



Bristol Impact Fund

Interim Evaluation Report

MB Associates

April 2024



Image credit: Eastside Community Centre

About This Report

This report

The goal of the second round of Bristol Impact Fund is to **grow the power** of local communities that experience the greatest inequality. In 2017, BIF brought together 8 council grant funds. BIF2 provides 4-year grant funding totalling £6.4m. It also provides smaller grants for 18 months to encourage more diverse communities. The fund has a strategic framework which includes intended impacts for communities, 5 thematic priorities for funding and 24 generic outcomes.

Strategic Goals

Create a fairer, healthier and sustainable city, one which is people-centred and has a resilient economy that supports diverse, inclusive and equitable communities¹

Bristol Impact Fund Goal

Grow the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality

Impacts

Equalities-led groups, neighbourhood communities and people experiencing the greatest inequality are better able to:

Self-organise & pursue collective priorities

Access trusted, empowering support

Build strong organisations taking forward community priorities

Collaborate and bring about meaningful change

Thematic priorities

Mental health & wellbeing

Digital Inclusion

Hate Crime support

Economic Inclusion

Community-identified priorities

Ways of Working

Leading to people to people and people to power connections and better use of assets & resources

MB Associates was commissioned in 2022 to deliver the evaluation of the BIF2 programme and provide evaluation learning support for the cohort of small, medium and large grant holders.

This report shares the learning from Years 1 and 2 of the BIF 2 monitoring, evaluation and learning programme. It draws from medium and large grant funded project reports, interviews, workshops and discussions with grant holders and the Bristol City Council team to analyse the overall difference the programme is making in the City for communities experiencing the greatest inequality.

It does not include data from 2023 Small Grant recipients.

The report contains the following sections:

- **A summary** providing an overview of the key findings and recommendations
- **Section 1** – an introduction to communities in Bristol including VCSE sector
- **Section 2** – an outline of the evaluation methodology and delivery
- **Section 3** – the key findings at project and programme level
- **Section 4** – the critical success factors and the challenges for projects and the wider programme
- **Section 5** – a conclusion and recommendations for the future
- **Appendices** covering additional information.

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Summary

The context

This is a summary of the interim evaluation report for Bristol Impact Fund 2, covering years 1 and 2 of a 4-year grant funding programme. It was commissioned in 2022 and draws on evidence gained by Simpect for year 1 and MB Associates for year 2 of the BIF2 programme. It reports on the impact of the grant funds and the programme's learning structure at project, community and sector level.

How the BIF Fund was distributed

Bristol City Council invests in grant funding to fulfil its strategic priorities for the people of Bristol. The goal of the second round of Bristol Impact Fund is to grow the power of communities that experience the greatest inequality. Building on the learning and achievements of BIF1, BIF2 delivers a 4-year grant funding programme totalling £6.4m. It also provides smaller grants for 18 months to encourage more diverse communities. With an asset-based approach, the fund has a strategic framework which includes intended impacts for communities, 5 thematic priorities for funding (mental health and wellbeing, digital inclusion, hate crime support, economic inclusion, community-identified priorities) and 24 generic outcomes.

BIF2 funds are spread widely across Bristol, mostly in areas of highest deprivation. The programme focusses on communities that experience the greatest inequalities. Funding decisions are made with an intentionality to support organisations 'of' their community, notably Black, Asian and Minoritised ethnic-led and Disabled people-led groups, and equalities organisations with limited funding track records.

24 VCSE projects received 4-year grant funding totalling £5,844,000. 11 smaller, 18-month grants were awarded in 2021 and a further 13 in 2023 totalling £300,000, to encourage community building in currently underserved wards and equalities communities.

Our conclusions

The Bristol Impact Fund is a crucial programme for empowering local communities to self-organise to support themselves. We see the fund building stronger organisations, where there has been ongoing engagement with the programme, whilst bolstering the voluntary sector ecosystem across its diversity. There is also strong evidence of impact on the quality of life of the individuals that these organisations work with, for whom there are often no other forms of support.

Whilst this report advocates the life changing impacts that BIF2 community organisations can have with relatively little funding, this sector is still operating on a knife edge. This follows wave after wave of challenge, from COVID, to the cost-of-living crisis and a reduction in statutory services which the VCSE sector bears the weight of.

The significance of investing in organisations that may not have otherwise received funding support cannot be underestimated. And supporting whole organisational development rather than just delivery, over multiple years, is proving to be transformational for some organisations. Black South West Network (BSWN) have seen an increase in organisations at wider sector meetings. The funding has elevated the 'voice' of more organisations, which in turn strengthens the sector. Without continued investment and support from the Council and sector development organisations, we would not see the progress demonstrated in this report.

Executive Summary

The Story of Change

BIF Story of Change – Growing the Power

MB Associates created a new **programme level Story of Change** which shows the link between monitoring, learning and evaluation activity, and the difference the BIF2 programme is trying to make. This supports us to understand the added value of the BIF funding and learning support programme and the difference the programme is making to the sector against the 4 anticipated Impacts: 1) Access trusted, empowering support; 2) Self-organise and pursue collective priorities; 3) Build strong organisations taking forward community priorities and; 4) Collaborate and bring about meaningful change.

A **project level Story of Change** was created to explore the difference the projects make to individuals and communities across Bristol. It outlines the activities and intended outcomes. Impact on people is defined by 24

short term outcomes which fall into 5 categories: Skills, Agency, Connection, Wellbeing and Representation.

The Story of Change illustrates the chain of events which enables the short-term outcomes for individuals to become the leading indicators for longer-term organisational impact and in turn delivers the longer-term community vision. For example, delivering individual outcomes through the 5 themes of growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality enables organisation and community level impact and ultimately leads to the wider vision of creating a fairer, healthier and more sustainable city which is people-centred and has a resilient economy that supports diverse, inclusive and equitable communities. This in turn positively impacts individuals. In this way, Growing the Power is a virtuous circle.

Executive Summary

Outcomes for communities, community organisations and the VCSE sector

Communities are better able to self-organise and pursue collective priorities

Over the past two years BIF2 cohort organisations are having the greatest effect on **Connectedness, Wellbeing** and **Agency** for the individuals they are working with.

Reported wellbeing outcomes are significantly higher than the number planned with 50% of organisations measuring wellbeing, and 100% of those reporting having a positive impact on participants' wellbeing. By exploring the different chains of events of outcomes, this report explores how wellbeing is affected at the start and end of the chain of outcomes. It's important to note that the starting point of participants differs across projects. Wellbeing can be a necessary precursor at the start of a chain of outcomes or an outcome of a chain of events. These are the leading indicators for agency and community connectedness.

Organisations are reporting an increase in people's confidence to deal with agencies, although not explicitly independently. The complexities and challenges facing organisations working with people in or near crisis, means although access is improved and participants are gaining some agency, it is not yet enough for holistic independence.

Community organisations and their participants are accessing trusted, empowering support

There is evidence that grant holders themselves are accessing empowering support through the wider programme of activities offered by the BIF programme including training, 121 support, partnership brokerage and access to resources. The skills developed through the programme are being embedded into community organisations that in

turn provide more, better and wider support for their own communities. As BIF2 organisations build their capacity, create new roles and the breadth of their offer, developing new activities or targeting new audiences, more people can access the local support they need.

This diversification has resulted in a chain of outcomes that collectively reinforce the foundations of a stronger and more resilient VCSE sector in Bristol.

The VCSE sector is better connected to take forward community priorities

There is limited evidence of impact on the VCSE ecosystem at this stage, although we see leading indicators that suggest better connectivity, strengthened by joined-up working with Voscur and Black South West Network (BSWN). We see considerable anecdotal evidence of connectivity within the BIF2 grant holder cohort, backed up by evidence of more formal partnership working reported in End of Year reports, where more than 50% of grant holders note strengthened partnerships with other organisations. And there is an awareness of the crucial importance of connections across the sector both in terms of organisational development and ability to signpost clients to other services for the most relevant support.

Sector development organisations such as Voscur and BSWN are integral to the ecosystem's resilience and growth and are effectively integrating their support within the BIF2 programme.

Executive Summary

Success factors

Organisations are collaborating and bringing about meaningful change

Whilst not necessarily formalised, we see lots of evidence of informal connectivity and collaboration, organisations within the network learning from one another, sharing approaches and skills.

Existing partnerships such as Bristol Hate Crime Partnership and Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seekers Partnership have used the funding to extend the work that they are doing and respond to growing community need. From reports it is clear that the partnership work enables a more efficient and effective wrap around offer of support for shared partnership communities. There is little robust evidence for the added value of these partnerships yet, though anecdotal evidence highlights the benefits of working with a more established lead partner. More data can be gathered in the years ahead.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning is improving across the funded organisations

A running evaluation of the outcomes from in-person workshops shows a gradual increase in grant holders' clarity on the overall programme, the outcomes and reporting process, skills and quality of evaluation, and in learning as a cohort. Grant holders also report on the development of new approaches and greater collaboration.

Grant holder End of Year reports show a commitment to better monitoring and evaluation overall. Examples gathered demonstrate how some projects are ensuring they reach their target audiences, and what they will do differently this year. A number of development themes were identified by grant holders and many of these needs are now being addressed through themed training and peer support sessions scheduled over year 3 of the programme.

The BIF 'ways of working' and programme approaches are crucial to the success of the programme and projects

The BIF2 programme has a unique approach to distribution of funding, with intentional equitable decision making and funding offered to some organisations with a limited financial track record. A proactive approach to engaging organisations that are 'of their community', notably Black, Asian and Minoritised ethnic-led and Disabled people-led, has also been crucial in strengthening the diversity of the sector.

BIF2 is more than just a funding programme; it has a support structure delivering significant additional benefit. This includes peer learning and opportunities for networking, technical support around monitoring and evaluation, and brokering relationships with Voscur and Black South West Network for additional capacity building support. As a result, there are better, more trusting relationships between community organisations and the Council, and greater organisational confidence and skills.

The data shows that inclusive, relational and place-based approaches are most central to success reaching into and engaging with diverse communities, building accessible and inclusive environments, developing initiatives that are grounded in and cater for community needs, and fostering strong trust-based relationships.

Grant holders emphasise the need for effective use of assets and resources to deliver outcomes but were keen to point out the challenges facing communities in crisis.

Executive Summary

Challenges and recommendations

The challenges

The most frequently mentioned challenges for BIF grant holders relate to the evaluation and reporting requirements of the programme. In addition, there are some programme level engagement challenges which relate to procedural elements and capacity issues.

Some of the most influential external challenges relate to sector capacity and ability to respond to constantly changing socio-economic circumstances and community needs. BIF grant holders report that the context has changed considerably since the start of their grant, and that they are seeing rising demand for services, and engaging with more people in crisis, while also facing rising costs.

Our recommendations

1. Bristol City Council

- Continue to support the programme and sector.
- Develop approaches to how the programme is evidencing impact and engaging with stakeholders to co-create this.

2. Community Resources Team

- Maintain strong and flexible approach to managing programme and working with grant holders.
- Continue to monitor and review ways of working, listening to the needs of the organisations and their communities.

3. Funded projects

- Try to apply learning through the programme better.
- Continue to build network and share practice learning across the cohort.

Collated highlights Yr1 and 2: 2022-2024

The difference BIF2 is making, where and to whom

BIF2 Funding



£6.4 million over 4 years

grant funding for small and large grants

Reach

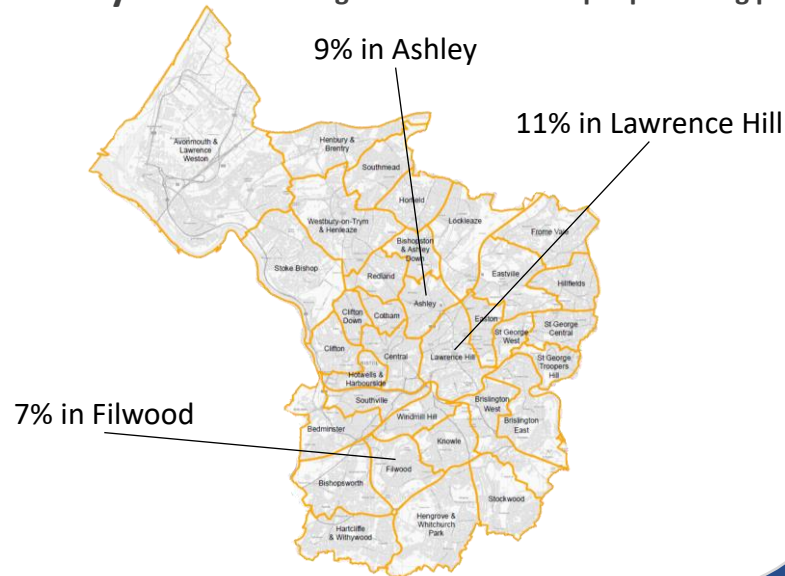
63,000

people engaged across all wards in Bristol

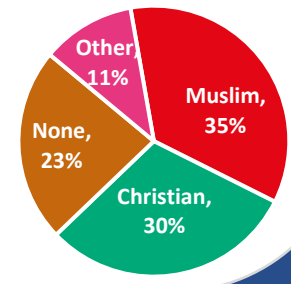
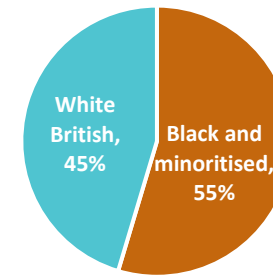
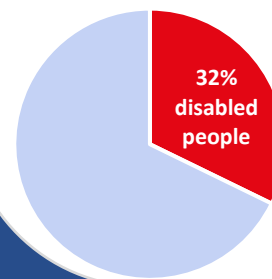
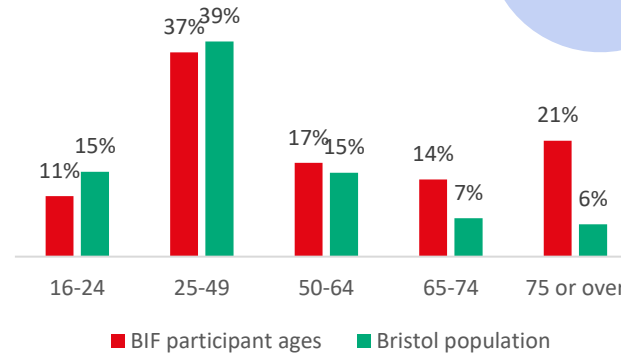
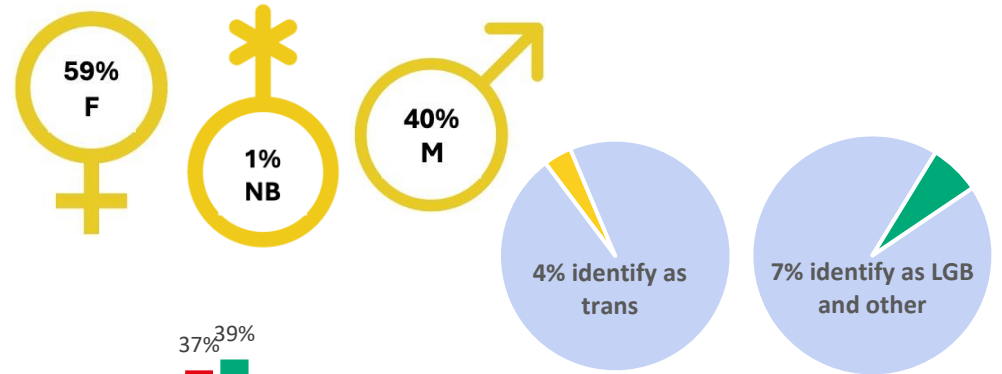
42%

of funded organisations are Black, Asian or Minoritised Ethnic-led

Ward Activity: The areas with greatest number of people taking part



Addressing inequality: The people participating in BIF funded projects



Collated highlights Yr1 and 2: 2022-2024

The difference BIF 2 is making, where and to whom

Community outcomes

Over £5.2 million

additional funding
leveraged into the city
over 2 years



Over 3,100

Volunteers, providing
over 1 million hours,
worth £15.3 million

Connectedness

Connecting participants
with others, communities
and agencies



Wellbeing

50% of organisations are
measuring wellbeing and
all have seen
improvements for
participants

**Knowledge &
Rights**

Increased understanding of
knowledge and rights



Organisational outcomes

**Increased overall
capacity**

**Improved reputation &
community
empowerment**

**New organisational
skills & knowledge**

**Increased
collaboration &
partnerships**

**More talent attracted
to the sector**

Growing the power
of communities experiencing the greatest inequality

Growing the power: A virtuous circle

Impact chains for individuals to communities to a stronger sector

The creation of stronger, more empowered community organisations generates a virtuous circle of impacts for individuals and communities. Longer-term community organisational impacts are likely to have more demonstrable evidence beyond the life of BIF2.



Figure 1: Growing the Power – the circular chain of outcomes from individual, to community to organisational and sector wide impacts. Source: End of Year 2 Reports
if you are having trouble understanding this flowchart, please contact investmentandgrants@bristol.gov.uk

1. The Bristol context

1.1 Bristol's population

A baseline review: Ethnicity and connectivity

The population of Bristol is estimated to be 479,000 people. At just short of half a million, it is one of 11 UK Core Cities, the 8th largest city in England and Wales outside London.

Bristol was the second fastest growing of the Core Cities over 10 years (2012 to 2022) after Manchester. There are now more than 287 different ethnic groups in the city, more than 185 countries of birth represented, at least 45 religions and more than 90 languages spoken. (Source: [Bristol.gov.uk](https://www.bristol.gov.uk)).

Bristol performs well for employment levels at 83% employment (5/63 cities) and is relatively well-qualified, so is likely to be harder for excluded communities to find a job. Bristol's infrastructure has some challenges, with digital connectivity relatively low at 76% (54/63 cities), relatively unaffordable housing and 23 days a year of poor air quality (45/63 cities). (Source: <https://www.centreforcities.org/city/bristol/>)

“Vibrant, cohesive and inclusive communities are our most important asset.”

Christina Gray, Director for Communities and Public Health, Bristol City Council

18.9% of the population belong to a Black, Asian or Minoritised Ethnic group - similar to the national average of 18.3%. The largest ethnic minority group is **Somali** 9,167 (1.9%) – the 4th largest Somali population after Birmingham, Brent and Ealing. More than half of the Somali population live in **Barton Hill** (23%), **Upper Easton** (11%), **St Pauls** (10%) or **Temple Meads** (10%). In **Lawrence Hill** 19% of the population are Somali.

Next largest groups are **Pakistani** 9,103 (1.9%) and **Indian** 8,371 (1.8%). The Office of National Statistics indicates that 6% of households in Bristol have no one in the household who has English as a main language, compared with an England and Wales average of 4%. Locally, Bath and NE Somerset has 3%, and other cities have more; Manchester (11%) and Leicester (19%) (Source: ONS, Census 2021).

Stronger, more connected communities

Levels of deprivation can often be an indicator of the strength of a community where inequality creates stress on individuals and the connections between them. Where the 1st out of 317 Local Authorities is the most highly deprived in England (Blackpool), **Bristol is ranked 82/317**, with 16% of its area being in the 10% most deprived and compared with Manchester (2), Leicester (22), Nottingham (10) and Bath and NE Somerset (274).

It has a very **poor ranking for crime** (8/317) and is in the **worst third for health (85), housing (87) and living environment (96)**. It is in the middle third for income, employment and skills (113, 137, 122).

Bristol's population (continued)

A baseline review: Public health and wellbeing

Wellbeing

Lower population wellbeing scores can be correlated with a range of inequalities. On the Thriving Places Index¹, Bristol scores average on local conditions for wellbeing but noticeably better than Manchester and Leicester. However, Bristol's equality score has dropped in the last three years and is similar to Manchester but worse than Leicester. ONS wellbeing scores over time show an increase in levels of anxiety in the population.

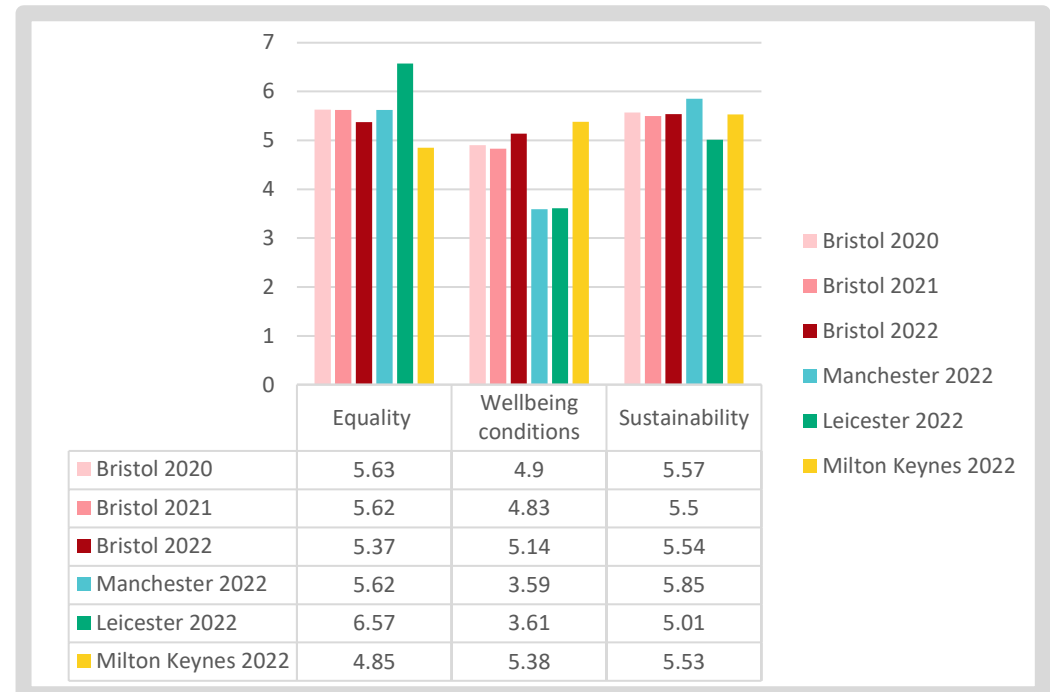


Figure 2: Thriving Places Index scores for Bristol, Manchester, Leicester and Milton Keynes

1 Thriving Places Index: <https://www.thrivingplacesindex.org/>

1.2 Bristol's VCSE sector

The voluntary, community and social enterprise sector

The VCSE sector is supported by two BIF partners - [Voscur](#) and [Black South West Network \(BSWN\)](#). Both describe how communities and the sector were still recovering from COVID at the beginning of the BIF2 period, now compounded by the cost-of-living crisis.

Activity in the sector includes:

- 724 diverse VCSE organisations indexed by Voscur in Bristol
- 500 volunteer and 1,681 paid roles advertised by Voscur and the [Can Do](#) Bristol platform

The 2021 post-COVID review of the voluntary sector in Bristol, [Designing a New Social Reality](#), with a sample that was 96% Black, Asian and Minoritised ethnic groups, highlighted mental health, digital exclusion, and financial insecurity and exclusion from the labour market as deteriorating and becoming more complex and inter-related. The research showed that 75% of respondents were struggling to afford basic items and 79% to pay bills. 65% of respondents struggle to afford transport and 13% are struggling to afford healthcare, including dentistry and prescriptions.

Voscur also say that digital inclusion is vital but unavailable to many Bristolians, in a 'city that boasts more tech companies than any other outside London'. One BSWN survey respondent describes how social and digital infrastructure is as vital as built infrastructure.

These outcomes create vicious cycles on top of systemic inequalities, especially for Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities, older and Disabled people and single parent families. The message is that the sector doesn't just need more funding, it needs to be better targeted at social inequality.

Longer term grant funding, improved partnerships, policy adaptations and infrastructure support for the VCSE sector were identified by the [Designing a New Social Reality](#) report as most important in addressing these challenges. This evidence substantiated existing research and provides a compelling case for a funding programme that could address these issues by supporting communities to support themselves.

1.3 Bristol has a strategic approach

With reduced income and escalating needs, Bristol is working with partners as One City to create a more equal and sustainable city

BIF2 is part of a wider BCC approach that is encapsulated by the following strategic documents:

- **[The Power of Us: One City, Many Communities. Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023](#)**
- **[Bristol City Council Corporate Strategy 2022-27](#)**

These documents recognise Bristol's assets – including people, land, culture and two universities, but indicate that inequality has been a long-standing challenge (See the Marmot Review 2010).

Life expectancy is nearly 10 years less for men in deprived than well-off areas; 7 years less for women. Issues like race and gender relate to civic status and trust - and can create vicious circles of deprivation, or alternatively virtuous cycles of success (Spirit Level 2009).

The economic growth that preceded the COVID-19 pandemic has stalled and there is a potential [£32m funding gap facing Bristol City Council](#). The Council now sees itself leading a One City place-making approach with inclusion as the foremost intention. Values include showing respect and being collaborative, but also taking ownership.

The approach should build on ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) focusing on *'what's strong not what's wrong'*. This means developing social capital (both horizontal and vertical) and working with partners towards citizen leadership and co-production. The Marmot Review refers to *'effective participatory decision-making at local level with people informed, engaged and able to act'*. 'One City, Many Communities' defines a key role for the VCSE sector in building community power and ownership, which Bristol will leverage by aligning resources. The strategy places these ambitions in the global context, referring to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Where can we make a difference?

The intention is that social capital and healthy place-making lead to wellbeing via social connectivity, support and cooperation.

Wellbeing

It is a specific target for people's quality of life and wellbeing to improve but beyond that, community participation, where people have a voice in decision making, including children and young people, is a priority.

Economic and digital inclusion

The number of benefits claimants in the city doubled during the pandemic. Jobs don't just generate financial wealth they impact isolation in a virtuous circle.

People need better transport, especially safe and active transport. and digital inclusion is a priority to promote good jobs. The Real Living Wage should be the norm but beyond that, the workforce should be more diverse and reflective of the population with a particular focus on disabled people who have some of the worst outcomes in the city. Children should do better than the 39% achieving good English and Maths GCSEs – the national average is 43%.

Community and the VCSE

For neighbourhoods to be flourishing, people need to be able to access support, jobs and amenities where they live. 'One City' means working with the VCSE on health, wellbeing and support services to co-create with citizens. From Bristol CC's point of view, success means: *'Citizens are more satisfied with the way we run things and enjoy easier access to services and consistently good customer service'*.

1.4 Bristol Impact Fund

Key

Ward boundaries

Bristol Unitary

Authority boundary

Context

In 2017 Bristol City Council planned to better tackle inequality by combining 8 grant funds into Bristol Impact Fund (BIF). BIF2 is the second iteration of this fund, building on the learning and achievements of the BIF1 programme.

In October 2021 BIF2 funded:

- 24 VCSE projects for 4 years – a total of **£5,8440,000**
- 11 smaller grants in 2021 and a further 13 in 2023, for 18 months, to encourage new involvement and diversity – a total of **£300,000**

(see Appendix for a list of all funded organisations)

The goal was to **grow the power of communities** that experience the greatest inequality.

Bristol Impact fund's focus

Of the larger partners, the majority operate across Bristol (with some being regional and one national) but focusing on sub-groups of the population, namely people who are: **women, young, older, Disabled people, of African/Caribbean/Somali heritage or refugee and asylum seekers.**

Three projects are for **Knowle West**, two projects are for **East Central Bristol** (Easton, Lawrence Hill, St Pauls, Ashely ward), two are for **Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston**, one each are for **Southmead, Bedminster and Barton Hill**. (Source: partner websites)

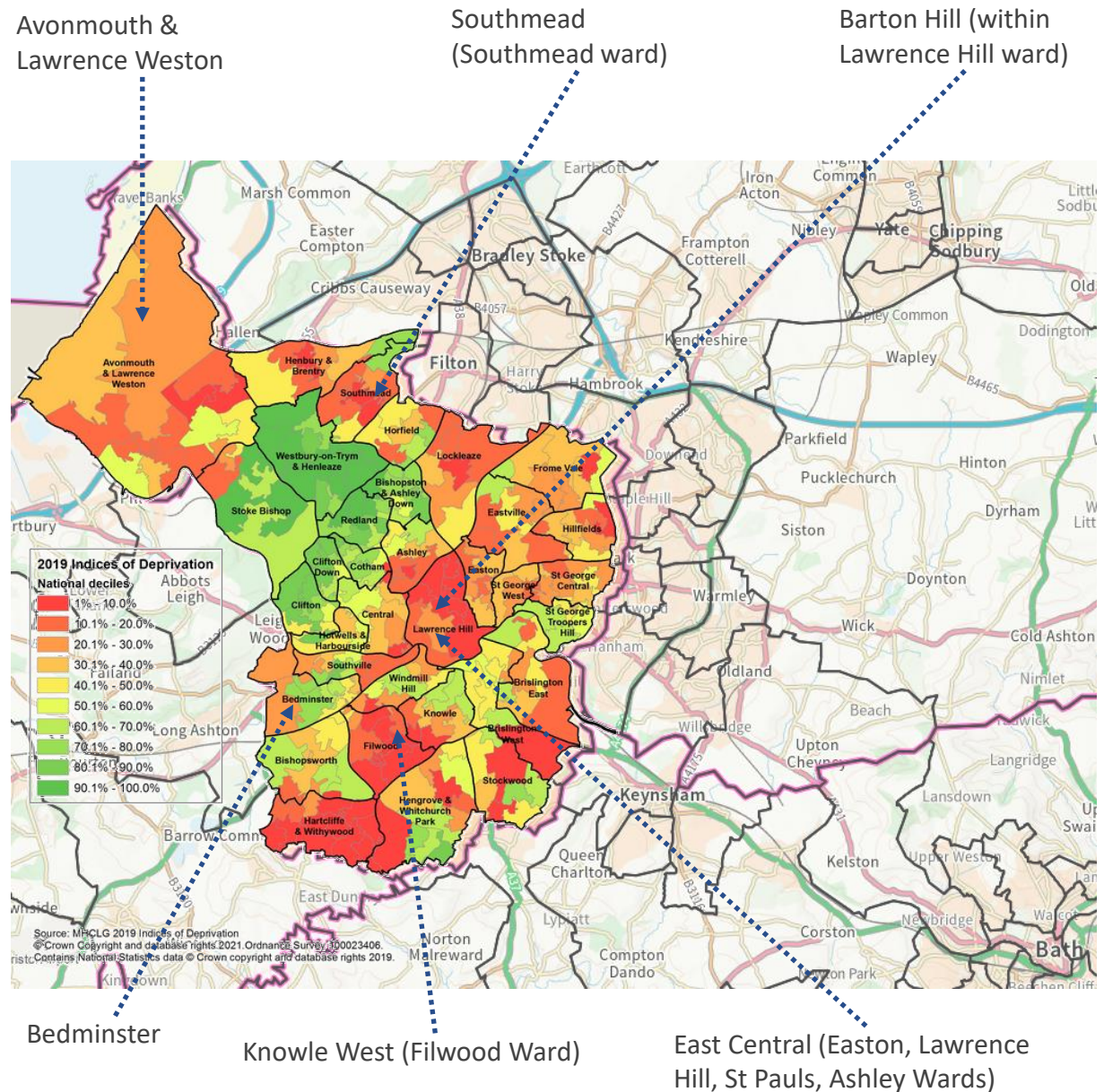


Figure 3: Map of Bristol with the Index of Deprivation overlaid

2. Methodology & Evidence

2.1 Evidence

Understanding how, and with what data, we have drawn analysis and conclusions

For the interim evaluation report we have drawn from a range of quantitative and qualitative data sources that combine to form a more robust data set:

- Participant surveys from MB led in-person workshops between January 2023 and April 2024
- Feedback from medium and large grant holders following engagement with 1:1 and drop-in opportunities
- Completed medium and large grant holder end-of-year reports from years 1 and 2. (Small grant reports have not been included in this report.)
- Ongoing MB and Community Resources team meetings between 2022 and April 2024
- The BCC Team Reflection Log completed between September 2023 and April 2024
- 1 Value of Change workshop with the BCC team
- 1 Value of Change workshop with the BIF steering group community organisations
- Interviews with 3 grant-holding organisations
- Analysis of local area population data drawn from the Bristol City Council census and statistics pages¹
- A review of the Director of Public Health annual report The Power of Us², and the Voscur and BSWN websites.

¹<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/statistics-census-information>

²<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s90214/BD16068%20Public%20Health%20Report%202023%20Power%20of%20Us%2023-11-23.pdf>

Our methods

MB Associates has led a series of online drop-ins, regular in person workshops and 1:1 support, for individual organisations focusing on measuring and managing impact.

Data has been gathered from a range of sources including from participating organisations, the Bristol City Council team and sector development agencies.

We have reviewed each data source to find common themes, challenges and opportunities to improve both engagement and outcome.

We use statistical analysis of numbers, alongside thematic analysis of narrative data aligned with the overall project and programme level objectives and outcomes.



Figure 4: Image taken from Workshop 1, January 2023

2.2 Programme level Story of Change

Purpose, research questions and evidence

Planning, measuring and understanding the added value of the BIF funding and learning and support programme is crucial to this work.

MB created a new **programme level Story of Change** that shows the link between monitoring, learning and evaluation activity, and the difference the BIF2 programme is trying to make.

The purpose of the overall evaluation and support programme is:

- To Grow the Power - empowering individuals and community organisations and inspiring them to do more;
- To help the Community Resources team and wider BCC understand the impact of BIF funding on the VCSE sector and communities in Bristol;
- To help shape future direction of VCSE grant funding criteria and management.

Programme level research questions were agreed with the Community Resources team to provide an overall structure for the evaluation:

- How far has the BIF2 funding empowered local communities that experience the greatest inequalities to: self-organise and pursue collective priorities; access trusted, empowering support; build strong organisations taking forward community priorities; collaborate and bring about meaningful changes?
- What worked well and what was a challenge?
- Did it reach the right people? And how well did people engage?
- Did it make a difference and to whom?
- Which elements made the most difference/created most value?

The **programme level Story of Change** allows us to identify which programme level activities lead to the programme level outcomes:

- 1. Access trusted, empowering support** to develop:
 - new skills and knowledge to support growth
- 2. Self-organise and pursue collective priorities** by:
 - widening engagement
 - platforming a greater voice in Bristol
 - supporting more connected, empowered communities
- 3. Collaborate and bring about meaningful change** by developing:
 - new and stronger partnerships and networks
- 4. Build strong organisations taking forward community priorities** that creates:
 - a more resilient VCSE sector

The **project level Story of Change** outlines the activities and intended outcomes for individuals and communities across Bristol.

Impact on people is defined by 24 outcomes that fall into 5 categories. Outcomes are especially for those experiencing inequality and/or affected by hate crime and discrimination:

1. Skills
2. Agency
3. Connection
4. Wellbeing
5. Representation.

Programme level Story of Change

The difference the programme makes to the sector

4 How?	3 What?	2 Who?	1 Why?	The Vision
Investment, context and commitment, inputs	Delivery and participation outputs	The people who matter, stakeholders	The difference we want to make with communities so they can:	
Equitable Inclusive Asset-based Place-based Relationship-orientated Citizen-led Nurturing the VCSE ecosystem	BIF large and small grant funding Cohort learning fund Peer learning programme (whole cohort) Peer sharing platform (shared resources, templates, how to guides) 1:1 support Drop-ins Planning and Evaluation	VCSE grant holder organisations Communities facing the greatest inequalities Community Resources team Voscur BSWN Bristol City Council	<p>1. Access trusted, empowering support to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new skills and knowledge to support growth <p>2. Self-organise and pursue collective priorities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> widening engagement platforming a greater voice in Bristol supporting more connected, empowered communities <p>3. Collaborate and bring about meaningful change by developing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new and stronger partnerships and networks <p>4. Build strong organisations taking forward community priorities that creates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a more resilient VCSE sector 	<p>Creating a fairer, healthier and sustainable city, one which is people centred and has a resilient economy that supports diverse, inclusive and equitable communities.</p> <p>Growing the Power of communities facing greatest inequality</p>

2.3 Project level Story of Change

The difference that projects make to people and communities

4 How?	3 What?	2 Who?	1 Why?		The Vision
Ways of working	Delivery and participation, outputs	The people who matter, Stakeholders	Short term for individuals	Long term for communities	
Equitable Inclusive Asset-based Place-based Relationship-orientated Citizen-led Nurturing the VCSE ecosystem	Mental health and wellbeing Digital inclusion Hate Crime Support Economic Inclusion Community Identified priorities	Communities facing the greatest inequalities in Bristol	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skills 2. Agency 3. Connection 4. Access 5. Wellbeing 6. Representation 	<p>Self-organise and pursue collective priorities</p> <p>Access trusted, empowering support</p> <p>Build strong organisations taking forward community priorities</p> <p>Collaborate and bring about meaningful change</p>	Growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality.

3. The key findings

Highlights Year 1: 2022-2023

The difference BIF2 is making, where and to whom

BIF 2 Funding

£1.3 million

grant funding for small and large grants



Reach

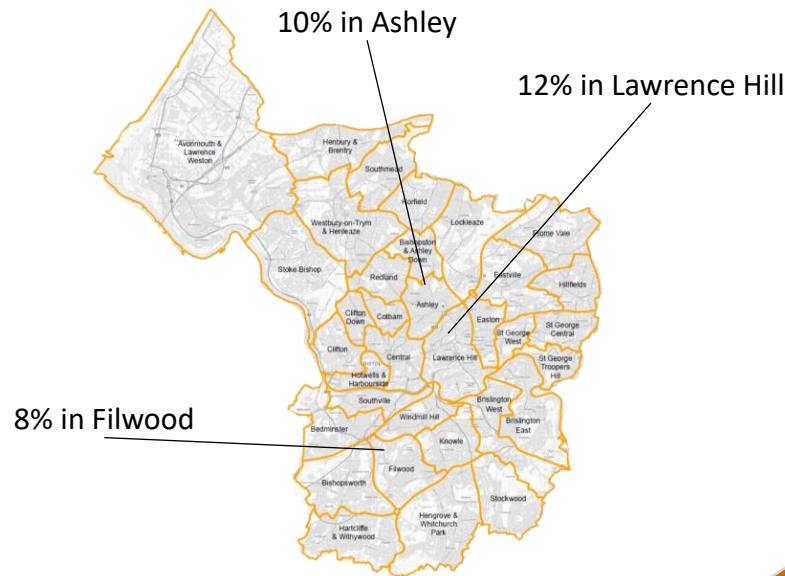
32,030

people engaged across all wards in Bristol

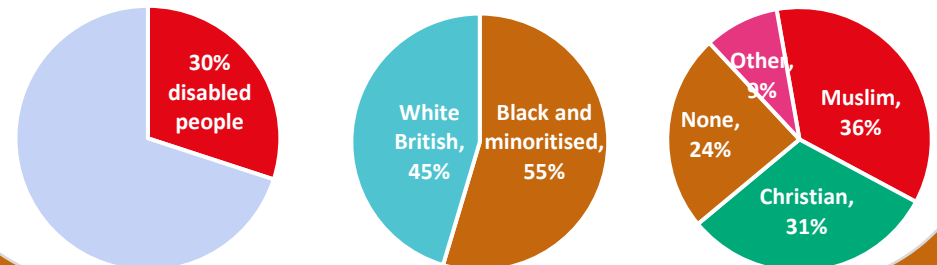
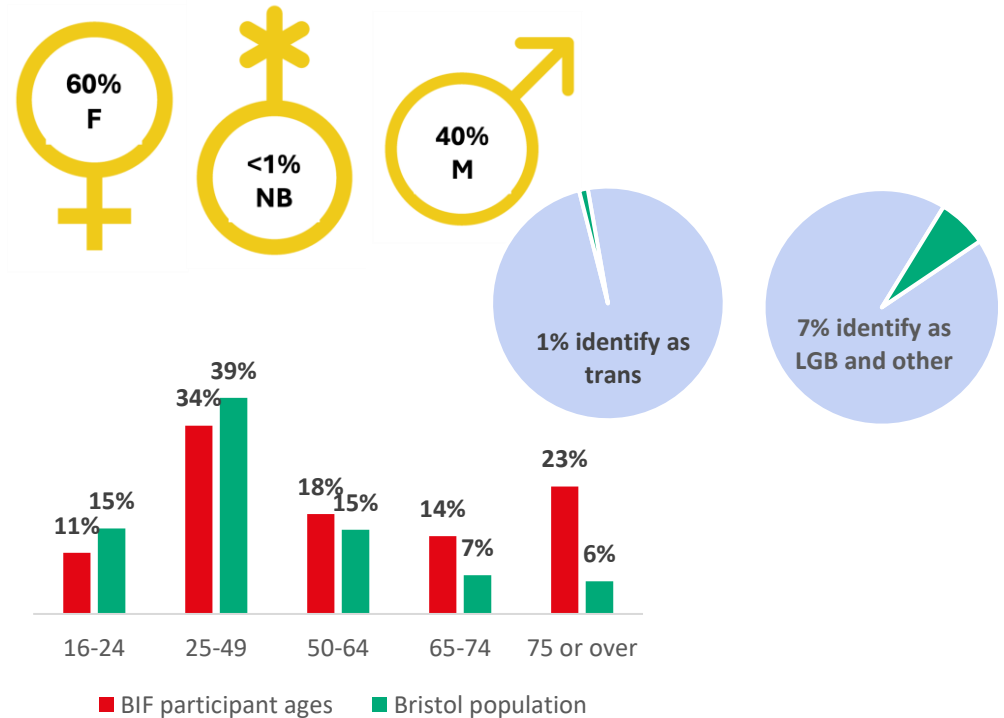
42%

of funded organisations are Black, Asian or Minoritised Ethnic-led

Ward Activity: The areas with greatest number of people taking part



Addressing inequality: The people participating in BIF funded projects



Highlights Year 1: 2022-2023

The difference BIF 2 is making, where and to whom

Community outcomes

Over £3.8 million

additional funding
leveraged into the city in
2022-2023

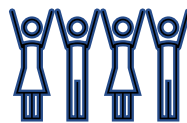


Over 1600

Volunteers, providing over
250,000 hours, worth
£3.5million*

Connectedness

Three times as many
participants connected with
others than targets for the
year.



Access

Nearly twice as many people
given opportunities to change
their communities than planned.

Knowledge & Skills

Nearly 3,000 gained knowledge,
and skills leading to greater
confidence.



Growing the power
of communities experiencing the greatest inequality

Highlights Year 2: 2023-2024

The difference BIF 2 is making, where and to whom

BIF 2 Funding

£1.6 million



grant funding for small and large grants

Reach

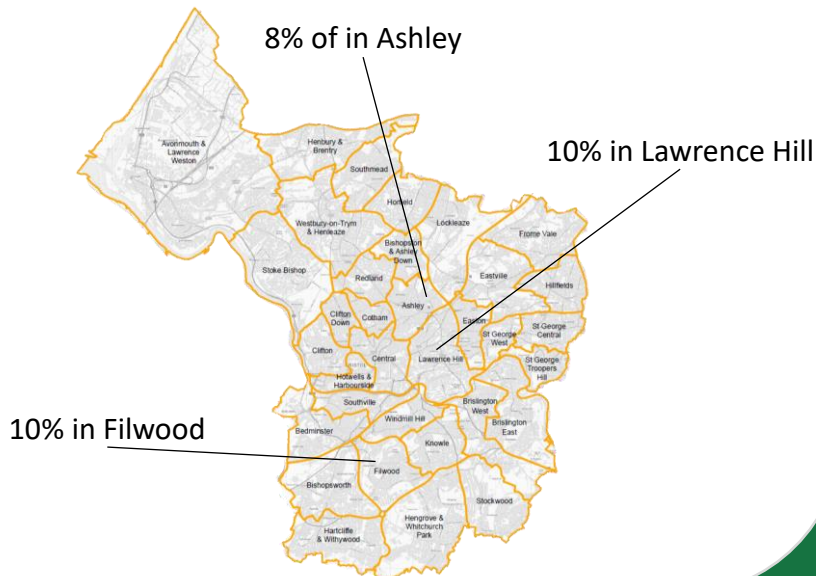
30,669

people engaged across all wards in Bristol

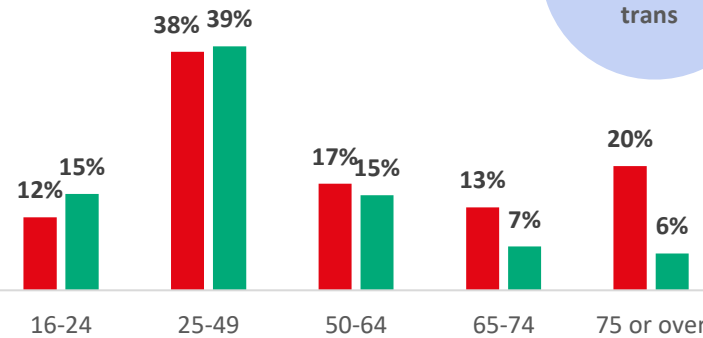
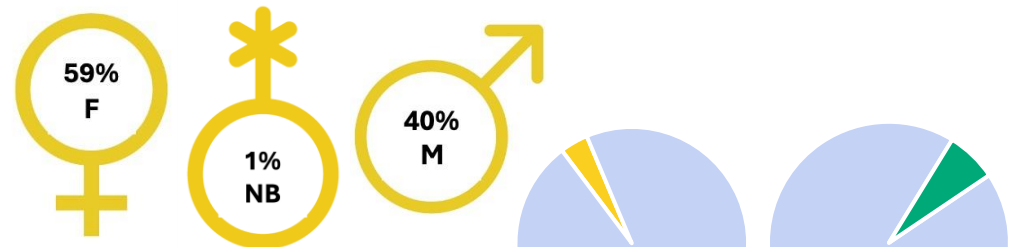
42%

of funded organisations are Black, Asian or Minoritised Ethnic-led

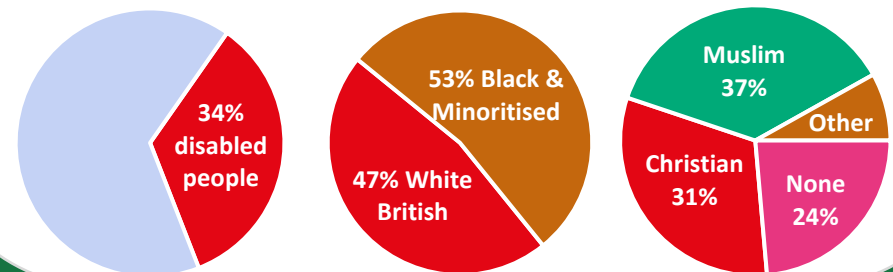
Ward Activity: The areas with greatest number of people taking part



Addressing inequality: The people participating in BIF funded projects



■ BIF participant ages ■ Bristol population



Highlights Year 2: 2023-2024

The difference BIF 2 is making, where and to who

Community outcomes

Over £1.4 million

additional funding
leveraged into the city in
2023-2024



Over 1500

Volunteers, providing
over **850,000 hours**,
worth **£11.7million***

Connectedness

Connecting participants
with others, communities
and agencies



Wellbeing

50% of organisations are
measuring wellbeing and
have seen improvements
for participants

**Knowledge &
Rights**

Increased understanding of
knowledge and rights leads to
further outcomes



Organisational outcomes

**Increased overall
capacity**

**Improved reputation &
community
empowerment**

**New organisational
skills & knowledge**

**Increased
collaboration &
partnerships**

**More talent attracted
to the sector**

**Growing the power
of communities experiencing the greatest inequality**

Collated highlights Yr1 and 2: 2022-2024

The difference BIF 2 is making, where and to whom

BIF 2 Funding



£6.4 million over 4 years

grant funding for small and large grants

Reach

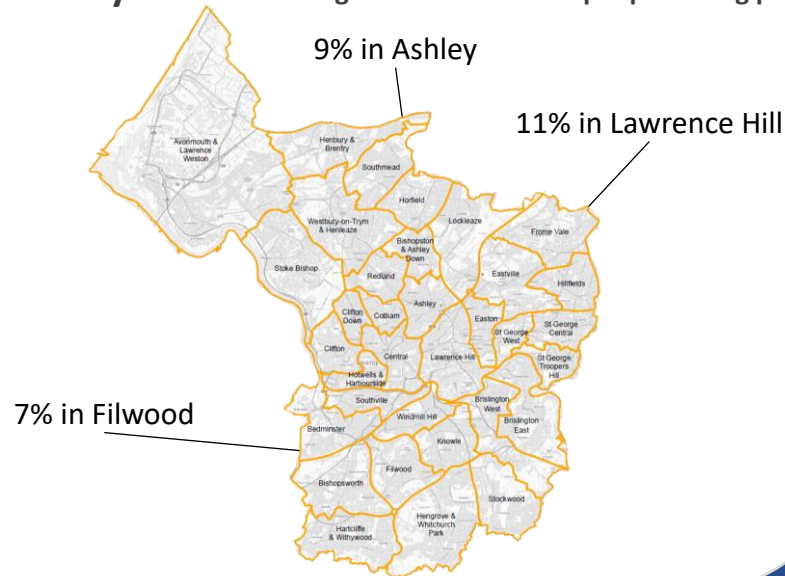
63,000

people engaged across all wards in Bristol

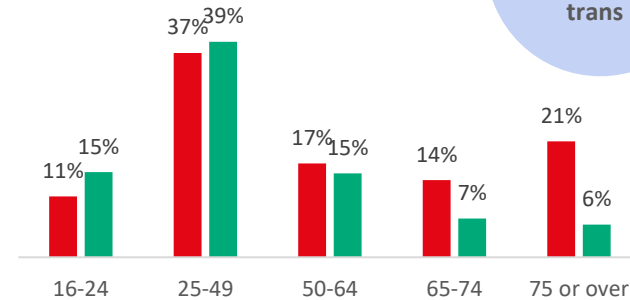
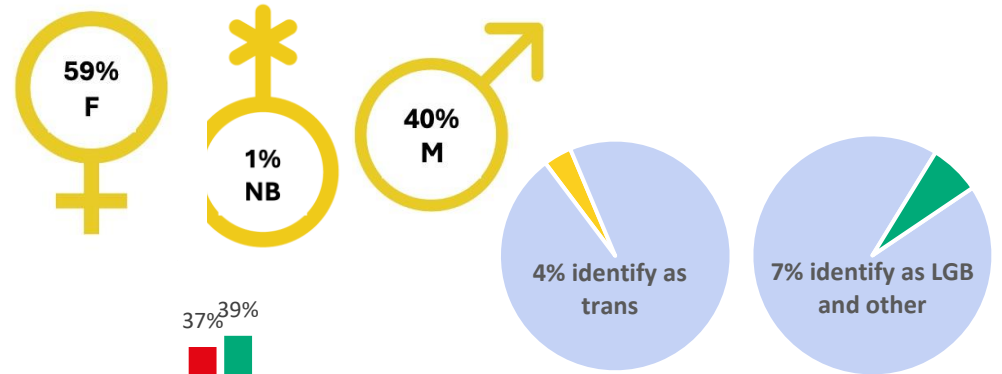
42%

of funded organisations are Black, Asian or Minoritised Ethnic-led

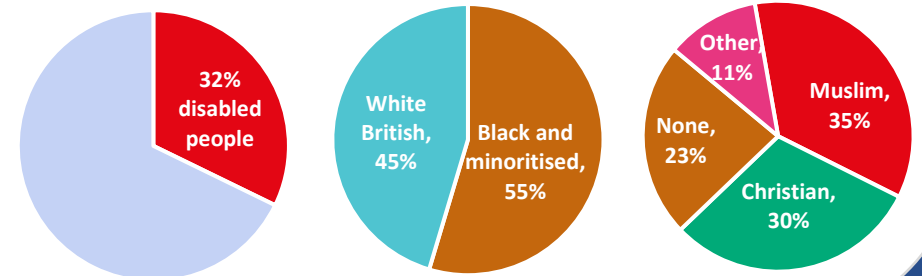
Ward Activity: The areas with greatest number of people taking part



Addressing inequality: The people participating in BIF funded projects



■ BIF participant ages ■ Bristol population



Collated highlights Year 1 and 2: 2022-2024

The difference BIF 2 is making, where and to whom

Community outcomes

Over £5.2 million

additional funding
leveraged into the city
over 2 years



Over 3,100

Volunteers, providing
over 1 million hours,
worth £15.3 million

Connectedness

Connecting participants
with others, communities
and agencies



Wellbeing

50% of organisations are
measuring wellbeing and
have seen improvements
for participants

**Knowledge &
Rights**

Increased understanding of
knowledge and rights



Organisational outcomes

**Increased overall
capacity**

**Improved reputation &
community
empowerment**

**New organisational
skills & knowledge**

**Increased
collaboration &
partnerships**

**More talent attracted
to the sector**

**Growing the power
of communities experiencing the greatest inequality**

3.1 Comparing Years 1 and 2

Progress towards outcomes and increasing capacity and skills

As would be expected there are slight differences in numbers, demographics and outcomes achieved between Year 1 and Year 2 of the BIF2 funding programme.

Headline comparisons show:

1. A greater emphasis on access and engagement, the first stages of a chain of outcomes, followed by the development of skills, knowledge and an increase in individuals feeling being more connected to their communities. Getting people engaged with an activity in the first place can present the greatest challenge. BIF2 funded organisations have been able to create new and targeted offers relevant to their own community needs. In Year 2, outcomes identified include those further along the chain of outcomes such as a greater sense of connectivity across communities and increased wellbeing. We also see new evidence of organisational development through capacity and skills building, collaboration and partnerships and community empowerment.
2. A slight decrease in overall numbers engaged in Year 2. There is no specific data as to the reason for this. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the cost-of-living crisis is having a detrimental effect on organisations' capacity as running costs greatly increase. There are also cases of organisations working at a greater depth of engagement with communities, prioritising building strong, sustainable relationships over casting a wide net to get numbers through the door.
3. A significant increase in the number of volunteer hours provided in Year 2 compared to Year 1, although the number of volunteers is similar for Years 1 and 2. This could be a result of building relationships with volunteers that results in volunteering for more hours.
4. A significant improvement in Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) monitoring, and evaluation overall, with many more organisations completing their EDI data more effectively and consistently across their activities meaning that the results are more robust. This is likely due to clearer and more consistent programme learning support and guidance over the last year. The data shows an overall increase in the number of people engaged who identify as transgender potentially due to increased confidence in managing EDI monitoring and/or increased engagement with those groups.
5. An uplift in funding offered for Years 3 and 4 to reflect high impact socio-economic challenges and rising costs for VCSE sector organisations.

3.2 Growing the power: A virtuous circle

Impact chains for individuals to communities to a stronger sector

In Year 2, there is more robust evidence of positive outcomes for individuals, community organisations and the sector as a whole. These are leading indicators of progress towards the long-term impacts identified for the BIF programme and wider aims for growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality. The creation of stronger, more empowered community organisations generates a virtuous circle of impacts. Longer-term community organisational impacts are likely to have more demonstrable evidence beyond the life of BIF2.

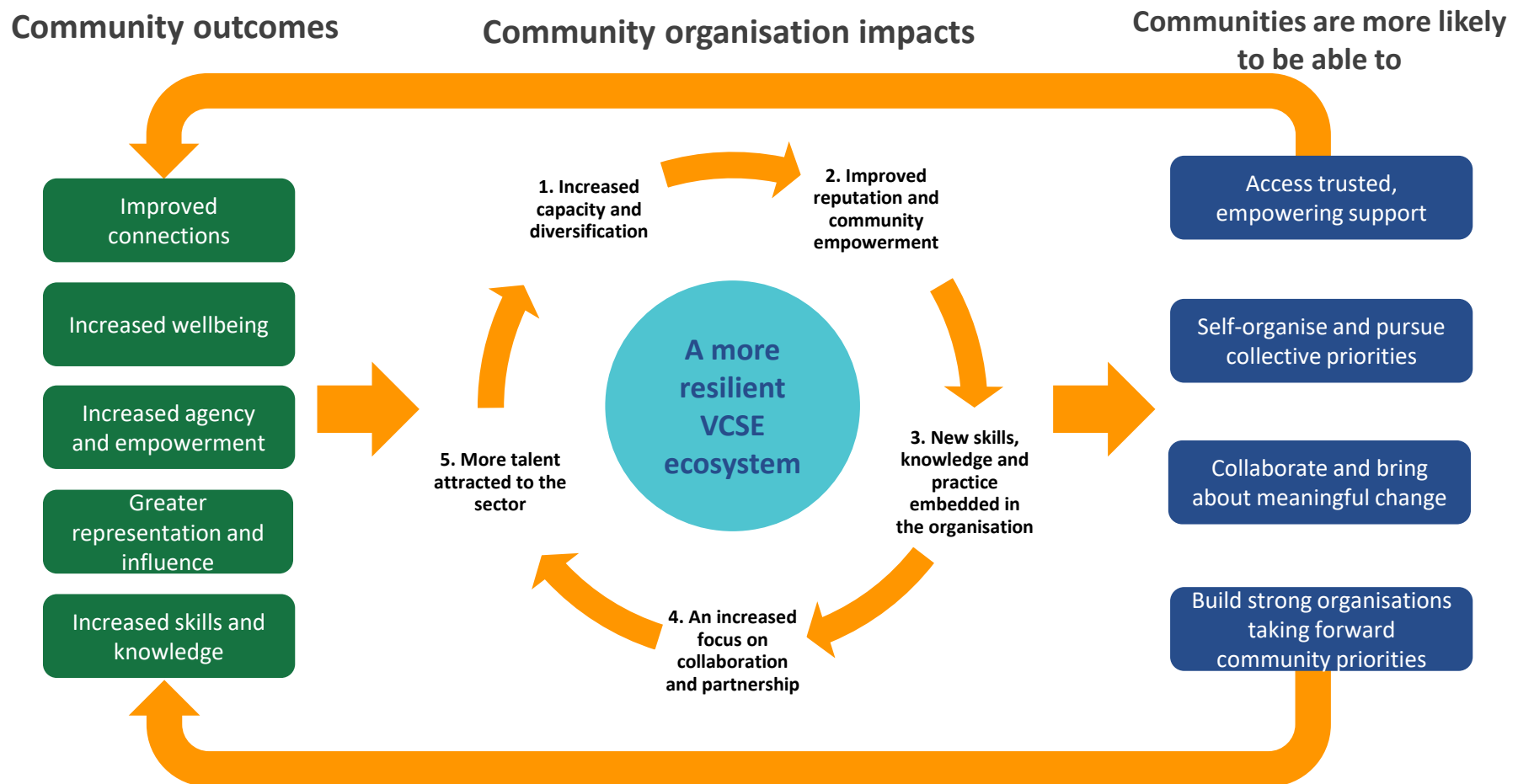


Figure 5: Growing the Power – the circular chain of outcomes from individual, to community to organisational and sector wide impacts. Source: End of Year 2 Reports
 if you are having trouble understanding this flowchart, please contact investmentandgrants@bristol.gov.uk

3.3 Impact on community organisations

3.3.1 Accessing trusted empowering support

Improved knowledge, skills and practice

Grant holders themselves say they are accessing empowering support through the wider programme of activities offered by the BIF programme including training, 121 support, partnership brokerage and access to resources. The knowledge and skills developed through the programme are being embedded into organisations that in turn provide more, better and wider support for their own communities. As BIF2 organisations build their capacity, create new roles and widen the breadth of their offer, developing new activities or targeting new audiences, more people can access the local support they need. This diversification has resulted in a chain of outcomes that collectively reinforce the foundations of a stronger and more resilient VCSE sector in Bristol.

Capacity

Having new dedicated roles or additional funded staff hours has impacted on **quality, improved skills, knowledge and practice** flowing into the organisation, improved **organisational reputation**, and increased **collaboration** and likelihood to **attract new talent** into a more viable VCSE sector. These outcomes form a circular chain of impact that is likely to have helped generate the significant funding leveraged into the sector by grant holders.

Knowledge, skills and practice

The BIF 2 programme of support for learning and sharing is also having an impact on organisational skills, knowledge and practice. There is evidence that those most engaged with this programme have developed and improved skills to be able to manage, measure and articulate their

impact on communities more clearly, with end-of-year reporting better structured and more robustly evidenced. Also, all organisations that have regularly attended BIF2 programme workshops report better idea and skills sharing with other organisations.



Figure 6: Impacts for community organisations

“We were able to deliver legal advice/casework for community members in need, where no alternative services exist.”

BIF2 funded organisation

A running evaluation of the outcomes from in-person workshops shows a gradual increase in grant holders' clarity on the overall programme, the outcomes and reporting process, skills and quality of evaluation, and in learning as a cohort. Grant holders also report on the development of new approaches and greater collaboration.

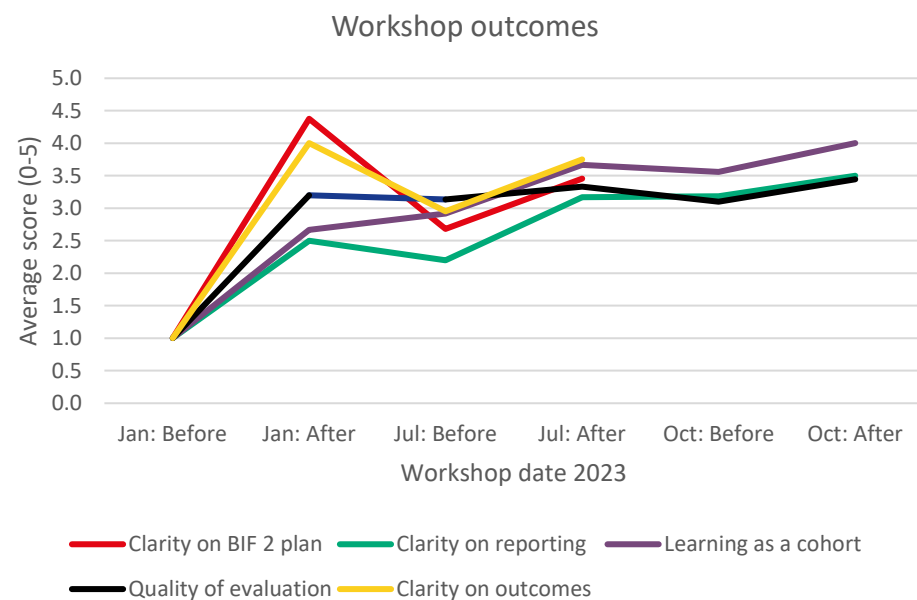


Figure 7: Scores for outcomes (where 5 is high and 0 is low) resulting from evaluation support workshops

New approaches

Organisational development of course results in better quality provision and reach. Grant holder end-of-year reports show a commitment to better monitoring and evaluation overall. The examples below demonstrate how some projects are ensuring they reach their target

audiences, and what they will do differently this year:

- SARI and Changes Bristol are closely monitoring their demographics in response to observed increases/reductions in certain cases, to make sure they're reaching the people who need their help most;
- Brandon Trust is now implementing a new electronic system to support better collection of monitoring data;
- Bristol Law Centre is intending to review their triage process to build presence in deprived wards with limited reach currently;
- Eastside Community Trust is planning to hire an external evaluator to investigate their impact and reach.

New approaches will continue to strengthen organisational knowledge of community need and ensure that funding is going to people experiencing the greatest inequality in the City. It would be useful for wider BIF grant holders to hear about the successes and challenges of implementing these new approaches.

A number of development themes were identified by grant holders and many of these needs are now being addressed through themed training and peer support sessions scheduled over Year 3 of the programme.

These include:

- More support for measuring impact, including a workshop on social value;
- Multimedia case study development training and support;
- More support for networking and partnership building.

3.3.2 Collaborating and bringing about meaningful change.

Collaboration and partnership

Although we are yet to see the development of new communities of practice, there is evidence that participants at workshops are learning from one another and value the opportunity to share.

There are four partnership projects within the BIF2 cohort including: Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service (BHCDS), Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seekers Partnership (BRASP), Full Circle @ Docklands, Talo and Bristol Youth Home Concern (BYHC) Partnership and Eastside Community Trust working with Somali Kitchen and Trinity. These are existing collaborations using their funding to extend the work that they are doing and respond to growing community need. From reports, it is clear that partnership work enables a more efficient and effective wrap around offer of support for shared community participants.

What is the Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service?

BHCDS is a partnership of six specialist charities coordinated by Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI) and including Brandon Trust, Bristol Mind, Off The Record, Bristol Law Centre and Resolve West. The service provides a holistic signposting, support, advocacy, conflict resolution and reparation service to empower victims of all types of hate crime and discrimination to take action and to cope with its physical, emotional and psychological impact. The service also runs one-to-one and group training and empowerment sessions, workshops and peer support. In Bristol, SARI triages approximately 500 referrals of hate/discrimination per year, of which over 300 receive dedicated support via casework or restorative justice through sometimes lengthy criminal and civil justice, re-housing or other procedures from BHCDS partner agencies. Last year, 778 people benefitted from the service. Funded under BIF1 and BIF2, the BHCDS receives the largest single grant of BIF2.

At present there is little robust and documented evidence for the added value of these partnerships. This will be addressed in Year 3 of the programme with additional evaluative reflection work with these partnerships. Anecdotal evidence and meeting notes show that BHCDS are developing some collective advocacy for driving change, for example improving the pathways to victim support for LGBTQ+ communities. It is clear there is value in having a strong leading partner that can provide guidance, support, direction and operational support for other partners, especially those that are less established. The BHCDS regularly share leadership of themed events to inform stakeholders of support available.

More established organisations like SARI, Resolve West, Bristol Women's Voice, Southmead Development Trust and Step Together, are also teaming up with wider partner organisations, agencies and services to support reach into target communities through referrals. Brandon Trust is networking with agencies across the country to learn best practice.

As a core part of joined up support for clients, we see smaller organisations are reaching out to wider services and stakeholders for collaboration. Autism Independence have teamed up with other family support, health and social care organisations so they can go into schools and reach more families who need their support.

More evidence is needed of the added value of both formal and informal partnership working. A formalised reflective practice is being implemented with BHCDS and BRASP for the subsequent years of BIF2, to inform learning in real time.

Organisational case study: CfD (Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People)

CfD Vision: A Bristol where everyone can participate in all aspects of life in the city, whatever their level of hearing.

BIF2 Total Funding (2021-25): £199,963.00

BIF2 Outcomes:

- Deaf people have a greater sense of “Deaf identity” and feel more connected to their community
- CfD is more representative of Deaf people in Bristol and therefore a more powerful organisation

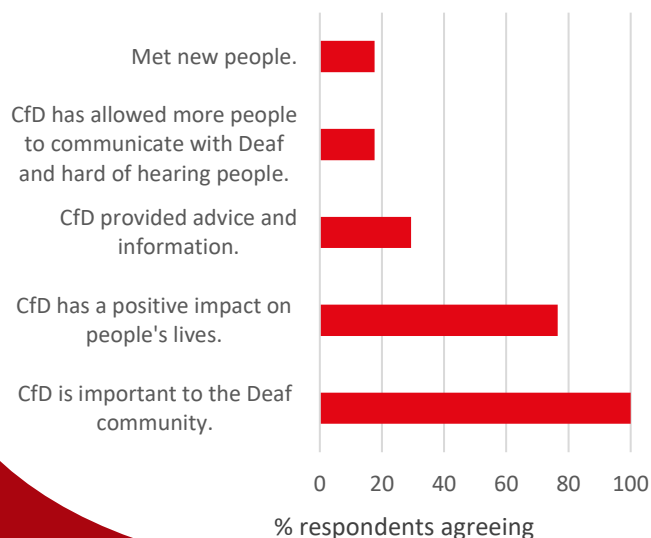


“CfD found that practical working with hearing organisations to encourage them to include deaf people can lead to greater inclusion than Deaf Equality training delivered by itself.”

CfD Community Development Officer

Figure 8: Photograph from CfD

The difference CfD makes to the deaf community



Organisational development:

- ❖ A new community development officer role
- ❖ New partnership working
- ❖ Increased reach, footfall, referrals, social media followers
- ❖ Leveraged funding: (Additional funding secured during 2023):
£28,399.00

“Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People has completely changed the way it works internally and how the team works with the Deaf community. They've become an enabler...in that they don't do things for people but rather enable people to do things for themselves. BIF has opened up a lot of opportunities for them. That organisation has transformed in the last couple of years.”

BCC Communities Team

3.4 Impact on the VCSE ecosystem

3.2.1 Building stronger organisations taking forward community priorities

Connectivity and capacity

There is limited evidence of impact on the VCSE ecosystem at this stage, although we see leading indicators that suggest better connectivity, strengthened by joined-up working with Voscur and BSWN.

The VCSE sector in Bristol is described by the Council team and grant holders as **generous, vibrant and diverse** in scope, size, audience, governance, location, offer and specialism. It is also adaptive,

"...endlessly transforming to respond to challenges...the creativity and improvement is great."

BIF2 Grant holder

A thriving, vibrant and diverse VCSE ecosystem depends on the relationship between dynamic and continuous investment, capacity building, skill enhancement, and infrastructure development. Sector development organisations such as Voscur and BSWN are instrumental in strengthening this relationship, acting as the strategic 'glue' that binds the sector together. They are integral to the ecosystem's resilience and growth and effectively integrating their support within the BIF2 programme is an important aspect of development.

Sector connectivity

We see considerable anecdotal evidence of connectivity within the BIF2 grant holder cohort, backed up by evidence of more formal partnership working in end-of-year reports, where more than 50% of grant holders note strengthened partnerships with other organisations. There is also an awareness of the crucial importance of connections across the sector both in terms of organisational development and ability to signpost clients to other services for the most relevant support.

Many community organisations are also creating accessible, welcoming physical spaces or community hubs to support people-to-people connections at a local level. At the same time, grant holders have been

keen to note that collaboration is a challenge when organisational capacity is limited.

"The struggles that people have are interconnected...and the solutions are the same. Working in silos isn't effective."

BIF2 Grant holder

The BIF2 programme is now focusing on curated activity to support peer connectivity, skills sharing and networking and we saw a greater number of organisations attending our joint workshop in April 2024, with all participants saying they had improved networking as a result.

Sector capacity

Volunteering remains crucial to the sector and is a core part of some funded projects. Whilst some organisations are training their own community volunteers, others are struggling to recruit. This is a nationwide trend that needs to be addressed.

"...Bristol citizens who volunteer with us ...are very much our assets and by supporting and training them and continuing to support their development builds upon this, enabling them to develop their experience, skills and confidence within their volunteering role but also into their own wider communities."

Bristol Resolve West

3.5 Impact on communities

3.3.1 Self-organising to pursue collective priorities

Access, skills, connectivity, agency, representation, wellbeing

The BIF2 cohort organisations report that they are having the greatest effect on Connectedness, Agency and Wellbeing for the individuals they are working with. We would expect these outcomes to be early indicators of more complex interactional outcomes for communities.

There are 24 identified project-level outcomes, which sit within six outcome themes: Representation, Access, Wellbeing, Agency, Connectedness, Skills. The full list of all outcomes can be found in the [Appendices](#).

Summary

Figure 5 shows the comparison between the number of organisations' planned outcomes and the number of outcomes reported at the end of Year 2. The greatest number of outcomes relate to making connections, with 35 planned and 35 reported. Reported wellbeing outcomes are significantly higher than the number planned, with 50% of organisations reporting a positive impact on participants' wellbeing. The starting point of participants differs across projects. Six organisations report working with people in crisis and delivering basic needs services. For others, wellbeing is improved through reducing stress by offering trusted support and connection to other organisations where holistic support is required.

By exploring the different chains of events of outcomes, it is possible to see how wellbeing can be both the precursor to later outcomes relating to community empowerment and also the result of these outcomes. Without access, connectivity and a basic level of wellbeing, individuals and communities cannot progress to more complex interactional outcomes. This is explored in more detail on the following pages.

Planned Outcomes vs Reported Outcome



Figure 9: Chart of planned outcome vs outcomes reported in End of Year 2 reports

3.3.2 Chains of events: Connectedness & wellbeing

The links and dependencies between outcomes

Wellbeing through connections and community

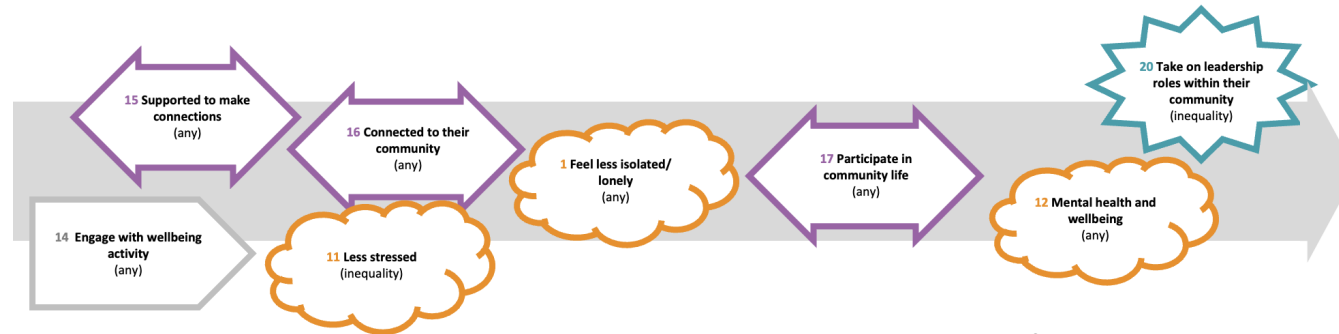


Figure 10: Example chain of outcomes relating to Access, Connectedness and Wellbeing. The shapes and colours denote different outcome types as shown on [slides 61 and 62](#).

Connectedness and Wellbeing

The chain of events starts with enabling access, in this case access to activity that leads to other outcomes.

The connections being made across the cohort are multi-layered and include participants being connected to each other (reducing loneliness), connected to organisations (offering varied and holistic support and reducing stress) and connected to a community (increasing people's sense of belonging). For example, at Easton Community Centre, 75% of residents who responded to a feedback survey said they connected with someone they didn't know in the centre and 86% said they have a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood.

For some organisations, the positive wellbeing impact they are having is because of the community they are creating through their service, by linking people who have shared life experiences and offering a safe and supportive place for them to explore their identity, for example at Off the Record.

We know that this sort of chain leads to greater civic participation and a greater likelihood of individuals being inspired and confident enough to take on leadership roles within their own communities. At this stage in the programme there is less concrete reported evidence of the latter.

"We have observed that many young people create meaningful connections and friendships with one another through attending our sessions, which contributes to their wellbeing..."

Off the Record – Facilitator Observation

Individual case study 1: Mo's story

Organisation: **Changes Bristol**

Outcomes chain:

- ❖ Engaged in wellbeing activity
- ❖ Supported to make connections
- ❖ Connected to their community
- ❖ Less isolated
- ❖ **Wellbeing improved**
- ❖ **Participating in community life**

Mo is an asylum seeker and his engagement with Changes began with a welcome call. He attended a session where he 'felt welcomed by everyone' and continued to engage. Some weeks later he enquired about volunteering...

In Mo's words:

"Volunteering has given me the confidence to talk to others. It is something I struggle with, going somewhere new and being nervous, it stops me doing what I like. But with Changes, I felt comfortable from the first day I started attending. That's why it didn't take me long to start volunteering."



Figure 11: Photograph from Changes Bristol

3.3.3 Chains of events: Agency & wellbeing

The links and dependencies between outcomes

Wellbeing through access and agency



Figure 12: Example chain of events of Access, Agency and Wellbeing

Agency & Wellbeing

'Increasing people's knowledge of their rights' has not been identified as a planned outcome for any Medium/Large grant organisation. However, 9 organisations have articulated having an impact on this outcome in their End of Year 2 report. Half of these organisations are part of the Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service, whose planned outcomes include people being more confident to report hate crimes and being able to manage discrimination, the early indicators of which are a knowledge and awareness of rights.

Organisations are reporting an increase in people's confidence to deal with agencies, although not explicitly independently. The complexities and challenges facing organisations working with people in or near crisis, means although access is improved and participants are gaining some agency (and improved wellbeing through feeling less isolated) it is not yet enough for holistic independence, or for more ambitious approaches to community representation and policy influence. It would be worth exploring the factors that would enable this transition from individual outcomes to representation and influence at community level.

“A group of older women in Ashton Vale are working with us to build a campaign to reinstate the buses. We are now pushing First Bus and the WECA Mayor to act, and the support of BOPF members will be at the vanguard of this campaign”

Bristol Older People's Forum

Individual case study 2: Mr B's story

Organisation – Bristol Law Centre

Outcomes chain:

- ❖ Knowledge of rights
- ❖ Feel less isolated and lonely
- ❖ Confident to deal with agencies independently



ADVICE IS FREE

Figure 13: Image from Bristol Law Centre

Securing a positive outcome after challenging employer's failure to make reasonable adjustments to help employee continue to work with their disability...

Mr B had multiple health issues, but no adjustments were made at his work-place. Following an operation and long-term absence he was in too much pain to return to work and sought support from Bristol Law Centre to be declared eligible for ill-health retirement. Bristol Law Centre gave ongoing advice and support to Mr B to compile the evidence needed to support the application and prepare for various meetings. Mr B was finally deemed eligible in summer 2023.

3.3.4 Chains of events: Skills, jobs & wellbeing

The links and dependencies between outcomes

Wellbeing through skills and jobs

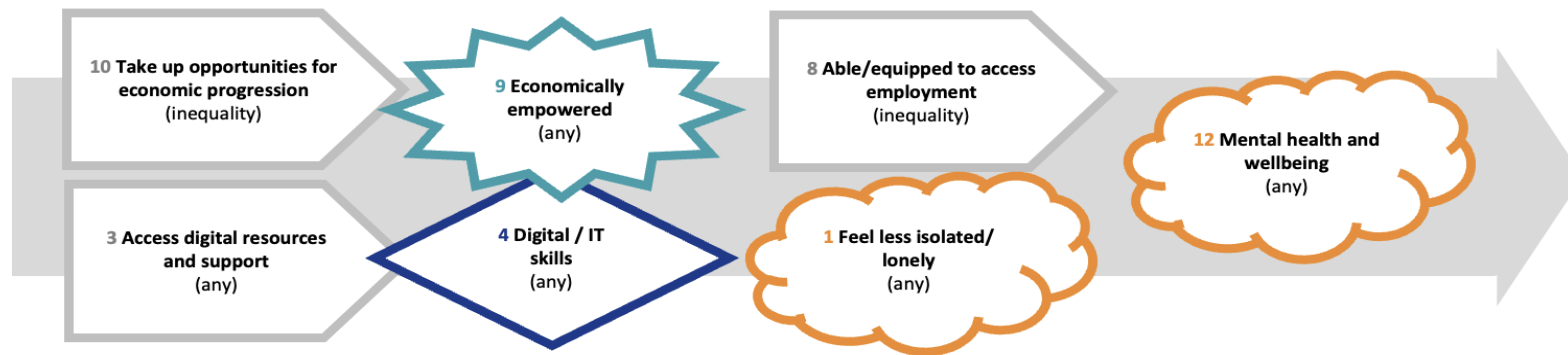


Figure 14: Example chain of events relating to Access, Skills and Wellbeing. The shapes and colours denote different outcome types as shown on [slides 61 and 62](#)

Skills and wellbeing

Access to support and skills development can lead to increased confidence and career progression if individuals have access to employment opportunities. And being economically empowered leads to a better quality of life and wellbeing overall.

There are several organisations supporting people through this chain of events but with little opportunity or capacity to measure change beyond the immediate impact of their service.

Two of the four organisations planning to improve digital skills have reported positive impacts for participants. Some with this as a target outcome but lacking direct evidence from participants' experiences, were able to report on increasing reach and building relationships with community members.

Southmead Development Trust have reported success with their accessible Techy Tea Party and there is a clear chain of outcomes leading to reduced isolation and improvements in wellbeing.

“I never thought I would be thankful for my monster. I had no idea of the world it could open-up for me. I’m really grateful for techy tea party and I have made some new friends too.”

Southmead Development Trust, Techy Tea Party Participant

Individual case study 3: Sue's story

Organisation: **Southmead Development Trust**

Outcomes chain:

- ❖ Access to digital resources and support
- ❖ Digital/IT skills
- ❖ Feel less isolated/lonely
- ❖ **Improved mental health and wellbeing**



Figure 15: Photograph from Southmead Development Trust

Aged 75, Sue had a laptop but didn't know where to start. Affectionately known as the monster by Sue, her laptop sat in the corner of the room unopened. Sue is widowed and currently lives on her own and didn't have anyone in her social network who could show her the digital ropes. At Techy Tea Party Sue learned the fundamentals of switching on her laptop, using the mousepad, and the accessibility function in her settings. As Sue's confidence grew, she wanted to use social media to connect with friends and family and to use email and attach documents and photos.

Sue is no longer afraid and no longer digitally excluded.

4. Critical success factors and challenges

4.1 Equitable funding

Intentional funding decisions

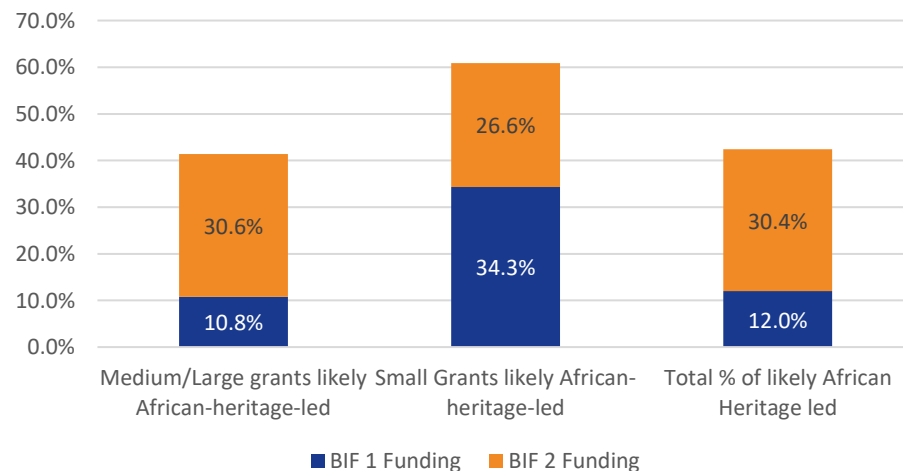
The BIF2 programme has a unique approach to distribution of funding, with intentional equitable funding decisions and small grant funding offered to some organisations without a financial or governance track record, but with evidence of being embedded in their community. This means that organisations that wouldn't otherwise have access to public funding have successfully applied.

The intentionality to address the inequity of previous funding has been a lifeline for many of the funded organisations. This approach has prioritised organisations that are 'of their community' particularly in terms of Black, Asian and Minoritised ethnic-led organisations and Disabled People-led organisations.

As a result of intentional funding decisions, we see a considerable increase (18%) in the proportion of funding going to Black Asian and Minoritised ethnic-led groups between BIF1 and BIF2.

The development of the People's Voice Project further demonstrates the intentional funding approach. At the start of BIF2, it was recognised that no organisation exists in Bristol led by Disabled People with learning difficulties. £200,000 was set aside to support the self-determination and self-organisation of Disabled People with learning difficulties. An initial piece of research was led by Bristol City Council's Inclusive Community Facilitator - Disability Equality. Three Disabled people with learning difficulties were employed to work with the Inclusive Community Facilitator - Disability Equality to explore community interest in forming a new organisation. Following a positive result, a call for Expressions of Interest went out to organisations who could take forward the next stage of work. WECIL was selected and will work to support the People's Voice Project. The grant is to develop an organisation which brings people with Learning Difficulties together, supports them to take action on things that are important to them and strengthens their voice and influence in the city.

Figure 16: Proportion of BIF1 and BIF2 funding to likely African heritage led organisations



Equitable funding

Intentional funding decisions

Applying a relational approach to the application process and the implementation of development funding for some organisations (so they didn't just have to focus purely on delivery), has enabled a broader range of organisations to be funded. BSWN facilitated conversations with organisations that helped the City Council gain an understanding of why Black-led organisations hadn't been funded historically. As a result, in order to improve the reach of the fund, applications were looked at individually and within a context, rather than a blanket approach.

Closer working relationships between teams in the Council's Communities Service has supported this approach and led to knowledge and practice sharing, which in turn has meant a more coordinated package of support for community organisations. The Council has also focused on encouraging applications from LGBTQ+ led organisations and, working with Bristol Funders Network and Voscur, has supported one successful application to the most recent BIF small grants programme.

The changing and often limited capacity of the Community Resources team to manage and support the range of needs of grant holders has occasionally hampered relationship building. Often, more resource is spent supporting organisations where there are significant challenges or needs that require continual support.

"The support package and a relational approach is very powerful. The team don't realise how transformative it is!"

Sado Jirde, Director, Black South West Network

4.2 The way the programme is delivered

Understanding what works to deliver on outcomes for communities and the VCSE sector

Our reflection workshop with the steering group highlighted some of the most successful aspects of the delivery of the BIF programme that have helped to build better, more trusting relationships between the Council and community organisations and supported organisational confidence, skills.

- **Positive empowering relationships and communication**

Communication between funders, grant holders and wider sector support partners is working well now and stakeholders feel that there are more trusting and equal relationships between the three groups. This includes grant holders feeling that they are able to negotiate and discuss priorities with the Community Resources team and are actively involved in making decisions about programme development. There are 10 organisations on the new BIF Steering Group, 8 of which attended the last meeting in April 2024.

- **Clarity of the evaluation process**

Although there have been some early challenges with the evaluation programme and support, including a change of consultant after Year 1 of the programme, grant holders say there is now more clarity on expectations, process and the support available for each BIF2 organisation.

- **Accessibility**

A continual process of reflection and adaptation led by the

Community Resources team and evaluation consultants means accessibility is increasing. There is careful consideration of event timings, location, platform and access (digital and physical), and provision of BSL interpretation. There are still some issues with the end-of-year report template, which need to be ironed out in order to be inclusive of the range of capacity, confidence and expertise across the grant holder cohort, but there is progress in the additional support offered by the Community Resources team and an open approach to more accessible reporting.

- **Facilitating skills and peer sharing**

Grant holders who regularly attend workshops, events, training and online drop-ins note the added value this offers to learn together as a cohort. There are numerous references citing skills development, networking and the opportunity to apply or try out different evaluation techniques in a safe environment. Some organisations are taking their learning back to their own organisations to embed these skills.

“[We have gained] insights from organisations that we have used to inform other areas of our work and the VCSE sector.”

BIF 2 Grant holder

4.3 The BIF Ways of Working

Understanding what works for community organisations to deliver on outcomes

The data shows that *inclusive, relational and place-based* approaches are most central to success reaching into and engaging with diverse communities, building accessible and inclusive environments, developing initiatives that are grounded in and cater for community needs and fostering strong trust-based relationships.

The 7 BIF2 Ways of Working (seen in more detail in the Appendices) were established to help to fund organisations focusing on approaches that would achieve the overall goal and impacts of the BIF2 programme. They were developed alongside community organisations to be reflective of existing strong practice.

All 7 of the Ways of Working are seen as important to BIF2 grant holders. The most prevalent that have contributed to success at this stage are **inclusive, relational** and **place-based**.

Overall, the prevalence of these themes indicates a sector that is deeply engaged with and responsive to the communities it serves. It points to embedded approaches that are inclusive, collaborative and rooted in the unique landscape of each community. This reflects a sector that is evolving to meet complex social needs with a rich tapestry of strategies that are as diverse as the communities themselves.

Most cited 'Ways of Working'

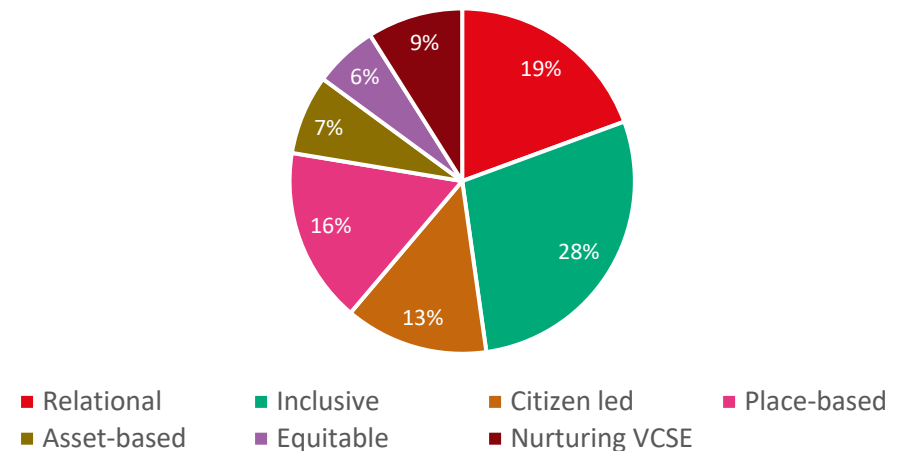


Figure 17: BIF 2 Grant Holder Ways of Working. Frequency of citation in End of Year reports 2023.

The BIF Ways of Working

Understanding what works to deliver on outcomes

Grant holders emphasise the need for effective use of assets and resources to deliver outcomes, but were keen to point out the challenges facing communities in crisis.

The lesser frequency of themes like ‘asset-based’ and ‘equitable’ could be because these are fundamentally embedded in organisational approaches anyway. Or it may be attributable to current social inequality, cost-of-living, housing and fuel poverty crises alongside increases in hate crime and mental health issues, creating a focus on crisis management.

Many of the BIF2 organisations report working with people and communities experiencing extreme challenges to health and basic living conditions, including not being able to feed their own families, not having access to crucial mental health support or suitable accommodation, or having no accessible travel options to help them connect with others.

An asset-based approach has long been a pillar of effective community support and is recognised as crucial to community health. The Power of Us¹ report acknowledges the richness of skills, talents, ideas and experience within communities and the need to embed participatory decision making at a local level.

“Creating the conditions for health through community requires commitment from everyone; individual, business, the NHS, the voluntary sector, the local authority and of course, communities themselves...”

The Power of Us, Public Health Report, 2023

However, taking an asset-based approach presents some challenges during times of crisis where assets may be limited and the pressures of providing basic needs prevail. While wellbeing is a long-term goal for many BIF2 projects, it also serves as an essential early step that must be achieved before individuals can make progress beyond simply surviving.

The programme’s flexible funding approach means that the team are able to respond to emerging needs and in 2024 offered the M/L grants a 10% uplift for Years 3 and 4 in recognition of the pressure that the rise in cost-of-living has placed on VCSE orgs and their ability to deliver grant funded activities (both costs and demand).



Figure 18: Ways of working word cloud

1 The Power of Us, Public Health Annual Report for Bristol City Council 2023 (<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/policies-plans-and-strategies/social-care-and-health/director-of-public-health-annual-report>)

Ways of Working: The critical success factors for BIF2 projects



Figure 20: Photo credit:
African Voices Forum

RELATIONAL

Much of our work is supporting people to rebuild their trust in connecting with others, modelling positive friendships where they are confident to talk to others about their feelings and mental health. Additionally, our befrienders encourage people to think through support needs they may have and where they can find support."

Changes Bristol

INCLUSIVE

"Rather than looking at differences, we believe in working around 'common ground' between the generations. This is a core belief set out in our manifesto. We understand the dynamics of ageism and its connection with other forms of inequality..."

Bristol Older People's Forum

Figure 19: Photo credit: Bristol
Older People's Forum

PLACE BASED

"This is ... part of us being place based, because we are connected to the community through our location and our members, we continue to use our capacity to build strong, connections which sees people coming together, adding in and being self-organised to shape the future direction of the area in which they live."

African Voices Forum



Figure 21: Photo credit:
Changes Bristol

4.4 The challenges

Understanding the barriers to development

The most frequently mentioned challenges for BIF grant holders relate to the evaluation and reporting requirements of the programme. Some of the main external challenges relate to sector capacity and ability to respond to constantly changing socio-economic circumstances and community needs.

Challenges around evaluation delivery and reporting requirements are already being addressed by the Council, MB Associates team and the BIF2 Steering Committee. External challenges include the increasing need from local communities, a lack of capacity to respond to this coupled with decreasing and more competitive funding pots for the VCSE sector. These challenges are more likely to be enduring and present barriers to long-term organisational development, delivery and resilience.

1. Whole cohort workshops

Whilst there is overall appreciation of the value of BIF learning and evaluation support, there is also some learning for the Community Resources and MB teams. Grant holders are varied in their experience, skills and confidence with evaluation, meaning that for some, the amount of new information is overwhelming with little time back in 'the office' to apply the learning. For some organisations, more 1:1 support is needed.

2. Data gathering

Consistent support for data gathering has come late in the programme, due to a change in evaluation consultants after Year 1 of the programme. This hampered effective evaluation and compounded existing confusion about what to gather and when. There is still considerable unresolved debate about the need for, format, structure and process for gathering EDI data from participants. In response to

feedback from community groups, the Community Resources team is reviewing monitoring requirements. And for some organisations who have not previously received large grant funding, there are not the systems and processes in place for the kind of monitoring and evaluation that the BIF fund requires.

3. End-of-year reporting

The EOY report form is a real barrier for many organisations, in particular those who may not have done prior evaluation and reporting. BSWN note that there are instances where the reporting process is causing individual stress. Although MB Associates is working to create a more accessible report format there is room for Bristol City Council to use its relational and innovative approach to grant funding, to redefine what good accessible reporting could be.

4. Capacity, including volunteering

Lack of capacity, staff churn and increasing demand for services means that managing workload is challenging. The reliance of the VCSE sector on volunteers compounds this and leaves it vulnerable when there is a change in the volunteer pool. Some organisations have reported increased difficulty recruiting and suggest there may be a decrease in the overall number of volunteers in Bristol.

Capacity challenges and staff churn both prevent the adaptive and flexible approaches needed to respond to changing community needs, stated earlier in this report. The pressure created by lack of capacity also has a negative impact on existing staff wellbeing.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The crucial role of Bristol Impact Fund

Bristol City Council invests in grant funding to fulfil its strategic priorities for the people of Bristol. The Bristol Impact Fund is a crucial programme for empowering local communities to self-organise to support themselves. We see the fund building stronger organisations, where there has been ongoing engagement with the programme, whilst bolstering the voluntary sector ecosystem across its diversity. There is also strong evidence of impact on the quality of life of the individuals that these organisations work with, for whom there are often no other forms of support.

Whilst this report advocates the life changing impacts that BIF2 community organisations can have with relatively little funding, this sector is still operating on a knife edge. This follows wave after wave of challenge, from COVID, to the cost-of-living crisis and a reduction in statutory services which the VCSE sector bears the weight of.

The significance of investing in organisations that may not have otherwise received funding support cannot be underestimated. And supporting whole organisational development rather than just delivery, over multiple years, is proving to be transformational for some organisations. BSWN have seen an increase in organisations at wider sector meetings. The funding has elevated the 'voice' of more organisations, which in turn strengthens the sector. Without continued investment and support from the Council and sector development organisations, we would not see the progress demonstrated in this report.

Along with being inclusive and place-based, the relational approach is one of the most important ways of working for BIF2 organisations, but it is resource heavy and time consuming. Future funding rounds must take into account these challenges as funding timelines and budgets are agreed.

The increased level of attendance at the last workshop demonstrates an improvement in the trust and relationship that the Community Resources team and the evaluators have with grant holders. And the enthusiasm by community organisations to take part in local decision making is similarly demonstrated by expressions of interest in and attendance at the BIF Steering Group. To maintain this momentum and continue to effectively build communities of practice, the Community Resources team need to continue to work in partnership with wider BCC teams and external partners.

Additional support is needed to create a sustained cohort or community of practice. Effective collaborating, partnering and even networking, all need time, resource and external facilitation, but it is clear there is value in coming together to share skills and experience. This relies again on the partnership between BCC, Voscur and BSWN.

5.2 Recommendations

How the programme can make more of a difference

Bristol City Council should

1. Continue to fund the BIF programme and support better joined-up working across community teams focusing on targeted support for the VCSE sector.
2. Consider the benefits of commissioning a whole programme Social Return on Investment study as an alternative to future evaluations to provide a value ratio that justifies the programme investment.
3. Continue focused and responsive work with the Steering Committee to inform the future of the fund.

The Community Resources Team should

1. Factor in additional and ongoing 1:1 or small group support and resources for some organisations.
2. Maintain a flexible approach to working with grant holders and responding to organisational challenges.
3. Continue to review and reflect on the perceived tensions between being asset-based vs providing basic support for people in crisis that many organisations are grappling with.
4. Use BIF2 project targets to support monitoring conversations rather than for reporting. The language of and focus on targets sets the wrong precedence, giving a perverse incentive for reaching this figure rather than focusing on outcomes.

5. Continue to facilitate the sharing of new ideas, practice and skills across the BIF2 grant holder cohort, securing early input from different organisations at each in-person event.
6. Continue to focus on supporting communities of practice within the cohort to enable more effective use of the Learning Fund.
7. Support a more focused approach to evaluating longer term community empowerment, representation and influence outcomes.

BIF2 funded projects should

1. Apply and embed their evaluation learning to understand better their outcomes in relation to representation, influence and agency, whether these are identified or unexpected outcomes.
2. Continue to build on networks and more formal partnerships within the sector, using the BIF cohort as a key place to support this.
3. Embed practice-sharing of new approaches, tools or ideas across the BIF cohort, whenever they are developed.
4. Consider co-creating an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion data statement to preface any data gathering and train staff and volunteers to use this.

Appendices

BIF 2 Funded organisations

Small, medium and large grant holders

List of organisations awarded small grants in rounds 1 and 2

Small Grants Round 1

Small grant S1	Bangladesh Association
Small grant S2	Black Mothers Matter
Small grant S3	Bristol Somali Youth Voice
Small grant S4	Filwood Hope Advice Centre
Small grant S5	Grassroots Communities
Small grant S6	Hartcliffe Club for Young People
Small grant S7	Job Network Bristol
Small grant S8	Malcom X community Centre
Small grant S9	Opoka
Small grant S10	Southmead Somali association
Small grant S11	The Misfits Theatre Company

Small Grants Round 2

Small grant S1	Black Mothers Matter
Small grant S2	Bricks
Small grant S3	Bristol Polish Women's Group
Small grant S4	Bristol Queer People of Colour Socials
Small grant S5	Bristol Refugee Festival
Small grant S6	Bristol Women's Voice
Small grant S7	Friends of Hillfields Library
Small grant S8	Hillfields Community Garden
Small grant S9	Greater Stockwood Alliance
Small grant S10	One Green Kitchen
Small grant S11	The Misfits Theatre Company
Small grant S12	Working Young (Hartcliffe Bikes)
Small grant S13	Friends of the Park (Oldbury Court/Vassalls Park)

List of organisations awarded Medium and Large grants

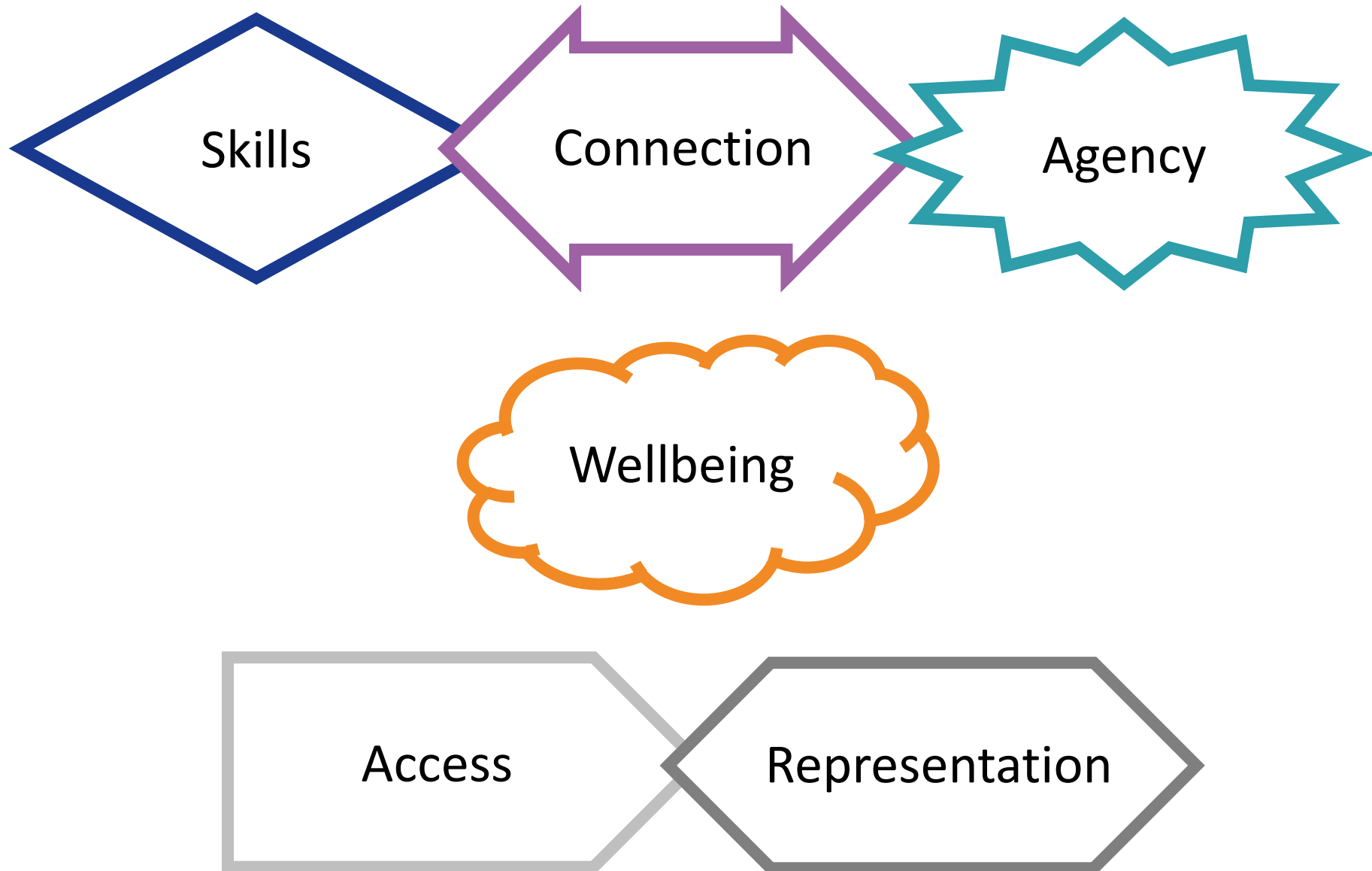
M/L grant 1	1625 Independent People
M/L grant 2	African Voices Forum
M/L grant 3	Ambition Lawrence Weston
M/L grant 4	Autism Independence
M/L grant 5	BHC&DC Bristol Hate Crime & Discrimination Service (BHC&DS) x 6 below
M/L grant 6	WECIL
M/L grant 7	Bristol Disability Equality Forum
M/L grant 8	Bristol Older People's Forum
M/L grant 9	BRASP Bristol Refugee & Asylum Seeker Partnership (BRASP) x 4 below
M/L grant 10	Bristol Refugee Rights with Refugee Women of Bristol
M/L grant 11	Borderlands
M/L grant 12	Bristol Hospitality Network
M/L grant 13	Project MAMA (Maternity Action for Migrants and Asylum seekers)

List of organisations awarded Medium and Large grants continued

M/L grant 10	Bristol Somali Resource Centre
M/L grant 11	Bristol Women's Voice
M/L grant 12	Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People
M/L grant 13	Changes Bristol
M/L grant 14	Community in Partnership Knowle West
M/L grant 15	Eastside Community, Trinity & Somali Kitchen
M/L grant 16	Full Circle/Talo/Bristol Horn/Vocalise: building equity and capacity of BME communities in Central and Inner East Bristol
M/L grant 17	Knowle West Health Park
M/L grant 18	Knowle West Media Centre
M/L grant 19	Lawrence Weston Community Farm
M/L grant 20	Southmead Development trust: community building and recovery in Southmead
M/L grant 21	Step Together Volunteering
M/L grant 22	Ujima Radio
M/L grant 23	Wellspring Settlement (with Talking Money and CHAS)
M/L grant 24	Windmill Hill City Farm

Impact on people is defined by 24 outcomes

Outcomes are especially for those experiencing the greatest inequality – they fall into six types



The 24 outcomes

1-14 are about individuals, 15-17 are about communities and 18-24 are about a more resilient VCSE sector

Key:
 wellbeing
 agency
 access and active and progress
 skills, knowledge, capability
 connect/community
 representation

	Summary	Full outcome	Theme
1	Loneliness	People feel less isolated / lonely	Wellbeing
2	Know rights	People experiencing the greatest inequality have improved knowledge of their rights and services available to them	Access and active progress
3	Digital access	More people are able to access digital resources and support	Access and active progress
4	Digital skills	People gain digital / IT skills	Skills
5	Report hate	More people feel confident to report hate incidents	Agency
6	Feel safer	People affected by hate crime & discrimination feel safer	Wellbeing
7	Engage with agencies	People are confident to/able to deal with agencies independently	Agency
8	Engage with employment	People experiencing the greatest inequality are better able to/better equipped to access employment or self-employment	Access and active progress
9	Economic empowerment	People feel more economically empowered	Agency
10	Economic progression	More people experiencing the greatest inequality take up opportunities for economic progression (e.g taking up new roles, back to work, setting up own business, further education, volunteering etc)	Access and active progress
11	Less stress	People experiencing the greatest inequality feel less stressed	Wellbeing
12	Wellbeing	People's mental health and wellbeing improves	Wellbeing
13	Able to manage discrimination	People affected by hate crime/discrimination are better able to manage	Agency
14	Engage with wellbeing	More people engage in wellbeing activities	Access and active progress
15	Supported to connect	People feel supported to make connections	Connect/community
16	Connected to community	People feel more connected to their community	Connect/community
17	Engage in community	People participate more in community life	Connect/community
18	VCSE more representative	My VCSE organisation becomes more representative of the community it serves	Representation
19	Policy better informed	Local policy or strategic decisions are informed by diverse and marginalised views and experiences	Representation
20	Leadership roles	More people who experience the greatest inequality take on leadership roles within their community	Agency
21	Self-organise	People who experience the greatest inequality (people from under-represented groups) are better equipped to self-organise to take action on issues that are important to them	Agency
22	Voice	People from under-represented groups (or people experiencing the greatest inequality) have increased voice and influence in their community	Agency
23	Access decision-makers	People from under-represented groups (or people experiencing the greatest inequality) have better access to decision-makers in the City	Representation
24	Organisation resilience	Increased resilience of VCSE organisations / My VCSE organisation (or VCSE organisations supported) have increased resilience and ability to respond to external challenges	Skills

Outcomes match to the Quality of Life survey

Bristol's Quality of Life survey asks many questions that are relevant and can be used with the BIF outcomes

	Summary	Full outcome	Thematic priorities
1	Loneliness	% who rarely or never feel close to other people	Mental health & wellbeing
2	Know rights	% who lack the information to get involved in their community	Community identified
3	Digital access	% whose lack of accessible communications and processes prevent them from accessing the internet	Digital inclusion
4	Digital skills	% comfortable using digital services	Digital inclusion
5	Report hate	% victim of age/disability/religious/sexual orientation/racial/sex discrimination or harassment in the last year	Hate crime
6	Feel safer	% whose fear of crime affects their day-to-day lives	Mental health & wellbeing
7	Engage with agencies	% satisfied with the way Bristol City Council runs things	Community identified
8	Engage with employment	% who know where to get information, advice and guidance about employment and training	Economic inclusion
9	Economic empowerment	% whose money problems stop them from getting involved in their community	Economic inclusion
10	Economic progression	% who have taken part in learning or training in the last year	Economic inclusion
11	Less stress	% whose emotional / mental ill health prevents them from leaving their home when they want to	Mental health & wellbeing
12	Wellbeing	% satisfied with life % who do enough regular exercise each week	Mental health & wellbeing
13	Able to manage discrimination	No relevant question	Hate crime
14	Engage with wellbeing	% who participate in cultural activities at least once a month % who visit Bristol's parks and green spaces at least once a week	Mental health & wellbeing
15	Supported to connect	% for whom transport issues stop them from getting involved in their community	Stronger more connected communities
16	Connected to community	% who help out their neighbours	Stronger more connected communities
17	Engage in community	% who volunteer or help out in their community at least 3 times a year	Stronger more connected communities
18	VCSE more representative	No relevant question	More resilient VCSE sector
19	Policy better informed	No relevant question	More resilient VCSE sector
20	Leadership roles	No relevant question	More resilient VCSE sector
21	Self-organise	No relevant question	More resilient VCSE sector
22	Voice	No relevant question	More resilient VCSE sector
23	Access decision-makers	% satisfied with the way BCC asks for their views before it makes changes that affect them	More resilient VCSE sector
24	Organisation resilience	No relevant question	More resilient VCSE sector

The BIF2 Ways of Working

7 principles and approaches that support effective community work

The ways of working:

Way of working	Examples
Equitable	Demonstrate positive action to redress inequity (level up) Build and strengthen equalities-led groups (which often work city wide)
Inclusive	Be proactive and intentional about inclusion Remove physical, attitudinal, cultural, environmental and economic barriers Find respectful, creative ways to empower people and communities who are routinely excluded from community and city life
Asset* based	Take the time to discover, then build on the assets that are already in the community *Assets are people – our interests, time, experience, skills, networks, community and voluntary groups. Assets are also money, buildings, land, the local corner shop, nursery, sheltered housing, businesses and services.
Place based	Continue to build strong, connected communities where people come together, self-organise and shape the future of their communities Encourage many more people to connect and expand the opportunities in their local area
Relational/ Relationship-oriented	Connect people to people, people to power and organisations to each other
Citizen-led	Encourage and nurture citizen action - by and for the people Encourage and enable community-led activity – people with shared experience or interest coming together to find solutions Grow collective skills, knowledge, confidence, curiosity and self-determination
Nurturing the community and voluntary sector eco-system	Strengthen organisations which can help tackle the structural inequality Encourage larger organisations to share their assets (by which we mean people, skills, experience as well as potentially buildings and other physical resources) with smaller organisations & informal networks to build community connection and collaboration Encourage organisations to have deep roots into communities Foster cultures of learning and co-creation

Figure List

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