



PRIDE IN PLACE

LED BY YOU – BACKED BY UK GOVERNMENT

Workshop facilitators

Chris Allen, Big Local Area Advisor



Setting up and making plans

Chris has run his own neighbourhood regeneration consultancy for over 25 years and has been an accredited adviser to central and local government. His work focusses on community led initiatives – specialising in Community Engagement, Vision Development and Strategic Planning. He has been engaged as an adviser within the Big Local programme since its beginning, working primarily around the West Midlands. He is also an accomplished regular broadcaster and podcaster as part of his Community Development work, including presenting the three series of Local Trust's national "Community Power Podcast". As a volunteer, he presents weekly radio shows that focus on Community and Business issues on Wolverhampton's Community Radio station.

His background, as a Church of England priest, also gives him specific insight into faith communities. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.

Tracy Lowe MBE, Grace Mary to Lion Farm Big Local

Setting up and making plans

Tracy is a business owner and local resident in what was the Grace Mary to Lion Farm Big Local area in Sandwell. She was the chair of that partnership for the closing years of the programme. She has also run the Wallace Community Youth Project for over 30 years, for which she has been honoured.

She is an advocate for young people, especially in her community, and builds in a 'social enterprise' element to her work to help develop business skills and an entrepreneurial outlook for the young people she engages with. She is now a trustee of the legacy body from the Big Local programme, 'GM2LF Charity'.



Dan Crowe, 3ni

Building strong partnerships - local authority perspective

Dan is director of 3ni, a new social value partnership, recently spun-out from Local Trust. 3ni brings together policy, practice, and the latest research and cutting-edge data and diagnostic tools to support local government and public sector partners to work with disadvantaged communities to transform neighbourhoods across the country. It also hosts the national network for neighbourhood improvement, sharing next and best practices to support community-led regeneration.

He incubated 3ni at Local Trust, where he previously led the policy team, in particular on the work and research programme for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods, advocating for a Community Wealth Fund, and making the case for C4, the ESRC-funded Centre for Collaboration in Community Connectedness. Dan has a background in local and regional government, working for the elected Mayors of London and in the north east of England, in regeneration policy at the Homes and Communities Agency, and for the think tanks Localis, New Europe, The Young Foundation, and Collaborate.

He has been an elected leader in the British co-operative movement, serving as Vice-President of the Co-operative Group where he led on the creation of its community strategy and as a trustee of the Co-operative Foundation. He is a Fellow of the RSA.



Vicki Gwynne- Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Building strong partnerships - local authority perspective

Vicki Gwynne is the Communities Programme Manager at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, bringing over a decade of experience in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) as well as local authority settings. She has a proven track record in community engagement, capacity building, volunteer management, and developing skills and knowledge to strengthen local communities.

Vicki is passionate about empowering individuals and organisations to create sustainable change, fostering collaboration and resilience across diverse neighbourhoods and groups. Her expertise lies in building strategic partnerships, delivering impactful programmes, and supporting inclusive growth. Committed to excellence, Vicki champions initiatives that enhance community wellbeing and long-term development.



Anna Francis, Portland Inn Project

Building strong partnerships - local authority perspective

Anna Francis is an artist and researcher whose work aims to create space to discuss and reframe city resources, through participatory art interventions.

She creates situations for herself, the public and other artists to explore places differently. In recent years the interventions which Anna has worked on focus on the city of Stoke-on-Trent, and use an action research process to recognise untapped resources, plan responses to disused sites in the city, take action to change the way these sites are viewed, and potentially, make changes, which can be temporary and sometimes permanent. Through this, Anna aims to gain an understanding of the role of artists, arts organisations and communities in the development of places.

Anna has curated exhibitions at AirSpace Gallery and The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, as well as leading on national and international curatorial and participatory projects. Anna is Associate Professor of Fine Art and Social Practice at Staffordshire University, and a Director at AirSpace Gallery, and The Portland Inn Project.



Alex Boys, Local Trust

Looking ahead: legacy in 2036 and beyond

Alex has over 20 years' experience of supporting resident-led action and community empowerment. Joining Local Trust in 2024, he leads our Delivery Team, with responsibility for delivery of the Big Local programme, our grant funding process and support offer.

In previous roles, Alex supported development of the Big Local programme at the National Lottery Community Fund and led a local infrastructure organisation in the West Midlands, providing support to resident-led partnerships and community organisations.

Prior to joining Local Trust, Alex held the position of Deputy CEO of NAVCA, the national body for local VCSE infrastructure organisations, where he played a key national role in developing the quality of local community sector support, and building voluntary sector engagement in new health and care structures. He is a trustee of Black Country Together, a charity supporting community and public sector collaboration.



Karen Williams, Bushbury Hill EMB

Looking ahead: legacy in 2036 and beyond

Karen is the Chief Officer of Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board (BHEMB), a successful and award-winning Tenant Management Organisation based in Wolverhampton. BHEMB have a Board who are all local residents and were therefore well placed to become the Local Trusted Organisation for Scotland's and Bushbury Big Local and offer support and advice in addition to ensuring good governance and accountability.

Karen is also a Board member of the Confederation of Cooperative Housing and the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations and is passionate about community led housing and tenant empowerment.



Yasamin Alttahir, Involve

Inclusive partnerships and decision making

Yasamin Alttahir is the Director of Advocacy and Communications. She has two decades of senior leadership experience in international diplomacy, crisis management, and strategic communications across conflict and post-conflict settings.

As Associate Director at the Open Society Foundations, she led global crisis-response programming across multiple countries and advised heads of state and multilateral bodies, including the UN, NATO, and the AU, on global threats to democracy. Her UK government experience spans strategic roles at the Cabinet Office, FCDO, and DEFRA, where she managed cross-government coordination on democratic resilience in Eastern Europe, countered state-sponsored disinformation during the Ukraine conflict, and led major policy initiatives, including COP26 Nature Day.



Nick Plumb, Power to change

Building strong partnerships - community/third sector perspectives

Nick leads Power to Change's think-do work on community renewal, shaping the research, policy and storytelling that help communities build power through community business. He designs and delivers mixed-methods programmes—combining participatory insight with practical testing in place—then translates what works into policy ideas, narratives and coalitions that can shift how institutions invest in communities.

Over the past decade Nick has worked across local economics, cohesion, climate, immigration, democratic reform and devolution, with a consistent focus on how places rebuild resilience, belonging and opportunity. At Power to Change he built the organisation's policy and advocacy function and later brought together policy, research and communications to strengthen external influence. He also served on the Board of the Government's High Streets Task Force, contributing to national thinking on high street renewal and place-based regeneration.



Afzal Hussain, Witton Lodge

Building strong partnerships - community/third sector perspective

Afzal is a staunch advocate of community-led approaches. He is Chief Officer at Witton Lodge Community Association - a dynamic social business transforming neighbourhoods and lives in north Birmingham. Prior to this, he led the New Deal for Communities programmes in Coventry and Birmingham.



Laura Fisher, Local Trust



Practical approaches to measuring success

Laura has worked in Local Trust's research team since summer 2019. She led on the Measuring Change support offer which matched evaluation specialists with Big Local partnerships and plays a key role in gathering the achievements and learning from Big Local areas as part of the Learning from Big Local project.

Before joining Local Trust, Laura worked at London Youth, a membership and advocacy organisation for youth organisations across London. Here, she was involved in programme evaluation and a variety of research projects, including a report on young people and communities

Jack Loughanane, Local Trust

Practical approaches to measuring success



Jack has worked at Local Trust since August 2023 as a senior researcher. He leads on a range of projects including the Partnership Reviews and Partnership Member Surveys. Jack's background is in social psychology. Before joining Local Trust, Jack completed his PhD in the University of Limerick, Ireland which was funded by the Irish Research Council. His research utilises advanced quantitative research methods and he has previously taught analysis and research methods at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.



Jill Hopkinson, NAVCA

Providing the support infrastructure



Jill joined NAVCA in May 2022. As Policy Manager, she is responsible for strategic policy analysis and development, advising members on issues directly relevant to local infrastructure and the VCSE sector. She works in partnership with members and other organisations to gather and share knowledge and experience, advocate for change and influence decision makers. Jill also leads on research for NAVCA focused on enhancing the knowledge and understanding of local infrastructure and demonstrating its value and impact.

Kashaf Ali, Locality

Investing in community buildings

Kashaf Ali is Locality's Development Manager for the West Midlands and has over 20 years of experience working in the VCSE sector. His experience includes helping to establish and scale up community finance organisations, developing and managing national delivery schemes for business start-ups, administrating home improvement programmes, and delivering capacity building support to VCSEs. He has extensive experience supporting community-led organisations to strengthen governance, engagement, and ownership of community assets, helping VCSEs and councils explore community ownership through feasibility studies, engagement, and appropriate governance structures

Mick McGrath, Locality

Investing in community buildings

Mick is a Development Officer for Locality covering the Midlands and beyond. He has over 25 years of experience working with VCSE sector. Experience includes aiding groups in negotiating Community Asset Transfers. He is currently assisting Cars Estate Big Local in Solihull with a CAT application. He is also experienced with fundraising and chairs the East Midlands Funding Forum, on the Register of Support services for National Lottery Heritage Fund and is a Resilient Heritage Mentor for Heritage Network. He is also a director for Switch Up CIC in Nottingham, voluntarily





Maxine Ricketts, Local Trust

Meaningful resident leadership in decision making about resources

Maxine coordinates support for Big Local partnerships in the Midlands region, as part of the Delivery team.

Maxine has many years' experience of service delivery and project management within the third sector.

Before joining Local Trust, Maxine held various roles in community development, working for local charities with responsibility for managing and supporting organisational planning and delivery of funded projects. She is passionate about empowering communities and has led the delivery of a number of funded partnership contracts and initiatives designed to strengthen and enable communities to become resilient and bring about change.

Lee Nicholls, St Matthews Big Local

Meaningful resident leadership in decision making about resources

Lee became the Chairperson in January 2019. He has been involved with the charity since its inception and is keen to lead the organisation forward in the next step of its journey. Lee has been involved with the local community for over 30 years and has owned and managed a business locally for this time. Alongside fellow Trustees, he is passionate about making a positive change in the local community and working together to deliver our Big Local vision.



Ish Latiff, St Matthews Big Local

Meaningful resident leadership in decision making about resources

Ish has worked on St Matthews Estate for several years and was appointed as our Sport and Volunteer Inclusion Coach in February 2020. Ish provides a range of sports opportunities locally and works on developing the skills and confidence of local people to get involved in working and volunteering in sport.



Tom Snape, Birmingham Citizens

Supporting wider community involvement in plans and decisions

Tom Snape is a community organiser working to help communities build power and win change by strengthening institutions and developing local leaders. With over a decade of experience across politics, campaigning, and community organising, his work focuses on building broad, diverse alliances that can act collectively on the issues that matter in their neighbourhoods, cities, and across the country.

Tom is based in Birmingham, where he works primarily with Birmingham Citizens, a long-standing civil society alliance bringing together schools, faith institutions, community organisations, universities, unions, and social enterprises from across the city. Through this work, he supports local institutions to deepen relationships, train leaders, and take coordinated action to win change the common good. This has included winning changes to local English language education, bringing jobs to low-income communities, and many local neighbourhood wins.

Tom has trained hundreds of people in community organising from a wide range of backgrounds, ages, and professions. He regularly guest lectures on undergraduate and postgraduate courses covering leadership, community development, public health, politics, and communications. His work is rooted in a belief that lasting change is won by organised people acting together.