



# Plans to Action

## Summary Report and Case Studies

**Community Development Foundation**  
July 2015



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# Summary

- Big Local is all about bringing local people together to change their communities for the better. The programme is run by Local Trust.
- Local Trust asked CDF to explore how Big Local areas are delivering their plans to enable areas to learn from the experience of others, as well as inform the support Local Trust offers to areas.
- Interviews were conducted with five Big Local areas and six non-Big Local community groups to understand how they delivered projects to address issues in their area.
- Four different approaches to delivery for turning plans into action were found in the Big Local areas that took part in the research:
  - **Commissioning** – commissioning an organisation to deliver a project, with some tailoring for the Big Local area.
  - **Co-working** – working in partnership with an existing organisation, most often based in the area, who are already delivering something that meets Big Local priorities.
  - **Co-creating** – identifying a need in the area and developing a bespoke project to address this.
  - **Bidding** – developing a form and selection criteria. Projects apply and are awarded funds if they meet priorities for the area.
- The five areas in the research delivered the following projects using these approaches:
  - Marsh and Micklefield in Buckinghamshire wanted to improve community cohesion. They **commissioned** the Young Foundation to undertake the ‘U project’, which offered residents the chance to take part in a series of training workshops to encourage people to get to know each other, bringing the community together.
  - Heart of Pitsea in Essex **worked with** their local council to refurbish a playground within the area to increase activities for young people and improve the appearance of the area.
  - Barrow Island in Cumbria wanted to develop community facilities in the Big Local area and better support younger families and children. Residents **partnered with** the local Council to rebuild a playground and have **co-created** a project to take over the lease of a local sports facility and redevelop the pitches and changing facilities.
  - Bountagu in North East London had no central community facility. They worked with partners to **co-create** a bespoke project to develop a community hub in the centre of Big Local to provide a meeting place, information point and centre for a range of community activities.

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- Rudheath and Witton in Cheshire received an application from Grozone, a community garden/horticultural therapy project within the Big Local area, bidding for funding to run 'outdoor learning adventures' with young people from the local secondary school. Running since July 2014, they provide meaningful activities for young people, as well as building transferable skills and improving their wellbeing.
  - The resident-led community groups interviewed who were not part of the Big Local programme had similar approaches to delivering projects. The main difference was they had to apply for funding, whereas Big Local areas already had funding from the programme. This meant the non-Big Local groups couldn't offer local projects the chance to bid for small grants.

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# 1 Introduction

This report brings together research exploring how Big Local and other community groups deliver projects in their areas. The aim of the research was to understand how Big Local areas move from identifying issues and priorities in their area, to developing projects to address these. It also aimed to highlight any differences in Big Local projects compared with other resident-led community groups developing their idea into a project.

The report contains five case studies of projects being delivered by Big Local areas and six case studies of projects delivered by non-Big Local community groups. The case studies are based on interviews undertaken with Big Local areas and groups between November 2014 and January 2015.

## 1.1 About the programme

Big Local is all about bringing local people together to change their communities for the better. Residents in each of 150 Big Local areas across England are given at least £1million to use over ten years to make their areas even better places to live. The Big Local programme is run by Local Trust, working with an endowment from the Big Lottery Fund (BIG), with a range of partners that provide expert advice and support for residents.

Big Local aims to fulfil the following outcomes:

- communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them
- people will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future
- the community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises
- people will feel that their area is an even better place to live

Residents come together as a steering group to consult their community about how to spend their £1million, with help from any community groups, local businesses, voluntary and public sector organisations they want to work with. This steering group goes on to form an inclusive and accountable local partnership, endorsed by Local Trust. The steering group/partnership guides the direction of Big Local in an area through a plan, which takes account of communities' priorities for spending the funding. Local Trust review and endorse this plan before releasing Big Local money to the locally trusted organisation of the partnership. The partnership can then draw down money from the locally trusted organisation to spend on the priorities in the plan.

## 1.2 About the research

The research aimed to understand the journey five Big Local partnerships made from deciding plan priorities to setting up and undertaking projects to meet these priorities. It also aimed to highlight any differences when compared to non-Big Local, resident-led community groups delivering projects.

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CDF developed the sample of areas with Local Trust. We included only areas that had been awarded Big Local Plan funding before March 2014 so that sufficient time had passed for them to develop projects from their plans. Plans and funding offer letters were examined for types of priorities (for example, small grants, younger people, community facilities). Those that had been awarded funding for staff or administrative costs were excluded because the research wanted to include activities, not running costs, of Big Local areas. We developed a matrix of areas to include a range of priorities and activities in the sample.

Alongside the types of priorities and activities, our sample made sure there was a spread of regions and waves. Areas were excluded if they were already involved in other Big Local research projects.

We contacted key residents and any workers to invite the area to take part in the research and arrange a suitable day for a visit. CDF undertook visits to the five areas between November 2014 and January 2015 when at least three key people were interviewed, including members of the partnership, other involved residents, any organisations working with the partnership on projects and locally trusted organisations.

A comparison sample of community groups was developed from CDF's network to look at any differences in projects led by community groups not involved in Big Local or in Big Local areas. A request for help was sent out to CDF contacts and also through local Council for Voluntary Service organisations. A good response was received and six groups were selected. A contact from each of the groups then took part in a telephone interview.

### **1.3 Research aims**

The aim of our research was to explore how Big Local areas are delivering their plans to enable areas that have yet to have their plans endorsed to learn from the experience of others, as well as inform the support Local Trust offers to areas.

Our research aimed to understand the realities of resident-led Big Local partnerships delivering projects from their plans, specifically:

- Why projects were chosen;
- The approaches taken, including any successes and challenges;
- Support accessed, including what helped delivery of projects;
- What lessons have been learnt about how to effectively deliver plans in the first year; and
- What is the same or different about Big Local partnerships delivering a project compared with other resident-led community groups.

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## 2 The projects

The following projects form case studies for this research:

- **Marsh and Micklefield** – The partnership commissioned the Young Foundation to undertake the ‘U project’, a series of interactive workshops across the Big Local area on a range of topics, from basic first aid to conflict resolution. The aim was that by learning together, people would get to know others in their community. The partnership hired two part-time workers to take responsibility for project delivery.
- **Heart of Pitsea** – The partnership worked with the local council to refurbish a playground in the centre of the Big Local area to increase the activities for young people and make a visible difference to the community. The council match funded the refurbishment and helped with procurement of a contractor. A member of the partnership took overall responsibility for delivering the project, including consulting with local children on the final design.
- **Barrow Island** – Consultation with the community showed they wanted play areas, sports facilities and a community centre for the Island. Residents partnered with the local council to rebuild a playground and have taken over the lease of the local sports facilities to develop new pitches, changing facilities and a community centre in the future. The Big Local worker and a resident on the partnership are project managing this.
- **Bountagu** – The partnership decided to establish a central community hub to develop a sense of community, improve community facilities and provide help, support and activities to residents. They wanted this hub to act as an information and meeting point and provide a space for community activities. The rep helped develop the budget for this, with the locally trusted organisation responsible for the planning application and the Big Local worker overseeing completion of all project actions.
- **Rudheath and Witton** – The community wanted to provide more activities for young people and increase qualifications. The Big Local partnership worked with their locally trusted organisation, Groundwork, and Grozone, one of Groundwork’s flagship projects within the Big Local area, to engage young people from the local secondary school in outdoor learning adventures. Grozone and a member of the partnership project managed the outdoor education lessons, applying to Big Local for some of the funding with match funding from Cheshire Community Foundation secured by Grozone. Monitoring of the project is undertaken by the worker, who is employed by the locally trusted organisation.

Comparison projects included as case studies involve: an art course to improve health and wellbeing; a community gardening project; a talent show for local charities; rebuilding of a playground; improved communication for displays at a local museum; and a volunteer model for running local library services.



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## 2.1 Why projects were chosen

The projects in our research were chosen by the Big Local areas because:

- They were often ‘quick wins’. Four of the five Big Local areas started off with projects that were slightly easier, or more readily achievable, to implement.
  - These were projects that weren’t starting completely from scratch. Areas often partnered with an organisation that had skills and experience in delivering such a project.
  - They were time-limited projects, with a clear start and end date, even though they still sought long-term impacts.
  - They were visible projects to raise the profile of Big Local area.
- Marsh and Micklefield and Rudheath and Witton Big Local areas started with ‘off-the-shelf’ projects. This meant they could learn more about the area, learn about how to deliver projects and grow in confidence from this.
- Bountagu and Barrow Island prioritised projects that cut across their plan priorities to maximise their impact.
- Projects were also chosen because there was an opportunity, such as match funding or an organisation delivering a project that met plan priorities.

## 2.2 What was common to these projects?

There were a number of factors that the projects in our research had in common:

- The experience and skills of other, professional organisations in partnerships was often key to success. Residents could learn about legislation and procedures, such as town planning and procurement, as well as build contacts with people and organisations to help them with projects.
- Securing match funding was important, but areas often required help from partners in completing application forms or finding out what was available.
- Areas were keen to ensure value for money from organisations they worked with. This was done through monitoring forms, price quotes for work from different companies / individuals and inviting tenders for work required.
- Areas had key members of the partnership, their locally trusted organisation, rep or a worker to manage the project and oversee actions needed to deliver it.
- Open communication was vital to the success of projects:
  - Open and transparent communication with partners meant Big Local partnerships had control of projects they were delivering, took decisions together and were clear about responsibilities.

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- Open meetings and community consultation meant residents took decisions on projects and the partnership engaged with as many people as possible.
  - Good communication managed any conflicts of interest. Open discussion of priorities and projects at Big Local partnership meetings and community consultation events meant the money was spent on projects the community, not individuals, wanted: *“We just worked towards it together. And no one was taking over or saying, ‘This is what I want.’”*
  - A shared purpose helped keep partnerships focused. Bountagu felt they worked well as a partnership because they *“all want the same thing”*. Other areas felt that their initial delivery of Big Local increased their understanding and knowledge of the area, so they knew what to focus on in the future.
- Negotiation, from agreements with partners to leases for buildings, formed a key part of delivery. Procurement and contracts were handled by locally trusted organisations and local councils.

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## 3 The approaches taken

The delivery approaches developed in response to project ideas, opportunities, and advice from those on their partnership, such as the rep, locally trusted organisation and other voluntary and public sector organisations.

Of the five Big Local areas in the sample, the research found there were four main delivery approaches. These were:

- **Commissioning** – this involves commissioning an organisation to deliver a project, albeit with some tailoring for the Big Local area e.g. Marsh and Mickfield commissioned the Young Foundation to deliver interactive training workshops.
- **Co-working** – working in partnership with an existing organisation that are already delivering something that meets Big Local priorities which the partnership can work with them to deliver. The organisations are most often based in the area, e.g. Heart of Pitsea worked with the local Council to refurbish a playground.
- **Co-creating** – identifying a need in the area and then developing a bespoke project for this, e.g. Bountagu partnership developed a community hub and Barrow Island has taken over the lease of a community sports facility.
- **Bidding** – developing a form and having projects apply to Big Local for funding. Projects are successfully awarded funds if they met plan priorities e.g. Rudheath and Witton awarded funding to an outdoor learning adventure project for young people.

The approach used depended on the type of project, with different approaches being used simultaneously for different projects, or in combination for one project, for example:

- Rudheath and Witton used a co-working approach for delivering the outdoor learning adventures with Grozone, but the project was funded through a bidding approach.
- Barrow Island worked with the Council on the playground, but they are using a co-creating approach for their refurbishment of Cavendish Park.

These approaches are described in more detail below.

### 3.1 Commissioning

Commissioning is a process by which Big Local areas may invite a number of organisations to compete to win a contract for work. Areas send out an 'invitation to tender' to a range of organisations that they think may be interested in doing the work that they have on offer. This is an approach often used by areas that know roughly what they want a project to look like but do not have the skills, knowledge or time to do it themselves.

An invitation to tender may include the following:

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- 1) Background to Big Local
  - 2) Description of the goods and/or services required
  - 3) Core requirements, such as qualifications, experience or any other needs that must be met
  - 4) Your evaluation criteria: a description of how you will assess and evaluate submissions
  - 5) Submission content and format: how submissions should be presented; for example, length and format (Word document, PDF, short film)
  - 6) Deadline for submission: where and when it should be submitted, and what it must include, such as pricing information and schedule
  - 7) Contact information of person(s) to get in touch with for enquiries or clarification

Areas using this approach may need to consider the following questions:

- How much can the service or activity be tailored to the needs of your area?
- Do you have a good understanding of what is required and what other organisations might feasibly be able to offer?
- How will you manage and monitor contracts?
- How will you communicate clearly with partners about roles and responsibilities?
- Have you factored the cost of VAT into your budget?

If areas take the above questions into account, there are a number of advantages to using the commissioning approach:

- the locally trusted organisation may be able to manage the project
- it is less time-consuming for those on the partnership
- it builds members of the partnership's knowledge of project management
- it allows the partnership to build new contacts and networks

### **3.2 Co-working**

The co-working approach is about working in partnership with an existing organisation, individual or community group to deliver a project that meets a Big Local area's priorities. This is an important part of Big Local, as it is all about building relationships within the community and surrounding area.

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Funding from the programme may be used effectively to enhance services that are already being provided. For example, another organisation in the area could be providing general advice or support on a particular topic, but additional Big Local funding could be used to pay for further services, such as one-to-one advice or workshops.

Areas using this approach needed to think about:

- how to identify suitable partners
- ensuring that the service or activity suits the area's needs
- the roles and responsibilities of different partners; for example, who is responsible for making decisions?
- how best to manage and monitor contracts

Advantages of this approach include the following:

- areas can draw on the skills, learning and experience of others
- it helps areas to build contacts and networks
- the area may be able to get more out of it, including match and in-kind funding

### **3.3 Co-creating**

In a co-creating approach areas might work with a range of local people, organisations or groups to create or design a new bespoke service for the community. This can involve people who might be described as 'providers' and 'users' working together, pooling different kinds of knowledge and skills. For example, if activities for young people or children were a priority with an area's plan, they might decide to involve these young people or children in the design of a new service or activity.

The process that areas may go through if they decide to use a co-creating approach could look as follows:

- 1) Identify and involve relevant stakeholders, including people who:
  - a. would be directly affected by the service, now and in the future
  - b. have a contribution to make as well as people who are currently involved in Big Local.
  - c. have a keen interest in the activity but are not necessarily involved in Big Local
- 2) Build on existing resources:
  - a. what resources are available to you? This includes knowledge, experience, skills and abilities, influence and connections.

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- b. look at what already exists and is working well
- 3) Identify and agree what you are trying to achieve and develop solutions. This might include idea generation and testing.

Challenges of this approach include:

- it may require more time to develop than other approaches
- areas may need to identify new partners to support or deliver the project

Advantages of this approach are as follows:

- it can be tailored to the area's needs
- it may allow areas to address more than one priority

### **3.4 Bidding**

A bidding approach allows areas to fund a number of other smaller local projects which help them address their plan priorities. In their plan they may have agreed the maximum amount to spend on addressing a particular issue but might not have decided how to spend the money. If there are a number of groups in the area already doing good work then it may be worth offering them funding. Local groups or individuals then bid for this funding. This can be done through a range of different methods. There may be an application or small grant process, participatory budgeting, a 'dragon's den' style event or similar.

Areas using a bidding approach need to consider setting up:

- a clear and suitable application form
- a good monitoring procedure to ensure activities or projects achieve what they set out to do
- funding agreements with the successful groups, organisations or individuals
- a feedback process for applications which were unsuccessful

Those areas which used this approach found it had the following benefits:

- it allows them to fund a number of projects at the same time
- it increases the visibility of Big Local in the area
- it encourages a range of people to get involved in the decisions about Big Local funding
- it may take less time than other approaches, because other organisations and individuals deliver the projects or activities.

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### 3.5 Adapting their approach

- In our research, Big Local plans all identified priorities which the projects were designed to address, but did not necessarily specify the approach that they would take to turn their plan into action.
- Following initial projects, delivery approaches in three areas were changing. Rudheath and Witton is moving from an application process to a commissioning process as their knowledge of what is happening in the area grows. Heart of Pitsea is moving from a commissioning process to a bidding process to benefit from what is happening in the area already. Marsh and Micklefield is moving from commissioning to co-creating bespoke projects with residents who have relevant skills. The areas in our research have found that different approaches are suitable for different projects and are using a range of approaches to deliver their plan.
- Areas were experimenting with different approaches to delivery and found they needed to be flexible about projects and approaches used, adapting to what was appropriate or available.
- Two areas are also in the process of reviewing their progress against plan priorities and deciding their focus for the next phase of Big Local.

### 3.6 Comparison to other resident-led community groups

- The process for other resident-led community groups was broadly similar to Big Local: groups identified the issue, set project tasks and responsibilities and worked to develop a network of partners.
- The main difference surrounded the availability of funding. Other community groups spent a lot of time and energy applying for funding for their specific projects. Whilst Big Local areas were always looking for match funding, they already had access to funds worth £1 million through the Big Local programme.
- The lack of availability of funding meant their approaches to delivery mainly involved co-creating, commissioning or co-working. No application/bid process was used because they had no funds for people to apply for.

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## 4 What support did areas access?

- Support came in the form of experience, skills, contacts, knowledge and time
- It often came from within the partnership:
  - The rep often helped with the budget or project management.
  - The locally trusted organisation and other partners provided expertise on procurement, form development, monitoring, applications for match funding, project management and contracts.
  - Workers, where they were in place, also offered support in terms of overseeing the project and securing match funding.
  - Bountagu were also looking to develop the support of residents within the community through the hub: *“And that’s the whole thing about having this space, [it] allows people to know who’s in your area, you can start to talk, to get support...”*
- Areas also talked to community groups in their area, who were not necessarily part of Big Local but had developed similar projects, to learn from their experience.
- Residents involved learnt from their experience: *“we were complete novices at [the start] – we’re not anymore...we’re much smarter...”*
  - They learnt from this experience rather than accessing specific support or training opportunities: *“I did feel I wanted training regarding being a chairperson, but now I’m actually vice chair and, four years down the line, I don’t feel I need that training.”*



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## 5 What lessons did areas learn about delivery?

- Start small and manageable, but just do it. Getting started was often the hardest part, but the success of even small projects boosted the confidence of residents to achieve more.
- Make use of what's already there.
  - This could be the experience of residents and of partners, projects that are already happening in the Big Local area, or buildings that can be identified.
  - Areas shouldn't be "*afraid to ask for help and if somebody has done it before don't reinvent the wheel. Ask them how they've done it and don't be shy.*"
- Match funding is very important to delivery and can help shape a project.
  - Most areas received match funding from partners in Big Local or other organisations they applied to.
  - In some cases this set the deadline for projects, which proved helpful for areas in delivering projects.
- Partnership working makes things easier.
  - Projects were made easier through using the links and experience of partners to develop delivery approaches, assess suitable projects and identify available match funding.
  - Big Local partnerships made use of contracting, procurement and monitoring procedures of locally trusted organisations and delivery partners.
  - Finding the right people, who were committed to making the area an even better place to live, was important to see projects through.
- Plan projects carefully.
  - Set reasonable goals and deadlines.
  - Ensure meetings have a clear agenda and actions.
  - Assign tasks to members of the partnership.
  - Ensure all contracts and funding agreements are in place.
  - Be transparent and open.
- Flexibility and persistence.
  - Areas recognised that things don't always work out as planned. They adapted to circumstances, considered options and planned alternatives.
  - Sometimes things took longer than expected, but continual planning, communication and a clear vision of what was wanted helped areas see the project through.

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- Have a clear monitoring process.
    - This showed the impact of the project, which areas could then use to promote the achievements of Big Local.
    - It also allowed areas to learn from the project; what worked well, what could have been improved, all of which helps future delivery.
  - Consider sustainability.
    - Barrow Island were planning for the future of their sports facilities through installing an all-weather, Astroturf pitch, which would be a unique facility in the area and bring in hire revenue. This income could sustain the running and upkeep of facilities in the future.
    - Heart of Pitsea made sure the council had responsibility for maintenance of the playground they refurbished. The partnership does not then have to budget for this.

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## 6 Conclusion

- Big Local partnerships who took part in the research are using a range of different delivery approaches to deliver activities in their area, including: commissioning, co-working, co-creating and bidding.
- Selecting an approach depends on what areas are trying to do, available opportunities in the area (in the form of people, organisations, existing projects and funding), and advice from reps, locally trusted organisations and others organisations on the partnership. Areas may use more than one approach at any time.
- Many areas started on easy to manage, but ‘visible’ projects to engage more of the community in Big Local. Areas in this research learnt a lot from their first projects and these lessons built their confidence to deliver more through future projects.
- Partnerships made the most of what was going on in the Big Local area: identifying match funding, using procedures of partners (in terms of procurement and contracts) and working with community, voluntary or service groups in the area to deliver something for Big Local. This meant residents kept control of what was happening in the area, but didn’t have to ‘start from scratch’ or do everything themselves.
- Communication and negotiation were vital to partnerships delivering projects. It kept residents of Big Local areas informed and engaged, built contacts and networks to help deliver projects and connected areas to possible match funding.
- Big Local areas were proud to look back at what they had achieved since their launch and proud residents were still leading it.
- Many of the Big Local areas interviewed for this research welcomed discussing their experience further with other areas, as did those interviewed as comparison groups. Contact information has been included in all case studies should other Big Local areas wish to find out more

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# 7 Case studies

This section contains case studies of projects delivered by five Big Local areas and six comparison groups.

## 7.1 Big Local case studies:

- [Barrow Island](#) – the area have rebuilt a playground and are looking to improve the changing facilities and pitches at a local sporting venue.
- [Bountagu](#) – the partnership worked together with their locally trusted organisation and the local council to secure the lease of a shop and convert it into a community centre.
- [Heart of Pitsea](#) – the partnership worked together with Basildon Council to improve a dilapidated playground within the area.
- [Marsh and Micklefield](#) – the partnership commissioned the Young Foundation to undertake the ‘U project’, which consisted of a series of workshops to teach participants new skills and boost community cohesion.
- [Rudheath and Witton](#) – the area worked with their locally trusted organisation Groundwork to engage young people from the local secondary school in a series of ‘outdoor learning adventures’.

## 7.2 Comparison group case studies:

- [Beauty Unseen](#) – by running live shows across the UK the project aims to prevent social exclusion and showcase the work of other charities throughout the country.
- [Buckland Monachorum Play Park](#) – Buckland Monachorum Parish Council worked together with the local community to refresh the play park in their village and buy new equipment.
- [Combe Martin Museum](#) – the museum ran a project called Breaking Barriers, which involved making their exhibits more user-friendly for those who have communication difficulties.
- [Friends of Braunton Library](#) – the community came together to create a volunteering group to run the local library when it was at risk of closure due to local government cuts.
- [Ilfracombe Graveyard Group](#) – a small group of volunteers came together to improve the environment of their local graveyard ahead of a World War I commemoration march.
- [Journey Through The Field of Art](#) – an artist started running community art classes to improve health and wellbeing in the local community.

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# Barrow Island Big Local

## 1 Summary of project

Barrow Island Big Local in Cumbria have rebuilt a play area for children in the centre of the Island and are looking to improve the community centre and sporting facilities located at Cavendish Park in the north. This is part of their Big Local plan to improve community facilities and provide more support for families and children on the Island. Residents partnered with the local Council to rebuild the playground. They have formed a charity, which has taken over the lease of Cavendish Park and is investigating building new pitches.

## 2 About the area

Barrow Island forms part of the Borough of Barrow in the county of Cumbria. The area has a population of 2,504 and is home to a primary school and nursery, pubs and shops, a church and two working men's clubs. It has the largest shipyard in the UK, which is one of the biggest employers in Barrow. In terms of community facilities, the largest is Cavendish Park (known to locals as Cav Park) on the north end of the Island, which has three full size pitches for football teams to use for games and practice.

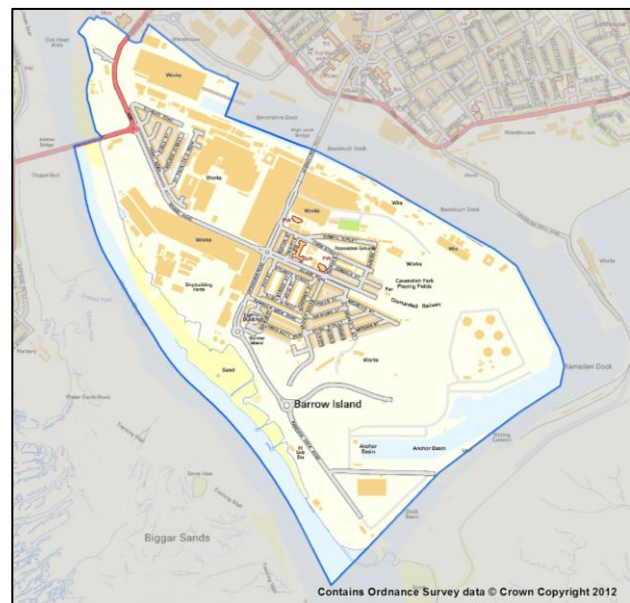


Figure 1: Barrow Island Big Local (Source: Local Trust)

## 3 What was the issue?

Barrow Island lacks community facilities, having no community centre and no suitable places for children to play. Following the closure of the community centre due to a loss of funding, the only community meeting space is a small community room, suitable only for small meetings and with limited use for young people. Community consultation for Big Local showed that residents were concerned about the lack of indoor and outdoor play areas, sports facilities or a community centre. The recreation ground in the centre of the Island used to contain a children's play area, but in recent years had no equipment. The pitches and changing facilities at Cavendish Park also needed renovating; the pitches often flooded and became waterlogged, which led to the cancellation of football games. The local football team had no priority over the pitches and there was no rugby pitch for the local team. This meant the football team couldn't *“progress up the league [because they] haven't got a home ground.”*

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#### 4 What was the solution?

The steering group decided to prioritise the refurbishment of the recreation ground play area in the first year of their plan because it would be a visible project to show that Big Local was listening to what the community wanted (see the box on the following page for a detailed description). They are also working to develop community facilities and improve sports provision in the area through the creation of “one facility providing sports, recreation and wellbeing for the good of the community.” Their project is to enhance the current facilities at Cavendish Park, improving its pitches and changing rooms while also adding a new space to be used as a community centre. This project is an example of the ‘co-creating’ delivery approach.

##### Recreation ground playground

**Brief and contract** – Local children were taken by coach to see parks in the area, so they could understand options. This fed into a community brief for new play equipment and landscaping. The Council then sent this brief to companies and got tenders back from six. The Council and five people from the steering group reviewed the tenders and selected a company based on price, durability and ease of maintenance. A contract was signed with the selected company, with the Council managing this contract.

**Funding** – The project used match funding of £46,000 from WREN Landfill Community Fund. WREN awards funding to projects if they are within a certain distance of a landfill site. The committee applied for the funding through the Council and worked with the Council’s treasurer to fill out the grant funding forms.

**Outcome** – Once the work was completed, the steering group held a grand opening of the park, which was really well attended. The local radio came and spoke with the children. The improvements to the park have greatly increased community involvement and provided space for children and families to play and talk to each other.

#### 5 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **The steering group** – Residents volunteer on the steering group, non-constituted group, Barrow Island Community Trust (BICT), who take decisions on Big Local in the area.
- **Barrow Island Community Sports Trust** – a charity set up as part of Big Local with representatives from local sports groups on Barrow Island and members of the Big Local steering group.
- **Barrow Borough Council** – Own Cavendish Park, which was previously leased to the Playing Fields Users Association.

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- **Barrow Sports Council (the locally trusted organisation)** – Includes representatives from the County Council, Borough Council and voluntary groups in Barrow. It addresses sports issues and physical activity in the town and gives out small grants to support local sports projects. One of the key members of the steering group is also involved in the Sports Council.
  - **Lancashire Football Association** – Advice on sports facilities in the area and run funding clinics in connection with this.
  - **Local architect** – The architect has been hired to design the improvements at Cavendish Park.

## 6 How did the area approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Held open community meetings** – following the consultation, the steering group set up a meeting with residents to get feedback on the key priorities identified from the outreach work. The residents were keen that a priority be the renovation of Cavendish Park's pitches and changing facilities to create a community centre and a home pitch for local football and rugby teams. A Lancashire FA representative was at the meeting and he mentioned that the organisation was looking to install a 3G pitch, which is a *“third generation, so it's a type of Astro turf...all weather pitch, full sized, with floodlighting”* and that Cavendish Park might be a suitable location. The community liked this idea and began to consider the possibility of building a 3G pitch alongside improvements to the grass pitches.
- **Investigated pitch improvements** – the steering group knew they had to take control of the management and maintenance of Cavendish Park by taking on a lease of the facilities, but before committing to this it was important for them to understand the extent of work needed to improve the pitches. As a result, they commissioned a local company to complete a land survey of the pitches, which found that they would be suitable if drainage work costing approximately £180,000 plus VAT was completed. The steering group attended a funding clinic, run by Lancashire FA, to understand their options for making these improvements. Lancashire FA suggested that an alternative to large-scale drainage work would be to purchase machinery, such as tractors and rotavators, to improve aeration. This equipment could then be used for ongoing maintenance and shared with other sports clubs. The area is waiting for Lancashire FA to survey the pitches and assess their suitability for these improvements.
- **Negotiated a lease** – the Playing Fields Users Association (PFUA), who leased Cavendish Park from the Council, agreed in principle to transfer the lease to Big Local. BICT entered negotiations with the PFUA and the Council to transfer the lease. The negotiation was complicated because PFUA and Barrow Borough Council wanted to ensure they had best value from the lease transfer and the steering group had to use contacts at the Council to ease negotiation.

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- **Became a registered charity** – at the same time as the lease negotiations were taking place, Barrow Island Big Local received charitable status from the Charities Commission for Barrow Island Community Sports Trust. The charity was formed to take on the lease for Cavendish Park and to invest any money from this back into the facilities. The charity is made up of seven core members, all residents of Barrow Island, many of whom also sit on the Big Local steering group.
  - **Planned for alternative options** – while the initial focus was on improving the existing grass pitches, with the lease negotiations ongoing, the steering group began to investigate building a 3G pitch alongside developing the grass pitches. A 3G pitch would be a significant investment, but would be a unique facility in the area which could bring £90,000 a year from hiring to local teams. This income could be used for hiring staff to manage the pitches as well as maintain the changing rooms and community centre. The Sports Trust has developed two business plans: one for 3G and grass pitches and one for grass pitches only. The business plans set out “...what they can charge now if they get the lease to rent the pitches out and potentially charge, once the pitches have been upgraded”. The plans also depend on what work needs to be done to improve drainage of the pitches.
  - **Hired an architect** – while the lease negotiations were taking place, the steering group contacted local architectural practices to ask them to outline proposals for improving the existing changing facilities to create a community centre. They asked the architects to include costs and a timeline of proposals and relevant examples of previous work. They knew of the companies because a member of the steering group works for a construction company. Three architects were interviewed by the steering group and a local, self-employed architect was hired from these. BICT selected the architect because they knew his previous work with schools in the community and trusted him. A contract was signed between the architect and Barrow Sports Council, the locally trusted organisation.
  - **Secured the lease** – following 10 months of negotiation, Barrow Island Community Sports Trust secured a 30 year lease of Cavendish Park in February 2014. The Council offered to waive the rent for an initial five year period because it would be “a facility for the people of Barrow, not just for the people of Barrow Island.”
  - **Applied for match funding** – an additional £500,000 is needed to build the 3G pitch and changing facilities/community centre or an additional £100,000 to develop only grass pitches and changing facilities/community centre. The steering group has hired a worker to look at match funding. They applied to Sport England for match funding of £500,000 to cover some of the costs of installing a 3G pitch, but were unsuccessful. They did receive positive feedback, however, and were encouraged to apply in the following year, when the project was more advanced and they could supply more information. The steering group are continuing to work on both options until match funding is secured.



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- **Maintained the facilities** – since taking over the lease, volunteers have been really important in maintaining the pitches and facilities at Cavendish Park. The Sports Trust has bought a tractor to “*cut the grass because the grass, it was costing £200 every time we had to pay somebody to come and cut the field...so now what we do is we’ve got a tractor, we’re doing it ourselves. And [the tractor] will pay for itself in no time.*”



Figure 2: Barrow Island Community Sports Trust after securing the lease to Cavendish Park. (Source: <http://www.barrowsportscouncil.org.uk/events.php>)

## 7 What has the project achieved?

“We were up there last week, and a lad came past with his dog, he said, ‘I’ve never seen that pitch looking so well.’”

Barrow Island has secured a lease for Cavendish Park and residents from the steering group have registered a charity, Barrow Island Community Sports Trust, to look after the lease and continue to develop the community centre and sports facilities. The area has really focused on “*what’s really needed, what’s going to be used.*” and this has increased the visibility of Big Local in the area, as well as brought the community together to use the new facilities.

## 8 What has the partnership learnt?

### Communicate and listen

- It is important to find committed people in the community to help deliver projects. Networks and open communication are needed to be successful.
- The steering group held open meetings with people in the community so that everyone had a say on what was wanted from Big Local, to avoid any conflicts of interest and to connect with those who could help.
- Barrow Island benefitted from members of the steering group knowing Council Members and local businesses who could help them with the project, as well as those who were willing to do extra work to make things happen (such as the Park Manager of the recreation ground).

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### Learn from others

- The steering group met with other communities in Lancaster and visited several community centres in the area. The Big Local Rep also gave useful advice and guidance.

### Seek match funding

- The area has hired a worker to identify match funding to develop Cavendish Park.

### Shop around

- The steering group is keen to get value for money and the best results for the community from Big Local: *“I don’t want to see us getting ripped off.”* They use existing contacts to compare price quotes.

### Keep going

- The advice the steering group would give to other Big Local areas is to: *“Keep at it, don’t be disheartened. You do get there in the end.”*
- Even when the negotiations over the lease were longer than expected, the steering group made sure they were developing options for Cavendish Park and the community facilities. This meant they could progress quickly once they had the lease.

## 9 What next?

Barrow Island Community Sports Trust is continuing to look for match funding to develop the pitches and are working on two plans. Depending on how much match funding is secured, they will develop 3G and grass pitches, changing facilities and community centre, or non-3G grass pitches, changing facilities and a community centre.

They hope that future improvements to Cavendish Park will continue to develop community relations and provide more activities for residents on Barrow Island, as well as increasing physical activity. Any income will be invested back into the community by Barrow Island Community Sports Trust through maintaining the pitches, changing facilities and community centre.

The steering group is keen to keep the momentum going: *“...it’s a ten year plan, but we’d like to get up and finished within six or seven.”*

## 10 More information

For further information about the project please contact Ali Greenhalgh, Barrow Island’s worker on [bict@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bict@hotmail.co.uk).

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# Bountagu Big Local

## 1 Summary of project

Early consultation with residents identified the need to develop a sense of community so this became one of the five key plan priorities. Part of this plan was to provide a community space where information could be shared and activities, events and training could occur. They worked with their locally trusted organisation and the local Council to secure the lease of a shop in the centre of the Big Local area and change its use from a shop to a community centre. The community hub opened in December 2013 and provides a meeting place, information point and centre for a range of community activities.

## 2 About the area

Bountagu is the name of the Big Local area (named after Bounces Road and Montagu Road) in Lower Edmonton, North East London. It is led by the Bountagu Partnership, made up of local residents. The area has three housing estates, Walbrook House in the north, Barrowfield Estate in the south and the Montagu Estate in the east. It contains a recreation ground, shops, nursery, infant school, junior school and a children's centre. The area has a population of about 5,000 and experiences high levels of deprivation, population churn and social isolation.



Bountagu has enterprise and employability as one of its key priorities and, as such, has a part time worker employed to support business start ups. It became an UnLtd intensive area in July 2014, meaning it receives support from Local Trust's partner UnLtd to train local residents in developing their business plans and promoting the Star People awards programme.

## 3 What was the issue?

*"...there's lots of private rented and social housing, lots of new families. So people didn't know the area or they didn't know each other."*

*"...one of the things [required] was an information point [because] the parents were saying to us, right at the beginning, 'We never know what's going on.'"*

Following the launch of Big Local, the consultation and outreach work with residents led to five priorities being identified. It showed that local people wanted to develop a sense of community ("And no one from that side of the estate knows anyone on this side of the estate, and they just don't know each

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other. *There was nothing bringing that community together and that [issue] came right at the beginning*”), more facilities and activities for children and young people, greater support for older people (including activities) and training opportunities and business support to improve residents’ employment prospects. Improving the look of the area was also important.

The locally trusted organisation, ECYPS (previously known as Enfield Children and Young Persons’ Services) was aware that community groups had nowhere to hold meetings (with some community group meetings taking place in the kitchen of ECYPS’ offices). There was also nowhere for the police or the local authority to meet with residents and discuss issues of concern.

#### 4 What was the solution?

The solution was for Big Local to establish a central community venue that could act as an information and meeting point and provide a space for community activities. This is an example of the ‘co-creating’ delivery approach.

#### 5 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Residents on the partnership** – the majority of the partnership is made up of local residents, including the then local councillor.
- **ECYPS (previously known as Enfield Children and Young Persons’ Services)** – the locally trusted organisation, ECYPS is an umbrella organisation with charitable status that provides advice and support to voluntary and community organisations working with children and young people aged 0-25 years.

#### 6 How did the area approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified priorities and decided which to tackle first** – The Big Local partnership decided that the best way to address their priorities, and the issues outlined above, would be to provide a focal community meeting place and information point, a community hub: *“So building a Bountagu community is about the outreach... that’s the thing that cuts across all the other priorities. So that’s the one that’s prioritised because it enables all the others...”*
- **Established what success would look like** – The partnership asked themselves what they wanted from the hub, setting their goals so they could identify steps to achieve it. They asked themselves *“What do you see in the future what it’s going to be like?”* and then, *“step-by-step”*, set

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about getting there. The partnership were helped in their budgeting by their rep and felt “it’s good to have someone who has an idea of how much these kind of things cost.”

- **Investigated options** – Two sites were available for renting at the time the partnership was looking at establishing the community hub. The partnership visited both sites but felt that an empty betting shop owned by the Council “*was the perfect place because it was a shop front, [with] windows leading out [so] everybody can see and things like that. We all came and saw this place a couple of times to see if it would be the type of property we wanted and we went forward from that*”. The lease was secured, subject to planning permission. The Council provided match funding, through the Enfield Residents Priority Fund, because Big Local was doing so much to engage the community. This meant the partnership “*had nine months rent free and the rest of the [Council] funding was to cover about a year*”.
- **Assigned responsibilities and tasks** – The ‘Getting Started’ and ‘Pathway’ funding enabled the partnership to hire a Development Worker for the first year. In January 2014 a manager was employed and the partnership set up subgroups based on the plan’s five priorities. Subgroups were comprised of members of the partnership who were interested in developing these priorities. Regular meetings were arranged and communications coordinated, actions overseen and progress monitored. Whilst partnership meetings were once a month, the subgroup responsible for the community hub met more frequently to address issues and ensure timely delivery.

Responsibilities in relation to the hub were shared between partnership members. At the outset ECYPS arranged for planning permission to change the use from a betting shop to a community hub, including drawing plans up of the unit as part of the planning application: “*We had to get planning permission to change the use and I found myself drawing plans of the place. I never thought I’d do that*”. The planning permission required negotiation to overcome objections relating to opening hours, noise and traffic. These were discussed by all members of the steering group via email before writing to the Council about how such objections could be overcome. It helped that one of the members of the partnership was a local councillor and could use their connections at the Council for advice and contacts.

The Development Worker and newly appointed Bountagu Big Local Manager (who oversees the hub and other workers) were responsible for health and safety and establishing administrative procedures within the hub, such as the booking process. At the outset the Big Local rep helped ensure that all those who were interested in the project, including statutory services, were kept informed of proposals via email. Communication and decision making amongst the partnership were mainly via email and meetings.

- **Promoted what they were doing** – The partnership worked with ECYPS to promote the hub with “*lots of good publicity in terms of leaflets, brochures*”. Two open days were held in February and March 2014, promoting services at the Hub and activities to address the five plan priorities, targeting children, young people, families and older people.

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- **Started small and built it up** – Initially the hub was only open on Monday and Wednesday mornings, but has since expanded: “...we’ve gone really from sort of standing just prior to this year, 2014, of having maybe I think two groups in here for part of the day...being closed most of the week to actually being open every day and having staff as well as volunteers, as well as residents using the hub. So it’s been quite a significant shift from standing talking about the plan, to actually delivering”.

The hub is now used for coffee mornings, Boxercise, an Enterprise club, job club and community group meetings, covering all five priority areas as intended. The windows, noticeboards and tables are full of posters and leaflets advertising services and activities across the Bountagu area. Staff and volunteers are available seven days a week to talk to residents about their concerns and provide advice to them, with an Enterprise Worker available to discuss their ideas for business start-ups: “I think the culture of enterprise is so significant to the dynamic of the hub as well...some people have said this is like a home from home, which is lovely...”.

In May, in addition to the Bountagu Manager, an Enterprise Worker and Outreach Worker were employed to develop priorities around business enterprise and community outreach.

- **Reviewed what they had done** – The hub, along with all plan priorities, is reviewed regularly by staff and the partnership. Each priority has a number of outcomes to let the partnership know if they have been successful and “in [the] review we take each of these points and say what progress we’ve made against the two year and five year targets”.

Staff continually feedback to the partnership about progress, working with partners and partnership champions on specific priorities. Having a resident as a champion for particular areas of the plan “...helps us in terms of understanding the drivers from the partnership but also for them to understand what is actually happening on the ground, like acquiring those skills”. The partnership also holds a specific annual review meeting to review the plan and progress against priorities.



Figure 1: Healthwatch Enfield at a coffee morning in Bountagu community hub (Source: Healthwatchenfield.co.uk)

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## 7 What has the project achieved?

The hub has brought local people together: *“And we’ve had things like coffee mornings, like two neighbours that live in the same road, I think a door, two doors apart, have lived there for the last 20 years and have met here. And they said, ‘Oh you live in the same road as me.’”*

The community hub is now open seven days a week, providing information and a meeting point for the whole of the community. The flexibility of the space means it can be used for a wide range of events, as well as information and advice: *“...just being able to come here and also just have the time to focus on [my business idea] and what I want to do and what I’m trying to achieve is just a really good feeling...having a space for residents to view their concerns or to come and be empowered or pursue their dreams and their desires is definitely key. And the fact that you can speak so openly to the staff.”*

Organisations also use the hub to speak to the community about their services: *“Because it’s all very well signposting but it’s better if they’re here and people can talk to them”*. The hub has raised awareness of Big Local amongst residents through *“Sharing the skills, sharing the ideas...our local residents then become our champions as well, which also supports our outreach. Because they themselves are going out and talking about what they’re doing and then people [are] coming in based upon what another local resident says.”*

## 8 What has the partnership learnt?

### Set reasonable goals

- Don’t promise too much because *“if you don’t deliver quickly then you actually get bad publicity.”*

### Work in partnership

- *“I think having a good partnership where everybody’s opinions and views are expressed and everybody respects that. And working together. And having a wonderful team of staff, definitely. Because without that we would not have been able to move forward...”*
- The partnership felt a key part of delivering the hub was how the partnership worked together: *“I mean that’s one of the really nice things about Bountagu, that we all kind of like each other and work well together and all want the same thing”*.
- Big Local has become more challenging to deliver as it develops, as the number of plan priorities delivered increases. This makes communication to and within the partnership more important.

### The importance of volunteers

- As well as the staff resource, volunteers have been a key part of the community hub. It has seen new people volunteer to become involved in Big Local, such as running coffee mornings, as well as people using the space for enterprise ideas.

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- The partnership welcomed the different forms of volunteering this opened up: *“we had someone to run the coffee morning which was just heaven-sent...And I’m always trying to say to her, ‘Do you want to come on the partnership?’ But she is actually one of these people that just wants to be very much hands-on in doing stuff.”*

### Assign tasks

- The partnership was very clear, as a result of sub-groups and partnership champions, on the steps needed to deliver the hub and who was responsible for this; supported by the Bountagu Manager. In the early stages it was the Development Worker, hired through the Getting Started and Pathway funding, who ensured that tasks were followed up and all information was communicated to partnership members.

### Use the links and experience of your partners

- When the area were developing their plan and profile they built on the 12 years of knowledge that their locally trusted organisation, ECYPS, had and the experience of the Councillor on their partnership *“so you didn’t have to pay anyone to do the research because it was all within the ECYPS: where all the different organisations were, where the partners, the schools were... So we within our partnership had all the skills and knowledge that you needed...”*
- Knowledge of budgeting, planning control and who to contact at the Council were also very important to delivery of the hub.

### Make use of existing buildings if you want a hub

- Bountagu also runs activities in another community hall and aims to work with other organisations in the area. The partnership encourage others to look at what is already there: *“...it doesn’t have to be your own centre. There are church halls...you make use of what’s available.”*

## 9 What next?

After the success of delivering the hub, the partnership is focusing on other plan priorities and projects that they have not yet had the time or resources to do anything about. The partnership recognises that due to the focus on the community hub and enterprise *“there’s been a bit of slippage [on plan priorities] sometimes...but [we’re] very much on the case of that right now”*. The partnership is proud of their success in delivering the community hub and how this has helped the community come together in Big Local.

## 10 More information

For further information on Bountagu Big Local, please contact Bountagu Community Hub Manager, Karen Hart, on [karen.hart@bountagu.com](mailto:karen.hart@bountagu.com). Also, if you are looking at establishing a community hub or building consider looking at this [practical summary](#) produced by Local Trust.



# Heart of Pitsea Big Local

## 1 Summary of project

Heart of Pitsea wanted to improve a dilapidated playground within the area. They partnered with Basildon Council, who match funded the project, to procure and hire a contractor. They consulted with local children and delivered the project within six months.

## 2 About the area

Heart of Pitsea is part of a 1960s new town in Basildon, Essex. The area has approximately 7,200 residents over an area two square miles. Half of all properties are social housing, the highest level in Basildon. It has a large market, three schools, a leisure centre and a number of shops and services.

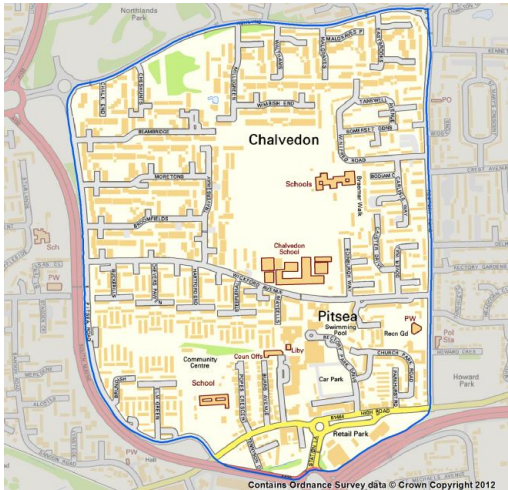


Figure 1: Heart of Pitsea Big Local

## 3 What was the issue?

The community consultation undertaken to develop the Big Local plan revealed that the environment, community and young people were key priorities. To tackle these priorities, “...one of the things that [the partnership] wanted to do was to clean up the area...the park areas are just so dilapidated.” A resident on the partnership had links with the local Council, Basildon, through their Environmental Champions Group and was aware that the Council had match funding available until the end of the financial year to renovate the rundown Elm Green play area.

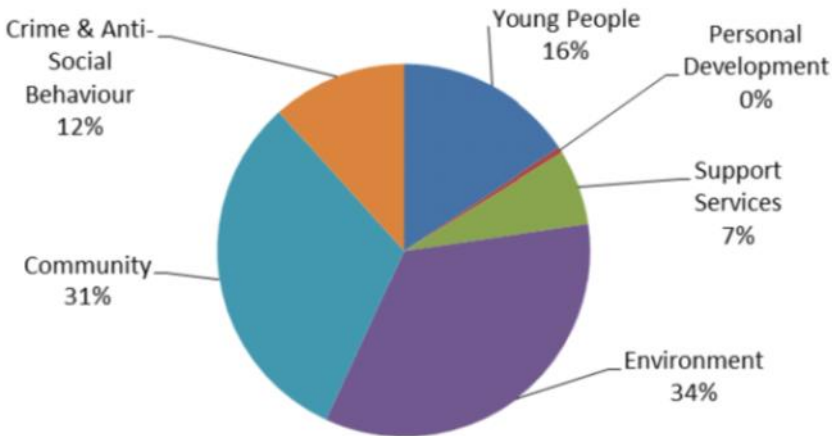


Figure 2: Priorities identified by residents in survey

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## 4 What was the solution?

To address priorities around the environment, community and young people and make the most use of the (time limited) match funding, the partnership decided to use their Big Local funding to renovate the largest park area in the community, Elm Green. This worked well for the partnership and the Council as *“The Council had known for, like, two or three years that [the play area] needed renovating and that they couldn't pay for the whole thing.”* This project is an example of the ‘co-working’ delivery approach.

## 5 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Residents on the partnership** – the partnership meet once a month with eight residents regularly attending.
- **Basildon Council** – the connection was through the Big Local Chair’s involvement in the Council’s Environmental Champions Group. The Council had £25,000 to invest in the play area.
- **Local primary school children** - a consultation was undertaken with local children to choose the design of the play area.

## 6 How did the area approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified a project and made it a showpiece** – Issues emerging from the consultation with residents were that of young people, the environment and community. The partnership used existing links with the Council to explore refurbishing the play area, which was the most dilapidated in the area. They felt the renovation would address resident concerns and be a good ‘showpiece’: *“we're looking to do one major project per year... So we thought about it and decided, well, actually, that would be a good showpiece, if you like, to get us up and running to make, you know, a big impact within our area.”*

The renovations to the play area were written into the plan: *“it was the one big thing we already knew we were going to spend that money for [the playground] project, so we knew we could work it in.”* The partnership also felt that this project could link up to Big Local in a larger way by maybe getting *“some of our projects running there, so through the summer we could maybe engage someone to do some football training, or at least we thought if it was a better maintained area, we could actually use it to our advantage to get some delivery going on.”*

- **Assigned a coordinator** – A member of the partnership volunteered to be the coordinator for the project: *“to make sure, just to chase up, ‘Has this been done?’”* The partnership felt that

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it was more appropriate if the Chair, who had the connection with the Environmental Champions Group, was not the coordinator to avoid any potential conflicts of interest: *“it was felt that it would be more appropriate for [another resident] to take responsibility.”*

- **Created a budget** – The playground was a large part of the first plan’s budget: *“we’re looking to do one major project per year, if you like, and obviously that was a big hit for us because it was £25,000 for us and £25,000 for Basildon Council.”* The budget was determined with their partner, Basildon Council, drawing from their experience. Funding was released by Local Trust following receipt of information regarding the total cost, the land the play area would be built on and evidence of permission from the owners, and the arrangements on maintenance and upkeep.
- **Established a timescale** – The partnership *“had a deadline as far as paying for it, because we needed to get it done [by the end of the] tax year because that’s when the Council had the money to match fund. So we had to, kind of, push it on, if you like, to get the consultation done, to get the agreement done, to get the work booked.”* This gave urgency to delivery and a clear timeframe within which to achieve the playground renovations.
- **Identified partners and made use of their experience** – The resident who undertook the coordinator role was responsible for liaising with the Council over *“who was doing what.”* This joint working allowed Heart of Pitsea to make use of the Council’s experience, networks and procedures. The Council, in consultation with the coordinator, used their formal procurement procedures to develop a brief of the work required and invite contractors to apply for this. From those that applied, the Council narrowed down those that applied to four, based on whether they met the group’s needs and *“were in the right price range for what they could deliver for that amount of money.”*
- **Kept consulting the community** – After identification of these four potential builders, the resident coordinator took their four proposals for the refurbished play area around local schools and nurseries to consult with children. This was felt important as it was them who would be using it: *“we got all the young people in the junior schools and that to choose the playground area, what they would like in there.”* From there, the residents *“picked which [contractor] we wanted.”* The partnership felt that *“having the different contractors to pick from and the young people picking it, I think, is a really good idea because it’s for them, at the end of the day.”* The consultation with schools happened in December 2013, with the contractor appointed in February 2014.
- **Worked in partnership** – It was important to the partnership that ongoing costs in relation to the play area were the Council’s responsibility. The Council agreed to pay maintenance costs, which took *“the onus away from us to maintain it.”* The worker also checked on progress by *“periodically doing site visits during the build.”* The playground was completed to schedule and includes new play equipment, a zip wire and a renovated football cage.

The residents were happy with the approach because they now have a renovated play space for use by the community and for Big Local events. They have a good relationship with the Council who will follow up on any complaints about the park, whilst the joint working and

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funding of the park was: “a good deal...because it cost [the partnership] only half the amount of money and the burden [of maintenance] has gone to the Council.” Heart of Pitsea is considering which other play areas they might renovate using this approach.

## 7 What has the project achieved?

The play area is a visible achievement of Heart of Pitsea, whilst the refurbished grass area and football cage provide a new event space for Big Local. The joint working with the Council was so successful that the partnership are considering which other play areas they might renew together.

A member of the partnership also feels that through the project and the consultation they have learnt more about their area: “in the last 18 months of being on the partnership I've learnt more about the area I live in than I have in the last 16 years that I've lived there. So that, to me, is an achievement in itself.”



Figure 3: Elm Green play area

## 8 What has the partnership learnt?

“this is our first project like that, you know, so it's learning for us.”

The main advice the partnership would offer to other areas includes:

### Secure match funding

- “Match funding, that's the main thing really.” The match funding, particularly the agreement of the Council to undertake maintenance costs, was vital to the project going ahead. The partnership was aware of the match funding through contacts of members of the partnership, so it is worth working with partners to identify any additional funding opportunities available.

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### Consult with the local community, but challenge any assumptions

- *“Rather than taking at face value that they don't want something, maybe challenging them to find out the reasons why.”* Residents were concerned that providing benches as part of the playground would encourage antisocial behaviour but the partnership are now considering revisiting this as there is nowhere for people to sit when taking their children to the park.

### Set deadlines

- A key feature of the project was the deadline in terms of the availability of the Council's match funding: *“[The deadline for the match funding made us], for want of a better word, get up off of our backside and do something about it quicker.”*
- Other parts of the plan have been slower in progressing than expected but *“maybe if [the partnership had] had a deadline on them, we would have actually focused a bit more and got it done...I think actually, having a deadline was really helpful.”*
- The partnership feels time limit should be realistic, however, as too short a limit would be *“unachievable, purely because everyone's giving up their own time to do these things and you have to fit it in with your own daily life.”*

### Draw on the experience and knowledge of partners

- *“...think about who's got expertise in terms of delivering this...draw on some of the provider network in the area in terms of what they're saying about needs. Not least because they're providing services that people in that area are accessing and using.”* As the partnership were new to delivering projects, making use of the Council's contacts, experience and procedures meant the partnership didn't have to start from scratch, to look *“for all these people to do things that we want them to do.”* They could take advice from the Council on *“who they've used, who's going to be good, who's not... who's going to give you, I don't know, perhaps, reliability and good value for money.”* This enabled them to spend money *“wisely”*.
- The use of the Council's procurement system meant that the partnership didn't have to invite and sift tenders themselves. Residents recognise that *“it's a good link to have the Council on our partnership as well...we've probably got to get Council approval anyway and it's easier, I think, if you've got a representative on your partnership that can take those decisions and get them sorted for you...”*
- The partnership also has *“rigorous”* governance processes through their locally trusted organisation, Basildon Council for Voluntary Services, with the worker based in the office of the locally trusted organisation.

### Ensure meetings have a clear agenda and actions

- To help your partnership stay focused and make progress in delivering what you want in your area.

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## Explore community champions

- Specifically in terms of play areas, the locally trusted organisation suggested the adoption of Community Champions to oversee the park and help ensure long-term community care and ownership.



Figure 4: Elm Green play area

## 9 What next?

*“The next challenge is joining the projects that come in against [the priorities] and again, you know, it would be interesting to see what comes out of that already. Because I think some of the providers, they’re going to have more experience, knowledge and understanding than we have in terms of like healthy eating and in terms of, you know, obesity issues and issues such as mental health and issues with drug and alcohol, you know? They are a range of providers who have loads of expertise and we should be drawing upon that expertise really.”*

After the early success of the playground, Heart of Pitsea set about reviewing the hundred or so ideas that had been submitted by the community for spending the remaining Big Local funding. The partnership developed a project brief template as a means of assessing these. Agreeing and drafting the project briefs proved time consuming, however, with 20 briefs completed over the course of 2014. Following a review, the partnership agreed a new process which they hoped would speed up decision making: community groups will use a proposal form to submit projects to the partnership for funding. The partnership are also looking more closely at what other groups are doing in the area so they can support *“current delivery rather than setting up from scratch.”*

Groups are encouraged to check whether the project they are submitting to the partnership fits with a priority in the plan, be clear on how much money they require to deliver the scheme and how the money will benefit the community: *“we’ll do an open application from some people, but we’d say, ‘Talk to [the worker] if you want, but look at [the] plan because the plan will outline what our priorities are’ we look at the resource allocation with the plan...Look at the plan, see what the plan obviously should be about, can you contribute generally to the plan... the idea at this stage is that the panel of residents will then meet every*

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*six weeks to look at the proposals that are there...so ultimately they're going to be the decision makers in that process."*

The partnership are setting about revising their budget as they *"have recognised now we need to realign our budget, because there's areas perhaps where we haven't put enough money and there's areas where there's too much money."* They are also looking to recruit more residents to help with delivery because they *"recognise that there's not enough of us to do everything. We need more people to help us achieve this."*

The area continues to maintain links with the Council through their partnership as they would like to do more parks *"and if we could get match funded from the Council for those as well, well, that would be great."*

### **I0 More information**

For more information on the project and Heart of Pitsea, please contact the area on [hello@heartofpitsea.co.uk](mailto:hello@heartofpitsea.co.uk).

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## Marsh and Micklefield Big Local

### 1 Summary of project

Marsh and Micklefield wanted to improve community cohesion within the local area so commissioned the Young Foundation to undertake the 'U project', which the Foundation had previously run in other local areas. This involved offering residents the chance to take part in a series of workshops that covered a range of topics, from basic first aid to conflict resolution. Not only did these workshops teach participants new skills, they also encouraged people to get to know each other, thus making the community more cohesive.

### 2 About the area

The Big Local area is made up of two adjacent communities, Wycombe Marsh and Micklefield, in the east of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. Wycombe Marsh, at the bottom of the valley, was originally a hamlet that has since been absorbed into High Wycombe as the suburbs have expanded. It is home to a primary school and nursery, three churches and a small retail park. Micklefield, on the higher ground, is a more compact area with its own community building, library, supermarket and combined primary and middle school.

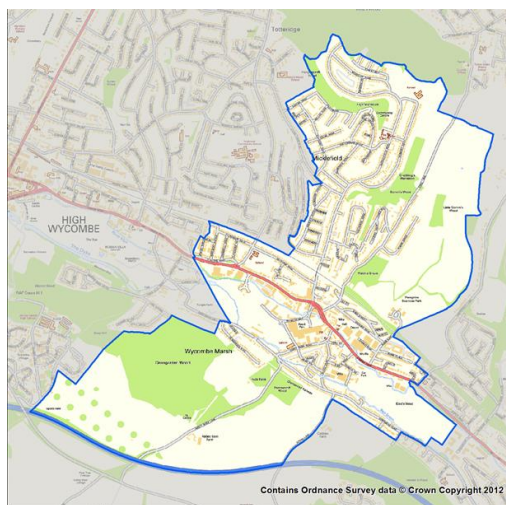


Figure 1: Marsh and Micklefield Big Local area



### 3 What was the issue?

The partnership employed an external consultant to conduct extensive community research with residents. The consultant's survey and needs analysis identified three priorities for the area to focus on: 'better community cohesion', 'raised aspirations for all' and 'enhanced educational engagement'. The first of these was the main priority that the area sought to address through the project outlined here. It was felt that within Marsh and Micklefield there were too many "communities within communities", rather than a good overall sense of unity within the community. They therefore wanted to bring together people who otherwise might never meet.



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#### 4 What was the solution?

In order to boost community cohesion in the area the partnership decided to ask the Young Foundation to deliver a project that they had delivered twice previously in the nearby towns of Chesham and Aylesbury. This, entitled 'the U project', involved putting on a series of free-to-attend learning workshops, funded by Big Local, in Marsh and Micklefield. These short sessions, which covered topics such as basic first aid and conflict resolution, were designed to be as lively and as interactive as possible so as to encourage participants to get to know each other, so helping to bring the community together. It has also been described as the 'smile project' because it's about getting people to smile at one another next time they see each other in the street. This project is an example of the 'Commissioning' delivery approach.

#### 5 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Big Local partnership** – a group made up of residents and supportive people from other local organisations that meet regularly to discuss developments relating to Big Local.
- **The Young Foundation** – a national organisation based in London, set up to harness the power of social innovation to address social inequality.
- **Project workers** - two local people were employed part-time to deliver the project.
- **Buckinghamshire Community Foundation (also known as Heart of Bucks)** – the community foundation for Buckinghamshire and Marsh and Micklefield's locally trusted organisation.

#### 6 How did the area approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified an 'off-the-shelf' solution with a 'proven track record'** – from the consultant's community research the group had identified the priorities that they hoped to tackle: community cohesion, aspirations and educational engagement. They therefore knew what it was that they were hoping to achieve but needed to consider the best way of doing this. As a group with relatively limited experience of managing their own projects and, given that members of the partnership were fairly time constrained, it was felt that an 'off-the-shelf' project with a 'proven track record' would be the most effective solution for their purposes: *"at the stage we were at I think it was the right thing to do because – as a group of volunteers who have jobs and families – there's only a limited amount of time that we can spend on things."* At a partnership meeting, the idea of the U project was put forward by a member of the partnership who, through her work at the County Council, was aware that the Young Foundation had delivered similar workshop projects twice before within Buckinghamshire

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and knew what it consisted of. It was then agreed that this was exactly the kind of project they needed.

- **Researched the chosen approach** – Though there was no real need for a formal procurement process (as the Young Foundation were the only provider that they knew of offering the U project or something similar) the partnership still wanted to check that the project was completely right for them. They therefore “took soundings... from the earlier Chesham and Aylesbury projects and actually spoke to the people who project managed to make sure that it would achieve [what they wanted it to achieve]”. Having done their research, they felt confident that the project could work for their area and made the decision to go ahead with it.
- **Secured further funding and hired local people to help deliver the project** – the partnership was able to secure some match funding from the council through the contacts of one of the residents on the partnership, which enabled them to run the project for five months rather than four. With this funding in place, the group needed to recruit two part-time project workers who would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the project. The partnership advertised the jobs through various local social media networks and successfully hired two local people in these roles. Once given project management training by the Young Foundation, these workers set about planning the project and moulding it to the local area; it was important, for example, that the workshops on the different topics were held in venues in both Wycombe Marsh and Micklefield, so as to involve people from both areas.
- **Marketed the project** – while still in the planning stages of the project, it was important for the group to get the word out about the workshops that they were running. The partnership and the workers promoted the project to as many people as they could within the wider community in an attempt to engage other residents in the project. While much of this was done just by word-of-mouth, a lot of the marketing was also done electronically, via social media. Buckinghamshire Community Foundation gave help and support in relation to this marketing process and getting people involved.
- **Launched the project** – after the project was set up and tailored to the local area, a launch event announced the arrival of the project. The partnership had wanted this event to be held in the Big Local area but the Young Foundation suggested that it might actually be more successful if held in the centre of High Wycombe, as that’s where the majority of the relevant agencies and organisations are located. The group followed this advice and felt that the launch was more successful because of this decision. A wide variety of people attended, including employees of Buckinghamshire County Council, Wycombe District Council and other agencies. The group were pleased with the number of attendees and felt that working with the Young Foundation had helped attract such a wide variety of stakeholders.
- **Delivered the project** – The workshops were then delivered across the local area over the following five months. The sessions focused on topics such as basic first aid, resolving conflict and networking. By learning together, people left feeling more confident in their skills and better connected to people in their area. Throughout this process the partnership had fairly informal discussions with the workers and the Young Foundation in order to catch up on

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how the project was going. At the end of the project the partnership held an event to celebrate its success.

- **Reflected on the project's achievements** – following the conclusion of the project the Young Foundation prepared a report about the effectiveness of the project. This, along with the views of those on the partnership and in the wider community, allowed the group to consider what could be done in future to meet the area's priorities.

## 7 What has the project achieved?

Although the project fell slightly short of their target of engaging 200 people in the workshops, the group are really happy with what they achieved. They felt that the project boosted community cohesion in the area and really helped to make the Big Local area feel like a single community, rather than two distinct areas: *“the team worked really hard to develop Micklefield AND Marsh, which was really good.”*

Residents are also proud that the project led to paid employment for one of the local workers, who went on to get a similar job working for in the National Health Service. The skills that both the project workers gained were certainly a major achievement of the project.

Additionally, the U project helped to significantly raise the profile of Big Local in the area. It was *“something to actually announce to Micklefield and Marsh residents: ‘Here is Big Local – actually we are starting to do something on the ground’.”* The extensive marketing and networking that took place throughout the project mean that people now have an idea of what Big Local is all about and are far more positive about the idea.

## 8 What has the partnership learnt?

The project was enormously beneficial as part of a learning process for the partnership: *“we were complete novices at that point – we’re not anymore... we’re much smarter.”*

The advice and learning that they would share with other groups is as follows:

### Have a clear project plan

- Communication between the partners worked very well throughout the project but there were some occasions where a clearer plan of the different partners' responsibilities may have helped. The partnership wasn't always completely sure what they were and weren't supposed to do in relation to the project and could have been clearer about who owns the data from the project. They therefore recommend other groups to *“make sure you've got a good project plan – make sure you communicate it as hard as you can.”* By identifying at an early stage what it is that will really make the project work, a clear plan helps to build greater success.

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### Don't be afraid to tailor an 'off-the-shelf' project

- While the U project was an 'off-the-shelf' project delivered by the Young Foundation the partnership felt that there was still room to make it more tailored to their needs. They would recommend that if other areas bring in existing services that they ask if there is an opportunity to make the services more bespoke. This is very important given that each community has its own unique needs to consider when designing any project. *"I think having a good partnership where everybody's opinions and views are expressed and everybody respects that. And working together. And having a wonderful team of staff, definitely. Because without that we would not have been able to move forward..."*

### Be clear about the purpose of meetings

- Alongside their partnership meetings, the area also now runs pick-up meetings to talk about specific project-related issues that may not be suitable for more general meetings. These are attended by partnership members and providers who are working on the projects. This is important to ensure that partnership meetings stick to their set agenda and allow volunteers to balance all of their commitments. Meetings have become a lot more focused as a result.

### Collect data on the project's impact at an early stage

- A greater focus on the number of people benefitting from the project would have been useful at an earlier stage in the process. This would enable judgements to be made about the project's successes and challenges while the project was still running, rather than after it was finished. More formal reporting could therefore have taken place during the project itself.

### Engage as wide a range of people as you can

- One of the challenges that Big Local faced was how to engage different social groups and demographics beyond the 'usual suspects'. They suggested that they *"should have just communicated and shouted about it more"* to do this, especially given that *"Wycombe is basically a series of communities on the hills"* that are relatively unconnected. More publicity in a range of different ways would have been useful for boosting engagement.

## 9 What next?

As a result of the increased confidence that the partnership has gained from running a commissioned project and employing a worker as a project manager, Marsh and Micklefield Big Local has now moved on to develop the partnership's own projects locally. They are currently in the process of delivering three pilot projects to improve their community. The ideas for these were the result of an open community meeting in which the partnership asked themselves and the community what they could do to gauge interest in different projects and see their benefit without investing too much time or money.

The three pilot projects are as follows:

- **'Empower to Cook'** – a collaboration with the Wycombe based Community Interest Company 'Empower to Cook', this project offers hands-on cooking sessions to local residents. Not only is it a way of teaching new skills to the people involved it also brings a

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range of different people together, increasing community cohesion. The project also aims to support the development of the community centre in Marsh where it is taking place.

- **Guerrilla Gardening** – in partnership with Micklefield Gardening Group (a resident-led group set up with the support of Big Local) and Chiltern Rangers (a local social enterprise delivering practical woodland management), they are running a community planting project to improve the physical appearance of one of the area's streets.
- **Creative Location Photography** – one of the area's local residents is a keen photographer and has been employed to run photography classes in the local area. The sessions will run participants through all the technical aspects of composing a shot and presenting great photography. Those taking part will learn some interesting new skills and get a chance to meet other people in the local area. The project aims to creatively document the gardening and cooking projects, leading to two exhibitions to further promote the Big Local work going on in Marsh and Micklefield.

The projects have been designed in a way that participants of the different projects will meet, support and promote each other's achievements and they all end in open invitation community events. It is hoped that together these aspects will further increase community cohesion.

## 10 More information

For more information please contact Lisa, Marsh and Micklefield's project worker, at [lisa@mandmbiglocal.org](mailto:lisa@mandmbiglocal.org)

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# Rudheath and Witton Big Local

## 1 Summary of project

Rudheath and Witton partnership wanted to tackle plan priorities around lack of positive activities and boosting aspirations of young people in the area. They worked with their locally trusted organisation, Groundwork, and Grozone, one of Groundwork's flagship projects within the Big Local area, to engage young people from the local secondary school in 'outdoor learning adventures'. The project, running from July 2014 to November 2015, was funded with £36,649 of Big Local money, and match funded by Cheshire Community Foundation. It provides outdoor education for young people, as well as building transferable skills and improving their wellbeing.

## 2 About the area

The neighbourhood of Rudheath and Witton consists of two areas on the eastern side of the town of Northwich, Cheshire. It is within 1 mile of the town centre. The area covers approximately 640 hectares with approximately 10,000 residents in just over 4,000 households. It contains a range of local facilities, including children's centre, adult learning centre, open space and bowling green, as well as local businesses.

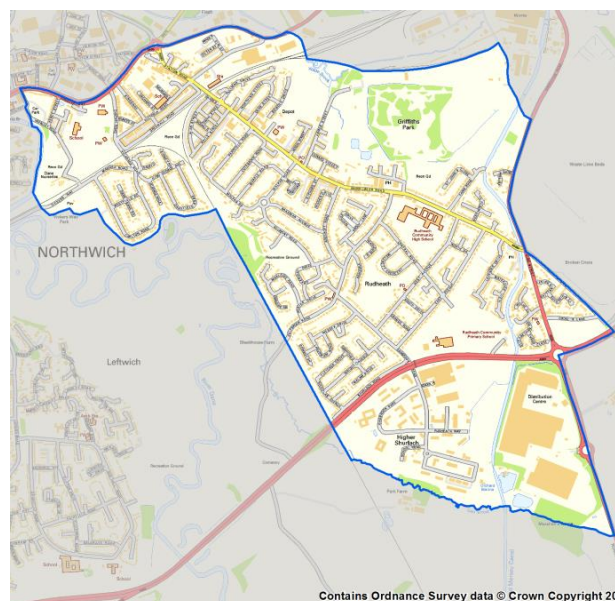


Figure 1: Rudheath & Witton Big Local area

## 3 What was the issue?

The idea for the project developed out of residents' dual concern over the lack of meaningful activities for young people in the local area, and lack of qualifications upon leaving school. They wanted to create more opportunities for young people in the area to take part in, as well as improving their job prospects, skills and aspirations.

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The following box gives details of the plan priorities and projects developed to address these:

### **Rudheath and Witton Big Local plan**

The following plan priorities emerged from the community consultation:

- a. Environmental Improvements
- b. Community Facilities improvements
- c. Debt and Personal Finances
- d. Jobs, Skills and Training
- e. Activities and Support for Young People

The partnership decided to deliver these priorities through: pennies and pounds (a debt and personal finance advice and awareness project); improvements to Rudheath Social Club (a community building); a communication project (including media skills for young people); Green Doctor local champions (promoting energy awareness); and Grozone learning adventures.

The plan states that in ten years *“Rudheath and Witton will have a more engaged community who are aware of the activities and services in the area and who are contributing to more community led activities that provide support and services for the whole community. Local residents of all ages will be more able and enthused to secure work, volunteer and work cooperatively for the benefit of their neighbours, manage their finances, lead healthier lifestyles, look after and respect the open spaces and local environment in the area and contribute to decisions about the area”*.

## **4 What was the solution?**

The partnership, through the Grozone project, wanted to build young people’s self-esteem, confidence and skills outside the classroom to change their behaviour and attitude to learning. Grozone works with many groups in the local community and have considerable experience of working with young people, so were keen to be involved in the project and show local young people the benefits of outdoor learning.

Grozone had previously worked with the local secondary school on programmes providing horticultural training for young people at risk of exclusion or not performing well academically. The staff team therefore were experienced in designing and running activities outside of the classroom to encourage participation and aspiration. In addition, a resident on the Partnership was also a trained Forest School practitioner, with experience of working with young people in the Rudheath and Witton area.

It was agreed that the combined experience could offer an effective programme of outdoor learning sessions at Grozone to a group of students who the school had identified as having difficulty engaging with mainstream education.

Those involved describe the aim of the Grozone project as “outdoor learning and qualifications for a group of young people, who are NEET (not in education, employment or training), or at risk of becoming NEET. It is about social skills and confidence building and positive relationships with the right community”.

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It would also give course attendees a chance to gain qualifications in First Aid and work towards the John Muir Award (an environmental award scheme that focuses on wild places).

This project is an example of the 'bidding' delivery approach.

## 5 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Residents on the partnership** – the partnership meets once every two months. Three quarters of the partnership work.
- **Grozone** – Grozone is an existing community garden within the Big Local area designed to offer volunteering opportunities for all, as well as providing horticultural therapy to those in need. It was set up by Groundwork in 2008 following community consultation and has since received funding from People's Millions in 2010 and Big Lottery in 2013, as well as significant financial support from the Local Authority and Public Health teams. It is open six days a week and caters for different groups of volunteers, from those suffering mental health difficulties or alcohol or substance dependency, to people simply wanting to gain experience of volunteering or local residents with an interest in gardening.



Figure 1: Grozone

- **Groundwork Cheshire (the locally trusted organisation)** - Groundwork Cheshire is an environmental charity with over 30 years' experience. It works with individuals and businesses on a variety of projects in local communities and across the county to improve people's lives. Grozone is one of Groundwork's flagship projects.
- **The local secondary school** - the school identified students who would benefit from the programme, either because they were at risk of exclusion, were carers, had learning difficulties or they felt they would benefit from activities outside of the classroom.



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## 6 How did the area approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Selected and developed their solution** – Following consultation with the local community and identification of issues in the area, the partnership decided on a two-stage application process to deliver projects in relation to these (outlined in the box below). They advertised for projects to apply for funding to help address the identified issues. Adverts went out through Groundwork and the Council, as well as promotion through their own local network. The partnership “asked people to come up with plans on how they think they could tackle these issues and put in an application for some of the money”. It was “open to anybody to put together an application”. Individuals who wanted to apply could access additional support to develop their idea from Local Trust’s social enterprise partner, UnLtd.

Knowing the issues surrounding antisocial behaviour and low qualifications of young people, one of the members of the partnership thought “I can do something about this, but I don’t know what to do. That took about six months for me to work out in my head”. She approached Grozone, who had already been running outdoor learning programmes with schools, and developed a proposal with them for submission to the partnership.

The partnership invited all candidates who made it through the selection process to give a presentation at the next partnership meeting. This was a “Question and Answer session, and then the Board awarded the grants based on that”. If the partnership was satisfied the project met their criteria, then it was awarded funds.

### Considerations for funding projects

Rudheath and Witton Partnership had a two-stage application process for funding projects in the area. The first stage was a written application and the second involved presenting to the partnership. The following criteria were used to assess projects:

- whether it met the plan priorities;
- who would benefit;
- how many residents would benefit;
- whether Big Local money would be well spent on the project;
- whether it would work in the area;
- whether the person applying had a good track record for delivering such projects; and
- whether it was good value for money.

If a project made it through the selection process, they were invited to present their project to the panel who could then ask questions. If this satisfied the partnership then an award of funding was made.

The application process was selected after the partnership sought advice from Groundwork about how to fund and deliver projects.

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- **Built the project team** – The resident on the partnership who developed the proposal with Grozone also had connections with the Deputy Head of the local secondary school. This resident recognised that by working with Grozone as part of Big Local, and by utilising their own Forest School skills, an opportunity existed to meet the area’s plan priorities relating to jobs, skills and training, and activities for young people. The resident approached the school and secured their verbal agreement to run outdoor sessions with students at risk of exclusion.

The project was planned to start in May 2014 with a group of ten Year 11 pupils visiting Grozone two days a week for six months.

- **Secured match funding in principle** – After securing agreement from all project partners, the resident on the partnership and Grozone collaborated to complete a funding application form and submitted it to Rudheath and Witton Big Local partnership for their consideration. The resident agreed with the school that they would match fund the project, and had verbal agreement that this would be possible.
- **Ensured there were no conflicts of interest** – When considering the application, residents on the partnership identified that there might be a potential conflict of interest in relation to a resident on the partnership applying for funding. The resident offered to resign if there was any concern about conflict of interest. This was discussed at a meeting by others in the partnership who thought there would be no conflict of interest if the same transparent application process was followed as for everyone else. The resident who applied for funding left the room whilst the partnership discussed the application (including after the presentation). The partnership agreed the Grozone project met their criteria and the area’s needs, particularly as it was the only project submitted in relation to the ‘children and young people’ priority of the plan.
- **Agreed contracts** – Following the award, a contract and grant agreement was signed by the resident and Grozone to ensure “*value for money and [the Big Local area] getting the financial benefit*”. This contract was based on the project’s application, as well as the locally trusted organisation’s standard project contract and protocol for all projects funded by the partnership.
- **Adapted the project to meet changing demands** – Before the project started the resident on the partnership, Grozone and the school had “*lots of negotiations around when it was starting, how long we’d have the children for, which children would be involved*”. The match funding for the sessions pledged in principle by the school unfortunately fell through, so Grozone used existing networks, contacts and fundraising skills to secure new match funding from Cheshire Community Foundation.

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Whilst these discussions were taking place, the priorities of the school changed following their Ofsted report. This moved much of their focus away from the project and, as a result, *“there was a time that it looked like the project might not happen at all”*. The contact at the school changed due to these shifting priorities, meaning new relationships had to be developed. The school also decided that Year 11 pupils could no longer be released for two days a week because it would interfere too much with other subjects.

The change of focus at the school, two weeks before the intended start date of the project, left a lot of questions over the start of the project. These delays meant a gap between the award of funding and the delivery of the project, meaning that Grozone and the resident had to keep going back to the partnership to explain the delay, update them on the project and seek their agreement to changes. Negotiation meetings between Grozone, the resident and the new contact at the school led to a final agreement that *“instead of doing the two days a week for six months with one group of pupils, we would work one day a week for 12 months and with two groups of pupils”*.

- **Ran outdoor learning sessions with young people** – The project successfully started in July 2014. Two groups of pupils attend two sessions over one day a week. In the morning, *“pupils from Year 10 come along, and then at lunchtime they get swapped over [with] pupils from Year 11”*. Pupils undertake activities such as constructing dens, making picture frames, fire building and starting, making bat and bird boxes, geocaching, learning about different trees and types of wood, clearing overgrown vegetation, planting bulbs and preparing raised growing beds.

The two members of staff who manage the project take it in turns to plan and run sessions taking account in changes in weather and the behaviour of pupils. Communication is very informal and has evolved over time. All communication between partners is undertaken via email and text message, as well as at the start of sessions.

- **Continually reviewed and evaluated the programme** – The partnership continually monitors all Big Local projects against their funding criteria (outlined in the box above). The Grozone project has kept the partnership informed of all changes to the project, so the partnership maintains control of delivery.



Figure 2: Fire Pit and seating for Forest School, with bug box in foreground

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## 7 What has the project achieved?

*“it is really helping with pupil behaviour according to the staff and according to, more importantly, the pupils themselves, it’s making them have more respect for themselves and each other and the environment, and improve their behaviour.”*

In terms of behaviour, the students have learnt how to interact with other Grozone volunteers. Staff at the school have noticed students becoming a lot more respectful and benefitting from the change of environment and learning outside of the classroom. The project is also currently working towards First Aid qualifications and John Muir Awards for students. These achievements help towards reducing antisocial behaviour and improving qualification levels.

## 8 What has the partnership learnt?

The partnership was aware that things might not run smoothly: *“there have been issues with all of [our projects], and I imagine that is the case with all projects, in all [Big Local areas], it is not just being a case of ‘Right here is the money, off you go, oh brilliant, it has all gone to plan!’”*. It has been crucial that effective communication has been maintained with project contacts to ensure any issues can be addressed, as well as ensuring projects are supported to find solutions. The partnership has tried to be as flexible as possible, and to try to accommodate the needs of all projects wherever possible: *“It’s important to us that our projects succeed but we recognise they may need our support at times in order to keep moving forward”*.

The main advice the partnership would offer to other areas includes:

### Engage partners

- All those interviewed felt the project could have been improved through earlier engagement and better communications with the school, including agreement on the release of students for the day. There needed to be a *“partnership with the school in the first place so they have joint responsibility”*.
- A written agreement would have avoided the loss of the original match funding.
- Good relationships and communication with partners was vital.

### Monitor your projects

- It is really important that the partnership sees projects as ‘live’ rather than just applications on the page. The partnership *“now have a project present at the start of each Board meeting, so someone who is actually delivering on the ground comes in and talks to the Board about what the issues have been or what the successes have been, what they have found, that kind of thing”*.
- All projects are asked to submit a monitoring report to trigger payments, be that monthly or quarterly. These reports request information on how many people have benefitted, but also ask for anecdotes from beneficiaries to try to get some stories about what has been

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achieved. It helps that Grozone has experience in providing monitoring information to funding bodies.

### Adapt your approach

- The delay in securing funding and partner agreement for the Grozone project meant it had to be revised. There needed to be a “degree of flexibility...to make sure that we can actually deliver”.
- The partnership has also altered the application and monitoring forms over time because experience made them realise they needed additional questions. For example, with the small grants they didn’t ask “how many local people benefit”, which meant projects could have been funded by Big Local but benefitting people from outside the area. Monitoring forms have been adapted to capture case study type evidence and ensure the partnership gets more of a story and picture of what is going on. The partnership continuously reviews the forms and considers whether they are getting the right answer, taking advice from their locally trusted organisation about such processes.
- The partnership has also concentrated more on whether the projects they fund are value for money, as well as meet the objectives of the plan. The partnership has not seen evidence of results for all the projects they have funded and wish to ensure they capture this information.

## 9 What next?

*“We think one of the things that this Board has achieved is that greater confidence and understanding of their own community and what would be beneficial for them.”*

The first phase of Big Local has helped residents learn what the priorities are for the area and what people are already doing there. A desire to fund projects which address specific known issues (such as low literacy amongst reception and early years school children) has led to the adoption of a commissioning process: *“If we’ve identified a problem then we need to do something about that problem and be a bit more proactive by directly commissioning work...rather than just waiting, hoping, that someone might apply to deal with that problem”*.

The partnership is now developing its second delivery plan. The Phase One programme was largely reactive, and projects tended not to link or add value to each other. The partnership felt this didn’t make the most of resources and wanted their next phase to have greater scope and flexibility. As residents have come to better understand the issues facing their neighbourhood, the partnership has identified a need for the second round activity to be more proactive and evolving, developing key themes and a strategic approach to ensure local issues are addressed. They see the programme for Phase Two consisting of:

1. A number of projects which were started in Phase One and which have either not completed their work, or where it is considered an extension would offer further benefits to local people.
2. Some new projects suggested by local organisations, partners, agencies.

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3. Specific pieces of work designed to address identified needs, commissioned by the partnership following a tendering exercise.

This third element is seen as key to the next phase, and the partnership has recognised they require additional external consultancy support to help them to develop their Phase Two Community Plan.

They want to start that process by improving their understanding of the range of potential issues, themes and projects which might be included in the next phase, and ideally to formulate new and creative alliances between partners to address these. They see this being achieved through structured but effective dialogue with partners and residents. It is important that the Big Local programme is seen as 'a collaborative project' between the partnership and organisations and individuals working in the area, and this is very much the priority for the partnership from now on.

### **I0 More information**

For further information about the project please contact the Big Local worker, Fiona Cowley, on [fiona.cowley@groundworkcheshire.org.uk](mailto:fiona.cowley@groundworkcheshire.org.uk).

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## Comparison group: Beauty Unseen

### 1 About the project

The 'Beauty Unseen' project is about '*recognising, celebrating and highlighting the inner beauty that is already within us all*'. By running live shows across the UK, starting with the Southwest in 2016, the project aims to prevent social exclusion and showcase the fantastic work of other charities throughout the country. At the first live show ten individuals from different backgrounds that have been supported by these charities will be brought together and given the chance to show off their talents. The group also hopes to make its own mini-documentary about the stage show and the individual journeys that each of the participants have gone through to get there.

### 2 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Roz Thomas** – A physio and mum of three, Roz is a dedicated volunteer who helps co-ordinate activities at her local church, including youth groups and a small allotment project. She founded Beauty Unseen following the completion of a similar project that she undertook in South Africa in 2009.
- **Involve** – Involve supports new and existing charities, voluntary organisations and community groups across Mid Devon in its local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) role.
- **A range of contributors** – A variety of different individuals and businesses have been crucial in supporting this project by contributing a range of goods and services for free, although the group has not yet received any financial contributions.

### 3 How did the group approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified the need** – In 2009 Roz and a team of volunteers completed a similar project in South Africa entitled the 'Tapestry of Dreams' project. This was a stylish live show featuring 10 HIV/AIDS-affected local Zulu women in which all the good things in their lives were celebrated, rather than focussing on the bad as was so often the case. When she returned back to the UK, Roz felt that social exclusion had become a major issue, noticing that the divide between different social groups seemed to be widening. She recognised a real need to bring people together and felt that live shows similar to her previous project could be a really successful way of doing this.
- **Built a team** – Once Roz had decided to apply her experience to address the issue she started to build a team to make the idea a reality. This involved sharing the concept with as many people as she could, promoting the project through a [YouTube clip](#) of her previous 'Tapestry of Dreams' project. After discussing the project with her personal and professional network, four others joined the cause, each bringing with them their own specialist skills and

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knowledge for the group to utilise; one member is focused on music for the event, another on theatrical work, such as stage management and lighting, and another on fashion-related activities.

- **Became a registered charity** – In the hope of securing future funding and to ensure that the trustees were no longer personally liable for any money involved in the project, the group applied to become a registered charity. This was the most challenging aspect of the project to date, but, through persistence and the generous advice of another local charity, Involve, the group were able to show the Charity Commission that the project deserved charity status and so were successful in their application. The guidance that they received from Involve was invaluable as they knew all about the process of registering as a charity and so were able to advise on how to approach the application, such as the correct language to use when writing it.
- **Secured contributions** – In order to ensure the event will be a success, the group are spreading the word as far and wide as possible. They have made numerous phone-calls and emails to get people involved and have so far been successful in getting famous designer Vivienne Westwood and a contestant from television programme ‘The Great British Sewing Bee’ to agree to make outfits for the show, as well as in getting a local textiles factory to agree to produce sewn fabric tickets for the event. All of these agreements came from networking and the use of existing links or contacts. The group is currently emailing charities across the country that may work with socially excluded people in the South West so as to find the individuals that will take part in the show.
- **Fundraised** – Beauty Unseen is about raising awareness, not money, but funding is still a major issue facing the project as they need money to hire a venue and would also ideally like to recruit a paid worker to speed things up. By becoming a registered charity it is hoped that they will now be better placed to apply for funding, but the group is also doing its own fundraising; for example, they have set up a Just Giving page that will allow people to donate money to their cause via text message.

#### 4 Advice

The group’s main advice to other community projects was simply that if you find something you have a real passion for just go for it and be persistent. They also couldn’t overstate the importance of networking – by talking to other people and making connections everything suddenly becomes much more possible.

#### 5 More information

To get in contact with the group please email Roz Thomas at [roz@beautyunseen.org](mailto:roz@beautyunseen.org) or call 07591933614



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## Comparison group: Buckland Monachorum Play Park

### 1 About the project

Buckland Monachorum is a village in West Devon, between Plymouth and Tavistock. The local play park next to the primary school was built by Buckland Monachorum Parish Council 25 years ago. The wooden equipment had begun to rot and the community were concerned that children would hurt themselves whilst playing. The Parish Council decided to replace the equipment to make it safer and longer lasting. With the support of the community, they successfully fundraised through events and grant applications to replace the equipment using a local social enterprise.

### 2 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Parish Council** – the Council was responsible for the management of the play park and led the project to replace its equipment
- **Local Primary School** – the head of the primary school supported new equipment because the children at the local school regularly used the park and would benefit from these improvements.
- **Village Hall playgroup** – the playgroup use the play-ground and provided letters of support for the Parish Council's funding application.
- **Local equipment company** – a small local company was hired to supply the new playground equipment to the play park.
- **Volunteers** – volunteers were recruited to help with laying a rubber ground surface to protect those using the playground.

### 3 How did the group approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified what needed to be done** – The existing wooden play park structures, such as swings and climbing frame were old and rotting. They needed to be replaced to protect the safety of children from the playgroup and the local primary school who were using the park.
- **Identified funding** – The Council monitors grants and funds to apply for, so were aware of the National Lottery's 'Awards for All' scheme. This provides funding to small, community-based projects with budgets of less than £25,000. The Parish Council applied online for 'Awards for All' funding.

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- **Reached out to people in the community** – To show public support for the project, the Council asked the playgroup, primary school and residents to write supporting letters for the application. They had contact with them through existing partnerships and through the already strong communication network the Parish had through local newsletters.
  - **Got a quote for the equipment** – The ‘Awards for All’ scheme required quotes to support the application. The Parish Council had specific needs for the replacement materials which they knew, from previously working with them, that a local social enterprise could supply them. The Parish Council provided the company with a brief and they came back with two or three schemes for the Parish Council to pick from. It helped that the company had already done business with the local school, so knew those involved and had an idea of what the children using the park would like.
  - **Secured funding** – The application was a success and the project was granted £10,000 to replace equipment in the playground. The Parish Council also contributed some of its own money and raised more through the sale of donated books and toys from a stall at the village fair. In total, this raised a further £1,000 towards the refurbishment of the playground.
  - **Signed a contract** – A formal contract was agreed with the local company to supply and build the new equipment.
  - **Made the money go further** – Volunteers from the village helped to lay protective rubber matting in the playground, which saved on costs.
  - **Planned for the future** – When the new equipment was in place, the Parish Council organised a grand opening of the newly opened playground and invited the local press to promote it. The project took less than 6 months from start to finish and the Parish Council do interim inspections of the new equipment, with annual inspections by an external company, to make sure it remains in good condition and plan for repairs.

#### 4 Advice

The Parish Council found the most important part of the project was connecting to the community. As well as letters of support, the Parish Council benefitted from the IT skills of a community member when completing the funding application form. The project was made easier by people in the community working together towards the same goals and objectives.

#### 5 More information

For more information about the project, please email the Chair of the Parish Council, Ric Cheadle, on [r\\_s\\_chedle@hotmail.com](mailto:r_s_chedle@hotmail.com).

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## Comparison group: Combe Martin Museum

### 1 About the project

The Combe Martin Museum is a registered charity and accredited museum based in Combe Martin, North Devon. It is a local history museum with hands-on and child-oriented exhibitions. Through the Breaking Barriers project, it is the first organisation to become Makaton friendly in North Devon. Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols to help people communicate. The project started 2 years ago and developed out of a need to make the museum more user friendly to those who have a communication difficulty, such as a visual impairment or hearing loss, or no formal means of communication.



Figure 1: Makaton welcome sign at the front of the museum

### 2 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Museum Staff** – The museum employs one member of staff. They were in charge of the management and delivery of the communication project. They had experience of Makaton from their previous role in a special school.
- **Media consultant** – The consultant was already volunteering at the museum but was paid to help manage the project with the member of staff due to their previous experience with Makaton.
- **Board of trustees and management committee** – The management committee is made up of a group of volunteers with particular responsibility for running the museum, such as volunteer

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coordination, children's activities, housekeeping, fundraising, collection care and conservation.

- **Volunteers** - The museum benefits from 58 volunteers who help the member of staff run the museum in teams that work in the morning and the afternoon.
- **Makaton specialist from local school** – The special educational needs coordinator played a key role in providing her language and communication expertise to the project.
- **North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** – The AONB provided a grant to fund the project.

### 3 How did the group approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified what needed to be done** – The museum talked to visitors and observed them using the museum and became aware that some had trouble understanding the exhibition displays. The museum felt that visitors with communication difficulties and children from the local school, who regularly used the museum, would benefit from displays with signs and symbols.
- **Created a partnership** – The staff member and consultant worked together on the management of the project. The member of staff researched what symbols to use and decided what size and position the symbols should be. The consultant was already working at the museum on another project, and became involved because of their company's expertise related to Makaton and symbol placement. Whilst continuing to volunteer, they were paid for their time and services on the project. There was no formal agreement between the museum and the consultant, but the management committee monitored the progress of the project.
- **Secured funding** – Having researched the options, the museum needed funding for the new displays. They had an existing partnership with North Devon AONB and were aware of a pot of money allocated to fund community projects each year. The museum's divisional support officer helped to fill out the funding application form. The application was a success and funding was awarded.
- **Purchased supplies** – Using the AONB funding, the museum bought two databases from Makaton, as well as a Widgit database (an educational and literacy software with a further range of symbols) for the exhibition displays. They also later purchased a 'TalkingPEN' with the AONB funding. This reads the displays out loud, making them more accessible to those with a visual impairment. The project is near completion, with the end goal is to make the whole museum Makaton friendly.

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- **Made the displays** – The member of staff and consultant went round the museum and looked at each exhibit to work out where the symbols would be displayed. The volunteer worked hard to get the right symbol and size for the displays from the two databases they had purchased.
  - **Tested the suitability of the displays** – The museum employee already knew of a language specialist from a local school who they thought would be able to help test the displays. They phoned them to set up a meeting at the museum, where the specialist agreed the symbols were of the right size and in the right position. One of the key successes came when the museum realised the displays would work. The AONB also visited the museum and were impressed by the project and visitors have left very positive comments in the Visitors Book.
  - **Trained volunteers** – After the successful testing, a training session on basic communication skills and signing was set up with the museum volunteers. The half-day training session was run by the specialist from the school and covered basic sign language skills. This will now form part of the training sessions for all new volunteers.

#### 4 Advice

Breaking Barriers found that regular communication between volunteers and external support (from the Makaton specialist at the local school and North Devon AONB) was key to the success of the project. The employee and consultant benefited from brainstorming sessions throughout the process, continually receiving feedback from each other to shape the project. They would advise any groups trying to do a similar project to thoroughly research symbols for displays and make sure to have all necessary equipment and databases.

#### 5 More information

To get in contact with the museum please go to their website <http://www.combe-martin-museum.co.uk/> or call them on 01271 889031.

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## Comparison group: Friends of Braunton Library

### 1 About the project

With the local library at risk of closure due to local government cuts, the community of Braunton in Devon came together to campaign to save it. The campaign was a success and led to the formal establishment of Friends of Braunton Library who aim to use volunteers to help run the library, increase opening hours and accessibility and, in the long term, develop it as part of a community hub.

### 2 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Friends of Braunton Library** – The Friends are an unincorporated charity. The board has 16 members from within the community. Roles include Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Members have political and management experience, including a member of the Parish Council, County Council and a parliamentary candidate.
- **Devon County Council** – the County Council are responsible for running the library.
- **Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA)** – DeVA is a Devon-wide partnership to build vibrant, healthy communities. They are working with the County Council to help support community groups involved in the running of library services.
- **Grant giving organisations** – funding has come from various grants in the area, including from local business Fullbrook and potential grants from the Parish Council and County Council.

### 3 How did the group approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified the issue** – Due to local government cuts, the library was at risk of closure. This would have led to a loss of valued services for the community in Braunton.
- **Started a campaign** – Local people came together to launch a campaign against the closure of the library called 'Save Braunton Library'. They felt the library could be saved by using volunteers to help run the service.
- **Raised awareness** – Save Braunton Library made representations to the County Council, consulted with the community and organised campaign events, such as **Big Borrow** where people borrow as many books on their library card as possible. They promoted the campaign

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through Facebook and e-mail, as well as the Braunton community website. These activities helped the campaign gain support and momentum.

- **Set and reviewed their goals** – The Save Braunton Library group set short terms goals in terms of preventing the library from closing and attracting more investment from the County in technology to allow for an extension in opening hours and freeing of staff time. They also have long terms goals centred on making the library part of a community hub, a one stop shop for all community services and cultural activities, as well as the focus for generating new ideas for community-run services.
- **Investigated all options** – The campaigners supported the County Council in their investigation of alternative models for running libraries, including Suffolk Libraries. In this model, the County Council remains legally responsible for library services but holds a long-term contract with a charity (Suffolk Libraries) to deliver this. Suffolk Libraries (<http://suffolklibraries.co.uk/>) is made up of community groups who run locally-focused library services. Braunton campaigners felt this model would be suitable for their area and lobbied the County Council for this.
- **Became a formal group** – The County Council recognised the strength of local support for all its libraries and worked hard to develop an alternative to closure. They agreed a one year pilot of a similar model to that of Suffolk Libraries. A total of 12 libraries will pilot the Devon Mutual Model where the County Council commission a mutual board to deliver library services. The board is a partnership of Friends/community groups who are running local libraries. The campaigners officially formed the Friends of Braunton Library in October 2014 and successfully applied to be in the pilot. Support for community groups taking part in the pilot comes from DeVA. The Friends have established subgroups to deliver the pilot and organise promotional fundraising activities and events for the library.
- **Applied for funding** – The Friends have received donations and support from local business and the Rotary Club, such as a notice board donated by Sles to keep the community informed about the campaign and a grant from Fullabrook. Their involvement in the Devon County Council pilot also means potential funding from the Council for Wi-Fi, self-service machines and swipe card access, all of which will increase the opening hours of the library. The Friends have also been awarded funding from the Parish Council.
- **Kept developing their supporter base** – The Friends maintain contact with supporters through Facebook and email, as well as Volunteer Days to try and gain new active supporters. The Volunteer Days revealed that many potential supporters did not have access to the internet and so the Friends have begun to produce a newsletter.
- **Valued their volunteers** - Volunteers who want to help run the library have to apply through Devon County Council, where they will be assessed for suitability and receive library training. The Friends recognise that not all those who are Members or support Friends of Braunton Library will want to help run the library service and are looking at a 'lighter touch'

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form of volunteering, such as helping at one-off events. The Friends are investigating community-centred means of rewarding all volunteers for their time.

- **Created a timeline and project plan** – The Friends are developing a project plan for the one year pilot, with actions and a timeline for what they want to achieve and when. This ensures they are clear on tasks.

#### **4 Advice**

The Friends' advice to other community groups is to have a strong Chair who can take control of meetings and keep on top of all the actions. They also highlight the importance of open communication between the Board, members, partners and the community for making progress.

#### **5 More information**

For more information, please contact [friendsofbrauntonlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofbrauntonlibrary@gmail.com).



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## Comparison group: Ilfracombe Holy Trinity Graveyard Group

### 1 About the project

The graveyard group in Ilfracombe, Devon was set up in July 2014. It was born out of a need from local residents to clear the graveyard's pathways ahead of a World War I Commemoration March. Residents felt that the graveyard looked wild and uncared for, which wasn't acceptable for visitors attending an event marking the centenary of the start of the First World War. The residents formed a group and set about strimming, weeding and generally tidying up the graveyard. As things progressed, however, the project also evolved into something of a local history project, with a researcher producing information about the lives of those buried in the graveyard. The group hopes that other local groups and residents will be able to make use of the beautiful space they aim to create.

### 2 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Local residents** – the group is run by a dedicated core of eight local residents, five of whom have attended every single session the group has put on. Other local residents attend if and when they can.
- **Exmoor Explorers** – a local outdoor club for young people.
- **Incredible Edible Ilfracombe** – a group supporting local food growth and knowledge have supplied a raised herb bed.

### 3 How did the group approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified the need** – On 2 August 2014 a Commemoration March was being held to mark 100 years since the start of World War I. As there were a number of Belgian soldiers buried in the cemetery, residents had invited Belgian delegates to attend the march, but felt the quality of the environment needed to be improved before the arrival of their guests. A group of residents decided that something had to be done to tidy it up.
- **Got people involved** – A lack of willpower was certainly not an issue for the group, but a lack of manpower could have been problematic, given the sheer volume of work that needed to be done. It was vital that the group could get good numbers turning up to their sessions every Saturday. The group set about involving other local residents, mainly by word-of-mouth but also via the group's newly established Facebook page. Recently, the group has

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been in touch with the local volunteering service as they are looking to benefit from volunteers with more specialised gardening skills.

- **Kept casual and carried on** – The group was very keen to keep their structure quite flexible and relaxed as they felt that requiring volunteers to make a formal commitment could be quite demanding, possibly putting people off. They therefore don't have a committee with formal roles such as Chair, Treasurer, etc. Decisions are made by majority vote as and when they are needed but members rarely seem to disagree on the best course of action to take. As part of the relaxed atmosphere, the group members also make an effort to be as friendly and welcoming as they can to new members, no matter what their ability or the commitment they are able to make.
- **Developed partnerships with other organisations** – Throughout their project the group found it helpful to utilise links with other organisations. For example, by becoming a member of the National Federation of Graveyards the group felt that they would be viewed with greater credibility when applying for funding (they are now looking for funds to buy new equipment as the group is currently reliant on members' own equipment). They also teamed up with Exmoor Explorers, a local outdoor club for young people, to improve various parts of the graveyard. The group is currently working with Incredible Edible Ilfracombe, who is supplying a raised herb-bed for the graveyard.

#### 4 Advice

The main advice coming from the group is to just 'do it'! If someone sees a need within their community, they should just discuss it with all the like-minded people they can find and go for it. They feel it's then important to persist and not give up.

The group was also keen to stress that it's important to have a relaxed, friendly atmosphere to reduce pressure and keep people involved.

#### 5 More information

For more information, please contact Sue Garwood at [suegar200@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:suegar200@hotmail.co.uk).

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## Comparison group: Journey through the field of art

### 1 About the project

Lorenzo Barron, a practicing artist with 20 years' experience, began running community art classes in 2013. Members of the class have all been referred by local doctors' surgeries and the local branch of MENCAP. Referrals can be for a whole range of reasons, including mental health problems or learning disabilities to a history of drug use or being the victim of domestic violence. Lorenzo's art classes improve health and wellbeing in his community, counter social isolation and work with participants to support them in a range of ways.

### 2 Who was involved?

A number of different parties were involved in the project:

- **Lorenzo Barron** – a practising artist for 20 years, Lorenzo wanted to expand his skill set and share the healing power of art.
- **Local doctors' surgery** – the doctors screen candidates for their suitability before making referrals.
- **Local MENCAP office** – supported Lorenzo to secure a Community First grant from Community Development Foundation.

### 3 How did the group approach this?

There were a number of stages that the group went through in order to turn their plans into action:

- **Identified the need** – Lorenzo, as a practising artist, had experience of the healing power of art and wanted to share its benefits on wellbeing.
- **Ensured he had all the skills needed to oversee their project** – Lorenzo undertook a PETLL (Preparing to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) course which qualified him to teach those aged 16 and over. As part of this course, Lorenzo designed the 'Journey through the Field of Art' classes, which promoted wellbeing, tackled social isolation and helped people to discover new talents through exploring their creative side.
- **Got a clear idea of what they wanted to deliver and who their audience was** – The classes are designed to cater for a maximum of eight participants as this, Lorenzo feels, is the optimum number to ensure he can spend time with each member and participants can talk with each other. He encourages members to express themselves through their art and this communication allows them to develop connections with others. Lorenzo evaluates

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participants as part of the course so that he can tailor its content to them and also encourages participants to evaluate themselves.

- **Networked** – A patron at the college where Lorenzo undertook his PETLL was keen for him to deliver the course. Lorenzo said they encouraged him, telling him he was “onto something absolutely phenomenal”. This patron provided a list of contacts who might commission the course. Lorenzo arranged meetings, sent emails and phoned these contacts to try to establish connections. The more people he contacted, the more people he met, it was: *“that snowballing effect...I had to keep following it up, keep going round, keep promoting it in-between, making meetings and ringing...”*
- **Tested it out** – A community organisation that looked after single mums booked him to do an initial course and, through the testimony of these participants, he was able to demonstrate the benefits to other potential commissioners. Through linking with existing groups, Lorenzo could also make use of their venues and facilities to hold the courses.
- **Stayed in touch** – Through the contacts provided by his patron, he was also able to attend a Cluster meeting (where the local authority meets with charities in the area) to promote the course. It was at this meeting that he first heard about Community First grants. He stayed in contact with the Cluster meeting to pursue this funding opportunity and, when the funding was announced, he partnered with the local MENCAP office (who he met through the Cluster meetings) to secure the grant. Lorenzo advertised the course through local doctors’ surgeries and was able to secure a meeting with a Practice Manager who agreed that the practice would screen and refer suitable patients.
- **Kept going** – Lorenzo’s biggest problem for his project surrounds continued funding. He continually stays in touch and follows up with people that he thinks may be able to help secure funding or commission the course.

#### 4 Advice

Lorenzo’s commitment to ‘Journey through the Field of Art’ was born out of personal experience of the importance of art to wellbeing. He thinks the best advice for delivering projects is for the person giving the instruction *“to have the passion, to care about it”*. He feels it is a big commitment but the buzz when it works and seeing the changes in people makes it worth it: *“I’m really making a difference, how many people can say they’re really making a difference like that?”*

#### 5 More information

For more information, please take a look at Lorenzo’s blog:  
<http://lorenzobarronartist.blogspot.co.uk/> .

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## 8 Contact information

Contact details for all of the Big Local areas and projects who took part in this research are available in the case studies. If you have any questions about the research or would like to talk further about the findings please contact:

**CDF** – Rebekah Ryder at [rebekah.ryder@cdf.org.uk](mailto:rebekah.ryder@cdf.org.uk) or call on 0207 812 5438.

**Local Trust** – Jayne Humm at [jayne.humm@localtrust.org.uk](mailto:jayne.humm@localtrust.org.uk) or call on 0203 588 0567.



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