



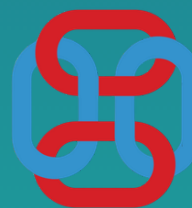
Chain Lane - Evidencing Strengths- Based Community Led Social Action

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Chain Lane
Community
Hub

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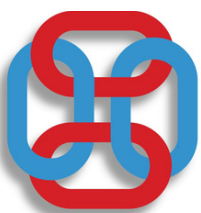
Executive Summary

This report presents an analysis of Chain Lane Community Hub's ways of working, examining whether and how they support and grow community capacity, agency and voice.

This research acts as a small-scale pilot study which offers insights into the work of Chain Lane and the value it brings to residents and the wider public services system in North Yorkshire. It is one of six VCFS demonstrator project reports which will form a comparative report, widening the evidence base and learning to a diverse set of VCFS organisations.

The research team worked in partnership with North Yorkshire Council's Localities Team who introduced Chain Lane as an example of a community anchor organisation; working with local people to build community capacity and resources.

The research was undertaken between October 2025 and January 2026 and included a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Working co-productively with Chain Lane, the research team sought to understand the impact of their way of working and the outcomes and impacts identifiable at individual, community and public services system levels. The findings are based on the perspectives of community stakeholders, the management at Chain Lane and individuals who received support.



**Chain Lane
Community
Hub**

Key Findings

The report identified four overarching themes, the key findings and learning from these are summarised below.

Motivations for participation

- While residents often initially engage with specific purposes, the way Chain Lane works with local residents uncovers and addresses deeper underlying challenges through a culture of openness, honesty and mutual respect.
- Working in a person-centred approach, Chain Lane aligns with individuals' values, enabling them to work preventatively and appropriately with individual needs.
- 'Being there' for people and going 'above and beyond' provides a safety net that builds individuals' confidence and resilience. Meeting people where they are at ensures they feel empowered to seek help when needed.
- Chain Lane was viewed as a locally embedded asset independent from local authority priorities. This perceived neutrality allows them to be responsive to community needs and foster collaboration amongst stakeholders in service of the community.

Outcomes and impact

At the individual level

- Residents gain practical abilities to deal with specific issues they face whilst developing an understanding of other resources available. This builds their knowledge of how to navigate the system independently or with low levels of support.

- Person-centred support leads to increased self-esteem and feeling of being listened to and seen. These underpin more concrete impacts such as improved confidence and being more socially connected.
- By providing practical help (e.g. Community Transport project) and filling service gaps, Chain Lane enables social engagement and access to services (e.g. hospital appointments) that would otherwise be difficult to attend. In doing so, they are also able to limit serious crisis escalation.
- By acting as a bridge or connector to a wide variety of support/services, Chain Lane enables individuals to access early help and reduce risks of crisis.
- Through their person-centred way of working and advocacy, Chain Lane improves efficiency of the wider system by directing individuals to appropriate channels, limiting crisis escalation. This is recognised by stakeholders who trust Chain Lane's judgement on when intervention is needed from third parties.
- Chain Lane plays a unique role, acting as a buffer, and translator and connector between community need and the public services the system, communicating needs up and down the system to bridge gaps in understanding and connecting services to community.

At the community level

- Chain Lane acts as a catalyst for community resourcefulness, enabling residents to become active citizens, strengthening overall capacity and skills. This grows connections and reciprocity between community members.
- By building community connections, Chain Lane creates opportunities for peer-to-peer support, building resources in place..
- Chain Lane serves as a central hub that encourages collaboration among various community organisations. It also acts as a mediator that improves and fosters better relationships between local residents and local authority services.

At service system level

- Chain Lane acts as a link for residents who have found difficulties accessing services due to a lack of know-how or frustration. By advocating on their behalf, Chain Lane enables access to essential services that residents were unable to reach otherwise and in turn reduce the risks of residents falling into greater crisis and requiring more intensive and expensive support.

Policy Recommendations

Prioritise person-centred approaches that offer a continual, non-time-limited presence for the individual.

Person-centred approaches allows organisations to act as a continual presence that meets residents where they are at rather than being guided by resources or funding timeframes. This way of working uncovers underlying challenges that can be addressed, building vital safety nets that build on individuals' confidence and resilience, limiting crisis escalation and system dependency.

Invest in place-based community anchor models that serve as locally embedded assets.

Chain Lane demonstrates the value of being a locally embedded asset that remains independent of top-down priorities. Their physical presence within the community is experienced as a trusted resource and facilitates collaboration. Similarly, they are able to mobilise rapidly when necessary and act as a vital link between public services and communities.

Recognise the role of community organisations as connectors and enablers of local collaboration.

Rather than solely acting as service providers, they connect diverse groups with unique talents and knowledge already present within their communities. This means actions are led by community-driven values, preventing duplication of efforts; building trust and collaboration locally. By acknowledging and supporting this role, policymakers can help to build a more resilient network.

Funding frameworks should aim to support core operational work and long-term organisational capacity.

To enable the preventative and responsive work seen at Chain Lane, funding should focus on core costs rather than time or output specific projects. This flexible core investment allows organisations to move beyond being a buffer and act as a mediator as well as enabling them to focus on working in a strengths-based manner.

System partner relationships should be equitable, two-way relationships between the VCFS and public services.

Relationships should build on the expertise of community embedded insight that translates needs and priorities of the community to the system to bridge gaps in understanding.

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Introduction and Background

This research was part of the UKRI/ESRC funded Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP) as part of the Communities in their Places programme of community demonstrators research.

This phase of YPIP is designed to work in partnership with place-based Voluntary Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) organisations. The research enables VCFS organisations to develop more effective evidence capture tools which are better suited to demonstrating the impact of strengths based community action. The research has co-developed tools which have been applied by the partner organisations, and conducted research data gathering to supplement and provide lived experience insights into understanding and evidencing the ways in which they work in a community-led or community-partnered manner. This research forms part of six VCFS demonstrator projects which will be summarised in a publicly available report later in 2026. The research team partnered with North Yorkshire Council's Localities Team who introduced Chain Lane as an example of a community anchor organisation; working with local people to build community capacity, resources and voice.

About Chain Lane

Chain Lane Community Hub is a small local charity in Knaresborough. They became an important local resource when a flash flood hit an area of the town not usually affected by flood waters. They mobilised local volunteers to door knock, organised emergency service

support in their building and supported people in the community, becoming a key trusted resource. This work was recognised by North Yorkshire Council and shaped their anchor organisations policy approaches. They have taken on the local plan, working closely with the community to support vulnerable people and building resilience. They are also part of SWIFT, a programme in North Yorkshire that aims to improve access to services and empower migrants by addressing the gaps in existing support systems.

Chain Lane became an organisation in 2010 (and registered as a charity in 2013), where they identified Knaresborough as having community groups and support but without much local infrastructure. At this point in time, VCFS support for the town was led from Harrogate with little presence in Knaresborough itself. In 2015, their current premises were built and Chain Lane spent the next five years prioritising servicing the loan by letting rooms. It was only when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and they housed the mass vaccination centre that they were financially resilient enough to be able to focus on community development.

“

At the time of starting, Knaresborough had some of the weakest community sector infrastructure in the county' (NY3105).

”

Now, Chain Lane acts as a trusted resource in Knaresborough for the community, other organisations and local authority services. Their work is focused on meeting community needs through collaborative efforts.

About the research aims and methods

The researchers spent time listening to Chain Lane's workers to better understand their values, activities, and the community they serve. These conversations shaped the focus and design of the research into this co-designed pilot study. The research approach draws on Participatory Action Research Methodology which embeds working with research stakeholders to produce outputs that are defined by and valuable to all stakeholders. The consequent research is co-designed and co-owned with the legacy evidence tools being left in place for Chain Lane to utilise and adapt for future needs.

The research design draws on the team's strengths-based evidence approach (Burchell et al. 2026; Cook et al., 2024a) in order to capture outcomes and impacts at individual, community and service system levels.

Methods undertaken include:

- Primary data gathering through six interviews with people engaged with Chain Lane, (who were compensated for their time and contribution with vouchers), a focus group with public sector service teams and VCFS stakeholders and interviews with the Chain Lane team.
- Bespoke adaptation of the teams' process data gathering tools to design robust and easy to complete tools for two programmes Community Transport and Ageing Well.
- Bespoke design of the research teams' Participant Journey Template to gather qualitative evidence data capturing individual context, nature of support and relationships building, outcomes and impacts.
- Analysis of the two above secondary data sources.

The process statistics enable Chain Lane to gather the essential statistical data on their activities. While the participant journey templates provide data to produce both individual case studies and enable comparison across individuals and impact of community engagement/capacity building.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter One presents the analysis of the process data from two of Chain Lane's programmes; Ageing Well and Community Transport. Chapters Two and Three present the in-depth experiences of six residents who have been supported by Chain Lane. With Chapter Two examining their personal context journeys and Chapter Three detailing the nature of support received. Chapter Four notes perceived outcomes and impacts from Chain Lane's strengths-based approach. Finally, Chapter Five summarises key learning from both data sources and reflects on the usefulness of being able to capture evidence in this way; including the learning this offers for policymakers and practitioners seeking to build strengths-based community action.

In reading this report it is key to situate the findings as a small-scale pilot study which offers insights into the work of Chain Lane and the value it brings to residents and the wider public services system in North Yorkshire. The comparative report across the six demonstrators (forthcoming 2026) widens the evidence base and learning to a diverse set of VCFS organisations, with the comparative data findings being attributable to a larger sample of individuals and communities. Therefore, providing robust policy learning. Important to note is that while this report includes a small sample of participants, the wider verification of findings is supported by shared experience of strengths-based working across multiple studies carried out by this team in related projects (see Cook et al., 2024b, Burchell et al., 2026, Cook et al., 2023 and Thiery et al., 2023).

Chapter 1 – Process Data Analysis of Ageing Well and Community Transport

Ageing Well

Utilising the process data capture tool, Chain Lane retroactively transferred 430 cases from their previous database into this new version. These cases dated over 6 months between 3/6/25 to 21/12/25. The aim of this new tool is to offer a rich understanding of activities, support accessed and the resulting impact. The data spreadsheet captured 430 cases, or engagements with residents in Knaresborough. However, due to new categories of data collection and retroactive input, not all categories were completed (e.g. whether there were specific underlying issues that residents were facing beyond the purpose of the visit). Further, whilst the new quantitative capture tool allows for multiple outcomes and impacts to be inputted, this option was not used frequently enough to demonstrate the multiple outcomes.

Analysis of this data is discussed below under the following headings: reasons for engagement, forms of support and the outcomes and impacts. Further, it is able to understand what support led to which outcomes and how these impacted individuals.

Coming into Chain Lane and purpose of seeking help

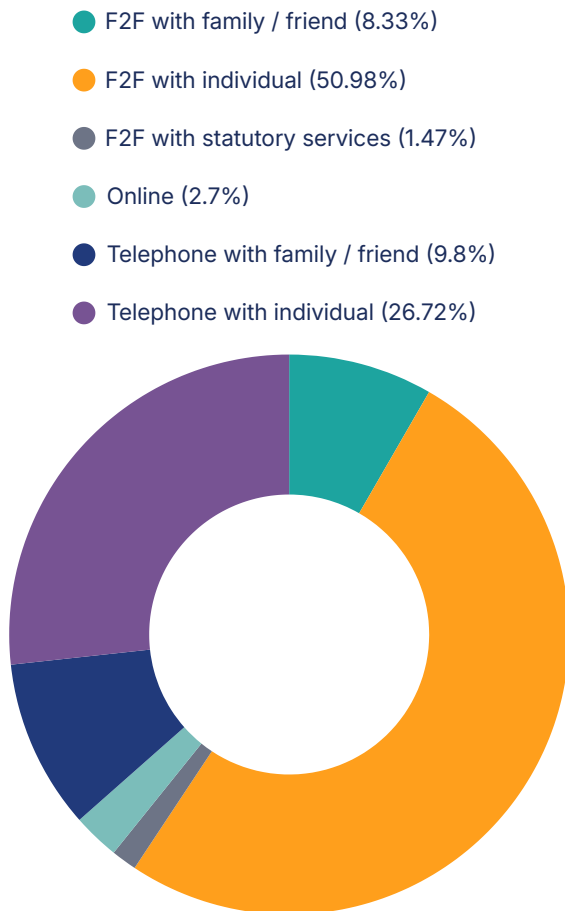
The most common forms were direct engagements with individuals rather than

third parties such as family or statutory services.

Over half of engagements took place face to face with individuals (51%) and over a quarter were over the telephone with individuals (27%). Over a quarter of engagements (29%) were seen to be for specific purposes. The most common of these specific purposes was reassurance/support in over a third of cases (34%). The second two most common purposes for engagement was with support for local authority issues: support in obtaining a blue badge (34%); and support with acquiring attendance allowance (28%). This highlights that people engage with Chain Lane for both specific and more general support within the community. Further it demonstrates that residents are likely to seek support with local authority issues from Chain Lane. The graph below represents the forms of engagement that residents had with Chain Lane.

Receiving support

Support given was recorded for 149 engagements (due to data retrofitting). These were primarily direct support provided by Chain Lane with only 1% signposting to other services. The most frequent supports were advice/information (56%), support with applications (23%) and connecting into other activities/opportunities at Chain Lane (17%).

Figure 1: Method of Contact

Comparing these cases where a specific form of support was given with method of contact in Figure 1, we see that the half of engagements that recorded support received were done face to face with individuals (51%), over a quarter over the phone with individuals (27%) and a tenth were achieved through phone contact with family/friends of individuals (10%). The final 12% were a combination of face to face with family and friends (8%), online (3%) and working with statutory services directly (1%).

The bulk of support is provided on an in-person face to face basis. For example, advice and information (58%), connecting into other services (64%), Support with applications (77%) and signposting to other services (100%).

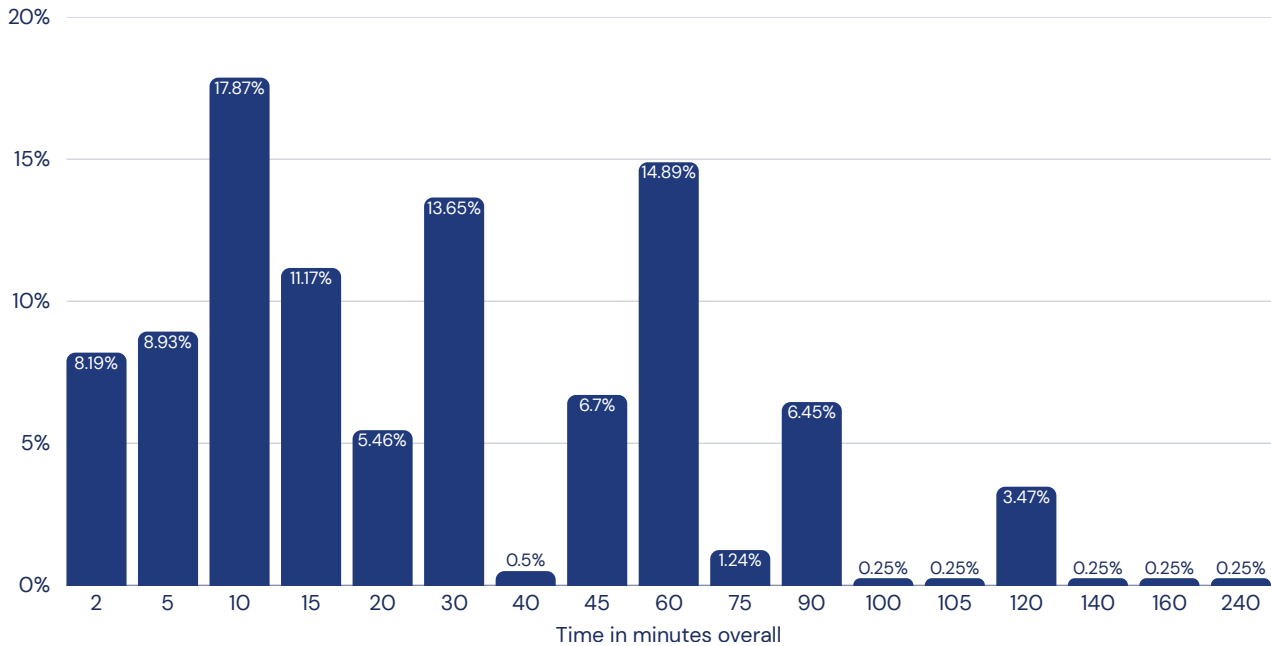
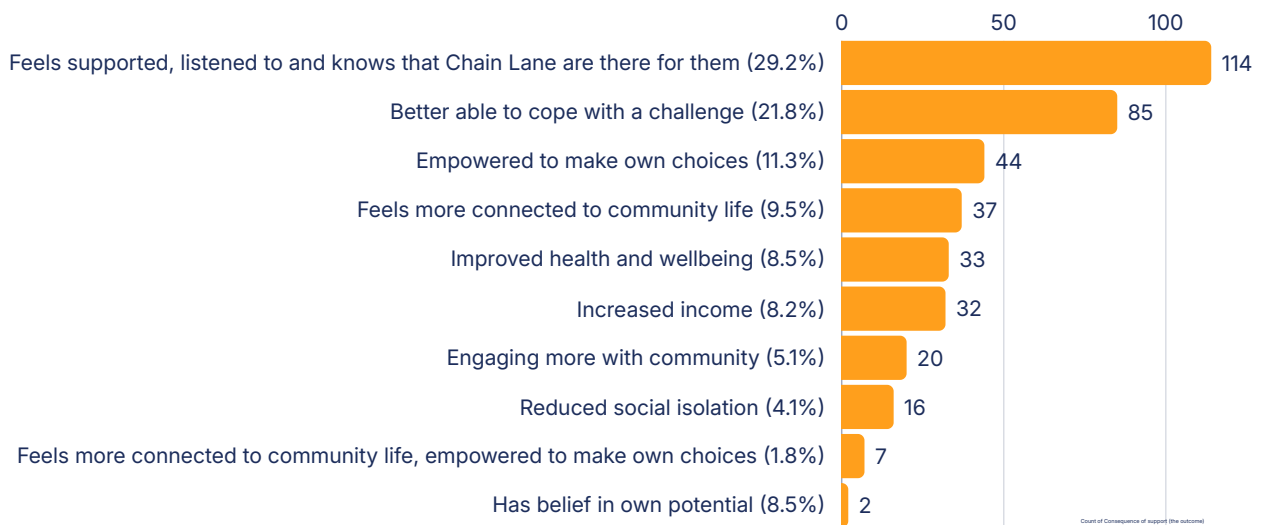
Where support took place over the phone, a third were where participants needed to be listened to (33%), a quarter were to be connected into other Chain Lane services and support (24%). They also supported people with advice (16%) and applications (14%). Referrals to specific support were made in 25 cases (17%). These were primarily for internal support including CLICK digital support (68%) and Forever Young project (8%).

Engagements with individuals ranged in length from 2 - 160 minutes, demonstrating the breadth of time required for individual needs. The most common lengths of time recorded were 10 minutes (18%), 60 minutes (15%) and 30 minutes (14%). This is displayed in intervals in the chart below which shows engagements lasted 10-15 minutes or 60-75 minutes most frequently. This is displayed in Figure 2.

Forms of support that frequently took longer were listening to residents (33% took 30 minutes), support with applications (31% took 30 minutes) and advice/information meetings (23% took 60 minutes). More generally, support with applications frequently required longer engagements (17% took 60 minutes and 14% took 45 minutes). This highlights the level of support residents require with advice and support in applications.

Outcomes and impacts of support

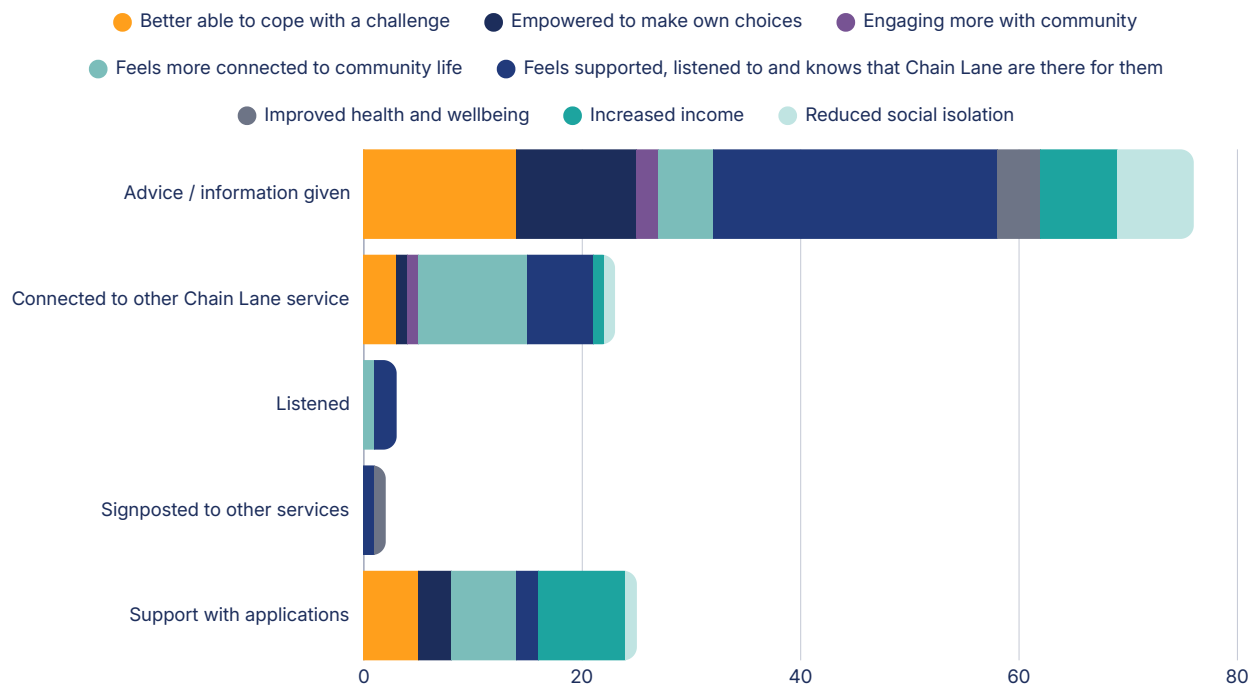
In 390 engagements, outcomes of engaging with Chain Lane were reported. Almost a third of engagements led to residents feeling supported, listened to and having the knowledge that Chain Lane is there if they need them (29%). The second most common outcome was that residents were better able to cope with challenges they faced in their lives (22%).

Figure 2: Time spent with resident in increments**Figure 3: Primary outcomes by cases**

The third most common outcome was that residents were empowered to make their own choices (11%). This is displayed in Figure 3.

Comparing outcomes of support and the type of support given, we see that gaining a deeper understanding of resident needs leads to residents building resilience. Feeling supported, listened to and knowing that Chain Lane is there if needed is seen as a substantial outcome across listening (67%),

being signposted to other services (50%), advice/information (34%) and being connected to other Chain Lane services (26%). Residents being able to cope with challenges they face in their lives was seen frequently in support with applications (20%), advice/information (18%) and being connected to other Chain Lane services (13%). These proportions can be seen in Figure 4.

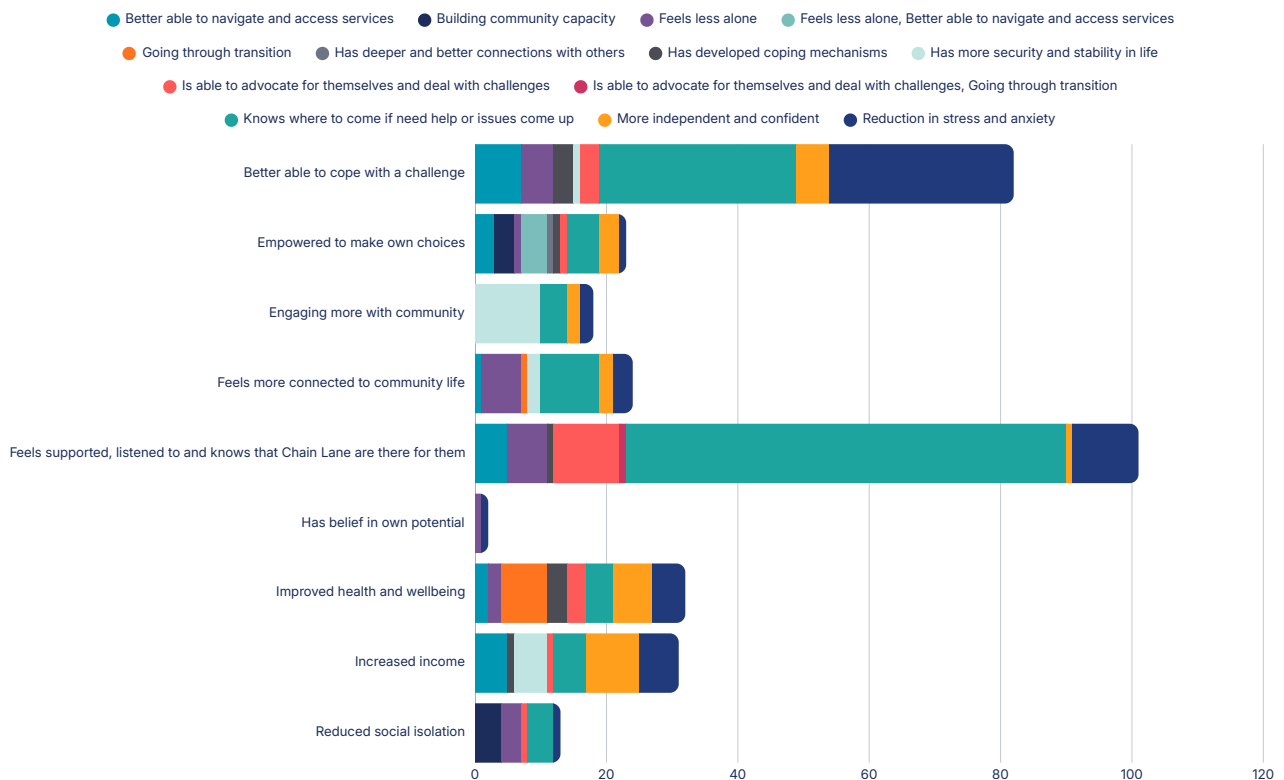
Figure 4: Types of support given and the outcome

Comparing the outcomes of the most frequent short and long engagement times (10 minutes and 60 minutes) shows how longer engagements led to more socially engaged residents. Shorter engagements resulted in improved health and wellbeing cases (36%), a reduction in social isolation (31%) and increased income (22%). Longer engagements resulted in residents engaging more with the community (20%), a reduction in social isolation (19%) and feeling supported, listened to and knows that Chain Lane is there for them (18%).

The research team also compared outcomes to face-to-face and phone contact to see whether there was a substantial difference. Altogether this consisted of 278 cases, 64% of which were face-to-face interactions and 36% via phone. The three topmost outcomes from face-to-face engagement were feeling supported and listened to, knowing Chain Lane was there for them (25%), feeling empowered to make their own choices (16%) and feeling more connected to community life (15%).

The three topmost outcomes from telephone engagement were feeling supported and listened to, knowing that Chain Lane was there for them (40%), better able to cope with a challenge (15%) and increased income through application support (11%).

The research team also looked at the impact the actions of Chain Lane had on residents. Overall, there were 327 cases where an impact of engagement was identified from engagement. The most frequently identified impacts of engagement were knowing where to go if they need help or issues arise (39%), a reduction in stress and anxiety (17%) and feeling more independent and confident to tackle issues (8%). The breakdown of primary impacts from outcomes can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The outcomes of support and the wider impact this has made

Comparing outcomes of engagement against impacts, it highlights individuals feeling able to deal with issues by having an understanding of available resources for the future. Feeling supported, listened to and knowing that Chain Lane was there for them led most frequently to an understanding of where to go if they experience issues or need help (66%).

Residents being better able to cope with challenges led to residents knowing where to go if they experience issues or need help (37%) and a reduction in stress and anxiety (34%). However, feeling empowered to make their own choices led to more varied impacts, demonstrating how the person-centred support is non-linear. The two most frequent impacts for being empowered to make their own choices were knowing where to go if they experience issues or need help (22%) and a combination of feeling less alone and better able to navigate and access services (17%).

Altogether, the Ageing Well data evidences that Chain Lane are trusted by their community for a wide range of issues, including those related to the local authority. Whilst a majority of people attend in person, those who do engage via telephone gain equal levels of support that leads to them feeling heard and fosters trust that Chain Lane will be there for them. The wide range of time spent with individuals highlights their approach of person-centred support, ensuring that residents are properly supported. Being listened to as a key purpose of engagement shows the trust that Chain Lane has in the community. This is also reflected in the high numbers of residents who seek support for applications and the long lengths of average time spent on these by Chain Lane further demonstrates the care and attention they pay to individuals. Further, those longer engagements were identified to lead to more socially engaged residents.

Primary impacts being that residents know Chain Lane is there if needed and being able to better cope with challenges adds to an understanding of Chain Lane working in a person-centred way, rather than doing things for people, fostering resilience and independence.

Community Transport

Chain Lane retroactively transferred 255 cases from the ten-month period between 2/1/25 and 10/10/25 into the new data capture tools. The aim was to better understand the impact that Chain Lane's Community Transport programme had on residents: what it enabled them to achieve, and the impact on residents if the transport was not available. The findings indicate that the community transport programme is particularly critical for enabling access to both formal (e.g., healthcare) and informal community life, with high proportions of individuals indicating they would otherwise be unable to access services, socialise or engage in community activities. The findings are presented under the three themes of (i) pickup location, destination, and the purpose of journeys; (ii) impact of the community transport on the individual; and (iii) unsuccessful journeys.

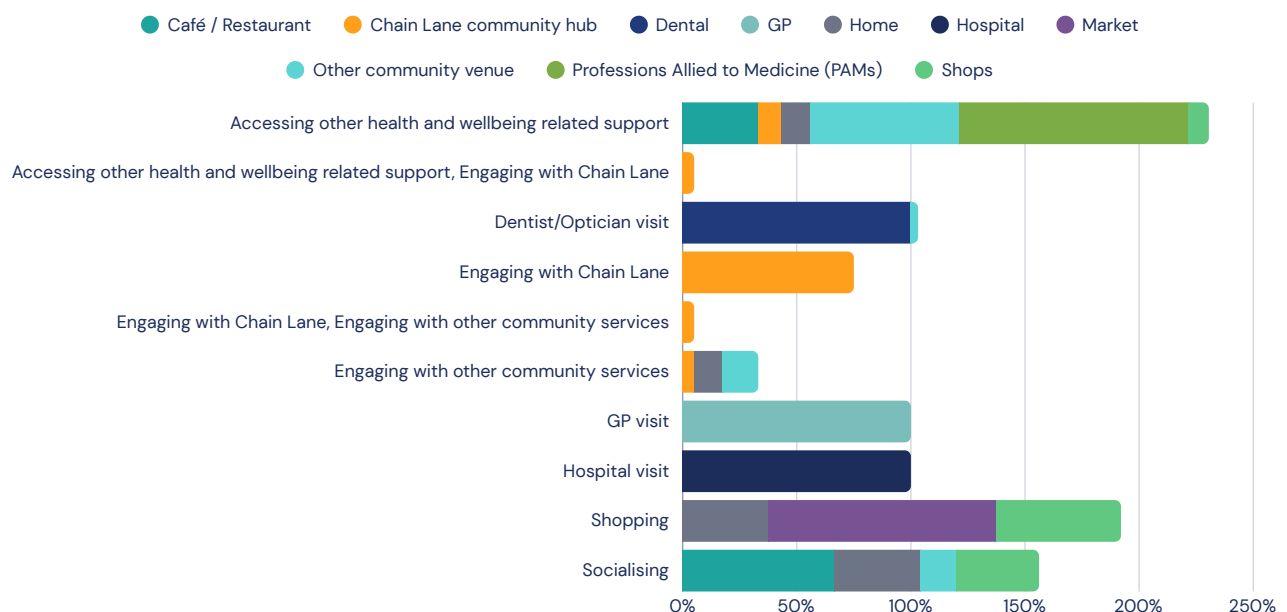
Pick up location, destination and purpose of journeys

Almost all individuals were picked up from home (91%). The rest of the pick ups are from a variety of locations such as shops, market, hospital and cafe, and community venues which is the second most common pick up location (2%).

For those picked up from home, the most frequent destinations were the hospital (26%), other community venues (23%), Chain Lane (17%), GP (12%), and markets (10%).

Residents reported a variety of purposes for using community transport to reach these destinations. Among those using the transport to attend community venues other than Chain Lane, 66% made these journeys for health and wellbeing reasons, while 16% did so for socialising and 16% for accessing community support services. The breakdown of reasons for visits can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Destination and purpose of journeys



Community transport was used for a wide range of distances, with most journeys being 10 miles or under. The most frequent journey lengths were 1-2 miles (33%), 4-6 miles (26%), and 8-10 miles (22%). Notably, journey length varied by type of destination, with some places tending to require longer journeys than others. Visiting markets, shops, and cafe/restaurants involved comparatively long journeys, with most trips to a market covering 8-10 miles (92%). By contrast, community transport to health-related services required shorter journeys; most strikingly, all visits to professions allied to medicine constituted brief journeys of 1-2 miles (100%).

Most individuals who used community transport had a return trip (86%) but this frequency varied by destination. Around three quarters used the transport service to return home (73%) and just under a quarter used a return trip for hospital visits (24%). However, individuals who made use of the transport service for dental, market, and health-related visits only made use of the service for outbound journeys.

Among those who visited other community venues, 22% used community transport support for their return trip.

Distance did not appear to affect whether a return journey was used.

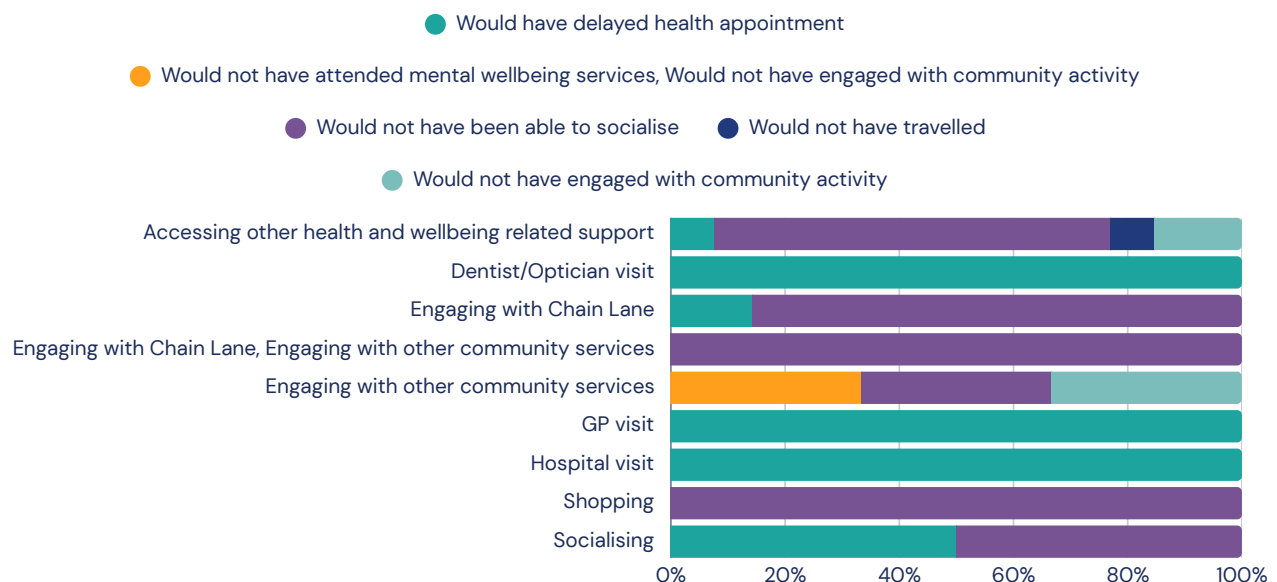
Impact of community transport on the individual

The reasons for booked journeys and descriptions of what would have happened if transport had not occurred were provided in a small proportion of cases (42 cases out of the 255). For the two most frequent reasons for journey (i.e., hospital and GP visits), individuals said they relied heavily on the transport services.

In all of these cases, participants reported that the absence of the transport service would have resulted in delayed health appointments, suggesting the transport services significantly impact their ability to access essential healthcare services.

Further, 70% of individuals reported they would not have socialised and 16% that they would not have engaged with community activities had they not had access to the community transport. Similarly, among those engaging with Chain Lane, 86% of them reportedly would not have been able to socialise without the provision of the transport service. Please see Figure 7.

Figure 7: Impact of community transport and what would have happened without it



Unsuccessful journeys

The findings reveal that out of the 255 total cases, only 53% of individuals successfully completed their booked journey. Of the journeys cancelled, the majority (80%) were home pick ups and 26% (66 cases) were caused by a lack of drivers. In addition, 21% of journeys were not completed due to other factors, including weather and cancellation by individuals.

Among booked journeys cancelled due to lack of a driver, residents' most common intentions were to visit the GP (20%) or a hospital (19%) and to access other health and wellbeing related support (17%). In terms of destination, the most frequently cancelled trips were those booked for the GP (20%), Chain Lane (14%) and other community venues (22%). Please see Figure 8.

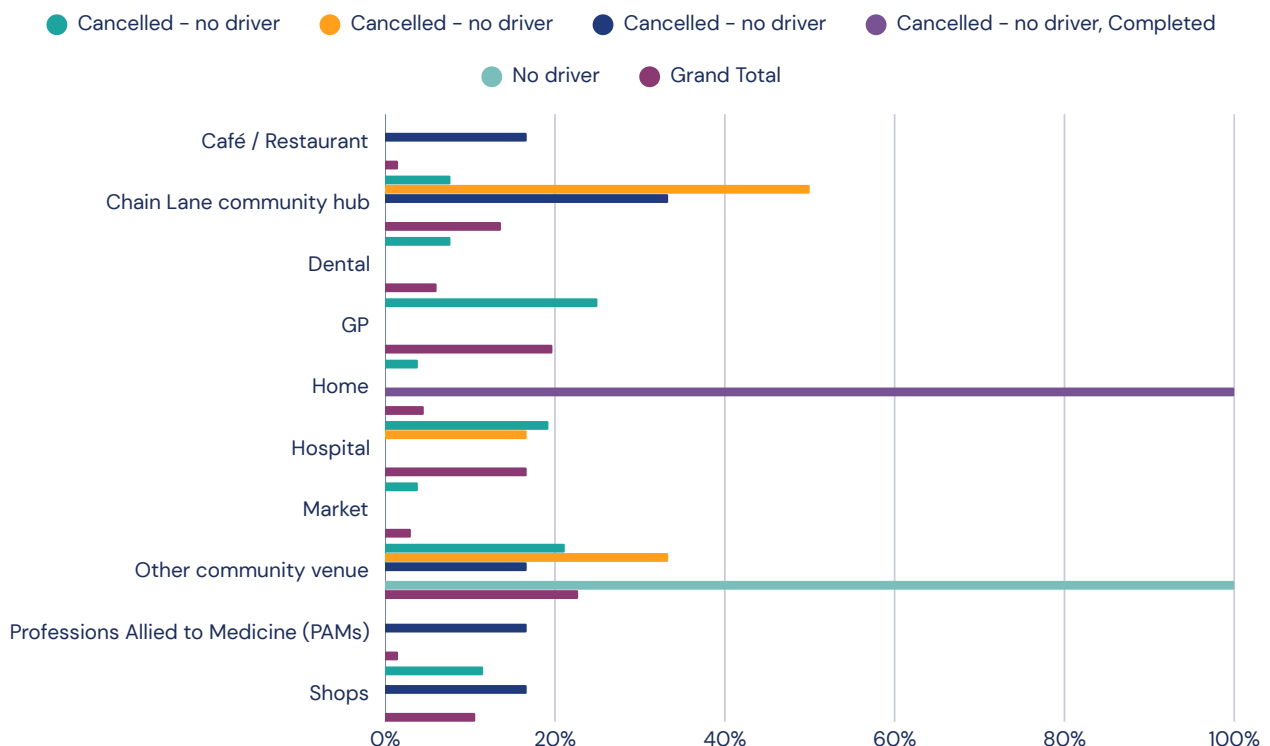
There is no correlation between longer journeys and cancellations by driver. The highest proportion of cancellations occurred for journeys of 1-2 miles (48%) followed by journeys between 5-6 miles (26%) and 8-10 miles (15%).

In contrast, short journeys (0-1 mile) and mid-range journeys (2-4 miles) and long-distance journeys 10-20 miles were cancelled less often.

These findings show that journeys with mid-range distances were the most often cancelled, while the shortest and longest trips were mostly completed. A high number of short journey cancellations may reflect comparatively high demand for shorter distance travel with the transport service.

Overall, these findings suggest that Chain Lane community transport is a highly valued service. It was used primarily for trips from residents' homes to health centres, markets and community venues. Individuals reported heavy reliance on community transport for attending the GP or hospital, explaining that without the service they are likely to have delayed their appointments. Many also said they would not have attended social events or engaged with community activities without the transport service.

Figure 8: Cancelled journeys to different key locations due to no driver



In these ways, the service seems to play a key role in enabling these residents' access to health and wellbeing support.

Importantly, these health-related visits and trips to community centres were generally the shortest journeys (although GP trips were more varied). Residents not being able to access these nearby locations without community transport suggests that the service enables those with limited ability to travel short distances for wellbeing support.

However, not all planned trips were completed: around half of booked transport was cancelled, most often from residents' homes.

Reasons included a lack of drivers, which mostly affected journeys booked for GPs, hospitals and other wellbeing support. Cancellations for any reason affected trips to some of the most common destinations, including the GP, Chain Lane and other community venues.

Lastly, journeys with mid-range distances were most affected by limited driver availability, while the shortest and longest trips tended to be completed.

This data highlights that Community Transport as an offering is a vital resource that enables individuals to access healthcare, socialise and take part in community activities. The varied distances that people use the support for demonstrates the gap that Chain Lane fill with this provision, particularly in accessing environments for socialisation and community engagement.

The understood impact of what may have happened had support not being in place highlights the potential impact if Chain Lane were unable to fulfill this function. Following this, where drivers were unavailable, the data does not show this as a result of a lack of willingness to drive longer distances.

The resources that are required to meet the needs of all Community Transport users would need building upon to ensure continued support.



Chapter 2 – Personal Values, Life Context and Personal Journey

This chapter discusses findings on the individual context of those receiving support from Chain Lane, the data is drawn from the six interviews with participants conducted by the research team. Participants described their lives before coming into contact with Chain Lane, sharing important life events that contextualise their current circumstances such as internal migration, environmental flooding and health challenges.

Experiencing sudden and traumatic events or important changes in life circumstances (discussed by n=6/6 participants)

All six participants described the impact of significant changes which they felt had seriously impacted their lives and shaped many of the challenges they were facing. Many (n=5) had experienced more than one significant or traumatic event. These experiences cluster around: i) a sudden change in financial circumstances (n=4), ii) personal bereavement (n=1), iii) a change in health (n=3) and iv) emergency flooding (n=4). In many of these examples they shared how this led to a chain of events that had resulted in significant challenges for them and reflected on how this affected other issues in their lives.

Sudden change in financial circumstances (discussed by n=4/6 participants)

Participants described changes to their financial circumstances. Whilst all were related to a change in employment

For example, (NY1I06) was forced into early retirement to look after her husband who had had a stroke and also needed to support her daughter who had autism. NY1I03 and NY1I02 were both made redundant and NY104 had left work due to ill health. These changes in life circumstances resulted in other events having more severe effects as well as a loss of self-esteem, purpose and personal connections.

So last year, I lost my job... through redundancy... and I was just getting my head around that and then my house flooded. I lost my car as well... the whole thing cost me a lot of money (NY1I03).

Things became very stressful as they cut back on the staff in the late 90s and introduced things like beepers...mobile phones and then it became almost impossible... Got too much and I had a mini breakdown... (NY1I04).

Change in health (discussed by n=3/6 participants)

The majority of participants dealing with financial difficulties sat alongside important were also managing changes in their physical and mental health which exacerbated, exacerbating an already challenging situation.

For example, in 2024, NY1I06 had major surgery which left her unable to undertake her husband and daughter's care. She discussed how these factors compounded and left her socially isolated.

it took a bit of recovering from [surgery]... it was quite difficult. But I probably shouldn't have been doing some of the things I was then doing... which then clipped my wings, because I did not like leaving [my husband] (NY1I06).

NY1Y04 had experienced both changes in his physical and mental health. When working life got too intense, he suffered a breakdown which left him unable to work for a number of years. When he did return to work, he felt like it made a positive impact on his mental health. Whereas NY1I03 ADHD and PTSD diagnoses left him struggling to navigate life. He has also struggled with adjusting to life outside of the army and felt let down by specialist forces services support. This left him socially isolated and feeling that others couldn't understand the difficulties he had faced.

They're finding it very difficult to treat people with combat PTSD, because people have got anxiety about wars and stuff like that, but then at the same time... they're anxious about putting food on the table, roof over their heads (NY1I03).

Bereavement (discussed by n=1/6 participant)

There was only one participant who had experienced bereavement and she had lost her husband. This loss was accompanied by feelings of isolation and a loss of identity especially since she had been his lifelong career due to his Hodgkinsons. The combination of moving to North Yorkshire in retirement and becoming a widow NY1I01 socially isolated.

I mean we were sort of velcroed to one another because of his very dodgy health. I mean he was never 100% anyway so I kind of missed out on friendship and that sort of thing so I'm taking a plunge that's good (NY1I01).

Flooding (discussed by n=4/6 participants)

In 2024, a flash flood occurred in Knaresborough that was described by the local authority as a 'once in 516 year event' and affected most of the participants. The effects they discussed impacted on their mental health through stress and financial burden. This new layer of pressure exacerbated existing problems.

For example, NY1I03's mental health and financial issues were worsened by the flood, through losing his car he couldn't visit his two children, his house needed extensive renovations and the council offered accommodation unsuitable for his kids. He felt like there was no support from the local authority which compounded these stresses.

So they [council] immediately put me in a hotel... and I'm like 'I can't live in a hotel because I have custody of my children'... when they were looking for temporary accommodation, they were looking for single accommodation,... my mental health... my job and my car stopped me from being able to pick my kids up (NY1I03).

NY1I04 and NY1I05, a married couple who live together, also struggled with the flood. They found that their insurance provider and support services were unsupportive of their needs. This meant that as a couple in their 80s they were forced to move around repeatedly in a short period.

Living with long term mental health challenges (discussed by n=2/6 participants)

Two participants discussed living with some form of mental health challenge and discussed how poor mental health had placed restrictions on what they were able to do as well as how daily challenges could affect their mental health.

NY1I03 described the issues he faced struggling with society after leaving the army. He compared how his experiences during his service left him feeling like he didn't fit in with other people.

You talk about the lives lost. It's not just that, it's the people who remained out there. And the people who've lost relationships, divorces and all that, like me, I got divorced. I really struggled to communicate some of my struggles with war. And that's the price I've had to pay (NY1I03).

NY1I05 suffers from debilitating anxiety which affects her ability to leave the house. When she does leave the house it is only for very small windows of time and she struggles to move at anything other than a slow pace. This leads her to being isolated in the community, only leaving with the support of her family, reducing her independence. She has concerns that the medication that she has been prescribed for her anxiety is not helping with her issues.

... I'm just trying to ween myself off some [anxiety] tablets at the moment because I didn't think they were doing me much good... to begin with, I couldn't go out (NY1I05)

Personal values goals and strengths (discussed by n=6/6 participants)

When discussing their personal journeys, all participants reflected on the research team's questions around what was important to them and their values and strengths. For example, NY1I06 took pride in her ability to be practical, even in very difficult circumstances. She discussed how she felt strong and capable, able to bear burdens of her own and others. However, she also understood that it made it difficult for others to help when she was stoic.

I don't think I'm the easiest person to help... I never thought I needed it. I'm a nurse, I can cope with a stroke, I can ask for help if we need it and we've muddled along. We've done okay and we make the best of what we've got (NY1I06).

NY1I02 saw his ability to translate complex issues to wider audiences as a key skill of his. Coming from his time as a manager, he saw leadership involving connecting with others and effective communication as a good quality in himself.

I was good at breaking down obstacles, persuading people, council, councillors, their elected members, always concerned with what the public might think and money and this and the other (NY1I02).

NY1I03 held strong principles and felt it was important to live up to his values and lead by example. His time in the military gave him a deep level of compassion for veterans and he felt they were undervalued in society, neither adequately respected nor provided with appropriate support.

NY1I01 was proud of her inquisitive nature and how she looked for self fulfilment through self development. She was proud of how she followed her own interests through life, resisting rigid structures and routines. She also discussed how being part of the local community, engaging with others and being an active citizen was important to her.

But now I'm also helping out at the hospice shop in Knaresborough, which is the St. Michael's Hospice because the medical side of the hospice were exceedingly good with my husband because of lymphoma (NY1I01).

Coming into contact with Chain Lane (discussed by n=6/6 participants)

All participants discussed how and why they initially engaged with Chain Lane. This was often due to a single specific issue but described how they were inspired to engage more because of the way Chain Lane responded to them as welcoming and being willing to listen.

For example, NY1I02 originally came to use the phlebotomy services but after conversations sparked by an advert about IT he became a volunteer. This opportunity enabled him to address wider issues highlighted earlier around missing a role and purpose and feeling isolated.

NY1I06 and NY1I04 and NY1I05 first came into contact with Chain Lane following the floods and the resultant damage to their homes. These initial contacts have led to them seeking support around multiple areas of service navigation.

Life was pretty tough and some other things going on. Hence probably why we found these lovely guys here (NY1I06).

All six narratives reveal that the presenting issue is not the predominant challenge facing these individuals and the way Chain Lane creates the space to listen enables people to address the underlying challenges they are facing.

Chapter 3 – Experiences of Support

This analysis comes from six in-depth interviews who had received support from Chain Lane, and focus groups with four stakeholders and two staff. The chapter examines findings around the nature of support offered by Chain Lane and their ways of working. The findings are categorised according to individual, community and public services system levels, reflecting the multiple levels at which strengths-based social action operates.

Chain Lane's Mission and Vision

How Chain Lane perceives the work that they do and the philosophies underpinning this was discussed by both staff and community stakeholders as broadly fitting into three categories: service and project delivery; community development; and enablement. Both staff members at Chain Lane (n=2/2) described how they perceive service and project delivery as guided by community need, not resources or funding opportunities. Their vision is supporting and empowering the community around issues that are relevant, meeting residents where they are at and being a continual presence. This allows them to focus on providing overarching support whenever needed in the community.

A service is something that should be continuous and it should be something that's offered to our community until it's never needed and it will always be needed because there's always going to be older people. There's always going to be migrants. It's like youth service, you're always going to need a youth service (NY3106)

They don't wait to be funded or see what the funding is coming down. 'We want to deliver this. Where can we get the money to do it?' (NY2103, public sector).

Workers described their mission as working as part of a collective response to community need. This included facilitating and enabling other resources in the community by fostering and facilitating a space for something to happen rather than always delivering themselves when others have the skills, capacity and are better placed to do so. Stakeholders (n=4/4) shared this interpretation of Chain Lane as being a part of a wider movement to foster an area wide collaborative effort.

And I would say it's a jigsaw and Knaresborough's a very vibrant community and I think they're one of the pieces (NY2103, public sector).

Part of this mission is engaging with the local authority to reorient funding for community need. Community stakeholders also identified how Chain Lane's Board is supportive of risk taking to ensure the community is prioritised.

I think what we've done is we've just followed our path and we've gone with the willing and we've not tried to convert the unwilling (NY3105).

Nature of Support & Chain Lane's Ways of Working

Individual Level

Stakeholders, staff, and almost all interview participants talked about the wide-ranging nature of the support provided to individuals. Findings show how Chain Lane helps residents practically and emotionally in response not only to crises but also to longer-term challenges. Interview participants and stakeholders described how, through working with people in a person-centred, caring and consistent/reliable manner, Chain Lane provides an accessible and safe space in which they can seek responsive support and connect to their community. Key components to how the Hub works with individuals are discussed below.

i) Friendly, person-centred, tailored assistance (discussed by n=5/6 participants)

The majority of interview participants discussed the friendly and sympathetic way in which Chain Lane's workers engaged with residents, recognising workers' commitment to walking alongside service users and making a positive difference to their community. Workers were seen as 'being there' for people, and as going 'above and beyond'. Consequently, residents felt supported, valued and more confident in seeking help. Building on people's strengths like this had allowed Chain Lane to provide help at an early stage, increasing preventative impact.

This was often contrasted with experience of services, in terms of how Chain Lane worked in a person-centred, non-transactional manner. Workers took the time to get to know people as individuals and to understand their situations. Workers' accessibility (referenced by stakeholders and staff), alongside their responsiveness and flexibility, created a warm, welcoming environment that encouraged participants to connect and gave them confidence they would have somewhere to go for help in the future.

They were accompanying me to the council building... to give me support... [worker] sat with me, she came to a few meetings with me... She knew how much it was winding me up, having to go on about the same thing. So I'd go in there, she'd speak on my behalf and then I'd just chip in... she took control (NY1103).

I trust them because they've not let me down, ever ... They're so accessible, so friendly... It's nice, doesn't make you nervous, you're not going to a place and it's them barriers against you... there's none... I feel very comfortable coming in... they were there, and were willing to listen (NY1106).

They don't just dismiss it [but] deal with us... They know you... I just put me head round the door... very friendly. That is the main thing... it's very welcoming. 'Sit down and we'll help you with that. Do you want a cup of tea?' (NY1104).

ii) Trust and agency through honest, non-judgmental relationships (discussed by n=3/6 participants)

Half of the interview participants recognised how workers' openness and honesty built trust and created a safe environment. This allowed users to relax, access help without judgment and feel part of the community. Participants felt able to be honest with Chain Lane about the organisation, knowing these opinions would be heard and respected. It also awarded them agency, increasing their confidence to access support and work towards their goals.

We want people to feel we're a safe place... they're not going to be judged... be bossed about or made to do anything they don't want to (NY3105).

I think they're also incredibly open to other suggestions if you've got any other ideas that they may be able to follow through (NY1101).

They don't chuck labels or stick labels on people... I'm different to anyone of any political view, but that's never got in the way (NY1103).

iii) Effective, responsive, preventative support contrasting with other services (discussed by n=6/6 participants)

All service users interviewed contrasted the support Chain Lane offered with that provided by other services, including the council. Participants described poor quality, unreliable and impersonal support from services which left them frustrated and exhausted. Interview participants also noted how Chain Lane differed from services in respect of its focus on getting to know people and their challenges, often moving beyond the initial crisis or presenting problem to the wider set of issues facing residents, and providing tailored support based on need, rather than service priorities. Whilst stakeholders did not directly compare Chain Lane with other services, they nevertheless agreed it offered the community swift, effective and person-focused support. This enabled it to support more appropriately and efficiently, as well as work in a preventative manner.

We made an appointment, came back two days later and she went through all the paperwork... she was marvelous. She did it all ... With these, if you say you want somebody, they'll get somebody... they always do the job quick (NY1105).

You go to a council office and chances of you seeing the same face it's pretty slim... Whereas, [at Chain Lane] that's all known. Let's move on (NY1101).

[After the flooding] this young family came in with a pushchair and they were homeless. They had nowhere to go.... they were in tears... NY3105 was instantly saying 'Right. I'll get you this'... And NY3106 then got them a room (NY2101, public sector).

Community Level

Chain Lane's central position in the community was discussed by all interview participants. Its physical accessibility and informal way of working was attributed to helping residents connect to support in a sustainable way and strengthening community connections. The Hub offered a collaborative space. Key themes around the nature of community level support are discussed below.

i) In and of the community, enabling easy access to support (discussed by n=2/2 staff, n=4/4 stakeholders and n=5/6 participants)

All staff and stakeholders, and almost all interview participants discussed Chain Lane's community-based location, accessible premises and community-centred approach. These enabled service users to drop in whenever suited, increasing independence and agency, with Chain Lane being a trusted, familiar fixture in individuals' everyday lives. This reassured them of Chain Lane's commitment and removed challenges they could face from inadequate and unaffordable public transport, limited individual mobility and overstretched services.

For a lot of people, this seems to be easy to travel to. It's got car parking... The wider doors into the bigger rooms for the mobility scooters... I can walk here in ten minutes. If there's a big queue and I'm not going to get seen, I can go and come back tomorrow (NY1102).

If you ever ring up the council... 'No... You'll want another department' and it's about 20 minutes to get through to them. 'No, it's not us. I'll put you on to somebody else'... it just becomes a nightmare and you don't do it (NY1104).

Stakeholders also discussed how, despite the financial burden its building placed on Chain Lane, it was nevertheless critical for its ability to be accessible, to respond to service users

in a person-centred way and to foster inclusion and belonging.

They've got quite a hefty mortgage on the building, which is quite a limitation... [However] they've got the flexibility [other organisation] haven't got of what they use their building for... It gives a focal point (NY2103, public sector).

ii) Building community capacity and connections within the community (discussed by n=4/6 participants)

Over half of interview participants discussed Chain Lane's situatedness within the wider community. Most provided examples of how it built community capacity and connections. Its activities provided an opportunity for people to get to know each other, to have fun, and to feel part of what was going on. One participant stressed how Chain Lane's inclusive, non-dogmatic approach helped create and strengthen links between residents, challenging them to confront opinions different to their own.

They're not political... They're welcoming to everybody and everyone... They will generally sit and have a debate and discussion... instead of being divisive, they bring people together (NY1103).

We see them through the bit that I've got them doing [in the IT club] and then they chat amongst each other and talk about stuff that's got nothing to do with why they're here (NY1102).

They've really taken on that ambition to be responsive and play their part in the jigsaw of how Knaresborough was supported... Knaresborough's a very vibrant community and I think they're one of the pieces (NY2103, public sector).

Public Services System Level

There was limited discussion amongst interview participants about this topic,

although it was discussed at stakeholder level and by staff. This can be explained by the fact that people accessing support are less often in contact with how Chain Lane operates/engages at public services system levels than the other two groups. Findings provide some evidence of how Chain Lane helped build two-way connections with the wider public services system through connecting residents with other services, as well as of how it represents residents' voices at service system levels.

i) Acting as a conduit between the community and the wider service system (discussed by n=2/6 participants, n=2/2 staff and n=2/4 stakeholders)

Through sharing its building with other services, Chain Lane provided them with the physical space to connect with the community. A small number of participants praised these links, which they saw as giving residents access to information and helping other services work in a strengths-based preventative way. They were also seen to benefit Chain Lane, increasing awareness of the organisation and its access to additional resources. Chain Lane's independence from the council was also seen by all staff as a positive, since it provided them with the space to respond to what people needed, independent of political trends.

Chain Lane was really important because it enabled me... and them to... get the family feeling safe again because we're working with the migrant worker and also liaising with the housing officer (NY2102, PCSO).

I think it's the unique combination of how [Chain Lane] work [different funding systems] together... it's a unique combination of how they do that and how they interlink into these other worlds... they are willing to work with others (NY2103, public sector).

The good thing about being a charity and not linked into the council is that we're not influenced by politics... we're influenced by what's needed... the projects are very much in response to the need that we've identified (NY3I06).

One Participant also gave examples of how Chain Lane enabled the community's voice to be heard at system level. The organisation not only provided a space for residents to share experiences, but also spoke up for the community at the council, helping to prevent harm. Half of the stakeholders interviewed added how they saw it as a reliable source of information about community opinion, with workers' capabilities awarding the organisation legitimacy in the eyes of the wider sector, thereby creating opportunities to influence at regional level.

It will always be Chain Lane that we would go to as a first off for anything immediate, whether it's trying to get any kind of temperature gauge for... the community or whether you're trying to get information... That's the whole reason why they're invited to that meeting... they're the experts of that local area (NY2I01, healthcare).

The council, they didn't fight one bit, not one bit. Had it not been for them [Chain Lane] constantly harassing the council to get to some decision... had they not stood by us, you might have had some deaths on your hands last year with the way that it [the flooding] affected people's health (NY1I03).

ii) Fostering joined-up working and collaboration within the wider system (discussed by n=2/2 staff and n=4/4 stakeholders)

Staff described how Chain Lane was committed to working collaboratively to add value to existing services through creating joined-up responses. Chain Lane workers interpreted their role as facilitating and bringing together different groups to respond

to gaps in the system, ensuring targeted support, reducing wasted resources and enabling preventative impact. In turn, all stakeholders experienced Chain Lane as an enabler, allowing them to work effectively through understanding the strengths and capacity that others in the community brought to the table and knowing when to let go and allow others to act. This facilitator role built collaboration through offering structural support, liaising and supporting effective communication that allowed stakeholders to act and work together where needed. They discussed how this further built trust and positive relationships across stakeholders, fostering a sense of collaboration rather than competition to support residents. Their enabling approach was identified as being crucial to fostering a sense of agency amongst system and community stakeholders.

From my experience, they very much do the enabling and then, I used the word before, trust, so that they let whoever they have asked to do whatever task it is to get on with it. What we always do first is check. Is anyone else doing it? What do they need... to do more? If no one's doing it, can we step into the bridge.... This enables Chain Lane to understand the gaps rather than doubling up on work or competing (NY3I05).

But they didn't try and sort of get involved in absolutely everything, which wasn't their skill set, and they knew their own limitations. But they knew what they were good at as well (NY2I01, healthcare).

They linked with people collaboratively in the community... I think they're not totally not involved, but I don't think they're leading. They put in a lot of effort at the beginning, but then it's kind of gone on its journey (NY2I03, public sector).

They'll then take a back seat but don't just disappear either. They're very much: how is it going? Can we offer any more support? ... We benefit them, they benefit us. And that's not just [organisation name] that we're talking about, the wider groups within the community as well. I can't talk highly enough of the contribution they make and changes they do make in people's lives (NY2104, VCFS).

Taken collectively these findings around the person-centred and strengths-based ways of working and the bridging and connecting role played by Chain Lane underpin the types of outcomes and impacts their work produces. These are now discussed in turn in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4 - Perceptions of Outcomes and Impacts

The analysis of immediate outcomes and longer-term impacts in this section illustrates the complexities of how benefits can begin as an outcome and evolve into longer-term impacts. Therefore, this chapter focuses mainly on identified outcomes and where possible discusses how these evolve into longer-term impacts.

Interview participants and community stakeholders identified a number of outcomes that they felt happened because of Chain Lane's support. These are organised into individual, community and system level outcomes. They are also supported by the experiences of stakeholders from the VCFS and local authority sector and Chain Lane own process data.

Individual Level Outcomes

Individual outcomes were the most frequently discussed by all six participants. Outcomes were wide ranging and participants described how Chain Lane's support had improved their lives, enabled better service navigation and built their own capacity to bring about change and better address challenges. These are broken down into core themes below and evidenced through people's experiences. By contrast, whilst all but one of the stakeholders (n=3/4) discussed the benefits to individuals of engaging with Chain Lane, their comments were limited to a recognition of the value of the community transport scheme, reflecting stakeholders' lack of personal contact with the individuals supported by the organisation.

Feeling accompanied, reduced stress/anxiety and building confidence/self-esteem (discussed by n=5/6 participants)

These outcomes were discussed by almost all participants and were often interlinked with being listened to and sharing associated with confidence building and breaking down feelings of having to face challenges alone. Self-esteem was linked to being able to better navigate support, sharing as well as volunteering and supporting others. While experiences were varied the central thread is the way in which Chain Lane offers an inclusive space to come together and engage in reciprocal support. Outcomes included growing friendship circles, feeling valued and building confidence and self-esteem, receiving practical help and being listened to especially after the flooding.

You felt so much better because you'd off-loaded, because you're just carrying it with you ...It's priceless, somebody listening, because if you don't get it out, it just sits there... I wasn't sleeping well and I would just do all that in my head and it's not a healthy place for it to be... I'm still fighting, but I'm fighting from a slightly different point. A bit of a stronger point, a little bit more sass there this time... I can honestly say, hand on heart, if I've not had these guys, I think I'd have gone under (NY1106).

So I just do it four hours there on a Thursday afternoon, which is when they do the computing. ..However, I've learned I can Google how to do that. So I have Googled and it has been a success... I don't do it every day. That's, that's the thing I need the muscle memory, I need to make it matter to me. (NY1101).

I think if other issues arose then I'm sure you would get some friendly advice and help and that's the thing because it's important and somewhere where you can go... it gives you more confidence... You feel there's somebody or something behind you locally, so if anything does go wrong you've got a bit of support there (NY1104).

This is supported by the Ageing Well data that demonstrates where gaining a deeper understanding of resident needs led to residents building resilience as 67% of those for whom the purpose of engagement was being listened to led to a sense of knowing Chain Lane are there if support is needed. Further, the data also shows that after an engagement, almost a quarter (22%) of all residents were better able to cope with challenges they faced in life.

Access to services and welfare support (discussed by n=6/6 participants)

Access to services was discussed by all participants; both in terms of connecting and navigating external services and the value of having direct service provision located within Chain Lane. Service support provided in place by Chain Lane included flooding emergency, in-house transport and blood service etc). Significantly, participants spoke of 12 different forms of service access that Chain had enabled them to reach. Some services were provided in place via the Hub linked services in Health and the local authority while, others were accessed through Chain Lane acting as a connector or

bridge. For example, accessing blue badges, benefits, funding for emergency car lease, employment and jobs opportunities, housing repairs, community transport, access to health and hospital appointments, online and digital access to services. This reveals the range of support offered by Chain Lane. The individual impact of enabling access to these services is reflected in the below quotes:

[Attendance allowance] has helped a lot as well... I... don't get a full pension... It makes a big difference. It takes a lot of stress out of general everyday life these days, especially as things become more technical and confusing... We wouldn't have had one of them [disabled] discs... those forms just look too stressful to fill out to be quite honest. I don't think we'd have got far at all... was just too (NY1104).

She did all the paperwork for me to get me to get the disabled badge... for the car...And we got the stairs rail ..[the difference the blue badge had made is] massive.... I can get nearer [to] things...We wouldn't have done it [applied for disabled badge or attendance allowance] just wouldn't have... too much (NY1105).

They've helped us again. We got involved [with the] scheme for transport... We don't have transport and for nine years we've been paying taxis to all our appointments. We have probably spent an absolute arm and a leg... I said, if we get that soakaway sorted I need the break, I need to get away. Scarborough is a very happy place for us. We love Scarborough. So we went for three days... and we got a lift back to the community hub... We got a lovely driver... the break was wonderful... It did the power of good (NY1106).

These changes made a considerable difference to their daily lives both practically, enabling them to be more mobile, and in respect of their worry and stress over finances linked to early retirement. This was supported by the Community Transport data which shows that 100% of hospital and GP visits would have been at least delayed if the support had not been provided.

Half of the interviewees gave examples of where Chain Lane had stepped in to fill a void left behind by service withdrawal. The most prominent examples being given around veteran support as the British Legion service moved entirely online, offering a community transport option as transport services were cut and fighting for the local people whose home had been destroyed by flooding. There were plenty of striking examples of where Chain Lane had prevented more serious crisis escalation typified by the example of one ex-veteran struggling to navigate services, thrust into crisis by the flooding.

They've helped me with loads of stuff. The biggest ... was they helped me get funding to lease a car so I could have access to my children....[Veteran] support has gone... [when] I came in contact with this place last year, they filled that void ... I'm not just a veteran I've got protected characteristics and through hard times and they literally just pulled up the rug and that's something that I really struggle with because I don't feel valued within society and it's only these lot here who who've made me feel like that because I can't get that through the Legions anymore... if I want anything, I need any help, I know I can come in here ... Whenever I'm in a bit of trouble or I'm struggling mentally... I can rely on people here (NY1103).

Flooding examples:

[Once we went to the hub] it was then that things started to happen here... putting us in touch with people... There ain't anywhere around here like that. There's nothing to pop into it.... [If these guys weren't here] just had to rely on family... what we could do ourselves (NY1105).

The hub got us into accommodation (NY1104)... when we got back into the house... We needed an extra bannister and that was [Chain Lane] who came round and sorted all these things out for us and sorted some tradespeople out who came quickly (NY1104).

Outcomes produced by accessing services or growing confidence through reducing isolation underpin longer-term impacts around connecting individuals to resources at community and service system levels. These in turn grow their knowledge around service system navigation, offer community based sources of support and provide stepping stones to avoid serious crises in the future.

Community Level Outcomes

Half of participants (n=3/6) and all but one stakeholder (n=3/4) discussed wider community level benefits created by the way Chain Lane operates. For participants, these were mainly around its ripple effects; creating community capacity and growing connections and reciprocity between community members. These outcomes were discussed by those who volunteered because they were in a stronger position to reflect upon community capacity building.

And I think that's what's nice, that each thing can start another, another little, well, another little hub, I suppose. And they all come through with Chain Lane. (NY1101).

I've been to a couple of the little things I've done here, like the barbecue and I got to meet the transport drivers and I got to meet the gardeners and this and the other...How many people would sit at home and see nobody and talk to nobody and I think one of the differences between this and the ability next up was you might be the only person they'd spoken to for days or weeks or whatever and by dragging them here if that makes sense that breaks that theme (NY1I02).

We've grown this friendship... When I need something from them, I dip my head in and I'll go 'What can I do for you?'. That's what everyone around here does... because they build it on friendship and community, they bring the community together, everyone pulls together. I have a conversation with people I'd never have spoken to in the street. They bring people together ...That's the great thing about them because they can get people to do things for free, just by being decent (NY1I03).

This development of community capacity and growing reciprocity was seen in the Ageing Well data where their person-centred way of working over longer engagements led to residents being more socially engaged with others at the centre.

There was also some evidence around how Chain Lane enabled and encouraged residents to contribute to the group and the wider community, with half of participants interviewed volunteering at Chain Lane. Chain Lane encouraged people to contribute in line with their experiences, knowledge and wishes, working with their strengths to find them a suitable role.

[Worker] said 'Would you like to become what we're calling a friend as opposed to a volunteer?... I said, 'Yes, I'll happily be a friend'. That involves helping out with e-copies and that sort of thing (NY1I01).

I met loads of people that I hadn't met before...this is kind of like the public front if that makes sense and then there's the personal front...So as a volunteer for helping the people, I like to help them. Yeah, it's kind of in my nature, if you like. So helping the people come in makes me feel good. Yeah, makes me feel valued, which retiring and doing nothing else, you kind of lose that feedback loop...Quantifying that into words, that's quite tough. It's partly the thing of you feeling the value you offer (NY1I02).

Stakeholders also commented on the community-building aspect of Chain Lane. For some, this was evident in how the organisation had helped refugees become settled, self-reliant members of the local community. Others described how Chain Lane acted as a facilitator and mediator, encouraging collaboration amongst community organisations, as well as supporting better relationships between community members and the council.

It has brought together a lot of the organisations within Knaresborough... We've all come together in that one room and had a lot of very positive conversations. So that to me again just shows how much value they add by bringing the community together. I don't think all the organisations all speak to each other... Just actually bringing them together, in one room and one forum has made a massive impact in terms of how we operate with each other... The [refugee work] was all brought together by the Community hub. That to me was massive.... a group of people who needed help (NY2I04, VCFS).

Service System Level Outcomes

While most of the participant journey interviews focused upon individual outcomes there are important connections to be made around these and service system outcomes.

Helping residents with into navigate the service system (n=6/6)

Chain Lane connected and advocated in some cases on behalf of residents, enabling all participants to access services they had previously been unable to reach or navigate for various reasons including know-how and frustration. The majority of interviewees felt that without Chain Lane they would have failed to get support and this would have impacted negatively on their mental and physical health. These outcomes typify the benefits of 'being there' at community level to pick up residents lost in or left behind by the system.

These findings reveal how by person-centred listening and brokering, Chain Lane enables residents to:

- better able to access the right support at the right time
- upskilling residents in navigating complex and often distant service systems
- building individual and community capacity to reduce the risks of serious crisis and the need for more intensive and expensive statutory support.

The below quote reflect these perspectives and experiences from light touch to more intensive strengths-based support:

One person came in for a blue badge application. They tried and failed ... they said, I've tried to do this three times and it's not worked each time. ...But if you need a blue badge, how are you going to go anywhere? So they come in and they sit down and within an hour, we've done it and it's gone through (NY1102).

If it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have a voice today [re contesting water authorities claims about the flooding] ...The council, they didn't fight one bit...[about the flooding]. Had it not been for Chain Lane constantly harassing the council to get to some decision... had they not stood by us, you might have had some deaths on your hands last year with the way that it affected people's health... there's people like my neighbours, they can't move, they just couldn't, and without the support from here, medically, they would have really struggled... I'd have probably ended up [in a] unit... it would have escalated too far because I literally lost everything and being cut off from access to children and stuff like that.... I don't know where I would have been... I think they recognise that brilliantly. I cannot be a bigger advocate (NY1103).

I think we'd have just struggled like hell [to access housing related support] and I think I'd have ended up on antidepressants I didn't want and I think it would have affected us because it's hard, really hard, we just struggled, I don't know what the hell we would have done... I would have been ill, further ill... I was struggling, really struggling. I've nowhere to go with it, nowhere else to go with it (NY1106).

Creating joined-up service responses in place (discussed by n=2/2 staff and stakeholders)

All staff (n=2) and stakeholders discussed how Chain Lane acted as an intermediary, allowing organisations and the local authority to set aside conflicting perspectives to come together. In turn this perceived neutrality of Chain Lane was discussed as enabling better joined up working, fostering collaboration and overcoming conflict within the system. This was both as a result of its presence in working groups and their hosting collaborative meetings in their premises.

Acting as an intermediary was also identified as not just fostering better collaborations and outcomes for organisations and the local authority, but also for community members. It was suggested that being able to collaborate in this neutral space led to benefits for the community through enabling joined up support.

We've all kind of come together in that one room and had a lot of very positive conversations around things... So that to me again just shows how much value they add by bringing the community together. I don't think all the organisations all speak to each other and get on very well with each other. Just actually bringing them together, in one room and one forum has made a massive impact in terms of how we operate with each other (NY2I04, VCFS).

Kind of a conduit into that community for North Yorkshire when we haven't got a direct point of contact... they kind of reflected their place, how they worked with other people in the place (NY2I03, public sector).

So Chain Lane for me was really important because it enabled me to... get the [immigrant] family feeling safe again because we're working with the migrant worker and... then liaising with the housing officer....{another example given by the same stakeholder} I had a gentleman who was creating havoc in the community where he lived... And he was attending Chain Lane, which meant then I was able to get Chain Lane on board and we were having multi-agent meetings to find out what the best thing to do for this gentleman was... So we were able to work together... to liaise because they were able to give me snippets of information and...because it was multi-agency and we're allowed to share that information, I was able to share

information with them so that they could put that into context and I could put what they were telling me into context to work for the best (NY2I02, PCSO).

Being an intermediary was also discussed in terms of acting as a mediator between organisations, the local authority and residents of Knaresborough. Three stakeholders discussed how they saw Chain Lane as both a buffer and a translator between the system level and the community. They were seen to be trusted by the community to voice concerns and raise issues that they might not be willing to say to stakeholders directly which allowed stakeholders to better understand the concerns, the context of issues they faced and be able to offer more effective support.

Similarly, two stakeholders discussed how Chain Lane was able to defuse charged situations where residents were angry over issues, through initially gaining their trust and then connecting them into services who could then offer effective joined up support. Two stakeholders also discussed how this allowed them to work more effectively with residents and enable them to build resilience as having Chain Lane as a partner built trust between the residents and the stakeholders.

[two community members] were angry about the delays...they were able to neutralise it with a cup of coffee and being part of the community (NY2I03, public sector).

I've liaised with [migrant support] and said, look, let me come in and do a few sessions. You can come and meet me, come and find out, you know, that the police are here to help because I'm fairly certain that a lot of migrant people see the police as, you know, someone to fear.' (NY2I02, PCSO).

All staff and half of the stakeholders discussed how this collaborative relationship building reaches all levels of the local authority, fostering a sense of collaboration between organisations and the local authority as a whole. Stakeholders perceived Chain Lane's willingness to push for wider system change through highlighting the effective collaboration going on in Knaresborough to local authority leadership and pushing for more joint ownership.

Staff at Chain Lane understood how it was necessary to gain system support for continued effective collaboration and increasing support for residents across the region. Part of this was being able to hold the local authority to account, ensuring it was truly collaborative, rather than just organisations feeding into the local authority. One stakeholder described how this reinforced a sense of commitment to collaborative efforts from the local authority.

So we had an emergency and we were helping them and then we drifted off a bit. [Chain Lane worker name] came back to us and said hold on a minute, this is a systems partner relationship. It was with one of the other departments. When they were ringing up, they couldn't get through. And she said you're saying everything about being our system partner and we're doing our end of the bargain. But where's your end of the bargain from North Yorkshire? A partnership's a two-way thing. So now we're paying attention to how our relationship is two-way (NY2I03, public sector).

So we do influence and sometimes lead others into funding and policy. That then impacts on the work that not just us, but the whole movement does. So that's quite a big piece of what we do (NY3I05).

Chapter 5 – Summary of Insights and Policy/Practice Learning

This review of Chain Lane Community Hub's way of working, evidencing how they support and grow community capacity, agency and voice reveals how it is their unique combination of person-centred ways of working, being of the community and fostering a collaborative environment that leads to successful outcomes for both residents and community stakeholders.

It was found that Chain Lane's specific ways of working enabled residents to open up by 'being there' for them, allowing them to uncover and address deeper underlying challenges. Their culture of openness, honesty and mutual respect builds individuals' confidence and resilience. They meet the individuals where they are at in life and, working in a person-centred approach and aligning with residents' values, allows them to provide appropriate support and for residents to feel empowered and seek help when needed.

However, stakeholders also highlighted the organisation's dependency on workers' capabilities and connections for organisational impact. This was seen to make it vulnerable to workforce change, a situation exacerbated by limited success with volunteer recruitment.

There's so much dependent on some key members of staff, which are down to a handful... if any... aren't there, that will have a detrimental effect (NY2101, public sector).

Over the last few years [they've been] trying to build up a volunteer database, but I don't really see an awful lot happening... they need more help (NY2104, VCFS).

Chain Lane's way of working with stakeholders enabled them to be seen as a critical asset by both residents and by community stakeholders. Their independence from local authority priorities allows them to respond to community need over external priorities and at the same time fosters collaboration amongst stakeholders in service of the community. Their position as trusted by all parties means they play a unique role, acting as both a buffer and a translator between the community, community stakeholders and the system. They communicate needs up and down the system, holding all parties accountable, to bridge gaps in both understanding and services.

This way of working was identified as leading to outcomes and impacts at three levels:

- The individual level
- The community level
- The service system level

At the individual level it was found that early intervention, providing practical help and acting as a connector to other forms of support, enabled strong outcomes and impacts for individuals.

Meeting people earlier in their journey allowed them to proactively prevent crisis escalation. The provision of practical help and filling service gaps enabled community engagement and access to other support as well as identifying more significant underlying issues people were dealing with. Chain Lane's way of person-centred working also led to residents understanding what resources were available and a feeling of being genuinely heard. This resulted in residents building knowledge of how to navigate the system more independently and an increase in self-esteem, building confident and more socially connected residents.

At the community level it was found that Chain Lane acts as a catalyst for community resilience, enabling residents to become active citizens and strengthening capacity across the town and wider area. In turn, this grows connections and reciprocity between community members.

They achieve this through building internal connections within the community, enabling them to support one another and building assets which then builds reciprocity and capacity. Acting as a central hub, they also encourage and enable collaboration across the sector and with the local authority, mediating relationships and encouraging ownership.

At the service system level, Chain Lane enables access to essential services, improves efficiency through directing to appropriate channels and reducing dependency on support. Their advocacy enables residents to essential services they may not have reached otherwise as well as developing their skills to navigate complex service systems independently.

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