

SWPA SOUTH WEST
PROCUREMENT
ALLIANCE

SWPA Community Benefit Fund Report

2018-2024

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Foreword

We are delighted to present the South West Procurement Alliance (SWPA) Community Benefit Fund Impact Report, showcasing the power of collaboration, community spirit, and strategic investment in local voluntary and charitable groups across South West England.

At the heart of this report is a powerful truth: when communities are empowered, supported, and listened to, they flourish. Through the SWPA Community Benefit Fund, we've helped strengthen the fabric of local life, supporting grassroots organisations that often operate below the radar but are essential lifelines to the people around them. Over the past six years, we've seen extraordinary work emerge from the smallest of grants. From tackling food insecurity and fuel poverty to promoting mental health recovery, financial inclusion, and creative empowerment.

This impact could not have been achieved without our regional committee members and delivery partners, including South West Community Matters and Locality. Their deep-rooted knowledge of local needs, along with their passion and networks, has ensured that funding reached those best equipped to create meaningful change.

On behalf of everyone at SWPA, thank you to all the organisations, volunteers, and individuals who make this work possible. Your dedication is the reason this fund delivers more than support, it delivers transformation.

Penny Searson

Penny Searson
SWPA Regional Manager

Celebrating the power of collaboration and community impact in SWPA

The SWPA Community Benefit Fund is a dedicated funding initiative established by LHC Procurement Group, designed to support local communities.

This Community Benefit Fund has been delivered in partnership with South West Community Matters and Locality, with oversight and nominations from SWPA's regional committee and associate members.

Along with their local partners, SWPA have been delivering Community Benefit Fund since 2019, with current members seen right:



The Need for Community Impact

Communities in the UK and beyond continue to face a range of critical social and economic challenges that require targeted support and intervention.

Some of the most pressing needs include:

- Cost of Living and Fuel Poverty:** Rising energy prices have left millions struggling to afford basic utilities, with many individuals unable to heat their homes adequately, leading to health and wellbeing concerns.
- Tenancy Sustainment and Homelessness Prevention:** Housing insecurity remains a major issue, particularly for young people, care leavers, and individuals facing mental health, addiction challenges and those recovering from domestic abuse.
- Health and Wellbeing support:** Mental health issues are on the rise, with significant increases in anxiety, depression, social isolation and reduced access to community-based support.

- Financial Hardship:** Low income families and individuals are facing increased debt, with many unable to afford rent, food, and essential goods there is significant need for financial education, income maximisation services, and employment support.
- Energy Efficiency and Sustainability:** Many homes across the UK lack proper insulation, leading to high energy costs and inefficient heating.

At the core of the SWPA Community Benefit Fund is the belief that strong, resilient communities are built through collaboration. The fund has brought together local authorities, housing associations, and a range of partner charities and community groups to address these urgent needs and foster long term sustainability.

By engaging local stakeholders and supporting grassroots initiatives, the fund has ensured that every pound invested delivers maximum social impact. The importance of a flexible, community-led approach, driven by local regional committees has been key to the programme's success.

Local Need

Lasting social impact is only delivered when outcomes are achieved that meet local needs. Using our regional partnerships and relationships that champion a local approach and working closely with our committee partners to tell us what their tenants, residents or users require remains central in our projects.

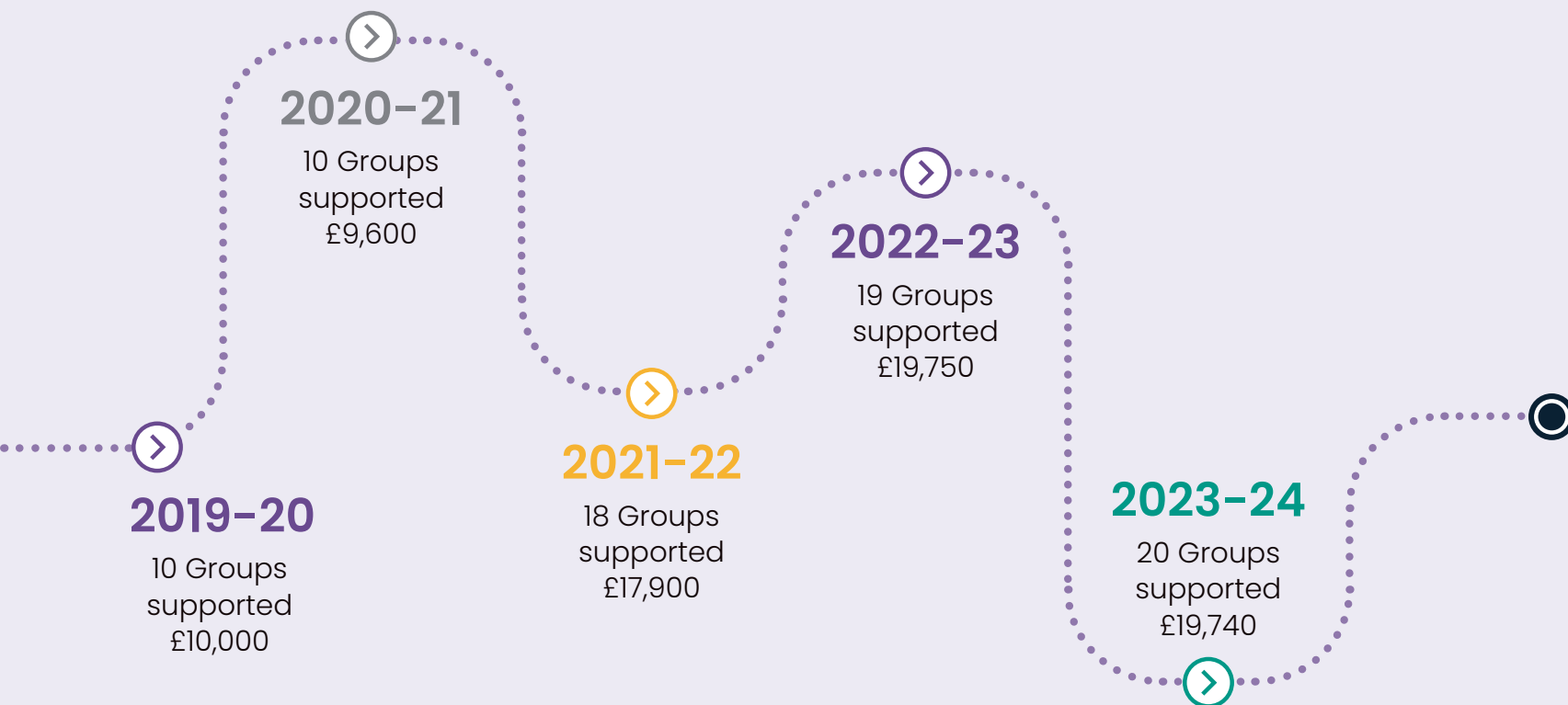
Our committee members and their Community Benefit Fund delivery partners are often community anchor organisations that are well-established, trusted organisations at the heart of the local

community. We have been working with these partners embedded in the community and have a deep understanding of local challenges, priorities, and opportunities. Their close relationships with residents and stakeholders mean they are ideally placed to identify emerging needs and deliver tailored, meaningful interventions that acknowledge local challenges and priorities. Working with these partners to deliver the Community Benefit Fund has increased our ability to deliver stronger outcomes, greater inclusion, and lasting social value at across South West England.

Journey to Date

As a committed not-for-profit procurement organisation, SWPA reinvests surpluses into community benefit initiatives.

The Community Benefit Fund was a key mechanism designed as an extension of SWPA's commitment to social responsibility to get funds directly to those who could best support those who needed it most.



Trowbridge Futures 20/21



Frome Birth Talk 21/22



Access Theatre 22/23



Gloucester Young Thinkers 23/24

Funding Priorities

The South West is a large and diverse region with a mix of busy urban centres in the north of the region such as Bristol, Gloucester, and Swindon along with more rural areas with 25% of settlements having under a population of 3,000.

In order to meet the differing needs across these communities, the Community Benefit Fund has focused on small charities that make a big impact with little resources. The smaller groups have used their grants to deliver very specific projects to their local communities which has delivered a larger range of outcomes than single activities.

Funded projects have supported a wide range of underrepresented beneficiaries, particularly a significant number of volunteers through community projects including older people, people with disabilities, refugees, young people, families and supporting people into employment.

While small community groups do not share the spotlight of many of the larger organisations, their benefits are equally amazing.

Partner Collaboration

The success of the SWPA Community Benefit Fund is built on strong collaboration between key partners, each playing a vital role in delivering meaningful community impact.

Our regional committee members and Locality, our current Charity Partner, serve as a crucial link between SWPA and the communities we support. Engaging with local community groups and grassroots organisations is essential for ensuring that funded projects are relevant and impactful. These partners help identify urgent local needs and facilitate community engagement, ensuring that initiatives are co-designed with the people they serve.

By fostering partnerships across these key groups, the SWPA Community Benefit Fund continues to reinforce our shared commitment to social impact.

The Role of SWPA and Locality



In South West England, we worked closely with our joint committee engaging with delivery partners across grant giving cycles, from application to delivery. We developed relationships with those partners ensuring that funding is going to those who need it most creating and maximising our impact.

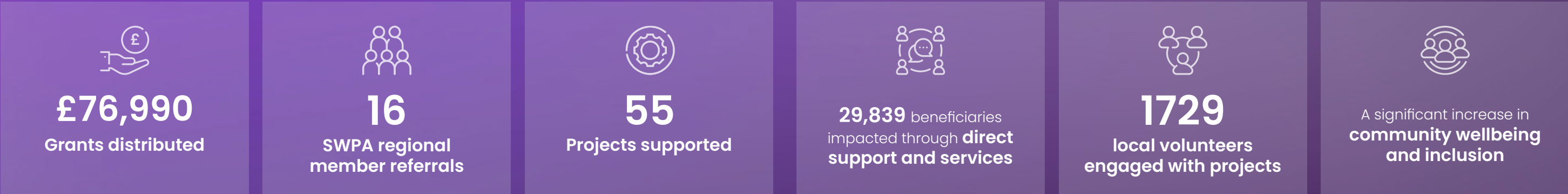
We have worked with charity partners South West Community Matters and Locality and have drawn on local knowledge to jointly identify a range potential projects, we actively support applications and signpost match funding opportunities to maximise the value of the delivery.

SWPA Community Benefit Fund Impact

Since 2018, SWPA Community Benefit Fund has supported 55 community projects across South West England, awarding a total of £76,990 in funding.

These projects have positively impacted thousands of individuals, addressing key societal challenges such as social inclusion, financial hardship, employability, and health inequalities.

Key Achievements



55 Community Projects

Receiving £76,990
Creating £961,764 in Social Value





Social Impact in South West England

Social value measures the wider outcomes that Community Benefit funded projects bring to individuals and communities, beyond purely financial metrics and inputs.

Understanding the impact for each of our social value areas is key to ensuring we prioritise and support the communities in ways that are needed most. This includes measuring impact at multiple levels: for individuals, communities, and wider society.

Monitoring the impact of services and projects delivered by small community groups in the South West region, with support from the South West Community Benefit Fund, has highlighted their far-reaching benefits beyond the funded initiatives. These include increased volunteering, environmental improvements, and valuable learning opportunities.

Increase in Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of small community groups, playing a crucial role in their sustainability. According to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, volunteer numbers in the voluntary sector declined by over 35% between September 2020 and April 2021, with much of this decrease attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restoring volunteer participation became a key priority in the post-pandemic recovery. Data from small community groups supported by the South

West Community Benefit Fund revealed that a total of 1,729 volunteers were engaged in delivering services funded through their grants, highlighting the essential role of volunteers in sustaining community initiatives.

Environmental Benefits

With the ongoing cost-of-living crisis pushing many individuals and families into food poverty, several community groups have expanded their efforts beyond their core services to address this urgent need. Many have incorporated initiatives aimed at reducing food waste and improving access to affordable food, demonstrating how their work extends beyond social support to deliver meaningful environmental benefits, whilst others provided access to upcycled or household items.

Learning and Development

A key advantage of this grant programme is the learning opportunities it generates. Whether through informal skill-building or structured educational initiatives, individuals involved in community groups either as participants or beneficiaries gained – valuable knowledge and experience – The impact of these learning experiences has been significant, with measurable outcomes reflected in survey results, highlighting the programme’s role in fostering personal growth, community development, and long-term resilience.

Using the available data gathered from the £76,990 financial input from grant funding to communities we can currently evidence the following social impact:



Total Indicative Social Value:

£961,764



This has been calculated using average wellbeing uplift on individuals supporting or benefiting from local projects in the community based on the monetary value of materials, funds or volunteering, alongside a range of additional outcomes including:

<p>Ability to access advice locally</p>	<p>Member of social group</p>	<p>Access to internet</p>	<p>Access to parks or greenspace</p>	<p>Training</p>
<p>Improved diet</p>	<p>Increased recycling</p>	<p>Improved belonging to neighbourhood</p>	<p>Improved confidence</p>	<p>Increased exercise</p>

While smaller community groups may not always be as visible as larger organisations, they often play a hugely vital role in enriching and strengthening the local communities they serve.

Empowering Young People Through Education



The **Hollie Gazzard Trust**, established in memory of Hollie Gazzard, aims to raise awareness of domestic abuse, stalking, and knife crime.

The organisation received a £1,000 grant to run six half-day training courses over six months, targeting young people. The goal was to educate 180 participants on the dangers of coercive control and stalking, equipping them with the skills to stay safe.

Impact

Through these workshops, young people gained crucial knowledge on identifying and responding to signs of abuse. Many attendees reported an increased sense of confidence in recognising harmful behaviours and seeking support when needed. Schools and community groups noted a positive shift in conversations around personal safety and healthy relationships.

“Every time we deliver training and we get that feedback from people to say ‘you’ve helped save my life’ or ‘you’ve allowed me to go out again for the first time because I don’t feel so scared’, it gives you that warm feeling in your stomach that we’re doing the right thing.”



Outcomes



180 young people trained in six months.



Improved awareness of stalking and coercive behaviour among participants.



Strengthened community engagement in addressing domestic abuse



Positive feedback from attendees, with some expressing that the training empowered them to take action in their own lives.

Indicative Social Value delivered: **£14,272***
*Calculated using HACT valuations on outcomes above

Mental Health Recovery and Creative Skills



Rusty Road 2 Recovery is a community-focused organisation that supports individuals facing mental health challenges by offering hands-on workshops in metalwork, car repairs, and creative arts.

The organisation received a £1,000 grant to fund materials for their metal sculpture and arts-based activities, helping participants develop new skills while improving their well-being.

Impact

The funding enabled three metal-based sculpture projects where individuals recovering from mental health issues could engage in creative and practical work. The workshops provided a therapeutic outlet, boosting participants’ self-esteem and confidence. Many attendees reported a sense of achievement and belonging, contributing to their overall mental health recovery.



“Rusty Road 2 Recovery has helped me no end, I was in a real bad place and coming here gives a real sense of purpose.”

Outcomes

-  **Funded materials and facilitators** for three metal sculpture projects.
-  **Provided a safe, inclusive space for individuals** with mental health challenges.
-  **Improved participants’ confidence, skill development, and social inclusion.**
-  **Strengthened community support networks** by engaging people in shared activities.

Indicative Social Value delivered:
£3,904*
*Calculated using HACT valuations on outcomes above

What's next?

As shown in this report, the SWPA Community Benefit Fund delivers transformative social impact, creating lasting change for communities across the South West of England. Through strategic funding, strong partnerships, and a commitment to social value, the fund has successfully supported many projects and thousands of individuals.

Looking ahead, SWPA remains committed to investing in community-driven initiatives, ensuring that the Fund continues to empower people, strengthen neighbourhoods, and build a fairer society.

In 2024/25 we have funded projects for all current regional committee members in South-West and will report on the impact once they have been delivered in the forthcoming year.

Heading into 2026-27, LHC Procurement Group remains committed to distributing surplus back into our local communities ensuring impactful support for a range of local and community-led projects. This reflects our ongoing commitment to generating greater social value.

Regional Committee

 Gloucestershire Health and Care
NHS Foundation Trust

Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust
Gloucestershire, South West England

 Somerset
Council

Somerset Council
Somerset, South West England

 DEVON & SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service
Devon and Somerset, South West England

**CORNWALL
HOUSING**

Cornwall Housing
Cornwall, South West England

 Selwood
Housing

Selwood Housing
Wiltshire, South West England

 Wiltshire
Council

Wiltshire Housing
Wiltshire, South West England

 BCP
Council

BCP Council
Dorset, South West England

 Magna
Housing

Magna Housing
Dorset, South West England



**Improving lives and places
through quality procurement solutions**

For more information about the SWPA Community Benefit Fund and its future plans, please visit:
www.swpa.org.uk/who-we-work-with/community-benefits/ or contact our
Group Social Value Manager at **Michael.McLaughlin@lhcpocure.org.uk**

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