



# From Isolation to Transformation

Your handy guide to the C2 7-step pathway to community-led health creation



**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.**



**C2** Connecting Communities

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# From Isolation to Transformation

Your handy guide to the C2 7-step pathway to community-led health creation

# Welcome to your handy guide to the C2 7-step pathway to community-led health creation

## ■ Why this guide was written and how to use it

C2 (short for Connecting Communities) has walked those 7 steps alongside very low-income communities all across the UK since 1994 to lead change for the better where they live.

But how did it start?

In 1968, as a teenage student nurse/midwife at King's College Hospital, I was first introduced to health inequalities. Rather like the stars of 'Call the Midwife' series, I cycled around South London and was shocked by the startling contrast in health between those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and their affluent neighbours often just a 'stone's throw' up the road. You see a lot from a bike! The sheer unfairness of being set on a cycle of poor health, low educational attainment, poor housing & unemployment, simply by accident of birth had huge impact.

So, the rest of my nursing career has been spent working with less affluent communities, research academics and other amazing people to develop ways to interrupt that cycle and create better health & well-being at the same time.

And we have - many times over! The big breakthrough came in the 90's when working as a Health Visitor in Falmouth Cornwall, not a place that most people would associate with

violence, poor housing and ill health, but that defined the huge Beacon housing estate back in 1994.

Community-led from the outset with no start up funding and simply working as equals with members of **Police, Housing, Education and local council**, we transformed the estate and the lives of those working and living there in 4 years. There were dramatic outcomes in terms of education, crime, housing and employment but best of all people got well! And it all stayed that way.

We now call this 'community health creation' but it's not about being unwell. It's about the wellness that we've witnessed for many years, that happens when local people & service providers work together as equal partners to focus on what **really** matters to them.

How to achieve this has been captured in the 7 practical steps in this guide and we've learnt it all from the best teachers - communities themselves!

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

- Hazel Stuteley OBE

### ■ Taking communities on the journey from isolation to transformation

#### What is C2?

**C2**, short for **Connecting Communities**, is a practical programme of transformative community-led development. Now a charity, C2 National Network of Connected Communities (C2NN) is partnered with the University of Exeter and our joint aim is to spread the theory and practice of Community Health Creation.

We define as this as ‘ the wellness that happens when local people and service providers work together as equal partners on issues that really matter to them both.’

Evidence-based on many years of ‘learning by doing’ C2 has a consistent track record dating from 1994, of breaking through long-standing barriers to create conditions needed for communities to lead transformative and lasting change, re-energising, strengthening and bringing a sense of order to disconnected, fragmented communities across the UK.

The richly experienced C2 **learning delivery** team, drawn from a range of **academic, NHS and community leadership roles**, offers a unique online experience using real life case studies & stories, narrated by those who led and experienced them, to embed **transferable principles**, skills & knowledge that will work for all communities, however diverse.

#### How and why it works

C2 works because it is **not a project**. It is a strengthening practical approach designed to bring **long-term culture shift and behaviour change** at strategic, community and frontline service delivery levels. It works with and **releases the latent strengths** of residents and service providers, inherent in all neighbourhoods to form **community-led operational partnerships** to tackle local issues that are barriers to health & well being, on an on-going basis.



## The C2 7-step pathway to community-led health creation



The 7-Step pathway to community-led health creation was developed following 2 years of research by the University of Exeter 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-led transformation.

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**.

At the heart of C2 7-steps is the creation of **new relationships** between local people and providers embedding the values of **trust, humility, compassion and respect**.

As its full title suggests C2 connects communities in 3 different ways:

- **Withinthemselves, creating networks and mutual co-operation**
- **With local service providers – building a parallel ‘community’**
- **With C2 communities across the UK, getting and giving inspiration and peer learning directly from one place to another.**

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**The end result is a dynamic and self-renewing community-led ‘People and Providers’ partnership where there is genuine co-production between agencies and residents, generating major improvements in local conditions and improved quality of life for all.**

### ■ A quick word on language and why it matters

We believe that for far too long, communities have been defined by their weaknesses rather than their strengths. The use of ugly language and certain 'label' words often perpetuates this and keeps them in a 'problem space'.

Our consistent experience is that residents living in low-income communities are always offended at being described as '**deprived**', '**needy**' or '**poor**'. They never feel deprived, needy or poor and are certainly never impoverished in spirit! We've listened to many of their voices over many years and they've told us they'd rather be described as '**needed**', '**compassionate**', '**kind**' and '**resilient**' which they undoubtedly are!! But '**disadvantaged**' or '**underserved**' we're told is better than 'deprived' to describe socio-economic status.

Similarly, being described as '**hard to reach**', '**seldom heard**' is seen as intensely patronising and they will often turn the tables to suggest that it's service providers who're extremely hard to reach and never listen anyway! 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 **passivity** and in extreme cases **clinical depression**.

Our experience suggests that this is what happens after years of being 'done to', becoming the **passive recipients** of services and 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 huge difference in the way we perceive communities and how they see 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 understanding our target neighbourhoods. C2 uses insights from complexity science as the lens through which to view change. We often refer to the '**problem and possibility space**'. A starting point is to identify what keeps communities in the 'problem space' and how we can use C2 7-Steps to get to the 'possibility space'.

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

## ■ So what are the C2 transferable principles?



C2 is not a model or a service but a way of thinking and working underpinned by core principles crafted with communities over many years. It uses an evidence based relational 7-step implementation framework to tackle entrenched health inequalities.

### **Community-led -**

**Puts residents at the heart of decision making to:**

- Create conditions to lead transformative change for themselves
- Generate and listen to a whole community voice
- Locate new community energy for lasting change
- Identify and address community priority issues

### **Strengths-based -**

**Views every community as potentially strong:**

- Recognises residents as the 'experts' holding solutions to the problems, never being the problem itself.
- Creates conditions to release 'hidden' strengths and capacity
- Builds strong and diverse new relations with service providers based on trust, respect and reciprocity
- Invests in developing emergent skills of local leaders.

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### **Collaborative / Relational -**

#### **Takes 'whole community' approach:**

- Brings people who live in an area, together with the parallel community of those who work there; addressing the needs of both
- Recognises commonality of issues faced by both to create lasting and co-productive interdependence
- Is non-hierarchical and community-led with all partners working as equals creating space for cementing new relationships
- Creates self-renewing problem-solving, long-term community-led partnerships

### **Health-creating (Salutogenic) -**

#### **C2 Partnerships reduce chaos and improve health by creating a social & physical environment that:**

- Increases community & individual sense of influence, control and ability to cope
- Provides local governance and access to services that is understandable, manageable and meaningful
- Creates conditions for community self-organisation
- Removes barriers to wellness as identified by communities themselves

- Residents become proactive co-producers of the change they want to see

### **Rooted in deep theory:**

- Views communities as complex adaptive systems with potential to transform
- Creates context for transformational change by connecting, listening and enabling
- Works to achieve lasting systemic community change, not short-term projects
- Uses exchange visits to transformed communities to instil hope and belief by showing what can and has been achieved
- Creates new community order

C2, giving communities back their self-belief by creating hopeful, healthful futures.

## ■ C2 7-step framework

**Step 1** Create enabling conditions and new relationships needed for community transformation at strategic, frontline service delivery and street level. C2 Strategic Steering Group (SSG) established. Target neighbourhood scoped and 'key' residents & providers identified to jointly self-assess baseline connectivity, hope & aspiration levels.

**Step 2** Establish C2 Partnership Steering Group (PSG) of frontline service providers with key residents, who share a common interest in improving the target neighbourhood. Hold C2 1 day connecting workshop to kick-start new relationships.

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



**Step 4** Constitute partnership operating from easily accessed hub within community setting, opening clear communication channels to wider community via social media and estate 'walkabouts'. Host exchange visits / meetings with other C2 community partnerships for peer learning and to see what's possible and what can be achieved.

## The C2 7-step pathway to community-led health creation

**Step 5**

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

**Step 6**

Community strengthening evidenced by resident self-organization e.g. setting up of new activities 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 months)

**Create 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 'key' residents & partners identified to jointly self-assess baseline community connectivity, hope and aspiration levels.**

This step can take up to 3 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.

### 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 further along the 7-Step Pathway. Known as

the 'dynarod' group, the setting up of the SSG to act as unblockers proves effective at giving frontline providers 'permission' to work differently and commit to the 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 at agreed intervals to monitor progress in target neighbourhood.

### Identifying 'key' residents

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

They are people with energy, 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.

### Measuring levels of connectivity and hope

The starting point of the 7-Step Pathway is to assess and identify the **key multiple dimensions of the problem space** within the target neighbourhood. Key to this is measurement of connectivity and hope. Usually we find a **large scale disconnect** on many levels.

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The team has devised a **connectivity measurement scale**, used to stimulate discussion in a series of focus groups with residents and partners. This is repeated 6 months on to measure shift and impact of increased levels of connectivity when new relationships have formed. From this starting point C2 then sets out to address ALL of the key dimensions identified in the problem space, using the 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 frontline service providers with key residents, who share a common interest in improving the target neighbourhood. Hold 1 day connecting workshop to kick start new relationships.**

**Walkabouts in target neighbourhood** and informal chats with residents and frontline workers hosted 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 the PSG.

### The Partnership Steering Group (PSG)

This group is effectively the **C2 Learning Set** and is made up of people who commit to the C2 7-step pathway to

community-led health creation and mirrors the SSG except it is made up of frontline service providers and at least **3-4 key residents**. The group will work towards the setting up of the C2 partnership in step 4. 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 target neighbourhood, is a welcome addition. The group works best with around 15-20 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 service providers and residents, by reciprocal understanding of each others community roles.
- **To facilitate a shared vision and commitment** to what 'people and provider' partnerships can achieve together i.e. opening up 'possibility space' and to deliver a clear 'road map' of the 7-Step Pathway.
- **To commit to forming C2 online learning set** to gain new understanding around skills and mind-set needed to deliver 7-steps.
- **To understand how to listen effectively and plan the Listening Event in step 3** and collectively work together to make this happen.

“There is no more powerful force for change than a community discovering what it really cares about.”

- Meg Wheatley

### ■ Step 3:

## Listening together to the community

(Timeframe approximately 2 months)



**PSG plans and hosts Listening Event to identify and prioritise neighbourhood health & well-being issues and produces report on identified issues, fed back to residents and SSG a week later. Commitment established at feedback event to form community led, C2 partnership to jointly tackle all the 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 the PSG to **create together, collectively host and listen** to the community, based on consistent C2 experience 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 in online sessions and backed up with coaching from C2 team. It is designed not only to embed ownership of the event across 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 C2 **feedback event, a week later**, to receive an easy to read report, jointly prepared by the PSG on the issues they’ve identified and to prepare an action plan to jointly tackle these issues via formation of ‘People & Provider’ 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 powerful in deconstructing what maybe a community’s negative perception of itself.

### ■ Step 4:

## Formalising partnership and exploring the bigger picture

(Timeframe approximately 2 months)

**Constitute partnership, which operates out of easily accessed hub within community setting, opening clear communication channels to wider community via e.g. social media 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 key residents who will take on executive roles with service providers 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 constituted 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 set 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 accessed, as this will not only be the HQ for partnership meetings, but also in time 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.

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### 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. This can be done online but is not as effective. The feedback is always 'If they can do it so can we'. And they do!

Then the developing site, a bit further along 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 a collective sense of hopelessness or no collective sense within the PSG that change can happen or indeed, what it looks like when it does.**

Now we have reached step 5 it's usually the case that we now have a very committed group of people, residents and providers, who may not have been part of step 1 so a refresher C2 learning event is recommended and an opportunity for the newly formed partnership to take stock of how far it's come.

“Communities have never been built upon their deficiencies, but on mobilising the capacity and assets of people and place.”

- John McKnight

### ■ 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 and strengthening relations and interdependency. 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 publically to keep that all-important positive community feedback loop flowing.

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

7By 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.



### ■ 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

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to do neighbourhood 'clean 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 communication between people and providers 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

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

- Dr Edgar Cahn

### ■ 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 co-ordinate all Partnership activities.

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



# The C2 7-step pathway to community-led health creation

## What does a strong community look like?

Most 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 with built in resilience.

How will we know when we've achieved this?

Community members have defined 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 their time and expertise.**
- **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 walking with communities from '**isolation to transformation**'.

## Remember C2 success factors:

- **Residents are the solution never the problem**
- **Service providers working differently as enablers**
- **Community-led partnerships working as equals**
- **Connecting as diversely as possible on a large scale**
- **Active and deep collective community listening**
- **Building new relationship pathways**
- **Being visible at ALL times**
- **Locating new energy for change from unexpected sources**
- **Joint listening and co-learning**
- **Keeping going and NEVER GIVING UP!!**

“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)

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

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