

# Our Place: a snapshot



The National Lottery Community Fund supports people and communities to thrive. Our Place is a 10-year funding programme running from 2014 until 2024 and is working with seven communities across Scotland so they:

1. have more influence on decisions taken locally
2. have more sustainable services and facilities that reflect their local priorities
3. say their community is a better place to live.

Our Place funding has helped improve local community facilities including community centres, church halls, parks and canals. We've also funded community activity, youth work, arts projects and lots more.

**£12m**  
total investment

**£1.5m** for 5 years of  
community development

**£10.5m** funding:

62 projects funded

Largest grant **£513k**

Average grant **£143k**

7 Community Chests of  
approximately **£20k** each,  
making small grants up to **£2k**

**7**  
communities  
supported

Douglas, Dundee

Auchmuty, Fife

Camelon, Falkirk

Ardrossan,  
North Ayrshire

Shortlees,  
East Ayrshire

Springhall &  
Whitlawburn,  
South Lanarkshire

Lochside  
and Lincluden,  
Dumfries and  
Galloway

# How does Our Place work?

Communities know what's best for them, and Our Place funding supports them to get the best out of their local environment. People from the voluntary and community sector, known as Community Builders, have used an Asset-based Community Development Approach to give localised support. Instead of asking what's wrong, they have spent time getting to know each community's strengths, helping them identify and think about future aspirations, build their capacity and involve as many people as possible.

## Programme design

- Work with stakeholders to identify geographic areas and boundaries.
- Set out community engagement plans and how to track progress.



## Community building starts

- Engagement with the local community begins.
- People start finding out about Our Place.



## Asset mapping and visioning

- Identifying the strengths and resources: buildings and environment, networks, services, skills, groups.
- Consultation to establish a five year community vision.
- Work with people known as community connectors who would acts as link between the communities and the programme.



## Design, funding and delivery of projects

- Individual or networks of grant holders design projects that can help deliver the community vision.
- The Fund assesses applications and decides whether or not to fund. In practice, all projects have been awarded money.

Beyond the main funding investment, we've introduced a Community Chest – a pot of funding for up to **£2,000**, enabling people to test ideas or support smaller-scale projects in each area.



## Ongoing support

- During the five year community building period, community builders take the lead on supporting the community.
- After that period lapses, our Funding Officers continue supporting the grant holders as with any programme.

# What we've learned from what people have told us

Our Place's contribution to the local area

## **It's boosted engagement in local decision-making and activities**

Through consistent community engagement by the Community Builders and the opportunity to try new projects out via the Community Chest, more people are looking to be involved with the local community.

## **It's created a buzz in the community**

People told us they feel more ambitious about the future and that their communities are a better place to live.

## **It's invested in improving community buildings, landscape and physical environment**

Places that matter to communities such as parks, community centres and canals have had financial investment to become more functional and look better.

## **It's provided opportunities for local people and delivery organisations to build their skills**

Community Builders helped communities explore new, more complex projects while providing practical support that has contributed to upskilling the local community.

## **It's facilitated connections and partnership working**

Working on the ground with communities and groups allowed Community Builders to connect the dots, help set up local networks and support people to sustain those connections.

## **What else we've learned...**

### **Financial investment won't take you far if it doesn't come with capacity building support**

Funding resources are important to ensure that the community's vision can be delivered. If the local community groups have little experience of delivering large projects, capacity building is critical. An independent Community Builder based in a local venue on a long-term basis can help the community sustain financial investment. The group can deliver successful projects, especially in the case of complex capital projects such as community centres, parks and canals.

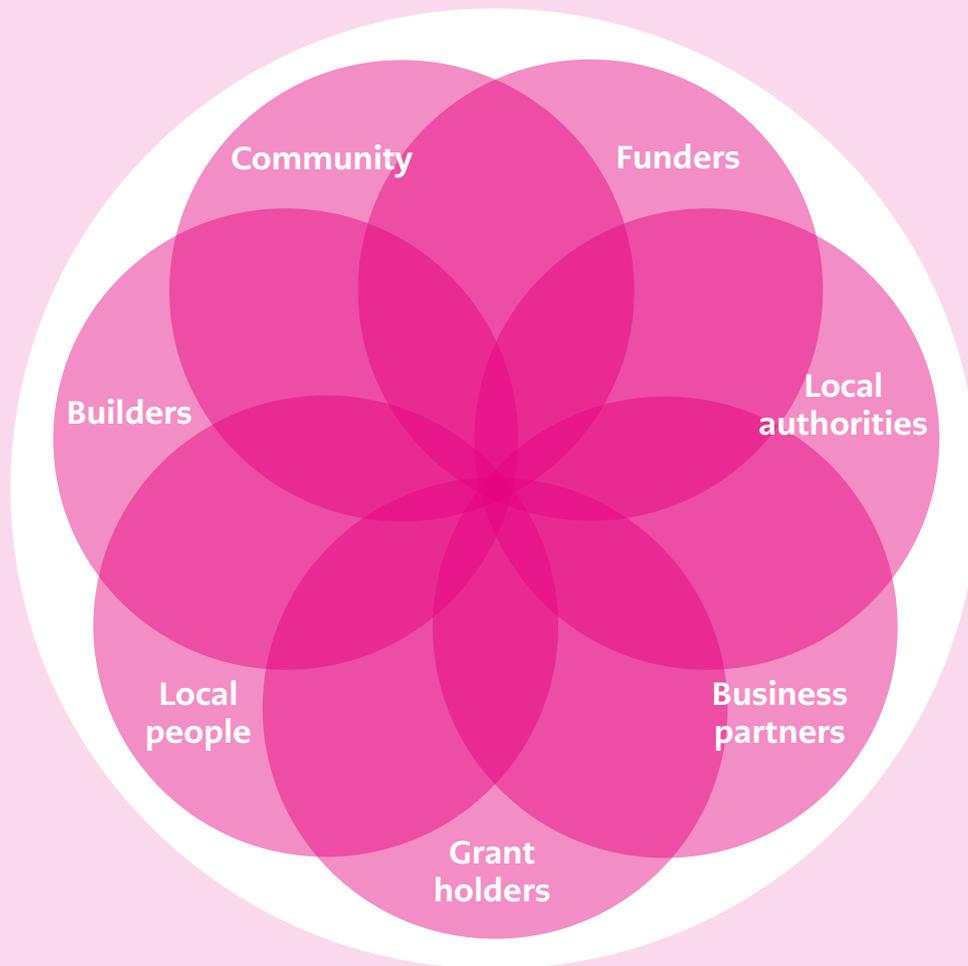
### **Communities can make great things happen with small amounts of money**

The Community Chest was a great way to spark community activity while larger projects were being designed. It also helped people who had an idea for building capacity and scaling it into a bigger project. Most importantly, it proved that ideas and getting people on board need not be expensive.

The Community Chest funded ideas that gained traction and community buy-in quickly.

## Personalities and relationships play an important role

Local relationships of all kinds are fundamental to running a successful project. Most people get involved with community activities because they are passionate to make their areas a better place to live. Regular interactions on forums where everyone can have an equal say allows communities to build trust. They can share learning and resources, and challenge each other to make change happen.



## Our recommendations

### If you're a local group

- Participate, contribute to and learn from local networks of groups and people. If there is no existing network, think about partnering up with groups in a similar situation to create one.
- Don't just occasionally consult your community, make sure it has an active role in developing and delivering projects. This could be as simple as sense-checking you're on the right track.
- Think about making a leap and working collaboratively with partners in nearby areas. For example, you can alternate between areas to deliver an activity such as an exercise class.
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself to deliver in tight deadlines. The community may be eager to see a project delivered but they'll be understanding if it needs to take longer because of limited resources or capacity – just remember to keep them involved.

## If you're a funder

- Co-produce the programme with relevant stakeholders who have local knowledge that can help reflect the community's ethos and ambitions.
- Invest in some form of micro-funding that can allow local people to try out new ideas, particularly while larger projects are in design.
- Provide capacity-building support as it's just as important as financial investment, especially in areas where there hasn't been enough opportunity for local groups to develop their experience.
- Consider making a gradual financial investment as it allows local groups to develop their capacity at a more comfortable pace.
- Carefully select capital projects in communities with limited experience in delivering large-scale projects or managing a community venue eg a park or a centre.
- Continuously collect and analyse data from all groups of participants in the programme, keeping track of what your contribution is to the local area and ensuring that it still works for the community.

## If you're a local authority

Work in partnership with communities and provide capacity support and resources when available. This will most likely pay off long-term as the community will be more resourced to deliver projects.

## If you're a Community Builder

- Make sure that people of all identities and walks of life in the community have an equal opportunity to voice their opinion and input to the process. Dynamics between different people and personalities can be a barrier to people's engagement so think about how you can manage conflict on this journey.
- Help with the facilitation of local networks but don't assume ownership over them, as the community should feel comfortable to run them in your absence.
- You don't want to be perceived as dipping in and out of the community so maintaining a local presence is a good idea. Having a local base for the Community Builder is well received, especially if it's accessible to the community in a central location.
- It's tricky to not get too involved with the community when you spend so much time with them, but it's important to remember that you'll be leaving at some point. Even though it might be challenging at the start, doing things with rather than for groups is a good way forward as it allows them to build their capacity and become more resilient.

If you would like more information or to apply for funding visit [tnlcommunityfund.org.uk](https://tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)



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