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# Abram Ward Community Cooperative, Wigan

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## Catalyst Profile:

## Abram Ward Community Cooperative, Wigan

A report prepared for Power to Change

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# 01. Introduction

Empowering Places aims to build more resilient communities by catalysing and nurturing community businesses to provide benefits and opportunities for local people. The programme funds locally rooted ‘catalyst’ organisations in six places across England to help empower communities to develop community businesses:

- [Abram Ward Community Cooperative \(AWCC\) in Abram, Wigan](#)
- [B-Inspired in Braunstone, Leicester](#)
- [Centre4 in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, Grimsby](#)
- [Real Ideas in Devonport and Stonehouse, Plymouth](#)
- [The Wharton Trust in Dyke House, Hartlepool](#)
- [Made in Manningham, incubated by Participate Projects in Manningham, Bradford](#)

The Empowering Places programme is delivered by a consortium of organisations including [Power to Change](#), [Cooperatives UK](#) the lead delivery partner, and with support from expert ‘tech leads’ at the [Centre for Local Economic Strategies \(CLES\)](#) and The [New Economics Foundation \(NEF\)](#). Each catalyst organisation receives up to £1m (between July 2017 and July 2022). The catalysts also have access to a capacity support provider pool, grant funding and money to award seed grants to emerging community businesses in their areas to deliver a five-year plan. This report summarises the interim findings from an independent evaluation of the Empowering Places programme, delivered by a consortium led by Renaisi.

The aim of this evaluation is to enable Power to Change and its stakeholders to learn about how to work in places, and how community businesses can drive local change.

This profile for Wigan is part of a series of outputs aiming to take a developmental, learning based approach to understanding and improving the programme, and to support wider learning for similar programmes in the future. There is a separate profile for each of the six places in the programme. This profile includes:

- **The socio-economic context of Wigan drawing on publicly available datasets, and using findings from a hyperlocal version of the Community Life Survey commissioned by Power to Change in 2018.**
- **Details of the catalyst organisation Abram Ward Community Cooperative, its vision and organisational structure, using information provided in programme documents authored by the catalyst organisations, as well as organisational data registered on the Charity Commission website.**
- **Approaches to delivering the Empowering Places programme taken by Abram Ward Community Cooperative, drawing on qualitative data, including interviews with staff at Power to Change, delivery partners, catalyst staff and community businesses – as well as information provided in programme reporting documents authored by the catalyst, delivery partners and Power to Change.<sup>1</sup> Researchers have also taken detailed notes and used an observation and learning log to track relevant findings and develop a comprehensive understanding of the development and impact of the programme.**

As a set, the profiles are designed to allow the exploration of similarities and differences in context and approaches across the Empowering Places areas, and to draw out learning gathered throughout the first three and a half years of delivery.

This profile uses data collected from the beginning of the programme (July 2017) to February 2021. A large portion of the qualitative data was collected in 2020 just as the Covid-19 pandemic was taking hold, and views and experiences may have shifted since then. The profiles will be updated again towards the end of the programme (June 2022), with a view to tracking change.

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<sup>1</sup> These include: Power to Change's Learning Paper on Empowering Places, Power to Change's internal quarterly reports, Co-operatives UK reports to Power to Change, notes from community business health checks and diagnostic sessions.

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## 02. Executive Summary: Abram Ward Community Cooperative, Abram Ward, Wigan

Abram Ward Community Cooperative (AWCC), is a collaboration of social enterprises, charities and community groups, working together to create sustainable and innovative communities. Using their strong community connections, AWCC focuses on creating and enabling an empowered environment for people to create their own businesses and support existing businesses to scale up.

This profile explores the context of the Abram Ward and Wigan, as well as AWCC's approach to delivering the Empowering Places programme, the emerging impact of the programme on the catalyst, community businesses and wider community and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on AWCC and the delivery of the programme in Wigan.



## Key points

- Acting as a Community Anchor organisation, AWCC aim to build on existing community spirit to create community business, to benefit the residents of Abram Ward and Wigan. AWCC aim to make Abram Ward a great place to work, live and visit by utilising, developing and safeguarding community hubs and open spaces.
- While AWCC had a previous focus on social enterprises, the Empowering Places investment has helped them develop their local wealth building and social enterprise offer and explore new approaches to scaling up – with a part of the investment being ringfenced for strengthening and development to ensure a legacy and sustainability.
- AWCC aim to have a clear ‘line of sight’ of community businesses across the ward and Wigan, including new community hubs, pubs, open spaces and new developments such as community-led housing. The ambition is that people will be inspired to set up their own community business, find employment within one or be encouraged to buy locally.
- The flexibility to test and pilot ideas provided by Empowering Places has given AWCC confidence to expand their activities borough-wide and resulted in opportunities such as becoming a key stakeholder for the Local Access pot in Wigan.
- AWCC received support from Empowering Places to develop its trading arm, Made in Wigan, which is developing education programmes across the area. It also drew down support to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, which seeks to develop the economy with local spaces, community business generation and the future parks programme, which will serve as a legacy of Empowering Places.
- AWCC have recently increased the number of community businesses they are supporting from seven to eleven, by distributing seed funding to four new community businesses through participatory budgeting events. Established community businesses – Men’s sheds, MissPlaces and Pianos, Pies and Pirouettes are all working to improve health outcomes amongst local people.
- AWCC have been minimally impacted by Covid-19 and have been lucky as a small and nimble organisation who are currently largely reliant on grant funding. However, as the pandemic has continued, AWCC are beginning to see an impact in being able to generate income through opportunities like long term rentals and hiring out conference facilities. The current situation has presented some opportunities, with AWCC acting as a key hub for the community food response in partnership with the council increasing their visibility locally.

## 03. Abram Ward, Wigan

### Context of area

The five villages of Abram Ward are on the outskirts of Wigan Town Centre, equidistant between Wigan and Leigh. The area includes old coalfields and rural land and features a stretch of the Leeds to Liverpool Canal. It used to be home to a number of shops, but over the last 20 years these have closed. There is no town centre or high street, no restaurants, one pub and few shops. It is the only council ward in the area without a secondary school.

The catalyst selection criteria for Empowering Places was to be operating in a deprived place, with opportunities for community business growth. Wigan has an Index of Multiple Deprivation average source rank of 85 and has at least one neighbourhood in the 10% most deprived areas in the country.

Empowering Places catalyst area: Abram Ward, Wigan <sup>3</sup>	
<b>Population</b>	17,837
<b>Household income, after housing costs</b> (England average: £27,311)	£21,882
<b>White British (%)</b> England average 79.8%	95%
<b>Under 25 (%)</b> England average 31%	33.1%
<b>65+ (%)</b> England average 18.2%	15%
<b>Thriving Places Index<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Wigan</b>
<b>Health Equality</b> (Thriving Places Index, this indicator looks at slope index in life expectancy at birth)	3.15
<b>Mental and Physical Health</b> (Thriving Places Index, this include indicators such as child obesity rate, conceptions in under 18s, illness & disability, prevalence of depression, anxiety and other health indicators)	3.72

<sup>2</sup> Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015

<sup>3</sup> Local Insights (2019)

<sup>4</sup> Thriving Places Index (2020)

<b>Education and Learning</b> (Thriving Places Index, this includes indicators such as adults with no qualifications, life-long learning, educational attainment of children, childcare quality and school readiness)	4.06
<b>Work and Local Economy</b> (Thriving Places Index, this includes indicators such as income deprivation affecting different sections of the population, employment and percentage with low income)	5.10
<b>Place and Environment</b> (Thriving Places Index, this indicator covers the local environment, housing, transport and safety. This includes green land cover, air pollution, journey times to key services, housing affordability ratio and crime severity index)	5.53
<b>Subjective Happiness</b> (ONS Life Satisfaction Scores)	7.63

Thriving Places Explanation: Scores of between 0 and 10. Scores are coloured to reflect similarity to the England Average, with higher scores indicating that a place is doing better than other places in that domain.	
<b>Key</b>	
Very Low Scores (Below 3.5)	
Below Average Scores (3.5 – 4.5)	
Medium Scores (4.5 – 5.5)	
Above Average Scores (5.5 – 6.5)	
Very High Scores (above 6.5)	

Local Authority area compared with England average <sup>5</sup>	Wigan
Housing Affordability	80% – 100%
Community Assets	80% – 100%
Employment rate: Ages 16-64	Lowest 20%
Business formation	20% – 40%
Happiness and wellbeing	60% – 80%

Place Analytics Explanation: Each category is benchmarked using multiple measures simultaneously and scored (in percentile form) relative to other catalyst areas. The higher the percentile, the better the place performed.

Percentile Key:	
80 – 100%	Very High
60 – 80%	High
40 – 60%	Above Average
20 – 40%	Average
5 – 20%	Low

<sup>5</sup> Place Analytics, local authority wide (2019).



UK Social Fabric Index <sup>6</sup>						
Local Authority	Social Fabric Score	Relationship Score	Physical Infrastructure	Civic Institutions	Economic Value	Positive Social Norms
Wigan	0.46	0.33	0.57	0.45	0.53	0.45
Plymouth	0.45	0.30	0.53	0.46	0.49	0.47
Hartlepool	0.37	0.24	0.48	0.38	0.44	0.33
North East Lincolnshire	0.38	0.27	0.50	0.38	0.40	0.36
Leicester	0.42	0.21	0.59	0.49	0.36	0.45
Bradford	0.43	0.28	0.58	0.43	0.43	0.43

UK Social Fabric Index Explanation:

Scores are graded from zero to one, with a score of one indicating the best-case scenario.

1. Social Fabric Score: This is a score for the strength of social fabric across all five threads; relationship, physical infrastructure, civic institutions, economic value and positive social norms
2. Relationship Score: This looks at clusters of social groups of people in communities and community-owned assets
3. Physical Infrastructure: This looks at physical assets that are present in communities which facilitate, structure and organise people within a community.
4. Civic Institutions: This looks at the health of democracy and governance at both local and national level, considering quality, trust and satisfaction.
5. Economic Value: This looks at the tangible assets which hold a monetary and/or economic value to an individual or family within a community
6. Positive Social Norms: This looks at the personal well-being and cultural attitudes of individuals and families in a community, including people's wider habits, behaviours and activities

Colour coding: The colour coding has been applied to each score category and is comparative between the six places. The highest score for each category is colour dark green and the lowest dark red. For example, compared to all other places, Bradford scored lowest on economic value and positive social norms.

<sup>6</sup> UK Social Fabric Index By Onward (2020).

## **Local context**

### **Community**

Wigan, Manchester, Liverpool and Preston are all within reach of Abram Ward, providing access to jobs, services and opportunities. Wigan borough is rated highly for safety (5.59) by the Thriving Places Index compared with other areas in the region (Manchester 1.76, Bolton 4.67, Preston 3.28).<sup>7</sup> According to a survey in 2019, 77% of people in Abram Ward speak to neighbours at least once a month (compared with 72% nationally), and 29% speak to neighbours daily (compared to the matched comparison area of 16%).<sup>8</sup>

### **Challenges**

34% people in Abram Ward think the area has got worse over the last two years, compared with a national average of 26%.

Only 20% of people surveyed in Abram Ward feel they can influence decisions, compared with 25% nationally.<sup>9</sup>

### **Economy**

Customer spending data from the area suggests that local customers spend a higher proportion of their money on items associated with 'disposable income' (42%) than is reflected by local business sales (12%). This means most businesses in the area provide products and services associated with the 'cost of living' (e.g. travel, groceries), whereas a significant proportion of individual expenditure is on items classified as associated with 'disposable income' (e.g. takeaways).

The data also suggests that general sales growth is down by 4.7% between April and August 2020, but there has been an average growth in customers of 6.3%. This means that more people are spending, but they are buying less.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thriving Places, local authority wide (2020)

<sup>8</sup> Hyperlocal Community Life Survey, compared with national [Community Life Survey](#) statistics (2019)

<sup>9</sup> Hyperlocal Community Life Survey Report 2018, commissioned by Power to Change (2018)

<sup>10</sup> Power to Change data from [Reward](#) (2018)

## Voluntary and Community Sector

Turnover data is available for 311 voluntary and community sector organisations in Wigan in the 2018 financial year. The combined turnover of these organisations was £150 million. With the economy of Wigan worth £5.17 billion in 2018, this means that the voluntary and community sector accounted for approximately 2.9% of the local economy.<sup>11</sup>

Small- to medium-sized organisations with a turnover between £5,000 and £5 million are most relevant to the programme, as these are the organisations that Empowering Places catalyst organisations are most likely to partner with or influence in their local area. Of the total number of organisations for which turnover data is available in 2018, 232 organisations were in this category and had a combined turnover of £51 million accounting for 34% of the total £150 million.

MyCake analysis of the published financial data of voluntary and community sector organisations in Wigan suggests that in any given year, approximately 40% of organisations make a loss.<sup>12</sup>

## Funding Landscape

Funding	Wigan <sup>13</sup>
Top five significant funders and amounts between 2017-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Department for Education (£9 million)</li> <li>– Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (£8.1 million)</li> <li>– The National Lottery Community Fund (£3.8 million)</li> <li>– The National Lottery Heritage Fund (£1.7 million)</li> <li>– Sport England (£1.1 million)</li> </ul>
Total number of funders in Wigan who have provided data to 360Giving (2017-2020)	31
Total value of grants awarded in Wigan by Power to Change (end of 2020)	£1.3 million

<sup>11</sup> MyCake analysis of Companies House and Charity Commission Data, Office of National Statistics (April 2020)

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> 360Giving [GrantNav](#) (Dec 2020)

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## 04. The Empowering Places catalyst: Abram Ward Community Cooperative

Abram Ward Community Cooperative (AWCC) was launched in 2013. AWCC is a collaboration of social enterprises, charities and community groups, that work together to create sustainable and innovative communities with a physical Community Business Hub in Platt Bridge Community Zone.

### Vision for the Empowering Places programme

AWCC's vision is that community businesses will be built upon existing community spirit and will aim to make Abram Ward a great place to work, live and visit by utilising and safeguarding the community hubs and open spaces in the ward. It hopes these spaces will be used as places from which to trade and community business will also be taught through educational services, providing awareness and new opportunities.

### Wider activities of Real Ideas

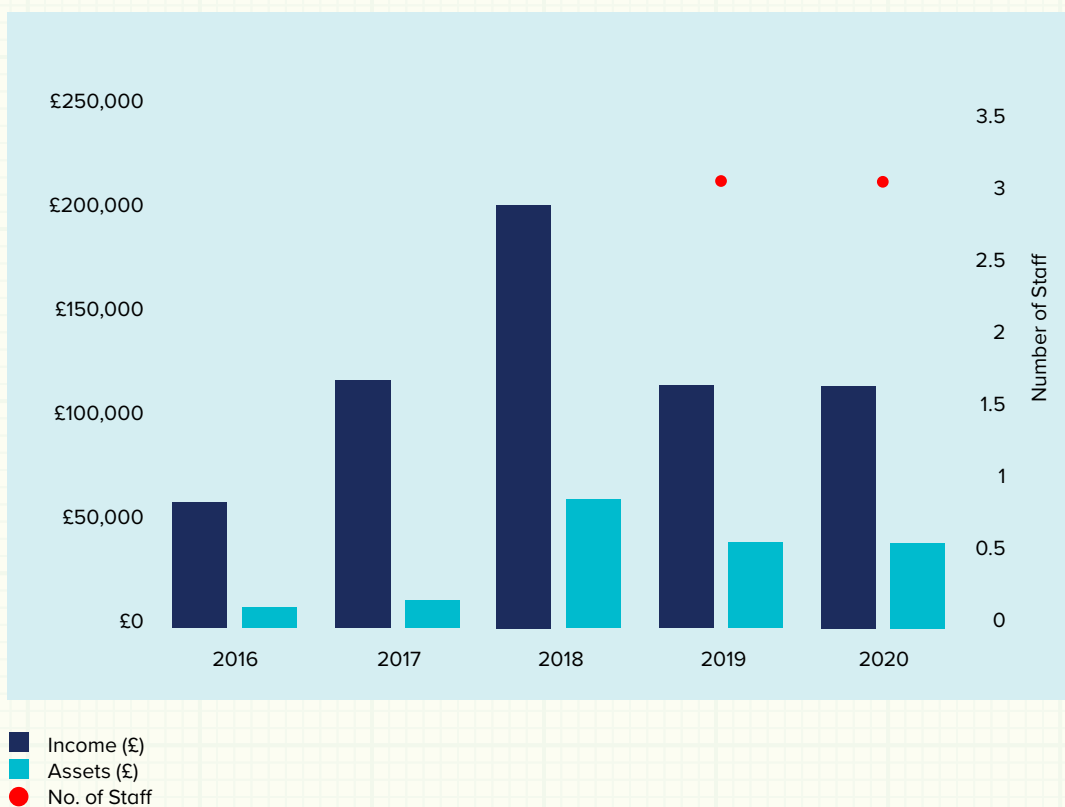
AWCC is a charity that acts as a Community Anchor. It has two buildings: an office block outside the centre of Wigan in Abram Ward, Platt Bridge, and a shop space in Wigan centre. Made in Wigan is a separate facility operating from the shop.

As of the 2020 financial year-end, AWCC employs 3 staff members, has a total income of £116,000 and assets worth £41,000. The figure below shows Abram Ward's self-reported total income, value of assets and staff head count between 2016 and 2020.

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<sup>14</sup> Power to Change Annual Grantee Survey (2020). The data presented here is self-reported by the Catalyst organisation to Power to Change, with missing data points indicating that no data was submitted.

Abram Ward Community Cooperative: Total Income, Value of Assets and Staff Head Count between 2016 – 2020



## **Empowering Places delivery**

### **The position of Empowering Places within the wider catalyst organisation**

Empowering Places fits in to the core function of AWCC, to increase community businesses for the benefit of residents in Abram Ward and Wigan. AWCC had a focus on social enterprise prior to the programme, but the Empowering Places investment has helped them to develop their local wealth building and social enterprise offer and explore and test new approaches and scale up existing activities. Part of the Empowering Places remit is also to strengthen and develop AWCC as a community business itself, ensuring a legacy for the programme and sustainability into the future.

### **Aims of Empowering Places locally**

By 2022, AWCC aim to have a clear 'line of sight' of community businesses across Abram Ward and Wigan, including new community hubs, pubs, open spaces or new developments such as community-led housing, from which people of all ages can be inspired to set up their own community business, be encouraged to buy local or find employment.

AWCC plan to expand to become Wigan & Leigh Community Cooperative, which will adopt a place based approach, developing ideas grown from Abram Ward. It aims to help people understand the opportunities that community businesses offer; and support schools to redesign their curriculum to accommodate the real needs of young people, helping them to showcase their skills and encouraging them to become employers, and not just employees. It also aims to see community businesses enabling people with learning disabilities to gain work experience and employment opportunities.

Finally, AWCC hope to see Wigan Council procuring more services from community businesses, and for local high streets and shopping spaces in Wigan and Leigh town centres to be proactively accommodating community businesses.



### Relationships and levels of influence

AWCC has a wide network both national and local organisations. In a relationship mapping exercise carried out by Shared Assets, AWCC self-identified that it holds over 100 relationships with voluntary sector organisations, commercial organisations, community businesses, collaborators, funders and commissioners.<sup>15</sup>

Type of Relationship	Number of Relationships	Mode Strength of Influence (1-3)	Mode Strength of Relationship (1-3)
Advisor	11	3	2.5
Collaborator	8	3	3
Commercial	2	1.5	1
Community Business	11	1	2
Funder	3	3	3
Peer	5	2	3
Political	3	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>		

A review of Charity Commission data highlights there are 232 small- to medium-sized voluntary sector organisations in Wigan. Based on the number of self-reported collaborator, peer and community business relationships held by AWCC, it can be estimated that AWCC has relationships with 24 organisations in the voluntary sector. This suggests that AWCC has a relationship with approximately 10.3% of the local sector.

<sup>15</sup> Shared Asset Relationship Mapping of Empowering Places (Sept 2020). RAG rating: Based on a scale of 1-3. Red (1-1.9), Yellow (2.0-2.9) and Green (3)

### Approach to delivering Empowering Places

AWCC's approach focuses on creating environments that enable people to feel empowered to start their own community businesses, and supporting existing businesses to increase trade and work alongside the community. Community organising has been identified as a key part of the strategy moving forward, with the aim to understand what the community want and need, and how to support them to make change themselves. This will inform a wider Neighbourhood Plan, which will focus on improving conditions for community businesses to grow and thrive and championing and supporting people to buy local.

AWCC aims to create mutually beneficial clusters of community businesses that work together and trade from each other, and are using their building in Platt Bridge to provide an incubation and training space for new community businesses to mobilise these connections. AWCC are in the process of scaling this work up to a borough-wide strategy, using their Made in Wigan shop, based in Wigan town centre. Made in Wigan provides an accessible hub for groups to meet in and work from, as well as somewhere people can come to discuss potential business ideas. They have plans to set it up as a trading arm and are in the process of developing an e-commerce platform to trade through.

Capacity support provided by AWCC includes helping community businesses to scale up, develop strategies, strengthen governance and business plans, and apply for funding. The team are also developing and testing an Enterprise Coaching Start Up and Scale Up training package for community businesses, consisting of a cooperative of business leaders, similar to the Empowering Places capacity pool. They are promoting these opportunities alongside other ways to get involved in community businesses through their Made in Wigan shop, and in local careers fairs at schools. They have identified three ways to engage: (1) develop a community business, (2) join a community business as a member, and (3) buy locally from community businesses.

AWCC are focused on using open space and local assets to develop community business hubs, and exploring new initiatives such as community-led housing, asset transfers and open spaces.

AWCC have good outward relationships and have positioned themselves as a strategic player in developing social investment across Wigan. It has been selected to be a key stakeholder in the Local Access Fund programme, working with Wigan Council and the Borough Community Partnership to develop a social investment strategy across Wigan.



### **Impact of Empowering Places on Abram Ward Community Cooperative so far**

Empowering Places has given AWCC the flexibility to test and pilot ideas in a small area, giving the organisation confidence and learning to expand to a borough-wide level. The decision to make AWCC a key stakeholder for the Local Access pot in Wigan is partly down to the reputation they have built in developing community businesses for Empowering Places and how they have been able to scale up their work from Abram Ward.

AWCC is the smallest organisation on the Empowering Places programme, in terms of staff, income and assets; being a part of the programme has enabled them to learn from others, taking inspiration from B-inspired in Leicester to develop their trading arm, and from some of the larger organisations to develop their asset base. Unfortunately, a recent attempt to purchase a community building in Abram Ward was unsuccessful, but this remains a priority moving forward and the Neighbourhood Plan Forum has developed a Community Asset Plan to identify future opportunities.

AWCC is already well regarded locally, which is evident in the initiatives it has been asked to join in the past. Empowering Places has enabled the team to enhance these connections and relationships and supported them to grow their contacts, helping them to develop new relationships with Locality and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, for example.



**Support and funding drawn down from the Empowering Places programme**

Support for catalyst organisation	AWCC <sup>16</sup>
Power to Change, Empowering Places Funding	£664,854
Tailored support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business Planning focused on Empowering Places Requested: 11 days valued at £5,500. Used: all 11 days</li> <li>2. Community Researching Requested: 4 days valued at £2,000 Used: all 4 days</li> <li>3. Website Development Requested: 12 days valued at £6,000 Used: 8 days so far</li> <li>4. Creating a trading model for Made in Wigan Requested: 17 days valued at £8,500 Used: 8.5 days so far</li> <li>5. Proposal Bid Work Requested: 4 days valued at £2,000 Used: 3 days</li> <li>6. Business site audit, Public realm analysis and vision, Neighbourhood Plan Requested: 31 days valued at £15,500 Used: all 31 days</li> <li>7. Open spaces developed into Community Businesses Requested: 17.5 days valued at £8,750 Used: None so far</li> <li>8. Training to become an accredited community organisation hub Requested: 10 days valued at £5,000 Used: None so far</li> <li>9. Coaching Requested: 1.3 days valued at £666 Used: All 1.3 days</li> </ol>
<b>Total tailored support used</b>	<b>Requested: 107.8 days, totalling £53,916 Used: 79.3, invoicing £39,650</b>

<sup>16</sup> Power to Change Airtable Charting (As of March 2021)

Other capacity support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Membership</li> <li>– Communications Support</li> <li>– Events Costs</li> <li>– Support to Community Businesses</li> <li>– Building work</li> </ul>
<b>Total other capacity support</b>	<b>Requested: £24,382.10</b> <b>Invoiced: £15,022</b>
<b>Support for Community Businesses</b>	
Seed grants	Dispersed 4 seed grants worth a total of £19,999
Tailored support	No tailored support has been requested for the community businesses yet

The figure below provides a breakdown of the financial support claimed by AWCC between years one and two of the Empowering Places programme, as well as the requested amount for the remaining three years of the programme.<sup>17</sup> Staff Costs includes the cost of freelance support, and internal costs includes office rental, equipment, travel, subsistence, marketing, communications and events costs.

Breakdown of Financial Support Claimed (in Years 1-2) and Requested (Years 3-5)



<sup>17</sup> Power to Change Grant Overview Snapshot (As of March 2021)

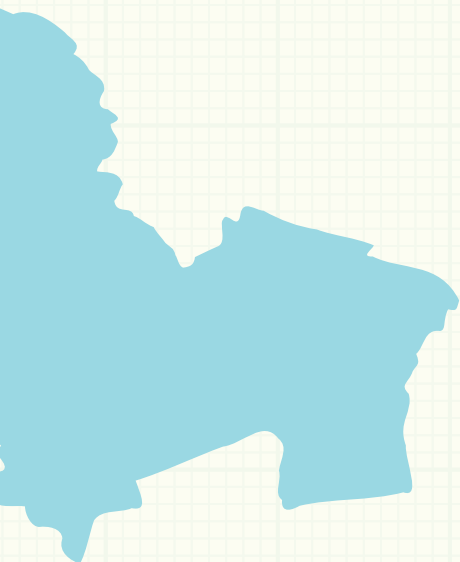
### Impact of capacity support provided by the Empowering Places programme

The largest piece of capacity support AWCC has commissioned from the programme has been to develop the Neighbourhood Plan including forward planning, business site audit and public realm analysis and vision. The Neighbourhood Plan will be used as a legacy of Empowering Places, supporting economic development with local spaces, community business generation and the future parks programme.

AWCC are also in the process of receiving support to develop the Made in Wigan trading arm, which will support them to develop a strategy of Community Wealth Building with Wigan Council. A former Tech Lead from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) was also directly involved in conversations with the Council around Community Wealth Building, which has supported AWCC to increase visibility as an even more credible organisation in this sphere.

AWCC have benefited from having multiple Tech Leads over the course of the programme with diverse skill sets. However, they have lacked the supportive and ongoing relationship that some of the other areas have with Tech Leads that have supported those catalysts for a longer period of time.

Seed funding applications and community research feedback showed that more people are becoming aware of Made in Wigan, but that there is still some progress to be made to empower more local people to set up their own community businesses.



### The community businesses supported by Abram Ward Community Cooperative

No	Community Business	Type	Support from programme <sup>18</sup>
1	Wigan Men's Sheds	For men of all ages to come together to make bespoke wooden products as requested by local people, whilst in turn helping to reduce male social isolation issues and increase health and wellbeing.	Seed Grant: Received seed grant of £5,000. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
2	TasteBuds Café	Community café that buys locally grown food and trains local people to cook	Seed Grant: Received seed grant of £5,000. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
3	MissPlaces Ltd	Wellbeing group for women supporting entrepreneurship and development of skills	Seed Grant: Received seed grant of £5,000. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
4	Bicky Lads and Lasses	Local young people making Arts and Crafts products within Bickershaw Village Club	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from AWCC. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
5	Betty's Café	Community cafe taking over a vacant facility within Bickershaw Village Club	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from AWCC. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.

<sup>18</sup> Power to Change Airtable Charting (As of March 2021)

6	Pianos, Pies and Pirouettes	Aims to reduce inequality via Arts and Culture in communities.	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from AWCC. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
7	Made in Wigan	Shop / community hub in Wigan Town Centre to promote community businesses to a borough-wide audience, plus provide space for community business to sell from, and to provide training	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from AWCC. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.



### **Emerging impact on community businesses and wider community**

AWCC have recently increased the number of community businesses they are supporting from seven to eleven, by distributing seed funding to four new community businesses through participatory budgeting events. They are now providing capacity building support to all eleven community businesses.

Men's Sheds and MissPlaces support the wellbeing of men and women respectively, by developing skills and confidence, and supporting entrepreneurship through making. Between the two groups they are supporting between 100 to 150 people per week across the borough, providing lots of social value for very little cost. AWCC are currently working with MissPlaces to develop their vision of developing an asset base.

Pianos, Pies and Pirouettes are a community business that use classical music and ballet to create accessible avenues to arts and culture for people who would otherwise be unable to enjoy the benefits of participation. The community business primarily aims to improve health outcomes by teaching ballet, but they also offer opportunities to build skills in composing music and designing sets for stage. The team have engaged a local professional Rugby club in ballet dancing, which has lifted the profile of the business and encouraged more people to get involved. The founder of the community business explained that a shortage of men in the ballet industry means that providing this training could give them a greater opportunity to go further. Pianos, Pies and Pirouettes have already raised money to support two local people to get into dance school, and one of their stories was featured in the [Wigan Today paper](#).



## 05. Impact of Covid-19 on the local area

According to the Social Economy Data Lab (SEDL), Wigan falls in one of the more vulnerable quintile for Covid, scoring 3 out of 5 on the vulnerability scoring.<sup>19</sup> The table below scores various relevant risk factors out of 10 in comparison to the five other Empowering Places.

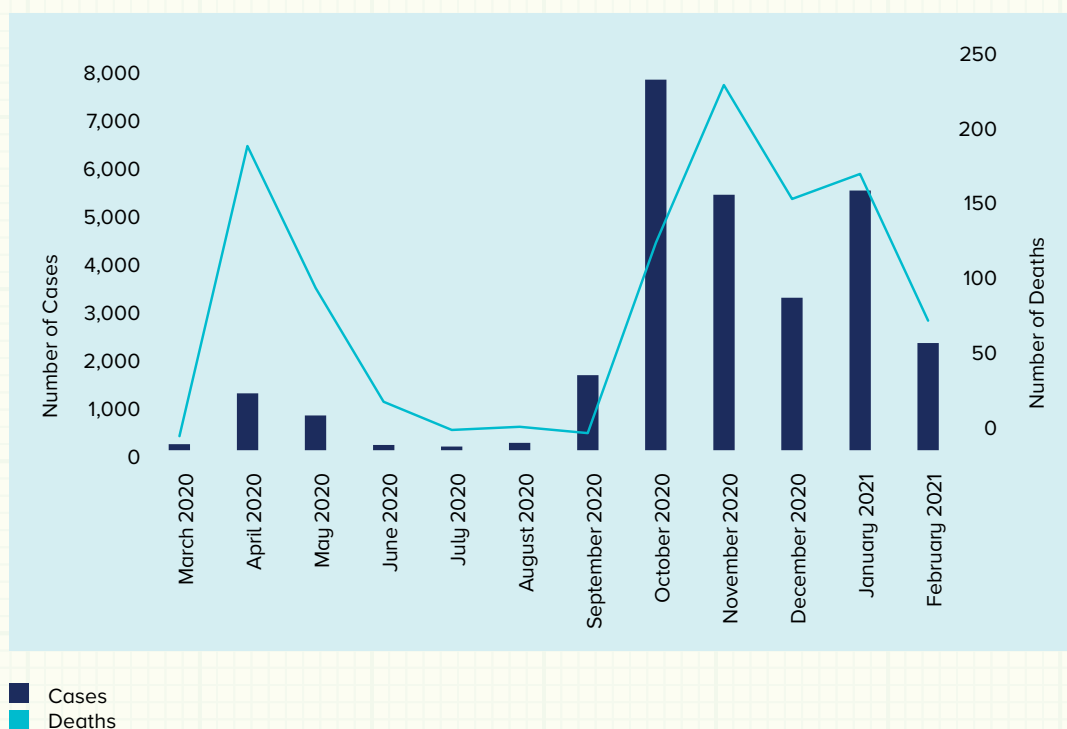
Indicator <sup>20</sup>	Wigan	Plymouth	Grimsby	Bradford	Leicester	Hartlepool
Total 70+ population	9.26	9.34	10	7.32	5.85	9.15
Obese adults	8.77	8.39	10	8.75	7.99	9.37
People aged 15 who are regular smokers	6.44	7.95	10	9.62	4.97	10
Receiving benefits for health or disability	6.60	6.57	7.48	6.54	6.47	10
Self-reported at-risk groups	9.45	8.76	8.35	8.56	9.05	10
Underlying health issues	8.66	8.02	8.63	9.44	8.00	10
Key workers	7.55	9.16	10	9.22	9.15	9.61
Vulnerable jobs	9.10	9.44	10	9.00	9.19	9.15
Vulnerable businesses	8.03	8.78	10	8.72	8.22	8.96
Groups requiring additional support	6.48	7.08	7.34	8.06	10.00	7.98

<sup>19</sup> Covid-19 and Communities: [Mapping the Covid-19 Effect](#) by Social Economy Data Lab (2020)

<sup>20</sup> Local Insights (2020). Each risk factors is scored out of 10 in comparison to the other Empowering Places locations, with a score of 10 indicating the highest risk.

The figure below shows the number of new Covid-19 cases and deaths as per date of test and date of death in Wigan. In total at the time of writing (March 2021), Wigan has had more than 28,000 cases and 1,100 deaths since the start of the pandemic.<sup>21</sup>

Monthly Covid-19 Cases and Deaths for Wigan



<sup>21</sup> Coronavirus Data [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) (As of 18th March 2021)

### What Covid-19 means for Wigan

Covid-19 related restrictions have impacted Wigan's retail sector. As shown below, data from the Social Economy Data Lab indicates that while grocery sales have increased in the five months between April and August 2020 in comparison to the previous year, total sales have decreased consistently in this period.<sup>22</sup>

Month	Grocery Sales Change (month to previous year)	Total Sales Change (month to previous year)
Apr-20	0 – 20% Increase	40 – 60% Decrease
May-20	0 – 20% Increase	40 – 60% Decrease
Jun-20	0 – 20% Increase	40 – 60% Decrease
Jul-20	0 – 20% Decrease	20 – 40% Decrease
Aug-20	0 – 20% Decrease	0 – 20% Decrease

Wigan has only three mutual aid groups. These groups serve a population of 326,088 people, therefore they each service a population of approximately 108,696 people. This is significantly higher than the national average, which is roughly 23,900 people served per Covid-19 mutual aid group.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Covid-19 and Communities: [Mapping](#) the Covid-19 Effect by Social Economy Data Lab (2020)

<sup>23</sup> [Covid Mutual Aid Calculation](#) (2020)

## Impact of Covid-19 on Abram Ward Community Cooperative and its approach to Empowering Places

AWCC have been lucky to some extent because as a small and nimble organisation largely reliant on grant funding, their income has not been as impacted as other catalyst organisations on the programme. Empowering Places funding contributes towards the salaries of all three members of staff and as a result they have not had to worry about furloughing or redundancies. However, as the pandemic has continued, AWCC are beginning to see an impact in being able to generate income through opportunities like long term rentals and hiring out conference facilities.

During the initial crisis period, AWCC acted as the key hub for the Abram Ward Community Food response, in partnership with Wigan Council. This has strengthened an already good relationship and has helped to build the organisation's profile locally. The initiative delivered 40 food parcels a week and worked across sectors to share information about vulnerable people, to ensure they were receiving the right support.

### *People were ringing up, crying, they didn't know there was a group like this – AWCC Staff/Tech Lead*

Responding to the necessity to adapt services online, AWCC used the time during the first lockdown to develop an E-commerce platform which provides a social space for local people and groups to trade goods. It is an ethical and inclusive platform which welcomes a variety of sellers.

## Impact of Covid-19 on community businesses

During the initial crisis period the majority of the community businesses being supported by AWCC were forced to suspend all activity. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Men's Sheds and MissPlaces had applied for funding to support their continued development and the pandemic has set them back slightly, but as both are small initiatives that don't currently rely heavily on income generation, they haven't been impacted too severely. Both the CCG and Council are keen to commission these types of organisations through social prescribing, so there is hope this will provide some sustainability for their business models in the future.

Taste Buds Café were able to support people to use the garden every day for four weeks. They also supported AWCC with the community food response, by inviting people to grow food and providing people with food from the café. As a direct result of this work they have been invited to sector-wide meetings with the Police and Council, which they never would have had the opportunity for previously.

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