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APRIL 2025

UNITED BY 2022

2023 - 2024 IMPACT REPORT



CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	4
An Overview of the Trailblazer programmes	9
Methodology	11
Snapshot of the Headline Impacts	14
An Introduction to each Trailblazer	16
Volunteers Collective	17
Gen22	26
Bring the Power	33
Critical Mass	42
Social Value	50
Trailblazer Outcomes and Learning: Progress Towards the Theory of Change	58
Conclusions	83
Thank you & Acknowledgements	87
Annexes	89

FOREWORD

Born out of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, the charity, **United By 2022**, was created to extend the legacy impact for communities. Successfully hosting a major sporting event was a high point in the history of Birmingham and the West Midlands, and the Legacy Plan launched numerous community programmes aimed at marginalised communities. One year on from the Games, an impact report revealed that five projects stood out for delivering outstanding results around tackling health inequalities and youth employability and United By 2022 applied for Games surplus funding to give these five deserving projects a longer runway. Now, three years on from the Games, we are thrilled to share the results. This report documents the blossoming of those projects and the longer term Birmingham2022 community legacy. When lives and times are tough for many, I hope you enjoy the chorus of uplifting stories and heartwarming statistics on every page.

The Games may have come to an end, but our commitment to the West Midlands is stronger than ever. United By 2022 has continued supporting the local communities, volunteers, and young people who were so integral to the success of the Games. Through a range of initiatives, we've worked to provide new opportunities, develop skills, and create lasting change in the region, ensuring that the pride and excitement that defined 2022 remains present in the hearts and minds of those we support.

At the core of this work is the belief that the Games were just the beginning. We are deeply committed to fostering a lasting legacy that brings people together, strengthens communities, and celebrates the diversity and creativity of the West Midlands.

From young people discovering new opportunities, to volunteers building connections and gaining valuable skills, we are proud to be fierce champions of this incredible region. Our work has always been about more than just celebrating a single event; it's about creating a lasting impact and empowering local people to continue the work of building a thriving, united community.

This report reflects the progress we've made and the ongoing efforts to ensure that the legacy of Birmingham 2022 remains a powerful force for good. Inside, you'll find stories of individuals and communities who have benefitted from the United By 2022 initiatives, the challenges we've faced, and the steps we've taken to make a difference.

We are proud of all we've achieved, but this is just the beginning. Together, we will continue to inspire pride, unity, and progress across the West Midlands for years to come.

**Nicola Turner MBE,
Chief Executive Officer,
United By 2022 Charity**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, United By 2022 was **awarded £4.7 million from the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund** overseen by the **West Midlands Combined Authority**. The purpose of the grant was to tackle regional health inequalities and skills challenges at grassroots community level. Using evidence from the external evaluation of legacy projects which took place as part of Birmingham 2022, in conjunction with community consultation undertaken in early 2023, United By 2022 proposed five interlinked projects collectively known as the Trailblazer programmes: Bring the Power, Critical Mass, Gen22, Social Value, and the Volunteers Collective. This report details the impact the Trailblazer programmes have had in 2023 and 2024.

Bring the Power was a youth engagement programme aimed at improving access to sport, widening knowledge and boosting confidence and resilience in young people, helping them to acquire new skills. The programme focussed on Women and Girls in Sport, SEND opportunities, and Youth Voice with goals to address the imbalance of female representation within the sports sector, and access to opportunities for young people with disabilities across the digital, arts, and sport sectors.

It was delivered through a range of targeted and open-to-all engagement pathways in Birmingham and the West Midlands.

1,403
participants engaged
in repeat activities
over the long term.

A further 13,557 participants engaged in bite-sized or one-off sessions across 82 different schools, colleges, and community groups throughout the region.

Co-design was a core principle and the programmes involved 546 individuals in developing activities to make them feel inclusive and accessible for the target groups.

80.3%
of participants said
that their engagement
with the activities had
increased their
motivation to take
part in a similar
activity again.



Originally designed as an access initiative for performing at the Opening Ceremony and the Birmingham 2022 Festival, **Critical Mass** brought together young people with and without disabilities to encourage them to move more and perform as a united dance group. As a Trailblazer programme, this groundbreaking dance and movement project continued to engage participants aged 16–30 years old from the West Midlands who are representative of the diversity of the region. The work was delivered at twenty five locations around the region by expert local partners, FABRIC, Coventry Inclusive Dance, Black Country Dance Hub CIC, and SAMPAD.

352 participants took part in 341 dance sessions during 2023 and 2024.

Over half of participants involved identify as D/deaf, neurodivergent or having a disability or long term health condition. 91.3% of these participants identified that their involvement had improved their perception of disability. Participants reported strong increases to wellbeing, and 96% of them formed new friendships as part of the project.

Gen22 was a pre-employment programme for young people (aged 16 – 24) from the West Midlands where they could gain employability boosting skills and make a difference through community action projects. Inspired by the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Gen22 was created by young people who struggle to access mainstream employability opportunities. Barriers they may have faced could include: disability, poor mental health, being a young carer or young parent, or having a criminal record. Previous impact data shaped the target participants for this iteration of Gen22, placing a strong focus on enabling participation from young people with special educational needs, disabilities, and access requirements. The programme included a competition called Ideas Made Real, creating a unique opportunity for young people to pitch for funding to turn their social action projects and community ideas into reality.

14 Gen22 community action projects took place in 78 different locations throughout the region. This engaged 546 young people. A further 14 smaller projects were funded in the Ideas Made Real competition. These have been planned and delivered by 31 young people – generating some of the most interesting and deep benefits to the individuals. Collectively, the young people contributed 22,390 hours of social action in local communities. The programme successfully reached target groups: 43.9% of young people involved in the project, for example, were from the 20% most deprived areas in the country.

22,390 hours of social action in local communities.



The **Social Value** programme was shaped by learnings from the Birmingham 2022 Social Value Charter and data from hundreds of grassroots groups that engaged with the community programme at Games-time.

This programme responded to an identified need for capacity building which makes community organisations more sustainable and resilient in the face of rising costs and increasing demand. The programme activities were co-designed with the third sector. It delivered upskilling and training opportunities through a mix of online and in person workshops; created a network for peer learning; encouraged collaboration; and introduced new funders and funding opportunities.

The Social Value team worked in depth with 170 community and third sector organisations in every local authority region. 617 representatives attended 50 Training sessions at 13 locations across the West Midlands.

At the same time the programme supported West Midlands private sector organisations to make Social Value a greater part of the way they do business every day.

It worked with the private sector to: develop Social Value strategies; measure the Social Value they are generating; connect them with local communities they otherwise wouldn't come across; and help them grow their impact and share their stories.

United By 2022 has measured the total Social Value generated by the charity in addition to the contracted delivery of activities under this grant. Social Value is achieved from the decisions and commitments made by the charity, such as employing 100% local workforce to deliver the work, training an apprentice, using local suppliers and holding sustainability principles at the core of operational delivery and governance. By gathering data from its own operations and from its suppliers it has generated the equivalent of £2,759,214.13 in Social Value. This has been independently verified and to put this in context, public procurement demands a 10% Social Value commitment and this number is equal to 55% of the total Trailblazers budget.

Equivalent of
£2,759,214.13
in Social Value.

The **Volunteers Collective** was launched in June 2023 to deliver on the legacy pledge made to the volunteers at Birmingham 2022, and to support regional growth through a thriving events pipeline. The programme uses an online portal to connect events organisations with experienced, enthusiastic volunteers who want to support local events. This process is supported by a volunteer engagement officer. 2,171 volunteers are currently registered on the portal, of which 921 have submitted at least one expression of interest to events advertised. 348 of these have taken part in at least one event. Across the 79 events which have used the Volunteers Collective, 777 positions have been filled, to deliver a total of 24,270 hours of volunteering.

24,270 hours
of volunteering.



Headline impact against the eight indicators

The activity and impact of all five programmes has been measured against the purpose outlined in the grant agreement for West Midlands Combined Authority's Legacy Enhancement Fund, as well as eight outcomes developed between United By 2022 and stakeholders throughout the region. These eight outcome areas are under the following headings: wellbeing, skills, resource, networks, exchange, representation, co-creation, and access. The collective impact of the five programmes has been assessed at a headline level against these eight outcomes.



Wellbeing assesses the extent to which individuals feel an increased sense of wellbeing through engaging as participants and volunteers, as well as through delivering projects as staff. In particular we note that young people experienced growth in wellbeing indicators, reporting increases to confidence, resilience, and overall happiness. This included, for example, increases in the willingness to try new things and how connected participants felt to their communities. This was particularly important for participants in Gen22, for example, who gave comparatively low wellbeing levels at the start of the project. Over 95% of volunteers and staff delivering projects also said that the Trailblazer programmes had a positive impact on their wellbeing.



One goal was to make organisations and individuals better **skilled**, and more confident to deliver work and to seek new work. 87.9% of individuals involved said they gained new skills as a result of their engagement and an even higher proportion – 93.6% – agreed that engagement had advanced their pre-existing skills. The type of skills gained varied across programmes but notable increases were reported in inclusion and co-creation; leadership and teamwork skills; and skills to take action on social causes.



United By 2022 also sought to provide organisations and individuals with more **resource** and capacity as a result of financial and/or development investment. Across a number of indicators in this outcome area, delivery staff identified that the Trailblazer programmes had enabled them to deliver better quality work, with more young people. 91.5% of delivery staff also agreed that delivering this contract has improved their own confidence or their organisation's confidence to apply for similar funding in the future.



To foster a stronger ecosystem in the West Midlands, the Trailblazers aimed to help organisations and individuals be better **networked**, particularly across sectors which currently operate in silo. This included forging new connections between organisations and prospective participants and volunteers, as well fostering better connections between organisations themselves. 88.3% of stakeholders, across all engagement types, identified that they had made new connections.



Through **exchange**, the Charity sought to ensure learnings, evaluations, and processes are open sourced, shared, and adopted by other organisations. This was principally delivered through the training for individuals across programmes. 9 in 10 of the people who attended training said that they intended to implement learnings from these training sessions in their everyday work.



Running across all programmes was a theme of **representation**. As a core purpose, United By 2022 wanted to ensure that organisations and individuals who have traditionally been excluded on the grounds of age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability will be better platformed, funded and empowered. People from a range of backgrounds and identities engaged across all Trailblazers. This was largely achieved by targeting specific groups for engagement in specific projects, often linked to sectors or areas where these people had been historically marginalised.



The levels of representation achieved may have been in part due to a strong focus on **co-creation**. Here, it was United By 2022's ambition that co-creation be more frequently used in community projects, driving better inclusion, access, and ownership. In order to do so, the programmes focused on people having agency to speak, whilst also listening to each other. 89.1% of individuals across programmes said that they had the opportunity to listen to other's opinions as part of their involvement in the programmes. 85% said they had the opportunity to share their thoughts.



Finally, the Charity challenged itself to make processes (from application to participation to evaluation) fully **accessible** on both programme and project levels. A principal element of this outcome area was individuals taking on learning, and then making changes to everyday practice, based on their experience of working with young people who identified as D/deaf, neurodiverse, disabled, or living with a long-term health condition, throughout the programmes.

Overall, Trailblazer programmes have proved a powerful catalyst for social change, community engagement, and individual empowerment. This may have been a result of the high volume of delivery which took place with participants and members of the public, compared to with the organisations and individuals delivering that work. As such, whilst organisations across Birmingham and the West Midlands are better resourced to support their target communities, more could be done to help them actively engage with other organisations to share, learn, adapt, and improve their offering. Any follow on funding might look to further develop activities strengthening the resilience of the ecosystem in the West Midlands.

This focus on delivery with the public, as opposed to development of sector ecosystems, has arguably driven United By 2022 closer to its long term outcome: that across Birmingham and the West Midlands, barriers to engagement (including the impact of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis) are alleviated for young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people, LGBTQIA+ communities, and economically deprived communities. In supporting organisations who deliver this engagement to go out and do what they do best, United By 2022 have played a role in ensuring the diverse and interconnected communities across our region can actively participate in sports, arts & culture, volunteering, and/or employment opportunities.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TRAILBLAZER PROGRAMMES



The Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF) was made possible by the underspend from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. It aimed to extend the positive outcomes and create a lasting legacy for the communities involved in the programme. This fund represented an opportunity to invest in projects that drive social change, improve wellbeing, and foster inclusivity for years to come. The CWGLEF is the principal funder of United By 2022's Trailblazer Programme.

The change we set out to achieve with £4.7m from the Legacy Enhancement Fund was to tackle health inequalities and skills challenges in the region, providing successful community centred pilots started during the Games the opportunity to realise their full potential. The selection of projects was informed by community consultation which tested need, demand, and emerging impact beyond 2022.

Evaluation of the original initiatives launched around the Games found that five of the twelve legacy programmes were already making a difference to deep rooted structural inequalities for our most marginalised communities. These five initiatives were grouped under the name Trailblazers and delivered by United By 2022, the charity created to sustain the community legacy of the Games.

The Trailblazer Programme consists of:

- ▶ **Bring the Power**
- ▶ **Critical Mass**
- ▶ **Gen22**
- ▶ **Social Value**
- ▶ **Volunteers Collective**

Following a brief outline of the methodology used, the report introduces each of the Trailblazer programmes, showing their individual impacts. This is before the latter half outlines the progress towards the eight organisation level outcomes.



METHODOLOGY

In March of 2023, **FRY Creative** were commissioned to conduct a situation and needs analysis, leading to the creation of an organisational theory of change (TOC) and evaluation framework, on behalf of United By 2022. Following completion, FRY were procured to deliver a full evaluation of the Trailblazers programme. The below overview outlines, in brief, how this work was delivered. More detail can be found in Annex 2 of this report.

EVIDENCE OF NEED, THEORY OF CHANGE AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

FRY Creative began designing United By 2022's Theory of Change in March 2023. This involved a thorough documentation review and internal team consultation to develop its first draft. This then led to a latter situation and needs analysis conducted with stakeholders across the region. Twenty-eight key individuals and organisations were identified and interviewed by the United By 2022 team. Discussions were structured around the following areas: regional needs and strengths; organisational needs and strengths; reflections on the first draft of the United By 2022 Theory of Change.

The United By 2022 Theory of Change was developed via the above situation and needs analysis, using key informant interviews with stakeholders identified by UB22, to determine the needs across Birmingham and the West Midlands. It sought to build the Theory of Change on the ambition of United By 2022, in conjunction with the needs of the sectors they aimed to support. The resulting theory of change can be viewed in Annex 1 - it is also outlined in the outcomes section of this report. Annex 2 includes full mapping of which Trailblazer strands contribute to each of the eight outcomes. The full evaluation framework can be found in Annex 3: Evaluation Framework.

The Theory of Change led to the later development of an evaluation framework, where indicators for the eight short-term outcomes were developed. These were developed in consultation with the internal United By 2022 teams, where FRY Creative spent a significant amount of time designing the data collection methods and processes with internal staff teams. This is outlined in the following section.

Stakeholder Groups

We identified common types of engagement across the Trailblazer strands, as well as common aims and intentions with each of these engagement groups. As such, throughout the report, sessions (any instance of United By 2022 or its suppliers delivering engagement with any stakeholder group) and stakeholders will be discussed according to the following categorisation. The six engagement categories utilised in this evaluation are as follows:

▶ **Participants**

These are individuals attending, engaging and benefitting from the three youth programmes – Bring the Power, Critical Mass and Gen22. Participants engage in provision which is seeking to benefit them according to the eight outcome areas. Participants are split into long-term participants and short-term participants according to how they are engaging. Long-term: an individual person will intentionally attend multiple sessions of a Trailblazer programme. Short-term: participants may only have one point of interaction with a Trailblazer programme.

▶ **Training Attendees**

These are individuals attending training provision delivered by United By 2022 and/or its delivery partners that is specifically intended to benefit the individual's professional skills, capacity or knowledge according to the eight outcome areas identified.

▶ **Network or Advisory Attendees**

These are individuals who are engaged to advise on the design or delivery of a Trailblazer programme. They are often brought in for consultancy engagement, to inform the direction of a project. They may be young people, industry professionals or sector representatives. They often contribute to cocreation aims.

▶ **Volunteers**

These are individuals who are registered on the United By 2022 Volunteers Collective Portal. They deliver volunteering for a number of organisations, on behalf of United By 2022.

▶ **Engaged Organisations**

These are organisations who benefit from the support of volunteers provided by United By 2022.

▶ **Delivery Staff**

These are individuals who are working on behalf of organisations to deliver United By 2022 contracts. These could be organisations who deliver provision for participants, those who facilitate network and advisory services, or those providing training.

Annex 2 includes full mapping of how engagement strands within each of the Trailblazer Programmes fit into the six engagement types outlined above.

DATA COLLECTION STRANDS

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data collection was conducted via two methods: activity reporting and individual impact surveys. Activity reporting recorded output data about the engagement taking place, such as the number of participants taking part, or the location of the sessions which have been delivered. Individual impact surveys were a series of online and paper surveys to be completed by the people benefitting from and delivering sessions across the six engagement types identified above. Templates were used to create a set of bespoke surveys per Trailblazer strand, questions were edited to ensure relevance for respondents. These questions have then been reaggregated for reporting. The aggregation method can be viewed in Annex 3: Evaluation Framework.

All individual impact surveys contain a mixture of demographic and outcome based questions. In the majority of instances individuals completed one survey per method of engagement. However, in some instances, individuals completed both a baseline and an endpoint survey. These surveys have been disseminated by United By 2022 and their delivery partners both online and in-person. The majority of questions across all surveys were optional. A full list of the questions can be found in Annex 3: Evaluation Framework.

Qualitative Data

Due to the diverse nature of both the activities across Trailblazer strands, as well as the stakeholders engaging with them, there was no uniform qualitative data collection that sits across the programme. Rather, over the course of evaluation design, FRY Creative have spent time with each of the Trailblazer teams to understand how qualitative data collection would best fit in the contexts of their programme. These methods were specific to groups of individuals engaging with elements of a programme. In some instances these methods took a deep focus on one individual or group, in other cases these methods sample a group of individuals from the broader population.

DATA ANALYSIS

Activity is still ongoing for a number of the Trailblazer programmes. As such, this report only includes activity which has taken place during 2023 or 2024. Analysis has therefore excluded any data relating to sessions taking place in 2025. Secondary data has been used from the [Office of National Statistics](#) to map postcodes to their Local Authority Areas, Lower Social Output Areas, and their related Indices of Multiple Deprivation deciles and rankings.

Analysis of all quantitative data, with more detail on programme strands and cross-breaks, can be found on the interactive data dashboard [here](#).



SNAPSHOT OF THE HEADLINE IMPACTS

KEY FIGURES



5 Trailblazer programmes delivering **47 different strands** of engagement activity

People engaged with **United By 2022** activities **43,088 times...**



...attending **dance classes**, **volunteering** at events, delivering **social action projects**, **connecting with new people**

2,367 events



engaging people across the **West Midlands**

Activity took place at **279 locations**, reaching every Local Authority area in the West Midlands.

24,270



volunteering hours delivered by **348 volunteers** across **79 sporting, cultural and community events**

577 young people delivering **22,390 hours** of social action as part of **Gen22** and **Ideas Made Real**

2,853 young people taking part in **long-term projects**



888 attendees at Trailblazer training sessions **upskilling people and organisations**



13,557 attendees at **engagement sessions** in **64 schools and community centres**



Equivalent of **£2,759,214.13** verified **Social Value¹**



28.2% of individuals **involved in Trailblazer programmes** were from the **20% most deprived areas** of the UK

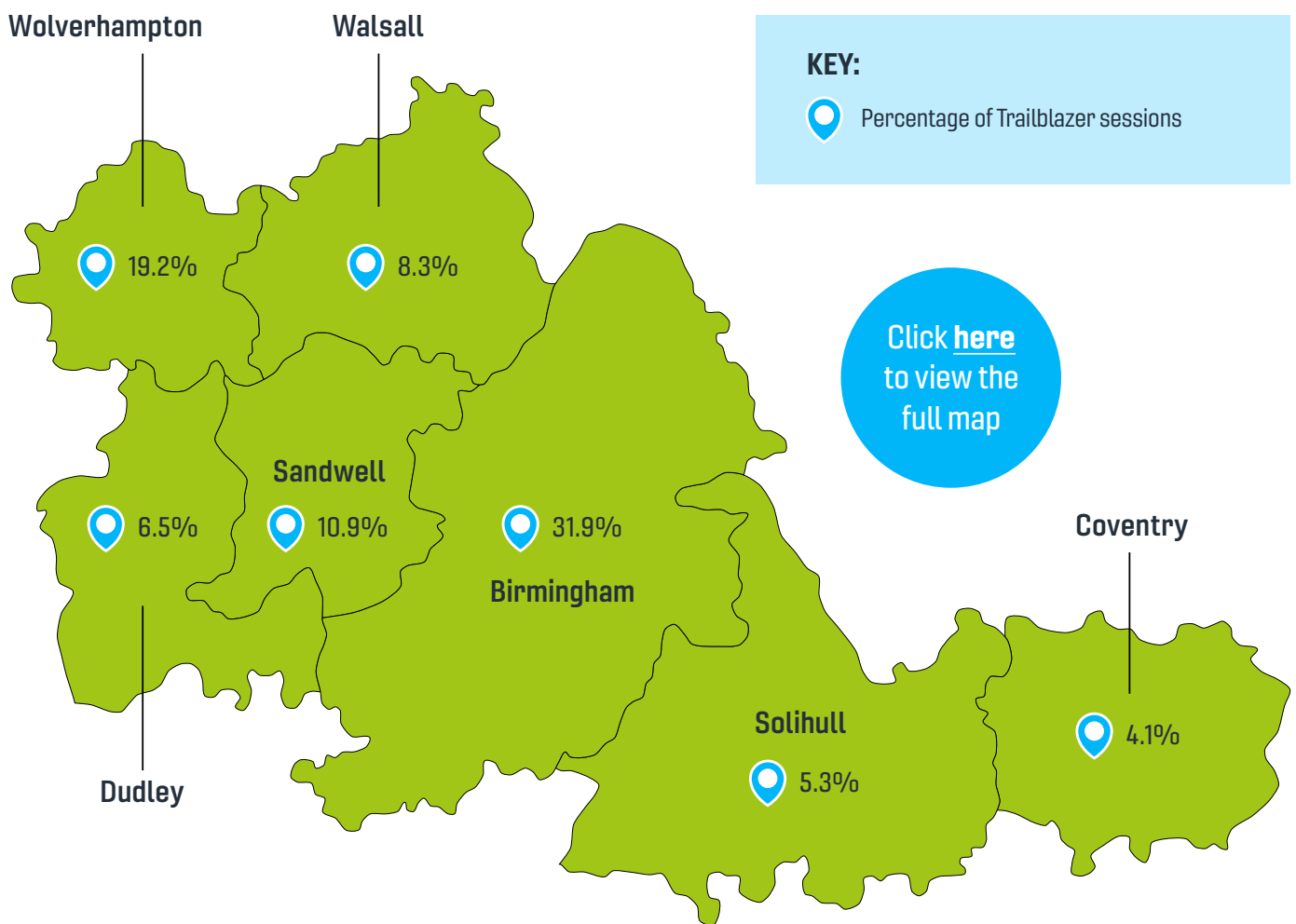


¹ Verified Social Value Figure provided by Social Value Portal, on behalf of United By 2022

WHERE ACTIVITY HAPPENED

Where Trailblazer activity took place across the region. View the interactive map on our Data Dashboard [here](#).

Session Locations: Local Authorities



Local Authority	Percentage of Trailblazer sessions
Online	3.3%
Other Local Authorities in the Region	10.5%

2,367 sessions
taking place across
279 locations

AN INTRODUCTION TO EACH TRAILBLAZER



VOLUNTEERS COLLECTIVE

OVERVIEW

The **Volunteers Collective** was launched in June 2023 to continue the volunteering legacy from Birmingham 2022. Made up of over 2,000 registered volunteers from across the West Midlands and beyond, the Volunteers Collective connects organisations with experienced, enthusiastic volunteers to support events. Since its inception, the Volunteers Collective has worked alongside several sports and cultural organisations to support their events which vary in terms of size and scale, from community-led events, to large-scale arts and culture festivals, to major sporting championships.

Notable events include:



Volunteers Collective Portal

The central hub of the Volunteers Collective is its online portal, where volunteering opportunities are shared, and volunteers can view multiple opportunities across the region and sign-up for events that interest them.

The portal is also useful as a database that includes relevant information about each volunteer, including contact details, dietary requirements, accessibility requirements, and uniform sizing. With this information readily accessible, event organisers can better prepare for volunteers supporting their event.

Originally the portal was exclusively for volunteers from Birmingham 2022, but this has been extended and is now open for anyone who is interested in event volunteering, with a particular focus on increasing the number of young people engaged with the Volunteers Collective.



Event Management

The Volunteers Collective offers a tiered package to cater to organisations' specific volunteering needs. While the Bronze tier is a free service, Silver and Gold are paid services.

- ▶ **Bronze:** At no cost to the event organiser, the Volunteers Collective team will publish the event on the portal to share with members. The team will then send the information of interested volunteers to the event organisers, including names, contact information, and other relevant details.
- ▶ **Silver:** In addition to the services listed for the Bronze tier, the team will review volunteer applications, allocate roles and shifts, and help with other preparation work as needed, such as training materials.
- ▶ **Gold:** The Volunteers Collective team will manage every stage of the volunteer process, including, but not limited to: volunteer applications, selection process, communication with volunteers, shift and role allocation, training and handbook creation, on-site management, and post-event feedback.

In addition to these services, the Volunteers Collective has developed a 'Volunteer Ready' checklist for event organisers who may not have used volunteers in the past, so they know how to be prepared when volunteers arrive. This helps to improve the experience for both volunteers and event organisers, increasing satisfaction and enhancing the event experience.

After each event is complete, members who volunteered at the event receive a post-event feedback survey. These surveys are used to improve the Volunteers Collective programme with members' input.



Volunteer Training with Skills360

Working alongside Skills360, United By 2022 has launched multiple online training sessions for Volunteers Collective members to learn new skills and boost confidence. These trainings cover topics such as health and safety, security, safeguarding, and diversity and inclusion.

The Volunteers Collective also created two 'onboarding' trainings, which all new volunteers must complete before they can view opportunities on the portal. One of these trainings introduces the basic concepts of volunteering and the Volunteers Collective Agreement and Values. The other training discusses challenging situations a volunteer might face on shift and how to address these situations.

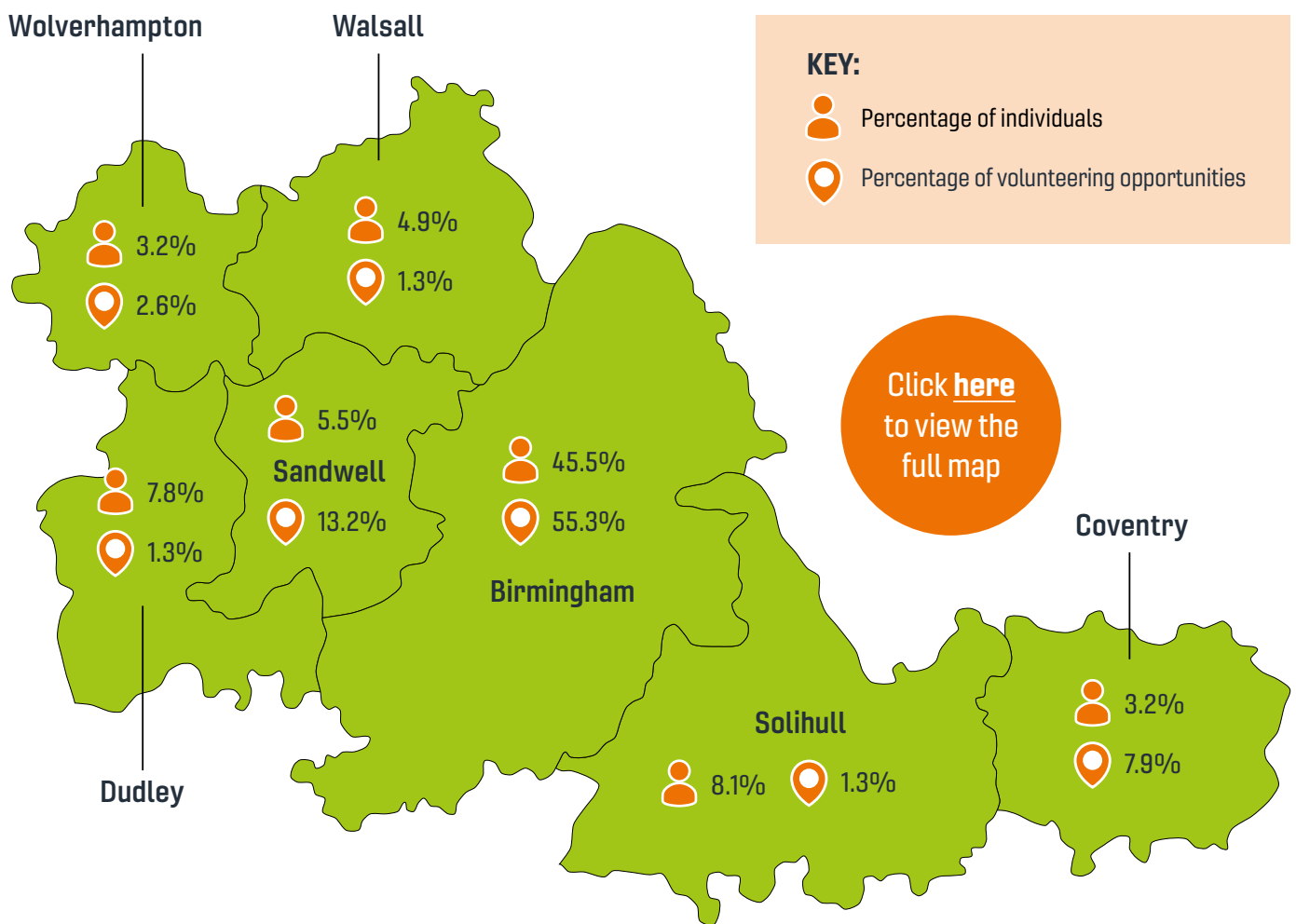
These training sessions give individuals who are new to volunteering an opportunity to learn about what to expect when supporting an event. Originally, all members of the Collective volunteered at Birmingham 2022, making them highly experienced and able to support large-scale events. As the Volunteers Collective welcomes new members, this training is essential in order to open volunteering to people who may not have had access to these opportunities before, and thus giving new volunteers the confidence to get involved.



KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic breakdown of the 348 individuals who have completed at least one volunteering opportunity during 2023 or 2024.

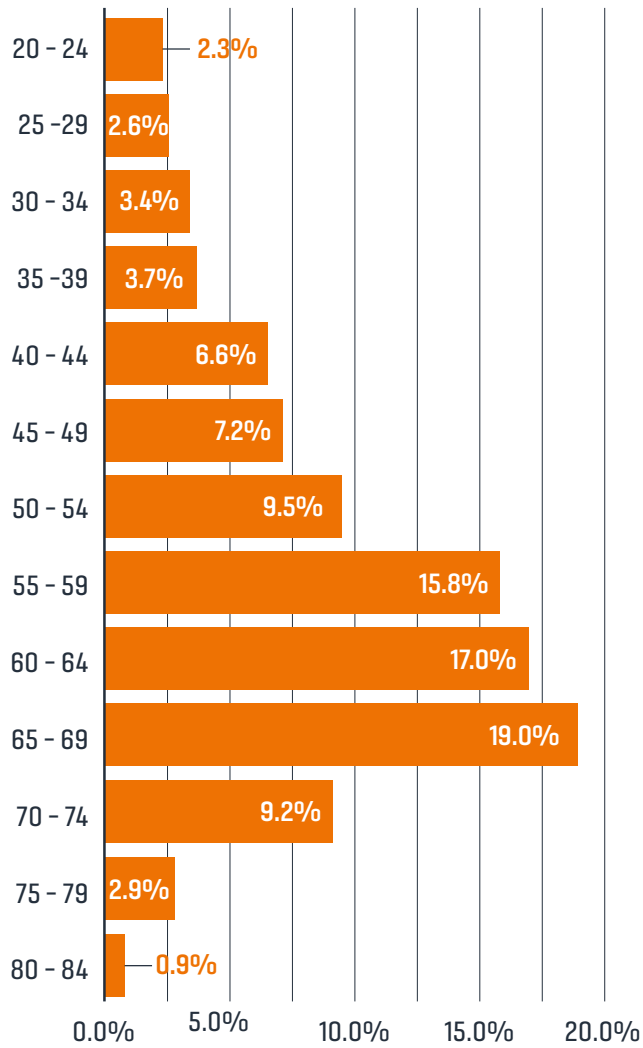
Home Location: Local Authorities



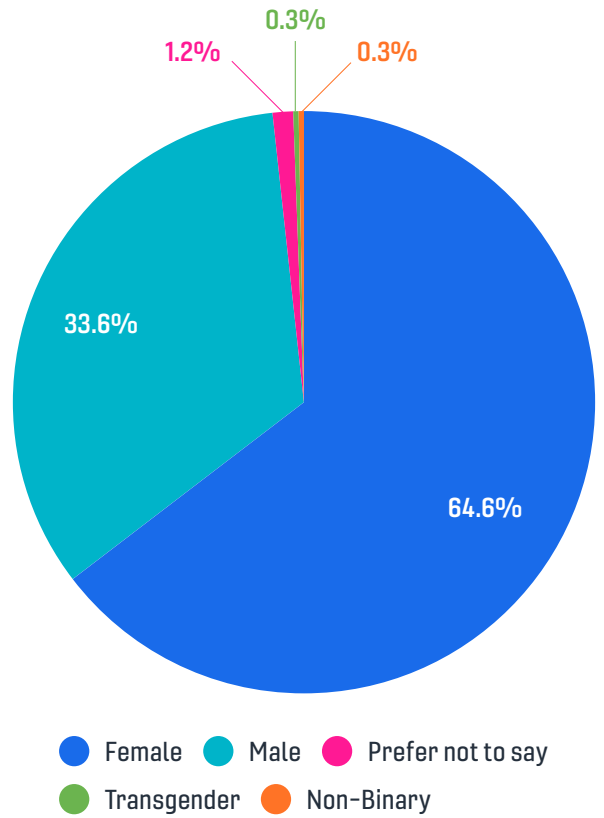
Local Authority	Percentage of volunteering opportunities	Percentage of individuals
Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands	14.5%	13.8%
Local Authorities outside West Midlands	2.6%	4.0%

(n=348)

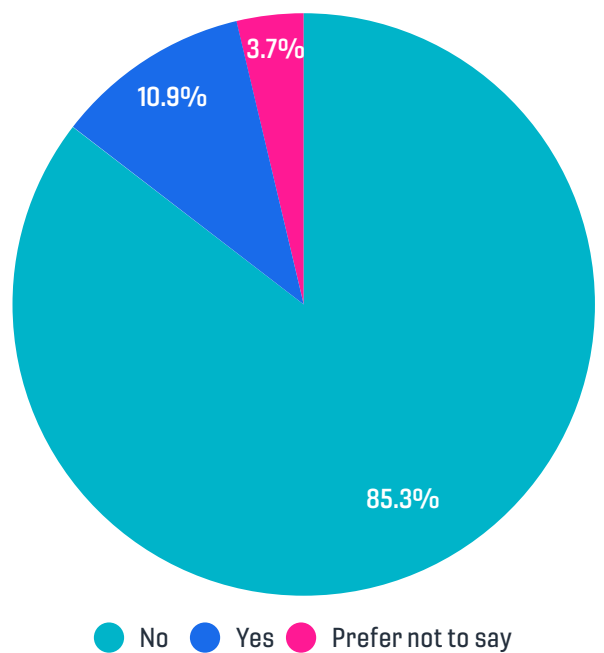
Age



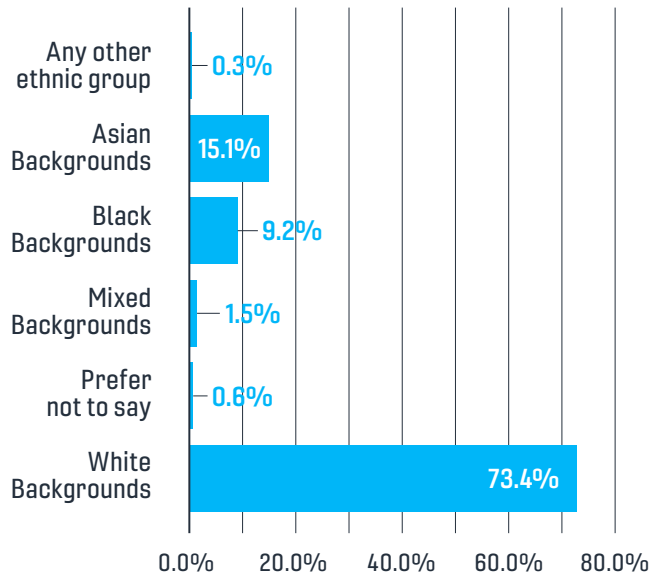
Gender



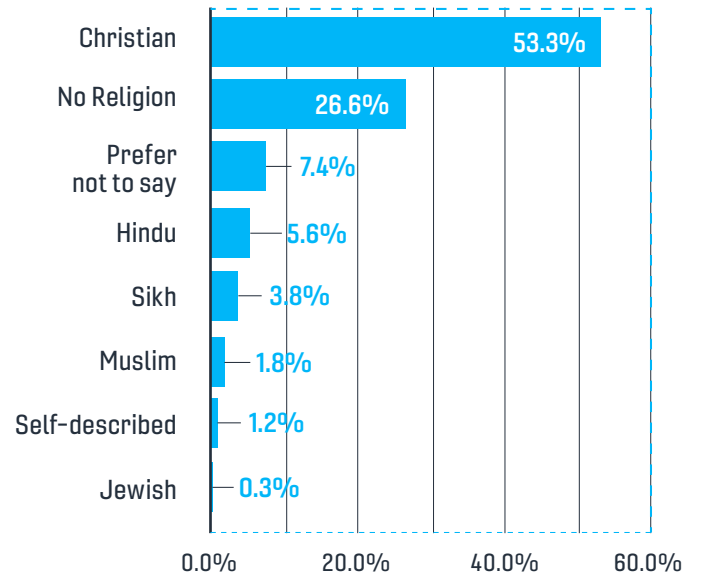
Disability, long-term health condition or neurodiverse



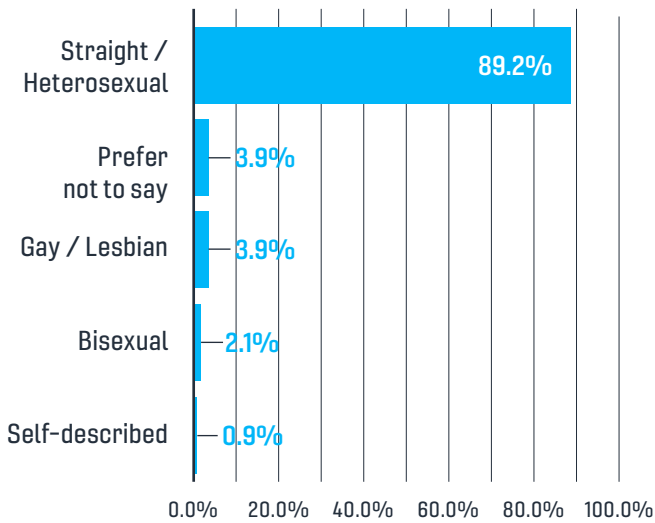
Ethnicity



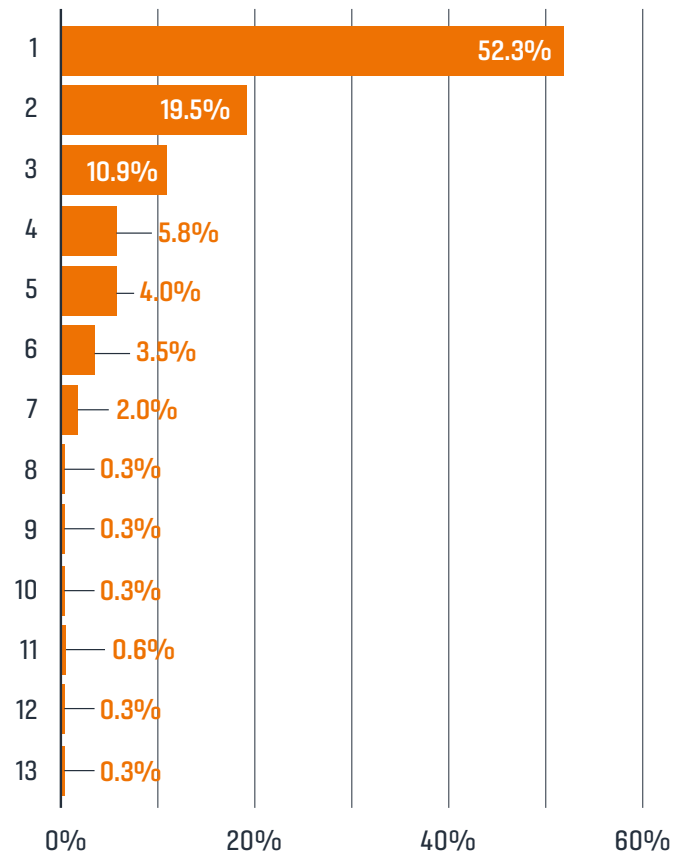
Faith



Sexuality



Number of Volunteering Opportunities completed, per participant



KEY OUTPUTS

24,270
hours of
volunteering

2,171
volunteers
registered
on the portal



921 volunteers
have submitted at
least one expression
of interest

348 volunteers
have taken
part in one
or more
volunteering opportunity



777 volunteering
positions have
been filled across
79 opportunities

Volunteers
have supported
opportunities at
58 unique locations
across the region



Volunteers on
average rated their
enjoyment **9.4/10**
across activities

26.4% of the volunteers
who have **successfully**
completed one opportunity
are from the **top 20%** most
deprived areas of the UK



KEY IMPACTS

99.5% of volunteers who have taken part in opportunities feel that they have **made a meaningful contribution** through volunteering

87.4% of volunteers  rated their overall experience of volunteering **good or excellent**

81.4% of volunteers rated their experience of submitting an expression of interest **good or excellent.**

83.1%  rated the communication with the Volunteers Collective **good or excellent**

77.1% of the volunteers rated the **timeliness of communications from the Volunteers Collective** **good or excellent**

94.4%  of organisations using volunteers say they were **satisfied** with their volunteers





Of the 2,171 volunteers registered on the portal, 921 volunteers have submitted at least one expression of interest and 348 have gone on to successfully take part in one or more volunteering opportunities. Across the board, volunteers have had a **positive experience interacting with the Volunteers Collective** team and portal. 99.5% of volunteers who have taken part in opportunities feel that they have **made a meaningful contribution through volunteering**.

In addition to volunteers experiencing positive outcomes, the organisations **utilising volunteers at events also displayed positive responses to their experiences**. 94.4% of organisations using volunteers say that they were actively engaged, and that the quantity of volunteers supplied had met their needs.

While United By 2022 brought joy and purpose to many, the focus group also highlighted some areas for improvement. Volunteers expressed a need for **clearer communication about roles and expectations**, particularly **when partnering organisations handled event logistics**.

"It's frustrating when you don't get details until the last minute," one participant noted. Despite these challenges, the group **praised the charity's approachable team** and the **diversity of opportunities available** and emphasised the importance of providing feedback to improve processes, ensuring future events could better serve both the volunteers and the community.

The volunteers also shared **ideas for the future**. Some suggested expanding roles to include younger participants – volunteers who had successfully completed opportunities were much more likely to be older than the general sample of people registered on the portal.

Other volunteers proposed a calendar of recurring events to help with planning. The Collective's training resources, such as short online courses, were well-received, though volunteers hoped for more advanced skill-building opportunities.

OVERVIEW

Gen22 is a free to access project that creates opportunities for young people (aged 16 - 24) from the West Midlands to gain employability boosting skills and make a positive difference in their community through social action initiatives. Inspired by the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Gen22 is for young people who might otherwise struggle to access opportunities. Barriers could include: a lack of confidence, poor mental health, being a young carer or young parent, or having a criminal record. For the current iteration of Gen22, there was a strong focus on enabling participation from young people with special educational needs, disabilities, and access requirements.

Participants are assigned to one of 14 funded organisations (12 grassroots and 2 flagships) to support them in completing a meaningful 30-hour social action assignment. These assignments are connected to the theme of “Creative, Cultural & Digital” and/or “Physical Activity & Wellbeing”.

Through their Gen22 projects, participants can:

- ▶ **Earn accredited or in-house qualifications and awards**
- ▶ **Volunteer to lead activity sessions for other young people at events**
- ▶ **Participate in skills-based residential programmes**
- ▶ **Learn from professionals across various industries.**

Our two ‘Flagship Delivery Partners’ Birmingham City Football Club Community Trust and Powered By Can were also tasked with providing support and guidance to the grassroots organisations. This included training and upskilling, sharing best practice, and strategic support.

The Gen22 programme is made up of two principal activity strands: Gen22 and Ideas Made Real.



Gen22

This activity strand includes **14 delivery providers** from across the region, who have been funded to deliver their own Gen22 projects for young people connected with their organisation. These 14 organisations are locally based organisations with a track record of working with young people who face barriers to access. The delivery providers engage with and support the young people to complete their social action and volunteering assignment.

To further achieve our objective of supporting young people who face barriers in the Gen22 programme, an Accessibility Pot was included. This fund supports our 14 delivery organisations through capacity building and providing access to additional training opportunities. The fund is designed to address the unique challenges and requirements faced by young people with SEND, ensuring they have equal access to employment services, facilities, and opportunities.

To achieve this, we have partnered with Sense, The National Deafblind and Rubella Association, who support individuals who are deafblind or living with other complex disabilities. Sense developed a three-tier package that enhances learning opportunities for participants and provides our delivery partners with personalised support to embed inclusive practice within their organisation. The engagement this workstrand is outlined as training provision throughout this report.

Gen22 participants have access to the Skills360 online learning platform, which has a range of training and development opportunities. They can enrol in 16 Employability Skills courses and earn badges by completing modules on leadership, CV writing, and safeguarding.

Ideas Made Real

Ideas Made Real offers young people (16-24) the opportunity to turn their social action projects and community ideas into reality. Each successful young person received an **award of up to £8,000** and support from United By 2022's youth programme to bring their project to life. Successfully funded projects included supporting refugees, creating mental health initiatives, or improving their surroundings. Ideas Made Real is designed by young people, for young people.

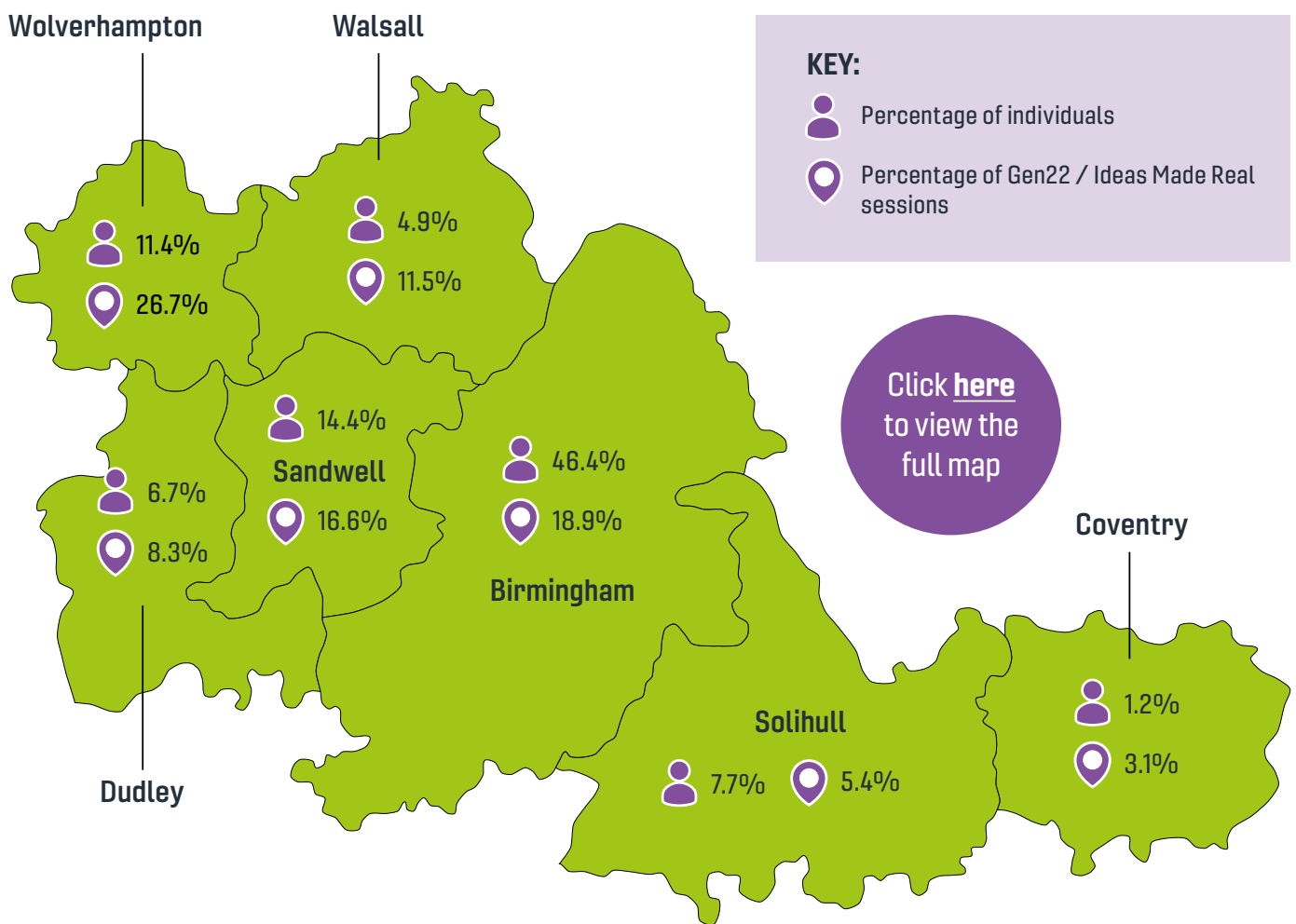
Successful applicants are partnered with a supporting organisation, who assist with the planning and delivery of their project. This year, we supported **14 projects focused on the theme of "Home or Community"**, aiming to improve public spaces, get more girls involved in sport, and organise workshops to develop creative skills.



KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The below demographics relate to all participants who took part in Gen22. The map and corresponding figures relates to all individuals and sessions from Gen22 and Ideas Made Real.

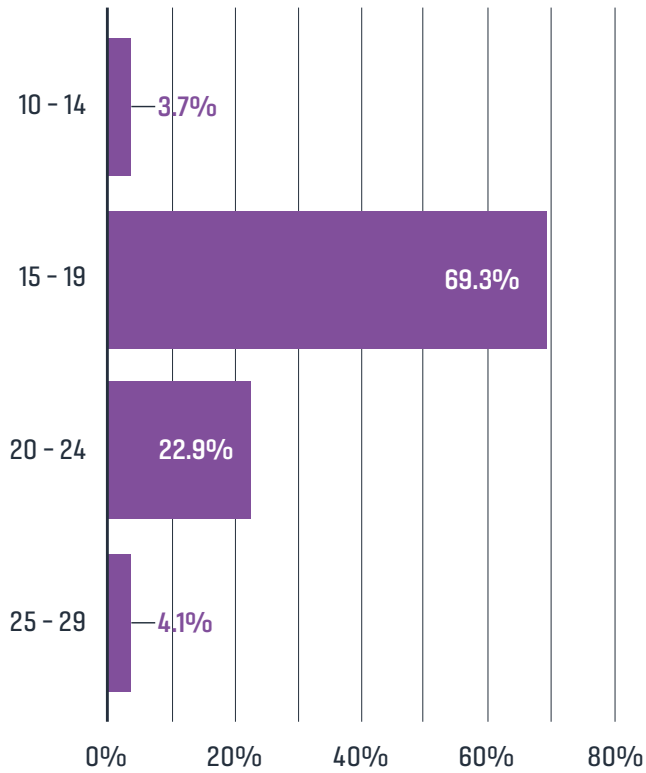
Home Location: Local Authorities



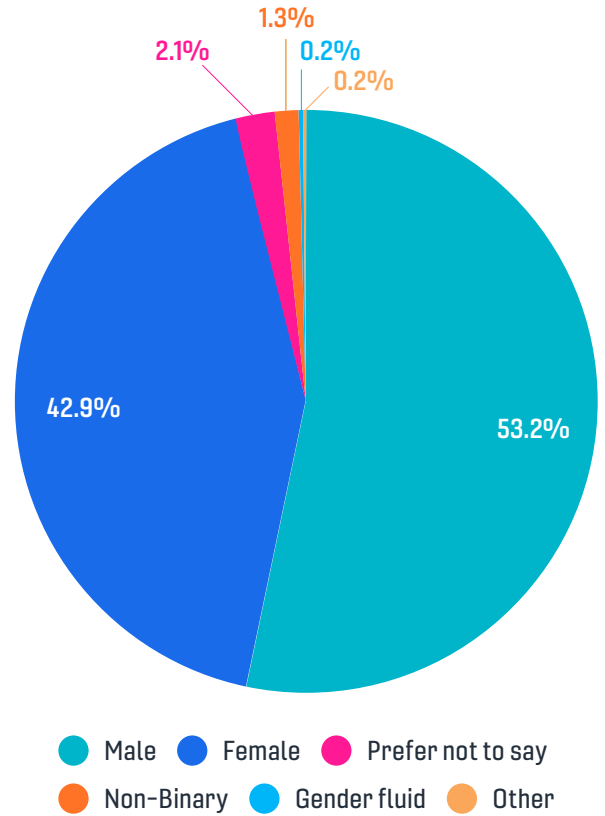
Local Authority	Percentage of Gen22 / Ideas Made Real Sessions	Percentage of individuals
Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands	7%	4.1%
Local Authorities outside West Midlands	0.9%	1.6%

(n=479)

Age

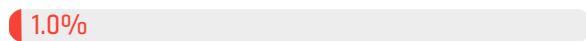


Gender

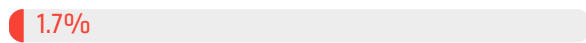


Do any of the following apply to you:

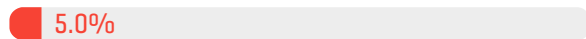
In care or a care leaver



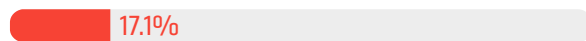
Young carer/parent



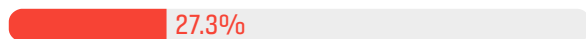
Family/friend who is or has been in prison



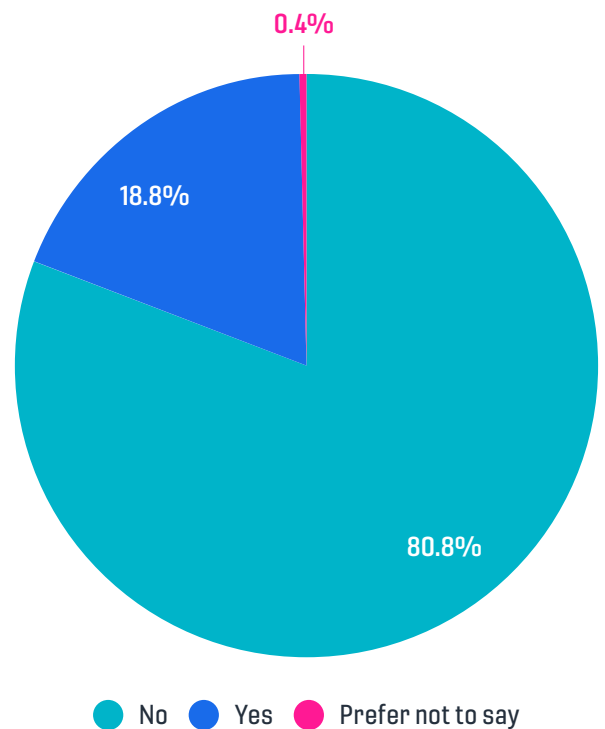
Have low self-esteem/self-confidence



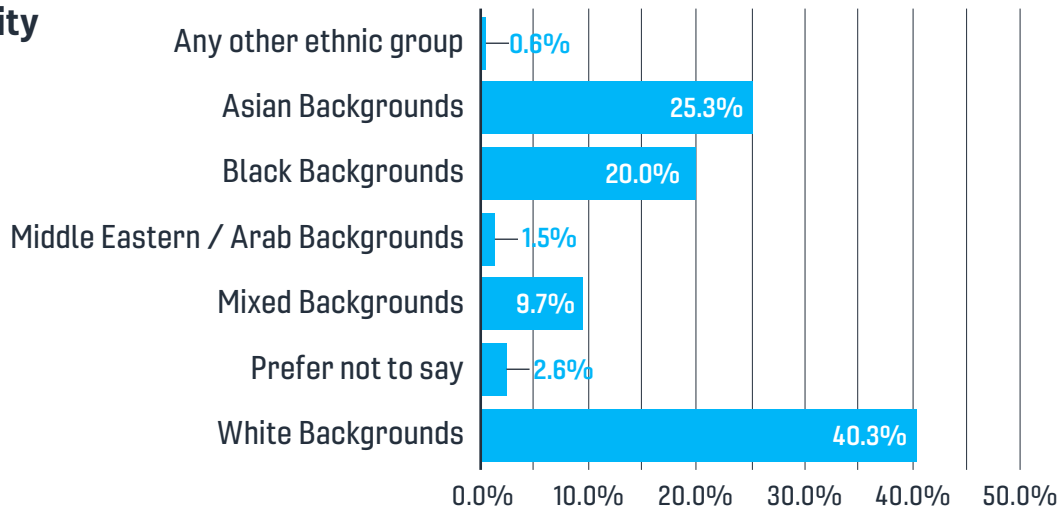
Free School Meals



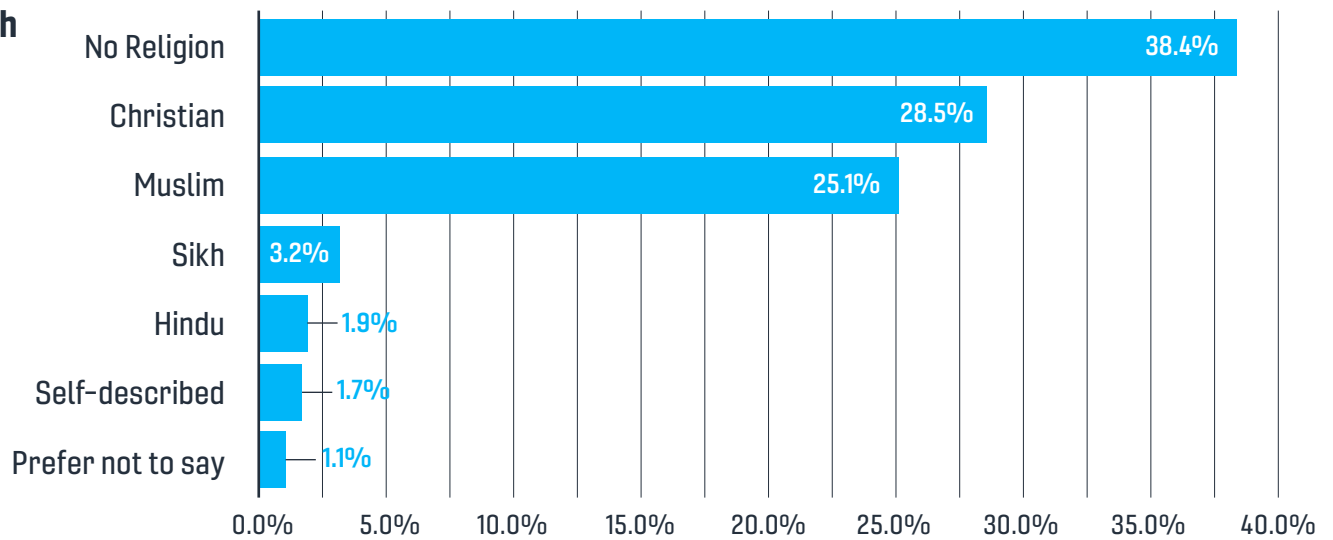
Disability, long-term health condition or neurodiverse



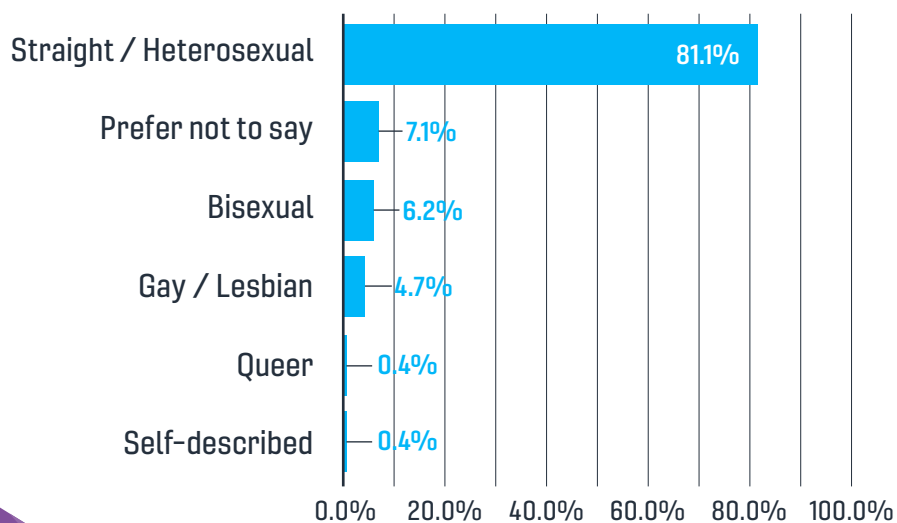
Ethnicity



Faith



Sexuality



KEY OUTPUTS

14 Gen22 projects delivered by 2 flagship organisations and 12 grassroots organisations

546 Gen22 participants attended sessions a total of **6,296** times



734 Gen22 sessions happened at **78** different locations across the region

43.9% of young people involved in the project were from the **20%** most deprived areas in the country

14 Ideas Made Real projects were funded, planned, and delivered by **31** young people

577 young people completed a total of **22,390** hours of social action



3 training sessions on working with disabled and neurodiverse young people, were attended by **38** people, delivered by Sense Charity

People on average **rated their enjoyment 8.8/10**



KEY IMPACTS

20.4% increase in participants identifying themselves as confident 

22.8% increase in participants identifying that they had positive mental health

82.6% say they feel knowledgeable about using social media to campaign for social issues 

12.4% increase in young people identifying themselves as resilient

26.4% increase in young people identifying that they had a positive outlook on society and the world around them

83.1% agreed that they had the skills they need to get where they want to in life

Gen22 and Ideas Made Real made a significant impact on **young peoples' confidence and resilience**.

The project saw a 20.4% increase in young people identifying themselves as confident, from 61.4% prior to engagement to 81.8% after. The number of young people identifying as resilient increased as a result of the project, from 71.5% before the project, to 83.9% after. This represents a significant increase of 12.4%.

Both of these qualities reflect a **broader increase to their wellbeing as a result of their engagement**.

There was an increase of 22.8% (from 58.1% to 80.9%) of young people identifying that they had positive mental health. Moreover, there was a 26.4% increase in young people identifying that they had a positive outlook on society and the world around them.

This significant increase may be due to the **bespoke skills provided to the young people** as part of their involvement. Following engagement 83.1% agreed that they **had the skills they need to get where they want to in life**. Skills provided throughout the programme, on taking action on social issues important to participants, have left the young people feeling more positive about future careers.

After the programme there was a 24.3% increase in participants identifying **they are confident to speak up about social issues** and a 22.8% increase in **confidence to make change in their local communities**. Whilst there was also a significant increase in their willingness to take action about social issues, only 66.1% of the young people feel confident to start their own social action campaigns. Whilst this increased from 44.2% at the start of the project, participants are still more likely to want to take action via social media: 82.6% say they feel knowledgeable about using social media to campaign for social issues.

As noted, across multiple indicators, there was significant uplift in participants identifying positive wellbeing, mental health, and attitudes towards the future. This may be due to the fact that young people taking part in programmes began with relatively low levels of wellbeing. Just over half of the participants said they have a positive outlook on society at the start of the programme. Only 58.1% said they had positive mental health. This shows that **the programme significantly impacted the young people who needed it most**.

BRING THE POWER

OVERVIEW

Bring the Power (BTP) is a youth engagement programme supporting a range of targeted and open-to-all engagement pathways in Birmingham and the West Midlands. The programme aims to widen knowledge, improve access to sport, and boost confidence and resilience in young people, helping them to acquire new skills. With a revised focus of Women and Girls in Sport, SEND opportunities, and Youth Voice as overarching Trailblazer themes, Bring the Power seeks to address the imbalance of female representation within the sports sector and access to opportunities for young people with disabilities across the digital, arts, and sport sectors.

There are multiple delivery strands within Bring the Power.

School Workshops

The workshops were delivered to schools across the region and they educated young people on the legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and inspiring local figures whilst building teamwork and employability skills. Each workshop ended by encouraging young people to make a pledge for change in their community.

Resources & Competition

United By 2022 developed flexible 20-minute assembly presentations with impactful imagery, film clips and supporting notes which teachers could edit and adapt to suit their students. The resources were hosted on the United By 2022 Charity's website and shared amongst school networks. A social action competition titled 'Get Even' for Key Stage 2 and 3 inspired young people to use their voice and take action to make a positive difference in their communities. Young people were set the task of creating a piece of art that celebrated diversity in sport and encouraged all young people to take part. Receiving over 50 entries, the winning artworks were selected by a local Birmingham youth panel, with the winners receiving tickets to a sporting event of their choice and a Team England athlete visit to their school.



Common Ground

The Common Ground Arts programme brings artist residencies to schools serving students with special educational needs. Teachers and artists share their professional knowledge and practices in their respective disciplines. This helps to create meaningful student art outcomes through these accessible artist residencies.

From street art to breakdancing, filmmaking for BSL users to visual arts, students were given the opportunity to explore, make connections, and foster creativity. The resulting student art projects from all schools were shared and celebrated during a public exhibition at the Midlands Arts Centre in June 2024. A summary video of all seven projects is available [here](#).

Gift of the Games

Gift of the Games supported 7 schools in Birmingham & Solihull to further embed inclusive sport and physical activity into their pupils' everyday life. Through collaboration with the schools, BTP provided an inclusive sports programme for pupils with and without SEND, along with tailored training support for school staff to ensure long-term implementation of inclusive practices. Over 6 weeks, students had the opportunity to participate in different sports, particularly those that are not usually offered in the school curriculum.

Critical to the success of the project was the support delivered to improve inclusion-awareness and accessibility. Each school completed a baseline consultation resulting in bespoke Action Plans delivered to PE leads and supporting staff. The project aim was to create partnership opportunities amongst schools to encourage project sustainability once the initial 6-week delivery period has finished. It will also provide ongoing support through e-learning modules and resource hubs.





Stronger Together

Four Birmingham based schools participated in the Stronger Together Project, each spending six weeks working with cultural organisations on the theme 'Stronger Together' to celebrate personal and community identity. Students from Queensbridge School took part in poetry workshops with Sampad South Asian Arts. Wheelers Lane Technology College and the theatre company Stan's Café created Suzie Small Pulls A Bus, a performance art piece about forces and friction, culminating in a double decker bus being pulled across the school playing field by over 100 students and parents.

King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys have worked with Soul City Arts, where a street-artist who uses his art to empower communities has worked to make a Stronger Together art installation. Kings Norton Girls School worked with musician Keith Farr to create The Birmingham Cantata, a musical piece telling the story and spirit that makes Birmingham the unique city it is today.

Festival Days

Festival Days are mass participation events for young people to connect through an inspirational day of sport and cultural activity. Seven community organisations were granted £7,000 each to deliver a Festival Day co-designed by young people, encouraging creativity and innovative thinking. Festival Days took place in each of the WMCA 7 local authority areas.

Some of the Festival Day providers extended their work beyond the delivery of a Festival Day to include workshops or additional sessions. One example of this being Kantu Ensemble who delivered a series of workshops to young people as a follow-up activity to their Festival Day, extending the opportunities available for young people with disabilities and SEND.

Kabaddi Project

With the Kabaddi World Cup taking place in the West Midlands in March 2025, the Charity supported school and community projects to improve the awareness of the sport and increase the number of young people participating through a project led by Wolverhampton Wrestling Club.

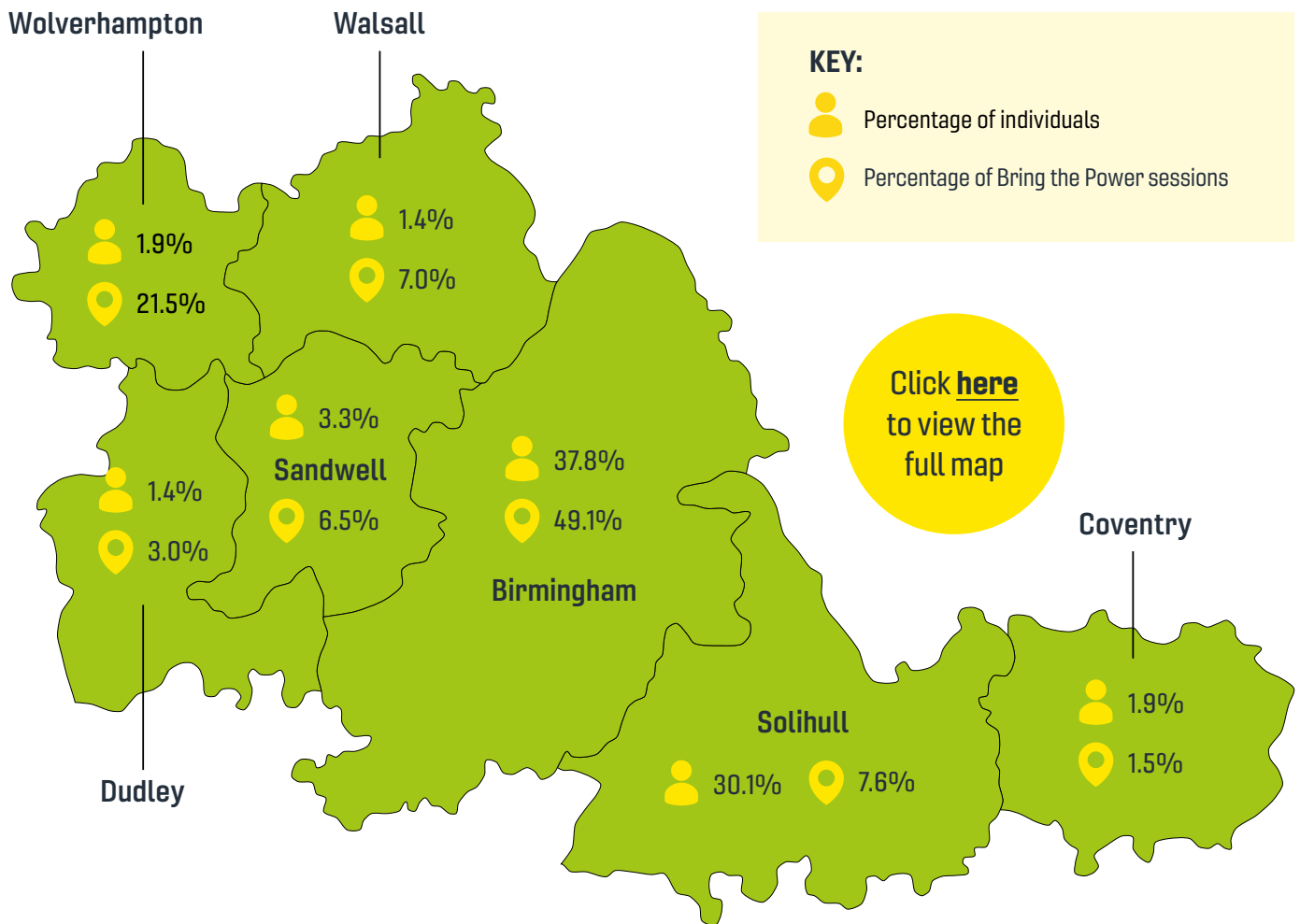
Working with local secondary schools and some local faith centres, kabaddi sessions were delivered and a locally based workforce was developed to support the longer-term sustainability of the sport within the region.



KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The below presents demographics from participants of Bring the Power across multiple strands, as well as those people who have taken part in advisory and consultation sessions. The map and corresponding figures relates to all individuals and sessions from Bring the Power.

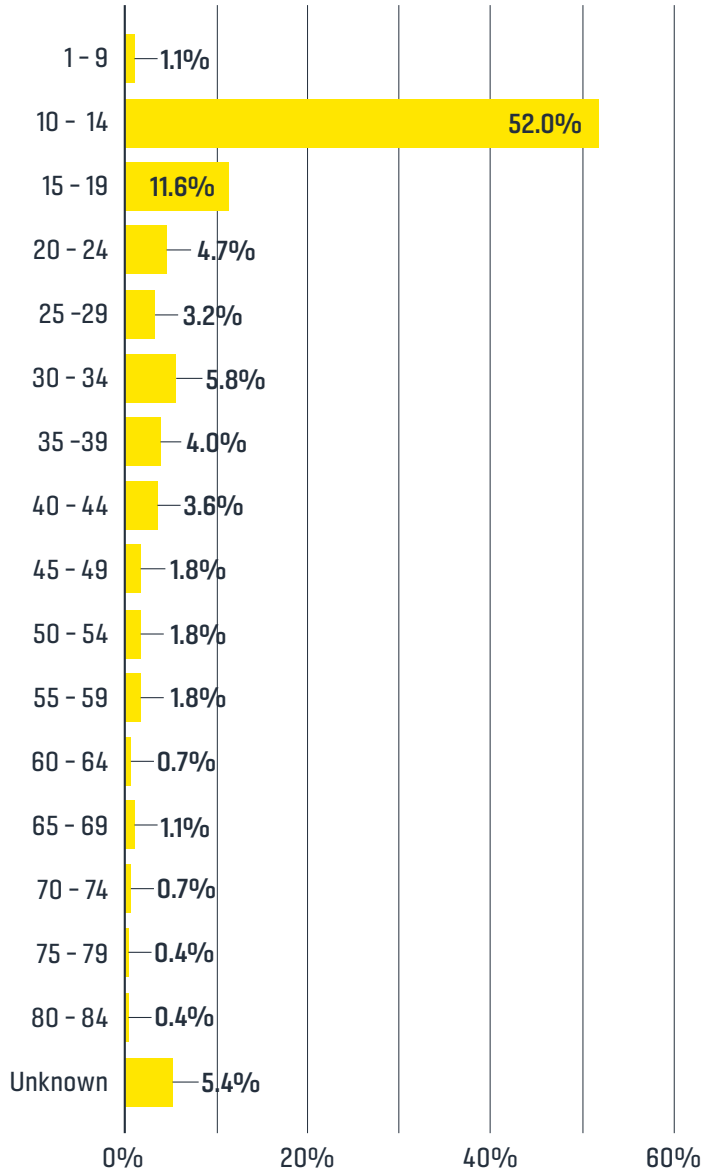
Home Location: Local Authorities



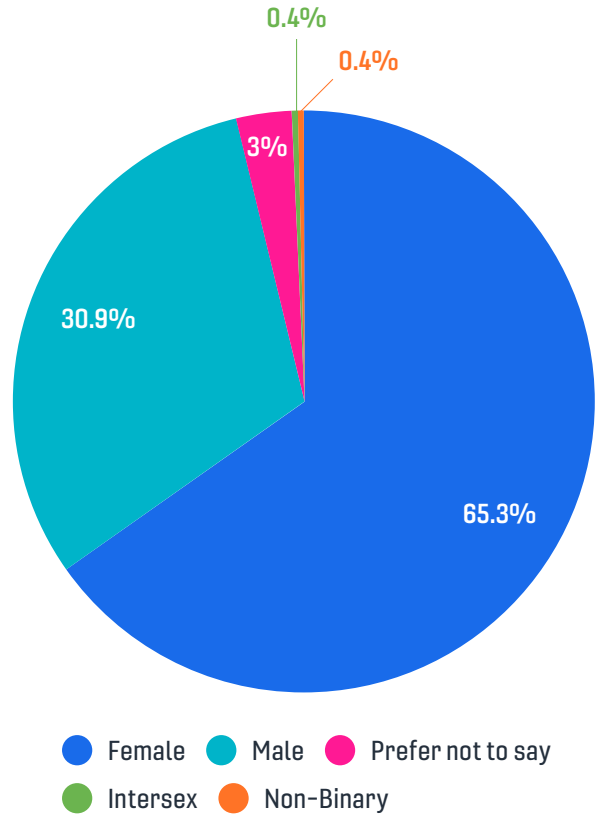
Local Authority	Percentage of Bring the Power sessions	Percentage of individuals
Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands	0.5%	4%
Local Authorities outside West Midlands	0.3%	5.7%

(n=278)

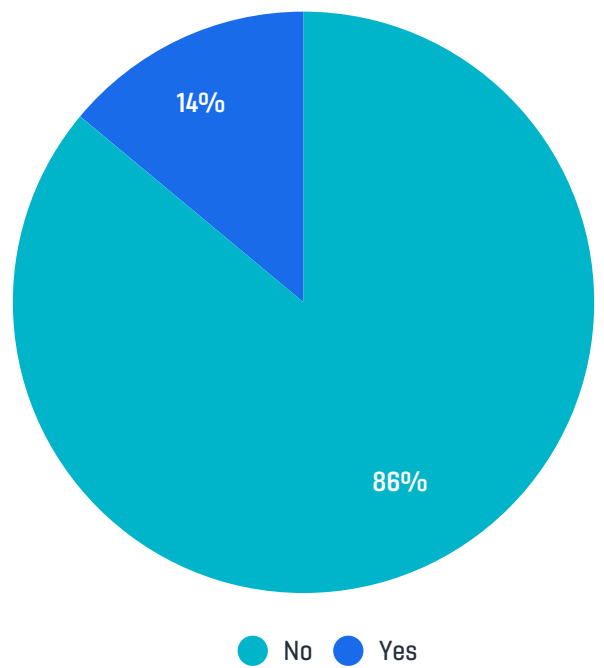
Age



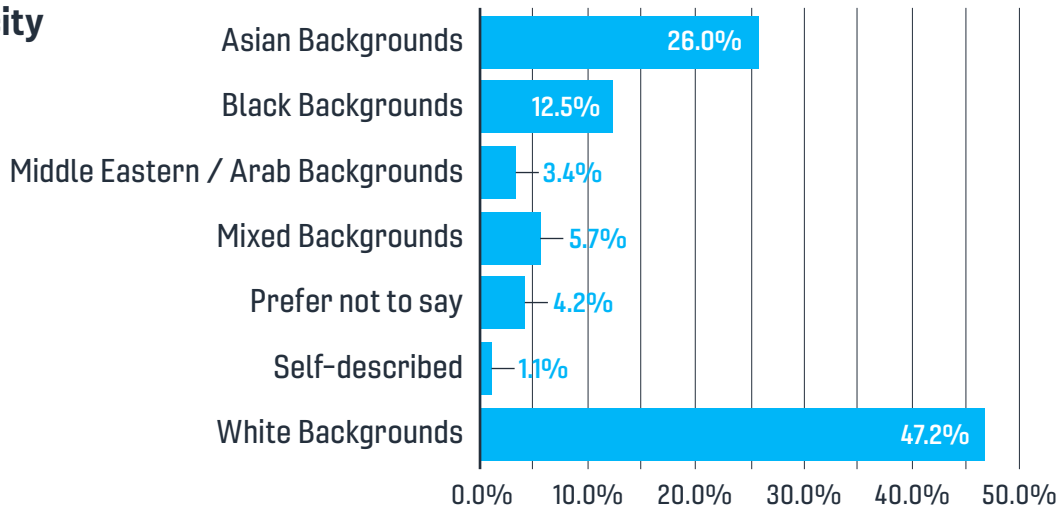
Gender



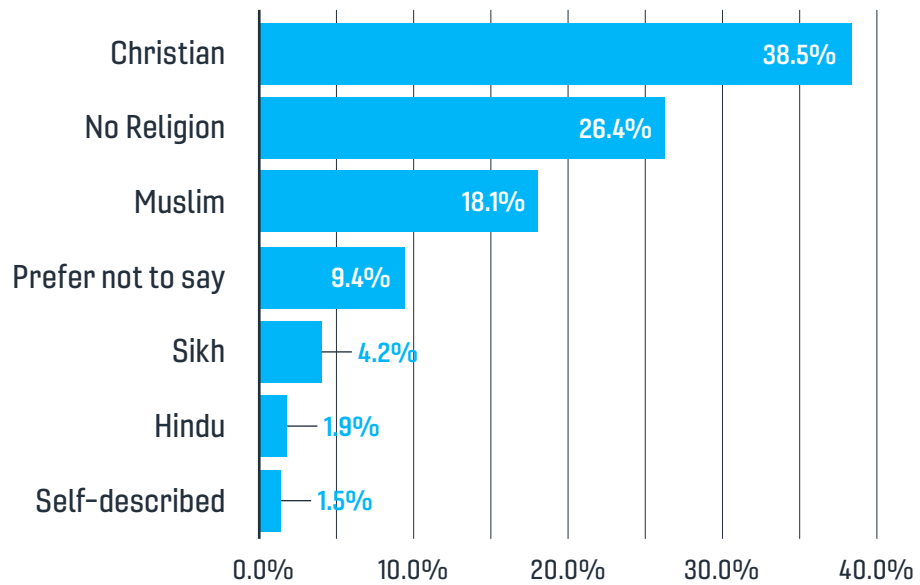
Disability, long-term health condition or neurodiverse



Ethnicity

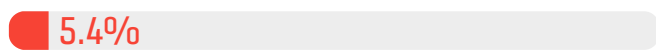


Faith

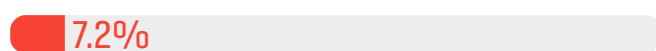


Do any of the following apply to you:

English as 2nd Language



Born Overseas



KEY OUTPUTS

1,403



participants engaged in arts and sports workshops over multiple weeks

13,557

participants engaged in **one-off Schools workshops** and Festival Days

20 training



sessions for school staff across 13 locations were attended by **176 attendees**

546

people shaped the content of Bring the Power initiatives as part of advisory and consultancy engagement

87 delivery organisations

worked with young people



82 schools, colleges and community groups engaged with the programme

People on average **rated their engagement 8.6/10** across activities



34.1%

of participants were from the **20% most deprived areas** of the country



KEY IMPACTS

70.4%

of delivery staff on the programme agreed that their organisation's engagement with Bring the Power has helped build opportunities for girls/women to engage with sports.

80.3% 

of Bring the Power participants said the programme **increased their motivation** to take part in similar activity again.

Bring the Power successfully increased participants' knowledge on barriers to engagement and social inequalities in both the sports and culture sectors.

88.6% 

of advisory participants agree that Bring the Power initiatives are **relevant to young people**.

85.7%

of advisory participants agreed that the programme **was more inclusive** in part due to their involvement.

Bring the Power has grown people's knowledge about the barriers to engagement that individuals may face when engaging in the sports or culture sector. 52% of participants said that they had knowledge about barriers to engagement in the sports sector prior to engagement, 68.3% said they did after engaging in the programme, representing a 16.3% increase. Participants rated their equivalent knowledge in the culture sector at 43.8% prior to engagement and 74% after engagement, representing a 30.2% increase.

Therefore, whilst the overall knowledge of barriers to engagement in sports was higher to begin with in comparison to the equivalent in culture, the growth in knowledge of the culture sector was significantly higher. While the programme built knowledge in both sectors, it built more knowledge in culture than sports.

Participants were 15.4% more likely to identify that they had **knowledge of social inequalities** in the culture sector after their engagement, when compared to how they rated their knowledge prior to engagement. The equivalent knowledge in the sports sector saw a 19.6% increase.

Equally, the **programme built participants' confidence to engage in sports and cultural activities**. As a result of engagement, participants were 8.6% more likely to feel confident to engage in sports, and 37% more likely to feel confident to engage in culture. After engagement, 81% of participants were confident to engage in sports, and 87% in culture. The programme had a particularly strong impact on women, who were 13.1% more likely to feel confident about engaging in sports after engagement.

CRITICAL MASS

OVERVIEW

Originally part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival, **Critical Mass** is a high-profile dance and movement project that engages hundreds of participants aged 16-30 years old from the West Midlands who are representative of the diversity of the region. The programme brings together young people with disabilities, and without, to encourage them to move more and perform as a united dance group.

FABRIC Keep Moving Sessions

FABRIC brought together new and existing Critical Mass participants for weekly movement sessions. These sessions focused on developing dance skills, building friendships, and fostering a sense of community through movement. FABRIC continues to generate learning and insight about inclusion, access and disability for the region and wider sectors, whilst engaging young people in high quality dance experiences.

Black Country Inclusive Dance Project (in partnership with BC Dance Hub CIC²)

As part of the Trailblazer commitment to commissioning two new inclusive dance projects in the region, United By 2022 funded Black Country Dance Hub (BCDH) to establish and develop inclusive dance provision in the Black Country. BCDH worked with groups from Walsall and Dudley to create sustainable, regular dance opportunities for disabled and D/deaf participants—historically underrepresented in the region. Two new inclusive dance groups were launched to expand this work, specifically engaging with the D/deaf community. Additionally, the charity facilitated support from Gowling WLG to help BCDH transition into a Community Interest Company (CIC).

² formally Black Country Dance Hub





Coventry Inclusive Dance Project (in partnership with Ascension Dance)

To fulfil the commitment to commissioning two new inclusive dance projects, United By 2022 funded Ascension Dance to create inclusive youth dance groups for children aged 5-14. This project focused on movement exploration, offering outreach workshops, pilot sessions, and sustainability evaluation.

It also provided regional development workshops, career training for dance artists, and support in showcasing participants' work—fostering inclusivity, creativity, and community engagement in Coventry and Warwickshire. These were locations formally identified as cold spots for United By 2022 work.

Laxmi Dance Project (in partnership with SAMPAD and Bollywood Dreams)

United By 2022 and SAMPAD commissioned an inclusive dance project at Shree Laxminarayan Temple. Led by Reena Tailor from Bollywood Dreams, this initiative provided weekly dance sessions for senior citizens who regularly visited the temple for community gatherings and worship.

The project aimed to establish a lasting inclusive dance provision, improving the physical and mental wellbeing of its participants.



FABRIC Performance Strand

FABRIC and United By 2022 worked to create more opportunities for disabled dancers and creatives within both professional and community dance contexts. Building on past achievements, the project aimed to embed skills training, employment pathways, and performance opportunities for Critical Mass participants.

FABRIC collaborated with existing Keep Moving groups, professional dance companies Anjali and Motionhouse, to ensure that disabled artists could access sustainable careers in dance.

Practitioner Capacity Building (in partnership with Dance Leaders Group)

This programme aimed to support at least 150 practitioners annually through online training and activities. Dance Leaders Group (DLG) delivered a capacity-building initiative that included:

▶ **Training & Development:** Supporting dance practitioners with business development, international expertise, and bursaries for existing courses.

▶ **Networking & Events:** Coordinating 35 paid learning exchanges between dance professionals and facilitating connections beyond DLG members.



▶ **Progression Routes:** Piloting resources from Critical Mass, including the Common Ground Manual, launching an Inclusive Pathway Forum, and offering five mentoring placements with regional professional dance companies.

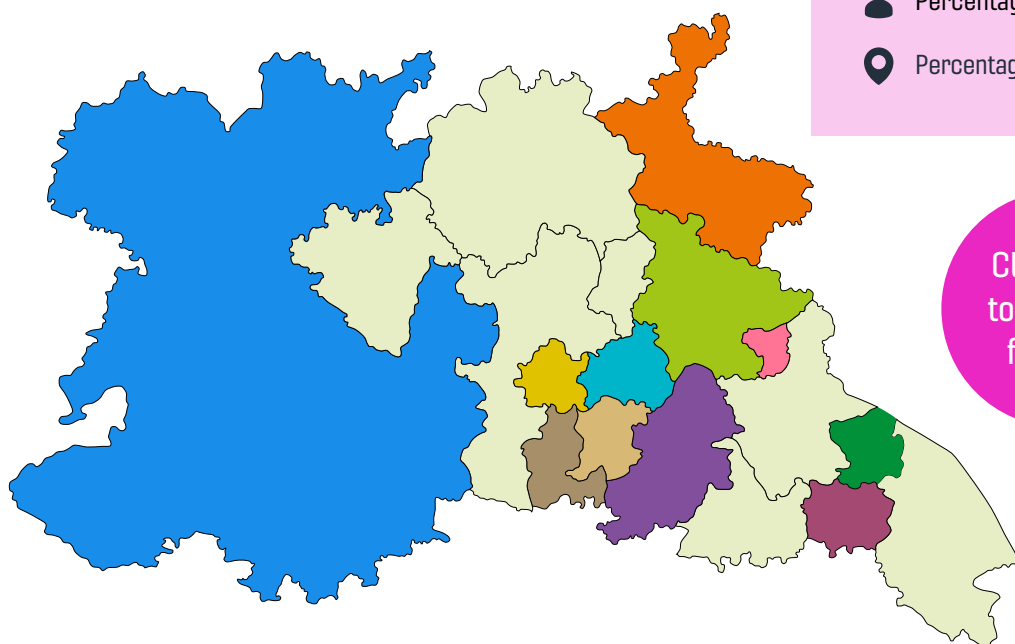
KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The below outlines the demographics of participants who have taken part in Critical Mass programmes over multiple sessions. The map outlines all individuals and sessions who were involved in Critical Mass.

Home Location: Local Authorities



KEY:

-  Percentage of individuals
-  Percentage of Critical Mass sessions





[Click here](#)
to view the
full map



Shropshire

 0.0%
 3.3%



East Staffordshire

 5.3%
 8.6%



Lichfield

 0.0%
 9.4%



Tamworth

 0.9%
 2.2%



Wolverhampton

 7.9%
 0.0%



Walsall

 11.4%
 6.7%



Dudley

 21.1%
 13.1%



Sandwell

 6.1%
 10.0%



Birmingham

 22.8%
 10.8%

Nuneaton and Bedworth

 0.0%
 15.8%

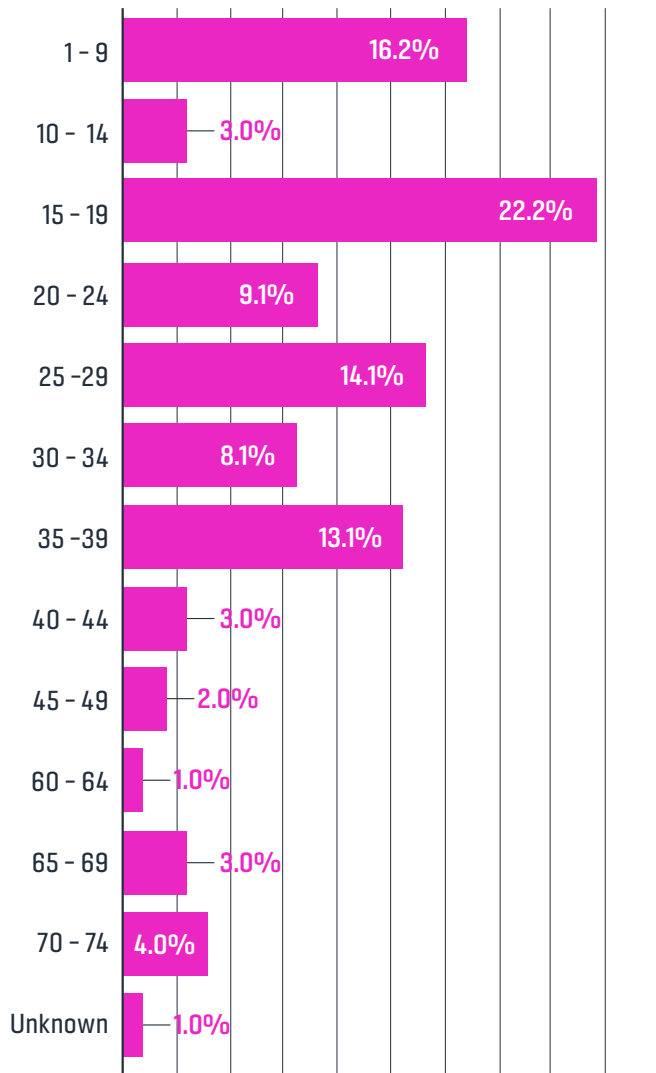
Coventry

 0.9%
 13.1%

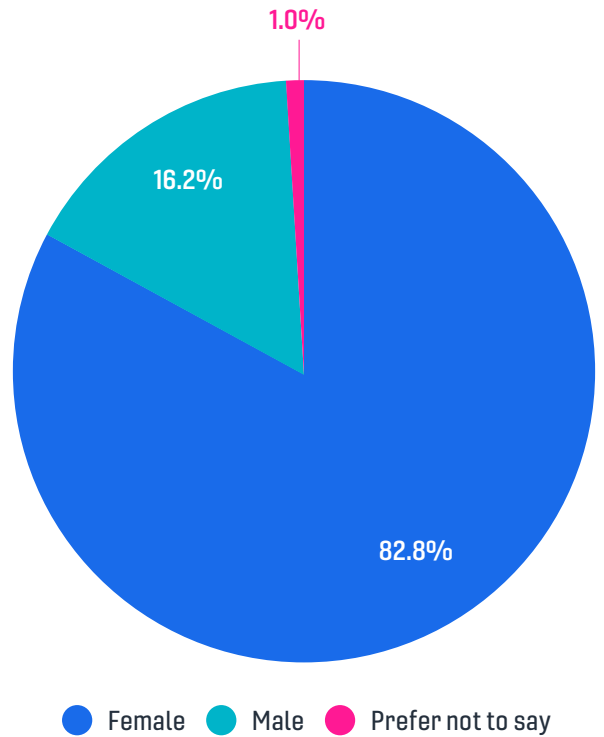
Local Authority	Percentage of Critical Mass sessions	Percentage of individuals
Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands	2.8%	14.9%
Local Authorities outside West Midlands	0.3%	6.1%

(n=99)

Age



Gender

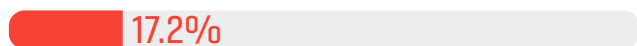


Do any of the following apply to you:

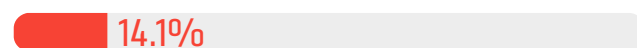
Disabled



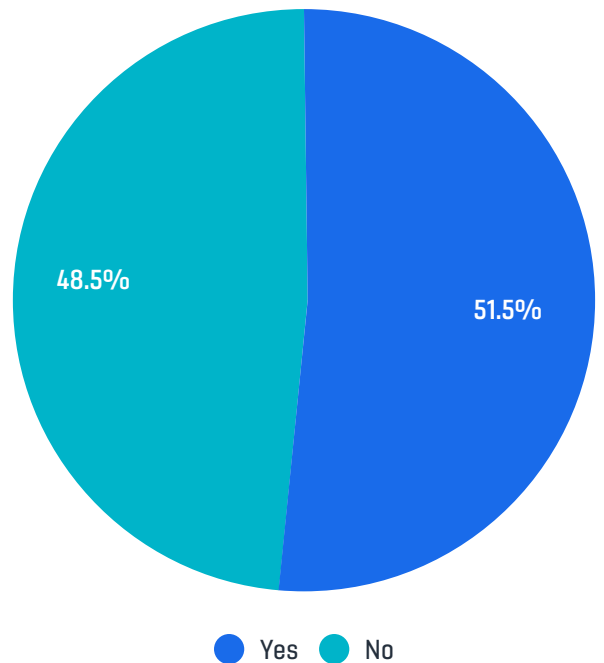
Neurodiverse



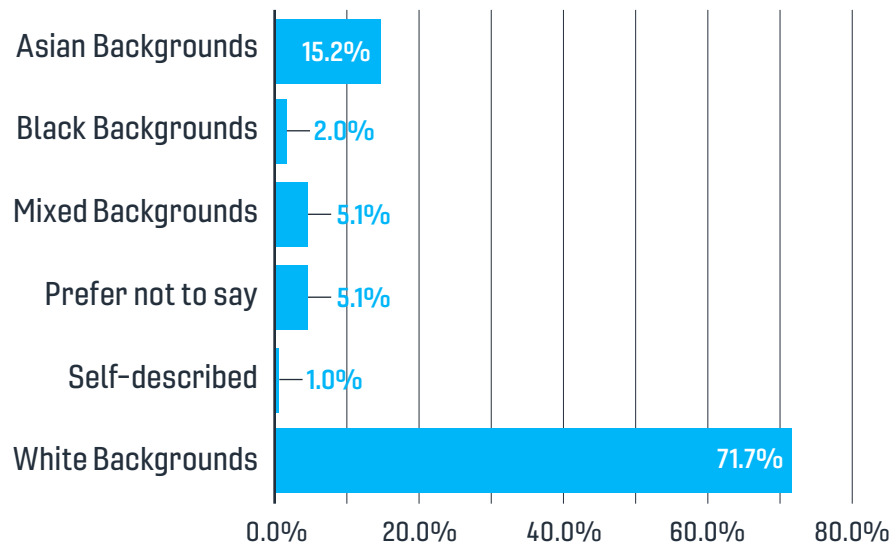
Long-term Health Condition



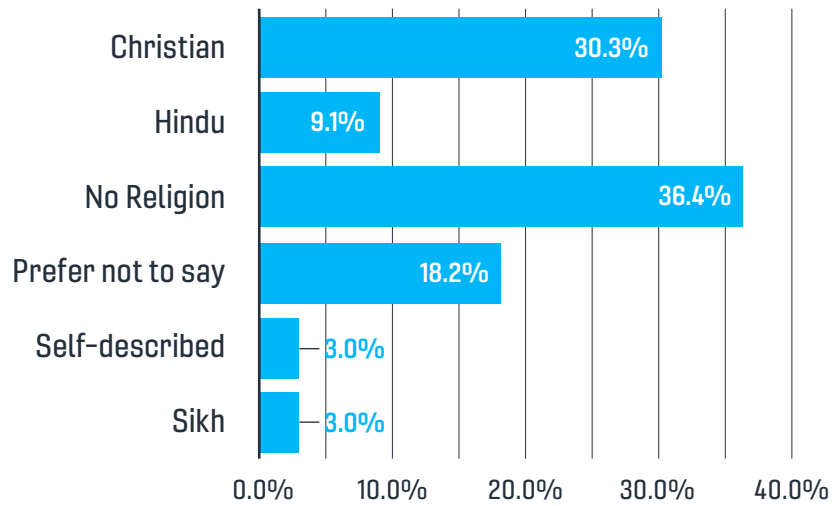
Disability, long-term health condition or neurodiverse



Ethnicity



Faith



KEY OUTPUTS

352 
**Critical Mass
Participants**

341 inclusive
dance sessions
with participants

25 
locations
across the region

17 members of
**Dance Leaders
Group** informing
delivery of the
programme

18 delivery
organisations



5 training
sessions on
inclusive dance

People rated 
their **enjoyment**
in engaging 9.5/10
across project

51.5%
of participants identify
as having a **disability,**
long-term health condition
or being neurodiverse

21.4% of people
involved in the project
were from the **20%**
most deprived areas
of the country



KEY IMPACTS

96% of participants formed new friendships through engagement in the project



91.3% of participants who identified as having a disability, long term health condition, or being neurodiverse had a more positive perception of disability.

Critical Mass **built participants' dance knowledge.**

62.8% of participants said they were confident in their dance knowledge prior to their engagement, 82.8% said they felt confident in it after their engagement. This represents a significant shift of 20%.

Critical Mass also **maintained participants' confidence in their dance skills**, which was at a high level prior to the start of the project. 81.4% of participants said they felt confident in their dance skills prior to engagement, and 80.8% did after engagement. Whilst this doesn't represent a significant shift, it is worth note that Critical Mass targets working with participants who are traditionally marginalised in dance. Therefore, a maintenance of strong dance confidence shows a successful outcome in this context.

The project also **slightly increased participants' confidence in their ability to make new friends.**

80.2% of participants felt confident in doing so prior to engagement, 83.8% did so after the engagement.

The project **significantly improved participant's perception of disability.** 79.1% of participants said that their perception of disability was more positive as a result of their engagement. 91.3% of participants who identified as having a disability, long term health condition, or being neurodiverse had a more positive perception of disability.



SOCIAL VALUE

OVERVIEW

Social Value is a measure of the value an organisation contributes to society, beyond a reported profit.

This method of measurement shifts the focus of value from a direct financial contribution towards the tangible impacts that decisions have on the people in our communities. Social Value looks at the net positive impacts for third sector organisations, communities and society; building towards a more sustainable future for the West Midlands.

In this programme United By 2022 have developed a robust Social Value implementation methodology using a measurement framework that aligns with the goals set out by the Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012, the needs of the West Midlands and the priorities of the Legacy Enhancement Fund. United By 2022 committed to generating a minimum of £1 million verified Social Value return across United By 2022 activities from April 2023–March 2025. This would represent a 20% Social Value return on the £5m trailblazer investment – far exceeding the 10% minimum required in public sector procurement. Social Value is being treated as a strategic priority, empowering United By 2022 to improve its own services as a charity.

The Social Value Trailblazer strand also encourages and supports organisations across the West Midlands to make Social Value a part of the way they do business every day. It works with the private sector to:

- ▶ Develop Social Value strategies;
- ▶ Measure the Social Value they are generating;
- ▶ Connect them with local communities they otherwise wouldn't come across; and
- ▶ Help them grow their impact and share their stories.

At the same time, this strand also works with the communities and the not for profit sector to:

- ▶ Deliver upskilling and training opportunities through a mix of online and in person workshops, supported by 1:1 surgeries;
- ▶ Create a network for peer learning, consultations and encourage collaboration; and
- ▶ Introduce them to funders and funding opportunities.

The strand aims to bring together the private and third sector, securing investment for grassroots sport, local arts organisations and community projects, and delivering more Social Value to the region.



Social Value had various project strands, which are outlined below:

Skilled Volunteers

A cohort of volunteers who have professional skills, ranging from business development to financial management, who are strategically matched with United By 2022 Family organisations who need targeted support. The skilled volunteer pool includes representatives from across the private sector.

Meet the Funder

Online and in-person sessions with grants officers from local and national funders, providing an opportunity for community organisations to find out about the funder's latest grants, processes and criteria. Funders also had an opportunity to meet new community groups and to offer advice and tips for successful applications.

Capacity Building

A series of webinars and in-person events, delivered by specialist industry experts and the United By 2022 team, to offer organisations support with practical challenges such as bid writing, budgeting and project management.

1:1 Surgeries

Recognising that some community groups face more barriers than others, members of the United By 2022 Family were offered 1:1 sessions for further support and guidance with topics such as reviewing funding applications, guidance on planning events, and suggestions for potential partners.

United By Family Events

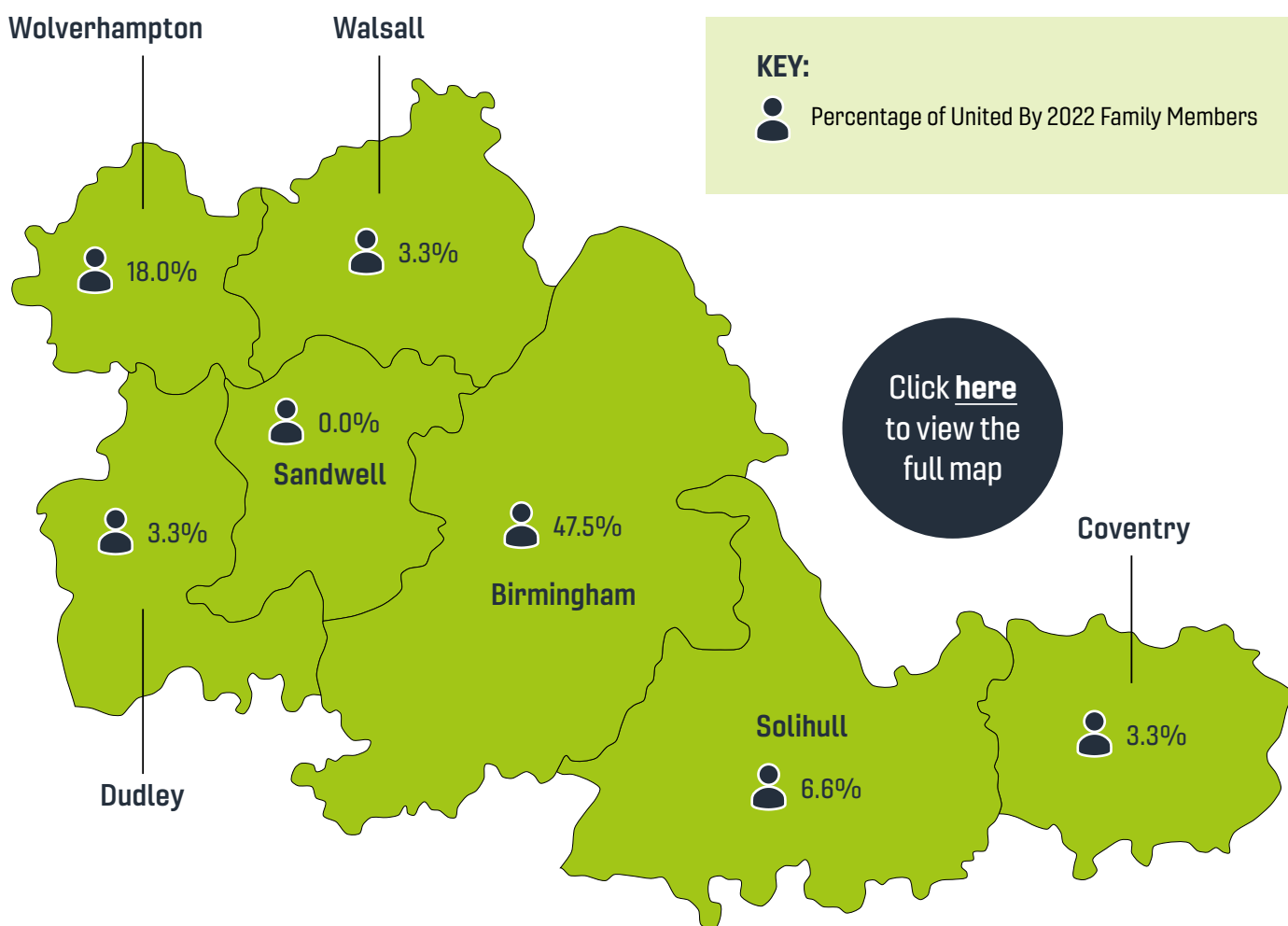
A series of in-person events in community settings across the region. These offer a mix of information sharing on the latest opportunities, a chance for local organisations to showcase their work, and opportunities to meet local authority community teams and anchor organisations.



KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Below represents a sample of attendees at training sessions conducted by the Social Value Trailblazer teams, across their engagement strands.

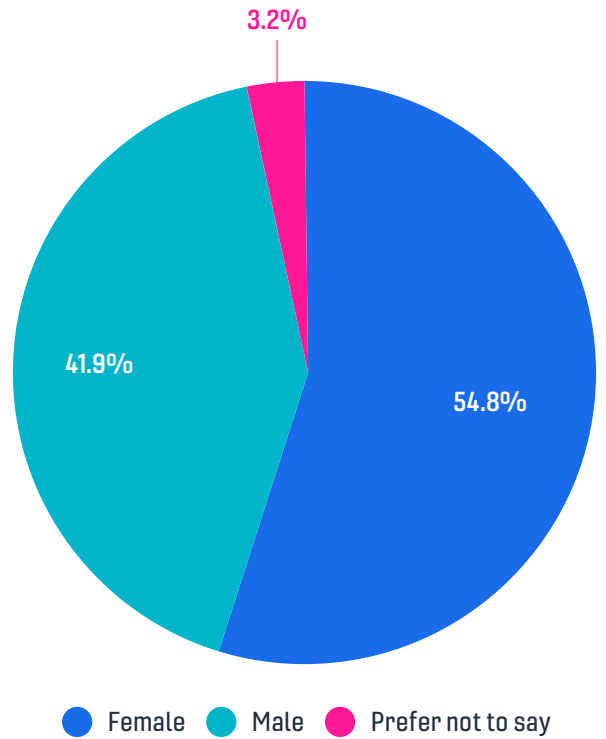
Home Location: Local Authorities



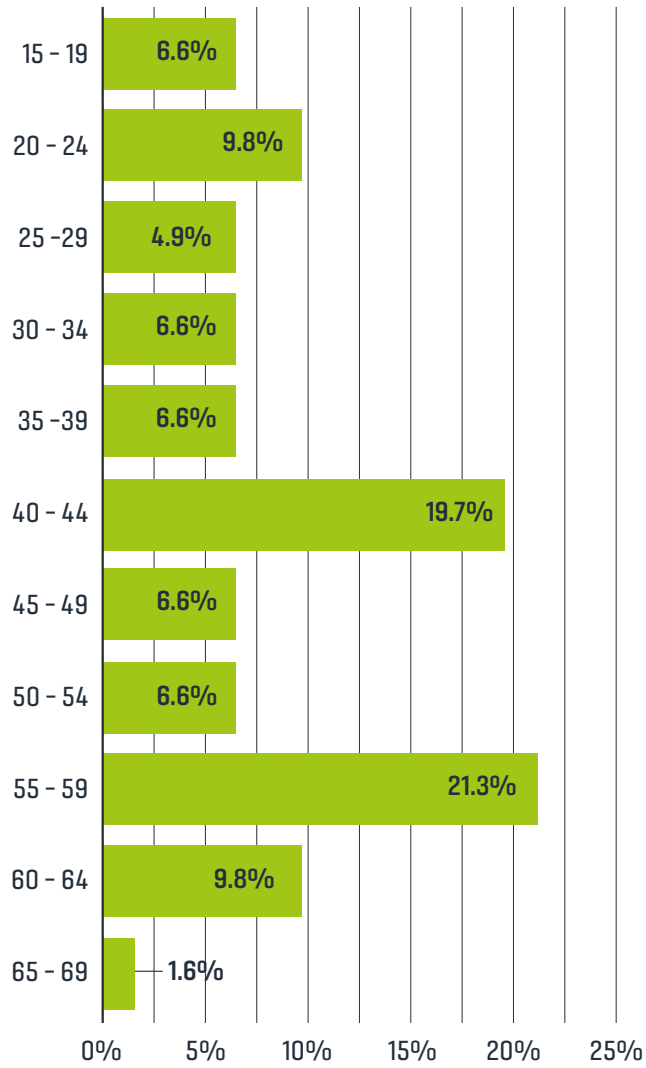
Local Authority	Percentage of United By 2022 Family Members
Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands	18.0%
Local Authorities outside West Midlands	0.0%

(n=62)

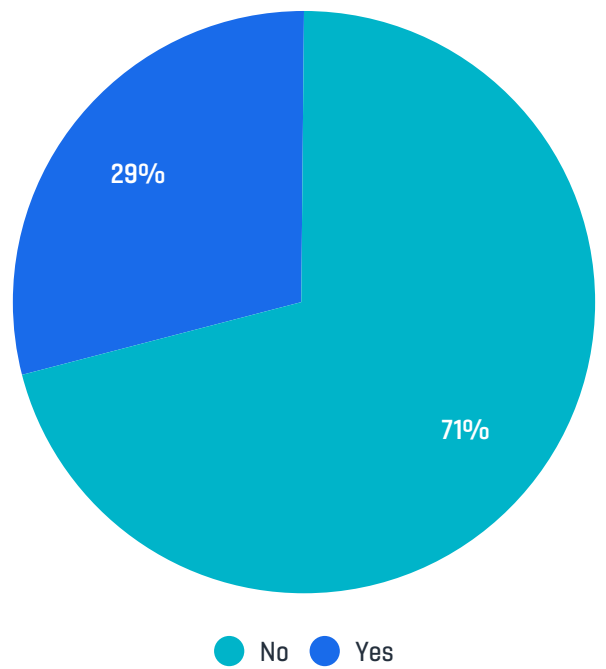
Gender



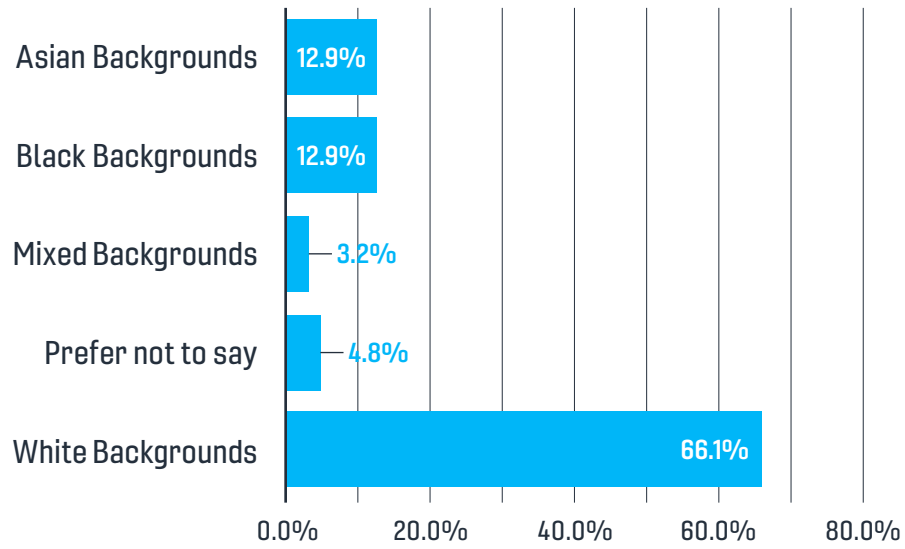
Age



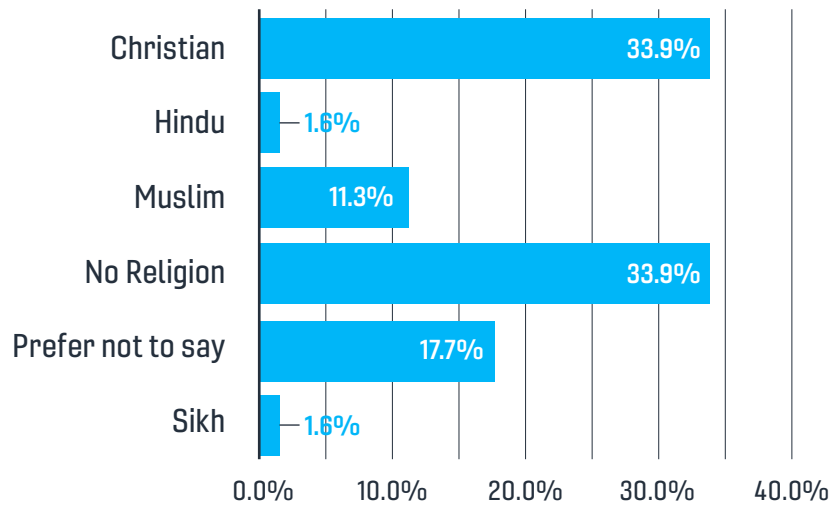
Disability, long-term health condition or neurodiverse



Ethnicity



Faith



KEY OUTPUTS

170 members
of the United By 2022
family

50 training 
sessions delivered
across **13 locations**

617 attendees
at training sessions

People on average
rated their enjoyment 
8.8/10 across activity

46% of training
attendees from the
20% most deprived
areas of the country

Equivalent of 
£2,759,214.13
verified Social Value³

77.4% agreed that
Social Value sessions
had **developed**
pre-existing skills

67.7% agreed that
Social Value sessions
had helped them
gain new skills 

³ Provided by Social Value Portal, on behalf of United By 2022



KEY IMPACTS

United By 2022 have supported 170 organisations across the West Midlands, through bespoke, tailored support and access to upskilling training.

In some instances, United By 2022 have also supported organisations to measure their own social value via the Social Value Portal.

United by 2022 used information from its internal operations and delivery suppliers to translate its investment into a verified social value figure. It also supports some of its delivery suppliers to measure their own social value return on investment.

The measurement and reporting framework used for this figure is aligned with a National Social Value Measurement Framework ('UK TOMs' - Themes, Outcomes & Measures). Data was recorded across these categories on a cloud-based platform called 'the Portal', a tool created by Social Value Portal (SVP), and then independently validated by their in-house experts. The UK TOMs are built around 5 key Themes, supported by a number of Outcomes and specific Measures. The Themes centre around promoting jobs and skills, supporting regional growth, empowering communities, protecting the environment and promoting social innovation. Each Theme is broken down into outcomes that are agreed to have a positive impact on communities, and these are further broken down into quantitative Measures. Financial proxy values have been attributed to each of the Measures within the framework, allowing organisations to report their overall contribution to society in financial and non-financial terms. For example, each full time equivalent direct local employee (FTE) who is hired or retained, has an equivalent Social Value of £28,009 - regardless of their actual salary.

As part of the Trailblazer programmes, United By 2022 achieved an equivalent verified Social Value of £2,759,214.13.⁴

This United By 2022 initiative has played a pivotal role in supporting grassroots organisations, providing them with invaluable networking opportunities, mentorship, and access to funding. Through tailored training sessions, corporate engagement events, and one-on-one guidance, organisations such as William Wilson Turner Foundation and Calico have been able to expand their reach and strengthen their impact. These opportunities have empowered them to navigate funding landscapes, enhance their digital inclusion efforts, and build meaningful connections within the sector. However, while these initiatives have laid a strong foundation for growth, organisations have also highlighted areas where additional support could enhance their long-term success.

One organisation, the William Wilson Turner Foundation, explained in a focus group that Networking had been a crucial aspect of their involvement with United By 2022. While they have formed connections at various events, they found that maintaining those relationships beyond the initial introduction remains a challenge. They noted that better post-event follow-up mechanisms, such as shared contact details or facilitated collaboration opportunities, would improve long-term engagement.

Despite these successes, Calico identified areas where they require further support. They found that while networking events provided exposure, they did not always lead to tangible partnerships, suggesting that a more structured matchmaking process with corporate funders would be beneficial. They also highlighted the financial barriers associated with attending events, proposing that a small travel bursary would help ensure equal access for all participants.

⁴ Provided by United By 2022, via Social Value Portal

Strengthening Skills and Confidence Through Social Value Measurement

The United By 2022 **Social Value team** has supported organisations like **FABRIC** and **Hark** in developing their ability to measure and understand their impact. Through this process, both organisations have enhanced their skills and confidence in demonstrating the value of their work.

Building Capacity and Skills

For Hark, the process of measuring Social Value was initially daunting. Chris Corcoran shared, *“Completing the Social Value process certainly seemed quite an onerous task... quite complicated in terms of gathering the evidence.”* However, through continued engagement, he found improvements: *“It felt much more of a partnership approach to just properly understand the ways in which we had really added value.”* This shift not only helped Hark track its contributions but also strengthened its confidence in delivering meaningful work.

FABRIC faced similar challenges, with Programme Manager Sophie Humphries noting, *“When we’ve had the meetings with United By 2022, it’s been really useful and they’ve definitely really explained everything in quite a lot of depth.”* Despite some challenges around collecting the evidence needed for social value reporting, the process encouraged a more structured approach to assessing impact.

Enhancing Confidence in Seeking Work

Measuring Social Value has encouraged both organisations to think more strategically about their operations. Chris emphasised, *“It’s actually really important to us that the work that we’re doing is making a difference and having an impact.”* The process also influenced hiring and partnerships, with Hark now working with facilitators and suppliers first encountered through the programme.

While FABRIC has not yet used Social Value data in funding applications, Sophie recognised its potential: *“I think it’s a really interesting measure, and I would like to learn a bit more about how to put it into our practice.”* Chris saw an even clearer benefit, stating, *“There’d certainly be a benefit in demonstrating to prospective clients that we have the experience and capacity to meet Social Value expectations.”*

Despite initial hurdles, measuring Social Value has provided both organisations with new insights and strengthened their ability to articulate their impact. To maximise its benefits, clearer guidance and earlier integration into project planning could further enhance confidence and skills in using Social Value as a tool for growth and sustainability.

TRAILBLAZER OUTCOMES AND LEARNING: PROGRESS TOWARDS THE THEORY OF CHANGE



United By 2022's Theory of Change outlines eight short term outcomes which they hope to have had an impact on as part of their Trailblazer programmes. These are as follows:

Wellbeing

Individuals feel an increased sense of wellbeing through engaging as participants and volunteers, as well as through delivering projects as staff.



Exchange

Learnings, evaluations and processes are open sourced, shared and adopted by other organisations.



Resource

Organisations and individuals will have more resources and capacity as a result of financial and/or developmental investment.



Representation

Organisations and individuals who have traditionally been excluded on the grounds of age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability will be better platformed, funded and empowered.



Skills

Organisations and individuals will be better skilled and more confident to deliver work and to seek new work.



Co-creation

Co-creation is more frequently used in community projects, driving better inclusion, access and ownership.



Networks

Organisations and individuals will be better networked, particularly across sectors which currently operate in silo.



Access

Processes (from application to participation to evaluation) are fully accessible on both programme and project levels. Best practice is acted upon, shared and iterated.



If these eight short-term outcomes are successfully achieved, then United By 2022 will have contributed towards the following medium and long-term outcomes, and finally the ultimate impact of the Trailblazer programme.

Medium-term Outcome

Diverse-led organisations across Birmingham and the West Midlands are better resourced and actively engage with other organisations to share, learn, adapt and improve their support to their target communities.

Long-term Outcome

Across Birmingham and the West Midlands, barriers to engagement (including the impact of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis) are alleviated for young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people, LGBTQ+, and economically deprived communities so they can actively participate in sports, arts & culture, volunteering and/or employment opportunities.

Programme Impact

To continue to galvanise civic engagement through volunteers, charities and community organisations. We upskill and support charities and community groups so they become more resilient, and we will unite them with local businesses. By 2032, our work will contribute to the West Midlands becoming a national beacon of inclusive growth, where barriers are broken down and opportunities are accessible to a wider range of people.

The next section outlines the impact made on each of the eight short term outcomes across the Trailblazer programmes. This is before the conclusion outlines how these have contributed to the **medium** and **long-term outcomes**, and **programme impact**, outlined above.



OUTCOME ONE: WELLBEING



Individuals feel an increased sense of wellbeing through engaging as participants and volunteers as well as through delivering projects as staff.

Across Bring the Power, Critical Mass, and Gen22, 2,238 sessions have been delivered with young people, which aimed to have a positive impact on their wellbeing. 348 people, delivering over 24,000 hours of volunteering, have boosted their happiness by making a positive contribution to the world around them.

Prior to the start of programmes, participants in Bring the Power and Gen22 highlighted a range of wellbeing challenges that included physical, emotional, social, and cognitive aspects, which may impact their ability to engage fully. Physical concerns included injuries, fatigue, and limitations in strength or stamina, which could hinder participation in sports and physical activities. Many also expressed apprehension about their abilities and performance, fearing they might struggle with learning new skills, understanding rules, or adapting to unfamiliar tasks.

Similarly, confidence, communication, and social interactions emerged as key concerns, with many participants feeling anxious about public speaking, meeting new people, and expressing their ideas. A lack of self-belief and fear of making mistakes were recurring themes, alongside worries about teamwork, potential judgement from others, and navigating different working styles.

In addition to social and emotional concerns, time management and balancing commitments were significant challenges, particularly for those juggling studies, work, and volunteering responsibilities. Some participants highlighted language barriers and difficulties in processing new information, which could impact their ability to stay engaged. Feelings of being overwhelmed by responsibilities, nervousness about trying new things, and difficulty maintaining motivation were also raised.

By addressing these barriers through structured support, inclusive environments, and confidence-building strategies, individuals across engagement types and Trailblazer programmes reported stronger wellbeing indicators.

Primarily, **young people engaging in Critical Mass and Gen22 feel more confident about trying new things**, a quality which can be significantly limited by low wellbeing and high social anxiety.

Prior to engagement, 72% of participants agreed that they felt confident to try something new. This rose by 9.2% over the course of the Trailblazer programmes to 81.2% at the end of 2024. This change may have been due to a growth in participant resilience. At baseline, 67.2% of participants agreed that they were able to adapt to change easily compared to 73.3% at the end of 2024.

Across the three youth programmes, participants were asked a number of wellbeing questions from the WEMWBS scale.⁵ These were as follows:

- 1 Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?**
- 2 Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?**
- 3 Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?**
- 4 Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?**

Questions 2 – 4 saw an increase of between 8.2% and 13% in the number of participants who were in agreement. This shows a significant positive impact of the programme on participants' mental health and wellbeing. By the end of 2024, 82 – 88% of participants agreed with questions 2 – 4.

The minor anomaly to this rule was question one: 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?' which saw a slight rise in anxiety levels over the course of the programme. The number of participants who identified feeling anxious went from 29.1% to 37.7% over the course of the programme. This could perhaps be attributed to trying new things and becoming involved in projects which they hadn't previously. In spite of this rise in anxiety, it does not seem to have affected participants' wellbeing in the areas outlined above.

Participants were also asked how much of a connection or sense of belonging they felt to their local community. Whilst scoring lower agreement levels than other indicators, 72% of participants agreed with this sentiment. This indicator saw a large discrepancy between Trailblazer programmes, with Gen22 participants feeling a much higher level of community connection (79.2%) compared to Bring the Power (55.7%). This may be due to the fact that Gen22 had a community social action focus.

Many members of the Volunteers Collective expressed how their involvement had positively influenced their wellbeing, offering emotional, social, and physical benefits.

A common theme was the boost to confidence, with one respondent stating, *"Volunteering has really helped me with my confidence and also really feeling a part of something special helping others."* Others highlighted how volunteering helped them regain a sense of purpose, and noted, *"Feeling like I have a purpose in life again."*

Several volunteers emphasised how volunteering had lifted their mood and provided a positive outlet. One described it as, *"Mood boosting and [I] like the engagement,"* while another summed up their experience as, *"Emotional, physical and spiritual impact resulting in a sense of purpose."* Others found it helped with their mental wellbeing, saying, *"Meeting new people, helping with my depression."* This was reflected in the quantitative data, where

99.5%
of volunteers who
have taken part in
opportunities felt
that they have made
a meaningful
contribution through
volunteering.

⁵ Warwick Medical School – Collect, score, analyse and interpret WEMWBS

For some, volunteering helped them cope with difficult personal circumstances. One individual shared that it helps to get them *“out of the house [...] filling the gap left by bereavement.”* Another attributed its value to meeting new people. Others found that staying engaged with volunteering provided structure and motivation, such as, *“Keeping active and keeping the brain engaged.”*

Social interaction played a significant role in wellbeing for many, with respondents offering *“Meeting other people, camaraderie, sense of all pulling together,”* and *“Meeting new and old friendships,”* as reasons for their engagement.

Another expressed, *“It has positively added to my life in terms of new connections and improved wellbeing through the enjoyment it gives me to play a part in delivering events in my community.”*

A sense of achievement and contribution also advanced wellbeing. One respondent reflected on *“feeling satisfied [they’d] helped customers enjoy their day of sport, for example”.* Another stated, *“the opportunity to give something back to the community and the making of new like-minded friends”* was a principal contribution to improved wellbeing. One volunteer found it particularly rewarding, saying, *“feeling useful and having a purpose”* was a key impact for them.

Finally, members of staff delivering projects as part of the Trailblazer programmes were also asked how delivery had affected their wellbeing.

96.8%
of delivery staff
said that their work
on programmes had
had a positive effect
on their wellbeing.





Nurturing Wellbeing Through Sport

The **St Andrew's Community Sports Flagship**, led by **Birmingham City Football Club Foundation (BCFC) and Bfriends Charity**, has played a crucial role in **improving the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing** of over 200 young people. Through team-building residential, mentoring, and structured support, the programme provided a safe space for personal growth, where participants built confidence, resilience, and essential life skills.

"Ours is a sporting development programme, but more importantly, it's a leadership development programme," explained Danny Hipkiss, BCFC Project Lead. The initiative began with a Youth Sports Leaders Award, designed to increase self-belief, teamwork, and communication skills, empowering participants to take ownership of their development.

Recognising the diverse needs of its participants, the programme adopted a flexible approach. Some engaged in intensive residential experiences, allowing them to form strong peer connections and build resilience in a supportive environment, while others attended weekly evening sessions to develop skills at their own pace.

Beyond skill-building, the programme **prioritised holistic wellbeing**. Young people were supported through mentoring, career exploration, and volunteering opportunities, all of which contributed to **greater self-esteem, motivation, and a sense of purpose**.

The impact has been **transformational**. Many participants overcame social anxiety, improved their emotional resilience, and developed a stronger sense of belonging. Several have secured paid coaching roles, others have progressed to university sports programmes, and many are actively involved in their communities.

"We've seen young people go from not saying a boo to a goose to leading sessions and managing challenging behaviour. It's been brilliant," Danny shared.

Natalie Loon, from Bfriends, emphasised the importance of tailoring the programme to meet the individual needs of young people. *"The creativity to be able to produce our own programme and deliver that under a broader guideline that's not so specific... that's enabled us to work with our cohorts individually and meet their needs."* By understanding their participants, the team was able to support young people beyond sports, helping them **develop life skills, gain confidence, and take meaningful steps towards independence**.

"We've actually got to know our young people, and we can look at some of the next steps for them... whether that be around life skills, employability, training, budgeting, or personal circumstances, like needing a mentor," Natalie explained.

By **creating an environment where young people feel supported, valued, and empowered**, Gen22 has had a **lasting impact on wellbeing**. Many participants have left the programme not only with new skills but also with the confidence and resilience to thrive in both personal and professional settings.

OUTCOME TWO: SKILLS



Organisations and individuals will be better skilled and more confident to deliver work and to seek new work.

Skills have been developed with participants engaging in youth programmes as well as in staff and organisations who have delivered the engagement. 78 training sessions, directly upskilling organisations, were also provided as part of Social Value, Bring the Power, Critical Mass and Gen22.

As part of their involvement, participants across youth programmes were asked what they were most hoping to gain from their involvement in projects. Skills were a recurring theme throughout.

Prior to events, participants of Bring the Power were most looking forward to learning new skills, trying different sports, and building confidence, and their post-programme reflections confirm that these aspects were the most enjoyable. Social engagement was another key motivator, with many looking forward to meeting new people, making friends, and working collaboratively, which was reflected in their enjoyment of team-based activities.

Participants in Critical Mass were hoping to gain confidence, social connections, and new dance skills throughout the project, and their reflections suggest these expectations were met. Many looked forward to improving their dancing ability, learning new movements, and gaining experience performing in front of audiences. The project was also seen as an opportunity to build friendships, work as part of a team, and engage in an inclusive, supportive environment.

Pre-programme participants in Gen22 aimed to gain confidence, professional skills, and practical experience in various fields, including coaching, creative industries, leadership, and community work. Many sought qualifications and career development opportunities, particularly in sports coaching, acting, filmmaking, and social action projects. Others were eager to develop transferable skills, such as communication, teamwork, resilience, and problem-solving, which would support them in education, employment, or personal growth.

A strong theme of community impact and social change emerged, with several participants hoping to make a difference in their local area, mentor others, and promote inclusivity. Additionally, some looked forward to networking and building relationships with peers and industry professionals, gaining insights into the realities of their chosen career paths.

Across all these programmes participants looked forward to attaining new skills, whether that be sporting abilities, dance knowledge or methods for social action. Across all of these programmes, and additionally in Social Value training and through volunteering opportunities,

87.9%
of individuals
involved said they
gained new skills
as a result of their
engagement.

An even higher proportion – 93.6% – agreed that engagement had continued to develop pre-existing skills that they held.

This skills development was reflected in post-engagement qualitative feedback gained across the youth programmes.

Participants valued the inclusive and engaging nature of the activities that led to new skills, with wheelchair basketball being a standout favourite. Many found it an exciting challenge, enjoying the unique movement, teamwork, and competitive element. Other popular activities included boxing and target-based sports like archery and curling, which provided a chance to refine coordination and focus. Some participants appreciated the opportunity to experience adaptive sports and understand different perspectives on physical activity. While a few found certain activities less engaging, the overall feedback highlights a positive and enriching experience, where participants not only developed new sporting skills but also gained confidence, social connections, and a broader appreciation for inclusive sports.

Critical Mass built confidence skills for participants. They spoke positively about the choreographic process, highlighting the creativity involved and how it allowed them to showcase their individuality. Many enjoyed learning new routines, mastering movement coordination, and developing performance skills, with some noting that their ability to memorise and execute choreography had improved.

Beyond dance skills, the project helped participants enhance their communication, teamwork, and leadership abilities, particularly when working with diverse groups. The inclusive atmosphere and strong sense of community were repeatedly mentioned, with many feeling empowered, accepted, and encouraged to express themselves freely. Overall, Critical Mass provided a transformative experience, helping participants grow artistically, socially, and emotionally, while reinforcing the power of dance as a tool for connection, confidence, and inclusivity.

This inclusivity may have been fostered by training rolled out across the Trailblazer programmes, which sought to increase facilitator skills.

81%
who took part said that they learnt skills on platforming people's voices, and 71.4% did so on co-creation.

Moreover, knowledge and skills of working with young participants who identify as D/deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long term health was a theme across both Critical Mass and Bring the Power. 71.2% of delivery staff and training attendees said they had gained skills in this area.

In Gen22 participants reported significant growth in confidence, leadership, and teamwork. Many gained hands-on experience in project management, coaching, event planning, and creative production, applying their skills in real-world settings. Improvements in public speaking, problem-solving, and adaptability were commonly mentioned, with several participants highlighting better communication skills and a greater ability to collaborate effectively. Those involved in coaching and leadership roles reported increased resilience, patience, and self-control, while those in creative industries gained technical skills in filmmaking, acting, and design. The project also provided a strong sense of achievement, helping participants feel more empowered and capable in their future careers. This is reflected in the quantitative data outlined in the Gen22 section of this report, which displays increases in skills and knowledge around taking action on social issues. Overall, Gen22 proved to be an impactful experience, equipping young people with practical skills, industry exposure, and personal growth opportunities, while fostering community engagement and social responsibility.



Opening Doors for Solihull's Creatives

Gen22 provided young people engaged with **Solihull Cultural Education Partnership** with hands-on experience in the arts and media industries through creative incubators in TV, theatre, film, music, and visual arts. These real-world work environments enabled participants to develop **practical skills, gain confidence, and make vital industry connections.**

For Connor, the TV incubator was *“a front door into an industry that is pretty reserved.”* Led by a seasoned TV producer, it provided invaluable insights into freelancing, invoicing, and networking. *“Without Gen22, I wouldn't have had the knowledge or the opportunity to be in those spaces,”* he shared. His experience led to a role volunteering on Joe Lycett's International Day of Birmingham.

Daniel, who took part in the theatre incubator, described it as **transformative.** *“We actually did some devising based on our experiences of disabilities and race and inequalities in society.”* Meanwhile, Ka, blended his background in traditional Chinese opera with contemporary theatre. *“This was the most meaningful week I have ever had,”* he reflected.

The film incubator featuring hands-on workshops on cinematography, sound design, and storyboarding was a fast-paced challenge for Emily, who worked on a short film showcased at Cineworld Solihull 2024 Short is Beautiful Festival. The pressure was intense, with only one day allocated for filming, but it provided an authentic industry experience. *“We were kind of filming the film as well as figuring out how it's going to work at the same time,”* she recalled.

The music incubator provided a **different kind of learning experience.** While participants worked towards an end-of-week performance, they also engaged in copyright law sessions, networking workshops, and collaboration with professional musicians. For Michael, the music incubator provided not just performance opportunities but essential networking skills. *“Networking is everything in the industry, and now I have people I can collaborate with.”*

The visual arts incubator left a lasting mark with a large-scale mural at a youth centre in Chelmsley Wood, an initiative driven by the young artists themselves.

Summing up the experience, Ka said, *“It's a very good chance to expand your knowledge... to meet different friends... and to develop your skills.”* Connor reflected on how the experience helped him overcome uncertainty about his career path: ***“It felt like I stopped spinning and someone pushed me in the right direction.”*** Similarly, Daniel spoke about the programme's impact on his confidence in theatre: *“It gave me a new level of confidence.”*

With **skills honed, networks formed, and confidence built,** these young creatives are ready to shape the future of the arts and media industries.



Developing the Next Generation of Basketball Leaders

The **Young Basketball Leaders (YBL) Gen22 project** has provided young people with the opportunity to gain **Level 2 Referee, Level 2 Table Official, and Level 2 Coach qualifications**, equipping them with the skills to officiate games, coach players, and inspire the next generation of basketball participants. Through hands-on experience and a structured mentoring programme, YBL has ensured that participants not only gain their qualifications but also transition into real-world roles within the sport.

Unlike many other organisations, YBL does not operate from a fixed facility and had to engage participants through clubs, colleges, universities, and social media. As Kim Accalia, the project lead, explained, *“We did a lot of advertising through the clubs involved in our league... but we also reached out through social media, which helped us immensely.”*

One of the programme’s key innovations was the addition of a **mentoring package**, designed to address the gap between completing a course and becoming fully qualified. Historically, many young people would complete their training but struggle to secure the required practical experience to gain full certification. *“We went a little bit outside the box. Normally, a course is delivered, and then people are left to find their own sign-off games. But we stretched ourselves further, running events to ensure they got the experience they needed.”*

The mentoring was structured in two ways: group online sessions to track progress and one-to-one support, where mentors attended games to guide participants in real time. *“We’d point them to a game where one of the mentors would be there... we might physically observe, or even do the table or referee with them, giving immediate feedback.”*

This approach significantly **improved retention and success rates**, ensuring that young people remained engaged and completed their qualifications. Many have since progressed to coaching and officiating roles in clubs, schools, and local leagues. *“Some of them couldn’t afford their club fees, but now they’ve found a way to pay them by officiating games. Others are moving into men’s leagues, being recognised as competent referees or table officials.”*

Beyond qualifications, the project has had a **profound impact on participants’ confidence, employability, and life skills**. *“You’re not just a referee. You’re learning how to make quick decisions, manage people, resolve situations, and communicate effectively—skills they’ll use throughout life.”*

YBL’s Gen22 initiative has created real pathways for young people to progress in basketball, ensuring a **lasting legacy of trained and empowered leaders** in the sport.

OUTCOME THREE: RESOURCE



Organisations and individuals will have more resources and capacity as a result of financial and/or development investment.

While delivering the Trailblazer programmes, United By 2022 was conscious of wanting to help develop organisations. Through wraparound training activity and bespoke delivery design, the Charity aimed to ensure that delivery of programmes boosted an organisation's work, as opposed to hindering it.

In order to understand how successful they were in achieving this aim, four quantitative questions were developed and asked to those in delivery roles across Critical Mass, Gen22 and Bring the Power.

The results were as follows:

- ▶ 88.1% agreed that delivery has boosted their / their organisation's capacity to deliver programmes
- ▶ 88.1% agreed that delivery has enabled their organisation to work with more young people
- ▶ 84.7% agreed that delivery has enabled their organisation to deliver better quality programmes

▶ **91.5%**
agreed that delivering this contract has improved their / their organisation's confidence to apply for similar funding in the future.

In spite of this, some United By 2022 Family members did express ongoing frustration at the lack of access to core funding in the sector. Whilst it is not United By 2022's intention to devolve core funding to organisations, it does highlight that maintenance of organisations capacity and resources is reliant upon core funding, as opposed to project by project funding which is less effective in enabling long term growth. The ability to deliver stronger work in this area has also been restricted by the limitations of Trailblazer funding devolved by WMCA - which stipulated how United By 2022 could devolve its funds.

OUTCOME FOUR: NETWORKS



Organisations and individuals will be better networked, particularly across sectors which currently operate in silo.

As with the Resource outcome – whilst United By 2022 sought to improve the lives of participants and volunteers in the region, through skills-building and improved wellbeing, they also aimed to support the organisations working with these people on the ground. The Networks outcome seeks to measure this aim, by understanding how organisations are connecting with each other, as well as how they are connecting with new participants and volunteers in communities.

All stakeholder groups were asked how far engaging in projects had helped them connect with new organisations and people. The majority, 88.3%, identified that it had. This was keenly felt by delivery staff, 93.2% of whom agreed with the statement. It was most positively felt by volunteers who had engaged in at least one opportunity – 100% of whom felt they had made new connections. Participants in other Trailblazer programmes were slightly less likely to establish new connections, with 83.2% saying they had as part of their work.

In addition, this was most keenly felt by participants who were from areas of high deprivation. They were 3.7% more likely to have experienced new connections as part of the work.

This shows how the Trailblazers played a particular role in giving a better platform to individuals and organisations who are from more deprived geographical areas – which may leave them less likely to be well connected across sectors.

In addition to new connections, individuals were also asked if the Trailblazer programmes had given them access to opportunities that they had not had prior with 90.7% of people saying that this was the case.

A principal element of the Networks pillar was providing organisations with better access to a broad range of volunteers, and volunteers with access to new opportunities. These event organisers displayed positive responses to their experiences. 94.4% of organisations using volunteers said that the volunteers were actively engaged, and that the quantity of volunteers supplied had met their needs. Whilst only 16.7% of the organisations we spoke to said that they required volunteers to have specific skills, 100% of the organisers who had this requirement said that they were given volunteers with the skills they needed.

94.4% said that overall they were satisfied with the volunteers they were supplied with. This displays the value organisations held in the volunteers they used. As is highlighted in the case study below, this was mirrored in volunteers' experiences of connecting with new organisations and friends through the Collective.



Rebuilding Confidence and Connection

After years of being a full-time carer for her mother, Bali found herself trapped in a cycle of isolation. Her days were repetitive and lonely, with few opportunities to break away from her responsibilities. When the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games brought a surge of volunteering roles, she signed up, hoping to find some respite. Although the Games' experience was initially uplifting, Bali felt adrift once it ended. *"I didn't know where to go or what to do next,"* she explained. She was relieved when United By 2022 launched the Volunteers Collective, offering former Commonwealth Games volunteers continued opportunities to volunteer across Birmingham.

Bali's first United By 2022 engagement was at a relaxed performance at the Birmingham Hippodrome. The audience included individuals with disabilities, and Bali found joy in making the environment welcoming and inclusive. *"It was amazing,"* she said. *"You see people light up when they feel truly comfortable."* The structured yet flexible approach of United By 2022 suited her needs perfectly. *"I could choose events that worked for me, with no pressure to commit beyond what I could manage,"* she shared.

For Maureen, United By 2022 was more than a platform—it was a bridge back to her creative side. As a part-time accountant, Maureen wanted to engage in activities outside her professional sphere. She began volunteering at the Sue Ryder charity shop, a cause close to her heart due to personal experiences with bereavement. While there, she used her artistic side to design window displays, a stark contrast to her usual number-focused work. *"It allowed me to connect with people in a completely different way,"* she said.

Bali and Maureen's paths crossed at a United By 2022 event, and the connection they forged would go on to change both their lives. Bali shared her struggles with one of her family member's mental health, and Maureen's work at Sue Ryder inspired Bali to encourage her family member to volunteer there. At first, the family member was hesitant, but with Maureen's support, she began working in the shop, helping with mannequin displays and other tasks. *"It's brought her out of her shell,"* Bali said. *"I can't thank Maureen and United By 2022 enough for helping her find confidence."*

Through United By 2022, both Bali and Maureen extended their volunteering to events like the Birmingham Weekender and Joe Lycett's International Day of Birmingham. These roles exposed them to a vibrant cultural scene and introduced them to fellow volunteers. *"We're like a little family,"* Maureen remarked, reflecting on the sense of belonging she found through the collective. Bali echoed this sentiment, noting how volunteering had reignited her sense of purpose. *"It's given me so much more than I ever expected,"* she said.

OUTCOME FIVE: EXCHANGE



Learnings, evaluations and processes are open sourced, shared and adopted by other organisations.

Exchange of knowledge was a key ambition of United By 2022. In order to ensure learning and iteration was live throughout the project, as opposed to just occurring at the end through evaluation, this outcome was mainly driven by 78 training sessions that occurred across the Bring the Power, Gen22, Critical Mass and Social Value strands. As individuals attended training workshops; teachers witnessed delivery from external organisations in their schools; and advisory and consultancy participants helped shape projects, learning was shared and utilised throughout.

Primarily, across all training conducted, attendees took home valuable, actionable insights.

90.4%
of attendees said
that they intend
to use learnings
from these training
sessions in their
everyday work.

Attendees of the Critical Mass training, for example, gained valuable insights into collaboration, leadership, and inclusivity in the arts. They explored the benefits and challenges of working internationally, gaining an understanding of how to communicate with people who have different access needs and how to manage this effectively. The training also encouraged critical thinking about barriers in the creative sector, with one attendee noting: *“Some of the barriers faced [included] going into the unknown and how to look at tackling those barriers.”*

Leadership was another key area of learning, with training attendees gaining new perspectives on leadership styles and how leadership can exist in both small and large spaces. One attendee shared, *“It’s great to hear different routes into leadership and how we can be a leader in a small space as well as a big space.”*

Another reflected on the continuous evolution of leadership skills, stating, *“My leadership skills are constantly evolving and play a part in everything I do and everyone I work with, it’s not just an end role/result, and to enjoy the journey & learning.”* Additionally, the training highlighted the need for more inclusive Research & Development practices in the sector, with an attendee commenting, *“More training is required across the sector for artists, choreographers and producers to make R&D experiences totally inclusive – this is not a criticism but an observation based on the session and recent R&D experience.”* This also reflects deeper work needed in the Network outcome, to better foster connection across sector silos. These reflections demonstrate the programme’s impact in shaping leadership approaches, fostering collaboration, and promoting inclusivity within the creative sector.

In Bring the Power, trainees from the Common Ground programme gained valuable practical, creative, and professional development skills through their training. Participants enhanced their video editing and filming abilities, broadening their expertise in digital media. One trainee highlighted the importance of inclusive and sensory approaches in art, stating, "I also gained a better understanding of how to deliver a more sensory approach within art, so more students feel more included." Others developed street art and spray painting techniques, expanding their creative toolkit beyond traditional methods.

Beyond artistic skills, networking and collaboration emerged as key takeaways, with trainees recognising the benefits of working with diverse groups of pupils and professionals. One attendee shared, "No matter how many skills or how much experience I may already have, working with a diverse range of pupils and professionals can only expand these." Additionally, the programme showcased the benefits of child-led sessions, increasing engagement and responsiveness, as one respondent noted, "The sessions were led by the children which increased their levels of engagement. The artists were very responsive to their attempts to engage with the resources."

These reflections highlight the programme's impact in broadening artistic approaches, improving inclusive teaching methods, fostering professional connections, and enhancing confidence in creative facilitation.

As will be noted in the Access outcome, the inclusivity learnings gained in Common Ground were a feature across multiple workstrands. 77.4% of delivery staff across Bring the Power and Critical Mass said that they had shared lessons learnt while working with young people who identify as D/deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long-term health condition. This exemplifies the culture of learning and iteration that United By 2022 are working to build on as they continue to deliver work with their suppliers.



OUTCOME SIX: REPRESENTATION



Organisations and individuals who have traditionally been excluded on the grounds of age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability will be better platformed, funded and empowered.

In its Representation outcome United By 2022 have been intentional about the people they want to be better represented, in what sectors and in which spaces: people who identify as disabled taking part in movement and sport via Critical Mass and Bring the Power; women and girls who are often less likely to engage in sports via Bring the Power; and young people who may have not engaged in social action in the past, via Gen22 and Ideas Made Real.

Assessing the extent to which the outcome has been achieved across projects has been understood through measuring who has and has not engaged in projects; in understanding if projects have actively been made inclusive; and if they have facilitated interaction between groups of people from different backgrounds.

In Bring the Power, 65.9% of the people surveyed identified as female. They were also more likely to experience positive outcomes on the project. For example, people who identified as female were 13.1% more likely to feel confident about engaging in sports after engagement.

In addition, Gen22 was intended to engage young people who may not have engaged in social action projects in the past. The programme therefore targeted young participants with a range of lived experiences which can link to barriers to engagement.

Of the 546 young people who took part in Gen22:

- ▶ 27.3% received free schools meals when they were at school
- ▶ 5% had a family member or friend who was or had been in prison
- ▶ 17.1% identified low self-esteem or confidence

▶ **43.9%**
were from the 20%
most deprived areas
of the country.

As noted in the Gen22 Trailblazer impacts, these respondents experienced large increases in reported wellbeing and skills gain, despite having comparatively low levels at the start of the programme.

51.5% of Critical Mass participants identified as having a disability, long-term health condition or neurodiversity.

While fostering inclusion in dance and movement across the region, the project also sought to shift the dial on perceptions of disability, contributing to the broader Representation outcome. 79.1% of all participants said that their perception of disability was more positive as a result of their engagement. Meanwhile, 91.3% of participants who identified as having a disability, long-term health condition or being neurodiverse had a more positive perception of disability by the end of the project.

As well as working towards better Representation, the Trailblazer programmes also fostered interaction between people from different backgrounds. In Bring the Power and Critical Mass, 87.7% of individuals agreed that they were able to interact with others from different backgrounds as part of their engagement. This was most keenly felt by people from areas of high deprivation, who were 13% more likely to agree with the statement.

Finally, individuals taking part in the youth programmes were asked about the methods used to ensure projects were inclusive. 92.2% of people agreed that co-creation made the projects more inclusive. 92.5% agreed that platforming people's voices had the same effect. Again, in both instances people from areas of high social deprivation were more likely to agree.





Creating Inclusive Spaces for Movement

Coventry Inclusive Dance, led by **Ascension Dance Company**, provides accessible dance opportunities for young people with additional needs. In partnership with **Ladybug Lodge** and **Moving Spaces**, the programme offers three strands: **Explore** (ages 4-9), **Venture** (ages 10-14), and **Journey** (ages 14-25). These sessions integrate creative movement, sensory play, and structured choreography, creating an environment where participants feel supported and empowered.

Flexibility has been key to success. As India-Rose Cox, a support worker and mentee artist, reflected: *“Explore sessions lasted around 45 minutes and initially followed a structure of free play, allowing us to observe how children engaged with a particular prop and how it could inspire movement.”* This adaptable approach enabled young people to gain confidence and self-expression through movement.

The impact on participants and their families has been profound. Josie Wheel, from Ladybug Lodge, highlighted: *“A lot of them just say it’s so nice to come somewhere and just be able to walk through that door...and know their child is safe.”* Meanwhile, Ashley Jordan, Lead Artist at Ascension Dance, observed: **“There’s one young person who sat out during the first session, but in the next session, they got more involved and are slowly becoming more confident.”**

Alongside participant growth, the programme has nurtured emerging artists through mentoring. India, now leading sessions, described the experience: *“I’ve been leading as well as supporting... And we’ve just been figuring our way out with these groups and finding what themes work, don’t work, and what will help for the next term.”*

Challenges, including fluctuating attendance and the need for adapted structures, have led to innovations such as shorter sessions and **assistive communication tools** like Widget. Sustainability remains a focus, with funding being sought from Sport England, community funds, and the Arts Council to ensure these vital sessions continue.

Coventry Inclusive Dance has created a space where young people can move, connect, and thrive. As India summed up: *“They’re really feeling comfortable within the space we’ve created.”*



Beyond the Boundary: Championing Female Representation in Cricket

The **Warwickshire Cricket Foundation's Gen22 Female Sports Leadership Programme** has created new pathways for young women, particularly from South Asian backgrounds, to engage in sport and coaching. The project aimed to challenge traditional barriers, increase female representation in sports leadership, and provide coaching qualifications to participants from Cadbury College and Birchfield Madrassah School.

"We know there's a massive workforce gap when it comes to female role models in sport," explained Jess Ward, Project Lead. The programme introduced young women—many of whom had never played cricket before—to the sport while providing them with Cricket Foundation Level 1 **coaching qualifications** and leadership training.

The initiative had a transformative impact, particularly for participants from Birchfield Madrassah, where **sport is not traditionally prioritised for girls**. Many participants **developed confidence in leading sessions** and are now actively engaging in **PE and coaching opportunities**. *"The fact they want to lead sessions is amazing,"* Jess shared.

A defining moment was when one participant expressed interest in studying sport post-16, despite cultural expectations that often steer young women towards careers in medicine, law, or teaching. *"Sport isn't really a career they're told about... we really need to support her on that journey because that's part of our legacy now,"* said Jess.

Beyond sport, the programme **introduced valuable life skills**, such as using public transport independently, after it emerged that many participants had never taken a bus before. This was integrated into the Edgbaston Cricket Stadium visit, where the school used the opportunity to teach students how to navigate travel independently.

By **providing coaching qualifications, leadership experience, and exposure to career pathways**, the Warwickshire Cricket Foundation's Gen22 project has empowered young women to take ownership of sport in their communities, breaking barriers and creating new opportunities for future female leaders.

OUTCOME SEVEN: CO-CREATION



Co-creation is more frequently used in community projects, driving better inclusion, access and ownership.

Bring the Power and Critical Mass engaged 563 people in co-design of projects. Across 97 sessions, these individuals helped to shape the direction of Trailblazer programmes.

As detailed in the Representation outcome, co-creation has been a clear method to drive strong inclusivity in the programme. Historic learnings from delivering these programmes as part of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games laid clear foundations for ongoing co-creation and co-design. Throughout 2023 and 2024, United By 2022 have fostered this approach – principally in its youth programmes including Critical Mass, but also in Social Value.

Individuals across stakeholder groups have felt heard, whilst also listening to others. Both are cornerstones of successful co-creation. 89.1% of individuals across programmes said that they had the opportunity to listen to other's opinions as part of their involvement in the programmes. 85% said they had the opportunity to share their thoughts. This illustrates how United By 2022 have facilitated the core elements of co-creation taking place across its programmes. This should go on to embed the process more regularly in the organisation's day to day work.

Both were mostly strongly felt in Critical Mass, where 97.4% said they had listened to others and 94.8% shared their thoughts. It was felt slightly less strongly in Bring the Power where 77.8% of participants listened to others and 71.2% shared their thoughts. This may have been due to the volume of Bring the Power provision focused on delivering activity, as opposed to co-designing it with young people on the programme.

Despite this, of those involved in co-creating Bring the Power initiatives, 88.6% agreed that they were relevant to young people. People who identified as disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long term health condition were slightly more likely to have had the opportunity to share their thoughts.

Moreover, as a result of sharing learning and delivering co-creation,

81.3% of training attendees and delivery staff in youth programmes report being better able to tailor sessions to the needs of the young people they are working with.

This shows how co-creation embedded within projects will outlive their completion.

Empowering Young Creatives Through Social Action

The Gen22 programme at **Gazebo Theatre** has placed young people at the heart of **co-creation**, empowering them to **design, lead, and reflect** on their own **social action projects**. Now in its third round, the initiative has evolved into a platform where participants take full ownership of **creative community-led work**, shaping projects based on their interests and the needs of those around them.

Participants led a diverse range of initiatives, including self-care workshops, open mic nights, art exhibitions, networking events, and environmental activities. From curating an exhibition in a newly renovated space to organising a welcoming space for local creatives to design T-shirts, each project was a direct reflection of the young people's ideas, creativity, and leadership. Crucially, they had the freedom to experiment, adapt, and improve their initiatives, ensuring that their projects were both personally meaningful and impactful for their communities.

Beyond delivering these projects, participants **gained valuable skills** in facilitation, budget management, public engagement, and event planning, all while fostering collaborative working practices. The supportive structure provided by Gazebo helped young people navigate challenges while still maintaining control over their work. Training in creative consultation, first aid, and workshop facilitation further reinforced their ability to lead.

By embedding **co-creation at every stage**, Gazebo's Gen22 project has transformed the young people involved into decision-makers, showing that **social action is most effective when driven by the voices of those involved**. Many young people expressed a desire to continue leading projects, demonstrating how meaningful participation fosters **long-term ownership and creative leadership** in their communities.



Young People Driving Change from the Pitch to the Community

Pitch2Progress, based in East Birmingham, has transformed Green Lane Playing Fields into a hub for youth development, sport, and social action. Through Gen22, the organisation engaged **40 young people in 12 community-led social action projects**, all designed to **positively impact their local area** while fostering leadership and confidence.

The initiative encouraged young people to **co-create, lead, and deliver projects**, ranging from soup kitchens for the homeless and community clean-ups to sports events and cultural exchange programmes. One of the most impactful activities was a homeless support project, where participants planned and ran a soup kitchen, taking full ownership of preparation, delivery, and community engagement.

A major goal of Pitch2Progress is to **bring young people from different backgrounds together**, challenging the **postcode rivalries** that often **divide youth in urban areas**. *“We’re trying to break those barriers. We’ve created a space where young people from different postcodes meet on the pitch, and from there, they build friendships. The fact that they now see each other as mates rather than rivals is incredible.”*

Beyond delivering community projects, the programme **created opportunities for progression**. Several participants transitioned from **volunteers to paid staff**, demonstrating the long-term impact of **youth-led initiatives**. Reflecting on Gen22’s role, Haroon stated, *“The opportunities and provisions Gen22 has allowed us to put on for these young people are priceless.”*

Despite facing challenges moving forward—including funding struggles and site access issues—Pitch2Progress remains committed to **providing a safe and positive space** for young people. Their work continues to **break down barriers**, bringing together participants from different backgrounds and fostering **a stronger, more connected community**.

Pitch2Progress is a shining example of how **co-creation and sport can drive meaningful social change**. By placing young people at the heart of decision-making, the initiative has empowered them to lead, develop key skills, and build a more connected community.



OUTCOME EIGHT: ACCESS



Processes (from application to participation to evaluation) are fully accessible on both program and project levels. Best practice is acted upon, shared and iterated.

The Access outcome has two principal indicators: first on tailoring sessions to young people, and second on volunteers being able to access and engage with opportunities.

Whilst Co-creation and Exchange outcomes have shown how successfully individuals have shared and gained learning on working with young people who are D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent or living with a long-term health condition, the Access outcome is concerned with how able they feel putting it into practise, by tailoring sessions directly towards people with these needs.

Of the training attendees and delivery staff surveyed on the youth programmes,

75% agree that they are better able to tailor sessions to the needs of young people identifying as D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent or living with a long-term health condition they work with.

Whilst still a strong outcome, it does display a lower proportion than those who have shared learning on the topic which could be due to the fact that putting it into practice requires a deeper level of impact.

The Volunteers Collective offers a unique opportunity to test how accessible listed opportunities are. This is because a large number of individuals are registered on the portal (2,171) but only a proportion of these people are expressing interest in opportunities (921) and actually participating in volunteering (348). Comparison of the difference in demographics between these three groups highlights who is and isn't accessing volunteering opportunities. Positively, those who have delivered at least one volunteering opportunity are marginally more likely to be from a Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage background. They are also marginally more likely to identify as D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent or living with a long-term health condition and more likely to come from an area of high social deprivation.

In spite of this, whilst 30.7% of the people registered on the portal are from Birmingham, 45.5% of the 348 people delivering opportunities are. This shows that if you're from Birmingham you're more likely to be engaged in volunteering. Moreover, whilst 9.9% of the people registered on the portal are under the age of 30, only 4.9% of those engaging in opportunities are under 30. This shows that young people are less likely to be engaged in volunteering.

For some volunteers, the accessibility and flexibility of opportunities were key improvements. One respondent shared, *"It has created a really accessible route for me to be regularly involved in volunteering opportunities that I previously did not know were available,"* while another highlighted, *"As a person with a disability, I have found that a lot of volunteering has been inaccessible to me on multiple levels so it has meant that my options and ability has meant I could not be involved in the projects but with the Collective I have not had anything put in my way but encouraged to get involved."*

Embedding Inclusive Practice Through Sense Level 1 Training

The **Sense Level 1 Training** has significantly improved **awareness and accessibility** across **Gen22 partner organisations**, equipping them with tools to **better support disabled people**. The training covered understanding access needs, making reasonable adjustments, supporting individuals in the workplace, and assistive technology, ensuring best practices are shared and implemented.

For many, the training **shifted perspectives**, particularly in recognising hidden disabilities. One organisation reflected: *“It definitely made us more aware of spotting needs... Young people often don’t like to talk about their disabilities, so it gave us a new awareness of checking in and using another sense to recognise where support might be needed”*. Simple adjustments, such as requesting ground-level rooms for accessibility, were immediately actioned. Others adopted clearer communication methods, including BSL (British Sign Language) and verbal acknowledgements, to improve engagement.

The training also introduced the Access to Work scheme, increasing **awareness of funding for workplace adjustments**. However, some organisations felt they needed further guidance, stating: *“I have Level 1, but I need to put it into practice for it to feel real”*.

Assistive technology was another key takeaway, prompting some to explore website accessibility improvements, such as text-to-speech features and clearer readability. Others adapted social media to be more inclusive by adding captions and image descriptions.

The training also fostered **new partnerships**, supporting inclusive recruitment and expanding networks. However, challenges remain, particularly the need for further training on neurodiversity and mental health support and financial constraints limiting accessibility improvements.

Ultimately, Sense Level 1 Training has **embedded accessibility into programme delivery** and organisational culture, ensuring people with disabilities can engage fully and equitably in social action projects.



CONCLUSIONS

As noted in the methodology in this report, the outcomes which have been measured as part of this evaluation were based on an 'evidence of need analysis' conducted on behalf of the United By 2022 with stakeholders across the West Midlands. The evidence presented in this report assesses United By 2022's work, impact and contributions which respond directly to the needs identified by the community, youth, sports and arts sectors in the West Midlands. By directly responding to community needs through design of programmes, United By 2022 have embodied each of its four priority areas.



The first is to **'Be a Catalyst'**, to build on the positive feeling and revitalised image of the region to increase opportunities for overlooked communities.



Third, to **'Be Influential'**, advocating for unheard communities and volunteers, and connecting businesses and local charities.



The second, to **'Be Inclusive'**, improving representation and access across sports, arts and culture sectors and breaking down the barriers to taking part.



Finally, to **'Be Relevant'**, by understanding and responding to the contextual barriers that prevent people from engaging.

From the off, the fact that United By 2022 has built its Theory of Change and designed the five Trailblazer programmes by responding directly to needs presented by these sectors shows their commitment to each of these four priorities.

The data collected as part of this evaluation further evidences how, in delivering these programmes, United By 2022 have delivered on the commitments made in programme design. These impacts have been laid out in depth in each of the outcome sections. Below they will be summarised according to how far they have shifted the dial on United By 2022's medium, long, and programme level impacts - which are outlined in Annex 2, and will be discussed in more detail below.

Whilst positively contributing to impact across all eight of its outcome areas, data collected as part of this evaluation identifies particular success in four outcomes (Wellbeing, Skills, Co-creation, Representation), and room for further development in four (Resource, Exchange, Networks, Access).

87.9% of people gained new skills, through their engagement, with Gen22 significantly impacting young people's leadership, employability, and social action capabilities. Training for organisations and delivery staff across Trailblazers strengthened capacity while fostering sustainable development.



This resulted in ownership of projects, greater engagement, inclusivity and, in the case of Gen22, long-term commitment to social action. Put simply, because participants directed projects, they enjoyed them more, and experienced stronger outcomes across the board.

In **Wellbeing**, there was very strong evidence that people taking part over multiple sessions saw significant increase and improvement to their mental health, confidence and social connections. In particular, Gen22 and Critical Mass contributed to resilience and self-belief, and the Volunteers Collective provided purpose and emotional uplift for those taking part.



As noted, **co-creation** and responding to community needs was built into the Trailblazer programmes from the beginning, and this continued throughout the programme. Co-creation principals were successfully embedded throughout advisory and consultancy panels, as well as with participants getting involved in projects on the ground.



Representation



is an outcome area which crosses over with one of the key priority areas: to 'Be Inclusive'. The Trailblazers successfully achieved this outcome in a few key areas: engaging women and girls in sports was a particular success of Bring the Power. In addition, across a number of outcome areas, people from more deprived communities experienced greater change than those who didn't. Critical Mass maintained and developed deep, meaningful engagement, continuing to break boundaries in changing perceptions of disability.





In Access, there was significant delivery of inclusive programming, and people reported learning sharing around working with young people who identify as D/deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long term health condition. However, there is opportunity to engage more young people, and people from areas of higher deprivation, in volunteering opportunities recruited via the Volunteers Collective.

There was clear evidence of learning and development across Trailblazer programmes, particularly for delivery staff and training attendees. However this was principally delivered by training, and organically in project delivery.

Greater impact could be made with more events specifically focused on allowing people to reflect on delivery and discuss learning, whilst in delivery of projects. As per the outcome, this would have fostered a more open and transparent culture of learning and iteration.



Strong networks were built in the Trailblazer programmes. Participants were connected to new organisations, volunteers to new opportunities, and people mixed with others from different backgrounds to their own. However, more could be done to foster ongoing partnerships between organisations. This is particularly pertinent to organisations working across sectors.



Resource aimed to give organisations and individuals more resources and capacity by financial investment or professional development. As has been shown, organisations and individuals across community, sports, and cultural sectors have benefited from funding and training. In spite of this, as was highlighted in focus groups for Social Value, core funding remains an issue. The Trailblazers programme did not distribute core funding to organisations, nor is it the overarching intention of United By 2022 to undertake this work. However, impact on this outcome will remain limited without this shift in focus. This may suggest that United By 2022 could shift focus from Resource onto the other seven outcome areas.



Overall, the Trailblazer programmes have been a powerful catalyst for social change, community engagement and individual empowerment, however further development could be given to their work strengthening sector resilience. This may have been a result of the high volume of delivery which took place with participants and members of the public, compared to with the organisations and individuals delivering that work. As such, whilst organisations across Birmingham and the West Midlands are better resourced to support their target communities, as per their medium term outcome, more could be done to help them actively engage with other organisations to share, learn, adapt and improve their offering.

This focus on delivery with the public, as opposed to development of the sector, has arguably driven United By 2022 closer to its long term outcome: that across Birmingham and the West Midlands barriers to engagement (including the impact of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis) are alleviated for young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people, LGBTQ+, and economically deprived communities.

In supporting organisations who deliver this engagement, to go out and do what they do best, United By 2022 have played a role in ensuring the range of interweaving communities across our region can actively participate in sports, arts & culture, volunteering and/or employment opportunities.



THANK YOU & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All this activity and the outcomes achieved for individuals and communities were a direct legacy of the surplus budget from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. United By 2022 Charity wants to say a massive thank you to its supporters, delivery partners, and our funder who contributed in myriad ways to make the Trailblazers Programmes a success.



United By 2022 would like to say a big thank you to the following:

The **West Midlands Combined Authority** for funding the Trailblazers via the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund



FRY Creative for capturing and communicating the impact of these programmes



United By 2022 staff who have worked incredibly hard as a team to contribute towards a shared mission

United By 2022's Board of Trustees, for guiding and supporting the team

The **Rigby Foundation** whose generous donation enabled us to hit the ground running at the start of 2023, in preparation for the Trailblazer Programmes Launching



Our brilliant **Volunteers Collective**, who have brightened events with their infectious energy

All of the **partners, suppliers and event organisers** who have helped make programme and event delivery possible. Thanks to you, 98% of our goods and services have been bought in the West Midlands



Our corporate friends at **Shoosmiths, Bruntwood, Gowling WLG, and Fisher German** for donating Charity event space



Our skilled **volunteers**, who gave up their time and used their professional skills to support grassroots charities and young people in the region

And finally, thank you to **the communities of the West Midlands** who have taken part in our Trailblazer programmes and welcomed us with open arms. Our work and our impact would not be as it is without the support of the region.

ANNEXES

- ▶ [Annex 1: Theory of Change](#)
- ▶ [Annex 2: Evaluation Methodology](#)
- ▶ [Annex 3: Evaluation Framework](#)





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