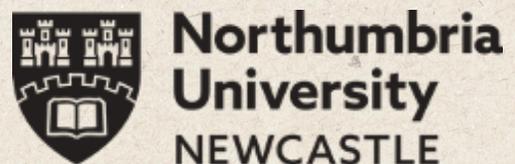




CIVIC CARE IN PLACE

EXPLORING HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL
BONDS THROUGH SUBTLE TECHNOLOGIES



An Invitation

This booklet is a walk.
A slow one.

Each page is a step—through
shared spaces, across
concrete and earth, along
riversides and railings.



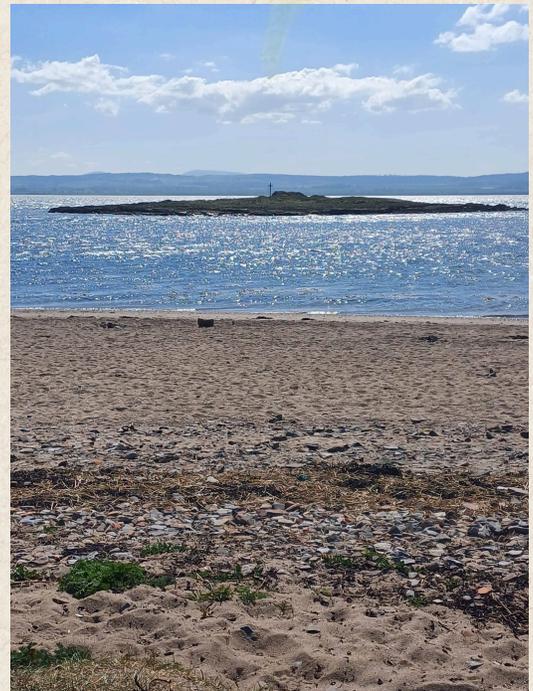
Care Begins with Noticing

Care begins with noticing. A
breath taken, a pigeon watched,
a patch of moss on a wall.
Noticing is not passive—it is how
we join in, how we remember
that we shape places with our
presence, our habits, and even
our silences.

A Shared Experiment

Over two weeks, local residents
shared daily reflections through
WhatsApp—what they noticed, what
they did, what they cared for in
their local green space.

From watering plants to tending
drainage systems, from quiet
moments to overlooked routines,
their stories revealed the small and
steady labour that helps civic
spaces thrive



SMALL EVERYDAY ACTS OF CARE

Everyday Moments of Care

Everyday life is full of small moments where we can look after each other and the places we share. These little things may not seem big on their own—picking up rubbish on the way to the shop, watering a plant outside the community centre, or checking in on a neighbour—but together they make our streets and spaces feel cared for.



"A beautiful morning walk, peace, birds, the occasional dog walker. The scent of the pine forest, a linden tree that has recently opened new green leaves."

Part of Our Routines

Sometimes care is woven into the everyday. Without even noticing, we tidy, greet, or help as we go about daily life. Other times, care grows through creativity and teamwork—when neighbours come together to organise something bigger, like a garden project, a clean-up, or a volunteering effort.

Connecting and Coordinating

Digital tools can also play a part. Apps, WhatsApp groups, or community websites help people connect, share tasks, and coordinate support.

These simple acts—whether face to face or online—show that small, everyday care is the foundation of stronger communities.

"I picked up about a dozen take-away menus that had either fallen out of doors on the path due to letter boxes being screwed up or just badly delivered."

WORKING TOGETHER: PEOPLE, SERVICES, AND CARE

Filling the Gaps

Communities often find themselves stepping in where official services cannot reach. Local people organise activities, provide support for neighbours, and tackle problems head-on.



"Our church is trying to promote all things sustainable, such as flower and butterfly counts, bat and bird boxes, a 'hedgehog highway' group on the estate."

Taking Matters Into Our Own Hands

Sometimes this means "doing it ourselves." While empowering, it can also be complicated—raising questions of responsibility and fairness. Many feel proud of their independence, but also frustrated by what they cannot manage alone.



"If I have noticed areas where care is lacking—maybe a neglected bench, overgrown pathways, or accessibility concerns that aren't being addressed—it's natural for me to feel both frustration and a desire to take action. Especially when these spaces contribute to a community's wellbeing, these acts can help spark change."

Balancing Independence and Cooperation

Care often becomes a balance: working together while still keeping the freedom to act locally. In this space between official services and everyday community action, resilience and creativity emerge.

OUR CONNECTION TO WHERE WE LIVE SHAPES HOW MUCH WE CARE FOR IT.

Pride in Place

When people feel proud of their neighbourhood—when they see beauty, belonging, or shared value—they are more likely to invest time and energy into looking after it.



"It's not about outsiders fixing things, but about strengthening local work. Support should amplify, not override, a community's voice."

Barriers to Caring

Caring is not always easy. Life circumstances, lack of resources, or feeling unwelcome can hold people back. Some feel apart from their community, unsure if their contributions would be noticed or appreciated. Others may feel disconnected from place itself, especially when public spaces seem neglected or unsafe.

"I feel huge connection to this space having lived so close by for almost 13 years, 11 of which I spent walking through the park 4 times a day taking my children to and from the school opposite. The park is over 100 years old and a lovely spot which attracts both positive and negative activity, and I feel hugely protective of it."



The Importance of Belonging

Belonging matters. Where connection is strong, care flourishes; where it is weak, people often feel they have little reason—or power—to get involved. Recognising both sides of this story helps us understand what makes communities thrive.

This booklet has been shaped by many voices and small acts of attention.

Thank you to the local residents who shared their daily reflections, stories, and observations—your words and actions brought these pages to life. Thanks also to the Wear Rivers Trust whose support and collaboration helped make this work possible.

What you have read here is not just research, but a record of shared care: the routines, experiments, and quiet contributions that keep places alive.

Want to know more?

Care does not end here. If you would like to learn more, share your own reflections, or get involved in future community projects, scan the QR code below.



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