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Using the Capabilities Approach to support child and youth activism in schools

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12th October 2022

Overview

1. Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland
2. Capabilities Approach
3. Children's Voices research programme
4. Findings/Action
5. Questions/Next Steps

1. CHILDREN'S NEIGHBOURHOODS SCOTLAND

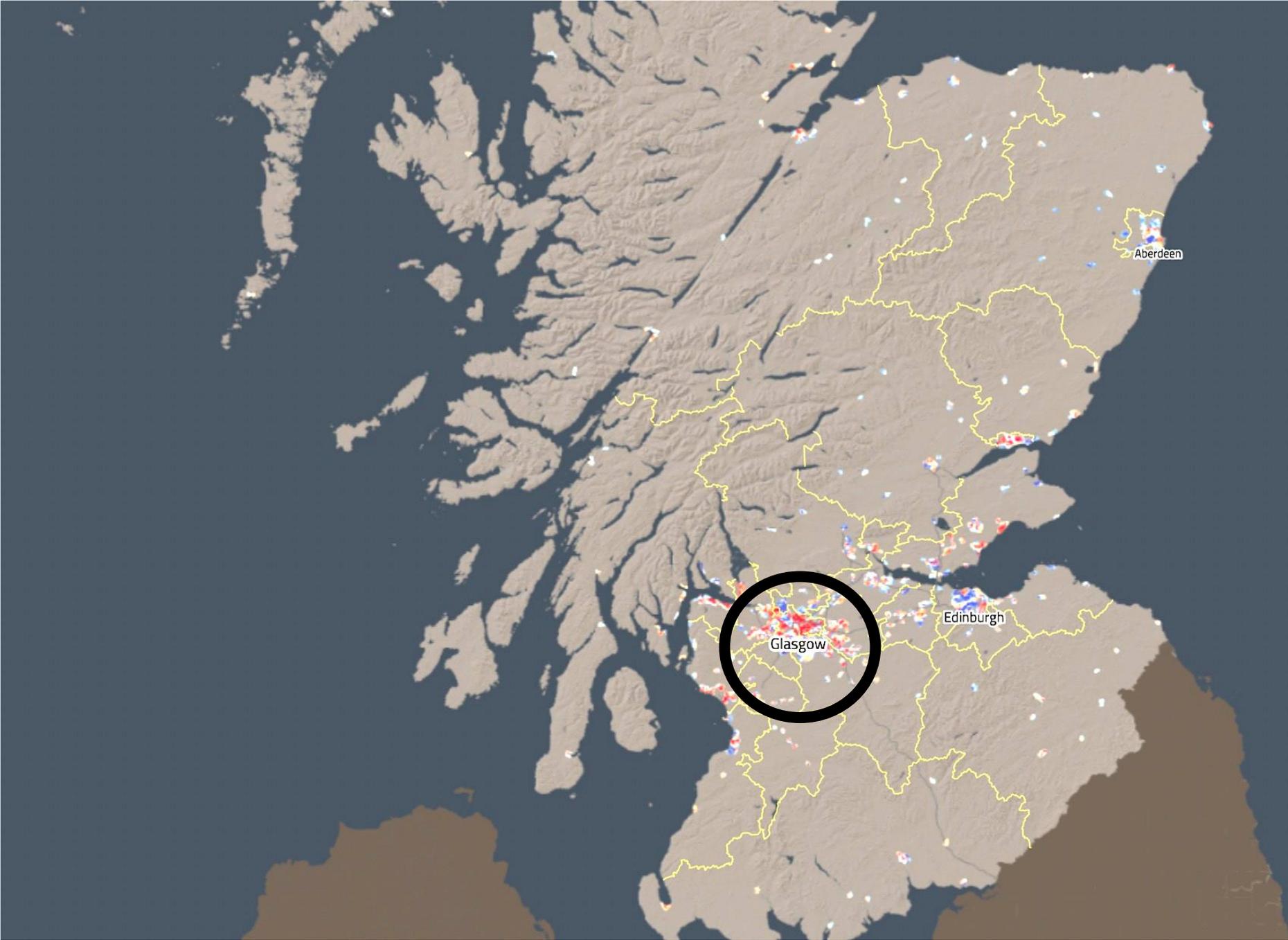# Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

- Inspired by Harlem Children's Zone, Pembury Children's Community, Hackney
  - 'To transform outcomes for children and young people in areas of poverty'
- Scottish Government (2018) 'Every Child, Every Chance: Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22': Poverty mitigation, Quality of life
- Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland:
  - Facilitator for participation, collaboration and change
  - Child-centred approach to improving wellbeing goals for children and young people
- 6 neighbourhoods in areas of high SIMD - 3 LAs; 6 Local Coordinators, 3.5 researchers
- Practice, research and evaluation integrated into programme
- 4 research workstreams: Capabilities, Context analysis, Process Evaluation, Outcome Evaluation

Research Team

- Claire Bynner
- Jane Cullingworth
- Maureen McBride
- Ben Murphy
- Sarah Ward
- Sarah Weakley

- Local Coordinators Team

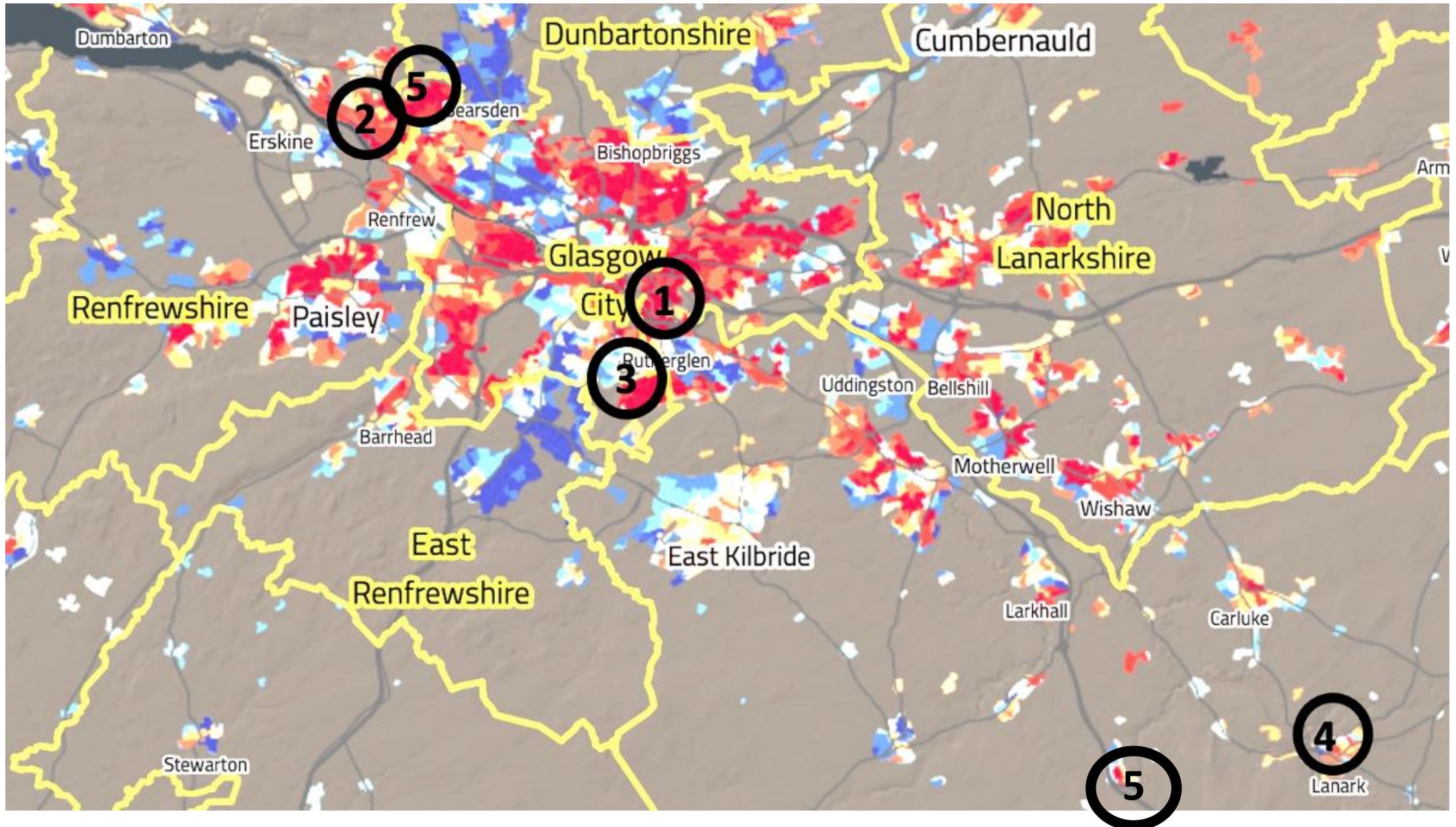Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

Aberdeen

Edinburgh

Glasgow

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/11/-4.0000/55.9000 (Accessed 011022)

Why does voice matter?

CNS early findings suggested that children's voices were not heard in decisions that concerned them:

'Children and young people always get the raw deal and decisions are always made for them and not with them.'

(R25, Third sector respondent)

'Their voices are swept under the carpet by adults who think they know better … regardless of whatever the child has said, the adult still knows better so we need to try and raise some of those voices up.'

(R10, Public health researcher)
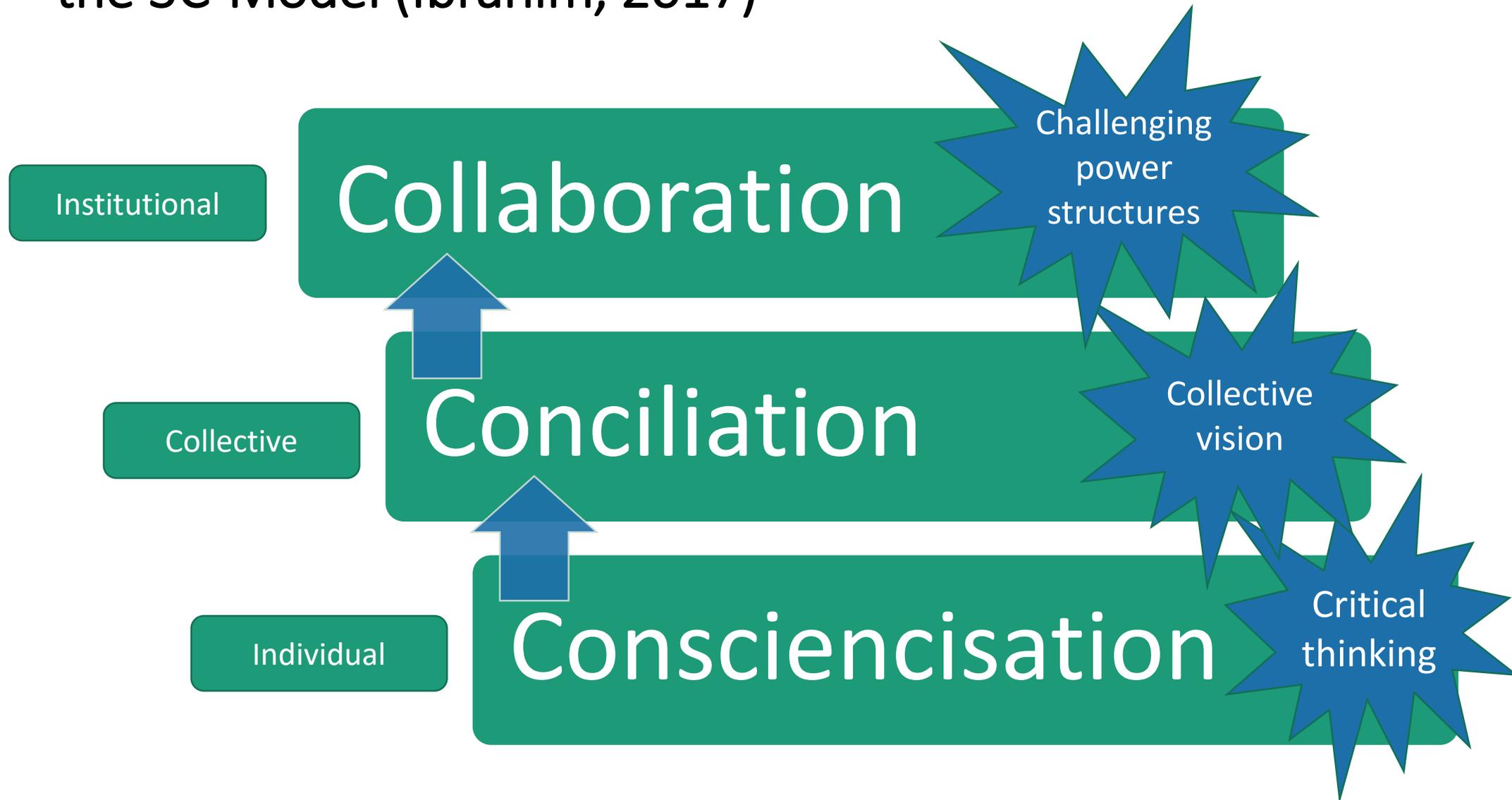
2.CAPABILITIES APPROACH

Key principles of the Capabilities Approach

- Conceived by economist **Amartya Sen** (1979) and philosopher **Martha Nussbaum** (2011)

- **Freedom to achieve wellbeing of primary moral importance**; understood as capabilities/functionings (Robeyns, 2011)

- The **wellbeing freedoms** people have reason to value – neither solely utilitarian (based on 'happiness') nor rationalist (based on income)

- What people are **'able to do and to be'** (Robeyns, 2003)

- Public **dialogue and reasoning integral** – capacities for democratic citizenship (Nussbaum, 2006: 388-391)

- **Coherent framework of social justice** across personal, social and structural concerns – an evaluative framework but also a prospective policy tool (Alkire, 2008)

Nussbaum's 'minimum core' Capabilities (adapted by participants)

CAPABILITY DOMAINS		Adapted by CYP
1.	Lifespan	Living a long life
2.	Health	Being healthy
3.	Bodily safety and security	Feeling safe
4.	Identity, expression & self-respect	Feeling happy & confident
5.	Individual, family & social life	Having good relationships with family & friends
6.	Education & Learning	Being able to learn
7.	Standard of living	Having a job, safe & warm place to live, food & clothes
8.	Productive & valued activities	Being able to get involved in activities
9.	Participation & voice	Being able to take part in decisions
10.	Legal protection	Being protected by the law
11.	Play	Being able to play/enjoy leisure time
12.	Nature	Having access to nature, animals & pets

Building collective capabilities and agency with CYP: the 3C-Model (Ibrahim, 2017)

Institutional

Collective

Individual

Collaboration

Conciliation

Consciencisation

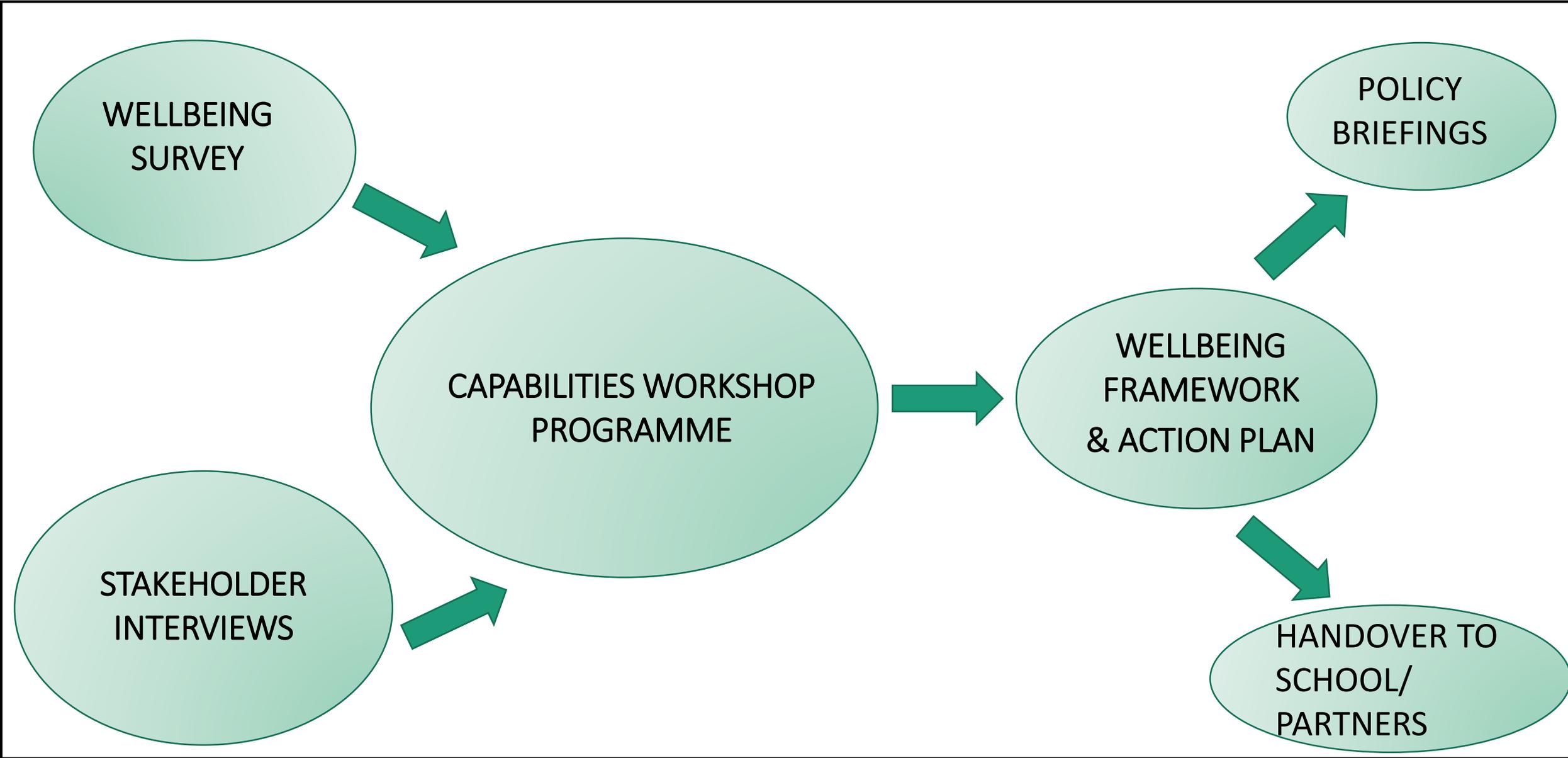Challenging power structures

Collective vision

Critical thinking

3.METHODOLOGY

Wellbeing framework - research process

CNS Capabilities Research Programme (1)

A. Explore Capabilities/Develop research skills		
Learning component	**Purpose and methods**	**Skills development**
1. Introduction to Capabilities Approach	To introduce the Children's Neighbourhoods programme To introduce the Capabilities Approach and why it is a useful way of measuring wellbeing in neighbourhoods	Critical thinking
2. Map the community	To explore the local neighbourhood using visual research methods Research method: Mapping your neighbourhood	Working collectively
3. Explore identity	To explore what is important in supporting wellbeing Research method: self-portraits	Self-reflection and confidence-building
4. Vote on priorities	To choose the key priorities for action for CYP in this neighbourhood	Dialogue and democratic decision-making
5. Understand local issues	To explore the complexities of a key local issue or priority through a structured debate Research method: gathering data and participating in debate Group discussion on capabilities priorities 1 & 2	Debate and dialogue
6. Explore local history	To explore the rich history and experience of local people in our neighbourhoods Research method: storytelling Group discussion on capabilities priorities 3 & 4	Listening and analysis
7. Use digital media	To research digital resources of community information To explore digital research tools Research method: online research/digital tools Group discussion on capabilities priority 5	Digital awareness Analysis skills
8. Analyse early findings	Analysis of small group priorities and capabilities framework	Listening and analysis

CNS Capabilities Research Programme (1)

	Learning component	Purpose and methods	Skills development
B. Conducting Research (Co-researcher programme)			
10.	Develop research methods	To develop understanding of different research tools, their potential uses, strengths and limitations To develop a research tool(s) to undertake 25% sample of school/group population (Optional: to undertake qualitative research, e.g. focus group discussion) Research methods: Questionnaire; Focus Group facilitation	Dialogue and deliberation
11.	Fieldwork	To undertake research with a 25% sample of the school/group population Research methods: Questionnaire; Focus Group facilitation	Co-researcher skills: presentation, listening, organisation
12.	Analysis	To analyse research findings and draw out common themes Analysis of questionnaires; Analysis of group dialogue transcripts	Analysis: simple statistical analysis Analysis of focus group discussion
13.	Presentation of findings	Presentation of overall school/group capabilities framework and discussion of next steps based on research Design and production of poster	Presentation skills Dialogue on next steps

Adapting to the pandemic: Jan – June 2021

Schools/Research participants (2018-2022)

Neighbourhood	Schools (roll)	Survey	Workshops (participants)
Neighbourhood 1 (Urban)	2 primaries (318), (444) 1 secondary (800) 1 youth org	20% 20%	14 sessions x 2 (10 + 10) 8 sessions (8) 3Cs evaluation case study (12)
Neighbourhood 2 (Town)	1 primary (362) 1 secondary (1509)	20%	14 sessions (10) 8 sessions (15 + 12)
Neighbourhood 3 (Urban)	1 primary (350) 1 youth org	20%	8 sessions (25) N/A
Neighbourhood 4 (Town)	1 primary (259) 1 secondary (1161)	20%	8 sessions (10) 8 sessions (12)
Neighbourhood 5 (Rural)	1 primary (63)	20%	4 sessions (6)
Neighbourhood 6 (Urban)	1 primary (118) 1 secondary (508) 1 youth org	20%	8 sessions (12) 8 sessions (8) 4 sessions (9)

4.FINDINGS/
ACTION

Capabilities across neighbourhoods

CAPABILITY DOMAINS	Adapted by CYP
1. Lifespan	Living a long life
2. Health	Being healthy
3. Bodily safety and security	**Feeling safe**
4. Identity, expression & self-respect	Feeling happy & confident
5. Individual, family & social life	**Having good relationships with family & friends**
6. Education & Learning	Being able to learn
7. Standard of living	**Having a job, safe & warm place to live, food & clothes**
8. Productive & valued activities	Being able to get involved in activities
9. Participation & voice	Being able to take part in decisions
10. Legal protection	Being protected by the law
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CYP priorities – NEIGHBOURHOOD 2 (1)

CAPABILITIES DOMAIN	FUNCTIONINGS
1. HAVING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS	o Being able **to get support and help** (all kinds, emotional, financial, practical), having **someone you can trust**, mutual respect, **having someone's attention** ('not always on the phone'), being able to have good communication, being able to make up after an argument o Being **able to have company**, not be lonely, being able to see family and not be prevented by physical distance from them o Being able to **see friends**, even when they live further away o Being able to have **positive relation**ships
2. HAVING A JOB, SAFE & WARM PLACE TO LIVE, FOOD & CLOTHES	o **Important for stability,** career progression, if you want to have a family o Need to **focus in school**, 'not act up', get good exams results o Additional tutoring is helpful; study skills o Provision of **affordable housing by Local Authority or Housing Associa**tions, being **able to afford bills** and keeping up with bill payments so you don't get evicted o Being **able to afford transp**ort, bus passes o Being **able to access good local shops, discounted healthy food** o Being **able to access** cinema, **leisure**, clubs

CYP priorities – NEIGHBOURHOOD 2 (2)

| CAPABILITIES DOMAIN	FUNCTIONINGS
3. FEELING HAPPY & CONFIDENT	o If you aren't happy and confident, this is a **significant barrier to achievement** and social activity and can create fear and paranoia, can make you stay inside and make things worse o **Good relationships with family and friends** support young people to be happy and confident o Confidence gets you noticed o **Confidence shows** in body language: this is a way to notice if your friends are struggling
4. FEELING SAFE	o **Feeling physically safe, in your own home and out and about**, feeling safe in school, **not being worried about people fighting or bullying** o Feeling emotionally safe, being able to trust others, friends, parents, teachers o **Feeling safe when using technology**, not being subject to bullying on social media or online o Being able to access counselling and support

CYP priorities – NEIGHBOURHOOD 2

CAPABILITIES DOMAIN	FUNCTIONINGS
5= BEING ABLE TO LEARN	o Important for getting a job o Quality of provision is important: **inspiring teaching, provision of local activity in the community** o Location can get in the way – affordable transport important, outreach opportunities o **Mental health can get in the way of learning**: problems with friends or family might impact on ability to learn o **Problematic behaviour in school can also a barrier to learning - for self and others** o **Lack of sleep is a significant barrier to learning**; most young people keep phones on all night, to use as an alarm, to check for messages, and to listen to something as a distraction
5= BEING HEALTHY	o **Mental health vital for all other aspects of health** o Being healthy affects all the other capabilities o **Bullying can have a big impact on mental health**

Ideas for action – Neighbourhood 2

CAPABILITIES DOMAIN	FUNCTIONINGS
1. HAVING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS	o **Peer counsellors** in every year group o **Training in talking skills** with young people o Being a good friend o **Support for parents** in talking to your young person
2. HAVING A JOB, SAFE & WARM PLACE TO LIVE, FOOD & CLOTHES	o **Role-play different jobs,** based on expert advice from employers. See what it's really like to do a certain job. o Advice for young people on careers options linked to above o Lots of opportunities for **supported study** so you can achieve the grades you want o **Peer support** to check young people are coping with school work and achieving what they can/want. o **Raising money/donating food** for those in need in community
3. FEELING HAPPY & CONFIDENT	o Hold a big **event to highlight the issues around feeling sad/happy** o Make **a survey to check how happy/sad young people are** and take action to support the sad people o Carry out research on **what has helped young people with depression** to improve o Put up noticeboards with **motivational posters/inspirational quotes** on them o Raise awareness of **being kind** and supportive
4. FEELING SAFE	o Create **support groups** – small groups to help young people feel safe; People of the **same age** group; Have **a therapist/teacher/counsellor** there to supervise o **After school club: different topics** – each month/exams/subjects
5. BEING ABLE TO LEARN	o **Make learning groups/small tutoring gro**ups with young people o Offer **clubs** o Offer **transport** to school/community activities o Support **young people with disabilities** to attend activities o Develop opportunities to **work on the curriculum online and/or to music** o Increase opportunities for **outdoor learning**

Building collective capabilities with CYP: the 3C-Model (Ibrahim, 2017)
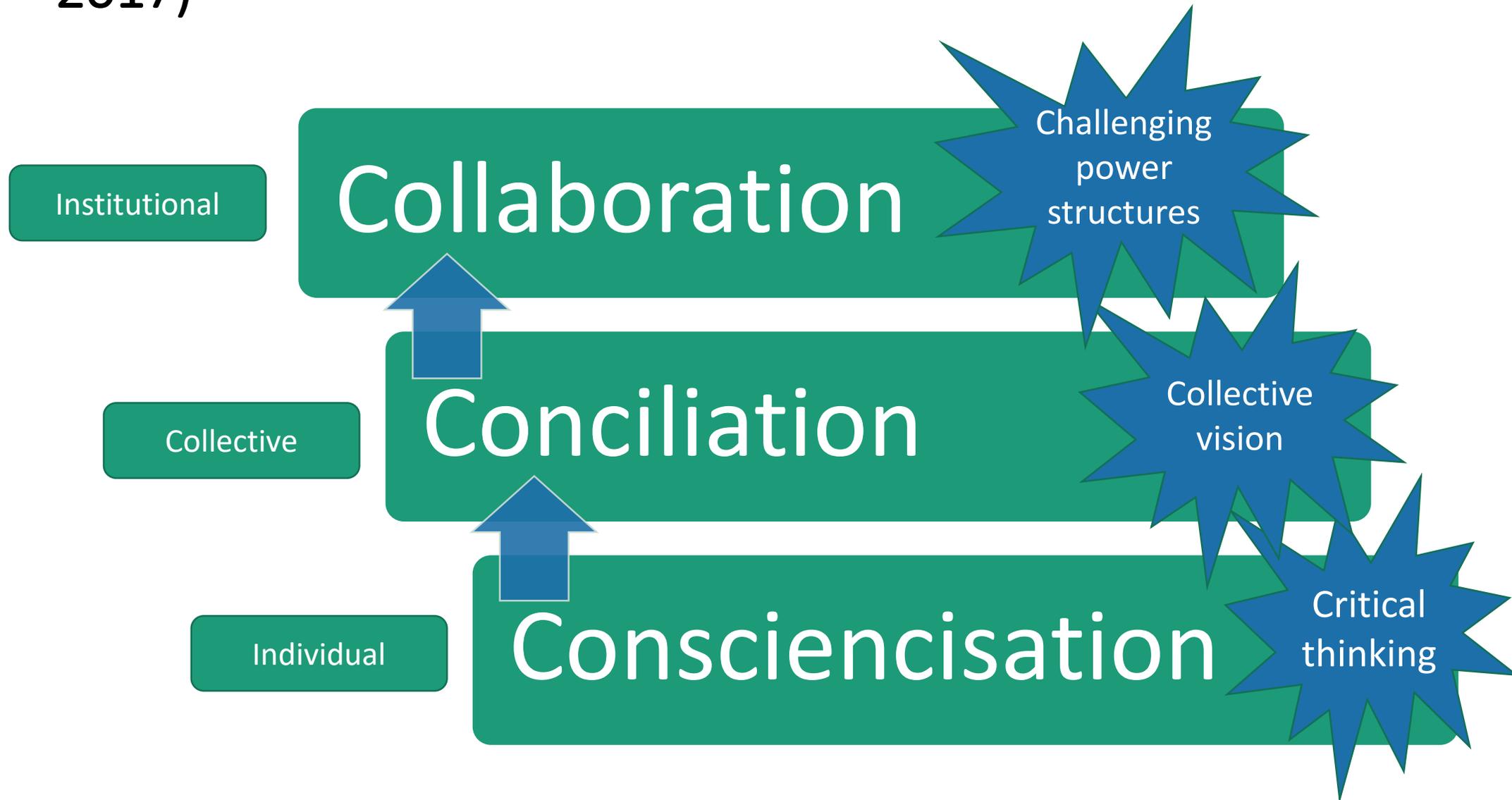
Consciencisation – being heard

When you find someone that you can trust with your information you feel happy telling them. I think that's good that you can have someone you can tell your emotions to, and they'll listen, they'll help you … it's just a matter of getting it off your mind, it'll be a relief …

I can talk to some teachers because I trust them … they understand and they listen. I feel it a massive glow when I talk to somebody because I know they're listening.

(Freya, School B)

Conciliation – Building solidarity

'When I was at school there was … certain people you identify are going to achieve and they're very nurtured. And a lot of people are excluded.

… Once I hit fifth year, I kind of, made a mess of my exams … Once that happened, once I didn't meet those standards, I almost felt, kind of…abandoned …

As if all a sudden there wasn't this one-to-one, you know, small groups and there wasn't the support. It was just, kind of, exclusive.'

(Jamie, Youth Group C)
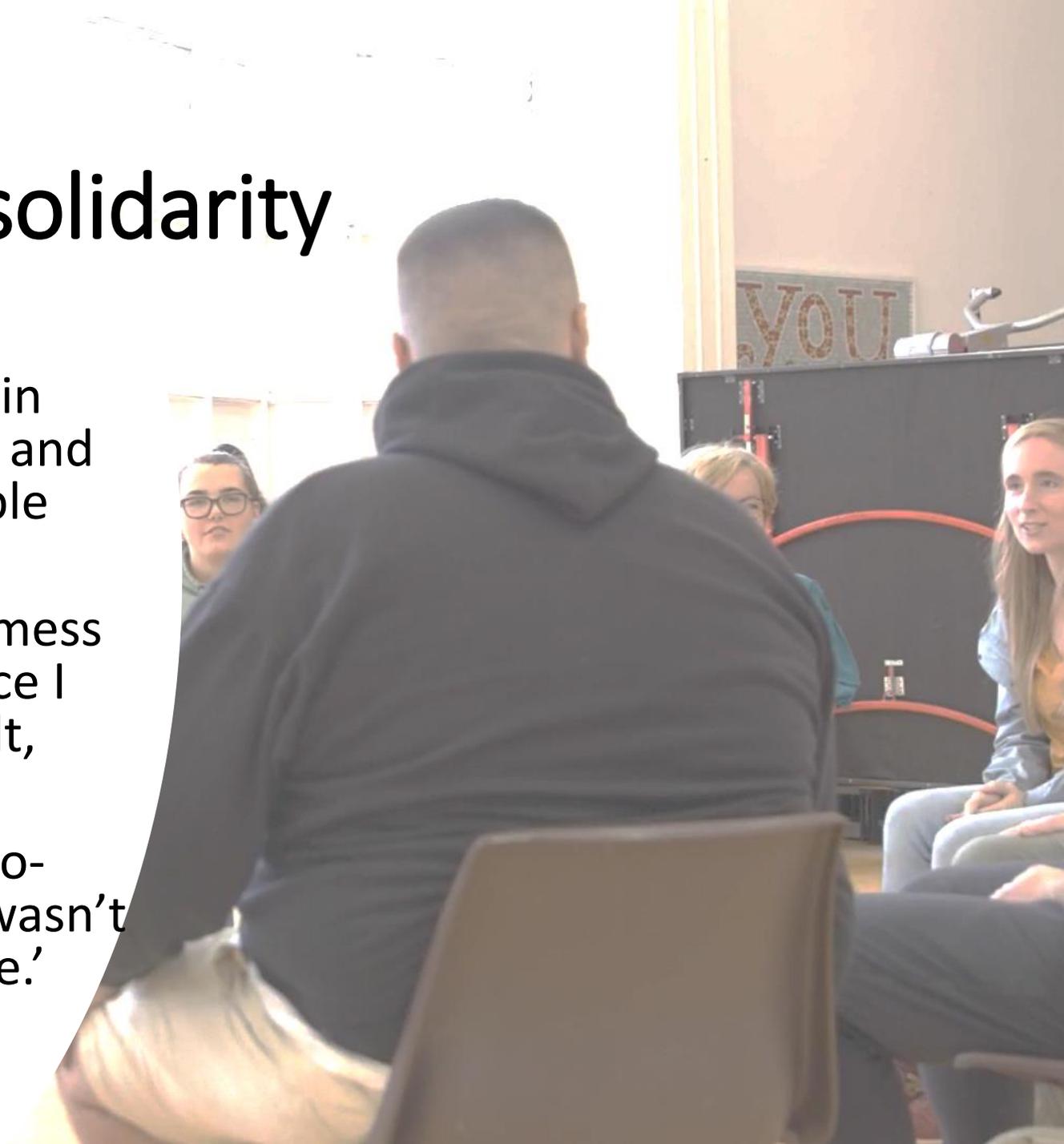
Conciliation – Disrupting assumptions/ Understanding others

SHAY: I've learned to look at other people's views, and then just respect everyone.

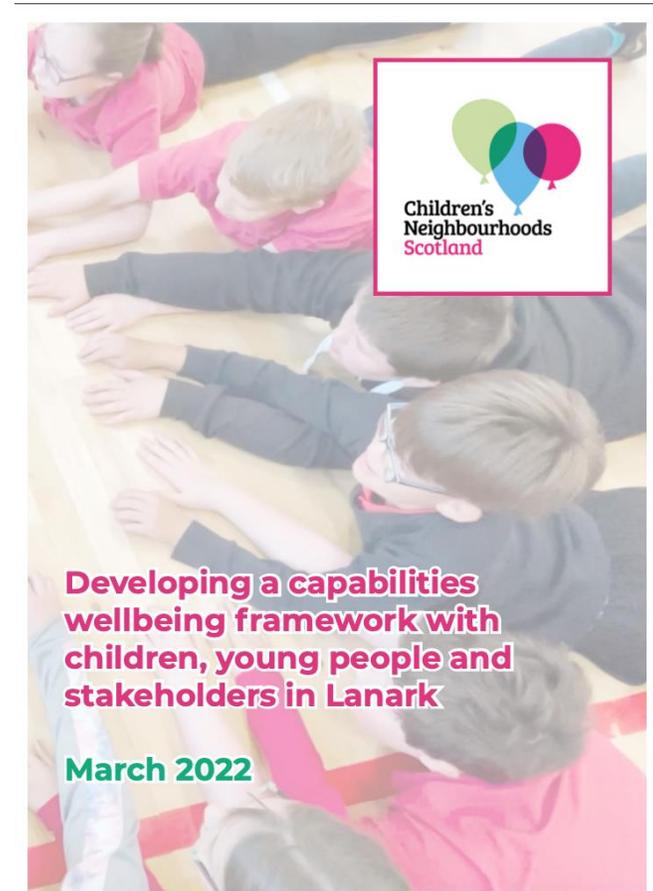NOAH: It's not all about what you want. It's about the community and what other people think as well.

AVA: Not all people in Scotland have a house or food and clothes and that's really bad. So, we want to try and make more people get the stuff that we have.   (School A)

Collaboration - CYP Local Wellbeing Framework s

Developing a capabilities wellbeing framework with children, young people and stakeholders
Clydebank, West Dunbartonshire
November 2020

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

Developing a capabilities wellbeing framework with children, young people and stakeholders in Drumchapel

February 2022

Developing a capabilities wellbeing framework with children, young people and stakeholders in Lanark

March 2022

Collaboration
Youth Mental Health –
July 2020

nsee.org.uk
Enquiry Evidence Excellence

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE
PROJECT EXPLORES MENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

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About NSEE

The Network for Social and Educational Equity (NSEE) is part of the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (ROC) at the University of Glasgow.

It works in collaboration with schools, local authorities, Education Scotland and partner services to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap in young people's education.

Children & Young People's Mental Health Task Force

Recommendations

July 2019

West Dunbartonshire
C O U N C I L

Published 10 March 2022

Collaboration - Climate Change Event – Oct 2021

"It is vital that we listen to the voices of those experiencing poverty to inform our next Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, which will be published by the end of March and will set out a critical path to reducing child poverty."

(Cabinet Secretary Shona Robinson on CNS visit to Drumchapel, October 2021)

BUT

- Action was patchy and not well resourced
- Time pressures – chance to revisit and continue building work
- Policy action/collaboration limited to political opportunities – mental health, climate change
- Lack of action on key capabilities
  - Having a job, safe and warm place to live, food and clothes
  - Family relationships
- Problems with lack of long-term university commitment to communities

4. QUESTIONS/ NEXT STEPS

Questions/Next steps

- Is the Capabilities Approach a useful one?

- How to build in potential to address space, audience, influence? (Lundy, 2007)

- Children's Voices research model – time-intensive – adapt or integrate?

- How to negotiate long-term commitment from (policy) partners – from outset or no collaboration?

- How to address structural capabilities – eg Standard of Living?

References

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Ward, S., McBride, M. & Watson, N.(2022)Evaluating youth empowerment in neighbourhood settings: applying the capabilities 3C model to evidence and extend the social justice outcomes of youth work in Scotland,*Journal of Youth Studies* ,DOI:10.1080/13676261.2022.2112160