



North Yorkshire  
County Council

# The Stronger Communities Programme in North Yorkshire

## Learning Review 2018-2022



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Foreword

Executive Summary

Programme Achievements

People: Outcomes for Individuals

Places: Outcomes for Organisations

Power: Outcomes for Communities

Learning Lessons

The Stronger Way

The Future

# Foreword

This learning review forms part of a structured independent evaluation of the Stronger Communities Programme since 2018.

Annual reports have been published since that time which follow the Programme's evolution from its fourth to eight year of operation in North Yorkshire.

Evidence has comprised analysis of all monitoring data for the period, pre- and post-surveys with over 300 hundred voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises (VCSEs) receiving grants and support, over 340 volunteers supporting the pandemic and the development of over 70 deep-dive case studies designed to understand how the Programme creates success.

The focus of this final report is on the learning lessons from the Programme's implementation in order to retain the key ingredients of its approach transitioning into the new North Yorkshire Council from April 2023.

The report is divided into chapters aligned to the Programme's strategy to 2030 which seeks to create the conditions for improved community wellbeing and resilience.

**People** – with an emphasis on outcomes for individuals / residents

**Places** – with an emphasis on outcomes for VCSEs and local assets

**Power** – with an emphasis on outcomes for communities / systems

A detailed report is available from the Stronger Communities Programme's Head of Service, Marie-Ann Jackson MBE, which contains a full review of achievements, outcomes, case studies and exemplars of practice.

## Abbreviations used in this summary

- ⚙ ABCD: Asset Based Community Development
- ⚙ APL: Approved Provider List
- ⚙ CSO: Community Support Organisation
- ⚙ LGA: Local Government Association
- ⚙ LGR: Local Government Reorganisation
- ⚙ NYLAF: North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund
- ⚙ SCDM: Stronger Communities Delivery Manager
- ⚙ SCP: Stronger Communities Programme
- ⚙ TPS: The Place Standard
- ⚙ VCSE: Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

# Executive Summary

The Stronger Communities Programme has consistently punched above its weight. Comprising seven skilful community developers, a Head of Service and Development Officer the Team has established a reputation for delivering success against the odds time and again.

Its high profile originated from the success of supporting the transition of 21 libraries into community ownership. Next came the launch of a courageous Investment Prospectus that encouraged grassroots social action in more communities via small grants, and larger longer-term VCSE collaborations never tried before. Outcomes from these approaches have been proven to endure, develop and grow post-intervention.

Having increased its reach, the Programme piloted innovative place-based approaches working with communities to tackle outcomes such as loneliness, social and digital isolation whilst all the time encouraging the Five Ways to Wellbeing. New services meeting local needs have also emerged from purposeful VCSE capacity building support.

With a prominent role managing the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund, the Programme's grant management expertise has attracted the interest of diverse system partners across public health, adult social care, social mobility and early help keen to connect with VCSE and community assets.

The Programme was entrusted with a stewardship role of mental health, self-harm and suicide prevention grants as well as the Essential Life Skills Fund setting the stage for supporting further complex programmes most recently. The Programme helped showcase VCSE capability through demonstrator projects and by locating these grants in communities.

The Programme's role in supporting the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic is becoming iconic, certainly award-winning, proof positive that all the work to build VCSE relationships from 2014 paid dividend when creating the Community Support Organisation (CSO) role and mobilising that network in just 4 days back in March 2020.



Since 2018, the Programme's (six-fold) growth in accountability for large, complex County-wide hardship support initiatives to reach the most vulnerable residents is evidence of the trust that senior leaders invest in the Programme.

In short, the Programme has far exceeded its original purpose. It has also responded comprehensively to the LGA peer challenge of 2016 in broadening its reach and becoming a force for change and development.

It has built VCSE and community confidence; strengthened, sometimes rescued, strategic assets and services whilst contributing to the improvement of social connectedness, improving wellbeing, reducing inequalities and supporting community resilience. It is imperative that 'The Stronger Way' is retained and embedded in the new North Yorkshire Council from April 2023 if the promise of community empowerment is to be realised.

# Programme Achievements (outputs)

## 1,100 community projects

**supported** since 2018<sup>1</sup> to stimulate social action, meet community needs, improve wellbeing, address inequalities and grow VCSE and grassroots capacity and organisational development.

This figure includes community grants and / or organisational awards as well as collaborative place-based and thematic projects but not awards to individual residents through 'hardship' or welfare assistance related funding.

### Geographical reach

Projects have been delivered in **over 200 communities<sup>2</sup>** across North Yorkshire from estates to small neighbourhoods, to market towns and their hinterland, to rural sparse locations and villages to the coastal strip and main towns of the County.

### Organisational / group reach

**Over 600 VCSEs/community groups<sup>3</sup>** have received financial and relational support from the Programme

**70%** of small grant applicants were typically 'new' or first timers

### Resident reach

An estimated **100,000 residents** benefited from the Programme between 2015 and 2020<sup>4</sup>

At least **60,000 residents** were reached by the Programme between 2020 and 2021<sup>5</sup>

## Pandemic response

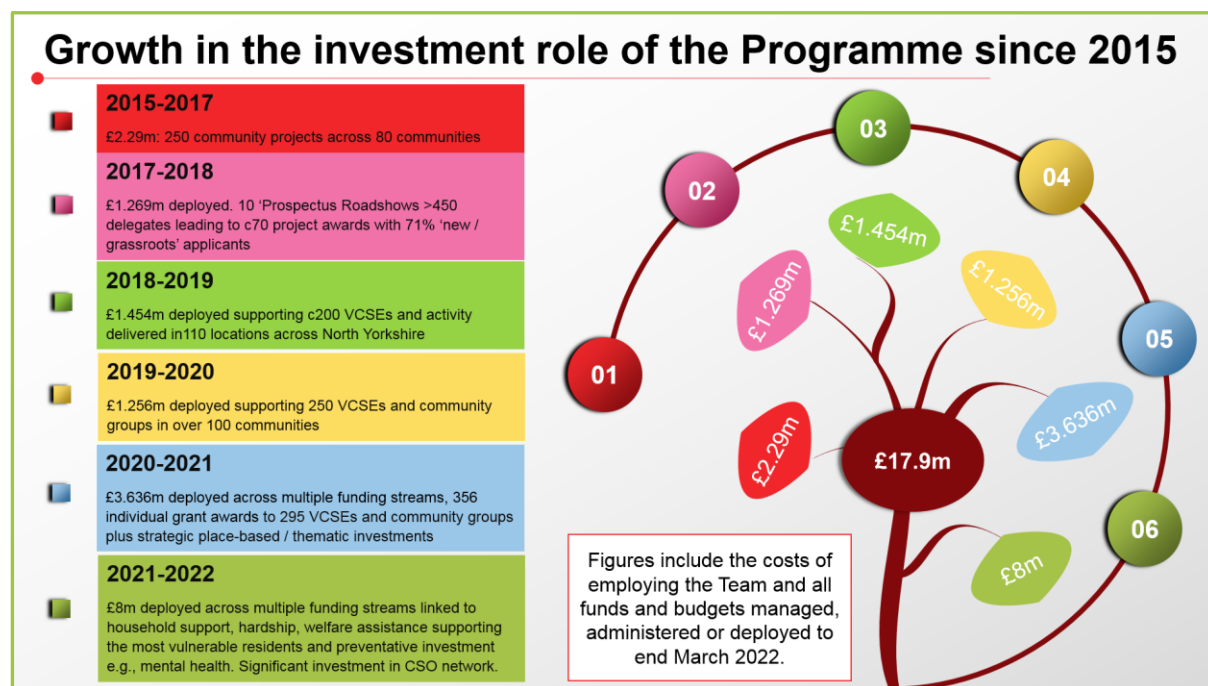
Investment in **23 Community Support Organisations** as a response to the pandemic enabled a wider network of over **150 grassroots organisations** and wider system (health, care, education, libraries, leisure, and local business) partners in North Yorkshire to support communities



## 2021-2022 household/resident reach

**> 100,000 residents** may have been reached with the Programme's support via complex programmes such as the Household Support Fund and NYLAF reaching 20,624 and 4,274 households each. Mental health programmes reached 10,000 people; food-related support programmes reached 24,000 people (some double counting is likely in these figures). The NHS app engaged 5,000 people and 1,000 children were supported by the Grow and Learn school readiness activities. Over 10,000 people were supported by the CSO network and community grants funded 161 projects reaching 45,000 people.

# Programme Achievements (outputs)



There has been a six-fold increase in the scale of investment deployed by the Team in the past 4 years to end March 2022.

## Return on investment

Small grants varied from £1.88 to **£2.81** for every £1 invested between 2018 and 2021

Achieve Together Projects averaged a return of **£3.27** for every £1 invested

## Social Value (experimental data)

CSOs delivered an estimated **£13.59** of social value for every £1 invested

Achieve Together Projects delivered up to **£19.13** for every £1 invested

## Leverage

**£3.45 million** of external funds as a result of SCP organisational development investment into VCSEs or place-based collaborations that would not have resulted in its absence.

**71%** of small grant project collaborated with others and 50% say this would not have happened in the absence of the Stronger Communities Programme.

**77%** of VCSEs engaged with the Programme were collaborating more than they had done before

## Enduring outcomes

**92%** of the activities and/or capital items supported by an Inspire grant continued at least 6 months to 2 years after the funding ended. **40%** of Projects have grown into something bigger or different – Inspire has acted as a stimulus for some small ideas to grow and evolve. **20%** is how much beneficiary targets are exceeded by Inspire Projects that continue within 2 years of the grant finishing.

# People: Outcomes for Individuals

The key outcomes for residents accessing community services and volunteers have been:

- |                                 |                           |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| ⚙ Improved social connectedness | ⚙ Improved wellbeing      | ⚙ Reduced inequalities    |
| ⚙ Improved sense of belonging   | ⚙ Improved social capital | ⚙ New skills e.g. digital |
| ⚙ Ability to survive hardship   | ⚙ Less risky behaviours   | ⚙ Reduced loneliness      |

## Evidence summary

### Small grants

Monitoring and evaluation of all community small grants activity over 4 years confirmed that local social action projects benefited a higher proportion of adults and older people in the early years, but improved engagement with children, families and multi-generations over time. There were positive and enduring outcomes observed up to 2 years post-funding. These projects had broad reach and found inclusive ways of engaging people facing adversity and disadvantage who might not typically participate. 16 deep dive case studies derived from a random sample of the projects correlated the grants with 5 ways to wellbeing outcomes – give, connect, be active, learn and take notice.

### Larger projects, place-based and VCSE capacity building investment

Achieve Together Project evaluation 2018-2020 confirmed an association with improved wellbeing outcomes, though measurement was not uniform across the Projects making it difficult to generalise. 5 deep dive case studies confirmed social connectedness benefits for residents accessing the support and services being provided as a consequence of a VCSE, or a partnership of VCSEs, developing their local service offers. There was also association found between the Programme's investment in place-based approaches (e.g. in Sleights, Colburn and the Upper Dales) and reduced feelings of social isolation, loneliness and digital exclusion.

### CSO Network

CSO evaluation 2020-2022 confirmed their contribution to residents' feelings of being cared for and not forgotten. They helped vulnerable people manage feelings of anxiety, hardship and lack of control. Experimental social value research with Boroughbridge Community Care 2020-2021 found they contributed a 20% mitigation of the negative wellbeing effects of COVID-19 for beneficiaries.

### CSO volunteer research

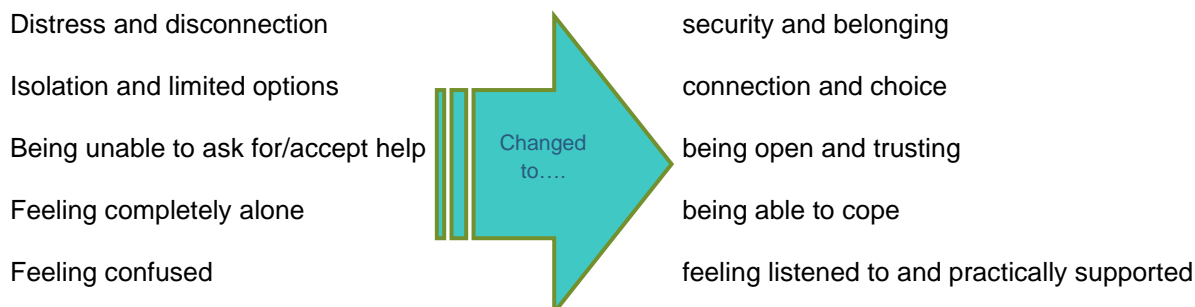
CSO volunteer research completed with 341 North Yorkshire residents correlated their voluntary experience with improved mental and emotional wellbeing, a sense of belonging and increased social capital through making new friends and networks. The other significant finding was the formation of new perspectives and changed attitudes about community needs, hardship and vulnerability, shaped by the volunteers coming into contact with people unlike themselves and whom they had not encountered before; in turn contributing to greater community cohesion.

Total case studies reviewed: 42

Projects reviewed: 520 (Inspire, COVID-19 community grants, Achieve Together and APL supported interventions)

# People: Outcomes for Individuals

## Wellbeing changes experienced by North Yorkshire residents (CSO Evaluation)



### CSO Volunteering Survey 2021 Results

**341 Responses**

**New Volunteers Came Forward**  
**12% for the First Time**

**Activities undertaken:**

- vaccination clinic **44%**
- shopping **43%**
- prescription delivery **42%**



#### Factors looking for in future volunteering role:

- 91%** feeling that your contribution is valuable
- 92%** having clear information and guidance
- 89%** Back up support in case things get tricky
- 84%** Having trusting relationships with others different from you
- 82%** Flexible, easy access, short-term opportunities

#### Volunteers got what they wanted from volunteering:

- A greater sense of belonging to my community (**85%**)
- A greater sense of purpose through helping others (**84%**)
- Awareness of what needs in my community (**81%**)
- Improved my sense of personal health and wellbeing (**72%**)



#### Future volunteering of interest:

- 62%** giving time on a regular basis
- 52%** being able to dip in and out of activities
- 45%** organising/helping run an activity or event
- 43%** providing transport/driving

#### Positive volunteer experience



**97% very satisfied or satisfied**



#### People volunteered to:

help community and/or others - **73%**  
respond to a national crisis - **51%**

**94%**

likely to continue volunteering in the longer term

The detailed 2021-22 report provides further insights about the benefits for residents accessing North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund, the Household Support Fund, the Holiday Activities and Food Fund, Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Programme, Reboot (digital inclusion), Defra food support, Community Mental Health Transformation and Staying Healthy, Independent and Connected.

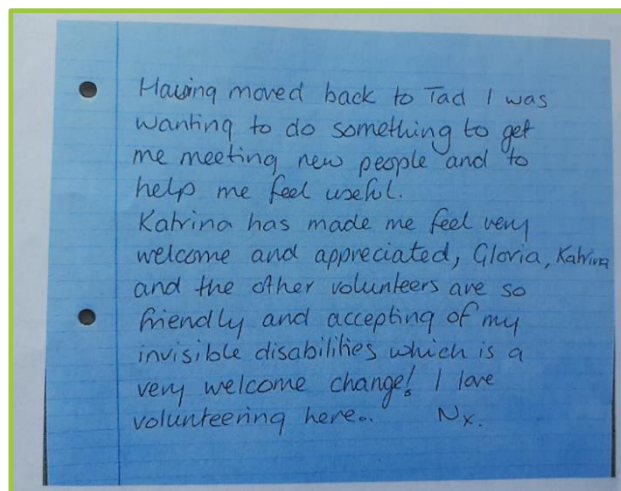
*"The NYLAF fund is very well managed and administered, it is an extremely effective and important offer of support to citizens of North Yorkshire and will be even more so in the next few years especially. The Development Officer keeps the show on the road basically." Head of Financial Assessments and Benefits, NYCC*

# People: Outcomes for Individuals

## Spotlight: Tadcaster

This heartfelt note from a resident who started using some services at Tadcaster Volunteer Cars and Services and Association, describes the clear sense of welcome she felt. Now as a volunteer she feels she belongs and is loved.

This is one of 15 similar stories collected for the Selby Stay Healthy, Independent and Connected wellbeing pilot delivered by 3 CSOs across the District. This approach was so successful it has been rolled out across North Yorkshire for 2023.



## Spotlight: Ripon

This short story is about a man living alone, suffering with a long term health issue, who found out about Ripon Community House through someone from their work.

It took him a couple of weeks to build courage to get in touch but found the staff to be friendly and helpful with positive consequences for his quality of life and sense of wellbeing.

*"I'm hopeful with the help I got, whereas before I could not see a way out of financial issues facing me. I feel less lonely. The volunteers are always welcoming and chatty. I feel better. I eat better which helps my diabetes. I don't feel like I'm being judged so I'm more likely to ask for help. If they don't know something they will always try to find out. If not for RCH my health would have suffered, and I would not know where else to go if I needed help."*

## Spotlight: Jayne (Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Programme)

Following her relocation to the area, multiple relationship difficulties, a loss of job, eating disorder, unsuitable home living conditions, problems with neighbours and a lack of a social network Jayne was skilfully supported by Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale Mind out of the group considered at high risk of depression and psychological distress. Nutritional support, landlord conversations, connection to a local environmental

campaigning group, relationship counselling and self-employment support were just some of the ways in which Jayne improved her mental wellbeing<sup>6</sup> score from 28 to 48 in a short period; and is looking to take up voluntary work for people with disabilities alongside building her business. But for the programme, the care, the skill and compassion shown, this story may not have ended so well.

# Places: Outcomes for organisations

The key outcomes for stronger VCSEs and community organisations have been:

- ⚙ Improved understanding of communities, with a higher profile and reach, to meet needs
- ⚙ Reconfigured operating model and (extended/new/better) services with motivated volunteers
- ⚙ Improved sustainability via more diverse income streams and / or leveraged external funding
- ⚙ Improved levels of collaboration with other place-based organisations

## Evidence summary

Longitudinal evaluation of Achieve Together Projects using a maturity matrix identified positive shifts in the way they were clearer about their mission, resources and relationships to realise their ambitions. A review of investments by the Programme to support VCSEs using consultants similarly identified these types of **added value** >>> things that would not have happened at all, in the same way, as quickly or to the same quality.

## Types of added value created by the Programme

### Grow

Adding value to organisations or groups to grow and improve their offer, reach and sustainability

### Develop

Where support has enabled organisations or community groups to develop a new service, approach or offer and innovate

### Connect

The links made or strengthened as a result of the Programme

### Rescue

Protecting local services by mitigating local provider failure - avoiding closure of strategic assets

### Influence

Building awareness and trust that VCSEs and communities can enhance what can be achieved by professionals alone



## Spotlight: North Yorkshire Youth

The Hambleton SCDM invested time and money into North Yorkshire Youth to help them realise their ambition for more Youth Mentors in the County. She used the APL roster to work with a consultant to develop their impact measurement framework and build confidence in the case for investment subsequently made to the National Lottery. This led to an award of £497,000 for 3

years. With that funding, over 300 young people have been supported with their resilience. The CEO also attributes subsequent success in attracting further investment of £555k from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to the initial faith and learning that the Stronger Communities Programme enabled.

*"I think the relationship is very strong. Trust, respect, and honesty are very evident in our dealings. Stronger Communities are amazing, and such a brilliant asset to the County and sector." (CEO, North Yorkshire Youth)*

# Places: Outcomes for CSOs

The evaluation of investment in Community Support Organisations (CSOs) between 2020 and 2022 found that whilst locally rooted already, the pandemic experience enabled them to grow their grassroots networks to suit local geographies. This looked different in urban, rural, coastal and sparse places. In common, was their determination to ensure no

one was left behind or went without basics. More than that though, they were highly relational rather than transactional e.g. ensuring someone had a chat on or near the doorstep rather than just dropping off some food or prescriptions. Through those conversations, people in these places could feel connected, needed and dignified.

*"Without Stronger, it's hard to imagine the network of CSOs that developed so quickly. Without them being in place, there would have been no other way of making sure people were ok. This devolved way of working was down to Stronger Communities. They've achieved a lot in terms that deep community delivery of services."*

*Nidderdale Plus*

## Spotlight: Revival in Ryedale

Revival has made a vital shift away from their pre-pandemic work focused on older people and social / group activity-based prevention towards seeing more people in their home. This meant that the work became far more about supporting vulnerable people around the edges or within health and social care. Importantly, this has led to commissioners, safeguarding

and social care managers and the VCSE working alongside one another. The Programme's part in enabling this change, which has seen Revival increase collaboration and partnerships with local and larger VCSE providers, has been critical, and an important learning point for the future Community Anchor model.

*"Revival is the ultimate place based organisation! Trusting and believing in their model has built confidence and capacity in an organisation whose mission is to support the community in this deeply rural area."*

*Stronger Communities Delivery Manager for Ryedale*

# Places: Community assets

## Evidence summary – assets review

A review of 28 case studies concluded that the SCP's investments had strengthened community assets - human assets (22/28, e.g., supporting volunteers to gain skills), followed by social assets 14/28, i.e., links and trust between individuals and services, and between organisations) were developed the most. Goodwill assets (network, connections between neighbours), skills, knowledge and commitment assets had also been catalysed in place-based working. Monitoring data confirmed that some built assets and physical assets had been improved through SCP grants too. Encouragingly, given the Programme's original purpose there had been a growth in service assets meaning that more places:

- ✿ Have more things to do for people of all ages to connect with one another
- ✿ Feel like there are opportunities being created at local levels.
- ✿ Have services increasingly rooted in, managed, or delivered by communities.
- ✿ Are more equipped to tackle local concerns/issues to improve lives.

## Spotlight: Harrogate District

Continued investment by the Harrogate District SCDM has seen local CSOs develop services including a new walking group and regular contact with 800 residents; a meals on wheels service with two village partnerships and local caterer; new funding to deliver new services; a collaborative

45 different types of service had been developed, the most being aimed at adults and older people with an emphasis on supporting mental health, as well as assets developing volunteering and social action. There were a growing number of services aimed at young people, linked to education, caring, and mental health. Making services accessible, affordable (e.g., for people on benefits) and inclusive were features of their design. The services were often aimed at people with special characteristics or who were considered vulnerable or at a disadvantage to their peers e.g., young careers, people living with mental health illness or limiting conditions.

## Community centred approaches review

A sampled review of 32 confirms an alignment between the Programme's investment and community development techniques with Public Health England's community centred approaches for health and wellbeing framework<sup>7</sup>. Prevalent were ABCD<sup>8</sup>, volunteer and peer support, area or place-based initiatives and community hubs (including community libraries).

approach to offering affordable/emergency food; an expanded offer for families and working age adults; projects meeting local need; school readiness; falls prevention; and information & advice workers going out into local groups/coffee mornings.

## Spotlight: Upper Dales Communities Partnership

Long-term investment in the UDCCP by the Richmondshire SCDM has enabled 'A Good Life' Project to achieve its mission of providing local mental health wellbeing support. This is a community that faces

many challenges due to its proximity to services. This organisation has succeeded in increasing awareness of provision, as well as working with providers to provide outreach.

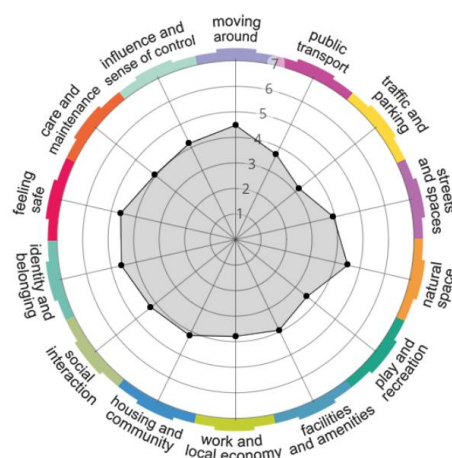
# Power: Outcomes for communities

An important condition to create long-lasting community wellbeing is the existence of strong, equitable relationships residents, organisations that provide services and policy makers. Power to commission services still largely resides with local and health authorities, but some communities, aided by

trusted VCSEs, are increasingly making their voices heard to influence local services. Examples of new community engagement practice (below) meantime show promise and illustrate the potential of ceding and sharing power in a more equal way.

## Spotlight: Place Standard Tool (TPS)

Craven's SCDM has supported local leaders to design the Greatwood and Horseclose Estate Plan using VOICE community engagement standards<sup>9</sup>. They then used The Place Standard, have been purposely inclusive, and have engaged 101 residents. TPS is also being used by 'The Place' in Settle to find out what matters to local people. TPS had previously been used to good effect by Ryedale's SCDM and shared learning gave confidence to use it in Craven.



## Spotlight: 'Voice and Representation of Older People'

The approach to engaging older people has been reconfigured with the Programme's support with greater emphasis on members aged 50+ co-designing their network across North Yorkshire.

*"Some of this work was tricky with relationship challenges. (The SCDM's) ability to navigate this really helped."*

## Spotlight: SEEChange

SEEChange is an example of how the support provided by the SCDM helped create the conditions for a new set of relationships and ways of working in Scarborough between the VCSE, local authority and health sectors. This led to

£495,000 of National Lottery funding for 3 years to build on exciting 'firsts' trialled such as a prototype participatory grant scheme. This will locate more decision-making power with residents and VCSEs to influence investment in health and wellbeing activity.

*"[The SCDM] is like the glue that holds all the organisations together, an honest broker. She has a good read on who does what like a map holder."*

# Power: Outcomes for systems

The Programme has worked skilfully across systems, sectors, domains, places and contexts to encourage a more equal set of relationships between policy makers, commissioners and the VCSE sector and community groups.

Commissioning culture has shifted since 2018 to being less traditional. More flexible opportunities are being made available to smaller VCSE organisations in light of the regard for, and perceived success of the CSOs.

The evidence reviewed including interviews with 50 commissioners, policy makers, NYCC directors and senior managers finds:

- ⚙ new voices being heard through different models of representation and engagement
- ⚙ new attitudes by commissioners towards the VCSE sector, more open to providing opportunities and pilots
- ⚙ new attempts at co-design and co-production improving with each iteration
- ⚙ new ways of thinking about and working with communities by NYCC directorates
- ⚙ new evidence that local VCSEs are collaborating more – and with commissioners - when the conditions for non-threatening, non-judgemental learning together are created
- ⚙ new co-design behaviours amongst the Programme's Team too e.g. developing the specification for the Community Anchor model with the VCSE sector.

## Spotlight Health and Adult Services (HAS)

The Programme has collaborated on multiple projects with HAS commissioners and service developers who highly value the Team's local knowledge and advice as these quotes illustrate. Consequently, new

ways of commissioning for wellbeing and prevention across North Yorkshire have emerged, as have new behaviours in VCSE, health and local authority relationships to forge place based ambitions together.

*"The Stronger Team are just our eyes and ears – the first place we go if there is an issue in a local area or with a provider."*

*"When Stronger started life there was no commissioning function in HAS. Stronger has advocated well for the VCSE sector. Now, we have 10 year contracts for some services and we have 'strategic partners' not 'providers'. The language and ethos has changed. We're growing together and we have an appetite for co-production."*

# Power: Outcomes for systems

## Spotlight: Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

The relationship with CYPS has improved considerably since 2018, with multiple opportunities to collaborate in ways that showcase the capabilities of the VCSE sector and communities, from the Grow and Learn school readiness pilot to the development of 'Get Going Grants' administered by the CYPS having received guidance on the best way to approach them

in communities. The SCP's exemplary management of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is now embedded in CYPS for the next 3 years.

Commissioners that have worked 'longer with Stronger' tell their peers that in building community capacity they have learned from the Programme that it is worth taking risks and letting go of control.

*"We wanted to embed a vision of early help in the community. We have completed joint work with 'Stronger' including a significant mapping exercise, workshops, presentations, involvement of the senior leadership team, all middle managers and plenty of challenging discussions to change the culture in my team of 175 people and the wider service."*

## Spotlight: Integrated Care System

Commenting on their engagement with the Programme, whether through the 'Thriving Communities Partnership' or a project to provide a 'frailty' focused resource to assist practitioners in settings, including primary and secondary health care, social care, and

the community and voluntary sector, a member of the NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) reflects on the SCP's approach and influence

*"Stronger Communities has played an important role in creating an environment where commissioning conversations happen. The way of working is changing. Stronger are never static, they are creating momentum and doing things. The SCP are a focal point of engagement with the VCSE sector and from a health perspective I can play into that."*

# Learning Lessons (since 2018)

Throughout the lifetime of the Programme and this review, the Team has been proactive in sharing thoughts about what was working well or not so well.

Looking back over all the years, each Team member was asked to identify their single biggest learning lesson.

*We can ask questions and present opportunities, but we don't need to have the answers or the solutions. They are usually right there in our communities; it is our job to get out there and find them!"*

*"Proper volunteer run organisations can go deeper and support subsidiarity and locality best (in my opinion!)"*

*"Go where the energy is. It doesn't always have to be positive energy, some of the best community libraries came from vociferous, upset communities."*

*"When communities are strong our role is more about managing the environment as much as we can to let solid organisations crack on."*

*"You have to be patient, there is rarely a quick off the shelf solution. It is all about trying to nurture lasting relationships that offer give and take from both sides."*

*"Always be curious, trust your instincts, and take the harder/more challenging route towards whatever your desired outcome may be! Many a time I have found myself in the stickiest of situations but on reflection, that is where all the learning/trust building happens."*

*"The concepts we have often struggled with the most have brought the most value. Just because we or others might find something difficult and doesn't give us quick wins, hold our nerve, commit to working through those difficult partnerships/conversations /processes."*



# Learning Lessons (2021-2022)

## People – the Team learned how to....

- ⚙️ broaden reach into communities and safely support more diverse populations
- ⚙️ work in partnership to deliver complex welfare projects quickly to meet urgent needs
- ⚙️ increase digital inclusion particularly across rural communities
- ⚙️ support people rebuild their confidence to re-connect and re-engage in community activity
- ⚙️ develop new ways of reaching children, families and those struggling with mental health
- ⚙️ manage FOIs and complaints to 'big programmes' responsively, with care and diligence

With hindsight they wish more time could be given to further consideration of preventative health outcomes oriented activity, despite the urgency of meeting immediate 'downstream' demands.

## Places – the Team learned how to ...

- ⚙️ sustain and develop reach through the CSO network
- ⚙️ develop a clear, stronger agenda around place-based working shared by partners
- ⚙️ nurture a community one stop model with potential for roll out to market towns
- ⚙️ support VCSE sustainability challenges at a time of increased sector fragility
- ⚙️ manage the complexities of a significant community asset merger to a positive outcome
- ⚙️ work through tensions with District colleagues whilst LGR took place

With hindsight, due to high workloads some SCDMs feel they were more reactive than proactive with their place-based working. Some small VCSE assets could not be rescued owing to the need to prioritise COVID response and for some the development of the Community Anchor model from the CSO network position has been challenging. The focus on countywide work has displaced some of the previous place-based focus for some SCDMs.

## Power – the Team learned how to ....

- ⚙️ Apply new community engagement planning tools alongside willing communities
- ⚙️ Use the Place Standard Tool to encourage inclusive conversations about 'place' by residents
- ⚙️ Reconfigure models of working to give more voice to older people aged 50+
- ⚙️ Embed its community grants approach within the Early Help teams, not tried before
- ⚙️ Influence the culture of commissioning in respect of wellbeing and prevention to the sector
- ⚙️ Work with the emerging Integrated Care System as a trusted interface with the VCSE sector

With hindsight, the Programme might have had even more influence on the 'Let's Talk North Yorkshire' initiative taken forward in the Autumn of 2022 with opportunities for different community engagement techniques to be employed based on best practice identified by the Team since 2018.

# Learning Lessons

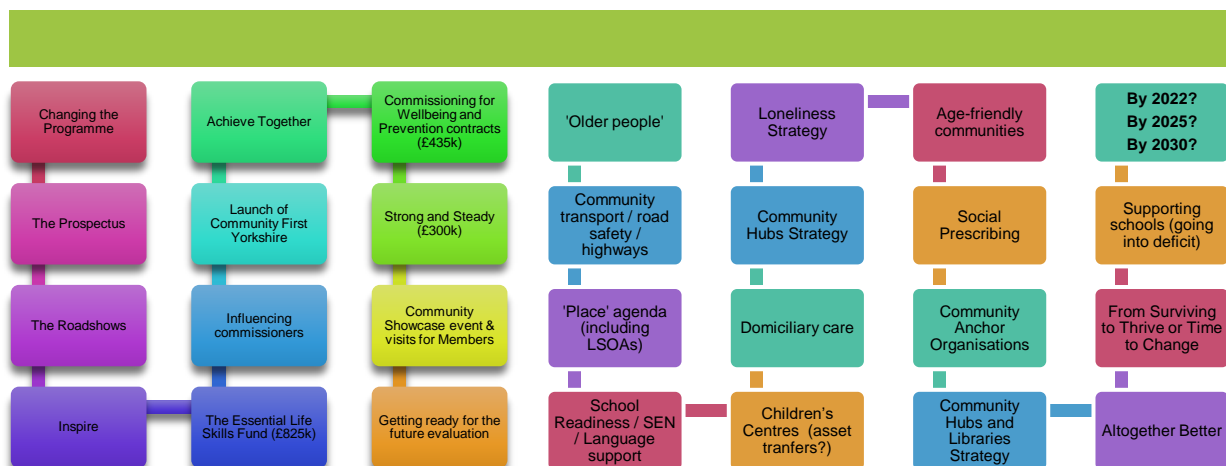
## Enabling factors that have supported the Programme's success

Relational approach rooted in mutual respect	Attitude to risk, 'backing winners but not afraid to fail'	Tenacity and persistence	Create space to plan, talk, reassure	Flexibility to use small grants to ensure continuity and build relations
Co-design predisposition	Trust and generous mind-set	Knowledge transfer at different levels in the system	Strong Team leadership	Responding positively to emerging trends
Describe, not prescribe - respect others' knowledge	Ability to connect organisations based on insight and deep local knowledge	Willing to share and combine systems.	Want VCSEs / communities / partners to succeed	Open to creative ideas to address needs developed out of APL consultancy support
Funding streams that promote new approaches and collaborations	Mitigating issues that threaten to derail multi-agency work.	Challenging VCSEs to move away from 'known, tried and tested' mind-set	Foresight and connection with wider best practice	Strengths of connections, contacts and local knowledge
Grant / budget management expertise	Team retention (low turnover) since 2014	Successful integration of new Team members	High profile sponsorship of NYCC CEO and Directors	The trust of the VCSEs and groups that engage with SCP

## Historic and ongoing challenges that test the Programme's ability to succeed

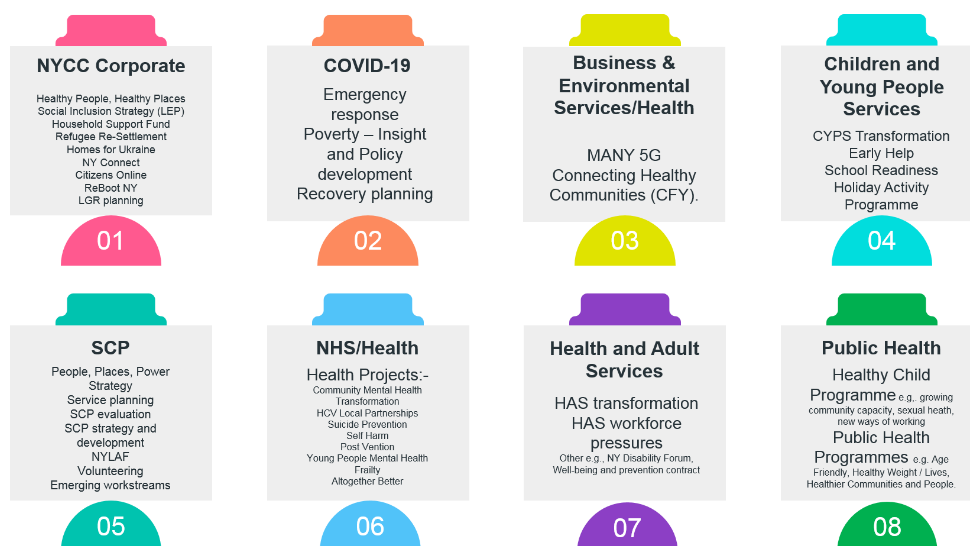
- The need to or request to deal with unforeseen crisis or closures which has a displacement effect of other work happening in the Team.
- Knowing how to enact 'proportionate universalism' in communities.
- Achieving sufficient clarity from internal stakeholders on their expectations for the Programme and to enable coherence with other commissioners – the demands are diverse.
- Meeting the continued and growing demand for their expertise in multiple contexts – whether in geographically or thematically focused agendas i.e., knowing how much energy, time and money the Team can afford to spend on these areas of work
- The growth of the Programme's responsibilities across multiple systems and the time needed to embed 'The Stronger Way' of doing things within other Directorates, services or parts of the system (e.g., health, adult social care, children and young people's services, transport, digital)

# Learning Lessons



ABCD activity	Digital inclusion	Evaluation	North Yorkshire Forum for Older People (NYFOP)	School readiness	UK Shared Prosperity agendas	Levelling Up our Communities: Danny Kruger MP report	Health Equity in England - Marmot Review 10 years on
Achieve Together Projects	Domiciliary / Home Care	Infrastructure contract input	Partnerships & Networks	Sleights Connected Communities			
Loneliness Strategy	Go Local	Inspire grants	Pathways to Health	Suicide Prevention			
APL management	Engaging with funders (TNLCF)	Internal volunteering	Place shaping / making activity	Supported volunteering			
Beyond 2020 transport agenda	Flexigrant management	Liaison with NYCC Comms	Mental health engagement	Transport Alliance			
Commissioner engagement	Enabling Social Action (National Input)	Age friendly communities	Refugee Conference	Wellbeing and Resilience/ Healthy Places			
Covid-19 response	Health Hubs	Play Streets	Rural Commission	Diagnostic review			
Community Support Organisations	Healthy child initiative	NY Connect	Salt of the Earth kindness campaign	Place Based Social Action (National Input)			

## Projects and Programmes by Service Area 2021-2022

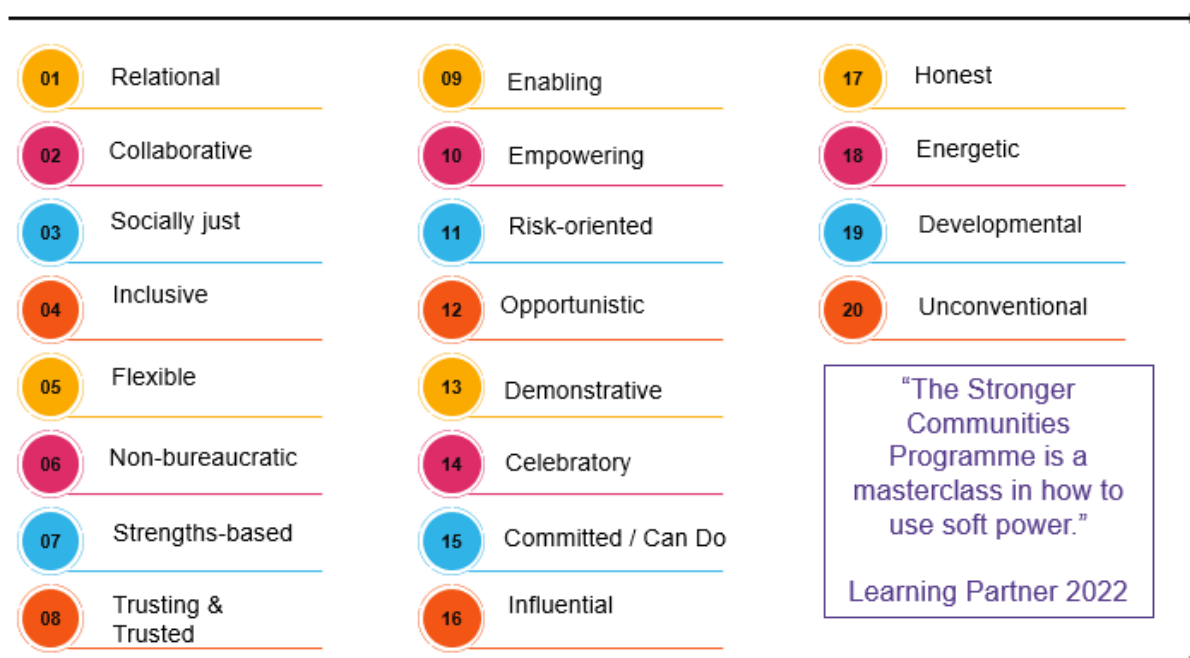


There have been many lessons learned about how to manage a workload with competing demands for a finite resource of 9 full time staff members. The images above are just some of the strategic and operational themes of work, projects,

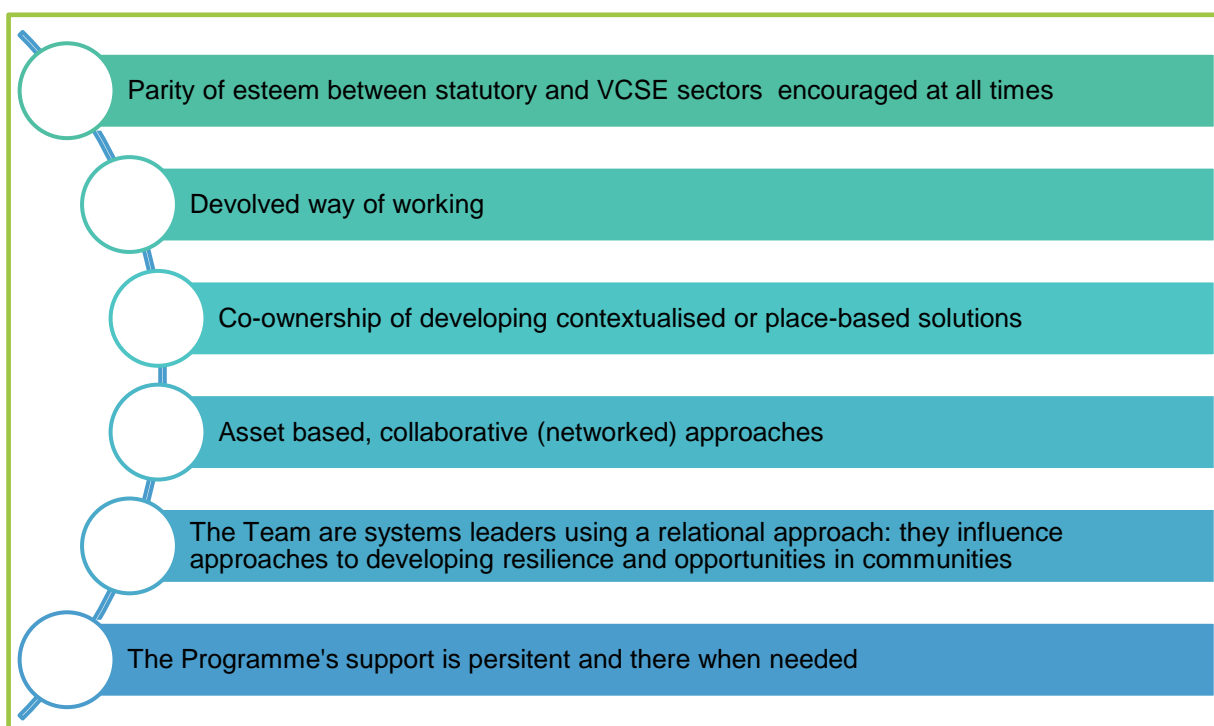
activities that the Programme has contributed towards since 2017. Learning to say 'no', or 'yes, we can help but not yet' has been very difficult for a Team with such an innate can-do attitude.

# 'The Stronger Way'

Analysis reveals these innate traits in 'The Stronger Way' of doing things



These 6 ingredients also illuminate the distinct approach adopted by the Programme to drive success.



# The Future

Recent exploratory work with CSOs and VCSEs confirmed that the Programme is most able to make a difference to the areas in deep green (see table right); can exert some influence on the light green areas; and can connect to the areas in yellow. These topics are derived from the Public Health England 'Inclusive and sustainable economies: leaving no one behind' guidance (2021)<sup>10</sup>.

Suggested focus for the next 3 years

Response to Recovery – identified areas we could make a difference and the practical things we could DO, to help....

Build greater Community Resilience
Improve people's Physical Wellbeing
Support people to be involved in the regeneration of their communities
Improve outcomes for children, young people and families
Build local partnerships and alliances to deliver services
Improve Transport, Travel and Connectivity for our residents
Reduce pressures on health and social care systems
Increase people's financial resilience and support people experiencing food and fuel insecurity
Improve people's Mental well being
Improve Education, Skills and Work opportunities
Create opportunities for more people to be involved in place based social action – five ways to wellbeing
Improve environmental sustainability

People, Places, Power / 'stream' positioning	Focus / key area of impact	Enabling role
<p>Narrow the Gap</p> <p>'Downstream'</p> <p>Themes: Cost of living, financial /social / digital inclusion food insecurity, COVID response</p>	<p>⚙️ <b>Building greater community resilience</b></p> <p>Example activity: Welfare support, hardship programmes, COVID grants, targeted work – most vulnerable, lowest wellbeing, places with lowest social capital</p>	<p>⚙️ Increasing people's financial resilience and support people experiencing food and fuel insecurity</p> <p>⚙️ Improving people's mental wellbeing</p> <p>Supporting system partners to work alongside VCSE and communities</p>
<p>Grow community capacity</p> <p>'Midstream'</p> <p>Themes: VCSE capacity, community wealth building</p>	<p>⚙️ <b>Building local partnerships and alliances to deliver services</b></p> <p>Example activity: Community anchors, hubs, grassroots social action, small grants and Achieve Together Projects</p>	<p>⚙️ Improving transport, travel and connectivity for our residents</p> <p>Supporting system partners to work alongside VCSE and communities</p> <p>Access to other external and mainstream sources of funding</p>
<p>Community-led place based social action</p> <p>'Upstream'</p> <p>Themes: Community Networks and Action Plans</p>	<p>⚙️ <b>Creating opportunities for more people to be involved in place-based social action (linked to the Five Ways to Wellbeing)</b></p> <p>Example activity: Community engagement, inclusive place-based conversations, commissioning pilots</p>	<p>⚙️ Improving people's physical wellbeing</p> <p>⚙️ Supporting people to be involved in the regeneration of their communities</p> <p>⚙️ Improving transport, travel and connectivity for our residents</p> <p>Supporting system partners to work alongside VCSE and communities</p>

## Further suggestions

Local government reorganisation provides an opportunity for the next chapter of the Stronger Communities Programme. The Team's size will likely grow, absorbing talented individuals from District Councils. This offers a moment to reflect on what the Programme wishes to achieve next. Developing the ambitions laid out in the 'People, Places, Power' Strategy to 2030 has merit, but it may have iterated as a result of the pandemic experience and LGR.

1: Retain 'The Stronger Way' of working with new Team members in 2023.

2: Embed 'The Stronger Way' of working in other Council Directorates focusing on those areas of the PHE Inclusive and Sustainable Economy Framework where the Programme can most directly 'control' the levers; and create influence.

3: Consider which aspects of the Programme's heavy workload and growing portfolio of programmes, projects, grants, budgets and commissioning activity could be transitioned to other parts of the Council, amongst infrastructure partners, to VCSEs and communities.

4: Further coalesce community investment objectives with other funders, social investors outside the Council, if even greater impact is to be conceived for the future. and in order to realise the ideals described in the 'People, Places, Power' strategy to 2030 and beyond.

5: Consider ways of measuring whether communities in North Yorkshire are stronger<sup>11</sup> by 2030 with the support of Council statisticians and data experts and retain the learning partner approach.



<sup>1</sup> This figure rises to over 1,415 since the Programme started in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This is likely to be an underestimate and this figure is the most reliable based on a geographical analysis of all grants activity completed by the Team in 2019/20.

<sup>3</sup> First time applicants for Programme small grants was around 70% each year until the pandemic. Groups applying for small grants during the pandemic were better known to the Programme already but there were still new applicants at a lower rate. Grow and Learn grants (c90 small providers) and mental health related grants reached a different and new set of VCSEs and small grass roots providers compared to the COVID-19 and previous small grants available boosting the organisational reach of the Programme in 2021-22. HAF also commanded a supply chain of nearly 60 separate local providers of activity coordinated by North Yorkshire Together. Defra and food-related programmes reached over 40 providers.

<sup>4</sup> This estimate is based on sampled analysis of the number of individuals benefiting from the small grants and larger projects that the Programme invested in, as reported in the 2019/20 Shaping the Future 2 report.

<sup>5</sup> This includes beneficiaries arising as a result of the Programme's direct investment (of its own budget) and / or through funding streams managed by the Programme on behalf of other government departments or organisations. Data for this estimate is found in Shaping the Future Part 3 by aggregating the shielded population (largely supported by the CSO network – estimated 19,055 people reached (source: social isolation monitoring report March 2021), in addition to residents benefiting from VCSE small grants enabled activity (21,470) and the individual beneficiary profiles supplied for Defra, mental health, self-harm and suicide prevention projects along with NYLAF beneficiaries (totalling 20,415). Caution, there may be double-counting as residents could have benefited from more than one of these funded activities.

<sup>6</sup> [The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [A guide to community-centered approaches for health and wellbeing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), page 18

<sup>8</sup> Asset Based Community Development

<sup>9</sup> Inclusion, Support, Planning, Working together, Methods, Communication and Impact.

<sup>10</sup> [Inclusive and sustainable economies: leaving no one behind \(executive summary\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> The illustration is an extract from 'A Sense of Connection' published by The Relationships Project.

Disclaimer: Information is presented in good faith and thought to be accurate at time of publication (December 2022), however the authors cannot be held responsible for errors or omission.