

July 2023

Together We Can 2

Progress Report

Year 2



3

Local organisations - Worth Unlimited, Open Door Community Foundation and Firs and Bromford Neighbours Together

80

registered groups + activities

32

new groups + activities since Jul 21

1

Vision

21

street parties

10

paid roles

Together We Can 2

Year 2 - in Numbers

79

young people attending TWC-led groups

293

participants in TWC-led activities

40+

Volunteers

170+

neighbours receiving advice and support

400+

attendees at our Community Events

Together We Can 2

Together We Can! is a unique collaboration between 3 grassroots organisations in the Firs and Bromford estates in East Birmingham. Working together with neighbours and partners, we are committed to a long-term, neighbourhood-wide journey of intergenerational community-building, seeking to root practical wisdom, connectedness and leadership among local residents. Our vision is shaped by that of Firs and Bromford Neighbours Together (FBNT), the residents' group overseeing the 10 year Big Local funding for the area:

**Developing our community into a place of creativity and compassion,
where all feel welcome, all feel connected, all feel they belong
and all feel that they can flourish**

TWC2 refers to this second phase of our work, from Jul 2021 until June 2026. This builds on the 4.5 years of the first phase of TWC. TWC2 now supports 10 paid staff, of which 6 are local residents, including our 3 new trainee connectors.

Uniquely, TWC2 is not about delivering particular projects or services. Instead, our approach is to be alongside neighbours on a journey of involvement, discovery and growth. As they connect with others in their local area and participate in doing things together, sharing their passions, gifts and skills with others, neighbours grow in confidence, become more resilient and, in turn, are more able to encourage and enable others to participate in community life.

This short report, produced with input from TWC participants, partners and staff, tells the story of our work this year and what our neighbours tell us about the difference TWC makes to them and their community. We hope you enjoy it!



Our journey this year

During 2022-3, our focus has been on further consolidating the reconnection and rebuilding of community life after the COVID19 lockdowns.

It has been a particular joy to welcome **Clare, Chloe and Tiffany**. Our 3 new 'connector-trainees' bring a particular magic to our work, successfully navigating their roles as neighbour, worker, friend and colleague, and taking our work forward in exciting new directions simply by being themselves.

Other highlights have included:

- Summer, Christmas, Easter and Eid events, along with smaller micro-local street parties - demonstrating the enthusiasm and warm welcome in our community.
- Relaunching regular green activities at The Hub and Hodge Hill Pantry, as well as around Firs and Bromford.
- Development of Men's Group and workshop space, alongside a new Women and Children's Group, in partnership with Spurgeons.
- Initiating and facilitating an away day for a cross-section of neighbours - developing the strength of shared culture and vision.





- Expanding of spaces offering support to neighbours. New Friday session to complement Open Door Tuesdays and Pantry (Thursdays), and developing our Sustainable Livelihoods Support approach.
- Starting our Mental Health capacity building project, aiming to increase our ability to support neighbours to respond to distress.
- Developing our Youth Connecting team, taking active leadership of youth groups, particularly Girls Groups and intergenerational Ambridge Teas and Bingo.
- Learning programme - Changemakers, Youthwork course and Community building course - investing in local people and way they've enabled growth of teams.
- Sam, joining Cath as a second Green Connector, bring a wealth of wisdom, enthusiasm and hummus.



Community life involves departures as well as new arrivals. This year we said a fond but grateful farewell to Phyllis, one of the stalwarts of our neighbourhood and inspiration behind our Street Connecting work.



How we work

Working closely with neighbours, our team plan strategically with other partners towards a more connected neighbourhood; support 'entry points' such as street events which enable neighbours to feel WELCOME, along with places, groups and activities where neighbours to feel they BELONG and SHARE the things they care about (passions), know about (knowledge) and can do (skills). We also create opportunities for neighbours to 'go deeper': to reflect, LEARN and develop as active and resilient participants in their neighbourhood. Through this neighbours are enabled to grow into ENABLING roles in the neighbourhood (and its places, groups and activities), including connecting, inviting and leading.



Across 5 workstreams, in dialogue with FBNT theme champions, TWC2 works towards groups and activities being as neighbour-led as possible, contributing to positive outcomes for our community (Section 3) and neighbours (Section 4).

Towards a Flourishing Community



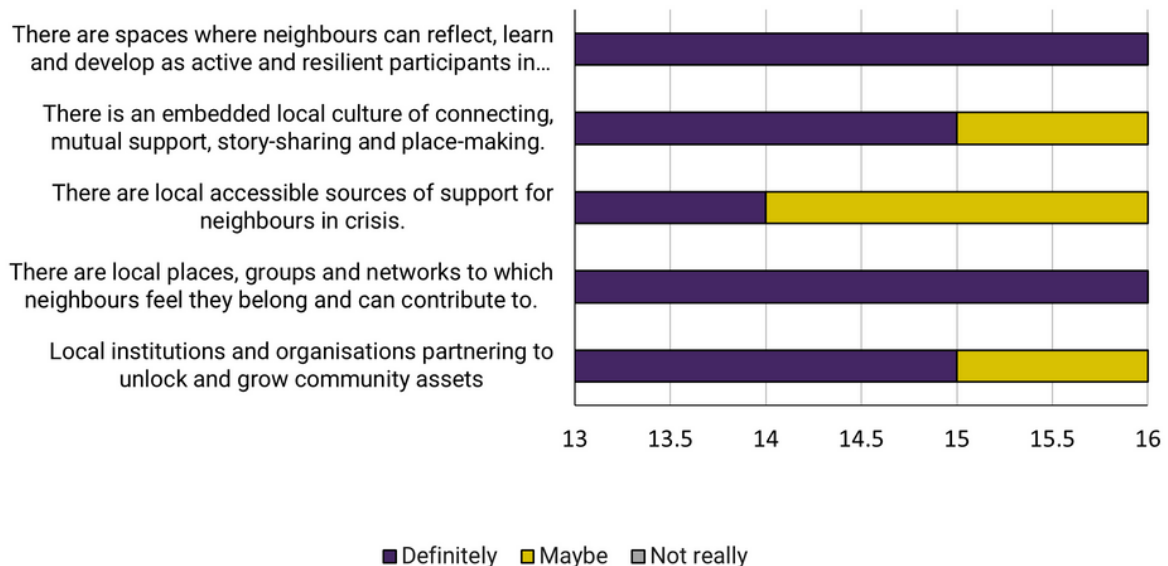
01. Partnerships

Building local partnerships - connecting and unlocking community assets through bringing local institutions to work more closely together - is an increasingly important part of our work.

Our Year 1 (July 2022) report named 21 local partners. By July 2023, this had risen to 48, including 8 schools/colleges. A further 5 key external partners are directly involved in delivery of TWC2 - Tame Valley Children's Centre/Spurgeons (Together for Families groups); Birmingham City Law Support (legal advice); Andy Freeman, Space to Breathe (mental health support); Tim Evans, Curating Connections (neighbour, youthwork/community-building training); and Philip Hoppner, Wolverhampton University (youthwork training). In addition, TWC2 has active support relationship with 12 independent neighbour-led community groups.

16 partners responded to our partners survey:

In your view, has TWC! contributed to the following...



"The closeness, the no bullsh, being honest about limitations, knowing how far you can go before we have to ask for more help, navigating red-tape... Teamwork - working together - working with other partners to fulfil what we want to achieve."**

Community Partner



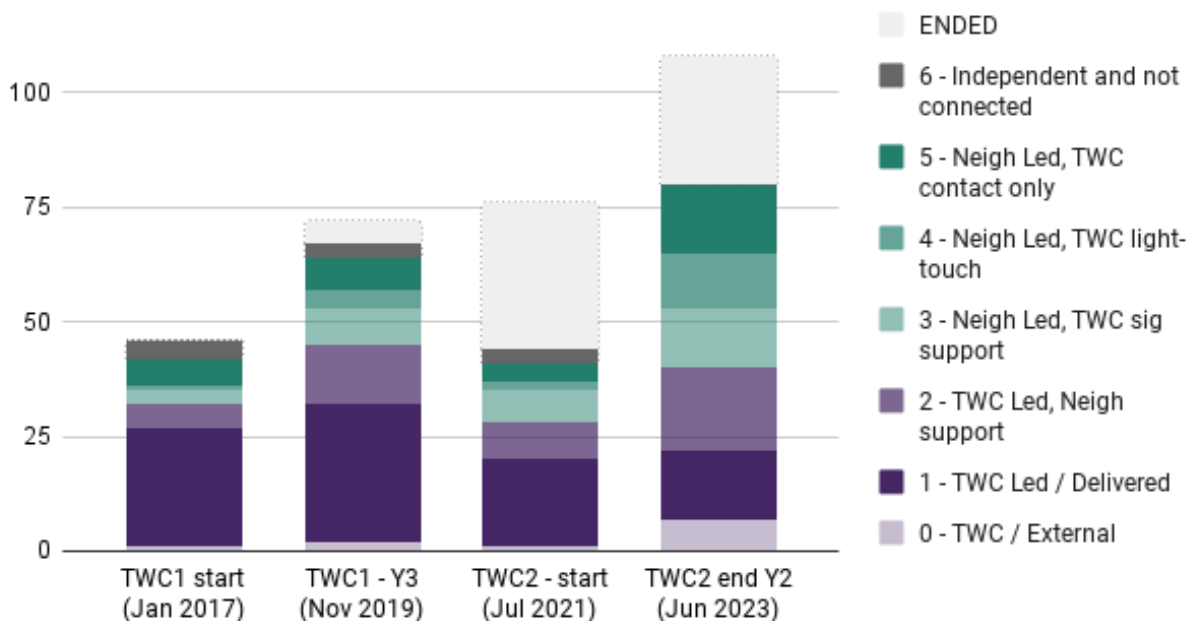
02. Places to Belong

There are local places, groups & networks to which neighbours feel they can BELONG and contribute to.

By the end of TWC2 Year 2 (Jun 2023), there were 80 local groups/activities connected to TWC. The last 2 years have been marked by two shifts:

- More local groups/activities - 32 new groups/activities have started since July 2021, as we worked to reconnect and recover post COVID-19.
- More leadership by neighbours - 14 new groups/activities were neighbour-led from the start; a further 26 ongoing groups/activities moved in the direction of being more neighbour-led.

TWC! Groups and Activities in FaB (2017-2023)



Helped me to connect with wider community in Bromford and learn more about the area. I don't feel alone and can have a good laugh with people who have become friends.

Places to go when you're lonely where you are cared for and given a supportive chance to grow both mentally and environmentally

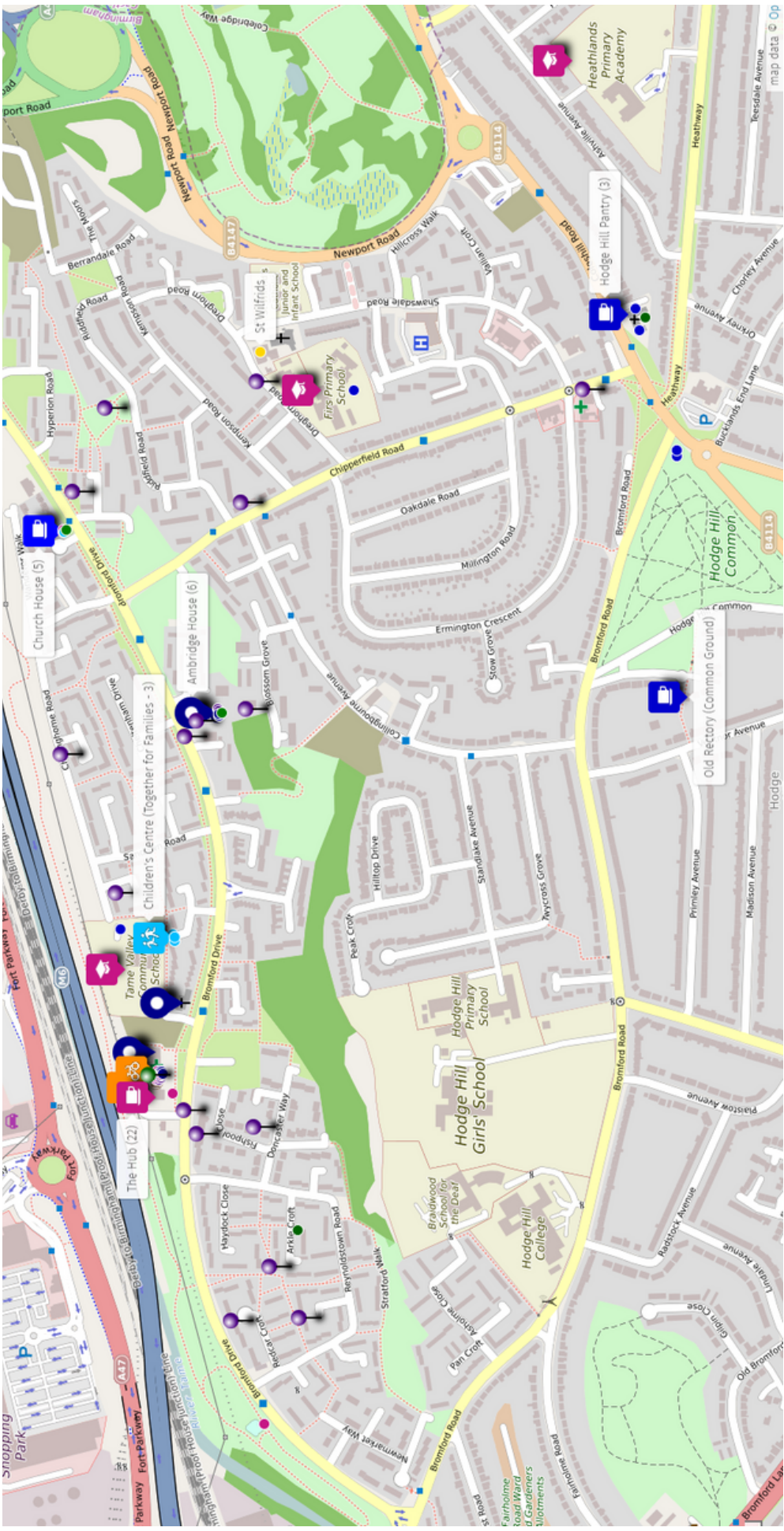
Given me new opportunities to do things with my friends, helped me to engage with my community and made me feel more a part of it.

Being part of something bigger

As a relative newcomer to the area, being part of the TWC groups has helped me to feel welcome and valued in this community

Having the Hub here helps to get us off the streets and gives us something positive to do with our mates

TWC2 Year 2 - Key Locations



Numbers in brackets show multiple groups with the same location. 54 further groups and activities happen at various locations across Firs and Bromford, not shown here



03. Local, Accessible Support

There are local, accessible sources of SUPPORT for neighbours in crisis

We have always recognised that neighbours sometimes need help to deal with the challenges life throws at us and to overcome the barriers that prevent them from being active participants in the local community.

Developing our Livelihoods Support Work

Our original aim to "develop a community-wide, collaborative approach to 1-1 barrier removing support for adults, young people and families" has faced considerable challenges. Our Tuesday Open-Door drop-in welcomes around 15 people each week, with c.5 requiring in-depth support with housing, benefits, employment or other issues - 115 residents in total over Year 2. Recognising the pressures this creates on staff and volunteers, we responded by reallocating capacity to open an additional Friday drop-in. This now welcomes 5-10 people each week, all receiving in-depth support from staff - 56 residents since Nov 22.

During Year 2 our support work has undergone a thorough review and major change. We said a fond farewell to Lucy, our Community Support & Development Worker, and restructured our staffing to create a new, more targeted Livelihoods Support Worker role. Flo Berrow will now be taking on this role, alongside her Youth Community Support work.



Youth Support

Our youth team (Flo, Dan and Janey) have continued to work with 2 local schools, providing 1-2-1 education-setting based support to 17 young people. Alongside this Flo, in her youth support worker, supported an additional 25 young people in the community, along side two Girls Groups.

It gave me confidence when I was struggling after COVID. It saved my life as I had hit an ultimate low in my life.

Being able to help others as I have also been helped with my mental health

The support from the team was unbelievable and helped me out a lot. It has really impacted my daughter and helped us to engage with Children's Services

I realised that I'm loved & it's like a family, one individual will never realise that by them listening it truly saved me.

They were kind, listened & encouraged me in the right direction to pick self up & get back on the rollercoaster of life..

Mental Health and Wellbeing - Capacity Building

We're excited to have launched our new Mental Health project, working in partnership with Andy Freeman (Space to Breathe). Through observation and in depth listening, Andy has identified a number of themes including difficulties engaging with statutory support; pressures of everyday life for some residents; specific challenges around culture/language and for refugees/asylum seekers; and how mental health/wellbeing challenges faced by staff and volunteers, can lead to additional stress and its effects on them.



There is a tension between the call for expertise and multi-layered provision in our TWC2 groups and our capacity to respond appropriately. Over the next 2 years, working with Jo and Nicola (2 neighbours acknowledged as Community Mental Health/Wellbeing Guides), Andy will be providing training and support as we seek to respond in 4 ways:



1. First Point of Call - ensuring those seeking help are enabled to know where to go for specialist support.

2. Right Response - making sure anyone who attends a group and talks about a mental health challenge they're facing is cared for in a consistent way that gets them quickly to the help they need.

3. Community Support - establishing what support we can offer locally and design/deliver this.

4. Long-term Support - creating a system of sustainable long-term support, recognising that not all solutions can be provided by public health and that even with right responses, someone may need long term relational support as they navigate the complexities of life.



04. Community Culture

There is an embedded local CULTURE of connecting, mutual support, story-sharing & place-making

Across Year 2, our work of place-making and story-sharing has continued. Key examples include the Writing Group becoming an amazing place for story sharing, the Arts Trail with Sajida helping us tell stories of our neighbourhood, the Heritage Project (working with Birmingham Museums Trust), Open Saturdays and the garden at Ambridge. The street parties led by neighbours really connecting their streets are an excellent example of how the focus of our work has shifted from TWC-led to Neighbour-led work. Practically, TWC2 continues to support production and distribution of the FBNT Newsletter, a key way of sharing our story with our neighbours.



Behind the scenes, TWC2 staff play an important strategic role in connecting local partners and developing shared vision for the future. In January, the TWC2 team hosted and facilitated an Away Day bringing together representatives from across our collaboration - FBNT, the FaB Community Development Trust, Worth Unlimited and Open Door - with a range of wider community members. An important next step in renewing and developing our relationships, the Away Day demonstrated clearly the strength of shared culture which has been developed. Since then TWC2 has led on extensive consultation with neighbours in further developing the FBNT Legacy plans, and facilitated a scoping exercise (along with FBNT and CDT reps) beginning to outline what resources and staff support will be needed to make these a reality.



Around 250 young people and 150 adults attended our Summer Cultural Festival to celebrate the Commonwealth Games.

Of the 50 attendees we spoke to for feedback:

- 98% met someone they hadn't met before.
- 92% got to know someone by name.
- 88% definitely felt more connected to others in the community, 12% said "maybe".

Grace's story.....

In her 40s, Grace has lived in the neighbourhood all her life. She has worked in housing (supporting residents), is mum to her young daughter and carer to her own mum.

- During the lockdowns, Grace planted one of the fruit trees from our Green Connecting team.
- Since COVID, Grace has brought her daughter to the community events (summer & Christmas).
- In April, our Street Connector Trainee, Tiffany, mentioned the opportunity to apply for a small grant (PIE Events) to run Street Parties for the King's Coronation weekend, and Grace was keen to get involved.
- When Grace popped into the Hub to pick up a form for the small grant, she happened to mention her love of gardening, so Tiffany linked her up with Sam (Green Connector). Sam picked up on Grace's "enthusiasm and people skills", and together they cooked up some green activities for her street party, upcycling plant pots.
- With her small grant, Grace put on "the best" street party, knocking on doors, talking to neighbours, bringing together loads of food, lots of creative activities, a BBQ, a bouncy castle and games.
- Tiffany mentioned Hodge Hill Pantry to Grace, but she was initially cautious, associating it with foodbank-style 'handouts'. But encouraged by Tiffany, she went along and was amazed at what she found: the Pantry itself, the community café, and the green activities in the church garden:



"Oh what an experience! Thank you for the invite! I honestly just got it all wrong, and thankfully so! It was great to garden and plant the seedlings, great to see the pantry and what is done there... and now be able to speak more confidently, and point some people in the right direction for help, inclusion and DIGNITY...!"

Now Grace is involved in lots of different community spaces, using her practical and people skills, connecting with other neighbours, and preparing to present to another PIE event. This time she'll be applying for funds to run an upcycling project to turn discarded materials into planters and window boxes, and teaching upcycling skills to others in the process.

"I can't put into words what I'm learning... I'm growing and sharing... the joy!"



05. Spaces for Reflection, Learning and Development

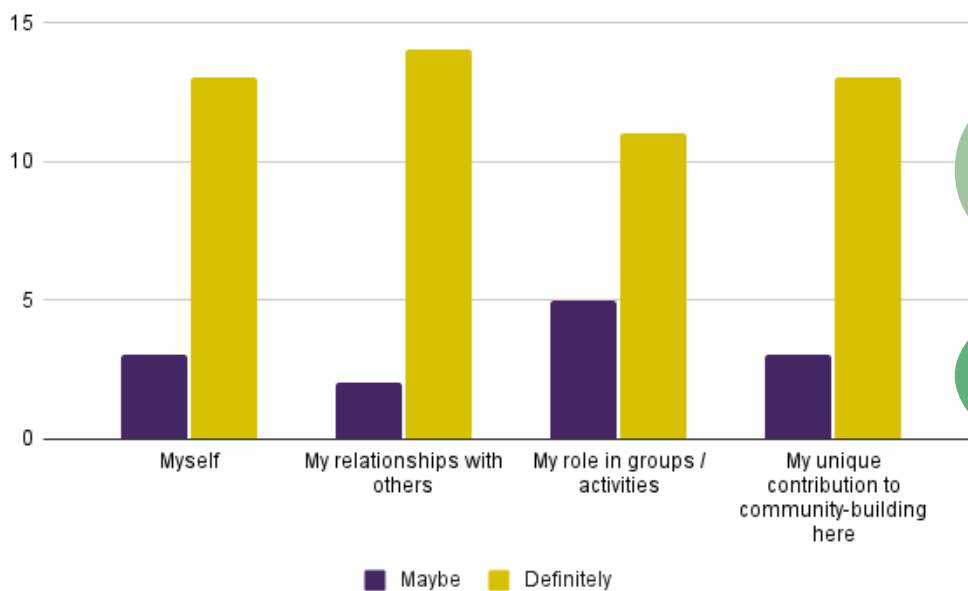
There are spaces where neighbours can REFLECT, LEARN & DEVELOP as active & resilient participants in their neighbourhood

Over the past year, we have continued to develop our Learning Programme encompassing formal and informal opportunities for learning and reflection. Highlights have included:

- accredited Youthwork Course (13 participants) resulting in increased knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for our Youth Connecting team, contributing to 3 of them achieving paid positions.
- Community Building course (8 participants) intentionally focusing on listening as well as the ABCD elements of community building.
- Diversity and Inclusion training, initially focused on core TWC staff with the next steps being to continue to apply our learning to our work, as well as extending the conversations to include volunteers and neighbours.

16 respondents to our participant survey had taken part in TWC2 learning:

As a result of being part of TWC, I have learnt more about



More confident with team work, group activities and speaking out loud.

I've learnt how to go and talk better. I have more understanding of young people.

That I can include myself more in decisions and plans

"TWC is helping people to feel proud of this community and to have the confidence to make personal contributions to grow it further"

Participant Survey Respondent

Jake's story.....

Jake was for a long time 'part of the clan' – other members of his family were very involved with TWC activities, and he'd come along with them to the big community events. But he was working full-time, and wasn't sure where and how he could get involved.

But Jake was interested in helping with the youth work locally, and when he saw the Youthwork course advertised, he signed up. He loved the story-sharing, learning and reflecting together with the other participants.



Out of the course, Jake was encouraged to bring his passion for gaming to help develop the young people's online gaming sessions, alongside fellow volunteer Andrew. From there, Jake and Andrew took the lead on a new youth group for boys, building on the rapport they'd developed in the online space. Jake's now a passionate youth work volunteer, has been through the Community-Building course too, and is exploring the possibility of doing further training with a view to becoming a professional youth worker.



Towards Flourishing for All

At an individual level, the difference TWC2 makes to our neighbours is expressed in our 'Neighbour Outcomes'. In June 2023 we asked our participants "As a result of being involved in TWC, do you feel..."

Outcome	Indicator	
More Connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% ...more connected to others in your community (63% definitely) 	<p>A bar chart with five bars of increasing height, colored in shades of purple. The bars represent the percentage of respondents who feel more connected to others in their community, with the highest bar representing 100%.</p>
More Able to Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 99% ...more able to share your passions, gifts and skills with others (52% definitely) 	<p>A bar chart with five bars of increasing height, colored in shades of yellow. The bars represent the percentage of respondents who feel more able to share their passions, gifts, and skills with others, with the highest bar representing 99%.</p>
More Resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 97% ...more able to cope when life is tough (43% definitely) 	<p>A bar chart with five bars of increasing height, colored in shades of purple. The bars represent the percentage of respondents who feel more able to cope when life is tough, with the highest bar representing 97%.</p>
Learning New Things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 96% ...have learnt new things (55% definitely) 	<p>A bar chart with five bars of increasing height, colored in shades of yellow. The bars represent the percentage of respondents who feel they have learnt new things, with the highest bar representing 96%.</p>
More Able to Enable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 99% ...more able to help others join in with community (56% definitely) 	<p>A bar chart with five bars of increasing height, colored in shades of purple. The bars represent the percentage of respondents who feel more able to help others join in with the community, with the highest bar representing 99%.</p>

Our Connector Trainees: their stories.....

Clare was already part of FBNT Board, a youth work volunteer and involved in Open Door drop-in. She was appointed Street Connector trainee in January 2022.

"I hadn't had a paid job for years, and really battled with myself (and my mental health) thinking about applying for this. My daughters encouraged me to apply. And some of the training courses, especially StrengthsFinders and ChangeMakers, helped me see what my gifts are. People believed in me. I feel like I belong, I'm part of a team.



We're all still learning together. It's our neighbourhood – we want everyone to have someone to turn to."



Tiffany had helped out with a few street events. During COVID lockdown she had a visit from the Street Connectors, who encouraged her to use her connecting gifts in her block of flats.

"I saw the difference it made, getting everyone together."

Tiffany applied for the first Connector Trainee role, but was unsuccessful. She was appointed to the second Trainee post a year later (in Jan 2023).

"...my first job interview for years, it was daunting. [When I didn't get it] I knew I wasn't ready. But I wanted to learn more, to get more involved. Working is different [to volunteering]. Community activities don't 'just happen'. There's a lot going on behind the scenes! I've got much more confidence to do what I do now."

For Chloe, Worth Unlimited's youth work locally was really significant through her teenage years. She transitioned into volunteering with Listen Threads and wider youth work, and got a job as a cleaner, but didn't feel fulfilled.

"It was always the dream to do [youth work] as a job. It's helped me, really boosted my self-worth. I feel more powerful, more myself. I've got more responsibility. Everyone's been so supportive."



Paul (Street Connector Mentor): "All three had raw talent. They've all grown in confidence and want to grow and develop. They've brought more capacity, different perspectives in leadership. They've become recognised locally as the 'go-to' people."

Next Steps

6+ years since the start the first phase of our TWC adventure there is much to celebrate and reflect on. This is also a good time to look forward. We've come a long way but there is work to do, to develop and embed our vision and ways of working and to support our community to plan for the future.

As well as continuing our work supporting neighbours with placemaking, connecting, welcome, support and story-sharing, enabling more local residents to participate, learn and grown into leadership, 3 priorities for Year 3 are:



01. Further developing community leadership

Continuing to develop knowledge, wisdom, skills and confidence among existing leaders & connectors, and broadening the diversity (of ages/generations, ethnic backgrounds, etc.) of people in those roles.



02. Supporting local strategic development

Supporting the facilitation of (and contributing to) local strategic development processes. Working in collaboration with FBNT & FABCDT, including developing plans for ongoing TWC staffing beyond 2025.



03. New spaces for connection

Supporting the expansion of community-building work in the Firs area of our neighbourhood, in and around new local 'hubs' there (including St Wilfrid's Community Centre).

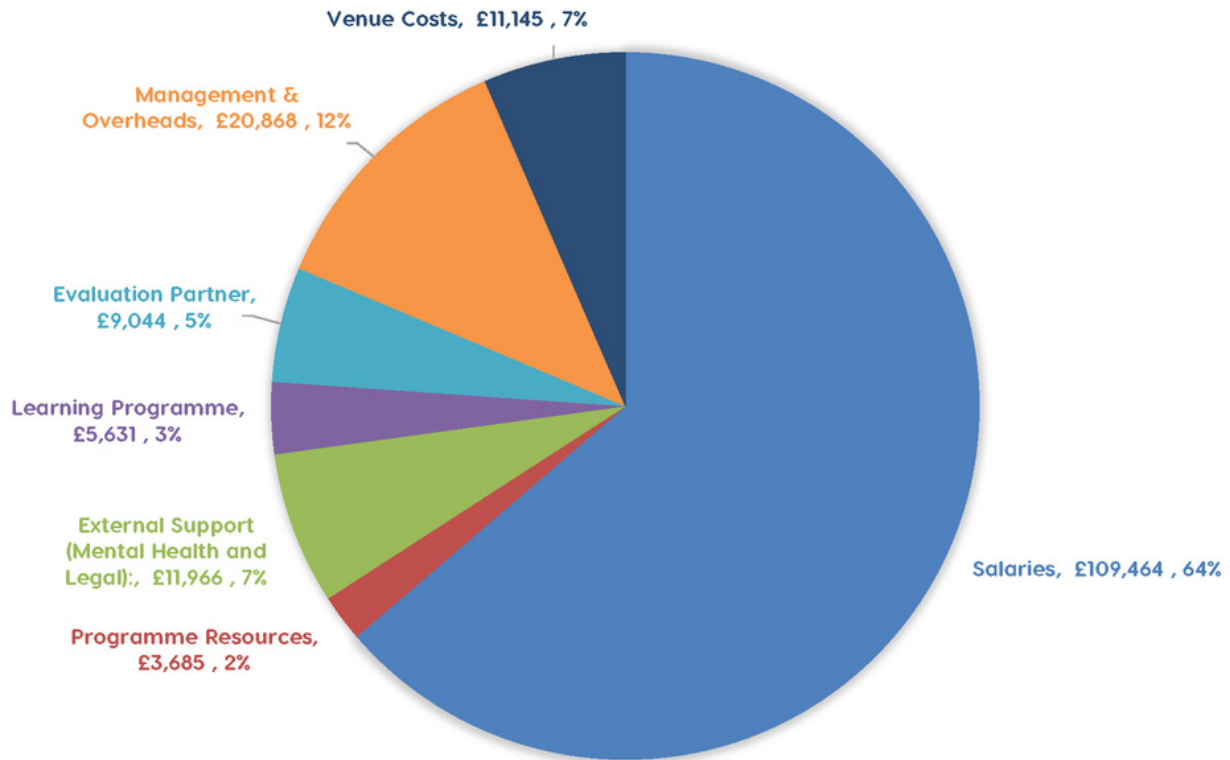


04. Supporting well-being and sustainable livelihoods

Continuing to reshape, develop and strengthen our livelihoods support work and our 'community infrastructure' for mental health & wellbeing support (particularly through our partnership with Space to Breathe).

What we've spent

TOGETHER WE CAN 2 IS GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND AND FIRS AND BROMFORD NEIGHBOURS TOGETHER



- The majority of the partnership is funded by two 5-year funding agreements with the National Lottery Community Foundation (£125,415 in year 2) and Firs and Bromford Neighbours Together from their Local Trust funding (£44,560 in Year 2).
- At the end of this year we have an underspend of £13,312 from our revised Year 2 budget. This will be carried over into Year 3 of the partnership.
- Generally, our expenditure has been on track for Year 2 of the partnership.
- A full budget vs actual spend report can be provided on request.
- The cost of living crisis has meant that our costs has risen at a faster rate than the 2% per year originally envisaged at the start of the 5-year programme. We have worked hard to keep costs down.
- Additional funds for associated activities have been donated by Birmingham City Council, The National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All), Groundwork/HS2, Thomas Dole, The Saintbury Trust, Pohwer, Cole Charitable Trust, Children in Need, Eveson Charitable Trust and The Alan Higgs Charity.

We couldn't do it without you!

TWC2 is a partnership between 3 locally embedded organisations:

- Worth Unlimited - a national youth and community organisation have been based in the Firs & Bromford (in 'the Hub') since 2010. Worth Unlimited has a long track record here as an established, trusted youth work organisation, staffed by local people.
- Open Door Community Foundation - developing further the pioneering locally rooted community-building work of Hodge Hill Church.
- Firs & Bromford Neighbours Together – board of local residents, administering the Big Local funding, developing a community vision, and overseeing various ongoing community events and activities.

Thanks are due to all the people who work tirelessly to see our neighbourhood flourish: All our TWC2 participants, leaders, volunteers and partners; FBNT Board (Flo P, Phil, Tim, Al, Clare, Amy, Elaine, Mary, Chloe, Karen, Sue and Paul); FaB Community Development Trust (Tim, Amy, Elaine, Gemma, Phil, Claire, Paul, Alan); ODCF Board (Al, Gloria, Penny); TWC staff (Paul, Dan, Gemma, Flo B, Clare, Tiffany, Chloe, Stewart, Cath and Sam); our mental health/wellbeing support team (Andy, Nicola and Jo).

This report was compiled and written by Jane Perry, with the support of the TWC2 Co-ordination Group (Al, Matt, Dan, Paul and Gemma).

Thank you for your continued support

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