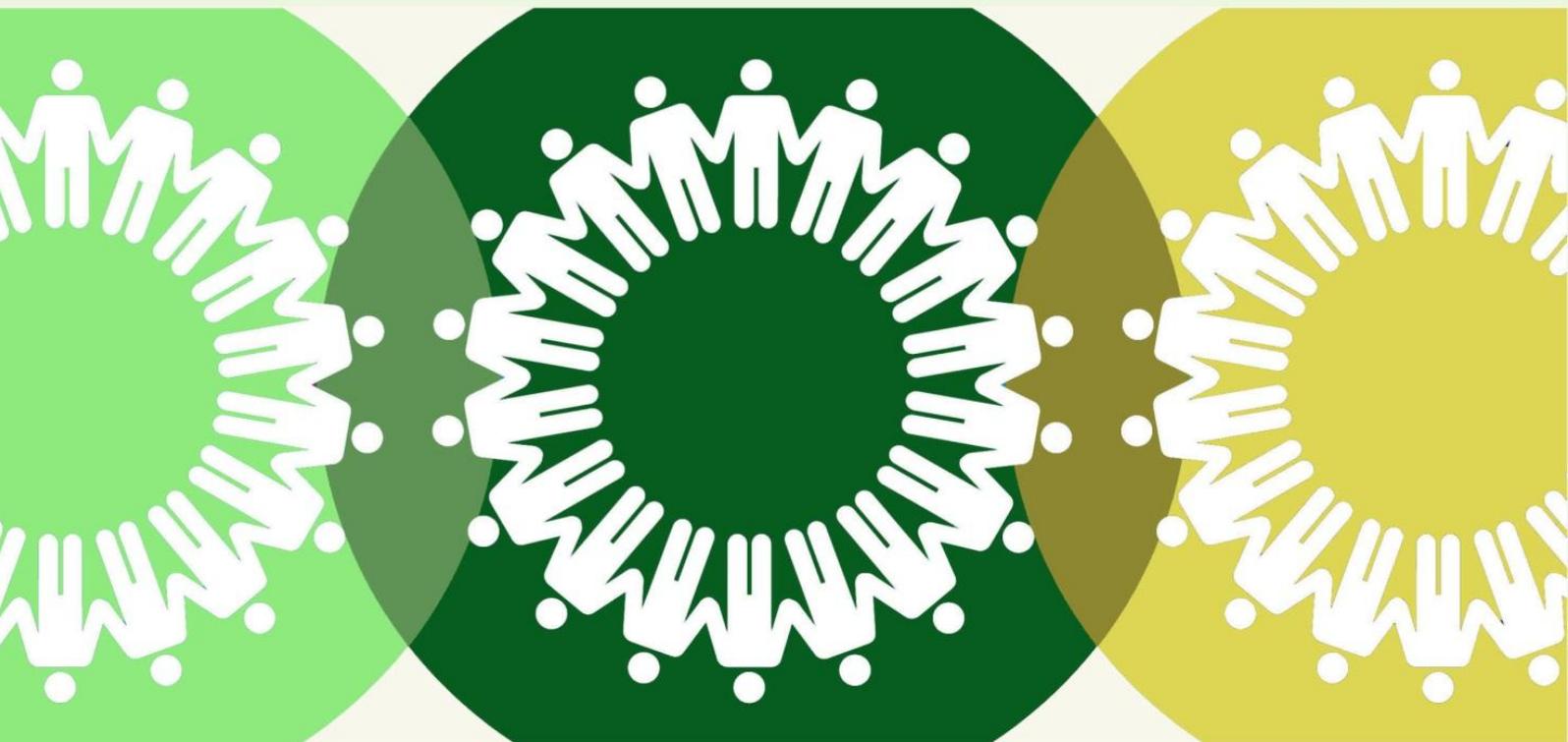


# Neighbourhood Resilience in Sheffield: Getting By in Hard Times

Deborah Platts-Fowler  
David Robinson



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# Foreword

By Councillor Julie Dore, Leader of Sheffield City Council



Sheffield is a proud and ambitious city with a track record of prevailing in the face of adversity. We have seen hard times in the past, and the challenges of the current austerity programme bring substantial pressures to Sheffield and its communities. Helping our communities to withstand the tough times ahead is one of the biggest challenges facing us as a city.

Sheffield City Council is facing a funding cut of more than £50 million in 2013/14, in addition to a more than £140 million reduction in services already made as a result of this austerity programme. Funding reductions on this scale have inevitably affected our ability to protect local communities against the impact of the social and economic hardship that they are faced with.

Resolving problems that are rooted in national policies and global processes will never uniquely be the responsibility of local government. However, promoting the resilience of Sheffield's neighbourhoods may prove to be an important way to help insulate neighbourhoods against the full force of economic decline, public sector reductions and cuts in benefits and tax credits.

This report provides a unique insight into neighbourhood resilience and factors promoting neighbourhood resilience. While the report acknowledges that there are clearly limits to the ability of outside agencies to promote resilience, it does highlight neighbourhood features that policy and practice should strive to promote and protect in a bid to nurture resilience.

This important research will be key to guiding a discussion within the city about what might be done to help communities be more resilient, and I, as Leader of the Council, am committed to being at the forefront of this discussion.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Dore".

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The economic downturn and public sector retrenchment are placing mounting pressure on many communities. What can agencies working with increasingly limited resources do to support communities under pressure? Building community resilience could be one way of getting more for less and helping to buffer communities against the full force of these pressures.

This report presents headline findings to emerge from a study undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University, working in partnership with Sheffield City Council, that set out to consider the notion of community resilience and explore factors promoting resilience. Two particular aims guided the research: to establish a working definition of community resilience for the city; and to identify factors that support and promote community resilience. The research approach centred on three essential tasks. First, a literature review with the aim of generating a working definition of community resilience and profiling factors known to promote and undercut resilience. The outcome was a shift in focus onto neighbourhood resilience. Second, the identification of resilient neighbourhoods in Sheffield and, third, fieldwork in resilient neighbourhoods to explore what resilience looks like and how it has developed.

## Defining community resilience

Analysis focused on communities of place at the neighbourhood level. The focus on the neighbourhood level reflects an interest in the social and material setting of everyday life, that shapes opportunities for interaction and engagement, contains key resources that inform the experiences of individuals, households and groups of people who reside therein, resulting in different outcomes in different places. As a result, it was deemed more appropriate to work with the concept of *neighbourhood resilience* rather than community resilience. Neighbourhood resilience was defined as the existence, development and engagement of local resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise.

Different places have different bundles of resources that inform how resilient they are in the face of different stresses and pressures. Different bundles of resources are likely to promote resilience to different stresses. A community might therefore be more resilient to certain forms of change and less resilient to others. The research challenge is to establish the local resources evident in resilient communities and to explain how these factors might serve to promote resilience. When thinking about the different local factors informing resilience it is helpful to consider who lives there, the social and physical context and the nature of community in the local area.

## Measuring neighbourhood resilience

The approach to identifying resilient communities focused on socio-economic stressors, measured through reference to the level of unemployment, income levels and deprivation within a neighbourhood. Outcome measures related to a number of factors known to be influenced by socio-economic stress for which administrative data is available at the neighbourhood level. Resilience was associated with better than expected outcomes, given the intensity of the stress that a neighbourhood is exposed to. This relative measure recognised that some more deprived

areas might actually be evidencing greater levels of resilience in the face of more extreme levels of stress and hardship.

Analysis involved analysis of each outcome measure against each stress indicator. The result was the identification of particular neighbourhoods in Sheffield with better and worse than expected outcomes relative to the level of stress experienced. These were defined as positive and negative outliers.

### **What makes a resilient neighbourhood?**

A series of factors were identified as helping to explain the apparent resilience of four case study neighbourhoods. Factors relating to who lives there included population stability, capacity to engage and the personal resources of local residents. Aspects of the social and physical context identified as important included local facilities and amenities, the scope and nature of service provision in the area, communication and information sharing, links to power and influence and the presence of active individuals and groups. Features of the local community recognised as important included the existence of shared and inclusive notions of belonging and identity, which provide a basis for the population to come together and mobilise. These factors are overlapping and interrelated. Action or inaction in relation to one factor will have knock-on consequences for others.

### **Reflections**

Various neighbourhood features were identified as important to resilience. It is simplistic to presume that nurturing these features will inevitably promote neighbourhood resilience. However, if pushed to spotlight neighbourhood features that policy and practice should strive to promote and protect in a bid to nurture resilience, four issues stand out. These are all issues that service providers have the capacity to influence through targeted interventions and mainstreaming activities:

- place making has a role to play in the promotion of resilience. The ambition should be to create and improve the gathering places within a neighbourhood so they invite interaction between people
- collective action requires a place-based sense of community rooted in common interests and experiences, which overlays other dimensions of social identity, such as class or ethnicity. This sense of belonging appeared to have been promoted by concrete local experiences of social ties and networks, nurtured by the infrastructure of public places discussed above. Population stability is also important
- information sharing and a community voice that resonates within and beyond the neighbourhood is important. Information and insight from local residents and community groups can help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision and should be actively promoted
- places and people are key features of the community infrastructure underpinning resilience. Passionate individuals make a major contribution to resilience by facilitating collective responses to local issues, securing resources for the area, running groups and activities and providing support to local people. Facilities and amenities that accommodate cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities are also key.

Two broad areas of further research can be identified. The first is more pragmatic in focus and relates to the practical application of the method developed in this study for measuring neighbourhood resilience. The second is more academic in nature and relates to the challenge of understanding the processes that underpin resilience and produce better than expected outcomes.

# Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

The economic downturn and public sector retrenchment are placing mounting pressure on many communities. What can agencies working with increasingly limited resources do to support communities under pressure? Buffering communities against the full force of these pressures by promoting resilience could represent a possible answer. Investing a proportion of public funds to build community resilience might be one way of getting more for less.

This report presents headline findings to emerge from a study undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University, working in partnership with Sheffield City Council. The study set out to establish a working definition of community resilience for the city and to identify factors that support and promote community resilience.

The research does not claim to provide conclusive answers about which of Sheffield's neighbourhoods are resilient or to provide a definitive formula for promoting resilience. What it does provide is a working definition of community (or more accurately, neighbourhood) resilience and an understanding of some of the key neighbourhood features that appear to promote resilience. The hope is that these insights will help guide discussion within the city about what might be done to help communities be more resilient.

## 1.2. Why is Community Resilience Important?

We live in an increasingly 'brittle environment' (Edwards, 2009). People's everyday lives and the local, national and global infrastructure of public, private and third sector organisations interact and operate in a fragile union. Even minor disturbances to this network appear capable of resulting in major disruptions, such as the current economic crisis. Living in this context demands that we accept and are prepared for major shocks and stresses to the system; that as individuals and communities we develop resilience, as a long-term sustainable solution.

Rising to this challenge demands that we recognise the links between individual, household and community resilience. Individual resilience might once have been considered a fixed trait residing in the person, but is now understood to be a variable quality that derives from a process of repeated interactions between a person and their environment (Gilligan, 2004). Residing in a resilient community can serve as a 'buffer', providing conditions and opportunities that support groups and individuals to cope better with various problems and challenges (Cottrell, 1976). Membership of a community can also serve as an essential source of well-being, an antidote to alienation and psychosocial and behavioural disorder (McMillian and Chavis, 1986; Newbrough, 1995; Sarason, 1974, 1993).

Recognition of these benefits has led some to infer that a lack of community explains a raft of social problems besetting contemporary society, from worklessness to rioting (Flint and Robinson, 2008). Hard pressed areas have been depicted as lacking the social fabric to prosper and blamed for their own problems. Social problems have been localised and thrown back at places to resolve themselves through the reinvigoration of community (Amin, 2005). This logic was evident in the Third Way thinking on community cohesion and social capital as means of overcoming poverty and disadvantage and is manifest in the coalition government's Big Society agenda.

This study does not subscribe to this position. We do not view resilience as a panacea for communities facing major social and economic disadvantages. It is a strategy for helping communities cope with adversity, rather than overturning structural inequalities. It can help communities to 'beat the odds', but it cannot 'change the odds' by removing the causes of adversity (Ungar, 2008). Even resilient communities will continue to require the support of public services to mediate the impact of stressors and support the on-going development, engagement and realisation of collective capacity.

### 1.3. Researching Resilience

The research approach centred on three essential tasks:

- *literature review* - the review focused on existing literature with the aim of generating a working definition of community resilience, identifying key components of resilience and profiling factors known to promote and undercut resilience
- *analysis to identify resilient neighbourhoods in Sheffield* - analysis compared a number of key stressors (deprivation, income, and rate of unemployment) against a number of neighbourhood outcome measures (including mental health admissions, premature mortality, male and female life expectancy, rate of crime and ASB, educational attainment, truancy rate, voter turnout) in each of Sheffield's 100 neighbourhoods, as defined by the City Council (based on natural boundaries and census output areas). Neighbourhoods were ranked based on how many times they were identified as an outlier (having better or worse than expected outcomes given the level of stresses faced). The result was a list of top ranking (positive and negative) outlier neighbourhoods
- *fieldwork in resilient neighbourhoods* - work was undertaken in four neighbourhoods identified as positive outliers to explore whether they were really resilient and, if so, what this resilience looks like and how it has been developed. Three neighbourhoods were relatively deprived areas of the city (high levels of unemployment and deprivation and low average incomes) and one was relatively affluent. Fieldwork involved speaking to a range of local stakeholders in each neighbourhood, including ward councillors, community and faith leaders, community activists and frontline service providers, such as healthcare workers, housing officers, advice centre workers, early years providers and community safety and police officers. In each of the four case study neighbourhoods, respondents were selected who were deemed likely to be able to comment on the reasons why the neighbourhood emerged as a positive outlier in relation to particular outcome measures, given their expertise and area of work.

## 1.4. Structure of the Report

This report is organised into four distinct sections:

- *chapter 2* draws on existing literature to generate a working definition of community resilience and an understanding of community that guides this study. The resulting focus on neighbourhood resilience is explained
- *chapter 3* conceptualises the role resilience can play buffering neighbourhoods against the adverse impact of various stressors, and draws on administrative data to identify more and less resilient neighbourhoods in Sheffield
- *chapter 4* explores the characteristics of neighbourhoods identified as more resilient, on the basis of better than expected outcomes given local stressors. Discussion concentrates on different dimensions of place, including who lives there, the nature of the local community and the physical and social context
- *chapter 5* spotlights the key findings to emerge from the study and reflects on priorities for future research.

# Defining Community Resilience

# 2

## Summary

Key features of the working definition of resilience include:

- a *focus on neighbourhoods* - the literature on community resilience fails to define community. This study focuses explicitly on communities of place and, in particular, the neighbourhood level. This is not to deny that people have multiple identities and are often members of multiple communities that transcend neighbourhood boundaries. The focus on the neighbourhood level reflects an interest in the social and material setting of everyday life, that shapes opportunities for interaction and engagement, contains key resources that inform the experiences of individuals, households and groups of people who reside therein, resulting in different outcomes in different places
- a *focus on coping with change and adversity* - neighbourhood resilience is defined as the existence, development and engagement of local resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise
- the importance of *community resources* - different places have different bundles of resources that inform how resilient they are in the face of different stresses and pressures. Different bundles of resources are likely to promote resilience to different stresses. A community might therefore be more resilient to certain forms of change and less resilient to others
- a useful *organising device* - there is no easy answer to the question of how different factors interact to generate different levels of resilience in different places. However, when thinking about the different local factors informing resilience it is helpful to consider the who lives there, the social and physical context and the nature of community in the local area
- the *research challenge* - the challenge for research is to establish the community resources that are evident in resilient communities and to explain how these factors might serve to promote resilience.

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter draws on insights from existing literature to generate a working definition of community resilience. Evidence of the resources that might serve to promote resilient communities is explored. The focus of analysis on communities of place - or neighbourhoods - is explained and a framework and research agenda to guide this study is outlined.

## 2.2. What is Community Resilience?

At its most basic, "resilience" describes the capacity to bend, bounce back and return to equilibrium, rather than break, in the face of pressure and stress (Norris *et al.*, 2007). This understanding informs much of the community resilience literature, which is dominated by a focus on emergency and disaster planning and the challenge of managing and recovering from a crisis, such as a flood, earthquake or terrorist attack. In this context, resilient communities are defined as those that bounce back to their pre-crisis state more quickly than less resilient communities.

This notion of resilience does not seem appropriate when considering communities exposed to more systemic, enduring, long-term stresses, such as those flowing from economic decline and recession, the retreat of public services and cuts to the benefit system. When faced with on-going stress, the challenge is less about bouncing back and more about adapting to change and coping effectively on an on-going basis. Helpful here is the notion of resilience employed in child development literature, which focuses on the ability to cope in the face of adversity. In this context, resilience is used to refer to (1) better than expected developmental outcomes relative to the child's disadvantaged circumstances; (2) competence under stress; and (3) positive functioning indicating recovery from trauma (Ungar, 2008). Building on this understanding, **community resilience might be considered the ability to respond and adapt positively to change, significant risk, or adversity** (Ahmed *et al.*, 2004; Gibbon *et al.*, 2002; Healy *et al.*, 2003; Masten and Powell, 2003).

Community resilience is not the same as community stability. It is not about isolating a community from change or controlling for all the conditions that can affect local residents. Neither is community resilience the same as community capacity, which can be described as the resources (financial, physical, human and social) that a community can draw on to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community (Chaskin *et al.*, 2001). Community resilience exists within and because of change and helps groups and individuals to cope better with the consequences of this change (Magis, 2010).

Recognising these key features, Magis (2010, p 401) defines community resilience as:

*"... the existence, development and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise."*

The collective investment of resources in the community is argued to create an upward spiral of increasing community ability to respond and adapt to change (Flora and Flora, 2004). This enables communities to increase their resilience through the very act of pulling together to respond to stressful events (Costello and Johns, 2006). It has been observed that "people in communities are resilient together, not merely in similar ways" (Brown and Kulig, 1996, p. 43), implying that a collection of resilient individuals does not guarantee a resilient community, but **in acting together the community can become greater than the sum of its parts**. It has also been suggested that members of resilient communities 'intentionally' develop personal and collective capacity. They engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and develop new trajectories for the community's future (Magis, 2010). The most resilient communities act purposefully and strategically.

### 2.3. Community or Neighbourhood Resilience?

The literature on community resilience fails to clarify or define the complex and contested concept of community. The question of exactly what is being referred to is left unanswered. Is it a community of place (contained within specific boundaries and rooted in a particular social, physical, cultural and economic context); a community of identity (composed of people with a common culture often related to shared ethnic or religious characteristics); or a community of interest (comprising people who share in an activity or interest, for example work, leisure, politics, religion)? Closer inspection reveals an implicit focus within much of the literature on a place-based notion of community, with a particular focus on the neighbourhood level. Community is, in effect, conceptualised as "an entity that has geographic boundaries and shared fate [...] composed of built, natural, social and economic environments that influence one another in complex ways" (Norris *et al.*, 2008, p.128).

Magis (2010) describes resilient communities as active agents, which pursue collective action to achieve specific community objectives that have a positive impact. They are more (socially and economically) equitable, a fact that supports the development and engagement of resources from across the community. Critical to their resilience, however, is the existence of local resources, which are collectively held or accessible to the community and that can be developed and engaged to achieve community objectives. Various authors have sought to identify these resources (Magis, 2010; Norris *et al.*, 2008; Sherrieb *et al.*, 2010). The factors identified amount to a description of aspects or dimensions of place that can promote resilience at the neighbourhood level:

- **Economic** – the economic resources available to a community for the welfare of its population, including individually and collectively held financial resources available for investment in business development and civic and social enterprise
- **Social** – the ability and willingness of community members to get along together, support one another, and participate in actions directed at community objectives. For the most part, social support captures helping behaviours within family and friendship networks, but it also encompasses members' experiences and perceptions of the wider community (Norris *et al.*, 2008), including interpersonal trust, sense of belonging, and tolerance of diversity. Research has found that these perceptions of community are often related to other neighbourhood phenomena, such as levels of crime, deprivation, satisfaction with the Council and local services, and whether members feel their local area is a good place to live (Demack *et al.*, 2010; Laurence and Heath, 2008; Letki, 2008). Another dimension of social capital is the presence of organisational structures within a community, including small groups such as committees, churches, and youth groups. These organisational structures represent the ways in which members of the community come together to socialise and address concerns and problems. The existence of organisational structures, the level at which these organisations function, and the linkages between organisations are critical to community empowerment
- **Cultural** – the ways in which community members 'know' the world, their values, and their assumptions about how things work, including rules relating to power and influence (Magis, 2010). Members' shared understandings of reality contribute to a sense of place and connectedness that in turn affect resilience (Alkon, 2004)
- **Human** – individuals' innate or acquired attributes, whether latent or manifest, such as labour force activity, training, skills and knowledge, physical health and

mental well-being. These human resources will influence and, perhaps, enhance the capacity of individuals to contribute to community resilience

- **Political** – community members’ ability to access resources, power, and influence decisions that affect the community. It reflects members’ capacity to express themselves and to participate as agents in their own community
- **Natural** – these are resources and ecosystem services from the natural world. In the Sheffield context, these might include air quality and natural resources that provide leisure and social opportunities such as rivers, reservoirs, parks and other green spaces
- **Built** – these are a community’s physical assets and built infrastructure, for example homes, schools, roads, office buildings, factories, community buildings and public spaces
- **Information and communication** – good communication is essential for community competence and resilience (Norris et al., 2008; Ganor and Ben-Lavy, 2003). In emergency situations, information and communication are vital. People need accurate information about the presenting danger and behavioural options, and they need it quickly (Norris et al., 2008). When facing longer-term stress, information and communication will be similarly important. As well as being correct, and appropriately transmitted, it is important that the source of the information is trusted. Some communities are more likely to trust local sources of information than unfamiliar distant ones.

Different places possess different combinations of these resources and are therefore differentially placed to deal with the stresses and pressures they encounter. This fact raises an obvious question; how do these factors interact to generate different outcomes in different places? Answering this question was a key goal of this study.

This focus on communities of place is not to deny that people are likely to have multiple identities and be members of multiple communities that transcend neighbourhood boundaries. However, the neighbourhood represents a key component of the social and material setting of everyday life, that shapes opportunities for interaction and engagement, contains key resources that inform the experiences of individuals, households and groups of people who reside therein and inform different outcomes in different places. Neighbourhoods are the setting for much of daily life and their form and nature has real consequences for the people who live in them (Martin, 2003). The neighbourhood also represents a tangible material setting and discernible target for interventions designed to promote resilience in the face of social and economic stress.

For these reasons, the neighbourhood represented the focus of this study. The definition of community resilience provided by Magis (2010) was adapted to provide a definition of neighbourhood resilience as the existence, development and engagement of local resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise.

## 2.4. Exploring Neighbourhood Resilience

The challenge for research is to understand how the different aspects of a place - manifest as the resources available to a local community - interact to determine the resilience of a community to specific stressors and pressures. This knowledge might then be deployed to guide decisions about interventions designed to mediate the impact of particular stresses and where they might be targeted.

The long list of factors outlined above provides a useful starting point. However, help is needed understanding the importance of these overlapping and interacting factors.

Pointers toward other possible features of the neighbourhood that might underpin resilience would also be welcome. At this point it is helpful to tap into advances made understanding geographical variations in health and well-being. Three explanations have been generated to explain variations in outcomes between different places, which draw attention to the characteristics of the people living in particular places, aspects of the local physical and social environment and the nature of the local community:

- *who lives there* - this bundle relates to *who lives there* and their situations and circumstances. This includes socio-economic circumstances, individual resources and human capital and also the stability of the population. The factors identified in the long list above that would fall into this category include human resources
- *Physical and social context* - this bundle relates to the context or setting and focuses attention on features of the local *physical and social environment*, including natural and built resources; services, amenities and facilities; social networks; community group infrastructure; and the systems and structures that support engagement and voice. The factors identified in the long list above that would fall into this category include economic, social, political, built and natural resources
- *nature of community* - this bundle relates to the *nature of community* in the area, whether there is a shared sense of belonging and identity, promoted by contact and interaction between residents, and informed by the area's history. Factors identified in the long list above that would fall into this category include cultural resources.

Applying these three types of explanations to the challenge of understanding variations in resilience promotes consideration of the full range of place characteristics and associated resources that might contribute to neighbourhood resilience. However, it is important to emphasise that, in applying these explanations, the challenge is not to establish the relative importance of one bundle of issues over the others. These are overlapping and inter-related bundles of issues (see Figure 2.1). Rather, the ambition is to understand the patterns and links between these factors in a bid to understand the essential characteristics of a resilient neighbourhood.

Moving this research agenda forward will involve determining the particular aspects of place associated with resilient communities; establishing which variables correspond with resilience. The challenge will then be to try and explain how these factors might serve to promote resilience. First, however, we need to develop a method for identifying resilient communities. This is the focus of the next chapter.

**Figure 2.1: Conceptualising Neighbourhood Resilience**



# Measuring Resilience

## Summary

Key elements of the approach to identifying resilient communities included:

- a focus on socio-economic stressors, measured through reference to the level of unemployment, income levels and deprivation within a neighbourhood
- the association of resilience with better than expected outcomes, given the intensity of the stress that a neighbourhood is exposed to
- a focus on a series of outcome measures known to be influenced by socio-economic stress and for which administrative data is available at the neighbourhood level
- the analysis of each outcome measure against each stress indicator to identify positive and negative outliers, in terms of resilience. The result is the identification of particular neighbourhoods in Sheffield with better and worse than expected outcomes relative to the level of stress.

## 3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the approach employed to identify resilient communities in Sheffield. The focus on neighbourhoods exhibiting better than expected outcomes is explained, the data drawn on to determine levels of stress and outcomes in neighbourhoods across Sheffield are discussed, and the neighbourhoods identified as outliers, in terms of resilience, are profiled.

## 3.2. What to Measure?

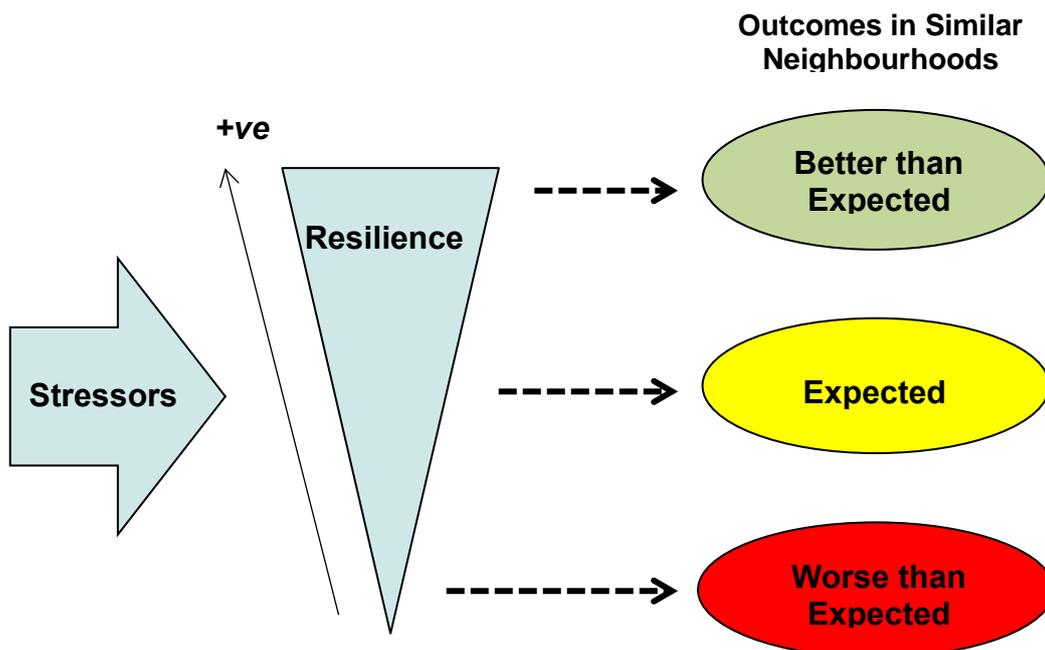
Measuring resilience involves capturing the ability of a community to mediate the impact of shocks and stresses. The greater the resilience, the better the outcomes when under stress. A number of important conditions need to be attached to this basic proposition.

First, resilience can vary depending upon the specifics of the stress and pressure being experienced. A community might prove resilient to one set of stressors, but struggle to manage the consequences of another series of pressures. It is therefore important to be clear about the stressors under examination. In this case, the stressor was identified as socio-economic stress, indicative of the challenges raised by economic decline and recession.

Second, it is important to recognise that the intensity of a stressor can vary from place to place. The stressors associated with economic decline and public sector cuts, including rising unemployment and falling incomes, and public sector cuts (for

example, in benefits and services) are not uniformly distributed. Some places will be more exposed to these stressors than others. This is an important point that previous work on resilience has often failed to recognise. Data relating to stress, capacity and outcomes has tended to be combined into a single composite score. As a result, socially deprived areas have tended to score worse than more affluent areas. This approach fails to acknowledge that some more deprived areas might actually be evidencing greater levels of resilience in the face of more extreme levels of stress and hardship. Recognising this fact, the research challenge becomes the identification of neighbourhoods that are evidencing *better than expected* outcomes, given the intensity of the stress and pressure they are exposed to. Figure 3.1 illustrates this approach to understanding neighbourhood resilience.

**Figure 3.1: Conceptualising the Mediating Effect of Resilience**



If we are able to identify neighbourhoods where outcomes vary from what might be expected given stress levels, the challenge is then to establish what factors help explain the resilience of these neighbourhoods. The hope is that these insights will usefully guide agencies working with increasingly limited resources to promote resilience and help buffer communities against the effects of various stressors.

### 3.3. Measuring Stress and Outcomes

Pursuing this approach to understanding resilience required neighbourhood level data for Sheffield relating to the defined stressor (pressures on opportunities and outcomes associated with the slowdown in economic activity) and on outcomes posited as likely to be affected by this stressor. Neighbourhood level data on changing levels of unemployment, incomes and deprivation were employed as the stress measures<sup>1</sup>. The measurement of outcomes was more challenging.

There have been various attempts to measure community resilience using survey and administrative data. For example, Experian (2011) produced an 'Index of Resilience', on behalf of the BBC, for all local authorities in England. The explicit aim was to rank local authorities in terms of their ability to respond to economic shocks,

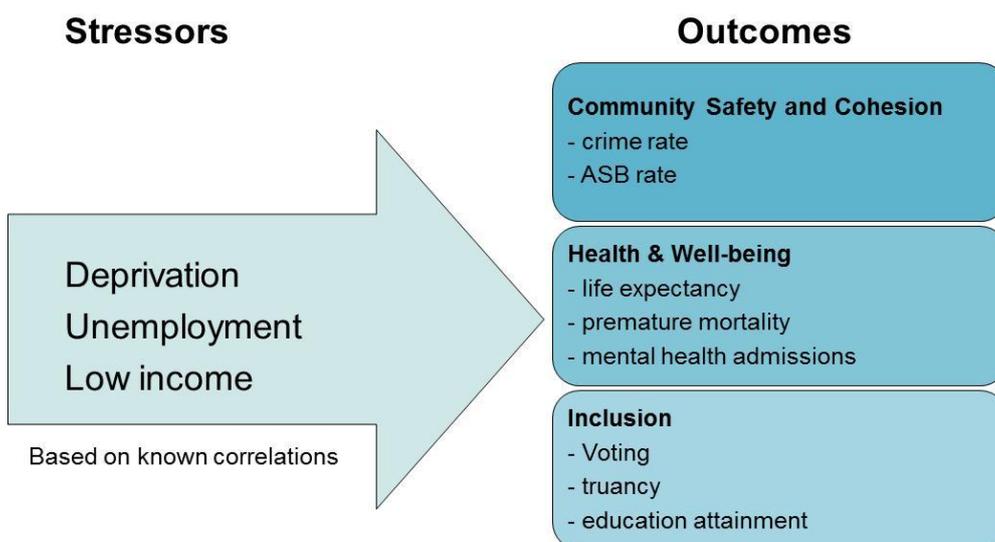
<sup>1</sup> Neighbourhood level data was provided by colleagues in NHS Sheffield and Sheffield City Council.

such as public sector cuts. Thirty-three datasets were collated across four key themes – business, community, people, and place. The Young Foundation’s ‘Wellbeing and Resilience Measure’ (WARM), was constructed using a similar approach to Experian, but was designed to measure resilience at more local levels, such as the neighbourhood (Mgnuni and Bacon, 2010). However, many of the datasets recommended for inclusion in the WARM approach are rarely available at local levels.

This is a common problem when trying to measure neighbourhood outcomes. Little data is available at the neighbourhood level, beyond what is captured in demographic statistics. Information about the local social or institutional context is hard to come by. Insight into resident experiences and perceptions is also limited. Some key perception measures are included in large-scale national surveys, but due to sampling constraints the results are rarely made available at the neighbourhood level. Moreover, some of these social surveys (including the Place Survey and the Citizenship Survey) have recently been discontinued. In response, our analysis focused on one of the few viable sources of information available at the neighbourhood level: administrative data collected by local government and public services, such as the police and hospitals.

A series of neighbourhood level datasets were identified as suitable measures for key outcomes known to be associated with socio-economic stress, based on previous studies. Strong correlations were deemed a pre-requisite for identifying which neighbourhoods are outliers from the city-wide trend. Correlation analysis revealed a significant or moderate to strong relationship<sup>2</sup> between socio-economic stress and certain key outcome measures in neighbourhoods across Sheffield. These outcome measures were mental health admissions, premature mortality, male and female life expectancy, rate of crime and anti-social behaviour, educational attainment, truancy rate, and voter turnout. Other outcome measures such as population turnover, proportion of housing vacancies, and low birth weight (live births) were analysed, but discounted because they were found to be weakly correlated with socio-economic stress in Sheffield.

**Figure 3.2: Stress and Outcome Measures**



<sup>2</sup> R-squared ranged between 36 (female life expectancy and unemployment) and 76 (deprivation and educational achievement) depending on the particular stress and outcome measure.

The measures employed capture a number of important issues. Recorded crime and anti-social behaviour is a useful measure of community safety and well-being. Not only is there a well known correlation between crime and deprivation. The level of crime and anti-social behaviour is a useful proxy for other dimensions of community well-being. For example, previous research has established a strong and consistent relationship between racial (in)tolerance and neighbourhood level crime (Laurence and Heath, 2008), suggesting that crime rates could be used as a proxy measures for racial (in)tolerance. Truancy rate and voter turnout are useful measures of inclusion within society. Political disengagement, measured here by voter turnout, and social exclusion are known to consolidate and drive each other (Electoral Commission, 2005). Truancy can be indicative of various problems and challenges in a child's life, including bullying, and there is a direct link between attendance and achievement (which is measured here in the form of educational attainment), and subsequent opportunities for inclusion in society through work and training. Health related measures are mental health admissions, premature mortality and life expectancy (men and women).

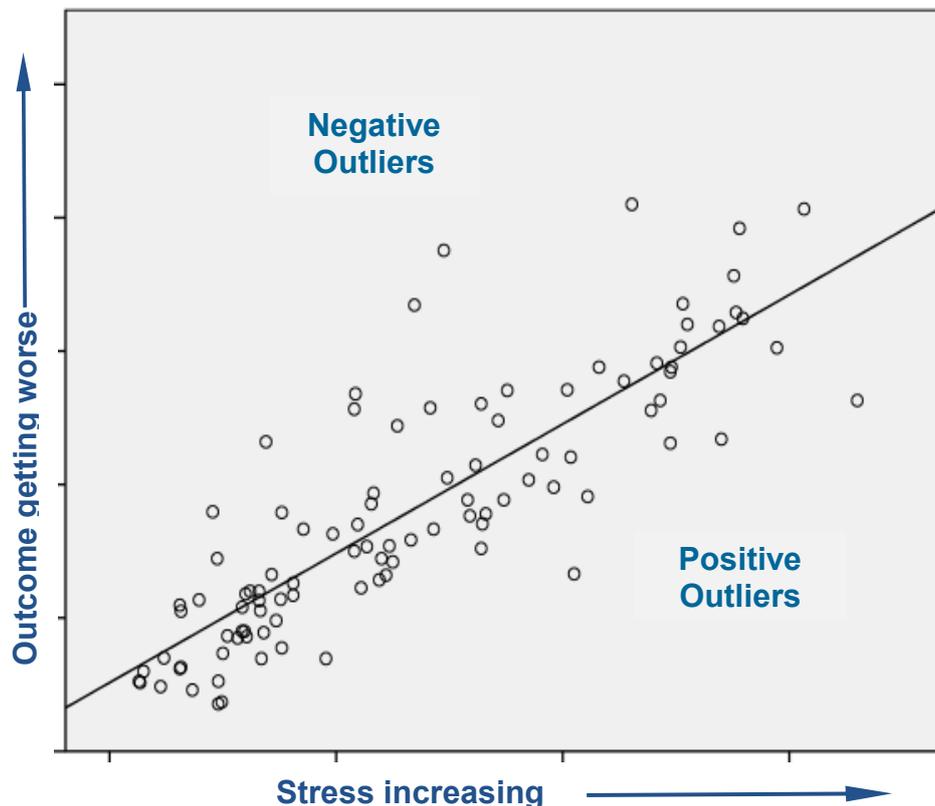
### **3.4. Identifying Outliers**

The identification of outliers, defined as neighbourhoods doing better than might be expected given the level of stress being endured, involved analysis of stress levels and outcomes in each of Sheffield's 100 neighbourhoods, as defined by the City Council. Each outcome measure was analysed separately against each of the three stress measures (unemployment, incomes and deprivation). The position of each neighbourhood relative to the average was then plotted. Figure 3.3 illustrates this exercise. Each dot represents a neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods above the average (illustrated by the ascending trend line) are experiencing better than expected outcomes, while neighbourhoods located below the line are experiencing worse than expected outcomes, given the level of stress endured.

The next step was to rank neighbourhoods based on how many times they were identified as an outlier against the different outcome measures. Resilient communities were short-listed on the basis of the number of times they were found to be an outlier against different outcome measures. This approach was designed to limit the impact of any data anomalies that might be associated with individual outcome measures. Table 3.1 lists the top ranking neighbourhoods in Sheffield, along with some basic socio-demographic information. This approach could also be taken for identifying the least resilient neighbourhoods. However, the decision was taken not to rank all Sheffield neighbourhoods. Although there was confidence around the extremes, the subtleties around the neighbourhood average provided less confidence for ranking neighbourhoods that were not outliers.

The identification of neighbourhood outliers using correlation analysis drew on the most recent data available. Trends over time were not taken into account at this stage. Changes in stressors and outcome measures over time were, however, reviewed in a second stage of analysis. The primary aim was to check whether any of the resilient neighbourhoods were experiencing worsening outcomes through time. The rather striking finding to emerge was that the resilient outliers, identified in Table 3.1, belonged to a group of neighbourhoods that had experienced both an increase in stress and improved outcomes over recent years. This finding reinforced the conclusion that these neighbourhoods were worthy of closer attention.

**Figure 3.3: Identifying Outlying Neighbourhoods**



Before the data exercise even commenced, officers in a range of agencies were consulted over resilience in Sheffield and asked to identify which neighbourhoods they considered to be resilient. However, respondents struggled to suggest where resilience existed in the city. Following the data exercise, stakeholders were again consulted to sense check the findings and to seek views on which neighbourhoods might be proving more resilient in the face of change of hardship. However, respondents struggled to provide examples of more resilient neighbourhoods. In response, the validity of the conclusions drawn from analysis of outcome measures were tested during fieldwork in case study neighbourhoods, discussed in chapter 4.

### **3.5. Profiling Resilient Communities**

Having defined a number of neighbourhoods within the city apparently evidencing better than expected outcomes, the challenge was to try and explain why these neighbourhoods were proving to be more resilient. Little data exists regarding many of the factors identified in Chapter 2 as likely influences on resilience, such as the natural and built environment, community groups and structures and locally available services and facilities. It was therefore deemed necessary to explore resilience factors through fieldwork in a sample of the neighbourhoods listed in Table 3.1. Fieldwork tested local opinion about whether the case study neighbourhoods were resilient and sought to establish possible explanations for resilience. Fieldwork findings are discussed in the following chapter.

**Table 3.1: Neighbourhoods with better than expected outcomes relative to stress level.**

	<b>Outcome outliers</b>	<b>Deprivation* Quintile</b>	<b>Youth** Quintile</b>	<b>Working Age*** Quintile</b>	<b>% BME</b>
<b>Lodge Moor</b>	Longevity Crime Voting participation	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	4.0%
<b>Firth Park</b>	Mental health Crime & ASB	Above Average	Highest	Average	4.2%
<b>Norton</b>	Longevity (female) Voting participation	Below Average	Lowest	Lowest	2.4%
<b>Wharnccliffe Side</b>	Crime & ASB Longevity	Below Average	Above Average	Average	1.9%
<b>Abbeyfield</b>	Crime Voting participation Youth engagement	Above Average	Highest	Average	52.0%
<b>Waterthorpe</b>	Longevity	Average	Lowest	Average	2.2%
<b>New Parson Cross</b>	Mental health Youth engagement	Most Deprived	Highest	Below Average	3.5%
<b>Southey Green</b>	Youth engagement Educational attainment	Most Deprived	Average	Average	4.3%
<b>Manor</b>	Longevity (female) Crime & ASB	Most Deprived	Highest	Above Average	4.2%
<b>Woodside</b>	Longevity (male) Youth engagement	Most Deprived	Above Average	Highest	47.3%
<b>Batemoor/ Jordanthorpe</b>	Educational attainment	Most Deprived	Below average	Average	3.0%

**Notes:** \* IMD 2010; \*\* Aged 10-19 years old; \*\*\* Aged 15-64 years old.

# What Makes a Resilient Community?

## Summary

- a series of factors were identified as helping to explain the apparent resilience of the case study neighbourhoods. These factors related to who lives there, the local social and physical context and the nature of community in the neighbourhood
- factors relating to who lives there included population stability, capacity to engage and the personal resources of local residents
- aspects of the social and physical context identified as important included local facilities and amenities, the scope and nature of service provision in the area, communication and information sharing, links to power and influence and the presence of active individuals and groups
- features of the local community recognised as important included the existence of shared and inclusive notions of belonging and identity, which provided a basis on which the population could come together and mobilise in response to concerns
- these factors are overlapping and interrelated. Action or inaction in relation to one factor will have knock-on consequences for others
- the research may have only scratched the surface when it comes to understanding the causal effect of different factors on resilience, but the issues raised demand the attention of research and policy.

## 4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores resilience in four case study neighbourhoods in Sheffield: Abbeyfield, Firth Park, Southey Green and Lodge Moor. All four neighbourhoods recorded better than expected outcomes given local stress levels. They were also selected on the basis that they appeared resilient in relation to a range of different outcomes and had different population profiles (in terms of age and ethnicity). Three of the neighbourhoods were experiencing relatively high levels of stress (unemployment, low incomes and deprivation), one was more affluent and experiencing lower levels of stress.

Fieldwork involved interviews with a range of local stakeholders identified as being well placed to reflect upon why the neighbourhood reported better than expected outcomes in relation to particular outcome measures. The list of respondents in each neighbourhood varied. Across the four neighbourhoods, more than 50 people were interviewed, including ward councillors, community and faith leaders,

community activists, tenant and resident representatives, police and safer neighbourhood officers and front line service providers including health care workers, housing officers, advice centre workers and early years providers.

The interviews explored two key questions. First, respondents were presented with the definition of neighbourhood resilience detailed in Chapter 2 and asked whether they thought that the case study neighbourhood was resilient. There was virtual unanimity in responses to this question, with nearly all respondents agreeing that case study neighbourhoods did evidence neighbourhood resilience. Second, respondents were subsequently asked about the factors that help promote resilience and whether there were any particular aspects of the case study neighbourhood that helped explain better than expected outcomes in relation to particular outcome measures.

Inevitably, the findings to emerge need to be treated with caution. The research approach represented a pragmatic response to the project aims, working within available resources. As a result, we are likely to have only scratched the surface when it comes to identifying factors underpinning neighbourhood resilience. The research was also limited in its ability to evidence the causal effects of different factors on resilience. However, the interviews did raise a series of interesting and insightful issues that extend our understanding of neighbourhood resilience in Sheffield and demand the attention of research and policy.

Discussion is organised into three distinct sections each focusing on a different bundle of factors identified as helping to explain resilience in the case study neighbourhoods. These bundles reflect the three types of explanation that are frequently drawn on to explain geographical variations in outcomes: who lives there; the social and physical context; and the nature of the local community (see Chapter 2 for more details). Table 4.1 summarises the key issues raised within each of these bundles.

**Table 4.1: Key Explanations for Resilience**

<b>Explanations for Resilience</b>	<b>Elements identified by Respondents</b>
<p><b><i>Who Lives There</i></b></p> <p>The circumstances and situations of the population, including demographics, socio-economic status, individual resources, human capital and related issues, such as turnover.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual resources</li> <li>• age profile</li> <li>• capacity to engage</li> <li>• population stability</li> <li>• diversity and difference</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Social and Physical Context</i></b></p> <p>The local context or setting, including natural and built resources, services, amenities and facilities, community sector infrastructure and opportunities for engagement and voice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical environment</li> <li>• facilities and amenities</li> <li>• service provision</li> <li>• active citizenship</li> <li>• media and communications</li> <li>• links to power and influence</li> <li>• housing</li> <li>• crime and anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Nature of Community</i></b></p> <p>The sense of community in the area, including whether there is a shared notion of belonging and identity, promoted by interaction and informed by the area's history.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared notions of belonging and identity</li> <li>• inclusive communities</li> </ul>

## 4.2. Who Lives There

Who lives in the neighbourhood was reported to be a key issue informing resilience. Attention focused on the individual resources and human capital of local residents and the stability of the population.

### *Individual Resources*

It does not necessarily follow that a group of resilient individuals will be resilient together, but it was reported that personal resilience can help promote neighbourhood resilience. The focus on neighbourhoods exhibiting better than expected outcomes given local stress levels (unemployment, low incomes and deprivation) served to largely control for the effect of socio-economic circumstances. However, it was pointed out by respondents in the Lodge Moor case study that individual wealth might not be recognised by these particular stress measures. This point was made in relation to the relatively high proportion of retired people reported to be living in the area. These individuals, reported to include many people who worked in professional, managerial and technical occupations, who might now have relatively modest incomes but also have limited outgoings (for example, having paid off their mortgage) and access to accumulated assets, including the capital invested in property and savings. These resources can be key in helping them to cope and get by in the face of adversity and maintain a good quality of life.

Education was frequently cited as a key contributor to neighbourhood resilience. Of course, education can be used purely for personal interests, but where it serves collective interests it can help promote resilience to change and hardship. It was suggested that a critical mass of people in a community who are educated, articulate, politically aware and care about the community can help locate and disseminate information and utilise different mechanisms for championing their cause. In some areas there may only be a handful of such people, but in the Abbeyfield neighbourhood it was reported there were enough who knew how to deal with community issues and were 'not frightened of fighting the Council' where this was deemed necessary.

On a more negative note, some service providers reported that attempts to engage people in some communal activities can be undermined by low levels of personal resilience. For example, the stigma associated with depression and other mental health issues, prevented people participating in group meetings or activities; as did alcohol and substance misuse issues.

### *Capacity*

Some local activists admitted that their community work took up a lot of their time and suggested that this level of commitment would not have been possible alongside full-time family or employment responsibilities: "when you've been working until 7pm, you can't come back and start going to a meeting". Often community volunteers and activities were retired or employed only in part-time positions. It was suggested that people out of work, despite having spare time on their hands, were often reluctant to get involved in community activity because of the stigma and low self-esteem associated with long-term unemployment. Capacity to get involved was also reported to be related to the age profile of the local population.

### *Age Profile*

Some aspects of resilience were reported to relate to the age profile and everyday routines and activities of the local population. Lodge Moor was reported to benefit from having a relatively high proportion of older residents who were around and

about during the day, talk to each other, keep an eye out for anything unusual or suspicious and readily report incidents to the police. Older people were also reported to have more free time to allow them to become involved in Neighbourhood Watch groups. Groups run by and for older people in the area were reported to provide a readymade audience for community safety officers wanting to share information and advice and raise awareness. The Safer Neighbourhoods team was reported to have carried out various awareness raising activities, for example, visiting luncheon clubs, the Tenants and Residents Association, attending fayres and meeting with Neighbourhood Watch to educate people about forms of crime targeting older people. Older populations were also reported to be more likely to engage in the consultation and to vote in local elections because "they see it as their duty".

### ***Population Stability***

Population stability was reported to promote resilience at the neighbourhood level. If a neighbourhood has a relatively stable population social ties, links and associations are more likely to develop. These ties can underpin shared notions of belonging which can underpin community action. Population stability was also reported to impact positively on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour (see below). It was also suggested that stability can serve to limit fear of crime. For example, people are likely to be less fearful of young people hanging around when they have seen them grow up and know their families.

In contrast, high population turnover limits the likelihood that people will know their neighbours. One stakeholder reported how in a less resilient community where they worked "ten years ago, you could knock on anyone's door", but as an ageing community had gradually been replaced by younger families "now people rarely know their neighbours". Social ties and connections can be built, but it can take some time for new residents to feel and become part of the community. In the meantime, community resources are dependent on the activities of the 'same old faces'.

Stability and homogeneity within the tenant base on the Westminster estate in Lodge Moor was reported to have been promoted by the lettings policy, which had previously involved the designation of the stock for over older people. On a more negative note, it was suggested that population stability in some areas may be the result of low social mobility, perhaps providing some people with a sense of thwarted ambition. However, thwarted ambition may impact less adversely if neighbours feel they are in it together.

### ***Diversity and Difference***

A complex relationship was reported between diversity and difference and neighbourhood resilience. The presence of particular social, cultural, ethnic or religious differences within a community can sometimes prove divisive, undercutting cohesion and limiting resilience. The arrival of a new population group in a neighbourhood can be regarded by long-standing residents as a disruption of everyday life and a challenge to established identities and notions of community. In the face of hostility, some groups might form social networks, based on a shared identity, that provide mutual support. These networks can be key in helping them to get by, but might limit engagement in a community of place. Tensions can be exacerbated by (the perception or reality) increased competition for scarce resources, such as funding for community groups or housing. In contrast, areas with a longer history of diversity can develop local identities and notions of community that are more inclusive and promote more positive social relations.

### 4.3. The Local (Social and Physical) Context

This bundle of factors relates to the context or setting and focuses attention on features of the local physical and social environment reported to be promoting neighbourhood resilience. Issues raised by respondents included the natural and built environment; services, amenities and facilities; community infrastructure; and the systems and structures that support engagement and voice.

#### *The Physical Environment*

Physical features of the natural or built environment can sometimes serve to limit interaction and engagement and undermine a sense of community. For example, a river, large road or dual carriageway can divide people who live in close proximity and present a barrier restricting access to community resources, such as shops, community centres and parks. Personal resilience can also be undermined by difficulties accessing services, such as healthcare and childcare. However, physical boundaries can also serve to define a place and engender a shared sense of belonging. This was the case in Lodge Moor, where the boundaries of the neighbourhood were reported to be clearly defined and to help engender a place-based notion of identity and belonging.

*Green space*, particularly parks, were frequently mentioned as being important to individual and neighbourhood resilience. It was reported that some public parks are still playing the role intended by their Victorian founders, contributing to social mixing, mental well-being and promoting local pride in the area. Where parks were well maintained, it was reported that all social groups in the local area used them, for example to relax, socialise and exercise. Parks are often the focal point for community festivals, which were seen by community stakeholders as important for social mixing and civic pride.

Parks were reported to benefit young people in particular. In the Southey Green neighbourhood, where the data exercise had pointed to a degree of youth resilience, an old landfill site had been redeveloped as a park (Cookson Park). Young people had been involved in the design of various aspects of the park. For example, a group often seen hanging around the local shops had been approached to design the skate park area, thus making sure the design met their needs, but also giving them a sense of ownership over the new park. Central to the redevelopment was a velodrome, which had provided opportunities for young people locally to engage in sporting activity, but also through the additional support of a local community organisation, the opportunity to belong to and compete for a cycling club. The reported benefits of these developments are consistent with the substantial literature regarding the benefits that accrue to young people who participate in clubs, in terms of social skills and emotional wellbeing.

#### *Facilities and Amenities*

A consistent theme across the case study neighbourhoods was the important role that a distinct centre with shops, services and related amenities can play in promoting interaction and a sense of community. A neighbourhood centre was reported to promote shared use of this space by local residents, resulting in informal encounters as people go about their everyday business. The associations that are forged and reinforced can serve to promote a shared sense of belonging and support productive community action.

Some respondents identified particular services as being important in drawing local residents together in shared space. These included a GP surgery, pharmacy, Post Office and newsagents. Other respondents suggested that the concentration of a

range of services and facilities was key. In Firth Park, for example, a good offer of shops was reported to be located alongside banks, a library, a café, a children's centre, council offices, advice centre, medical clinic, allotments and a large well-maintained park. The district centre is also well connected by local bus routes, helping people reach the district centre and also connect – physically and socially – to the rest of the city.

Appropriate buildings and spaces for activities to take place were also identified as important. Concern was expressed about the future of existing community buildings, in the face of public sector cuts. For example, one stakeholder commented that "there used to be lots of things situated in the library..., but the Council is now trying to sell the building". The concern was that these activities would be lost rather than relocated to another space. In response, help might be provided securing access for local people to other local buildings, such as schools, for the purposes of community activity. However, it was suggested that community buildings are also signifiers of community activity and can be a source of community pride and belonging.

Respondents reflected that district centres, such as Firth Park, could be replicated in other parts of the city through the development of activity centres or hubs. These might house local businesses, a café, a library, job clubs, provide space for rent by business and/or use by community groups. The ambition would be to create a place where the concentration of services and facilities would pull local people together, promoting social interaction. At very least, it was suggested that planning decisions should take into account the potential damage wrought on district centres when considering plans for supermarket development. Although promises of local employment opportunities and financial support for community projects were recognised as a benefit of such developments, some respondents argued that these benefits were outweighed by the negative impact on community infrastructure.

### ***Service Provision***

The form and nature of service provision was identified as key to individual resilience, particularly in more deprived neighbourhoods and in relation to more vulnerable residents. As discussed above, individual resilience can help promote neighbourhood resilience. The local presence of service providers in the neighbourhood can also serve to pull local residents together into shared space, as discussed above. Service provision was also reported to directly promote neighbourhood resilience. For example, community festivals and events, which promote social mixing and local pride in the area often rely on the support and input of council workers, such as park rangers and community development workers, in addition to the efforts of local volunteers. Respondents reported that the input of these workers would be sorely missed if their posts were lost as a part of public spending cuts. Local volunteers acknowledged that the back up of public services was important and reported that they might struggle to organise and host community events on their own.

The way that services are provided was acknowledged as important to resilience. Some service providers expressed disappointment and confusion over low participation rates in locally offered activities. They felt this represented apathy within the local population. However, other stakeholders spoke about not only the need locally relevant activities but also the need for long-running regular activities that people can rely on. Some providers suggested that young people would quickly stop attending if they turned up to find activities were not running as planned. It was reported that regular after school activities provided by a local community organisation represented a dependable and safe place for young people in Southey Green. Young people were said to value having somewhere to go and something to do while they waited for their parents to return home from work. The gap between

school and home is known to be a time when a high proportion of youth crime and victimisation occurs and so these types of activities help mitigate risk.

The way services interact with people locally was also thought to be relevant to resilience. Community organisations reported intentionally trying to build independence and a sense of social responsibility in the way they delivered services. For example, young people were expected to set up activities before they could begin, and local people were approached to volunteer for small but specific tasks. Service providers found that, despite initial reluctance from some, most people welcomed these opportunities to participate, to feel needed, and to be responsible for something. For example, staff at the Southey Green library encouraged three girls who attended regularly, but were often 'a bit giddy', to become library monitors, giving them badges to wear and the task of checking out books and returning them to the shelves. This was viewed as a successful initiative and was extended out to other young people, who generally helped out four hours per week, with three people at a time on a rota.

Good links such as these between local people and service providers can promote more effective service provision. Another example was Neighbourhood Watch, which was reported to work closely with statutory services, including the police and fire service, serving as their "eyes on the ground". Problems were raised promptly, allowing the police to nip emerging problems in the bud. Neighbourhood Watch was also reported to facilitate communication between the police and the local population, for example, distributing newsletters on behalf of the police. Tenants and residents associations can play a similar role, keeping their landlord and the police in touch with any issues or concerns in the local area. In Lodge Moor, TARA members were reported to regularly walk around the estate noting problems that are reported to Sheffield Homes. The TARA is also helping Sheffield Homes with efforts to promote internet inclusion, in response to the fact that many older tenants are not online and therefore struggle to access various services and resources now provided through the Internet. Sheffield Homes is providing Internet training for a group of 12 tenants, who it hopes will be IT champions, and is also seeking to open an internet café in the Hallam Community Centre. This development also has the potential to bring the community together online, for example, by promoting engagement in the TARA online. It is also hoped that the IT training will promote individual resilience, in that people will be able to utilise online resources and advice, for example, around welfare reform.

### ***Active citizenship***

In some neighbourhoods, certain individuals were reported to be making a major contribution to resilience, by facilitating collective responses to local issues, securing resources for the area, and providing social and educational support to local people. Fulfilling such a role can demand considerable time, knowledge and expertise, which people with family or work related responsibilities are unlikely to be able to commit. Reflecting on this point, respondents in Lodge Moor commented that the area benefited from having a relatively old age profile because older people have fewer commitments and more time to get involved. It was also suggested that the work related experience and expertise of retired people in the area facilitated effective involvement.

The important role played by a few passionate individuals was championed across the case study neighbourhoods. However, concerns were also raised about the dangers of relying on one or two key individuals to sustain the community infrastructure. In particular, what would happen if they moved on? In response, respondents emphasised the importance of generating a local community infrastructure that could survive the loss of a key individuals. Suggested approaches

included supporting community activists to share their skills and providing training to help a wider range of people get involved and share key roles and tasks. Service providers were identified as having a role to play in supporting this approach.

Community development workers and local activists suggested that some of the more formal structures set up to inform and involve residents in local issues, such as community assemblies, engaged only a small proportion of local people. It was reported that the same few people attend all public meetings, unless there was a specific, acute problem affecting the locality. Reflecting on this point, some respondents questioned whether a more effective approach to community engagement would be to boost activity when there was a local crisis.

Shared negative experiences can sometimes bond people together and stimulate collective activity. Examples were given of neighbours pulling together to lobby for traffic calming measures, for street cleaning activity, or to tackle drug selling in their local area. One respondent reflected that this kind of collective activity is often "motivated by self-interest rather than a culture of citizenship". Self-interest may well be the initial hook for people to get involved in community activity, but it is possible for participation to continue over the longer term and in relation to a broader range of issues. Such an approach was reported to have left a legacy of community activity in a neighbourhood close to Abbeyfield, where a group of Somali women came together following the shooting of two young Somali men. It was described as a 'focused emotional response to their sons getting involved' in crime and violence, but their subsequent work with the local authority set up a range of diversionary activities for young people in the area that are on-going. However, sustaining interest and commitment can be difficult and there might be a role for practitioner input, at least in the early stages.

Maintaining the local community infrastructure requires the commitment of financial support, as well as time and effort of local residents and service providers. A one-off investment can serve to kick-start activities, which might become self-sustaining. For example, a voluntary sector organisation had provided initial funding for a local exercise class in Firth Park, which became self-financing by charging users a small fee for attending sessions. On-going investment might be required to maintain certain aspects of the local community infrastructure. For example, it was reported that allotments in Firth Park had been the centre of volunteer activities, including activities engaging adults with learning disabilities. However, when Big Lottery funding ended it was no longer possible to buy-in the expertise required to work with certain groups and activities had to be scaled back.

Respondents also championed the benefits of long-term investment in less formal community engagement. Community organisations talked about a 'softly softly' approach for building the trust of local people, reflecting the fact that it takes time to build the capacity of local people to work together. Start-up funding for community-led projects had been invaluable in some cases. Stakeholders also reported that paid training opportunities could help develop grassroots activity.

### ***Media and Communication***

The circulation of information about the area to the local community was reported to be important to resilience. An informed population was reported to be more engaged. Local newspapers were identified as an effective channel for communicating with the community, providing information about what is happening locally, as well as an opportunity to respond. The *Burngreave Messenger* is a local newspaper distributed to households in the Burngreave area. It was reported to serve as a 'directory service' for local people, keeping them in touch with local news, events, activities and proposals for the area. People were reported to regularly contact the paper for

information about how to deal with various personal and community issues. People involved in the newspaper admitted that it was a challenge meeting the costs associated with printing and distribution. Originally, the *Messenger* received funding from New Deal for Communities (NDC). It continues to run with the help of volunteers. Other local circulars, such as SOAR's *5A/ive* bulletin, were also identified as being important source of information for local people about where they live. Survival has demanded cost cutting, which has included restricting distribution to key drop points rather than house-to-house posting.

Information about what is happening can help communities navigate their way through change. However, agencies responsible for implementing changes were reported to be sometimes poor at communicating with local residents. Community stakeholders felt that agencies sometimes purposely restricted the information available to local people, which allowed them to 'get away' with things that the community was not happy with. For example, proposed changes to bus routes had not been advertised at bus stops along the affected routes and no information about the changes had been targeted at the communities affected. Rather, information was made available on the bus company's website. Lack of information and limited opportunities to exercise voice were reported to undercut willingness to participate, making it more difficult for agencies to engage local residents when it served their purposes to do so.

'Irresponsible journalism' was reported to have a negative impact on neighbourhood resilience. Negative headlines about a neighbourhood not only influence how outsiders perceive the area and the people who live there, but also how local residents perceive the area and their fellow residents, with a potentially damaging impact on the sense of community within the area. For example, a school located in a less resilient neighbourhood reported attempts to improve local pride by engaging with the press to promote positive stories about the area. The school contacted the local press to disseminate news of its open day for ex-students (attended by over 800 people), but the newspaper, playing to old stereotypes, reported 'open day for doomed school'.

### ***Links with Power and Influence***

Community links with power and influence (linking social capital), such as links with Members of Parliament, ward Councillors, as well as officers in key institutions, seemed to promote neighbourhood resilience by facilitating responses to change and hardship. In North Sheffield, a number of stakeholders reported how communities had benefited through links with David Blunkett (MP), gaining his support for funding bids for schools and local initiatives. Community links with ward Councillors were reported to have helped with local campaigns by bringing issues to the local press and government meetings. Ward councillors can also provide individuals and communities with information about democratic processes, making campaigns more effective.

In Abbeyfield, higher than expected engagement, measured through voting participation, was reported to reflect the fact that the three ward Councillors live in the area. Campaigning is locally focused, addressing local issues and engaging with local people. One person claimed to have voted for the first time after a Councillor who lived locally called at his house and talked about various issues, talked about the benefits of voting and showed him how to get to the polling station. More generally, people are more likely to vote (either way) when they know candidates, and especially if candidates are perceived to have previously helped the local community. In this sense, voter participation may be one proxy measure for linking social capital and collective efficacy.

Organised groups, such as TARAs, were not well-attended in all the case study neighbourhoods. It was suggested that TARAs appeal to a certain type of person, generally older people. Another stakeholder suggested that organised groups frequently take on the identity and interests of the people who set them up, and memberships dwindle, with the group finally folding, as founding members leave. Thus, groups currently playing an important role in some neighbourhoods will not necessarily be there for the future, without succession planning. Young people are rarely included in organised community groups, and one stakeholder was considering setting up a youth forum. Yet, despite low participation in organised groups, there were lots of examples of when communities had "come out in force" in response to local issues. This shows that coming together can take different forms and loose collectives can still be effective, but are conditional upon the flow of information. Residents in one neighbourhood had refused the opportunity to set up a local residents group, because they did not want the task of running it. This was a tight-knit group of residents, who were connected enough to come together on an issue-by-issue basis.

### ***Housing***

The tenure profile of a neighbourhood was reported to inform stability in the local population. The private rented sector is characterised by relatively high levels of turnover. Areas with relatively high levels of private renting are therefore likely to be less stable. Social ties, links and associations are likely to be weaker and the shared notion of belonging and shared interest that helps promote community engagement and action might be less evident. Respondents also raised concerns about the growth of the buy-to-let market in some neighbourhoods and the rising number of houses in multiple occupation, which resulted in the arrival of many new residents. Some local residents reported that a rise in anti-social behaviour was associated with such developments. Tensions can also arise between existing residents and new arrivals, who might be from outside the neighbourhood and from a different social group. It was also suggested that private housing was under-regulated, contributing to over-crowding and an increase in poorly maintained properties, which were seen as detrimental to the overall appearance of the neighbourhood, and linked to the erosion of local pride.

The owner occupied and social rented sectors have lower rates of turnover than private rented housing. High levels of owner occupation and low turnover among tenants of the Westminster estate were reported to explain stability within the population in Lodge Moor. High levels of owner occupation were also cited as important to resilience in Abbeyfield. In addition to stability, the nature of the owner occupied stock in the area, including front and rear gardens providing 'defensible space', was reported to help explain the lower than expected crime rates in the area. In addition, it was reported that Abbeyfield contains desirable housing - good quality, large Victorian and Edwardian properties, as well as mid-size Victorian terraces - which serve to attract people who might not be able to afford such properties in some other parts of the city. A related suggestion was that the relatively low cost of this housing allowed 'community minded' residents to commit more time to community activities than might otherwise be possible if they had a large mortgage to pay off.

### ***Crime and Anti-social Behaviour***

Crime and anti-social behaviour were reported to be strongly associated with neighbourhood resilience. In some cases crime seems to have brought residents together to tackle underlying problems in the neighbourhood (as discussed above), thereby contributing to neighbourhood resilience. More commonly, crime was reported to have an undermining effect on resilience. For example, social landlords reported that a common reason for tenancies being terminated in some areas was

people moving to escape anti-social behaviour. Increased turnover undermines stability and undercuts informal policing by the community, whereby neighbours keep an eye out for each other and report anything suspicious. Crime and disorder were also reported to impact on the local economy, for example, crime and anti-social behaviour rendering the neighbourhood unattractive to business.

Particular spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, were reported to be a location for some low level ASB. One police respondent reflected on how a local playground was a magnet for groups of teenagers who would hang out smoking and drinking. However, this was reported to make it easier for the police to engage with young people in the local area. Other examples were given of spaces that attracted low level ASB, including school grounds that were open to the public. In one instance, a school responded by constructing a fence around the school and its grounds. This proved to be a divisive move, which divided the local community, with some local residents who used the green space for recreational purposes objecting to the fence. Two groups were subsequently formed, one in favour and one against the fence. In the event, the fence was built enclosing two-thirds of the field. The remaining third is no longer maintained, as it is not deemed part of the school grounds. Local residents are trying to secure village green status for this land.

Discussion of relatively low levels of reported crime in Lodge Moor identified three particular features of the neighbourhood that helped explain better than expected outcomes. First, the police reported that they were policing by consent. The local community was reported to be cooperative and engaged in policing of the neighbourhood. In addition to an active neighbourhood watch scheme, the area benefits from having an older population who are around during the day, talk to each other, keep an eye out on what's going on and report anything to the police. Local people were reported to be likely to phone in about relatively minor incidents and issues. This was reported to help the police "nip things in the bud". Second, a lot of work was reported to have been done by the safer neighbourhoods team 'wising-up' the older population to distraction crime, bogus officials, cowboy traders and such like. This was partly in response to a spate of offences in the area. The presence of groups for older people in the area provided a readymade audience for community safety officers wanting to share information and advice and raise awareness, with the police visiting luncheon clubs, the TARA, attending fayres and meeting with the local Neighbourhood Watch to educate people about this particular form of crime. Third, the area was described as being geographically isolated, being located on the edge of the city with few roads in and few rounds out. It was therefore deemed as being unattractive to potential criminals.

Some respondents reflected on the fact that low rates of recorded crime in some neighbourhoods might be a result of "not very nice collective action" or the dark side of neighbourhood resilience. In more than one of the case study neighbourhoods it was suggested that tight knit communities sometimes deal with issues 'in house'. In relation to crime and anti-social behaviour, for example, people turn a blind eye or issues are dealt with by 'leading families' or groups. This can also involve intimidation of those keen to address problems through more formal channels. The effect can be to undermine the community infrastructure and reduce resilience to other stressors.

#### **4.4. The Local Community**

This bundle of explanations for resilience in the case study neighbourhoods focus on the nature of community in the area, whether there is a shared sense of belonging and identity, promoted by contact and interaction between residents, and informed by the area's history. It is important to note that many of the factors discussed above were identified as key in supporting the emergence and maintenance of a local

sense of belonging and identity and supporting collective action at the neighbourhood level.

### ***Shared notions of belonging and identity***

Resilient neighbourhoods appear to be home to a strong community of place, where there is a shared sense of belonging and interest. Residents care about the area and see their own well-being as connected to the well-being of the neighbourhood. Many of the factors discussed above help nurture this sense of community. Spaces of association, such as local shops and community centres, facilitate the social interaction that can promote social ties. Stability within the population allows links and ties to solidify into networks of familiarity and association. Shared interests are recognised and collective responses developed, which are sustained through the commitment of local people. The neighbourhood is a discernible place, to which residents have a sense of belonging and commitment.

Some residents will be members of community of identity or interest, alongside membership of a community of place. These alternative forms of community can sometimes serve as a valuable source of support and assistance. This is particularly true for people excluded from place-based communities, which might be rooted in a very particular, rather insular and inward-looking notion of identity and belonging. However, it was also suggested that strong bonds to a community of identity can result in people being less likely to mix with other groups and participate in their local community of place. For example, it was also reported that white children in the Abbeyfield neighbourhood struggled to build social relationships with local children from other communities of identity. This was thought to be due to the high proportion of children in the neighbourhood who go to mosque direct from school (for schooling and prayer), preventing them from socialising with children outside of school.

Various efforts have been made to break down these barriers and notable successes have been achieved. However, the resources required can be significant. Projects to engage Muslim women living in Abbeyfield and the wider Burngreave area were reported to have involved the commitment of resources over a sustained period to engage a small group of women. Interest was reported to have waxed and waned and the women taking part were still not in a position (collectively or individually) to engage in community activities in the local neighbourhood. They were reported to engage informally, for example by attending school coffee mornings, but to shy away from more formal community roles to "save themselves in case something comes up in their own community".

### ***Inclusive Communities***

Inclusive communities that negotiate a settlement between the different groups and interests resident in the area are likely to prove more resilient. Some communities of place pull together in ways that serve to exclude and even problematise particular sub-sections of the local population. For example, a community might pull together to resist change in relation to the arrival of a new population. Examples provided by respondents included communities pulling together to campaign against the development of a new traveller site and attending public meetings to protest about the unfamiliar or anti-social behaviour of new groups. Statutory services were sometimes divided on how to deal with community activism. In some cases, services engaged and sought to work with local campaigns and in others the community was dismissed as "bigoted".

On the specific issue of dealing with large groups of local people attending and speaking out at public meetings about the local impact of new migrants, some

agencies argued against holding future public meetings, forcing people to raise grievances with relevant agencies on a one-to-one basis. This appeared to be a divide and conquer tactic. In contrast, other agencies wondered how to harness this level of community engagement and political participation, which was unprecedented in some communities.

# Reflections

## 5.1. Introduction

Major cuts in government grants have forced local authorities across the UK to reduce services, cut jobs and close facilities. Sheffield City Council is facing a cut in funding of more than £50 million in 2013/14, in addition to more than £140 million cuts in services already made as a result of the Government's austerity programme. Cuts on this scale inevitably undermine the traditional role that public services have played buffering local communities against the impact of social and economic hardship. How can service providers continue to support these communities in the face of diminishing public resources? Part of the answer might be to help promote neighbourhood resilience.

This study has explored this prospect within the Sheffield context. Some neighbourhoods in the city were found to be recording better than expected outcomes given the level of socio-economic stress they are experiencing. These neighbourhoods were characterised as displaying resilience. Analysis in four such neighbourhoods revealed a number of factors that appeared to help explain these better than expected outcomes. Nurturing these features in neighbourhoods across the city could help secure better outcomes for residents.

It is important to reiterate that neighbourhood resilience is no panacea for remedying the hardships besetting communities in an age of recession and austerity. Resolving problems that are rooted in national and global processes remains the responsibility of government. However, promoting resilience might help insulate neighbourhoods against the full force of the harsh winds of economic decline, public sector retrenchment and cuts in benefits and tax credits.

With this ambition in mind, this final chapter presents the key conclusions to be drawn from this study. The working definition of (neighbourhood) resilience generated during the study is outlined, the approach to measuring resilience is clarified and possibilities for promoting resilience are considered. Finally, discussion reflects on future priorities for research.

## 5.2. A definition of neighbourhood resilience

Three core problems were identified with existing definitions of community resilience. First, the focus on the potential for communities to bounce back to a state of equilibrium. This approach might be useful when considering a short term crisis, such as flooding, but it is inappropriate when considering communities exposed to longer-term, more systemic stresses, such as economic decline and public sector retrenchment. Second, the failure to define the complex and contested concept of

community. Third, the failure to specify the scale of operation, with attention flitting between the neighbourhood, the town or city and the district level.

In response, a definition was developed that focused on the capacity of a community to cope with adversity and change, rather than to return or bounce back to some previous state or condition. Attention focused explicitly on communities of place, contained within specific boundaries and rooted in a particular social, cultural, physical and economic context. In particular, attention focused on the neighbourhood as the social and material setting of everyday life, which contains various features and related resources that have real consequences for the people who live in them. **The result was a working definition of *neighbourhood resilience* as:**

*"the existence, development and engagement of local resources by community members to cope in an environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise"*

The challenge posed by this definition is to understand how the different aspects of a place - manifest as the resources available to a local community - interact to determine the resilience of a community to specific stressors and pressures. To help meet this challenge, an organising framework was developed which promoted consideration of the full range of place characteristics (who lives there; the physical and social context; and the nature of community) that might contribute to neighbourhood resilience.

### 5.3. Measuring Neighbourhood Resilience

Measuring neighbourhood resilience involves capturing the ability of a local community to mediate the impact of shocks and stresses. The greater the resilience, the better the outcomes. A number of important conditions were attached to this basic proposition. First, it was recognised that resilience can vary depending upon the specifics of the stress and pressure being experienced. Second, it was acknowledged that the intensity of a stressor can vary from place to place. Some places will be more exposed to particular stressors than others. Previous work on resilience has often failed to recognise this fact. As a result, socially deprived areas have tended to be portrayed as less resilient. However, some more deprived areas might actually be evidencing greater levels of resilience in the face of more extreme levels of stress and hardship. Recognising this fact, this research focused on identifying **neighbourhoods that are evidencing better than expected outcomes, given the intensity of the stress and pressure they are exposed to.**

Measuring resilience requires neighbourhood level data relating to the defined stressor and outcomes posited as likely to be affected by this stressor. In this case, neighbourhood level data on changing levels of unemployment, incomes and deprivation were employed as the stress measures. A series of neighbourhood level datasets were identified as suitable measures for key outcomes known to be associated with socio-economic stress, based on previous research, including community safety and cohesion, inclusion within society and health and well-being.

The focus of analysis was on identifying outliers, defined as neighbourhoods doing better or worse than might be expected given the level of stress being endured. This involved analysis of stress levels and outcomes in each of Sheffield's 100 neighbourhoods, as defined by the City Council. Each outcome measure was analysed separately against each of the three stress measures (unemployment, incomes and deprivation) and the position of each neighbourhood relative to the average was then plotted. A strong correlation between stress level and outcomes was apparent. This is to be expected. However, it was also possible to identify a

short-list of resilient neighbourhoods on the basis of the number of times they were found to be an outlier against different outcome measures.

## **5.4. Promoting Resilience**

Various neighbourhood features have been identified as important to resilience. However, it would be simplistic to presume that nurturing these features will inevitably promote neighbourhood resilience. First, this research has only scratched the surface when it comes to exposing the features and understanding the processes that produce better than expected outcomes. There is much work still to be done. Second, even if we were confident about which factors supporting neighbourhood resilience, it would still be difficult to prescribe a response. What works in promoting neighbourhood resilience is likely to vary from place to place depending upon local circumstances and conditions. There can be no one size fits all approach. There is also the fact that some issues will be easier to influence than others. 'Who lives there', for example, is a bundle of factors over which policy and practice has limited influence.

It is important to acknowledge these caveats. However, if pushed to spotlight neighbourhood features that policy and practice should strive to promote and protect in a bid to nurture resilience, four issues stand out from our findings. These are all issues that service providers have the capacity to influence through targeted interventions and mainstreaming activities.

### **1. *A basic infrastructure of public places***

Much has been written about the importance of informal public gathering places - or third places - and their importance to public life and community. Oldenburg (2000) suggests that main streets, pubs, cafés, post offices, libraries and other third places, which might include service centres and amenities, are the heart of a community's social vitality and the foundation of a functioning community of place. They serve to render places discernible, create habits of public association, and provide a setting for grassroots activism and politics. They can also offer psychological support to individuals and communities. According to Mean and Tims (2005) these public spaces can act as a 'self-organising public service', a shared resource in which experiences and value are created. These advantages were apparent in the comments and reflections of respondents in the case study neighbourhoods. Parks, shops, service centres, community facilities and other aspects of the physical context were identified as important in giving a neighbourhood its character and providing opportunities for social encounters, which can be a source of assistance and support and underpin a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood.

This evidence suggests that place making has a role to play in the promotion of resilience. Planning, development, regeneration, transport, conservation, environmental and housing services therefore have a role to play in promoting resilience. The ambition should be to create and improve the gathering places within a neighbourhood so they invite interaction between people. This is likely to require a co-ordinated approach, engaging the different agencies that contribute to the design, layout, appearance and management of public places and manage local facilities and amenities, as well as the people who live and work in the area.

### **2. *An inclusive sense of belonging and identity***

Challenges or grievances motivate collective action, but they need to coexist alongside a sense of community if a collective response is to be mobilised. In the neighbourhood context, this requires a place-based sense of community rooted in common interests and experiences, which overlays other dimensions of social

identity, such as class or ethnicity. This was reported to be the situation in the case study neighbourhoods.

This sense of belonging appeared to have been promoted by concrete local experiences of social ties and networks, nurtured by the infrastructure of public places discussed above. Population stability was also important, allowing people to develop affiliations and ties to people and places in the neighbourhood. This is an important finding in the context of welfare reforms that are likely to force households to move in response to cuts in Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance.

The recognition of shared priorities, concerns and grievances was also reported to be important. This demands knowledge and awareness of issues impacting on the local area, such as proposals for cuts in services or the closure of local facilities and amenities, and the circulation of this information. In the case study neighbourhoods, this was taking place through communications from service providers (leafleting, information sharing at meetings and briefings to community groups), community mechanisms (including newsletters and community newspapers) and word of mouth. The result was strong 'bonding social capital' (ties between people in the neighbourhood) with the potential to mobilise solidarity and promote mutuality.

These findings are consistent with evidence suggesting that a sense of belonging and social networks at the neighbourhood level can promote benefits including lower crime figures and higher educational achievement. However, there can also be a downside to a strong community identity. An ever present danger in strongly bonded communities is that some people or groups are excluded and even vilified as the cause of local problems.

### **3. *Information, Voice and Power***

Information sharing within the community has already been noted as important to the recognition of shared priorities and grievances. Effective community action also requires the community to have a voice that resonates with people and agencies beyond the community. Through this voice community members might work to sensitise strategies, plans and actions of agencies working in the area toward the needs and priorities of local people. Voice was exercised in the case study neighbourhoods through various means, ranging from engagement with local councillors and MPs, through to productive working relations between community groups and frontline officers in agencies, such as the police.

Information and insight from local residents and community groups can help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision and should be actively promoted. The productive relationship between the police and Neighbourhood Watch and Tenants and Residents Associations is a good example of the benefits that can flow from such links. Links with Members of Parliament and ward Councillors can help to legitimise claims and render campaigns more effective, although this demands knowledge of how the local democratic system works and should be actively promoted. Formal democratic processes can also be invigorated, evidence suggesting that people are more likely to vote when they know candidates and perceive that they are working to address local priorities.

Community voices can sometimes articulate views and opinions that challenge services providers and local agencies. This is particularly likely to be the case in the context of cuts and the difficult choices to be made about which facilities will close. It can be tempting in such circumstances for agencies and groups to foreclose discussion. While acknowledging the need to challenge and mediate divisive and prejudiced opinion, a more productive ambition might be to try and harness the

community engagement and participation promoted by controversial issues for productive purpose over the longer term.

#### **4. *Community Infrastructure and Action***

Places and people were identified as key features of the community infrastructure underpinning resilience in the case study neighbourhoods. Passionate individuals were reported to be a key aspect of the local infrastructure, making a major contribution to neighbourhood resilience by facilitating collective responses to local issues, securing resources for the area, running groups and activities and providing support to local people. Facilities and amenities able to accommodate cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities were also identified as key.

Promoting and sustaining this infrastructure demands support and assistance from statutory agencies, as well as the time and effort of local residents and community organisations. Even a relatively small level of support can have far reaching consequences, by kick-starting activities that become self-sustaining. Core services can help protect and promote facilities and amenities by considering the impact of strategy and practice on the local infrastructure and assessing the likely knock-on consequences for resilience. The challenge is to be clear what is being cut. A library, for example, can accommodate much more than books and IT facilities. It can be a meeting point for local people. Many libraries provide a warm and safe space where community groups meet, as well as hosting community events. Can alternative settings be found for these users?

#### **5.5. *Areas for Further Research***

Two broad areas of further research can be identified. The first is more pragmatic in focus and relates to the practical application of the method developed in this study for measuring neighbourhood resilience. The second is more academic in nature and relates to the challenge of understanding the processes that underpin resilience and produce better than expected outcomes.

##### ***Practical application of the method***

Previous measures of resilience have combined stress, capacity and outcomes, potentially overlooking resilience in areas of greater challenge. Thus, these measures might better be understood as measures of vulnerability. Resilience must be seen as a relative concept (as it is in the child development literature) where outcomes are viewed in relation to the stress, with resilience as the mediating force. Yet, there is an appetite for a resilience index, which can rank neighbourhoods and help services target resources and monitor over time. The approach we have taken only helps identify the most and least resilient neighbourhood 'outliers'. Based only on the relationship between stress and outcome, the method can less confidently be used to rank neighbourhoods around the average. Further consideration could be given to a resilience index that takes account of the level of challenge facing neighbourhoods. Such an exercise would need to fully explore data limitations and caveats through consultation with practitioners to ensure accurate input of data and interpretation of findings.

We looked at the three measures of socio-economic stress (unemployment, deprivation, household income) separately to explore if and why some neighbourhoods present as an outlier with only one or two, and not all three stressors. For example, a couple of neighbourhoods in Sheffield with high student populations presented as positive outliers only in relation to the stress of (low) household income. Arguably this is because household income in student areas overestimates the level of challenge facing the community. This is because low

income relates to a life stage rather than socio-economic disadvantage *per se*. Future research might consider the possibility of using a composite socio-economic stress measure, as this would make identifying outliers a quicker, easier exercise. However, consideration would need to be given to the limitations of each measure separately to avoid the misleading effects of individual measures affecting (as per the example with student household income), and perhaps compounded in, the combined measure.

Greater consideration might be given in future research to longitudinal tracking of neighbourhood resilience. Although we attempted to look at trends over time in stressors and outcomes, analysis was limited by the availability of neighbourhood data since the recession began (in 2008). Periodically repeating the data exercise would allow the movement of neighbourhoods in terms of better or worse than expected outcomes to be tracked through time. This trend data would support analysis of neighbourhoods where resilience is being undercut and where targeted interventions might be warranted.

### ***Understanding Resilience***

Research into neighbourhood resilience faces a challenge common to all neighbourhood effects research. Correlations between neighbourhood characteristics and outcomes might be observed, but how can they be explained? What are the causal mechanisms that produce better than expected outcomes, and in what circumstances and conditions? Only by answering these questions will it be possible to determine the most efficient and effective policy response.

This research challenge focuses attention on two key tasks. First, identifying the essential characteristics of a resilient neighbourhood. What does a resilient neighbourhood look like? What are the common features? Second, explaining the causal mechanisms through which these features produce better than expected outcomes. This will involve gathering together under the umbrella concept of resilience knowledge and recognising overlaps and connections between themes that have traditionally been viewed in isolation. This includes the four key issues distilled from the findings of this study and summarised above.

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