

Making it Happen

Interim Evaluation Report 2022–2023

Authors: Ellen Care, Leigh Brown, Lewis Haines, Malavika Murali



Foreword

How we work with people and communities can have a transformative impact on improving health and reducing persistent and in some cases widening health inequalities. Making it Happen has shown what is possible through working alongside people, helping them to recognise, explore and share their own strengths. It is clear people's participation in community life is supporting them to be the best version of themselves as they make friends and do the things that bring them joy. Social connections and community really matter in enabling people to lead healthy, happy and fulfilled lives. It is wonderful to see the unique community spirit of each neighbourhood shine as people make positive change together.

The places that people are born, live, work and socialise in have a significant influence on how healthy people are. Making it Happen shows that people want to be involved in shaping these places. East Sussex communities clearly have an abundance of ideas and passions. Additionally, what the community cares about and wants to put their energies into, match many of our own strategic priorities such as; addressing loneliness; reducing and adapting to climate change; creating opportunities for participation in arts and culture; or helping to ensure that everyone has access to a healthy and nutritious diet.

Through finding ways to work together, with lived experience valued alongside learned experience, we can best create thriving places and communities. Making it Happen is a great example of how to help people find the power within themselves, providing tools and knowledge to make change and be valued contributors in ensuring an equitable distribution of health in East Sussex.

There are many ways to reach, hear from, engage, and involve the many diverse individuals, communities and populations who live across Sussex. The Sussex Health & Care Partnership's Working with People and Communities Strategy explains our approach to making sure that the voices of people and communities are heard and influences how we plan and deliver health and care services in Sussex. Our strategic approach recognises that the assets inherent in our people, communities and places - when supported and enabled - can mobilise to improve health and wellbeing, and in turn support our health and care services.

Many people will feel that they don't have enough control over the decisions and actions that affect their lives and the places they live in. This report shows how asset based and participatory approaches can allow people to grow the skills, confidence and belief in their own voices.



The Four Shifts described in this report can be a valuable framework beyond Making it Happen to further develop person and community centred approaches to protecting and improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities in East Sussex.

Darrell Gale

Director of Public Health

East Sussex County Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Gale". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Contents

Foreword	1
Contents	3
Introduction	5
About this report	5
About Making it Happen	5
About Collaborate CIC	8
Methodology	8
Approach to Phase Two Evaluation	8
Creation of the analytical framework	9
Co-design of evidence collection methods	9
Evidence collection	10
Evidence collection method	10
Data collected	10
Limitations	13
Analysis	14
Explaining the analytical framework	15
Headline Findings	18
How it happens	18
For whom it happens	19
Why it happens	21
Enactment of ABCD	21
Accessible funding	22
Support structures	25
Engagement with the wider system	27
Local focus	28
Emphasis on learning	29

Findings	31
Deficits to strengths	31
What we found	31
What this tells us	37
What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations	38
Central to local	38
What we found	39
What this tells us	40
What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations	41
Isolation to collaboration	42
What we found	42
What this tells us	45
What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations	46
Assuming and prescribing to learning and responding	47
What we found	47
What this tells us	50
What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations	51
Conclusion	52

Introduction

About this report

This report demonstrates what we have learned in partnership with programme teams and participants about if, how, why and for whom Making it Happen is working in the places in which it is delivered. Central to the programme is the idea that asset-based community development (ABCD) approaches can enable individuals and communities to make change for themselves and in doing so, they may experience improved health outcomes and greater wellbeing. This evaluation does not seek to evaluate the application of ABCD principles. Rather, it seeks to understand the potential for the programme to influence the adoption of ABCD alongside the ways that ABCD approaches are generating improvements in health and wellbeing through supporting community action and voice. Instead of proving or disproving assumptions, we document in the findings below progress on and inhibitors of developments in advancing pivotal shifts in East Sussex from a systemic perspective.

This report aims to provide learning to those involved with delivering the programme, from the on-the-ground delivery staff to those overseeing the work. It aims to provide insight on how the programme is delivering against its aims and the four shifts framework that was developed as part of this evaluation and how the programme could go further to achieve these aims. We also explore the context behind the insight we've presented and how that context effects the MiH programme and its delivery. Much of our insight is presented from the perspective of MiH, as this has been our focus for the evaluation.

About Making it Happen

Making it Happen (MiH) is a 5.5-year programme commissioned by East Sussex County Council Public Health department. It began in October 2019 and will run until March 2025.

Five local organisations are working in partnership to deliver the programme. The partnership is led by Sussex Community Development Association, who are working

with 3VA, Action in Rural Sussex, Hastings Voluntary Action and Rother Voluntary Action.

The programme takes an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach to strengthen and support local community capacity to take collective action, with the primary goal being to improve wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. At its heart, it is about building the confidence and capability of people to come together in their neighbourhoods to create positive change and tackle local issues that matter to them most. They are supported to do this by Community Development Workers (CDWs) working in each of the five districts where the programme is operating (Wealden District, Rother District, Eastbourne Borough, Hastings Borough and Lewes District).

Central to the original specification (ESCC, 2019) for the programme is the wealth of evidence which demonstrates how situational changes and life events contribute to health and wellbeing. In 2020 Public Health England encapsulated this as follows: “Community life, the places where people live, and having social connections and a voice in local decisions, are all factors that make a vital contribution to health and wellbeing and help buffer against disease” (Community-centred public health: Taking a whole system approach, Public Health England 2020).

The original specification therefore cited the purpose of the programme as the delivery of ABCD, drawing on and strengthening community capacity to take collective action on health and the social determinants of health.

Priority neighbourhoods were selected through a process which drew on data sources including Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Co-op Wellbeing and WARM ward data alongside discovery activity undertaken by local delivery partners to identify the presence of local assets, opportunities and appetite for positive change.

True to the spirit of ABCD and community led change, no specific outcomes or KPI's were set in the context of the neighbourhoods where the programme was to be delivered. However, there were key requirements and outputs placed on the overall programme including:

- Creation of a Commissioning Platform
- Delivery of a grant programme
- Commissioning of an evaluation

- Annual challenge panel
- Pathways to health improvement and community services
- Communications plan
- Guidance and tools for asset mapping
- Living asset map reports
- Increased understanding of the evidence, theory and practice of AB approaches
- Investment in a diverse VCSE sector
- Widened participation for marginalised, minority and social isolated groups
- Health inequality impact assessments

Modelling ABCD in the development and implementation of some aspects of these requirements has proved a significant challenge and some have been adapted to reflect more closely the emerging interests and priorities of local communities.

Since October 2022, Making it Happen has facilitated:

- Over 2,000 meaningful connections, defined as an event, activity or conversation through which CDWs learned something new or surprising about a person, a group, an asset or an area, or something substantial happened or changed; or the CDW's connection with a person or group has deepened/increased/improved or the connection between others in the community deepened/increased/improved).
 - 28% of those meaningful connections were with individuals
 - 31% were with local community groups
 - 30% were with government, business or voluntary sector assets
 - The remainder were with local physical assets like parks or public spaces, networks, faith organisations or assets relating to heritage and culture.
- Grant giving of over £610,000 in total to the end of September 2023, through 248 different grants from Small Sparks (up to £500) to Next Step (£501 - £3,000) to Grow Grants (£3,000 to £15,000).¹

¹ See Appendix 1: Asset Analysis Graphs

About Collaborate CIC

Collaborate CIC were appointed as Phase Two Evaluators to the programme and began their evidence collection and analysis in 2023, following an initial period of co-design and collection method development in late 2022.

[Collaborate CIC](#) is a social enterprise that supports places, partnerships, and people across the UK to work together to improve social outcomes. We believe that collaboration is the route to addressing complex social challenges and structural inequalities, and our mission is to build a [Collaborative Society](#). We work collaboratively in all that we do to build diverse networks of changemakers, share ideas and insights, and create a platform to celebrate the work of others. We have a particular focus on supporting people to embed learning cultures and approaches in their practice, working to make the most of the insight they generate and using it to enable meaningful change on the ground.

Methodology

Approach to Phase Two Evaluation

Collaborate CIC were appointed as Phase Two Evaluators to the programme and began our work in late 2022. The Phase One Evaluation was carried out by Dr Kevin Harris, Chad Oatley and Claire Russell from the Centre for Health and Realist Research Partnership from 2021 to 2022 using a realist evaluation approach built around the development and testing of Programme Theories (PTs)².

Our approach continues to explore if, how, and why MiH works and for whom, in the areas where it is delivered, to illustrate how change is happening. Building on the work of Phase One, we have developed an approach that aligns with the already established infrastructure of the MiH programme with a focus on the collaboration between Collaborate and MiH teams, particularly Community Development Workers (CDWs). We have adapted evidence collection methods to better align with the practice and ways of working of CDWs and involved learning and development amongst

² See Appendix 2: Making It Happen Stage One Report

practitioners, allowing those closest to the work to collect evidence that is valuable to them.

We hold that the context in which outcomes are produced are critical for describing how those outcomes have been produced. With this understanding, we focused on ensuring the evaluation became not an activity in addition to the work, but part of the work itself, encapsulated in the phrase: 'from the work, through the work'. This meant that we focused on making the most of what was already there and deriving value from it, rather than generating additional information.

Alongside exploring the effect MiH has had on the communities it has worked with, we have explored what, if any, effect MiH has had on the wider system. This is inherently challenging, as MiH is one programme among many different groups operating in this space, alongside a comprehensive network of public and voluntary services.

In 2023, we evaluated the programme in five stages: creation of the analytical framework, evidence collection (after co-design of the methods), midpoint review, analysis and collective sensemaking, and reporting.

Creation of the analytical framework

Phase One of the evaluation set out assumptions about why or how Making it Happen might work in the form of PTs. The original evaluators began to test and refine their assumptions to demonstrate what it is about the programme that has contributed to change. At the start of Phase Two of the evaluation, Collaborate examined the assumptions behind each of those PTs and turned them into indicators within a new analytical framework called the 'Four Shifts' model, which maps four shifts in practice along various levels or scales at which shifts may take place. (See Figure 1 and below for more on how the Four Shifts framework was created.)

Co-design of evidence collection methods

Alongside developing the analytical framework for our evaluation, we reviewed key documentation and held scoping conversations with the Core Evaluation Group, Academic Advisory Group, and CDW teams, and additionally attended the Big Sparks event and follow-up workshop with its participants. This gave us insight into how people were working on Making it Happen, their experience of the evaluation thus far, and what changes they would like to see. CDWs emphasised that we should focus on adapting rather than creating new reporting processes but requested that language

used in the evaluation be more accessible for them and the communities they work with. We also heard about how we could adapt the evaluation to support an asset-based approach and use it to equip communities with new tools for their own learning and development.

We reviewed reporting processes accordingly and suggested where adapting might be helpful to improve information available for the evaluation and improve accessibility and ease of use. We did this on a rolling basis so that we could start collecting evidence in new formats as soon as possible.

Evidence collection

The following core methods were used to collect evidence for this report:

<i>Evidence collection method</i>	<i>Data collected</i>
<p>Story Collection: Drawing on a range of existing and ad hoc tools for capturing reflections from CDWs, we created a story collection template ³containing questions emphasising who participated, personal (CDW) learning and lessons for the wider system based on the ‘four shifts’. We produced guidance⁴ alongside the template to support CDWs to identify what makes a good story and how to record one.</p>	<p>39 stories</p>
<p>Grant Reviews: We did not adapt the template for reviewing grants this year, but we are involved in supporting ongoing conversations about making the grant process more generative for community members. A working group of</p>	<p>114 grant reviews</p>

³ See Appendix 3: Story Collection Template

⁴ See Appendix 4: Story Collection Guidance

<p>CDWs are reviewing grant paperwork, which we will feed into by making recommendations on their suggestions from the evaluation perspective. ⁵</p>	
<p>Community Survey: We refocused the pre-existing community survey from the first phase of the evaluation for community members who have led and participated in Making it Happen to gather thoughts and feelings about being involved with a community-based project, activity, group or event including: the quality of support from CDWs, impacts in line with the ‘four shifts’, and information about accessibility.⁶</p>	<p>87 survey responses in total including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 51 people who helped set up the project/activity ● 21 people who helped support it, ● 15 people who have primarily been participants
<p>Stakeholder Survey: We developed a survey to capture initial thoughts on stakeholders current understanding of MiH and ABCD and any relevant experience interacting with the programme to understand the influence MiH has on stakeholders and the wider system. We also sought to gain insight into how MiH could further improve the influence it has on the system and what stakeholders would need to increase ABCD’s recognition and use within the system.⁷</p>	<p>36 survey responses</p>
<p>Stakeholder Interviews / Focus Groups: Following on from the survey, we delved</p>	<p>26 focus group participants invited, 7 participants joined</p>

⁵ See Appendix 5: Grant Review Template

⁶ See Appendix 6: Community Survey

⁷ See Appendix 7: Stakeholder Survey

<p>deeper into some of the insight gathered through the survey in interviews and focus groups.</p>	<p>We proposed to run 3 focus groups, focusing on the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central to Local: all attendees cancelled ● Isolation to Collaboration: attended by 4 people ● ABCD in Practice: attended by 3 people
<p>ABCD Conversations: This strand of work, crossing Big Sparks events and the Four Shifts event, seeks to understand the potential for MiH and ABCD to influence other groups to adopt ABCD approaches and the mechanisms that enable this and barriers that hinder it.</p>	<p>Big Sparks Follow-Up event⁸</p> <p>Four Shifts event⁹</p>

We also adapted the Delivery Plans spreadsheet used by Neighbourhood Teams to collect information about the scale of the project or activity and who participates. There was limited use of the new spreadsheet by the time of producing the analysis in Phase Two and therefore they did not factor into this report.

We have found these methods illustrative of action on PTs 1-4, but with regards to PTs 5-8, we have come to understand that while there are some examples of influencing the wider system, work to effect change on these PTs — particularly in terms of system stewardship at more senior levels supporting collaboration across the system — had been limited. We took steps to develop methods such as a stakeholder survey and follow-up interviews and focus groups with senior stakeholders in order to collect some baseline data about their current understanding and experience with MiH and ABCD that we might return to in the next year to assess the influence MiH can have in the system. These people did express that MiH was improving their knowledge of ABCD practice (37% of survey respondents felt MiH had increased their awareness of ABCD

⁸ See Appendix 8: Big Sparks Next Steps Report

⁹ See Appendices 9 & 10: Four Shifts Event Report and Four Shifts Activity Pack

approaches), however, even with the addition of methods to capture insights regarding PTs 5-8, the work to effect change is itself limited.

That being said, we have been contributing to conversations about the influence of MiH on ABCD practice. As part of our work on this strand, we joined Big Sparks and the subsequent workshop at which the group began to generate various opportunities related to how others can either support ABCD adoption, influence the wider system and/or embed ABCD approaches in existing projects further. We have also hosted conversations leading up to and including the 'Four Shifts' workshop for people who are interested in advancing asset-based ways of working in their work, role or community.

A midpoint review served as an opportunity to review the methods for collecting evidence and whether they were producing the insights expected to fulfil reporting expectations. For the most part, the ongoing collection methods were working well so there was no requirement for large changes to the collection methods.

Limitations

As with any evaluation, our report is based on the information we had available to us.

With the Stories and Grant Reviews, we reviewed all of the forms that were provided to us by the MiH Delivery Team, within the period of January 2023 – September 2023.

There were some methods used in the evaluation which were less successful than we would have hoped or did not reach the intended people. The stakeholder focus groups in particular, were challenging to organise, with many potential participants not responding to invites or dropping out at the last minute. Participants were recruited through MiH organisational contacts but some of those nominated had limited knowledge of the day-to-day activities of MiH. We intended to hold 4 focus groups, however in reality were only able to hold 3, with 7 participants across them.

The information gleaned was helpful for demonstrating the effectiveness of MiH and ABCD for a wider audience, what has been effective about the programme, and how to integrate it better with other services and delivery in East Sussex, but it required quite a lot of time to administer and those who we did engage who had very little involvement with the programme were only able to offer limited insight. This meant we were unable to get as much information from those in the wider system as we would have liked. The individual interviews with senior stakeholders that took part as part of

this strand were effective and provided useful insight into MiH's role as part of the wider system.

The community survey had a satisfactory response rate and the insights provided were beneficial. It was clear however that the majority of respondents to the survey were those who were leading community initiatives funded via MiH, with less responses coming from those who were taking part in activities. The survey was sent through CDW contacts, so it makes sense that those leading projects made a greater proportion of those who responded. While there isn't a suggestion that those leading projects aren't able to properly represent those who take part in their activities, we feel that an area of further focus for next year should be engaging directly with community members taking part in MiH activities.

Analysis

In the analysis phase we consolidated evidence collected in preceding months and performed initial analysis of the evidence for exploration in joint sensemaking conversations. This analysis relied on using indicators from the Four Shifts analytical framework as codes, a common research approach for tagging and organising analysis in order to see patterns. We added any new codes that we or CDWs identified were missing from the framework. Beyond the four shifts, we also tracked operational/programme-specific insights as well as insights about how the wider system is working to inhibit or encourage activities. Finally, we identified when an insight constituted an outcome and when it constituted a need or a condition or precondition for change.

In the spirit of adopting processes which reflect that those who drive the work are best placed to refine and make sense of it, we conducted a sensemaking workshop with CDWs, another with community members who have been involved fairly consistently in leading or participating in MiH-supported activities, and a meeting with the Core Evaluation Group. These sensemaking workshops gave us an opportunity to review the themes that had emerged from our analysis alongside those closest to the work. Participants helped us to shape these themes into a narrative, providing further context and grounding the themes in the real-life situations that produced them. Conversation with CDWs was particularly illustrative of additional case studies and ideas for building into the system the capacity to meet people's needs.

Explaining the analytical framework

The Four Shifts framework was created to support the collection and analysis of evidence in the second phase of the evaluation. Part of the motivation for creating this was to create a more accessible and practical tool for evaluation than the PTs. The Four Shifts framework is an evolution of the PTs and although they do not map across perfectly, there is generally crossover between them. We can re-examine the PTs by tracing their connections to the four shifts using the indicators, which were derived in large part from the assumptions behind the PTs.

The four shifts themselves arose from a review of materials from the previous evaluation including the PTs, alongside ideas from conversations with the Core Evaluation Group during the discovery phase about what change in the system we would hope MiH would contribute to. We cross-referenced notes from these conversations with CDWs' own theories of change, and factored in Collaborate's understanding of system change. As well as the shifts, the framework references the various levels at which these shifts might occur: inside a person, between people, between people and services, and between services and services or at the system level.

We have found the shifts and the levels to have unique and reinforcing roles in our analysis and sensemaking. In performing the analysis, we oscillated between using the lens of shift or level in order to see the data from various perspectives. We found the emphasis on levels of change to be missing from the last phase of the evaluation and consider its absence to be a significant gap since it critically speaks to the question of 'whom' as people in the system act or are impacted in different ways at different levels. The level at which change is happening will necessarily point to the approaches employed there, resources available there, and relationships built or reinforced there.

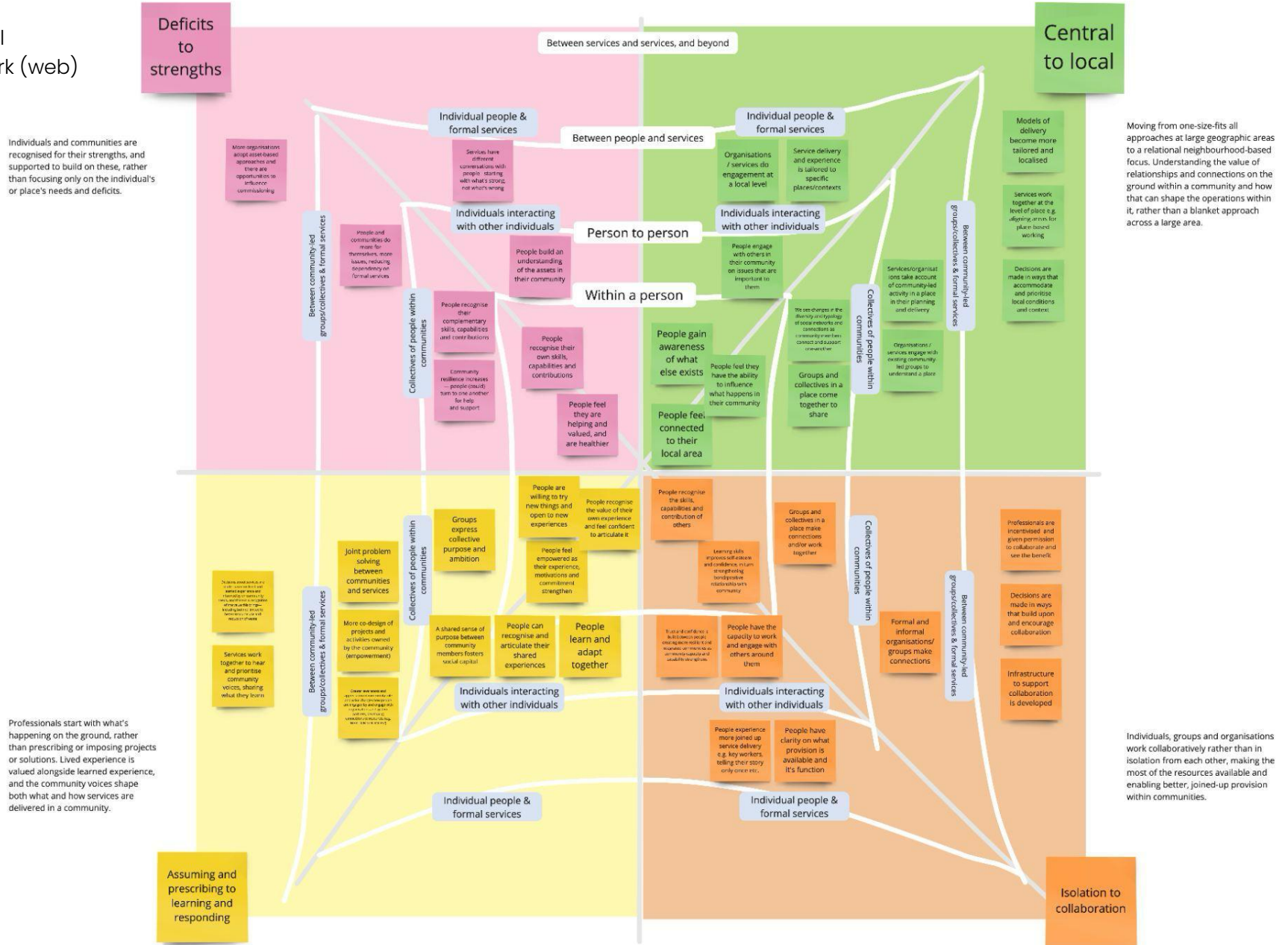
As mentioned, the framework has been embedded into evidence collection mechanisms and used in practice both by Collaborate in the course of the analysis for the evaluation but also by the MiH operational team. We have heard from CDWs that they are finding the 'four shifts' framework to be an "amazing tool" that "marries theory and practice well". Importantly, this feedback reinforces that we are conducting the evaluation in the spirit of it being not an activity in addition to the work, but part of the work itself.

We have also supported the MiH team to explore the wider application of the Four Shifts framework beyond MiH to understanding and enabling the proliferation of asset-based practice across East Sussex. Discussions in the lead up to and at the Four Shifts Workshop on 27 November 2023 suggest that there is a wider resonance and that once again the accessibility of the framework is a distinct advantage.

Given the resonance the framework has seen and how it has been used in the analysis of the evidence collected, the findings in this report are structured by the shifts rather than the PTs.

Figure 1:

Analytical framework (web)



Headline Findings

The task of the evaluation is to determine 'if, how, and why, the programme works, and for whom, within the areas it is happening in. Regarding the question of 'if' Making it Happen is working, we have seen without question that MiH is deploying ABCD effectively to support people to make connections, initiate projects and activities, feel more connected to their local place and bring local community assets into use. As part of the ABCD approach, the focus is less on what service someone needs and instead about what gives someone purpose, enjoyment and belonging, attending to the social factors in people's lives that impact on wellbeing such as their relationships.

The following sub-sections summarise our understanding of how, why and for whom the programme works, with more detail about the change at each of the levels for each shift in the next section (Findings).

How it happens

In terms of how MiH currently works for people who interact with it, we have seen the most change in the 'within a person' and at 'person to person' levels in terms of 'Deficits to strengths' and 'Isolation to Collaboration' shifts. This includes evidence of increases in self-confidence and self-esteem; lifestyle changes including exercising and socialising more, leading to self-reported improvements in physical and mental wellbeing; and developing new skills and capabilities which in some cases have translated into opportunities for employment etc. as well as greater sustainability of projects.

Central to this change for people appears to be that through participating in activities and projects supported by MiH, people have the opportunity for more and deeper connection with others, and that they feel joy together and have positive shared experiences which contribute to a sense of community, belonging and wellbeing.

We have seen some evidence of the programme working to create change at the 'people and services' level, though not as much as above. Primarily this change is in the connections between formal and informal groups which results in more people finding out about and accessing the MiH activities (e.g. as statutory or commissioned services making referrals into groups/projects set up by MiH or sharing info/advertising

them) which in turn increases the number of people who experience the benefits of connection and the asset-based approach. We also see connections being made between groups or services that do a similar thing or might be useful/relevant to the same people. Although changes in how formal services are operating appear to be limited at the moment, there are one or two examples of groups proactively reaching out to formal services to support/understand their community better and some staff actively seeking input from the MiH team and CDWs to get support to develop their ideas and initiatives.

For whom it happens

The people who are benefiting and changed most by MiH are those closest to the community work — the people who have set up activities and projects with the support of CDWs, others who volunteer to help run them, and the neighbours, peers and community members who join in. The reflections and learning shared by CDWs in the story templates also suggest that their experiences of the programme are having a meaningful impact for them as individuals and in their practice. Beyond those immediately involved in projects, we see an impact on people and professionals who are connected through local networks and similar services and who attend events like Big Sparks¹⁰. Professionals at a more strategic level currently seem to be the least impacted by MiH and there is little evidence of transformation change for them, though those who have had some contact with the programme are positive about their experiences.

The ABCD approach means that MiH activities are built from the community-up; rather than seeking to create activities or services for a particular cohort, the projects that emerge are a result of what the community cares about and wants to put their energies in. The nature of who participates and benefits is therefore somewhat 'self-selecting' with people 'opting-in'.

Currently MiH is operating in dedicated areas of East Sussex, chosen in part on the basis of data related to indices of multiple deprivation, as well as a baseline understanding of the assets already within a place. The question of determining 'for whom' MiH is working within those operational areas is challenging as limited data is collected about who takes part in MiH activities and projects, in order to prioritise the

¹⁰ Big Sparks was a showcase event organised by MiH held in November 2022, bringing together ABCD projects from across the county

effectiveness of the relational way of working that ABCD requires. Demographic data collection is often seen as a barrier to community engagement, which is why MiH has made a conscious effort to develop the programme through relational working, with less of a focus on data collection. We did make suggested amendments to the Delivery Plan template to start to capture this information, however that for this report these templates had not been used widely enough to meaningful analysis. It's also important to highlight that even had the template been fully utilised, this wouldn't be a complete dataset of everyone who was accessing a MiH activity. It has therefore not been possible for us to identify specific trends in who is or isn't taking up the opportunity to be a participant in MiH. Should MiH decide to collect this data in the future, we may be in a position to analyse this information.

The range of activities and projects MiH supports includes 'open to all' groups, groups built around a specific locality (e.g. on an estate) and groups aligned with specific communities of interest or identity including those with various characteristics protected under the Equalities Act.

Our understanding is that MiH seeks to empower a diverse and representative set of people in the East Sussex community through their participation in programme activities. While evidence suggests that ABCD approaches are likely to be more inclusive than traditional forms of engagement with marginalised communities, programmes like MiH need to be aware of structural barriers to participation and therefore programme delivery having to do with unequal distribution of power and access to resources, including social capital.

As such, MiH is unlikely to be reaching the most marginalised and deprived people in the community through the use of ABCD approaches alone. For those who are struggling to meet basic needs to ensure survival, the capacity and headspace to engage in (let alone initiate and sustain) community activities is likely to be less without wider structural change to enable this — even though such people will have ideas and assets to contribute to their community. We know that many community development programmes struggle to effectively support people who face systemic marginalisation (e.g. people of colour, people with disabilities or people from the LGBTQ community) without specific attention and intervention to overcome barriers, including cultural literacy, access accommodations and remuneration.

MiH could be more purposeful in building the diversity of people who participate in activities, which would require thoughtful and strategic activity. Diversifying the

delivery team to be more reflective of the communities you'd like to reach might be somewhere to start, but efforts would need to extend beyond representation to reduce structural barriers to participation—which might have to do with caring responsibilities, inflexibility of transport options or a fundamental lack of leisure time. How to effectively measure the change and collect data at an operational level to support this mission, without interrupting the relational approach of ABCD, would present an additional but not insurmountable challenge.

Why it happens

Throughout conducting this evaluation, we have sought to explore what findings tell us about the wider system in East Sussex and the operation of MiH in that context. We have encountered that, in many cases, MiH enables change even in the face of constraints in the wider system. Some of the constraints MiH faces are directly within the power and influence of MiH but many are not, such as siloed funding streams and top-down decision making. Most are characteristics of the system in which the programme operates and require collective action from system stakeholders to address. We do, however, also see evidence of how MiH can face some of these constraints more effectively than similar programmes, which others can learn from.

These insights constitute important background for the subsequent findings organised by the four shifts. While there are some slight changes to how they could be operationalised, key elements about the way MiH is set up could and should be replicated in other programmes and funding streams as we have seen them to be enablers of the four shifts — regardless of the future of the MiH programme. There are also ways, which we highlight below and in the final recommendations, that working at the system level could remove some constraints MiH has faced. Any action in this area would have a beneficial impact on not just MiH but other projects and programmes that operate in the system as well.

Enactment of ABCD

Naturally, one of the most notable of these key elements is the effective and widespread fulfilment of ABCD principles in starting from what's there, including local assets.

Developing physical assets

Physical assets and spaces to meet are fundamental to the ability of many MiH projects and activities to operate. Provision of these assets is mixed across the borough, and access to these is one of the greatest sources of anxiety and frustration for participants.

One community survey respondent shared that they are “a bit anxious about future cooperation with Council who own the land - we are very dependent on maintaining two way cordial relationships”. Another respondent went as far as to say, “My involvement in the project has generally been a positive experience but this has been somewhat lessened by dealings with the landowner.”

East Sussex, like most areas across the country, has seen a loss of social assets within their local communities, such as local libraries or community hubs as budget deficits are in part managed by selling off or closing publicly owned property and spaces, alongside reductions in funding available to the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. These assets are important, as they are so essential for these small projects to grow since people need somewhere to meet. For many projects, a large proportion of their spending goes to room hire fees and funding spaces to gather to develop the work together, suggesting that overall a substantial proportion of overall grant funding is going towards meeting this basic need for community space. If MiH did not exist, groups would still need this threshold amount of money to have a foundation on which to build.

Accessible funding

It is worth noting that MiH itself as a funded programme has a broad remit whilst other funding available to community organisations in East Sussex often has strict conditions and barriers to access. The flexibility of MiH carries through in the distribution of funding within the programme; it is a lot more accessible, flexible and relational with support available to complete the applications. With its low barriers to access, it is trust-based/led. There is time and space for things to grow, relatively free from pressure to meet set timescales or outcomes.

How people in communities get funding for their projects and activities is more relational than other types of funding that exist. Many of the other funding streams that exist in East Sussex have significant barriers to community projects, such as the need to have match funding or funding paid in arrears. There is also more flexibility on what the

MiH grants can be spent on, determined by what would be most effective for the activity, rather than rules on what funding can and cannot contribute to.

For example, In Uckfield, November 2022, the warm hubs initiative was being discussed nationally in response to higher energy costs. The Manor Park & Hempstead fields Resident Association (MPHFRA) immediately approached MIH worker regarding the idea of a warm space in Central Uckfield having heard some residents voicing concerns about heating bills. They had some volunteers ready to go. The Winter support fund was not yet available so MIH within a few weeks supported them to apply for a small sparks fund to trial the space at the end of November. The lead volunteer stated “MPHFRA are very grateful to MIH to support our original idea, and without this funding it wouldn’t have got off the ground.” With support from MIH they came together with other local organisations to form a peer network for the warm spaces in the town, since then they have continued the café year round and were recently successful with Lottery funding.

Funding applications through MiH are always open, rather than only during set periods, and the time to application and funds being received is shorter than other forms of funding. Generally, communities felt that the information needed for each stage of the MiH grants was proportionate to the amount of funding received, although there is space to make the grants paperwork even more accessible (which a group of CDWs are already exploring). During the community sensemaking workshop, the funding process was summed up as an ‘adult-to-adult’ relationship, that was supportive of their projects, rather than one that made them jump through hoops, with overly prescriptive outcomes, timelines and expectations for projects.

Small amounts of funding ‘unlock’ other amounts of resources that are not costed. The amount of money it would take to fund any one of these projects if they were staffed is much larger than the grants awarded, but the amount of volunteering hours that the relatively small amount of funding enables is important. This is not just resource to be absorbed or adapted to align with statutory agendas, it only occurs when there is community interest — but it does add significant value to the community that otherwise would not be available.

Success in fundraising is unsurprisingly a significant contributor to either positive or negative feelings about a project or activity depending on whether it is present or absent, how easy it is to obtain, and for how long it is available. (See Figure 2 for an illustration of community survey respondents’ feelings about their involvement in MiH.)

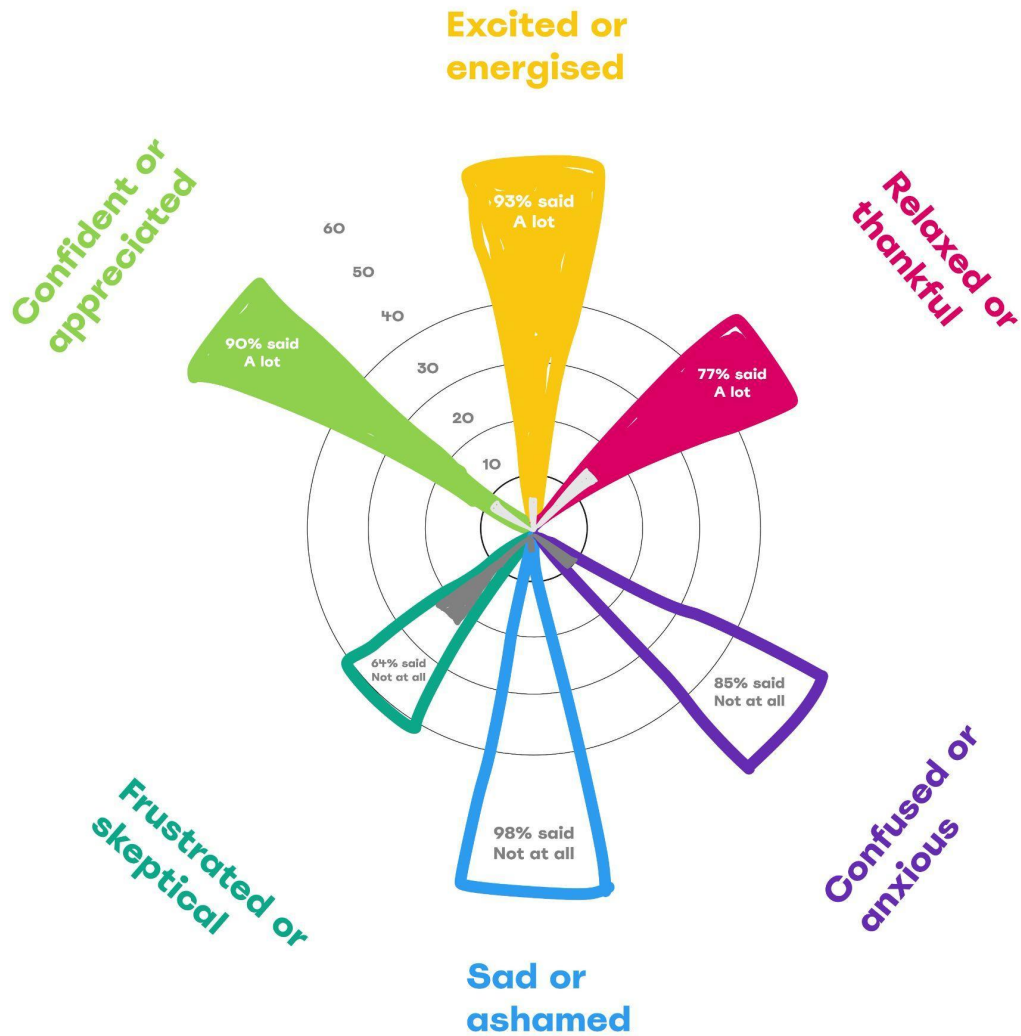


Figure 2:

Illustrated graph of community survey responses showing positive responses in coloured bars and less positive ones in grey bars (people had the most unanimously *positive* responses about being excited or energised by the MiH project or activity they are involved with and the most *mixed* responses about feeling frustrated or sceptical)

One community survey respondent spoke to feelings of anxiety that they may fail on the basis of not securing funding: "I think the biggest struggle is funding and I get

anxious of feelings of failure to provide the best support for my community if we don't get support. It is a stressful part. Overall though I feel excited and confident and determined to work with amazing people that will help us and believe in our projects along with the community."

We heard that efforts to further simplify application forms can also help ease the way. Given MiH ABCD principles, there may be some benefit in exploring other decision making approaches and how the community can have more say in what project receives money.

However, there are issues of longevity for these projects and there's also a clear issue with setting up bank accounts so that people can hold funding which has been repeatedly raised as a challenge. In the community survey, we heard requests for a set process for starting a community bank account. We heard in the community sensemaking session that one group would have wanted to control their money themselves but their organisation did not exist yet so it went into the town council account and now they have control so the group needs to get permission/the council has control over their work. We understand that the delivery partners have been doing some work on this issue and that some of these challenges may sit outside of their influence, but it is important to highlight issues which seem to be causing day-to-day challenges with the delivery of the programme.

Support structures

The role that CDWs play has been crucial to the successes achieved by the MiH programme, and is greatly valued. CDWs entire focus is on supporting communities, rather than having to split their time on other work. This enables them to be completely community focused, rather than having other agendas or focuses that can exist in statutory community-focused roles. The CDWs offer practical support to those within communities, lessening the burden of developing their ideas and supporting on things that community members are more likely to find difficult.

This is important as setting up a MiH project or activity is likely to have a significant impact on the person setting it up, and the CDWs provide them with the support and coaching they need to be successful. CDWs act as connectors and stewards of the local system, with local knowledge and local networks that can link people and assets together than community members may have otherwise been unaware of. Given their position across a local area, they can also act as translators of insight and learning

across their geographies, and collectively they can provide insight across a wide area of East Sussex.

Support from CDWs and volunteers is extremely important so that those holding this responsibility are not alone, running the risk of burning out. One person illustrated the difference it makes to have support: "I am really positive about the project now it has been running a few weeks and am really optimistic about how I can develop it further. I have got help from others now too who want to stay and help move it forward which is great. I was sceptical at first but I think this is natural as it is something new. I feel positive as I have seen people enjoying themselves."

However, there is a cost (sometimes perceived as a burden) to community members of setting up and leading projects and activities, especially for those who are structurally disadvantaged and struggling to meet their fundamental needs. The presence and commitment of wider volunteers makes a big difference for lessening the burden on organisers as well as contributing to the longevity or sustainability of activities. Someone who helped initiate a project explained the entanglement of holding responsibility for a project: "It is stressful to feel responsibility for the project, but it also feels very worthwhile and I would not want to stop."

We have seen that where there is only a small number of people interested in a certain activity, if there are fluctuations in those interested (especially due to the time that some projects take to set up and get off the ground), interest can waver, as can volunteer numbers. It may be important to consider the capacity required for administering something as not everyone can commit what might be needed to deliver an idea. In one example, it seemed like the idea was absorbed into another project, which may be something that could be explored wider in MiH that we haven't heard much about. The programme could consider focusing on building collectives that may have different activities as part of it but benefit from shared functions/infrastructure.

Some ideas from the community can be large in scope and aims, so CDWs help people to identify initial steps and tests they can try, supporting them to walk before they run. As such, MiH seems to play a key role in helping make ideas a reality by cautioning people from doing too much too soon. The CDW and community sensemaking sessions highlighted a perceived need for getting people with the ideas more dedicated support.

We know that people helping to set up projects feel these constraints, as seen in responses to the community survey (see Figure 2) where we asked people who are

participants in MiH community projects and activities: When you reflect on your experience, what kinds of feelings do you have about the project and what it is trying to achieve? Across six types of feelings (three more negative and three more positive), respondents were invited to indicate whether they felt them a lot, a little, or not at all. We also asked them to explain more about why they have those feelings. Notably, we've seen that many of the same constraints are provoking emotional responses in people — the negative feelings coming from facing constraints and the positive feelings coming from overcoming them.

Engagement with the wider system

In this evaluation, we explored the wider system through the lens of MiH. As with other parts of this report, limited evidence gathered through the evaluation does not necessarily mean it doesn't exist, but that it was not gathered through our collection methods. Especially when thinking about the wider system, we recognise that there has been activity at higher levels of the system related to MiH, for example the programme being presented at strategic meetings. However, the evidence we have collected suggests that the impact of any of this activity has not been felt or perceived by the CDWs or the community members we engaged with and gathered data from.

MiH exists as part of a wider system and there are many different examples of MiH projects engaging with other aspects of the systems and in some cases delivering activities in collaboration with other services. However, much of what we saw was at a service level e.g. other services who worked directly with communities. We saw limited interaction between the delivery of MiH (i.e. the CDWs) with higher/more strategic parts of the system. This is largely to be expected, the role of the CDWs is to focus on ABCD within the communities they operate in. CDWs themselves felt that there was little space for more strategic engagement with the wider system and felt that type of engagement was a much different function and skill set than their main role working directly with communities.

Where there was interaction between MiH and higher parts of the system, we largely only saw one-way interaction i.e. someone or a service looking to benefit from MiH's connections and knowledge of the local community, rather than aiming to build more collaborative ways of working. Those we spoke to as part of the stakeholder engagement certainly valued the knowledge and expertise of CDWs but there was little evidence of collaborative working, with the main focus being better supporting their role, rather than meeting the needs of the community.

Local focus

In setting up MiH, a decision was taken that the programme should operate on a geographic basis. This was in part to the large disparity of health inequalities that can exist between areas within the borough or district boundaries and the need to have a focus on these areas. For much of the programme, this has been an important choice, enabling CDWs to build relationships across their local area. Operationally this has also caused some challenge, as some ideas or themes do not exist solely in a single geographical area and some geographical areas have more of a cohesive identity than others.

While there is scope to support communities of interest through MiH which cross different geographic areas, the majority of the work is very locally based within specific areas and neighbourhoods of the places where MiH is operating. Through local working, CDWs are able to build a rich understanding of what's out there and what can be mobilised and shared wider. They are able to connect, share and network to bring different members of the community together, supporting people to become co-organisers as well as bringing together potential participants and volunteers.

From the survey and sensemaking session with community members, we have noted that people involved in MiH projects and activities describe working with CDWs in a generally positive manner, especially for the connections CDWs could help them make as well as support with promotion of their activities. This is reinforced by the kinds of connections tracked through other reporting mechanisms, such as 'hosting introductions', 'information sharing', 'networking opportunities', and 'signposting'. One person described the way connections facilitated involvement: "It was a difficult piece of work, but working with Making it Happen meant that we had better connections and easier routes to the families and young people we needed to work with." Another person emphasised that CDWs could help "bring the right people/organisations together". It's also clear that CDWs are creative with the support they can offer, as in one example in which CDWs made available "infrastructure like gazebos" which the group would otherwise have needed to buy or hire — something similar programmes could learn from.

However, it's important to remember that communities are porous and are not delineated by the administrative boundaries that are put on them. It's also true that communities of interest may not be found in a small geographical area and sometimes the net will need to cast wider to engage a sufficient number of people to make an

activity sustainable. We saw some examples where there were ideas that could not be supported as the number of people engaged in a local area was too small to sustain the activity, but there may have been enough people further afield.

Emphasis on learning

The way MiH operates engages effectively with the messy reality of community work, where there is not a straight-line between inputs and outcomes and where understanding the context and how it is constantly shifting is key. Adopting a learning culture is a key part of this. CDWs are allowed to fail and focus on learning in MiH. Outcomes are learning outcomes; CDWs can identify what to learn more about and how to enable communities to learn also. In this way, the CDWs have developed an approach to supporting communities in a natural, relational way, building on their experience as they work.

Community members value that CDWs work with them to learn when things don't go to plan, enabling them to continue developing their projects. In the community sensemaking session, we heard from one participant that this had been instrumental in getting their project to where it is today, as they valued that they had the freedom to evolve and develop their ideas rather than being forced to stop at the first hurdle. It can take time to find an approach that works to build on an initial idea, but the development along the way is instrumental.

Applying these and the wider lessons from MiH can be challenging as at times. Some of those delivering the programme have felt that MiH has been commissioned as a research project, with interested stakeholders seemingly waiting to engage with the 'end result' rather than seeing it as a living project from which others could and should engage with and learn from along the way. This is a common issue across our current commissioning models in the UK. Programme delivery is rightly focused on improving lives for those in the communities they support, but there is heavy requirement for data and information that confirms that the money has been spent effectively. The types of information help us run programmes effectively and that tells us whether we are delivering good value for money are often different and can create competition for resources that are often stretched. It is important that this tension is recognised and managed, so that the programme is able to fulfil both functions as effectively as it can with the resource it has available.

It's important that we see MiH as an opportunity to 'test' an ABCD approach as well as an effort of ongoing learning and reflection about how the wider system in East Sussex operates, which we can act on now.

Findings

Findings are organised according to what we found for each of the four shifts across the various evidence collection methods; what they tell us about conditions, preconditions or enablers of change; and our concluding ideas and recommendations for the operation of the remainder of the programme. Within each shift, findings are further structured according to level or scale. This focus shines a light on who is changed as a result of the programme and at which levels in the system.

As mentioned previously, a lack of evidence or findings does not necessarily mean that the evidence doesn't exist or that it isn't happening, but that we have not seen any evidence that would tell us otherwise.

See Figures 3 and 4 for the grid version of the analytical framework showing indicators contributing to the four shifts at the various levels alongside a heat map version of the framework showing the prevalence of the indicators in the analysis.

Deficits to strengths

This shift envisions reaching a point where individuals and communities are recognised for their strengths, and supported to build on these, rather than focusing only on the individual's or place's needs and deficits. This is an essential tenet of ABCD and one that CDWs do well in practice. This is one of the shifts where we have seen the most evidence of change, particularly at the 'within and person' and 'person to person' levels. Improvements in people's confidence, skills and wellbeing have been highlighted, but change in the wider system still seems to be limited.

What we found

Within a person

We collected ample evidence of the positive effect that being involved in MiH projects and activities has on participants' confidence and self-esteem, and their sense and value of their own worth and strength. This change is both self-reported and observed in people by others including fellow participants, activity organisers and CDWs, who remark, for example, on the difference over time in a participants' demeanour and

characteristics. This is one of the strongest changes we have collected evidence of during the evaluation and points to a growth in empowerment as a result of MiH.

Since the launch I have spoken with some members of the shed and asked how things are going. One member said "I've never been happier".

Men's social group story template

It's lovely to hear that we're making a difference to people's lives. We're told "this has changed my life". Sometimes it takes a while before people join the group, but once they do they always return and you can see their self-confidence growing and them having fun.

Social group grant review

For some individuals, this improvement in confidence is empowering them to make deeper changes in their lives. This improvement in capacity and capability is supporting some people to build transferable skills, such as outdoor skills or coaching skills, which in turn is leading to more active volunteering, further education and employment.

We have been able to support men attending to volunteer and lead their own sessions including a regular sea swimming group, fishing and walking meetups between the men. One participant is now leading fishing groups for Project Rewild. We have been able to offer training and a level 2 angling qualification. Two men from the group are now volunteering on fishing sessions for adults and children and arranging fishing meetups with other men. One participant has now arranged and applied for funding for his own sea swimming group and sea lifeguard training with the support of Project Rewild. He has started regular sea swim meet ups.

Men's outdoors group grant review

We also heard some examples of people making healthier lifestyle choices prompted by experiences with MiH activities, such as increasing their exercise, getting out to see friends more and taking steps to reduce their isolation. This suggests that there is a link for some between MiH and to improved physical and mental health outcomes.

I just wanted to say thanks for encouraging me to get into some kind of healthy exercise by inviting me to join your walk. It woke something up in me and I went back to swimming tonight. I was a bit slow but managed 25 lengths in 45 minutes. I'll join up and have a membership card and go regularly.

Participant from men's outdoors group in grant review



Figures 3 & 4:

Analytical framework (grid); Analytical framework (heat map), representing which indicators showed up in our analysis the most and least, derived from total number of times each indicator was coded to a case study or grant review

After the July events, a particular artist did not isolate herself and has instead started seeing her friends and her anxiety was also reduced.

Celebrating Diversity Event grant review

We also collected a lot of evidence of the positive effect that supporting others has for people and that a sense of helping others has a powerful positive impact on your own sense of wellbeing. This suggests that the manner in which support is delivered and people's role within it can have positive impacts on health and wellbeing in addition to the benefits of the activity in and of itself. This was especially true for people who had initiated community projects or become involved in running them, and where activities are built around peer-support or are designed for people with some kind of shared experience.

[The group] has helped the mental health of both of the lead volunteers: "It gives me a good reason to get up and do something on a Monday morning"

Parent /toddler group grant review

Having worked in mental health Recovery Services - I can see first hand how taking the wording 'Mental Health Peer Support' out of the equation enables true and rich Peer Support to naturally occur.

Men's social group story template

Person to person

Early indications suggest that community resilience is growing, particularly in terms of people having neighbours and connections they can turn to for support should they need it. By community resilience, we mean the ability for communities to use the resources it has available to address situations that arise. In part this is due to the increased number and type of connections that MiH is helping to develop (see Isolation to Collaboration) but also perhaps because as people's confidence in their own abilities grows and they see others also flourishing, their understanding of their community's strengths and what it can offer are increasing too.

I feel safe sitting around the fire with these men. I don't know them well but it gives me an opportunity to talk about things I would never usually open up about, I can talk honestly and openly and I feel I am heard and supported without judgement.

Participant quoted in outdoor group for men grant review

Relatedly, we have heard that MiH activities contribute to a sense of community and positivity about what is happening, which suggests an increased sense of pride in place and what it has to offer.

The barn dance was a friendly community space, people from all ages and areas of Peacehaven came along. Everyone joined in for the dancing and there was a sense of community spirit throughout the evening.

Community barn dance grant review

There are examples of the ways projects operate and the benefits that people derive from them evolving over time e.g. the Calamity Crafters project, where a crafting group evolved into a support network. This evolution appears to happen quite organically and driven by the desires of the group rather than being pre-planned or pre-determined (linking to a shift from Assuming and Prescribing to Learning and Responding).

Between people and services

While it has not been possible within this evaluation to formally identify any impacts on the usage of formal services as a result of MiH activities (e.g. reductions in use of statutory services as these are replaced with community-based support), there has been some limited anecdotal reference in evidence we have collected to people feeling less of a need to engage with formal services such as GPs for issues like loneliness and isolation because they feel supported by other groups. Some more mature projects and organisations (e.g. Compass Arts) have attempted to quantify how demand is shifted by their work.

A number of the participants have quite serious ongoing health issues. The group provides a way for them to gain support via an informal network rather than having to access services such as their GP. Whilst they will remain under the care of the health system, this group may be reducing their reliance on statutory services.

Crafting/support group story template

MiH is effectively modelling the different kind of relationship a commissioned service and its staff (in this case the CDWs) could have with the people it's supporting. Here, community members are equal partners in value creation, not a 'user' or 'customer' of a service given or done to them. While we understand there to be ambitions and commitments from other services to work in this way, we have not seen evidence of other formal services adopting similar approaches as a result of MiH's influence so far.

What this tells us

- **Turning good ideas and community passion into real activity and projects doesn't happen by itself.** The proliferation of activities through MiH suggests that there is no shortage of ideas and passion from people in the community for the change they'd like to see in their communities. But these ideas and opportunities need to be nurtured, explored and developed to come to fruition. The structure and approach of MiH and how it is applying ABCD principles in practice, and in particular the role of CDWs, play a very important part in this.
- **The process needs to support and allow for the personal transformation that makes this work most impactful.** If the outcome that we are seeking is psycho-social and relates to how people feel about themselves and their relationship to others, we seek an adaptive rather than a technical change, so there is not a simple relationship between inputs and outputs. In this shift in particular, but also across the others, supporting such transformation means investing in the time and space to build relationships and work at the speed of trust. MiH seems to do this effectively, in part due to structural choices about how the programme was set up (e.g. few restrictions on timelines for projects to work within) but also the skill and judgement of CDWs.
- **Reciprocal relationships improve wellbeing and build community spirit.** The fact that projects are driven by community members themselves and that the greatest value produced comes from the relationship between people, rather than as a transaction from one party to another, is central to the premise of ABCD and MiH.
- **What is traditionally perceived as a deficit can be a strength.** All lived experience of participants — including the challenges and adversity they face and experience — is valued and seen as a strength in MiH, rather than an indication of 'need' or a deficit which must be addressed. This allows space for a different kind of support and solidarity to emerge between people and for people who are often disempowered by formal services (which see them only as

their deficits) to be active participants in their own and others' wellbeing. How people are treated by a service or the professionals they encounter (in this case the 'service' being MiH and the CDWs the professionals) has significant implications for how they relate and respond to that experience.

What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations

- **Continue to encourage the 'flipping' of deficits and strengths:** The mindset shift that enables us to reframe our perceptions of people and places around their strengths rather than their deficits is fundamental to proliferating asset-based approaches. One of MiH's great strengths is its ability to deliver things that give people purpose and bring them joy and be confident in the health and wellbeing benefits this will bring, rather than narrowly focusing on what people 'need'. Building on existing offers e.g. the ABCD training offer alongside finding ways and opportunities to demonstrate how MiH is doing this in practice and encouraging others to 're-train' their defaults through practical experience would make a useful contribution to this shift.
- **Further expand the focus to influencing services, not just individuals:** For a lasting impact in relation to this shift, wider services and projects need to be operating from a strengths-based perspective alongside MiH. Identifying how MiH can most effectively contribute to this shift in other organisations is key to the legacy of the programme.
- **Continue to learn about and push the boundaries of balancing what the community can do for itself vs. where professional (e.g. clinical) expertise is needed.** We have seen examples of MiH projects and the people associated with them grappling with the nuances and boundaries of what communities are best placed to do for themselves and where professional input and expertise is needed. This is a wider conversation which will need to be explored and understood collectively if asset-based approaches are to expand. Engaging in this meaningfully means being open to questioning 'accepted wisdom' and the ability to have mature conversations about risk (e.g. what is our collective tolerance for risk, and the risk of what and for whom).

Central to local

This shift is about moving from one-size-fits all approaches across large geographic areas to a relational neighbourhood-based focus. It envisions those supporting

communities working from an understanding of the value of relationships and connections on the ground within a community and how that can shape the operations within it, rather than a blanket approach across a large area. The localised nature of MiH's working shows many strengths but those delivering the MiH programme and those in the community felt they hadn't seen evidence that other parts of the system were operating in this way, often feeling like an outlier compared to many other public services. There are some challenges to overcome in working in this way in terms of scale and sustainability.

What we found

Within a person

As explored in more detail under 'Isolation to Collaboration', MiH is creating many opportunities for people to connect with more people in their community, in more ways. As well as within projects, these connections are facilitated through events like Big Sparks, where both individuals and collectives gain awareness of what else exists in their community, create connections and become more enthusiastic about contributing to their community. We've heard repeatedly about the value of events and opportunities like Big Sparks and the follow-up workshops to participants in MiH and a desire for more of these opportunities.

There was a range in demographics, there were families, individuals, older and younger, there were people who were in a paid role and using this as a platform to have conversations and get some meaningful insights into how they perceive their local neighbourhoods.

Community litter pick grant review

Person to person

We have also seen evidence of changes in the diversity and typology of social networks and connections. Community members connect and support one another across groups/demographics that may not have connected without the MiH work, as well as there being more and deeper connections within similar networks because of the projects and groups.

Between people and services

The vast majority of social assets being used (or brought back into use) through MiH projects and groups are local assets within communities and neighbourhoods, rather than in traditional central hubs where traditional services are often delivered from. This suggests that there are additional places where community activity or support are welcomed or needed which formal services, operating on a more centralised model, are not reaching. By the nature of the ABCD approach in MiH, activities are based where communities want and need them.

While we have not seen evidence of a shift in formal services changing their operating models towards a more localised delivery model, there are examples of CDWs being contacted by formal services for support in reaching communities that formal services find it difficult to access because they are operating on larger footprints. This suggests there is definitely a value to the wider system of this local knowledge and connection.

Because of the localised nature of MiH activity, participation numbers and group sizes are likely lower than for activities traditionally convened over a wider geography (although many MiH groups and activities report growing numbers of participants as investment in them increases). While this has benefits in terms of accessibility and people being more likely to attend something very local to them, it can pose challenges for the sustainability of the activity and create an over-reliance on a small number of volunteers and conveners, increasing the possibility of burn-out.

What this tells us

- **MiH is achieving its ambition of stimulating local neighbourhood and community-specific activity:** While there may be common themes in the kinds of activities that are set up through MiH (e.g. craft projects, youth groups, walking groups) it matters that they are not 'cookie-cutter' initiatives rolled out to a template but have emerged from and through the communities where they are based. While it may be possible to explore more connections and collaborations between similar groups to enable them to pool resources and learn from one another, it would be important to do this in a way that maintains their individuality and authenticity and the space for them to diverge in how they develop.
- **MiH activity is filling a gap at the local level:** MiH projects and activities are unlocking unused or underused local community assets and resources, bringing them back into use or creating more spaces for connection and community

activity which have been overlooked or are inaccessible or inefficient for formal services operating at a wider geographical footprint. This brings positive opportunities for connection and enhanced well-being closer to more people.

- **There are activities that are supporting the diversification of social networks:** the projects, activities and events that do this most effectively have usually been set up with that deliberate purpose in mind (e.g. Chinese New Year celebrations or Celebrating Diversity in Eastbourne). Having activities that support the diversification of social networks are important, enabling others to engage outside of their existing networks and groups. It is important that there is a deliberate focus on increasing this, alongside ensuring that opportunities exist for those most marginalised in society.

What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations

- **Explore opportunities for collective action but don't lose the local connection:** Part of what makes MiH compelling to participants is the bespoke nature of the projects that have emerged from that particular community at that particular time. However, we also know that there is significant work required to set these activities up, which can be overly burdensome and off-putting to some. It is likely that it is possible to explore more connections and collaborations between similar groups to enable them to pool resources, learn from one another and reduce the burden and pressure of running a group. However, it would be important to do this in a way that maintains their individuality, authenticity and local connection.
- **Understand the ambition for a more structural shift to local provision, delivery and organisation:** Communities want to feel that they have a say in what happens in their local area. However, the statutory instruments we have can rarely account for what different local communities need. This creates a feeling in communities that things are done to them, rather than with them. By moving towards a future where communities feel they can say what they need and services can respond accordingly, we are also likely to increase community engagement with these services. As MiH has demonstrated, there is a vast amount of resources available when communities are able to shape how their needs are met.

Isolation to collaboration

This shift is about individuals, groups and organisations working collaboratively rather than in isolation from each other, making the most of the resources available and enabling better, joined-up provision within communities. We have seen wide evidence of the increased connections that MiH is building and are starting to see evidence of more connection forming between formal services and informal MiH collectives, but there is some way to go for this to be a true collaboration.

What we found

Person to person

At the person to person level, new connections are being formed and existing relationships deepened as a result of people's involvement in MiH projects. Through participating in group activities, they meet new people or spend more time with people doing things together that bring them joy and this creates trust, confidence and a sense of belonging. Many projects report growing attendance over time, suggesting that there are a growing number of opportunities for connection.

These relationships extend beyond the organised events or meet-ups related to a project and 'spillover' into conversations and connections outside of the MiH activities, suggesting that people are building greater resilience through these connections and would have more support to draw on in their community should they need it.

“Many new friendships have been made. We know that lots of men have met up away from our sessions and made new connections. Isolation and loneliness has been talked about a lot by men in the group. Spending positive time with other men in this way has been one of the greatest successes of the group.”

Outdoor men's group grant review

There is a change not just in the number of connections people have but in the type and depth of connection they have with people, with some examples given of people being more likely to reach out to others and work together more, rather than just being alongside one another. Together they develop skills and knowledge, improving not only their own sense of self-esteem and confidence but their relationship to their community. Making connections and spending time with peers and neighbours creates

a sense of community spirit and solidarity with one another, which increases people's personal investment in their place and in their community and contributes to creating more resilience and integrated communities. The sense of reciprocity between peers with shared experiences which is fostered by MiH (rather a transaction between a provider and a service-user) also contributes to this. While this is quite intangible and we have not seen evidence of concrete outcomes, this strengthening of community capacity and capability is a powerful condition for more community action.

...we are local men who live and work here. We, like many other men, have suffered from depression, anxiety, and mental health issues. We are fathers, husbands, lovers, brothers and friends. We need and want this work for all of us.

Outdoor men's group grant review

As well as connections between peers, we also saw evidence of connections across demographic differences being formed e.g. a local Muslim community feeling more confident in their connection to the wider place through the Peace Community Centre Soup Kitchen. In particular, intergenerational connections which some projects and groups have enabled are seen as making a particular contribution to community cohesion.

From the event, we were able to reach out to communities that were not reached out to previously. From the comments received after the event, the majority of the community members were keen to join in the next year's celebration and to be more involved in community engagement.

Community event community survey response

Being part of one group or activity can be a gateway to getting involved in other things and making more connections. A 'web effect' means once people are in touch in one way, it seems to be more likely that they will come into contact with other opportunities to get involved in things in their community.

"The festival has had an impact in building networks and partnerships for future projects and events."

Community festival grant review

We know that there are greater barriers to participation for marginalised and minority individuals and groups, and although MiH is seeking to target some of the most deprived communities in East Sussex, it is not immune to the challenges community

development programmes commonly experience in seeking to do this well. We do see evidence of some minority groups making use of the programme, and importantly the support that they get is tailored around their community and its needs.

Between people and services

We have seen examples of groups and collectives in a place sharing their work and knowledge (e.g. building awareness about what is available in a place) and doing practical things together to work towards a shared goal (e.g. supporting a particular community).

The relationship between Hastings Community of Sanctuary and the library service has been strengthened and both are keen to continue to work together...Running the project alongside the library service applying for their Sanctuary Award through City of Sanctuary UK, meant that it was part of an ongoing strategic plan, and so it [is] likely to have more impact.

Finding Sanctuary grant review

In some instances, connections between MiH community groups and projects (informal groups) and public services are starting to be made. However, these generally appear fairly transactional rather than really collaborative, as it is usually in the form of referrals or raising awareness of the group so more people are accessing the MiH groups/activities. We saw a few examples of more collaborative relationships with local councillors or others in the local authority leading to local assets being made available for community use. But for many, even with CDW support, navigating formal/statutory service structures to make truly collaborative connections is difficult.

The local doctors are still not referring at the end of the six week NHS course but when I am made aware I get in touch with the surgery and drop off posters/flyers.

Health support group grant review

Initially one of the challenges was getting men from our more socially deprived communities involved. We wanted to particularly target Greater Hollington but also any of the recognised areas of deprivation in Hastings and St Leonards. Getting our message to these men and the professionals involved in working with them was a challenge initially. This has improved a lot over time, by creating links with local health care workers, keywords, charities, social prescription workers and housing associations in the community. Also, time and word of mouth has really helped in this regard. We now have referrals from many local health care support organisations. This is where having more time really helps.

Outdoor men's group grant review

- *Linked with Kit Squad through a mountain leader website. Made contact. Able to source repurposed hiking equipment – boots / waterproofs etc. Only have to pay postage and reproofing liquid. Available to those on a lower income.*
- *Link with The Pelham and Storage opportunities going forward.*
- *Link with a local supported living unit called Pathways – residents attended and helped with paperwork. One person supported with paperwork from Pathways.*
- *Call from someone who runs a Special Needs school in Ninfield. Wanting...help with Hiking for the kids.*
- *Possible funding from Bexhill Rotary Group.*
- *Someone from Combe Valley Countryside Park came along to see what the group was doing.*

List of wider connections made by an outdoors group in their grant review

What this tells us

- **Shared spaces are vital:** Forming connections is an explicit purpose of many groups and being together face to face is usually necessary to support this, so having accessible places and spaces to meet is important. Places and spaces where multiple different kinds of community activity happen (e.g. community centres) helps with the 'web effect' of connecting people to more opportunities once they're involved in something.
- **Accessible digital tools are proving effective:** Groups are also making use of free digital tools to stay in contact with each other such as Whatsapp. These

seem to be proportional to their requirements, with low barriers to entry, and maintain the 'peer to peer' informal and organic nature of the groups.

- **CDWs are key connectors:** CDWs act as key nodes in local networks helping people to connect and navigate the wider landscape of activities and services and make connections between them. Their local knowledge and networks are key.
- **Resource needs to follow referrals:** Where formal services are making connections into Making it Happen activities and referring people along, this does not always come with resource or support attached which undermines a spirit of true collaboration and could threaten the sustainability of the groups in the longer term.

What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations

- **Investing in community spaces is a key enabler of community engagement and action.** Much of MiH's grant funding goes towards things like room hire to enable groups to meet i.e. on facilitating the process of growing ideas rather than on growing the ideas themselves. Increasing access to these spaces and investing in them where they do not exist is a key prerequisite for community action, within MiH or beyond.
- **Strive for true collaboration not just awareness and transactions:** Beyond the person to person level, the next frontier is the connections and true collaboration between MiH groups and projects and formal services and ways for them to work together which are not just about directing people to different services/activities in a transactional way but working creatively and collaboratively to develop and support communities together.
- **Explore further opportunities to broaden social networks and connections across demographic differences as well as intergenerationally.** While still being led by the assets and ambitions of the community, purposeful consideration and continued work to make all projects inclusive and accessible to all would be beneficial, as well as considering the overall 'spread' of projects and perhaps seeking to target future activity in the later stages of the programme in neighbourhoods/communities where there has been more limited engagement so far. It may be useful to consider how MiH could adapt its approach and team to better engage with communities that are less heard from and who are often underrepresented in services.

Assuming and prescribing to learning and responding

This shift envisions a future where professionals start with what's happening on the ground, rather than prescribing or imposing projects or solutions. Lived experience is valued alongside learned experience, and community voices shape both what and how services are delivered in a community. We have seen how participating in MiH projects is giving people a different kind of experience of working with services/professionals that still feels countercultural to their usual experiences and expectations — one that is adaptable, empowering and responsive. We're yet to see much evidence of this translating across to their experience of other services.

What we found

Within a person

While many people join a group or activity because of a pre-existing interest or experience of it, we also saw evidence of people trying new things and being open to new experiences — often because thought has been given (by organisers and CDWs) to what is needed to support people to do this. Self-reporting suggests people respond positively to these new experiences in terms of how this impacted their self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing.

Person to person

The 'peer to peer' element of many of the of the MiH projects and activities (e.g. kinship carers, mental health support groups) has many powerful elements (see Deficits to Strengths above) including the opportunities this creates for people to recognise and articulate their individual and shared experiences. This is an important step towards community members being able to build upon their lived experience to shape what and how services are delivered in the community.

I'm a kinship carer raising two grandchildren. I know how isolating and difficult taking kinship children on. Lack of support can lead to isolation... We have brought together kinship carers in the area to share knowledge and experience with newer carers. Bringing together the kinship children who may have experienced traumatic starts in life to form friendships with other kinship children like themselves.

Carer group community survey response

Linked closely with the Deficits to Strengths shift, the ABCD approach of MiH means that people who are part of the groups and collectives the programme supports are not just passive recipients of a service but have an active role in creating, supporting and making decisions about the activities they are part of. This is crucial, as this enables communities to say what they need and build in themselves, resulting in the positive outcomes described in the Deficits to Strengths section. This in turn enables members of the community to have the confidence to exercise greater voice and participation in other arenas in the future (such as in interactions with formal services). At this stage the evidence suggests the preconditions for this are being built, rather than an outcome.

Being asked to take on independence and responsibility is an approach...that I haven't experienced elsewhere. It offers one challenges that initially seem overwhelming. 'How could I possibly do that?' I have thought to myself on countless occasions. But once accepting the gauntlet, (mostly because I can see the belief those asking have in me, though I don't often share it), I always end up surprising myself and feeling empowered.

Participant comment in arts group grant review

There are a range of structures for how groups and activities run and make decisions together, with some having more formal committees and meetings and others organising and problem solving in a more ad hoc way as needed. The evidence suggests that CDWs play an important role in 'leading by stepping back' to create the space for this ownership and responsiveness by the group, even when people may initially look to them for direction, and in ensuring that structures to support this remain proportional.

We supported a small group of these artists to write their own policy for having independent studio practices [and] set up a WhatsApp group that keeps a record of people entering and leaving the studio in pairs. It had teething problems as there is a lack of tolerance for each other but through facilitated, Bohemian style conversations, we worked through what was acceptable, what was mental health and what was out of order.

Arts group grant review

The purpose of groups is evolving over time and in some cases, people who initially made connections through one group or activity have gone on to set up new initiatives and projects separately from that original source of connection.

It became clear after a few lessons that they loved cooking together as a group & having access to the equipment library plus laughing at each other (and me) when they mess up. I suggested a lesson on bread making which was met with real enthusiasm. I was so pleased with the response so I said it was nice that they wanted to make bread. The reply was "bugger that, I can get a loaf in Lidl for 40p, but these sessions make me feel so much better mentally, it's a release when I know the kids are safe at school & I can be me for a while!!" With hindsight, I wish I had realised that it would become more about mental health than cooking.

Community cooking group

We have seen some evidence of different groups and projects from the MiH programme coming together to learn or take action collectively. Large-scale events like Big Sparks and the follow-up workshop are clearly valued opportunities for groups to connect with one another. CDWs have opportunities to share learning and insight within their organisational team and across them through the learning programme (which we are aware is in the process of being redesigned) which is beneficial, but could be extended more widely.

People to services

We've seen only one or two examples of formal groups and services making a more proactive effort to connect with MiH groups and activities beyond referral pathways in order to learn from their experiences and build understanding of the community and place.

What this tells us

- **The ABCD approach and intention, and CDWs' skill in practising this, is integral to this shift:** The intention of asset-based community development to be led by people's gifts, talents and motivations rather than their needs or deficits, and the belief that people themselves are the most powerful agents of change in their own lives are fundamental to an approach that responds to what people want rather than imposing things upon them. Embodying and modelling these principles is a key part of the CDW role, and having the time to build relationships, trust and understanding with the people they are working with is important because this way of working challenges people's expectations and experiences of the status quo. As such, it can take time for people to get used to this different kind of relationship and requires careful judgement on the part of CDWs to move at the right pace.
- **There are more opportunities for collective learning across projects and groups:** While each group and activity is different and unique, there are many common experiences and challenges that they face, particularly around core infrastructure such as bank accounts. Opportunities that do exist for groups and projects to share experience and problem-solve together are valued, and CDWs have useful insight in understanding where connections between different groups or projects could be made or what the key issues where people need support might be.
- **CDWs have a wealth of insight and experience which could be valuable to the wider system:** As experienced practitioners of ABCD approaches and as community connectors and 'eyes and ears on the ground' CDWs play a unique — and much appreciated — role in the system. There are challenges around capacity and many calls on CDWs time, so balancing their core role of supporting communities with supporting learning and change in the wider system needs to be carefully considered.
- **Change is greater for individuals than for organisations and the system:** While MiH is contributing greatly to a shift at the 'within a person and 'person to person' level, the evidence we have seen suggests it is having a much more limited impact in terms of influencing change in formal services and how they interact with communities and each other. This is to be expected as there is limited activity happening within MiH dedicated to this end, and it is unclear who is responsible and resourced to take this role on.

What we've learned: conclusions and recommendations

- **Consistency of practice across CDWs is key:** We heard many positive things about CDWs and the roles they perform. Nonetheless, natural churn in the team and continuous learning mean it is valuable for individuals and the team to keep refreshing and returning to ABCD principles, practices and tools. Continue working on the toolbox and creating effective shared learning spaces to aid induction and continued learning across the delivery team.
- **Share this learning and tools beyond the MiH team.** The practical experience of the MiH programme delivery team in delivering ABCD make them well-placed to have an active role in building wider asset-based approaches in East Sussex, not only by sharing formal reports such as this but also through peer learning and support across roles and creative ways to share how MiH works in practice experientially with others.
- **Build a movement, not a collection of projects:** There are opportunities for more support across projects/activities in MiH to support learning at community rather than project level e.g. making connections, sharing learning and experience, building common infrastructure. When people involved in different projects do have opportunities to come together, we know they find it valuable. There is an opportunity to capitalise on this to go beyond MiH being a collection of discrete projects to building a collective movement.
- **Create a clear strategy for influencing the wider system:** There is much more scope for formal services to learn from the community groups about what people want, what they can contribute to and what gives people purpose etc. than is being realised at the moment. Formal services need to be more proactive and sensitive in seeking this — avoiding extractive or transactional practices such as simply referring people on or trying to absorb projects into their typical way of doing things, but meaningfully engaging in collaboration and shared learning. But the MiH team could likewise think more proactively about their strategy and approach for influencing this kind of change in the system, and identify more clearly whose role it should be.

Conclusion

Working alongside the MiH programme this year has demonstrated to us the many strengths and benefits the programme is bringing to communities in East Sussex and in some cases the transformational change it is supporting for individuals who are part of projects and activities.

This report draws out key findings about how and why MiH has driven change in East Sussex. We feel confident in saying that MiH is working effectively in the places it is operating for those people who are active participants in the programme, and based on what we have seen we suggest the next question on the horizon is not so much if, how and why it is working but rather how MiH can maximise its impact and proliferate that change.

As with any programme, there is much to be learned, as covered in this report and discussed in recent months, about what is and isn't working and how things could be tweaked or adapted or improved. Whilst acting on these learnings and implementing changes is by no means easy, we are confident that there is already a fairly strong shared understanding amongst the MiH team about what those opportunities are.

Our conclusions and recommendations focus instead on what we understand to be the more fundamental pathways MiH could take in the final stages of the programme. As it currently stands, MiH is a delimited programme (though relatively long-term and substantial in the scheme of local authority-commissioned community development programmes). As such, it has a natural lifecycle — from inception and initiation, to delivery, and eventually closure or a transition to the next iteration. As MiH enters its latter stages of maturity, the emphasis in attention should rightly shift to maximising the legacy and lasting impact the programme can have.

While we have focused our analysis and conclusions around the Four Shifts analytical framework we developed from those programme theories, finding it an effective model to interpret this programme, we have considered the original programme theories set out at the start of the programme. Broadly programme theories 1-4 were focused on the communities and the benefits they might gain from this programme, with theories 5-8 focused on the potential change to the wider system as a result of the programme. We broadly agree with the conclusions of the Phase One evaluation in that there are plenty of benefits experienced by those in the community who engage with the programme. We however found very little evidence to suggest that there have been

any significant changes in the wider system as result of the programme. While there is certainly a larger proliferation of the language of ABCD across East Sussex, we heard some concern from those delivering MiH that this is only at a surface level, and that they had seen limited examples of actual practice shifting to community led approaches and engaging with what this shift in power will look like in reality.

While not unique, MiH is one of the largest examples currently in East Sussex to evidence an asset-based community development approach. We consider it to be operating outside of the mainstream as an alternative ABCD system, driven by different beliefs and assumptions and with its own set of operating procedures and policies which we have seen differ in significant and impactful ways from the status quo. As we have heard, what's holding the programme back often comes down to seeking to 'practise ABCD in non-ABCD organisations in a non-ABCD world'.

We know that at its best, MiH can, through the principles of ABCD, nurture transformational change for individuals and the peers and community they're connecting with, re-setting how people think about themselves, their relationships and their place. This is of course a worthy and impressive end in itself. But there is a danger in expecting that if MiH remains geared towards this individual and interpersonal level change, it will make a lasting impact on wider 'status quo' system conditions.

As our findings from this year have shown, if activity to influence is not joined together at different levels of the system, then the impact and any shifts to the system may remain limited. At this stage in the programme's lifecycle, a pivot to and greater investment in that wider influencing to build the infrastructure and conditions for more asset-based activity in East Sussex is vital.

We therefore recommend that in the final part of the programme MiH focuses on the following:

- 1. Identify, clarify and make accessible the learning about the key enablers, approaches and processes that have contributed to MiH's effectiveness and that could be hard-wired into other programmes beyond MiH and the wider system.**

In particular, we suggest this could include learning about:

- The principles of ABCD and how to apply these effectively in practice, including for example the continued development of the toolbox;

- Effective funding processes and mechanisms to enable community-led activity;
- Defining the role, scope and positioning of community development workers as locally-based connectors and facilitators;
- The kinds of community spaces which are needed to facilitate community-led work and where these should be located.

Work to generate and capture this learning is already underway and we hope the materials produced through this evaluation will provide a useful contribution to this. More specific products are also likely to be needed and we would encourage you to continue developing these in collaboration ('from the work, through the work') where possible.

2. Develop a purposeful strategy for engaging the wider system and sharing the learning identified above.

Our understanding and evidence gathered to date confirms relying on 'on the ground' activity in the community to organically generate wider change in the system is not reliably effective in influencing system change. The time is ripe for a purposeful and prioritised strategy and action plan for influencing system change, which goes beyond simply awareness-raising and which is appropriately resourced and managed against other programme priorities.

Developing such a strategy will likely include answering (or re-establishing an already agreed response to) questions including:

- Do the four shifts remain an accurate description of the system change we believe is needed to enable more asset-based approaches? If so, how can we extend the use of this framework? If not, how can we adapt it to more accurately reflect what we need?
- What specific learning and know-how can MiH contribute to making these four shifts tangible? How will we capture progress and learn from what is and isn't working?
- Who do we need to influence? Who within the MiH programme and ecosystem is best placed to influence which stakeholders? How can we resource and equip them to do so effectively?

- What routes and opportunities beyond awareness-raising are open to us to influence change? (Examples of tools in Collaborate and Nesta's [Margins to Mainstream](#) report may offer inspiration)

3. Embed MiH more effectively in the fabric of the wider VCFSE sector.

MiH is not the only programme or activity with an asset-based approach operating in East Sussex and it seems there is a growing appetite for collaboration across different projects and programmes towards shared goals. We also know there is an active voluntary and community sector in East Sussex from grassroots organisations up to larger, more established infrastructure organisations. Through events such as the Four Shifts Workshop and in more informal and ad hoc ways through the work of the CDWs, collaborations and connections seem to be forming, but as above, we believe more purposeful steps to nurture this would be beneficial.

Our sense is that MiH is treated somewhat separately from other VCFSE initiatives by both those involved in delivering it (the partner organisations) and those commissioning it. We think there is merit in embedding MiH more deeply into the fabric of voluntary and community activity. In particular, better links could be made with the infrastructure support that the voluntary action organisations that deliver MiH are also commissioned to deliver, especially in this final stage of the programme and as more community projects and activities mature and need to seek alternative forms of support and funding.

4. Build a movement, not just a collection of projects.

Whilst energy is needed to focus 'outwards' beyond MiH to influence change, this can also be bolstered by efforts to build a greater sense of movement within and between the projects that form the Making it Happen programme. Evidence so far suggests this will be of practical benefit to the projects in the short-term, as well as beneficial to longer-term system change aims.

This could include:

- Creating more time and space for projects to come together to share what they're working on, build connections and develop enthusiasm for community action, as per Big Sparks. This has the added benefit of being an opportunity for other stakeholders who MiH is seeking to influence to understand and experience more of the programme.

- Bring together projects and activities on related themes or in similar geographies to share what they do and how, and explore whether collective infrastructure could support them to scale more effectively and be more sustainable in the longer term.

Importantly, the findings from this phase of evaluation and particularly the feedback from community participants in MiH projects suggest that while gearing activity at the level of individuals and person-to-person dynamics has limited impact in terms of change in the wider system, influencing positive change in the system in the ways described above can still lead to positive and transformational change for individuals. This is because the conditions that the system creates have a direct impact on how people are feeling.

By shifting the local system to one that people feel supports and nurtures them, rather than one that can feel adversarial and limiting, we are more likely to see more collaboration between the levels of the system. By creating a system where communities are able to say what their needs are and are given responsibility for deciding the best way for these to be met, we will enable community action in the ways MiH has demonstrated, resulting in healthier and more resilient communities. Investing in developing more positive system conditions is also therefore likely to lead to more positive interactions for individuals and collectives which they feel more positively about and are therefore likely to proliferate.

Deep-rooted, sustainable change for places and communities comes from systemic change in the interaction of multiple actors and factors. Making these recommendations for the programme is not to suggest that it is the work or responsibility of MiH alone to change the system. For MiH to successfully play its part, other actors in the system will be need to:

- **Adopt a learning mindset:** engage in shared learning alongside MiH with curiosity, open-ness and a willingness to adapt, especially recognising where the way they work might be direct tension with enabling that system shift.
- **Take responsibility:** recognise that the system is not 'out there' but that all actors are part of it and have agency and authority to make specific changes which others can't.

- **Foster collaboration:** recognise that system change is a team sport and that they too will have a role in influencing change and reaching actors that MiH cannot or will not influence.

Making it Happen Interim Evaluation Report 2022-2023

Produced in January 2024

If you would like to get in contact about this report, please email Lewis from Collaborate CIC at lewis@collaboratecic.com.

