How Can We Best Align Partners and Community Assets to Ensure Whole Communities Can Access Opportunities to Enhance Social Mobility?

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Executive summary

Research Question: How can we best align partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility?

The diverse county of Cambridgeshire is simultaneously home to some of the most, and least, deprived communities in England. It is posited in the below report that by connecting people with the social, cultural and economic capital that they need to improve social mobility, this gap may be narrowed. One such method in achieving this goal is vis-a-vis the utilisation of a digital platform.

Through a process of literature review and interviews, this report evaluates the potential of a digital platform to address specific issues with regards to cooperation, collaboration and networking among community groups - organisations that provide so many tangible benefits for their members.

Although a platform solution theoretically appears ideal, in practice there are several concerns about its creation and practical utility. Reflecting on these findings, the report concludes with six recommendations to address the research question:

1. Enrich the Cambridgeshire County Council website's current online directory;
2. Create a database of ready-to-go volunteers;
3. Provide opportunities for mediation for community groups and share evidence of the positive impact of collaboration;
4. Invest in community hubs with affordable premises for hire;
5. Consult with community groups on the utility of a digital platform enabling networking between groups close in function and/or proximity;
6. Model information flow in local communities to identify communication gaps; the results may be used to predict the reach of advertised opportunities and monitor the success of outreach initiatives.

Section 1: Introduction

Cambridgeshire is home to a shade over 850,000 people (UK Population Data, 2021), with these residents living in a broad spectrum of geographic settings. There are the urban population centres of Cambridge and Peterborough, the historic city of Ely, the market towns of Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives, new and emerging towns such as Camborne and Northstowe and a dense network of small villages and parishes. Echoing this diversity of space is the diversity in wealth and life chances. Cambridgeshire is both home to some of the most, and least, deprived wards, districts and LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas) in England. For instance, when considering education, skills and training, the county is simultaneously home to England's 10th *least* deprived district and the nation's 3rd *most* deprived (See: Cambridgeshire Insight: South Cambridgeshire & Fenland, 2019). With such polarisation present, the question is how can this gap be closed, how can those towards the more deprived side of the scale move towards being less deprived?

One potential answer to this question lies in the cultivation of upward social mobility. In short, social mobility is "the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Where there is a strong link, there is a lower level of social mobility. Where there is a weak link, there is a higher level of social mobility" (Social Mobility Commission, 2022). However, the complication with this approach is the ability to actually enhance an individual's income and, therefore, their social mobility. There are numerous barriers to labour market participation which embody a range of elements, from skills and training, to mental and physical health (See: Aliva, 2019). Therefore, for a complex issue, a solution which addresses this complexity is required. What is key in the provision of services to enhance social mobility, is the ability of those involved to cross-collaborate and work together.

To this end, this project has been tasked with answering the following question: how can we best align partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility? This report - formulated by a combination of researchers from Cambridge University and Cambridge itself - has been moulded to reflect the current reality of inter-organisational collaboration whilst also interrogating the potential for alternative approaches, and is structured as follows.

Firstly, an extensive literature review has been conducted which covers the multi-faceted concept of social mobility and connects its potential enhancement through the utilisation of a 'capitals' framework. This feeds into a discussion on free flowing information and 'desiloisation' between different entities, as well as the provision of joined-up services. It is subsequently argued that a potential means of enabling joined-up services is through the use of digital platforms. A segment, which consists of an overview of platforms in general before our hypothetical approach, is put to those working within local government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) across Cambridgeshire. This section is followed by an analysis of numerous examples of successful collaboration in order to elicit this project's recommendations; which are provided in both the executive summary and following the concluding section. Before the report begins in earnest, the following section comprises an overview of the methodological approach utilised by both the researchers and the project as a whole.

Section 2: Methodology

The methodology employed consists of two key elements, a substantive literature review and the carrying out of interviews, in order to answer our research question. In the first instance, the literature review allows the project to, on one hand, contextualise and understand the issues within our research topic - namely social inequality and social mobility - and the notion of 'alignment' and a joined-up approach, on the other. It thus gives us the theoretical springboard from which we come up with proposed solutions to the problems identified in the literature.

The second part of our method involves interviews with professionals within local government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) who are either working on issues related to social mobility or are interested in promoting collaboration within the sector, in order to gather their feedback on our proposed solution. We choose interviews over surveys for its ability to allow for thicker description and more in-depth insights. The interviews are semi-structured in nature, with a set list of questions and topics but also the freedom to deviate from them should something interesting and useful come up (see: Appendix 4 for the interview template).

We sent out a range of emails and were able to set up 5 interviews. Of our interviewees, 3 are working at District Councils, 1 is from an organisation specialising in providing services to other community groups within the VCS, and 1 is a community group. Amongst those working at District Councils, two are from Fenland and one from South Cambridgeshire. Due to time and logistical constraints (not least because the period of interviews - late 2021 - was a very busy time for many community groups), we were unable to conduct more than a limited number of interviews with a skewed distribution of representation across Cambridgeshire. However, given that 4 out of 5 of our interviewees are in positions that require regular contact with diverse community groups across Cambridgeshire, we have reason to believe that their opinions would reflect to some extent the experiences and perspectives of these groups.

Finally, we synthesise the feedback and suggestions given in the interviews by looking for patterns and repetitions in order to draw out key themes from which we make recommendations on (a) how our proposal can be tweaked, and (b) what other potential solutions might better serve the purpose of promoting social mobility by aligning partners and community assets.

Section 3: Literature Review

Set against a backdrop of ever expanding and entrenched social inequality (Dorling, 2014, p3 & Savage et al, 2013, p220), the notion of social mobility has been a prominent feature of political discourse within the U.K for the past 25 years (See: Campkin, 2013, p97, Kisby, 2010, p484, Freedman & Laurison, 2019, p29 & Jennings et al, 2021, p302). Whilst seldom mentioned by name, the enhancement of social mobility is the driving concept behind the various approaches adopted by central government. According to the government's independent social mobility commission (SMC), social mobility is defined as "the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Where there is a strong link, there is a lower level of social mobility. Where there is a weak link, there is a higher level of social mobility" (Social Mobility Commission, 2022). For the big society or levelling up to take place, an increase in wealth between the generations is an essential component. However, social mobility is not inherently a positive phenomena, for downward social mobility can take place (McKnight, 2015, pii).

Yet, as argued by Abigail McKnight of Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, "more advantaged families are able to protect early low attaining children in cognitive tests from downward mobility who appear to benefit from their parents' higher levels of education [through] being able to secure places in Grammar or Private secondary schools and being more likely to attain a degree qualification." (ibid, piii). Building upon the government's definition, which ties into McKnight's assertion, Lucinda Platt states that social mobility is the "movement from the class of family of origin to a different class in [their] own adult life" (Platt, 2014, p24). This is an important addition to the SMC's definition, because it brings in the notion of class, for social mobility concerns much more than solely the level of income one accrues over their lifetime.

Within the social sciences, class is often associated with the notion of 'capital'. This is embodied through the work of Mike Savage, who led the research behind the BBC's *Great British Class Survey* experiment. Within this survey, respondents were tasked with answering questions which concerned three broad topics - economic, social and cultural capital (Savage et al, 2013, p223). These three capitals were selected owing to their well established lineage within the social sciences. According to Savage *et al*, "there has been a striking renewal of interest in the analysis of social class inequality, driven by accumulating evidence of escalating social inequalities, notably with respect to wealth and income, but also around numerous social and cultural indicators, such as mortality rates, educational attainment, housing conditions and forms of leisure participation" (ibid, p220). This interest has been accelerated through the utilisation of seminal French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's "conceptual armoury to elaborate a model of class linked not exclusively to employment inequalities, but to the interplay between economic, social and cultural capital" (ibid).

Bordieu's Capitals

According to Bourdieu's work, there are three forms of capital which are utilised to interpret social phenomena. Firstly there is *economic* capital, or that "which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the forms of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986). Simply put,

someone's access to finances and property. For Bourdieu, "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital" (ibid); this is bound in the idea that the more money and property an individual possesses, the more they can access as a result. The other two forms of capital are the *social* and the *cultural*.

Social capital is the notion that "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group" (ibid). A more detailed analysis of social capital features in the following section on digital technologies and de-siloization. Finally there is *cultural* capital, which, according to Bourdieu exists in three forms: as *embodied*, *objectified* and *institutionalised* (ibid).

The embodied state of cultural capital "presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labour of inculation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor (ibid). Embodied cultural capital is akin to gaining "a suntan, it cannot be done second hand" (ibid), and is centred upon the individual cultivation of knowledge and the "work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost" (ibid). In short, embodied cultural capital is produced by an individual working on themselves. For instance learning how to paint through learning theories is an example of embodied capital. Emerging out of embodied cultural capital springs the *objectified.*

As the name alludes to, the objectified takes on an empirical dimension and serves as the physical manifestation of one's embodied capital. For instance, an individual can learn how to paint and can purchase brushes, a canvas and an easel; yet, the mere ownership of these entities does not an artist make. Rather, to possess these artefacts, they "only need economic capital; to appropriate them and use them in accordance with their specific purpose [they] must have access to embodied cultural capital" (ibid). Anyone can own art supplies, but it takes skill and practice to produce a work of art. The creation of a painting is the objectification of embodied cultural capital - a physical manifestation of a learned skill.

Finally there is the *institutionalised* form of cultural capital, which is premised upon the notion that embodied and objectified cultural capital can be officially sanctioned. This objectification is what "makes the difference between the capital of the autodidact, which may be called into question at any time [...] and the cultural capital academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications, formally independent of the person of their bearer" (ibid).

Examples of institutionalised cultural capital are the provision of formal qualifications and the recognition of a skill by an institution. For instance if an individual who paints in their spare time attained a formal qualification in painting, or if their work was presented at an exhibition. Institutionalised cultural capital gives weight and, in a sense, justification to an embodied skill or body of knowledge. Ultimately, cultural capital can be subdivided into the learning of a skill or a body of knowledge (how to paint), using this to produce tangible, real world entities - which can therefore be appreciated by others

(making art) - and for this skill or knowledge to be recognised by some sort of authority (that art to be hung in a gallery).

The above focus upon Bourdieu's capital is merited, for if class itself can be assessed vis-a-vis the access to economic, social and cultural capital (Savage et al, 2013, p223 & Williams, 1995, p599), then so can social mobility. For, if the distinction between class position is defined by the level of 'Bourdusian' capital, then the provision of that capital, and the enhancement of socio-economic standing that brings, is essential in the entrenchment of upward social mobility. Therefore, the SMC definition of social mobility is limited. For, it is not solely a question of enhancing income or occupation (although this is an essential quality of social mobility), but rather the cultivation of social and cultural capital *as well as* the economic. This view of social mobility is one already held by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Social Mobility in Cambridgeshire
In 2016, the city of Cambridge was deemed to be a so-called 'social mobility cold-spot', but has "recently been identified (Social Mobility Commission (SMC), 2020) as one of the ten English local authorities outside of London with the smallest pay gaps between the sons of the most and least deprived" (Chapman, 2021, p3). Despite Cambridgeshire being one of the more affluent counties in the U.K, pockets of deprivation abound - most notably in the rural Fenland region and within the cities of Cambridge and Peterborough (Baird et al, 2020, p9). Therefore, despite there being wealth, it is not holistically distributed across the region. According to *Think Communities,* the county council's approach to building community resilience (See: Think Communities, 2018), "poor social mobility results from a lack of social, cultural, human, environmental, and economic capital" (Chapman, 2021, p5), who also argue that "the main driver of social mobility is good quality participation and progression in the labour market" (ibid). However, attaining this 'good quality participation' in the labour market is in and of itself a strenuous undertaking for many individuals across Cambridgeshire.

According to Zulum Avila of the International Labour Organisation, jobseekers facing complex barriers to employment are vulnerable to long periods of unemployment or precarious work. Frequent and prolonged unemployment spells often result in skills deterioration and lower wages, pushing many workers to take informal work, search for jobs abroad or give up looking for work and withdraw from the labour market. Improving employment outcomes for this category of jobseekers very often requires a combination of services to address both direct barriers to employability and other challenges (e.g. poor literacy, long-term illness, housing and financial constraints) that might influence job-search ability" (Avila, 2019, p2)

Within Cambridgeshire, the most deprived area in relation to both employment and education, skills and training is Fenland. According to the nationwide *Indices of Deprivation* study, published in 2019, Fenland is the 54th most deprived region in the U.K with regard to employment and is the *third* most deprived region when concerning education, skills and training (Cambridgeshire Insight: Fenland, 2019). Compare these significant results with those of South Cambridgeshire - home to much of the fabled 'Cambridge Phenomenon' cluster of high-tech industries and those who work within it - which sits as the 13th least

deprived area for employment and is the 10th least deprived region for education, skills and training (Cambridgeshire Insight: South Cambridgeshire, 2019).

When concerning education, skills and training, this equates to a chasmic gap of 304 places between two districts which exist within a handful of miles of each other. Within the past decade, and going forward to 2030, South Cambridgeshire, as a component of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, is receiving a proportion of upwards of £500 million from central government as a means to "realise the economic potential of the area, to unleash the next wave of the 'Cambridge Phenomenon', to improve connectivity and enhance reliability of journeys" (GCP Meeting, 2015, p5).

This stark division in employment and educational opportunities illustrates a key feature of enhancing social mobility in not only Cambridgeshire, but the U.K as a whole. For, according to the aforementioned Lucinda Platt, "the range of difference between the various class positions, between the top and the bottom - clearly have a bearing on the interpretation of what observed social mobility means" (Platt, 2014, p40). It is, at least theoretically, easier to be upwardly socially mobile when the positions between class strata are closer together (See: appendix 1 for more detail). As Bourdieu stated earlier, "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital" (Bourdieu, 1986) and if social mobility is taken as the increase in capitals and income, it would be harder to be upwardly mobile if one lacks the ability to attain the means to expand their capital - primarily through participation in the labour market.

Yet, as the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed, the issues facing contemporary society are definitively complex in nature, requiring numerous positions, viewpoints and expertise to not only understand but to also combat and essentially solve. This is equally true of enhancing upward social mobility. Therefore, what is required is a means for enabling and facilitating interdisciplinary and cross departmental collaboration in order to provide cooperative, wraparound services. What follows in this section is the theoretical underpinnings behind such an approach, along with the considerations required for it to become a reality.

Free Flowing Information and Siloization
For any organisation or, indeed, groups of organisations to work collaboratively, the base element required is the free flow of information. For if one group or faction within an organisation hoards insight or knowledge, they are potentially hoarding the tentative opportunity for joined-up work. What is desired, if not essential, is what sociologist of science Ron Westrum calls, a 'generative' organisational culture. Within such environments "organisations focus on the mission [and] everything is subordinated to good performance, to doing what we are supposed to do" (Westrum, 2014, p59). This is in opposition to so-called 'bureaucratic' organisations, where "those in the department want to maintain their 'turf,' insist on their own rules, and generally do things by the book—their book" (ibid) and the holistically restrictive 'pathological' organisational culture which is "characterised by large amounts of fear and threat. People often hoard information or withhold it for political reasons, or distort it to make themselves look better" (ibid).

At the very base of developing joined-up, collaborative or wraparound services lies the notion of free information flow (IF). Westrum argues that "pathological organisations have low IF, bureaucratic organisations have middling IF, and generative organisations have high IF. That means that if you ask a pathological organisation to use its information, it will have big problems doing that [which] means that often generative organisations will succeed where pathological organisations fail, because the former are better at utilising the information they have" (ibid, p61). Therefore, for collaboration to effectively take place, generative organisational cultures are a prerequisite.

The manifestation of a pathological or bureaucratic organisational culture is the 'silo' - an image drawing on the immense tubular silos in which grain is stored (Sennett, 2013, p166). According to the esteemed sociologist Richard Sennett, silos are defined by 'isolation', which in his terms "is the obvious enemy of cooperation [where] workers in silos communicate poorly with one another" (ibid). The silo concept has entered into the managerial lexicon and has been used to describe not only individual organisations, but also entire systems, such as with Patrick Dunleavy's observation that the "UK central government is split up horizontally into around 14 vertical silos, headed in each case by a department of state in Whitehall with its attendant 'departmental group' of quasi-government agencies, or with smaller-scale departmental counterparts in the devolved administrations" (Dunleavy, 2010, p12).

As Sennett alludes to, silos and the broader process of 'siloisation' isolate and insulate different individuals, departments and organisations from one another depending on scale. Yet, the silo often arises from what is often viewed as a positive and desirable trait within organisations. Todd Pittinsky, a professor within the Department of Technology and Society at Stony Brook University, illustrates a potentially oxymoronic phenomenon where "a production team that works together like a well tuned machine [...] the stuff of division managers' dreams [can] also be a big headache for top management - that's when we call it siloization" (Pittinsky, 2010, p10). On the one hand a tightly knit, 'well tuned' group can be easy to manage and effective, yet, "the tighter the members of an organisation's units bind together, the harder it can become for them to work effectively with other units and the more likely they are to act in their own best interests at the expense of the company's overall performance" (ibid).

To refer back to the above discussion on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of economic and cultural capital, at the micro level, silos are the manifestation of *social* capital. To reiterate, Bourdieu stated that social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of [...] relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu, 1985), with Nan Lin *et al* stating that it appears "as resources embedded in one's social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilised through ties in the networks" (Lin *et al*, 2001, p58). In short, the concept of social capital ascribes value to the connections and relationships people have with one another.

Within the concept of social capital is composed of three forms, *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking*. According to Dan Aldrich "each type identifies variation in strength of relationships and composition of networks and thus different outcomes for individuals and communities" (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p258). Aldrich identifies bonding social capital as "the connections among individuals who are emotionally close, such as friends or family, and result in tight bonds to a particular group" (ibid). The clearest example of

bonding social capital is family, for "bonding social capital is commonly characterised by homophily (i.e., high levels of similarity) in demographic characteristics, attitudes, and available information and resources" (ibid). Within the social settings where bonding social capital is the definitive form of social connection, a side effect is the potential for a group to "reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups" (Putnam, 2000, p22). This 'reinforcement' of an exclusive identity is the social equivalent of the silo wall. At an organisational level, silos (and the bonding social capital upon which they are erected) create what Ron Burt has termed 'structural holes'.

A structural hole emerges when "people focus on activities inside their own group, which creates holes in the information flow between groups" (Burt, 2004, p353), therefore a structural hole is a "[discontinuity] between exchange relations" (ibid, p355). The above paragraphs have emphasised the organisational level, yet structural holes are an element of any system. Therefore, they can exist at the micro level between individuals within an organisation or department, in between different groups, or even between separate organisations who operate within an ecosystem. Yet, a structural hole is not solely an obstacle to be overcome, but rather a potential well-spring for novel collaboration. In an optimistic turn, Burt argues that structural holes "are entrepreneurial opportunities to broker the flow of information between people on opposite sides of the structural hole" (Burt, 1997, p355).

Building bridges, or networking, is an obvious prerequisite to collaboration, for free informational flow and the generation of nuanced insight is an impossibility if that very information remains locked up within the silos of a bureaucratic or pathological organisational culture. What is needed, as Burt alludes to, is a bridging between the silos, an opening up of bonded relations, in order to facilitate the flow of information from one group to another. This connection is entrenched in 'bridging' social capital.

For the aforementioned Dan Aldrich, "bridging social capital describes acquaintances or individuals loosely connected that span social groups [...] These ties are more likely to display demographic diversity and provide novel information and resources that can assist individuals in advancing in society" (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p258). Whereas groups defined by bonding social capital are exclusionary and, in a sense, 'inward looking', those which are rich in bridging social capital are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" (Putnam, 2000, p22). The interrelation between bonding and bridging social capital is best summarised by Robert Putnam in his highly influential work *Bowling Alone*, where he states that "bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40" (ibid, p23).

This observation on Putnam's part highlights the importance of both bonding and bridging social capital within an organisation or social system. This is equally attributed by Todd Pittinsky, who argues from a managerial perspective that "silos serve a purpose [for] when people feel tightly connected to a relatively small group, they are likely to feel more comfortable, work harder, and take more responsibility. Unfortunately, they can be less effective in working with people in other units and less willing to try" (Pittinsky, 2010, p19). Rather than 'dismantling' silos, Pittinsky argues that silos, and siloization generally, are a "tension to be managed, not a disease to be eradicated" (ibid).

Theoretically speaking, a means of 'softening' a silo is the integration of bridging social capital in and amongst the bonding social capital which holds a group or organisation together. According to Mario Luis-Small "bridging social capital often comes from involvement in organisations including civic and political institutions, parent–teacher associations, and sports and interest clubs along with educational and religious groups" (Small, 2010 in Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p258). Numerous groups, organisations and working groups exist across Cambridgeshire which facilitate the development of bridging social capital.

Bridging Social Capital in Cambridgeshire - Closing the Digital Divide
An example of this is the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership (CDP), a "network set up to improve digital inclusion across Cambridgeshire" (Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership, 2021) and "share information, promote good practice and working relationships between service provider organisations and individuals from the voluntary, community and statutory sectors, who work to alleviate digital exclusion issues" (ibid). Digital exclusion is a significant issue across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as revealed by a survey conducted during the early days of the pandemic to ascertain the scale of inaccessibility to digital technologies which can enable remote learning and found that "around 8,000 children and families were suffering disadvantage [in ability to access technology]" (Cambridge - in Pursuit of Equality, 2021). Within the CDP, numerous organisations approach the multi-faceted nature of digital exclusion from different positions.

For instance, the *Cambs Youth Panel* and *Laptops 4 Learning* approach digital exclusion from an 'access' position - the so-called 'first' level of the digital divide (Van Dijk, 2017, p1), with the latter taking "large organisation's [...] surplus tech, [to] repurpose and deploy through charities and local authorities" (Laptops 4 Learning, 2021). Yet, someone having access to digital technology will not intrinsically eradicate digital exclusion, rather, with a nod to the aforementioned concept of cultural capital, they will also have to be able to use the technology. This is known as the 'second level' of digital exclusion. This is a salient problem in advanced settings where "digital divides seem to be closing in terms of access, but inequalities that affect people's ability to make good use of digital resources persist" (Vassilakopoulou & Hustad, 2021, p1). Within the CDP, *Cambridge Online* - located and primarily focused upon Cambridge itself - embody the closure of the second level of digital exclusion by offering up their service to

> help people from the Cambridgeshire area to get online by teaching digital skills, and we then provide a range of courses to help people make the most of being online – including searching and applying for jobs, literacy and numeracy skills, shopping online, using Facebook and socialising online, contacting government and health services, leisure and healthy living (Cambridge Online, 2021)

The above quote touches on an important element of digital inclusion, especially when concerning the enhancement of social mobility, for access to, and use of, technology is in and of itself an isolated phenomenon, unless it can be used to generate real world benefits to the user. According to Massimo Ragnedda, individuals who utilise digital technologies in a self-beneficial manner are in possession of 'digital capital', vis-a-vis "a set of internalised abilities and aptitudes (digital competencies) as well as externalised resources (digital technology) that can be historically accumulated and transferred from one arena to another" (Ragnedda, 2018, p2367). The importance of digital capital within the arena of social

mobility concerns its manifestation as a 'conversion capital', insofar as "the level of digital capital that person possesses influences the quality of the Internet experience (second level of the digital divide), which, in turn, may be "converted" into other forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, personal and political) in the social sphere, thus influencing the *third level* of digital divide" (ibid, p2367 - emphasis added). This third element of digital exclusion is approached within the CDP by Cambridge Online along with CHS' 'New Horizons' project and Cambridgeshire Libraries.

This example highlights a means of cross-collaboration towards assuaging a multi-faceted, complex issue which requires multiple perspectives. However, the work of the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership and the other organisations like it within the county is essential and effective, the complexity inherent with enhancing social mobility requires a broader approach which has the potential to bring together multiple organisations such as the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership and others like it. Whilst digital inclusion is considered an important element in enhancing upward social mobility (Lane-Fox, 2010, p3), according to John Clayton and Stephen Macdonald the "lack of access to and appropriate use of ICT may be factors in extending exclusion, but according to [their] data are not the primary causes of social exclusion" (Clayton & Macdonald, 2013, p962).

As is ever so within the social realm, the barriers to upward social mobility are numerous and therefore intersect with each other. Therefore, whilst being able to access technology, use it and generate positive benefits from said use is a positive step in the right direction, a reliable internet connection and an ability to use LinkedIn does not an upwardly mobile individual make. To enhance upward social mobility, a means of bringing together the various organisations within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who deal with the various intersections which limit mobility is required. Therefore, a solution which links those tasked with ending digital exclusion with, for instance, educational institutions, council services, mental health support, employability services, housing providers, the NHS and numerous others is required. The manifestation of such a demand is referred to as 'joined-up' service provision.

Joined-up Services and Governance
Within the U.K, the concept of joined-up governance or government, is not a new phenomenon. Initially raising its head during "the first term of the Blair Government, joined-up government [...] was a central objective of public sector reform" (Ling, 2002, p615). However, over time the "agenda of public reform [moved] on to a focus on 'delivery' and 'quality services' rather than 'modernising government" (ibid). According to Christopher Pollitt, "joined-up government is a phrase which denotes the aspiration to achieve horizontally and vertically coordinated thinking and action" (Pollitt, 2003, p35). It is subsequently argued that there are four benefits to adopting, or at least striving for, a joined-up approach:

1. Situations in which different policies undermine each other can be eliminated.
2. Better use can be made of scarce resources.
3. Synergies may be created through the bringing together of different key stakeholders in a particular policy field or network.
4. It becomes possible to offer citizens seamless rather than fragmented access to a set of related services (ibid).

These benefits each relate to "the wish to eliminate contradictions and tensions between different policies", "to make better use of resources, through the elimination of duplication and/or contradiction between different programmes", "to improve the flow of good ideas and co-operation between different stakeholders in a particular policy sector, thus producing 'synergy' or smarter ways of working" and " to produce a more integrated or 'seamless' set of services, from the point of view of the citizens who use them" respectively (ibid).

The desire to achieve joined-up governance lies not only in the complexity of social phenomena and problems, but the complexity within the government itself. Patrick Dunleavy, of the London School of Economics, opined in 2010 "why is not government more like Marks and Spencer? Why can it not have an integrated outlet on every High Street or shopping centre in the places where people want to go anyway?" (Dunleavy, 2010, p9). This hypothetical question often raised by focus group participants, hints at the complexity of government. As referred to above, Dunleavy has identified "thirteen types of citizen-government relationships in the UK" (ibid, p10), overall estimating "that there are at least 40 different and substantively important ways of organising the inter-relations across tiers of government in most areas in the UK, each of them with their own distinctive peculiarities, institutional histories and characteristic ways of working" (ibid, p12). The reason why the relationship between citizen and government isn't as simple as that between customer and retailer is the vastly increased complexity of the former over the latter (ibid, p10).

Depending on the intended outcome foreseen by the citizen, the means upon which they interact with government services will vary significantly on a case by case basis. If one has issues with taxation or benefits they would directly approach the relevant national ministries (HMRC or the DWP respectively) whereas, if a citizen took issue with the manner in which a local school is being run they, according to Dunleavy, would be interacting with "services implemented by micro-local agencies in a public service delivery chain" (ibid, p11), which requires the citizen to work through two separate entities (a micro-level agency and the local government) before being in contact with central government (ibid, p10).

This complexity is entrenched within the mechanisations of government. To reiterate, Dunleavy reminds us to "bear in mind also that UK central government is split up horizontally into around 14 vertical silos, headed in each case by a department of state in Whitehall with its attendant 'departmental group' of quasi-government agencies, or with smaller-scale departmental counterparts in the devolved administrations" (ibid, p12). As can be observed by these examples, the means of combating social issues is in and of itself incredibly complex, as are the social issues themselves. The overriding goal of this project is to enhance social mobility through answering the question of *how can we best align partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility*? To reinforce a point raised earlier, according to the council's own research, "the main driver of social mobility is good quality participation and progression in the labour market" (Chapman, 2021, p5). Therefore, the spectre of unemployment and the means in which to overcome, or at least combat it, provides a useful case study to interrogate the complexity at hand.

As mentioned above, according to Zulum Avila (2019) "improving employment outcomes for [longterm] jobseekers very often requires a combination of services to address both direct barriers to employability and other challenges (e.g. poor literacy, long-term illness, housing and financial constraints) that might influence job-search ability" (Avila, 2019, p2). This quotation not only highlights the multifaceted reality behind long term unemployment, but also the requirement for a 'combination of services' to combat this significant barrier to social mobility. Within the same document a table is presented (below) detailing the 'potential barriers to employment' (ibid, p4). As can be seen there are five 'employment and skill related barriers' and twelve identified external barriers which affect the ability for an individual to take up a job (ibid). This table illustrates the breadth and depth required to tackle long term unemployment and, thus the necessity for a joined-up approach towards vaulting one of the major hurdles preventing social mobility.
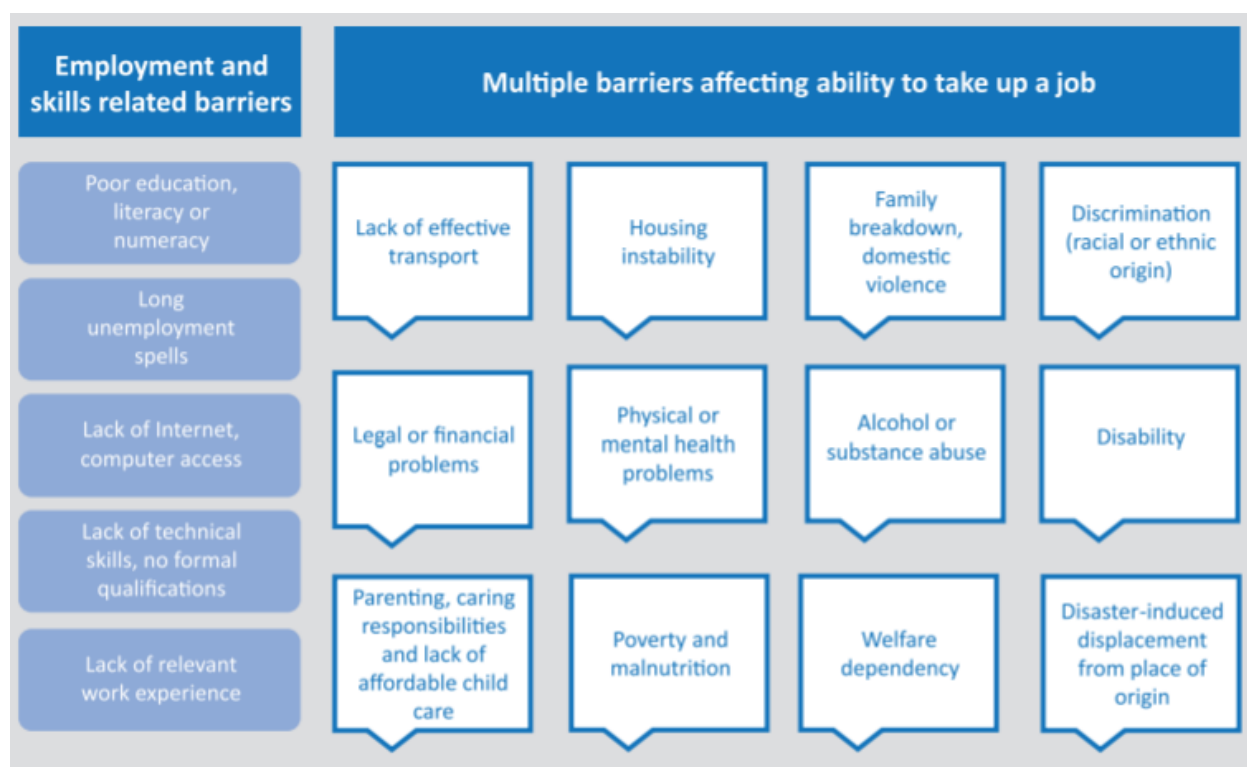

Fig2. Barriers to employment by Zullum Aliva (Aliva, 2019, p2)

The preceding handful of paragraphs have looked into the notion of joined-up services and the necessity for such an approach in enhancing social mobility. The question still remains, however, how does one go about developing a joined-up service? The aforementioned Patrick Dunleavy, vis-a-vis the work of Nick Frost (2005) has developed a potential path upon which to do so. What is proposed is a potential series of stages to be followed in order to achieve full integration - a merger of two or more entities.

To begin there are two separate entities, both tasked with the "provision of services is planned separately by each organisation or service stream involved, within highly siloed professional or

organisational compartments" (Dunleavy, 2010, p17). This stage embodies the bureaucratic organisational culture identified by Ron Westrum (2014). The following stage emerges when "organisations or service-streams [...] recognise that their activities are complementary and acknowledge a need to fit them together in order for the coverage for clients or communities to be improved" (Dunleavy, 2010, p17). This is the domain of bridging social capital and is a scenario where platforms could be of use in facilitating the grounds of realisation. This stage is a positive step towards a joined-up approach, but "progress is limited because organisations or service-streams do not significantly modify their own strong cultures" (ibid). Here Dunleavy is calling for the effective dismantling of the silo, in opposition to Pittinsky's argument that silos are 'tensions to be managed' and are in many ways positive (Pittinsky, 2010, p19).

The third stage builds upon the previous two when "organisations or service-streams now formulate joined-up plans, that at least cross refer to each other. And crucially, they make some efforts to collect information on how (joint) outcomes are being achieved" (Dunleavy, 2010, p17). The rate of progress here is embodied by two separate entities, who subsequently identify similarities and begin to develop a plan to collaborate. The fourth stage moves from the theoretical realm of planning and organisation and to

> some common or overarching goals, which follow through from plans into implementation and even into detailed working on cases or areas. They work together in a planned and systematic way towards realising shared objectives. For example, information sharing or information pooling begins, ICT systems start to routinely communicate, and 'front-line' staff know each others' processes and methods of working well (ibid, p18).

This lays the groundwork for the important fifth stage, where "services work together in a planned and systematic manner towards shared goals that are agreed consensually" (ibid). Behind the scenes, this collaboration, according to Dunleavy includes "joint committees [meeting] regularly at senior levels and managers [emphasising] the need for effective joint working inside each organisation or service stream involved" (ibid). The sixth stage is split into four sub-sections, titled "difficult next-stage, or 'something more', developments" (ibid) and the seventh stage is a full merger. However, for the scope of this project these two stages are beyond consideration, for the goal is to provide a means for collaborative working, rather than a vehicle for the merger of separate entities.

Conclusion
This review began with a focus on social mobility, noting the concept's centrality in the development of government policy, which led to an expansion of the social mobility commission's definition of social mobility, through the addition of a class dimension. This enables the interpretation of not only class, but social mobility, to be viewed through a 'capitals' lens by drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The 'capitals' approach to social mobility has been adopted by Think Communities at the county council level and is also used here. Following on from this assertion, this project shares the view that the best means of which to build upward social mobility is the provision of stable and sustained access to the labour market. However, there are multiple barriers to sustained employment for many residents in

Cambridgeshire, which encompass a mixture of social, environmental, health, economic, skills and cultural factors.

The entwined nature of these barriers calls for the necessity for a 'joined-up' approach to combating social issues and problems, because their very nature is, in and of itself, joined-up. Social mobility, or at least the provision of upward social mobility is an incredibly complex issue consisting of numerous other complex issues and thus, a joined-up approach is required. However, the prevalence of silos and siloisation within organisations stands as one of many obstacles to developing a joined-up approach. Therefore, this review looked into the underlying factors behind the formulation of silos and the potential means of, not necessarily dismantling them, but at least managing them. This was in the form of social capital and the 'structural holes' present in between silos, and the potential of 'bridging' social capital as a means of linking the 'bonded' groups within the silos.

This need to bridge the gap between silos is embodied via the second stage of Patrick Dunleavy's seven proposed stages of joined up service formulation by bringing different groups, organisations, entities and individuals onto the same table as it were. This review has provided a theoretical underpinning to this project's approach in answering the question of *how can we best align partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility?* The following question is, what method would be best suited to bringing together the disparate and diverse groups of Cambridgeshire to best enhance social mobility? One such means of achieving this goal is the utilisation of digital platforms.

Section 4: The Promise and Problems of Digital Platforms

The word platform has many different uses and connotations across the English language, with it spanning the 'computational', 'architectural', 'figurative' and 'political' realms (Gillespie, 2014, p349-50). Within the business realm, platforms have become a central component of the contemporary economy, with, according to Nick Srnicek's work *Platform Capitalism* (2017), "numerous companies [incorporating] platforms: powerful technology companies (Google, Facebook and Amazon), dynamic start-ups (Uber, Airbnb), industrial leaders (GE, Siemens) and agricultural powerhouses (John Deere, Monsanto)" (p43) to name a few. In this digitised context, a platform is best understood as a "digital infrastructure where two or more groups interact. They therefore position themselves as intermediaries that bring together different users" (Srnicek, 2017, p43).

According to Srnicek, platforms have four 'essential characteristics' (ibid, p44), the first of which being the above mentioned provision of a "basic infrastructure to mediate between different groups" (ibid). A contemporary example of this feature is embodied in the drive for social prescribing within the NHS (See: Appendix 2). The second characteristic concerns the notion that platforms "produce and are reliant on 'network effects'" (Srnicek, 2017, p45). Network effects are bound in the notion that "the more numerous the users who use a platform, the more valuable that platform becomes for everyone else" (ibid). Thirdly, "platforms often use cross-subsidisation: [where] one arm of the firm reduces the price of a service or good (even providing it for free), but another arm raises prices in order to make up for these losses" (ibid, p46). The final characteristic asserts that "platforms are designed in a way that makes them attractive to its various users" (ibid). Yet, despite platforms "presenting themselves as empty spaces [...] the rules of product and service development, as well as marketplace interactions, are set by the platform owner" (ibid, p47). These four characteristics refer to the essence of the platform as a concept:

1. A means of facilitating collaboration or a market
2. Their social situatedness
3. If there is no broad desire to utilise the platform, it will cease to function as a platform
4. The economic considerations of running a platform and the underlying political and power considerations of a platform.

These characteristics are all to be considered when developing or utilising a platform. They also offer a useful means to interpret pre-existing examples of platform use.

Within the perpetually expansionist realm of the smart city (Sadowski & Pasquale, 2015, p9), the platform has adopted a vaulted status as an approach to reducing siloisation within the urban realm (Brown et al, 2020, p7). One such example comes from Peterborough and is manifest in the (now defunct) *Share Peterborough* platform, "an online, resource sharing platform for businesses and other organisations in Peterborough" (Share Peterborough, 2016). The Share Peterborough platform is philosophically grounded in the circular economy. According to Julian Kirchherr *et al*'s 2017 literature review into the concept, a circular economy is an economic system that is based on business models which replace the 'end-of-life' concept with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering

materials in production/distribution and consumption processes, thus operating at the micro level (products, companies, consumers), meso level (eco-industrial parks) and macro level (city, region, nation and beyond), with the aim to accomplish sustainable development, which implies creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity, to the benefit of current and future generation (Kirchherr et al, 2017, p224)

For the Share Peterborough platform, the drive to enhance environmental, social and economic conditions is central to the platform's existence (Share Peterborough, 2021). The 'mediation' proposed by the platform encompases the sharing of resources, ruminating that "Share Peterborough is a totally free, member only, online sharing community for Peterborough businesses. Whether you have a meeting room to spare, or you need some office chairs; as a member you can use this site to exchange products, skills, and services, and offer exclusive promotions to other members" (ibid). Thus presenting a digital means of reducing the 'end-of-life' concept imbued within 'linear' approaches to resource consumption.

The above paragraph relates to the first of the four platform characteristics posited by Srnicek. The second of which, concerning 'network effects', represents an issue with this particular platform, for at the time of writing there were no active listings on the digital map (app.sharepeterborough, 2021).[1] This uncovers an inherent tendency within platforms; they are inescapably monopolistic. The value of a platform is ascribed to the power of network effects, for the more people who utilise a platform, the more valuable it becomes as a mediator, owing to the greater range of interactions that can take place on it (See: Srnicek, 2017, p45). The platforms which Share Peterborough have utilised to advertise its existence - Facebook and Twitter - already possess a relative monopoly on local advertisement (the effective function of the platform) owing to their substantial network effects. This realisation doesn't in and of itself discount using platforms in the public realm, but it highlights a particular concern, being, that if a platform possesses insufficient network effects, then the reason for its existence - the mediation of interaction between groups - may not come to pass.

The Share Peterborough platform is one interpretation of what platforms can be used for. There are other platforms being utilised within Cambridgeshire for other means. One such platform is Cambridge's *Intelligent City Platform* (ICP) which functions as a means of producing "real-time data from an array of sensors around the city that can be used in a host of applications" (Intelligent City Platform, 2019). The data which flows into and through the platform concerns waste, air quality and temperature, busses, parking, traffic control, road network and other sources including twitter timelines, weather, google traffic and train departures (ibid). Whilst the Share Peterborough platform and the ICP on the surface share little, they are both underpinned by a defining essence: the asuasion of the limiting factors contained within information silos.

The Share Peterborough platform approached this phenomena vis-a-vis connecting different organisations and businesses through the provision of a means of limiting wastage and enhancing the principles of the circular economy; if one entity has an excess of something, there reasonably may be

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[1] The Share Peterborough platform was shut down on 30/11/2021 owing to a lack of use.

another entity who are lacking in that regard, and the platform could facilitate the eradication of that need without resorting to resource extraction and the negative environmental impacts that entails. The ICP, on the other hand, approaches 'desiloization' through an information provision lens. The platform brings together numerous different viewpoints of the city in one place, therefore connecting the various departments and interests under one roof.

Despite approaching the same phenomena via different means, the end result, or at least the desired end result is the same; sharing. Put in another way, the bridging of structural holes via the facilitation of bridging social capital. However, whilst the facilitation of interconnecting previously isolated and insulated siloised groups is in and of itself a noble and desired outcome, it doesn't implicitly entail the formulation of 'joined-up' services.

The preceding paragraphs have sketched out the theoretical boundaries of what makes a digital platform, and highlights the potential of a platform focused approach to the facilitation of bridging social capital between separate organisations and groups. However, whilst an approach may seem sound, or even obvious on paper, the instance the rubber meets the road, the conditions of its feasibility change. Therefore, this project took the notion of a platform approach and put it to a number of local figures in the local voluntary sector to ascertain the validity of such an approach.

Applying Platforms
Given the multifaceted nature of inequality that the goal of social mobility aims to counter, this project recognised that one solution would not be sufficient to cover all our bases. Therefore, we were interested in furthering the joined up approach that the Cambridgeshire County Council had been focused on, with the aim of synergising partnerships and facilitating connections between already existing formal and informal community assets. The thinking was that, by allowing these groups to come into more frequent contact and partnership with each other, we could build a comprehensive network that would allow residents from one part of Cambridgeshire to access the full range of knowledge, resources, and opportunities that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and relevant local authorities could provide. This resonates with Recommendations 7 and 8 of the 2020 CUSPE-CCC report (See: Baird et al, 2020), which was to renovate the existing council directory of services as a broader digital platform in order to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities in a place-based format.

In developing our ideas for a proposed platform, we drew inspiration from a peer-to-peer platform promoting volunteer-host engagement named the national STEM Ambassador programme. Through a digital marketplace (and supported by regional hubs), expert volunteers from the science, technology, engineering and maths sectors may advertise their specific skills. Host organisations (which include every school in the UK) may also advertise one-off or ongoing opportunities for volunteers to register for. Volunteer engagement is encouraged through the use of incentives (via employers, training opportunities, and through certificates of annual volunteering hours) while hosts benefit from access to a vetted community of 30,000 specialist volunteers. One element of this approach was particularly appealing for this project, that being the idea of a marketplace for volunteers and information-sharing.

We were therefore drawn to the use of a digital platform as a tool for connection between different community assets, which comprise anything from informal interest groups and community safety patrols, to food banks and parish councils. We were also encouraged by the findings in previous surveys of the Voluntary and Community Sector within Cambridgeshire that emphasised the interest and desire of groups in forming peer networks amongst themselves. In particular, more than 80% said that networks for those within similar fields (e.g. health) was either slightly or very important, and around 70% said that networks for groups within the geographical area was either slightly or very important (Support Cambridgeshire). The digital platform was thus meant to be an affordable and accessible online space with the following purposes:

● To provide a (virtual) context by which community assets could build relationships
● To facilitate the sharing of information, volunteers, venues

As such, we put together the following suite of suggested features:

● Directory
● Community page to advertise information
● Marketplace for requests for and offers to help
● Discussion forums
● Direct messaging
● In-built video chatting function

The figure below demonstrates how our proposed digital platform would ideally contribute to aligning partners and community assets to enable communities to access opportunities and become more socially mobile.
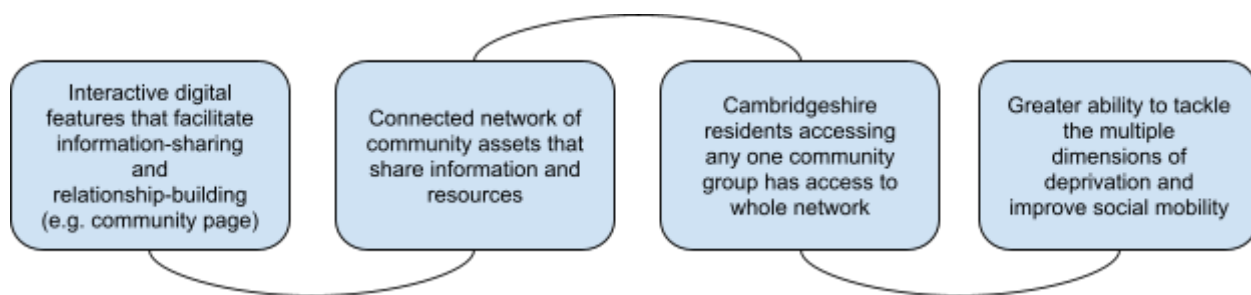
Fig.2 Proposed rationale behind the digital platform

The use of a digital rather than in-person platform was particularly appealing owing to: (a) its accessibility no matter the locale; (b) asynchronicity, allowing different groups to respond and engage at different times; (c) affordability, both for participating community groups and the County Council; and (d) inclusivity; allowing the broadest range of community groups to participate within the same space, which might not be achievable in-person.

Interview findings

Armed with these theoretical models, we interviewed four professionals within the public and third sector in order to understand their perspective on our proposed platform. We asked questions that aimed to evaluate the following dimensions:

- Usefulness - does it meet a real need?
- Feasibility - can it be done with current resources?
- Receptivity - will community groups be receptive to using it, and what can be done to make it more attractive to them?

However, despite our initial enthusiasm, our proposal was met with scepticism. Below, is an analysis concerning the rationale for such resistance.

Firstly, various forms of digital communication platforms are already in use across Cambridgeshire, with different groups preferring different platforms. The participants did not see the benefit of creating a new platform to facilitate networking between community groups. Many groups already had their own virtual methods of communication and switching from one to another might be potential sources of confusion and incur high transaction costs. This would also replicate, in online space, what Think Communities Place Coordinators were already doing in-person. Secondly, the county-wide nature of the proposed platform was seen as not particularly relevant, especially for partnerships between community groups that are strongly local in focus (e.g. Love Wisbech) and might not necessarily benefit from a Cambridgeshire-wide online network.

Thirdly, promoting uptake and maintaining engagement is a laborious process that requires dedicated time and personnel both from the County Council and the groups themselves. This is compounded by the relative lack of digital skills within the voluntary and community sector - which was estimated at around 20% in 2018 (Support Cambridgeshire, 2018) - as well as the digital inequalities between groups with different income levels and uptake of digital technology. It is, therefore, not feasible to expect that all groups will be able to participate and engage at the intended levels, and equipping them to use the network would thus be an added cost. Interviewees thus implied that the expense was likely to be high and that it may not achieve the proposed benefits. One interviewee suggested that a communication forum dedicated to coordination may be more useful for parish councils as node organisers, rather than the community groups themselves. Furthermore a site for interlinked public-facing parish council pages would be a good way to promote awareness equally of available services in a local area.

Fourthly, interviewees pointed out that a digital platform might be inadequate in facilitating relationships between community groups that may have had complicated histories of competition between one another for funding and/or volunteers. For example, the Love Wisbech partnership between community groups was the result of a yearlong period of communication between groups, with the help of an external mediation consultant, which allowed them to come to a written agreement of shared values that would facilitate their collaboration. Therefore, while a digital platform can provide the virtual

infrastructure for communication and connection, it can only work if there is a pre-existing relationship of goodwill and a culture of sharing. The results of our interviews can be summarised as follows:

Is it **useful**?	Other forms of digital communication are already in use.
	Other kinds of network-building initiatives exist (e.g. Think Communities).
	County-wide network might not be of use to groups that work within smaller localities.
Is it **feasible**?	Switching from one platform to another incurs transaction costs for community groups.
	It is costly to equip and teach community groups (with differing levels of digital skills) to use the platform.
	Staff costs and infrastructural investment to upkeep the network are high.
Will community groups be **receptive** to it?	Receptivity to information and volunteer sharing is predicated on a culture of goodwill and collaboration, which may be difficult to establish online.
	Voluntary staff may not consider interaction with the platform to be a good use of their time.

To conclude this segment on the role of digital platforms in facilitating cross collaboration and joined up approaches to service delivery, we argue that for a digital platform to be successfully utilised *in situ*, a number of factors need to be, at least, taken into consideration. Firstly a detailed understanding of the current landscape of technology and system utilisation amongst and between the different entities must be established. Secondly, a local, perhaps ward-by-ward approach is recommended to the rollout of new technological approaches. Thirdly, if a platform is to be utilised, a dedicated team is required to service, maintain and ensure its full functionality. However, the fourth finding is perhaps the most illuminating. For, platforms cannot be utilised to spark cross collaboration, but rather, their potential use lies in their ability to *enhance* pre-existing forms of collaboration.

Section 5: Key Successes and Key Needs

Key Successes

Despite the above discussion, interviewees noted several specific examples where community assets or organisations were able to achieve successful outcomes through networking, coordination or collaboration. We draw them out in order to understand how a potential solution can incorporate key learning points. Summaries of these are provided below.

Pandemic response

The coronavirus pandemic brought together diverse local groups to form community support networks across South Cambridgeshire (Interviews A, B, C) which was driven by the communities themselves and not by the council (Interview A). According to the county council's directory of services, 190 covid-19 related community groups sprung up in response to the pandemic (Directory of Services, 2022). Supporting robust local networks and relationships is also described as a priority in the wake of the pandemic (Interview B).

Also, the Hiraeth project (run by Cambridge Hub) have organised outdoor events in 2021, such as picnics and park visits for the vulnerable groups it focuses to help to address the situation influenced by the pandemic especially the lockdown, although it is underscored that more complex reviews and requirements for checking and hiring indoor spaces and designing the use of the spaces (such as meeting rooms) has negatively influenced the organisation of diverse activities as before (e.g., cooking and workshops for the vulnerable groups Hiraeth helps) (Hiraeth, 2019; Interview E).

Funding acquisition

Funding/overspending has been highlighted as an increasing problem for organisations during the pandemic and associated recession (Support Cambridgeshire, 2020). Communication is key to funding at different scales:

For a *single/small organisation*, reaching out to a coordinating body reveals funding opportunities that can be used to improve facilities and services. For example, CCVS assisted Hale Road Allotments, Swavesey to apply for funding to install waterless toilet facilities, greatly improving accessibility and the utility of the site for the local community (Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services, 2017). Fenland District Council worked with a local charity to disseminate funds to small organisations more effectively and quickly (Interview C).

For *multi-organisational partnerships*, the coordination of complementary expertise is crucial to address a fundable issue such as digital inequality. The Cambridge Digital Partnership (as discussed above) includes different organisations with roles to play in access, cost effective purchase, and training (Interview B). Love Wisbech, a partnership of 24 community groups, was borne out of a Support Cambridgeshire consultation project between local councils, organisations and residents. They have made joint applications for funding which were successful due to the brand recognition and momentum of a larger partnership (Interviews C, D).

Personalised support

Hiraeth is a volunteering project run by Cambridge Hub from 2019, a charity branch in the city of Cambridge (Hiraeth, 2019; Interview E). It aims to assist unaccompanied asylum seeking children (14 to 19 years old) in Cambridgeshire and the UK with social inclusion, which is of importance to increasing social mobility in the host country, and is conducted primarily through socialisation, English language acquisition and improvement of wellbeing. The Hub serves as a coordinator of a wide range of events, which promotes inclusivity and tenders collaboration between the attendees and case/social workers of Cambridge City Council. Despite a long chain of the service, which means the volunteers do not directly contact the children, based on the interviews with the project manager and previous student manager, it is suggested the personalised support provided by Hiraeth, with different partnerships locally/nationally, may benefit the social mobility of young immigrants. The typical community partnerships include:

A. A sports club located in the northern part of Cambridge (Histon), the Hub has built programmes to allow the children's participation in football, for example;

B. Centre (an organisation on mental health) on Mill Road, Cambridge, has good reach to the local community, with which the Hub has run a picnic on a piece in Cambridge in 2021 summer and some group therapy sessions to help the children address housing/financial problems;

C. A "Rainbow" project in Cambridge for disadvantaged youth;

D. Football activities and "boxing future" in Peterborough.

The Hub has also cooperated with Cambridge City Council and Peterborough City Council, which supported various in-person events, such as tutorial sessions (English and maths for the children usually with language barriers) and career-based workshops (including coding classes to facilitate the children's skills, which could be important to their employment and inclusion going forward), as well as other workshops based on the immigrants' interest, which is also the core of the project development by the Hub to increase the young people's motivation to join the events. The Hub is also associated with Derbyshire County Council for events on children and young people's wellbeing and inclusion (Interview E).

Additionally, Community hubs in Fenland are modelled on the South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils Early Help Hub, a portal providing diverse information including access to Community Connectors who can link up users with the services and support that they need (Interview D). These are intensive approaches to provide bespoke, high quality support.

Key Needs

Beyond successes, the interviewees, who are involved in coordination and close working with community groups, describe broadly similar priorities for future development. This is highly important in allowing us to identify the broad areas that a potential solution should address. These fall into three categories: *volunteers*, *awareness of opportunities*, and *relationship building*.

Volunteers

Volunteer efforts have been crucial during the coronavirus pandemic to support community-led projects delivering food, medicine, and running errands for people who are self isolating or shielding (Baird *et al*, 2020). The enthusiasm of the public to volunteer during a time of crisis has been extraordinary, and it is described as a great potential benefit to the voluntary service sector if this enthusiasm could be maintained going forwards (Interviews A and D). The shape of volunteering is changing, with more people interested in ad hoc "micro-volunteering" rather than a regular voluntary position in one place. Sharing volunteers or organising a flexible voluntary workforce of this sort is a complex challenge for individual organisations to address, and involves huge duplication of effort. Provision of this as a service would be attractive for host organisations (Interview D).

Challenge: How can volunteers be shared, sought and matched to opportunities with community organisations, while maintaining engagement of all parties?

Awareness

Informal and formal networks (re. bridging social capital) exist between community groups, voluntary organisations, services, and councils. When opportunities become available, such as funding or collaboration, these are disseminated through the network. Unknown entities may benefit hugely from these opportunities as well, but cannot apply for what they do not know about. Central coordinating bodies such as volunteer hubs can address this gap when groups reach out for help. But, for example, CCVS doubts that the majority of volunteer groups are known to them or the council (Interview B).

For specific groups, such as the children and young immigrants involved in the Hiraeth project, how to use digital platforms to help them associate or extend social networks seems to be overlooked. This is hindered by their age and living situation (for example, many of them live in specific relocation centres, where digital devices could be in limited use or no signals are available) and restricted investment to their equipment - if they live with other households, probably because they are expected to leave and be independent after they grow up several years later, the host families usually do not invest mobile phones or electronic devices for these children/teenagers (Interview E). Thus, it seems that the awareness of stakeholders (the children/young immigrants, the host families, governing organisations and the local welfare and relevant offices) should be raised about the use of digital networking, but also specific plans and budgets might be considered for more e-facilities accessible to young immigrants and other vulnerable groups with this need.

Challenge: How can the council increase its reach to improve awareness of opportunities, overcoming the current gaps in bridging social capital, to improve equity of funding?

Relationship building & networking

Community organisations may collaborate to access funds or to widen participation in their activities. Building relationships and trust in order to launch these collaborations is a significant barrier due to the time and commitment asked of volunteers (Interview B). Where funding is sought, the short time frame means that applicants may not be able to create these links and establish a proposal in time. Furthermore there can be resistance to collaboration due to groups wanting to maintain control over their projects, or due to perceived scarcity of resources (Interview C). As described above for Love Wisbech, a partnership may require mediation to overcome interpersonal problems (Interview D).

Challenge: How can complementary organisations establish and maintain positive, beneficial relationships without networking becoming a time sink?

Routes to Address the Stated Priorities

In response to feedback from interviewees, we reflect that a standalone digital platform to promote collaboration between community groups may not be successful. In this case, what possibilities are there for addressing these priorities?

Volunteer Management

How can volunteers be shared, sought and matched to opportunities with community organisations, while maintaining engagement of all parties?

Different strategies for volunteer management include:

A. A highly personalised, bespoke matching service similar to a traditional job agency may provide host organisations with volunteers that have appropriate skills or certifications; the burden of labour there lies with a central personnel organiser. The intense involvement of a coordinator may speed up the process and maintain engagement.

B. A peer to peer system allows host organisations and prospective volunteers to promote themselves and communicate directly. The workload is divided as both host and volunteer must invest time, but a coordinator may still need to provide support.

C. A noticeboard allows hosts to advertise volunteering opportunities but with no registration of volunteers. The labour of vetting candidates and managing communication falls to the host organisation, and extensive lists of vacancies may be overwhelming to volunteers. This does not promote volunteer sharing or collaboration between hosts, however it is a simple and widely used approach.

D. Under an automated volunteer matching service the volunteer supplies a profile that is algorithmically matched to a shortlist of suitable opportunities. This may be more time effective than other systems when there is a very large number of volunteers and/or opportunities.

There are existing services at the national level, including peer-to-peer systems (such as Do It, Be On Hand), online and app-based directories (such as Reach Volunteering, Charity Job, RestLess), and local nodes that may provide informal facilitation in Peterborough, Cambridge and Huntingdon.

Potential for added value

A volunteer database that is kept up to date (for example regarding DBS status and availability) could improve the return rate of volunteers for positions and remove the time obstacle from short term or cover vacancies, and remove an administrative burden from hosts. A highly localised "menu of opportunity" is attractive (Interview D). As a local service it would be well placed to accommodate or promote volunteer sharing initiatives between local organisations.

Recommendation 5, below, may be incorporated into strategy A, B or D according to the priorities and resources available.

Awareness of Opportunities

How can the council increase its reach to improve awareness of funding and collaborative opportunities, overcoming the current gaps in bridging social capital, to improve equity of funding?

Advertising opportunities may be targeted at specific geographic areas or demographics using existing networks that leverage metadata, such as Facebook. However, where the audience is not known, a dispersed approach may improve reach through community groups' members or relationship networks (exploiting bridging social capital in diverse groups). Responsive information provision occurs through node organisations as gatekeepers who are contacted by groups with a specific need. Offline dissemination such as through community hubs and parish councils is a crucial aspect as not all organisations are active online. Identifying the gaps to target may be a novel approach that supports existing information dissemination efforts.

Potential for added value

Identification of where localised gaps in communication exist could be a valuable tool for monitoring impact and progress, and is an ideal application of a digital approach. Several sources of data may feed into such a tool: mapping the geographical spread of potential (economic, social, cultural, human, environmental) capital from council service directory data (See: appendix 1), mapping the previous applicants and recipients of funding, mining social media sources for the footprint of unregistered community organisations, and modelling the spread of information through communities under different advertising campaigns. Though the mapping and modelling of social networks uses established mathematical principles (Yablochnikov, 2021), to our knowledge this would be a novel application.

Recommendations 3 and 4 address this priority in the offline and online realms respectively, with Recommendation 6 bringing in the added value of modelled information flow.

Networking

How can complementary organisations establish and maintain positive, beneficial relationships without networking becoming a time sink?

Volunteer organisations can be particularly time-poor, a point highlighted in all interviews. To improve the efficiency of networking and prevent it becoming a time sink, some relationships need to be prioritised and even incentivised. Local groups with complementary functions may achieve this

organically through their parish council, community hubs, or existing personal networks (Interview C). Node organisations with a wide spread of contacts can also create networking events.

Potential for added value

A more proactive approach to predicting upcoming funding priorities would improve efficiency for node organisations to target their networking initiatives. Patent benefits for community groups that engage may improve participation.

Section 6: Conclusions

The theoretical framework for social mobility clearly identifies the provision of economic, social, and cultural capital as a means of enhancing social mobility. The barriers to communities accessing these types of capital are complex and as such require a joined up solution. The concept of desiloisation is a process for improving information flow by bridging structural holes in organisations. Platforms may address this by facilitating communication and collaboration between distinct groups.

However, deploying a platform is not a simple, fast, or cheap task. Not only does the infrastructure need to be built, users may be reluctant to adopt it and unable to get the most out of it. This is alongside the required administrative support, which entails an ongoing cost. From the evidence gathered throughout this project, there was a clear scepticism among our interview subjects about the utility of a new platform to address this research question.

Furthermore, our interviews highlighted a key set of priorities in the realm of horizontal communication in the community and voluntary sector: volunteer management, improving awareness of opportunities, and effective relationship building. Each of these may be approached in diverse ways with differing financial and time burdens placed on the participating organisations. Therefore, in response to the question of how can we best align partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility, this project proposes the following measures.

Section 7: Recommendations

As a result of our research, we make the following recommendations, which are presented in three elements. Firstly, recommendations 1 and 2 concern behind the scenes and information management approaches which are internal in nature and require little new research. Therefore, these are posited as being relatively short-term in nature. The second element, recommendations 3 and 4, are premised on the notion that investments are required for specific ends, particularly the provision of community hubs, and are therefore considered to be more long-term initiatives. Finally, the final two recommendations, 5 and 6, are centred on the need for future research, and possess the longest time frame of potential completion.

Short Term and Behind the Scenes

RECOMMENDATION 1: Enrich the Cambridgeshire County Council website's current online directory

Following concerns about the cost and work required to build a *de novo* platform to improve community group collaboration, we propose a compromise wherein the council directory of services infrastructure could be regenerated with extra functionality to facilitate information flow and offline relationship building efforts.

The Cambridgeshire Directory is currently accessed through more than 76,000 sessions per month (for comparison, per month the Suffolk InfoLink website is accessed through 74,000 sessions; the Norfolk Community Directory through 10,000 sessions; the Essex Directory of Children and Family Services is downloaded 341 times; and the Hertfordshire Directory receives 11,100 unique page views). This demonstrates that the Cambridgeshire Directory is a well-used resource with an established user base, which addresses the concerns about uptake and initial participation of a new platform and infrastructure expense.

Extra functions would include an associated noticeboard dedicated to announcements of funding opportunities and calls to action for community groups, richer profile information for listings (type of service, organisation size, geographic location and reach, social capital type), and a redesign as an interconnecting web of local resources including the parish councils as nodes. Community groups listed may opt-in for contact regarding funding opportunities, support, or local initiatives.

An enriched, locally interconnected directory will address the priority issues for horizontal communication in the following ways:

- It provides a central listing for opportunities (both financial and collaborative), greatly improving discoverability for groups who are not already on the grapevine. Community groups with listed contact details could be automatically notified of applicable news targeted using profile data, potentially driving novel partnerships.
- Public provision of contact details and the connection of listings through parish nodes will aid mutual visibility of groups.

● Specifically this also incentivises participation through the potential to be notified about funding.

Furthermore, the improved metadata attached to the directory would enable automated reporting on the frequency of user access (popularity) of different content types, adding a data source to feed into Recommendation 6 below.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Create a database of ready-to-go volunteers

To reduce the burden of temporary/ad hoc volunteer management, and to stimulate an environment of volunteer sharing, a database would be maintained with profiled volunteers (skills, experience) who are supported to keep DBS certification and availability up to date so that they can volunteer immediately. It may be appropriate to wrap this in a mobile app to encourage interactive browsing of opportunities and the spontaneity of microvolunteering: this embodies the "peer to peer" volunteer management strategy described in Chapter 5. It would have specific added value compared to current volunteering websites, as described previously. Existing volunteer centres may be well placed to support or deliver this service with additional funding. A Cambridgeshire centralised provision of volunteers will address the priority issues for horizontal communication in the following ways:

● As a shared resource it reduces unnecessary duplication of effort, such as DBS checks.
● The system may be used to facilitate relationship building through collaborative training initiatives: investing time in training shared volunteers may be the incentive to get groups in the room.

Long Term Investment and Community Provision

RECOMMENDATION 3: Provide opportunities for mediation for community groups and share evidence of the positive impact of collaboration

We recommend identifying histories of conflict and potential areas of competition between community groups and providing opportunities for mediation, as well as highlighting the advantages of collaboration, possibly facilitated by Think Communities Place Coordinators.

Our interview findings indicate that it is not necessarily the case that collaboration would be considered positive by community groups - rather, histories of conflict, and the current incentive to compete for funding and resources, would need to be addressed before collaborative relationships could be built between them. Interviewees highlighted the importance of explicitly stating and agreeing on shared norms and values between community groups as they undertook collaborative ventures. Lastly, they emphasised the importance of using evidence to convince community groups of the advantages of collaboration, usually through showing how this would attract larger funding to the region and highlighting its positive impacts on residents who might benefit from a wider network of help.

We therefore suggest that processes of dialogue can be conducted between community groups within individual districts, to bring about positive relationships of collaboration that can then be potentially optimised through digital platforms.

This can add to horizontal communication and strategic alignment between community groups in the following ways:

- It can unearth and address histories of conflict and areas of competition within a safe, conducive, and facilitated environment.
- When shown evidence of the positive impact of collaboration, this can provide common ground and shared motivation for community groups to work together.
- Facilitated mediation can lead to the explicit agreement on norms and values (e.g. culture of no blame) that can set the tone for future collaborations.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Invest in community hubs with affordable premises for hire

Reiterating the recommendation of the 2020 CUSPE-CCC report and to address the financial pressures previously reported by community groups, we propose that the council supports and improves existing community hubs or provides funding to create new ones. Affordable premises hire or local discount rates (as already in place across the county) should continue to be part of this.

Investment in community hubs will address the priority issues for horizontal communication in the following ways:

- The sharing of a physical space promotes shared routes of information and is a natural forum for collaboration and shared events.
- A hub location is an offline node for disseminating information about opportunities to engage, collaborate, or apply for funding - especially vital for groups who are not digitally connected. As in the case of libraries as community hubs, they may provide an access point for digital services.
- Community hubs are inherently place-based and as such are a good forum for rallying volunteers.

Furthermore, these venues can address stated funding pressures and incentivise community engagement through improved availability of premises.

Future Avenues for Potential Research

RECOMMENDATION 5: Consult with community groups on the utility of a digital platform enabling networking between groups close in function and/or proximity

We recommend identifying and consulting with smaller networks of community groups which have similarity by type (e.g. parish councils) or locale (e.g. all groups in South Cambridgeshire), to ascertain if a digital platform might be useful for their network.

Interview findings suggest that digital platforms might be useful forms of communication between groups that already have a connection, but less helpful in creating meaningful relationships between groups with little existing connection or similarity in function. We thus recommend that the digital platform can play the role of augmenting existing relationships rather than creating new ones, the latter of which can be achieved through other means, as we will touch on below (Recommendation 4).

This consultation can help to strategically align community partners and bring about social mobility in the following ways:

- Should the consultation end in an agreement about the utility of a digital platform and its eventual setup:
  - This leads to more communication between community groups, which can synergise and augment current relationships and provide the launchpad for initiatives of potential collaboration.
  - The platform can also raise awareness about the array of activities and programmes provided by community groups, and provide opportunities for potential referrals from one programme and/or group to another.
- Should the consultation end in consensus that a digital platform would not at present be useful to community groups:
  - This can provide further understanding on whether and how smaller networks of community groups currently communicate amongst themselves, and their thoughts on how this can be optimised.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Model information flow and reach

In order to improve awareness of opportunities among community groups, commission a novel tool (through commercial or academic partnership) based on modelling of digital and real world information flow specific to Cambridgeshire communities, approximating direct contact and word of mouth networks, to predict the reach of advertised funding/collaboration opportunities and overlay that with instances of successful funding or partnership. This tool may be used by the county and district councils to support dissemination of information through local communities. Modelling information flow will address the priority issues for horizontal communication in the following ways:

- The tool can be used to identify gaps in bridging social capital that may be used to target announcements or other interventions, in order to improve equity of funding.
- Targeted campaigns based on the tool's predictions may improve cost effectiveness of advertising.
- Prediction and post-analysis would allow monitoring of progress and improvement in deploying funding – a route to demonstrate impact.

To our knowledge, this would be a unique application of modelling to improve the uptake of collaborative/funding opportunities among community groups, and presents an opportunity for the council to engage in cutting edge research.

Appendix 1: Geographic Spread of Capitals Across Cambridgeshire

If social mobility is to be enhanced through the attainment of 'capital' - be it economic, social, cultural or educational, health or environmental - the question arises, how can individuals increase their stock? How can those set to gain from upward social mobility access the avenues through which the capitals flow? In order to interpret and answer these questions, a component of this project has analysed the County Council's directory of services, specifically the 'community listings' contained within, to not only geographically situate the services which could potentially be a source of capital provision, but to also observe which types of capital can be accessed. Whilst this approach is limited in scope (by being limited to one list of locations), it nonetheless reveals a number of traits which are of importance regarding the pursuit of upward, social mobility.

According to Thomas Piketty, capital "in all its forms, has always played a dual role, as both a store of value and a factor of production" (Piketty, 2014, p48), therefore, what is required is a means of discerning which services enhance, not only the value of one's capital, but also the production of it. To this end, this project analysed capital by not seeking to identify something as ethereal as 'capital', but rather, how it is produced. Rather than focusing on capital, the focus was geared towards identifying the conditions of its production. For instance, the concept of social capital is premised on the notion that the stronger the bond between a close group of people, as well as the wider the constellation of connections between a more dispersed group will lead to more resources to be utilised by an individual (See: Bourdieu, 1986 & Putnam, 2000). The more access to resources through a diverse set of connections, the greater the social capital. Therefore, social capital is enhanced by expanding an individual's connections, and if a locale offers the opportunity to meet new people, it will vicariously offer the opportunity to expand social capital.

This logic was applied to each of the six forms of capital outlined by the aforementioned Think Communities approach (See: Chapman, 2021). Alongside social capital, cultural capital was identified vis-a-vis opportunities to expand general knowledge and human capital - the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic well being (ibid) - is linked to conditions which could expand formalised knowledge/skills. The provision of environmental capital is catered by access to open or safe space and employability (read economic capital) is entwined with the notion that "good quality participation and progression in the labour market" is the main driver of social mobility. Therefore, employability capital is assessed via opportunities to enhance labour market participation. This project also added a health component, by assessing opportunities to enhance personal physical health, such as sporting groups or dance classes.

An example of this approach is particularly embodied in libraries. According to Anne Goulding, Reader in Information Services Management at Loughborough University, "libraries can contribute to the building of social capital by promoting the types of interaction and integration which enable social networking" (Goulding, 2004, p3). The same author also argues that "libraries might be considered sites for the production, dissemination and acquisition of cultural capital" (Goulding, 2008, p235). They also offer 'safe spaces' (Cambridgeshire Libraries, 2021), employability services and business start up support (Cambridgeshire Libraries.a, 2021) as well as, through free internet access, the capacity for online

learning. Therefore, libraries offer the potential to enhance social, cultural, human, environmental and employability capital through the opportunities they provide.

In total, 329 different entities were analysed. There are a total of 537 different entries within the directory, however, covid-19 support groups were not included owing to the potential short term nature of their existence and neither were logistical entities such as highways depots. This produced 878 different instances of potential capital provision. This was broken down into each form of capital as follows: Social - 239; Cultural - 204; Human - 84; Health - 134; Environmental - 127; Employability - 90. As can be seen here, the provision of social capital was the most prevalent form, with the means of gaining formal qualifications being the least common. However, whilst the overall presence of capital provision is of some interest, the geographic spread of these is of significance. For instance, if you are to compare Cambridge City (223) with Fenland (59), the residents of the former have over three and three-quarters more opportunities to enhance their capital than the latter.

Initially it appeared that there would be a loose correlation between the provision of capital and the relative position of the region on the Indices of Deprivation (IoD), however this is only part of the story. Whilst relative deprivation does have some correlation, a larger impact is the population density of the area. For instance, the district of Huntingdon which is home to the larger towns of Huntingdon and St Neots, plus St Ives and Ramsey, performs significantly better (165) than East Cambridgeshire (69), despite being separated by 24 places on the IoD (Cambridgeshire Insight: Huntingdon, 2019). Therefore, it appears that an individual's proximity to a population centre - either as a direct resident or by living on the periphery - is an important factor concerning the ability to enhance their capital.

This is a significant finding because Fenland, statistically the most deprived area within Cambridgeshire (excl. Peterborough) - which is the third most deprived LSOA in the country when education, learning and skills is considered (Cambridgeshire Insight: Fenland, 2019) - is also Cambridgeshire's least densely populated district (i.plumplot, 2022). This means that not only do the residents of Fenland have fewer opportunities to access capital, they have further to travel to those places, which emphasises the necessity of private vehicle ownership or public transport reliance, therefore placing more barriers in between those seeking to enhance their capital and the ability to indeed do so.

This side investigation into the provision of capital across Cambridgeshire has illustrated the skewed nature of access across the county. It illustrates an interesting insight, that it's easier for the residents of some places to enhance their own personal stock of capital than it is for others; a phenomenon purely determined by their place of residency. In theory, there is more opportunity for a resident of King's Hedges in Cambridge City (despite its relative deprivation: 6,022 most deprived area in the U.K) to enhance their capital (and vicariously their social mobility) than for a resident of the village of Wimbington (19,240 most deprived) (See: Cambridgeshire Insight: Deprivation Map, 2019). Therefore, a means of enhancing social mobility (amongst others) is to ensure the enhanced connection between areas of high capital provision (Cambridge/Huntingdon) and those with less opportunity. This could be physically (transportation) or virtually (Connecting Cambridgeshire).

Appendix 2: Social Prescribing for Equal Access to Services

Social prescribing (SP) is an initiative from the National Health Service (NHS) as part of the 'Universal Personalised Care' scheme. SP provides access to community groups allowing for both practical and emotional support.

A concern with SP is that personalised care is often considered as a costly service although it is intended to relieve the burden on general practitioners (GPs). It has been estimated that 20 % of GP consultations are for primarily social issues. Generating evidence for the effectiveness of SP is difficult as it is local context dependent and therefore highly heterogeneous (Husk et al, 2019). Therefore, the research that has attempted to measure SP effectiveness has so far been mixed (See: Bickerdike et al, 2017 & Husk et al, 2019). One study showed that although SP was correlated to better patient outcomes it did not reduce GP workload (Loftus et al, 2017). Despite the lack of sufficient studies to measure the effectiveness of SP between cost and patient outcomes, it is an example of a human-facing social platform. Alongside this, 59 % of GPs think SP has the potential to reduce their workload (NHS England, 2022). A study funded by NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (See: Dayson & Bashir, 2014) also estimated that SP resulted in both NHS cost reductions and improved patient outcomes. SP could therefore be a viable platform model for users from increased demographic populations than currently targeted, and with a wider range of needs, with the potential of self-referral to reduce the burden on primary care.

Appendix 3: Interview contributors

Interviews and supporting quotations

A : Gareth Bell, Communications and Communities Service Manager, South Cambs District Council

B : Mark Freeman, CEO for Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS)

C : Anonymous contributor, Think Communities

D : Anonymous contributor, Fenland District Council

E: Project Manager and Project Student Manager, the Hiraeth Project (interviewed on 2 November 2021; no direct quotations)

Interview A

- Impact of the coronavirus pandemic: departmental cooperation

"There is a post-pandemic push to coordinate some work… So the challenge is: how do we move beyond that post pandemic model, mainstream into how the council works in the future? The dynamic within South Cambs is now different to how it was in the past (quite departmental), the holistic public

health response is much stronger now and way we work with other departments is now a much stronger link"

- Successful local collaboration: hub and spoke

"[During the pandemic] neighbouring communities formed bubbles with [council] officers in support… they would come together [in virtual meetings] and reflect on how they were approaching things, share information and gather ideas from one another. The way they came together in a hub-and-spoke model within the district was really successful and we are reflecting on whether that has a place in future."

- Improving efficiency with time-poor collaborators: provide bespoke support

"We don't do [Community Flood Plans] *for* people because it needs that local engagement… In some cases it hasn't been successful due to capacity [lack of time and staff] but there is a recognition that it would be a really positive thing… the solution is to get an officer in the room with them, to get it over the line."

Interview B

- Incentivising networking: the coordinator's role

"There is a danger that unless groups are coming together with a particular focus, then people will think *'I've got a busy day job, why am I going to that networking meeting or spending time building that relationship?'* … It takes time to build these partnerships and relationships… Often you need someone in that initial period to have the capacity and resources to do all of that work, to make it happen".

- Building a successful platform

"[A platform] can't be seen as an easy and quick fix because it won't be. You have to work to make anything around relationships happen. Whether or not you are doing that on digital, face to face, or a mixture of the two. You have to invest in the management, the support, the encouragement, and the time to make that happen... Putting the platform in place is 10% of [the work]. It becoming useful and self-sustaining, is 90%".

- The priorities of a paid staff member are different to a volunteer

"No one volunteers for an organisation because they want to join a chat group".

- Awareness of opportunities

"[Unregistered, small voluntary organisations] are the grassroots of what makes communities work, what makes places that you want to live and work and study… If they're not [collaborating] the reason is perhaps because they never thought about the possibilities... Lots of organisations won't necessarily get involved, because they don't want to or need to. But lots of [others] would find benefits."

Appendix 4: Interview template

Topic	Questions	Answers
Existing interactions and relationships between formal / informal assets	How do formal assets interact with each other? What **successes** and **failures** have there been previously in facilitating cooperation? How do formal assets/services currently interact with community-based assets, and vice versa? How is impact measured in this network? What shared objectives do these assets have in your network?	
Types of useful interaction	How might a peer support network, where services find help or partnerships with other community groups, be useful (or not)? E.g.: ● Specific partnerships ● Organising joint events ● Sharing volunteers ad hoc ● Advertising / awareness ● Sharing resources to save costs ● Marketplace of requests for and offers of help Would a digital platform to facilitate such interactions be helpful, and if so, what particular features of this platform would be desirable and used? ● Community page ● Discussion forum ● Direct messaging ● Special advertisements / features of community groups ● Online meeting	
Opinions on capacity / resources of group to use a platform that enables such interaction	Would community groups/services have the capacity, resources and motivation to use a platform such as this?	
Opinions on infrastructure / practicalities	What steps or infrastructure would be required?	
Opinions on how to incentivise uptake	What specific challenges are there for access? How to incentivise participation?	

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