Children, well-being and community in a non-deprived neighbourhood

Hayley Collicott

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Declarations

This thesis is the result of my own independent investigation, except where otherwise stated.
Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The views expressed are my own.

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No portion of the work presented has been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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Summary

Recent UK policy rhetoric has emphasised the need for wider society to recognise their shared responsibility for the well-being and safety of young people. This thesis explores the ways in which communities can have an impact upon the welfare of local children and young people in a particular, non-deprived commuter suburb. Government policies in England and Wales have asserted that children's well-being is 'everybody's business'. Similarly, political rhetoric in England about the 'big society' and neighbourhood based programmes in Wales have echoed this shift in responsibility for improving children's lives from central government to local communities, although both are ambiguous about how this should be done. Drawing on primary, qualitative research, this thesis explores how communities facilitate the well-being of children in a non-deprived, modern suburban neighbourhood in South Wales. The ethnographically driven study included interviews with 35 residents and over 200 hours of observation in a variety of community settings. The findings suggest that in Newtown Common there are a number of ways in which community can be conceptualised as influencing the well-being of children and young people in its midst. These include the role of: the social and environmental hazards in the neighbourhood, in the built environment; the ensuring of children's safety and access to facilities by community organisations and those that work in the area; and the value of local informal networks of support for children and families. The thesis concludes by reflecting on the methodological, sociological and policy implications of these messages.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, 'well-being' has become increasingly prominent in policy discourse and academic literature, especially in relation to children and young people. Simultaneously, there has been a growing emphasis on the role that wider society, and in particular 'communities', should play in facilitating the well-being of themselves and those around them. This can be seen as part of a growing shift towards the promotion of civic engagement and local responsibility. Both of these messages have resonated strongly in the current UK policy context in England and Wales, particularly following the election of the New Labour UK Government in 1997. There has been little consideration, however, of if and how this 'community' approach to facilitating the well-being of children and young people is operationalised in everyday practice. Consequently, the aim of this thesis to explore how this shared responsibility for facilitating children and young people's well-being is understood and enacted within a particular locale. Specifically, the study sought to understand these experiences in a non-deprived, modern commuter suburban neighbourhood in South Wales, which I have named Newtown Common. Research involved an ethnographically driven qualitative case study including interviews with 35 participants including parents, children, young people, senior residents and those working in and for the neighbourhood. Fieldwork also comprised over 200 hours of observation in and around the area and at local community centres, groups and public spaces. The thesis will consider how the different aspects of neighbourhood were understood as providing a 'community approach' to facilitating the well-being of local children and young people.

The New Labour Government can be seen as establishing the issue of children's well-being on the UK political agenda, as well as promoting the message that addressing this issue was everybody's responsibility. Following the publication of *Every Child Matters* (2003) in England at the start of the 21st century, there has been a UK-wide policy shift in the location of responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing onto wider society. This was reflected in the equivalent Welsh document, *Children and Young People: Rights to Action,* (Welsh Government, 2004) which stated that all children should have "a safe home and community which supports physical and emotional well-being" (p1).

These documents, and the consequent policy agenda, were borne out of a climate that included an investigation into the death of a young girl, Victoria Climbie, who was known to a number of public services that were widely perceived to have failed to protect her. *Every Child Matters* identified five key outcomes that "really matter for children and young people's wellbeing" (Department for Education, 2003; 14). These are: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being. In addition, the responsibility for safeguarding has expanded beyond an initial remit of preventing cruelty to a broader concern about the well-being of children and young people (see chapter two). This shift has remained in contemporary policy in the UK and Wales. For example, the inclusion of 'well-being' in the recent the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) also demonstrates the wider scope of welfare embraced by government and social services.

In addition to increased prevalence of 'well-being' in UK policy, there has also been a simultaneous shift to broadening the responsibility for children's well-being beyond the nation state. *Every Child Matters* emphasised that children's well-being was not just a task for public services, but everybody's responsibility, including the community:

> *Everyone in our society has a responsibility for securing these outcomes. Families, communities, Government, public services, voluntary organisations, business, the media and others have a crucial part to play in valuing children, protecting them, promoting their interests and listening to their views.*
> *(Every Child Matters, Department for Education 2003; 14).*

The argument that facilitating the well-being of children and young people is 'everybody's responsibility' was subsequently reflected in a number of UK and Welsh policy documents and informed the development of the updated *Children Act 2004*. This Act introduced the office of the Children's Commissioner in England, following on from its establishment in Wales in 2001 and Local Safeguarding Children Boards in England and Wales who were responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children in their area. In Wales, The Welsh Government responded with the *Keeping Us Safe: Report of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Review*, (2006a) which assessed the progress of service delivery in this area across Wales. Amongst other recommendations, the review called upon the Welsh Government to address conflicting views of children in society and concluded that they should be*:*

> *'promoting … greater acceptance of adult responsibilities towards all children, including the shared responsibility to develop safe communities.*
> *(Keeping Us Safe: Report of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Review, Welsh Government, 2006a: 13).*

Ensuring the well-being of children and young people has therefore become an important issue within Wales and the UK, and one that governments believe society has a collective responsibility to ensure. Less apparent however is an examination of how this translates into everyday practice, particularly at a micro level for those living in neighbourhoods. This thesis aims to explore if and how the 'community' might have a role in facilitating the safety and well-being of local children and young people. Central to this is a reflection on what might be meant, understood and assumed by the term community in the policy context, as explored further in the next two chapters.

What is meant by children's well-being?

In order to investigate how children's well-being is facilitated in the community it is first necessary to identify the scope of the project by defining the key terms and assumptions. As described above, the 'everybody's business' policy context, stemming from the *Every Child Matters* agenda, has identified the community as partially responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people. This thesis therefore aims to explore the notions of neighbourhood and

community, and how these can be understood as facilitating the well-being of children and young people in a modern, non-deprived suburb in Wales. Moreover, it considers the ways in which well-being and 'risks' to children are increasingly being positioned as threats to their future well-being, rather than their current circumstances. Reflections on how the specific characteristics of the case study site illustrate a particular understanding of well-being are also considered.

The Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor (Wales), first published in 2008 and updated in 2011 provides a useful framework for exploring issues of children's well-being within Newtown Common. The Monitor draws on the Welsh Government document *Children and Young People: Rights to Action* (2004), which grouped the core articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into seven core aims. The Welsh Government pledged to work towards ensuring that all children and young people in Wales:

- have a flying start in life;
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and
- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Building upon this, the monitor provides data and evidence on key themes relating to the seven core aims:

- early years;
- health;
- education;
- access to play, sport, leisure and culture;
- rights and entitlements;
- safe home and community; and
- ensuring no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty.

The Welsh Government asserted that the series of publications (the next is due in late 2015), will help to track the well-being of children in Wales over time. It draws on indicators from the Child Poverty Strategy as well as other national datasets and some commissioned qualitative work with children and young people to help establish a valuable insight into the well-being of children and young people in Wales. Some social commentators have raised concern that this expansion of interest into children's wider well-being signifies an unnecessary extension of government intervention into the private sphere of family life (Fuerdi, 2001; Lee, 2014). Academics however endorse a move towards an assessment of children's well-being (Bradshaw, 2011; Rose and Rowlands, 2010).

For this thesis, I will use this framework as a guide to refer back to when considering the aspects of children's well-being that emerged from my own findings. This will help expand upon the evidence for the Monitor by providing an insight into issues of

welfare and well-being for children and young people in particular non-deprived neighbourhood. In particular, the Monitor notes that there remains a gap in relation to 'the extent to which children's experiences of a safe home and community differ according to whether they live in an urban or rural area. This will help to provide some case study evidence on this topic in relation to childhood in a modern suburb. The well-being domain entitled a 'safe home and community' is of particular relevance for this thesis. However, the use of the term 'community', or often 'local community', is used throughout the report, without definition. The indicators used to inform domains relating to community drew on either neighbourhood or Wales level data suggesting a geographical conceptualisation of the term. This thesis however will also reflect upon a more detailed understanding of aspects of 'community' that could be considered as facilitating well-being for children and young people.

What is meant by community?

Like well-being, the term 'community' has been subject to a wide range of academic debate despite its common and un-defined use in policy (Crow 2002). A review by Crow and Mah (2011) on community research since 2000 reveals the variety of methods and discipline which have employed community research. A number of studies followed the approach adopted in the 'classic' community study in London by Young and Willmott (1957), which focused on communities as a geographical region. Subsequently, traditional distinctions between concepts of community focus on the differences between communities of interest, identity and place (Willmott, 1986). Recent developments in community research however have problematised and developed these distinctions. For example, Blackshaw (2010) argues that, in contemporary society, virtual communities must also be considered. Furthermore, Mah and Crow (2011) argue that whilst these interpretations of community are often associated with positive connotations of collective well-being and networks of support, current research has critiqued this view evidencing the oppressive and exclusionary experiences of community (Hoggett 1997; Crow and Maclean, 2000).

Policy assertions that 'communities' should share responsibility for ensuring children's safety and well-being have not specifically defined what is meant by community. This thesis seeks to explore the possibilities and limitations inherent in a policy expectation that there is a 'community' that will be involved in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. This inevitable messiness surrounding what a community may or may not be is one of the considerations of this project. Therefore, for the remainder of this thesis however, the term neighbourhood will refer to the actual geographical locality, whilst the term community will be used to refer to, or reflect on, the additional features of the neighbourhood, such as local organisations and groups or social networks as well as the physical environment. More specifically, the findings identify four key aspects of a neighbourhood that could constitute a community: the physical environment; the local facilities, groups, and leaders; and the local networks of friends and family.

As Walkerdine and Studdart (2011) note, the term community can be understood as a verb representing local actions on a micro scale which make a neighbourhood more than the sum of its parts. Nevertheless, the exploratory nature of the thesis will not pre-suppose any positive consequences or connotations of community. Instead,

the thesis aims to critically engage with the data to identify positive and negative experiences and impacts of the neighbourhood, Newtown Common, as a community on children's well-being.

It is also necessary to define the scope of the research in terms of those whose well-being is in question. The focus of this thesis is upon the role of the community in facilitating the well-being of those aged 18 years old or under, reflecting the definition of children employed in the *Children Act 2004*. In addition, throughout the report there are references to young children or young people if the child or children referred to are nearer either end of this age bracket where appropriate. The research also recognises that the well-being of children is affected by that of their parents and wider family. Therefore consideration is also given to the wider safety and well-being of families within the community.

Origin of the thesis

This project was a doctoral case studentship that I was awarded in 2008. The proposal emerged from the collaboration between scholars at Cardiff University with an interest in childhood and social work, and policy makers in the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) who wanted to further understand the role of the neighbourhood in facilitating the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This fitted well with both my previous experience in a social research institution focusing on health and well-being, and my interest in generating a greater understanding of how we can ensure and facilitate children and young people's welfare.

The research was conceived as a qualitative case study to be conducted in a suburban neighbourhood utilising a range of data collection techniques. The project aimed to further understand safeguarding and community in an 'everyday' neighbourhood, that is, one that is not identified for its 'extreme' demographic characteristics or location. The use of sociological techniques to explore social work themes, such as safeguarding, is relatively rare (Winter, 2006). The findings will therefore have a range of policy and sociological implications.

In particular, the concept of 'safeguarding' was to be explored as it was experienced on the ground. During the course of the field work in the chosen study site (see chapter five), it seemed that there was a strong focus on well-being rather than safeguarding. As reflected in policy documents, there is an emphasis on the role that the local community could play in facilitating children's welfare in general. Consequently the emphasis for the thesis is on the ways in which the community can be seen as facilitating, or safeguarding, of children's well-being.

The project was exploratory in nature, but guided by two core research questions that were adapted throughout the research process (as discussed in chapter five). These were:
- What aspects of a neighbourhood can help to facilitate, or hinder, the well-being of children and young people?

- How do community members, including parents, local workers and young people living in a given locale, perceive and enact their role in facilitating the well-being of local children?

This project is an independent piece of doctoral research that took place at Cardiff University between 2009 and 2013. It was funded by the NSPCC and the Economic and Social Research Council. The research was one of a number of studies that fitted in to a wider work programme within the Welsh Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD). WISERD comprises social scientists from a range of disciplines across Wales who conduct research about locality and neighbourhood and draw on a range of methodological approaches to address research questions. The research by Evans and Holland (2012) and Holland (2014) provides a particularly useful comparison and their work is drawn on in the thesis. This separate study was also undertaken as part of the WISERD work programme. It was informed by similar research questions to explore 'community safeguarding' of children's well-being and used a qualitative case study approach to engage residents and community workers in the area. As detailed in chapter five however, this study was based in contrasting locations in the socio-economically deprived and well-established communities in the South Wales Valleys. Amongst other studies, this thesis draws on this comparative research to help examine the arguments made as part of this project, as well as develop the findings by Holland and Evans in particular.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis draws upon the everyday experiences of children, young people, adult residents and community workers in a non-deprived, relatively recently established neighbourhood to explore how community can be understood as facilitating children's well-being in a specific locale. The thesis is structured as follows.

The three chapters following this introduction locate the thesis in relation to policy contexts, theoretical frameworks and relevant empirical studies. Chapter two helps to frame the thesis by considering the political contexts relevant to children, families, communities and well-being. This chapter argues that there has been a shift in the policy context in the past few decades to emphasise the importance of ensuring the well-being of children and young people in the UK. In addition, there has been a shift towards recognising neighbourhood and parent level accountability, with rhetoric of rights as well as responsibilities for children, families and neighbourhoods.

The theoretical frameworks for the project are outlined in chapter three, which reviews relevant literature relating to community, relationships and responsibility. Whilst there is still no clear consensus regarding the link (or differences) between neighbourhood and community, the literature suggests increasingly individualised behaviours in society together with a pervasive awareness of risk have eroded community bonds. This provides a useful framework for exploring the ways in which community may be seen as facilitating children's well-being in Newtown Common. Conceptualisations of what is meant by community, the state of relationships in modern society and the class nature of parenting are discussed here and revisited throughout the thesis to help make sense of the data and findings.

In chapter four, the key empirical evidence relevant to children, safety and neighbourhood are reviewed and the complexities inherent in negotiating children's freedom and protection are explored. Parental concerns are shown to affect how children spend their free time. Parks, school journeys and exercise are identified as key sites of exploration for experiencing childhood in the local sphere (Harden, 2000). A number of studies highlight the importance of place upon perceptions and experiences of safety, and the limited empirical research which has examined the relationship between suburbia, childhood and risk is explored as well as key messages emanating from studies in inner city and rural settings. This chapter concludes by reflecting on empirical evidence from community case studies that have considered the ways in which community can be seen as facilitating children's well-being. It concludes by outlining the potential contribution of this ethnographic case study, which is the first of its kind to explore these issues in a modern, non-deprived suburban neighbourhood.

Chapter five provides a reflexive discussion of the methods used to generate data for this research project. The ethnographically driven fieldwork utilising a flexible and iterative design allowed an exploration of the ways in which the neighbourhood could be considered as providing a community approach to facilitating children's well-being. The chapter reflects however on some of the methodological challenges in researching 'community' in a neighbourhood that had few overt community structures such as a school or extended kin network. In particular it considers the applicability of traditional ethnographic methods such as the walking tour in an area where walking is not part of their everyday experience. The study highlights the important of going back to the unpinning principles of ethnography in its aim to understand the everyday lives of others by participating in their experiences. The data collection methods therefore needed to be informed by the nature of everyday lives for those living and working in the area. In addition, the data collection techniques chosen recognise the importance of participants as those with localised knowledge in this area. They also allow a more in depth insight into everyday experiences through prolonged exposure to the case study community and interactions with those that live and work in the area. The process of negotiating, and re-negotiating, ethical consent with participants is also explored amongst other reflections upon data generation and the ethical considerations of the research.

Interrogation of the data revealed four ways in which community could be conceptualised in Newtown Common as an agent for facilitating children's well-being. These form the structure of the empirical chapters within the thesis and are as follows:
- Streets, public spaces and well-being in Newtown Common (chapter 6);
- Local groups, community centres and children's safety in Newtown Common (chapter 7);
- Childhood and community facilities in Newtown Common (chapter 8); and
- Friends, family, neighbours and children's well-being (chapter 9).

Chapter six, the first empirical chapter, explores the impact of the community as a physical place upon the safety and well-being of local children and young people, with a focus on children's experiences of streets and public space. This chapter

explores residents' experiences of Newtown Common in terms of the environmental and social risks to well-being. Predominantly, those that live and work in the area perceive the community as a quiet and safe area, although some examples of physical hazards and risks to children and young people, such as traffic, are cited. The accounts are contrasted with narratives in studies of more disadvantaged neighbourhoods to reveal an insight into contrasting lived experiences in some areas. Tensions in residents' accounts in relation to boundaries and use of space by children, young people and outsiders are explored in relation to implications for community parenting of children and young people (Evans and Holland, 2012).

The seventh chapter explores the role of community groups, centres and those working in the area in facilitating the well-being of children and young people in Newtown Common. Residents identified some channels for raising and addressing local issues which they believed posed a threat to children's safety. In particular, the observations at the Partnership and Communities Together meetings hosted by the local councillors and police provided an outlet to discuss safety concerns identified by local adults. It is suggested however that the prevalence of childhood in the home and private rather than local sphere of the neighbourhood means that the responsibility of well-being lies primarily with parents. In addition, those managing community centres and spaces were keen to ensure their premises were risk free to fill their own obligations as safe community spaces. Such accounts closely reflect arguments about the risk adverse society introduced in chapter three. The data highlights some areas of activity aimed at facilitating children's well-being but suggests that the minimal focus upon this by community organisations means such practice is often left to parents.

Chapter eight also explores how the community recognises their responsibility of providing play and leisure facilities to facilitate the well-being of children in Newtown Common. Enhancing well-being through providing adequate facilities for local children and young people to make use of was also perceived to be a valuable aspect of the work undertaken by community leaders. Despite efforts to directly address areas of need by providing activities for young people and support for families with young children, there was little success evidenced in the data of these forms of provision. There are therefore two paradoxes evidence in Newtown Common: the perceived desire for more facilities for young people, yet the underuse of the ones that are currently provide; and the perception that children need facilities to get them 'off the street' despite the lack of evidence that they spend time in such places in Newtown Common. The chapter concludes by reflecting what sort of provision is considered as required by adults, compared with what is desired by young people. It suggests that the middle class expectations about concerted cultivation and the relocation of children into the private sphere may contrast with the desires of young people in particular, who desire spaces to socialise and 'hang out' away from adult supervision.

Chapter nine, the final empirical chapter, argues that the role of friends and family emerged as one of the most important forms of support for the well-being of both children and families in general. The data suggest that residents of Newtown Common felt that local, personal networks of support were experienced both through active examples of help and care as well as the creation of a general sense of safety through an atmosphere of trust created by friends, family and other residents. There

were however challenges experienced in creating and maintaining these valuable local networks of support. The findings suggest that for residents in Newtown Common, the arguments about fragmented social bonds and increased individualisation resonate in many of their narratives.

The final chapter draws together the main findings from the data collection. In Newtown Common, the data suggests that the community can be considered as facilitating the well-being of children and young people in a number of ways: providing a community safe from social risks and environmental dangers; the actions of local groups, community centres and those working in the area to identify and address concerns about children's well-being; the attempts of local groups to provide access to space and provision for young people to play and hang out; and the vital support networks of local friends and others to facilitate the well-being of children and families in the neighbourhood.

The thesis concludes by discussing some of the political, methodological and sociological implications of the findings. It is argued that further reflection is needed during the planning of modern neighbourhood developments that consider how and where childhood and community might be experienced in the area. Future policies should also recognise the value of informal as well as formal networks of support for families and facilitate the creation and maintenance of such links and reflect on the impact a local primary school may have upon this links. Methodologically, the ethnographic approach is asserted to have enabled the recognition of the intricacies and nuances of everyday life in Newtown Common. There were important lessons however about the challenges in engaging with residents in the non-deprived commuter suburb compared with similar studies deprived areas. Data collection needed to be informed by providing opportunities to go alongside residents in their everyday activities, which may be different to those activities (and therefore methods) appropriate in other areas.

The thesis also reflects on how the research study helps to develop understandings of contested sociological concepts such as community, children's well-being, parenting cultures and childhood. It considers the ways in which policy assertions about these concepts resonate with the everyday experiences of children, adults and those working in an area such as Newtown Common. The thesis concludes by arguing that this study provides a unique insight into the ways in which a neighbourhood can play a part in facilitating the well-being of children in a modern, non-deprived commuter suburb.

2. WELL-BEING FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief summary of policy developments in relation to children, families and communities, with specific consideration of children's safety and well-being. Whilst this arena is complex and dynamic, it aims to outline some of the relevant policy approaches over the past decade to provide a useful context for the thesis findings. Well-being has become increasingly situated as a key priority for policy, with suggestions that national well-being provides a more useful measure of a nations success than the traditional Gross Domestic Product (GDP). After a brief consideration of what is meant by 'well-being', this chapter considers who is positioned as responsible for children's well-being in modern policy. Much is assumed at the national level through institutions such as health, education and child protection agencies, which have demonstrated some recognition of children's right to enjoy childhood rather than a pure focus on their potential as future adults. Contemporary policies also highlight the responsibilities of those at the local and family level for children's well-being, which includes some accountability for both protecting and managing the behaviour of children and young people, reflecting a tension in how children are positioned as both at risk, and as posing a risk in policy rhetoric. The chapter concludes by considering the current support services and political approaches that may frame the views and experiences of those living in Newtown Common.

As noted by Rose and Rowlands (2010) the New Labour government can be credited with embedding the concept of children's well-being in government reports, guidance and legislation marking a shift away from the narrower focus on child care and safeguarding children's welfare. Whilst noting that this transition involved more of a longer, evolutionary process promoted by children's rights campaigners and academics, amongst others, they highlight the adoption of 'children's well-being' into governmental rhetoric acted as a catalyst in bringing the concept into the forefront of public debate. Likewise, Axford (2009: 372) commented that "suddenly it seemed that everyone involved in children's services us talking the language of 'outcomes' and 'well-being'". However, there remain a number of unanswered questions about what is meant by children's well-being and about how consistently the term is used.

Children's well-being in UK policy

Before thinking about how aspects of the neighbourhood may facilitate the well-being of local children, it is first important to unpick what is meant by the term. 'Well-being', and in particular, 'children's well-being' has been conceptualised in a number of ways by academics and policy makers alike. Ben-Ariech (2010) noted that whilst reports on the state of children have been produced since the mid twentieth century, there was a clear shift from focusing on children's basic needs to a wider consideration of development and well-being. This was also reflected in the increasing recognition of the importance of children's rights, perspectives and experiences as well as their status as a human being, not a human becoming. The Children Act 2004 for example included references to a child 'enjoying and achieving' as one of the integral ingredients to their well-being.

Well-being has been contested and conceptualised by a number of scholars, especially in childhood studies. The evidence that informed much of the original well-being work is founded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of child development. He argues that children's well-being is affected by their own individual actions, and the actions of those around them, as well as the wider structures within which they sit. Subsequently, the UNCRC (1989) made it clear that government and families should consider the impact of various aspects of children's lives including education, recreation, care, health and children's social behaviour.

Bradshaw (2001a; 2001b 2002; 2011) has developed a set of domains in relation to child well-being reflecting on those included in the *Every Child Matters* and the UNICEF (Cornia and Danziger framework). The following domains are identified by Bradshaw (2011:10) as key areas for policy and academic interest in children's well-being:

- Childhood poverty and deprivation;
- Physical health;
- Subjective well-being and mental health;
- Education;
- Housing and the environment for children;
- Children's time and space;
- Children and young people in leaving care;
- Child maltreatment;
- Children and the early years; and
- Children, crime and illegal drug use.

Whilst there are cultural limitations to this notion of well-being, attempts have been made to create indicators to facilitate international comparisons of well-being. As noted by Bradshaw (2011) the UK did not fare especially well when compared to other OECD or European countries (UNICEF, 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2007). In particular, Wales has been identified as having the lowest proportion of young people reporting positive life satisfaction in the Great Britain and Ireland (Brooks et al., 2009). Therefore, these domains can provide a useful framework for exploring approaches to facilitating children's well-being in a modern, non-deprived commuter suburb in Wales.

In Wales, children's well-being has been defined in a number of ways. The *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act* (2014) asserts that:

> *"Well-being", in relation to a person, means well-being in relation to any of*
> *the following—*
> *(a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being;*
> *(b) protection from abuse and neglect;*
> *(c) education, training and recreation;*
> *(d) domestic, family and personal relationships;*
> *(e) contribution made to society;*
> *(f) securing rights and entitlements;*
> *(g) social and economic well-being;*
> *(h) suitability of living accommodation.*
> *In relation to a child, "well-being" also includes—*

> (a) physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development;
> (b) "welfare" as that word is interpreted for the purposes of the Children Act 1989.

This definition of well-being demonstrates the commitment to a broad and multi-faceted consideration of welfare for those living in Wales as both adults and children. The definition is not straightforward however and could be considered as encompassing every aspect of a child's life. This raises questions about state intervention and responsibility given the fine line between the role of the state, the role of the community and the role of parents, as explored below.

Another useful consideration of children's well-being is the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor (Wales), last published in 2011. The monitor draws on the seven core aims of the Welsh Government's policy document outlining their commitment to the UNCRC to provide information on key themes relating to children and young people's well-being. Using national datasets and specifically commissioned research data is provided on the following themes:

- early years;
- health;
- education;
- access to play, sport, leisure and culture;
- rights and entitlements;
- safe home and community; and
- ensuring no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty.

These themes, similar to those in the Social Services and Well-being Act, convey consideration of the importance of a wide range of aspects in the lives of children and young people. They also highlight the incorporation of children's rights and responsibilities, and their position as both future adults and children in their own right. For this thesis, I will be considering these interpretations of well-being and examining how they relate to the view and lives of those in Newtown Common.

As in some academic and policy documents, well-being was used somewhat ambiguously by my participants in relation to the ways in which the neighbourhood could facilitate the wider well-being of local children and young people. It will be important therefore to reflect on which aspects the Monitor are reflected in the views and experiences of those living in Newtown Common and which aspects are perhaps less relevant in this type of neighbourhood. The remainder of the chapter will consider policy approaches to facilitating children's well-being, with particular focus on what has been identified as a neighbourhood or community responsibly.

Locating responsibility for children's well-being

As noted by Bradshaw et al. (2006), as the state widened its remit in relation to safeguarding, their state responsibility for children's welfare has also become diluted. Ensuring the well-being of children and young people is not just a task to be undertaken by parents and family members, but also by wider society. Amongst other things, the work of children's right advocates has led to an increase in the areas in which government have adopted responsibility for children's lives, for

example, by recognising the importance of play. Approaches however are complex and have shifted and developed over time and political changes. The state began to assume more responsibility for the lives of children towards the twentieth century, particularly at an institutional level in the areas of education, health and child protection, whilst primary socialisation and 'parenting' of children were left to the family unit. The transition into the twenty-first century has been characterised by more formal intervention into child rearing and seen a growth of initiatives aimed at the neighbourhood and family level. This focusing of support at a local level can be seen in terms of both providing targeted support for those believed to be disadvantaged through social exclusion, as well as reflecting expectations about the role of individuals and those who live and work in neighbourhoods for children's well-being.

Whilst there has long been concern with welfare in Britain, traditionally there was reluctance for the state to become involved in family matters, except under extreme circumstances (Daly, 2013). Following the recognition of children as the future of society at the end of the eighteenth century, children's lives became subject to various forms of government regulation, for example through the introduction of protective legislation regarding child labour in the nineteenth century, and the 1908 Children Act providing some protection for poor children in workhouses (Hendrick, 2005). During this time, a number of charities were founded that emphasised the need to rescue children from abuse and neglect. Subsequently, the twentieth century saw children's lives under increasing scrutiny from academics and policy makers from a range of disciplines, including education, the justice system and developmental psychology. This was symptomatic of the growing preoccupation with how children grew up and what they grew up to be (Moran-Ellis, 2010). Children were seen as human 'becomings' rather than human beings (Qvorturp, 1994; 2).

A significant shift in policy came at the end of the twentieth century with the *Children Act 1989* in the UK, and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by the UK Government in 1991. This was mirrored by an emerging trend in the sociology of childhood whereby children were recognised as active individuals in their own right (James and Prout, 1990). Following the election of the New Labour UK government in 1997, there was a shift towards early intervention for children and a broadening of family support to ensure children's well-being, signifying a move towards state responsibility moving beyond traditional institutions such as health and education, and into parenting. Whilst this extension in involvement has been cut back under the Conservative-led coalition UK government with Liberal Democrats since 2010, the shift towards a shared responsibility for the well-being of young people in society has been largely continued. Whilst a number of national policies address the wider aspects of children's well-being; responsibility is often decentralised to the local level. This chapter explores these issues in more detail with consideration of the key differences for childhood and youth in Wales, whose approach to children, family and community policy is developed following the *Government of Wales Act 1998*.

Changes have also occurred in relation to the approach to family support. The introduction of 'cradle to grave' care in 1970 following the Seebohm Committee (1968) united services until the *Children Act 1989* which separated social care for vulnerable adults and social care for children (Thoburn et al., 2013). With the

election of the New Labour government in 1997 however, there was a shift to invest in early intervention and parenting drawing on evidence of 'what works'. There was a clear move towards state involvement in parenting as a means of tackling poverty through improving child outcomes, as well as tacking anti-social behaviour and social order (Daly, 2013).

Contemporary approaches to children's well-being in UK policy

Whilst it is not always clear what activity can be considered family support policy (see Frost, 2003), there was an observable shift in policies surrounding responsibility for children's lives since the turn of the century. Most importantly for this thesis, there was an emphasis on the responsibility of the government to ensure not only children's safety, but their wider well-being. This includes an increase in interventions at an earlier, more preventative stage, rather than when children were already suffering in terms of their health and educational outcomes. In particular, the state expanded into intervening in family life, an area previously considered as private and beyond the scope of government responsibility.

The election of the New Labour Government in 1997 saw the introduction of a variety of family services to combat child poverty and social exclusion (Daly, 2013). Whilst some of the New Labour policies were applicable to England only, the addition of the term 'child well-being' as a policy focus can be seen as a legacy of the New Labour Government across the UK (Rose and Rowlands, 2010). Although often understood in different ways, the term became popular across the Western developed countries as a buzzword in children's policy (Axford, 2009). The New Labour Government set up the Children's and Young People's Unit in 2000 (in England) as part of their "continuing commitment to improving the life chances of our children and young people (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001; 26). One of the six areas for key outcomes was the health and well-being of children and young people. It was in 2003 however, that the term took centre stage, following the response to the inquiry into Victoria Climbie's murder.

In addition, there was also a renewed emphasis on family policy, demonstrated by the creation of the Department for Children, Schools and Families in England in 2007 (Cornford et al., 2013). Daly (2010) identifies the emergence of six key areas of family policy brought about by New Labour: "the education, care and well-being of children, financial support for families with children, services for families, parental employment, work/family reconciliation and family functioning" (p 434).

These shifts did not represent a completely novel outlook on family policy; however the approach reinforced the recognition of the state's role in early intervention and the responsibility of safeguarding children in a wider sense by preventing them from growing up in a position that would pre-dispose them to negative health and developmental outcomes later in life (Parton 2008). There was a shift towards a responsibility for children's general well-being. In particular, England's *Every Child Matters* green paper asserted that policy should address risk factors from an early age through effective inter-agency working (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). This is a trend that has been continued, if somewhat eroded, since the election of the Conservative-led Coalition government in the UK.

James (2009) identified a number of key trends in this new direction for policy under New Labour, the most significant of which involved the reshaping of Children's Services in light of the UK government's *Every Child Matters* agenda in England (2003).

> *To prevent future crime and social disadvantage, the state had to take a much more active and interventionist role in relations to children and their development. Good universal services would still be important, but so would the identification of those children who would benefit from targeted services".*
> *(James, 2009; 3)*

As outlined above, the finding that Climbie's death was preventable generated a surge of media attention. Rose and Rowlands (2010) argue that "policy is not developed in a vacuum, and the children's policy context continued to be very noisy and cluttered in 2003" (p 79). The inquiry into Climbie's death identified a number of failings by agencies charged with the joint responsibility to protect children. Responses in England in the form of *Every Child Matters* (2003) and *Keeping Children Safe* (2003b) and the five outcomes identified; being healthy, staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being, were later written into the *Children Act 2004*. The outcome was a wider shift in policy, which some argue demonstrated an opportunity seized by the government to bring forward proposed changes (Parton, 2009). Some of the underlying principles of the shift were that parents should bring up children, but with the help of the government, and that prevention is better than tackling a crisis (Rose and Rowlands, 2010). Whilst policy in Scotland broadly reflected this shift, Pithouse (2011) argues that Wales' response, *Children and Young People: Rights to Action*, *(*2004), included the introduction of seven core aims which linked specifically to articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights for the Child. Furthermore, unlike the UK government, the continued period of office held by the Welsh Labour Government has enabled continuation of these themes, as discussed later in this chapter.

In addition, the 'think family' approach not only extended the focus beyond children, but expended the remit of responsibility beyond children's services (Cornford et al., 2013). One example of this is the emphasis on inter-agency working, also embedded within the government response to the *Every Child Matters* agenda, which reflects a commitment to join up agencies' activities to ensuring the well-being of children and families. The introduction of the Common Assessment Framework as a multi-agency tool aimed to focus services around the needs of the child rather than the services. Whilst the evaluation of the tool highlighted a number of challenges (see Brandon et al., 2006) the drive towards multi-agency working has remained. Furthermore, it has been embraced in Welsh policy, which made a multi-agency, family-centred approach compulsory for every local authority with the introduction of the Families First[1] programme in 2012.

Some have critiqued the family focused approach developed by New Labour remaining a market-driven policy. For example, Daly (2010) argues that New Labour

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[1] Families First is a universal service in Wales that aims to improve services through offering support that caters for whole families, rather than individuals within families, and by co-ordinating the agencies working with families so that families receive joined-up support.

recognised the family as "an economic agent" and a unit "to serve important social functions (particularly in relation to social integration and social order)" (p434). It was necessary therefore to support families to ensure they would provide responsible well behaved members of the workforce. Nevertheless the role of the state in family policy and intervention had broadened to involve a considerable push towards targeted early intervention to improve well-being and outcomes for children. This included investment in parenting practice. Evidence-based early intervention approaches have been argued to provide a vital mechanism for addressing inequalities in modern society (Allen, 2011).

Government responsibility can also be seen as becoming broader as their safeguarding role was extended to facilitating a more general sense of well-being for children. As noted by Holland (2014) the Welsh Government's (2006b) *Safeguarding children: working together under the Children Act 2004* guidance for professionals reflects this change. It states that safeguarding entails "protecting children from abuse and neglect; preventing impairment of their health or development; and ensuring that they receive safe and effective care; so as to enable them to have optimum life chances" (p5). This can be seen as reflecting the expansion of state services responsibility for children from protection from abuse and neglect towards a recognition of children's environments upon the future well-being, or well-becoming (Ben-Arieh, 2010).

Despite the policy shift towards enhancing children's well-being however, international evidence suggested that children's well-being in the UK is relatively low compared with similar nations (Bradshaw, 2011). Much media attention followed the findings in a UNICEF (2007) report that the UK was the worst place in the developed world for children to grow up. The report brings together a variety of measures to assess material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks and young people's own subjective sense of well-being. In particular, the UK was behind in a number of factors including children's subjective well-being and child health and safety. Whilst the measures used in such reports have been critiqued academically (see Morrow and Mayall 2009), these methodological issues were not brought into the public arena and thus concern over children's well-being remained strong in the media and public discourse. Children's well-being was, again, at the heart of public debate. Whilst this figure has improved in the more recent report, (UNICEF, 2013), headlines such as "UK is accused of failing children" (BBC News Online, 2007) broke out across the UK and politicians had to consider a policy response that would ensure the wider well-being of children, in addition to protecting those at risk of harm.

In the years leading to the 2010 election – the focus upon children outcomes and wider well-being became a key source of political and public debate. Conservative politicians criticised the then Labour government approach to addressing disadvantages and supporting families noting that they had failed to tackle poverty and close the attainment gap (BBC News Online, 2008a). Similarly, there was concern about the impact of poverty on the family. In 2008, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers asserted poverty was causing dysfunctional families, which in turn was linked to education underachievement in childhood and leading those children straight into a life of poverty and family breakdown themselves (BBC News Online, 2008b). Whilst teachers were encouraged to be supportive of pupils, it was

acknowledged that their focus should be on teaching rather than acting as counsellors and social workers. It argued that families needed more support at home because the effect of what was happening outside of school has an equally significant impact upon achievement.

The notion of family breakdown has become increasingly controversial as the structure of 'normal' families in Britain changes and thus became a key focus of election campaigns. James' (2009) Family and Parenting Institute document *10 years of family policy; 1999-2009* found that family forms are changing as both rates of cohabitation and mothers working increases, financial support from grandparents becomes more common, marriage rates are decreasing and family structures become ever more complex. It called for policy makers to avoid attempts to reverse these trends and instead to help understand and support them to ensure children's and society's well-being. In the UK Conservative party plans for family policy, David Cameron used this James' report to promote active family intervention in 'dysfunctional' families to ensure more successful parenting (BBC News Online, 2010). He argued that whilst material poverty is related to children's success and chances in life, it is the style of parenting that matters most. Responsible parenting, he states, allows children raised in poorer households to do just as well as those in wealthier ones. He pledged to refocus family support policies to target families that needed it most adding 'we can't just stand by for fear of looking judgemental'. Whilst the implications of such a policy shift are contentious, the belief that successful parenting should be supported and actively ensured by the government to improve child well-being moves away from a focus on ideal or preferred family forms.

In 2008, as the Conservative Opposition leader, David Cameron argued that Britain had a social responsibility to improve every child's quality of life. He stated that

> *Making Britain the most family-friendly country in the world is not just a job*
> *for the state, as Labour seem to think…This is a challenge for our whole*
> *society, it is about action to improve the quality of our public realm – the*
> *physical condition of public space, and the emotional condition of our*
> *everyday interactions and relationships with children.*
> *BBC News Online, 2008a, Cameron childhood speech: full text*

Similarly, Ed Balls, the then secretary for children, school and families, argued in his response that the government recognised the importance of stable relationships above the family's structure. The *Green Paper on the Family* (The Centre for Social Justice, 2010) aimed to make public services more 'family friendly' and ensure support groups for the families in most need, including parents of disabled children. The plans also included more support for fathers to take an increasing role in family life as well as emphasising the importance of extended families and friends in supporting parents when families breakdown.

Some have criticised the way in which targeted support for families and communities can also be seen as classed, with the aim of indoctrinating middle-class parenting values into socially excluded neighbourhoods (Gilies, 2005). This approach promotes an assumption that in a meritocratic society equality, and well-being, can be achieved through the redistribution of opportunities rather than wealth (Giddens, 1998; Gilies, 2005). Furthermore, the political rhetoric around social exclusion and disadvantage that emerged at the end of the twentieth century is accused of placing

blame upon individuals rather than structural factors for those living in poverty and deprivation (Rose, 1999).

Moreover, a number of scholars have criticised targeted interventions in parenting and family life, particularly in relation to the parenting programmes introduced by the Conservative-led coalition government (Levitas, 2012; Bond-Taylor, 2015). The rhetoric surrounding 'broken families' followed by the introduction of the 'Troubled Families[2] programme can be seen as normalising the middle class notions of family life, whilst working class families are targeted for failing to provide appropriate parenting to ensure their children's well-being (Gillies, 2005). This can be seen in the targeting of services towards more deprived areas, where families with normalised middle class family values are perceived to be lacking (Skeggs, 2004; O'Brien et al., 2000). Research with those engaged with the programme however has found that family and key worker understanding of the approach to empowerment, such as through the redistribution of resources, contrasts with the ideas about empowerment as responsibility and the reduction of state burden implied in government discourses. Nonetheless, in addition to questions about the claims made about the success of the services, the stigmatising rhetoric has been criticised as unhelpful and neglecting to recognise the structural impacts of poverty (Levitas, 2012).

Children as both 'at risk' and 'as at risk'

In more recent UK policy, children have been perceived as both a potential threat to society, and as those in need of protection, creating tensions in government approaches (Moran-Ellis 2010). In particular there has been an increase in regulation at the turn of the century, with a growth in relation to the behaviour of children and young people. Concerns about potential risks posed by these groups became key issues in both policy and media and public debates. Furthermore, the targeted approach towards parenting interventions has been criticised for normalising middle class parenting approaches whilst pathologising those of the working class or socially excluded (Gilles, 2005). Furthermore Lee et al. (2014) has argued that these state interventions encroach upon the private lives of families and criticise government's aims at interfering with parental decisions about breastfeeding, for example.

Growing state intervention in parenting practices has not only demonstrated a shift in governmental regulation on child rearing, but also exhibited a marked preference for middle class parenting practices. The end of the twentieth century can be seen as marking a change in the way society and the UK government viewed troublesome children. Compared to other European countries, the UK traditionally had a minimalist approach to family social policy with a largely targeted model of benefits and services (Daly, 2013). Whilst regulation of children's lives had long been established, widespread public concern about lawless children prompted by media scandal, led to a change in the then UK government's approach to managing youth crime. Both the White Paper *No More Excuses – a new approach to tackling youth crime in England and Wales* (1997) and the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* mirror the

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[2] The Troubled Families programme is a UK Government scheme lunched in 20111 that aims to help families with a range of 'troubles' turn their lives around.

change in public perceptions of childhood from vulnerable innocent 'angels' (Valentine, 1996) to the 'knowing perpetrators of malevolent and evil acts' (Matthews et al., 1999; 1713). The murder of toddler James Bulger in 1993 by two 10-year-old boys prompted a media campaign against youth delinquency (McRobbie, 1994) culminating in a popular belief that young people in Britain are 'in some way turning feral' (Jeffs and Smith, 1996; 1). One constraint enabled by the 1998 Act was the introduction of curfews, where local authorities could restrict what time children below the age of ten should be off the streets (Matthews et al., 1999).

The James Bulger case and subsequent media attention can be seen to underscore a feeling in the public that some children and young people are a risk to society and thus the rest of the community should be protected from them. However, Matthews et al. (1999) argue that curfews simply perpetuated the exclusion of young people from their adult-centred communities. Rather than recognising children as individual actors it challenges their position as responsible citizens and is based on adult concerns in society rather than empirical evidence. Consequently, Matthews et al. believe that encouraging participation and allowing a voice to young people in local decision-making would be more constructive. Moran-Ellis (2010) notes that the popular concern about 'out of control' children has brought about a surveillance response in government policies and their rights are still limited in Britain. She notes that whilst consultation of children has increased in England with the establishment of the Children's Commissioner and young people's citizenship panels, they are limited to influencing policy not improving children's rights.

The shift towards individualism (see chapter three) has also been associated with the change in policy landscape whereby structural disadvantage has been reframed as individual failings (Rose, 1999; Gillies, 2005). The welfare agenda under New Labour has been criticised for focusing on equality of opportunity rather than of financial support (Dwyer, 2002). This emphasis on personal agency within the policy arena, derived from the work of Giddens and Beck, embraces and normalises what can be seen as middle class practices and experiences (Savage, 2000). Parenting practices have been brought into this debate with traditional approaches to child rearing juxtaposed with the moral qualities of middle class methods (Lareau, 2003; Perrier, 2012). This distinction is also reflected in the public arena.

Forms of state intervention and support for the well-being of children and young people

Holland (2014) identifies key spheres of influence for the safeguarding and facilitating the well-being of children and young people. These are: the formal sphere; the community sphere; and the informal sphere. Over the past two decades, policy has started to emphasise and facilitate the role of the community sphere, reflecting a shift towards the notion that children's well-being is 'everybody's business'. Whilst there are links and interactions between these spheres, the next part of this chapter considers trends in policy relating firstly to the responsibility for children's well-being adopted at the national level. Policy responses can be seen as underpinned by the preoccupation with managing risks in an increasingly individualised society (Beck, 1990; Giddens 1992). It then highlights some of the more targeted and local level interventions which can be seen as both emphasising

responsibility at the local level, and promoting, what some have argued to be, a more middle class approach to ensuring the well-being of children.

State intervention in children's safety at the national level

As argued by Giddens, Beck, and more recently by Furedi (2001) society is becoming increasingly interested in managing risks, including those surrounding the well-being of children. This is the case not only for parents, but also for the state and child welfare services. Social work is at the frontline of child protection services and changes in its structure and attitudes towards it serve as an indication of changing attitudes to risk, well-being and children in modern policy. Whilst there has been a general acknowledgement in the literature that concerns about children's welfare are disproportionate to actual fear, Webb (2006) notes that the nature of a democratic society means that governments have to respond to that fear. He argues that the number of successive child abuse scandals over the past two decades has damaged social work and caused it to 'embrace the language of risk and accountability as much as other institutions' (p3). Consequently, the shift from social workers to be judged on bad outcomes rather than bad decisions (which are not always synonymous) have led to a blame culture whereby someone is always held accountable (Macdonald, 1990). Consequently, a focus on targets, assessment and procedure rather than child protection itself has led to an overburdening of social workers arguably further adding to the risk to children (Webb 2006).

There has also been an increasing adoption of Giddens's 'actuarial' view (Giddens 1994) in terms of child protection systems whereby risk management strategies approach abuse as abstract and knowable and therefore see risk as 'ultimately manageable and predictable' (Ferguson, 1997: 231). This outlook has caused the term 'danger' to be replaced with the term 'risk' which infers potential for calculation and prevention (Douglas, 1992). Alaszewski et al. (1997) assert that a change in the structure of protection systems from institutional to the community care approaches has put the responsibility of managing risk on to professionals. They argue that these professionals are 'expected both to construct and manage the risk, and are blamed if they fail to do so' (p20). Ferguson (1997) argues that inquiries into a child's death are conceptualised as the product of the failure of social systems to prevent child abuse by the system itself, and thus as a product of modernity. Consequently, when events lead to extreme harm or death of children, professionals are held to account and blamed 'when they fail to protect vulnerable individuals or fail to protect the public against dangerous individuals' (Alaszewski et al., 1997: 20). An ethnographic study by McMahon (1998) concluded that within child care social work, the investigative culture caused workers to report that they were constantly in a negative position causing him to title his account *Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't.*

Some have argued that even in its success, the preoccupation of risk and risk management in child protection systems has also led to many 'costs' such as the alienating of many parents and children and an over emphasis on investigations rather than preventative strategies (Parton, 2006). Furthermore, for social workers, the uncertainty of risk and auditing culture underscores the importance of them making decisions that are defensible, rather than right (Scourfield and Welsh, 2003). Similarly, MacDonald (1990) warned that there is a continued danger whilst social workers decisions are judged upon outcome. She asserts that contrary to beliefs and

judgements in social work practice, a bad outcome is not synonymous with a bad decision. Following the media and public outcry regarding the state of child protection, Eileen Munro was commissioned to produce an independent review on child protection in Britain which aimed to identify key areas for exploration and recommendations for future reform (Munro, 2010). The final report (Department for Education, 2011) concluded that preventative, early intervention services need to work together to safeguard children, including those which do not meet the threshold for statutory care.

Additionally, Ferguson (1997; 2001; 2003) argues that the widely negative view on the preoccupation with risk within child protection is too deterministic and ignores the effect of reflexive modernisation (see also Giddens, 1990; 1991). He argues that children and parents are able to 'use information to act and react to the conditions they find themselves in 'which in turn shapes both their lives and child welfare institutions they engage with' (Ferguson, 1997: 222). Therefore, Ferguson believes that by fostering trust in these child welfare institutions, vulnerable parents and children can become empowered and use their expert knowledge to inform and shape child welfare systems. Whilst this approach does not feature the 'unrelieved gloom' that some fear dominate accounts of social work practice (Pithouse and Williamson, 1997: xiii)

Ferguson's work has been criticised for a lack of empirical support and overstating the liberating potential of reflexive modernisation (Scourfield and Welsh, 2003). Furthermore Scourfield and Welsh (2003) observe that the basis of the child protection system is upon social control and regulation. A study by Broadhurst et al. (2010) has also concluded that the impact of bureaucracy has also been negatively affected by this climate and failed to improve child protection. For example, they found that the introduction of performance-driven computer software that aims to manage social workers more effectively has ignored other priorities such as relationship between worker and service user that are central to good practice. Dumbrill's (2006) qualitative study on child protection interventions has also argued that power is an important dynamic in parent-worker relationships, which challenges the potential of reflexive modernisation.

However this preoccupation with state intervention in child protection has also received criticism. Several social work academics have expressed concerns about a growing 'child 'rescue' policy push (particularly in England) and have called for more support and less punitive monitoring (see White et al., 2014). More broadly, Frank Furedi, a prominent social commentator in this field, argues that contemporary society is always in a state of risk but that 'the risks that can kill you are not necessarily the ones that frighten and provoke you' (1997: 6). Drawing on examples from the UK, he asserts that there have been a plethora of public health scares regarding beef infected by BSE[3], the fear of the contraceptive pill or air travel causing thrombosis or deep vein thrombosis respectively and concerns about the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine causing autism. Similarly, he argues that, whilst the media and therefore the public discourse in the UK are often concerned about toxic residues in food, poor diet is much more likely to kill you.

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[3] Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is a disease usually affecting cattle but that can transmit to humans. Also known as 'mad cow disease', there was widespread public concern about BSE when 10 human contracted it in 1996 through eating beef.

Furedi therefore concludes that these fears are based upon a culture of fear rather than the likelihood of the risk. Subsequently, he has examined the way the culture of fear can be applied to paranoid parenting (Furedi, 2001, see previous chapter) and concerns around terrorism (Furedi, 2007). Similarly, Guldberg (2009) has criticised the continued over-protection of children and argued that children should be taught to have more trust in the world. She concludes that parents should be left to be parents and children should have enough freedom to enable them to 'learn through living' (p178).

State intervention in children's well-being at the local level

Children's well-being has also been recognised as the responsibility of wider society as well as the state. This has involved both recognition of the role of the local environment upon children's well-being, and the assertion that the neighbourhood or community should take responsibility for children and young people in their area. The Conservative-led coalition government has called for a wider acceptance of responsibility for the general well-being of children and young people. Continuing the 'everybody's business' theme emphasised in *Every Child Matters*, the UK government has promoted the building of the 'Big Society'.

The role of the external environment was emphasised as important in the ecological approach to children's well-being. Of relevance to this thesis in particular, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979; 1986; 1994) highlights the potential impact of the neighbourhood-community context (one of his Exosystems) upon children's lives. He notes that this effect could happen directly, for example greater intelligence was argued to be linked to exposure to richer, varied cultures (Vatter 1981) or indirectly through its effect on the family, such as the effect of disrupted and stressful lives in certain environments (Rutter et al., 1975; Rutter and Quinton 1977). Similarly, research on health outcomes has identified community and family as two key social determinants of well-being (Dahlgreen and Whitehead, 1991). Whilst this ecological approach has been criticised for presenting an uncritical, abstract description of the impact of social structures upon children's well-being and neglecting the role of biological factors, the framework has been drawn upon to inform empirical work on micro- and meso-systems (Churchill, 2011).

The notion of a safe community is something that is emphasised as important in children's well-being. The UNCRC and the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales identifies a safe home and community as a key component in children's well-being. Under the Conservative-led Coalition UK Government, the concept of the Big Society was used as a flagship policy idea in the run up to the general election and aimed to empower communities by giving them control of local services. The concept has, however, been subject to criticism from academics (Kisby, 2010) and politicians alike (The Telegraph Online, 2011) who argue that large cuts to local councils are undermining an idea which relies on residents volunteering for local services despite difficult financial times. The Big Society was quietly dropped in England early in the Government's term. However, a report for the Institute of Welsh Affairs (Boucher, 2013) has highlighted the positive aspects of the idea and suggested that whilst the Big Society is an English policy, it is one that aligns itself well with the characteristics of Welsh life. It concludes that higher rates of neighbourliness, satisfactory friend networks and those that enjoy living in their area

indicate that a sense of community akin to the Big Society is already prevalent in Wales. This will be examined in relation to the findings in this study and other empirical studies later in the thesis.

Under New Labour, one of the most relevant community-based policies aimed at facilitating the well-being of children, particularly in relation to their future was the introduction of Sure Start Local Programmes. This innovative approach emphasised the importance of early intervention approaches and created a 'hub' for families with children under four in disadvantaged areas (Daly, 2010).

> "SSLPs not only aimed to enhance health and well-being during the early years, but also to increase the chances that children would enter school ready to learn, be academically successful in school, socially successful in their communities and occupationally successful when adult." (Meluish et al, 2012; i).

Central to Sure Start was the importance of parent and community involvement whilst guidance was issued to local authorities in 2006 to develop parenting support strategies to meet local needs. Despite a largely child-centred social investment approach, parents and local authorities were required to recognise their role in ensuring positive outcomes and social behaviour of children (Churchill, 2010).

Whilst Sure Start was subject to cuts after the election of the Conservative-led Coalition government in 2010, the responsibilities of parents, families and communities to manage children's outcomes, and behaviour, continued to be emphasised in political rhetoric. A key element of family policy under the coalition government was the focus on fixing 'Broken Britain' including the decline of the family and the rise in youth crime and anti-social behaviour (Wilkinson, 2013). Contemporary family policy in England has seen a particular focus on the 'troubled families' agenda. Riots in urban England in 2011 were associated with disorderly young people who were not appropriately regulated by parents or other adults in their communities rather than poverty and deprivation and lead to an increased emphasis about parental and local responsibility for children's behaviour in government policy (Evans and Holland, 2014).

In 2011, the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced that the programme would have £448 million to change the lives of 120,000 troubled families to aid social recovery drawing on the evidence of family intervention projects initiated under the previous government (The Guardian Online, 2011). This approach could be seen as refocusing responsibilities for children's well-being back to parents and families as Sure Start centres continue to close across England. In support of the Troubled Families Agenda, the Department for Communities and Local Government report (Casey, 2012) evidenced the range of complex issues facing those eligible for the intensive intervention, whilst the interim evaluation by Lloyd et al. (2011) demonstrated successful impacts of the Family Intervention Projects. Criticisms have been made of Casey's work and the troubled families rhetoric for positioning families as a passive object rather than subjects (see above and also Levitas, 2012) and can be seen as stigmatizing families "irresponsible, criminal or inadequate" (Lister, 2004: 122). Nevertheless, such work continues in England although questions have been asked about the impact of future budget cuts on these services.

The situation is somewhat different in Wales however. As the Welsh Assembly has devolved powers over children, young people and families, the Labour Welsh Government can be seen as following a similar approach to that of New Labour through maintaining a wider focus upon providing family support across its local authorities and there is an absence of rhetoric around 'troubled families'.

Children, well-being and responsibility in Wales

Newtown Common, the neighbourhood in which this study is based, is a modern, suburban neighbourhood located on the outskirts of a city in South Wales (see chapter five for full discussion). The everyday lives of residents are therefore impacted upon by policy from the current Labour Government at the Welsh Assembly.

The Welsh Government assumed responsibility for a number of policy areas that impact on families through the initial creation of the National Assembly for Wales under the *Government of Wales Act 1998* and subsequent the "yes" vote in the 2011 referendum on further law making powers in accordance with the *Government of Wales Act 2006. A*reas of devolved responsibility include healthcare, education housing, local government, and social welfare. In particular, the stronger focus on the UNCRC and the expansion of supporting families and communities demonstrate in Wales a different approach than that taken by the coalition government in the UK.

Well-being in its widest sense has become prevalent in Welsh policy, as reflected though the introduction of the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill 2014.* Amongst other things, the bill has a focus on preventative interventions and provides a new of more broad definition of well-being, which is drawn upon by this thesis.

The Welsh Government also has a focus on upholding the rights of the child. It was the first country in the UK to establish the post of Children's Commissioner in 2001, who must have due regard for the UNCRC. Furthermore, as of May 2014, all Welsh Ministers have a duty to have due regard to the UNCRC when exercising Ministerial functions in accordance with the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 (*Welsh Government, 2011c). In upholding the UNCRC, the Welsh Government has also emphasised a commitment to children's play. The *Children and Families (Wales) Measure* (Welsh Government, 2010a) makes statutory provision to, amongst other things, tackle poverty, promote play and participation and establish Integrated Families Support Teams. The measure also introduced a duty upon local authorities to assess, secure and promote sufficient play opportunities for children. Financial commitment to the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* has demonstrated political and financial commitment to ensuring the well-being of children in Wales.

Targeting policies based on deprivation at the neighbourhood is an established approach in Wales. Locally-based initiatives have existed from the outset of the Assembly for Wales, which introduced the Communities First[4] programme to provide

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[4] Communities First is a community focussed programme that supports the most disadvantaged people in our most deprived areas in Wales with the aim of contributing to alleviating persistent poverty.

funding for Wales' most disadvantaged communities to support local regeneration (Dicks, 2014). The programme, now considered one of the Welsh Government's key agents for tackling poverty, aims to improve the lives of residents through community involvement. The principle of Communities First is that local involvement and partnerships are integral to alleviating deprivation locally. Whilst support is afforded by the government, this premise reflects a tradition in which citizens' responsibilities, rather than rights, are emphasised in relation to their 'employability' (Dicks, 2014). Since its implementation in 2001, Communities First has received a number of criticisms regarding its ability to impact upon key outcomes such as educational attainment and health (Adamson and Bentley, 2008) and economic gains (Hincks and Robson, 2010). Following these concerns, and those identified by the national evaluation in 2011, the programme was re-focused in 2012 and findings suggest improved service delivery (Ipsos Mori and Wavehill Consulting, 2015).

In addition, a similar scheme to Sure Start was introduced from 2006 called Flying Start[5]. Reflecting the underlying principles of Sure Start, Flying Start provides a targeted intervention to families with children under four in the most disadvantaged areas in each of the 22 local authorities and an emphasis on early intervention. Enhanced health visiting, free, high quality childcare from age two, parenting support and early language development for children all aim to address risk factors and enhance outcomes for children (Welsh Government, 2012a). Whilst Sure Start has since seen dramatic cuts in England following the election of the Coalition government and a turn towards a concentration of support on those considered most at need and at risk by the troubled families agenda, the Welsh Government has pledged to extend the Flying Start programme to reach 36,000 children by 2016. Whilst the recent independent evaluation of the programme commissioned by the Welsh Government was inconclusive with regards to the impact of Flying Start (Knibbs et al., 2013), the commitment demonstrates a continued dedication to early years intervention. In addition, the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-16* (Welsh Government, 2012b) reflects an emphasis on multi-agency family support and early intervention to ensure a "basic standard of well-being" (p18) across Wales, including the continuation of the Families First programme which provides universal support to families before they develop complex needs and require statutory intervention. As is clear from the difference in names, the 'troubled family' agenda presents a stark contrast to the Welsh government programme which focuses on an inter-agency Team Around the Family approach to advocate early intervention, tailored to each families' strengths as well as to their needs (Ginnis et al., 2013).

Newtown Common however, is a non-deprived suburb and therefore does not receive these sorts of support. While area based services provide non-stigmatised support within the areas that they cover, some have criticised the fact that families in need in otherwise wealthier areas cannot access those services. Whilst services such as Families First are available universally, it was not something that any participants were aware of. Residents of Newtown Common therefore have to rely on generic provision such as health services, the informal sphere and community structures that are provided by the local authority or may be resident-led. The

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[5] Flying Start is the Welsh Government targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most deprived areas of Wales. The programme takes a child-centred approach to improve child outcomes through the provision of four key service entitlements, with an additional overarching focus on early identification of additional support needs.

potential challenges this raises for residents are reflected on later in the empirical chapters of the thesis.

Conclusion

Whilst contemporary policy in this area is vast and constantly evolving, this chapter has summarised the relevant policy and political developments over the last few decades that frame the exploration of the community's role in facilitating the well-being of children in Newtown Common. The political rhetoric regarding safeguarding children can be seen as evolving in two key ways; the broadening of concern to the wider well-being of children; and the extending of responsibility from central government to the community or neighbourhood.

A number of scholars have noted that a focus on 'children's well-being' in policy and wider society is one of the legacies of the New Labour government (Rose and Rowlands, 2010; Axford, 2009). Subsequently, the introduction of the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor in Wales has attempted to identify and measure important indicators of children's well-being in Wales. The domains emphasised as key: early years; health; education; access to play, sport, leisure and culture; rights and entitlements; safe home and community; and poverty are used when exploring threats or risks to children's well-being in Newtown Common. Young people have also been positioned as both 'at risk' and as posing a risk to children's well-being, with younger children more likely to be perceived as the former and older children associated with the latter. This is a theme that is reflected on later in the thesis.

The second development relates to the emphasis on societal responsibility, and in particular, the role of the local community. The past two decades have seen an increase in local initiatives aimed at least in part, at promoting the well-being of children, families and communities. Whilst the Troubled Families Agenda has begun to move focusing on parental responsibility, the Welsh Labour Government remains committed to local family support initiatives such as Flying Start. Similarly, the Children and Young People Well-being Monitor for Wales reflects the UNCRC emphasis on the importance of safe communities to facilitate children's well-being, although questions remain about what this means in practice. In particular, the notion of community is a contested concept and one that requires further consideration. The next chapter takes this as a starting point for exploring relative sociological concepts relevant to understanding the role of the community in facilitating children's well-being in Newtown Common.

3. LOCATING NEWTOWN COMMON – COMMUNITY, RELATIONSHIPS, RESPONSIBILITY AND WELL-BEING

Introduction

> *Fieldnotes 15th July 2010:*
> *…I wasn't really sure when moved from one area to another'; there were no signs like you sometimes have when you enter and leave rural villages. As the bus drove further out of the city centre, the houses were no longer Edwardian terraced homes, but modern housing with drives and front gardens. As we moved through the suburbs between Newtown Common and the city, I noticed a number of people out and about; this included a mixture of young adults, older people and two ladies with pushchairs. There were also some shops and pubs that we passed on the way. If I hadn't have already visited the area by car and seen the map, there would be no way to tell I'd entered Newtown Common. There did seem to be a different sense however. Houses seemed newer, the grass even seemed somehow greener and I saw no one walking around. No one got on or off the bus before the final stop at the retail park and we hadn't passed any shops, pubs, or obvious communal areas. Is this normal for Newtown Common? Modern, clean and devoid of people out and about. Or was this just a quiet time?*

The main aim of this study is to explore what part the community can play in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. Underpinning this objective are two key assumptions; firstly, that there is something tangible that can be identified as a community; and secondly that the members of the community and institutions within it have the potential to undertake the responsibility of facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. This chapter contextualises the thesis by trying to understand what is meant by 'community' drawing on relevant theoretical debates. Firstly, the nature of a community is discussed, particularly in the context of relationships in modern society. The chapter then explores the idea of responsibility for children's well-being, noting the role of the citizen and parents in modern society.

The study neighbourhood chosen, Newtown Common, is a geographical area on the outskirts of a city. Power (2007) argues that neighbourhoods can provide those living within it the foundations to build a community. She argues (p22):

> *Neighbourhoods frame people's lives, providing a bundle of services that people need, and an environment on which families depend. They also provide a vital anchor to individual lives, the 'container' within which different social groups develop contact with each other… [They] do far more than house people. They form a base for wider activities, providing many of the social services that link individuals with each other, giving rise to a sense of community. Thus neighbourhoods provide a basic line of support to families.*

Power's definition of the neighbourhood includes a set of inherent assumptions. The extract above appears to suggest that by providing a basis for local services, residents of a neighbourhood are able to form social networks which create a sense of community. This, she notes, helps to provide support to families. This chapter considers the operationalisation of this sequence by exploring the relevant sociological debates surrounding communities. In particular, it will reflect on how

relationships, responsibility and risk in modern society integrate with concepts of community before discussing the literature relating to life in modern, commuter suburbs such as the case study site, Newtown Common.

As discussed in the introduction chapter, neighbourhood in this thesis refers to a geographical place whilst community is used to illicit the ways in which a neighbourhood involves something more that impacts upon children's well-being. This includes the social and environmental aspects of the neighbourhood, the local groups, centres and people working in the area, and the social networks that parents and children create.

What is community?

Whilst a plethora of literature has been generated focusing solely on what constitutes a community, it remains one of the more contentious sociological concepts. As Pahl (2005: 621) notes, "community appears as elusive today as it was forty years ago". Whilst there is not sufficient space to reflect on the full body of research here, the next two sections review the relevant theoretical debates in relation to communities and their potential for facilitating the well-being of local children and young people through supportive relationships.

Early studies defined different types of community in relation to place, interest and identity (see for example Willmott, 1986; and Kednall, 2002). These included the 'classic' studies of Willmott and Young (1986) and others (see for example Rees, 1950; Pahl, 1965; Frankenberg, 1966). More recently work has examined the operationalization of the concept by exploring the connections, differences, boundaries and development of communities (Crow and Mah, 2012). Importantly for this thesis, recent research has also included more critical appraisals of traditional community studies to recognise the often nostalgic discussion of the concept and highlight more negative aspects of community through inequality, social divisions and exclusion (Hoggett, 1997; Crow and Maclean, 2006). When developing this study and interpreting the findings, it was important to locate this study within these frameworks, whilst also acknowledging that community should not be assumed to represent a wholly or inherently positive and desirable concept.

Nevertheless, this conceptualisation of community as neighbourhood is often reflected in policy and academic literature. Community based initiatives for examples are geographically targeted. Furthermore, the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales, identifies a safe community as one of the key domains for measuring children's well-being. The indicators used to assess progress in the domain however, refer to Wales level data on safety and housing, or perceptions and experiences of neighbourhoods. Likewise, as discussed in the following chapter, a number of academic studies have examined the links between neighbourhood, childhood and well-being, often synonymising community and neighbourhood, for example in terms of town planning (see Wridt, 2010; Handy et al., 2008).

Other studies have explored children's experiences of neighbourhood to get an insight into the impact of community upon children's experiences of place and well-being. Holland (2014), for example, highlights the importance of three overlapping

but separate spheres of safeguarding children's well-being in communities: the informal sphere; the community sphere; and the formal sphere. She concludes that the community sphere, which involved neighbourhood based services, including those undertaken by the third sector, can play a vital role in bridging relationship between statutory services and neighbourhoods. These findings build on those of Ghate and Hazel, (2002), who explored parenting in poor environments in Britain. They identified the role of formal, semi-formal and informal support for parents and noted that the stresses experience by deprived parents can negatively impact upon their parenting, emphasising their need for support services. In these studies, the community is therefore identified as a semi-formal level of local groups and organisations within a neighbourhood. Chapters seven and eight draw on this definition to identify local groups, community centres and those working in the Newtown Common as one way in which community can be conceptualised through the findings. In addition, the chapter explores whether relationships in the neighbourhood can also be seen as providing a form of community support. The next section explores the ways in which these types of local relationships are theorised in contemporary social theory.

Community and the importance of relationships

> *Fieldnotes, 21st September 2010:*
> *… I seemed to get the same sense in the toddler group that I did in people's houses. It was friendly and relaxed, and it seemed, for want of a better word, lived in. There was noise, mess, movement and warmth. People would acknowledge each other! They knew the names of each other's children. This was not something I witnessed on my walks around Newtown Common. Despite the amount of time I spent walking around, I still felt like a loner and a stranger out in the eerily quiet public spaces of the parks and streets. If someone walked past me (which was rare), it was quickly, with their head down and a sense of purpose. They did not look at me as a threatening outsider, granted, but they also did not look at me at all. I did not pass people out in their front gardens, on short walks, and I never saw neighbours exchanging pleasantries outside homes. People seemed private and unfriendly. In here, however, I was entering some sort of bubble of activity, friendliness and familiarity. Someone smiled at me within 60 seconds.*

Power (2009) argued that the neighbourhood provides the basis for the community, which in turn can provide support for families. In the later chapters of this thesis I explore family and community relationships in Newtown Common. Informal networks are shown to provide invaluable support to parents, children and young people in an otherwise desolate neighbourhood. As noted in the extract above, houses and (some) community groups were places for play and enjoyment amongst friends whilst public spaces were isolated with no public displays of neighbourliness as experienced in other neighbourhoods (Evans and Holland, 2012). Local networks were therefore a key aspect to explore in terms of their potential for facilitating, or inhibiting, the well-being of children and families in Newtown Common.

In this section I introduce some key related social theories and explore their relevance to modern, suburban family life. The state of relationships in modern society has been asserted as having an important negative impact upon the development of social networks in communities. Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992)

amongst others have argued that the emphasis on individuals' agency and their rights and responsibility exercise choice has resulted in uncertainty and a preoccupation with risk management. This increase in individuals' ability to choose is also echoed in the management of personal relationships. Whilst some emphasise the benefits of moving in and out of love, some argue this frailty of relationships has affected family bonds as well as links within the wider community (Bauman, 2003).

Changes in family relationships

Changes in work organisation have been associated with changing the structure of family relationships in modern society. Beck (1992) argued that the growing individualisation in society can be seen as having a significant impact upon family structures and relationships in modern society, which have implications for contemporary childhood. Family forms are seen as shifting from traditional extended kin networks prior to industrialisation, to a structured family unit during industrialisation until the reflexive modernity move towards transitional elective relationships by the end of the 20th century. The later chapters consider the extent to which families and networks in Newtown Common are characteristic of modern relationships.

Early theories of the family centred on a belief that prior to industrialisation traditional families involved extended kinship networks working together in communities. Subsequently, it is argued, the process of industrialisation lead to the loosening of wider kinship networks and the embracing of a more nuclear, constrained form of family (Gillies 2003). Whilst Parsons (1956) promotes a more positive view of the transtion towards nuclear families, his idealised notion has been criticised for an assumed heterogeneous effect on society. Goode (1963) argued that whilst working class families 'gained most from limiting their commitments to the nuclear family unit' (p4), upper class families did not become more nuclear because they were able to use family connections and power to their benefit. Of particular relevance to this study, Young and Willmott (1957) found that middle class families were also able to maintain contact despite their greater geographical mobility, whilst many working class families successfully preserved extended family networks for support. This finding is reflected on in relation to the experience of families in Newtown Common in the findings chapters.

As political and media debates began to focus on the New Right's 'pro-family' ethos, academic research began to focus on family practices and the role and value of intimate relationships (Williams, 2004). Some scholars have argued that this shift in family enabled couples to move towards more democratic and collaborative relationships (Giddens, 1992). Jamieson (1999) argues however that relationships remain structured by inequalities and are multidimensional in nature emphasising the amount of effort that goes into maintaining these 'pure relationships'.

Within the wider literature on modern society, there is a concern expressed about the existing state of relationships more generally. Beck (1992) argued that modern societies are characterised by a growing individualism that is disintegrating relationships and families. Whilst many see this disintegration of traditionally obligatory family ties as problematic, others believe that the democratisation of relationships can facilitate a purer bond opted into whilst both parties provided

satisfactory care for each other and their family. Furthermore, Beck, along with Beck-Gernsheim, later concluded that the family had become a dead or a 'zombie category' and was thus meaningless (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 204).

Bauman's (2003) view on love and relationships is also critical of the state of relationships in modern society. His book, *Liquid Love* aims to detail the great 'risks and anxieties of living together in our modern liquid world' (pxiii). Since marriages are choices and links made by humans, he believes that humans can just as easily untie them. For the family he argues that 'kinship networks cannot be sure of their chances of survival, let alone calculate their life expectancies' (p31). Similarly, Beck-Gernsheim (1999) surmised that individualization has caused the family to become more elective and democratic rather than an obligatory form of solidarity and is therefore more fragile. She argues that the traditional family is therefore 'losing the monopoly' as different forms of family become increasingly normalised as the 'post-familial family' (p68).

Such concerns have been reflected in political and public discourse for example in stories about 'broken Britain' and the fragmented family (see chapter two). Smart (2007) warns that in both contemporary social theory and policy debates, there remains a growing concern about the state of families in modern society, which is at risk of becoming 'conventional wisdom' (p20). Whilst acknowledging that there are a number of individualization theorists who are by no means homogenous in their thinking, Smart focuses her critique on the book *Individualization* by Beck and Beck Gernsheim, noting that their meanings and view of the future is often unclear other than that 'the future for families is bleak, and that modern social conditions will succeed in pulling families apart' (p19). Furthermore, Smart argues that this work along with many others including *Liquid Love* by Bauman (2003) are unsupported and rhetorical. She argues that their conclusions often contrast with evidence from empirical studies of family in Britain.

Not all individualization theories form such a negative position however. Giddens (1992), for example, argues that the move towards freedom in families can only have positive consequences because it offers democracy and equity because relationships are 'pure' and 'entered into for its own sake' and is continued only as long as both parties are satisfied (p58). For this reason he argues that trust can be acquired by honesty and mutual disclosure, and believes that such choices regarding relationships entered into form part of a person's identity and 'are constitutive of the reflexive narrative of self' (1992: 75). Some theorists however have criticised Giddens for neglecting to address realities in relationships such as inequalities of class, gender and power, and the practicalities of love and care (Jamieson 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999). Smart (2007) recognises that Giddens has defended his view by asserting that it is an ideal type and maintains that he provides a useful platform for future debate. However Crow (2002) argues that this is not an adequate response to his somewhat misleading theory in which structural inequalities are neglected and the extent of social change assumed is overstated.

Smart (2007) has aimed to further the debate around modern family life. Building on her critique of the individualization theory, she argues for the importance of considering love, hate and all the other emotions that are integral to families and relationships. Furthermore she argues that biography and memory can provide a

useful insight into exploring personal lives and modern relationships. Using the individualization and other grand theories as a point of origin, she draws on empirical evidence to propose an investigation into the notion and experience of 'personal life', which includes the notion of family but does not feature it as a starting point or inevitable aim or consequence. Another critique of the individualisation theorists' views on families is their focus upon relationships between couples and parents with limited consideration of childhood. Furthermore, such theories therefore do not explain the impact of individualisation upon parent-child or sibling relationships and how this may be negated by the often innate and instinctive desire to protect and care for children both by parents and other community members.

Families in modern society have therefore been considered to be less resilient than in the past. It has been argued that family bond may no longer have the power to connect people as individuals are increasingly driven their own needs and choices.
As argued by Smart however, much of these theoretical concepts were not developed through empirical studies. The thesis provides an opportunity to examine how these theories relate to the everyday experiences of families and relationships for those living in Newtown Common.

Community relationships

It has also been argued that community bonds and relationships are suffering in modern society (Putnam, 2000). As with family relationships, the creating and maintaining of bonds which could facilitate a local community network are equally subject to individual choice. (Perceived) traditional styles of neighbourliness are believed to have changed and decreased, especially for those living in suburban areas such as Newtown Common. This section reflects on some of the sociological arguments that a sense of community has been diminished by individualisation in society together a weakening of neighbourhood ties and the pervasive risk consciousness. This argument provides a bleak outlook for communities, however a number of empirical studies have critiqued this nostalgic mourning of 'communities lost' citing the continued importance of informal social networks in modern society and calling for more micro studies of neighbourhood and community relations. These notions provide a useful backdrop for exploring the ways in which community relationships can be seen as facilitating the well-being of children and families in the findings chapters.

Many contemporary social theorists have argued that increased individualism within society, whereby nobody looks out for anybody else, has resulted in the fragmenting of communities (Beck 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1990; Young 1999). Whilst the idea that just inhabiting the same area does not necessarily lead to social networks is not a new one (see for example, Lee and Newby, 1983), some sociologists have suggested that following industrialisation families no longer had to rely on wider community and kinship networks (Gillies 2003). Consequently, earlier models of local support no longer serve the same functions as in pre-industrial society. Social ties and personal relationships are now seen as being more open to individual choice rather than being based on physical proximity. In particular, Schwartz (1980) asserts that, for many living in suburbia, the house is treated more as a hotel than a home. This implies little room for neighbours and fostering neighbourliness. Consequently, Ruonavaara and Kouvo (2009) suggest that this

perceived decreased importance in neighbourliness may account for the low level of sociological interest in this area.

One strand of sociological interest in this area has been the perceived collapse of community through the decrease in social capital (Putnam, 2000). Drawing on evidence from the end of the twentieth century in the United States of America, Putnam argues that connections and interactions between individuals, including neighbours and families, in contemporary society have decreased, to the detriment of modern lives and communities. Putnam argues that social trust, a key aspect of social capital is also in decline much to the detriment of modern relationships. As noted by Misztal (1998), trust, and in particular, interpersonal trust can have an important impact upon society. Trustworthiness has been consistently identified as vital to personal relationships (Willmott, 1987; Spencer and Pahl, 2006). Furthermore, Putnam (2000) argues that this is the case for those living in suburban communities, such as the one chosen for this study. Putnam states that the need to commute between work, home and leisure activities for those living the suburbs produces a 'civic penalty' and negates the existence of social capital. Whilst a study of suburban life in the 1960s Gans (1968) found examples of trust and cohesion, the concept of community lost linked to suburban living remained pervasive in academia and urban planning (Duanny et al., 2001).

Concerns about the erosion of community bonds and trust are emphasised by social commentators as concerns across society. Furedi and Bristow (2010) argue that the growing risk consciousness has fostered an atmosphere of distrust epitomised by the introduction of policies such as the national vetting scheme for anyone wishing to engage with children. They argue that this undermines previous expectations about the positive influence of adults upon children and damages generational bonds. Furthermore, the competition endorsed by strategies of middle class parents to ensure the future success and well-being of their children has also be identified as contributing to the erosion of trust and bonds between parents (Lee et al., 2014; Lareau, 2003).

The idea presented by Putnam of a community lost is one that has been subject to theoretical and empirical criticism. Spencer and Pahl (2006) argue, for example, that if you look at people's micro worlds and their informal relationships, there is still evidence of community and social solidarity, but that it may look different. Their study notes that whilst social cohesion has long been associated with family and kinship, the importance of friendships as social glue in modern society remains understudied. Drawing on the notion of personal communities to refer friends as well as those 'significant others who inhabit our micro-social worlds' (p2), they dispute Putnam's argument that the quality of modern social relationships are in decline and call for further investigation of people's micro-worlds. They conclude that friendship provides a valuable safety net in modern society and that, 'at its strongest, it is based on trust, commitment and loyalty' (p210). The importance of personal communities for those living in Newtown Common is reflected on in chapter nine.

In his critique of society's longing for a safe, homely community as a paradise lost, Bauman (2001) questions the possibility of a safe and caring community. Drawing attention to the inherent conflict between freedom and communality in society, he argues that money spent on protection to keep strangers out should be spent on

tackling societal problems such as poverty. Bauman states that 'the 'community' they seek stands for a burglar free stranger proof 'safe environment'; 'Community' stands for isolation, separation, protective walls and guarded areas (p114). Such a negative belief renders the potential for neighbourliness and community safeguarding as both unlikely and exclusionary. This argument builds on fears about increasing individualisation breaking down community bonds. Furthermore, the belief that society has become obsessed with risk and risk prevention mirrors Guldberg's (2009) concern that the continued teaching of children to fear the adult world will inevitably damage adult-child relationships.

Empirical studies have also presented contrasting empirical evidence for this perceived shift in modern Western society; whilst some arguing that travel and communication technologies facilitate wider and better choices when creating their networks, others warn against those excluded from making these choices (see Clark, 2007 for a useful summary of evidence). Putnam's focus on communities, individuals and families is also criticised for neglecting to consider the impact of wider structural impacts such as gender, class and ethnicity (Franklin, 2007). The assumption that community networks are always positive has also been criticised for neglecting to recognise its potential as exclusionary and marginalising. For example, Webb (2006) has argued that whilst Neighbourhood Watch schemes are often believed to consist of innocent people working together to keep their community safe, they are actually 'good examples of networks involving bias and self-interest' (p225).

Furthermore, despite beliefs about a turn in society towards individualism have been popular in rhetoric and theory, Boyce (2006) argues that empirical research undermines claims of the 'shattered community' (pp9.3). She notes that in a number of studies, including her own ethnography of a deprived neighbourhood, there is clearly a continued importance of neighbour relations. Similarly, a study in England by Crow et al. (2002) emphasised the survival of neighbourhood relationships and further asserted that the belief that neighbours were either busybodies or isolate nobodies was also an unhelpful and untrue dichotomy. Consequently, Boyce argues that neighbourliness and community relationships are still evident but are in need of further exploration. Like many other forms of personal relationship, including adult friendships, neighbours and neighbourliness are still under theorised (Jamieson et al., 2006). Furthermore, the small literature that exists focuses on adult centred notions of neighbourliness (Boyce 2006; Crow et al., 2002; Stokoe 2006) and lack consideration of the potentially protective relationship between children and neighbours or other residents in the community. Similarly, Holland et al. (2011) argue that informal networks still provide valuable support to parents and are associated with better maternal mental health and decreased levels of child abuse. However, there is little evidence however on how these forms of social support networks can be created and promoted where they do not exist. Whilst at the individual family level, the impact of parenting has been considered, (see chapter four), the notion of community parenting remains under theorised and contemporary theorists' concerns about child welfare continue to focus on formal networks and child welfare agencies.

Community networks provide a key site for exploration of the impact of community upon facilitating children's well-being in Newtown Common. Luke and Harris (2007) argue that whilst citizens are increasingly expected to regulate the conduct of others,

policy makers need to understand and help strengthen local social networks. Consequently, a careful examination of empirical evidence is needed to investigate how informal networks such as other parents, adults and children are able to facilitate the well-being of children in their neighbourhood and to question whether notions of individualisation are applicable to such practices. As noted by Jamieson et al. (2006), many personal relationships remain under theorised and this thesis suggests the need for further exploration of the relations between neighbours, children and other local residents.

The first part of this chapter has reviewed some of the key theories in relation to relationships in modern society in an aim to problematise the notion that neighbourhood can lead to a social community with potential to facilitate children's well-being. These are key issues that will be teased out through the findings chapters of the thesis and revisited in the conclusion. The next part of the chapter considers the ways in which the community can be seen as responsible for promoting the well-being of children.

Responsibility in modern society

Returning back to the assumptions by Power (2007) and those intrinsic to the notion that communities can facilitate children's well-being, neighbourhoods are not only expected to foster local relationships, but there is also a presumption that the members of these communities will take some responsibility for the well-being of others in their area. The previous chapter has considered the approach adopted by successive governments to adopting the responsibilities of child rearing, including top down and local initiatives. This section considers theoretical debates surrounding the responsibility of citizens in general. It then reflects on the literature surrounding parents as those responsible for the well-being of their children and how their decisions can be seen as affected by modern concerns about risk and class practices.

Giddens (1992; 1999) emphasises the role of both individuals and wider structures upon people's lives. He denotes the inseparability of risk, safety and responsibility in modern society and its impact upon the everyday experiences and decisions of people. He also distinguishes between two key interpretations of the word, responsibility. Originally, the word was used to refer to someone who created or instigated an event, for example. Increasingly, he argues, responsibility is used to refer to an obligation or liability in relation to a corresponding risk however. Significantly for this thesis, arguments describing the new modernity highlight this pervasive notion of risk in society, which can be seen as affecting decisions at a state, community and individual level in relation to children's safety and well-being.

Beck (1992) argued that late modern society is not necessarily any more risky than previous societies, but rather a preoccupation with risk and risk management has permeated everyday life in developed countries. Similarly, Giddens (1990, 1991, 1992) wrote about the effect of modernity creating a society obsessed with the future and preventing dangers, thus creating a concern with risk and risk management. Both theorists have argued that following various social conditions, citizens in late modern societies are constantly reviewing and reflecting upon their lives and thus

synonymously changing them. This includes the risks produced by modernisation itself. Whilst both Giddens' and Beck's theories were produced independently; their conclusions about society have been drawn together and produce a new outlook on contemporary society. Ekberg (2007) asserts that:

> *Ultimately, both theorists conclude that the ethos of wealth creation that characterised industrial modernity has been overshadowed by an ethos of risk avoidance, class consciousness has been displaced by a risk consciousness and the increased awareness of living in an environment of risk, uncertainty and insecurity has become a major catalyst for social transformation.*
> *(Eckberg, 2007; 344)*

Whilst Giddens' and Beck's work has proved highly influential in social science as a theoretical basis for explaining late modern society, research has critiqued his thesis. Much of this criticism has come from commentators in childhood and child protection studies. Further to a clear lack of empirical support, Beck and Giddens are criticised for failing to consider children's experiences and different points of view as well as overlooking structural differences, such as gender or generation in their theories (Scott et al., 1998). As noted by Backett-Milburn and Harden (2004) however, the late 1990s saw an increase in studies that began to address these issues. For example, some empirical studies have examined parents' and children's understandings and perspectives of risk and child safety with consideration to structural and international processes (Hood et al., 1996; Kelley et al., 1997; Valentine 1997a; Valentine 1997b). Backett-Milburn and Harden (2004) argue, however, that whilst these studies recognise the constructed and contested nature of risk, they fail to explore the fluid nature in which understandings are negotiated and reconstructed within mundane family interactions. Their qualitative study in Scotland involving four case study families concluded that 'it is important to contextualise 'risk' within socio-economic, cultural and institutional frameworks' which thus far has been neglected (p429). Such work provides empirical support for the pervasiveness of risk in modern society whilst also highlighting the importance of structural inequalities upon people's lives.

Risk has been defined a number of different, and often contrasting ways, especially in relation to children and parenting (Lupton, 1999; Denney, 2005; Lee et al., 2014). Lee et al., (2014) identify four useful ways of conceptualising risk: risk as an untoward possibility, not probability; risk as free floating anxiety; risk consciousness and morality; and demoralization and policing through risk. For this thesis however, participants were not asked about particular types of risks but invited to discuss anything they identified as a risk to the safety and well-being of children and young people living in the area. The focus in the remainder of this chapter is to consider literature on civic responsibility for children's well-being to provide a useful insight into how this responsibility might be understood and enacted by those living and working in Newtown common.

Community and responsibility

> *Fieldnotes 24th June, 2010:*
> *…and I wondered, what I would do now, if a child slipped from the play equipment, or was being picked on by another child? What would I do if there was a fight between two teenagers? Would I step up, look after and protect a child? Try to resolve an altercation? Should that be done by me? Should it be done at all? If I lived here, would I feel that what was happening in this park was my responsibility? Of course, none of these scenarios happened; the park remained empty.*

Intrinsic to the assumption held within UK social policy (as described in the previous chapter) that communities should recognise their role in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people, are the debates around responsibility and citizenship.

As noted by Marinetto (2003) the majority of citizens in twentieth century Britain were restricted to passive involvement in government through intermittent elections. From the 1980s however, the concept of citizenship increasingly factored in political ideology. By the end of the twentieth century, the concept of active citizenship was embraced by thinkers on the right who noted that the balance between rights and responsibilities complimented their aim to reduce state dependency and expand private markets (Marinetto, 2003). In addition, there was a shift towards "government through community" in which policy initiatives embraced the notion that neighbourhoods were responsible for improving their lives through civic engagement (Rose, 1996: 332).

According to Etzioni (1993; 1995), whose ideas were influential on the 1997-2010 New Labour Government, society needed to establish a greater balance between rights and responsibilities to address social issues in modern society. With a focus on rejuvenating the moral landscape so that communities could use a form of peer pressure to manage individual members (Etzioni, 1995; 144),

> *First, people have a moral responsibility to help themselves the best they can. The second line of responsibility lies with those closest to the person including kind, friends, neighbours and older community members.*

Etzioni (1997) and Selbourne (1994), among other communitarianism theorists, argue that individual's duties to society and its members should take precedence over their rights and privileges. Such arguments were prevalent in the late 1990s and early 2000s and established on the foundation that community solutions held the answer to perceived moral decline in society, rather than the state or the individual. Communitarian theorists are not a homogenous group. Driver and Martell (1997) for example note that some place more emphasis on conformist, conservative aspects of communitarianism than others. The Third Way approach adopted by the New Labour UK Government can be seen as leaning slightly in this direction amid concerns about dwindling social responsibility whereby a morally prescriptive, individual communitarianism was promoted rather than a more progressive, socio-economic approach (Taylor, 2011).

The communitarian view that communities hold the solution to addressing social problems is reflected in the policy documents underpinning this study which

emphasise community responsibility for children's well-being. This draws on the communitarian motto that "it takes a village to prevent a crime" (Etzioni, 1997, which was a responsibilisation take on the African proverb popularised by Hillary Clinton 'It takes a village to raise a child'). This emphasis upon community regulation is also one that was reflected in the response to the riots across Britain 2011. The Conservative-led Coalition UK government's response to these riots also emphasised the importance of community control, as well as the importance of society accepting their responsibilities as well as their rights (see Evans and Holland, 2012, for a full discussion).

Etzioni's argument and the communitarian approach have sustained a substantial amount of criticism. Taylor (2011) argues that policy makers should avoid the idealised notion of community promoted by communitarians on three grounds: firstly, it ignores the dark side of community in its ability to be oppressive and exclusionary; secondly, it assumes universally close knit social networks exist in modern society, which is criticised in empirical research such as this thesis (see chapter nine); and finally he argues that it places unrealistic expectations upon neighbours and communities because such relationships are usually superficial rather than intimate. In addition, a number of scholars have argued that individuals' choices and therefore actions are not uninhibited but restricted by wider structures, (see for example the discussion of Habitus, Bourdieu 1984; Reay, 2004, and also structuration by Giddens, 1984 amongst others). These wider structural constraints are arguably underplayed in the communitarian theory.

Parents and responsibility

Whilst parents have always been considered as primarily responsible for bringing up their children, recent shifts in policy demonstrate the increase in state intervention in family practices. In relation to parenting cultures, there are two key areas of literature that relate to this project; parenting and class, and parenting in a risk society. In an increasingly individualised and de-traditionalised society, and one in which parents are more aware of the consequences of their actions on their children than previous generations, theoretical discussions surrounding risks to children provide a useful context to the thesis. Some argue that parents' growing awareness of risk has an often detrimental impact upon children's lives and overall well-being. This responsibility is not one that rests equally on parents across the UK however, it is gendered, racialised and, most relevantly for this thesis, it is classed (Lawler, 2000; Gillies, 2003).

The increase in parental responsibility for children's behaviour, outcomes and well-being can be seen as part of the wider neo-liberal project towards emphasising the role of individual actions rather than structural impacts upon society (Henwood et al., 2010). As argued by Furedi (2002), as children have become the responsibilities of their parents, rather than the wider community, their upbringing becomes something different to child rearing. 'Parenting' became perceived as involving specific skills which had important, accountable consequences upon the lives of their children. A plethora of research has erupted in the past decade or so exploring the meaning behind the term 'parenting' (Lee et al., 2014). Of most relevance to this thesis

however is that an integral part of this responsibility ascribed to parents involves the managing of risks to their children's current and future safety and well-being.

Parenting and risk management

The risk society paradigm has been both supported and critiqued by a plethora of rhetorical and empirical work in Britain. This includes commentators citing various topical news stories on child tragedies to illustrate the pervasiveness of risk obsession in modern Britain and the effects of an increasing preoccupation with child safety upon child protection services. The notion of a risk society, as defined by Giddens, refers to late modern society in general, however many researchers have used examples from within the UK to offer an insight into how the risk society is visible and operates on a national level, as well as at the family level. Parents' concerns about children's safety have been shown to impact upon children's lives and use of neighbourhoods.

Following the work of Giddens and Beck amongst others, many commentators have drawn on empirical research relating to issues of child protection to understand and explain notions of risk in late modern society (Backett-Milburn and Harden 2004). Whilst the original notions of risk and the risk society were largely constructed in abstract and rhetorical terms, it is clear that concerns around child protection form a helpful illustration of the way a risk anxiety has affected contemporary society (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990; Scott et al., 1998). In particular, contemporary approaches to parenting can be seen as symptomatic of a risk management culture.

Since the writings of Beck and Giddens, a plethora of commentators have examined child protection and well-being using the notion, or paradigm, of a risk society in the UK. One major theme that emerges from the literature is parents' increasing concern with protecting their children from often extreme but unlikely dangers. In the 1990s, Scott et al. (1998) raised the issue that fears for children's safety reflected parents and adults risk anxiety rather than actual or likely dangers to children. They noted that in the UK there is an increasing awareness and concern about risks from strangers as a result of growing recorded cases of violence against children. However, they argue that three quarters of these offenders are family members. Furthermore, they assert children aged between 5 and 15 are the least likely age group to be a victim of homicide whilst those at the highest risk of being murdered are children under 1 year old and thus unlikely to be exposed to a threat from 'stranger danger'. Scott et al. argue that this is a result of the new risk society citing the decrease of children aged 7-8 that walked to school alone from 80% in 1971 to 9% in 1990 in the UK.

Similar findings were evident in other empirical studies. For example an investigation of children's and parents understandings of risk and danger in rural locations identified parents' concern about abduction despite its low likelihood (Valentine 1997b; Valentine and McKendrck 1997). The number of children walking to school is also of concern in Wales. Whilst, the number of children aged five to 16 years old walking to school increased between 2004/05 and 20008/08 there was a significant drop in walking to school and increase in driving between 2007/08 and 2008/10 (Welsh Government, 2010b). The link between these figures in Wales and concerns about risk from parents or children however requires further empirical research.

Higher income parents have also been found to more likely to drive their children due to safety concerns (Mackett et al., 2007). Carver et al. (2008) suggest that such parents are falling into a 'social trap'; by driving their children to school in an attempt to keep them safe from traffic, they are also increasing the traffic risk for other children. However, there are likely to be a range of other contributory factors impacting upon travel choices. For example, parents' working hours and the culture of school choice, which could both have practical implications for the length and travel choice of parents' journeys when dropping their child at school.

Whilst the studies above seem to support Furedi's (1997) notion of a culture of fear by concluding that protecting children is 'not best served by keeping them dependant and fearful', some argue that Furedi's 'libertarian agenda' is too extreme (Scott et al., 1998). Some studies on child welfare and social services have also recognised a tension between protection and autonomy (Alaszewski et al., 1997). Similarly, a small-scale study of parents suggested that whilst parents are aware that dangers such as abduction are unlikely, the potential outcome is too terrible for the risk to be ignored (Collicott, 2009). Consequently it is important to acknowledge parents' struggle to balance children's freedom and safety during these times of acute risk anxiety.

Parents can be seen as subject to an ever-increasing range of dangers to their children (Furedi, 2001). However, Scott et al. (1998) assert that whilst parents look to experts for guidance, they often receive mixed messages and struggle to determine who to trust. Consequently, parents often opt to make their own decisions based on more accessible sources of information such as the media. This supports Furedi's argument that society is provoked not by actual or likely dangers, but the ones that receive coverage in the media and public discourse. Similarly, Stokes (2009) argues that it is cases, or the coverage of cases, such as Jamie Bulger, Sarah Payne and Madeleine McCann that have led to Pain's (2006) finding that extra-familial child abduction was the greatest fear of parents in Britain. Such fear remains despite calls from Pritchard and Sayer, (2008) amongst others to recognize that instances of such cases in the UK are relatively uncommon. Some argue that such events continue to receive this attention due to the high level of harm involved (Alaszewski et al. 1997). However, accidents and injuries within the home often result in the death of a substantial number of children yet receive minimal attention in public discourse (Harden 2000). This may relate to perceived manageability or preventability of such accidents compared to stranger abuse and abduction.

The work of Furedi and others surrounding parents' constant surveillance and over-protection of their children draws upon Giddens' and Beck's belief that society is increasingly concerned with risk and risk management despite resultant impacts on other aspects of children's well-being. Furedi (2001) Guldberg (2009) and Palmer (2010) argue that parents' choice to restrict children's outdoor play for safety reasons could be damaging children's well-being rather than protecting them. A report from the Children's Society in 2013 repeated claims from their previous report (2006) that children felt their parents' concerns about children's safety are preventing them from being granted the freedom they want to play outside without an adult. This so-called relocation of children from the public sphere to the private sphere due to parental safety concerns is partly responsible for increased levels of child obesity. 'Helicopter'

parents are said to be using increased supervision, monitoring and restricted forms of play by wrapping their children in cotton wool (Layard and Dunn 2009). Research by the Welsh Government (2013) found that 34% of children in Wales were overweight or obese, including 19% classified as obese. Drawing on a number of empirical studies, a report by Gleave and Cole-Hamilton (2012) for Play England emphasised the importance of promoting children's play to keep them fit and healthy. However, much of the arguments of social commentators like Furedi still lack grounded empirical support.

Some literature has focused upon the idea of intensive parenting as a response to the increased pressure to ensure children's success and well-being. As argued by Wall (2010), there is an underlying assumption in modern society that parents are able to determine their children's life course, if they have the correct skills and are prepared to put in enough effort. Furthermore, the proliferation of 'expert' advice due to an expected parenting deficit in managing the risks to their children's future furthers the notion that parents are responsible but incapable (Hays, 1996; Fox, 2009; Lee et al., 2010). Much of this literature however suggests trends in parenting are linked with gender (Shirani et al., 2012) and social class, as explored below.

Parenting and class

> *Fieldnotes, 18th May 2011:*
> *"It was interesting that Lucy identified herself as middle class in a defensive way. All the mums at the group had jobs, and most planned to go back after different amounts of maternity leave. From what I had heard, all but one mother were married and living with a husband, and within this parent group, all but one could be identified as white British women. Almost all of them however, were struggling in different ways."*

The acceptance of responsibilities as well as rights has been directed as parents as well as communities, especially in relation to ensuring the well-being of children and young people (Churchill, 2011). The shift to individualisation and reflexive modernity depicted by Giddens and Beck amongst others has been accompanied by an emphasis in policy and wider society upon the responsibility of everyone to take control of their own lives and better themselves (Gillies, 2005). In this narrative, disadvantage is not seen as a consequence of structural inequality, but one of individual failing (Rose, 1999), whilst literature on class appeared to have dropped down the sociological agenda (Savage, 2000). The last two decades however have seen a surge of debate surrounding class and the cultural practices of parents. In particular, this literature has critiqued the move in social policy to "indoctrinate middle-class values as a method of tackling disadvantage" (Gillies, 2005: 836).

Research suggests that (middle class) children are spending less time out in the public sphere playing in the street for example (Karsten, 2005), and that there is a growing assumption that children should always be supervised and unaccompanied children often rouse concern or suspicion (Cahill, 1990). They suggest even children's leisure time is becoming increasingly structured and organised by adults including a move towards a 'back seat' generation of children who are chauffeured everywhere by their parents(Karsten, 2005). Social commentators such as Guldberg

(2009), argue that this shift comes from society's desire to protect children but has gone too far leading to cocooning and overprotecting children. Whilst for some it is difficult to compare generations based on potentially nostalgic notions of childhood past, there is evidence that childhood, and particularly children's experience of outdoor space, is different to that of past generations (Valentine and Mcendrick, 1997; Harden, 2000; Karsten, 2005). This thesis will consider these arguments in relation to everyday experiences of childhood in a non-deprived suburban community and consider to what extent Newtown Common can be seen to exemplify this notion of contemporary childhood.

A number of scholars have drawn on a Bourdieusian framework to highlight the ways in which middle class parents are able to transmit advantage through their choices in childcare (Vincent and Ball, 2006), involvement in school (Reay, 2000) and overall approach to parenting (Lareau, 2003). Furthermore, Skeggs (2004) argues that whilst the passing on of privileges is deemed 'good parenting' by policy makers, working class parents are seen to be failing to provide their children an appropriate start in life due to their lack of material resource. Some have also argued that for middle class parents there has been a focus on safeguarding the future well-being of children and young people, as has also been reflected in some cases of policy (for example the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales). Lareu (2003) refers to this as concerted cultivated, citing the increase in middle class children attending courses and organisations that may improve their outcomes in future life.

However, the targeting of government programme aims to improve future rather than current outcomes for those in more disadvantaged areas. For example, under Sure Start and Flying Start, parenting support has been directed to the most deprived areas of the UK, and therefore places in which families are identified as likely to be socially excluded (Lee et al., 2014). This suggests an assumed link between deprivation and parenting ability. Inadequate parenting is perceived as the underlying cause of a raft of social problems including crime (Lawler, 2000). Gillies (2003) argues that this can be seen as an attempt by the government to provide working class parents with the skills to bring up middle class children. In these ways, it could be assumed that family practices in Newtown Common fit with normalised forms of 'good parenting'. The data in the findings chapters certainly supports the notion that there is a classed element to perceptions of adequate and appropriate childrearing. It also shows that in areas such as Newtown Common, without targeted semi-formal family programmes, there are other areas in which parents feel they would like support.

Suburban communities

This chapter has aimed to highlight some of the pertinent debates to this thesis. Theoretical debates surrounding family and community relationships have been considered in respect of the individualisation thesis set out by Beck and others. Wider structural factors in relation to responsibility for children's well-being at the state and local level have also been explored, particularly in relation to the communitarian approach and in the context of reflexive modernity. In addition, however, it is important to recognise the impact that the type of neighbourhood may

have upon the nature of the community, the relationships within it and the wider support structures.

Newtown Common was chosen for a number of reasons, as explained in more detail in chapter five. Whilst it has some peculiarities, such as the lack of a primary school, it could largely be seen as an opportunity to engage with "typical nongated suburban experience" that Watt (2009) suggests are in need of further sociological exploration.

Within the classic community studies, suburbia was portrayed as a middle class utopia where "the move outward is also a move upwards" (Willmott and Young, 1967: 15). A number of urban studies in the United States of America in particular followed this up with studies highlighting the inequalities and criticism surrounding urban sprawl and gated suburban communities (Duany et al., 2001; Low, 2001; Blakely 2006). Watt (2009) argues however that "contemporary suburbia is characterised by late-modern anxiety (p2874).

In his analysis of suburbs in London, Watt (2009) argues that the building of newer housing estates near less traditionally wealthy areas is generating more of a great area of suburban dwellers of upwardly mobile ex-city dwellers. Echoing the findings by Lawler (1999; 2005) the residents of Newton Common were keen to disaffiliate themselves from 'other' people and places that were not to their taste by creating boundaries. Watt argues that this helps with their attempts to appear respectable and ratify their middle-class habitus. Whilst this project is exploratory in nature, these theoretical concepts will provide useful points for reflection in relation to the everyday experiences of residents in Newtown Common.

As early as 1961, Jacobs has criticised the planning of suburbs in the 1950s claiming that they contribute to the decline of communities by isolating residents. Of particular relevant to this thesis, she argues that density of people using the pavements together with the propensity of residents to pay attention to others in busy areas transform strangers into onlookers likely to identify trouble. Privatisation, she argues, inhibits community and increases concerns about safety. Concerns about the neighbourhood's physical environment leading to isolation, privatisation and the loss of social capital as discussed above provide valuable in discussions of community in the findings chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the key theoretical debates underpinning the thesis. The notion of community is one that can be interpreted in a number of ways and is often undefined in policy documents despite the identification of 'a safe home and community' as a key domain or assessing children's well-being. The chapter also explores the idea of relationships in modern society, reflecting on arguments that community and family bonds have been damaged raising questions about the existence of informal network for trust and support. The second part of the chapter considers contemporary approaches towards responsibility for children's well-being. There is an observable focus on the role of communities and parents upon influencing the current and future well-being of children. Expectations about parenting practices are highlighted as largely classed with the concerted cultivation

approach adopted by middle class parents favoured and endorsed in political and public debate.

The next chapter reviews some of the key empirical studies in relation to the thesis. It starts where this chapter findings by considering the impact of modern parenting practices upon children and young people. Citing the increased supervision and regulation of (middle class) children's lives, various commentators have contributed to the literature on childhood with claims about how the modern world is hindering children's development by failing to provide them with real food and play or social interaction (Palmer, 2006). Whilst largely rhetorical, such theories are supported by some empirical studies demonstrating the (re)positioning of childhood into the realm of the home (Karsten, 2005; Harden, 2000).

4. STUDIES IN CHILDHOOD, WELL-BEING AND PLACE

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the ways in which the community can impact upon children's safety and well-being. Consequently, this chapter attempts to summarise some of the relevant empirical evidence regarding children's well-being in the community. The previous chapters have demonstrated the perceived changes in childhood. Theoretical debates around the risk society suggest that childhood has been relocated away from public spaces due to growing concerns by parents and wider society about protection and safety. More recent debates however have highlighted the impact of overprotecting children upon their overall well-being. This chapter therefore explores these assertions by drawing on relevant empirical evidence in relation to childhood, risk and place. It argues that preoccupation with risk and safety can be seen as impacting upon children and young people's visibility in the public sphere, and that links between use of outside space and exercise have been linked to negative impacts upon their health and well-being. The chapter then reviews empirical evidence on neighbourhoods, children and risk, including scoping existing relevant findings from community case studies. It concludes by arguing that there is a gap in the literature regarding the role community can have upon facilitating the well-being of children and young people in a non-deprived, suburban commuter neighbourhood.

Much of the literature on children and place draw upon the pervasiveness of risk in the lives of children and parents. Whilst risk has been conceptualised in a number of ways the aim of this thesis is interested in everyday experiences of risk, which are likely to be context dependent (Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). Risk was therefore not defined during data collection allowing me to capture any risks to children's safety and well-being identified by those living and working in Newtown Common. Similarly, these studies relate to mundane experiences of risk in children's everyday lives.

Neighbourhood and children's well-being

This thesis aims to explore ways in which a neighbourhood may give rise to aspects of community that facilitate children's well-being. It focuses on everyday experiences within non-deprived, modern suburban neighbourhood akin to the ones Morrow (2011) identifies as increasingly common and containing high proportions of children. As noted in the introduction, the emphasis is therefore upon a wider interpretation of well-being that maltreatment. This section however provides a brief overview of research linking neighbourhood characteristics and children's maltreatment. Evidence suggests that children in suburban, less deprived areas are not those identified as most at risk of abuse and maltreatment. As discussed later in the thesis, this was reflected in the focus of this project which identified the low visibility of statutory services in Newtown Common compared to more disadvantaged communities (for example Evans and Holland, 2012; Holland, 2014).

Various studies have considered child well-being in relation to the neighbourhood environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) by focusing on child abuse and neglect. In reference to child well-being, statistical data on child maltreatment provides an insight into demographic characteristics relating to the 'at risk' nature of children (see for example Sabol et al., 2004; Southern and Biedrzycki, 2003). A study by Drake and Pandey (1996) drew on Census data and Child Protection Services data in the U.S. to examine the relationship between child maltreatment and neighbourhood poverty. They found that child neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse were all positively associated with neighbourhood poverty and that the link between neglect and poverty was especially strong. Similarly, research in the UK drawing on the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents has demonstrated the relationship between deprivation and child maltreatment (Sidebotham et al., 2002). Evidence suggests therefore that children in deprived neighbourhoods are more at risk of maltreatment, although it should be noted that they and their families are also likely to be subject to more surveillance than their middle-class peers. Some research has also specifically examined child maltreatment in the suburban jurisdiction and identified the role of instability in predicting child maltreatment rates at a neighbourhood level (Ernst, 2000). Geographic Information System (GIS) technology has also been used in US suburbs to examine and map child maltreatment (Ernst, 2001). Such research aims to provide a visual tool to highlight areas most at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Freisthler et al. (2006) provide a review of the research on ecology and child maltreatment. They discuss methodological difficulties in researching child welfare at the neighbourhood level. They advocate the use of multi-level modelling to enable a more complex understanding of the relationship between neighbourhood characteristics and child maltreatment with an aim to develop evidence-based neighbourhood interventions to help prevent child abuse and neglect. Similarly, (Coulton et al., 2007) argues that there needs to be more research to understand the relationship between how neighbourhoods can provide support for or potentially impact negatively upon families at risk of child maltreatment. However, research by (Lery, 2009) found that that whilst certain demographic features of a neighbourhood have been linked to child maltreatment, her study shows that 'residential instability, impoverishment and childcare burdens are positively associated with high foster care entry rates', regardless of such characteristics.

The majority of studies linking neighbourhood and children's well-being involve surveys and qualitative interviews with children and young people and aim to provide a more abstract overview of the types of issues which are believed to affect children's experiences of childhood and local areas in relation to safety and well-being. Concerns about safety from parents and children are shown to impact upon children's use of free space and their physical activity. These studies often provide support for the suggestion that efforts to protect children from risks and hazards are impacting upon their wider well-being. Very few studies however provide a case study exploration of the role of specific features and aspects of a community upon the well-being of local children and young people.

The relocation of childhood

In western society childhood is dominated by the ideology that 'the child's work is to play' (Blackford, 2004; 241). Children's lives in the UK however are subject to increasing control and regulation from both their parents and the state. Research has demonstrated that parents' concerns about children's safety have led to increased supervision of children and tighter restrictions over their access to the outside world (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Hood et al., 1996) and a relocation of childhood from the public sphere to the home area (Harden, 2000). Similarly commentators have suggested that British society has become too obsessed with child protection causing paranoid parenting and ultimately damaging childhood (Palmer, 2006; Furedi, 2001). Empirical evidence however remains mixed. Many authors argue that there has been a clear shift in children's play to inside the home or in supervised or organised activities due to parental concerns about children's safety (Valentine, 1996; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Harden, 2000; Tandy, 1999; Karsten, 2005). Hillman (2006) describes with remorse the rareness in which children are seen 'socialising in a relaxed way in the streets or playing football, or just doing shopping for the family' (p61).

Some evidence suggests that the street remains an important part of many children's lives (Percy-Smith and Matthews, 2001; Matthews et al., 2000). Recent research in Wales has also considered the different ways in which boys and girls make use of outdoor space. For example, in Ivinson's (2014) ethnographic study with young people in a working class neighbourhood in the South Wales Valleys she found that riding motorbikes and fixing engines provided a meaningful opportunity for autonomy for some young teenage boys, despite the negative reaction from authorities. Similarly, Renold and Ivinson (2014) highlight the importance of relationships with horses for some young girls in the area, further emphasising that not all children are restricted to their bedrooms through their parents' fears for their safety. Instead, for the young boys, it was their positioning as causing a risk that might have restricted their outdoor activities.

However, a large number of studies have documented the restriction of children's freedom and movement imposed by parents in an aim to protect them (see for example Timperio et al., 2004; Valentine, 1997b). A study of over 1,000 children in Austria by Timperio et al. (2004) examined the link between perceptions of neighbourhood and cycling amongst children. The study found that increased traffic, lack of sports grounds or parks locally, the need to cross several roads and a lack of lights or proper crossings all impacted upon parents' concerns regarding their children walking and cycling. They also found that main concerns differed for male or female children. However, as described above, many of the parents were primarily troubled by media scandals relating to child protection (Vincent et al., 2010). Often, parents were more concerned about abduction and abuse than the more likely hazards arising from traffic and speeding problems and the lack of pavements for children to walk along (Valentine, 1997). Whilst parents were often aware that abduction was a less likely threat to children, it is the horrifying nature of the consequences that make their fears so powerful (Jenkins, 2006; Murray, 2009; Collicott, 2009). A study by Vincent et al. (2010) explored the ways in which 70 working class mothers in London were influenced by political and media criticisms. They found that despite vetting and CRB checks mothers often found it hard to trust

anyone enough to use child care because they were not willing to take that risk with their child.

As noted by Lee et al. (2010), when examining the relationship between parents and children, society frequently emerges as 'risk-centred' regardless of the context of the research. Their review of parenting cultures observed that one common theme to emerge was the strong influence of risk consciousness. Livingstone (2007) has associated what she terms the 'bedroom culture' of children with both increases in individualisation and a desire for privacy coupled with risk consciousness in modern society. Parents associate the home with safety. He also notes however that the media rich environment dominates the lifestyle of young people's lives which also draws them into the home. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2014) argue that the risk aversion of parents is compounded by a breakdown in adult solidarity due to the shift in assuming that both strangers and professionals may have negative intentions towards children. Consequently, they argue that parenting and childhood is becoming increasingly privatised and restricted to the home.

However parents themselves have also been considered as a source of risk to children. Along with poverty, a lack of social support and familial problems, 'bad parenting' has been identified as having a risky impact upon children (Hoffman, 2010). In particular, it has been argued the policies and media coverage of parenting are based on middle class norms and in some way exaggerate the sense of agency possible for working class mothers struggling to embody the 'good mother' and 'good citizen' (Vincent et al., 2010; 136). Similarly, a study of middle class mothers in a Californian suburb found that taking their children to the park was a social experience for mothers who were 'idealized as unpaid mothers devoting 'priceless' labour to the upbringing of a child' (Blackford, 2004; 241). Despite the class differences in parenting culture however, these studies reinforce the notion that parents are primarily concerned about protecting their child.

Parental concerns are not the only influence on children's change in play however. A study by Tandy (1999) in a suburb in Australia examined differences in types and places of play across two generations. The survey was completed by children and by their parents, who were asked about their childhood. Tandy's findings suggest that parents' safety concerns and the growth in home-based leisure technology have restricted the location of children's play to within home areas. Based on an examination of the children's drawings and stories, she argues that children may prefer to play further afield but, based on their parents' concerns and restrictions, opt to play in their own or a friend's home. However, whilst some are concerned about the temporal and spatial boundaries parents are imposing upon their children, Critchlow (2007) argues that children portray these alternative activities, including supervised play, as positive and beneficial. She argues that this is linked to them being allowed the freedom to play in large groups and in spaces designated for children without adults disrupting and disapproving of their noise and presence. Furthermore, the children in her study enjoyed the fact that the supervision and regulation in such environments helped keep them safe. There is clearly an overriding perception amongst parents and children however, that children are safest when kept in the home area.

Such studies demonstrate that, for children and young people living in less deprived neighbourhoods, there is a relocation of children into the home and private sphere. However, experiences and perceptions of risk to children's well-being are also classed and contextual. Evidence suggests there are social inequalities in children's exposure to risk and danger (Bradshaw, 2011). Furthermore, research with children and young people in more deprived areas have continued to evidence young people's use of the street and public space (Evans and Holland, 2012). The study conducted in a south Wales valley by Renold and Ivinson, (2014) reflects on the outdoor activities enjoyed by girls and boys as part of their gendered experiences of their neighbourhood. These findings also echo those of Lareau (2003; 2010) who noted the classed difference in the ways parents regulated their children's use of time.

Class differences in children's use and experiences of neighbourhood were also observed in findings from the linked study by Evans and Holland (2012). Their research demonstrates the importance of recognising the nuances of local parenting culture for example, when exploring children's use of space in the neighbourhood. They argue that there is a "community parenting paradox" in their study in Caergoch, whereby residents' lives, including their parenting practices and behaviours, are very visible and perceived by outsiders to be neglectful despite the complex but invisible cultures, rules and knowledge that inform community parenting practices (p178). For those living in this neighbourhood, parenting can be seen as reflecting the working class approach identified by Lareau, (2003; 2011) whereby children are encouraged to enjoy their childhood and develop 'naturally. As noted by O'Brien et al. (2000) this has become a marker of neglectful or irresponsible parenting in society compared with the more endorsed approach of children taking place in supervision, organised activities. Lareau identifies the latter approach as a form of concerted cultivation approach to parenting associated with middle class families. This involves investing in children's future outcomes by taking an active role in their childhood and enlisting them in organisations and groups, for example, which are seen to foster their future well-being.

Children, risk and the private sphere

Given the identified relocation of childhood into the private sphere, at least for those in less deprived areas, some studies have highlighted the significance and yet absence of qualitative investigation of safety in the home, or private sphere. Harden et al.'s (2000) qualitative study on the impact of risk and parental anxiety on the everyday worlds of children found that both parents' and children's perceptions of risk usually relate to the public sphere. They found that participants seldom reported home accidents as a risk. Harden (2000) argues that this is because parents and children both perceive the home as a space of safety in contrast to a feeling of vulnerability in the public realm. Consequently, known areas and public spaces near to the home were also believed to be safer than unknown places. Accordingly, children reported their wariness of different places and spaces when negotiating risk (Harden et al., 2000). Whilst outside play for children often refers to playing in the back garden (Valentine, 2000), the boundaries and construction of the 'home area' may vary with age (Matthews, 1984).

The perception of the home as a haven is not always a useful strategy. Some families in deprived inner city areas have been shown to adopt the defensive strategy of 'keeping to themselves' whilst externalising the fear of 'others' may make the home seem safer, it also creates fear of everything outside (Reay and Lucey, 2000). Furthermore accident statistics demonstrate that the home is a site of a vast number of accidents to children in the UK each year, as well familial abuse and neglect. Nonetheless, whilst parents may realise such accidents are more likely then abduction and abuse, their concerns about the latter are too powerful to be ignored (Ross, 2007; Collicott, 2009).

Modern technology has also penetrated the private sphere, exposing children and young people risks from the 'outside world' or public sphere (West et al., 2009; Livingstone et al., 2010). Livingstone et al. (2010) found in their study that 33% of children went online on their mobile phones or internet enabled hand held device, and this figure is likely to have increased in the past few years with personal internet devices becoming increasingly affordable. In Livingstone et al.'s exploration of internet use by children aged 9 to 16 years old in the UK, risks to children's safety and well-being included access to and use of pro-anorexia, self-harm and suicide websites. Children also reported being subject to bullying online, making contact with strangers and sending or receiving sexual images. The authors noted however that children experience fewer online risks than might be expected given their levels of use, and these risks need to be managed not reduced.

Nevertheless, exchanging sexual images or messages, known as sexting, has been identified as a particular risk to young people in the UK, and girls in particular (Ringrose et al., 2012). The findings from qualitative work with children aged 12 to 14 years old in London by Ringrose et al. (2012) revealed that sexist abuse and harassing behaviour, which would result in prosecution in public spaces, appeared accepted and taken for granted activity by young people in these online interactions. This questions the notion that relocating children to the private sphere is necessarily a means to ensuring their safety and well-being. Responsibility for managing these risks is still being negotiated in policy, but these risks are arguably less applicable to neighbourhood strategies of protection and intervention. The role of ensuring children's well-being during their experience of online communities and they ways in which such communities are regulated are beyond the remit of this thesis but would be an interesting area for future work.

Children, risk and the local sphere

Despite the documented decrease in time children spend in the public sphere, a number of studies have sought to understand children's everyday experiences outside of school and home, including exploring how they do spend their free time. To explore the impact of a risks society upon childhood it is important to understand the everyday, mundane experiences of risk (Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). Of particular relevance to this thesis is how children spend their time in what Harden (2000) refers to as the local sphere, that is, a space often close to home where children spend their time and so built up some familiarity and knowledge of places and often the people within them. Whilst this sphere is not deemed to be as safe as the home, or private sphere, it provides familiarity and less vulnerability than the public sphere.

Although childhood is not homogenous, three key places emerged from the literature as common local places where children might spend their time: parks and playgrounds; school journeys and spaces for physical activity and play. Moreover, these examples can also be seen as designated or acceptable used of the public sphere in society more so than playing streets, for example (2002). Whilst these examples were the most common chosen illustrations of how children may spend their time in their local sphere, the later chapters suggest that in Newtown Common, children make limited use of these spaces.

Children's use of parks

Research on use of parks has often come from the premise that children are not making enough use of them. Criticisms from children about parks often includes complaints about 'dogs muck' and a lack of wild space to make dens (Morrow, 2002). Play parks have also been identified as a space for younger children although they are still often valued as a space for older children, aged 10 to 14 years (Elsley, 2004). A study by (Loukaitou-Sideris and Sideris, 2010) examined why children made little use of many parks in inner city and suburban areas in the USA. Using data from surveys of children and observation of 100 parks, they concluded that suburban and inner city children were 'attracted to parks of different sizes and containing different facilities, and that the association between park safety and park use was also different in these two settings'. Lack of time and concern about safety were reported as the main reason for underutilization of parks by parents however such research often focuses on the role of the parents and neglects the agency and views of children themselves.

Whilst parks have been identified as a popular and important space for children (Homel and Burns, 1987), the inconsistent nature of children's use of parks creates problems for planners and managers of public space (Hall et al., 1999). Furthermore, use is gendered with young girls' concerns about safety and the presence of boys affecting their presence at parks (James, 1995). A study by Lloyd et al. (2008) found that parks played an important part in girls' lives including providing space for 'social interaction' in early adolescence and a 'retreat' during the rest of their adolescence (p21). They also found that the social safety of parks was a significant factor in girls' use of parks. Having a familiar park close to home enabled them to meet friends in private and away from their family without the need for transport or planning and without feeling too much at risk.

Parents' safety concerns about where children spend their time have widely been reported as a key factor in inhibiting children's use of public space. This includes a concern about use of local parks. For example, Tinsley et al. (2002) found that the condition, maintenance and perceived safety of parks by parents restrict children's access to local parks. Most research however has considered parents as only those who control children's access to the park, rather than their experiences when attending the parks with their child. One notable exception is Blackford (2004), who examined the way mothers in a suburban neighbourhood in California observed their children's play in different locations. She found that, in parks, mothers often sat in a ring socialising whilst surveying their children, as well as each other. However, she found that when in commercial playgrounds or parks, such as the play area in

McDonald's PlayPlace[6], mothers appeared to partly 'let their guard down' letting their children play undisturbed while they 'put their trust in commercial standards of safety' (p229). This study reveals the role of parks in some mother's lives and also emphasises the preference for supervised, organised play in places designed to be safe for children. It has also been suggested that 'the performance of gender and class values is crucial in the theatre of the playground, among the mothers who tend the young children but also among the children themselves' (Blackford, 2004; 245). Parks therefore remain an important part of children's everyday lives, especially in relation to risk management.

Children and physical exercise

An increasing amount of literature has examined the relationship between children's health and their local environment (Teedon et al., 2014), particularly in relation to obesity (Lake and Townsend, 2006; Galvez et al., 2010). Perceptions of neighbourhood safety have often been associated with a decrease in the time children spend playing outside or in active transport (Carver et al., 2008). Similarly, research suggests that parents' concerns about safety and urban sprawl have contributed to a decrease in numbers of children walking and cycling in their neighbourhoods (Loukaitou-Sideris and Stieglitz, 2002; Timperio et al., 2004). These concerns however can vary according to neighbourhood.

Weir et al. (2006) examined the relationship between children's physical activity and parents' perceptions of safety in inner city and suburban neighbourhoods. They found that parents in inner city areas reported higher levels of concern about neighbourhood safety than suburban parents. Children's levels of physical activity were also negatively correlated with inner city parents' anxieties. They concluded that neighbourhood safety is an important factor in children's opportunities for physical activity. However, their method of data collection included a questionnaire whereby parents were asked to estimate their levels of anxiety about a variety of neighbourhood safety issues. Attitudes are personal and thus difficult to compare across respondents. Also, whilst this considered a variety of factors, such as gangs, child aggression, traffic and personal safety, qualitative data could offer a greater insight into parents understandings of risk and safety in the neighbourhood and examine their decision making process. Furthermore, such research neglects the views and agency of children in decisions to play outdoors. It also forms one of the many examples of research emphasising that the problem is especially high in inner city areas without recognising the benefits of future research in suburban neighbourhoods to examine why, and how far they are perceived as representing a safe community for children. In contrast, a study by Wridt (2010) used a qualitative GIS approach to tracking children's movements in relation to children's exercise and obesity in a low-income neighbourhood in Denver, USA. The study offers an insight into children's perceptions of risk noting that they do not always correlate with reported crime. Consequently, she argued that children's local knowledge should be recognised and utilized in neighbourhood level interventions to promote physical activity.

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[6] MCDonald's is a fast food restaurant which has designated play spaces for children where they are able to play on slides, climb ladders and frames and play in pits of plastic balls for example.

Children and school journeys

One product of an increasing interest in the mundane aspects of children's everyday lives in a risk society, is the literature on children's journeys to school. A number of studies have noted the chauffeur-driven generation of children driven almost everywhere, including to school (Hillman, 2006). Jenkins (2006) has attributed the decline in children's mobility independence to a culture of risk avoidance. However, Murray (2009) criticises the literature on 'paranoid parenting' (Furedi, 2001), arguing that the stranger danger discourse "underplays the subtle and complex interaction of conceptualisations and practices of motherhood' (p473). She asserts that such discussions ignore the interaction between mothers' and child's perceptions and experiences of risk and their ability to actively assess media and expert messages about risk places. Murray's (2009) study on children's school journeys found that almost all the mothers were aware of the paranoid parent discourse and that parents and children alike were influenced by the media coverage of risky events. However, personal and local experiences of risk were also significant in negotiating the discourses global risks. For example, whilst one mother was concerned about bullying, her son downplayed it, which Murray notes may be due to his ability to negotiate it. In contrast, she found that, like in parks (Morrow, 2002), dog excrement was one of the most significant risks reported by children because of its potentially embarrassing, rather than dangerous, consequences.

Some risks however are experienced by children throughout their everyday activities. For example, research by Harden et al. (2000:18) found that some children believed 'hanging out' to be 'inherently risky, although were not necessarily able to explain this'. Young children in particular were concerned about risky behaviour by adults that included the use of drugs and alcohol. Such concerns often vary according to place because different living environments have different risks associated with them (Mee, 2010). Risks were found by Harden et al. (2000) to be managed by children as well as parents. Children may try to avoid areas which are perceived to be more risky, as well as relying on the 'safety net' provided by their parents, through the provision of information and money in case of emergencies (p19). The ways in which everyday risks are identified and managed is a crucial aspect when understanding the ways in which environmental aspects of the community can facilitating the well-being local children and young people.

A study by Ross (2007) incorporated a range of visual and qualitative methods to explore how school journeys play an important role in how local children and young people engage and interact with their local area. The children in her study, aged between eight and 11, identified two types of safety concerns: social dangers, such as strangers; and environmental dangers, such as traffic. Ross argues that cultural and physical characteristics of children's local environments can have specific impacts upon their understandings and experiences of place. More recently, a study by Evans and Holland (2012) highlights the value of recognising local parenting cultures as well as environments when considering children's and young people's experiences and negotiation of risk and safety in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Wales. The relationship between place and children safety and well-being has been demonstrated as an important one, and one in need of further exploration.

Playing in parks, walking to schools and playing sport can therefore be identified as the commonly research spaces for young people. However, a number of studies still cite the importance of street play for young people (Malone, 2002; Matthews, 2003; Percy-Smith, 2002; Evans and Holland, 2012). Some have argued however that adults' safety concerns and the normalising of middle class approaches to parenting have contributed to the loss of the street as a site for children's play (O'Brien et al., 2000; Karsten, 2005). Despite the work of Biddulph (2001; 2010; 2012) and others, who seek to encourage children's use of streets over vehicles use, children out and about in their local roads are still often viewed negatively by adults. This is a theme reflected in the findings chapter of this thesis.

Place and risk

The aim of this thesis is to explore the way in which community can impact upon children and young people's everyday experiences of risk and in neighbourhood with that is not deprived or at a geographical extreme. As described in chapter five, the chosen site is a modern, non-deprived predominantly commuter suburb. This section reviews research that has been conducted in suburban areas, as well as inner city and rural areas to identify key findings and messages that helped to inform the development of my project. Limited research has been conducted into the relationship of suburban neighbourhoods and experiences of risk and safety with no examination of the role of the neighbourhood or community in promoting and facilitating the well-being of young people in these areas.

The increasing interest in the sociology of childhood has also incorporated an attempt to explore and understand children's geographies. The recognition of childhood as a social construct together with an appreciation of children and social actors also exposed the heterogeneous nature of childhood in relation to their different experiences of place (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). When examining children's living environments in relation to perceptions of safety, it is important to consider that specific local environments play a significant part in shaping young people's experiences in their everyday lives (Harden, 2000; Percy-Smith and Matthews, 2001). It is also important to note that children and young people's experiences of the same neighbourhood are not homogeneous. Studies of place and childhood have identified that experiences vary according to gender, sexuality and class (Cooper, 2009) and race, class, gender and age (Reay and Lucey, 2000; Renold and Ivinson, 2014; Ivinson, 2014). When examining place, risk and childhood, Harden et al. (2000) also found that the time of day was also linked to experiences of places, whereby children believed certain places were more risky after dark.

Following the spatial turn in sociology, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of understanding constructions and experiences of place (Cresswell 1996, 2004). Much of the discussion draws on the work of political geographer Agnew (1987) who identified the physical location, the locale and the sense of place as central to making place a 'meaningful location'. Building on his framework, Gieryn (2000) argues that whilst sociologists often do not explicitly label 'place sensitive' work as part of the sociology of place literature, 'sociologists have a stake in place no matter what they analyze, or how' (p46). Despite increased advancements in

transportation and communication, he argues that place remains an important element of social life. Gieryn's review of sociological studies that consider place demonstrates how place is created and constructed by people through perceptions, memories and imagination, as well as how places themselves play a part in shaping people's lives and identities. Consequently, such work has been considered in relation to the sociology of childhood (see for example Jones 1999; Scourfield 2006). Furthermore, Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue that the construction of childhood is ingrained with a 'spatial ideology which shapes our understanding of different environments, such as the home and the street, and that this has a range of consequences' (p776). When considering children and young people's use and experiences of public space, and their parents and other local residents' perceptions of this use, it is therefore important to draw on these theories which embrace the combined sociological theories of place and childhood.

Despite a growing literature surrounding childhood, research on children, risk and safety largely focuses on the 'unitary urban child' with further attention needed to rural neighbourhoods (Nairn et al., 2003: 9; Matthews et al., 2000; Philo, 1992). A study by Mee (2010; 193) found that many parents believed that "any place to raise children is a good place" as long as they are raised by good parents who ensure their safety and well-being. However, their results suggest that some types of neighbourhood are better at achieving this than others. The three main themes in areas of living that appear to effect children's safety the most are; deprived and inner city estates, suburban neighbourhoods and rural areas. In Wales, the Valleys area provides a further geographical category that shares features with urban and rural locations. The majority of empirical studies about place and safety highlight the importance of risks in either end of the extreme in terms of living environment for children and young people; from risky places in the inner city and disadvantaged areas to isolation in rural locations. Suburban areas are often referred to as some sort of medium ground by these studies with slightly better access to facilities and slightly lower levels of risks and other hazards. Specific neighbourhood based case studies of suburban areas, particularly modern housing estates, remain largely absent from studies of childhood and risk however.

Suburban neighbourhoods

Limited neighbourhood-based studies have examined the specific impacts of place upon childhood and safety in suburban areas, with studies tending to focus on areas where children might be most 'at risk', such as deprived and inner city areas, as discussed below). Research that has been conducted in suburban areas however, considered them to be less risky than inner city, deprived and rural neighbourhoods. Despite parents often moving to suburban areas because they are perceived as safer for children, Corcoran et al., (2009) argue that these newer suburbs can pose new considerations with green space decreasing and a lack of facilities.

Parental beliefs about neighbourhood safety and a sense of community feature in a number of research articles concerned with urban planning policies and the development of suburbs. (Handy et al. 2008) examined support in the US for developing traditional 'communities' in neighbourhoods. They found support grew from 44% to 59% between 2003 and 2005. They found this support was linked to an expectation that these more suburban neighbourhoods provided child and elderly

friendly environments, although support was limited in rural areas due to concerns about space. Findings that identify parental beliefs about the benefits of childhood in suburbia are supported by a qualitative study conducted by (Keels, 2008) in a variety of US neighbourhoods. Results showed that residing in suburban areas was a central factor in aiding children's access to higher quality resources. Furthermore, children moving into suburban areas gained access to safer streets, schools and community centres. Consequently, whilst parents recognised that suburban housing was more expensive, they felt it was a worthwhile move to ensure their children's access to these benefits.

Research with children also echoes these messages, with both rural and urban children perceived cities as more risky spaces (Harden et al., 2000). Similarly, Percy-Smith and Matthews (2001) found that bullying was less common in suburban than in inner city areas. They argue that this is partly linked to groups of young people 'hanging out' in inner city areas, whilst suburban areas offered more space and opportunities to engage in organised clubs and activities (p57). Such perceptions are supported by research by Deakin (2006) on victimization and experience of harassment, physical assault and theft based on findings from the UK Children and Young People's Safety Survey. She found that the street was the most common site for harassment of younger people, especially on the journey to and from school, followed by schools and parks. Deakin asserted that children living in inner city areas and council estates were at the most risk from assault and theft, whilst those in suburban areas were less vulnerable. Children from rural environments were found to be at the lowest risk.

Whilst the notion of the rural idyll has been identified as unrealistic (Valentine, 1997b), and assumptions about deficit childhoods in deprived areas critiqued (Reay and Lucey, 2000) research has also questioned whether childhood in the 'in between' suburban areas offers a balanced middle ground or creates more problems (Corcoran et al., 2009). Quantitative studies on children and safety, such as the research by Deakin appear to identify suburban areas as relatively safe environments for young people. Some have argued however that there are challenges for families and young people living in suburbia. One of the classic community studies in the UK, conducted by Willmott and Young (1960) examined family, class and kinship in a London suburb evidenced the extent of close-knit kinship networks in working class families and highlighted their role in mediating the impact of poverty during industrialisation.

The nature of suburbs later in the century and in the US in particular however has been increasingly associated with more middle-class commuter neighbourhoods without local services. Wynne (1977) described the difference between 'old' suburbs, which were towns on the outskirts of a city, and 'new' dormitory suburbs, which rely on cars and do not have their own economy. He argued that these new suburbs were therefore less able to support family life with less formal or informal activities for children compared to inner city children who may have a richer life experience. Subsequently, Miller (1995) has reviewed literature on suburbia from the middle to late twentieth century. She argued that whilst many families aspired to the suburban ideal in the United States (based on the traditional British suburb), the emphasis on family closeness and maintaining a perfect home together with a lack of nearby entertainment led to family isolation. Consequently, when residents struggle to live

up to the ideal in reality it leads to stress and may undermine the familial harmony they aimed to achieve.

Findings by Bould (2003) however, challenge the stereotype of isolated families living in the suburbs. This project examined so called 'caring' neighbourhoods in the US. These were suburban predominantly white, middle class areas in which residents reported working together to care for local children. The study found that these neighbourhoods placed little value on privacy. It also highlighted the prevalence of the male-bread winner ethos whilst the mother stayed at home with pre-school children. Furthermore, in a study on parents' attitudes towards adolescents and substance misuse, suburban students reported that their parents were more tolerant of substance misuse than some other 'problem behaviours' such as their rudeness to other adults (Luthar and Goldstein, 2008).

Empirical research on childhood in suburbia has received mixed reviews especially in terms of children's safety in the neighbourhood. Some studies have found that adults often move to suburban areas because their access to green open space and 'nice neighbourly feel' offer a preferred place for children to grow up (Allen et al., 2007). However, other research has questioned this notion of an ideal childhood of the suburbs. The creation of these types of 'good' neighbourhoods in Portland, US has also been evaluated by Miles and Song (2009). They found that the modern urbanisation planning and policies had successfully created 'good' neighbourhoods in terms of connectivity and accessibility as well as fostering a positive social environment. However they believe that this process has also created other pockets and areas of poverty elsewhere that lack all these features of a 'good' neighbourhood. Research with children and parents in Hertfordshire, England by Mackett and colleagues (2007) found that parents in higher income families were more likely to drive their children around for safety reasons. Their study also revealed that children living in the suburban areas with more green, open space, local support networks and access to shops in the area were more likely to be allowed out without adult supervision. As explored later in this thesis however, the absence of some of these features could make a difference to children's use of suburban neighbourhood.

There are also many risks still inherent in suburbia. A study of suburban life in Dublin found that whilst suburban neighbourhoods are often identified as less risky than inner city or deprived areas; childhood is still shaped by similar issues. Corcoran et al. (2009) argue that the perception of the child as vulnerable permeates every social class and their findings suggest that parents and children still have to balance safety and freedom. Whilst parents may have moved out of the city with their children to a more pleasant and rural environment, they found that 'in reality, parents end up expending considerable time and energy organising activities for their children and in most cases, ferrying them by car to and from activities' (p53). Similarly Corcoran et al. argue that suburban life generates risks such as heavy traffic, lack of amenities and anti-social behaviour of young people, which result in additional anxieties for adult residents. Most of the young people in their study reported a preference to suburban life; however they were frustrated by the erosion of potential meeting spaces by increasing developments and the limitations on their playing of soccer by adult residents. This was reflected in the residents' interviews in this thesis, which

included complaints about the presence of groups of teenagers or balls being kicked into gardens (see chapter six).

Those living in these neighbourhoods therefore positioned children as a risk as well as at risk. Corcoran et al. argue that in suburban areas, where amenities and thus meeting spaces are often limited, children form the basis of adult residents' social interactions and networks. Schwartz (1980) uses the metaphor of the house being used as "the hotel, rather than a home", in modern suburban life (p641). Reviewing research in the second half of the twentieth century he notes that residents return to their house to eat and sleep, but the majority of their life takes place outside of the home and suburb. The findings from Corcoran et al. (2009) echo this, arguing that through taking children to schools and clubs and meetings parents of children's friends, family life provides the main opportunities for adult residents to make social ties in the neighbourhood. This is a theme that needs further exploration and is considered later in the empirical chapters.

An earlier study on suburban childhood by Homel and Burns (1987) in Australia found that primarily a lack of children their own age followed by traffic, noise and pollution were the top problems listed by children when asked what they did not like about living in their area. Some also reported that there were not enough parks or places for play. However, the children in their study frequently reported that their neighbourhood had friendly people, nice parks, quiet streets and other children to play with, suggesting a mixed response. Homel and Burns concluded that suburban living can often "lack sufficient formal and informal activities to offer children a rich and varied existence" (p102). Such arguments build on the work of Zill (1984) who suggested whilst children living in suburbs were more positive about growing up in their neighbourhood than children from inner city areas, their mobility was limited until they were able to drive. Whilst this research is not based in the British context, they highlight some key issues surrounding suburban childhood in need of further exploration.

Childhood in deprived and inner city areas

A number of studies have argued that living in inner city estates and deprived neighbourhoods can have negative effects upon children's well-being. In addition to the statistics on maltreatment, poverty and deprivation are also seen to impact upon children well-being more generally, and their experiences of the neighbourhood. Whilst the idyllic perception of suburban and rural childhood has been questioned, there is little doubt that many parents see life away from city and disadvantaged neighbourhoods as a safer and better place to bring up children (Matthews et al., 2000; Valentine, 1997b).

Findings from the Growing up in Scotland longitudinal cohort study (Bradshaw et al., 2013) also showed that only 50% of parents living in the most deprived areas reported that they felt their neighbourhood was good for bringing up children in contrast with 95% of those living in the least deprived areas. Whilst there is recognition that children are not simply passive beings onto which the negative impacts of neighbourhood can imprint, there is a high risk association with low income neighbourhoods and estates (Pinkster and Fortuijn, 2009). Such areas are subject to higher rates of assault and theft (Deakin, 2006). This is reflected in

children's views on safety and place with both urban and rural children often perceived more deprived areas as most risky (Harden et al., 2000).

Young people in deprived or inner city neighbourhoods are also often seen to pose a risk to others living in the neighbourhood.

> *Prevalent anxieties about gangs, yob culture, feckless working class youth, a black crime wave and out of control drug consumption all focus exclusively on youth cultures. Within these landscapes of concern, children living on large inner-city council estates are constructed as both 'at risk' and as 'a potential risk to others*
> *(Reay and Lucey, 2000; 411).*

Whilst anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) are often associated with children, one study found that children also suffered from racial harassment, fighting and loud music from adult residents in their block of flats (Morrow, 2002). Vandalism, needles, burnt out areas, boarded up houses and rubbish were also reported as making children who lived in deprived neighbourhoods feel particularly unsafe (Elsley, 2004).

Research by Ghate and Hazel (2002), who conducted a representative survey of 1754 parents in Britain, followed up with qualitative work with a subsample of 40 parents in disadvantaged circumstances. The main environmental problems that parents reported included dirty streets, traffic danger, stray dogs and pollution from traffic or factories. Poor areas were identified as "physically dirty and degraded, crime ridden, dangerous and generally unpleasant by those who live in them" (p87). This impacted upon parents' perception of safety for their children and therefore their imposed boundaries and rules, preferring to keep them indoors, in their gardens or at their friend's house. This study provides a clear picture of the sorts of environmental risks and dangers parents perceive children face in disadvantaged area.

Some research has examined children and young people's experiences of inner city and disadvantaged areas. One study by Travlou et al. (2008) examined where teenagers liked to spend their free time in Edinburgh, London and Sacramento, California. They found that shopping malls, cinemas and commercial centres were among the most favoured and argued that public space is often contested, both by competing sets of teenage groups and between teenagers and other residents. For example, some young people in her study said they were resented for hanging around in one street as the local shop owner felt it deterred business. In this case, the restriction of space is incurred not through a desire to protect the young people, but because they have become perceived as a threat. Similarly, when trying to encourage children's sense of community it is important to address their exclusion from the local social life, often enforced by the 'dirty looks' they get just because of their age (p151).

These notions of deprived and inner city areas are widespread, with a number of studies associating these neighbourhoods to low development or education outcomes for children Cassen and Kindon, 2007; Dyson et al., 2010). However, it is also important not to allow such neighbourhoods to become stigmatised based upon adult or middle class ideals (Reay and Lucey, 2000). A study by Reay and Lucey, (2000) with primary school children in inner city London found that all children reported concerns about danger in their neighbourhood, especially from traffic or

strangers. They noted however that the sense of threat was most prevalent from working class children from larger estates. However, whilst children and parents on such estates considered their living environment as "dirty, dangerous and chronically under resourced for children" (p423) they also felt a sense of belonging. Reay and Lucey concluded that there is a need to explore working class experiences of place and space to 'counter the hegemony of middle class versions' which are based on stigmatised discourses rather than an understanding of children's perspectives (p425).

Similarly, Seaman et al. (2006) argue that parenting in deprived neighbourhoods must also be recognised for its strengths and ability to promote resilience. Their qualitative research in disadvantaged areas in Glasgow found that parents often identified positive aspects of living in their area, and that they used open, democratic and clear parenting strategies to work with their children in keeping them safe. Furthermore, it is argued that children and young people living in the area were able to take responsibility for the safety of themselves and their friends by keeping an eye out for each other, staying together and sharing local knowledge about potential risks or dangerous situations. Such findings are echoed in the community studies in South Wales (Evans and Holland, 2012; Holland, 2014) discussed below which evidences the collective responsibility adopted in deprived areas for children's safety and well-being. The extent to which this is applicable in less deprived, suburban area has rarely been explored and will form a focus of the empirical chapters later in this thesis.

Rural childhoods

Research that has investigated rural lives has highlighted the dominant 'imagining' of the rural as idyllic, natural, peaceful and with close community ties (Valentine, 1997b: 137). Following Philo's (1992) plea for more consideration of neglected rural children, McKendrick (2000: 374), asserted that 'a core concern of the new rural studies of childhood has been to deconstruct the rural idyll which is presumed to exist'. Studies have found not only that the rural myth does not fit with experiences of life in the rural (Valentine, 1997b) but also that the disjunction between the myth and reality of life in 'small, remote, poorly serviced and fractured communities' caused dislocation, especially for more deprived children (Matthews et al., 2000). Both parents and children believed rural environments were more problematic for older teenagers who are not well catered for (Valentine, 1997b; Glendinning et al., 2003).

Accordingly, Nairn et al. (2003) assert that the idealization of rural living comes from the urban/rural dichotomy whereby the rural is constructed in opposition to the negative images of an unsafe urban. They note that young people in particular have been cast as 'victims of urbanisation' doomed to an uneasy childhood (p14). Their study, however, criticised this deterministic approach to researching young people's lives and aimed to demonstrate how they challenged social constructions and seek out 'the urban' within 'the rural' (p9).

Constructions of the rural therefore have become increasingly diverse. The growing literature on both parents and children's challenges and concerns about life in rural environments (Valentine, 1997b; 1997a; Woodward, 1996; Matthews et al., 2000) has highlighted the other rural, or the 'anti-idyll' (Bell, 1997). Similarly, whilst there

remains a rural childhood myth that the countryside is the ideal location for an innocent, free and adventurous childhood (Jones, 1999), Tucker and Matthews (2001) uncovered anxieties and conflicts surrounding freedom to play in recreational spaces amongst rural children. They concluded that there are multiple realities of rural childhood within Britain that must be explored.

Furthermore, international constructions of the rural are equally diverse. For example, Nairn et al. (2003) highlighted the differences between perceptions of the rural in Britain, America and New Zealand. Whilst it is important to remember that different children have different experiences, it is equally important to consider that children are not a homogenous group and experiences of communities and neighbourhoods are contingent on a variety of integrated factors and contexts beyond the rural/urban divide.

Parents and children both believe that a rural environment is a good and safe place for children to grow up (Little and Austin, 1996; Glendinning et al., 2003). In contrast to the imagined perfect idyll, however, research has shown parents understood that rural environments are not completely safe havens and often construct them as both dangerous and safe at the same time (Valentine, 1997a; 1997b). As concluded by Ward (1990), fiction and novels may evoke childhood in the countryside as free, safe and purer than city living, but these do not correlate with concerns in public discourse about children's safety in the public sphere (Valentine, 1996; 1997a; 1997b). Similarly, Bell (1997) argues that whilst a tranquil life in the countryside is still aspired to by many as 'a place to retreat from the ever quickening pace of urban living', there is also another side to the rural such as the dystopian 'badlands' and 'rural horror' depicted by some American films (p94).

Consequently, whilst notions of nature, freedom and opportunity still exist, (Aitken, 1994), parents' are concerned about urban related dangers, such as traffic problems, speeding vehicles and risks from strangers, as well as local, demonised rural strangers (Valentine, 1997). Similarly, Matthews et al. (2000) have argued that the realities of children's experiences of growing up in a remote, small rural neighbourhood lacking in facilities suggests an 'alternative geography of exclusion and disenfranchisement' (p141). Following the increase in children's engagement in organised activities, concerns have been raised because access to such designated spaces for play and activities are limited by class. Furthermore, transport to and provision of such activities are more limited in rural areas increasing the necessity of parents' economic resources for children to have the opportunities to take part in such activities. It is important to recognise however that those living in rural areas are not always wealthy or middle class. Woodward's (1996) research demonstrated that the notion of the idealized rural 'obscures deprivation' (p60). Whilst participants in her study did identify potential difficulties with living in a rural environment, perception of challenges was not linked to deprivation because it was hidden and seen as an urban problem. Furthermore, when deprivation in rural areas was acknowledged, it was associated with an individual's personal failings.

Community case studies of childhood

Research has evidenced the significance of place on childhood and children's safety and well-being amongst a complex array of different factors. Measures of poverty and deprivation have been used to draw conclusions about links between neighbourhood and children's safety and welfare, whilst research on children's well-being often examines children's and parents experiences and perceptions of neighbourhoods at a more general or abstract level without consideration for how these factors might link together in a particular locale to generate an insight into how the ways in which well-being is facilitated in a particular locale. Where the latter has happened, community case studies have explored experiences in a particular geographical setting, but draw on the concept of community to illicit the way neighbourhood can mean more than just a place. This study aims to supplement this literature by providing an in depth community case study which explores the role of specific aspects and features of the neighbourhood upon the safety and well-being of local children and young people.

Some ethnographic studies have already been conducted in this manner and provided a useful contribution to literature on neighbourhood, community and childhood. Research in the U.S. in particular provides some interesting ethnographic data on childhood in relation to class and gender. In contrast, Merten's (2005) study on young girls in suburbia offers a more mundane insight into gender, trouble and the relationship between school type and life stage in a suburban neighbourhood. Her two year ethnographic study on middle aged children in a US suburb and focused on the transition between childhood and teenhood and grade school to junior high school. Blackford's (2004) ethnography of children's playgrounds in suburban California examined the use of the playground by mothers as well as children. Exploring the use of parks by mothers she found that the panoptic ring of mothers surrounding children in the park represented the ideology of suburban, middle class life which centred on bringing up their children. She also noted that parks can be a site for displaying gender and class values amongst children as well as their mothers. Such studies begin to offer a more detailed picture of life in suburbia rather than identifying it as simply safer or better than life in an inner city. These studies offer an insight into the value of ethnographic data to get a better understanding of parents' use of parks for example or girl's experiences of changing schools.

The findings by Evans and Holland (2012) regarding community parenting were also only illuminated through a prolonged, ethnographic approach to exploring residents' every day lives. They argue that parenting practices in Caergoch rely on invisible cultural practices within the community. Community parenting of children and young people was identified as an important form of informal safeguarding whereby local residents often look out for the well-being of each other's children across the neighbourhood. These informal networks of support were enabled by the established links and kin networks evidence in the community, and the design of the neighbourhood whereby parents could sit outside the front of their houses and observe activities along the straight, observable street. This contrasts with experiences in Newtown Common where local networks were new, homes and back gardens were bigger and the streets emphasised boundaries. As argued later in the

thesis, such conditions effectively privatised and hid parenting, childhood and prohibited this sort of community parenting.

These findings provide a set of useful notions that are explored and reflected on in relation to the experiences of parenting, childhood and community well-being in Newtown Common. However Evans and Holland's study also highlights the value of their methodological approach in exploring these issues. Their qualitative community case study research integrated fieldnotes and prolonged interactions and experiences within the community was imperative in uncovering the lived realities of residents' facilitating the well-being of the young people in their midst. They argue that this was only possible to understand through the insight and local relationships the researchers gained from prolonged engagement in the area. This is an important methodological message also echoed in this thesis.

Whilst highlighting the value of ethnographic community studies in this field, this review has shown that there remains a gap in studies which can provide a case study community approach to understand children and safety, or more specifically the potential ways in which the community can facilitate the well-being of local children. For example, whilst children have been repeatedly marked as both at risk and as a risk in the community, residents that are neither parents nor children have not been questioned and rich information regarding different residents and children's views and experiences in the same places are absent. Such information about how the community does or does not enact collective responsibility for local children, and the differences and similarities within the community could offer a valuable insight into if and how safeguarding of children and young is performed in a neighbourhood context.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to explore the role that community can have upon the well-being of local children and young people. Building on the debates within the political and theoretical context for the thesis, the chapter has examined the empirical evidence that children and young people have been relocated from the public sphere to the private sphere of their homes and other organised activities. A number of studies have demonstrated that parental concerns about safety have impacted upon children's physical activity, school journeys and use of parks, which has potentially negative consequences for their health and more general well-being. Place is then identified as an important factor in both parents' and young people's experiences of risk and safety as well as their use of public space. Some ethnographic studies have identified the importance of formal, semi-formal and informal forms of support for families and the role of these spheres in facilitating well-being. Such research tends to focus on the experiences of parents, children and young people living in more disadvantaged areas which are subject to a wealth of physical and social hazards.

This thesis aims to contribute to these areas of research by exploring the role that local residents and provision can have upon facilitating the well-being of children and young people in a non-deprived suburban area. The empirical studies discussed in this chapter have provide a useful back drop to links between place, childhood and well-being, but none have been able to provide a clear insight into how concepts

such as community, well-being, parenting and childhood are linked and experienced in a specific locale. Modern, commuter, non-deprived neighbourhoods such as Newtown Common are not rare, yet research has not yet explored how family, community and childhood policy impacts, or does not impact upon children and young people in these types of neighbourhood. As described in the subsequent chapter, an ethnographic approach was used to explore the following research questions:

- What aspects of a neighbourhood can help to facilitate, or hinder, the well-being of children and young people?
- How do community members, including parents, local workers and young people living in a given locale, perceive and enact their role in facilitating the well-being of local children?

5. FACILITATING WELL-BEING IN NEWTOWN COMMON: AN ETHNOGRAPHICALLY DRIVEN NEIGHBOURHOOD CASE STUDY

Introduction

This research project aimed to explore the ways in which 'community' can be seen to have a role in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people in a non-deprived, suburban neighbourhood. An ethnographically driven qualitative case study approach was used to identify different aspects of community and explore how these particular forms of community can impact upon the well-being of the young people living in the neighbourhood. Over 200 hours of observation and 35 qualitative interviews provide a valuable insight into how a suburban community, an area not characterised by deprivation, can facilitate or, in some cases, inhibit, the safety and well-being of local children. This chapter starts by outlining the aims of the research project before presenting the rationale behind the chosen research method. It then reflects upon the data generation including a discussion of ethical considerations before describing the approach to data analysis. It concludes by summarising the key methodological learning points from this research project.

The research setting for this study is a suburban neighbourhood that has been given the pseudonym 'Newtown Common', and is located on the outskirts of a city in South Wales, UK. As outlined in more detail below, the neighbourhood estate is relatively modern and is unremarkable in that it is not classified as deprived, inner city, nor rural but instead a non-gated, relatively new city suburb (Watt, 2009).

Fieldwork took place between 2010 and 2012 and included over 200 hours of observation. This entailed:
- 'hanging out' in community spaces and public areas, including the community centre and local church café, which were the only community buildings;
- spending time with families in groups and in their homes and as part of their daily routine;
- attending 10 bi-monthly local Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) meetings;
- helping some local mothers organise and run 20 parent and toddler weekly sessions;
- assisting for two weeks at a summer play scheme for children and young people at the community centre; and
- attending an organised social group for residents aged 50 or over on two occasions.

A total of 50 days were spent walking around the community at different times of the day across weekdays, weekends and school holidays. Fieldnotes were taken and written up after each visit. In addition, I conducted 35 group and individual interviews with residents ranging from six year old children to more senior local residents. The research design was influenced by a range of factors, including my own ontological and epistemological convictions, along with some practical and pragmatic

considerations. This chapter will also review some of the methodological evidence that shaped the research design.

Research aim

The aim of this project was to explore how children's well-being is facilitated by the community in a particular locale. The chosen research site was a modern suburban neighbourhood in South Wales which does not possess the features in terms of geography or deprivation that often attract community studies. Instead it provides an insight into every suburban experiences in a non-deprived commuter neighbourhood. Newtown Common is slightly untypical however, in that it did not have a local primary school however, which the findings suggest was perceived to have an important impact upon the sense of community.

The original project proposal was underpinned by a policy context in which UK Government documents such as *Every Child Matters* (2003) and the Welsh Government's *Keeping Us Safe: Report of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Review* (2006a) called for a more holistic approach to safeguarding children. This was combined with the desire conveyed by some social work academics to move towards a more community based, partnership approach to facilitating well-being and safety of children and young people (Jack and Gill, 2010). There is a growing drive and rhetoric for safeguarding children's well-being to be recognised as a collective responsibility, or 'everybody's business'.

This study explored how aspects of community in a specific neighbourhood understood and enacted their responsibility for the well-being of children and families in their locality. As outlined in chapter one, this research project was conceived as an independent studentship with some pre-determined research aims, forming part of a wider programme of work at the Welsh Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD). The research questions evolved somewhat however as part of the research process. A separate study within WISERD was driven by the same research aim and similar questions and methods but was based in a socioeconomically deprived, long established neighbourhood in the Welsh Valleys (see Evans and Holland, 2012; Holland, 2014). Key findings from this study were outlined in chapter four. In addition to exploring the everyday realities in a modern and non-disadvantaged suburb, this thesis will contextualise findings with those of the contrasting study to facilitate some comparisons and develop key themes.

Research questions

Unlike some other PhD projects, the proposal for this thesis was originally developed between the studentship funders and wider project team. The main area for exploration was therefore set, but I was able to use an iterative process to adapt the research questions as the project took shape so I was able to analyse and identify the most pertinent and relevant questions throughout the data generation and analysis. This section briefly summarises the journey that led me to my final research questions as detailed below:

Research Questions:
- What aspects of a neighbourhood can help to facilitate, or hinder, the well-being of children and young people?
- How do community members, including parents, local workers and young people living in a given locale, perceive and enact their role in facilitating the well-being of local children?

The exploratory research was guided by a set of initial research questions as outlined in the project specification, and informed by the surrounding policy and academic debates about safeguarding, community and well-being outlined in the earlier chapters of this thesis. The main aim was to explore the role of the 'community' in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people in a suburban neighbourhood, but the inductive and ethnographic nature of the research meant that the themes needed to emerge from the data, rather than the other way around.

Below I provide some commentary around the original questions and how they were adapted as a result of the study trajectory. Much of the questions informed the initial discussions but the final questions and findings presenting in this thesis were driven by the content of the data I was able to generate during the project.

1. *What are neighbourhood experiences and perceptions of formal safeguarding agencies, including social work, education, health and criminal justice services? And;*
2. *How are children safeguarded through informal networks and how are decisions made to make formal reports of concerns?*
   From an early point in the study, it was clear that formal reports of concerns were not visible or talked about by those living or working in Newtown Common. As hypothetical conversation of what would be done seemed unfruitful, the shift towards how local organisations understood their role in facilitating children's safety and well-being provided emerged as a more appropriate notion to explore. The focus therefore shifted from safeguarding to a wider consideration of facilitating children's well-being.

   As discussed later, what was apparent from the data was the term 'community' could be understood in a number of ways; the physical neighbourhood, the people who worked in the area and the local networks of those living in the area. Each of these can be understood as having a potential role in promoting and ensuring the well-being of children in Newtown Common. In this case study, these themes were more relevant in the everyday lives of residents than the formal agencies and reports of safeguarding than may have been envisaged in the original project proposal.

3. *How are notions of children as a risk, as well as at risk, enacted within a specific locale?*
   This is a tension that did emerge from the findings and is discussed in the empirical chapters. As the data collection continued, this became less of a key research question for investigation, but it remained an important theme to reflect on in light of my data. As with previous literature, in Newtown Common

there did appear to be some differences in perceptions of vulnerability and risk according to the age of the child.

There were a number of methodological issues, discussed later in the chapter, related to the nature of the community and neighbourhood that influenced the trajectory of the study. These are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Epistemological considerations

Before selecting my research design, it was essential to consider my epistemological approach to addressing the research questions; how I could find out in which ways can 'community' be seen to have a role in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. Research questions are framed by the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the researcher, and these should be acknowledged and articulated (Mason, 2006). As a social constructionist and qualitative researcher by background, the research questions lend themselves to recognition that there are more than one construction of reality depending on perspectives and experiences (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). My approach to the research questions was underpinned by a number of key principles outlined below.

Children and young people are social actors with unique experiences, opinions and understandings (Mason and Hood, 2011). Moreover, they not only construct valid meanings and insights which, whilst potentially different, are just as important as those of adults and can usefully inform the wider understanding of childhood (MacNaughton et al., 2007). Experiences of childhood in relation to safety and well-being cannot be understood without recognising children as social actors with their own role to play in constructing and determining their lives and the lives of those around them rather than passively being shaped by wider social processes (James and Prout, 1990).

The same is true of adult residents, who need to be recognised as active in their own lives as well as subject to wider social structural impacts. A number of community studies are founded on the belief that social processes can be understood through an exploration of their expression in everyday life (Frankenberg, 1990). This trend is reflected in studies of social change (Charles and Davies, 2005) and health and well-being (Popay et al., 1998; Frohlich et al., 2007). Drawing on Giddens' (1976) theory of structuration, which argued that individuals are not unconscious beings and maintain a degree of freewill, albeit inhibited by structure, Popay et al. (1998) assert that to understand determinants on well-being, the role of place needs to be examined in more detail with an emphasis on local understandings and experiences. Community studies must, therefore, involve an exploration of the interconnectedness between informal networks, locally-based organisations and sense of place (Charles and Davies, 2005). Furthermore, the research design embraces the importance of 'civic intelligence' (Elliott and Williams, 2004) about community life through the use of methods that aimed to facilitate co-generation of meaningful data about participants everyday realities (Renold et al., 2008).

Understanding and recognising of the value of social constructions provides the foundation for the epistemological approach and rejects the belief that there is one

objective and discoverable truth. In addition to endorsing the interpretive approach however, the analysis and presentation of data also follows the critical realist approach of Miles and Huberman (1994). Drawing on the work of Bhaskar (1989), this tradition aims to move beyond the representation of the world as purely symbolic constructions towards an argument that a real world exists, but understandings and experiences of it are inevitably different. Adopting a realist approach can therefore provide a valuable perspective to interpretive, qualitative research in relation to the wider implications of findings (see Maxwell, 2012 for further discussion).

Ethnographically driven field work

This project is an exploratory qualitative community case study and incorporates a number of methods to gain a better understanding of the community residents' views and experiences. This qualitative approach was informed by the ethnographic research tradition, which facilitated a greater depth of understanding of everyday life through taking part in the everyday activities of some residents and becoming familiar with their realities. Interpretative, qualitative research is valuable for research in relatively unknown areas of study (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). As outlined in the earlier chapters, the potential role of community residents in facilitating the well-being of local children has received little empirical attention and requires extensive investigation. Through an attempt to immerse myself in certain areas of the local community and often ad hoc, flexible data generation with residents, I aimed to discover and absorb knowledge and understandings about how those living and working in the area viewed their responsibility for the well-being of (other people's) children in the neighbourhood.

The research questions for this project draw on not unproblematic notions of community and place, childhood and families and safety and risk to name a few. As outlined in the previous chapters, research on these topics has involved a variety of methodological approaches including a range of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Whilst the so-called paradigm wars between qualitative and quantitative methods has been characterised as unhelpful (Oakley, 2000; Clegg, 2005), the subsequent recognition that both methods are useful and can successfully be mixed to provide an overall and rich understanding (Mason, 2006) has reinforced the argument that research methods can be chosen in accordance with practicality and relevance for addressing research questions (Becker, 1993). This is the approach taken in this research, which lent itself to qualitative exploratory research methods.

Child protection and social work studies traditionally rely on scientific and quantitative methods which allow them to work with objective numbers and facts (Beckett, 2007; McLaughlin, 2007). Consequently, social work researchers have advocated the superiority of positivist approaches such as controlled trials to inform social work practice (MacDonald, 1998). The exploratory nature of my research questions however focus more on everyday experience and understanding than providing measures, statistics or experimental outcomes. That is not to say however, that such data is not relevant. This chapter makes use of statistical data below to provide a general picture of the community and its residents for example.

The emphasis on understanding and experience within the research questions therefore are particularly suited to qualitative and ethnographically driven data collection techniques. As argued by James and Prout (1990; 9), ethnography "allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is possible through experimental or survey styles of research". Following the wealth of ethnographic studies of children and childhood (see James et al., 1998), Jenks (2000) argues that ethnographic methods are the "most effective methodology to be employed in the study of childhood" (p71).

Ethnographic study originates in the cultural anthropological work of Malinowski, who sought to document and experience first-hand other cultures and traditions. In particular, locally embedded practices are experienced and written up through 'think description' to provide an insight into the lives of those being studied (Geertz, 1973; 2). Since then, ethnography has evolved to cover a wide range of topics and issues (Luders, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Atkinson and Hammersley (1994; 248) characterise ethnography as incorporating some or all of the following features: an emphasis on exploring social phenomena rather than hypothesis testing; collection of unstructured data rather than that which corresponds to pre-determined categories or codes; exploration of a small number of cases; and interpretative analysis of data to provide description and explanation. Some have critiqued the broadening of ethnography and argued that ethnography is now a label for a variety of activities that bear little resemblance to the approach as it was initially developed (Davies, 2008). Nonetheless, for this study, it is the epistemological focus on analysing the 'everyday' and often taken for granted realities of local residents in relation to community responsibility for children's well-being that suited the project aims.

To address my research questions, it was important for me to go beyond shorter, often out of context meetings with participants in more discreet qualitative data collection opportunities. Instead it was essential to learn about residents' everyday experience through prolonged or extended participation in their community, or 'lasting co-presence of observer and events' (Amann and Hirchauer 1997; 21). As Goffman (1989; 125) argues, ethnography is a way of:

> *generating data by subjecting yourself, your body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle…so that you are close to them whilst they are responding to what life does to them.*

Over the past few decades, ethnographic methods have been increasingly employed to explore health, education and social policy, which has caused ethnography to evolve through a range of different applications of the principles (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Atkinson et al., 2001). Consequently, the method does not involve a simple or clear cut approach. The research process can be both "highly particular and hauntingly personal" (Van Manaan, 1988; ix) and has been criticised for failing to provide objective and representative accounts of the social world (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005; Hammersley, 2006). It remains however, a valuable way to explore and illuminate everyday experiences in a

particular locale, and an approach that would enable the exploration of local understandings and practices which address my research questions.

Participant observation and fieldnotes

Participant observation can be understood as "establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting" (Emerson et al., 2001). To explore the potential ways in which the community could facilitate the well-being of children's well-being, interviews were able to provide a valuable insight into participants' opinions and experiences. Participant observation however provides an opportunity to share in the lives of participants to provide access to local knowledge and situational practice (Luders, 2004). Participant (and non-participant) observation was therefore a crucial aspect of my data collection. In the past few decades, participant observation has begun to be seen in a broader sense as a "flexible, methodologically plural and context-related strategy that could incorporate widely different procedures" (Luders, 2004; 224). It goes beyond the requirement for research to access the social world of interest and become immersed in that reality to also produce written descriptions of that world to present to others (Emerson et al., 2001).

Considered the "linchpin of ethnography" (Woodyer, 2008: 349), ethnographic methods rely, at least in part, on participant observation, yet the term does not refer to a homogeneous set of research activity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Participant observation is problematised due to its requirement for the research to have "both detachment and personal involvement" (Bruyn, 1966; 13). Moreover, it could be argued that all research involved participation in the social world in some sense (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Jorgensen (1989) argues however that it provides a unique opportunity for researchers to shift from a complete outsider to a complete insider. Whilst I would argue that there is no cohesive 'insider' perspective, and certainly not one I could develop actually living in the area myself, the depth of the understanding was certainly broadened through prolonged engagement with the neighbourhood and its residents.

Fieldnotes can therefore be defined at the representation of observed events, people and places into textual accounts (Emerson et al., 2001). In many cases, fieldnotes can comprise materials and other grey literature collected during observation as well as notes on informal discussions and observations throughout the fieldwork. These will then need to be worked up and expanded on once leaving the field, or whenever the researcher has a spare moment. Even still, there is a wealth of tacit knowledge within the research mind that can never be fully recorded in fieldnotes (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2007). These then form a valuable source of data that may be analysed in the same way as interview transcripts (discussed further below).

Participatory methods

The research design was influenced by the recognition that participants, including children and young people as well as adult community residents, have valuable localised knowledge about their everyday realities including expertise in relation to the research questions of this study (Braithwaite et al., 2007; Holland et al., 2008).

Smith et al. (2002) argue that drawing on 'insider' knowledge can effectively frame the project trajectory so that it is relevant to the participants and increases the quality of the evidence. This viewpoint is reflected in the general ethnographic approach to the research and iterative process to identifying key research questions. Distinguishing a research approach as participatory or otherwise is not a binary choice however, but rather a continuum on which a variety of research designs can be placed. Previous studies with children and community members have successfully demonstrated one end of the scale in which participants can be trained to become co-researchers and take part in method development and data collection. Other research might consider itself to be participatory by simply involving participations in data generation.

Sociological research with children has advocated the use of more participatory methods to help address the power imbalance between adults and children, and to help ensure the research agenda meets the needs of children. The value of and extent to which children should be involved in shaping the research design, data collection and dissemination has been discussed by Holland et al. (2010). Whilst some studies have included children in all stages of research by training children in research methods, (see for example Kellett et al. 2004), Holland et al. question the assumed methodological and ethical superiority adopted by some participatory researchers, whilst Smith et al. (2002) argue that many of the obstacles of conducting participatory research in practice have been 'glossed over' by advocates of the approach (p194). Despite this debate however, there has been a clear shift towards recognising the specialised knowledge of target populations when shaping the research design and agenda of participatory research (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Furthermore, there has been a growth in using innovative methods to help children engage with the research including the use of visual research (Holland et al. 2008; Pink, 2007) and multi-modal research (Dicks et al., 2006). In addition, the ethical considerations associated with seeing children as autonomous have ignited further debate concerning issues of consent, informed consent and the problems of children 'becoming participant' (Renold et al., 2008). Drawing on empirical evidence, such work has developed the sociology of childhood by recognising and using views and experiences of children to ensure that children have a voice in mainstream sociology

There are a number of challenges in implementing a full model of participation whereby, in this case, local residents could be consulted in all stages of the research design, implementation, analysis and report writing process, including young people themselves. For example, delays can arise through problems in recruiting co-researchers and the time required to build up relationships whilst the narrow or limited pool from which the participants may be drawn could also provide a distorted or incomplete picture (Braithwaite et al., 2007). For the purposes of this project therefore, full participation was not practical or possible. Furthermore, recruitment of a co-researcher involved cost and an aspect of work sharing that is arguably inappropriate for a PhD submission. The principles underlying the participatory approach however, remained influential. When planning the research design, (and ethical approval), a suite of methods were prepared that would allow the participant to choose their preferred method for taking part in the data collection from a range of options. I also worked with some key participants to guide me through the continued data generation approach, as explored later in this chapter.

It was also important to adopt a flexible research strategy, which enabled me to adopt and adapt the particular method that was most appropriate to situations as they arose. This is another central affordance and attribute of ethnographic research principles (Luders, 2004). In particular, I embraced the approach used in the ESRC Connected Lives Project in the study of networks, neighbourhoods and communities in Manchester (Emmel and Clark, 2009). The methods used for the project were described as "designed to capture the multi-dimensionality of the real life experiences of networks, neighbourhoods, and communities" (p2). The essence of their project was to embrace a variety of methods to reflect the diverse experience in residents' lives. This outlook is akin to the one adapted in the WISERD case study (Evans and Holland, 2012), and one that I felt most appropriate for addressing my own research questions from my chosen perspective. Using a less rigid research design enabled me to capture the mundane and everyday experiences.

The qualitative, ethnographic and participatory driven case study incorporated a variety of methods. This involved a combination of observation and a range of interview types including visual methods and walking tours.

Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews are one of the most common forms of data collection in social research and are traditionally seen as offering 'windows on the world' (Hymen et al., 1975; 15). Furthermore, interviews can offer an insight into the experiences of participants' social worlds by allowing them to describe their lives in their own words (Harden et al., 2000). Interviews therefore provided a valuable research technique for obtaining an insight into the perceptions, views and experiences of residents living in Newtown Common. They can be understood as facilitating narratives situated in social worlds that can be captured, at least in part, through research (Miller and Glassner, 1997). It is not so much the accuracy of the account that was important, but the way participants make sense of their experiences and lived realities.

Reflecting the social constructionist epistemological conviction, interviews, or specifically semi-structured and in depth interviews, provide an opportunity to see the social world through the perspectives of participants. Closed questions that determine and constrain responses to those identified by the research and therefore limit the scope of data produced were not appropriate for this explorative study. In contrast, in depth life history interviews, common in ethnography (Hyel, 2001), would have provide a vast depth of knowledge and opportunities to interrogate the ways in which the narratives were produced. Such data would be too focused on a small number of individuals to provide the variety of insights necessary for this project however. Ethnographic qualitative interviews using a semi-structured approach therefore facilitated an opportunity to elicit rich enough information around a selected topic without constraint from predetermined answers (Grinnell and Unrau, 2008). It is important however to ensure participants have the freedom to interpret concepts in their own way, for example when asking about risks, rather than using researcher defined concepts in questions (Henwood, et al., 2008).

Central to the ethnographic interview is an attitude which communicates to the participant that the researcher wants to know "what you know in the way you know it"

(Spradley, 1979; 34). Ethnographic interviews benefit from the time allowed to build rapport and respectful relationships through prolonged engagement with participants. This enables participants to feel more comfortable to keep talking and draw upon their own meanings and life experiences using their own words (Spradley, 1979; Becker, 1970). Furthermore, Heyl (2001) argues that ethnographic interviews are constructed as open and reflexive interactions within which "all the messiness of everyday life can intrude" (p 375). Key themes can then be identified by starting analysis as soon as the data collection starts to help guide and inform the future of the data collection. Whilst the major challenge when using qualitative methods, such as interviews, is that the data cannot be extrapolated to produce a generalised picture, the value for the research is their ability to facilitate exploration surrounding certain topics of interest. Furthermore, the value of this research is that findings are not about a generalised non-specific imagined person, but that it provides an insight into the context in which a participant's meanings and experiences are shaped. As with ethnographic research, the semi-structured interview celebrates the ability to glean an insight into the social worlds of another, as they experience them.

It is also important to consider the additional preparation required when developing interview guides for research with children and young people. James et al. (1998) note that children should not be considered as less capable than adults, but it should be recognised that they may prefer or be more comfortable expressing their views in different ways. For example, James et al. suggest that task rather than talk based interview may be a more suitable research method. Likewise a number of studies have highlighted the benefits of usual visual methods with children and young people, such as asking them to take photos and create maps of their local area (see below and Morrow, 2001; Rasmussen and Smidt, 2003; Darbyshire et al., 2005). Whilst these methods were offered with limited take up, interviews or informal conversations were offered and a number of young people did opt to take part.

Like Punch (2002) I would question the assumption that children are unable to engage with the more adult research methods, such as interview, I also recognise the benefits of ethnographic research in conducting research with children and young people. Equally, I agree that research tools and methods need to be person friendly rather than the slightly more patronising child friendly. Nevertheless it is important to consider issues such as informed consent and power relations when devising the interview strategy. Children and young people were offered to undertake interviews on their own or as part of a pair or group and settings were of their choosing (such as the home, or public area). For young people it was important to make sure the questions made some sort of sense to their everyday lives and experiences, but other than ensuring the relevance, the questions were not dissimilar from that of those asked in the adult interview schedule. For children, language, time and topics needed to be adapted more to help them engage with the research topics. For all interviews it was important to ensure participants understand the project and how their data will be used, and aware their participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time (see section on ethical considerations below).

Multi-modal methods

Visual methods, such as encouraging participants to take photographs, are a well established method of collecting data for researchers with a variety of

epistemological underpinnings (Prosser and Schwartz, 1998). Despite ethical and practical considerations, many studies have demonstrated the benefits of using visual data to triangulate, add topological context, confirm and enlarge their findings (Bolton et al., 2001). Renold et al. (2008) reported the benefits of using visual and participatory methods with children and Nairn et al. (2003) highlight the benefits of using photographs and graffiti sheets in addition to street interviews and observation to research community life. Multi-modal methods was something I therefore wanted to be prepared to integrate into my research design as a potential method for data gathering, analysis and to aid conversation.

Pink (2001; 2007) argues that it is important to recognise what visual methods represent when opting to use them. For example, Emmison and Smith (2000) argue that observation of an increasingly visual world is the key to ascertaining the truth about the world, representing 'what the eye can see' (p4). In contrast, Pink, (2001; 2007), has argued for a more reflexive approach when conducting research using visual methods. She suggests that visual data is subjective and criticises its use at 'face value'. Hodgson and Clark (2007), however, argue that the preoccupation with epistemology is not constructive and that using visual methods in either way can be valuable and complimentary.

Gabb (2009) argues that qualitative mixed methods and a creative research design can offer a richer insight into family relationships and experiences. In particular, she highlights the benefits of techniques such as visual methods, research diaries, vignettes and photographs as valuable additions to observation and interviews. As argued by James et al. (1998), 'task-centred activities' that engage children in their own interests may offer a preferable way for children to choose to express their ideas and opinions. Ross et al. (2009) have recounted the benefits of more innovative methods such as mobile methods to explore the everyday lives of young people. Walking tours have become an established method of constructing more contextual insights into the daily lives of participants, especially young people, (see for example Percy-Smith and Matthews, 2001; Moles, 2008; Evans and Jones, 2011). They have been shown to be especially useful to gain an insight into the use and experiences of place and space.

It was therefore recognised as a useful technique which was offered to residents as one method of data collection that I had hoped would prove equally useful and beneficial in my own research. My research design, data collection tool kit and ethical clearance therefore involved preparation for such methods. The participatory element of the design allowed participants themselves to select which ways they would like to take part in the research. This meant however that when many of these methods were not chosen, or were considered by participants inappropriate, it did not promote the variety of data generation expected. As argued by Derbyshire et al. (2005) multiple methods can facilitate a greater insight rather than simply creating more of the same.

Community case study

The community case study approach lends itself neatly to explore the ways in which community can be understood as facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. As indicated earlier in the thesis, community case studies can provide

an important level of understanding regarding the lived realities of childhood and well-being in communities. The study of children and childhood must be recognised as multi and interdisciplinary in nature. Prout (2004; 2) argues that childhood, "like all social phenomena, is heterogeneous, complex and emergent, and because this is so, it requires a broad set of intellectual resources, an interdisciplinary approach and an open-minded process of enquiry". Likewise, the nature of this project combines a number of disciplines and traditions, including methodological approaches. There is an array, for example, of ethnographic community studies, including in the areas of family and kinship (see for example the studies by Willmott and Young, 1957: or Rosser and Harris, 1965, revisited in Charles and Davies 2005).

A number of ethnographic community studies build on the assertion by Frankenberg (1990) that social processes can be best understood by an exploration of how they are played out on a smaller, case study scale (Charles and Davies, 2005). Young and Willmott's F*amily and Kinship in East London* (1957) is one of the most popular, as well as classic, examples of community case study research. Since then, case studies have evolved but remained valuable in exploring community life (Crow and Allan, 1994; Blackshaw, 2010). Community studies, "rather than developing grand theory to explain societal change, show how lives are lived in the context of wider social change" (Charles, 2012; 438). An ethnographically driven community case study was therefore well-suited to the research aim. Furthermore, the appreciation of the approach that social constructions and realities should be contextual and understood rather than observed, measured and counted was akin to the outlook in which the research aims were designed and developed.

Yin (2009) argues that case studies provide an opportunity to understand complex social phenomena. In particular, he asserts that the exploratory nature of case studies best suits research which aims to investigate the 'how' or 'why' question about a contemporary set of events over which the research has no control. Furthermore Burawoy (2009) advocates the use of the extended case method to use participant observation to generate theory. The extended case method entails

> *"the extension of observer into the lives of the participants under study, the extension of observation over time and space, the extension from microprocesses to macroforces and finally, and most important, the extension of theory" (p xv).*

Case study research has been criticised for not providing a generalisable account, a common criticism of in depth qualitative research. However, the aim of this research is to gather an insight through contextual explanation and analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation to predict frequency within the wider population (Yin, 2009). Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that there are five key misunderstandings about case studies relating to the theory, reliability and validity of the research approach (p 221). He argues that social research should recognise the value in studying and analysing particular cases by "getting close to reality" through specific examples (Flyvbjerg, 2001; 132).

Case Study Site

Following the development of a suitable research design, it was important to select an appropriate research site for the case study. The neighbourhood chosen was a modern suburban housing estate in South Wales selected purposefully as non-deprived neighbourhood, and therefore more of a 'typical' example of suburban middle class everyday life (Yin, 2011).This provides a contrast to, for example, the area chosen by Evans and Holland (2012), which was more of an 'extreme' or 'key' case with high levels of generational disadvantage.

As argued by Emmel (2013) sampling in its conventional sense is not necessarily the most appropriate term for qualitative research, which inverts the principles of measurement and representation. This is especially the case for ethnographic and case study research which commonly focuses on a single site (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). Nevertheless, for the purposes of the wider study into community safeguarding of which this project was a part of, it was important to choose a location that contrasted and was still of sociological interest. Whilst some community studies have revisited previous research sites to explore social changes (for example, Charles and Davies, 2005), the aim of this research is to provide a 'snapshot' understanding of the ways in which the community had potential to facilitating children's well-being within a given time frame and social context (Thomas, 2011).

> *Fieldnotes 18th June 2010:*
> *The estate is full of red brick modern houses. Most are semi-detached and set back on sprawling roads that curve away from the join with the main road into an eventual cul-de-sac. In stark contrast to those in the Edwardian terraced long straight rows of houses in the city centre, with front doors opening straight onto the narrow pavements either side of the parking controlled roads without space for a drive or garden, the houses in Newtown Common appeared much more like separate units. Rather than merging into a long line of cloned house fronts, houses here were unified by their lack of uniformity. Each has varying degrees of a drive, even if shared, with room for at least one car and a garden setting them away from the road. Often drives and fences helped to create a low level but clear barrier between houses. Front doors of neighbours were not side by side, but at a distance and jaunty angle frequently including a small path up to each individual house. Looking around, each property had its own distinct area, but most seemed welcoming somehow, perhaps because they were clean, tidy and presentable, with no gates, high walls at the front or 'beware of the dog' signs. Whilst the divide between homes was clear, the privacy was not displayed in an off putting way, more as if their territory had been marked – literally.*

In contrast to the deprived, well established valleys community selected as a key setting by Holland (2014), this project aimed to explore similar questions in a relatively modern and less deprived neighbourhood. As described above, literature on the changing nature of childhood has identified the 'backseat' generation of middle class children who are perceived to be kept indoors and chauffeured from place to place by (over)protective parents (Guldberg, 2009; Mackett et al., 2007; Fuerdi, 2001; Palmer, 2010). Additionally, a recent longitudinal study in Wales by Fone et al. (2014) has highlighted the association between social cohesion and

mental health. It is interesting therefore to explore well-being in a non-deprived, modern suburb.

Like similar community studies, (see for example Ghate and Hazel, 2002) Holland's (2014; 388) study focused on residents in a relatively deprived neighbourhood. 'Caergoch' was defined as consisting of:

> *former local authority housing, largely built in the post-war period to provide homes for coal miners and their families. The housing is now largely managed by a large housing association, with some private ownership and privately rented accommodation. Caegoch is characterised by high levels of economic inactivity, following the closure of most mines and much manufacturing in the area, with subsequent high levels of child poverty. The area has a thriving tradition of community development, much of it initiated and staffed by local residents. This is largely funded by the Communities First programme…*

The research locality chosen for this study differs from Caergoch in almost every way. Whilst Caergoch could be considered to have many features typical in deprived areas in Wales, such as high levels of unemployment and child poverty, Newtown Common is within the least deprived quartile of areas in Wales[7]. Community initiatives aimed at lifting families out of poverty are therefore not targeted at areas such as Newtown Common. It has little tradition of community development and the facilities that do exist have been relatively recent additions to the area. Moreover, it does not have a local primary school. The current shift towards closing small schools and concerns about the impact this may have on communities meant that this added an interesting dimension to the choice of neighbourhood.

I have named the case study neighbourhood Newtown Common purely because in many ways it is a common or typical new suburban housing estate. It was reported to be a largely developer led estate, which seemed to mean priorities were set by the profit making building companies rather than the council, and is located on the outskirts of a south Wales city and has few local facilities other than a community centre. The estate was built at the end of the last century and is largely privately owned housing with private drives and gardens. It is situated close to a motorway junction and one of the large out of town retail and industrial parks. Largely made up of families with adults in 'professional' careers it could be considered a commuter dormitory.

As with many modern neighbourhoods in the UK, Newtown Common is challenging to conceptualise in terms of its social class. Traditional distinctions of class focused on occupations. In particular the 'Goldthorpe' classification, which ranked society by their employment position, has been considered the 'gold standard' to measure class over the past few decades (Savage et al., 2013). Following a rage of criticisms however (see for example, Skeggs, 1997; 2004), a number of scholars have highlighted the complex nature of class distinction in modern society and echoed the

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[7] According to the WIMD, (2011). Wales has been divided into 1,896 Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) containing around 1,500 people to enable calculations of areas with the most to least deprived residents. Newtown Common is within the top 25% of least deprived areas. Exact figures are not given to protect anonymity of neighbourhood.

point made by Bourdieu (1987) that social and cultural capital are equally important indicators of social class (Devine, 2004; Savage et al. 2005). Recent analysis by Savage et al. (2013) draws on cultural and social indicators as well as economic aspects of class to propose a complex map of seven classes: the Elite; Established Middle Class; Technical Middle Class; New Affluent Workers; Traditional Working Class; Emergent Service Workers and Precariat. Whilst this thesis is not one intended to contribute to the theoretical debate surrounding class distinction, an analysis of this neighbourhood and those living within it requires awareness of and reflection on their social situation. Within this model, Newtown Common and its residents can be seen as located within one of the middle class groups. In particular, most residents fit within the established middle class, which is associated with graduates level education and employment in the professions or management. Savage et al. suggest they make up around a quarter of the population and can be found outside of large towns or urban environments.

Due to its location close to the motorway, residents are largely commuters moving into (and out of) the area from elsewhere for work purposes. Furthermore, the modern nature means that there are not generations living together in the community as experienced in Caergoch. The aim was, however, that the neighbourhood should generally be considered as not being an extreme case, with no particular social problems identified, particularly in relation to deprivation.

> *Fieldnotes 11th February 2011:*
> *As usual, the bus had a variety of people including some young adults,*
> *travelling from the city centre in semi-casual clothes, who filed off at the stop*
> *for the cut through to the Industrial Park. There were then two older ladies*
> *and one (ethnic minority) mother and toddler in a pram who joined the bus at*
> *other suburbs and stayed on throughout the stop-free journey through*
> *Newtown Common until the final destination; the Retail Park and*
> *Supermarket.*

The census data from 2011 collated by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) provides a useful insight into the demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood[8]. Data on the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) that covers most of Newtown Common suggests that those living in this area are more likely to work in managerial and professional occupations rather than routine occupations. Data on tenure of housing also shows that there are slightly higher rates of private renting in Newtown Common and much higher rates of residents owning their home with a mortgage or loan compared to the local authority. There is also no rented council owned social housing, although, those living in Newtown Common are less likely to own their home outright than the average resident of the local authority or Wales as a whole. Qualification levels, including professional qualifications are also higher within the Newtown Common LSOA than the local authority average.

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[8] The 2011 census provides a count of all residents and households in England and Wales. It provides a snapshot of the population as at 27th March, 2011 and is the most detailed and up-to-date source of information available about the population. Exact figures are not given in this thesis to protect anonymity of neighbourhood.

Other data from the census helps to provide a picture of the area including the comparatively high ownership of cars with local authority figures for owning no car or van around five times higher than the figures for Newtown Common households. The ethnicity for the LSOA is quite similar to that of the local authority in general, but with a slightly higher ethnic mix than Wales as a whole. Whilst there is a general spread of ages amongst residents there are lower numbers of those aged 60 years old and over with a much higher proportion of residents aged 30 to 44 than the local authority and Wales as a whole. This suggests that Newtown Common is largely filled with working professional middle-aged adults who own their house with a mortgage. They do not live in a disadvantaged area and are more likely to have access to a car than those living in the wider local authority.

This project therefore aims not only to explore the understudied links between community and children's well-being, but to do so in what can be considered a non-deprived, modern suburban neighbourhood (Yin, 2011).

> *Fieldnotes 17th September, 2010:*
> *As usual, the whole area was quite aside from the perpetual sound of cars moving swiftly and purposefully through, rather than carefully around and between houses in the estate. Although not hot, it was sunny and dry, but there were no children, or even adults or pets, to be see or heard anywhere.*

New suburban areas have been identified as under researched, especially in terms of the residents' experiences and local networks (Lupi and Musterd, 2006). Concerns have been raised about the nature of relationships in suburbs, not least by Putnam (2000) who linked the dominance of privacy in suburbs with a 'loss' of social relationships as discussed in chapter three. Similarly, studies in North America raise concerns about the political and economic implications of suburbanization. Nonetheless, a vast amount of middle class households in the Western world opt to live in these areas and the scarcity of research into these neighbourhoods needs addressing (Lupi and Musterd, 2006). This study provides a useful insight into the everyday lives of these suburban dwellers in a site in South Wales.

Once the research locality had been chosen, the exploratory nature of the project and the ethnographic approach enabled a flexible research design. Some key participants were identified as I learned more about the area, such as those working in the community centre and church, the local policy community support officer and the local councillors. In addition, I was keen to recruit a mixture of residents across a range of ages. The aim of the thesis was to explore the ways in which different understandings or conceptualisations of community could be seen as facilitating the well-being of children in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the target 'sample' involved anyone that could be seen as part of the community including those who lived and worked in the community as well as local children and young people that might both facilitate other children's well-being and reflect on if and how their well-being might be promoted.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, 'community' has been recognised as a particularly challenging notion to define. As argued by Willmott (1989; 2) "the popularity of the word has not made its meaning any clearer". Therefore, I limited participants to those

that considered themselves to live in the area of Newtown Common without setting any fixed boundaries of criteria. The aim was to immerse myself into the community using an ethnographic approach and adopt and adapt research methods and techniques as required to find out about residents experiences and understanding how children's well-being might be impact upon in or by the community.

It is important to note that there were no clear boundaries as to the edges of the neighbourhood identifiable by signs. Therefore my rough categorisation of where the boundaries of the neighbourhood were, were informed by the discussions with participants.

> *Fieldnotes, 9th November 2010:*
> *As I passed through on the bus I realised that it wasn't sure exactly when I'd left Abertaf and moved into Newtown Common. The housing estates appeared to merge into each other, although, on reflection, the nearer to the retail park we got, the newer the housing.*

Whilst the extracts describing the exact points reported by parents could compromise the anonymity of the case study site, a number of people used the retail park and roads to set out the area. The task of identifying boundaries was not a straightforward one however, or one that either children or adults seemed to do easily. Contrary to the work of Malone, (2002) boundaries of the neighbourhood did not appear to be of great importance to those living in Newtown common. A number of adults laughed when I suggested that I had a number of maps printed that they could use to help, and explained that they were not familiar with thinking of the neighbourhood in that way. In contrast the young people tended to have a better idea about where they were on the map, but seemed reluctant to define boundaries around the neighbourhood. As discussed in chapter six however, boundaries around homes however, were deemed much more important and a source of a number of local conflicts.

Validity

Atkinson (1990; 73) argues that the authenticity of findings can be "warranted by virtue of the ethnographer's own first-hand attendance and participation. It is therefore mirrored in the 'presence' of the reader in the action that is reproduced through the text." Qualitative case studies provide an opportunity to understand something by getting close to it Flyvbjerg (2006). Whilst transparency and reflexivity together with presentation of data can facilitate the validity of findings however, ethnographic accounts do not constitute the representation of an objective reality" (Hammersley, 1992).

Within the literature, a number of techniques have been identified to help researchers ensure that the validity of findings from qualitative research. Roulston (2010) provides a useful summary of the approaches to ensuring 'credibility' in qualitative interviewing, for example, and considers the challenges and criticisms for each. She also outlines the implications of the theoretical assumptions about the interview associated with each approach. As she suggests, recognising and acknowledging these are vital when establishing the validity of qualitative research and analysis. Coming from a constructivist perspective, I bring into this project my

own epistemological assumptions about the nature of evidence required to address my research questions, and therefore about how knowledge can be produced.

As the only researcher working with the data, there was an inherent element of rigour to the data analysis regarding the implantation and use of codes. In this project, both categorical and frequential themes were identified to develop understanding and identify patterns (Bendassolli, 2013). Additionally, reliability can be improved by sharing interpretations with colleagues to help test your findings. Throughout the fieldwork, ideas were discussed with fellow PhD colleagues informally, including sessions where we looked at small bits of each other's data to gain a new perspective. Furthermore, as these findings were being developed, they were presented at a number of national and international conferences to help test and generate new ways of thinking about the data.

Being reflexive is also an important point in demonstrating the transparency of the research, and therefore helps to strengthen the validity of the work. This section discusses not only the variety of data collection methods drawn upon, but also incorporates a valuable reflection upon the data generation method. Whilst space restrictions inhibit the inclusion of a full auto-ethnography to reflect upon the data collection process in detail, the ways in which the research setting and I, as the researcher, affected each other during the research process can provide a valuable context to augment the validity of the findings (Coffey, 1999; 1).

> *The construction and production of self and identity occurs both during and after field work. In writing, remembering and representing out fieldwork experiences we are involved in profess of self-presentation and identity construction*

It is therefore important to be reflexive in the discussion of the process of data collection and generation.

Data generation – a reflexive account

For this research project, I drew on ethnographic methods including a mixture of informal and formal qualitative interviews, and several forms of observation within the community. Reflecting ethnographic tradition, data collection focused on getting to know the community 'on the ground'. This included walking around the neighbourhood regularly, speaking to local community residents and leaders and attending a number of groups and sessions that took place in the community. An important lesson from the data collection was that to understand the everyday lives of residents; I had to shadow their movements and experiences. In Newtown Common however, the expected data collection techniques such as spending time in the neighbourhood and walking around the area with participants did not fit with their daily experiences. It was therefore important to draw on a number of other techniques that did facilitate an insight into what was happening in the residents lives, as well as documenting what was, or was not, happening in the neighbourhood. Consequently, the research design incorporated a number of other research approaches. Luders (2004: 226) argues that "the flexible use of different methodological approaches in accordance with the particular situation and issue" is characteristic of ethnographic research.

This section discusses not only the variety of data collection methods drawn upon, but also incorporates a valuable reflection upon the data generation method. Whilst space restrictions inhibit the inclusion of a full auto-ethnography to reflect upon the data collection process in detail, the ways in which the research setting and I, as the researcher, affected each other during the research process can provide a valuable context to augment the validity of the findings (Coffey, 1999; 1).

> *The construction and production of self and identity occurs both during and after field work. In writing, remembering and representing our fieldwork experiences we are involved in a process of self presentation and identity construction.*

It is therefore important to be reflexive in the discussion of the process of data collection and generation.

Data was generated partly through fieldnotes and informal conversations with residents and those working in the area, and some more formal data collection techniques such as interviews. The aim was to build local relationships in the community using a snowball approach. Influenced by the participatory approach to research, when the participants were invited to take part in the research process more formally, they were offered a range of methods to choose from according to their individual preference and situation. The suite of methods offered included driving and walking tours, and some visual methods as well as traditional interviews and focus groups. The aim was to help local residents share their own experiences in everyday life, therefore the research design had to be informed by participants' daily routines and practice.

Totalling over 200 hours of observation I attended 10 local partnership meetings between the police, councillors and local residents to address local safety concerns. I also attended 20 weekly toddler group sessions, spent two weeks with a summer play scheme, attended social groups for those aged over 50 and devoted a number of days just spending time and helping out in the local community centre. I was also fortunate enough to spend time in houses with families going about their daily routines.

Whilst an ethnographic approach had already been identified as the most appropriate way to explore how communities could be seen as facilitating the well-being of children in everyday life, the method also proved invaluable due to the almost hidden nature of community in Newtown Common. Hidden communities are usually defined as those where public acknowledgement of membership might be threatening or stigmatising and members are therefore challenging to identify for researchers (Murer, 2009). Whilst identifying as a community member of Newtown Common was not necessarily something residents avoided, it was still something that was easily identified or accessed through participation in community events, buildings or groups due to low levels of local engagement or through social interactions in streets or outside local schools. Spencer and Pahl (2006) note that whilst many have highlighted the eroded and transient nature of community bonds, through exploring the nature and quality of 'hidden' informal networks that did exist. The absence of a 'sense of community' as identified by theorists such as Putnam (2001) and Bauman (2001) in these ways was an interesting finding sociologically,

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especially given the focus on exploring how community can be seen as facilitating the well-being of local children, but it also presented a number of methodological challenges which are reflected on in this section. Like Spencer and Pahl however, taking the time to illuminate and reveal examples of networks and community bonds that did exist meant that community could be seen.

As outlined in chapter two, there is an increasing rhetoric that children's well-being is everybody's business. Those members of society living or working in the same neighbourhood as children and young people should enact some form of responsibility for them. This thesis aims to explore this assumption by understanding what, if anything, geographical co-location has upon understandings of facilitating the well-being of local children in this way. For this reason, the research method was as much about understanding experiences of the place as it was those within it. The data collection was centred around the neighbourhood, and in what ways it could be considered as facilitating a community. Furthermore, this thesis was able to explore the relevance of the 'community lost' notion in a modern, suburban community given recent findings in more deprived areas that argue for the persistence of neighbourhood-based social networks of support facilitating local well-being (see for example Boyce, 2006, Evans and Holland, 2014).

Observation

To gain an insight into the lives of residents to understand how the community might facilitate children's well-being, I spent over two years in the neighbourhood attending various meetings and settings around the neighbourhood. This included over 200 hours of observation; most of which took place during weekdays throughout term time and school holidays between 8am and 11pm, but I also conducted some fieldwork during weekends. Whilst there was no aim or checklist for what I should attend or when, certain groups and settings caught my attention in relation to my aim to explore how community could be understood as impacting upon children's well-being.

Initially, it was extremely difficult to obtain a hook into the community, with no local primary school, and largely quiet roads and parks, many days at the start of the field work just involved me walking around aimlessly, getting to know the area but with no destination other than perhaps the 24-hour supermarket in the retail park. The annual community day which occurred at the start of my fieldwork had a relatively low turnout and many of the adults I sparked conversations with were not from the community. Practicalities such as how long I could last without sitting and eating, or where I could go when I accidently cut my foot led to early concern that Newtown Common was little more than a collection of houses. As I spent longer getting to know the area, however a research design or plan began to evolve. Some meetings, such as the Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, were suggested as sites for data collection and I attended throughout the time in the field, whilst other spaces and situations remained harder to penetrate.

My aim was to immerse myself into the lives of residents to gain an insight into how the community could impact upon the well-being of local children. Without a local school (see below) there was no obvious site to start this data collection, so the most obvious hub was the community centre and church centre by attending some of their

classes and sessions. Discussions with the community centre manager identified the 'soft play' sessions as a useful starting point. This was a session which took place in the main hall of the community centre and involved a bouncy castle and large but age appropriate toys for pre-school age children. On attending the sessions, two things became clear; firstly, whilst some children interacted with each other, the parents (or adult accompanying the children) tended not to and took responsibility for watching their own child rather than the children as a group. Secondly, on speaking to the parents on any given day, usually a maximum of two were from Newtown Common, with others visiting from outside the area because it fitted with the time that they needed the session.

The lack of an informal space in which residents or customers could spend undirected time in the community centre made it difficult to establish any relationships or links. In the church however, the café had exactly that atmosphere and it was here that I found it easier to forge some ties with local residents. Following an introduction by the café manager to one of the parents, I found my way into a group of local parents who were in the process of setting up a new toddler group in the church café. Unlike soft play, the aim of this group was to provide a supportive session run by parents for parents. Whilst some parents came from other areas across the city, the majority were local parents who felt that they needed a community based group in which they could bring children of different ages in a relaxed atmosphere and share stories and experiences with like minded parents. It was this session that I chose to participate in and observe negotiating entry through shared interest in parenting experiences and my offer to help and run a number of sessions. I attended the group for 6-9 months until, due to a number of challenges, the group dissolved.

This setting gave me an opportunity to build reciprocal relationships with a number of parents who were interested in my work and keen to share their thoughts and experiences. This provided me with a number of opportunities to arrange more formal interviews but the experience also allowed me to glean valuable knowledge about the daily lives of these (mainly) mothers with young children living in Newtown Common. I also spent time with some families outside of the group by going for a cup of tea at their house, for example. Many explained that following childbirth they had decided to stop working and look after their children full-time. As they tended to have professionals jobs, they sometimes felt resentment as being seen as 'just a mum' and therefore explained that they enjoyed talking about something other than children. What also became obvious was that this group of friends became an invaluable source of local support for each other in the absence of nearby family (see chapter nine).

I also attended the PACT meetings held at the community centre by local councillors and police and community support officers for over a year. This provided an insight into the sorts of issues raised in and by the community in Newtown Common, as well as the methods for responding to them. It also allowed me to generate some relationships with those involved in running the meetings and arrange interviews with those that attended. In terms of semi-formal support and children's well-being, this appeared a key site for identifying areas of concern raised by local residents in terms of children and young people's safety and well-being. Whilst the issues contrasted drastically with those raised in the linked community case study in a deprived area, it

did provide a useful insight into how this process was implemented and used and who by.

Whilst the toddler group provided access to local parents with young children, and the PACT group provided an insight into the views of more senior residents, adults of older children were harder to identify as there was no natural point of contact. Young people went to a wide variety of schools, (up to 50 primary and at least 4 secondary) and most parents appeared to be working in the day time, did not attend the PACT group in the evening or walk around the estate. Likewise there was no local shop or fish and chip shop so no natural way to start to build links. Interviews with parents of older children therefore mainly came through snowballing from other parents and community staff, or through chance encounters, when one parent was on holiday from work and did marking in the café for example, or another worked nights and I saw her outside of her house on one of my walks through the neighbourhood. As explained by parents of young children who reflected on their life before parenthood; when working, adult residents treated the area more as a hotel than a home, driving home only to eat and sleep (Schwartz, 1980). During the day, the area was accurately described by one resident as a 'ghost town'.

I was also keen to discover the views of children and young people themselves in relation to their experiences of living in Newtown Common and the affordances and challenges the neighbourhood presented to them in terms of safety and well-being. Gaining access through the play scheme and toddler groups, I asked some younger children to draw and/ or tell me about what they liked about where they lived and where they liked to go. I also tried to engage young children in this way whilst conducting interviews with their parents, but these tended to be four or under. For older children, again the lack of a school as a recruitment setting was a challenge so I arranged to attend the council run play scheme in the summer holidays for two weeks. Here I undertook the planned activities with them and talked to them whilst helping out with the running of the scheme. I also ran one session with them where I asked them to write or tell me some things they liked about living in the area, something they did not like and anything they wished they could change. This was written on sticky pads and attached to the wall depending on its category.

Young people, or those above secondary school age, were slightly more visible in the community than those of primary school age. It transpired that at the time of data collection the community centre were trying to restart a youth club which they ran in previous years so I arranged to spend time at the youth club run at the community centre. No young people turned up to any of the sessions however, so the club was unfortunately cancelled. The football club was slightly more popular, even if sporadically. A group of local friends occasionally came to play football in the community centre that had attended various groups at the community centre whilst growing up and built some positive relationships with centre staff. There were also a few 'youth events' organised by the police during the 18 months of data collection, but all struggled with limited, if any, youth engagement. Here snowballing through parents I had spoken to and the initial group of friends that had contact with the community centre were a valuable entry point into gaining an insight into the lives of those living in Newtown Common.

In addition, much time was spent 'hanging out' in the community centre and church with workers that I had built up relationships with to get an idea of the sorts of ways the centre was used, and run. Public space was empty which whilst interesting, provided limited data. Private spaces were therefore where I needed to be in order to experience everyday life in Newtown Common. I was heavily reliant upon the hospitality of those living and working in the area. This also included spending time with families that I built relationships with during the data collection period. I am therefore, forever in their debt. They provided me with an intense and vivid exploration of their worlds as they lived them. Such insight and understanding through shared experiences could not have been conveyed through interviews, or for that matter, quantitative methods, alone.

It must be noted that these observations were, therefore, limited to certain self-selecting groups. Whilst every effort was made to engage with residents of different ages, the nature of the data collection meant that I was reliant on those I was able to identify and approach, and those that had the time (and inclination) to spend their time with me. As qualitative research however, generalisability was never a goal of the project, rather it aims to explore understandings, meanings and realities for residents in relation to the community's impact upon children's well-being.

Interviews

To supplement observations and fieldnotes, and to gain a more in depth and personal understanding about residents' views and experiences, I conducted a range of informal and formal interviews. Where possible, I asked residents of a range of ages whether they would be happy to put aside some time for me to meet with them, usually in their house, to discuss their experiences and views of the area in more detail. In total I conducted 35 of these more formal interviews, most of which were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis (see table A for a breakdown). Two of the participants opted for me to write notes during (and after) the interviews rather than be recorded. Whilst the informal interviews allowed data to be collected more casually in a more natural situation and written up in fieldnotes, these formal interviews provided me with a wealth of data.

Table 1 – Breakdown of participants

Participant type	No. of formal interviews conducted	Males	Females	BME
Parents	12	3	9	1
Senior residents	7	2	5	0
Young People	8	5	3	0
Children (aged under 12)	1 (group interview)	3	1	0
Local leaders	7	3	4	1

Ranging from half an hour to two hours, the conversations were semi-structured in nature (see Appendices A and B for the interview schedule for adults and young people respectively). It was pleasing to note that most participants commented at the end of the interview that they were surprised how quickly the time had gone. Different residents required different skills in research. For example, one young person asked if he could look at a question and record the answers one at a time, until he felt more comfortable with the idea that it involved more of a conversation and was not a test. For some, offering control of the audio recorder helped mitigate some issues surrounding power and control within the interview itself, although many older residents were too nervous about operating the machinery to benefit from this technique.

In contrast to some young people, senior residents welcomed the opportunity to talk about the neighbourhood and their local experiences and views. They were more also likely to go off topic slightly and last much longer. For parents with younger children, my provision of crayons and paper with some suggestions of drawings was much appreciated by parents. Some also commented that it was comforting that I would recognise that their child was their first priority and that distractions were inevitable. It was important to them that I was not concerned about interruptions during the interview and would respond to their child as much as them.

One advantage of the ethnographic nature of the resarch was that I was able to spend more time in the field rather than restricted to 'one off' interviews which can be limiting and frustrating (Punch, 2002; Darbyshire et al., 2005). This enabled me to build a rapport with young people before and after the designated interview to explore other themes and ideas as they arose. Equally, it was interesting when participants reflected on the interviews and discussions with me one occasions following our conversation, providing some small opportunities for more participatory approaches to early analysis of findings.

As with all research, these findings present a partial and subjective picture. Table 1 illustrates that there was a lack of interviews or formal conversations with children,

which is something that could be developed in future work. Whilst there are plenty of data on childhood in the area from parents and my own fieldnotes, as well some informal conversations, the lack of voices from those under 12 years old in my thesis is a limitation that needs to be acknowledged. There are also low numbers of Black, Minority and Ethnic participants in the sample, although the low rate reflects the proportion of BME in the community. The breakdown of my sample however is relatively representative of what, or who, were visible in the neighbourhood. This is also reflected in the higher number of mothers than fathers. Whilst fieldwork was undertaken in evenings and weekends, the majority of parents were recruited during the day and often through the toddler group network. The difficulty to make links and find participants despite the snowballing approach was one of the key challenges of the research process, but the sample achieved could be considered to provide a satisfactory insight into the ways the a non-deprived modern community might facilitate the well-being of local children and young people.

Walking tours

Interviews were the research method opted for by most participants. They felt that it was something they were used to, could understand the meaning of and would allow them to convey what they wanted to in the a natural form of expression. Some use was made of mobile methods however, through walking and driving tours. There was also some use of visual methods, but this was done either by participants with which I had built up a strong relationship over time or in the play scheme with younger children.

Walking tours can provide valuable ways to engage with children and young people in particular when exploring their environments (Ross, 2007; Ross et al., 2009). Walking can also provide stimuli for experience or memories that may not have otherwise been recited in an interview situation (Moles, 2008). As demonstrated in later chapters, walking around the neighbourhood was not a common everyday experience for many residents. For most participants, the combination of the lack of local facilities, type of roads and traffic and daily preferences and routines meant that they did not have regular routes walking through the neighbourhood. As noted earlier in the chapter, the level of car ownership was high in the neighbourhood, which could perhaps be considered a marker of a non-deprived suburban lifestyle. The neighbourhood also appeared not to be especially pedestrian friendly, as explored in more detail in chapter six.

All was not lost however, for a number of reasons. Firstly, recognising that walking around the neighbourhood from one place to another did not mean that I did not take part in daily routines with participants, it just meant that joining in with their lives involved different activities. Time was spent in people's houses and gardens for example, rather than public spaces, and journeys often involved driving to the supermarket, school, or home from the community centre. This facilitated an insight into a wealth of different types of experiences, such the practicalities of getting more than one child into a car and between the car and the destination, for example the school or supermarket. This was the everyday reality for adults in Newtown Common. The school journey in particular, which involved a car journey, a lack of parking spaces and a walk to school gates with few if any Newtown Common

residents was enlightening. This supports the findings by Ross et al. (2009) about the value of car journeys as unlikely but revealing locations for data collection. Furthermore, such activities allowed relationships to develop and strengthen.

There were some cases where I did walk with a family to the park and back and between places and as shown by Moles (2008), it did provide a valuable window in the community from the family's perspective. In particular, the obstacles to walking around the neighbourhood became more evident that may otherwise have been unreported by parents. For example, as explored in the findings section, the community had an extremely fast road running through it, which children had to be careful crossing, and, for example, they were encouraged to get off of their bikes so they didn't roll onto the road. Coupled with this were the relatively steep hills in the estate. These were a safety hazard for children playing, running or on bikes that may get out of control and caused problems for parents (or older sisters) who were relied on for pulling or pushing prams and children on bikes back up the hill again when travelling in the opposite direction. These sorts of experiences may not have been everyday activities but taking part in them with the family help to make clear some of the reasons many chose to drive around the estate, which were not necessarily reported or recognised by participants in interviews.

Young people tended not to opt for walking tours explaining that they would only be walking home. I did walk with one young person however, and discussion en route included a mention of how he had almost been run over crossing in one place, and that a few people had experienced 'near misses' at that point. This is something that had not come up in any interviews or informal conversations with the young person, further adding weight to the suggestion that, even short, directed journeys may provide the researcher with an insight unexpected by the participant.

Visual methods

The potential for visual methods, particularly the use of participant photographs, have been identified as valuable techniques for generating data with children and young people especially (Morrow, 2001; Rasmussen and Smidt, 2003; Darbyshire et al., 2005; Thomson, 2008; Renold et al., 2008). Due to the way the data collection progressed however, and despite providing participants with the option for using visual methods, the majority preferred to opt for an interview in either a formal or informal style. Where they were used however, they did offer promising results for taking forward in future research.

Maps were taken and used to trigger discussions about the area, but residents seemed largely unfamiliar with the visual layout of their neighbourhood in the environment. They did provide an insight into the most common form of landmark used to locate their house however, which was either the community centre or the supermarket. Rivers or parks were not mentioned. The maps were therefore used as more of an aid to promote conversation rather than as data themselves.

Perhaps due to the type of community and residents, the majority of which owned camera phones, offering the use of a camera did not have the attraction value that was experienced in studies such as Renold et al. (2008). Furthermore, taking photographs of everyday experiences had little appeal to young people or adults who

generally perceived their lives as 'boring', 'quiet' and 'uneventful' despite my reassurances that I was interested ordinary lives. Drawing on their circumstances and the frequency with which I observed this happening anyway, I suggested that participants took photos on their phone just to capture what sorts of things they did in a day. Participants were slightly more optimistic about this option. To help overcome some nervousness, and due to the fact no literature was available to guide the research in this area and thus it was experimental, I suggested that the photos would purely be used for elicitation purposes, as a discussion guide and reminder rather than as visual data. Whilst the photos did not exactly provide a transparent window into the everyday realities of residents, they did provide valuable markers of experiences identified by the participants themselves. By their own admission, participants felt that taking 'quick snaps' with their phone was a familiar and comfortable technique that also allowed them to reflect on their days in conversation with me. As found by other researchers using such methodologies, the use of visual methods here facilitated additional conversations with participants and provided an extra layer of insight into their everyday lives.

Using the photos in this way meant that there were less concerns with ethical issues concerning the legality of taking, owning and disseminating photos as experienced in the study by Wiles et al. (2008) exploring children's everyday lives. However, it was possible to draw upon the photo elicitation techniques (see Harper, 2002). My approach echoed that of Epstein et al. (2006) who used photos in interviews to explore children's perspectives of their lives. I used the photos that participants generated in their everyday lives as a prompt to think about their daily experiences.
As reported by Epstein et al., I found that using this method helped to trigger participants memory about their everyday lives and enabled me to probe and ask questions about activities that would otherwise been have forgotten or omitted by the participants as mundane and not of interest. For example, when using the technique with a mother of two young children, she noted that she had not realised how much time she spent looking after other people's children. This was an important consideration that is discussed in chapter nine, given the importance of personal networks of support for childcare experienced by some residents due to the distance of wider family networks. She also said it made her realise how long it took to get everyone into the car, and therefore what an ordeal it was to leave the house with the children. Additionally, it aided the interview to have something else prompt discussions and take the focus when used as a technique with 17 year old Alun.
Whilst this was only used to a minor degree in this project, the findings show that this can be an extremely useful method for gaining access to the everyday worlds of participants.

Ethical considerations

The ethical implications of the research were carefully considered when determining the research design, and throughout the research process. This project was informed by the ethical guidelines of the Economic and Social Research Council, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the British Sociological Association. Ethical consent was obtained from Cardiff University's School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix C for Ethical Approval Letter). In addition to concerns of consent, confidentiality and other

established protocols for ensuring the well-being of those involved in the research process, the potentially sensitive nature of the topic and the inclusion of children and young people raised some additional areas of concern.

Child protection

The nature of the research questions meant that it was possible that I would become aware of potential risk to a child or vulnerable adult. Participants were made aware that if this type of information was disclosed the appropriate university protocols would be followed in consultation with the NSPCC and my supervisors. This was explained on the information and consent forms and also covered verbally before any discussions took place. Before starting the research, I also updated my enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance and during data collection I carried a university photo identification badge so I could reassure participants if needed.

Researcher safety

In the last decade or so, there has been an increasing awareness of the need to build strategies to ensure researcher safety into research designs (Paterson et al., 1999). When conducting fieldwork, I adhered to the lone worker protocols and reported via a mobile telephone in to a designated colleague before and after entering the field. Out of hours, my partner performed this duty. In each case the nominated person knew where I was, although the nature of the project meant that these details were updated regularly, as my time in the field was never predictable.

Informed consent

Following changes to research governance in the UK to govern research involving 'human subjects' (Tinker and Coomber) there has been an increasing interest in the role of informed consent (Wiles et al., 2005). For this project, all adult participants were provided with written and verbal information about the project and required to provide written consent before taking part in any research activities (see Appendix D for information sheet). All children and young people were asked to give verbal consent, and written consent was agreed before formal interviews took place. Consent from a parent or guardian was also sought for participants under 14 years old (see Appendices E, F and G for consent sheets for adults, young people and children respectively).

I was concerned that it would be difficult for participants to fully understand the implications of their involvement in the project before taking part in the research. This was especially the case as relationships were built that lasted throughout my time in the field and involved frequent contact. Consequently, regular discussions were held with participants who had longer or more in depth involvement to ensure that they were still comfortable with the data they were providing and how it would be used in dissemination (see Renold et al., 2008).

In addition, participants were given the option to discuss and identify anything they would prefer not to be included as data. This sometimes involved stopping the digital recorder to allow participants to speak more freely. Offering participants the ability to control the recorder also helped them to feel more in control, although very few took

the opportunity. A few participants also decided that they would rather not be recorded, and felt more comfortable with me taking notes during the discussion. I took steps to ensure that they realised that this was perfectly fine and I was grateful they were willing to share their thoughts and experiences with me at all. After the interview, however, one of these explained that they probably would not have minded what they said being recorded, but there was a concern about committing to this before the discussion took place. This underscores the importance of continued negotiation of consent highlighted by Renold et al. I therefore revisited the notion of consent at the end of each interview to ensure participants were still comfortable with the data produced.

By building up a trusting and open relationship with many of the participants, it was possible to revisit issues of consent, as suggested by Renold et al., throughout the data collection process. When meeting with parents at the toddler group in particular, they were keen to find out how the research was going, and sometimes asked if and how I might write something up. In one case, I was invited to a social event which it was agreed would not form part of the research, because the mothers attending wanted to relax and not be concerned about how their words and actions might be represented in the thesis. This hints at the way in which all data collection can only represent the partisan perspectives, which those involved choose to present. It was reassuring however to note that I was still generally recognised as a researcher despite my intense and prolonged involvement in the group.

In another case, discussed in chapter seven, there was some conflict between the toddler group and the church centre. This originated when the centre put up room hire costs for the group to cover building maintenance and insurance. This was believed by the toddler group organisers to be unnecessary and detrimental to the group due to the consequential fee increase for those attending the group. One participant, Lani, suggested that this would provide useful information for the thesis because it provided an insight into the struggles the group had when "just trying to do something to help families in the area". She also suggested, (and this was sanctioned by a number of the other parents taking part in the conversation), that the section in my findings could be titled "churchgate". This was generally received with laughter. Again, this provided some reassurance for me that there was an awareness of, as well as continual reminder about my role and key reason for attending the groups. In being open about how things might be presented and asking for (and accepting) ideas, participants could appreciate the transparency of my work and show a continued awareness of my role.

Informed consent from children and young people

In addition to meeting legal requirements when conducting research with children and young people, I was keen to ensure children were both protected and able to take part where they chose to (Alderson, 1995). A specific set information sheet and set of questions was developed for when speaking to children and young people (See Appendix G). When attending clubs with children, active consent was sought by the centre and activity leaders. The aim was also to provide parents with opt out forms before their children attended the clubs. The low turnout and unpredictable nature of the groups for children and young people however meant that for those children under fourteen, consent was sometimes obtained in a more ad hoc fashion

as the parents dropped children off for example. Whilst the majority of research in clubs mainly involved observation, descriptions and data on children whose parents had not been checked for consent were not included in the findings.

During one play scheme session, children were asked to take part in an activity where they, or I, wrote down on sticky paper things they did and did not like about the area and things they wanted to change. The activities were run as part of the programme of options for children taking part of the playscheme so every child attended could choose to take part. In all but one case, verbal consent was obtained from parents prior to their child joining the session, the exception took part in the activity but post-its kept subtly marked until the parent had an opportunity to provide consent so their views could be discounted if consent was not provided. Verbal consent was also provided by all children who took part in the activity. Whilst there are concerns that children may take part because it was offered as part of the playscheme and because everybody else was, children did not need to speak or write on a note if they did not want to, even if they were 'taking part'.

During interviews with some parents, children were also asked to take part in drawing. For this form of involvement, parents written consent was obtained and children's verbal consent. Where children under 14 were interested in taking part in more in depth or future participation such as an interview, written opt in consent was obtained from both the parent and the child. For those aged 14 or over, written consent was obtained from the young person but parental consent was not sought. All participants were able to withdraw any or all of their contributions at any stage of the research process. Participants were provided with a research debrief and thank you letter (see Appendix H) including contact details of the researcher and other useful links such as details for the NSPCC child line or local community centre and police community support officers.

Data protection, dissemination, anonymity and confidentiality

The requirements of the *Data Protection Act* were fully adhered to, with the proviso that any uncertainties would be referred to the university's data protection advisor. All research materials were kept in a locked filing cabinet or password protected on the computer with restricted access.

Anonymity of the individuals involved in the data collection and the exact locality will be ensured in publications by using pseudonyms and obscuring identifiable features. Furthermore, care was taken not to identify names of other participants involved to neighbours, although discussion about participation did happen freely within the community which was done so at the participants' discretion. Similarly, data generated in group situations including group interviews and observation meant that some participants were known to each other.

The use of visual methods means that it will be impossible to anonymise all materials, for example photographs of places, and so secure storage was essential. Photographs including identifiable people or places have not been used in publications. Careful consideration will be given to the use of any non-anonymised data in dissemination to local people such as counsellors or policy makers and would

be fully discussed with the relevant participants. Permission to use any participant generated data was verified at the start and end of their involvement.

Method-specific ethical issues

Digital recordings of interviews and walking tour discussions were locked away securely until they had been transcribed and anonymised. The data was then securely wiped from the machine following transcription. Photographs from my walks around the neighbourhood were password protected and did not include identifiable people. These will be deleted following the end of this project. Due to the trajectory of the data collection, some photographs were taken by participants on their camera phones, but these remained their images at all times and were only viewed together with me during an interview to prompt discussion (Wiles et al. 2008). Consequently there are no photographs with identifiable people available for use in dissemination.

Observation took place in public spaces as well as in groups and sessions such as the toddler group and PACT meeting. Active consent from the gatekeeper and opt out consent from the participants (and participants parents/ guardians where necessary) was sought. The Fieldnotes were written and anonymised and any data generated with participants was subject to the ethical procedure detailed above.

Analysis

> *The process of analysis should not be seen as a distinct stage of research:*
> *rather, it is a reflexive activity that should inform data collection, writing,*
> *further data collection, and so forth. Analysis is not, then, the last phase of*
> *the research process. The research process, of which analysis is one aspect,*
> *is a cyclical one.*
> *(Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 6)*

Analysis and interpretation of my data took place throughout fieldwork and helped to inform the ongoing trajectory of the research project, including refining the research questions, as outlined above. Therefore, whilst the analysis appears as a separate section in this thesis, it was an integral part of the research approach from an early stage.

In line with Coffey and Atkinson (1996), I believe that "analysis is a cyclical process and a reflexive activity; the analytical process should be comprehensive and systematic but not rigid" (p10). As they note, analysis for researchers working in some theoretical traditions refers purely to the handling and manipulating of data. As such, it is often considered as a distinct stage within the research process located between data collection and writing up results. From my constructivist perspective, my aim is to consider and identify themes in the accounts provided by my participants and in my experiences of the field. Accordingly, my inductive approach to the project, driven by my exploratory research questions, mean that it would be impossible to separate analysis out from fieldwork. Through my active participation in the research, in observations as in interviews, it would be impractical and contrary to the tradition to resist thinking about and recognising similarities and differences in the data as it was generated.

Coming from a social constructivist perspective, one ontological assumption is that qualitative interviews are situations in which participants are able to make sense of and present their view of the world. Every participant's view is equally valid in that it is their perception based on their experiences and understanding. As an ethnography, the aim is to explore these views and identify similarities and differences which help to explain the everyday worlds of those living in Newtown Common. My analysis therefore loosely followed the approach set out by Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. (1994: 10). Whilst I did not exactly begin the data collection with a fully fledged 'start list' of potential themes through which the data might be organised or coded, it would be naïve and unprofessional not to acknowledge that my own interpretations and understanding of the fieldwork process was informed by my own experiences as well as reading the literature outlines here, and prior to my doctoral study.

I kept a record of my research activity on a simple spreadsheet, which had columns to note the dates of visits, where I spent time in the neighbourhood, and when I undertook formal or informal interviews. Throughout the data collection, interviews were transcribed and written up after visits to study site, together with developed accounts of fieldnotes. My experience reflected that of others in that decisions needed to be taken spontaneously about ways to note down observations in the field (Denzin and Lincold, 1994; Emerson et al., 2001). Writing quick notes or points in a mobile phone application was not as conspicuous as getting a notepad out on a bus, for example. Similarly I often made use of spending time in parks to write up notes from previous experiences or conversations, as well as to describe the current situation.

Once in electronic format, it was then possible to use a computer aided qualitative data analysis software package, AtlasTi, to facilitate coding and manage the interview and fieldwork data. Miles and Huberman (1984) note that there is not a shared set of rules for analysing qualitative data, or for verifying their robustness as is the case for quantitative data through statistical techniques. Furthermore, there is a tendency amongst qualitative researchers to promote the development of analytical skills through "learning by doing" (Fielding and Lee, 1991; 6). Charmaz and Mitchell (2001; 160) however, provide a useful guide for qualitative analysis; whereby the researcher compares new data with data from the start of the research to identify emerging categories and consider relationships between concepts and categories.

Due to the vast amount of fieldnotes and interview transcripts, there was a large amount of data that needed coding to allow key themes to emerge. Emerging themes were identified throughout the process and built on in future data collections because my research design facilitated an iterative strategy for data generation. Key themes were then arranged into overarching points, some of which were used to form chapters, some to form thematic sections within chapters and some identified as common notions that were evidenced throughout the data.

As suggested in many of the textbooks I read before entering the field, of the main challenges in undertaking ethnographic research was data analysis (Luders, 2004). Atlas-Ti provided a means of organising the data using the themes, which were refined throughout the data collection process by revisiting the transcripts and

fieldnotes. This enabled me to take advantage of the full depth and substance of the ethnographic data. The coding structure drew on categories emerging from the data, reflecting the inductive analysis process. This approach was also adopted by similar neighbourhood case studies conducted as part of the study *"The Middle Classes in the City: Social Mix or just 'People like us'? A comparison of Paris and London"*. Atlas-ti was used to bring together all of my written data and identify 'families' of documents (grouping by respondent type for example). Whilst maps and some photos amongst other information was also collected as part of the data collection, these were small in number and thus easier to manage manually.

Throughout the data collection process I would then read and re-read my data to become increasingly familiar with it. As an ethnography, the data included a variety of data sources that needed to be analysed, for example leaflets or flyers from the local meetings or maps I used in interviews. Whilst key points from these were reflected in my fieldnotes, they were also kept in a folder in a filing cabinet and reviewed whenever I reread the rest of the data. For coding purposes, analytic memos were created in documents that could then be treated like fieldnotes and transcripts.

Identifying themes through qualitative analysis provides the catalyst for inductively developing empirical data into theory (Bendassolli, 2013). My initial stage of data reduction (Huberman and Miles, 1994) was done using AtlasTi's coding tools. Open coding was used to assign codes to sections of raw data that were related to any themes that emerged (See Appendix I for an example). In many cases extracts would be eligible for more than one code. These were then revisited at regular intervals throughout the data collection process and helped to identify and quantify common patterns and relationships across the large data set.

Once AtlasTi had been used to identify initial codes, it was possible to examine all extracts in relation to one theme in more detail by exporting relevant data passages and sentences. Whilst this could have been done using the computer software, my preference, based on previous analysis, was to do this by hand using piles of paper, highlighters and sticky notes. Patterns were then related back to the literature and used to identify contradictions and or gaps to promote new topics for remaining research (D'Cruz and Jones, 2004). These later helped to inform the structure and basis of the empirical findings chapters of this thesis. It was important to remain reflexive through the data collection and analysis process to consider decisions made to help build rigour into the analysis.

A dangerous trap when analysing and writing up data from community studies is writing in a purely descriptive manner rather than critically engaging with the data. Mills (1959; 368) noted that "the endless 'community studies' of the sociologist often read like badly written novels", which is not what this project aimed to do. This was something that, whilst aware of, I still relapsed into a number of times during the reporting stage. Consequently, a robust system of analysis was crucial to help focus and drive my presentation of the data in a way which is meaningful and of interest to the reader.

Through familiarisation and saturation of my data, however, it was possible to think beyond the descriptive categories of what it was telling me to reach an interpretation

of what it might mean. From this, common themes began to emerge in relation to the research aim. Disentangling these into three distinct clusters of ideas was challenging with so many overlapping and repeated notions, and some are present across all four chapters. As argued by Gabb (2009) however, qualitative research data, especially relating to family lives, could be considered 'messy'. This is not something to avoid she asserts, but something to embrace to reflect the uncertainty and vitality of 'lived lives'. This is certainly a principle that I believe is reflected in the lives of those living in Newtown Common.

Conclusions and key learning points

This project provided a unique opportunity to explore concepts of well-being, community and responsibility in a research setting that often do not attract such in depth fieldwork. The variety and, in particular, versatility of the methods used were crucial leavers to gain an insight into a neighbourhood that initially seemed too difficult to penetrate. The project acted not only as an experience for learning about the topic area, but also afforded a number of learning opportunities for me as a researcher. When reflecting on the journey therefore, there are some key points to consider for taking research in this area forward in the future.

As argued by many ethnographic scholars, there are a number of complexities and challenges in conducting ethnographically driven research (Luders, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Less covered in the research however are the challenges in implementing typical ethnographic methods in this more unusual study site. The challenges in recruiting participants in a barren area such as Newtown Common are relatively unchartered territory in the literature. Consequently, the initial fear at how to present absence as a finding was outweighed by the potential contribution of this thesis. One of the key learning points of the project was that the characteristics of this new, suburban neighbourhood largely inhabited by mobile commuters meant that their experience of and within the neighbourhood is limited. Instead of causing a problem however, this led to two interesting strands of work: exploring how residents did experience their neighbourhood, and what may have effected this interaction, and reflecting on how these often limited experiences within their neighbourhood impact upon the ways in which community can be understood and facilitate the well-being of children and young people.

It was also worth reflecting upon what emerged as the second largest challenge I encountered in conducting this ethnographic study. This involved the careful construction and maintaining of relationships with local participants during my time in the field. As cautioned against by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), I was wary of becoming too comfortable in the field to a degree that could affect my ability to provide a critical perspective during analysis of the data. More challenging however was the negotiation of relationships between participants who had various tensions with each other, without appearing to take sides. Whilst Coffey (1999) argues that it is important to recognise the positive as well as negative emotions that arise during ethnographic work, it is the awkward moments where I tried to balance my role to retain some independence. Whilst I am not sympathetic to the school of thought that suggests I could remain a non-partisan observer of an objective reality, it was important to remind myself, and my participants of my role whilst in the field. This

was not action research that aimed to make a difference to the community in the process of the fieldwork. I therefore resisted the urge to get caught up in passionate conversations regarding the lack of a school for example without seeming unsympathetic towards their viewpoints. Additional analysis of the data collection process itself may contribute to a useful reflection on ethnographically driven methods in a separate paper.

The aim of this research was to explore the ways in which community can be seen as facilitating the well-being of local children and young people in a particular, non-deprived modern suburb. The research design chosen aimed to explore if and how this was achieved in the everyday lives of those living and working in Newtown Common. As an undefined term in policy context, I was keen to leave the concept open to interpretation during data collection to facilitate a more participant generated explanation. A major challenge however was that participants were largely unaware of the policy shift towards recognising safeguarding children's well-being as 'everybody's business'. Furthermore, many asserted that there was not even any sense of a 'community' in Newtown Common to start with. Whilst these produced extremely interesting findings by demonstrating the challenges of implementing a policy shift at the organisational level without any mechanisms for feeding this down to local communities, there was a concern that there may be not be enough data to inform a 80,000 word thesis. As data collection continued, data did emerge on the issue by unpicking the concepts in different ways. Consequently, the ability to be flexible to adapt my research design and questions were crucial lessons for me.

When reflecting on the methodological techniques, the thesis benefitted from the explorative nature of the study, and the time afforded by virtue of the PhD project allowed for a highly iterative methodological approach. As detailed above, the project design and ethical consideration enabled a vast array of methods and techniques to be chosen by the participants including developing an innovative approach using camera phones as a method for documenting daily lives in place of a written or audio diary or disposable camera. Whilst only a few participants opted to use this technique I believe the photos provided a useful stimulus for interviews and conversations and would benefit from further consideration as a data collection tool.

The next four chapters present the empirical findings from the thesis. When exploring the role of community in facilitating the well-being of children in a modern, non-deprived suburb, the data revealed four key forms or aspects of community that had distinct but interrelated impacts. These were: the impact of streets and public spaces environment; the role of local groups, centre and people working in the area in ensuring children's safety; the role of local facilities to promote well-being; and the role of friends, family and neighbours. Chapter six considers children and young people's experiences of safety and well-being in relation to the built environment in Newtown Common. It considers the way in which children can be seen as having been designed out of certain public areas and reflects on the distinction between the public and private divide as well as the influence this has upon young people's experiences of safety in the community.

6. STREETS, PUBLIC SPACES AND CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING IN NEWTOWN COMMON

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the ways in which the community can facilitate the well-being of local children and young people in a modern, non-deprived suburb. The design and physical environment of the neighbourhood emerged from the data as one of four forms of community that had the potential to impact upon the safety and well-being of children in Newtown Common. Whilst there were concerns about traffic and walkability in the area, there was an important absence of concerns about most social and environmental hazards that were identified by young people in deprived areas (Tannock, 2012b; Elsley, 2004), which contributed to an appreciated 'air of safety' for residents. This echoes the findings in the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor that a safe home and community were perceived as important by children, as well by adult residents for ensuring their well-being. The role of public organisations such as the community centre and local groups were perceived as important mechanisms in facilitating this air of safety by some, as explored in the following chapter. Despite this general sense of safety however, public spaces in Newtown Common such as parks and streets are rarely used for play and hanging out. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the implications of a highly privatised area where childhood is largely 'hidden' from public spaces and how this impacts upon the potential for community parenting, found to be an important aspect of facilitating children's well-being in more deprived areas (Evans and Holland, 2012).

The Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales (2011) identified a 'safe home and community' as one of the seven important aspects of children's well-being. To asses this, the Monitor reports on indicators relating to crime, housing and environmental harm, traffic accidents, hospital admissions, anti-social behaviour and bullying. Such measures take into account both social and environmental risks to children's well-being. It also reports on a sense of safety in the neighbourhood, noting that findings from the MCS that children living in disadvantaged areas were more likely to report 'never' feeling safe. Much of these are also cited as important indicators of children's well-being by Bradshaw (2011). The data from this study demonstrates that children in Newtown Common are largely free of these sorts of social and environmental neighbourhood based risks to their well-being.

Children's happiness has been shown to have a strong relationship with their perceptions of their local area (Children's Society, 2013). In general, the neighbourhood of Newtown Common was perceived to be quiet and safe by residents. They did however express a number of concerns about hazards or risks in the neighbourhood in relation to safety and well-being. The chapter suggests that whilst such risks are neither uncommon nor incidental they could be considered minor compared to those identified by studies in more deprived areas (Evans and Holland, 2012; Percy-Smith, 2002). Furthermore, despite the general perception of safety in the area, children in Newtown Common appear to epitomise those described in current literature in relation to the changing nature of childhood through the (over)protection of children (Furedi, 2001; Palmer, 2006; 2010). Commentators

such as Guldberg (2009) argue that this relocation of childhood is detrimental to their overall well-being; however there is limited evidence of this from the data presented here. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how each of these realities for children in relation to children's experience of the built environment impact upon their safety and well-being.

Hazards and social dangers in Newtown Common

This chapter starts by describing the physical space of Newtown Common, drawing on fieldnotes and interview data. It will argue that, as found by Percy-Smith (2002) in the late 1990s, environments in suburbs are perceived to be much safer than other deprived or inner city areas in terms of potential environmental risks and social dangers. Neither the place, nor the people within it, were perceived to be particularly risky compared to findings by other studies (Tannock, 2012b; Elsely, 2004). This was demonstrated as much through what was not said by participants, as it was in their descriptions of life in Newtown Common. Equally the raising of relatively minor issues, such as limited lighting, suggested the absence of other risks observed in similar studies in more deprived areas, such as the presence of broken glass and needles (Percy-Smith, 2002). Like the suburb in Percy-Smith's study of children's geographies, Newtown Common was generally perceived as safe and quiet. There were some concerns about hazards raised by participants of all ages, including traffic and walkability of the area, which are not uncommon. Descriptions of the area tended to focus on the lack of amenities and it being too quiet or dull rather than focusing on the cleanliness of the area. In contrast, children living in Percy-Smith's inner city areas cited broken glass, used syringes, drunken 'weirdos' and general litter problems. Likewise other studies highlight young people's unease due to the presence of needles, burnt out areas, rubbish or fly tipping (Tannock, 2012b; Elsley, 2004). Such hazards were not mentioned by anyone in Newtown Common where, as detailed in fieldnotes, the environment was clean and tidy. These findings therefore suggest that as a non-deprived suburban neighbourhood, Newtown Common is experienced as a safe or low risk area for children and young people.

Newtown Common is a modern city suburb which began to be developed in the 1970s but has expanded greatly in the last three decades. Morrow notes that the second half of the twentieth century saw a significant rise in suburbs and 'new towns' like Newtown Common, in which children made up a high proportion of residents. In general, residents perceived the neighbourhood as a quiet and safe environment. Whilst the residents often had little to say about the area, the absence of descriptions about litter, vandalism, violence and other negative aspects found in other community studies in more deprived, urban areas is just as revealing (see Percy-Smith, 2002; Neary et al., 2012).

Newtown Common's sprawling estate has one main road running through it and a number of winding roads off it leading to cul de sacs. Whilst there is a mixture of housing on the estate, almost all of the homes include a private drive and front and back gardens. Fieldnotes from one of my first visits convey the nature of the area:

Fieldnotes, June 17th 2010:
I was struck by how quiet the area was. Compared to the city centre
especially, I had the distinct impression that Newtown Common was a safe,
friendly, family area. The roads and pavements were in good condition and
wide enough to walk along. There was no broken glass or rubbish on the
floor (or the rats or seagulls that tend to accompany them in the city centre).
It was a clean, tidy, modern looking estate. Likewise the houses were all red
brick new looking homes with tidy, well-kept lawns and drives. Unlike the city
centre, I noticed the lack of toys and sometimes other debris scattered
across the front garden. Everything looked extremely well presented.

From the start of my data collection, I immediately associated the modern build of the housing together with wide roads and pavements with a safe and peaceful environment. Perhaps this was due to the neat and clean presentation of the area compared to the more run-down area of the city in which I live. This outlook on the neighbourhood also resonated through the residents' views, although they often found it hard to articulate what it was about the neighbourhood that created this impression. When asked why she described the area as safe and friendly, resident and local businesswoman, Judith said she could not explain, "It's just a feeling". Likewise, Colin, a local parent and police officer concluded that "it's a nice area, it's a fairly safe area". As seen in my fieldnotes, there was something about the estate that exudes an air of safety, however, like the residents, it was something that I found difficult to explain or articulate.

As found in Percy-Smith's (2002) ethnography of a suburb and an inner city area, Newtown Common contrasts sharply to some areas in the city it adjoins. For some residents, the comparison with other places they knew about, either in Wales or further afield, with their life in Newtown Common were drawn on as the evidence for why they appreciated the area. Joe, a parent and local community centre staff member explained that he felt "lucky to be living here…it's one of the best areas in [city]". Likewise, Gill who lived in the area with her husband and two young children, stayed within the area when moving to a bigger house "because it feels safe and it's pretty quiet as well". When asked why she perceived the area to be safe she explained "I come from a council estate in Scotland, so I would say this is safer than that".

Gill, Parent of young children:
It wasn't terrible, it wasn't bad at all, but you know, it would be, it's difficult to
say if it would be safe or not because I never came to any harm and I didn't
have any sense of danger or anything there. But I think I would feel, going
back to live there now, that this would be a safer place to live.

For Gill therefore it was both the absence of any danger, and a comparison of how she felt living in other places that created a perception of Newtown Common as a quiet and safe neighbourhood to live in. This feeling of safety also translated into a belief that the area was a safe environment for children. Joe, a parent, sums up this feeling of safety for children by asserting that he "wouldn't be worried about anything for children, I don't think there's anything to be worried about'" He concluded "it's definitely a very good area, any parents dream".

This feeling was also echoed by young people, who felt that the lack of crime was one of the key reasons for the safe atmosphere. For example Huw, a 16 year old young person who had grown up in the area, explained "it's quiet…like not any trouble. I dunno, it's just everyone's friendly I suppose". This was particularly noted in contrast to a neighbouring area which Geraint described as "quite rough" because it had "a lot of gangs". Geraint was from this 'rough' neighbouring area but explained that he felt safer in Newtown Common because it was nicer and he did not feel like he was about to be "jumped" when walking around the neighbourhood. As noted by Suttles (1972) it is often the identification of threats from outside that unites a residents with a sense of community. Likewise, Taylor (2007) argues that familiarity and similarity within a neighbourhood can bond people against a common 'foreign' enemy.

Young people and a sense of safety

The sense of Newtown Common as a place of safety resonated throughout the narratives of all residents regardless of age. It was most striking however in the case of young people and especially teenagers who only identified outsiders or beyond the envisaged boundaries of the area potentially threatening. The absence of environmental and social dangers was seen to facilitate a sense of safety. In some cases, especially with children, participants felt they had nothing to say because they did not spend much time 'out and about' in the community at all. Often teenagers in particular explained that they went into the city on their weekends with friends and spent evenings at their own or sometimes a friend's house. Consequently it was often difficult for them to engage in perceptions of safety and well-being in the Newtown Common. The data suggest that this is likely to be partially linked to the nature of the community whereby young people reported being quite content to stay at home where they would often have access to free food and drink, their games consoles and television. However, there were examples of young people 'out and about in what Harden (2000) defines as the 'local sphere'.

For children in Newtown Common, particularly those of primary school age, their experience of the community was largely supervised and most had little to say about the area except in relations to concerns about traffic (see below). Whilst teenagers appeared to make more use of some neighbourhood spaces, their choice about leaving the home impact upon by their often more tempting alternative of staying at home. Young people in Newtown Common often commented that had their own room and therefore the space, freedom and access to activities that children in other types of neighbourhoods or social classes may not experience. For example, Alun explains his preference to spend time at home rather than the community centre.

> *Alun, young person, 17 years old*
> *they're all good and that lot but you know, you can sort of do all this stuff at home as well. Um, in the comfort of your own home and, you know, you have mates round… I played pool [and the centre] and then, I liked pool quite a lot and then my dad bought me a pool table, so I had a pool table"*

Whilst this sort of experience is not representative of all children, one quotation from a young person, Matt, who lives in a neighbouring suburb (Abertaf) sums the difference between the neighbourhood compare to other local neighbourhoods.

"Down Abertaf there's, they just, the, the mothers just leave their kids, they've got about 8 kids whatever, just leave them running round the streets, its shocking like…up here it's all organised and, they know when to go in, whatever… [younger children are] with parents, yeah, like teach 'em how to ride a bike up Newtown Common. In Abertaf they just leave 'em outside with like a flat football or something". This narrative echoes the suggestion by O'Brien et al. (2000) that middle class parenting approaches to supervision have been normalised leading to negative perceptions of the more working class 'learning through living' approach (see also Lareau 2003; 2010). These examples are similar to findings reviewed by Holland et al., (2011) and seemed to have created a separation or division in Matt's mind about the types of parenting occurring in the two different types of neighbourhoods. This general sense of safety was also echoed when I asked the young people who did spend time walking around the neighbourhood at night what they would do or had done if they felt threatened.

In none of the interviews or conversations could one of them recall an example where they or anyone else had been concerned about their welfare in Newtown Common. Lloyd simply replied "I wouldn't feel threatened" and really could not understand why I was asking these questions. Furthermore another young person only reported feeling a little bit 'jumpy' at night because of the physical aspects of the community. In particular, he felt that the lack of pedestrian crossing coupled with the speed of traffic made walking a little dangerous and he did not like to use some of the paths at night time because they were not lit. Young people often tended to base their feelings on an assumption that people within Newtown Common were generally good people who do not go out of their way to jeopardise the well-being of others. This was not the case for other areas such as Abertaf however, and when examples of antisocial behaviour or crime did happen, it was assumed to be from outside.

Moral panics around deviant young people have been documented in previous studies, such as Cohen (1972) in relation to the mods and rockers groups identified by in the 1960s, and the 'hoodies' and 'chavs' over the past few decades (Pearson, 2006). Nevertheless, anti-social behaviour is often referred to in political rhetoric as a sign of increasing social disorder (Millie et al., 2005). As explored in chapter two, this was reflected in public debates about "feral" British young people, (see for example, Jeffs and Smith, 1996). Whilst residents in Newtown Common tended not to describe public spaces as spaces that young people should be (see chapter six), problems with anti-social behaviour were likely to be perceived as coming from outside of the community. Similarly, local teenagers did not feel that any residents looked objectionally on them. This feeling is not necessarily naïve however as evidence at the PACT meetings (see chapter seven) demonstrated that crime rates in the area were low compare to surrounding areas, and that crimes that were committed were often on property and committed by opportunists taking advantage of unsecured vehicles.

Conjuring up ideas of safety for these young people therefore seemed to be more about not being able to think of examples of risk and criminal activity. Richard, a local teenager, believed that Newtown Common was a safe neighbourhood.

Richard, 18 year old young person:
I haven't really heard much of crime. I think, one of my friends had a bike or
two stolen but… I haven't really witnessed much crime or, stuff like that.
There's not much vandalism going on at all.

In most cases young people expressed the feeling that they would feel slightly uneasy when walking around on their own, but many walked around Newtown Common quite often without reporting any experiences of concern. However, when pushed about what they would do if an incident did arise and they were worried about their own or another's safety, every young person said they would report it to an adult. One said he would put his concerns in the PACT box, others said they would speak to their parents or perhaps someone at the community centre but none could give any examples.

There was a clear finding from the data that experiencing unfavourable circumstances in terms of unkempt spaces, as well as physical and social hazards, including people perceived to be 'risky', was closely associated with feeling unsafe. This supports the findings by a wealth of criminologist research which identifies 'physical incivilities'; 'social incivilities', such as rubbish; abandoned shops and homeless or drunk people as related to fear of risk and crime in neighbourhoods (see La Grange et al., 1992; Perkins and Taylor, 1996, Robinson et al., 2003). This includes consideration of the effect incivilities can have upon an individual as well as the wider community (Taylor, 1999). Inversely, for those in Newtown Common, the absence of such incivilities appeared to negate concerns about risk and crime amongst residents in the community.

It is worth noting that the lack of such 'social problems' on the surface cannot be assumed to necessarily mean there is an actual absence. The local policeman, Colin, for example, suggests that drugs are a problem in the area. However, it is perhaps the lack of visibility, exposure to and awareness of 'social problems' that affects residents' perception of safety in an area. Whilst space does not permit a full review of the literature, positive correlations between income and perception of safety have been found (Pantazis, 2000) and data from the British Crime Survey (1994) showed a relationship between area of living and fear of crime. For this thesis however, the lack of crime and other hazards observed was reported as instilling a general feeling or sense of safety in Newtown common.

In contrast, ethnographic research on childhood and well-being in an ex-mining neighbourhood, highlights a number of physical and social incivilities including "a severe deterioration of community living conditions, marked by widespread drug use, vandalism, burglaries, joy-riding, fly-tipping and car-burning" (Tannock, 2012b: 7). This study was undertaken in an economically deprived area of the South Wales Valleys and, and as referred to throughout this thesis, presented an extremely different insight into the aspects of community that can impact upon the well-being of local children and young people. Tannock also notes the area was also the setting for a number of violent crimes. Such unambiguous examples of environmental hazards and dangers to young people and residents in Newtown Common were absent from all fieldnotes and participants' accounts of the area. In this way, the nature of the built environment but also the behaviour of those that live within it can be seen as impacting upon the safety and well-being of those that live within it.

A similar study explores the experiences of public space for children and young people living in a range of more and less deprived rural and urban areas in Scotland. Day and Wager (2010) found that concerns about safety were part of the daily reality for local young people living in the deprived inner city area. Similarly, the fieldwork data supports the findings of Percy-Smith (2002) who explored young people's experiences in comparative areas in a city in the English Midlands. His study revealed that:

> *Young people in the inner city commonly talked of their area as being 'dirty'*
> *or 'polluted' by urban detritus such as litter, discarded refuse and dog*
> *excrement, of the dangers posed by traffic, used syringes and broken glass,*
> *and of social dangers such as bullies, drinks, druggies and weirdos*
> *(Percy-Smith, 2002: 61)*

In contrast Percy-Smith found that:

> *Apart from a shared concern about traffic problems, suburban young people*
> *rarely mentioned environmental hazards and social dangers. Instead, these*
> *young people talked of their suburb as a nice place to live.*
> *(Percy-Smith, 2002: 62)*

Such findings highlight how hazards were prevalent in the lives of the young people living in the inner city area compared with the suburb. Despite research being conducted over a decade later, my findings in relation to young people's and other residents' experiences of life in a suburb in Wales reflect those found in Percy-Smith's study. Residents all found it hard to describe why they felt their area was safe to live in, but they all reported a feeling of general safety without narratives of experiencing crime or environmental hazards. The local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) explained that she was keen to uphold the criminologist inspired 'broken window theory' (see Wilson and Kelling 1982). She felt that if she made sure the neighbourhood was kept clean and tidy, this would encourage the maintenance of this environment and deter future antisocial behaviour.

Where reasons were cited by residents for what generated the general feeling of safety in the area, the lack of crime was the most commonly provided explanation. Consequently, aside from a concern about traffic and parked cars presenting a relative danger to local young people, it is the lack of environmental and social dangers and hazards cited that is the most telling about the low risk experience of the neighbourhood. These findings support those of previous studies linking feelings of safety in an area with residents' positive perceptions of the area (Parkes et al., 2002).

Some studies have argued, despite the exposure to risks in certain neighbours, that engagement with public and potentially dangerous areas have provided deprived children with some benefits. For example, McKendrick (1998) describes a 'paradoxical poverty' whereby children and young people in poorer areas were often able to gain a richer experience from their physical and social environments. Similarly, Percy-Smith (2002) found that "young people in the inner city appear to derive a richer environmental experience from their neighbourhood than suburban young people" which affords them less flexibility for "environmental (re)creation".

This reflects some of the tensions discussed in chapter two regarding the tensions between freedom and overprotection of children. Nevertheless, whilst the inner city children often construed their use of space as playful and fun, it was shown to also lead to hostile relations with other residents.

The contrast in experiences of areas of different levels of disadvantage suggests there may be some correlation between class and experiences of neighbourhoods. As argued by Giddens (1991), Popay et al., (1998) and Frohlich et al., (2007), there must be a consideration of the structural impacts on well-being and health as well as the impact of individual's actions. In relation to health, Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991) identified a range of social determinants that effected health including biologically determined factors, individual behaviour, social and community influences, living and working conditions and wider socio-economic, cultural and environmental circumstances. Subsequently, a number of studies have argued that when examining health and well-being, the influence of structural factors cannot be ignored (Popay et al., 1998; Frohlich et al., 2007). Whilst there is an association identified in this thesis and other studies between deprivation and experiences of communities and the impact of this upon well-being, as with all qualitative studies, generalisation and causation cannot be assumed but may be an area of consideration for future work.

Some perceived dangers in the area, such as traffic, were identified by both parents and young people, there were very few other concerns reported with many feeling a general sense of safety in the neighbourhood. The most common response to questions about safety in the area was "I don't know really" or "I have any really". As described in chapter six, the community was characterised by its lack of risk and, perhaps, therefore young people found it difficult to provide examples of being protected from any dangers. Unlike the young people in deprived areas of Glasgow in the study by Seaman et al. (2006), no shared knowledge of risks or 'safety in numbers' approaches were needed for young people in Newtown Common because risk was not part of their everyday realities.

Traffic Concerns

As found by Percy-Smith, traffic was the one example of a risk to safety that was reported by residents, especially in relation to its potential threat to children and young people. Despite the cul de sac nature of the estate, the main artery road running through the estate that connects the wider city with the Retail Park and superstore was seen to create dangerous through-traffic to Newtown Common. Furthermore there were some reports that residents themselves would speed through the estate creating a danger to children and pedestrians.

A main anxiety that arose from the adults as well as the young people's narratives about potential safety concerns in the estate related to the volume and intensity of traffic in the area, and the dominance of fast cars on the roads through their estate. For example, in a group interview with some children aged between seven and ten and their parents, all of the children explained that they did not feel safe when playing outside their house because of the speed that cars came down their road.

> *Max, 7 years old:*
> *"you know that man with the black car he always come down here like, very quickly […] it's like they don't even care about the children"*

As described by Max, fast cars are a common sight in Newtown Common. To the annoyance of some residents, much of the traffic travelling through the estate was as a result of the road through the neighbourhood also providing access to a large retail and industrial estate. On one occasion, I was travelling with Lisa, a mother of two children aged three and five, back to her house in the car and she remarked on how other drivers appear to be shocked when she slowed to turn into her road rather than continue to the retail park area. This supported similar observations recorded in my fieldnotes that the majority of traffic appeared to be travelling through the estate rather than in and out of it.

However, not all of the concerns about cars and traffic could be attributed to non-residents. The conversation between Max, his siblings and his mother that surrounded this comment made it quite clear that it was often 'actual residents' that were speeding around the neighbourhood. They identified a number of residents, including 'the man with the black car' Max mentions who lives at the end of their cul de sac and caused recurrent problems including a close miss during the snow. The mother explained to me that once, when the children were playing outside, the frequently speeding 'black car' sped down the road too fast, lost control during the turn due to the hazardous freezing weather conditions and skidded up onto their garden and drive. Max explained "you could see the tracks on our garden" and there was a consensus that if the children or anyone else was there at that time, they would have been hit.

For children especially, traffic was causing a safety concern in Newtown Common. In my initial observations, the sprawling cul de sacs and the traffic calming measures, pointed out to me as a more recent safety enhancement by one mother, provided an illusion of a more gentle environment away from the higher speed through roads. Residents' accounts however cited the windy roads as creating risks to pedestrians and children because the frequent speeding cars passing through the estate were unable to see around corners. Moreover, the dangers arising from restrictions to view by car drivers are further compounded by the extra vulnerability of children due to their inexperience and smaller size (Lupton and Bayley, 2007) and also their predisposition to more impulsive behaviour West et al. (1999).

Many parents in Newtown Common reported that they imposed restrictions on their children's play and movement, and usually ensured younger children were supervised. In particular, children and young people were almost also driven to school, clubs and friends houses. This is not an uncommon finding, especially for residents such as those in a non-deprived area. Research suggests that higher income parents are more likely to drive their children around through safety fears (Mackett et al., 2007). However, highlighted by Carver et al. (2008), many of the parents in Newtown Common could be seen as falling into a 'social trap' whereby driving their children to school in an attempt to keep them safe from the large volume of traffic is adding to the problem for other parents.

This more common response supports the wealth of evidence regarding the growth of indoor and 'backseat' generation children described by Karsten (2005). She argued that middle class children, in particular, are driven by their parents when travelling to school for example, rather walking even smaller distances. Karsten believed this is partly due to an increase in school commuting, which is extremely widespread in Newtown Common, an area without a local primary school (as discussed in the conclusion to this thesis). Whilst the nearest primary school was about a 30 minute walk from the middle of the neighbourhood, children were reported as attending over 50 different primary schools, of which almost all others would require driving. Many parents explained that the reason for this was that the nearest primary school was less well regarded so, if they were driving anyway, they would rather take their child to a better school. Therefore, driving would appear to be a practical choice but one that may also be linked to concerted cultivation with parents considering their child future outcomes and well-being (Lareau, 2003; 2011).

Likewise, the increased supervision of children by parents, and their engagement with sports clubs and other extracurricular activities can be seen as another example of concerted cultivation. Lareau (2003; 2011) argues that middle class parents intervene in children's lives to monitor the involvement in school and 'aggressively' develop their skills through involvement in organised activities. In contrast working class families were more likely to allow their children to 'hang out'. The choice of 'better' schools, and involvement in their children's lives by driving them to groups and clubs could therefore reflect this middle class approach to parenting which is focused on facilitating children's future well-being, rather than, perhaps, their enjoyment of childhood. However the actions of Shirley, one local parent of three young children, provide one example of parenting behaviour that suggests not all parents were as confining. Together with the local Police Community Support Officer and the council's Road Safety Team Shirley arranged a road safety day to teach children how to navigate the neighbourhood safely.

In addition to the concerns about moving traffic, there were also a number of concerns about parked cars in Newtown Common. This was largely attributed to the large industrial estate next to the housing development. Many residents found that non-residents were parking along their roads and outside of their houses. When attending the local PACT (Partnerships and Communities Together) meetings in the neighbourhood, parking was the most frequent concern raised (see chapter seven).

Traffic is not only a concern for children and young people living in the suburbs however. As found by Percy-Smith, despite it being the only environmental concern from residents in his midlands suburb, it was actually in the inner city area where a 13 year old participant was killed when crossing the road. This echoes empirical research which has highlighted the positive association between deprivation and road casualties, especially for children (Graham et al., 2005). It is not possible within the realms of this field work to determine how traffic here compares with other areas of the city, but its impact on the use of public space was a real outcome for some residents, as discussed further below.

Walkability

In addition to concerns about traffic and parked cars, residents also reported hazards when walking around the neighbourhood, although, this was limited to the few that did not report that they drove everywhere and largely comprised young people and more senior residents who may not have access to a car. Overall, concerns about risks when walking were experienced by residents and children as specifically traffic related environmental hazards. It is worth exploring how this relates to the chosen design of the area and its consequences for walkability in the neighbourhood. Hazards to pedestrians in Newtown Common were not always reported or acknowledged specifically as risks in residents' accounts of the area, or in my own initial reflections of the level of safety in the area. By spending time in the area however, and walking around the area alone or with participants, some challenges began to emerge through the experience of everyday life.

The term 'walkability' has become increasingly recognised as potentially significant upon young people's active lifestyles (De Meester et al., 2012). For studies on the impact of mobility on physical health, De Meester et al. argue that walkability refers to mixed land use, connective roads and dense residential areas. It has been used as a concept to inform health studies but by considering it in the context of inhibiting actions that encourage the familiarity and trust that facilitate community parenting. However, I would like to extend this consideration of walkability and the built environment further by exploring the more experiential obstacles to walking around Newtown Common by drawing on a mixture of fieldnotes and residents' narratives.

As these extracts demonstrate, a lack of pavements and safe pedestrian crossings felt hazardous to me as a researcher and caused me to reflect on how it may be experienced by residents who were less mobile:

> *Fieldnotes, 22nd October 2010*
> *I reflected on the lack of crossings available for pedestrians between the community centre and the retail park. I had now done this journey a number of times, and so crossing roads and finding my way was becoming instinctive. Nevertheless, the trouble it took to cross the road was brought to my attention today by a car travelling exceptionally fast. Whilst the main road is windy to try to calm traffic I realised that there were frequently fast cars that travelled around the estate. Furthermore, the point that I habitually had chosen to cross the road was just somewhere I had begun to realise was the easiest place for me to cross. There were no markings for a crossing anywhere in that area, and yet, I thought, it must be the main route for pedestrians walking through the estate. There are also no dropped curbs in that area.*

> *The part of the road in question was a 'T junction'. The route most cars took that went to the shops was right, then left. For pedestrians to follow this route therefore, they need to cross the road to the left, which is usually quieter as it leads to a cul de sac. In this case however, the car went straight on and into the cul de sac. Whilst car was only travelling the speed of the other traffic, the density of cars made it difficult to predict which if any may take this route to my usual dash across the road got me there safely. This incident, however, led me to think about others that would need to cross this road to*

*get through the estate. I wondered what elderly residents would do, or those
with push chairs. There was no clear, safe crossing for pedestrians at all.*

Concerns about walking through the neighbourhood and crossing roads with fast moving traffic were also raised by adults and young residents. Whilst one senior resident explained that local campaigning had introduced some crossings, she noted that there were still very few available along the main route through the community despite fast and continual cars travelling through the estate to get to the local retail and shopping parks. This was not something mentioned by many of the adult residents however, although it was mentioned by a senior resident who attended the Partnership and Community Together (PACT) meetings, which are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Whilst young people tended to report that they didn't spend much time walking around the neighbourhood, and this was supported by my experiences of walking around the area, one teenage girl, Lydia, did describe concerns about crossing the road at the local retail park. The typical response from young people was that Newtown Common was a fairly safe area that they could walk around safety, if they needed to. On specific questioning about walking around the neighbourhood, Lydia explained that there was no pavement linking the retail area so they tended not go there very often.

> *Lydia, young person, 13 years old:*
> *so if we're like crossing over, we've got to like run really quick and like if
> we're walking across we have to be really careful, and the cars go quite fast.*

Similarly, when leaving the toddler session with Lisa, a parent of younger children, on one occasion, she explained that even though it was "just around the corner", it was easier to drive than walk with two excitable children. On further discussion, it seemed that running next to a busy road was one, although not the sole, reason for this decision. The challenge to walkability around some parts of the neighbourhood often made driving the preferable option, or deterred people from going out. Residents managed these safety concerns by often choosing to drive rather than walk and accompanying children around the estate. This gives some insight into the socio-economic disparities in child traffic accidents, with parents in poorer areas being much less likely to have access to a car.

Children's use of public space in Newtown Common

This section of this chapter explores the shift in location of children in Newtown Common from potential dangers in the public space into to the risk managed home environment and considers the applicability of Harden's 'local sphere' to young people's experiences of Newtown Common. On the one hand, Newtown Common is experienced as a safe, suburban area for children and young people to grow up in. On the other hand, however, the restriction of children from the public sphere could be seen as inhibiting well-being through physical exercise and 'learning through living' (Guldberg, 2009). It is suggested that this reflects the opposite aspect of what McKendrick (1998) described as 'paradoxical poverty'. Whilst McKendrick noted that those in poorer areas were often able to gain a richer experience from their physical and social environments, residents from Newtown Common appear to make limited

use of their seemingly safe public areas. Furthermore, this section will explore the notion of children and young people being 'designed out' of such spaces (see Woolley 2006; 2008). This could be seen to promote an individualistic responsibility for safety from parents rather than a move towards a collective assuming of community parenting by neighbours to improve safety for children in the local area (Wyver et al., 2010).

In the study by Harden (2000), children identified a local sphere which was located between the safe private sphere of the home, and the vulnerability felt in the public sphere. Given the perceived safety in Newtown Common, or at least the absence of concerns about environmental hazards, it is interesting to note that there is little use of the public spaces by children and young people. Instead, this section illustrates the highly regarded boundaries and 'privatised' neighbourhood which creates tension about where children and young people should and should not be. It also considers whether, in some cases, they have been 'designed out' of some public areas (Woolley 2006; 2008). Furthermore, the experiences of children and young people discussed here resonate with the arguments of commentators who question the impact of the changing nature of childhood as, they argue, parents have become overprotective of their children.

Visibility of children in Newtown Common

Despite the clear sense of safety felt by participants in this study, their reported use of public space, including parks and streets, was relatively low. In contrast to a recent study in a deprived, terraced community in the South Wales valleys (see Evans and Holland, 2012), houses and roads in Newtown Common were not a space used fluidly by residents but a set of partitioned, private spaces with clear boundaries. Gardens and paths to front doors tended to be separate and specifically marked cutting the road into a series of spaces attached to homes.

> *Fieldnotes, 24th June 2010*
> *There are no terraced houses or front doors that opened directly onto the road, each house seems to have their own distinct area surrounding their house, sometimes marked by fences and paths. Front doors are not next to each other, or to the road or passing foot traffic, they are part of the property, part of the home [...]*

As described by Tracey, a local parent who moved into the area when it was first built, the homes and families within the community appeared to be 'cocooned' within their own houses. In contrast, children in the neighbourhood described by Evans and Holland would freely roam in and out of houses and between homes on the estate. In Newtown Common, children and young people were not often seen out and about in front gardens or playing in the roads.

> *Fieldnotes, 17th June 2010 3pm:*
> *The houses also seemed to be quiet with no one visible in streets or front gardens or even audible from back gardens, certainly no children, despite at least one car being parked outside around a third to a half of the homes.*

Fieldnotes, 17th June 2010 5pm:
During my walk through the houses, there were a few voices of children to be
heard from home or gardens but no one playing in the street or front
gardens. The high walls/ blocked off back gardens made it impossible to
know how many children might be outside in the sun.

It became increasingly clear throughout my time in Newtown Common that children's play was not often the 'street play' found in other studies (Percy-Smith, 2002; Evans and Holland, 2012). Through my experience with families with younger children it became clear that much of the playing was done within the household, either in the home or outside, in their closed and secure back gardens. As noted by Percy-Smith, this could be due to the larger space and resources afforded to children in suburban neighbourhoods rather than smaller inner city communities. In contrast, a study by Day and Wager (2010) highlights the importance of public spaces for young people in a range of neighbourhoods in Scotland to meet friends, play and have a break from family and school.

This supports the rhetoric of a number of commentators on the changing nature of childhood. This literature argues that modern children are highly supervised by their parents and restricted to indoor, regulated play activities rather than given the freedom to explore and learn through living (Karsten 2005; Furedi 2001; Palmer, 2010; Guldburg, 2009). Furthermore, in a discussion with one father about how he perceives Newtown Common in terms of its safety for his eight year old, he explained "there's never really a point where she's not supervised. So in terms of her particular safety it's not something that I've, I've sort of particularly had to think about". This was echoed in a few other parents' narratives who struggled to think about safety for children in the area because they tended to keep their children inside without really thinking about it. For example, Tracey, a parent of teenage girls and a five year old explained that she could not think of many examples where any of her children experienced much risk. She explained that for her younger son, "I can't really think of any problems I've had in the park, we usually go visit people rather than parks". Lani, the parent of a four year old also reported that they tended to "we just play in the garden, I guess" when asked about her child's experiences of playing outside. Again this supports the notion that in this neighbourhood, children are largely restricted to their private areas such as their homes and gardens where risk can be managed.

In terms of safety therefore, this quote demonstrates a lack of concern about the dangers faced by children whilst playing outside of the home, perhaps because there were few instances where play occurred out of the home. Guldberg (2009) argues that restricting children's freedom like this limits the children learning from experiences to manage risk themselves. Furthermore, she asserts, it damages the relationships between young people and adults, teaching children not to trust others. It was unclear from this data however whether children tended not to play outside due to parents' restrictions or due to the children's own wishes.

There is also the suggestion that road design could do more to promote play outside of houses. For example the work of Biddulph (2001; 2010; 2012) suggests that where home zones were created in streets, children were able to enjoy playing in the street and socialisation increased. The evaluation of the home zone initiative in

England whereby parts of roads are designated for shared use between cars and pedestrians has shown that residents feel it can make the street safer for their children (Biddulph, 2010). Results also suggest parents were more confident about allowing their children to play in the streets. Likewise, organisations such as *Playing Out* and *London Play* which promote the use of closing roads to facilitate children, families and residents playing together. Such initiatives may help to promote the use of streets as a safe place for play in Newtown Common.

Boundaries and conflict

The clear and often marked privatisation of space also caused conflict between residents about ownership and rights to space. This discouraged the community feeling between neighbours which fosters community parenting as evidenced by Evans and Holland (2012). In their study parents sat outside their front doors together watching children play, although there were also some examples of residents criticising other parents for allowing their children too much freedom to "do whatever they want" and "get into trouble" (p 185). This poses questions about what space was considered to be for children and young people.

Rather than examples of friendliness and mutual support between neighbours, residents were more likely to discuss encounters of tension and conflict. For example, a number of issues were raised about conflicts over shared drives. As mentioned above, most houses in Newtown Common, had specific paths and front gardens, so that it was clear which part of the space surrounding houses belonged to which home. This was not always the case for driveways. I noted in fieldnotes that "a number of the houses have drives next to each other, and shared areas, with others having a private drive that offers access off it to a number of properties". On reflection, the sharing of the drive contrasted with the demarcation of the rest of the grounds surrounding the rest of the property.

Perhaps related to this combination of private and shared space, disputes over shared drives were a common occurrence in Newtown Common. It was clear from one young person's account of an argument over leaving an old car described as a 'rust bucket' on a shared drive the conflict had affected his as well as his parents' relationship with the neighbouring family. He concluded he would "never buy a house with a shared drive". Furthermore, a parent living in a different part of the community explained that an issue with her shared drive rippled through relations in the street:

> Tracey, parent of teenagers and young child:
> But all the rest of the neighbours we all used to be friendly before and its just
> soured the whole neighbourhood where the house in between have gone
> with them and one of the neighbours up that way have gone with her as well.
> So it's divided, it has divided the neighbourhood

In this case, questions about who owned a certain bit of the drive led to a conflict between neighbourhoods about who had the right to do what. There are clearly strong feelings in Tracey's neighbourhood about the importance of space being attributed as belonging to a particular resident.

In addition, some other residents complained about young people using the streets as an area to play or hang out. When complaints were made about local young people, it usually related to groups of teenagers playing outside people's houses. It seemed that once the children were above a certain age they moved from in need of protection to potential troublemakers. One parent of young children reflected "well I think, now and then there's a bit of anti-social behaviour and, and, I suppose, it wouldn't be the little kids but it would be the kids of, thirteen upwards wouldn't it?" Consequently, instead of concern about the lack of facilities and clubs in the area for local young people, some residents saw them as a potential risk or nuisance to themselves and others.

> Lloyd, young person, 18 years old:
> R: there was an incident before, where I was playing in the street but I was with my mate and he had his two little brothers and they weren't allowed obviously out of the sight of the mother… play with them for 5 minutes and we got the women then, the next door neighbour came out, had a go and I said listen, to be honest with you, we're, we're not even kicking it hard. at the end of the day, if you honestly think a 5 year old and a 10 year old they, guna let their mother go up on the field by themselves, ok for us lot, its alright but for a 5 year old and a 10 year old they can't leave their parents, they have to stay in their parents sight
> I: yeah, and what did they say to that then?
> R: they just…some, some people are different; some people accept the fact and other people just get in a right mood.

Lloyd then went on to explain that whilst nothing would or could be done to a 5 and 10 year old, older people like himself could 'get done'. He describes "it's happened to me on one occasion where, I was actually down my mate's street and, in fact PC thing actually talked to me and she told me to go away". This illustrates how the privitisation of space is so prevalent, that residents call upon authorities to uphold the boundaries and exclude young people from playing on what is, essentially, public property.

Lloyd believed that this actually puts children at risk because it is out of concern for the child that younger children may be restricted to playing in their street rather than in parks or larger public spaces. His perception that a 5 year old and 10 year old could not leave their parents is also an interesting point, and one that is not reflected in other studies (Shaw et al., 2012; Evans and Holland, 2012). Accounts like these may go some way to describe the underuse of such spaces discussed earlier in the chapter.

There were also cases of, usually senior residents, presenting the other side of the argument through their 'suffering' with children playing football outside their houses. This tension was also something that was observed by the ex-councillor who explained that if residents were really concerned about the safety of young people in their area then they would be happier with them playing closer to their own homes.

> Gwen, ex-councillor for Newtown Common:
> R: I know of a few cases, I know the areas, little cul de sacs, quiet as anything, they don't have any real problems there, but they called the police because there were boys in the road playing football and it landed in the flowers.

I: they called the police?
R: they called the police, yeah, I mean what can you do with people like that. And there's another couple who um, they live in a cul-de-sac where there's a very nice little grassed area and there's a lovely couple and they've got three teenage boys. And these boys used to play football in the grassed area, and in the end that couple got the Conservative councillor to get a sign put up by the council saying ball playing is not allowed….and it's a difficult one because when you say about these people and you know, they're saying, what about the safety of the children, if they cared about the safety of the children, as a lot of the parents say, like that woman who had the three teenage boys, in this day and age with everything you hear about what happens to kids, I will not have my children out of my sight, and that's all there is to it. Um, you know, the older teenager could, but not the youngest she said she would not let him out of her sight so I need him to play where I can see him. And so if these people really cared about the kids, would feel the same way too, you know, that there could be paedophiles in the, um, because of course that's the way a lot of parents look at it. You hear all thing things about what happens to kids these days, so no, I don't think really people care about the kids.

Again the practice is repeated whereby even older children are restricted to playing within the sight of their parent reflects the local norm echoed in my observation of public spaces. This epitomises the concerns raised by social commentators such as Palmer (2006), Furedi, (2001) and Gulberg (2009) about the decrease in children's freedom in their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, childhood in Newtown Common appears to be more restricted than many childhoods elsewhere in the world (Shaw et al., 2012).

The privatisation of space did not only emerge in overt conflicts and tensions however. Whilst playing, one of Jane's, two young girls asked to do chalk drawing on the driveway. Although the chalk would wash off, Jane was keen to make sure the play and drawing did not venture across an invisible line dividing their drives from their neighbour's.

Fieldnotes, 17th August 2010:
At first I was struck by what seemed to me to be an unusual request from [Jane's daughter] to play in their own front garden area, rather than the back garden. Although, it was at the end of a close with hedges around it so still quite enclosed… Jane then came out to make sure that [daughter] was only drawing on their drive, and not crossing onto the drive of their next door neighbour. Whilst in some respects, this seemed like a sensible request and I had already wondered what the neighbours would think of chalk on their drive. On the other hand, this felt like an odd notion to me, considering it was a shared drive with no clear marked area. Despite the notion of the shared drive therefore, there was an unwritten rule that an invisible line of privacy and boundary that needed to be respected. And this was a feeling I got even as a visitor to the house.

In the study by Evans and Holland (2012) the space outside houses was seen as a shared area for children to play on, driveways were often cited as private spaces for the cars of those who owned the house. The deep feeling about this appears in Tracey's case to have ruptured relations in the area. Such strong feelings about the

use of space are shown below to also have repercussions in terms of using these spaces for play.

Conflict over space was not only restricted to gardens and driveways. There appeared to be an undertone in some, often older residents' narratives that the street was not a place for children's play. This concern did not seem to arise from a concern about their safety however, rather from perceiving usually older children in public space to constitute more of a nuisance. For example, when asked if he saw many children playing around the area, one senior resident, Roland, replied "we don't have any problems like that". Furthermore, he later explained that he had difficulties with young people playing football on the grass beside their house despite often calling the police until he successfully had a sign put up saying "no ball games". A number of young people in the study reported being what they perceived to be unfairly sent away when playing ball games around their streets by other adults.

This echoes the findings by Morrow (2001, see also Percy-Smith 2002) in similar studies. Like in Newtown Common, Morrow found that a number of residents in her research did not like children playing ball games in public spaces close to their house and restricted the use of the area. Such conflicts over public space seem especially evident in communities with highly privatised areas with distinct boundaries. In contrast to the play zones highlighted by Biddulph's study (2010), which put children and play at the centre of the use of space, children's play in Newtown Common was restricted to designated spaces away from other people's homes. Such initiatives have also featured in the media, with one article citing survey findings that almost one third of parents believed that if they allowed their children to play ball games or make noise outdoors it would cause problems with other residents (BBC News Online, 2013). In addition, 28% of parents in the survey feared they would be judged by their neighbours if they let their children play outdoors without supervision. Such accounts raise questions about what spaces are available for children's play in neighbourhoods.

Spaces for children and young people

Childhood in Newtown Common epitomises the concerns of a number of contemporary social commentators who argue that children are not spending enough time left to do free play (Furedi, 2001, Palmer, 2010). Even during holidays and good weather, children were rarely seen playing outside on bikes or in parks, which has been noted to have a number of impacts on well-being including physical health (Weir et al., 2006; Carver et al., 2008; Timerio et al. 2004), and learning risk management (Guldberg, 2009; Furedi, 2001; Palmer, 2010). Furthermore, whilst there were a number of spaces developed for children and young people to play in Newtown Common in addition to the institutions and organised groups, such areas were significantly underused.

As exemplified in my fieldnotes below, children and young people were rarely seen and there was a marked underuse of the parks and green spaces in the community area obvious even during good weather.

   Fieldnotes, 13th August, 2010, 11am:

> *I noticed there was no one at the play area by the community centre or at the park, even though it was quite warm and sunny…On my usual exploratory path through the neighbourhood, I walk through the park and along the path. Despite it being the summer holidays and warm, if not hot day, there wasn't anyone using the park. I didn't even see anyone walking through it. Similarly, I didn't see anyone around when I walk on through the park, along the main road that goes through the neighbourhood and up to the other field and games area behind the community centre. I took a walk around the field to enjoy the sun and the peace and quiet – a nice change of pace from my life in the city centre. Despite spending almost half an hour in the park, I did not see anyone coming to the park to use the MUGA or field.*

Throughout the fieldwork, I spent a vast number of hours walking the neighbourhood including through the park areas and sitting to eat my lunch on the grass in the sun. Even in the warmest, driest weather however, the parks for younger children rarely had more than two children in them and they were always accompanied by an adult. Similarly the multi-use games area (MUGA) set up by the council specifically for the local young people in the last few years also was barely used. This was a fenced tarmacked area set up for a number of sports. The space inside could be used for football, basketball or potentially for other games and the fences meant that the ball would stay within the space. During my field work however, I saw it used for football no more than five times.

This emptiness and underuse of parks and other public areas was also noticed by other adults living and working in the area. Joe, a parent who worked at the Community Centre exclaimed in one interview; "The parks are empty, the MUGA's empty, where are they? Where are the kids?" The lack of interest in, and use of, the facilities that had been invested in within the neighbourhood, was both a source of concern and slight frustration for those working in Newtown Common. This is explored further in the next chapter.

When asked about where they spend time, the local young people I spoke to often focused on the need for there to be more for them to do in their free time in Newtown Common. For example, the recently installed MUGA that Lloyd mentions was built as a result of a request from young people asking for somewhere to play (see below), but as he points out, this is only for during the day, due to its location at the top of an unlit field. Similarly, in one conversation with Alun, a local young person aged 17, and the community centre leaders Alan describes the inadequacy of the seating area that was added near to the MUGA. This then led to a discussion by the community centre staff about the council not providing a shelter because they would not want young people to hang around and cause trouble. This is explained in an interview with one young person.

> *Alun, 17 years old:*
> *they've got, what do you call, the shelters up there, they got those shelters and they were, they're absolutely useless to be honest. They couldn't design them better and cheaper... and the seats aren't even seats. They're just lots of poles slanted sort of that way, [so]… no youths can loiter.*

This extract suggests that whilst some provision was being made for young people, there were also attempts to prevent 'troublesome youths' from causing trouble. The point made above highlights the tensions between allowing young people to have

somewhere to go, without creating an ideal space for 'mischief'. For some though, the desire was for more youth facilities within the community centre. As argued by Chawla and Malone (2003) local authorities planning struggled to equal the rapid changes in the population structure of modern suburbs or 'new towns' which often included large amounts of children. The findings in Newtown Common support this argument that such neighbourhoods often lack the amenities and spaces for children and young people to 'hang out'. This suggests that the findings from studies such as Hall et al. (1999) that children hanging out are seen to be a problem locally are still being found in modern neighbourhoods today.

In addition to the lack of spaces for children and young people to play safety in the public arena there were also aspects of the built environment that discouraged or limited their use of the area that were provided. The lack of lighting in communal areas such as parks and paths and the 'useless' shelter for example mirror what Woolley (2006; 2008) describes as children being 'designed out' of certain areas at certain times.

As depicted in the following extracts, the young people cited the lack of lighting as a factor influencing their experience of safety. In an interview with two teenage sisters (age 13 and 15), they explained that in the evenings of winter months, "the fields are pitch black". Lydia expanded on this explaining that at one park "you've got nothing apart from a few house lights". They added that this put them off spending time in these places. Likewise another teenage boy explained that this was why they played football in the lit community centre car park instead of the park. This has an impact upon their behaviour emphasising the relocation of childhood into the private sphere.

Limited lighting in public spaces also reinforced perceptions of the public sphere as dangerous or risky. As one young person explained, he felt that he was on edge when walking around the neighbourhood in the dark and felt that if there were lights he would feel much safer.

> *Lloyd, young person, 18 years old:*
> *the only thing I find a problem is, you know the actual, like, not like lanes, but*
> *the major pathways, they don't have lights so, you're more, you're at more of*
> *a risk of being jumped or whatever…if there was lights, it would be much*
> *safer.*

Equally, Lydia explained it took her longer to walk home if she walked home in the evening from her friend's house because she chose to take the longer route along main roads, which made her feel safer.

In addition to my observations throughout the data collection in relation to the absence of children and young people in public spaces in the community, a number of residents also observed this point.

> *Greg, parent of 8 year old and teenager:*
> *You don't tend to see that many gangs of children hanging about … you*
> *don't really see loads of sort of kids just hanging about doing nothing.*

Echoing the findings in Percy-Smith's (2002) study, the suburban children from Newtown Common did not follow the 'all the neighbourhood's a playground' ethos of the children from the inner city.

There were also mixed views about general safety when walking through the area. A number of residents did note that whilst the neighbourhood was quiet, it did sometimes make them feel vulnerable with no one there to watch out for them. Barry, the community centre manager explained "yeah, it is, it feels very… quiet, which in some ways is a bit intimidating cos, it's too quiet to be honest, locking up there's no one around…what would you do, who would you call for". In general however, parents and young people reported that they feel safe walking around the area, or at least not in any danger. Like many parents in the area, Sarah, found it difficult to answer the question because she did not often walk around the area herself, however she concluded; "I wouldn't say I wouldn't feel safe if I was up at night walking about".

In terms of safety therefore, traffic and park cars can be seen as one environmental aspect affecting perceived safety. However, the lack of streetlights, seating and other community amenities convey some features of Newtown Common that exemplify Woolley's (2006; 2008) argument regarding young people being designed out of the neighbourhood. These accounts and the analysis of my fieldnotes present a compelling picture of a neighbourhood in which children and young people are neither expected nor enabled to spend time in public spaces.

Community parenting in Newtown Common

This final part of the chapter highlights the potential impact of neighbourhood design is having upon youth and childhood in Newtown Common. When considering ways in which the community can facilitate well-being, this section reflects on whether the environment in Newtown Common promotes a culture of shared responsibility amongst residents to keep an eye out for local children through 'community parenting' (Evans and Holland, 2012). When considering Newtown Common as a physical space some challenges emerged regarding the potential for local children to become 'everybody's business'. This follows the shift in policy towards shared responsibility in the wake of the *Every Child Matters* agenda which criticised the collective failure of organisations and groups, including the community, to protect children's welfare.

In general, Newtown Common is experienced as a safe, suburban area for children and young people to grow up. There were few examples of the environmental hazards as experienced in deprived or inner city studies with the main threat coming from traffic. Despite the apparent safety of the public space in the area however, it is significantly underused by local young people.

These findings suggest, therefore, that Newtown Common epitomises types of community that concerns many social commentators who warn against the current climate of 'Paranoid Parenting' and 'Toxic Childhoods' (Furedi 2001; Palmer, 2010). Furthermore, it has been argued that parents' perceptions of safety in the neighbourhood affect the activity of children (Carver et al., 2008). In the case of

Newtown Common, traffic and walkability of the neighbourhood may be the reason for children's lack of mobility around the area, either due to the decision by the young person or the parent. The privatisation of space however and general feeling that young people should be located in supervised and privately organised activities or within homes rather than in the street does seem to correlate with the under use of public spaces by children and young people in Newtown Common.

Relocating childhood to the private rather than the public arena in this way supports the notion of Wyver et al. (2010) regarding the individualised response to facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. Whilst this response could be argued to be keeping children safe, it has also been criticised for restricting their freedom (Guldberg, 2009; Furedi, 2001). Furthermore, managing risk to young people (and potentially from young people) by designing them out of public spaces operates in contrast to what Wyver et al. (2010) identify as a collective response to improving the safety of the public sphere.

The recent study by Evans and Holland (2012) highlighted the importance of community parenting as a form of safeguarding local children and young people. In their study, parents would sit outside their house together and survey the activities of the local young children playing around the street. Similarly, as discussed in chapter two, a number of policy documents have emphasized the role of the local community in facilitating the well-being of children and young people. For example, the Welsh Government was urged to promote a 'greater acceptance of adult responsibilities towards all children including the shared responsibility to develop safe communities' (Welsh Government 2006a; 14). The findings from this research suggest however that one of the largest obstacles to this in Newtown Common is that local children are often not visible to other residents, which is partly due to the impact of the physical nature of the neighbourhood. Private gardens, organized play activities in non public places and travelling out of town to where they attend school renders local public spaces devoid of any children to be 'looked out for'. Furthermore the mobile lifestyles of adults and privatised and enclosed nature of space where children play do not facilitate the ability for residents to observe local children in the same way as other neighbourhoods might do (see for example Evans and Holland 2012).

Several decades ago, during suburbanisation in the United States of America, Jacobs (1961), argued that it is often the busier areas with passing foot traffic that creates a safer atmosphere than deserted streets. Whilst this argument is now somewhat outdated, the data in this chapter suggests that the deserted, privatised space observed in Newtown Common is still reflecting this today. Whilst there are few environmental concerns in the area, as Jacobs highlights, there is not the potential for mutual surveillance, which might create feelings of safety and facilitates a sense of looking out for each other. She asserts that pavements should have users on them fairly continually but residents and strangers' need a purpose to walk around the area and use pavements. These sentiments are echoed in contemporary planning studies with the 'New Urbanism' promoting high-density developments "in 'walkable' neighbourhoods close to public transport, employment and amenities" (Cozens and Hillier, 2008; 51).

More recently, the work by Biddulph (2010; 2012) has highlighted the safety benefits of creating play zones, where children and play itself are given more priority on the street to foster increased levels of less risky of play activity. Charities and organisations such as *Playing Out* and *London Play* advocate the use of street orders, which allow residents to close their roads to cars to allow residents to come together and children to play safely. Whilst proving particularly popular in London and Bristol, a *Play Streets* programme has also been piloted in Swansea, South Wales (City and County of Swansea, 2012). Research on the impact and outcomes of such schemes is yet to be published. Evidence also suggests that cul de sacs can "provide a social safety net" for children and neighbours living within them where children can have uninterrupted outdoor play overlooked by neighbours (Hochschild, 2013). This was not what was described or observed in Newtown Common however, with few children playing in the space in cul de sacs, and few adults positioned in a place to observe them.

Successful facilitating of well-being and community parenting by local residents relies on the assumptions that both the children *can* be seen by adults and that the adults *see* the children. Whilst this may appear an issue of semantics, my findings suggest that the visibility of children and limited observation by adults are perhaps one of the key hindrances to effective community parenting of young people. Less considered in literature however is how the built environment affects children's and residents' use of and visibility in the neighbourhood, and therefore the potential for mutual surveillance which is central to enabling effective community parenting. This chapter highlights some aspects of neighbourhood design which can result in the use of the area in a way that is not conducive to community parenting of children and young people.

A recent study by Evans and Holland (2012) has highlighted the importance of community parenting as a form of safeguarding the well-being of local children and young people. In their study, parents would sit outside their house together and survey the activities of the local young children playing around the street. In this case, much of the children's play took place outside in the neighbourhood. In contrast young people and children in Newtown Common tended not to play in the public space and therefore were not observable and or available for community parenting or informal safeguarding. Likewise, parents were never seen sat outside of the front of their homes or positioned in spaces where they would be able to keep an eye out for children. For this reason, Newtown Common does not facilitate community parenting where residents are able to watch out for and take responsibility for the well-being of local children and young people. The environment does not encourage the notions of mutual surveillance and community parenting (Evans and Holland, 2012), which could have been one way the community could be seen as taking responsibility for children and young people's well-being.

Conclusion

When considering the indicators that are considered to contribute to a safe community by the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor (2011), there are limited examples of risks to well-being identified in young people's accounts. Traffic, and challenges to walkability are identified as concerns to children's safety but there

is a clear absence of other social and environmental risks. Throughout this discussion, residents' experiences are compared with evidence of childhoods in more deprived areas where spaces are more risky and dangerous (Tannock, 2012b; Elsley, 2004). Whilst there is a general perception by all residents that Newtown Common is a safe and quiet area, young people, through their own choices as much as parents, are rarely visible in public spaces such as streets and parks. This could be seen as reflecting a change in the nature of childhood, and an individualised approach to the so called risk society (Beck 1992). There may also be social class dimensions to this given that children in Newtown Common are more likely to have bedrooms and gardens than those in more deprived areas that make greater use of public spaces despite experiences of social and environmental risks. Nonetheless, the safety of Newtown Common in terms of people and environment can be seen as facilitating the well-being of local children and young people.

However, the findings also identified one way in which the community is not able to foster well-being in the same way as some deprived and much more risky neighbourhoods. Residents in some deprived areas have been found to use more of a community parenting approach whereby residents collectively monitor children's safety and well-being by all keeping an eye out for each other's children (Evans and Holland, 2012). The privatised and boundaried nature of Newtown Common, together with the prevalence of children time spent in the home means that children are less visible to residents. Likewise, accounts also highlight the lack of visibility of adult residents that would be able to keep an eye on local children. This could be seen as supporting the notion that close knit communities are decline in modern society (Putnam, 2000, see further discussion in chapter nine). Whilst these children and young people are protected from outside risks by living in a safe area and by choosing to remain in more controlled, organised spaces, such a childhood epitomises those mourned by current rhetorical literature regarding the over protection of childhood, there was little evidence that this affected the well-being of these children and young people.

The built environment can therefore be seen as having two impacts upon the well-being of local children and young people. Firstly, the existence, or absence, of physical and social risks and hazards can impact upon perceptions of the area as safe, although a safe community does not necessarily equate to a well-used one. Secondly, the built environment can be seen to shape children's interactions with the neighbourhood including other residents. The next chapter considers the role of community groups in facilitating children's safety.

7. LOCAL GROUPS, COMMUNITY CENTRES AND CHILDREN'S SAFETY IN NEWTOWN COMMON

Introduction

Residents' accounts demonstrate that community groups, leaders and centres can be an important factor in facilitating the safety and well-being of children and young people in Newtown Common. This chapter explores how local organisations and those working in and for the community understand and enact their responsibility for protecting local children and young people from risks and hazards in the neighbourhood. Drawing on qualitative data from residents and staff in this suburban neighbourhood, this chapter investigates a number of settings as sites for reducing risk for children and young people in the neighbourhood. It is argued that much of the evidence supports the argument that the risk society has become pervasive in society. Residents' experiences also reveal tensions between ensuring the community is safe space for children whilst also positioning public areas as those that are not for young people.

Following a short introduction to local provision in Newtown Common, the chapter explores the role of community services and organisations that form part of the semi-formal sphere in facilitating children's well-being in a modern, largely professional suburban community in South Wales. Through a series of case studies, it explores the dichotomy between positioning children and young people as a risk as well as at risk in Newtown Common. The findings reveal a number of challenges to sustainability of services related to facilitating the well-being of children and young people. When interrogating the data from interactions with community staff for examples of impact upon children's well-being, a tension between perceptions of children and young people as 'posing a risk', as well as their status as 'at risk' emerged. Furthermore, there were a number of challenges to developing settings which might be considered to facilitate the well-being of children and families that appeared common across groups and organisations. The chapter concludes by questioning the extent to which community groups, organisations and workers are able to facilitate the well-being of children and young people in Newtown Common.

The data revealed that the formal sphere barely featured in the everyday lives of those living in Newtown common compared to those in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Evans and Holland, 2012). A number of studies have linked deprivation with the risk of child maltreatment, (Sidebotham et al., 2002; Freisthler et al., 2006). Furthermore, the study by Evans and Holland (2012) highlighted how, in a deprived well established neighbourhood in the Welsh valleys, parenting was much more visible. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that in this research in a non-deprived, modern suburb, issues of child neglect and maltreatment were not raised or discussed by any residents or those working in the area. That is not to say this issue was not applicable in this area, but that it was visible or discussed as part of the everyday lives of adult and children living in the neighbourhood.

Consequently, when examining the ways in which those working in and for the community can affect children's safety, it is the semi-formal and informal spheres

that are the focus of this thesis. There are a number of social and organisation spheres which can be seen as being involved in facilitating the well-being of children and young people. These have been identified as: the formal sphere, including statutory children's services; the semi-formal sphere, which refers to community level support from local service provision; and the informal sphere including neighbours and other residents (Ghate and Hazel, 2002; Holland, 2014). Both of these studies have highlighted the importance of the semi- formal sphere in their examinations of parenting support and the wider community in facilitating the well-being of children and families living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Newtown Common and the semi-formal sphere

In order to examine how children's well-being might be impacted on by the semi-formal sphere, it was first important to consider what this consisted of by mapping community provision in Newtown Common. As outlined in the methods section, (chapter five), the area is not identified as one that is highly affected by deprivation locally. Contextualising the narratives from residents, and my own experience shown below, statistical evidence highlights the comparatively low levels of disadvantage in Newtown Common. The latest release of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2011b) by the Welsh Government shows that even the highest Lower-Layer Super Output Areas[9] in the neighbourhood is over three quarters[10] of the way down the list of most deprived areas in Wales. It can be considered therefore an area of relatively low deprivation. The area is higher up the list (about half way up) in terms of community safety however, suggesting that, compared to other indicators of deprivation, crime and safety in the area is likely to be a more likely concern for residents.

As outlined in chapter two, there has been a recent shift in policy towards developing more targeted, neighbourhood-based provision for early intervention and parenting support. In particular, within Wales there are a number of community based initiatives that provide support to children, families and the wider community. The end of the last century also saw an increased awareness of risk in society which led, in part, to the implementation of citizen led community partnership meetings in communities which would focus on local issues such as crime, disorder and quality of life (Gasper, 2012). Such groups could also facilitate the semi-formal sphere for community support. The role of such community groups and organisations however remains understudied in less deprived communities such as Newtown Common however, underscoring a unique insight this thesis provides.

Existing similar studies that explore the links between communities and children's well-being, (see Holland, 2014; Ghate and Hazel, 2003) explore experiences in neighbourhood that epitomise types of deprived communities targeted by the community and family support programmes outlined in chapter two. For example, in the study by Ghate and Hazel, (2003) semi-formal services included after school clubs, parent support schemes and education, family services and support such as Sure Start or Home Start. Similarly, Flying Start centres that are funded to local

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[9] Wales has been divided into 1,896 Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) containing around 1,500 people to enable calculations of areas with the most to least deprived residents.
[10] Exact figures are not given to protect anonymity of neighbourhood.

support service points across Wales have been shown to provide a local hub for communities, but these are only provided in targeted areas (Knibbs et al., 2013).

In contrast, due to the relative level of disadvantage in Newtown Common, it is not eligible for these forms of targeted support programmes and had no reference to the formal safeguarding sphere mentioned during the study. Whilst this does not necessarily translate into a complete absence of involvement, it was not present in the everyday experiences or accounts of those in the neighbourhood. As discussed in the methods chapter, it was therefore difficult to identify the provision available that would help to facilitate the well-being of local children. Newtown Common is a modern housing development, which is still undergoing expansion. As outlined above, because it is not a deprived, inner-city, derelict or rural area, and residents tend to have professional occupations, the neighbourhood has not received any form of extra funding or support initiatives. Adding to residents' narratives of absence regarding the lack of school and other local amenities, Newtown Common does not have such an immediately obvious layer of community support services which could be seen to form part of the semi-formal sphere. Nevertheless, in Newtown Common there were community leaders and institutions that were able to successfully address local issues, including those relating to children's well-being and safety, and therefore a semi-formal sphere of activity gradually became apparent as I spent longer in the community.

The perceived lack of semi-formal community structures and institutions in Newtown Common presented a methodological challenge in penetrating local life (as discussed in chapter five). Community provision in Newtown Common largely comprised the two community buildings located opposite each other on the main road through the neighbourhood. The first was a council run centre, which is also available for private hire by childcare providers or sports lessons. The second was a church, which had some private hire sessions and a café open during lunchtimes Monday to Friday. As the only community buildings in the area, these were the focus for observing the interplay between residents and community leaders in terms of impacting upon the well-being of local children and young people. Whilst I spent time in these hub areas observing residents' use however, users tended to attend sessions in the community and then leave, with no time or space allocated for less organised activity. The few hours at lunchtime in the church café was the only provision that allowed for residents to spend unstructured time in these community hubs.

In addition, there were also examples of community groups from which I was able to glean more of an insight into the everyday practices of some local residents and staff members. Some of these groups were initiatives provided by the local authority. In regards to welfare, the centre housed the drop in hours for the local councillor every month as well as the local Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) meetings every other month. I also attended a council run play scheme for local children during the summer holidays and various youth clubs or youth engagement sessions that were set up through the council and police community support officer. In addition to these services, some informal groups had also been set up by residents to help support each other. This often represented a gap in provision or need whereby one member of a particular group tried to bring other similar residents together in a community space. For example, whilst the sessions were not explicitly

defined as support sessions, a mother and toddler group prided itself on being an affordable, non-judgemental session run by parents for parents and it was clear throughout my six months of attendance that the level of support and care provided for parents was significant. The remainder of this chapter will explore the use of these sites as case studies for exploring how semi-formal safeguarding operated in Newtown Common, as well as some of the challenges it faced.

Children's safety and those working in and for Newtown Common

Ensuring the safety of children and young people in Newtown Common is understood and enacted in different ways by those working in the area. The data revealed two key patterns in relation to perceived roles and responsibilities for identifying and mediating risk to children and young people in Newtown Common. Firstly, staff working in community centres focused on ensuring that their settings were safe and risk free environments for children and young people. Much of this centred on ensuring health and safety rules and regulations were appropriately adhered to within and around the setting, reflecting the pervasiveness of the risk adverse culture in modern society (see chapter three). Secondly, councillors and the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) interpreted their responsibility as ensuring a risk free environment in the community as a whole. The data reveals the importance of engagement with local residents for these community leaders when identifying and addressing risks and safety concerns within the neighbourhood. In addition, all of the staff assumed some degree of responsibility for ensuring wellbeing for local children and young people through addressing the lack of facilities in the area. This is discussed in the second part of this chapter.

Community centres in Newtown Common

The responsibility to protect children and young people from harm emerged as a dominant factor in both formal and informal interviews with those working in and for Newtown Common. This part of the chapter argues that staff working in centres within the community saw their role as that of ensuring residents, including children and young people, have a safe space to use within their neighbourhood. This tended to involve a heavy focus on creating a safe space for families within the church centre, and echoed the arguments of Beck (1992) and others discussed in chapter three, who highlighted the increasingly risk averse atmosphere in society. Rules and regulations for ensuring children's well-being appeared to involve minimising risk to younger children, and perceived external risks *from* young people or adults.

The data suggests that key workers within the community centre and church centre largely understood their role in facilitating the safety and well-being of local children in terms of creating a risk free and welcoming environment for visitors to the centres. In particular, data reveals that the church centre was set up partly to provide a safe space for local residents and families in particular. This message was at the forefront of the approach reported by the centre's co-manager, Judith. She explained that the centre was "hopefully being a place the community can come and feel safe because there's not much here for them". In particular, it was a place where children were afforded some freedom to play safely.

Judith explained that the clientele in the church centre comprised mainly of mothers and young children, although there were also some carers of adults with special needs that frequently used the café. She felt that the aim of the management and 'the girls' who work in the café was to offer these groups a safe space to meet where families could sit together. It was not clear however whether the café was opened at certain times, (lunch time Monday to Friday), specifically to meet the needs of these groups, or whether these were the only groups that could make use of the centre during the time.

Throughout my observations of the café and during interviews and informal discussion with staff and the church centre, it was clear that ensuring the space was safe for families was a primary concern. Consequently, a number of safety measures were implemented around the centre. I noticed the safety lock on the door on my first trip. Like many areas with spaces for children to play, but not the community centre, the church centre had a double door whereby there was a buzzer to allow entry into the building, and a button to press in order to leave. In an interview with Judith, she explained that this was required because children were able to open the door otherwise. She described the measure as more important in preventing children from leaving the building than for controlling who had access. This helped to reinforce the safe environment of the church centre area for families with younger children.

In addition to keeping children safe from dangers outside of the centre, it was clear that ensuring safety in the area also included making sure everything was kept extremely clean and tidy to minimise risk within the centre. Terry, who acted as a caretaker for the church centre, was especially keen on keeping things clean, as illustrated in the fieldnotes below:

> *Fieldnotes, 22nd October 2010:*
> *I had also noticed before [Terry] was extremely stringent about keeping the place clean; he would often wipe tables down with a disinfectant spray in the cafe numerous times throughout the lunch time, sometimes whilst people were still sat at the table, and often came around with the vacuum cleaner several times whilst people were still there as well as again later before closing. This week I also noticed him cleaning the door to the hall, which is what brought his cleaning habits to mind. He would also bring belongings left in the café, including drinks cartons, into the playgroup and say where exactly it was found, and perhaps even suggest which child it belonged to. This happened today but also on a number of previous occasions. Whether this came from a concern to keep things neat and tidy or to ensure the child had his drink or a mixture of both I wasn't sure.*

Whilst the Community Centre does not have the same sorts of open areas as the church centre where families can sit, relax and talk together, the manager Barry explained in his interview that ensuring the health and safety of staff and the general public was one of his key duties as manager. When probed about the sort of health and safety measures the community centre needed to follow, Barry mainly cited what he thought of as "general security measures".

> *Barry, community centre manager:*
> *well we make sure the store cupboards and these cleaning store rooms are locked, the office is locked, we try not to encourage kids into the office, well I*

try not to but all the rest of the staff do of course [laugh] so I try to discourage it as much as possible. But they do tend to be quite familiar the kids, that's just the way it is.

This denotes the more relaxed attitudes in contrast to the church centre. However, controlling whether 'kids' enter the office and locking cleaning cupboards could be interpreted as preventing any children or young people from reaching harmful substances or equipment. Barry's reference to these actions as security measures however suggest that they are as much about protecting the possessions of the centre from potential misbehaviour or theft as they are about ensuring the wellbeing of those using the centre.

Community centre staff did aim to create a safe environment for residents in terms of the physical risks rather than the wider forms of well-being explored in chapter eight. Some felt this was a relatively easy task due to the safe and tranquil nature of the community as a whole. Joe, a parent who works at the community centre, felt that the quiet and civil nature of life in Newtown Common extended to the community centre. He explained "if anywhere would be a magnet for trouble, it would be [community centre] but we've never had any problems". In contrast, in other centres he had worked at across the city he felt "I was more or less a bouncer". In more information discussions, Joe spoke about his experience working in other centres where he felt, and had been, threatened by young people using the space. Maintaining the Community Centre in Newtown Common as a safe space for those using it, including the staff, however, was not something that came up in interviews. From his point of view, safety from such social threats was not a concern.

During the interview with Barry, I mentioned a time during a soft play session where I saw Ceazer walk through the back and around the outside of the centre so he avoided carrying back the boiling water through the hall with children in. Barry explained that this was not a rule of the centre, but something that he chose to do as an added safety precaution. Similar techniques were adopted more purposefully by the staff in the church café who I also witnessed taking additional care when carrying hot drinks and food through the area. When talking to Judith, the church centre co-manager, it became clear however that there was a fine line between the responsibility of staff to be aware of the safety of small children in particular, and the responsibility of parents to ensure their children behave sensibly and safely. Whilst she expected that 'the girls' in the café take care when walking with food and drink, there was some resentment that parents allowed the children to run around in this situation. The next section explores some of these tensions between responsibility and health and safety in more detail.

Centres, responsibility and children's well-being

Ensuring that the centres provided a space that was free from physical hazards for community members to enjoy was one of the key aims described by staff, particularly those in the church centre. This legal concern for ensuring children's safety can been seen as one that supersedes a civil or moral responsibility for children's well-being in general. Prolonged data collection revealed a number of tensions between the health and safety regulations of the centre, and the needs or use of the centre by families. This included friction that emerged in relation to the overlapping responsibilities of

parents and staff members for the safety of children using the centre and some conflict about the lengths to which business can reasonably be expected to go to in an effort to meet the needs of community members. Risks to children are often perceived to be predictable and therefore avoidable, especially in relation to physical hazards, with organisations such as these centres legally responsible for managing such dangers in and around their buildings (Ferguson, 1997).

When exploring the ways in which those working in the community identified their role in facilitating children's well-being, it was interesting to note that most interpreted their priority as ensuring that children were safe from physical dangers. Whilst this may seem like a narrow interpretation of the concept of well-being, (see chapter two), analysis of the data suggests that the reason for this was the centre's legal responsibility to ensure children's safety, and concerns around physical harm as well as potential litigation. In the interview with Judith, she revealed mixed feelings about parents' perception of the centre as a safe place for children to play. She explained, "If I'm honest, I don't think parents think about health and safety when they're here" which she felt could cause some to put too much of a burden upon staff.

> *Judith, church centre manger:*
> *Some people don't respect [the church centre] and they should if they want*
> *to continue. For example, some allow their children to walk around with food,*
> *walk on the window sill in socks. This is a health and safety issue.*

Much like the PlayPlaces in McDonald's observed by Blackford (2004), parents appear to be placated by the knowledge that the centre has assumed some responsibility for the child's wellbeing. Similarly, Blackwood concluded, 'parents of today feel that commercial spaces share their adult responsibility. Because of this, supervision of the children is very tenuous'. This certainly holds true in the eyes of the staff working in the church centre.

For Judith, there appeared to be a difference between creating a safe environment and ensuring children stayed safe whilst in that environment. She also believed that it was important for parents to adhere to unspoken rules to assist the staff in maintaining the safe environment often repeating the phrase "they wouldn't do that at home". Judith later explained that "the children are their mum's responsibility, not [the staff's]. The café staff clean the toys and try to keep it clean and safe but it's hard when the mum's let their kids take beans on toast into the play area". In addition, when referring to ensuring the door was always locked to prevent children 'escaping' she explained that they did what they could but really it was the responsibility of the parents. Whilst Judith stressed that this was not the case with all children, there was certainly some frustration that emerged surrounding responsibility for children whilst they used the café. She concluded by surmising that "it's nice the parents feel safe, but do they just not care". Again, this echoes the sentiments of the risk adverse society and the findings by Blackford (2004) that parents were able to relax in settings where responsibility for children's health and safety was perceived to be transferred to a setting or organisation.

This data also revealed however, that first and foremost, each of these settings was in the public sector; however they were still run like businesses. Ultimately, the needs of the community therefore were put second to certain market driven elements

of running the centres. Money for maintenance was a particular concern and during the course of the data collection was shown to be a limiting factor in providing local services for children and families. In discussion with staff at the church centre, they were especially proud of the health and safety accreditations, which were displayed within the café. They made it clear that upholding these standards were integral to the ethos of the centre. As argued by Ericson and Doyle (2004; 4), "the private insurance industry helps shape the contours of the risk society as well as the problems faced by that society". They argue that despite the overall role of the state, insurance companies govern the everyday experiences of risk and safety governance. The risk being managed therefore becomes the legal risk to business in the first instance, rather than the risks to children.

Some residents felt that general rules about health and safety however sometimes worked against the enabling of wider well-being for families and children in the Newtown Common. In some cases, a tension therefore arose between local organisations' legal responsibilities of to protect children from harm, and their encouraged but not enforced responsibility for facilitating the wider well-being of children and families. For example, the toddler group that was set up by local parents for local parents to provide a safe and welcoming support group were frustrated by the health and safety barriers that prevented them "doing something nice for the community".

> *Fieldnotes, 22nd October 2010: 'Churchgate'*
> *As I went over to sit on the mats with the other mums I could tell something was going on and that the mums were not happy about something that had happened. They were all caught up in angry and strong discussions with determined looks on their faces and nods and words of encouraging as different parents conveyed their opinions. On asking what was going on, I found out that last week, during the toddler group, one of the mum's had cut Lisa's son's hair in the corner of the hall. Whilst there appeared to be no problem with this happening at the time, they had been told today by the centre staff that there had been a complaint made about this, suggesting that it was against health and safety regulations. The parents could not understand who would have made the complaint as they felt like they were all of the same mindset and believed it was the centre staff that were not happy, not any parents. This seemed to bring up a few key issues that were discussed by the mums (in particular the playgroup leader/ organisers):*
> - *A feeling that the church centre staff were just 'picking on them', because this was only the most recent of a number of complaints/ attempts to make things difficult.*
> - *A feeling that 'we're not just stupid mums…we must have 60 degrees between us'.*
> - *A frustration that they were trying to do something for the community and they felt that the church centre should be encouraging and supporting the endeavour not presenting problems.*

In this example, those working at the centre were aware that if an incident occurred it would have implications for the centre as well as the child and therefore their legal duties were their number one priority. In contrast, parents felt that the organisation was putting risk aversion above the wider well-being needs of local families and children. The fieldnotes then go on to discuss each of these three points in more detail, but the key point to emanate was that the parents felt that what they were

doing was providing an important and valuable form of provision in the neighbourhood, discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but that the centre were more concerned with over cautious health and safety procedures to see the 'bigger picture'. Parents therefore reflected on the ways in which their experiences entailed a disjuncture between what they perceived to be parental common sense, and perceived instructional barriers through this as a consequence of a risk adverse society.

Since the group started, not long after I began data collection there was a clear feeling that staff were putting the risk averse ethos of the centre before the needs of the community. Much like the public and media debates referenced in chapter two, the parents often discussed examples of 'safety gone mad' at the expense of children's general well-being. There were a number of instances where the mother running the group felt that they had to prove they were able to adopt what they considered a 'common sense' approach to health and safety within the group. Following discussions with those working in the centre however, it seemed that this area of tension arose largely because the centre wanted to ensure they followed all health and safety regulations to allow them to continue operating for the community. This represented a conflict between the centre's key aim to provide a safe environment for users, and one which provided a space for much needed community provision. It therefore again reveals tension between allowing some degree of freedom, to be determined by parents, and ensuring a risk free environment to protect, or arguable over protect, children.

After a couple of weeks the parents were able to reflect on the situation and recognised this conflict. They felt that it echoed a tension present in everyday life as a parent where some health and safety procedures appeared to run contrary to the common sense of ensuring children and families' wellbeing in the bigger picture. For example, Hannah recalled an example of what was referred to as 'health and safety gone mad' when she had to get to nursery before the staff would administer Calpol (liquid paracetemol) to her teething daughter.

> Fieldnotes, 19th November, 2010:
> Hannah reflected on when she had had a scare about Cerys [her daughter] earlier this week. The nursery rang Hannah at work to say that Cerys had a really high temperature and so Hannah needed to come needed to come to get her immediately. Hannah explained that she was immediately filled with dread and rushed in a panic stricken state over to the nursery. Apparently they rang her every 10 mins and left messages saying 'hurry or we'll ring an ambulance 'even though she said she was on her way. Hannah explained that it turned out just to be that Cerys was teething and once she had arrived and given her some Calpol she was ok and her temperature came down. She could not believe that the nursery isn't allowed to administer Calpol even though Becky [one of the mothers at the toddler group] was asking them to on the phone.

Hannah and the rest of the group reflected on this because they felt that the health and safety restrictions which made it necessary for Hannah to be there before they would give Cerys any medicine. They felt that this prevented Cerys from feeling better and put her at risk, whilst also panicking Hannah into rushing and driving in an unsafe manner over to the nursery with messages beeping through to her phone.

Additionally, later that day I went with Lisa, a mother I spent a lot of time with during the data collection, to pick up her eldest child from primary school. Whilst we were waiting she introduced me to another parent at the school gate from Newtown Common that Lisa knew had a child in a different class. Whilst talking we found out that this other parent's child was ill but Lisa was unable to offer to take him home because she did not have a spare car seat for him. Instead, because his mother was not able to drive, he had to go home on the bus with the mother carrying him between school and home either side of the bus journey.

> *Fieldnotes, 19th November 2010:*
> *There was another women at the school that Lisa knew and offered to take her bags back home for her (she told me later that the lady had a condition so wasn't allowed to drive so had to get the bus to collect her child). The other lady had been called to pick up her son because he was ill and lying on the floor so she was a bit worried. Lisa said she would have offered to take them home but she didn't have another car seat so the mother took the child back carrying him on the bus…On reflection we discussed that it seemed a little ironic that regulations meant the child to be taken home on a bus without seatbelts and carried by an ill mother, rather than travelling in a car with a seatbelt but without a specific car seat. Following the Cerys incident earlier, we reflected that this could be seen as another example of how organisational rules and regulations which aim to protect the children (and organisations) in general, could potentially be causing other knock on health and safety issues.*

It can be seen that parents experiences of institutional rules outside of the community, such as at the school gates or during the Calpol incident, mediated and possibly reinforced, their perceptions of Newtown Common institutions during "Churchgate". These mundane examples from everyday life in Newtown Common provide a useful insight into the everyday lives of parents living in Newtown Common. It suggests that parents perceive the pervasiveness of risk adversity in society, and believe this often contradicts common sense approaches to facilitating children's well-being.

These examples illustrate the ways in which parents draw on wider notions of 'safety gone mad' in a risk society and apply them to localised examples of managing risk in the community. Tensions arise between health and safety procedures ultimately put in place to protect children, and often organisations, which have a knock on or displacement implications for health and safety elsewhere. This reflects a slightly different take upon the potentially negative consequences of the 'health and safety paranoia' recognised by Palmer (2010) and other commentators on modern childhood. Nevertheless, returning to the overall impetus for these regulations, it was clear that organisations within Newtown Common and elsewhere adopted and abided by a range of rules driven by a desire to create a safe space for children and families.

Local councillors, police and community partnerships

Ensuring the physical safety of children and young people for local councillors and police officers involved a much wider remit due to the broader nature of their responsibilities. Consequently, it was clear that for these community leaders, their aim was to ensure the whole community was a safe environment by minimising or eradicating risks in the area. In contrast to the approach adopted by the centre staff, these leaders explained that their work entailed addressing issues that were raised by those living in the community. This part of the chapter explores the understanding of the roles of these leaders within the community in relation to facilitating the safety of local children in Newtown Common. It then briefly explores some of the core examples of activity undertaken as part of the Partnership and Community Together (PACT) neighbourhood meetings, the central vehicle for identifying and addressing local issues, to ensure children's well-being. Finally, challenges experienced by those working in Newtown Common are identified and questions are raised about using this model to address wider community concerns in practice.

There was a mixed awareness of the various local provision by residents however, and many tended to refer to community services in a way that suggested some awareness that someone might be there if they needed them. For both young people and adults, many of the services were seen more in terms of meeting individual needs than promoting the safety and wellbeing of local residents. From the data it emerged that there were examples of successful utilization of these methods by a number of residents to address and solve local concerns.

As explored in the previous chapter, as a physical space, Newtown Common was widely perceived to be a safe area for all residents, including children and young people. When interrogated further, this overall sense of safety appeared to be grounded upon the experiences and perceived absence of risk and hazards in the area. This case was made strongly by those who had experienced life in other areas which may consist of "lots of vandalised shops, shutters over doors, massive drug problems" identified by one parent and community worker. He concluded that there were "so much social problems in other places which Newtown common just has nothing of that I've seen". Whilst there may be discrepancies between perceptions and actual levels of crime, absence of a number of risks and hazards believed to exist elsewhere appeared to be a principal reason for residents feeling safe in the area.

Local concerns in Newtown Common

Data from fieldnotes following attendance at PACT meetings and interviews and more informal discussions with the councillors, PCSO and regular PACT attendees provided a useful insight into the sorts of issues raised by residents in Newtown Common. This largely consisted of complaints about traffic and parking, and in some cases concerns about anti-social behaviour from children and young people. In this way children were sometimes seen as *at* risk and sometimes as *posing* a risk according to their age and therefore perceived level of innocence and vulnerability.

As explored in the previous chapter, the elements of children's well-being that are often associated with a 'safe community', such as social and environmental dangers, were largely absent in the exploration of risks to children's safety in Newtown Common. There was a stark absence of social and environment risks experienced in deprived communities such as needles, burnt out areas and rubbish (Tannock, 2012b; Elsley, 2004). However, concern about traffic and danger from the large volume of cars passing through the neighbourhood at speed was commonly reported as a threat to children's well-being. This was also reflected in the concerns raised by community groups and those working in the area. In addition, social risks posed by people were also identified in this forum. In particular, people coming from outside the perceived safe haven of Newtown Common were perceived as risky.

Traffic and Parking concerns

The PACT meetings often had some general concerns addressed and updated each meeting, these usually included industrial park workers taking resident's spaces and parking illegally. From my data it was difficult to ascertain examples of where residents had used organisations to specifically address a concern about the wellbeing of children and young people. I also never witnessed the involvement of young people within the process, although the PCSO did explain to me at the start of the field work that she was trying to think of ways to engage the young people in conducting some sort of youth PACT meeting. There had been some successful involvement in the past that she was keen to recreate.

The most frequently raised issues by residents in the PACT meetings involved concerns about traffic and, more specifically parking. Much of these problems were believed to be the result of the neighbouring industrial estate and limited resident parking, as well as the use of crossings and pavements to park cars. Previous discussions with community leaders and the PCSO suggested that this was a common complaint amongst residents, and it was also something that I noticed immediately when attending the meetings.

> Fieldnotes, 7th September 2010, PACT meeting:
> The main focus of residents' complaints seemed to be parking outside their houses. The concern seems to be regarding finding places to park outside their own home rather than community safety concerns.

Whilst not being able to park outside their house was the main complaint, there were also concerns about what the overcrowding meant for pedestrians. Often residents explained that cars were parked illegally around junctions and at crossings. This was said to be a potential concerns for pedestrians, especially children and young people who were shorter and could not be seen over the parked cars by oncoming traffic. Furthermore, parking on pavements was said to restrict the ability to push prams or wheelchairs along pavements and cars often blocked crossings and blocked curbs.

Parking and traffic are not unusual themes of such groups. A recent unpublished PhD thesis by Gasper (2012) drew on ethnographic experiences of PACT meetings in three different localities. She argued that in the more advantaged area, village parking was one of the most frequent issues raised by residents, as well as speeding

cars, cycling on pavements, and the few incidents of anti-social behaviour. Such themes are reflected in my experiences of PACT in Newtown Common.

Whilst issues such as traffic and car parking may not appear to be key causes of concern for the wellbeing of younger residents, a study by Mullan (2003) on children in Wales found that such issues had a significant impact on young people's wellbeing in the local area. She concluded that "those who reported living with busy traffic and car parking were found to be less likely to have positive perceptions of the safety, friendliness, appearance, play facilities and helpfulness of people in the local area" (p351). She also argued that this was the case regardless of socio-economic conditions. Whilst the importance of the physical nature of the neighbourhood is explored more in the subsequent chapter, this does emphasise the potential importance of this community group in exploring these issues. I attended this group which met bi-monthly throughout my data collection.

In most cases, the PACT meetings attempted to address issues of parking by working with local residents and business leaders. In the case of parking, the councillor explained that resident only parking was not an option. To ensure that the safety concerns of residents were addressed, residents were encouraged to ring the local non emergency police number to report illegally parked cars, and ideally take photos. In addition, towards the end of my involvement, the PCSO brought in the manager of one of the large local firms close to the estate. Discussions began about how to tackle the issue of employees using residential parking but were not resolved during the fieldwork.

Anti-social behaviour and outsiders

Other than parking, troublesome 'youths' and so-called anti-social behaviour formed the other form of complaint. Within PACT meetings, the main concerns that were raised involved areas that were believed to be frequented by young people. In most cases, it was the litter left by the young people who were 'hanging out' or walking through the area that was emphasised by frustrated residents, who were angered that areas close to their home were dirty and unsafe. For example, one resident was concerned about a patch where people were walking through and leaving rubbish.

> *Fieldnotes, 7th September 2010, PACT meeting:*
> *One resident brought up a complaint however about a cut through near his*
> *house he did say that he was worried about the health and safety*
> *implications of having rotting rubbish left there in case a child picked it up or*
> *it attracted rats.*

Following this complaint, at the next meeting the resident complained that someone had urinated in the area. After a number of meetings, and feedback between the police and local council, it was agreed that a fence could be put there to help to prevent this behaviour. Complaints about actual damage, trespassing, and in this case urinating in public were few and far between but still of some concern to one or two residents. Such complaints seem minor in comparison to the violence and other dangers experienced in more deprived communities (Tannock, 2012a; 2012b), perhaps signifying again the absence of the physical and social incivilities in Newtown Common.

More common were complaints about (assumed) teenagers on off road bikes disturbing the peace. Such behaviour however are often attributed to young people from outside the estate coming in, rather than those living in Newtown Common. In general however, the community was perceived to be relatively trouble free.

> *Roland, senior resident :*
> *…they tend to come in to our area rather than be here, do you know what I mean? [yeah] like, this scrambling business, they've obviously come in underneath the underpass, underneath the motorway and, cause havoc and then go away again. But we don't get anything like that at all really...*

> *Greg, parent of 8 year old and teenager:*
> *I was on the residents committee, and um, there was sort of a regular dialogue with the local police about to trying to basically stop people from coming through the estate to get to, I assume its to [the retail park] or whatever it is, um, but,[to wife?] I was just saying over the last few years. Generally its quite a quiet area, its not something that you know, we particularly notice any kind of issue with.*

These extracts both demonstrate that there was a concern about people coming in to the area and passing through and potentially causing trouble on the way. This feeling of concern about outsiders posing a threat was widespread within the community, especially because most crime in the area was identified by the PCSO as being opportunist. Some concluded "as far as I can see, most of the crime is their own silly fault really" regarding the continued problem of crimes being the result of unsecured vehicles. Other residents I spoke to however, were more vocal about their concern about unknown people walking past their houses and through their neighbourhood.

Priya, a mother of two young children, explained that the potential of strangers walking through the estate from the industrial area was of concern to her and her neighbours. She explained that, like other residents, she had already had bikes stolen from her garage. It was the safety of local young children if playing out in the front garden that concerned her more however. A later interview with her neighbour, senior resident, June, echoed these fears. She also noted that rubbish, and trespassing were regular complaints. June felt strongly that the cut through between the community and the industrial estate should be closed off to ensure the safety and peace of mind for those living in the community. This resonates with the findings presented in the previous chapter in relation to the privatisation of space however, and indicates that whilst the street was not seen as a place for young people to play, it is one that children should be able to inhabit safely.

The perception of young people as troublemakers or sources of concern was not reserved to those from outside of Newtown Common, however. Many parents reported that not having young people 'hanging around' the neighbourhood as a positive aspect about living in the community. When Roland, a senior resident was asked whether he often saw children playing around the street he replied, "no, we don't have any trouble with that". This reflects the dominant interpretation that children in the street or playing in the neighbourhood as a cause for concern.

These views are not unique to Newtown Common however, with a number of empirical studies pointing to a widespread feeling that young people spending time 'hanging out' in the neighbourhood is likely a cause for suspicion. Barnes (2006, p31) concluded that there is "a generalised perception that *any* young person is up to no good and therefore should not be allowed to wander freely in the community" [original emphasis]. More importantly, this lens through which young people's use of neighbourhoods is viewed has also been reflected in research practice. As noted by Holland et al. (2011), research tends to be focused on adults' concerns about and fears of young people in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour rather than questions about their involvement in protecting or helping young people if they were in need.

Children at risk, or as a risk?

In the case of parking, traffic and outsiders, concerns for children and young people were mentioned, although usually in an imagined, abstract sense. Examples of risks or safety concerns never drew on evidence or experience but were often later made to emphasise a point. Whilst this interpretation was not immediately evident, on reflection when writing up fieldnotes, there were some questions about the genuine concern for children in some of the cases discussed above.

> *Fieldnotes, 2nd November, 2010: Pact meeting*
> *On reflection from the meeting today I thought again about the portrayal of young children as innocent and in need of protection. One of the resident's complaints about crossing the road blind was a potential hazard to mothers with prams and small children, and this was often what I thought about when I used some of the more dangerous crossings in the area.*
>
> *However, I was reminded of other times where residents have described the potential harm to children to underscore the urgency of their personal issue. After all, a potential hazard to a child was much more emotive than a nuisance to a senior resident.*

Whilst my initial impression as an observer was that the group was being used as a method for ensuring the safety of local children, in my later fieldnote entries I reflected on the notion that some individuals might be seen to be drawing on the notion of the child in danger as a form of emotive or evocative language to add weight to their complaint. I later discussed with the ex-councillor, who still attended meetings, whether she thought the residents at PACT meetings showed concern about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Gwen seemed certain that it was often the case that residents would 'use' children to make personal complaints into a health and safety issue.

She described a number of cases where children were largely identified as a nuisance in the PACT meetings, and concluded, 'no, I don't think really people care about the kids'. I think that from analysing what was said through the remainder of the meetings I attended, this theme was continued with no concerns ever expressed concerning the safety and welfare of children directly. However, as discussed in more detail in the previous chapter, it is clear that Newtown Common was both perceived and experienced by many young and old residents to be a safe arena for

children so it is possible that no concerns were perceived to be in need of attention in this arena.

Addressing whose local concerns?

When reflecting upon the effectiveness of the PACT meetings, through informal discussions with various community leaders, the composition of the meetings was raised as a concern. In order to ensure the neighbourhood was a safe environment for children, young people and adults of all ages throughout Newtown Common, it was important to try to identify any local concerns. The attendance however did not reflect the demographic make-up of the neighbourhood. On attending the groups for over a year however I found that they always had very low levels of attendance. From my collective observations of residents that attended the PACT meetings, the majority of serial attendees were senior residents who had lived in the neighbourhood since it was built. Others, arguably understandably, tended to come when they had a particular issue that needed addressing, and stopped when either the problem was solved, or, less often, they felt nothing was happening.

Roland and Wendy were two of the main attendees of the PACT meeting, and strongly advocated its value to me and to other residents and were disappointed that other residents did not care enough about their neighbourhood to take part. This reflects the findings of Gasper (2012), who also noted PACT attendees who appoint themselves as 'care takers' of the community and position those that do not attend as letting the community down.

The meetings often had some general concerns addressed and updated each week, but when residents did have something to complain about they would turn up together in a large group and would be very vocal about it.

> *Roland, senior resident*
> *there's a small nucleus of people who come all the time… but they tend to,*
> *like, you probably remember a couple of weeks ago there was a big pile of*
> *them came, and they were all very vocal about it […]I think the most we've*
> *had is about 25, but that was, you know, when a big crowd of them came*
> *from one sort of close, you know, cos they were lets go to the pact meeting*
> *and bombard them.*

In general therefore, attendance was high when particular concerns presented, such as the need for salt in preparation for bad weather, or a spate of parking issues, but in general, the PACT meetings were not well attended by local residents. One staff member[11] felt that the meetings consisted of "limited conversations and trivial issues…it's a waste of time; they seem to go over the same issues like parking and fencing off tracks when kids explore routes as short cuts". The staff member concluded that these things were "trivial things just part of growing up for kids, having adventures. It's stopping kids from being kids…if you haven't got anything decent to complain about, what's the point?" As shown in the research by Gasper (2012), these sorts of issues were common concerns in more middle class areas, and the meetings can only be driven by issues raised by those attending.

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[11]For some comments, this staff member asked to remain anonymous without links to their other comments to ensure they could not be identified.

The most common reason cited for lack of attendance to the PACT meeting where residents had heard of the group, was a lack of time. It could be argued that the PACT meetings in Newtown Common appeared more of a top down initiative (Gilling, 2007) approach to community safety rather than an organisation that has grown out of the concerns and wishes of local people. As found in the middle class neighbourhood studies by Gasper (2012) the PACT group only seemed to attract a certain type of attendee and suffered from a number of challenges in attempts to engage other residents, including young people.

To find out more about why other residents did not attend the group, I asked every interview participant if they had heard of the group, if they attended and if not why not. Within these interviews, no adults that I had not met through the meetings had attended. In my interview with Richard, a local young person aged 18, I asked him whether he had been to any PACT meetings more recently to raise any concerns about the area.

> *Richard, young person, 18 years old*
> *No, we were supposed, I've been told about 'em cos they want a few of us to come up here, cos we've grown up here, and they have asked us, but we've never, I've never had the time to come up here*
> *I: no, and again that's for the same thing is it, you're working or*
> *R: yeah, working*

This was a common theme among adults and parents, that they did not have the time to attend the meetings, and Richard later explained that this was the reason his parents also had not ever attended any PACT meetings. This feeling was echoed throughout my findings when I asked a number of residents in interviews or just informal conversations about their attendance at the PACT meetings. Other than those I had met at the meeting already, I did not meet anyone who had ever attended them but many had heard of them. Lisa for example explains that, as predicted by the PCSO, that she does not attend because they're "never really convenient times". However reflecting she continued by explaining that "they're one of those things I never think about". This suggests that the main reason for not attending is that she feels no desire to attend because she does not need to. Whilst this does not suggest she is being 'anti-social', it could perhaps mean that she does not have any issues to be raised.

When speaking to young people, I had a mixed response about their experiences with PACT. Two remembered being involved in the youth PACT meeting in the past, which was designed specifically to address the lack of facilities in the area.

> *Fieldnotes, discussion with Richard, young person, 18 years old*
> *He said that he sort of remembered being involved with a PACT meeting when he was younger, and thought that one of the boys he knew had put the idea into the pact message box complaining about the lack of facilities. He said that they asked for a MUGA (multi use games area) because all other town nearby were getting them, and that they wanted one in Newtown Common as well. He said that then 'they' (possible PCSO or a councillor) rang him and said about the PACT meeting so they went along, but he wasn't sure what else he remembered. He was glad and clearly emphasised the fact that they were listened to however. Not necessarily because he was*

> *a child being listened to by an adult, but that a resident was listened to by the local council and police.*

Lloyd also remembered attending a PACT meeting in the past and was pleased that they had been able to make a difference in the area.

> *Lloyd, young person, 18 years old:*
> *I: have you heard of the youth pact meetings they used to do here? Were you involved in them?*
> *R: um, I've heard of em, I think I've been to one of them, which was when they were talking about building the MUGA and the seats up there. We all sat down and decided which one we wanted, which was, quite good*
> *I: yeah, you enjoyed, you thought that was a good idea did you?*
> *R: yeah*
> *I: and did you find that things happened and it was all*
> *R: yeah, it was all good…there's nowhere to sit at the community centre but up on the thing but, like, when it was raining and whatever and it was really bad, we couldn't actually play up on the fields so we started in another place, an area where we can just*
> *I: play in the rain?*
> *R: yeah*

Most of the other young people who were not in the same cohort as the young people involved in MUGA meeting or were younger teenagers or children had similar responses to that of Geraint.

> *Geraint, young person*
> *I: have you ever heard of the um PACT meetings?*
> *R: I haven't got a clue*
> *I: no, and do you know like, who the PCSO is, or do you know anything about that, local police, just*
> *R: no*
> *I: ok, that's fine. Oh, and did, were you here for the Halloween fifa night or anything? Or it wasn't Halloween, there were two different nights, there was a fifa night in January here*
> *R: was there? I haven't got a clue, sorry*

It seems from these experiences which were supported by my observations of the PACT meetings that often residents would attend them if they did have a particular concern about something. Similarly, even though earlier in a meeting I had asked 18 year old Richard, what he would do if he had a problem he suggested that he would use the PACT postcard system. This suggested that amongst both the adult residents and local young people, there were some that both knew about and would use this form of organisation if they had a problem.

> *Richard, young person, 18 years old:*
> *I: ...If you were worried about something, like if you had a concern that was related to safety, um, what would you do?*
> *R: I would probably come up here and use that little PACT box they've got on which you write in what happened and you post it in*
> *I: oh yeah*
> *R: and they do actually, they do actually listen, if you've got a problem they will actually ring you up*

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For Richard therefore, the positive experience from engaging with the PCSO and PACT meetings before had given him the confidence in the system if another risk or issue was to present itself.

Another reason given for not attending the PACT group was that some felt it was used more as a chance for political reasons rather than focusing on resolving community problems. Through discussions with attendees I learned that the councillors had changed in the past few years which had caused some residents to leave the group. Likewise, the association of the group with politics rather than just addressing local needs was considered to be a deterrent, although Roland who attends the meetings suggests this was a problem but it has now been addressed. He cites an example in which the original chairman was asked to leave for this reason and had not returned since.

> *Roland, senior resident:*
> *The police themselves were very uncomfortable with him because he was always criticising the police and, where again, I don't think it's a good, and he was very friendly with the [party] councillor… and he used to make sort of sniping remarks about what the council are doing and, you know, when she, when she was off it.*

As a result Roland explained that the Chief Constable came in to the meeting:

> *…And of course, he, the chairman was, you know, mouthing off and eventually he stood up and he said, um, er, I'm guna call the meeting to order and I'm guna ask you to leave the chair and he said and what's it got to do with you, you see. So he said I tell you what its got to do with me, I'm in charge of all the pact meetings in [City], they're my responsibility. Well he just didn't know what to do, and he sort of kicked the chair over, disappeared.*

Whilst this was not a commonly expressed view, the intertwining of political issues could be considered a concern which conflates the core aim of the PACT group, which is to raise concerns residents have about the area to the attention of those who are able to and are responsible for doing something about it.

Adapting to meet community needs

Perhaps what was more evident from my discussions with other participants about the PACT group was that they did not have a strong enough reason or concern to lead them to take time to attend the meeting. Many had other priorities and commitments in their life and did not feel they had any concerns to raise through the group. There are some examples of successful adaptions of the PACT group, however which resulted in an increased engagement. The meetings provide an important example of where the common approach has been adapted to suit the nature of the community. The PCSO describes her attempts to encourage more people to engage with the service.

> *Fieldnotes, discussion with PCSO, 22nd June, 2010:*
> *…she explained the use of the PACT postcards which can be dropped off at various points, anonymously. What she thought had been most successful*

however were the street PACT surgeries she had introduced (unsure of how many there have been of these so far). This was where she would take a mobile police station around to different streets and ask them to come and see them about any issues etc. The time/ place of the street surgery would be advertised in advance through leaflets through the door, in community centres etc. She found that this way it could be in the evenings, at a time that suited the residents (i.e. when people were home from work) but also because it would be just across the road residents were more likely just to nip over and come to speak to someone. She said that these had been successful so far and they even had some residents bring them out coffee/ cakes etc. The street surgeries happen every 6-8 weeks according to PCSO workload. Karen notes that the street PACT surgeries were done with the local councillor and the housing association, and issues/ concerns raised were usually related to anti-social behaviour. For example, litter, parking etc. [which relate to the problems perceived to be caused by the nearby industrial estate].

This extract points towards the difference with engaging with the sort of population in Newtown Common, although attendance is not an uncommon problem for these sorts of meetings (Gasper, 2012). It also demonstrated as well the sort of effort needed on behalf of the community workers and institutions to encourage and foster community engagement. In the case of the PACT meetings it seemed that only certain people came every meeting. Most attendees believed this was because either they were taking an interest in community engagement, or perhaps they were more of a 'busybody'. Whilst some felt saddened that the majority of people did not 'care enough about the community' to attend, it does raise questions about whether there are other means of engaging with residents that may be more successful.

Conclusion

When considering the ways in which community can be seen as impacting upon the safety and well-being of local children and young people, this chapter demonstrates the role that local organisations and provision can be seen as having upon reducing risk in Newtown Common. Unlike the research conducted in a working class, well established neighbourhood in South Wales, discussions and concerns about well-being, issues of safeguarding and the involvement of statutory services was neither visible nor discussed in Newtown Common. In general, there appear to be few if any concerns about physical hazards to children's safety in the area that were raised by residents in Newtown Common, echoing the findings from the previous chapter. The types of risks to children's well-being identified were relatively low level compared to the dangers experienced in other neighbourhoods such as needles and broken glass (Percy-Smith, 2002; Elsley, 2004). Nevertheless, residents were working together with local leaders to identify and address any physical hazards or risks to children in particular.

When safety concerns were raised, residents at PACT meetings tended to draw upon notions of innocent and vulnerable children to highlight the potential risk but there was little evidence of anyone coming to harm. Likewise, whilst the presence of young people 'out and about' in Newtown Common was presented as causing a potential threat, there were no concrete examples of this happening that emerged from the data collection. The data does highlight some challenges with relying on the

PACT meetings as the dominant vehicle for expressing concerns about the local area in Newtown Common because of the low and slightly homogenous attendance of the group. Evidence suggests that some adapting to address these issues was well received by residents but also that perhaps the lack of pressing safety issues together with a lack of awareness about how to express these concerns and what would be done could all contribute to the lack of engagement in PACT as a tool for facilitating children's safety and well-being.

Whilst PACT is identified as the most appropriate site for raising and addressing issues about children's safety and well-being in Newtown Common, the evidence suggests that it is not effectively used in this way. Perhaps due to the privatisation of childhood, and its prevalence in the home sphere, the wider well-being of children's also appears to be more privatised. In terms of ensuring children's safety within the community buildings themselves, centres in the neighbourhood demonstrate a level of vigour when following rules and regulations to ensure they are providing a safe space for children, young people and families in the area. Parents perceived this as reflecting the risk averse culture of contemporary society, described in chapter three, with an overwhelming focus on ensuring the environment is free from physical hazards to children rather than using 'common sense' to recognise the wider consequences for well-being. The implications therefore are that other aspects of well-being are also privatised and left to the informal sphere, which, as explored in chapter nine is an invaluable source of support to parents and children, but one that is not easily found for some in Newtown Common compared to in other studies (Evans and Holland, 2012).

Children's physical health and protection from environmental risks in and around the neighbourhood have been shown as the primary focus for those working in and for children in Newtown Common. However, there was also recognition amongst some that there were other aspects of children's well-being that they could facilitate. In particular, a number of staff highlighted the importance of access to facilities and activities for children and young people, which has been identified as an important aspect of children's well-being (Bradshaw, 2011). The next chapter reflects on the ways in which those working in and for Newtown Common attempt to meet the needs of local children and young people in terms of their access to and use of local facilities and public space.

8. CHILDHOOD AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN NEWTOWN COMMON

Introduction

Promoting the well-being of children, young people and families through providing local facilities and services was perceived to be an important role for those working in and for Newtown Common. The data from the thesis identified community provision as one of the three key elements of 'community' which can impact upon the well-being of local children and young people in Newtown Common. Community groups and leaders understood protecting children from environmental hazards explored in the previous chapter as only one part of their role in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. Enhancing their physical and emotional health through providing access to adequate facilities to play or hang out was also perceived to be a valuable aspect of the work undertaken by community leaders. The data revealed two key paradoxes; firstly there was a perception that children should be 'off the streets', despite little evidence of young people visible outside in the neighbourhoods; and secondly, there was a feeling amongst all residents that there was a need for more facilities for young people in the area. When activities were organised, however, there were challenges engaging young people, questioning the assumption that children and young people need or want organised activities rather than a space to 'hang out'. The chapter concludes by reflecting upon the impact of community design and development upon community provision and engagement.

Dissatisfaction with local facilities has been linked with children and young people's subjective levels of well-being in the UK (Children's Society, 2013) and many have argued that the re-location of children into the 'private sphere' is having a negative impact upon their well-being (Palmer, 2010; Karsten, 2005). As outlined in chapter one, well-being as defined in the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill* (Welsh Government, 2014) entails the social and emotional welfare of children and young people as well as ensuring their physical protection. Furthermore, children's access to sports, leisure and culture is used one of the seven key domains in the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales (2011). Indicators such as involvement in sports clubs, play and time spent with friends are identified as positive measures of well-being whilst time spend on computers and watching TV are presented more neutrally. Whilst commentators such as Palmer (2010) and Guldberg (2009) have raised concerns about children's increased exposure of television and electronic media, the qualitative research cited in the Monitor emphasise the importance and enjoyment children associate with such forms of entertainment.

This chapter will examine the evidence of provision for children and young people in Newtown Common in relation to these findings. It will suggest that whilst the lack of facilities is raised as an area of concern, the data suggests that this cannot be simply addressed by setting up a few sessions for families or young people. This questions the assumption that, in Newtown Common, access to clubs and sports are always what children want and need to increase their levels of well-being. In addition, there

are a number of challenges that community groups and leaders have faced when trying to introduce local provision that need further consideration.

In the past decade academics and other commentators on children's lives and geographies have both theorised and evidenced the changing nature of childhood and the impact this can have on their wellbeing. It is suggested that modern children's lives are 'toxic' at worst (Palmer, 2010) or risk adverse at best (Gill, 2007) as a result of paranoid parenting (Furedi, 2001). Subsequently, Lester and Russell (2008) have argued that the restriction of children's freedom to play outside by (over)protective parents is damaging both their social development and quality of life. Jack and Gill (2010) have advocated recognition and promotion of community based support programmes to protect children and promote wellbeing. Despite calls for more a holistic approach to facilitating children's well-being from policy publications, such as *Every Child Matters*, they argue individually-orientated strategies to safeguarding children's well-being are prominent in the UK. Jack and Gill assert that agencies should instead be working in partnership to "extend local provision with the aim of creating safer, more 'child friendly' communities" (2010; 90, see also Gill, 2007). This approach has also been promoted by UNICEF, and, to an extent, can be seen in Welsh Government initiatives such as Communities First and Flying Start, which create a supportive hub in areas of need and deprivation.

Empirical evidence suggests that there is still much improvement required to address children's and young people's subjective levels of well-being, especially during the teenage years. Research by the Children's Society (2013) demonstrates that well-being is a more prominent area for concern for young people than for children, with findings demonstrating a positive correlation between age and reports of low well-being. Evidence suggests that, at any time, 14% of 15 year-olds in the UK have low levels of well-being, of which only a small amount has been associated with indicators of poverty. Furthermore, low levels of well-being have been linked with a range of other issues in the lives of young people including violent and risky behaviour, depression and likelihood of victimisation (Proctor et al., 2009).

The chapter will first examine examples of community provision aimed at facilitating engagement with young residents in the neighbourhood. In particular, there is evidence of investment in providing spaces for local young people and teenagers through the community centre, local councillors and the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). The data also revealed a number of challenges however, which are outlined in the second half of the chapter. It is argued that despite addressing the identified needs in the neighbourhood the provision that was provided was under-used and eventually ended due to a lack of engagement.

The lack of facilities for young people in Newtown Common

As noted in the previous chapter, safeguarding concerns relating to abuse and neglect were not raised or discussed in any of my data, including fieldwork in PACT meetings and discussion with those working in the area. A main complaint about the neighbourhood in relation to young people in the area that was repeatedly raised in conversations with residents was the lack of facilities in the area to play for children and young people. This was often considered to be a failing in community design

rather than the failing of those who worked in the area to provide more. There was a general feeling that young people needed somewhere to go 'to get them off the streets' and engaged in constructive activities. Whilst there was limited evidence of young people 'on the streets', (as explored in chapter 6) the lack of facilities was a concern raised by young people themselves as well as adult residents and those working in and for the community. In addition, a paradox emerged between a perceived gap in provision for young people, and the challenges faced when trying to encourage engagement. The chapter suggests that this may be relating to discrepancies between what facilitating children and young people would like and what those working in the area try to provide.

Identifying what facilities were needed in the area to facilitate children and young people's well-being was something some parents and young people struggled to answer. For example, when asked how to improve the area, Celia, a parent of an eight year old daughter and a teenager, reported a challenge in responding; "when people ask what's it like living up Newtown Common I say there's nothing up there, and yet, here you are asking us what we want and we can't come up with anything". Likewise, when I asked about whether they would like a local pub in the area, they replied that they would not want a pub any nearer that it was. Greg explained "I dunno, I suppose its cos we're getting older I suppose and I don't like the idea that, it doesn't get raucous particularly, the only time it get raucous is when people have house parties". This illustrates a conflict in wanting facilities such as a pub, but not the trouble and nuisance that it might create.

Every young person interviewed and those involved in informal discussions felt that there should be more for teenagers in particular to do in the area. This could include better outdoor spaces, or more clubs and activities for them to attend. When speaking to one young person about growing up in the area, he described how he wished there were more outdoor clubs.

> *Richard, young person, 18 years old:*
> *um, more outdoor activities really. because when we was 13, 14, all we*
> *wanted to do was get out of the house, we wanted to do something, but we*
> *used to come up here, but alls they used to do in here, cos they had no*
> *football team, all they were doing was indoor stuff, we never really had like,*
> *football, playing football, unless we went up here on our own.*

For some, like Richard, there was a desire for more organised forms of leisure facilities for local young people. His interview suggested that he felt that there should be more provision for those who wanted to get out of the house and do something outdoors in an organised or structured manner. He suggests this would have helped him and his friends have a more enjoyable childhood in the neighbourhood. This idea fits in with the literature on the changing nature of childhood in modern society whereby their play activities are moving away from free unstructured time towards more organised forms of groups and sessions (Karsten 2005, Palmer 2010).

When parents were asked to describe amenities in the community, "there's no school, there's no local shops, there's nothing really" epitomises the most common response. The sense that there was nothing in Newtown Common for children and young people to do, or indeed anywhere for them to go, was one of the most common responses when asked about the challenges of living in the area. This was

seen to cause problems for parents with young families as well as young people who linked the ability to be out and about, or play, with well-being. Jenny, a local parent of two young children, felt that this was one of the reasons the community was so empty because families had to go to other areas to find activities and spaces for children and young people to play. She explained "apart from [that park], there's nothing here, there's nothing for the … like, now it's the school holidays most of the time we're having to drive to get somewhere else cos there's not, there's not very much here". Jenny felt that the neighbourhood needed more provision to allow children and young people to play locally and build relationships.

Whilst Newtown Common was perceived to have a particularly low number of amenities for children and young people, frustration with a lack of facilities is a common finding among young people in the UK with a number of studies highlighting children's and young people's dissatisfaction with local facilities in their area. For example, in a study by the Children's Society (2013) 40% of children aged eight to 15 years old reported that there was nothing to do in their area. They also noted that satisfaction with local facilities decreased through higher age bands. It has been suggested further research is required however on the resources within particular communities or neighbourhoods to provide a better insight into the impact of community resources and wellbeing (Fauth and Thompson, 2009).

Provision for families and children and young people

There was a perception by most participants in the study that more provision was needed for those living Newtown Common, especially for young people, to increase their happiness and well-being. Those that work in the area recognised this as something that they should endeavour to address, within the structures that they had available. In particular, the attempts to introduce a toddler group for families with young children and a youth club and other events for young children are drawn upon as examples of matching local concerns with provision. Despite attempts to address the calls for more provision however, very few of these examples of provision were successful.

Interviews with the community centre staff and PCSO expressed a concern about the impact of the lack of community engagement in the area, due to the lack of activities. Consequently, they described an important aspect of their role as trying to address this and promote the well-being of young people. Similarly, the ex-councillor explained that when she took on the ward of Newtown Common she was 'staggered' about the lack of amenities in the area.

> *Gwen, ex-councillor for Newtown Common:*
> *It's difficult for the children and the adults because the children hardly knew each other, because of the fact that they went to so many different schools, but then there was nothing for them to do either, which didn't help. But then, and the fact that there's no area, you know normally you get the young kids begin to meet and they all hang around at a local shop or somewhere like that, they all get together. But there wasn't anywhere, there was absolutely nowhere. And so the kids did have real problems.*

This feeling was also echoed by those working at the Community Centre. A staff member at the Community Centre explained that he saw the main role of the community centre as providing a space for local residents to do sports and other activities.

> *Ceazer, community staff member:*
> *The community centre should provide outside resources to help the community um, ah, how do you say, enhance their personal um, achievements. Whether it's in sports, even education. Cos you sometimes use these places as um, learning and, place, we had, there's a place I used to work at and they actually had stuff we have here, like the gymnasium, but then had another room full of computers. in that sense, education, sport, leisure.*

Similarly, Joe felt that the area needed more facilities for children to 'get out and about' and play or 'hang out' around the area. In addition, he notes the importance of ensuring that what is provided is something that the children are interested in and will use. This hints at the slight frustration by some of the community workers about the underuse of the facilities that do exist, as explored in detail later in the chapter.

> *Joe, parent and community centre staff member:*
> *There needs to be more clubs and things to do outside the family home and to do for children instead of, nothing's really available here for them and what is available they don't seem to be interested in.*

To address the perceived problem of a lack of facilities for young people local community leaders tried to work with young people to provide activities. Gwen, the previous councillor, explained, for example, that she started the one and only local football team for the area to help unite local young people and give them an outlet for their energy. Additionally, the PCSO and Community Centre staff explained that the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in the main field next to the centre had been constructed in response to calls for more facilities in the area for young people. The play scheme also provided a free space for children to go during the summer holidays and take part in a number of activities designed to aid development and provide exercise and enjoyment.

Throughout the data collection, the community centre staff attempted to get a youth club for young children running one night a week. Despite various attempts however, they were unable to succeed despite running one a few years before. When asked about this, the Centre manger felt that there was never the influx of young people, or the staff required to instigate a new youth club.

> *Interview with Barry, Community Centre manager*
> *well the youth club before, the locals were quite a lot younger and they were all still in school together and things and they all hung around together but I think as they've sort of grown up they've all gone their separate ways, some of them have got jobs, moved on. And there's been no new children coming in and taking up…*
>
> *there's never been a new influx of kids come through really, I dunno why … there was a gentleman that was gong to take it on, because we haven't got the staff to supervise it, um, fully supervise it all the time so um, its quite*

> *difficult to, we did have a guy that was going to voluntarily come along and oversee it but err, eventually um, circumstances changed and he wasn't available at that time so, the children he brought with him to the youth club, I dunno for whatever reason, didn't come back*

As referred to in the extract above, the youth club was never able to operate due to low attendance by local young people and, as perceived by Barry, the lack of appropriate staff to run the club. This raises questions about whether there was a need for facilities for young people in Newtown Common, and if the organised clubs and groups that were offered meet these needs.

Despite the lack of facilities for children and young people in particular presenting as a common complaint by residents, there were further examples of provision for young people in the community. During the data collection, I witnessed some joint initiatives between the police, PCSO and the community centre to keep young people 'off the streets' and encourage them to make more use of the existing facilities.

> *Fieldnotes, PACT meeting 2nd November 2010:*
> *Whilst the Halloween event was described as a general success to those attending the PACT meeting I had a different story from those who worked in the community centre. The centre manager explained to me that they had very little interest despite the free food and film, and that there were actually teenage boys hanging out together outside of the community centre rather than coming inside. They believed part of the reason was that the PCSOs were up there in their squad cars which may have put people off. They also asked the boys what would make them more likely to come in, to which the boys replied that they would have come in if there were some girls in the centre.*

In an effort to keep the young people happy in the area, Fifa[12] and Halloween events were organised to take place in the community centre and the police provided food and soft drinks. For Halloween, a low classification horror film was shown on the projector, but very few people came in. In an attempt to remedy this and listen to the reasons given by young people for not coming, the following session organised in January offered the chance to play Fifa on the play station on a big screen and Dominos pizzas. There was a group of boys that came in for this session together and one or two others that came in on their own. Once the pizza had arrived and been eaten however they went home. In addition, the PCSO organised a basketball training session on Saturday which no one attended at all. This reflected the common theme throughout my observation of Newtown Common young people who were just not consistently interested in spending time in the community centre. These examples provide a useful illustration of the paradox in the data between the perceived need for facilities and the difficulties faced when trying to engage young people in seemingly attractive activities. These challenges are discussed further below.

Whilst the majority of concern about the lack of facilities focused on provision for young people, families with young children were also identified by parents as needing a source of support in the area, leading to the creation of a volunteer lead

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[12] Fifa is a multi player football computer game for game consoles such as a Play Station.

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toddler group at the church centre during the data collection. As identified in the previous chapter, the church centre was intended as a space for families with children to come and spend time in a safe family-friendly environment. Judith, the centre co-manager explained, that the café "is a gathering area for Mums to socialise and children to play and interact safely, and not just for people from Newtown Common".

Building on this, some mums who met at the café on a Friday asked to use the hall to run a toddler group to allow this safe and friendly use of the centre once the café had closed. Whilst there were other sessions for families and children in the centre, there was feeling that what was needed was an informal and low cost group set up for parents by parents. Unfortunately, the group struggled with attendance from the start, as explained by Jenny, one of the parents involved in running the group.

> *Jenny, mother of two young children:*
> *we're doing the tots group at the community centre and that all sounds really good doesn't it but, there's, considering how big everywhere is and how, I know how many, you know, just down here I know how many parents there are with kids and things like that, it's such as small proportion of us actually go in there*

Whilst everyone that attended the group felt it was a valuable form of provision, low attendance eventually prevented the group from continuing.

The lack of facilities and provision for young people was identified by all residents, including the young people themselves and considered a priority for promoting wellbeing for those working in and for the community. On further analysis of the data, references suggest that perhaps what children and young people need, is a space to 'hang out' that is not organise or supervised by adults. This would explain, for example, why young people opted to hang around outside of the community centre on Halloween rather than engage in the event. Likewise, Lydia explained that sometimes she would just hang around the entrance area of the community centre and use the vending machines "just for something to do". Such comments suggest a tension between the type of casual, informal activity enjoyed by young people and the organised activities arranged by the centre.

Nonetheless, levels of engagement were an important area of concern for those working in the area. In particular, families with young children were seen to be in need of support leading to the creation of a parent and toddler group. Despite the group's creation as a direct response to concerns raised about provision in the area and its organisation by one of the local parents, the group was not successful. The next section examines some of the reasons for the lack of community engagement with these types of provision.

Challenges to community engagement

Within Newtown Common, community workers and leaders arrange a variety of provision to help to ensure the well-being of local children and young people. The data shows however that there is contradiction between what these services provide and what residents expect or desire in their area. This part of the chapter explores

some of the reasons provided for a lack of engagement and critiques the notion that underuse of public space arises from over protective and risk averse parents (Palmer, 2006; 2010; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997). The provision appeared to address the needs identified by local residents therefore creating a paradox between complaints about lack of provision, and the low engagement with excising provision. The local mothers of young children, who were looking for an affordable and non-judgemental safe space to interact with other similar families, were able to set up a toddler group in the church centre. Likewise, there were a number of community events arranged to provide activities for young people with something to do in the area. Attendance and engagement was extremely low however and by the end of my data collection there was still no youth group running and the toddler group had finished. The remainder of this chapter considers these areas of provision and the challenges they faced in achieving the required momentum despite an articulated need for such services.

Community responsibility for children's well-being was largely understood to involve ensuring the safety of children and young people living in the neighbourhood by those working in and for the local area. As summarised in the previous chapter, community staff in Newtown Common can be broken down into those working in the community centre and church, who largely saw it as their responsibility to ensure the safety of local residents in their buildings; and local leaders such as the local councillors and PCSO who assumed responsibility for facilitating well-being in a broader sense for children living in Newtown Common. Both of these groups also articulated a responsibility to provide opportunities for children and young people to facilitate wellbeing. Largely this involved addressing the lack of facilities in the area and a perceived lack of community spirit. Despite this often united effort, there were also a number of inherent challenges identified in achieving these activities, with lack of community engagement presented as a vicious cycle that the community staff are unable to break.

Previous evidence on the use of public spaces and facilities has argued that one of the main causes for the low visibility of children and young people in public spaces is the risk adverse nature of modern parenting and childhood (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Palmer, 2010; Fuerdi, 2001). Parents' perceptions of safety in the local area, together with the birth order of siblings, have been identified as closely related to restrictions on young people's access to the 'public sphere' beyond the more immediate space of the home area (Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2000).

Palmer (2008; 2010) has argued that modern children confined to homes are 'battery kids' rather than 'free range'. This is preventing them from experiencing outdoor play which, she argues, is a vital learning activity. By keeping children indoors, she argues that they miss out on learning about risk assessments, social skills, self-reliance and common-sense understandings of how the world operates. Palmer also highlights concerns about the prominence of computers and technology as increasingly dominating children's free time and play.

The challenges that arose in relation to engaging children and young people in Newtown Common provide some support for these arguments, particularly in terms of preferences for organised activities (Karsten, 2005) and the use of computer games (Palmer 2008; 2010). There was little evidence however of parents restricting

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the location of their own children from playing in the public spaces in Newtown Common out of concern, although there was a shared expectation that children would not be out alone until an older age than might be experienced in other neighbourhoods (Evans and Holland, 2012). As explored in chapter six, however, the privatised and segregated accounts Newtown Common did demonstrate a perception amongst residents that streets were not places for young people to be. This provides support to the argument that young people have has been relocated from the public to the private sphere (Karsten, 2005). Whilst chapter six also highlighted some concerns about safety within the neighbourhood in terms of traffic and walkability, the under-use of public spaces and facilities within Newtown Common appears to be more linked to issues of awareness, and needs being met either at home or outside of the neighbourhood. This presents an interesting paradox in which residents of all ages feel there should be more facilities for the area, however those that are arranged suffer with low engagement. Such findings have implications for developing future interventions which aim to enhance local provision for young people.

Low awareness and engagement

The community centre had space for a dedicated youth club but because very few people came they could not afford any youth workers to run it. Although a Dad brought his son and some friends in a few times for sessions, this stopped after two weeks and it transpired this was because in that time the Dad was out of work but now had a new job.

Concern was raised about the low attendance at other community groups and when talking to participants I was often struck by their limited knowledge of what was going on within the community.

> *Fieldnotes, 24th August 2011:*
> *The play scheme was mainly attended by the same children as last week, but it got me thinking about the number of parents and children that I had mentioned the play scheme to in the months previously who had often noted that they did not know about, and yet none of them had come along. Similarly, it reminded me of when I spoke to Tracey's teenage girls who were keen for there to be more going on in the area, but when I suggested they went to the pizza evening at the centre that evening, they did not seem very keen. This was perhaps because they did not know anyone else going, but they didn't really expand on their reasoning. Whilst the fact they didn't know about it originally did show a gap in marketing, the fact in both of these cases, and other example with such as the community day and other groups, it was interesting that they chose not to attend even when they did know about them.*

For some working in the area, there was a frustration that despite a perception by some residents that more activities and facilities for young people were needed in the area, those that were organised were not very well attended or used. There was a feeling amongst some staff that due to the relative wealth of families in the area, young people did not engage with community groups and provision because they did not want or have to, unlike those living in more disadvantaged areas who some believed would make more use of the amenities available. This feeling sometimes

limited the enthusiasm and effort a few staff members were prepared to invest in meeting demands for additional groups and facilities for the community.

> *Staff Member[13]*
> *There's activities to do at the centre, and kids aren't interested, when the youth club was going on, they weren't bothered. I really don't know which direction they want to go with this with regards to complaining. When things are put on, they're not used … Thousands of pounds have been spent on things not being used, what's next? The MUGA's put in but had little use…where can they go from there? When they were put in other places, they are used from morning 'til dusk. I think they're spoilt for choice personally, it's an affluent area and they've got other things they prefer to do where other children in [city] don't have access to those resources as their parents aren't as wealthy.*

In a separate interview, another staff member explained that young people in the area in particular had little use for the community centre because they had what they needed at home.

> *Ceazer, community centre staff member*
> *I think it's because of, because of the status and the income of the average person around here's a bit higher than other parts and so the kids have everything in the house they need…the only reason they go out is to be with their friends and hang out, they don't go out to do stuff like what we've already got here.*

This evokes questions about the impact of class, as well as place, upon children and young people's use of community facilities. This supports the theories discussed in early chapters relating to the increase supervision for more middle class families. Comparisons of everyday life and play for young people in Newtown Common with experiences of childhoods in more disadvantaged areas could provide a valuable avenue for future analysis and research.

Lack of advertising and awareness

For many of the local organisations, there was a lack of knowledge about them even existing. In particular there is a feeling amongst some young people and community leaders that there needs to be more effort made with marketing community events. Part of this could link back to the lack of a school or meeting place such as a local shop in the area, and therefore the absence of a central place for disseminating messages about forthcoming activities.

> *Geraint, young person, 17 years old:*
> *I: yeah, but um so, and so you just come in and see what's going on?*
> *R: see what's going on, have a little nose*
> *I: but in terms of advertising*
> *R: oh, there's no advertising really at all*
> *I: ok, so you don't sort of hear about new things*

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[13] For some comments, this staff member asked to remain anonymous without links to their other comments to ensure they could not be identified.

R: like some of the workers will just say, oh, come up on Tuesday
I: ok
R: and expect us to pass it on like

There was a feeling by the community centre staff in particular however that residents could make better use of the facilities.

Caesar, resident and community centre worker:
Well I think we [community centre staff] could do better. I think it's a matter of um, there should be more outreach, to the um, to the community. That way um, it could be more of a, acknowledge that we're actually here in some respects. I think they need to know that they can use the place and that takes steps by the council doing more marketing… It's up to them to do it, I don't know. It's like, what do you call it, a um, if you own a store, you're not gunna just open the doors and expect customers to come in

Caezer was especially hopeful that they would be able to rejuvenate the centre and would often do what he could to encourage young people to use the space to keep them off the street out of harms way. As he infers, the centre may have been more successful if it was run more like a private business. However, on reflection later in the year I began to think about the events and groups that I had personally told people about, but that they had not attended. This suggested there it was more lack of engagement than a lack of knowledge.

Fieldnotes, 13th April 2011:
I spoke to some of the children's parents about the basketball training that had been organised for later in the day to see if they were going and they knew nothing about it. Yet again, somehow, the community members were unaware of what was going on in the community centre. Shirley also said she did not realise anything about the play scheme that would be running over the summer and felt that there really needed to be more marketing to let people know what was going on.

Lack of interest, time and money

Despite a number of residents complaining about the lack of facilities and groups, the data reveals that existing provision suffered from low engagement. Attendance in clubs and organisations was one of the key concerns of local leaders and workers in Newtown Common. They hoped that by getting residents engaged initially, awareness of other groups and activities would grow as well as local networks of peers to use the facilities (Willmott, 1986). The lack of a catalyst for local engagement became a key barrier to the success of a number of groups and institutions that I witnessed struggling whilst conducting my study.

Fieldnotes, 27th April 2011:
It was nice to attend the [toddler group] coffee morning and feel like I was helping to contribute to keep the group going. I knew that they were still struggling for funds and was hoping that their talk with [the councillor] would help provide them with some suggestions for how to continue. It was nice to meet some of the other mothers however and it seemed like perhaps the netmums advert was bringing in some new parents but I also noticed that there were some who had drifted away.

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Unfortunately, the toddler group ended up finishing before my data collection came to an end because they could not afford to rent the hall with such low and inconsistent numbers. Despite all the voiced desires of those I had spoken to that there should be more to do in the community, my own observations and experiences began to confirm the fears of the community workers; that not enough people would attend.

> *Fieldnotes, 27ᵗʰ May 2011:*
> *When talking to the guys in the community centre, Ceazer was trying to convince me to set up some sort of weekly group for teenage girls. Joe was saying there was no point, they've tried everything and no one comes in. Caezer was much more enthusiastic and felt like they should be trying harder, and whilst I was there we asked a couple of 14 year old girls what they wanted. Unfortunately, I was aware that I couldn't offer to provide that service, and Caezer knew that they couldn't afford to get people in without guaranteed customers so I felt like inside we both knew that this, like the other attempts earlier this year to get a youth club going, would ultimately come to nothing. I began to wonder whether I would also be feeling like Joe if I had been working here and experiencing that same feeling again and again.*

Another example of this came in an interview with two teenagers, Lydia and her sister, Abigail. When asked about their daily routine, Lydia felt that she did not have time to go out, although it was something she had done in the past with friends from neighbouring areas.

> *Lydia, young person, 13 years old:*
> *There's no point going out because if I go out, I end up being out for ages, cos I go and everyone's like oh, stay out, so I stay out til 9 and I end up rushing everything so it's not worth it.*

Consequently, Lydia explained that she did really "bother" going out; from her point of view, there are other things she has to do, or chooses to do in an evening which she prioritised above spending time outside. In particular, the girls explained that as their homework levels increased, they stopped spending time outside. Whilst they refer to other friends that are "out", they are not ones I encountered during the data collection. Further research with young people that did spend time outside would be beneficial.

Furthermore, despite saying earlier in the interview that they wished there were more activities in the area for them to do, when I told them about the Fifa and pizza event later that evening at the community centre, neither were interested in coming along and explained they had homework and things to do.

As noted by Joe, the community centre had tried a number of initiatives to get youth clubs going before to help get 'bored teenagers' off the streets, but they were just not interested in attending. Furthermore, for both the informal groups and the council run youth group, the problem came down to low numbers. It is interesting however that, especially in the case of the toddler group, this did not indicate the lack of need so much as a lack of funds. When talking to the community workers on another occasion they explained that a 'hip hop' session had been particularly popular whilst

it had been part funded. When that funding ran out however, the price went up and the young people stopped attending. This reveals perhaps the true tension for this group, the fact that these target groups are seen primarily as customers. Consequently, whilst parents of young people, children, teenagers and older people could perhaps be seen as those with the least disposable income, this could explain the lack of attendance in these groups. The problem with the toddler group for example was striking a balance between paying bills for the group and keeping costs down. Unfortunately for the group to break even the amount that needed to be paid each week was too much for these parents.

Another example of where money appeared to affect the success of a group came with a discussion of a youth group with the manager of the community centre about the lack of youth groups in the area.

> *Barry, Community Centre manager*
> R: they used to just come along for the youth club dance group on for them
> I: oh yeah, yeah.
> R: and then, it was subsidised by some money that the police, err, managed
> to obtain, from somewhere
> I: mm
> R: and then that money ran out so we had to put the price up and then once
> we put the price up they didn't want to come back

Financial concerns does not explain low attendance at some of the other groups however, such as the free play scheme, the PACT meetings or other community events. As mentioned above, I was somewhat surprised to note that at the community open day in the first summer of my data collection, the majority of people I spoke to came from other areas.

Needs met elsewhere?

Another challenge to local organisations was that the residents' needs could be addressed elsewhere. When discussing the lack of interest in the community centre and youth club with one of the young people, it emerged that for most, many of the things offered within the centre for hanging out and casual playing were needs that could be met at home. Perhaps what was actually wanted by young people was a space away from adult supervision to hang out. Furthermore, other than sports groups, of which many played with their school club because there was no local football, rugby or hockey team, the children of Newtown Common often explained that their home met much of their leisure needs. Whilst these attitudes can be seen as reflecting the individualised nature of modern society outlined in chapter three, they must also be understood as class specific. Nonetheless, the findings also raise questions about considerations of generating community cohesion in community design and development. Similarly, the extract from Alun below illustrates the locating of young people's play within the home.

> *Alun, young person, 17 years old:*
> *Sort of, everything you can do here, apart from like obviously sports,*
> *everything that we love doing, um, its sort of like things like play station and*
> *that lot, they're, they're all good and that lot but you know, you can sort of do*

all this stuff at home as well. Um, in the comfort of your own home and, you know, you have mates round and, you know
I: free food?
R: and yeah free food, free drinks, pretty much. But yeah, like I've got one of the, what do you call it, I played pool up here and then, I liked pool quite a lot and then my dad bought me a pool table

The above brings to light one of the possible reasons for the low turnout at the youth events within the community centre, even if they are in part designed to improve the wellbeing of local young people during the winter months. It also highlights the potential for class-based differences in experiences of home and community. Alun describes the attraction of food, games and drinks for free within the house suggesting that his needs can be better met within his home. These are unlikely to reflect the lived realities experienced by those living in deprived areas such as the South Wales Valleys (Evans and Holland, 2012) or deprived areas in Glasgow (Seaman et al., 2006) which may partly explain differences in use of local areas and facilities.

The need for organised activities could also be seen as an adult-centred goal. As argued above, Lareau (2003; 2011) research with parents of ten year olds found that middle class parents were keen to develop their children through engagement in supervised, structured 'enrichment' activities that help improve their life skills. In contrast to this concerted cultivation approach, Lareau argues that working class parents however follow a different logic which encouraged 'natural growth' and allows children to 'hang out' and enjoy being a child. The low take up could relate to a feeling amongst children and young people that they do not want to spend their evenings developing themselves but spending their time as they choose.

When asked about their daily routines, very few young people reported that they had time to go out in the evenings and instead preferred to spend time doing homework, watching TV and playing games or chatting using social network sites. As found in the research supporting the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor, watching television and playing computer games was an important factor in young people's lives.

> *Lydia, young person, 13 years old:*
> *mostly I don't really have time, literally, like I go to bed at about 10 so I come in, maybe watch tv for a bit, cos I'm normally really tired, cos we've got to get up early and go to school. Um, do your homework, cos I'm in year 10 now and I have a lot of homework, like um coursework and stuff, so um, and then just maybe go on facebook a bit, and then have a shower and wash my hair, which takes a while so that takes like an hour and then just watch tv… and then 9 settle down and just watch tele when homework's done.*

Such case studies also support the findings of studies outlined in chapter four which highlight the prevalence of children spending time in the home or private sphere. However, in the cases of these older children or young people, the choice to stay in the home resonates more with Livingstone's (2007) finding that, a personalised media environment is taken for granted for many young people today. He argues that this is partly due to the saturation of childhood by the media-rich lifestyle which leaves young people with few other satisfactory alternatives. In light of the feelings of

safety in the neighbourhood discussed in chapter six therefore, the dominance of personal media-rich environments in the lives of modern young people seems a more convincing motivation for their choice to spend time in the home instead of outdoor or community spaces, rather than concerns about safety.

Not all young people's narrative in Newtown Common echoed this finding however. 18 year old Lloyd explained that he often spent time outside in the neighbourhood 'hanging out with mates', as well as in organised clubs and activities.

> *Lloyd, young person, 18 years old:*
> *I: ah ok, that's good, yeah. um, and what do you do on a weekend?*
> *R: go out with my mates. Actually, I'm start, I work on the weekends from 9 til*
> *4 and then I go out with my mates*
> *I: around here or?*
> *R: sometimes in Newtown Common, sometimes…anywhere*
> *I: in to town or?*
> *R: yeah, just relax, chill*

When asked, Lloyd said that they did not have a favourite place to go, he said that if they were in Newtown Common, they would often spend time 'hanging out' in the local supermarket and motorway service café. He explained they were allowed to sit there "because we're good". Later in the interview again he notes that there is nowhere to "just sit" in the community centre. As found in previous studies of young people's use of space, this could be because Lloyd and his friends wanted a place to go that was less structured or actively supervised.

The study of young people's use of free space by Robinson (2009) revealed that what was perceived to be just hanging around and doing nothing by onlookers held significance and meaning to young people as they enjoyed time away from supervision and structure to tell stories and converse. Likewise, Millward and Wheway (1999) note that children enjoy spending time hanging around in their neighbourhoods rather than adult directed spaces. While existing studies suggest greater amounts of time spent in the public sphere for those in more deprived areas (see also Matthews and Limb, 2000), which the majority of this data demonstrates, there are young people in less disadvantaged who seek informal outdoor spaces to relax. The interview with Lloyd also reveals some tensions in whether the community centre provision was therefore meeting the desires of some young people to "just sit" and "hang out". Furthermore, the importance placed on the need for young people to be seen as being "good" when hanging out reflects the predominant view of groups as potential trouble, as discussed in chapter six.

Another reason that was provided for residents' reported lack of engagement was that they were being pulled in other directions. For example, Judith, the co-manager at the church centre, noticed that the mothers she spoke to in the church and cafe talked about going to visit their parents or friends (who tend to live further away) on weekends. Similarly, the earlier extracts from interviews with Greg, who drives his eight year old daughter to her school friends' houses, and Lisa, whose daughter is also starting to build new school friendships out of the community show how different school locations can pull children out of the community as work does for adults. This supports the finding by Morrow (2002) that friendships are not always neighbourhood-based. Similarly to in Newtown Common, Morrow found that it was

the children from a school in a "quiet, sprawling, suburban locality with few facilities for young people" that appeared to have more of a problem with friends not living nearby (p15).

This was echoed in discussions with teenagers in Newtown Common about whether they were members of any local teams or clubs. Almost all of the young people interviewed were members of sports teams, but they were spread across the city and often linked to the location of different schools or friends from school. No participants regularly attended a team located in Newtown Common. Similarly, in an interview with some younger, primary school aged children and the parents of two of the boys, the mother explained that her children and their friends do play football, but in different places.

> Interview with young boys (aged seven to ten) and parents:
> I: do you go to any clubs or anything?
> Boys: um,
> 1st child: yeah, I go to football in [another neighbourhood] leisure centre
> Dad: you go down [inner city] to play as well don't you
> I: yeah?
> Mum: and you go to [a third different neighbourhood] to play football don't
> you [to child's friend]
> 3rd child: yeah

The mum later explained "they tend to stick where the schools are doing their things, we tend to stick to those, because our community centre is under used". She felt that if there was a local football team then the children would not have to travel to play in other areas. Furthermore, because the local children do not all attend one or two other schools but a large variety across the area, it means the children are all pulled in different directions. Such potentially unforeseen impacts arising from the lack of local facilities, and in particular, the lack of a local school, raise important questions for consideration by those involved in planning suburban developments.

Conflicting priorities

Whilst not necessarily identified as a reason by residents, analysis of the data from suggests that a conflict when negotiating personal or family priorities and attending local activities was one cause for low engagement with local provision in Newtown Common. The attempts by parents to keep the toddler group running and successful as a key source of support for young families highlighted a number of tensions between the church centre staff and the group. This was largely as a result of the conflict between trying to run a low cost informal group to support parents and toddlers on the one hand, and trying to meet the health and safety standards and please the managers of the building on the other.

Relying on parents taking turns to run activities each week, the group started as largely an extension of socialising within the café, but in a bigger space for children to run around the hall. As the group continued however, costs for insurance and then hire were introduced and as costs for the sessions went up and pressure upon maintaining enough numbers increased, the group became stressful to manage. The need to run the group as more of a business clashed with the informal spirit in which the sessions had been started and parents were frustrated that the church centre

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provision caused a disjunction between the needs of the centre as a business and the role of the centre as a place for community support.

> *Fieldnotes 22nd October 2010:*
> *Jenny was perhaps the most vocal about her anger; she clearly had a strong feeling that the centre staff were just 'picking' and were clearly not happy about the group for some reason. She said to the rest of us that she would set up a meeting and that hopefully if each party were honest then they could address whatever was wrong. One mum suggested that perhaps they wanted money for the use of the room on a Friday, but, as Joanne said, the playgroup didn't have any money. They group only collected a small amount of money each week, which was put towards tea, coffee, squash and the activities for the children.*

In this case it was partly the organisational approach, informed by legal requirements, to ensuring children's well-being through strict health and safety measures (and associated insurance costs) that seemed to be the barrier to continuing the group. In a discussion with the church centre co-manager about the running of the centre, she mentioned that they are sometimes approached about starting new groups, but it was not as easy as it seems. "They need to ensure that they have CRB checks and liability over insurance, risk assessments; you can't just come in and start a club". She emphasised that the centre needs to cover themselves legally in terms of health and safety amongst other things. In this case it seemed that despite their socio-economic status as professional people, they were unable to secure the resources needed. In contrast, the toddler group in Power and Willmott's (2007) study managed to secure funding to maintain the success of the group. The funding required for the toddler group in Newtown Common however meant that the challenges to engagement listed above hindered the numbers from making it even a cost neutral endeavour and the location of the neighbourhood meant they were not eligible for funding or grants.

Conclusion

Academic and political conceptualisations of well-being highlight the importance of access to play and leisure for children and young people (Welsh Government, 2011a; Bradshaw, 2011). This was also seen as a way to improve satisfaction with the area for children and young people. The data presented in this chapter provides an insight into the two competing narratives that were frequently expressed within Newtown Common. Firstly, whilst residents and those working expressed a desire to keep young people off the streets, the evidence in the previous chapter suggests that very few were actually visible on the street. This may explain the second narrative or paradox whereby the introduction and organisation of what were deemed to be much needed facilities and activities for young people were met with low engagement and attendance.

It was clear that those working in and for the community were keen to address concerns within the area that there were not enough facilities for children and young people and the PCSO in particular actively arranged a number of events with food and entertainment. Engagement however remained low for potentially a range of reasons, questioning the rhetoric that more organised provision was required for

children and young people in Newtown Common. Data suggests that young people may be more interested in spaces to hang out away from adult supervision, rather than attend supervision sessions. This could be seen as relating to both the middle class approach to parenting whereby there is a parent, rather than child-centred drive for children to undertake activities that will prepare them for adulthood rather than allowing them to enjoy childhood. In addition, the negative perception of young people as potentially risky coupled with a feeling that they should be off the streets to avoid causing trouble may also motivate adults to provide supervised activities for older children in particular However, the parents who set up and attended the toddler group strongly believed that the sessions provided an important resource to parents of young children in the area, yet they too suffered from low numbers and high costs. This perhaps suggests a complex set of reasons behind the lack of engagement in both these cases.

The implications therefore are that young people remained dissatisfied with local facilities and continue to conform to the indoor, organised risk-free modern childhood that commentators condemn. Additionally, for those families with young children, parents may continue to feel isolated and lonely, such as Jenny. Furthermore, without attendance at local groups, residents of all ages may find it more difficult to create and maintain the crucial forms of support that they may lack due to a smaller informal sphere of support. The answers are not simple however, but the insights suggest these circumstances stem from a lack of consideration about community cohesion and integration during the neighbourhood design. This is a theme that runs throughout these findings chapters.

9. FRIENDS, FAMILY, NEIGHBOURS AND CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING IN NEWTOWN COMMON

Introduction

Whilst a plethora of studies have identified the variety of impacts parents can have upon children's lives, this chapter aims to explore the role of friends and family upon the well-being of children and families in Newtown Common. This emerged from my findings as one of the most important forms of support for the well-being of both children and families in general for those living in the non-deprived, modern suburb. When exploring the role of the community in facilitating the safety and well-being of children and young people in Newtown Common, the role of local networks of friendships emerged as a vital source of support due to their role in taking care of as well as more generally caring about the well-being of children and families. This supports much of the literature identified earlier in the thesis (Ghate and Hazel, 2002; Attree, 2004; Evans and Holland, 2012) which emphasises the role of both kinship and friendship as integral to everyday care and relationships. In contrast to these studies however, neighbours were not always identified as having a positive impact upon children's well-being. Unlike the community parenting experienced by those in Caergoch (Evans and Holland, 2012) examples of 'keeping an eye out' for local children outside of friendship groups were rare. The chapter argues therefore that residents felt that local, personal networks of support were experienced both through active examples of help and care as well as through the creation of a general sense of safety through an atmosphere of trust created by friends and family. It concludes that amidst a perceived lack of community spirit and the absence of extended local family bonds or community parenting, informal networks form a crucial form of support in Newton Common.

Chapters six and seven argued that community groups and institutions were often perceived to play an important part in the well-being of children and families in Newtown Common. This was both in terms of ensuring their safety and facilitating their physical and social and emotional well-being through access to local amenities. In addition, this chapter argues that one of the most important roles of these community sites is to facilitate the creation of friends that has to potential to have a more active or direct impact upon the well-being of children and families. As discussed in chapter four, parents influence their children's lives in terms of risk, safety and use of the neighbourhood in a number of ways (Mackett et al., 2007; Carver et al. 2008; Hood et al., 1996; Valentine 1997a; 1997b). This chapter aims to look beyond the role of the parents to explore the ways in which other members of the children's personal community can be seen as affecting their well-being.

Previous research into the nature of such personal relationships has been highlighted as significant in recent theoretical debates on care and well-being. For example, Spencer and Pahl (2006; 2010) argue that 'personal communities' provide an important form of social support that needs to be explored. Whilst individualisation theories have focused on the loss of community and the subsequent decline of the community (see Putnam 2000), Spencer and Pahl suggest that local groups and organisations only form part of the picture. They assert that relationships between

friends and family can play an equally significant role. Furthermore, the notion of social capital has tended to analyse and explain adults' experiences and lifestyles with little attention paid to children's networks or 'personal communities' (Morrow, 2002). Whilst Spencer and Pahl's study was also limited to data on adults it seems an appropriate framework to analyse forms of support for children and young people. Consequently, this chapter aims to build upon their work by drawing on the notion of personal communities to examine the part friends and family were perceived to play in ensuring children's well-being.

This chapter starts with a discussion of 'personal communities' for residents in Newtown Common, including some reflection on the 'sense of community' in the neighbourhood. Whilst I did not specifically ask my participants about how they would define their 'personal communities' I did ask them more open ended questions about their friends, family and forms of support. For the purposes of this section I will be using the term to refer to people that they identified as providing a role in ensuring the safety and well-being of their children. When excluding the impact of parents upon children's well-being, which has been well documented elsewhere (see chapter four), the data revealed two key subdivisions in relation to the role of personal communities in facilitating informal safeguarding or community parenting (Evans and Holland, 2014). The first of these were other parents that adopted a form of responsibility for the well-being other people's children, these were usually friends of the child's parents. Secondly, the peer networks of the children and young people themselves were identified as important in facilitating their friends' well-being. These types of 'personal community' will form the next two sections of this chapter before it concludes with reflections on the importance of local, informal networks in facilitating the well-being of children and young people. The actions of local people can therefore be seen as one of the ways in which the community can have an impact upon the well-being of children and young people within Newtown Common.

Neighbours and the sense of community in Newtown Common

When examining the ways in which the community can facilitate the well-being of parents, families and children in Newtown Common, local networks have been shown to provide an important source of support (Evans and Holland, 2012; Ghate and Hazel, 2002; Attree, 2004). In particular, Evans and Holland argues that in Caergoch, neighbours provided a vital form of informal safeguarding for local children through community parenting. In Newtown Common however, residents' accounts more commonly expressed mourning for this type of 'sense of community'. Whilst many have built 'personal communities', described below, the absence of strong local links and relationships with neighbours was a strong theme throughout the data, particularly for parents of younger children.

> *Joe, parent and community centre staff member:*
> *I don't believe there's any community at all. There's not a local shop where*
> *people greet each other in the morning when you go in for a newspaper, not*
> *like other parts of [city] which are established communities. Maybe it will*
> *have in time but I don't think there is... I think everybody keeps themselves to*
> *the selves, and I don't see any community based things here at all….you*
> *don't see a soul, other parents of [city] greet each other going to the shops,*
> *the newsagents are familiar with their customers. In Newtown Common,*

> *they've got [Retail Park] but it's such a big place. People just go and buy stuff without interacting.*

Joe's narrative sums up the overall experience for residents in Newtown Common. By identifying the lack of something, in this case facilities, compared with other neighbourhoods, he locates this as a prime cause for limiting social interactions and the creating and sustaining of relationships between residents. Joe draws on experiences in other parts of the city, particularly those in 'established communities'. The suggestion is that because the community is new, there are not the established kin and friendship networks found in more traditional neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the lack of opportunities for social interaction, and the absence of local amenities in particular, hinder the creation and development of such relationships.

This interpretation chimes with the findings in Evans and Holland's (2012) study of informal safeguarding of children's well-being in a deprived, traditional and established neighbourhood in the Welsh Valleys. The authors highlight the value of local kinship networks as well as the layout of the housing estate in facilitating interactions between residents. Rather than referring back to a romanticised past in the desire for a nostalgic notion of a 'community lost' (Bauman, 2001) , Joe cites examples of contemporary but different types of neighbourhood in Wales. The study by Evans and Holland highlights the benefit of community parenting playing a role in facilitating the safety and well-being of local children and young people. They note however, that this does not necessarily signify a safer community however, but a more visible and shared form of safeguarding. Similarly, the sense of community generated may be related to the high levels of needs and risk within the neighbourhood.

Joe's narrative also hints at the contradiction between the desire for a safe community and the longing for increased community spirit; people "keep themselves to themselves" and appreciate the quiet, whilst also reporting a wish for more interactions with neighbours. This tension was revealed most strongly in an interview with Greg and Celia who were parents of a young daughter, aged eight, as well as a teenager. During the first half of their interview, descriptions of their experiences of the lack of community were evident, much like many interviews and discussions with other residents on the estate. For example, they noted that they had to drive their daughter to primary school every day, "which is a nightmare" due to traffic when leaving the estate. They discussed the lack of facilities and emptiness of the area.

> *Greg, parent of 8 year old and teenager:*
> *I think the estate is a fairly empty place during the day, or certainly that's the impression I get. And, cos I work shifts as well, like I'm off today, I notice how quiet the place is during the day, it is very quiet. Which is nice in some ways, um, but in other ways it just sort of reinforces how isolated it can be on the estate.*

As the interview continued, I asked how they thought the neighbourhood could be improved; however, they explained that they found this difficult to answer. Through the course of the interview, Celia and Greg conveyed their difficulty to articulate the challenges of living in Newtown Common or provide suggestions for addressing these problems. Greg explained "I don't know, can't quite put my finger on it but

there seems more a sense of an area in [another area of city] than there is here, without actually being able to pin point why that is…".

Similarly, the following extracts illustrate the tension inferred by Bauman (2001) that the lack of community spirit that residents criticise is often a product of their own lifestyle choices.

> *Greg, parent of 8 year old and teenager:*
> *"I do feel guilty in a way cos you know, its people that make the community…there's not a magic formula, it's about what you put in to the community and it something that comes up time and time again in the sermons [in the local church] …it's up to us as a group of people to do something about it. But it is really, really difficult because the last thing you want to do when you've been in work all day then is sort of haul yourself out of the house and try and do something else, but that's what it takes…I dunno, maybe it just reflects where we are in society now because, you know, people just generally now live incredibly busy lives, and certainly with our daughter, how many days of the week is she doing something? You know its brownies in [other place in city] and you know swimming on a Wednesday…"*

> *Celia, parent of 8 year old and teenager:*
> *You know, I was just thinking about what you've just said. Every year the people in the close that we live in organise a barbeque and we've never been. So again, here we are saying and then if something does happen we haven't got…initially the first time we were on holiday but I responded what a good idea, what a shame that we're on holiday, and then last year we just forgot about it"*

Celia and Greg both reveal in these extracts that what they would like in Newtown Common, the sense of community and positive social relationships with neighbours, they do not have time for. In the second extract, Celia provides an example of the sort of social event and occasion that they would like in the community, but they have not attended. Both initially point to a lack of time as the issue. Within my fieldnotes I noted that this could be the first time Celia and Greg had reflected on their opinions of the neighbourhood and their busy and non-local lifestyles could make them a factor in the lack of community spirit.

> *Fieldnotes, 19th November 2010 :*
> *It was clear throughout the interview that this may have been the first time they have really thought about and processed the concerns they were having. They began to realise that, like the 'typical' resident they describe, they also fit much of the characteristics themselves. For example, they were out in the day, spent evenings outside of the community and they also didn't go to the street barbeque etc.*

Research by Crow et al. (2002) illustrates the delicacy in which 'ideal' relationships can be negotiated; where neighbours are 'neither busybodies nor nobodies' (p127). It also reflects Bauman's (2001) argument that whilst society follows its quest for a stranger proof safe environment, community can only involve 'isolation, separations, protective walls and guarded areas' (p114). The data presented here supports the

idea that whilst the notion of community spirit in terms of establishing local networks is often desired by residents in Newtown Common, their lifestyle and their preferences do not facilitate conditions for enabling these types of interactions and relationships.

'Personal communities' in Newtown Common

The aim of this thesis is to explore the ways in which the community can have a role in facilitating the safety and well-being of children and young people in Newtown Common. Given the lack of community spirit amongst local strangers and 'acquaintances' (Morgan, 2009), this section argues that parents' personal networks of local adults are one of the central forms of support for children and young people in Newtown Common. Moreover, the personal communities of parents of young children provide an especially important form of support for parents and families, as well as directly for children.

Despite the diverse forms of families in contemporary society (Smart and Neale, 1999; James, 2009), parents often remain the most common form of support for children and young people in Newtown Common. This supports evidence from the Children's Society (2013) which argued that family relationships are central to well-being in childhood. The friends and family of parents were also identified as playing another key part in ensuring children's well-being. This could be by actively looking after someone's child directly in the form of child care, but also by caring for the family more generally by supporting the parents. Support from parents by their own parents however, was less visible in Newtown Common, with many adult participants explaining that their parents lived a significant distance away. Previous studies have suggested that positive well-being, for mothers in particular, is associated with children's development (Kiernan and Huerta, 2008). My data revealed that mothers of young children in Newtown Common in particular relied upon their personal communities of informal networks for support.

Interviews and observations also revealed examples of children's friends and siblings as central modes of support for young children in particular. For example, when spending time with Lisa's family, it was common to see five year old Andrea looking out for her younger brother James if we walked to the park and within the toddler group session. As discussed below, the networks between children were important in looking out for each other, in addition to the examples of community parenting performed and adults within the parents' personal community.

The role of adults in community groups or institutions (as discussed in chapter six) was sometimes identified as an important form of support, but most accounts of everyday experiences by young people highlighted the role of chosen personal communities. Furthermore, whilst parents and other adult residents believed local children encountered problems in creating and maintaining effective personal communities because of the lack of facilities in Newtown Common, this concern was rarely identified by the young people.

Fieldnotes, 2nd July, 2010:
The issue of the lack of school was also brought up a number of times
[during discussion with four parents at the church café]. Veronica noted that
she moved to the area when her son was 5 and was told that there should be
a school here by the time he was seven but he is now 16 and there is no sign
despite the increase in more housing being built. Interestingly all of their
children would be attending different schools, which bring up an issue I
hadn't thought of before. Although these children were good friends and
grew up together, they would all be going to different schools and needing to
make different friends. This also means that parents can't lift share/ pick up
each other's children. However, there didn't seem to be any bad feelings or
even question about why the children were attending different schools. One
just said her children were going to a church one, another to the catholic one,
another to a local one etc. Attending a variety of different schools just
seemed to be an everyday reality for these families.

The absence of the school was frequently highlighted in residents' narratives as a crucial problem for the community, and this was believed to disadvantage local children in particular. Furthermore, the awareness that young people in Newtown Common attended a high number of different schools across the area (over 30) was often recited in conversations as proof of the challenging social situation for these young people. Whilst it is clear that the school would have provided an extremely useful service to the area, my data suggests its potential in terms of shaping and creating local personal communities was desired much more by parents than by young people.

Whilst research is yet to fully explore the impact of community residents attending a number of different schools, the findings do echo messages from similar empirical work in relation to the impact of school closures on the local community. For example, a study by Witten et al. (2001; 307) in New Zealand concluded that 'schools can serve as catalysts for community participation, social cohesion and the vitality of neighbourhoods'. Similarly, empirical research on the impact of school choice in the Western countries has identified the segregating and fragmenting impacts of children attending non-local schools (DeSena, 2006; Andersson et al., 2012; Roberts, 2012). Similarly, parents in Newtown Common reflected upon the implications of their children being unable to attend a local primary school and many felt strongly that everybody from the neighbourhood should go to school together.

Jenny, Parent of two young children:
It's like all this, all the people she's made friends with at tots group and
they're all going to different schools and so. You know and its like, you know,
my experience, you know, the questions you're asking me, I just wonder
what my experience would be if you're asking me in another 5 years time
when I really don't know anyone in the area, you know what I mean and, cos
as much as we all say we're guna stay in touch we, you just wont be able to
cos we'll all have stuff going on and its so sad that all the friends that they've
got to know and there all and pretty much everybody's going to a different
school … it's not, you know its not everybody goes to the, when I, when I
grew up we all walked to the same school. And the girl next door went to the
same schools as me. it's just not right that you know

As exemplified by Jenny's interpretation of the situation, parents and other residents in the area tended to believe that 'it's just not right' that children are not able to attend a local school that their neighbours and friends go to. In particular, she believes that this will have an impact upon the friendships and networks that both she and her daughter have created.

Parents and other adult residents in the area highlighted the array of problems created from not having a local school and this was supported by my own observations in the area. From my first visit to the toddler group in the summer it was clear for example that all the children that were friends from the group were most likely going to lose that friendship as they attended four different schools. The following year when talking to the parents it was clear that to an extent this has happened with a reliance on parents arranging meetings in order to maintain a friendship that may have been continued if the children went to the same school. One example of this is when Lisa's daughter was invited to two birthday parties on the same day and she has to decide whether to attend the one of an old friend or the one all of her school friends are going too.

However, when speaking to teenagers about their feelings and experiences, many of the concerns held by adults about the impact upon their social relationships were not there. That is not to say that they were not valid concerns, but as explained by one teenager, "it's what I'm used to so I don't know any different". Similarly, it was clear when I asked young people about which friends were their home friends or school friends; they often did not already have that division in their heads. Richard for example explained that his local friends and school friends are the same. Another teenager Ella explained that her best friend lived in Newtown Common and that they spend a lot of time together. She did not seem concerned about other friends that lived further away. Similarly, even when Tom described spending the majority of his free time with friends in the same neighbourhood as his school, he simply said that he could just cycle, get a bus or ask for a lift. He did not describe any limitations on spending time with these friends. Similarly, most young people generally agreed that accessibility in the area was good and often considered other suburbs as still nearby or local if they were in walking distance. Whilst I would not suggest that a local school would not have benefitted the children, it was clear that many young people in Newtown Common did not acknowledge it as the challenging problem that local adults portrayed.

Furthermore, on closer inspection on the data, the school, like other community institutions, represented something of importance to parents and the community as a whole. For example, having to drive their child to school on their way to work and experience bad traffic was the burden described by parents rather than children. Similarly, the school gates were frequently identified as a crucial place for creating friendships with other parents. Consequently residents noted that they were missing out on these important interactions because their children had to be driven and dropped off everywhere. Meanwhile Newtown Common was described as a 'ghost town' during the day whilst everybody was at work and school leaving stay-at-home parents even more isolated. Judith, the church centre co-manager emphasised that she believes this to be one of the causes of postnatal depression in the area. Comparing the area to where she had young children Judith explained that local parents were not forced into interacting with others. This would help create local

friendships with other parents, she explained, who would then have been able to identify problems and help check the well-being of the parents as well as the children.

> *Fieldnotes, interview with Judith, resident and church centre co-manger*
> *Judith believed the absence of a primary school to be one of the causes of postnatal depression in the area. She explained "you don't see people going up to or around the school, there is no one to say 'you ok today' or ask someone back for a cup of coffee if they seem to be struggling"…*
> *Comparing the area to where she had young children she explained that local parents were not forced into interacting with others by waiting for their children at the school gates. This would help create local friendships with other parents, she explained, who would then have been able to identify problems and help check the well-being of the parents as well as the children.*

Whilst previous studies have demonstrated the value of local support for parents in more disadvantaged areas (Ghate and Haze, 2002; Attree, 2004; Evans and Holland, 2012), this study demonstrates that informal networks are reported to be just as valuable to parents in less disadvantaged areas. It is the personal communities of these parents that emerged as in more need of facilitating and maintaining than the children and young people. The data suggests that this is due to the 'hotel not home' (Schwartz, 1980) nature of the neighbourhood discussed above which meant that when new parents are looking to create empathetic friendships of support, their opportunities to meet others are lacking. Furthermore when these relationships have been formed, their importance in providing support for the parent and young child is clear.

Parents and young children

Drawing on the accounts and experiences of families in Newtown Common, especially those with young children, three key forms of care for local children from other parents emerged. These were: 'taking care of' the child, 'taking care of' the parent, and creating a sense of safety and security. These support findings from previous empirical studies upon the ethic of care (Williams, 2001; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Milligan and Wiles, 2010)

Taking care of the child

Parents' friends were identified as a vital form of support for families in Newtown Common. This support was provided directly, through their taking care of the child, but also indirectly, by caring about and supporting the parent and more general well-being of the family. Taking care of a child, was sometimes offered for practical reasons such as to allow the parent to complete a domestic task more quickly or sometimes because the parent, or mother in all of my data, 'needed a break'. In all of my data, this informal type of looking after a child was done by people who could be considered to be within the mother's personal community, who in Newtown Common tended to be home with the child(ren). This supports other studies which have highlighted parents' appreciation of "knowing" and "trusting" in social relationships (Speight et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2011). These relationships were particularly

important for the parents in this study, who described living too far from family to rely on them for childcare support.

As discussed in chapter three, a number of social commentators have raised concerns about trust in relation to perceived erosion of networks and social capital (Putnam, 2000; Fuerdi, 2008). In particular, Lee et al. (2014) argue that extreme regulation of parent-child contact based on the assumption that strangers and professionals may pose a risk to your child have facilitated a shift towards distrust of adults by parents. Evans and Holland's (2014) study disputes this by demonstrating the community parenting approach in Caergoch, whereby children are able play out on the streets whilst residents provide a network of adults 'keeping an eye out' for their safety. Whilst there was no evidence of such trust among neighbours in Newtown Common, it was evident in the informal networks of support that they had created. Echoing the work of Spencer and Pahl (2006) the examples that follow demonstrate that despite a potential lack of support networks on the surface, there was a hidden form of solidarity and trust that is revealed through a more detailed look at 'personal communities' in Newtown Common.

It was common among the group of parents I observed for one mother to ask another mother to look after their child. This was sometimes undertaken through a feeling of understanding and empathy by the parent offering care, and it often involved an unwritten assumption that, at some point, the favour would be returned. For example, for some mothers, such as Lisa and Jane, taking care of each other's children had become an easy and commonplace practice. For example, at one time Lisa and I were at Jane's house and their children played together with us watching them whilst Jane first went to the dentist, and 'taking advantage of the situation' she joked, she then went about some other domestic tasks such as going to the supermarket. This common arrangement would just emerge naturally and was made easier because both Lisa and Jane were friends and thus there was a pre-existing form of trust that Lisa was capable of ensuring the well-being of Jane's children. Similar instances were described by a number of parents interviewed, repeating the narrative that they would happily look after their friends' children whilst their friend had something to do and vice versa.

In every case, the person that was asked to take care of a child, and the person that would offer that service came from the parent's personal community; a friend or occasionally family member that the parent had a relationship with rather than an unknown professional childcare agency for example. This did not mean however that anyone within the personal community would be asked. For example, no parents mentioned any friends who were not parents that had been asked to take care of their child. It may also be noted that there were no male friends asked to take on the role, although this may partly be a result of the sample. Empirical evidence has identified the use of informal networks as a vital form of child care, essential for more deprived families (Backett-Milburn et al., 2008; Evans and Holland, 2012). Parents in Newtown Common however almost always cited friends as their first choice for child care and support. This contrasts with the findings of many studies which identified grandparents as the most common form of informal childcare Britain (Speight et al., 2009; Gray, 2005; Wheelock and Jones, 2002). Based on the data, the reason for this in most cases was due to the large geographical distance between families and

their parents, underscoring the value of creating and maintaining local networks of friends.

Moreover, when instances of babysitting were discussed to allow the parent some 'time out', experience with younger children and familiarity with the children was mentioned as very important to the parent when selecting someone who they felt comfortable leaving their child with. This was something that appeared to create a sense of trust in child care. For example, at one point some mothers were thinking of setting up a child minding list but there were concerns raised about whether the parent would be able to be selective when choosing someone from the list to look after their child. This implies that parents would want only to call upon the services of someone they knew and trusted. It was also interesting to note that only mothers were put on the list as opposed to fathers or adults that did not have children. This suggested that both the shared experiences of being a parent as well as some form or trust and familiarity, usually from being a friend, are important when deciding who parents will choose to take care of their child. This support the work of others studies relating to parents' appreciation of "knowing" and "trusting" in social relationships (Backett-Milburn et al., 2008; Speight et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2011). Unlike in the majority of these studies however, parents in Newtown Common did not have extended family networks locally to rely upon.

Another theme that emerged from that data was how often parents were engaged in taking care of other people's children. When conducting the photo interview with Lisa, it was clear that taking care of a number of her friends children had become so ordinary that she was not aware how often it happened. As we scrolled though the images she exclaimed "…sorry, I hadn't realised how much of my time I spent looking after other people's kids". It was interesting that throughout the data collection Lisa often seemed to be suggesting, or perhaps implying, that because she was lucky enough to be coping well with motherhood, she felt a responsibility to look out for those that were perhaps in more need. This links to the relational approach of the feminist ethic of care (Tronto, 2001) and could be argued to demonstrate some evidence of a sense of almost moral obligation to care for others. One of the reasons Lisa attributed to hers and her family's well-being was the relatively local presence of her extended family, which she noted was an unusual situation compared to other parents she knew in the area.

As discussed in chapter five, Newtown Common is a modern, newly built estate and most participants explained that they, like many other families, moved to the area, often from many miles away, for work purposes. This meant that extended family was not always identified as a common or immediate form of support, despite this being identified as a key form of support in the UK (Speight et al., 2009; Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Evans and Holland, 2012). Some residents appreciated a small amount of space from their family. For example, Reginald, a senior resident was appreciative that their family did not all live in Newtown Common. He explained "I mean some families are in everybody's faces all the time aren't they. But um, we do meet up together but not, weekly or anything like that". However, as observed by Judith, the co-manager of the local church centre and café, there were also a lot of parents that seemed to be lacking that form of reassurance she believed having their own parents close by could have provided. Consequently she felt some responsibility

to take on that role in reassuring and supporting parents that were in the café explaining that you could often see that desire for reassurance in their faces.

Judith, church centre manager:
You can see [post natal depression] in the majority, in the way that they talk
to a child for example, in their need for reassurance. When these mothers'
parents live so many miles away they need some reassurance from
somewhere.

Examples of care by family also provide the one exception in my sample for when there were examples of males included in the taking care of children process. When interviewing Reginald he explained that his granddaughter was visiting whilst she revised for her exams. However Reginald's wife, the grandmother, who was not home during the first part of the interview did ring home to check they were ok and suggest what they could have for lunch.

Whilst no one had immediate family living in the neighbourhood, a few parents had extended family living in and around the city and emphasised the importance of having family relatively nearby for child care purposes. Greg and Celia for example admit that they welcome the support from Celia's parents whilst their children were growing up concluding "we do rely on them quite a bit". They later explained that whilst "it is very useful having Celia's parents within, you know, sort of quarter or an hour or 20 minutes away or whatever it is" they still lament that "again it's another car ride away".

Whilst having family within a 20 mile radius was common for around half of the participants, for others in my sample, their family was much further away. This included family elsewhere in the UK and in other countries and in all cases this appeared to impact upon their sense of support. For example, it was often these mothers that described feeling more isolated and needing more support. It was not just their families that they lost however; some parents described leaving whole support networks or personal communities in the areas they moved from. They therefore had to create new relationships which, as described earlier, they found increasingly difficult in this type of community.

Friends and family were not just missed in terms of more structured child care however; there are also a number of less involved forms of looking after their children that parents appreciated. It seemed that many parents were more relaxed when others were around who would also be keeping a watchful eye out for their child. Such acts often took place in a group or institution where the parents were unable to see to their child's well-being momentarily.

Fieldnotes, 11th November 2010:
…I particularly noticed, during today's session, the ways in which parents
would look out for each other children at the toddler group. Once today, a
mother of a four year old girl who recently joined the group said "I'm just
going to buy [daughter] a juice from the café, [outside the room used for the
toddler group]. Another mum, Lisa, replied with "that's fine, I'll keep an eye
on her" as if there was an unspoken understanding about the hidden
meaning of the sentence. The mum immediately smiled and seemed
reassured about the situation, perhaps glad that Lisa understood what she

really meant. This situation would often happen at the toddler group. Within the usual group of mothers, one might say they were going to make some tea or go to the toilet to others in the group before they left. The reason for this was only partly so everyone knew where they were, but there was also an implied request that the other parents would therefore keep an eye out for their children.

In some cases this type of care would even be implicit affording the parents to feel more relaxed about their child's safety and well-being. Similarly, there were a number of instances in group situations where a child might hurt themselves and so, after checking initially for the parent's location (possibly for fear of seeming interfering) a friend would then step in to comfort and check on the child. Likewise, if someone was close to a child who was about to hurt themselves they would sometimes warn the child or move them from the dangerous situation even if the child's parent was in the same room. As discussed in the section on the toddler group, the 'closeness' of the friends often mitigated the fear of being seen as 'interfering' rather than taking care of a child (see Holland et al., 2011).

There was also a general feeling of confidence that, unlike unknown residents, a parent's friends would ensure their child's well-being in their absence. Lisa sums up this sense stating that,

> *Lisa, parent of two young children:*
> *My friends would be looking out for my kids... but in general passersby who were not, uh, had kids, would not say anything, because, people don't, you know, you don't ever say anything to anybody about anything because they might sue you.*

This feeling that a passerby might not say anything was reflected in a number of interviews with parents who felt like there were too many risks involved in approaching a child you do not know. This reflects a concern portrayed in recent media coverage. An article in the Daily Mail Online (2014) cites an experiment in which two children, aged five and seven, stood alone for an hour in a busy shopping centre in London for a social experiment for television. During the hour, only one person stopped to help them with over 600 other people walking around or passed them. The article continued by condemning the "price of paedophile hysteria" in which a child dare not ask for help, and an adult dare not offer.

Shirley also describes another example of parents feeling that friends will take responsibility for their child's welfare in their absence. She explains that when her children go to play in a nearby field for example, she feels comfortable that they will be safe because it is near her friend's house.

> *Shirley, parent of three children aged between five and ten:*
> *at the back of there is a field, yeah and they go up by there and they play up by there, yeah and its close to my friend's house so she'll keep an eye, or if they need anything they'll go in there or come back here.*

Later in the interview she also describes how other children come to her if anything happens to them whilst they are at her end of the road suggesting a reciprocal relationship of care between the parents.

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Some examples also demonstrate examples of caring for a child when the parent is unable to do so due to circumstances, for example if one parent is particularly busy with work another parent may offer to take their friend's child with them on a trip as sometimes happened with Michaela's son. Similarly, when Jenny's husband is rushed to hospital in an ambulance, following her disgust that "her neighbours did nothing" she called a friend to come and watch the children so she can go to the hospital. With her parents in another country, the role of her local personal community proved crucial during this time of her husband's illness. Likewise, when collecting her children from school and noticing that her friends' child was ill, Lisa offered to give the child a lift home. Unfortunately, she didn't have another car seat so the mother and ill child had to travel home on the bus (which perhaps brings up other issues regarding safety). Nevertheless, such examples of parents looking after their friends children were a common theme throughout the data as well as receiving friends' gratitude at this support.

Taking care of the parents

Ensuring the well-being of young children can also involve taking care of the parent. It was clear from my analysis that the parents of young children in my study relied heavily on the support of their friends. Those working in the area reported that there was a high rate of postnatal depression in Newtown Common and, whilst nobody seemed to identify where this statistic originated, it formed a convincing narrative based on my discussions with parents although this contrasts with research linking deprivation and postnatal depression (Lee et al., 2000). Many parents explained that they drew on the resources of their personal communities, including friends and family, to support themselves, and again this seemed to largely be other parents.

Taking care of their friends was often conducted in quite obvious ways, for example, in cases where parents would explicitly ask others for help. For example, when one parent was having trouble at work and wanted to talk through the issues and have others look through the accompanying paperwork, her friends were able to help her out. Similarly, when it is clear that one parent needed some cheering up with a girly night or even just a tea or coffee I frequently observed people stepping in to take care of their friends.

Not all forms of support from friends were necessarily sought so overtly however. One of the key observations I made regarding the needs of the parents of young children was their desire for a form of support in the form of a 'friendly environment' rather than a judgemental arena for others to preach advice and rejoice in their own success. For example, some mothers wanted a space to complain about their child crying all night or not sleeping or having a bad time at school and just craved some general compassion and sympathy in return. Whether a friend was able to provide this often confirmed their role in the personal community of the parent. In these cases whilst sometimes advice was given, it was usually in a friendly constructive way, such as "oh yeah, it's hard helping boys to use the toilet, have you tried putting a floating ball for them to aim at to make it fun". In contrast parents and adults that did not act in this way were often avoided and their lack of support may then be spoken about within the personal community. Other issues discussed also included (without wishing to propel stereotypes), problems with their family or husband and

concern with weight loss and body issues. There were also some more practical forms of support such as passing on of children's clothing and toys or passing on tips about how to get in to different schools. These instances were plentiful and provided an invaluable source of emotional support to many of the parents.

Much of these concerns and issues are related to becoming a parent, or more specifically a mother in the case of body concerns, and the forms of support required may be similar to mothers across the nation. As demonstrated earlier however, having access to the personal communities to help provide the support is something that a number of parents found particularly challenging in this community. Furthermore, another key theme that appears to be unique to these more middle class mothers is their adjusting from being identified as a professional women to, as many felt they were perceived, 'just a mum". This echoes earlier studies which identified the negative perceptions some parents felt other had of them, or they had about themselves because they were "just a mum" (Shelton and Johnson, 2006; Bagley and Ackerlay, 2006).

This message manifests itself in a number of ways that were identified through analysis. For example, when trying to set up the toddler group Jenny is angry when she feels the centre staff do not credit her enough knowledge or capacity to run the group because "they just see me as a mum…but I've done this sort of thing before". She also later says she feels people look at her more suspiciously when she walks around with a buggy compared to the respect she would get previously. Similarly, many of the mums are often keen to have an opportunity to talk to people other than children about things other than children's TV or behaviour patterns. Many parents satisfy the latter issue by returning to work part time but it is by sharing these concerns in a caring, empathetic environment that provides them with vital emotional support.

It was also clear from spending time with these parents that emotional support did not always have to be face to face but was often done via the internet. In particular the role of Facebook played a large part in enabling parents to share their struggles and concerns as well as their triumphs and good times with their personal community. In this case, physical proximity was arguably overcome as a barrier as the internet can facilitate care regardless of distance (Mok and Wellman, 2007). It was clear from my findings however that largely it was people in the local personal community that engaged with each other on Facebook.

Nevertheless informal local networks were perceived to provide a valuable source of support for parenting and enhance the well-being of the family as a whole. Some studies have highlighted the potential negative aspects of such networks as proving a form for judging or assessing each other's parenting, rather than supporting it (Blackford, 2004; Evans and Holland, 2012). There was little evidence of this in my fieldwork, however, it is important to acknowledge that community parenting does not necessarily equate to reassured and happier parents, or safer children.

Children and young people

Examining the well-being of children and young people in a locality requires investigation of the perceptions and experiences of the young people themselves. Unlike parents of young children however, children and young people often found it much more challenging to identify their forms of support. When asking children and young people about their own understandings of their safety and well-being and how they may look out for others, the response was largely hypothetical with few if any examples of concern for themselves or others. Drawing on a mixture of their accounts and my observations two key themes were apparent in relation to ensuring their well-being. The first was that for young people in middle childhood, the main examples of care beyond that of their parents came from friends and siblings. Secondly however, many young people reasoned that they did not experience any concerns about their well-being in Newtown Common. They attributed this to a combination of assumptions about the area they lived in, and their own experiences and lifestyles. This supports evidence from across the UK that children are generally happy with their lives on the whole (Children's Society, 2013). Care and concern for children's well-being was also evident from adults, however this was rarely directly acknowledged in the young people's accounts.

Children and their personal communities

Friends and siblings provided the two key roles in facilitating the well-being of children. These could entail a general concern or more of an active involvement in ensuring the a child's safety. As argued by Morrow (2001), until recently, few studies have considered the impact of friends and community activities upon children's networks, focusing instead on schools and families. Unlike in some other neighbourhoods with long established residency, local children did not have extended family living close by. Coupling this with the lack of a local school or successful local events, there was not an explicit link for people living in the same area to know each other or have a potential predisposition to being involved with each other and potentially care for each other. However all of the children we spoke to had created local personal communities.

When observing the boys playing together at the play scheme, there were a number of instances whereby the often newfound friends would intervene in another child's actions to protect or care for each other. For example, one child had learnt how to climb the seating area in the park and when he saw his friend trying to climb it he immediately came over and tried to help him by showing him the best way to climb up and down safely. Similarly, when the children were toasting marshmallows, it was interesting watching the children take charge of looking after each other. I was a little cautious when the coordinator explained that we would step back from the pit and rescind a level of control and power over the children's safety. However, the children were able to identify and negotiate the potential hazards themselves very well. For example, one child told another not to play with anything near the fire in case they dropped it in and others told one particular child to be more careful so he did not burn himself. They also ensured that each other were safe and sensible. This underscored the importance of allowing children some freedom to recognise the responsibility they can have for their own and their friends' safety.

Similarly, siblings also conveyed a sense of protection over each other. This was often due to the perceived vulnerable status of the other sibling and perhaps resulted to some extent in this responsibility being imparted on to the children by their parents. Nevertheless, when travelling to the park with Andrea, age five, and James, age three, on their bicycles, Andrea would frequently stop and check that her younger brother was okay, that he waited at the end of the road for their mother to help him cross and reminded us that he needed his safety bungee[14]. Similarly, at the play scheme, one child was in a wheelchair and his brother was very careful to make sure that he was safe both physically and emotionally. For example, he would always walk ahead of him to open doors; he would get the creative equipment for painting or whichever activity his brother wanted and he also requested that the other children all played a ball game in the hall instead of on the grass so he could be included. There were also groupings of brothers and friends who would walk around and play together. For example, Tommy explained that whilst cycling in their road, he "got worried when Neil went, coming down from there he came in front of the car, I said 'car' as loud as I could". The boys said that they would warn each other if they felt someone was in danger, although they could recall few other examples. On a slightly more subtle note, when one brother also noticed that his little brother was cold he lent him his jumper. Whilst small, these are the sort of everyday examples of where children's friends and siblings play a part in ensuring their well-being.

Like adults, informal networks for young people also included online communication. Most young people included going on social networking sites as part of their daily routine and chatting online as a way of communicating with friends. In an interview with Geraint, he explained that he mainly spoke to people through Facebook or through online gaming where groups of friends could do quests and talk together.

> *Geraint, young person, 17 years old:*
> *Interviewer: in your other time, what do you do? So like on a Wednesday evening, or whenever you don't have football*
> *Geraint: err, playstation really, or something like that…and everyone's got one so we're all online together …*
> *Interviewer: and do you like use facebook or whatever to keep in touch and things? Or msn or whatever?*
> *Geraint: yeah, yeah facebook usually*

When talking to children directly about if they have ever felt concerned, one group of boys did say that they had been bullied and that they had told one of their mothers about it in an attempt to sort it out. Whilst there were no other concrete examples, in cases such as these where there were more extreme threats posed to the children's welfare most said they would speak to a parent. However, there were no other examples of this given. The general sense that emerged from conversations with young people in Newtown Common was that they were engaged in everyday acts of caring about each other's well-being even if they did not recognise them. For example, in observing the toddler group, the children would help each other showing each other how to use toys or climb the slide safely. Similarly, fieldnotes from the playscheme included examples of children cautioning others when close to the

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[14] Bungee cords are similar to elastic leads for dogs and can be attached to a child's clothing to ensure they do not wander off or get lost.

barbeque or jumping down the steps. As described in chapter six however, there were very few environmental or social risks in the community centre or field however, such as litter, glass or perceived risky people. In regards to more serious danger however, none reported having many, if any, experiences of being concerned and tended to see their area as a generally safe.

> Abigail, young person, aged 15:
> We'd look out for each other if we were going somewhere, like looking out for cars and stuff, but we haven't really had any problems […] I can't think of any times I've been scared here.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the role of informal networks, or personal communities in Newtown Common upon the safety and well-being of children and young people. In general residents reported that the neighbourhood was safe and young people struggled to consider many examples of threats to their physical safety. Where these did emerge however, siblings and friendship groups were cited as 'looking out for each other'. Networks of support however were identified as crucial by parents and particularly young mothers however, who often lacked the wider family support networks in more established neighbourhoods.

The lack of experienced concerns by children and young people in the neighbourhood, supported by their knowledge of local crime statistics generate a general sense of overwhelming safety and well-being in the area. Where examples of concerns are observed, they are often small and so ingrained in everyday life - they are not recognised as acts of care by the children and young people themselves. Furthermore the main concerns expressed were from the physical surrounding such as lighting, crossings and traffic. This does suggest that in communities built on an assumption that few residents walk around the estate, more consideration needs to be given to the everyday experiences of children (and older people) who are local pedestrians. As argued in the previous chapters, children and young people in Newtown Common are largely located in private spaces, such as homes and gardens rather than public spaces such as parks or the street. For example, many were often in their own or friends' houses and rarely out walking the neighbourhood or in street 'gangs'. This perpetuated the area's reputation as a safe one because there were not young people out and out who might be perceived as creating a risk to others.

Some residents could be seen as mourning the loss of the traditional community in modern society, support some of the literature on relationships outlined in chapter three. The common themes that emerged however do suggest that personal communities, which could include friends or family, were identified as particularly important for many young parents in facilitating their well-being. It was important for these parents that they forged relationships with others who would empathise and understand their experiences and concerns as a parent and who would provide care and support both for the child and the parents themselves.

Whilst on the surface the lack of community spirit inhibited the sort of community parenting found by Evans and Holland (2012), analysis of informal networks illustrate

a less visible form of trust and solidarity among parents' and children's local personal communities. Consequently the importance of creating and facilitating local friendships needs further exploration, especially in these sorts of neighbourhoods where new parents often have to create new personal communities. The findings should then be reflected in local policy support initiatives that recognise the range of support communities may lack, such as local informal networks, despite perceived economic advantage. The final chapter helps to bring these findings together by reflecting on the impact of the community upon the well-being of children and young people in Newton Common as and highlight common themes emerging across the data.

10.   CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study used exploratory, ethnographically driven methods to explore the ways in which community can impact upon the well-being of local children and young people in a particular locale. More specifically, whilst the (limited) existing work in this areas has been considered in deprived neighbourhoods, this research was undertaken in an 'everyday' modern, suburban neighbourhood that is not characterised by disadvantage (Yin, 2011). This chapter will summarise the key findings from the key empirical chapters before highlighting some of the common themes that were intertwined throughout the empirical chapters. The conclusion indicates how the thesis might provide contributions to current methodological and sociological debates as well as insights into future policy. The chapter also considers potential directions for future work.

The project was guided by the following research questions:
- What aspects of a neighbourhood can help to facilitate, or hinder, the well-being of children and young people?
- How do community members, including parents, local workers and young people living in a given locale, perceive and enact their role in facilitating the well-being of local children?

Community, well-being and childhood in Newtown Common

Against a backdrop of political debates relating to who should take responsibility for children's well-being, to what extent, and how this could be achieved, the data and analysis revealed that there are three aspects of community that could be conceptualised as facilitating well-being in Newtown Common: the social and environmental features of the neighbourhood; the groups, centres and people working in the neighbourhood; and friends and family. Drawing on over 200 hours of observation and 35 interviews, the data was analysed to identify key themes and patterns emerging from the everyday lives and experiences of facilitating the well-being of local children and young people. Despite the 'everybody's business' agenda that was embedded in the response to various child protection scandals over the past 10 to 15 years, the variety of ways in which community can impact upon children's safety and well-being were not easily articulated by children or by adults working in the area.

Streets, public spaces and children's well-being in Newtown Common

Chapter six explored the impact of the community as a physical space upon the safety and well-being of local children and young people. This chapter argued that, compared to other empirical community studies in Wales, residents in Newtown Common experienced few and relatively low levels examples of physical hazards and social risks to children and young people's well-being. Residents and community

workers drew on examples of lived experiences in other neighbourhoods to describe an overwhelming view that the community is safe and quiet. Whilst it was difficult to articulate the exact reasons for this feeling, some residents drew on the social and environmental risks that were not experienced to illustrate the absence of a fear of environmental and social dangers in the neighbourhood.

There was some evidence however that in creating the safe neighbourhood by privatising and demarking spaces, children and young people had been 'designed out' of public spaces and childhood was often hidden in the home sphere rather than experienced in the local sphere (Harden, 2000) of neighbourhood spaces. As illustrated in a number of chapters, Newtown Common was perceived as having limited facilities for younger people living in the area and there was little evidence of them 'out and about' in the community using the provision that did exist. Furthermore when children did use public spaces, disputes occurred over boundaries and where young people should be able to play. The chapter concludes that as a physical space, Newtown Common provided a safe space for children and young people, but one that largely guided them in to the private and boundaries areas of their homes. The wider neighbourhood itself was not perceived to be an area where children and young people belong.

Local groups, community centres and children's safety in Newtown Common

Chapter seven reflects on the lack of visible engagement with more formal types of safeguarding support and explores how community groups, centres and those working in the area enacted their responsibility to identify and mitigate risks to the well-being of children and young people in Newtown Common. Concerns raised did reflect those raised by adults and children living in the area, such as heavy traffic, but they were also supplemented by a narrative of perceived threats imposed by those from outside neighbourhood penetrating the local community. In addition, whilst children were positioned as vulnerable, young people were often identified as presenting a potential risk.

For the community centre and church centre, there was a tension between providing useful spaces for residents and balancing the risk adverse culture in public buildings. For the councillors and local police community support officer (PCSO) the remit was much wider and they used local meetings with residents to raise and address local issues of concern about the neighbourhood as a whole. The chapter questioned the location of children within these public spaces however, and reflected upon the types and ages of young people that were defined as in need of protection, and those that were instead considered to pose a risk.

Childhood and community facilities in Newtown Common

Chapter eight explored the role of local provision in promoting well-being through local activities and facilities. Enhancing well-being through providing adequate facilities for local children and young people to make use of was perceived to be a valuable aspect of the work undertaken by community leaders, meeting the requirements of the Welsh Government aim to provide access to play and leisure facilities. However, despite efforts to directly address this perceived need by

providing activities for young people and support for families with young children, there was little success evidenced in the data of these forms of provision. In the case of young people, efforts were made to address complaints about the lack of facilities by providing spaces and activities for young people to help promote their wellbeing. Additionally, local leaders tried to engage with young people as well as adults to discern key areas of concern in terms of safety and well-being in Newtown Common. Attendance and engagement were consistently low however, even in attempts to directly address concerns raised by local residents.

This chapter also explores two interested paradoxes that emerged from the data. Firstly, it reflects on the lack of community engagement with existing facilities and considers how this relates to the commonly reported need for more facilities for young people in the area. In addition, amongst these groups, there was a perception that children should be 'off the streets', despite little evidence of young people hanging out on the streets. It suggests that perhaps provision needed is not organised activities but space for children to 'hang out' unsupervised without being perceived as a risk by other residents.

Friends, family, neighbours and children's well-being in Newtown Common

Chapter nine argued that the role of friends and family emerged as one of the most important forms of support for the well-being of both children and families in general. This chapter reflected on some of the arguments surrounding loss of community bonds in modern society and the impact of this upon informal networks of trust and support. Unlike more disadvantaged communities, the formal sphere was much less visible in residents' accounts of their impact upon children's well-being in Newtown Common (Evans and Holland, 2012; Holland, 2014; Ghate and Hazel, 2002). Instead, the semi formal and informal networks emerged as crucial forms of support. Residents in Newtown Common tended to contrast from those in established communities and lack a history and extended kin network that evidence suggests many communities benefit from.

As found by Spencer and Pahl (2006) relationships of trust and solidarity that translated into care for and care about each other were evident through a more detailed look at informal networks. Parents in Newtown common felt that local, personal networks of supports were experienced both through active examples of help and care as well as the creation of a general sense of safety through an atmosphere of trust created by friends, family and other residents. Such aspects of well-being relate to aspects of the social and emotional care of children and families as well as the importance of friendship, which is identified as an indicator in a range of measure of children's well-being (Welsh Government, 2011; Bradshaw, 2011). However, the data reveals challenges in creating and maintaining these vital support networks in Newtown Common, emphasising the role of the other two arenas of community; the built environment and community provision in helping to facilitate the interactions which build these networks.

The contribution of the thesis

The overall aim of this thesis was to gain an insight into how community can be understood as playing a part in facilitating the well-being of local children and young people, drawing on the political drive for increased decentralisation of responsibility in local well-being. The research provides a unique insight into how the adoption of responsibility for children safety and well-being can be seen in the everyday practices of those living and working in a non-deprived, modern suburb in South Wales. As outlined in chapter four, existing studies largely focus on more deprived areas, who are recipients of various targeted provision such as Flying Start or Communities First. This thesis provides an opportunity to look at how policy concepts such as well-being, community and collective responsibility play out in this type of locale. The study presented a variety of findings that could provide useful messages not only for policy, but for sociological and methodological debates within the social sciences. These are discussed below.

Policy implications

The study demonstrates that, in Newtown Common, the safety and well-being of local young people was facilitated through four different aspects of the community, which contain some important messages for policy. Analysis of the challenges faced by residents and those working in the area in relation to local engagement and developing local support networks could prove useful for future policy relating to children and well-being. Furthermore an overarching theme throughout the chapters for example, was the perceived impact on the absence of a local primary school. With an increase in modern, commuter suburban housing estates like Newtown Common being developed that is some valuable learning that can be gleaned from the experiences of those living in this neighbourhood.

One of the central themes that emerged from the data was that primary schools were perceived as a vital foundation for a variety of community support. In relation to each ways in which community is conceptualised in the findings chapters, the creation of a local school was believed to have the ability to enhance their potential for impacting upon children's well-being. In particular, residents and local staff believed that if there was a school in Newtown Common, it would facilitate better use of facilities through linking provision to the school. They also argued that a school would provide a valuable source of interaction for residents from which valuable local support networks would be created and maintained.

The school was perhaps a key missing ingredient and was reported as a concern for all participants, including senior residents[15]. The extract below summarises the common feeling that having a school makes a community in a more succinct way possible than rewording.

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[15] Following the data collection, the council has now announced plans to build a primary school on a site close to the community centre. (No reference is provided to maintain anonymity of neighbourhood).

Joe, parent and community centre staff member
A school is desperately needed to be honest with you …I think having the school would make a big difference where people would get the chance to speak to each other when walking their kids to school. The majority of children in Newtown Common go through different parts of [city] so there's not much community because they're all in different schools around the city… God knows what it will take to have a community, it may well never have one until there's a school, and personally I think not until then.

The lack of a local primary school was drawn in as a contributing factor in all complaints about concerns about community life. In particular however, it was felt to be a significant barrier to facilitating the communities ability to facilitate the well-being of children in Newtown Common. One of the key messages from this research therefore was that residents perceived the school as a missing focus point that would facilitate local friendships and support networks that are identified as extremely valuable in this type of community. Further research may be useful to explore the wider impact of not building local schools within neighbourhoods, which may in turn inform planning policy.

In addition, the thesis provides some useful insights into experiences of a certain type of neighbourhood design. Chapter six argued that further reflection is required during the planning of modern neighbourhood developments, which consider how and where childhood and community might be experienced in the area. By designing children and other residents out of spaces, and building communities with no local spaces for interaction, residents are less likely to build local networks or support, or provide opportunities to 'keep an eye' out for each other through community parenting (Evans and Holland, 2012). In addition, the emphasis on privatising spaces and property in the area contribute to tensions around where children belong. In the case of Newtown Common, this is parks that are unlit in the evenings, and within their own homes.

In addition, whilst Newtown Common could be considered a middle class and certainly a non-deprived area, there are some aspects of community missing from this modern suburb that are found elsewhere in more established communities. The desire for better local support networks was the most commonly cited concern for well-being reported by parents with regard to parents of young children in particular. It could be argued that without the existence of targeted interventions and support, local social networks are even more important. Future policies may therefore need to recognise the value of informal as well as formal networks of support for families and facilitate the creation and maintenance of such links where possible.

Methodological implications

One of the most valuable methodological contributions this thesis makes is the experience of conducting ethnographically driven approach in a modern, non-deprived commuter suburb like Newtown Common. The aim to explore the policy rhetoric that communities can facilitate the well-being of children and young people relies on a number of assumptions about the existence of something tangible that could be considered a community in a neighbourhood, and that these do indeed attempt to facilitate the well-being of local children. In Newtown Common, traditional methods for observing the everyday were not always applicable due to the privatised

nature of community and childhood. It was important therefore to recognise that methods for exploring everyday experiences need to be guided by the nature of the lives ones seeks to gain an insight into. When it became clear that residents did not walk around the neighbourhood, a walking tour needed to be replaced with a drive along. The thesis therefore highlights the importance of thinking back to the aim of ethnographic methods, to walk in the participants shoes (or, in this case, travel in their car), rather than following data collection methods appropriate in different types of community.

On the surface, there was little sense of community, and therefore engaging with residents was not a straightforward task in this form of 'hidden community'. Understanding the ways in which neighbourhood was experienced and understood as a community in this particular area was not something that could be gleaned from one-off interviews or standardised questionnaires. The ethnographic approach enabled the recognition of the intricacies and nuances of everyday life in Newtown Common. The exploratory nature of the research into the lived realities of adults and young people was particularly valuable. Prolonged engagement with the community and those that work and live within it through different times, seasons and events helped to increase my familiarity will life in the area. As noted by one participant, it is likely that I spent more time during the data collection out and about within the community than they did. Furthermore, the relationship and rapport with participants enabled a more engaged interview process, and one that could be followed up upon by either party at any time. By embracing my participatory role in generating data, instead of aiming to objectively observe 'reality' I was able to benefit from deeper insights from participants who would sometimes reflect on their interviews or discussions with me and revisit topics or subjects of interest. The thesis argued therefore that in-depth, qualitative case study research design provided a valuable insight into the ways in which community can be seen as facilitating well-being through an exploration of what is understood and enacted 'on the ground'. The ethnographic approach afforded me a number of advantages throughout the data collection process that can be recognised and utilised by future similar studies.

Sociological implications

This thesis provides a useful insight into the ways in which conceptualisations of children's well-being, community, parenting and childhood are applicable in a modern, non-deprived commuter city suburb in south Wales.

As children's 'well-being' has become more prominent in policy, the terms has been conceptualised in a number of ways. Using the themes identified as important by the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales (2011), this thesis has reflected on what aspects of well-being are most relevant to children and young people living in Newtown Common. The empirical chapters suggest that childhood in this neighbourhood is largely free from social and environmental risks, except for concerns about traffic. Children's physical and emotional well-being however are called into questions due to concerns about the lack of appropriate facilities for young people in the area as well as a (perceived) lack of local networks of support.

The findings highlight however that there are some discrepancies between perceptions of these risks to well-being when comparing adults' views with local

children and young people. For example, whilst community groups felt there was a need for more facilities to keep young people 'off the street', analysis suggests what is desired by young people is spaces to hang out and play away from the organised, adult supervised activities promoted. This tension, amongst other reasons, could explain the low engagement in existing provision and suggest that this element of well-being may be understood differently by children and young people. Additionally, whilst concerns are raised about the ability for children and young people to develop friendships to facilitate play and provide emotional support, the data suggests this is more of a concern for adults, or more specifically parents of young children, than it is for children and young people.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, community is a contested term, but one that is used without explanation and definition in a number of policy documents. In the Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor, one indicator reports on children's and adults' perceptions of safety the 'local community' which suggests the concept refers to the social and environmental aspects of the neighbourhood, but a definition is not provided. Likewise, political rhetoric highlights the role of 'communities' in taking responsibility for children's well-being without reference to what is meant by this or how it should be operationalised.

Initial difficulties in identifying and engaging with the somewhat hidden and privatised community in Newtown Common present important methodological and sociological messages for understanding community studies. However, the study suggests that in Newtown Common, community could be understood and conceptualised in a number of ways; the environmental and physical aspects of the neighbourhood; the groups, centres and those working in the area, who recognise their role in identifying social and physical risks as well as promoting children's access to (certain) leisure activities; and the local friendships, siblings networks which provide support and 'look out' for local children. In contrast to studies in more deprived and well-established communities however, Newtown Common did not lend itself to the types of community parenting whereby residents collectively and collaboratively aim to protect and care for local children (Evans and Holland, 2012; Ghate and Hazel, 2002).

Building on this, there are also messages on this about parenting cultures in this non-deprived, modern commuter suburb. Parental concerns about children's safety and a preference to chauffeur them to organised activities also emerged from this study. The data also supports previous empirical studies which suggest middle class parents are more likely to promote activities that help to develop their children to prepare them for adulthood. This concerted cultivation has been shown to help transmit advantage to children in middle class and has been associated with better outcomes (Lareau, 2003; 2010). In contrast, parents in working class families were shown to favour natural growth and encourage their children to enjoy childhood in its own right. Furthermore, the middle class attitude towards parenting prevails in wider society whereby 'increasingly, in the UK context at least, letting children roam or play out unaccompanied is becoming a marker of neglectful or irresponsible parenthood (O'Brien et al., 2000: 273). Implicitly, these parenting cultures can have an important impact upon childhoods.

In many ways, childhood in Newtown Common can be seen as epitomizing the type of childhood criticised by many social commentators (Guldberg, 2009; Palmer, 2010; Furedi, 2008). However, it is also important to recognise the active role of the child in many cases rather than associating purely with parenting practices. Findings revealed that young people often preferred indoor, computer-based play rather than outdoor activities and illustrates that for these young people, the choice to play at home reflected largely the wealth of resources available to children in Newtown Common. There were some examples of restrictions to children's freedom and movements due to the safety concerns of parents, but these appeared to be normalised by residents, perhaps because there was an overwhelming lack of children using public space. Whilst chapter six demonstrates that there are fewer hazards to be concerned about in the area it was still interesting to note that the hazards that did exist did not appear to greatly promote children's use of public space.

The study also suggests that young people's use of public space was perhaps more overtly controlled by the imposition of boundaries and protection over 'private spaces' in roads which were not believed to be places for young people and associated perceptions of these areas as not space for them. Experiences of life in Newtown Common reflected the tension suggested by Bauman (2001) that, whilst there was an overall desire expressed for greater community spirit, there was a contrasting desire to keep the area safe and free from crime by privatising and access to controlling community spaces. Furthermore, following on from the argument that childhood is becoming more privatised, structured and home orientate, expectations from the community were that unsupervised young people in public spaces was something to be avoided; they were perceived as needing somewhere to go because there was 'nowhere for them to go' in Newtown Common. The implication therefore is that, unlike in some deprived communities such as (Evans and Holland, 2012), public space such as roads and street corners are not considered places where young people should be.

Future research

This project could usefully be expanded upon in a number of ways to further develop the arguments made and address some of the boundaries of the study design. In addition to extending the reach of the observation and data collection to the harder to reach groups within the community, it may also be beneficial to replicate the study in another location to reveal and similar or contrasting patterns and experiences, perhaps in a rural or inner city environment. This would help to develop arguments made here using a rich source of data from different types of community.

The research also afforded an insight into the benefits of utilizing some participatory methods in engaging a range of residents. For example, the walking and driving tours provided prompts for discussions about more mundane aspects of the community. In particular, joining families on (car) journeys to pick up children from school or go to shops or park facilitated a greater understanding of their everyday life in real situations. It generated richer data through observation as well as discussions provoked during the trips. Greater use of this method is likely to provide useful insights into community experiences. Likewise the use of the phone camera

research as an insight into everyday realities however was extremely valuable and could be effectively utilised in future studies. Further research with particular groups of children or young people in particular could make more use of these and other multi modal research methods to facilitate a richer understanding of their lived experience.

Conclusions relating to the role that the community can play in facilitating children's well-being could be further developed by using the same research model and questions to explore another contrasting neighbourhood, such as a rural Welsh community. This would facilitate greater understanding of both children's well-being and 'local community' through the identification of any similar or contrasting patterns. Similarly, the same research design could be employed usefully to explore a different social process in more detail. One example would be how care for the elderly or senior residents is experienced and understood in local communities. Whilst not the focus of this study, isolation of elderly residents was something that emerged as a side issue from the data as an area of concern. Like new mothers, retired and elderly residents reflected on the lack of a hub to facilitate local networks of support and without employment, this was an important issue that would benefit from further investigation.

Concluding comments

This thesis aimed to explore the ways in which the community could be seen as playing a part in ensuring children's well-being in a non-deprived, modern commuter suburb in South Wales. It provides a valuable insight into the types of children well-being that are perceived as relevant to children in this type of area, and the ways in which the community enacts the collective responsibility for this well-being that is promoted in policy theoretic. Most social and environmental risks in public spaces in the neighbourhood were absent from narratives of residents, children and those working in the area, with risks to well-being primarily coming from traffic and (as perceived by adults) undesirable outsiders. Whilst community groups and leaders as well as some adults and child residents reported the need for more facilities, the analysis suggests differences in the types of spaces the children desire with those promoted by adults. Going beyond the realm of the parents, local friendships were also identified as important for facilitating the emotional well-being of families, but this was perhaps more true of parents of young children than children themselves. In addition, the data provide some interesting insight to the relevance of concepts such as community, well-being, childhood and parenting for those living in an area such as Newtown Common. The thesis therefore provides a useful insight into the ways in which the community can be seen as facilitating certain types of children's well-being which has important policy implications for the continued well-being and everybody's business political agenda. In addition, the findings also provide a useful contribution to literature on contemporary parenting and childhood in suburban, modern non-deprived neighbourhoods.

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Appendix A – Adult Interview Schedule

Explain about the research project, the main plans of data collection and why I have asked them for an interview. Ask them to sign the **consent form**. Ask if it is ok to record the interview.

The main purpose of this interview is for me to get an idea about what it's like to live in [Newtown Common], and what you think it's like to be a parent and child in your neighbourhood.

NB I am aiming to hear stories/ narratives to get a better understanding of life and childhood in [Newtown Common] (including sense of community, especially in relation to safety)

1. You and your family
   a. Could you start by telling me a bit about you and your family please? [Child ages?]

2. You and your neighbourhood
   a. How long have you **lived** in [Newtown common]? [Why did you move here? Where from?]
   b. What were your reasons for **moving** here? [idea of a safer/better place for children/ family?]
   c. Where do your friends/ extended family live?
   d. If people ask you **where you live**, what would you say? [eg [Newtown Common], North [City] etc.] [Mark this on the map?/ Where do you feel are the boundaries of your area/ [Newtown Common]
   e. How would you **describe** the area you live in? [Why? Can you give any examples/ stories?]
   f. What do you think it is **like to live** here? [Examples/ comparisons/ Community spirit?]
   g. What do you think are the **benefits** and **challenges** of living in your area? [Why do you say that? Can you give me any examples? Traffic/road? Cul de Sacs? Community Centre?]
   h. Do you attend **PACT** meetings? What do you think of them? [Useful/ work?]

3. Safety in the neighbourhood
   a. What do you think of **your area** in terms of **safety**? [Why/ what makes you say that?]
   b. [If apt] Do you think safety in your local area could be **improved**? If so, how?
   c. How do you think it **compares** to other places in Wales (eg central [City], rural areas or the valleys or anywhere else you've lived)? [prompt – in relation to risk and safety]
   d. Do you think it is a **safe area for children**? [use maps to help]
      i. What makes it more/ less safe?
      ii. Are there many **safe areas** for children to play/ hang out?
      iii. Are there any dangerous **hotspots?**
   e. How do you decide where/ when your children are allowed out to play? [prompt - how far from home, eg park, [retail park], community centre etc] any examples?

4. Childhood in [Newtown Common]
    a. How would you **describe other children** in the neighbourhood? [What do you think its like to be a child in [Newtown Common?]
    b. Could you describe a **typical day** for **your** children (either school day, weekend or both) [probe on safety, ie, where play, until what time, does this change according to time of year or who they are with etc]
    c. Where do/ will your children go to **school**? How **long** does it take to get there? Will they be driven or catch the bus? [Any concerns about safety?]
    d. What do your children do in their **spare time**? [where? Why/ why not in [NC?]
    e. Do your children have many **friends** in the area? What do they do together?
    f. What is it like **looking after**/ supervising other children? And what is it like **leaving your child/ children** with other people?

5. Other parents and children in [Newtown Common]
    a. Do you **socialise** with many people from your local area? [Attend any community centre events, classes, clubs?]
    b. How do you think **other parents** feel about where is **safe** for children to play?[same as you?] [same rules about where to play/ times to come home etc]
    c. Do you feel that **other adults** (and children) in the neighbourhood **look out** for your child? [any examples?]
    d. What do you think **people** in your area would do if they were **concerned** about a child's well-being, for example from other children, the environment, people, anything? [any examples?]
    e. Do you think that **kids** in your area **look out** for each other?
    f. Equally, are there any example where kids **might not look out for each other**? [more mischievous/ cause problems?]
    g. What would you do if **you were concerned** about the safety or wellbeing of a child in your neighbourhood? (eg seek advice? speak to child/ parent/ friend/ neighbour?)

6. Anything else?
    a. Is there anything else you think I should know about childhood in your area?
    b. Is there anywhere else you think I should visit or anyone I should speak to in order to get a better idea about life in [Newtown Common]?
    c. As part of my research I am also finding out whether parents have time to jot down any thoughts they have following on from this interview to be collected/ discussed at a later date, is this something I could leave with you?

Appendix B –Young Person Interview Schedule

<u>Ethics</u> – If under 16 ensure that you have a parent's permission before conducting an interview.

Young person interview guide
Introduction
1. Explain about the research project, and what the interview will be about.
2. Go through the consent form and ask them to sign it.
3. Ask if they would like to do the interview with others (eg siblings/ friends) or on their own.

Interview questions
You
1. Tell me a bit about **yourself** [prompt, age, siblings, how long lived in neighbourhood etc]
2. How would you **describe** what its like to live in this area? What about if you were talking to a friend or another young person?
   a. What are the **benefits**/ **problems** of living here? Eg facilities/ school?
3. How do you think its difference being a young person in [Newtown Common] **compared** with other places? [prompt, eg in [City] centre/ valleys/ Pentwyn]
4. What do you do on a **usual school day** [prompt, where do you go to school, **how** do you get there, what do you do afterwards in terms of getting home/ playing with friends etc]
5. What do you usually do on the **weekend** [prompt, stay at home, play in garden/ park/ clubs etc]
6. What do you like to do to have **fun/ relax**? [Prompt, stay at home/ watch TV/ play outside with friends?]
7. Where is your favourite place to hang out/ meet friends Why? Who?
   a. What do you think of these places e.g. **Street? Parks? Community Centre?**
8. What about other children you know, where do they play? Who with?
9. Give the children some **maps** of the area – ask them to mark where they like to go and colour code some places with dangerous/ safe (red/green).
10. Do you belong to any **clubs** or teams?
11. Were you involved in or have you heard of the Youth PACT meetings? Do you know about the PCSO? Community centre open days? Halloween/ Fifa nights etc.?

Risk and Safety
1. What do you think of this **area in terms of safety**? Do you think is it safe to live in compared to other areas? Eg [City], Valleys, Rural, City, London etc.
2. What do you think are the most **likely things to cause you harm** in your neighbourhood? [Prompt, traffic, other children/ adults, litter, broken glass, falling off bike]. Can they give any examples/ stories?
3. What makes you **feel safe** (when playing/ away from home)?
4. What **would you do if you didn't feel safe**? [prompt, leave area, ring parents, speak to a passing adult/ teacher, ring police]

5. What do you think that **other people in the neighbourhood think about young people**? Is there a difference between teenagers and children? Boys/ Girls? Vulnerable children vs. menace/ troublesome teens?
6. Are there any areas, places or groups of people that you are **nervous around**? Perhaps places you don't go after dark/ in the winter?
7. Can you think of any **examples** of when you or another young person in the area have **been hurt**, either **accidently** or by **other young people adults** etc. [prompt; What would/ did you do?
8. What would you do if you **thought someone was in danger** of getting hurt? [prompt, this could be a younger child/ someone older in trouble/ a sibling]
9. What would you **like to change** about your neighbourhood to make it safer to play in? [Prompt, more clubs? Parks for different ages]

Finally, I think you have an idea about my study of youth and childhood in [Newtown Common], but how do you think is the best way to find out about what young people actually think about the area? Could they recommend friends? Would they attend anything at the community centre if I did an evening/ weekend/ half term/ Easter session etc?

Further involvement – would they be interested in taking you on a walking tour and taking photos or keeping a safety notebook (with parent's consent)?

Appendix C – Ethical Approval Letter

Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Director Professor Malcolm Williams
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol Caerdydd
Cyfarwyddwr Yr Athro Malcolm Williams
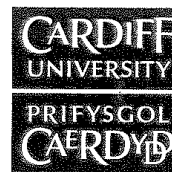
Cardiff University
Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff CF10 3WT
Wales UK

Tel *Ffôn* +44(0)29 2087 5179
Fax *Ffacs* +44(0)29 2087 4175
www.cardiff.ac.uk/

Prifysgol Caerdydd
Adeilad Morgannwg
Rhodfa Brenin Edward VII
Caerdydd CF10 3WT
Cymru Y Deyrnas Gyfunol

15th April 2010

Our ref: SREC/605

Hayley Collicott
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Hayley

Your project entitled *"Safeguarding Children in Local Community: A Neighbourhood Study"* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University at its meeting on 14th April 2010 and you can now commence the project.

Having reviewed your application, the Committee agreed that your response to Question 13 of your Ethical Approval Application should have been "Yes". Your application is nevertheless approved.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Tom Horlick-Jones
Chair of the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc: E Renton
        Supervisors: S Holland, A Coffey & L Radford

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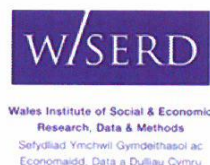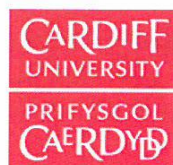## Appendix D - Information Sheet for Residents

Information sheet for residents page 1

Childhood in your community

Information Sheet for Residents

Researching the role of the community in children's well-being

A research project with Cardiff University

What is being researched?

I am interested in how residents of [   ] experience issues of child safety and risk in their neighbourhood. In particular I am looking at children's use of public places, and how the wider community help to safeguard local young people. I want to help councils and government understand more about these issues in suburban communities like yours.

How are you doing the research?

I am asking for volunteers from [   ] to take part in the study. Every community member is invited, including young children through to elderly residents. If you are interested you will be invited to an interview with me.

In the interview, I will ask you about how children are kept safe or might be at risk in your neighbourhood. You can be interviewed in your home or any-where else you choose, at a time to suit you. It will take about half an hour. If you wish, you can volunteer to do other research activities. You may like to take me for a walk around your neighbourhood to help illustrate your opin-ions about childhood in your community, or you could keep a 'child safety' notebook for a week.

I would also like to invite your children to take part in this research. They may wish to take part in an interview about childhood and safety in your commu-nity. This can be done either alone, with you or with friends. They may also volunteer to show me around the neighbourhood and perhaps take photos of some of their favourite places to play.

More information about the ways you and your children may like to take part in the study will be available from me.

Why are you researching our neighbourhood?

Much research has considered childhood in inner city or rural areas, but little has focused on life or childhood in suburban communities. Consequently, I believe ⬚ is an ideal setting to explore understandings and experiences of childhood in a typical new suburban community.

What will happen to the information you learn from the residents of our community?

The research will be written up as a report and you will be offered a copy of this. It may also be published in journals and books. No one's real name or street will be named in the reports and ⬚ will not be named in any publications or reports. The interviews may be written up and stored for use by future researchers, but without your name or any contact information on them. You may also suggest other ways you would like your information to be used, such as through a presentation to local community members or councillors. This will be fully discussed with you and will not include any identifiable information unless agreed with you first.

Who is doing the research?

The project is conducted by Hayley Collicott, a PhD student from Cardiff University. I have up-to-date enhanced CRB clearance and am supervised by Dr. Sally Holland and Professor Amanda Coffey of Cardiff University, as well as Dr. Lorraine Radford from the NSPCC.

Do I have to take part?

Not at all! Anyone who takes part will be a volunteer. And you can change your mind at any time, even during or after an interview.

What if I am worried about any aspect of the research?

I can be contacted at any time on the e-mail address and telephone number at the end of this leaflet and will be happy to answer any questions before, during or after the research project.

If the researcher becomes aware of any information that suggests that a child might be at risk, Cardiff's social services child protection procedures will be followed and the relevant body will be notified.

Contact details: Hayley Collicott
E-mail: CollicottHE@Cardiff.ac.uk
Telephone: 02920 879338

If you have any concerns about the research, then you can contact the Chair of the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee,
Professor Tom Horlick-Jones
029 208 75004

Horlick-JonesT@Cardiff.ac.uk
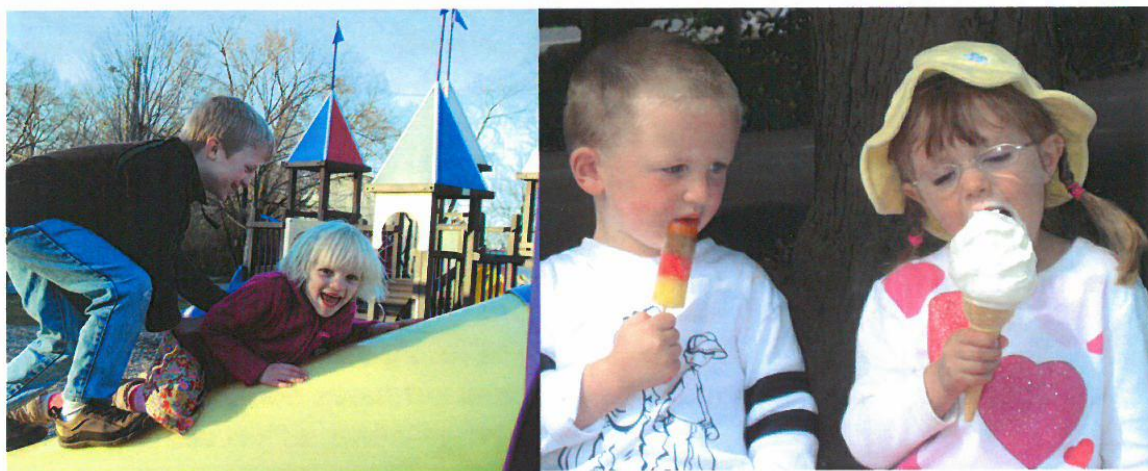
Appendix E – Adult Research Consent Form

Childhood in your community

Research consent sheet

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this research project.	Yes/NO
2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	Yes/NO
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.	Yes/NO
4. I agree to take part in the study.	Yes/NO
5. I agree that my interview may be tape-recorded	Yes/NO
6. I understand that the information I give will be kept confidential unless I say that either I or a child are at serious risk of harm.	Yes/NO

_____   _____ _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____ _____
Name of person taking consent   Date   Signature

Appendix F – Young Person Research Consent Form

Childhood in your community

Young Person Research Consent Sheet

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this research project.	Yes/NO
2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	Yes/NO
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.	Yes/NO
4. I agree to take part in the study.	Yes/NO
5. I agree that my interview may be tape-recorded	Yes/NO
6. I understand that the information I give will be kept confidential unless I say that either I or a child are at serious risk of harm.	Yes/NO

_____   _____ _____

Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____ _____

Parent/ Guardian (if under 16)   Date   Signature

Childhood in your Community

Rights, roles and responsibilities
A research project with Cardiff University

about you …

What is your name?

………………………………………………………………………

How old are you?

……………………………………………………………………….

What do you like to be called?

……………………………………………………………………….

Anything else you would like us to know about you?

……………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………….

taking part …

☐   I agree to take part in the project 'Childhood in your community'

☐   I have read and understood the information leaflet

☐   I know what the project is about and how I can be involved.

☐   I know that the activities will help the researchers know more about how I feel safe or in danger in my local area.

☐   I will decide if I want to have what I say about myself recorded.

☐   I know that if I say something that suggests either myself or someone else is in danger then the researcher will need to report this to a social worker or the police.

☐   I can decide to stop participating in the research at any time (and I don't have to give a reason why)

your say …

If there are any other things about taking part in the project that you would like us to agree to, you can write them down below (or we can write them for you):

☐   ……………………………………………………………………

☐   ……………………………………………………………………

☐   ……………………………………………………………………

☐   ……………………………………………………………………

☐   ……………………………………………………………………

If you would like to sign your name here, you can:

Your Signature _____

Researcher's Signature_____

Today's date: _____

I give consent for (child's name) to take part in the research study. I have parental responsibility for (child's name)

Parent/Guardian's Signature_____

Today's date_____

Appendix H –Thank You Letter for Participants

Thank you

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help with this project. The findings will be analysed together and included in a written report on the role of the community in the safeguarding of local children. In particular the report will aim to explore the issues surrounding potential risks and benefits of childhood in a typical suburban community such as yours. If you would like any further information about the project, the written report, the way your information will be used or any other enquiries please feel free to contact me through the details below. I have also included some useful names and numbers for your information at the bottom of this form.

Thanks again,

Hayley Collicott BA Hons, MSc
Cardiff University PhD student
WISERD
46 Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
02920 879338

Useful contacts:

[Newtown Common] Community Centre
[context details removed to ensure anonymity]

[Newtown Common] Community Church Centre

[context details removed to ensure anonymity]

[Newtown Common] Police Community Support Officer

[Name]
[context details removed to ensure anonymity]

NSPCC ChildLine
Tel: 0800 1111
Web: www.childline.org.uk

Appendix I – Analysis Example: AtlasTi Screenshot