

Learning from Phase 2 of the Place Based Social Action Programme

Subtitle: End of Phase 2 Report

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Contents

.....	1
Subtitle: End of Phase 2 Report	1
Introduction	4
The aims of the Place Based Social Action programme	4
Key features	4
Learning and evaluation approach.....	6
Learning	6
Evaluation.....	7
Methodology.....	8
Overview of Phase 2 Delivery	9
Place by place summary of Phase 2 delivery	9
Phase 2 delivery in Numbers	18
Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.....	19
Difference made by PBSA partnerships in Phase 2.....	20
Empowerment of local people and organisations.....	20
Increased understanding of social and economic issues and opportunities in their area	21
Organisations and communities increase their capacity and ability to work together in different ways	23
More services at a local level are co-produced	24
Residents feel they have greater influence and ownership over the places where they live	25
Enablers of change - Key factors that have enabled change.....	26
Really listening and acting on what's been heard.....	27
Meeting people where they are	27
Resourcing social action with money, time, advice and guidance	28
Creating enabling conditions	28
Creating mutually beneficial systems for collaboration	29
Targeting diverse communities.....	29
Looking forward to Phase 3	30
How key learning from Phase 2 has influenced approaches for Phase 3	30
Place by place summary of plan	31
Programme level outcomes	36
Increased understanding of what the PBSA programme approach enables – in particular, the support, local conditions and approaches that can allow place based social action to thrive	36
Improved knowledge about how approaches to place based social action change local systems	37

Increased understanding of the **impact social action can have** on individuals, communities and organisations –
and effective ways to capture and measure this..... 38
The programme explores **what works at what scale** for place based social action..... 38

Appendix: Overview of activities mapped onto social action typology 39

About Renaisi..... 40

Introduction



The aims of the Place Based Social Action programme

The Place Based Social Action (PBSA) programme is a £4.5m investment in ten local partnerships, over seven years. PBSA was launched in 2017 by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and The National Lottery Community Fund (the Fund).

PBSA aims to support the local partnerships to develop social action approaches to address issues and priorities that matter to people in their community. Social action is defined by DCMS as ‘people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can include volunteering, giving money, community action or simple neighbourly acts.’¹

The PBSA programme does this by:

- Supporting **local communities, public sector organisations, service providers, civil society organisations** and **businesses** to work together to address local priorities
- Increasing the **capability and ability of local people and organisations to take action** on the issues that matter to them
- Encouraging **new ways of working**, so that the people who live and work in an area have more **meaningful influence** and **ownership** over local services.²

Key features

Local PBSA partnerships are made up of a **broad range of actors**. The lead organisation in each area is required to be a registered charity, community benefit society, community interest company or social enterprise. Other members of the partnership include local community members, representatives of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations. As a prerequisite of the programme - local authorities in each area were also required to be included in plans, meaning in every area there is at least some level of statutory investment (though intensity varies).

PBSA is **essentially a capacity building programme**, designed to support a stronger VCSE sector through better relationships, more connected services and flexible resource that can be used to develop and sustain organisations within the partnership, as well as local people as social action leaders. Funding has been spent on an array of things like upskilling individuals, paying for staff salaries, putting on events, supporting the growth of smaller organisations.

The PBSA programme was originally informed by a **typology of social action** which includes nine approaches: advocacy and social movements, befriending and helping, community asset ownership, community organising, co-operatively owned services, co-production, formal

¹ [DCMS, Policy Paper, Social Action, 2016](#)

² From the PBSA programme initial [guidance](#)

volunteering, peer support and learning, and time credits. The table below outlines which of these the partnerships have used throughout their delivery. We have included an appendix with further details of how these activities have been categorised.

Places	Typology of social action						
	Advocacy and social movements	Befriending and helping	Community organising	Co-production	Co-operatively owned services	Formal volunteering	Peer support and learning
Colchester				★			★
Coventry	★	★	★			★	★
Halifax		★	★	★	★	★	
Bristol		★		★	★	★	
Hartlepool				★			★
Lincoln			★	★	★		
N.E. Lincs				★			
Watchet	★	★				★	★
Bootle		★		★	★	★	
Hackney	★	★					★

The PBSA programme was designed with **two key elements of support** for partnerships: a support contractor and a learning partner. The focus and activities for each is as follows:

- **Learning partner role (Renaishi)** - supporting partnerships to build skills in evaluation, develop evaluation plans and tools to capture insights, and develop processes of learning to embed reflection and adaptation. This included a dedicated point of contact for each place to support partnerships with their evaluation approaches, as well as generating key learning at programme level.
- **Support contractor role (Locality, New Economics Foundation and Co-operatives UK)** – supporting partnerships to build social action capacity by playing the role of critical friend, supporter and facilitator. Helping them to strengthen relationships, develop and deliver plans, and prioritise activities. The **Relationship Management** has been used as dedicated point of contact for each place to guide and support partnerships through each stage of the programme.

Learning and evaluation approach



Renaishi are the learning and evaluation partner for the PBSA programme. The aims of our partnership are to:

- Collectively demonstrate that an approach to resourcing 'backbone'/infrastructure organisations and partnerships like those in the PBSA programme is an effective way to upskill and empower local people
- Learn about which approaches work, in what context, and why
- Build evidence and demand for this approach to social action so that local public services and other funders support these types of initiatives at a local level in the future
- To build **evaluation capacity** in places, leaving PBSA partnerships in a better position to assess and demonstrate their own impact

Learning

As well as supporting the partnerships with **building their skills around evaluation** (as outlined above), we support **cross place learning** through a range of activities including producing learning resources such as evaluation guidance for places and short accessible learning papers sharing experiences from across the cohort. As well as co-developing a **programme of learning events and initiatives** with Locality, which included:

- **Induction to Phase 2 event in March 2019:** bringing representatives from all 10 partnerships together with staff from the funders and support providers to reflect on Phase 1 and to share ideas and updates on Phase 2.
- **Two-day Learning Event in Lincoln in February 2020:** delivered by support providers Renaishi, Locality, NEF and Coops UK, with the aim to create a sense of collective identity and pride across the PBSA Programme, highlighting synergies within the cohort and strengthening understanding of the purpose and ambitions of the programme.

- **Development of a Peer Network:** including regular online 'open' sessions for the cohort to provide a space for partnerships to share their experiences and targeted sessions led by partnerships around a topic of expertise.
- **A Facebook group:** to share resources, advice, opportunities and learning.
- **Rapid insight session on how to evaluate PBSA activities:** in September 2021, Renaisi ran a session with places to outline the purpose of the PBSA Evaluation, and how it is being carried out, introducing the Evaluation framework, and reiterating the expectation that places carry out their own evaluations, with support from Renaisi to do so. The session introduced tips and tools for places to use in their evaluations.
- **Reflection on delivery of Phase 2, and Phase 3 plans:** Following submission of Phase 3 plans, Renaisi and Locality ran a Learning session with the Peer Network in December 2021, to provide a space for reflection on the process of submitting Phase 3 plans and how learning from Phase 2 will influence the next phase.

Evaluation

As part of the evaluation, we want to understand what we can conclude from the experiences of the ten places about the conditions that enable social action to flourish; and to understand what is distinctive about this programme's approach to change.

The Fund has taken a flexible approach to monitoring for PBSA (to reflect the iterative flexible nature of the programme) and does not require partnerships to report consistently on outcome measures, and instead asks for some basic monitoring information and reflections from partnerships on their approaches and learning. The approach champions learning and understanding the process for change, which our evaluation seeks to mirror. To support this we have developed a number of different developmental place and programme level outcomes as outlined below:

Place level outcomes

- **Local communities and organisations** from different sectors feel more **empowered**, and increasingly able to take action on issues that matter to them
- Partnerships increase their understanding of the **social and economic issues** and **opportunities** in their areas, and what is needed to embed social action projects at place level
- Organisations and communities increase their capacity and ability to **work together in different ways** – creating new spaces for collaboration and engagement across sectors based on more equal relationships
- **More services at a local level are co-produced** through the social action projects
- Residents feel they have a **greater influence** and **ownership** over the places where they live

Programme level outcomes

- Increased understanding of **what the PBSA programme approach enables** – in particular, the support, local conditions and approaches that can allow place based social action to thrive
- Increased understanding of the **impact social action can have** on individuals, communities and organisations – and effective ways to capture and measure this
- The programme explores **what works at what scale** for place based social action
- Improved knowledge about how approaches to place based social action **change local systems**

Because the programme is aims to build capacity and strengthen partnerships, to create pathways that allow local people to flourish. **Our evaluation aims to measure how that process for change has come about and what has enabled it or presented barriers, as well as what has changed.** It is important to note that our evaluation does not seek to measure the individual impact for end beneficiaries as the activities (often run by social action activists) are a by-product of the process and are often attributable to number of different factors of which PBSA is one.

In addition to our written evaluation reports we have worked with our associate Close Up Research to produce an ethnographic film examining the delivery of PBSA in 2020, starting at the Learning Event in Lincoln, and tracking progress throughout the rest of year via the submission of video diaries from partnerships. The film can be found on the [Renaishi website](#).

Methodology

This report presents findings from Phase 2 of the PBSA programme, from January 2019 to January 2022. It aims to summarise some of the key findings from this period to build an overarching picture of Phase 2 delivery for those who were directly involved, and for others working on similar approaches who might be interested in early learning that has arisen from the programme. The report covers - an overview of Phase 2 delivery, understanding the difference PBSA is making, key learnings focused on enablers and challenges for embedding social action, and plans for Phase 3.

This report has been authored by the learning partner for the programme (Renaishi) and is informed by:

- Conversations with partnerships during one-to-support and learning gathered at the PBSA Learning Event in Lincoln in February 2020
- Peer networking sessions throughout Phase 2
- In-depth qualitative interviews conducted in August and December 2020 as part of an additional piece of work commissioned by the Fund to understand the Impact of Covid-19 on PBSA places and partnerships response
- An analysis of monitoring reports submitted to the Fund throughout Phase 2

- An analysis of Phase 3 plans (which included reflections on Phase 2 and projections for Phase 3)
- On-going one to one support with the places throughout Phase 2.

Overview of Phase 2 Delivery



In 2019, and early 2020, places were in the process of being inducted into Phase 2, developing a shared understanding of the purpose of the PBSA programme, and preparing to deploy their plans, when the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown arrived. Like many VCSE organisations up and down the country, PBSA partnerships had to pause day-to-day delivery (including PBSA) whilst they addressed the crisis.

PBSA partnerships were heavily involved in the community response, having to rapidly adapt and innovate to provide immediate support to residents. The Fund emphasised the need to support the PBSA places to do this, and created the space for the repurposing of grants as well as access to their new emergency fund. The table below outlines how the partnerships balanced the delivery of Phase 2 activities, alongside responding to the covid crisis.

Place by place summary of Phase 2 delivery

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
Community 360 (Colchester, East)	<p>The partnership originally planned to support residents with dementia through a referral and support pathway to create a “dementia friendly borough”.</p> <p>The partnership carried out activities to raise awareness of dementia across a wider range of sectors and to a larger number of people, through sessions, trainings and campaigns targeted at communities and local organisations. They built capacity to tackle the issue by increasing the Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) membership, and widening representation. They also improved access for community members with dementia, and saw improved diagnosis and support as a result of their activities.</p> <p>During Covid-19, Community360 served as the lead for the Community Hub, bringing in over 2000 volunteers to reach over 4,000 clinically extremely vulnerable people within nine months. The One Colchester partnership has served as the infrastructure for the DAA so facilitated partners to collaborate in their response to the pandemic, using their referral and support pathways to work with partners across the borough to connect with mental health organisations, foodbanks and GPs surgeries. It also carries out</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>monitoring and delivering activities connected to the Borough's Covid-19 recovery plan. Alongside this they conducted listening exercises with over 300 people, producing two reports, Dementia Voices and Dementia Voices: Living in Lockdown. This time period has strengthened the partnership and widened its participation and engagement with local organisations. They credit the flexibility of the PBSA approach with allowing them to try new things and identify new opportunities, which has laid the foundation for them to consider longer-term approaches to social connectedness, and a shift in focus toward tackling health inequalities.</p>
<p>Grapevine Coventry</p> <p>(Coventry, West Midlands)</p>	<p>Grapevine, through Stoke Aldermoor Social Action Partnership (SASAP) has used community organising approaches to listen to the needs of community and inspire local people to create their own solutions. They employed a local resident with the right skills and experience to be a paid Community Organiser, and have conducted one to ones, public meetings, and listening campaigns with children and young people. Through this, issues important to local residents have been identified, such as flytipping, isolation, community cohesion and tackling gun and knife crime.</p> <p>SASAP has built capacity to act on what they heard by building core teams of local residents and workers, and campaigns around the main issues, monthly 'collaboration stations' and fortnightly 'social suppers' or partnership meetings, as well as training and mentoring.</p> <p>SASAP worked during the pandemic with local mutual aid groups as a route to connecting with local volunteers, as well as developing a food hub and delivering a programme of wellbeing activities to address mental health and isolation, to lead on movements to tackle loneliness and isolation, and build connections between organisations and people.</p>
<p>Halifax Opportunities Trust</p> <p>(Calderdale, Yorkshire and Humber)</p>	<p>The partnership sought to bridge divides between West Central and North Halifax by bringing the two communities together through social action and connecting organisations in the two areas. The partnership used their Covid response to help address this. They set up a food hub at the start of the pandemic, and worked with other local partners to distribute food, including setting up a 'community fridge' at a local Mosque.</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>They used trained community organisers to listen to the needs of the community, helping to maintain contact with individuals in need, delivering food, PPE and information in multiple languages, to isolated people, with a particular focus on refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>Throughout Phase 2, they primarily used community organising approaches to support people to set up social initiatives such as a community garden and kitchen project involving refugees and asylum seekers, projects to revive neglected green spaces, and an online storytelling group. They also supported local people to get involved in a consultation on plans for new neighbourhood and road infrastructure in the area.</p> <p>They have also been training community journalists and reporters to collect stories and perspectives to powerfully demonstrate impact through visual mechanisms, allowing them to make inroads and build skills in specific communities, such as BAME communities</p> <p>At the end of Phase 2, Halifax Opportunities Trust have prioritised re-opening their Centre, and are also planning ESOL with a COVID/health focus to enable people who struggle with English to understand the complex communication and guidance being issued by central Government.</p>
<p>Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership</p> <p>(Bristol, South West)</p>	<p>The partnership's focus was on bringing diverse communities together, initially intending to do this through a befriending scheme and enhancing local facilities and green spaces.</p> <p>They changed approach during the Covid-19 pandemic, as staff were redeployed to provide the community response to the pandemic, working with Bristol City Council to take referrals for shopping, prescriptions, dog walking and telephone befriending to residents. They also worked with other local organisations to create referral networks, and supported people to set up social initiatives like wellbeing groups. When people who were street homeless were moved into temporary accommodation, they worked with partners to help the residents integrate, stay informed, and access needed resources.</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>They pivoted use of their asset to become a central emergency hub, responding to the immediate needs of the community, including inbound and outbound call centre facilities, coordination of volunteers, provision of food parcels and befriending services. As the pandemic continued the priority shifted to informing and supporting people to have their vaccinations. They took the time presented by the pandemic, due to the need to put on hold planned in person work, to focus on internal organisational development, including learning and development for the board of trustees.</p> <p>In the later stages of Phase 2 the partnership also supported a number of initiatives to work toward empowerment of young people, community action, and community coming together. For example, community fun days, and sports and engagement activities for children.</p> <p>The partnership held a large community consultation exercise at the end of 2020 and as a result have revised their plan and plan roll out an asset-based community development model, and a digital transformation strategy. They are also working on a community led film about their place.</p>
<p>Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (Hartlepool, North East)</p>	<p>The partnership planned to use social action to create a range of solutions to local social and economic challenges and help people escape poverty. Plans for Phase 2 were initially rooted in face to face engagement but were adapted to include online engagement and digital inclusion projects. The pandemic has provided a chance to engage in deep community listening, using research to understand how Covid-19 has impacted the experience of poverty for local people.</p> <p>At the outset of the pandemic, the partnership focused on working with the local authority and other local bodies to get homeless people housed. They also worked on a number of cross-organisation initiatives such as a digital inclusion project that provided local people with technology and mobile routers. They also developed programmes of wellbeing activities to address growing concerns around mental health. In addition, they provided pastoral support to volunteers and supported other organisations on safeguarding and protecting of volunteers.</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>Throughout Phase 2, the partnership supported practical social action to solve poverty. Through the Housing for Heroes work, the Hartlepool Food Network, and Benefits advice work they have helped to build resilience for people experiencing hardship and offer routes out of poverty, increasing incomes, enabling people to make changes in their lives and understand their situations and how they can be managed.</p> <p>The partnership have adjusted their approach to focus on systems change, and have co-created a local working group with funding from the local authority to develop this, with the goal of developing a shared approach to poverty and welfare services. They have continued to support Social Action Leadership.</p>
<p>Lincoln City FC Sport & Education Trust</p> <p>(Lincoln, East Midlands)</p>	<p>The partnership sought to increase community cohesion in the area, through delivering activities which enhance communal areas, and generate pride in the area, and what people have in common.</p> <p>In Phase 2 they have continued or initiated a number of social action projects, including obtaining community assets, supporting a volunteer-led newsletter and administering a community chest, which provides funding for projects based on decisions of a resident panel. The partnership delivers training sessions in community organising to support further social action.</p> <p>The partnership adapted towards a community response during the pandemic which allowed them to engage with vulnerable members of the community who they might not have otherwise reached, for example through outreach and befriending phone lines. The partnership worked closely with the local authority and local mutual aid groups to respond to the pandemic, and have since spun off a 'Good Neighbour' scheme, managed by local people, to support residents to retain the connections made in the crisis period.</p> <p>After the crisis period the partnership carried out a community survey to understand the opinions of the local area and see whether perceptions have changed in response to the crisis. They have also carried out initiatives that aim to build pride in the area such as litter picks and art trails.</p> <p>A significant achievement in Phase 2 was taking steps to develop a Community Land Trust (CLT) in Sincil Bank, addressing long term</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>property neglect and returning buildings to use, as well as developing other assets for the public to use, such as opening up green space.</p> <p>Much of their work is inclusive and multilingual, reflecting the diverse population in the Sincil Bank area. For example, they set up ESOL Conversation Classes. They are also working to set up BAME networks to help with engagement going forward.</p>
<p>North East Lincolnshire VCSE Alliance (N.E Lincs)</p>	<p>The partnership aimed to promote community action to address to address local issues such as drug dealing, anti-social behaviour and slum landlords, working with local people to support neighbourliness, to increase well-being, reduce health inequalities and create a central community hub.</p> <p>Unlike other PBSA partnerships, the lead organisation in N.E Lincolnshire is an Alliance made up of senior representatives from other local organisations and therefore during the crisis period, most people were occupied with crisis response in their own organisation and PBSA was largely on hold. However, the partnership did send out activity packs to local families.</p> <p>In Phase 2, the partnership supported the development of the East Marsh United CLG (EMU), a dynamic organisation led by local residents that is dedicated to transforming the neighbourhood. Support included recruitment and internal capacity building.</p> <p>Since the crisis the partnership came back together to re-plan and re-prioritise and began developing a ten-year Neighbourhood plan with a number of partners. EMU also worked with a number of local organisations to bring forward a community led housing project, as well as working with three social housing providers delivering home maintenance in East Marsh. As well as encouraging participation and volunteering through a dedicated set of events and activities.</p> <p><i>Note this partnership withdrew from the programme at the end of Phase 2.</i></p>
<p>Onion Collective CIC</p>	<p>The partnership aimed to address five main issues in the area, around transport, education and training, empowering residents to</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
<p>(Watchet, East Somerset)</p>	<p>have a voice in decision making, supporting young people, and promoting awareness of existing activities and support</p> <p>Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they put on hold work to promote deliberative democracy and moved funding into Watchet Coronavirus Community Help Group, a partnership of 70 organisations. They turned a local newsagent into a central emergency hub, responding to the immediate needs of the community and also used their community electric car to take people to and from doctor’s appointments and later for vaccinations. This has led to a successful joint bid for a community mini-bus. They worked closely with their local mutual aid group, which was formed quickly due to existing connections and relationships created through PBSA. This Community Help Group subsequently became Watchet Good Neighbours and Watchet Meals on Wheels.</p> <p>During Phase 2, the partnership has expanded to 40 member organisations and now employs a Watchet Coastal Community Project Officer to oversee and help deliver all PBSA work with the help of around 100 volunteers. Initiatives supported included refurbishing and saving a community bookshop, which will now run as a community owned building with courses and workshops. They also supported a community newspaper delivered to every household in Watchet, and continued to support the youth action programme to adapt as far as possible within the circumstances of the pandemic.</p> <p>They also commissioned a digital ‘power mapping’ of the relationships between groups and individuals within their community to understand who was working towards what goals and who was important to whom. The partnership is in the process of facilitating an arrangement with the FE college to create a provision of accessible workshops with volunteer tutors.</p>
<p>SAFE Regeneration (Bootle, Sefton, North West)</p>	<p>The partnership aimed to bring together local organisations to deliver volunteering and social action activities to help local people contribute to the regeneration of Bootle.</p> <p>They turned a derelict pub into a community pub with a number of outdoor events throughout the year. The pub remained staffed throughout the lockdowns, the team connecting with the community</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>throughout to tackle social isolation. The pub was also pivoted to become a central emergency hub and linked with a local foodbank to provide food parcels.</p> <p>The lead partner SAFE Regeneration also provided support to smaller partnership organisations during the crisis by helping them to apply for funding.</p> <p>The SAFE hub also focused on developing pathways for people in to social enterprise, and supported a growing number of people to start-up businesses during the pandemic. They also trained community journalists and reporters, to collect stories and perspectives, to powerfully demonstrate impact through visual mechanisms, allowing them to build inroads with local young people.</p> <p>The partnership’s social action activities have allowed them to engage local people in the development of the UK’s largest Community-led regeneration project, <u>Destination Bootle</u>, which submitted a planning application in February 2021. The partnership has been carrying out a major online community consultation event as part of the scheme, which submitted a planning application in February 2021. The scheme aims to regenerate the area around the canal with growing projects, co-produced public art work, canoeing and boat mooring, new eatery's and accommodation for visitors. The partnership also established SAFE Community Homes, a Community Land Trust that will eventually own 107 homes on behalf of the community, with all profits being re-invested in local projects.</p>
<p>Hackney Volunteer Centre</p> <p>(Hackney, London)</p>	<p>The partnership aimed to establish a new community hub in Hoxton West, and build capacity in residents to eventually run activities themselves.</p> <p>In Phase 2 they continued to trial different ways to support residents through delivering training, supporting diverse activities for residents, building partnerships and employing residents as staff. They managed to extend the programme to a new area in the south of the borough in Hoxton West, called Our Space 2. Meanwhile they implemented structure for their support offer by creating an Our Space Workbook with all the steps involved in setting up a new project, how to engage new users, how to budget and what a project needs to be sustainable. They also jointly</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 2 delivery
	<p>created a User Agreement and Code of Conduct, all to help standardise guidance for success.</p> <p>As part of their Covid-19 crisis response they managed the borough-wide volunteering response as the local authority nominated volunteer hub and positioned themselves as a key strategic player in the local area. They changed the way they work with communities, by supporting groups with larger ambitions, in particular a food pantry, a Community Closet (a children’s clothes bank), and a digital inclusion project, Bridge the Gap. Early on in the crisis period they partnered with the local authority, working together in new ways to support mutual aid groups. They used this as a route to engaging new volunteers and getting help to those in need quickly. VCH’s work during the pandemic included matching volunteers to emergency food and pharmaceutical requests and setting up outreach and befriending phonedlines.</p> <p>Following the crisis period, the partnership worked with other local organisations to get mutual aid volunteers into longer term more skilled roles.</p> <p>They have also run a listening campaign (Hoxton Conversations) with Hackney Healthwatch using a survey, developed and delivered by a group of volunteers from Hoxton. They trained up community researchers to engage with local people as part of this work. This work supported Healthwatch to gather residents’ views on local services and engaged new residents into the programme.</p>

Phase 2 delivery in Numbers

Partnership	Number of volunteers i.e. number of people who are supporting the delivery of activities on a voluntary and unpaid basis. This should not include people who are taking part in social action as 'volunteers'.	Number of beneficiaries taking part in activities This is the number of direct beneficiaries; people who are actively involved and benefiting from activities.	Number of activities delivered number of activities completed e.g. setting up a community group, cleaning up an area, workshops/classes, festivals/events etc	Number of public meetings / consultations meetings you have set up and/or events/public meetings you have attended where you can demonstrate that you consulted with the community
Community 360 (Colchester, East)	11	828	9	11
Grapevine Coventry (Coventry, West Midlands)	164	720	395	476
NHP Ltd and Halifax Opportunities Trust* (Calderdale, Yorkshire and Humber)	34	125	19	6
Hartcliffe & Withywood Community partnership (Bristol, South West)	36	1,143	201	8
Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (Hartlepool, North East)	36	14,319	288	16
Lincoln City FC Sport & Education Trust (Lincoln, East Midlands)	25	1,013	210	98

Partnership	Number of volunteers i.e. number of people who are supporting the delivery of activities on a voluntary and unpaid basis. This should not include people who are taking part in social action as 'volunteers'.	Number of beneficiaries taking part in activities This is the number of direct beneficiaries; people who are actively involved and benefiting from activities.	Number of activities delivered number of activities completed e.g. setting up a community group, cleaning up an area, workshops/classes, festivals/events etc	Number of public meetings / consultations meetings you have set up and/or events/public meetings you have attended where you can demonstrate that you consulted with the community
North East Lincolnshire VCSE Alliance (N.E Lincs) **	-	-	-	-
Onion Collective CIC (Watchet, East Somerset)	115	1,500	7	39
SAFE Regeneration (Bootle, Sefton, North West)	285	25,161	1,096	166
Hackney volunteer Centre (Hackney, London)	74	1,477	279	33
Total	780	46,286	2,504	853

**Reporting period Nov 2021 – Feb 2022. Note partnerships recorded in different ways, so figures may not be directly comparable.*

*** As N.E. Lincolnshire did not progress into Phase 3, this monitoring data was not shared.*

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic inevitably presented huge challenges for partnerships, who had to quickly pivot to provide a community crisis response, a huge shift from the longer-term nature of their initial plans. They needed to adapt to working in new ways, amid the constraints of national lockdowns, health risks and ongoing uncertainty about the future. Individuals working within the partnerships faced huge responsibilities and workload, with fatigue and burnout being real issues. Towards the end of 2020, places were also generally finding that existing issues such as poverty, long-term

unemployment, mental health issues, loneliness and isolation, domestic violence, and antisocial behaviour, were becoming more prevalent and more extreme.

However, an unexpected positive was that the pandemic opened up a new way of thinking, with more value being placed on flexibility and being led by the needs of the community. The crisis confirmed the real value in community-led approaches, and the importance of investing time in building strong relationships and trust with local people, which in many cases is what allowed partnerships to respond quickly to local need in the pandemic. It also marked a shift in delivery model from setting up services and finding people to come to them – to finding people, understanding their needs and responding to these in a way that empowered them. Following evidence provided by mutual aid groups and huge numbers of volunteers - that people do want to be involved in their local communities. As a necessary response to the crisis the partnerships also established new networks and relationships, which in many areas they have sustained and strengthened demonstrating that effective systems working can be achievable and is often more efficient and more effective.

Difference made by PBSA partnerships in Phase 2



Through the combination of data submitted by places (outlined below), and qualitative data collected through interviews, observations and learning sessions, and Phase 3 plans, we are able to begin to draw together a picture of the difference PBSA is making in the ten places at this point in the programme and the types of approaches and ways of working that have been effective. This section describes these changes relating them to the relevant place level outcomes, as well as the enablers and barriers to achieving this impact.

Empowerment of local people and organisations

The primary aim of PBSA is to empower people and organisations to take more long term responsibility for their local area through social action. There are multiple examples of partnerships successfully doing this throughout Phase 2. Though it is best demonstrated through their **support of residents to deliver services and activities themselves**, examples include a community wellbeing and growing garden in Halifax which was started by the partnership and taken on by the community; a ukulele club which self-started by residents using facilities belonging to the partnership in Sefton; and in Colchester the partnership supported members of the community to produce an interactive online Christmas calendar for people in care homes in Colchester which included submissions from all over the community, such as a murder mystery radio play produced and performed by a local community theatre group, and seated exercises delivered by a personal trainer.

There are also many examples of where partnerships have used **topics of local interest** to galvanise their communities. Prior to the pandemic, several areas were addressing **issues around the appearance of the local area**. For example, in Lincoln, the partnership used this approach to engage local investors in funding this work and created additional but meaningful changes such as updating old street signs, taking down 'To Let' signs, removing wheelie bins.

Additionally, Lincoln, Sefton, and Coventry, all used community clean ups to get people involved in **collectively restoring pride in their local area**.

Partnerships that have adopted a **community organising approach** (using listening as a basis to uncover what matters to people, and connecting people to take action around shared concerns) have empowered residents in a different way, by supporting them to take direct action on issues that matter to them. For example, in Coventry, the partnership supported local people to take part in a radio broadcast that called on stakeholders like councillors to work together to bring about a collective change in mindset around waste disposal. The partnership in Halifax provided Community Organising training to a local Labour Women's group to support them to get more people involved in setting up a 'Stand up to racism' campaign.

"[PBSA has] given local people hope and confidence that they can make a difference to improve their area and agency in decisions and issues that affect their lives" - Lincoln

Some of the partnerships have used **training and capacity building to develop the skills of people in the community and inspire them to develop solutions to local problems**. In Hartlepool and Coventry, the partnerships have run social action leader courses. 'Change Maker University' in Coventry has engaged seven local residents in modules that 'intentionally build relationships, start movements and take action'. The partnership report that participants have been able to use newly developed listening skills to build deeper relationships in their service delivery roles.

Some PBSA partnerships have also **facilitated the transformation of the COVID-19 community response into longer-term community-led groups**. In Lincoln, the PBSA partnership supported the crisis response to evolve into a 'Good Neighbour' Scheme managed by local people. Similarly, in Watchet, the Onion Collective had worked closely with their local mutual aid group during the pandemic, and later transitioned this into a Good Neighbour Scheme. The partnership have helped to structure this group, and organise external financial support to ensure its work can be maintained in future.

A small number of places have also been engaged in **purchasing of land for community leisure and housing**. In Sefton, the partnership established SAFE Community Homes, a Community Land Trust that will eventually own 107 homes on behalf of the community, with all profits being re-invested in local projects. The partnership in Lincoln have also developed a Land Trust to grow resident membership and develop skills to manage assets, with the aim of generating increased community ownership and transferable skills.

Increased understanding of social and economic issues and opportunities in their area

PBSA plans were required to demonstrate a solid understanding of issues and needs in the local area with partnerships indicating how their approaches would be shaped accordingly – this was built into the design of the programme and initial application stage. During Phase 2, understanding and responding to local needs has become even more significant with poverty levels further exacerbated in many areas by the pandemic.

There are many examples across the programme of how PBSA partnerships can play an active **role in providing opportunities for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds** - particularly through projects that address poverty and disadvantage. For example, The Action Lab's primary long-term focus is to solve poverty in Hartlepool. Prior to the pandemic their £1m challenge helped residents save money on their food and energy bills, and access benefits they were entitled to. Since the pandemic they provided advice on access to benefits, energy advice, fuel bank vouchers allowing people to heat their homes over the winter months.

During the immediate crisis period caused by the pandemic (and beyond), many partnerships saw an **increase in demand for services such as foodbanks, adapting their response to meet the need**. Some partnerships responded by establishing **food hubs for delivery and pick up**. It is estimated that in excess of 2,300 parcels were delivered or given out by PBSA partnerships in Coventry, Colchester, Halifax and Sefton to support the immediate needs of local people.

Some partnerships also set up **longer term food initiatives** to support people to support themselves, such as growing projects, community gardens and cooking projects. In Coventry, their growing project was set up to provide a sustainable food source for the food hub, as well as engaging volunteers in the setting up and running of a local supermarket. The partnership in Hartlepool worked with Edible York to send out 100 growing packs of seeds and cookbooks; and in Halifax, they helped a local mosque to set up a 'community fridge'.

Early on in the crisis **isolation and wider mental health concerns** were also identified as being some of the biggest social concerns - caused by a variety of factors including an inability to leave challenging home circumstances, job loss, problems with debt, home schooling, and loneliness. Partnerships in Bristol, Colchester, Coventry, Hackney, Lincoln and Watchet set up **outreach and befriending phonelines** which provided essential contact for people who are on their own and unable to leave their homes – offering friendship and providing support.

Local people got involved as volunteers with the phonelines and worked to **establish whether people had enough food**, offered to collect shopping and prescriptions, and **referred people or signposted them to more specialist support where needed**. In Coventry, the partnership felt an unexpected and positive outcome from the anonymity of a phone call was the ability to ask about financial needs in a way that was not possible or appropriate previously. Overall, in estimates gathered through interviews with partnerships suggest that **at least 12,500 calls were made by PBSA partnerships during the crisis period**. Other approaches used to respond to mental health challenges were socially distanced walks, online peer support groups and even virtual excursions.

Some areas have also used learning from social action work, to **raise understanding of local social and economic issues among local service providers** and to influence their approaches. In Hartlepool the partnership engaged with local public service providers on a number of issues, including a coalition of agencies working to improve family and child welfare, and working with Hartlepool Borough Council on a shared approach to planning the local authority's new anti-poverty strategy. In Colchester, as a result of the PBSA programme encouraging community engagement with public services, Dementia Diagnosis Rates have increased in Colchester and have suffered less in North East Essex during the last eighteen months than other comparable regions.

Organisations and communities increase their capacity and ability to work together in different ways

PBSA encourages organisations from different sectors to work together and increase their capacity and ability to do this in an effective way. The intention was for new spaces of collaboration and engagement based on more equal relationships.

During the pandemic, there was a significant emphasis on collaboration in PBSA areas and arguably the **experiences of 2020 have encouraged this to happen more quickly than it might have done otherwise**. PBSA partnerships expanded to include new and more diverse partners from different sectors and different communities.

Reports submitted by PBSA places in October 2020 revealed that **eight of the ten partnerships had increased their membership** as it became more important to a) reach people who were potentially isolated, by reaching wider subsections of the community through those with existing links and b) respond to complex and multiple needs revealed by the pandemic, by drawing on the expertise of specialist organisations such as those supporting mental health. Some of the new partners include local businesses in Watchet and Sefton, women's refuge and domestic violence support in Bristol, health focused organisations in Halifax, Hackney and Colchester, a mental health steering group, in Lincoln, mutual aid groups in Hackney and Watchet, and a housing association in Colchester and Sefton.

It is apparent that **cross-sector working can add considerable value and that organisations fulfil different functions**, capitalising on their respective skills, knowledge, expertise and resources. Across the programme, it has been reported that:

- Community organisations bring connections, relationships and an in-depth understanding of the issues in their areas
- Specialist voluntary sector organisations bring expertise in mental health, domestic violence, or disabilities
- Statutory services provide access to local data, as well as helping set up mass operations, such as call centres and pivot staff to support in different roles.

“There’s power working as a collective solving big issues and small ones across the board I can’t wait to be involved in what’s to come.; SASAP is a long term venture. Meetings before were short term, it was, we’ve got an issue, we’ll resolve it. Never: ‘Let’s grab everybody, let’s take responsibility, let’s all get involved.’ I’m proud to be part of SASAP.” – Coventry

There is evidence in the majority of places during the crisis period that local authorities reacted nimbly in their work with voluntary sector organisations. In some cases, there were notably quick responses to issues that had previously been considered hard to make progress on. For example, in Hartlepool those who had been previously hard to house – were ‘housed within 20 mins of presenting to the local authority’. Many partnerships noted that **local authorities have been more willing to be led by the community**, they have been less rigid and more flexible, and have enhanced relationships with the voluntary sector. There have been examples in Hackney and Lincoln where the local authority has partnered with the voluntary

sector to submit successful funding proposals. Both partnerships noted that this might not have happened pre-Covid.

It is clear that local authorities have also benefited from these relationships. For example, to ensure they were reaching the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis period local authorities have had to work with other organisations to access people who have not previously received statutory support. This was noted in both Bristol and Colchester.

“What it gave was the confidence, with [PBSA lead organisation] we have now realised a quite exceptional relationship with voluntary sector, link with borough is really strong that isn’t the case in all areas. I felt very confident to devolve the responsibility of shielding patients and the health needs & prescriptions”. Local Authority. 15

Some partnerships have **worked with other agencies to commission specific roles** supporting early intervention or dedicated community cohesion workers, supporting the alignment of strategies and increasing the knowledge of multiple stakeholders. In both Colchester and Hackney, the partnerships worked with stakeholders such as GPs, GP care advisors, local Clinical Commissioning Groups, the council and the voluntary sector on social prescribing offers.

Other partnerships have **intentionally built trust and relationships between communities, agencies and services**. For example, Hartlepool Action Lab has brought together agencies to work on the issues of the sexual exploitation of women following the death of a woman supported by the team and an initiative called Get Connected, which focuses on developing a shared language to discuss poverty. In Halifax, the role of trained Community Organisers has included building relationships with other organisations via joint projects and events.

Across the PBSA programme, places have defined the boundaries of their places differently from local neighbourhoods and wards to a town-wide level. **In some areas these boundaries have extended, which has been positive in enabling PBSA areas to work more effectively**. For example, the partnership in East Marsh have linked with the Flourishing Towns pilot and the ‘Building Back Better’ campaign, across the wider Grimsby area and in Hackney, the partnership has expanded the reach of their ‘Our Place project’, to work with the local authority and CCG around social cohesion across the borough. Whilst the potential downside to this might be a larger area of focus and grant spend spread more thinly, the upside is **increased profile, more cohesive and multiple relationships with organisations** in the wider area and access to additional funding.

Partnerships have made these achievements in the context of **significant challenges related to the pandemic**. Staffing has been a challenge in several partnership organizations, with high turnover, burn-out, sickness, and Covid-19 isolation making it difficult to be consistent in supporting the community and particular projects. The stop-start nature of Covid-19 restrictions was also a challenge, as was the difficulties in progressing the work and maintaining the motivation and strength of partnerships while not being able to meet face to face.

More services at a local level are co-produced

There are emerging examples of PBSA partnerships facilitating residents to co-produce local services. Several partnerships are **supporting groups to formalise as standalone** entities, helping to strengthen the sector and endorse the power of local people. Partnerships have

supported groups with policies, procedures, writing constitutions and assisting groups to apply for funding. Some examples of this include supporting a local resident to start running drama classes with 8 to 13-year-olds in Bristol, and incubating a new CIC in East Marsh to deliver home maintenance and small-scale construction work locally, and has since been able to provide six local people with employment and on the job training which will lead to recognised qualifications.

Three of the partnerships are **supporting people to setup their own social enterprises** by helping them develop their ideas, apply for funding, set up governance structures and bank accounts and provides business advice. For example a small 'growing' project which sent seeds and cook books to local people gained so much popularity online that the online community, supported by the partnership, went through the process of constituting themselves as a Community Interest Company (CIC). The partnership in Sefton also reported a growth in people wanting to develop their own enterprises, due to people losing work, or re-assessing their priorities during the pandemic. This avenue has the potential to provide long-term solutions to tackle local social issues, build local economies and create opportunities for local people by providing one or more people with an income.

Covid-19 certainly made this more challenging. For example, in Hackney, the partnership reported that as residents were struggling during Covid-19 they were more likely to want to take part in activities rather than lead them, making it difficult to move away from a model of service delivery, to co-production.

Residents feel they have greater influence and ownership over the places where they live

The PBSA programme aims to encourage residents to feel a greater sense of influence and ownership over the areas they live in. This has spanned from consultation to community asset ownership.

Galvanising interest around a community asset has supported partnerships to increase relationship building with both local residents and the statutory sector. For example, the partnership in Halifax have carried out a number of Community Organising activities that directly targeted groups with an interest in assets, such as a save our pool group, community pub and friends of the park group, to support them with registering buildings as assets of community value.

Some of the partnerships are **using media to support residents to use their influence locally**, for example by providing **training in community journalism** for people to grow in confidence, develop their skills and collect stories from others, they have been able to demonstrate the impact of their work to a wider audience through accessible visual mechanisms, but also to make inroads and build skills in specific communities, such as young people in Sefton and BAME communities in Halifax.

In some areas, **forums or platforms have been created for residents to have say** in their local area. For example in Lincoln the PBSA work has led to other platforms being established locally where residents can have a say and inform local decisions (e.g. Local Council thematic meetings and Community Hubs, and a Neighbourhood board). In Coventry, the partnership holds fortnightly Social Suppers, bringing together residents and stakeholders and their Community Organiser runs monthly "Collaboration Station" meetings online, which encourage residents to share ideas for social action and change in a joyful and supportive environment.

In some areas, **PBSA have engaged local residents to shape local services and programmes**. For example, the Bristol partnership held a large community consultation exercise at the end of 2020 and as a result have revised their plan and plan to roll out an asset-based community development model, and a digital transformation strategy. In Sefton, the partnership carried out a major online community consultation event as part of Destination Bootle, a £44m scheme in collaboration with a social landlord and aims to regenerate the area around the canal with growing projects, co-produced public art work, canoeing and boat mooring, new eatery's and accommodation for visitors.

There has also been a marked shift towards creating platforms **targeting or engaging with specific groups**, to support agency building in communities they are less engaged with. For example, the partnership in Colchester held a Citizen's Conference with BAME Communities, focusing on BAME hate crime and inclusion. Similarly, the partnership in Lincoln have set up a BAME network.

In some of the PBSA places, partnerships helped to facilitate mutual aid groups during the pandemic. For example - Hackney, Watchet and Coventry **provided structures for mutual aid groups to work through**, which included guidance in safeguarding, money handling and GDPR, helping the groups to build legitimacy, at the same time supporting them to flourish autonomously. In Hackney, the partnership reported that as a result of their work with mutual aid groups, people from other areas have since approached them to set up their own local projects. Since, some have been repurposed into Good Neighbour Schemes, as referred to in the key learning on 'Empowerment of local people and organisations'.

Enablers of change - Key factors that have enabled change



The previous section focused on describing the difference PBSA partnerships made in Phase 2 of the programme. This section summarises the learning so far on what **helps social action to thrive** and the approaches across the PBSA programme that support this. The focus is on understanding some of the **enablers and challenges** that have arisen so far on the programme.

As the previous section has highlighted, places are approaching their PBSA programmes in diverse ways, and although there is evidence of impact across the place-level outcomes set by the programme, **there is a lot of variation in the types of social action activities places have been carrying out, and the specific impacts**. With that understanding in mind, this section sets out to show **what the common mechanisms are for change** that are being used to achieve these positive impacts. It will show that despite differences between places, some common themes are emerging in what enables social action to thrive across the PBSA programme.

Across the PBSA Phase 2 programme, partnerships have been challenged to **engage the community** in new ways, with the pandemic requiring them to adapt their approaches and engage new audiences. At the same time the pandemic has challenged partnerships to test assumptions about what works, and how effective their engagement methods are. At the start of Phase 2, PBSA partnerships were thinking about the **role of volunteers and empowering people to take leadership around social action**. Examples emerged around shifting attitudes to volunteering, and helping people to understand what skills they had to offer. Finally, as outlined in

the previous chapter, during the pandemic, **collaborative approaches** had a renewed focus – with expanding networks, new referral systems and new voices brought into PBSA partnerships. This has understandably led to some challenges but has also revealed some critical learning points that could support PBSA partnerships and others in the future.

Really listening and acting on what's been heard

In the final year of Phase 2 at least six of the PBSA partnerships have run **community consultation and listening exercises to understand the needs and priorities of local people. Multi-platform consultation** has been useful for engaging larger numbers of people from a variety of backgrounds. Partnerships have used a mixture of surveys, social media polls, attending existing meetings and forums, and getting people involved in hyper-local neighbourhood conversations.

Many partnerships have highlighted that successful engagement with residents in their areas came about when they **understood their motivations**. This often starts with listening, followed by making activities fun or beneficial to get involved in, or engaging people around a topic or event of interest like a community festival or an arts project. These types of activities can provide a 'way in' to volunteering on a more regular basis and are also a way to **mobilise local people on issues that matter to them**, by engaging them with the support and connections that can help them to lead social action themselves.

Partnerships noted that where mobilising and social action projects had a **tangible impact** on the local area (such as community gardens, or litter picking), this has a positive impact on engagement, as individuals felt empowered by seeing the outcome of the process. However providing a tangible impact is not always possible, for example when listening raises up structural issues that take a long time to address. In that situation, partnerships found that **creating feedback loops** to demonstrate that people have been heard has been a good method for building trust. One way of doing this was by feeding back findings to those who had been consulted through a community newsletter. Another method for building trust was to **provide safe spaces for conversations**, and one partnership reported that they did this by engaging people through trusted services such as a local mothers and babies playgroup. Finally, encouraging people to **retain ownership** of an idea was found to be a powerful way to maintain engagement – when those involved in the action of an idea are those that first conceived it, while drawing in others in a balanced and equal way.

Meeting people where they are

A general challenge is PBSA areas tend to be in low-income areas, with other factors of deprivation. Some areas struggle to generate engagement as many people in the area have multiple pressures and responsibilities in their lives that limit their capacity or confidence to take part in social action. In this context, partnerships found that **focusing on accessible topics** to which people feel confident contributing is effective in engaging community members in collectively developing approaches and solutions. For example, encouraging community members to contribute as 'experts by experience'. **Treating people as individuals** with unique passions and perspectives was powerful and tended to be drawn out by the relational 1:1 nature of the Community Organising Approach. Also important was **meeting people on the platforms**

they are already using. For example, during the pandemic, engaging people through platforms like Whatsapp rather than relying on Zoom was key to inclusion and reach.

Some of the partnerships also found that **inviting other organisations to join consultations, or 'piggy-backing'** on existing initiatives allowed there to be more scope to align strategies and ensure that the community's voice was at the heart of these.

Resourcing social action with money, time, advice and guidance

Having **paid staff to support social action** was felt to be essential to hold, facilitate, deliver and communicate social action work, and bring in more partners and volunteers, money and resources. In particular, having paid **Community Organisers** has been a common mechanism for change used by some of the partnerships. Partnerships in Halifax, Lincoln and Coventry have used the community organising principles to listen to and engage their communities and co-produce solutions. **Resourcing was a challenge for some during Covid-19** however, with some organisations seeing income decline during this time, and others losing staff to furlough or for other financial reasons.

Prior to the pandemic there was interest from several other places to begin deploying similar techniques. However, the prevention of face-to-face interaction meant that this has been much more challenging, and usual ways of engaging people such as door knocking and being visible in public areas like supermarkets, was not possible for the majority of Phase 2. In addition, being able to **provide seed grants** to fund new ideas has been an effective enabler for change.

Creating enabling conditions

During the pandemic, most places saw an influx of people volunteering. Their contribution was initially largely reactive to needs with partnerships setting the direction. In some of the PBSA places, partnerships helped to facilitate mutual aid groups during the pandemic. For example - Hackney, Watchet and Coventry **provided structures for mutual aid groups to work through**, which included guidance in safeguarding, money handling and GDPR, helping the groups to build legitimacy, at the same time supporting them to flourish autonomously. In Hackney, the partnership reported that as a result of their work with mutual aid groups, people from other areas have since approached them to set up their own local projects.

Partnerships have learnt that certain conditions help encourage people to stay volunteering. These include **flexibility, access to IT, cultural training** as well as **equipping those involved with skills and knowledge** that build their confidence to make change. There are examples from across the programme of partnerships delivering training in community journalism, mental health awareness, and leadership skills.

Successful collaborations have come about when **partners agree on a clear purpose**, can offer **resources or additional benefits** to organisations collectively coming together, are **representative and inclusive**, and **where roles and contributions are identified and defined**, including individual **skill sets, expertise and experience**. Examples of expertise different organisations bring to PBSA partnerships have been a track record in managing volunteering, service user involvement, working with people with disabilities, advocacy work, utilising food waste to tackle food poverty and community organising.

Creating mutually beneficial systems for collaboration

Discussions with statutory sector organisations suggested that being able to **provide data and evidence to demonstrate the impact of social action initiatives, significantly reduced their risk aversion** and increased their willingness to work with voluntary sector partners. However, partnerships noted challenges around this, especially when it can be hard to provide evidence of impact around social action in a short time frame.

Another way in which partnerships overcame this risk aversion in the statutory sector was by **building relationships with specific people** (such as councillors, commissioners, key people in procurement etc) through joint training opportunities or attending open access forums. These ways of coming together helped to support a culture of trust.

Data and information pooling has also played an important role during the pandemic facilitating greater collaboration and trust between organisations. Two partnerships reported centrally compiling their existing data, with voluntary and statutory sector services, **supporting more effective referral systems**. Additionally, in one area, the partnership **commissioned research** capturing experiences during the pandemic, which has contributed to understanding at local authority level, and feeding into a planned review of health strategy.

Building on this, stakeholder mapping, coordinating and signposting potential volunteers and service users has been used to build local intelligence and relationships to **join up responses during the pandemic and beyond**. This can be done by helping partnerships to understand which relationships to focus on, to align with the outcomes they want to see.

Despite these successes, partnerships noted challenges in collaborating. Firstly, increased numbers of organisations working together has meant that **planning becomes more complex**, and priorities can become blurred by trying to incorporate different perspectives. In partnerships where organisations are at different stages of their development and have diverse interests, collaborative sessions can be harder to run. Another challenge reported by partnerships was that operating within the context of **fewer volunteers and scarce funding** has meant competition amongst local organisations has been common. Organisations have been **reluctant to invest critical short-term resources** in collaborative approaches. These challenges in deploying the approach will be useful to consider as places enter Phase 3.

Targeting diverse communities

Lack of diversity in some of the partnerships was a challenge in some PBSA areas. Those engaging in volunteering are often relatively privileged compared to those most affected by poverty, and Covid-19, and some partnerships felt these volunteers were often engaged in short term volunteering, and there was a need to engage them in longer term projects that involved them sharing their skills. There is awareness in some partnerships that those for whom English is not a first language or are recent migrants will have felt particularly isolated during the pandemic and there is a need to engage these communities and ensure that there are volunteers who can reach them.

Acknowledging the **importance of diverse representation** in engaging communities has led some partnerships to take a more active approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In one

area they have taken the approach of championing the diversity of individuals (rather than looking at the diversity of the whole population – in a predominantly white area) by creating platforms for people who had not had previous opportunities to input, while another area, which is more diverse, is looking to set up a BAME network.

Looking forward to Phase 3



The PBSA programme originally set out to reduce the number of partnerships from ten to five in the final phase, supporting only the most successful. However, consultation with places at the end of Phase 1 revealed that a competitive element would be counterproductive as it would prevent places from sharing challenges and learning from each other. Additionally due to limited funding being available post-Covid, beyond crisis funding, it felt more important than ever to retain longer-term capacity building funds for the partnerships. In light of this the programme opened the process up to all ten partnerships and took a strategic decision to move away from its original aim to ‘scale and sustain’ in Phase 3, and focus instead on ‘resilience and legacy’ particularly embedding their work and partnerships beyond the programme.

To progress in to Phase 3 the Fund requested a Phase 3 plan which asked partnerships to report on impact from Phase 2, how they would build on the partnerships in future, and key milestones and actions for Phase 3. Because the amount of funding remained the same as it would have if it was five places, partnerships were also asked to articulate how the reduction in funding would be managed, and how they would source matched funding.

Following submission of the Phase 3 Plan, nine out of the ten places were progressed to Phase 3, with the N.E Lincolnshire partnership not being awarded the funds, due to difficulties reaching a decision about which organization among the partnership should be awarded the money moving forward.³

How key learning from Phase 2 has influenced approaches for Phase 3

Building on the learning from Phase 2, places have broadly decided to focus on the following approaches:

- **Capacity support:** this was felt to key for establishing a legacy of social action in their places, helping move some partnerships from a delivery to a guidance and support role, although they envisage there will be challenges in practice due to the ongoing economic and health climate.
- **Community organising:** despite the challenges of conducting traditional organising methods during the pandemic, it highlighted the value of the approach, leading to a renewed focus in some areas.

³ The fund holder in N.E Lincolnshire was an Alliance made up of senior representatives from local organisations who engaged a delivery partner, East Marsh United CLG (EMU). In the Phase 3 plan the Alliance proposed moving away from having EMU as the main delivery partner in the PBSA programme and EMU challenged this decision. The dispute was taken to the National Lottery however the organisations involved were unable to come to a unanimous decision on which organisation should hold the money moving forward, so the Lottery were unable to move forward in that area.

- **Facilitating collaboration:** the success of this in Phase 2, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic was highlighted as a key strength to build on for most places.

As well as two newer areas of focus:

- **Community assets:** these were highlighted as essential during Phase 2, as hubs for the Covid-19 response as well as places for the community to gather. This has led some partnerships to focus on this for Phase 3, as places to rebuild community and tackle isolation. Some are specifically building on learning from Phase 2 as to how to make these inclusive and open.
- **Systems change:** Some partnerships felt that focusing on the emergency Covid-19 response had led them to work in a reactive way losing the ability to focus on the bigger picture. They felt in Phase 3 they needed to make impact not just on individuals' lives but on the systems that place people in poverty.

Place by place summary of plan

This table summarises from Phase 3 plans, what activities and approaches places plan to take moving forward.

Partnership	Summary of Phase 3 Plan
<p>Community 360 (Colchester, East)</p>	<p>In line with Phase 2, aims for Phase 3 continue to sit under the themes: Reflection, Awareness, Togetherness, which aim to contribute toward a better quality of life for people living with dementia. Prevention is a new aim introduced for Phase 3, contributing to the broader aim of helping people live well for longer, and addressing health inequalities.</p> <p>Activities in Phase 3 will include listening programmes, friends' sessions, awareness training and raising campaigns, outreach activities to underrepresented groups, social events creating and convening spaces for people with dementia, those affected by health inequalities and carers plan and design activities and strategies to create a dementia friendly borough. They have also secured an allotment and will be running gardening sessions for people with dementia.</p> <p>Learning will be an ongoing focus through the reflective and collaborative opportunities that come from the Dementia Voices research, training and placing peer researchers to evaluate projects, working with MA students to enhance knowledge of dementia and annual events.</p> <p>They will also launch a bi-monthly Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) newsletter, which will be distributed to current and prospective DAA members in the Borough of Colchester.</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 3 Plan
<p>Grapevine Coventry (Coventry, West Midlands)</p>	<p>Grapevine’s ambition for Phase 3 is to create lasting impact by building a stronger community full of with self-renewing initiatives that give people (residents and workers) in the area the human resource, experiences and confidence they need to tackle their challenges.</p> <p>In Phase 3 they aim to build on community led campaigns with one focusing on tackling fly tipping and community image and others focused on ownership of youth facilities, tackling youth crime, street safety and inclusive spaces for young LBGT+ and minoritized ethnic groups. They will also continue leadership development work via their Change Maker University to embed community organizers within anchor organizations and build public narrative training.</p> <p>Their learning goals for this next phase are to develop their understanding of individuals’ relationships to power, what extent Grapevine’s approach has been embedded within the partnership, and understood by systems stakeholders, as well as the change that has happened, and how this is perceived.</p>
<p>Halifax Opportunities Trust (Calderdale, Yorkshire and Humber)</p>	<p>The partnership hopes that the legacy of the programme will be that the local community will have networks of empowered people willing and able to act on local issues and have more of a say on the things that affect them. They also hope for more organic connections between north and south Halifax.</p> <p>They continue to believe a community organising approach is key to this. And in Phase 3 there will be more emphasis on local groups being able to sustain activities through self funding through supporting them to access micro grants and other local funding.</p> <p>Another key opportunity to connect north and south is an upcoming project that looks to improve a large green space which geographically connects both areas, and to foster community activity there.</p> <p>Key activities in Phase 3 include: Restarting and developing the PBSA Steering group with an emphasis on community members-partnerships; Providing further Community Organiser support for some funded longer term projects; Continue community listening with an emphasis on door knocking and face to face listening</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 3 Plan
	<p>events which could not happen in the pandemic; Adding more community organiser training, perhaps with a more informal ‘Bite size’ focus alongside the buy-in training package; Creation of local networks to link people working on particular initiatives such as Climate change - environmental, Community growing, Food hubs and Community Kitchens.</p>
<p>Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership (Bristol, South West)</p>	<p>The partnership’s ambition for Phase 3 is to drive up aspirations, build capacity and enable better opportunities and influence.</p> <p>Within this, Phase 3 Plans will continue to be delivered within the thematic areas of: Pride of Place, Children and Young People’s Aspirations and Health and wellbeing. They will work with partner organisations to deliver a range of community-led activities, including art-based projects, a community-film, after school clubs and outdoor activities. They will also convene spaces for peer support and action around identified issues including bullying and domestic abuse. More broadly events such as their Pride of Place forum and other friends groups will bring the community together to collaborate and define local priorities.</p>
<p>Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (Hartlepool, North East)</p>	<p>In Phase 3 they aim to solve poverty at a strategic and policy level through three strands of social action, to create practical solutions that support people to escape poverty.</p> <p>First, the continuation of community and street level practical action: Continued investment in the network of action will ensure the impact for individual residents and communities continues, offering routes out of poverty for young care leavers, the residents of the Stronger Neighbourhoods community, people experiencing food and energy poverty, people entitled to benefits, the digitally excluded, people wanting to lead social change in their community and people needing a warm handover to support.</p> <p>Second, an influencing programme designed to change the systems: The Collaboration Superpowers workshops will bring together a group of workers and managers from across the voluntary and public sector to prototype a new way of working together in Hartlepool focused on early</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 3 Plan
	<p>support for people at risk of being pulled into poverty, listening and walking alongside individuals.</p> <p>Third, the creation of a community of practice within the town focused on 'Good Help' that places people at the centre of actions and believes that workers and people using services can find solutions if given the space to do so.</p>
<p>Lincoln City FC Sport & Education Trust (Lincoln, East Midlands)</p>	<p>Phase 3 aims to continue to build the sustainability of a thriving Sincil Bank and resilience in the community via embedding social action They aim to expand the partnership to encompass broader groups working in the Sincil Bank area.</p> <p>To achieve this while ensuring that all within the partnership remain committed to the principles of PBSA they will co-produce a partnership agreement with the current partnership residents.</p> <p>Engagement in Phase 2 has indicated the following resident priorities for projects in Phase 3: Outreach - continuously reaching out to ensure inclusivity; Enhancing the physical appearance of the area; Addressing antisocial behaviour and; Community cohesion - enhancing togetherness in the neighbourhood.</p>
<p>Watchet Coastal Community Team, Watchet (West Somerset)</p>	<p>Phase 3 aims to work towards more devolved community power and therefore a resilient, connected and flourishing coastal town. Onion Collective have transferred the lead of the partnership to Coastal Community Team (CCT), who they want to be a facilitator and empowered, not just a provider of services, and to work with a diverse group of people to contribute towards a more formal development document such as a neighbourhood development plan or similar.</p> <p>As a result, building and embedding the deliberative democracy strand, 'Watchet Wants', which was put on hold during Covid-19 is a priority in Phase 3. Alongside this they will continue with their leadership of existing projects: a community car, community paper and skills learning workshops.</p> <p>In addition, internal development and support for social action initiatives will aim to build greater Social Resilience, Environmental Resilience and Economic Resilience.</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 3 Plan
<p>SAFE Regeneration (Sefton)</p>	<p>Their ambition is to empower individuals to recreate a sense of community & belonging in their neighbourhood, restore civic pride and effect individual outcomes of improved employment options, better physical and mental health and reduced social isolation.</p> <p>To work towards their goals, the partnership will deliver social action activities focusing on three strands: Food, Environmental and Art. People will continue to be involved in a range of ways via activities which will include cultural, food, music and well-being festivals & events; clean-up events including the creation and installation of participatory public art and planters; canoeing groups & greening/growing projects; food and cooking focused projects. They will utilise a team of Kick Starters to be the ‘people on the ground’, spearheading projects alongside community groups.</p> <p>The regeneration proposal led by SAFE Regeneration also aims to deliver new community facilities in the form of a Creative and Digital hub and new housing. Alongside this, the community pub will be refurbished, and expanded as a cultural venue. The project will create jobs and attract investment into the area.</p> <p>SAFE has also secured 3-yrs funding to provide young people with 6-month training placements, will be used to train young people in skills related to the delivery of the PBSA plan, which could provide a legacy for the programme, supporting the involvement of others and contributing to sustainability of the social action projects locally.</p>
<p>Volunteer Centre Hackney (Hackney, London)</p>	<p>VCS Hackney aims during Phase 3 to have designed new methods of outreach, engagement and support; and that potentially the programme will have further expanded, with their role moving more to one of guidance rather than delivery.</p> <p>Phase 3 will continue to ensure that the programme model is given the investment promised, and that it is adopted by statutory services as way to address health issues and inequalities. In partnership with Southern Housing Group</p>

Partnership	Summary of Phase 3 Plan
	<p>they will be launching in a third location – in the north of the borough, Stamford Hill – Our Space 3.</p> <p>They will trial different ways of supporting residents with their projects, facilitating more peer support, will continue to build and strengthen new and existing partnerships, and will be working closely with new project leads steering group to grow and strengthen the programme. They plan to introduce a mentoring programme for project leads to give them opportunities in the borough to grow more widely and embed the skills and learning they have acquired through Our Space.</p>

Programme level outcomes

Where the place level outcomes have helped us understand instances of impact in the communities they are operating, the programme level outcomes seek to help us understand the impact of PBSA at a more macro level. So that we can demonstrate a) what conditions are needed to instil a culture of social action in communities and b) what that looks like when its successful.

This section focuses on what we know at this stage in the programme, however, because the programme is only mid-way through and because delivery was disrupted by the pandemic the answers we have are only early indications.

Increased understanding of **what the PBSA programme approach enables** – in particular, the support, local conditions and approaches that can allow place based social action to thrive

At this stage in the programme, we are beginning to understand the process and conditions for change, the enablers section of the report highlights key pieces of learning that can be attributed to the wide variety of approaches undertaken by the PBSA partnerships. Including genuinely listening and responding to people’s needs and acting on their motivations. Meeting people where they are ensuring activities, consultations and training are accessible and appropriate, not just speaking to those ‘usual suspects’. Creating enabling conditions for people taking part in social action such as flexibility, access to IT, training, seed grants, and advice, guidance and governance structures to work within. As well as creating mutually beneficial agreements when working with partners - this is a critical learning point to help us understand how the programme is beginning to improve local systems.

Another enabling factor has been the programme design itself. This includes the flexibility around criteria for spending, flexibility around monitoring requirements and not putting in place mandatory

indicators for change. As well as an embedded culture of learning and the support of a relationship manager to help them navigate complexities and play the role of critical friend, alongside evaluative support to ensure that the partnerships are capturing how they are enabling change at a local level. In addition to this, during the peer networking sessions we have seen a great deal of candour and honesty from partnerships around what has and hasn't worked. This combined approach to flexibility and learning has supported a truly emergent programme, that has allowed and resourced partnerships to test out new ways of working to better understand the conditions for change. We have even seen examples of cross-place learning where the partnerships have developed ideas based on what others have done. For example, Colchester's plan was informed by meeting with the Onion Collective to understand how to operate at different scales and reading about work in Hartlepool to address the wider determinants of health.

Improved knowledge about how approaches to place based social action change local systems

Aside from Colchester and Watchet, the PBSA partnerships are operating in the top 30% most deprived areas in England.⁴ The charity commission reported in October 2021 that over 60% of organisations registered with them saw a loss of income during the pandemic.⁵ Interviews with PBSA partnerships also tell us that one of the most significant shifts in the last two years has been in the number of people experiencing poverty for the first time. At a point in time where there is rising need juxtaposed by reduced funding. It has become more important than ever for mutually beneficial agreements systems approaches to be taken up by local stakeholders. Voluntary sector organisations and local authorities simply cannot afford to take part in 'nice to have' activities, add ons to the day to day must be both beneficial and cost effective to their organisation, as well as to the community.

The shift that the pandemic has created is that it forced voluntary sector organisations to collaborate more effectively between themselves. It also prompted statutory sector organisations to collaborate more readily with voluntary sector organisations so that they could benefit from each other's resources and better serve the community. This expedited a process that no one previously had time for. The key elements of success for PBSA areas have been information and data pooling, commissioning research and carrying out activities like power mapping that multiple parties can benefit from. It feels like there is a way to go with this. The area that appears to be furthest ahead is the partnership in Hartlepool who plan to use Phase 3 to proactively 'influence the systems that push people into poverty or prevent them from using their own skills to escape from poverty.' They have a group of workers and managers from across the voluntary and public sector have now committed to prototype a new way of working together in Hartlepool focused on early support for people at risk of being pulled into poverty, listening and walking alongside individuals.

⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation Data](#)

⁵ [What new research tells us about the impact of COVID-19 on charities](#)

Increased understanding of the **impact social action can have** on individuals, communities and organisations

The programme explores **what works at what scale** for place based social action

The areas where we have least information is around the impact of social action on individuals, communities and organisations, and understanding what works at what scale. It is anticipated that in Phase 3, the lead partnership organisations will collect this information and in our role as evaluators we will be able to analyse this information across the programme.

Appendix: Overview of activities mapped onto social action typology

PBSA Activities	Typology of social action	Places (Phase 2)	Places (Phase 3)
Using assets to become community hubs	Befriending and helping; Formal volunteering	Bristol, Halifax, Sefton and Watchet	Sefton, Hackney
Working with mutual aid groups	Advocacy and social movements; Befriending and helping; Formal volunteering.	Coventry, Hackney and Watchet	Hartlepool
Community Organising, community connectors and active listening	Community Organising; Co-production	Halifax and Lincoln	Colchester, Coventry, Lincoln
Working with others to create referral networks and share data	Peer support and learning	Colchester, Coventry, Hartlepool and Watchet	Bristol, Colchester, Hartlepool
Developing activities of wellbeing support including growing projects, community gardens, virtual calendars	Co-production	East Marsh, Colchester, Hartlepool, Halifax, Coventry, Sefton and Lincoln	Sefton, Bristol, Colchester, Coventry, Hackney, Hartlepool, Lincoln
Developing pathways for people to develop solutions, such as social enterprise or standalone groups	Co-operatively owned services, Co-production	Sefton, Lincoln, Halifax, Bristol	Sefton, Lincoln

PBSA Activities	Typology of social action	Places (Phase 2)	Places (Phase 3)
Strategic planning through community consultation	Co-production	Lincoln, Bristol, Sefton, Colchester, East Marsh	Sefton, Bristol, Colchester, Hartlepool

About Renaisi



We're passionate about creating the conditions for strong, inclusive communities to thrive.

We're constantly learning from the different perspectives we see working directly with communities, with the providers of services and the investors in communities. It gives us a unique perspective on how systems work and how to improve places equitably.

The combination of our research and evaluation consultancy with employment & advice programme delivery, makes Renaisi a uniquely well-rounded learning partner for the voluntary and community sector.

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