



NPF4 Consultation: the views of children and young people

Children and young people will live with the decisions made in the fourth National Planning Framework longer than anyone else. Considering this, it was concerning to see how inaccessible this consultation was for children and young people to truly be able to engage with it (particularly those from less affluent backgrounds).

We at includem have worked to capture the views of those we work with, who experience several challenges in their local areas – including high rates of deprivation, insecure housing, formal and informal social and educational exclusion, and barriers to accessing basic necessities. We engaged with 15 children and young people (aged 6 to 16) through their trusted support workers across Scotland - including Glasgow, Forth Valley, West Dumbarton, Fife and Aberdeen – to discuss their experiences of their local areas. This was done through activities that best suited the child or young person, from exploring the concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood in their local area, with graphics, through metaphors, taking a walk around their area, or discussing how they access key spaces.

Our findings are particularly relevant to the themes of sustainable, liveable, and distinctive places, when considering what children and young people want to see in their communities.

Basic Resources

A key theme across discussions related to the need to be able to access basic necessities – including food, health, education, housing, transport and nature.

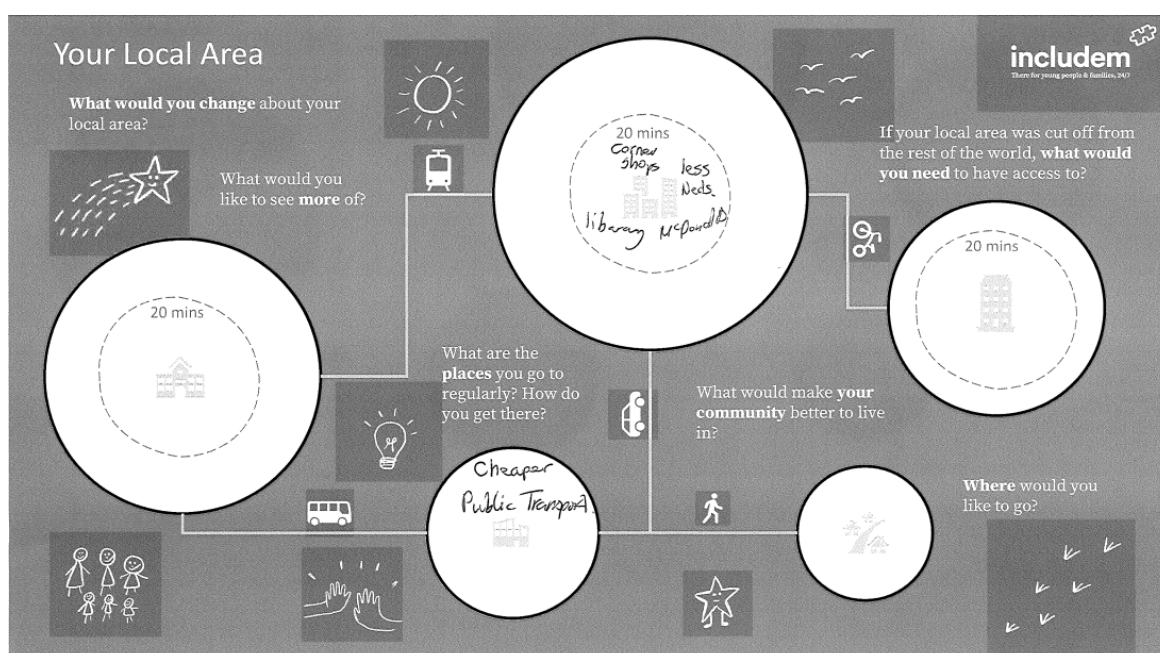
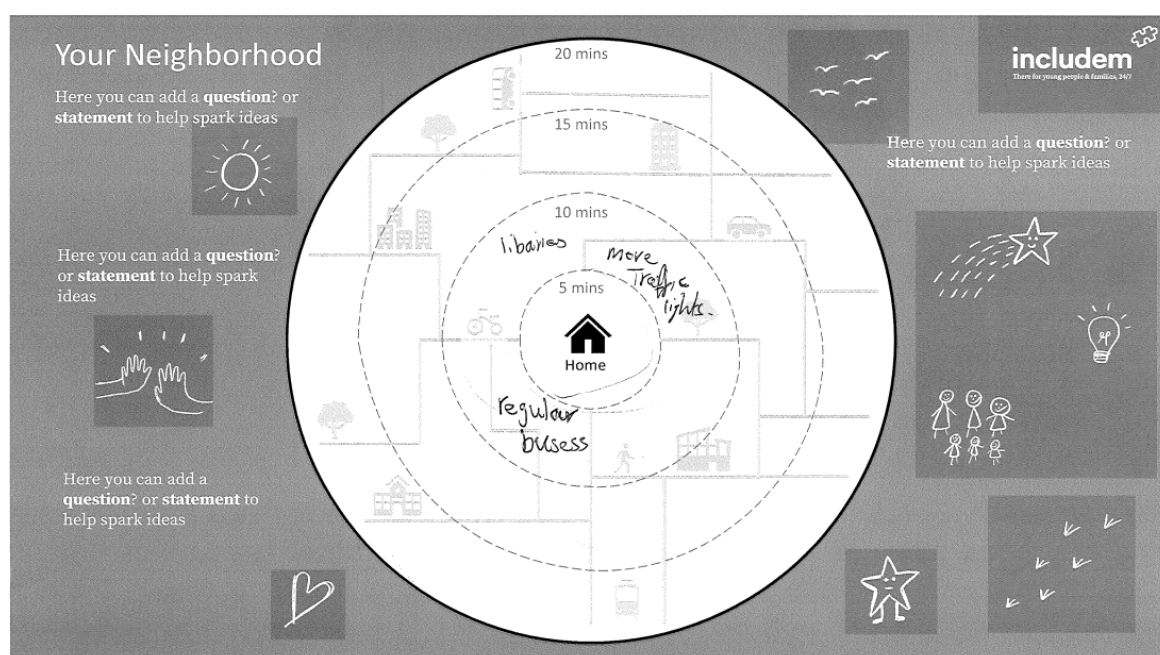
Food / “Scran”: The need for local and affordable supermarkets and access to ‘scran’ was particularly prevalent. Children and young people wanted to ensure there were affordable supermarkets in their immediate area, including a 13 year-old in Aberdeen noting they would like a supermarket to be within 10 minutes walking distance to help with carrying shopping home. This reflects a concerning experience that many families face when living in areas of high localised deprivation, where only small, and more expensive, corner shops are accessible by walking, with little to no direct public transport routes to larger supermarkets. It is vitally important that future planning ensures that families in all areas can access affordable food without owning a car.

Health: Many children and young people spoke about the need for a hospital – both noting the lack of any local hospitals and the need for them to be “*properly kitted out*”. This included the need to access GPs and dentists within the local area. A clear issue was identified by two young people that noted that the closest A&E was particularly far from West Dumbarton, making it difficult to get to in an emergency. When developing health infrastructure, it must be considered where they are, and how they can be accessed, to serve all the communities intended.

Transport: Several children and young people mentioned the need for more space for active travel, noting how they “*love walking*”, and would like to have more room to cycle. Of particular concern was the need for better, more regular and affordable public transportation, and the importance of being able to depend on busses “*without the slightest doubt*” for school attendance. Some noted the need for more localised transportation,



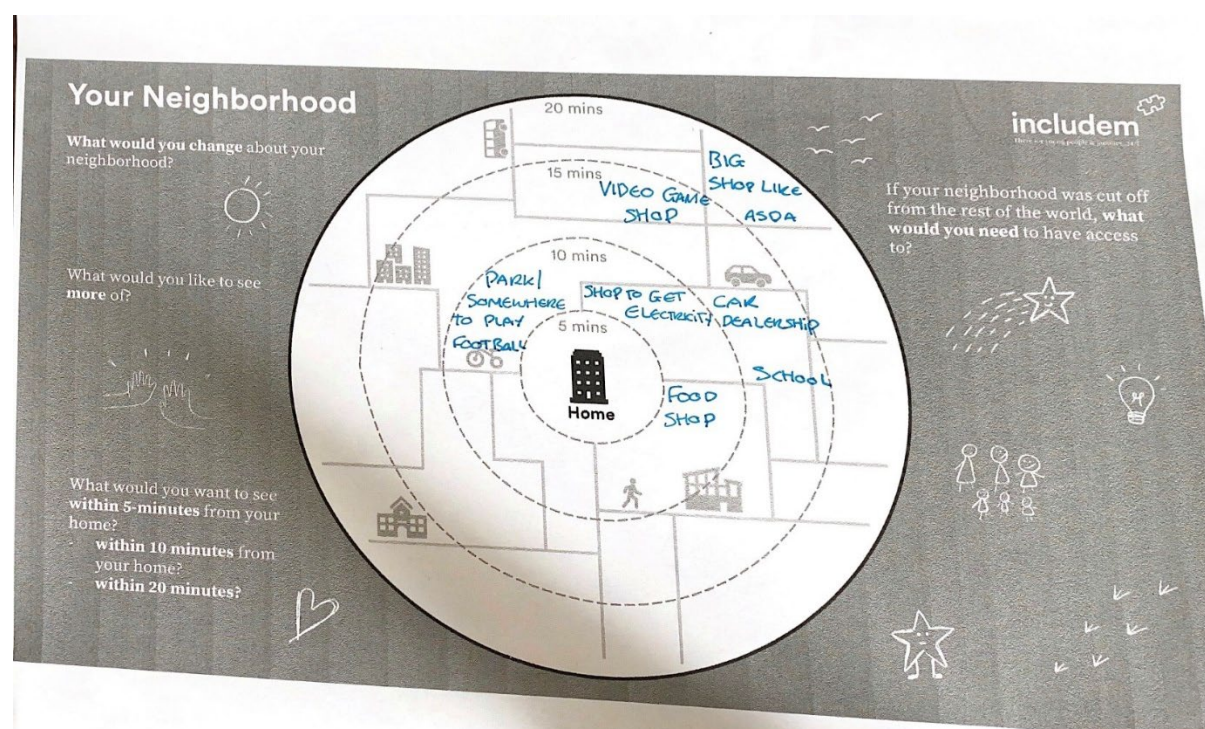
reflecting challenges of accessing areas out with city centres. What these children and young people have rightly noticed, is a wider issue of how bus routes service their communities, and the preferences for routes (and their regularity) being focused on serving affluent neighbourhoods and city centres. (Philip Alsten et al, [Public Transport, Private Profits](#) (2021)) Public travel infrastructure must be develop for routes that serve people, not just profit. Regarding road transport, one 11 year-old in West Dumbarton called for less potholes on the roads and a 15 year-old in Glasgow wanted to see more traffic lights and less cars on the roads. This is notable, as it is already known that there are nine times as many fatal and serious injuries among pedestrians aged 5-9 in the most deprived areas than the least. (Health Foundation, [What makes us healthy?](#) (2018)) Not only is it important to ensure communities are adequately serviced by the road infrastructure in place, but that public streets are safe and comfortable to live around.





Nature: Some young people particularly noted how much they valued natural spaces and wanted to see more of them. One young person in Dundee spoke about enjoying being in the countryside, where it was quiet, and wanting to have more access to get to the outskirts to escape noisy flat living. Key to them was having a good supply of trees and “loads and loads of fields with wildlife” - noting that these were lacking in the inner city. This reflects the need for green and wild spaces in urban environments (particularly in areas of deprivation) and the need to invest in rewilding, not just in rural areas, but at a smaller scale in urban environments, utilising the potential of derelict land. Additionally, two young people in Forth Valley noted that they wanted to see more windfarms and electric cars, illustrating the need for planned green infrastructure.

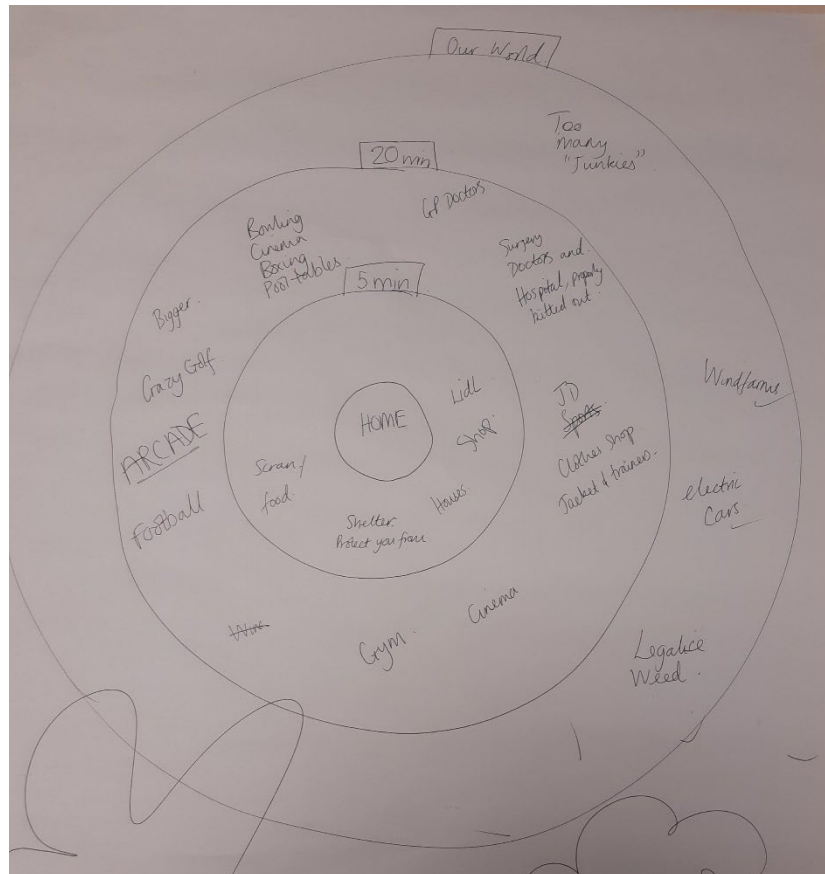
Education: some spoke about the value of having a school nearby, with one particularly noting that this should be within 10 minutes by walk or bus, or 5 minutes by car. The value of having their school nearby came from both its accessibility and from its key role in building localised social relationships. Notably, those that experience school exclusion, reduced timetables or alternative education are often left with limited opportunities for socialising – adding to increasing isolation. It is critically important that these children and young people have access to spaces outside of education where they can safely meet others in their community.



Housing/ “shelter”: when exploring what they would need if their neighbourhood was isolated due to nuclear disaster (a creative and topical metaphor), three young people (aged 15-16) in Forth Valley noted a need for shelter for protection. While the need for shelter and housing was only briefly brought up by children and young people in these activities (due to the focus on their surrounding area), challenges with housing are faced by many of the families we work with. This includes being stuck in a cycle of temporary housing making the setting of routine difficult, living in unsafe conditions due to black mold with considerable health consequences for small children, and living in highly overcrowded



conditions impacting heavily on the health and wellbeing of the whole family. There is a clear need for greater ambition to repurpose existing unused buildings, develop greater (and varied) housing stock in areas of need, and ensuring that occupants are protected and supported to have access to safe and healthy living - no matter their social or economic status.



Connecting Community

A second key theme arose from children and young people's experiences of their community, the need to be able to connect with other people and the importance of fun and social spaces.

Recreational: almost all children and young people spoke about wanting to see more free or affordable recreational spaces - including cinemas, bowling, pool tables, boxing, gyms, football pitches, arcades, dirt bike tracks, swimming pools and a park. It is valuable to note the range of activities these children and young people wanted access to, including different types and levels of independence in these activities. Providing children and young people greater options through free spaces to explore their interests, engage in prosocial behaviour and simply enjoy their local areas could have key value in supporting individual and community health and wellbeing.

Youth groups: youth groups are key spaces for socialisation for many of the young people we support. One young person in Dundee felt there were more youth groups in the centre



of town, which were quite busy, finding that as they moved to another part of the city, they no longer had the same options – being unable to access a new group and living too far from the ones they previously attended. Others had seen an increase in their area due to investment, contributing to their positive experiences of their local neighbourhood. These experiences highlight that there is a need to increase the accessibility, funding and localisation of youth groups. A key role for the spatial strategy here is to prioritise localised community spaces to support similar activities across Scotland.

Community: Many spoke about enjoying local busy spaces to spend time with friends, such as local squares, high streets and AstroTurf – and saw this as a key part of their community and wanting these about 10 to 15 minutes from their home. Some also walked to historical buildings and parks, showing the value of being able to access these cultural and nature-based ties. There was a widespread need for free, dry spaces where you could access Wi-Fi and charging points for phones – illustrating that simple solutions in local areas could have a major impact on wellbeing. While young people often experience stigma, criminalization and being move away for ‘loitering’, it is important that there are safe spaces that children and young people can spend time freely.



Resources: multiple young people mentioned the need for community resources close by, such as a post office or a bank. One young person in particular spoke about the need for more libraries, which can be a safe place to spend time, and a key access point for computers and Wi-Fi. This spatial strategy going forward must be a part of reversing the cuts and closure of these resources which continue to be vital to many.

Shops: Multiple young people mentioned liking having access to shops, whether for trainers, clothes, video games, home goods, sweets or ice cream – with one young person wanting a high street at a 5 minute walk + 10 minute bus ride away. This illustrates that



Your Neighborhood

What would you change about your neighborhood?

I love it - nothing

What would you like to see more of?

like that
Byron isn't too close

What would you want to see within 5-minutes from your home?

- within 10 minutes from your home?
- within 20 minutes?

love walking

includem
Where all young people & families live

If your neighborhood was cut off from the rest of the world, what would you need to have access to?

shops = cheese
food tea
friends shouldn't be more than 30min walk

shops/post office = 5mins = maximum
big shop = 10mins max

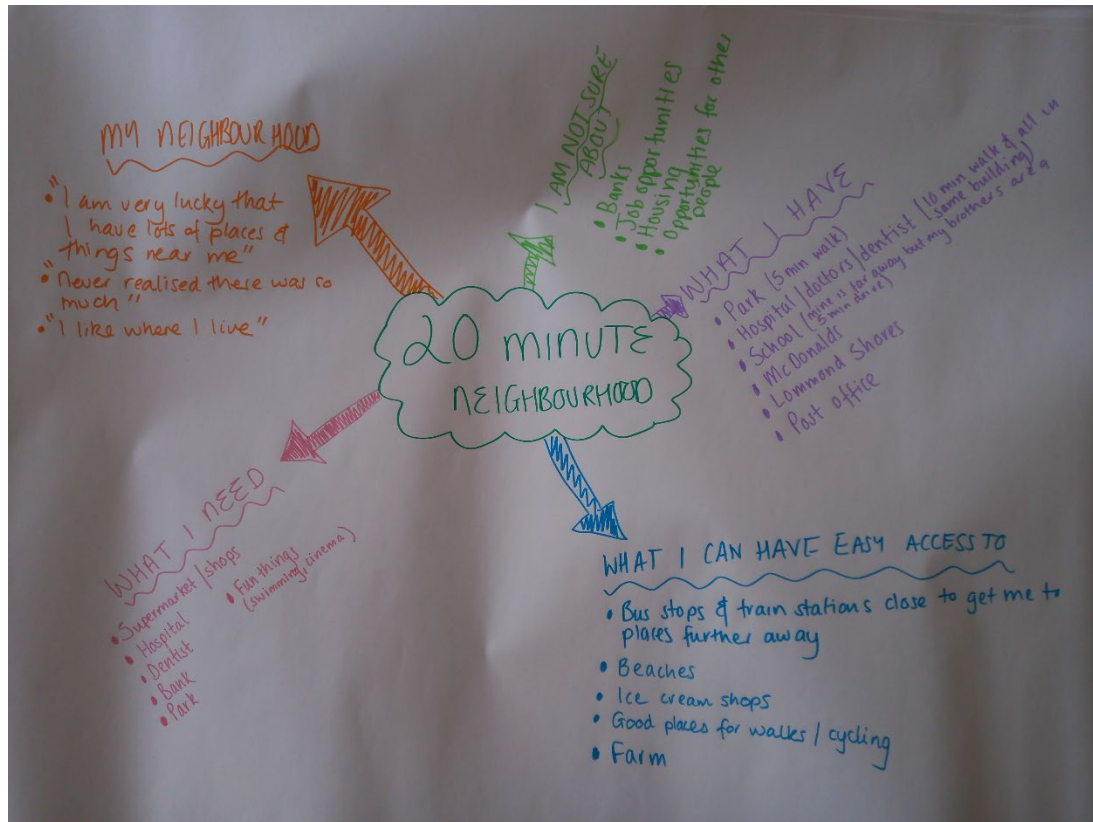
big high St = 5 min walk + 10 min bus

@ the moment = 3min @ + 20mins.

car = 5min
school = 10 min walk max
than bus
3min @

“I’d make sure there was something for all kids to do – there is nothing here – no clubs for them. And I’d put in more cameras and get some of the greenery cut back because it’s creepy at night. We need more cameras to stop muggings in this kind of area. There are a lot of lanes and side streets – open that up. When the dark nights come in you want to be safe.”

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In closing...

If the Fourth National Planning Framework is to create sustainable, liveable and distinctive places for *all* children and young people, no matter their postcode, it must prioritise them as rights holders now, not just as future citizens.

It is imperative that future planning prioritises accessible and affordable resources for all communities. To truly create 20-minute neighbourhoods, basic resources should be available to local areas across Scotland - including affordable supermarkets, healthcare, transport routes and infrastructure, nature, education and social spaces, and safe housing. These essentials must be considered in light of regional requirements, such as the critical role of transport between disconnected communities and the need for nature in urban environments, and localised challenges in neighbourhoods in accessing essentials.

Additionally, local infrastructure must ensure it supports connecting communities, including children and young people – ensuring they are included in their area (rather than excluded). This includes providing a variety of free and affordable recreational spaces, community hubs in neighbourhoods, dry spaces with Wi-Fi, shops and vital resources such as libraries. Critically, these spaces must be safe to be enjoyed.

Above all, children and young people must be included in planning. They must be recognised as experts by experience, understanding their own needs to truly bring changes to the spaces they live in and rebuild community connection and wellbeing.