



Community outcomes over time

A comparison across the 2006, 2008 and
2011 GoWell community surveys

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Executive summary

This report presents cross-sectional findings from GoWell's community surveys for the years: 2006, 2008 and 2011. The report compares residents' perceptions of community cohesion and trust, feelings of safety, and social support across GoWell's five intervention area types (IATs): Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs), Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs), Peripheral Estates (PEs), Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs) and Wider Surrounding Areas around multi-storey flat redevelopments (WSAs). Percentage changes between waves are presented as absolute (rather than relative) increases or decreases. So, for example, if the prevalence of a particular outcome halves over time from 10% to 5%, we would describe this as a fall of 5% rather than a 50% reduction.

Community cohesion

We report on four indicators of social cohesion in this report: informal social control; perceptions of honesty; feelings of safety and the extent to which people feel part of their community.

Indicators of social cohesion have generally worsened over time.

- Perceived informal social control declined from 2006 to 2008 but these declines were somewhat reversed by 2011, although none of the IATs regained the levels of 2006. All GoWell IATs lie below the national norms which existed in 2005 on similar indicators of collective efficacy.
- Perceptions of honesty among people in the local area had fallen sharply by 2011 in the regeneration and Wider Surrounding Areas but remained much the same in the HIAs and PEs. Levels of perceived honesty remain much lower than reported for England and Wales around the time GoWell commenced.
- Feelings of safety in the neighbourhood at night-time declined markedly between 2006 and 2008 but have improved since then. These more recent improvements in feelings of safety mirror national trends over the same time period. Feeling unsafe is less common in the GoWell IATs than in the most deprived areas nationally.
- There have been small increases in perceptions of feeling part of the community between 2008 and 2011 in the regeneration areas but a decline in the other area types.
- For all four indicators, trends in the WSAs are more negative than in the other area types, suggesting the need for a greater focus to be placed on the social consequences of the changes being experienced in these areas.

Social contact and support

- There is no evidence of a consistent trend over time with respect to the proportion of people having at least weekly contact with friends or neighbours.
- In the TRAs, weekly contact with neighbours or friends has declined since 2008: in all other area types it has increased.

- Generally, in regeneration areas, contact with friends has been higher than contact with neighbours, but in the non-regeneration areas contact with neighbours has been higher than with friends.
- Those reporting that they can rely on someone to give advice or support in a time of crisis increased across all areas, with the percentage in 2011 reporting this ranging from 77% in the TRAs to 87% in the PEs. The largest increases across the five-year time period were seen in the two regeneration area types.
- It appears that the GoWell IATs are approaching national levels of having close friends and confidants.

Conclusion

These indicators provide a sense of the 'social health' of the GoWell areas over time. There appear to be positive signs in relation to the indicators measuring close contact: we see relatively high proportions of respondents in all areas saying they have someone they can rely on for support, and also that they have regular contact with friends and neighbours. Over time, these findings have generally been sustained.

The findings are less positive, however, in relation to the indicators of wider community cohesion. As a whole, there are negative trends in feelings of safety, perceptions of honesty and informal control, and feeling part of the community. Differences between area types highlight some encouraging findings in the regeneration areas (for example with regard to feelings of safety); and the most concerning picture emerges for the WSAs.

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Background

Urban regeneration includes a range of interventions that may potentially improve the interlinked dimensions of household, dwelling, community and neighbourhood environment in urban areas. As poor health is associated with poorer living circumstances, there is a policy expectation that regeneration and housing improvement strategies in disadvantaged urban areas will contribute to health improvement and reduced social inequalities in health.

GoWell is a research and learning programme that aims to investigate the impact of investment in housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities over a ten-year period. GoWell is focusing on a large, multi-faceted programme of housing investment and area regeneration across the city of Glasgow¹. The programme aims to establish the nature and extent of these impacts and the processes that have brought them about, to learn about the relative effectiveness of different approaches, and to inform policy and practice. It is a multi-component study with a comparative design.

This report summarises GoWell's findings from a repeat cross-sectional study that recently completed its third wave of data collection. This Community Health and Wellbeing Survey collected baseline data in 2006, conducted the first follow-up survey in 2008 and a second follow-up in 2011. These surveys are carried out in 15 neighbourhoods that have been categorised by intervention into five different GoWell area types, as detailed in Box 1 below.

The report presents descriptive comparisons of the different area types, in terms of residents' perceptions of their neighbourhood. Responses from residents in the GoWell study areas are compared over the three surveys (2006, 2008 and 2011). This timeframe allows us to begin to look at short and medium term impacts of regeneration, although it should be noted that it will take years for the full effects of many of the interventions to be felt.

Box 1. GoWell intervention areas types.

Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)

Places where major investment is underway, involving a substantial amount of demolition and rebuilding over a long period. Many residents who remained in these neighbourhoods during the study period were waiting to relocate while nearby properties were cleared for demolition.

Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)

Places where a more limited amount and range of restructuring is taking place, and on a much smaller scale than in TRAs.

Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)

Places of mixed housing types surrounding areas of multi-storey flats subject to transformation plans, and being used for decanting purposes from the core investment sites. These areas also receive substantial amounts of core housing stock investment.

Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)

Places which are considered to be popular and functioning successfully, but where significant improvements are required to dwellings, both internally and externally. Extensive property improvement works take place in these areas.

Peripheral Estates (PEs)

Large-scale housing estates on the city boundary where incremental changes are taking place, particularly in terms of housing. These estates were originally entirely social rented but, as a result of the Right-To-Buy scheme and private developments in recent years, there is now a significant element of owner-occupied as well as rented housing. Private housing development and housing association core stock improvement works both take place on these estates.

We are aware that the implementation of regeneration plans has been affected by macro-level circumstances, with private sector developments appearing to be the most significantly affected by the economic recession. Therefore, while social housing new build programmes are well underway and housing improvement programmes are in an advanced stage of implementation, the development of mixed tenure communities involving private sector new builds has largely stalled as macro-economic conditions impact upon private housing developments. Furthermore, some types of intervention take longer to deliver than others: for example, some of the large-scale clearance and demolition programmes will take many more years to complete. Some respondents may therefore have experienced completed interventions but others are living in areas in which regeneration is underway but not completed, and still others are living in areas where some aspects of regeneration may be considered to have barely begun^a.

^a New build development by private contractors have slowed. This affects different types of GoWell area to different degrees but we believe the most affected area types are likely to be the Transformational Regeneration Areas and the Peripheral Estates.

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Sample and methods

GoWell uses a prospective quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effects of regeneration on a broad range of housing, neighbourhood and health outcomes. A major component of the evaluation is the GoWell repeat cross-sectional community survey. We have undertaken three waves of data collection: in 2006 (wave 1), 2008 (wave 2) and 2011 (wave 3), with a fourth wave planned for 2014. The aim of this survey is to describe changes in GoWell areas and the residential, neighbourhood and health changes for individuals living in these areas.

Sampling

The sampling frames differed for the three waves of data collection, reflecting changes in population size in some of these areas (e.g. due to demolition plans, populations in regeneration areas have decreased from wave 1 to the next two waves) and to further develop a nested longitudinal cohort (details of which will be reported elsewhere).

Table 1. Sampling for the three survey waves.

Year and wave	Sampling
2006 – wave 1	All areas: random property selection
2008 – wave 2	Regeneration areas: all properties Other areas: random selection
2011 – wave 3	Regeneration areas: all pre-existing properties, plus all new builds Other areas: return to all previous interview addresses, plus all new builds.

Response rates

Table 2 provides information on the sample size and response rates for each wave.

Table 2. Achieved samples and response rates for the GoWell cross-sectional surveys.

Year and wave	Sample size	Response rate %
2006 – wave 1	6,016	50.3
2008 – wave 2	4,657	47.5
2011 – wave 3	4,063	45.4

Results

Community cohesion

Cohesive communities have a number of important features: less antisocial behaviour, less isolation and distrust, more integration and social support, and a greater sense of belonging and valuing of other members of the community. Cohesive communities are also regarded as being more stable and sustainable, and less dependent on external services and interventions.

We report on four indicators of social cohesion in this report: informal social control; perceptions of honesty; feelings of safety; and the extent to which residents feel part of their community (the latter was only asked in 2008 and 2011).

Informal social control

Informal social control was assessed by asking residents whether they thought someone was likely to intervene if they saw a group of youths harassing someone in the local area (Table 3).

In all types of area, perceptions of informal social control worsened from 2006 to 2008 – most notably so in the regeneration areas (TRAs and LRAs). However, in most area types (the exception being the WSAs) these declines were somewhat reversed by 2011. The trend in the WSAs suggests a continuing diminution in these areas of the community's sense that antisocial behaviour problems could be satisfactorily dealt with informally and contrasts with the somewhat more encouraging pattern in the other area types. That said, in 2011 within the regeneration areas, only one-in-three respondents agreed that informal intervention would take place to address a local incident of harassment.

Similar questions were asked in the Citizenship Survey for England and Wales in 2005. At that time, 82% of people nationally thought it likely that someone would intervene in their neighbourhood if a fight broke out and 79% if a child were spraying graffiti². The figure for intervening on graffiti in the most deprived areas was lower at 58%. Similar figures have not been published since, but on this basis, it looks as if the GoWell IATs continue to perform poorly on this measure compared to national norms.

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Table 3. Resident intervention in youth harassment.

Intervention area type	Percentage of residents agreeing or strongly agreeing that someone was likely to intervene if a group of youths was harassing someone in the local area		
	2006	2008	2011
Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)	39	19	31
Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)	52	20	32
Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)	55	51	43
Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)	58	47	54
Peripheral Estates (PEs)	56	45	52

Perceived honesty of co-residents

As an indicator of perceived levels of honesty in the community, residents were asked whether someone who lost a purse or wallet in the area would be likely to have it returned without anything missing.

As shown in Table 4, levels of perceived honesty fell sharply over the period of the three surveys in the regeneration areas and WSAs but remained unchanged in the HIAs and PEs. In all area types, the proportion of respondents agreeing with the statement is low (one-in-four at most). When a similar question was asked in the Citizenship Survey in England and Wales in 2003, 48% of respondents said it was 'quite likely' or 'very likely' that a wallet would be returned intact if lost in their local neighbourhood³. In the 2008-9 Citizenship Survey, 50% of respondents considered that 'many' of their neighbours could be trusted, a rise of 3 points since 2003⁴. It does appear as if trust in local residents within GoWell IATs is relatively low by national standards and moving in the wrong direction.

Table 4. Perceived neighbourhood honesty.

Intervention area type	Percentage of residents agreeing or strongly agreeing that a lost purse or wallet would be returned with nothing missing		
	2006	2008	2011
Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)	26	12	11
Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)	31	10	10
Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)	39	38	14
Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)	27	32	26
Peripheral Estates (PEs)	24	24	22

Safety after dark

Thirdly, we asked residents whether they would feel safe walking in their neighbourhood after dark. Feelings of safety declined sharply in all area types between 2006 and 2008. There has then been a general improvement since 2008, although no areas regained the level reported in 2006. The improvement since 2008 has been particularly striking in the TRAs. Once again, the WSAs show the most concerning pattern: the proportion feeling safe in 2011 being 28 percentage points lower than in 2006. The finding of increasing feelings of safety at night-time in the last three years is similar to national trends over the same time period. The Scottish Household Survey has reported a 10% increase over time in the number of people feeling safe walking alone at night in the most deprived areas, up from 55% in 2007-8⁵ to 65% in 2011⁶. The increases in GoWell IATs since 2008 are of a similar order of magnitude, and even greater in the TRAs. Indeed feeling unsafe is less common in all GoWell IATs than in the most deprived areas nationally: feeling 'very' or 'a bit' unsafe ranged from 12% in HIAs to 26% in LRAs in 2011, compared with 32% for the most deprived areas in Scotland⁴.

Table 5. Safety walking after dark.

Intervention area type	Percentage of residents who agree or strongly agree that they would feel safe walking in their community after dark		
	2006	2008	2011
Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)	53	25	47
Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)	66	37	48
Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)	76	37	48
Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)	68	54	61
Peripheral Estates (PEs)	70	51	61

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Feeling part of the community

As another indicator of community cohesion, in 2008 and 2011 residents were asked about the extent to which they felt part of their community. As shown in Table 6, there were small increases in the numbers feeling part of the community in the regeneration areas and a decline in the other areas. Again, the WSAs show the least positive picture over time.

Table 6. Feeling part of the community.

Intervention area type	Percentage of residents who feel they are part of the community a great deal or a fair amount	
	2008	2011
Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)	52	54
Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)	57	60
Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)	85	71
Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)	88	80
Peripheral Estates (PEs)	81	79

Social contact and support

Contacts with neighbours and friends

Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they had contact with neighbours and with friends. We have focussed on the proportion indicating that they had such contact once a week or more (Table 7).

Within area types, the patterns of response are similar for 'neighbours' and 'friends'. In the TRAs, contact seemed to increase between 2006 and 2008 and then fall again by 2011, to levels lower than in 2006. In the other four area types, contact seemed to fall between 2006 and 2008 and then increase again by 2011, usually to levels similar to those in 2006 (the exception being contact with friends in the PEs, which has remained at 2008 levels).

Table 7. Resident social contact and support.

Intervention area type	Percentage of residents who speak to neighbours once a week or more			Percentage of residents who meet with friends once a week or more		
	2006	2008	2011	2006	2008	2011
Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)	67	72	61	71	75	63
Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)	74	56	71	68	63	74
Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)	82	71	86	74	66	71
Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)	82	80	84	77	74	79
Peripheral Estates (PEs)	90	83	89	87	75	75

Emotional support

As an indicator of emotional social support, we asked residents if there were people on whom they could rely for advice or support in a crisis. Across all the areas there has been an increase between 2006 and 2011 in the percentage of residents who report having one or more people who can provide this support. The increase is most striking in the regeneration areas (+16% in the LRAs and +8% in the TRAs).

To put these findings in perspective, the Citizenship Survey for England and Wales in 2007-8, around the time of our second survey, reported that 94% of adult respondents had one or more 'close friends', defined as 'people the respondent felt at ease with, could talk to about private matters, or call on for help'⁷. Thus, the improving findings in GoWell IATs appear to be bringing these areas closer to national norms for social support.

Table 8. Emotional support in time of crisis.

Intervention area type	Percentage of residents who can rely on one or more people to give advice and support in a crisis		
	2006	2008	2011
Transformational Regeneration Areas (TRAs)	69	61	77
Local Regeneration Areas (LRAs)	65	61	81
Wider Surrounding Areas (WSAs)	81	83	83
Housing Improvement Areas (HIAs)	77	76	80
Peripheral Estates (PEs)	86	68	87

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Summary

Levels of community cohesion are a reflection of the extent to which people in an area relate to each other and have a degree of common purpose and values. Cohesion is more difficult to achieve where populations are highly transient and very diverse, and the environment is not conducive to communal activity and interaction. Cohesive communities are regarded as being more sustainable and less prone to negative outcomes such as crime, suicide and territorialism.

We are interested in measuring community cohesion, as we might expect the various dimensions of community regeneration to help deliver and support more socially cohesive communities. The findings reported here highlight the scale of the challenge.

Over the three waves of the survey, we can see that community cohesion has generally worsened – as illustrated by the findings in relation to perceptions of honesty, informal social control, feelings of safety and (to a lesser extent) people's sense of belonging. However, there have been positive movements on several indicators since 2008, including informal social control, safety at night, social contacts and social support. On safety, the GoWell IATs are following recent national trends, and on social support they are approaching national levels. On the other hand, on issues of reliance and trust (indicators of perceived informal social control and honesty of local people), the GoWell IATs continue to lag behind national norms.

We might draw a tentative conclusion about a narrowing of community and social relations, whereby the wider sense of a geographical community is weaker and becoming more atomised to smaller friendship and neighbourly structures which are the stronger element.

A second tentative conclusion concerns the trends seen in the WSAs, where community cohesion seems to have deteriorated consistently over the period of the surveys. These are areas into which there is a considerable amount of relocation, building of new homes, and resultant population growth. Not only are existing residents experiencing new arrivals from the TRAs, who may also be of foreign origin (more so than other local residents), but the new arrivals are living in new surroundings and perhaps in low-rise accommodation for the first time (or in a long time). All these things may have a negative effect, at least initially, on feelings of safety and trust in others and security in the local environment. These findings indicate that attention to the social consequences of these housing-led changes may be required to prevent these areas experiencing unanticipated outcomes as a result.

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