

PARTICIPANT PACK

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Introduction and background

Common Ground – An East-West Collaboration

Programme aims and objectives

“Common Ground” is a transformative initiative designed to reclaim and reimagine the role of community development (CD) and health work across Northern Ireland and Scotland. Supported by the [Connect Fund](#), this project brings together two leading organisations: the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) in Northern Ireland and the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC). The programme will foster inclusive, cross-sectoral dialogue and build sustainable partnerships that address health inequalities and poverty.

At its core, Common Ground seeks to revitalise the language, practice, and leadership of community development in health contexts. By creating intentional spaces for learning, reflection, and collaboration, the project will strengthen civic infrastructure and empower community leaders to shape equitable futures.

Purpose and Rationale

Community development has historically played a vital role in empowering communities, amplifying marginalised voices, and driving social change. However, shifts in policy language, institutional priorities, and funding landscapes have led to a diminished visibility and perceived relevance of CD approaches—particularly within health systems.

This project responds to a critical moment: the need to reaffirm the value of community development in tackling structural health inequalities and to invest in the next generation of community leaders. Through East-West collaboration, Common Ground will explore shared challenges, showcase innovative practices, and build lasting alliances that centre equity, inclusion, and community-led transformation.

Objectives

The initiative is guided by six key objectives:

1. **Identify Shared Challenges**

Explore common issues facing communities in Northern Ireland and Scotland, with a focus on the social determinants of health and the drivers of inequality.

2. **Modernise CD Language**

Reflect on the evolving language used in policy and practice, and assess its impact on how community development and health work is understood and implemented.

3. **Showcase Models of Good Practice**

Share successful CD approaches from both regions that have effectively promoted social inclusion and addressed health inequalities and poverty.

4. **Develop Leadership**

Build community leadership skills and explore opportunities for community leaders on an East-West basis

5. **Build Alliances**

Unite CD leaders from both networks to discuss and plan a joint collective action project that reflects shared values and priorities.

6. **Forge Lasting Connections**

Establish enduring partnerships between CD infrastructure organisations committed to addressing poverty and health inequalities.

Group information

Name	Organisation
Sarah Boath	CHEX
Kate McHendry	CHEX
Clare Rogers	Fife Council
Helena Richards	Carr Gomm
Anne Marie Timmoney	East Dunbartonshire Council
Neill Clark	East Ayrshire Advocacy Services
Natalie Stevenson	VOX
Kim Meek	Dundee City Council
Katie Biggart	Turning Point/Outdoors for You
Rachel Lewis	Aberdeenshire Council/Action Kintore
Wendy Johnstone	VASLAN
Lesley Crawford	Glasgow Life

Programme timeline

Date	Event	Location
25 Nov 2025	Introductory session	Online
9–11 Dec 2025	Belfast Exchange: networking, policy round tables, site visits	In person in Belfast
20 Jan 2026	Common Ground dialogue session	Online
19 Feb 2026	Common Ground dialogue session	Online

3–5 Mar 2026	Glasgow Exchange: networking, policy round tables, site visits	In person in Glasgow
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Background information on CHEX (Community Health Exchange)

We work with community-led health organisations, Local Authorities, the NHS and Scottish Government to promote community-led health as a way to tackle Scotland's persistent health inequalities.

[CHEX](#) is a Scotland-wide network and works at local, regional and national levels. We're part of the [Scottish Community Development Centre](#) - the lead body for community development and the CHEX Network is supported by a strategic partnership agreement with [Public Health Scotland](#).

What we do

- We support networking between people and organisations working in community-led health and related sectors to encourage the sharing of learning and facilitate conversations and peer support.
- We host events and conferences to bring people together to share skills, generate ideas and discussion on the important and topical issues affecting community-led health.
- We provide quality information on community-led health and other relevant topics, through our [website resources](#), as well as [publications, briefings and consultation responses](#).
- We provide current awareness and topical information to our network through the fortnightly Snippets bulletin.
- We work alongside our network to amplify their voices with their contributions to CHEX responses to consultations and calls for views, as well as encouraging the network to become involved in our survey and interview research.
- We are the home of [Health Issues in the Community \(HIIC\)](#), an interactive training course used to increase understanding of community-led health.
- We also provide other training opportunities promoting the benefits of community-led health.
- Regionally, we work with NHS and Local Authorities to encourage partnership working with community-led health organisations.
- At the Scottish Government we influence policy through collaborative work and participation in working groups, to advocate for community-led health as part of the solution to Scotland's health inequalities.

Background information on CDHN (Community Development & Health Network)

CDHN is a regional infrastructure organisation working with local communities and across sectors to take action on the social determinants of health, improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. We work with communities to identify their own health & social needs & have a specific focus on those who experience the most disadvantage. With 30 years experience and a cross-sectoral membership of over 2400 individuals and over 110 community and voluntary organisations, we have an extensive reach across Northern Ireland.

We recognise, value, and gather evidence to understand the social determinants of health and people's lived experiences, and together with our members we design, develop, deliver, facilitate, and evaluate initiatives that improve health and address health inequalities. We use our learning, knowledge and experience to create social change and influence policy and practice through training, capacity building and community investment.

We believe that everyone has the right to good health, yet, in Northern Ireland, and beyond, deep-rooted inequalities mean that not everyone has the same chance to live a healthy life. You can keep up to date with us [through our newsletter](#).

Elevate is a programme of support for the community, voluntary and public sectors delivered by CDHN and incorporates training focussing on community development as a way to reduce health inequalities.

These truths guide our work:

- In Northern Ireland some people die younger and experience more years in poor health because of factors such as where they live, their jobs, quality of their homes, their education, clean air, how much money they have and access to health services.
- These health inequalities are unfair and preventable. They are driven by the social determinants of health, not just personal choices or lifestyles. Overemphasising individual behaviour change can actually make inequalities worse.
- Achieving health equity requires long-term, society-wide action that tackles the root causes of poor health.
- Community development approaches help people to identify what matters to them, recognise power imbalances, participate in decision making, and take collective action to improve their health and wellbeing.
- To close the health inequalities gap, we must actively involve people experiencing the most disadvantage, including minority and marginalised groups, and work together for real, lasting change.

Programme monitoring & evaluation arrangements

Evaluation framework for Common Ground

CDHN will design evaluation tools to evaluate the project against these 6 outcomes. SCDC will contribute to the design and complete, collate and submit evaluation of activities in their area to CDHN.

Evaluation of Individual Learning Progression

- Questionnaires to capture & assess any changes in knowledge/skills/confidence and any areas for future development
- Self-reported examples of how learning has been applied in real-world settings

Evaluation of Networking Events

- Attendance Records – sign-in sheets/registration data
- SurveyMonkey Feedback Forms to assess satisfaction, relevance, and impact using qualitative and quantitative data

Evaluation of online dialogue groups

- Questionnaire evaluation to gather feedback from participants
- Dialogue session notes
- Photos and notes from participatory exercises

Overall Programme Evaluation

A final report will be produced in April 2026, including:

- Summary of questionnaires, participant feedback, session notes
- Evaluation of events and activities
- Project reflections from CDHN & SCDC
- Recommendations for the 2026/27 phase

Community development & health inequalities: policy and practice

Relevant Scottish policies & initiatives

CHEX

If you haven't accessed this before a great place to start is the CHEx [Resource Hub](#) on community led health and our resource [on key actions](#) we set out to help address health inequalities in Scotland which also has useful links to other websites and resources. The [HIIC](#) website also has a range of case studies and further information on how this programme helps people understand what affects their health and the health of their community.

National Policy

The three current national policy initiatives of particular relevance in Scotland to health inequalities:

[Scotland's Population Health Framework](#)

[Public Sector Reform Strategy](#)

[The Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework](#)

Public Health Scotland – Collaboration for Health Equity Scotland

Public Health Scotland are currently working with University College London's Institute for Health Equity for a two year [Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland](#).

There is a [national learning system](#) open to anyone interested to sign up to and to keep up to date. In addition to the national programme site work is underway in collaboration with local partners in *Aberdeen City, South Lanarkshire* and *North Ayrshire*.

In addition the Institute for Health Equity runs a [Health Equity Network](#) open to practitioners from across the UK, and CHEx contributed along with key partners to the 2025 Conference.

Current research programmes

There are lots of research projects focusing on the wider social determinants of health, health and social care policy, poverty and public policy. The two following programmes are of particular relevance to Common Ground and academics from these programmes will be participating and contributing at different parts of the programme.

Common Health Assets

CHEX is a longstanding partner in [the Common Health Assets UK research programme](#) focused on demonstrating how community led organisations impact on the health and wellbeing of people in disadvantaged areas. This UK wide research project included community led organisations in both Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Common Ground will build on this partnership and [Queens University Belfast](#) and [Glasgow Caledonian University](#) will contribute to different elements of the programme.

Rachel Baker presented on emerging findings from the programme at the CHEX Conference in March 2025 and the presentation can be accessed via [the Conference Resource Page](#).

Scottish Health Equity Research Unit

The [Scottish Health Equity Research Unit](#) is a partnership between the [Fraser of Allander Institute](#) at the University of Strathclyde and [the Health Foundation](#). Its focus is strengthening policy and driving action on health inequalities through evidence and insight.

SHERU regularly publishes on [the current inequality landscape](#) in Scotland, building on its initial [2024 report](#) and on [prevention](#) in Scottish policy and practice.

CHEX are working in partnership with the Poverty Alliance to support community researchers in two local authority areas contribute to SHERU's current [strengthening policy implementation](#) programme. This programme focusing on understanding how two specific national strategies concerning key socio-economic determinants of health are impacting on health inequalities in Scotland: Housing and Employability. SHERU will also participate in elements of the Common Ground programme.

Scottish implementation context

CHEX regularly produces policy responses and briefings. The following are the most relevant to the Common Ground Programme:

[Joint Statement on Prevention](#)

[Mental Health & Wellbeing Briefing](#)

[How Community led health approaches tackle inequalities](#)

[Public Health Scotland Shaping our Strategy – Consultation Response](#)

Audit Scotland provides a range of reports on how public money is spent and whether policies are achieving desired outcomes for individuals and public bodies. You can find more information on their [work in health and social care on Scotland here](#).

Relevant Northern Irish policies & initiatives

[Strategic Framework for Public Health - Making Life Better](#)

[ni-executive-anti-poverty-strategy-2025-2035.pdf](#)

[HSC RESET final 0.pdf](#) (Health & Social Care)

[Neighbourhood Model of Care](#)

Information for the Belfast visit

Programme itinerary

Itinerary for visitors and bus schedule (Final timings to be confirmed)

Date	Pick up	Drop off
9/12	Belfast International Airport	Hampton by Hilton Hotel
10/12	Hotel	Shankill Women's Centre
10/12	Shankill Women's Centre	Hotel
11/12	Hotel	Women's TEC
11/12	Women's TEC	Hotel
11/12	Hotel	Airport

10th December - Agenda

Time	Activity
10.00	Introduction to the common ground leadership programme and getting to know each other.
11.00	Tea break
11.15	Roundtable discussion: Putting community development practice and principles into practice within public health policy
12.30	Lunch
1.30	CDHN Strategy launch and networking event
2.20	Members' round table discussion: Using our voice and our influence
3.30-4p m	Closing remarks and more networking

Flight times and travel

Meeting Point

Kate & I will meet you all in the main check in hall of Terminal 1. Please be at the airport in plenty of time and aim to arrive no later than 2.15 to give us time to give you your boarding passes and get through security.

[Map of Glasgow Airport](#)

Glasgow – Tuesday 9th December 2025

Flight No: EZY423

Departure: 16:15

Group Meeting Time: Please be no later than 2.15pm

More information on ways to get to Glasgow Airport can be [found here](#).

Belfast – Thursday 11th December 2025

Flight No: EZY63

Departure: 17:15

CDHN will arrange a bus transfer from Belfast city centre to [Belfast International Airport](#).

Boarding passes

We will have printed copies of your boarding passes with allocated seats and will give them to you at Glasgow Airport.

We will also have back-up copies but please look after your boarding passes carefully!

Flight information including ID and onboard luggage

Please find the link to the [EasyJet information on IDs for domestic flights](#). Please let us know asap if you think you don't have relevant ID.

You can bring **one small cabin bag only**. Please find the [link to the EasyJet information on the size of bag you are allowed](#). Remember it must be able to be stowed under the seat in front of you. If you have any queries re your bag and what you can bring with you check with EasyJet directly.

Please find details on the [Glasgow Airport Security](#) page on what you can and can't take on board including liquids. **Please read carefully and ensure you comply with the rules to ensure we go through security smoothly.**

Food and accommodation

Hotel

We will be staying at the [Hampton by Hilton hotel](#) in Belfast City Centre and breakfast is included.

15 Hope Street
Belfast
BT12 5EE

Food

If you have dietary requirements or allergies please tell us on the additional information and emergency contact form.

All meals will be covered during our visit to Belfast including on Tuesday evening on arrival. We have not arranged a meal for Thursday evening as we are travelling later in the afternoon and expect you will wish to travel straight home from the airport.