

MAKING IT HAPPEN

AREA SNAPSHOT

Sidley
Rother Voluntary Action
Nov 2019 – December 2024



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What This Snapshot Will Cover

- **The aim of this Snapshot**
- **Introduction**
 - What is ABCD?
 - What is Making it Happen?
 - Links to wider health policy, strategy and guidance
- **Executive Summary**
- **2019 Insights**
 - The area rationale approach
 - Area background and context
 - 2019 data
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- **2024 Insights**
 - Community Development Worker reflections on key developments, challenges and learning
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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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Sidley

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Area context

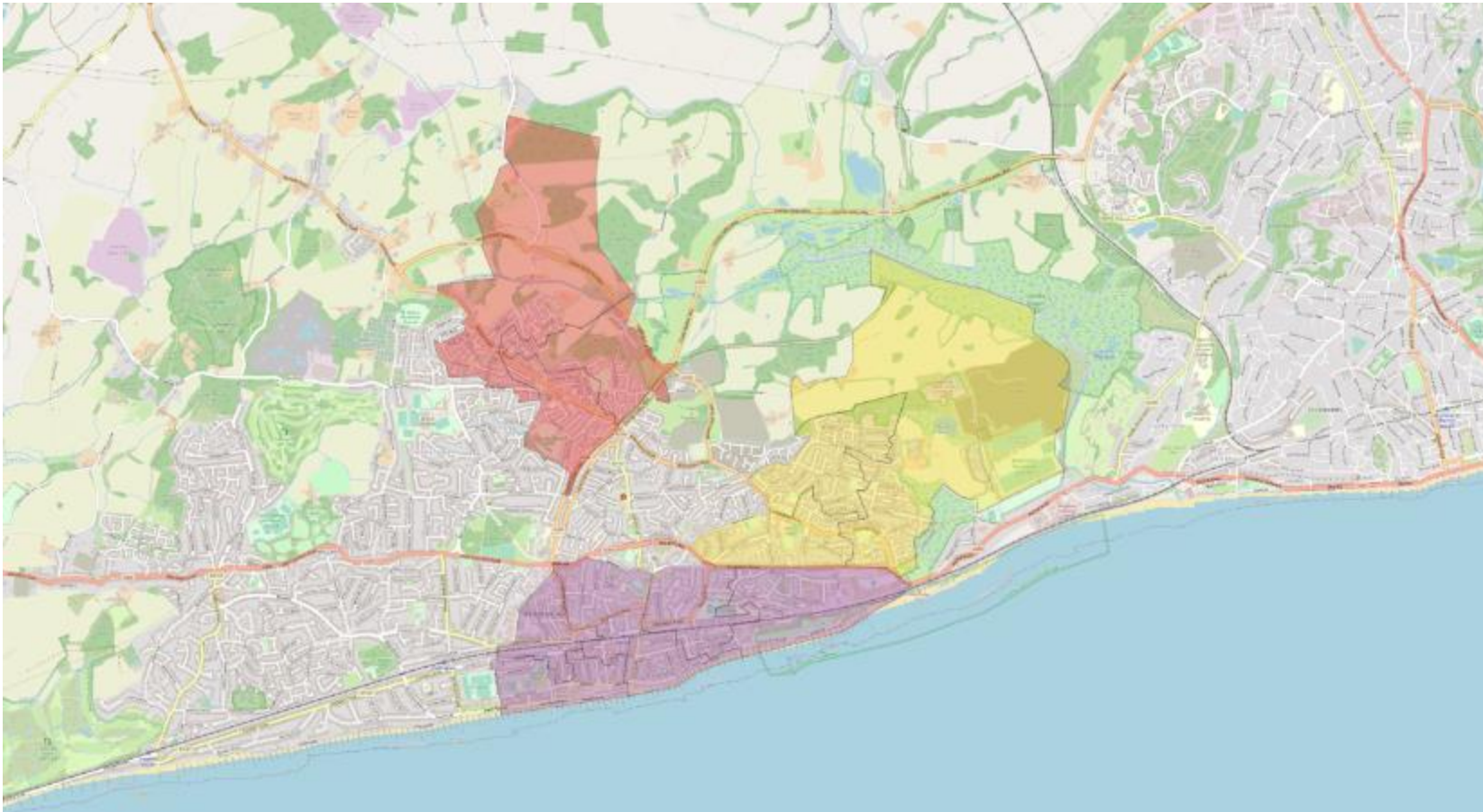
Sidley sits on the outskirts of Bexhill, with the village forming the northern tip of the overall built-up area. It is connected to Bexhill further in terms of political representation, through the Bexhill Sidley council ward, and Bexhill & Battle Parliamentary constituency. Beyond this, there is a mix of distinct, Sidley-based amenities, and links to other parts of the Bexhill built-up area.

Educationally, the All Saints Nursery and Primary Schools sit at the centre of the area, just removed from Ninfield Road, while Bexhill Academy, Glenleigh Park Academy, and St Mary's Special School & College are all within walking distance. As well as being central geographically, Ninfield Road is also central in terms of features, with a mid-sized supermarket, dental and GP surgeries, and other shops and facilities, including the Post Office, public toilets, and a number of local businesses and cafes located on, or nearby the road. Bexhill Hospital is also close-by.

Green, and community space is also available through Sidley Community Centre, Sidley Rec, Gulliver's Sports Ground, as well as smaller play parks and areas such as Jubilee Road. While these amenities and facilities exist, the area, and its links to the rest of the Bexhill built-up area, has been impacted by the building of the Combe Valley Way in 2015, with the major link road to Hastings cutting directly across the eastern edge of the area from north to south.

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The Area



There are three Making it Happen areas based in or around Bexhill.

Sidley sits on the outskirts of Bexhill, with the village forming the northern tip of the overall built-up area shown here in red.

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Executive Summary

Sidley

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Executive Summary

- In 2019, Sidley was selected as an area of focus for Making it Happen based on a range of data. There were particular challenges in relation to income deprivation, employment, educational achievement, health deprivation and mental health.
- Discovery work by CDWs at that time also highlighted the presence of significant local assets including the Heart of Sidley, local primary school and active churches, councillors and local traders. Concerns were flagged in relation to a gap in youth services.
- Since 2019 community action has developed, much of it driven by or building from the assets that were present and noted at the start of the programme.
- The Heart of Sidley is formalising as a group and plans to progress the development of a community space on the Rec.
- Links between the school with the local community have built and Bexhill Family Collective offer free Forest School provision for local families and has made links with Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardeners.
- Local traders have supported Christmas and summer activities and are involved in plans for a major summer festival with aims to involve the local community
- One local church hall is no longer in use, but another church has become very active, supporting the Market Place food project and a drop in café. It is also behind the Sidley Roadshow – an event to share information about local voluntary groups and clubs.
- The Pelham is becoming a hub for community action and now hosts Right Path Hikes and Running Space which are contributing to encouraging better mental health. Youth services remain a gap, but the Pelham has created a youth space and employed a youth worker.
- The BMX track has been revamped and a new skate park has been developed
- Local councillors remain active and the cricket club has found a home closer to Sidley.
- Due to cut backs, Southern Housing have withdrawn their community participation workers, and events that used to run from the Orangery have been moved to focus on St Leonards.

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The Picture in 2019

Summary of the 2019 area rationale:

Sidley

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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.

Sidley – worse than East Sussex average in rates of:

- Older People Living Alone
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children
- Fuel Poverty
- Key Stage 2 Development
- GCSE Attainment
- Adults with No/Low Qualifications
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs
- Socially Rented Households
- 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
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services caseloads
- Adults claiming ESA due to mental health.
- 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 Sidley

- Income deprivation – 1
- Employment – 1
- Education skills and training – 1
- Health deprivation – 1
- Crime – 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 Sidley:

- Health
- Economy, work & employment
- Housing, space and environment
- Relationships & trust

WARM Ward data

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

- **Red**
 - Life satisfaction
 - Education
 - Health
 - Material wellbeing
 - Strong and stable families
 - Local economy
 - Infrastructure
- **Amber**
 - Belonging
 - Crime and anti-social behaviour

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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

- Heart of Sidley desire for a sustainable legacy and recognition of need to broaden community access
- Two local primary schools
- Active local churches with church halls
- Local traders supportive of community action
- Gap around services for young people
- Close work with local councillors
- Large capital project at the Rec and at Gullivers
- Connection with the Pelham and Optivo
- Strong local community links

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The Picture in 2024

Bexhill Central and Sackville

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 **RVA** CDW Team used the links made by one organisation, supported by the CDW, to illustrate the connectivity that has developed between groups across the whole town and noted the ways they have supported and collaborated with each other.

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Development Examples

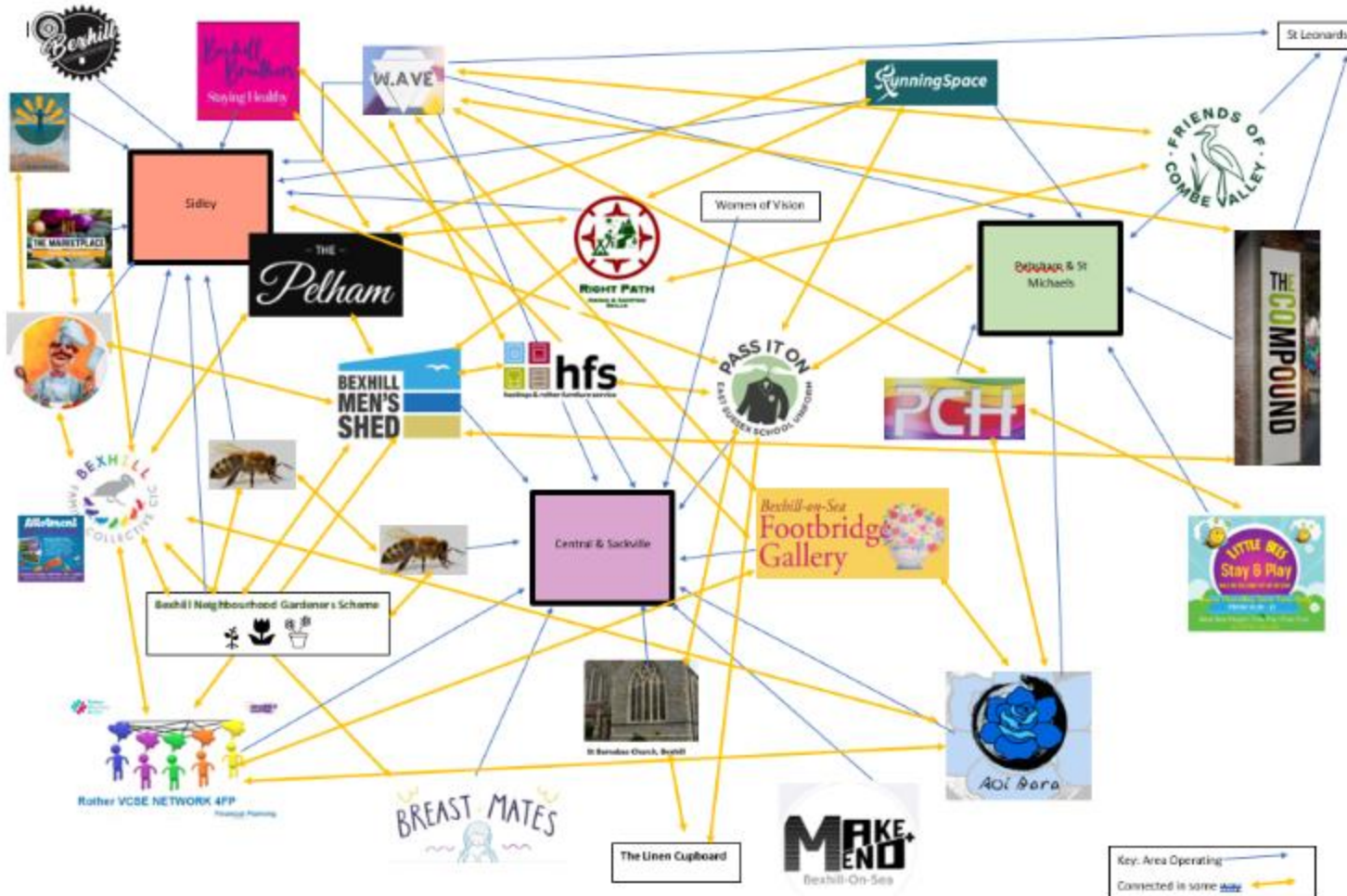
Supported by the CDW , Bexhill Men's Shed have made links to a large range of other groups and people:

- 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!

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Key Developments (Projects/Groups)



The incredible neighbourhood networks that have been built over the past few years are substantial and complex...and continue to grow daily.

CDWs also reflected on challenges that have occurred since 2019:

- Covid! Not being able to physically connect
- Staff changes. Sometimes change is positive, but it can break relationships. However, CDWs note that MIH has gone a long way to improve awareness and reputation of RVA across the town.
- 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 the Heart of Sidley, 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.

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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.

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Grant Funding

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(Between April 2020 and December 2024)

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The Grant Programme

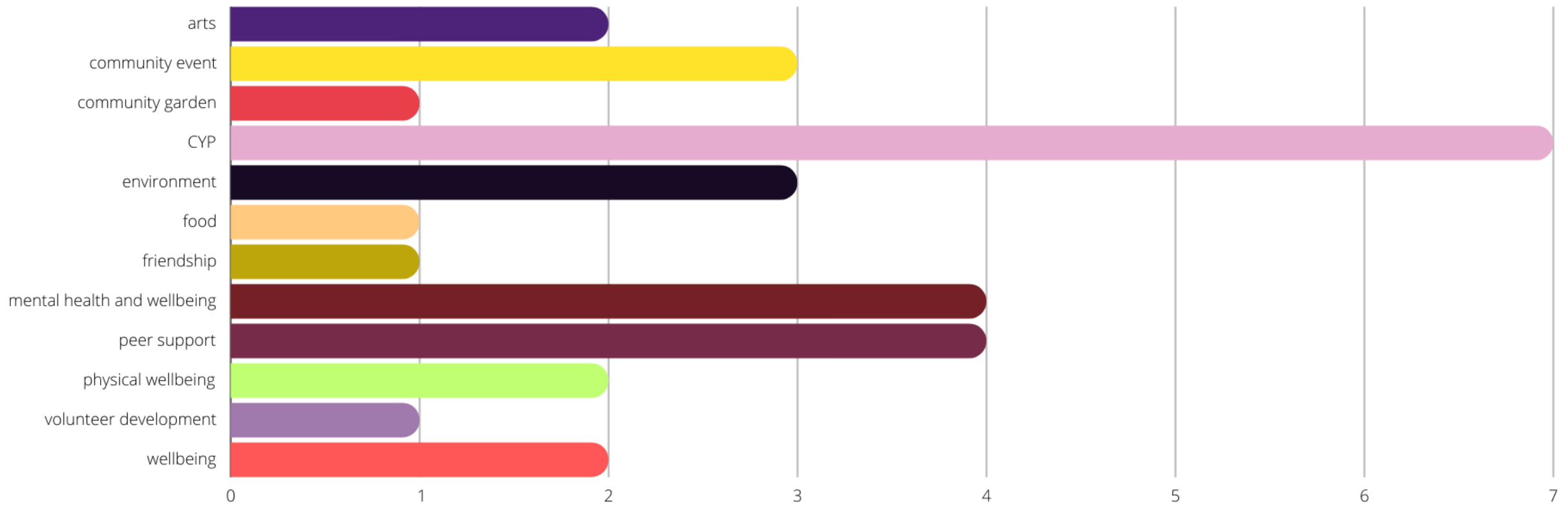
The making it Happen grant programme was designed to be flexible and offer a range of funding options to reflect the needs of different projects of different sizes. The broad aim was for projects or activity that would build from the positive things that are already present, involve local people, benefit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

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

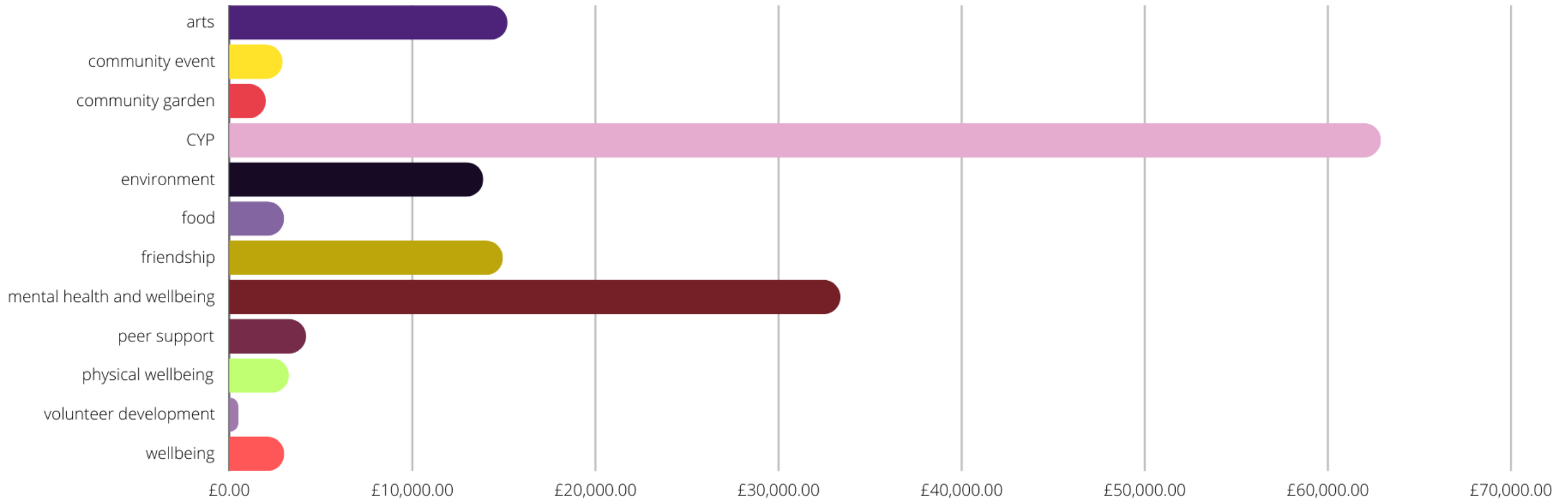


NB: It should be noted that many projects relate to more than one theme. This graph draws on the central project intention.

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Grants Awarded

Total sum invested in Sidley 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

"We have connected with different community groups – eg cultures and race"

Sharing all different culture, making new friends, learning new ideas"

"Listening to other people's life experiences – pleasantly surprised by similarities"

(Feedback from members of the Women of Vision group in response to the question: "What are some ways that we come together even though we have our differences?")

"It's very creative and free minded and it was my thing. BEST MORNING EVER!"

(Make Good Trouble – All Saints primary school pupil)



Rother Voluntary Action
15 Feb · 🌍

🌲 Awesome day at the Trees for Cities planting day at Sidley Rec 🌲
Lovely to see so many people volunteering to help get these new trees in the ground. It was a wonderful event - well done to all involved 🌲 Trees for Cities



Clockwise from top left: Bexhill Men's Shed; Aoi Bara at the RVA Network event; Discovery Walk with the High Sheriff; Community, Connection and Cake; Project Planning; Cake!

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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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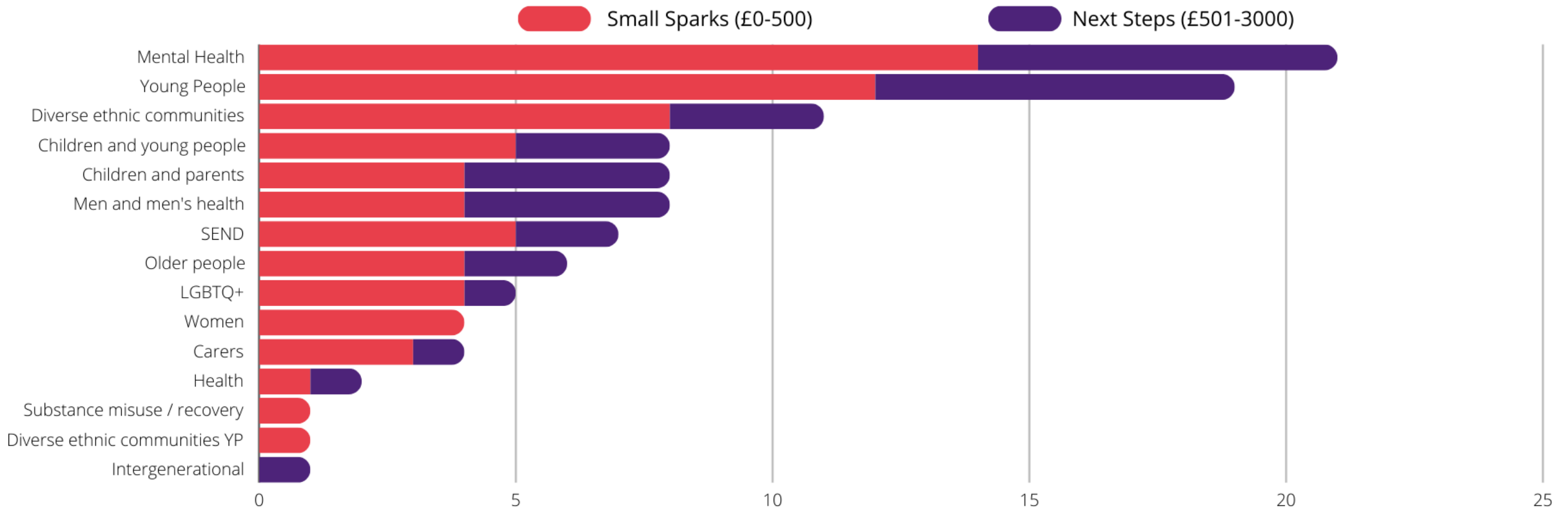
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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:

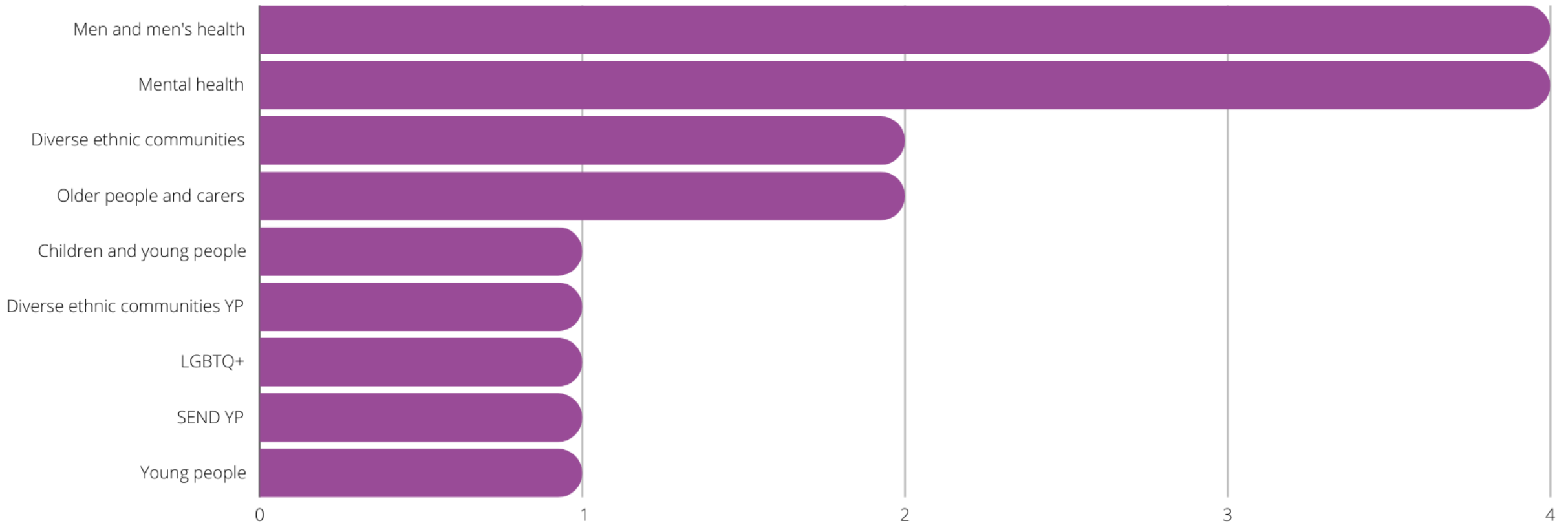


- It is important to note that many projects will have more than one core beneficiary group. Those detailed here are those that are focused on a particular group.

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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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Sidley: 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 Hollington, the MIH Community Development worker works with people who have identified as having the characteristics detailed opposite.

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

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

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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

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Insights: Changes Over Time

In 2019 Sidley was selected based on a range of data. The area faced particular challenges in relation to income deprivation, employment, education and health deprivation. JSNA data flagged issues in relation to child and adult mental health and people reporting bad or very bad health. Relationships and trust were also highlighted as problematic within Co-op wellbeing scores.

Community Development Workers did also flag a number of local assets, including the Heart of Sidley, local primary schools and active churches. They noted a gap in terms of youth services, but active councillors and local traders, and close connection with the Pelham and Optivo.

Since 2019 community action has developed, much of it driven by or building from the assets that were present and noted as opportunities by CDWs at the start.

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Insights: Changes Over Time

The Heart of Sidley is coming to an end after ten years. They are formalising a Community Group to carry forward work achieved to date, and have established a Committee. Plans are progressing for development of a Community Space on Sidley Rec.

Community links with the primary school have increased since 2019 and there is more involvement by the school in community events. They now host the local scout group and the PTA host regular Craft Sales. Bexhill Family Collective have made a huge difference for the community. Supported by MIH, their Forest School offers free provision for local families, and is proving popular. They have made strong links with Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardeners and set up The Pantry offering food which otherwise would be thrown away.

Through the activities of Heart of Sidley, some local traders have been involved in local events including a Christmas tree lights event, and in summer fairs. The plan for next year is for a major event along the same lines as the St. Leonards Festival – a huge one day festival involving the local community in volunteering, performing and catering.

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Insights: Changes Over Time

One of the church halls is now used as a nursery making it unavailable for community use, but another local church has become much more involved with local residents. The church offers a food project, The Market Place, which opens once week and offers cheap food and a drop in café offering free drinks and a chance to socialise.

The church alongside MIH, has also supported the development of the Sidley Roadshow, established to promote what is on offer in Sidley, with information about voluntary groups and clubs for people to join. The group is also developing a soup project using donated vegetables run by Cooking Pops, a project supported by Making it Happen, which he will run alongside the Older Peoples meals he provides weekly.

The church is also about to start an affordable monthly social evening to follow on from a hugely successful quiz night held in aid for their food project.

The Pelham are hosting more and more groups which offer support to Sidley residents including Right Path Hikes and Running Space.

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Insights: Changes Over Time

In response to issues flagged at the start about a lack of youth services, the Pelham have created a youth space in their basement and fund an experienced youth worker. With the redevelopment of the Family Hub, it is hoped that the Youth space in their building may be used again by local young people.

The BMX track is still being used since its revamp and has volunteers supporting young people by offering lessons and events at the track and around the local area. The Skate Park has now been open for over 18 months and has trained volunteers offering support to the young people using it. Women on Board now also run weekly sessions there for young women from 14 years old.

Local councillors continue to support activities and groups in the area – the Skate Park wouldn't have happened without their involvement – and Sidley Cricket Club has moved to a new space closer to Sidley in a move driven by a local resident.

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Insights: Changes Over Time

Southern Housing has moved its office from the centre of the village and due to cut backs their Community Work in the area has been reduced quite significantly. Events and activities that used to run from The Orangery have been moved to focus on a location in St. Leonards.

Despite these setbacks, networks are building between groups and are starting to show results, with groups working together, supporting each other and even applying for joint funding (such as the Bee Keeping Project). The Sidley Road Show is an example of the Village coming together. The local Pub was shut in 2019 and has recently re opened with a landlord who wants to be involved in the community.

Bexhill Neighbourhood gardeners have hosted a number of groups and are currently working with another allotment in Bexhill on a Bee Project. Grass roots initiatives including Righ Path Hikes and Running space provide fantastic opportunities for peer support for people who may be struggling with their mental health.

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Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- **Strengths**

- The presence of strong local assets including local church, schools and the Pelham
- Local desire to continue work instigated through the Heart of Sidley
- Connection and networking that is developing between local community groups in the area
- Sidley Roadshow which provides an opportunity for local residents to find out what's going on in the area

- **Challenges**

- The area faces significant challenges in relation to deprivation
- Loss of services including housing participation support and youth services
- Loss of key community space such as a church hall which is being used to support delivery of essential services

- **Opportunities**

- Active Councillors and local community and voluntary sector organisations who are driving positive change
- The continued development of the Pelham as a focus for local community action
- The Sidley Roadshow as an opportunity to continue to encourage networking and collaboration

- **Threats**

- New programmes and initiatives that don't build from learning from Making it Happen, which risk relationships and undermine opportunities for collaboration and co-creation with communities
- Funding landscape