



Transforming Challenged Communities

Your handy guide to the 7 steps



C2 | **Connecting
Communities**
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THE C2 WAY



This guide is designed to complement the C2 Introductory Course and Experiential Learning Programme, to explain and unpack each step clearly, and act as a handy guide and reference for all C2 learners.



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■ Why this guide was written and how to use it

In 1968, as a teenage student nurse at King's College Hospital, I was first introduced to health inequalities. Rather like the midwife in the Sunday evening BBC series, I cycled around Lewisham with a Health Visitor and was shocked by the startling contrast in health status between the families living at the bottom of the hill, in poor socio-economic circumstances, and those at the top of the hill in affluent Blackheath. The unfairness of it had a great impact and shaped my career for the next 40 years.

The bad news is that health inequalities are worse than ever, the good news is that there are now major breakthroughs in how to tackle and prevent them in the first place, as you're about to discover using C2 Connecting Communities.

Are you, like us, a bit weary of all the rhetoric, countless documents and reports published in recent years, endlessly banging on about the importance of strong, resilient communities and community engagement? There must be hundreds of them, more recently telling us that we must work in an asset based way, be co-productive and have our glasses half full!

Most are very worthy and explain the 'why' but they seldom explain the 'how'. How do you actually do large-scale engagement at street level, involving all the services and make it work? **We think this is a huge gap.**

So this short guide, to accompany the C2 learning programmes, is our attempt to put this right. We hope it will encourage you to think and work differently, by being part of an exciting approach that applies these simple, common sense methodologies that really do work.

It's based on 40 years of 'learning by doing', working with disadvantaged communities and understanding the 'inner life' of troubled neighbourhoods, the dynamics of poverty and learning from all our mistakes as well as what's worked. (We're still learning and making mistakes by the way!)

So do please use it as a reference, literally '**every step of the way**'. We hope you enjoy the journey!

– Hazel Stuteley OBE

■ The journey from Isolation to Transformation

What is C2?

C2, short for **Connecting Communities**, is a 'not for profit' independent organisation, linked and partnered with Exeter University. C2 has a consistent 18-year track record of breaking through long-standing barriers to support delivery of cost effective, transformative and lasting change, reviving, re-energizing and bringing a sense of order to dysfunctional, disadvantaged communities across the UK.



The richly experienced **C2 delivery support team**, drawn from a range of **academic, NHS and community leadership** roles, offers a unique 'learning by doing' 2 year package to commissioners, to not only tackle and transform a target neighbourhood, but to embed skills and knowledge to enable this effective approach to be further replicated by them in other neighbourhoods of their choice.

How and why it works

C2 works because it is **not a project**. It is an energizing approach that works by bringing about a **culture shift and large scale behaviour change** at strategic, community and frontline service delivery levels, to harness the collective, creative power of residents working as equals with **Police, Health, Education and Local Authority** services. Embedding this different way of working with communities brings **long lasting change and improvement**.

The programme was developed following 2 years of research into 'what worked and why' on the multi-award winning Beacon Project in Falmouth 1994 – 2000 which taught us that **residents are the solution and never the problem**.



C2 has a robust theoretical framework using insights from complexity science as the sense-making lens through which to view, understand and deliver community transformation.

It works with and releases the latent strengths of residents and service providers, inherent in all neighbourhoods and is grounded in 20 years of 'practice based evidence'.

It is also based on recent and compelling biological evidence that lacking control and influence over one's immediate environment, is the root cause of damaging

health and social behaviours leading to costly management of chronic illness and community breakdown.

Our experience is that all this is entirely preventable and treatable.

The 2-year C2 delivery support programme uses the unique C2 7-step framework to create new relationships embedding the values of trust, humility, compassion and respect from 'high level to street level'. As its full title suggests C2 connects communities in 3 different ways.

- **Within themselves, creating networks and mutual co-operation;**
- **With local service providers -building a parallel 'community';**
- **With other C2 communities across the UK, getting and giving inspiration and peer learning directly from one place to another.**

The end result is a dynamic and self-renewing neighbourhood 'People and Services' partnership where there is productive co-operation between agencies and residents, generating major improvements in local conditions and quality of life for all.

■ A quick word on language and C2 'buzz' words

We believe that for far too long, communities have been defined by their deficits rather than their strengths and the use of language and certain 'label' words often perpetuates this. Our experience is that residents living in lowincome communities are always offended at being described as '**deprived**'. They never 'feel' deprived and are certainly never 'deprived in spirit'. They are comfortable with '**disadvantaged**' however, which more aptly describes their status. Similarly, being described as '**hard to reach**' is seen as intensely patronising and they will often turn the tables to suggest that it's some service providers who are extremely hard to reach! Another frequently heard and inappropriate 'label' word is to describe residents as '**apathetic**'. Our experience tells us that the reality of this perceived apathy, defined in the dictionary as lack of interest, enthusiasm and concern, is that it in fact reflects large scale **powerlessness**, **hopelessness** and in extreme case **clinical depression**. This is what happens after years of being 'done to', being the passive recipients of services, having no sense of influence and control in decision -making and of never being listened to. So we recommend great sensitivity in the use of language. It all makes a difference in the way we perceive communities and how they perceive themselves.

C2 buzz words!

Because C2 is all about large-scale change, we want to introduce you to some terms that we find helpful, when assessing and analysing our target neighbourhoods. C2 uses insights from complexity science as the lens through which to view change and these are frequently used terms taken from this. We often refer the 'problem and opportunity space'. A starting point is to identify what's in the 'problem space' and how we can use C2 to get to the 'opportunity space'.

Other frequently used words are '**key**' to indicate potential to unlock and 'open up', and '**self**' as in 'management' and 'organisation' to describe the subtle shift in power dynamics from service provision across to residents.



■ Giving communities back self-belief by creating hopeful futures

Step 1 C2 begins creation of enabling conditions and new relationships needed for community transformation at strategic, frontline service delivery and street levels. C2 Strategic Steering Group (SSG) established. Target neighbourhood scoped and local C2 secondee appointed. 'Key' residents identified to jointly self-assess baseline connectivity, hope & aspiration levels.

Step 2 Establish C2 Partnership Steering Group (PSG) of front line service providers with key residents, who share a common interest in improving the target neighbourhood. Hold connecting workshop and identify team of 6-8 members to attend 2 day C2 '1st wave' Introductory Learning Programme.

Step 3 PSG plans and hosts Listening Event to identify and prioritise neighbourhood health & well-being issues and produces report on identified issues, which is fed back to residents and SSG a week later. Commitment established at feedback event to form and train resident led, neighbourhood partnership to jointly tackle issues.



Step 4 Constitute partnership which operates out of easily accessed hub within community setting, opening clear communication channels to the wider community via e.g. newsletter and estate 'walkabouts'. Host exchange visits and meetings with other local community groups and strategic organisations. Identify '2nd wave' of 6-8 new learners to C2 Experiential Learning Programme.

Step 5 Monthly partnership meetings, providing continuous positive feedback to residents and SSG. Celebration of visible 'wins' e.g. successful funding bids which support community priorities and promote positive media coverage, leading to increased community confidence, volunteering and momentum towards change. Partnership training undertaken to further consolidate resident skills.

Step 6 Community strengthening evidenced by resident self-organization e.g. setting up of new groups for all ages and development of innovative social enterprise. Accelerated responses in service delivery leading to increased community trust, co-operation, co-production and local problem solving.

Step 7 Partnership firmly established and on forward trajectory of improvement and self renewal. Key resident/s employed and funded to co-ordinate activities. Measurable outcomes and evidence of visible transformational change, e.g. new play spaces, improved residents' gardens and reduction in ASB, all leading to measurable health improvement and parallel gains for other public services.



■ Step 1: Building firm foundations and locating the energy for change

(Timeframe approximately 3-6 months)

C2 begins the creation of enabling conditions and new relationships needed for community transformation at strategic, frontline service delivery and street levels. C2 Strategic Steering Group (SSG) established. Target neighbourhood scoped and local C2 secondee appointed. 'Key' residents identified to jointly self-assess baseline community connectivity, hope and aspiration levels.

This step can take up to 6 months depending on readiness to change within the commissioning organisation and its partners. C2 has developed a change model and formula for assessing this and managing any resistance.

C2 'Scoping' target neighbourhood involves identifying and analysing the key multiple dimensions, social, cultural and historical that together have created the 'problem space' referred to in the introduction.

Appointment of local C2 secondee is made for 12-18 months, to become a full member of the C2 team. This not only supports **local operational activity** but also ensures that in depth skills and knowledge, and **'learning by doing'** C2 in the target neighbourhood, is embedded for future sustainability of this way of working & future replication, using original site as exemplar for others.

Strategic 'buy in' / setting up Strategic Steering Group (SSG)

Unless there is 'buy in' to the C2 'whole community' way of working at a top strategic level, there will inevitably be difficulties for personnel involved with C2, and the partnership steering group (PSG), at street level.

Sometimes known as the 'dynamod' group, the setting up of the SSG to act as unblockers, has proved effective at giving frontline providers 'permission' to work differently and commit to C2 7-step approach. This group, mostly at director level, will typically include representation from Police, Local Authority, Housing, Education and Health and will meet regularly to monitor progress in target neighbourhood. It must also include a 'key' resident, described below.

'Key' residents

So called because they have the potential to unlock, engage and release capacity of the wider community. The C2 team selects these residents carefully as they are 'gold dust' and absolutely vital to long-term success.

They are people with energy, a sense of humour and a greater readiness than most to pursue improvements where they live and, once discovered, need to be carefully nurtured by everyone.

Baseline Measurements of Connectivity and Hope

The starting point for C2 is to assess and identify the **key multiple dimensions of the problem space** within the target neighbourhood. Inevitably we find a **large scale disconnect** on many levels. The team has devised a connectivity measurement scale, which is used to stimulate discussion in a series of focus groups with residents and service providers. This is repeated 18 months on to detect shift in impact of increased levels of connectivity and when the neighbourhood is opened up to the 'opportunity space' that C2 brings.

From this starting point C2 then sets out to address **all** of the key dimensions presented by problem space, using 7-step framework, SSG and PSG, the latter is explained in step 2.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

Step 2: Gathering and connecting C2 'journeymen'

(Timeframe approximately 2-3 months)

What's it like to live / work round here?

Establish C2 Partnership Steering Group (PSG) of front line service providers with key residents, who share a common interest in improving the target neighbourhood. Hold connecting workshop and identify team of 6-8 members to attend 2 day C2 '1st wave' Introductory Learning Programme.

Walkabouts in target neighbourhood and informal chats with residents, frontline workers and local community groups by C2 team accompanied by key residents, are essential in building a visual picture and understanding the all important 'lived experience' of what it's like to live and work there. This is often the best way to recruit membership of PSG.

The Partnership Steering Group (PSG)

This group is made up of people who commit to the C2 7 steps and mirrors the SSG except it is made up of frontline service providers and 2-3 key residents who may also be part of SSG. The group will provide steerage and guidance towards the setting up of the C2 'people & services' partnership in step 4 and will ultimately become the 'backbone' of this. A PSG typically includes representation from **Health, Housing, Police, Fire Service, Education** and **Local Authority** as a minimum. Representation from



Youth, Children's Services and any other local organisation having a prominent role within the target neighbourhood, is a welcome addition. The group works best with around 20 members.

C2 Connecting Workshop

This initial workshop has 4 purposes:

- **For all members of PSG to connect**, often for the very first time, and to begin breaking down the 'them and us' between agencies and residents, by learning about and seeing each other as people.
- **For C2 to facilitate a shared vision and commitment** to what 'people and services' partnerships can achieve together i.e. to open up the 'possibility space' and deliver a clear 'road map' of the 7-step approach and timescale.
- **To identify team of 6-8 members to attend local C2 Introductory 2-day residential learning programme** to gain new understanding around skills and mind-set needed to deliver 7-step approach.
- **To understand and plan the Listening Event in step 3** collectively work together to make this happen.

“Leaders as hosts know that people willingly support those things they've played a part in creating.”

- Margaret Wheatley

Step 3: Listening together to the community

(Timeframe approximately 2 months)



PSG plans and hosts the Listening Event to identify and prioritise neighbourhood health & well-being issues and produces a report on identified issues, which is fed back to residents and SSG a week later. Commitment established at feedback event to form and train resident-led, neighbourhood partnership to jointly tackle issues.

The C2 Listening and Feedback Event

C2 Listening Events are just that and are a fun but powerful, pivotal stage towards transformative outcomes. They are specifically designed for PSG to create together, **collectively host and listen** to the community, based on the C2 ethos that communities always know what they need to ‘heal’ themselves. There is a great deal of detail associated with the ‘lead in’ to this event, how it’s publicised, how to get people there etc., which will initially be explained at the Learning programme and backed up with coaching from the C2 team. It is designed not only to embed ownership of the event across the spectrum of service providers and key residents who make up the PSG, but to signal to the community, who often suffer high levels of consultation fatigue that something different and worthwhile is happening here.

All attending are invited to attend the **C2 feedback event**, a week later, to receive an easy to read report on what they’ve said and to start planning how to tackle prioritised issues via the formation of a ‘People & Services’ partnership. This event is often a rich source of engagement of a 2nd wave of key residents.

Press releases need to be prepared for both events by the PSG as this not only spreads the word but positive press coverage is helpful in deconstructing what maybe a community’s negative perception of itself.

Step 4: Formalising and exploring the bigger picture

(Timeframe approximately 2 months)

Constitute a partnership, which operates out of easily accessed hub within community setting, opening clear communication channels to the wider community via e.g. newsletter and estate ‘walkabouts’. Host exchange visits and meetings with other local community groups and strategic organisations. Identify ‘2nd wave’ of 6-8 new learners to C2 Experiential Learning Programme.

The Constituted Partnership

Membership will be drawn from the PSG in terms of service providers but is now open to an expanded number of residents who will take on executive roles with agencies on the committee in a supportive capacity.

Because this is the long-term, resident led vehicle for continued growth of the community, the partnership needs to be formally established to give it credibility and

‘teeth’. It builds on the new momentum, relationships, energy and optimism developed in first 3 steps. C2 offers expert guidance on this and how to set up the partnership.

C2 partnerships enable communities to self-manage and problem-solve on a continual basis, and sets them on a forward trajectory of improvement. Evidence from the C2 national network over last 20 years suggests they are for ‘life’ and are **self-renewing**.

Again a press release to publicise new partnership and public meetings leads to expanding ‘ripples’ of information and further community engagement.

The Neighbourhood Hub

It is important that these premises are visible and easily accessible, as this will not only be the HQ for the partnership meetings, but also, in time, will become the ‘beating heart’ of the neighbourhood, offering a wide range of information and signposting services. Often a member of the PSG can suggest suitable premises, which ideally can be used free of charge, at least in the short term until the partnership is fully established.

Communicating with the wider community is essential and the ‘feedback loop’ can take many forms, e.g. a newsletter, dedicated facebook page, website etc.

Exchange visits

These visits are possibly the single most powerful of all the 7 steps in terms of accelerating peer learning and opening up the 'possibility space' for both residents and service providers. The way it works is to take as many members as possible from the PSG in a developing neighbourhood to visit an established C2 site to meet residents and partners and 'see for themselves' the level of transformation and what's been achieved. The feedback is always 'If they can do it so can we'. And they do!

The developing site, a bit further along the 7 steps, hosts a return visit, which is defining for them because they can then 'stocktake' on progress so far.

Although included in step 4 it may be necessary to do visit during step 1 if there is no collective sense within the PSG that change can happen or indeed, what it looks like when it does.

The 4-day residential Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) at Exeter

Once we have reached step 5 it's usually the case that we now have a very committed 2nd wave group of people, residents and providers, who may not have been part of

step 1. Even if they were it's now timely to nominate a team of 4-6 learners to attend the Exeter ELP, which could be described as the C2 'immersion' and team building programme.

This is a unique opportunity to meet with other teams from across the UK and learn, not only the theory which underpins C2, but how to interpret this theory into reality during a day of visits to long established South West C2 sites (which C2 research is based on) who have now been officially recognised as Guide Neighbourhoods (GNs). The GNs will be offering ongoing practical support and training to developing sites up to step 7.

“If we use what we have, we have what we need.”

– Dr Edgar Cahn

Step 5: Consolidating Relationships and Learning Together

(Timeframe approximately 2-3 months)

Monthly partnership meetings, providing continuous positive feedback to residents and SSG. Celebration of visible 'wins' e.g. successful funding bids which support community priorities and promote positive media coverage, leading to increased community confidence, volunteering and momentum towards change. Partnership training undertaken to further consolidate resident skills.

Partnership meetings

There is absolutely no substitute for regular monthly partnership meetings. They are the 'glue' that keeps the neighbourhood on a forward trajectory by systematically tackling the issues identified at the Listening Event. Cost effective and often free solutions and early wins happen surprisingly quickly, engendered by the creativity, diversity and multiple leverage points afforded by those

seated around the table. These must be publicised using a range of media resources and celebrated publicly to keep that all-important positive feedback to the wider community loop flowing.

This is also often the point at which the service providers recognise that their workloads are easing, conversely, as a result of this extra activity and improved intelligence e.g. neighbour nuisance and ASB may be measurably reducing.

By now we should also be seeing an increase in volunteering levels.

Training opportunities

Resident collective confidence will now be increasing and this is a good stage to further consolidate and improve skills levels particularly around committee skills. C2 offers its own 'in house' training delivered by experienced team members from Guide Neighbourhoods, but we also recommend Trafford Hall in Cheshire, which provides excellent short and residential courses at extremely low cost as well as a travel bursary. Each group attending qualifies to apply for a £500 grant towards start up or a specific project.

www.traffordhall.com

Step 6: Residents as co-producers of services

(Timeframe approximately 3-9 months, subject to local conditions)



Community strengthening evidenced by resident self-organization e.g. setting up of new groups for all ages and development of innovative social enterprise. Accelerated responses in service delivery leading to increased community trust, co-operation, co-production and local problem solving.

Community Self-organisation / emergence of entrepreneurs

This is an exciting sign of community strengthening reflecting increased collective confidence and can be defined as:

- **The spontaneous coming together of a group of residents to create a new activity.**
- **NOT directed or designed by someone outside the group.**
- **The group decides WHAT needs to be done, the HOW and the WHEN.**

Residents are now starting to take pride in and responsibility for their neighbourhood and C2 often witnesses early self-organised groups coming together during step 6 to improve green spaces, derelict land and

to do neighbourhood 'tidy ups', removing rubbish and graffiti.

We have a lot of evidence showing that these activities are often the starting point for a range of social enterprise opportunities, offering employment and further education.

Making the most of emergent community receptivity

There will now be greater trust and more effective communications between services and people because it is visibly evident that agencies are listening and responding, so now is a good time for the Partnership to promote activities targeting poor health.

Our experience suggests that most residents are completely unaware of how poor their collective health is or the differential in life expectancy between them and their more affluent neighbours and are often outraged and shocked. C2 has witnessed on many occasions the greatly increased uptake for health promoting activities when this 'goes public'. The knock on socio-economic effect of large- scale improved health behaviours cannot be underestimated as it impacts on employability, anti-social behaviour and educational attainment.

“ We thought we were doing up houses, we were actually doing up lives.”

– Grenville Chappell,
Beacon Community Partnership

■ Step 7: Towards Long Term Sustainability

(Timeframe indefinite)

Partnership firmly established and on forward trajectory of improvement and self-renewal. Key resident/s employed and funded to co-ordinate activities. Measurable outcomes and evidence of visible transformational change, e.g. new play spaces, improved residents' gardens and reduction in ASB, all leading to measurable health improvement and parallel gains for other public services.

The paid Partnership Co-ordinator role

This is an exciting time when the 'opportunity space' has been maximised and there is visible transformation in the way the neighbourhood looks, improving quality of life for all.

Agencies are also finding their jobs easier and so this is a 'win win' scenario which must be kept going.

So far the Partnership will have functioned on an entirely voluntary basis but, as activity and networks increase, the administration now involved will outstrip the capacity of even the most dedicated volunteers. At this point it makes sense to apply for funding to pay for a part-time key resident to coordinate all Partnership activities.

C2 offers guidance on options of how this can be achieved.



What does a strong community look like?

All C2 Partnerships have so far stood the test of time over many years and have continued to operate this highly effective approach to neighbourhood governance. Many outcomes, particularly health, will not be apparent for up to 5 years but our evidence shows that, once transformed, neighbourhoods never slip back to the way they were, suggesting that Partnerships set up using the 7-step approach are self-renewing, strong and have built in resilience.

How will we know when we've achieved this? C2 would define this as being where a high proportion of people:

- **Are generally satisfied with their neighbourhood.**
- **Feel that they belong and are proud of where they live.**
- **Self-organise groups, events and hold budgets.**
- **Regularly volunteer.**
- **Get on well with people from different backgrounds.**
- **Feel that they have influence and control in decision making.**

C2 Partnerships and the 7-step journey are the 'tried and tested' way of getting from 'isolation to transformation'.

Remember C2 success factors:

- **Residents are the solution not the problem**
- **Agencies working differently**
- **Connecting**
- **Enabling**
- **Active listening**
- **Building Relationships**
- **Being there**
- **Keeping it going, making it last – sustainability**

Engagement process

- **Locating the energy for change**
- **Establishing agency commitment**
- **Joint listening**
- **Co-learning**
- **Delivering (small wins)**
- **Keeping it going**

■ Final word

We hope this guide to the C2 7 steps has been useful.

We have also produced a handbook to accompany the C2 Leadership programme, *Transforming Challenged Communities the C2 Way*. This offers a much more 'in depth' and practical analysis of each step, the barriers, the enablers and the skills and mind-set needed to support the 7-step delivery.

This is generally only available to commissioners to C2 but if you are interested in undertaking this course please contact:

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“Go to the people, live amongst them, start with what they have, build with them, and when the deed is done, the mission accomplished, of the best leadership, the people will say, we have done it for ourselves.”

– Lao Tze (600BC)



C2 – Giving communities back their self-belief by creating hopeful futures

