

Enabling more connected, contributing, cohesive communities – Communities Can
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In the beginning.....

- **Stonewater is a social housing provider, with a mission to deliver good quality, affordable homes to people who need them most.**
- **32,500 homes in England for over 70,000 customers.**
- **We already had an ambitious change programme, with a strong focus on investing in Stonewater's physical assets – £9m refurbishment programme of Retirement Living sites and Communal Spaces.**



Our ambition

- Through 2021/2022, we turned our attention to enabling environments. We aimed to explore issues of community *connections*, cohesion and capacity and the part we can and do play in the localities in which we operate.
- We had the aim of thinking about the wellbeing our customers, their personal assets and strengths and steps Stonewater could take to maximise the positive impact of these.



Our approach

- **Learn from Community Catalysts' approach and application**
- **Connect and engage with local residents and staff in 3 areas (Southampton, Bedford, Calderdale)**
- **Listen, learn and empower change through better conversations**
- **Start with what's strong and matters to local people and places**
- **Discover what works well and share ideas, approaches and positive practice**
- **Support staff and stakeholders with practical tools to map assets (people/places) and aspirations**
- **Share stories, inspire others to take more community centred approaches and to spread and scale impact**

The approach we took

Colleagues started to map community groups/assets in each of the localities.

Everything started with a conversation.....

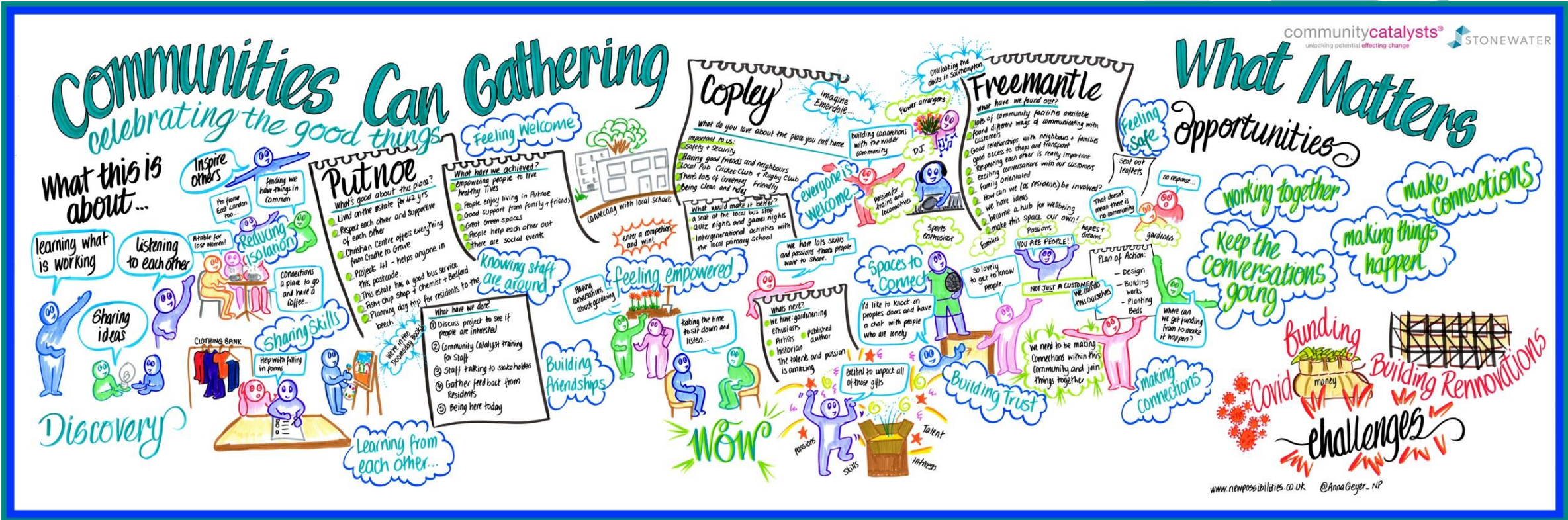
- What matters to you about this local area?
- What you're good at?
- What are the strong parts of the local community?
- How things could be even better here?
- How and where do you meet with people in the local area these days?
- What makes you feel valued, heard and included in your life?

Copley Mill Village, Copley, Halifax



- Copley Mill Village is a village in Halifax with one road in and out.
- Customers told us during early conversations that there wasn't any seating area at the bus stop.
- This was putting customers off using the bus stop as they had no safe waiting area, not only accessing the bus but also customer wanting to walk around the village, there isn't any stopping places for them to rest.
- Owners of the bus stop confirmed that the pathway is too narrow to add any seating
- Stonewater own the land behind so we have sought quotes to put a seating area there to enable the community to sit, engage in conversation or simply catch the bus.

The Gathering



Would your organisations be ready?

I ask that question as we had a number of challenges or questions to overcome across the project.....

- **Would our operating structure hinder us? How would we have local conversations when we didn't have a local presence?**
- **How would we connect people in a virtual world? How would we speak with communities in place?**
- **Managing Board Expectations – Measurable Outcomes versus Customer Conversations and stories.**
- **No physical space to meet in Copley Mill House RL scheme as the scheme was in the middle of a refurbishment so had to be virtual.**
- **Accepting we were not the experts in these communities. We had to be prepared to listen.....let the communities tell us what they wanted.....we were on our own journey of discovery and as cheesy as this might sound we haven't reached our destination yet!**

Summary

Our conversations are just the beginning.....

Community Catalysts are currently gathering the insights from what we have heard and learned, representing different stakeholder perspectives and possibilities and Stonewater will draw on key insights to create its own action plan for change.

Stonewater is committed to continuing to explore how it can make a positive difference by getting alongside local people, working together and building on each other's strengths and contributions. We will have a set of principles rather than a prescriptive framework for our organisation to take forward. We may never go as far as social prescribing but what we will have is built by our customers and connected communities.