

Community assets

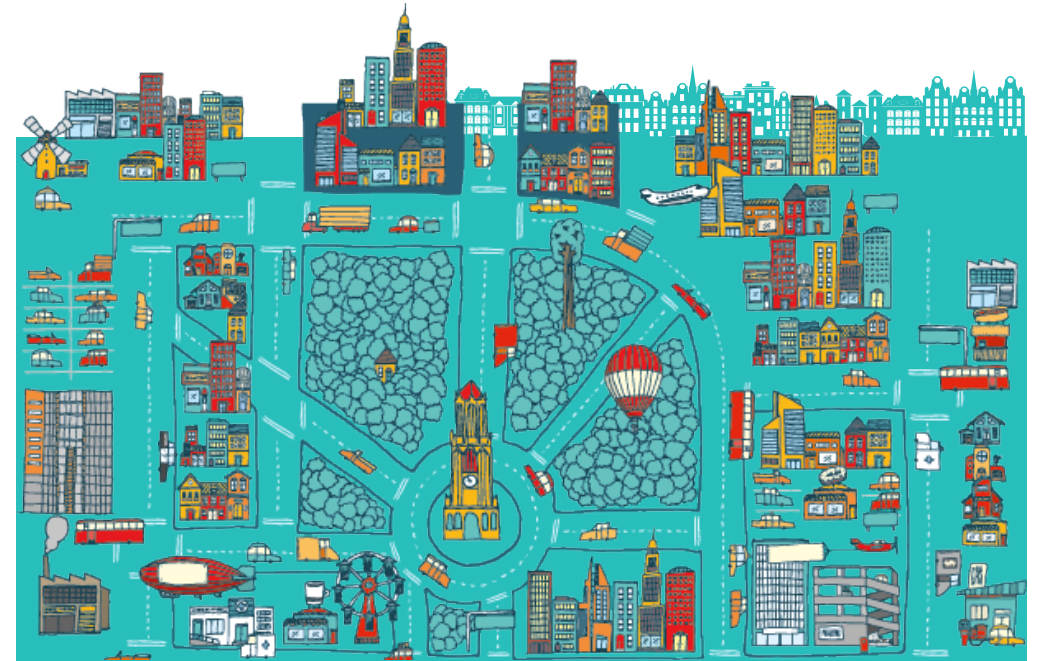
This evidence briefing will help support your conversations with customers, grant-holders and other stakeholders.

It shows how community assets contribute to the conditions that enable people and communities to thrive.



The National Lottery Community Fund supports people and communities to thrive through projects that are people-led: ensuring that individuals are meaningfully involved in the things that affect their lives and communities.

Our villages, towns and cities have places and spaces where good things can happen, and where we can build meaningful relationships and connections with others. Strengthening individual wellbeing and resilience enables people to live fulfilled lives.



What do we know about the role of community assets in thriving communities?

Community assets are community buildings, spaces or facilities like community centres, village halls, parks or community owned businesses, like shops or pubs.

These places and spaces can provide valuable opportunities for communities to run events and activities, or locate essential services in trusted and accessible venues. However, when projects don't consider the needs of the whole community, some people may feel excluded.

What does the evidence say?

How assets can enable people-led outcomes

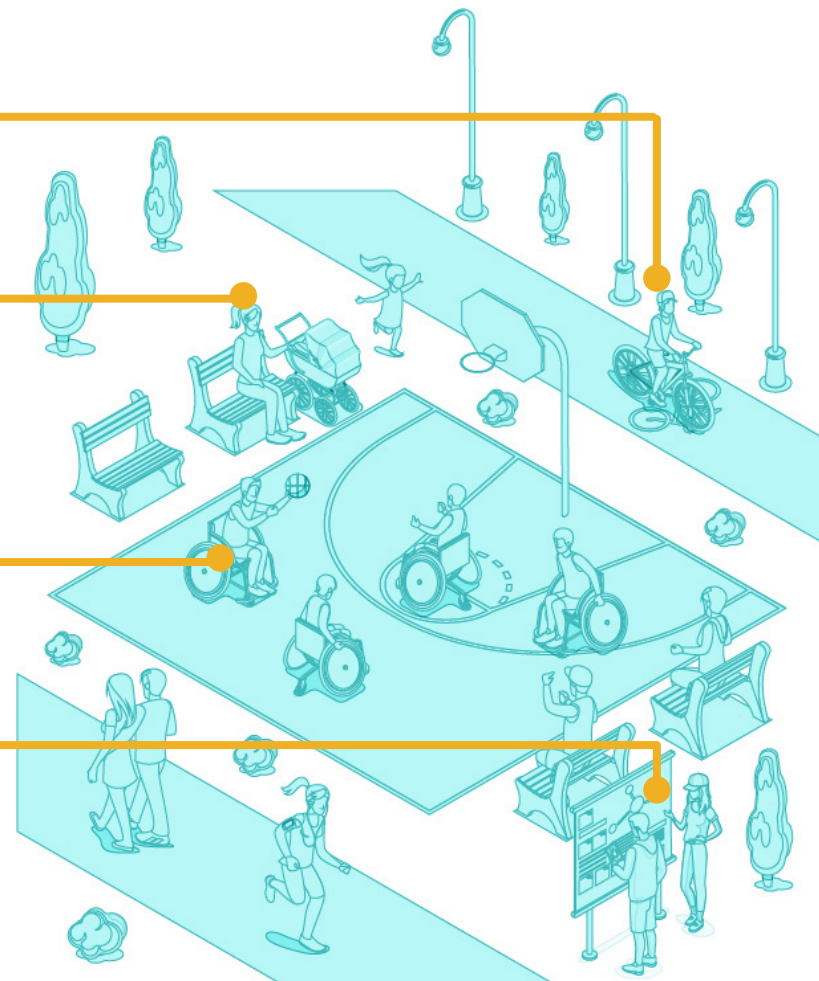
They can help encourage physical activity and other healthy behaviours.

Where the changes bring together people from different ages and social backgrounds they can help build the sense of belonging and social cohesion.

They can encourage people to come together to make a difference on the things that matter to them.

Activities can be as small as opening people's porches and gardens to promote social interaction, or as big as bringing people together around a new neighbourhood plan.

Neighbourhood re-design - like the addition of planters, play equipment or making it more accessible for people with disabilities or health conditions - can have a number of benefits for individuals as well as the wider community.

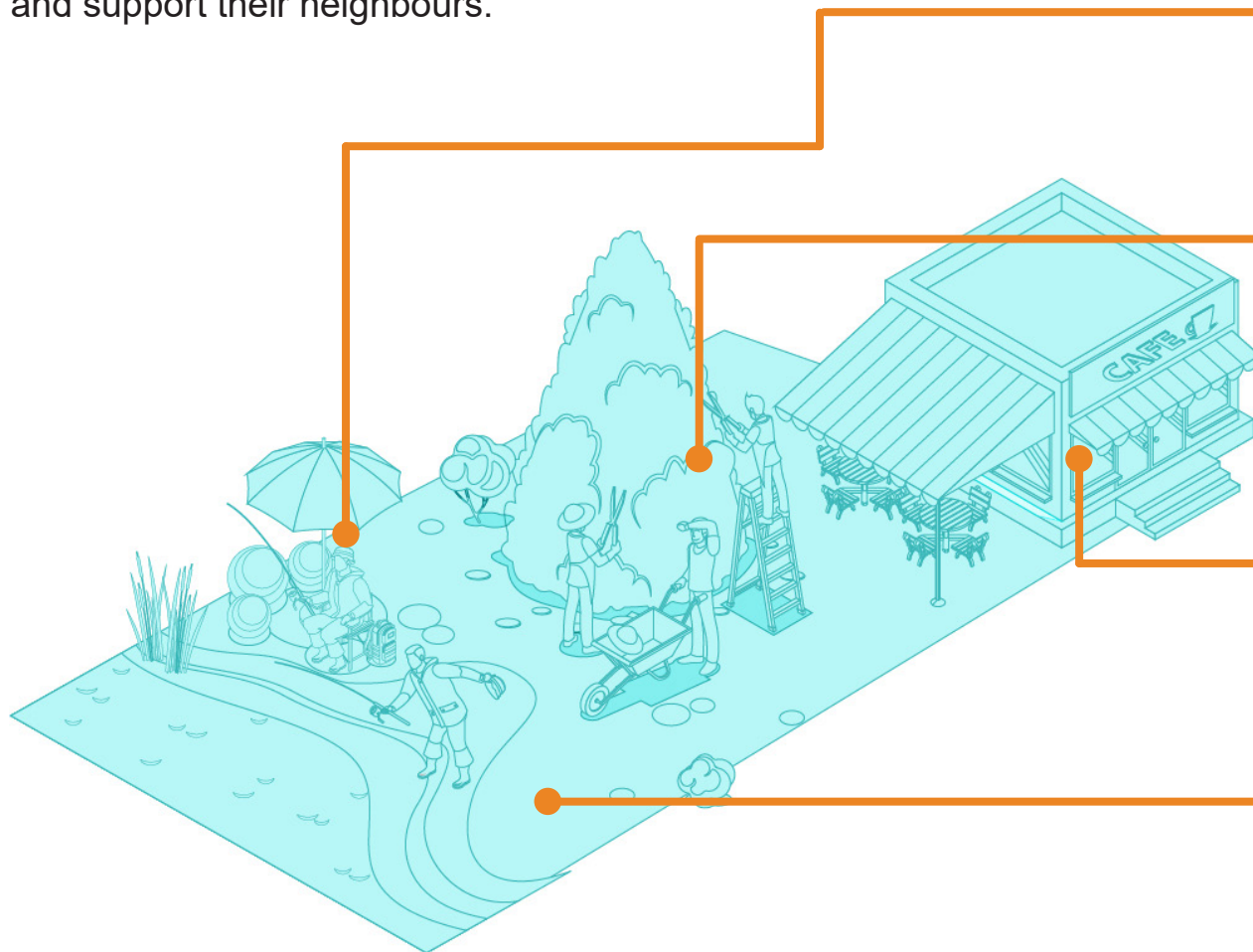


— However, some changes in the use of space, even temporarily, can lead to segregation or exclusion of certain groups, so it's important to think about the possible impact of these projects on the whole population.



Community assets can help bring people together and improve social ties. Spaces can be used to build new connections, strengthen existing networks and encourage people to get to know and support their neighbours.

How assets enable relationships and connections



Having local spaces that encourage interactions between users and contribute to a shared sense of identity can help people feel closer to their neighbours and to the place they live.

Activities in green and blue spaces, community development projects (where local people come together to take collective action around a particular issue) and temporary or 'pop-up' spaces can encourage different social groups to spend time together.

Amenities that can help build social connections between groups include local shops, markets and places to trade goods and skills, as well as online local information services.

Places where people can spend time and meet others help build a sense of neighbourliness, as do nurseries, schools, well-kept public spaces, health centres and other places that provide support.

Places and spaces

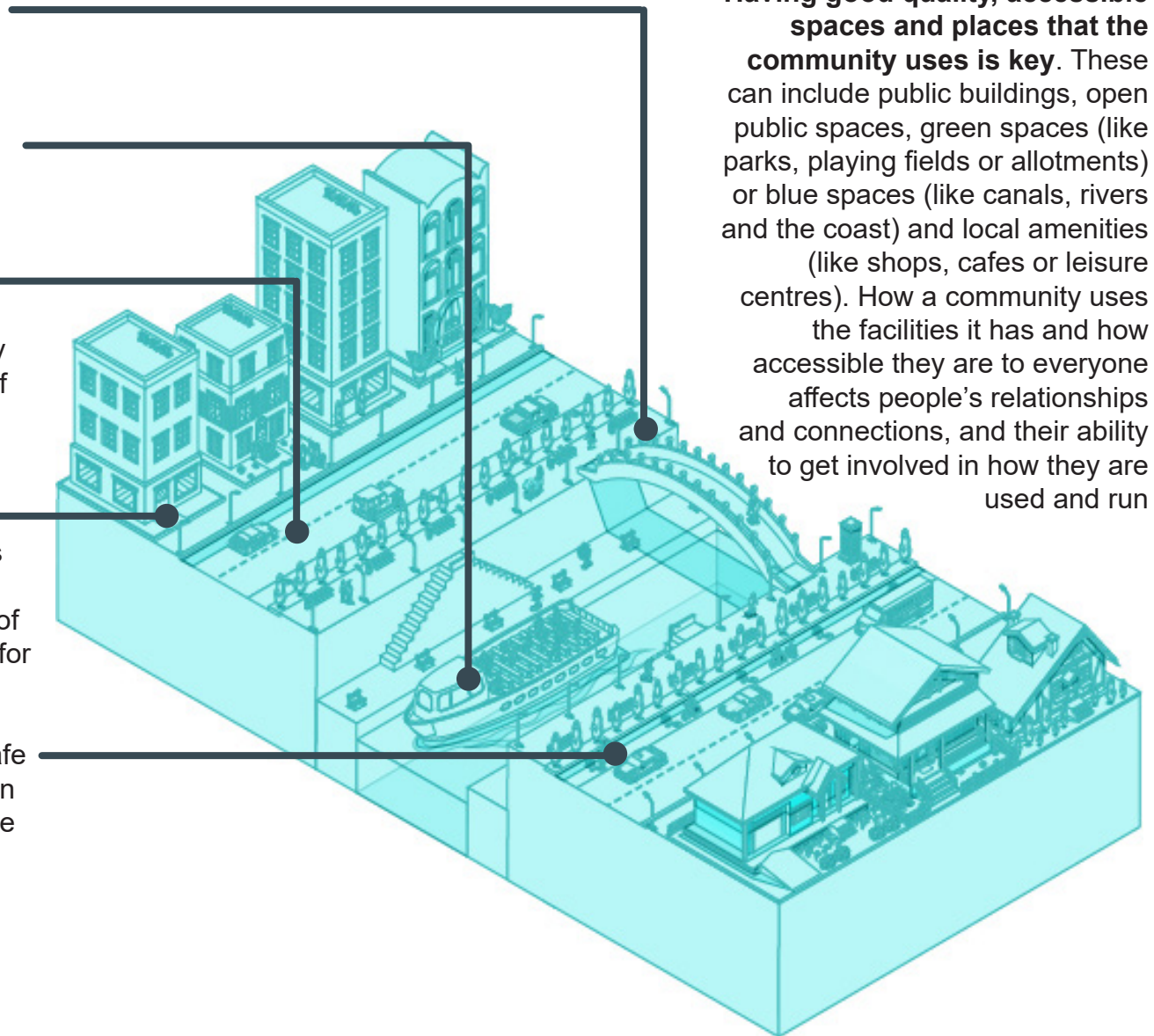
Having green and blue spaces where activities are also run can provide opportunities for local people to participate and improve social interactions.

Events and temporary use of spaces can encourage people to come together to make a difference on the things that matter to them.

How pedestrian-friendly an area is, and how easily people can move around it on foot (its 'walkability') is linked to higher levels of involvement in community activities. It may also influence people's perception of their neighbours - including whether they trust each other.

Historic buildings and heritage venues (such as museums, archives, monuments, conservation areas or archaeological sites) can have an impact on a community's social connections and people's sense of belonging if they are used to host inclusive activities for local people.

Good public transport and street design (including safe crossings, uncluttered pavements and bike lanes) can also promote social connections and may help reduce loneliness.



Having good quality, accessible spaces and places that the community uses is key. These can include public buildings, open public spaces, green spaces (like parks, playing fields or allotments) or blue spaces (like canals, rivers and the coast) and local amenities (like shops, cafes or leisure centres). How a community uses the facilities it has and how accessible they are to everyone affects people's relationships and connections, and their ability to get involved in how they are used and run

How can I use this evidence in grant making?

1 Help people build on existing local assets

Work with projects to find out if their proposed activities can help make use of or improve existing community assets. All kinds of local places can be used to deliver positive activity - including schools and health centres, dedicated community hubs, or pop-up places and temporary spaces.

2 Think about the impact on the whole community

Encourage projects to think about the potential impact of their project on the whole community.

- How could they make sure that changes or use of shared spaces are available to and welcome by everyone?
- Could their project inadvertently exclude people? For example: opening hours that exclude people of working age; buildings that aren't accessible to disabled people, or pushchairs; lack of facilities for new parents.
- Have the customers thought about how to make sure that people from different ethnic groups or religions feel welcome? Is there

an opportunity to use the project to help build a shared identity locally? For example, by using a historic space to share people's experiences and memories of a place; or bringing the community together to create public art in a neighbourhood.

3 Encourage people to think about and capture their impact

Grant holders may have questions about how to measure the impact of their project. There are a range of ways to think about this, depending on what matters to them.

It's important to remember that some of the benefits associated with community assets are not necessarily those that first spring to mind.

Grant holders may be interested in monitoring the number of users, whether people from different ages or backgrounds use the space, or the types of activities that they take part in.

However, community assets may also be having a bigger impact on the attitudes, behaviours or conditions that help communities to thrive. So encouraging projects to think about or measure these wider outcomes could help strengthen the evidence base and capture the full value of a space - not just the outcomes associated with individual activities.



Supporting community assets through grantmaking

National Lottery funding supports the creation, development and use of community assets around the country. Here are some examples of how these assets are used to help communities to thrive.

Focus on: community hubs

Community hubs are multi-purpose centres, venues or spaces which provide multiple opportunities and services for local people in one place. Supporting community hubs is one of the ways that the Fund can help a community to thrive by making use of local assets.

As well as the benefits of the activities provided, the nature of the hubs themselves can help deliver other community outcomes. For example:

- Community hubs may improve people's trust in each other, pride in the local area, social cohesion and social mixing by bringing together different groups.
- Community hubs can help people come together to make a difference on the things that matter to them.

Evidence gaps

We've set out key evidence about community assets but there are still some important questions we don't know the answers to.

- **Are there specific places and spaces that encourage civic activity?**
- **Does it matter who owns or runs local spaces and hubs – whether the community, the council or a private business?**
- **How do digital spaces complement or conflict with physical spaces in building thriving communities?**

If you have uncovered useful evidence that might help to fill these gaps, you can email: knowledge@nlcommunityfund.org.uk



Where can I find out more?

This briefing was developed from research carried out by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Happy City in 2019, as well as from the Fund's own bank of case studies.

To find out more visit:

- [NLCF Knowledge Bank](#)
- [NLCF Evidence library](#)
- [Thriving Communities research report](#)
- [Measures bank](#)
- [What Works Centre for Wellbeing website](#)
- [Happy City website](#)