

RELATIONSHIPS AS RESISTANCE

ROOTS

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Roots Community Conversation: Lochee & Greater Dundee

3rd June 2025



Our Voices, Our Vision: A Visual Recap

Visual minutes create a record of the Conversation, which are often more easily absorbed, appreciated and understood than words alone.





In the UK, encouraging informal conversation among local people is vital for stronger, healthier communities.

Community Cohesion: Informal connections build understanding and trust across diverse groups, helping reduce tensions and promote inclusivity.

Well-being: Everyday social contact offers emotional support, eases loneliness, and improves mental health – a simple yet powerful public health measure.

Social Capital: Informal networks provide practical support – from sharing job leads to organising local events – improving life for individuals and neighbourhoods alike.

Civic Engagement: When people feel connected, they're more likely to volunteer, take part in local projects, and help shape community decisions.

Economic Impact: Local networks strengthen small businesses and encourage people to shop locally, keeping money in the community.

Safety and Resilience: Close-knit areas tend to have lower crime and recover faster from challenges, thanks to trust and mutual support.

Cultural Exchange: Informal connections help newcomers feel welcome and enrich community life through shared stories and traditions.

Encouraging everyday connection across the UK can create more compassionate, resilient and vibrant communities for everyone.



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01



Introduction

The Roots Programme CIC is a small but mighty grassroots organisation dedicated to bringing people together across differences. Through dialogue – not debate – we create spaces where people with different lived experiences in the UK can connect, share perspectives, and explore solutions that benefit the whole community.

In our Roots Community Conversations, participants discuss local challenges from multiple viewpoints, identify common ground, and put forward their own ideas for change. These informal forums are especially valuable for those who may not have time to volunteer or join official groups—but still have important insights to share.

At a time of rising division – from the unequal impacts of the cost of living crisis, to the legacy of Covid-19, to the polarising effects of Brexit and world conflicts – it's more urgent than ever to make space for calm, compassionate conversations that move us forward together.

We believe that community members are the true experts on the places they live. Instead of arguing online or feeling excluded from local decisions, people need accessible ways to be heard and respected – outside of formal processes. Roots doesn't believe it's enough to involve communities only when decisions are already being made. We want local voices to be heard regularly – through grassroots-led conversations where residents can speak freely and be treated as trusted advisors by those in power. We offer simple tools and structures for residents to host ongoing local dialogues– run by the community, for the community. We invite local authorities to recognise and support these conversations as a valuable part of civic life.

Founded by Ruth Ibegbuna, Roots runs national projects to amplify underrepresented voices and strengthen communities. Our Conversations are one way people can influence the future of their neighbourhoods– on their own terms.

**If you'd like to bring Community Conversations to your area
or learn more, contact clare@rootsprogramme.org**

02 The Conversation

Lochee & Greater Dundee chats



Why Lochee and Greater Dundee for this Community Conversation?

Dundee, like many post-industrial cities, contains a vibrant tension between renewal and hardship. While often stigmatised from within and outside, it is also a city of creativity, community resilience, and rapid transformation. The Lochee area, in particular, has become a microcosm of this duality.

Participants shared a picture of a city often divided into micro-communities - each with strong identity and support networks, yet often disconnected. Many noted a pride in local initiatives, art, green spaces, and strong community figures, while acknowledging the deep-rooted challenges of addiction, poverty, stigma, and systemic inaction.

This Community Conversation was an opportunity for locals to speak candidly, generate ideas for change, and imagine a more hopeful and connected Dundee.

People who feel part of their community say the benefits include:

Having an opportunity to meet people (45%);

Improving their wellbeing (43%)

Having a greater sense of pride (40%)

Having a positive impact on their local area (36%).

National Lottery Community Research Index - a survey of over 8,000 UK adults designed to find out people's priorities and aspirations for their local community.

03 The Conversation



We asked, you answered...

How does the Lochee & Greater Dundee experience compare with its reputation?

It was described as a place of beauty, resilience, and community spirit – yet also one overshadowed by stigma and negative media narratives. Lochee, in particular, is often portrayed through the lens of crime and drugs, but many residents emphasised a more nuanced reality: one of grassroots policing, recovery, and regeneration.

Residents spoke proudly of:

- Park-rich natural beauty
- Affordable living
- Creative regeneration projects like community art and the Lochee Hub

They also highlighted that while Dundee can feel “sectioned off”, with deep contrasts between neighbourhoods, each has its own identity and forms of support. The postcode/street divide between “good” and “bad” areas further illustrates these contrasts, but also shows there is a significantly smaller gap between what is considered a good place to live than might be assumed.

“There’s community for drugs – but also community elsewhere,” said one participant, noting both the challenges and the strengths found across different groups.

What gives you hope for Dundee’s future?

Many pointed to the youth, who are keen to lead change but face intergenerational barriers, social media overload, and few spaces that meet their needs.

04 The Conversation



Community members highlighted:

- Youth-led activities
- Mental health workers in schools
- Small businesses and art projects are giving life to public spaces
- “Community came back with a vengeance” – a powerful comment that encapsulates post-pandemic revitalisation and ongoing recovery efforts.

However, there was a shared concern: support is often reactive rather than preventative.

The community called for:

- Early intervention
- Accessible information
- Face-to-face engagement
- Bringing together parents, teachers and youth workers, and children.

Confidence in Creating Change

A common sentiment was “We want change, but obstacles are systemic.”

Participants expressed:

- Hope for small, local snowball effects
- Concern about invisible or absent local authorities
- A desire for more accountability and visibility in decision-making
- Frustration with local press that reinforces negativity



Importantly, Dundee is not sectarian, and many saw this as an under-recognised strength in community cohesion.

05 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

This session sparked passionate responses. The playful format encouraged people to think creatively and constructively about their community.

KEEP

- Community spirit & pride
- Supportive teachers and mental health staff
- Lochee Hub
- Artworks & murals
- Small businesses
- Youth voice and youth-led activities
- Parks, green spaces, and regeneration projects
- McManus Gallery
- Inclusive and non-judgmental spaces



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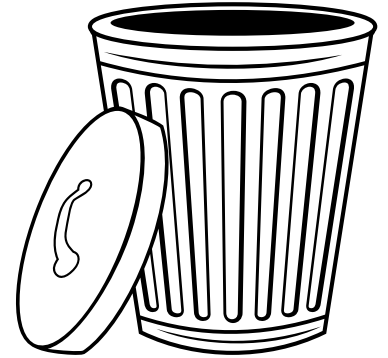
**I love art –
it starts conversations**

”

06 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

SCRAP

- Stigma and judgmental attitudes
- Abandoned or neglected areas
- Lack of visibility from local government
- Social media-fuelled negativity and isolation
- Romanticising gang culture
- Absence of outing groups and age-out gaps for children's services
- Disconnect between public services and public needs



“

Phones and social media can be both a lifeline and a trap”

”

07 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

REIMAGINE



- High streets with more independent shops and vibrant store fronts
- Community-held public spaces
- Earlier intervention for struggling families and young people
- Mental health support that doesn't wait for crisis
- Better access to what's already available (e.g., club directories, visible signage)
- Use social media for good – challenges and trends for change
- Creative professional approaches – "School Through My Eyes"
- Revive Wellgate as a community and cultural hub

“

**Give phones
a purpose –
not just a
distraction.**

”

08 Actions

Community Priorities for a More Connected, Inclusive, and Vibrant Greater Dundee and Lochee:



The Dundee community was passionate about creating real, lasting change. In small group discussions, participants proposed practical, immediate, and long-term actions that could empower the community, elevate youth voices, and strengthen support systems.

Youth Empowerment

- Amplify young voices in school and community decisions through campaigns, videos (like School Through My Eyes), and direct involvement in planning activities.
- Provide safe, cheap or free spaces for young people to meet face-to-face, especially for those without access to clubs or events.
- Support mental health earlier: bring in pre-emptive social work, mental health workshops, and ensure resources are visible and accessible in schools.

Visibility & Communication

- Directory of local opportunities: A user-friendly, centralised guide for clubs, services, and events — both online and in community hubs.
- Improve awareness using schools, community centres, and social media to share resources, local business initiatives, and wellbeing campaigns.
- Strengthen outreach by councillors and local government — ensure elected officials are visible, accountable, and easy to contact.

09 Actions

continued



Regeneration & Local Investment

- Protect and promote small businesses through local funding support, the use of empty shopfronts, and the creative use of abandoned buildings.
- Encourage art and public beautification: more murals, planters, and creative spaces to increase civic pride and conversation.
- Revive and reimagine key spaces like the Wellgate Centre – make them homes for local creativity, small enterprise, and youth activity.

Social Connection & Education

- Establish workshops in schools and hubs, run by organisations like Rekindle, to build local pride, resilience, and cross-generational understanding.
- No-phone zones and conscious tech spaces: create awareness of phone addiction while using tech positively to build connection.
- Encourage storytelling and kindness campaigns in schools and public spaces to foster compassion and connection.



If you're in the negativity and all you hear is negativity, all you will live is negativity. We need louder voices for the good."

10 We thank you for your support of our programme!



Acknowledgements

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