Local Trust
trusting local people

Research on community responses to COVID-19 and how they recover

Introduction

Local Trust has commissioned in-depth research to look how communities across England respond to COVID-19, and how they recover.

The research, which is being undertaken by a coalition of researchers led by The Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham, looks at how different communities fare during and after the coronavirus crisis. The findings will provide insight into the impact of unexpected demands or crisis on local communities, and the factors that shape their resilience, response and recovery.

About the research

When faced with a crisis or difficult situation, one of the advantages communities have is their ability to react swiftly and decisively; to join together and quickly assess how to respond and to act without the shackles of bureaucracy. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 communities have been responding to support each other, whether that's by coordinating food packages for the most vulnerable, door knocking to safely check on those who are isolated, setting up online neighbourhood groups to stay in touch. Although the value of communities responding to crises is well-recognised, it is rare to have the opportunity to assess it while it is happening.

The COVID-19 crisis enables us to look at how communities react to, cope with and recover from a major crisis that impacts almost everybody in the community. Local Trust is keen to take this opportunity to learn what sort of help communities are best placed to give, how they make it happen and how this might be best supported.

The research will draw out possible differences between the experience of Big Local and non-Big Local communities and also inform Local Trust's work on 'left behind' communities by ensuring that the experience of left behind areas are captured in the research.

We are also keen to understand what Big Local areas might need to reboot once the crisis as passed, insight which might inform future use of contingency funds.

The research will take place between April 2020- March 2021 and will broadly cover two phases, with regular outputs shared throughout:

COMMUNITY FUND

1)   the "response phase" (April – September 2020)

2)   the "recovery phase" (October- March 2021)

Research questions

The questions this research will seek to answer are:

1.   **How do communities react to, cope with and recover from major crises?**

2.   **What have communities done in reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak and how does this compare with community reactions to other crises?**

3.   **What support do communities need to make an effective response to COVID-19?**

4.   **What support do communities need to recover effectively from the impact of COVID-19?**

5.   **How do Big Local communities differ from non-Big Local communities in their response to COVID-19, their recovery from it and their support needs?**

6.   **How do communities in 'left behind' areas differ from the other communities in the sample in their response to COVID-19, their recovery from it and their support needs**?

Methods

The project involves extensive research to capture real time learning and fieldwork in areas. Desk research will include literature reviews, analysis of social media and other material relevant to community responses. Fieldwork will be based on regular, in-depth individual and group interviews with residents, community groups, Big Local reps and local authorities.

Study areas

The study areas have been selected because of pre-existing, trusted relationships between community members, researchers and established research programmes, ensuring the research can start to provide immediate outputs, and avoid placing additional burdens on the communities involved.

The 25 study areas are located across all regions of England with diverse characteristics, from rural villages to urban estates. They are places where:

- residents have been supported over the long term to build civic capacity, and make decisions about resource allocation through the [Big Local programme](#)

- residents have received other funding and support (through the [Creative Civic Change programme](#) administered by Local Trust)

- areas categorised as ['left-behind'](#) because communities have fewer places to meet, lack digital and physical connectivity, and there is a less active and engaged community

Research team:

Angus McCabe (TSRC) is leading a team as part of this work. They include: Mandy Wilson (Mandy Wilson Ltd), Rob Macmillan (Sheffield Hallam University), Angela Ellis Paine (TSRC), Helen Harris (TSRC), Paul Morgans, Amanda Smethurst (Amanda Smethurst Consultancy); Asif Afridi (Brap); Richard Usher (Just Ideas Sustainable Solutions); Lizzie Oxborrow (Renaisi); Sarah Boiling (Sarah Boiling Associates) and Wendy Sugarman (WSA Community Consultants).

Outputs

There will be regular outputs from the research, including:

- Monthly research briefings: monthly briefings combining reviews of relevant literature and emerging findings from the fieldwork

- Blogs: blogs throughout the research to giving an essence of what we are learning within the wider context of other research taking place

- Reports: two reports, one from the "response phase" (April- September 2020) and another from the "recovery phase" (October to March 2021), giving a full picture of the research and analysis in relation to the research questions

More information:

If you have any questions about the research or would like to discuss the project with us, please contact us at research@localtrust.org.uk

Study areas

	Location	Region	Local Authority	Big Local	Creative Civic Change	"Left Behind"
1	Bath and North East Somerset	South West	Bath and North East Somerset Council	✔		
2	Birmingham	West Midlands	Birmingham City Council	✔	✔	
3	Birmingham	West Midlands	Birmingham City Council	✔		✔
4	Blackpool	North West	Blackpool Borough Council	✔		✔
5	Bristol	South West	Bristol City Council	✔		
6	Bristol	South West	Bristol City Council		✔	
7	Corby, Northamptonshire	East Midlands	Northamptonshire County Council	✔	✔	✔
8	Ealing	London	Ealing Borough Council	✔		
9	Enfield	London	Enfield Borough Council	✔		
10	Gravesham, Kent	South East	Kent County Council	✔		

	Location	Region	Local Authority	Big Local	Creative Civic Change	"Left Behind"
11	Grimsby	North East	North East Lincolnshire Council		✔	
12	Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire	East of England	Cambridgeshire County Council	✔		
13	Liverpool	North West	Liverpool City Council		✔	
14	Milton Keynes	South East	Milton Keynes Council	✔		
15	North East Derbyshire and Chesterfield, Derbyshire	East Midlands	Derbyshire County Council	✔		
16	North Tyneside	North East	North Tyneside Borough Council	✔	✔	
17	Northampton, Northamptonshire	East Midlands	Northamptonshire County Council	✔		✔
18	Scarborough, North Yorkshire	Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire County Council	✔		
19	Sheffield	Yorkshire & Humber	Sheffield City Council	✔		
20	Shropshire (Oswestry)	West Midlands	Shropshire Council	✔		

	Location	Region	Local Authority	Big Local	Creative Civic Change	"Left Behind"
21	Telford	West Midlands	Telford and Wrekin Council	✓		✓
22	Thanet	South East	Kent County Council	✓	✓	✓
23	Thurrock, Essex	East of England	Thurrock Borough Council	✓		
24	Walsall, (Darlaston South)	West Midlands	Walsall Council			✓
25	Wolverhampton, (Bilston East)	West Midlands	City of Wolverhampton Council			✓

About Local Trust

Local Trust is a place-based funder supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places where they live. We believe there is a need to put more power, resources and decision-making into the hands of local communities, to enable them to transform and improve their lives and the places in which they live.

We do this by trusting local people. Our aims are to demonstrate the value of long term, unconditional, resident-led funding through our work supporting local communities make their areas better places to live, and to draw on the learning from our work to promote a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and others engage with communities and place

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