



**Year 8 Community Plan
2023 - 2025**

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Introduction from the Chair

I'm really pleased to be welcoming you to our year 8+ community plan, which will run until the end of the Big Local programme. Our Big Local journey started over 10 years ago and during this time there have been numerous changes – with the loss of shops, schools merging and new ones opening, and the sad decline of sports facilities. New housing developments have seen an influx of new residents, not necessarily matched with increased services or facilities.

What has not changed is the community spirit of our residents. We still have underlying issues with anti-social behaviour, drugs and people struggling to make ends meet. But the estate feels safer, more welcoming and more connected.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Big Local workers, Cara Thorpe, Angela Vicker-Craddock, Keven Gabriel and Mike Spackman, without whom our activities wouldn't be possible. I would also like to thank our local community, volunteers and partners for their continued support.

As we move towards the end of Big Local we will work hard to ensure that its successes carry on through our legacy. The community centre has undoubtedly become a vital hub for residents, and we are working with Newington Community Association to keep the centre locally-led into the future and to embed the Big Local ethos and approach in its governance and operations.

We are determined that this will not be the end of our journey, but the beginning.

Since the start of our Big Local journey Newington has really changed. As a community we are better connected and have a renewed pride in the place we call home. This has given us a new confidence – not only to call out unacceptable behaviour but also to want, and expect better for our children. We are constantly proving that we are a community that cares - for our friends and our neighbours.

We know that we have a long way to go. Newington is one of four communities in Thanet identified as 'left behind communities'. We're not 'left behind' because we somehow choose to be, or lack the skills or capacity to be otherwise, but rather because we don't have access to the types of support, facilities and opportunities that more affluent communities enjoy.

Big Local has started to address this situation; by running the community centre we have reversed negative perceptions and have created a hub for the community. We must now make sure that we can secure ownership of the centre – either through a Community Asset Transfer or a long lease – and continue the work that has started. The range of activities we offer – from cooking and creative sessions to large scale events - bring residents together and this naturally creates new friendships and connections built on trust and a shared belonging. We are excited about the potential of the Levelling Up Fund to create a training kitchen that it fit-for-purpose. We know that cooking skills increase confidence, skills for life and employability, both within and outside the hospitality sector.

When we look at the data we are struck by the harsh realities of the picture it paints. We believe that we need to build on the trust we have developed to further grow social capital. It is only through a strong community-led voice that we will influence statutory partners and decision-makers to deliver services that better meet our needs. As we come towards the end of our Big Local journey we will provide more opportunities for local people to come together, and seek stronger partnerships so their voices can be heard.

Catherine Curtis
Newington Big Local Chair
January 2023

About Big Local

The Big Local programme is a place based initiative, designed to put residents in control. It was launched in three waves of 50 areas and was designed to be an opportunity for local residents in 150 areas around England to use at least £1m over 10-15 years to make a real and lasting positive difference to their communities. Big Local is resident-led, hyperlocal and long-term, introducing a new approach to enabling communities to achieve lasting change in their areas.

Big Local was established with a number of core key features that make it different from other programmes. It is:

- Long term – providing certainty and continuity, over 10-15 years
- Resident-led – working directly with individuals living, working, studying and playing in areas rather than through organisations; building confidence and capacity amongst those wanting to make a difference to their community and their local area
- Non-prescriptive – enabling residents to spend on their own terms and in their own time, on the projects they judge to be most important to them
- Accompanied by flexible and responsive support – to help communities to build the confidence and capability to make the most of the opportunities available to them, whilst not constraining their own ambition and initiative

Big Local is run by Local Trust, working with a £200m endowment from the Big Lottery Fund, which has to be spent by the designated Big Local areas by 2026 or it will be returned to The National Lottery Community Fund.

To secure the funding, resident-led partnerships worked together to define a common vision and to agree priorities to tackle issues that mattered most to the community.

The outcomes Local Trust set for Big Local at its outset were deliberately broad, and allowed residents to tackle the issues that were most important to them:

- Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them.
- People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future.
- The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.
- People will feel that their area is an even better place to live.

Newington Big Local was launched in the third wave, announced in December 2012. Our partnership was formed in 2013 and our first plan issued in August 2014.





Cops enters
Woods
Art

16 PACKS PER CASE
12 CASES PER PALLET
POSSIBLE PER PALLET

Any

Newington Big Local

The Newington estate was mostly built in the 1950s, for miners working locally and their families. As such, the community has a large proportion of families, including lone parent households. It is full of solidly constructed, cream-painted houses and is typical of many developments of this time. The homes are generally well laid out, with a mix of mostly semis or maisonettes, with one tower block, Staner Court, which is a local landmark. There is a really good sense of space, with lots of communal green spaces, 'boulevards' and private gardens.

The Newington Community Centre was built in 1975 and was council run until a local charity, Newington Community Association took on a 21 year lease in 2007. The centre has deteriorated over the years, with a lack of care and maintenance. It gained a very negative reputation, and with local kids adopting it as their meeting point other residents gave the centre a wide berth. During 2018 NBL took over the day-to-day management of the centre, working closely with Newington Community Association. The partnership built on the feasibility study that they commissioned in 2017, implementing urgent maintenance and repairs and challenging the centre's reputation.

Across Newington approximately 46% homes are owner-occupied, 40% are social rented and the remaining 14% privately rented. The average house price is £243,094 compared to a South East average of £434,616 (August 2022). However, the housing affordability gap is £10,245 compared to the South East average of £7,654.

A local pub closed in 2009; there was a small parade of shops, but these have closed as part of developments. There are now two local shops, a Spar on The Centre and a McColl's on the outskirts of the estate. There are a couple of cafes and fast food shops. The most accessible large supermarket is a Tesco on the outskirts of the estate.

Newington comprises three Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), designed to contain 1,000 to 3,000 residents and 400 to 1,200 households. These are Newington 13A, Newington 13B and Newington 13C. As with many areas, the statistics vary between

LSOAs; if Newington 13C was omitted the data presents a much bleaker picture.

Four primary schools serve the estate; Newington Community Primary, Ramsgate Arts Primary School, St Lawrence and Dame Janet. The Newington Sure Start Centre has been closed since February 2020 but is scheduled to reopen early in 2023. The area is served by the Royal Harbour Academy, situated on the outskirts of the estate. It was built in 2005 and offers some excellent community facilities, such as an athletics track and a theatre but these are not easy to access and the track is not well maintained. There is also an additional needs secondary school, Laleham Gap on the outskirts of Newington. Small Haven School is a very small special needs school for children and young people (3 to 19 years) with profound, severe and complex needs.

There are two Private Finance Initiative (PFI) developments; Copperfields is an independent living centre with 49 self-contained flats and Library House, a mental health unit. Both are managed by West Kent Housing Association.

Meridian Village, on the outskirts of Newington is still not completed, but has had residents since 2011. It predominantly contains rental properties and comprises of some small terraced houses and flats. The aspiration was to sell the majority of these homes privately but a lack of take-up led to purchase by a Housing Association, Southern Housing.

A second new development, Poppy Fields, between the Copse and Copperfields is well underway and scheduled to be completed in 2023. It will contain 58 homes, with 30% affordable housing, including shared ownership.

Despite the proximity of Meridian Village to the centre of Newington ambitions to integrate its new residents into community life have been slow. We are hopeful that we are more successful with the new development, and are liaising with the developer, WW Martin and Housing Provider, Orbit Homes to expedite this.



Background

Our priorities have remained relatively constant since our first community plan, with a focus on opportunities to get together, children and young people, creativity, food and green spaces. While we have made good progress in these areas we have trialled some activities that have not worked as well. We have learnt a lot in the last 10 years and have grown in confidence and capacity.

When we reflect on our activities we've had some notable successes. For example, our youth group, Chill Club and our annual creative festival, Best Fest. We were very fortunate to receive Creative Civic Change funding (September 2018 – October 2022) and this provided a 'creative' focus for community activities. Despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic we ran a range of activities that have had a tangible impact on individuals and have strengthened community ownership and connections. We commissioned an independent community consultation and alongside conversations with residents hope to use this to secure funding for future creative activities.

In 2018 we took over running the community centre. This was game changer for us; we have been able to challenge its negative image and to create a dynamic community hub. Our Creative Civic Change project, Creative Newington has vastly strengthened the sense of community ownership, with community designed and made mosaics, mural and window vinyls.

Newington has been awarded £500,000 Levelling Up funds to create a training kitchen; we hope that this also acts as motivation for the Council to progress with an agreed Community Asset Transfer or long lease, particularly as the Levelling Up outcomes extend beyond the timespan of the current lease.

As with many communities, we struggled during the Covid pandemic but were able to quickly launch our Community Food Club, already in the planning stage, to meet immediate local need.

As restrictions dragged on we heard that people were struggling with the isolation and boredom, particularly those families home schooling.

We launched our creative packs and online challenges and worked with a local partner, Looping the Loop to offer 'pop-up' doorstep performances.

Our youth group, Chill Club moved online and although problematic was a lifeline for young people. Our partner, aim4 Partnerships CIC circulated creative packs, distributed tablets to those young people without the ability to get online and facilitated work with Rash Dash, an arts company we met through Paines Plough, to contribute to a verbatim concept album, Don't Go Back To Sleep: The Lockdown Album, following 18 people from 12 countries around the world through the joys and fears of early lockdown and pandemic.

We identified 'food', and specifically healthy eating in our first community plan. We ran some pilot projects, and in October 2020 employed Mike Spackman, a qualified and award winning community chef. The pandemic undoubtedly limited the activities we could run but since the lifting of restrictions we have run family cooking sessions, cooking with young people, set up a weekly lunch club, for older and lonely residents and have recently launched a Curry Night for men and boys. We have worked in partnership with East Kent College to deliver the practical element of their hospitality employability scheme and have worked with two local primary schools.

To some extent the pandemic impeded community decision-making, with a number of former members moving away from the area and others reluctant to engage via Zoom. We have refreshed the partnership and have spent some time ensuring that new members have the knowledge and confidence to lead decisions as we set our sights on the legacy of Newington Big Local.

Here are some of our achievements in the past year:

- Over 35 young people regularly attend Chill Club
- Sold 2,760 tickets for performances and workshops in Roundabout
- Community Food Club supports over 120 households
- We have run over 70 Family Cooking sessions

Some of our early initiatives relied on external partners for their success, for example setting up a credit union, debt advice and creating a locally owned care organisation. On reflection, as a community we are more successful when we lead activities ourselves and residents much more likely to actively engage.

What has worked less well:

- Creating a local Credit Union – in retrospect our biggest problem was a lack of trust. Newington Big Local was very, very new and the project was run by partnership members, further compounding issues around trust. Even before the cost of living increases few people had the ability to save.
- Developing an Embedded Citizen's Advice service – together with our delivery partner, Citizens Advice Thanet we misjudged our ability to recruit residents with the requisite experience and capacity to train to become a Citizens Advice volunteer. Although one resident did complete the training, she volunteered in the Ramsgate centre.
- Our aim to foster local community enterprises – despite offering additional support we were unable to identify residents with the confidence and aspiration to take the first step into enterprise.












Community Profile

Although Newington scores poorly on local and national statistics in factors such as health, crime and anti-social behaviour, a lack of qualifications and work there is a strong sense of community spirit. Many residents have lived on the estate for years, if not generations and there is a wealth of local knowledge alongside a tangible desire amongst local people to challenge negative perceptions of the area. Over the past 10 years we have noticed a reduction in anti-social behaviour and vandalism, alongside an increased willingness of local people to tackle undesirable behaviour. However, this is not necessarily reflected in the statistics.

Local Trust and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) carried out research and developed a quantitative measure of left-behind areas using open data, including developing a Community Needs Index for the first time. This also led to an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for 'left-behind neighbourhoods'. The research identified Newington as one of 225 'left behind neighbourhoods'. These are predominantly in post-industrial and coastal areas in the North and the Midlands, and Newington is one of only 10 in Kent, and one of 5 in Thanet with the others being Cliftonville West, Dane Valley, Eastcliff and Northwood.

The report "suggests that places to meet, connectivity – both physical and digital – and an active, engaged community are vital to secure better social and economic outcomes for people living in deprived neighbourhoods. People in places which lack these features have higher rates of unemployment and child poverty, and their health is also worse than those living in other deprived areas. And the evidence is that they are falling further behind." The partnership believes that this finding makes it even more vital that the community centre is sustainable and welcoming, offering activities and support that local people want.

 Population	There are 5,478 people living in Newington, Ramsgate	 Education & skills	37% of people have no qualifications in Newington, Ramsgate compared with 19% across South East
 Vulnerable groups	31% of children aged 0-19 are in relative low-income families in Newington, Ramsgate compared with 15% across South East	 Economy	30% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in Newington, Ramsgate compared with 40% across South East
 Housing	2% of households lack central heating in Newington, Ramsgate compared with 2% across South East	 Access & transport	38% of households have no car in Newington, Ramsgate compared with 19% across South East
 Crime & safety	The overall crime rate is higher than the average across South East	 Communities & environment	The 70.2 % of people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood is lower than the average across South East (82.6%)
 Health & wellbeing	25% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Newington, Ramsgate compared with 16% across South East		

Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI), www.ocsi.co.uk / 01273 810 270. ©OCSI 2022

“Residents in these communities have markedly worse socio-economic outcomes than the residents of other equally deprived areas”. Whilst this inequality was magnified by Covid-19 we also saw an increase in neighbourliness. People might not have a lot, but pulled together to share what they could and to support their neighbours.

Crucially, the research indicates that the proximity of ‘left behind neighbourhoods’ exerts a negative impact on surrounding communities, further limiting opportunities for positive change.

The report highlights the need for Newington Big Local to focus on strengthening resident connectivity and engagement, including work to secure the community centre.

The statistics show that all Newington neighbourhoods are ranked among the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England (IMD 2019), with 71% among the most deprived 10%.

Newington has a younger population (26% under 15 years), compared to a South East average of 19%, and fewer residents aged over 65.

There are high levels of childhood poverty and obesity; 31% of children aged under 16 live in low income families, with 23% children living in ‘out of work’ households; this compares to 19% and 15% respectively across the South East. By the time they are in Year 6 almost 40% of Newington’s children are classified as overweight or obese, compared to 31% across the South East and this trend continues into adulthood. There are no affordable sports facilities or clubs in Newington, despite the multi-million pound sports track at Jackie Bakers. Many years ago this “was such a wonderful place – we had international hockey tournaments – but it’s been so neglected it’s just not useable anymore.”

“Two of my grandsons live in Highfield Court and they have to go to Ramsgate to play football.”

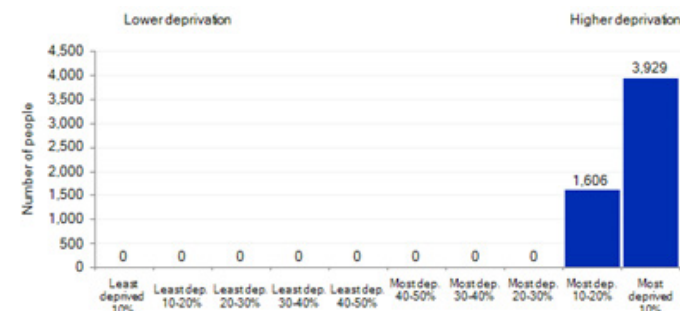


Figure: Number of people in each deprivation decile, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Indices of Deprivation 2019)

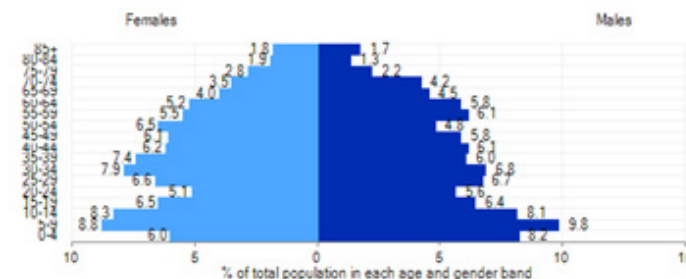


Figure: Population estimates by 5-year age band: Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2020

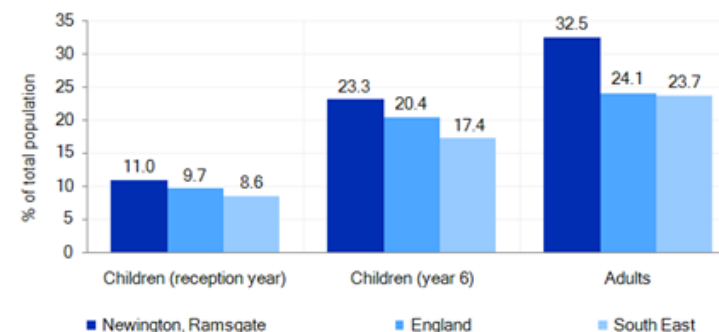


Figure: Children and adults classified as obese: Source: National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) (2017/18-2019/20), Health Survey for England 2006-2008

Crime

Although anti-social behaviour and criminal damage remain significantly higher than regional averages it is violent crime that is strikingly high. Residents believe that this could be addressed by a preventative police presence but Ramsgate town consistently takes precedence. When we do see police they invariably seem to be accompanied by armed officers and a helicopter to respond (too late) to a serious incident.

Mobility

Mobility is poor with 38% of households having no access to a private car, compared to 19% across the South East. The local bus service is patchy, with no busses after 19:00 or on Sundays. The lack of private cars and the poor bus service is further compounded by an apparent reluctance of local taxi firms to come into the estate. We are conscious that this means that if facilities and services are not locally available, many residents will not be able to access opportunities at all.

"I tried to order a taxi from the Community Centre from our local firm and was told no cars were available in the area at that time. So I walked up to McColls (at the edge of Newington) and thought I'd try again. The same taxi firm to be told it would be 10 minutes! There was no explanation when challenged, it was simply that they didn't want to pick up in Newington."

Health and Wellbeing

Newington has a significantly high number of disabled residents, identified by the total number of people receiving Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and PIP and for households receiving Universal Credit due to poor physical or mental health. Mental health issues are increasing and domestic abuse escalated alarmingly during the pandemic.

There is a real lack of accessible support for people with disabilities and/or mental health, and pressure in social care means that people invariably hit a crisis before public services are available.

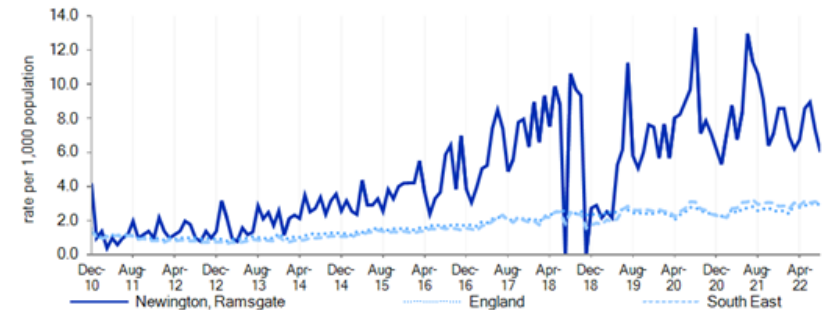


Figure: Violent crime offences : Source: <https://data.police.uk/>

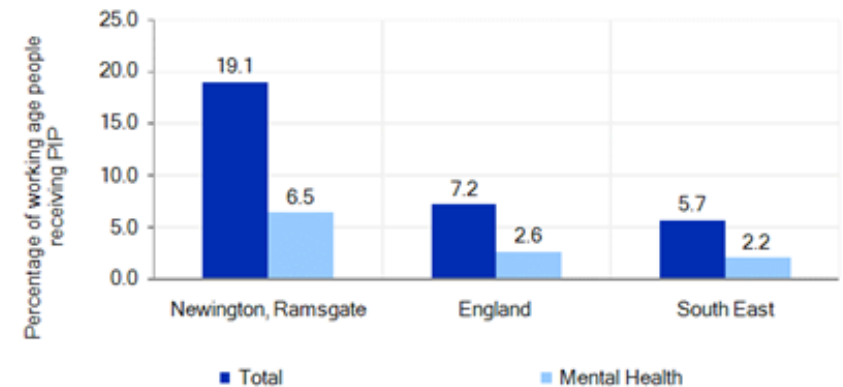


Figure: Personal Independence Payment (PIP) recipients: Source: Department for Work and Pensions (Jul-22)

Employment

Many of our residents are on low incomes or have no paid work and Newington's financial vulnerability index rank is 37,960 (based on LSOA, 2020), with 10% of households on Universal Credit (August 2021). Poverty is a common challenge, with under 30% of people aged 16-74 in full-time employment in Newington compared with 40% across the South East; 40% of residents are 'economically inactive', compared to the South East average of 28%. The largest employment sector is retail (20% of those employed) with a large proportion of these with zero-hour contracts giving little or no control over working hours. During Covid and with the recent increases in the cost of living we are seeing a large increase of working households who are struggling to make ends meet.

Youth unemployment is a particular challenge for Newington, with 12.8% 16 to 24 year olds claiming JSA/UC, compared to a South East average of 2.9%. Locally, there are many entry level job opportunities, particularly in hospitality, but there is a culture of worklessness and lack of aspiration that is difficult to change.

As with other places, all age unemployment has dropped since the peak during Covid. Our conversations with families suggest that many really struggled with self-isolation during the pandemic, particularly with regards to their children and keeping them busy and occupied. The increases in living costs are impacting a lot of our residents.

A significant number of residents live with limiting long-term illnesses and have poor educational attainment. A high numbers of residents (37%) have no formal qualifications and lower life expectancy than local and Kent averages.

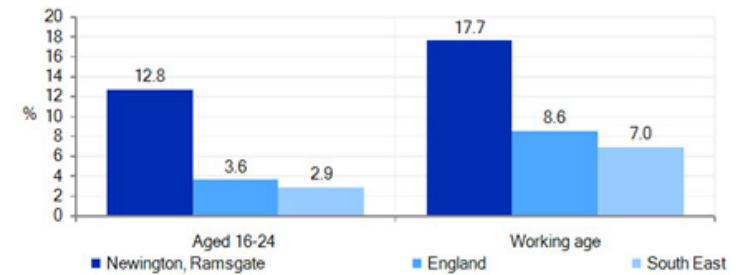


Figure: Workless benefit claimants aged 16-24 (May-16) and 16-64 (Feb-22): Source: Jobseekers Allowance/ Universal Credit/ Incapacity benefits/ Employment and Support Allowance – Department for Work and Pensions (May-16/ Feb-22)

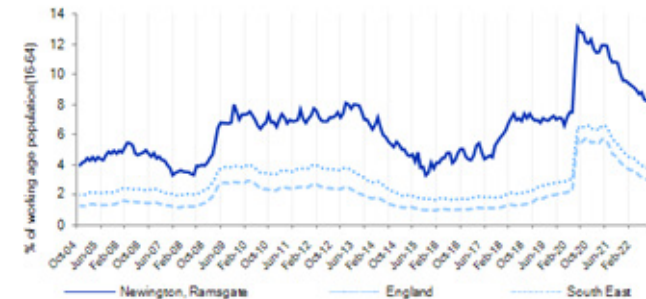


Figure: Unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance/ Universal Credit) claimants: Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Establishing Our Plan

In creating this plan we are building on what we know works and what local people want, alongside revisiting previous activities and trying out new ones to provide opportunities for residents to come together and inform what the future might look like. We want to maximise benefits of the Levelling Up Fund capital investment, formalising relationships with local schools and supporting people to eat more healthily on a budget. We also want to support our children and young people to gain the skills and confidence that will raise their aspirations for the future.

The plan was developed between September 2022 and February 2023, led by the partnership. The current grant agreement was extended to enable this process to be completed. This extended approach enabled the partnership to review progress and design a plan through to the end of the Big Local funding. The partnership held monthly facilitated discussions as part of the regular partnership meetings which included:

- introduction to the process, timescale and parameters
- discussion with partner organisations about the Big Local, their work and possibilities for the future
- detailed facilitated discussion to review the community profile and views of residents
- review the proposed activities including the outline budget
- detailed review of the first draft plan and budget

Between meetings, actions were agreed to gather information for the plan, and to arrange consultations with residents and partner organisations. This enabled the partnership to spend time on wider ranging discussions informed by the community profile data, and also to bring back to the meetings specific costed plans.



Views from the community

Community Food club

We asked Food Club members how the food club is helping their household.

We received 97 completed surveys; 100% said food club is helping them, with 91% giving the top score of '5'. 100% listed 'financial help' as the top reason, with 79% additionally saying that it's helping them eat more healthily; 98% said it's encouraging them/their children to try different foods. Some of our older residents welcome the opportunity to see other residents and felt that Food Club closure would leave them more lonely and isolated. We asked residents whether the food activities have changed the way they shop, cook and eat; the following summarises their answers:

"I wait to see what's in my food bag before I go shopping and save lots of money".

"I understand best before dates and don't waste food now".

"When I get a glut of something e.g. tomatoes I make a sauce or something and share it with residents at Copperfields".

"I know what I can freeze and how to do it and am batch cooking."

"I'm planning my meals every week now."

"We've got a little group and every week we share ideas and recipes."

"We're doing much more cooking from fresh and eating fewer ready meals."

Family Cooking

We asked parents and children participating in family cooking sessions what these have meant to them and whether they should continue. The overriding response was that the cooking sessions have ignited interest in food and cooking; children are expressing a wish to cook at home and are much more likely to try different foods. Although a key aim was to support families to eat more affordable, healthy meals a number stated that the social element was just as important.

"It's been a way to meet new people and it's been fun and educational."

For some children there were notable achievements, such as improved relationships at home and learning new skills.

"Family cooking has made a huge difference to Leo, it's a miracle. The difference in two weeks is incredible. He's bonding better with his [foster] dad and [foster] brother and we even have conversations at the dinner table, it's been life changing."



Creative Newington

This Creative Civic Change funded project provided a creative focus for a range of different activities. Regular participants at the weekly after-school club, Hot Dog Club told us that they met new people, learnt new skills and felt more connected to the community. We asked people whether we should find a way to continue the Hot Dog Club, and if yes, whether we should change anything. The responding response was 'yes'. The majority felt that "something was lost when it got so popular"; at its height we had over 65 attending, making it difficult to focus on creative skills and outputs.

The overriding feeling was that it would be better to run more structured sessions, perhaps for a specified number of weeks, and to 'sign up' regular and constant participants for these. Residents felt this would make them feel more "needed" and able to actively inform the design of the sessions.

"It was quite a triumph. Friendships were made. And it wasn't just the children that made new friends, it was the Mums too. It was an opportunity for a bit of normality, to sit and catch up and have a laugh. Getting home and not having to cook a full meal, with the children relaxed and chilled out after spending some extra time with their friends."

We also asked for feedback from the youth theatre group, set up after conversations with parents and designed to fill a gap in local opportunities. Almost without exception parents told us that their child had increased in confidence and made new friends, various parents told us that their child's behaviour at school and/or home had improved, that their child was sleeping better and/or that their child's school work had improved.

"My daughter Olivia joined Inspiration a few months ago, she went along with her friends out of curiosity and has thrived ever since."

"Liv is an energetic, vibrant, free spirited little girl, she was always the batman in a sea of princesses!! Liv has been enrolled into many groups i.e. ballet, Taekwon-do, brownies etc and she would love it initially but after a few weeks she wouldn't want to go, it became too repetitive, not enough silliness or allowance of opinion. However since joining Inspiration, Liv has made new friends, grown in confidence, performed in two performances, encouraged others to join the group and most importantly she looks forward to going every week, even complains that it's not long enough or not on enough days. I can't thank Zoe, Peter and the team enough for creating such a diverse, inclusive, encouraging group of young people that promotes individuality, freedom of speech and opinion, fun, music, team building and all in a safe nurturing environment."

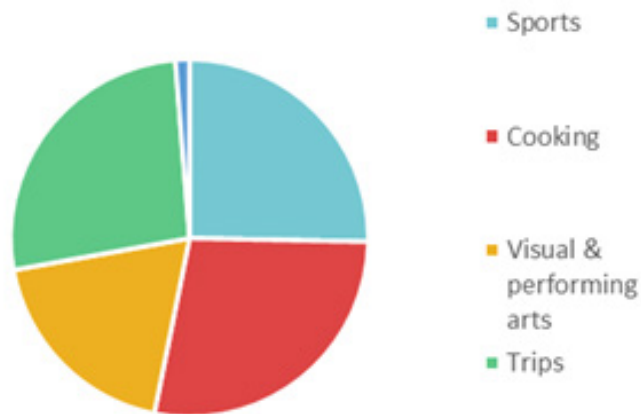
The Creative Newington project commissioned People United to undertake an independent community consultation to reflect and review project achievements, including learning from Covid and to create a community-led roadmap for the future.

Perhaps most importantly we hear about the impact of creative activities on children and young people. From increased confidence and feeling connected to raised aspirations and feelings of self-belief.

"Where there's lots more people, I think the creativity has got way bigger. I feel quite special to be a part of the Newington Community Centre. And it makes me quite happy to live around here because there's nice people and all that and a good community it's, like, safe around here."

Young people

We asked young people how they found living in Newington and what sort of activities they would like available locally. They almost unanimously told us that “apart from Chill Club there’s nothing to do, it’s boring.” It was clear that for many both the costs and transport barriers made accessing activities outside Newington out of the question. Nevertheless, there was a sense that young people like the ‘people’ in Newington, they say that it’s “safe” and welcoming”. Young people embrace opportunities for new experiences across a range of different areas. There is a lack of free or affordable sports activity in Newington and we will explore how to address this.



Partners

Aim4 Partnerships has worked with NBL for the past five years after the success of running a year- long project with children and young people who live on the estate. As a small arts organisation working with the community has taken time; you need to find out about the community, how it works, listen and collaborate with them about what they need and their ideas. NBL placed a great amount of trust in aim4 and worked together to create a thriving youth group that has been peppered with both failures and successes. This has meant that there have been some difficult moments, being open and honest about what is working and what isn't and adapting ideas and approaches to grow. NBL has actively supported aim4 in fundraising for the youth group and other creative projects in the community that bring people together and introduced other artists to the community. aim4 staff have also supported the partnership at events and through Covid in volunteering for the Food Club. (Nova, Aim4 Partnerships CIC)

Our experience of working with Newington Big Local and Starling Support has been overwhelmingly positive. As a company we wanted to initiate opportunities for community members to engage with the processes involved in creating personal performance. We spoke to community leaders and the Screaming Mary Club was born, and with the help of NBL has gone from strength to strength. We now have a bit of funding independently and a large number of loyal members and are set to have some brilliant outcomes in 2023. We were also invited to start a young producers scheme with the Chill Club - it was a joy to work with Nova and all the kids at the club. They all put in a great deal of work into producing, and starring in (!) a brilliant and well attended cabaret at Newington Roundabout pop up theatre. We are loving forward to further developing this scheme in 2023. Screaming Alley is a community focused company but up until we were invited to work with NBL we lacked capability to reach community groups beyond those that attended our shows. Through this new partnership our local offer is more diverse and far reaching. We have skilled up as a company becoming teachers, workshop leaders and mentors and have enjoyed it immensely (Lara, Screamng Alley CIC).

Events

At our 2022 Christmas event we asked residents whether they recognised the main issues listed below, and highlighted by the statistics.

The recurrent issue for 'other' was for more affordable activities for children and young people.

- Child poverty and obesity
- Food poverty
- Crime
- Unemployment and jobs
- Mobility and Transport
- Community connections

Feedback from residents highlighted how important community events are for bringing people together.

"The food was lovely, especially the roasts. Would like to have more events like the Easter Disco and Halloween Disco, also missed the coffee mornings on Monday and Friday. Art and crafts using the tiles".

"Really enjoyed it would like to see more events like this to bring everyone together. More art days for younger children that can't go to youth club. Maybe an indoor boot fair every 2/3 month".

"Had such a lovely time, fantastic event. My son really enjoyed himself. Also my partner came down from Leicester he said it was amazing".

"We have enjoyed today being able to spend time together as a family eating lovely food and having fun seeing the kids' faces is priceless, thank you so much for doing this at such hard times, merry Christmas".

"Excellent day! We really enjoyed coming to Newington big local events. Very well run friendly. Couldn't recommend it enough!"



Vision Statement

The Newington Community Centre will be the thriving and sustainable heart of the community. It will provide opportunities for residents to get together and will act as a hub for services. A new Food Enterprise will support people to cook healthy, affordable meals, to better understand and reduce food waste and will create employment opportunities. The community will feel a sense of pride and ownership, using green spaces for play, relaxation and to connect with nature.

Costed vision





The theme of active community involvement runs across all our activities, with opportunities for people of all ages and interests. We will create new 'volunteering' opportunities and strengthen our relationships with stakeholders, including Thanet District Council, West Kent Housing Association (Copperfields), Orbit Housing (Poppy Fields) and local schools. We will seek to develop activities that introduce new experiences, raise aspirations and challenge negative perceptions of Newington.

Activities

"A community is a group of people who come together, working and living to have fun and to improve the standard of living and the quality of life"

When we speak to residents the most common request is for community events and opportunities to come together. We will continue to deliver our tried and tested favourites, with a renewed focus on opportunities for partnership members and other residents to be actively involved in all stages of design and delivery. For each large event we will create an 'events' team of staff and interested volunteers; this will be led by the partnership, with a standing agenda item for partnership meetings.

We will run regular, ongoing activities and seasonal events.

Started as a monthly pilot, our Lunch Club is increasingly popular with older residents. We are currently running this weekly, with 12+ regular attendees. The lunches not only provide an opportunity for people to eat and socialise together, but also a 'warm' space. People often don't want to leave after lunch, and really appreciate the space to chat with other residents. We are exploring the opportunity to introduce resident-led arts and crafts activities. We will continue to review attendance and may decrease its regularity in the summer months.

Before the pandemic we ran coffee mornings on Mondays and Fridays and these especially attracted parents, who popped in after dropping their children at school. We have reinstated our coffee morning, on Tuesdays and this is a great opportunity to gather information about needs and gaps, foster involvement in other events and hear ideas for other activities. The coffee morning is led by Sarah (former Chair of NBL) and Sally (NBL partnership member).

Since starting to run the community centre we have provided activities

during school holidays, with breakfast clubs, arts and crafts, physical and environmental activities. In the past 18 months we have accessed Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme funding and this has enabled us to offer more varied activities within a more formal structure. Since August 2019, and in spite of a 'gap' due to Covid, over 350 children and young people have participated in our holiday programmes, many with their parents or carers. We will run holiday programmes during Easter and Summer holidays. We intend to apply for external funding, potentially through the HAF programme to supplement holiday activities and to allow us to include a wider variety of activities.

Our seasonal events have always attracted a large number of people and we have created an events calendar for an Easter disco, Best Fest, our annual creative festival, Halloween and our Community Christmas lunch. Historically, all our events have been free of charge for residents but as we look towards the end of Big Local we will explore introducing voluntary donations and/or external grant funding to ensure that they can continue.

We have previously tried different approaches to Easter, and the most successful was an Easter Egg Hunt and Disco for children and families.

Best Fest, Newington's annual community arts festival attracts over 2,500 local people and is an opportunity to enjoy music and entertainment, to have a go at various arts and crafts activities and to socialise with friends and neighbours. This annual event brings together numerous external partners, such as Kent Fire and Rescue, Age UK and Orbit Housing. They are all tasked with offering creative activities as a way to involve local people and to instigate conversations. The event takes a lot of organising and it will be key that we have a group of committed residents to volunteer to make this happen, and to support delivery on the day.

Halloween is a firm favourite for us in Newington and we have a small group of Mums, working alongside staff who decorate the community centre and the Copse, design activities and 'sell' tickets. We are keen for them to take even more of a lead and will work alongside them to offer any help that they require.

Our Community Christmas Lunch provides a chance for 100 residents to come together, for a Christmas meal together. We decorate the centre, organise games, a raffle and arrange for Father Christmas to visit, with presents for primary school children.

We will also identify and trial new ideas, such as community BBQs and pop-up food events.

Our Creative Civic Change project, Creative Newington demonstrated our potential as a creative community and the opportunity of the arts to strengthen community cohesion and ownership.

We are working to identify community ideas and will fundraise to make these happen. For example, we are talking to Cohesion Plus and the Kent Racial Equality Council about a collaboration for a Community Parade and Celebration in October 2023, to coincide with Black History Month. We hope that this includes school and community drumming, music, dance and lantern making workshops to excite residents to get involved. This will build on the successful performance of the Cohesion Plus Afro-Bhangra Fusion Group in Roundabout. We are struck by the impact that 'public art' has had, not only on those people directly involved but also on the wider community. There is a sense of pride in being part of the project and creating artwork that will last a lifetime. We have gathered thoughts and ideas from residents and hope to provide opportunities for Newington to continue its creative journey.

Newington's children and young people thrive

Newington Chill Club, a creative youth group for 10 plus started back in 2018 and has gone from strength to strength; 255 children and young people have attended the club. Over the past 6 months, the club now has a regular attendance of 35 young people each week. The club receives regular external funding from BBC Children in Need as well as AF Blakemore (The Spar). Chill Club offers a range of creative activities and various sports, including SERVES Tennis, table tennis, dodgeball, badminton and football and regular cooking sessions with Mike, the community chef.

The club provides a vital service in bringing young people together and providing different activities and experiences for them. This is their club and they own it.

Many of the young people embrace doing new things, having the opportunity to have new experiences and to work with different professional people. When asked what they like about the club the overwhelming response was making new friends and socialising. Young peoples' mental and emotional health is still in recovery post-Covid. Connecting with each other again is essential in enabling them to be healthy both mentally and emotionally. We need to continue to listen to their concerns and understand their needs.

It has had numerous notable achievements, including:

- Working with professional artists to create festival headwear for Best Fest, our creative community festival.
- Collaborations with Pie Factory Music on the Sirens Project (girls only), Project Motorhouse photography workshops and Advent Doors project.
- A 'Young Leaders' scheme was introduced in 2021.
- Devising, writing and performing their own show in Roundabout
- Every year the Chill Club has received a Try Angle Award and various members of the group have received certificates and awards in recognition of their hard work and effort.

We will continue to support our partner, aim4 Partnerships CIC to deliver our weekly creative youth group, Chill Club. We will set-up a bi-weekly cooking club for those young people particularly inspired to cook. We will work with aim4 Partnerships CIC to explore external funding to introduce an aspect of performing arts, continuing the experience at Roundabout in 2022.

Newington Youth Theatre Club

During the Creative Newington project we worked with Inspiration Creative CIC to set up a youth theatre group in Newington. Initially resourced through external funds, the Youth Theatre Club started in March 2020, just as the first Covid lockdown was announced!

The idea for the club came after our first visit from Roundabout, and conversations about how inaccessible drama and theatre groups are for local children, due to cost as well as distance and a misunderstanding that drama 'isn't for people like us'.

Many local children have very limited access to the arts or inclusive arts provisions, and so we have been able to start up a provision that will hopefully benefit the local community for the longer term. We will work with the provider, Inspiration Creative CIC to secure funding to enable this activity to continue and grow.



Food Enterprise - Food For Life

Food remains an important strand of how we bring people together, gaining confidence, new skills and knowledge and providing ways for people to get together to form and strengthen relationships. We will use the next 12 months to gather evidence to support a funding bid to maintain the food activities that are most impactful.

Our food activities aspire to breaking down barriers and addressing stigma to enable residents most affected to build coping strategies and resilience.

- Weekly family cooking sessions – about parents and children learning together -sub-theme about parenting skills – ability to communicate with their kids – having the expected outcomes – trying new foods, breaking down barriers to unfamiliar food, learning skills for life and confidence, encouraging whole family meals , we see stronger relationships developing. Next steps – better data on what people have at home, how they're budgeting/ prioritising money, learning to stretch available funds further.
- Chill Club Cooking – grew out of cooking sessions delivered alongside the weekly youth group – older teenagers find the cooking as an opportunity to talk about their own concerns. We find that food offers a backdrop for informal conversation that provides a platform for them to be heard; confidence increases as they learn core skills, pathways to independence – more successful contributing adults.
- Curry Club – for men and boys, we have found that people find this a safe place to talk – not superficially, really works having dads and sons together - dad's role modelling responsibilities and commitment.
- Lunch Club – supporting mental health and wellbeing; opportunity to get together to socialise; addressing social isolation; a warm place to come and eat a hot, healthy meal, together.
- Adult Cooking Sessions—sociable opportunity to come together with other residents to cook a healthy, affordable meal for the whole family.



Newington has some characteristics of 'food deserts'; first highlighted in 1995 by the Low Income Project Team (LIFT) of the UK government's Nutritional Taskforce. Poor mobility alongside inadequate access to affordable, fresh food and high diet-related conditions such as obesity and diabetes, can be expected to be driving food insecurity.

Community Food Club

This was a lifeline during Covid and remains so as many households choose between 'heat or eat'. From the outset we were determined to minimise the stigma attached to food banks, and rejected means testing.

In May 2019, the local media reported that Thanet had Kent's highest rates of child poverty; with more than half of Newington's under 18s living below the breadline. It is testament to the spirit of Big Local that in March 2020, Newington had launched a community food club that was supporting struggling households across Thanet and in neighbouring areas.

The Community Food Club now operates twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. It routinely contains a tray of store cupboard items, such as cereal, pasta and tins, a bag of fresh fruit and vegetables and a tray of 'fridge' items, such as fresh meat or fish, cheese, desserts and fruit juice. We purchase the food from Fareshare Kent; it would otherwise end up in landfill and is donated to Fareshare by supermarkets. Each food club day involves:

- collecting food from Ashford early in the morning – this reduces the tray cost and helps us to keep costs down
- unpacking the van and sorting the contents
- allocating food received between the confirmed number of members
- making up store cupboard trays for the following week
- sending messages to food club members

We recognise how important the Food Club is, but also the effort required to deliver it, and increasingly, the spiralling costs. Our aspiration is to better link Food Club with our cooking activities, helping people to eat more healthily and affordably. We will create new 'volunteering' roles to increase our capacity and seek external funding to ensure that Food Club is not run to the detriment of other activities and that it forms a part of our legacy for as long as it is needed. The Community Food Club asks members for a donation, and this contributes significantly towards our direct costs (food costs, vehicle costs and bank charges).



Green Spaces

We are fortunate to have plenty of green areas, with The Copse, a 1.2 acre woodland, green spaces and with many houses having their own garden. Our Creative Newington project and holiday programmes have highlighted how important green spaces are to the community. We want our community gardener to support the maintenance and development of our existing green spaces and want to encourage local people to be more actively involved.

The Copse is a 1.2 acre woodland in the heart of the community. We have had a 'Tenancy at Will' agreement with Kent County Council since 2014 and this has allowed us to use the space for parties, events, holiday programmes and projects, and is used by local primary schools. We have negotiated with a local developer and they have agreed to make various improvements, free of charge, which will enable the Copse to be used as an outdoor classroom and Forest School. Whilst the woodland is kept deliberately natural it still requires a certain degree of maintenance to ensure that it is accessible and safe.

The Sensory Garden was created through the Creative Newington project in 2022. It was designed by local residents and 'built' by Brenwards, who continued significantly via their Corporate Social Responsibility programme. The garden is based at Copperfields, an over 55s independent living centre; many of the residents are elderly and lack the capacity to fully maintain the garden themselves. We have undertaken to provide ongoing support to ensure that the Sensory Garden is kept tidy and welcoming, especially for Copperfields residents, and the extent of support needed is seasonal. The Copperfields residents are setting up a 'gardening club', with the view to this starting in the Spring. Our community gardener, Keven has built a strong relationship with key residents and has committed to offering up to one day per week, when needed.

In 2018 we secured Pocket Park funding and created a community garden, on the edge of the estate. Called 'Bob' by local people the garden has taken a bashing over the past couple of years, with a car driving through it and general neglect during Covid. Before the pandemic we were starting to grow vegetables and herbs, and encouraging residents to help themselves. We had a core group of 'volunteer' gardeners.

One of our priorities is to identify and recruit a group of 'volunteer' gardeners and to develop the garden with their input. We have met with the new Housing Officer at Thanet District and hope to involve people living in the Staner Court housing block.

One of the recurrent issues for residents was that parents were using the green verges as a car park at school drop-off and collection times. This was blatantly dangerous with a number of accidents narrowly missed. During 2020 we built a number of raised planters to act as a barrier to cars. These were decorated by local children and young people, during holiday programmes and Creative Newington activities. We spoke to local residents about how these planters might be used and the most popular idea was to grow edibles for the community. We have complemented the planters with small fruit trees and are slowly encouraging a wild flower meadow. We want to recruit local residents to set up a 'gardening' sub-group. This group will inform planting here, and in Bob.

We will have a number of community 'cook outs', taking food to where people are; facilitating conversation with people who don't always engage.



Community centre

The community centre is run by NBL, under an arrangement with Newington Community Association (NCA), the leaseholder. NCA is a charity and Company Limited by Guarantee, set up in 2006 to provide opportunities and benefits to the residents Newington. NCA's aims are in line with NBL's goals. The current Board of Trustees has very limited operational capacity and works closely with NBL to deliver its aims. In order to ensure that the Big Local ethos is embedded in its governance three NBL resident members will join the NCA Board of Trustees.

The aims of NCA are to:

- Build the assets and skills of Newington's residents
- Strengthen community cohesiveness
- Address loneliness and social isolation
- Foster effective partnership working

The centre is owned by Thanet District Council, with less than 5 years remaining on the old fashioned and outdated lease (July 2028). Conversations regarding community asset transfer (CAT) have been ongoing for a number of years, largely stalled by the lack of capacity/ staffing in Thanet District Council's property team. With the full support of NBL, NCA applied for a freehold asset transfer in March 2019, and commissioned an Independent Building Inspection in May 2019. The EOI application was approved by Thanet District Council's cabinet in 2019.

Newington has been awarded £500,000 Levelling Up capital funds to create a training kitchen at the community centre and this will undoubtedly include some improvements to the fabric of the centre. The deadline for completion of this work is March 2024, with associated outcomes extending beyond the current term of the lease. The grant was approved in principle by the TDC Cabinet in July 2022. NBL will set up a sub-group to oversee this work and to ensure community ownership and to maximise community benefits members will be drawn from NCA board, NBL partnership and relevant stakeholders.

Local Trust have agreed that Shared Assets will provide 10 days additional support with the Community Asset Transfer or lease renewal.



The sustainability of the community centre is a vital part of continuing to support community relationships, cohesion and ownership. We will explore ways to maximise rental income.

Support costs

Our largest resource, and therefore expense is our staffing. This plan allocates staff costs to the respective budget heading, where there is an obvious link. This shows us approximately how much staff capacity we have to deliver our aspirations, and the need for more residents to be actively involved. We are conscious that demands change and that this is only an indication of how time is used.

Over the past few years we have provided NCA with additional support to increase their capacity and to strengthen systems. The charity is now in a position to start to resource some of the capacity needed for the day-to-day running of the Centre and two days staff costs will be met by NCA. The Community Chef staffing costs are allocated to the Food Enterprise budget; the cooking activities are supported by some additional project officer time.

The Support Costs budget includes other staffing costs and those expenses that relate to the ongoing operation of Big Local, including staff expenses and training, marketing, running costs and additional support.

We are mindful of the need to secure external support and funding to enable us to continue and to deliver our legacy. We will explore opportunities to maximise income from hall hire and to secure external funding.

Partnerships

NBL has developed good working relationships with a number of partners and we hope to strengthen these over the coming months and years.

Arguable our key relationships include those with our local authorities, Thanet District Council and Ramsgate Town Council. Whilst we have excellent relationships with elected members the political cycle can make these precarious. Similarly, staff changes sometimes hinder effective partnership working.

We are working closely with Thanet's Regeneration Project Manager on the Levelling Up Fund and will ensure that we shine a spotlight on what we do and on local need. We are determined that Newington will be seen and heard, and that NBL's achievements recognised.

We have excellent relationships with two of the four local primary schools, through Creative Newington activities, cooking sessions and use of the Copse. We want to co-design further activities, with the schools and will include them at the earliest stage in the design of new initiatives. In 2022 we successfully engaged with Royal Harbour and Chatham and Clarendon Grammar for the first time. We want to build on this success to involve them and their students in future community projects.

Our partnership with East Kent College, delivering the practical element of their hospitality employability scheme, demonstrated that we are a credible partner. We want to work with them to replicate this programme, and working alongside the DWP Thanet, maximise use of our new training kitchen to extend employability programmes to residents. The relationships we have created with key decision-makers at East Kent College open opportunities for us to inform future employability programmes to address local skills gaps and aspirations.

We have longstanding relationships with local Housing Associations but there are two in particular that we will develop. The first is with West Kent Housing Association, who manage Copperfields. Through the Creative Newington project we created the sensory garden and nurtured the Screaming Mary Club, demonstrating the possibilities of working with residents and starting to break down intergenerational barriers. We will build on the strong relationships developed over the past three years to incorporate Copperfields into future activities we design. The second is Orbit Housing, who will be managing social housing in the new Poppy Fields development. It will be important for us both to integrate new residents into community life as seamlessly as possible.

Our successful and longstanding relationship with aim4 Partnerships CIC has enabled our youth group to grow and thrive. Through aim4 we are able to link with other creative organisations, networks and producers. As Big Local reaches its end it is crucial that we continue to work with aim4 both to maintain this relationship and also to support them to secure ongoing funding and to develop future joint initiatives.

Through Creative Newington we built excellent working relationships with a number of creative partners and we will develop these further over the coming months. For example, work with Inspiration Creative CIC and Screaming Alley CIC to secure funding to continue the Newington Youth Theatre Club and Screaming Mary Club respectively. We will continue to liaise with Looping the Loop to identify opportunities for collaboration.

We are talking to Paines Plough about the potential to bring Roundabout back to Newington for a longer period to facilitate a more embedded approach to the performing arts. We are working with Cohesion Plus and Kent Racial Equality Council to design a Community Celebration and Parade in October 2023, to coincide with Black History Month.



Budget

The budget enables the partnership to plan for a 2.5 year period to the end of funding in September 2025. The budget includes:

- Staff support costs to the end of the project (project co-ordinator, assistant and community gardener) to deliver activities and work with the LTO and NCA to plan and fundraise for legacy. Some staff costs will be covered by NCA in relation to community centre management.
- Small delivery budget for events (year 1 only), Chill Club (reducing budget for 2 years) and community food (1 year). There is an expectation that we will work with partners to raise additional funding for these activities. A first stage Reaching Communities bid has already been submitted for the community food project.

Opening balance (rounded)	257,075	144,239	64,563
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		Year		
		8	9	10
Start Date		01/04/2023	01/04/2024	01/04/2025
End Date		31/03/2024	31/03/2025	30/09/2025
		£	£	£
Good Things Together		4,682	-	-
Newington's Children and Young People Thrive		5,223	4,113	-
Food enterprise		27,380	-	-
Green spaces		10,708	11,219	5,877
Support costs		64,843	64,344	58,686
Total		112,836	79,676	64,563

Closing balance	144,239	64,563	0
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Starlings



Places to live. Space to grow.

