
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Inverclyde Cares: compassionate and resilience communities in the face of multiple disadvantage

23rd International Conference on Integrated Care, Antwerp, Flanders, 22-24 May 2023

Vicki Cloney¹, Alison Bunce¹²

1: CVS, Inverclyde, Greenock, Inverclyde, United Kingdom

2: Compassionate Inverclyde, Greenock, Inverclyde, United Kingdom

Inverclyde is a small local authority in the West of Scotland. There are less than 80,000 people in Inverclyde, and it is home to the most deprived areas of Scotland and the third highest drug deaths in the country. Inverclyde has significant deprivation, generational unemployment, child poverty and problematic drug and alcohol use. In recent years, the undercurrent of these multiple disadvantages has been compounded by the uncertainty and challenges of both a global pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. However, Inverclyde has the first recognised Compassionate Community in Scotland. Compassionate Inverclyde is a social movement underpinned by the values of compassion, helpfulness and neighbourliness. It is ordinary people helping ordinary people with extraordinary results. The juxtaposition between this radical kindness and the severe and multiple disadvantages has led to a new social movement called Inverclyde Cares. Building on the work of Compassionate Inverclyde, Inverclyde Cares recognises the importance of social connections and the role communities, voluntary organisations, the public sector and private businesses have in supporting one another. If supported and nurtured, these inter-dependencies can create communities that offer opportunities for those who are lonely, vulnerable or forgotten to feel valued and included. Inverclyde Cares is an all-system approach to address local social challenges with kindness and compassion.

The 4 workstreams within Inverclyde Cares include bereavement, Covid remembrance, kindness and stigma. Inverclyde Cares recognises that bereavement is a universal experience. The Programme Lead has supported organisations across Inverclyde to explore how to support staff after a loved one dies, from compassionate policies and procedures to kindness within the language they use with each other. Several organisations have developed bereavement charters and have been awarded the national bereavement charter mark. Similarly, Inverclyde Cares recognises the loss felt throughout our community during the Covid-19 pandemic. Working in partnership with Greenspace Scotland, an artist has been commissioned to consult with the community to capture experiences during the pandemic and gather ideas for a meaningful lasting memorial.

Kindness is at the heart of Inverclyde Cares. The Inverclyde Kindness Awards acknowledge the kind actions that happen in every corner of Inverclyde every day, both by individuals and organisations. Along with this, the Programme Lead is supporting organisations to develop a Kindness Charter. Like the bereavement charter, this gives organisations an opportunity to explore how they can demonstrate kindness and the changes they pledge to make, both within

their own staff teams and with external partners and communities. Likewise, there is no place for stigma in a caring and compassionate community. So far, there have been 3 Challenge Stigma events, which have explored what lies at the core of all stigma and the importance of positive language. These events have provided an opportunity for third sector organisations, public and independent partners, and communities to sit together as equals to discuss how to address stigma in Inverclyde. We are a group of people, using our collective experience to explore how to work together to solve a problem in our community, because community problems require community solutions.