

## PARTNERSHIP REVIEWS: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Big Local programme is based on the commitment, passion, and talents of local people who volunteer their time to improve their area and the lives of the communities living there. Since 2015, we have asked Big Local reps to submit updated information about each partnership on an annual basis.

The partnership review is carried out for numerous reasons. It's a way for Big Local to ensure partnerships are within [Big Local criteria](#) (resident-led, with over 50% residents and eight or more people). It provides a valuable insight that allows us to better understand how resident-led decision-making works in practice through the Big Local programme. It also helps us understand who is involved in delivering Big Local and how the partnership operates as a group.

Below is a short summary of the 2021 partnership reviews and information on how we'll be supporting areas to respond to some of the findings.

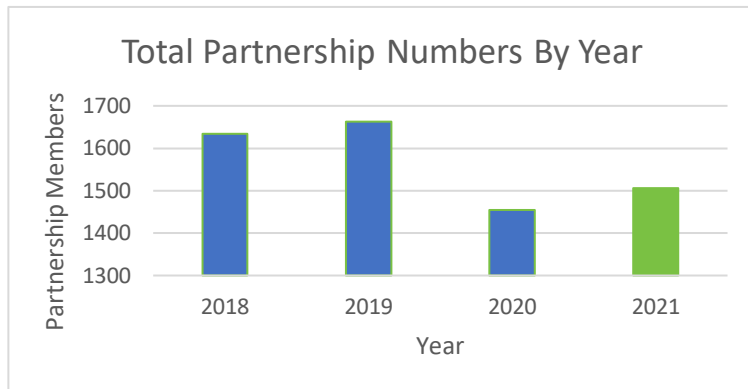
### What we've learned

Since partnership reviews started in 2015, over 4,300 people have been involved in Big Local as partnership members (excluding workers or LTO representatives). On average, that equates to roughly 29 different people being formally involved per partnership over the course of the program. Of course, many more people are involved in other ways including delivering and participating in activities.

Big Local continues to benefit hugely from the volunteering spirit of those involved. Despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, we welcomed 374 new members onto Big Local partnerships in 2021.



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COVID-19 did have an understandable impact on participation. Before the pandemic, approximately 400 new people joined partnerships each year. In 2020, 252 people joined, presumably because many had less time to volunteer and difficulty getting out into the community to connect with people.

Despite this drop in partnership numbers, the review showed a compelling story of the commitment, passion and resilience of Big Local volunteers who continued to deliver their plans or adapted them quickly in response. We know that many Big Local areas thrived, providing vital support to their communities, and making new connections with community members who sought out their Big Local for advice and support.

The increase in partnership numbers this year is positive: 1455 members were involved in 2020, which has now increased to 1506 in 2021.

Many partnerships have a core of members who have participated for multiple years and this trend has continued in the most recent review. 276 partnership members have appeared in all seven partnership reviews, dating back to 2015. In more than two-thirds (108) of partnerships, one member appeared in all seven reviews. Whilst 44 partnerships have at least three members who've been involved in seven partnership reviews.



The increase in partnership members this year has also contributed to an increase in areas that met Big Local criteria in 2021. Whilst 42 areas were under criteria last year, this number dropped to 28, and after follow-up with partnerships from Local Trust and reps we are pleased to say that another 12 have increased their membership to come back into criteria. We will continue to support and work with the other areas to help them become stronger, resident-led partnerships who can take the lead in creating lasting change in their area.

## Next steps and Make it Happen

The continued engagement from Big Local areas with the programme has been remarkable. Many areas have innovated their approaches to continue interacting with

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their communities, and the bounce-back of partnership membership indicates that there is still a desire from volunteers to get involved with Big Local.

Whilst most partnerships are within criteria, there are still some that are struggling to meet our requirements. We will be following up with these areas directly to provide support to address any difficult issues. Part of this might include asking your rep to discuss any barriers with you and to develop a plan to ensure strong engagement and participation in the future.

It is essential that Big Local plans are made by a strong, resident-led partnership and it is a priority of the Local Trust to ensure that this continues going forwards. Therefore, we will also be working more closely with partnerships with 8 members, to ensure that they are in a strong position in terms of resident input and decision-making.

We will also be keeping in touch with partnerships throughout the year to ensure that they have access to resources that will allow their partnership numbers to increase.

Additionally, we have updated and improved the support we offer to help our Big Local areas achieve their ambitions. Based on programme insights and learning, we have rolled out a new support package called Make it Happen. Areas are now able to access more time with expert partners, attend learning events and join networking spaces on new topics, including community engagement.

If you have any questions about the above information, please contact your Big Local rep or email the Programmes team directly at [programmes@localtrust.org.uk](mailto:programmes@localtrust.org.uk).

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