

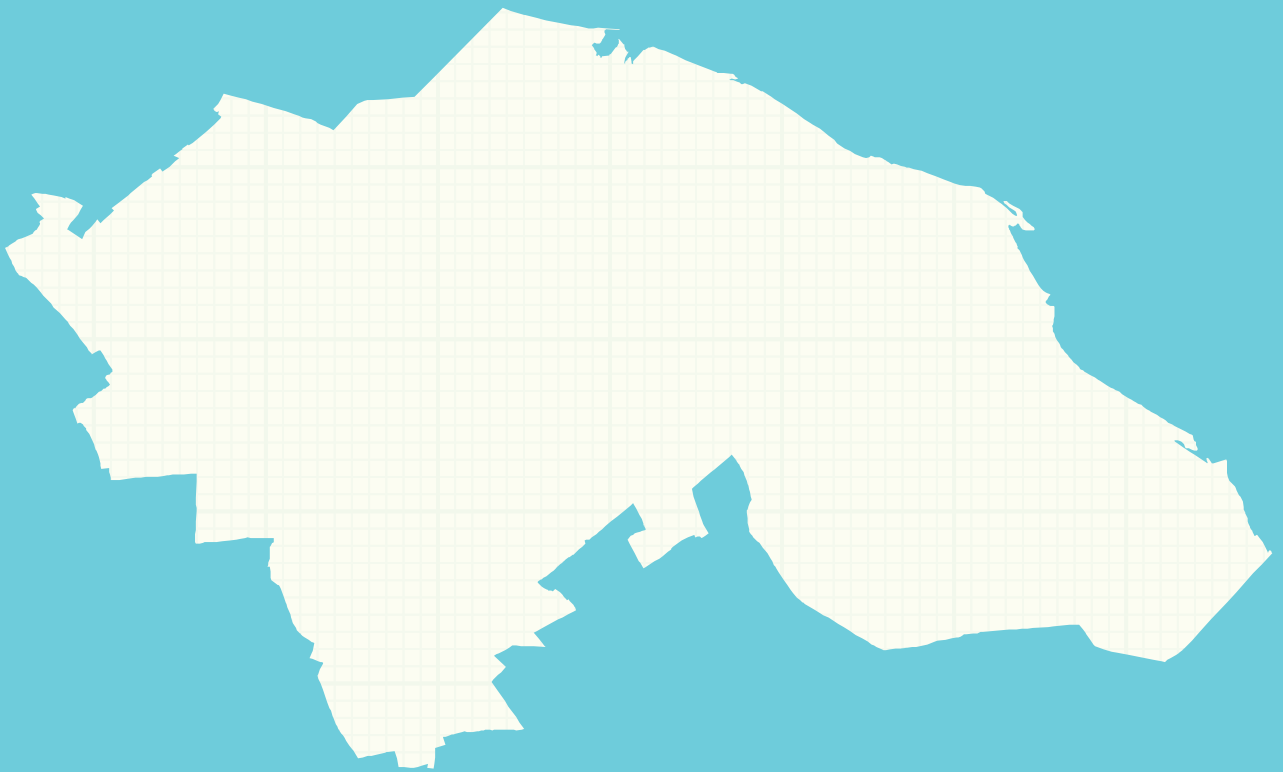


power to
change

business in
community
hands



Centre4, Grimsby



Catalyst Profile: Centre4, Grimsby

A report prepared for Power to Change
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August 2021

01. Introduction

Empowering Places aims to build more resilient communities by catalysing and nurturing community businesses to provide benefits and opportunities for local people. The programme funds locally rooted ‘catalyst’ organisations in six places across England to help empower communities to develop community businesses:

- [Abram Ward Community Cooperative \(AWCC\) in Abram, Wigan](#)
- [B-Inspired in Braunstone, Leicester](#)
- [Centre4 in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, Grimsby](#)
- [Real Ideas in Devonport and Stonehouse, Plymouth](#)
- [The Wharton Trust in Dyke House, Hartlepool](#)
- [Made in Manningham, incubated by Participate Projects in Manningham, Bradford](#)

The Empowering Places programme is delivered by a consortium of organisations including [Power to Change](#), [Cooperatives UK](#) the lead delivery partner, and with support from expert ‘tech leads’ at the [Centre for Local Economic Strategies \(CLES\)](#) and The [New Economics Foundation \(NEF\)](#). Each catalyst organisation receives up to £1m (between July 2017 and July 2022). The catalysts also have access to a capacity support provider pool, grant funding and money to award seed grants to emerging community businesses in their areas to deliver a five-year plan. This report summarises the interim findings from an independent evaluation of the Empowering Places programme, delivered by a consortium led by Renaisi.

The aim of this evaluation is to enable Power to Change and its stakeholders to learn about how to work in places, and how community businesses can drive local change.

This profile for Grimsby is part of a series of outputs aiming to take a developmental, learning based approach to understanding and improving the programme, and to support wider learning for similar programmes in the future. There is a separate profile for each of the six places in the programme. This profile includes:

- **The socio-economic context of Grimsby drawing on publicly available datasets, and using findings from a hyperlocal version of the Community Life Survey commissioned by Power to Change in 2018.**
- **Details of the catalyst organisation Centre4, its vision and organisational structure, using information provided in programme documents authored by the catalyst organisations, as well as organisational data registered on the Charity Commission website.**
- **Approaches to delivering the Empowering Places programme taken by Centre4, drawing on qualitative data, including interviews with staff at Power to Change, delivery partners, catalyst staff and community businesses – as well as information provided in programme reporting documents authored by the catalyst, delivery partners and Power to Change.¹ Researchers have also taken detailed notes and used an observation and learning log to track relevant findings and develop a comprehensive understanding of the development and impact of the programme.**

As a set, the profiles are designed to allow the exploration of similarities and differences in context and approaches across the Empowering Places areas, and to draw out learning gathered throughout the first three and a half years of delivery.

This profile uses data collected from the beginning of the programme (July 2017) to February 2021. A large portion of the qualitative data was collected in 2020 just as the Covid-19 pandemic was taking hold, and views and experiences may have shifted since then. The profiles will be updated again towards the end of the programme (June 2022), with a view to tracking change.

¹ These include: Power to Change's Learning Paper on Empowering Places, Power to Change's internal quarterly reports, Co-operatives UK reports to Power to Change, notes from community business health checks and diagnostic sessions.

02. Executive Summary: Centre4, Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, Grimsby

Centre4 is a long-established hub that aims to support the regeneration of North East Lincolnshire through offering an incubator space for small businesses and social enterprises, as well as a range of services for local communities. Centre4 aims to create change by supporting business development and encouraging local people to turn ideas into action, as well as providing job opportunities for local people and bringing back green spaces.

This profile explores the context of the Grimsby area as well as Centre4's approach to delivering the Empowering Places programme, the emerging impact of the programme on the catalyst, community businesses and wider community and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Centre4 and the delivery of the programme in Grimsby.



Key points

- Centre4 is a local charity based in the communities of Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park Estate, the area hosts an active base of local residents who have been involved in setting up and running various local shops, community and youth centres. Challenges faced by the area include low educational attainment, health inequality and low rates of employment.
- Centre4 hosts a number of businesses, offers space to rent, access to a community library, community gym, business amenities, and an ethical recruitment agency. It also has a free-for-all advice service and an Ofsted registered nursery, as well as managing the social prescribing service for North East Lincolnshire.
- Through the Empowering Places programme, Centre4 is supporting a number of growing community businesses as well as providing business support to individuals to develop ideas. Centre4 take a relational and collaborative approach to working with the community and local stakeholders.
- Empowering Places has given Centre4 resources to develop new ideas and enhance capacity to strengthen its own infrastructure as well as that of local community businesses. In particular, it has enabled Centre4 to create deeper connections to the community through community organising; as well as supporting the incubation of the Ethical Recruitment Agency (ERA) which connects Centre4 with various local providers and members of the community.

- Two of the largest community businesses, ERA and Nunny's Farm would not have existed in their current form without Empowering Places. Centre4 currently have nine community businesses, some of which are trading, but remain reliant on Empowering Places to cover staffing costs.
- Centre4 has used capacity support from Empowering Places to draw down strategic support and advice from their tech Lead at New Economics Foundation (NEF), as well as support to increase its influence locally.
- ERA has been able to provide training and build confidence in local people looking for work, as well as supporting people to gain roles in volunteering and paid employment.
- Centre4 was immediately impacted by Covid-19, through loss of rental income. However, as part of the response effort, Centre4 developed new partnerships with multiple local organisations and positively, ERA received a number of local commissions from the council and other organisations to respond to an increase in demand for temporary staff and Covid response workers.

03. Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, Grimsby

Context of area

Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park are estates to the west of Grimsby, with Nunsthorpe mostly developed in the 1940s after the war, and Bradley Park in the 1970s. Most homes are owned and managed by social housing providers², after a vote by residents in 2004 to transfer the original council owned stock. After the stock transfer, the housing providers began significant investment in upgrading homes across both estates, providing structural repairs, and replacing kitchens and bathrooms. This work is ongoing. There is also a significant number of privately rented properties.

The catalyst selection criteria for Empowering Places was to be operating in a deprived place, with opportunities for community business growth. Grimsby has an Index of Multiple Deprivation average source rank of 31 and has at least one neighbourhood in the 10% most deprived areas in the country.³

Empowering Places catalyst area: Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park ⁴	
Population	13,503
Household income, after housing costs (England average: £27,311)	£20,805
White British (%) England average 79.8%	96%
Under 25 (%) England average 31%	36%
65+ (%) England average 18.2%	15.7%
Thriving Places Index⁵	Bradford
Health Equality (Thriving Places Index, this indicator looks at slope index in life expectancy at birth)	3.36
Mental and Physical Health (Thriving Places Index, this include indicators such as child obesity rate, conceptions in under 18s, illness & disability, prevalence of depression, anxiety and other health indicators)	3.85

² Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (previously called Shoreline Housing), as well as the Guinness Partnership and the Longhurst Group

³ Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015

⁴ Local Insights (2019)

⁵ Thriving Places Index (2020)

Education and Learning (Thriving Places Index, this includes indicators such as adults with no qualifications, life-long learning, educational attainment of children, childcare quality and school readiness)	4.42
Work and Local Economy (Thriving Places Index, this includes indicators such as income deprivation affecting different sections of the population, employment and percentage with low income)	3.02
Place and Environment (Thriving Places Index, this indicator covers the local environment, housing, transport and safety. This includes green land cover, air pollution, journey times to key services, housing affordability ratio and crime severity index)	4.99
Subjective Happiness (ONS Life Satisfaction Scores)	7.52

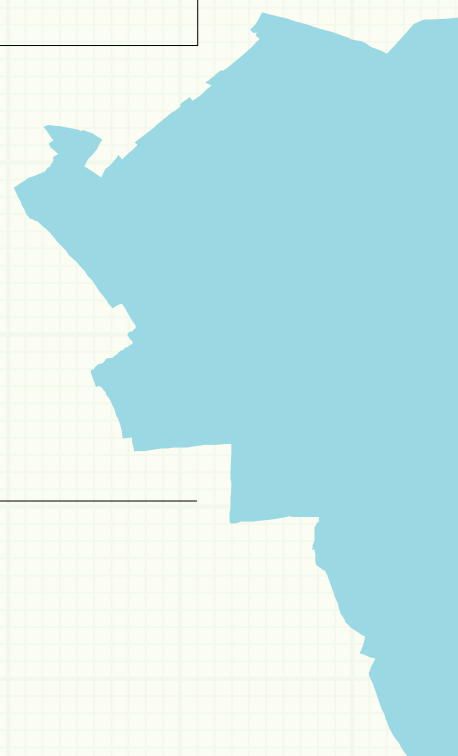
Thriving Places Explanation: Scores of between 0 and 10. Scores are coloured to reflect similarity to the England Average, with higher scores indicating that a place is doing better than other places in that domain.	
Key	
Very Low Scores (Below 3.5)	
Below Average Scores (3.5 – 4.5)	
Medium Scores (4.5 – 5.5)	
Above Average Scores (5.5 – 6.5)	
Very High Scores (above 6.5)	

Place Analytics: Local Authority area compared with England average ⁶	North East Lincolnshire
Housing Affordability	80% – 100%
Community Assets	80% – 100%
Employment rate: Ages 16-64	Lowest 20%
Business formation	20% – 40%
Happiness and wellbeing	60% – 80%

Place Analytics Explanation: Each category is benchmarked using multiple measures simultaneously and scored (in percentile form) relative to other catalyst areas. The higher the percentile, the better the place performed.

Percentile Key:	
80 – 100%	Very High
60 – 80%	High
40 – 60%	Above Average
20 – 40%	Average
5 – 20%	Low

⁶ Place Analytics, local authority wide (2019).



UK Social Fabric Index ⁷						
Local Authority	Social Fabric Score	Relationship Score	Physical Infrastructure	Civic Institutions	Economic Value	Positive Social Norms
North East Lincolnshire	0.38	0.27	0.50	0.38	0.40	0.36
Plymouth	0.45	0.30	0.53	0.46	0.49	0.47
Hartlepool	0.37	0.24	0.48	0.38	0.44	0.33
Leicester	0.42	0.21	0.59	0.49	0.36	0.45
Bradford	0.43	0.28	0.58	0.43	0.43	0.43
Wigan	0.46	0.33	0.57	0.45	0.53	0.45

UK Social Fabric Index Explanation:

Scores are graded from zero to one, with a score of one indicating the best-case scenario.

1. Social Fabric Score: This is a score for the strength of social fabric across all five threads; relationship, physical infrastructure, civic institutions, economic value and positive social norms
2. Relationship Score: This looks at clusters of social groups of people in communities and community-owned assets
3. Physical Infrastructure: This looks at physical assets that are present in communities which facilitate, structure and organise people within a community.
4. Civic Institutions: This looks at the health of democracy and governance at both local and national level, considering quality, trust and satisfaction.
5. Economic Value: This looks at the tangible assets which hold a monetary and/or economic value to an individual or family within a community
6. Positive Social Norms: This looks at the personal well-being and cultural attitudes of individuals and families in a community, including people's wider habits, behaviours and activities

Colour coding: The colour coding has been applied to each score category and is comparative between the six places. The highest score for each category is colour dark green and the lowest dark red. For example, compared to all other places, Bradford scored lowest on economic value and positive social norms.

⁷ [UK Social Fabric Index](#) By Onward (2020).

Local context

Community

In the last few decades, there have been a number of tenant and resident associations active within the estates, seeking to improve their local area. Residents have been actively involved in setting up and running local shops, community and youth centres, restoring parks and open spaces and addressing anti-social behaviour.

Nunsthorpe has few shops, but good transport links to Grimsby town centre and Cleethorpes.

Challenges

A survey of people in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park in 2019 found 37% people have low trust in others, versus the comparator area of 29%.⁸

The area is in the bottom 1% for educational attainment, and 11% of the population have no qualifications. The area is in the bottom 3% for employment, with low wages being an additional issue for those that are employed.⁹

Economy

Customer spending data from the area suggests that local customers spend a higher proportion of their money on items associated with 'disposable income' (40%) than is reflected by local business sales (14%). This means most businesses in the area provide products and services associated with the 'cost of living' (e.g. travel, groceries), whereas a significant proportion of individual expenditure is on items classified associated with 'disposable income' (e.g. takeaways, entertainment).

The data also suggest that sales growth is down by 6.4% between April and August 2020, but there has been an average growth in customers of 3.9%. This means that more people are spending, but they are buying less.¹⁰

⁸ Hyperlocal Community Life Survey, compared with national [Community Life Survey](#) statistics (2019)

⁹ Hyperlocal Community Life Survey Report 2018, commissioned by Power to Change (2018)

¹⁰ Power to Change data from [Reward](#) (2018)

Voluntary and Community Sector

Turnover data is available for 236 voluntary and community sector organisations in Grimsby for the 2018 financial year. The combined turnover of these organisations was £182 million. This includes some schools, religious organisations, grant-making foundations and international aid. With the economy of North East Lincolnshire worth £4.7 billion in 2018, this means that the voluntary and community sector accounted for approximately 4.3% of the local economy.¹¹

Small- to medium-sized organisations with a turnover between £5,000 and £5 million are most relevant to the programme, as these are the organisations that Empowering Places catalyst organisations are most likely to partner with or influence in their local area. Of the total number of organisations for which turnover data is available in 2018, 175 organisations were in this category and had a combined turnover of £50 million, accounting for 27.5% of the total £182 million turnover.¹²

MyCake analysis of the published financial data of voluntary and community sector organisations in Grimsby suggests that in any given year, approximately 30-40% of organisations make a loss.¹³

Funding Landscape

Funding	Grimsby ¹⁴
Top five significant funders and amounts between 2017-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Department for Education (£4 million) – The National Lottery Community Fund (£1.2 million) – The National Lottery Heritage Fund (£767k) – Power to Change Trust (£547k) – The Henry Smith Charity (£522k)
Total number of funders in Plymouth who have provided data to 360Giving (2017-2020)	21
Total value of grants awarded in Grimsby by Power to Change (end of 2020)	£1.3 million

¹¹ MyCake analysis of Companies House and Charity Commission Data, Office of National Statistics (April 2020)

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ 360Giving [GrantNav](#) (Dec 2020)

04. The Empowering Places catalyst: Centre4

Centre4 (formerly Second Avenue Resource Centre) was established in 1995 and exists as a community hub to support the regeneration of North East Lincolnshire. It offers services and activities to the local community as well as incubator space for small businesses and social enterprises.

Vision for the Empowering Places programme

Centre4's vision is a place where community business has raised local people's aspirations and transformed life chances; a place that embraces the Garden City principles on which it was designed, and a place with high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities so that North East Lincolnshire once again becomes somewhere that people choose to live because of the breadth of activities and services that are available. It also aims for the area to be a place where people are healthier, happier, engaged and empowered. It hopes that community business will be viewed as an essential part of local economic development plans and the local business landscape.

Wider activities of Centre4

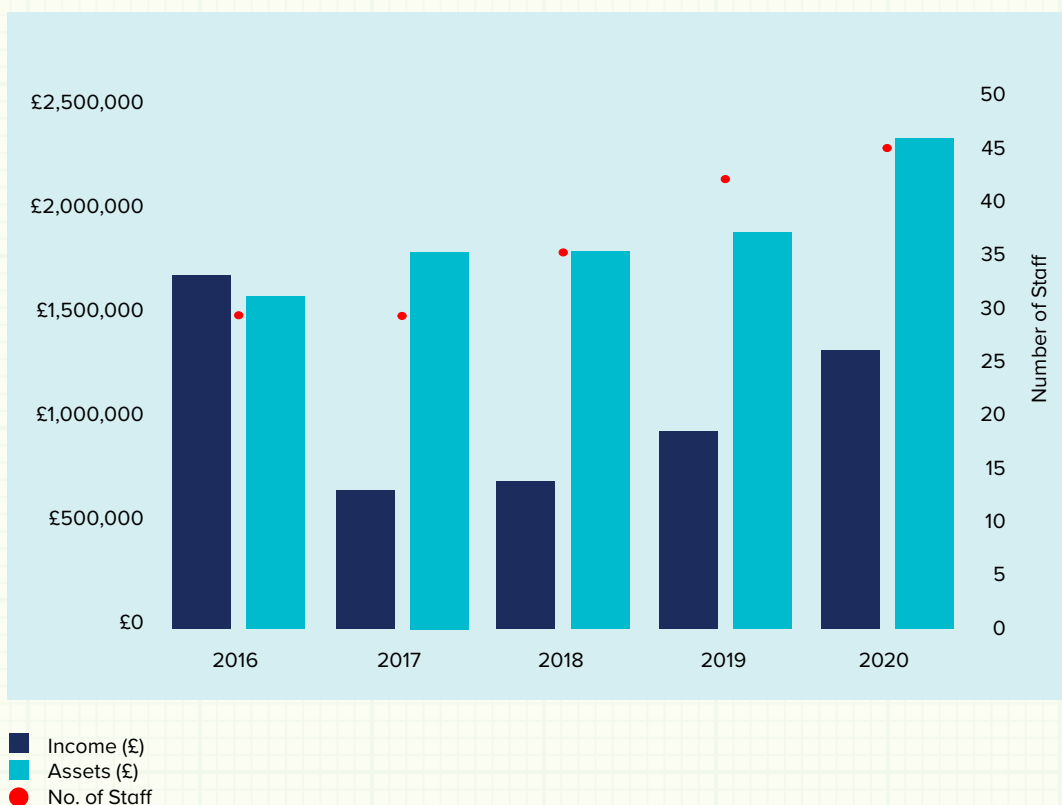
Centre4 is a community business itself, offering spaces to rent including office space, meeting space, a sports field and a nursery, as well as services and amenities such a community café and a community shop run by tenants out of the building. The Centre4 team also deliver health and wellbeing programmes, access to a community library, business amenities, and a free-for-all advice service and social prescribing for the North-East Lincolnshire area.

As of the 2020 financial year-end, Centre4 employs 46 staff members, has a total income of £1.3 million and assets worth £2.3 million.¹⁵ The figure below shows Centre4's self-reported total income, values of assets and staff head count between 2016 and 2020.¹⁶

¹⁵ MyCake analysis of Companies House and Charity Commission Data, Office of National Statistics (April 2020)

¹⁶ Power to Change Annual Grantee Survey (2020). The data presented here is self-reported by the Catalyst organisation to Power to Change, with missing data points indicating that no data was submitted.

Centre4: Total Income, Value of Assets and Staff Head Count 2016-2020



Empowering Places delivery

The position of Empowering Places within the wider catalyst organisation

Empowering Places resources the Community Business Hub, which supports people with a business idea to help it grow. This includes the provision of business support, provided by the Empowering Places Programme Coordinator which aims to engage and encourage local people to develop ideas and solutions that tackle local issues. The Programme Coordinator also works towards their outcome to raise the profile of community business through wider place-making and influencing work with local partners. The Centre4 team would not directly be supporting local businesses in this way were it not for the Empowering Places programme. Part of the Empowering Places remit is also to strengthen and develop Centre4 as a community business, ensuring a legacy for the programme and sustainability into the future.

Aims of Empowering Places locally

By 2022, Centre4 aim to have 10 trading community businesses in the Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park area that employ additional people beyond the original founders or have intentions to grow beyond being volunteer-led organisations. It hopes to support the cultivation of a network of community organisers, coaches and businesses, who will support individuals with new ideas. Finally, Centre4 also hopes that the local authority and other partners become aware of the central role community businesses play in the local economy, and bring this into consideration when making decisions around procurement.

Relationships and levels of influence

Centre4 has a wide network of both national and local organisations. In a relationship mapping exercise carried out by Shared Assets, Centre4 self-identified that it holds over 100 relationships with voluntary sector organisations, commercial organisations, community businesses, collaborators, funders and commissioners.¹⁷

Type of Relationship	Number of Relationships	Mode Strength of Influence (1-3)	Mode Strength of Relationship (1-3)
Advisor	18	2	2
Collaborator	8	2	3
Commercial	18	2	2
Commissioner	2	3	1.5
Community Business	5	2	3
Funder	11	2	2
Peer	42	2	2
Political	4	3	1.5
Total	108		

A review of charity commission data highlights there are 175 small- to medium- sized voluntary sector organisations in Grimsby. Based on the number of self-reported collaborator, peer and community business relationships held by Centre4, it can be estimated that Centre4 has relationships with 55 organisations in the voluntary sector. This means that Centre4 has a relationship with approximately 31.4% of the local sector.

¹⁷ Shared Asset Relationship Mapping of Empowering Places (Sept 2020). RAG rating: Based on a scale of 1-3. Red (1-1.9), Yellow (2.0-2.9) and Green (3)

Approach to delivering Empowering Places

Centre4's approach focuses on bringing green and empty spaces back into use and providing job opportunities for local people. Their focus is on creating change, building profile and supporting business development by encouraging and supporting local people to turn ideas into action. As a small business incubator, Centre4 uses its building and land to host most of the Empowering Places community businesses; this approach has been beneficial for connecting both businesses and clients or recipients to each other, and other services.

One of the best things about this place is that there's so many different things going on, people come and say 'I don't know about that, don't know about that.' It connects all those different things – Catalyst Staff/Tech Lead

Centre4 takes a relational approach to working with the community, providing flexible, community-centred advice and support for community businesses and local people with business ideas; this includes helping to build confidence and supporting with the development of governance structures, business plans, accounts and so on.

Centre4 have been trained by Community Organisers UK, and use a community organising approach to help build capacity of local people and inspire them to make change for themselves. Centre4 have two Community Organisers, funded by Empowering Places, that reach out to the community and connect with local people who may have business ideas, or feel passionate about particular issues in the local area. Pre-Covid Centre4 started a community organising in schools programme which engages with a local Academy and the Institute of Further and Higher Education, which is currently paused.

Centre4 also support community business development through collaborative working with local enterprise support organisations, such as E-Factor. It is also working to find ways for its largest community business, the Ethical Recruitment Agency (ERA), to start working with local businesses. Both of these initiatives are currently in the early stages of development.

Centre4 has been focusing on building relationships with influential local actors inside Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park and in the wider area. The organisation has been asked to join multiple partnerships, working groups and consultations which will support its aim to raise the profile of community businesses locally. A recent example of this was an approach from Active Humber for an initiative around community empowerment and greenspace. They are also developing a 'Business for Social Good' forum and local campaigns which will include telling positive stories – to build the profile of community business and further develop strategic relationships across North East Lincolnshire.

Impact of Empowering Places on Centre4 so far

Empowering Places has given Centre4 the resource to try new things which the organisation would otherwise not have been able to develop. It has enabled Centre4 to employ a Programme Coordinator, whose role it is to strengthen the infrastructure of the organisation and local community businesses. The programme also provided funding for two Community Organisers who have enabled Centre4 to further embed and build connections with the local community. The programme has also had an impact on the individuals involved: being employed as a Community Organiser has helped to build individuals' skills and confidence, as well as providing financial security.

My confidence has grown, it came on the backend of a really low point, I was picking up by doing good things like changing my job, [but] could never have imagined, so many different aspects. I've never been on a job without benefits, [it is the] first time I'm not reliant on tax credits, doing it myself – Catalyst Staff/Tech Lead

The Community Organisers have been instrumental in connecting with and supporting local people. Their activities include connecting people to services and resources, helping people on to Universal Credit, ensuring they have access to food vouchers and hardship support; alongside this they champion social action projects like litter picking and fun street activities. Although the community organising approach hasn't yet led to any new community businesses, what they have been able to do is create conditions for local people to feel supported, grow in confidence, build their networks and connections and take part in social action. Consequently, they are beginning to notice an increase in local people asking about starting community businesses.

Centre4's (former) CEO was already very well regarded and active in the local civil society sector, and has strong relationships with key local actors, such as the Director of Communities at the council. However a lack of capacity has often restricted the organisation's ability to build on and develop its strategic networks. The resources and connections provided through Empowering Places have enabled Centre4 to build on these networks and to connect outwards with organisations outside of the immediate area. The Empowering Places funding has allowed the team to focus on the role of community business in a balanced local economy, which has further piqued the interest of North-East Lincolnshire Council. This has also been enhanced by the technical support from New Economics Foundation (NEF) and Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) which has helped to position Centre4 as a key local actor beyond Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, to the wider North-East Lincolnshire area.

Without the investment from Empowering Places it is unlikely that either Nunny's Farm or the Ethical Recruitment Agency, two of the community businesses being supported through the programme, would have been launched. Both these community businesses have improved Centre4's profile and reach, allowing the team to connect with more members of the community, other local actors and provided an opportunity to develop new areas of work like community enterprise modelling. Working towards its aim of catalysing 10 trading community businesses by 2022, Centre4 currently have 9 community businesses, some of which are trading, but it is unlikely that any of them would be sustainably trading without funding from Empowering Places.

Support and funding drawn down from the Empowering Places programme

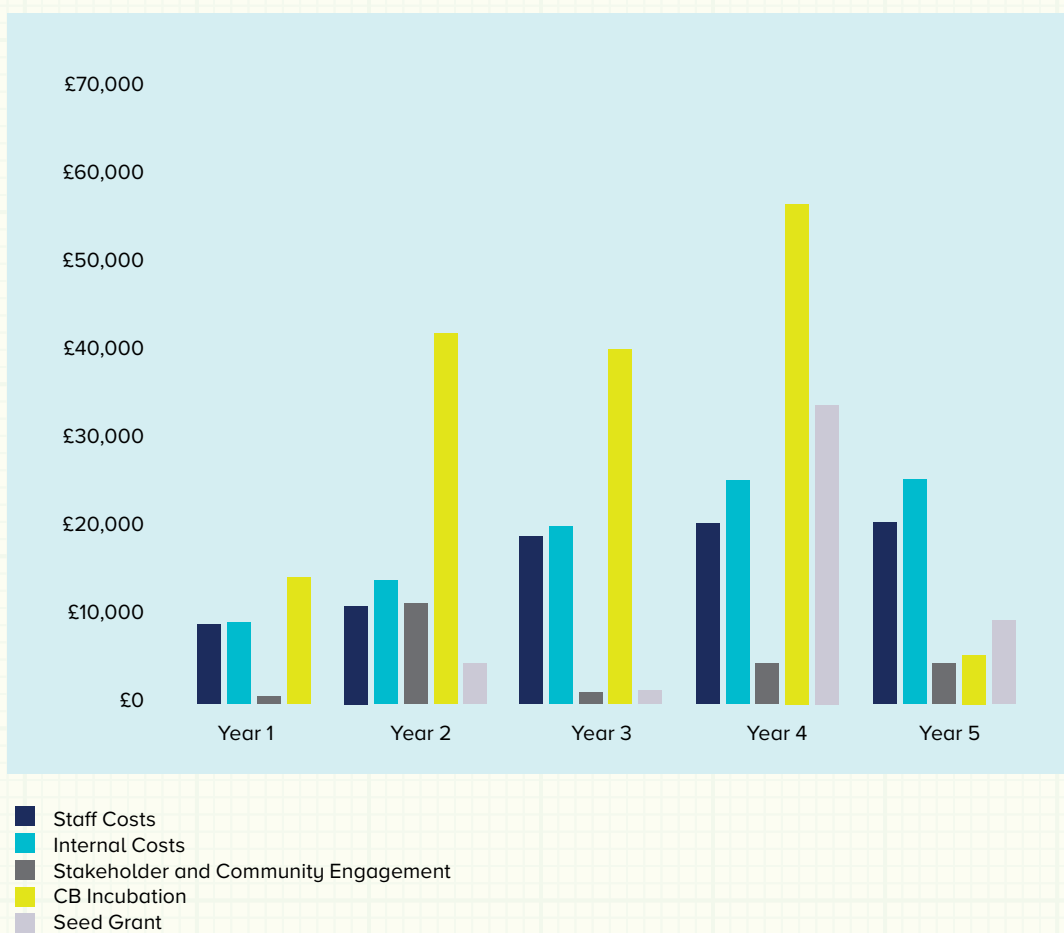
Support for catalyst organisation	Centre4 ¹⁸
Power to Change, Empowering Places Funding	£665,000
Tailored support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support with developing a new economy partnership. Requested: 10 days, valued at £5,000 Used: All 10 days have been used. 2. Support for storytelling and marketing. Requested: for 17 days valued at £8,500. Used: 16 days have been used. 3. Support to write an application for housing grant Requested: 1 day valued at £500.}Used: None so far 4. Support for Community Organising Training Requested: for 10 days valued at £5,000 Used: All 10 days were used. 5. Community Business coaching for community organisations Requested: 20 days valued at £10,000 Used: 5.5 days so far 6. Governance support for Centre4 Requested: 10 days valued at £5,000 Used: 2 days so far 7. Strategy, income generation and mentoring support Requested: 24.5 days valued at £12,250 Used: 5 days so far 8. Coaching Requested: 2.7 days valued at £1,332 Used: all 2.7 days
Total tailored support used	Requested: 95.2 days at £47,582 Used: 51.2 days, invoicing £25,600

¹⁸Power to Change Airtable Charting (As of March 2021)

Other capacity support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Building work and legal fees – Staff training on customer service and social welfare – Events and legal fees – Equipment and staff training
Total other capacity support	Requested: £20,337.96 Invoiced: £5,618.40
Support for Community Businesses	
Seed grants	Dispersed 4 seed grants worth a total of £5,999.98
Tailored support	Requested: Tailored support for two community businesses for 34.5 days, worth £17,250 Provided: 11 days of tailored supported provided so far

The figure below provides a breakdown of the financial support claimed by Centre4 between years one and two of the Empowering Places programme, as well as the requested amount for the remaining three years of the programme.¹⁹ Staff Costs includes the cost of freelance support, and internal costs includes office rental, equipment, travel, subsistence, marketing, communications and events costs.

Breakdown of Financial Support Claimed (in Years 1-2) and Requested (Years 3-5)



¹⁹ Power to Change Grant Overview Snapshot (As of March 2021)

Impact of capacity support provided by the Empowering Places programme

Centre4 is a well-established community hub, with a strategic and well networked team. The main area of support it has drawn on from its Tech Lead at NEF has been to help the team navigate some of the complexities of the programme. This includes taking advantage of the opportunities, thinking about what support they need and who they can access that from, as well as support in creating a flexible and evolving strategy to deliver Empowering Places. NEF has also played a role as a strategic sounding board and advisor when necessary.

Over time, the Tech Lead role has increasingly focused on supporting Centre4 to raise its profile. A good example of this was the work NEF carried out around building the VCSE response to a new economic partnership strategy being developed with the local council. The aim of this work was to increase Centre4's influence within the area, by understanding the influence of the VCSE sector on the local economy. Prior to this piece of work, the VCSE sector had not prepared a coordinated response or taken such a proactive approach to trying to influence local economic strategy. Unfortunately, it did not directly influence the council's strategy, however, it did support Centre4 to begin a conversation with the Economic Team and regeneration partners, increased the representation of the sector on local boards, and increased the visibility of Centre4, who are regularly held up by the council as an example of success.

Centre4 drew down capacity support from Locality to support them with visioning. They found this support helped them to work with more intentionality, and helped them to realise that outcomes related to care were more aligned to the organisation's skills and experience, than (for example) housing. This new focus came at a point when anticipated care needs were high, at the beginning of the first Covid-19 lockdown, and informed the Ethical Recruitment Agency's focus on training people in adult social care and connecting up with local care homes to offer recruitment services free of charge. The anticipated demand for care workers, did not come to fruition, however, the new focus on adult social care came to the attention of commissioners within the CCG and as a direct result of this, ERA is in the process of being commissioned to establish a 'system workforce bank' covering a number of roles for Health and Social Care.

Centre4 has been approached to take part in a number of strategic local initiatives since being involved in the Empowering Places programme. Although enthusiasm from the team has been high, it has been a challenge to ensure they are led by the priorities they have identified and don't endeavour to take on too much.

The community businesses supported by Centre4

No	Community Business	Type	Support from programme ²⁰
1	Ethical Recruitment Agency	Helps local people develop the skills required to access employment opportunities and works with businesses to place them.	Centre4 have provided start-up funds and staff costs, and £48,000 grant was awarded at the end of 2020 to support them to incorporate separately. Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from Centre4. Capacity Support: Provided to B-Inspired to support the Ethical Recruitment Agency
2	Community Orchard	Uses waste land to create a community orchard.	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from Centre4. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
3	Nunny's Farm CIC	Aims to become a community asset which will be self-sustaining, provide local employment, learning and education opportunities, and improve the health and well-being of the local area.	Seed Grant: Received seed grant through Centre4 of £3,000. Capacity Support: Received tailored support with strategy development, income generation and mentoring. Requested 24.5 days' worth of support worth £12,250 and have so far used 9 days

²⁰ Power to Change Airtable Charting (As of Dec 2020)

4	Chords	A community singing group bringing people together, developing self-esteem and confidence	Seed Grant: Received seed grant through Centre4 of £999.99. sCapacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
5	Craft Collective	Local crafters coming together to sell collectively online and at markets or from local premises.	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from Centre4. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
6	Baby Clothing	Selling second hand and new baby items, surplus given to babies in community.	Seed Grant: Received seed grant through Centre4 of £1,000. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
7	Community Gym	Bringing together local providers to train and support, aims to be community owned.	Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from Centre4. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support.
8	Thrift Shop	Selling second-hand clothes and giving profits to local charities.	Seed Grant: Received seed grant through Centre4 of £999.99 Capacity Support: Provided to B-Inspired to support the Thrift Shop
9	Tool Library	Community owned business, lending tools.	Seed Grant: Have not received seed grant Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support

Emerging impact on community businesses and the wider community

The Ethical Recruitment Agency, incubated and set up by Centre4 using Empowering Places funding, has gone from strength to strength during 2020, taking on multiple temporary and permanent contracts for the council during lockdown. They have been able to help people into work, provide training and build confidence. A big achievement was to get a payroll set up for temporary staff which was what employers needed in the current climate where work has been so uncertain and longer-term commitments have been harder to make.

During lockdown, the Ethical Recruitment Agency team had demand for 20 positions from the council, for Covid-19 workers and refuse workers. They were able to place 12 candidates, and following this success the council returned to fill more positions. They also promoted three of the workers to Officers. The last 12 candidates placed had all been out of work for some time, and now being employed by the council is having a huge impact on their lives. That particular department of the council has since recommended the Ethical Recruitment Agency to other departments.

Centre4 are developing connections between Zlto (a social action and volunteering platform) and the Ethical Recruitment Agency to further the idea that there is a journey for individuals that takes them from involvement in social action to employment or to community business. By February 2021, Centre4 had 46 registered Zlto members, of which 40 members have actively participated in social action jobs working a total of 647 hours.

The other community businesses being supported by Centre4 have also started to deliver positive impacts for the community. For example, the community gym which has an annual £10 membership and cheap sessions for non-members has allowed people to socialise and make new connections, as well as giving some of the more involved members ownership and responsibility for running it. Similarly, Chords, the community singing group has brought people together; although its membership is not huge, it has had a significant impact on those that have been involved.

Nunny's Farm, based on the old sports field at Centre4, focuses on providing health and wellbeing activities and has been involved in local social prescribing initiatives. It has also used seed funding to create a link with the community through recording videos about the animals and some of the daily tasks and jobs done around the farm. These were used on the business's website and social media channels to raise awareness and encourage donations.

05. Impact of Covid-19 on the local area

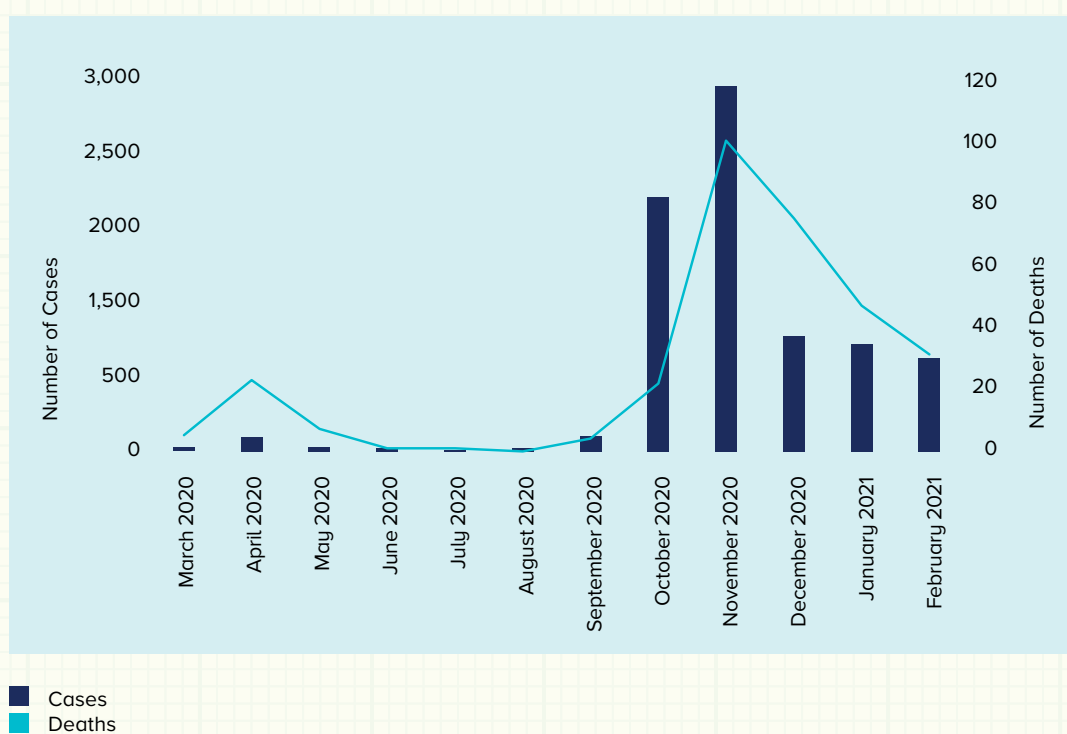
According to the Social Economy Data Lab (SEDL), Grimsby falls into the most vulnerable quintile for Covid, scoring 5 out of 5 on the vulnerability scoring. It also ranks the highest of the six places in the Empowering Places programme for six of the ten indicators. The table below scores various relevant risk factors out of 10 in comparison to the five other Empowering Places.

Indicator ²²	Grimsby	Plymouth	Bradford	Leicester	Wigan	Hartlepool
Total 70+ population	10	9.34	7.32	5.85	9.26	9.15
Obese adults	10	8.39	8.75	7.99	8.77	9.37
People aged 15 who are regular smokers	10	7.95	9.62	4.97	6.44	10
Receiving benefits for health or disability	7.48	6.57	6.54	6.47	6.60	10
Self-reported at-risk groups	8.35	8.76	8.56	9.05	9.45	10
Underlying health issues	8.63	8.02	9.44	8.00	8.66	10
Key workers	10	9.16	9.22	9.15	7.55	9.61
Vulnerable jobs	10	9.44	9.00	9.19	9.10	9.15
Vulnerable businesses	10	8.78	8.72	8.22	8.03	8.96
Groups requiring additional support	7.34	7.08	8.06	10.00	6.48	7.98

²² Local Insights (2020). Each risk factors is scored out of 10 in comparison to the other Empowering Places locations, with a score of 10 indicating the highest risk.

The figure below shows the number of new Covid-19 cases and deaths as per date of test and date of death in North East Lincolnshire. In total, North East Lincolnshire at the time of writing (March 2021), has had more than 8,000 cases and 320 Covid-19 related deaths.²³

Monthly Covid-19 Cases and Deaths for North East Lincolnshire



²³ Coronavirus Data [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) (As of 18th March 2021)

What Covid-19 means for Grimsby

Covid-19 related restrictions have impacted the retail sector in Grimsby. As shown below, data from the Social Economy Data Lab indicate that while grocery sales increased in the five months between April and August 2020 in comparison to the previous year, total sales decreased between April and May 2020, during the initial period of lockdown. Total sales then started to increase during the summer period when lighter Covid-19 restrictions were in place.²⁴

Month	Grocery Sales Change (month to previous year)	Total Sales Change (month to previous year)
Apr-20	0 – 20% Increase	20 – 40% Decrease
May-20	20 – 40% Increase	20 – 40% Decrease
Jun-20	20 – 40% Increase	0 – 20% Increase
Jul-20	20 – 40% Increase	0 – 20% Increase
Aug-20	20 – 40% Increase	0 – 20% Increase

North East Lincolnshire has three different mutual aid groups, as well as a number of informal support mechanisms being offered through existing groups. These groups serve a population of 159,800 people overall, therefore they each service a population of approximately 53,000 people. This is less than half the number of mutual aid groups per head than the national average, which would be approximately six or seven for an area of this size, serving roughly 23,900 people.²⁵

²⁴ Covid-19 and Communities: [Mapping](#) the Covid-19 Effect by Social Economy Data Lab (2020)

²⁵ [Covid Mutual Aid Calculation](#) (2020)

Impact of Covid-19 on Centre4 and its approach to Empowering Places

The Covid-19 pandemic had an immediate impact on Centre4's ability to rent out rooms, and two tenants were forced to give notice almost immediately. However, the team managed to fill rooms quickly with a wellbeing service, and Lincolnshire Housing partnerships. They furloughed two members of staff, but were fortunate that their reserves were healthy, and decided not to bid for additional funding on the basis that other organisations were more in need. Centre4 praised the flexibility of Power to Change and other funders in their understanding that services are still vital and delivery is more complex.

In response to the pandemic, Centre4 worked in partnership with multiple local organisations including the Blue Light Brigade and Sector Support, which helped to accelerate some of their aims around increasing the visibility of the organisation locally. The community response in Grimsby was also very strong, which highlighted the value of the community and voluntary sector to the council and has in turn helped to raise the profile of Centre4.

Throughout the Covid-19 lockdown periods during 2020, the Centre4 team have managed to keep the profile of community organising high using social media and leaflet dropping. The team also put together activity packs, set up street games, held virtual bake-offs and used the community garden, donated by the Stroke Association.

Centre4 and the Ethical Recruitment Agency managed volunteers in this period through the digital rewards platform Zlto. They were surprised to attract interest from across the borough, allowing them to scale up activities to new areas and build new connections. Social action and volunteering jobs included picking up prescriptions, shopping, dog walking, fitting key safes and changing light bulbs. They provided digital support such as setting up a router and supporting someone with setting up Netflix and used skilled volunteers for specific jobs, such as an electrician, plumber and gardener. They worked on behalf of an agency to support with a flat clearance for someone who went into care; they also provided gas and electricity top-ups for people who were struggling; and managed a hardship fund on behalf of the local authority – ensuring that people not only got vouchers but also got the wider support they needed. Through Social Prescribing Centre4 has also been able to connect people experiencing health inequality to access support via tablets with supported digital access scheme (additional lottery funding).

Strangely there have been lots of positives, lots of new contacts made, we have been instrumental in the community response and supported people who want to make a difference to do so – Catalyst Staff/Tech Lead

Impact of Covid-19 on community businesses

One of the biggest impacts of Covid-19 was on people who Centre4 were having conversations with about starting a community business, whose focus had to shift on to securing a regular income for themselves, rather than to risk taking on a new venture. Centre4 hopes to pick some of these conversations back up in the coming year, however, the likelihood of these progressing is unknown. The impact of Covid-19 on the Ethical Recruitment Agency has perversely been quite positive. The organisation has used this period to raise its profile and increase its client base. At the beginning of the first lockdown, it anticipated a rise in need for care staff and proactively sought to address this, by training people to work in adult social care. Although there was subsequently less demand for this service than anticipated, the process of focusing its efforts allowed it to think more strategically about how it could navigate the labour market in a way that was lucrative for local people, the business and local employers. This led to a focus on developing the relationship with the council, who requested recruitment support for 20 posts and have since recommended their services to others, as well as setting up a payroll function for temporary staff, reacting to increasing demand for short contracts.

Nunny's Farm was legally required to close during the first lockdown. Seed funding provided through the Empowering Places programme, however, helped them produce films for social media and maintain some level of community engagement. During the period that they were open, in between lockdowns, they managed to reach their 10,000 visitor target.

The community gym was forced to close immediately during the first lockdown. In the brief period, it was allowed to re-open it used a strict booking system and followed Covid-secure guidelines. There was an increase in community involvement and engagement with members coming in to support with cleaning and a new member taking on the important function of inductions. The Thrift shop closed its doors immediately, but staff and volunteers sent out packages of clothing to people to support with weight loss, weight gain and growing children over the lockdown period; this new way of working made them think differently about their services and consider how they could use online methods beyond the current situation, as well as develop packages as an ongoing idea.

Singing group Chords, used time they had away from meeting face-to-face, to develop an idea around storytelling and sensory theatre; and the tool library managed to launch during the first lockdown and was able to provide tools to individuals and also to support social action jobs being carried out through the Zlto platform, emphasising the 'networked' nature/ interconnectedness of community businesses.



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