

Shops, Supermarkets & Social Connection: Understanding Their Role in Reducing Loneliness & Supporting community health and wellbeing



Tackling Loneliness Hub Webinar.
Wednesday 2nd July
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About Neighbourly Lab



We are a non-profit organisation with a mission to find new ways for people to better connect.

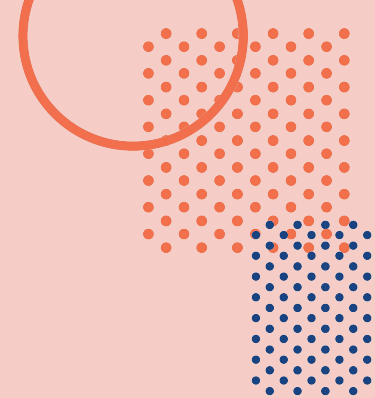
We believe that connected communities are strong communities, where people can access the support and care they need to flourish and participate.

Our focus is on modifying environments and providing tools to enable more social connectedness to occur. We also help public service organisations to serve everybody in their area equitably and inclusively, so all people have opportunities to thrive in their local place.

We do this through research, innovation, training and sharing evidence around ‘what works’.

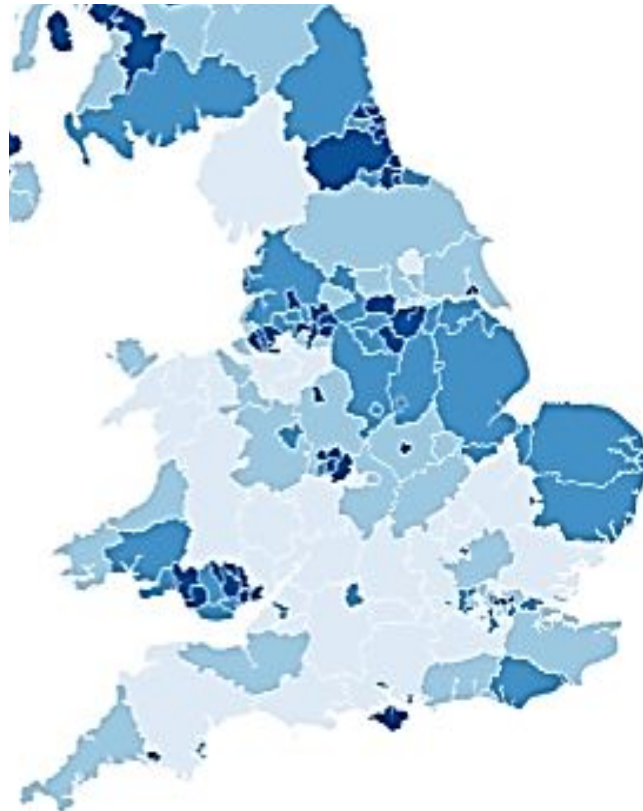
www.neighbourlylab.com





The Background

Why focus on Social Connection and Access to support?



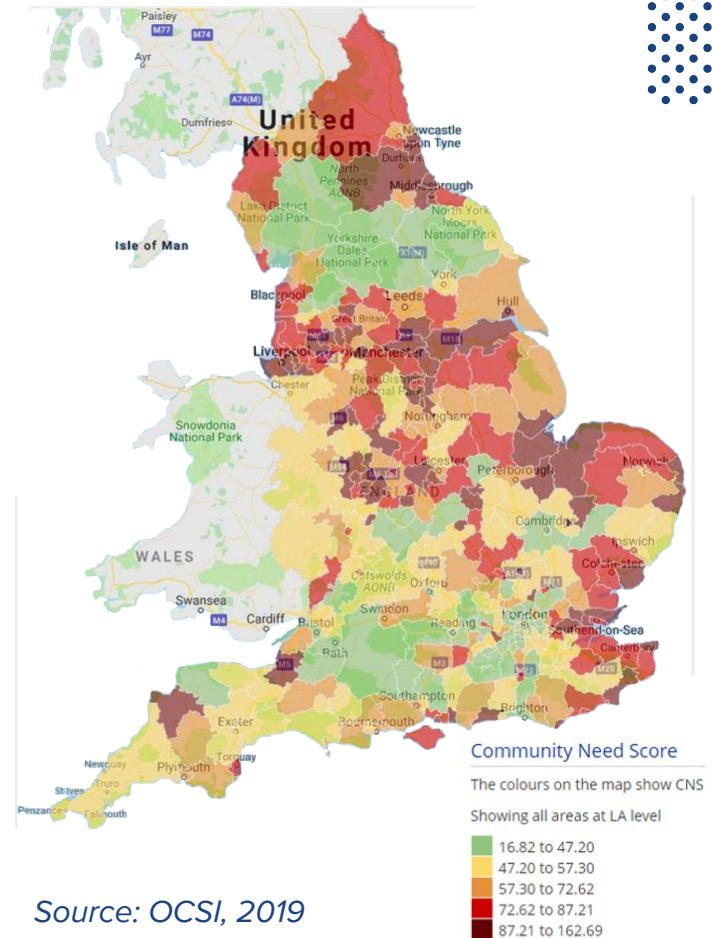
Source: The Health Foundation

Social connectedness →

- Longer life, better health, and improved well-being.
- Communities that are healthier, safer, and more prosperous.
(World Health Organisation 2023)

Importance of **prevention** – but resources not equally distributed...

Need to **increase opportunities to access** connection, information and prevention support – focused on addressing inequalities.



Source: OCSI, 2019

Place based action



Shops as assets for accessing support and social connection



Supporting foodbanks



Fundraising for local good causes



£/Grants for local groups, including green tokens



Donations of goods



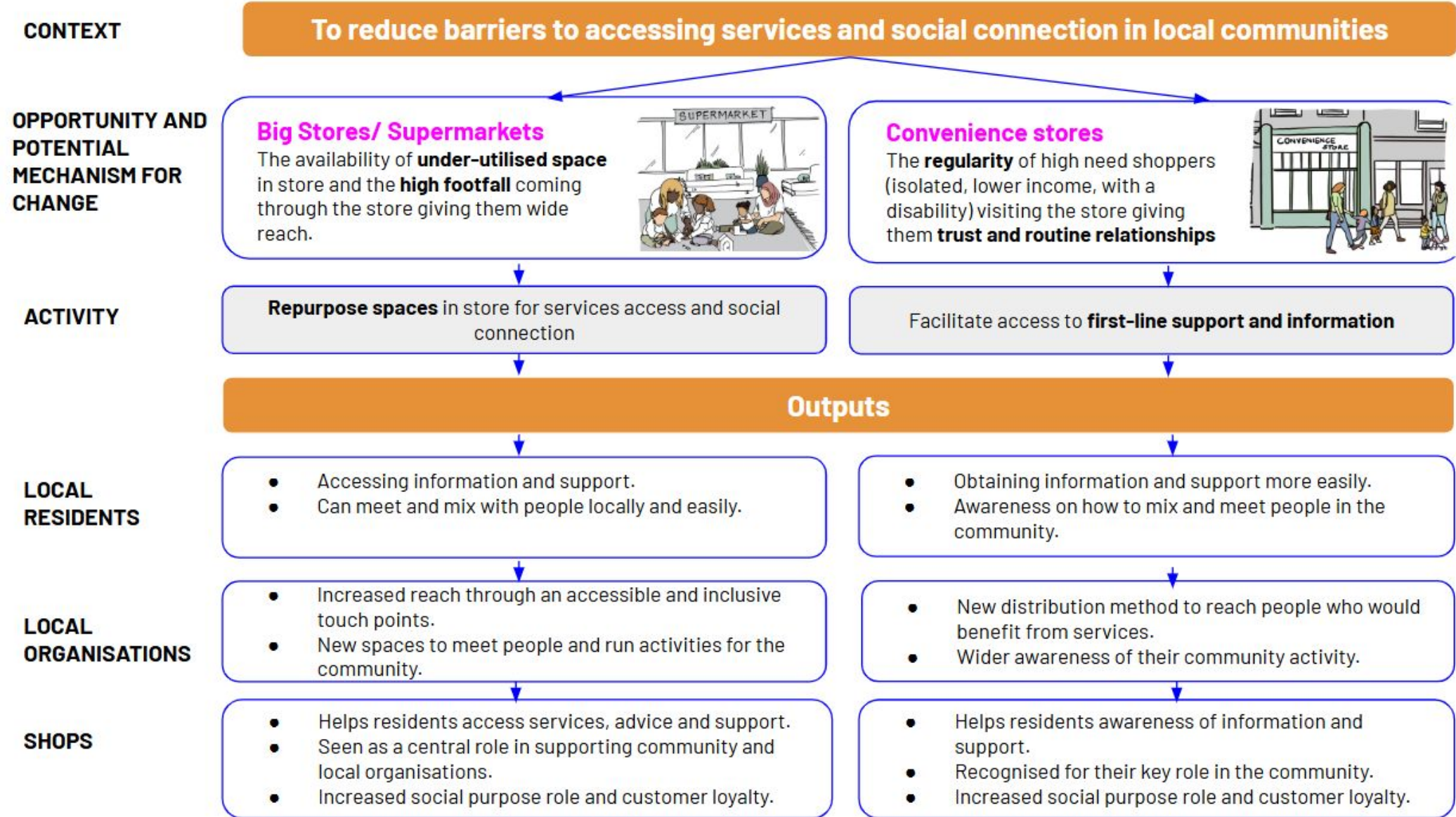
Community champion time

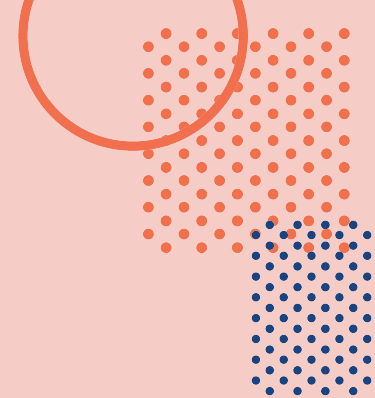


Space offered in-store



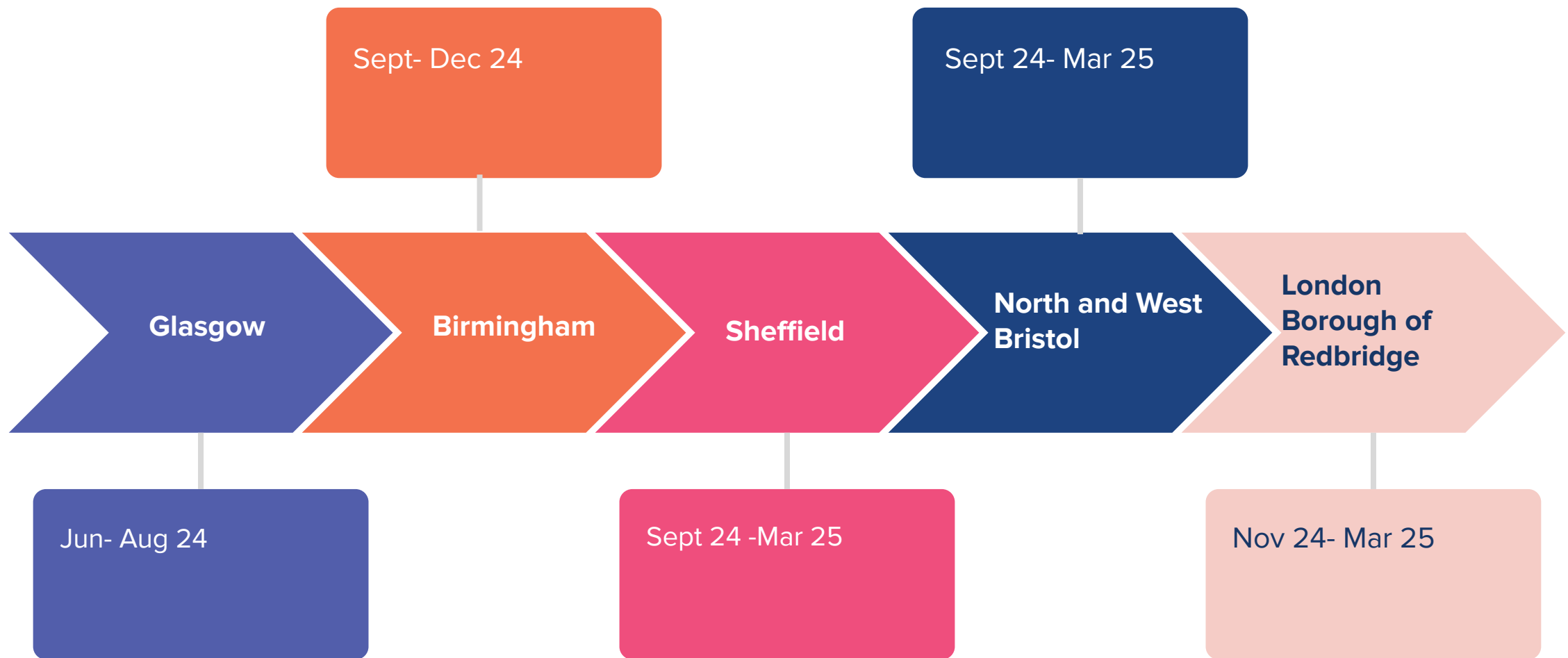
Theory of Change





The Trials

Timeline of trials



Maryhill, Glasgow

Area

Faces high levels of income and employment deprivation and challenges related to health, education and access to services.

Spaces

Asda

- Medium sized store in closed off community
- Closed cafe space

Tesco

- Large Supermarket on main road
- Open foyer space

Stakeholders

- Community Champions Ryan and Amanda
- Local colleagues Iain and Gina
- Glasgow, Chest Heart and Stroke
- Glasgow Golden generations
- G20 youth
- Residents

Activities

- Health awareness, community walks
- Digital safety
- Blood pressure checks
- Brew, biscuit and blether
- Kids colouring



Small Heath, Birmingham

Area

Faces high levels of deprivation, including low employment rates, high child poverty, and issues with crime and environmental quality. The area faces challenges related to income inequality, access to services, and overall quality of life.

Spaces

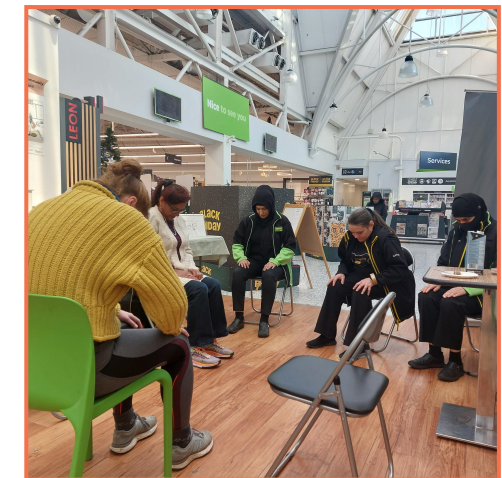
- Asda store, retail park
- Empty unit at front of store (ex opticians)

Stakeholders

- Community Champion Tracey
- Local colleague Rickie
- Local charities
- Citizens Advice
- Social enterprises
- NHS teams
- Residents

Activities

- Job and CV fair
- Slow cooking demonstrations
- Chair yoga
- Arts and crafts
- Coffee mornings
- Citizens advice sessions



Drakehouse and Handsworth, Sheffield

Area

The areas surround Drakehouse and Handsworth area areas with varying levels of deprivation.

Spaces

- Drakehouse, A retail park, underused community room available
- Handsworth, Existing cafe space and foyers

Stakeholders

- Community Champions Liam and Bethany
- Local community groups
- Voluntary sector
- Council community teams
- Local police
- Local NHS teams
- Residents

Activities

- Local photo community group exhibition
- NHS parental training course
- Kids after school activities
- Health awareness



North and West Bristol

Area

In Bristol the North and West areas, particularly the outer parts, experience higher levels of deprivation compared to the inner areas.

Spaces

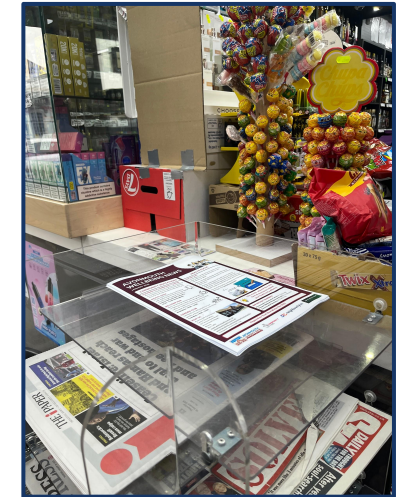
- Local areas Avonmouth, Lockleaze and Shirehampton
- Working with convenience stores, 2 local cafes and a Post office
- Limited space inside but a regular touchpoint for the community

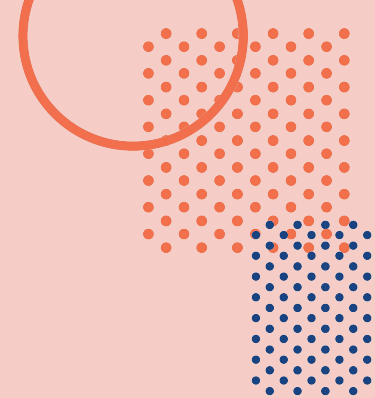
Stakeholders

- North and West Bristol Locality Partnership
- Local GP representative for the area
- Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust - Maria
- Avonmouth Community Centre - Rachel
- Shirehampton Action - Ash
- Lockleaze Coffee Shop, Kam's Cafe, Premier Avonmouth, Coop Avonmouth, Shirehampton Post Office
- Residents

Activities

- Community Wellbeing leaflet for each area
- Monthly 'Whats on' signposting
- Monthly rotation and themes





Understanding the context

Understanding the context to mobilising store assets

The inter-relationship between context and components involved to address social goals within shops.

- **Local Context**
- **Space**
- **People and organisations**
- **Connecting and Supporting Activities**
- **Business Operating Environment**



From Storefront to Community Hub



Local Context

- Ground activity in local needs: health inequalities, loneliness, food access.
- Consider store usage: top-up shop, big weekly shop, mission shopper.
- Understand the store's catchment profile—who comes, when, and why.
- Older adults, families, young adults etc



People and Organisations

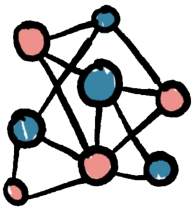
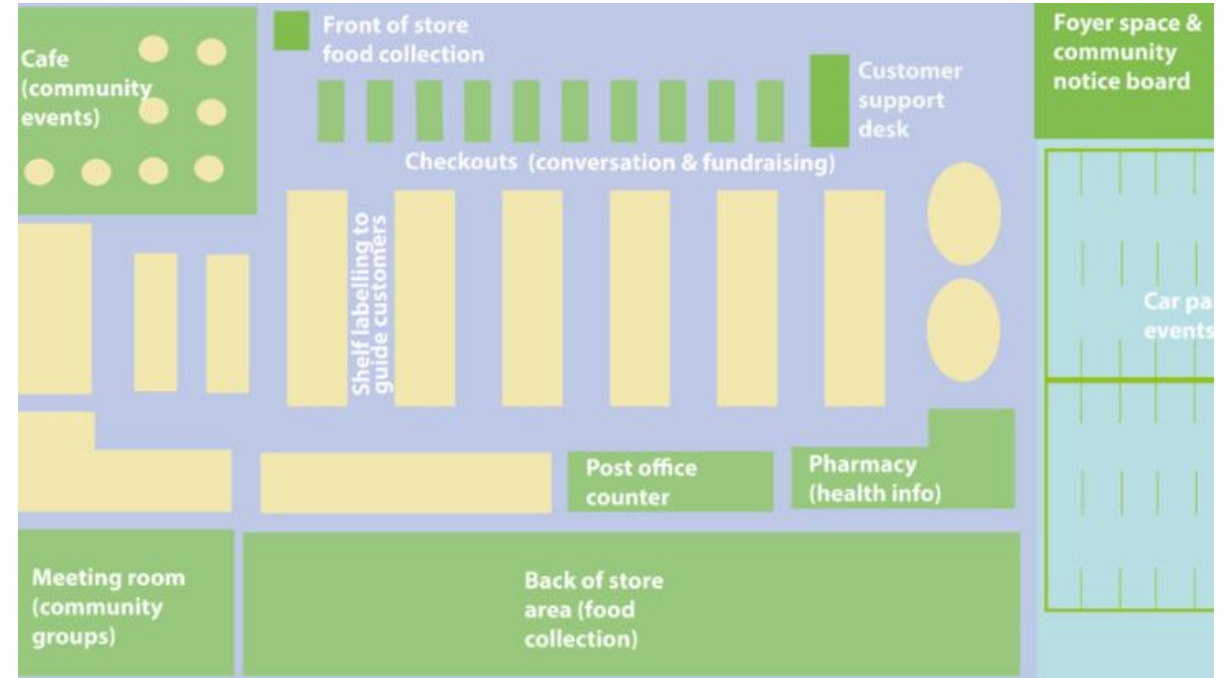
- Partner with local charities, council teams, and resident groups.
- Engage the right stakeholders: store staff, community champions, partners.
- Retailer and businesses, public and VCSE sector, the community.

Making it happen: Space, People and Purpose



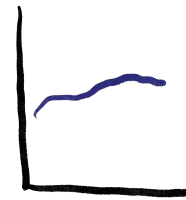
Space

- Identify usable spaces:
 - Foyer
 - Café
 - Community room
 - Empty 'meanwhile' space
 - Wall displays
 - Car Parks



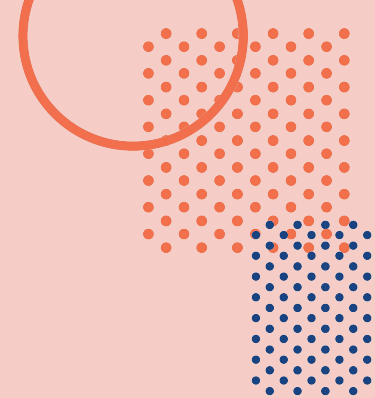
Connecting and supporting activities

- Align activities with business goals: footfall, dwell time, social value.
- Keep activities simple, low-risk, and timed around store operations.



Business operating environment

- Low risk
- Business friendly
- Shared value



The Models

The five models on working with shops and supermarkets to support communities health and wellbeing.

A

**Local Links
Corner**

B

Marketplace

C

**Talk and
Support
Space**

D

**Living and
Learning**

E

**Ready-to-go
Sessions**

A. Local Links Corner

Model	Local Links Corner
Goal	Helping local communities access and reach support when they need it.
Overview	This information/awareness raising model celebrates the role of convenience stores in communities and mobilises their lynchpin status as a mechanism of gaining local health and wellbeing information at a trusted space. A preventative social prescribing model.
Who and how it helps	This model offers public sector teams, especially those focusing on health and wellbeing, a means of reaching residents who may not currently be aware of key health messages, or places and organisations where they can access support.
Examples in practice	<p>Convenience store</p> <p>The Public Health team in Redbridge Council collated key local information for Hainault which was then distributed via 3 convenience stores in order to convey key health messaging and share events and what's on opportunities to a wider audience.</p> <p>Café</p> <p>The NHS Locality Partnership in North and West Bristol, and local community group, Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust, collated information for distribution by a community café, reaching residents they were not previously connected with.</p>



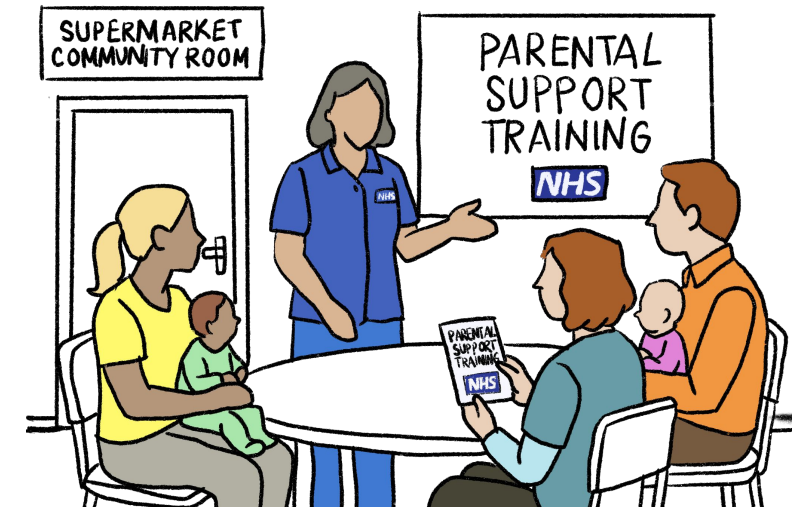
B. Marketplace

Model	Marketplace
Goal	Helping local communities to access and reach support when they need it.
Overview	This information/awareness raising model enables external public sector organisations to offer direct services to customers, such as health checks, broad financial guidance, or community signposting in supermarket spaces. These pop-up style events require minimal space and input from supermarket store staff but can act as a wellbeing hub to provide high-impact outcomes for local residents.
Who and how it helps	Responding to community needs and context, existing services increase reach and take up support by meeting residents where they are.
Examples in practice	<p>Small space</p> <p>In Glasgow, Maryhill. Glasgow Chest Heart and Stroke ran pop up sessions (in a thoroughfare space) to share information of health awareness that included undertaking blood pressure checks.</p> <p>Large space</p> <p>The Community-Led Support Team in Adults, Health, and Housing at Thurrock council worked with a town centre Morrisons to invite a group of key organisations to a monthly 'Talking Shops' where customers could get support and advice in one place.</p>



C. Talk and Support Space

Model	Talk and Support Space
Goal	Increasing the sense of community and social connection at the same time as opportunity to access personalised support.
Overview	This model utilises the range of in-store private supermarket space with the possibility of privacy, such as designated community rooms with doors or screens. These can be offered for free of charge to public sector and voluntary groups to run support activities, meetings or and training that addresses a need for a more private community space for connection and learning.
Who and how it helps	This can support public sector teams and voluntary organisations to deliver their activities in an easily accessible space that could be perceived as -more convenient, accessible, safe, or free of stigma for the community groups they aim to support.
Examples in practice	In Sheffield Drakehouse, the local NHS team were able to book a 12 week programme for local residents to support parents with young children. It offered an easily accessible space for training to be delivered in a private setting for public good.



D. Living and Learning

Model	Living and Learning
Goal	Increasing the sense of community and social connection.
Overview	<p>This model utilises the unused spaces in supermarkets to create connection opportunities. These are regular, often themed, sessions - such as budgeting workshops, gentle exercise classes or coffee mornings - led by external partners to support wellbeing, connection, and community learning.</p> <p>These events require in-store supermarket space and active connection with the store to facilitate and timetable use of space. This could utilize an existing 'community room' or benefit a 'meanwhile' space.</p>
Who and how it helps	This can support public sector teams and voluntary organisations, especially those focusing on connection and learning, or wider health and wellbeing to run regular engagement opportunities such as chatty cafes and reach residents in a place they regularly visit.
Examples in practice	In Asda Small Heath, Birmingham, a variety of activities for local residents were offered to learn and connect with one another through themed sessions such; slow cooking demonstrations, crafts sessions and chair yoga, all taking place in an empty opticians space.



E. Ready-to-go Sessions

Model	Ready-to-go Sessions
Goal	Increasing the sense of community and social connection.
Overview	This model provides a simple, repeatable, light-touch way for supermarkets to engage customers through creative and social activities in empty or underused spaces. 'Activity boxes' including all necessary materials and instructions, allow regular staff to facilitate sessions without specialist input. Activities could range from conversation games, creative prompts, or themed table set-ups, painting, colouring and crafts.
Who and how it helps	This can be led by supermarkets with an understanding of needs and demographic profile across their local area, e.g. addressing social isolation, working with older adults, parents and children or young people.
Examples in practice	In the Asda Handsworth store, Sheffield, the Community Champion spotted a lack of after school activities in the area. She set up a Friday after school drop-in club to both engage school-age children as well as give parents a place to connect or have some time out. Making use of existing materials from Asda's charity partnerships and christmas campaigns, she created activity kits such as origami, biscuit decorating and card-making.



Recommendations

1. Identify which local shops and supermarkets have the best potential for engaging priority communities, then build relationships by visiting in person and starting conversations with Store Managers/Store Owners and/or Community Champions.
2. Look at the available space in the shops and supermarkets and determine which of the models could best support your objectives.
3. Share your understanding of local needs and what you're doing in the area with them to see how they can help with offering spaces or activities so it's a joined-up venture.
4. Identify existing local organisations, and opportunities that could offer outreach activities in their space to utilise the distribution methods they have.
5. Include Store Managers/ Shop Owners/Community Champions as key stakeholders and invite them to join in community decision making in your area to help foster a connected approach.

Other resources

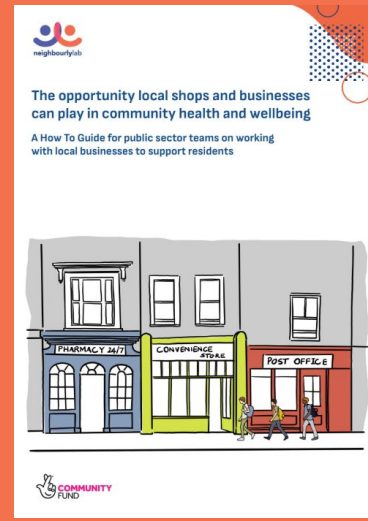
Understanding the role shops and supermarkets can play in supporting community health and wellbeing:

An insights report and guide for local services.



The opportunity local shops and businesses play in community health and wellbeing:

A How To Guide for public sector teams on working with local businesses to support residents.



Our Space: Opening up your store to support communities:

A guide for supermarkets



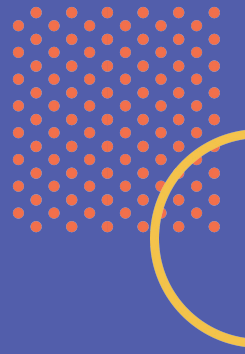
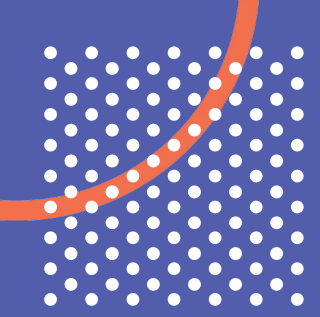
Coming soon!

Inspiration Gallery:

The role of shops can have in community connection.



Coming soon!



Q & A

Thank You

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