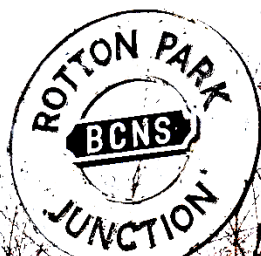




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SOHO LOOP 1¼ MILES  
(AND TO HOCKLEY PORT)

BIRMINGHAM 1 MILE

WOLVERHAMPTON 11½ MILES  
3 L

Unlocking Social &  
Economic Innovation  
Together

USE-IT! Community  
Research

UIA

URBAN  
INNOVATIVE  
ACTIONS





## USE-IT!

### Unlocking Social & Economic Innovation Together

**USE-IT!** is an **exciting** and **innovative** multi-agency collaboration involving 15 partners, including the University of Birmingham, which is linking local residents to large-scale urban transformations.

Here we focus on one particular stream of the **USE-IT!** programme – **community research**. We work with local people in Greater Icknield to research local problems and come up with innovative solutions that connect to the wider urban regeneration developments taking place.

We started community research as a *method*: a way of accessing the human assets in the Greater Icknield area and connecting people to the large-scale developments taking place in this part of Birmingham-Sandwell. But after a year of training we realised that we had an amazing asset: **resident experts committed to training and taking the opportunity to research with us**.

This booklet is about the journey and the projects that we have embarked upon. It is dedicated to the people of Smethwick and Ladywood, to Winson Green, Soho and Cape Hill, to the Black Patch, Icknield Port Loop and all the communities and neighbourhoods in-between.

It is in the detail of places and stories that assets are realised and the future is built.

[The USE-IT! Community Research Team](#)  
[The University of Birmingham](#)

# SOHO FOUNDRY

## What is USE-IT!?

Unlocking Social and Economic Innovation Together is a three-year, 'action' research programme that delivers mechanisms to maximise local assets and enable local residents to benefit from large-scale urban transformations. **USE-IT!** works with local people who are 'experts' in their neighbourhoods – people that know about their area and are engaged with their own communities. We support resident experts to engage in urban and economic development and play a key role in influencing change. **USE-IT!** does this by:

- the University of Birmingham training and accrediting local people to be 'the experts'
- recognising and accrediting skills through the NHS Learning Works
- the Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs (iSE) developing local social entrepreneurs.

Using the leverage potential of 'anchor' institutions – organisations with long-term commitment to the city region such as the universities, NHS, city council, iSE etc.- **USE-IT!** has:

- trained more than 80 community researchers and accredited them through the Open College Network
- identified more than 200 local people with skills that weren't recognised – matching their skills to opportunities in the new Midland Metropolitan hospital - saving the NHS hundreds of thousands of pounds in recruitment and connecting local people to better jobs
- supporting over 60 social entrepreneurs from the area develop social enterprises to bring new products to market; this has contributed to Birmingham being recognised as a "Social Enterprise City" by Social Enterprise UK.

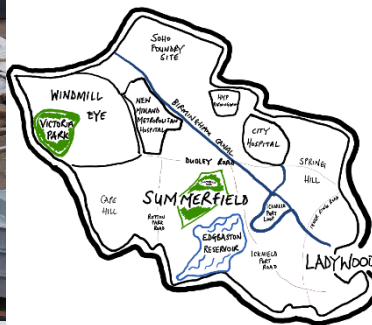


## Where is **USE-IT!**?

**USE-IT!** has been focused on Greater Icknield - an area that cuts across core urban sections of Birmingham and Sandwell local authorities

### Why the Greater Icknield Area?

This is a densely populated inner-city area classified as one of the most deprived in England. More than 10% of residents do not speak English as their first language; whilst rates of persistent poverty are more than four times the city-regional average.



It is an area that has historically housed the *poor house*, the *gallows* and the *prison* but it has innumerable assets both visible and hidden – including our community researchers. The area is also undergoing rapid urban transformation:

- More than **6,000 homes** being developed
- A new community on the renamed **Port Loop**
- A new hospital – the **Midlands Metropolitan**
- The future **transformation of Ladywood** announced by Birmingham City Council in March 2019

# Community Research

## What is **USE-IT!** Community Research?

Community research is about training local people and recognising that they are valuable assets in bringing lived experience, skills, contacts and local knowledge and insight into particular communities. Community researchers have the ability to gain the trust of the local community, engage hard-to-reach groups and to research sensitive topics.

Community researchers can identify issues which may not have been considered when research questions were being developed so they can inform the research process. Most importantly, because Community researchers are members of the community, they can enable the community to engage and participate in the research process enabling their voices to be heard. As one community researcher put it:

**"I believe [that] if you want change in your community, you have to be part of that change. Community research is about making contacts work to help improve the area, so people's voices get filtered up to the people with influence."**

But as well as getting people's voices to the people of influence it is enabling them to **be** the people with influence.



## USE-IT! Community Researchers

**USE-IT!** Community Researchers were recruited in the Greater Icknield area by advertising for '*experts at living around here*'. We engaged with our local partners (Brushstrokes, Smethwick CAN and Karis Neighbour Scheme) to reach out and gain trust amongst different communities. At recruitment events hosted by our partners we explained the community research process. Interested residents attended a free accredited research training programme covering **research skills, data analysis** and **reporting**.

The Community Research Training is based on a framework developed in by the Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS) at the University of Birmingham and is a free accredited research training programme consisting of 3 units:

- i) learning research skills,
- ii) practicing research skills and
- iii) analysing data and reporting

In just over 2 years we have trained more than 80 community researchers. This is a very diverse group in terms of gender, age (from young adults to people 60+), skills, talents, ethnic backgrounds and employment status. Some attended one part of the training becoming Community Partners, others went on to do their own projects and then commissioned work.

### Peer-to-Peer research

A number of Community Researchers have now been trained to become trainers co-delivering our research training with the team - this is developing a sustainable platform for engaging with community experts and upskilling. Meanwhile, two local **USE-IT!** residents recruited and trained as Community Researchers are finishing their planning MSc in the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies which has been funded by **USE-IT!**.

## Research commissions undertaken by **USE-IT!** Community Researchers

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**USE-IT!** uses the assets already present in individuals and communities enabling residents to put their expertise at the centre of research for the aim of influencing how knowledge is generated and decisions made. We commission work with community researchers and clients (from across the public and private sector) to carry out purposive research that explores assets and opportunities for co-designing policy solutions. Here are some examples of our work to date:

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### **Tackling Childhood Obesity**

In the spring of 2019 Birmingham City Council commissioned **USE-IT!** Community Researchers to carry out research on childhood obesity. This played a key role in delivering research which has been instrumental in Birmingham City Council being awarded an additional £300k grant to do further work around childhood obesity; see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tackling-childhood-obesity-15-million-funding-for-local-projects>.

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### **Community Arts Project: Hidden Mothers**

Hidden Mothers is a public art project celebrating migrant and refugee mothers and empowering them from facing isolation and vulnerability, particularly in the socio-political context around Brexit. This project will use arts and ritual, including tradition and folklore, as a symbolic, empowering act against marginalisation and isolation experienced by migrant and refugee mothers. Ritual is a universal device through which we share experience, strengthen community bonds, explore our roots. In partnership with University of Birmingham, artist Tereza Buskova delivers workshops in which refugee and migrant mothers take part in traditional ritualistic and therapeutic craft activities, making dough and embroidered 'insignia' that will be included in a public performance later this year. These workshops will be a space in which mothers and their skills are valued, made visible, and strengthen their community. **USE-IT!** Community Researchers co-run the workshops and gather data through observation, interviews and photography. **Project Team:** Kat Gut and Ines Dalal, University lead: Dr. Lisa Goodson.

**UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF FOOD INSECURITY ON CHILDREN AND THE AVAILABILITY OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROVISION**

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

**Aim:**

- To identify the extent to which food insecurity is impacting children.
- To identify the key priorities for future research and to provide evidence to inform policy.
- To identify policy options.

The research will inform groups and organisations working with children and families who may need to access funding to deliver to specific areas of food insecurity and the wider narrative around food security which is now on the political agenda.

**Methodology**

Semi-structured interviews with:

- Researchers who assess children's out-of-school activities.
- Those involved in the delivery of out-of-school activities.

**ANTICIPATED IMPACT**

- The project will raise awareness and give a voice to those in food poverty.
- By working with organisations who are engaged with children in food poverty, our findings will add to the evidence base for future research.
- Hopefully, we will continue this work and obtain further funding for interventions to help alleviate food poverty amongst the children.
- It will add to the existing narrative on food poverty, which is currently in its infancy in the UK.
- It will further help shape future research and inform policy.

**PROJECT TEAM**

Dr. Aleksandra Kazłowska  
Debbie Kerslake  
Alison Thompson  
Gazala Aslam

**CONTACT DETAILS**

equaniteducation@gmail.com

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to all the individuals and families who have participated in this research.

Thanks to Dr. Andy Kelly for his advice and guidance on food security and intervention in the F&M economy.

**PROJECT BACKGROUND AND STATISTICS**

According to widely reported figures (Trócaire), from 2009 over the last financial year, the number of food parcels distributed by the network across the UK rose by 17 percent to nearly 4 million.

Research estimates the average population of any one household in the UK and 16.4% of Birmingham's population live in areas which are amongst the 20% most deprived in England. Birmingham ranks 30th out of 314.

Malnutrition and obesity now identified as part of Birmingham's health inequalities. Child poverty and rates increase the rate of the highest in the country. 25% of children live in poverty, increasing to 42.5% in Ladbroke.

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## Understanding the impact of food insecurity on children in the USE-IT! area

*What strategies do parent/carers employ where there is little/unaffordable or no provision and for providing meals for their children?*

Identifying formal and informal out-of-school and school holiday provision of children's activities and programmes in the local area; especially those providing food as part of the provision as the issue around 'holiday-hunger' and food security/poverty increases generally due to governmental austerity policy. 15 interviews carried out with parents/carers of school-aged children during children's activities at Ladywood, Summerfield and other health and community centres between July-September 2019. By working with organisations who are engaged with

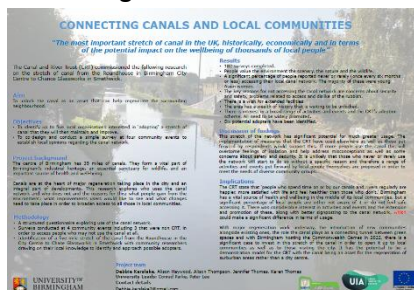
children in food poverty, our findings will add to the evidence base for future research and will raise awareness and give a voice to those in food poverty. **Project Team:** Gazala Aslam, Nettes Derbyshire, Debbie Kerslake, Alison Thompson; Academic Lead: Dr Aleksandra Kazłowska Contact: [equaniteducation@gmail.com](mailto:equaniteducation@gmail.com)

## Developing a Skills Recognition Intervention for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the UK

**Aim:** to explore how the European Skills Passport can be adapted for use with refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. **Objectives:** to identify what would assist refugees and asylum seekers in understanding and entering the labour market; to develop 'employers of sanctuary' to support the programme; to use this evidence to develop a UK intervention to support refugees and asylum seekers. **Methodology:** Phase 1. Explore the suitability of transfer of the Italian model; Phase 2. Work with stakeholders to explore what works in a UK context. Semi-structured interviews with organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers, employment organisations (including job clubs and job centres) and individuals with personal experience of the migrant journey; Phase 3. Develop a network of 'employers of sanctuary' who can offer work placements and employment; Phase 4. Remodel the Italian programme developing a 6 week programme based on the findings; Phase 5. Delivery and evaluation of the intervention for up to 20 asylum seekers and refugees which includes the offer of work placements. **Project team:** Community Researchers - Gazala Aslam, Alison Thompson, Debbie Kerslake; **Project Planner:** Seema Raymond, University Lead: Dr Lisa Goodson, Contact details: [L.J.Goodson@bham.ac.uk](mailto:L.J.Goodson@bham.ac.uk)



## Connecting Canals and Local Communities



The Canal and River Trust (CRT) commissioned this research focusing on the stretch of canal from the Roundhouse in Birmingham city centre to Chance Glassworks in Smethwick.

**Methodology** included a structured questionnaire exploring use of the canal network; 182 surveys completed.

**Findings:** People value the environment the scenery, the nature and the wildlife.

A significant % of people reported never or rarely accessing their local canal network - the majority of these were young Asian women. The key reasons for not accessing the canal network are concerns about security and safety, problems related to access and dislike of rubbish. **Project team:** Debbie Kerslake, Alison Haywood, Alison Thompson, Jennifer Thomas, Karen Thomas; University Lead: Conrad Parke, Peter Lee. **Contact:** Debbie.kerslake3@gmail.com

## Community Bereavement Support



**Aims:** to understand what support is available for bereaved people within the Greater Icknield Area.

**Objectives:** To inform bereavement support and develop an asset-based approach to bereavement care, by determining what bereaved people have found helpful within the Greater Icknield community and to establish links between bereavement coping strategies and resources.

**Methodology:** Qualitative research using semi-structured in-depth interviews; 15 face-to-face interviews with people with experience of bereavement.

**Project Team:** Debbie Kerslake; University lead - Dr. Aleksandra Kazlowska

**Contact:** Debbie.kerslake3@gmail.com

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## Community ESOL support for Better Health

The Better Health Programme (BHP), (funded by Public Health, Sandwell Council and coordinated by Sandwell Consortium), addresses inequalities in Sandwell through Language support. Delivery partners offer a range of free language support through a mix of formal and informal styles of learning, both in and out of the classroom. **Objectives:** produce a qualitative evaluation of learners' perspectives of the impact of the Better Health language programme; provide an understanding of the motivation for language learning to help tailor future delivery to take account of these needs; use research findings to inform staff development and lesson planning. **Research findings** have provided evidence of the impact of the Better Health programme from a service user perspective and have also provided valuable insight to help shape the delivery of community based ESOL being commissioned by Sandwell Language Network, a Controlling Migration Fund Project. For Brushstrokes the research has provided additional evidence of the need, benefits and challenges of community based ESOL that can sit alongside research with our higher level ESOL learners this year and inform future funding bids. **Project team:** Hawar Amin and Carol Henry; Birmingham University Lead: Dr Lisa Goodson

[l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk)

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## The Impact of the Hope Project on Destitute Asylum Seekers

**Aims:** explore the situation of refused asylum seekers who receive support from the 'The Hope Project' (a charity delivering a range of services to new migrants across the West Midlands); evaluate the impact of the charity's intervention on former clients.

**Methods:** Between December 2018 and February 2019 community researchers undertook 31 telephone interviews with former Hope service users.

**Findings:** all participants reported the support received by Hope to be very helpful and those that had received accommodation described it as 'making a big difference' to their lives. However, the effects of long term destitution on asylum seekers has been overlooked by asylum decision-making processes and the legal regulations and procedures in place for appealing those decisions. **Project team:** Marisol Reyes, Bircan Ciytak, Hawar Amin, Roshanak Khoshnevis, Mohammad Shabab; **Project Coordinator:** Dr Lisa Goodso; **Contact details:**

[l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk) and [m.reyess@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.reyess@bham.ac.uk)

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## Tate Industrial



Greater Icknield is a legacy of inspirational industrial heritage that has shaped our world and our culture ..... In 2016 a Turner Prize listed artist, Roger Hiorns, wanted to bury an aeroplane on Icknield Port Loop – possibly in homage to this industrial legacy? It didn't happen, but it got us thinking about how we could build on the industrial heritage of the **USE-IT!** area. These ideas have merged into the concept of **TATE INDUSTRIAL**. This is an exploratory event to develop a set of schemes, ideas, moods, interventions and scenarios that play with the idea of Tate Industrial.

**Project Team:** Jennifer Thomas and Peter Lee  
[p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk)

## Opportunities for local procurement Soho Ward

*What opportunities are there for local procurement by organisations and anchor institutions based in Soho Ward and what gaps in the market exist for social enterprises to meet those needs?* This research uses a range of methods to map organisations and businesses across the Soho Ward to inform Soho First Community Development Trust (CDT)



Community Economic Development Plan. **Project Team:** Alison Thompson, Debbie Kerslake; University: Dr Aleksandra Kazłowska; Contact Details: [alison13.at@gmail.com](mailto:alison13.at@gmail.com)

## Soho First Maker Space

Soho First wanted explore and develop the idea of new office space which is: community focused and financially viable. They asked CRs to explore: models of existing maker space/enterprise hub and needs of potential users and local community. Overall research question was: "What kind of facility will benefit Soho most in the context of local community needs?" Methodology: 18 qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews with maker spaces and potential users of such facilities. **Project team:** Gazala Aslam, Shazia Baig, Jeanette Derbyshire, Kat Gut, Jennifer Thomas, Karen Thomas, University Lead: Dr Aleksandra Kazłowska, Contact details: [nettesderbyshire@gmail.com](mailto:nettesderbyshire@gmail.com)



**Walking around Icknield: accessibility, movement and Place Perceptions in Greater Icknield** **USE-IT!** is concerned with how urban transformation benefits local communities. These joint projects build on a long tradition in CURS exploring psycho-social boundaries and environmental perceptions (Brian Goodey: Images of Place (paper 30). The place perceptions project uses mental maps to explore the connections between residents and

urban transformations in the city centre. For the walkability project, a walkable environment is the extent to which the built environment of an urban area "...supports and encourages walking by providing for pedestrian comfort and safety [whilst] offering visual interest in journeys throughout the network"" (Southworth, 2005, p.248). The **objective** of this research is to assess the ease of access of Port Loop as it is redeveloped and repurposed for housing. *To what extent will the new and existing surrounding communities in the Greater Icknield area derive mutual benefit from each other's assets.* **Impact:** will inform continued efforts to integrate Port Loop into the wider area and inform future policies. **Project team:** Carol Williams, Debbie Kerslake, Hamid Lea; University of Birmingham: Peter Lee (CURS), Miles Tight (Engineering), Gavin Rudge and Mark Sheldon (Applied Health); **Contact:** Peter Lee p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk or Debbie Kerslake debbie.kerslake3@gmail.com **Place Perceptions:** Sara Hassan [s.hassan@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.hassan@bham.ac.uk)

## Improving Health Outcomes for People with Type 2 Diabetes

**Purpose:** to identify the scope to improve health outcomes for people with Type 2 Diabetes through enhanced healthy lifestyle support. **Methods:** Literature review of medical research best practice on lifestyle interventions; interviews with GPs, participants in a health and wellbeing support programme and Health Service Commissioners; testing a Health & Wellbeing Dashboard\* with **USE-IT!** residents. **Findings:** There is extensive research literature on effective lifestyle interventions for those with Type 2 Diabetes but often GPs do not have time to learn about it. GPs found the Dashboard combined data in useful ways but they lack time to explore these issues.

### IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR THOSE WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES

**Research purpose**

To explore the scope to improve health outcomes for residents of the UoB City Centre with Type 2 Diabetes through enhanced healthy lifestyle support

**Key challenges**

- Existing systems not designed to integrate or make patient data changes around diet and lifestyle and individualised support for those with Type 2 Diabetes
- GPs with no dedicated time to support or train new users (difficult to provide)
- The need for a dedicated team to support and train new users (difficult to provide)
- The need for a dedicated team to support and train new users (difficult to provide)
- The need for a dedicated team to support and train new users (difficult to provide)

**Background**

- Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in the UK
- Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in the UK
- Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in the UK
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- Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in the UK

**Initial findings**

- There is a need for a dedicated team to support and train new users (difficult to provide)
- There is a need for a dedicated team to support and train new users (difficult to provide)
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**Dashboard Concept**

The dashboard is a web-based tool that provides a comprehensive overview of patient data and allows for the creation of personalised health plans. It is designed to be used by GPs and other healthcare professionals to support their patients with Type 2 Diabetes.

**Dashboard screen shot**

The dashboard screen shot shows a user interface with various data visualizations and a list of patients. It is designed to be easy to use and provide a clear overview of patient data.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

The Community Engagement Team is responsible for promoting the dashboard and supporting users. They are based at the University of Birmingham and work closely with the Health Service Commissioners.

**CONTACT**

Dr. Peter Lee: [p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk)  
Debbie Kerslake: [debbie.kerslake3@gmail.com](mailto:debbie.kerslake3@gmail.com)  
Sara Hassan: [s.hassan@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.hassan@bham.ac.uk)

\*The Dashboard originates from a collaboration with Birmingham City University Faculty of Computing & Engineering & Ashiana Community



### Developing a Wild Neighbourhood

**Research purpose** was to identify how a 'Patchwork Meadow' could be created across the Greater Icknield area to facilitate a green city, building on its biophilic status, the 'City of Meadows' rather than an urban jungle in time for the Commonwealth Games in 2022.

**Objectives:** to identify what are barriers and opportunities to make the Greater Icknield area into a 'Wild Neighbourhood' that improves residents' well-being; to explore how new developments can include wildlife initiatives within their plans; to identify how a 'Patchwork Meadow' could be created in the Greater Icknield area, with a view to extending this across the city. **Methodology:** 16 face-to-face interviews (with 4 environmental experts, 4 environmental organisations, 2 wildlife organisations, 1 representative of the City Council, 1 developer and 4 community organisations) and mapping of the current green spaces across the Greater Icknield area. **Project team:** Alison Thompson, University Lead: Dr Aleksandra Kazłowska, Contact Details: [alison13.AT@googlemail.com](mailto:alison13.AT@googlemail.com)

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### UK 2070 & the USE-IT! Project 'Community Influence'

The main goal of this project is to look at how communities at the risk of marginalisation make their voices heard. This will feed into a think-piece to be put to the 2070 Commission which is an inquiry into regional inequalities throughout the UK creating a framework for action to address these and "level the playing field" socially and economically. Research outline and methodology: individual interviews with leaders from community groups, public figures, and those working with marginalised groups. Project team - University leads: UCL- Lucy Natarajan and UoB - Sara Hassan; Community Researchers: Shazia Baig, Jeanette Derbyshire, Hamid Lea, Jennifer Thomas, Mark Robinson; Contact details: [s.hassan@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.hassan@bham.ac.uk)

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### Other projects in development include:

- **Voices of Jamaica** (and other 'Windrush' migrants) - Five interviews had taken place to date and the team is looking for participants. Project team: Mark, Queenie, Ines, Carol.
- **Causes of Continued Unemployment** – Participants had been identified
- **Identifying the needs of BME North Smethwick communities by Jalal Community Connect Foundation** –
- **Exchange Study** – connecting to the University of Birmingham Exchange building
- **University as a Public Good** – as part of the ESRC Festival event November 2016.

## What next for **USE-IT!**?

### A Community Research Social Enterprise

Too often projects end and the researchers and the funders walk away. We cannot allow this to happen to **USE-IT!** which has developed a model of research commissioning that can be a new partnership for co-designing our cities.

We are building a permanent bridge between communities, universities, the council, the voluntary sector and business so that consultancy and research within communities is co-owned, co-designed and co-produced. To do this we are building a community interest company that will link *community experts* in neighbourhoods to the University of Birmingham and other universities in the city-region to co-design and co-produce research and policy which will:

- Creates a more **transparent community research network**
- Direct community experts to **resources, mentoring and support**
- Improve **social mobility** by improving skills
- Provide **additional resources for local communities**
- **Value local knowledge** and pay people for this
- Provide a **‘go-to’ place for strategic investments**
- Unlocks **potential revenue streams** for communities

Our aim is to create a ‘resident experts’ company that is the ‘go-to’ place for strategic investments in the city and region. We will pay our resident experts using existing streams of revenue that flow through the city.

We consult our Community Research Social Enterprise and pay our communities for research that will help them benefit from urban transformation and public policies in the city.



## Developing a Community Research Social Enterprise

If you would like to know more about **USE-IT!**, are interested in becoming a community researcher or are interested in helping us develop the community interest company to benefit the wider region please get in touch:

Peter Lee 0121 414 3645 [p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.w.lee@bham.ac.uk)

Lisa Goodson [l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk)

Aleksandra Kazłowska [A.Kazłowska@bham.ac.uk](mailto:A.Kazłowska@bham.ac.uk)

Sara Hassan [S.Hassan@bham.ac.uk](mailto:S.Hassan@bham.ac.uk)



Community research training and recruitment workshops and activities held with partners as part of **USE-IT!** engagement activities during 2017-18.



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**Acknowledgments:** To all our community researchers and the residents of Greater Icknield that have contributed enormously to the success of **USE-IT!**

**USE-IT!** has been funded by the EU ERDF Urban Innovative Actions Programme

**USE-IT!** official Uia website: <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/birmingham>

**USE-IT!** will be launching a website with more details of our projects in the near future; please contact us for more information



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