



# **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

## **AREA SNAPSHOT**

Castle, Hastings  
**Hastings Voluntary Action**  
*Nov 2019 – December 2024*



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## What This Snapshot Will Cover

- **The aim of this Snapshot**
- **Introduction**
  - What is ABCD?
  - What is Making it Happen?
  - Links to wider health policy, strategy and guidance
- **Executive Summary**
- **2019 Insights**
  - The area rationale approach
  - Area background and context
  - 2019 data
  - Community Development Worker discovery reports
- **2024 Insights**
  - Community Development Worker reflections on key developments, challenges and learning
  - Grants awarded by theme
  - Equalities connections
  - Learning from the Making it Happen evaluation
- **Key insights**
- **Strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats**

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## The Aim

The aim of this snapshot is to provide background information drawn from learning over the course of the Making it Happen programme to support deeper conversations about neighbourhoods in East Sussex where statistical data might suggest a challenging picture, while lived experience offers an alternative perspective. The snapshots add valuable qualitative insight to complement data about neighbourhoods in East Sussex.

Statistical data utilised in decision making about which areas to focus on at the start of the programme is revisited and reviewed in the context of development and learning gleaned from the programme over time.

The snapshots do not seek to provide a comprehensive profile of an area but draw on learning from and about the assets that are present, and developments which have occurred over time and reported on within the Making it Happen programme by local residents and by the Community Development Workers who work alongside them.

The aim of this snapshot is to start a conversation and to complement statistical data prepared through the Integrated Community Teams here: <https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/resources/ict-profiles/>

This is to inform thinking about approaches and methods of engaging communities in addressing health inequalities.



# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Introduction**

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## What is Asset-Based Community Development?

“Building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions, **asset based community development** (ABCD) draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future” (*Asset Based Community Development Institute, DePaul University*: <https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/Pages/default.aspx>)

“ABCD challenges the traditional deficit-based approach that tries to solve urban and rural development problems by focusing on the needs and deficiencies of individuals, neighbourhoods, towns, villages, etc. ABCD demonstrates that local assets (people, physical assets etc.) and individual strengths are key to ensure **sustainable community development**, and that people have a life of their own choosing.” (*Nurture Development, 2018*)

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## What is Making it Happen?

Making it Happen has adopted the principles and values of ABCD. Generic Community Development Workers (CDWs) work alongside communities in a neighbourhood context to identify, connect and build from the positive things that exist in a locality.

Because there is no set agenda other than positive action taken forward by the community, it has the potential to enrich every aspect of civil society and to feed into the whole range of local strategic priorities.

This enrichment is in part dependent on the willingness and ability of local institutions and organisations to flex and adapt in response to the broader and deeper engagement this can bring.

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## Relevant Health Policy, Strategy and Guidance

Making it Happen contributes to the delivery of numerous policy and strategy objectives and can assist in the fulfilment of a range of guidance around working with communities:

- [Mental Health](#) (World Health Organisation)
- [Community engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities](#) (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2016)
- [Fair Society Healthy Lives](#) – The Marmot Review (Marmot et al, 2010)
- [A guide to community centred approaches for health and wellbeing](#) (Public Health England and NHS England 2015)
- [Reducing health inequalities: system, scale and sustainability](#) (Public Health England, 2017)
- [Community Centred Public Health: Taking a whole system approach](#) (Public Health England 2020)
- [Working in Partnership with People and Communities](#) (NHS England, July 2022)
- [Improving Lives Together](#) (Sussex Health and Care, December, 2022)
- [Working with people and communities strategy](#) (Sussex Health and Care, 2022)

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Hastings - Castle**



# AREA SNAPSHOT

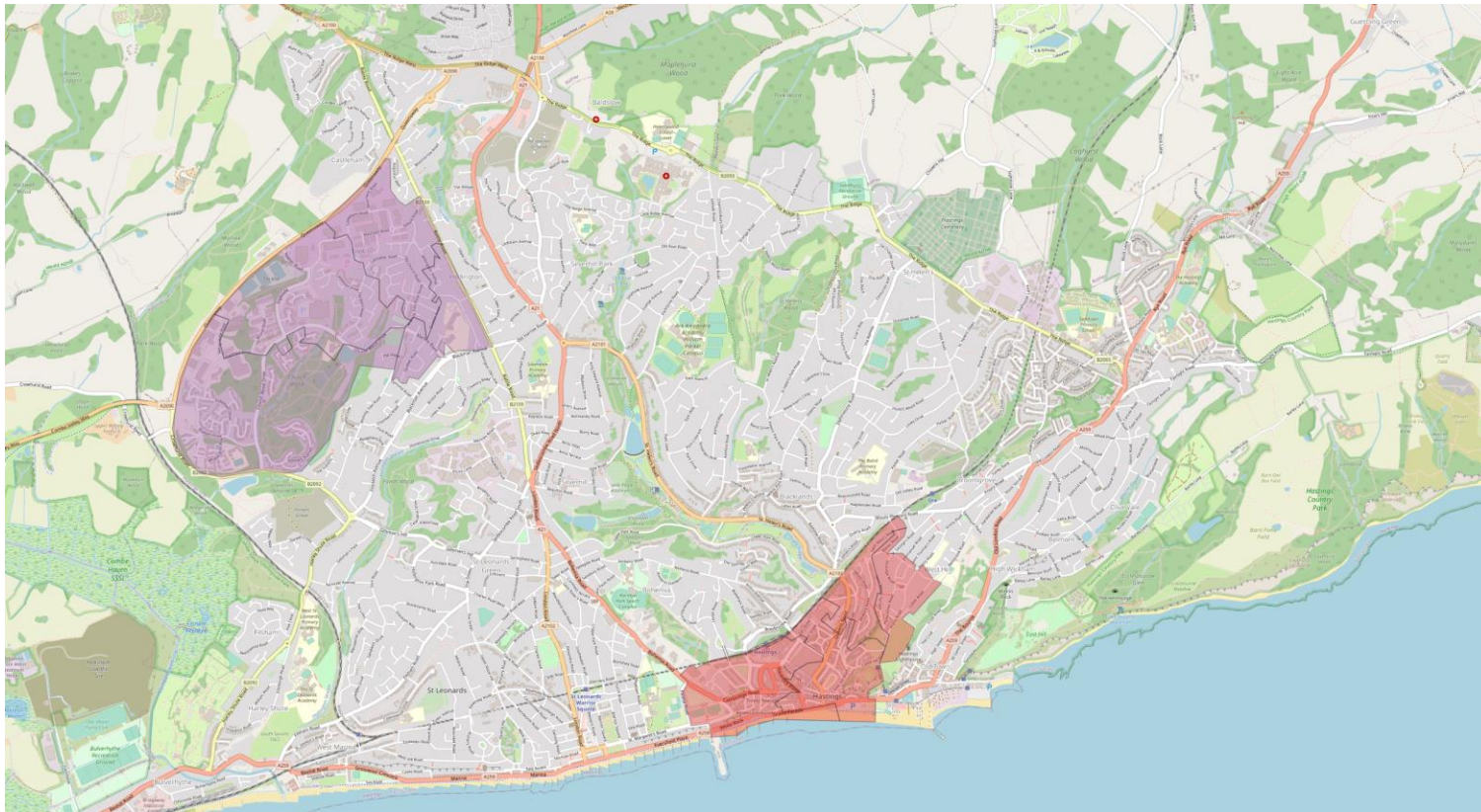
## Area context

**Castle Ward**, as the name suggests, mirrors the Hastings Borough Council ward of Castle. It is an area that forms a large part of Hastings town centre, bordered to the north and south by the railway line and the seafront respectively, and extending west to Falaise Road, and east to Croft Road, wrapping round the Old Town. As a result, it contains a sizeable number of amenities and resources of various different kinds including Hastings station, the Priory Meadow shopping centre, an Odeon cinema, Hastings Town Hall, a number of banks, a museum, sports and fitness centres, Hastings Castle, Hastings Library, and a number of community spaces, including the offices of Hastings Voluntary Action.

The area also has strong bus links to the rest of Hastings, with most bus routes running to and from the town centre outwards. While access to amenities and resources is strong, the housing status of those living in the area is far more precarious, with mostly multi-occupancy households, more than 50% of residents living in privately rented accommodation, and many residents only living in the area on a more temporary basis, all of which limits the community and identity of the area.

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## The Area



There are two Making it Happen areas in Hastings.

**Castle** is shown here at the bottom in red, covering the town centre, key amenities, and part of the main seafront.

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Executive Summary**

Hastings Castle

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Executive Summary

- In 2019 Castle Ward was selected as an area of focus for Making it Happen based on a range of data, including in relation to income deprivation, employment, education, skills and training, crime and living environment. There were also challenges around relationships, trust, life satisfaction and sense of belonging.
- There were also opportunities to build from, including a range of meeting spaces, key community connectors and organisations who were already active. There were also other local assets including the beach, seafront, vibrant pubs, small independent shops and active churches. A significant positive was the good transport links with the wider town and town centre.
- In 2024 new groups have emerged and increasingly a drive to encourage connection through networks and opportunities for peer learning.
- New projects and initiatives have evolved, most notably in relation to arts and engagement, mental health and wellbeing and environmental initiatives.
- Projects supported by and with children and young people have developed.
- Peer support and peer learning are common threads within the projects that have been supported through Making it Happen.
- There is focus also on initiatives that encourage relationships and a sense of belonging which in turn have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.
- Groups are connecting with each other and are engaging in opportunities for voice and influence.
- Making it Happen does appear to be engaging with people from different backgrounds and with different characteristics.
- There is correlation between the data and challenges identified in 2019 and the priorities and impact of projects and activity being driven by local communities in 2024.

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **The Picture in 2019**

**Summary of the 2019 area rationale:**

Hastings Castle

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## 2019 Area Rationales

In 2019 ahead of the launch of the Making it Happen programme, delivery partners reviewed existing data about East Sussex to inform decisions about which areas to focus activity.

Areas were selected based on relative deprivation and health inequality evidenced by 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and 2018 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). 2016-17 WARM ward and 2018 Co-op wellbeing index data were also considered. These illustrated indicators such as confidence, quality of local services, employment, experience of isolation, crime and unemployment. Broadly, the areas selected showed relative dissatisfaction with key themes in relation to living in the area and general quality of life.

Crucially, the area rationales also drew on CDW learning from previous Public Health programmes including Chances for Change, which provided a much more nuanced picture than the statistical data alone might suggest. CDWs sought to highlight the presence of local assets and opportunities to build from. They were able to highlight key connectors, appetite and ideas as well as potential challenges and blocks to community engagement.

A summary of the area rationale produced at that time is shared in the following slides.

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## Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2018

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) identifies the current and future health and wellbeing needs and strengths of local communities. These resources help to inform decisions and plans to improve local people's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in East Sussex.

### **Castle - worse than East Sussex average in rates of:**

- Lone Parent Households
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children
- Fuel Poverty
- Early Years Development
- Key Stage 2 Development
- GCSE Attainment
- Adults with No/Low Qualifications
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs
- GP-reported Obesity in Adults
- Rate of Adults in Alcohol Treatment
- 40-74 year olds receiving an NHS Health Check
- People self-reporting bad or very bad health
- People self-reporting a long-term health condition or disability
- Adults with Depression
- Adults claiming ESA due to mental health.

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## Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019

**Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD):** The English indices of deprivation measure relative deprivation in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas. The Indices provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas across England, based on seven different domains, or facets, of deprivation. IMD's score areas between 0-5 based on levels of deprivation, with 5 representing the least deprived and 1 the most deprived. A score of 0 is registered where no data is available.

### IMD scores for Castle – across all LSOAs

- Income – 1
- Employment – 1
- Education skills and training – 1
- Health deprivation – 1
- Crime – 1
- Barriers to housing – 2
- Living environment 1

	Income deprivation
	Employment deprivation
	Health deprivation and disability
	Education, skills and training deprivation
	Barriers to housing and services
	Crime domain
	Living environment deprivation



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## Co-Op Wellbeing Index: 2018 WARM Ward Data: 2016-17

### Co-op Wellbeing Index

<https://communitywellbeing.coop.co.uk/>

The index provides an insight into what is important to people in a local community. The following themes were highlighted as priorities for Castle Ward:

- Health
- Economy, work and employment
- Relationships and trust

### WARM Ward data

WARM provided a way of understanding and identifying an area's strengths, such as levels of social capital, confidence amongst residents, the quality of local services or proximity to employment; as well as vulnerabilities such as isolation, high crime, low savings and unemployment.

- **Red**
  - Life satisfaction
  - Education
  - Health
  - Material wellbeing
  - Belonging

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Discovery Activity 2019

In each of the areas, Community Development Workers undertook discovery activity to establish whether the conditions for Asset Based Community Development were present. This involved drawing on existing local knowledge and relationships (their own and that of their organisation), and mapping of other local assets to connect with and build from.

### **Opportunities to build from:**

- Castle ward offers some small community meeting spaces
- HVA have a good relationship with the local college (use of spaces, links to art department and wellbeing support.)
- Key community connectors (including young people) are present in the ward.
- Community organisations are based in the area
- Good links with town centre Business District initiative (for events & links to retail/ business)
- The beach & seafront
- Churches, pubs, small independent shops
- Central library

### **Potential outcomes:**

- Individuals - Feeling Valued
- Individuals - Sense of purpose
- Communities - Engaged Communities
- Organisations - Increased variety of community associations

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **The Picture in 2024**

### **Castle Ward**

Reflections on developments and change over time

# AREA SNAPSHOT

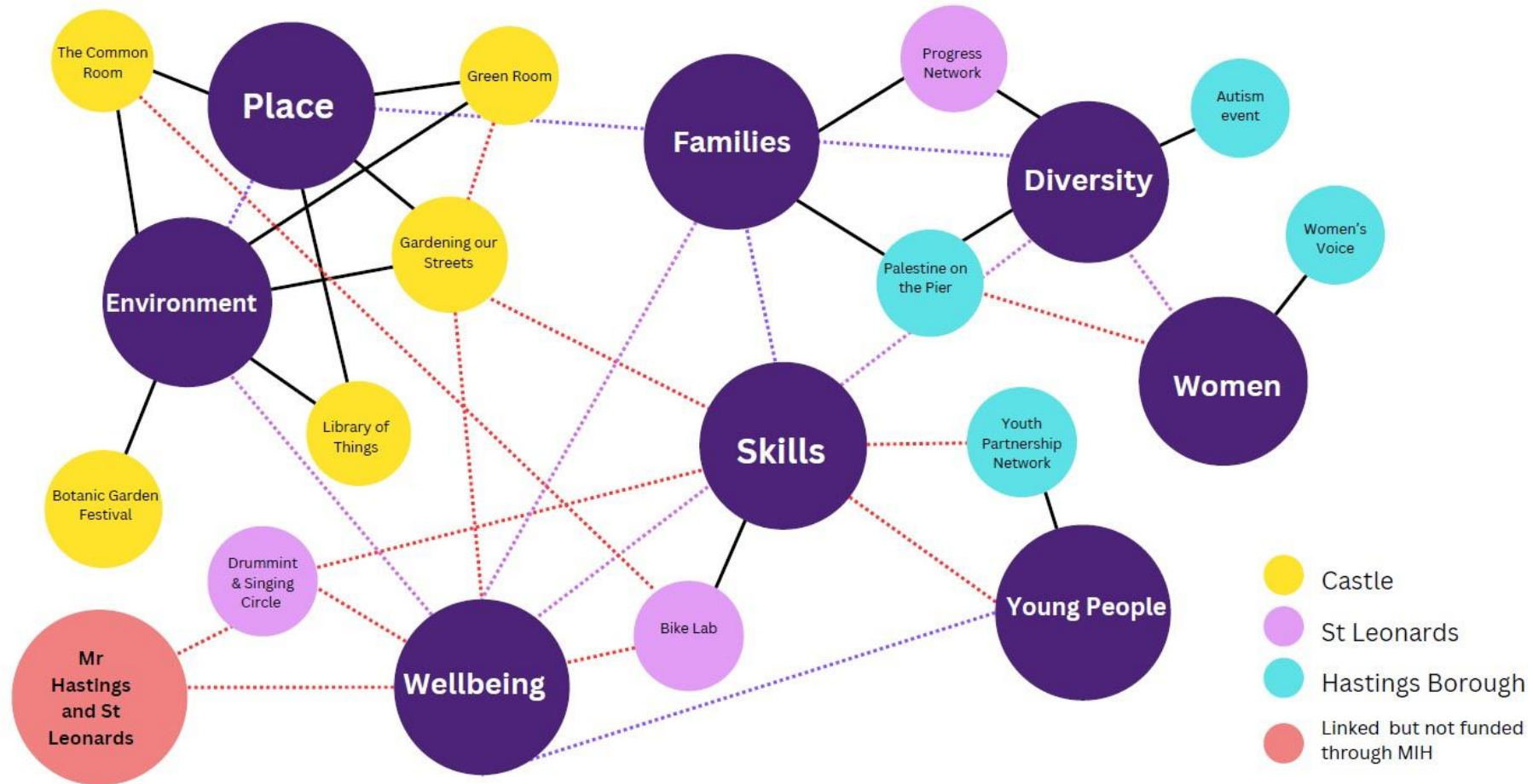
## Reflections

In June and December 2023 Community Development Workers from the five Making it Happen Teams that work in each of the Districts and Boroughs came together at two away days to reflect on developments, challenges and learning over time in each of the neighbourhoods where they have been working.

The Hastings Development Worker mapped key developments in relation to themes as well as areas. To support work in Castle and Hollington, the CDW has forged wider links with communities of interest and identity from across the town.

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## Developments and connections - examples



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Key Challenges

- A challenge identified early on in Hastings related to the number of programmes and initiatives 'competing' for the engagement of people and communities in the town.
- Castle particularly was hugely challenging and choices had to be made about holding the line on taking time to build relationships and trust, versus pushing to demonstrate outcomes, outputs and value before people were ready to take ownership themselves.
- By taking time to focus on relationship building, community led projects and activity eventually blossomed.
- The challenge became managing the wealth of ideas coming forward for support from MIH and particularly for grants, and the administrative burden of this.
- Grant and programme administration began to take valuable time away from being present in the community.
- Striking the balance has been hard to navigate.

### **What have you learned?**

- Relationships and trust are key
- Groups take time to develop
- Some groups hit the ground running
- Some just need 'permission to try'
- Initial activities often attract people from other areas of the town
- Organisations are often able to work in other areas making useful connections with residents

### **What do you want to share with others?**

- Not to be concerned that some groups take years to find their 'pace, place or role'.



# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Grant Funding**

Castle Ward

(Between April 2020 and December 2024)

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## The Grant Programme

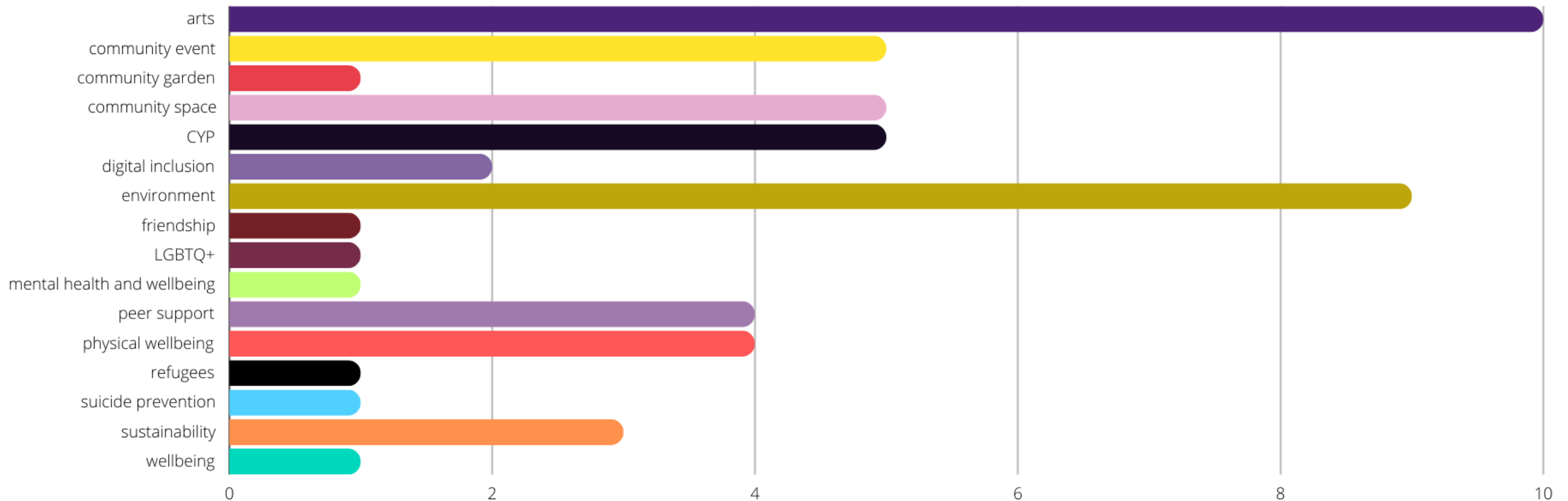
The Making it Happen grant programme was designed to be flexible and offer a range of funding options to reflect the needs of different projects of different sizes. The broad aim was for projects or activity that would build from the positive things that are already present, involve local people, benefit the wider community, and encourage community led development. There were three levels of funding:

- Small Sparks – grants up to £500 for individuals or groups
- Next Steps – grants of between £501 and £3000
- Grow Grants – grants of between £3,001 and £15,000

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## Grants awarded in Castle

Number of grant-funded projects/activities by primary theme between April 2020 and December 2024:

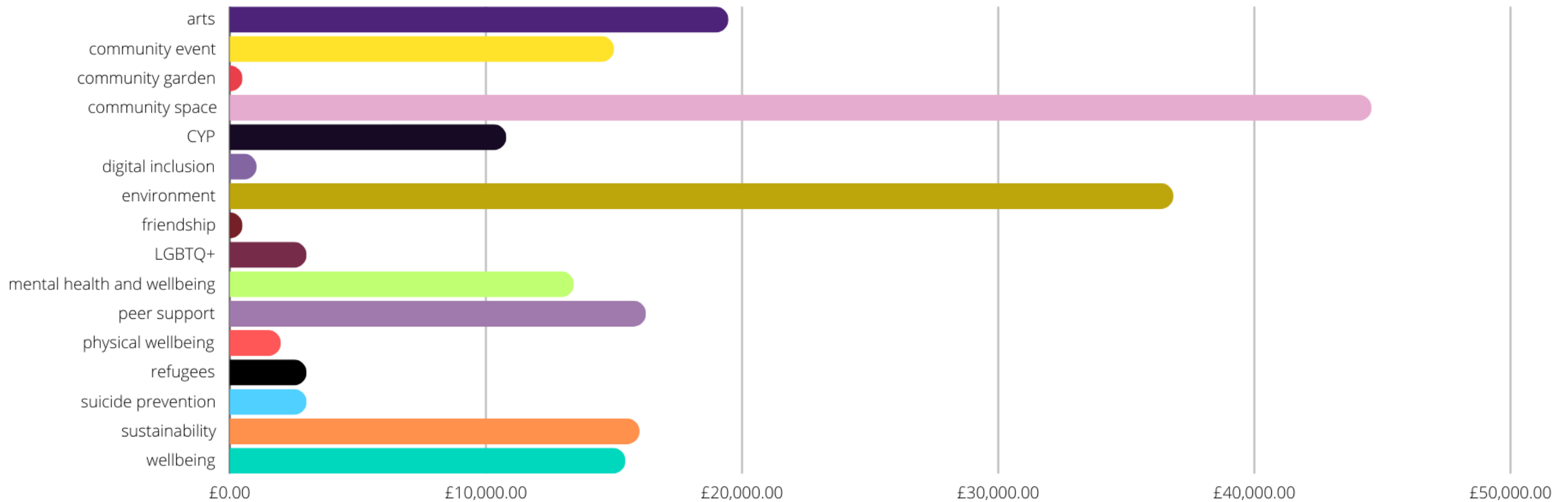


*NB: It should be noted that many projects relate to more than one theme. This graph draws on the central project intention.*

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## Grants Awarded

Total sum invested in Castle by primary theme:



*NB: This graph draws on projects local to the area in addition to county wide initiatives which may benefit local residents.*



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## Impact and Outcomes

*“Conversations in-between the music have offered connection... The conversations are levellers as, unlike many conversations the residents experience, the topic isn't about the help they need or their problems. They have agency.” (Explore the Arch grant feedback)*

*“Thank you so so much I came inside and had a cry. This will really, really help me unwind after and before work. Thank you again I really, really appreciate your kindness.” (Bike Lab key worker bike recipient)*





**Clockwise from top left:** Explore the Arch, Library of Things, Arts in the Park, Hastings Rec FC, Gardening our Streets

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Broader Context**



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## Addressing Health Inequalities

Making it Happen adds value to initiatives, such as the [NHS Core 20 plus 5](#) programme, in effort to reduce health inequalities whilst also encouraging individuals and communities to take positive action for themselves.

The focus is on the role that community building plays in addressing the **wider determinants of health** by “drawing on existing human and material resources to enhance self help and social support, and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation and direction of health matters” (WHO Ottawa Global Conference)

In this way, Making it Happen is working with communities to develop solutions that intersect the wider determinants of health to encourage **social connection, build resilience and improve mental and physical health and wellbeing**. These outcomes are being reported across the whole range of projects which communities are driving, regardless of their original intention.

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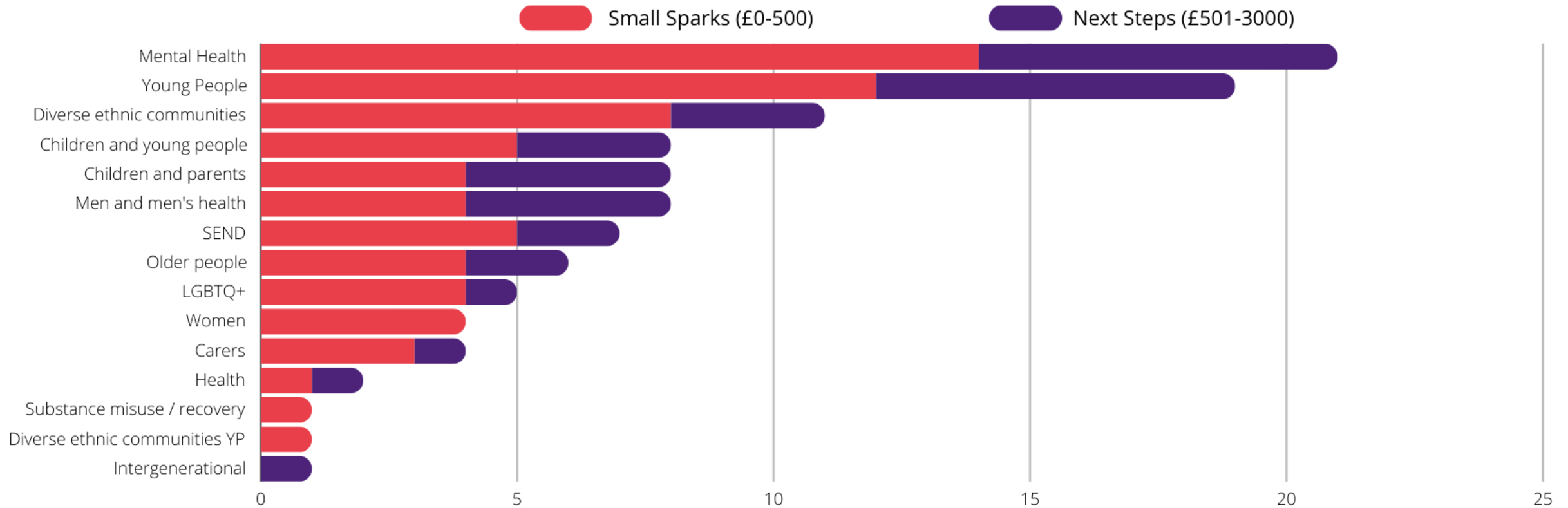
## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Through the Making it Happen programme we have sought to ensure that we are maximising opportunities to engage with those least likely to be heard. Our goal is to add additional value to more targeted health and wellbeing programmes, services and interventions by encouraging relationships, connections and trust within communities and by supporting a ripple effect of positive action, engagement and collaboration. A central objective is to build on and support positives and opportunities that already exist, and to avoid duplication. This includes working alongside individuals, groups and organisations who represent or work with those individuals and communities who are marginalised or have least access to power.

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## Grants Awarded

### Allocation of smaller grants by protected characteristic across the MIH programme:

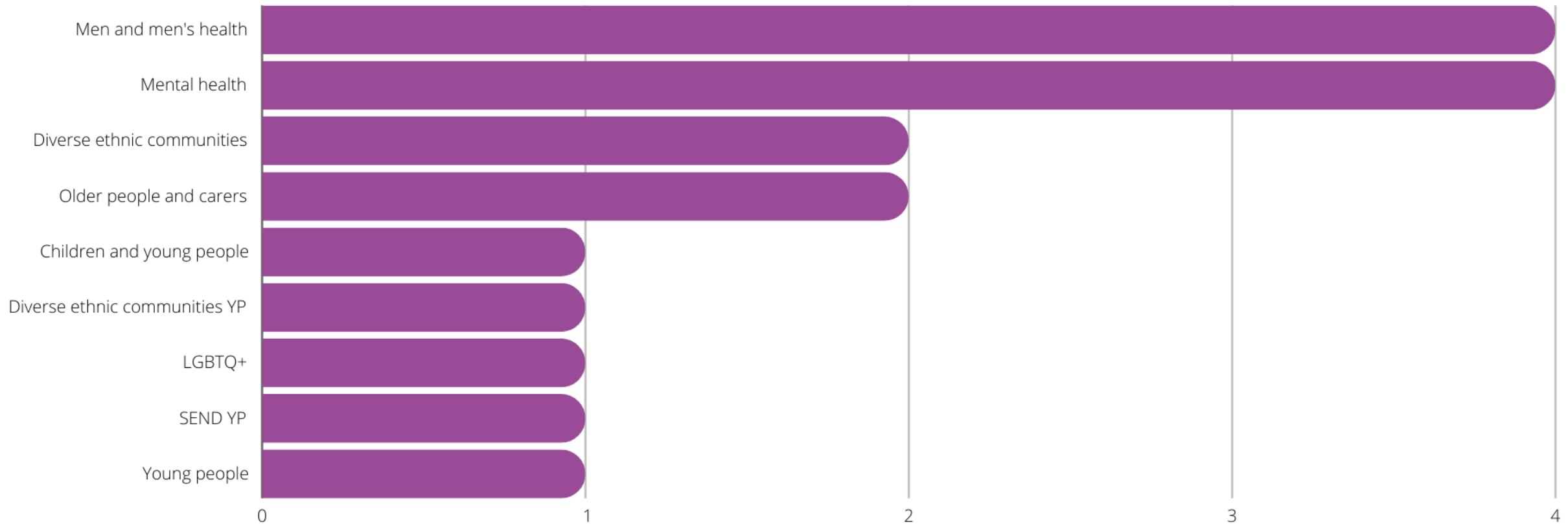


- It is important to note that many projects will have more than one core beneficiary group. Those detailed here are those that are focused on a particular group.

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## Grants Awarded

### Allocation of larger grants by protected characteristic across the MIH programme:



- It is important to note that many projects will have more than one core beneficiary group. Those detailed here are those that are focused on a particular group.

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## Castle: Protected Characteristics

Making it Happen does not collect personal information or data. However, some groups are set up for a specific purpose, or for a specific community of identity. Broadly, in Castle, the MIH Community Development worker works with people who have identified as having the characteristics detailed opposite.

It is important to note that each of the MIH priority areas is in an area of relatively low income. Therefore, socio economic inequality is likely to be a theme running across the majority of projects supported through the programme.

- **Socio economic inequality**
- **Diverse backgrounds**
- **Children**
- **Families**
- **LGBTQ+**
- **Men's health and wellbeing**
- **Mental health**
- **Migrants and asylum seekers**
- **Minoritised ethnic communities**
- **Women**
- **Young People**

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Stage Two Evaluation**

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## Evaluation Reflections

[making-it-happen.org.uk/stage-two-report](http://making-it-happen.org.uk/stage-two-report)

### MAKING IT HAPPEN **REPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### Building A Better ABCD Movement

##### 1 IDENTIFY

Identify learning about successful approaches and processes from the programme and make them accessible, to allow them to be replicated across the wider system.

##### 2 EMBED

Embed Making it Happen more effectively into the fabric of the wider VCFSE sector.

##### 3 DEVELOP

Develop a direct strategy for enabling the wider system and sharing learning.

##### 4 BUILD

Build a movement, not just a collection of projects.

Evaluation by our Partners  
Collaborate CIC produced  
reflections on the programme  
overall through the Stage Two  
Report:

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## Evaluation Reflections

**MAKING IT HAPPEN**  
STAGE TWO EVALUATION

[making-it-happen.org.uk/  
stage-two-report](https://making-it-happen.org.uk/stage-two-report)

### How community projects have impacted communities

#### INDIVIDUALS HAVE

Reported an increase in  
**self-confidence** and **self-esteem**

Reported improvements in  
**physical and mental wellbeing**

Developed new **skills** and **capabilities**

#### PEOPLE COMING TOGETHER HAVE

Felt **deeper connections with others**

Become more likely to **reach out** to others  
to **learn, work,** and **take action** collectively

A key aspect of this was reflections on the impact projects can, and have had on communities:



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## Evaluation Reflections

[making-it-happen.org.uk/stage-two-report](https://making-it-happen.org.uk/stage-two-report)

### **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

The Asset-Based Approach to  
Community Development:

Why it Works

**BUILD ON LIVED EXPERIENCE**

**FOCUS ON COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE**

**TURN DEFICITS INTO STRENGTHS**

**ACCESSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE GRANTS**

**LEARN FROM SETBACKS**

The evaluation also reflects on why the ABCD approach is working:

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## Insights

Hastings - Castle

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## Changes Over Time

JSNA (2018) and IMD data (2019) identified challenges around income deprivation alongside health and mental health challenges. There were localised issues such as: 'income deprivation affecting children', 'lone parent households' & 'fuel poverty' in addition to deprivation in terms of educational skills and training, living environment and crime.

Effort to build connection and encourage collaboration within Castle has blossomed, particularly over the last year or so. Initiatives like the Green Room, the Men's Network and recent effort led by HVA through Making it Happen to establish informal networking, skill sharing and learning through the Learning To Thrive project, all respond to a local desire for greater collaboration and peer support to build skills to counter some of the challenges faced by people living in the town.

There has been a great deal of activity in relation to green agendas, and many of the drivers for greater collaboration have emerged through a community of projects dedicated to environmental sustainability, and improving public realm spaces. Gardening Our Streets introduced planters to public squares and pedestrianised streets while plans for the Marianne North Botanic Garden continue to develop. These groups and many others have been working together to encourage collective effort, including to engage in Town Deal discussions to support the regeneration of the town centre.

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## Changes Over Time

There have been a number of arts initiatives that directly seek to encourage better mental wellbeing, such as Arts in the Park, alongside projects focused on physical health including Fit Revolution and Hastings Rec FC for self identifying women, trans and non-binary folk.

Collaboration with the Mr Hastings and St Leonards men's health project has proved extremely valuable in supporting a wide range of initiatives that benefit men's health and wellbeing, and through the cross fertilisation of ideas and connections.

The Library of Things and Bike Lab are focused on sustainability through recycling and reusing, but also seek to address challenges around socio economic deprivation.

The Co-op Wellbeing Index (2018) highlighted challenges around relationships and trust, while WARM Ward data (2016-17) flagged issues around a sense of belonging. Projects such as Progress Network, Palestine on the Pier and Explore the Arch have all sought to encourage diverse connection, new relationships, improved wellbeing and community engagement.

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## Changes Over Time

In 2019 the Community Development Worker flagged the presence of a number of small community spaces. The picture in 2024 shows how the pandemic and cost of living crisis have impacted on these spaces, affecting the ability of some to volunteer, while flooding in the town centre had made some spaces inaccessible. Some venues no longer function, or have changed their focus or offer in response to the changing context, while others have made physical improvements. Its not unusual for coffee shops to be used for community meetings and these can act as great bumping spaces for connection, and perhaps less daunting for new people to engage.

The Development Worker also reflects on funding which has come into the town for green spaces and environmental initiatives, as well as for the Town Centre. The effort by local groups to build relationships and collaboration supported by Making it Happen, suggests there is huge potential for ongoing and collective contribution by the community to these initiatives. Many groups are also planning to develop their ideas across the town as a whole.

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## Changes Over Time

There has perhaps been less development in relation to Children and Young people than had been hoped when Making it Happen began in 2019, but the CDW has forged good relationships with local youth organisations and continues to work closely with Xtrax and to support the Hastings Youth Partnership. A new project funded through Making it Happen and led by Explore the Arch will work with young 'Reader Leaders' keen to undertake research amongst their peers.

Recent Hastings episodes of Phenomenal Happenings highlight the creativity and value of community action to the Town and how this contributes to the outcomes identified as having potential at the start:

- Individuals feeling valued
- Having a sense of purpose,
- Engaged communities
- Greater diversity of organisations.

100% of grant evaluations received by groups have reported that they agree or strongly agree with the following statements:

- **Do you think your project helped you to achieve something valuable or useful in our community?**
- **As a result of your project, did people in your community to connect together in a meaningful way?**

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- **Strengths**

- New groups and initiatives developing in the town centre
- Growth of networks for mutual support and opportunities for shared learning
- Connectivity of people and groups offering opportunities for voice and influence, including engagement in collaboration and coproduction
- Relationship between ABCD community development workers with Mr Hastings and St Leonards Workers as well as local infrastructure workers
- Focus on community led change and value of lived experience

- **Challenges**

- The time needed to really embed this approach
- Limited resource remaining in the grant budget
- The fragility of community led solutions if they are not nurtured, or are not valued in local decision-making

- **Opportunities**

- The wealth of policy, strategy and guidance that highlights the importance of community development, collaboration and coproduction with communities
- The Four Shifts Framework and the evaluation of Making it Happen which are setting the impact and findings in a wider context
- Continued development of opportunities in St Leonards and across the Borough.

- **Threats**

- New programmes and initiatives that ignore opportunities for collaboration and co-creation with communities and risk relationships and trust.
- Funding landscape
- Political uncertainty