Our Place

Views of Children and Young People in Gatehouse of Fleet

+44 (0)7745 188 845 • info@sleeping-giants.co.uk • www.sleeping-giants.co.uk

1. Introduction

Local Place Planning

Local Place Plans are an important way for communities to have more influence over what developments can happen in their area. These community-led plans set out:

- the local community's vision for the place that they live
- the activities, projects and developments that community members think should happen in their area, and where these should happen
- proposals for how land is developed and used in their local area

Communities like Gatehouse of Fleet are facing a demographic crisis, where many of its residents are of retiral age, and most young people leave the area in search of better opportunities. It is vital that Local Place Plans are informed by the views of children and young people, so that proposed developments meet their needs, both now and in the future.

Gathering the views of children and young people

Between spring 2022 and autumn 2024, children and young people shared their views on the positives and negatives of living in Gatehouse of Fleet, as well as how they felt the town and its facilities should be improved.

The engagement opportunities were led by social enterprise Sleeping Giants on behalf of Gatehouse Community Centre and then, as part of preparation of the Local Place Plan, Gatehouse Community Council. In total 121 children and young people were engaged through:

- sessions at Gatehouse Primary School
- sessions with young people who accessed Gatehouse YMCA
- a community event run at Gatehouse Community Centre.

In addition, the views of 436 young people from the Dee and Glenkens ward were gathered by Dumfries and Galloway Council through their 10,000 Voices research which used the Place Standard Tool as a framework. Although Gatehouse is only one town within this ward, it provides a useful benchmark to with which to compare the Gatehouse findings.

The Place Standards Tool

In the most recent engagements with children and young people, adapted versions of the Place Standard Tool were used which provided a useful structure for conversations about their place. This approach is being used by many communities across Dumfries and Galloway as part of Local Place Planning to help people think about different elements of their place in a methodical way. The tool helps people pinpoint the assets of a place as well as areas where a place could improve.

A summary of the scores given by children and young people on each theme in the Place Standard Tool can be found in table 1 (p7) alongside a comparison with the results from 10,000 Voices.

2. How do Children and Young People View Gatehouse?

A fuller summary of children and young people's comments can be found in tables 2 and 3 on pages 8 and 14.

Overall, children and young people in Gatehouse were **MOST positive** about:

1. the positive **identity and sense of belonging** in the community, and many of them feel that Gatehouse has good community spirit, and find the people to be nice, friendly and kind. They also appreciate events like the Gala Day which bring members of the community together.
2. opportunities to regularly enjoy **natural space,** valuing the pretty landscapes, the woods, wildlife and plants, and enjoy walks in nature.
3. opportunities for **social interaction**, enjoying spending time with friends at each other's homes, at school, at the parks, in the street, and at various groups and clubs.
4. General **feelings of safety**, although some did express concerns around traffic, poor lighting in public areas, bullying and anti-social behaviour such as theft, drunkenness and passive smoking.

Overall, children and young people in Gatehouse were **LEAST positive** about:

1. **Traffic and parking**, due to cars driving too fast, cars parking at the side of the road making roads narrow, the lack of parking spaces, and the lack of safe crossing areas.
2. **Public transport**, recognising that (other than the school bus), they have to rely almost entirely on car travel with parents or carers.
3. **Care and maintenance** of Gatehouse, with worries expressed around litter, vandalism, and the fact that some of the houses and buildings (not least the community centre) need a lot of work done to them.
4. **Opportunities for play and recreation,** with concerns expressed around the lack of play facilities for toddlers and younger children, the need to improve parks and outdoor sports facilities, the requirement to travel to access the opportunities that appealed to them, and the lack of stuff to do to keep children and young people off the streets.

There is clear evidence that **as they age, children and young people tend to become more dissatisfied** with aspects of Gatehouse and children aged 9-11 scored 11 out of 14 themes in the Place Standard Tool more negatively than their younger peers

These older children were more concerned about:

- **Work and** economy, with worries that they will need to move away to pursue their chosen career path, and
- **Influence and a sense of control,** with older children and young people often feeling that adults make all the decisions, don't listen to them and don't care what they think.

In addition, Children aged 7-11 were less satisfied overall with local facilities and services, and this was the area for which children provided most comments.

While there were lots of positive comments about some local facilities and services (see appendix, table 2), overall young people expressed relatively high levels of dissatisfaction in this area. some of the main themes which were expressed were:

- The lack of shops and eateries which appeal to young people, or which are young people friendly
- The lack of facilities where young people can spend time, socialise and have fun all year round
- The fact that community groups often don't programmes and activities which appeal to young people

While not a concern for everyone, the standard of **local housing** is an issue for some children and young people.

Some worried that there were too many holiday homes and that more houses were needed for local families, while others felt that some houses were in disrepair and needed improvements made to them.

The concerns voiced by children and young people must be taken seriously when creating plans for Gatehouse, not least given that 57.3% of young people from Dee and Glenkens Ward who were surveyed as part of the 10,000 Voices research stated that they do not intend to stay in Dumfries and Galloway in the future, which is slightly above the regional average of 55.1%.

3. What Needs to Change in Gatehouse?

A fuller summary of children and young people's comments can be found in tables 2 and 3 on pages 8 and 14, however their top priorities were:

	Better management of **traffic and parking** to make roads feel safer for children and young people. This could include: • building more parking spaces and stopping cars parking on roadsides • introducing lower speed limits in the town
	Improving children and young people's ability to **move around** their place by **walking, wheeling and cycling** including widening pavements and improving paths.
	Creating more opportunities for **play and recreation** for children and young people by making additions and improvements to: • outdoor spaces – sports and play equipment: a skate park, bike track, better park equipment and improvements to the football pitch were the most popular suggestions. • indoor spaces – redeveloping the community centre was the most popular suggestion • sport and leisure clubs and groups, so that they run activities children and young people are interested in

	Improving **facilities and services** including: • creating more of a 'high street' feel in the town centre with a wider range of shops and cafes that appeal to children and young people • improving facilities to cater more to the needs of young people all year round. Specifically, this included: o improving outdoor hangout spaces for young people (like the 'Bird Hut') by upgrading them and providing lighting o providing more access to indoor facilities such as the community centre and youth facilities particularly in the evenings during colder, darker months o again, redeveloping the community centre to provide more facilities for children and young people o improving the choice of books for children and young people in the local library • running a more varied and appealing programme of activities for children and young people a youth and community facilities Build better **housing for families** which is accessible to parks and other facilities that children and young people use.
	Improve lighting in key areas where children and young people walk, cycle, play and hang out to make them **feel safer**. This should include the Bird Hut, the Men's Shed, parks and certain streets.
	Support children and young people to have more **influence and a sense** of control by listening to them, valuing their opinions, and involving them more in decision making. This could include: • involving them more in local meetings, but in young person friendly ways • acting on the suggestions of children and young people where possible, and providing them with feedback about what's changing because of their input • helping them to become more aware of other opportunities to be involved in decision making e.g. through the Regional Youth Council • involving them in volunteering and activities to help raise money for facilities and activities they want.

In addition, during the engagements with children and young people, teachers and youth workers also made some suggestions about the need for

organisations to work more closely together for the benefit of children and young people.

Table 1 – Place Standard Tool scoring

	10,000 Voices		Gatehouse Primary School			
	Regional Average	Dee and Glenkens	9-11 yrs	7-8 yrs	5–6 yrs	Gatehouse Average
1=awful, 7=excellent			1=not good, 3=great			
Traffic and parking	4.25	4.25	1.5	1.75	1.5	1.6
Public transport	4.5	4.25	1.75	2	2.25	2
Care and maintenance	4	4.25	1.75	2	2.25	2
Play and recreation	4.25	4.25	1.75	2.5	2	2.1
Work and economy	4	4.25	1.75	2	2.75	2.2
Influence and control	4	4.25	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.2
Housing and community	4.5	4.5	2.25	2	2.5	2.3

Moving around	5	5	2.25	2.5	2.5	2.4
Facilities and services	4	4.25	2.25	2	3	2.4
Streets and spaces	4.25	4.5	2	2.75	2.5	2.4
Social interaction	4.25	4.5	2.5	2.25	2.75	2.5
Feeling safe	4.5	4.75	2.25	2.5	2.75	2.5
Natural space	4.75	5.25	2.5	2.5	2.75	2.6
Identity and belonging	4.25	4.5	2.25	2.75	3	2.7

Table 2 – comments from all engagement sessions by Place Standard theme

1. **Moving around -** How easy is it to move around and get to where I want to go?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• We can ride our bikes and scooters • Lots of places to walk	• Lots of potholes on the roads • There aren't enough good bike paths • Pavements aren't wide enough • The bridge needs improved	• Widen pavements • Improve and extend bike paths
2. Public transport - What is public transport like in my place?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
School bus	• Have to rely on cars as public transport is poor	• Need better buses
3. Traffic and parking - How do traffic and parking affect how I move around my place?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• Not too much traffic compared to other places	• Not enough places to cross the road safely • People drive too fast • There's too much traffic • Not enough parking • Cars park badly and make roads narrow	• More traffic lights and safe crossing areas • Widen roads or stop cars parking on them • Build more parking spaces • Make cars drive slower
4. Streets and spaces - What are the buildings, streets and public spaces like in my place?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• It's nice and quiet • The clock tower • Nice buildings	• It feels too small • Feels too quiet • Some of the buildings are a bit run down • Not enough lighting	

5. Natural space - How easy is it for me to regularly enjoy natural space?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• Very pretty landscapes and good views • Nature walks • The woods • Lots of wildlife and plants • Lots of places to roam about	• Can get lost in the woods • Litter can damage wildlife • Not enough trees and plants in town	• Plant more trees and flowers in town
6. Play and recreation - How good are the spaces and opportunities for play and recreation in my place?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**

• Fleet-star football • Wheels of Fleet • **Parks** • Bike trails • Gravel cycling • Horse trails • Bowling club • Golf	• Lack of stuff for young ones / toddlers • Nothing for kids to do to keep them off the streets • Parks need better equipment for all ages • Have to travel to do fun activities • Football pitch isn't great • Not enough places to stable horses • No arcades	Improvements to outdoor spaces: • Bike track / dirk bike track • Horse trails • Skate Park • More and better park equipment • Sports / running track at Garries Park • Improved football pitch • Basketball hoops • Tree house • Winter youth shelter • Lights Improvements / additions to indoor spaces: • Redevelop community centre to include facilities for sport and leisure[1] • Soft play for little ones • Cinema • Swimming pool More sports clubs and activities that appeal to young people (see table 3 below)

7. Facilities and services - How well do facilities and services in my place meet my needs?

What's good	What's not so good?	Priorities for change
• The Community Centre • Shops e.g. Spar, Keystore, charity shop, icecream shop, Apothecary shop, • Good nursery and primary school with supportive teachers • Library • Doctor	• Not enough choice of shops and those that are there are too expensive • Some of the shopkeepers not friendly to young people • No gym for children or adults • No swimming pool • No petrol station or garage • Lack of takeaways	Create more of a high street feel like Castle Douglas with: • Better cafes / restaurants / takeaways that sell food kids like (e.g. McDonalds) • Better shops that appeal to young people (e.g. toys, skincare) • Bigger supermarket

[1] See table 3 below

• Post Office • Hairdresser • Places to eat e.g. Galloway Lodge, Iron Brew laundry cafe • Pubs • Youth clubs e.g. Bunker, YMCA, Beavers, Scouts, Wheels of Fleet • The bird hut	• Lack of cafes • No cinema • Community Centre needs a lot of work • Hospitals are far away • Lack of dentist • Youth services are not open enough in the evening, particularly in winter • Young people are not aware of activities on offer or they are not appealing to them	• Young person friendly cafes or shops including those that open at night Improve facilities to cater more to the needs of young people all year round, including: • Better access to safe outdoor hangout spaces for young people (improve lighting, renovate the Bird Hut) • Better access to indoor facilities including having youth spaces open more often in the evening • Redevelop community centre to include more facilities for young people[2] • Improved choice of books in the library Youth and community facilities to run a more varied programme of activities that appeal to young people (see table 3 below)
8. Work and local economy - How active is the local economy in my place and are there good opportunities for work, volunteering and training?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• Places to work • Some young people feel like they will able to pursue a career in Dumfries and Galloway	• There aren't enough people working in the shops • Many young people will need to move away to pursue their chosen career	• Redevelop community centre to include facilities for tourists[3]
9. Housing and community - How well do the homes in my place meet the needs of my community?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**

[2] See table 3 below
[3] See table 3 below

• Nice houses • Lots of houses	• There are too many holiday houses and not enough for local people • Some homes need improvement • Bigger and better houses are needed for some families • Houses are far away from the park	• Build better housing for families which accessible to parks and facilities that young people use
10. Social interaction - How good is the range of opportunities which allow me to meet and spend time with other people?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• Get to see friends at youth groups / clubs etc. • Good festivals • Get to hang out with friends at various places (school, home, park, street)	• Mainly older population so not too many people to hang out with • Friends live far away • Very few indoor spaces to hang out other than people's houses. • Have to hang about outside which is cold and dark in winter	• See facilities and services above
11. Identity and belonging - To what extent does my place have a positive identity that supports a strong sense of belonging?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**
• Gala week is great • Riding of the marches • Community spirit • Nice, friendly, kind people • A nice community	• More community spirit needed • Not everyone is nice to each other at school • Unkind people • Negativity within the community	• More volunteering and raising money for local charities and groups
12. Feeling safe - how safe does my place make me feel?		
What's good	**What's not so good?**	**Priorities for change**

	• There is some bullying • Some people steal stuff • The roads and traffic can feel scary • Can feel intimidated by drunk people • People smoke outside • There isn't enough lighting in parks, some streets, hang out spots	• Provide more safe crossing areas • Improve lighting in parks and other areas young people hang out

13. Care and maintenance - How well is my place looked after and cared for?

What's good	What's not so good?	Priorities for change
	• Some people smash windows and vandalize things • There is litter in playground, parks and on the street • Some of the houses and buildings need a lot of work to improve them	•

14. Influence and sense of control - When things happen in my place how well am I listened to and included in decision-making?

What's good	What's not so good?	Priorities for change
	• Older people make most of the decisions • Young people don't always feel like adults in the community listen to them or care about what they think • Poor awareness of Youth Council Reps	• Involve young people more in local meetings, but in young person friendly ways. • Act on the suggestions of young people where possible and provide them with feedback about what's changing as a result of their input

Table 3 – **Specific suggestions for improvements to community facilities and services** (in particular for the redevelopment of Gatehouse Community Centre and the kinds of activities children and young people would most enjoy).

Indoor Sports Facilities and Equipment	Youth / Study Space	Activities for children and young people

• a gym (including for under 16s) • basketball • football • hockey • badminton • acrobalance • yoga • tennis • dodgeball • rugby • indoor curling • gymnastics (inc. mats, equip) • climbing wall • equipment that can be stored then rolled out • table tennis (with more than one table so the school could come and play there)	• Tutors to help with subjects • Lap desks • Standing desk • Circular group table • Dividers between desks • Bench / tables with computers • Tables and chairs • Books / library • Beanbags • Comfy area / corner • Quiet / chill out space • Large whiteboard or chalk board • Kitchen / tea and coffee making facilities • Charging points • Wifi • Space for teacher, tutor, supervisor • Stationary • Security cameras	More varied programmes of activities that appeal to children and young people including: • Music (learning, playing, listening, DJiing, singing) • Drama • Disco / parties • Gaming • Cooking • Art and crafting • Make-up, hair, nails • Movie nights • Issue based work e.g. drugs & alcohol, first aid • Trips to exciting places e.g. rage rooms, escape rooms, climbing wall, trampolining • Sports activities such as, football, hockey, rugby, tennis, gymnastics, martial arts, cycling group (including for girls)