

Poets Streets: A Portrait

July 2023



Making Public Services
People Services

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO POETS STREETS.....	4
Context	4
Why Poets?	5
Purpose of this Portrait	5
A word on data	6
WHAT WE FOUND	7
Housing	7
OWNERSHIP.....	7
STOCK.....	8
REPAIRS.....	8
RENT ARREARS.....	9
TENANCY TURNOVER AND EMPTY PROPERTIES.....	9
TENANT SATISFACTION.....	10
Neighbourhood	10
CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR.....	10
BINS, FLY-TIPPING AND RATS.....	12
GREEN SPACES.....	13
TRAVEL.....	14
ENGAGEMENT WITH RESIDENTS.....	14
Costs	155
DEPRIVATION.....	15
SUPPORT.....	16
COST OF LIVING.....	16
EMPLOYMENT.....	17
Family	188
FAMILY LIFE.....	188
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS.....	198
COMMUNITY ASSETS.....	199
EDUCATION.....	199
Health	20
PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY.....	20
MENTAL HEALTH.....	21
ALCOHOL AND DRUGS.....	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	233

1. KEEP RESIDENTS IN THE DRIVING SEAT	233
2. BE CONSISTENT AND TAKE PLACE OVER MULTIPLE YEARS	23
3. BE WELL-COORDINATED ACROSS LOCAL ORGANISATIONS	23
4. ENGAGE RESIDENTS ON “WHOLE STREET” LEVELS	234
5. SHOW RESIDENTS HOW IT RESPONDS TO WHAT THEY’VE SAID	244
6. GET BETTER DATA	244
KEY THEMES TO EXPLORE	244
A FINAL NOTE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETTER PARTNERSHIP WORKING	255
 WHAT’S NEXT?	 266



Welcome to Poets Streets

Context

For a number of years, five Registered Providers (Crosby Housing Association, One Vision Housing, Plus Dane, Prima Group and Riverside) have been working together with Sefton Council in the Poets Streets area, responding to the highly fragmented picture of property ownership and management responsibilities in the area to test out a model of joint stewardship. A new single property ownership database produced through the collaboration work shows that 38% of the 1493 properties in the Poets Streets area are in the private sector, predominantly owned by Private Landlords, 36% are owned by Riverside, 8% Plus Dane, 7% One Vision, 4% Prima, 2% Crosby HA and 5% other RPs. The picture of private landlord ownership is also very fragmented in itself. As no single organisation has the levers to deliver a noticeable and sustained difference over time, they recognised that a joint model is needed.

Working together from 2019 with Estate Regeneration funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) the RPs developed a plan for Linacre - 'Liveable Linacre' - and subsequently a specific Neighbourhood Regeneration Prospectus for the Poets Streets area to improve the housing offer, local environment and quality of life for people in the Poets Streets and the wider Linacre area. Since November 2020, they have focused on the development and implementation of a Neighbourhood Delivery Plan.

This has included:

- Testing new joint area management routines, where the 5 RPs each take responsibility for a zone of around 250 properties, with 'tenure/ownership blind' monthly inspections, with follow up by appropriate RP's/Council with tenants and landlords on environmental issues.
- Involving the Council's Housing Standards and Environmental Services and Communities teams to gradually break the cycle of costly and unplanned 'reaction' in the area and encourage positive resident behaviours through a joint, persistent approach.
- RPs connecting into bi - weekly South Sefton 'huddle' meetings to support vulnerable people and scoped work with St Leonards and the National Illegal Money Lending Team on serious personal debt in the area.

They have also undertaken consultations as individual Providers, e.g., door-knocking exercises by Prima Group (March and April 2023) and Riverside (October 2022), the results of which are shared in this report.

The RP's have agreed they want to continue the collaboration which they see has direct and wider value to the area and their organisations and develop a modern and collective approach to neighbourhood regeneration – with a 'people and place' and public service reform and prevention focus.

Capacity was commissioned in April 2023, to work with the consortium of Registered Providers and Sefton Council to help:

- Build stronger connections and ways of working together between residents and other stakeholders in the area.
- Develop a growing movement of people, organisations and resources with a shared purpose and ambition for Poet Streets.
- Articulate a longer-term neighbourhood delivery plan and help identify finance to deliver it.

Why Poets?

Sefton is the 89th most deprived of the 317 English Local Authorities.¹ Linacre is the most deprived of the 22 Sefton wards, with the highest rates of fuel poverty, worklessness and crime in the Borough. And within Linacre Ward, 2,200 households (33%)² live in a neighbourhood of streets named after poets – hence the name Poets Streets. Residents in the area are faced by long-term systemic challenges.

In the Poets Streets area, poverty is deep-rooted, and high levels of deprivation are caused by low levels of qualifications, long-term worklessness, and poor physical and mental health. Crime and anti-social behaviour rates are high. The physical aspect of the neighbourhood is poor, with black sacks sitting out on the kerbsides, high levels of fly-tipping, and, as a result, rats.

“It’s just hard at the minute for everyone... A man came to see us and said, “I’m just sick of being cold.” – Debbie Shelley, St Leonard’s Youth and Community Centre

While on the face of it, there are lots of neighbourhood-wide challenges, Registered Providers found that 85% of residents enjoy living in the neighbourhood³ and 54% of residents like their neighbours and feel there is a sense of community⁴. There are also lots of pockets of activity that are making life better for the residents of Poets. Refugee and asylum-seeking families are being welcomed into the community, local groups are working hard to feed and care for residents, and green spaces are being looked after by neighbours.

“Some residents have lived in the area since they were born or have family there and are really proud of it and have a real passion for it.” - Jon Farrell, Riverside

Purpose of this Portrait

¹ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD)

² MOSAIC Ward Profile, Linacre

³ Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

⁴ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p10.

This Portrait aims to paint a clear picture of current needs and opportunities in the Poets area, to support and inform the conversation between Registered Providers and other key stakeholders and funders around how they can work better together.

Throughout May 2023, Capacity set about to paint a picture of the area's strengths and challenges by speaking to 29 people from 14 local community groups, housing associations, public sector bodies and health teams. We have also analysed data from public sources, reports from Registered Providers and recent consultations with residents. The insights are broken down into five sections – housing, neighbourhood, costs, family and health – although these themes hugely intersect with and impact one another.

This report gives the findings, mostly from the perspective of professionals and key stakeholders in the area. We're grateful to those who contributed to the report by sharing their insights and observations: Taking Root in Bootle, Kindfulness Coffee Club, St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre, Merseycare's Integrated Care Team, Sefton CVS, Venus Charity, Sefton Council's Early Help, Public Health and Neighbourhood teams, Career Connect and Brunswick Youth and Community Centre. Following this report, we'll meet with residents to hear their ideas for the Poets Streets and work with local leaders to bring them to life.

The conversations have also provided opportunities to explore further opportunities for Registered Providers to work more effectively in partnership with each other and other local stakeholders, and touches on examples of good practice in other areas of Merseyside which can be explored further. This insight can be found at the end of the report.

A word on data

This report uses data as specific as possible to the Poets Streets area. However, this exclusive focus isn't available in most datasets. We have used ONS data where possible⁵, and had to use higher-level data, e.g., at Linacre Ward, or Sefton Council level. Given the challenges of getting data specific to Poets Streets, one of the recommendations of this report is to improve the quality of data available at this granular level to support the pilots.

This data has also been supplemented by rich insights from local stakeholders. It's worth noting that stakeholders and the data weighted challenges differently to each other, and we've tried to convey the different emphases in the report.

⁵ The following Census Output Areas make up Poets Streets: E01007003, E00035507, E00035509, E00035510, E00035511, E00035513, E00035531, E00035535, E00035537, E00035538, E00035540, E00035541, E00035542, E00035544

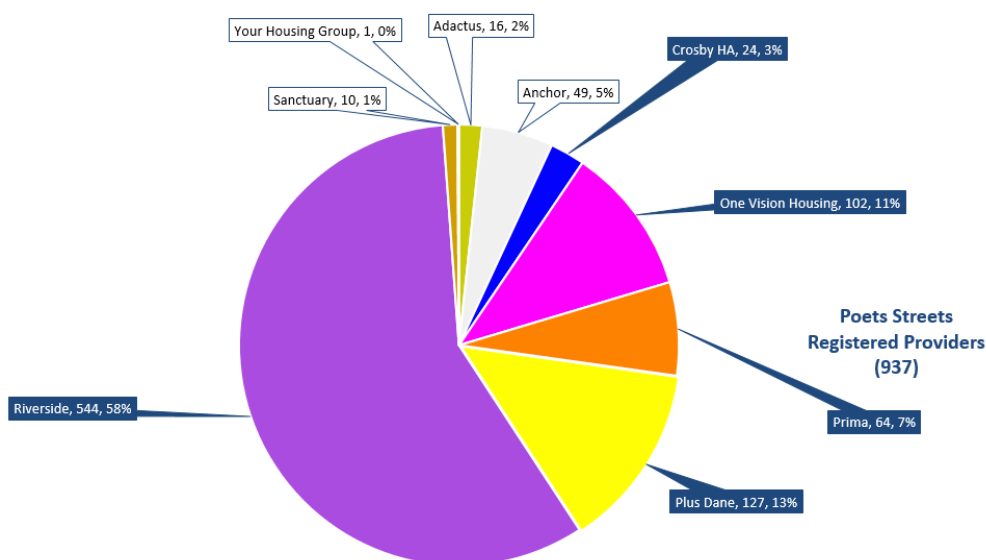
What we found

Housing

There are around 2,000 homes in the Poets area,⁶ and housing is relatively cheap: property prices are lower than those across the Borough.⁷ Just over half of the homes are terraced, with 23% semi-detached, 18% flats, maisonettes, or apartments, and 7% detached.⁸ 3 in 4 households are just adults, with nearly half (878 of 2024 households) occupied by just one person.⁹

OWNERSHIP

Housing in the area is owned by a number of different providers, including private landlords. Nearly half of all housing (48%) is social housing, with private rental making up around a quarter (24%) of homes, and the remaining being owned, either outright or with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership.¹⁰



Even within social housing, there are a number of Registered Providers, which can bring its own challenges, both for the Providers and for those living and working in the area. Providers told us that initiatives like clean-ups and managing rats are much harder to coordinate across neighbourhoods with mixed ownership. This is amplified by the

⁶ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁷ Sefton Council (2021). *Ward Profile: Linacre*. Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service, p16.

⁸ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Accommodation type* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁹ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Adults and children in household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Tenure of household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

proportion of privately owned properties, which can be poorly maintained, seem to have the highest tenancy turnover, and are disengaged from neighbourhood initiatives.

*“Everyone I know is renting privately - that’s where the issues are. It’s the damp in the air.”
– Local Resident*

STOCK

Registered Providers hold stock of varying ages, and some of the challenges in the area stem back to the housing stock. Crosby Housing Association’s stock is around 30 years old, and a number of Prima Group’s homes are new build. The majority of Plus Dane’s housing is more than 100 years old, although they also have some properties which were built 30 years ago. 70% of Riverside housing stock was built between 40-49 years ago.¹¹

In some of the older housing stock, energy efficiency is poor, for example, 65% of Plus Dane’s properties are rated D-G.¹² Prima were able to deliver some retro fitting on local properties due to receiving wave 1 Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding. This included the fitting of ‘Switchee’ devices, providing rich information on damp, mould and condensation, energy use and thermal quality of properties which will be tracked over time.

Work undertaken by Sefton Council in the area compiled a single view of the planned maintenance and investment programmes in the area in order to understand the interest and potential for joining up approaches in particular streets. Registered Providers, supported by the Council’s Energy Team, identified retrofit as the focus area, looking first at fabric, like insulation, while the uptake and potential of new technologies, like heat pumps, were unclear. This work was paused as there was no available funding for the work. The impact of poverty and the rising cost of living is explored [later](#).

REPAIRS

Repairs in the area vastly depended on the age of the housing stock. A number of Registered Providers have a proactive approach to upkeep, both through cyclical lifespan plans and door-knocking. As part of a door-knocking campaign, Prima Group found around 40% of homes needed routine repairs.¹³

Repair costs in the area are higher than the average across the Riverside Group, at £666 per home compared to £521.¹⁴ They have increased by 21% in 2021/22, and are on track to increase again for 2022/23.¹⁵

Damp is one of the main issues Registered Providers raised with the stock in the Poets area. It is largely caused by the age of housing and issues with pebble-dashing insulation. In the recent door-knocking exercise, Prima Group found 1 in 3 of its properties to have minor mould issues.¹⁶ This is likely compounded by tenant behaviour in response to rising energy

¹¹ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p4.

¹² Conversation with Noreen Fallon, Housing Officer, Plus Dane (1 June 2023).

¹³ Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

¹⁴ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p5.

¹⁵ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p6.

¹⁶ Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

costs. The use of devices like Switchee, a smart thermostat, could be expanded to more homes in the area. They don't rely on access to Wifi and can help target properties/households that might need support, pre-empting larger problems in the future. Investing in repairs for damp, alongside investing in energy efficiency, may be tangible ways of supporting tenants both to improve housing conditions and ease the pressure of the cost of living.

RENT ARREARS

Crosby Housing Association's General needs homes - 13 of 18 accounts have arrears, with 5 accounts owing £1000+. 13% of Plus Dane's tenants are in arrears resulting in court action, which is about the same across Sefton. Riverside reported that rent arrears are worse in the area than in other areas, with the average household owing £383.

TENANCY TURNOVER AND EMPTY PROPERTIES

Many stakeholders talked of a very transient community in Poets homes. The empty property rate in Linacre is double that for the Borough (90 and 43 per 1,000 properties respectively) and over a quarter (27%) of these empty homes have been empty for more than two years.¹⁷

However, the data for most Registered Providers tells a slightly different story. Tenancy turnover and empty properties were not considered to be a huge challenge for many Registered Providers. The Riverside Group, Crosby Housing Association and Prima Group reported relatively low tenancy turnover and few empty properties, with average tenancy lasting 12.1 years. Riverside reported that empty homes, tenancy turnover and failure, and void rent loss were lower than average across other neighbourhoods.¹⁸ Likewise, Prima Group reported a very small number of just two void properties within the last 12 months, and quick reletting processes due to high demand.¹⁹

In contrast, Plus Dane reported a turnover rate in the Poets area of double that of other Sefton neighbourhoods, with nearly 1 in 4 tenants moving on in the last two years, and three tenancies ending within the last 12 months. However, vacant stock accounts for less than 1%, indicating that empty homes are not a significant issue.²⁰

The difference between the datasets possibly highlights that the homes with the most transient tenants are privately rented, although it would be helpful to explore this further.

Anecdotally, Plus Dane felt that turnover had stabilised, possibly due to a shortage of property on Property Pool Plus and higher demand following the COVID pandemic, and tightening of regulations on when tenants are able to search for alternative social housing.

¹⁷ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p14.

¹⁸ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p5.

¹⁹ Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

²⁰ Information provided by Noreen Fallon, Plus Dane, over email (June 2023)

TENANT SATISFACTION

Tenant satisfaction seems relatively high. 31% of tenants would like to see further investment in properties.²¹ However, residents rated Prima Group 8 on a scale of 0 - 10 as a good landlord,²² and 92% said they were satisfied with the service they receive.²³ Plus Dane reported lower rates of complaints than across other Sefton neighbourhoods.²⁴

Neighbourhood

The Poets area, while recognised by some professionals, is not a cohesive whole community, although residents do feel a sense of connection to nearby households. Prima Group found that 85% of residents enjoy living in the neighbourhood²⁵ and 54% Riverside of residents like their neighbours and feel there is a sense of community.²⁶ While people talk of a transient community in the area, there are certainly many long-standing residents too.

“There are people who’ve lived there for years and years and years and wouldn’t dream of living anywhere else.” - Clare Foulder, Plus Dane

The area has a number of local assets and 34% of residents like the local amenities.²⁷ There are small local shops and cafés, as well as playground equipment, green spaces, two family wellbeing centres, St Leonard’s Youth and Community Centre, Kindfulness Coffee Club and Brunswick Youth and Community Centre, which support the local community through a foodbank, pantry, and social groups. Poets Park is a green space with a play area in the centre of the neighbourhood, and there are other parks close to the area too.

The surrounding area has many more amenities and 43% of residents like the location.²⁸ Poets Streets is less than a mile from Bootle Strand, which has shops, bars and restaurants, a Sefton Council One Stop Shop, a library and Job Centre Plus. It’s also about a mile away from Bootle Leisure Centre and is well connected by public transport.

Levels of pollution in the neighbourhood are high due to traffic levels in the surrounding area.²⁹ However, the impact of air quality is not something that any of the local leaders we spoke to as part of the consultation raised, suggesting it might be more of a focus for health professionals than for residents. Prevalence of respiratory disease is picked up in [Health](#).

CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Poets area has quite a poor reputation for safety and anti-social behaviour, and this is supported by local police data. Many of the conversations with local organisations we had about the neighbourhood gravitated to weed-growing factories, drug dealing, guns and gang

²¹ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p11.

²² Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

²³ Information provided in conversation with John Ghader and Steve Wharton (24 May 2023)

²⁴ Information provided by Noreen Fallon, Plus Dane, over email (June 2023)

²⁵ Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

²⁶ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p10.

²⁷ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p9.

²⁸ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p9.

²⁹ Sefton Council (2022) *2022 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR)*, p.iii.

violence. This same emphasis, was, however, not borne out in the data gathered by Registered Providers.

Between March 2020 and April 2021, 2,586 crimes were reported in Linacre. The Ward has high rates of crime nationally: of the nine Lower Super Output Areas making up Linacre, eight are in the top 10% of highest crime areas in England.³⁰ Nearly half of the offences are violent crimes (42%), followed by theft (19%), public order (13%), and drugs (11%). Of the violent offences in Linacre ward between April 2020 and March 2021, 350 (32%) were common assault and battery, including racial offences.³¹

“Younger kids are still very aware of gangs.” - Carlie, Venus Charity

2020/21 saw a 38% increase in the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour compared to the previous year in Linacre, and nearly half (48%) were reports of rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour. 16% of all anti-social behaviour reports in the ward specifically mentioned youths, with 7% relating to alcohol or drunken behaviour.³²

“You’re scared to go down Peel Road at night.” - Carlie, Venus Charity

Interestingly, data from Crosby Housing Association, Plus Dane and Riverside showed lower rates of reported anti-social behaviour than in other areas across Sefton neighbourhoods³³. The Riverside Community Plan ranked the Poets Street area as one of the least problematic neighbourhoods for anti-social behaviour,³⁴ reporting that the main issue is fly-tipping, but noting that ‘few reports have been received recently’³⁵. In a recent consultation, 1 in 4 Poets residents told Riverside they could do more to manage anti-social behaviour.³⁶ Knowing that the area is a hotspot for violence and other crimes, it suggests that residents are simply not reporting crimes to Registered Providers, and it would be helpful to understand why.

³⁰ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p25.

³¹ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p26.

³² Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p25.

³³ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p9. Shared in conversation by Denise Hair, Housing Manager, Crosby Housing Association (19 May 2023). Housing Manager.

³⁴ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p9.

³⁵ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p9.

³⁶ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p11.

BINS, FLY-TIPPING AND RATS

Neighbourhood challenges like bins, fly-tipping and rats were some of the most prominent themes in interviews with local stakeholders. The rate of fly-tipping incidents in Linacre (77 per 1,000 population) is over five times higher than the Borough rate (15 per 1,000 population).³⁷ This could be because of an infrastructure issue: many homes in the area don't have wheelie bins due to being stolen, or the property type doesn't allow wheelie bin access. Therefore residents leave black sacks outside the front of their houses to be collected by the Council. The narrow rear alleyways, the path by the railway line and other small unused pieces of land are particular hotspots for fly-tipping. As a result, the area has a huge issue with the rat population.

“There is nowhere to store these bin bags – if tenants store them in the backyard, they have to bring them through the house to be collected. You can apply for a wheelie bin for storage but they just get stolen.” - Clare Foulder, Plus Dane

Three in four residents told Riverside they could improve the neighbourhood by tackling fly-tipping and clearing rubbish.³⁸ It's clear that these challenges significantly affect life in the neighbourhood and that improving the infrastructure for waste would improve the overall sense of pride and living conditions in the area.

“One week a woman told us she'd had the inside of her car engine eaten out by rats, another Mum said her kids couldn't play in the garden because a family of rats had made their home in the Wendy house...” – Mandy Lewtas, Kindfulness Coffee Club

Over the years, there have been numerous consultations and initiatives to reduce these problems. These have included programmes with community skips run by Registered Providers and Sefton Council, an environmental hit squad, and a clean-up organised by Network Rail to cut the bushes and remove rubbish to make the pathway by the railway line more pleasant. These worked well for a time but were unsustainable, and ultimately haven't had a long-term impact. Stakeholders have pointed to the physical makeup of alleyways, poor infrastructure for removing waste, and short-term tenants dumping furniture as some of the main reasons.

“On Knowsley Road, there was a scheme where they did loads to improve the alleyways. It was brilliant and beautiful for a short while, but because you have a changing occupancy level, they were wrecked again in 6 months.” – Local Resident

One unintended consequence of these initiatives is that they may have left residents unsure of the Council's statutory offer and duty. There is some important learning from this for future pilot schemes around clearly communicating with residents about short-term interventions.

Consultations around how to improve infrastructure for waste disposal have returned mixed results, for example, with some residents resistant to Eurobins because they would take up

³⁷ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p35.

³⁸ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p6.

in-demand parking spaces, and others believing residents would just dump rubbish next to them. It's clear that any solution would need to be designed by those living in the community to make a long-term difference.

"We need a cultural shift... and we would need the residents to design the solution so that we know they would use it." - Christine Leung, Taking Root in Bootle

GREEN SPACES

While there are inherent structural challenges within Poets, like the narrow alleyways behind much of the older housing stock, there are also lots of assets in the area; lots of green spaces, including the canal, the park, and small pieces of communal land.

Poets Park is in the centre of the neighbourhood and has a children's play area. However, stakeholders have told us that residents don't tend to use the park, although others in the area, like Melleneer Park, known as 'the doggy park', and North Park, are well used. Consultation with residents about the perception of Poets Park and the equipment there may present opportunities to use this asset better.

"The doggy park and North Park feel safer than Poets Park. North Park has a bigger playground and lower bushes, so you can see through it, and it feels safer." - Carlie Machell, Venus Charity

There are many small grassy spaces that are currently underused, which are hotspots for fly-tipping and dog poo. 30% of residents told Riverside they would like to see improvements in the landscaped areas – but previous attempts to improve green spaces haven't always had a long-term impact, and have been damaged.³⁹ These have great potential to be used to improve pride in the neighbourhood, and initiatives run by projects like Taking Root in Bootle and Regenerus are supporting residents to grow trees, vegetables and plants, community composting, display hanging baskets, and clean up alleyways are already helping improve community pride and residents' wellbeing.

There's much potential for small, community-led projects to do more to improve green spaces in the area. It's clear that engaging residents is key to the success of any activity, and in a neighbourhood where residents are facing so many fundamental challenges across their own physical and mental health, finances, safety, and local pride, activities like these require skilled leadership to bring about a huge and sensitive cultural shift.

"There was one project where people were given hanging baskets, but some just thought, "Why should I bother?" because the local area isn't well looked after." - Mandy Lewtas, Kindfulness Coffee Club

"How can you get people engaged in a park when they're hungry?" - Carlie Machell, Venus Charity

³⁹ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p11.

TRAVEL

Poets Streets are well connected by public transport. There are two train stations, Seaforth and Litherland Rail Station and Bootle New Strand Rail Station, within half a mile of the area, and it is also included on several bus routes to Bootle Strand and the city centre. It's close to ports and the P&O ferry terminal, and the canal path for travelling on foot or by bike.

More than half of residents in the Poets area aged over 17 don't own a car,⁴⁰ which is considerably lower than across Sefton.⁴¹ However, in this predominantly terraced neighbourhood, parking is very limited.

ENGAGEMENT WITH RESIDENTS

Listening to residents is something that lots of organisations have done over the years – with mixed success. Local organisations told us that some residents may struggle to read or don't have access to the internet, so they reach people in person through door-knocking, events and consultations.

Registered Providers

The main ways that Registered Providers are engaging with the Poets area are through door-knocking, holding residents' voice groups, working with community groups, and funding neighbourhood activities:

- **Door-knocking.** In recent years, housing officers and other staff from across Registered Providers have taken part in joint walkabouts, where they would meet to share learning following door-knocking. This joint work has now stopped, although several Registered Providers have continued their own inspections. In addition to this, Prima Group have run 'Love your street' campaigns.
- **Information leaflets.** Many Registered Providers distribute leaflets and/or have an online space to communicate with residents about their services and give information on the support that they can access, e.g., around loan sharks.

"Even people in employment are really struggling to make ends meet. We're trying to work out how to support them." – John Ghader, Prima Group

- **Residents' voice groups.** Some of the Registered Providers also have residents' voice groups, for example, Crosby Housing Association's tenant service panel, which meets every 6 weeks, and Riverside's residents' voice group.
- **Connecting through community groups.** Many of the Registered Providers have close relationships with community centres, e.g., One Vision Housing and the Brunswick Youth and Community Centre, and Riverside with St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre Pantry. This integration with community spaces helps to join the dots for tenants – especially those who are most vulnerable – as they receive

⁴⁰ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Car or van availability* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁴¹ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p16.

support from a trusted person in a local organisation, making sure that services work together well for them and that needs are met.

- **Funding for neighbourhood activities.** Some of the Registered Providers also have funding available to support opportunities in the neighbourhood e.g., Housing Officer budgets, designated community funds (Riverside Community Fund) and neighbourhood funding for local organisations and initiatives.

Sefton Council

A number of stakeholders talked of mistrust of the Council and reflected that there is more trust in community groups.

Community groups

Community groups told us that they engage with residents through door-knocking and local Facebook groups. They have also held well-attended events, hosted in local community venues and with free food. A community consultation recently run by St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre showed that the majority of residents want a community forum to have the opportunity to talk about the neighbourhood.

Costs

The Poets area is amongst the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK, with IMD scores indicating that the level of deprivation is increasing. Employment is low, and many residents are in debt to their Registered Providers as well as other companies, leaving them vulnerable to loan sharks.

DEPRIVATION

More than one in three households in the area are experiencing deprivation across more than one area of education, employment, health and housing, with just 18% of households without deprivation across any of these dimensions^{42,43}.

⁴² A household is classified as deprived in the **education** dimension if no one has at least level 2 education and no one aged 16 to 18 years is a full-time student. A household is classified as deprived in the **employment** dimension if any member, not a full-time student, is either unemployed or economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability. A household is classified as deprived in the **health** dimension if any person in the household has general health that is bad or very bad or is identified as disabled. A household is classified as deprived in the **housing** dimension if the household's accommodation is either overcrowded, in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating.

⁴³ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Car or van availability* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

95% of families claim child benefit in Linacre Ward.⁴⁴ Nearly half of the children in Linacre Ward have free school meals (49%), which is more than twice the Sefton rate (19%).⁴⁵

SUPPORT

In the midst of these challenges, community-led activities are well-embedded and offer a range of support to residents across welfare rights, social isolation, debt and food.

Trussell Trust data for April 2019 to March 2020 shows that 1,913 vouchers were issued to residents of Linacre Ward. This rate is about four times higher than across Sefton (280 compared to 66 per 1,000 residents). The foodbank based at St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre is one of several across Linacre that fed 1,145 adults and 727 children across the ward last year. St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre also feeds 50 to 60 people each week through its social supermarket that uses the Your Local Pantry model.⁴⁶ Riverside attends the pantry each fortnight.

Many Poets residents claim Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. 38% of working-age residents claim Universal Credit in Linacre, which is more than double the rate across Sefton and the North West, and 24% claim Housing Benefit.⁴⁷ The proportion reported across Registered Providers suggests that the rate is even higher in Poets than in the rest of Linacre. Riverside reported a higher proportion of tenants claiming these benefits in Poets Park than in other neighbourhoods across the organisation (40% compared to 26%).⁴⁸ Just over half of Plus Dane's tenants claim Universal Credit. Just three of Crosby Housing Association's 18 general needs households pay rent themselves, and others claim housing costs via Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.⁴⁹

In addition, in 2020, residents in Linacre Ward made 1,784 applications to Sefton Council's Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme, 'ELAS', which offers residents foodbank vouchers, and top-ups on gas and electricity.⁵⁰ They made up a quarter of all applications, and 55% were approved in full, with 10% being partially approved.⁵¹

COST OF LIVING

The impact of the cost of living is hard-felt in Poets, where residents are already struggling to make ends meet. Data shows that Linacre residents were already using relatively little energy in comparison to residents of other local wards, with a mean domestic gas

⁴⁴ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p18.

⁴⁵ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p6.

⁴⁶ Data shared in conversation by Debbie Shelley, Centre Manager at St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre (May 2023).

⁴⁷ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2022) *Wider Determinants: Strategic Needs Assessment 2020/21*, p10.

⁴⁸ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p9.

⁴⁹ Data shared over email by Denise Hair, Housing Manager, Crosby Housing Association (19 May 2023)

⁵⁰ <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/advice-benefits/emergency-limited-assistance-scheme.aspx>

⁵¹ Sefton Council (2020/21) *Wider Determinants: Strategic Needs Assessment*, p18.

consumption in 2020 of less than half of that of Harington, the most affluent ward in Sefton (9,701 kWh and 19,324 kWh per domestic meter respectively).⁵²

24% of the households in Linacre Ward were in fuel poverty in 2020.⁵³ The rising costs of gas and electricity and the low energy efficiency of homes will only push more residents into fuel poverty.

“People are stretched. By the time they’ve paid for leccy and gas, they’re hungry. Community groups are run off their feet.” - Carlie Machell, Venus Charity

EMPLOYMENT

Long-term worklessness and low levels of qualifications play a huge part in the ongoing challenges in the area, with Linacre Ward having the highest proportion of NEET (50 of 421 young people) within Sefton⁵⁴. Census data from 2021 indicates that nearly half of all residents are neither working nor studying (936 of 2022).⁵⁵ Long-term worklessness is a huge problem: just 8% of those who were unemployed had worked in the last 12 months, 59% had not worked in the last 12 months, and 1 in 3 had never worked.⁵⁶ Just 8% of those out of work were actively looking for employment.⁵⁷

More work needs to be done to understand the barriers to residents securing employment. One key factor is low levels of qualifications: more than 1 in 3 residents in Poets have no qualifications at all, with 26% reporting that their highest qualification level is GCSE, 14% A-level, and just 8% have a work-related qualification.⁵⁸

Another factor is likely to be the availability of work in the area. Census data shows that of Poets residents who work, 30% work more than 10km away from home (288 of 966). Around half work either from home or within 5km (178 and 318 respectively).⁵⁹ Anecdotally, people have referenced a ‘brain drain’, where those with higher aspirations leave the neighbourhood to pursue employment. It’s also worth considering the impact of car ownership and public transport links, as touched on in the [travel](#) section, on the opportunities for employment.

⁵² Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2022) *Wider Determinants: Strategic Needs Assessment 2020/21*, p35.

⁵³ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2022) *Wider Determinants: Strategic Needs Assessment 2020/21*, p36.

⁵⁴ Data shared by Sarah Vaughan, sourced from Career Connect MI – NCISS (13 June 2023)

⁵⁵ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Economic activity status* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁵⁶ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Employment history* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁵⁷ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Economic activity status* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁵⁸ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Highest level of qualification* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁵⁹ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Distance travelled to work* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

The high levels of other vulnerabilities which doubtlessly affect opportunities for employment, like poor mental health, high levels of educational needs and physical disability, are explored in [Health](#). With Career Connect and Sefton@Work working in the area and Hugh Baird College nearby, there is scope to work with partners to better understand the barriers to employment and to consider how to overcome them.

Family

Lots of households in the Poets area are made up of just adults, with many people living alone. 3 in 4 households are just adults, and one adult lives alone in nearly half of the homes (878 in 2021).⁶⁰

The proportion of adults in Linacre aged 65+ is lower than across Sefton – 15% and 27%, although it's worth noting that the proportion in Sefton is higher than across the Liverpool City Region and England (21% and 20%).⁶¹ 17% of homes in the Poets area are occupied by adults aged 66 or over.⁶²

FAMILY LIFE

1 in 4 households has children, and one adult lives alone with a child or children in 10% of households in the area,⁶³ so 2 in 5 of families in the Poets area live with a lone parent.

Rates of domestic abuse are high across Sefton and saw an increase of 120% between 2017/18 and 2021/22. As with other crimes, Linacre Ward and the Poets area are likely to be overrepresented in the cases of domestic abuse.

The numbers of social care cases are high, and nearly 1 in 10 of 0-17s in the ward are known to Children's Services – almost three times the Sefton and England rates (924, 376 and 324 per 10,000 children respectively). The number of children on a Child Protection Plan is three times the average across Sefton and England (148, 51 and 43 per 10,000 children respectively), and 3% (95) of the children in the Ward are looked after, which is nearly 5 times the England average. Just 2.6% of families in the Ward are supported through Early Help, indicating that services aren't engaging families before things escalate.⁶⁴

“Mum won't let a Social Worker into the house because she doesn't have carpet on the stairs and she's worried they'll think she can't look after her kids.” - Mandy Lewtas, Kindfulness Coffee Club

⁶⁰ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Adults and children in household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁶¹ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p11.

⁶² Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Adults and children in household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁶³ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Adults and children in household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁶⁴ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p33.

Stockbridge Village in Knowsley and the Family Toolbox in Wirral were referenced as good examples of family support in surrounding local authority areas, for how they appeal to families, connect with the wider community, and engage multiple generations.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

While Census data shows that 90% are white British and were born in the UK,⁶⁵ providers in the Poets area told us about the refugee and asylum-seeking families they are supporting in the neighbourhood. Venus Charity told us that Syrian and Afghan families have had a really positive experience of the area, settling quickly, and being welcomed by the community⁶⁶.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

There are two family wellbeing centres in the area: Seaforth and Marie Clarke. These are Council-run centres that offer wraparound services to support the needs of the neighbourhood. However, they are currently underused, especially Marie Clarke. While more should be done to better understand the reasons for this, Sefton Council suggested it could be because of the stigma attached to the building because of its history as a family contact centre. They also suggested the building is uninviting, despite the plot of land. At the time of writing, a diagnostic review has been commissioned to explore the access and connection of Family Wellbeing Centres across the Council, including Marie Clarke. There is potential to develop the plot of land and uninviting centre to reclaim this as a community space.

EDUCATION

There are two local primary schools – All Saints and Thomas Gray – and two secondary schools within a 3-mile radius, Savio and Hillside. Hugh Baird College is also located nearby. We haven't been able to engage schools as part of this report but would recommend doing that as part of design and leadership of future activities, as we know anecdotally that they play a big part of the local community and are very proactive in supporting families.

The number of children achieving a good level of development in early life in Sefton is slightly worse in comparison to across England, and the trend indicates that this is only getting worse. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2 to 2.5 years in 2021/22 was 76%, whereas in England it was 81%. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception dropped in Sefton from 71% to 61% between 2017/18 and 2021/22.⁶⁷

30% of primary school students living in Linacre have Special Educational Needs support – double the rate of Sefton.⁶⁸ Given that data from 2021/22 shows that just a fraction of adults with a learning disability are in paid employment across England (4.8%), and rates are

⁶⁵ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Ethnic group* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁶⁶ Information shared as part of conversation (18 May 2023)

⁶⁷ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2022) *Area Profiles: Sefton: Wellbeing* Available at: www.fingertips.phe.org.uk (Accessed: 08 June 2022).

⁶⁸ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p21.

even lower in Sefton (2.2%) (NHS Digital, 2023)⁶⁹, these high levels of need are likely to play a large part in the low employment rates in the Poets area.

Health

Health outcomes in the Poets area are very poor. Life expectancy for men is 72 years, and for women is 76 years across Linacre Ward, in comparison to 80 and 83 across England respectively.⁷⁰ Rates of poor health and disability are very high in comparison to national averages and also locally in Sefton, and significantly impact lots of elements of life in the Poets area.

Residents of Poets have more doctors' appointments than elsewhere in Bootle and across England (around 6 per person per month, compared to 4 and 5 respectively). Data shows that they also struggle to maintain a healthy lifestyle. 1 in 4 do less than 30 minutes of exercise per week, and around 7 in 10 adults in Sefton are overweight or obese.⁷¹

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY

The rates of poor physical health and disability for residents are highlighted by both the ONS data and Prima Group's recent consultation in the area. 45% of households in the Poets area (906 of 2029) are occupied by one or more adults who are registered disabled under the Equality Act.⁷² In addition to that, 175 households have one person - and a further 30 households have 2 or more people - who live with a long-term physical or mental health condition that doesn't limit their day-to-day activities.⁷³ 70% of households reported they had health issues and disabilities in a recent consultation with Prima Group.⁷⁴ However, only 15% of Riverside customers have a disability.⁷⁵

Physical health and disability impact residents' employment and productivity and are only becoming more significant. 22% of working-age residents within Linacre ward claim Personal Independence Payments (PIP), and this is likely to be on the rise in line with trends across Sefton, the Liverpool City Region, and England. As with many other indicators, Linacre ward is overrepresented in Sefton: in April 2022, Linacre residents made up 10% of the Borough's PIP claimants.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ NHS Digital. *ASCOF measure 1E: Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment* <https://app.powerbi.com/> (Accessed 8 June 2023).

⁷⁰ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2021) *Ward Profile: Linacre*, p6.

⁷¹ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2022) *Obesity Profile: Sefton; Adult Prevalence data* Available at: www.fingertips.phe.org.uk (Accessed: 08 June 2022).

⁷² Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Number of disabled adults in household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁷³ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Number of people in household with a long-term health condition but are not disabled* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁷⁴ Prima Group (2023). *Poets Park Big Door Knock Consultation Results*, p1.

⁷⁵ The Riverside Group (2022) *Riverside Community Plan Appraisal Peel Road*, p8.

⁷⁶ Sefton Council: Commissioning Support & Business Intelligence Service (2022) *Wider Determinants: Strategic Needs Assessment 2020/21*, p12.

Looking more closely at the reasons for PIP claims in Sefton in April 2022, over a third (38%) were related to psychiatric disorders, with the next largest category being musculoskeletal disease (31%). 5% of Sefton's PIP claimants are unable to work because of respiratory disease.⁷⁷ This is notable because we know that air quality in the area is poor, and the prevalence of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in the Poets area is rising steadily year on year, currently standing at double the England average (4.4% in 21/22 compared to 1.9%).⁷⁸

High levels of poor health also present many households with unpaid caring responsibilities. 337 households in the Poets area have unpaid care,⁷⁹ and 203 residents who answered the Census said they help or support someone who has long-term physical or mental ill-health conditions, illness or problems related to old age. This unpaid care toll is significant: 64 residents say they provide between 20 and 49 hours of unpaid care each week, and 68 provide more than 50 hours.⁸⁰

MENTAL HEALTH

Poor mental health is a recurring theme through stakeholder interviews, and the local Integrated Care Team told us that mental health is the highest reason for referrals to their team. Nearly half of the households in the Poets area are occupied by someone living alone, and anecdotally we understand these to be mainly single men, many of whom struggle with drug and alcohol use and suffer from poor mental health.

Finding data specific to the Poets area around mental health has been challenging, and one of the recommendations of this report is to better understand mental health in the area and the impact that has on residents' wider experience. We know that 14% of Sefton's residents have depression but would expect the concentration of poor mental health to be higher in Poets area than other more affluent areas, given the other significant challenges residents face around poverty, physical health and family life.

Hospital data shows much higher rates of incidents related to mental health than in Sefton when compared to other Boroughs. In 2021/22, emergency hospital admissions for intentional self-harm in Sefton were 45% higher than in England (237.7 and 163.9 per 100,000 respectively). Rates among 10-24s are 54% higher than England rates (659.5 hospital

⁷⁷ Sefton Council (2020/21) *Wider Determinants: Strategic Needs Assessment 2020/21* (2022), p12

⁷⁸ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). *National General Practice Profiles: Trends: N84016 - Moore Street Medical Centre, Respiratory Disease*. Available at: www.fingertips.phe.org.uk (Accessed 8 June 2023)

⁷⁹ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Unpaid care* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

⁸⁰ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) *Number of unpaid carers in household* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 5 May 2023)

admissions as a result of self-harm compared to 427.3 per 100,000 across England).⁸¹ The rate of suicide is similar to England at around 10 per 100,000.⁸²

The proportion of adults in contact with secondary mental health services in paid employment is 5% in Sefton, slightly lower than the England rate of 6% (NHS Digital, 2023).⁸³ Census data from 2011 showed that half of all residents in the Linacre ward claiming incapacity benefits were claiming due to mental health.⁸⁴ While the benefits system has changed significantly since 2011, this insight shows that mental health in the ward significantly impacted employment and will have impacted many other elements of life too – and against this backdrop, we might suggest that it still is.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Alcohol and drug use has been referenced anecdotally in various stakeholder interviews but needs further exploration to understand the causes and impact of substance misuse. At the extreme end, hospital data shows that admissions for mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of alcohol in the area in 2018/19 were more than three times higher than the England average (240.4 and 75.6 per 100,000 respectively England).⁸⁵

⁸¹ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2022) *Area Profiles: Sefton: Services*. Available at: www.fingertips.phe.org.uk (Accessed: 08 June 2022).

⁸² Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2022) *Area Profiles: Sefton: Life expectancy and causes of death*. Available at: www.fingertips.phe.org.uk (Accessed: 08 June 2022).

⁸³ NHS Digital. *ASCOF measure 1E: Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment* <https://app.powerbi.com/> (Accessed 8 June 2023).

⁸⁴ Sefton Council: Sefton Business Intelligence and Performance Team (2012) *Linacre Ward Profile 2012*, p16.

⁸⁵ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2022) *Local Alcohol Profiles for England: Area Profiles: Sefton: Key indicators*. Available at: www.fingertips.phe.org.uk (Accessed: 08 June 2022).

Recommendations

This report concludes with a number of recommendations based on its findings, around data, engaging with the community, working more closely with other professionals, and finally, the key themes to explore further.

First, we begin with six building blocks for the design and carrying out of any activity to bring about change in the area. These elements came out as almost more significant than what activity is done, as they will be fundamental to any success. Insights show that any initiatives to make a change in the area should:

1. KEEP RESIDENTS IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Loud and clear, we heard that residents need to be at the heart of thinking and doing to make any long-term difference. Lots of initiatives have targeted Poets Streets in the past but haven't been able to make lasting changes. Stakeholders from across sectors were united in their view that residents are pivotal to the success of any initiative in the area, and so need to be at the heart of any change.

Community groups suggested that the most effective ways to engage residents are in-person, through door-knocking and information events, and by attending community spaces where tenants already are and where they feel comfortable. For example, Riverside attend the pantry fortnightly, which helps to build trust and relationships with residents, and there are other spaces, like the drop-ins at the Family Wellbeing Hubs, where this could be done too. Online local Facebook groups are also used to good effect by local organisations and can help to communicate with residents.

"If you've got a connection with people, it works well." - Mandy Lewtas, Kindfulness Coffee Club

2. BE CONSISTENT AND TAKE PLACE OVER MULTIPLE YEARS

While more can be done to dig into some of the reasons why previous initiatives haven't had the desired lasting impact, some conversations suggested that success would lie in running activities over multiple years, communicating the responsibilities of residents clearly, and embedding them well across local long-term partners.

3. BE WELL-COORDINATED ACROSS LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Any activity in Poets Streets needs to build on trusted relationships with partners working in the area for it to be fully embraced. Detail for how to build this on a day-to-day basis is outlined in [opportunities for better partnership working](#), and in addition to this, particular plans or initiatives for the area should be led by a coordinated partnership of local trusted organisations who are in constant communication with residents.

4. ENGAGE RESIDENTS ON "WHOLE STREET" LEVELS

The mixed ownership of housing in the area makes any initiatives a challenge to coordinate. This seems to be amplified in Poets by a high proportion of homes owned by private landlords (24%), which can be poorly maintained, and seem to have the highest tenancy turnover. Initiatives should, therefore, be coordinated across whole streets, rather than across individual providers, so that they have a higher chance of success. It may also be worth exploring the possibility of engaging private landlords, as well as the tenants.

5. SHOW RESIDENTS HOW IT RESPONDS TO WHAT THEY'VE SAID

Building trust with residents and keeping their voices at the heart of initiatives are key to the success of activities in the area. Keeping a feedback loop that tells residents about the progress that has been made against what they have asked for is key to both of these things.

“People are easier to engage when you’ve shown that you’re making changes based on their feedback.” – Clare Foulder Plus Dane

6. GET BETTER DATA

Lots of data doesn’t drill down to the granular level of the Poets Streets. Given the uniqueness of the area and the complexity of the challenges residents face, gathering quality data specific to the neighbourhood will be necessary to inform and measure ongoing pilot projects, e.g., through community forums, regularly attended trusted community spaces, and direct consultation. These ideas should be put to the test with residents.

However, it’s worth noting that some of the stakeholder insights and data for this report have weighted challenges in the area quite differently, so it’s possible to conclude that **who** collects insights from residents will affect what is collected and its accuracy. Engaging the community requires sensitivity, as residents are more receptive to some organisations than others. An example raised in this report is that residents don’t report the high levels of violent crimes to Registered Providers, and instead, report fly-tipping as the main neighbourhood issue. Direct consultation with residents, perhaps done by a trusted third party, would help to understand how much residents trust different stakeholders, and, for example, whether there are discrepancies between Providers or among different groups of tenants.

KEY THEMES TO EXPLORE

In addition to the opportunities identified to strengthen ways of working, several key themes have come through the report based on the impact they have on life in the Poets area and the focus they were given within stakeholder interviews. This list isn’t exhaustive, and the data and insights shared as part of the report may spark some other ideas too. The community forums will define the focus areas, but here are some initial ideas from the insights presented in this report:

- **How to improve the infrastructure for waste.** Bins, fly-tipping and rats were some of the most prominent themes in interviews with local stakeholders. This has been something that organisations have tried to tackle for some time, so further work needs to be done to consider the solution to this – and residents need to be

engaged every step of the way, to make sure that the solution has the best chance of success.

- **How to build pride in the community and neighbourhood.** Community pride is strongly linked to the challenge around waste disposal, and an assets-based approach to caring for small pieces of land is already helping to improve green spaces and resident wellbeing. There's much potential for small, community-led projects to do more to improve green spaces in the area - again, engaging residents. These projects need skilled and sensitive local leadership for the best chance of success.
- **How best to improve the energy efficiency of homes to reduce damp and mould, and lessen the impact of rising costs on tenants.** Damp and mould are among the most common housing concerns. Investing in repairs for damp and energy efficiency may be tangible ways of supporting tenants both to improve housing conditions and ease the pressure of the rising cost of living.
- **How to improve employment opportunities for residents.** Long-term worklessness and low levels of qualifications play a huge part in the deep-rootedness of poverty in the area. More work needs to be done to understand the barriers to residents securing employment, but local assets, including the two local primary schools, nearby Hugh Baird College, Career Connect and Sefton@Work may be well-placed to help increase aspiration and qualification levels.
- **How to support residents in their physical and mental health.** High rates of poor physical and mental health significantly impact lots of elements of life in the Poets area. More needs to be done to explore the cause and the impact of these and to consider opportunities to better support residents to improve their physical and mental health.
- **How community assets could be better used in the area.** More needs to be done to understand the reasons for this, and opportunities explored to use underused local assets, e.g., Poets Park and the two Family Wellbeing Hubs, Seaforth, and Marie Clarke, to their full benefit to the community.

A FINAL NOTE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETTER PARTNERSHIP WORKING

While there was some discrepancy between different Registered Providers, local organisations said that they make decisions quickly, have some really good partnerships with local organisations, and make a positive contribution by funding important initiatives. There are, however, lots of ways that organisations in the area could help join up support for residents, and our initial conversations particularly sought to highlight how Registered Providers could work more closely with local stakeholders. These conversations with different organisations could be taken forward into more specifics, but the initial conversations highlighted that Registered Providers could:

- Have operating groups of housing officers, in addition to the strategic steering group.
- Partner with other Registered Providers to bid for funding to improve the area.
- Join in with the regular Integrated Care Team events in the South Sefton area, which are used by social prescribers, health and wellbeing trainers, Social Workers, the fire brigade, and police, to consider how they could better support the community.
- Join the multi-disciplinary team in the Integrated Care Team to share up-to-date information about tenants and help target necessary support more effectively. The

- Team is currently piloting this with One Vision Housing, and finding it saves time for both organisations by helping to connect the dots.
- Work with Sefton Council as part of a coordinated community engagement programme.
 - Take part in the Linacre/Derby Welfare Reform Forum, run by St Leonard's Youth and Community Centre.
 - Signpost to other services using a social prescribing model.
 - Continue to increase the funding for opportunities in the area to invest in important initiatives, especially where local groups are struggling to access philanthropic funding because funders believe the work should be statutory e.g., projects on public or Registered Providers' land.
 - Invest in local rather than national organisations to lead local projects, as local groups are more effective at engaging the community for the duration of the project and longer term.

Mersey Care's Integrated Care Team offer support to adults who may have physical health needs, mental health needs or require social support. Integrated care is about giving people the support they need, joined up across all health and care services. We would love Registered Providers to have an awareness of what we do and to know how to refer in and make contact with us." – Kerry Brown, Integrated Care Team

One practical request is to have a simple way for local organisations to connect with Registered Providers. Local community groups who support families talked of their challenges in contacting Registered Providers when tenants had housing needs, for a few reasons: the mix of ownership, the different ways of working of each Provider, the closure of community engagement departments, and the turnover of personnel.

What's next?

The next phase of activity will focus on building partnerships with local residents and stakeholders across housing, voluntary sector, education, and health, to share ideas for Poets, and come up with some practical ways to bring them to life.

1. We'll meet with residents to hear their ideas for the Poets Streets and come up with some practical ways to bring them to life.
2. A community forum will shortlist opportunities to explore, based on what comes out of the sessions with residents and this detailed insights report, supported by Registered Providers and Sefton Council.
3. We'll identify partners and funding, and pilot new ideas together.

Want in on the action? Get in touch: Sarah.Taylor@thisiscapacity.co.uk

