

February 2020

Stockport Local Fund

**NO
NO
NO**



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



Stockport Local Fund

£400,000 invested over 3 funding rounds
72 projects delivered by
67 organisations received investment
Over **600** people benefited from round 1
alone

Here's how....

{The Group}... fosters such brilliant sense of community and is enjoyed by people of all age...and would stay all day given the opportunity."

"I clean and bake here, just being here is my favourite time, I never have any bad days here, only good."

"Every day I get stronger, next month I am a key speaker at a Safeguarding Conference there is no way I could even have thought about that a couple a years ago."



The Stockport Local Fund is a £1m community fund!

The Stockport Local Fund is Stockport Council's £1m community investment fund established in 2017 to make direct investment in the ideas and activities of our communities and help make the things that matter to local people a reality.

This ambitious programme is a 3 year investment, and in the first 18 months has invested £393,869 in 72 projects across 67 organisations.

This report gives an overview of those investments, the types of activity we've funded and the difference we have made.

As our funding programme develops we will look to sustain the process to ensure our communities can continue to thrive and innovate, and how we consolidate the fund as part of our core business.

We have learnt much about our VCSE sector through the Stockport Local Fund, how quick and agile they can respond and the innovation they have to tackle issues. How much they value small and easily accessible investment: the benefits of networks, support and connections; and the wider resources that investment can lead to.

We have also learned how challenging it can be for developing organisations to transition to sustainable revenue streams and the high levels of support and investment necessary to develop ideas and organisations. Alongside the challenge of being sufficiently agile in our processes to respond to needs whilst retaining transparency.

Going forward we want to work collaboratively with communities, Elected Members and colleagues to shape and develop the fund.

A Clear Strategic Commitment

The Borough Plan (2015-20) set out our plans “to change the way [we] work ... to find new ways to enable communities to come together to form a vision for their own future, and to shape and direct the services they use.”

The established Inclusive Neighbourhoods Portfolio furthers the strategic oversight and governance and our enhanced understanding of Stockport's VCSE through the State of the Sector in 2017 captured the breadth and diversity of the VCSE but also the vulnerability and fragility of many groups and organisations:

- **1,689 VCSE orgs in Stockport**
- **Organisations primarily working with adults and older people**
 - **1,309 micro (under £10k)**
 - **9/10 orgs are micro or small**
- **Organisations seeing a year on year reduction in income**
- **Organisations reporting an increase in expenditure**
- **Over half have at least one source of public funding**

A Rationale for Investment

Our communities cannot thrive if they aren't supported by a strong and diverse third sector. This means that we must invest in **smaller voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and create partnership working and peer support** opportunities so that they become equal partners around the table.

Where communities are divided or individuals and families are in crisis, demand for our services is increasing at unsustainable levels. So we want to **invest in social action and inclusive growth**, in order to **prevent people from reaching points of crisis** where they **rely more heavily on statutory services**.

If we do not find new ways of working with communities to fix these problems, we risk losing the public's trust – not just in the Council but also in local democracy, and in the whole system, that supports communities. This means that we must invest in **positive relationships**, moving beyond the fundamentals of community engagement to take a **whole system approach to community investment**.



The Fund

Principles and Priorities

Stockport Local Fund invests in ideas and activities that:

- are new or looking to scale up;
- can lead to a self-sufficient change in the community after the investment;
- can show significant community support

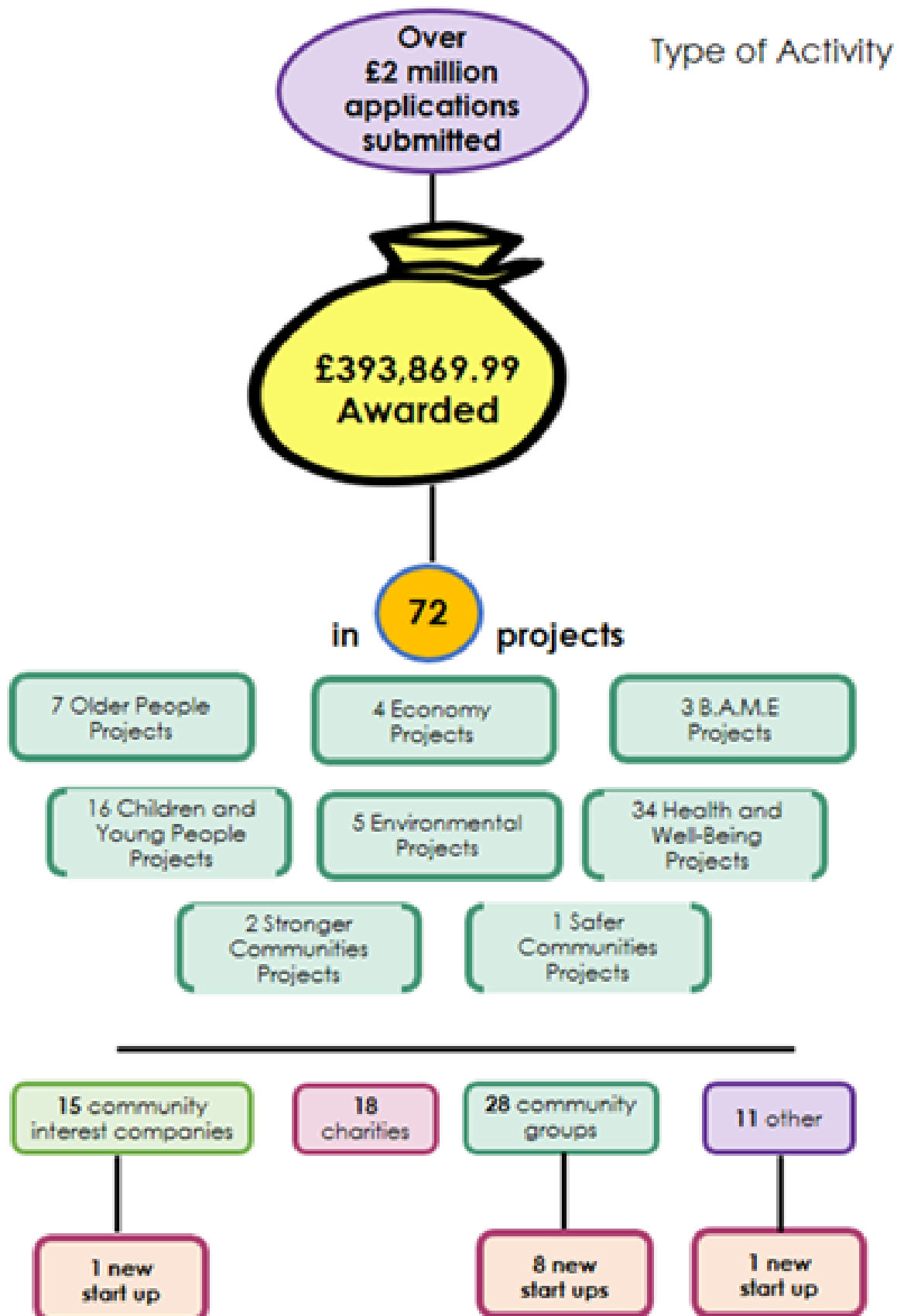
Address at least one of the fund priorities:

- 1.increase social contact and support for people experiencing social isolation and loneliness
- 2.get more people involved in supporting each other with long-term physical, special educational needs and/or mental health conditions
- 3.get more people to succeed in making long-term lifestyle changes to improve their own health and well-being
- 4.work together with schools, the police, youth offending services or local support agencies and the communities they serve
- 5.create opportunities for people at risk to help them fulfill their potential
- 6.build relationships between communities, peer groups or generations with a focus on mentoring and buddying

Governance and Decision Making

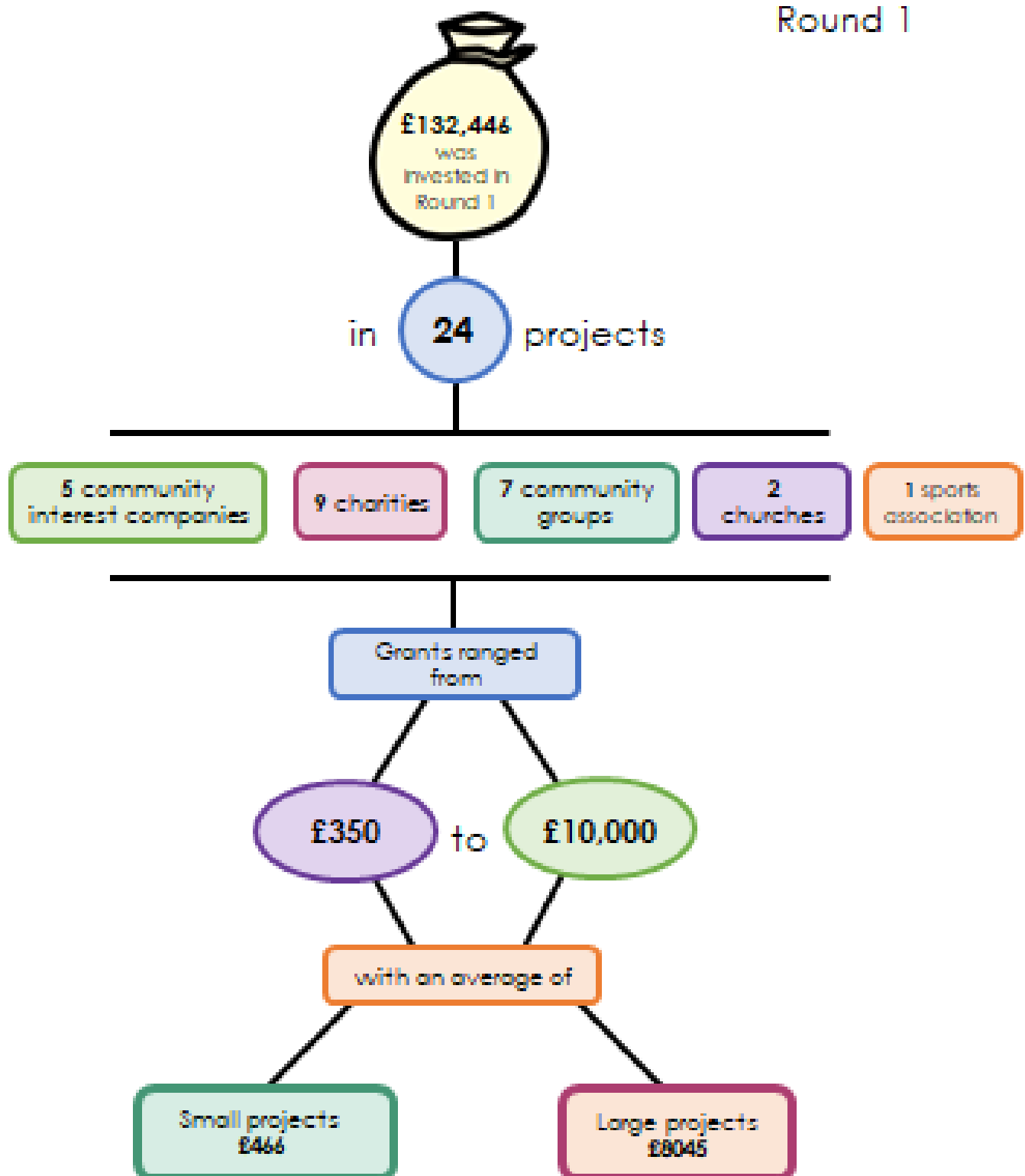
Investment decisions were made by a multi-agency panel with representation from statutory services, communities and businesses.

Investment Summary



Round 1

Round 1



Round 2

Round 2



↓ £21,553 less
than Round 1

in **19** projects ↓ 5 less than
Round 1

5 community
interest companies

4 charities

8 community
groups

1
individual

1 sports
association

2 applicants were
funded previously

Grants ranged
from

£250

to

£10,000

with an average of

Small projects
£454

Large projects
£8322

↓ down £12 on Round 1

↑ up £277 on Round 1

Round 3

Round 3



£39,598 more
than Round 2

in **29** projects



10 more than
Round 2

5 community
interest companies

6 charities

13 community
groups

3
churches

2 sports
association

4 applicants were
funded previously

Grants ranged
from

£480

to

£10,000

with an average of

Small projects
£498

Large projects
£7301



up £44 on Round 2



down £1021 on Round 2

Round 1 Analysis

7 Services supported directly

165 activities

£177,765 in cash match
funding

644 people benefited

68 days of training

3662 volunteer hours
Equivalent to **£40k** @
national living wage

500 packed lunches
for children over school holidays



Round 1 Impact

What Organisations said...

"We were able to supply fresh bread to the Foodbank throughout the summer..." **Pure Innovations**

"The project has now secured a reaching communities grant, covering the cost of a full time worker..." **Walthew House**

What our communities told us...

I am just so pleased I came today..." **Friendly Fridays**

"Joining has given me a lot of pleasure. It has peaked my interest in art and given me the confidence to have a go!" **ARC Stockport**

"I look forward to coming and really enjoy the company and learning different skills..."
Walthew House



What the data said...

75% of children participating now feel more confident about school-**Wonderful Things Heaton Norris**

78% of the Refugees and Asylum Seekers we see now feel more connected to the Community-
Yaran North West

100% of participants reported an increase in wellbeing and confidence, and a reduction in feelings of isolation-**ARC Stockport**

Claire's Story

Claire fled an abusive relationship in Blackpool and came to the women's refuge in Stockport. From there she quickly discovered that she too could help other women. Knowing that she had a burning passion to support vulnerable women gave her the inspiration to start Owls (Ongoing Women's Local Support) a self-help group for women that have suffered from domestic abuse.

It was intended to be a small coffee morning, but it quickly began to grow, people needed more support and Claire needed help to meet the demands. She set up a buddying system, embarked on training, and applied for funding to the Stockport Local Fund for a small amount so she could become a trainer. Claire knew that by being able to offer the training would mean that more women would get the support they needed. It was a busy time for Claire and renting community spaces was not ideal, the group needed a space where women would get the confidentiality they needed and applied to the local fund again but this time for £10,000.

We asked Claire what £10,000 means, "It was fantastic, we now have a confidential, safe place, we can provide a drop in 5 days a week, we can put on training, do you know that we are the number one referral organisation for women in Stockport!"

Claire has been on a journey and she talks candidly about her experiences, we asked what has changed for her "Every day I get stronger, next month I am a key speaker at a Safeguarding Conference there is no way I could even have thought about that a couple a years ago."

Claire had some advice for those thinking about doing something for their community, "I am so proud of being able to help women and setting up Owls, if you have a passion, ignore that little voice that says you can't do it, and just do it, it's not easy and its hard work but it's worth it."

To find out more about the great work of Owls go to Stockport Local:

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/groups/owls>



Pure Innovations

The Kitchen

The Kitchen is a cafe and bakery serving freshly made food and drink, training people with special needs in baking and customer service, giving them vital life skills and improving employment potential as well as increased confidence and improved well-being. They donate their products to a local homeless charity every week and have links with dementia cafes and local food pantries.

The Kitchen delivers baked goods, providing external catering and run a stall at food markets which helps to make the project sustainable. They see increased demand on participant places as well as the produce that they provide. Although they admit that this is a good problem to have and are looking into ways of expanding to meet the demand.

The Stockport Local Fund awarded £9985 to kick start the project and the start up of this social enterprise supporting people into training and employment.

Joe has been coming to The Kitchen every Monday:

"I clean and bake here, just being here is my favourite time, I never have any bad days here, only good."

Dave Ferrier Manager:

"It's thanks to Stockport Local Fund that we set-up, we really needed the

equipment to make The Kitchen happen, the best thing I have seen is the

participants grow in skill and confidence over time. I would recommend the

Stockport Local Fund to other organisations the application compared to other

bids was easy and straightforward."



Friendly Fridays

Cheadle Community Centre

Friendly Fridays follows the NHS five ways of wellbeing and every week people have the opportunity to connect, learn, give, be present and get active. This could include chatting over coffee, taking part in arts and crafts or playing games. They have forged a strong partnership with Home Instead who provide a monthly lunch club too.

The project works predominantly with older people, however due to its recent summer holiday activities and proximity to the local park it now is benefiting young families too.

The project has had considerable impact in Cheadle Heath and surrounding areas, easily reaching 30 people a week, and often exceeding 60 during the school holidays.

The Stockport Local Fund awarded £10,000 to employ a part time project officer to develop the offer and meet the increased demand. The money awarded meant they could develop their volunteering programme and form links with private and other voluntary providers to strengthen their offer.

"Friendly Fridays is an absolutely fantastic group. It fosters such brilliant sense of community and is enjoyed by people of all ages. We come most weeks and my 2 children love it!"



Our Learning

Investment has made local organisations stronger, more sustainable and less reliant on grants.

The fund has grown **new community activity** by allowing un-constituted groups to apply. We tried to make it **easy to apply**, reducing the time often taken to make an initial application ...Of which less than 50 were for small (Under £500) grants.

We recognise the challenges that a digital process of the fund can cause to those digitally excluded, we have worked hard across the council to support people with these changes and **100% of applications were via the online form**.

The fund is extremely popular indicating a **real need for grant funding** in Stockport, particular for larger grants. On average we were only able to invest in 1 in 5 applications. Many organisations have benefited from **non-financial support** through for example, the

Sector Connector
networking events, and built sustainable
relationships with businesses.

The funding has increased community activity and supported sustainability of our larger organisations; we have witnessed applications from innovative new projects and increased the testing and scaling of ideas where in the past the financial burden has often restrained organisations.

Many organisations in Stockport now require a larger investment, they have successfully tested an idea and proved concept, and several have come back to the funding looking for further investment.

There is strong evidence of need and value across the sector of infrastructure investment to support organisations and ideas, and support access to larger national funds.

In Summary

There is a real need for investment, and the interest in the fund has exceeded expectations. We've reached a wide variety of organisations and supported community engagement. New groups have been established and social enterprises have been supported to scale. For those organisations who have received funding the investment has been invaluable and combined with wider support has supported organisations to grow and diversify

BUT.....

Applications significantly exceed available resources and identifying sustainable revenue streams remains a challenge for many organisations. Certain groups need support to access the fund, and many would benefit from a faster more agile small grants process while other have out grown the fund and now need support to find the next.



What next?

Areas of Development

Communication Support Small Grants
Larger investments Sustainability
Ownership

In the next year of the fund we will:

- Work with our communities and stakeholders to develop clearer messaging about the purpose and priorities of the fund including through better use of internal communications and social media.
- Explore ways to simplify and open up the small grants element, working with third sector and place based colleagues.
- Work with our colleagues and communities to ensure equitable access.
- Identify further sources of support for emerging groups and those that need it.
- Explore ways of generating alternative sources of community investment that can both fund activity outside of the direct priorities of the local fund and potentially develop a sustainable revenue stream for the fund itself.



Post Script – July 2020

This report was drafted in early 2020, due to Covid-19 it was not circulated. It stands as a record of the investments made in Rounds 1-3 and impact of Round 1. Much has changed since the report was drafted, but the learning remains equally valid, it does however need to be considered in the current context of Covid.

The Covid Impact State of the Sector Survey showed:

- 87% of organisations have seen a reduction in income as a result of covid-19
- 35% of organisations need financial resources to continue to deliver their current activity
- 40% need resources to deliver new projects to respond to the impact of covid.

Collaboration across the VCSE in Stockport has never been stronger, grass roots activity has mobilised to support communities in unprecedented ways voluntary organisations are redesigning their offer and reflecting on their future. The financial challenges for the sector and the council have never been greater.

The Stockport Local Fund is a key part of the borough's recovery plan, it needs to be redesigned in the context of these plans, recognising the role it can play not just in delivering outcomes for local people but also in reshaping and redesigning services and the VCSE offer to improve these outcomes.