



JOSEPH
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Risk, trust and relationships

**THE LIVEABLE LIVES
STUDY: UNDERSTANDING
EVERYDAY HELP AND
SUPPORT**

ScotCen Social Research

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This paper:

- introduces the Liveable Lives project as a study of low intensity support in Glasgow;
- examines three specific accounts of help and support;
- identifies key themes for further investigation.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) commissioned this paper as part of its programme on risk, trust and relationships, which aims to investigate risk and trust in everyday relationships where support happens.

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Summary

How do we jointly construct and maintain the webs of ordinary support that make life 'liveable'; and what is it that can make the giving and receiving of such support difficult? How do we understand everyday help? As acts of kindness? As something to be 'paid back' or reciprocated? What do people think and feel about such interactions with those close to them and with others?

These questions lie at the heart of the Liveable Lives project – a major study of 'low intensity support' in Glasgow. The study is focused on three neighbourhoods in and around the city – Hillhead, Maryhill and Bearsden – chosen in part for their diversity, but also the strong social and geographical links between them.

Liveable Lives involves a range of different methods, but at its centre are a series of interviews with individuals about their experiences of everyday help and support. These took place over two meetings, with participants keeping a log in the intervening period of instances of help and support given and received, offered or accepted, withheld or declined. This served two main functions: first, to surface or capture instances of everyday help or support that might otherwise have passed unnoticed; and second, to prompt recall and discussion at the second interview.

This report introduces the study, its aims and methods; but, through a close engagement with three specific accounts of help and support – those of Suzie, Ivan and Ana – it also illustrates the potential richness of the study dataset as a whole; highlights some of the different ways in which such accounts can be read and understood (especially those relating to biographical, relational and structural themes); and identifies some of the key themes that will be explored during the remaining stages of the project. The accounts of Suzie, Ivan and Ana are all drawn from Maryhill and describe the experience of everyday help and support, its presence and its absence.

Emerging themes

This initial analysis is deliberately narrow but deep, exploring a handful of accounts in detail. Some important themes are already emerging and will be explored further during the remaining stages of the project. These include:

- The way that specific instances of help and support are 'nested' within layers of wider relationships and previous experience.
- The often blurred nature of the relationship between helping and being helped; the way that an individual's need for help can lead to them *giving*

help, and how the *inability* to offer help can lead to a reluctance to ask for it.

- The contrast between the way that people initially describe acts of help or support as spontaneous and their subsequent consideration of the potential emotional, material and physical costs/risks (to themselves and to others) of helping or being helped.
- The role in such deliberation of both general moral rules (for example, 'you shouldn't ask unless you have to') and specific considerations based on previous experience of particular individuals or situations.
- The iterative and incremental way in which trust develops through relatively small acts of help and kindness, and the blurred distinction between the practical and the emotional.
- The central role of mobility in many accounts of help and support. Mobility can help ensure that such help can be given – as in the case of Suzie's return to Maryhill in order to be closer to her father-in-law. But it can also create particular needs, such as Ana's need to have someone look after her car while she makes a trip back home, and challenges – both for individuals and communities.
- The importance of the physical *setting* of help – for example in back gardens or in stairwells – in explaining how help happens but also how people make sense of it. Linked to this is the relationship between 'real' physical settings and narratives of place.
- The potential tension between cohesion and exclusion within particular communities. Close-knit relationships and a sense of shared identity can provide a strong basis for mutual support but can also reinforce feelings of difference among those who come into the area from different communities, backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures.
- The sometimes compensatory and sometimes complementary character of the relationship between online and offline help and support.

1 Introduction

About the Liveable Lives study

How do we jointly construct and maintain the webs of ordinary support that make life 'liveable'; and what is it that can make the giving and receiving of such support difficult? How do we understand everyday help? As acts of kindness? As something to be 'paid back' or reciprocated? What do people think and feel about such interactions with those close to them and with others? These questions lie at the heart of the Liveable Lives project – a major study of 'low intensity support' funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Such support is both ordinary and hugely significant: ordinary in the sense of often being mundane, barely visible and taken for granted; significant because of the crucial role it can play – for all of us, but especially as we get older – in allowing us to lead 'liveable lives'. Although there is an existing body of research on social support and social networks, this tends to focus on questions of who is there for us or what support looks like. The focus of this project is instead on the question of *how* such support comes to happen (or not) and how that relates to questions about who is there for us and what it looks like. As such, it has a particular focus on relationships (and the stories we tell about them) and the way in which these shape – and are shaped by – the giving and receiving of everyday help and support. It aims to understand these interactions and relationships in the context of narratives about particular communities (both geographical and/or social), wider narratives about contemporary social life, and the concrete realities of life in particular social and economic contexts.

The project involves an intensive study of everyday support in the specific context of Glasgow – a location chosen both for its similarities with other urban settings but also its distinctive problems and identity. Using a range of research techniques (including talk-based and visual methods, diaries and observation) we are working with individuals and voluntary and community organisations as well as observing other types of spaces such as supermarkets and libraries. This work is happening in three very different areas in and around the city to build an understanding of how everyday support happens and of both the local and general factors that help and hinder that process and hence the possibilities for 'kinder communities'.

The study is being jointly led by ScotCen Social Research (part of NatCen Social Research – an educational charity and the UK's largest independent social

research institute) – and Dr Julie Brownlie, a sociologist at Edinburgh University. The research fellow for the project is Dr E-J Milne.

One of the aims of this interim report is to introduce the study, its aims and methods. But through a close engagement with three specific accounts of help and support – drawn from interviews with study participants – we also aim to illustrate the richness and complexity of the study dataset; show what a multi-level engagement with such issues might look like; and highlight emerging issues for exploration and analysis during the remaining stages of the project.

Three windows onto the ‘friendly city’: the study areas

We chose to focus the research on Glasgow for a number of reasons. Overall, we felt that the city offered both a generalisable post-industrial urban context and a distinctive sense of self and place. The narratives of Glasgow combine the identity of the socially-cohesive, ‘friendly city’ (Glasgow City Council, 1997; www.peoplemakeglasgow.com) with less positive stories of urban fragmentation, ill health (the so-called ‘Glasgow Effect’) and low social capital (GCPH, 2010). The city as a whole contains elements of affluence and deprivation; mono- and multiculturalism; statism and grassroots activism; and the urban and semi-rural. It also has strong traditions of both faith-based and secular support and community. So we felt there was sufficient diversity within Glasgow and sufficient similarities between Glasgow and other settings to merit this relatively tight geographical starting point.

The research is centred on three areas to the north of the river Clyde: Maryhill, Hillhead and Bearsden. These were chosen, in part, because of their diversity, but also because of the strong social and geographical links between them. We recognised that individual accounts and relationships of help and support would, of course, not be limited to these particular areas but extend outwards across the city, the rest of the country and indeed the rest of the world. However, we also expected the local to be highly significant in shaping, enabling and constraining everyday experiences of help and support and took these three areas as our entry points in trying to understand how such interactions occur and are sustained (or not).

We provide a brief pen picture here of Hillhead and Bearsden, and a slightly fuller portrait of Maryhill, as this is the area where fieldwork is nearest completion and from where, as a result, we have drawn the individual accounts that form the basis of this report. The portrait of Maryhill draws not only on secondary sources but on initial focus group work with residents of the area.

Hillhead is a small neighbourhood located in the centre of Glasgow's west end and is home to the University of Glasgow. Developed in the 1860s as part of a strategy to move residents out of the city centre, today the influence of the university overshadows the area. The area contains many students, former students and staff, as well as young professionals, and feels liberal and middle class – if also slightly transient, due to the age structure of its population. The nature of the housing stock (mainly tenements and Victorian houses converted into flats) means Hillhead has a higher number of people living on their own than the Scottish national average. The majority of tenants in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) rent from absentee landlords and developers, many of whom have bought up local housing stock from families and long-standing residents who have out-migrated to suburbs such as Bearsden.

Bearsden, located on the north-west fringes of Glasgow and actually lying within East Dunbartonshire council area, is often regarded as a suburb of the city because of its proximity and the number of people who commute from the area to the city for work. Bearsden originally developed on the back of the canal and railway connections, before experiencing further waves of expansion in the 1930s, 1960s and 1990s, which created its current contrasting communities. Bearsden is regarded as – and is – one of the most affluent communities in the West of Scotland. Its population is heavily weighted towards married couples (accounting for 63 per cent of households by contrast with a Scottish average of 49 per cent) and it has far fewer single young people or divorcees. One of the factors behind this is the lack of single person accommodation and also the fact that Bearsden has less social housing than any other area in Scotland.

Maryhill is situated in the north-west of Glasgow. With around 52,000 residents, the area stretches over three and a half miles along Maryhill Road from St George's Cross in the south, to the Garscube Bridge where the River Kelvin acts as a natural border between the City's outer reaches and Bearsden in East Dunbartonshire. In the 1970s and 80s the area was regarded as one of the most deprived in Scotland, and the frequently used term 'Maryhill Corridor' – first adopted in the 1970s by Glasgow City planners to describe Scotland's second largest regeneration project – also speaks to the role that Maryhill Road has as a transport thoroughfare out of Glasgow to the suburbs of Bearsden and the countryside beyond. Originally a village built at the end of the Eighteenth century after the extension of the Forth and Clyde canal, it grew rapidly in the late nineteenth century when heavy industries such as boat building, saw-milling and iron founding led to a large influx of workers, but suffered when such industries went into decline (Mitchell, 2007).

The area as a whole has pockets of gentrification and is no longer among the most deprived in Glasgow. However, significant problems remain, especially in relation to public health. Male life expectancy is five years lower than the Scottish national average and eleven years lower than in Bearsden, while women live five years less than the Scottish national average and eight years less than their counterparts in Bearsden (ScotPHO, 2010). There are also higher incidences of hospitalisation, particularly with regard to drug and alcohol related issues, and psychiatric admissions are more than twice the Scottish average.

Maryhill is an area that has gone through considerable change – reflected, and rooted in, significant shifts in housing provision. A narrative of decline – of Maryhill as not being ‘the way it used to be’ was heard in much of the ethnographic work for the project. This narrative is framed in terms of regeneration – old housing stock being demolished and new stock built, including the expansion of private ownership where there was previously social housing – and of new people coming to the area, including immigrants and asylum seekers. While for these ‘newcomers’ such changes may increase their sense of neighbourliness, the opposite is true for some from traditional white working class communities – especially those who have lived in the area their whole lives. (As we shall see later in the report, in such circumstances, both incomers and longer-term residents may end up feeling excluded, for different reasons.)

M5: “It used to be like a good neighbourhood because o’ the fact everybody knew everybody, but it’s no really like that now wi’ the influx o’ like foreign people moving into like Maryhill and stuff. So in my close, it used to be all people that grew up in Maryhill and surrounding areas, but now there’s a lot o’ different ethnic cultures an’ that, and then so ... so you don’t really *know* your neighbours. You just [say] “Hello”, and that’s it. My close is the same as that. Yeah. I’d say in the last 5, 10 years. It used to be all kinda Scottish people, but .. Yeah. It’s more a “Hello” now.”

M3: “You try and get on wi’ them, but they don’t really wannae let you in to their lives, you know, pretty much. Not that you’re prying or anything. You just want to say “Hello” and ...”

M5: “... be neighbourly if you like looking at it.”

M3: “*Neighbourly* kinda thing ...but .. er .. it’s [now] kinda standoff-ish.”

Excerpts from male focus group in Maryhill, April 2013

This shifting profile of neighbourhoods is linked to feelings of safety and security. The following extract from another focus group carried out at the start of the project touches on these concerns.

M5: "See like the ... the closes have got security doors on them, but you need them now. You didnae really need them years ago. I dinnae think you needed them."

M4: "I think more of the older generation done things like that. I mean you used to hear mum and dad talking about that ... and like slung out the window, "We're having a party the night. Want to come up to the party?"! I remember it never used to be like that; big bolt on your door and everything. You're no getting in."

M5: "... and a lot o' people get jealous that havenae got things, and they go, "They've left their door open, or their windae open", they'll climb in, steal your DVD player, and be away wi' it. And there's a lot o' drugs now as well."

M1: "Aye. Years ago, you never had that."

M2: "... everybody before was just the same."

M4: "As you were saying though, back then – like maybe the 40s and 50s – they never really had what we call *valuable* valuables."

M5: "Naebody had any money."

M4: "They basically would buy week to week. But now they've got their big plasma TVs and they've all got 80 degrees an' all that."

How the research is being carried out

Over the first few months of the project, we set out to understand more about the character of the three areas by carrying out ethnographic work, including walking interviews and observation of community spaces, reviewing local histories and statistics, and conducting a number of naturally occurring and structured focus groups. We then conducted a series of interviews with individuals about their experiences of everyday help and support. These took place over two meetings, with participants keeping a log in the intervening period of instances of help and support given and received, offered or accepted, withheld or declined. Participants kept the log in a variety of different ways, including handwritten notes, audio recordings, drawings or a text-diary. Whatever the method chosen, the log served two main functions: first, to surface or capture instances of

everyday help or support that might otherwise have passed unnoticed; and second, to prompt recall and discussion at the second interview.

In a small number of cases, we also conducted interviews with family members, friends or acquaintances of the core research participants. The aim here was to generate an alternative perspective on the same relationship or instance of help or support.

Finally, the research involved work in each area with a small number of informal and semi-formal groups and organisations providing either direct or indirect help and support to members of the community. Most of these organisations to date have been identified through participant interviews. As with the individual interviews, the aim was to understand more about what makes such help and support possible and sustainable in these organisational spaces, and about how they create or shape new or existing relationships.

Starting narrow: beginning the analysis

In the rest of this report, we provide an early glimpse of the type of insights that the study has to offer. We do this through an analysis that is deliberately deep and narrow – focusing on a close reading of three individual case studies from one of the study areas (Maryhill) rather than analysis that runs across the dataset as a whole. While this is a pragmatic approach – we needed to find a manageable way into what is already a huge volume of data – it reflects the key analytical focus of the study, the question of *how* everyday help and support happens in particular contexts, circumstances and relationships.

We are starting, then, not only with particular cases (participant accounts) but with particular instances of help and support within each of the three accounts and working outwards from there – looking for signs of the general in the particular. This method is especially helpful in allowing us to start to probe the multi-layered and cross-cutting context, outlined in the introduction to this report, which is the ultimate focus of this research. In other words, it allows us to highlight the complex and embedded character of individual acts or instances of help or support, and to identify and explore the different levels of analysis (individual/biographical, relational, socio-cultural and spatial) that will be required as the project progresses.

In what follows, we present brief readings of three specific participant accounts. In doing this, we are drawing very loosely – and as a heuristic device – on an approach called the ‘listening guide’. This comes from the work of Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan (1992) and has been developed by Doucet and

Mauthner (2008), and broadly involves different readings of the participant's original account or narrative; a 'biographical' reading that situates that account within an individual's life experience; a 'relational' reading that explores the relationships within the account; and a 'structural' reading that focuses on the physical and socio-economic context within which it occurs. (It is worth noting, though, that this approach is also associated with a strong emphasis on researcher reflexivity, which will be missing, at least explicitly in this initial phase, from our own analysis.)

For each example, we start with the log entry itself and then construct a version of 'what happened' from the participant's perspective, using their own words, though not necessarily in the order that they might originally have said them. This is the jumping off point for our other three readings: for the biographical, the relational (both in relation to the specific act and more widely) and the socio-economic, cultural and spatial. In practice, these often overlap – for example, most biographical accounts involve intimate relationships of various kinds, and both individual experiences and relationships unfold against the backdrop of particular communities and settings. We recognise that the notion of the structural we are invoking here is especially crude – and that networks and relationships as well as the narratives we tell about them can themselves have structural properties and realities. Nevertheless, the process of teasing out these different readings – however artificially separate – acts as an analytical brake, helping us to slow read and not jump to premature assumptions about what is going on.

In the next few pages, we show what such a reading looks like (and how potentially rich an individual account can be if explored in this way). We conclude the report by identifying some emerging themes from the project.

2 Three accounts of everyday help and support

Suzie's account: Fetching my god-daughter

"Was sitting out back in the sun. Got phone call from my friend (Maggie) telling me my god-daughter (Maggie's daughter) didn't like camping, she wouldn't sleep so as it was about 7pm I said we would go down on weds to pick her up. That way she could stay there with the rest of kids till the Sat. I love having my god-daughter so I was so happy."
Suzie's written log entry

Extracts from interviews with Suzie

"They had went on holiday. Normally, I get her a Wednesday and a Friday, but because they were going away for the week, I didnae get her. I didnae know what to dae wi' myself because I hadnae got her, and I thought, 'I'm no gonna phone her. It's too early to phone on the Monday, I'll wait a few days and *then* gie her a phone'. And then it just happened, she [Maggie] texted me on the Tuesday night, "Are you missing your girl? You'll maybe get her back earlier than you think". That's how we started it. She says, "I've no slept. The wean just willnae settle at all, she just hates it! We've tried everything; putting her into bed wi' the girls, putting her in beside us. She just willnae settle at all". And I says, "Well, what you wanting me to dae? D'you want me to come and get her?". And she went, "I don't know, I'll try her the night and see how things are but if she doesnae settle, we'll need to come hame". So I phoned her on the Wednesday and I says, "How did it go? You want me to come and get her? It'll let you have time wi' the others". And she told me "aye, If you don't mind". She knew she'd be all right here. I was on the phone, and he [my husband] went, "What is it?". I says, "The wean doesnae like camping. You wanting to go doon and get her?", and he was like, "Aye. If you want". You know what I mean? He knows how much I love the wean. He does an' all."

"Wednesday was just a hectic day. My husband took his dad shopping, as normal, so he came home at 12, so we were going [...] for our shopping, and I didnae realise we were three hours ... So it was a mad rush to get everything all done, then go doon and get her. When we went there, we stayed for a few hoors so that we didnae just go there and take the wean. We sat for about three hoors. When I went and got her, she didnae even greet. Normally, she kinda girns when she's saying cheerio to her mum,

but she didnae even bother. She just sat in the chair, and I think before we got oot o' the place she was sound asleep. We didnae get back till about 10 o'clock. I had her until Saturday."

"I phoned her [Maggie] every day to tell her how she was. I let her talk to her, although she wouldnae talk back. At least she was kinda talking to her every day, sometimes twice. And then on the Saturday I phoned her [Maggie]. I says, "When are you hame?" and she went "I'm hame noo. Bring her doon", and then we took her doon but I had all her claes, and Maggie went, "You've got all her claes, and you've got her, but that doesnae mean to say you've to keep her, I want her back!" Sleep the whole day. And that's what I done on Saturday. And then, Sunday, I was as bright as a button. You know what I mean? I think it just, all the energy had been knocked oot o' me, having the wean probably, so when I got rid of the wean on Saturday, that was me."

"I just love getting her. I would have her here all the time."

Biographical themes in Suzie's account

Suzie describes spending most of the day collecting her god-daughter, three days looking after her and then taking to her bed the day after she leaves. Her availability, but also her exhaustion, is linked to a chronic health condition. Despite – or perhaps because of – these health problems, Suzie describes throwing herself into a range of activities. In fact, she explicitly links the help she gives – and her engagement with those around her more generally – to her own difficulties: 'When I [experienced health condition], I started to kinda be more helpful. Obviously [before], I was busy daein' things'.

She is now closely involved with a range of activities and classes, as well as the lives of various close family members and friends and neighbours in the area. Her home seems to be constantly full of other people's children and other 'strays', as she puts it.

Another strong biographical element in her account is the pull of family ties and responsibilities. Although born in Maryhill, Suzie and her husband had lived in other parts of the city for many years but returned because of her father-in-law's ill health. Although they were living reasonably close to him, they did not feel close enough to provide the level of support they wanted to:

Suzie: "[My husband's] mum died a few years ago right enough, but that's what brought us here – because he's the next o' kin. So, whenever they

phoned him, it was taking him 20 minutes, half an hour to get there, you know, so we thought, “No. We need to get closer, just on the off chance”.”

Interviewer: “So were you doing the support for them as well?”

Suzie: “Yeah. He, he still is. D'you know what I mean?”

Interviewer: “Oh. His dad.”

Suzie: “For his dad. Yeah. He takes his dad shopping every week, and takes him to the barber, chiropodists. Whenever he wants, he just phones and he'll go and take him. Know what I mean? So as well as looking after me, he's looking after them. You know what I mean? ... Yeah. Sometimes he feels as if he's getting pulled. D'you know what I mean? But he does it anyway – just at the drop o' a hat. He just jumps whenever he [father] phones, which is good. D'you know what I mean?”

Although Suzie was dependent on her husband driving her to collect her god-daughter, the actual help she then offered – babysitting – is something that Suzie spends much of her time involved in because of her own family history and grandchildren. Although her view of relationships is fairly gendered – men, she suggests, are ‘for DIY’ – much of the help she herself offers others is practical, including babysitting and filling in forms (‘that’s one thing I’m good at’), and springs from her own life experience.

Relational themes in Suzie’s account

The log encounter revolves around a friendship between Suzie and a younger woman, Maggie, a single mother who lives nearby. But it is also embedded in Suzie’s relationships with her own husband and with Maggie’s child, Suzie’s god-daughter.

Suzie’s relationship with Maggie – whom she describes as ‘just a really nice young lassie’ – has involved Suzie looking after Maggie’s daughter two days a week ‘since the week she was born’. But this relationship involves a degree of reciprocity (a ‘two way street’), with both practical and emotional dimensions. ‘If there's anything I need done, she'll be the first to do it’; ‘She helps me mentally’. Two things seem to underpin this relationship/friendship: a recognition of shared character disposition (‘she's like me, she'll help anyone’), and a sense of sedimented trust.

“At first wi' Maggie, I didnae know whether to trust her; [...], but obviously as I got to know her then I realised “Well, aye. She's one that I *can* trust”.

There is nae many that I could say, I could tell them my life story and nothing would get said about it.”

This is based on observation and experience of how the younger woman has handled potentially sensitive situations involving others. Here, for instance, Suzie describes how Maggie let her know that a mutual friend might need help without breaching the friend’s confidence.

“She would say, “Suzie, Mary was talking to me. Want to go and make sure she’s OK?”, knowing what she’d told her ... and I’d say, “How? What is it?”. She’d be, “Just go and see her”, and ... and I would go and see her. You know what I mean? So then I knew, “Right. Well, she’s no telling me what Mary’s problem is, so she wouldnae say anything about me either”.”

Whether or not the level of Suzie’s involvement with her god-daughter ever leads to tension is not clear, although Maggie’s words, while humorous in tone, certainly touch on the level of the intensity of Suzie’s involvement: ‘I want her back!’. Suzie clearly sees this relationship of help continuing in to the future, as she talks of having a ‘a room for [her god-daughter] when she’s a bit older that she’ll go into’.

The care Suzie provides for her god-daughter goes well beyond a simple response to someone else’s need, and appears to have huge emotional significance for her. Indeed, the relationship she describes is closer than many inter-generational family relationships. In the map that Suzie draws in her first interview, it transpires that her god-daughter has simply been absorbed into the category of ‘grandchildren’.

While Suzie states the actual offer of help involved no reflection on her part – ‘I just open my mooth!’ – in the account of the conversation Suzie has with her husband immediately after the phone call, she clearly makes sense of the offer of help through her relationship with the child – ‘he [husband] knows how much I love the wean’. All of this signals the difficulty in this instance of thinking in terms of the ‘helper’ and the ‘helped’: in fact, in her second framing of the encounter later in the interview, Suzie this time recalls it is her and *not* Maggie who uses the expression: ‘if you don’t mind’. This again points to the degree to which Suzie herself is receiving something, as much as offering.

“And I says, “Well, I’ll come and get her, and it’ll let you have time wi’ the others”, I says, “if you don’t mind”. She went, “It’s a bit long”. I says, “Well, what you want to dae? Lose your holiday and disappoint the other kids or whatever?””

The other key relationship in Suzie's account is that with her husband, whom she describes as her 'main carer' and as the one who 'does everything just about'. As a result of his dual caring role (for her and his father), she is careful not to 'burden' him emotionally – 'put too much on him'. Instead, she often turns to female friends/neighbours, like Maggie, who live locally. In particular, she turns to her immediate neighbour who has, in the years they have lived beside each other, become a close friend. While they did not know each other directly when Suzie moved in, they were known to each other through one of Suzie's relatives. She sees this as a reciprocal relationship based on proximity, but it is one that she closely monitors. She describes the work of holding back – 'I can tell her that, I cannae tell her that other thing' – and has confidence that she can read her neighbour's capacity to listen – 'I can tell when she's able enough'. As with her relationship with Maggie, this relationship is also cross generational and Suzie sees herself giving advice as an older, more experienced, mother. It also has an everyday helping-out quality, with her neighbour running errands because Suzie is unable to get out easily. For Suzie, this sense of shared awareness, understanding and experience is not to be found in relationships with professionals.

These relationships with local women (and their husbands in so far as they offer practical help) combine with her involvement in a whole range of local groups and classes to offer a dense network of potential help and support. In fact, reflecting in the second interview on her mapping from the first interview, Suzie notes 'I didn't realise how many folk I kinda depend on, if you know what I mean ... the kinda scale it was on'. This touches on the extent to which interdependencies need to be surfaced, though tellingly Suzie recalls this as *her* dependency on others, while the mapping included others' dependency on her.

Starting out with the specific relationship involved in the encounter recorded by Suzie in the log, we see how making sense of those relationships means understanding other relationships not mentioned or mentioned only in passing. The demands of Suzie's husband's caring role for his father as well as for Suzie, for instance, shapes the emotional relationships Suzie has with local female friends which, in turn, leads to her offering childcare such as that described in the log.

Structural themes in Suzie's account

While, as we saw above, Suzie links her interest in helping others to her experience of ill health, she also understands the 'sort of person' she is – someone who, according to her husband, 'brings all the strays home' – as rooted in being brought up in a particular area. 'I was brought up in [name] Road, that's

the way everybody was. You know what I mean? They all helped each other'. This is also part of a wider narrative about the city of Glasgow as a friendly city which Suzie invests in – a contrast narrative partly structured around the differences between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Just as Suzie contrasts the warmth of Glasgow with the coldness of Edinburgh, she also compares Maryhill with richer areas of Glasgow, primarily Bearsden. These more general positive place narratives are maintained alongside a biographical narrative that is, on the contrary, about the everyday *risks* of living in Maryhill. Suzie, in fact, originally left Maryhill because of the risks she saw the area posing.

Suzie: “Where I stayed in Maryhill, the kids were starting to kinda do drugs and hang about the close and things, and they wouldnae move to let you in and out wi' shopping an' things, and when I contacted Glasgow City Council they told me best thing to do is keep my own kids in. That's what they would do. And I thought, “I'm sorry. No”. Either he was gonna end up in jail, strangling one o' the kids because they werenaie.”

Interviewer: “Is that, that's your husband?”

Suzie: “Yeah, because they wouldnae move when I was coming in wi' shopping, and I just sat one night and I thought, “No. Tae hell wi' it”, and I went private let to get away.”

Years later, having returned to Maryhill, Suzie finds there are still problems. She worries about gang fights and has heard cautionary tales of where these fights now are – ‘I believe it has started now at the round building’. These threats are juxtaposed with the sense of lost community – a community which was literally, in Suzie's eyes, built into the buildings: ‘[Name] Road was a community when it was the tenements’. This, Suzie suggests, is ‘a shame’ for the ‘good people’ in the area. Even though many of the same people have moved in to the new homes, drawing on persistent narratives of the loss of community and of nostalgia for a golden age of open doors, Suzie believes the risk now is of being ‘ransacked’ because of the ‘drug thing’.

Maryhill is an area that has gone through considerable change – reflected, and rooted in, significant shifts in housing provision. This narrative of Maryhill as ‘not the way it used to be’ is one that was also heard through the ethnographic work for the project, including through the walking interviews and the focus groups. As we saw earlier, it is a narrative framed in terms of regeneration – and of ‘incomers’.

The extent to which these changes lead to actual increased risks is open to debate and it is a question that troubles Suzie. On the one hand she believes current residents have forgotten what their own children got up to, yet, at the same time, the current generation of young people are positioned as different, as *threatening*. She also distinguishes between different groups of residents: 'I'm no saying that everybody's all totally changed; some still look out for each other'. Her relationship with her immediate neighbour described above is a case in point and is reflected in the porous nature of their homes: walls are knocked on to gain each other's attention – 'they bang the wall tae each other' – garden furniture and toys are shared, material boundaries between the homes are usurped – '(we) keep saying we're to go and dae away wi' the fence'. This is contrasted with those neighbours where the maintenance of property boundaries symbolises a lack of relationship – 'all the rest have put six foot fences up'. When Suzie in her log entry states she was sitting out 'the back', this means sitting out with neighbours in view of others. In fact, some of Suzie's other log entries emerge out of this shared space – sharing of teabags, offers of childcare, and so on. Weather also shapes the potential for interaction: 'we've just been sitting out the back most o' the time'; 'the weather was kinda nice, so we just kinda sat oot'.

Although Suzie's sense of community is highly geographically proximate, it is worth noting she also maintains membership of several virtual communities. On Facebook, she has 4,500 friends – 'because o' games' – though only 150 that she 'talks to constantly' and which 'I could tell you about them because I know about them'. As in her offline relationships, she occasionally relies on, or helps, others to achieve specific objectives within the games that she plays.

Several of the relationships she has developed online have moved offline with people coming from across the world to stay with her in Maryhill and her visiting others. These transitions between offline and online communities have not always been successful, in part because people have not always been as honest as they could have been about who they are. Nevertheless, these online relationships are important to consider not just because they are a facet of Suzie's everyday interactions (including helping) and have offline implications for the support she offers – including offering accommodation to 'online' friends – but also because they take up a large amount of time – 'I could go on the computer from 9 in the morning, and still be there at 12 at night'.

Ivan's account: 'I'm not sure who I would have asked'

Ivan had no entries in his log. He was ill for the entire period.

Extracts from interviews with Ivan

"It's been very quiet now for 10 days. [I've] absolutely nothing to record in my help and support log. I hadn't been out the house and I've had no contact with anybody, and I haven't phoned anyone, and the only phone call I've received in 10 days has been from you to make this appointment."

"[Asking for help] would have been fine but um, to get any would have virtually been more of a challenge than just to get on with things really. Doing anything was too much and too painful. The only neighbour capable of being asked, one works nights and I'm not sure what hours his partner keeps. People do keep very much to themselves. I'm sure I could probably ask the young couple with two children but again I've had no reason to. I'm sure they'd help if um, if I really needed it but the question is one of scale, did I *really* need it? I had enough, I could have probably, I would have liked um, I had aspirin and paracetamol and that sort of thing in my first aid but I didn't have some other things that I ran out of. Another one that they could have just got from the chemist without a prescription or from Tesco's but um, och it wasn't critical. It would have been better."

"I'm not sure who I would have asked; I would probably just have done without. It would be the energy and the effort to ask somebody. I mean your next stage as I said, your next stage is third party interventions from your GP organising whatever you know, as far as I can understand it, I mean, that's really the only entry into everything is via a GP so I think I would phone them and, um, take it from there."

"It's one of those things where you miss the fact that you are alone, it would have been nice for someone to make me a simple meal, um, something you know, I was actually making myself worse. The next step from where I was wasn't a neighbour, the next step was the GP – not a neighbour. I was as close as you can get to the stage where actually I wasn't capable of looking after myself. But you can be like that for quite a reasonable period of time before you actually need help, it's not ideal but it's not um, uh and it's, remarkably normal um, across the country that a lot of people just don't get the help."

Biographical themes in Ivan's account

Ivan's lack of diary entries is symptomatic of a decade of isolation due to ongoing health issues and a sense of difference from those around him. As a 'middle class' man who moved to Maryhill over a decade ago as a student, his interviews tell the tale of an 'outsider' who stayed in Maryhill not by choice, but because of circumstance.

As a student, his networks were through a local university where he socialised with friends and fellow students and volunteered on community projects. At this point he saw his time in Glasgow as transitory: 'I was only passing by and in my head it was never my home. I don't have friends local to Maryhill, neighbours changed. People were quite unfriendly'. However, having stayed in Glasgow to work after university, several years ago, Ivan's life changed following some serious health problems.

During this time, his university social group 'dispersed to the four winds' and now 'the only phone calls I get are people who want to sell you something'. Still in poor health, Ivan is no longer able to work or volunteer and has been unable to formulate what he wants to do in the next stage of his life.

Relational themes in Ivan's account

The emptiness of Ivan's log reflected his capacity for self-reliance, the minimal nature of his support network and, particularly, his lack of geographically proximate friends. Too ill to get out of bed during the period covered by the log, he stayed there until he had recuperated enough to rely on 'emergency' food supplies in his cupboard. His self-reliance he saw as a necessity – the result of living among people he felt he had little in common with: 'Most of the people I've come across aren't really similar you know, um, they're from a different background. [Where] I live there is no one there, they're neighbours; there's nothing wrong with them. But um, they're not my friends and we've got nothing in common'. His decision not to pick up the phone to 'the handful of people' he trusted was also practical – they all lived some distance away and would, therefore, be unable to visit him. But it was also a calculated choice to avoid burdening those emotionally close to him: 'I'm very careful not to ask those other people that you do trust unless you really need'.

This wish to avoid placing a burden on others was based upon a deeply held moral judgment and, when he did have to ask, he was careful not to transfer any sense of obligation to them:

Ivan: “Well you tell someone what you need and you always give them the option of just saying ‘no’ okay. Uh, I think what is very nasty in life is where people try to present you with ... trying to morally blackmail you to do, where if you say ‘no’ you’re made to feel like a shit! You don’t say ‘you’re my only hope’. That is really a nasty way of doing things and I’ve known people in life who do that on a very regular basis! And they’re just manipulative, it’s a devious way of asking people to help you so how you ask people to help you I think is also important. Um, so people have a choice.”

Interviewer: “So is that part of you holding back because of obligation, or people feel that they’re morally obliged to help you?”

Ivan: “Yes that’s part of me, I, that’s, it’s a moral judgment I make that you don’t impose on people, if you’re going to ask people for help you’re honest with them, you don’t mislead them as to the significance of whatever it is, or how much you need it or whatever else yeah, honesty is pretty important. I don’t feel I’m being burdened if someone asks me, I feel I’m being used, if someone asks me in a particular kind of way um, then I just have to deal with it as best I can. But that hasn’t been done for a very long time.”

Ivan was very aware that, as his health and financial position had worsened, he was not only more reluctant to ask people for help, but others were also less likely to ask, or rely on him – rendering him more isolated still. This is a complex cycle of interactions, the beginnings of which are difficult to pinpoint, in which Ivan frames both his and others’ reactions in his declining fortunes. For Ivan, being able to help people was inextricably linked with being fit and having access to money.

Ivan: “The more you’ve got or the more people think you’ve got, whereas these days the less you have people tend not to bother you! [Laughter] They say “oh he can’t help so”.”

Interviewer: “Is that around material things or is that around physical strength or – ”

Ivan: “Well material things, physical strength, whatever. If you’re young, fit, you’ve got a car, lots of money and all these kinds of things people, there’s a different range of things that people can ask you to help with, the less you have the less people perceive that you know the different things that they might be asking you for. In the past I’ve been asked to do all sorts of things, but there you go.”

Structural themes in Ivan's account

Ivan's view of himself as an outsider in Maryhill has been shaped not only by his ill health but also by class and educational differences. This highlights the way that a community experienced by one person as supportive and close-knit may be experienced very differently by another. Ivan was acutely aware of class differences, even though he felt uncomfortable with the term: 'Maryhill is working class. I don't like using that word but people understand that'. His education meant that he felt that he had little in common with his neighbours, and had nowhere to meet people of his own socio-economic background. This was highlighted when he explained that he didn't take part in local activities because he was used to being the person who ran, not participated, in them.

Although Ivan's stay in Maryhill was originally intended to be temporary, his health problems had limited his income significantly. This led to him being resigned to staying in his current accommodation, in a locality where he had no friends and is socially isolated: 'it's probably going to be somewhere I live, you know, for the rest of my life. You run out of choices. You need an income to make choices. I mean in the back of my mind is just the very thought of who on earth would want to live in Glasgow, in my home?' While Ivan perceives himself to be different, in economic terms his resources are typical of many of his neighbours. Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics for his locality shows that 46 per cent of residents were income deprived and 33 per cent of residents were in receipt of benefits related to ill health and disability (SNS 2010).

Reflecting on Ivan's empty log book we can see how his ill health and different socio-economic and cultural identities, in combination with his reluctance to 'morally blackmail people' by asking for help, meant that he had learnt to rely on himself – something which left him 'alone'.

When read together, Ivan's and Suzie's accounts show how ill health cannot be viewed in isolation. In Ivan's case, it combined with other biographical factors to further disconnect him, whereas in Suzie's case it reinforced her connections. Another key difference between the two is that while Suzie's ill health had led her to spend considerable time online, Ivan chose not look to the internet for social contact.

Ana's account: Asking a friend to look after my car

“Today is the third of June. I've been searching online to see if there's any available flights so I can book for me and my daughter to go and visit my parents for a short, very short visit. But before I book the flight I have to find ... somebody who can look after my car, because I'm afraid to leave the car unattend[ed] on my public car park, in my premises. So I have no other, not a lot of friends to call and ask this favour, so I call my, my friend the colleague that ... studied together in one of the courses. So I call him and I just ask if he can take care of my car for the time I'm away. So he, he said there is no problem and he promised, actually he arranged to come ... and get the key and get the car on a day before I go. I do trust the guy.”
Ana's audio log entry.

Extracts from interviews with Ana

“I have nobody [else] to call, honestly.”

“I didn't ask the garage, it's all money matters. He's professional he's doing the job but it's kind of more business relationship than a personal, I think, so it's business only and anyway, it's a different relationship. So I decide not to go over there plus I expect that he's going to charge some money. There's no free lunch.”

“And I don't have other one to ask for this favour. Not that I didn't have one. I have kind of other people, but I don't want everybody to know where I'm going and give my life, take my car and do whatever you want, you know.”

“This is the second time [I asked my friend]. [When I asked him this time] I didn't go and play in my head, examining my thinking. I just call and see what happened. I knew that he was going to say yes, I knew it! And I know this is like, everything is a small favour, “it's no problem”. You predict [how] somebody behaves and say, “ok, he's going to help anyway”. He's always “no worry”. Everything for him is very [punctual]. When I say 10 o'clock, he says it will be 10 o'clock. I do trust the people who keep their word and, as I said, this doesn't happen overnight, it's been a kind of number of years. I have no other choice you know.”

“If I need some help, some practical help then I call on him and he comes and if he's free doing some stuff, so that's, that's kind of how things work.”

I've been giving him some money but a very, very little, like just to cover the petrol and so there wasn't, so very, very free. I don't know, I can't explain. I don't think that's going to be forever, it's just this particular time of my life. He's sweet. I don't think I'm... things going to keep for a long, long, long years and years – everybody at some point moves on different way and probably lost the connections.”

Biographical themes in Ana's account

Ana's account is powerfully shaped by her experience of being an immigrant to the UK. Ana describes her need to find someone to look after her car while she goes back to her home country to visit her parents. She does not feel she can leave her car unattended but lack of money as an unemployed single mother means she is unable to leave it parked at a local garage. With few people she feels she can trust and also needing someone to keep an eye on her flat, Ana splits the tasks and asks a friend she knew from college to look after her car and the project researcher to look after her home and plants. After the researcher declined, in order to maintain professional boundaries, Ana consequently asked her neighbour. These two 'friends' and one other woman, who also emigrated from countries neighbouring Ana's own, are the only people in the UK whom Ana trusts: 'I don't have other one to ask for this favour'; 'I've not got any option than to ask him for that'. While this lack of choice would contradict what some would see as fundamental to the definition of trust (Brownlie *et al*, 2008), as we see below, Ana's description of her friendship with Richard also highlights a crucial dimension of trust – its embeddedness in familiarity.

Having arrived in the UK with a partner who chose Glasgow because of its migrant community, she and her daughter became homeless when the relationship ended. This and several ensuing experiences meant that she had to learn to be self-reliant to survive 'you must learn to depend on yourself first I think so to feel comfortable, and feel strong enough to be on your own'. Ana reflected back on how she used to be and how her outlook had changed over the years: 'I used to be so open and friendly person, open'; 'I know that there are some good people, they can exist, but I change. My philosophy before was trust anyone until they prove you wrong. Now don't trust until they prove you wrong!'

This transformation from an outgoing, open person who sought to interact with people and seek mutual support to someone who was isolated, distrustful and 'paranoid' about people's – especially men's – intent was the result of several events which had occurred over the previous few years. These incidents led Ana to reformulate her presumption of trust. It also led to her seeking and giving help and support to migrant women from neighbouring countries to her own who had

a shared experience and could offer empathy and understanding: 'help and support I think is coming basically from people who are in the same position and they've been suffering to the hard times, so they know how you feel and the support has come from foreigners who are in the same situation that I am in and they kind of don't have, don't have nobody so, you know and I have nobody.'

While Ana expressed sadness that she felt unable to trust people, particularly men, her experiences reinforced her vulnerability, transforming her disposition from one of openness and trust to a position of inherent distrust where people were 'spies'. Consequently there was a need to test people's motives and construct boundaries to protect herself and her daughter. One way she interpreted what was going on was to construct her life as a spiritual struggle and test, where all things happen for a reason, including people coming into and out of your life, aiding you at different stages but also testing you:

"My philosophy is that life is kind of, its more or less a spiritual journey to me, and if you meet people there must be a reason because do you need these people for this time of your life for some reason, you don't need to keep them for ever, you just don't need to drag them you know?"

Relational themes in Ana's account

As there is a financial cost to Ana of choosing to store her car in a garage, her only alternative is to ask a member of her very limited circle of friends, and in fact there is only one person whom she feels that she can ask and trust to do this.

The friendship with Richard – who was also interviewed as part of the study – had evolved over five years since they met on a college course. He spoke of why he befriended her:

"Ana was on the course but there were some wee neds. They're sitting with their earphones in – boom boom boom – and they're smoking dope in the morning before they go into the class! Ana was older and more sensible and it was a shame for her because ... she used to get some stick. She was there on her tod and naebody was speaking to her. And you could see all she wanted to do was learn and I was like, so I used to go and speak to her. I would go and sit with her. So the reason why I stuck it 'oot is because I was determined because it was an injustice and I thought, "silly wee boys, I'm no' going to let them" and I felt sorry. I don't know, I think it's called having a heart maybe!"

Richard, friend of Ana

“I’m trying to think why did I do it? And I’m thinking because I probably put myself in her shoes and I wouldnae have liked it myself if I was copping that amount of abuse etcetera. And I think it’s the old saying for bad people to prevail it only takes the good people not to do anything, something like that, anyway, do you know what I mean? I could see another human being in distress I suppose and I just wanted to help.”
Richard, friend of Ana

As the course progressed, Ana began to trust Richard, later on relying on him to help her with her car – ‘So that’s how things happen, just slowly, slowly gradually’.

Since this event, Richard has been Ana’s main port of call when she needs help or advice, although: ‘We don’t be in touch constantly. If I need some help, some practical help then I call on him and he’s come, if he’s free, that’s kind of how things work’. The friendship was very much linked to practical tasks, with Richard being her ‘go to’ person for practical help.

An important element of the relationship was that Ana could pay Richard a nominal amount to cover his petrol or materials. This was a ‘symbolic ... ten or twenty pounds’ which meant that Ana was not indebted to him or expected to repay him through alternative means. The exchange of money allowed them both implicitly, and explicitly, to create a friendship that was free of suspicion regarding motive and also relieved them of future obligations or opportunities to take, or claim, advantage. Again there are important questions being raised here about the nature of trust and reciprocity and the boundaries that we place round these – in Ana’s case, through introducing elements of financial reimbursement

One of the ways that Ana found to make sense of her general isolation – and to withdraw from potentially negative friendships – was to focus on her relationship with God and draw sustenance from that: ‘People who are really spiritual and involved in some different religion or whatever, they understand, they don’t need to be attached to somebody just to feel secure’. She also felt that having time with her child and focusing on her spiritual journey meant that her energy was kept for herself and her daughter, rather than ‘drained’ by the effort of sustaining relationships which she saw as ‘work’ that overloaded her ‘life with extra emotion’ and led to ‘exhaustion’.

At the same time, however, she is aware that isolation might not be good for her mental health, or for her child’s development:

“I don’t like it and I don’t know how to fix it, it’s getting worse actually. I don’t want, I don’t, I don’t want this, my feeling to be like that, like shut

down and, urrrgh, I don't want this, it's not healthy, it's not healthy for me. You need contacts and you need to be more open, but how can keep the balance to be open and the same time to be kind of cautious and say 'oh, oh' and to know where to stop?"

Structural themes in Ana's account

As a relative newcomer to both Glasgow and Maryhill, having arrived here only a few years ago, Ana is still settling into a locality where she feels like an outsider and regarded with suspicion by some:

"Some people don't like progress, some people don't like that foreigners like me can have many things that other people cannot afford and they can get jealous in some way. And even if they pretend to be friendly, that's why sometimes behind a good motive you don't know really the motive."

With little historical or socio-economic knowledge through which to understand the area and locate herself, she has had to rely on other people's knowledge, for example the housing association she rents her property through 'the housing officer told me that it's one of the desirable places and I realised that it's a good place to live'. Ana is very aware that she is still getting to know Maryhill and her sense of the area might not tally with statistics and others' knowledge, particularly with regards to crime and safety. In her interview Ana mentioned 'I've heard it's the highest crime; Glasgow has the highest crime in the UK by statistic. So in one way it's friendly but in another way you need to be kind of cautious'. She then went on to say it is 'not advisable to walk after 10 o'clock on the street', and how, when she first moved to her flat three years ago 'I didn't kind of know it's not so safe'. This led to a tale of an emergency trip to the supermarket at 10 o'clock one night:

"On the way back the police car stopped and said, asked me, am I alright? I said "yes, I just went to..." and I was shocked you know? Why are they asking me? I'm alright! Do I need help? There was really concern about my well-being."

Ana went on to talk of how other people had also warned her about being on the streets after dark '[A] similar experience I have after 10pm – the dog walkers, they tell me you don't want to go after dark, after dark, we don't like to go out after dark for safety reasons; it's not so safe to go out after certain time'. As a consequence of these stories, Ana had developed a sense of Glasgow and Maryhill being places where one needed to be aware of crime and safety issues. She had consequently begun to warn family members where it was safe and

unsafe to walk. In addition she had varied her former practices and now avoided the canal:

“It’s quite a dangerous place, taking a walk by yourself – it’s not recommended, you don’t know who you’re going to meet. Sometimes even for me it’s kind of, I’m afraid to go. We can take a walk through the canal when the weather is good and sunny, but during the day. I’m not going at 7 or 8 o’clock by myself walking.”

This growing awareness of narratives of safety and vulnerability after dark contrasted with Ana’s actual experiences of Maryhill where she had found people to be friendly and kind, due in part to her having a child. She spoke of the kindness of strangers, how they would stop her and give her money as a ‘good omen’ for her daughter, to buy her sweets, and how strangers had given her toys or presents for her daughter while out shopping. This tradition she found ‘a little bit strange – I mean you don’t know how to react, you know?’ – although she welcomed the fact that the presence of a child bought her ‘respect’ and made people ‘more tolerable, more soft’. On balance, while Ana’s experiences point to a ‘friendly’ city, the received ‘cautionary’ narratives seem to trump her experiences or, at the very least, sit ambivalently alongside them.

3 Emerging themes

Although this initial analysis has been extremely narrow – and has drawn primarily on the interview accounts of core participants in one area, rather than the full range of data emerging from the study – some important themes are already emerging.

- Specific instances of help and support tend to be nested within layers of relationships and previous experience. While we have focused here on three examples from within ongoing or existing relationships, even the simplest acts of help (including apparently ‘random acts of kindness’ like Richard’s first offer of help to Ana on her course) are likely to have roots that go deeper and wider.
- Often, those roots lead to other relationships and the connection between these various relationships is variable – some complement each other (for instance, the way that Suzie’s relationship with her husband makes possible the level of her involvement with her god-daughter) while others may be compensatory (such as Richard’s involvement in Ana’s life following the breakdown of her relationship).
- The accounts explored here illustrate the blurred nature of the relationship between helping and being helped. It is not just that the gains from helping – such as feeling valued, useful, busy, loved, indebted to – can make this distinction almost meaningless, as Suzie’s account about looking after her god-daughter illustrates. Suzie’s involvement with her god-daughter while ‘everyday’ in nature, is also a considerable commitment – physically and emotionally – yet because Suzie’s feelings for the child and what the relationship gives her – she does not frame this as a burden. These accounts also illustrate the ways in which the need for help can lead to the giving of help (as seen in Suzie’s increasing immersion in community activity following the onset of her health problems), and how the inability to offer help can lead to a reluctance to ask for it and (at least a perception) that others no longer request help (as in Ivan’s account).
- While people may find it difficult to acknowledge (to themselves or others), or to articulate that their acts of help are anything but spontaneous (‘I didn’t think about it, I just asked’), in fact their narratives of helping often show that they are reflexive both about the potential affective, material and physical costs/risks to themselves and to others of helping or being helped.

- It is clear that, in deciding whether to seek or to offer help, people apply both general moral rules – for instance, Ivan’s rule that ‘you don’t impose on people’ – and specific considerations based on previous experience of particular individuals or situations and material or other constraints. Sometimes, as in Ana’s case, specific bad experiences can transform an individual’s general willingness to trust.
- Although Ana’s account illustrates how trust in others can be lost, it also – in its account of her relationship with Richard – demonstrates how it can be developed and reinforced over time through relatively small acts of help and kindness. Suzie’s account, too, provides an example of the layering up of trust – in this case, in the ability of key confidantes to handle sensitive situations and information appropriately.
- As such, it is probably not meaningful to think of practical and emotional help as distinct categories: apparently small acts of practical help can, in themselves, be deeply emotionally significant (for instance, offering food at times of severe crisis, such as bereavement) and can certainly help to underpin subsequent emotional disclosure by helping to create and sustain a sense of connection.
- The physical *setting* of help – for example in back gardens or in stairwells – is crucial both in making sense of how help actually happens but also in how people make sense of how it happened and the accounts they give about *why* it happened. Accounts of helping or being helped are deeply moral. To an extent, they might become moral in the telling as, in effect, people are being asked to ‘account’ for the presence or absence of help but they also appear to speak to everyday morality in action. This sense of morality suffuses understanding of local contexts. In Maryhill, for example, accounts of helping are related to regeneration or decline – that is, to people’s beliefs about what the change in housing stock means for relations of responsibility towards neighbours. These are also stories about what it means to live in Glasgow. The lure of the friendly city narrative is such that people can be drawing on it – and gaining credibility from it – while *at the same time*, telling stories of exclusion and lack of safety. As the project progresses, this interplay between ‘real’ physical settings and narratives of place will be explored in more detail. In particular, we will be looking for those narratives that are present across all three areas and those which are distinctive to each.
- Many of the accounts are about mobility (or lack of mobility), linked to the search for more ‘liveable lives’. Mobility can help to ensure that needs for

help and support are met – as in the case of Suzie’s return to Maryhill in order to be closer to her father-in-law. But it can also create particular needs, such as Ana’s need to have someone look after her car while she makes a trip back home, and challenges – both for individuals and communities. At an aggregate or community level, mobility can disrupt the capacity of communities to maintain a sense of cohesion, trust and shared identity; at an individual level, of course, it can disrupt relationships with family and friends, leaving people feeling isolated. Immobility also brings challenges at both individual and community level: making it difficult, for instance, for Ivan to physically leave a place where he feels he does not belong and creating a discourse of exclusion that affects those who are seen as ‘mobile’, such as newcomers to an area.

- This potential tension between cohesion and exclusion within particular communities also needs investigating. Close-knit relationships and a sense of shared identity can provide a strong basis for mutual support – as illustrated by the accounts of traditional tenement life in Maryhill. But they can also reinforce feelings of difference among those who come into the area from different communities, backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures – as in the cases of Ana and Ivan. Overall, these three accounts show the variation in the way that particular geographical communities are experienced by those within them; and, as such, the difficulty of developing solutions that will work for all.
- While some people’s use of online communities is directly linked to the restrictions they feel in their local or offline worlds – and is, for instance, a response to isolation or disability – the online and the offline also complement and merge into each other. This is nicely illustrated by the way that Suzie is visited in Maryhill by individuals she has met online.

This initial, highly focused engagement with a small number of cases within one of the study areas will now be used to guide and shape analysis of the dataset as a whole. Moving between these different levels, we hope to understand the complexity and dynamics of individual lives (and, indeed, individual decisions, acts and relationships within those lives), but also to identify variations and patterns across the three areas and the diverse range of people living within them. In both types of analysis, we hope to hold on to the interplay – signalled here – between individual biography, relationships and socio-structural circumstance.

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