

WINTER 2012

Welcome to the latest edition of the GoWell newsletter for Townhead. In this newsletter we are focussing on our research around the issue of community engagement and empowerment. Also included is information on some of the structures that exist to enable communities to have a say in things that affect them and local initiatives you might have an interest in getting involved in.



But first we'd like to say a huge thank-you to those of you who took part in our recent survey. During August – November last year, interviewers from BMG were in the area busily knocking on doors and inviting residents to take part. In total, 151 people from Townhead took part in the survey, many of whom had also taken part in our previous survey in 2008. This is a great result as it means we can really get a sense of how and what is changing for individual residents over time.

Our researchers will now start looking at all the responses from the most recent survey and comparing them with what residents told us in our previous surveys in 2006 and 2008 to see whether things are changing in the area and in people's lives. The findings for Townhead will be available in spring and we will send you another newsletter then with the findings for the area. As with previous survey findings we are keen to share and discuss these with organisations and groups working in the community. So if you would be interested in us visiting a group or organisation you are involved in please get in touch.

We hope you find this newsletter of interest. As always, we would welcome any thoughts or comments you may have on it. You can find our contact details in the box opposite.

Best wishes  
The GoWell Team

## What is GoWell?

GoWell is a ten-year research and learning programme that aims to find out from local people what they think of the efforts to improve their area and if this has an impact on their health and wellbeing. We have now completed three surveys, in 2006, 2008 and 2011, with another one planned for 2014. From these surveys, we have built up a picture of what and how changes are taking place in your community; whether things have got better or worse for residents; and what changes are important to residents.

We share and discuss the survey findings with a range of organisations that plan and deliver services in your area. They are already being used by organisations such as Glasgow Housing Association, other housing associations/providers, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government to help improve services and regeneration efforts both now and in the future.



For more information on GoWell, please contact:

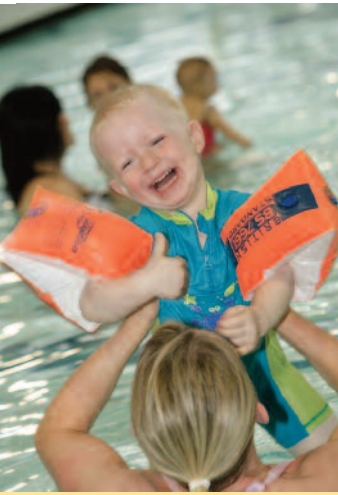
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"...a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them".

*Scottish community empowerment action plan: celebrating success, inspiring change* definition of community empowerment

The term 'community empowerment' is used and understood in many ways. Basically it is about communities exerting influence and control over plans, issues and actions that affect them. This can happen in different ways. So, for example, a group of residents may get together to improve something in their area or campaign for something that is important to them. Or they may join one of the many groups or forums set up by local service providers to listen to and consider local views on issues and services.

## WHY GET INVOLVED?

Joining a group or committee obviously involves giving some of your time, and it can be hard work bringing local people together. But working together for a common cause can be worthwhile. You can highlight local issues and concerns and make a real difference to your community by influencing plans and improving how services are provided and delivered. As well as collective benefits for you and your community there are also personal benefits to be gained in relation to your health and wellbeing.

Through our surveys, we look at the levels of empowerment in our communities and how they are changing over time. We also look at whether empowerment relates to how people feel about their community, and their health and wellbeing. We have found that people who feel empowered are more likely to feel they belong to and are included in their community, with connections to friends and neighbours. We also asked our survey participants a range of questions about their positive mental wellbeing or state of mind – such as how confident, optimistic and happy they felt. We found that the more empowered people feel, the better their mental wellbeing is. Other organisations and researchers further afield than Glasgow and Scotland (such as the World Health Organisation) have also looked at the issue of empowerment and the impact it can have on health, and there is growing evidence of its benefits.

So whether you are interested in getting a bit more involved in your community in general or in specific decisions affecting your area, there really are good reasons for you to do so.

## EMPOWERMENT IN TOWNHEAD

In our surveys we've been asking residents a number of questions about how empowered they feel. The good news is that levels of empowerment have been improving over time. So, for example, we asked residents whether on their own or with others they could influence decisions affecting their local area. A growing number of people across our study as a whole reported that they could influence decisions and in Townhead, 43% of residents who took part in our 2nd survey agreed that they could. Although this is only a minority of residents it has more than doubled from the 18% of residents who reported this in our 1st survey. A similar proportion of Townhead participants (47%) agreed that people in the area could find ways to improve things when they wanted to. The figure wasn't so high, though, when we asked whether the providers of local services, like the council and others, respond to the views of local people. Only 13% of Townhead participants agreed with this.

We also specifically asked how empowered residents felt in relation to their housing provider. Responses to this question were the most positive. Within Townhead, 79% of participants in our 2nd survey said they were satisfied with the way they are kept informed by their landlord/factor about things that might affect them. Residents were also increasingly satisfied with their landlord's and factor's willingness to take account of residents' views when making decisions – from 61% satisfied in our 1st survey to 82% in our 2nd survey.



## YOUR COMMUNITY MATTERS

At a national level the Scottish government has been working hard to encourage community empowerment and provides guidelines to help public agencies and communities work together (the National Standards for Community Engagement).

Local service providers are committed to involving local people. For example, there are lots of different ways tenants can get involved with their landlord/local housing provider such as by joining their local tenant-led management committee, joining or setting up an independent Registered Tenants Organisation or by participating in customer satisfaction surveys.

Other organisations in Glasgow that plan and deliver health, regeneration, housing, and other public services have similar ways in which residents can get involved and some of the formal groups/structures that exist are listed over the page. These can be a good way to link with people who provide services for you and your community, get involved in local decision making and meet other members of your community.

# HAVING A SAY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Group / Organisation	What they do	Find out more
Community Councils	Can be a good way to meet other people and take part in discussions about what's happening in your area.	Contact the Community Councils' Resource Centre on 0141 287 4723 or pop along to one of the meetings. The community council serving your area meets at 7pm in the meeting room of the Grafton Place Flats on the 1st Tuesday of each month.
Community Reference Groups	Panels of local residents who represent various interested groups and act as a 'sounding board' for Glasgow's Community Planning Partners.	Contact the North East Glasgow Area Office on 0141 266 9860.
Public Partnership Forums (PPFs)	Link patients, service users, carers and the wider public and act as the 'public voice' for the community to be involved in decisions about local health and care services.	PPF meetings are held from 6.30pm till 9pm at John Wheatley College, 2 Haghill Road, Haghill, Glasgow. For more information contact Tony Devine on 0141 277 7540 or Siobhan Harkin on 0141 232 0172.
Housing Association Management Committees	If you live in a house owned or factored by a housing association you can often become a member of the association and its committees to have a say in matters which affect your home and neighbourhood.	If you are a tenant of Glasgow Housing Association, or live in a home factored by them, phone Compass LHO on 0141 274 8670 to see about becoming a member.
Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)	These are independent groups of residents who feed their views into landlords on particular issues or more generally.	In Townhead there are the Ladywell and High Street Tenants and Residents Association and the Townhead Tenants Association. Compass LHO can tell you more about when and where these groups meet. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (details below) can provide information on how to set up a group.

More information and support on how to be more involved in how your housing services are delivered is also available from the **Tenant Participation Advisory Service** on 0141 552 3633 and/or the **Tenants Information Service** on 0141 248 1242.

## OR WHY NOT SET UP YOUR OWN GROUP?

As well as attending meetings and becoming a member of one of the above groups, you can also get support to set up your own community group. This could be to bring together people who are interested in a specific issue or activity. Glasgow Life's Area Services are able to provide support for those wishing to set up community groups. To find out more, contact the North East Area Services on 0141 276 0920.

## VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY GROUPS AND INITIATIVES

There are also lots of other ways to get more involved in your community such as joining a local group or initiative run by the voluntary organisations, groups or Churches working in your area. These can be a great way to get more involved in your community, learn a new skill or just to meet new people. Information on these can be found in the community facilities, libraries and Churches in the area.

All the personal information we collect is completely confidential and anonymous and is not shared with anyone outside the research team.

GoWell is a collaborative partnership between the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, the University of Glasgow and the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, sponsored by Glasgow Housing Association, the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.