Annual Report 2021
WSA Community Consultants
Hello,

‘Now They See Us’. This is the title of the Third Sector Research Centre report for Local Trust that explores the effects the Covid-19 pandemic has had on communities. And the title certainly describes how many communities have been feeling over the course of 2020 and 2021.

Local communities and community organisations have been crucial in the response to the pandemic. Not only did community groups spring into action very quickly, they also relentlessly continue providing support to local residents despite the prolonged nature of the pandemic. It has now been over 18 months and the pandemic has tested all our spirits. We would like to express thanks and gratitude to those who provided and continue to provide support to their communities. We know how crucial your contributions have been.

After the shock of 2020, we settled into the new realities of living during a pandemic. We have welcomed several new colleagues into the team, which was welcome news after the uncertainty of the last year. We were very happy to be able to return to the office part-time as of June this year. Although, like many of you, we pride ourselves on working remotely very well (and continue to do so), being back in the office as one team and being able to interact face to face has really highlighted that human contact is essential when building relationships and settling new colleagues into their roles. We have found it invaluable and, although we continue to work from home part-time, the team has been enjoying their days together in the office.

As well as the team being able to come together in person, we had the opportunity to meet with some of our clients and deliver some of our community engagement work and training face to face. After a year of everyone being in a small Zoom box (!), this has been a welcome change. Delivering training workshops for researchers for the Somers Town Big Local project in person was a hugely rewarding aspect of community engagement and development, as has delivering training to the fantastic resident-led panel for the Grenfell Projects Fund. The resident-led panel will manage the Grenfell Projects Fund that is funding to support recovery and wellbeing across North Kensington.

We continue to develop community-engagement approaches and uphold best practice for projects and organisations we are affiliated with. Connecting stakeholders with organisations where we think a real difference to communities can be made is an aspect of our practice that will remain integral to WSA moving forward.

We also continue to deliver and promote our Community Development courses, which we deliver to both the public and as bespoke training sessions for organisations. As a small organisation, we do face challenges around promotion and reaching our target audience, however we are learning from the experience and continue to move forward, reaching more and more people. We are immensely proud of our CPD-accredited courses, which we can deliver either in person or online. They are highly participatory and encourage participants to share knowledge and experience, and learn from each other as well as from the trainers.

We would like to thank all the community groups, organisations and everyone we’ve worked with, pulling together resources, working collectively and sharing initiatives with one another. We aim to continue supporting people-led efforts to tackle issues in their area in 2022.

Thank you for your support in 2021 and have a happy and successful 2022.

Best wishes,

Wendy,

and all at WSA Community Consultants

If you’d like to find out more about what we do, our values and who we are, please visit our website at www.wsacommunity.co.uk

We’re also on Twitter @WSACommunity and LinkedIn.
What We Do

Our projects often involve elements of each of the following areas but are grouped here to best demonstrate our work in these areas and show the positive impact for our clients and, more importantly, the people in the communities they represent.

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We work with communities to support positive changes. We are committed to developing and sharing knowledge and experiences through building networks to bring people together. All of the projects we work on inform each other, leading to the experiential learning that is part of our value base.

To assist us in our work, we use a range of frameworks and models to support good practice and put communities at the heart of their own development to ensure we deliver the most relevant, bespoke project plans. We have experience of using a range of participatory methods and tools.

We work with stakeholders to develop evaluation frameworks, often using a theory of change approach, and undertake external evaluations to feed into learning. We are also dedicated to creating community leadership and voice, as well as having a strong commitment to social inclusion and empowerment.

WSA is committed to capacity-building and strengthening community development. Please do get in touch with us around work that you are doing – we’re interested in sharing good practice and learning from other initiatives, as well as offering support and intervention around our broad scope of community development, participation, networking, training and evaluation.

Key Partners

We work with a number of partners each year. We really appreciate the relationships we have with the people we work with, and look forward to ongoing opportunities to collaborate and build on work to date. Some of our key partnerships this year include:

- Community Regen
- Gillian Granville
- Just Ideas
- Kim Donahue Consulting
- Leila Baker
- Lev Pedro & Associates
- Mandy Wilson Limited
- Merida Associates
- Sian Penner Associates
- Space 4
- Strategic Content
- Third Sector Research Centre

We love working in partnership, so please do get in touch if you would like a chat about how we can link up and work together.

Our Team

Wendy Sugarman,
Company Director
- email Wendy

Vicky Daborn Tedder,
Evaluation and Training Manager
- email Vicky

Lekey Leidecker,
Project Consultancy and Research Officer
- email Lekey

Hana Vyas,
Administration and Communications Co-ordinator
- email Hana

Rufus Attrill,
Project Support and Administration Assistant
- email Rufus

Visit our website to find out more about the team.
We had a few changes here at WSA this year and welcoming new colleagues into the team to join Wendy, Vicky and Hana.

Lekey Leidecker has stepped into the role of Project Consultancy and Research Officer. Lekey brings community-development experience in locations as diverse as rural Tibet and underserved communities in North Philadelphia, USA. Lekey has quickly settled into the role and has been supporting the Somers Town Big Local community consultation, and the Local Trust ‘communities responding to Covid-19’ research.

We also welcomed Rufus Attrill into the team. Rufus joined us on a six-month placement as part of the Kickstart government initiative as our Project Support and Administration Assistant. We are happy to say Rufus will be staying with us for longer to continue providing project support. As part of his role, Rufus has been providing hands-on project support as well as working closely with Hana to support the business to bring our systems up to date.

We have also extended our associates network: joining Sarah Clement, Emma Morgan and Yvonne Prendergast, we introduced new associates Shae Eccleston, Graeme Fancourt, Pam Hardisty, Shehnaaz Latif and Jo McGreal. We are delighted to work with associates who bring such a wide range of skills and experience to WSA Community Consultants, and look forward to sharing our joint expertise and to work with you in 2022!
Community Development and Engagement

Getting the community involved in changes that affect their future has always played a large role in our projects, but this year our focus has been getting back on track to seeing communities face to face. The following projects highlight how empowering people and communities leads to positive engagement and lasting change.

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS TRUST
Content Strategy and Digital Engagement

This autumn, WSA and our partner Merida Associates started working on Birmingham Museums Trust’s (BMT) Content Strategy and Community Engagement project. BMT is on a path to re-imagine the way that it does content digitally and aims to bring in voices, viewpoints and stories that reflect the city’s culture.

Through co-design and strong community engagement, we are working with community representatives to create a shared vision for the places and groups that could contribute to the digital content of BMT, including identifying key themes and areas for stories to be shared by BMT on their digital platforms.

We mapped the existing BMT community contacts and other groups, and explored their views of Birmingham, what they would like to see in the digital content and what they would like to share as part of this programme.

In early 2022, we will recruit a group of community storytellers, who will have a role of coming together to gather and agree the content, as well as working further to engage community groups that we may not have connections to yet. We will also work with BMT to commission local community arts organisations to develop some of the content.

Nine sites across the city

- Birmingham Museum & Art gallery
- Thinktank Science Museum
- Aston Hall – Jacobean Mansion
- Bordesley Hall – Tudor House
- Museum of the Jewellery Quarter
- Sarehole Mill – water mill, inspiration to JRR Tolkien
- Soho House – Home of Matthew Boulton & the Lunar Society
- Wedley Castle – ruins of a Medieval manor house
- Museum Collection Centre

Opening up the Archive
RESIDENT-LED PARTNERSHIP
Co-design and Community-Assessment Training for the Grenfell Projects Fund and Community Leadership Programme

We have been working to support a fantastic and active group of residents who have come together as a resident-led panel for the Grenfell Projects Fund. This funding is to support Grenfell recovery. As such, the residents involved are very clear that they have the role of planning the grants programme and then opening this to community groups. Our role is to train and support the resident-led panel to design, assess and measure the impact of the grants process and assessments of the Grenfell Projects Fund.

The Grenfell Projects Fund was set up after the Grenfell fire to support new and existing local organisations and residents’ associations affected by the tragedy and support recovery. The fund initially started in 2019. The Community Leadership Programme aims to build skills and capacity in local voluntary and community projects through partnerships with local voluntary-sector organisations.

Following residents’ feedback that they wanted to ensure that there was very clear resident control and influence in the process going forward, we were interviewed by residents, along with RBKC, to ensure that what we were offering would add value to this process. We were then asked to facilitate the training and support of the CLP and GPF Resident’s Panel. The Resident’s Panel will be responsible for the allocation of funds for both projects, including involving the wider community through feedback and involvement, once potential projects apply for funds.

Our approach to this project is through co-designing the whole grant-application process with the Resident’s Panel, to ensure that the community drives this process. We are committed to ensuring that the Resident’s Panel co-produces all aspects of the grants’ design and delivery.

The panel members are great, passionate and bring a wealth of experience of what their area needs to aid recovery. We are very much there to support and facilitate discussions by really supporting the resident-led nature of this work. We are working with the Grenfell Communities Team, together addressing the needs of the group, which has meant changing original timescales to ensure this process is genuinely community led and gives the residents enough time to design the process and communicate it to the community in the way they would like to.

The co-design process on what the grants programme looks like and how it will be assessed was completed this year, and we very much look forward to the next stage of the grants programme opening in 2022 and supporting the residents around this. Thanks to everyone involved for genuinely working hard together to really co-produce this process. We appreciate everyone’s passion and hard work!
Building on our previous facilitation work with the Francis Crick Institute, WSA Community Consultants were engaged to facilitate a series of workshops to record individuals’ personal and professional experiences of life during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a Public Engagement project for the Crick; the postcards will be used to archive this period and, in the future, might be used for other public-engagement initiatives.

This year the Crick Institute extended their invitation to join this workshop to several local organisations as well as their own staff. We facilitated a series of workshops with groups that included Camden FC, University College Hospital, Calthorpe Community Garden and Third Age Project, to bring them together and give these groups a chance to reflect on their personal experiences of the pandemic.

The workshops focused on the concept of ‘a postcard to myself – living in the times of Covid-19’. During the workshops, the participants were asked to record their experiences on a postcard to their past and future selves. This followed some in-depth and honest discussions about the things people have lost and gained during this period of pandemic.

Each workshop was watched by the animator for the project, Jenny Leonard, who then produced a wonderful image for each group’s postcards. Thanks to Paul Bragman, who also facilitated some of these workshops, and the Crick Public Engagement team for capturing this very important time in all our lives and giving an opportunity for wellbeing sessions to their staff and local groups.

Printed with the kind permission of Jenny Leonard Art
LOCAL TRUST
Communities Responding to Covid-19 Research

We are part of the Local Trust’s Communities Responding to Covid-19 research project alongside a wider team, convened by University of Birmingham Third Sector Research Centre, who are conducting research in 26 communities in England. This research involves working to capture responses to Covid in these communities. Our focus has been on fieldwork with Big Local Conniburrow, as well as contributing to research briefings, workshop facilitation and team analysis.

The title of the first report, ‘Longer than anyone thought,’ summarises how the prolonged nature of the pandemic has shifted both community responses to the pandemic and the nature of the research. Since the response is ongoing, we are working to use this ‘unique opportunity to gain grounded insight into community responses to crises as they unfold.’

In Conniburrow, our research consists of interviews with various members of the Big Local area, activists, workers and volunteers, and addresses what actions the area has taken in response to the crisis. Across all 26 areas, the research team has conducted over 500 learning conversations thus far.

The second report, titled ‘Now they see us,’ examines the changes that have taken place in relationships between communities and statutory agencies, local authorities and larger, established voluntary organisations, which during the pandemic have begun to recognise the role of communities and the value they bring to themselves.

The report highlights that while many of the challenges that communities face are not new, they have been amplified by the pandemic.

These are some of the findings that have emerged from the research:

1. Needs are changing and so are community responses.
2. Sustaining community action becomes more challenging as the pandemic continues.
3. While they have many characteristics in common, communities have responded differently to the crisis and require different support to recover.

Alongside this research, WSA also worked with the Third Sector Research Centre colleagues in the research and production of a briefing paper, ‘Sustaining Community Action’. As well as looking at the 26 case study areas, this process also included the planning and facilitation of a workshop bringing together some of the communities that are taking part in the research. The full briefing paper can be found here along with a blog explaining more.

Despite the many challenges the reports describe, the strengths of local communities shine through. Communities have continued to adapt to the changing circumstances of Covid-19, in some cases laying the groundwork for more robust networks of funding, delivery, and collaboration. The second report in particular emphasises how these strengthened community networks will be essential for the Covid ‘recovery’ that this research was initially meant to examine.

1. Source: Now They See Us: Communities responding to COVID-19. Authors Angus McCabe, Mandy Wilson, Rob Macmillan, and Angela Ellis Paine.
We supported Somers Town Big Local (STBL) in developing their next Big Local Plan. This new plan set out how the community will continue to invest to achieve the changes they want to see over this period.

Our work with STBL on their new plan involved a community consultation, developing a community profile, and workshops with the STBL Partnership, which helped feed ideas into the plan.

Hiring researchers from the local community brought their local understanding to the consultation whilst also investing in the area and building local skills. This was the first time since the start of the pandemic that we got out to do fieldwork in person and we were very excited about being in the community once again.

Residents – who understand the community’s needs and concerns – participated in the consultation, and the fieldwork was met with enthusiasm and motivation for conducting questionnaires and interviews with Somers Town residents. The researchers listened to the voices and opinions with a shared understanding, which gave our consultation sensitivity and approachableness. Thanks so much to our wonderful team of community researchers – we really appreciate all your hard work!

A consultation review reflected the sentiments expressed by the residents, highlighting concerns over a lack of inclusion in decision-making about changes in the area, along with a desire for green and safe community spaces within Somers Town, support for young people and a thriving local market. These feelings were reinforced by the outcomes of the survey (which we had a great response to), even though the responses were across a broad spectrum, from frustration to enthusiasm for change.

We were excited to see the partnership develop their priorities for their new plan, with several projects that fit into each of the following themes:

- **Theme 1: Supporting the local economy**
- **Theme 2: Bringing people together**
- **Theme 3: Cleaner, greener, safer Somers Town**
- **Theme 4: Engaging young people**
- **Theme 5: Communications**
LOCAL TRUST

London Learning Cluster

Working in partnership with Sian Penner, we continue to facilitate and support the development, learning and networking of the Big Local London Learning Cluster, bringing together the 26 London Big Local areas.

In 2021, there were two events to celebrate and support London areas by sharing how they supported communities during the pandemic. We focused on:

- experiences of Covid and the impact for people in their BL areas
- areas’ responses to Covid-19
- areas’ plans for reopening

We know Big Local areas have been at the centre of their communities, so it was no surprise to see how many activities the areas had managed to deliver during and in between the various lockdowns, as well as the creative ways in which they managed to engage with their local communities.

We listened with delight to the various projects and examples from areas, and are sharing some of them below: online activities for residents (Hanwell Big Local); a doorstep carnival to create a sense of returning to normality (William Morris); and a

‘Wheels for Workers’ bicycles scheme to provide refurbished bikes for key workers during the pandemic (Noel Park).

Presentations frequently led to productive discussions and questions around project delivery. Breakout rooms allowed participants to debate bigger questions around funding and planning, celebrating what was achieved, and pointing out the benefits, problems and methodology for future projects. We had good feedback from the evaluation of the session, with the breakout rooms being a highlight of many of the participants.

“My most important takeaway was learning from others’ experience, challenges, and success stories.”
– Participant

The innovation and adaptability of Big Local areas in London was very clear. The sessions highlighted that each Big Local area was able to work around the isolating issues caused by Covid by bringing their community together and, in turn, learn from each other and find inspiration for future projects. We enjoyed the networking during the sessions and the ways that areas fed off each other, bringing new ideas and sharing ways of doing things. Thanks to everyone involved and to the eight areas that shared presentations and all the other London areas that attended and contributed! See you all at the next event in 2022.

Hanwell Big Local – online activities: this area organised a number of small online initiatives aimed at involving local residents, keeping in touch with them and giving them something fun to do. The activities included a cooking course, yoga, meditation and mindfulness, bath-bomb making packs and a teddy bear hunt at a local woodland area.

William Morris Big Local – doorstep carnival: the doorstep carnival was a Covid-safe celebration to cheer people on their own doorstep. It included drumming and dancing workshops and wildlife-themed activity packs given out to children.

Noel Park Big Local – Wheels for Workers: Noel Park’s ‘Wheels for Workers’ initiative provided refurbished bikes to those key workers who needed to travel for work during the pandemic. It was based on wanting to go way beyond ‘clapping for carers’ and do something practical. This was available to all key workers from across sectors – free bicycles were issued to local key workers who couldn’t work from home.

“Presentations were very inspiring” – Participant
LOCAL TRUST
Big Local Incorporation – Learning Partners

In partnership with Leila Baker, we were the learning partner for Local Trust in the design, production and evaluation of incorporation guidance and support for Big Local areas. This looked specifically at how to best support the growing number of Big Local areas that have incorporated or are thinking about incorporating.

As the Big Local programme is now halfway through its lifetime, more areas are thinking about how to create a legacy to provide longer-term support and change for their communities.

Together with a working group of Big Local reps, we co-produced focused guidance for Big Local areas considering incorporation. This was followed by a pilot with five Big Local areas, where they were given support around incorporation; we acted as the evaluators for the pilot process. We used a ‘test and learn’ approach to look at what worked and how best to support areas moving forward.

The pilot was carried out between April and July 2021 and trialled a package of support that comprised three main components:

- Written guidance along with a diagnostic framework and support planning tool.
- Tailored support and advice in each area, which supported partnerships to discuss, consider or move forward around incorporation. This part was delivered by Incorporation Advisors, a new role that was being trialled as part of the pilot.
- Two incorporation ‘cluster’ sessions.2

Five areas were selected to take part in the pilot. Each area’s start and end points in this pilot were different, but what they have in common is that they developed their thinking about process and how to approach incorporation.

The evaluation of the pilot showed that each area has moved forward with their awareness and understanding of incorporation. Some areas have taken the decision to park incorporation as an option for the time being, while others have decided to pursue it. The main thing, they said, was that they had managed to make a decision that was taken collectively and was well informed.

“Having someone be a critical friend has been really, really helpful.”
– Partnership member

Alongside this project, we have also worked with Leila Baker on work that she led to undertake some consultation / options appraisal work around assets and Big Local areas. This was fed back to Local Trust, and policy and guidance in relation to asset acquisition was produced.

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2. Source: https://localtrust.org.uk/big-local/programme-guidance/big-local-partnerships-becoming-or-setting-up-their-own-locally-trusted-organisation/
PEOPLE’S HEALTH TRUST  
Community Engagement Training

People’s Health Trust is an independent charity addressing health inequalities. We were very pleased to support People’s Health Trust on a few projects during 2021.

In June 2021, we facilitated a short workshop for the trust that gave their Local Conversation leaders a brief opportunity to reflect on what they needed to support their own mental health. This workshop was set up to acknowledge and reflect on the fact that supporting the mental health of others in the community has an impact on their own mental health, and helped them to understand what support Local Conversation leaders might need.

Working alongside People’s Health Trust, we are currently planning a series of workshops to build on digital and in-person community engagement skills for the brilliant community groups they fund through their Local Conversations and Active Communities programmes. We are working closely with the Trust to build on our How to Engage with Communities training course, which we are adapting to the needs of the group, and will deliver the course over three sessions in January.

Z2K  
Team Away Day

Z2K is a charity that believes no individual in the UK should be living in poverty and that adequate, stable income and housing are key to creating a more equal society where everyone has the chance of a stable and dignified life.

We worked with the Z2K team to plan and facilitate a team away afternoon to spend some time reflecting on the team and recharging after a long period of change and working remotely. This session aimed to celebrate the team’s resilience but also give space for reflection and learning for forward planning.

The Z2K team were passionate and engaged, exploring a range of ideas that included unpicking values, sharing good practice and identifying a range of actions that will help the team going forward. Some of the feedback from the day included people feeling pleased to have the opportunity to come together and specifically to join up the case work and policy/campaigns work that Z2K is doing.
Evaluation

Our background in community development and related areas has enabled us to provide informed, independent evaluation of projects from local to national scale and communicate our findings clearly to help feed learning into practice.

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE
Everyone’s Business

This year marked a big milestone for our work with Maternal Mental Health Alliance’s (MMHA) Everyone’s Business campaign. After almost 10 years of working with the Alliance, we felt it was the right time to hand over the reins of the external evaluation of this amazing project to a new team of evaluators. However, before we did this we had the big task of completing the five-year evaluation of the campaign, covering the period from 2016 to 2021.

The campaign calls for all women throughout the UK who experience a perinatal mental illness to receive the care they and their families need, wherever and whenever they need it. The campaign recognises that 1 in 10 women develop a mental illness during pregnancy or within the first year after having a baby, and the effect if this is untreated or undiagnosed. It also works around the postcode lottery, with maps showing the progress following funding pledged in each nation. But there is still patchy provision of services, so there remains more work to do to reach full parity.

Covid-19 had a further negative impact on new and expectant mums, and further stretched the services supporting their mental health during the perinatal period. It disproportionately affected women and families of colour and those from poorer backgrounds. MMHA are now calling on ministers to fill the pre-Covid gaps in specialist services.

As part of our five-year evaluation of the campaign, we looked at the progress the campaign made in their goal to ‘turn the map green’. Prior to this phase of the Campaign, over 40 per cent of areas within England and Scotland, 70 per cent in Wales and 80 per cent in Northern Ireland had no specialist PMH provision. In the five years since, there has been positive movement across all four nations, with money newly pledged for specialist PMH services in all nations, and past financial pledges translating into new and additional specialist services in England and Wales.

Our work on this last evaluation consisted of a large number of individual and group interviews, case studies, a focus group informed by lived experience, and review of secondary data. All of our learning has been informed by the theory of change that we worked with the campaign to develop and to update several times to reflect the changing outcomes of the campaign.

We were very privileged to be part of the Alliance and its campaign journey, and to witness how it grew from strength to strength. We would like to thank MMHA for letting us be part of their journey. We’ll be watching eagerly how the campaign develops further and improves the lives of women and families. We worked on this in partnership and would also like to thank our team – Gillian Granville, Helen Garforth and Kim Donahue – for all their hard work on the evaluation over the years. It really feels like the end of an era. Our full evaluation report can be seen on our website from January and also is available on the Maternal Mental Health Alliance website.
ABIANDA

Abianda Services Evaluation

Abianda is a social enterprise that works with young women affected by severe inequality, including those labelled as linked to the pejorative term ‘gangs’, and provides training and critical support for the professionals who work with them. Abianda’s aim is to ensure these young women feel safe to access help and tackle the barriers that hinder this. Working alongside young women and centring their voices is a key focus.

We developed a good understanding about the valuable work this organisation does, and have worked with the Abianda team to co-produce a theory of change. We conducted a review through a process of co-production and collaboration between WSA and the Abianda team, which was informed by interviews, a review of policies, tools and funding applications. These informed a report exploring the themes, and three theory of change workshops to discuss and co-produce the ToC framework.

Staff demonstrated a determination to support young women to see their own power; this good practice was one of the many elements captured in our evaluation.

Abianda puts each young woman in control of her experience; the need to support rather than blame was highlighted, acknowledging the complexity of difficult situations such as police relations and inequalities, with the casting and treatment of women as victims.

“Inequality is the oxygen that fuels the fire of exploitation.”
– Abianda staff member

The theory of change framework helped to instil a positive and sustainable way of measuring and achieving change.

More recently, we worked on the evaluation of the work Abianda does around ensuring the participation and influence of young women. This has included interviews with the young women who have taken on the paid roles of consultants, those who have taken part in the Elevate programme and those who work on the programme, along with a review of secondary data. Early analysis of this has shown that through participation young women have made a number of changes. We look forward to learning more about this and will report back to Abianda in March.
LOCAL TRUST

Measuring Change in Big Local Areas

We are part of a pool of providers commissioned by Local Trust to work with Big Local partnerships to build their confidence and skills in measuring the changes they are making. When we work with an area, we support the partnership to assess their needs, successes and challenges, and build a bespoke measuring-change plan in collaboration with each area.

By supporting Big Local areas to measure change, we ensure that the partnerships have the tools to evaluate future work and can use the evidence collected to further build opportunities for the community. This year we have worked with three Big Local areas.

Big Local Conniburrow

We carried on the work we started with Big Local Conniburrow in Milton Keyes in 2020 by providing them with the tools they needed to evaluate their community fridge programme. We worked with local residents on the creation of a Community Profile; this profile will serve to inform the area’s new plan.

Following this, we worked with the partnership and the community fridge volunteers to design a set of data collection tools that will work for them. The fridge is well used, with a high number of return users. In the data collected, 83% of people valued that the community fridge stops food waste, making it the most popular answer. The green credentials of this role of the community fridge were recognised, with comments that it, “Helps the planet.”

This approach of marketing the community fridge as something that is about food waste is important, as it tackles the very important problem of food waste but it also opens the fridge up to more users across the community, as it stops it from being seen as a food bank despite the way that for some people there will be some crossover in these purposes.

The data also highlighted the financial benefit, with respondents estimating financial saving of £15–£20 a week. Whilst for some this was a nice extra, for others in the community there was significant need for the support.

“[I] don’t get state benefits; would have been in dire straits without it.”
– Project participant

This outcome from the fridge is particularly important as it is supporting people at a very difficult time, with a number of residents either losing their jobs or experiencing reduced incomes.

SO18 Big Local

Last autumn we started work with SO18 Big Local to support the partnership in assessing the difference that SO: Let’s Connect is making to the community. Specifically, how this programme will build digital inclusion, build confidence and address loneliness. The programme provides IT equipment, internet connectivity and support from volunteer digital connectors to enable more residents to get online.

“Before, I often felt lonely. But I don’t now, as I can study, do activities and connect regularly with people online.”
– Project participant
SO18 Big Local (continued)
We started the work with a well-attended workshop to produce a theory of change to help with the measuring-change process. We worked closely with the area to produce and test a set of measuring tools to capture the journey travelled by community members during the project pilot. There have been some strong stories of change collected that demonstrate how impactful this project is.

“Having the internet means I can get help with writing a CV and I will be able to look for jobs. Also, my daughter loves using a drawing app.”
– Project participant

To see the difference the project is making, watch the *SO18: Let’s Connect video.*

**What information was collected and how?**

- Information about the numbers of people who are supported, reasons they came, support they got and the difference it made — gained from before and after conversations logged on SO18 BL database
- Life stories at the end of support about the range of differences the project makes to people — created from in-depth conversations
- Video recordings of people speaking directly about the support they gained and the difference it made: https://youtube7Qp=E7xjQ
- Reviewing Mentors’ records of their support offered to each person, recorded on SO-Let’s Connect CRM system

**Beechwood, Ballantyne & Bidston Village (BB&B) Big Local**

The third area we supported in 2021 is Beechwood, Ballantyne & Bidston Village (BB&B) Big Local. We started with 13 conversations with partnership members, residents and stakeholders to understand where the area is at, where they have strengths and where they feel they need support in relation to the difference BB&B Big Local is making to local people and how these stories can be evidenced and told.

There was a real desire in the partnership to identify and share the stories of the impact that BB&B Big Local is making. This would both show some examples of the difference that is being made to those who are volunteering and increase residents’ understanding of Big Local, as well as improve communication with them and possibly lead to increased engagement. We worked with the area and, through a series of workshops, we formed a theory of change that will inform their next actions.

The area identified five categories they want to concentrate on, which are:

- Improving mental wellbeing
- Enabling young people to thrive
- Improving the local physical environment
- Meeting immediate needs
- Gaining skills and employment

We helped the area to identify the indicators of change and the changes they wish to see. We’re really enjoying working with all of these Big Local areas, and we hope this support acts as a catalyst to measure the changes made to date and benefit future planning.
WE ARE CHAZAK

Celebrating Sephardic Culture focused on the cultural tradition of Hamin

In partnership with Community Regen, WSA was commissioned to help evaluate We are Chazak’s project celebrating Sephardic Jewish culture and the tradition of Hamin (a cultural food).

We very much enjoyed working on this project, which included facilitating workshops to focus on supporting an evaluation framework (theory of change) for the project and designing evaluation tools that allowed We are Chazak to evaluate the outcomes, which were to:

- Increase awareness within the Jewish community of Sephardic heritage and traditions through Hamin
- Widen knowledge and understanding of how to make Hamin
- Increase the sense of pride in Sephardic heritage and culture
- Widen access and appeal of Sephardic culture to young people, disabled people and people from different backgrounds
- Make Chazak better known in the community and more resilient, having built knowledge and skills

In July, we held a workshop to train volunteers involved in collecting data on what the purpose of the data collection is and the techniques to use. As we are nearing the end of the year, WSA and Community Regen – as well as the volunteers – will start to analyse the data and look at the emerging learnings and themes from the project. These findings will then be put into a report to feed back to the Heritage Lottery.
WEST YORKSHIRE & HARROGATE HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP
Musculoskeletal Pathway Evaluation

In partnership with Lev Pedro & Associates, we conducted the evaluation of West Yorkshire & Harrogate’s pilot service to improve health and wellbeing of people suffering from musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions.

The project consisted of two pathways, each designed and delivered independently of the other. These pathways were in addition to clinical services provided by the NHS and were delivered at community level by local VCSE organisations.

Whilst each pathway was designed differently, there was strong evidence that participants gained self-management capabilities that they could use beyond the programme and that participants improved their connection to sources of support in their community, which then lead to substantial improvements in mental and physical health.

We used data from a mix of sources, including reflective diaries and pre- and post- intervention questionnaires, as well as qualitative data to evaluate this pilot scheme.

We identified a number of key enablers for the scheme, some of which are:

- Good collaborative processes, shared vision and approach across sectors being the norm
- Maximising the strengths of both sectors – in this case, the clinical oversight of primary care together with the reach and capacity of the VCSE sector to build trust and relationships and tailor services to individual needs
- Adequate funding, through commissioning processes, to enable the VCSE to deliver an effective service, and to enable good co-design
- A wide range of activities, and the ability for patients to try several things before finding the right activity

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH
Community Champions Programme

The Greenwich Community Champions programme is an initiative set up by the borough to enable people to help their families, friends and wider community make sense of the latest advice and information about Covid-19.

The programme includes a variety of different interventions throughout the Royal Borough of Greenwich, ranging from technology lending hubs to participatory budgeting and Community Champions.

Our team will work alongside some local community researchers to evaluate the Community Champions programme to understand the effectiveness, key issues, and opportunities for action to inform recovery plans and carry on the great work.

We are using a mix of methods to approach the evaluation, including working with local community researchers to gather data from each area, as well as holding interviews and workshops. We are also compiling four case studies, each looking at a particular neighbourhood.

As our work on this project progresses throughout autumn and winter and we have completed the initial fieldwork, we will hold a series of participatory workshops to gather community and professional reactions to the interim findings and help inform the final evaluation report. The final evaluation report will be presented in the spring; we hope it will capture key changes and areas that can be further embedded across the borough.
Aspirations – Mentoring Education Project Evaluation

The Aspirations programme provides mentoring support for looked after children (LAC) to increase the likelihood that they enter and complete higher and further education.

This year we finalised the three-year evaluation of the Aspirations project for Bolton Lads and Girls Club. The Aspirations project is for looked after children, aged 8 to 18, to provide one-to-one mentoring. The project aimed to improve educational attainment by supporting confidence and relationships for young people, and, in turn, increasing the scope of their aspirations.

Our evaluation approach to this project involved a mix of quantitative and qualitative data that were collected by both our team and the client. We always love the fieldwork and really enjoyed all of the interviews with both the children and their mentors, as well as the workshops with staff. Whilst our fieldwork plan had to change due to the pandemic, we were amazed at the adaptability of the young people in the project and all the hard work by the staff and volunteers in such challenging times.

“When talking to people now, I feel equal to them and don’t worry about what they may know or who they are.” – Young person

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the biggest driver of change was the positive, asset-building approach. This aided the recognition of young people’s talents and achievements. It also helped to empower young people and shape their relationships with their mentors. The mentors played a complementary role, acting as a bridge between young people and professionals due to their unique relationship with their mentees, leading to effective partnership working.

“For my mentee it has been confidence building – to have someone who listens, to bounce ideas off.” – Mentor

64% of young people improved their levels of aspiration in their Star Outcomes

“Before, if I wanted to do stuff, I’d feel really nervous about it but now if I want to do something then some good things can come out of it. I really want to start trying new things even more.”

73% of mentors had seen their young person’s confidence increase

“Before he thought he was aiming too high. The gradual process of hearing from someone who he was not stupid and not aiming too high helped him believe in himself.”

90% of mentors had seen their young person’s confidence increase

“Before, if I wanted to do stuff, I’d feel really nervous about it but now if I want to do something then some good things can come out of it. I really want to start trying new things even more.”

64% of young people saw their confidence increase
We are delighted to work with some very talented peer trainers who are all patient and public voice partners sharing their experience to train others and NHS staff.

Working with People and Communities in Addressing Health Inequalities

We have worked on a range of projects to encourage and build participation and representation of lived experience in health services. We continue to advocate for stronger involvement of people living with a range of conditions in the design of services as well as in contributing to the strategies and policies that affect them. Alongside that, we work directly with people with lived experience to support them in sharing their experience to drive change.
ENGAGE BRITAIN
Community Conversations

Towards the end of 2020, WSA Community Consultants and Just Ideas were commissioned by Engage Britain to work on the Health and Care Project as their delivery partner for Community Conversations.

The aim of the project is to develop sustainable policy solutions for health and care by engaging with people and communities, as well as some practitioners. Engage Britain aims to demonstrate that by putting people at the heart of policy development, it will lead to better policy-making and better outcomes. The Community Conversations was the first part of this work and offered an exciting opportunity for 100 conversations about what really matters in relation to health and care across England, Scotland and Wales.

Embarking on such a large project in the middle of a pandemic required us to be flexible in our approach. It was originally planned that the conversations would take place face to face, and for obvious reasons we had to adapt our approach and move these conversations to a digital space.

Together with our partners Just Ideas, we recruited a number of Community Conversations hosts, who conducted conversations from Cornwall all the way to the Scottish Isles. We stretched far and wide and did an incredible amount of outreach to connect with hosts – new, as well as those known to us – to get together groups of participants from all walks of life, and various demographic groups.

The result of this outreach was truly incredible. Participants of the conversations were so generous with their experience. And the hosts, who were all their peers, made people feel safe and welcome. We were humbled to be there to listen to very personal and quite often painful stories. Having done these conversations using Zoom and other online platforms meant that the analyst team at Engage Britain were given an incredible amount of rich data, arguably much more than we could ever collect if these conversations were done face to face.

Through our network of hosts and the individual and personalised approach to these conversations, an incredible 74% of individuals took part in this kind of conversation for the very first time. This is a credit to the network of hosts we recruited in working to build a supportive environment to conduct the conversations. All the hosts were supported by one of our wonderful JI/WSA support partners, and building in high levels of support made everyone feel supported and included.

We feel privileged to have been allowed to be there and listen to people’s experiences. Thank you to all our hosts and participants for making this such a special experience. If you would like to find out more about the project, head over to Engage Britain’s Health and Care Hub.

Some stats:
- 76 hosts recruited
- 101 Community Conversations took place
- 715 individuals took part in the conversations
- 74% of individuals had not taken part in similar conversations before
- 97% enjoyed taking part in the conversation
- Participants felt it was a safe space to share and discuss
THE FRANCIS CRICK INSTITUTE
Patient Advisory Panel

The Patient Advisory Panel (PAP) was launched in 2019 to help the Francis Crick Institute’s Public Engagement Team in the development of their public exhibition on cancer. This exhibition became known as ‘Outwitting Cancer’ and opened in September 2021. It is now open and it’s a free exhibition, so why not go along and see it between now and July 2022?

The PAP members fed into every aspect of the exhibition, from commenting on the design to the marketing to the language used in the exhibits. A huge aspect of the co-design was the work on the ‘Oncozine’, which accompanies the exhibition. This was co-produced by the PAP members and scientists.

“Little did I know that I’d get to meet all these amazing people, and I never felt better than when I came out of a PAP session.” – PAP member

The PAP members came together for an additional meeting to contribute to this; the animations in Chapter 4 (Conversations about cancer) highlight their work.

“Meeting all the people here has actually changed my life ... we’re just different people because of this experience, so I hope that it continues.” – PAP member

The exhibition opened on 29 September 2021 for an exclusive preview for the Patient Advisory Panel. The exhibition launch was a special event that finally brought the PAP members together at the end of a long journey, much of which was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. After some incredibly touching and heart-warming introductory speeches, the members and their friends and families viewed the exhibition.

We were very privileged to come along and are happy to share some photos and reflections. Some of the reflections at the opening of the exhibition were:

“It feels colourful, inviting, and warm with the colours being used... it doesn’t feel like a dark scary space to go into, which cancer is often deemed to be...” – PAP member

“It’s written in a language that explains things with lots of information that explains the science in a different way... I have a lot of connections to schools, and I will encourage them to come along and visit here.” – PAP member

This fantastic initiative is free and open to the public as a way of sharing some of the research that is being undertaken in the building. Most importantly from this work, we want to thank all the PAP members for your passion, sharing sometimes painful and difficult experiences, and your hard work in shaping and co-designing this work.

Across the two years of working together, the PAP members shared very personal and emotional lived experiences. The openness and honesty really touched every aspect of the exhibition and was very much appreciated and respected by us as facilitators and also by the Crick Public Engagement team, exhibition curator and those involved in the digital content.
NHS ENGLAND AND
NHS IMPROVEMENT

Patient and Public Voice – Influence and Impact course

WSA Community Consultants, in partnership with Just Ideas, continued to support the NHS Patient and Public Involvement team on a number of projects over the course of this year. We continued supporting Patient and Public Voice (PPV) partners within NHS England and NHS Improvement through offering the two-day ‘PPV Influence and Impact’ training course. In 2020, we worked to adapt the course for digital delivery, and in 2021 we continued with online delivery.

The training is aimed at Patient and Public Voice partners but is also open to some NHS staff members who want to better understand the PPV role.

PPV representatives play a key role within NHS England and NHS Improvement, regional health initiatives, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and locally within GP practices. The training recognises this and acknowledges how confusing the health and social care landscape and structures within NHS England and NHS Improvement can be for the patient voice. The interactive two-day course brings together people from all parts of the NHS structure who have the common interest and experience of patient voice.

Although we appreciate the strain that two days of online training can bring, we have learned that spending this time on Zoom can build a network and community. The participants are given ample opportunities to work in small groups and hence build relationships with others. In our 2020 redesign of the course, collaboration and a feeling of togetherness have been paramount in ensuring that the participants receive a positive and engaging experience during the two days.

Evaluation of the course continuously shows the value of the course to those who are taking part. Many of the participants report that their confidence in themselves and their role has increased as a result of being on the training, and that they understand the role more and feel empowered to carry it forward.

“I used to feel rather junior to other long-serving patient partners. I realise now that my voice is just as valid and also perhaps more current and relevant.”
– Course participant

“It is good to meet other PPV partners and see how we all fit in to the NHS improvement plan.”
– Course participant

“I feel more focused and appreciated in my patient and public voice role, and the course has given me additional confidence to raise such issues appropriately.”
– Course participant
NHS England and NHS Improvement are looking to support NHS staff in their roles through digital workshops to understand how to build patient and public engagement and the duties that sit alongside this. They want to equip staff to implement good practice and understand the related guidance, share ideas and develop plans.

We first worked alongside the NHSEI Public Participation Team to refresh and transfer the 10 Steps course to digital delivery.

The WSA/JI team supported several training days in 2021, supported by a group of peer trainers and NHS co-facilitators.

This is a very practical course, where participants bring their own project to the session. They work in groups through the 10 Steps model of support, from setting outcomes all the way to how they will feed back to the people who have been involved. The course delves really deep into what participation is, what drives participants, and good practice. It increases understanding of participation and engagement in relation to health inequalities and looks at strategies to build inclusion of communities.

We look forward to delivering more training sessions in 2022.
NHS ENGLAND AND 
NHS IMPROVEMENT

Advanced Therapy 
Medicinal Products 
Workshops

We were excited to facilitate two mixed 
stakeholder ‘discovery’ workshops for 
organisations that are working on cell and gene 
therapy (or Advanced Therapeutic Medicinal 
Products; ATMPs) to enable the development of 
patient-facing information about what cell and 
gene therapies are.

In May 2021, we facilitated a ‘discovery’ meeting 
of the various stakeholders to ensure that they 
get to know other work in this field and build on 
knowledge elsewhere in the system, avoiding 
duplication and achieving a more joined-up 
approach. The group included a mix of NHS staff, 
people from the voluntary sector and industry 
representatives. We followed this up by arranging 
interviews with a number of key stakeholders to 
get a deeper understanding of the subject and 
their work.

In the autumn, we held a second workshop, 
where we welcomed new participants and 
enabled them to connect with one another, 
reflect on what we have learnt so far about 
patient- and public-facing information, and 
identify and agree knowledge sharing and 
collaboration in the short and long term. We then 
produced a detailed report of the findings from 
the workshops and interviews.

We are pleased that both workshops were well 
attended by various stakeholders, and we look 
forward to seeing more collaboration to support 
patient engagement and information within this 
part of the health system.

We would also like to thank Strategic Content 
for their help with this project and making 
sense of very complex information. Thanks 
for your work to help distil the complexity and 
present information in a very clear and easy to 
understand way!

NCD ALLIANCE

Our Views, Our Voices

We were very happy to be working with the NCD 
Alliance again, this time to redesign their Our 
Views, Our Voices training for digital delivery. 
This work was in partnership with Just Ideas.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) include a 
whole range of conditions, the five most common 
being cancer, diabetes, chronic obstructive 
pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease 
and mental health, but there are many other 
conditions that are also non-communicable.

The Our Views, Our Voices training strategy 
seeks to build the meaningful involvement of 
people living with NCDs around the globe so they 
have more knowledge and confidence to not only 
share their lived experiences but also to transfer 
knowledge and skills to their peers to build a 
public narrative on NCDs. This in turn supports 
people living with NCDs to be change-makers, 
advocating to those in power for more resources 
and better health care.

Our Views, Our Voices also aims to establish 
a network of confident advocates and 
spokespeople who can call for action on strategic 
advocacy priorities, including to improve access 
and availability of NCD treatment and care, and 
meaningful involvement of people living with 
NCDs in decision-making processes.

The redesign of this course for virtual delivery 
acknowledges the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic 
caused restrictions on international travel, and also 
recognises and supports a commitment to using 
other ways to grow and support the Our Views, 
Our Voices network. The cohort taking part in this 
training included some countries who have just 
published their own Advocacy Agendas, including 
Malaysia and Vietnam.

We are also working with the NCD Alliance to 
do some initial thinking around moving the Our 
Views, Our Voices ‘training the trainer’ course 
online to support more in-country training carried 
out by people living with NCDs for their peers.
Training

WSA is supporting and strengthening community development, social inclusion, participation and empowerment. We put communities at the heart of their own development, and to support our mission, we provide high-quality training to those who either work directly in community development or have an aspect of their role that demands knowledge and skills around community engagement, inclusion or development.

Community Grants Programme
This is a newly accredited 14-hour programme that explores what an effective grants panel looks like and how it operates, including best practice. In two modules, we review programme outcomes and setting of priority areas, understanding how they should be informed by community need. We look at good practices in application processes and create clear guidance to support these. The second module discusses the assessment process and how it fits with the change we’re hoping to encourage and what’s important in how grants are judged. This is followed by setting up tangible application-marking criteria to ensure programmes meet the desired changes and aspirations.

Bespoke Training Opportunities
In addition to the courses that we have already developed, we also offer tailored training around all aspects of community development. Our training is often flexible and based on the needs of the groups we’re working with but may involve group sessions or one-to-one capacity building.

2021 saw us delivering our training courses for a number of audiences. Whether it be one of our public courses, group training for organisations or a completely bespoke training session built to the needs of a particular organisation, we supported our clients throughout the year by providing our high-quality community engagement training.

Case Study
A pan-European civil society alliance approached us with a request to design an online training session for a group of their members with diverse needs and levels of experience of organising activities and engagement. We provided them with several possible scenarios and they selected a delivery consisting of two 1.5-hour sessions. The training was delivered over two weeks to a diverse group of participants who wanted to increase their understanding of community development and engagement tools. It included a mix of theory and practical exercises that the participants could take away and start using in practice.

Please find more information on our website, including the booking form: wsacommunity.co.uk/training/
Training Courses

Understanding Community Development
This course looks at the values and principles that underpin good community development, and provides an opportunity to explore and reflect on practice and the impact it has on communities. It is aimed at those who are starting out in community-based work and/or are looking to incorporate community-development processes into other roles.

“Learning the theory behind community development really helps you think about how you will work in practice.” – Course participant

How to Engage with Communities
Designed for community engagement practitioners who want to use creative methods of engagement and facilitate community-led development, both face to face and digitally. This course is aimed at people in a variety of roles that require facilitation and engagement skills and methods.

“Many thanks, it was one of the best trainings I have ever went to, very interesting and involvement of everyone was brilliant!!!” – Course participant

Evaluating Community Development and Measuring Change
Helps participants develop a clear understanding of community-based evaluation and provides practical tools to strategically plan and evaluate. It suits people who work with community groups, projects or programmes. It also provides some practical tools and guidance on how to effectively measure change.

“[I found most beneficial] learning about different methods of collecting data and the pros and cons of these methods. Learning how other people have applied this to their work and hearing success anecdotes.” – Course participant

Training the Trainers: Peer Training and Facilitation
This course is for all those working with communities or active within their community who want to expand or develop their understanding of training theory of practice. The course supports all participants to harness their skills and practice training delivery.

“Different methods of training that all work together to produce an interesting, informative training session.” – Course participant

Action Learning
Action Learning is a unique way to tackle real problems or issues in order to get things done. Action Learning brings individuals together in small groups where they can explore issues around their direct experience and develop actions through the support and exploratory questions of the group.

“[Our training style is highly participatory, as we encourage groups to learn from each other and make plans to put their learning into action so that a day’s training has knock-on effects far beyond the workshop.]”

We welcome you to get in touch to register your interest in any of our training courses or to discuss how we can develop bespoke training for you.
Looking Forward to 2022

The WSA Community Consultants team is looking forward to working with our partners and clients, old and new, in 2022. We hope 2022 will offer even more opportunities to work together and reconnect with clients and communities face to face.

Developing partnerships

We are committed to capacity-building and strengthening community development, and hope to make new links to continue to achieve this. Please do get in touch with us around work that you are doing – we’re interested in sharing good practice and learning from other initiatives as well as offering support and intervention around our broad scope of community development, participation, networking, training and evaluation skills.

Contact Us

Please do get in contact to discuss potential partnerships, joint working or just to share practice. You can email us at info@wsacommunity.co.uk, or contact our team individually:

Wendy
wendy@wsacommunity.co.uk or 07932 730477

Vicky
vicky@wsacommunity.co.uk or 07572 028002

Lekey
lekey@wsacommunity.co.uk

Hana
hana@wsacommunity.co.uk

Rufus
rufus@wsacommunity.co.uk

Training courses

Our community development training courses have become an integral part of WSA, what we do and what we stand for. We are keen to promote learning and knowledge-sharing in this area and are looking forward to delivering more training sessions in 2022, with an emphasis on bespoke training sessions for groups and organisations.

WSA is keen to encourage...

- Learning and sharing across projects and initiatives
- Working together to achieve better outcomes for communities
- The listening to and sharing of lived experience to have a real impact on change
- Calls to action around health inequalities, and all doing what we can to address this and give people and communities a strong voice

We look forward to hearing from you and hope to work with you in 2022!