



University
of Glasgow

**BRIDGING THE GAP:
BUILDING SOCIAL CAPACITIES
ACROSS GLASGOW**

**Collaborative Research
Project Report**

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May 2017

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Bridging the Gap: Building Social Capacities across Glasgow

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Executive Summary

In a context of continually increasing migration and population diversity, Bridging the Gap (BtG) is a charitable organisation delivering a range of services in the Gorbals, and across the south of Glasgow, focusing on young people, community inclusion and families (see 1.). This research project was developed together with staff and volunteers at one of its key services, the BIG Thursdays Drop-In, held weekly during school term time, and open to all.

The main aims and objectives of the project were:

- to assess recent and current strengths and challenges in service delivery, in terms of social capacity, in the Drop-In and beyond;
- to explore the ways in which people may be supported by the organisation, and support each other, through its Drop-In service;
- to ensure that people's voices remained central to reporting, to foreground narrative empirical evidence that presents people as individuals rather than statistics (see 2.).

A qualitative methodology was used, involving participant observation, semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation methods (see 3.). The main data-gathering stage of the project ran from May-Dec. 2016; analysis led to a draft report, which was taken back to BtG staff and Drop-In volunteers and attendees for verification and further input, included in this final report.

Key findings of the project can be categorized into three main areas: strengths of the Drop-In and BtG as an organisation more broadly; challenges faced by individuals, and related issues these raise for BtG; and suggestions for future service provision.

Strengths

Analysis across the qualitative (narrative) data suggests that key strengths are:

- Welcoming environment
- Organisational culture
- Sense of belonging
- Togetherness in diversity
- Skills development
- English language development
- Special events and trips
- Direct support
- Developing relations outside the Drop-In

These are discussed at length in Section 4. It is noted that strengths are often directly related to challenges, and vice versa.

Challenges

Analysis finds that the main challenges faced by service users and/or BtG as service provider are:

- Isolation in the local area
- English language provision
- Exclusion in Glasgow
- Interpersonal relations
- Sustaining support
- Organisation and communication
- Trips

Issues central to these challenges are covered in detail in Section 5.

Suggestions

Research participants made a range of direct suggestions which are outlined in Section 6., together with recommendations that emerged through analysis and the later verification stage of the project. Suggestions for future service provision fall into the following categories:

- Outreach
- Organisation and communication
- Induction and support
- English conversation and classes
- Trips and events
- Practical and other ideas

1. Introduction

Bridging the Gap (BtG) was established as a charitable organisation¹ in the Gorbals, Glasgow in 1998, with the aim of enabling local churches (Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic) to work together to meet local needs, specifically addressing sectarian tensions.

Since then, Glasgow has experienced increasing migration. The 2011 Census recorded 21% of the city's residents as non-White Scottish ethnicity; 50% as belonging to religions other than Church of Scotland or Roman Catholic (notably 38% stated no religion or did not answer; 5% were Muslim); and 13% as speaking languages other than English². Ongoing migration since 2011 (within Scotland, across the EU and across the world, for economic reasons and to seek asylum) has no doubt further increased population diversity.

BtG has developed its work to build relationships across such diversity more broadly, with a central focus on enabling people to find 'common ground'. The organisation runs a range of services and initiatives, in three main areas: young people, community inclusion and families. BtG Purpose Statement³ reads:

- To build positive relationships across the divides, with particular reference to: integration of Black and Minority Ethnic communities, and the transition from primary to secondary schools.
- To value the humanity and nurture the potential of every individual, and where appropriate, provide practical support.
- To celebrate the good in our community, by providing the opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds to discover their common ground, overcoming racism, sectarianism, territorialism and isolation.

BtG runs a range of services across its main target areas. This research was a collaborative project, with the focus negotiated between the researcher, staff and volunteers at BtG **BIG Thursdays Drop-In** service (hereafter the Drop-In). The research is situated in the wider context of Glasgow City Council's Community Planning Partnership Single Agreement Outcomes strategy (2013), in which the "key focus for partners is to take a more integrated approach to delivering services" under the *Thriving Places* initiative⁴, to which BtG ascribes.

Indeed, persistent inequalities in the area led the Gorbals to be chosen as one of the first neighbourhoods to take on the *Thriving Places* approach: while the area has seen extensive regeneration in recent years, "a large majority of data zones in the area remain in the poorest 10% of data zones in Scotland"⁵.

¹ Registered charity no. SC028657.

² See <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/home.html>

³ BtG Annual Report (2015-16): <http://www.bridging-the-gap.org/Resources/Annual%20Report%2015-16%20web.pdf>

⁴ See <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00435436.pdf>

⁵ Leman, L. (2016) *Community Led Monitoring Framework*. Report to Gorbals Regeneration Group, Oct. 2016.

This report is primarily intended for BtG, to develop its organisational service delivery and capacity, in the immediate and longer term. It may also be useful to engender multi-agency conversations around networking and integrated ways of working in the Gorbals, and across the city.

1.1 BIG Thursdays Drop-In service

The Drop-In service is a volunteer-led, open access service that runs weekly during school term times, 10.30am to 2.30pm in a church hall in the Gorbals. At least one member of BtG staff is present, from the start of the volunteers' meeting at 9am until the hall is cleared and tidied, usually around 3pm. The number of volunteers can vary from week to week, as a formal commitment to volunteer every week is not required of people. Volunteers split themselves into three teams: the Hall, Kitchen and Kids Teams. To volunteer in the Kids Team, people must first obtain clearance through the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (criminal clearance checks, run through Disclosure Scotland)⁶; all volunteers should receive an induction as they start, with a member of staff.

Each team is responsible for a range of relevant tasks, agreed and reiterated in the volunteers' meeting before the service opens to the public. Tasks include:

- Moving tables and chairs to set out the hall as needed for the Drop-In
- Put out soft mats and toys for children at one end of the hall
- Putting up banners, pictures and other materials to make the hall the Drop-In space for the day
- Preparing lunch to serve at 12.30pm (for an average of 60-70 people)
- Preparing fresh fruit served through the morning
- Offering and making teas and coffees to attendees throughout the day
- Running games and activities for adults and children separately
- Following health and safety procedures in all areas
- Making sure toilets and other facilities are suitable for use
- Planning ahead for future weeks' activities, especially for specific events, eg. Christmas party, Gorbals Fair, Refugee Festival
- Deciding the next week's menu and Kitchen Team main chef
- Returning the hall to its usual set up at the end of the day

Activities involve a wide range of arts and crafts, both for children and adults; table tennis and dominoes are regular games offered. Hall Team volunteers are asked to welcome in attendees, especially new ones, and much activity involves sitting and chatting over a hot drink. The Kids Team runs a regular singing session for children and parents; parents are encouraged to play and do activities with their children (the Drop-In is not a crèche). Volunteers can move between teams, every 6 weeks there is the chance to switch.

One Thursday a month a more structured 'BIG Chat' is organised 1-2pm, during which a crèche is offered so that everyone can get involved. The BIG Chat aims to bring people

⁶ See <https://www.mygov.scot/about-disclosure-scotland/>

together to consider a specific issue, and may be facilitated by BtG staff or an external person brought in for the session; it can also be based on a film or other media. Topics during the research period included gender equality for young girls and women, sexuality and identity, drug and alcohol recovery awareness, post-Brexit debate, Black Scots (in Black History month), and Child Protection issues.

2. Project Aims

BtG attempts to respond to complex, changing and diverse local and city-wide population dynamics and support needs, amidst ongoing government policy shifts, in robust and adaptable ways. In recent years, significant UK-government driven increases in ‘austerity policies’ have put greater pressure on individuals, especially those in already marginalised positions, and the local authorities and third sector organisations who work with them. BtG, as most organisations working to address issues related to poverty, find themselves and the communities they support facing difficult times and situations.

Together with BtG staff, the project aims were developed drawing on organisational values and Purpose (see 1.) The key aim was to assess recent and current strengths and challenges in service delivery, in terms of **social capacity**, in the Drop-In and beyond. Social capacity was agreed as a constructive approach to recognising and nurturing each individual through the research; rather than framing the research in terms of personal or neighbourhood ‘problems’ or ‘issues’.

This social capacity approach further aligns with Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), a strand of thinking and practice that BtG staff had recently been trained in as the research set out. ABCD works towards the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials, assessing the resources, skills, and experience available in a community and organising around issues that move its members into action, then deciding and taking appropriate action⁷.

Thus, the main research objective was to explore the ways in which people may support themselves and each other, through BtG’s Drop-In service:

- as individuals, to access relevant support to address their needs, including onward referral where appropriate; and
- as members of the local community, to develop better social relations across diverse and marginalised groups in south Glasgow.

Capturing grassroots organisation service delivery, and the depth of relations and practices that are produced through it, is notoriously difficult. This is due to many factors, including constant turnover of people presenting to services, multiple support needs, and a time-limited, high-volume and pressured work environment. A further objective, then, was to ensure that people’s voices remained central to reporting (see 4.4), to foreground narrative empirical evidence that presents people as individuals rather than statistics.

⁷ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asset-based_community_development

3. Methods

The researcher began as a volunteer at the Drop-In in May 2015, getting familiar with people, volunteer roles, the organisation and key issues in the area. In Feb. 2016, at a meeting with BtG staff, 'building social capacities' was identified as a key focus of research, and the methodology agreed.

The project consisted of three approaches:

1. **Participant observation**
2. **Semi-structured interviews**
3. **Photo-elicitation**

Originally, the research also set out to incorporate diary-keeping as another method to engage participants (see information leaflet, Appendix A). However, there was no uptake for this approach, people generally said that they had no capacity or interest in this method.

The research was given ethical clearance by the University of Glasgow through its Research Ethics Committee process in April 2016⁸. All analysis and reporting is anonymised, and data held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.1 Participant observation

The researcher continued as a volunteer at the Drop-In, in order to gather qualitative (narrative) material across as wide a range of volunteers and attendees as possible. Participant observation involves becoming a participant/part of a community or group to research how they work 'from the inside'⁹. The researcher undertook participant observation most weeks that the Drop-In operated, May–Dec. 2016. They also attended various related events in the area, and another BtG service, to follow up with attendees from the Drop-In who had moved on, and/or were also involved in/with other activities and organisations locally.

Information leaflets and sheets (Appendices A and B) were displayed around the Drop-In weekly for the first month, then sporadically to remind attendees that the research was underway; also to recruit interviewees. The researcher also verbally told people about the research regularly.

Fieldnotes were kept, typed into word documents, and analysed together with interview transcripts (see 3.2), using a grounded theory approach¹⁰ to identify key themes and suggestions. This approach emphasises the data itself, rather than checking the data against a pre-set hypothesis.

⁸ Application No. 300150120; College of Science and Engineering.

⁹ Cook, I. (2005) 'Participant observation'. In Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. (eds.) *Methods in Human Geography*. London: Pearson Education Ltd.

¹⁰ Devine, F. and Heath, S. (2009) *Doing social science: evidence and methods in empirical research*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

3.2 Informal interviews

Informal interviews enable more explanatory data than questionnaires or other quantitative (counting) techniques. Such interviews are intended as informal ‘conversations’, which encourage discussion, to better understand underlying reasons for opinions and behaviours: they allow scope for research participants to explore and explain their perceptions as well as actions, addressing non-quantifiable matters such as beliefs and feelings¹¹. Given the research focus on personal and social capacities and relations, this method is highly appropriate.

20 interviews were conducted. For key characteristics of the participants, see Table 1. Efforts were made to recruit as wide a cross-section of interviewees as possible; though ultimately the sample was dependent on people’s intention and availability. People who attended only briefly, or once/twice then did not return, were only included in the participant observation aspect. The unfunded nature of the project meant that it was difficult to include people for whom English is an additional language; informal interpretation occurred on occasion in participant observation contexts (attendees/volunteers interpreting for others in conversation), but this unfortunately could not be extended to interviews.

Table 1. Interview participants

Gender	Status	Length of involvement	Contact	Scottish / Overseas
Male	Vol	2 yrs	Past	Scottish
Male	Vol	3 yrs	Current	Scottish
Male	Vol	18 months	Past	Scottish
Female	Vol	6 months	Current	Scottish
Female	Attendee	10 yrs	Current	Scottish
Male	Attendee	6 months	Past	Scottish
Female	Vol	2 yrs	Past	Scottish
Male	Vol	3 yrs	Current	Scottish
Female	Attendee	10 yrs	Current	Scottish
Female	Vol	5 yrs	Current	Scottish
Female	Vol	5 yrs	Current	Scottish
Female	Vol	4 yrs	Current	Overseas
Female	Attendee	3 yrs	Past	Overseas
Male	Vol	4 yrs	Past	Overseas
Female	Attendee	10 yrs	Current	Overseas
Female	Vol	9 months	Past	Overseas
Female	Vol	8 months	Past	Overseas
Male	Vol	18 months	Current	Overseas
Female	Attendee	5 yrs	Current	Overseas
Male	Vol	2 yrs	Past	Overseas

Within an small organisational service such as the Drop-In, it is inevitable that people come to know each another well. Thus, to ensure participants’ anonymity in the research, no names, ethnicities or ages are reported here; likewise, country of origin beyond

¹¹ Hay, I. (2010) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scottish/Overseas is not detailed. The Scottish/Overseas category is useful, to analyse any significant differences across people who have/have not migrated at the national scale.

Copies of the information leaflet, information sheet and consent forms are included in Appendices A-C. Interviews were recorded, with permission, typed verbatim into word documents, then analysed together with fieldnotes, using a grounded theory approach (3.1).

3.3 Photo-elicitation

As research started, Magda, an attendee, requested to take photographs at the Drop-In, in preparation for a college course in photography. BtG were keen to support this, and it was agreed that Magda could take photos with individuals' permission. These photos were being uploaded to BtG's Facebook page (in the public domain) as the research was conducted, and the idea of using the photos to people's thoughts about the Drop-In developed in conversation with Magda. Photo-elicitation involves showing participants photographs, and asking questions about them. This can be especially useful to work with groups, such that research can capture discussions between people; and the focus on the visual can often prompt different thinking and comment than asking a verbal question (eg. in interviews)¹².

40 photos were chosen by Magda and the researcher together to use in this way; the selection was based on a photo including a group of people, rather than an individual, to align with the research focus on *social* capacities. These were printed out (A5 size), and set out at two specific occasions: one month's BIG Chat specifically aimed to engage more people with the research; and at BtG's AGM, held at another site with different attendees than at the Drop-In, but all with a range of experiences and connections with the organisation and its services. People were asked to discuss with each other:

- Reactions to and thoughts about the photos in general
- Their favourite photos and why they chose them
- The photos they thought best represented BtG, and why

These informal sessions were recorded, with permission, and the data typed up and analysed together with fieldnotes and interview transcripts. A record was also made of the photos most often chosen as favourites and/or best representative of BtG, which are included in the report, with permission from Magda.



¹² Harper, D. (2010) 'Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation'. *Visual Studies* 17(1): 13-26.

3.4 Verification process

The data was analysed and key findings drafted (Jan.-Mar. 2017), circulated initially among relevant BtG staff for comment during April 2017. The BIG Chat in May 2017 was then organised as a feedback and verification session with Drop-In attendees and volunteers, to check whether key findings resonated across different people, and to gain further thoughts as to strengths and challenges. This activity also specifically asked people to reflect on the suggestions for future service delivery that emerged through research, and add to these.

3.5 Data presentation

Qualitative methods involve engagement in the ‘messy’ field of perceptions and beliefs, wherein statements must be interpreted by the researcher, raising the possibility of misrepresentation. There is an ethical duty to acknowledge this potential gap between researcher understanding and participants’ original meanings. In doing so, qualitative approaches are argued to be *more, not less valid*, since they make visible these issues rather than claiming any universal truth¹³. Mis-interpretation can be minimised by asking follow up and ‘checking’ questions through data collection, and engaging in longer term, in-depth fieldwork such as participant observation, as in this research project.

It is also important for participants’ voices to be central in reporting¹⁴. While it is not feasible, logistically or ethically, to include all interview transcripts for public viewing, this report foregrounds word-for-word extracts of speech. These verbatim extracts are presented in the following section as *italicised direct quotes* indented in the text; these come from interviews and photo-elicitation sessions, which were recorded. Participant observation is drawn on in the main text discussion, either in single quotation marks (‘xxx’) or paraphrased from fieldnotes. Everyone who took part in the research is referred to as ‘participants’, while people who come to the Drop-In as either ‘attendees’ or ‘volunteers’ are referred to as such.

The following standard academic conventions within direct quotes are used:

- ... indicates a short pause in speech;
- [...] indicates a section of speech not included in the report, for brevity’s sake and/or because it goes off the topic being discussed;
- [laughs] indicates effort to annotate emotions registered during an interview;
- REALLY use of capitals indicates emphasis by the interviewee;
- [context] indicates some background that helps understand quote in context;
- [name] indicates where extracts have been anonymised.

¹³ Askins, K. and Pain, R. (2011) ‘Contact zones: participation, materiality and the messiness of interaction’. *Environment & Planning D: Society & Space* 29(5): 803-821.

¹⁴ Cahill, C. (2007) ‘Doing Research *with* Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work’. *Children’s Geographies* 5(3): 297-312.

4. Strengths

Key themes emerged through the course of the research, and analysis was undertaken mindful of the ABCD and *Thriving Places* frameworks outlined in 1. This first 'results' section focusses on the strengths of the Drop-In, identified by participants. These incorporate both organisational strengths, things that BtG 'do well' or 'get right', and individual strengths, skills and experiences that people bring to, or develop through, the Drop-In service – recognising that these strengths combine in different ways, in and outside the Drop-In.

4.1. Welcoming environment

All participants, across all aspects of the research, describe the Drop-In as 'welcoming', 'nice' and 'fun' in some way. Critically, this welcoming atmosphere is referred to as constant, a dependable aspect of the Drop-In week in-week out, year in-year out, 'a friendly place' that is constantly so:

I remember it [first visit] clearly I went in and it was [name] who said hello and offered me tea and ... keep me company that day and I felt so nice [laughs] ... they said will you come back next week? [laughs] ... and at that time I had been here [living in Gorbals] 4 years maybe and I didn't know people

[phoned to ask about volunteering] they said just show up so I did and ... that was that [laughs] ... and they were just nice and there was just a sense of yeah ... so and what do you want to do and I said well I don't really mind I just want to be involved with stuff ... and yeah and I kept going back because it was just nice

I went to Volunteer Glasgow [and they said] come to our taster sessions so that's how I got involved ... so I went to 4 or 5 different things and BtG was the second and I was sold there and then [laughs] I went to the other ones but I knew BtG was the one I would go back to It was so welcoming it was VERY noisy [laughs] ... but I'd been in the house so that was good

so I was brought in by [name] they seen me and told me about it and ... and so I was freezing and I went into the Drop-In and [name] came across and give me a cup of tea ... and so happy days it's all good

so there's a real camaraderie ... it's fun



it was all so relaxed and ... I was OK so I fit in well with these people ... I just immediately felt welcomed

there's such a strong consistency around feeling welcome ... in lots of places that's the aim but it doesn't happen and ... part of that is that listening to community to everyone who walks in the door

I remember it being very welcoming and very friendly ... and I liked the feel of the place when you came along

just the atmosphere ... that's what it is that's what I like ... a good friendly atmosphere ... an everybody seems just to get on

the feeling of camaraderie is very strong there that's a good memory ... you really you felt you were part of things and for me that was really important

there are people who come through the door and you don't know them ... and then a small number of people who've been coming for many years see them and say OH look who's here who's come back ... and it's lovely they recognise them as old friends and show the person off ... this is such and such who used to come here years ago [laughs]

The majority of participants stressed the importance of extending this welcome to everyone, and that actually the welcoming environment can only be pervasive because it applies/is applied to all. This openness relates to how highly participants value diversity (see 4.3), and also to a recognition that being welcoming is central, even if not (fully) reciprocated by all attendees:

there are a few people ...at the very margins ... I think it's essential ... if someone can come somewhere where someone is going to say hello how are you? ... and some people are very much struggling and they may come and keep themselves to themselves but if at least they can come somewhere ... and be welcomed

you know there's some things [other services] where they try and get you involved? But what I like [at BtG] is they leave me be to do [his own thing] ... that's what I like and why I come back ... I'm accepted for what I am ... people recognise me and let me get on with it

Further, there is a strong sense that the welcoming culture of the Drop-In is both personal and egalitarian: people describe being treated with respect, and treated equally, no matter their background, position or support needs:

I think a lot of things that keep this organisation running ... one thing is equal opportunity for everyone ... everyone can participate here ... in every activity here [...] the attention is to everyone equally so that's the main thing everybody wants to get attention ... so when you get attention somewhere you will go there [...] so it's very welcoming and cooperative here ... and respect people everyone want respect

[speaking as an immigrant] it's a bit the same with vulnerable people [who are not migrants] ... so they are seen as outsiders you don't usually mix with [...] which is sad but I think I can say that society doesn't want to see vulnerable people ... at BtG though they widen the horizons they don't see stereotypes they just see people ... as people

that's why it's true volunteering cos you come in when you can [...] you do what you can and that's the same for all of us no one is treated in any hierarchical volunteer system

they never judged me and the issues I was dealing with they just wanted to be there for me ... I don't know how else to talk about it [...] they advocate inclusion and participation



there's no hoop to jump over which would deter a lot of people ... and they don't get mad if you show up one time then don't show up the next ... they would like to see you every time but ... they understand that life happens or sometimes you don't feel like it ... they're accepting of all situations which is one of the things that makes them so welcoming and why people keep coming back ... and why there is such a mix of people because they are accepting to everyone all classes ... it is a level playing field cos you have people that are homeless and on the street and people well educated and they're doing the same work so cooking next to each other ... there's no it takes down all the boundaries

it was a sense of it doesn't matter who you are come in and have a cup of tea ... more tea more tea [laughs] it doesn't matter who you are leave it at the door come in and have a cuppa and a chat ... just chip in and get on with it ... and that's what I like ... that's what I enjoy about it

it's such an egalitarian environment ... you don't really know who's a volunteer and who's a ... consumer? And why people are there and it doesn't matter because people are there for the here and now ... and for what they can find in that

[talking about personal issues] you need to act your way out of that you can't just think it so ... right get off your arse and one day finally I did and [...] I saw the big sign BtG all welcome and I walked in [...] and I didn't have a clue what I was doing or what to expect ... and [staff] went through what I could do and it was about what I felt comfortable doing ... and I felt welcomed ... and I was there every Thursday for two year

Clearly, the Drop-In provides a service and space in which people feel welcome and comfortable, such that they often return. Participants who have been involved for longer periods of time strongly believe that this is the core strength behind the service's longevity.

4.2 Organisational culture

This overwhelming sense of welcome, regardless of people's backgrounds, circumstances or needs, was detailed by many as being due to BtG's 'organisational culture'. Three interconnecting elements emerge from analysis as critical to this culture. First, BtG is commonly described as a trusting organisation:

I immediately felt like they trusted me with a lot of stuff ... and I really liked that cos I felt like I'm a capable independent person [...] I didn't want to be a burden in any way as a volunteer ... so I'm happy they gave me the trust and chance to do things myself ... and learn from if I wasn't doing it right ... if they didn't like it then I was able to learn from that

you have to have trust ... so I'm doing the cooking tomorrow and when you do the cooking you go out to buy the food ... and they just gave me the money for that and I was like do you not need me to sign a petty cash slip? and they're just like no no just get receipts and bring them back ... which ... it's assumed that I'm competent enough to keep receipts and so on

I think there's a huge amount of acceptance [...] if you're a really unconfident or incapable person then you're you need that time and you are going to make mistakes ... so by them [BtG] giving you that chance right off the bat ... with volunteers with staff with everyone ... they give you one bump up already ... that jumpstarts your confidence ... you're not going to gain anything if you're starting off and they don't trust you ... so it's a huge plus for social capacity

it's so open-hearted ...and people can be silly and be accepted for being silly

Second, this trust is both necessitated by, and enables, the Drop-In to operate as a volunteer-led space (which in itself is vital to developing skills and experience, see 4.5):

so usually for the Drop-In you need around 12-15 volunteers ... to be there for the whole day ... and now you can only get that to work if people really feel like they belong that their contribution is valued ... and the people who are the most available and committed are not necessarily the most skilled but ... you appreciate the fact that they're there anyway ... so listening to what people have to offer and what they have capacity to do who is willing ... and [BtG] are so aware of that



Being volunteer-led means that the Drop-In can be somewhat 'haphazard', and lots of participants describe it as 'chaotic' in terms of planning ahead, delivering activities and so on; yet this lack of definitive goals, strict structure or organisational control is largely valued across participants (though see 5.6 for occasions where being volunteer-led can also be a challenge):

my first impression was that things were very ... well that they were very organised but loose at the same time? I really liked that things don't always go often go to plan that's life [laughs]

it's flexible that's the beauty of it ... and everything always seems to come off somehow ... we [volunteer team] always get there ... or at least somewhere with what we were planning to do ... and if we don't we get somewhere else which is great [laughs]

it was organised chaos so ...my initial response was I don't know if I can do this there's so much going on around you ...and yet one volunteer [name] came up to me and said come

back I hope you come back ... and I did ... it was just brilliant it was warm and it was personal and ... crazy big family a lot of laughter it was joyful

because they are so flexible but things just happen ... you don't know what's going to happen but they do make it happen ... and that flexibility and that openness to ... ok we're just going to go with it ... that makes things work out better

I love the way that we work to get stuff ready for events through fun and craziness ... thing just seem to emerge from the chaos and everyone owns it

Third, this volunteer-led practice, while 'not perfect, never perfect', is widely understood by participants to reflect a key organisational culture of being people-centred, 'putting people at the centre of everything they do'. This closely aligns with BtG's Purpose Statement (see 1.). Participants described this approach in a variety of ways, many in terms of a 'feeling' of care and support engendered between staff, volunteers and attendees:

I've only got my own hypothesis ... but I think it's love I think that's what it is ... call it what you want I'm not a religious person but you could call it a spirit maybe ... but it's love ... and there's a term that gets banded about person-centred ... person-centred this and that ... but I think if [staff] are ... they really have people central to what they do then that's when the magic happens

[in the voluntary sector] there's a huge amount of talking about doing good work but not doing it ... BtG is the opposite it's run by genuinely nice good people ... who ... they're doing everything with the best of intentions and that goes a very VERY long way ... they are doing it grassroots and practicing what they preach [...] BtG knows its limitations ... and it makes itself relevant so people want to come ... and they do all of that people centred stuff really well ... so the organisational culture is extremely strong

it's all about people that is central ... and not through words not what they SAY they do but just what they DO and how they do it ... and I know the impact it's had on my life being shown the care it's changed my life [...] it was a really emotional experience actually [...] thinking how lives can change so much for the better ... it's not necessarily about a massive change it can be so small but BtG really has a positive impact on people in my experience through all my time there not only what happened with me ... you can almost feel it there's something in the air ... it's almost tangible the support and care ... everyone for everyone else



Of particular note is that half of the non-Scottish participants highlighted that community organisations, social centres and places such as the Drop-In are not the norm in their countries of origin, and deeply value BtG in and of its very existence:

you should be grateful that you have this community [organisation] here and appreciate it

in [country of origin] such community work or events is NOT culturally the norm ... different system ... it's very rare to have community organisations doing drop ins or other support activities so I really appreciates this and wants others to see how valuable it is

I think because you are so used to it you don't see it anymore and it's taken for granted ... and I want to point it out for me you shouldn't take it for granted ... this doesn't happen in my country

4.3 Sense of belonging

The welcoming environment directly addresses one of the main challenges identified by participants, that of social isolation (discussed in 5.1). In positive terms, the majority of participants discussed building a sense of belonging as being both a motivator for attending the Drop-In, and enabled by the relationships and connections developed through being there:

who comes here is many outsiders and immigrants ... and for those groups of people what they lack in society is the feeling of belonging and you WANT to belong somewhere ... and BtG you can feel a part of something [...] it's a safe place where you build family connections you suddenly feel again a part of something ... in your country where you're from you build connections from the birth but then when you move you lose that [...] but here as immigrant BtG helps you build those roots or new roots ... every week you start to build new memories and connections



I'm socially isolated I don't have a job so I look forward to going cos I'll get to meet people ... and a cross section of folk ... and also [...] I need the contact to so I can feel I belong

it's nice to have a feeling of home

I just wanted to volunteer ... do something locally yeah ... a having a purpose and belonging you know

This sense of belonging, a feeling of home, was particularly discussed in terms of being part of the local community:

I was looking for things to do in the local community ... I wasn't sure what exactly but I wanted more involvement [...] 11 years I'd been living there and I wanted to feel more a part of the community

it feels really vital to make a new life and be part of local community ... I have that here [volunteering at BtG]

I wanted to do something community based and something in walking distance so ... to develop local links

it clearly gave me a sense of community and ... it gave me a sense of usefulness ... but also just a great deal of joy ... on Thursday to be there ... I always look forward to it

The depth of the sense of belonging enabled through the Drop-In is best exemplified by how many participants described 'missing' the service if they were unable to attend or had moved on (eg. for a job or college course), and a sense that their absence is missed by people attending:

I remember multiple Thursdays where [...] waking up in the morning and oh I really don't want to do anything I want to lay in my bed it's cold and wet outside ... then I'd get to the Drop-In and there's be [name] or somebody else smiling and saying hello ... and a big hug ... and immediately my day would turn around ...and by the end I was smiling and didn't want to go home and that happened so many times ... and that's pretty amazing you know I really miss it

it's quite a ... fluid bunch of people ... and that's really helpful if you feel easily trapped ... especially because I've been out of work for so long to come into something more fluid is better there's no You Must Come every week or ... but to come round to Thursday and if I've not been well enough to go ... it HURTS me if I'm not there ... I'll be looking at my watch and thinking oh they'll be doing this or that just now ... and I'm not there ... so it's become a really important part of my life

I was very touched last week and I don't know her name but one of the young mums ... said she would really miss me [moving out of the area]

I miss coming every week now ... have college that is good but here my family you know? Miss everyone so I come when I can

well my last week was pretty moving ... people said goodbye and said they'd miss me ... and you know people meant it I really felt that they meant it [moved on for employment]

In large part, such a strong sense of belonging amongst many participants is enabled through the organisational culture outlined above (4.2).

people were asked well what is it that we want to do and [some of us] agreed that ... well we just ... like to come and we ... like to chip in and we don't need for things to be overly structured and we like chatting to folk and having some food and ... it's nice to be just like there's some folk playing table tennis and there's some folk doing something else but we don't need it to be like all activities as such cos that's really not ... it's that sense of being somewhere where you feel you belong

you're going to the same place every week and it's relaxed and you relax ... you get the size of a person you get talking to them ... and make connections

Alongside the open, fluid atmosphere, participants also value and recognise the importance of doing specific tasks and activities, to build social relations and connections. The notion of 'bonding' through doing things together was evidenced weekly in the participant observation, especially around organising and preparing for discrete annual events (see 4.7), and it is the personal element of working on something together that appears important in this:

as a volunteer there on a Thursday you have a task to do ... and in the process of doing that task you'll make connections ... you get to know someone better because you're researching or doing a task together ... you have to learn about each other and be with each other working together

[volunteering in the kitchen] so I brought in family recipes not only what my mam made but what my granny made ... they meant a lot to me and feeding people with them meant a lot to me ... so sharing how to make those dishes with people was a really bonding thing

4.4 Togetherness in diversity

The wide cross-section of people attending the Drop-In is obvious. While attendance changes every Thursday, there is always a range of national, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, across diverse social positions and ages. In part, this stems from the range of motivations people identified for attending/volunteering at the Drop-In (some outlined above):

- For health and well-being (physical and mental)
- To tackle social isolation
- To gain a sense of belonging
- To contribute to local community
- For benefits and welfare advice
- For support with claiming asylum
- To get a lunchtime meal

This diversity is highly valued as a key asset of the Drop-In, and in the photo-elicitation sessions 'bringing diverse people together' was ranked as the top strength of the Drop-In. Scottish participants emphasised 'pride' in being a multicultural nation, in which difference and migration has long been 'a fact of life' and 'who we are'. Some pointed to BtG's main purpose of bringing different people together, with older Scottish participants often talking about the long-standing sectarian issues central in BtG's original and ongoing work. 'Coming together' was described as an intrinsically good thing, since it is 'just interesting to learn about others all the time', and as critical for social cohesion, in breaking down stereotypes:

I like the diversity and I like being able to chat with different people and do different things

you know I like that I've made a kind of connection with people that I wouldn't have ever had had a connection with ... people like [names several attendees different to themselves] [laughs] ... it's been good for me to not seek out people that I share a lot of things in terms of my life with ... I've loved that



bringing people together in BtG is so important ... it's too easy to only know your own kin ... but Scotland well society is more than your own little group

I've seen a lot of people here come through here aye ... some country you see a big influx at one time ... and then a shift to another country an ... I don't know why that is but ... yeah they're all my friends ... it's the best thing here that we can meet each other from lots of place and be I come here to be friends

aye and now with the political changes and Brexit and all that ... it is so so necessary that we spend time getting to know each other and not getting more divided

you have ways where you don't even know that you're thinking ... and then to be exposed to something different it was really good for me ... cos now I think my subconscious is less judgemental than it was ... my normal conscious was not that judgemental but my subconscious is a lot less judgemental now

Migrants to Scotland generally spoke of similar desires to be with a diverse range of people to experience multicultural differences, and additionally discussed learning about Scottish culture as important in being able to 'settle' in Glasgow:

the thing is at that time and still it is good for me ... that people from different backgrounds and communities can come together and share and ... that people be together this is important for me ... this is good opportunity to meet the people and learn their values and culture and the language and talking ... and their behaviour and you have to learn these things ... because different people have different backgrounds and deal with people in different way ... so this is good opportunity to learn ... because I want to live here so I must learn ... how to respect others and how to get respect in this place in this country

Some participants commented that this diversity 'just happens', in the general mixing together at the Drop-In, others appreciated the explicit attempts to raise awareness of difference that are made by BtG, through endeavours linked to Refugee Week, Interfaith Week, celebrating a range of religious dates throughout the year, and holding multicultural awareness discussions and activities:

when we watched that movie about the girls in other parts of the world ... from different cultures ... I remember just being stopped in my tracks and like ... wow I need to think about this ... and I like those discussions the BIG Chats¹⁵ for that

These more overt efforts to raise awareness of difference highlight diversity as a positive social element. Further, 'native' traditions and cultures are highlighted alongside non-Scottish, non-Christian ones, eg. holding Ceilidh dancing, celebrating Burn's Supper and Bonfire Nights – the research finds this to be vital to the sense of belonging of Scottish-born attendees, with people making comments about the importance of 'not ignoring us who was born here'.



Crucial is the genuinely wide range of differences and backgrounds the Drop-In pays attention to, to move beyond seeing ethnicity and/or religion as the *only* differences in society, instead bringing plural diversities to the fore, eg. between women and men, different ages, diverse education and employment backgrounds and so on:

it is a ... connection there we are all the same position ... we go for different reasons but we have that position of looking for support [...] so someone who has never experienced hunger cannot know what it is like to feel hungry for days ... and not everyone at the Drop-In has hunger but we have problems

¹⁵ The 'BIG Chat' is a structured monthly activity, bringing people together to discuss a particular topic, see 1.1.

Many informal conversations in the participant observation highlighted how volunteers and attendees come to understand diversity as much more complex than ethnic or national background or religion:

I like being there because there's a really great cross section of people ... there's people who are Gorbals born and bred ...there's people who ... are for want of a better terminology care in the community folk just need the support of folk who are willing to ... to help them do stuff ... and it's great when you get that thing where people are comfortable enough to say can you show me how to cut broccoli? ... I've never done it before and I can say yes ... and we're here as equals that's fine you're happy to ask for help I'm happy to give it ... there's no hierarchy and you feel that yeah that was a day well spent ... and I can ask for help too

As this quote shows, the welcoming environment and organisational culture (4.1 and 4.2) are central in enabling broader openness to people's variety. Moreover, from this diverse diversity, there stems the potential for people to recognise and value commonalities, alongside respecting differences - while everyone may have different backgrounds, people do come together for a common cause and share common values and activities:

I remember [on first visit] there were so many different people just all kinds of people ... and [name] they were looking after me ... it was lovely they chatted to me and told me a bit about their story which was similar to mine really

[name] said to me ... you know how strong and resilient asylum seekers and refugees are ... and all of us really? ... and I hadn't seen that ... I had personally at that point seen myself as a victim of ... circumstance [...] and when he said that ... and you look around the room and you see so many people struggling with so many different kinds of things ... and because people understand what it's like to struggle they ... it's maybe easier to empathise ... to understand someone else's situation

so ... last Thursday when [name] asked for a moment of silence for ... the victims in Orlando ... who died ... it really touched me ... and to see that you know it showed the global connection ... this woman from [African continent] ... asking us all to mark that moment that event... and who's very broken up about it for whatever reasons ... you know I don't know what her reasons were ... that's something important ... I'll always remember that

[BIG Chat about Brexit] you had some people aware that the debate was they're coming to steal our jobs but everyone was saying no people come with different skills and experiences and some people come for asylum and that's all ok that's great ... people know it's not as clear cut ... the opinions don't have to be massively well informed but they are valid ... people might not be massively educated and that none of that matters when you're cooking together or playing with kids together



and just thinking how different we all are ... and there's this phrase how we're wired differently ... and where our strengths lie and what we find difficult is different but ... I think BtG has an incredible ability to make sure that they find people's strengths ... so there are different strengths but what we share is that we all have strengths ... [and BtG] I mean they challenge people to ... try new things but they always make sure that anyone walks through that door they feel useful in some way to the whole ... that's its power

The research also shows that ideas and understandings around diversity are constantly being re-thought by people in a range of ways, as they encounter new differences and have new experiences weekly. It must also be noted that some people more than others discuss current affairs, and are aware of – or willing to speak openly about in the context of the research – social tensions and hostility across the city (see 5.3), in terms of class, religion, ethnicity and immigration especially.

4.5 Skills development

People clearly develop a range of skills at the Drop-In. Interestingly, participants spoke far less about 'technical' skills than about building 'social' skills. Team-working was mentioned most often, especially by those in volunteer roles, gained through planning and delivering weekly activities, and in preparing the weekly meal:

I learn here how to work together with a team ... before that I work in my country on my own mostly ... so now I learn work with other people in a team ... this is good for me

[talking about working in the kitchen] I guess I've learned skills in that group very practical skills ... but also how to work with together with other people

in a kitchen you have to get on with people you have to know how to work closely ... it's a small space ... and you get to know what people's strengths and weaknesses are so what someone maybe isnae so good at and what they're better at maybe they like to wash up ... ach just the little things so you



A majority of participants also highlighted the role of listening, as a skill to be developed, and one that is particularly useful and valuable in the Drop-In:

and BtG you can feel a part of something ... something interesting and exciting you can show your skills ... sometimes just being able to listen to people is a skill I have this now

and I learned it doesn't matter what you say you don't have to have the perfect thing to say to make people feel better ... but letting them know you're there for them ... you're happy to listen and give a hug or ... directing them to someone who does know

so that's something I had never done before going to BtG never ... and the times I've just sat down and ... listened to people ... I'm not a listener I'm a talker I know this [laughs] so to ... see the importance of that and to realise ... that there's so many people come to BtG that don't get listened to in their lives ... that's all they want that's all any of us want

I was unsure about making connections with people [...] I don't have the same experiences that they've had how do I relate to them? [...] and I realised that people just want someone to listen to them ... they want people to talk to you and smile and they don't want to be judged ... I think I grew from being more close minded and less experienced ... to open minded more accepting and more aware of just humanity and what people want and need

Though formal listening and other skills training is offered though the Drop-In (see below), what most people identified was their own skills development in terms of 'not taught but learnt'; ie., people discovered or re-discovered skills through being at the Drop-In, taking part in activities and generally 'getting involved':

I was terrified at the start and didn't know what I was doing and all I did really was I tried to just listen [...] because I was aware that the decisions that I was making ... let's say they were not fruitful they were the complete opposite [...] and I looked at the people at BtG and these people looked happy ... I was on the look to how to go to change my life and they showed me through their example ... and I was watching and listening and trying to do the things they were doing

and I don't know what happened but it [planning an activity] ignited a spark in me and I had all these ideas and ... this spark of creativity ... that hadn't really been lit for a long time

there's a difference between what we do and going to a soup kitchen ... there's so much more when you build in the activities ... and the theme or the celebration the plans for the weeks I think that really helps people coming back ... some people come for the meal and

leave but ... most people are coming at 10 and ... they're doing an activity or learning a new skill ... finding their creative side ... so the ongoing focus builds the social capabilities more than anything else ... coming to eat lunch and talk to people that's great but you're not team building ... by doing the activities you're trying something new ... or helping somebody with something else ... all of those go to building confidence and ... that's a really important aspect of it



It is precisely such confidence-building, highlighted in the quote above, that seems most valuable to the majority of participants; people discussed gaining confidence through developing their skills, and/or through ‘just being with people’:

BtG provided for me quite a lot in terms of self esteem and self respect and purpose ... it's given me all of these things [...] I now have experience and skills I can do more decision making things like [new volunteering role elsewhere]

I'm not a very outgoing ... I'm a very shy person and I don't put myself in situations where I don't know people ... so I really wanted to do that to gain some confidence ... and being here helps a lot

yeah so suddenly I was running [some activities] and not realising I can do all this but ... apparently I can [laughs] ... it was great discovery in myself that tonne of confidence that's come out of it

volunteering at BtG has had a genuine impact on my life ... I wouldn't be where I am today without those inspiring people and moments [...] and they made a challenging period in my life a lot easier ... because you can go in on a bad day and be who you are ... and staff and volunteers may just quietly ask how are you today? But not demanding explanation just checking in and ready to listen ... and it gets self generating and I gained confidence just being with those people

I think that certain aspects were recognised ... and I could say that I could kind of see people respected some skills I had ... and that's a nice feeling ... it wasn't overt or explicitly said but I felt respected by others and actually almost... and I'd never felt this before but I felt almost ... as if people looked to me to make decisions and lead and I've never had that before



Some people also attend free external training courses that BtG staff identify and encourage people to take up, eg. courses in health and safety, food hygiene, awareness of asylum issues, working with children, emotional literacy and First Aid. Participants who had done such courses said they were very helpful, though a minority of participants had attended a course. There appeared general desire to take up formal training opportunities, while issues such as travel, childcare, language ability and accessibility were raised:

I did the listening skills training ... that was good really useful ... and I've done other training yes but ... I can't remember them now ... I've done ... an introduction to asylum issues but yes the listening was useful [talks about using that in personal life and situations]

they didn't say you're in the kitchen do this course but there was a nudge ... and we did is as a group from BtG ... all BtG in the health and safety one ... not the food hygiene though ... that was at the college it was external and other people joined it ... most people got through it but there was a bit of an issue with language for some people

I missed one about refugees actually I think that would have been interesting and helpful I would have been interested in about reasons for people to seek asylum

On a highly positive note, several participants identified the skills and confidence gained through the service as key to them having moved on, and one person explicitly outlined how they took skills developed at the Drop-In with them:

if somebody's sitting by themselves in the Drop-In they're not sitting by themselves for long ... simple things like that ... a very human approach ... I remember what worked for me as a person and now I use that in my work .. it's not about anything complicated or strategizing but ... showing people care

4.6 English language

English language is a constant issue in the Drop-In, mentioned regularly in conversations, something BtG have been attempting to support for some years, and which remains a challenge (see 5.2). Initially the Drop-In focussed on informal language learning through conversation, in an ad-hoc manner. Then, language classes were offered at the Drop-In by a qualified volunteer. However, the space is not suited to such classes, and they were discontinued in the period the research was undertaken. The research stresses that this is a result of available facilities at the hall, rather than motivation and skills of volunteers.

There remains the opportunity to practice language informally in conversation, and some participants highlight the value of this, while arguing that such practice needs to be given more of an emphasis at the Drop-In:

the English thing I think ... [sighs] in the big room it was nigh on impossible and when it went into the small room it was ... cold and poky ... and cos it was happening the same day as the Drop-In ... and people in the main hall would be where is everyone? oh they're all in the English ... and the people in the English would be ... oh there's country dancing in the main hall but so people were missing out on each other

[it is] important for newcomers to learn English ... otherwise they can't join in ... so I was talking to [name] who says she speaks [non-English language] most of the time and I said well it won't happen by a miracle you've got to try just give it a go and practice ... so we can have a chat here on Thursdays ... but classes are also really needed

but there has to be a certain amount of encouragement to people to make an effort ... and we ourselves we have to try ... and not be ... quiet about it ... and that's what BtG does ... encourages and supports you to try out your English

but that's at the moment on ice [English classes] because they need to find a better location but we do it informally like [name] came up ... this was ages ago and he said can you help me a bit ... and he had a magazine and between us we flicked through the pages ... and he was reading out the headlines and then we went into bits and he was asking why is this this and I was explaining ... and then flipping to another page and saying see that's the same word but there it means a different thing ...and we had lots of fun with it and I think fun is really important with anything like that

4.7 Special events and trips

Just over half the participants spoke at some length about one-off or annual events as 'special', particularly the Drop-In's involvement in the Gorbals Fair (a wider neighbourhood event), Refugee Festival (the Drop-In hosts an afternoon/evening celebration in line with international Refugee Week every year), International Women's Day (ditto) and the Christmas party (always well-attended by local families). These events are valued in terms of the preparation activities required (mentioned previously regarding 'bonding' activities) and the occasions themselves, further key in building social relations and developing a sense of belonging (4.3):

the best things for me is ... Christmas party [laughs] ... because every people coming and ... music and fun I like it

Christmas party is always good good fun ... [laughs] and there is that sense of just pulling together and it all works somehow

[refugee festival event] was fantastic ... I loved it I really did I loved how proud people were to see their flags up on booths ... and to share their food people really wanted you to try what they'd brought ... I thought the activities were great [...] the spirit was fantastic in the room ... it was just a happy happy event and it felt like a culmination of BtG for me ... the singing was fun I loved the singing ... and [name] came in and saw the flag on their booth and ... wanted everyone to try their food and they were the happiest person

refugee week was lovely it worked so well ... people had overflowing stalls with all kinds of things to taste

I loved drawing [name] for the women's day celebration ... her lying on the floor ... letting me draw around her ... that trust and coming together as women ... you know you [BtG] provide a warm and welcoming space and people will come and they will connect ... and you set limits too so that it's safe



I really loved the international women's day event ... I really like how we make the decorations for the event [...] same with making the costumes for the Gorbals fair ... they are some of my favourite memories and what I tell people about and what I show pictures of to other people



Fewer participants had been on an external trip, unsurprising as these are less frequent; though activities and events away from the Drop-In and the Gorbals are predominantly remembered very positively and affectionately:

aye I did go on a residential ... that was unbelievable it was phenomenal ... I loved it ... [laughs] actually seeing people [from the Drop-In] away from that environment ... so so happy ... freer ... that geographical change it just seemed ... a different atmosphere ... having music and songs from different countries sharing that ... aye a big circle and singing songs ... and all the children and parents and adults we were all together and having fun ... like a wee holiday that lets you be free and it felt beautiful ... the place was beautiful and we had paper aeroplane competitions and simple things like that ... I think just taking people out of their local environment just for a break ... has that ability to free you up

with the men's group ... well I've been quite a few places with them ... we've been to New Lanark ... pitch n putt ... we've been cinema ... ten pin bowling we've been to ... a hill up in

the Trossachs ... that was a big day aye that was a big day out ... we went to Milngavie ... and to Strathaven ... I love them trips I do I go on every one I can ... it's so good to get away

and I been on the men's group activities I went with [names] and some other friends we went to Mugdock park ... long walk and good weather enjoyed that very much and another time we went bowling ... this experiences is very valuable for me to build memories and new life here

at the Citz I got a ticket and my brother came and [name] was there [...] it would be fun to go yay we're out of the house more and I think it's absolutely valuable to be able to see theatre ... and art

I went to the Heads of Ayr park trip that was so much fun [...] it was a really good day everyone had a lot of fun yeah ... and I think people will be like remember when we fed those camels and ... it's a bonding thing ... oh Ayr it was so funny ... and you have pictures of your kids jumping on trampolines together and ... and we were all singing songs on the bus and stuff we were all together singing and that was funny

4.8 Direct support

Few people mentioned getting direct support and advice as a key reason they attend the Drop-In. This may be due to research design (see 3.1 and 3.2), in that attendees and volunteers coming with direct support needs around claiming asylum spoke less English, and were more difficult to recruit to the research. Further, throughout participant observation, people usually avoided discussing more negative aspects of their lives; and given the research focus and Purposes of BtG (on capacities rather than problems), participants were not pushed to focus on the latter. Those who mentioned issues with benefits, housing, recovery and health issues were overwhelmingly positive about the direct support or signposting that BtG staff provide:

you try to avoid that so I tried to avoid that ... talking about poverty and problems if ... there's two of you meet in the street and you're struggling and you'll say alright? And yeah yeah alright mate ... but in reality your fridges are empty ... you're not alright

with things [staff] help me to do things sort out paperwork things ... and with the English yes?

after I came in first to get out of the cold man ... then really I got help with calling and stuff for a hostel the staff helped sort me out accommodation wise

Several volunteers also highlighted the support they receive in terms of undertaking a volunteer role, and specifically valued the annual Volunteers Evening, a celebration and thank you event that involves some team-building exercises, as well as food, soft drinks and the opportunity to chat outside the Drop-In. There is also an informal annual peer evaluation process, that a few volunteers felt was important; others had less to say about the peer evaluation – it was 'alright' but not a major strength or vital in their opinion:

and within BtG they do the [annual volunteer] review and the question is always asked what can we help you with to develop ... and they do support you

4.9 Developing relations outside the Drop-In

The Drop-In is a specific site; yet the research shows that the Drop-In is central in people developing wider networks of both personal and organisational connections. Some participants spoke at length about how attending/volunteering at the Drop-In had opened up all kinds of other opportunities for them, through both formal and informal channels. Moreover, the research found that the skills and confidence gained at the Drop-In (4.5) enabled people to take up these opportunities; and how in doing so, participants further developed their sense of self esteem and belonging in the area:

and the events like Gorbals fair and other things BtG get involved with in the wider community all peoples come together outside the Drop-In

and it's a good feeling being recognised ... I mean now I'm quite often involved with [other voluntary activities in the Gorbals]... it's nice to know that people see you as ... that you've got a role in the community ... it's good to have a role it's important to have that identity and a positive role [...] it's probably more that it gives a good feeling inside that ... it contributes to the local community



I have taken that confidence and skills on too ... one of the other things at BtG that I got involved with was with [particular activity] [...] anyway so I then got asked by my friend is a primary school teacher and she was doing a show with 86 primary six kids [...] and I went I'll do it I'll help ... so me and [another] friend worked on ... for a month ... worked on this school show so I was working with kids and teaching them ... and I don't think I'd have done that without doing it first at BtG ... no I'm certain I wouldn't have so that's very powerful to be able to take that onto somewhere else

Developing relations beyond the Drop-In can broadly be broken into two categories, personal and organisational links, though the research finds these to be mutually interconnecting.

4.9.1 Personal relationships

'Making friends' and building personal relationships outside the Drop-In is valued among all participants, extending a sense of belonging and going some way to alleviating social isolation (5.1). Further, several migrants outlined how central this is to 'making a new life here':

especially the Scottish people the attitude became more friendly and people started to approach me which they didn't always do before ... even today I had a situation where [a

person from the Drop-In] who before didn't talk to me now is opening up and talking [...] and we had a conversation and about their holidays and things not a simple hello ... a proper conversation it was nice

yes I have friends here from Drop-In so [name] ... and [name] he used to come here and he is my friend [...]and [name and name]... yes I see some people socially ... so [name] she friends also with my wife and come to my house for dinner sometimes ... lots of friends too meet around the town ... and because it goes beyond here this is important ... this is first organisation I joined here when I live here so they my first friends and this is special thing

I don't see so much of [name] now but we keep in touch ... and another friend is [name] ... they were talking to me one day and said I want to learn to cook but the kitchen's too frantic [at BtG] ... and I said I'll teach you to cook so they used to come to my house ... so we did that a few times and became friends ... and I've been to [another person]'s for dinner and lunch ... so those are the people that I say there's my pal [laughs]

[name] comes in here and I phone them sometimes and ... [name] sometimes I meet around about and [name] sometimes too



and throughout the years I know [names] ... I feel a bit more I am accepted ... in the Drop-In and outside because I do things with the school and they know me through those actions ... from being supported here now I can volunteer in other places and so now I volunteer at other events I learnt to do that here so I don't feel a stranger any more

I sort of just have started to bump into people too ... around town sometimes ... I bumped into [name] when they were [doing something] near me and we had a chat ... and [name] works in [name of place] and I didn't know but I popped in there and ... so because we knew each other from here we had a lovely chat and we've bumped into each other a couple of times actually on Argyle St ... and it's knowing the faces around the place it's a small thing but ... I saw [name] going into somewhere and we nodded to each other across the street the other day ... so there is a sense of settling in

yes my friend is living new Gorbals and coming here [BtG] and coming my house ... and we come to my house and her house

a lot of the people have kids so they bump into each other at the school and other kids stuff

I'm on Facebook with [lots of people] ... we follow pictures and there's a few relationships that I hope to continue ... I'll keep following people's lives even if I'm not here ... and if I come back and visit I can arrange to meet up

The volume of quotes that could have been included here speak to the extent of networks and relations that people can potentially build through the Drop-In.



4.9.2 Organisational links

Participants discussed being enabled to take on new roles with BtG itself, as well as other organisations (either voluntary or moving into paid employment), and/or move into education. Several participants discussed how BtG staff encourage people to move forwards, at their own capacity, broadly in terms that align with the person-centred organisational culture discussed in 4.2. Thus, many participants also undertake other (voluntary) activities, and directly attribute such activities as being at least in part due to support from BtG. Participants are involved with a wide range of charities across Glasgow city more widely, and/or have moved into paid work or college courses; some continue to visit the Drop-In, others ‘naturally move on’:

I speaking at schools with BtG about experience as migrant

See now I volunteer in church café and at [named charity] shop in Gorbals

because quite often one volunteer opportunity leads to another ... if I hadn't been at the Drop-In I don't think I would have found out about it [other role] normally

from there [Drop-In] so I've also been involved with the writing class at the Barn ...and the gardening group as well the Growing for Change group ... and Supporting the Gorbals which is a panel which gives out funds to people locally ... that's through Thriving Places ... so I turned up on an open day and it evolved from there ... and getting involved with community budgeting

and BtG referred me to go to other organisation and get experience ... to go to interfaith organisation and I enjoy working with them ... and I understand now how to talk more with Muslim people and Hindu people and other people



[name] was volunteer here at BtG for long time but now she ... volunteer with old peoples home she does is care work ... she is a nurse a general nurse in training so while we cannot work she is happy to volunteer with old peoples home ... and she got good advantage from here learning language and practicing here so then she can use ... that language she can now move on to work with old people ...

the Refugee Council I went there and present a report ... of BtG with BtG so ... I think these kind of things they help me learn and give me opportunity ... and yes so I recently came with [organisation] volunteering ... they are also welcoming and I have short training with them and now I am doing promotions around [specific issues] ... yes my role is to go to the different universities and colleges and schools to give awareness so ... with other staff members this across Glasgow ... but maybe in the future other cities as well

we got cheap tickets to go see a play at the Citizens ... and [name] was there and I was sat next to [name] and [name] and other people were dotted around ... so it was planned and we didn't meet before or after but

I went to university ... and the experience at BtG was pivotal in that ... it was through BtG that I got involved some volunteering at night shelters and wee bits and pieces of other things [...] aye that was all through links with BtG and [staff suggested] you could do this university course in community work ... but they proactively encouraged me to apply ... and I got an interview and I went and spoke about my experiences and what they [university] said was I got it because of my experience and enthusiasm ... that was clear and I was learning skills and I was talking about folk and ... I didn't have the qualifications but ... the enthusiasm all came from BtG and the chances and confidence they gave me

The participant observation element of the research clearly shows that the majority of other volunteering, work and education that people move on to centres on various aspects of social justice: people take up positions that in some form are addressing issues of homelessness, drug and alcohol recovery, poverty, or health issues; some participants explicitly mentioned desires to 'help the community', often based on their own previous/ongoing personal experiences:

anti-poverty day ... yes that's every Oct that happens in George Square ... several of us get involved with that that's really important right now ... see we know how that feels how that is and ... it really needs to be sorted



4.9.3 Feeling safer in the city

Increasing and strengthening personal and organisational links have another positive impact regarding participants' general sense of safety and 'feeling comfortable' locally, and (to a lesser degree) in the city more widely. That is, the research finds that recognising and being recognised is critical in de-escalating fear of unknown others in daily life. One aspect of this safety came in attending events **as** a group (eg. trips, Gorbals Fair) – some people definitely felt more comfortable and able to be in public spaces when part of 'the Drop-In group'. This issue is closely related to experiences of and perceived exclusion in Glasgow (see **5.3**):

some events are outside but you are together as a community group ... and they can be themselves and they are just people ... not refugees not migrants not addicts not sick with mental health ... and that's what is precious about BtG we are stronger together

people are looking out for one another ... and you can do that because you're making connections ... I saw that film with him and they come to my house and we're going to do that in town next week and people ... are making connections and ... just that sense of community so you feel you can go about the place safely

the most valuable [thing is] community safety ... because suddenly someone who might look a bit different isn't a stranger anymore ... they're someone you see on a Thursday ...and eventually a friend [at the Drop-In] and even more maybe ... a friend that you see outside the place ... and that's how a community continues to knit itself together

three of us [...] went to Edinburgh to speak to a conference ... to do with community safety ... so there were lots of high heid yins from police and social work and various different things ... and we were the 'real people' to come and talk about the Drop-In and the effect that it has on our communities on safety ... because you see people around the place and you know them ... they're NOT strangers who are going to ... hurt you in some way ... they're just [name] from the Drop-In who you ate lunch with last week

5. Challenges

As already mentioned, key challenges identified in the research are often directly related to key strengths. Thus it is important to continually reflect on both, to inform service delivery, and BtG's ability to work effectively and in an integrated way with other service providers and organisations in the Gorbals and across the city. Strengths should be highlighted and celebrated, but not taken for granted: as one volunteer said, 'it's never job done'. The report now turns to the challenges participants raised in terms of issues in the local community and wider society, personal challenges, and the questions these pose for BtG as an organisation.

It should be stated here that participants were clearly more comfortable and willing to discuss strengths rather than challenges. The research analyses this as due to the culture of the Drop-In, and BtG's stated Purposes and ABCD approach (see 1.), all of which emphasise enabling and building positive relationships, valuing and nurturing people's potential, and celebrating the 'good' in community (see also 4.8).

5.1 Isolation in the local area

Isolation was a key concern identified across the research, as a significant issue among the local community that both leads to and exacerbates a range of health and other problems. Participants mentioned – either for themselves or others – having a lack of connection with wider society; this challenge is shared across parents (especially mothers), asylum seekers and refugees, people with mental and/or physical health issues, with insecure housing provision, un- and under-employment and drug and alcohol recovery issues. It is noteworthy that isolation was discussed both as physically being 'stuck at home', yet also being out of the house but not having social networks:

I am quite a shy person I tend to stick at home I think I was at home for too long for years ... with the kids and I stayed with kids [...] it's tough ... not about physical exhaustion but the mental ... not the childcare itself but the energy and the sometimes they argue and the noise all the time I find it's the emotional exhaustion is tough

with this hip condition I was becoming very isolated [...] and I said alright I'm going to find a voluntary thing to get me out the house

the easiest thing people get round here is isolation

when you've nae money it's easiest just to stay at home ... then you don't know what you can't buy as much ... that's too frustrating

there's too many ... there's lots of triggers going out ... in recovery there's always things you know you want to avoid and sometimes well it's just easier to stay in

when I am new nobody know me and I can't say hello to everyone on the street ... but if I can't say hello and people no say hello to me I don't want to be there on street so much

As evidenced by this last quote, asylum seekers, refugees and other new migrants to the area have particular issues getting to know local people, and learning about the neighbourhood and city more widely; from where to buy cheap food basics, to registering with a doctor, to being able to develop social relations. Not having local links makes isolation worse among migrant parents, in terms of not being able to call upon friends or family networks for

childcare, not being allowed to work as asylum seekers, and/or having few opportunities to socialise/develop links beyond the immediate family:

if I had family here mam or aunt then it would be easier to drop [children] off with them but ... no childcare ... so I stayed at home and [...] I think my confidence was not good

we are still in the process of claiming asylum [over 4 years] ... so I have [family] here and ... it's a long time yes and tiring very tiring ... and disturbing because since 4 year I didn't do anything ... I get voluntary work with different organisations but ... I just getting small benefits which is not good for me because I don't want to take any benefits ... but I cannot work ... so we can go to the park or walks but many things cost money

The isolation experienced by Scottish participants and its effects must also be highlighted; a few individuals spoke at length about how frustrated, hopeless, depressed or upset 'being stranded', as one participant put it, can feel. A key theme among this group was poverty related to un- or under-employment, and changes to a range of benefits and how these are processed. Participants reported significant financial challenges when benefit incomes decreased, due to changes in entitlements to Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance, Working Tax Credits, child benefits, and other health and disability benefits. This was exacerbated for some due to the new 'sanctions' process imposed people who did not strictly adhere to the procedures set out by government. The Ken Loach film "I, Daniel Blake" (2016) was commonly referred to as highlighting 'impossible' inconsistencies faced by people attempting to get financial support from the state.

Key is that financial exclusions are directly related to isolation in a variety of ways (see also 4.8), from direct implications of not being able to afford to go to a café, the shops, do leisure activities, to more indirect effects related to low mood and other health issues that stem from the stress of poverty.

There were other factors that specifically intensify/increase the potential of isolation among migrants, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, covered in the next two sections.

5.2 English language provision

Being isolated limits the opportunity to learn and practice English as an additional language; moreover, there is a negative feedback loop in that, when the chance to be with English speakers occurs, lack of confidence can hinder people's attempts to practice. For migrants who are or have been socially isolated, and fearful of engaging locally either due to trauma and mental health related to claiming asylum, and/or experiences of racism in the city (see 5.3), this is a very real problem:

and for the language is very important because when you're stuck at home so we speak in our own language at home and it's easy to get scared of practicing English ... to be afraid to speak in English and get communication

when you will live long time in a place need to make friends ... but it is hard to make friends when the language is not there

my friend who I met at BtG ... who's gone all the way through with their English learning ... they're very shy when speaking [...] and they don't think it is [good English] but it IS but they don't think so because they don't get the opportunity to practice

The provision of language classes at the Drop-In was mentioned as a challenge by many participants, recognising that informal learning and practice was helpful, but 'not really enough' especially for those new to English. One interviewee discussed this challenge in broader terms, concerned that the issue of language learning has become difficult to raise due to its increasingly political implications. They highlighted that, in their experience, many migrants wish to learn English but a range of factors make this difficult, including decreased funding for and availability of classes city-wide, childcare issues, and physical and mental health capacity to attend. They also believed that advocating learning English as important (to 'settle in', 'get a job' and to 'make a life here'), risks the potential charge of racism, in a reverse way:

last night I was reading comments by different people after a BBC documentary ... about integration ... and a number of people were angry with other people ... they were angry about people not learning language ... but the problem with communication is ... you always do have to learn language but if you TALK about it the need to learn language oh you are racist ... but for communicate with people you need language ... if people don't know language how they communicate? I come here from [country of origin] and first thing I learn language

The key challenge for BtG is that the Drop-In is understood as a space for informal opportunities to chat and learn language (see 4.6), yet the research found consensus that it is not suited as a site for formal classes. The design of the space itself, and the activities offered and focus on group involvement, suggests that setting aside a time and place for a language class has not worked – despite the efforts, expertise and motivation of volunteers. This raises questions as to how BtG can address this challenge through alternative service delivery.

well there apparently is a desire [to learn English] ... but actually doing it [...] you have to actually do it and practice it ... there's no point in thinking that coming here and talking for half an hour is going to solve your problems

It must also be noted that there is a specific issue regarding the dialect in Glasgow, and the Gorbals – even for English speakers:

when I arrived little English ... I could understand some things mostly ... [in country of origin] I learnt English but I could hardly understand the accent ... I can write English in my school ... but not easy to understand when somebody speak ... so that's why I go outside and come here to hear and learn the informal and the speaking

I haven't lived in Scotland for [X] years so there is a certain level of ... re-integrating with that stuff [laughs] [...] integrating back into I'm not used to being surrounded by Scots ... so I need to re-learn the dialect

5.3 Exclusion in Glasgow

Several participants mentioned being discriminated against in employment, in terms of gender, disability and especially ethnic background. One migrant woman was told 'don't come back' when she left a job for maternity leave, others report being uninvited to interview once their ethnicity or national background become evident:

losing my job was my first bump on the way and I lose confidence

there was a fight a racist attack just there yesterday ... and attacks on women ... people are feared fi go outside

I was going to interview, on paper application, then we speak on phone and he [potential employer] hear my accent [African origin] and tell me actually no ... job is filled

people know what is BtG is accepting ... but not everywhere accepting

as an immigrant I have some ... some fear some experience of hatred ... people have different experiences my friend [pointing to attendee who is also seeking asylum] he no experience this [friend nods]

However, racism and exclusion are sensitive topics, and few people spoke – briefly and hesitantly - about these issues in the area and the city. Such exclusion was mostly framed in the sense that things are improving with time:

as an immigrant I can feel the attitude [...] so there is some people attitude that you should not be here [...] there is lots of stigma about [migrants] ... and because there are many of us the attitude [...] although I think it's changed slightly ... it's still not the best

before Gorbals no good no ... now new Gorbals is better ... new people new mix is much better ... before don't like it now is good ... before people is because I have a headscarf people is no nice ... no good no talking to me ... now change of people ... some same people but mix of people [...] more different countries ... makes difference ... last maybe 7 years is better ...

but I think for me the fact that sometimes you have to first prove yourself if a bit sad but I'm grateful that I get the chance

and you know after 10 years I am a part of the community here but also you still feel you are an immigrant I will always been seen by some people as that ... and the stereotype oh they stealing our jobs ... and you try your best but it is tough ... there is this attitude in every society ... and immigrants really try hard we are hard-working people ... we do try to be part of this society

There is an on-going issue, mentioned by several Scottish participants, regarding other users of the hall in which the Drop-In occurs. Participants felt that some of these other individuals and groups can be quick to 'judge folk at the Drop-In' because of their ethnic and national backgrounds (as migrants); finding fault and placing blame if, for example, the chairs and tables aren't returned to the usual pattern, or the place not cleaned properly. There is a sense that, more widely, people across the Gorbals negatively stereotype the Drop-In, precisely because it includes asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. As three participants explained separately, they used to believe the negative stereotypes and 'act like that', until they attended to 'see what this was all about', to 'see for meself'. On meeting people, all three said that they changed their attitudes, became regular attendees or volunteers, and they wished more local people came along to break down exclusionary or racist opinions.

There are issues around 'cultural racism', in that participants describe the exclusions in the neighbourhood being based both on people's non-whiteness, and also non-Scottishness:

so what I've experienced ... [compares being a white immigrant from Europe to] when you're from the USA everyone wants to be friends with you [laughs] but when you're from Poland or

Latvia suddenly it's like ... you're this figure that nobody wants to know they're like ... ok [frowns]... all the eastern immigrants experience the same Russia Lithuania Poland

because of government issues the problems so with housing and jobs and schools and hospitals ... we are picked up on because they can't pick on the others ... the rules of being racist or that falls on us now ... because we are white as well but we are different [...] no one wants to be called racist so it's easier to pick on us

One person also reflected that being excluded can create its own self-fulfilling negative cycle:

and you can also create this kind of attitude yourself as well that you feel unsafe in the Gorbals ... and people react to you ... so there is some people attitude that you should not be here and then you also can think that and other people because you think it ... they think it maybe they didn't think that before? ... because you thought this and then you behave the way you think it's gonna happen ... and then people react to you behaving that way

A few participants linked exclusion and racism to dominant negative media reporting and policy statements round immigration:

The challenge is to resist pressure from the media and UK government to make the population racist ... BtG is a beacon of hope

Comments on this generally highlighted what people consider to be a critical difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK, especially England and central government in London. There was agreement, among Scottish and overseas participants, that Scotland is a welcoming country for immigrants, and that its long history of immigration, and Scottish people's own migrations around the world, lend Scottish society a more open attitude. However, incidents and experiences of racism and exclusion do occur, and clearly there remains work to do locally, and across the city, to continue to challenge racism and exclusion based on any pejorative categorisations.

5.4 Interpersonal relations

The research clearly shows that the Drop-In enables new friendships, social relations and interconnections to thrive (4.1, 4.4, 4.7 and 4.9). However, not everyone gets along well with each other, and several participants pointed out that there will always be incompatibilities between some people: the challenge is to ensure a space in which any tensions can at the least be managed, at best addressed:

though sometimes it can get a bit oh so-and-so is the person who does THIS and then that always falls to them and they're not necessarily the best person to do that ... or might not always want to do that role I don't know ... that sometimes means other people can't do that role if they might want to

and like anything in life you get to know the people you get on with and ... I'm not sure you interact so much with the people you don't get on with ... it's as simple as that really

what I don't miss is the largeness of the space in terms of in a larger project there's always gonna be one or two people that you don't like [...] and there are some people who don't give other people space ... airspace and that can be an issue in a smaller area like the kitchen ... and there are tensions [...] so if you've got someone who talks incessantly that's difficult or ...

I honestly don't know how you manage that ... it does seem to be a thing maybe it's people being isolated [in the week] and at the Drop-In there is opportunity to talk ... and people feel it's a space where they are allowed to do that and that's fine but ... that can drown out other people ... and maybe that can't be resolved

there are a few interesting power [relations] well some people more in charge or wanting to be but in different ways ... but I think that's to do with experience ... or where they're at ... maybe there's a crossover if some people have been there years then I suppose there will be an expectation that that's what they do

There was a specific tension during the research around people coming to the Drop-In who are in recovery from drug and/or alcohol misuse. This was raised with staff at the time, over a period of a few weeks, and staff acted on this issue: first, arranging a BIG Chat that listened to people's concerns, points of view, experiences and suggested solutions; then following up with a second BIG Chat facilitated by two local drug charity workers, which had been one of the suggested actions:

the drugs thing I noticed that and ... honestly I don't know if maybe it was one of things that encouraged me to leave but it certainly wasn't an attraction for me to stay ... put it that way and I understand that it's a Drop-In and it has to be open to all ... and I'm also aware that there was a meeting specifically about to deal with and talk about addiction issues ... and it cleared the air but that issue's not gonna go away

I can see there are tensions ... I can understand there are [...] parents and ... I'm just thinking it makes things in their view unpredictable? ... it doesn't feel necessarily ... in their view again ... safe a place to bring their children and turn their back to have a chat with their friends ... so it's not an easy one ... it's a balancing act ... my personal view is that if people can come and be welcomed in however small a way we can't say how important that may be for them for their recovery

[talking about BIG Chat regarding drugs issue] people ... were saying that they wanted their kids to feel safe in the Drop-In ... sometimes you don't know who's coming ... but then people who were sharing [about being in recovery] were saying how BtG and this space was really important for them because it allowed them to come and ... they were still welcome here even if they didn't have themselves together ... that was really important too ... it made me think well how do you balance something like that cos you want people to feel safe ... and those people to come back but you also want to be an open space for people who don't have it all together ... I think they [staff] do a good job of it ... but that chat made me think oh this is a real problem ... how do we tackle that?

The general consensus in the research was that this is a challenge, which probably cannot be resolved, but that careful attention needs to be paid to how it develops. One participant said they knew that this issue did prevent some people they knew from attending 'which is sad', but no service can 'truly please everyone'.

Another issue raised was around 'cliques', and how small groupings of people can develop and then 'usually stick together' and not interact more widely. This was understood, though, as more a natural part of social grouping, rather than with any negativity or exclusionary intent involved:

because they sit together at a table for lunch and they SHOULD [...] I realise that fills their need ... but I think there's groups of people that I would like to get to know better ... and you

know I think it's [Drop-In] deliberately loosely structured and ... probably works well in that way ... but it does make it a little harder to connect sometimes

there is a tendency [... it's like the [country of origin] women and the Gorbals women there's a lot of friendliness and like oh hello how're ya doing ... but people don't sit with each other over lunch? It's a little bit cliquey over lunch? ... but it's understandable there's groups where they go to the Drop-In to meet up with each other and that's their ONE opportunity in the week to catch up ... so they sit around together to do that ... and you can't say right everyone mix up [laughs] ... with the [country of origin] women they're coming from all over the city and this is their chance to see each other and catch up [...] so a bit of a

separation but NOT a tension ... there's no animosity there's friendliness ... and you know full well that if two women one from each group bump into each other on the streets they'd be like hi hello how are you?

BtG is an on ongoing enterprise ... that people come in and go out of so it's a little bit like getting on a moving escalator? You know a ... when should I get on? You know ... and it's already going on so it's hard to ... hard to get introduced ... so many people already know each other it's tough coming into that

[there are] language barriers ... and some the divides between parents ... so all the [country of origin] women would sit and talk together and the Scottish women sit and talk together ... but their children would all play together ... so that's really interesting and I think that's something [BtG] should try and work on ... because although there is a mix of everyone across the entire Drop-In... there is still divides between languages but that's because you can only get so far in a conversation with someone ... the deepness of it can't go as far [...] it's also hard because some people have been living here for generations and [others] have been here what nine months and don't know how long they'll stay

The latter point, regarding the mobility of migrants, was also noticed in participant observation, in conversations with people who expressed how emotionally difficult it is to invest in making new friendships outside their 'own group' (people from similar background and language), when their future is uncertain. The challenge is finding a balance, such that people get what social support they need from others they already know or who they share a background with, while ensuring new bonds and relations are fostered.

5.5 Sustaining support

A minority of participants raised concerns regarding how support can be sustained at the Drop-In. While few, this issue was important to those who raised it:

my relationship with BtG is for myself is quite mixed emotions [...] and it's quite natural as well but it's tough for a person in my situation I get over it [smiles] but what happen is when you come and you're quite vulnerable [...] and you need some support and I came and I felt ... taken care of ... but then when you start to stand on your feet and you are there a while and know way around and then you have other people who come and they are new and quite vulnerable you will kind of ... move along ... you don't feel so supported and it's tough ... so OK I'm not special now I'm just one of the bunch yeah? [...] and I saw people who have very similar experience ... but it has to happen it has to there's no other option ... you have to get yourself going ... but it took me a while to get over the fact now I'm not so vulnerable [...] because at some point you can feel a bit rejected ... you can feel a bit lost this is what my experience was when I was not new anymore

not everyone is noticed when they come in sometimes

so sometimes feel ... little bit ... inequality sometimes ... so they [BtG] should be careful to give ... full attention to everybody ... and I don't feel it's bad but this is if somebody comes and he feels not that attention he will not come back again ... maybe not everyone is like me I can come and not much attention and I will come back ... and I feel that just sometimes some people are getting more priority than other people ... [asked whether there is a pattern to who gets priority attention] no no just this can happen to anybody not ... there's no difference male female or mothers not mothers or people from different country no not prejudice thing ... sometimes just not everyone welcomed in the same way

More widely, participants were unanimous in their praise for the support that is offered by staff (see 4.8) and volunteers, in terms of how much is enabled and achieved with so few resources. Participants frequently remarked that BtG needs more funding and more staff to be able to 'keep up the great work'. There was recognition that, precisely because the Drop-In is volunteer-led, the capacity for support will ebb and flow depending on the volunteers present any one week, and their own health and abilities on that day. One volunteer said:

I have noticed there are people at the Drop-In who are sitting alone ... and [...] you can tend to sit with people who you are comfortable with and I noticed a few times when there were ... I saw someone sitting alone but still went and sat with someone I knew ... so I probably should have gone to that other person and made that conversation happen

There were contradicting comments around volunteer support in terms of the annual evaluation process. Some participants remembered doing an evaluation – and some praised the more recent introduction of a peer-to-peer evaluation – while others felt that the form and system did not offer them much, or they said they had not completed an evaluation yearly. This issue further relates to the next section.

5.6 Organisation¹⁶ and communication

Participants were keen to point out there needs to be a balance between structure and flexibility; people overwhelmingly value that the Drop-In is not rigid in its demands on volunteer commitment and time, or how it is ordered and run, pointing out that its 'renowned chaos' is central to its 'welcoming environment' (see 4.1):

if it's too structured then it's not a drop in

At the same time, many participants spoke about the need for structure to the day and activities, as important to bring people together across differences in doing tasks and activities together (4.4), and to develop skills and social capacity (4.5):

[talking about disorganisation] but the whole is better than the sum of the parts and it works somehow [...] there's so much stuff they could be doing better be more efficient be clearer ... and just more strategic ... but ... does any of that really matter when you have something that anybody who turns up feels welcome feels like there's something special going on and comes back? ... so the last thing you want to do is get in the way of that ... in so many ways it's ramshackle but people feel they belong ... and part of the reason for it being ramshackle is because it is GENUINELY community led [...] it genuinely follows what people have asked for so we end up with this random scatter gun

¹⁶ Organisation here refers to the **act of organising**, not to BtG as an organisation.

when there's something like the Gorbals fair or the ... refugee week ... when there's something like that going on then there really is a definition to the activities that happen... but there were weeks that ... I wasn't quite sure how to focus? ... and it didn't seem that other people knew ... it seemed a little bit ... loose almost too loose

parents actually playing with their kids now ... cos when they would get tea and sit on the sides it's too unstructured ... those changes are better now parents are more involved ... but there are still parents where their kids are running out the side door and you think ... do I run after them?

The challenge of finding the right balance in terms of structure and flexibility also relates to the issue around 'cliques', while the speaker of the latter quote later mentioned feeling stressed when 'nothing is organised sometimes'. The research suggests that these factors are in part about communication, in the sense that staff organise the Drop-In to a degree, but volunteers are also responsible for organising, leading and planning. It depends both on how busy any one day may be, as well as how capable individual volunteers may be feeling on that day: 'we're not always all of us having a good day'. Thus, BtG staff have to constantly facilitate across what is taken on by different people, which requires close communication.

A further communication issue, several participants wondered whether BtG is advertising the Drop-In widely and systematically enough, outlining how they discovered it by 'accident':

curiosity brought me along and I think I saw the banner outside ... a few times and I was curious what happens there

I got a list of places from somewhere else that I was looking to volunteer with ... but BtG wasn't on the first list that I got ... I went somewhere else and they pointed me to BtG

This issue was always framed in terms of a positive challenge, in that these participants believe the Drop-In to be so beneficial, more people should have the opportunity to gain through it. There is a monthly 'taster volunteer morning' in which people who are looking to volunteer through the Volunteer Centre Glasgow come along; however, there was agreement among participants that the Drop-In could support more people through more consistent local communication

Others pointed out issues with getting up-to-date communication:

I looked for their website which is very out of date and they haven't updated it in years [laughs]

a lot of things aren't followed up and don't happen ... communication can be terrible I still don't get emails to volunteers [laughs] but I find out anyway somehow

things work very slowly [...] I have the time [...] I'm like come on let me do that or that and it's a bit like they feel guilty for asking but you're NOT asking me I WANT to do this stuff [laughs] ... so things just take way way longer than they should ... and there's so much stuff that [...] they're like oh it'll be fine ... no at some point you need to work all the bits out

they could communicate better ... like there are things that happen trips I heard about afterwards ... that might be me that I wasn't there on that week OK but might be they could make more effort to tell us about trips?

I think the [volunteer] roles ... I don't think they were explicitly mentioned or [...] there wasn't an overt communication to any person what skills have you got what do you want to do ... there might have been a mention oh you seem like you can do [xx] or little comments ... there wasn't a conversation I had about specific skills that I had no one said that to me

Once again, participants were keen to ground such comments in an understanding that staff time is already overstretched; this is a structural issue rather than an individual one.

5.7 Trips

The challenge here is straightforward: participants would like the opportunity to go on more trips, of a wider range that suits more people¹⁷. This issue becomes more difficult in that funding has to be found for trips, and they involve logistical organisation, which all requires staff time. Further, numbers must be capped for trips, which needs to be done in as fair way as possible. Another consideration is that not all trips will suit the diversity of people who attend the Drop-In:

I went to the new Lanark with the men's group and I quite enjoyed it ... I thought it's quite good but maybe I had limited value for myself [...] to be honest I think I was looking to do the walk and go to the pub but BtG being a being an alcohol free we weren't going to do that ... it wasn't appropriate [laughs] but it was OK ... I don't know that many trips were appropriate to myself or fit in with my needs and health [mobility issues] ... and not having kids ... quite a lot of events are about kids and families

we need more trips aye ... I couldn't get on one yet not one going away I would love to get away

there is a men's group to trips but we have no women's group? I cannot go with men's group maybe family but better women's trip

¹⁷ NB. Since the research ended, a residential trip occurred, which had not happened for over two years, and this received very positive feedback by those who went on it (echoing comments in 4.7 regarding previous residential trips).

6. Suggestions

When asked how the Drop-In service could change or what they would like to see improved, participants were tentative with suggestions, aware that pressures on staff and organisation time and resources are already high, and that volunteers themselves have many other issues they might be dealing with in their lives:

it's hard to get vulnerable people involved with this thing ... sometimes it's the project workers who organise and then put these things on and that's not the same ... it's a tough challenge

well everyone [names staff] is already so so busy and over-stretched I don't know how they do it

Thus, a central recommendation of this report is that BtG should seek funding to potentially recruit a further member of staff. Given the current funding climate, this is easier said than done; one possibility to consider is a new part-time post (perhaps two days/week), to attend the Drop-In and deliver related work (eg. suggestions below). It should be noted that the Drop-In has continued in its current form for several years, while one member of staff attached to it has an additional project in their workload, which has developed over the past two and a half years (High Rise Bakers), without any backfill.

In particular, this role could take up the *Thriving Places* initiative more centrally, in terms of further integrating The Drop-In service in/with other local services, and build upon the social capacities already evidenced in this report. Such a role should not jeopardise the volunteer-led approach or practices, rather augment and develop the strengths of the Drop-In and enable participants to address the challenges.

6.1 Outreach

While there was clear agreement that the Drop-In does 'bridge the gap' between different groups, racism and exclusion in the local community exists, and participants generally pointed out that this is too big a social issue for one service to deal with:

I think it's very hard work to break down stereotypes so I don't know what BtG can do

However, participants do think that BtG, specifically through its Drop-In service, should continue to address this. Aware that BtG already works on these issues in schools, suggestions were related but also separate. In part, outreach was advocated in terms of bringing a wider range of people into the Drop-In, and especially long-term Gorbals residents who may otherwise never meet migrants, refugees and asylum seekers:

so a wider range of events that involve more people from outside the BtG [...] so the question is what is the path to make the bridges ... I think through experience and actions together ... you cannot just say it that we should be integrated ... you have to experience it ... the only way for something to stay with people ... is through experience and creating something together having events not just attending but created by those local people

I wonder if there's something in inviting people from the housing association or ... other organisations like glad café to come to the Drop-In [...] I know there is some problems with Glasgow Life and the bingo ladies ... and stepping on each other's toes about timings and

what is offered or ... but if those people actually came and saw what happens at BtG they would understand a bit more? I'm sure that they've probably been invited

Outreach was also mentioned in terms of isolation experienced across the neighbourhood, and having a BIG Thursdays staff member dedicated to finding and reaching out to people, to introduce the Drop-In by talking to them in, for example, their homes, places of work, or health care centres. In line with the broader remit and Purposes of BtG, this report suggests that such a staff role could be to support and enable volunteers to take forward such outreach activity. Indeed, one participant wondered about the potential of volunteers visiting people elsewhere. There are risks and training issues to be considered here, but this idea was strongly supported in the verification process; specific suggestions/comments included:

go to Children First who work with vulnerable families, they could let people know about the Drop-In

put posters in nurseries and school gates

ask schools and nurseries to go in and talk to parents about BtG – sometimes posters don't work

make sure the Gorbals activities timetable is updated – there are still ones from 2015 on display

put leaflets through doors and on buses, everyone can take some to deliver where they live

Further, an additional Drop-In post could develop organisational and individual capacities more explicitly and in a sustained way, having a 'networking' dimension that specifically looks to how some of the recommendations made here are already being provided by other organisations, or would be better developed in collaboration with other agencies in the area. A key example would be regarding a women's group (see 6.5). The point is that such networking and external relations-building work already happens, with BtG staff (across its different services) linking with other Gorbals' organisations wherever possible – yet volunteers and attendees are largely unaware of this. During the verification session, a Community Development student (on placement with The Barn) was visiting the Drop-In, and remarked on how similar the findings of this research are to what people using services at The Barn think. They stated that:

these are definitely community-wide issues and there is room for partnership working and learning

6.2 Organisation and communication

Suggestions around structure/organisation were the most contradictory, given the diversity of people's needs and the flexibility required in practice of a volunteer-led service. One way to attempt balance, and a range of differently structured-to-loose possible interactions in the space, is to be clear with volunteers what different Team roles involve through induction, annual evaluation and related materials (see also 6.3):

for me I would look for a little more structure ... you still need open choice just to sit and have tea if that's what somebody wants to do but ... maybe more structure to what's offered ... cos the kitchen is really obvious there's structure you know you've got a meal to get on the table

maybe there's something in training or finding the people who're more comfortable ... going to talk to people who might be alone and encouraging them to do that? [...] maybe they don't want to do that every time but they're more comfortable than someone else ... and pitching it to them that you're really good at this and X person would really benefit from some conversation ... would you mind finding some time to do that? cos I think right now they have people who know to welcome people in but sometimes it's picked up and sometimes it's forgotten ... so have people who OK so today my job is welcoming and I'm really good at that ... so I'm gonna do that today

the structure well it depends on how busy we are ... but there is I think sometimes it's more busy with activities in the morning and we need more in the afternoon ... unless there's a BIG Chat the afternoon needs more organisation

However, it must be emphasised here that improvements around structure and communication should be balanced with maintaining the welcoming and personal environment. On a similar note, one participant pointed to how the Drop-In might be more organised in terms of financial efficiencies, but again this should not outweigh the core strengths of the service (not being more efficient in strategic or corporate terms):

as long as they have funders who will support them to do what they do well at the scale they're doing it it's fine [...] does it really matter that you could save 20-25% a week on what you spend on food [...] that extra bit of money doesn't really matter given the warmth and welcome you provide? ... you know government are always chucking money at pilot schemes or consultants to write reports and things never get done or followed up ... BtG is not that expensive and it is doing a phenomenal job

Regarding the website, and developing communication/advertising materials, one suggestion is to liaise with local colleges and/or universities to find students who might be interested in taking on discrete roles as a student project. Such student project could be to work with attendees, but take responsibility of re-designing the website and posters/leaflets. After the re-design stage, when the student moves on, volunteers/attendees can take up distribution themselves.

Several participants in the verification session also discussed the benefits of setting up a Facebook page for the volunteers; this should also involve staff but can be sustained by volunteers themselves.

6.3 Induction and support

Induction and support is relevant to volunteers and attendees; suggestions below indicate which of the groups they relate to.

Volunteer induction/information materials need to be updated, edited and made more accessible to all:

maybe when someone starts have more of a talk with them about what skill they have ... and how do you want to improve it ... maybe have a booklet on skills that you go through ... maybe people want to lead a wee bit more so you can look to how they do those roles in the Drop-In

the orientation ... if there's any way that the orientation could be more visual? because it is so verbal ... and I did it about 3 months after I started [...] and I know because people come in

week by week that ... you can't do an orientation week by week but you could give people the orientation materials and try to figure out a way to present them that's not so verbal ... there were several people in our group who had no idea what the materials said ... and I couldn't read through them all either in the time that we had

The idea of more visual material was very popular in the verification session. This could also be a discrete student or volunteer project.

Further, the idea of a 'buddying' or 'pairing' during a new volunteer's initial weeks was raised; this could increase the welcoming aspect, and gently disrupt in-group gatherings from time to time (asking those who are volunteers in the groups who settle together to act as buddies). The risk is that an individual volunteer may not be able to attend every week, so rather a 'pool' of buddies could work to take up such a role with newer volunteers.

It was also suggested that volunteers could take on induction of new volunteers, developing their own skills and capacities in this process, while taking some pressure from staff. This could enable staff to sustain direct support required by attendees around immigration, housing, health needs and so on. There was also the suggestion that a 'mini-orientation' or an information sheet be provided to attendees on first visits, with a few key pieces of information about BtG Drop-In, what its aims are and what it offers/what attendees can expect. This is currently done verbally.

There was a suggestion that annual evaluations should be continued as 'peer evaluation', as they currently are, and that this could be more consistently embedded, to enable people to reflect on skill development, social capacities and confidence.

6.4 English language provision

There are two main suggestions regarding English language. First, the Drop-In is better suited to an informal, conversational approach, which could be developed more consistently, and discussed with volunteers as to how this it can be delivered – especially the multilingual volunteers at the Drop-In. A related recommendation is that the issue is revisited at regular intervals, to get feedback and keep responding to changing need. One idea is to bring in an interpreter or relevant practitioner to offer training for volunteers around using conversation to improve language; this is not about training to teach language (see below) but what can be done informally. Other specific comments and ideas offered at the verification session are:

have themes for English conversation so there is mutual exchange, chatting is both ways (eg. theme can be favourite food)

conversations work well with three in a group, with a theme

it is more better when we have conversations with different people, not same every week

conversation is very useful even if you are attending college every week

Second, BtG as an organisation should look to either deliver language classes at another time and place, and/or better connect with providers already delivering classes in the area (this could be an outreach worker role, see 6.1). While a key challenge, and often raised, participants had few specific suggestions as to how or where classes might be delivered:

the English language stuff ... there was talk of doing a class for adults in the school ... but there's so much for the staff to be juggling already I don't know how they do it all the different projects

if [English language] were on a different day in a different location but still under the [BtG] banner that would be a good thing ... it would be helpful to take it out of the Drop-In ... here I think we can do conversation not lessons ... and we could do that better with some more effort and consistency

and the English classes this is the most important thing ... people need for to be not isolated and to move forwards in the community ... but the language is especially important ... to learn in a systematic way and needs too to practice ... BtG should look how can do the English language and guide people about the need to learn and the learning itself ... and so what is formal and informal words and this is important for life in the day ... Drop-In is better for informal

Conversation and classes were discussed at length in the verification session, with positive feedback and enthusiasm for conversation, more queries and worries around classes:

classes are a good idea in theory, but we would need premises, volunteers, and need to work out how to advertise. Would it clash with other ESOL classes? What would be the approach, relaxed or informal? If the latter can we offer a certificate? A lot to think about. Is it realistic for BtG to take this on?

6.5 Trips and events

The suggestion is clearly, more please! Of differing types, to cater to different groups and needs. Taking action on this will be limited to financial resources and staff and volunteer capacities; the recommendation here is that outreach work (and a potential new outreach role/staff member) should look to how and where joint trips and events can be developed and delivered by the Drop-In in conjunction with other agencies in the area, or indeed further away. This would further entrench integrated working across organisations.

In particular, several participants raised the need for a women's group. One remembered that there had been a women's group in the past, but this was not sustainable when volunteers were no longer able to facilitate/organise it. Thus, this is another recommendation that may be more achievable/sustainable to develop together with an already established women's group in the area, and see what BtG resources and people might contribute together with another agency.

The events which already occur (see 4.7) were widely valued in the verification session, with no other suggestions as to other events the Drop-In could become involved with. Specific ideas for trips included one for families, linked to bushcraft skills, and taking advantage of free museums and other city sites.

6.6 Practical/other

There were further ideas/concerns highlighted through the research:

like also technical things we need computer training and ... maybe access to other courses that are more practical skills

please when you give us the song sheets put it in bigger and bolder font so we can read it easily

there are pictures up and I wondered if ...about putting first names under pictures that are up ... to help cos I don't do very well with names when I'm first introduced to people

can we have name tags for everyone?

need more baking sessions ... we used to do baking then the High Rise Bakers started which is great but I don't go there ... I'd like baking at the Drop-In again

have a sewing class every week or set up 2 table for sewing ... sometimes it's there but no one ever knows where to put the sewing machine ... and work together on a sewing project

At the verification session, people mentioned that computer training occurs at Gorbals library, and the Drop-In could signpost there, and perhaps develop links with library provision. Budgeting skills ('how to feed a family affordably') was another popular suggestion, preferably in-house training.

7. Conclusion

The Drop-In service is highly valued among research participants, past and current, volunteers and attendees alike. The following quotes are just a few of many similarly positive ones:

I was thinking about the society in general ... and it struck me that those people [at BtG] do so much for the area ... so much for events and things in the Gorbals ... and for people in the Drop-In ... I thought it's so unfair because those people do so much so much work for the community and they're not given the respect as they should be

and BtG in many ways is restoring my faith in community

I can't thank them enough I really can't it's amazing ... changed my life so it has

the main magic at BtG is people's hearts are in the right place

it's one of the best things that ever happened to me

BtG is the one core thing in the Gorbals that brings things together people together ... it's an amazing organisation ... and I do think it works and what they're doing helps people in the margins or in the minorities ... and people from other countries and different classes and ... everyone can learn something about themselves and something about someone else ... if they go to the Drop-In just one time

I think actually there's been two things I've got out of BtG ... one is to feel myself as a useful individual and the other is ... to really understand what organisations like BtG contribute to the country ... it was [a realisation] ... oh THIS is the kind of thing that is keeping the country going

my son demands to come to BtG as soon as he finishes nursery every Thursday

The **core strengths** revolve around being people-centred, *in practice* as well as outlined in the organisation's Purpose, enabling a volunteer-led space and service that truly makes the majority of attendees and volunteers feel nurtured and able to develop their own social capacities in a range of ways. Importantly for BtG's ABCD approach, and involvement with the *Thriving Places* initiative, the research finds that participants are clearly taking skills, experiences and confidence from the Drop-In to engage increasingly and more fully across the Gorbals and the city. This finding shows BtG to be in a good position to further extend its social capacity-building work.

Key challenges are ongoing. Some are due to wider structural inequalities, societal issues and governmental policies, such that BtG can respond and adapt service delivery to support people, rather than tackle the issue itself. Other challenges are more organisational, that BtG may reflect on and address, with the involvement of attendees and volunteers. This report emphasises that these challenges are mostly ongoing and evolving, rather than factors that can be permanently resolved; several issues raised in research will require continually finding a balance, it would be inappropriate to attempt a 'fix'.

Appendix A:

Information Leaflet



Bridging the Gap: building social capacities across Glasgow

Collaborative Research Project

Have you ever been to the
BIG THURSDAYS Drop-In
in the Gorbals?

Would you like to share your
story and help shape future
support?

*This is an invitation to take part in a
research project. Before you decide if you
would like to participate, please read the
following information carefully and ask us
any questions.*



Contact Us

If you would like to take part or have any
questions, please contact Kye Askins
Email: Kye.Askins@glasgow.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to Bridging the
Gap directly, please contact

Tricia McConlogue,

Catriona Mulligan or Roz Adams

Email:

tricia@bridging-the-gap.org

catriona@bridging-the-gap.org

roz@bridging-the-gap.org

Telephone: 0141 418 0241

Website: <http://www.bridging-the-gap.org>

If you have any concerns about the conduct of
this research please contact

Ethics Officer: Dr Hester Parr

Hester.Parr@glasgow.ac.uk

Or come along to the

BIG THURSDAYS Drop In

10.30am – 2.30pm

Will people know I am taking part?

All information will be kept anonymous – this
means the researcher and some Bridging the
Gap staff will know that you are taking part,
but we will remove details, such as your
name and nationality, so that you cannot be
recognised.

The information you tell us is still subject to the law so
anything you do or say that could harm participants or
researchers may be shared with relevant authorities.
Your information will be stored in a secure location for
five years and then both digital and paper copies will
be destroyed.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Bridging the Gap will use the research to
help them decide future service provision, as
well as raising awareness of the work that
the organization does.

We will use what you tell us and show us in
reports, articles, online media, and possibly
at exhibitions and events. We will talk about
what we have learnt using anonymised
quotes to relevant groups that may include
local organisations, policy makers, the
media, and other people in universities.

If you would like to be invited to any potential events
outside Bridging the Gap please provide contact
details.

What is the purpose of the research?

We want to know how people are supported with individual needs, as well as how the Drop-In may help develop better social relations between people in Glasgow.

We want to know what doesn't work, what challenges you think are faced in the Corbals, and how support could be improved.

Who is organising and funding this project?

This research is being undertaken by Kye Askins, who is a researcher at the University of Glasgow.

The collaboration has been built through Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet) and does not receive any funding. We may try to find funding for this project in the future.

It has been reviewed by the College of Science and Engineering Research Ethics Committee.

This research has **NO** connection with the police or the UK Home Office.

Can I take part?

We think that **anyone who has been along to the BIG THURSDAYS Drop-In** has something to say about the work of Bridging the Gap, challenges for the organization, and challenges for people living in the area, and issues about community inclusion more widely.

We welcome everyone to take part.

Please share this leaflet with people you know who might be interested.

Do I have to take part?

It is **completely voluntary**. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time, and do not have to give a reason.

If you decide not to take part this will not affect relationships with the researcher or people at Bridging the Gap - you can still attend the Drop-In without information being used for research purposes.

What will happen if I take part?

Drop In: You can keep coming to BIG THURSDAYS (10.30am – 2.30pm weekly in term time). Kye will be here as a volunteer, and chatting with people from time to time to ask what they think. You will be asked if you want to be interviewed informally, or take part in a photographic project, or keep a diary about any of the things you think are important. You can choose to do any, all or none of these things.

Informal interviews: You will be invited to have a one-to-one conversation, to talk in depth about the issues you think are central. This can be in a quiet room at the Drop-In, or at another time and place that you prefer.

Photography: Together with Magda, who is doing a photography project at the Drop-In (already advertised), you will be asked individually or in small groups to talk about your experiences at BIG while looking at some of the photographs already taken, and how they relate to your life in Glasgow.

Diaries: You can also keep a diary, however you like (with words, drawing, photographs you take yourself), and talk about this diary with Kye when you feel ready to.

Appendix B:

Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Bridging the Gap: building social capacities across Glasgow

Collaborative Research Project

My name is Kye Askins. I work at the University of Glasgow, and I volunteer at the BIG Thursdays Drop-In run by Bridging the Gap. I am doing some research, together with Bridging the Gap, to find out how people are supported with individual needs, as well as how the Drop-In may help to develop better social relations between people in Glasgow.

We are interested in hearing your opinion:

- What are the good things about BIG Thursdays – what works for you?
- What needs to be done that is not being done?
- What can be done differently to make the service better?
- What are the main challenges for people living in and around the Gorbals?

This research project wants to hear from anyone who has attended the BIG Thursdays Drop-In service, in any capacity. We welcome all opinions.

1. What will taking part in the research involve?

You can take part in the research in several ways.

Informal interviews: You will be invited to have a one-to-one conversation with me, to talk in detail about the issues you think are important. This can be in a quiet room at the Drop-In, or at another time and place that you prefer.

Photography: Together with Magda, who is doing a photography project at the Drop-In (already advertised), you will be asked individually or in small groups to talk about your experiences at BtG while looking at some of the photographs already taken, and how they relate to your life in Glasgow.

Diaries: You can also keep a diary, however you like (with words, drawing, photographs you take yourself), and talk about this diary with me when you feel ready to.

To be able to analyse all the information, I will record the things you say in various ways. Where possible – and only with your agreement - I will tape record conversations so that I can remember what has been said more accurately. Otherwise, I will make written notes during conversations. All recordings and notes made during the interview will be kept in a password protected computer/locked room.

I will ask permission to take photographs of the diaries as a record. If you do not want me to do this, I will make some descriptive notes of the content.

2. Do I have to take part?

Please ask any questions you might have about this research before deciding whether or not to take part. You are free to choose whether you would like to participate. If you do agree, and then later change your mind, you may withdraw yourself and your data from the study without questions at any time. If you are happy to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

3. What happens to the research data provided?

The raw research data – recordings of interviews, conversations and so on - will be typed up into Word Documents on computer. This information can then be analysed to produce a report, which will be circulated to Bridging the Gap and other relevant organisations in Glasgow, and across Scotland where appropriate.

You will also be offered a copy of this report in paper copy, and it will be freely available via the University of Glasgow website.

I will make sure that all the information is kept anonymised. This means that I will not use your real name, or other details about you that could identify you – unless you expressly tell me that you want your own name to be used.

4. Who has reviewed this project?

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Glasgow Research Ethics Committee. This project has also been agreed by Tricia McConalogue, Director of Bridging the Gap.

5. Contact details

Kye Askins, School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow

Kye.Askins@glasgow.ac.uk

0141 330 2289

Appendix C:

Consent Form



Consent form

Bridging the Gap: building social capacities across Glasgow

Collaborative Research Project

- I have read and understood the information sheet.
- I would like to take part in the research project described on the information sheet.
- All information I disclose may be used in the research unless otherwise stated.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the research, without penalty, at any time
- I give permission for a tape recorder to be used, knowing that all recordings will be kept safe and secure.

Signed.....

Print Name.....

Date.....

Contact email/telephone.....