An evaluation of the social value created by the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative, Merseyside
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Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership

The Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership supports the development, delivery and evaluation of the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy, through the innovative generation and application of evidence for effective and sustainable health and wellbeing commissioning.
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Cover photo: A patch of Cabbages planted at St Luke’s Methodist Church as part of Incredible Edible Hoylake initiative to create fresh fruit and vegetables grown in green spaces around the local community © Sarah Briscoe.
Executive summary

On the Wirral, there are large discrepancies between life expectancy, with a twelve year difference between residents living in the more affluent west and the more deprived east. Life Expectancy Wirral was set up in 2009 to address these discrepancies in life expectancy by understanding more about poverty and where it exists. Life Expectancy Wirral works in collaboration with other Christian denominations, communities and the voluntary sector, and fosters working relationships which aim to tackle inequality in the very communities it exists in. The project aims to raise awareness of poverty and inequalities in life expectancy by: building on, improving and expanding its church pairings; forging meaningful and sustainable relationships and working partnerships between communities and within congregations; capture learning and provide resources to those wanting to become involved in social action; and, harnessing the use of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing.

The main work of Life Expectancy Wirral has focused around a network of church pairings and its Green Spaces campaign to encourage people to make more use of their local amenities. This evaluation aimed to explore the impact and social value created by engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral for those involved in the initiative: the Diocese of Chester, representatives from the four church pairings that have been set up since its inception, volunteers, and members of the Life Expectancy Wirral steering group. This evaluation specifically focused on the health and wellbeing changes brought about as a direct result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral. A social return on investment analysis (SROI) was used to determine the impact and social value created by these changes and the health and wellbeing implications for all involved.

The SROI involved using a mixed-methods approach which involved a scoping exercise to identify key stakeholders (those who were involved in delivering the project, volunteers, and any other individuals), desktop-based logic modelling to identify the inputs (activities), outputs (results) and outcomes (impacts) associated with the initiative, and engagement activities to identify the wider impact of the project on those involved. Stakeholder engagement involved a series of interviews and a focus group to determine the financial value of changes in stakeholders’ quality of life. As part of this evaluation, a questionnaire on the use of green spaces was designed and distributed and analysed by the principal researcher. Further secondary data from feedback forms completed after attendance at Life Expectancy Wirral events was also collected and analysed.

The SROI evaluation found that for most stakeholders, the positive changes were related to: social factors, mental health and wellbeing, partnership working and new skills. Many of these were interlinked, however the strongest themes were social and partnership work.

This evaluation demonstrated that Life Expectancy Wirral tackles the issue of poverty and what it means by equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and skills to understand the context of poverty in their own communities. Stakeholders reported how the initiative had helped to build, develop and sustain relationships between the church and public bodies and also focused on the environmental aspect by developing its Green Spaces initiative to encourage more people to use and benefit from their local amenities. The work of Life Expectancy Wirral helps provides an understanding about the wider determinants of health by learning more about what contributes to poverty, how it affects health and how this knowledge can be harnessed to improve communities’ quality of life and overall health and wellbeing outcomes.

To date, four pairings are committed to dealing with inequalities and have taken in-roads to address this through relationships, partnerships and getting to know members of their linked communities. While pairings reported issues regarding communication, there was a feeling...
amongst stakeholders of a concerted effort to continue to develop pairings and to involve more communities and other faith denominations to ensure that local issues are addressed.

This evaluation found that a number of activities already exist in green spaces on the Wirral (e.g. walks and tours around Birkenhead Park for example), however, these tended not be readily accessed by those living in the immediate vicinity. Life Expectancy Wirral has now secured funding to continue its work with green spaces, encouraging people to use local amenities while raising awareness of the effects of spending time in green space.

This SROI evaluation calculated that for every pound put into Life Expectancy Wirral, £5.53 of social value was generated. Engagement with the initiative created many successful social outcomes for its stakeholders, including friendships, reduced isolation and increased inclusion. This evaluation found that the initiative also had the added effect of boosting mental health and wellbeing by making people feel good about themselves while being engaged, fulfilled and stimulated by the initiative.

This evaluation highlights that Life Expectancy Wirral is an important community asset for maintaining health and wellbeing. The initiative provides a good social return on investment, due in part to the fact that the initiative is run mainly by volunteers. The social benefits of engagement with the Life Expectancy Wirral are very positive. As a direct result of the initiative, individuals reported that they were more socially included within their communities. Improved community networks and partnerships had been created and sustained and there was more understanding of poverty and the situations of many vulnerable community members from both the affluent and deprived areas of Wirral. Mental health and general wellbeing improved as individuals felt included and active members of their community. Through engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral, individuals had learnt personal qualities such as empathy and confidence, and had developed a range of new skills including supporting others and sharing expertise. The initiative had further reinforced individuals’ faith, which resulted in feelings of being Christian and helping others. The vast majority involved in the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative did so as volunteers, and as such this created much social value, improving both quality of life in stakeholders and general wellbeing.

**What does this SROI value mean?**

During the twelve month study period, in return for an investment of £24,715, a further £136,771.28 was generated in social value, creating a social return on investment ratio of £5.53 for every £1 input when discounting for other attributable factors and the chance that changes would have occurred anyway. This figure is in no way comparable to other reports where SROI calculations have been used. This amount must be considered in conjunction with the accompanying report, and with consideration of the four themes of positive changes identified in the research as having occurred as a result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral: social (wider) determinants of health, mental health and wellbeing, partnership working and new skills. The financial proxies arrived at have been agreed and developed with stakeholders who have been involved in the research. To this extent, the SROI ratios presented in this report are subjective and relevant to the individuals on the day that the research was conducted. The ratio presented offers an insight into the holistic health and wellbeing benefits that are gained, and not an actual financial representation of what has actually been spent by stakeholders. The SROI figure is important in understanding that Life Expectancy Wirral generates a good return on investment: that the benefits experienced have a much wider impact that resonates across the Wirral.

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership, (AHWP) at the Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University in conjunction with Life Expectancy Wirral and the Diocese of Chester. The AHWP supports the development and delivery of the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy, by generating and applying evidence to ensure effective commissioning, while identifying innovative approaches to sustainable health and wellbeing. This report presents a social return on investment (SROI) on Life Expectancy Wirral, identifying the changes that have occurred as a result of engagement with the project, and the associated social values.

This research project is one of a series of evaluations conducted by the AHWP as part of a wider project to map community assets in Wirral, highlighting examples of individual or group initiatives that improve and enhance health and wellbeing. This evidence will be used to inform the development and delivery of health and wellbeing activities in Wirral.

1.1 Research
Wirral experiences some of the widest health inequalities in England, with an average life expectancy gap of over 12 years experienced between those living in the affluent and deprived areas of the peninsula (14.6 years for men and 9.7 years for women) (APHO, 2012). As an example, those living in Heswall can live for 10 years longer (83.5 years) than those living in Tranmere (73.1 years) and Birkenhead (the east) (73.4 years) (Owen, 2011).

Wirral is in the bottom 20% nationally of deprived areas, with the greatest levels of deprivation being found in Birkenhead, Leasowe, Rock Ferry, Tranmere and Woodchurch. Levels of child deprivation are highest in Bidston, Birkenhead, Seacombe and Tranmere. Deprivation on the Wirral is higher than the England average, with about 15,300 children (25.9% of the population) living in poverty compared to 22% nationally (APHO, 2012).

Figure 1: Differences in deprivation levels between east and west Wirral (C) Crown copyright
A number of significant factors contribute to the gap in life expectancy between the east and west sides of the Wirral. Many of these are health-related, e.g. deaths from cardiovascular disease, smoking rates, and high levels of alcohol and drug consumption (APHO, 2012). The main cause of health inequalities is income inequality and poverty. Living in poverty is closely related to other factors that influence health such as education, living environment, employment and lifestyle (behaviours such as smoking, drinking alcohol and obesity).

1.2 Life Expectancy Wirral
Life Expectancy Wirral was developed in 2009 by the Church of England Diocese of Chester, led by the Right Reverend Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead. The project was borne in response to the discrepancy between life expectancy years between the different areas of the peninsular. Life Expectancy Wirral had the central aim of enabling church communities to engage with its community around issues that contribute to the life expectancy gap.

1.3 Aims and objectives of Life Expectancy Wirral
Life Expectancy Wirral aims to: “enable Christian communities to respond to the issues surrounding the unacceptable differentiation in life expectancy on the Wirral” (Life Expectancy Wirral, 2013). Working in collaboration with other denominations, communities and the voluntary sector, it is hoped that working relationships will help to tackle inequality in the very communities where it exists. This action is underpinned by increasing awareness of poverty and the gap in life expectancy experienced across the Wirral. Life Expectancy Wirral does this by building on, improving and expanding its church pairings and adapting its materials so that resources can be used by all churches of any denomination.

Another aspect of Life Expectancy Wirral’s work is providing information, guidance and support for churches who want to become involved in social action - collectively tackling issues which affect life expectancy. By bringing people together through the work of the pairings and through a range of events hosted by Life Expectancy Wirral, including its Green Spaces initiative, information is then disseminated, while fostering partnerships and working relationships.

The project’s main aims are identified as:

- Raising awareness among churches of the nature and extent of poverty on the Wirral, and how that contributes to differing life expectancies.
- Enabling churches to respond to these issues in long term and sustainable ways
- Highlight within the churches the biblical imperative to address poverty.
- Encourage learning, mutuality, interdependence and communication between churches.
- Build, develop and sustain relationships between churches and public bodies.
- Capture the learning and potential for replication elsewhere.
- Focus on the environmental aspect of the community: development of a green spaces initiative, piloted around the Laird Street area in Birkenhead. Funding has been given to encourage and enable communities to access green space in the Birkenhead West Float area (see picture 1).

1.4 Life Expectancy Wirral - progress to date
Since Life Expectancy Wirral began four years ago, a number of events, resources and research have been conducted to support the project’s work. The project focuses predominantly on its church pairings and green spaces initiative which are outlined below along with a summary of the project’s outputs including partnership working events, resources and research.
1.4.1 Partnership and networking events
A total of six events have been held over the past three years, bringing together approximately 600 people from across the Wirral. The purpose of these events has been to raise awareness of poverty and to build community partnerships and networking. These events involved (Robertson, 2013):

- **January 2010.** A *Life Expectancy Wirral Summit* was held to disseminate information about Life Expectancy Wirral and seek feedback on its progression. Emerging themes and future actions included: the need to address the attitudes and language encountered when referring to those living in poverty; more partnership working with local authorities; emphasis on building relationships which will in turn lead to outcomes; and that the church needs to shift focus outwards to local communities.

- **May 2010.** A meeting with local authority representatives and facilitators was held in response to suggestions of partnership working at the summit (including representatives from Housing Strategy, Economies Policy and Wirral Regeneration Council). This meeting identified ways of improving partnership working. Recurring themes included the need for better communication between churches and faith, voluntary and statutory sectors; the need to improve access to green spaces by those living in poverty (discussed in section 3.2); and support for those in debt.

- **September 2011.** The *Together for Life* event was held to encourage churches to ‘dream’ about possible actions faith groups can take to challenge poverty. Lots of realistic suggestions were discussed as part of the session, which emphasised the use of green spaces and continued partnership working.

- **March 2012.** The *Inequality in the Wirral, what’s the church got to do with it?* event brought together a range of faith, voluntary and statutory sectors together to address assumptions and preconceptions that each may have about the other, to build relationships and to look at how partnership working can reduce the gap in life expectancy. Positive feedback was given on the event and can be found in the appendices. The event:
  - Provided facts and figures about poverty on the Wirral and information on the effects of the changes in welfare state benefits to people’s lives.
  - Update from churches already engaged in social action and the impact of this on their church and community.
  - Considered and reflected upon what the Bible has to say about the Christian response to poverty.
  - Offered more understanding of what faith-based organisations are doing to tackle poverty and to encourage greater support for Life Expectancy Wirral. Almost half (44%) of attendees were from churches, 14% from the local authority and 12% from NHS Wirral.

- **May 2013.** A prayer evening was held to mark three years of the Life Expectancy Wirral project. The event aimed to challenge local churches to recognise the depth and nature of poverty on Wirral and to do something in response to the Christian imperative to care for those in need. This led to the planning of the next event.

- **February 2013.** A second *Together for Life* event was held which focused on how churches can and do make a difference to tackling poverty on the Wirral. The event aimed to give churches information and statistics regarding poverty on the Wirral and the effects of forthcoming changes in state welfare benefit payments. It also offered the opportunity to hear the stories of churches already involved in community action; Bible discussion about the Christian response to poverty; and encouragement for churches to
consider about how they can respond. It was hoped that over the coming months, this event would lead to greater partnership working and community action.

Data collected and analysed by Life Expectancy Wirral have highlighted three main outcomes (Robertson, 2013):

- Recurring themes and suggestions raised at events have given direction to the development of Life Expectancy Wirral.
- LEW has raised awareness of poverty on the Wirral which has encouraged individuals and churches to be more actively involved in tackling poverty. There has also been a “noticeable sea-change” in churches from ‘what are you going to do about it?’ to ‘what can we do about it?’
- Provided a platform for networking which has improved partnerships between sectors and churches and improved knowledge of who does what.

1.4.2 Church pairings initiative
Life Expectancy Wirral works in collaboration with other denominations, local organisations and public services, as well as the voluntary sector with the goal of understanding inequality and poverty. As part of the initiative, Life Expectancy Wirral has focused on pairing churches in less affluent with more affluent areas of the Wirral, and building lasting relationships between these communities in a bid to improve the lives of those living in these areas. It is hoped that the pairings will enable each community to understand the dynamics of poverty and how this affects health and wellbeing.

The pairings work on the basis that two churches (any denomination) are brought together - one from an affluent and one from a less affluent area. The pairings involve training led by the diocese, regular discussions between the pair, quarterly meetings, and can involve regular community events/initiatives aimed at involving the community in that area and supporting the working relationships between the two areas. The pairings involved:

- Christ the King from Priory parish in Birkenhead, with the Church of the Good Shepherd, Heswall (pilot pairing)
- Laird Street Baptist, Birkenhead West Float and St Bridget’s, West Kirby
- St Mary’s Church of England, Upton and St. Oswalds Church of England, Bidston
- St. Chads Church of England, Leasowe and St. John the Baptist Church of England, Meols

**Background to the pilot pairing between Christ the King and Church of Good Shepherd:**
The initial aim for each church and their parish involved in the church pairings was to learn more about the deprivation that was around them, discover more about their pair’s community, and examine Biblical perspectives on poverty. The two parishes took part in five discussion sessions where views, attitudes and experiences were challenged. The groups also discussed how best respond to issues affecting life expectancy.

Following the five events, the pairing decided on a number of short, medium and long-term objectives which encompassed the eight objectives of the overall Life Expectancy Wirral project, involving awareness of poverty, the need for action, partnership working and effective communication. The initial stages of the programme involved a total of five discussion sessions, three of which were held separately with each church group and incorporated several stages (Box 1). Each session lasted approximately two hours.

**Interim findings:**
An interim project report was written (Robertson and Skinner, 2009) which evaluated the pilot pairing and outlined recommendations. These have been summarised below.
Feedback from evaluation forms completed at each event found that the process of bringing two parishes together to learn about and respond to life expectancy issues was successful. It was felt that initial progress was promising as the churches involved in the pairing considered the impact of poverty upon community members and the work of partners to address the issues surrounding deprivation.

However, it was felt that there were a number of stumbling blocks in the setting up of the first pairing. For example, it took time to find a parish from a less deprived area that was able to take part in the project. Eventually, a group of parish representatives from the same Bible Study group in Heswall became involved in the initial discussions. While the group was not created specifically for the purposes of the pairing pilot, the fact that the group was well established and had previously worked with one another meant that they were comfortable in each other’s company and worked quickly through the start-up of the pairing and the first training session. However, variation in attendance by group members from this parish meant that there was a lack of continuity and this had led to some confusion over timings. The length of time between group discussion sessions also meant that there was a lack of continuity and part of the session was therefore spent recappping and becoming familiar with the processes.

Box 1: Pairings (Robertson and Skinner, 2009) The pilot pairing between Christ the King, Birkenhead Priory parish and the Church of the Good Shepherd, Heswall parish began with a five-stage programme facilitated by the project co-ordinator:

Stage 1: Listening to the world
The first stage looked at poverty indicators for the Wirral and specifically for the parishes/communities participating in the project. Those involved in the pairing considered the impact of poverty upon community members and the work of partners to address the issues surrounding deprivation.

Stage 2: Listening to the word
The pairing looked at the Bible and examined teachings on inequality, the special concern expressed for those living in poverty, and the imperative for Christians to act against injustice. They also examined responses and attitudes to those living in poverty.

Stage 3: Exploring and connecting
The third stage involved both parishes meeting with each other and sharing thoughts, attitudes and responses to the process so far. They also explored the role their faith played in actions to reduce poverty.

Stage 4: Responding and applying.
The pairing were supported by facilitators to identify a project/action to plan and deliver together. It was important to refer back to stages one and two to ensure issues contributing to the life expectancy gap were being addressed and to consider faith implications.

Stage 5: Sustaining
This final stage focused on the evaluation of the pilot model and whether the project has been successful: had it addressed specific deprivation indicators set out in stage one; responded to Bible teachings in stage two; and whether sustainability for the future had been considered. If the pilot had been unsuccessful, there is a need to identify what caused this.
In evaluative feedback, both churches involved in the pairing commented that they would have preferred to have met the other group prior to the start of the pairing. The initial group sessions were seen as a good platform to get to know members of the other parish. It was suggested that an initial meeting before the start of the project would be beneficial and would help to gel relationships earlier in the process.

Robertson and Skinner (2009) recommended that the project be repeated with other parishes. Initially, it was considered beneficial to expand and include another four or more parishes (at least two pairs) on the Wirral. It was considered that enough time be given to the selection of parishes and the training of facilitators. It was also suggested that a discussion should take place with Life Expectancy Wirral’s steering group regarding the selection process and how this should be developed and to spend time on branding and awareness-raising to promote the profile of the work while generating support. It was also highlighted that financial implications of the project would also need to be considered.

1.4.3 Green Spaces
Part of Life Expectancy Wirral’s work has also involved understanding more about the use of green spaces, particularly in deprived areas in a bid to improve levels of healthiness and increase the numbers of those partaking in exercise. As part of this evaluation, a questionnaire was developed and distributed among the more deprived areas of Wirral. These secondary data have been analysed as part of this evaluation, and findings are discussed in section 3.

1.4.4 Life Expectancy Wirral reports
As part of the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative, a number of reports and resources have been produced by the Diocese of Chester and are summarised below:

Life Expectancy on the Wirral - Pilot Project Interim project report (Robertson and Skinner 2009)
This report set out to highlight the work of Life Expectancy Wirral to date and whether it had met its original aims and objectives. The overall project aim was to enable Christian communities to respond to the issues surrounding the unacceptable differentiation in life expectancy experienced on the Wirral. This section has been covered as part of the pairings section earlier.

Understanding the language and nature of poverty (January 2011)
As a result of feedback given following a number of Life Expectancy Wirral's events, the project was challenged to consider the language and the attitudes that its supporters used when thinking about people who experience poverty. The report, which continued on the work of the Reporting Poverty in the UK report (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009) highlighted that there was a need to consider the appropriateness of language used, perceptions and attitudes towards those living in poverty. The report covered three main issues relating to poverty: the nature of poverty, what is it and who does it affect?, stereotypes and prejudice linked to poverty, including attitudes, and the language used when referring to individuals experiencing poverty.

The report highlighted that terms such as the poor, impoverished and poverty-stricken are stigmatising and have negative connotations. The Life Expectancy Wirral report (2011) highlighted that instead of viewing individuals as experiencing poverty, it is also necessary to consider the assets, rather than concentrate on deficits. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach1 adopted a framework of understanding the assets that individuals have: for example, the human, social, physical, financial and public assets. It suggested

1 www.church-poverty.org.uk/livelihoods
that a different approach to helping people overcome poverty would be to encourage individuals to identify and utilise the resources they do have access to, rather than focus on what they do not.

This report is available as a resource through the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative and contains group work and discussions to foster consideration of what poverty is and how it is acknowledged and dealt with within communities.

**Life Expectancy Wirral website**
The Life Expectancy Wirral website can be found at the following address: [http://www.chester.anglican.org/page_csr.asp?Page=336](http://www.chester.anglican.org/page_csr.asp?Page=336). The website contains an overview of the initiative, its history and developments so far this year. A link to many of its resources are also on this website as well as two videos from those involved in the initiative. There are also a number of links to partner organisations.

**1.4.5 Future plans**

**Expansion of the pairings:**
To date, four pairings have been set up across the Wirral:
- Christ the King, Birkenhead Priory parish and the Church of the Good Shepherd, Heswall parish, is currently on hold as the Heswall parish was without a vicar for a period of time.
- Laird Street Baptist, Birkenhead West Float and St Bridget's, West Kirby is functioning as a pairing and is actively involving a third church to the partnership.
- St Mary's Church of England, Upton and St. Oswalds Church of England, Bidston is still functioning.
- St. Chads Church of England, Leasowe and St. John the Baptist Church of England, Meols was set up in May 2013 and is currently embarking on the five sessions of involvement.

Work will continue to develop and build on these pairings with a hope of further pairings in time.

**Funding opportunities:**
The outcomes of Life Expectancy Wirral events in combination with feedback from church pairings and other events also led to a successful funding bid to the Public Health Innovation Fund for the ‘Exploration of a community led initiative to enable those living in poverty to increase their use of urban and non-urban green space’. Recommendations were made in the resulting report and LEW received funding in 2013 to take some of these actions forward in a 12-month pilot project, *Green Space Champions* (section 3.2).

**Further developments and partnership working:**
As well as these events, Life Expectancy Wirral has also worked with Tearfund, a disaster relief organisation which aims to support churches in addressing poverty, to offer a free course on community engagement or tailored support. At the time of this report, the St.Oswalds/St. Mary’s pair has taken up the offer and has begun dialogue with Tearfund.

Regular feedback from those participating in Life Expectancy Wirral also highlighted the need for improved communications systems, which has contributed to the revitalisation of the *Churches Together in Wirral* initiative, which aims to develops relationships between statutory and faith sectors and culminated in the writing of a funding proposal for the development and running of a Wirral-wide website (which Voluntary Community Action Wirral (VCAW) are supporting to run alongside its Wirral Well website). This latter work on development of communications is being led by a member of the Life Expectancy Wirral steering group.
1.5 The social (wider) determinants of health

It is acknowledged that while the aim of Life Expectancy Wirral is to ultimately reduce the gap in life expectancy, this is an almost-unachievable goal. Instead, the project aims to increase awareness of poverty and attempts to fundamentally deal with the social (wider) determinants of health which lead to health inequalities and poverty and which reduce life expectancy.

This evaluation will understand more about the social determinants of health in relation to Life Expectancy Wirral. The social determinants of health is a construct designed by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1992) which layers the general socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions which co-exist, lead to and support the existence of poverty and health inequalities (figure 2). Their model highlights how factors such as where you are born, living conditions, education and access to healthcare all contribute to certain positive or negative life outcomes.

Life Expectancy Wirral predominantly involves the social and community networks arch (seen as the orange layer in figure 2) which links with living conditions above it (dark blue section in figure 2). This research will assess the project in relation to this model and the social value gained from addressing these factors in relation to life expectancy.

Figure 2: the Determinants of Health, Dahlgren and Whitehead (1992)

1.6 Social return on investment

This research will build on evidence already obtained by Life Expectancy Wirral through its events, resources and research. While much work has been done to build partnerships and forge discussions relating to poverty, there is currently no evidence on the social value of the initiative, and the benefits from engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral and its potential impact on the communities of the churches taking part in the pairing process and the wider Wirral community.

The aim of this evaluation was to explore the impact of the Life Expectancy Wirral Initiative of in relation to health and wellbeing, and the social value gained by engagement with the
project. With the Public Value (Social Value) Act 2012 requiring public authorities to consider how services they procure might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities, it is also timely to consider the wider impacts of community projects on the areas they thrive in.

An SROI evaluation has been chosen as the most appropriate method of analysis for this evaluation as it involves assessing the social, economic and environmental impact of Life Expectancy Wirral through direct involvement with key stakeholders. The SROI process involves identifying changes as a direct result of an individual’s engagement with a project. The analysis uses a combination of qualitative, quantitative and financial information to estimate the amount of ‘value’ created or destroyed by the project, which is typically expressed as: ‘for every £1 invested in the project, £x of social value is created’ (Nicholls et al., 2012).
2. Methodology

The project methods were developed in collaboration with key staff members, including the project lead and staff from the Diocese of Chester. The evaluation approach, feasibility and appropriateness of the selected methods were discussed and agreed upon during the initial phase of the evaluation. To ensure the SROI was relevant and included the most recent outcomes, the evaluation SROI looked specifically at the past twelve months from January to December 2012.

2.1 SROI Analysis

SROI analysis involved three distinct stages: scoping, logic model, and engagement activities.

2.1.1 Scoping exercise

A scoping exercise was undertaken by the principal researcher to identify and clarify what the SROI analysis would measure and how. This scoping exercise took the form of a meeting with Life Expectancy Wirral's project lead, and members of its steering committee. This stage of the research also identified key stakeholders to include in the research, and considered the best approaches to engage with them during the next phase of the SROI.

During this scoping stage, the purpose, background, resources, activities and the timescale were discussed and agreed upon. During this scoping exercise, it was established that the evaluation would focus on the work that was ongoing into the use of green spaces, and Life Expectancy Wirral’s pairings of churches from east and west as these were the main priorities and where much of Life Expectancy Wirral’s work is focused. There are currently two functioning pairings - Laird Street Baptist, Birkenhead West Float and St Bridget’s, West Kirby; and, St Mary’s Church of England, Upton and St. Oswalδ Church of England, Bidston. Another pairing with Christ the King, Priory parish, Birkenhead, and Church of the Good Shepherd, Heswall, was temporarily on hold at the time of the evaluation, and a new pairing between St. Chads Church of England, Leasowe and St. John the Baptist Church of England, Meols, began in May 2013, and therefore was not included in the current research.

2.1.2 Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the research was granted by Liverpool John Moores University’s Research Committee prior to starting the evaluation to review the ethical implications of the evaluation. In July 2012, the evaluation design and methods were approved as being ethically sound (ethical approval reference 12/HEA041).

2.1.3 Logic model

As a result of meetings and interviews with key stakeholders, a desktop-based logic model was created based on findings from the scoping exercise (Appendix 1). This outlined the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the project and was used to inform the changes that occurred as a result of being involved with Life Expectancy Wirral. The logic model helped to identify the benefits gained from engagement in the project and helped to inform a social value focus group which identified associated social value of the outcomes.

2.1.4 Engagement activities

It was agreed with members of the Life Expectancy Wirral project team that the research would predominantly comprise interviews with stakeholders involved in the project and the church pairings. A focus group was also held to understand the outcomes and changes that resulted from engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral.

Semi-structured interviews:

Nine one-to-one service user interviews were conducted with stakeholders who were involved with Life Expectancy Wirral. This included volunteers, those involved in partnership...
working and community engagement, representatives from church pairings, and Life Expectancy Wirral project leads. The interviews gained in-depth views on the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative and their perceptions on the work it was doing and how the project was progressing. Interviews also involved discussion around how the project had affected the stakeholder’s quality of life, health and wellbeing, and relationships (with friends and family, other volunteers and their community).

**Focus group**
To further support interview findings and to provide additional evidence to inform the SROI, a focus group was held with three members of the Life Expectancy Wirral project team and steering group. The focus group worked on validating and identifying key themes gained from the interviews and logic model. A number of financial values were also agreed upon which was directly fed into the impact map to determine the social value of engagement with the project.

**Questionnaires**
As part of the green spaces initiatives, a questionnaire was devised and delivered to the users of a range of services based in the more deprived areas of the Wirral. Questions covered the use of green space and how often, where this was in relation to where they lived and what they used the green space for. A total of 92 were returned from eight organisations, and these have been analysed as part of this evaluation.

**2.2 SROI calculations**
A range of financial information was sent by the Director for Social Responsibility at the Diocese of Chester. This consisted of project worker salaries, expenses and room hire costs. These inputs were balanced with social value calculations, based on qualitative data collected in interviews and a focus group. These financial proxies were sourced either directly from stakeholders themselves, or from other sources, including a database of financial proxies (www.wikivois.org) or directly from the Internet. These calculations were input onto the impact map and a pre-set formula determined the social return on investment.

**2.2.1 Sensitivity testing**
Further verification of the SROI process and financial amounts was also conducted among focus group attendees. Furthermore, a sensitivity analysis was conducted which tested any assumptions made as part of the financial calculations process. This helped to identify which assumptions had the greatest impact on the final calculation, and how this changed the final SROI total. This analysis tested changes to estimates of deadweight, attribution and drop-off (aspects which assess whether the change would have happened anyway and whether other organisations contributed to the change financial proxies, such as cost of courses), the quantity of outcomes, and the value of non-financial inputs. This final process ensured transparency in analysis results.
3. Results

This section presents the findings of research conducted as part of this evaluation to explore the impact and social value of Life Expectancy Wirral's church pairings and green spaces initiative.

3.1 Church pairings

Three pairings participated in the research; all except the newly-created Leasowe/Meols pairing which was set up at the time that the evaluation was undertaken. The following (Boxes 2, 3 and 4) summarise the involvements of each pairing.

Box 2: Christ the King, Birkenhead Priory parish and the Church of the Good Shepherd, Heswall parish

Those involved in the church pairing felt that the discussion sessions delivered as part of the initiative were “a real eye opener” and thought-provoking, dealing with many preconceptions relating to poverty. As a result of these sessions, it was realised that the two parishes had much in common, and that each shared a common goal in understanding more about poverty.

“If you don’t see it [poverty, hardship etc.] why would you consider it a responsibility? If not required to, you wouldn’t engage. Personally, it’s good to see how you are helping people who are struggling to get by. Just understanding problems helps” Pairing member

Stakeholders felt there was the sense that the church can play more of a role in community life, and that volunteering would be one way of building on this. One perception, however, was that the families most in need may not necessarily acknowledge they are in need. It was considered that basic help, such as collecting shopping, and repair work can often be all that is needed to involve people in their community. However, the coordinator and Life Expectancy Wirral steering group were very aware that there was a danger of the pairing becoming about one-way relationships between giver and receiver. It was agreed by the Life Expectancy Wirral steering group to stress the ethos of partnership working in future meetings and pairs as links with the local authority, health services and key individuals within the community would enhance any progress made by churches:

“The church has a very important role to play [in the community]. We need to tap into resources as people want to do positive things for nothing, it’s just about harnessing it correctly. You need to be realistic and integrate with the people around you”

It was felt by? that it was now when? time to start acting upon the theories and relationships built at the beginning of the pairing process and during the discussion sessions. Although the pairing was currently on hold at the time of this evaluation, it was hoped that with a new church leader and renewed focus, the pairing would continue. Individuals involved in the pairing were still continuing to support the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative and were hopeful that the project would in time continue to grow, if those involved are able to look at past issues and build on these along with developing partnerships already created.

“The time for talking is over, now it’s time for action”
Box 3: Laird Street Baptist, Birkenhead West Float and St Bridget’s, West Kirby

The pairing was set up over two years ago, and is a cross-denominational pairing. The pairing considers that its work is “about people getting to know each other” and partnerships are being forged with another local Anglican church who are becoming involved in the pairing. Stakeholders felt that the pairing had helped forge and develop friendships and build on community relationships.

For example, the pairing also works with the St James Opportunity Shop (Op Shop), a community activity venue which recycles clothes and goods. The shop also has a number of volunteering opportunities. As part of the pairings, clothes are collected and donated to the store. A member of Life Expectancy Wirral also has created a community venture by recycling denim and teaches sewing sessions at the Laird Street St James Centre.

“We’re focusing on networking – Life Expectancy Wirral is all about developing relationships. The church is more than meeting with people on Sunday, it’s more engrained: what you get out of it is what you put in”

The pairing sees its strength as being in its leadership, with highly supportive rectors. Over a period of change, the pairing has provided support to each other and therefore a partnership of equals has been created. Each church recognises its own communities’ needs, but within this they have recognised commonalities, including mental health, loneliness and bereavements. Although the Laird Street congregation is fairly small, through the pairing, it has gained strength.

There is a lot of good will and challenges – in a positive way. [Life Expectancy Wirral] is a platform to respond to certain things and

Box 4: St Mary’s Church of England, Upton and St. Oswalds Church of England, Bidston (picture 4)

This pairing has been running since 2011. The pair has actively engaged with its communities and has hosted an evening event which was attended by both congregations and wider Upton and Bidston communities. The community engagement event, ‘Beechwood stories’, asked individuals to put forward their memories of the Beechwood estate. The church pair are looking at how best to support existing community activities on offer at St. Oswalds, offering computer training sessions and school-holiday football training sessions. The pairing is also trying to develop long-term links with Wirral Foodbank.

The pairing also organised a call for services where a range of services were offered out, including use of a decorator. However, this was not taken up and the group are in discussions to better promote this and will be looking at time banking/volunteering.

The pairing aims to learn more about the issues surrounding poverty and has teamed up with Christians Against Poverty who are providing information and support to the pairing so that the group is better informed to support members of its community.

The group itself has highlighted issues regarding communication and is actively working on improving this among its pairing members. For example, it now has a responsibility list so that certain individuals will email members who have the internet at home, while others will text or call those who do not have mobile phones.
Summary of church pairings:
The three church pairings as studied in boxes 2, 3 and 4 are well established. However, each pairing felt there was still work to be done in involving more individuals and representatives/organisations into the pairings, whether this be another church - of any denomination not necessarily the same as the existing churches - and to increase partnership working. It was envisaged that more direct links to the community, through partnership working would increase the chances of successful pairings. This was supported by the Upton/Bidston pairing link-in with Churches Against Poverty, and its community ‘Beechwood stories’ which captured the imagination of the local community in recounting childhood memories.

All pairings felt that they understood more about poverty and other people’s experiences, as a direct result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral and the discussion sessions that took place at the start of the pairing. While the sessions highlighted the differences between the parishes involved in the pairing – i.e. one from an affluent and one from a less affluent area – that this had the effect of also highlighting commonalities and that instances of poverty were experienced even in more affluent areas.

The role of the church in tackling the issues as highlighted by the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative was also more clearly understood. The pairings aimed to be an active part of their communities and were inclusive to all, regardless of faith.

All pairings had experienced problems along the way, whether this was with leadership of individual churches or communication issues between the pairings. However, in the most part, these issues were addressed by the pairings. The initial pilot pairing between Birkenhead Priory and Heswall parishes is on hold due to the fact there was no church leader at Heswall. However, it is hoped that now that role is fulfilled that the pairing may continue.

To summarise, the evaluation showed that church pairings had made inroads in creating relationships with their paired church(es) and were forging working relationships with members of their communities. This resulted in a range of community events and collaborations that helped increase involvement of churches in the lives of local people. The pairings address most of the eight objectives set out by the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative (set out in the introduction section). By addressing issues relating to communication, and a more concerted focus on the green spaces initiative (see following section), the pairings will have met all of Life Expectancy Wirral’s original eight objectives.

3.2 Green spaces initiative
Accessing green spaces has many positive health and wellbeing benefits, including providing opportunities for physical activity, enhancing concentration and self-esteem, alleviate anxiety and depression, boost immunity and social interaction (Luria and Lyons, 2010) (see box 4). Further research highlights that those living in poverty are the least likely to make use of local green space.

“Unfortunately those living in more deprived communities, who tend to have poorer health and suffer from the kind of illnesses that can be alleviated by regular exposure to green spaces, are also less likely to have good access to high quality parks and green spaces” (Green Link 2010).

Life Expectancy Wirral’s Green Spaces steering group was set up to explore a community led initiative to enable those living in poverty to increase their use of urban and non-urban green space. As part of this work, a questionnaire was distributed among organisations and churches in the most deprived areas, covering the types of green spaces that people lived
near, whether they accessed it and what they thought could increase their use of such spaces.

**Evaluation**

In conjunction with the principal researcher, the Green Spaces steering group designed and distributed surveys to 23 organisations and churches based in the 20% most deprived areas on the Wirral, to be completed by people accessing their services (Birkenhead, Leasowe, Seacombe and Woodchurch areas). A total of 92 surveys were returned from eight organisations and churches. Half of these were completed by people with postcodes in the 20% most deprived areas of Wirral. These surveys have been analysed by the principal researcher.

Findings revealed that many respondents (99% n=80) lived within a ten minute walk of the green space. These tended to be parks (78%, n=71), beaches (28%, n=26), children’s play areas (28%, n=25) and farm attractions (27%, n=24). The vast majority 86% (n=69) used the green space nearest them; accessing it most days (23%, n=15), at least once a week (38%, n=25), every 1-2 weeks (14%, n=9), once a month (14%, n=9), or less (12%, n=8). Most visited green spaces with others (67%, n=39) – mainly with family members (61%, n=34), friends (42%; 10); and children (15%, n=9). A third (n=19) said they visited green spaces on their own, typically while dog walking (15%; n=9).

Activities undertaken by the respondents at the green spaces varied, but mainly included walking, playing, seeing or feeding animals and enjoying the scenery. Reasons for not visiting local green spaces included dog fouling, dogs being off the lead, gangs/trouble, litter, and a preference to go further afield.

Almost two-thirds (60%, n=53) said they regularly visited green spaces further away from home. Reasons given by others for not visiting these spaces included: lack of time (48%, n=27); cost (21%, n=12); and transport (11%, n=6). Other reasons included: lack of confidence (n=2), other green spaces nearer to home (n=1), untidy (n=1), unable to find where it is (n=1), and mobility or health issues (n=4).

To make green spaces more popular, many respondents thought they should be tidied up and made more attractive (e.g. repairing play equipment) and that park rangers should be available to look after them. People were more likely to visit green spaces if socialising with friends, if they had someone to go with, if they could grow fruit and vegetables or take part in conservation work or for organised events such as walks or exercise.

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**Box 4: Urban green spaces health and wellbeing benefits**

**Physical benefits:** by providing attractive locations for a huge range of sporting and recreational activities, including walking, cycling, football and running, as well as more gentle activities such as picnicking or photography

**Mental health benefits:** by providing areas of quiet and solitude where people can escape from the stresses of life

**Spiritual benefits:** can help bring about a sense of place and provide areas for contemplation, reflection and inspiration

**Social benefits:** by providing areas where social clubs and organisations can hold events. They can also help individuals enhance their own personal social network.

**Environmental benefits:** help mitigate the impact of climate change by reducing flood risk, sequestering carbon dioxide in trees and plants and reducing atmospheric pollution. The urban tree canopy also helps to reduce the risks from ultraviolet radiation exposure and the heat island effect.

*(Luria and Lyons, 2010)*
The majority of respondents were unaware of the health benefits of spending time in green spaces. The survey results showed that most people used some local green space at least occasionally and would use it more if some physical improvements were made (clearing up litter, reduction in dog fouling, more seating and flowers), if they had someone to go with and if there were opportunities for socialising with family and friends.

**Conclusions**

There are a large number of activities already available in green spaces on the Wirral (e.g. walks and tours around Birkenhead Park and Wirral Country Park). However, these tended not be accessed by those living in poverty. Reasons for this included that the events were not well publicised, that parks are other green spaces were avoided because of dog fouling, or the perception that these spaces are unsafe because of young people and addicts congregating in these areas.

Evidence shows that it can be fairly easy to encourage people living in deprived communities to become involved in using their local green space amenities with the help of local projects. For example groups such as Wirral Environmental Network, Incredible Edibles and Big Heritage. The Life Expectancy Wirral survey results showed that most people used some local green space at least occasionally and would use it more if some physical improvements were made (for example, clearing up litter, reduction in dog fouling, more seating and flowers), if they had someone to go with, and if there were opportunities for socialising with family and friends.

One barrier to travelling to green spaces further than walking distance was considered cost and availability of public transport. Many respondents stated that they lacked the time to travel and visit green space. Suggested ways of tackling this include increasing awareness of the many positive effects of spending time in the outdoors (see box 4) while highlighting the different activities within communities.

**Recommendations**

Following on from this research conducted by Life Expectancy Wirral, a working group was created early 2013 which included a number of local representatives from a range of fields, including: individuals working in green space such as parks, allotments, and representatives from local community projects, council-run activities, voluntary organisations and Wirral waters, who were all brought together to investigate and action responses to the research findings. The steering group recommended that the green spaces campaign would:

- Create cohesive, up-to-date information showing all that is available on the Wirral in terms of green spaces and activities.
- Create ‘how to’ guides on starting and running activities/initiatives (evidence-based tips) involving green spaces. This information (along with the above ‘what’s on’ guide) would be distributed to those who already have established relationships with people living in poverty e.g. police, Neighbourhood Area Agreement groups, housing associations, churches (including pairings), children’s centres, health trainers and Safer Communities Initiative based in Morpeth Dock.
- Creatively devise ways of informing communities about the benefits of accessing green space out into the community.
- Look at ways of tackling issues such as dog fouling, dogs off the lead etc. in many green space areas.
- Provide a forum for groups/individuals to meet and share ideas through an event, generating information for ‘how to’ guides. Invitations would be sent to those who will be creating the guides as well as community members and the organisations who will be receiving them.
Future work:
A Green Spaces Champions’ scheme is proposed in which volunteers from churches and communities would champion the use of green spaces and highlight the activities and resources available to all. The role may involve:

- Distributing information and ‘how to’ guides to the community through networks (organisations and churches).
- Having time slots in parks when they are available to offer advice and accompany people to green spaces and on walks.
- Providing social/volunteering activities in green spaces.
- Working in partnership to develop more ‘grow your own’ initiatives in public spaces (such as Incredible Edible Hoylake [cover picture]), using spaces for allotments, and the growth of fruit and vegetables for all to pick in communal areas.

It is anticipated that Green Spaces champions would receive training and would work together with other organisations such as council services, friends of parks etc. If this was successful it is possible the concept and training could be sold on to other areas to generate not-for-profit income for Life Expectancy Wirral.

3.3 SROI interview analyses
A total of nine interviews were conducted with those who are involved in either delivering, volunteering or leading the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative, which were analysed thematically. Five main themes were revealed: wider determinants of health, faith, mental health and wellbeing, partnership working and skills. Many of these were interlinked, for example, making new friends led to networking and new partnerships being formed, which in turn had led to getting to know more people and feeling more part of a community. The following section is divided into these five themes, with a selection of quotes to support the findings. For the purposes of the report, interviewees have been anonymised and their comments identified by interview number.

Social determinants of health:
All interviewees agreed that Life Expectancy Wirral aimed to address some of the issues relating to the social and community networks of the third layer of the Dahlgren and Whitehead (1992) determinants of health figure (Figure 2). It was felt that this was where a difference could be made, eventually changing life circumstances and thereby outcomes for many of the parish communities.

The most important factor for interviewees was that the work of Life Expectancy Wirral was far greater than simply attempting to reduce life expectancy. Interviewees discussed that the initiative was in fact more about the social aspects of tackling the social (wider) determinants of health, for example, by focussing and harnessing the social and community networks that the project was able to build upon.

The social aspect was noted as very important, with all interviewees reporting that they were getting to know neighbours, congregation members and others in their community. The initiative helped to create friendships between the pairings, but also cross denominationally and with other congregations. It was felt that getting to know others would also help many to understand what others’ lives are like. It was felt that there was a large divide between the deprived east and affluent west parts of the Wirral, and understanding the different experiences of both would be beneficial to all engaged with Life Expectancy Wirral. It was also highlighted that there were difficulties experienced within wealthy communities. An example of this was with elderly residents living in West Kirby (west Wirral) who are vulnerable and isolated. It was understood that the realisation that poverty and deprivation existed across the Wirral as well as in specific areas would create more understanding and knowledge on how to address the issue. Many interviewees stated that through Life
Expectancy Wirral they had learnt more about what was on their own doorsteps and that this, along with their faith, was spurring them on to get involved in some way.

“Life Expectancy Wirral is not just about reducing life expectancy gap, it’s more low key, it’s about people knowing each other” (Interviewee 7)

“People in the nice areas [of Wirral] have no idea how people six miles away live and what they put up with, what they have to cope with on a daily basis” (Interviewee 6)

“People do not think that there is any poverty and that it only exists in Africa. There is also the view that if there is poverty in the UK, then it is self-induced by lifestyle choices. These attitudes are found inside and outside the church, and overcoming these is a fundamental aspect” (Interviewee 1)

Creating friendships and getting to know others in a community helped to also combat isolation, loneliness, and promoted a sense of feeling part of a community. It was acknowledged that Life Expectancy Wirral helped to make faith more relevant for communities.

It was felt that although Life Expectancy Wirral was being delivered by the Church of England Diocese of Chester, it did not mean that it was only for those of this particular faith. Interviewees were keen to highlight that many denominations had been involved in the initiative and that a great many partners were supporting the ethos of its work. One pairing had incorporated a third church, a nearby Baptist church, and the three were working together. One of the churches in another pair is also Baptist.

It was also felt that many enjoyed being involved in Life Expectancy Wirral because they felt good about helping others and that there was an aspect of reciprocity with elements of both giving and receiving in Life Expectancy Wirral’s work. Suggestions of joint work included shopping for the elderly, checking in on neighbours, uniform donations and donations of food through churches and food banks.

“We are called upon to do more than go to church and not merely talk about your faith. It is about showing love, being honest and offering opportunities for others” (Interviewee 5)

“For me as a Christian, everyone has integrity and we need to treat everyone with integrity no matter who they are. It’s important so people are valued” (Interviewee 4)

“[Life expectancy Wirral] offers an opportunity of faith and mind... and over time it can make a big change” (Interviewee 5)

“There is a stigma attached and people can be ostracised because they’re different. Life Expectancy Wirral needs to tackle and deal with this” (Interviewee 3)

“There has been a real development of friendships. We are aware of people in different situations. This is not a flicker of a project, but a flame” (Interviewee 7)
It was also felt that the project helped to reinforce the role that the church has within communities, as being a safe haven and a community hub. In this sense the church is seen as a community asset.

“The church plays a big part of the community and while people in the community may not necessarily turn to the church for faith reasons, the church still plays a role” (Interviewee 2)

“People need a local, safe and unjudging place where they can get help, and this is what the church can do” (Interviewee 3)

**Mental health and wellbeing:**

Those involved in the pairing stated they gained a lot from involvement with Life Expectancy Wirral. Many reported that engagement in the project boosted their own wellbeing. They felt they were doing a good deed for their community and that this made them feel good. For many, this was something they were involved in as part of their retirement and they felt engaged, fulfilled and stimulated.

“Being involved in the project has boosted my wellbeing. It’s got the feel good factor. Being there for others is good for me, it gives me a boost” (Interviewee 3)

“I get a lot out of it – it’s been a retirement move from working five days a week to seven. You see things that need doing and you’re committed to following it through” (Interviewee 5)

“Those involved in the pair are giving something back”
(Interviewee 2)

“I feel it is doing my duty, fulfilling what I was meant to do in a positive way. It’s been very good for me” (Interviewee 5)

Many interviewees said that the reciprocity was because they felt there were personal gains from engagement with the project as a result of helping others. An increased awareness of poverty meant that they could better identify those who needed help, such as the elderly and infirm, and that by offering services or even assistance such as taking in the shopping etc. that this can make a great deal of difference to a person’s quality of life. The focus for many interviewees was receiving through giving and that the church having a presence in the community could also help people to help themselves.

“Identify what people can give rather than taking, as feelings of contribution are important” (Interviewee 6)

“The pairings are to improve people to better themselves”
(Interviewee 3)

There was also some discussion around perceptions of lifestyle choices and poverty and that understanding more about poverty, and what life is like for those experiencing poverty, helped to break down barriers and overcome prejudice. This in turn may lead to people thinking and recognising their own responsibilities and obligations in supporting other members of their community.

**Partnership working:**
Forging relationship and partnership working was considered one of the most important aspects of Life Expectancy Wirral. Making friendships within congregations and with other communities was important to the success of the initiative. Networking within the community and across Wirral was also seen as important for spreading the word of Life Expectancy Wirral but for also helping to provide a concerted effort to deal with the social (wider) determinants of health, but also in keeping church open and active. The project helped to overcome isolation and vulnerability by keeping a presence within communities and being able to quickly respond to need.

“The great thing with Life Expectancy Wirral is that it is so open and a real diversity of partners that sit around the table. That has to be a good thing” (Interviewee 2)

“I would completely fail to see how you could address issues of life expectancy unless the whole of society is engaged in that process” (Interviewee 6)

“Life Expectancy Wirral needs to be kept abreast of what’s happening in the communities its operating within. And if it can, be in a position to influence” (Interviewee 2)

It was also viewed that the church may play more of a role in helping to deal with emerging crises, for example with debt, money management, poor budget skills and substance abuse. The church may be relied on for those at crisis point. This is supported by the increasing use of food banks across the Wirral, whose impact makes a large difference to lives. Many of the church pairings were involved in collecting food, and churches were seen as the ideal opportunity to identify those most in need. This, it was felt, was only possible through the work of partnerships.

Skills:
One of the benefits of forging relationships as part of Life Expectancy Wirral was the opportunity to share skills and expertise for the benefit of others. Many involved in the pairings used their personal and professional expertise and contacts as part of the initiative. For example, one member recycled denim from the Laird Street Opportunity shop and made cushion covers for sale. She also teaches sewing sessions, offering her skills to others. As mentioned previously, links with debt charities and foodbanks was helping others by sharing knowledge.

The majority of individuals involved in Life Expectancy Wirral freely gave their time and effort and received no wage for their work. Their volunteer work kept them busy and also meant that it was their desire to make a change and to be actively involved in the initiative that drove them to stay engaged.

A number of personal skills were also gained from engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral, for example, qualities such as empathy and reciprocity. Many reported they felt they were being more Christian by engaging with others and thanks to the pairing discussion sessions, were able to put themselves in other people’s shoes and consider their views and circumstances. This increased awareness of poverty had humbled many who had previously been unaware of the life expectancy gap before engaging with the initiative.
4. Social return on investment calculations and results

The section outlines how the SROI was calculated using an impact map to determine the financial amount. The impact map lists the key changes that have occurred over the past twelve months as a direct result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral. Calculated on an Excel spreadsheet, the impact map charts the impact of these changes on individuals, other stakeholders and the local community. Each change is recorded as an indicator on the impact map, and has a financial proxy costed to it. This work forms the SROI calculation. A number of assumptions were made when determining any financial proxies, and this section outlines how these were made, the actual SROI calculations, and a sensitivity analysis which ensures robustness in the calculation.

4.1 The impact map

Information collected from stakeholders during the stakeholder engagement focus groups and interviews was used to identify the key areas where material change had occurred as a direct result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral. This information is captured under a series of headings and presented in the form of an impact map. The impact map identifies the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of each of the identified changes from each stakeholder group, using financial amounts.

4.1.1 Stakeholders

For the purposes of the impact map, stakeholders have been grouped into the Diocese of Chester, which have supported the project through salary costs, payment of expenses and room hire fees. Those involved in the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative have been grouped together and these include representatives from all four pairings, steering group members Life Expectancy Wirral volunteers and members attending Life Expectancy Wirral events. These groups could not be further split down as the benefits for all individuals were the same and were therefore accounted for collectively.

4.1.2 Inputs

Inputs considered the stakeholders that have financially invested into Life Expectancy Wirral. This was used to assess the net social value that had been created or destroyed by engagement with the project. This predominantly is expressed by project staff salaries, expenses and room hire (Table 3).

Table 1: Summary of stakeholder group and inputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diocese of Chester</td>
<td>Time, staff, resources,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing representatives</td>
<td>Time, events, administrative work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEW volunteers</td>
<td>Time, events, administrative work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outputs

Outputs are a summary of the activities which have taken place as a result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral.

Table 2: Summary of key stakeholder outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diocese of Chester</td>
<td>Delivery of Life Expectancy Wirral project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hosting Life Expectancy Wirral events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing representatives</td>
<td>Volunteer time – average six hours per week including attending meetings, church time and community work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEW volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteer time – average six hours per week including attending meetings, church time and community work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.3 Outcomes
The outcomes are the key changes experienced by each stakeholder which could be financially measured. There were multiple changes experienced by each stakeholder group, and these have been categorised into the most important outcomes for inclusion in the impact map. The positive outcomes experienced by stakeholders are expressed in the following theory of change statement:

**Theory of Change**
Life Expectancy Wirral initiative was borne in response to the discrepancy between the life expectancy gap experienced by east and west areas on the Wirral. Engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral which resulted in increased socialising, networks and partnerships, sharing and learning of new skills including empathy and reciprocity as well as increased mental health and wellbeing. The initiative also actively involves volunteers at its heart.

Life Expectancy Wirral addresses what is meant and understood by poverty and as a result a range of community initiatives have been organised to bring communities together and to raise awareness of the disparity in life experiences between deprived and affluent areas.

**Table 3: Summary of key stakeholder outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Outcomes - positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pairing representatives and LEW volunteers</td>
<td>Socialising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental health and wellbeing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative and unintended changes**
Stakeholders were also asked to think of any negative or unintended changes that may have occurred as a direct result of Life expectancy Wirral. It is important that these were included in financial calculations in order to ensure that the SROI analysis is robust and comprehensive. Time and travel costs were the only issues reported by those involved in the evaluation, and these amounts have been included on the impact map as average journey spend to four meetings and two events per year and volunteer time.

**Indicators**
Indicators are used to determine how the outcome reported by the stakeholder is measured. For example, for new friendships, this was equated as the average cost of coffee and cake for two at £5 per month. For being Christian and helping others in need, this was valued at £110, the average annual UK spend on charitable donations. Focus group members estimated that all pairing representatives and volunteers donated approximately six hours in volunteer time to their church, the local community and the pairing process as part of the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative. This was costed at a value of national minimum wage for six hours each week for 52 years. For the indicator increased sense of community, this was valued at the average weekly volunteer time that EU residents gave, which made them feel more of a part of their community by building up their skills and networking. This has been costed at national minimum wage over a year.

**Quantity**
For each outcome and subsequent indicator(s) identified by stakeholders, a numeric quantity is required for the impact map. For this SROI analysis, the quantity refers to the number of stakeholders a change applied to. For the purposes of this calculation, this amounts to: approximately 67 individuals involved in the four pairing schemes; 9 involved in the steering group; and approximately 300 people who attended LEW events and are on the Life Expectancy Wirral mailing list.
**Duration**
How long a change will last varies depending on the change. However, for the purpose of this research, the figure applied is one, as the evaluation looked at the past twelve months and considered outcomes for just one year.

**Financial proxies and sources**
In order to determine the ‘value’ of the key material changes for each stakeholder group, financial proxies were used. The majority of the financial values for key changes reported by the stakeholders were valued by stakeholders during interviews or focus groups. However, the interviews and focus groups were not able to put financial values on all indicators, such as increased sense of community and partnerships and networking. In this situation, values were sourced from elsewhere, namely internet websites, Wikivois (a financial proxy website where indicator values are shared), or costs were valued by the partner organisations.

Wherever a value has been calculated it has been sourced to ensure the costs can be verified. For example, for an increased sense of community, focus group attendees said this could be valued by the average weekly hours a volunteer gives to their community. An EU study (McCoughan et al., 2011) found the average was 6.5 hours week. Therefore this is costed at national minimum wage and calculated over a year for the 76 volunteers involved in the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative (67 pairings representatives and 9 steering group members).

For Partnerships and networking, this was valued at the cost of attending a business networking event organised by the Impact Factory, costing £450.00. This amount has been applied to all 300 people involved in Life Expectancy Wirral events and are on their mailing list and receive newsletters.

**4.1.4 Impact**
Included within the SROI analysis framework is a series of adjustments that were made by the principle researcher which relate to deadweight, attribution, displacement and drop-off.

- Deadweight – how likely is it that the change would have happened anyway?
- Attribution – are there any other organisations / individuals who have contributed to the change?
- Displacement – has any activity been displaced by the change?
- Drop off – does the change drop off in future years?

For the purpose of this research, displacement and drop-off were not calculated and were set at 0%. As this evaluation specifically covers the past twelve months, there was no reported drop-off or displacement. For deadweight and attribution, in the majority of cases, amounts were set at a base level of 50% and this was applied on the basis that some reported volunteering and being involved in other community engagement activities as well as Life Expectancy Wirral.

**4.1.5 Calculating the Social Return on Investment**
The calculation for the SROI is described in this section. Expressed as a ratio of return, it is derived from dividing the impact value by the value of the investment. However, before the calculation is made, the impact value is adjusted to reflect the present value of the projected outcome values. This is to reflect the present day value of benefits projected into the future. In this social value account, some outcomes are projected for a period of 1 year and so the effect of discounting for this is limited. The ratio of return for SROI calculates the net present value of benefits created, based upon the net present value of investment required to deliver such benefits. The SROI ratio is calculated by dividing the Total Present Value of impact by the investment made:
The SROI calculation indicates that for each £1 invested, there is a social return of £5.53. However, this research has highlighted only the impact on individuals directly involved in the project, and not the subsequent impact on their families, working relationships and community networks. It is therefore anticipated that this amount returns the minimum amount of social value that Life Expectancy Wirral can be expected to yield. For example, although 300 people across the Wirral attended a number of events, this figure does not include a count of individuals attending pairing events organised within the paired areas. There is also the potential for the benefits of the initiative to be experienced elsewhere to be far greater than those expressed here, such as with church congregations involved in the pairing processes and residents living in the communities where the pairings exist on the Wirral.

4.1.6 Sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity analysis allows the influence of each variable used within the impact map to be assessed for its impact upon the overall result. This can also test assumptions made and determine their impact in the final SROI calculation. Each variable was assessed, and it was found that most changes did not have a significant impact upon the result, thereby providing a degree of confidence over the figures used. Adjusting proxy amounts did not result in a marked difference in value (usually no less than 10p). Therefore, further sensitivity calculations were conducted using the variable of numbers involved in the outcome and indicator (see tables 5 and 6). Where necessary, the principle of under-estimation has been followed, and as a result no single variable can be assessed to significantly alter the result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>New assumption</th>
<th>SROI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers, pairing representatives and event attendees</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Increased awareness of poverty</td>
<td>Increasing number from 76 to include all 300 event attendees</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>£8.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Sharing skills and expertise</td>
<td>Increasing number from 300 to include all 67 other volunteers</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>£7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership working</td>
<td>Partnerships - networking course</td>
<td>Increasing number from 300 to include all 67 other volunteers</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>£7.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When conducting sensitivity analysis testing on deadweight and attribution, a number of assumptions were made where key stakeholders were not able to provide actual figures. In this case, a conservative estimate of 50% was applied. However, test calculations were carried out using the higher 75% and lower 25% assumptions (table 5). With the higher 75%,
this affected the rate which ranged from £1.43 return using a 75% assumption, to £12.37 if using the lower 25%. The 50% figure has been used for the final SROI calculations as this is the middle ground and was agreed upon when discussed with focus group attendees.

**Table 6: Sensitivity testing deadweight and attribution assumptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Variable base rate</th>
<th>New combined high assumption</th>
<th>SROI rate</th>
<th>New combined low-assumption</th>
<th>SROI rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers, pairing representatives and event attendees</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>£1.43</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>£12.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1.7 Impact tables

Tables 7 to 9 show the changes identified by Life Expectancy Wirral stakeholders and the associated financial values that helped to create the impact map and which contributed towards the social return on investment value. The three tables show the main changes which were experienced by attendees of all three groups which participated in the research: social, mental health and wellbeing, faith, partnership working and skills. The indicators were suggested as examples by research participants either during interviews or focus group. Financial proxies were arrived at using direct examples (e.g. socialising as the cost of cake and coffee at £5 per month).

In instances where no amount could be derived at by the group, proxies where taken from a range of sources. For example, research participants stated that through the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative, they had become more Christian and were helping others in need. This was calculated as the median cost of annual charitable donations (£120) (Dobbs et al., 2012).

As volunteering was the integral aspect of Life Expectancy Wirral, focus group members calculated the number of hours put into the project each week was on average six, which includes attending meetings, administration, travelling and preparing for events etc. This has been calculated over a year long, which covers then evaluation time, and costed at national minimum wage.

To calculate the value of the project being an example of a community asset, focus group members equated this with the cost of keeping a church open. By engagement with the project, it was felt that churches were opened up to their communities, that its building was being used a community hub, and that consequently helped to ensure the church was still a functioning part of a community. To cost this, the annual upkeep for a church was valued at £37,800 which includes services and building maintenance costs.
Table 7: Impact map for social value changes: Social

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Impact value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>New friendships</td>
<td>Focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cost of coffee and cake at £5 per month +£60 per year</td>
<td>£60.00</td>
<td>£135.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased awareness of poverty</td>
<td>Focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>£820 Understanding poverty college module cost at LOAS, London</td>
<td>£820.00</td>
<td>£15,580.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combats social isolation - feeling part of a community</td>
<td>Focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Cost of annual socialising</td>
<td>£220.00</td>
<td>£3,685.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased sense of community</td>
<td>Focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Volunteering - 6.5 hours’ work per week for 52 weeks at national minimum wage of 6.19ph</td>
<td>£2,092.22</td>
<td>£39,752.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving community environment</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Role of a full time park warden</td>
<td>£17,500</td>
<td>£4,375.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Taking into consideration all deadweight and attribution calculations
# Table 8: Impact map for social value changes: Partnership working and skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Impact value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership working</strong></td>
<td>Ambassadors for LEW</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cost of a LEW social marketing campaign using Facebook and Twitter for one year - £750pm X 12</td>
<td>£9,000.00</td>
<td>£135.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnerships - networking course</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Cost of a business networking course</td>
<td>£450.00</td>
<td>£15,580.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Interviews and focus groups</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Volunteering - 6 hours’ work per week for 52 weeks at national minimum wage of £6.19</td>
<td>£1,931.28</td>
<td>£3,685.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal qualities - empathy</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Cost of one-day communications training at the Empathy Factory is £450pp.</td>
<td>£450.00</td>
<td>£39,752.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing skills and expertise</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Cost of running a one-day event</td>
<td>£75.00</td>
<td>£4,375.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Taking into consideration all deadweight and attribution calculations*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Impact value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health and wellbeing</td>
<td>General sense of wellbeing</td>
<td>Focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Cost of coffee and cake at £5 per month +£60 per year</td>
<td>£60.00</td>
<td>£1,140.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tackling wider determinants of health - Mental health support group</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Annual cost of monthly group therapy sessions for pairings based at £20 cost per session for a year</td>
<td>£240.00</td>
<td>£180.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Being Christian and helping others in need</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Median annual cost of charitable donations over a year</td>
<td>£120.00</td>
<td>£1,842.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Churches as a community asset</td>
<td>Interview and focus group</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Annual cost of upkeep of a church without any wages or pension. Includes services and building costs</td>
<td>£37,800.00</td>
<td>£56,700.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Taking into consideration all deadweight and attribution calculations
5. Discussion

On the Wirral peninsula, there is a large discrepancy in life expectancy, with those in more deprived areas living on average 12 years less than someone in a more affluent area, just six miles away. Life Expectancy Wirral was initially set up in 2009 to address this issue. The initiative aims to enable communities to respond to the issues surrounding the differentiation in life expectancy. Working in collaboration with a range of Christian denominations, communities and the voluntary sector, Life Expectancy Wirral fosters working relationships and aims to tackle inequality in the very communities it exists in. The project aims to raise awareness of poverty and inequalities in life expectancy by: building on, improving and expanding its church pairings; forging meaningful and sustainable relationships and working partnerships between communities and within congregations; capture learning and provide resources to those wanting to become involved in social action and harnessing the use of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing.

A number of reports have been produced by Life Expectancy Wirral which provide valuable resources and tools, not only for those involved in the initiative, but for anyone working with deprived communities as the fundamental issues of attitudes towards poverty and engagement are dealt with.

This evaluation has centred around key stakeholders to ensure appropriateness of methods and the reliability of its findings. Stakeholders reported a number of outcomes they have experienced as a direct result of engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral, which can be grouped into five main positive themes: social (wider) determinants of health, mental health and wellbeing, partnership working, faith and skills. Within these themes, stakeholders reported a number of often interlinked outcomes. The social determinants of health and partnership working were considered the strongest and most important themes as Life Expectancy Wirral has resulted in many new friendships and working partnerships. This has led to an increase in social activity within congregations and communities, attending community events and social gatherings together. Linked with greater socialisation, communication and partnership working was the sense of social inclusion. Life Expectancy Wirral helped to combat loneliness and isolation by providing a forum for communities to get together and help each other. This in turn led to a greater feeling of taking a more active role in their community. Life Expectancy Wirral was also interested in the social action that came with supporting the initiative. Those involved were keen to not only understand more about poverty, but to actively do something about it and through the work of Life Expectancy Wirral, attempted to reduce inequalities and improve the quality of life experienced by the most vulnerable and poorer communities.

Life Expectancy Wirral has equipped individuals with the knowledge and skills to understand the context of poverty in their communities and how this directly related to individuals: their neighbours. Their faith was seen as the central component which placed their work into context: by engaging with Life Expectancy Wirral individuals were being Christian, irrespective of the denomination they belonged to. Cross-denomination and cross-sector working also helped to reinforce underlying aims: that Life Expectancy Wirral aimed to reduce the gap in life expectancy experienced across the Wirral irrespective of where the discrepancies occurred and by whom.

Engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral also had the added effect of boosting mental health and wellbeing by making people feel good about themselves. As unpaid volunteers, they felt they were doing good for their community and were spurred on by the aim of reducing inequalities and improving quality of life wherever they could. For many, Life Expectancy Wirral was something they were involved in as part of their retirement and they felt engaged, fulfilled and stimulated. They were able to share their expertise, whether that was as a result of their career, or from specific knowledge gained as part of the initiative’s discussion.
sessions. In turn, they had learnt more about poverty, and what it meant, and how it is experienced in many different ways.

The main work of Life Expectancy Wirral is focused around its church pairings and its Green Spaces initiative. Four pairings have been set up covering the communities of Birkenhead, Heswall, West Kirby, Upton, Bidston, Leasowe and Meols. The original pairing between Birkenhead Priory and Heswall parishes is currently on hold, but members were hopeful that their work will continue in the near future. The pairings were committed to dealing with inequalities and have taken in-roads to address this through relationships, partnerships and getting to know the very people in their communities. The pairing process is not without its problems, with most reporting communication issues. However, there was a feeling of a concerted effort to carry on and develop pairings to involve more communities and other faith denominations to ensure that local issues are being addressed locally. In this sense, the pairings were extremely inclusive and open to all. It is hoped that the pairings will continue to grow and more will develop across Wirral. This will be possible if an ethos of twinning or pairing is fed down through the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative (see recommendations section).

Much work is also ongoing into the use of green spaces, particularly among those living in the more deprived areas of the Wirral. Research as part of this evaluation (Robertson 2012) found that a number of activities already exist in green spaces on the Wirral (e.g. walks and tours around Birkenhead Park for example), however, these tended not to be readily accessed by those living in the immediate vicinity. Reasons may be that events were not well publicised, or that parks and other green spaces were avoided because it was perceived that they were misused or deemed unsafe. Time and transport were also a reason for not visiting these amenities. It was felt that it was fairly easy to encourage people living in deprived communities to access their local green space amenities with the help of local projects such as Wirral Environmental Network, Incredible Edibles and the Big Heritage.

Now funding has been received to continue the green spaces work, it is anticipated that Green Space Champions will be created - volunteers who will befriend those people highlighted by research as being most likely to benefit from time spent outside in natural environments (specifically single men over 55 and single mums struggling financially). The volunteers will themselves receive 2.5 days of training which will be transferable to other contexts and may be helpful in finding employment. Their role will include accompanying participants to events and activities, raising awareness of the effects of spending time in green space and what is available locally and supporting participants to grow in confidence and self-esteem.

By addressing the social determinants of health and meeting the aims and objectives of the initiative, Life Expectancy Wirral returns a good social return on investment. The SROI calculation shows that for every pound put into Life Expectancy Wirral, an average return of £5.53 in social value is generated.

This evaluation highlights that Life Expectancy Wirral is an important community asset for maintaining health and wellbeing. The evaluation demonstrated that Life Expectancy Wirral provided many health and wellbeing benefits for its volunteers. The initiative generated a good social return on investment, partly because it is run mainly by volunteers, with only a part-time project lead with support from the Diocese of Chester. The reported social benefits of engagement with the project were very positive, with all group members reporting they felt the initiative was worthwhile and they had gained something from the experience. As a direct result of Life Expectancy Wirral, individuals stated that they felt more socially included in their communities; they had increased/improved community networks and partnerships; and they were more aware of poverty and the situations of many vulnerable community members from both the affluent and deprived areas of Wirral. Mental health and general wellbeing was
improved as individuals felt included and active members of their community. Through engagement with Life Expectancy Wirral, individuals had also learnt personal qualities such as empathy and confidence and had developed a range of new skills including supporting others and sharing expertise. The initiative had further reinforced individuals’ faith, which resulted in feelings of Christianity and helping others. The vast majority involved in the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative did so as volunteers, and as such this created social value which had the effect of improving quality of life in stakeholders.

**Limitations**

The research involves an SROI analysis which relies heavily on qualitative research. The nature of the SROI evaluation in attempting to quantify the unquantifiable (for example, the value of tackling the wider determinants of health, or improved community relationships and working partnerships, is that it was often quite difficult to elicit meaningful financial outcomes from participants. The SROI analysis itself is dependent on the responses given by the research participants, which are subjective to those taking part at that particular time-point. On a number of occasions where focus group members were not able to arrive at financial amounts themselves, financial proxies were derived at using known proxies used elsewhere in other research or from examples given during qualitative data collection (e.g. hours input into volunteering). While the numbers involved in the research are quite small, these are a good representation of those engaged with Life Expectancy Wirral.

What is also outside the scope of this research is the social value created by the entire community as a knock-on effect of the initiative. The experiences and outcomes of steering group members, volunteers and attendees to Life Expectancy Wirral’s events have the potential to spread the work and ethos of Life Expectancy Wirral to a greater audience, which cannot be expressed in this evaluation. Therefore this calculation can be seen as the minimum value created by the initiative.
6. Recommendations

Following this evaluation, a number of recommendations have been made which may help support the continuing success of Life Expectancy Wirral.

- Although the pairings reported a number of problems, mainly relating to communication, work is ongoing to remedy this. The pairing system could benefit from an ethos of pairing embedded directly from the Diocese of Chester. An informal charter that churches across Wirral could sign up to would perhaps make the processes easier, and would help initiate a Wirral-wide adoption of the initiative. This charter would set out the need to understand what poverty is in the context of Wirral, and would set out a commitment to work in partnership with other cross denominational churches, as well as organisations and third sector projects. This charter would be the basis for pairing more churches up and would predominantly focus on improved community relationships and partnerships.

- Consider forging links with young people through schools, youth clubs and groups which already exist in churches. These pairings could be quite informal and would help extend the number involved in Life Expectancy Wirral.

- The website could be better designed so that more information is available and the site would benefit from involvement of the individual churches. For example, a directory of what’s on could be added, or directly linked to the Wirral Well website. A blog by the pairings would help along with Facebook and Twitter accounts. Using social media will help promote the initiative and capture a new audience.

- Continue delivering Life Expectancy Wirral events (linked to pairing updates, announcement of charter, first stage of sign up, annual update on Life Expectancy Wirral). Previous events have been successful, and the number of different individuals attending shows the widespread interest in the project and its relevance for the community in addressing public health issues.

- Continue to build on existing relationships and consider new working partnerships that will support the expansion of the Life Expectancy Wirral initiative and ensure that all of its aims can be met.
7. References


8. Appendices

1. Logic model

Key changes

WIDER DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- New friends
- Combats social isolation and loneliness
- Inclusion – feeling part of the community/faith group

FAITH

- Increased sense of community
- Partnerships and networking – building relationships with NHS, local authority, other faith denominations, other congregations

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Boosts wellbeing ‘feel good factor’
- Improving environment of communities
- Churches as a community asset

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Being Christian - recognising obligations helping others in need
- Empathy – put yourself in someone else’s shoes
- Increased awareness of poverty within own community – breaking down barriers to assumptions
- Reciprocity – Doing good and giving something back and being helped in turn

SKILLS

- Sharing skills and expertise
- Time commitments
- Communication

PROGRESS – addressing life expectancy gap?
2. Diagram showing evaluation feedback responses and comments given from attendees at the Life Expectancy Wirral Summit, January 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well organised</td>
<td>• Extremely well organised and constructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Practical, worthwhile discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drama was excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>• Hopeful of things actually happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inspirational number of attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rooted in vision - to improve health and wellbeing, reduce poverty gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>• Meeting different people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encouraged and enthused to work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Good to hear different voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Different sectors well represented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>• Thought provoking - made attendees consider issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Next steps - consideration of future and what to do next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements</td>
<td>• Event was too short or too broad an agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More information on church pairings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilitators at front or in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>• Share with others the LEW work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• LEW message promoted in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Involve more of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>• Ongoing feedback to local churches, organisations, colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consolidate current ongoing work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Summary report of event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future actions</td>
<td>• Share the passion - improve communication and collaboration between organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Directory of Wirral community resource (update WirralWell website)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication and publicity strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Six/twelve month review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage more church pairings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final report *An evaluation of the social impact of Life Expectancy Wirral, Merseyside* will be available on the Centre for Public's Health website: [http://www.cph.org.uk/expertise/population-health/](http://www.cph.org.uk/expertise/population-health/).

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