

Gloucestershire's Levelling Up Together  
Grant Scheme 2022-2024

**Levelling up  
together**

**Final Impact Report 2024**



**Gloucestershire**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

# Levelling Up Together

## Final Impact Report

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# Introduction

Gloucestershire County Council's 2022-2026 Strategy "Building Back Better in Gloucestershire" (available [here](#)) sets out its ambition to 'level up' Gloucestershire communities. This ambition builds on the UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper (2022) (available [here](#)) which focuses on challenging and changing geographical inequality in the UK, through investment and new infrastructure to allow 'everyone the opportunity to flourish'. The White Paper sets out long-term, quantifiable missions across a range of policy areas from housing to crime to health. Health inequalities are at the core of these missions, and many of them refer to 'closing the gap' and reducing health inequalities. The strategy is owned nationally by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (which has now been renamed the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government).

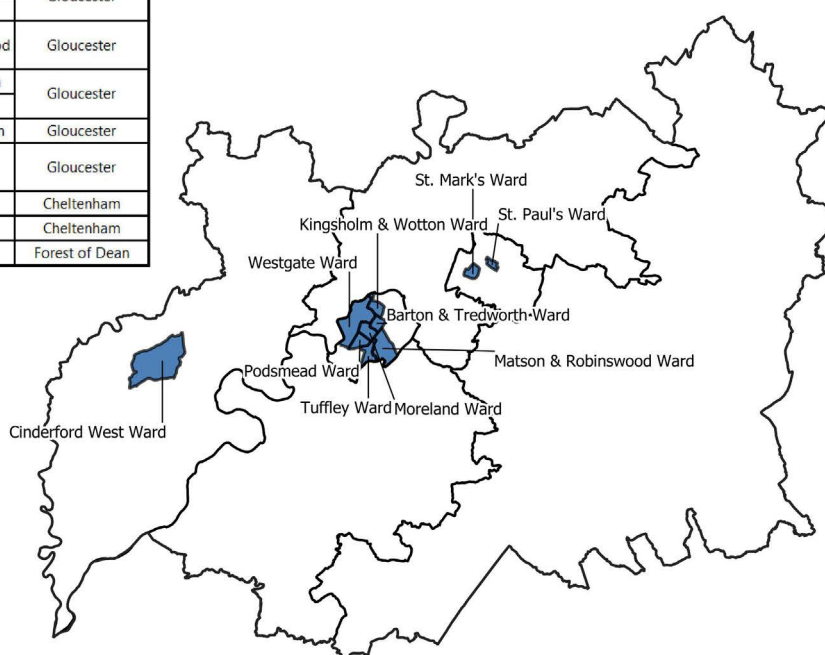
The Council's 2022-2026 Strategy and its 'levelling up' ambition was further informed by a Council Motion passed in September 2021 to 'tackle poverty and deprivation'. In response to the Council Strategy and Motion, a "Levelling Up Our Communities" conference was held on 19 May 2022. It was attended by approximately 130 people in person and virtually. The conference highlighted that successful 'levelling up' will require us to strengthen how we all work together, and this includes further developing and reinforcing links between communities, voluntary and community sector partners, public sector organisations and businesses. Recordings from the conference and a summary report can be found [here](#).

At the conference, the Leader of Gloucestershire County Council at the time, Councillor Mark Hawthorne MBE, announced the investment of £1.5 million as part of the council's commitment to levelling up communities across Gloucestershire. To oversee the delivery of this investment and the council's wider levelling up ambitions for Gloucestershire, it was agreed that this funding would be used to create a Levelling Up Together grant scheme, and in keeping with the stated aims of the conference, it would focus on the twelve most deprived Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019). This would help improve the lives of the 3.1% (19,435 people) in the county currently living in the 10% 'most deprived' communities in England (IMD, 2019). These twelve LSOAs fall into ten wards highlighted in Figure 1.

## Levelling Up Together Grant Scheme: Eligible Areas



Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) Name (total – 12)	Ward Name/Area (total – 10)	District
Podsmead 1	Podsmead	Gloucester
Tuffley 4	Tuffley	
Matson And Robinswood 1 Matson And Robinswood 5	Matson & Robinswood	Gloucester
Barton And Tredworth 4	Barton & Tredworth	Gloucester
Moreland 4	Moreland	
Kingsholm And Wotton 3	Kingsholm & Wotton	Gloucester
Westgate 1 Westgate 5	Westgate	Gloucester
St Marks 1	St. Mark's	Cheltenham
St Pauls 1	St. Paul's	Cheltenham
Cinderford West 1	Cinderford	Forest of Dean



# The Levelling Up Together grant scheme

The Levelling Up Together grant scheme represents an opportunity to try new ways of working with Gloucestershire communities.

The grant scheme launched on Tuesday 18 October 2022 and remained open to applications until midnight on Sunday 27 November. A wide array of groups and organisations working in the eligible areas outlined in Figure 1 were invited to apply. The scheme encouraged collaborative bids to encourage partnership working.

To facilitate true community voice and development, the criteria for bids were kept to a minimum, to enable communities to be creative in what they bid for. Applicants needed to demonstrate how their bid would help to achieve the outcomes linked to at least one of five of the missions taken from the UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper (2022):

- *"By 2030, the gap in **Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE)** between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years*
- *By 2030, **well-being** will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing*
- *By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in **reading, writing and maths** will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third*
- *By 2030, the number of people successfully completing **high-quality skills training** will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas*
- *By 2030, **pride in place**, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing."*

**The Levelling Up Together grant scheme sought to take a flexible, responsive, and relational approach, to build trusting relationships with prospective applicants and communities.**

The Levelling Up Together grant scheme was highly competitive and received 127 applications, totalling £7,418,181.54.

The Levelling Up Together Team coordinated a robust, multi-stage approach to appraising applications to the Levelling Up Together grant scheme.

The eight County Councillors representing the eligible areas played a key role in the grant scheme. All applicants were asked to discuss their application with the relevant County Councillor/s.

# Grant awards

**52 projects were awarded, totalling £1,470,712.50.** As some organisations were successful with multiple bids, there were 45 Levelling Up Together 'partners'; the term used to describe successful applicants. The below table outlines the full list of organisations that received a Levelling Up Together grant:

District	Areas Covered	Organisation Name	Project Name	Total Grant Awarded
Cheltenham	St. Mark's	Cheltenham Borough Homes	CBH Wraparound Support Initiative	£85,000
Cheltenham	St. Mark's	Hesters Way Partnership Limited	Cheltenham Pantry	£30,000
Cheltenham	St. Paul's	Read With Me CIC	Every child reading well	£3,422
Cheltenham	St. Paul's	Fresh Hope	School House Cafe, Kitchen rebuild / repurposing	£50,000
Cheltenham	St. Paul's	Gas Green Baptist Church	Gas Green Youth and Community Centre Levelling Up initiative	£72,000
Cheltenham	St. Paul's	Vision 21 Gloucestershire	Planet Cheltenham ECO-Hub	£25,000
Cheltenham	St. Mark's, St. Paul's	Move More	Community-Based Physical Activity Provision	£33,690
Forest of Dean	Cinderford	Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF)	Vibrant Cinderford Spaces	£82,500.00
Forest of Dean	Cinderford	Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Men's Shed CIC	Forest Community Shed relocation	£25,000
Forest of Dean	Cinderford	1st Cinderford Scouts	Improving Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in local Scouting	£3,257
Forest of Dean	Cinderford	Sportily	Sport, Health, and Wellbeing in Cinderford	£10,000
Forest of Dean	Cinderford	Home-Start North and West Gloucestershire	Home-Start Cinderford	£29,000
Forest of Dean	Cinderford	The Family Wellbeing CIC	Coaching parents towards positive wellbeing	£4,770.50
Gloucester	Podsmead, Tuffley	Read With Me CIC	Every child reading well	£3,422.00
Gloucester	Tuffley	Gloucester Community Building Collective	Community Building	£15,000.00
Gloucester	Podsmead	Friends of Tuffley Park	Tuffley Park - Outdoor Accessibility for All	£75,000.00
Gloucester	Tuffley	Tuffley Rovers AFC/Tuffley Rovers Youth	Youth changing rooms & pavilion redevelopment	£37,500.00
Gloucester	Tuffley	St Barnabas Community Halls	Growing our service to the community 2023	£10,000.00
Gloucester	Tuffley	Court Community Association (Tuffley)	Breakfast Club	£12,000.00
Gloucester	Tuffley	Court Community Association (Tuffley)	Free and sustainable food parcels	£15,000.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	GL Communities	The Best Life	£50,000.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	Arcexi Ltd	Rebranding Matson	£18,750.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	Read With Me CIC	Every child reading well	£3,422.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	TLT Matson CIC	The Long Table Matson	£40,000.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	Together in Matson	Fund Forward	£15,000.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	Create Gloucestershire	Culture Matson Community Chest	£10,000.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood	Community Roots CIC	Top Two	£5,000.00
Gloucester	Moreland	Gloucester Community Building Collective	Community Builder	£21,506.00



Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth, Moreland	Read With Me CIC	Every child reading well	£3,422.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	Brendan's Bridge	Czech M8s +	£30,000.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	Rainbow Transformations CIC	Barton and Tredworth - The Arts and Cultural Quarter of Gloucester	£50,000.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth, Moreland	Gloucestershire Bangladeshi Association	Gloucestershire Bangladeshi Association	£35,000.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	Kingfisher Church	Community Hub	£40,000.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	The Friendship Café	The Friendship Café	£15,500.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	Islamic Society of Gloucester (ISOG)	Education and Social Welfare Project	£15,700.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth, Moreland	Fair Shares	Fair Shares	£18,500.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	Rising Stars Youth FC	The Glebe - Multi Sports Hub	£45,000.00
Gloucester	Barton & Tredworth	St James and All Saints and Christ Church Gloucester	Building Resilience and Warmth for Sustainable Flourishing	£25,000.00
Gloucester	Kingsholm & Wotton	Roots Coffee and Community	Kingsholm Partnership	£75,000.00
Gloucester	Kingsholm & Wotton	Gloucester Rugby Foundation	Engage	£59,100.00
Gloucester	Kingsholm & Wotton	Read With Me CIC	Every child reading well	£3,422.00
Gloucester	Westgate	Gloucester Feed the Hungry CIC	Gloucester Feed the Hungry Community Space	£10,000.00
Gloucester	Westgate	Kingfisher Treasure Seekers	Improving access for improved wellbeing and health equity	£50,000.00
Gloucester	Westgate	Discover DeCrypt	Old Crypt Schoolroom Cafe	£20,000.00
Gloucester	Westgate	The Wiggly Worm	Food for Mood	£3,229.00
Gloucester	Westgate	Filipino Association of Gloucestershire	Filipino Heritage Day/International Nurses Celebration	£5,000.00
Gloucester	Podsmead, Tuffley, Westgate	Play Gloucestershire	Annual Play Provision	£13,505.00
Gloucester	Matson & Robinswood, Podsmead, Tuffley	Diverse Leap	Diverse Leap Mental Wellbeing Drop-in Centre - Outreach Project	£1,500.00
Across Districts	Barton & Tredworth, Kingsholm & Wotton, Moreland, Podsmead, Tuffley, Westgate, Cinderford	TIC+ (Teens in Crisis)	Boys in Mind - Levelling up access to mental health for boys and young men in Gloucestershire	£56,379.00
Across Districts	Barton & Tredworth, Kingsholm & Wotton, Matson & Robinswood, Moreland, Podsmead, Tuffley, Westgate, Cinderford, St. Mark's, St. Paul's	North and West Gloucestershire Citizens Advice	Levelling Up Advice	£89,200.00
Across Districts	Kingsholm & Wotton, Cinderford	Play Gloucestershire	Holiday Play Days	£11,016.00

All applicants were notified of the outcome of their application by the middle of February 2023. The majority of Levelling Up Together partners had received their grant (or their first instalment) by April 2023.

Keeping the criteria for bids to a minimum (and focusing on the levelling up missions) resulted in a diverse array of successful projects and partners.

**Please note:** This report builds on the Levelling Up Together interim report (available [here](#)) in which you can find more information on:

- The application process
- The decision-making process
- A summary of key milestones and events
- The co-produced Levelling Up Together learning and evaluation framework

## Working with Levelling Up Together partners

The Levelling Up Together grant scheme has maintained regular contact with its partners as part of its relational approach. The Levelling Up team has sought to create an open and honest culture where feedback, learning and challenges can be easily shared.

### Site Visits

All projects have been visited at least once. This has been a great opportunity for partners to informally discuss their progress and their learning with a member of the Levelling Up Together team.

### The Levelling Up Together Celebration Event

On Wednesday 28th February 2024, an event was held at the Heritage at Kingsholm Stadium in Gloucester to celebrate one year since the grants were awarded. The relevant County Councillors and other stakeholders were invited to join the Levelling Up Together partners and the Levelling Up Together team. In keeping with the relational approach taken thus far, Levelling Up Together partners and elected members helped to shape and plan the event.

The event was opened by the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities and then Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE. Cllr Hawthorne thanked the partners for their commitment to supporting the Council's efforts to 'level up' and deliver on its most recent strategy's ambitions. Partners from across the eligible areas gave brief presentations on their Levelling Up Together projects. All partners had the opportunity to reflect, network and strengthen relationships and partnership working. It was also an opportunity to remind partners to participate in the final survey and explain that whilst the Levelling Up Together webpages, inbox and team would remain accessible, the team will mainly be working on other related programmes of work from now on.



# One year on

As per the co-designed learning and evaluation framework for Levelling Up Together (outlined in the first impact report found [here](#)) all Levelling Up Together partners were asked to participate in a second and final survey in Spring 2024, the results of which are summarised in this report.

**To facilitate true community voice and development, the criteria for bids were kept to a minimum, to enable communities to be creative in what they bid for. Applicants needed to demonstrate how their bid would help to achieve the outcomes linked to at least one of five of the missions taken from the UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper (2022):**

Thank you to the Levelling Up Together partners who responded to this survey and contributed to this report. While it's not possible to include all the raw data, this report summarises what's happened in the year since the Levelling Up partners received their grants.

All but one grant has been paid in full. The funding for the grant that could not be paid has been redistributed in the same area in consultation with the relevant County Councillor. Therefore, £1,470,712.50 has been spent.

£299,112 has been invested into the eligible Cheltenham areas (seven projects), £154,527.50 has been invested into Cinderford (six projects), £860,478 has been invested into the eligible Gloucester areas (36 projects), and £156,595 has been invested into projects which cross more than one district (three projects).

## Levelling Up Together project updates

**Many of the Levelling Up Together projects are ongoing. Here's what some of our partners have been up to over the last year or so.**

*"Our mixed approach of holiday and annual play provision has led to great outcomes for the communities we have been welcomed into. We have seen more people using their community green spaces on days we have been providing our provision with anecdotal evidence that this playful habit has continued days when our Play teams are not on site.*

*We've been in the fortunate position of being trusted to advocate for children's needs, supporting them in reporting broken pieces of play equipment, or to speak with council leaders and community groups about their desires to make the play spaces a nicer place to visit.*

*The combination of creative and active play has meant that individuals have been able to arrive and choose what they want to do, the knock on benefits then are both physical and mental in nature as beneficiaries have been able to keep active in games like 'jumpers for goalposts' football or energetic games of tag, but also been able to find some time to themselves to create pieces of artwork to take home.*

*355 individuals have benefitted from having free play provision on their doorstep, visiting multiple times to get out and play. One caregiver telling us they plan their "... summer holidays around what the Play Rangers are doing, it is so nice to have something the whole family can do... for free!"*

**Play Gloucestershire (pictured)**





*"The building work is now complete, and our toilet block was open in December 2023. The response to users re the quality of the toilets and the how the new facilities have enhanced their experience of the centre has been great. Increased enthusiasm from workers at the centre because they no longer have to apologise. We have increased self-esteem of the centre amongst users."*

**Gas Green Baptist Youth and Community Centre**

*"We were able to employ a family support worker for Cinderford area and encourage the community to reach out to services and support from ourselves and other community services. We were able to support over 10 families individually and offer volunteers into the home. Meet with midwives, health visitors, health professionals and mental health services and signpost in an informed manner."*

**Home-Start North and West Gloucestershire**

*"Our Active Tots sessions have been regularly attended by a committed group of parents/carers and children. They have benefited not only from the interactive activity, but from the support network formed and opportunity for children to be active in a safe and well-resourced environment."* **Sportily**

*"Over the last year The Skills Hub, based at Hesters Way Resource Centre has been offering skills and training sessions every Wednesday and Thursday. These are open access sessions with support from qualified staff. There are two sessions each day and comprised of a variety of topics relating to:*

- *Employability skills and work clubs*
- *Digital and ITC skills*
- *Money management and budgeting*
- *Vocational certificates - Customers Services, Food Safety and Construction Skills Certification Scheme*
- *Household skills - Basic DIY and Damp, mould and condensation.*

*We have been successful in engaging local partners to offer specialist support and advice to our customers, for example, Disability Employment Advice delivered by DWP staff and Benefit and Money Advice, CBH team. We have previously hosted workshops from Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire, Damp, Mould, and Condensation and DIY sessions CBH. We understand being flexible in our timetable enables us to cater for recommendations made by our customers and presenting issues such as:*

*Cost of Living – additional sessions of budgeting, money matters, seasonal spend, shopping smart and save money and keeping warm workshops.*

*We have been embedding the Tenancy Investment offer of this project into the St Marks community by building relationships with residents in the area. We understand that a person-centred approach is the key to supporting people and unlocking their potential."* **Cheltenham Borough Homes (pictured below)**



*"Our main achievement is the successful move to new premises, to avoid closure. The workshop is now kitted out with lots of tools and machinery. We are proving very successful with new members joining and applications for more community project support. We now also have a social quiet space."*

**Forest Community Shed**

"Our project had three key elements:

1. The **performance space** upgrade has been completed and the space accessed by all year groups, with a fantastic Young Voices Concert held which utilised the additional staging, enhanced lighting, projector system and audio equipment. The children had immense pleasure in performing for their parents and a targeted audience and it proved to be a useful trial run for the main end of academic year performance.

The children were hugely enthused by the quality of equipment and the opportunity it gives to them to develop key skills that could change their life experiences and outcomes. The value it offers in seeking out and developing children's skills and talents is very significant. The space and equipment is used daily and accessed by all year groups, as well as by the Drama Clubs, University modules, choir, daily worship activities, not to mention the end of term discos which now offer a whole new sensory experience with the upgraded audio and lighting equipment.



*The new performance space at Kingsholm C of E Primary School*

2. **The Thrive programme** - the Thrive approach has evolved over the last 25 years, providing those who work with children and young people the skills and tools to optimise social and emotional development and skills. Through Thrive we are committed to supporting and encouraging the development of confident, curious, creative and capable children who are open to learning and more emotionally resilient. All of the staff team have received generic Thrive training and we have identified a practitioner per year group plus two specialists and one lead to coordinate provision across the school. There is also a family programme attached to this, which subject to sourcing further funds, we will be exploring, to broaden the benefit across the wider community.

3. **Swimming** - two year groups access swimming provision per year which is a fundamental skill. Significant numbers of our children remain unable to swim and we are looking to source viable alternatives to increase provision."

**Kingsholm C of E Primary & Nursery School (Roots Community Group)**

*"Our project was to include more of the community, through helping people with subs and uniform. We have seen an increase in all of our sections and have helped a number of our members. We have also helped a number of our scouts attend a county camp by helping with the cost of the event."*

**Cinderford 1st Scouts**

*"We have refurbished our washroom facilities and converted a room into a parent/baby changing facility with an additional toilet."* **Kingfisher Church Tredworth (pictured below)**



*"We are now approaching 70% of the funding towards the building project in St Pauls, alongside our project work which has included our youth group, community fridges, library of things pilot project and much more."* **Vision 21 / Planet Cheltenham**

*"'Engage' represented a new, collaborative project co-designed with residents living within the St Marks Street, London Road, Great Western Road, Worcester Street, Oxford Street, Deans Way, and Clapham Court neighbourhoods of Kingsholm and Wotton offering local, accessible interventions that equipped people of all ages with the skills, confidence, and knowledge to achieve better life outcomes.*

*Residents reported the need for community-based interventions that would help inspire better outcomes around life skills, employability, and wellbeing. Inspired by the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', 'Engage' sought to engage residents most vulnerable to socio-economic inequalities including single parents, young people, older people, unemployed, and those living with a health condition in one-to-one support and group-based learning activities. Funded provision through the LUT scheme included:*

- **Connect:** Supporting older residents to come together and engage in weekly reminiscence sessions at Kingsholm Stadium, accessing healthy refreshments, interacting with club memorabilia, sharing memories with peers, and hearing recollections of yesteryear with former players. Seventy-one participants engaged over the project period, with 87% stating sessions had improved their mental wellbeing and 100% reporting forming new friendships.
- **Learn:** The cost-of-living crisis is having a significant impact on the lives of those living in neighbourhoods around Kingsholm Stadium. Funding supported delivery of three weekly 'Warm Hub' sessions throughout the winter months, directly engaging 110 families. Whilst the primary objective of the session was to provide a space for families to keep warm, access hot meals, and connect with other families (tackling loneliness and social isolation), sessions provided an opportunity to engage children and young people in traditional youth provision and support parents to develop skills to cope with the crisis. Workshops explored money skills, ways of being more energy efficient, understanding bills, and cooking healthy meals on a budget. 84% of parents stated they felt better prepared to deal with cost-of-living pressures because of 'Engage'.
- **Resilient:** A key priority of the project's 'Job Club' was to support unemployed or economically inactive adults develop the practical skills and personal attributes to progress into sustainable employment. Whilst this included the delivery of accredited employability type qualifications, of equal importance was addressing some of the wider health and social inequalities that being unemployed impacts, including mental health. Each of the weekly ninety-minute sessions included at least thirty-minutes of group discussion or practical activity which focused on improving participant understanding of mental health, what impacts it (e.g. alcohol, sleep, physical activity), coping skills and stress management techniques, and the local support available (e.g. Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind). 88% of 'Job Club' participants reported possessing the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead mentally resilient lives.
- **Active:** Providing access to community-based sport and physical activity can be a useful tool in diverting teenagers away from risk-taking actions and anti-social behaviour. 'Engage' included delivery of weekly evening sessions from Kingsholm Stadium for local teenagers which were underpinned by the National Youth Agency's principles of youth work practice (voluntary engagement, based on lived experiences, include non-formal learning and education, and embrace equality, diversity, and inclusion). Ninety-six young people participated over the funded period, taking in provision which included multi-sport and physical activity, access to safe spaces (laid out mindful of trauma informed practice) where young people can choose to relax, socialise with friends, take part in creative spaces, and use digital devices, and personalised, needs-led activities that challenge risk-taking behaviours, exploring topics such as conflict management, critical thinking, decision making, and making positive choices.
- **Give Back:** For the last five-years, the Foundation's 'Hitz' programme has supported over 100 young people aged sixteen-to-eighteen to achieve qualifications and progress into further / higher education or employment. Over the funded period, fourteen 'Hitz' participants have taken their first steps into volunteering, working with the 'Engage' project team to deliver planned activities and provide a welcoming, supportive experience for participants. 100% of volunteers stated their experience had improved their confidence, with 43% going on to complete additional volunteering or social action in their community." **Kingsholm Community Foundation**



"With the grant money, Wiggly Charity have provided Two x 5-week cookery courses for vulnerable adults, including people with learning difficulties and mental health issues, from Sept – Oct and Oct – Nov 2023. The courses are now completed. The courses focussed on teaching new kitchen skills and creating healthy, accessible, low-budget meals that participants could make at home. We also aimed to increased confidence when cooking, boost community connections and combat social isolation and loneliness. We were joined by 15 participants over the two courses with attendance being consistently good across the weeks. Feedback showed that the course boosted mental health levels in the group and participants ate together at the end of each session so formed friendships which will last beyond the course. 100% of participants said they would recommend a Wiggly cookery course and everyone has asked to come back to do another Wiggly course in the future." **Wiggly Worm (pictured)**



"The Levelling Up funds were received after we had been running for approximately 18 months and coincided with an upturn in the demand for the pantry service. By then we had established reliable weekly routine of food purchase, collection, storage, display and distribution and had a team of 3 key volunteers who helped support the paid staff to run the operation. This has continued throughout the year with the pantry stocked on a Tuesday and open on Wednesday and Thursday mornings with Fridays dedicated to client liaison and administration.

We have served a wide variety of clients who have come to us via referrals from local support services and self-referral. Our recent survey gives a snapshot of the issues facing our clients including issues such unemployment, mental health, debt, budgeting, low income and medical exemptions from work. All clients have enjoyed the benefits of the weekly food shop which costs them £4 and consists of 2 fridge items 8 ambient items plus seasonal fruit and vegetables and "free" goods that are end of date or in large supply.

In addition to the grant funds we have received from Levelling Up Together, Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council we have been in receipt of numerous food donations from local well-wishers, churches and schools plus have received anonymous financial donations via our web-based donations portal." **Hester's Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)**

"Our mixed approach of holiday and annual play provision has led to great outcomes for the communities we have been welcomed into. We have seen more people using their community green spaces on days we have been providing our provision with anecdotal evidence that this playful habit has continued days when our Play teams are not on site.

We've been in the fortunate position of being trusted to advocate for children's needs, supporting them in reporting broken pieces of play equipment, or to speak with council leaders / community groups about their desires to make the play spaces a nicer place to visit.

The combination of creative and active play has meant that individuals have been able to arrive and choose what they want to do, the knock on benefits then are both physical and mental in nature as beneficiaries have been able to keep active in games like 'jumpers for goalposts' football or energetic games of tag, but also been able to find some time to themselves to create pieces of artwork to take home."

**Play Gloucestershire (pictured)**





*"We have today finally secured the lease and got the keys! We will be starting the works straight away to make the area look fantastic and aim to be open and ready to employ and rent chairs soon."*

**Arcexi Ltd (pictured below)**



*"Levelling Up funding has supported many community projects throughout Matson, Robinswood and White City. The funding supported the Community Chest and the ongoing work of Culture Matson. Culture Matson is an alliance of local community partners delivering arts and culture to support well being and giving equality of opportunity.*

*The projects are progressing well and funding has enabled local young people and adults to engage in a range of creative activities.*

*The projects to date have included funding towards-*

- *Matson Music and Food Festival*
- *Partial funding for Everyman Pantomime Trip for Robinswood School*
- *In House Christmas Production at Moat School*
  - *DJ and PA Equipment Redwell Centre*
  - *GAS Projects - Matson Makers weekly art and crafts group*

#### **Culture Matson, Create Gloucestershire**

*"Mini Movers has progressed well during the funding period. Through partnering with Family Space who have a direct relationship with families, our delivery in St Marks has had consistent numbers on a weekly basis and has enabled Move More to become more embedded within the community which has benefitted other programmes that we deliver for older participants. Delivery in St Pauls is now thriving, however a considerable amount of testing and learning was required to get to the current position. This involved multiple taster sessions at the community hub, identifying additional community partners to identify families and moving venues." **Move More***

"Over the past 12 months, the Phoenix Centre has emerged as a beacon of hope and transformation in the community, drawing attention and awareness as a safe space and a hub for wellbeing. Through various classes, activities, and personalised coaching, the centre has fostered social inclusion, improved mental and physical health, and empowered individuals to lead fulfilling lives. This report highlights some of the notable success stories that exemplify the positive impact of the centre's initiatives.

**1. Walk and Talk Group:** The Walk and Talk Group stands as a testament to the power of social inclusion and physical activity in enhancing overall wellbeing. By encouraging movement, exercise, and communication in a natural setting, the group has facilitated meaningful connections among participants who may not have crossed paths otherwise. The result is not only improved physical health but also a sense of belonging and camaraderie within the community.

**2. Yoga Classes:** The growing demand for yoga classes underscores their profound impact on the local community. Beyond enhancing mobility, strength, and balance, these classes promote mindfulness and social engagement. Participants attest to the transformative effects of yoga, both physically and mentally, as they find solace and connection through the practice.

**3. Personalised Coaching:** The 1-2-1 coaching program has yielded remarkable transformations in participants' lives, as exemplified by the case of 'S.' S's journey from struggling with mobility and chronic conditions to achieving significant weight loss and strength gains is a testament to the efficacy of personalised coaching. Moreover, S's newfound confidence and participation in various activities demonstrate the holistic nature of the centre's approach to wellbeing.

**4. Empowering Individuals:** The Phoenix Centre has served as a catalyst for empowering individuals like 'S' to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential. By providing a supportive environment and personalised guidance, participants have been able to break free from limitations and pursue new opportunities. S's transition from participant to facilitator, leading the diamond art class, exemplifies the ripple effect of empowerment within the community.

**5. Impact on Neurodiverse Individuals:** The centre's impact extends to individuals with diverse needs, such as 'M,' who is autistic and resides in supported living. M's journey from isolation to active participation in centre activities, including personalised coaching, reflects the transformative power of community engagement and positive reinforcement. Through the support of the centre, M has blossomed into a more positive and engaged individual, enriching both his own life and the lives of those around him.

The success stories emerging from the Phoenix Centre over the past 12 months underscore its vital role as a catalyst for community wellbeing. Through a combination of inclusive activities, personalised coaching, and empowerment initiatives, the centre has transformed lives, fostering resilience, connection, and hope within the community. As more individuals experience the transformative power of the centre's programs, its impact is poised to continue growing, enriching the lives of participants and strengthening the fabric of the community.

This report serves as a testament to the dedication and vision of the centre's staff and volunteers in creating a nurturing environment where individuals can thrive and flourish." **GL Communities**

*"The challenges of recruitment have delayed the start of our Boys in Mind project several times, but with both positions now filled, we are delighted to be able to proceed with our project activities including delivery of workshops, connecting with communities and attending community events. We now have a strong brand identity, logos, posters, leaflets, social media platforms and web pages. We have also stocked up on merchandise to help us promote the project and distribute across the wards that we are targeting and to support our outreach and engagement strategy. We have made some useful connections across all the wards which we will now be pursuing to raise awareness of how we can support young males through our project." **TIC+***

*"The project started well and was built on the foundations of our outreach work and integrated detached youth work. A youth club was established at Parry Hall and young people were integral to planning and facilitation. The hiatus enabled our youth provision to work with young people to involve them in future planning and wants / needs in a community setting. We identified a shortage of trained Youth workers and play specialists in Gloucestershire highlighting a skills gap that was not meeting young people's needs and aspirations. Young people identified the lack of community educational support for young people with Avoidance disorder or school anxiety. Community partners expressed a need for play work training and young people's Mental health awareness Jigsaw community Co-operative has become an accredited community college (NOCN / NCFE) and has recruited suitably qualified staff to deliver, and the first cohort is underway. We are training young people in Mental Health first Aid and "buddying" to identify and offer support.*

*We have built strong links with local business to underpin reach and employability who have offered city center premises (the forum) as a safe space for young people and we are currently in negotiations with to offer school holidays support. The youth clubs reopen July 24, and this has been guided by young people and us." **Brendan's Bridge***

*"Phase 1 of the Vibrant Cinderford Spaces project to create multi-use community hub through the renovation of the former Dockham Road Health Centre is close to completion. Key achievements include:*

- *Relocated our office*
  - *Welcomed permanent community partner tenants*
  - *Completion of the training/conference room delivering a flexible space which can be divided into two functional and welcoming spaces or left open to provide a large communal conference area. This space is in regular use from the wider community.*
  - *Transformation of the exterior facia of the building with the installation of wood cladding and the new signage*
  - *Trialled the Forest Community Pantry*
  - *Launch of marketing plan to raise awareness, community engagement and involvement."*
- Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) (pictured below)**



**Forest Voluntary Action Forum's new community space before and during renovations. This building used to be Cinderford Health Centre.**

*"We have successfully recruited two community builders for Parry Hall and Tuffley. They started in late August (2023) after several rounds of recruitment between March and June. Both community builders were given basic training in strengths-based working before going out into their respective areas and 'discovering' the place. This involves getting to know local people, their heritage and culture, their passions and interests and their 'bumping spaces' - places where residents like to meet, chat and do things together. The 'discovery phase is also about finding out about local community groups, businesses in the area and identifying different types of assets such as green spaces and the built environment, local services such as schools and GPs and libraries. As well as listening to people and hearing about their lives and what matters to them, they also introduce themselves and explain what the project is about, building relationships with local residents and key stakeholders so they start to become known, familiar and trusted.*

*In Parry Hall, our community builder has spent a lot of time in and around the Parry Hall building, getting to know the staff at the Gloucester Youth Project, and meeting other organisations that use the space such as Your Next Move, Brendan's Bridge and local activists.*

*At Christmas, the Collective was asked to support an activity day organised to bring children and families together in the Hall between Xmas and New Year. We gave some seed funding from the Parry Hall Community chest to support the day. Our community builder has also connected with a local care home, a parent and baby group and a local cafe - a key community asset.*

*In Tuffley, our community builder has met with local residents, attended local community groups, including the Teapots Tea and Chat sessions, the Grange toddler group, Bingo at Tuffley Hall, and the lunch group for the over 60s at Tuffley Community Centre. She has also attended the monthly Know Your Patch Gloucester meeting, coordinated by Treasure Seekers which brings public and voluntary sectors together to network and share learning."* **Gloucester Community Building Collective**

#### **"In the past year, we have:**

- **Provided 144 allotment sessions over the year**, working with 1065 people, 22 regular participants. These visitors included children, families, older people, refugees and asylum seekers, people with physical/mental health disabilities, people living alone and at risk of isolation.
  - **Provided 48 free community lunches for local people**, cooked by and for our participants, often using produce grown at the allotment.
  - **Provided 144 woodworking sessions over the year**, working with 42 regular participants and often inviting young people from local alternative education providers to also take part. The group has built numerous things, from planters and benches for the local community, alongside commissions and personal projects. 14.2% of our regular users have a physical or mental disability.
  - **Provided 48 free art group sessions**, providing a supportive, welcoming space for people who face barriers to community involvement- 95.8% have a disability.
  - **Provided 13 trips to 61 regular participants**, to locations and spaces that would usually be prohibitive due to financial constraints or accessibility.
  - **Provided various community time bank exchanges**, matching need and skills through one to one giving and receiving of practical everyday help, gardening, light DIY, shopping, dog walking etc.
  - **Built a new shed for our allotment**. This was built with participants, for participants, at our community wood workshop. It was constructed with local people, for local people. The community will benefit from it in various ways, from school groups storing resources within it, to increased capacity to store equipment and tools safely and securely.
  - **"Built a new polytunnel**. This replaced a dilapidated one, allowing us to grow plants and seedlings effectively, conduct small workshops within it, work with groups of schools."
- Fairshares.**



**"Our project had two strands to it:**

**1. Seed funding for new activities in our new centre in Eastgate Street.**

- **Discos for adults with learning disabilities.**
- **Performing arts programme for adults with learning disabilities.** We are starting a 4th term this year to run during the summer period and are currently planning a big open-air event in August in Kings Square to celebrate the programme
- **Coffee and Karaoke mornings (inclusive).**
- **Threads community sewing group.** This group is run by a group of committed volunteers
- **Art and Craft Group (inclusive)**
- **Toddler group for families of additional needs.**
- **Teenage Disco.**
- **Community singing.**
- **Dancercise.** This group is run as a fun way to engage in gentle physical activity. It is disco meets Mr. Motivator! We have a good core group attending this and we are starting to see engagement grow
- **Community lunch.**  
**Bingo.** This group is well attended and valued as a community activity
- **Safe Space.** This Saturday afternoon group gives families with additional needs somewhere safe to go and relax. There are multiple activities each week including a Nintendo Switch, Silent Disco, Arts and Crafts, Lego building and a variety of toys. The children can play and make friends in a supportive environment and parents can relax in the knowledge that should there be difficulties, every other parent in the room understands the challenges. This group is growing each week and we need to look at putting on another session as it does get very crowded.

**We utilised the second part of funding to support members of our community to engage with wider health, social care and community activities. We supported 15 individuals over the year to:**

- See their GP (x7)
- Attend ED for urgent care (x4)
- Attend Court Sessions (x14)
- Act as an appropriate adult for those with complex needs (x11)
- Find solutions for financial/social problems (including making appointments to see housing officers, CAB, speaking with utility companies, etc.) (x 29)
- Using restorative practice to manage relational conflict (x12)

Each of these took multiple phone calls, visits, and follow-up chats to debrief after sessions and we have lots of learning as a result. The profile of the typical person we supported was a young man with complex emotional needs is expressed through antisocial behaviour or anger. Through the work we have been able to:

- Understand the barriers for those with complex emotional needs in accessing primary care. We are now working with our local PCN to identify access pathways and to work together on rehabilitative approaches for those who have been (or are at risk of being) removed from practice lists due to aggressive behaviour.
- Understanding the importance of approach and de-escalation for people with complex needs, especially at times of anxiety. We will be putting this learning into practice during our ED pilot where we will have staff in the ED at GRH for a short period to assess its benefits.
- Understand how the expression of unmet mental health needs and neurodiversity expresses itself in antisocial behaviour for young men. We have been undertaking lots of learning and talking to various colleagues and are working on some proposals for how we use this learning to change processes and practice to help de-escalate situations and see people access the right support at the right time. These are just tweaks to practice rather than costly system programmes.

**"We have secured some more funding from the CMHT programme to continue this work."**

**Kingfishers Treasure Seekers**

# Success stories and long-lasting impacts

The Levelling Up Together partners were asked about their projects' successes and the following themes emerged:

- Even if they're small, the impacts of the grants are clear.

*The impact of the Levelling Up Together grant will be wonderful and long-lasting. Having new windows (covered by the LUT grant) will ensure less energy will be needed to keep the building warm. The new window installation is part of the bigger plan to make the building carbon net zero, obviously a very big help to our environment and cost of heating the building.* **St James Church**

*"The Levelling Up Together grant has raised our profile as an organisation and of "Ow Bist". We have been proactively approached by many organisations and agencies with an interest in using the space. We are now providing one-off or regular opportunities to: NHS Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire County Council's Adult Education Team, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, ThirtyPercy, WEA (national adult learning provider), Forest Food Network, FODCAP, and the DWP."*  
**Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF)**

*"This money has been so welcomed and the impact and results are evident. The families are the winners. We celebrate this as the children are the focus of all Home-Start's work and focus. The first 1,001 days count."* **Home Start North and West Gloucestershire**

*"The Levelling Up Together grant has given us huge organisational security over the duration of this grant, allowing us to grow our core participants over the past year, giving staff breathing space to focus on delivery rather than fundraising, and allowed us to engage with more local people as a result"* **Fair Shares**

*"The Levelling Up Together grant has been instrumental in keeping the West Cheltenham Pantry operating. Without this funding the pantry would not have been sustainable over the last 12 months. The fund has supported 4040 shop visits for the most vulnerable members of the community and has ensured that they have food to eat but has also allowed them to save money to spend on other needs. The funding has not only kept the pantry open for food support but allows us to continue making referrals to other organisations to support our members. The pantry is a social hub that provides a friendly space where isolated individuals can make vital connections either with staff, volunteers or other pantry members."* **Hester's Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)**



*In December 2023, Gas Green Youth and Community Centre held a launch event. Cllr Bernie Fisher unveiled their new toilet block and 'Levelling Up Together' plaque.*

- Partners have been able to create and maintain sustainable and safe spaces where communities can mix, interact, and learn from one another.



**A Fair Shares celebration event at the Friendship Café in Gloucester**

*"We catered for a range of vulnerable adults across the two courses – some with learning disabilities and others with mental health issues – which meant that the recipes and level of learning varied considerably between individuals, so our Chef adapted each course and recipe, accordingly, adding additional elements for some of our learners to challenge and stretch them. The feedback we received was really tremendous, with 100% recommending a Wiggly course and asking to return for another one!"*

#### **Wiggly Worm**

*"Over the past year, we have used time banking to encourage participants to share their time, knowledge and skills to build stronger communities. This has been on both a one-to-one basis, as part of a group, or individually.*

*By bringing people together we have helped people together to overcome loneliness, social isolation, and build confidence, whilst working together on improving our local community. Our work has built connections between people, places and communities. Our projects work in conjunction with each other, whilst individuals across our projects support one another, though 1:1 exchanges of help, support and friendship."* **Fair Shares**

Fair Shares has recently celebrated its 25-year anniversary and created a [video](#) to celebrate those who support the organisation in some way.



**Images from Fair Shares anniversary video (video linked above)**



- **Partners have successfully supported residents and communities with a range of interests and issues.**

*"Key successes include:*

- *the implementation of community college offering accredited training and qualifications*
- *Level 6 careers advisor to support young people into engagement and employment*
- *Strong business links (Kier construction and we are planning to work together on a mobile youth club (still in planning , hoping to be operational summer 24)*
- *Young people who are disengaged from marginalised communities linking with youth workers and identifying support*
- *Rebuilding the youth provision and being part of the recent youth centres contract as community-based specialists."* **Brendan's Bridge**

*"Ow Bist has provided a central point of focus for wrap-around health and wellbeing advice and support/ services. We have welcomed Citizen Advice Bureau, Caring for Communities and People (CCP) and ICE Creates as permanent residents. This has enabled CAB to hold regular drop-in surgeries and week on week the number of local people making use of these sessions has steadily increased. We have been working closely with both tenants to support their clients with access to volunteering opportunities and signposting to other relevant services."* **Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF)**

*"Not only have we helped support clients with healthy food top ups but also have managed to signpost half the clients to support services that address some of the issues that they presented with on joining the pantry. Clients have taken up benefits advice, housing support, and have received household support grants amongst access to a host of other services.*

*We are also pleased to report the successes of the volunteers who have been invaluable in ensuring that the service can run smoothly. We have been able to offer training and support that they have found useful and we can report that one has overcome personal issues to such an extent that he has been offered fulltime work at the NHS."* **Hester's Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)**

- **Working in partnership with partners and other stakeholders brings multiple benefits.**

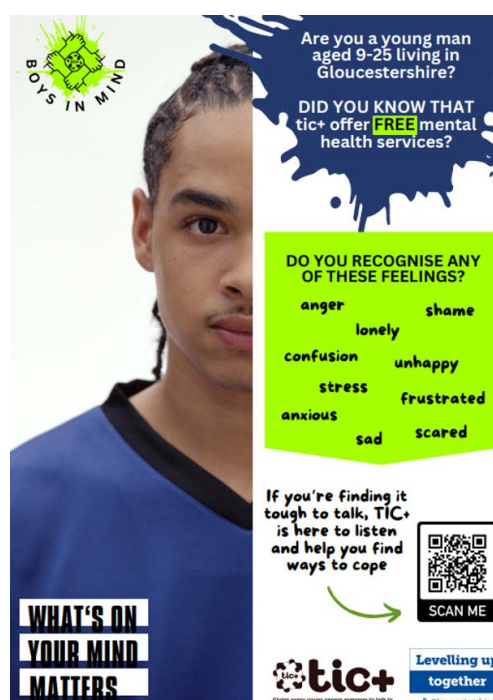
*"Since the LUT grant, we have fostered relationships with many of the local sheltered housing providers and the Honeybourne Unit (Cheltenham). We are working together with a fellow charity - Aim Up (Chelt) to provide cookery sessions for their residents and are currently looking at joint funding to enable us to do this."* **Wiggly Worm**

*"Being awarded the Levelling Up Together grant has enabled us to connect with many organisations that are related to our cause, and who are keen to collaborate with the Boys in Mind project to raise awareness of the free mental health services for young males offered across the County. As well as schools and colleges we have also connected with:*

*Friendship Café, Music Works, Engage Programme - Kingsholm RFC, Play Gloucestershire, BBC Radio Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Libraries, GYC, The Venture Community Hub, Podsmead Hub, Tuffley Rovers, Tredworth Tigers, Sportily, Active Gloucestershire, DWP Glos, Freedom Leisure, FVAF (Forest Voluntary Action Forum), Increase the Peace*  
**TIC+ (a leaflet for their Boys in Mind Project is pictured)**

*"The LUT grant has given the pantry greater visibility and has helped to build community relationships with other support organisations. We are now working more closely with Cheltenham Borough Homes, Severn Wye EA, the Cheltenham Food Network, Feeding Gloucestershire, Feeding Cheltenham, Family Space, The Workers Educational Association and a number of other advice provider."*

**Hester's Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)**





- **Across the county, residents and communities are willing to engage, share ideas and feedback.**

*"We have successfully recruited two community builders for Parry Hall and Tuffley. They started in late August (2023) after several rounds of recruitment between March and June. Both community builders were given basic training in strengths-based working before going out into their respective areas and 'discovering' the place. This involves getting to know local people, their heritage and culture, their passions and interests and their 'bumping spaces' - places where residents like to meet, chat and do things together. The 'discovery phase is also about finding out about local community groups, businesses in the area and identifying different types of assets such as green spaces and the built environment, local services such as schools and GPs and libraries. As well as listening to people and hearing about their lives and what matters to them, they also introduce themselves and explain what the project is about, building relationships with local residents and key stakeholders so they start to become known, familiar and trusted.*

*In Parry Hall, our community builder has spent a lot of time in and around the Parry Hall building, getting to know the staff at the Gloucester Youth Project, and meeting other organisations that use the space such as Your Next Move, Brendan's Bridge and local activists.*

*At Christmas, the Collective was asked to support an activity day organised by Kulcha Lee, who wanted to bring children and families together in the Hall between Xmas and New Year. We gave some seed funding from the Parry Hall Community chest to support the day. Our community builder has also connected with a local care home, a parent and baby group and a local cafe - a key community asset.*

*In Tuffley, our community builder has met with local residents, attended local community groups, including the Teapots Tea and Chat sessions, the Grange toddler group, Bingo at Tuffley Hall, and the lunch group for the over 60s at Tuffley Community Centre. She has also attended the monthly Know Your Patch Gloucester meeting, coordinated by Treasure Seekers which brings public and voluntary sectors together to network and share learning."* **Gloucester Community Building Collective**

- **Many partners reported that the Levelling Up Together grant supported them to increase and improve their partnership working and access additional financial support from other funders (including Arts Council England), enabling them to continue and/or expand their offer.**

*"We were successful in our application to the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) Suicide Prevention Fund which we highlighted dovetailed with our Boys in Mind project funded by the Levelling Up Fund. The DHSC funding of £100,054.65 supports our early intervention services including InTER-ACT and TIC+chat and the work of our Safeguarding team. It also covers marketing materials and activities to raise awareness of the services to audiences who may need support."* **TIC+**

*"With the Levelling Up Together team's knowledge, we have been able to access funds we have not applied to before."* **Together In Matson**

*"The match funding from Podsmead Big Local has been increased because inflation has increased the cost of everything from play equipment to diesel for transport. They have committed to £13,869.00 for annual play provision."* **Play Gloucestershire**

*"We have received additional funding for Tuffley from Summerfield Charitable Trust (£5k) , Gloucestershire Community Foundation (£2.5k) and the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust (£8k). This has enabled us to make the Tuffley role a 2 year post."* **Gloucester Community Building Collective**

## Facts and figures

- *"We have worked with 11 families in 1 year. Accessed white goods, food vouchers, furniture, baby bundles, mental health services, health visitors.*
- *The role has been 26 hours a week for the worker and additional support from 4 volunteers. Averaging over 384 hours of support given with the home.*
- *It was a wonderful scheme, it created a new role, reaching 11 families , 4 volunteers and endless sign posting. This has had a positive effect for the families. Its avoided any further Social Services involvement, its empowered parents and made under 5 s life's better. We were able to positively encourage parents who were stuck. Remind them they had this, remind them they were strong and dedicated. The voluntary sector is very good at taking the weight off other services. We work hard to avoid further hardship. stress and despair with our families."*

### Home-Start North and West Gloucestershire

- *"Number of beneficiaries: 630 children plus Nursery.*
- *Our SEND data indicates the levels of need we have been above the average.*
- *Thrive support - From pupil review meetings in the Autumn Term we identified 196 children that would benefit from Thrive screening and have now screened all 630 children. Post the initial screening 89 were identified as being in need of receiving Thrive therapy to help repair breaks in neuro development and enable the children to self-regulate."*
- *Sportily "Over 70 sessions have been delivered with over 270 participations.*
- *20% of sessions were school based with the rest taking place in the community.*
- *61% of participants were female and 1.1% from a UKME background."*

### Kingsholm C of E Primary & Nursery School (Roots Community Group)

- **"The number of beneficiaries is over 80 people** with some people attending on a regular basis which has resulted in 330 attendances between August and April No. of sessions/activities delivered.
- From August – April **we have delivered 144 workshop sessions.**
- **Satisfaction or wellbeing scores.**
- We have **completed 132 feedback forms** or follow-up conversations.
- Confidence score – **100% reported an increase in their overall confidence.**
- Skills increased – **100% reported an increase in their skills** relating to the session delivered.
- Attendance – **100% reported they would return for future sessions.**
- Recommendations – **100% stated they would recommend the skills hub to others.**
- Session rating (1-10) **97% scored 8+/10.**  
Tutor rating (1-10) **97% scored 8+/10.**
- **39 people secured paid employment."**

### Cheltenham Borough Homes



*A session in the Cheltenham Borough Homes Skills Hub*

"We helped 2 Scouts attend a county camp weekend which they wouldn't normally attend due to costs, and provide at least 8 members with uniform and subscriptions." **1st Cinderford Scouts**

"We paid for a fundraiser. She has allowed us to continue our work. We run a community hub which is open from 9am - 9pm and have 20+ classes/sessions over 5 days of all ages and abilities. We have over 200 community members attend weekly." **Together In Matson**

"34 after school sessions, 27 holiday play days, 230 hours of play delivery and 355 individuals. 2,281 play visits – play visits are when someone has visited a play session, this can be the same person being counted across multiple play sites." **Play Gloucestershire**

- "Total number of beneficiaries supported within the LUT funded period: 464 (exceeding the original target of 150)
- Number of interventions delivered within the 'Engage' project: 10
- 88% of adult participants self-reported making positive changes to their lifestyle ensuring they can lead healthier, more resilient lives in their community.
- 97% of all participants developed new social friendships, in some cases helping to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation.
- 82% of all participants now possess the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead mentally resilient lives.
- 89% of adult participants feel they have developed new practical and personal skills that can support their progression into education, training, and employment.
- 94% of all participants have an improved understanding of opportunities available to them in their local community." **Gloucester Rugby Foundation**

"We supported 15 participants with a range of difficulties including mental health challenges, learning difficulties and those who are vulnerable and experiencing social isolation. The delivery took place over 2 x 5-week courses based at our Westgate St Community Kitchens. Feedback was largely qualitative (comments from participants above) with 100% of participants recommending a Wiggly cookery course and everyone asking to return in the future." **Wiggly Charity**

## WESTGATE #2 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

### Something you've enjoyed

Meeting new people, working on my speed, gaining experience.

Working with the group and team, being able to ask anything and get the support needed from the chef

It has been very warm and welcoming with good team work.

### Something you've learned

How to make a Hollandaise sauce properly.

I've learnt new recipes and skills to make a meal for myself.

Even though I'm a chef, I've learned new things that I've been able to implement in my job.

### General comments

I'd definitely recommend a Wiggly course - meeting new people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

My favourite part was making the meals so I can make them at home when I want.

I've learned how to make so many amazing dishes.

Feedback from the courses provided by Wiggly Worm

- "344 members have joined since November 2021
- No. of sessions/activities delivered.
- March 2023 – March 2024
- 4040 shop visits
- Average of 84 members per week over 48 weeks."

**Hester's Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)**



**"At Matson Music Festival** there were 200+ attendees, numerous local organisations supporting the event, and local food providers. There was more business to the local shops and impact quotes highlighted a feeling of wellbeing. The event was suitable for all ages with a variety of activities.

**At Robinswood School**, 450 children attended The Everyman Theatre for the annual Pantomime.

This gave the opportunity to many children who had not had not seen a live performance at the theatre. The children had a remarkable time. The event was accessible for all children with no financial constraints.

**The DJ equipment at the Redwell Centre** is being very well used and supports activity for the Youth Club of which there are two sessions a week. The 7–11-year group have approximately 32 young people per session and the older group have approximately 30 young people per session; over 60 in any one evening.

*One stakeholder said: "Confidence levels have grown and some young people who struggle to engage really find their voice on the Mic!"*

**Matson Makers and Youth Group** meet weekly, and numbers range from 6-12 per session. The Youth Group is a recent venture, and numbers are increasing. The young people are enjoying experiencing new opportunities and learning new skills.

A travelling production company delivered a **pantomime to 125 children at Moat School**, giving them the opportunity to experience theatre in their local community.

*One stakeholder said: "The children were so excited and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Many of them would not have the opportunity to see a show and having it at school made it easier to facilitate, and no transport costs and additional staffing and volunteers were needed."*

### **Culture Matson, Create Gloucestershire**

*"Delivery has taken place in St Pauls and St Marks across 27 weeks, with 54 sessions being delivered in each locality. There have been 839 attendees at these sessions (includes multiple bookings). Due to delays in launching funding we will continue delivery until July, ensuring a total of 39 weeks delivery."*

#### **Move More**

*"Within the 12 months the Health and Wellbeing programmes have impacted approximately 80 people.*

*So far 25-35 people and by the end of the 12 months 35-40 people directly through 121 coaching.*

*20-30 people through the yoga sessions, 20-30 people through walk and talk sessions, and a further 5-10 people through the diamond art sessions.*

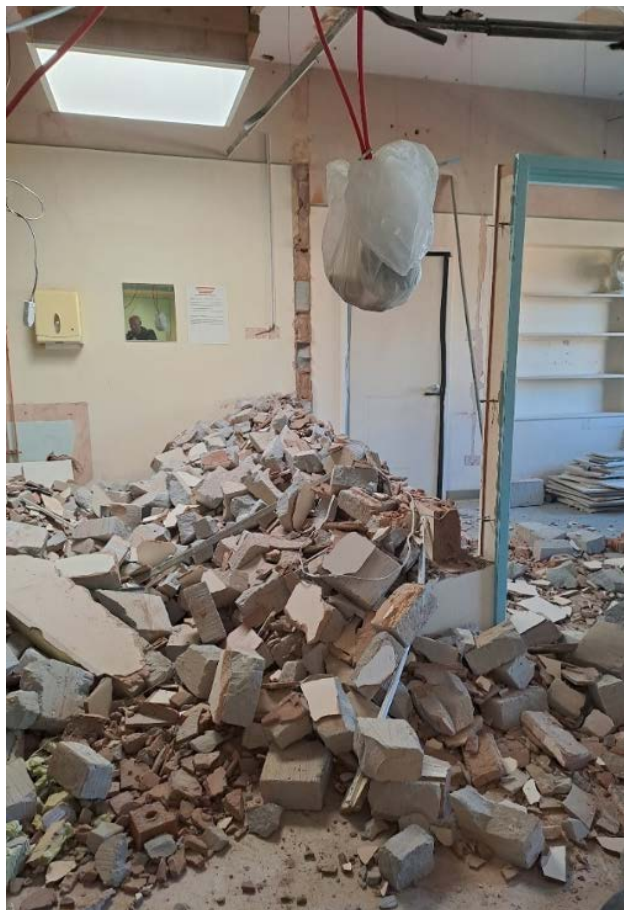
*The 121 coaching programme is an 8-week programme and the session deliveries have had to be adapted due to other activities within the centre, But the 121 sessions delivered weekly on average is 10 or 40 hours per month, yoga session 2 hours per week, walk and talk 2 hours per week.*

*Diamond art 2-3 hours per week". **GL Communities***



- *"We have established working relationships with 11 local, county and national organisations and agencies.*
- *17 Cinderford residents became members of the Forest Community Pantry*
- *Number of sessions/activities delivered.*
- *The renovation of the building to date has provided us with a functional and attractive multi-use space which has enabled us to:*
- *successfully trial the Forest Community Pantry*
- *enable fortnightly pop-up Lloyds Bank providing banking advice and services*
- *host a GCC HAF district providers meeting*
- *hold 4 Forest Youth Initiative meetings*
- *host 3 Barnwood Digital Inclusion Project meetings with multiple partners*
- *held a partnership meeting with FVAF and Forest of Dean District Council community builders*
- *host a Forest Food Network community engagement event*
- *provide the NHS vaccination centre for Autumn/Winter COVID and flu jabs*
- *provide a regular meeting space for Wyldwood Arts*
- *provide a venue for Forest Young Mum's peer support group*
- *Host 2 DWP employment support events*
- *Monthly location of NHS Forest of Dean Integrated Locality Partnership*
- *Provide venue for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Forum*
- *Provide venue for Forest of Dean Climate Action Partnership (FODCAP)."*

**Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) (pictured below)**



"Between September 2023 and March 2024, we had the following engagement:

<b>1925 visits to</b> Monday disco (adults with learning disabilities)	<b>250 visits to</b> Threads	<b>84 visits to</b> Teenage disco	<b>1861 visits to</b> Thursday Disco	<b>817 visits to</b> Bingo
	<b>254</b> Art and Craft	<b>128</b> Singing/Choir	<b>2062</b> Performing Arts	<b>623 visits to</b> Safe Space
<b>2100 visits to</b> Coffee and Karaoke (inclusive)	<b>782 visits to</b> Wednesday afternoon disco	<b>403 visits to</b> Dancercise	<b>230 visits to</b> Community Lunch	<b>24 visits to</b> Toddler Group

- **11543 total engagements through the Treasure Seekers Hub** at Eastgate of which 5695 is brand new activity. This is all now sustainable activity which will continue and will be built upon for the future.

Please note not all groups started in September. Carers attendance is not counted in the figures.

- **27 new volunteers started.**
- Due to the nature of the groups, it is difficult to gather well-being scores.
- **419 hours of direct delivery given to individuals with complex emotional needs**, plus around 75 hours of talking with professionals, attending multiagency meetings etc, to try and deliver system change."

#### **Kingfisher Treasure Seekers**

## Challenges

Levelling Up Together partners were asked about the challenges associated with their Levelling Up Together projects, and the following themes emerged:

#### **A lack of time and capacity is an ongoing issue.**

- "Key challenge is providing enough volunteer support to assist members in their chosen activities." **Forest of Dean & We Valley Men's Shed known as Forest Community Shed**
- "Working together can be difficult because everyone is very busy. If we could take some time to think about the other services working with the families, the load would be shared and there would be more clarity." **Home Start**
- "Time - This represents the greatest challenge for us across all the foci. Not just allocating time, but protecting it as a constant in the face of a tsunami of need." **Roots Community Group**
- "The biggest challenge has been waiting for quotes, chasing these through, ensuring we have the funding we need to go ahead with the next step and then scheduling the actual installations. These all take time and lots of patience." **St James Church**
- "We went through several rounds of recruitment to find the right candidates." **Gloucester Community Building Collective**

**There are concerns about the high levels of need.**

- “We have served a wide variety of clients who have come to us via referrals from local support services and self-referral. Our recent survey gives a snapshot of the issues facing our clients including issues such unemployment, mental health, debt, budgeting, low income and medical exemptions from work. All clients have enjoyed the benefits of the weekly food shop which costs them £4 and consists of 2 fridge items 8 ambient items plus seasonal fruit and vegetables and “free” goods that are end of date or in large supply.”  
*Hester’s Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)*
- “We are building a system wide partnership to help close the gaps that people might fall through.”  
*Kingfisher Treasure Seekers*

**Recurrent and/or longer-term funding is required.**

- “Fundraising is an ongoing challenge, but we will get there.”  
*Vision 21 / Planet Cheltenham*
- “The community is aware that the funding is only for a year.”  
*Gloucester Community Building Collective*
- “Recruitment has been our biggest challenge. Our first Youth Outreach & Engagement Officer moved on after a few months and we had to re-recruit. This post has now been filled which means that the project end date will now extend to December 2024. We have also found it quite difficult to engage and build trusted relationships in some communities and to get responses from other Levelling Up partners. In some cases there appears to be a mistrust of services that get short-term funding, however, TIC+ will be celebrating its 30th anniversary this year and continuing to provide vital mental health support to children and young people across the County.” *TIC+*



*The new facilities at Tuffley Rovers Club*





# Learning

The Levelling Up Together partners were asked about their projects' successes and the following themes emerged:

- **The grants have helped partners to learn more about each community they work in.**

*"Both community builders have settled in well to the role and have started to develop good relationships with the people who live and work in their respective areas. The first year can be quite daunting, especially if you have never done community building before and people can be initially suspicious about the role as we don't have an agenda and don't deliver a service."*

**Gloucester Community Building Collective**

- **The grants have helped to kickstart additional opportunities and activities.**

*"We are grateful for the kick start from LUT. Having this initial grant at the start of the project has enabled us to get ahead with the first phase of the refurbishment."* **St James Church**

- **Change and levels of trust can impact engagement.**

*The feedback from the delivery partners has highlighted numerous challenges:*

- *More community involvement in project development and delivery*
- *Event management - ensuring all permissions and health and safety requirements are robust*
- *Use your team effectively, take advice and support*
- *Increased costs - transport being a key challenge*
- *Using local resources wherever possible, availability and capacity*
- *Time constraints and capacity*
- *The Weather has been a challenge when organising outdoor events."*

**Culture Matson Create Gloucestershire**

*"Community building is easier in the spring, summer and autumn months. Community building takes time - and when it's in a community that feels abandoned and forgotten, where there aren't many buildings for the community to access for shared activities, it takes much longer to build trusting relationships."*

**Gloucester Community Building Collective**

- **It is beneficial to offer holistic support through partnership working..**

*The principal objective of 'Engage' was to use the powerful, trusted brand of Gloucester Rugby to connect with those most vulnerable of exacerbated socio-economic inequalities, engage them in holistic community activities, and empower long-term participation through either Foundation-led activities or those by trusted community organisations.*

*The following are just some of the local partners who have given their time to contribute to the participant experience within 'Engage': Gloucester Rugby, Gloucestershire Libraries, Gloucestershire Careers Hub, Fit for Life Gloucestershire, Active Gloucestershire, TIC+, KYP, DWP JCP, Adult Education Gloucestershire, Gloucester Young Carers, Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing College, Art Shape, SWAC, Gloucester Community Building Collective, local social prescribers, and P3.*

*Partner contributions varied and were specific and personalised to their area of expertise. Roles included supporting with resident referrals, amplifying marketing, communications, and PR activities, co-delivering workshops based on their work (including information, advice, and guidance), inputting within monitoring and evaluation activity, and welcoming onward referrals from 'Engage' participants.*

*The Foundation looks forward to collaborating with partners on future community-focused interventions."* **Gloucester Rugby Foundation**

- **Be realistic about the time, skills and resources you require.**

*"There have been unforeseen delays to construction and installation of exterior signage, and we will need to secure further funding to install green energy measures and to create a multi-use community growing garden."* **Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF)**

*"Be patient and have contingency plans! Outreach and engagement activities can take a long time to plan and prepare. Many organisations are operating with tight budgets, limited resources and availability. Being visible and on the ground, out and about in communities has more of an impact than just sending emails."* **TIC+**

*"We have learnt its important to do your building research so you know what you are heading into., you can't always trust the estimates."* **Gas Green Youth and Community Centre**

## Legacies and looking forward

Whilst the officers working on Levelling Up Together move onto new areas of work, Levelling Up Together partners and projects continue to grow in their communities.

**In many cases, the Levelling Up Together grants have given partners the opportunity to pilot community-informed ideas, demonstrate the value of their work, and plant seeds for the future.**

**Below, our Levelling Up Together partners reflect on Levelling Up Together legacies and next steps.**

*"We are delighted to share that we have received Awards for All funding to continue delivery from September 2024 - July 2025. Due to the positive impact of delivery additional funding was also secured to deliver in the Springbank area."* **Move More**

*"Confidence in the Council staff, enthusiasm not to give up but keep trying. we are now applying for grants to move onto Phase 2 of our project to restore the Youth Centre to the place that makes their users proud."* **Gas Green Youth and Community Centre**

*"A full refurbishment of the hall will enable the whole community to enjoy the building, whether it be for Muslim prayers, family parties, school clubs, art events, sports clubs, etc. It makes it a more welcoming space, rather than a barely usable tired old building that costs a fortune to run."* **St James Church**

*"We will take some time to discern the suitable next steps for LUT legacy work within Cinderford, some of our partners are keen to be more involved and that will be of significance to ensure that work is effective. We continue to expand our wider provision within the Forest of Dean with new work starting in Newnham, Awre, Blakeney and Coleford. We have also secured HAF contracted delivery for 2024 and will be advertising this to all those we have connected with through the LUT project also."* **Sportily**

*"Its enabled Future proofing of our building"* **Kingfisher Church Tredworth**

*"There is a playful legacy left in the areas we have work on. Creating safe spaces for the community to reclaim their green spaces for play, leisure and recreation."* **Play Gloucestershire**

*"By offering volunteering opportunities to children and young people we are leaving them with a legacy of volunteering elsewhere locally and experiences they can call upon when/if in an interview position for any future employment"* **Vision 21 / Planet Cheltenham**

*"The legacy of LUT investment in the Foundation through the 'Engage' project includes the following:*

- Partners from the public, VCSE, and private sector possessing a better understanding of the needs, challenges, and barriers impacting the lives of residents living within the St Marks Street, London Road, Great Western Road, Worcester Street, Oxford Street, Deans Way, and Clapham Court neighbourhoods of Kingsholm and Wotton. Impact data collected through the project will be used to inform future activities that are need responsive and build further on the progress made through 'Engage'.*
- A physical legacy of 'Engage' is the 'Heritage', a space that was acquired by the Foundation next to Kingsholm Stadium and used frequently within the project for activity delivery. Participants enjoyed the accessibility of the venue which can be entered via Kingsholm Road, with the setting now the principal delivery zone for most of the Foundation's work.*
- The Foundation strengthening its partnership network with other VCSE organisations and departments within the public sector, something which will be developed into the future through collaborative bid writing to secure funds into the county to deliver new projects focused on boosting social mobility.*
- The development of a new volunteer workforce under the Foundation which is committed to supporting the delivery of community projects, improving participant experience, and achieving improvements in their own skill development and wellbeing.*
- An LUT grant empowered the Foundation to deliver a targeted community intervention focused on supporting residents whose lives are most impacted by poverty, deprivation, and cost-of-living pressures. This place-based approach will be developed on further through the Foundation's new strategy period, with a focus on collaboration, participant voice, and inclusive opportunities."*  
**Gloucester Rugby Foundation**

*"The legacy we are creating through the School House Cafe is to create a diverse hub for our community which offers a wide variety of events and opportunities for people in our community to participate in. We have such a large number of different things happening that I truly believe that there is something for everyone."* **Fresh Hope**

*"To keep up momentum to provide food education that is accessible to all. There is no doubt that in the current economic and social climate that our service, and what we provide, is needed and of benefit to those that access it. We will continue to apply for funding to enable us to continue this work."*

**Wiggly Charity**

*The pantry needs to remain open and accessible to those most in need in the community. WCP hope to develop the 'moving on' process to support members for long enough with other issues they are facing whether this be debt, unemployment, addiction to successfully see them through the hardship they are facing for them not to require the pantry service.* **Hester's Way Partnership (West Cheltenham Pantry)**

*"I want to serve wider groups to impact more people. I want to deliver wellbeing workshops online and group coaching to reach more people. I also want other professionals working alongside me, delivering coaching and other therapeutic services to serve more people."* **The Family Wellbeing CIC**

*"With the barber unit the passion is to make a safe motivated space that helps build bridges over the barriers to entry that a lot of young start up beauticians/barbers face when trying to get started in the industry. With the project our aim is to make it a financially sustainable practice that allows us to continue to help the community in any way we can."* **Arcexi Ltd (pictured below)**



*"Beyond LUT, Culture Matson will continue to enable local people to have access to arts and culture in the community through working together, listening to what the community wants and designing work that is based on that research. LUT Grant Funding has reached many people who may have not had the opportunity to be involved in activities and events."* **Culture Matson Create Gloucestershire**

*"The legacy of the Levelling Up funding for Move More is that it has enabled us to create a programme of activity for pre-school children which we have expanded into other areas and also parent paid versions of the service. The data gathered and positive feedback from partners and parents has also enabled us to secure additional funding to continue delivery."*

*We also provide fully funded activity for 5 - 13-year-olds in St Pauls and St Marks meaning that there is accessible provision for a wide range of children and families who reside in these areas who have been adversely affected by the cost of living crisis."* **Move More**

*"The goal or legacy is to continue growing the awareness of what the wellbeing programme can do, continue to help the community to improve their mobility, strength, weight management, self-belief and confidence and help them to become more aware, educated and able to help themselves, to help people become more independant and live fitter, healthier creating a much better quality of life."*

**GL Communities**

*"Complete the building and to begin helping the local community to incorporate ideas for sustainable living."* **Vision 21 / Planet Cheltenham**



*"We want to continue our valued work and will continue to work in partnership with other organisations to find best ways for collaboration and support, to ensure legacy of work together."* **Fair Shares**

*"Next step is the completion of Phase 2 which will deliver a community providing healthy eating options at low cost, as well as a range of other community benefits such as reduced social isolation, skills development, and an inclusive opportunity for both volunteering and employment."*

*A growing garden to the rear of the building is also in development. The redevelopment of this area will create a multi-use space with raised beds to grow produce for the community café and a sensory space to promote wellbeing. In addition, subject to funding, an outdoor building use as a youth space and workspace."* **Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF)**

*"We plan to continue community building in both areas (funding permitting). We will be attending a fiscal hosting workshop organised by Create Gloucestershire next week which aims to share learning on participatory budgeting and other community engagement approaches that enable funds to go out to communities in the most effective, democratic, representative way."*

*The Collective is also focusing the next year on learning and evaluation and will be piloting a new monitoring tool that will enable us to generate reports on indicators such as physical health and wellbeing, participation and influence, local economy, mental health, green action (climate change), art and culture and community safety and resilience."*

*We are re-launching our strengths-based network in the summer aimed at bringing people together from different sectors who want to build on what's strong and not focus on what's wrong."*

*We are also planning on hosting a cross sector city wide conference in the autumn that aims to bring together people who live and or work in Gloucester to see how we can work in a strengths-based way to make the City a place where everyone can have a good life and communities are at the heart of decision making."* **Gloucester Community Building Collective**

*"The Treasure Seekers Hub at Eastgate is a long-lasting legacy that we are now looking to use for the benefit of the wider VCSE and community. The partnerships we are building across the system to help close gaps where people fall through will leave a legacy as well as being the platform for continued work in this area."* **Kingfisher Treasure Seekers**

## Closing comments

Below, our Levelling Up Together partners share any final thoughts.

*"We very much appreciate the opportunity that the LUT grant gave the group and the benefit to the community is huge, now and in the future."*

**Forest of Dean & We Valley Men's Shed known as Forest Community Shed**

*"We are very mindful of the significant challenges facing our community and are hugely appreciative of the levelling up funding. To create longer term equity, we know that we will need to source additional funds to continue to address the multiple issues."*

**Kingsholm C of E Primary & Nursery School (Roots Community Group)**

*"Thank you for your support and funding."* **Sportily**

*"1st Cinderford Scouts would like to thank you for helping us to build a better community."*  
**1st Cinderford Scouts**

*"Thank you for the trust you have put in us."* **Play Gloucestershire**

*"Just our sincere thanks for providing us with the opportunity to work with our local community to help people overcome their personal barriers through the medium of food."* **Wiggly Charity**

*"Without further support the pantry will struggle to provide the same service that it has done since it began in November 2021."* **Hester's Way Partnership" (West Cheltenham Pantry)**

*"Thank you for all of the teams support in allowing me to get the CIC started and off the ground. Whilst it is not where I want it yet, I have lots of plans to grow and move this forward."* **The Family Wellbeing CIC**

*"LUT Funding has supported the work and development of The Culture Matson Group and allowed local people to have equality of opportunity within their community."* **Culture Matson Create Gloucestershire**

*"It's been a pleasure working with GCC, their faith in our work and trust in our delivery has meant it has allowed us to get on with what we do best!"* **Fair Shares**

*"To thank the Levelling Up Together team for supporting the Gloucester Community Building Collective both with funding for the two roles (plus the two community pots) and with organising the network events."* **Gloucester Community Building Collective**



**A Forest Community Shed Christmas event in the Forest of Dean**

*"Thank you for all your support. We will be putting together some full ripple effect mapping in the coming months (it's too soon to see many of the outcomes presently)." **Kingfisher Treasure Seekers***

*"Thanks to LUT for granting me the funding and allowing me to turn these streets into incredible places to live and huge outdoor art galleries for everyone to benefit from daily!" **Rainbow Transformations CIC***

*"The Boys in Mind team are now aiming to carry out more outreach and engagement activities until the end of 2024 across all our targeted wards and will be capturing this on our social media platforms. We are also planning to co-produce a short video to showcase the project activities. We have produced a short survey to capture feedback from young males that participate in our project activities and we will share a written report in January 2025." **TIC+***

*"Thank you – the Levelling Up Together grant gave us the opportunity to initiate a significant change in how youth are supported in Gloucester. Young people have recognised aspiration and their voices being heard. Our confidential and accessible Mh service has gained recognition with young people who are confident in self referral or signposted via outreach." **Brendan's Bridge***

## **The next phase of levelling up Gloucestershire communities**

**A selection of short videos to highlight the diverse array of Levelling Up Together projects across the eligible areas are in production and will be shared on the Levelling Up Together webpages in the coming months.**

For more information on the Levelling Up Together programme, please visit [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/your-community/levelling-up-together](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/your-community/levelling-up-together)