



MAKING IT HAPPEN

AREA SNAPSHOT

Crowborough
Action in Rural Sussex
Nov 2019 – June 2024



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What This Snapshot Will Cover

- **The aim of this Snapshot**
- **Introduction**
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 - What is Making it Happen?
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- **2019 Insights**
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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.



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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)

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Crowborough, Wealden

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Area context

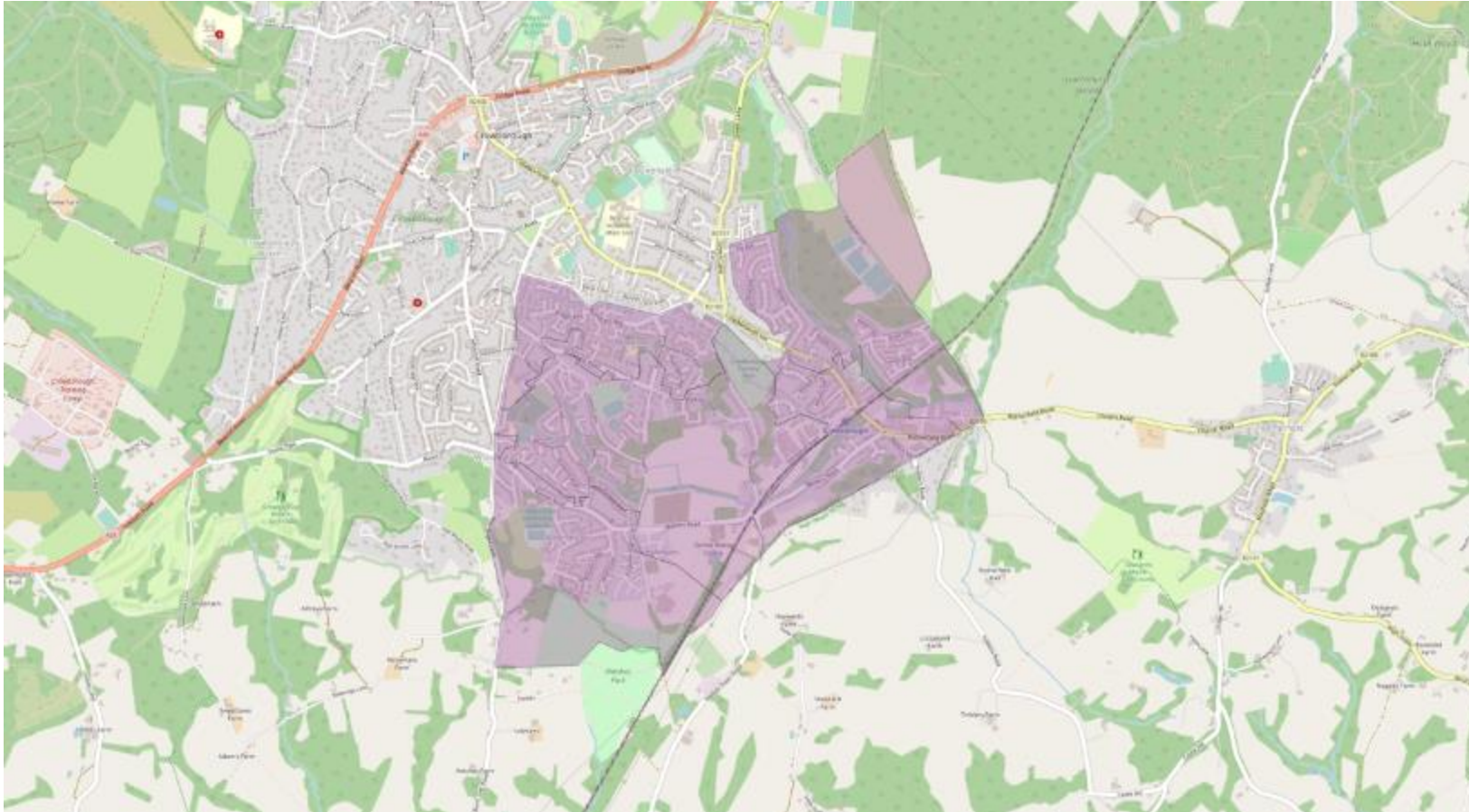
The **Crowborough** area that Making it Happen works in covers the south and eastern parts of the town overall. The bulk of the area falls within the Crowborough South East and Crowborough Jarvis Brook council wards, while the north and west of the area spills over slightly into the Crowborough Central and South West wards. Nationally, it is currently represented by the Wealden constituency, which is due to become the new Sussex Weald constituency at the next general election.

The area is relatively large geographically, resulting in varied access to amenities between those in the western half of the area, and those in the eastern half. While both parts are some distance from the town centre by foot – those living nearby Crowborough Football Club, for example, are approximately 30 minutes walk away – this distance is felt more strongly by those in the west of the area than those in the east, where a number of amenities are present. This includes Crowborough train station, a Tesco superstore, and a health centre, pharmacy, and several dentists, several other grocery and food outlets, a post office, Jarvis Brook Memorial Hall, and nearby access to green space via Crowborough Country Park, and the Jarvis Brook Playground and Skatepark.

Conversely, the western part of the area is far less supported. While there is good green space provision through Wolfe Rec and Adam's Field, as well as the Crowborough Community football stadium – which includes community pitches alongside the main playing field.

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The Area



When Making it Happen began, the patch covered **Alderbrook and Jarvis Brook** in the south and east areas of the town.

In 2021 the boundary was extended to cover the whole of **Crowborough**. This was to open up the potential benefit of links and connections with assets present across the town, particularly for people living in Alderbrook and Jarvis Brook.

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Executive Summary

Crowborough

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Executive Summary

- In 2019 Crowborough was selected as an area of focus for Making it Happen based particularly on issues relating to barriers to housing and services, and geographic barriers.
- JSNA data also flagged the number of lone parent households, and local health data highlighted the number of people over age65.
- There were enormous positives, including the area being set within the High Weald are of outstanding natural beauty and access to London.
- There is some 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:
- Groups have emerged with a focus on green spaces, capitalising on the natural environment and opportunities for greater community engagement and community land ownership.
- Engagement with young people led by Artytime has led to collaboration with the wider community and collective action.
- Projects being led with and by children and young people received the largest number of grants and amount of funding.
- Connections have been made to the Family Hub and a new Community Forum presents a useful model for an umbrella organisation to encourage collaboration and connection with local services.
- Strong links have also been made with the dementia forum.
- Key services, such as Sussex Clubs for Young People have been lost to the area.
- Some groups are finding it challenging to find enough volunteers but others are self sufficient and running well without support.

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The Picture in 2019

Summary of the 2019 area rationale:

Crowborough

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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.

Crowborough – worse than East Sussex average in rates of:

- Lone Parent Households
- Fuel Poverty
- Early Years Development (**Crowborough East only**)
- Key Stage 2 Development (**Jarvis Brook only**)
- Adults with No/Low Qualifications (**Jarvis Brook only**)
- Socially Rented Households
- Adults with Depression
- Adults with Dementia (**Crowborough East only**)
- GP-reported Hypertension

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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 Crowborough

- Income - 4
- Education - 2
- Barriers to housing and services - 1
- Adult skills - 4
- Geographic barriers - 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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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.

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2019 Discovery Report Summary

Challenges highlighted

- Local health engagement reflections from the Clinical Commissioning Group from 2018 highlighted the following concerns:
 - High proportion of older patients over 65+
 - Smoking
 - Lack of employment opportunities
 - Mental health
- Lack of local services and comparative disadvantage for those who need them
- Time needed to build relationships in Jarvis Brook
- Lack of spaces to meet

Opportunities to build from:

- Set within the High Weald area of outstanding natural beauty
- Well serviced to get to London
- Warm existing local relationships with residents on Alderbrook and appetite for engagement
- St Richards Crowborough
- Active Community Association
- Jarvis Brook residents association
- Pockets of volunteers though no network or hub to connect them

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The Picture in 2024

Crowborough

Reflections on developments and change over time

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2023 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.

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Development Examples

- In October 2021 the Making it Happen area was extended to include the whole town of Crowborough whilst retaining a specific focus in the original patches.
- **Green Spaces Theme:**
 - Green Transition Crowborough GTC (Community Orchard, Wildlife Group, food satellites, new green sports initiative) leading on green community initiatives in Crowborough but also advising on things like the rewilding of verges. Gaining success and attracting funding.
 - Smiles for Miles CIC, new director, attracting more volunteers and linking with volunteering and business. Social media posts asking for supporters. Possibly a name change soon.
 - Making it Happening has linked both of the above to East Sussex Children' Services.
- **Skate Park Development Grow Grant – Jarvis Brook:**
 - Working to engage families within the whole process.
 - Provision for young people via the local youth club and Artytime activities.
- **Children & parent groups:**
 - Baby2Baby & beyond are running smoothly, referral process and widening scope in areas. Making it Happen signposted to funding bulletins etc.
 - Family Hub High Weald, Making it Happen supporting the new branding/parent groups in near future. Making it Happen worker supporting volunteer coordinator to find new sites and link to orgs etc.
- **Crowborough Community Forum – New as of 2022:**
 - Lots of groups in this and a good model for an umbrella org to share resources and support each other. Making it Happen attended meeting in Autumn.
- **Dementia forum:**
 - Very supportive of each other, and have via support from WDC. Lots of activities in Crowborough for people with dementia and their carers.

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Key Challenges

CDWs also reflected on challenges that have occurred since 2019:

- Generally tricky for groups to navigate the **planning system**. For example, the Skatepark development took a long time.
- **Young People –**
 - Jarvis Brook youth club is still running but looking for overall management to support them. Sussex Clubs for Young People had been keen to support local youth initiatives, but closed down leaving an uncertain future. Making it Happen linked the group to Active Sussex.
 - The Skate Park development has given opportunities for young people to be involved. The initiative is now a few years old and the original young people may have 'moved on' from being involved so a new set needs to be engaged.
- **Green Spaces Theme –**
 - Some of the Spaces that Green Transition Crowborough (GTC) are improving are owned by other orgs like primary schools and Wealden District Council. Permissions have to be sought at certain times of day or for certain activities. The very knowledgeable Council ranger has left so GTC are supporting the council with their biodiversity knowledge. However, this is a substantial role which may be demanding of more time than the group can give.
 - For MIH actually getting word out how to help and support local action. Local groups are mainly working together well and doing things their own way. This is not a negative but can be a challenge to see where MIH can be supportive. It could perhaps target certain demographic or neighbourhoods to invest time to building relationships. There is a general feeling amongst existing groups of not enough volunteers to do the work of these initiatives therefore MIH could focus on supporting them to engage more widely.
- **Community Fridge –**
 - Seems to ebb and flow in terms of the involvement of volunteers. They have satellite sites but want a permanent base.

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ABCD Learning Reflections

What have you learned?

- Desire for closer relationships between different areas/communities such as Jarvis Brook and Alderbrook, the Crowborough Community forum is starting to support these connections as well as the Green Transition Crowborough.
- For some groups signposting and connecting them with other groups is all that is needed.
- Need to get out to meet people - focus on engaging with local community leaders and champions.

What do you want to share with others?

- There are successful models within Crowborough like the Dementia forum. While this does include paid WDC staff supporting the coordination, it is very hands on and works well. Meetings in person seem to be key to some of these networks/forum working well through observations.
- Businesses seem to be keen to be involved where possible.
- Social media is used well by various groups in the area.

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Grant Funding

Crowborough

(Between April 2020 and December 2024)

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The Grant Programme

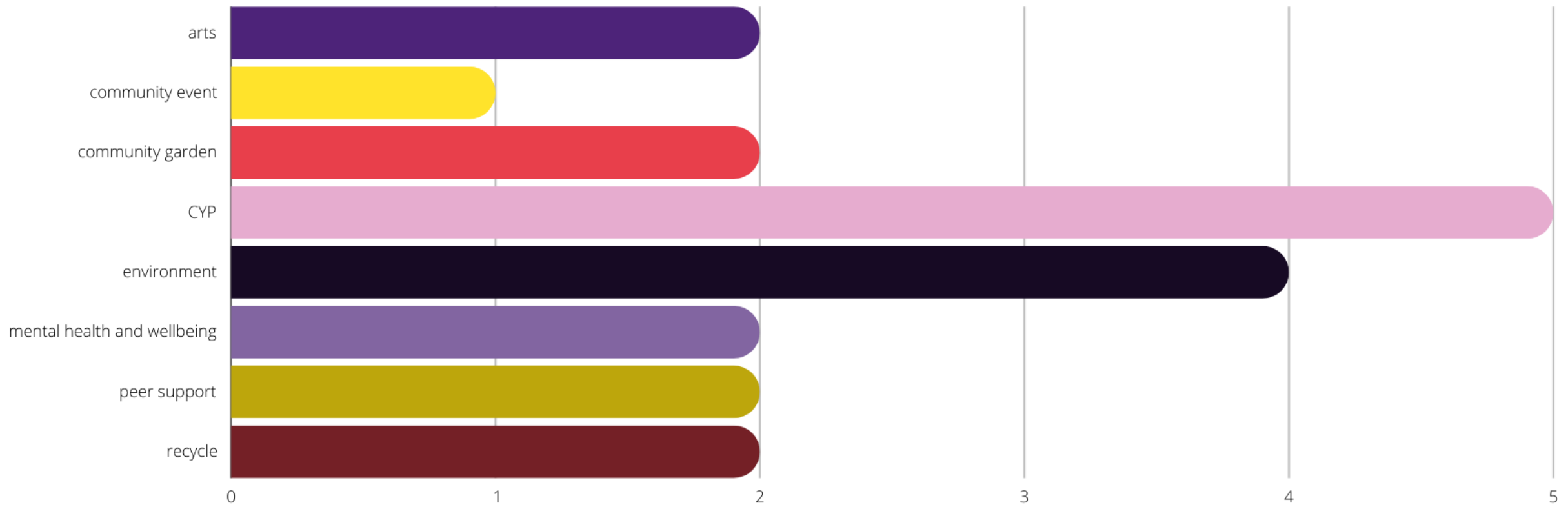
The making it Happen grant programme was designed to be flexible and offer a range of funding options to reflect the needs of different projects of different sizes. The broad aim was for projects or activity that would build from the positive things that are already present, involve local people, benefit 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 Crowborough

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

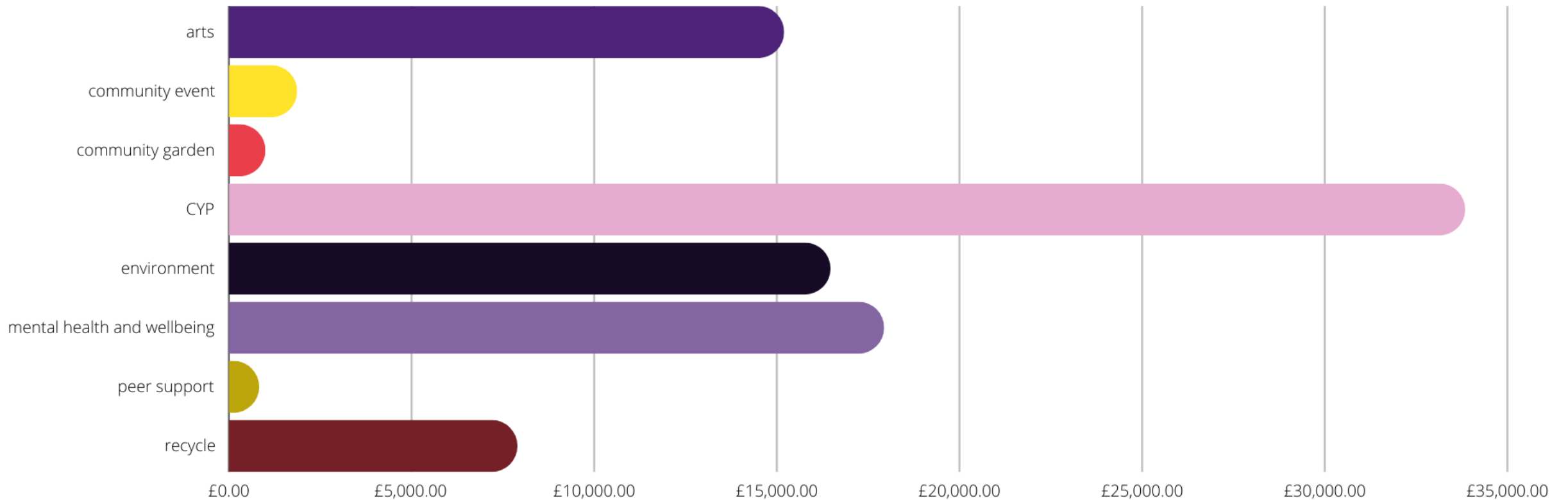


NB: It should be noted that many projects relate to more than one theme. This graph draws on the central project intention.

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Grants Awarded

Total sum invested in Crowborough by primary theme:

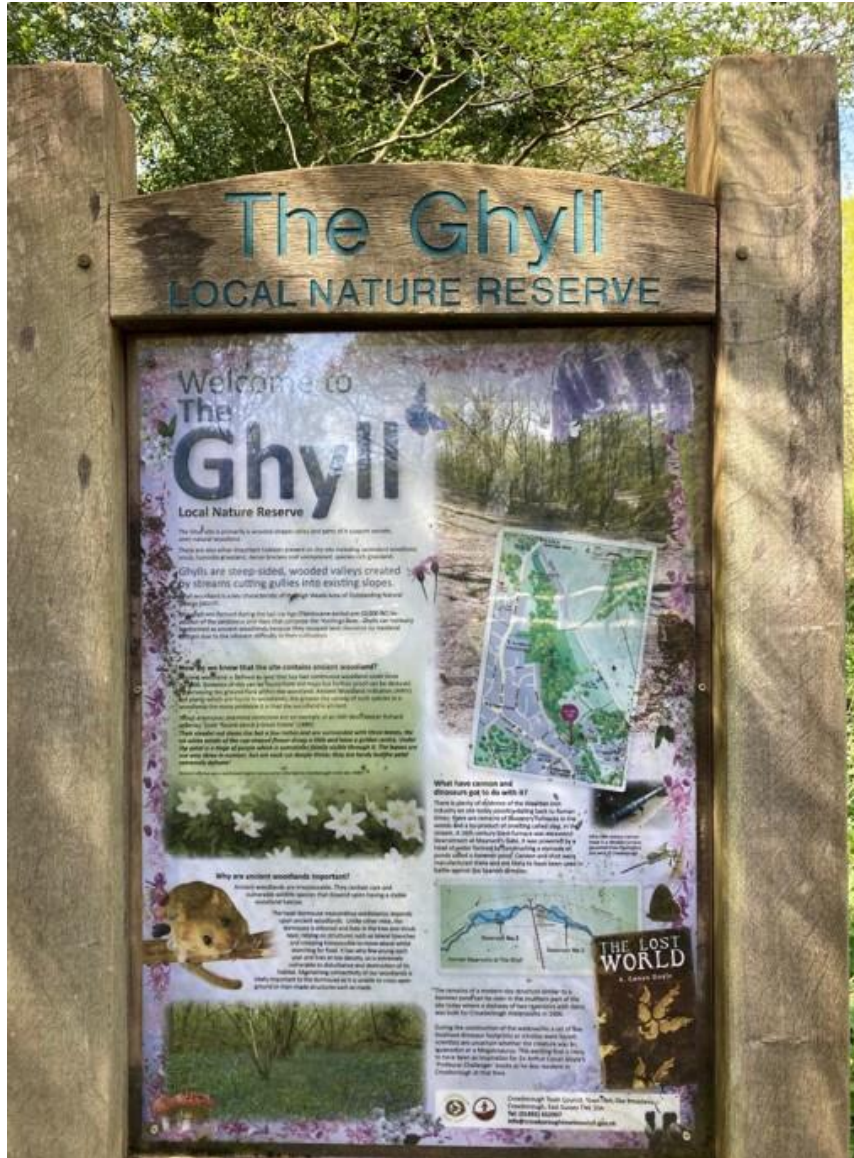


NB: This graph draws on projects local to the area in addition to county wide initiatives which may benefit local residents.

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Impact and Outcomes

“There has been a huge amount of positive feedback from everyone who has come out to one of the working parties, from the schools involved, from Crowborough Town Council councillors and also from the wider community. For example we post updates on the Sustainable Living in Crowborough (SLiC) Facebook group and these always generate lots of interest. One local resident brought us an apple tree as a donation for the first planting day having seen it advertised on SLiC.” (Crowborough Community Orchard grant feedback)



Clockwise from left. The Ghyll Local Nature Reserve; Jarvis Brook Skate Park; and Artytime

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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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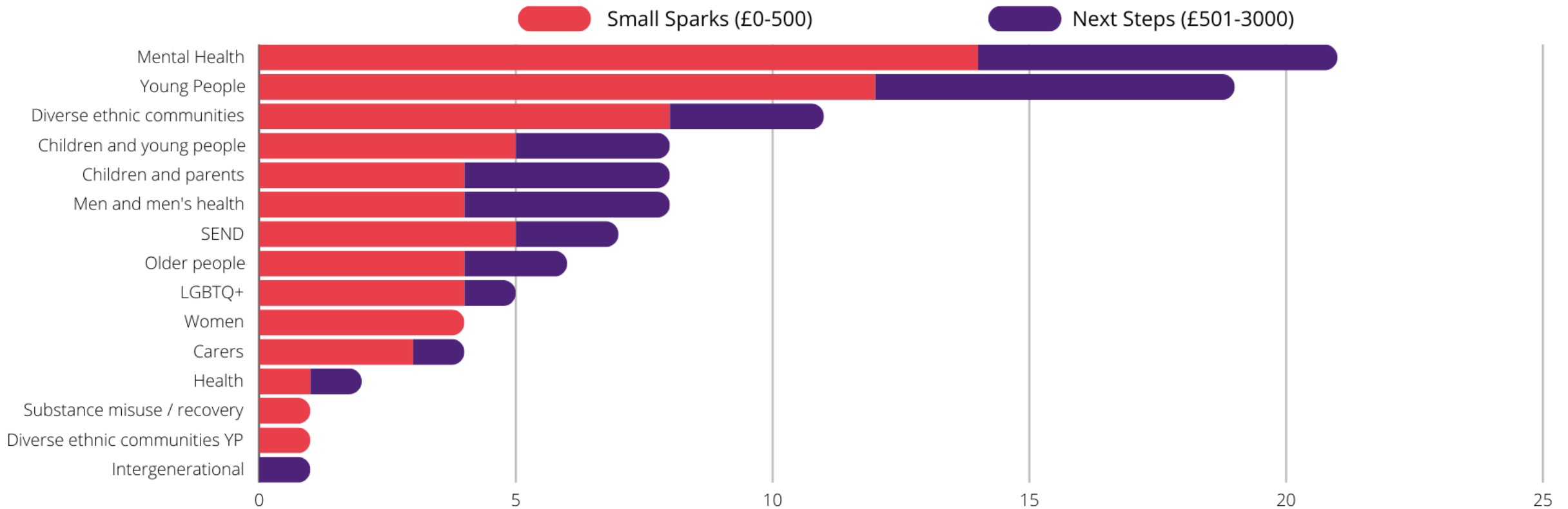
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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:

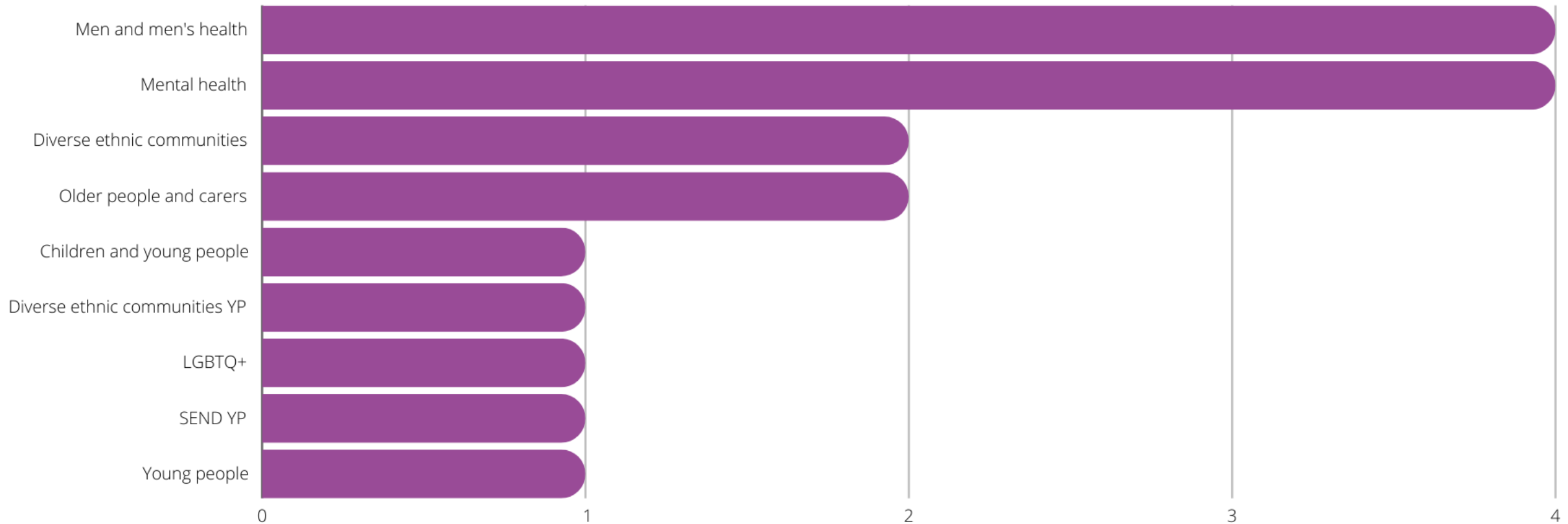


- It is important to note that many projects will have more than one core beneficiary group. Those detailed here are those that are focused on a particular group.

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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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Crowborough: 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 Crowborough, the MIH Development workers work 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.

- **Children**
- **Young people**
- **Families**
- **Maternity**
- **Older people**
- **People with dementia**
- **Migrants and Asylum Seekers**

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Stage Two Evaluation

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Evaluation Reflections

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

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

Crowborough

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Insights: Changes Over Time

There is some correlation between some of the data from 2019 and the priorities and activities developed by the local community.

JSNA data from 2018 flagged concerns about the high number of adults with dementia and local CCG data also highlighted the number of patients in the area who are over 65. The growth of the local dementia forum is significant then, and while this has dedicated support from Wealden District Council, the Making it Happen team have built strong links and work closely with the group.

Statistical data from 2019 identified higher than average numbers of lone parent households and challenges around early years development. Over time, initiatives have developed driven by local parents such as Baby2Baby, and good links have been forged by Making it Happen with the High Weald Family Hub, including with the Volunteer Coordinator, supporting them to link with other local groups and organisations.

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Insights: Changes Over Time

The area has seen valuable work led by Artytime with support from Making it Happen, to work with local young people. This included effort to build relationships and trust with the wider community to engage their support in plans driven by the young people to redevelop the local Skate Park. Ongoing collaboration has led to plans for the development of a Scrap Store and community hub.

Environmental and green initiatives have also emerged and are proving a key priority for local people and a valuable opportunity to build interest, engagement, voice and influence. Crowborough Community Orchard and the Wildlife Group, and umbrella group Green Transition Crowborough, are driving interest and development in relation to community land management.

There are good relationships between some of the existing groups with Wealden District Council (WDC). Increasingly Making it Happen is working with WDC, including in effort led by the Council to explore how to become more community led, such as through work to reform the local Equalities Reference Group as a more co-productive space.

This WDC aspiration presents exciting opportunities for voice and influence, particularly through the ongoing development of the Crowborough Community Forum and Green Transition Crowborough.

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Insights: Changes Over Time

The Community Development Workers reflected on relationships which shift and grow or decline over time. Alderbrook has remained fairly static, while Jarvis Brook has begun to open up. They note that the developments that have taken place, would not have happened without the existing strong assets in the area and existing volunteers.

In terms of the original opportunities highlighted in 2019, much has been made of the natural environment through green initiatives. The good connectivity with London has perhaps presented a double edged sword in that some residents appear to use the town as a base to escape from their commute rather than as a community to which they belong. There has also not been as much activity on Alderbrook as had been hoped.

Development Workers reflect that taking time to build relationships has made working with local groups easier. They see potential for collaborations through the Community Forum and Family Hub and highlight signposting and ongoing learning will be key as time goes on. Supporting groups to network and make connections for support and collaboration will be essential to ensure sustainability.

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Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- **Strengths**

- Emerging forums for voice and influence such as the Crowborough Community Forum and Green Transition Crowborough.
- Aspirations for Wealden District Council to become more community led.
- Good relationships with key local statutory organisations.
- Ongoing development of green and environmental projects and community land management initiatives.

- **Challenges**

- The time needed to really embed this approach
- Limited resource remaining in the grant budget
- Engagement of wider community

- **Opportunities**

- Interest in coproduction and community led action by WDC.
- 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

- **Threats**

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