



# REWEAVING THE FABRIC OF SOCIETY

*Early learning from the  
Citizens UK Community  
Organising Growth Projects*

*Jason Wood*

***citizens***<sup>uk</sup>



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Establishing a Citizens alliance from the ground up takes unquantifiable amounts of dedication, commitment and hard graft. Amongst all of the many challenges and demands they had to contend with, I'm very grateful to the many leaders, organisers and other participants who invested their time and commitment into helping us develop an insightful evaluation and learning programme. Their contributions include completing surveys, reports, taking part in interviews and enabling me to visit areas and observe assemblies and other actions. They have done so with the kind of enthusiasm that is so characteristic of people involved in this vital work. I trust this report (and the other outputs to come) reflect their views but, as always, the author accepts final responsibility for what is presented here. I would also like to thank the staff at Citizens UK's national office

for their great project management skills as well as their practical and intellectual engagement with the evaluation and learning strand.

None of this work would have been possible without generous funding from The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF), whom we are grateful to for their willingness to invest in broad-based Community Organising as a model for "putting people in the lead". The funds they provided have not only enabled us to develop a set of new Citizens alliances, but also to conduct the extensive evaluation and research process underpinning this report which, in turn, is making it possible for us to extract valuable learning that we are already implementing internally as we develop further Citizens alliances in areas beyond those selected as part of this TNLCF funded Growth Project.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Jason Pandya-Wood (Jason Wood) is Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and an Associate Professor of Social Policy at University of Nottingham Malaysia. Prior to this, he worked at Nottingham Trent University and before that, at De Montfort University in Leicester. Jason's research examines the impact of social policy interventions, including in youth work, community development, health improvement and criminal justice. His professional background is in youth and community development work, and he has closely followed the development of Community Organising in the UK since becoming involved with Nottingham Citizens in 2012.



# FOREWORD

The COVID-19 crisis has taught us that it is the social fabric of relationships in communities that makes all the difference for how people can support each other and adapt to challenges.

So, how do we (re)build that social fabric? Specifically, how is Community Organising being used to build people power in disadvantaged areas and enable local leaders to make change? This evaluation gives us valuable insight.

## *Building trust and co-operation across difference.*

There are many ways that communities can be divided, and this evaluation examines how people are successfully weaving relationships together across difference: building trust, focusing on face to face conversations, mapping their networks of relationships, listening and finding common concern. This approach

has worked in Somerset, as rural and urban communities take collective action to improve bus services, and it has worked on the Marks Gate estate in Dagenham, where residents from the local Anglican and Pentecostal churches came together to obtain long neglected road repairs worth £250,000.

## *Developing local ownership.*

In places where people repeatedly experience change as something that's done to them – rather than something they are agents of - there's a real job to be done in building local control and ownership. In our method of Community Organising, it starts with the challenge: if you want power to make change then you need to organise and you need to pay. This dues-paying membership model, where even the smallest group in the most deprived neighbourhood has to pay something, means that people feel ownership of their alliance, because they do own it. This membership model brings

sustainability and it means that when it comes to choosing priorities, there are no outside obligations and the listening campaign can really find those concerns that have been otherwise ignored. The Sunderland listening campaign that heard from teenagers on Free School Meals that their change was being taken away by the system is a compelling example of the kind of unexpected issue that surfaces when you really listen. Those young people have used Organising to change the system and win their money back for much needed food and drink in the school day.

## *Enabling local leaders.*

It is the development of local leadership that makes the change possible. When we see school students in Newham persuading London City Airport to pay the real Living Wage or see grassroots charities like One Roof Leicester and the Somali parents association SOCOPA transform the way they deliver services and engage with volunteers and “service users” alike, it is because of “ordinary” people stepping up. This evaluation unpacks the levels of leadership involved in Community Organising: people entering leadership for the first time, leaders progressing and established leaders doing things differently. With examples, the evaluation analyses the journeys and drivers at play and examines how the organising model relies on that combination of leadership: in fact, 53% of those involved in a new

Citizens alliance report having direct experience of the issues we campaign on, whereas 81% identify taking effective public action as a skill they have gained through Community Organising.

I’m grateful to The National Lottery Community Fund for funding this first of its kind in-depth evaluation and to Dr Jason Pandya Wood for carrying it out. I’m optimistic that these insights will help a whole range of communities, charities, funders, commissioners and policy makers who are concerned with the social fabric and with place-based, people-led change.

MATTHEW BOLTON





# 1 | INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Citizens UK secured funding from The National Lottery Community Fund to build the capacity of people in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage and low civic engagement. Operating in ten “Growth Areas”, the initiative sought to enable people within communities to work together effectively to tackle the problems they face and help ensure their communities flourish in the future.

Each of the new Citizens alliances would:

- o Be led from the very beginning by local people.
- o Apply, refine and develop the “broad-based Community Organising” model used by Citizens UK for over 30 years.
- o Focus on developing leaders, strengthening communities and building sustainable local capacity by establishing self-funded Citizens alliances in each Growth Area.
- o Share learning on the processes and impacts of this experience.

Through the work, Citizens UK sought to achieve the following outcomes for each Growth Area:

- o 10 people on the Leadership Teams will have a greater capacity to influence decision-making and take collective action in their locality, and have increased Community Organising skills and stronger civic networks such that they are able to respond to future challenges.
- o 200 people on the core teams will have a greater capacity to influence decision making and take collective action in their locality, and have increased community organising skills and stronger civic networks such that they are able to respond to future challenges.
- o 20 member communities will become stronger, benefitting from stronger relationships internally, stronger relationships with other neighbouring communities and an improved culture of leadership development.
- o Communities will benefit from new forms of civic participation and more inclusive and democratic systems of decision-making.
- o The wider populations of each area will benefit from the social and economic improvements that result from local projects and campaigns that the alliance runs. This could include better employment prospects, improved housing conditions, better wages, improved services.

**To date:**

- o **Nine of the ten planned new alliances** have established themselves and **three new alliances are in development.**
- o There are **71 civil society institutions in membership** and a further **41 civil society institutions are becoming members.**
- o **746 people** are currently actively involved in their Citizens alliance through leadership groups, core teams and campaign teams.
- o In 2020, **994 people** turned out to the various actions led by the alliances.
- o **£195,050** has been secured in annual dues with a further **£52,000** committed as other institutions join.

The National Lottery Community Fund award has enabled Citizens UK to build alliances in a wider range of locations spanning urban, suburban, towns and rural areas. As a result, the Growth Project has shown that it is possible to build diverse and sustainable civic alliances that are deeply rooted in – and representative of – local communities in a range of geographical areas.

## *What is Community Organising?*

Broad-based Community Organising is a process of developing alliances that bring together locally rooted civic institutions that are committed to developing leaders, identifying issues and working together to act publicly on issues of shared interest. Local alliances comprise of “member institutions” from across civil society, including faith institutions, universities, colleges, schools, trade unions and community groups, which are all supported by a professional Community Organiser.

The “iron rule” of Community Organising is to “never do for others what they can do for themselves.” The approach seeks to create change through enabling people

facing disadvantage to build power and tackle problems themselves rather than through professionals delivering services to those who are deemed needy. The commitment to people facing disadvantage goes beyond the “involved people” in each group and challenges and enables civil society institutions to reach out to the disconnected and disadvantaged in their neighbourhoods. Fundamental to the approach is the raising of “hard money”, where local institutions contribute membership dues.

The model adopts the definition of a leader as “someone with a following”, meaning a move beyond only those with positional

power (say the Headteacher or the Chief Executive of a charity). We avoid the lone activist, and instead engage and enable those relational leaders in each community who either possess or are willing to develop good relationships and the inclination to involve and develop others.

Putting people before programme means organising people around their interests, rather than trying to fit them into a pre-determined programme. Issues are identified through listening campaigns at the local level, with members voting on priorities and local energy determining what action can be taken.

## *Evaluation and learning*

This is the first of a series of learning and evaluation outputs that seeks to tell the story of how the Citizens alliances in each of the Growth Areas positively influenced the lives of those involved. This, and the outputs to follow, provide insights into what has worked, what hasn't worked and how new alliances could develop based on this learning.

In this short report, we highlight some of the achievements and challenges in nine of the Growth Areas:

- o Barking and Dagenham.
- o Brighton and Hove.
- o Enfield.
- o Essex.
- o Leicester.
- o Preston.
- o Somerset.
- o South Birmingham.
- o Sunderland.

The data that underpins this report primarily comes from two surveys conducted at the start of the project (late 2017/early 2018) and again towards the

end of the project (early to middle of 2020). The report also draws on reports produced by Community Organisers and leaders in each of the areas and interviews with the Lead Organisers.

Our focus in this report is on three themes:

- o Building relationships within and beyond one's own institution to enable resilience to respond to crises and act for justice.
- o Building genuine ownership characterised by the Community Organising principles of "people before programme" and of "organised money", which involves local civic institutions collectively funding and owning their local Citizens alliance, as well as the organic development of alliances.
- o Building leadership development.

## Building Stronger Relationships

Leaders from new Citizens alliances state that **Community Organising** equips them to **build** better **relationships** in their organisation (**90%**) and to better **connect** with people of **different backgrounds** in their area (**82%**).



## 2 | BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTING TOGETHER

Organised communities depend on relationships: internally, between civil society institutions and with those who hold the power to make the change. The craft and method of Community Organising posits that it is through their combined, sustainable relational power that alliances can achieve the influence they need to secure the change they seek. There is evidence from the Growth Project that this theory of change has achieved results across a range of measurable areas.

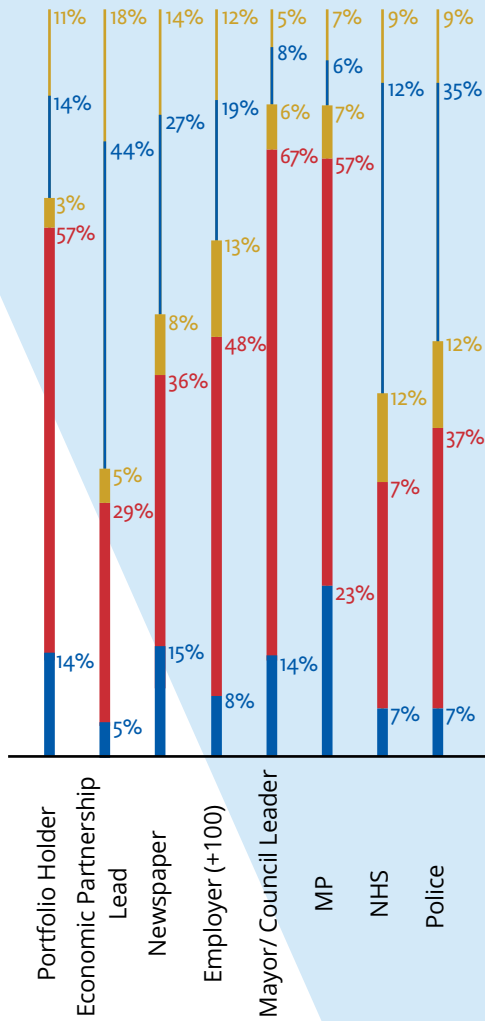
### *Building powerful relationships*

As a result of their engagement with the Citizens alliances:

- o 90% stated that their member institution is better at building relationships within and beyond the institution.
- o 82% stated that their member institution is better at connecting people from within to people of different backgrounds from outside of the institution.
- o 74% stated that the Citizens alliance brought people of different backgrounds together from within their member institution.
- o 66% believed that their member institution has improved its power and influence locally.

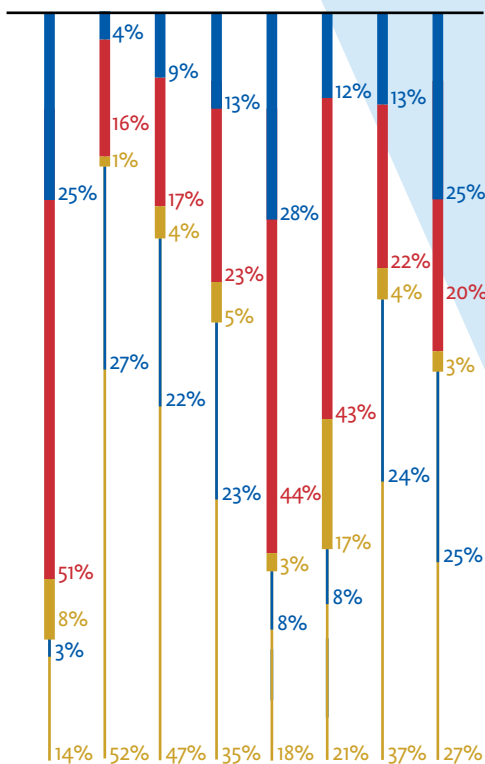
*(Survey 2, Q6, n=80)*

We know that member institutions on their own tended to have mixed success in being able to influence those who hold power. In the first survey, we provided a list of the most common power holders in a local community and asked individuals, at the very start of their engagement with the Growth Project, whether they felt they could influence them. Around a quarter of participants had previously been able to influence an MP and a further half felt that they could. Far fewer had influenced leaders in the NHS and the Police (with only a third thinking that they could).



**Table 1:** To what extent do you feel your institution is able to influence or inform the decisions of...

(Survey 1, Q25, n=87)



**Table 2:** To what extent has the local alliance has engaged with...

(Survey 2, Q8, n=79)

- Have previously influenced this person
- Could possibly influenced this person
- Unable to influence this person
- Dont Know this person
- Not sure

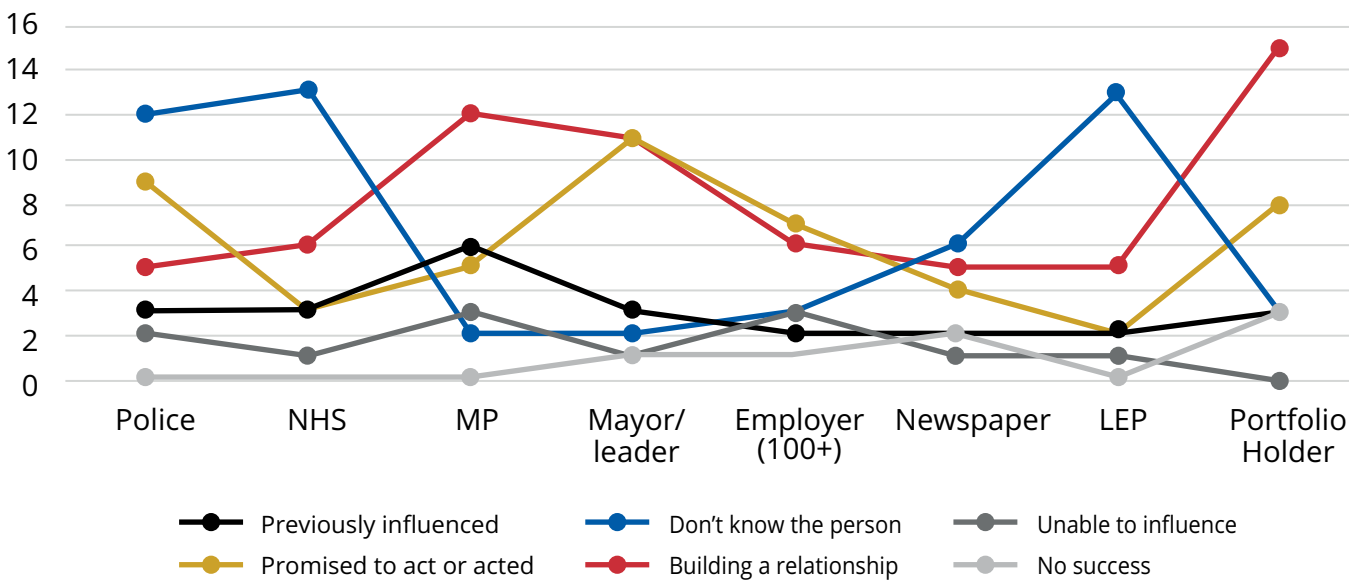
- This person has promised to act or has acted as a result
- We've met with this person and started to build a relationship
- We've tried to influence this person with no success
- We have not tried to make contact with this person yet
- Not sure

Whilst we are not comparing like for like, when we look at data from the second survey, we see a different picture emerge for the extent to which Citizens alliances have been able to build relationships with and secure commitments from decision makers. Here we asked participants to tell us about whether and to what extent their alliance had engaged with the same groups of key decision makers.

If we limit the data to those who completed both the first and second surveys (n=28), we can begin to see some positive moves in terms of ability to influence, reflecting the success of relationships, albeit from a very small sample of responses.

**Table 3:** Comparing previous and present relationships with decision makers

(Respondents who answered S1 Q25 and S2 Q8, n=28)



The first three lines (black, blue and dark grey) refer to data collected at the start of the Project. The remaining three (yellow, red, light grey) refer to data collected at the end. Whilst the majority of participants in the first survey didn't know the Chief Constable or Police and Crime Commissioner, by the end of the project there were promises to act in nine cases and relationships built in five cases. These numbers are even more positive with local authority elected Portfolio Holders (15 examples of relationships built, eight of commitments or action) and with the Mayor or City Council Leader (11 in each case). There were very few cases where people had attempted to influence without success.

Being able to influence depends on the combination of building relationships and leading actions, both of which require institutional commitment and turnout. The activities of Brighton and Hove Citizens, in one year, focused on this, ensuring a high turnout of 200 people at an assembly with council leaders, and holding meetings with the local MP and leaders of all three political groups on the city council. As a result, the commitments won from the Greens, Conservatives and Labour were crucial in delivering their first campaign win: to reinstate an accessible toilet in Hove Cemetery North.

## *Strengthening relationships between civil society institutions*

As part three of this report demonstrates, alliances have been built with members drawn from different faith institutions, education (schools, colleges and universities), the charity and community sector, and a small number of trades unions. The potential here for genuine broad-based Organising has been realised, with evidence of different groups working together. For example, Citizens Essex draws on the combined membership of two universities, Christian and Muslim religious institutions, and secular voluntary and community organisations. In 2019-20, one of the co-chairs was an Anglican Priest and the other an Imam of a mosque.

Local training has also enabled people of difference to come together. In Leicester, over 100 people have attended training. The Organiser notes that: "one of the highlights of this was seeing the intergenerational and cross-cultural one to one conversations that took place regularly in this context." Leicester Citizens is also working hard to ensure that its membership better reflects the diversity of the city, in particular building a close relationship with the Federation of Muslim Organisations – an alliance of several hundred local mosques, schools, and charities.

In South Birmingham, as part of their Citizens listening campaign, two universities held public iftar events, bringing over 400 people from communities in total together during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. This was the first time two large open community iftar gatherings were held like this in Birmingham.

Sunderland Citizens undertook listening in nine member institutions with 38 women, 29 of whom were from migrant and diaspora communities. Nine of these women followed up by engaging with the Law Commission consultation on hate crime in 2019 and key leaders from University of Sunderland, Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre (SIBC) and others agreed to engage in follow up action, providing further exposure to Community Organising. The Law Commission's consultation paper, released in September 2020, included all of the recommendations from this exercise<sup>1</sup>. The action also led to two new institutions joining Sunderland Citizens.

Citizens Somerset has faced a challenge in identifying migrant, refugee and diaspora leaders to work with, reflecting the demographics of the area. There are significant numbers of people from diaspora communities – for example from Poland, China and Southern India – living

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<sup>1</sup> See Law Commission (2020) Hate Crime Laws: a consultation paper, available at: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lawcom-prod-storage-11jsxou24uy7q/uploads/2020/10/Hate-crime-final-report.pdf>



in Taunton, the county town and where a number of members are located, but early efforts to engage them in a leadership programme were unsuccessful. There are also a number of Syrian refugee families now settled in Somerset, but again efforts to engage them have not been successful. They have had better success in engaging

people from diverse ages – people from 11 to 70+ years old were involved in the listening campaign, in training sessions and in the teams preparing the Founding Assembly. Somerset Citizens have also achieved success in demonstrating that Organising is possible in contexts combining urban and rural geographies.

## *Strengthening internal relationships*

There is evidence from the Growth Project that internal relationships within civil society institutions have been strengthened.

Listening campaigns have been critical to this, building internal relationships through one to one conversations. The numbers involved in listening campaigns are sizeable. For example:

- o In Essex, over 1,000 people were listened to in the run up to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections originally planned for in May 2020.
- o In Barking and Dagenham, following training, listening campaigns involving over 1,000 people were initiated in Christ Church, St Marks, All Saints Secondary School, Riverside Secondary School, St Marks Church, On the Rock Church, and Holy Family Church.
- o In 2020, Leicester's target for listening is 705, with confidence that this will exceed 1,000 by the completion of the listening campaign.

In Barking and Dagenham, a local church is home to a vibrant congregation with over 21 nationalities represented.

However, this church has undergone a significant transformation over the past 15 years, moving from a traditionally white English and Irish congregation to one where large numbers of African and Filipino families attend. This has resulted in some division between the different nationalities and tension in the Parish. Through Community Organising inside the institution, the Parish is going through an envisioning process to decide:

- o How they want to relate to each other and their wider community.
- o What values they want to guide them through the process.
- o What they would want to do with their premises.
- o Which lay leaders will be up for leading this process.

There is a growing sense of togetherness as Parishioners and lay leaders have stepped up to the challenges of leadership, which includes them talking through some of the tensions and coming up with some exciting suggestions such as reviving the Parish Church Council.

Universities have adopted new ways of working with their students. For example, Essex University piloted a module in partnership with Citizens Essex in 2019/20 called "Democracy in action" with 27 students. Together, they organised face to face learning and group visits to member institutions across Colchester to listen

around crime and safety and to build relationships between institutions. It was a highly successful pilot and conversations are continuing for the module to become part of the curriculum for 2021-22.

In Leicester, Citizens has worked with the University of Leicester to develop four themed weeks to get the students to volunteer more in the city. They have also provided four placements for undergraduate students and were successful in securing UK Research and Innovation funding to develop a joint university and Community Organising impact project.

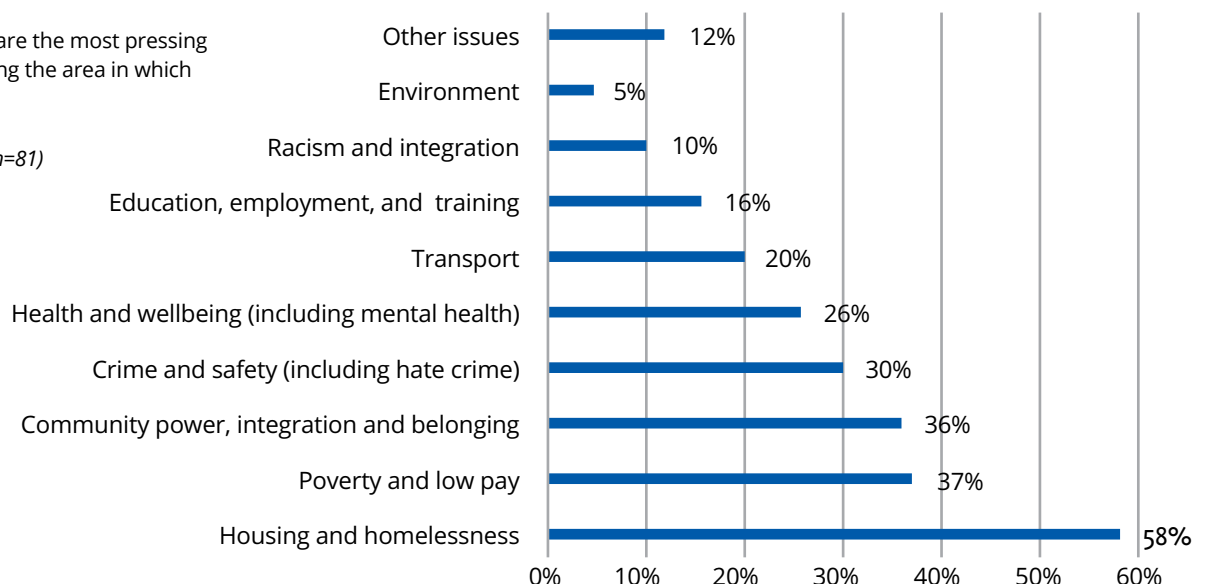
## Acting together for social justice

When alliances operate at their best, campaigns and issues will vary from area to area. What matters to neighbourhoods in Sunderland will almost always be different to the villages and towns in Somerset. Yet, there are also unifying issues – the bigger challenges that face us all but are experienced differently at the local level.

In our first survey in 2017/18, we asked respondents to identify, in their own words, the most pressing challenges or issues facing the town or city in which they live and what should be the priorities for Community Organising in the local area. These responses were categorised as follows:

**Table 4:** What are the most pressing challenges facing the area in which you live?

(Survey 1, Q29, n=81)

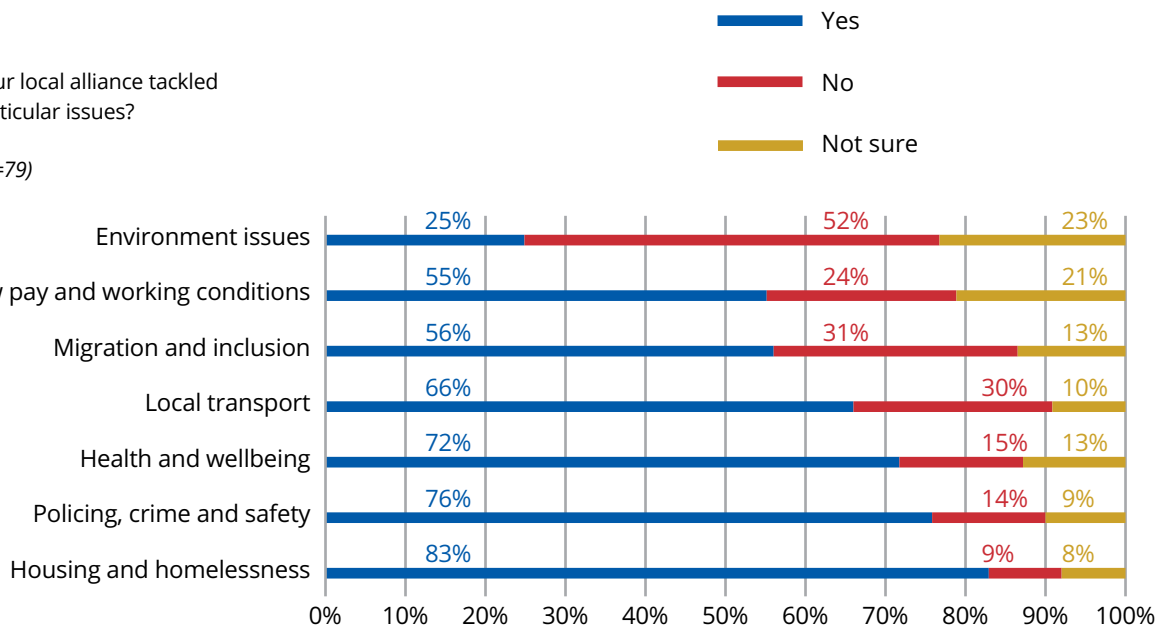


In the first survey, respondents also shared their perceptions of the local area in which they live. Whilst 63% agreed that people “in my local area tend to help each other”, 60% disagreed that they were part of a “close, tight knit community.” Views were split on whether people who live in the area have “demonstrated they have the power to influence others” (35% agree, 33% disagree, while 30% said they didn’t know).

Our second survey asked respondents whether the local Citizens alliance had tackled any particular issues. The data suggests that alliances have focused on those issues that were identified as most pressing in the early stages. Housing and homelessness, for instance, was identified as “a main priority for our alliance” in 53% of responses, closely followed by health and wellbeing (52%).

**Table 5:** Has your local alliance tackled any of these particular issues?

(Survey 2, Q14, n=79)



Campaigns of varying size, scale and impact have taken place across the different growth areas. In the survey, 78% of respondents (n=62) had been involved in one or more campaigns (Survey 2, Q10, n=79). The examples below illustrate the range of campaigns taken up by local areas and the positive outcomes that arose from these:

- o Securing funding for detached youth work and involving young people in police training.
- o University students and staff working with the Methodist Circuit network to tackle the digital divide in local communities.
- o Setting up a local night shelter.
- o Securing women’s only swimming sessions run by the local authority.
- o Improving mental health signposting and service provision.
- o Leading a national campaign to improve the experience of children in

receipt of free school meals so that money they don't spend is returned to them. The alliance has also led on the voucher scheme for school holidays.

- o Securing improvements to public transport including increased availability and fare reductions for young people.
- o Enabling local women to take part in the Law Commission inquiry into hate crime.
- o Promoting the real Living Wage.
- o Seeking to increase the number of Syrian refugee families resettled in Somerset.

(Survey 2, Q11, n=66)

When asked whether the campaign achieved what it set out to, the vast majority of respondents agreed it did "to some extent" (71%, n=44), 18% felt that it achieved everything it set out to achieve and 11% stated that it didn't achieve what it set out to achieve. **Many campaigns were "in process":**

We are still in the process, but we are seeing some positive outcomes. I have put together a spreadsheet portraying how financially viable it is for hotels to carry on housing the homeless based on a 100% occupancy excluding the summer times. The council leaders, in particular [the] Rough-sleeping Task Force, see the utility in that. Indeed, there's even a hotel owner contemplating selling the hotel to the council, as a long-term solution.

(RESPONDENT 54, EDUCATION, BRIGHTON)

There are stories, too, of campaigns that achieved more than they set out to achieve. For example, the case of a refugee welcome campaign:

The enthusiasm from the local community to support families, gave the [council] the evidence that families were welcome here and helped press for far more families than had originally been suggested.

(RESPONDENT 11, FAITH, SOMERSET)

Six respondents gave some further reasons for why they felt the campaign did not achieve what it set out to achieve. A campaign on housing in one area faltered due to the combined lack of evidence, the alliance's relative newness, and the poor response by the city leader:

We did not have enough evidence to make our case. We have begun a new listening campaign to gain more insight and evidence.

(RESPONDENT 5, FAITH, LEICESTER)

The alliance was too inexperienced to follow through, or to research adequately.

(RESPONDENT 6, VCS, LEICESTER)

It was also recognised that some of the “asks” were probably a bit too ambitious:

[We wanted to...] improve the council housing bidding system. Work with the council to ask property developers to increase the percentage of social housing stock in new builds part fund the Night Shelter. The above three ‘asks’ were part of the seven ‘asks’ the alliance came up with for the Leicester Mayoral elections in 2019. As this was the first campaign... I feel this was too ambitious. The first meeting with the Mayor, once he was elected did not go as planned, therefore the ‘asks’ haven’t progressed.

(RESPONDENT 4, VCS, LEICESTER)

Participants in another area recognised that some of the campaign priorities were perhaps too general, making it hard to achieve a tangible win:

We also campaigned for more Living Wage jobs locally - in 2015 Trades Union Congress (TUC) survey Northfield (South Birmingham) was the constituency with highest number of people earning below the living wage in the country. It achieved little because it was too general and not focused. Also, we based it on data and not listening - the listening would have told us that locally there were bigger issues! We did raise the profile considerably though!

(RESPONDENT 53, FAITH, SOUTH BIRMINGHAM)

Examples such as these remind us of the importance of letting listening guide the actions that are pursued and underpinning “asks” with research. The successful campaigns are those that have broken down issues into tangible problems that can be effectively challenged. They also remind us that alliances need to perhaps build properly prior to taking action. Sometimes a rush to action can be disadvantageous to local alliances who require a longer lead in time to build.

By way of contrast, in 2019, Citizens Essex conducted the largest ever listening exercise on crime and safety in Essex, listening to 1,000 people, to bring to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) elections in May 2020. Despite the elections being postponed due to Covid-19, they hosted an online Assembly at which the PFCC Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner came and agreed to their three specific asks:

- o More funding for detached youth work.
- o Working with us to enable young people to train police in order to build better relationships.
- o Assisting us in getting lighting fixed in a notorious pedestrian underpass in Colchester.

They also secured quarterly meetings with the Commissioner to evaluate progress and to strengthen the relationship.

In Barking and Dagenham, an action team inspected the state of roads in July 2019. They measured the length and depth of some of the potholes on the road. They also posted photos in a “gallery of shame” on social media and called on the local authority to repair the road. The response from the council came within 48 hours, informing the parishioners that the repairs would be complete by the end of the 2019. The council carried out the repairs in October 2019 – two months earlier than anticipated. The entire road was resurfaced at a cost of approximately £250,000.

Also, in Barking and Dagenham, and on a larger scale, more than 15 residents were trained by Citizens UK in partnership with the Thames Ward Community Project and Architecture Sans Frontières (ASF) to develop a resident-led approach to regeneration. Home to Europe’s largest housing development, Barking Riverside, the team has led 1,000 conversations with local residents and held four successful “inclusive growth summits.”

The time period of our second survey meant that some respondents identified the Covid-19 pandemic as a stalling factor in some of the campaigns. For some, the pandemic and its restrictions came at the early stages of a campaign, meaning that action needed to be postponed. In other cases, campaigns that had been partially won could not be further strengthened at this time:

The right for women and young children to swim in a leisure pool, screened from the public, with women lifeguards, at a slightly reduced rate was won for one year. Negotiations to continue, or to move to an exercise pool, to train lifeguards in women-only sessions, to keep prices affordable have all failed so far. They want to women to hire a private pool. Now the leisure centre is closed due to the virus, but we’ll ask for more talks.

(RESPONDENT 22, FAITH, ESSEX)



Although Covid-19 was identified as a barrier to some of the work, in other areas, there is evidence of continued action, built on the strength of local alliances. Leicester Citizens successfully held a delegate's assembly/listening launch event with 73 leaders attending online.

In July 2020, Somerset Citizens held its accountability assembly online with a turnout of 96 people. Leaders were developed through co-chairing, sharing stories and holding decision makers to account. The assembly helped build strong accountable relationships with both leaders of Somerset West and Taunton District Council and Somerset County Council. They secured agreement to work with Somerset Citizens on public transport, housing and on the real Living Wage. The Conservative leader of the County Council agreed to sign the Citizens UK Charter as part of campaign for Living Wage for care workers, making him the most senior Conservative politician in the UK to sign it at that point.

Alliances have also responded by reshaping their asks according to the changing needs of the local community. For example:

With Covid-19, the council moved all those experiencing homelessness to one accommodation site and had all services delivered on site. The asks in our campaign have now changed to: 'Nobody returned to the streets and no new people on the streets.' At our Accountability Assembly in July, we will be asking the County and District Councils

to commit to these asks and to work with all groups currently involved in making the site so successful.

(RESPONDENT 41, EDUCATION, SOMERSET)

In Barking and Dagenham, £36,000 was raised for and by local members as part of their response to the challenges posed by Covid-19. This included funding for food bank provision, resources for digital inclusion (including laptops and internet access) and support for institutional development to be more responsive to emerging needs. Citizens Essex were quick to respond to Covid-19. They managed to secure Lottery funding for general Covid-19 responses around mental health and Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) training, plus funding for digital inclusion which has enabled families, individuals and institutions to better access online connectivity and deepen relationships.

In South Birmingham, a planned public assembly to time with the Mayoral elections has been postponed until May 2021. The membership instead joined many others in Birmingham's civil society to establish local support teams to distribute food parcels and other help to vulnerable households and key workers. They started an online campaign to help a community business (home care workers) to secure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) gear, resulting in national media coverage and big companies, like Jaguar Land Rover, making donations.

In August 2020, the City of Sunderland Council accredited as a Living Wage employer. The Sunderland Citizens action team who had led on this work made celebratory Living Wage face masks and sent these to council leaders. The chapter is now working with the local authority and Living Wage Foundation to plan a celebration and play a key role in making Sunderland a Living Wage City (as is the Council's desired agenda) when the easing of Covid-19 restrictions make it possible to do so.



## 3 | GENUINE OWNERSHIP

What marks Community Organising out from many other forms of community empowerment is the focus on putting people in the lead. It seeks to achieve this through identifying and training leaders, building powerful relationships and inculcating genuine ownership at the local level. Alliances become successful and sustainable where the agenda is set, shaped and led by local member institutions. The health of a local alliance is measured by various commitments:

- o The extent to which listening within and across institutions drives and shapes the agenda.
- o The presence of an effective leadership group.
- o The payment of dues.
- o The extent to which Community Organising is becoming embedded within an institution, for example through the number of people involved and the number of people trained.
- o The extent to which institutions can “turnout” the numbers needed to make actions powerful.

Listening in our own organisations and communities and regular meetings/other communications between organisations and leaders bring forward the problems being experienced, so they can be evaluated for action.

(RESPONDENT 71, FAITH, ESSEX)

Member institutions are actively involved in actions, action teams, listening and public meetings.

(RESPONDENT 63, FAITH, SUNDERLAND)

We asked survey respondents to what extent they felt member institutions own and lead the work of the alliance:

- o 32% strongly agreed.
- o 53% agreed.
- o 16% disagreed.
- o 1% strongly disagreed.

(Survey 2, Q16, n=77)

Of the comments offered alongside this question, most provided further endorsement. Priorities set and action taken as a result of listening within institutions was seen as vital:

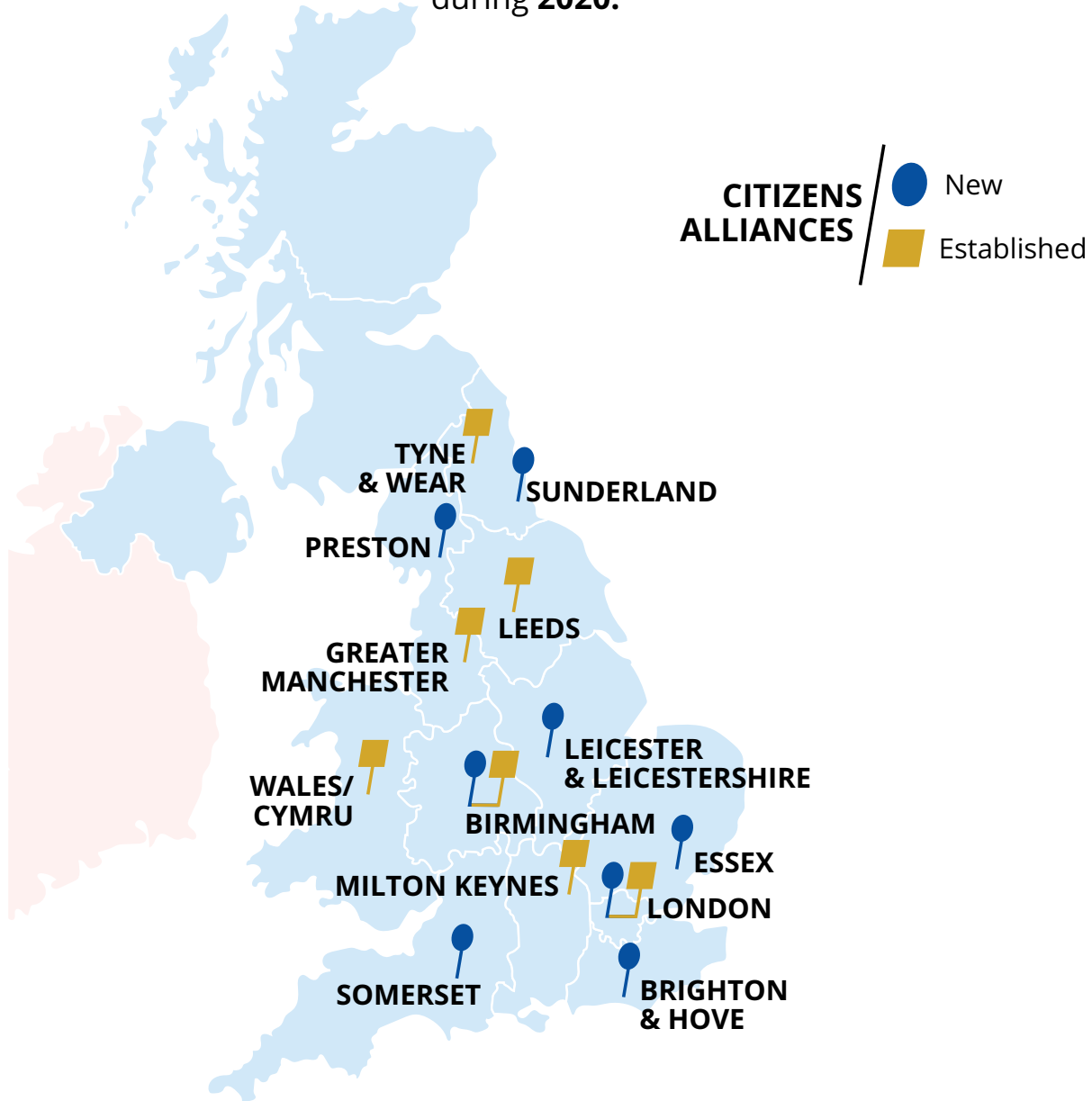
There were also examples where engagement was “mixed”, with views not always consistent in each area:

Not all member organisations in our alliance work on every piece of work. Where one organisation or group has a strong interest and takes the lead, working hard, others supporting, we have achieved results. Without the ownership there are no stories coming forward, no personal interest to provide impetus.

(RESPONDENT 22, FAITH, ESSEX)

## Nine new Citizens alliances in three years.

**£195,000** raised in membership dues.  
**994** community leaders taking action during **2020**.



The most important learning that arises from the Growth Project is that genuine ownership takes time to achieve. As one participant identified:

It has taken us a long time to get sufficient member organisations to become viable and because the bulk of these for such a long time were churches with an elderly demographic, the impetus to take things forward has fallen on a few, hard pressed leaders without much vital backing from their congregations. We have therefore leaned more than perhaps we should have on our Organisers. However, since we launched, we now have a new main Organiser (albeit, part time and not residing in the area), and some support still from our previous Organiser, so we are making strides now, particularly in recruiting state education establishments which should help balance the age, ethnicity and economic demographic better."

(RESPONDENT 11, FAITH, SOMERSET)

The importance of the role of the paid Community Organiser is raised in a number of comments. It is clear to see the role of the Organiser changing as alliances become more established, and responsibility for "ownership" shifts away from the Organiser to the member institutions. In the early stages, there is considerable reliance on the Organiser:

As a new alliance, we have sometimes been guilty of relying on our Organiser for more than we should. We set our own priorities and coordinate turnout ... though.

(RESPONDENT 21, UNION, LEICESTER)

As alliances develop and mature, they increasingly take the lead but rely on the Organiser as a trainer, guide and agitator to encourage fresh approaches and collective action:

The issues we focus on are agreed as a group and are based on listening campaigns within the community. While we need the help and guidance of our Organiser, much of the work is led by members within the alliance.

(RESPONDENT 26, EDUCATION, ESSEX)

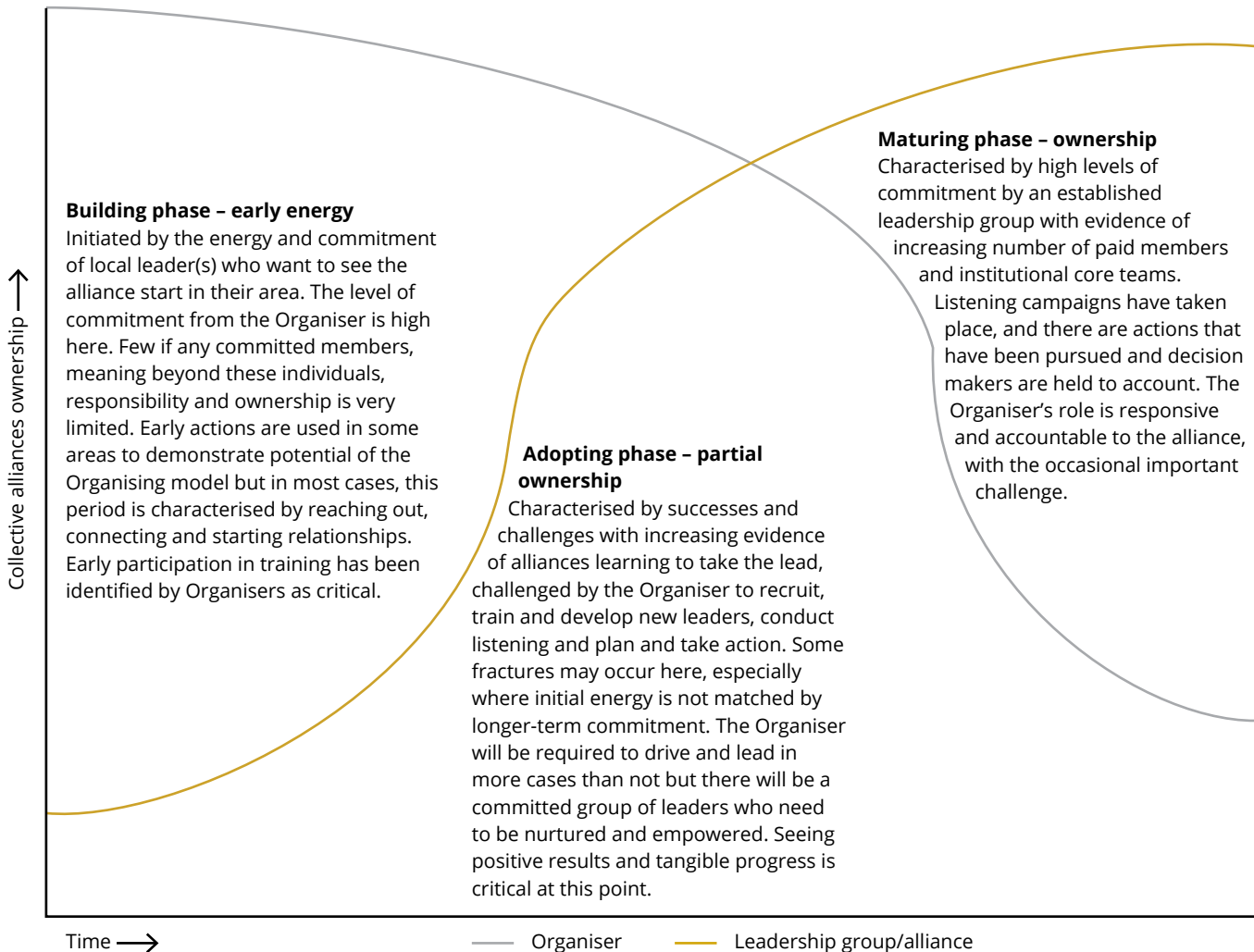
...there is a strong leadership group however occasionally they need to be agitated by the Organiser.

(RESPONDENT 51, EDUCATION, SOUTH BIRMINGHAM)

Reflections from Organisers in the early stages of the project suggested that "building an alliance from scratch" requires an intensive amount of resources and presence from an Organiser. It was felt by Organisers that this was somewhat underestimated in the project design and the deployment of limited paid Organiser time may be one reason why some alliances faltered or took longer to come to fruition.

Based on the accounts of Organisers, leadership group members and from the growth reports, we can broadly determine

three phases where a “shift” towards deeper alliance ownership occurs. This is captured in the diagram below:



**Table 6:** Phases of local ownership over time

The process of Community Organising and the development of alliances is fluid and ever-changing, so this diagram is only a rough indicator of how the process can work. Applying time limits to each phase is unhelpful as each alliance has prospered differently according to the local context and levels of energy and commitment. Problems can occur at each

phase. For example, a rush to action in the building phase might have caused some difficulties for Leicester Citizens. The absence of institutional depth beyond one or two key leaders halted Preston Citizens' development. Although arguably in the maturing phase, Somerset Citizens continues to face challenges in terms of the diversity of its membership.

## Snapshots of the Citizens alliances

The Citizens alliances are ever-changing, constantly evolving as they build membership, secure membership dues and take part in actions. At the time of writing, a current snapshot looks like this. Across the nine established Citizens alliances:

- o **746 people** are currently actively involved in their Citizens alliance through leadership groups, core teams and campaign teams.
- o In 2020, **994 people** turned out to the various actions led by the alliances.
- o There are **71 civil society institutions in membership**.
- o A further **41 civil society institutions are becoming members**.
- o Of these:
  - 42 are faith-based institutions.
  - 30 are from the voluntary and community sector.
  - 32 are educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities).
  - Two are unions.
  - Six are classified as “other” (including housing associations and a group of people who set up their own ‘member institution’ in Somerset).
- o **£195,050** has been secured in annual dues with a further £52,000 committed as other institutions join.

Barking and Dagenham	Brighton and Hove	Enfield	Essex
Total member institutions: 8 Total joining institutions: 2 o Faith: 3 o Community/charity: 3 o Education: 3 o Other: 1 Number of active people: 189 Turnout in 2020: 135 Annual dues: £14,000	Total member institutions: 9 Total joining institutions: 2 o Faith: 5 o Community/charity: 2 o Education: 3 o Other: 1 Number of active people: 46 Turnout in 2020: 144 Annual dues: £26,500	Total member institutions: 0 Total joining institutions: 18 o Faith: 8 o Community/charity: 2 o Education: 8 Number of active people: 15 Turnout in 2020: 0 Annual dues: £48,000	Total member institutions: 11 Total joining institutions: 0 o Faith: 4 o Community/charity: 4 o Education: 3 Number of active people: 152 Turnout in 2020: 180 Annual dues: £42,550
Leicester	Preston	Somerset	South Birmingham
Total member institutions: 14 Total joining institutions: 0 o Faith: 5 o Community/charity: 5 o Education: 3 o Union: 1 o Other: 1 Number of active people: 144 Turnout in 2020: 113 Annual dues: £32,500	Total member institutions: 2 Total joining institutions: 9 o Faith: 4 o Community/charity: 2 o Education: 2 o Union: 1 o Other: 2 Number of active people: 15 Turnout in 2020: 0 Annual dues: £40,000	Total member institutions: 9 Total joining institutions: 8 o Faith: 7 o Community/charity: 4 o Education: 5 Number of active people: 47 Turnout in 2020: 141 Annual dues: £14,250	Total member institutions: 8 Total joining institutions: 2 o Faith: 2 o Community/charity: 4 o Education: 3 o Other: 1 Number of active people: 66 Turnout in 2020: 50 Annual dues: £27,000
Sunderland			
Total member institutions: 10 Total joining institutions: 0 o Faith: 4 o Community/charity: 3 o Education: 2 o Other: 1 Number of active people: 72 Turnout in 2020: 231 Annual dues: £2,250			

## Internal depth

The expectation that leaders will embed Community Organising within their institutions takes time to be realised. Most institutions have seen the involvement of a “few leaders” who have taken part in training or action (53%). There is also evidence of core teams of leaders emerging (35%) who are intentional about organising. Only in a minority of cases is the institution reliant on the “positional leader”, i.e. the person formally leading the institution, such as the Rabbi or Headteacher, being involved (15%).



**Table 7:** How embedded is community organising in your institution?

(Survey 2, Q17, n=78)

We have a core team of leaders who are intentional about Community Organising and significantly involved.	27 (35%)
We have a few leaders who are somewhat involved, for example they have been on training or taken part in an action.	41 (53%)
Only or predominantly the positional leader within the institution is bought in.	12 (15%)

Internal depth matters because it ensures the sustainability of the alliance. For example, Citizens Essex experienced challenges when several institutional leaders suffered ill-health resulting in them scaling back their involvement. As a result, the Organiser recognised the importance of developing membership plans with the leadership of each institution and developing a core team committed to the plan.

South Birmingham Citizens used membership plans to help identify how the culture of Community Organising can be embedded within the structure and practices of each member

institution, moving from lone individuals representing their faith, community or education institution to recognised core teams who have support and resources from the rest of their institution.

Preston Citizens' progress suffered from this very issue. Due to an exceptionally high turnover of people in positions of leadership, the Organiser lost key relationships with three potential strategic partners. As their growth project report highlights:

The previous Organiser had built relationships with one or two individuals from within each of the founding partners. Through these relationships, money was pledged. However, in a number of cases, these key people moved on and there was not wider buy in from the organisation. Key decisions had not even been made at key strategic level, which meant that it had not been fully signed off. This has led to the last six months a lot of spade work being needed to carry out in order to build a core group in each organisation.

(GROWTH REPORT, PRESTON)

This issue was compounded by the development Organiser leaving the job after a period of extended sick leave. Whilst a supervising Organiser spent one day per

month in the area, this had not been enough to build the key relationships needed on the ground. More recently, Preston Citizens have now appointed a dedicated Organiser and progress is being made.

Among Leicester Citizens, depth has been promoted through supporting institutions to organise internally. For example, they worked with the President of the Student Union as she steered a #MeTooOnCampus campaign that she felt was getting out of control and needed to be more strategic. This campaign subsequently went from strength to strength. They also worked with a Somali parent charity to develop leadership and run a listening campaign on an inner-city housing estate in receipt of significant development funding.

## *How have member institutions benefited?*

The vast majority of respondents indicated that their institution had developed as a result of being part of their Citizens alliance:

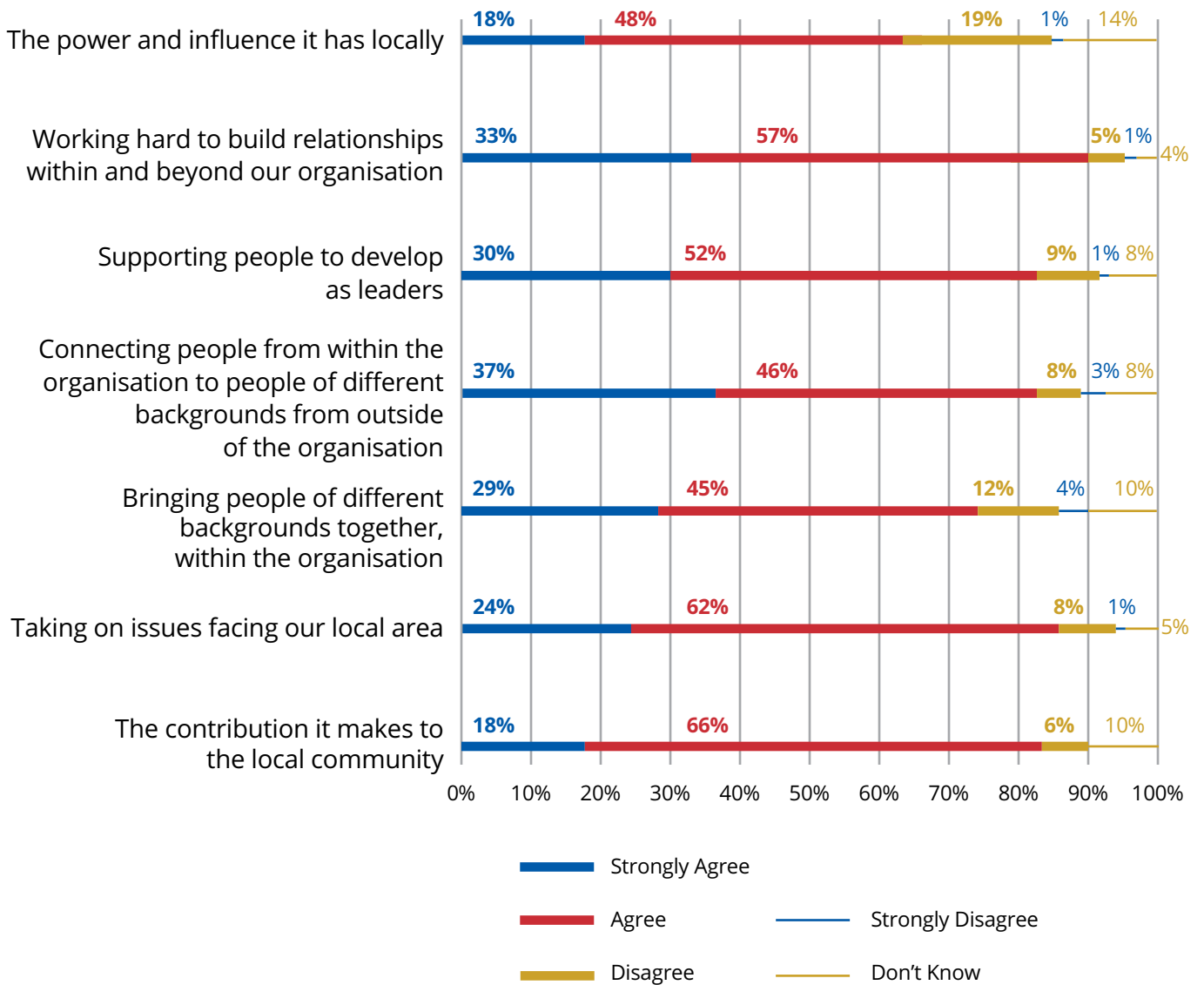
- o 90% agreed (33% strongly) that the institution was better at building relationships within and beyond the institution.
- o 86% agreed (24% strongly) that the institution had improved taking on issues facing the local area.
- o 84% agreed (18% strongly) that the institution had improved the contribution it makes to the local community.

- o 82% agreed (30% strongly) that the institution had improved developing people as leaders.

There was a more mixed response for the extent to which participants felt that the institution had seen improvements in its power and influence locally. 20% of participants disagreed and 14% did not know, with 66% agreeing (18% strongly) this was the case. Against the much higher ratings this may seem less positive, but it still represents well over half of respondents affirming greater influence.

**Table 8:** Since becoming involved in Citizens, to what extent do you agree that your institution has improved...

(Survey 2, Q6, n=79)





We asked respondents to identify what they felt had been the most significant thing that their institution had gained from being part of the local Citizens alliance.

77 people responded to this question and the top three groups of responses were categorised as follows:

Category	N	Sub-categories	Examples
Relationships	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Belonging and connection to wider community.</li> <li>o Internal relationships.</li> <li>o Collaboration with other institutions.</li> <li>o Relationships with and influence on decision makers.</li> <li>o Increasing connections between diverse groups.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“Our eyes were opened to the experience of our local community. We could see that our struggles were connected and together we could change things.”</b> (RESPONDENT 69, UNION, LEICESTER)</p>
			<p><b>“The ability to open the minds of our students and enhance their education by exploring real life community action. Also, the students have had a chance to develop a greater understanding and connection with the community that they are living in.”</b> (RESPONDENT 77, EDUCATION, ESSEX)</p>
			<p><b>“An edge - critique in relationships with power to add to pretty high levels of existing trust.”</b> (RESPONDENT 37, FAITH, LEICESTER)</p> <p><b>“Collaboration. Our organisation is small and being part of Citizens gives us the opportunity to collaborate with other organisations. This has been fantastic for the organisation and members.”</b> (RESPONDENT 76, VCS, SUNDERLAND)</p>
Community Organising knowledge and/or skills	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Examples of using Community Organising skills within institutions.</li> <li>o Power analysis.</li> <li>o New ways of taking action.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“We have benefited from training and experienced leadership roles as well as being introduced to learning how to campaign for a cause, negotiate and tactfully reach a positive solution through Community Organising.”</b> (RESPONDENT 80, VCS, ESSEX)</p>
			<p><b>“We have changed how we work around issues in the students union to take a more Organising style approach to issues.”</b> (RESPONDENT 44, EDUCATION, BRIGHTON)</p>
Taking action	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Examples of campaigns and actions.</li> <li>o Moving from principles to actions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“The pledge that was then taken before the council and the Clinical Commissioning Group echoed the voices of [our] students. When pupils witnessed the organised way of running campaigns, they knew their abundance of energy could be directed to achieve tangible change rather than sufficing it to win the moral argument. This created an impetus for more students to change...”</b> (RESPONDENT 54, EDUCATION, BRIGHTON)</p> <p><b>“It’s good to have our frustration with the issues that we are tackling, as a charity, validated by the local community, but it is equally as important that we have all united to put pressure on the local government to address those issues.”</b> (RESPONDENT 16, VCS, LEICESTER)</p>

**Table 9:** What has been the most significant change for your institution since joining Citizens?

The other significant benefits were:

- o Receiving advice and help from an Organiser.

- o Experience and benefits of being involved in building a Citizens alliance.
- o Developing people in new ways.
- o Participating in training.

(SURVEY 2, Q7, N=77)

## 4 | DEVELOPING LEADERS

Citizens has changed my life (...) I felt I had to hide my lived experience if I wanted to be a good leader. Citizens has taught me that I can be my authentic self and that my lived experiences have shaped who I am. I understand that these experiences actually make me a better leader, as I am more driven and impatient for change... I know that wherever I am, I can build community and bring people together over shared values.

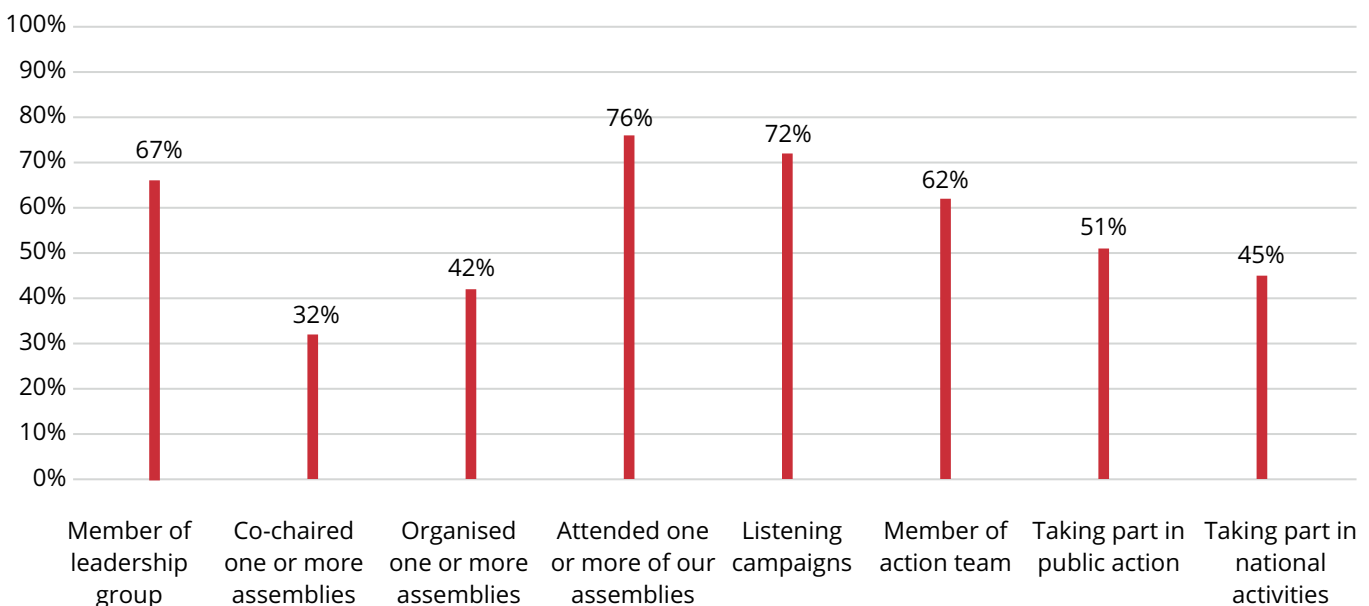
(RESPONDENT 69, UNION, LEICESTER)

Leadership development is central to the Organising ethos. When Community Organisers talk about the success – or otherwise – of their alliance, they talk about the quality, depth and breadth of leadership that is evident. There has been considerable success in developing leaders throughout the different alliances. The project has opened up opportunities for people who did not previously see themselves as leaders, encouraged those in power to lead differently, and accelerated the development of those on their way to leading.

This has been achieved through a combination of the formal structures of leadership put in place by alliances, through high levels of responsiveness to local development needs, and through enabling experience by action.

**Table 10:** Since joining Citizens, in your local area, which of the following have you taken part in?

(Survey 2, Q22, n=76)



Leadership is nurtured through training, one-to-ones, encouraging individuals to take on public roles, building experience of leading action or campaign teams, and sitting on the alliance's sponsoring committee or leadership group. In our survey, the majority of respondents had served as a member of the leadership group/sponsoring committee (n=51, 67%). Around a third had co-chaired one or more of the assemblies (n=24) and 62% had been part of an "action team" or "campaign team" (n=47).

For 87% of participants, this was their first time being involved in a Citizens alliance and 53% of individuals had lived experience of being directly affected by one or more of the issues prioritised by their local alliance. The most common examples offered by participants included access to and support for mental health and wellbeing, issues around housing and homelessness, availability of transport in rural areas and experience of poverty or low income.

An individual's own experience may be a motivating factor behind becoming involved in campaigns, but at the very least it provides greater scope for empathy and the desire to take action:

Lived in poverty as a child with poor access to Free School Meals and local stigma. Also worked in social housing and saw the impact of this on families.

(RESPONDENT 60, FAITH, SUNDERLAND)

Tangible campaigns (brought about by breaking down an issue in a problem that can be solved) enable those affected by an issue to see and benefit from the actions that they have taken:

We won a mental health service for 16-19-year-old people where there was previously a gap. My daughter has benefited from this service since it was created.

(RESPONDENT 45, UNION, SOUTH BIRMINGHAM)

As a result of engaging in Citizens:

- o 45% of respondents felt that they are more capable of making decisions about things in their personal, professional and/or public life.

Those involved in the growth projects also signalled strong agreement with a series of statements about engagement in public life:

- o 94% strongly agree/agree that people like them can have a real influence on politics if they are prepared to get involved.
- o 100% strongly agree/agree that when people like them work together, they can really make a difference to their local community.

## Training

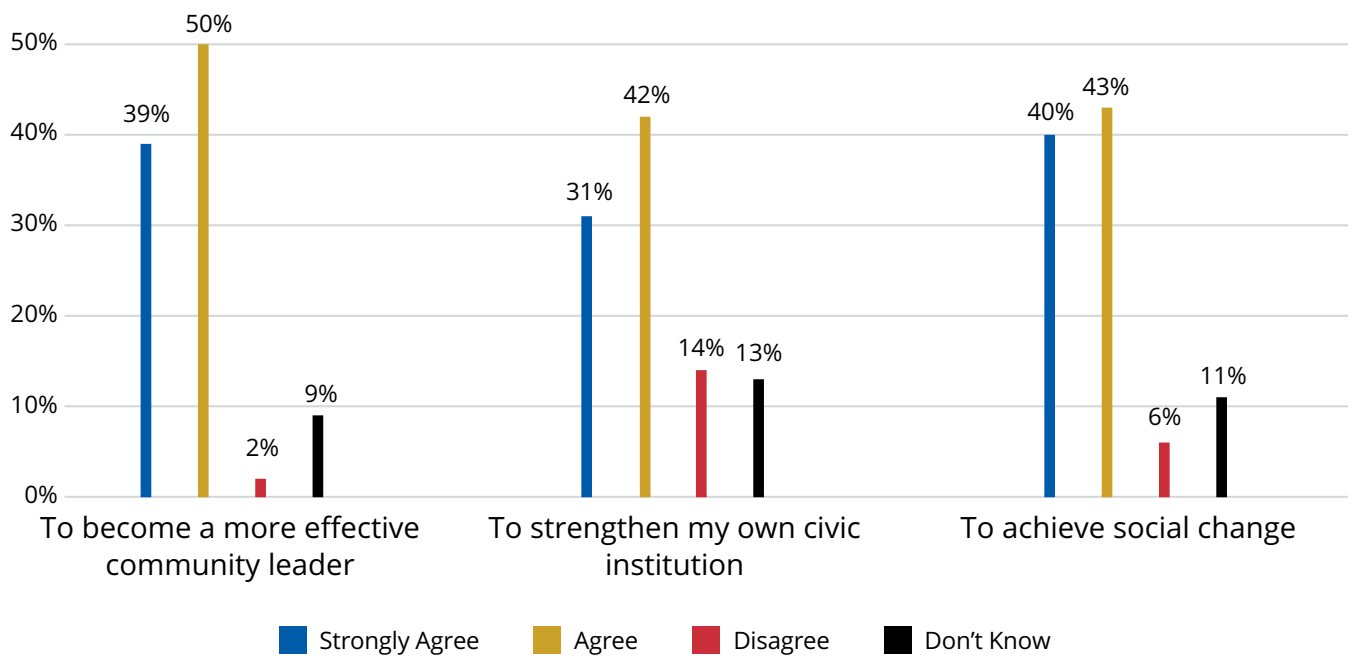
Training in the craft of Community Organising is seen as a fundamental first step in building both leadership and the alliance. The training includes national and accredited Community Organising training (six days in duration) focused on those sitting on leadership groups or leading core teams within institutions, local and regional training courses, and bespoke training based on local need. Participation numbers vary according to the age of the alliance, the extent to which leadership groups have established themselves and the energy and commitment locally to drive participation.

- o In Barking and Dagenham, for instance, around 30 individuals have attended national or local leadership training and a further 200 have attended some form of bespoke training.
- o Leicester has so far trained over 100 people locally.
- o Somerset has trained 94 people. Of the 15 people sitting on Somerset's leadership group, nine have attended national or regional Citizens UK training.
- o Despite facing significant setbacks, Preston Citizens has trained an impressive 50 people to date.



In the survey, 33% of respondents had undertaken the national training, 45% had participated in local/regional training and 43% had taken part in other training. Of those who did:

- o 89% strongly/agreed that the Community Organising training had enabled them to “become a more effective community leader.”
- o 73% strongly/agreed that the Community Organising training had enabled them to “strengthen their own civil institution.”
- o 83% strongly/agreed that the Community Organising training had enabled them to “achieve social change.”



**Table 11:** If you attended Citizens UK training, how strongly do you feel that it helped you with the following?

(Survey 2, Q23, n=64)

## Developing skills and experience

There are three common types of leader that emerge from a review of the growth projects. These are:

- o **New leaders.** People who never thought of themselves as leaders, had recognition or who previously never had the experience to lead.
- o **Emerging leaders.** Those within member institutions who are, through engagement with Community Organising, able to accelerate their leadership trajectory.
- o **Established leaders doing things differently.** These are established leaders who, through their engagement with Citizens, change the ways in which they lead in their institution or sector, such as University, Diocese, charity etc. They will organise differently, lead campaigns or develop others in different ways.

There is strong evidence that engagement in Citizens alliances has contributed to skills development as the table below shows.

**Table 12:** Since becoming involved in Citizens, to what extent have you developed any of these particular skills?

(Survey 2, Q24, n=76)

Skill	Developed	About the same
Negotiating with those in power	78%	22%
Leading teams or groups	66%	34%
Building or strengthening relationships	79%	21%
Building a team	68%	32%
Developing others into leaders	73%	27%
Dealing with conflict	54%	46%
Breaking down a problem down into tangible issues	76%	24%
Conducting power analyses	79%	21%
Taking effective public action on the issues that matter to me	81%	19%
Developing a campaign strategy	77%	23%
Speaking in public	56%	44%

Respondents highlighted a number of new experiences that had contributed to their development as leaders, increased their confidence and developed a new sense of pride:

Taking part in a campaign and talking about the success of that in public at one of our assemblies - on a personal level, this gave me a great feeling of achievement and pride.

(RESPONDENT 26, EDUCATION, ESSEX)

I feel that I have a model for bringing about change and understand that signing a petition, whilst important, is unlikely to bring about change. I understand that if I care about something, I can do something about it.

(RESPONDENT 63, FAITH, SUNDERLAND)

Recognising the need to step forward publicly and being confident enough in the plan and the numbers to do so.

(RESPONDENT 22, FAITH, ESSEX)

# Community Organising has equipped me to:



Negotiate with power holders



Take effective public action



Build stronger relationships



Lead teams



Established leaders have commented on how Citizens UK has changed their approach to leadership within their own institutions, exemplified by this respondent:

I seriously developed my strategic thinking. When conducting campaigns, leadership meetings concerning the direction of the alliance, I have developed the habit of having a higher-level perspective combining a variety of aspects. This includes the way to approach and move different kinds of people towards action, whether in power or within the institution. I became obsessed with the clarity of the wanted outcome, i.e. meeting to act and not to merely meet. Having said that, within these different aspects I also grew aware of the importance of maintaining relationships over long periods of time. Overall, becoming strictly more result orientated when judging performance.

(RESPONDENT 54, EDUCATION, BRIGHTON)

The various activities that feature in the Community Organising cycle provide opportunities for the development of a wide range of skills for diverse people:

Numerous people, from sixth formers to church ministers and retired teachers have developed their leadership skills through the training and through being involved in the listening campaign, action teams, leadership team, attending Citizens training courses. We have involved people and enabled them to use their skills in photography and filming, in communications, and in writing and public speaking through writing and delivering

scripts and their personal experiences at the Citizens assemblies so far, including the Founding Assembly.

(SOMERSET GROWTH REPORT)

The most common way that development is realised in the cycle is through action teams aligned to the interests and energy of those involved. Enabling those who have experienced their own challenges to move to leadership roles has resulted in individuals realising that they can make a difference and build their own confidence at the same time:

Our Mental Health Action Team is led [by] one young person who has a personal and moving story of how she was received at an A&E when needing help for her mental health. [She] has grown immensely over this year and said: 'Over the last few months, I have been lucky enough to be involved with Citizens UK Brighton and Hove branch. The experience has provided me opportunities to give back to my community, one that I am so proud to be a part of as well as building cherished connections that would never have developed without the training opportunities and house meetings I have been privileged enough to attend. The team I work with are so excited about initiatives that we believe will change the lives of the people we have listened to. I could not imagine my life without this institution and look forward to making important change and building the power of those around me.'

(BRIGHTON AND HOVE GROWTH REPORT)



We asked survey respondents what the most significant change for them had been, since becoming involved in the Growth Project. The most popular responses (of 66 examples) were categorised as follows:

- o Developing knowledge and skills in power and power analysis (20 examples).
- o Understanding, building and strengthening relationships (15 examples).
- o Changing how people work and lead, including how they develop others (13 examples).
- o Taking or understanding how to take effective action (13 examples).
- o Developing skills in listening and organising (12 examples).

## *Broader civic responsibility*

There is emerging evidence that involvement in Citizens UK has spurred people to engage in other forms of civic responsibility. Since becoming involved in Citizens, people had engaged in the following activities for the first time:

- o 31% of respondents presented their views to a councillor or MP.
- o 32% led or joined a campaign about an issue they care about.
- o 25% urged someone outside of their family to vote.
- o 21% urged someone to get in touch with a councillor or MP.
- o 19% made a speech before an organised group.
- o 12% helped with fundraising drives.
- o 10% became an officer or took another leadership position within an institution.
- o 9% voted in the general election and 10% in the local election.
- o And one person stood for public office.

*(Survey 2, Q27, n=68)*

Since becoming involved in Citizens UK:

- o 19% of respondents have joined another community or civic group, including: community sponsorship schemes to resettle refugees, a local group dealing with Covid-19 issues, community heritage trusts and schemes supporting rough sleepers.
- o 12% joined a political party.
- o 10% joined a tenants' or residents' group or Neighbourhood Watch.

*(Survey 2, Q26, n=57)*

The majority of survey respondents devote time to volunteering with 25% doing so outside of Citizens and their main job for more than 20 hours in a month.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

This short report has presented some of the key findings from the evaluation and learning strand of the Citizens UK Growth Project. In this, the first of our series of outputs, we have focused on nine of the Growth Areas to examine aspects of:

- o Building relationships within and beyond one's own institution to enable resilience to respond to crises and act for justice.
- o Building genuine ownership characterised by the Community Organising principles of "people before programme" and of "organised money", which involves local civic institutions collectively funding and owning their local Citizens alliance, as well as the organic development of alliances.
- o Building leadership development.

### *Citizens alliances have developed powerful relationships*

Citizens alliances have developed their capacity to build relationships internally, across civil society institutions and with those who hold power to make change. Alliances have demonstrated that they can influence, and through their stronger relationships, can organise and win campaigns on the issues that have been identified as important to their membership. There is a growing diversity of member institutions, and evidence of bridging between different faith groups, educational institutions, the community and voluntary sector and trades unions.

Thousands of people have been listened to and as a result, campaigns have reflected the priorities of local areas acting on those issues identified as most important at the start of the Growth Project. Most campaigns have been fully or partially won, and many are still in progress as members build on their successes to consolidate positive social justice impact. In these challenging times, Community Organising has continued apace as alliances adapt to Organising online and making a vital contribution to sustaining resilient communities.

## *Citizens alliances are models of genuine ownership*

Citizens alliances are led, owned and sustained by member institutions with many hundreds of people in the lead. The spark that ignites them is the early energy from a few key committed leaders, with matched commitment from a paid Community Organiser. As times go on, ownership deepens as more and diverse member institutions increase the numbers of those actively trained, engaged and leading. There is

strong emerging evidence of member institutions adopting Community Organising practices, something that will further build as alliances mature. As a result, member institutions have improved their relationships within and outside of the institution, how they address issues in the local area, the contribution they make to the local community and how they develop people as leaders.



**LEICESTER CITIZENS HOLD THEIR FIRST MAJOR PUBLIC ACTION, A MAYORAL ACCOUNTABILITY ASSEMBLY IN APRIL 2019**

# *Citizens alliances enable significant leadership development*

Citizens alliances have trained and enabled experience in leadership for hundreds of people from all walks of life. New leaders have come to the fore, having never previously recognised themselves as people able to lead change. Established leaders are doing things differently. The vast majority of those who had participated in Citizens Community Organiser training felt better equipped to be an effective community leader, strengthen their own civic institution and achieve social change. There is evidence that leaders have developed their confidence and have new or improved knowledge and skills in power analysis, strengthening relationships, leading, taking effective action, listening and Organising. Citizens alliances have also spurred people to engage in other forms of civic responsibility.

The learning from the Citizens UK Growth Projects has significance for those involved in designing, implementing and evaluating interventions that seek to build resilient communities. Of all of these, a healthy and powerful civil society is one which is underpinned by strong relationships within and between its institutions, and puts people, genuinely, in the lead.



The image features a solid blue background with several thick white lines. One line starts from the top left, goes diagonally down to the right, then turns 90 degrees to go horizontally to the right, and then turns 90 degrees to go diagonally down to the right. Another line starts from the top left and goes diagonally down to the right. A third line starts from the top left and goes diagonally down to the right. A fourth line starts from the top left and goes diagonally down to the right. In the bottom right corner, the text 'citizensuk' is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'i' in 'citizens' has a dot above it. The 'uk' is smaller and positioned to the right of 'citizens'.

***citizens***<sup>uk</sup>