

# Placemaking in Gorgie



## Introduction

Gorge Collective is a volunteer creative and cultural group embodying a collaborative ethos. We deliver community-led, embedded activities in Gorgie, creating room for the great wealth of creativity, knowledge and skills of local people to emerge through our workshops and events.

In February 2019, Gorgie Collective co-hosted a series of public sessions with Common Weal Edinburgh South West and local residents to gather information on how people feel about the Gorgie area and their priorities for improvement. The events were free and open to all those who work, live or volunteer in and around Gorgie. Thirty adults completed the Scottish Government's Place Standard tool, rating 14 categories related to the local area on a scale of 0-7. The findings were consistent, with broad consensus amongst all the focus groups who participated in the assessment.

Gorgie Collective selected the Place Standard as a face-to-face option to facilitate the coming together of members of the local community in a structured way. Place Standard discussions are effective in enabling communities to identify change opportunities, build consensus and create a community "vision" for their neighbourhood.

## Gorgie: Demographic Profile

The key demographic trends in Gorgie are summarised in the box below.

### GORGIE PROFILE

- Gorgie is a **highly-populated urban area**
- The majority of Gorgie residents live in **single person households**
- The vast majority of households comprise **adults**
- Gorgie-Dalry is one of the most **ethnically diverse** neighbourhoods in Scotland, the second most ethnically diverse neighbourhood in the City of Edinburgh
- Most non-white Scottish residents are **migrant workers**

Census data shows that Gorgie-Dalry is a highly-populated urban area. Gorgie is well-known within Edinburgh as a destination for first-time homebuyers and young professionals. The distribution of the housing stock means Gorgie is well positioned to serve these groups, with over a fifth (23% in Gorgie-Dalry) of properties comprising 2 room (1 bedroom) accommodation, compared to an Edinburgh average of just 6%. There are issues with overcrowding – 7 of the 10 most housing deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh are located in Dalry, Gorgie and Sighthill. Almost all dwellings (96%) in Gorgie-Dalry are tenements or flats.

A very high proportion of people – 55% in Gorgie-Dalry - live in single person households. This is significantly higher than the Edinburgh and Scottish averages at 39% and 35% respectively. Only 7% of households in Gorgie-Dalry comprise children under 16, far lower than the Edinburgh average.

Gorgie-Dalry is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Scotland and the second most ethnically diverse neighbourhood in Edinburgh after Southside in the city centre. It is home to a large Asian community, comprising 13% or 1 in 8 local residents. The proportion of Europeans in the area, including a large Polish community, is at 14%, double that of the city as a whole (7.5%). Only around half of the local population (55%) was born in Scotland.



There is a very close correlation between the number of respondents declaring a country of birth outwith Scotland and the number of respondents identifying as being of non-white Scottish ethnicity. This shows that the majority of non-white Scottish residents in the area are migrant workers.

Gorgie-Dalry town centre, one of Edinburgh's 8 town centres, is located on Gorgie Road and Dalry Road. It is an arterial bus route with excellent public transport links. The town centre is typified by small businesses, with businesses owned and managed by Scots as well as migrant workers from Poland, India, China, Italy, Pakistan and Nigeria amongst others.

## Place Standard Results

The Place Standard categories and the scores gathered through our workshop sessions with local Gorgie residents are summarised below.

Category	Scoring range	Average score
Moving Around	4, 4.5, 2, 4	4
Public Transport	7, 6, 6, 6	6
Traffic and Parking	4, 3, 3, 2	3
Streets and Spaces	4, 4, 3, 4	4
Natural Space	3, 3, 4, 2	3
Play and Recreation	3, 4, 6, 4	4
Facilities and Amenities	5, 5, 4, 2	4
Work and Local Economy	3, 3.5, 2, 2	3
Housing and Community	2, 2, 2, 4	2
Social Contact	3, 2, 2, 1	2
Identity and Belonging	6, 3.5, 4, 4	4
Feeling Safe	6, 6, 5, 6	6
Care and Maintenance	3, 1, 2, 1	2
Influence and Sense of Control	1, 2, 1, 1	1

## Analysis

### Strengths

The highest scores by far came in the categories Public Transport and Feeling Safe. There were also high scores in the Identity and Belonging category. Many long-term residents had an extremely strong affiliation with the area and often had family living in the area or multi-generational associations. This score was counterbalanced by newer arrivals to the area, who had a comparatively weaker sense of identity.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Residents felt that Gorgie was extremely well-connected in terms of public transport. Gorgie Road is an arterial bus route with buses running every few minutes during the day with direct links to the New Town, Old Town and various University campuses.

The proximity of Haymarket train station was widely appreciated especially by those who worked, commuted or shopped in Glasgow.

Gorgie is also very conveniently located walking distance from the tram/ airport express route via Haymarket, Roseburn or Saughton.

### FEELING SAFE

Participants felt universally safe in the area. Reasons given included the friendly feel of the community; good relationships with local shopkeepers and businesses; knowing neighbours in tenement stairs and the location of most streets off a busy arterial road.

There was also a high level of affection towards local institutions such as the Tynecastle Arms and the Gorgie Fish Bar, which had late opening hours and were responsibly managed. The presence of these amenities combined with night buses and continuing pedestrian traffic contributed to a feeling of safety at night throughout the local area.

## Issues

The challenges faced by residents in the area generally attracted more attention and discussion in the focus groups than areas with which local residents were content.

People with a strong attachment to the area typically felt that it had been neglected in terms of public services, investment (including basic care and maintenance such as street cleaning) and had been

historically under-resourced with limited advocacy by local representatives. This resulted in a general feeling that Gorgie-Dalry had been 'overlooked' in recent years and that the voices of local people were not heard on local issues.



## CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Residents were unanimous in their views that Gorgie-Dalry was not as well-maintained as other areas of the city. Issues identified included persistent and unsanctioned littering and dog fouling and inadequate street cleaning which resulted in unsanitary conditions in highly trafficked pedestrian areas. Participants queried the resources directed toward Gorgie-Dalry in comparison with other better maintained town centres in Edinburgh.



Existing parks and green spaces such as Gorgie-Dalry Park and White Park were felt to be 'basic' and underwhelming, with little care or investment in either in recent years. Despite having the redeveloped Saughton Park on our doorstep, Sighthill-Gorgie residents are second bottom in city rankings in terms of satisfaction with parks and green spaces, reflecting dissatisfaction with local provision. The overall impact of a perceived lack of care and

maintenance in our area was a diminished sense of community pride.

Our placemaking discussion findings correlate very closely with responses from the most recent Edinburgh People Survey (2018), an annual survey assessing residents' satisfaction with Council services. Sighthill-Gorgie residents were completely dissatisfied with street cleaning services; only 39% describing themselves as content against an Edinburgh average of 56%. We were also by far the most dissatisfied ward in the city with dog fouling issues, only 27% stating this was not a common problem compared to 48% city-wide.



## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

There were mixed views on this topic. Many participants lived in tenement blocks and were positive about the social, architectural and amenity value of the traditional tenements that typify Gorgie. However, there was a general feeling that housing stock in the area had been systematically neglected. Several specific issues related to common stair repairs, backgreen maintenance and antisocial behaviour were raised. These issues were compounded by a perceived lack of support from the Council in tackling them.

The low score was also influenced by recent planning issues in the local area, including several proposed developments that participants felt were very detrimental to the amenity of the homes of local people. There was broad consensus that the views of local residents in Gorgie were not effectively represented or even valued in the planning process.

Less than half the people in our community (45%) believe we have enough information about planning applications compared to an Edinburgh average of 58%. Several participants expressed an interest in forming or joining a local Residents' Association to better advocate for the needs of local residents.

## SOCIAL CONTACT

Whilst people felt comfortable within their community, participants felt that there were limited opportunities for social contact. Historically, a number of local events had focused on attracting families with children, which did not meet the needs of the majority of residents in Gorgie who live in single adult households or with their partner. Diversity in event programming was also felt to be limited with few events celebrating the multinational nature of contemporary Gorgie-Dalry.

Issues with social isolation were identified, in particular for new residents and those adults/couples



with no local networks or support systems. Several attendees had previously participated in Gorgie Collective workshops and wanted to see more free, accessible community activities like this. The high proportion of single person households in Gorgie-Dalry was recognised as elevating the risk of social isolation, although it was noted that the issue is also being actively tackled through the work of Gorgie Collective, Big Hearts, Health All Round and other local

charities and community groups. Whilst wellbeing data is not well measured in the Edinburgh People Survey, indicative low responses to statements such as 'people from different backgrounds get on' (where Sighthill-Gorgie ranks second bottom) and concerns about antisocial behaviour point to similar issues.

An immediate challenge identified was the lack of availability of safe, attractive meeting spaces in the local area. While there are several community centres/ facilities in Gorgie-Dalry, these are mostly open in the daytime on weekdays and do not meet the needs of the majority of residents who are working at this time. There are also limited indoor/outdoor public meeting spaces and those that exist are typically basic with limited facilities.

### INFLUENCE AND SENSE OF CONTROL

This was the lowest scoring category of all those discussed, with an extremely low average rating of 1. Local residents generally felt that they did not have a say on decisions impacting them directly. This was particularly acute related to local housing and planning issues, as discussed above.

Participants were also concerned that the local area had suffered from poor representation in recent years. Some attendees had experience of contacting local reps on local matters and receiving no or an inadequate response. It was noted that the local Community Council meetings were poorly advertised in the local area (the majority of attendees were not in fact aware of its existence).

It was generally felt that other areas of the city had had more individuals or groups speaking up for their interests and that this meant that they had received more resources. One example cited here was Gorgie Collective research, which has shown that Sighthill-Gorgie and indeed the whole South West locality has received no cultural revenue funding for the last 10 years.

These concerns are borne out by stark findings from the Edinburgh People Survey. In the most recent survey (2018), Sighthill-Gorgie was the most dissatisfied ward in the city by far on the issue of having a say on local issues and services. Only a third (36%) of residents felt they had enough info about the performance of council services against 51% in the city as



a whole. Locals also felt they did not receive enough information about how the Council spends its money. Most concerning, Sighthill-Gorgie residents were the least satisfied in the whole city with the Council's management of our neighbourhood, with only 58% satisfied, 15 percentage points below the average for Edinburgh at 73%.

## Ideas and Actions

A number of exciting ideas were proposed by participants to improve our local area and make our place an environment that more effectively supports the wellbeing, participation and inclusion of local residents.

There was a lot of interest in improving the care and maintenance in Gorgie and the overall amenity of the area, particularly in addressing persistent littering and dog fouling issues and improving and increasing the number and quality of public green spaces and meeting places.



As a result of a series of recent planning proposals judged to be damaging to the amenity of local residents, there was strong interest in giving a voice to local residents in the planning process, including by learning how to make effective comments on planning applications and establishing a residents' association or similar collective grouping.

There was a widespread feeling that Gorgie had been overlooked and poorly represented in recent years compared to other areas in the city, with limited advocacy for the area on the part of local representatives and officials that had resulted in chronic and persistent under-resourcing in a number of areas such as housing, culture and the public realm. Attendees felt there was an opportunity to improve local participation from a very low baseline, especially by getting involved with community-embedded and volunteer organisations giving a voice to local people.

There was a lot of energy and ambition to see Gorgie-Dalry transformed into a greener, more relaxing space with improved public spaces, a greater sense of community ownership and pride and better local representation. Participants were keen to strengthen existing participation mechanisms and for local residents to have a greater say on decisions impacting them directly.

Gorgie Collective believes that it is fundamental that future placemaking activity in Gorgie is community-led, with local ownership and engagement, and that structural and strategic local development and place plans in our area reflect the aspirations and needs of local residents. Gorgie Collective is a member of the Gorgie-Dalry Community Forum and looks forward to taking forward the findings of this report with Forum colleagues, existing community partners Common Weal Edinburgh South West and Big Hearts, local representatives and organisations who share our objectives and the many passionate local residents who have supported our work to date.