

# Revealing Social Capital

An ethnographic study of  
cross-economic mixing

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# 01. Executive summary

# 01. Executive Summary

## Background to this work

- US data looked at the role social connections play in driving our levels of social capital and concluded that children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to achieve higher incomes in adulthood when they grow up in communities that foster friendships between high- and low-income people.
- Inspired by this, a partnership was developed to see whether similar patterns hold in the UK; the partnership included Neighbourly Lab, RSA, BIT, Meta, Stripe Partners and researchers from Stanford and Opportunity Insights.
- The UK 'Revealing Social Capital' study included in-depth, qualitative, place-based ethnographic research led by the team at Neighbourly Lab. We explored the experiences of people living in different parts of the UK, providing a textured understanding of their social connections, **where and how these connections crossed lines of economic difference and explored what these connections are like 'in real life'**. We sought to understand what conditions are in place to foster cross-economic mixing and how it is experienced by a diverse range of residents.
- We selected 'outlier' neighbourhoods with unusually high or low connections across economic backgrounds, which are similar in most other ways. By comparing similar areas, we are able to understand what makes some communities better at building social connections than others, regardless of their economic or demographic makeup.

## Main findings

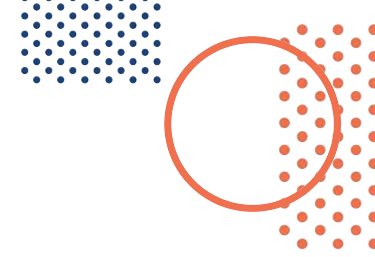
- There are reasons to be optimistic that we can increase people's social capital and cross-economic connections. Through our analysis of places with higher and lower mixing across lines of difference, we have identified **five key settings** where mixing takes place. This is exciting as it means that we can see what changes to policy and praxis need to be made to foster cross-economic mixing in locations where there is not much currently, to benefit those who need it most.
- The settings we have identified are wide reaching and if interventions were to be made, they would have the potential to be scaled. These are: **education, the workplace, sports, leisure and hobby groups, music and the arts and faith/interfaith activities and spaces.**

The most notable insights about cross-economic mixing in these settings include:

### Education:

- In early years settings and primary schools, cross-economic mixing takes place between parents and carers and works best when there are activities that actively encourage these connections. This is particularly interesting as direct interventions already take place in these settings, and they could be leveraged to encourage cross-economic mixing.
- In secondary schools the cross-economic mixing takes place between the students and is most effective when facilitated through diverse extra curricular activities. Mentoring in schools is helpful.
- Adult Education offers local opportunities for people to meet others from different economic backgrounds.

# Executive Summary continued



## Workplace

- Employers who encourage an equitable culture, giving staff opportunities to mix with others across class and authority - both inside and outside of the workplace. These employers tend to also invest locally, contributing to community activities. Interesting interventions could happen through local employers.
- Flexible work including in hospitality, either locally in cafes and pubs or at larger corporate events, facilitate cross-economic mixing. This is most notable with younger residents.
- Efforts at deliberate mixing through training and mentoring in the workplace are also cited.

## Sports, leisure and hobby groups -including music and the arts

- Certain structural conditions need to be in place including: the activities being easy to get involved in; being affordable and welcoming; and being well advertised - using different platforms keeping the information up to date. People also need to know what their involvement entails, so they are set up for success.
- Spectating on the sidelines - either parents watching their children play sports and participate in activities, or as a local fan - are often cited as opportunities for cross-economic mixing.
- Belonging to and regularly using low cost sports, fitness and other activities are effective for cross-economic mixing. Relationships are often extended through social media and joining relevant local groups.

- Informal volunteering, which is more hyper-local and 'helping out', can have more of a cross-economic effect through neighbourhood mixing, than formal volunteering which has less of an impact.

## Arts, music and culture

- Cross-economic mixing tends to happen when what is offered - be it an exhibition, a gig or a class - is inclusive and accessible, meaning events are lower cost, at venues in which everyone is welcome and that are usually well-known by the community.

## Faith, interfaith and faith spaces

- Positive faith affiliation serves to build some residents' social capital and foster friendships across economic lines of difference. Instances of warm welcome to newcomers and financial or practical support in times of hardship demonstrate this.
- Local interfaith interactions foster cross-economic mixing particularly during times of celebration or working together over a shared local issue.
- Using faith spaces, for diverse and secular activities facilitates cross-economic mixing. Importantly, when spaces are offered at a low cost, they are made more inclusive and accessible to all members of the community

## 02. About this work

# About this piece of work



## The idea

We wanted to bring to life a diverse range of lived experiences to complement the quantitative data and help inform policy and praxis. We studied 'outlier' neighbourhoods with unusually high or low cross-economic mixing that were otherwise similar. Comparing these areas revealed what drives social connections beyond demographics or economics.

Neighbourly Lab carried out the ethnographic work on behalf of this research partnership



## 32 x Ethnographic interviews with a follow up journal of social activities

This phase of research built on the rapid qual phase, whereby some of the research team travelled to 15 locations across England. We narrowed the focus to four Locations, focusing on two neighbourhoods in each. Equal split of lower and higher socioeconomic status, with £35,000 as the median income per individual.

8 people\* in each of:  
Ealing (London), North Yorkshire, Birmingham and Southampton

An \*is used across this report to indicate name of person has been changed



## Consolidating the findings and eliciting the key themes

Pulling together the qualitative insights and exploring what works to build cross-economic mixing.

Feeding into the participatory workshops with residents



## Reporting, feeding into participatory workshops

Insights and recommendations to be built and developed in local resident, practitioner and policy-maker workshops.

Opportunities for change looking at emerging insights

# Glossary of terms

Throughout this report, we use a range of terms to refer to the relationships people have in their communities:

## Social Capital

The resources, support and opportunities that come from your social connections or network. This includes trust and reciprocity.

## Social Connection

Positive relationships and connections to others, individually and within a community or group. Interactions can be light-touch or deeper relationships.

## Cross-economic Mixing

Mixing with people from a different socio-economic group, with either significantly higher or lower income.

## Economic Connectedness

Economic connectedness is the share of high income friends in low income people's social networks. It is one measure of cross-economic mixing which was used in the analysis of Facebook friendship data as part of this project.



# Finding the locations for research



**We wanted to understand what drives economic connectedness - that is, friendships between people from different income backgrounds**

- A neighbourhood's economic connectedness depends on two factors: **exposure and friending bias**.
- **Exposure measures how income-diverse an area is**. It shows the natural opportunities residents have to meet people from different income levels.
- **Friending bias measures whether people actually form these cross-income friendships** more or less often than we'd expect, given their area's income mix.
- We focused on **friending bias because it reflects aspects of community life that can be changed now** - things like local norms, clubs and public spaces - rather than simply who happens to live in an area.
- We identified neighbourhoods with **unusually high or low friending bias, then matched each with a nearby area that was similar in terms of income, education and ethnicity**.
- By comparing these pairs, we could see what community practices actually make a difference in fostering cross-income friendships.

In order to help bring to life what we mean by **high or low socio-economic connection in a place**, we provide an example through two locations. These examples remind us of the interrelationship between the built environment, good social infrastructure and relationships with neighbours and how they form the backdrop to residents' overall experiences of living in their place. These examples can be applied to other locations.

#### Higher economic connection e.g. Masham, North Yorkshire

**Built environment**  
-the design of the neighbourhood, shared spaces, green spaces

**Built environment:** Focused around a market square, with benches, a church, a community office and several pubs. People live around the square and there are cafes and shops. The back gates are interconnected so people have to walk through each others' gardens for access. There is a community noticeboard that is regularly updated.

**Good social Infrastructure**  
-the spaces and places that facilitate community mixing and are accessible and open for all

**Good social infrastructure:** The church, community office and pubs are used for a variety of community activities. The activities range from baby groups to gigs and art exhibitions and are largely facilitated by the community office.

**Neighbours**  
-play a key role in how people experience their local place

**Neighbours:** People live around the square and slightly further away, naturally bump into each other, can sit outside on the square together (like a shared front garden). They shop in similar places so bump into each other. Their relationships are often supported with local WhatsApp groups.

#### Lower economic connection e.g. St Mary's, Southampton

**Built environment:** Makes it harder for residents to connect with each other. Homes are high rises, the high street is busy and there's an underpass that cuts the area in half, which can feel unsafe to walk through.

**Good social infrastructure:** There are no faith spaces, easily accessible community centres and despite there being many pubs, many of the residents do not use them. They tend to go elsewhere for community life.

**Neighbours:** People are living in high rise buildings with little connection to their neighbours. Many report anti-social behaviour and say that they don't feel safe. There are no examples of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups.



## Within the areas of higher and lower cross-economic connection, people's experiences of social capital and cross-economic connection falls on a spectrum

Some people in this sample had access to many others from different socio-economic groups and are able to mix with them, whereas others have few connections, including from a different socio economic group. **Understanding how people's connections play out in their lived experiences can help us to design better interventions and develop policies to support those people** who would benefit the most from increasing their social capital and cross-economic mixing.

We have labelled the four different 'types' of experiences as **thriving, striving, satisfied and struggling**. There are case studies in the back of this document (Appendix 1) that bring this to life. The labels are a qualitative description based **on the people we met in this research, their social capital and the cross-economic mixing they experience in their communities**.

The quadrant overleaf helps us visualise this. By looking at places, settings and conditions where people are thriving (top right of the quadrant) with their social capital and cross-economic connections, we can explore what needs to change in settings and conditions to support those who have low to no social capital and cross-economic connections; people who are **struggling** (bottom left) **or striving** (bottom right).

Social capital is fundamentally relational. However, to increase people's cross-economic mixing we cannot solely rely on people to change, particularly those with low to no social capital in their lives, to find people in better situations than them to help improve their economic outcomes. Likewise, we cannot leave it to chance that some people with poorer economic outcomes will easily meet others with higher economic outcomes and become 'better off'. Instead, we need to think about the changes to systems, structures and settings that are needed to help increase contact and mixing across lines of economic difference. Thinking about this through people's experiences can help us..

### THRIVING

*"I love the area, I love it here. My husband has talked about moving, he wants to move to an area with more space, but I don't think we'll do it as we'll miss the community too much."* **Participant 31, Derby Road, Southampton**

### STRIVING

*"I think I'm still considered an outsider...a busybody probably - but when I first moved here I wasn't part of anything. So I tried to set things up and get involved, it hasn't been easy."* **Participant 22, Pateley Bridge**

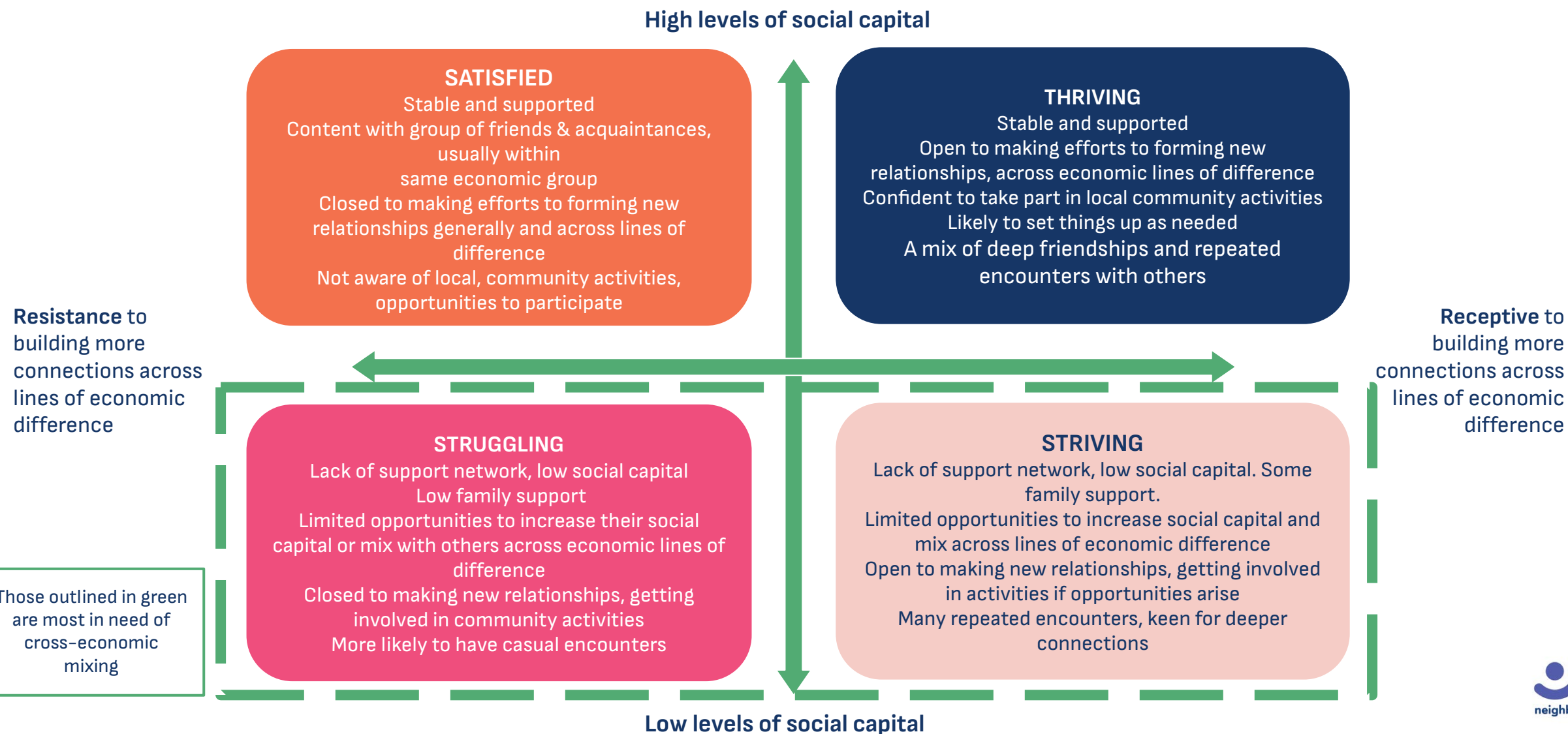
### SATISFIED

*"I have people that I know and like. I belong to a fishing club which is completely across the economic horizon... from very poor to really affluent. I find it quite comfortable to be linked by this common pursuit."* **Participant 30, Ealing Broadway South**

### STRUGGLING

*"Since I moved here a couple of years ago I've found it hard to meet people. It's the people in the local shops who are the most friendly."* **Participant 10, Bearwood**

By looking at the experience in place of those people who are **thriving**, we can plan better for those who are **striving** and **struggling** and would benefit from cross-economic mixing.



## 03. The five settings that lead to cross-economic mixing

There are five different community based settings that are conducive to cross-economic connection in neighbourhoods. The first 3, outlined in green, have the most reach and likely impact for creating cross-economic mixing.



Within each of these settings, with innovative changes to policy, funding and partnerships, there could be an upswing in cross-economic mixing, creating opportunities to support people from lower socioeconomic groups to have better outcomes. The policy ideas are not part of this ethnographic work. They are a subsequent piece of this project that has been led by the RSA.

# 1.

## Education and training

Setting up conditions for effective mixing among students and/ or parents, with opportunities to form connections across lines of difference

- Education settings, those supporting people from the early years through to universities, surfaced as important places for fostering cross-economic mixing. Cross-economic mixing takes place when there is an inclusive culture and environment, opportunities for taking part in shared and relevant activities, and physical spaces for mixing and meeting.
- In the early years and primary school settings, cross-economic mixing takes place between parents and carers and works best when there are activities that support these connections to happen. By encouraging cross-economic mixing starting in the early years, and facilitating it throughout children's schooling, it is likely to increase the numbers of people who would benefit and could help to make cross-economic mixing a norm.
- In secondary schools, cross-economic mixing takes place between students (not parents) and seems to be most effective when facilitated through diverse extra curricular activities such as sports, drama, community activities and workshops. Mentoring in schools is also helpful.
- University connections are often geographically spread and maintained through social media. They provide opportunities for people to seek out others from more diverse backgrounds.
- Further and Adult Education courses offer opportunities for people to meet other locals from different economic backgrounds. People benefit from the wider range of connections others have, giving them access to a broader network of people.



**Early years settings**, such as family hubs and preschools seem to facilitate cross-economic mixing, particularly amongst the mums. This is most effective when there are activities that mums and their babies or toddlers can do together as well as when people who work in these spaces, actively encourage the mums to

connect. When they chat to each other, share their similar experiences and then stay connected in a WhatsApp group, they give each other mutual support and build friendships. The coming together over early parenting experiences creates a unique hook for many and can last for years.



**Primary schools** also play an important role in building cross-economic connections between parents. This is easier in areas where there are more mixed demographics. Regardless, schools are an excellent setting for building social capital too. Parents across this sample

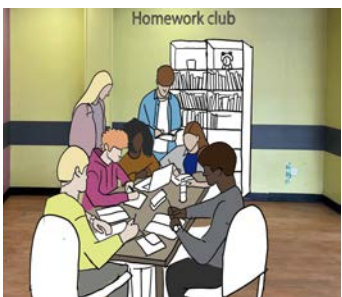
reported that the daily interactions at the school gate, in combination with the length of time their children attend primary school, motivates them to mix and there is the space in which to do so. When schools encourage parents to interact with each other informally, such as waiting in the playground together rather than in a queue outside, or bring families together for fun activities, then there are opportunities for cross-economic mixing. This can also be enhanced by parent WhatsApp groups for each class/year group. When mixing is encouraged, cross-economic relationships can develop outside the school environment, with people spending time in social and cultural settings outside of school hours. This can benefit both the children and their families.

### Spotlight Story:

**Anya's story is an example of how early years settings and then local primary schools are a fantastic setting for cross-economic mixing for parents and how the connections between parents can benefit their children and the local community.**

When Anya's daughter started at the local primary school, she knew a few of the other mums from sessions and playgroups at the family hub, but realised there were many more to meet. At drop offs she noticed that while they may have greeted each other from a distance, everyone would hurry off, often to their Mother in Laws or to do chores and stay at home until pick up. The women came from a range of diverse heritage backgrounds and their common ground was that their children were at the same local primary school. Anya decided that she would ask the local community centre to open up and invite the mums in for a coffee after drop off. This was a popular idea, with many women joining, building connections and supporting each other in many different ways. Over a short period of time, a core group of mums became active, and gathered together for activities for their children including crafts clubs for them and for employment advice for each other - lobbying the local decision-makers to keep the centre open. Their economic background was tied to their husbands' jobs, which varied from shop owners, technicians to local cab drivers.





**Secondary schools** provide a fertile setting to promote cross-economic mixing amongst young people. Schools seem to mostly do this through actively breaking down barriers and creating an inclusive culture, encouraging students to get involved in a range of diverse extra-curricular

activities including sports. They also provide external careers advice or mentoring offering further opportunities to students like special interest workshops and competitions that go beyond the classroom. When schools open up their facilities beyond school hours for use by the local communities, it can also facilitate cross-economic mixing. Staff also seem to benefit from this type of school environment, with a talent pool made up of mixed backgrounds and socioeconomic status.

#### Spotlight Story:

**Angie's story reminds us of the role of schools in creating cross-economic mixing among staff as well as pupils.**

Angie was primary school trained but got her first teaching position in a local secondary school as a support for children with additional needs. The Head Teacher was good at connecting with all her staff and encouraged Angie to further her training and cultivate an expertise young people with additional needs and behavioural challenges. After years of experiences, it has led to her becoming an expert in supporting young people with additional needs.

#### Spotlight Story:

**George's story shows the impact of friendships in secondary schools as stepping stones into higher education and opportunities for economic mixing through local football clubs.**

George grew up in Masham, attending Masham primary school on the market square. He went to high school in Harrogate and was the first in his family to go to University - he chose one in a nearby city, after his careers advisor suggested he find a city that was still easy enough to travel home to. He still knows the people he grew up with - his best friend from high school connected him to his first job post-university, where he worked his way up to manager. He moved back to Masham with his wife to start a family and used his experience to land a job working in financial services, where he's been for the majority of his career.

*"My best friend from school was from Masham, we'd grown up together. We actually went to different secondary schools but it didn't matter. He phoned me and said, look, I've got this management trainee job at Enterprise. I think you'll really enjoy it.... I worked there for seven or eight years. Gave me a really good grounding in all facets of management and running a business. I did really well. I progressed and went from a trainee to a regional manager."* **Participant 26, Masham**



**Universities** gave people the opportunity to make new connections with others from many different locations, and whilst some people find them hard to maintain once university is over, they benefit from social media as a means of keeping in touch.

Some people deliberately sought out a more diverse friendship group as their school environment was insular and they wanted to increase their social capital and connections with people from different backgrounds. Mixing within universities can be encouraged through accommodation allocation and, like with schools, a diverse and financially subsidised extra-curricular offer.



**Further Education, training and adult learning courses** offer local opportunities for people to meet others from different economic backgrounds. If new connections live outside their local area, there is some effort needed by people to maintain their friendships. With

adult education courses in particular, people benefit from the maturity of others and the wider range of connections they have made over the years, giving them access to a broader network of people.

*"I signed up to an Adult Ed course at the Academy. I met lots of people from all sorts of backgrounds and financial set up. The tutor was quite high profile and has set up writing retreats which I've been to with some of the friends I made on the course. I found out about the course online."* **Participant 3, Bearwood**

### Spotlight Story:

**Saira's story reminds us of the important of community settings being used for adult education.**

Saira is a mum of three who has lived in Derby Road her whole life. During motherhood she became isolated and depressed. One of the ways she connected to other mums in the area was through the Clovelly Family Hub, where she has met women from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds. Having it next door to the Learning centre has made this more accessible too. The courses helped her to upskill in events management and find purpose outside motherhood. She was also invited by her teacher to attend an awards ceremony in London.

*"There was only 400 people at my high school. My older brother and sister went there before me, so I knew most people. But I don't really know many people in Harrogate, so I normally just stick with my friends when I go to College. Most people are only staying for a year or two anyway. So it's kind of like there's not a thing. There's no point making friends."* **Participant 27, Pateley Bridge**

*"Parents of my kids' school friends are great. If I needed something or suddenly something happened, I know who I would ask and who I would rely on. They're not necessarily close friends that we'd go on holiday together but we're lucky that we connected."* **Participant 17, Ealing Broadway South**

# 2.

## The workplace

Creating a workplace culture and conditions to facilitate cross-economic mixing and encouraging employers to invest in their local place

- The workplace, particularly its culture and environment, as well as the investment of employers within their local community, has consistently emerged through this ethnographic research as an effective setting for cross-economic mixing.
- Some larger employers encourage an equitable culture, giving staff opportunities to mix with others across class and authority - both inside and outside of the workplace. These employers tend to also invest locally, contributing to community activities outside the workplace.
- Flexible work including in hospitality, either locally in cafes and pubs, or at larger corporate events, facilitate cross-economic mixing. Younger residents in particular, reported mixing across economic difference through these settings, keeping in touch through social media and meeting up every now and then.
- Some efforts at deliberate mixing through mentoring, training and development in the workplace have allowed people to meet others from different socioeconomic backgrounds.



**Large local employers** who facilitate cross-economic mixing have a positive impact in their communities. In this research, employers included factories, mills and breweries and had similar cultures to each other. Primarily, they promote a culture of equality in how they ask people to dress, the support/ benefits packages they offer, or the end of month 'treats' that they gave all staff. This workplace culture encourages people to mix across lines of difference while on an equal footing. For example, the Land Rover factory in Stirchley encourages everyone to wear a uniform, and no suits, so that there is less hierarchy. One resident remarked that his "*work friends are 'very working class' and so different from me and my uni friends*".

Extra curricular activities, facilitated by employers also help to foster cross-economic mixing. These may include activities that are sponsored and encouraged, and enable employees to become close friends outside of the workplace. We learnt how certain breweries in Masham would invest in a monthly keg for all staff to enjoy, as well as support the local triathlon, which is an important part of Masham life. The Cadbury factory, in Stirchley, is also known to encourage mixing. Residents described how they used to have a social club as well as organised activities, where everyone was included, whatever their role.

By investing in the local people and community, some employers stand out. Employees encourage others to apply to work there. This means that there is a strong local presence and people bump into each other in and outside of work, which inevitably encourages more cross-economic connection and exposure to new opportunities.

### Spotlight Story:

**Jacqui's family story demonstrated how local employers can encourage economic mixing and social mobility.**

Jacqui, a grandmother in her early 70s, grew up just outside London and met her husband in through a mutual friend. He was from Stirchley - shortly after getting married, in 1980s, they moved back there. Their family are involved in all sorts of activities in the community and have deep ties to the Cadbury Factory. Jacqui's husband started working there after meeting the Director in the pub he'd been working at. He started on the factory floor and worked his way up to Management. Her son also worked there, as did she when she needed some informal shift work. The Cadbury culture was inclusive and supportive of its staff, giving them the message that they mattered. It gave everyone homes. healthcare and other forms of support, including flexible working. It also facilitated mixing out of hours between people irrespective of pay grade. They would mix out of work at the pubs and play sport, creating a strong and inclusive community.

*"There are the breweries and mills who are good employers, there are some businesses, usually the hotels, who don't take part in any community events, don't employ any of the youngsters in the holidays and don't pay well, zero hours you know, so no one wants to work there. The message it gives us is we care about our profits way more than our local people. They get cheaper migrant workers there, and they don't really mix with us."* **Participant 23, Masham**



**Some other local employers** were also reported as creating a conducive environment for cross-economic mixing. For example, both an optometrist and a plasterer shared how they enjoy going out to venues in their local area with a group of work friends for a quick drink straight after work. They know these colleagues have different backgrounds, and they may not meet on the weekends but they have solid work friendships, facilitated by a positive work culture. People who work in local hospitality reflected similar sentiments and also reported keeping in touch via social media, maintaining their connections.

A few local employers, like the Council, were reported to be deliberately trying to encourage mentoring and mixing across departments and hierarchies, including socio economic status, with the ambition of this mixing having a positive impact on staff wellbeing and the Council's service delivery.

There are also instances of local employers helping people with functional skills and qualifications, contributing towards sector specialisms and therefore exposure to a wider range of people from a higher socio economic group.

**Some local businesses are less invested their local people or place.** Residents perceived this negatively, seeing it as a missed opportunity in terms of supporting people who need employment, as well as being part of the whole community. Many residents believe local employers should play a more pivotal role in uplifting the community and creating jobs.

*"I worked in the local cafe. They employed a diverse mix of people, to reflect the area and they gave away food at the end of the day [to people who needed it]. It means they are known for being caring about the area, more people came in and it had a nice friendly feel with people mixing and chatting to each. It was expensive though."* **Participant 11, Ealing Broadway North**

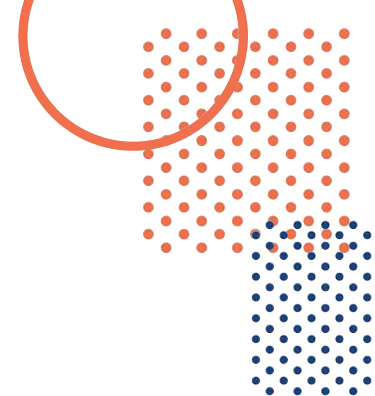
*"I work for the local council and they can see that we would be more effective if we mixed with other departments and different grades. They have asked me to help deliver this, it will take time and there will be some resistance as this hasn't been done before, but I know that many people are keen. I think they have a responsibility to help change how we mix with others, as we don't have time in our regular working day."* **Participant 31, Derby Road, Southampton**

*"There are three Afghanis - two brothers and a cousin. They all live in the same house...I go round all the time. One guy, I got him work at Southampton airport. It was only weekends, but I got him work at Specsavers... through someone that I knew. We sit down and try and find something else for him as well because it's the cost-of-living crisis."* **Participant 14, St Mary's, Southampton**

*"Pretty much everyone in Stirchley has some kind of connection to the Cadbury Factory. My husband got a job there back in the 80s - he was working in a local bar where all the Cadbury staff would drink and became pally with a Director who would always be there. Eventually the Director got him a job there and he worked there until he retired. Now my son who is 28 works there. Back in the day it would be such a source of community, they had a worker's bar and everyone from the community used to go. But my son says it's changed since Mondeley bought it."* **Participant 1, Stirchley**



# In summary: these are the key conditions that create cross-economic connections within education and workplace settings



## Key conditions

## What this looks like

### Culture of equality

- Institutions are set up to create less hierarchy, be it through academic attainment or the role/ position in the company.
- This is demonstrated through how learning/ training is delivered, how people are acknowledged/ rewarded for achievement and clothing.

### Proximity/ opportunity for bumping

- People who attend the institutions live nearby, need places and spaces to 'bump' into each other - street corners, playgrounds, cafes, community hubs.

### Organised sports/ activities

- Local sports/ activities happening through the institutions, creating opportunities to connect over specific shared interests.

### Social and developmental opportunities

- Having a social club/ social space nearby that pupils/ parents/ staff can go to, at different times of day to feel welcome and part of something outside of their school/ work day.

# 3.

## Sports, leisure and hobby groups

Locally based community activities with a clear purpose and 'rules' to create 'opportunity' for cross-economic connection

- Sports, leisure and hobby groups that have spaces and places locally, that are inclusive and accessible and demonstrate a clear and obvious purpose for the activity, are most likely to facilitate cross-economic mixing between participants.
- Certain structural conditions need to be place including: being easy to get involved in; being affordable and welcoming; and being well advertised - using different platforms and keeping the information up to date. People also need to know what their involvement entails, so they know what to expect from the activity and are set up for success.
- 'The sidelines' where parents watch their children play sports and participate in activities, are examples where cross-economic mixing takes place. Likewise, spectating at local football matches and other sports, creates opportunities for regular contact and mixing across lines of economic difference.
- Participating in sports, fitness and other activities are effective for cross-economic connection. Those who belong to low cost clubs, report meeting others from different economic backgrounds. Relationships formed at these clubs are often extended through social media and joining relevant local groups.
- There is little qualitative evidence that formal volunteering facilitates cross-economic mixing, however informal volunteering, which is more hyper-local and is perceived as just 'helping out', can have more of an effect on cross-economic mixing within and between neighbourhoods.



## Watching children's sports and activities

allows parents to meet others from different socioeconomic backgrounds, especially when the sports and after-school clubs are varied and diverse.

These activities largely follow the conditions set out earlier, including being inclusive and accessible, with clear information and obvious purpose. They are often thrown into WhatsApp groups as part of their membership, so end up connecting with people on and offline, which can encourage relationships to build.



**Watching local sports** regularly creates opportunities for a greater cross-economic mixing. Sports fans who have a season ticket for their local team and watch their home games regularly often meet people from a range of socio economic backgrounds through their shared passion.

People describe the atmosphere as friendly, with people keeping an eye out for each other, for example, noticing with concern if seats are empty some weeks. Whilst these relationships are focused on the games, they do interact and share contact details, creating relationships with new and different people, often across lines of economic difference.

## Spotlight Story:

**Zanine's story points to the conditions that could support cross-economic mixing, such as specificity and inclusivity. This comes through the perspective of gender where she finds the lack of women's only sport and cultural offers as a barrier to mixing others.**

Zanine likes where she lives but notes that Bearwood lacks spaces for women to mix and meet others, to build social capital and cross-economic relationships. This means she finds opportunities for mixing outside of Bearwood with other women who share the same hobby, interests or lifestage (e.g. writing, sport, health and wellbeing or having children with additional needs).

She recalls her school days, when school sports facilitated mixing across lines of difference. She's frustrated that where she lives now lacks any facilities for women's only sports, like netball. Zanine believes there's much potential in women's only activities to encourage mixing across lines of economic difference.

*"We were worried that I was going to be very lonely moving here but actually, I would say it's maybe more sociable than what I had in London. We have a really big friendship group. I go running or hiking with some of them. I'm also in the local orchestra which helped me meet a different kind of group."* **Participant 28, Pateley Bridge**





## Adults sports, fitness and other activities

serve as an immediate icebreaker and builds social connection quickly and easily. People quickly bond over their common interest, as the activities they are doing are effective at bringing people together. Men in particular talked

about being part of football, running and cricket clubs. Women noticed fewer women's only sporting opportunities, but were still able to meet other people in these settings.

Meeting new people from different economic circumstances through going to their local (inexpensive) gym is quite common. The gyms themselves do not seem to do anything proactive to facilitate mixing, but the fact that they have a well advertised fitness class schedule, they are low cost and accessible and they have facebook groups with more information and opportunities to engage, means that people have the opportunity for repeated contact and to form friendships. People reported going for coffees after their sessions, so having some additional local social infrastructure nearby can support people in building these connections.

*"I went to this class because I was trying to lose some weight after my third child. I remember her from school but I never would have talked to her before. I thought she always seemed a bit unfriendly. But we just got chatting over the equipment and reconnected. This was 13 years ago. Now she's one of my best friends. Then we started going on walks, she got me into the Walkie Talkies."*

**Participant 31, Derby Road**

## Spotlight Story:

**Sara's story is an example of how accessible and local groups help to form social capital, and can support cross-economic mixing if people know what is involved and share the same interests.**

Sara lives in Derby Road, which has many local facilities that facilitate mixing. She decided to get into exercise once her kids were at school full time so joined a 'legs, bums, and tums' class at her local gym. After a going a few times she bumped into a woman who she had gone to school with, in the local area, decades before. They got chatting after the class and she introduced her another woman, who had a different heritage and socioeconomic status, and is now her best friend. They have started seeking out more activities to do together, and tried a Women's walking group, crafting and they've been setting up activities for their kids to do in the school holidays, linking up to the English Cricket and Athletics for kids initiatives. They want all kids in the area to have sporting opportunities as there aren't many. They are meeting different types of women through these varied activities either for themselves or their children's.

*"Gym classes. That way I've noticed I've actually met people here. It was so difficult living in the US for 30 years and then coming back and not really knowing many people here... The way I met them is if they're just next to you on the mat and there's someone that's been there a few times, then it's weird not to say 'hi'. So, I was talking that way to people... You see them repeatedly... For me it's been at pilates and yoga."* **Participant 18, Ealing Broadway North**



**Volunteering:** Whilst the wellbeing and social connection benefits are well-known, there is little qualitative evidence within this research around the role of formal volunteering in encouraging cross-economic mixing. However, some examples were given of informal volunteering being more likely to increase residents' connections across lines of economic difference.

**Formal volunteering** such as routinised support through a local charity (e.g. helping at food banks), using skills to give effective advice and information, helping older people and supporting at local community events, such as mini festivals or triathlons were reported as helping volunteers to form new friendships and feel more connected to their community. However, these types of volunteering activities did not seem to have an impact on cross-economic connections beyond the act of volunteering.

**Informal volunteering** which tends to be hyper-local and feel more like helping those they know, seems to have more of an impact on fostering stronger relationships and sometimes increases cross-economic connection. Although these tend to be focused within the same economic groups, there are incidents through neighbourhood, cultural or faith activities that helped build stronger cross-economic ties. These included hosting schemes, litter pics, WhatsApp neighbourhood groups, freecycling and interfaith activities (see setting 5).

*"My parents were on a refugee kind of scheme, like they helped move in refugee family from Jordan or Syria. So we're good friends with them. They come round for dinner."* **Participant 27, Pateley Bridge**

*"I volunteer at Uni doing legal aid with people seeking sanctuary, but we don't become friends. We just help people. I'd love to be friends with some of the people I've supported but we're kind of not supposed to."* **Participant 11, Ealing Broadway South**

*"They [the foodbank] would come round and do the collections... around Covid times... But since then, we've gone down to the Starchley Baths and donated. When we've gone down there... it's usually people you recognise, probably neighbours, and you say 'hello, how are things?'. But if you go to something like a foodbank, it's not like going to the market or a Christmas Fayre."* **Participant 8, Starchley**

*"Through the WhatsApp group we can ask for practical support or share food. You're helping people out in ways you wouldn't before. There's potential; to speak about something when you meet each other."* **Participant 31, Derby Road**

# 4.

## Arts, music & culture

Universal access to creative opportunities that are inclusive

- Cultural activities, including the arts and music, are powerful ways of fostering social connection, bringing people together to build their social capital and increase their economic connectedness.
- Residents involved with community based arts and music projects expressed how collective creativity develops a strong sense of community amongst participants, increasing their wellbeing and their sense of belonging to the area.
- When local spaces can be used as venues for either art classes, exhibitions, music venues or spaces where groups can convene, they tend to have improved social capital and better mixing across lines of economic difference.
- Cross-economic mixing tends to happen when what is offered - be it an exhibition, a gig or a class - is inclusive and accessible, meaning they are lower cost and at venues in which everyone is welcome and are usually well-known in the community.



**People and spaces** are key in contributing to a thriving arts and music scene locally, that facilitates connections across lines of economic difference - the local social infrastructure is a key enabler of the arts and music scenes. For example, we heard about local venues supporting young people by subsidising the cost of a cinema ticket and allowing them to use the space for events such as inclusive dance classes. We heard about churches hosting art fairs and concerts in Masham, as well as community centres opening up for cinema nights and residents opening their doors for life

drawing classes. These places are accessible and inclusive and the local people support and encourage cultural and creative opportunities.

The spaces, groups and activities often have an online presence (e.g. through local groups), allowing people to find out what's on locally and engage with others beyond the lifespan of the singular event. In those areas lacking local cultural arts and music, residents still try and access them, but have to leave their local area and go elsewhere. This means that whilst they may enjoy themselves, they are less likely to forge and sustain local relationships, as there are fewer opportunities for bumping and mixing.

*"I did lots of dance, drama and music at the local centre growing up. In fact it was through the centre that I made loads of friends from different backgrounds. We are all still in touch, on Snapchat mainly. Some are at uni, others are working and one is a mum now."* **Participant 11, Ealing Broadway North**

### Spotlight Story:

**Heather's story shows us the importance of subsidised creative activities locally, so that a range of people can participate and meet others over shared interests. It also shows how support can be given and received through music.**

Heather is a local artist, poet and sculptor. Her partner is also an artist and amateur but enthusiastic musician too. She moved to Masham as it is known for being welcoming to artists - together, the couple opened up a local studio and with a bit of investment were able to offer subsidised classes which were popular and facilitated meeting and mixing between people. Unfortunately, they had to charge for classes, and noticed how their community started to change and become less mixed, as only people who could afford the fee would go to classes. The studio and classes have since been taken over by someone else, and that person has been applying for funding, so that the classes are more inclusive and accessible for everyone regardless of their income and therefore creating an environment that once again encourages cross-economic mixing.

*"We sell tickets for the gigs in the community centre, so everyone knows about it and can come and get them. They're not expensive. We have loads of tribute bands that come here, everyone loves it. It's intergenerational, everyone is welcome. It creates a really lovely community."* **Participant 23, Masham**

# 5.

## Faith & interfaith activities and faith spaces

Harnessing the assets that exist in faith communities - their people and buildings to create opportunities for cross-economic connection

- Faith and interfaith activities and spaces are a powerful source of social capital and they provide opportunities for cross-economic mixing for some residents.
- Positive faith affiliation serves to build some residents' social capital and foster friendships across economic lines of difference. Instances of warm welcome to newcomers, and financial or practical support in times of hardship demonstrate this.
- Local interfaith interactions also play a key role in fostering cross-economic mixing particularly during times of celebration or when coming together over shared local issues, be they festivals or local political campaigning.
- The physical faith spaces, for diverse and secular use, are effective for cross-economic mixing. Importantly, when spaces are offered at a low cost, they are made more inclusive and accessible to all members of the community increasing likelihood of usage.



**Being affiliated to a faith community** seems to benefit some residents deeply, in terms of building their social capital and developing friendships with people across economic backgrounds. A common theme is the role that faith communities play in offering a warm welcome to people when they are new to an area, especially for those with no other local family or social connections. Faith

communities, especially those more established in communities, were typically described as well set up and as having key people in place to help others navigate the local area and meet people from the congregation. When they work best, they accelerate people's belonging to a place and provide the necessary support with family life and work, as well as broader challenges. In fact, in some areas, we learnt that some people visit the adjacent areas with higher cross-economic connections to pray and meet others.

**Interfaith activities** also create cross-economic connections that benefit individuals as well as the community more broadly, especially when they connect with those beyond the formal and traditional roles of faith leaders, and include women and young people. This tends to be most impactful when the area consists of diverse faith communities, so residents are used to bumping into and mixing with different people. For example, some people come from similar home countries but have different faith affiliations. Derby Road in Southampton is a good example of how interfaith connections can help uplift local economic connections. There are 7 different faith spaces, representing many religions and communities and they all open their doors for different activities and events. Residents told us about the hyperlocal Hindu community being better off financially than the Muslim community, and they invest in local community activities, including street parties/ parades to celebrate Eid, that bring people together. This mixing has also led to employment opportunities in local shops as well as creating micro-enterprises for some of the women.

*"Our local church is for everyone, they open their doors to all sorts of activities in the community. We have toddler groups there, activities for young people, it's even a venue for gigs and exhibitions. It means people go there for different things and it means different things to people."* **Participant 25, Masham**

*"When you go to the mosque, you see many different faces. When you come out, you're talking about work, you're taking your job, they spent 5-10 minutes, and then they go home or shopping.... When you come out you're gonna see 100s of people standing around in groups."* **Participant 16, St Mary's, Southampton**

*"There is a church just across road from us, we go to the community events. It's a nice mixture of people in terms of ethnicity, lots of different types of little stalls. It's nice to support small business owners... it's a good way to meet people. I will just try and engage and have a little bit of conversation."* **Participant 3, Bearwood, Birmingham**

*"Our church is now full of very old people. but they look after their elderly and put on a coffee morning every week. For some people that's the only people they see. It's a shame as they could do more for the rest of the community."* **Participant 22, Pateley Bridge**





**The faith spaces** in areas where there is higher economic connectedness, seem to be open and accessible for non-faith activities, and this contributes to a necessary, social infrastructure role.

Churches, in particular, have been described as being places of good social infrastructure within communities. We heard examples of how churches in areas of higher economic connection are used for weekly food banks, drop-in/ advice sessions, mum and toddler groups, homework clubs, youth spaces, community events and for gigs and exhibitions. They facilitate cross-economic mixing through targeted and specific activities.

In some cases, the mixing across lines of difference is among local volunteers helping at the activities, in others it is between volunteers and attendees. Notably, most mixing among residents occurs during specific activities focused around a singular hook, such as a food bank, or special interest or hobby, such as music group. This links back to the findings in the previous sections.

In areas of lower economic connectedness, we heard how their faith spaces tended to be for single use and solely open to people from the specific faith congregation. There are opportunities to open these spaces up to increase mixing across lines of difference, and include the wider community.

*“My parents came from New Zealand and knew no one apart from each other. They weren’t religious, but decided to get us Christened so that we could be part of the church. That’s how they made their friends, and met people. I’ve done work experience with one of them.”* **Participant 11, Ealing Broadway North**

### Spotlight Story:

**Lisa’s story highlights faith as a connector across very different groups.**

Having lived in the Masham for over 30 years, one resident has seen the value of the Methodist church in bringing together people who would otherwise remain strangers. The generations of farming families that often keep to themselves are often part of the community during faith activities or celebrations. She has found it a nice way to have common ground which has allowed her and her family to connect and build systems of support, and to offer the same to other families.

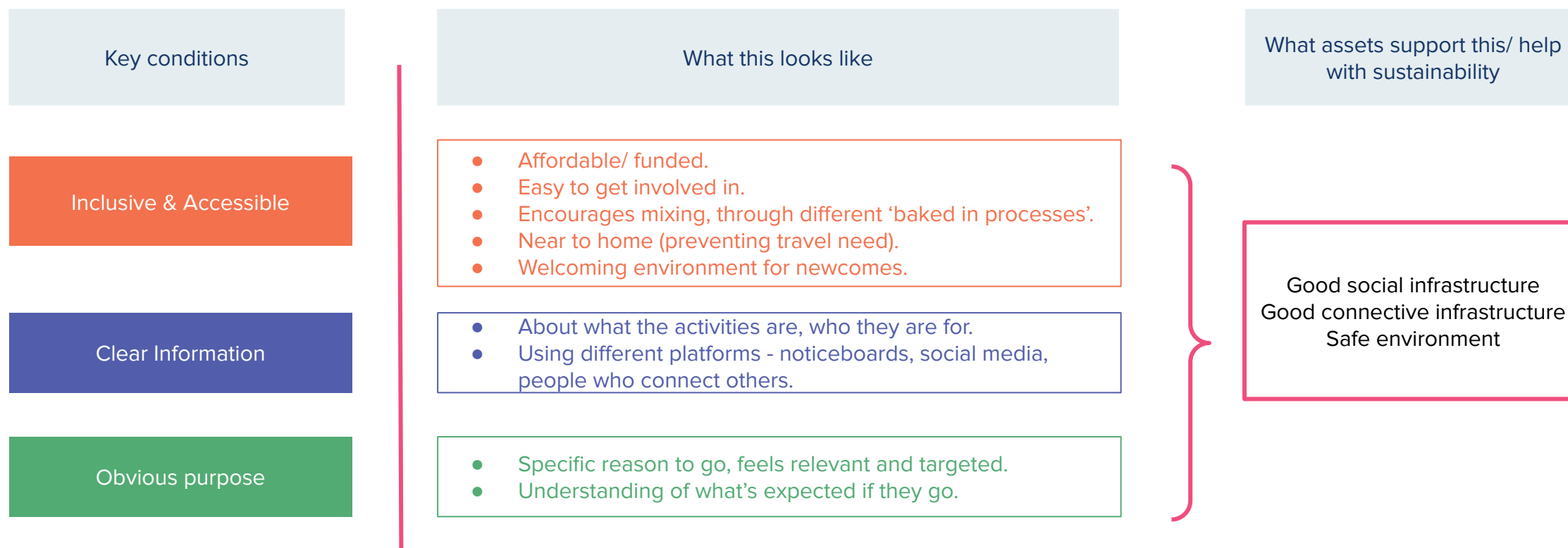
### Spotlight Story:

**Maggie’s story shows the importance of community events run by faith groups.**

A creative resident likes going to the art fairs held at a church near Bearwood, though not in her postcode sector. She finds the fairs a good opportunity to go and meet other creative people and enjoy seeing what’s made. This church runs community events, which she sometimes goes to which she enjoys. The fact that it’s nearby means she’s mixing with people from her local area and further afield. She never goes to this church for religious reasons.

# Summary of conditions that create cross-economic connections within community settings

Through this research we have identified different settings where social capital is built and where, under the right conditions cross-economic mixing can take place, in particular for those people coming from economic disadvantage and are likely to have few cross-economic connections. These settings are **sports, leisure and hobby groups, arts, music, faith and interfaith activities**.





## 04. Final thoughts

## 04. Final thoughts: addressing cross-economic mixing through place-based interventions & policy

Through engaging with people in their communities, we have been able to identify the key settings that are conducive of mixing across lines of economic difference and developing social capital. These are: the workplace, education, sports and hobby groups, music, the arts and faith and interfaith spaces and activities. Some of this supports the analysis of Facebook friendship data which tells us that most friendships form locally and in schools, while sports and hobby groups often encourage cross-economic friendship among their members.

We also learnt that certain conditions are important to encourage cross-economic mixing in these settings. Sports, hobby groups and the arts need to be local, accessible, affordable, designed to accommodate different needs and offer a welcoming environment for newcomers. Activities and events should be specific in what they offer, providing a clear hook to attract people to participate. Knowing the purpose of the space, and more importantly, knowing what taking part looks like and what people will get out of the activity, boosts their interests in these activities. Moreover, flexible and accessible spaces that can host various activities are valuable in nurturing cross-economic friendships and supporting communities in strengthening social capital between their residents.

Workplace settings can also facilitate successful mixing, particularly when there is an organisational culture promoting equality, and also invests in the local place, as well as its people/staff. Cross-economic friendships in the workplace can be supported when employees live nearby and the employer provides opportunities for socialising in local places, as well as encouraging staffs' participation in sports clubs, hobby groups and activities.

Schools, colleges, training courses/ adult education and universities also provide opportunities for increasing people's cross-economic connections. Building-in mixing through diverse extra-curricular activities is key and creating an environment where cross-economic mixing is the norm is essential so that a wide range of people benefit.

Now that we have identified the settings and conditions for building people's social capital and fostering cross-economic mixing, there is cause for optimism. We can design and develop interventions in these settings that can help to build and strengthen people's access and opportunities for cross-economic mixing. It is hoped that this knowledge will be applied in policy and practice to support people's economic mobility and improve the economic outcomes for a broader range of people in our communities. The research team's ambition is that decision makers draw upon the insights gathered, to develop policies and interventions to increase cross-economic connections, so that more low-income children and families can benefit from higher rates of upward economic mobility. This will be a challenge, one including multiple actors in different roles working at different levels within the field of social connection: broader public services, businesses and community organisations of different size and scale as well as local social infrastructure. It is a challenge that invites collaboration, innovation, participatory design and policy change.

Please note that as part of this project, the research team, in partnership with the RSA, has facilitated participatory sessions in two of the research locations (Southampton and Birmingham) to develop the insights and inform thinking regarding policy change and interventions. There is a report available under separate cover.



## 05. Appendix 1



# THRIVING RESIDENTS

## Most likely to seek out the support and connections that they need

Skews towards people from more stable backgrounds and who have lived in the area for majority of lives.

Range of friendships and connections from multiple sources and life stages. Motivated to connect with new people, and to connect others together for their benefit. Open to expanding connections across lines of economic difference.

Their local environment has places and spaces for mixing and meeting. These include in public realm, such as markets, squares and parks, as well as indoor venues and hospitality.

They are likely to benefit from good transport links and accessibility within and beyond local area. Their local areas tend to feel safe

They tend to be proactive, uptaking opportunities to participate in local life, through activities, sport, events and volunteering.

They are likely to report positive wellbeing with health benefits attributed to feeling a sense of belonging.

Rory\*, a man in his 70s, has lived in Masham for over 20 years, having grown up in Scotland and lived in Sheffield and the USA at various times. Although when he arrived, he didn't know anyone in the area other than his wife, Rory has created a community of friendship and support around him. A retired teacher and ex-footballer, he has become well-known in the community for the ways he helps others and brings people together. Actively engaging with others, from the owner of one of the breweries to the postie, he has developed networks within the local community that encourage meeting and mixing. When he was in financial difficulty, Rory used his connections to find a job at the brewery, a position which he now encourages others to take on.

He works at the local community office, so stays up-to-date with and takes part in the activities, groups and events that are happening in the local area. For example, when the driver for the local school bus left and there was no replacement, he stepped in to the role and helped as he wanted to make sure the kids that couldn't afford transport would make it to school. Rory has also connected with people in the creative industry as well as faith leaders to host community events in one of the local churches and other community spaces.

Witnessing the stigma around mental health in his community, Rory uses his role at work to engage with people who may be struggling. He also helps run a support group in a nearby town, encouraging people he knows to attend. With deep relationships with some, and frequent encounters with others, Rory knows a lot of people that can help lift him up - socially, emotionally and economically - and that he can lift up himself.

*"Lots of who I saw today I met over the last 20 years, either in the pub socialising, while at work in the community office or at one of the social events that happen locally."*

**Rory, Participant 23, Day 1**  
**Post-task**

*"Everybody's very friendly, I walk into the town centre and I'll get chatting to many people. Go in the cafe in the morning and everyone's there, or the pub in the afternoon."* **Rory, Participant 23, Interview**



# STRIVING RESIDENTS

## Doing the best they can with who and what is around them

Skews towards people who live in a different area from the one in which they grew up in. This means they may not have the same strong or deep ties to people in their local area, compared with those who have lived in the area all their lives.

They have lower numbers of social connections and lack informal support. However, they are motivated to connect with new people and sign up to activities, or benefit from services that provide opportunities to develop an informal support network.

They face practical barriers to increasing their social and cross-economic connections. They would participate in activities, if it helps them meet others and was easy to do (e.g. volunteer at local school event). Likely to do this on their own and hope to form friendships through it.

Their local environment is likely to have fewer places and spaces for mixing and meeting, or their individual circumstances may make repeated encounters with others quite difficult. This means they find it hard to build cross-economic connections. Limited networks mean they are less likely to find out about events or activities via word of mouth, so they need access to clear information.

Accessibility and transport likely to be more challenging. Local areas may not always feel safe. They lack a solid sense of belonging and don't feel included, but are hopeful.

Jill\* is a retired community worker who moved to Pateley Bridge more than 20 years ago, where her husband's family have lived for generations. Her husband and daughter who both work in different local businesses and institutions, are her main sources of support. Despite these connections, she still feels that she is seen by many in the local community as an outsider.

She does lots within the community, organising and running events to engage with people and encourage them to meet and mix, especially across lines of difference. For example, during the Covid 19 pandemic, she began baking goods which she would deliver to people she thought may be lonely - giving them away for free week on week, she got to know more of her community and did what she could to help them through difficult times.

What Jill has struggled with is the lack of reciprocation from her community outside of her family. Whilst she goes out of her way to connect with others, few make the effort to connect with her. An example of this was recently when she was ill; as she remained housebound for months, no one came to offer her any support. She also finds it hard to get the momentum from the community to build connections, especially across socioeconomic status. Jill sees how many people stay within their bubbles of those they know, and often whose families have known each other for generations.

Nevertheless, Jill views her area and the people within it in a very positive light, seeing the activities and events she hosts as opportunities to interact with others and develop more meaningful relationships.

*"The majority of my social connections throughout this last year are through the connections I have made since moving here and consciously becoming more involved with the community. This then gave/ gives me a sense of belonging."* **Jill, Participant 22, Day 4 Post-task**

*"My son lives here and is a teacher at the local school. That's helped me meet more people, as I can get help out there."* **Jill, Participant 22, Interview**



# SATISFIED RESIDENTS

## Most likely to stick with who they know

Skews towards people from more stable backgrounds and who have lived in the area for majority of lives.

Tend to have a smaller circle of friends and connections, with little desire to connect with new people or expand connections, especially across lines of lower-socio economic difference.

Can be quite passive in terms of getting involved in community/ local life. Likely to take part in activities with people they know, with little intention to meet others. Not likely to help out or volunteer locally.

Their local environment has places and spaces for mixing and meeting. These include in the public realm, such as markets, squares and parks, as well as indoor venues and hospitality. They would tend to use them with same group of people rather than meet new people.

They tend to have good transport links and accessibility within and beyond local area. Their local areas tend to feel safe

Reporting positive wellbeing and health benefits, including sense of belonging.

Likely to engage with formal support when needed, but less likely to develop their informal support network further.

James\*, a 50 year old father to young adult children, has lived in Bearwood his entire life. He has friendships with people from a similar, working class background. Having studied economics at university, he now works for a local authority and has formed a network of people with different socioeconomic backgrounds. Many of his current social interactions are with a mix of people from throughout his life: from his childhood, school, university, work, his relationships and his kids.

While his kids were still at school, James took on various roles within the local community, which ultimately led to him meeting his current partner. In Bearwood, he has been involved in various groups and taken part in many local activities. For example, since he was a teenager, James has played bowls at a local club. This has connected him to many people over the years, those with both lower and higher socioeconomic statuses. By taking part in social activities and groups like these, he has always felt part of the local community with little need to new friends in his later years.

James is very contented with his life. He feels that the activities, groups, and spaces around Bearwood have encouraged to mix with different people, building his connections across lines of economic difference.

*"I have built habitual social connections that work for me, most of which I have fostered over the years - from different social events to local groups. They give me a sense of belonging and that works for me."* **James, Participant 2, Post-task**

*"Playing bowls sort of directs a lot of my social activity... it's quite a working class game cause you find them at the back of pubs or social clubs or in parks. And I earn good money but I still identify like working class. So I've met a lot of people there."* **James, Participant 2, Interview**





# STRUGGLING RESIDENTS

## Most in need of policy interventions to support their cross-economic mixing

Skews towards people from more deprived backgrounds and lower social connections, or inconsistent family support.

Can be reluctant to engage in their local place, with little contact with neighbours, small number of friends, and little bandwidth to connect with others. May not be working in secure roles, so unlikely to have colleagues with whom they connect. Quite passive in terms of getting involved in community/ local life. Unlikely to take part in activities with little intention to meet others. Not likely to help out or volunteer locally.

They do not tend to spend much time out and about locally mixing and meeting with others. They don't have easy ways of meeting other from cross-economic backgrounds. School would have been the best way to set this up.

Transport can be a barrier to taking part in activities. Affordability and safety can be barriers to participation

Reporting poorer wellbeing and lower mood, lacking a sense of belonging to place.

Aliyah\*, who is in her 40s, moved to Ealing with her ex-husband over 10 years ago, but has moved to a new area since her divorce a few years ago. She has two young children under the age of 10 and works full-time in healthcare, so she does not feel she has time to take part in any other local organised clubs, hobbies or interest groups.

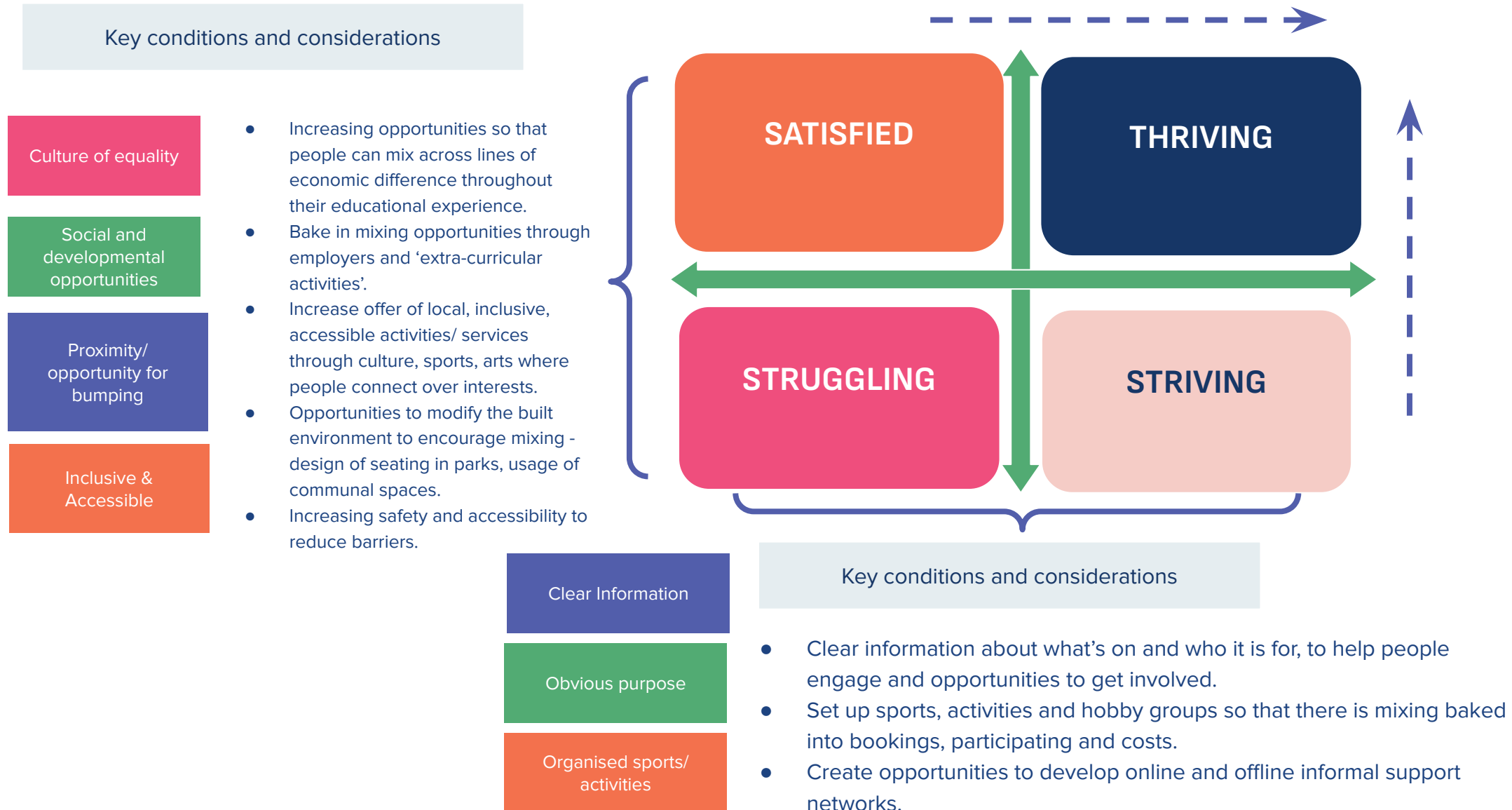
Although she is not actively looking for information about them at the moment, she still has some awareness of the local activities taking place, gained either by seeing people engage in various sporting activities (including running) or via posters advertising activities in the local library and via 'Around Ealing', a local quarterly magazine distributed to all residents living in the borough. In spite of the advertising she is aware of, she feels that more could be done to promote local activities. She is not interested in social media, so won't find adverts or information on those platforms, but sees schools as a potential source of information about local events and activities.

Without the information to join groups, and with limited time to engage with people outside of her kids and her work, Aliyah struggles to form new connections, especially with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

*"Ealing Library in the shopping centre... I see lots of posters for things that would be things I would be interested in. They have talks, they have a chess club, it's just at the moment it's not an option for me. It's nice to see those things but I just don't have the time or the energy. Most of the people I know are from a small circle of similar people."* **Aliyah, Participant 17, Interview**

*"My current situation doesn't allow me to meet people outside of my kids and my work. In the future it would be nice to meet more people."* **Aliyah, Participant 17, Post-task**

# A more targeted approach through policy would be needed to help drive opportunities to increase people's cross-economic connectedness, so that those most in need can benefit





# Thank you

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