

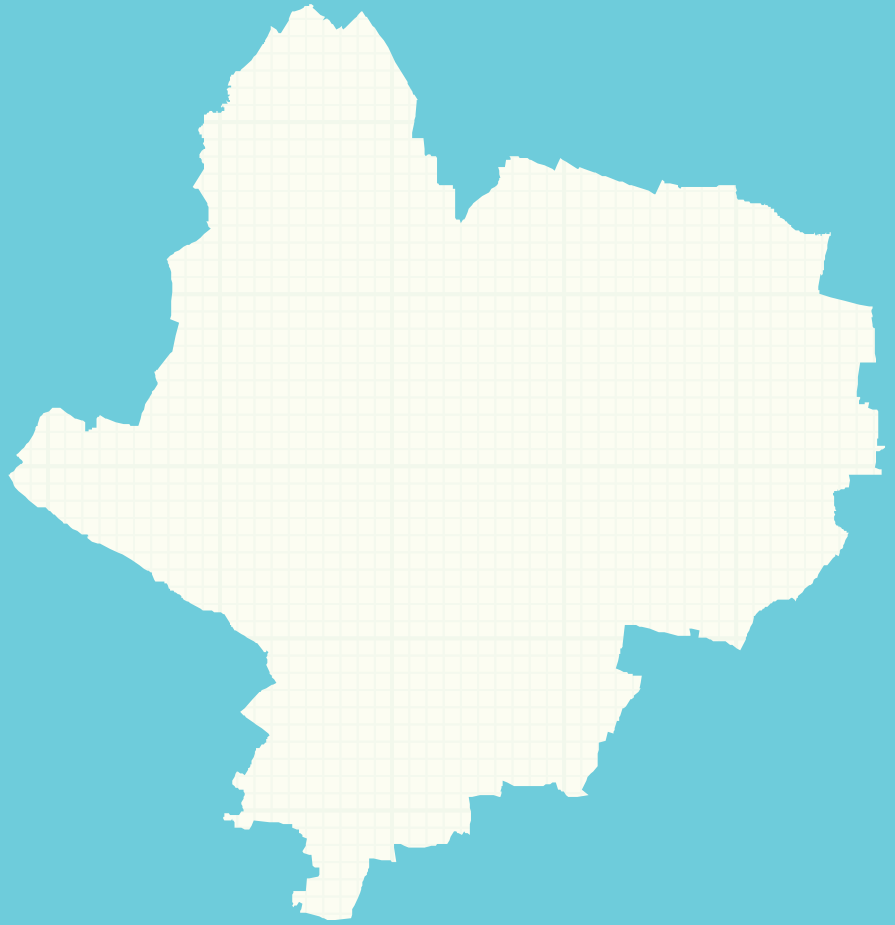


power to
change

business in
community
hands



B-Inspired, Leicester



Catalyst Profile: B-Inspired, Leicester

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 Leicester 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 Leicester 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 B-Inspired, 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 B-Inspired, 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: B-Inspired, Braunstone, Leicester

B-Inspired is a well-established, large community organisation which has chosen to incubate a small number of targeted community businesses largely within a central community hub. B-Inspired's strong connections to the community and highly supportive approach to catalysing its community businesses have proven successful, but Braunstone, B-Inspired and its fledgling community businesses have all been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This profile explores the context of the Braunstone area as well as B-Inspired'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 B-Inspired and the delivery of the programme in Braunstone.

Key points

- The Braunstone catalyst, B-Inspired, is a neighbourhood-based charity with a trading arm which owns several local assets. It operates within the Braunstone estate, a highly deprived area to the west of Leicester comprised largely of social housing but with very little infrastructure and no high street.
- B-inspired is catalysing a small number of community businesses, the majority of which are located within a central community hub. The aim is for them to ultimately run as independent enterprises that also support each other and offer a diverse range of employment, volunteering opportunities and services not previously available to local residents.
- B-Inspired's rigorous, hands on approach to supporting its community businesses is welcomed by community business staff and is showing signs of success, but is time intensive for B-Inspired as a catalyst.
- B-Inspired has drawn on Empowering Places tailored capacity support and seed grants to help two of its community businesses to move to a stronger position and it welcomes the peer support element of the programme, but the organisation's specific skills and approach mean that overall, it has drawn less support from the programme than some other catalysts.
- Being a part of the Empowering Places programme has enabled B-Inspired to take on the Grove as a community hub, has enabled the organisation to have a new focus on community business, enabled it to develop new partnerships and to diversify the roles and skills of its staff.
- The community businesses that are being developed would not have existed in their current form without Empowering Places and community business staff have found the support and training provided through the programme to be very valuable. The development of the Grove has also helped provide the community with a hub and services that were previously lacking.
- Covid-19 has had considerable impacts in Braunstone. B-Inspired has experienced a large reduction in income, coupled with increased demand on some of its community services. The more established community businesses had to stop trading and have lost income, while the pandemic has stalled development of the other community businesses.

03. Braunstone, Leicester

Context of area

The Braunstone Estate in the ward of Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields sits to the west of Leicester. The area contains social housing developed in the 1930s and has a large amount of green space, with one of the largest parks in the city and facilities including a library, health centre and leisure centre. However, it doesn't have a formal high street, supermarket or pub, and there are very few shops offering groceries or other basic provisions in the immediate area.

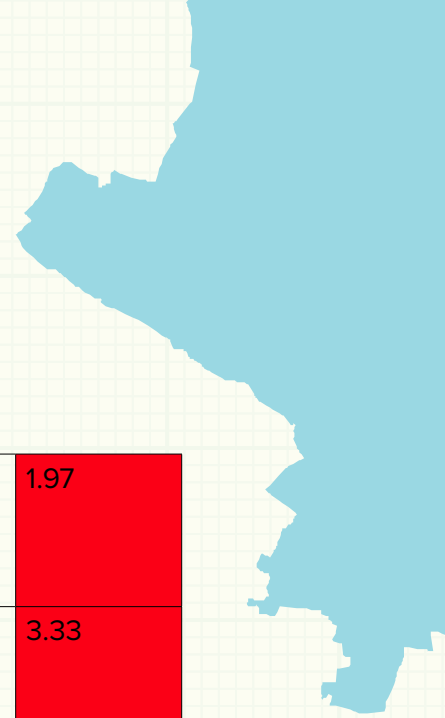
The catalyst selection criteria for Empowering Places included operating in a deprived place, with opportunities for community business growth. Leicester has an Index of Multiple Deprivation average source rank of 32² and has at least one neighbourhood in the 10% most deprived areas in the country.

| Empowering Places catalyst area: Braunstone ³ | |
|---|------------------|
| Population | 15,801 |
| Household income, after housing costs (England average: £27,311) | £17,466 |
| White British (%) England average 79.8% | 74.5% |
| Under 25 (%) England average 31% | 40.5% |
| 65+ (%) England average 18.2% | 11.3% |
| Thriving Places Index (town)⁴ | Leicester |
| Health Equality (Thriving Places Index, this indicator looks at slope index in life expectancy at birth) | 6.22 |
| 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) | 3.69 |

² Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015

³ Hyper-local [Community Life Survey](#) statistics (2019)

⁴ [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) | 1.97 |
| 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) | 3.33 |
| 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) | 4.91 |
| Subjective Happiness (ONS Life Satisfaction Scores) | 7.63 |

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) | |

| Local Authority area compared with England average ⁵ | Leicester |
|---|------------|
| Housing Affordability | 60% – 80% |
| Community Assets | 80% – 100% |
| Employment rate: Ages 16-64 | Lowest 5% |
| Business formation | 80% – 100% |
| Happiness and wellbeing | Lowest 20% |

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 |

⁵ Place Analytics, local authority wide (2019).

| UK Social Fabric Index ⁶ | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Local Authority | Social Fabric Score | Relationship Score | Physical Infrastructure | Civic Institutions | Economic Value | Positive Social Norms |
| Leicester | 0.42 | 0.21 | 0.59 | 0.49 | 0.36 | 0.45 |
| 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 |
| North East Lincolnshire | 0.38 | 0.27 | 0.50 | 0.38 | 0.40 | 0.36 |
| 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.

⁶ UK Social Fabric Index By Onward (2020).

Local context

Community

Braunstone is relatively ethnically diverse and has a higher-than-average proportion of the population that are Black (7%) or Asian (6%). A survey carried out in Braunstone in 2019 found that 74% of people said their friends were not all from the same ethnic group and 70% of residents surveyed think people from different backgrounds get on well.⁷

The business start-up rate in Leicester is notably higher than close neighbours Nottingham and Derby.

Challenges

A survey of people in Braunstone found:⁸

- 30% of respondents saying they were lonely often or some of the time
- 10% of people said they would have no-one to talk to if needed
- A lower-than-average proportion of residents feel they belong in Britain, 72% compared with the national average of 84%

Many Braunstone residents experience poor health, with higher-than-average rates for heart disease, stroke, cancers and respiratory diseases. Childhood obesity is also higher than the Leicester and England average.

Only 56% of those aged 16-24 are in work.⁹

⁷ Hyper-local [Community Life Survey](#) statistics (2019)

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Local Insights (2020)

Economy

Customer spending data from the area suggests that local customers spend a higher proportion of their money on items associated with 'disposable income' (44%) than is reflected by local business sales (18%). This means most businesses in the area provide products and services associated with the 'cost of living' (e.g. transport), whereas a significant proportion of individual expenditure is on items classified associated with disposable income (e.g. takeaways).

Data also suggest that sales growth is down by 7.4% between April and August 2020, but there's been an average growth in customers of 2.6%. This means that more people are spending, but they are buying less.¹⁰

Voluntary and Community Sector

In 2018, turnover data is available for 659 voluntary and community sector organisations in Leicester. The combined turnover of these organisations was £320 million. This includes some schools, religious organisations, grant-making foundations and international aid. With the economy of Leicester worth £8.31 billion in 2018, this means that the voluntary and community sector accounted for approximately 3.9% 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, 517 organisations were in this category and had a combined turnover of £148 million, accounting for 46.3% of the total £320 million turnover.¹²

MyCake analysis of the published financial data of voluntary and community sector organisations in Leicester suggests that in any given year, approximately one third of organisations make a loss.¹³

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

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

¹² *ibid*

¹³ *ibid*

Funding Landscape

| Funding | Funding ¹⁴ |
|--|--|
| Top five significant funders and amounts between 2017-2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">– The Wellcome Trust (£1.8 million)– Power to Change Trust (£453k)– The National Lottery Community Fund (£229k)– The Henry Smith Charity (£180k)– Garfield Weston Foundation (£157k) |
| Total number of funders in Leicester who have provided data to 360Giving (2017-2020) | 34 |
| Total value of grants awarded in Leicester by Power to Change (end of 2020) | £1.3 million |

¹⁴ 360Giving [GrantNav](#) (Dec 2020)

04. The Empowering Places catalyst: B-Inspired

B-Inspired is a neighbourhood-based charity with a trading arm which owns several local assets, as a legacy of the New Deal for Communities programme. It works with local people to understand local issues, forges relationships with service providers and has its own network of volunteers to support the local community.

Vision for the Empowering Places programme

In five years' time, B-Inspired aims for Braunstone to boast a community business-led economy, where local people will have created their own solutions to tackle some of the most difficult issues faced by their community. It aims for them to feel strong and supported by a partnership that has developed and built local infrastructure. B-inspired has an ambition to be working with and for local people, and for its partnership to be inclusive and embrace everyone who wants to help Braunstone flourish, from community groups to private business.

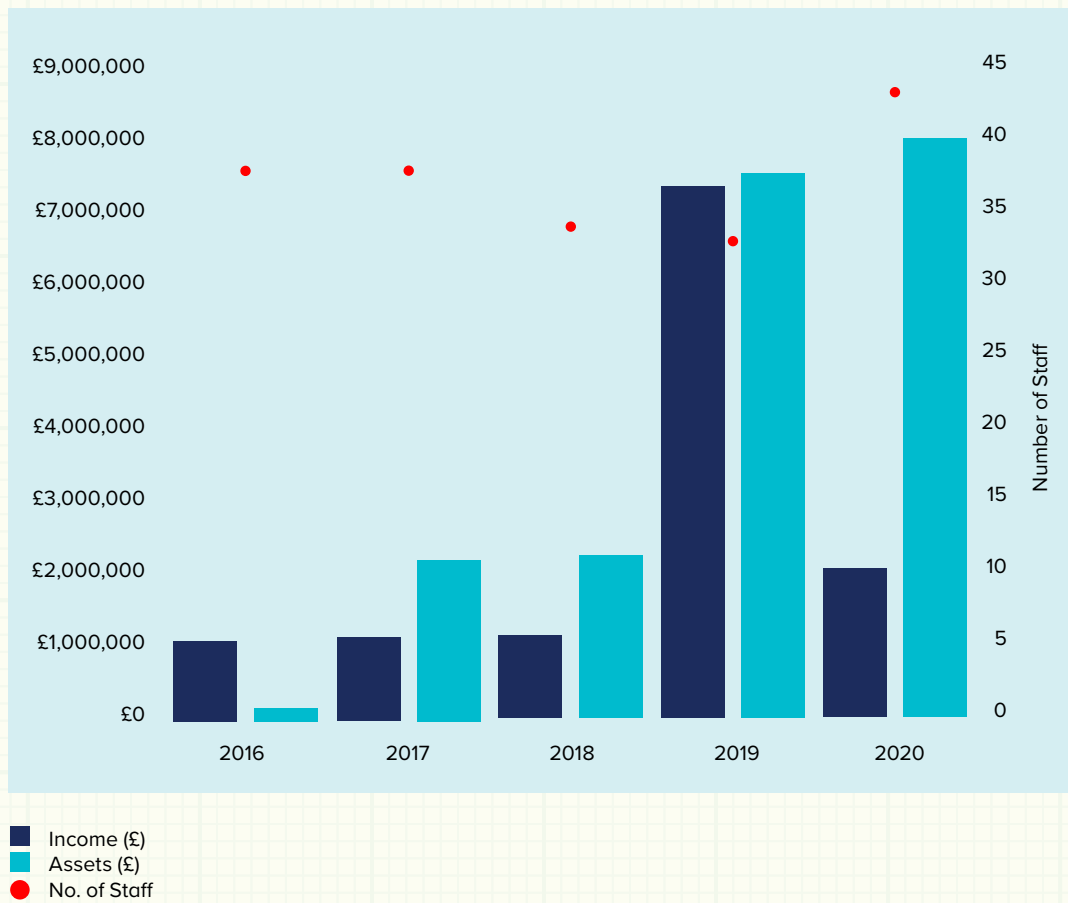
Wider activities of B-Inspired

In addition to the Power to Change funded Empowering Places programme, B-Inspired also hosts sports and other physical activities, is part of the national Fare Share scheme, has a befriending scheme for socially isolated elderly community members, delivers health services and runs a range of other community activities.

As of the 2020 year-end, B-Inspired had a total income of £7.1 million and assets worth £7.3 million. The figure below shows B-Inspired's self-reported total income, value of assets and staff head count between 2016 and 2020.¹⁶

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.

B-Inspired: Total Income, Value of Assets and Staff Head Count between 2016-2020



Empowering Places delivery

The position of Empowering Places within the wider catalyst organisation

B-Inspired has always worked with local community groups and businesses but joining the Empowering Places programme has allowed it to focus specifically on community business, and playing the catalyst role neatly bridges the support that the organisation offers businesses with the range of social action work it delivers. Community business as a concept has historically not really taken off in the Braunstone area so Empowering Places has provided a good opportunity for B-Inspired to push the idea locally:

It has provided a platform for us to really shout about community business to really motivate people that they can do it themselves; if they want to have a bar in the area, they can do it, if they want to have a cafe, they can do it... There's lots of motivational traction really through this new role – B-Inspired staff/Tech Lead



Aims of Empowering Places locally

B-Inspired's approach centres around developing a cluster of businesses around The Grove, which is a former council-run sports centre, with the aim of using community businesses to improve local learning and employment opportunities. B-Inspired has a specific focus on health and reducing health inequalities, but also aims to have an impact on other areas including greater community pride and empowerment, and reduced social isolation.

By 2022, B-Inspired is aiming to make Braunstone home to a thriving and integrated community business sector with the Braunstone Grove facility at its heart. The aim is for the majority of the community businesses created in the next three years to be based at The Grove and for these businesses to use their individual strengths and resources to collaborate for the betterment of their community. B-Inspired also envisages that each of the community businesses will offer a diverse range of employment, volunteering opportunities and new products and services not previously available to local residents.

In order to achieve these aims by 2022, B-Inspired has been continually championing Braunstone, its talents and strengths while promoting local community businesses and stakeholders. Between now and the end of programme in 2022, B-Inspired is planning on focusing on the following areas:

- **Marketing**
- **Funding and financial sustainability**
- **Training**
- **Volunteer induction courses**
- **Employability and community business support skills and qualifications**
- **Capacity support designed for specialised roles**
- **Events, roadshows and community engagement**

Relationships and levels of influence

B-Inspired has a wide network of both national and local organisations. In a relationship mapping exercise carried out by Shared Assets, B-Inspired identified over 80 relationships it holds with 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 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Collaborator | 44 | 1 | 1 |
| Commercial | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Commissioner | 2 | 1.5 | 2 |
| Community Business | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Funder | 11 | 2 | 2 |
| Peer | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| Political | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 84 | | |

A review of charity commission data highlights that there are 517 small- to medium-sized voluntary sector organisations in Leicester. Based on the number of self-identified relationships B-Inspired has with collaborators, peers and community businesses, it can be estimated that B-Inspired has relationships with 59 organisations in the voluntary sector. This means that B-Inspired has a relationship with approximately 11.4% 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

B-Inspired has chosen to catalyse a relatively small number of community businesses and to provide those businesses with significant amounts of support to get them to a point where they are sustainable. The majority of the community businesses are or will be located in The Grove, the community hub that B-Inspired recently took over from the local council and renovated. The Grove is very much designed to be at the heart of the community and the aspiration is that, while each of these community businesses will be independent, they will also be able to support each other both by offering complementary services (such as children's parties that make use of the 4G football pitch and the café) and by providing peer support.

Staff describe themselves as very enthusiastic about their catalyst role and identify that this has resulted in them spending a considerable amount of time on the programme to the point where it is now more integrated into the organisation than had first been anticipated in the project plan. The dance group and football club both had limited business experience and this means that quite intensive one-to-one and group support is needed from B-Inspired, with some contact taking place with the community businesses most days.

In order to provide the support needed for two of the new businesses, the Community Shop and the Community Café, B-Inspired appointed two new Community Development Workers who started in October 2020 to develop the businesses over their first year. Both Development Workers were put through a very comprehensive induction programme which introduced them to both the community and B-Inspired's wide range of activities, reflecting the fact that B-Inspired sees the new community businesses as being closely aligned with the rest of the organisation. The fact that the two Development Workers were appointed at the same time has resulted in some real efficiencies, with the two staff members developing processes and procedures and planning marketing strategies for the new businesses together and both have found having the other for support to be invaluable.

***You can bounce off each other and learn different things off each other –
Community Business Staff***

B-Inspired's highly supportive approach is considered to be hugely valuable by the community businesses it is catalysing, not least the fact that this support extends to the volunteers who are or will be involved in making the community businesses a success:

It's just really impressive the amount of support that you receive and the volunteers will receive as well – Community Business Staff

As a catalyst, B-Inspired has also made considerable use of its strong connection with the local community to listen and understand the types of community business that are needed, where the gaps are and what will be used. This listening is ongoing and will be a central feature in the development of the community shop, café and bar to ensure that there is real community support and buy-in for the ventures. Before the pandemic hit, there were promising signs that B-Inspired's highly collaborative and intensive model of catalysing community businesses would be successful.

Impact of Empowering Places on B-Inspired so far

Being a part of the Empowering Places programme has had some clear impacts on B-Inspired as an organisation, both positive and more challenging. First, without being part of the programme, the team would not have applied to take on The Grove. The building had been offered to the team by the Local Authority two years previously but they did not have a clear plan for how they would use it at that point. Empowering Places provided them with an obvious focus and a viable plan for the building which centered around homing some of the community businesses as well as expanding some of their existing activities such as office hire.

Second, the programme has provided B-Inspired with more opportunities to develop partnerships and raise the organisation's profile. The organisation's Chief Executive has always been well connected but being part of Empowering Places has led to an increase in the number of invites she receives to speak at conferences and the number of opportunities to raise B-Inspired's profile. At a local level, the programme has also widened the organisation's access to the local community. Working with the football club for example has given B-Inspired contact with new families with different needs to those they supported previously and so the organisation's already strong community profile is developing too.

Third, the programme has provided B-Inspired with an opportunity to diversify the roles of some of the staff within the organisation meaning that Empowering Places has not only extended the organisation's capacity, but the skills and abilities of individual staff members too.

Finally, as already identified, B-Inspired's approach to catalysing its community businesses is intensive and the Empowering Places programme has become well integrated into the organisation. While this has clear benefits, it has also meant that the organisation has had less resource to dedicate to other activities and so Empowering Places has perhaps taken the organisation on a slightly different path than it may have been on otherwise.

We've given a hell of a lot more resources and time than we thought we'd be giving – Catalyst Staff/Tech Lead

Had the organisation not become an Empowering Places catalyst, it is likely that it would have got involved in more project-based work around specific themes such as welfare and support.

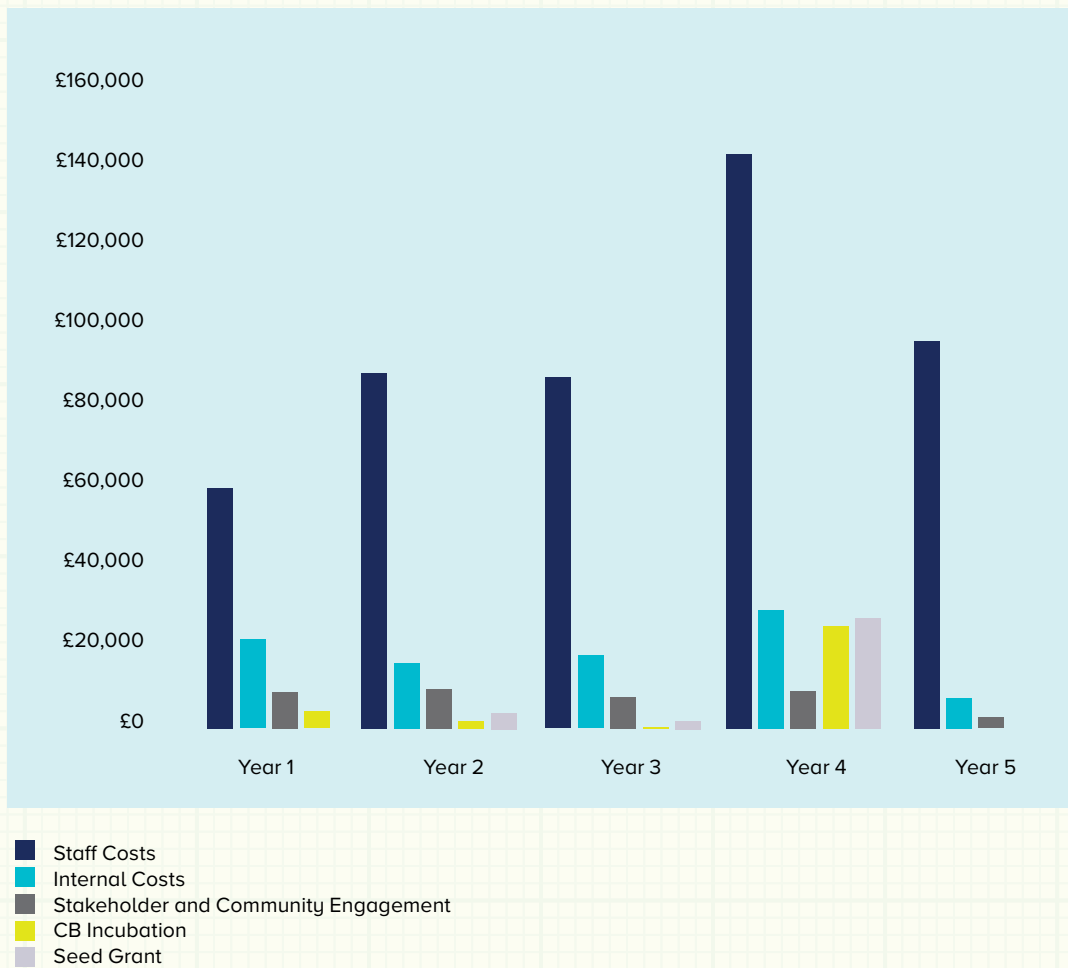
Support and funding drawn down from the Empowering Places programme

| Support for catalyst organisation | B-Inspired ¹⁸ |
|--|---|
| Power to Change, Empowering Places Funding | £649,918 |
| Tailored support | Support for Community Asset Transfer response to tender for The Grove Requested: 4 days valued at £2,000 Used: 2 days Developing business support knowledge and deliver support to community businesses Requested: 19 days valued at £9,500 Used: 19 days Bid Writing Support Requested: 6 days valued at £3,000 Used: 4 days Website support for community businesses and storytelling Requested: 25 days valued at £12,500 Used: 24.3 days CASE training for Community Businesses Requested: 14 days valued at £7,000 Used: None so far |
| Total tailored support used | Requested: 68 days valued at £34,000 Used: 49.3 days valued at £24,650 |
| Other capacity support | – Staff Training – Communications Support |
| Total other capacity support | Requested: £24,585.90 Invoiced: £3,255.60 |
| Support for Community Businesses | |
| Seed grants | Dispersed 4 seed grants valued at £12,000 in total |
| Tailored support | Requested: Tailored support for two community businesses for 50 days, valued at £25,000 Used: 45 days |

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

The figure below provides a breakdown of the financial support claimed by B-Inspired 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

The B-Inspired team is well established and, in many ways, has needed minimal support from the programme, as they already had a long history of community engagement and working to support local organisations. They had a change of Tech Lead in Autumn 2019 and used the new, stronger relationship with their most recent Tech Lead (who left in December 2020), to help them explore funding opportunities. B-Inspired initially made limited use of the support provided by the capacity support provider pool which the team felt was quite generic, but once they were able to add more local organisations to the list, they felt they were able to tailor the support to their needs and so have used it more. This has included seeking out support with taking on The Grove from local surveyors, for example, as well as support with training, marketing and media support which the team has found really helpful.

While the organisation has perhaps needed less support than other catalysts, the team has still valued the peer support element of the programme and the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with the other places. This element of the programme has helped to confirm that the challenges they experience are widely shared, for example the issue of having lots of interest in volunteering but few people offering to lead. Sharing these experiences and ideas through Learning Camps and the other informal channels within the programme has been useful.

Just the chance to share stories, to share ideas, to talk about what's working and literally people have picked up things and gone 'oh I'm gonna give that a go' and so on – B-Inspired staff/Tech Lead

The team does not feel as though there are notable gaps in the support that they have received, since they already had many of the skills required to deliver the programme and support their community businesses. Having initially not drawn on the seed funding available for their community businesses, they have now dispersed two seed grants. However, they feel that this is not necessarily enough to get them up and running and think that what their community businesses need at this point is a larger injection of cash to help them in the vital set-up phase, as well as more support with financial planning to enable them to get that right early on and maintain it as the businesses grow in independence.

The community businesses supported by B-Inspired

| No | Community Business | Type | Support from programme ²⁰ |
|----|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Garage Sale/ Community Shop | A place to buy second-hand clothes and bric-a-brac at affordable prices | Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from B-Inspired. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support. |
| 2 | Braunstone Park 18 FC | A community run grassroots football club aspiring to run as a community business by trading their skills | Seed Grant: Received two seed grants from B-Inspired, totalling £6,000. Capacity Support: Support for bid writing and developing business support. Requested 25 days valued at £12,500. So far used 23 days. |
| 3 | ER Crew | A volunteer run dance group, specialising in Street Dance genres | Seed Grant: Received two seed grants from B-Inspired, totalling £6,000. Capacity Support: For website development and storytelling support. Requested 25 days valued at £12,500. So far used 22.3 days. |
| 4 | Bar at The Grove | A nascent community business idea to invite local people to submit ideas to run the bar facility at The Grove for community benefit | Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from B-Inspired. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support. |
| 5 | Nutri-Bodyblast | Local personal trainers in fitness and nutrition | Seed Grant: Have not requested a seed grant from B-Inspired. Capacity Support: Have not requested capacity support. |

²⁰ Power to Change Airtable Charting (As of March 2021)

Emerging impact on community businesses and wider community

While it is still early days for Braunstone's community businesses, and Covid-19 has set progress back considerably, there are already some emerging impacts identified by the catalyst and community business staff. These fall into three broad categories: Impacts on individuals, impacts on the community businesses themselves and impacts on the wider community.

Individuals involved with the developing community businesses have experienced very real impacts from being part of the programme. The dance group for example existed for many years before being formally supported by B-Inspired with the lead staff member running it alongside their paid job. When she was made redundant, B-Inspired mentioned the Empowering Places programme and the support available to help her establish a formal community business. This included extensive training on all the considerations, practicalities and skills involved in setting up a community business. For that individual, the support and training she has received through the programme has been 'brilliant' and like a 'bright light' at the time that she needed it.

The community businesses themselves have also been impacted by the programme. Both the dance group and the football club which both existed in some form before they got involved would arguably not be on a path to becoming community businesses without the programme and the training and support that it provides. B-Inspired has held these businesses' hands every step of the way, ensuring they have the right training to understand the set-up and running of a community business as well as providing support with marketing, social media, web design, and writing funding bids. Without this support, the groups may have continued in a more informal way, but their role within the community would have been less cemented.

So, the impact is real, you know we've got groups there that have been through business start-up training programmes for free that they would not have had access to, a level of mentorship that they would not have had access to – Catalyst Staff/Tech Lead

The approach that B-Inspired has taken of hosting the majority of the community businesses within The Grove has also had an impact on the community businesses as they are able to engage with each other, train alongside each other and provide peer support.

Wider benefits to the community are also becoming evident. The redevelopment of The Grove and the community businesses that are running out of it, are providing the local community with a hub and services that were previously lacking. Even in the short time that The Grove was up and running between its launch and the first Covid-19 lockdown, it was already proving hugely popular and both the dance group and football club were receiving high numbers of bookings. There is a real sense among catalyst and community business staff that The Grove is connecting the community in new ways.

We have a better beat in the community, we have a home... for everybody, regardless you know, it doesn't matter whether you're two in a family or ten in a family, you're all welcome there. It's an amazing building and that opportunity just would not have happened without Empowering Places – Community Business Staff

It is still early days, but B-Inspired is the only organisation currently championing community businesses in the local area. While B-Inspired's catalyst work has not yet had a direct impact on the local narrative, what the organisation is delivering is being noticed and, with the increased impetus behind the community business sector nationally, there is the potential for the work in Braunstone to have a ripple effect to other parts of the local community.

05. Impact of Covid-19 on the local area

According to the Social Economy Data Lab (SEDL), Braunstone Town falls into one of the more vulnerable quintiles for Covid, scoring 3 out of 5 on the vulnerability scoring.²¹ The table below scores various relevant risk factors out of 10 for Leicester, in comparison to the five other Empowering Places.

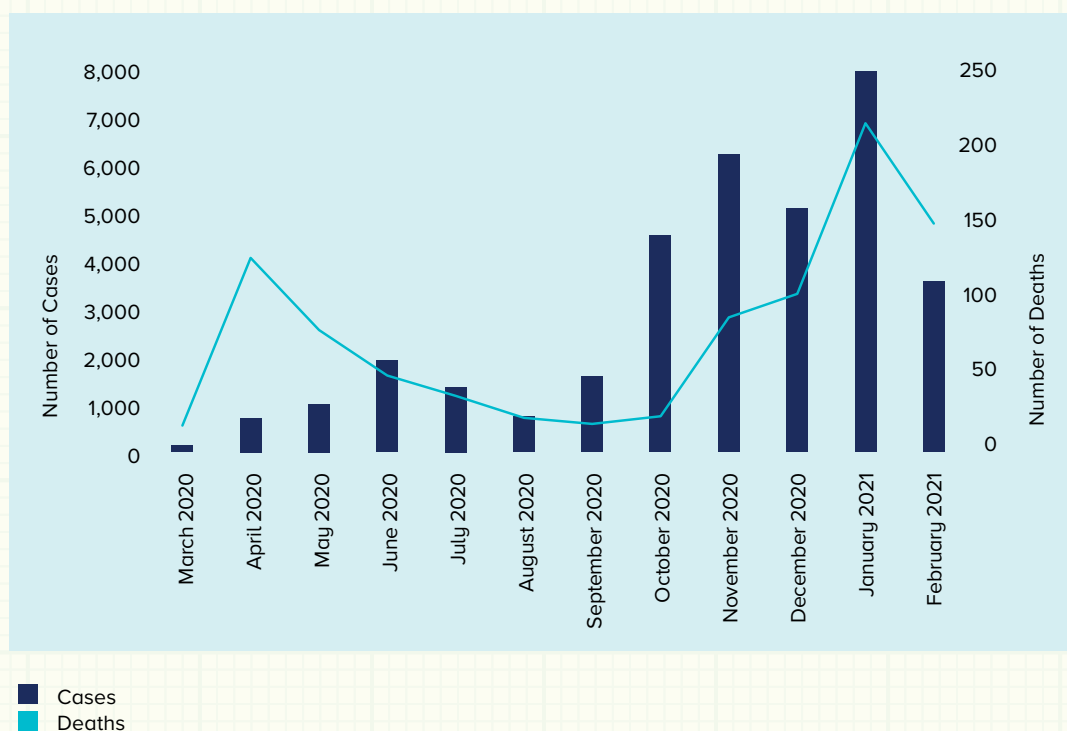
| Indicator ²² | Leicester | Wigan | Plymouth | Grimsby | Hartlepool | Bradford |
|---|-----------|-------|----------|---------|------------|----------|
| Total 70+ population | 5.85 | 9.26 | 9.34 | 10 | 9.15 | 7.32 |
| Obese adults | 7.99 | 8.77 | 8.39 | 10 | 9.37 | 8.75 |
| People aged 15 who are regular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

²¹ Covid-19 and Communities: [Mapping the Covid-19 Effect](#) by Social Economy Data Lab (2020)

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.

In comparison to other Empowering Places locations, Leicester was hugely impacted by the current Covid-19 pandemic and experienced tough and long-lasting restrictions on the whole city in a period when activities in other areas of the country were considerably less restricted. The figure below shows the number of new Covid-19 cases and deaths as per date of test and date of death in Leicestershire. In total, at the time of writing (March 2021), Leicester had recorded more than 34,000 cases and 940 Covid-19 related deaths.²³

Monthly Covid-19 Cases and Deaths for Leicester



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



What Covid-19 means for Braunstone

Covid-19 related restrictions have had a particularly large impact on Braunstone's local retail sales. As shown below, data from the Social Economy Data Lab indicates that while grocery sales have increased in the five months between April 2020 and August 2020 in comparison to the previous year, total sales have consistently decreased in this period.²⁴

| Month | Grocery Sales Change (month to previous year) | Total Sales Change (month to previous year) |
|--------|---|---|
| Apr 20 | 20 – 40% Increase | 60 – 80% Decrease |
| May 20 | 40 – 60% Increase | 60 – 80% Decrease |
| Jun 20 | 20 – 40% Increase | 40 – 60% Decrease |
| Jul 20 | 40 – 60% Increase | 40 – 60% Decrease |
| Aug 20 | 40 – 60% Increase | 20 – 40% Decrease |

Leicester has 11 different mutual aid groups. These groups serve a total population of 355,218 people, therefore they each service a population of approximately 32,293 people. This is more than the national average, which is roughly 23,900 people served per Covid-19 mutual aid group.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 B-Inspired and its approach to Empowering Places

As an organisation, B-Inspired has been hugely impacted by the pandemic so far. The sudden closure of The Grove so quickly after it opened has meant that B-Inspired has missed out on valuable trading income as well as the chance to develop the hub further and therefore generate more income. While it has been closed, B-Inspired has still had to meet the Grove's large overheads and staff have therefore felt as though the building has been 'leaking money'. The organisation's other trading business, the Business Box (serviced office space that the organisation lets out to fund its charitable activities), was also badly hit with many tenants either unable to pay rent or having to end their contracts.

Previously B-inspired had been working towards being reliant on trading income and had reached a point where its profile was about 70% trading income and 30% grant funding. While this is seen as the 'holy grail' for a community organisation, during the pandemic it has become a curse and the B-inspired team has had to switch strategy and seek more grant funding which has been challenging, not least because the organisation's size rules it out of many funds.

While Covid-19 has not altered B-Inspired's fundamental approach to delivering Empowering Places, it has inevitably had an impact on its catalyst activities and the extent to which it can deliver them.

Alongside the huge loss in trading income, the organisation has experienced a large increase in demand for its social support activities during the pandemic, including a 37% increase in overall demand for the foodbank. In order to meet this demand, staff needed to be reallocated meaning that there was less resource dedicated to Empowering Places at some points.

The nature of support that B-Inspired provides its community businesses has also shifted. Both the football club and the dance group, who were already trading, have lost a lot of income, so B-Inspired has turned its attention to putting in grant funding applications to help support the two groups.

In some ways, the biggest impact of Covid-19 on the way B-Inspired delivers the programme has been the loss of momentum. At the point that the Covid-19 restrictions started, both the football team and dance group were on the cusp of incorporating and there was a lot of local interest in both these groups and the community bar, shop and café with local residents expressing interest in volunteering. There was a fresh sense of anticipation from local residents who were excited by the recent opening of The Grove and there were plenty of opportunities for the emerging businesses to engage with the residents. All of this momentum has been stalled and instead of reaching out to the community to increase interest, the last few months have been more focused on supporting the local community and trying to retain existing engagement as much as possible so that when restrictions are finally lifted, the businesses can try and pick up where they left off.

Impact of Covid-19 on community businesses

The Braunstone community businesses have been hugely affected by Covid-19. The football club and dance group both run out of The Grove which was forced to close for much of 2020. Those two community businesses were on the cusp of signing the paperwork to establish them as independent businesses and were riding on the recent successful launch of The Grove with strong bookings when the pandemic took hold. Once restrictions came in, the dance group immediately lost income. The team switched to holding online classes but found that it was not possible to charge for them when families were struggling and when there were so many other free online dance classes available, often fronted by celebrities. It was important for them to maintain a presence to keep interest in the group so they ran free online sessions throughout lockdown. This process cost the group more as it takes longer to put a class together online and they needed to invest in some new hardware to deliver this successfully. The dance coaches still needed payment, which came out of the group's reserves and some small grants that they were able to access. Since they were not yet a fully-fledged community business, there was a limit to the types of funding they could apply for and so money has been very tight, which is a real issue since some of the individuals associated with the group rely on it as their main source of income.

While Covid-19 has been enormously challenging for the dance group, they have managed to identify some positives from the experience. They feel that having to be online has helped them to reach a different audience and they have had to think creatively about how they reach and engage people through social media.

I've shocked myself with how creative I could be – Community Business Staff

The football club was also hugely affected, not least because three of the teams that played on the pitch became frustrated with the local ban on grassroots sports within Leicester and moved to play elsewhere. The club has taken a big hit on its income and is having to work hard to attract new teams.

While the bar, café and shop were not up and running when Covid-19 restrictions came in, good progress had been made and there was interest from local volunteers. Not being able to advance plans for these three businesses for much of this year has put them behind where they wanted to be, but with the new Development Workers now in place to oversee the development of the café and shop there is a sense of optimism that things will be able to get moving again, as long as ongoing Covid-19 restrictions are not too prohibitive.

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