



# **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

## **AREA SNAPSHOT**

Pebsham St. Michaels  
**Rother Voluntary Action**  
*Nov 2019 – December 2024*



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## What This Snapshot Will Cover

- **The aim of this Snapshot**
- **Introduction**
  - What is ABCD
  - 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**

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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*)

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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**

**Pebsham St  
Michaels**



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Area context

**Pebsham St. Michaels** is a fairly residential area, bordered to the north and east by the Combe Valley Countryside Park, and connecting to the rest of Bexhill in the west and south, mirroring the council ward of the same name, and forming part of the wider Bexhill & Battle constituency.

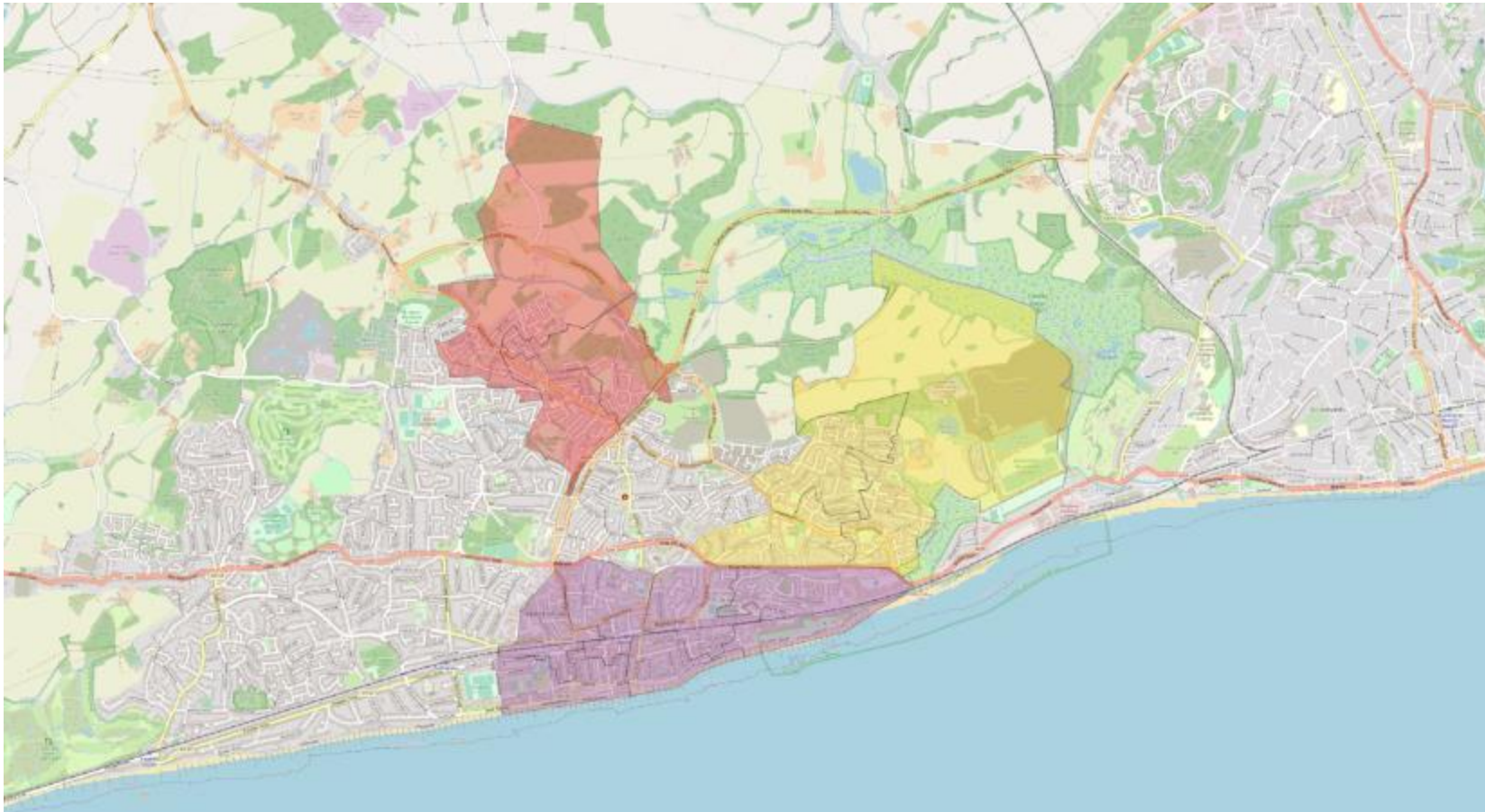
Despite the closeness of the south-western parts of the area to the centre of Bexhill in terms of simple geography, the area is bordered to the south by the A259, meaning it is a boundary that can feel as physical as it is political, cutting Pebsham off from the rest of Bexhill. As a result, those living in the area are similarly reliant on internal amenities to those in the cul-de-sacs further north.

These core amenities include a supermarket, doctor's surgery, pharmacy, and Pebsham Community Centre all close by to each other along Seabourne Road. This particular area of Seabourne Road is also the location of a key green space, the Seabourne Road Rec and Playground. The more southern part of the area includes two educational institutions, Bexhill College, and Pebsham Primary Academy, as well as another green space, Glyne Gap Field.

Further to the east, Bulverhythe Rec also lies within the area, but is up to a 30-minute average walk across Pebsham Lane from the centre of Pebsham, while drivers are reliant on the A259 again as the link to the Rec, Hastings and beyond. The area is linked by public transport to the centre of Bexhill by Stagecoach buses, which run approximately every 30 minutes, and by Bexhill Community Bus, which offers a 2-hourly service Monday to Saturday. By foot it is approximately a 30-minute walk to both the station and to Bexhill Hospital close by to the Combe Valley Way.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## The Area



**Peabsham St. Michaels** shown here in yellow is bordered to the north and east by the Combe Valley Countryside Park, and to the south by the A259.

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Executive Summary**

Pebsham St Michaels

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Executive Summary

- Pebsham St Michaels was selected based on IMD and JSNA data, including in relation to older people living alone, people self reporting bad or very bad health and long term health conditions, and mental health. There was also a higher than average rate of pupils with SEND. Relationships and Trust was flagged within more qualitative data.
- Access to Combe Valley Countryside Park, Pebsham Community Centre and Bexhill Sixth Form College were identified as potential local assets, alongside the existing relationship of RVA with the Pebsham Centre Committee.
- An active local Councillor of long standing was identified as a crucial local asset
- Since 2019 projects have developed, albeit more slowly than in Bexhill Central and Sackville
- Projects that have emerged have forged connections with groups and organisations from across the wider town, such as with The Compound and Pass it On.
- There were challenges for Pebsham Community Centre in relation to building and governance and red tape was cited frequently as something which could make challenges feel insurmountable.
- There were also challenges around navigating with other community support roles, such as Generic Infrastructure and the Food Network, which took time and sensitivity to illustrate the complementarity of MIH
- Learning from MIH has illustrated the crucial importance of community led action to address local priorities and the value of projects that are meaningful to local people
- Pebsham Community Hub has emerged as a key catalyst for community led change. New projects and activities are emerging and the Hub is becoming a space for people to meet and connect
- The local Councillor has been crucial to this development for the area, alongside key new groups for children and projects like Running Space which seeks to improve mental wellbeing and reduce suicide.
- There have been challenges around the lack of youth provision in the area.

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **The Picture in 2019**

**Summary of the 2019 area rationale:**

Bexhill Central & Sackville

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). WARM ward and 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 quantitative 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.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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.

**Pebsham St Michaels - worse than East Sussex average in rates of (applicable to all areas unless specified):**

- Older People Living Alone
- Key Stage 2 Development
- GCSE Attainment
- Adults with No/Low Qualifications
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs
- GP-reported Obesity in Adults
- 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 with Dementia
- Adults claiming ESA due to mental health.
- GP-reported Hypertension

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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 Pebsham St Michaels:

- Income deprivation – 2
- Employment deprivation – 2
- Health deprivation and disability – 2
- Education skills and training deprivation – 3
- Barriers to housing and services – 3
- Crime domain – 2
- Living environment deprivation – 3
- Geographic barriers – 3

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



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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 Pebsham St Michaels:

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

### WARM Ward data

WARM provides 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**
  - Health
  - Material wellbeing
  - Strong & stable families
- **Amber**
  - 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.

- Easy access to the Combe Valley Countryside Park, Pebsham Community Centre, Bexhill Sixth Form College, Pebsham Equestrian Centre, Pebsham Health Centre, Bexhill College Sports Centre.
- Enthusiasm from people involved with the local assets and the wider community to improve activities and access to services.
- RVA has already built a strong relationship with the committee running the community centre who are keen to encourage more people to become involved and to deliver activities locally.
- Local Independent Councillor is of very long standing and has a very good relationship with the community, ensuring he visits each house at least once a year.
- He identified needs and happy to work with RVA to develop new services – his latest idea being to have a breakfast club for older people in the community centre
- Opportunity to engage, especially with families and young people using the Community Centre although not excluding people through natural community links.

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **The Picture in 2024**

### **Pebsham St Michaels**

Reflections on developments and change over time

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 **Rother** CDW Team used the links made by one organisation, supported by the CDW, to illustrate the connectivity that has developed between groups within Central Bexhill but also across Pebsham St Michales and Sidley, and noted the ways they have supported and collaborated with each other.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Development Examples

**Supported by the CDW , Bexhill Men's Shed have made links to a large range of other groups and people:**

- Hastings Furniture Store – landlord / local charity which provided the site for the shed
- Right Path Hikes – J initially spoke with Men's Shed regarding his idea who referred him to Making it Happen
  - The Pelham – discussions around idea for the Men's Shed pre Covid
    - Wave Arts – Planters prepared by the Men's Shed
    - Cllr TB – Men's Shed member and local Councillor
- Member of Bexhill Rotary is a member of Men's Shed – helped to get new machinery funding
  - Cooking pops – opening event + future cooking courses being discussed
- Ladies shed being discussed – new members from a local craft group have offered to help
  - IT support – several hours of support provided
  - Local Graphic designer donated computer for the Men's shed
    - Links with Social Prescribers – Bexhill PCN
- Community support via St Michaels – links and visits already taken place
  - Local Bexhill Lions member has offered to distribute leaflets
  - Men's Shed member also involved with Bexhill Diabetes Support Group.
    - Links with Just Friends

**There have been so many connections and collaborations made possible by the ABCD nature of this group!**



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Key Challenges

- Covid! Not being able to physically connect
- Staff changes. Sometimes change is positive, but too much change can break the relationship and it can be hard to rebuild trust. However, the CDWs note that MIH has gone a long way to improve awareness and reputation of RVA in Bexhill.
- Challenges for Pebsham Community Centre in relation to the building and governance
- Red tape can sometimes make things feel insurmountable. This can cause people to doubt their confidence – which can lead volunteers to not pursue their idea.
- Initially, there was confusion around how ABCD might work alongside other forms community support like Generic Infrastructure Support and the Food Network, and a degree of sensitivity was needed to show how it adds value and complements rather than duplicates.
- Knowing when to signpost an individual or a group to other types of support was tricky at first, especially if a relationship and trust had been built with an individual or group. Encouraging broad connections for partnership, collaboration and expert support is key.
- Time & Capacity to attend all local events is an ongoing challenge.
- Rippling community frustrations due to large sums of money going to projects the community disagree with.



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## ABCD Learning Reflections

### What have you learned?

- That ABCD and learning from the process takes time, but it is worth the investment of that time.
- The importance of introductions between groups and face to face connections
- The Wellbeing impacts of empowerment
- The importance of not being afraid of a project failure – gives CDWs and community representatives confidence
- Challenging our own unconscious bias around ideas
- Need to provide examples of ABCD ways of working versus non ABCD examples to improve understanding.
- Challenges with youth projects and the need to have youth workers / lead. Impact of this on ABCD ways of working if the youth workers aren't from an ABCD background.
- *The ability to step back and watch people (who didn't initially believe they could) fly.....*

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

- The crucial importance of nurturing community led action to address local priorities
- How adopting an ABCD approach and empowering people as opposed to teaching them brings about confident communities.
- The value of projects that are truly meaningful to all members and where all members feel equally important.
- The impact of ABCD projects on community mental health.
- Funding
  - More money to empower existing assets and build new groups
  - Less funding into top-down courses / groups
- Less token surveys – more exploring communities before commissioning.

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Grant Funding**

Pebsham St Michaels

(Between April 2020 and December 2024)

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## The Grant Programme

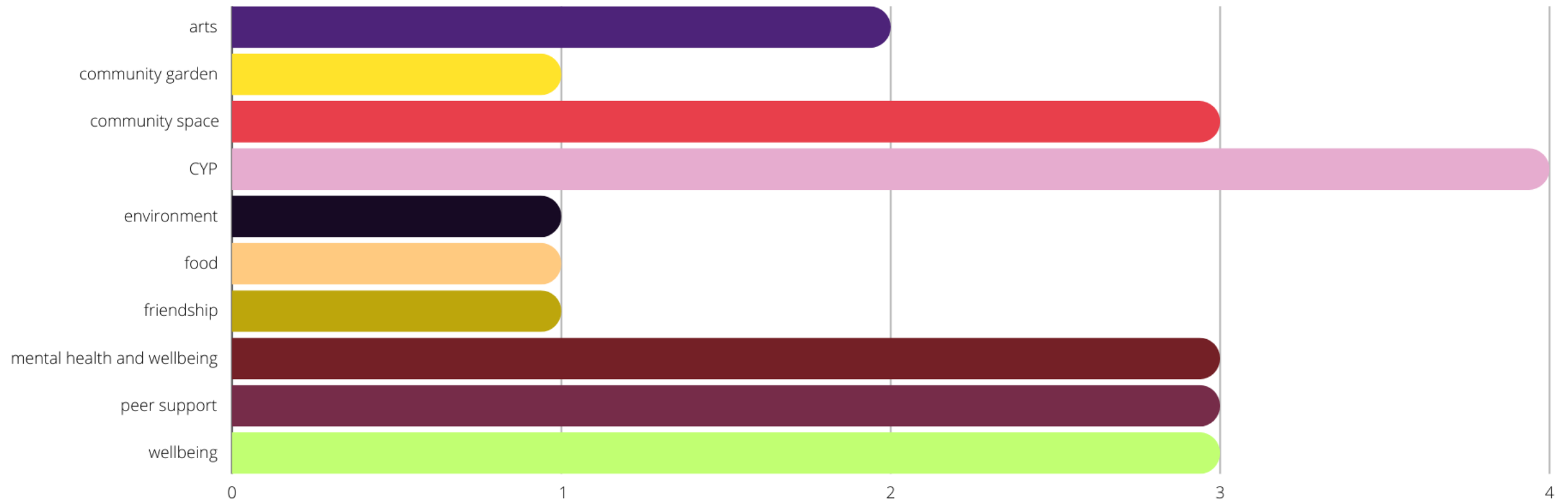
The making it Happen grant programme was designed to be flexible and offer a range of funding options to reflect the needs of different projects of different sizes. The broad aim was for projects or activity that would build from the positive things that are already present, involve local people, benefit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

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Grants Awarded in Pebsham St Michaels

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

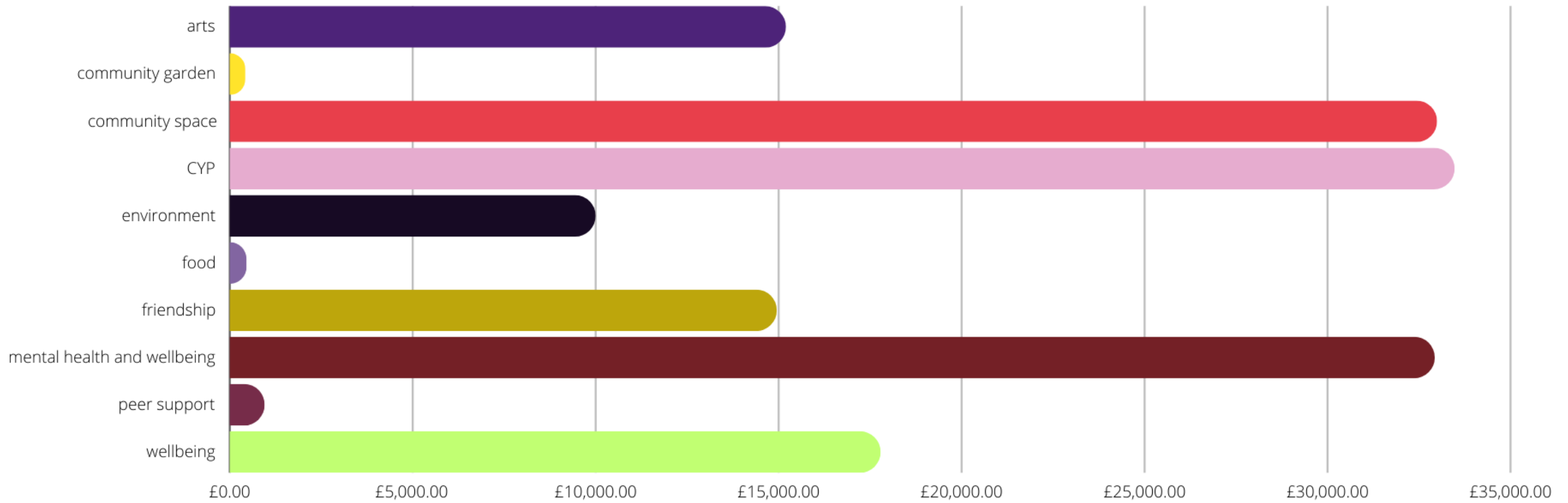


*NB: It should be noted that many projects relate to more than one theme. This graph draws on the central project intention and also includes county wide projects and activities*

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Grants Awarded

Total sum invested in Pebsham St Michaels by primary theme:



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



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Impact and Outcomes

*“What is amazing is that it’s the only group in my ward for under 5 children which means the children get to meet and play with each other and what is very important is that the parents themselves get to meet up with other parents and they can share their issues and difficulties of bringing up young children.” (Local Councillor on the Little Bees Toddler Group)*





***Clockwise from top left:*** Pebsham Community Centre entrance; Inside Pebsham Community Centre; Running Space; Little Bees Toddler Group



# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Broader Context**

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

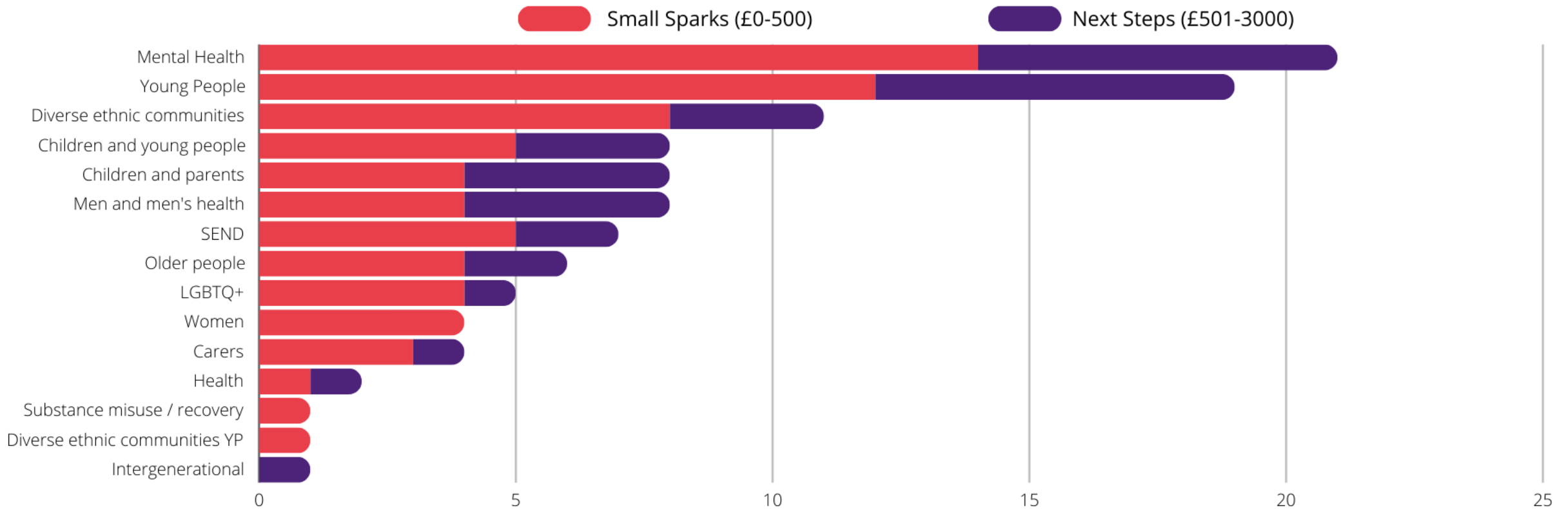
## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Grants Awarded

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

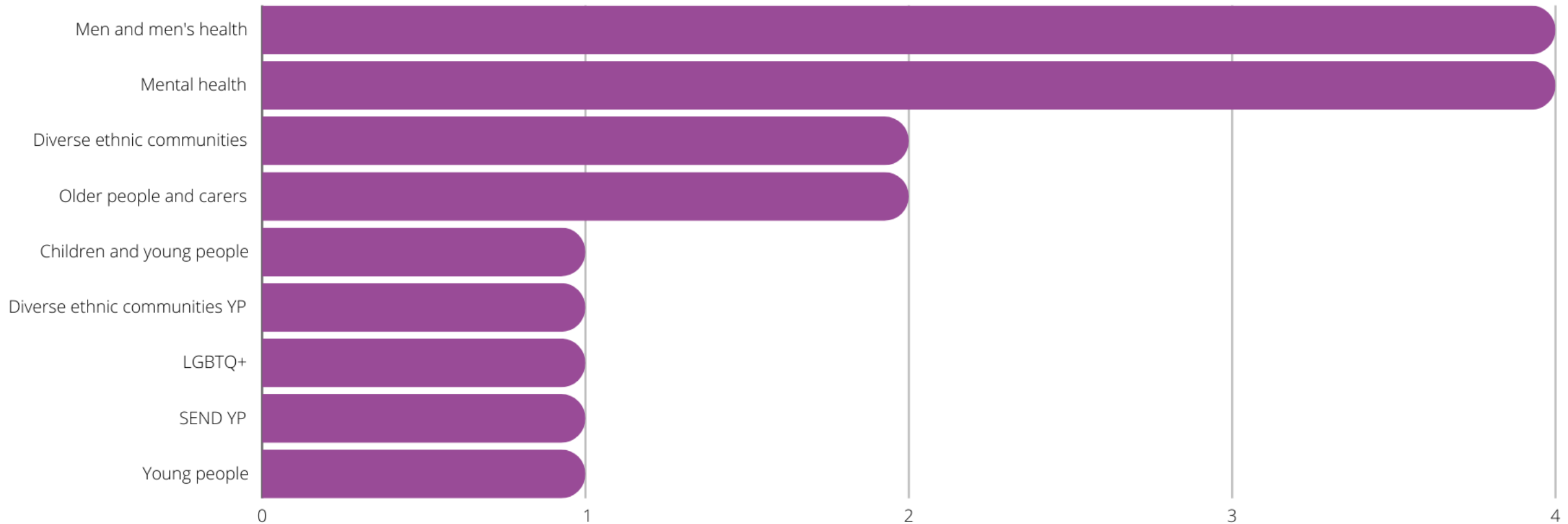


- It is important to note that many projects will have more than one core beneficiary group. Those detailed here are those that are focused on a particular group.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Pebsham St Michaels: 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 Bexhill, 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.

- **Socio economic inequality**
- **Bereavement**
- **Children**
- **Families**
- **Homelessness**
- **LGBTQ+**
- **Men's health and wellbeing**
- **Mental Health**
- **Minoritised ethnic communities**
- **Older people**
- **Disability**
- **Women**
- **Young People**

# **AREA SNAPSHOT**

## **Stage Two Evaluation**

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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:



# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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:

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## 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:

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Insights

Pebsham St Michaels

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Insights: Changes Over Time

Pebsham St Michaels has proved more challenging to engage within than Bexhill Central and Sackville, but there is some correlation between the development that has occurred and the data from 2019. JSNA and IMD data identified core issues including the number of older people living alone, adults with depression, income deprivation and geographic barriers as key issues for the area.

Central to the geographic challenge is the fact that the town is effectively cut off from Bexhill Central by the A259 which limits practical accessibility to a handful of local amenities in the north of the patch. Discovery work noted the lack of bumping spaces which might otherwise naturally encourage social connection.

To address this, the core focus of activity, and the catalyst for much of the community development activity which has occurred, centred on the development of Pebsham Community Centre as a Hub to bring people together for connection, and to foster a stronger sense of community and self sufficiency. New activities and projects have evolved, emanating from the centre, and there has been ongoing work to support the engagement and development of Centre volunteers.

There are now regular coffee mornings and the Centre was recently successful in an application for funding from MIH to improve the kitchen area and create a café space. The independent Councillor identified in the early discovery work has been a core driver to the community coffee mornings and warm welcome café.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Insights: Changes Over Time

There have been challenges around the engagement of young people, which has been exacerbated by the lack of youth provision in the area. Loss of services like Sussex Clubs for Young People exacerbates the challenge for community led initiatives to meet crucial requirements around governance, robust policies and procedures, and access to paid youth workers to support.

The College was identified in 2019 as a possible asset to connect with, but the majority of students commute into the area and don't necessarily regard Pebsham as 'their' neighbourhood.

Projects have evolved in relation to younger children, including art workshops for children with SEND and their families and Little Bees Toddler Group, and there is appetite for more.

Running Space is a project which is based around championing and encouraging running as a personal and community activity to support mental health, reduce stigma around suicide and which encourages participants to build friendships and wider connections. The group operates from the community centre and has forged links with other local groups based in the centre.

The role of proactive local councillors has been crucial to support development in the area, including to encourage links and connections between the various groups accessing the Hub. This connectivity between the various groups is proving valuable as a means to encourage mutual support and sustainability.

# AREA SNAPSHOT

## Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- **Strengths**

- The development of Pebsham Community Hub as a catalyst for connection and collaboration
- The development of activities and groups focused around social connection
- Local groups creating an informal network for peer support
- Strong and supportive local councillors

- **Challenges**

- The geography, which sees the area cut off from central Bexhill, remains challenging
- The lack of youth provision or support to develop community led youth clubs which has exacerbated a broader challenge to engage with young people
- Bureaucracy required for things like youth clubs and services

- **Opportunities**

- Pebsham Community Hub as a catalyst for new projects and activities
- Development of the kitchen in the Hub as a community café space
- The emerging informal network of groups to become a mechanism for collaboration

- **Threats**

- Rippling community frustrations due to large sums of money going to projects the community disagree with.
- 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