RELATIONSHIPS
PROJECT

CASE STUDY CARDS

16 inspiring, real-life examples of relationship-centred practice

Find inspiration for ways in which you could put relationships at the heart of your practice, by exploring real life examples.

It's unlikely that an approach to developing good relationships can be copied and pasted from one context to another. Instead, we recommend exploring a range of different case studies and identifying the ingredients that you feel will work best for you. We think that doing this collectively with your colleagues or community is the best way to find the right recipe.

How to use the cards?

The cards are designed for use in workshops, meetings or sessions. We recommend printing the cards so that people can read them, move them and stick them up on the wall. You can find some suggestions below for activities you could do with the cards. We also encourage you to create your own activities!

You can find the full case studies on the Relationships Project website (and there's a shortlink on every card).

Activities

1. Gallery

- Print out all 16 cards, either A4 or even A3, and display them on the wall like a gallery. Ask your group to walk around, reading the case studies.
- Give people a prompt such as 'find the case study that feels most inspiring / most relevant to your own work' or 'find the case studies that rely on the same, or similar, enablers to create an impact'.
- Ask everyone to come back together and share a bit about how they responded to your prompt/s.

2. Co-presentation

- Deal out some or all of the case study cards.
- Ask individuals or small groups to read their card and prepare to present the case study back to the group. (If you have time you could ask each team to do some further research about the organisation or project they've been given).
- Follow each presentation with a discussion about what can be learnt or borrowed from each case study.

Activities

3. Creating benefits

- Ask your team to go through the full deck of cards, selecting the case studies which demonstrate impact closest to the impact you hope to have as a team.
- Break into pairs to discuss; how relationships contributed to the benefits described in each case study; what the potential lessons are for your work; what some first steps towards applying those lessons might look like.

4. Divergent connections

- Deal out the cards so that each person has at least 3 case studies to look at (you could print multiple sets of the cards if you need to).
- Ask everyone to read their cards individually, and list as many insights and/or ideas they could take back to their own work, organisation, project or challenge.
- Once everyone has created their own list or brainstorm, ask them to pair up or form small groups to discuss and build on their ideas.
- Finally, bring everyone back together to share their top 1-3 insights with the group.

5. Make your own case study

- Using the cards as a template - and as inspiration - ask your participants to work alone or in groups to mockup a case study card for their organisation, community or project.
- As everyone to present their mockup back to the group for questions, feedback and discussion.
- You could also do a variation on this activity where you use it as an imaginative exercise. For example the prompt could be 'create a mockup case study card for the organisation or project you're planning to set up'. This could be a useful way of inviting people to think deeply about relationships at the earliest stages of a project.

COMMUNITY SHOP

Helping people escape and pre-empt food poverty by combining subsidised food with relational support services.

Overview:

Community Shop is a 'social supermarket' comprising three interdependent spaces: a highly subsidised essentials shop for local people on welfare; a hub providing training and mentoring in useful life skills; and a community kitchen with space to eat, socialise and cook.

Community Shops are designed as community hubs, to welcome people and make them feel at home whatever their needs. This helps build trust and reassurance as the foundations of a supportive relationship. In practice, then, Community Shops offer support in informal, often unexpected ways.

Relationship spotlight:

A stronger support network of staff and community members equips service users to learn and improve their wellbeing.

Keywords:
Co-creative, informal, multifaceted

Top 3 benefits:

PERFORMANCE

543 members moved into full-time work.

SKILLS

97% have tools/skills to meet goals.

WELLBEING

96% improve mental wellbeing.

Key learning: Spaces enabling informal, ad hoc interactions help new relationships take root and flourish.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Co-design:** support programmes and goals co-created with users.

2 **Activities:** food and learning activities enable new connections.

3 **Space:** physically combining subsidised shopping and support services.

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BIG PICTURE LEARNING

Putting students directly at the centre of their learning by reframing the student-teacher relationship.

Overview:

Big Picture Learning is an educational model "with the sole mission of putting students directly at the centre of their own learning."

Among other things, its approach to learning is built around individualised learning relationships, student learning groups ("advisories"), regular family engagement and a school culture of student and adult equality and student leadership.

Ultimately Big Picture Learning gives students equity and control in their relationships within the school environment.

Relationship spotlight:

A more equitable student-teacher relationship, with more student agency, can boost educational attainment.

Keywords:
Responsible, democratised, personalised

Top 3 benefits:

PERFORMANCE

Graduation rate higher than US avr.

BELONGING

Supportive relationships w. **90%** of adults, **87%** of peers.

ECONOMIC

Engagement reduces exclusion costs.

Key learning: Reframing power dynamics can improve outcomes by empowering groups we typically assume 'don't know best'.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Narratives:** new ways of discussing and considering student-teacher relationships.

2 **Co-design:** genuinely collaborative learning empowers students.

3 **Norms:** school norms reframe students' roles and relationships.

WEvolution

Women using Self Reliant Groups (SRGs) to empower and support each other through poverty.

Overview:

WEvolution offers support for women from disadvantaged communities in Scotland to form Self Reliant Groups (SRGs).

Through SRGs women develop supportive and collaborative friendships to empower each other to save money, learn skills and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities as means of social and economic resilience.

Each SRG creates its own rules to guide how its members interact.

Relationship spotlight:

A mutually supportive group relationship between disadvantaged women boosts wellbeing, resilience and income.

Keywords:
Purposeful, supportive, structured

Top 3 benefits:

WELLBEING

39% members reported mental health improvements.

RESILIENCE

£372 income generated per SRG in 2018.

SKILLS

47% members reported increased skills.

Key learning: Guidelines and rules can - in some instances - help relationships kindle and thrive.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities:** SRG activities cultivate collaborative relationships between women.

2 **Rules:** SRG rules facilitate supportive, accountable relationships.

3 **Training:** training equips women to grow effective SRG relationships.

OFF THE RECORD

Using strengths-based, collaborative relationships to support young people to improve their mental health.

Overview:

Off the Record (OTR) works with young people aged 11-25 to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

OTR's work emphasises young people's capabilities and rejects prescriptive, dependent relationships. All programmes, for example, are co-designed and co-delivered with young people.

Services are also flexible and informal, and over 40 young people have trained as Peer Navigators to support other members.

Relationship spotlight:

Relationships between young people and staff focusing on strengths, not weaknesses, improve mental-health outcomes.

Keywords:
Strength-focused, flexible, peer-led

Top 3 benefits:

SKILLS

27% reported greater self-understanding.

WELLBEING

18% reported feeling happier.

PERFORMANCE

Session ratings of **37/40** upwards.

Key learning: Supportive relationships should foster agency and personalisation, not one-size-fits-all approaches.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities:** welcoming group activities encourage belonging and agency.

2 **Co-design:** designing services boosts young people's confidence and skills.

3 **Space:** an informal, flexible space welcomes young people.

THE SCOTTISH VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

Addressing root causes of violence by supporting perpetrators and victims through community relationships.

Overview:

The SVRU is a team of police officers, police staff, experts and people with lived experience with a remit to design violence-prevention strategies rooted in social relationships.

Its programmes include mentoring, work placements, educational initiatives, hospital outreach and community training and signposting - often as joined-up offerings.

The underlying belief is in social connection and opportunity, as opposed to only punishment, as an antidote to violence.

Relationship spotlight:

An emphasis on supportive relationships and economic opportunities helps reduce violence.

Keywords:
Collective, understanding, supportive

Top 3 benefits:

BEHAVIOUR

85% reduction in weapon carrying.

BELONGING

Tenants report greater neighbourhood satisfaction.

ECONOMIC

Huge reductions in cost of violence.

Key learning: It isn't always easy to prove the impact of better relationships, when many factors are at work.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Narratives:** reframing violence as socially rooted encourages rehabilitation.

2 **Training:** mentoring and training equips perpetrators to change.

3 **Incentives:** economic opportunities provide new, non-gang relationships.

SCOTTISH MEN'S SHEDS ASSOCIATION

Improving men's physical and mental health by providing an active, welcoming social environment.

Overview:

Men's Sheds are places for men to socialise and share skills to improve their physical and mental health.

Sheds take many forms, and the projects and activities in each are based on its members' interests.

Providing a welcoming place to collaborate on projects makes it easier for men to discuss health, and reduces obesity and social isolation.

Relationship spotlight:

A space emphasising warm, informal relationships and a sense of purpose improves men's physical and mental health outcomes

Keywords:
Welcoming, purposeful, local

Top 3 benefits:

HEALTH

75%-80% report better physical and mental health.

BELONGING

90%+ feel at home and make good friends.

ECONOMIC

Social investment return of **£9.80 per £1** spent.

Key learning: A desire to learn skills - members- most popular joining motivation - can drive new social relationships.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Space:** sheds are relaxed spaces allowing informal connections.

2 **Activities:** relationships form working 'shoulder to shoulder' on projects.

3 **Measurement:** social returns can show the power of social relationships.

AMPLIFY NORTHERN IRELAND

Growing civic culture and community innovations through participatory, collaborative relationships.

Overview:

Amplify NI is a "community-led innovation" initiative empowering local people to lead and collaborate on community solutions.

Amplify NI believes that people with lived experience must lead change, everybody has a role, power dynamics must be challenged and stories about community strengths are vital.

Through community dialogue, participatory research, storytelling, co-designed workshops and an accelerator, Amplify NI aims to understand lived experiences of inequality and support local people to collaborate on new narratives and solutions to address it.

Relationship spotlight:

Assuming leadership and collaborating with one another empowers citizens to improve their communities based on their lived experience.

Keywords:
Collaborative, valued, innovative

Top 3 benefits:

ECONOMIC

£155k raised by accelerator participants.

BEHAVIOUR

224 local innovations supported.

SKILLS

346 co-creation workshop attendees.

Key learning: Thoughtful training and support can encourage and equip people to collaborate.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Co-design**: locals build collaborative relationships with organisations and peers.

2 **Narratives**: community stories help enrich community culture and belonging.

3 **Training**: training and workshops equip locals to collaborate.

GOOD GYM

Reducing isolation and improving life satisfaction through relationships built around running.

Overview:

Good Gym finds ways for people to help reduce social isolation, help elderly people and serve community projects through exercise:

1. Mission runs: a runner runs to help vulnerable, isolated and housebound people with one-off tasks.
2. Coach runs: runners are paired with isolated older 'coaches', who they run to see each week.
3. Group runs: a running group runs to help with a community task.

All runs use exercise as a vehicle to develop supportive one-to-one or community relationships.

Relationship spotlight:

A runner-coach relationship between runners and older people can improve life satisfaction and reduce isolation for older people.

Keywords:
Mutual, supportive, regular

Top 3 benefits:

BELONGING

Coaches report reduced isolation and loneliness.

WELLBEING

Coach happiness and life satisfaction increases.

HEALTH

£2.78 - £4.56 health-related ROI per £1 invested.

Key learning: Having a valued role is important for marginalised groups. Here, elderly people serve as valued coaches.
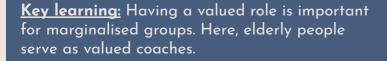
Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities**: existing exercise is leveraged for social connection.

2 **Incentives**: desire to get fit helps incentivise supportive relationships.

3 **Measurement**: proving impact justifies continued relationship-making effort.

THE FROME MODEL OF ENHANCED PRIMARY CARE

Building a preventative health model by catalysing social activity across the community.

Overview:

The Frome Model of Enhanced Primary Care, aka Compassionate Frome, uses existing social networks to improve health outcomes, recognising that health is rooted in social relationships.

The model works by:

1. Mapping community social activities (services, social groups etc.) and identifying gaps.
2. Supporting locals to fill those gaps in sustainable ways.
3. Signposting people to social activities through trained Community Connectors, social prescribing, cafe drop-ins, outreach and media activity.

Relationship spotlight:

Encouraging social activity through family and friend relationships improves health outcomes and reduces healthcare costs.

Keywords:
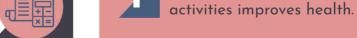Familiar, constructive, guided

Top 3 benefits:

HEALTH

14% hospital admission reduction v. 28% *increase* in Somerset.

BEHAVIOUR

94% can manage health better.

ECONOMIC

21% reduction in healthcare costs v. 21% *increase* in Somerset.

Key learning: Well-connected community members - Community Connectors - play a key role in kindling new social relationships.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities:** participation in social activities improves health.

2 **Co-design:** healthy social activities created with local people.

3 **Training:** people trained to signpost people they know to activities.

THE BIG LUNCH & THE GREAT GET TOGETHER

Improving social and economic outcomes by creating social capital through neighbourly gatherings.

Overview:

The Big Lunch and The Great Get Together are both summertime neighbourly gatherings built around food and celebrating connection.

The aim is to build social capital, which translates into a range of positive social and economic outcomes.

Anybody can organise a Big Lunch or Get Together, and each organisation provides free resource packs to help, without prescribing what organisers can decide to do. Each year over 6 million and 300,000 people are involved in the Big Lunch and The Great Get Together respectively.

Relationship spotlight:

Encouraging neighbours to connect has long-term, wide-ranging ripple effects for community outcomes.

Keywords:
Sharing, capacity-building, neighbourly

Top 3 benefits:

BELONGING

77% of Big Lunchers feel closer to neighbours.

WELLBEING

5m attendees feel Lunches reduce loneliness.

ECONOMIC

Neighbourliness saves public services **£15bn** annually.

Key learning: People sometimes need a nudge, like a campaign or invitation, to connect with people they don't know.

Top 3 enablers:

1 Activities: shared activities like eating catalyse connection and cooperation.

2 Measurement: quantifying neighbourliness helps show the value of coming together.

3 Training: equipping people to organise events facilitates connection.

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MIGRATEFUL

Helping refugees overcome barriers through relationships that provide trust, support and agency.

Overview:

Refugees escape terrible circumstances and face many barriers - language, employment, prejudice, self-confidence and no social networks - in their new countries.

Migrateful addresses these barriers by facilitating cookery classes led by refugees and vulnerable migrants to address these barriers.

Migrateful trains chefs through weekly group workshops. Sessions include English exercises. When ready, chefs graduate to classes for paying customers, which double as an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange.

Relationship spotlight:

Supporting refugees to grow a social network helps them develop confidence, skills, language and income whilst combating prejudice.

Keywords:
Welcoming, supportive, identity-building

Top 3 benefits:

BELONGING

Refugees grow a social network through Migrateful.

BEHAVIOUR

Interacting with refugees reduces prejudice.

SKILLS

Classes improve income, skills, confidence and English.

Key learning: Relationships that offer trust and self-expression allow people to be seen as people, not categories.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities**: cooking offers a shared experience that develops refugees' relationships.

2 **Training**: group training builds social networks and skills.

3 **Narratives**: trust and empowerment allows refugees to convey their value to others.

COOK

Supporting ex-offenders and homeless people, and improving business performance, with supportive employment relationships.

Overview:

COOK produces frozen meals with fresh ingredients and a homemade taste.

The company's "driving purpose" is to nourish four relationships:

1. Between people and their work.
2. Between people and food.
3. Between COOK, its customers and their communities.
4. Between business and society.

COOK achieves this by employing ex-offenders and previously homeless people through its RAW programme. It also offers staff mentorship, a buddy system, self-reflective sessions instead of appraisals and staff financial support.

Relationship spotlight:

By reinforcing supportive relationships, company culture can support recovery for those experiencing hardship.

Keywords:
Empowering, understanding, committed

Top 3 benefits:

BEHAVIOUR

50 RAW Talents employed since 2014.

ECONOMIC

32% profit increase in 2019.

PERFORMANCE

14th in 2019 Times 100 Best Companies to Work For.

Key learning: Relationships are shaped by many norms, e.g. how self-assessment works, within a given place.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Norms**: COOK culture holistically reinforces a relational environment.

2 **Narratives**: successful employment improves perceptions of ex-offenders.

3 **Regulation**: rules, like banning appraisals, can drive relational culture.

GROW CARDIFF

Improving health and wellbeing outcomes through social relationships developed whilst community gardening.

Overview:

Grow Well is a partnership between Grow Cardiff and the NHS that allows surgeries to socially prescribe activities at community gardens.

Activities include weeding, watering, harvesting, arts and crafts, making raised beds and digging ponds. If prescribed, patients join other patients and participants involved with the garden as 'volunteers'.

Activities are decided positively: by asking what the patient would like to contribute to, not what they need help with.

Relationship spotlight:

An empowering relationship between patients and other volunteers helps patients feel useful, more optimistic and healthier.

Keywords:
Empowering, practical, mutual

Top 3 benefits:

WELLBEING

Increase in participant wellbeing, relaxation and optimism.

HEALTH

Participation boosted exercise and fruit/veg intake.

ECONOMIC

£212 estimated statutory-service saving per person.

Key learning: Activities and learning allow supportive relationships to grow without relationships being labelled as 'supportive'.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities**: cooperation, confidence and healthy behaviour rooted in gardening.

2 **Space**: a relaxing, natural environment infuses supportive relationships.

3 **Training**: participants learn skills as they socialise..

APPLIANCES ONLINE

Enhancing business performance and reputation through more trusting relationships with staff and customers.

Overview:

Appliances Online (AO) is an online British electronics retailer.

The company made three risky but ultimately beneficial strategic decisions to improve the customer relationship:

1. Next-day delivery on all white goods, despite huge initial cost of delivery infrastructure.
2. Free returns for any reason, despite concerns customers would abuse the policy.
3. Freedom for the customer service team to handle complaints informally and with discretion, as if the customer "was your gran but after the call you needed to explain what you did to your mum."

Relationship spotlight:

A trusting relationship with customers improves customer satisfaction and insight into customer behaviour.

Keywords:
Trusting, uncertain, essential

Top 3 benefits:

PERFORMANCE

95% TrustPilot ratings 'great' or 'excellent' (top 0.01%).

ECONOMIC

Reduced customer-service management costs.

SKILLS

Staff enjoy more autonomy and responsibility.

Key learning: Initial outlays can bring long-term savings as relationships improve.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Norms:** business conventions help build trusting relationships.

2 **Regulation:** new rules foster empowering relationships with staff.

3 **Training:** staff trained and trusted to exercise greater autonomy.

TIMPSON

Inspiring rehabilitation through trusting relationships, and improving social attitudes to ex-offenders by employing them.

Overview:

Timpson is a service retailer with over 2,000 UK stores. 10% of staff are ex-offenders.

To help ensure ex-offenders are prepared for employment, Timpson offers preparatory mentorship and training in prisons, interviews based on attitude and offers financial and housing support.

Timpson's 'upside down' management approach also trusts colleagues (including ex-offenders) as experts, empowering them to run shops as they (not their managers) see best. Timpson discourages directive management and has scrapped performance appraisals.

Relationship spotlight:

An empowering, trusting relationship with ex-offenders improves rehabilitation outcomes and staff and business performance.

Keywords:
Trusting, empowering, mutual

Top 3 benefits:

BEHAVIOUR

3% re-offence rate (61% UK average).

PERFORMANCE

76% staff retention among ex-offenders.

ECONOMIC

Inspired major companies to employ ex-offenders.

Key learning: Building impactful relationships sometimes faces stigma or pushback.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Narratives:** Timpson has inspired others to place more value on ex-offenders.

2 **Co-design:** Timpson values and trusts ex-offenders as experts, following their lead.

3 **Regulation:** new company rules reinforce this collaborative relationship.

EVERY ONE EVERY DAY

Building a more inclusive, participatory borough by facilitating a culture of strong civic relationships.

Overview:

Every One Every Day is an attempt to turn a deprived UK borough into the world's first "large scale, fully inclusive, practical participatory ecosystem."

Participatory projects are characterised by equality, mutual benefit, peer-to-peer collaboration, productive activity and accessibility. The supporting ecosystem requires a support platform for starting projects and a pool of active projects.

The model assumes local people have the ability to build thriving, sustainable communities, but need the right kind of invitation to demonstrate this.

Relationship spotlight:

More active civic relationships between residents contribute to a host of community outcomes.

Keywords:
Inclusive, collaborative, self-led

Top 3 benefits:

WELLBEING

9/10 enjoyment across 26,000 sessions.

PERFORMANCE

131 neighbourhood projects.

BELONGING

8/10 score for perceived neighbourly trust increase.

Key learning: Given the resources, permission and space, people have ample skills and motivation to connect.

Top 3 enablers:

1 Training: connecting citizens through a huge activity programme.

2 Narratives: changing perceptions of borough citizen participation.

3 Space: providing shops, workshops and other accessible spaces.

CANCER RESEARCH

Building a more responsive, innovative and resilient workforce by instilling digital working practices.

Overview:

Cancer Research aims to "bring forward the day when all cancers are cured." Its ambitious digital strategy requires new skills and working relationships.

Members of a digital 'Hub' deploy to 'Spoke' teams, working with (not for) them to instil 'agile' digital practices: prioritising audience insight, raid testing, embracing failure and minimising bureaucracy. Staff are also equipped to work remotely.

Drop-ins, open presentations, on-job training and constant support help show the benefits and train people.

Relationship spotlight:

Digital working relationships mean staff are better equipped to encourage and support donors.

Keywords:
Communicative, structured, aligned

Top 3 benefits:

RESILIENCE
Remote workforce equipped for pandemic and life events

PERFORMANCE
Better, faster insights into supporters

SKILLS
Staff versed in digital skills and practices

Key learning: Teaching staff to fish (use digital practices) build more robust, mutual relationships than giving them a fish.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Training:** drop-ins, on-job training and constant support.

2 **Co-design:** digital team works with, not for, other teams.

3 **Norms:** New team structure, communication norms and software.

Delivering excellent, public-facing customer service through responsive social-media relationships with customers.

Overview:

Buffer helps companies connect with their customers and build their brand using social media. It has a large, loyal online audience and writes widely on connecting well with users using social media.

Buffer prides itself on fast, responsive social-media communication, delighting customers with convenient solutions.

It also curates a digital and in-person customer community, actively collaborating with customers to coordinate events and peer learning.

Relationship spotlight:

Responsive relationships with customers using social media makes customers happy and boosts reputation.

Keywords:
Understanding, fast, personal

Top 3 benefits:

ECONOMIC

Long-term financial gain through customer loyalty

PERFORMANCE

Faster, more targeted customer service

SKILLS

Deepens staff understanding of customers

Key learning: A little - quick replies, clear information - goes far on social media, because many organisations fail here.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Training**: selecting software to capture and manage process.

2 **Narratives**: framing customer service as a learning and branding opportunity.

3 **Co-creation**: collaborating on events with customer community.

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Driving productivity, savings and staff wellbeing through thoughtful remote working relationships.

Overview:

Buffer helps companies connect with their customers and build their brand using social media. Since 2015 the team has been fully remote, openly reporting on its successes and failures.

Buffer is intentional about which communication tools it uses, and how. It defaults to radical transparency and over communication.

Managers trust staff to work effectively with a routine that works for them. The team also retains in-person and non-work interactions, to guard against loneliness.

Relationship spotlight:

Conscientious remote working relationships drive productivity, cost savings and staff wellbeing.

Keywords:
Remote, intentional, transparent

Top 3 benefits:

WELLBEING

98% want to continue remote working

PERFORMANCE

More productive workforce

ECONOMIC

Reduced staff costs

Key learning: Intentional communication norms are required in the absence of in-person cues.

Top 3 enablers:

1 **Activities**: personal and in-person activities for balance.

2 **Norms**: clear, transparent norms around digital communication.

3 **Incentives**: remote workers hugely value flexibility

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