



# Stockwell Strong Fund

## Impact Evaluation Report

Creating initiatives to connect the community

December 2023



Communities continue to feel the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. The grassroots organisations and community groups at the forefront of support during the pandemic continue to provide lifelines to their communities. Some of the groups and organisations work in silos with minimal funding made available to aid growth and widen their reach. However Hyde Housing Association acknowledge that more can be done at the grassroots level to provide adequate support to those in dire need.

To achieve these aims, Hyde Housing awarded a **£35k funding pot** in partnership with Centric, Oval Learning and Stockwell Partnership to test and develop cost-of-living initiatives in Stockwell. The funding pot was made available to **nine grassroots groups** and **charity organisations** in small funds (**£3k**) to support and combat the brunt of the cost of living crisis in their locale through various community activities ranging from the provision of meals to community members, providing a safe space for older adults, and energy advise groups amongst others.

To kick off the engagement, the Centric team developed two separate online surveys for the **nine funded grantees** and another for up to **20 community members** who benefitted from the funded activities. Consequent to the surveys, the grantees and their members were invited to an in-person impact evaluation event. The survey questions and event seek to understand and evaluate the impact of the allocated funds on grantees and their communities. Most notably, the survey questions aim to discover if and how the project funding supported people from the effects of the cost of living crisis.

## Evaluation Conclusion

The pandemic, funding cuts, and the cost of living crisis have forced many grassroots groups and small organisations to shut down or reduce their support programs. However, **the Stockwell Strong Fund successfully supported community groups and charity organisations in coping with the cost of living crisis.** Grantees appreciated the funds and expressed that it helped increase their community presence. The pilot program helped build connections between community groups and opened doors for some grantees to access larger funding opportunities. The community members who benefitted from the program expressed numerous impacts such as mental health support, cost of living advice, safe space for children, and building new relationships with other residents. Overall, the pilot program created further ideas and recommendations for future engagement.



# Summary Recommendations

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Presented below are summary of recommendations from the grantee and community survey responses as well as recommendation shared at the impact event. They represent ideas and future considerations to improve the Stockwell Strong Fund for partners, grantees and community members.

## **1. Collaborative Networking and Partnerships:**

Grant providers' and local authorities should share resources and encourage collaborations among grass root groups and other community organisations to reduce statutory divide.

## **2. Capacity Building for Community Groups:**

We encourage training and capacity building workshops from grant providers to the community groups who provide direct and effective activities within their communities. Workshops can include bid writing and project management skills.

## **3. Enhanced Communication Strategies:**

Community groups and grant providers to work together on clear and inclusive communication strategies using WhatsApp and other digital platforms.

## **4. Long-Term and Flexible Funding:**

Make funding processes accessible and flexible enough for grass root groups and community organisations. Also the availability of long-term grants can aid project sustainability and the growth of community initiatives.

## **5. Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:**

Community groups and fund providers to gather feedback from community members regularly to assess the impact of funded activities, ensuring that programs meet the community's needs and identifying areas for improvement.

## **6. Research and Evaluation Focus**

Invest in research to assess community program impact on health, well-being, and financial stability during cost of living crisis.

## **7. Policy Advocacy for Systemic Change:**

Advocate for policies addressing the cost of living crisis in Stockwell using insights from the fund's impact.

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Centric Community Research is a Research Hub established for and by the communities of Lambeth and Southwark. Informed by a history of racism and injustice against people of colour and our lived experience of persistent ongoing racial inequities, we aspire to empower diverse communities of colour across the urban landscape. Our communities and researchers are important to the work we do:

## Why Centric

- Centric trains and upskill local community researchers with no previous experience in research methods, thereby creating capacity and capability for local communities.
- Centric are part of the communities we serve, which means we have access to in-depth insight and are trusted by a demographic who are weary of always being researched by outsiders.
- Our team has a diverse range of both lived and learned skills and expertise and a founding team of researchers from different cultural backgrounds, with over 8 languages spoken within the organisation.
- The programme is accessible in a short space of time and offers unique progression routes for community researchers over time. Community researchers progress into leadership roles such as project management and most recently hosting of our own Cen-X podcasts.

## APC Model

APC gives us unique, sustainable and dynamic access across the urban locale. We socially broker between organisations and communities to co-design, co-produce and co-evaluate.

## Accessibility

We specialise in delving into the heart of 'hard to reach' communities across the distrust nexus that traditional institutions struggle to access.

## Positionality

We act as a conduit between institutions and underserved communities across all urban locales through our informal networks that are constantly expanding.

## Credibility

We hold a valued, relevant and healing voice within the urban locale that allows our work to have a desired impact. Empowerment of various types of community leaders give us a consistent audience, sense of ethics and direction.

## Engage, Connect, Activate

The activation of underserved communities through the community research model and equitable research practices is central to the mobilisation and social activism aspect of research. Centric has developed an internal process for this model. This process is central to the success of the community research model, ensuring communities actively participate, co-design, and have a stake in the research process.



# The Project Team



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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

This assessment evaluates the effects of the Stockwell Strong Fund initiative in improving the health and well-being of young people, elderly individuals, and MLTCs living in Stockwell. Hyde granted the fund to Stockwell Strong Funds, which comprises Oval Learning, Stockwell Partnership, and Centric. The aim was to develop cost-of-living initiatives through community engagement programs that can lead to sustainable outcomes.

This project aim to investigate the impact of the fund on Stockwell residents and the organisations that received the grant. The assessment will determine if the programs have improved outcomes and if they are self-sustaining for future impact. Additionally, it will explore the journey of the Stockwell Strong Fund and how it was established.



## OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the impact of the community programs run by organisations as well as learn about residents' perceptions.
- To better understand the issues faced by the community and how funding can help them in the future.
- To assess the potential benefits of the Stockwell Strong Fund for the Hyde community.
- To promote essential self-awareness in order to assess overall well-being, as well as evaluate social and financial circumstances.



# STOCKWELL STRONG FUND FUNDED ACTIVITIES

The Stockwell Strong Fund will be supporting the following activities. Please have a look and join some of the local cost-of-living incentive activities!!



## NATURE GARDEN

14 weeks - Saturdays between 10:30am - 4 pm, with lunch at 1 pm. Providing family meals and well-being support at the Oasis Nature Garden. For more information, please contact: [nature@oasisplay.org.uk](mailto:nature@oasisplay.org.uk)



## COST OF LIVING ADVICE

14 weeks - Thursdays between 12- 2 pm at St Johns Community Development Project. Offering assistance to senior citizens by providing cost of living advice. For more information, please contact: [info.stjohns@yahoo.com](mailto:info.stjohns@yahoo.com)



## HUG GROUP

42 weeks - Drama classes, drumming sessions, & COL advice/support for senior citizens from the Portuguese-speaking community with MLTCs. Wednesday at 10 am - starting October 4th, at The Portuguese Community Centre. For more information, please contact: [maria@stockwell.org.uk](mailto:maria@stockwell.org.uk)



## SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROGRAMME

12 weeks - Access to alternative therapies, upskill community to co-create and progression opportunity for referees - Starting October 23. For more information, please contact: [jewels@art4space.co.uk](mailto:jewels@art4space.co.uk)



## POP UP FREE COMMUNITY DANCE

Free community dance classes for all ages & drama activity for Youth Groups. Adding social opportunities, signposting & exploring ideas around the COL and how it affects young people today starting October 23. For more information, please contact: [info@thebouryacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@thebouryacademy.co.uk)



## FRIENDS OF READY SCHOOL

39 Weeks of free breakfast for children in Lambeth Primary School & free school trips - starting October 23. For more information, please contact: [chairfriendsofreay@gmail.com](mailto:chairfriendsofreay@gmail.com)



## COMMUNITY MEAL/WARM ROOM

23 weeks - Every Friday 12.30 to 2 pm. Supporting well-being and nutrition and providing free hot lunch for the community at the Courland Grove Baptist Church Courland Grove. If interested, please contact: [nildouk@gmail.com](mailto:nildouk@gmail.com)



## ENERGY ACTION STOCKWELL

Stay warm this winter - providing energy-saving packs in the community - starting October 23. If interested, please contact: [rootnbranch19@gmail.com](mailto:rootnbranch19@gmail.com)



## EDUCATIONAL & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY VS. COST OF LIVING

25 weeks - Keep active and healthy - Mondays and Saturdays activities for youth & providing family sport, COL workshops, support and more - starting Oct 23. If interested, please contact: [stockwellstrikers@gmail.com](mailto:stockwellstrikers@gmail.com)

Stockwell Strong Fund Team



The Centric project team employed a mixed method approach for this impact evaluation project. A research journal highlighted the benefit in adopting a mixed method in studies; according to the authors the approach when properly combined provides more rigour to research than when either of the methods are used.<sup>1</sup> The survey research which is a quantitative method was used to measure and explore the impact of funded activities on residents as well as unpack the experiences of the grantees. While the qualitative aspect was introduced within the project in-person impact event. The qualitative method is valuable to understanding the effects and experiences of the grantees and their communities.

Another research literature provided an alternative way to consider qualitative and quantitative research methods in modern-day research. The publication shows the potential of both methodologies. However, a stronger emphasis was on the combination of both methods; for example, a qualitative approach, which requires reflexivity and deductive reasoning, will be needed where there is less data to generate insights and determine the findings of a study.<sup>2</sup>

To unpack the impact of the funds, survey questions was sent to nine grantees to understanding how their activities have impacted lives and support residents to reduce the implications of the cost of living crisis. A separate survey was designed for community members who have engaged in the funded activities. Both survey questions was shared with Hyde and partners for review to ensure validity before dissemination to the grantees and residents.

In addition, a WhatsApp messaging channel was created to improve access to communication with the grantees throughout the engagement process. The project team created an accessible poster for the impact event, one which is void of jargon and confusing terminologies. This approach was taken to encourage and improve community engagement amongst Stockwell residents. The **eight survey responses** from the grantees and **twenty-three responses from residents** in addition to insights shared at the impact event was analysed to generate key insights and recommendations for this evaluation project.

# Timeline

## From Vision to Success

### Project Kick-Off October

- The evaluation kicked off with meeting the Stockwell Strong Fund team to understand and agree on project expectations.
- Design of survey questions for grantees and their residents.

1

### Grantee Survey

The survey questions was shared with the grantees via WhatsApp created for the project.

2

### Community Survey

Survey questions shared with residents who have engaged with the funded activities.

3

### Site visits from SSF

The grantees were visited by the Stockwell Strong Fund team to encourage and answer any questions they might have.

4

### Impact Event

An in-person impact event was held with grantees, residents and the Stockwell Strong Fund team to discuss challenges, successes as well as understand recommendations from the participants

5

### Project Report December

The insights and recommendations were analysed and highlighted in the report.

6

As in the case of all research projects and assignments, there were challenges and successes we have detailed below:

## Our Challenges

- The grantees reported that the evaluation timeframe given for the programmes was short. Some of the groups expressed there could be additional impact recorded if there was more time given.
- It was a challenge communicating with the community members directly during the program. Majority of the communication was done via grantees to their members.
- Given their ages, backgrounds, and abilities, we faced challenges choosing between bank and voucher payments for our participants. We learnt that people may have payment preferences, hence we aim to provide options and choices in future engagements.

## Our Successes

- We had a successful event despite the challenges and push back experienced with choosing a date and time that works for all.
- The site visits by the SSF team to the grantees in their place were successful and productive. It also aids communication between the Centric team and the grantees.
- We achieved and developed a successful collaborative partnership with Hyde and the SSF team during this project.





# Stockwell Strong Fund Survey Insights



It is noteworthy that the insights provided here are from the online survey responses from eight of nine grantees and twenty-three community members who have engaged in the funded activities.

## Grantee survey responses

Eight grantees expressed that their community organisations have been providing support to their residents for 2 years and over.

The majority of grantees reported that their activities and programmes fulfilled community needs, achieved success on a regular basis, and maintained a community presence even before they received the grant. However, five of them mentioned that they struggled to maintain community presence before receiving the grant, but experienced an increase in maintaining a regular community presence after receiving the grant.

Before receiving the grant, most grantees said they were "usually" able to maintain a regular community presence. However, after receiving the grant, all of them reported being able to actively maintain a regular community presence.

illustrated in **Graph A & B**

**A**

Before receiving the Stockwell Strong Fund, the grantees rate their community group / charity organisation as:	Popular with local customers	Fulfilling a community need	Achieving success on a regular basis	Actively maintaining a regular community presence	Working towards an established community presence	Struggling to establish a community presence
Yes, usually	8	8	7	7	4	1
Yes, at times	0	0	1	1	3	2
Not significantly	0	0	0	0	1	3
Not really	0	0	0	0	0	2

**B**

After receiving the Stockwell Strong Fund, the grantees rate their community group / charity organisation as:	Popular with local customers	Fulfilling a community need	Achieving success on a regular basis	Actively maintaining a regular community presence	Working towards an established community presence	Struggling to establish a community presence
Yes, usually	8	8	7	8	5	1
Yes, at times	0	0	1	0	2	1
Not significantly	0	0	0	0	1	4
Not really	0	0	0	0	0	2

Meanwhile, **Graph C** shows three different ratings by grantees which represents their impact on the community they served through the funds. The respondents acknowledged various levels of impact the funded activities had on their members with the highest being **80%**

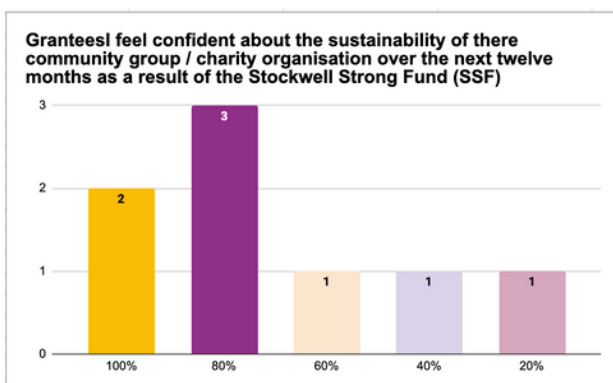
Half of the grantees who are respondents in the survey rated the services provided by their community group or charity organisation had an **80% or above** impact on community awareness of access to services and had helped reduce community isolation, whilst the other half indicated their services had made **60%** impact on the community. Most Grantees expressed their programme has impacted community pride and empowerment as well as community cohesion and improved health and well-being with 7/8 selecting **80%** impact or above .

**Most of the organisations indicated in our survey that their programme has provided support for the community with a rising cost of living**

## C

In the grantees opinion, there programme has:	Impacted community pride and empowerment	Impacted community awareness of access to services and reduced isolation	Impacted community cohesion and improved health and wellbeing	Impacted community self-esteem and confidence (sense of employability)	Provided community support with the rising cost of living
100%	3	3	5	3	5
80%	2	2	2	2	2
60%	3	2	1	1	0
40%	0	0	0	1	1
20%	0	1	0	1	0

## D



Overall, the grantees expressed confidence in the sustainability of their organisation over the next twelve months as a result of SSF. In our survey, 4 out of 8 grantees rated **80%** or more, indicating that the majority feel that the fund has helped them become sustainable over the next 12 months because of the fund itself. As Illustrated in **Graph D**

During our survey, we asked grantees about what could better support their organisation, as stated in **Graph E**. Most expressed comments around grant amounts, such as bigger grants or smaller pots. In contrast, others suggested more partnership work to link and share more about offers.

**E**

The Stockwell Strong Fund can better support my community group / charity organisation by:
Support with follow up funding for sustainability
Bigger grants
Partnership work, joint funding bids.
More linking and sharing of offers
By reducing youth anti-social behaviour and aiding with cost of living and developing activities that aide families keep going and youths out of trouble helping to build stronger families. Working with mental health residents to improve their well being
Nothing specific
Continue funding the activities in order to maintain the key points of the group.
Small pots of funding are great to provide short term support/activities but rarely cover the full costs of the activity - staff time and overheads. This impacts negatively on building a sustainable organisation.

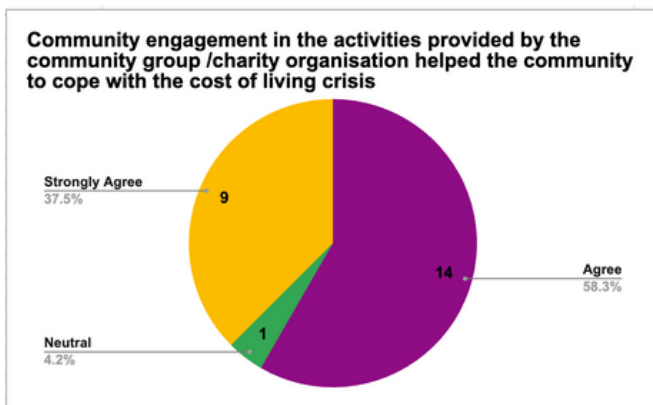
(Shaded cells denote the most popular response)

## Community survey responses

The survey questions shared with the community members who attended the funded activities was aimed at learning about their experience and to evaluate the impact the activities had on the residents. Majority of the attendees responses show their gratitude for the support received from their engagement with the grass root groups and charity organisations. Whilst their responses that emphasises on challenges and expectations. Their responses are represented in the chart and tables below.

The respondents **60.9% agree** the activities attended provided support and helped them cope with the impact of the cost of living crisis. Whilst **34.8% strongly agree** they felt supported with the rising cost of living. It is interesting to learn non of the responses were negative around support received with cost of living. It felt as though they all were positively impacted however on different scales. **(Chart F)**

**F**



**G**

What attendees enjoyed the most about activities	What attendees least enjoyed about activities
My family and I enjoyed spending a nice time with friends, and eating was another pleasure as we got to know different types of healthy foods.	Sessions could be longer; always want to continue when the time expires
Socialising	Its only once a week
Meeting others in the same boat	No full support from local authorities
Community and creative achievement	It was all good
The ability to express myself creatively in a safe and friendly environment with access to an array of materials and friendly, supportive professionals. It feels so cosy and nurturing that it helps me feel part of something special and able to open up to people.	Ending time. It's so much fun and so engrossing to be able to explore my creative side that the time always seems to run out really quickly.
Getting advice about improving my life financially	People being late
The exercises	Occasionally, the meal wasn't on.
Community connection and learning new cooking skills	It's not a permanent event
Spending time in the community	That it wasn't more frequent
Geed food, meeting people. Networking and hearing about other things going on in the area.	Getting new ideas on how to manage the costs of living crisis and how to cook simple food for less
Delicious food, nice to talk to and meet new people, especially people I recognised but had never spoken to.	Nothing
The drama session pushed my memory, made me think and helped me process	Nothing
Welcoming space/ advice	Nothing
Socialising with people	Nothing
It's great for the kids.	Nothing
N/A	Nothing
Everything the children get	Nothing
That my son had an enjoyable trip with his class.	Nothing
Equal opportunities for children	Nothing
The food (bagels) for children in these hard times.	Nothing
School trips and bagels for children	Nothing
Children benefit from food and school trips funded.	Nothing
Great support to the school children	Nothing

The community members were asked questions about what they enjoyed most and least enjoyed; their responses showed satisfaction with the activities they engaged in and keenness for the funding to continue. Meanwhile, the common dislikes across the responses were the activities being short-term and less available than they would have wanted. **(Table G)**



Attendees shared diverse and positive descriptions of their programme experiences and also offered ideas for improving the activities. Survey responses **indicated a widely held value for community engagement through the SSF programmes** and respondents expressed a clear need to sustain the programme far beyond the expiry of this funding round. They also suggested that provision for longer sessions would be beneficial for them in their respective programmes. **(Table H)**

Within the survey questions, the respondents were given the opportunity to provide further thoughts and comments beyond the scope of the questions. They described the direct impact of the programme and group activities on themselves, and in some cases, how other people in their households benefitted from the activities. Again, the responses included ideas for continuity of the initiatives. **(Table I)**

## H

Attendees' description of activities	Attendees' ideas of what would make the activity better
One of the most wonderful activities is where children help prepare the food and we all feel as if we are one family, despite our different cultures. This activity is very good for connecting the community.	If there were leftovers, I was always offered to take away some food for my son. It would be great if this was standard.
Good	Supported and sponsored
Too short	They were longer
Tranquil, friendly, kind, safe, rewarding	There was an additional hour each week
Friendly and respectful. There is a sense of ease and comfort in the space. Each person is fully supported, shown different techniques and encouraged to ask for help whenever they need it whilst also allowing space to explore their own personal imagination through the mediums they feel drawn towards.	Better heating and better snacks. Maybe everyone can bring something in to make or share for our after-snack
Getting advice on how to cope with the cost of living	Made another one in the weekdays
I really enjoy and make me feel less isolated	Participants are on time
Fun and rewarding	If funding continues
Fun, engaging, friendly	Further funding to continue
Activity, brain power	If it was longer lasting either in the length of session or a number of sessions.
Community lunch - all welcomed	If they continued after the grant finished
Valuable, especially do in the middle of winter	Longer and/or more frequent
Beneficial	They lasted longer & I could benefit from learning what was available to support me
Lots to do and talk about	Can all help each other
My son loves it.	N/A
N/A	N/A
Informative	N/A
Food and a trip for my son.	If they could be provided again next year
Great fun and builds community spirit	N/A
Great.	There was free fruit, too!
It's what the children need	N/A
Benefits to the children of Reay Primary School	All funding to Reay primary schoolchildren gratefully received
Helpful & supportive	N/A

(Shaded cells denote the most popular response)

## I

Community comments
Continue the initiatives
I am very grateful for these projects, they have helped me and my health in many ways and they are an essential part of supporting my mental health
I feel so grateful to have found this place. It's given me a way to feel like I have value and worth in a community setting. It's allowed me to imagine myself engaging with people and life more.
I feel so grateful to have found this place. It's given me a way to feel like I have value and worth in a community setting. It's allowed me to imagine myself engaging with people and life more.
Please continue supporting this activities. They really make difference
Please keep the funding going
It would be great for Oasis to have more support from Lambeth and other organisations because it is such a vital service to our community.
Great sessions, I want more, less isolation helped my build friends
The teams do a great job. Very grateful for this, and it has become a standing arrangement with me and an 80 year old friend of mine, who lives alone, to have lunch there on a Friday.
I have seen how the amount of funding for the school has reduced in the time my children have been at school, so anything extra is very appreciated.
We really appreciate all the help with funding for the bagels for the children at school! Thank you!

The impact of the pandemic, funding cuts, and the cost of living crisis had forced many grassroots groups and small organisations to either shut their doors or reduce support programmes to communities who needed them most. These impacts also affect the benefits of the activities. In the survey, one of the community responses states “I have seen how the amount of funding for the school had reduced in the time my children have been at school, so any extra is very appreciated”

The findings from the surveys highlight the importance of community groups and the impact of their activities and engagements on the community. The grantees' responses show how they valued and rated their input within the community, providing support to alleviate the impact of the cost of living crisis. Some community groups expressed that they had successfully gained community presence and awareness before the funding, while others shared how the fund had helped create the awareness they sought. Meanwhile, the allocated fund helped increase both parties' reach and popularity within their community.

Additionally, the residents expressed appreciation for the initiative and were able to showcase the impacts that the funded activities had on themselves and the household. One common theme among both respondents (i.e. grantees and community) is the emphasis on increasing the funds and ensuring the sustainability of the community programmes and activities. Longer-term support seems critical to success since grassroots and charity organisations play a vital role in supporting people in crisis; without their help, many residents would not know how or where to get essential support. The developed recommendations are included in this report.





# Stockwell Strong Fund Event insights

1. Communication
2. Community  
Connectedness
3. The Fund



# Communication

## Grantees and Community



The grantees at the impact evaluation event were asked to share their thoughts and experiences with communication throughout the grant process. Some praised the WhatsApp communication channel used for creating awareness throughout the process from allocation to the impact event. While others expressed the challenges with catching up with messages which are not a part of their work, another grantee expressed the sensitive nature of people's experiences with the cost of living; hence, they struggled with asking their attendees how they have been impacted. Meanwhile, the majority of the grantees agree there could be more clear communication to create awareness of the fund as well as the criteria for participating in the funded activities.

Effective communication is considered the bedrock of all engagements, from community relationships to developing trust and partnership building toward response to community needs. Lessons from the pandemic indicate how clarity and effective communication aided community groups in responding and hence reducing the tremendous cost of the crises.<sup>3</sup> At Centric, we have continued to explore and develop creative ways to communicate and disseminate information that provides clarity and resonates with diverse audiences; these we have achieved in our '[Dissemination of Knowledge](#)' project and within other projects.

Some of the community members had expressed gratitude and satisfaction with the referral received to engage in the funded activities. They were a number of positive feedback from community members who have shared impact of the activities from mental health to support with cost of living. Although people are at different levels of needs however it was apparent that everyone who engaged in the funded activities received one or more support due to the grants.

*"I was made aware of several creative projects that I could take part in by my key worker at the harbour pathways to historic recovery."*

## Communication (Grantees)

Need more advertising about the fund being available.

Communicate to other grantees more to spread awareness and volunteer for programs.

Clear-cut communication should exist on who qualifies to participate in these funded activities.

It can be difficult when funding is limited in a particular area for funding criteria.

One borough under this Scheme struggled with funds and catchment areas.

We are engaging people with the project when it is new.

Lots of WhatsApp emails are difficult to follow when not part of work.

## Communication (Community)

Link with a support worker referred me to my creative sessions.

I was connected to Root 'n' Branch who helped with information and materials to cope with winter costs.

Art 4 space has connected me to socialising in the community. For the first time ever, I found out about Art 4 space via referral to do chair - yoga, and the environment was conducive. I immediately felt positive.

I was made aware of several creative projects that I could take part in by my key worker at the Harbour Pathways to Historic Recovery.

Link with a support worker referred me to my creative sessions.

I was connected to Root 'n' Branch who helped with information and materials to cope with winter costs.

# Community Connectedness

Grantees and Community

One common theme observed throughout the conversation with the grantees and community members engaged in the evaluation process from survey to the event is the opportunity to connect with other community members.

The grantees expressed gratitude with the partnership created through the Stockwell Strong Fund. They expressed diverse experiences, where some of the grantees shared gratitude for being able to connect with other groups within the community, for the first time due to the Stockwell Strong Fund programme. For others the ability to create a safe space for people to connect, reflect and learn is a major win providing a sense of fulfilment and community connected as heard from both grantees and community members.

Some grantees said it took additional efforts to build relationship with community members and have conversations on the impacts of cost of living, given that advise on such topic is sensitive and may be seen as an invasion of privacy. However, one of the most significant expressions was collaborative working, being able to work with others, not only the community but other organisation that has applied to the fund. In the event insights we found that the community members appreciated the support received through the activities and programmes from community warm space, to free healthy meals, creative activities, free energy advise and more.

One of the community groups who provided support to young children said: *"This newfound capacity has not only made a positive impact on the lives of the kids but has also provided a sense of relief and peace of mind for their parents during challenging times marked by a high cost of living."*

Building community connection is critical to developing resilience, assessing social support network and increasing physical and mental health wellbeing in the community.<sup>4</sup> Some of the impacts of the connection shared by the grantees and the communities include less isolation and the feeling of worth and value within the community.



## Working with Others (Grantees)

"S"- sharing with other services collaboratively -working.

It took a long time to build relationships with residents because cost of living advice can be an invasion of privacy.

Partnerships with other organisations to support each other. Root 'n' Branch + Art 4 space harbour on Shakespeare Road, an addiction recovery enterprise

People should engage and take it on board, having to build trust, especially in older group projects elevating pride.

Community connecting with local organisations purely from funding process, simple grant brief.

A WhatsApp group is a good idea for sharing communication with other grantees from fund

Word of mouth is a way of letting people know about the project.

Successful link with logical GP's practices, link workers, etc., able to refer; some users self-refer.

Linking community influences building community confidence to engage.

## Impact (Community)

Empathy, peer support, creativity and well-being pathways help me a lot. I live with depression.

Taking part in creative social activities has raised my vision of being able to have a purpose in life.

Attending Art 4 Space Creativity enabled me to have positive mental health and encouraged me to have positive mental health and helped me socialise more.

Attending a creative mosaic-themed set of sessions led by Art 4 Space + NHS has led me to stop smoking.

It has helped us socialise, make new friends, get out more, and rediscover ourselves.

Feeling safe to share concerns about most problems.

## Impact (Grantees)

The pilot will increase our chances of successfully applying for long-term funding elsewhere.

Educational benefits of trips that would be difficult without funding





Funding is a significant challenge for nearly all the community groups and the charity organisations we engaged in the evaluation process. They are grateful for the services and support they provided through the **£3k** pilot grant. However, they expressed the need for longer-term funding to cover costs and volunteer remuneration. The grantees report that grants are usually explicitly targeted at projects and often do not cover general running costs essential to the group's success. Groups also need practical help such as training and support with writing bids, proposals and project management. The groups generally feel that increased funding could widen their support and provide for those most in need.

For grantees who are new to funding process, they expressed that the pilot has increased their knowledge and has increased their chances of applying for larger amount of fund in the future. Some of the community members said that the fund had given their children the opportunity to join educational trips which would not be possible without the grants. Another community member stopped smoking with the support received at one of the creative sessions attended.

Community groups and charity organisations can only function or provide support with the availability of funds. During our engagement, many grantees felt confident about the sustainability of their group and organisation over the next twelve months due to the Stockwell Strong Fund.

*"We faced challenges due to the limitations of the grant amount, despite being grateful for the support. With a large number of kids on our team, we strategically minimised our usage to ensure fair distribution. While appreciative of the generosity, we navigated the balance between optimising the grant and meeting each child's needs."*

In summation, there is a call for radical shift that encourages recognition of the grass root community groups as active agent of change,<sup>5</sup> hence they need to be provided with appropriate support given their knowledge and local experience.

## Insufficient grants (Grantees)

Not a large enough fund to be able to extend reach (hard to reach) significantly.

The fund did not allow the length to Run successful projects

Lack of funding to offer vital support in a way that would have a major impact on those we support.

Could have more spaces available if more funding was available for waiting lists.

The grant was too small for too short a time and would have been better if it had longer and more money.

More time, more £!!!

Organisation staff need to be paid to attend or don't have the capacity to support volunteers.

## Grant & Evaluation Process (Grantees)

last-minute cancellations dates+meeting organisation for grantees.

Surveys may not be appropriate for our project, making it more general.

When completing online surveys, we did not receive an email to say it was completed.

It can be hard to complete 2 creative processes fully in the time that the allocated funding allows. Longer or more sessions would be great.

More time is needed for longer sessions of creativity, meaning more funding.

Not knowing enough about the other groups apart from WhatsApp, Maybe a launch event at the beginning.

## Limitations (Grantees)

Evidence-gathering is challenging when working with children.

Our project did not address the root causes. Funding better allocated there?

Not reaching enough people in a short timeframe and connecting with the most needy.

Attendees sometimes that come don't have issues with the cost of living.

There is a limitation with which borough one lives in.

The catchment area funding limits others who are not in the catchment area.

The Stockwell Strong Fund successfully provided community groups and charity organisations with the support needed to engage their communities in programmes and activities that can help cope with the impacts of the cost of living crisis. The impact evaluation project helps to explore and understand the impact of the funded programmes on grantees and those who engage in the activities.

Throughout the engagement, the grantees appreciated the allocated funds and expressed that the grant had helped increase their community presence, supported people with the cost of living and provided the opportunity to support those who needed it most. However, those community groups with many residents who depended on their services had expressed that they could only attend to some members given that the allocated pilot funds was not sufficient to meet community demands. One common overarching insight and impact of the fund was the sense of belonging, and connections built through the partnership between community groups who before the grant worked in silos.

The grantees were appreciative of the opportunity to learn about other grass root groups and their work within the community. For some grantees who are new to funding processes, being a beneficiary of the pilot grant has opened doors to access even larger funding opportunities in the future. Meanwhile, others expressed that the survey is an eye-opener to the expectations of funders and a first-hand lesson in measuring programme impact on communities.

Likewise, the community members who benefitted from the funded activities expressed numerous impacts the programme had on them, from mental health support, cost of living advice, safe space and activities for young children. Other impacts for the communities include building new relationships with other residents, developing creative skills and having a safe space to relax and reflect.

Overall, the collaboration, connection and impact observed in the pilot programme created further ideas and recommendations for future engagement.



# Stockwell Strong Fund Recommendations



## 1. Collaborative Networking and Partnerships:

It is recommended that community groups and local authorities encourage and facilitate collaboration among different community groups and organisations to share resources, knowledge, and best practices.

## 2. Capacity Building for Community Groups:

We recommend that funders and non-profit support organisations provide practical help such as training and support in writing bids, proposals, project management and training on difficult conversations to empower community groups in sustaining their activities and growth. Throughout our engagement with diverse communities, we learned that being comfortable with having difficult conversations can improve relationships in our personal and professional lives. Learn more in our written blog on **Difficult Conversations**.

## 3. Enhanced Communication Strategies:

Community groups and funders could co-develop and implement more effective communication strategies, leveraging digital platforms like WhatsApp while ensuring clarity and inclusivity in messaging. We conducted a similar plan through our **DoK Project**, which explores ways of communication using creative methods.

## 4. Long-Term and Flexible Funding:

We recommend that funders and policymakers to consider increasing the availability of long-term funding to support the sustainability of community projects. Grants should also be flexible enough to cover general running costs and not just project-specific expenses.

## 5. Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:

We recommend that community groups and funders regularly engage with community members to gather feedback and assess the impact of funded activities, ensuring that the programmes are meeting the community's needs. This could also support the improvement of the programmes and help identify potential gaps.

## 6. Research and Evaluation Focus:

We recommend that academic institutions and funders invest in research and evaluations to continuously assess the impact of community programmes on health, well-being, and financial stability and to understand the community's evolving needs during the cost of living crisis. We ourselves conducted a project around **CoL and MLTC** to explore barriers of COL, especially towards those with multiple long-term conditions, where now we are on part 2 of

## 7. Policy Advocacy for Systemic Change:

It is recommended that policymakers and advocacy groups use the insights from the fund's impact to advocate for policies that address the effects of the cost of living crisis on the Stockwell community.

# SSF Reflections

1. Laura Bassett
2. Raquel C Januario
3. Steve Griffin

Hyde, Centric, Oval Learning and Stockwell Partnership were all part of the formation of the partnership known as the Stockwell Strong Fund (SSF). The partners have reflected and shared their reflections on the pilot fund. Listed below are some of their reflections.

## Our Successes

- Our partnership was a highlight for us as we all had different skills that aided us in creating the fund. The partnership created a safe learning space for collaboration and for new skills as well as the creation of new knowledge.
- During the funding process, we conducted site visits to meet with our grantees and community members. These visits helped us gain a better understanding of the community, including both their successes and barriers.

## Our Challenges

- All partners work in different places, which makes it challenging to find time to concentrate on the fund and fundraising while also working on other things.
- Organising the key elements for accepting community proposals was challenging due to a short timeframe for fund arrangement.
- Communicating with some of the guarantees was challenging due to the lack of responses. However, we understood that it could be because of their own company being low, tech issues, or a language/writing barrier.
- Visiting all the programmes was a challenge due to our capacity, locations of activities and timing.

## Key Learnings for grantees

- Benefits of actively committing to the programme planning process by attending in-person meetings to make the most of support and guidance available.
- Exploring ways to increase site / session capacity.
- Need for consistent involvement in promoting initiatives and increasing advertisement for the fund.



This fund has connected partners and people in a way that will continue to generate value beyond the relatively modest sums received by provider organisations.

My hope is that this model shows a way in which we can shift power and resources into communities, build connectedness, and develop individual and collective voice, agency, and skill sharing.

Our partners span health, education, community organisations and wider resident leadership and involvement. I feel partners are better positioned now to apply a similarly lean and community led investment model at scale, taking on all our learnings from this fund.

That investment model can be held by the community, fully driven by principles of equity, inclusion and hope and made possible by the talent and capacity within Lambeth's residents to generate transformational change.

**Laura Bassett - Long term Lambeth resident, connector and Director of Partnerships at Oval Learning**





Working on the fund has been a gratifying experience, from creating terms of reference with criteria to site visits to see the programmes in action. It has fostered collaboration and unity through community partnerships with the benefit of a wide range of skill sets and a deep understanding of the community's needs with health, education, and community in mind.

This fund was created to support those who struggle with the cost of living, like those with multiple long-term conditions. We encouraged community members to apply through an acting body to give them an opportunity to give back and improve their skills

We, as partners working together to build this fund has been a new way of working, but it has shown that it's possible with organisations that are passionate about the community.

Giving community a voice , safe space and support.

This model can be applied in other areas to let programs reach a wider audience by connecting partners together with the community.

**Raquel C Januario - Long term Lambeth resident  
Project Manager at Centric and Advocate for those with Disabilities.**

It's been great to be part of the SSF team.

The project has not only provided funds for community groups delivering vital services helping some of the most vulnerable residents with the cost of living crisis, it's also helped to strengthen relationships between a whole range of organisations and groups delivering services in the Stockwell neighbourhood - it's been brilliant!

**Steve Griffin , Director of Stockwell Partnership & Founder of Thiving Stockwell**



# Stockwell Strong Fund End Notes

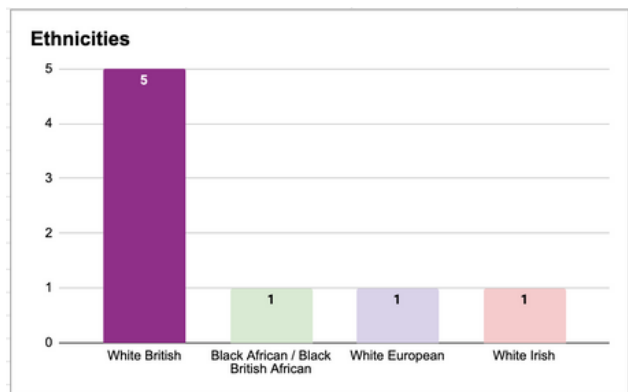
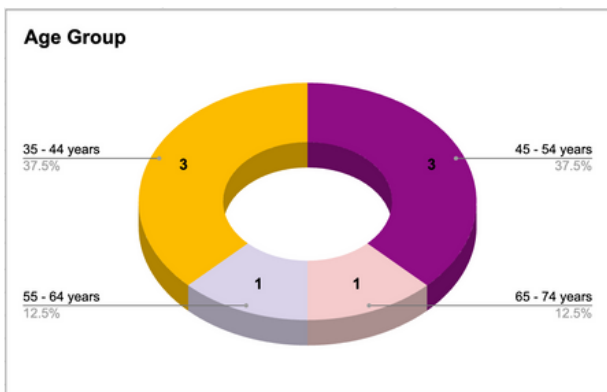
- Participant Demographics
- Group Pictures from SSF site visits
- References



## Survey

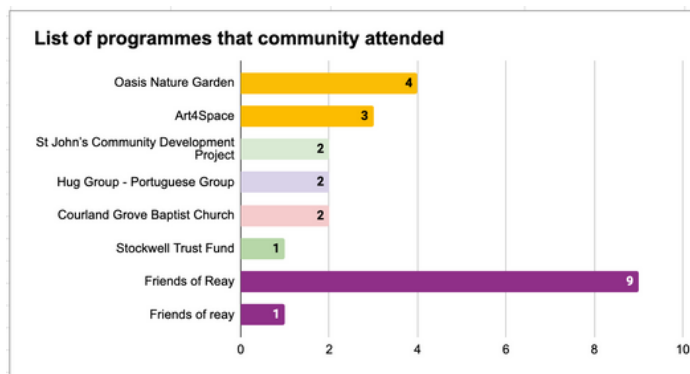
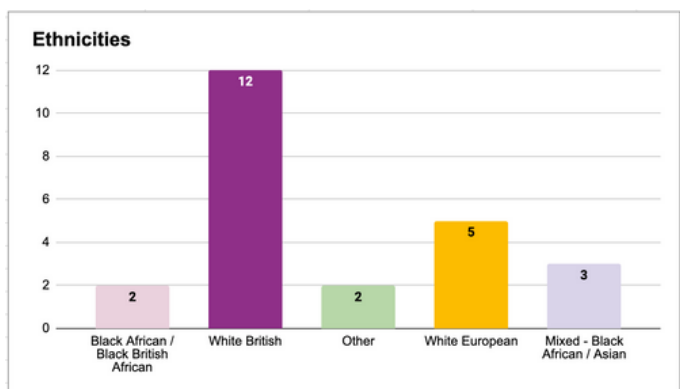
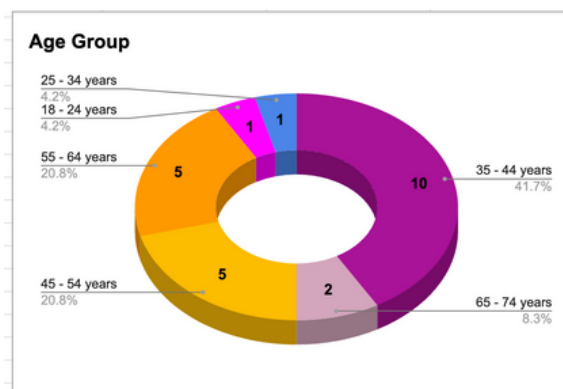
For this evaluation project, we engaged individuals from diverse age groups who are residents within the Stockwell community with the target being those residents who facilitates activities within grass root community groups and charity organisation as well engaged in the community led activities.

### Grantees



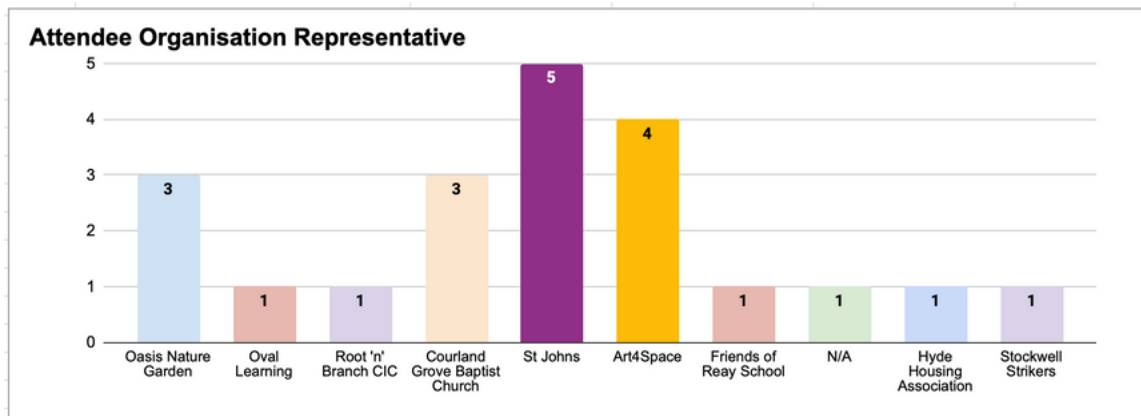
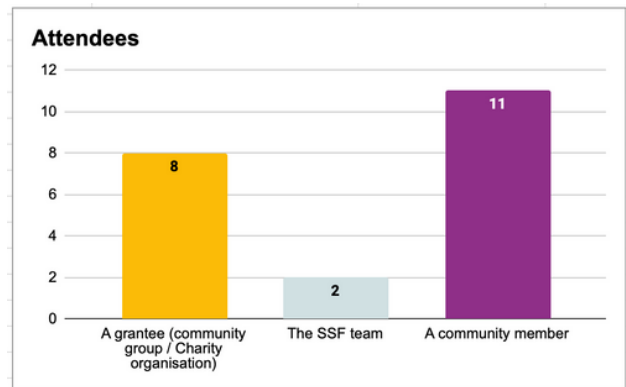
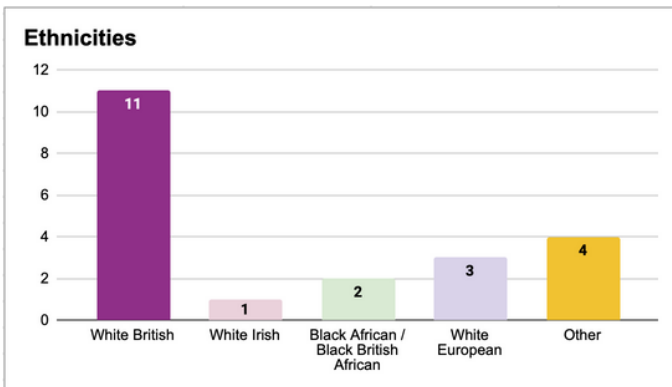
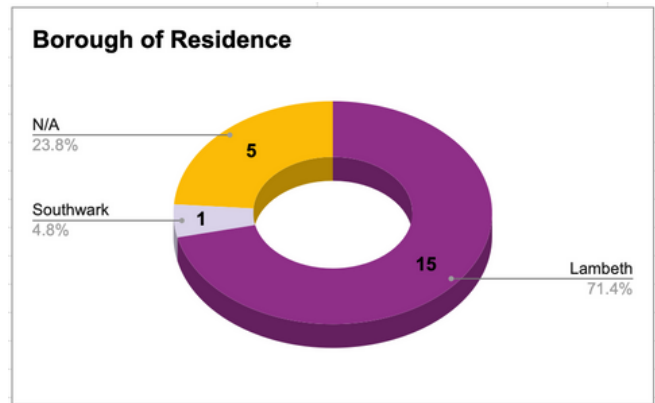
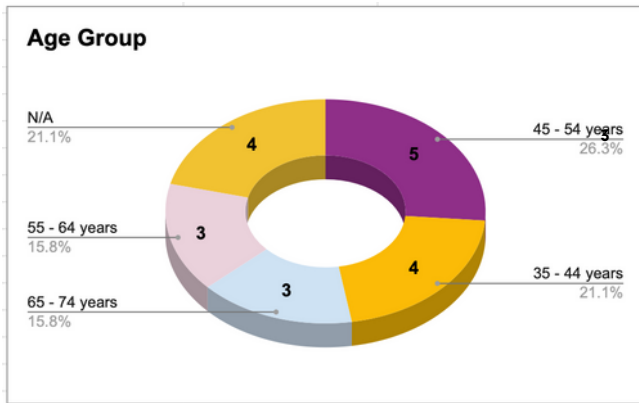
Survey Organisations	
Stockwell Strikers	Oasis Nature Garden
Friends of Reay	St John's Community Development Project
Stockwell Partnership	Art4Space
Root n Branch	The Boury Academy

### Community



## Event

The demographics below represents the number of attendees at the impact evaluation event. Some residents joined the event without registering, hence we could not capture their demographic data.









1. Creswell, J.W. and Hirose, M., 2019. Mixed methods and survey research in family medicine and community health. *Family medicine and community health*, 7(2).
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3. Forman, R., Atun, R., McKee, M. and Mossialos, E., 2020. 12 Lessons learned from the management of the coronavirus pandemic. *Health Policy*, 124(6), pp.577-580.
4. Newman, M.G. and Zainal, N.H., 2020. The value of maintaining social connections for mental health in older people. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(1), pp.e12-e13.
5. Larrieta, J., Wuerth, M., Aoun, M., Bemme, D., D'souza, N., Gumbonzvanda, N., Esponda, G.M., Roberts, T., Yoder-Maina, A., Zamora, E. and Qureshi, O., 2023. Equitable and sustainable funding for community-based organisations in global mental health. *The Lancet Global Health*, 11(3), pp.e327-e328.



## For More Information:

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# Thank You For Your Attention!