

# Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability

End of Project Report



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# 1. About this Report

[Civil Society Consulting CIC](#) (CSC) received a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund for their capacity building programme Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability (KCS2S), for organisations led by and for marginalised communities, over one year from 2023-2024.

This report aims to demonstrate the impact of the KCS2S programme made possible through this grant, as well as the effectiveness of the 'S2S' model, which is characterised by being or providing ...

**Learning-by-doing**, rather than training-oriented: we feel it's a misconception that grassroots organisations lack skills per se. Rather, they often require support in developing 'mental blueprints' and confidence for certain processes. Therefore, it makes more sense to work with organisations to co-produce outputs rather than simply instructing them and expecting them to execute it on their own!

**Hands-on support:** We directly provide the additional capacity that overstretched grassroots organisations lack, which ensures they feel valued and achieve tangible results from the programme.

**Led by the organisation:** Each organisation develops according to its strengths and unique 'organisational personality' rather than conforming to a specific mould set by funders.

**1-2-1 support:** We provide one-to-one support that is responsive and tailored to each organisation's nuanced needs, giving them the attention they deserve.

**Collaborative learning and connecting:** To complement our one-to-one support, we deliver workshops that are relevant to organisations' learning. This also provides participants with an opportunity to develop peer networks.

Civil Society Consulting (CSC) has been funded by The National Lottery Community Fund to deliver **Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability (S2S)** – a capacity-building programme for organisations **led by and for marginalised communities** – focusing on those in the **North of England**. Through the programme, social action leaders will develop **peer support networks** and co-produce key outputs with CSC consultants.

Through our new edition of our tried-and-tested programme, CSC will provide one-to-one support to up to **70 organisations** led by and for marginalised communities.

CSC will work with each organisation to co-produce checklist of up to **five** tangible outcomes – such as a funding application, impact report, or refreshed website – over a period of three to four months.

Workshops on income generation, theory of change, M&E, website development, social media and filmmaking led by industry experts will also be on offer. We're also providing 15 social action leaders up to 5 sessions with a professional leadership coach.

Organisations will progress through the programme in cohorts of up to ten, to enable the development of meaningful peer support networks. Each cohort will be encouraged to participate in bi-weekly catch ups to discuss challenges, track progress and share successes.

**CONTACT Us** If you're a 'led by and for' organisation and are interested in taking part, email [francesca@civilsocietyconsulting.co.uk](mailto:francesca@civilsocietyconsulting.co.uk)

**Brought to you by:** Civil Society Consulting

**Funded by:** COMMUNITY FUND

**Our partners:** MISSION GROWTH, mendee, ThroughFilm, Time to Spare, between humans

[www.civilsocietyconsulting.co.uk](http://www.civilsocietyconsulting.co.uk)  
[@CivilSocietyCIC](https://twitter.com/CivilSocietyCIC)



## 2. About Civil Society Consulting CIC

[Civil Society Consulting](#) CIC has a mission to promote health, equality and social solidarity by supporting UK civil society.

We provide free support to grassroots organisations led by and for marginalised communities through our flagship grant-funded initiatives, Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability and 32 Steps to Togetherness, which aims to reduce the inequity in the sector and unlock the potential of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations.

We also specialise in carrying out participatory evaluations and research projects that are rigorous and systematic yet ultimately action-oriented and grounded in the real world. Our recent clients include the Greater London Authority, LGBT+ Consortium, Carers Trust, Runnymede Trust, European Network on Religion & Belief, Greater Manchester CVO, Tower Hamlets CVS, and BLG Mind, to name a few.

Through both streams of work, we engage VCSE organisations across the UK, particularly in the North West, North East and East of England, and London (where we are based).

CSC has five directors:

- Mark Ereira-Guyer
- Natasha Ereira-Guyer
- Francesca Godfrey
- Sadia Akram
- Jordan Blyth

Mark, Natasha, and Francesca are currently active directors, while Sadia and Jordan play important roles in leading our EDI and design specialisms. Directors are supported by a highly professional team of sessional workers and freelancers, with expertise in fundraising, community engagement, evaluation, marketing, communications and community development.

# 3. Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability

## The story of our project this year: What the funding has helped us do?

Since 2020, CSC has been empowering and catalysing grassroots organisations through our National Lottery Community-funded capacity-building programme [Steps to Sustainability \(S2S\)](#).

S2S is a tried-and-tested and proven-effective programme, co-designed with communities, and has a long-lasting legacy. We work with participating organisations to co-produce tangible outputs, such as impact reports, funding applications, and developing online platforms. We also partner with industry experts to deliver workshops on requested topics, including income generation, impact modelling and measurement, demonstrating impact through film, community podcasting, and maximising the potential of ChatGPT for your organisation. In our latest iteration of (KCS2S), we place a stronger emphasis on supporting the wellbeing and social solidarity of grassroots community leaders, with a greater focus on group learning. Additionally, within the programme, social action leaders have access to Social Action Leadership Coaching— an innovative year-long programme of individual leadership coaching.

With the support of the National Lottery Community Fund, we have delivered three iterations of S2S over the past four years<sup>1</sup>. Alongside our other streams of work, we have provided one-to-one support to over 200 grassroots organisations across England, supporting them to secure over £2 million in funding collectively.

## Programme highlights

343 organisations have participated in KCS2S through one-to-one support, workshops (i.e. group learning, coffee clubs), the Celebrating Togetherness Event in Peterborough, Social Action Leadership Coaching, or by being part of our Lived Experience Reference Panel.<sup>2</sup>

Key outcomes of KCS2S are showcased in the infographic below. We can provide several examples or case studies of impact and other reports to illustrate the depth and scope of the work undertaken on request.

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<sup>1</sup> BAME Faith Social Action Leaders — Networks of Support & Sustainability COVID-19 (1-year grant, £28k); Steps to Recovery (18-month grant, £79k), topped up by further funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (£100k); and Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability (1-year grant, £90k)

<sup>2</sup> (this number includes organisations/ individuals who participated in more than one of the various programme support offered)

# Kinder Communities: Steps to Sustainability 2023-2024

## Highlights

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organisations/ individual participated in KCS2S

**37** received **one-to-one** support | **106** participated in **workshops** (group learning) | **125** participated in our **coffee clubs**

**50** celebrated **togetherness** in Peterborough | **15** benefitted from **Social Action Leadership Coaching** | **10** steered us as part of our **Lived Experience Reference Panel**.

### Proud2BParents



Manchester-based Proud2BParents received **three-multi year grants** of over **£300,000** from **Henry Smith Charity; Reaching Communities & Postcode Lottery** following our co-produced funding applications.

### Yuvanis Foundation



Yuvanis Foundation, based in Rochdale, secured **£247,000** over **three years from Reaching Communities**, which we co-created to support them in framing a new organisational future and youth focus.

### Become United



We supported Greater Manchester-based Become United with an **impact report** on their **NLHF funded programme 'Kids Nature Club'**; and also reviewed and advised on their employment project, therapy dog case study and business plan template.

### James Ross Hunter Youth Support



South London-based James Ross Youth Hunter secured **£10,000** through **Awards for All** through receiving support with development of a **report** summarising community conversations on **'What can be done to reduce violence in the community?'** commissioned by **Lewisham Council**, as well as **hiring an intern**.

### Business Plans Co-production



**When Women Gather** (Nottingham); **AFRIDAC** (East London) and **Raham Project** (Peterborough) were supported to produce **business plans**.

### Refreshed Websites



We delivered **refreshed websites** for **Living Keys** (Peterborough) and **Roots for Change** (Newcastle-upon-Tyne).

### Communicating Impact Through Film



In partnership with Through Film, **Ubuntu Multicultural Centre CIC** (Middlesbrough), **Saabat Gallery CIC** (South bank Redcar and Cleveland) and **Excel Women's Centre CIC** were supported to **communicate their impact through films**.

### Podcasts



**Awakening Minds CIC** based in Rochdale received support on setting up their podcast. We co-facilitated a **Community Podcasting webinar** with Gift Wrapped Media CIC and hosted **20 social action leaders** who learnt how to start a podcast and everything involved!

### Mother & Child Welfare Organisation



We supported West London-based MACWO to prepare a **proposal to Hammersmith and Fulham's Gangs, Violence and Exploitation Unit** to deliver workshops to prisoners approaching the end of their sentences at HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs; also to **evaluate** their delivery of the **Parent Carer Champion Network in Wandsworth**; and co-produced an **Award for All application** for their 'Tree of Life Project and **City Bridge Foundation application** for their 'Mentoring and Tutoring programme for young people engaged and at risk of criminal exploitation.

### The Lantern Initiative



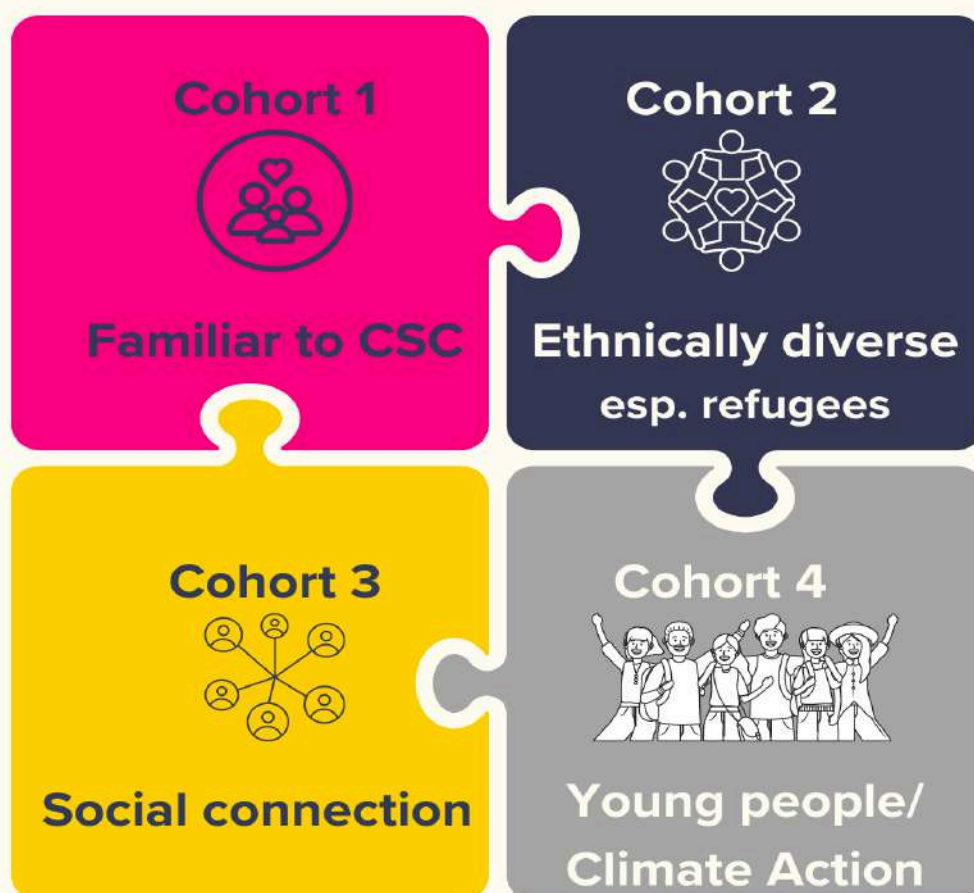
In 2021 through an earlier iteration of Steps to Sustainability— Steps to Recovery — we co-produced a **report** with the Lantern Initiative (Peterborough and Leicester) on **barriers British Muslims face in accessing mental health support services** (which was **recently referenced in an academic paper**). Building on our rapport, through KCS2S, we co-produced a **safeguarding policy** and a **funding application to Henry Smith Charity**.



## Programme outline

Throughout the year, KCS2S participating organisations were split into four cohorts. This enabled each cohort to receive targeted support and allowed the organic formation of meaningful peer support networks. Participants within each cohort addressed the specific needs and goals within their organisations' focus areas through 1-2-1 support. The cohorts were divided based on specialist areas of focus and specific qualities, including:

1. **Familiarity with CSC:** Organisations in this cohort had established connections with CSC and required capacity-building support. To kickstart the programme promptly, we utilised a list of organisations with which CSC had existing relationships. These organisations had already expressed interest in KCS2S.
2. **Ethnically diverse, especially refugees:** These organisations specialised in supporting diverse communities, working with marginalised or immigrant/refugee populations. They required support tailored to these unique needs and challenges.
3. **Social connections:** Organisations in this cohort focused on fostering social connectedness within their communities. They run programmes or initiatives aimed at reducing isolation among community members.
4. **Organisations supporting young people/climate action:** This cohort comprised organisations that help or are involved with young people/ climate action initiatives. They work on youth empowerment, environmental education, and advocacy for climate action.



## 1-2-1 support to grassroots organisations

From 2023-2024, KCS2S provided 1-2-1 hands-on support to 37 organisations nationwide. We successfully co-created 57 tangible outputs with participating organisations, such as impact reports (16%), funding applications (32%), business plans (7%), data collection/ analysis tools (14%) and governance/ organisational advice on how to set up a CIC (23%).

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### Project Evaluations/ Impact Reports



18

### Funding Applications/ Fundraising



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### Business Plans



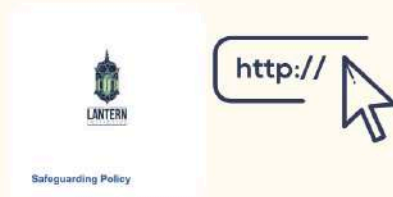
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### Data collection/ analysis tools



5

### Core Infrastructure Development



13

### Governance/ Organisational Advice



## Social Action Leadership Coaching



Social Action Leadership Coaching was an innovative year-long programme of individual leadership coaching. It benefitted 15 grassroots and community leaders who received up to five sessions of professional leadership coaching as part of the KCS2S programme 2023-2024. The programme primarily aimed to support leaders in accessing organisational capacity-building support while also making progress with their own wellbeing, personal, and professional development. This was for the benefit of themselves, their organisations, and their communities. The



programme was delivered by Laura Love-Petschl of Between Humans in partnership with Civil Society Consulting CIC.

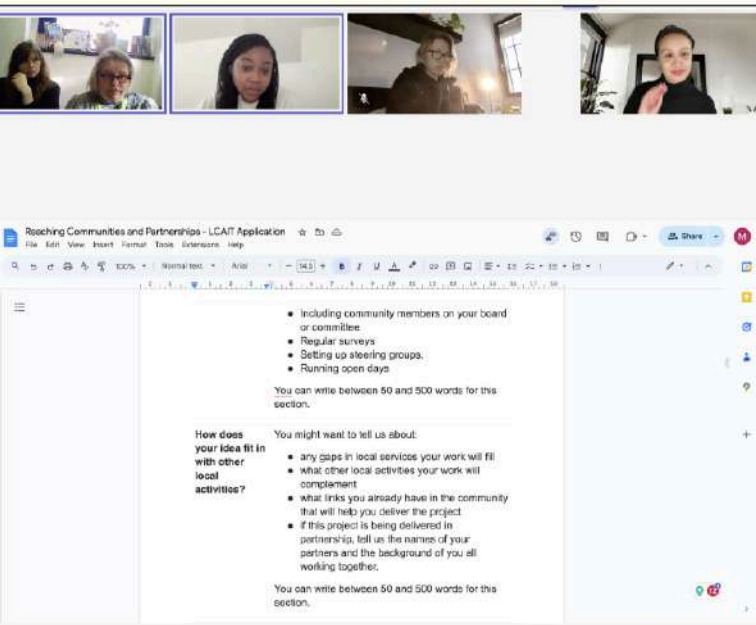
## Coffee Clubs and Workshops

During the KCS2S programme, CSC hosted online coffee clubs. We also facilitated workshops tailored to the priorities and core learning areas of the grassroots organisations participating in the four cohorts to foster peer support networks between them. Some sessions, such as filmmaking to demonstrate impact and community podcasting, were also open to all (i.e. to social sector organisations within the cohorts), broadening the reach of our support efforts. The programme concluded with an in-person Celebrating Togetherness Conference in Peterborough, which fostered community connections and provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements.

- **Coffee clubs:** We ran three coffee clubs with a focus on loneliness, covering themes centred on tackling loneliness, loneliness in men, and youth loneliness. In total, we had 125 attendees across all three sessions.
- **Workshops:** Eight workshops were run as part of KCS2S with 106 attendees. These workshops included:
  - Two webinars in partnership with Will Thompson, founder of [Plinth](#), formally Time to Spare. In these sessions, organisations learnt how to optimise the use and sharing of data using Plinth's free impact software for community organisations.
  - Two webinars and one in-person workshop on Income Generation in partnership with fundraising expert Emmanuel Ayoola ([Mission Growth](#)). Through these sessions, organisations learnt simple and effective ways to raise their first £50-100k in the next 12 months.
  - A webinar in partnership with Judy and Sian from [ThroughFilm](#) CIC gave participants a unique opportunity to learn how to communicate the purpose and impact of their organisation through film.
  - A three-part online learning programme on Impact Modelling and Measurement by Heather Ridout, where participants learnt several models for articulating their social impact journeys and strategies; core components and steps for setting up and implementing impact measurement (inc. why, what, how, who and when); and, how to put theory into practice. Participants also explored real-world examples to build confidence and were provided templates and resources to begin or advance their own impact modelling and measurement.
  - A webinar in partnership with Tim Cook, founder of [AI Confident](#), covered an Introduction to Generative AI. Organisations worked to build confidence to responsibly harness the power of Artificial Intelligence and uplifting its transformative power by working smarter with Generative AI, such as Chat GPT, to maximise their efficiency.
  - A webinar in partnership with [Brad](#), a community podcaster, and Sam, an audio engineer from The Horringer Podcast, covered all aspects of community

podcasting, from pre-production to recording and editing. This left participants with a toolkit of simple but effective techniques for each stage of podcast creation.

- **Celebrating Togetherness Conference in Peterborough:** We assembled grassroots leaders from England and Scotland for our Celebrating Togetherness Conference in Peterborough. The event was a celebration of the work of grassroots organisations across England and marked the success of S2S over the years. The day featured keynote speeches from Coffee Afrik CIC and the Edinburgh Interfaith Association. There were also project exchanges showcasing the work of organisations from Rochdale, Peterborough, and Middlesbrough, as well as workshops on demonstrating your impact through film, community podcasting, and income generation. We had a fantastic turnout with 50 attendees who travelled across the UK to attend, including many former and current KCS2S programme participants. Some of our KCS2S programme beneficiaries showcased their amazing work in the project exchange and connected with one another during the workshops.



*1-2-1 meeting with LCAIT, advising on Reaching Communities funding application*

*Celebrating Togetherness Conference in Peterborough*

## 4. How we've involved people from our community in the work we do

### Feedback from organisations

Steps to Sustainability is driven by lived experience, responding to a sector-wide consensus that programmes are more effective and targeted to their audiences when they are designed by them!

KCS2S has evolved from antecedent Programmes (Steps to Sustainability and Steps to Recovery) into its current form in direct response to organisations' needs and the preferences we've gleaned. A piece of feedback that we have integrated into this Programme has been a greater emphasis on supporting the wellbeing of social solidarity between social action leaders, which we have endeavoured to deliver. During the course of KCS2S, feedback has rolled in organically thanks to the relational way support is delivered. To ensure an opportunity for anonymous feedback, we consistently surveyed onboarded organisations through online questionnaires to collect feedback 'as we go' and modify/pivot our programme delivery accordingly.

Our coffee clubs and workshops have also been useful for collecting feedback. For example, at the coffee clubs, we have registered more than 125 leaders attending, giving their ideas, perspectives, and speaking directly to our panel of guests. At the workshops, we collected post-session feedback surveys to gather views on improvements for future workshops and delivery. From these warm and informal consultations, we have adapted our provision, focusing more on mentoring, peer support, creation of impact reporting measures and organisational Theory of Change/s.

### Lived Experience Reference Panel

We have run all significant proposals and ideas past our loyal and dynamic 'advisory panel' comprising ten sector leaders with lived experience from diverse backgrounds. Our [Lived Experience Reference Panel](#) (LERP) shaped and developed the KCS2S programme alongside our other grant-funded projects. The panel includes faith-inspired and social action leaders who have participated in our earlier support programmes, such as Steps to Recovery.

Throughout this grant funding period for KCS2S 2023- 2024, our LERP agreed to meet with Mark (CSC Founder and Director) three times to discuss and collaborate on how we delivered the Programme. It was important to us that participating in the LERP was an enriching experience rather than onerous. For instance, we scheduled meetings around the LERP's schedule and co-produced our programme based on their advice. We also provided £150 remuneration for expenses. See our LERP board advisors for KCS2S below.



## Needs analysis survey

We conducted a needs analysis online survey aimed at minority-led organisations to establish a consensus on priority support needs (see section 9 for findings). This enabled us to create a 'baseline' delivery support model, anticipating what organisations may need from the support programme. We have continued to liaise and develop the Programme with our infrastructure support agencies and funders (including the Lottery, Community Foundations, Tudor Trust, Lloyds Bank Foundation and many more) in the North-West, Manchester, North-East, London, East Anglia and Peterborough in particular.

## REV. FUJO MALAIKA



Malaika has served as an **Interfaith Minister** for the past 11 years and is actively involved in addressing and mitigating the impact of **systemic inequalities** and **racial discrimination** on members of her Afro-Caribbean community.

## JOHN KABUYE



John Kabuye is an IT and Maths Lecturer and was recently elected **Councillor for Newport Ward, Middlesbrough**. He and his wife Irene run the **Ubuntu Multicultural Centre** in Middlesbrough town centre, which has won a community award at Middlesbrough Council's Civic Awards.

## ZAHRA IBRAHIM



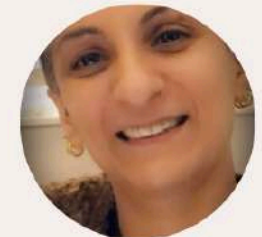
Zahra Ibrahim is the **Director of Excel Women's Association**, a charity which supports women by providing a safe space within Barking and Dagenham. The Excel Women's Centre, where the charity is based, was founded in 1995, when Zahra and a few other local women began monthly meetups as a self-help group.

## CELSE OLIVEIRA



Celso is the chairman of the **East Timorese Association of Peterborough**, a non-profit community organisation designed to support the local Timorese community. The organisation tackles **social isolation** and encourages community integration by participating in many local social and sport activities.

## NASRINE AKHTAR



Nasrine is the Founder of **Awakening Minds**, a grassroots community-led and non-profit organisation providing ad-hoc culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health training, care, and personalised support, specifically for BAME underrepresented communities.

## BRAD YOUNG



Brad Young is a **community podcaster** based in Suffolk. A former teacher, he has been involved in community radio for many years presenting music programmes on a variety of community stations in Suffolk.

## NICKY IGINLA



Nicky is a highly-devoted community leader that has dedicated her life to championing **racial equality, intersectionality**, and the welfare of marginalised communities. She is the founder of the **Caring and Sharing Charity Organisation** situated in Rochdale, addressing the systemic challenges faced by the BAME community within Rochdale and its surrounding areas.

## ALI HUSSNAIN



Ali is the Youth **Strategic Director of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society**. Ali is an advocate of the **empowerment of young people**, and plays a crucial role in mobilising Scottish Shia Muslim youth in community building activities. Ali graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a degree in Astrophysics, and works full-time as a Director of Technology and Product.

## KATHARINA LÜTZENKIRCHEN



Katharina is an Undergraduate **Theology** Student at the University of Edinburgh. The desire to apply her studies in practice has led her to volunteer with organisations like the Edinburgh Interfaith Association, the **Cities Faith and Community Forum**, and the Council of Christians and Jews.

## MEG HUBER



Meg is a postgraduate student at the University of Edinburgh studying **Religious Studies**. Her particular interest lies in **multi-faith dialogue's role** in peacebuilding and diplomacy. Before moving to Edinburgh, she did her undergraduate work in Virginia, USA, receiving degrees in business, philosophy, and theatre.

## 5. How have our beneficiaries changed the way we work?

The first iteration of 'Steps to Sustainability' focused on advice and skills training. After receiving positive feedback from organisations, we realised that hands-on, active support was having the most transformative effect. The most significant change we made to 'Steps to Recovery' was to increase the time spent with each organisation to achieve a greater depth of impact.

In our KCS2S programme, we implemented feedback from Steps to Recovery that organisations built fruitful and supportive connections with the other organisations going through the programme at the same time, especially when they were doing similar work and/or were in the same geography. Additionally, we acted on feedback that, in addition to practical support, social action leaders also expressed a need for more support in looking after their wellbeing and developing peer support networks. This highlighted that, due to the current economic and political situation, carrying out social action work has become more challenging than ever.

In this iteration of S2S, we responded to the feedback in a number of ways:

We delivered **one-to-one support in cohorts** of 8-10, with thematic and/or place-based focuses, along with regular workshops. We attempted to have bi-weekly 'cohort catch-ups' to foster deeper connections among participants. However, we could not sustain this effort due to limited organisational capacity. To address this barrier, we observed that workshops and coffee clubs held alongside one-to-one support provided organic opportunities for groups and cohorts to interact and build connections. This then became our primary vehicle for facilitating peer support networks.

The inclusion of **Social Action Leadership Coaching** was a first for S2S. It was added to the programme in response to social action leaders' requests for support for their wellbeing and sustainability as leaders.

**Our Celebrating Togetherness Conference** in Peterborough celebrated the achievements of S2S over the years, bringing together 50 social action leaders — old and new friends of CSC — from London, Rochdale, and Middlesbrough. The event facilitated in-person connections (although many people had met online before!) through networking, workshops and project exchanges. Meaningful connections blossomed, and we expect to see robust partnerships that are likely to be sustained.

We would like to propose a new iteration of S2S, which we do not have a formal name for at the moment (we are affectionately calling it Steps to Sustainability 4.0). This iteration will be tailored specifically to other capacity-building needs of Community Interest Companies (CIC). We will maintain an emphasis on supporting the wellbeing of social action leaders and the development of peer support networks between them (for further elaboration, see section 10).



## 6. How are we making the most of the strengths of our community

KCS2S is a strength-based programme through and through. It is premised on the idea that grassroots organisations are ‘strength-based’ by definition. As CSC described in their [2023 blog](#), organisations led and for the communities they serve are ‘agile, intrinsically motivated, trusted and knowledgeable.’ This means they are able to meet the needs of communities that have nuanced experiences and are underserved by mainstream services.

Here are some ways we have ensured KCS2S is ‘strengths-based’ and makes the most of the strengths of our community:

**Working co-productively with a ‘learning by doing’ approach** allows participating organisations to realise all the skills they already possess. The one-to-one relational coaching style we use to support organisations is inherently strength-based because it is based on the principle that ‘you had the answer inside you all along’. With the support being led by organisations, they develop processes that ‘go with the grain’ of their ways of doing things, as opposed to any kind of ‘top-down’ approach.

**The Lived Experience Panel (LERP)** is another example of KCS2S making the most of the strengths of the community. As mentioned above, the LERP — comprised of social action leaders who have previously passed through the Steps to Sustainability programme — plays an integral role in shaping the delivery and design of the Programme, including future iterations. We draw on their lived and learned experience of running community organisations to ensure that our Programme is relevant, inclusive, and fit for purpose.

**Social Action Leadership Coaching**, a new addition to this iteration of Steps to Sustainability, takes a strengths-based approach to capacity-building grassroots organisations. It was developed with the understanding that social action leaders, in the words of Laura Love-Petschl (Between Humans), who delivered the coaching, are naturally doers who are action- and solution-orientated. Coaching provides a space well-suited to exploring ideas, defining outcomes and planning ways forward.’ The coaching, much like the learning-by-doing approach that underpins the one-to-one support, builds on the strengths and dynamism that social action leaders already possess.

## 7. The differences we're making: big and small

### How our project helped people and our community, and how we know it's helped

Marginalised communities stand the most to gain from civil society, especially since public services often underserve them. However, organisations led by individuals from these communities have the odds stacked against them in a wide range of ways. Investing in these organisations is a way of investing in the underserved communities they represent. We have witnessed the impact of their work firsthand during in-person visits to their projects. Below, we share some data (qualitative and quantitative) to demonstrate the impact that some of our KCS2S participant groups have shared about our Programme:

#### Workshops

As part of the Programme, the KCS2S delivery team organised online webinars on relevant topics, including:

- **'Optimising how we use and share data'** with Will Thompson (Plinth);
- **'Income generation with Emmanuel'** with Ayoola (Mission Growth);
- **'How to demonstrate your impact through film'** with Judy Kulpa and Sian Davison (ThroughFilm CIC);
- **'Impact Modelling and Measurement'** with Heather Ridout;
- **'Working smarter with Generative AI'** with Tim Cook (AI Confident)
- **'Community Podcasting'** with Brad Young and Sam Brilliant (Gift Wrapped Media CIC).

Please see the feedback below from participating organisations on the Impact Modelling and Measurement and Income Generation workshops. The results indicate that participants were highly satisfied with the course content and were motivated to apply their learnings in real-life contexts.

*Please note that scores for the impact Modelling and Measurement and Income Generation are averaged across three sessions.*

#### Peer support network events

Our Coffee Clubs and networking events have been consistently well attended, and positive feedback has been received. Below are some comments reflecting on Our Celebrating Together Conference in Peterborough:

*"My colleagues were wondering why I was taking time out to go to a conference in Peterborough, of all places. Boy, am I glad I went. It was **such a brilliant event**"*

*from start to finish, with **so many inspiring speakers** and great to hear about so many wonderful projects. **Unsung heroes, I'd say!**"*

- Wallee McDonell, Celebrate Life CIC

*"Thanks so much for inviting me to the event yesterday. It was such a joyful day and a really effective showcase of the work of so **many inspiring role models** working for and with their communities."*

- Lisa Wells, National Lottery Community Fund Funding Officer

*"Thank you for a wonderful day at Peterborough. It was undoubtedly an **incredibly well-organised, lively, and extremely beneficial networking event**. First of many, I hope."*

- Nasrine Akhtar, Founder of Awakening Minds

*"Thanks for your generosity in letting me attend the event last week - it was really enjoyable and so great to see those Peterborough groups thriving as well as gaining inspiration from elsewhere (**Rochdale rocks!!**)."*

- Christina Alexander, Former CEO of Peterborough CVS

*"It was truly a **productive, heartwarming, and eye-opening experience**. The insights shared by the speakers and fellow attendees **left a lasting impact on me**. Their stories, passion, and dedication have **motivated me to strive for excellence** in my work and personal life. I am grateful for the opportunity to **connect with like-minded people** who are making a difference in their respective communities."*

- Kamrul Islam, Bangladeshi Association and Community Project (BACP)

*"Thank you for having us at your very **inspirational and uplifting event**. It was really lovely to see the important work that is going on and the impact it's having on the communities."*

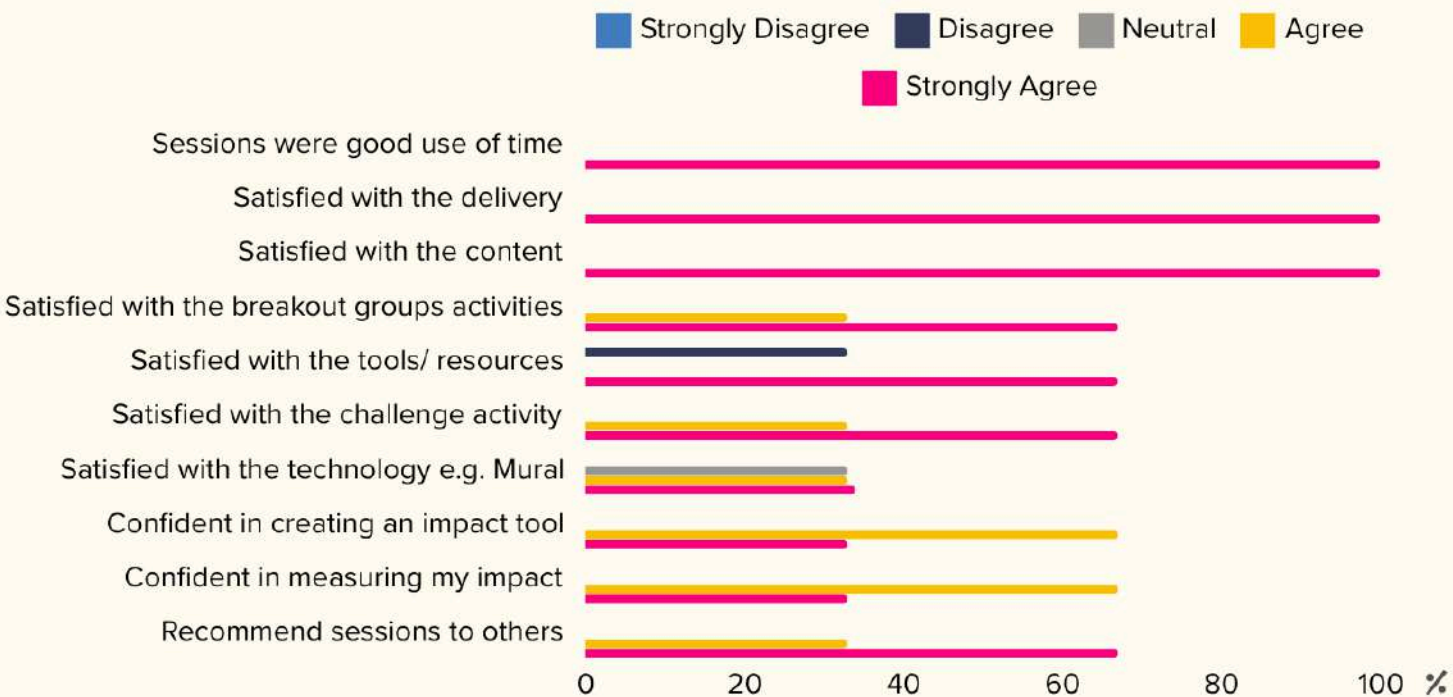
- City College Peterborough

*"Thank you for inviting me to your event. It was **so special and authentic**. Also, a huge thank you for creating the space for me upstairs to hold my meeting. I really felt looked after and safe."*

- Abdirahim Hassan, Coffee Afrik CIC



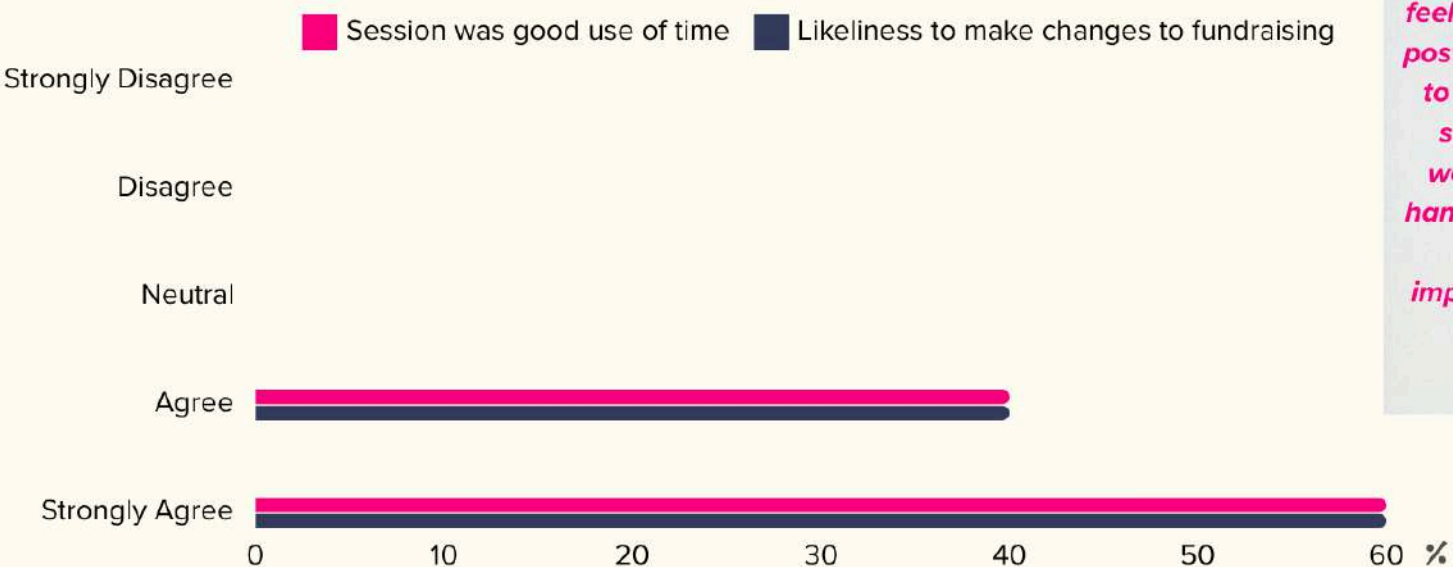
## Impact Modelling & Measurement



*“Relevance and use of Theory of Change. I found it beneficial that the workshops were very interactive. Very well organised and delivered.”*  
Yuvanis Foundation

*“Good delivery, excellent terminology explanations [and] excellent content.”*  
Burnside Centre

## Income Generation



*“I felt that LinkedIn was a way to create relationships and develop future opportunities, but the session cemented this feeling and gave me the opportunity to understand what I am posting about the organisation and how to develop my profile to ensure he captures more traffic and engagement. I have seen an increase in people connecting with me since the workshop. Gold nuggets and useful tips. I have shared the handouts with colleagues to ensure they are maximising their opportunities for engagement too. This is extremely important for grassroots organisations like us, as we need to do things effectively with our time”*  
Proud2bparents

*“The facilitator was very knowledgeable and gave good tips about fundraising.”*  
AFRIDAC

## Social Action Leadership Coaching Feedback

Social Action Leadership Coaching, delivered by Laura Love-Petschl of Between Humans, was an innovative year-long programme of individual leadership coaching for 15 grassroots and community leaders in London, the East, and North of England.

The primary aims of the Programme are to support leaders accessing organisational capacity-building support while also making progress with their own wellbeing, personal and professional development for the benefit of themselves, their organisations, and their communities.



**Francesca**, Director of Civil Society

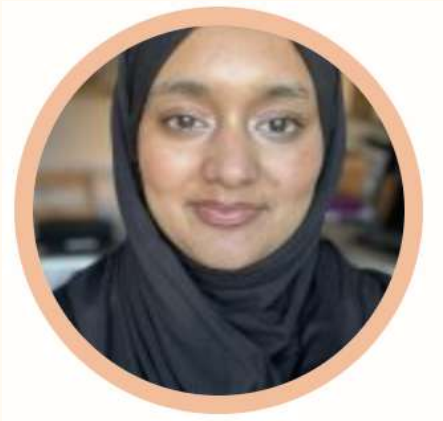
Consulting CIC, participated in our social action leadership coaching as a way to quality-test this new element of the KCS2S programme firsthand.

Before working with Laura, Francesca reflects, *“I struggled with work-life balance, prioritising my needs and personal development, assertiveness, and self-confidence as a director. This was having an effect on my motivation and ability to perform and lead the organisation.”*

The impact of working with Laura was profound. Francesca noted: *“Working with Laura has supported me to **shift my mindset to more positive and constructive thinking patterns**. I now have a road map to ensure my involvement in the organisation is more sustainable and serves me better as an individual. This has helped me to be **more creative, assertive, and bring energy to the organisation.**”*

Reflecting on the sessions, Francesca highlights the effectiveness of *“drilling down into a single issue each session helped me to look at **problems that affect me day-to-day more objectively and enabled me to develop solutions from that perspective.**”*

The coaching experience not only empowered Francesca to overcome personal and professional hurdles but also equipped her with the tools and mindset needed to lead her organisation: *“**Thank you so much, Laura!**”*



**Faiza**, the founder of Raham Project, a registered CIC supporting ethnic minority families during pregnancy, birth, and early parenting, received coaching from Laura to navigate the challenges she faced.

Before working with Laura, Faiza shares: *“I have been feeling overwhelmed and out of my depth lately. However, after speaking to Laura, my mind feels more at ease, especially during the focused hour she provides. I have also*

*recognised some deep emotional barriers that I have been facing and will seek additional support to improve my emotional well-being.”*

The impact of working with Laura highlighted the positive changes in Faiza’s mindset and approach to responsibilities: *“I am becoming increasingly self-assured and less anxious when handling specific tasks.”*

Reflecting on the sessions, Faiza found the coaching most useful in helping her recognise the importance of self-care and integrating this as a normal, regular practice: *“Feeling like I’m always available to listen to others has left me with an empty cup. This has drained me emotionally. But the sessions with Laura have helped me give back to myself. It’s also highlighted that this is not something that is needed for 6 sessions. It needs to be integrated into my work in a longer-term sort of way.”*

Moreover, Faiza advocates for the incorporation of similar support mechanisms for individuals leading charity groups: *“I feel this should be an integral part of support for people in positions of leading a charity group.”* Additionally, she mentions exploring Rapid Transformational Therapy (RTT) as a potential solution to address blocks that individuals may face in running a business, recommending further investigation into this approach: *“I also have been reading about RTT as part of some of the blocks that people may face in running a business that may be worth you looking into.”*



## Feedback on 1-2-1 support to grassroots organisations

For KCS2S 1-2-1 support, we focused on addressing the most immediate needs of participating grassroots organisations, producing up to three tangible outputs that would lay the foundation to support their sustainability.

### James Ross Hunter Youth Support

Founded in 2014, James Ross Hunter Youth Support (JRHYS) works in South London, delivering workshops and events for young people and parents. JRHYS raises awareness of knife crime, gangs and exploitation and promotes positive social values and wellbeing.

Through KCS2S, JRHYS received support through funding applications, governance, data analysis, workshops and coffee clubs, social action leadership coaching, and the development of a report on ‘What can be done to reduce violence in the community?’ commissioned by the Lewisham council. Additionally, they received support for hiring an intern.

When asked in what ways KCS2S helped JRHYS most, founder Collet shared that: ***“the most useful part was the information about charity set-up and criteria associated with community groups, along with the implementation of reports that demonstrated the importance of***

***understanding our organisation’s strengths and priorities.”*** KCS2S successfully supported JRHYS with a friendly reception. Collet states: ***“I feel that my organisation has had excellent support”,*** and working with CSC ***“felt like working with a family with similar objectives.”*** Through the hands-on, one-to-one support, KCS2S enabled JRHYS to benefit from ***“a framework [that] was created, and we developed a bond with the tools of awareness associated with community building trust one-to-one.”*** JRHYS co-produced an Awards for All application, which was successful, and they secured £10,000 for one year to continue the important work they do.



## When Women Gather CIC

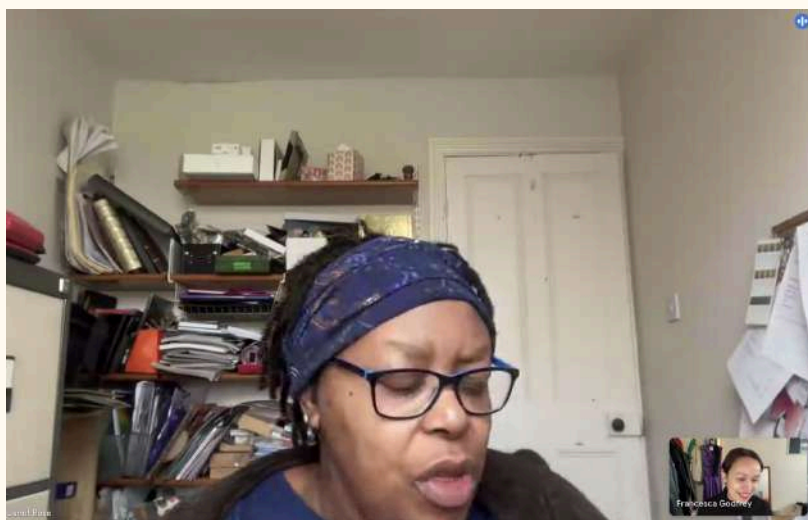
Nottingham-based When Women Gather supports women in their communities holistically through the provision of engaging and participatory arts and wellbeing-focused workshops and events.

Through KCS2S, When Women Gather received support to enhance their operations and impact, including facilitated brainstorming sessions to initiate a business plan, co-produced workshops feedback form for Arts Council funded project 'Voice of Identity 2', co-produced QR code flyer for feedback, workshops and coffee clubs, and social action leadership coaching.

Reflecting on the support received, the team at When Women Gather expressed their appreciation: *“The support we received with gathering evaluation via Google Docs made data collection much easier. Staff were very helpful with any questions we had. Writing a business plan with Francesca made this process so easy. To be honest, I was dreading doing it, but with support, it was a very positive experience, and this has really helped with our focus for future plans. The support has been invaluable. Also, having leadership coaching with Laura was much needed. **You don’t realise how much you are doing, and having that space is essential for continued wellbeing.**”*

When asked about the most useful aspect of the support, Janet emphasised that it has *“**given us focus, direction, do what we are good at and improve our methods. Having someone to talk to bounce ideas, thoughts.**”*

KCS2S enabled Janet to focus on long-term outcomes for her organisation: *“When you are delivering, it’s important to make time for future planning over the next few years. Francesca has really supported this. Making the time to do it as I don’t think we would have done it without Francesca. I feel my organisation has had excellent support. A joy to work with, always positive, always encouraging, never felt silly or not able to ask any questions”.*



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## Yuvanis Foundation

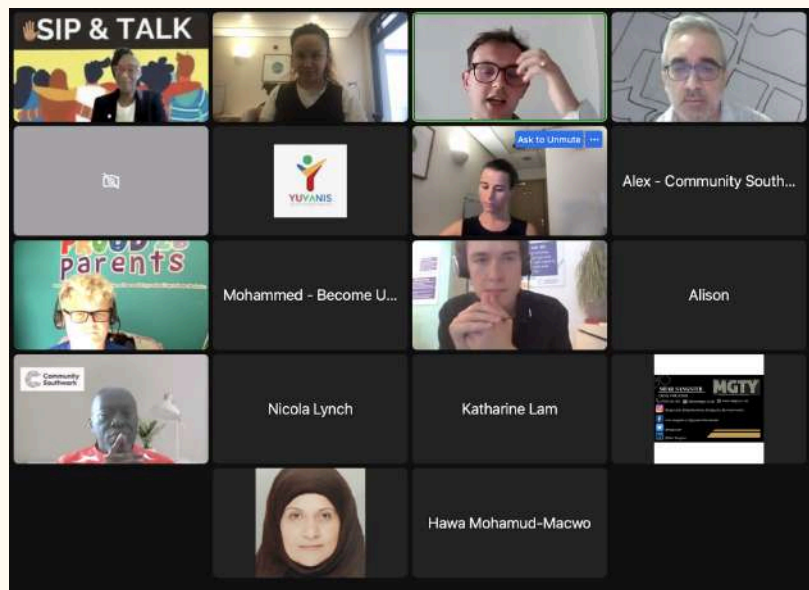
Yuvanis Foundation, based in Oldham, works to develop people to be resourceful, resilient and responsible for their community through engaging and empowering activities. Their aim is to tackle social exclusion and provide opportunities for participation in social, cultural, educational, recreational, and fun activities within a safe and secure environment.

Through KCS2S, Youvanis Foundation received social action leadership coaching, participated in workshops and coffee clubs, and co-produced a successful three-year Reaching Communities funding bid.

When asked about the most useful aspect of KCS2S, Zakir reflected on the support and the profound impact this has had on their organisation: *“We received support to identify our weaknesses, two of which were impact reporting and core cost funding. Mark was extremely supportive in guiding us through the application for core cost funding. I was also given the opportunity to join the impact reporting workshops, which were extremely insightful and beneficial for our organisation. I am also in receipt of 1-2-1 leadership coaching, which I am finding very useful for my own development, resulting in the growth and development of our organisation.”*

The support from our team, especially Mark, empowered Zakir:

*“I feel my organisation has had excellent support. It was absolutely empowering to have CSC take a very personal approach to supporting us. It certainly wasn't just tick-box exercises they have us go through, as can often be the case with many programmes. We felt CSC cared enough about our organisation to treat us as an individual organisation. Mark, in particular, took time to understand our organisation thoroughly and guide us through the next steps to sustainability.”*



The collaborative support provided through KCS2S resulted in the Yuvan Foundation securing £247,000 in three years of funding from Reaching Communities.

## Burnside Centre

Since its founding in 1969, Middleton-based Burnside Centre has been dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the residents of Langley Estate and the wider Middleton area. Their mission is to serve everyone in the community who needs support, fostering a collaborative environment that unites residents with local authorities, voluntary organisations, and other groups in a collective effort to advance education and provide facilities for social welfare.

Through KCS2S, Burnside received support by co-producing a 2-year outcomes report, as well as participating in workshops and coffee clubs. Burnside Centre received support that

served as a crucial source of evidence for their grassroots community work. This support facilitated their ability to showcase their impact and achievements to stakeholders and funders.

As Manager Kerry shares: *“We had an Outcomes report developed and written for us, which was a great source of future evidence. This document will be very useful for us moving forward in evidencing our grassroots community work. I think it helped that a lot of the structure was provided for. With us having such a small staffing team, this type of work is often put aside due to lack of capacity. So having your support in the development of the document provided guidance. We would not have been able to produce this document without your support. This template can now be future development and worked into our long-term sustainability plans, which is a valuable resource to us”.*



Reflecting on the support received, Burnside Centre expressed their appreciation: *“I feel my organisation has had excellent support. Really supportive and engaging - thank you to everyone involved”.*

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Other organisations supported through 1-2-1 support include:

**Cee Bee Gold Foundation** received support to make two grant applications (Cost of Living Crisis and the Henry Smith Foundation). These applications aimed to fund their food bank provision and other social solidarity and networking activities. Meetings were held with funders (including the local Lottery officer), and tailored guidance was provided to help with budgeting and better evidencing their local needs. As an organisation run and led by people of Black African heritage, the charity has needed guidance on how best to present its case and ensure that funders understand the work it undertakes. Unfortunately, both grant applications were declined. The team is now working with the charity manager to refocus a new Reaching Communities application (which had been declined prior to CSC involvement) and to evidence social impact better.

**Saabat Gallery CIC** received support in the submission of a successful Cost of Living Crisis, which underpinned their food poverty reduction work and helped scope a new three-year community support activity and development plan. The team is currently assisting them with budgeting and evidence for a Reaching Communities grant. Further advice and guidance has been provided to better present their community arts and professional artist programme to



the Arts Council. An exemplar short video has been produced to better evidence their impact and the necessity of their work in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in England.

**Deaf Rhinos**, a community-based football group for deaf people of South Asian heritage, Received support in submitting their first Awards for All grant application.

**Roots for Change**, a small refugee charity based in the North-east, received support in developing their fundraising capacity, and the team have helped them to create their first organisational website

**Moving Forward** is a service users group based in Camden for people recovering from addictions. The team guided them in establishing themselves as a social enterprise and developing their confidence, leadership, and organisational skills.

**Mindfulness Network for People of Colour** is a community interest company working with therapists and psychotherapists nationally to ensure access to support from people of colour. They received guidance on strengthening their organisation and delivery, including fundraising support. One of their board members is now on the project's Lived Experience reference panel.

**Gentlemen's Growth** is a new grassroots organisation seeking to address the stigma of mental health faced by men from ethnically diverse communities, especially Black men. As a new enterprise, the team helped shape their organisational growth and development. This included establishing them as a social enterprise and developing the leadership capacity and skills of key personnel.

Community-based podcasters in Suffolk were supported in setting up a new community interest company (**Gift Wrapped Media CIC**) and guided in their fundraising and operational model. They also contributed extensively to delivering support to other organisations, guiding them on their own community podcasting possibilities.

**Ubuntu MultiCultural Centre CIC, Awakening Minds CIC, Excel Women's Centre and East Timorese Association Peterborough** have all received one-to-one sessions to help them develop their business planning, income generation and evaluation.

**Making It Mindful** supports children and families in Waltham Forest and Essex through a variety of weekly classes, workshops, and children's Holiday Clubs. Making It Mindful received support with an Awards for All application and successfully secured £20,000. This was Making It Mindful first experience in securing this type of grant.

**Global Digital Equity (GDE) CIC** works to close the digital divide and assist overlooked communities throughout the UK in enhancing their quality of life through digital and financial literacy training. GDE received support with an Awards for All application and successfully secured £20,000 to deliver their project: Digital and Financial Literacy - Training for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Cardiff.

## 8. What we've learnt

### What's gone well

#### 1-to-1 support to grassroots organisations

It is evident from the section above that we've made some fantastic headway with our one-to-one support and guidance. We've supported multiple organisations in securing funding and created lasting impact legacies, whether that's upskilling a social action leader or co-producing an output that acts as a catalyst for increased capacity. The success of our one-to-one support hinges on open, honest communication on both sides regarding capacity, working styles, and areas for improvement in co-production. Additionally, as our experience with all Steps to Sustainability iterations, 'working with the willing' tends to deliver the best results. For instance, the best outcomes were achieved when organisations/ social action leaders actively prioritised participation and contribution despite their very busy (and often stressful) schedules.

#### Workshops

We consistently received positive feedback for workshops delivered through the programme (see page 16). The workshops were conducted online to allow grassroots organisations from across England to attend. They were approximately an hour long, apart from the Impact Modelling and Measurement, which spanned three separate workshops... Feedback attributed the success of these workshops to the carefully curated lineup of facilitators, who were experts in their respective fields. Participants appreciated the variety of workshops on offer, including more traditional capacity-building areas, income generation and impact measurement, as well as some innovative skills areas such as AI and podcasting. The resources provided by facilitators to take home, such as templates and 'cheat sheets', were also highly valued by participants.

#### The cohort structure

By dividing participating organisations into four cohorts, we were able to provide more tailored support and maximise impact across diverse communities and causes. The cohort structure also facilitated the development of peer support networks as organisations within a specific cohort could attend workshops together, fostering organic relationships and collaboration.

#### Peer support networks

A key objective of KCS2S was to facilitate the development of peer support networks for social action leaders, enabling them to seek advice and support from others and fostering a sense of solidarity. Coffee clubs, workshops, and our in-person conference in Peterborough were all designed with this goal in mind, and based on the feedback we received, they were successful in achieving it... Whilst our initial plan to facilitate bi-weekly catch-ups was not sustainable due to organisational capacity, we found that our regular workshops and coffee clubs were enough to create the conditions for relationships and connections to blossom

within and between cohorts. Many participants who had interacted online for some time finally got a chance to meet each other in person at our Celebrating Togetherness Conference in Peterborough!

## Reflections from Social Action Leadership Coaching

*Perspectives were provided by Laura Love-Petschl, Between Humans, who delivered the coaching.*

**Coaching was an effective social action leadership development approach.** Furthermore, coaching stretched the leaders by challenging them to apply their thinking to themselves and their own development. It supported them to recognise the value of self-development and taking care of their own wellbeing for effective and sustainable social leadership. In this way, coaching provided an important opportunity to develop their self-awareness and self-efficacy skills, which will hopefully continue to serve leaders beyond the bounds of the programme. This is evidenced in the feedback provided by leaders.

**Breadth of leadership development.** Leaders were supported to identify, explore and move forward on a wide range of issues and goals of personal importance to them (rather than being taken through a predetermined programme of leadership development content). As such, the scope of topics covered was broader, more nuanced, and more responsive to leaders' individual needs and situations than a more directive approach. For example, the topic of procrastination for one leader meant identifying and working through underlying fears of failure/disappointment, while for another leader, it involved recognising their neuro/cognitive needs and reframing procrastination as necessary processing time.

**Expanding access to professional leadership coaching.** As part of the larger Kinder Communities project, delivered online and without a financial barrier, the programme supported a diverse group of leaders drawn from different social action organisations and projects across various locations in England (including London, Peterborough, Greater Manchester and Nottingham). The programme reached leaders with no prior experience with coaching and may not have had the opportunity otherwise (due to lack of awareness, the cost of coaching and the very limited number of professional coaches working in the community sector), providing time and space for growth and learning. The structure of having five coaching sessions allowed leaders (who were generally unfamiliar with coaching) to develop their understanding of coaching and learn how to make the most of each session. It also allowed us (coach and leader) to notice changes that were happening over time or identify patterns of thought/behaviour

Aligning with Laura's perspectives, CSC witnessed the positive impacts of leadership coaching on KCS2S participants, particularly on participants' wellbeing and motivation. CSC intends to integrate leadership coaching as a regular component of the S2S format in the future. Currently, we are exploring the potential of group coaching through our [32 Steps to Togetherness project](#).

## What's not gone well or has been challenging

### Reaching our original target of providing 1-to-1 support to 70 organisations

In our original proposal to the National Lottery Community Fund, we proposed to deliver one-to-one support to 70 organisations, helping them produce up to three tangible outcomes. However, as stated earlier in this evaluation, we managed to achieve this with 37 organisations during the funding period.

It's clear that our initial target of 70 organisations was highly ambitious, and the team was not able to deliver tangible outcomes within the given time frame and with limited resources available. One significant factor was that some participating organisations were 'starting from scratch', so to speak, and had limited knowledge about developing as an organisation, requiring us to cover basics (i.e. you need three directors to apply for funding as a CIC) and spend time laying the foundations, which slowed down progress towards tangible outcomes... Additionally, organisations needed more in-depth support to progress from the programme than initially anticipated, including advice, motivation, and coaching, in addition to co-producing tangible outcomes.

To effectively provide meaningful one-to-one support to 70 organisations, we recognise the need for increased funding and a longer grant period.

### Drawing boundaries with support

It's evident that grassroots organisations are in dire need of capacity-building support, and their local CVSes are underserving many. Participating organisations have often come to us soon after finishing our agreed work plan with requests for additional support, which has been difficult to turn down. While we have been able to support some organisations with 'pro-bono' support, for the most part, we've had no choice but to turn several down due to our limited capacity. To mitigate this challenge, we have prioritised setting clear boundaries and limitations based on our limited funding and resources, providing realistic work plans, and, of course, not overpromising.

### Bi-weekly meetings

In our original plan proposal, we planned to facilitate bi-weekly catch-ups for cohorts to catalyse the development of peer support networks. The bi-weekly catch-ups were designed to provide a platform for participants to share challenges they were experiencing and celebrate successes. However, it became clear that participants did not have the capacity to take part in these catch-ups alongside their other commitments in KCS2S, such as participating in 1-to-1 support and workshops. Despite this, we observed that connections and peer support networks were developing organically from workshops and coffee shops. As a result, we decided to use these opportunities as the main spaces for networking and building



connections. We found these to be more realistic and viable for participants, allowing them to engage meaningfully without overwhelming their schedules.

## Reflections from Social Action Leadership Coaching

*Laura Love-Petschl, Between Humans, who delivered the coaching, provides her perspectives on the challenges of delivering leadership coaching and offers up some solutions for future iterations.*

**Barriers to attendance/engagement experienced by some of the leaders.** Not all leaders completed their five sessions, and there were some issues with repeat rescheduling and last-minute cancellations. Barriers to attending/engaging included long-term mental and physical health problems, which meant that leaders were too unwell to attend sessions, and/or severe financial/housing/work difficulties/caring responsibilities needing to take precedence. These barriers are particularly relevant to consider in the context of coaching grassroots leaders since they can be caused or exacerbated by structural inequalities and, therefore, experienced more acutely by people from marginalised communities.

**Leaders unfamiliar with coaching.** Leaders who were less familiar with coaching may have led to some not prioritising their coaching sessions in their busy schedules because coaching requires more active participation from them compared with receiving advice. However, the benefits are felt more over time as insights are accrued and shifts start to happen. We discovered that it is crucial to emphasise the value and uniqueness of this opportunity (and the limited number of places) to leaders from the outset.

**Setting boundaries around commitment.** An ongoing challenge for a programme rooted in making leadership coaching more accessible and available was balancing setting boundaries around commitment and engagement (for example, when to withdraw the coaching offer when a leader was not attending sessions/not responding to requests to book their sessions) with being flexible, understanding, and responsive to sometimes complex needs and barriers.

## What's been unexpected or interesting

From our experience running KCS2S, we've observed that CICs are often not reaching their potential/making the most out of it because of inexperience/lack of awareness of what makes a strong, robust CIC. This often leads to barriers in accessing funding.

CICs 'not reaching their potential' manifests in several ways:

- **Heavy reliance on grant income** reduces opportunities to generate trade income, which is arguably more sustainable.
- **Being 'One woman (-or man) show'** compromises robust governance and misses out on the opportunity for diverse perspectives/experiences shaping the organisation.

- **Not authentically reaching into their communities** impaired their ability to demonstrate how they are community-led.

The above has proved to have an adverse impact on CICs being successful in Reaching Communities funding as many — at present — are not able to demonstrate diverse income streams and strong governance structures.

## **What have we learned that would be useful to others**

Although this might not be a surprise, what grassroots organisations really want is support on income generation; 32% of KCS2S participants specifically requested and received support on topics related to income generation (i.e. support writing funding bids). This demand was reaffirmed in a needs assessment we conducted towards the end of the Programme. Another popular area of support was advice to set up CICs, and providing strategic advice around this (23% of KCS2S participants received this support).

Capacity-building support for grassroots organisations should focus on income generation, including bid writing, diversifying income streams, and developing infrastructure and resources that make an organisation more ‘fundable’, as well as focusing on how to support smaller groups and CICs best.

## 9. Evidence this work is needed

*“I hope your services [KCS2S] continue to gain support as what you all are doing is not only great but much needed!”*

- Zakir Ahmad, Yuvanis Foundation

KCS2S supports grassroots organisations led by and for marginalised communities. We know first-hand the challenges these organisations face, including:

- Lack of resources and funding;
- Decreased support from power-wielding entities (corporations and government);
- Burnout and high staff and volunteer turnover;
- Challenges building strong networks and partnerships; and
- Lack of public support and understanding;

Through KCS2S, we have a model to successfully collaborate with grassroots organisations to support them in overcoming these challenges, and we would like to continue supporting grassroots organisations to do so. In order to make a case for further funding to continue our work capacity-building organisations and collect data to enable us to deliver targeted support, we called upon our KCS2S community to gauge the need for further support and what areas they need further support with:

**What further support do you now need to be even more successful as a social action leader in your community?**

A word cloud on a light blue background. The words are arranged in a roughly triangular shape, with 'business planning' at the top, 'funding' in the middle, and 'establishing-infrastructure' at the bottom. The words are in various colors: orange, pink, purple, blue, and teal. The size of the words varies, with 'business planning' and 'funding' being the largest.

business planning  
funding  
networking  
collaboration  
resources  
sustainability  
establishing-infrastructure  
capacity building

webinars in the future?



Partnerships and Networking

*"Partnerships and collaborative networking"*

*"Corporate engagement, corporate talks, and how to develop your profile"*

*"Tips for enabling meaningful collaboration between bigger and smaller organisations"*



Funding:

*"Tender bid writing"*

*"More about funding and practical steps to become better at funding bids"*



Training and Development

*"Leadership training"*

*"Professional counselling/director guidance"*

*"Wellbeing and work-life balance"*

*"Lived experience working, and looking after yourself"*

*"Project management, LEAN, automation, induction, and onboarding"*



Feedback and Evaluation

*"Efficient feedback and evaluation tools and methods"*

*"More on collection methodologies, capturing soft outcomes, outcomes, outputs, inputs"*

*"Theory of change simplified - why it's needed"*

*"Writing reports, case studies"*



Social Media and Technology:

*"Getting the most out of LinkedIn"*

*"How best to utilise social media and make the most out of your time on social platforms/reach your target audience/defining your brand"*

*"Exploring ChatGPT to generate reports and speed up the creation of social media posts and reports, and possibly funding applications"*

Organisations highlighted particular issues they are struggling with, including

- **The impact of the cost of living crisis:**
  - Higher bills such as *"increase in gas and electric bills"* and *"operational costs have shot up"* resulting from the cost of living crisis are causing budgetary issues for organisations.
  - The impact of this is not only felt by organisations but also by service beneficiaries. For example, one organisation shared: *"It's also causing issues for our learners, such as financial problems travelling to and from college; financial problems with purchasing materials for the course and financial problems paying for course fees, when applicable"*.
  - Additionally, *"we are seeing participants who are struggling with debt and food shortage"*, and *"we have provided free support to people up till now and know of mothers with newborn babies who have had trouble being able to pay for their food shop"*.
  - The cost of living crisis is bringing an increased demand for these essential services, including *"increased demand, higher costs of delivering activities, and costs of sessional staff"*, which is *"increasing the risk of limiting services and service windows"*.
- **Small organisations have very limited reserves for survival:**
  - Responses show that:
    - 25% of organisations simply do not have reserves;
    - 25% have less than three months reserves;
    - 25% have between 3-6 months reserves; and
    - Only 13% have reserves between 6-12 months and 12+ months.



- **Funding is the biggest problem crippling organisations from doing more:**
  - Every organisation's response was related to funding;
  - Organisations want to offer more support but are unable to due to a lack of core funding;
  - A lack of core funding prevents organisations from developing sustainable long-term strategies - a 'catch-22'.
  - Furthermore, competition for available funding is difficult to obtain due to recognition from large funders: *"The biggest challenges we face currently are funding. The Arts Council is unable to recognise what we offer here at the gallery as well as other funders. We need a solid team to do these grants."*
  - Grassroots organisations simply cannot increase their capacity or plan strategically in the longer term. This is even more concerning when organisations voiced the funding they need in the next 12 months (75% need between £50,000- £150,000, and 38% need between £10,000- £50,000).

[Research](#) shows that grassroots organisations, particularly those led by and for marginalised communities, contend with multifaceted constraints that deny them opportunities to develop personally, professionally, and organisationally, including:

- Lacking access to the same level of funding and resources as larger, more established organisations;
- Having fewer connections and finding it challenging to build strategic alliances and collaborations compared to larger entities. This is compounded by the lack of social infrastructure and support to develop these critical networks and
- needing support to build their capacity to capture outcomes and understand the changes they are making in people's lives but lacking the expertise and tools to measure and communicate their impact effectively.

This is mainly down to power imbalances and marginalisation, which leaves smaller, community-based groups, grassroots organisations often without the influence, connections, and resources compared to larger, more established entities; social infrastructure and support systems needed to empower grassroots groups that are often underdeveloped or absent; and, limited budgets and staff. Grassroots organisations have less bandwidth to invest in areas like impact measurement, marketing, and network-building that could help them access.

KCS2S is built from the bottom up to ensure relevance and effectiveness. It recognises the transformative power of grassroots and their leaders who are seeking to level the playing field or at least bridge some of these divides that leave a catch-22 situation, which is hindering organisational growth and impact for a wider societal benefit. We gained feedback from grassroots organisations on themes where most support is needed.

Support through KCS2S is paramount now more than ever. Funding our programme, by extension, supports smaller grassroots organisations through the provision of critically required capacity-building support.

We are uniquely positioned and qualified, having run three iterations of KCS2S, to provide this support to them in a way that empowers, builds strong bonds between and within, and amplifies their voices directly to change-makers.

# 10. How we're changing what we do

## What changes we've made based on our experiences and what we've learned

In terms of delivering S2S, providing one-to-one support via cohort structure has worked well, and we plan to continue this in the future. We also want to maintain our focus on supporting the wellbeing of social action leaders through peer support networks facilitated by opportunities for group learning and coffee clubs. However, based on feedback from participants, some improvements could be made to the workshops and group coaching.

### Changes to workshops

- Participants felt that the 60-minute income generation webinar was too short. Therefore, next time, we will allocate a 90-minute workshop to ensure sufficient time for recapping content and asking questions. Participants would also appreciate an opportunity to book a 30-minute 1-2-1 session with the income generation facilitator.
- For the workshops focused on using technology to work smarter, such as the session on Generative AI, participants would have liked to see more time spent on practical applications of the tool, such as how to create social media posts and funding applications using ChatGTP, demonstrations on how to use the tool, and even a testimonial from a social action leader using the tool.
- Emmanuel, who ran our Income Generation sessions, suggested that it would be useful to track the progress of organisations' fundraising 6+ months after the sessions to know if the sessions actually translated to improved fundraising. However, this can only be achieved by a longer grant.

### Changes to group coaching

Laura Love-Petschl, Between Humans, provided some ideas for solutions to overcome challenges she encountered delivering the coaching:

- It was helpful to join up our thinking on individual leaders and their engagement with the programme. Specifically, identifying potential barriers upfront will allow us to determine how we support agreeing where engagement is not proving possible. This could be achieved even more proactively in future programmes by building it into the referral process.
- We discovered it is crucial to emphasise the value and uniqueness of this opportunity (and the limited number of places) to leaders from the outset.
- Offering taster sessions/one-off sessions rather than discovery calls for leaders interested in exploring coaching could help recognise the value of coaching. This approach can be more effective in showing (rather than telling) what coaching entails and its benefit for leaders who have not experienced coaching before. It also means

that those who are not able/do not want to commit to multiple sessions can still access some of the benefits of coaching.

- Establishing a clear timeframe within which each leader must complete their sessions or risk losing any unused sessions (e.g., all sessions must be completed within six months) would set a firm but fair commitment boundary of commitment.
- Extending the project timeframe and/or having leaders begin their coaching journeys earlier in the project may increase the likelihood of completing sessions within the project's timeframe.
- More time or an earlier start also allows for flexibility in offering additional sessions to consistently engaged leaders over a longer period. While we've introduced this in the current programme by offering additional sessions to some leaders, it hasn't been feasible for those joining later in the project cycle.

## **A shift in focus to CICs**

As elaborated below, our plan for the next iteration is to focus on supporting CICs. We have identified a trend indicating that they are not reaching their full potential, and with the right support, they could have a vast impact. Although many organisations participating in KCS2S were CICs, a programmatic shift to supporting CICs would mean support would be more tailored.

Additionally, we believe investing in CICs — which are an accessible way for those experiencing marginalisation to get involved in social action – will contribute to making the charity sector more diverse.

## **What our plans are for the coming year - and beyond**

We want to deliver a new iteration of Steps to Sustainability, which focuses on upskilling newly set up and established CICs led by and for marginalised communities, building on learnings from our three years delivering S2S.

Over an 18-month period, we propose to work with upward of 70 CICs across England via seven cohorts of 10 organisations. Our geographical 'hot spots' will be Greater London, Greater Manchester, East Midlands (Nottingham/Peterborough/Leicester) and Teesside.

Each cohort member will be assigned a dedicated CSC advisor with whom they will co-produce one tangible output. This could include supporting the participating organisation to work towards being a more sustainable/robust CIC, an income generation strategy, an organisational strengths review, and one more output that contributes to the development of the organisation more generally (i.e. an impact report, monitoring and evaluation tools; a funding application or a refreshed website). All the while, the CSC advisor will be providing advice on developing a robust CIC through the co-production sessions.

In addition to the one-to-one support, CSC will partner with industry experts to conduct workshops for every cohort on topics related to developing robust CICs (including income

generation, governance, and public affairs), giving participants the opportunity to learn in group settings and network with each other.

We've designed this new iteration based on conversations/ feedback from TNLCF colleagues, our Lived Experience Panel and past participants. In full transparency, we've streamlined the Programme to elements that we know work and are effective/useful for the busy and often over-stretched organisations we work with.

### **How will our plans help our community to thrive? And what support do we need to do this?**

With financial support from the TNLCF to deliver a CIC-focused iteration of S2S, there is potential to contribute to a diverse social sector, which intrinsically means underrepresented communities will be better served. To effectively provide this support to a substantial number of organisations, we will need a substantial grant period spanning 18+ months.

CICs are an accessible way for communities to start up organisations that benefit/serve communities: they are quick and easy to start up, eligible for the vast majority of funding streams, and provide flexibility to respond to the needs of communities rapidly. It also enables those running these organisations to earn an income, which makes working in the social action/charity sector more accessible/inclusive for those from marginalised communities. A diversity problem still blights the charity sector, and investing in and upskilling CICs could be leveraged as a solution.

Organisations led by and for marginalised communities are arguably better at providing support to their communities because they are [‘agile, intrinsically motivated, trusted and knowledgeable’](#). Additionally, these organisations are more likely to take preventative approaches to tackling complex issues in contrast to the crisis-management focus of many of our public services. For example, KCS2S participants at Bollyfit Active CIC in Greater Manchester use the community's shared interest in traditional South Asian music to reduce depression, anxiety, diabetes, hypertension and obesity; Mother and Child Welfare Organisation in West London are training ‘Parent Carer Champions’ with experience of children being targeted by gangs, grooming, and exploitation to provide peer support to others experiencing or at risk of experiencing the same thing. Both these examples demonstrate how supporting CICs directly will result in underrepresented communities being better served.