

Community micro-enterprise project

Birmingham 2022 – 2024

FINAL REPORT



April 2024

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unlocking potential effecting change

Achievements at a glance

Community Catalysts launched its first project in partnership with Birmingham City Council in 2018, which led to the establishment of a dynamic network of community-based micro-enterprises offering community-based opportunities for learning disabled and autistic adults. Encouraged by this success, the council commissioned a two-year follow-up project in 2022, which resulted in the following:

- 36** community micro-enterprises delivering services across the city of Birmingham
- 10** new community micro-enterprises
- 26** established community micro-enterprises identified and supported
- 79** new jobs created
- 119** new volunteer opportunities
- 657** weekly hours of accessible supported delivery
- 463** people accessing activities each week
- 24** people who used direct payments
- 114** self-funded people
- 325** people who were grant funded
- 270** attendees at events

Background

Birmingham City Council commissioned Community Catalysts in 2018 to support the growth and development of community micro-enterprises across the city. This was with the aim to improve care and support options for people with autism and learning difficulties.

Building on the initial phase, the council re-commissioned Community Catalysts in 2022 for an additional two-year project. This phase spanning 2022 to 2024 led to the development of a vibrant network of 36 community micro-enterprises. A key to its success was the deployment of Community Catalysts' Development Programme, led by local Community Enterprise Catalyst, Saber Ghafoor.

The programme provided enterprise leads with comprehensive, free support that focused on creating responsive, high-quality, and sustainable micro-enterprises. Our 'Doing it Right' standards provided guidance and support around legal compliance, risk management and safeguarding. It also laid the foundation for continued partnership and peer support between a wide network of community micro-enterprises in Birmingham.

What support do community micro-enterprises offer?

Community Catalysts collaborated with partners to launch the [Small Good Stuff Birmingham directory](#). This includes community micro-enterprises that provide a range of services for people with learning disabilities and autism. These services include:

- Outdoor activities
- Fitness, health and wellbeing
- Social activities
- Arts
- Performing arts
- Community centre-based activities
- Youth work
- Support groups
- Information advice and guidance
- Support in the community

Who is supported by the micro-enterprises?

Community micro-enterprises have been supporting **463 people** each week, many of whom have learning disabilities, autism, or similar needs.



What is the impact in Birmingham?

- Local jobs have been created by community micro-enterprises in Birmingham. People can work locally, earn an income and make a positive difference.
- Commissioners, people with autism and learning difficulties, care providers, and families know that good support is available. As a result, they are able to access a wider range of alternative day opportunities in the community, in addition to the more traditional models.
- There are more opportunities in the community for people with learning disabilities and autism, which can also be sought through direct payments.

Community micro-enterprise survey

Feedback from community micro-enterprises highlighted the critical support provided by Community Catalysts. This included business advice, promotional opportunities and access to resources.

The project's contribution to enterprise development was rated at 3.9 out of 5. Enterprise leaders rated the support they received from Community Catalysts at 3.9 out of 5 in terms of the likelihood of micro-enterprise success.

“Saber has been a great support throughout my journey of starting my organization in 2022. He trusted my passion, which helped me believe in myself more. Saber also set deadlines to catch up and update, which helped me be more productive. He has also helped me connect with many organizations over time, finding locations, groups that need my services, and funding opportunities.”

Community Catalyst events

Community Catalysts organised a series of events to promote community micro-enterprises and integrate enterprise leaders' insights into Birmingham City Council's adult social care strategy.

Promotional event at Muath Trust

In March 2023, the first event at Muath Trust in Sparkhill welcomed seven local organisations and over 150 attendees. Eight community micro-enterprises took this opportunity to promote their services, offering taster sessions that showcased the diverse support available.

Mini fete at Stechford Leisure Centre

The Mini Fete in July 2023 at Stechford Leisure Centre attracted 50 attendees, including parents, carers, and families. The event featured a mix of health and wellbeing programmes, personal development opportunities, and creative sessions, showing the enterprises' pivotal role in the community.

Community micro-enterprise consultation event

In January 2024, a consultation event led by John Freeman, Commissioning Manager at Birmingham City Council, brought micro-enterprises together to seek feedback related to challenges such as transportation, funding and accessibility.

These events not only promoted community micro-enterprises, but ensured the voices of enterprise leads were heard and facilitated conversations with key stakeholders.

The future for Birmingham

On conclusion of the project, many micro-enterprises have joined Community Catalysts' Small Good Stuff directory. Enterprise leads have also discussed the creation of a WhatsApp group for ongoing peer support.

Regular micro-enterprise network meetings will be held to facilitate the sharing of practices and opportunities, supported by Birmingham City Council and various Neighbourhood Network Schemes.

Saber Ghafoor
Community Catalyst Birmingham
May 2024