



Family, Friends and Neighbours: Social Relations and Support in Six Low Income Neighbourhoods

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Family, Friends and Neighbours: Social Relations and Support in Six Low Income Neighbourhoods

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

There is an increasing tendency for policy discourses to portray deprived or low income neighbourhoods as problematised spaces of difference, where internally cohesive and segregated communities nurture dispositions and behaviours that deviate from social and cultural norms. Whether the consequence is seen to be high levels of worklessness, anti-social behaviour and crime or community conflict, policy portrays the challenge as being to promote change, either through the generation of increased social mix in a bid to transform the local population, or the reform of attitudes and behaviour via disciplinary or therapeutic interventions designed to challenge local cultures (Flint and Robinson, 2008).

The central premise of this paper is that this characterisation fails to acknowledge two important points. First, deprived neighbourhoods can be home to sets of relationships that constitute a resource pool from which people can draw support, widening the variety of sources from which they secure sustenance and helping them to 'get by' in the face of disadvantage and inequality. Second, the spatial routines and personal geographies of support relied upon by people in low income neighbourhoods can extend beyond the confines of the residential neighbourhood, resulting in access to a wider array of resources that provide people with the security, stability and confidence that they require to engage with wider society and to overcome, or at least manage, their exclusion from social and economic opportunities (Robinson, 2010).

Recognising these two key points raises a number of questions that this paper will seek to address. Key among them is the availability and nature of place-based relationships and the benefits that accrue to local residents engaged in local networks. This focus will allow the paper to consider the validity of claims that deprivation can be reversed by fostering stronger social bonds between local residents (CLG, 2008; Putnam, 2000). Attention to neighbourly relations will also facilitate consideration of prevailing orthodoxy informing the recent drive for 'mixed communities', which presumes that neighbours represent a potential source of bridging capital that can enable people to 'get ahead'. Related to this point, analysis will also explore more dispersed social networks, how they are created and maintained and the resources and support that they can provide that help people get by. This will facilitate consideration of the contention that looser, more extensive networks can provide a source of bridging capital that will allow people to 'get ahead'.

This report considers these questions through a review of data collected via in-depth, face-to-face qualitative interviews with 180 people living in six low income neighbourhoods across the UK. The content and outcomes of relationships between respondents are unpacked through the application of a typology of social relations which distinguishes between three groups - family, friends and neighbours - in an attempt to understand who provides what form of support and what impact this has on respondents' lives. This approach reflects a desire to redress the tendency in some research on deprived neighbourhoods to conflate different forms of support without delineating precisely who is delivering what support and in which circumstances.

In summary, this paper presents findings to emerge from analysis of the informal place based resources and extended networks of support apparent in the recorded narratives of respondents across the six case study neighbourhoods, their importance (or otherwise) to different residents in different places and the factors informing availability and access to these relations and resources.

1.2 The Data

This paper draws on data from qualitative interviews undertaken in two waves with 180 residents living in six relatively low income neighbourhoods. The first round of interviews was undertaken with around thirty respondents in each of the six neighbourhoods in the Spring and Summer of 2008. These were followed up with repeat interviews carried out a year to eighteen months later with a sub-sample of eighteen to twenty respondents in each of these areas. A common topic guide was used across the neighbourhoods, and new themes were introduced for the wave 2 interviews.

The six case study neighbourhoods are: the *Hillside* area (part of a larger housing estate in North Huyton) in Knowsley, Merseyside; *Oxgangs*, which is a suburb to the south of Edinburgh; *West Marsh*, to the west of Grimsby town centre in North East Lincolnshire; *Wensley Fold*, a residential area close to Blackburn town centre, in Lancashire; *West Kensington* estate in the Earls Court area of West London; and the town of *Amlwch*, Anglesey, in a semi-rural setting. The areas are all in the lower two deciles of the relevant national deprivation index, and were selected to represent broad differences in the extent of diversity, connectivity and residential mobility according to relevant social indicators (see Appendix 1 for more detailed case study profiles).

The neighbourhoods are not therefore all classic areas of 'concentrated poverty' that have tended to dominate research into relatively deprived areas (Milbourne, 2010). Amlwch and West Marsh are both isolated from major centres of economic activity and have faced long term economic decline, with modest in and out-migration over the past thirty years or so. Oxgangs and West Kensington are deprived neighbourhoods in the midst of very affluent areas in two prosperous capital cities. West Marsh and Hillside are ethnically homogenous areas (predominantly white British), while Wensley Fold is a more ethnically mixed neighbourhood, with a well established South Asian community living alongside a white British community close to the town centre of Blackburn.

There are further contrasts in the extent to which the neighbourhoods have been subject to area-based renewal programmes over the years. Hillside and West Kensington were both New Deal for Communities areas. Oxgangs has also been subject to a major remodelling, demolition and new build programme in the past ten years. A housing refurbishment programme was undertaken in Wensley Fold five years ago as part of the housing market renewal programme for East Lancashire. Area-based interventions in West Marsh and Amlwch, however, have been modest and sporadic. The extent of variation between the neighbourhoods is intended to help unravel both consistencies and contrasts in the perceptions and experiences of the residents, in ways which might not be evident from more quantitative' assessments of economic and social indicators.

1.3 Report Structure

The paper is organised into five key sections:

- *a typology of social relations* – summarises the approach to social relations informing analysis
- *family* - considers family bonds and the outcomes associated with these relations (income, services, and emotional support) that help people 'get by' in deprived neighbourhoods
- *friends* – focuses on friendship networks and considers the factors informing the form and content of these networks and the variable support and assistance forthcoming through friendship ties
- *neighbours* – considers the nature of relations with neighbours and other residents. It therefore focuses on relationships within the geographical boundaries of the case study neighbourhoods
- *conclusions* – presents some tentative conclusions drawn the analysis so far been undertaken.

Throughout the paper, extended sequences from in-depth interviews are presented in order to convey the nature of social relations and the associated outcomes in respondent's own terms.

2. A Typology of Social Relations

The diagram below summarises the approach to social relations informing the analysis presented in this paper. It draws heavily on Blokland's (2003: Chapter 4) '*grid of social relations*', which provides a useful framework for thinking about how the content and outcomes of relationships can be conceptualised. The approach involves dividing social relations into three categories - bonds, attachments and transactions – that capture different elements of what are largely, if not always, positive social relationships between family, friends or neighbours.

To briefly review the nature of each type of social relationship, bonds are affective relationships with high emotional content. For this reason, all relations between friends and family fall into this category. It would not make sense, for example, to have friends with whom there is little emotional connection whilst even family members that are estranged are likely to have a relationship based with affective content, however negative this may be. Neighbours can forge bonds between one another when neighbouring crosses the line into friendship. Bonds are characterised by high levels of social interaction, often in private settings, and significant emotional and practical support that extends beyond the routine or perfunctory.

The remaining two types of social relationship can only be held between neighbours or other residents given their lack of high emotional content. Attachments refer to relationships based on affinity with others ('we're all in the same boat') or where individuals hold a personal, often abstract view on the value of being good neighbour. This translates into a willingness to help others in need (sometimes called 'latent' neighbouring) or to engage in the exchange of goods and services, for example gifting vegetables grown on an allotment, which are symbolic of a commitment to neighbouring rather than a deliberate in-kind transfer intended to help another person manage on a low income. Attachments can involve a reasonably high degree of sociability such as conversing at length in public spaces but rarely extends to social activities (pubs etc.) or regular visits to private homes. By contrast, transactions involve relationships that have a more instrumental purpose such as a mutual agreement to keep an eye on a neighbour's house when they go on holiday. Transactions have little emotional content and are distinguished by a desire to limit interactions to a convivial level that, unlike bonds and attachments, do not stretch to sociability.

Whilst the three categories have been presented as ideal-types, it should be noted that the boundaries between them are fluid and permeable. This conceptualisation is therefore best conceived of as continuum (as represented by the arrows below the chart). This fluidity may manifest itself in many ways. It is difficult to determine, for example, at precisely what point neighbours become friends, not least because individuals attach different meanings to the term. It is also important to note that a single individual may occupy multiple positions within this schema if, for instance, they have close friends in the neighbourhood (bonds) at the same time as enjoying amiable relations with other neighbours (attachments). The value of the typology lies, however, in its capacity to distinguish between the content and outcome of relationships that are often conflated, as in the ubiquitous 'kith and kin'. In other words, it enables us to unpack the social relationships that are present in neighbourhoods (and beyond) and think about how they shape, or are shaped by,

3. Family

3.1. Introduction

Some respondents referred to large extended families when discussing family links and forms of support offered and received. More typically, respondents focused their comments about family on parents, children, siblings and grandparents. These family networks typically stretched beyond the area of residence, to other parts of the same town or city, often to other parts of the UK and, in some instances, to other countries.

Some respondents had no family members living in the same town or city, explaining that either they themselves had moved away from the town or city where most of their family resides, or had seen family members relocate to another town or city. Some respondents also explained that family members who lived nearby had died. However, the majority (two-thirds) of respondents who talked about their family during interview had family members living in the same town or city and many (one-third) had family members living in the same neighbourhood. In some cases, the result was dense, closely knit networks of association between family members, which engendered continuity of relations and numerous opportunities for family members to help one another.

This chapter considers the importance of these family networks to respondents in the six case study neighbourhoods. Analysis reveals that family networks represented a key resource pool from which respondents drew support and assistance. For many people this sustenance served to enhance opportunity and well-being. For some it proved critical in helping them 'get by'. The unique nature and strength of bonds between family members provided access to forms of support and assistance rarely exchanged between friends or neighbours. Examples include financial assistance, in the form of gifts or informal loans, and child care. However, there was a variable geography of family networks across the case studies, with more dense, locally rooted networks being apparent in Wensley Fold, Amlwch and Oxfgangs.

Discussion begins by considering the forms of support and sustenance provided by family members, before moving on to consider experiences of providing support to family members.

3.2. Support and Sustenance

Family members were providing three key forms of sustenance that were revealed to be helping respondents to cope and 'get by': transfer payments; services; emotional support, advice and comradery.

If income is defined broadly as all that comes into a household, in the form of money, goods or in-kind assistance, family members were found to represent an important source of household income. The most significant form of income received by respondents from family members might be termed *transfer payments*. These included gifts, subsidies and informal loans. Some respondents reported not needing the financial help of family or friends, others reported having no one to ask,

while some balked at the idea of asking a relative for money. For some, however, family members were an important source of financial assistance, helping them to cover a shortfall between income and expenditure or to pay for a special treat, such as a holiday.

Many younger respondents reported looking to a mother or father for financial help in times of need. Some people, such as Danni from Oxfangs, sought financial support from a parent on an ad-hoc basis, whenever money was tight:

- Interviewer: *So, do you run out of money and go without things?*
- Danni: *No it's not like that, if I run out of money I've pretty much got everything in the house that I need and if I do need anything else then my mum's always at hand.*
- Interviewer: *So where does your mum live?*
- Danni: *Dalkeith but she works in town.*
- Interviewer: *So she's your safety net is she?*
- Danni: *Very much so.*
- Interviewer: *And do you have to pay her back?*
- Danni: *Yeah I always pay her back but she doesn't hound me for it, if I've no got it I've no got it, she knows she's going to get it when I've got it.*

Cordell, a lone parent in West Kensington, reported being able to borrow small amounts of cash from her father, an Auntie and a friend. Cordell emphasised that she viewed these transactions as loans and stressed the importance of paying back the money promptly, so that help would be there in the future should she need it. She also talked about having a reciprocal relationship with her friend and auntie, who she also helped in times of need:

- Interviewer: *What about in terms of your needs, what support do your friends and family provide you?*
- Cordell: *Emotionally, if for example me and [partner] are going through a rough time I know that I can talk to either one of those two people [Auntie or best friend] and it's not going to go any further. If I need to borrow money as well, £30 till I got paid I would, they would help me out with £30, things like that. I've had to borrow money off my dad and I've just paid him back on pay day, I said 'I've got the money under there on the clock for you' and he said 'take it back, £20 for her, £20 for the other one' because my son's birthday's just gone recently, my dad's like that but I always, if I borrow 10 or 15 I like to give it back so even if he says to me 'take it back' he knows that I'm good for it and if I ever need to borrow again he won't have to question, he will give me it anyway but I don't like to be owing money.*
- Interviewer: *Are friends and family very important to you then?*
- Cordell: *More family yeah friends come and go but family definitely.*

Interviewer: *And it's for the reason you talked about, the support that the family can provide you, is that the main reason?*

Cordell: *Yeah and also the support that I give to them as well*

Interviewer: *Yeah I should have said that, in terms of the support you provide them what form might that take?*

Cordell: *Exact same thing ?? ?? my aunt she has three daughters and if my aunt's feeling down and she's having a rough time she says 'do you mind if I send one of them up to you' and I say 'well yeah' because my house has always got kids and things like that, no problem, if ?? would say no if money's kind of tight and food was tight but then I'd say no to her, come down to her and she might send the kids with a bit of change and go swimming or cinema or something like that but no problem.*

Frankie talked about having a similar reciprocal relationship with her sister and friend:

Interviewer: *Who do you borrow from?*

Frankie: *Epecially at the end of the week, like Saturday, Sunday, sometimes I have got nothing, I have to finish the week and Monday I get my money, yeah sometimes £10 from neighbours, sometimes my sister.*

Interviewer: *So your neighbours would actually lend you £10?*

Frankie: *Yeah I do that with her as well. I give it to her Monday, I give her the money, we know each other because we're all on benefits so we help each other. And I go to where my sister lives, sometimes she can't come to me and I have to... 'I need money from now to buy something'.*

Respondents appeared far more willing to turn to a family member than a friend for financial help. Respondents often inferred that helping each other is what families are for. Sana's reflections on asking his sister for financial help illustrates this point:

Interviewer: *Do you think things like having family around makes it easier to get by?*

Sana: *Yeah family is important, if you need someone if you're in a bad state and don't have money and you need to pay the bill you can ask, I always do that if I don't have any, go to my sister 'can you give me a tenner and I'll give you it back' she doesn't mind giving it cos it's family, so that helps.*

Interviewer: *Anything else that helps you manage when things are tough?*

Sana: *Yeah it does actually, if I don't have my brother in law, go to work, have to pay for taxis as well, cos he doesn't take money he just drops you off.*

Interviewer: *He takes you free?*

Sana: *Yeah just takes me free.*

Interviewer: *So family are really important aren't they?*

Sana: *Yeah he says he doesn't like taking money from family so that's good.*

Financial help and assistance was not always provided in the form of cash loans or gifts. Connie, a lone parent with two children, talked about being helped out financially by her mother. She explained that she had to cut back on various 'luxury items' as a result of a reduction in household income following her divorce from her husband. However, rather than gifting her cash directly, Connie's mother regularly helped cover the cost of the weekly supermarket shop and was also paying for the whole family to go on holiday:

Interviewer: *Do you ever compare your circumstances now with points in the past?*

Connie: *Yeah, I mean every Friday we'd go shopping to Asdas and get everything and come back and have take away for your tea whereas I can't, we have one every now and again but even taking my little girl to McDonalds to have a happy meal, they used to be £1.98 and now they're £2.30, it's just ridiculous but yeah I do, the better brands we used to have to what I can afford now, if I'm lucky enough to go shopping with my mum on a Friday night I get my shopping paid for me but sometimes I'm not.*

Interviewer: *How do you feel about that?*

Connie: *Obviously I'd love to have the luxury items that they used to have but I've got my own independence, I've got my family, I'm happy, I'm not bothered about sacrificing what I used to have, if it come to it I'd cut down on everything to make sure the kids had... but me mam would never let me get that far anyway, I really could not live, she'd help me which is good.*

Interviewer: *Does she help you out from time to time financially?*

Connie: *Yeah she's taking us to Disneyland Paris on Sunday, she's paying for us, me and me partner and me little girl, me little boy's not coming cos he's not quite old enough but she's paying for us to go there for a week.*

Interviewer: *Is she going as well?*

Connie: *Yeah her and her partner's coming as well, yeah she helps me.*

Stuart and his partner Lizzie in West Marsh also talked about getting help in kind from a parent, in this case with the cost of a birthday party for their children, as well as more substantial financial help in the past financial with housing costs:

Interviewer: *So presumably it's a bit tough when it comes to kids birthdays and stuff is it?*

Lizzie: *We've got two, a week on Sunday and other one's two week after. I'm biting my nails.*

Stuart: *They're having a joint party in between both birthdays.*

Interviewer: *That's a good move.*

Lizzie: *Yeah it's a bit of a nightmare.*

Stuart: *At the church hall it is, it's not cheap either.*

Lizzie: *Compliments of Grandma, it's their birthday present.*

Interviewer: *I was going to say does Grandma help you out?*

Lizzie: *Yeah quite a lot.*

Stuart: *She is, she's brilliant.*

Lizzie: *She has to, she doesn't have to but she helps us out quite a lot and she's not got a lot really.*

Interviewer: *Do you feel all right about that?*

Lizzie: *No, I hate it. Sometimes I have actually got to ask and I hate having to but it's one of the things about living here.*

Interviewer: *Has she been here?*

Lizzie: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *She's visited you in this house?*

Lizzie: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *So at least she can see, she must be happy that....*

Lizzie: *She was the one that actually helped us to get this house financially.*

Support and assistance from family members, in the form of transfer payments, was an important source of income for respondents across the case studies. There were no obvious place-based variations in access to this particular form of support. This appears to reflect the fact that distance does not represent an unsustainable cost limiting access to this particular form of support. This is in stark contrast to the other forms of help, assistance and income that were reported to be provided by relatives, access to which typically reliant on people living in close proximity to family members, as we will now see.

Family members were often involved in the **provision of services** that people would otherwise have to pay for or do without. Examples referred to by older respondents included help around the house (maintenance and repairs) and transport (lifts to and from shops and doctors). Joe in Oxfgangs talked about how family members help him with DIY jobs around the house and with the gardening, jobs that he struggles with himself because of health problems. Vera, also in Oxfgangs, reported having health problems that made it difficult for her to manage her home and explained how her daughter-in-law helped her around the house, following problems with her home help:

Interviewer: *What about your shopping and stuff, do they help with that, your neighbours, or have you got family?*

Vera: *No, I had a home help because my breathing's getting so bad, I'm all right sitting but walking around the flat I get awfully breathless, I've got asthma, I used to smoke but it's been 20 years since I've stopped but I've still got it, but I had a home help used to come in for two hours and she kept coming and then she would nae come and then she came and then she would nae come and I could nae rely on here to get my milk and things like that because there was no milk, I could try and get the rest of the stuff and get a taxi home which I did today but she stopped. So my daughter in law, she has two days off a week but they're different days off, she works out at the airport and she'd come up and she does a wee bit of hoovering and she changes my bed. I mean I manage to do my ironing but the likes of moving that couch out, I can't do that myself, it's too heavy, the same with this chair but she can do it, we can do it between us but you know I can't do it otherwise.*

Isobel in West Marsh, Grimsby also talked about how her children and their families regularly called on her and her husband and helped out with the maintenance of the house and with shopping:

Interviewer: *So the people you're closest to are your family?*

Isobel: *Yeah that is more or less all we've got left now.*

Interviewer: *Do they provide a lot of support and help for you or is it more you giving it to them or is it a mix?*

Isobel: *No physically they're brilliant, if we want to go anywhere and we say we haven't got a car but Mike who's next door now, he does shift work, I'll say to him 'do you mind popping me to the shops?' 'course no problem' and he'll take me, and he's not actually me son in law, he's a partner, and my daughter, she works all day but she would do the same at night. Well Mike did the decorating for us, he used to be a painter and decorator, I said 'it really needs doing but I can't do it and Jim [husband] can't do it' 'oh I'll do it for you' and he set to and emulsioned everywhere for us which I thought was brilliant of him because our own son didn't. And the same with Sally [daughter], the one at Humberstone, even though she lives at Humberstone, she always comes down four days a week, she takes me to the shops or to Cleethorpes if we just go on the prom for a bag of chips*

Among younger respondents - in particular, women - regular and intermittent help with child care was an important form of support provided by family members. In some cases, family members were part of a complex tapestry of childcare that respondents put together in order to be able to work. Some respondents reported preferring informal childcare because of concerns about formal provision (child-minder or nursery), including safety, suitability and cost. Informal childcare provided by relatives was also reported to be a flexible option, that people could rely on at short notice, and to be an option available when formal provision was closed. Sandra in West Kensington, for example, reported putting her daughter in nursery while she is working during the week, but relying on family or her daughter's father for child care when she is working on a Saturday:

Interviewer: *And how do you manage with the child care?*

Sandra: *Well I put Lisa [daughter] in nursery on a Thursday and a Friday and I finish at 6 and I go and pick her up. On a Saturday night it's normally my mum that watches her or her dad'll come up here so she's in her bed kind of thing, because it's a night time and so it's light and I don't get back, it's normally nine o'clock I finish.*

Mel, a lone parent with two children (aged two years and ten months old) living in West Marsh, Grimsby, talked about moving in with her mother when she was pregnant, before securing a property near by, which allows her to pop in and visit her mum on a regular basis, to socialise, for advice and in search of a respite from the challenges of parenthood:

Interviewer: *How close is your mum?*

Mel: *I live down the road, that long road there.*

Interviewer: *How often do you see her?*

Mel: *She works at the hospital, she works three shifts a week and the rest of the week I normally see her. We always pop down.*

Interviewer: *Would you say you're quite close?*

Mel: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *And did she help you out?*

Mel: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *What sort of things would she do for you?*

Mel: *She has the kids, we go there every Sunday for dinner and she just pops out, if I'm feeling down she'll say 'come on let's go out' or she comes round and when I was pregnant she did my washing, drying and ironing for me.*

Mel was working part-time as a hairdresser and was also about to start college on an evening, on the basis that her mother and other relatives would help look after the children:

Interviewer: *How many nights a week [is college]?*

Mel: *Three evenings, well me hairdressing's 6-9 over two evenings and the beauty is 1-9 on a Wednesday. The school would look after him till 6 then either me mum, me dad, me sister, their dad, he'd come and either pick 'em up at 6 or earlier if he's finished work and bring 'em back.*

Respondents who were grandparents frequently reported spending much of their free time looking after grandchildren. Winnie in Hillside, for example, reported often looking after her five grandchildren on an evening, when her son is out at work, while their other grandmother looks after them during the day when their mother is out at work:

Interviewer: *Yeah cos you have a bit of independence then don't you?*

Winnie: *Well mine tends to go on me grandkids.*

Interviewer: *Yeah, how many grandkids?*

Winnie: *Five*

Interviewer: *And do you look after them quite a bit?*

Winnie: *Oh yes, they'll be coming down tonight ... I 'ave them over the weekend cos me son's wife she works late and then sometimes I have to go and baby-sit because he works on the taxis ... so I go and do me little bit and help out because 'er mum has them of a day if you know what I mean, when she's at work and it's not every day, she has a couple of days off but, 'er mum mostly has them of a day so if I can do my bit like tonight till about 8 o'clock and then they'll take them home.*

Interviewer: *So she'll bring them to your house?*

Winnie: *He'll drop them off, pick them up and drop them off. If you look out there tonight you'll probably see me playing tennis or football in the road with them.*

Safa in Wensley Fold explained that it is important for her to live close to her sister because they were mutually reliant on each other's help to get-by on a day to day basis. This included looking after each other's children so they can do various chores or can go out; a frequently reported benefit of the informal child care provided by family members was that it allowed parents the space to enjoy some time together or to maintain a social life. Safa therefore reported being very pleased when they ended up living next door to each other after having to leave their previous house because it was being demolished as part of the housing market renewal programme in the area:

Interviewer: *Do you think that your life would be different if you lived somewhere else, whether that was in Blackburn or outside of Blackburn?*

Safa: *I think it would be completely different. The best thing about it because I never thought me and my sister would be next door to each other and that's the biggest opportunity we've got because in our old house living together in one house and then we were, we had to move and that and we thought I'll be living somewhere and she'll be living somewhere else and because of our kids being so small and that we need that help with them and that and we got help, we got houses next door to each other so I think that's the best thing.*

Interviewer: *You seem really pleased about it?*

Safa: *Yeah I am, I've come here, she's with the kids and whenever she needs to go out I'll be with the kids and she can go out.*

The sharing of sustenance between family members often extended to include **advice, emotional support and comradery**, which often proved important to well-

being and quality of life. Donald, a respondent in West Marsh, Grimsby, described a dense, locally (Grimsby) based family network that provided him with comradery and emotional support:

Interviewer: *What family have you got living round this area?*

Donald: *I've got my brother, my sister as well because they live together. I've got me mam, she lives in Cleethorpes, I've got me dad, he lives on, I don't know I'd class it as the Grange or the Nunny, Grange I would say, that's in Grimsby. Most of my family's still round here.*

Interviewer: *And would you see them every week?*

Donald: *At the minute I'm not talking to me dad [laughs]. If I'm honest I see my Uncle more than anybody I do, and he lives down [street name] Grimsby, which is walking distance again, either that or I just get on the old pedal and go out on the bike...if I've got nothing to do, I'm bored out my head, I can either go to visit me mam, me cousin, I've got choices, even me ex sister in law I still go round there and we're still mates, me and her, we used to fight like cat and dog, we never got on at all but now we're like that [indicating closeness] so like I say I've got a pool match tonight, next week, I can go to me ex sister in law's, have a quick cup of tea and that and then go to the club 'cos it's like round the corner from the club. There's still that connection between me and her you see so...*

Donald was currently out of work and explained how contact with family helps him deal with boredom:

Donald: *when me partner's out it does get lonely I'll admit, it does get lonely looking at four walls all the time but once I've got, if I've got my kids over the weekend, I've got my mind occupied but sometimes I'll go on the computer and talk to me family on that one cos most of them are on the internet like. I don't plan anything cos I could wake up tomorrow and think 'I'll do that and do that and do that' and then it'll just go pear shaped but I go see me uncle quite often cos we exchange DVDs and videos and films and what not, go round there for a cup of tea and that, basically I keep my mind occupied so I don't go insane [laughs].*

Zara, a respondent in Oxgangs, also described a locally focused network of family contact and support, but her case also illustrates how different family members, by virtue of their relationship with an individual, the resources at their disposal and geographical proximity, can play different roles and provide different forms of support and assistance. Zara reported that her mother's former partner who lives in the neighbourhood is a source of emotional support, while her brother who lives in an adjacent neighbourhood provides practical and financial support and her father who lives elsewhere in the city is a source of emotional support via regular contact on the phone:

Interviewer: *If I said who are the people closest to you in the neighbourhood who would you say?*

- Zara: *My mate Callum he's a friend about my ma's age, growing up he was always there, he was my mum's boyfriend and he kens what my mum's like so he's sort of there like emotionally if I want to talk to him about anything and I would say him and my wee brother, he's staying at Collerton Mains [adjacent neighbourhood], him and his wife, no his wife but she might as well be.*
- Interviewer: *So it's a very close friend and your brother, so is Callum is he here in Oxfangs?*
- Zara: *Aye*
- Interviewer: *And your brother's over at Collerton Mains?*
- Zara: *Aye*
- Interviewer: *So emotionally you said he understood the history and some of the past. What other support do you get from them, is it financial, practical, all those things?*
- Zara: *Well it's financial and just family stuff and shopping at Asda because they have a car, things like that.*
- Interviewer: *So will he go and take you there and then drop you off with all your shopping?*
- Zara: *Aye*
- Interviewer: *What about if you were short of money?*
- Zara: *My wee brother would help me out or Callum if he had it.*
 Interviewer: *Do you find that you need to borrow money now more than you did or, you said you're just getting used to budgeting and you've got your tax credit?*
- Zara: *I'm getting used to budgeting but I would say I borrowed more the last time I spoke to you because I was unemployed, I never had as much money and I never had a wee bit to put aside, whereas now I have a wee bit and even if I use that I have my wee brother that I can get money from as well and I have Callum and I could phone up my dad and he'd give me it.*
- Interviewer: *You mentioned your dad before, does he live round here?*
- Zara: *No we talk on the phone every day, he's always on the phone to us but he helps me out if I need it.*

It is difficult to establish the relative importance of these different sources of income to the well-being of respondents, but there is little doubting that they represent an important source of income, in addition to wages and welfare payments, that help respondents cope (emotionally, practically and financially) on an intermittent or ongoing basis. This fact was reflected in the importance that some respondents placed on living close to other family members. This was particularly true among people who were facing a particular upheaval, challenge or change in their life. For example, a number of respondents talked about relocating to be close to their parents upon having a baby or upon losing a job and struggling financially. Nigel,

for example, talked about needing someone to 'lean on' when explaining why he had moved back to West Kensington:

Interviewer: *What made you come back to London?*

Nigel: *Missing home innit. Miss being in my own town. Miss this place, just missed home, had enough of going, getting no help or surviving by myself and not having family to lean on now and then, it does make a difference.*

Interviewer: *So you've got people around you here that can offer you support?*

Nigel: *Support yeah, that's what I need, a little guidance really. Yeah I just wanted to come back home, sort my life out, start working, stop signing on the dole and that.*

Rebecca was less explicit about the reasons for returning to Hillside after moving to a city elsewhere in the UK, merely observing that she had been returning every two weeks to see family and therefore decided to come back to the neighbourhood where most of her close relatives were living:

Rebecca: *at first I didn't really want to come back because we were living in a flat down there and we had no children and I felt all right living in the flat but I was coming home every two weeks to see my family and then it was starting to get to me, and it made me decide to come back.*

Interviewer: *So are the family ties in the area quite important to you?*

Rebecca: *Yes*

Interviewer: *So who do you have that's living close by now then?*

Rebecca: *Two brothers, two sisters, another sister who lives in Knowsley village ... and one lives down near [name of park].*

For similar reasons, some respondents explained that they were reluctant to relocate to another area because they wanted to remain close to family:

Interviewer: *Sure. Do you think that your life would be different if you did live somewhere else?*

Robbie: *I wouldn't want to live somewhere else cos I'm quite happy here in the life that I've got.*

Interviewer: *So if you absolutely had to move away from here what would you miss?*

Robbie: *I'd miss my family because like my Gran just stays down the road, my Gran actually lived in this house before my mum and dad, my mum grew up in this house so it's always been a house that's been in our family and then eventually they've bought a house, but just the fact that all my friends, nobody's moved far away, everybody's within walking distance and if you need anybody to help you there's always somebody that's here.*

3.4 Providing Support and Sustenance

The family relationships associated with the generation and sharing of resources were, in some cases, rooted in the neighbourhood, but ongoing place-based relationships and attendant practices were not critical to the sharing of resources between family members. Rather, productive family relations appeared to be rooted in an emotional commitment to kin, which engendered a willingness to support a family member, sometimes at significant cost or inconvenience to the support provider.

This willingness did not always extend to all family members. Indeed, respondents often talked about providing assistance to and receiving help from particular family members, while having little or nothing to do with other family members, who they were 'not close to', had lost contact with, had fallen out with or who were 'busy' with their own lives. Some respondents also expressed a reluctance to ask for or seek help from their family and talked about wanting to maintain their independence and privacy. However, where support was forthcoming, it often involved a significant commitment on behalf of the family member providing assistance.

Stephanie was living in West Kensington and explained that she could not leave the area because of the support she received from her family and her responsibility for looking after her grandmother:

Stephanie: *I asked [local authority] if I could stay in Fulham, I didn't want to leave that area, I asked to stay in Fulham, not to be moved far so they gave me this place.*

Interviewer: *Why did you want to stay in Fulham?*

Stephanie: *This is where I've grown up, I don't know any other area so I didn't want to live outside, and my family's close as well.*

Interviewer: *Is that important?*

Stephanie: *Yeah as I've got two kids as well I need them [family] around.*

Interviewer: *Do they help support you with the children?*

Stephanie: *Yeah, yeah*

Interviewer: *Ok. Are you pleased then that you've moved here and you weren't moved out of the area?*

Stephanie: *I'm still actually waiting for my permanent, so this is just temporary but yeah I'm really pleased to have moved anywhere local from my Gran, it didn't really bother me where, what estate it was, a house, a flat, it was just somewhere near my Nan.*

Interviewer: *And that was really important?*

Stephanie: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *Do you do a lot for your Nan then?*

Stephanie: *Yeah I help out, she doesn't speak English.*

- Interviewer: *Where is she from?*
- Stephanie: *We're Columbian, so she speaks Spanish.*
- Interviewer: *Do you go there every day?*
- Stephanie: *Yeah*
- Interviewer: *What sort of things do you do for her?*
- Stephanie: *Well right now she's got the decorators in so it was just mainly to stay there with her, she's all right and if they need something when they ask her she won't understand, letters that she'll get through she won't be able to read or understand, to help her with the shopping as well.*
- Interviewer: *So making sure that she is happy and comfortable in the area and she understands what's happening?*
- Stephanie: *Yeah*

The sense of duty underpinning Stephanie's dedication to looking after her Nan was invoked by other respondents to explain the commitment they made to looking after an elderly or sick relative, often at great sacrifice to themselves. Kelly, in Knowsley, recounted being a full time carer for her father, who moved in with her for the last eight years of his life, and also providing a home for her daughter and her two children. Implicit within Kelly's reflections on her role as a carer was the notion that it was something she 'had to do'. In a similar vein, Nusrat, in Wensley Fold, talked about it being her responsibility to look after her father and disabled brother, who lived nearby in Wensley Fold, as well as her own family:

- Interviewer: *I make my dad lunch and dinner, provide it for them cos they're quite old and I have a disabled brother living there so I go back and it's like going back in time, it's nice to catch up, it's good.*
- Interviewer: *Have you always had those responsibilities then?*
- Nusrat: *Since mum died and I have two brothers actually and one brother's got married, his wife wasn't prepared to live with my dad and my brother and they had to move out so from then onwards, I think it's about five years now really that I've been taking care of my brother and my dad as well as my own family.*

Such responsibilities served to tie some respondents to the neighbourhood, despite a preference to relocate. Ronald, for example, talked about being tied to West Kensington, despite his preference to move elsewhere, because of his responsibility for looking after his father:

- Ronald: *If my dad wasn't here and somebody said 'would you move out?' yes I would but I wouldn't at the moment because I'm the only one that looks after him. I've got older brothers and a sister and it's always been me and although I'm the baby I looked after my mum when she was ill and then I look after my dad and I won't go anywhere until he I'd love to move over nearer my daughter but I can't do that and leave my dad.*

Interviewer: *So the reason why you stay here is for your dad not because...*

Ronald: *Not for me any more.*

Interviewer: *If you dad wasn't here would you like to move away?*

Ronald: *Well I say yes but then my work is only a 20 minute walk away so there's lots of reasons ...People say 'I'm surprised you're still there, why don't you do something about it' easy for you to say but I certainly wouldn't leave my dad so while he's there I'm not even going to think about it, there's no point.*

Interviewer: *No, you wouldn't take him with you?*

Ronald: *He wouldn't go, my dad's very, very stubborn he wouldn't go ... what he says has to be and you have to abide by what he says, but I just think at his age why not? He's done enough for me so why not repay him really, he's quite happy over there, he knows I'm here if he needs anything. He had his phone disconnected, he doesn't want anyone phoning, if anyone needs to know how he feels or what's going on he tells me, I'm his lifeline.*

There were also examples of people moving to be close to family members, in order to provide support and assistance. Holly, for example, reported that her son had moved back to Grimsby from the South East of England following an attempted suicide attempt by her husband:

Interviewer: *So just to clarify, so there's yourself and your husband lives here?*

Holly: *And my son.*

Interviewer: *Right and does he work in the area?*

Holly: *He works from home. My husband's off sick at the moment, attempted suicide but it wasn't [whispering], so my son works from home, that way he can pop in and out. If there's anything I need he can.*

Interviewer: *Right, so he moved with you when you moved [to West Marsh]?*

Holly: *No he didn't, he moved up [from the South East] with us, didn't settle in at all, went back, but he wasn't happy down there and I think he knew when he came to visit me he could see I was struggling so then he moved up here, sort of does jobs for me round the house, things that I would have to pay for he does, fitted a new kitchen in and this sort of thing you know. Family's about helping each other isn't it?*

Interviewer: *Absolutely, it must be a real help to you then?*

Holly: *Oh he is yes, any problems I always rely on him, it's very useful.*

Stan and his wife have two sons who have both had children in the last 18 months. As well as providing a place for them to stay while their accommodation is decorated and providing financial help refitting the accommodation (for example, buying a new carpet), Stan and his wife also help with child care on a regular and ongoing basis:

Stan: *I've got two sons, one discovered they were pregnant and then the other one discovered they were pregnant the day after so they were actually due in the first week of January last year, we got one at the last week of December and one in the first week of February and then the one who had the one in February obviously she'd been off from her work for three months, went back to work, discovered she was pregnant again, she's just had one five weeks ago so it's been a very busy 18 months.*

Interviewer: *And you're down there visiting a lot?*

Stan: *Oh aye. The last eight weeks they've been up staying with us because no having, they're redecorating their room, they didn't want to take a wee baby with all the decorations and a building site so they're staying with us but that's just for a bit. I was away getting a carpet for them this morning.*

Interviewer: *What about the child care, are you going to be helping out with that?*

Stan: *We're helping out because obviously they're both families with one of them working and hopefully all four of them will get into work so we probably will wind up looking after the kids, we see them three, four times a week anyway so it's just like having them back in the house all the time, they're never out our pocket so... that's what your mum and dad's for, aye.*

Interviewer: *I know it's early days but also the cost of child care and then working it's a big...*

Stan: *Aye it'll save a lot of money and we like having the kids, it's a good thing for us.*

Many of the parents interviewed appeared to accept that they had an ongoing duty of care for their children, which did not stop just because they had grown up, left home and, in some cases, now had a family of their own. Harold in Amlwch philosophically remarked that "it's the bank of mum and dad" when reflecting on the financial support that he and his wife provide to their daughters

Harold: *I love work. Me dad was the same ... I enjoy having the money, we were out yesterday in Holyhead doing a bit of shopping, helped me daughter out with some money and out again tomorrow. I was out last with me daughter, me youngest daughter just split with her husband and he's not paying anything for the kids and working tax credit hasn't come through because she's working so many hours a week so we had to pay the rent which was £260 ... that's how it was.*

- Interviewer: *So have you helped them out in the past or is just recently when they've got into difficulties?*
 Harold: *Mine seem to come in... it happens every now and again, the circumstances change and things happen.*
- Interviewer: *But you'd support them?*
- Harold: *Yeah I mean it's the bank of mum and dad isn't it? We're never going to be rich as long as we've got kids. They've left home and got homes of their own and we're still helping them out.*
- Interviewer: *You mentioned the kids have got kids, do you get involved in child care?*
- Harold: *Me wife was doing yeah, Kim's using a child minder at the moment which we've been giving her half to but her tax credit's come through so that's a weight lifted off our shoulders now. We'll stay in, I don't smoke, I don't barely drink apart from on me holidays I'll have a few beers, we don't go out, don't eat in restaurants.*

In some cases, parents had loaned or gifted large sums of money to their children. Samuel, in Amlwch, for example reported that his father gave him £3,000 to pay off his debts:

- Samuel: *I had personal debts, my dad ended up bailing me out £3,000.*
- Interviewer: *What sort of debt was that, credit cards and stuff?*
- Samuel: *Yeah, personal debts to friends and stuff like that yeah. Everyone tried to help me out but in the end me dad borrowed me £3,000 ... He's given me it basically. I'd like to pay him back but I'm just not in a position to at the moment.*
- Interviewer: *And how do you feel after...?*
- Samuel: *It was pretty grim, I didn't want to borrow it*
- Interviewer: *Did he volunteer to lend you the money or how did it happen? Did you ask, did it just happen?*
- Samuel: *It just happened when I was going into hospital, he was just saying 'just tell me what you've been up to' so I had to tell him the truth basically then.*

The form and nature of the resources made available through family networks was informed by the geography of the family network. More dispersed family networks often represented an 'unsupportable cost', rendering various forms of support inaccessible. Examples of support and assistance less accessible to dispersed members of a family network included practical help about the house (for example, DIY tasks), help getting around (for example, shopping trips to the supermarket), help with child care, providing a place to stay at a time of accommodation crisis, opportunities for socialising and comradery and emergency assistance (for example, when burgled or when unwell or ill). Face-to-face engagement with more dispersed members of a family network was therefore typically limited to intermittent visits, with

contact maintained and support offered through telephone conversations, text and email contact.

The differential forms of support and assistance provided by proximate and distant relations is well illustrated by the case of Geraldine, a lone parent with two children living in West Marsh, Grimsby. Geraldine reported that her mother and father had left Grimsby and relocated to a town some 50 miles away in North Yorkshire. Geraldine explained that she could not afford the rail fare to visit her parents. She therefore only saw her parents when they drove down to visit or came and picked Geraldine and the children up and took them back to North Yorkshire for a visit, which they did every couple of months of so. However, her children keep in regular contact with their grandparents through telephone calls and letters:

Interviewer: *So how often do you see your mum or do your mum and dad come here?*

Geraldine: *Yeah they're coming this weekend, I don't go there very often cos I haven't got any transport and going on the train and that it's just extortionate. Sometimes my mum even comes to pick me up, it's like 35, 40 quid round trip, it's a lot of money, but yeah we get to see them probably every couple of months which isn't enough but...*

Interviewer: *Kids get on with them do they?*

Geraldine: *Oh adore them, me daughter speaks to me mum every day, the minute she gets in the door, 'can I ring me granny' 'yeah go on then' every day and me mum sends us letters and they write letters to me mum and email and so yeah we're still... and as I say me brother, he just lives near the college and we see him nearly every day, nips in nearly every day.*

In contrast, Geraldine explained how her brother, who lived nearby in Grimsby, was a source of day-to-day practical help and assistance, particularly with child care, which was critical in allowing her to pursue a college course:

Interviewer: *So has he [brother] got family?*

Geraldine: *No he's on his own and he works, but he is me rock me brother, I couldn't do what I do without [name of brother], I mean especially going to college and that, he was the one who took her [daughter] to school when I had a course and you know he was... and still now, he's brilliant, I couldn't do half without him and I do feel so sorry for these young lasses that have got nobody, I don't know how they cope, you know got no family round them and nobody'll help them, it's such a shame.*

Interviewer: *So you needed that?*

Geraldine: *Oh yeah*

Interviewer: *You say with the college particularly?*

Geraldine: *Yeah especially me course yeah...*

Interviewer: *Just by practically...*

- Geraldine: *Yeah if I was to say 'I've got a course and it doesn't finish till 5' 'oh I'll pick the kids up from school for you' and it's sometimes just an hour, that's all it is, or when they're off school we sometimes do courses here, obviously when the kids aren't at school and he'll have the kids for the day for me and you know, you do need it, especially when you're working and doing adult education, you just need it.*
- Interviewer: *Absolutely, it's good that you've got him here isn't it?*
- Geraldine: *Certainly*

3.5 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that bonds of necessity are alive and well in family networks, and represent an important source of support and assistance that serve to help people 'get by' in an increasingly privatised and individualised society. The sustenance provided by family members was found to take three essential forms: transfer payments, including gifts and loans of money; services, including child care, help managing and maintaining the home and transportation; and emotional support. Respondents also often turned to family members for help in times of crisis or emergency.

Access to the support of family members was found to depend upon willingness of an individual to seek help from family members; the nature of relations between family members; and the capacity and willingness of family members to provide support. The form and nature of support accessible through family networks, in part, reflected the geography of this network, more dispersed networks tending to render the provision of various forms of support (such as the services including child care) more problematic. More dispersed networks were more readily apparent among younger people and in case studies characterised by turbulence that were home to people with a personal history of residential mobility (in particular, West Marsh, West Kensington and Hillside).

4. Friends

4.1 Introduction

Friends represented an important source of support and assistance for many respondents. In some cases, strong bonds existed between friends, facilitating the transfer of forms of sustenance – including financial help and child care - that proved critical in helping people to 'get by'. More commonly, friends proved an important source of emotional support, advice and comradery, as well as a source of transactions, involving the exchange of small services and forms of assistance, particularly in times of crisis and emergency. Friendships within the local neighbourhood were more apparent among longer-term residents.

4.2 Friendship Networks

Friendship networks varied in form, content and geography. In part, these variations reflected the life history of respondents. In some cases, relationships with neighbours had developed into bonds of friendship which provided enduring and committed emotional and social support that went beyond mere sociability. In particular, respondents who had resided in the same location for a relatively long period appeared most likely to report neighbouring relations that had manifested into friendships and involved the forging of attachments and emotional bonds and facilitated ongoing interaction and associated transactions. Such relations were evident in a small number of cases in each case study area, but were most readily apparent in Amlwch, Wensley Fold and Oxgangs, where it was more common for respondents to have lived in the area for many years, if not all their life. Close social bonds had often developed as a consequence of growing up together or sharing similar experiences, such as attending a particular school.

The intimacy of these bonds is evident in the way that some respondents, such as Christina in West Kensington and May in Oxgangs, talked about the family-like quality of relationships:

Christina: *Some of them, especially number three, I can – we're like family... there's only nine houses, that's the reason why we're so close to each other. .. Matthew's house is number four, which is his Nan, and his Nan is like a second grandmother to my son.*
Christina West Ken, 30-34

May: *We all was like a big family, we could go to one another if we needed anything or needed help and that.*
May Oxgangs, 65+

In some case studies, redevelopment of the neighbourhood had served to fracture such friendship networks. This was particularly apparent in Hillside, where a number of respondents or their friends or relatives had been relocated during the NDC's regeneration programme. Curt, for example, a young single man living in Knowsley

talked about missing his friends after moving to a neighbouring area during the regeneration of Hillside:

Interviewer: *So you moved from Hillside to Primalt. And that's quite a significant move isn't it?*

Curt: *Yeah it is.*

Interviewer: *Tell me about that, how did you feel about it?*

Curt: *I felt, I didn't really think it'd be that bad because it's quite close isn't it, but it was cos I didn't see most of me mates cos most of me mates still lived in Hillside and then they moved and it was ok but I still miss Hillside cos I lived there for like 14 years.*

Interviewer: *So when they said you were going to have to move you mustn't have been very happy?*

Curt: *No I wasn't cos it was 'ard moving and I knew I'd miss everyone but I didn't think I'd miss 'em as bad as I did.*

Demolition and new build activity were also a feature of recent regeneration programmes in Wensley Fold and Oxgangs. However, activity in these neighbourhoods had not been as extensive as the redevelopment programme in Hillside and did not appear to have been as disruptive to localised friendship networks. Nusrat in Wensley Fold, for example, reported that the house she was living in was demolished as part of the housing market renewal programme in the neighbourhood, but that she subsequently moved into a new property in the neighbourhood only a short walk away from where she had previously lived, allowing her to maintain the close ties she had with friends and relatives in the surrounding streets. Eleanor in Oxgangs had also been required to move from her previous home because of plans to demolish the block of flats she was living in. However, she was also relocated to a property nearby, allowing her to maintain the friendships she reported developing as a result of living in close proximity to her neighbours in the blocks of flats:

Interviewer: *You mentioned having friends over, are your friends living locally?*

Eleanor: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *So you've got quite a lot...*

Eleanor: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *That you've known for a long time?*

Eleanor: *Yeah got lots of friends, well we were in the flats for 11 years and we've been here for 6½ so it's coming up to 18 years altogether that we've been staying here and most of the people that we know also all lived in the flats as well and that's how we got to know them in the first place but they demolished all three blocks of flats and everybody got moved.*

Interviewer: *But didn't move far?*

Eleanor: *A lot of people stayed within Oxfgangs yeah,*

The friendship networks of respondents with a limited history of residential mobility tended to be more geographically bounded. Julie, for example, reported friendships rooted in the different neighbourhoods in Grimsby where she had lived, but had few ties beyond the town:

Interviewer: *Who would you say you're closest to?*

Julie: *I've got quite a lot of friends and they live all over place. There's two or three friends that are neighbours that live close by, the lady that used to live at the bottom of my garden when I was round there, we're very close, there's the couple that have had the baby, I help them, they help me and we get on really well, unfortunately the lady that was on the other side of the road from me, she died March time but she was always popping in and I made sure that she was all right. Friends wise I've got them scattered all over the place but we see each other regularly.*

Interviewer: *In Grimsby?*

Julie: *In Grimsby as well as outside of Grimsby, I have a friend that lives where I used to live in Lazeby Acres, we've been friends for 15 years.*

Interviewer: *Is this inside town or outside town?*

Julie: *Just outside of town is [name of neighbourhood], it's a big new estate. A friend that I've known for 25 years has just moved into the area so that we're closer together and she's got grandkids so we spend a lot of time with them. My family live in Huddersfield so it's only contact with the phone at the minute, I'm going down in September to see them. And of course my boys, the youngest still lives with me, but my eldest lad is moving to Immingham shortly.*

People with a history of residential mobility tended to have more dispersed friendship networks. Waseem was one of a number of respondents in West Kensington who had no strong ties to the area and described a friendship network extending across London and beyond:

Interviewer: *What about friends, what role do friends play in your life?*

Waseem: *Quite a big role I guess, there's a few close friends and then a broader circle of work friends who I still socialise with a fair bit, quite a few of them outside work at weekends and things and there are a few guys that I work with that I've been away with a couple of times and a couple of weekends away and a holiday.*

Interviewer: *Where are they based, are they around here?*

Waseem: *One of them is but mostly my friends don't live in this area, friends from university tend to be dotted around London, so if we meet we tend to meet in central London and if I'm socialising with work friends normally it's straight after work*

- Interviewer: *but if we do socialise at weekends then most of them tend to be in east London cos that's where I work. Do you have much to do with neighbours?*
- Waseem: *Not very much, just hello and that's it really.*
- Interviewer: *Does that concern you?*
- Waseem: *Not really I don't, I think you should be polite and so on and if there was a problem be able to say 'music's a bit loud' or whatever but...*
- Interviewer: *So you wouldn't really want to be particularly friendly with them?*
- Waseem: *No I don't want to be going round for cups of tea and that kind of thing, the people I'm friends with are the people that I've chosen to be friends with and actually there might be some very nice people amongst my neighbours that I would like to be friends with but equally I don't know, I think it's important to say hello and recognise each other but I don't want to... part of me as well there just doesn't seem to be enough time to socialise with the people I socialise with, family and friends as it is, my fiancé and I tend to be very busy socially I was away last weekend and the weekend before that and we're at a wedding not this weekend but the weekend after that so I don't know, and we both tend to work, sometimes we do work quite late and I will during our busiest time every month, and it's just trying to find time to do the laundry and keep the house tidy as well as everything else.*
- Interviewer: *So time is a real issue then?*
- Waseem: *I think time is probably the biggest issue.*

More geographically dispersed friendship networks were also informed by spatial routines of daily life that extended beyond the area of residence, for example, for reasons of work or education. The workplace and sites of education and training (schools, colleges and universities) represented centres of interaction that brought people into close proximity. Contact did not inevitably lead to intimacy and close friendships, but against this backdrop of routine associated with work, education and training some people did develop friendships that involved the exchanges of support and small services. Ralph in Grimsby, for example, worked three 12 hour shifts a week and reported knowing few people where he was living, other than immediate neighbours to say 'hello' to. However, he had developed a close friendship with work colleagues, who would come around for a chat and a drink on an evening and who had been helping him with DIY around the house:

- Interviewer: *What about where you work?*
- Ralph: *Yeah*
- Interviewer: *And how do you get there?*
- Ralph: *Company transport, they put a coach on and they pick up.*

- Interviewer: *So do you socialise with any people that work there or is it just a small social network round here?*
- Ralph: *To tell you the truth I haven't got many friends round here cos...*
- Interviewer: *You've only just got back?*
- Ralph: *Yeah but a friend from work, he comes round, like today, he does a bit of joinery work for me and such like so, which is cheaper than getting somebody you don't know.*

Similarly, Graham in Amlwch talked about there being people in the local area that he would “shake hands and have a chat and a laugh with” but commented that “we’re not in each other’s houses, everyone has their own life and gets on with things”. Graham went on to observe that his closest friendships are with work colleagues and he went onto reflect on a “certain comradeship” that comes from working together “on the boats”.

The contacts made by people at work were typically with people from outside their neighbourhood and there was little evidence of any significant overlap between work and neighbourhood contacts; neighbours and work associates were not the same people. The resulting dispersed nature of work-related personal networks could serve to undermine the development of stronger ties out of work if the distance involved represented an unsupportable cost.

Another important aspect of work relations was the extent to which the nature of a person’s work could serve to limit workplace contacts to a particular group. A good example of this phenomenon was a Portuguese migrant worker who reported that most of the people he knew in Grimsby he had met through work and were from Poland and Iraq. However, in addition, he did report having developed a strong friendship with an English colleague:

- Interviewer: *Do you have any English friends?*
- Aleksy: *I have yeah, is nice yeah, nice. I have another one work with me, he's 63 or so, he's ok, sometimes it's like dad, she said already, I think he's like nearly your second father, if I need something or if I am something I go to him and he already know because he have more experience in it, in the life, and he say 'oh yeah do like this or do like that' so he's ok. But he don't live here in Grimsby, he lives..not far away from here though, he lives there.*

Most respondents were not currently in (voluntary or paid) work and so had no access to work related contacts. Some people, however, did report strong networks of friendship that had originated at work and survived either being made redundant or retirement.

A final finding of note was that in some cases the mobility of friends served to extend the geographically bounded networks of respondents who were less mobile. Callum, for example, had never moved outside Grimsby, but had an extensive network of friends in West Marsh, across the town and beyond:

- Interviewer: *Do your friends live around here?*

- Callum: *I've got one who lives next door, one who lives across the road, there's a couple all over town basically, all over, some that live in Louth.*
- Interviewer: *Where's that?*
- Callum: *It's about half an hour from here, just a little town, not far from here.*
- Interviewer: *Who would you say you're closest to and where do they live?*
- Callum: *I dunno, I've got a massive lot of friends, I've got quite a diverse groups of friends as well, different backgrounds, different groups, because I'm the sort of person who gets on with quite a lot of people, got a big diverse lot of friends.*
- Interviewer: *So you're closest to your mates and they're all scattered around?*
- Callum: *Yeah, yeah, I always make an effort for people so... and quite a lot of my older mates, cos I'm obviously older, most of them are married and settled down now so I don't get to see them now, they've got kids and things like that. Facebook as well, you meet a lot of people that way as well, especially if they live out of town.*
- Interviewer: *You mean new people or get in touch...*
- Callum: *Get in touch with old people from school and like my mate, I used to hang round with him, he lives in London now, I haven't seen him for ages ... I used to live with him and he went to London to work and Facebook you can keep in contact with that now so that's quite good. And texting, no-one ever rings now it's always texting, but it's helped me out with my dyslexia, but it's a lot of short texts so there's a lot of cheating as well so you find you write like it as well, texts, so it's not a good thing sometimes, my paperwork at work, it's quite funny.*
- Interviewer: *Do you go out with people you work with at Tesco's?*
- Callum: *Yeah I do, I think that's why I've got a big list of friends, obviously from other places, college, nights out you meet people, things like that. I think you hang around with sometimes quite a lot of people you work with as well and go out a bit more, the group you work with. But then again I know people from work but my friends hang around with them as well now because I've introduced them on nights out and like had a big Halloween party here last year and everyone met and they get on and go out and stuff like that or come here for a few drinks and go out.*

Callum was not the only younger respondent to comment on how the use of networking web-sites, such as Facebook, helped them to maintain friendships over greater distances and to prevent the breakdown of ties, despite face-to-face meetings being infrequent or rare. In contrast, Isobel, a retired women living in West Marsh with her husband, reported how distance proved to be a unsupportable cost and had weakened friendship ties:

Isobel: *Believe it or not I haven't any friends. I have to say, we've lost them over the years, we always went out of town to [name of village]. We belonged the darts team and dominos and things and we always socialised out of town and of course once the car went our social life went. My husband did occasionally go into the [name of pub] but that's been shut down for years so...*

Interviewer: *So there's nowhere around?*

Isobel: *No*

Interviewer: *When did the car go then?*

Isobel: *I can't remember... about 2000 I think, quite a long time.*

Interviewer: *That must have been a bit of a loss then, being cut off?*

Isobel: *Yeah it was.*

Interviewer: *You say you went out of town to socialise, why was that?*

Isobel: *Well we found people pleasanter, they were a lot nicer out of town, you walked in and everybody spoke to you.*

Interviewer: *How did you get into that then?*

Isobel: *Well my husband used to go, it was his friend who was a Londoner who used to go, how he went I don't know but when my husband worked with him and he said 'would you like to come out one night with me' because his wife didn't go out and of course I didn't because I'd got young children so they used to travel there, how they came about it I've never thought to think, 25 years we went there.*

Interviewer: *How far out of town is it?*

Isobel: *In between Grimsby and Louth ... we used to go there and got into the darts and got quite a reputation as good darts players actually, we've won one or two trophies and I used to love it then because my husband's always done shift work and even when he was at work one of the team would take me because I was a valuable player.*

4.3 Support and Sustenance From Friends

In some instances, friends represented a source of income that took the form of transfer payments, including financial gifts and informal loans. This form of sustenance was typically underpinned by strong bonds and an emotional commitment between friends nurtured over many years. More commonly, however, friends served as an important source of emotional support and comradery. Shirley in Oxgangs explained how she could turn to her friends, who lived in the same stairwell, whenever she was feeling down and needed someone to talk to:

- Interviewer: *Yeah, so if I said who are the people closest to you what would you say?*
- Shirley: *My neighbours downstairs, and if there's anything wrong I just go down to them.*
- Interviewer: *Do you have family?*
- Shirley: *My dad, my mum died 30 years ago and my step mother died two years ago so I've been going to see my dad once a week.*
- Interviewer: *So in terms of an emergency it would be your neighbours downstairs.*
- Shirley: *And I've got a friend who lives not far, just round the corner, down the hill and round the corner, she's somebody I've known... mind you I've known Deborah and John [neighbours] for years and they have problems, she's agoraphobic and my mum was agoraphobic but people have got lot of things in common. I think the first time we actually met them properly was when [son] had actually fallen downstairs and he'd heard a noise and came out, I was panicking of course and he said I was to go back upstairs and make a coffee, because I don't know what I would have done, he'd fallen down I don't know how many stairs but, and I thought 'It's going to be a hospital trip' but he got [son] up and made sure he was ok but after that you know, and we're the same, if there was any trouble there we would help them and you need to have people like that.*
- Interviewer: *So in terms of support then do they provide that emotional support?*
- Shirley: *Yes very much, because I suffer from depression as well so sometimes I've got to speak to somebody that knows exactly knows as well, I can talk to [son] about it as well but then I don't want him to worry about me, I can't talk to my dad because I don't think he understands so I talk to Deborah and John because he knows how she feels as well and I get a cuddle and all that and that's essential.*

Betty, also in Oxfangs, talked about how her and a friend supported each other through difficult times:

- Interviewer: *What support if you like do you get from these people? Your close circle?*
- Betty: *I've had a lot of support off them and I'm very, very grateful because I had two bad years that if it wasn't for them, I can't imagine, it would have been really bad.*
- Interviewer: *Are we talking about emotional support, financial support, practical?*
- Betty: *Everything, everything, that's how the group is, it's become my second family a lot of them so if it wasn't for them I don't think I would have coped very well.*

- Interviewer: *And do you think you support them equally? Is it a reciprocal arrangement?*
- Betty: *I have in some things yes, it depends on... because we're very different in a lot of ways to mysen so... I've helped her with her family, she's helped me with my family but there's other things that we both stay clear of, the family that she deals with through her family so it kind of works*
- Interviewer: *You tap into a bit of that, her support and she taps into you?*
- Betty: *Yeah we mix and match, if she wants to talk to me she'll talk to me, if I want to talk to her, we talk, it's good that way, we know each other enough to know what we need. She'll know me enough to say 'right she needs a kick up the backside' somewhere along the line so we know each other's ways in some ways.*
- Interviewer: *But it works?*
- Betty: *It works a way for us, it's good for us.*
- Interviewer: *What about financially? Do you lend them, do they lend you?*
- Betty: *No not that, occasionally maybe but it's not that kind of thing, it's more emotional*

It is interesting to note how Betty, like many people when talking about the support and assistance offered to and received from friends, drew the line at financial reciprocity. Jackie in Amlwch expressed a similar sentiment:

- Jackie: *Yeah yeah, they're so close around here, everyone knows everything and they're all friendly.*
- Interviewer: *Is that a good thing that everyone knows everything?*
- Jackie: *It is and it isn't, I think everyone likes their own space as well, there's a few people... you want to get out and just here, it's nice but sometimes it can be too much.*
- Interviewer: *So sometimes it's a good thing and you want their help and they're there it's good.*
- Jackie: *Yeah*
- Interviewer: *What about financial help, would you go to neighbours for that, have you got family round here that you can go to?*
- Jackie: *I've got my father up the road, but I'm independent, I like to do it myself, but I wouldn't ask people, my next door neighbour Mary would help but I would never ask, I'm independent, I like doing that myself.*

In contrast, emotional support from friends in managing a difficult period in their life or coping with distress or depression were common themes to emerge when respondents were asked to reflect upon any support or assistance they receive from

friends. This was particularly the case among the women interviewed. The importance of this support was emphasised by Robina, in West Kensington:

Robina: *[Daughter] is going to nursery so that gives me time to do what I want to do and I think for me that is... having a couple of friends who are very close but help me, take me, we can go there, we can sit down, before it was just work, home, kids and that's it, there was no social life, now I can say I do have a little bit of social life which I think is a benefit because you need some close friends that you can open up to and then you can just not have to worry about 'oh my gosh are they doing to tell somebody else or can I say that so I think that's something that really does make me happy now, that I am able to connect to a few of my friends and they to me and we have our own little group, three at the most but it's three to four and that's nice.*

Interviewer: *And it's an outlet for you?*

Robina: *Yes, mentally I think for me when you're at home and you're not mixing socially with anybody, you lose track about yourself, you lose interest in everything that you are connected to and for now I do realise that 'you know what let's do this, let's go there, let's do that'.*

Interviewer: *Does that make you feel good about yourself then?*

Robina: *Yeah it does, it makes me happy in a way that I am doing something right and I wish that all these things were in place beforehand and I hadn't kept everything within me and just... I mean there are times in your life when you do things for your family and you're very family oriented but now I do feel that to have a little bit of social life which I never ever had, because I never had the time.*

Interviewer: *So a bit of 'time for me' then?*

Robina: *It's a time for me yeah.*

Shirley, in Oxgangs, also described the importance of emotional support received from neighbours, explaining how the practical support offered by a neighbour when her disabled partner had a serious fall developed into a long-term relationship through which both households became close friends:

Shirley: *We have got very nice friends downstairs that are quite good, [my partner] had fallen down the stairs once and I got such a shock and [the neighbour downstairs] brought [my partner] up and told me to go into his house and stay with his wife, that was how we met kind of thing ...we've got friends as neighbours.*

Interviewer: *So in terms of support then do they provide that emotional support?*

Shirley: *Yes very much, because I suffer from depression as well so sometimes I've got to speak to somebody ...and I get a cuddle and all that and that's essential.*

Interviewer: *And what about financial support, are you self sufficient?*

Shirley: *We're kind of self sufficient, actually we help other people out a lot of the time, Deborah and John downstairs, he's working but I don't think he gets very much and they sometimes get into dire straits so we've helped them.*

In this particular case, the friendship manifested itself through both a reliance on the emotional support provided as well as a reciprocal willingness to help each other out financially, when necessary. Another example of the benefits to flow from bonds of friendship discussed by women respondents was the in-kind payments and gifts received from friends. Carla in Amlwch, for example, talked about how her network of friends passed on children's clothes and toys, saving each other money in the process:

Carla: *I think we've all probably saved a fortune, small fortune by passing the clothes on or toys on when one family's grown out of it and they say 'do you want this?' and it goes onto the next family so it'll easy do two or three families, or some clothes till they get work out and then go straight in the recycling bin or get rid of.*

The men interviewed tended to talk about socialising and valuing the comradery when discussing the benefits of friendship. Connor in West Kensington, for example, talked about having family scattered across London who he speaks to on the telephone almost everyday and if there was a problem would be "here in no time". Connor's friends were his drinking buddies, including former work colleagues who he periodically meets up with, and other regulars at his local pub:

Interviewer: *What about in terms of friends at work, did work have any role in that in terms of going out with your colleagues?*

Connor: *Yeah as it happens there's half a dozen of us of the old guard who we still meet for a drink, not to often, ... and we have a yarn about the old days on the road, but we do enjoy each other, they're all more or less retired as well now.*

Connor: *Just the lads I meet in the pub, it's a local pub, and it's all local people use it and I know all them, we yarn about... we put the world to rights, football and politics.*

Interviewer: *How often would you go to the Clarence?*

Connor: *Once a week.*

Interviewer: *Would you arrange to meet the lads or they'd just be there?*

Connor: *No they'd be there yeah.*

Friends also represented a source of practical support when a need arose, for example at a time of crisis or emergency. Practical help appeared to be more readily available from friends living relatively close by, who were on hand to help out at short notice. Sarah in West Kensington, for example, reported having friends living in other parts of London and beyond, but relying on friends in the neighbourhood for practical help:

- Interviewer: *Do you have any friends that you'd see [in the neighbourhood]?*
- Sarah: *Yeah we've got some very good friends that have children similar ages to mine.*
- Interviewer: *Do they live round here?*
- Sarah: *Yeah I have two that live immediately in this area.*
- Interviewer: *Thinking about the role of friends and family in your life, what sort of support do friends and family provide you?*
- Sarah: *We went away for a few days to the Isle of Wight and I thought I had a place to leave my fish but I didn't but I rang my friend round the corner and said 'can I bring my fish over in the morning?' and she was absolutely fine with that. I have cat sat last summer, it looks like we might cat sit again this summer but again somebody who lives not an awful long distance from here, she doesn't have anyone else and she wants to leave the cat in the area so she knows that I'd be willing to do it so support, I know for example that one of the friends went overseas for a while with two of her children and two of her younger children were at home with their dad but dads aren't that good at looking after kids so they spent an awful lot of time round my house, so we sort of help each other a little bit.*
- Interviewer: *So all your friends like in West Ken area?*
- Sarah: *No I have friends who live outside, a bit further afield, I have friends outside London too but generally week by week...*
- Interviewer: *Nearby?*
- Sarah: *Yeah*

In instances where the bonds of friendship were particularly strong, the practical help and assistance provided by friends in times of crisis or emergency sometimes went well beyond what might be described as 'neighbouring' (see Chapter 4) and involved a substantial commitment of time and effort, as Sue's story illustrates:

- Interviewer: *Is there a lot of that goes on, helping each other out?*
- Sue: *No, I feel as if I'm the mother hen cos it's me that if there's anything that they need I always say just let us know, just give us a knock on the door.*
- Interviewer: *Those are the kind of things that make a place isn't it?*
- Sue: *Yeah I always say that, if anybody, if they need any help then I'll help anybody, like my best friend, she got knocked down just over four years ago and I looked after her for four months because her leg was just totally smashed in and I used to leave here at 6 o'clock in the morning to get down there, get the kids up to school for 7, get their breakfast, get them washed, teeth brushed, [friend's daughter] was only little then and take her to school, this is before me illness really set in fully.*

There were also examples of strong public spirit and positive disposition toward forging friendships and helping people. This finding is well evidenced by the case of Kathleen, who lived in West Marsh. Kathleen had become friends with a number of Polish migrant workers who she got to know and helped when they first arrived in the town and who since have helped her on various occasions:

Interviewer: *What about friends round here or in Grimsby?*

Kathleen: *Yeah I have some Polish friends and I also have a friend that used to live up near the school, round the corner, but we don't live in each other's pockets, in fact when I was in hospital my phone broke and me Polish friends went and bought me another phone and on this new phone it's got SOS so if I need anybody now I'm in trouble I press the side of my phone and it will ring Doncaster, me daughter and me friend round the corner and send a message 'I'm in an emergency I need help'.*

Interviewer: *How did you get to know your Polish friends then?*

Kathleen: *Well I worked for the Polish man a few years ago. I met him as a friend really through another bloke that I worked for and he needed a carer so I went as a carer for him and he was Polish and when these friends of mine came into Grimsby they didn't know anybody and the taxi driver, he'd been talking to a taxi driver and said 'well we know of someone' and they brought them up to this man called Bill and they got friends and I met them through him and then he died about two years ago and we stayed friends.*

In addition to providing respite care for foster children, she also talked about making friends with a couple with two young daughters who lived nearby, who she sometimes invited round for tea:

Interviewer: *And do people come to you for help and support?*

Kathleen: *Well these foster kids do, I've got them all the time, most of them.*

Interviewer: *What about friends?*

Kathleen: *Well I haven't got a lot of friends, I stick to more or less what I've got.*

Interviewer: *Do you help each other out much?*

Kathleen: *Well yes, I'm picking the girls up today and they're coming to tea, the little girls.*

Interviewer: *How did you get to know her them?*

Kathleen: *She came, well at the bus stop down here, we were talking about something and just chatting in general and she said 'are you going shopping?' and I said 'yeah I'm going to get some stuff for a birthday party' said 'oh I haven't had a party for ages' so I said 'well you can come if you like' and didn't expect*

her to and her and her boyfriend rolled up and the little girls, 7 and about 3 year now. We used to have a big party in the garden every year, I don't now, I even could provide all the drinks and the food and everything, I can't do it this year.

4.4 Place effects on Friendship Networks and Associated Support and Assistance

The discussion above has touched on various factors that might inform the form and nature of friendship networks and the role they play as a source of support and assistance in the lives of people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Personal history (including residential mobility), individual attitudes, dispositions and preferences, current and previous situations and experiences (including involvement in work, education and training), as well as individual resources have all been spotlighted as factors informing both the structure and geography of friendship networks and their role as a source of support and assistance. In addition, key dimensions of the place in which a respondent resided also appeared to influence the form and function of friendship networks. The existence of closely knit, locally based friendship networks was found to vary between the three neighbourhoods. In Oxfangs there were numerous instances of neighbours being both regular contacts and social intimates or friends. These friendship ties had often been forged over many years. Some of the respondents had gone to school and grown up in the neighbourhood together and friendship had been sustained by virtue of the fact that respondents and their friends had remained in the area:

Interviewer: *Do you have friends living around here, people you know?*

Vernon: *Yeah there's people I know, obviously who've stayed in the multi storey flats, people I've worked with, people I was actually brought up with as a kid, people I knew in bed sits and so forth, I do know quite a few.*

Interviewer: *Sure and do you find it a friendly place?*

Vernon: *Oh yeah*

These dense, closely knit networks were a feature of the Amlwch, Wensley Fold and Oxfangs case studies and are reminiscent of the archetypal working class neighbourhood described by Bott (1955), who observed the concentration of people of the same or similar occupations living in the same neighbourhood, which was characterised by low population turnover and continuity of relations, resulting in a high degree of density or close knit social networks. In West Kensington and West Marsh, Grimsby there were also examples of people with close knit friendship networks rooted in the local area, but despite numerous examples of neighbouring and neighbourliness (see Chapter 4), local ties were often weak and less frequently extended beyond the convivial into attachments that might be deemed friendships. This was particularly apparent in West Marsh, Grimsby. In Hillside, it appeared that redevelopment of the area has fractured some longstanding friendship networks, by forcing some local residents to relocate beyond the immediate area.

In attempting to unpick the reasons for these apparent differences between the case studies, analysis pointed to a number of stark differences, particularly between the Grimsby case study and the Amlwch, Oxfangs and Wensley Fold case studies, that were likely to impact on the opportunities for residents to develop interpersonal ties within the neighbourhood. First, in West Marsh, residential mobility emerged as a common theme in the housing pathways of younger respondents, with many

respondents having moved into the neighbourhood in recent years. This fact reflects the relatively large private rented sector within the neighbourhood and its lubricating role in the wider housing market system. It also reflects the limited financial resources that these young people had at their disposal, which meant that they 'ended up' in West Marsh, rather than exercised a positive choice to live there. Residential mobility inevitably serves to distance people from family members and friends, who might be left behind in the neighbourhood, town or city from where people have relocated. The result can be twofold. On the one hand, these new residents can be disposed to look beyond the neighbourhood for social contact, to other parts of Grimsby or beyond, where they used to live. Meanwhile, longer-standing residents can experience a gradual depletion of neighbourhood acquaintances, as contacts die or move away and they struggle to nurture contacts with new residents. Indeed, some older residents in West Marsh, such as Sybil, reported that the ability to forge bonds with other neighbours was being undermined by changes in the attitude towards neighbouring among younger residents:

Sybil: *I've always enjoyed living round here, I mean I've had loads of friends but some of them are dying and we're getting new neighbours and they're young 'uns and they don't want owt to do with elderly people. I've got one, two, three, there's about eight round my age... Pat across the road, we are good friends, Helena, I'm good friends with her.*

Thus her own network of neighbours she considers friends is being steadily eroded, with little perceived prospect of forging friendships with newer, younger residents. This suggests there are differences relating to age and length of time in neighbourhood regarding the inclination to form bonds with other residents.

A second and striking difference between West Marsh (and Hillside) and the other case studies was the lack of opportunities for the development of interactions in public space, which might support the development of social networks from which friendships might emerge. In West Marsh there appeared to be few opportunities for people to meet in pubs (there was only one pub on the edge of the neighbourhood that many respondents were unwilling to enter, perceiving it to be rough and unwelcoming); cafes or corner shops (there were few local shops and most people did their shopping at nearby supermarkets or in the town centre, which is only a 10 minute walk); community centres (there is one community centre that people with younger children did report attending, but most people were unaware or disengaged from the services provided); parks (the local park was in poor condition and was reported to be a hang out for local gangs and street drinking); or library (there is no library within or close to the neighbourhood). The local schools emerged as the only local service provider where people were regularly making interpersonal connections within the neighbourhood.

The West Marsh and Hillside case studies appeared to have been emptied of the institutional and physical infrastructure that helps support social connectivity. There were therefore few opportunities for people (even if they were inclined) to show an interest in the well being of others. Entertaining and socialising was frequently taking place in the home. People who did go out to socialise frequently left the neighbourhood:

Interviewer: *How often do you go out?*

Callum: *Last couple of months I've gone out quite a lot more. I think cos I'm single I think you go out more than you should do, if you're not single you don't go out as much.*

Interviewer: *So have you got a lot of single mates around?*

Callum: *A few but I've got quite a lot of mates with people.*

Interviewer: *Where do you go out, do you go to Grimsby?*

Callum: *Go to town quite a lot because it's only round the corner for me, my local, depends what night, because I always go out on Tuesday because it's cheap but I know a lot of friends, well it's like town's my local so I've been going to town, one of the places I'll go since I was 17, 18 so I see a lot of people in pubs, work in pubs, a lot of friends, but other friends go to Cleethorpes so I go to Cleethorpes with them quite a lot as well sometimes and I've just started going quite a lot out on a Sunday because my days off.*

Fear of crime, which was marked in West Marsh than in other neighbourhoods, and concern about personal safety also emerged as a factor limiting the social interaction in the neighbourhood. Kathleen, for example, talked about wanting to be in her house by two o'clock in the afternoon and about not socialising with her neighbours, despite her strong public spirit and sense of duty to help people, as discussed above:

Interviewer: *what sort of things do you do on a typical day?*

Kathleen: *Shopping. I get up 7 in the morning, get me grandson off to college now, he's left school, feed the animals and usually just go to town to shop around.*

Interviewer: *To Grimsby?*

Kathleen: *To the town centre yeah.*

Interviewer: *Do you go every day?*

Kathleen: *Yeah because I can't afford to put the heating on a lot so if I don't go out and sit up there I'm freezing in the house all day and I'm on my own all day so I do, the bus is only across the road.*

Interviewer: *So you get the bus there?*

Kathleen: *yeah the free bus, get the bus to town, in the summer I walk but in the winter catch the bus so just wander round town and then come back and start doing more work in the house, decorating or cleaning or what have you.*

Interviewer: *Do you go anywhere else?*

Kathleen: *No I don't... occasionally I used to go to Louth on a Wednesday, I'd take one of the kids or a neighbour but I keep myself to myself now so I don't really go.*

Interviewer: *Do you go out at night?*

Kathleen: *No I never go out at night.*

Interviewer: *What do you term as night?*

Kathleen: *Well I'm in the house from half past 2, 2 o'clock usually unless there's someone coming.*

Interviewer: *Do you go out in West Marsh, do you go up to the community centre or...*

Kathleen: *No*

Interviewer: *Or neighbours' houses?*

Kathleen: *No I never mix with neighbours, I don't encourage them in mine and I don't go in theirs.*

In a more extreme example, Patrick talked about loosing his confidence being out and about in the area, after being the victim of a violent attack:

Interviewer: *In terms of friends is there anyone that you're close to in the neighbourhood at all or do you like you say keep yourself to yourself?*

Patrick: *I mainly keep myself to myself. I've got a few friends that I do visit on a regular basis but they live in Downwell? And Welwyn Street but I do get out now and again. I get out a lot more now than I used to because a few years I got beat up myself down Oxford Street and I got me back fractured and I had a blood clot on me lung and I spent just under two weeks in hospital. I got jumped by 30 people, me and me mate.*

Interviewer: *Do you mind me asking what that was about?*

Patrick: *Main reason, we thought we was doing the right thing at the time, then next minute we got jumped and he suffered a kidney infection through being kicked in the ribs and kidneys and I got a blood clot on me lung and a fractured back due to a lass of 16 jumping on me back. If it hadn't have been for me going into a seizure when I did I think they'd have carried on and I don't think I'd have been here talking to you now, I think they'd have killed me to be honest. After that I lost confidence, I stopped going out and everything else cos it just kicked the hell out of me, I just shut myself in and then I thought 'hang on a minute, if I shut myself in they've won' so I've gradually got myself out and started going out again.*

The impact of these factors on social networks was most acutely apparent in the experiences of the older people interviewed in West Marsh, a finding that appears to concur with Thomse and van Tilburg's (2000) suggestion regarding the environmental dependency that can make older people are more vulnerable to the overall characteristics of their neighbourhood. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that there were no examples of people forging social networks within West Marsh. What contact and ties were being developed frequently revolved around children and were associated with school, activities put on at the community centre or playing in the park:

Interviewer: *Do you think your life would be any different if you lived in other parts of Grimsby?*

- Rebecca: *I think some areas are a lot better, in other areas there's a lot for the kids to do, it's like Cleethorpes, there's so much for the kids to do up there, there's the beach, there's the sandpit, there's the play towers, the bowling, there's a leisure centre, it's got everything there, there's everything up there and all the kids at Cleethorpes seem to be busy doing summat but the kids round 'ere, they're not busy doing owt because obviously the park shuts earlier and there's not a lot for kids to do apart from the leisure centre.*
- Interviewer: *So if you lived somewhere else... from what you're saying there's a kind of knock on effect of that, it's not just about your own kids but it's about the other kids round and about?*
- Rebecca: *Yeah*
- Interviewer: *Which could make it quite different couldn't it, in a better way from what you're saying?*
- Rebecca: *Yeah if I was in a different situation and I could afford a better house with a bit of a front garden and what have you then I definitely would move out of the area but obviously I don't think my situation's going to change for the next few years so I'm happy here, the kids are happy, they're happy at the schools and stuff. If there weren't the park there I don't know what we'd do because, I mean I take my two out and a couple of their mates'll see us go out and they'll follow on with us, by the time I get on the park I've got an 11 side football team, what more do you want? I'm the mad crazy mother that they put in goal all the time, the rest of 'em are sat on the wall fagging it and whatever, chatting away and I'm in goal getting booted and all the rest of it.*

4.5 Conclusion

By definition, a bond exists between friends. In some instances, these bonds were found to support the provision of sustained and committed forms of support that helped people manage various challenges of living on a low income in a relatively deprived neighbourhood. More commonly, however, friends represented a source of emotional and social support.

In some instances, friends were also neighbours. This was most evident in the Wensley Fold and Oxfangs case studies. Neighbourhood based friendships were least apparent in West Marsh and Hillside case studies, where social relations with other residents were placed under pressure from a range of factors including crime and fear of crime, residential turbulence and a lack of opportunities for interaction in public space, which served to weaken and fragment social ties.

Friendship networks typically extended well beyond the neighbourhood. This was particularly the case in West Kensington. However, distance was an unsupportable cost limiting the support and assistance provided by more dispersed friends.

5. Neighbours

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of relations between neighbours. Unlike the previous chapters on friends and family, therefore, it focuses on relationships within the geographical boundaries of the six case study neighbourhoods. The chapter is organised into three key sections. The first two sections focus on positive relations with neighbours in the form of attachments and transactions (bonds between neighbours who become friends were discussed in the previous chapter). Attention then turns to consider more ambivalent attitudes towards social relations with people living nearby and considers the factors which appear to constrain the potential for forming strong social ties. This is a particular important issue given the increasing emphasis that policymakers are placing on the potential for informal social relations to act as a catalyst for improving deprived neighbourhoods and generating new forms of cohesion and empowerment (see for example SEU, 2001; CLG, 2008, 2009).

5.2. Attachments

Attachments are relationships underpinned by an explicit belief in the importance of neighbouring that manifests itself, for example, in a commitment to support others in times of need or through sociability beyond the exchange of pleasantries. Such attachments with neighbours were far more evident than bonds among respondents. These were commonly expressed in terms of a personal conviction of the value and importance of maintaining good neighbourly relations. Reference was also frequently made to the importance of 'looking out for each other', particularly among longer term residents, such as Nigel in West Kensington:

Nigel: *I would look out for my neighbours yeah, if I see them in trouble I would look out for them that way...you know certain people in the area that you grew up with and you just know the same people.. it's probably been the same people here for 25 years or so.*

An important facet of the content of attachment relations was the explicit willingness to help neighbours in times of need. This clearly echoes Mann's (cf. Buonfino and Hilder, 2006: 14) distinction between 'manifest' neighbouring comprising observable interactions and exchanges of support and 'latent' neighbouring, in terms of help provided in response to a crisis or urgent need. This 'latent' element of neighbouring is often apparent in expressions of support or offers of help in case of problems or difficulties, as illustrated by the comments of Doris in Grimsby and Murray in Oxfangs:

Doris: *Neighbours are lovely, really are lovely, they'd do anything for me, they're brilliant...they've got an allotment and they bring me fresh vegetables so they are really lovely, anything, they've said to me all along if I need something in the middle*

- of the night just knock on the wall and they'll come and help me and they're brilliant.*
- Interviewer: *What about if you had an emergency or something, would you use your neighbours or what would you do?*
- Murray: *Well I'd get in touch with the lassie up the stair, I'd phone her cos she's on the phone and I've got her phone number and she's got my phone number so ... if she goes away for Christmas or New Year she always comes and tells me she's, 'give me a call at my mum's or my sister's if anything goes wrong with the house' just that week she's away.*
Murray Oxfords, Male, 65+

It is worth noting, however, that the value attached to neighbouring is not always reciprocated by other residents. One middle-aged woman interviewed in Grimsby observed wryly, for example, that her own willingness to help was not necessarily an outlook shared by neighbours:

- Ethel: *Yeah I always say that, if anybody, if they need any help then I'll help anybody.*
- Interviewer: *Do you think there's a lot of people round here like that?*
- Ethel: *No [laughs] no don't think so, I've never seen it, there was a documentary on telly the other night about neighbours ..and this guy, he'd been there 30 years and didn't even know his neighbours and I think that's awful, where's their interaction gone.*
Female, 45-64

Ethel clearly laments the lack of commitment displayed by other residents as expressed through her disbelieving reaction to the television programme. This suggests that whilst attachments can be developed without any expectation they will be reciprocated, this is still accompanied by a sense of frustration at other's perceived lack of neighbourliness.

Expressions of attachment were realised in practical terms in a number of ways, including responding to immediate needs, acts of generosity and sociability beyond convivial relations. Looking firstly at the responses to immediate needs, there were a number of examples where latent neighbouring became manifest in a time of need or crisis as the following two examples from West Kensington illustrate:

- Robina: *when we first moved in we had a problem with the lock and something like that and we did have people that will come and help you and if you're in an hour of need. Once I was out and my son came, I was working ... and he was soaking from the rain and my neighbour did take him in so it's nice, there are some nice people here.*
- Khahijah: *To be honest I try to always be kind .. Last time one of our neighbours is attacked by dog and me and my husband we take water and put water [on the wound].*

Such examples of neighbourliness were often framed by reference to a belief in the importance of 'looking after people around you', suggesting that attachment neighbouring was rooted in a particular set of values, which appeared to be reaffirmed by the acts of neighbourliness, as Vera in Oxfords observed:

Vera: *I know her name's Dorothy and I said 'have you got any candles up there Dorothy?' and she goes 'no' I said 'wait there now'. I'm kind of walking up the stairs with a candle here 'here's a few candles, take them, I'll light them for you' going up the stairs in pitch darkness. But it just shows you that's when neighbours become good neighbours, when something like that happens.*

Another example of attachments were spontaneous acts of generosity that appeared to be extended without expectation of being returned. Joachim in West Marsh and Ahmed in West Kensington, for example, recounted receiving gifts from neighbours:

Joachim: *The woman [next door] is a bit more quiet I think but the man is like fisherman and sometimes he come in and bring some fish in ...bring the haddock and wow, yeah now it's getting better. Now they bring sea bass, I really like sea bass. Cos at work we do all that kind of fish but it's really expensive to buy in the shop and I say 'oh it's really big one I can't believe it' really nice.*

Ahmed: *When I was working on my allotment the lady which is a neighbour to me, she just grow some tomatoes and she brought 20 plant for me without asking her, she ask me 'do you need some?' yes, I think if you ask anyone a favour he will not hesitate.*

The value of such actions for people on the receiving end of such generosity is evident in the reflections on how 'nice' such neighbourly support is. It is important though to distinguish this kind of support from the cash or in-kind support discussed in preceding chapters. The provision of goods or services to friends and family often seemed to be a mechanism for getting by financially in the face of poverty. This does not seem to be the purpose of the acts of exchange outlined above which are irregular and seemingly unconnected to financial need. There are, however, rare exceptions, as in Aaliyah's case in West Kensington, where neighbours who are not obviously friends provide mutual financial support as a means of coping on a low income:

Aaliyah: *At the end of the week, like Saturday, Sunday, sometimes I have got nothing, I have to finish the week and Monday I get my money, yeah sometimes £10 from neighbours, sometimes my sister. I do that with [my neighbour] as well. I give it to her Monday, I give her the money, we know each other because we're all on benefits so we help each other.*

This was an atypical example, though, and the provision of goods or services seemed more an expression of commitment to neighbouring than a practical or material form of assistance to enable individuals to get by. This is not to suggest that these forms of social relationships do not provide valued forms of practical support. There were examples of women respondents who reported that neighbours are willing look after children for short periods to enable them to complete domestic tasks or run errands:

Diane: *It is a good thing, say for example I go to the shop and I leave my son who's eight in the park, because our house overlooks the park there and there might be 50 boys in that I know and I say 'listen just watch out for him while I go to the shop across*

the road' no problem... I'm not saying I'd ask them to baby-sit, nothing like that but my son's outside and I have to pop out for gas, electricity I'll leave him and just say 'keep an eye on him'.

Geraldine: *the lady who lives next door to me has lived in her house 15 years....she'll often say if I'm going to the shop she'll watch kids for 10 minutes and vice versa and we borrow things off each other and it's community spirit really.*

However, these acts are distinguished from the sort of childcare provided by family discussed in chapter 3 by the intermittent nature of this support. Neighbours will 'keep an eye' on children for short periods whilst family offer more extended and regular forms of care. This difference reflects the more bounded nature of relations that typically exist between neighbours, compared to family members. At the same time, these are clearly valued sources of help and, as the second quote illustrates, contain symbolic value in the sense of fostering a sense of 'community spirit'. Neighbourly acts can thus underpin attachment to place, perhaps through reaffirming the kindness of other residents.

A final outcome of attachment neighbouring is forms of sociability that stop short of becoming friendships. This can include visiting or inviting neighbours round or even relying on them for support, but with an accompanying sense of distance that is not commensurate with friendship. The particulars of such relationships are well illustrated by the case of Peggy in West Marsh, who reported having a 'wonderful neighbour' who, as she revealed, provided her with a lot of support when she fell seriously ill. Yet the strong attachments she feels towards her neighbour fall short of the emotive bonds which characterise friendship:

Peggy: *Everybody in the Avenue, I know I could rely on anyone if I was in need of anything but I'm most friendly with Pat next door She's a really, really wonderful neighbour. This is going to sound awful because I'm ever so fond of her but she isn't my type of person as a friend. When I go on holiday she pulls curtains for me and before today when I've been going out she was saying 'what are you having for your dinner today?' I said 'well I haven't made up my mind yet' 'well don't think about it, I'm doing this and I'll bring you some ...but I couldn't do with Pat as a friend... because we don't like the same kind of things.*
[Peggy, Grimsby, Female, 65+]

One explanation of this distinction appears to be their different interests and tastes, which was later expressed in terms of the perceived lack of good judgement when they went on a rare clothes shopping trip together. Attachments can, therefore, provide a whole range of valued support without spilling over into the realm of friendship.

Despite the apparent limits to the intimate content and outcomes of such forms of sociability, attachments still appeared to generate a valued sense of belonging, security and contentment. This fact is well illustrated by the case of Gwen, who was retired and living in Amlwch. Gwen had recently moved to a bigger house on a development nearby, but lamented leaving behind the comradeship of her old street and reported wanting to move back:

Gwen: *if I could I think I would move back to that house tomorrow because here, it's a lovely big house but it's sort of isolated, over there you could come out to your wall and there would*

always be someone to talk to so there is a lot of positiveness about living down there, I do miss it ... I find myself, I keep going back and talking to the neighbours, sitting on the wall with them.

Interviewer: *Why is it different here?*

Gwen: *Well I could go out of this front door now and there's nobody sat on the wall talking, there's no kids playing there, over there, when I lived there, because it was a nice little cul de sac, it was about eight houses it was, there's the rest of the estate as well, and no matter where you went you'd walk out, you could feel really down and there'd always be someone there to go 'hello you all right?' even if it was only the kids, but here you can feel really down, go out through the front door and there's nobody, nobody's going to be sitting out here talking, the children are not going to be playing outside. Very private it is here.*

While Gwen longed for the neighbourly relations she left behind when she moved house, some other elderly residents reported that neighbourly relations were in decline as sociability is supplanted by a preference for more distant, if still convivial relations, among younger residents. Isobel in West Marsh acknowledged that younger people in the neighbourhood were convivial, but not "interactive":

Interviewer: *What about on the street, do you think people get on with each other on the street?*

Isobel: *Yeah I've found...older people will talk to you more, they'll say good morning and if you're sat on a seat they will sit and talk to you. Even the younger ones when you're up at the shops and what have you, they are good that way but only in passing conversation, not like it was years ago when everybody was close together. ... You can't be polite, well you can be polite, you say good morning and hello but they're not interactive, they won't speak to you, where with [my neighbour] and I, if we see each other it's gas, gas, gas, gas, gas. It always used to be like that down here but people have died and moved on and new ones have moved in and moved out actually.*

Tania in Amlwch related a reported loss of neighbourliness to a perceived increase in the number of people moving into in the area from elsewhere:

Tania: *people have altered you see, if there was a sickness in house years ago everybody used to go there from the neighbourhood like, everybody would help, that's what's missing, everybody helps.*

Interviewer: *And everybody helping one another, is that still going on?*

Tania: *No*

Interviewer: *What's happened there then, why has that gone away then?*

Tania: *So many strangers here now you see, there was only locals there then of course that knew one another.*

This was a common narrative in Amlwch, particularly among Welsh respondents, who often related a perceived decline in neighbourliness with the arrival of increasing numbers of English people in the area. Reflecting on this point, Danni suggested that these ‘incomers’ were not familiar with the collective culture of neighbourliness that characterised Amlwch:

Danni: *loved being in London but it's very fast pace and it's very anonymous and that is the contrast, here nothing's anonymous, everybody knows everybody and they know everything about everybody and it can be irritating at times but it can also be very supporting and very nurturing, but in London everything's anonymous, nobody makes eye contact with anybody and nobody speaks to anybody, I had to, it took me a long time to realise that it wasn't acceptable to say hello to everybody you met on the street, where I'd feel strange in Amlwch if I didn't acknowledge people in Amlwch, but it has changed because there's a lot of strangers come to Amlwch and they haven't quite grasped that aspect.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean by strangers?*

Danni: *Incomers*

Interviewer: *From anywhere in particular?*

Danni: *I think there's quite a lot from Liverpool, quite a lot from Manchester.*

The comments of Isabel, Tania and Danni chime with the ‘community lost’ thesis so popular in political rhetoric and increasingly influential in public policy debates, in the form of the Big Society agenda. However, much of the empirical evidence presented here appears to undermine claims about the fracturing of neighbourly relations, neighbours emerging as an important source of support and assistance and, in some cases, friendship. Yet, Gwen’s comments point to the fact that there are cleavages around attitudes to neighbouring that are shaped, for example, by age. There is also a variable geography of neighbour relations, with attachments between neighbours being more evident in some case studies (for example, Oxfgangs), than others (for example, West Marsh). These matters are explored below when we consider barriers to neighbouring.

5.3. Transactions

Attitudes and practices towards neighbouring among residents sometimes took in forms of ‘transactions’ that, unlike bonds and attachments, had low emotional content but comprised a willingness to provide small acts of practical support or engage in convivial relations. Transactions often manifest themselves in small acts of practical assistance such as minding post or keeping a careful eye on who enters communal buildings, or help in a time of emergency. Minnie in Amlwch, for example, talked about helping out her neighbour during a power cut:

Minnie: *Barbara, that side, I've known her virtually all the time I've lived in Amlwch which is 25 years now ... we're not in and out of each other's house but we had two power cuts, they went through cables a couple of times over the last couple of the weeks and she's all electric and I've got the gas cooker so I'm*

filling up my flask with boiling water to make coffee, it's on that kind of level you know.

Interviewer: *So supporting?*

Minnie: *There's a support thing there yes, looking out for each other.*

Transactions also consist of convivial relations such as exchanging greetings or engaging in small talk with neighbours or other residents that falls short of a mutual desire to spend time together. Such relationships were often characterised by a desire to bound interactions within these parameters, as the following observations from Roger, Gerard and Hattie illustrate:

Roger: *I'm no really friendly with them but I'm no unfriendly, we talk and that's it, used to help quite a few of them with wee electric jobs or plumbing jobs, no for money.*

Gerard: *Usually of course I say good morning to neighbours, and usually they are quite happy to say, "How are you?" and this is good ...I mean, everybody's looking their own business, that's the main thing....I've never had anybody come in [my house] the last five or six months ... They say hello and everything, and it's like – of course if you help them, just bringing some bags, shopping bags, that's about it essentially.*

Hattie: *I don't associate a lot with my neighbours, I'm not that type of person. I'm one of them if I get in a lift with them I say hello...I will talk as long as they talk, if they don't then I won't make conversations. The young girl next door, I'll hold the lift for her, I've just taken a parcel in for her, but that's it, 'hello here's the parcel' end of... I couldn't tell you who lives in the end two flats, I've no idea, I don't wanna know. I shut my door and as long as me and my dad are all right that's all I need to know basically.*

In each of these cases there is a willingness to provide practical support that can be quite extensive, as in carrying out plumbing or electrical work, but there is also concomitant desire to circumscribe the scope of sociability. Many respondents appeared satisfied with such limited forms of social interactions with neighbours, but some, such as Nigel in West Kensington, did express a longing for closer forms of association with their neighbours:

Nigel: *I don't talk to [my neighbours]. You get a Christmas card, that's it, and you maybe get the odd 'hello' or 'how are you' during the year but it's not like 'oh come in for a cup of tea, can I borrow some sugar, my door's open any time'. It ain't like it was in the 50s and 40s, it's nothing like that, even in the 70s it was starting to get like 'lock the door' when I was born I think. I don't think it's a community like, how a community should be I think.*

Such an account illustrates an important point about distinctions *within* the typologies developed within this section. Individuals engaged in similar levels of interactions with neighbours may well view the desirability of those ties very differently. The longing for more intimate forms of 'community' with neighbours perceived to exist in the past contrast starkly with the conscious intent to bound the scope of relations expressed by others as shown by the examples at the beginning of this sub-section.

Thus residents may *experience* similar forms of neighbouring but perceive them differently as either a choice or constraint. Possible explanations for such constraints are discussed more fully in the following section.

Thus far this section has explored the nature of relationships with residents and neighbours using two elements of the typology outlined in Chapter 2. Whilst this analysis demonstrates how these ties vary, it is also the case that attachments and transactions are largely characterized by a positive attitude towards neighbouring. Although there are individuals who express a desire for more committed social relationships than they currently enjoy, they can still identify positive elements of practical or social support provided through existing contact with other residents. Neighbouring may rarely provide the most intense forms of emotional support or financial support delivered through bonds associated with family and friends, but it does offer a degree of practical and social support that, particularly in the form of attachments, helps engender a sense of belonging and attachment to place. In this respect, neighbouring appears to contribute to broader sense of well-being rather than constitute a direct source of sustenance to enable individuals to manage the daily challenges of getting by on a low income. Perhaps the distinction being made here is that friends and family enable people to manage emotional and financial difficulties often manifest at the household level, whilst neighbouring can be a means of navigating, circumventing or even negating some of the challenges faced by living in disadvantaged areas. This last point raises the possibility of distinct and different attitudes toward and experiences of neighbouring in poorer neighbourhoods compared to more affluent locations.

Before concluding this section on the positive aspects of neighbouring, it is important to note that a single individual can have social relations that fall into one or more categories. One resident in Oxfords for example, spoke of how he is very friendly with one neighbour (bond) but otherwise has little contact with other residents on his 'unfortunate stair' except for an elderly neighbour with dementia who he will return home when he finds her lost in the street (attachment). It is equally the case, though, that some individuals who engage in attachment neighbouring based on a belief in the value of positive relations with proximate others may take this approach with almost all residents they encounter. Individuals may, therefore, occupy more than a single point along the continuum outlined in the introductory section of this paper.

5.4. Ambivalence

The preceding discussion has provided ample evidence of positive attitudes towards neighbouring. However, there were a number of cases where residents were far more ambivalent about those living nearby and, in some cases, where there appeared to be little contact between immediate neighbours, other than a passing greeting or smile of recognition. Some respondents appeared to have little inclination to remedy this situation by getting to know neighbours better. Indeed, some, particularly younger, respondents reported wanting to keep their distance from other residents, reporting that they did not pry into other people's business and wanted to maintain their own privacy. Kelly in Hillside was one such respondent:

Interviewer: *Do you have a lot of, how would you describe your social life round here?*

Kelly: *I don't personally socialise, I don't go in anyone's house and nobody comes in mine, only my family ... but I'm social in a way that I'd never walk past anybody and things like that but there's just a side to me that I like to keep...*

- Interviewer: *Keep private...*
- Kelly: *Yeah, mine.*
- Interviewer: *But nonetheless people round here are still important to you aren't they?*
- Kelly: *Very important, yeah*
- Interviewer: *So on that level you're quite sociable?*
- Kelly: *Yeah, but once the door's shut it's shut, that's just the way I am.*

Such preferences were in sharp contrast to the longing for more intimate forms of association apparent in the accounts of some older residents, as discussed above. However, it is important to note that few residents expressed a desire to disassociate themselves from *all* other residents but preferred to regulate contact through a selective approach to neighbouring. Good relations with neighbours that could be characterised as bonds or attachments were therefore often accompanied by a desire to avoid 'undesirable' residents. Thus ambivalent neighbouring was not necessarily about complete withdrawal from public social life but, in certain cases, a form of selective association.

At times, the processes of dissociation took on a spatial form as residents constructed complex micro-geographies based around the identification of good and bad areas in their neighbourhood. This was particularly common in the West Marsh case study, reflecting perceived problems with crime in the area, as illustrated by the comments of Ethel, Sybil, Julie and Doris:

- Ethel: *Yeah, we haven't got problems with anyone who lives in these houses in this street. It's mainly out of Eltenham Street, some out of Gilby Street, not many, and some off New Haven.*
- Sybil: *Well I've always liked it because from Pinewhite Road to Highbury Street, we've always classed this as the quiet end, but after Hargreave Street no way would I want to live up there.*
- Julie: *There is virtually no crime in this area, you go one street down and there is, why that is I've no idea. I suppose it's the same everywhere but this L shaped section we all look out for one another, it's close knit and everybody knows what everybody's doing. If one's on holiday everybody looks out.*
- Doris: *I've got no problems with this area, this part, even my road, I couldn't ask for better neighbours, the neighbours and everything here are fantastic and this part of it is lovely but I certainly wouldn't want to be any further back.*

These examples show how residents will often identify positive affinities with immediate neighbours whilst lamenting the behaviour or practices of those living nearby, including those situated on adjacent streets or blocks. This indicates, again, how forms of attachment neighbouring, as identified in the final two quotes, can be constructed in tandem with a desire to actively disassociate from other residents. Such findings highlight the complexity of social relations, with individuals engaged in multiple forms of neighbouring that cleave along social and spatial divisions.

Understanding why ambivalent attitudes emerge is important in light of the tendency for policymakers to increasingly highlight the potential for informal social relations to act as a catalyst for improving deprived neighbourhoods. The levels of ambivalence identified in this research would suggest that such visions of community are not immediately realisable. This raises the question of why such ambivalence exists and what circumstances, if any, would need to pertain for residents to come together in the ways envisaged by policymakers. The findings from this research suggest that the constraints on the formation of social relationships that generate ambivalence can be characterised broadly either as *defensive* or *voluntary*.

Defensive ambivalence can be conceived as a response to a perceived threat or imposed change in circumstances whilst voluntary ambivalence stems from a disinclination to develop close social relations with neighbours that is, to some degree, rooted in personal choice. There are notable variations across case study areas, with respondents in West Marsh exhibiting the strongest tendency to exhibit defensive forms of ambivalence in response to perceived levels of crime or anti-social-behaviour as well as the high turnover of residents in private rented accommodation. In the other five case study areas, there appears to be a broader array of both defensive and voluntary factors constraining the formation of social relations. West Kensington stands out as the neighbourhood with the highest propensity of individuals expressing a preference for, or satisfaction with, low levels of interaction with others. This reflects the routines of daily life apparent among respondents in West Kensington, which were more likely to extend beyond the local neighbourhood (see Robinson, 2010).

Looking firstly at defensive explanations of constrained social ties, it was evident that perceptions or experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour played a major role in circumscribing the degree of contact with neighbours or other residents. Some individuals, such as Holly and Cordell, expressed a desire to limit relations with others in order to minimise the likelihood of encountering trouble:

Holly: *Well a lot of people tell me now that they daren't go out at night after about 5 o'clock, not even to the local shops, they won't go, they'd go without sooner than go to the local shops after that time. I haven't encountered any more trouble since you was here but apparently there is still trouble on the street but I keep these blinds shut nearly all the time so people don't know when I'm in or out and I don't involve myself in the neighbourhood at all, I go to town, do what I have to do and come back.*

Cordell: *You get people from out of the area come in for rows and things like that but the character's still the same. I think we keep ourselves to ourselves so it's a case of once you close the door I shut everything out to be honest*

In these two examples, minimising contact with other residents constitutes a conscious attempt to reduce the likelihood of undesirable contact with other residents. It is a defensive response to the perceived unpredictability of life in the neighbourhood which can, in part, be managed by a retreat behind closed doors. Such a withdrawal from social space can also manifest itself in the desire to keep children indoors, as Doris explained:

Doris: *it's getting to the stage now where [my son] wants to go and play [but] I don't want him mixing, that sounds really snobby and I'm not a snob at all but I don't want him mixing with the*

people round here, the kids are out 9, 10 o'clock at night and I don't want that for him.

This has implications not only for the capacity of children to get to know peers in their neighbourhood but also for parents to meet other residents through their children. Thus the potential to develop new social contacts is constrained across two generations through this preference to keep children indoors to avoid perceived threats.

Whilst these examples relate to perceived *external* threats, there were a number of cases in West Marsh where actual experiences of crime contributed to a desire to minimise social interactions with other residents. Donald, for example, recounted how a past experience of violence following an attempt to help another resident locate a stolen bike prompted a fundamental reassessment of his attitude towards getting involved:

Donald: *I keep myself to myself, in my opinion that's the best way because then you don't get accused of fucking doing anything. I was beat up in Cleethorpes about four, five year ago ...there was a disabled bloke got his bike pinched... I thought I was doing the right thing at the time helping him out and I got a fractured back, he got kidney infection and I spent 2½ weeks in hospital.*

A similar breakdown of trust was also evident in the case of a family who experienced a series of unpleasant incidents including witnessing the vandalism of neighbours' windows and having a car crash into their front door:

Partner: *I don't trust anybody.*

Stuart: *On one side no, but I suppose in an absolute emergency the lady on the other side we could definitely trust her, she's got a little girl as well which our eldest plays with and they're a nice family. we don't associate with anyone really.*

Partner: *There's a lot of unsavoury characters, not particularly on here but just yards away down there and over there.*

It was striking, however, that when re-interviewed for the second wave of research after moving to nearby Cleethorpes, the couple were more positive about relations with neighbours and other residents:

Stuart: *Well we're starting to talk to people a bit more, as we said people round here are a bit better. I don't think we'll just not talk to anybody for the rest of our lives.*

Partner: *No, I mean when we go out shopping or to school and back, I take little un to school every morning and there's this woman who takes her dog a walk onto beach, she stops to say hello to him every morning so now every morning if she's not there it's 'where is she?' It's routine now. And there's an old man who always walks down as well and says good morning and it makes you really happy cos you wouldn't get it down there, West Marsh, you keep your head down down there.*

Stuart: *They'd rather swear at you than say hello.*

Whilst Stuart suggested later in the interview that they are still in the 'habit' of keeping themselves to themselves, the perceived conviviality of the new area has contributed toward a softening of their reticent approach towards social interactions with others. This highlights how attitudes towards neighbouring are bound up with the social and material circumstances that attend particular places. Moving can, therefore, prompt a reappraisal of willingness to engage with others.

Whilst perceptions and experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour appeared to exert a strong influence on propensities to limit social interactions through processes of *self*-exclusion, the actions of others also served to contribute to feelings of being excluded from neighbourhood life. Racism was identified in the accounts of both a young Asian woman and a young black man as constraining the scope of their contact with neighbours:

Robina: *I was taught by my dad..and it is in our religion as well isn't it, you have to know your neighbour and you have to get on with them so I try to put that in practice wherever I can. If my neighbour needed my help I would help them but it's not like how you get on with everyone because there are people who don't want to know you just because you're wearing a scarf.*

Leon: *some of [my neighbours] I know, some of them have got stalls on the market, some of them I know well, I carry their shopping home, some of them I'm real cool with but again some of them they're not really [friendly]... again it could be just me cos I'm like that age group, I'm black, 25 ...I think a lot of people do feel threatened where I don't really think I'm a person that will feel threatened*

In both examples, an apparent willingness to develop attachments with neighbours is hamstrung by the different forms of prejudice they encounter. Exclusion was also found to take on non-racial forms, a white mother and daughter, for example, explaining how they stopped interacting neighbours who they suspected of spreading gossip:

Patricia: *We was talking to a woman down the road weren't we, and she seemed really nice, we were chatting to her but now we're not so sure because a lot of things have happened since we've chatted to her and she was spreading all gossip weren't she, and we're not so sure about her now.*

Monica: *Stay to ourselves now, stuff everyone else.*

Attitudes towards neighbouring appear to be closely associated with the perceived willingness of others to engage in positive relations, and ambivalence or selectivity in neighbouring can be a consequence of a sense of exclusion from a collective culture or shared identity, that serves to limit the scope of social ties with others. Examples included the sense of exclusion felt by some respondents in Amlwch as a result of being English and the cultural boundaries evident between South Asian and White British residents in Wensley Fold, which served to limit the extent of neighbourly relations. The result in Wensley Fold was a sense of surprise (among both White British and South Asian respondents) when positive neighbourly relations straddled this perceived divide (Cole *et al*, 2009).

Another factor that appeared to contribute towards a reluctance to interact or a lack of contact with neighbours was high levels of turnover. As already noted, this was particularly evident in West Marsh, where the prevalence of low-cost, high turnover

private rented accommodation appeared to contribute to a lack of contact and trust between longer-term residents and more transient neighbours, with the former often associating the latter with crime or anti-social behaviour. This corroborates other research that identifies high turnover in deprived neighbourhoods as a factor disrupting community ties and inhibiting the formation of local social networks (Bailey and Livingston, 2007; Cattell, 2001).

In Oxfgangs and Hillside, there was also evidence that redevelopment of local housing could impact upon the nature of social relations between residents. One respondent explained how the demolition of high rise flats and the move to new build, low-rise housing had a detrimental affect on perceived community spirit:

Betty: *Some of us are bought and some are let out [in the new housing] so you don't always have the same neighbours ... we know folk but they're not that close. It's not like what we had in the flats. There was more fun, there was more sense of community, I don't know what it was...it just seemed totally different, everybody could have a good laugh... everybody was in the same boat... If the things went on fire everybody got smoked because it would go up through the chutes ... It didn't matter if you were working or single or a drug addict or... you were all in the same boat, we all had the same kind of housing, we all had the same problems, so I think that's what made it easier.*

In this instance, a combination of higher turnover, mixed tenure and the loss of communal experience shared by residents in the high-rise flats all seemed to combine to change the character of social ties with neighbours. This highlights both the complexity of the factors that underpin social relations and the diversity of pressures that can undermine those ties. What is clear, however, is that an involuntary move can alter perceptions of the nature of relationships with neighbours. In this case, bonds and attachments that one form of accommodation appeared to support did not seem to be recreated in the new place of residence. This can be the case even if when moving to a property within the same neighbourhood. This suggests that the relationship between place and neighbouring is not simply a feature of neighbourhoods per se but of the specific configuration of relations that inhere in particular locations and forms of residence, particularly for those in communal dwellings.

Whilst these forms of defensive neighbouring featured prominently in explanations of why individuals restricted social contact with other residents, there were also accounts of voluntary ambivalence where bounded forms of interaction were expressed more in terms of an inclination or choice. Some interviewees described how they lacked the time or propensity to interact with others. Stacey, for example, explained how she preferred the street she now lived on to the street she previously lived on in the same neighbourhood because the neighbours were less intrusive:

Stacey: *when I used to live on Dover Street they used to come and knock on me door and stand and talk to me for hours...and I thought I've got kids to look to and stuff, I can't just stand here and talk whereas on here you don't get none of that, you can get on with kids, do whatever and it's done.*

A similar preference was expressed by Sarah who had formerly lived as a child in a street that displayed the close social bonds between neighbours that she herself now avoided:

Sarah: *As a child I grew up in an area where we virtually lived in each other's houses, it was a cul-de-sac as it goes, and we were all knew each other's mums and called them aunty but my children don't do that. In fact I don't encourage them to go in anyone's house because I say we're all playing out the front, we don't need to be in each other's houses, I don't go for that.*

In the case of Stacey and Sarah both there is an evident disinclination to develop the sort of ties with neighbours that might be characterised as attachments or bonds.

Waseem also explained that he had little desire to get to know neighbours beyond the exchange of convivial greetings because he already had a broad network of friends and busy social life:

Waseem: *No I don't want to be going round for cups of tea and that kind of thing. The people I'm friends with are the people that I've chosen to be friends with. There might be some very nice people amongst my neighbours that I would like to be friends with but equally, I don't know, I think it's important to say hello and recognise each other but...there just doesn't seem to be enough time to socialise with the people I socialise with, family and friends as it is...and it's just trying to find time to do the laundry and keep the house tidy as well as everything else.*

This quote strikes at the heart of a presumption inherent within the current government's Big Society agenda; that people will necessarily want to engage and volunteer. Time is clearly a barrier that limits Waseem from developing closer social ties. However, there is also a tangible sense that limiting the scope of interactions with neighbours is partly an individual preference or, at least, something that he is not wanting to prioritise. The corollary of such ambivalence was that some interviewees who desired closer relationships with neighbours found their overtures rebuffed by others who had not appear to have the time or propensity to reciprocate these efforts. Zaneb, for example, described trying and failing to make friends with her neighbours:

Zaneb: *I tried to make friends with these neighbours but they won't so I left it at that so basically. I don't know anybody in this street unless somebody dies and 'oh her name was Mary' or something... it's not like you would go out and knock on the neighbour's door and say 'hello can I borrow a cup of sugar'. I even started that when I first come over here, I cook and I would take plate of samosas or whatever to the neighbours and so I stopped and I just keep to myself....people keep to themselves, they don't have the time..I think people are busy, they don't want to get involved, they don't want to bother, because I've got two neighbours here, they're both the same, don't want to know. So I gave up.*

It is instructive that the lukewarm response of neighbours prompted Zaneb to disinvest time in getting to know others living nearby and adopt a more ambivalent attitude to neighbouring by 'keeping to herself'. There is a retreat along the continuum of neighbouring when initial attempts to form attachments prove unsuccessful.

A voluntary preference not to engage with neighbours, or at least not to any extensive degree, was most common among respondents in West Kensington. The reasons why are unclear, although the reference to "not having enough time", in Waseem's case above, may reflect the higher proportion of residents in work in West

Kensington and the associated extension of routines of daily life well beyond the local neighbourhood.

5.5. Conclusion

This section has shown that neighbouring can take on a number of dimensions along the continuum of social relationships. Bonds were most evident in Oxfords where neighbours had sometimes become friends who provided valued forms of emotional and social support. The capacity to form bonds often appeared related to the length and stability of residence in the neighbourhood. Attachment forms of neighbouring were observable across all three neighbourhoods, with interviewees expressing a commitment to look out for others, provide practical support and to engage in social contact that went beyond convivial relations. Latent support in the time of a crisis of moment of need underpinned these social relationships. A small number of interviewees engaged in what could be considered transactions with neighbours which comprised of limited practical support combined with carefully bounded forms of conviviality.

More commonly, however, the desire to maintain distance with at least some neighbours translated into more ambivalent forms of neighbouring where contact with proximate others was not always considered desirable. Whilst all neighbourhoods provided examples of individuals 'keeping themselves to themselves' or regulating relations with neighbours, this tendency was far more pronounced in West Marsh in Grimsby. This is perhaps explained by high levels of 'defensive' neighbouring as individuals construct social and spatial boundaries to maintain distance in response to series of external pressures centring on perceptions of crime and transience in a neighbourhood where they had often 'ended up', rather than made a positive choice to live. These were networks under pressure. By contrast, West Kensington stood out as the neighbourhood where the disinclination to engage with neighbours was more voluntary, driven by a preference to limit contact with others. Though harder to explain than defensive neighbouring, it nonetheless provides an important reminder that there is consensual position on the desirability of close relationships with neighbours.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Key Findings

Family and friends provide more intimate, sustained and committed forms of support that enable people to manage the daily, immediate challenges of living in poverty whilst neighbours can both enhance or diminish the experience of living in low income and relatively deprived neighbourhoods.

The strong bonds of attachment and emotional commitment that characterised relations between some family members and, to a lesser extent, some friends underpinned the provision of three broad forms of sustenance or income: transfer payments, including financial gifts or loans; services and practical help, such as help with child care; and emotional and social support. A small number of respondents were engaged in transactions with neighbours, comprising limited practical support and bounded forms of conviviality Neighbouring relations. More commonly, respondents were engaged in attachment forms of neighbouring, involving a commitment to look out for others, to provide practical support and to engage in social contact. Some, particularly younger, respondents were ambivalent about neighbourly relations, preferring to 'keep themselves to themselves'.

These findings appear consistent with the conclusion that private bonds have become more important and that family and friends, rather than neighbours, provide the most important source of support for getting by in deprived neighbourhoods (Blokland, 2003; Olagnero, 2005; Warr, 2005). Yet, in some instances, neighbours were also friends and relatives, and neighbour relations were underpinned by strong bonds, resulting in the exchange of this full range of support and assistance. This finding appears to concur with the conclusion drawn by Boyce (2006) that strong and intimate relationships do still often exist between neighbours and are rooted in and sustained by the need for support and assistance in the face of social and financial hardship. However, an important caveat needs to be attached to this conclusion; neighbours matter for some people in some places, but the situation varies depending upon the individual and the nature of the place where they live. Indeed, in some instances there is often a significant degree of ambivalence about relationships with neighbours.

In West Marsh, Grimsby and, to a certain extent, Knowsley and West Kensington it appeared that the mutual support and exchange that used to characterise relationships between family, friends and neighbours (the kind of overlapping networks described in the East End by Young and Wilmot, 1957) had come under pressure and been hollowed out, prompting individuals to forge more inward-looking relationships (bonding capital) with family and friends only. In contrast, in Oxfords, Wensley Fold and Amlwch a broader range and greater depth of relations appeared to be 'alive and well'. A further important caveat is that there are clear differences in the perceived desirability of bond-like relationships with neighbours among older and younger residents; it was predominantly respondents under 40 years old who talked about keeping themselves to themselves, whilst older respondents lamented the decline in willingness of newer, younger neighbours to interact.

6.2. Influences on Relations and Associated Resources

The variation in the existence of bonds, attachments and transactions between family members, friends and neighbours appeared to be associated with the interplay of various individual and the place-based factors.

Individual level factors included:

- *Residential history and geography of mobility* - respondents with a personal history of residential mobility were more likely to have geographically dispersed friendships networks. The mobility of family and friends could also serve to extend the geography of these networks. Frequent mobility could serve to limit the strength and depth of neighbour relations.
- *Current and previous engagement in work, education and training* - ongoing or previous history of employment, training or post-16 education in some cases promoted increasingly complex and geographically extensive friendship networks.
- *Parental responsibilities* - being a parent of young children often served to facilitate meaningful encounters with other local residents, which in some instances develop into friendship ties and resulted in the emergence of mutual support networks involving, for example, the provision of help with child care.
- *Personal resources* - distance frequently proved to be an unsupportable cost limiting the support and assistance friends and relatives were able to provide. Certain resources, however, helped sustain networks over greater distances. Access to and the ability to afford a good public transport network (for example, in London) and to personal transport (in particular, a car) supported extended networks. Access to the internet and the use of networking sites, such as Facebook, was also reported to sustain friendships.
- *Personal disposition* - there is some evidence to suggest that personal outlook and sociability informs relations with family, the formation of friendships and the nature of relations with neighbours, as well as the support that a person might seek or be willing to accept. All neighbourhoods provided examples of people wanting to 'keep themselves to themselves' and regulating relations with neighbours, as well as examples of people who were socially outgoing and appeared more readily willing and able to form friendship ties with neighbours.

Place based factors included:

- *Turnover and residential stability* - experiences in the West Marsh, Knowsley and West Kensington case studies point to various ways in which turbulence in the local population can undercut the development of attachments and bonds between neighbours. Residentially mobile residents often looked outside the neighbourhood for social contact, to friends and relatives living in other parts of the town. Meanwhile, existing residents experienced a gradual depletion of neighbourhood acquaintances. In West Marsh, residential turbulence was informed by the relatively large private rented sector in the neighbourhood and reflected the area's role as a 'zone of transition' function within the local urban system. In West Kensington, relatively high levels of mobility reflected the fact that people were drawn to the area for practical, rather than personal, reasons (connectivity to other areas of London; local services and resources; availability of housing). In Hillside, turbulence within the local population was associated with a programme of large scale demolition and ongoing rebuilding.
- *Social and physical characteristics of place* - the opportunities for contact and interaction varied between the case studies. In particular, there appeared to be

a lack of opportunity for interactions in public space in the West Marsh case study. Also evident in West Marsh and Knowsley were high levels of 'defensive' neighbouring, as individuals constructed social and spatial boundaries to maintain distance, in response to a series of external pressures centring on perceptions of crime and safety.

- *Collective social functioning* - the Oxfgangs, Wensley Fold and, to a certain extent, Amlwch case studies were notable for their closely knit networks of family and friends, which had often been nurtured over many years. The relative stability of these neighbourhoods, certainly when compared to West Marsh and Knowsley, appeared to provide the opportunity for a shared history and notion of a collective identity to emerge, which served to effect more positive neighbouring and neighbourliness. However, in Amlwch it did appear that insider-outsider identities served to undermine a sense of belonging to such collective identities for some (particularly English) people.

6.3. Implications

These findings raise a number of implications for policymakers and academics concerned with the potential for the restitution of social networks to revitalise disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Firstly, they suggest that family, friends and neighbouring matter in different ways to different people. Both across and between case study areas, there is a plurality of views about what support might be sought and received from family and friends and regarding what constitutes good neighbouring and the desirability of close contact with those living nearby. This finding problematises the claim that deprivation can somehow be reversed by fostering stronger social bonds between neighbours (see for example Putnam, 2000, CLG 2008). Sustainable communities cannot simply be willed into being if at least some residents display a disinclination to invest time in getting to know others.

Secondly, the propensity to forge strong social ties and productive friendships with neighbours is linked to the nature of a place, and the nature of a place is the outcome of external forces and top down social, economic and political processes, as well as social relations and actions in everyday life at the local level. Recognising this fact raises the possibility, if not the likelihood, that a pre-requisite for creating the conditions in which more open and supportive relationships can flourish will be the tackling of material and social conditions that serve to constrain the possibilities for forming social relationships. However, even if such changes to the material conditions were possible, this would be no guarantee that the character of local, social relations would fundamentally change. Whilst some older residents lament the loss of bonds or attachments with neighbours, this is less evident among younger residents. These generational differences may point to long-term changes in cultural preferences that echo Blokland's (2003) observation that the desire for public forms of familiarity with neighbours is in long-term decline.

Thirdly and finally, the neighbourhood can be the site of social networking and neighbours can still provide an important source of social and practical assistance, but this is far less likely to extend to material or emotional support than with friends or family. Good neighbouring can generate a sense of belonging and attachment to place that clearly anchors individuals in neighbourhoods, but this does not necessarily enable those living in more constrained circumstances to meet the immediate challenges of getting by on low incomes. In this respect, the findings presented herein appear to support the contention of some social capital theorists (especially Putnam, 2000) that bonding social capital between dense, homogeneous networks of family and friends helps people 'get by'. At the same time, though, it perhaps challenges the view that looser more heterogeneous networks can provide

important sources of bridging social capital that enable people to 'get ahead'. If neighbours can be considered a potential source of such bridging capital, it is rarely the case that they are used as a resource in this way. The ties that matter most for those on the lowest incomes are those providing bonding social capital. This conclusion runs counter to prevailing orthodoxies that presume that the creation of 'mixed communities' will provide a ladder of opportunity for disadvantaged residents to climb. Rather, it appears more likely that policies which limit turnover and actively support family or friendship networks (through housing allocation policies for example), may prove more effective in nurturing the kind of support most valued in deprived communities.

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Appendix 1 – Case Study Profiles

A1.1. Hillside and Primalt, Knowsley

The Knowsley case study is made up of two adjoining neighbourhoods, Hillside and Primalt. Primalt is the formal name given to the area for planning purposes and by the NDC partnership, but the whole area is generally known by residents as Hillside, and this is as the term for the case study area in the rest of this report. The neighbourhoods make up one-third of North Huyton New Deal for Communities (NDC) intervention area (the other areas are Finch House, Fincham, Woolfall North and Woolfall South).

These two neighbourhoods, and the wider NDC area, form a part of the collection of inter-war and post-war municipal housing estates that were developed as ‘overspill’ from the City of Liverpool slum clearance programmes and the expansion of the Liverpool Docks. The majority of dwellings are two storey semi-detached and terraced family houses arranged in traditional street patterns. Households in the case study area are predominantly White, with just one per cent of residents from a minority ethnic background, according to the 2001 Census.

Analysis from the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for the two lower super output areas (LSOAs) that approximate most closely to Hillside show that the area is in the most deprived decile on four of the seven domains: income, employment, health, and education, skills and training; it is in the second most deprived decile on ‘crime’ and ‘living environment’, and the third lowest decile on ‘barriers to housing and services’. The ONS statistics on population turnover for 2005/6 showed a rate of 50 per 1,000 (compared to a median turnover rate for Medium SOAs in England and Wales of 78 per 1,000).

The age profile of the area according to 2006 mid year estimates broadly matches the wider local authority and national picture, with a slightly higher proportion of young people under the age of 16. In the 2001 census, 25 per cent of households were classified as lone parent (compared to 19 per cent in Knowsley and 10 per cent in England) and 53 per cent lived in social housing (compared to 32 per cent and 19 per cent respectively). In February 2008, 6.4 per cent of the working age population in the area was claiming Job Seekers’ Allowance (JSA) (compared to 4.2 per cent in Knowsley and 2.2 per cent in England) and 19 per cent were claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Severe Disability Allowance (SDA) (compared to 13.6 per cent and 6.8 per cent respectively).

Hillside is bounded by the M57, a dual carriageway (Seth Powell Way) and a park (Alt Park) and is one of the more isolated areas in the wider neighbourhood. In recent years void properties have been a significant problem in the housing stock, with many empty properties declared structurally unstable and dangerous. The sense of isolation has been reinforced by the demolition of a considerable proportion of the housing stock, leaving many unused open spaces that have yet to be developed as part of the masterplan for the area.

New development to replace demolished dwellings has recently been suspended, as a consequence of the economic downturn. The area has few public buildings and amenities, and one of the last remaining post offices in the area closed last year. Beechwood Primary School, which was one of three primary schools in the North Huyton area, has also recently closed down. The one public building in Hillside, the ‘Hillywood’ Community Centre, is well

used by a range of local groups, residents and stakeholders. It is staffed by two paid community workers and a small band of dedicated volunteers.

The Primalt area comprises 648 units of accommodation including a renovated tower block known as Knowsley Heights. There are around sixty owner-occupied properties in the area. There are problems with anti-social behaviour in parts of the estate, and environmental problems, although one area, Pennard Field, is seen as a potential amenity for the whole community. There are no other public amenities in the Primalt area.

A1.2. Oxgangs, Edinburgh

Oxgangs is a suburb of Edinburgh, located in the south-west of the city. It is named after an 'oxgang', an ancient Scottish land measure. The development of the area started in the early 1950s; it had previously been mostly farmland and was considered part of the countryside on the fringe of the city. The area consists of large housing schemes, ranging from Edinburgh City Council-owned high rise tower blocks to private bungalows. A large proportion of former council-owned properties in Oxgangs have been bought by tenants under the Right to Buy scheme, and there is now a high demand for what remains of the council housing stock in the area.

An analysis of the LSOAs for Oxgangs in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for 2007 shows that the area is in the third most deprived decile overall, and is classed in this decile for income, health and crime. It is in the second most deprived decile in terms of education, skills and training and housing, in the fourth most deprived decile for employment, and the fifth for geographic access. The age profile of the area in the 2006 mid-year estimates is broadly similar to the city and national picture, with a slightly higher proportion of older residents (21 per cent, compared to 17 per cent for Edinburgh and 19 per cent for Scotland). There was a relatively high proportion of lone parent households in the areas (14 per cent compared to 8 per cent in Edinburgh and 11 per cent in Scotland) and of households in the social housing sector (46 per cent compared to 18 per cent and 29 per cent respectively).

As of November 2007, 2.6 per cent of the working age population in Oxgangs was claiming JSA (compared to 1.6 per cent in Edinburgh and 2.1 in Scotland) and 14.7 per cent were claiming IB/SDA (compared to 7.2 per cent and 9.4 per cent respectively).

The neighbourhood is well served by a variety of shops, amenities and public facilities. It has two small shopping areas at each end of Oxgangs known to the locals as the 'top' and 'bottom' shops. The top shops (Oxgangs Broadway) are the larger and feature a small convenient store known as 'Denis's', named after the owner of the shop. Other shops in the top area include a newsagents, a hairdressers, and three take-aways.

There is also a post office and a pharmacy.

The local library is a popular hub of the community, and is regularly used for meetings and classes as well as for its wide range of books and IT facilities. Oxgangs has three primary schools, as well as a nearby high school with a very good reputation locally and further afield. Two neighbouring primary schools situated on Oxgangs Green (Comiston and Hunters Tryst) were recently merged and renamed Pentland Primary. Local churches in the area include: Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church, a Roman Catholic Church and a recently built Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In 2003 Edinburgh City Council (in consultation with tenants) took the decision to demolish and redevelop Oxgangs high rise flats, originally known as Comiston Luxury Flats. In April 2005 the long-standing tower block, Capelaw Court, was demolished to make way for new housing. Capelaw was one of three high rise flats built in Oxgangs Crescent in 1961 and

1962. The other two buildings (Caerketton Court and Allermuir Court) were then demolished in November 2006. The new homes, built on the site of the high rises, were designed in consultation with local people, and provide a mixture of dwellings, including provision for the elderly and the disabled. The scheme reflected a local desire for 'low rise' housing, coupled with the need to achieve relatively high dwelling densities in the face of high housing demand. However, some local residents have expressed reluctance about moving into the newly available accommodation because of its location and lay-out.

A1.3. Wensley Fold, Blackburn

Wensley Fold is a neighbourhood of Blackburn, a Lancashire town with a population of some 100,000 in 2001, and the administrative centre of the unitary authority of Blackburn and Darwen (population 137,000 in 2001). The neighbourhood is located immediately west of Blackburn town centre. It is bounded to the North by the A677 Preston New Road, to the South by a mixed use retail and industrial area and to the West by a large park. The area has a population of approximately 3,000, occupies a hillside situation and is characterised by rows of parallel terraced houses organised in a compressed grid pattern. Recently, the area has been subject to redevelopment, as part of the Pennine Lancashire Housing Market Renewal programme, with a number of terraces being demolished and replaced by new-build terrace properties, with more space between each row allowing for gardens and back yards to be developed.

Blackburn has a long history of immigration, particularly from India and Pakistan, and one in five (21 per cent) of the population in the town were recorded as of South Asian ethnic origin by the 2001 Census. In the study area, more than half of the local population were recorded as having a non-White ethnic origin by the 2001 Census, and 51 per cent were recorded as of South Asian ethnic origin. The LSOAs that were combined to create an area almost equivalent to the case-study neighbourhood were in the most deprived decile on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007. The area was in the most deprived decile on six of the seven domains measured by the IMD: income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, and living environment. In contrast, the area was in the least deprived decile in the 'barriers to housing and services' domain, reflecting its proximity to the town centre.

According to the 2006 mid year population estimates, the neighbourhood has a young age profile. A relatively large proportion of the population are children less than 16 years old (29 per cent, compared to 24 per cent in the local authority district and 19 per cent in England) and only 11 per cent are men over 65 years old or women over 60 years old (compared to 19 per cent nationally). The 2001 Census recorded a relatively large proportion of single person households (41 per cent) and households containing dependent children (39 per cent). The neighbourhood has relatively large social rented (30 per cent) and private rented (16 per cent) sectors, according to the 2001 Census. Only half (50 per cent) of the households live in owner occupied accommodation, compared to 71 per cent of households in the district and 69 per cent of all households in England.

A relatively high proportion of the local population were in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disability Allowance in February 2008. The proportion of people in receipt of the latter was almost treble the national level (18.8 per cent in the case study neighbourhood, compared to 11.6 per cent across the district and 6.8 per cent across England).

The area has a vibrant local shopping centre, with local shops specialising in South Asian produce. There are also a number of major supermarket stores on the edge of the area and the town centre is within walking distance. Local community resources include a community centre that runs various training, educational and social activities targeted at the whole population, as well as places of worship and parks.

A1.4 West Marsh, Grimsby

West Marsh is a neighbourhood of Grimsby, the largest town in the district of North East Lincolnshire, with a population of about 90,000. Grimsby has a long history as a fishing port and nearby Immingham is a major container port. Other major employers in the district include the chemical and food processing industries.

West Marsh is located immediately adjacent to the town centre and also close to the A180, the main route into the town from the west. A major feature of the area is the River Freshney, which runs west to east through the neighbourhood. On the north side of the River is a park. Together, these two physical features divide the neighbourhood into two distinct areas. North of the River and West of the park is an area often referred to locally as 'Gilby'. Centred on Gilby Road, this area is relatively isolated, and consists of three parallel no-through-roads, criss-crossed by six parallel no-through-roads. South of the river is an area that many local people refer to as 'West Marsh', which is characterised by parallel roads of terraced houses.

The population of the LSOAs that are almost equivalent to the study area was just over 3,000, according to the 2006 mid-year estimate. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) were of working age and 23 per cent were less than 16 years old. The area has a relatively small older population (13 per cent of the population, compared to 20 per cent in North east Lincolnshire and 19 per cent in England). According to the 2001 Census, a relatively small proportion of households are couples, with or without children (46 per cent, compared to 57 per cent in the district and 57 per cent across England). 17 per cent of households are lone parent families, compared to 12 per cent in the district and 10 per cent in England.

The area is relatively deprived, falling within the most deprived decile of lower super output areas in England. The area is placed in the lowest decile in relation to education skills and training, crime and the living environment on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). It is in the second lowest decile in terms of income, employment and health. In February 2008, 15.7 per cent of the working age population were in receipt of JSA or IB/SDA, compared to 11.1 per cent of people of working age in North Lincolnshire and 9.0 per cent in England.

The neighbourhood, like the wider district, is ethnically homogenous. According to the 2001 Census, 98 per cent of the population of the neighbourhood and the district were White British or Irish, one per cent were White Other and one per cent were Mixed Heritage. The study team did come across anecdotal evidence, however, that migrant workers from the EU accession states had arrived into Grimsby in recent years, with some people settling in West Marsh, although the scale of new immigration is unclear.

Terraced housing is the dominant built form in the neighbourhood. Many of these properties have no garden or curtilage at the front, the front door opening straight onto the street. A relatively large proportion of the housing stock is privately rented (20 per cent, double the district and national average), while the proportion in the owner occupied sector (64 per cent) is below the proportion in North East Lincolnshire (72 per cent) and England (69 per cent).

There are a limited number of community facilities in the neighbourhood and several shops are shut and boarded up. There is, however, a community centre on the northern fringe of the area, which provides various courses, classes and groups, including youth activities. Shortly before the study team visited the area for the first stage interviews a local man had been stabbed to death in the area. At the time of the visit, the police investigation was ongoing and police divers were combing the River Freshney for evidence.

A1.5. West Kensington

The West Kensington case study area is located in west London, in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The area is located within walking distance of Earls Court Exhibition Centre and a number of London Underground stations including West Kensington, West Brompton, and Earls Court. The area is surrounded by several high status neighbourhoods including Chelsea, Baron's Court and Kensington.

The case study area, which comprises 1,800 properties in two social housing estates, West Kensington and Gibbs Green, forms part of a larger neighbourhood which most locals refer to as 'West Kensington.' The neighbourhood is centred on the intersection between North End and Lillie Roads, where most of the area's numerous shops, pubs and cafes are located. The area also has a bustling (semi-permanent) market which is located on Lillie Road. The West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates are located in the north of the neighbourhood on the eastern side of North End Road. Reflecting the diversity of the wider West Kensington area, the neighbourhood is a mixed income area and contains many households with above average incomes. In some parts of the area, property prices are very high, with some selling recently for more than £1.5 million.

The LSOAs for the area do not match the case study exactly, but are close enough to indicate the profile of deprivation in the locality. In terms of the IMD 2007, the areas were in the lowest decile for income and living environment, in the second lowest overall and in terms of employment, health and barriers to housing and services, and the third lowest for crime. It was however (just) in the least deprived half of LSOAs in terms of education, training and skills. In terms of the age profile, there is a slightly higher proportion of younger residents under 16 (20 per cent) than in the borough (16 per cent) or nationally (19 per cent) and a lower proportion of older residents (12 per cent) than in England (19 per cent). According to the 2001 Census, 23 per cent of households are lone parents, compared to 12 per cent in Hammersmith and Fulham and 10 per cent in England, and 11 per cent are multi-person households, compared to 13 per cent in the borough and just three per cent nationally.

65 per cent of households were described as 'white' or 'white other' in the area (78 per cent in Hammersmith and Fulham and 91 per cent in England) and 21 per cent described themselves as 'black' (compared to 11 per cent and 3 per cent respectively). The black and minority ethnic population includes members of Afro-Caribbean, West African and Somali communities. 57 per cent of households on the estates were in the social housing sector, compared to 33 per cent in the borough and 19 per cent nationally, and just 25 per cent were owner-occupiers (compared to 44 per cent and 69 per cent respectively).

The study area is covered by the North Fulham New Deal for Communities programme, and social housing units on the West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates are being modernised as part of this initiative. The West Kensington estate comprises approximately 1,000 units and was built in the early 1970s. It is a mixed development comprising five tower blocks, low rise flats, maisonettes and some terraced houses. The Gibbs Green estate comprises some 160 flats and maisonettes, built in the late 1950s/ early 1960s. The properties are set out in six four storey blocks and one eight storey block, which is due to be replaced by low rise housing and a communal hall under redevelopment proposals.

A1.6. Amlwch

Amlwch is a small town located on the northern tip of Ynys Mon (Isle of Anglesey). It is the fourth biggest settlement on the island and has a population of 1,400. It is relatively isolated geographically and the nearest towns to it are Llangefni (13 miles away) and Holyhead (20 miles). Amlwch comprises distinct neighbourhoods, including Amlwch Port, which was once a thriving port, Amlwch town itself, where most shops and services are based, and Craig-y-

don, a small local authority housing estate located between Amlwch and Amlwch Port. The residential areas contain a mixture of property types, although most of the stock consists of houses of traditional construction.

The town was once of the main centres of industry in Wales. It had one of the world's largest copper mountains ([Parys Mountain](#)), was once a centre for ship building and repair, and the base for a chemical plant which extracted bromine from sea water. However, these industries have all closed and, despite the continuing economic value to the town of the nearby Wylfa nuclear power station, the town has been in economic decline for the past thirty years or so. As a relatively deprived area, there is some regeneration activity being undertaken in Amlwch, coordinated by the regeneration agency for Wales, *Communities First*.

The LSOAs selected do not match exactly the study area but they nevertheless provide reliable estimates of its socio-economic position. In terms of the Welsh IMD, Amlwch is in the second most deprived decile in terms of community safety, environment, access to services and housing, and in the third most deprived in terms of income and its overall ranking. It is in the fourth most deprived decile for employment, health and education. It does not have as high a WIMD score as many of the communities in the South Wales valleys, but the reason for selecting the area was due to its greater geographical isolation and relative immobility, signified by a population turnover rate for mid 2005 to mid 2006 of 44 per 1,000 population (compared to a median of 78 per 1,000 for England and Wales).

In the 2006 MYE, the age profile was broadly similar to district and national averages with a slightly higher proportion of those under 16 (20 per cent compared to 18 per cent for Ynys Mon and 19 per cent for Wales). Slightly higher proportions of the population were lone parent (13 per cent) or single person (35 per cent) households than in Ynys Mon (11 per cent and 29 per cent) and in Wales (12 per cent and 29 per cent). 98 per cent of the population is of 'White British/Irish' population ethnic origin (the same as for the district and one per cent higher than the national average).

In the 2001 Census, just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of households in Amlwch owned their homes (68 per cent in Ynys Mon and 71 per cent in Wales) and 18 per cent were in the social housing sector (compared to 17 per cent and 18 per cent respectively). In February 2008, 5.1 per cent of the working age population were JSA claimants (3.1 per cent in Ynys Mon and 6.6 per cent in Wales) and 12.3 per cent were JSA/SDA claimants (compared to 9.5 per cent and 10.9 per cent respectively).

Many residents speak Welsh and it is the first language for some. In acknowledgment of this, residents were asked which language they would like to be interviewed in. Most did not have a preference, but two of the in-depth interviews undertaken by the research team were conducted in Welsh.