



MAKING IT HAPPEN

AREA SNAPSHOT

Newhaven Meeching and Newhaven Valley
Sussex Community Development Association

Nov 2019 – December 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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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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Newhaven Meeching and the Valley

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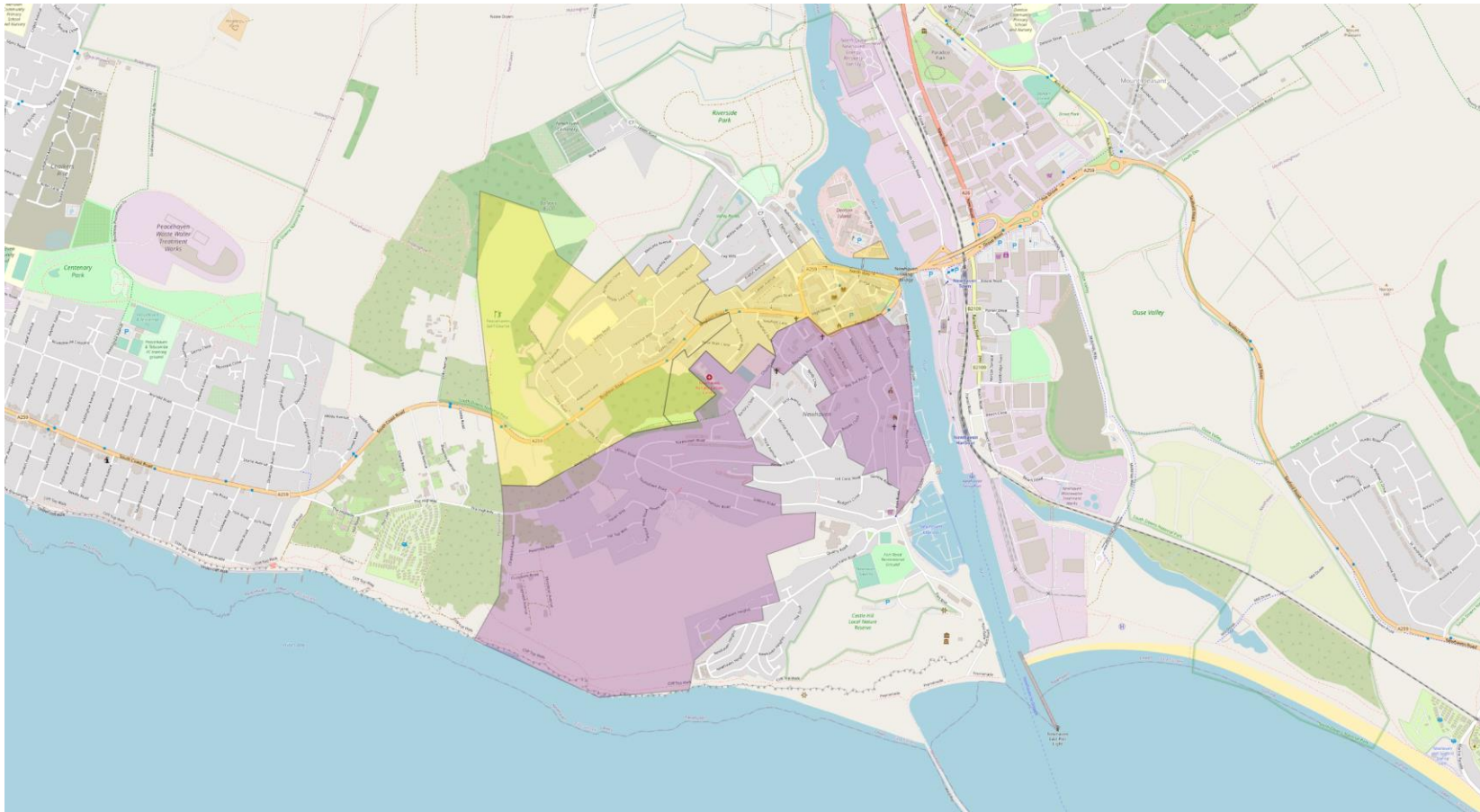
Area context

Newhaven has a rich history as a fishing port and as an industrial and military hub. The River Ouse runs through the middle of the town, leading down to Newhaven Harbour, which continues to serve as a focal point. The east side of the river includes the residential areas of Denton and Mount Pleasant, but mainly comprises industrial, commercial and transport links, including the town's two train stations – Newhaven Town and Newhaven Harbour – and Newhaven Ferry Port, while the west side includes educational, commercial, and residential space. Newhaven is also linked by bus to a number of other urban centres, including Brighton to the west, Lewes to the north, and Seaford and Eastbourne to the east. Newhaven's population has remained steady, growing from 12,528 in 2011 to 12,854 in 2021.

Making it Happen has two areas of interest in Newhaven, which we refer to as **Newhaven Meeching** and **Newhaven Valley**. The Meeching area lies within the 'Newhaven South' ward of Lewes District Council, wrapping around the High Street and the west of the River Ouse, while being bordered by the A259 to the north, and the coast to the south. Locally, it is known for being home to a number of key community locations, including the Town Council Building, the Hillcrest Community Centre, the Seahaven Academy secondary school, and the High Cliff Academy primary school. Newhaven Valley comprises the 'Valley' area of Newhaven itself, as well as Newhaven High Street and the surrounding area. As a result, it includes both a large amount of the town's commercial space, as well as sizeable residential areas. Politically, these areas are represented by two council wards – Newhaven North and Newhaven South – and the Lewes parliamentary constituency.

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The Area



There are two Making it Happen areas based in Newhaven.

Meeching lies to the south, on the west side of the River Ouse and is shown here in purple. The **Valley**, shown here in yellow, includes the high street and stretches up to the north western edge of the town.

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Executive Summary

Newhaven Meeching and the Valley

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Executive Summary

- In 2019 Newhaven Meeching and Valley were selected as areas of focus for MIH based on a range of IMD and JSNA data, alongside Co-op Wellbeing and WARM Ward data which flagged issues around relationships, trust, housing and life satisfaction.
- The presence of assets highlighted by CDWs was striking, including a strong sense of local pride in the history, culture and heritage of the area, and also pride in the local independent economy based on principles of supporting local business and traders.
- Other local assets included schools, green spaces and the presence of local services and organisations. However, there was no central hub or community centre in the Valley.
- Significant resource has come into the town from central government for redevelopment and regeneration.
- A huge range of activity has evolved since 2019 supported through MIH but also rippling out to become independent catalysts for new activity
- Projects built around peer support & friendship, and arts & creativity have flourished. Mental health, and projects run by and with children & young people have also proved popular. Increasingly there are projects relating to green and open spaces, and environmental sustainability.
- Groups are forming networks and collaborations. Creative Newhaven is fast become a key focal point which is generating ideas and enabling collaboration, but also voice, for a wide network of creative individuals, groups and organisations.
- The Hillcrest Centre and Hospitable Environment CIC are key local organisations providing a hub and a catalyst for social gatherings, idea sharing, creativity and local community led development.
- There has also been collaboration with key services, particularly with schools, Southern Housing and local GPs
- Funding which has come to the town from central government has been impacted by rising costs, leading to scaling down of plans.
- There is frustration at new housing developments in the Valley, with no provision for community spaces or local amenities.
- But there is much to be positive about in a town which is demonstrating how to build on the positives that are already present.

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The Picture in 2019

Summary of the 2019 area rationale:

Newhaven Meeching and the Valley

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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.

Newhaven Meeching and Valley issues flagged were broadly similar: worse than East Sussex average in rates of:

- Lone Parent Households
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children
- Fuel Poverty
- Early Years Development
- Key Stage 2 Development (Valley only)
- GCSE Attainment
- Adults with No/Low Qualifications
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs
- Socially Rented Households (Meeching only)
- GP-reported Obesity in Adults
- Adults in Alcohol Treatment
- Adults with Depression
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services caseloads
- 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 Meeching and the Valley:

- Income – 2
- Employment – 2
- Education, skills and training – 1
- Health deprivation – 1
- Crime – 3
- Barriers to housing – 1
- Geographical barriers – 2

	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 Newhaven:

- Economy, work and employment
- Housing, space and environment
- 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
 - Material wellbeing
 - Strong & stable families
 - Crime and anti-social behaviour
- **Amber**
 - Health
 - Belonging
 - Local economy
 - Public services
 - Infrastructure

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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

Meeching

- Local CDW knowledge and relationships
- Local interest and pride in culture, heritage and leisure
- Sense of local pride
- Secondary school
- Fort Rec and other green spaces including the skate park
- Local services

Valley

- No central hub or community centre – closest are the Lewes Road Hut, Denton Island Community Centre and public buildings like the library
- Buy in from residents to the local independent economy
- Employment opportunities in local industry are highly valued
- Strong sense of local pride
- Good local connections and engagement with other local services

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The Picture in 2024

Newhaven Meeching and the Valley

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

- Significant government funding has led to establishment of new groups e.g. Newhaven Enterprise Zone, Newhaven Creatives
- Hospitable Environment is a key project that came out as a result of the Tidemills Project.
 - The Soup & Social evenings bring the community together & help the development of ideas and projects, particularly creative projects.
- Many projects centred around or use the Hillcrest Centre, a really valuable community asset.
- Other local initiatives include:
 - Peer support groups and activity
 - Green projects
 - Social enterprise flea market
 - Engagement with local PTAs and schools
 - Grass roots mental health and wellbeing initiatives
 - Art, music and creativity
 - Young people – sports, theatre activities



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Key Challenges

- Uncertainty regarding funding/ development of buildings
- Red tape
- Investment has pushed up prices of rent and community groups are struggling to find affordable spaces.
- Getting others to understand benefits of ABCD and how it can work positively with services
- Difficulty for smaller community groups to be involved in regeneration projects, as arrangements have already been made with larger organisations (e.g Wave leisure with the development of the Wellbeing Hub)

What have you learned?

- New people moving into the area has led to new ideas & positive action – reinvigorating stale thinking & negativity.
- Ethos of community space at the Hillcrest Centre has been the foundation for ideas developing.
- Willingness of groups to be open & collaborate leads to more successful, inclusive projects & sense of involvement from the community.

What do you want to share with others?

- The importance of consistently being out in the community & attending events etc.
- Be open minded & curious about possible ideas emerging & connections.

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Grant Funding

Newhaven Meeching and the Valley
(Between April 2020 and December 2024)

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The Grant Programme

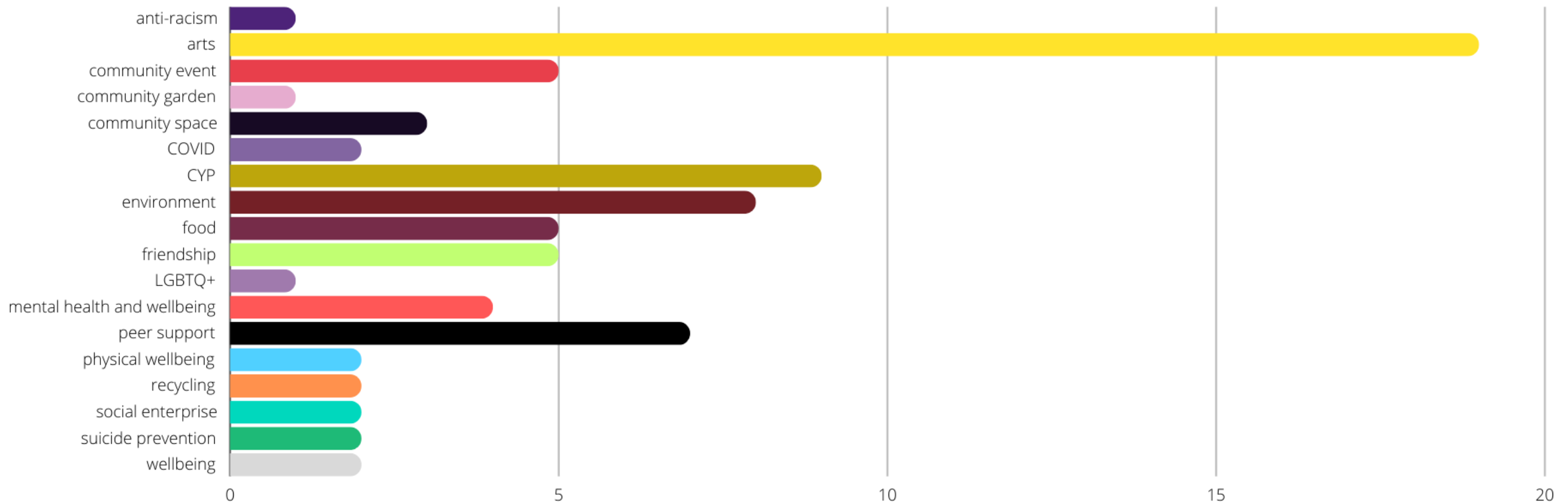
The Making it Happen grant programme was designed to be flexible and offer a range of funding options to reflect the needs of different projects of different sizes. The broad aim was for projects or activity that would build from the positive things that are already present, involve local people, benefit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

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

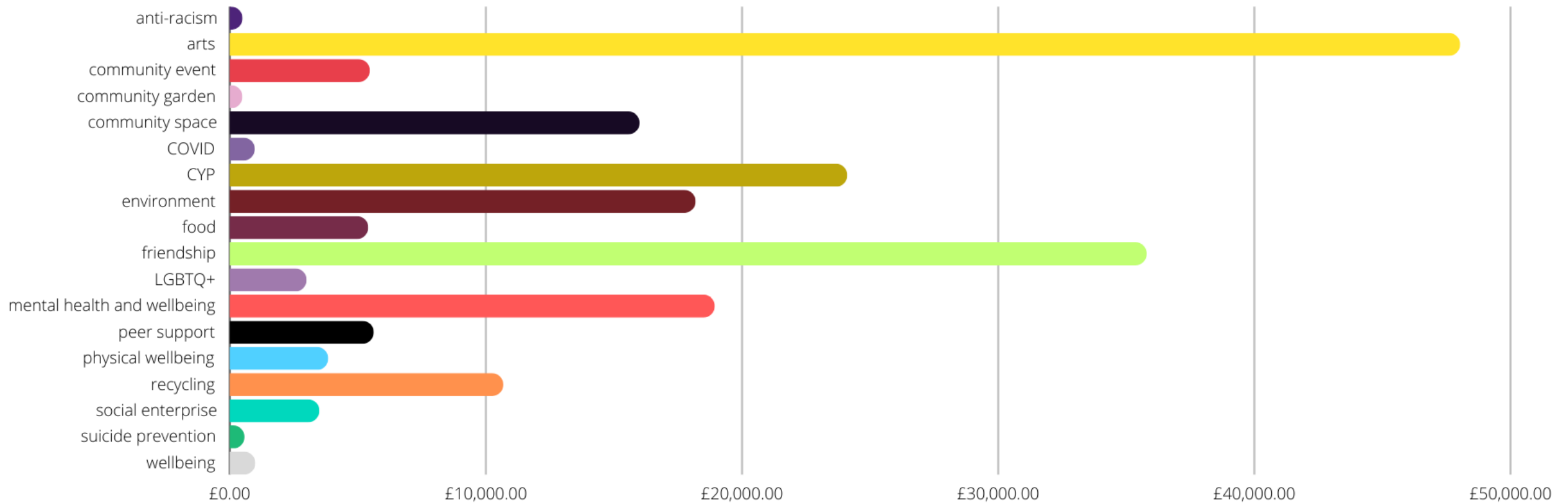


NB: It should be noted that many projects relate to more than one theme. This graph draws on the central project intention.

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Grants Awarded

Total sum invested in Newhaven 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



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Impact and Outcomes

“What I have seen happen is quite incredible. It has become a community of skill sharers and enablers, organisers and encouragers, makers and demonstrators of their outside interests and personal projects often utilising the talents of the group as a whole.” (Dockside Barrell Scrapers lead musician)

*“The boys have looked forward to coming and have made some great friends. It feels great not to be judged and have some understanding of needs. ‘L’ has been able to play with others with similar difficulties”
(Newhaven Autism café participant)*



Clockwise from top left: *The Repair Café; Mountain Men; Fish Festival; Litter Picking; The Dockside Barrell Scrapers*

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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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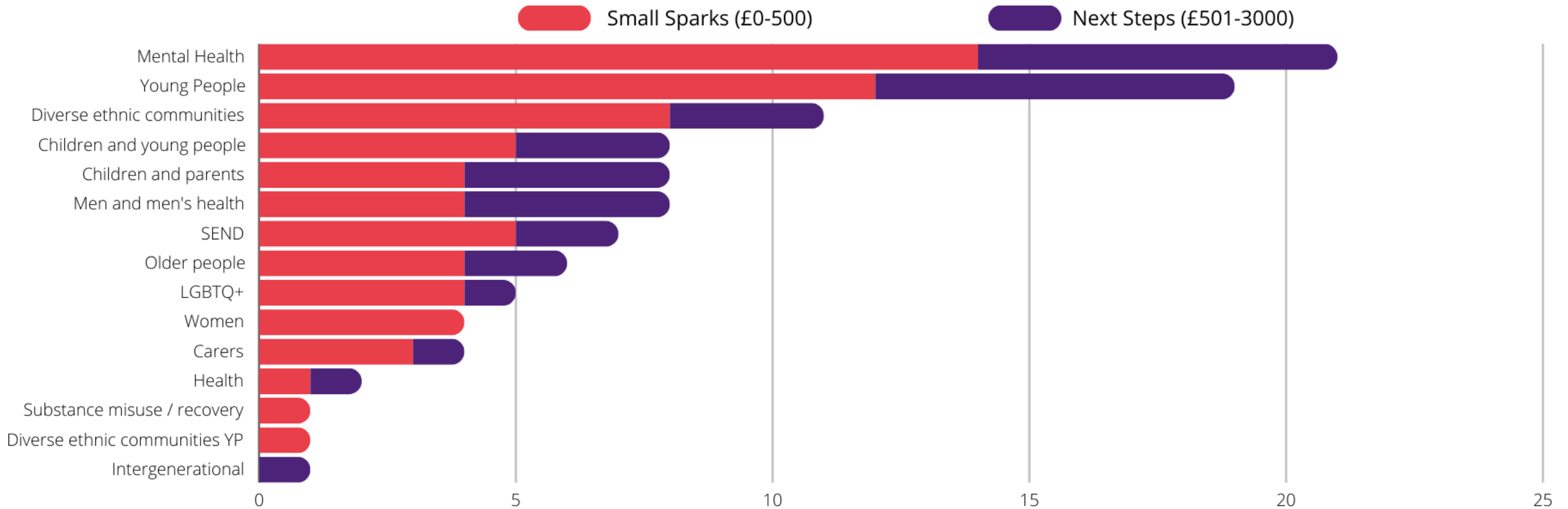
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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:

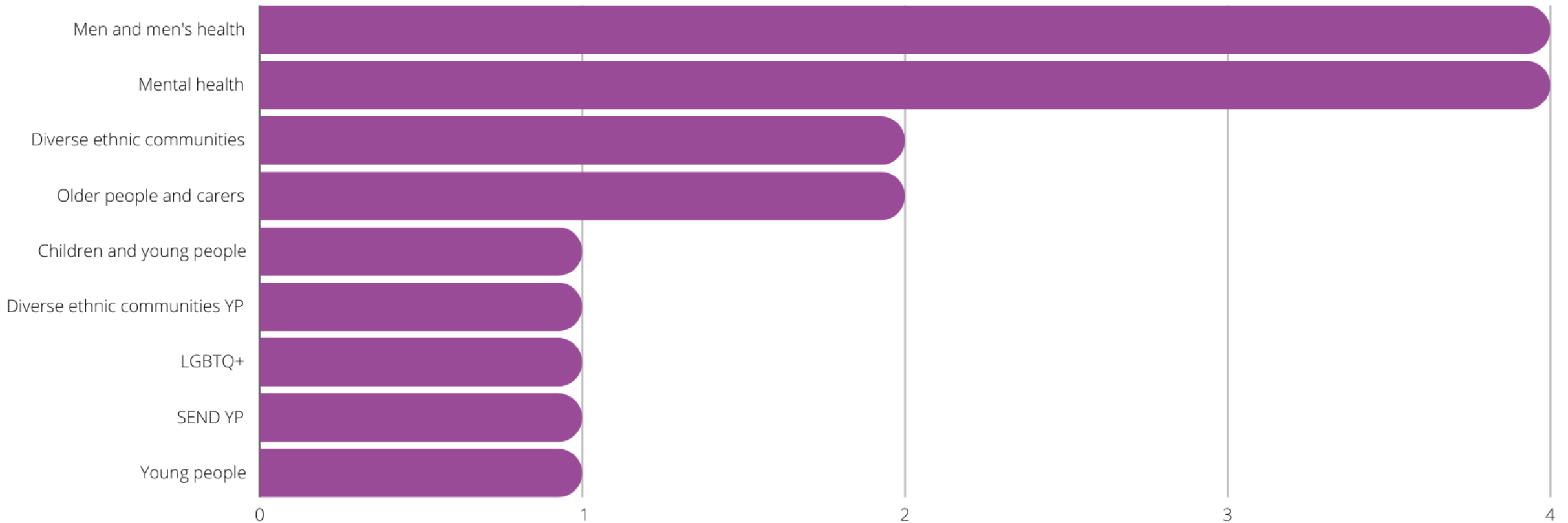


- It is important to note that many projects will have more than one core beneficiary group. Those detailed here are those that are focused on a particular group.

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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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Newhaven: 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 Newhaven, 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.

- **Maternity / families**
- **Ethnically diverse communities**
- **Children**
- **Young people**
- **Low income**
- **People with long term health conditions**
- **Mental health**
- **SEND**
- **LGBTQ+**
- **Loneliness / isolation**

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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

Newhaven

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Changes Over Time

In 2019 Newhaven Meeching and the Valley were selected as areas of focus based on a range of data. There were particular challenges in relation to the number of pupils with SEND, skills and training, health deprivation, lone parent households, mental health challenges and rate of adults in alcohol treatment. Issues around relationships and trust, housing and life satisfaction were also flagged.

In their discovery work from 2019, Community Development Workers highlighted a strong sense of pride in local history, culture and heritage. There was distinct pride also in the local independent economy, in local industry and employment opportunities. CDWs noted inherent commitment to the principle of 'buy local' to support local businesses and traders. Also noted, were the presence of local secondary schools and green spaces, including the Fort Rec and Skate Park and good local connections and engagement between the CDWs with other local services as positives to build from. They flagged the lack of a central hub or community centre in the Valley.

As with all the areas, there is correlation between projects that have emerged since 2019 and the challenges and issues flagged at the start of the programme. Most particularly though, it is clear that development has evolved which builds from the assets that were identified as already present at the start.

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Changes Over Time

Since 2019 there has been a great deal of development and change. Initially there was scepticism and a sense that local residents were mistrustful that the approach might genuinely support community led development. It took some time for the CDWs to become embedded and trusted, but the investment of that time has paid off.

CDWs highlighted the significant central government funding which came into the town, such as for the Newhaven Enterprise Zone, the Creative sector and for major town centre redevelopments. Initially, there was frustration that discussions about some developments in the town appeared to be closed, with little opportunity for wider community engagement. CDWs therefore chose to focus on relationship building; working alongside those local community assets that were open to wider collaboration; and to build from the ground up.

The Hillcrest Centre in Meeching now acts as a hub for a huge range of projects, activities and events which bring local people together, and is a base for the Newhaven Wood Creatives, Hospitable Environment, and a range of other community arts, performance and creative activities which have been supported through Making it Happen. The Friday Gather 2 Cook café at the Centre is run by participants to ABCD ESOL classes that were delivered by DRI and supported by MIH.

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Changes Over Time

There is a wealth of activity emerging which relates to arts and creativity. The Hospitable Environment is providing a focal point for social gatherings, idea sharing, creativity and community development. Other examples include the Folk School (now the Dockside Barrell Scrapers), Tidemills Choir and Newhaven Art Space.

A striking feature of this activity relates to the connection which participants make between their engagement in the activities and the positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing; their sense of community; and sense of belonging.

There are a number of projects evolving around the principle of peer support; people coming together to support each other in dealing with challenging life circumstances, such as Mountain Men for men struggling with their mental health to go walking together; a group for parents of children with SEND; and a group for LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic abuse.

Green and environmental projects are coming to the fore, including a gardening for wellbeing group at the Southdown Wellbeing Centre, and The Land Nature Reserve. The Green Centre encourages people to reduce, reuse and recycle.

There is collaboration too between green and environmental groups working together on a toolkit led by Gardening in Action to share knowledge and resources.

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Changes Over Time

There have also been a number of projects working with, or which are led by, children and young people, such as to deliver summer futsal training and Havens Young Creatives youth led theatre.

Schools proved challenging to engage with at the start, due to the enormous pressure they are already under, but over the last year, collaborations have developed with three local schools, including Seahaven Academy and Breakwater Academy in Newhaven. The CDWs were able to attend a recent Seahaven inset day alongside volunteers from 'A Touch of Gentleness' who gave the teachers hand massages while CDWs explored ideas with them about how best to engage children in exploring their ideas for projects with the local community.

There has also been connection with other key services, such as Southdown, local GP surgeries, Southern Housing, PCSO's, Newhaven Enterprise Zone, and to support broader community engagement in local discussions about Newhaven Town developments.

There has been a huge amount of networking, resource sharing and collaboration between groups, as well as with other organisations and services. One example includes a collaboration of a number of local arts groups to host a Lantern Parade which involved local residents in making lanterns and writing a song for the town.

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Changes Over Time

CDWs note that while national government funding has come into the town for local improvements, this has been knocked off track by the cost of living crisis and broader financial pressures, meaning that the funding no longer covers full costs, and plans have been scaled back. This has impacted on priorities such as the conversion of old buildings to new community spaces and improvements to the Fort Road Rec.

A source of huge frustration is the lack of planning for community space in the recent development of new housing estates in the Valley. This is an area that already lacked a space, and which is further disadvantaged by its steep topography, lack of local shops and being dissected by the A259.

Despite these frustrations, Newhaven has become a creative hub for the District, perhaps due in part to population movement from larger more costly areas like Lewes and Brighton. The Creative Forum initially felt closed to wider community input, but has become a hugely influential and enthusiastic forum which is generating ideas and enabling collaboration across a wide network of creative individuals, groups and organisations.

While most activity has been focused in the Meeching area of the town, a recent community event in the Valley is a positive step. Within Meeching, residents make the most of the assets that are present and have tapped into creativity, but also local pride in Newhaven and the passion for its history and culture.

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Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- **Strengths**

- Strong pre-existing sense of pride in the local history, culture and heritage of Newhaven
- Culture of independent local economy and self sufficiency – ‘buy local’
- Local assets – green spaces, port, fishing industry and proximity to the Downs and local farms.
- Development of creative opportunities and social enterprise which complement pre-existing culture and assets

- **Challenges**

- Risk that local community priorities may be scaled out of development plans as resource value dwindles
- Lack of planning for community spaces and local amenities in new developments in the Valley

- **Opportunities**

- Peer support groups developing for mutual support and to improve mental health and wellbeing
- Creative groups contributing to the development of a creative sector within the town
- Green and environmental groups working together on a Toolkit to share knowledge and resources
- Local groups coming together to network and collaborate, leading to new initiatives, but also wider engagement in local Town developments and plans
- Strong collaboration with local organisations and services

- **Threats**

- New programmes and initiatives that ignore opportunities for collaboration and co-creation with communities and risk relationships and trust.
- Funding landscape
- Potential to lose relationships and trust with communities when MIH ends