken a substantially greater time commitment to establish than in earlier, more affluent, pilot areas. Discussions are under way in both Walsall and Solihull for the further 'roll out' of Street Associations locally.

In both Pleck and the Cars Estate, Street Associations has succeeded in securing additional funds to support events: £3,000 from Solihull Council and £1,500 via Walsall Housing Group's Neighbourhood Fund. Scarborough Road and Kingsley Street in Walsall are independently seeking funding from the Near Neighbours programme, and there is also the potential for future Big Local funding on the Cars Estate in Solihull. At a more strategic level, Street Associations has built strong relationships with Neighbourhood Watch and the 'Big Lunch' nationally.

In each area, core groups have been established and have, to date, organised a children's Christmas Party for each street and held at least eight meeting each. The strength of each core group is, however, variable, with more commitment secured in Vauxhall Crescent (Solihull) and Scarborough Road (Walsall). In both areas, core group members have been recruited from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and the activities undertaken (particularly in Pleck) have reflected the diversity of the community.

Adapting the initial 'house meeting' approach of Street Associations to using 'neutral' public places for meetings has facilitated resident engagement, though this has involved some additional costs. What has facilitated progress has been the more intensive 'start-up' support and encouragement offered by the Street Associations initiative. This has included undertaking, directly, the initial street door knocking/surveys (undertaken by local volunteers in the earlier pilots), the organisation of free barbeque/bonfire events at which Street Associations were marketed and core group members recruited,. Subsequently, those core group members went door-knocking on the day of the Christmas events to remind residents to attend. provided food for, and activities at, the event.

At the initial scoping stage, the Street Association Founder/Co-ordinator expressed scepticism about the capacity of local residents to organise independently, but this proved to be an unfounded concern. Core group members have committed considerable time to meetings, organising food (including securing donated food), obtaining donated goods for raffles and running activities at each event. Table 4 captures core group feedback on the key factors in the development of their community activities.

Table 4: Core group reflections on key contributions

Interview Comments
<p>‘Funding helped. The bonfire was a free and very successful event and that sort of created a momentum.’</p> <p>‘Having a little pot of money is useful, just so you are not always putting your hand in your own pocket.’</p> <p>‘The informality (of Street Associations) is important. Breaking the ice by talking to people on the street and on their doorsteps. Definitely the informality. We struggle here with getting people involved in Big Local because, I think, people don’t trust structures and formality.’</p> <p>‘Someone from the outside coming in, actually knocking on your door, talking to you directly and giving you the confidence to do something.’</p> <p>‘The direct approach worked - being asked to take part face to face rather than a leaflet through the door inviting you to a meeting...which is the usual thing.’</p> <p>‘Martin’s (Street Association Founder/Co-ordinator) enthusiasm is catching. It’s real ‘can do’ and does not just look at ‘the problems.’</p> <p>‘People have just been contributing so much. Their time, or food, or decorations. Even if they can’t stay for the whole thing.’</p> <p>‘Working at a street level has helped. It just makes things more manageable.’</p> <p>‘We’ve done a lot....meetings....but they have made it fun.’</p> <p>‘Everyone putting their ideas into the pot and feeling they could do this has been important’.</p> <p>‘Being part of a bigger network is really useful. I don’t think we could do it without help and advice from Martin on things we don’t know like money and insurance, and being able to see what other Street Associations is good as well.’</p>

It should be noted that, in each area, key members of the respective core groups have already been active in their community in various ways, for example in organising events

for Temple, as the local vicar, or as Big Local representatives. However, the recruitment of these activists, alongside the direct approach to others, as enabled a wider group of people to be involved. As one core group member commented; 'this is the first time I've been involved in organising anything.' The motivation for those joining the core group also varied significantly. On Scarborough Road, one driver in arranging the children's Christmas Party was to raise funds for the neo-natal unit at the local hospital - 'I just really feel like charity begins at home'. For others, it was simply to 'meet the neighbours properly'. At Armstrong Drive, where the majority of those active were retired, the motivator was 'to get back a sense of community that was here when we moved (to the estate)', or to 'stay active' or 'do something for the children'. For those on Vauxhall Crescent, where the majority were younger parents, it was about 'doing something for ourselves and our families.' In Kingsley Street, some felt it offered the opportunity to strengthen the community against anti-social behaviour and 'feeling a bit intimidated on your own street'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, establishing Street Associations in the two areas has not been without its challenges. In Pleck, discussions at event planning meetings raised issues of anti-social behaviour and racism in both streets. Interestingly, the Asian family who experienced racist abuse dismissed this as general anti-social behaviour, whilst the incidents were described as racist abuse by White residents. An outcome of these discussions has been the Street Association registering as a street based Neighbourhood Watch, supported by the local Police. On Scarborough Road, divisions were evident between what two core group members described as 'our end of the street' and 'the other end'. Residents were aware of a number of 'known' families and individuals who they did not want to involve in Street Associations, as well as the risk of others coming to the street for 'dodgy' reasons. For Kingsley Street, one core group member said she participated in Street Association in an attempt to 'sort out this one really difficult family who wreck the street'. This was echoed by another resident, and carried through to a general sense that disrespect and lack of care was evident in the street. On the Cars Estate, the development of Street Association itself resulted in surfacing of tensions between long established residents and more recent in-comers, as well as between owner occupiers and those living in private or social rented accommodation; 'here it is a lot of little cliques rather than a community.' The Co-ordinator was required to help manage a particularly tense relationship between two core group members here.

Despite these challenges, and within a relatively short space of time (since September 2014), Street Associations has achieved its goal of using social activities to ‘re-build’ a sense of, if not community, certainly neighbourly social networks. The term ‘re-build’ here is important. What local residents in both Pleck and on the Cars Estate described were not ‘broken communities’ but ones with a residual, or perhaps latent, sense of community:

‘We get a bad press, but people like living round here.’

‘The people who talk us down...they are all outsiders and don’t really know what it is like round here.’

Feedback from participants in the children’s Christmas Parties was unanimously favourable in their response to Street Associations. A key theme, in line with the Association’s goals, was that increased sense of knowing and trusting neighbours, self-confidence and wellbeing (see Table 5 for summary feedback).

Table 5: Resident Feedback - Adults: Christmas Event Vox Pops (Sample)

Armstrong Drive, Solihull	Scarborough Road, Walsall
‘Street Associations has really got people involved. There is a general apathy in the area so it’s been a lot harder to get people involved with Big Local...but the social side of Street Associations has really attracted people.’	‘It’s nice to see how much everyone’s contributed and got stuck in. I think we should be really proud.’
‘Knowing your neighbour was what was missing...but that is sort of changing.’	‘I’m unemployed at the moment and it feels good to be doing something for the street and the area. And it looks good on my CV’
‘I’m retired, so this (Christmas event) was something to do...and it’s nice just seeing people actually having a chat.’	‘It’s just about stopping for quick hello now, not just walking passed like we would before’.
‘There is not a lot for children to do round here and they go to different schools. So this is a nice way of getting the children all together.’	‘I don’t think all those kids knew each other before this but look at how well they’re playing and getting on. It’s got to be good for the street, you know, the next generation.’
‘I think this helps. It helps you know who you can turn to if you need a bit of help.’	‘There’s a lot of issues on the street and to be honest there are some people who I just don’t think I’d want here, but everyone who has come are really nice and friendly and I’m happy to get to know them.’
‘It’s just nice to see something for the children at Christmas.’	‘I’ve lived here 17 years, my neighbours lived in 42 years and we’ve nodded hello but never talked until this. Crazy isn’t it.’

Vauxhall Crescent, Solihull	Kingsley Street, Walsall
<p>‘It’s been good. Here and at the bonfire I’ve met a lot of new people that I knew by sight but had never spoken to.’</p> <p>‘There are a lot of new people on the estate and it’s been a chance to get to know them.’</p> <p>‘I’ve lived on the estate since it was built. So when the children were young I knew a lot of people from the school gate. But I’ve worked since then and sort of lost touch. So with these events I’ve sort of reconnected with people I had not really spoken to for years.’</p> <p>‘I speak to lot more people now, so it feels okay to pop round and talk if I haven’t seen them for a while.’</p> <p>‘I think it’s (Street Associations) achieved its goal....bringing people together who had never spoken before.’</p>	<p>‘I’m really shy and keep myself to myself but forced myself to come for my grandson so he could play and meet some other kids on the street...I’d definitely bring him to more things like this.’</p> <p>‘I bet a lot of the women here don’t socialise with anyone outside their family, it’s nice to see them sit and talk.’</p> <p>‘This man lives across the street from me and I’d never spoken to him, now we’ve chatted all afternoon and will certainly be friendlier now.’</p> <p>‘They should do this every month or maybe even do trips or something. It’s really good to get to know everyone.’</p>

For the, mainly younger, children interviewed the events were, quite simply, fun and something that did not usually happen in their neighbourhood.

Table 6: Feedback -Children: Christmas Event Vox Pops (Sample)

Armstrong Drive, Solihull	Scarborough Road, Walsall
<p>‘I like the games.’</p> <p>‘Santa was great.’</p> <p>‘I like this. All my friends are here.’</p> <p>‘It’s the first Christmas Party here.’</p> <p>‘Great...I won sweets in the raffle.’</p>	<p>‘I had the curry...it was really nice but a bit hot’</p> <p>‘I know where Santa lives!’</p> <p>‘All the toys are fun’</p> <p>‘We got Henna tattoos for £1. The lady said we had to wait until they were dry and cracked then we could wash it off and the light brown lines would stay.’</p>
Vauxhall Crescent, Solihull	Kingsley Street, Walsall
<p>‘It was fun. I played with my friends.’</p> <p>‘I talked with Santa.’</p> <p>‘I liked the games.’</p> <p>‘I liked making things.’</p>	<p>‘It’s a Christmas card for my family that I made’</p> <p>‘I saw Father Christmas’</p> <p>‘I came with my mum and my nan, they don’t speak much English so they wanted</p>

'All my friends are here. It's fun.'	me to help'
--------------------------------------	-------------

Follow up resident surveys have not been conducted in the four Street Association areas at the time of writing. Quantifying the impact of the initiative on local quality of life indicators (and the extent to which these have changed) is not therefore possible at this stage. However, exit interviews with core group members (just under three months after the Christmas events) focused on their perception of what had, or had not, improved on their street as a result of this initiative. The group at Scarborough Road expressed their keenness to organise another free event quickly to promote Street Associations and build on their membership. Whilst core members at Kingsley Street and Armstrong Drive were, overall, disappointed at the dropping off of active core group membership since Christmas, views across all street were that Street Associations made a positive impact - both in terms of what members had personally gained from participation and through changes across the wider community. These views are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: What's Changed? Core Group Focus Group Feedback: March 2015

Armstrong Drive, Solihull	Scarborough Road, Walsall
It's been helpful to get to know the neighbours and not just the people next door.'	'To be completely honest, I wanted to be involved because I'm actually really worried about anti-social behaviour on the street and I wanted to feel safe talking about some of our problems and deciding what to do'
'The way people just muck in, it's been great. And they have been so generous, restores your faith as they say.'	'It's just good community stuff isn't it. You know, new neighbours, new people, new faces, its important'
'It's not just that people wave to each other across the street. They come across and have a chat and you get to know people by name.'	'It was so nice seeing all the kids together at the Christmas party so I'm thinking we should now do like a little weekly football club or youth club or something. There is nothing for them on this street, it's not safe at the moment.'
'I'm a bit older and I don't think I would have gone to some of my neighbours for help if I needed it. But now I know them and I feel I could.'	'I think we should be really proud of ourselves, we all came together and get stuff done and really it hasn't been that much hard work'
'It's been good but it worries me it's the same two or three people doing everything.'	'One thing is that some people are more interested in Neighbourhood Watch than Street Associations. They just aren't interested in the social bit'
'You feel you can use the Street Association as a stepping stone. It gives you a reason for getting a conversation going with people.'	

Vauxhall Crescent, Solihull	Kingsley Street, Walsall
<p>‘I think what I’ve learned is that people don’t like meetings but are really willing to help out. It’s encouraged me because in Big Local people not coming to meetings was seen as people being apathetic and not caring about the neighbourhood.’</p> <p>‘Before we did this I’d never talked to XXX (name). We had passed on the street and never spoken. Now we always stop and have a chat.’</p> <p>‘I moved here recently and this has been great. I was worried as I knew now-one when we moved here but now I really feel at home.’</p> <p>‘ A lot of people have moved onto the estate recently and it’s been a good way of bringing them together with people who maybe have lived here all their lives.’</p> <p>‘I don’t get upset with the children playing on the street any more. It used to worry me , but now I know their names and we can have a talk.’</p> <p>‘I feel much more comfortable on the estate now...now that it’s a place where people stop and chat.’</p> <p>‘This has turned back some of the bad feeling that was coming around on the estate’.</p> <p>‘Simple, but important...it’s been enjoyable’</p>	<p>‘Street Associations has been good. It’s been the neighbourhood group that looks after the street and got neighbours talking.’</p> <p>‘I’ve enjoyed it and I know more neighbours, but I still worry that we are not strong enough as a group yet to tackle the anti-social behaviour around here. Anti-social behaviour makes people keep themselves to themselves and that has made the Street Association harder.’</p> <p>‘I’ve met some wonderful people I did not know were on this street and I have been here 45 years.’</p> <p>‘The Christmas event was really good and the children enjoyed themselves. But that has been the only event so I think it’s to soon to say whether we are really making a difference.’</p> <p>‘I’ve lived here six years but moved away for a year to look after my dad. When I came back I wanted to do something for the street and do something that would mean my daughter felt safe here. Street Association was sort of it’</p>

The challenge, therefore, will be not necessarily organising further events, but ensuring that the feeling of increased connectedness highlighted by interviewees is sustained beyond and between social gatherings.

It would also be interesting (but beyond the scope of the current evaluation) to gain the views of residents who either refused to complete initial street surveys and/or were unwilling to join the local Street Association or attend events. This was recognised as a key challenge for the core group members interviewed;

‘I think what is important, but difficult, is for Street Associations to get beyond those that are already active in the community and reach those who have not been involved.’

‘Lots of us [core group] actually already know each other and just roped our friends in.’

‘We already do a lot of stuff for Temple, so we’re really used to putting on this sort of events.’

Next Steps and Recommendations

As illustrated to this point, each of the four Street Associations are at a different stage of development, and are working under different formats for different purposes. Both Kinglsey Street in Pleck and Armstrong Drive in Solihull reported that they would ‘wait and see’ how Christmas events went before planning future activities. As one core group member commented ‘you have to walk before you can run. You have to build some foundations.’ Since then, both streets have begun discussing future events, but with an awareness that more committed group members and volunteers would be needed to push the Street Association forward. In contrast, Vauxhall Crescent already has a series of events planned for 2015, including Easter Saturday games, A ‘Big Lunch’ a summer camp out (July) and day trip to Weston-Super Mare (September). For Scarborough Road, group attendance remains strong with regular and well attended meetings, but there is a sense that securing dates and making decisions around events involves careful negotiation; ‘we seem to get carried away, I think it’s important we take our time and do things right’.

It is likely that continued Street Association support will be required to sustain or reinvigorate any momentum built in the run-up to Christmas. A number of people in both streets commented that it took more meetings than they thought to get the Christmas parties planned, while other suggested that it was Neighbourhood Watch, rather than the social element of Street Associations itself, that was their main focus and concern. Table 8 captures final reflections and feedback from core group members at exit focus groups.

Table 8. Focus Group Reflections

Feedback from Evaluation Participants
<p>‘It’s been good to stop and this meeting and just think back to how we started and how far we have come.’</p> <p>‘I’ve learned a lot. I’m more confident. I’ve never been called ‘chair’ before, never mind run a meeting’.</p> <p>‘I’m retired...so Street Association has really given me a purpose and kept me active.’</p> <p>‘I don’t like handling money, other people’s money. But I’ve learned how to do it. Have to say it still scares me a bit though.’</p> <p>‘I was a bit sceptical at first...like this will not work round here. But I thought I’d give it a go. And the great thing is that other people have done so as well.’</p> <p>‘I think what I have learned is that you can’t just do meetings. You have to get out and be seen...at events like the bonfire or the Christmas party. It’s only when you are seen, and the events, people have enjoyed them, that’s when you get people involved.’</p> <p>‘It’s good because it’s informal. Yes it’s meetings, but they haven’t felt like meetings.’</p> <p>‘I think what would be good in the future is to know you have a plan of events. So you announce at one event what is happening next and then people can get involved if they want or just sort of dip in and out.’</p>

Drawing on the feedback from interview participants and reflections on observation sessions at events and core group meetings, the report’s recommendations are:

1. Street Associations plan, as a matter of priority, an exit or succession strategy in Pleck and the Cars Estate. This could either be planned withdrawal with minimal future support or seeking continuance funding for a longer term engagement and the roll out of the Associations in neighbouring streets. Gradual withdrawal has already been implemented at Scarborough Road, with the Street Association Co-ordinator not attending a successful and productive group meeting in March 2015. Whilst in the other three Street Associations local residents now chair meetings, consideration needs to be given as to how this process evolves with the more fragile associations on Kingsley Street and Armstrong Drive.
2. The qualitative interview data, and particularly exit focus groups with core group members, indicate that Street Associations is making a difference. It would be beneficial to be able to, at least in part, quantify this through follow up street surveys (as undertaken in earlier pilots). It is, however, recognised that this may

not be possible with the relatively small numbers of active core group members whose energies may be better spent (certainly in their view) on organising events.

3. Core group members recommended two actions from their learning through Street Associations, namely that:
 - a. The set up stage for any future Street Associations should be early in the calendar year. This would give the core group the opportunity to plan a series of events over Easter, the summer and in the run up to Christmas that would sustain engagement.
 - b. Dates for core group meetings are planned well in advance around events, rather than, as at present, dates for future meetings being agreed at each meeting. Again the view was that this could facilitate continuity and sustain momentum.
4. Consideration needs to be given to the financial viability of the four Associations supported to date. As noted, the Street Associations model has been adapted for Pleck and the Cars Estate. Whereas pilot initiatives tended to be 'house meeting' based, there are costs associated with the hire of public places for meetings as well as actual events. Whilst the amounts are not substantial, they do have implications for core group members (who often made significant donations to Christmas events) in low income neighbourhoods. Donations alone are unlikely to sustain activities and the options of small/community chest grants should be explored. With cuts to Local Authority budgets this may be problematic - though perhaps less so on the Cars Estate where there may be access to Big Local monies. However, as a Wave 3 Big Local, the estate plan has yet to be submitted and agreed. Funding is therefore unlikely to be released until later in 2015, or early 2016.
5. Christmas events at each of the Street Associations raised between £90 and £120. The view from across the piece that, with generous donations of time, goods etc, future events could be 'run on a shoe-string, or at least only a bit of money'. The idea has been to draw down money raised from Christmas events to invest in future activities. Consideration should be given to including a small endowment fund for new Street Associations. Essentially, money that can be drawn on to cover the costs of events (particularly more costly activities proposed such as coach trips) to ease cash flow problems and 'stop people dipping into their own pockets when there is not a lot of money about.' Such an endowment could also be used to cover event insurance.

6. Careful consideration needs to be given to the balance between formality and informality in Street Associations. Participants particularly valued the informality of the initiative and felt that this had helped in engaging people. However, that informality did not help to protect people within the core group when handling money. This also applies to securing insurance for events.
7. To date, Street Associations has worked in areas of 'traditional' housing. It would be interesting, and challenging, to test the model in high rise estates where there is often less 'street level' connection.
8. Vauxhall Crescent is the most advanced Street Association in terms of future plans. Much of that planning has been done through the use of social media - in particular Facebook. This is also the group with the youngest membership. Consideration should be given by Street Associations to the greater use of social media in terms of networking, communication and co-ordination.
9. Street Associations should continue to build on the strategic alliances made with Neighbourhood Watch and the Big Lunch, whilst retaining its own distinct identity and purpose. Indeed, there is the potential to extend strategic relationships - and attract possible funding - in response to (for example) the health and wellbeing agenda within public health and Care Commissioning Groups or the community investment strategies of Housing Associations and Registered Social Landlords.
10. Issues of scale need to be considered. The strength of Street Associations 'at the grass roots' is that they are street based. However there was a view from the police and other representatives from statutory bodies, was that Local Authorities in particular lacked the resources to respond to, for example, Neighbourhood Watch schemes established on a street by street basis.

While it is important that Street Associations are not set up in response to particular local agendas; working socially at street level (particularly in low income neighbourhoods) is likely to expose localised and complex issues (and indeed in two areas has exposed neighbourhood tensions as well as strengths). Across the four low income pilot areas, Street Associations has made a contribution to building on the Trust's objectives of building community resilience. The challenge is to sustain the gains secured to date and build on these to support effective approaches to reducing economic and social injustice and assist in building cohesion in diverse neighbourhoods in line with broader Barrow Cadbury Trust values and objectives.

Appendix - Street Association Publicity Samples



What's Happening on Armstrong Drive and Cowley Close

Street Association
love my street

A number of us got together over a barbecue in September and thought it would be good to generate more community spirit. So we set up the Armstrong Drive and Cowley Close Street Association.

We have held two events to date :-

Our first event was a Guy Fawkes Firework party with a bring and share barbecue.
With 20 homes bringing food to share - a real feast was enjoyed by all who attended.

Our second event was a delightful Christmas Party held at Auckland Hall
As you can see from the photographs above it was well appreciated by children and adults.
Both events were a great success and we are looking to see what we can do next.

With Easter coming up we thought we could make use of the Green again:-

 **Easter Saturday at - 3.30pm:** 

Easter Egg Hunt - all children - come along and join in !
Easter Bonnet Parade - make your own hat with an Easter Theme
a **PRIZE** for the best and craziest hat !
Plant a Bulb- on the Green (bulbs provided)

Cost: absolutely nothing, just bring yourselves along get to know more neighbours make our streets that bit more friendly and supportive.

Want to help organise events ? Join our core group (currently 10 of us)
Pop in to Sheila at 17 Armstrong Drive or email armstrongf@gmail.com for more details.

The Barrow Cadbury Trust is an independent charitable foundation, committed to bringing about socially just change. We provide grants to grassroots community groups and campaigns working in deprived communities in the UK, with a focus on Birmingham and the Black Country. We also work with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society.

The evaluation of Street Associations was undertaken by Angus McCabe and Amy Burnage with support from the Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham.

