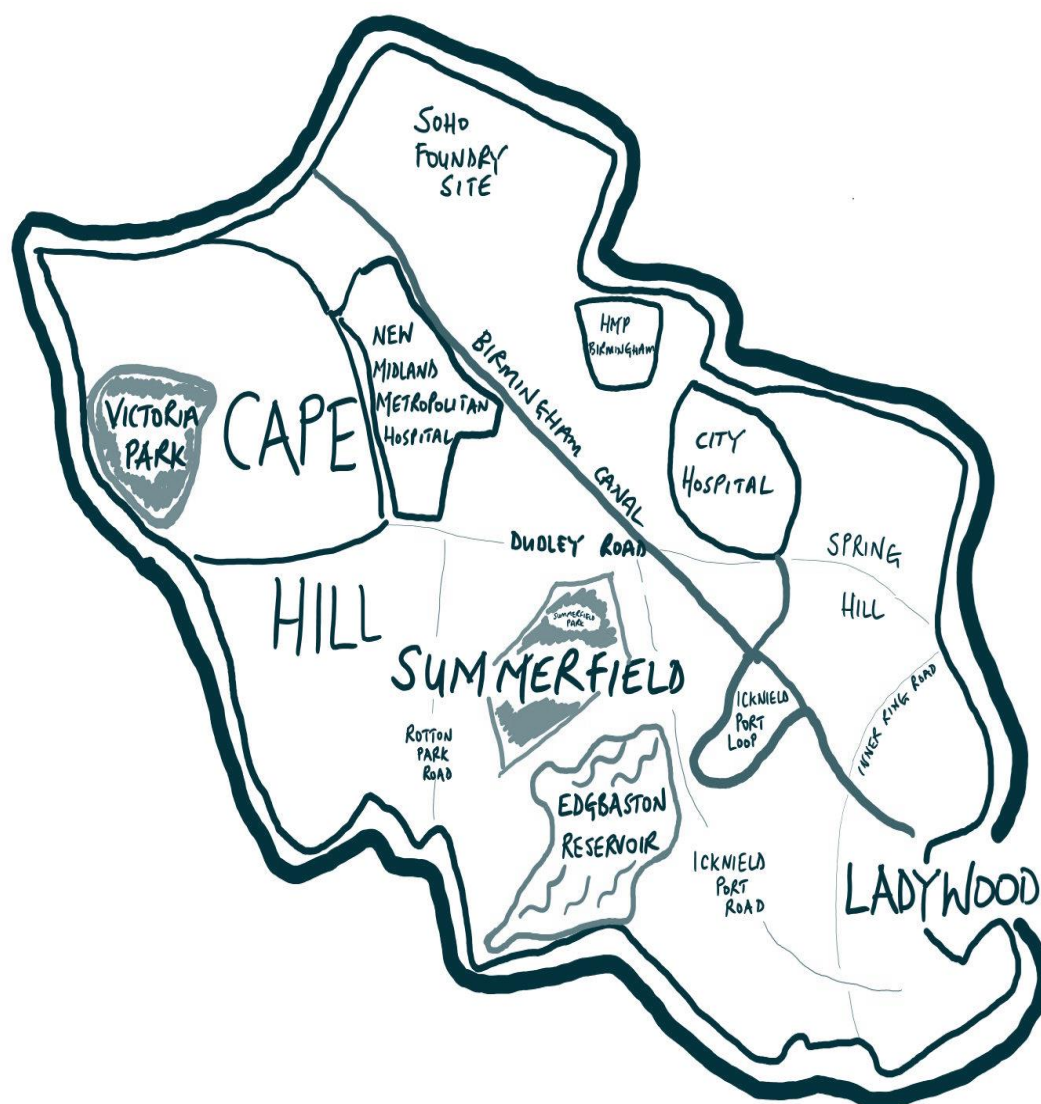


# Unlocking Social and Economic Innovation Together (USE-IT!)

Impact report, 2016-19



**CLES**

progressive economics  
for people and place

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# 1. Introduction

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The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) is pleased to present this impact evaluation report to Birmingham City Council. This report relates to work undertaken by CLES to evaluate the Unlocking Social and Economic Innovation Together (USE-IT!) Programme. This introduction provides context to the Programme, together with detailing our approach to evaluation and associated methodology.

## About the USE-IT! Programme

USE-IT! is a three-year European Union funded programme which aims to pioneer innovative approaches to inclusive urban development in an area of persistent poverty and deprivation in inner city Birmingham. Funding was secured from the EU Urban Innovative Actions (UIA Programme), an initiative which provides cities with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Recognising that orthodox urban economic development approaches often exacerbate inequality and have little impact on enduring patterns of deprivation, the USE-IT! partnership has set out to test an alternative approach in the Greater Icknield area. Rooted in a commitment to recognise and build the assets of local communities by connecting them with the resources of the 'macro assets' of the area (including developers and Anchor Institutions) the programme has four principle strands of activity:

- Matching job skills in the community with demand (connecting people to jobs in Anchor Institutions)
- Community Researcher Training
- Social Enterprise and Social Production (establishing/supporting social enterprises to grow and embedding them in local markets)
- Understanding and strengthening community assets and finance

The programme seeks to affect change on the ground but also to generate learning about the efficacy of these approaches with a view to influencing wider system change, including in policy and practice of regeneration.

# USE-IT! – CREATING AND UNLOCKING ASSETS IN THE COMMUNITY

## COMMUNITY RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

**Two people** who trained as Community Researchers have gone on to complete an MSC in Urban Planning at the University of Birmingham, and one has applied for a PhD in Planning.

**Carol** joined the Community Researcher programme and in her project looking at arts and crafts activity in the area interviewed three people – a local priest, community leader and an orchestra conductor/choir leader who all had lots of connections with many other people living locally.

**80** Community Researchers deployed  
**16** organisations have commissioned research, with one project helping the council to secure a £300,000 grant

## COMMUNITY ASSETS BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**Ladywood Leisure Centre & Roundhouse**  
14 local people were employed thanks to USE-IT! Job Club's work with local employers.

**Port Loop**  
Supported flagship initiative, 'Civic Square', to move to the area by negotiating a space for their Neighbourhood Lab with the local housing developer.

**Holy Trinity Smethwick 'ChangeSpaces'**  
Turned space in a local church into a co-working space for local social entrepreneurs, charities, small businesses, and self-employed freelancers.

**Edgbaston Reservoir**  
Supported a consortium of local residents (Summerfield Alliance) to develop a community-driven long-term vision for the Reservoir and the open spaces around it. This led to establishing a larger consortium of local organisations to take the work beyond the project's end date.

## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ISE

**44** new social enterprises launched  
**25** new products and services  
**5** supply chain opportunities  
**5** jobs created  
**£248,000** brought into the local economy

**Golden Sparkle**  
Started by Queeni Thomas to provide health and wellbeing support to isolated people over 50. They aim to make available perishable food, pre-packed cooked meals to residents, and meal planning for least two days per week.

**Warm Earth**  
Project created by Summerfield Residents Association to grow vegetables for community groups all year round (winner of the USE-IT! Challenge Award).

**SOHO Network**  
Peer network of social enterprises in the SOHO area which will continue to be supported by ISE after the end of the USE-IT! project.

## SKILLS MATCHING NHS SANDWELL AND WEST BIRMINGHAM

**Horani** is a pharmacist from Syria who fled the country with his family in 2012. After being granted indefinite leave to remain in the country he was keen to use his expertise in the UK and has been supported by USE-IT! to undertake necessary training and undertake work placements at the hospital.

**235** overseas nationals engaged with learning works  
**104** started IELTS training  
**19** NHS placements  
**52** with paid work from professional body

Images should always be credited and greyscale

**Nikhath Iftikhar** is a doctor specialising in sexual health and HIV from Pakistan. She fled the country in 2013 and since being granted leave to remain has been supported by the hospital to undertake high level English language training, work shadowing and to cover the cost of registration fees.

**Mohammed** is a biomedical scientist from Sudan. He spent four years in the UK trying to find ways to use his skills in the NHS. USE-IT! has funded his English language qualifications and arranged a placement in City Hospital.



## About this evaluation

The USE-IT! Programme evaluation has been in two phases: A retrospective process and impact evaluation of the Programme covering the period April 2017 to January 2019 (phase one, the findings of which can be found in the Interim Evaluation report) and a longitudinal study of the impact of activity in the final year of the programme from January to December 2019 (phase 2).

This report sets out the findings across both phases of the evaluation which was designed to report on two things: the impact of individual Work Packages on direct beneficiaries and; the impact of the programme as a whole on a number of system change outcomes. To reflect this CLES has undertaken the following activities:

### Development of an evaluation framework

First, we developed an evaluation framework. The purpose of this was to shape the process and impact evaluations discussed below. The Framework details the outcomes, lines of inquiry and methods for deriving information throughout the evaluation. It was developed from reviewing documentation associated with the Programme; through drawing on CLES' previous experience of developing such frameworks and; through engagement with members of the USE-IT! Programme Board.

### Impact evaluation

Second, we have carried out an impact evaluation of Work Packages 4, 5, 6 and 7. The purpose of this was to explore the inputs and outputs of the Programme and the emerging impact of activities on organisations, beneficiaries and the wider population of the USE-IT area. It also sought to understand the extent to which USE-IT! activity had contributed to systemic change in relation to poverty in the area. The findings of the impact evaluation are set out in Sections 4-6 of this report. First, we carried out a review of relevant Programme monitoring and other documentation. Second, we identified a number of stakeholders to interview within each Work Package. All elements of the impact evaluation were framed by the evaluation framework.



## 2. Policy context

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The USE-IT programme sits in the context of wider regeneration programmes and projects which have taken place in a UK context over the course of the last forty years. The following section offers a chronological account of regeneration policy and practice since 1980 during which time a variety of approaches have been pursued with similar aims, including: developing effective partnerships at the local level; regenerating neighbourhoods in economic, social and environmental terms; and in fostering more effective use of public funds for regeneration. These approaches have had varying degrees of success, with USE-IT effectively a response to some of the failures of other initiatives to fully realise the objectives above.

Urban or regeneration policy started in a UK context in the early 1980's with a desire to address the adverse impacts of economic restructuring on urban neighbourhoods. Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) were driven by the market and sought to create the conditions for economic success in places like Canary Wharf, Manchester Castlefield, and Salford Quays through large scale physical regeneration activity. This activity created new industrial heritages and specialisms for these areas, notably around financial services. At the same time in the 1980's, government also started to designate Enterprise Zones, area in which cities could utilise inward investment policies such as reduced business rates to attract big employers.

In the early 1990s attention started to move towards partnership approaches towards regeneration. Still with an emphasis on physical regeneration, initiatives such as City Challenge took an area based approach to improving the physical conditions of estates in prime locations such as Hulme in Manchester. Sitting alongside this came the more neighbourhood focused Single Regeneration Budget which would evolve over six rounds of spending. 1997 brought a change of government and a change of approach towards regeneration. The approach moved away from physical regeneration towards a more joined up approach which explicitly focused on economic and social factors as well as the physical. The emergence of Regional Development Agencies was a key element of this.

In 2001, the government introduced its National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, a plethora of initiatives designed to regenerate some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country physically, economically, socially and environmentally. These initiatives included: New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. In 2010, another change of government saw a return back towards the regeneration approach of the 1980's, with a focus on private sector led physical regeneration and inward investment driven economic development through City and Growth Deals; an approach that has largely continued up to the modern day Local Industrial Strategies.

Greater Icknield has been the subject of millions of pounds of regeneration funding through the policies and initiative described above – it could however be argued that the historical approach of physical, neighbourhood and social regeneration has not worked. Cognisant of the failures of these programmes to deliver lasting change for many communities across the UK, we have in recent years seen a wave of places embrace a community wealth building approach to developing thriving and equitable local economies. At the heart of this approach has been the principle that the physical, financial and human assets of a place can be leveraged for local economic benefit. Key to this approach are Anchor Institutions, those large organisations rooted in place whose spending, employment practice and management of assets can have a defining impact on local economies. High profile examples, such as the network of Anchor Institutions in Preston, have inspired interest in this type of approach which is now being applied across the UK. The USE-IT emphasis on linking macro and micro assets aligns it strongly to the Community Wealth Building approach and learning from the programme should contribute to these policy debates and learning.

# 3. Evaluation Framework

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This section of the report presents the evaluation framework which underpins the evaluation of the USE-IT! Project.

The evaluation framework provides a structured approach to assessing the outcomes of activity and the difference these that these outcomes have made to the original conditions that the Programme set out to change. In doing so, use of a framework should enable an assessment to be made of whether the stated objectives have been achieved and the overall impact of the Programme and help inform the development of future strategy, delivery and investment.

A draft of the Framework was discussed with the USE-IT! Programme Board in December 2018 to ensure it gathered the information members required the evaluation to demonstrate.

Evaluation activity	Evaluation outcomes
Process evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Effectiveness of partnership working</li><li>- Effectiveness of links to wider priorities</li><li>- Effectiveness of project management and delivery</li><li>- Value for money</li><li>- Effectiveness of monitoring</li></ul>
Impact evaluation	
Work Package 3: Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Build Trust in the USE-IT! programme</li><li>- Increase awareness of USE-IT! activities</li><li>- Increase participation in USE-IT! activities</li><li>- Increase capacity of local community to use communication tools for local benefits</li><li>- Increase in different types of civic engagement in the USE-IT! area</li></ul>
Work Package 4: Community Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Local people are engaged in the opportunity to train and 'work' as community researchers</li><li>- Develop and deliver a dynamic package of community researcher training</li><li>- The programme will develop peer learning</li><li>- Community researchers will be able to work towards an accredited qualification</li><li>- CRs will consult widely across the target area</li></ul>
Work Package 5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Enhanced employment opportunities in the NHS for skilled overseas migrants</li></ul>



Routes to Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A shift in the behaviour of the NHS in relation to employment</li> <li>- Impact upon individual, community and cohesion</li> <li>- Enhanced partnership working at neighbourhood level - NHS to community groups to community</li> <li>- Effectiveness of delivery team</li> <li>- Effectiveness of linkages to other aspects of service delivery (wrap around)</li> <li>- Effectiveness of support activities - e.g. language classes etc</li> </ul>
Work Package 6: Social Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Profile of social enterprise raised in the local community and Birmingham</li> <li>- Increase in social enterprise start ups</li> <li>- Increased business activity for social enterprises, including linkages to macro opportunities such as Commonwealth Games and HS2</li> <li>- Increase in people in work experience in a social enterprise</li> <li>- Sustainable community of social entrepreneurs</li> <li>- Increase capacity of local communities to respond to and address social issues</li> </ul>
System change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large local organisations (seek to) act as Anchor Institutions, leveraging their assets to build wealth in the local economy</li> <li>- Anchor Institutions prioritise and resource engagement with community assets in their business activities</li> <li>- People are better connected to the assets and resources of the area</li> <li>- Opportunities exist and are taken by local people to create new community assets</li> <li>- Increased recognition amongst developers, local authority, health sector and higher education of community assets</li> <li>- More equitable relationships between Anchor Institutions and local people</li> </ul>

## 4. Community research: Impact analysis

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This work package has been led by the University of Birmingham and has sought to develop research and analytical skills in the local community. It has two main elements: the first is a programme of community research training, where local people are able to gain an accredited qualification; the second is a programme of commissioned research, which has seen the community researchers work with University academics to deliver research for clients from across the West Midlands.

### Context

Community research is a well-established participatory research method and there are numerous examples of the approach being utilised across the world. For example, Manchester City Council and the University of Manchester have worked with community researchers around creating age friendly communities<sup>1</sup> and the Local Trust have supported projects in the areas in which they operate<sup>2</sup>.

The USE-IT! approach has been different from many of these in several important ways. Firstly, it has been a long-term investment in developing a large cohort of community researchers and utilising the skills and experience of an academic institution to do so. Many similar projects are short-term pieces of work that seek to support an institution to undertake a particular piece of consultation. Second, the programme has responded flexibly to changing circumstances (it was originally envisaged as a means to conduct a community survey and recruit people for other work packages). Third, the model of commissioned research has provided a sustainable stream of opportunities for community researchers to maintain their involvement and be remunerated for it.

The ethos of this Work Package was to:

- View the community as an asset, recognising the diverse skills and experience that exist within the local community ('experts in neighbourhoods'), and enabling residents to put their expertise at the centre of research to influence how knowledge is generated;
- Direct community activity towards urban transformation projects so that the local community can benefit. This chimes with a programme level aim of connecting 'micro to macro';

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.socialresponsibility.manchester.ac.uk/news/february-2018/involving-older-people-as-co-researchers/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://localtrust.org.uk/news-and-stories/blog/community-research-in-big-local-areas/>

- Increase the University's presence in areas of deprivation and develop the idea of the University as an anchor institution in the local area.

This impact evaluation has been drawn together by: reviewing documentation and output data associated with the work package; undertaking interviews with those responsible for delivering the project, the academics at the University who have partnered with the community researchers and a sample of community researchers; and through attending the Open Day on 6th November.



## Summary of activity and outputs

### Outputs delivered

- 80 people have engaged with the community researcher training, with almost all of these having received their accredited qualification;
- 2 of the researchers who completed the training are enrolled on the planning MSc in the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, their places funded by USE-it!;
- Many of the researchers are working on 16 research projects commissioned with a variety of clients. They are driving research that matters to them and are being paid fairly for their time and expertise;
- The research projects are aiming to influence service delivery and strategic policy making. They are supporting investment in place, with £300,000 in funding secured by Birmingham City Council to tackle childhood obesity, partly as a result of evidence from a commissioned research project;
- As part of the legacy of the work package, 5 of the community researchers are undergoing training so they are able to deliver sessions to train new researchers.

## Impact assessment

This element of this section analyses progress against the evaluation framework outcomes for this Work Package:

### Outcome 1 - Local people are engaged in the opportunity to train and 'work' as community researchers

**Opportunity to participate in commissioned research.** One of the elements of the programme that evolved (particularly from the summer of 2018 onwards) during the programme was the commissioned research. With the University of Birmingham playing a convening role and utilising its connections, it has seen the community researchers work with a range of partners from across the West Midlands. This has provided valuable experience of working with partner organisations to design, conduct, and disseminate research and has allowed them to shape the research being conducted in their communities.

It has also demonstrated to the partner organisations, that the community researchers are a viable partner for their research, being skilled and with a local knowledge, which many organisations lack. It has also provided an opportunity for the community researchers to be paid for their time. This has been important for some of the researchers, who admitted that they may have had to look at other opportunities had the financial resource not been available. There has been a broad range of commissioned research projects commissioned through the project, covering themes such as public health, engagement with the environment, food insecurity, and harnessing the skills of the migrant communities.

**Potential for social enterprise.** Another development during the programme has been the work to create a social enterprise for community research. This is a significant opportunity for the researchers to continue to pursue their research interests and do so in a manner that rewards them financially. It also has the potential to influence the wider

West Midlands area in terms of the ways in which research is done, the types of projects that are developed, and in bringing in 'lost voices' to research. Finally, there is the potential to cement the legacy of the USE-IT! programme by creating this asset within the neighbourhood.

USE-IT! has partnered with BVSC which will provide support to the community researchers in taking forward the social enterprise or community interest company. It is important that the community researchers are supported through this process given that "it's a big leap to move from a community research project to a social enterprise".

## **Outcome 2 - Develop and deliver a dynamic package of community researcher training**

**Skills development.** There are a wide range of people that have been supported to complete the community researcher training. All were at different points in terms of the skills and competencies they possessed. However, an element that was consistently seen as useful by the researchers was the learning around the development of topic guides; this way of conducting interviews has allowed for a greater depth in consultation. Researchers also consistently reported that they developed their confidence through their participation in the programme. This is in terms of their self-confidence, picked up through speaking with and interviewing a wide range of people, and also through developing quality pieces of work.

**A positive experience.** The community researchers have provided positive feedback regarding the community researcher training, the vast majority reported that they enjoyed the training and have stayed involved in the project, through events and being involved in commissioned projects. It was reported as a well-designed programme of learning, which was accessible for people with no formal education, or with limited language skills. The course was praised for being very practical, about learning by doing, and an exchange of ideas. Finally, it was also considered important that some elements of the training course were delivered at venues in the local community, which were locations where the community feel comfortable, and are easily accessible. It also created trust between staff from the University, and the community – a vital step in the development of the programme.

**The programme has reached a diverse range of people.** There have been over 80 people who accessed the training opportunity from a wide range of ages and ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as well as diverse interests and ideas. The community researchers and the University staff recognised the benefit of developing this diverse pool, both in relation to the breadth of the communities in the USE-it! area that there is knowledge of, and in terms of the range of research topics that were developed as a result.

## **Outcome 3 – The programme will develop peer learning**

**Built bonding and bridging social capital in the USE-IT area.** The programme has seen over 80 community researchers trained. What came across strongly through consultation was that the researchers have supported each other through the training process and have often collaborated on research projects. They have developed new

links with fellow researchers, and with people in their communities, and have widened their local connections.

**Mentoring has supported researchers.** The mentoring of community researchers by University staff has proven a valuable element of the programme. The community researchers felt it was important for people to feel valued, and to have a medium for their ideas to be developed and to be turned into a research project. There was also a sense that the University staff who have been engaged in the commissioned research were doing so because they were genuinely interested in the approach and in supporting the researchers. It has also provided validation to the researchers that their ideas and convictions are recognised by academics.

**Learning for academic staff at the University.** The staff at the University who have worked with the community researchers have also benefitted greatly from the programme. There has been exposure to a new way of thinking for the academics at the university who have worked with the community researchers. It was considered that 'academics are sometimes quite constrained in our thinking' due to academic protocol, and being aware of potential criticism. This is not to say that the community researchers do not take a thorough, or academic approach, more that they are not restricted by academic norms. The relationship is certainly reciprocal, as researchers felt the University was important in terms of quality assurance, and connections with key local stakeholders at a strategic level.

**Community researchers to deliver training.** As part of the preparations for the development of the social enterprise, and in order to ensure a legacy to the work package, five of the community researchers will have delivered training to new recruits. This will create a capacity within the group to deliver accredited training.

## **Outcome 4 – Community researchers will be able to work towards an accredited qualification**

**Researchers have gained qualifications.** One of the key aspects of the work package has been that it offered the opportunity for community researchers to gain an accredited qualification. Over 80 researchers were able to progress through the training, which is based on a framework developed by the Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS) at the University. This has been important for individuals who had varying levels of qualifications and the credibility of the research being undertaken. The community researchers have all started from different points, but there is a common thread in that they have their lived experience and their knowledge of communities.

**A wide range of experience gained.** There have been a variety of opportunities for community researchers to gain experience, in addition to the formal qualification. One example is a project which aims to assist refugees and asylum seekers to understand and enter the labour market, where a training package was developed. Second, the Connecting Canals and Local Communities project saw the researchers engage members of the public, with 182 surveys completed. Third, the Wild Neighbourhood project has seen the community researchers engaging with key environmental and wildlife organisations in the region. Fourth, the open day in November gave community researchers the opportunity to present their work to a diverse audience. Fifth, there are



five of the current cohort of community researchers who are now being trained to become trainers themselves.

## **Outcome 5 – Community researchers will consult widely across the target area**

**Researchers have researched what matters to them.** The programme has been successful in allowing community researchers (and academics through the commissioned research) to conduct research on projects and subjects that matter to them. This is important because the community researchers bring with them a connection to the communities in which they live, and in which they have conducted their research.

**Research projects reflect need in the USE-it! area.** The commissioned research projects provide an opportunity for academic research to take place that directly relates to an identified need in the communities of the USE-it! area. One example is the type 2 diabetes project, which has been working with GPs in the USE-it! area to trial his dashboard. The dashboard is about supporting people to change diet, lifestyle, and social prescriptions. There is a relatively high prevalence of diabetes in the USE-it! area, and there are concerns that the condition is getting worse. This project creates a potential vehicle to engage all sections of the community in practical discussions about their lifestyles. Another example is the skills recognition project, which aims to support refugees and asylum seekers to understand and access the UK labour market. The project will also link participants with potential employers.

Taking this approach is important because it begins to foster a link between the interests of the community and the interventions and programmes that exist in the area. This is an element of a wider cultural change around ensuring that communities are involved in the development of local initiatives and have the ability to shape future development in their place.

**Community connectors.** One of the elements that the researchers reported during consultation was that they were able to provide information and guidance in the community (albeit in an informal capacity) during their primary research. This was often in the form of a broad signposting role, but specifics were mentioned, including ESOL classes, health services, recruiting people to the work package, and linking people with other opportunities through USE-IT! This is an important ‘knitting’ role within the local community, which helps to ensure that people are able to access what is on offer and supports recent arrivals in particular.

## **System change outcomes**

This element of this section explores the contribution which the activities associated with community research have made to the wider systems change outcomes associated with USE-IT! Below are the relevant systems change outcomes for the work package. It is fair to say that the work package has made a contribution across a broad range of outcomes, but that evidence is only beginning to emerge to enable us to assess the extent to which these outcomes will ultimately be realised.

## **Systems change outcome 1 – local organisations as Anchor Institutions**

One of the stated aims of the work package when the programme was conceived was for the University to be more outward facing and to embrace its role as a civic good. There was a feeling that it was an internationally renowned body, but that it might not be investing in its immediate community. Through USE-IT! the University has embraced this role and has developed a very successful community researcher programme that has harnessed the assets that exist in the community. The University has been crucial to the commissioned research, and will be vital to the success of the social enterprise, they have provided 'clout' and legitimacy in the research process.

## **Systems change outcome 3 – People are better connected to assets**

There are examples of communities being better connected to assets. One is the enabling of an alliance of community groups and organisations to develop a community driven long-term vision for Edgbaston Reservoir and engage with a committee of planners and stakeholders to negotiate a new masterplan for the area. However, fundamental change here will require the dominant narrative of planning and regeneration to shift significantly. This will be a long-term process.

## **Systems change outcome 4 – Individuals are able to create social, economic and environmental change**

As with the outcome around people being better connected to assets, this one is a slow burner. The commissioned research has provided a vehicle for community researchers to work with partners. There is certainly a feeling among the researchers that this work will have an influence 'I try and think, a little bit of what I've said will go to a policy level and improve people's lives '. However, many of the projects are at an early stage of research, and it is the policy responses to the research that will determine the extent to which the projects will create social, economic and environmental change.

## **Systems change outcome 5 – Increased recognition amongst developers, local authorities, health sector and higher education of community assets**

The Work Package has highlighted the community as an asset, and has shown that there are very talented individuals in areas that might be termed as deprived. The feedback from partners who have commissioned research has been positive and throughout the University there is interest in the USE-IT! approach, different as it is from traditional research.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations below are grouped into two categories, those to ensure the legacy of this work in the USE-IT area, and those which seek to inform the transfer of this approach to other areas and contexts.

Legacy in the USE-IT area:

- 1) The University of Birmingham should continue to provide support (alongside BVSC and iSE) to the community researchers to develop the social enterprise model to continue this work. There is a great deal involved in the proposed transition of the programme of community research to a viable social enterprise. To set up the social enterprise will require the University to play a verification or quality checking role (particularly in the early stages of the organisation), and support from BVSC and iSE with the necessary skills around social enterprise. The University should also consider continuing to part fund courses, perhaps through giving lecturer time to each on courses.
- 2) Ensure that the social enterprise continues to deliver benefit for the USE-IT area. It is important that the social enterprise should seek to maintain and recruit a diverse cohort of community researchers from the local area. In addition, it should seek to provide free training and the opportunity for people from deprived neighbourhoods of Birmingham to work on future projects.
- 3) Advocate the model widely. The dissemination event in November was a powerful demonstration of the effectiveness of the work package. This should be repeated, as a learning experience, and a chance to drive new research, but also as a tool to advocate for community research as a model more widely within the region.
- 4) Community researchers to track the long-term impact of USE-IT! Capturing the full impact of the programme will require tracking beyond the life of the programme. For example in WP 5 the length of conversion process for the overseas health quals means that while progression has been evident, there have not yet been significant numbers of people placed into employment. The long-term is where the real outcomes will be seen and would cement the legacy of the USE-IT! Project if the evaluation were to be completed by a resource that the programme itself had curated.

#### Transferability:

- 1) Produce a toolkit to allow the model to be promoted to universities and other anchor institutions nationally and to encourage it to be replicated. A model of community research such as that rolled out through USE-IT! ideally needs to be part of a wider set of project activities in place and help to shape them.
- 2) One of the successes of this project has been the interest the model of community research has garnered at the University, and from partners who commissioned the research. Much of this has been based on academics that organically recognise the value of different forms of research. However we recommend that an academic paper is produced, which looks to outline the benefits, challenges, and key success factors of a community research approach.

## 5. Pathways to employment: Impact analysis

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This section of the impact report explores Work Package 5. This Work Package has been led by the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and has sought primarily to provide overseas nationals moving to the UK with the support required to move into employment opportunity within the NHS. The emphasis has been placed not on lower level employment around cleaning and catering, for example, but upon harnessing the existing higher-level medical skills of the participants, which include doctors and pharmacists.

### Context

Historically, there have been many nationally defined Welfare to Work and Employment Support Programmes which USE-IT! can be compared to. However, these Programmes have largely focused on the ultimate goal of moving individuals into employment as quickly as possible. The approach adopted by the Learning Works (a component of the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust) has been distinct, with a focus on realising the untapped skills of people in the area by providing individually tailored packages of support to translate these skills into higher grade employment opportunities. This has been part of a broader commitment by the Trust to support people most marginalised in their local community (specifically refugees and recent migrants) to access high quality job opportunities. In this way, Work Package 5 was not just about progressing people along the journey towards employment. Instead, it forms part of a much wider desire to realise the potential of NHS organisations as assets, so that they bring maximum benefits for the communities in which they are based.

This section explores the impact of Work Package 5 and has been drawn together through: reviewing the outputs associated with the Work Package; through undertaking interviews with those responsible for delivering the project; and through focus groups with direct beneficiaries.

### Summary of activity and outputs

In terms of targets and outputs, Work Package sought initially to engage through the Learning Works with 60 individuals (highly skilled overseas nationals). This target has been far exceeded, with the following the core outputs, as of 26th September 2019:

- 235 highly skilled overseas nationals have engaged with the Learning Works;
- 169 have been invited to study IELTS or OET;

- 104 accepted and have started the process of studying IELTS or OET;
- 16 have passed IELTS;
- 19 have had placements in the NHS;
- 52 have undertaken paid work in the NHS or other healthcare setting;
- 5 have registered with a relevant professional body.

The participants involved with Work Package 5 are aged between 26 and 56, are an equal split of male and female and are from 36 countries from across the world. They have included qualified doctors, nurses, surgeons, anaesthetists, psychologists, physiotherapists, bio-medical scientists, technicians, pharmacists, pharmacologists, radiographers, dentists and public health specialists.

## Impact assessment

### Outcome 3 – impact upon individual, community and cohesion

**Financial Benefits.** Learning English to the required level for IELTS or OET is time-consuming and expensive – it can take up to 5 years to reach the levels required for employment in the NHS. USE-IT! has reduced the financial burden for overseas nationals by paying for the courses and associated exams. The vast majority of participants would not have been able to do this without the financial support of USE-IT!

**Peer Support.** The activities of Work Package 5 have brought people from similar and sometimes very different backgrounds closer together. The nature of the activities has encouraged participants to work together to realise their goals and support each other. The individuals are very cohesive and have benefited from the opportunity to provide peer support to one another. They have used tools such as WhatsApp to keep in contact outside of classes and provide each other with support. The peer support has been both around English language, but also about other issues individuals may face around access to services, and integration and cohesion, for example.

**Friendship.** The activities of Work Package 5 have enabled people to create new friendships. There has been a significant degree of participants supporting each other and mentoring each other to realise their individual and collective aspirations. In addition, there has not really been any formal advertising of the Learning Works or the activities of Work Package 5 – instead communication has often been through word of mouth and participants signposting their friends towards the activities. This significantly reduces the costs of attracting participants to the project.

**Specific Vocabulary.** The recently launched OET classes will provide participants with a very specific vocabulary associated with their profession. This means they are more prepared for opportunities that may arise in the NHS and are more confident in their dialogue with patients during placement opportunities. The OET classes present the beneficiaries with the opportunity to gain experience of using medical vocabulary with their peers and moves beyond the more generic approach of IELTS. This demonstrates the ability of the Learning Works and Brushstrokes to adapt to the needs and demands of their clients.

**Motivation.** The individuals that have been involved with Work Package 5 are highly skilled and with lots of qualifications from their own country contexts. The IELTS and OET classes have given them a renewed purpose and motivation to utilise those qualifications in a different context in the UK. All the participants are very motivated to learn, pass their exams, and move into employment opportunity in the NHS. Many of the participants have had to find employment in more menial occupations, with the classes providing them with the opportunity to develop their English language skills and potentially move into employment which is more aligned to their skills and which is higher value in terms of pay.

*'Horani is a pharmacist from Syria who fled the country with his family in 2012. After being granted indefinite leave to remain in the country he was keen to use his expertise in the UK and has been supported by USE-IT! to undertake necessary training and undertake work placements at the Hospital.'*

**Hard Work.** Stakeholders responsible for the delivery of Work Package 5 activities at the Learning Works and Brushstrokes recognised that achieving a score of 7 or 7.5 for IELTS is a huge achievement for the beneficiaries. Some of the participants have started from extremely low bases in terms of their English language skills and have reached their dreams through sheer grit, determination, and hard work. They need to undertake 5 hours per week of classes, together with self-study and fit that around other household and personal challenges. Many of the participants have been women with small children, with need for hard work really evident.

**Re-finding Identity.** Many of the participants in the IELTS and OET classes have come from incredibly tough backgrounds and from countries such as Iraq and Sudan. The classes have enabled them to integrate into the wider community and to 're-find' their identity and improve their confidence. This is crucial to progressing with IELTS and in making the journey toward employment.





## Participant case study

Leila<sup>3</sup> is a trained nurse from the Sudan and came to the UK five years ago. She has two young children and prior to engagement with Brushstrokes and the English Language classes, she had felt increasingly isolated looking after the children and with her husband in full time work. She had limited engagement with anyone beyond her immediate family. As her children started to get older, Anne had a desire to get back to work and her career in nursing. After a visit to the Learning Works, she decided to try and improve her English and start to make the journey back to being a nurse. Since engaging with Brushstrokes Anne's English has improved, but importantly she has become more engaged in her local community – she now talks to her neighbours and the classes have enabled her to make new friends. She will be shortly taking her exams.

### Outcome 5 – effectiveness of delivery team

**Enabled Development and Growth.** The activities of Work Package 5 and USE-IT! more generally have contributed to the growth and development of Brushstrokes as an organisation. It has enabled them to:

- Professionalise their offer around IELTS and OET, and build further their ESOL activities;
- Expand their reach to individuals across Sandwell, Birmingham and wider within the West Midlands;
- Develop a strong partnership with the Learning Works;
- Access wider funding for English language classes and other Wrap Around activities and services.

Equally, USE-IT! has also supported the growth of the Learning Works and its reach. This would probably have happened anyway as a result of the strong leadership of the Learning Works, but Work Package 5 activities have enabled the profile of the Learning Works to be enhanced within the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and for new activities to be implemented and funded, including HOP.

**A Big Impact on Lives.** The activities of USE-IT! and Work Package 6 have not only had an impact upon the lives of the participants of the IELTS and OET classes, but also on

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<sup>3</sup> For confidentiality reasons, names have been changed

those at the Learning Works with responsibility for delivering it. These individuals have seen changes in both their approach to their job and their personal lives, with families, friends and work colleagues noticing the difference.

'we have really seen a new way of living in you Mum'

'this is your biggest achievement'

'when I think of the NHS, I think of you Lawrence'

## Outcome 6 – effectiveness of linkages to other aspects of service delivery

**A Sense of Hope.** The activities associated with Work Package 5 have not just been about supporting the move into employment and the provision of IELTS and OET classes. The role of advisors and teachers has also been to mentor and support participants with other challenges and issues. The activities have given participants a sense of hope that they can realise their dream of becoming healthcare professionals in a UK context.

'Nikhath Iftikhar is a doctor specialising in sexual health and HIV from Pakistan. She fled the country in 2013 and since been granted leave to remain has been supported by the hospital to undertake high level English language training, work shadowing and to cover the cost of registration fees.'

**A Range of Wrap Around Services.** The involvement of Brushstrokes as the provider of IELTS and OET classes has been important, given their wider remit to provide support around a number of issues and across different agencies. Support provided has been more rounded than just English language provision and has included advice around accommodation, schooling, and benefit entitlements, for example. Brushstrokes are effectively a community anchor institution, providing a range of support to local and neighbouring communities.



### Participant case study

Sami<sup>4</sup> is a fully trained GP from Iraq. Since coming to the UK, he has had a number of low paid and temporary jobs, most recently working night shifts at an Amazon warehouse. Whilst providing income, the work has not been rewarding and Sami has not been able to achieve his dream of working in the NHS and looking after people. Sami was until recently twinning his work with study at Brushstrokes for an English language qualification. However it proved extremely tiring. Sami has

<sup>4</sup> For confidentiality reasons, names have been changed.

left his job and is now studying almost full-time to move towards his aspiration of becoming a GP.

## Outcome 7 – effectiveness of support services (i.e. language classes)

**A Flexible Approach.** The team at the Learning Works and Brushstrokes have adopted a flexible approach to delivering the activities of Work Package 5. In particular and in relation to the generic and difficult nature of IELTS, the two organisations are now shifting their offer towards OET classes which provide English language skills which are more specific to the medical profession.

*‘Mohammed is a biomedical scientist from Sudan. He spent four years in the UK trying to find ways to use his skills in the NHS. USE-IT! has funded his English language qualifications and arranged a placement in City Hospital.’*

**Not your usual Employment Broker.** Employment Support and Brokerage can often be seen as quite clinical and in-humane as agencies seek to move individuals straight into a job. The Learning Works is not seen as being like that by participants, with recognition that people are on a journey towards work. They are also recognised as being more caring and people focus.

## Financial and economic impact

The impacts identified above have been relatively ‘soft’ impacts upon people and their confidence and way of life. The impacts of Work Package 5 are potentially huge in ‘hard’ financial and economic terms. The table below has been developed by the Learning Works and estimates the potential salary benefit if every individual engaged with Work Package 5 moved into employment in the NHS. This is significantly more than the amount spent through USE-IT! on Work Package 5 activities.

Table 1: Anticipated salaries of Work Package 5 participants

Profession	Salary (estimate)	Total	Overall total
Doctor	61K	44	£2,684,000
Eye surgeon	77K	1	£77,000
Anaesthetist	50K	3	£150,000
Nurse	25K	71	£1,775,000
Psychologist	35K	3	£105,000
Physiotherapist	30K	4	£120,000

Profession	Salary (estimate)	Total	Overall total
Bio Medical Scientist	35K	28	£980,000
Pharmacist	38K	14	£532,000
Dentist	70K	15	£1,050,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£7,473,000</b>

## System change outcomes

This section of the Impact report and Work Package 5 explores the contribution which the activities associated with supporting overseas nationals into employment have made to the wider systems change outcomes associated with USE-IT! The findings have been drawn largely from conversations with the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and Brushstrokes.

### Systems change outcome 1 – local organisations as Anchors

**Brushstrokes as a Community Anchor.** Brushstrokes as an organisation have not only been involved in Work Package 5 activities, but additionally those of Work Package 4 around Community Researchers. The organisation sees the key synergy between the two as it has encouraged participants to volunteer in different scenarios and understand the nature of the local community more. This involvement has enhanced the role of Brushstrokes as a Community Anchor.

**A Complementarity to other Activities.** Brushstrokes recognised at the outset of USE-IT! and Work Package 5 in particular that there was a clear complementarity between the proposed activities and what they were already doing in Smethwick, Birmingham and the wider West Midlands. For example, they were already involved in a Sandwell MBC employment support project and saw USE-IT! as a key opportunity for added value and to reach a wider segment of the community.

### Systems change outcome 2 – Anchors prioritise engagement with community assets

**Real Localised Provision.** Brushstrokes recognised the role which USE-IT! has played in re-localising service provision. In an era that has become dominated by the centralisation of services, particularly in the NHS and local government, the activities of Work Package 5 have to a degree reversed this orthodoxy. USE-IT! has enabled the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, the Learning Works, and Brushstrokes to provide ‘real localised provision’ and whereby the community assets are the core beneficiaries.

**A Fostering of Partnership Working.** The delivery of Work Package 5 has not just been about the Learning Works and Brushstrokes. Instead, a range of both statutory and

voluntary and community sector organisations have been engaged in providing wider support services. The principles of the Work Package 5 activities are also shaping future partnership working and relationships between Anchors and the Community. For example, the Learning Works are currently working with Balfour Beatty around the construction of the new Midlands Metropole Hospital and have reached an agreement where 10% of the labour used will be those furthest away from the labour market. The Learning Works will work with Balfour Beatty to help realise this through referrals and support for beneficiaries.

### **Systems change outcome 3 – People are better connected to assets**

**Cross Organisation Working.** Involvement in USE-IT! and Work Package 5 in particular has brought the Learning Works and Brushstrokes closer together in terms of collaborative working. The ‘two-way’ referral and support service has enabled both organisations to get to know each other better and deliver activities that are for the most effective outcomes for participants. Brushstrokes recognises that they took a ‘punt’ on IELTS as it was more advanced than the ESOL classes it had historically delivered, with the Learning Works supporting them along the journey.

### **Systems change outcome 5 – Increased recognition amongst developers, local authorities, health sector and higher education of community assets**

**Compassion and a big heart.** For the Learning Works and their staff base, USE-IT! and Work Package 5 has been much more than a regeneration and employment programme. It has become a way through which those working for the NHS can have greater affinity with the community and the area surrounding the hospital, in particular. All those working for the Learning Works have engaged with the activities because they want to make a difference, they have compassion to the challenges facing the participants and all have extremely ‘big hearts’.

### **Systems change outcome 6 – More equitable relationships between Anchors and local people**

**Engagement of a Diverse Participant Group.** The activities of Work Package 5 have been integral to bringing people from different nationalities and backgrounds together and to link them to opportunity. Brushstrokes as an organisation alone and historically has brought together people from over 90 nationalities to develop their English language skills and enable cohesion within the wider community. Brushstrokes understands the needs of different communities, particularly when it comes to English language skills and employment support.

## **Recommendations**

Work Package 5 has been an integral part of USE-IT! and the principles should be rolled out both in the locality and across wider demographic groups. The Impact Evaluation has enabled us to identify a number of recommendations for both legacy and transferability.

## Legacy Recommendations for the USE-IT area

- 1) The model adopted as a component part of USE-IT! should be rolled out and transferred to other groups. It is clear that the personable and individualised nature of the approach is effective in moving individuals on the journey to work and should be expanded to other groups such as ex-offenders and the homeless.
- 2) The Learning Works and Brushstrokes have been key brokers in the success of Work Package 5. They have worked collaboratively to tailor employment support to the needs of quite a complicated target group. Linked to Legacy Recommendation 1, the Learning Works should be given the freedom to build upon their successful approach and expand relationships with community groups linked to other cohorts of stakeholders.
- 3) Linked to the recommendations of the other Work Packages associated with USE-IT!, evaluation of impact needs to be embedded into any future rollout of Work Package 5 and be included from the outset of any activities. It is important that the distance travelled of participants on such employment support programmes is more effectively tracked so that their individual journey can be tracked and impact upon community more effectively understood.
- 4) Whilst Work Package 5 provided lots of benefits for participants in terms of predominantly their English language skills, a common concern was that the activities did not always meet expectations in terms of work placements within the Hospital. Participants were really keen to enhance their employment prospects through practising their professions in real-life scenarios. Legacy Recommendation 4 is therefore to twin wider activities with placements of part on any Work Package 5 rollout.

## Transferability Recommendations for Work Package 5

- 1) USE-IT! and particularly the activities of the Learning Works and Brushstrokes has clearly been a success, the model deployed providing an effective approach for moving overseas migrants towards employment opportunity. There is therefore scope to build on the lessons learned and roll the Methodology out to other NHS Trust in areas with similar demographics. This should commence in the West Midlands, before moving further afield.
- 2) The key facet of Work Package 5 which sets it aside from other Welfare to Work and Employment Programmes has been the provision of ESOL, IELTS and OET classes, something that has been really valued by the participants. The project has also highlighted that there is often a 'ready-made' workforce for the NHS in many local communities – they just need to be found. Transferability Recommendation 2 is therefore that the NHS should shift its approach to overseas recruitment and support existing UK



residents, providing support for English language classes where appropriate.

- 3) Work Package 5 has shown the value of an individualised, outcome focused approach to employment support activities that is more effective than existing Nationally led Welfare to Work Programmes. The finding of USE-IT! should be utilised to inform a more bespoke and community focused approach to Welfare to Work.

## 6. Social Enterprise: Impact Analysis

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This section focuses on Work Package 6, which aimed to help local people solve local social and economic issues through starting or growing social enterprises, cooperatives and community businesses. Work Package 6 was led by iSE, and other partners involved included Smethwick Church Action Network, Co-operative Futures, and Localise West Midlands.

### Context

There are a number of programmes around the UK which are aimed at social enterprise development. Many of these share elements with the programme on offer in USE-IT, such as the training programme, mentoring and start up grants. For example, the School of Social Entrepreneurs (SSE), who also have a base in the Midlands, have the Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneurs Start Up Programme, which provides a training programme of 14 learning days spread over a year, a £1,000 grant, mentoring from a Lloyds Bank mentor and a support network of other social entrepreneurs. SSE also have other programmes aimed at the Scale Up and Trade Up level.

However, while there may be some similarities, the USE-IT project is unique in many ways. The most important of these is the way in which it sought to link micro and macro opportunities. Where other social enterprise development programmes focus solely on the development of the social enterprise and entrepreneurs, from its inception the work around social enterprise development in USE-IT was around trading and supply chain integration. With the framing of the initial hospital project, the Port Loop development and bigger opportunities such as HS2 and the Commonwealth Games, USE-IT looked to create a sustainable and flourishing community of successful social entrepreneurs.

### Summary of activity and outputs

Work Package Six has five key elements, these are:

- Development of USE-IT! Network and online networking platform;
- Engagement and market development;
- Social Enterprise Propeller (SEP/FUSE) business support programmes;
- Access to employment through social enterprise; and
- Business mentors and coaches programme.

Of the 44 social enterprises supported to start up, 7 are trading and operating in the health sector; 6 in food; 6 in community and/or business development; 5 offer support

or coaching; 4 are in retail, gifts or crafts; 3 are in tourism; 2 in zero waste; 2 are in sport; 2 are in the built environment; and 7 are in other sectors.

The table below provides a summary of outputs as outlined in the initial Application Form, and the delivered outputs at the end of the project. As described in the Interim Report, some of the outputs included in the Application Form were flawed in that they were incorrect – for example there are not 15 schools in the USE-IT area, so this will never be able to be delivered.

Similarly, work has been done as part of Work Package Six that goes beyond basic output data and is explained in more detail in the impact assessment against the 6 outcomes in the next section. There are also two case studies which demonstrate the legacy of the Work Package Six.

Table 2: Summary of Outputs

In application form	Delivered
80 members in Network by year three	86 members
30 new services and products taken to market by social enterprises	32 new products/services
18 social enterprise pop up markets	19 markets
5 social enterprise consortia	5 social enterprise consortia
10 new services taken to market by consortiums	10 new product/service
30 new social enterprise starts	49 new start up social enterprises
60 existing social enterprises supported through Propeller programme	56 existing social entrepreneurs supported
15 social enterprises supported with start-up grant	15 social enterprises supported with start-up grant
Two different work experience support packs: one for 16 to 18-year olds (15 places) and one for those over 18 (30 participants)	Two work experience support packs created
Programme of engagement with 15 local schools	Programme of engagement began with 12 schools, with two schools and a youth group actively involved.
20 social enterprises recruited and providing work experience opportunities	21 social enterprises recruited and providing work experience opportunities
20 work experience places	7 people in work experience
10 jobs in social enterprise for local people over three years	5 jobs created
36 mentors/coaches recruited	36 mentors/coaches recruited

36 social enterprises received mentoring	25 social enterprises received mentoring
10 new supply chain opportunities as a result of mentoring/coaching	5 new supply chain opportunities

## Impact assessment

### Outcome One: Profile of social enterprise raised in the local community

At the interim reporting stage, this outcome was where most success had been seen, and this trend has continued. As the interim report detailed, the baseline for the social enterprise sector in the USE-IT area was extremely low when the project began, and thus much work has been about developing this sector.

There has been a lot of success against this outcome, not least with the work around Social Enterprise City, which is worth looking at as a case study.



### Social Enterprise City

#### How the legacy of USE-IT has been ensured

The work around Social Enterprise City is also an important feature regarding the legacy of the USE-IT project, which will see results that go beyond the USE-IT area.

Social Enterprise City is an accreditation awarded by Social Enterprise UK, which recognises the growth and success of the social enterprise sector in 28 places across the UK. It is awarded to celebrate achievements of the place, support the sector to grow, and enable the city to bring together local stakeholders to grow the communities and build markets at the local and national level.

Partners within the USE-IT programme understood the need for the accreditation in order to embed the profile of social enterprise within Birmingham for after USE-IT ended. While it had always been a desire to apply for Social Enterprise City status, there had never been the resource or capacity to do so.

USE-IT enabled the bringing together of a steering group of important strategic partners, representing public sector anchor institutions, commercial business, infrastructure and social enterprise support. Having representatives from each of these sectors around the same table for the same goal is important for progressive system change at a wider level.

The steering group have focused on building capacity of social entrepreneurs through internships and leadership training, generating data and awareness of the sector through a baseline survey exercise, and supporting social enterprises to generate income through 'meet the buyer' events in the built environment.

Social Enterprise City has also put social enterprise as a priority for organisations on the steering board, with the LEP now creating a post to focus on social enterprise development, universities looking at careers support and an internship offer, and health institutions making space at their sites for health based social enterprises, for example.

While work with the Social Enterprise City is just beginning, there have already been two events around social finance, including a networking event for entrepreneurs to speak to social finance providers. Similarly, over 240,000 people were reached at events and activities raising awareness of social enterprises across the city as part of City Drive.

One way that the impact of Social Enterprise City could be increased would be by harnessing the power of the organisations sitting on the steering group. By looking to see how the procurement processes and land and asset usage of these organisations, could be used to support local social enterprises – either in supply chains or via access to space – the legacy of the project could be ensured by ensuring a sustainable, plural economy made up of a flourishing sector of social entrepreneurs.

## Outcome Two: Increase in social enterprise start ups

As part of the work around the Social Enterprise City, the steering group carried out a survey of social enterprise activity across the wider Birmingham area. This survey found that the social enterprise sector in Birmingham is characterised by a high proportion of newer, younger social enterprises with almost 41% of those responding having been formed in the past three years. This is almost double the national comparator figure of 21% and can be attributed to the funding that iSE were able to access to run more dedicated courses for social entrepreneurs at the start up level.

Partners reported that there had been 'lessons learned' around setting up social enterprises in a deprived place. It took 'significantly longer' for social entrepreneurs to register than in other areas, and while over forty social enterprises have set up, only 23 of these have a business registration at the moment – though all the others will register. This is because lots of the social entrepreneurs who have set up have started 'from the very grassroots', thus needing more support at the beginning or taking longer to progress due to other constraints on their time such as other work priorities.

It is also important to note that measuring the increase in social enterprise start up's alone will not capture the rich work that has been done with entrepreneurs. Many consulted reported increases in their confidence, with some entrepreneurs reporting that confidence they'd found *"has been a big thing"*. One person who had been on the FUSE programme said:

*"The programme taught me how to calm down and get my point across, I'm more confident and have more self-esteem than before. Having someone else say your idea is good is confidence building – I have self-belief now."*

### **Outcome Three: Increased business activity for social enterprises, including linkages to macro opportunities such as Commonwealth Games and HS2**

There has been success against this outcome. Not only have targets been hit around the pop-up markets, with all 18 markets running across the three years, but the Soho Network which was established to enable social entrepreneurs to trade with one another and form partnerships will continue to run after the USE-IT project finishes.

Similarly, a total of £248,000 of extra money has been leveraged by 12 social enterprises within the USE-IT area. This money is a combination of funding, grants and successful contract bids.

In terms of linkages to macro opportunities, it is useful to look at a case of the Commonwealth Games. This is an important case study for understanding the legacy of USE-IT as outcomes have not yet been seen but will come in subsequent years thanks to the firm foundation building of the project.





## Commonwealth Games

### How social enterprises have increased their business activity

The Commonwealth Games will take place in Birmingham in 2022, representing a huge opportunity for the social enterprise sector across the city. There are two major developments, a swimming pool and the athletes' village, taking place within the USE-IT area.

As well as being an important opportunity for increasing business activity for social entrepreneurs, the Games also exemplify the importance of USE-IT's focus on linkages between macro and micro assets.

At the macro level, large scale developers have been engaged by USE-IT partners, with three coming to iSE directly to see how they can spend their collective £3.5 million with social enterprises. Similarly, work has also been done with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to link iSE with key strategic players, including procurement at the Common Games Organising Committee and DCMS.

At the micro level, work to progress social enterprise involvement in the Games has been about fostering and nurturing the burgeoning social enterprise sector to get them ready for procurement opportunities. iSE have also pulled together a Third Sector Working Group focusing on procurement, volunteering and funding which includes representatives from BSSEC and the Heart of England Community Foundation.

The Commonwealth Games also highlights the issues and difficulties which can face social enterprises and large-scale institutions trying to engage with each other. Large organisations can be nervous about engaging with small social enterprises, and small enterprises can often struggle to respond to tenders in the way in which is required by the private sector. For example, the payment terms of large developers are often set at 30 days. This does not work for many social enterprises who would struggle in terms of cash flow.

To mitigate some of these difficulties, iSE were able to contract a new member of staff with expertise in the construction industry to act as a bridging contact between developers and social enterprises. This would not have been possible without funding from the USE-IT project and has been vital in terms of engaging developers. Regarding the payment terms, they have worked to get developers to reduce these to 7 days.

The consortiums which have been developed in Work Package 6 will also play an important role in the Games, by enabling smaller organisations to work together to complete larger tenders.

The Commonwealth Games also represents a number of important legacy opportunities.

- USE-IT has established a burgeoning social enterprise sector who will be able to bid for tenders around the Commonwealth Games after the project ends; and
- USE-IT partners are looking to take ownership of a building in the athletes' village after the Games, securing a long-term social enterprise hub.

## Outcome Four: Increase in people in work in a social enterprise

Outcome Four is the outcome against which progress has proved the most difficult. One reason for this relates to the underdeveloped baseline of the social enterprise sector in the USE-IT area. There has been considerable work done to raise this baseline, and there are now a high representation of newer social enterprises with the Social Enterprise City survey finding that 39% of social enterprises do not yet employ staff.

Beyond the underdeveloped baseline, there were also some difficulties in delivering on this outcome. The Chamber of Commerce were not able to complete the work, and iSE had to take ownership of this strand of work quite late in the project. Since then, some progress has been made, including two work placements have linked local people to social enterprises. Other local organisations who work with people looking for work experience have also been contacted and are now beginning to place people in work experience. This is testament to the importance of the flexibility of the USE-IT programme, as partners were able to reimagine an element of the Work Package and have begun to see good results.

Further progress against the outcome relates to the work experience in schools element of the programme. The interim report found that the application form stated that 15 secondary schools would be engaged with, despite there not being 15 secondary schools within the USE-IT area. To combat this issue, a programme of work experience was developed with the help of a social entrepreneur from the USE-IT area, who had been through the FUSE programme, that was rolled out to Years 4 and 5 in six primary schools. Three of these schools were in the USE-IT area, while another three were outside of the area in order to test the legacy across the city.

The programme supported children to look at what they wanted to change within their communities and design a social enterprise around that. The programme delivered training to teachers and provided all the materials needed for the classroom. Continually, the learning around setting the business up was integrated into the curriculum. For example, maths lessons covered budgeting, and in geography lessons the children surveyed the local community to find out what they wanted to change. During consultation it was reported that the power of USE-IT within this project was enabling a 'genuine pilot' and the ability to try things out, that would not usually be supported.

## Outcome Five: Sustainable community of social entrepreneurs

A number of activities have been completed designed to ensure that the community of social entrepreneurs that has been established will be sustainable post-USE-IT. Training and information delivered by iSE has focused on ensuring that social enterprises can be much more resilient and will need less support. One of these training packages that was successful was the leadership training, which helped *"build the resilience of the next generation of social enterprise leaders."*

Social Enterprise City will also build up a sustainable community that expands wider than the USE-IT area, and another method ensuring sustainability is the Soho Network. Social entrepreneurs that attend this Network report its usefulness for networking, describing it as a 'font of knowledge.'

However, many social entrepreneurs consulted reported unfamiliarity with the Network, though most acknowledged that this was because of where they are in terms of their own social enterprises. Some social entrepreneurs have still been working full time and have thus not been able to attend the Network because of this. Others have struggled with capacity and are looking to be able to reattend the Network after having to stop previously. Others are only just getting to the stage where they would find use from it. One social entrepreneur did report being 'mystified' by the Network, as while they had heard about it on the FUSE programme, they have not had any further information. However, even this entrepreneur acknowledged that they are not yet at the stage where they 'have all my ducks lined up' and ready to attend a Network like this. All of the issues with the Network then relate more closely to the findings of the 2017 baseline survey and 2019 Social Enterprise City survey which highlighted the lack of a social enterprise sector within the USE-IT area.

As well as the Soho Network, other pieces of work have been completed by the partners of the Work Package Six which will go some way in ensuring a sustainable community of social entrepreneurs, even after USE-IT project has ended. For example, a participant on the FUSE programme worked with Smethwick CAN, one of the USE-IT partners, to create a six desk co-working space in an underutilised space in Holy Trinity Church. In the three months since opening, this space now has 15 members who are a range of social entrepreneurs, individuals running social projects, and micro-businesses with an interest in the local community. From this, there have already been two meetings about setting up a CIC or social enterprise which have come directly from conversations in the coworking space.

## **Outcome Six: Increase capacity of local communities to respond to and address social issues**

This is a difficult outcome to measure, and again presented some difficulties in terms of the undeveloped nature of social enterprise in the USE-IT area. However, some progress has been made.

For example, there are some examples of people taking part in multiple activities within the USE-IT programme. For example, some participants started their USE-IT journey as part of Work Package 4, where they were involved as a community researchers', before completing the FUSE programme in Work Package 6.

The programme within schools also helped increase the capacity of local communities to address social issues. Children were encouraged to address local social issues, choosing to set up social enterprises to address local issues such as homeless people, children at school living in temporary accommodation, and parents who were learning English as second language, amongst others.

Similarly, the number of social enterprises set up in the area will go some way in increasing the capacity of local communities to respond to and address social issues in that all of the enterprises have a social focus. Some aim to address social isolation, while others sought to create activities that would draw people together in a very mixed neighbourhood.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below are grouped into two categories, those to ensure the legacy of this work in the USE-IT area, and those which seek to inform the transfer of this approach to other areas and contexts.

Legacy in the USE-IT area:

- 1) Work Package 6 has achieved excellent with a broad range of public and private sector anchor institutions and developers in a relatively short space of time and from a largely underdeveloped starting point. The partners on the Social Enterprise City Steering Group should now seek to go further than initial engagement and corporate social responsibility pledges and seek to shift the procurement policy and practice of these institutions and realise supply chain opportunities for local social enterprises at scale.
- 2) The Soho Network will continue to run after the end of the USE-IT project. The Network is a valuable resource for many of the social entrepreneurs who attend, not only in terms of peer support and advice, but also in regard to leveraging further business opportunities. However, the Network should be better promoted to entrepreneurs finishing the FUSE programme, as many interviewed were unfamiliar with it. Ensuring the success of the Network is important for creating a sustainable community of social entrepreneurs, and so ensuring that new social entrepreneurs are easily able to get involved is vital.
- 3) Ensure that the community researcher social enterprise continues to deliver benefit for the USE-IT area. This is an important legacy project for USE-IT as it brings together two of the work packages. Thus, it is important that the social enterprise should seek to maintain and recruit a diverse cohort of community researchers from the local area. In addition, it should seek to provide free training and the opportunity for people from deprived neighbourhoods of Birmingham to work on future projects.
- 4) It will also be important to ensure that work around Social Enterprise City continues to benefit the USE-IT area. While it is essential it operates at city-wide scale, ensuring that more hard to reach communities and areas, such as the ones identified in the USE-IT model, are not left behind will be important to ensure that the core purpose of USE-IT is enshrined long after the project has finished.

Transferability:

- 5) The key facet of Work Package 6 which sets it apart from other social enterprise development programmes has been around linkages to macro opportunities and a determined focus on trading and supply chain integration. The recommendation is therefore that other social enterprise development programmes should shift their approach and emphasise trading, especially with anchor institutions, earlier on. While this may seem daunting for some social entrepreneurs on the beginning of their journey, encourage trading and providing help and support around getting in the supply chains of large public sector anchor institutions would have a greater impact on strengthening and democratising local economies anywhere.

- 6) The place-based focus of USE-IT has also been valuable. Focusing on a specific area did come with some of its own challenges (as discussed in the impact evaluation of this section) but overall it represents a unique and successful model. By harnessing existing assets, such as the space in Holy Trinity Church, USE-IT, and Work Package 6 more specifically, were able to create a sustainable community of social entrepreneurs who are rooted to and passionate about their local community and place.

# 7. Community assets and finance: Impact analysis

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This section describes the impact of Work Package 7 which has been led jointly by iSE and Birmingham City Council. The delivery of this Work Package deviated significantly from the original project plan and has been refocused on supporting community economic development activity in neighbourhoods within the USE-IT! area, building a strong legacy for the project and building an infrastructure to support social enterprise in Birmingham.

## Context

This Work Package was originally focused largely on building the financial architecture for social enterprises to sustain activity initiated through the wider project. During the course of the project, it was redesigned to enable project resources to be directed to emerging opportunities and challenges. In this revised plan, activity has focused in three areas: The development of community economic development plans; securing a roadmap for legacy and; the creation of the 'social enterprise city' programme. The willingness to flex project activity and resources in this way is not typical of significant regeneration projects of this type and was widely recognised as a significant strength of USE-IT! by the project delivery partners.

This impact analysis has been drawn together through: reviewing the outputs associated with the Work Package; undertaking interviews with those responsible for delivering the project; and through interviews with direct beneficiaries.

## Summary of activities and outputs

This element of the section details the key findings in relation to the impact of the activities under Work Package 7. The findings follow the relevant outcome themes of the evaluation framework produced collaboratively by CLES and the Project Board for the USE-IT! project.

## Outputs delivered

The following outputs have been delivered through this Work Package:

- Three Community Economic Development Plans have been developed for Soho, Smethwick and the Summerfield Reservoir along with community economic development activity in Ladywood to link local people to job opportunities in the Birmingham Round House and Ladywood Leisure Centre

- A Roadmap for legacy which includes legacy pathways for all USE-IT! Delivery Partners, Work Packages and the overall project as an example of good practice in addressing urban poverty.
- The formation of Birmingham Social Enterprise City as an agent to support and advance social enterprise in the city.

## Impact assessment

### A stronger social and solidarity economy within neighbourhoods in the USE-IT area

**Strengthened existing social and solidarity sector organisations.** A key characteristic of the approach taken to delivery of this Work Package has been to prioritise building trust and working *with* existing community groups and organisations rather than to setting out to create new organisations. This was a consistent message we heard across our interviews, with people clearly enthused and committed to this way of working:

“Previously, the answer to the need for community action [in this area] has been to set up a new group or community organisation, this was different”

We heard numerous examples of organisations who had benefited from the practical support that USE-IT had provided through: technical advice and expertise (through iSE and Cooperative Futures) and; ‘horizontal’ connections to other groups in the area and ‘vertical connections’ to institutions. In some cases this support has enabled informal groups to grow and commercialise their activities, for example, a resident gardening group has developed a social enterprise to produce and sell heated raised beds. In other cases it has connected organisations to opportunities in the area, for example brokering a relationship between a prominent social economy organisation in Birmingham with the developer of a major regeneration scheme in the area to create opportunity for them to relocate to that site. People also described the way that USE-IT has “elevated” what they had felt was informal community activity and helped those involved develop their own understanding of the wider national and international social innovation movements. One respondent described how the visits he’d been on as part of USE-IT (to the Social Enterprise World Forum and to a London based participation event) had helped him go from “doing things [in the community] as a hobby to changing the economy!”

Furthermore, the project has strengthened the architecture of the social and solidarity economy in the area, through support for weekly and monthly community meet ups which bring people from across the area together and provide a forum for connections to be made.

**Supported the growth of new social and solidarity economy organisations.** While all respondents were clear that the primary objective of the community economic development element of this Work Package was to support existing community organisations, several new SSE organisations have emerged through these activities. These include Eat, Make, Play (see case study below) and a Food Cooperative in Smethwick. These organisations have emerged from engagement activity with people and organisations in the area rather than fulfilling a pre-set target.



**Increased social productivity of land and assets.** A key success of this Work Package has been to 'unlock' the social potential of several key community assets including the playing field next to Edgbaston Reservoir and the establishment of a social enterprise co-working space at Holy Trinity, Smethwick. These achievements emerged not from a pre-formed objective but from engagement with local people and organisations who could see the potential of pieces of land and buildings around them but faced barriers to realising this. The case of the Edgbaston Reservoir Playing field is illustrative of the efficacy of this approach. Widely described to us a "long term problem" and source of tension between local residents and the City Council, through this Work Package connections have been built between the landowner (Birmingham Settlement), local community groups and residents and the City Council planning department. Along with providing small sums of funding for community activities, USE-IT! funded staff have acted as enablers of this as a participatory process in which "there was no brave vision, just everyone doing their bit". The result has been the development of plans for the site (which had been untended and intermittently proposed for development for many years) which include expanded space and facilities for existing community organisations, the development of a eco-community centre and other environmental assets.

**Built profile and potential market share of social enterprise sector in Birmingham.**

Beyond the USE-IT area, this Work Package has had a defining influence on the profile of social enterprise in Birmingham. Through the formation of the Social Enterprise City workstream, USE-IT resources have been used secure the following impacts:

- Secured Social Enterprise City accreditation for the city
- Built a Steering Group of 5 local anchor institutions, 2 social enterprise organisations and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP.
- Developed a programme of work focused on building the strength and penetration of social enterprise in the Birmingham economy, through work on: Shaping markets; building skills and knowledge of the sector; capacity building; data (including production of a baseline study of the sector) and; awareness raising (reaching 240,000 people through the 'City Drive' initiative in 2019)
- Developed a local plan to ensure opportunities around the Commonwealth Games 2022 are maximised. This has included securing commitments from developers to spend at least £3.5m with Birmingham based social enterprises, a significant opportunity for smaller, newer social enterprises supported by USE-IT! to access these supply chain opportunities.

Expanded the reach of USE-IT activities

**USE-IT! reached beyond those ready to engage in formal activities.** Respondents described that in the other Work Packages participants were required to sign-up to formal activities (as community researchers, as learners on English language and social enterprise programmes) and levels of engagement in those from several neighbourhoods within the USE-IT area was low. Work Package seven therefore focused on recognising and supporting the more informal activity already taking place in these areas. For example, while Work Package 6 focuses on supporting people who have

decided they would like to form a social enterprise, in Work Package 7 the aim has been to support a wider range of social and solidarity economy activity:

“That plurality of work is crucial. If it had just been about social enterprise, it would have been limited – wouldn’t have got that wider animation of the community”

In some cases (such as the Warm Earth gardening group – see above) we heard that USE-IT support has enabled informal community activity to grow and move into a viable social enterprise operation (supported by Work Package 6). But it was clear from delivery partners that this was understood not to be the sole or even primary goal of their activities.

**Flexibility has enabled project to realise unforeseen opportunities.** The willingness to flex the resources allocated to Work Package 7 to respond to emerging opportunities has meant that the project overall has delivered impacts that were not anticipated in the original project bid. While delays in construction of the new hospital (which was intended to be a venue for social enterprise markets in the original project plan) prevented planned activities, the response has been to ‘unlock’ existing assets such as Edgbaston Reservoir playing field.

#### Build a legacy for the USE-IT programme

This Work Package has included activity to support individual Work Packages to build a lasting legacy in the USE-IT area. Details of these activities are described in specific Work Package impact reports (see sections 4-6). However, beyond individual Work Packages, activities to strengthen the legacy of USE-IT have had the following wider impacts:

**Secured senior support for USE-IT as a model of locality working.** Throughout the final year of the project, Birmingham City Council has been developing a new model of locality working. There has been significant interest from both senior officers and elected members in the USE-IT project and a desire to apply the learning generated from it in the development of the new model. USE-IT! staff have proactively engaged in this process, with Cabinet members and officers invited to take part in learning events and activities. This has proved highly successful with a commitment now secured from the Council to XXXXXX [need to insert specific comments from Jonathan Tew here].

**Pioneered a different approach to neighbourhood regeneration.** We repeatedly heard from respondents that the approach to the community economic development aspects of Work Package 7 took a very different approach to regeneration to projects that had come before. The ‘detectorist’ approach of finding and then connecting people, organisations, institutional actors and physical assets for many was in stark contrast to the model of delivering predefined ‘solutions’ in an area. This approach is a key legacy of the USE-IT activities in this area, in terms of the direct experience of those who have worked on and with the project and as a shared narrative for how change can be realised in the future.

#### USE-IT activities benefit people experiencing persistent poverty

**USE-IT activities has addressed the social isolation of people living in poverty.** Through the community economic development activities within this Work Package

USE-IT has sought to address the isolation of people experiencing poverty in the USE-IT area. While USE-IT activities have not directly provided material assistance to those in poverty, organisations which do provide such support have been involved as delivery partners and collaborations. This has meant that the people they engage with have been able to take part in the community activities and events which USE-IT has enabled and supported (such as the community picnics on the Edgbaston Reservoir playing field).

**USE-IT has recognised the assets that exist within neighbourhoods often defined as 'deprived'.** A number of respondents emphasised the value of USE-IT in recognising the skills, experiences and activities of people living in neighbourhoods which are often defined by the level of material deprivation.

"If you find some way of recognising people in the first instance and getting them interested and following their own interests and generating community feeling other things will start to follow. There are groups who are able to put people in touch with jobs opportunities and benefits but you have to start at a simple level with little projects that draw people in and find out what they can do and what they can bring to the party. USE-IT has given real substance to the idea of Asset Based Community Development"

**Emerging evidence on impact of USE-IT on material deprivation.** Through our evaluation activity we have identified emerging evidence of an impact from some Work Package 7 activities on material deprivation in the area. This has largely related to the support given to seven individuals who were previously unemployed to secure job roles at the Ladywood Leisure Centre. There are indications that other Work Package activities may have led to wider impacts on incomes in the area as a result of individuals building up confidence and skills through USE-IT supported activities and moving into paid work. However data gathering on the impact of these activities on individual beneficiaries has been very limited and it is therefore not possible to verify this suggestion.

## Recommendations

The Impact Evaluation has enabled us to identify recommendations for transferability of Work Package 7:

### Transferability

- 7) The community economic development approach taken in Work Package 7 has evolved organically and the eventual model is not documented anywhere other than in this impact report. Given the extent to which this represented a shift in pre-existing models of regeneration, it is recommended that a dedicated piece of work is done to document and communicate the model for practitioners interested in adopting co-productive approaches to neighbourhood economic development in other areas of Birmingham and more widely.
- 8) Similarly, the story of the engagement with City Council planners around the Edgbaston Reservoir and the outcome in terms of moving towards a co-productive approach to masterplanning has great significance for other areas. It is recommended that the experience be documented and translated into a practice relevant case study for use by planners and community activists seeking to engage on similar issues.

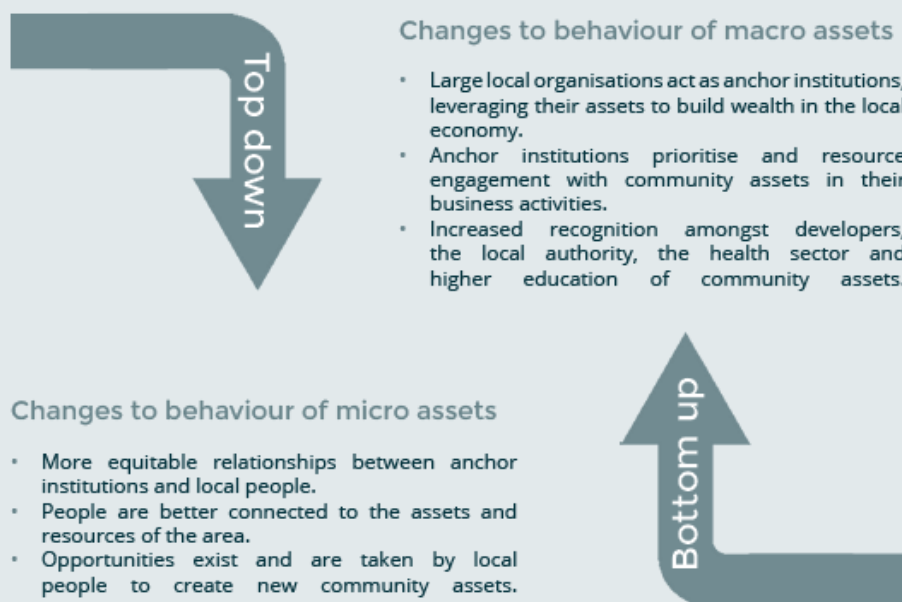
## 8. System change: Challenges, responses and impact

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The USE-IT! project has sought to drive change through the delivery of specific work packages but also to influence wider system change and advance the 'micro to macro' model more widely. To understand the extent to which the project has realised this ambition we have evaluated progress against six 'system change' outcomes.

These six outcomes can be grouped under two headings, those relating to changes in the behaviour of macro assets (which could be understood as 'top-down' changes) and those that relate to changes in the understanding and profile of micro assets (which could be understood as 'bottom-up' changes).

Figure 1: System change outcomes



To analyse progress against these outcomes we interviewed people from USE-IT funded organisations across all four principle Work Packages to investigate the challenges the project has encountered, how it has responded and emerging evidence about the impact these approaches have had.

## Top-down

### Challenges

**There are few national and local policy drivers for public and commercial sector organisations to use their economic weight to support inclusive economic development.** While the concept of large local public and commercial sector organisations acting as ‘anchor institutions’ to utilise their purchasing power and assets to promote inclusive economic development is now well established<sup>5</sup>, national policy in large part runs counter to such an approach. Hospitals and universities are instead subject to national performance and funding frameworks that prioritise cost and efficiency, economies of scale and performance against nationally set metrics.

**The business operations and processes of anchor institutions are geared towards large suppliers delivering large scale contracts.** This has made securing supply chain opportunities for locally based organisations very challenging. At a practical level we heard examples of delays of three months or more in payments for services which present significant issues for small organisations dependent on these payments to cover immediate costs. At a strategic level, contracts are designed to secure lowest possible cost by aggregating the goods / services required into large contracts making them beyond the capacity of smaller suppliers to deliver.

**For the duration of the project the dominant model for neighbourhood regeneration in Birmingham has focused on facilitating activity by commercial developers to drive economic growth.** National regeneration programmes and funding have been non-existent and the City Council has seen cuts of over 30% in its budget over the decade, meaning that funding for non-statutory services has essentially evaporated. Against this backdrop, the City Council, in common with many UK local authorities, has worked with commercial developers to bring investment to the city.

**The idea that the economic ‘clout’ of anchor institutions could be used to tackle poverty was not well understood by local anchor institutions at the outset of the project.** Representatives from all the ‘macro’ asset organisations in the USE-IT area described initiatives which their organisation had undertaken to engage and support community organisations. However these were largely one off initiatives geared at supporting community activity rather than attempts to address social and economic challenges in these areas through the redirection of spending and physical and financial assets. Many of the individuals within organisations that were interested in such an approach reported that prior to their involvement in USE-IT they and their colleagues did not have the skills, experience or connections necessary to realise that ambition.

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<sup>5</sup> See [https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Community-Wealth-Building-through-Anchor-Institutions\\_01\\_02\\_17.pdf](https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Community-Wealth-Building-through-Anchor-Institutions_01_02_17.pdf)

**A decade of austerity has led to a retreat of local public services from non-statutory services. This has limited the capacity of the local authority to engage with initiatives such as USE-IT!** We heard repeated references to the focus of the City Council on managing reductions in funding. This has had practical implications of the availability of staff within the City Council to support and engage with the project both because of increasing workloads, the uncertainty created by continuous budget reductions and loss of staff with prior knowledge of the project from services as the number of employees has reduced. Many of the people we spoke to in the City Council were supportive of the project and its aims and could see the alignment between its objectives and wider Council priorities (including a commitment to locality working and inclusive growth) but were wary of engagement in a project whose considerable resources set it apart from the majority of other areas in the city.

## How USE-IT has responded

**Across all USE-IT! work packages individuals have bridged the gap between anchor institution, local organisations and individuals.** Many of the people we spoke to who worked for delivery partner organisations described difficulty making their organisation's standard processes or approaches adapt to the USE-IT approach. In many cases their response was to go beyond standard operating processes to bridge these gaps. Examples included paying community groups out of their own pockets because they knew that payments would otherwise take so long that the group would not be able to cover its costs, working beyond contracted working hours to engage with communities and working outside of formal policy.

**For the majority of the project, rather than pursuing changes in the policy and strategy of 'macro assets', USE-IT! has instead sought out opportunities to test different ways of working and build new practice 'from the ground up'.** For example, in relation to the Edgbaston Reservoir masterplanning process, USE-IT supported the formation of a community alliance group focused on maximising community use of the playing field site neighbouring the reservoir through community events, engagement and collaboration. In practice the Alliance did itself then go on to engage with planners about the masterplanning process and ultimately produce an alternative planning document but their approach was grounded in community activity. In the final months of the project we heard examples USE-IT! staff drawing on these experiences to influence wider policy and strategy, for example in the development of a neighbourhood governance model for the city and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

**USE-IT! has built city-wide coalitions around common priorities.** The creation of the Social Enterprise City Steering Group is a key example of how USE-IT has sought to affect the economic policy landscape in the city. The team identified the opportunity of applying for Social Enterprise City status as a mechanism for raising the profile of social enterprise and providing a dedicated forum for linking macro asset demand with micro asset supply.

**USE-IT! has utilised European funding to supplement anchor institution budgets, enable action and deliver proof of concept, specifically in the case of the pathways to employment work package.**

## Impact

**USE-IT! has secured policy and cultural change in relation to recruitment practice of the local hospital trust** which is now being adopted across the Black Country and recognised at a national level.

**USE-IT has pioneered a model for bridging macro and micro assets which is being taken up by the City Council as a blueprint for its new locality working approach and by local housing associations.** Pioneer Housing Group, based in the Castle Vale area of north Birmingham, has committed to taking forward the USE-IT approach to link the macro asset opportunities connected to the Commonwealth Games with the micro assets in their area. [Insert quote from Jonathan Tew on Council].

**USE-IT has had an impact on the economic policy landscape of Birmingham by creating the Social Enterprise City Board** and securing the commitment of anchor institutions across the city to support social enterprise as a key element of building an inclusive economy.

**Development of a new social benefit clause, based on the USE-IT! principles, to be considered for the procurement of a major new housing development proposed for north Birmingham.**

## Bottom-up

### Challenges

**High levels of deprivation and transience in many parts of the area meant that activities to grow social enterprise took longer than anticipated in the original project plan.** We heard about the practical difficulties of establishing new businesses in areas where people are reliant on income from low paid, often precarious work making the early stages of establishing a business extremely challenging. A number of interviewees also described a lack of recognition of the human and physical assets of these communities and the work that was needed to identify these assets and support individuals and groups to build on them to grow social businesses.

“The fact is that there is so much that exists that is untapped, [there has been a] lack of meeting places, lack of someone who to coordinate things that are going on, that’s what [the USE-IT project manager] has managed to [do]. It’s as simple as making jam, I don’t know how to make it, but I know people who do!”

**We heard repeated references to high levels of distrust of regeneration initiatives from residents in the area and pervasive narratives about the Council “promising big and delivering small”.** Many respondents talked about the lengthy process of building trust between the project and people and organisations in the area.

**Community activists described feelings of isolation and that organisations such as the Council and the University were “remote”.** Few of the smaller community organisations and individuals we spoke to had any pre-existing relationship with the City Council, universities or hospital trust prior to the USE-IT project.



**The different operating priorities and restrictions of micro and macro organisations often lead to misunderstanding that can undermine attempts at developing partnership working.** Several respondents noted barriers to partnership working for the largest programme partners (the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University, University Hospital Birmingham and Birmingham City Council). They highlighted scale and bureaucracy as obstacles to building strong partnerships with small, local community groups and organisations. In practical terms they talked about the difficulty in making payments to community organisations, slowness of HR processes and size meaning that finding the right person within the organisation to resolve an issue was time consuming. It was recognised that where Anchors were able to overcome these barriers it was through considerable legwork of personally committed employees who could 'face both ways' and act as bridges between the community and the Anchor:

"It's [been] a bit like herding cats with an oil tanker!"

**The UIA funding regime presented obstacles to the involvement of smaller organisations.** These included a very short (one month) window between the call for applications and deadline for submissions and a requirement to provide detailed budgets and a commitment to provide match funding from each delivery partner in the Application Form. Smaller, community-based organisations struggled to meet these requirements.

## How USE-IT has responded

**Maximised flexibility within a rigid funding regime to redesign activities and resources to respond to local context and needs.** Relationships with the UIA secretariat have been carefully managed which has enabled maximum flexibility to vary the delivery of the programme where new opportunities have emerged to strengthen impact. For example, all deviations from the Application Form programme description have been discussed with the UIA Secretariat and in principle agreement was secured prior to formal sign-off. An example has been the re-allocating of Work Package 7 funds to community economic development activity and to high level English language training.

**Prioritised and resourced the building, bonding and bridging social capital necessary to grow the social and solidarity economy in the USE-IT! area.** In Work Package 7 the aim of community economic development activity has been to support a wider range of social and solidarity economy activity. In some cases (such as the Warm Earth gardening group – see above) we heard that USE-IT support has enabled informal community activity to grow and move into a viable social enterprise operation (supported by Work Package 6). But it was clear from delivery partners that this was understood not to be the sole or even primary goal of their activities.

**Invested in building relationships with people and organisations and utilised resources, networks and capacity to 'unlock' the potential of these community assets.** Examples include Brushstrokes (which has been enabled to become a community anchor organisation (see section 5), Warm Earth (see section 7) and the playing field at the edge of Edgbaston Reservoir (see section 7).

**Built hyperlocal communication channels to connect people and build community capacity.** Prior to the Programme Work Package 3 identified that there was no dedicated hyper-local community social media channel for the Ladywood area. Use-IT! social media channels have built the local communications infrastructure and through direct support to community groups and organisations they have enabled those with little or no social media capacity to promote and engage online. Social media analysis reinforces this point, with 1289 followers across all project platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) and 1039 posts and retweets of USE-IT content in 2019 and 303,000 impressions. A number of interviewees commented that it was easy to secure support from USE-IT! to strengthen their own communications efforts, for example through paid for Facebook advertising, "they've got the resources and they are happy to bend them to local priorities".

**Married practical support with affirmation and profile for community activists and organisations, linking them to peer networks locally, nationally and internationally.** Respondents described the way that USE-IT has "elevated" what they had felt was informal community activity and helped those involved develop their own understanding of the wider national and international social innovation movements. One respondent described how the visits he'd been on as part of USE-IT (to the Social Enterprise World Forum and to a London based participation event) had helped him go from "doing things [in the community] as a hobby to changing the economy!"

**Played the role of interpreter and connector between macro and micro partners as a way of helping to establish positive, ongoing relationships.** In many cases USE-IT engaged as a neutral partner whose focus was on building relationships rather than delivering a specific agenda. A key example of this is the brokering of relationships between Birmingham Settlement (the landowner), local resident groups and the City Council in relation the playing field adjacent to the Edgbaston Reservoir.

## Impact

**Supported existing local community organisations to develop into 'community anchor institutions' in the USE-IT area.** Examples include:

- Brushstrokes, who have played a crucial role in 'unlocking' the potential of local migrants;
- Birmingham Settlement, which is 'unlocking' the potential of its land on the Edgbaston Reservoir through a participatory community design process.

**Strengthened and grown the wider social and solidarity economy in the area, with new social enterprises, co-operatives and networks of support for informal community activity and groups.**

**Boosted the reach and depth of engagement of local residents in community activities, including those experiencing poverty.** We heard qualitative evidence of the difference practical and technical support had made to the success of community-led activities. Social media data illustrates the reach of USE-IT! communications activities, with 1289 followers across all project platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) and 1039 posts and retweets of USE-IT content in 2019 and 303,000 impressions.

**Built linking social capital in Greater Icknield, enabling local people to have greater say over the future of their area.** For example in the development of a community masterplan for the Edgbaston Reservoir which has prompted an innovative participatory approach to master planning from the City Council.

**Increased the social productivity of multiple community assets in the area.** These include the creation of a social enterprise co-working space in a local church and the redevelopment of the playing field adjacent to Edgbaston Reservoir as a site for community based environmental action and reaction.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations arising from this analysis of impact of the USE-IT programme are made at three levels: Individual Work Packages, System Change outcomes for Birmingham and recommendations for transferring the USE-IT approach to new places and contexts. This section focuses on system change outcomes, with Work Package specific recommendations embedded in the Work Package specific sections of this report and recommendations for transferability set out in our separate Transferability and Replicability study.

## System change recommendations for Birmingham

- 1) The model for recruitment of overseas medical professionals pioneered by USE-IT! provides an exemplar of an anchor institution approach to employment. We recommend that the model is promoted widely and that other anchor institutions are encouraged not simply to replicate the model but to apply the approach on which it is based to their recruitment and procurement activities.
- 2) USE-IT! has built the social economy sector in Greater Icknield. As the project comes to an end, opportunities are being created to enable social enterprises and cooperatives to compete for anchor institution supply chain opportunities. To be successful this will require engagement with procurement professionals and senior level sponsorship from within anchor institutions. We recommend that this becomes a key area of focus for Social Enterprise City, working with senior leadership of the city's anchor institutions.
- 3) USE-IT! has provided proof of concept for a transformational model of locality working. We recommend that the model and the learning from it are applied and embedded in the City Council's emerging model of locality working.
- 4) USE-IT! has generated numerous examples of the 'unlocking' of community assets, increasing the social productivity of land and buildings. We recommend that this becomes a prominent role for a future locality working model in the city.

- 5) This impact evaluation highlighted variable levels of commitment to an anchor institution approach among the city's anchor institutions, with USE-IT! staff often operating outside of existing policies and procedures. We recommend that the learning from the project is shared with the city's Anchor Institution Network.
- 6) The USE-IT! focus on growing the social and solidarity economy and connecting people to the wealth that exists within anchor institutions are key elements of an approach to building a more inclusive economy. However, without strategic commitment and support to such approaches there is a risk they remain marginal to the city's wider economic strategy and have limited traction on the economic conditions in which people live. We recommend that the USE-IT! impact report is considered by economic development and regeneration professionals in the city and learning from it used to prompt a review of current approaches to economic development.