

1 Purpose

This document provides information on how to enhance the passenger experience that can be achieved across all Network Rail stations through Community Rail activities. This guidance helps to drive Network Rail’s *customer driven* ethos.

“Social value” is the term used to describe the social and economic benefits created as a result of a project or piece of work. This guidance note shows how we can go above minimum requirements to deliver social value across railway works.

2 Community Rail

Community Rail is a grassroots movement developed by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) that builds relationships between communities and their rail service, putting the stations back at the heart of the community. A key objective to Community Rail is creating an inclusive railway that is welcoming and accessible to all. Through this, the station is not just *developed* by the local community, but it is one that *develops* its community by enhancing career prospects, supporting local small and medium enterprises (SMEs), creating community cohesion as well as promoting healthy lifestyles. These initiatives can be developed in a way that is unique to the local area based on its demographic, social diversity and surrounding landscape and/or environment.

Through local stations embracing inclusivity and enabling local communities to become key stakeholders in the future and development of the station, a vital contribution is made to overall wellbeing, prosperity and mobility that is sustainable, thereby benefitting generations to come. The diagram below shows the key Community Rail ‘building blocks’ that lead to making rail a great experience.



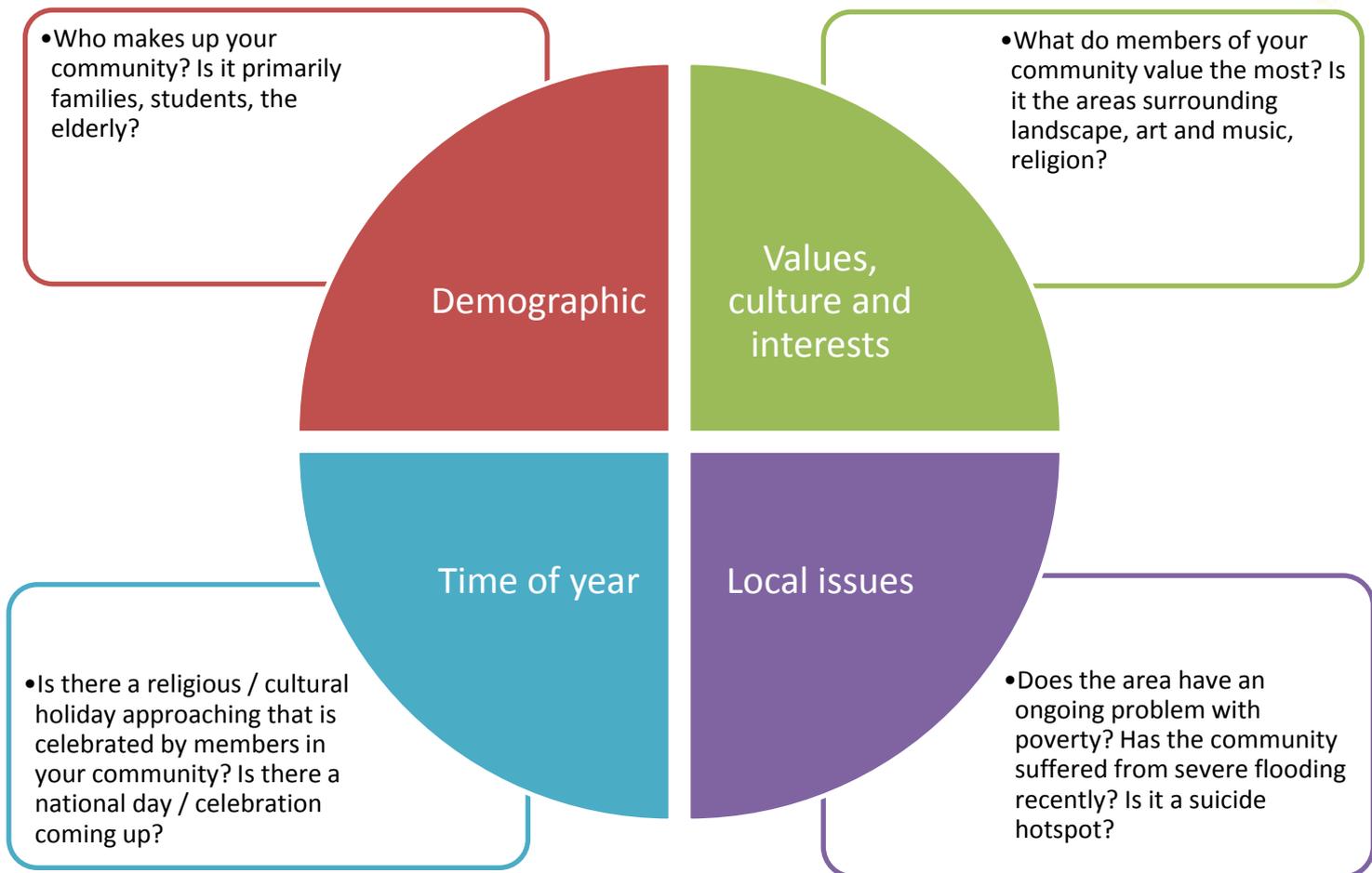
2.1 Community cohesion

Community cohesion is a term used to describe the sense of togetherness and belonging, forming a unit within their local area. Through this, diversity of individuals' backgrounds are valued and embraced, with all members having equal access to opportunities. Community cohesion is an essential compound to the foundations of a community, enhancing resilience by enabling individuals to adapt and work through periods of hardship.

Community cohesion can be achieved through any activity that brings members of community together. Here are some examples:

- Transform underutilised land surrounding your local station into an area that members of the community can get together and enjoy, such as a community garden. Alternatively, enhance the aesthetic of the station by painting over poorly maintained walls to create a mural, which will also prevent graffiti and vandalism.
 - These are great examples of a station enhancement that community members can volunteer to create, while also enjoying the end result that boosts morale through leaving a legacy in their local area.
- Empty areas of the station are great for hosting a variety of events. These can be used in the following ways:
 - Host competitions such as gardening and agriculture;
 - Run charity fundraising events such as cake sales for Network Rail's charity of choice or a charity that of importance to the local area;
 - Run workshops such as arts and crafts, sewing, flower arranging and more to encourage creativity in the local area. These could be hosted by local artists or professionals;
 - More educational workshops could also be held, such as rail safety or suicide prevention classes to raise awareness of dangers and threats that impact the railway;
 - Open donation centres throughout the year. Christmas would be an excellent time for members of the community to put together items for Network Rail's charity of choice and for the homeless in the local area.
- Organise litter-picking or 'spring clean' events for members of the community to take part in maintenance activities of the station'.

All of the above are great examples that can be done at any station; however there are some ways these can be personalised to your local community for greater success. See the diagram below for some things to take into consideration while planning activities. Tailor your activities to what these groups would benefit from the most, and make sure it's inclusive!



Case study – Christmas lunch, Euston station

On Christmas Day 2017, Network Rail hosted a lunch for the homeless in Euston station, with 45 volunteers across the company helping to make the day a success.

Network Rail employees partnered up with homeless charity St. Mungo's, grassroots group Streets Kitchen, British Transport Police and other local businesses and charities to serve a four-course lunch, donate presents, warm clothing and chocolate, as well as Christmas cards.



On top of this, volunteers from Streetvet, an organisation which provides homeless pet owners with free veterinary treatment, were on hand to give dogs health checks.

2.2 Social enterprise

Social enterprise is a concept in which a business (in this case, the station) invests in the local community by enhancing economic growth through developing career prospects and supporting local businesses. Within this, access to opportunities are optimised and equal amongst all no matter what their age, gender, race, beliefs, background or physical ability.

Railway stations are situated in the heart of city centres, towns and suburbs, being the primary entry point for commuters and travellers to and from cities. This gives stations an ideal platform for social enterprises to thrive, providing major benefits for the railway while maximising social inclusion.

These initiatives are particularly beneficial for rural villages, which are vulnerable to losing local businesses and services from economic decline, most commonly experienced during winter months from a lack of tourism. Some ideas of how social enterprises can enhance economic growth are listed below.

- Offer unused areas of the station to local SMEs to set up pop-up stores selling local goods;
- Collaborate with station cafes to offer opportunities to teens and adults with learning disabilities to gain important life and catering skills (see case study below).
- Host CV skills and careers advice workshops in unused rooms at the station;
- Use stations to sell and distribute locally grown, organic produce to remote communities for greater accessibility to goods and services. This could also be done with local artwork or gift ideas for those who may have limited access to shops, particularly during Christmas time or other special occasions.

Case study – Skills for life at Severn Dee Travel

Severn Dee Travel is a non-for-profit organisation run by volunteers and the community rail partnership. At Gobowen Station it provides ticketing and a station café that offers work experience opportunities to students and special educational needs from Derwen College.

Here, the students learn basic catering and customer service skills that will enhance their career prospects, supporting longer-term career aspirations.

The project directly contributed to Derwen College receiving an 'outstanding' for the opportunities it provides for personal development, behaviour and welfare to its students.

2.3 Health and wellbeing

Community Rail strives towards achieving equal access to services and opportunities for all, and lack of access to these can severely impact an individual's health and wellbeing. This is more prominent amongst the elderly, financially unstable and those with physical disabilities, with these groups more likely to be affected by social exclusion leading to a greater risk of loneliness and isolation due to a lack of access to public transport. These groups are impacted to a greater extent if living in rural areas without the access or ability to drive a car. However, there are ways to combat social exclusion, while also relieving symptoms of mental health disorders and promoting healthier lifestyles, leading to a better quality of life for all.

- Arrange 'rail to trail' walks to and from local stations to encourage healthy and sustainable modes of transport. Guided walks are not only a great opportunity for members of the community to meet each other, tackling isolation and loneliness, but help to reduce the risk of obesity while also promoting positive mental health for those living with illnesses such as anxiety and depression;
- Ensure your station has accessible routes from stations into green spaces, as this will open opportunities for visitors and those with physical and hidden disabilities. Having organised and regular programmes led by volunteers provide individuals with a routine and structure for exercise to facilitate social interaction, rehabilitation and recovery;
- Utilise unused areas of the station to host weekly support groups for those suffering from loneliness as an opportunity to meet likeminded individuals. These sessions can be made fun and creative with a range of activities (see section 2.1 for examples).

For more information on accessible travel and social inclusion, please refer to the *Making travel accessible Guidance Note NR/GN/ESD20*.

Case study – Bentham Line dementia walks

The Bentham Line is proactive in helping to ensure that walks from the station are accessible for people living with dementia. With walking tours departing from Morecambe, Bentham, the Forest of Bowland (in an area of outstanding natural beauty) and Saltaire (part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the walks aim to prompt longer-term memories and offer a supportive and positive excursion. They also provides access to nature, in which evidence has shown it improves emotional and physical health of patients, including improved awareness and attention, self-esteem, independence and sense of self control.

Additionally, leaflets for the walks are being developed that are simple, easy to read and largely image-based. The partnership is also working hard to ensure signage is clear and accessible on marked footpaths from the stations.

3 Day-to-day customer service

While the above Community Rail activities go above and beyond typical business as usual in the running of stations, there are key things that station staff members should be doing to ensure passengers have the most positive experience when travelling by train. These include:

- Ensuring directions and signs are clear to ease passenger stress of navigation around the station, these may include;
 - Staircases indicating which direction travellers should go up or down;
 - Clearly labelled platforms and exits.
- Ensure that train time departure and arrival boards are situated in easy to access areas and are clear to read, accompanied with effective callouts for those who are hearing impaired;
- Ensure that the presentation and aesthetic appearance of stations are well maintained to create a more pleasant transport environment;
- Promote the 'Everyone', 'Suicide prevention' and 'Diversity and inclusion' training programmes to staff members alongside customer service training for public-facing staff.

4 Example activities and volunteering

Organise **charity collections** at stations for Network Rail's charity of choice

Target **community issues** by addressing antisocial behaviour issues or working with the homeless

Use and promote the **adopt-a-station** programme to rejuvenate the local station

Organise a team **litter picking** day

Network Rail employees: You are entitled to up to 5 days volunteer leave. This can be taken for any UK registered charity or one of the three types of community engagement activity:

(i) Community Safety, (ii) Early Engagement or (iii) Community Rail. For more details, visit

{ [HYPERLINK "http://connect/volunteering"](http://connect/volunteering) }.

To view all environment and social KPIs, please refer to the *KPI Guidance Note NR/GN/ESD22*.