

Greater Manchester leaders in local government, health and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector came together to sign a tripartite Accord to work together in a collaborative way to tackle entrenched inequalities.

This GM focus is replicated in Oldham with a commitment from Action Together to working with our members in the borough to design out inequality. From the Poverty Action Group, Poverty Truth Commission, and Community Champions to the network working together to improve women's services, collaboration is at the core of our offer.

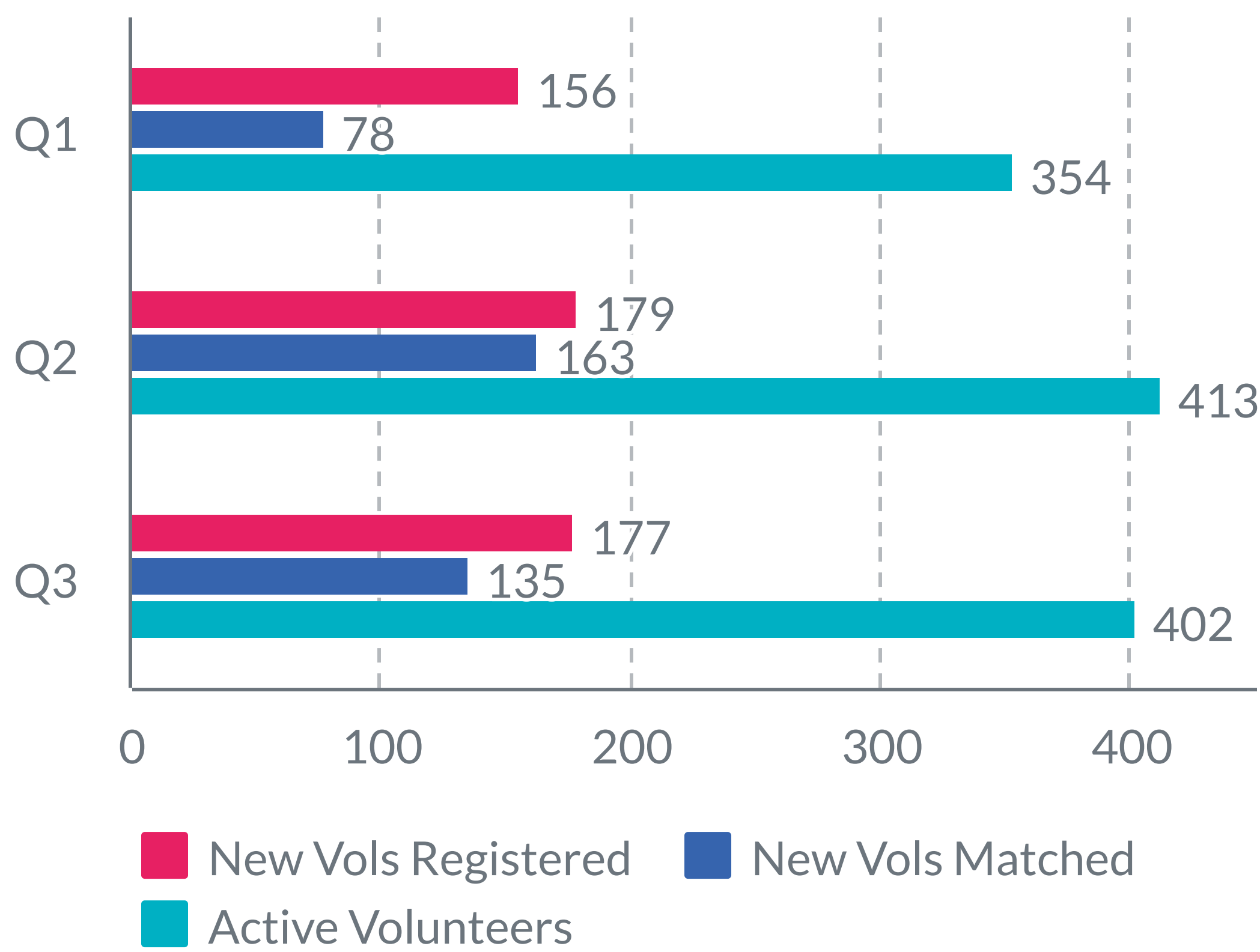
Liz Windsor-Welsh Chief Executive



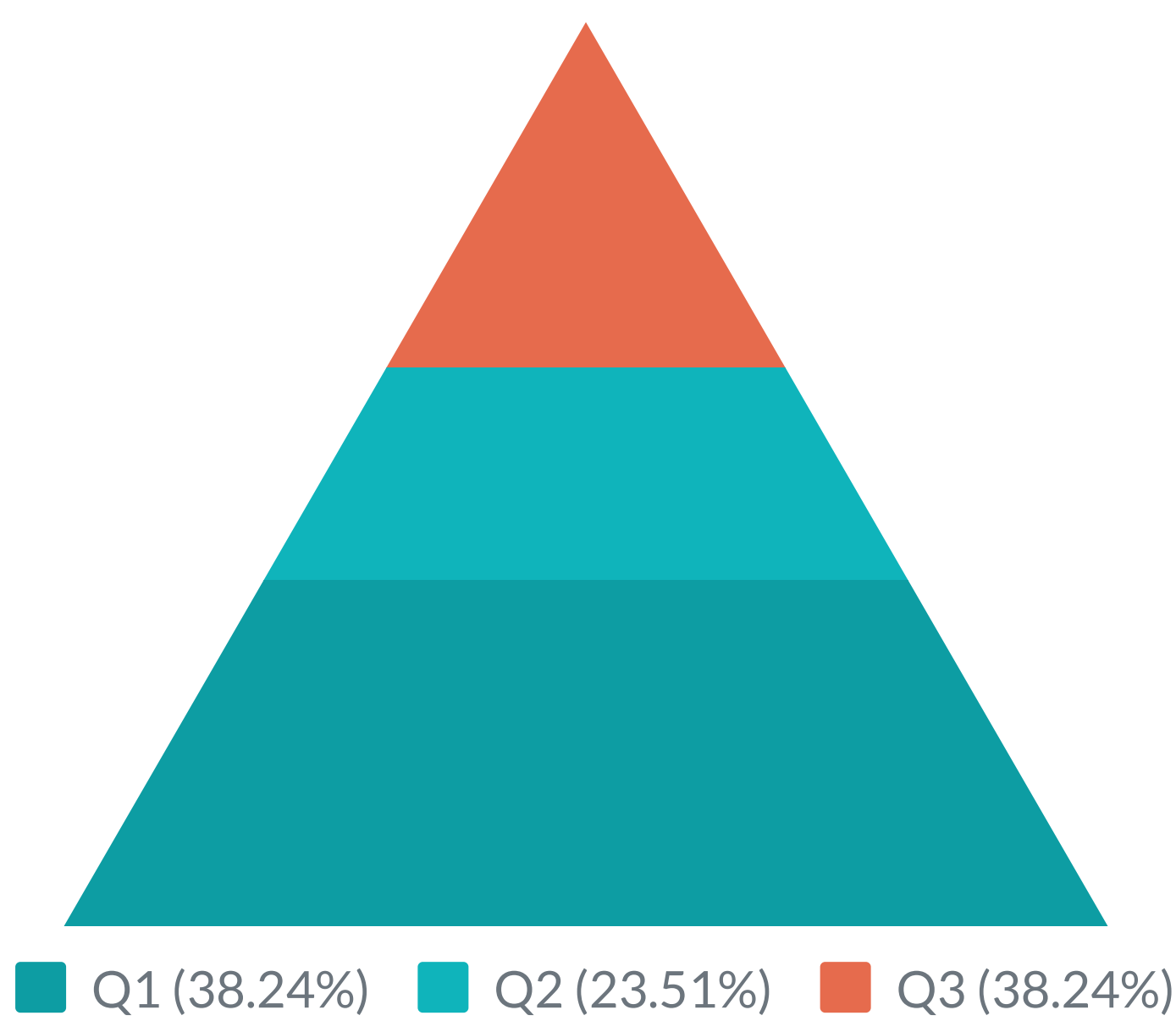
Quarter 3 in Numbers

- 177 volunteers registered, 135 matched into new roles and 402 active volunteers co-ordinated
- 191 VCFSE groups and organisations supported
- 109 events and training sessions with 194 attending
- £232,379 grants and investments made to 70 groups and orgs
- 21 VCFSE forums and thematic network meetings facilitated with 122 groups engaging.
- 17 E-bulletins delivered to 1,500 people across the sector (Funding, Training and Events and Oldham Community News)

Volunteering (total registered 512, matched 376, active 1169)

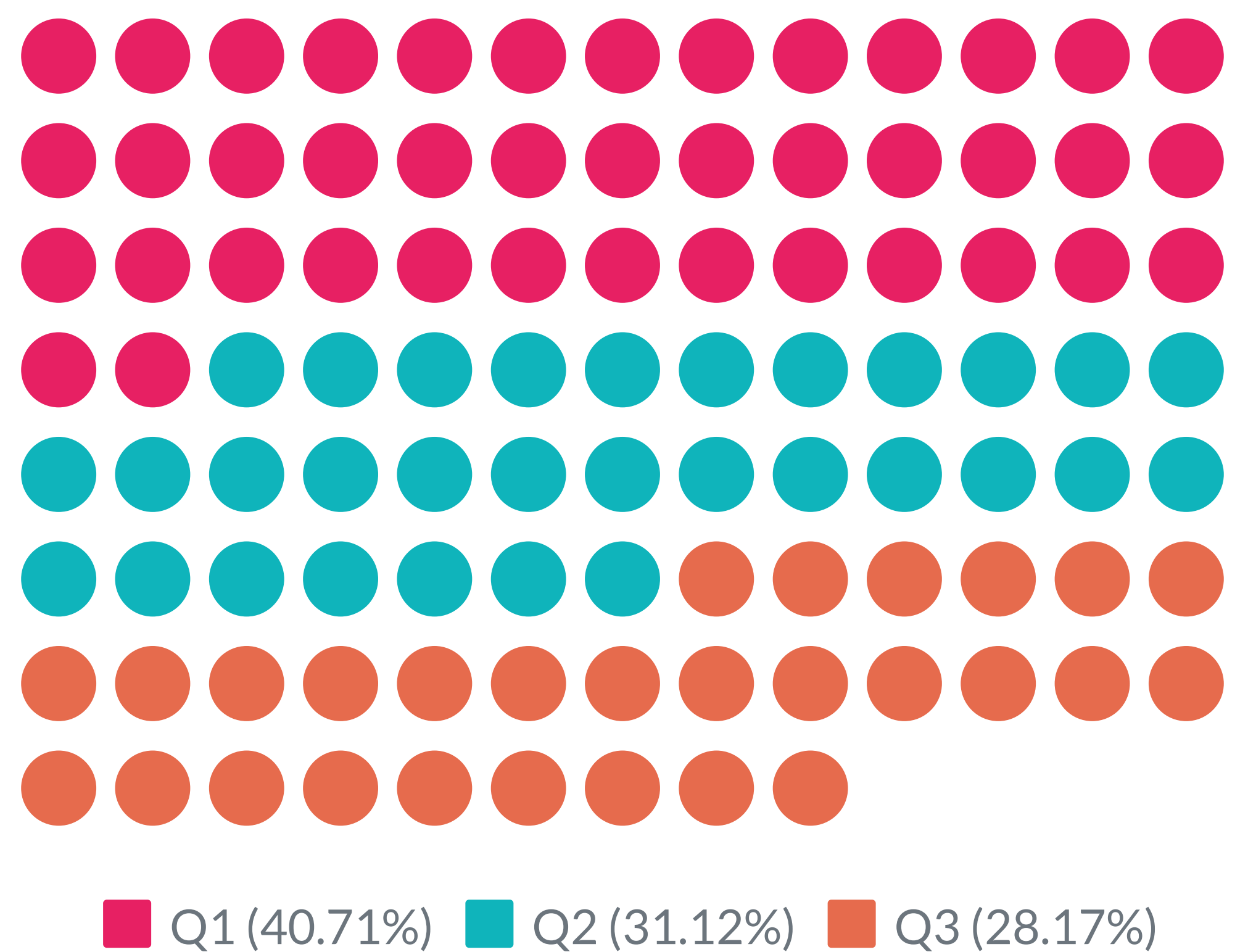


VCFSE Orgs. engaged in Forums and Networks (total 319)



Includes Community Explorers, Community Centres and Anchors Network, VCFSE Womens Network, Poverty Action Group, Food Solutions Network

Groups Supported (total 678)

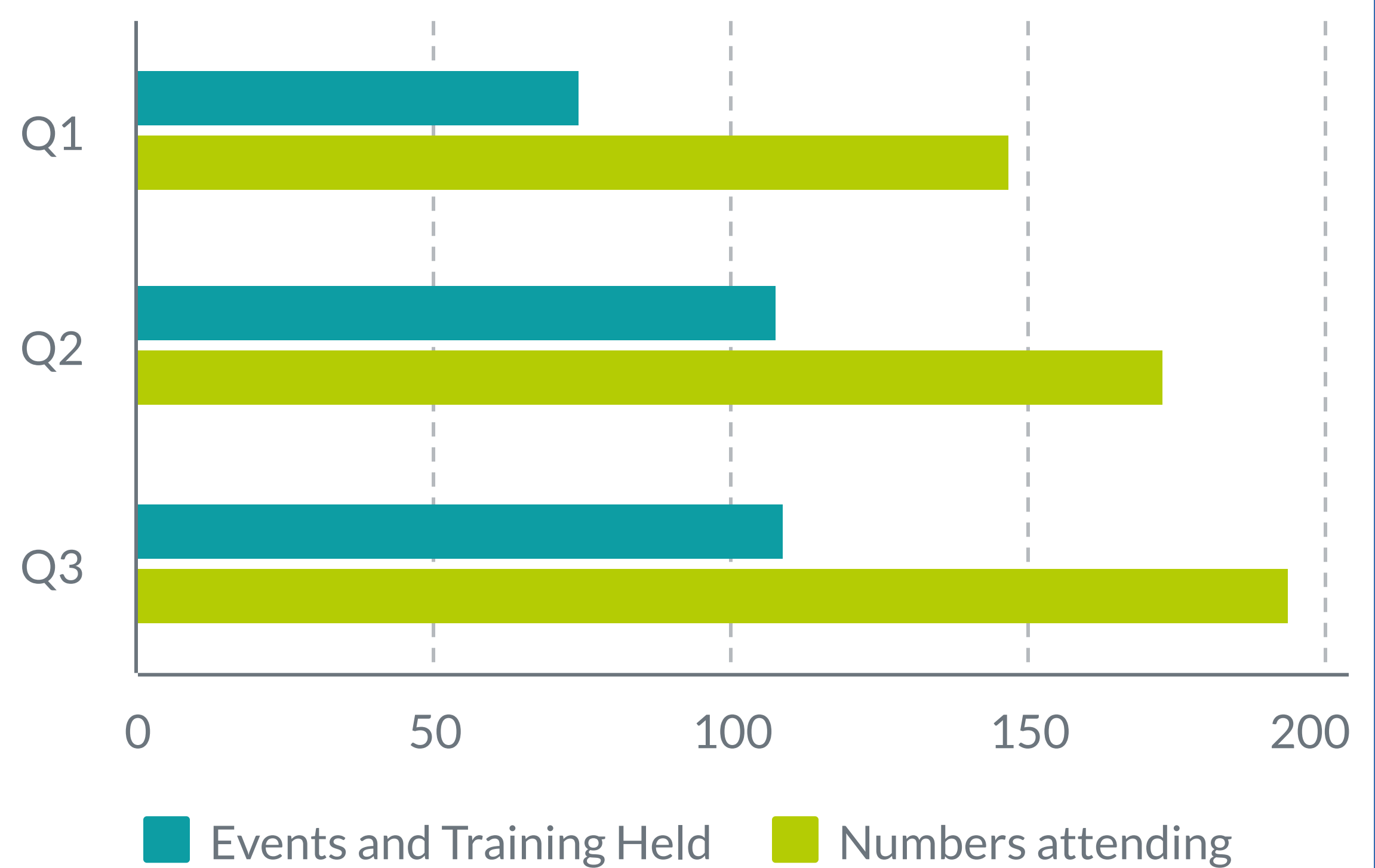


Includes 1:1 support, Organisational Healthchecks and Funding Mentoring

Grants and Investments Awarded (Total £734,583 to 291 groups and orgs)



Sessions held (total 292) Numbers attending (total 594)



Includes Training Sessions, #WednesdaysWeekly Sessions, #MeetTheFunder Sessions and all other events

Volunteering

Volunteer Brokerage and Volunteer Hubs

Through Q1-Q3 we have been developing our volunteer brokerage service in light of the learning we have made through the pandemic.

We have developed a Volunteer Hub model, which aligns our accredited Volunteer Centre brokerage service to 'place'. The model brings the Volunteer Centre offer closer to the heart of communities across the 5 districts and includes:

Brokerage: [Online](#) and in-person volunteer brokerage to 100's of volunteering opportunities delivered from Community Hubs supported by Volunteer Hub Hosts

Training: Training for volunteers to get ready for volunteering and training for groups and organisations to get them ready for volunteers!

Emergency Response Volunteers

During Q 1-3 we have supported vaccination clinics at nine community sites. Five of these were community pop ups in various locations with either a high footfall (such as Parliament Square to coincide with Festival Oldham) or in areas where vaccination take up had been low. Action Together staff recruited, coordinated, and supported Emergency Response Volunteers in the marshal role.

Two of the community sites have continued weekly in the community settings, supported by our ERV's and members of the community organisation who manage the building providing marshalling and language support.

We have built up a core group of volunteers in these settings who volunteer on a regular basis – appointing one volunteer to the role of volunteer ambassador.

We supported the roll out of the booster jab in the period immediately before and during the Christmas break at Chadderton Town Hall by recruiting, coordinating, and supporting emergency response volunteers to act as marshals alongside volunteers from several Community Champions that we have been working with.



"I enjoy volunteering because it gets me out and helping, I've helped to save lives during this pandemic". Amjad

"I was shut off from the world. Volunteering felt like a big step for me, it makes me feel like I'm giving something back to my community. Somebody said to me 'you're a hero!' It felt amazing to hear that I am making a difference". Craig

"We love getting involved in the community! Volunteering has given us the opportunity to meet so many inspiring people and engage in lots of different roles". Sahima & Zakira



Our Emergency Response Volunteers have continued to support the delivery of the humanitarian aid and poverty relief offer in Oldham, working closely with Oldham Foodbank.

We manage circa 100 active volunteers each week in the Foodbank who are providing a range of roles from collecting food donations, to picking and packing food packages, to delivering to the door for residents.

Our Social Prescribing Manager has continued to provide mentoring support to the Volunteer management team through this period.



#MonthOfCommunity - Volunteering Campaign

We delivered a #MonthOfCommunity campaign in June to celebrate and thank people who'd volunteered across Oldham throughout the pandemic. We also focused the campaign on our member organisations, responding to some of the findings from our COVID reflection event with advice for groups wanting to reconnect with their volunteers who hadn't been able to work with them during lockdown.

We took part in the national campaigns #VolunteersWeek and Small Charities Week, and launched the Volunteer Celebration Fund. The aim of the fund was to support members in thanking and celebrating their own volunteers. Volunteering and Development staff worked with our Comms and Marketing team to produce resources, arrange training, and promote our services across the month. We also timed the launch of our Radical Kindness public artworks and distribution of our volunteer thank you badges to coincide with the campaign.



Each week of #MonthofCommunity focused on a different element of volunteering:

- Week 1 Volunteers' Week
- Week 2 Recruiting volunteers
- Week 3 Reconnect with volunteers
- Week 4 Reflection on volunteering



Radical Kindness Project

Alongside the public recognition and gratitude for the NHS and Key Workers, we wanted to celebrate the power of kindness and the vital work of neighbours, communities and volunteers in responding to the COVID emergency.

We have been privileged to be part of the community response to COVID-19 and witness the outpouring of generosity and kindness from people and communities. We have mobilized an unprecedented number of volunteers, supported community groups to completely shift their offer overnight, and seen mutual aid groups spring up across our three boroughs.

We wanted to mark the importance of this moment through an artwork in the town centre of each of our localities. Public art is uniquely accessible – belonging to all of us and part of our daily life. It encourages people to pay attention to the world around them and to reflect on what it means to be from our place, our town, and our community.

We worked with Oldham based artists Rebecca and Michael from May Wild Studios. They live and work in Oldham and are inspired by handcraft, nature, storytelling, community and collaboration. The artists spent weeks in each borough listening to people in both boroughs – collecting stories, photos, drawings and memories which bring to life radical everyday kindness. We also asked our followers on social media to share their stories online. The artists then went through a design process to turn what they heard into a public celebration.

The final piece is a “seedbank” of casts of local seeds radiating out from a central QR code where visitors can read all the community stories. The artwork was opened by the mayor at an event which included talks from the artists and a speech from the council leader. Attendees could watch the process the artists used to make the work and take away a seedling with information about how to share their own kindness story.

The artists continue to develop the relationships they have built with local people and groups, and are planning a series of community workshops. The ‘seedbank’ of stories continues to grow as local people submit their stories of radical kindness.

You can see more pictures from the launch events on our Facebook page:

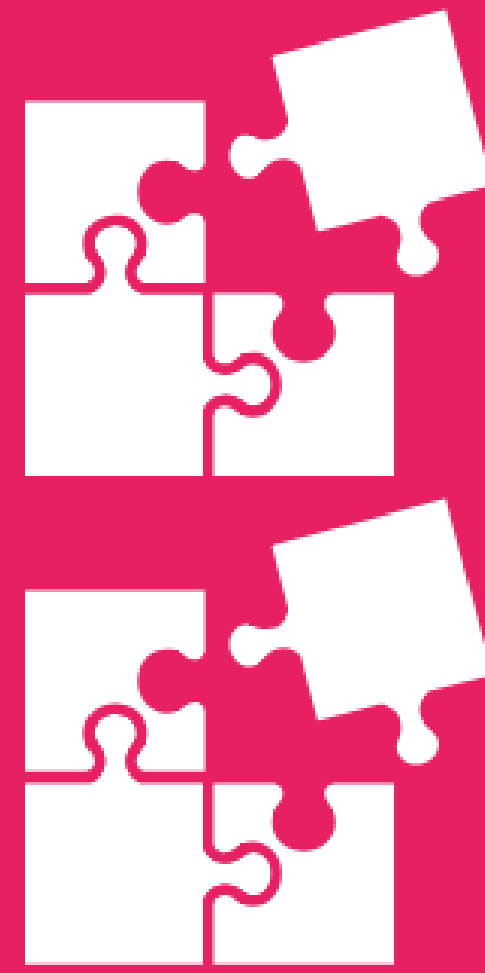
- [Oldham Launch - Radical Kindness Project](#)



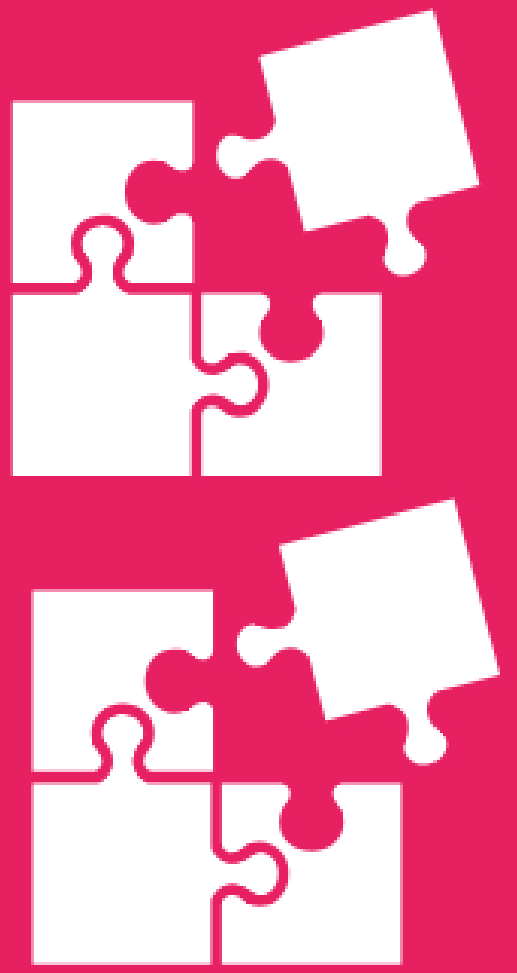
Development



Advice and guidance for Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside community groups during Covid-19



#WednesdaysWeekly



#WednesdaysWeekly

Alongside our development work with groups, organisational healthchecks, Quality in Action award support and helping groups find funding and develop sustainably, there were lots of development opportunities for our members this quarter, including our regular COVID-19 advice and guidance sessions plus...

We held some fantastic training and information sessions, particularly useful for our Oldham members.

- [Oldham Household Support Fund](#)
- [Oldham Money Advice Referral Tool](#)
- [Oldham Economic Review Board - VCFSE Discussion Session](#)
- [Do you need help to sustain and grow your organisation?](#)
- [International FASD Awareness Day](#)
- [Quality in Action Award](#)
- [The 7 effective principles to deal with changes](#)
- [Refresh of GM VCSE Accord](#)
- [Learning to Excel: Microsoft Excel for Beginners - with KPMG](#)



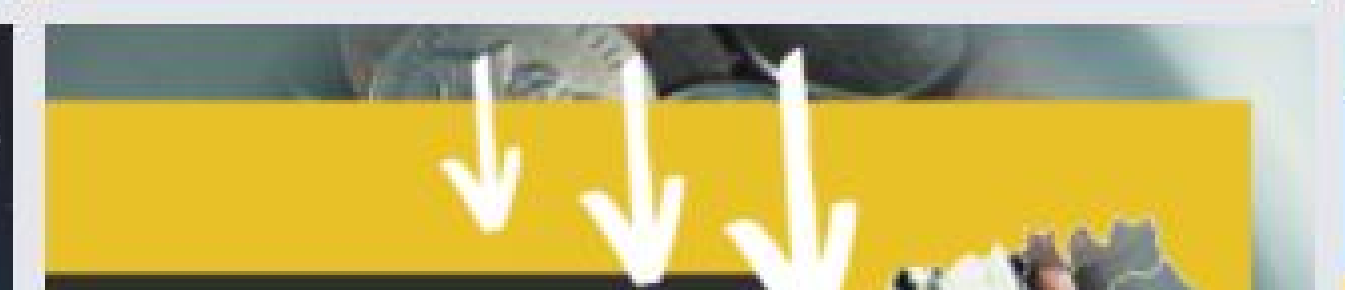
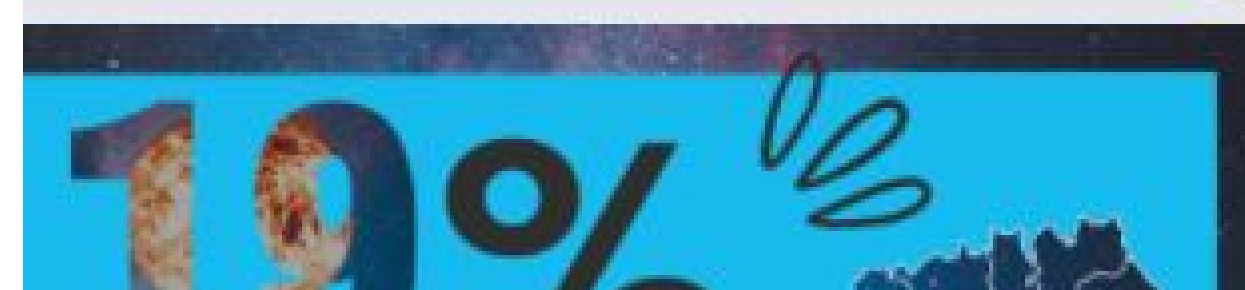
Place Based Working

During this period, we have restructured our Oldham team to further develop our approach to place-based working, particularly our community development offer. The restructured team includes a new Operations Manager and five Community Development Workers (CDW's) - one in each District. Highlights and notable achievements through this work include:

- Weekly insight sharing meetings between our CDWs and their local authority equivalents in place
- Regular 4-way review meetings between the district coordinators, local authority community development officers, our CDWs and our new Operations Manager Rich; to review actions against the place community development workplan
- The introduction of hybrid working and opening of more community spaces has provided CDWs with several community bases to work alongside community groups. Placing our development offer in the heart of communities.
- In Q3 the CDW team started work to co-design a fresh and innovative approach to capacity building support for those organisations looking to move from surviving to thriving! This 6-month peer learning programme is the Development Learning Community and will launch at the end of February 2022



We supported the launch of State of the Sector. The reports analyses the significant social and economic contribution the VCFSE sector makes in each of the city-region's 10 local authority areas and across the whole of Greater Manchester



Partnerships

Strategic Representation

We have continued to provide the strategic representation of the VCFSE across the key Oldham Partnership Boards and Covid Governance Arrangements including:

- Oldham Leadership Board
- Oldham Health and Wellbeing Board
- Oldham Safeguarding Adults Board
- Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- Oldham Children's Alliance
- Oldham System Health and Care Board
- Oldham Integrated Delivery Board
- Oldham Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership
- Domestic Abuse Partnership
- Oldham Communities Board
- Corporate Parent Panel
- Covid Strategic Co-ordination Group
- Community Bronze
- Vaccination Bronze
- Health and Care Silver

Community Explorer Gatherings

Community Explorer Gatherings are our place-based grassroots VCFSE forums, facilitated monthly in each of the 5 districts. They continue to be the vehicle used for gathering community intelligence and insight on the issues that matter most to people in Oldham. This insight is then shared in other network spaces and has contributed to some of the developments through the Community Champions work, as well as some of the other programmatic responses developed both 'in-place' and across the borough. During the months when the pandemic was acutely impacting communities (including in this reporting period), community explorers have provided a great space for mutual support, the encouraging of activity around Mutual Aid, and the sharing of resources to in order to best support groups in the 5 districts.

The CDWs have begun a process of reviewing the effectiveness and purpose of their Community Explorer gatherings with the intention that a renewed approach will be launched within the new fiscal year.

Oldham VCFSE Women's Network

Members of the network have been meeting monthly throughout this period and collaborating on delivering a community offer for women that responds to the needs of women who are accessing support from the network members. The priority areas of work are around supporting women experiencing domestic abuse and supporting women experiencing poverty. The highlights from the network include:

- Collaborative process for investing £100,000 grant funding, via the Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership, to 5 of the network members to strengthen their community support offer to women experiencing Domestic Abuse
- Developing a [network service directory](#) for women's support
- Working together to develop and submit an expression of interest to Smallwood Trust's Women's Sector Resilience Fund Phase 2
- Representatives from the network participating in the Oldham Women's Taskforce to represent the voices of seldom heard women.

Poverty Action Group and the Food Solutions Network

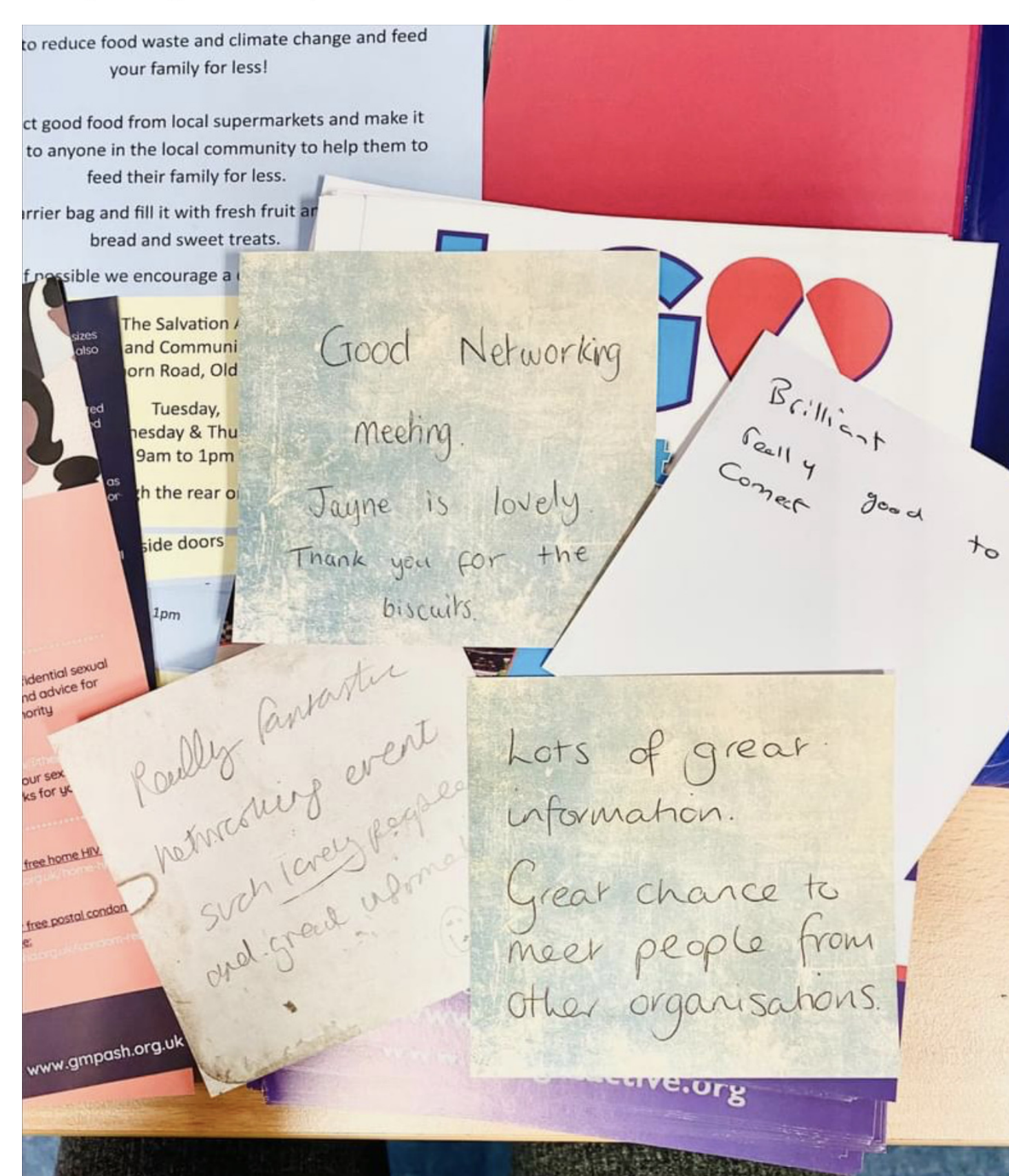
In Q3 the process of refining our thematic networks, in particular those relating to poverty began. Highlights and notable achievements in this area include:

The refresh of the Food Solutions Network, moving it into the VCFSE space and therefore being coordinated by Action Together rather than the Public Health team. This is a key strategic move and positions the VCFSE more powerfully within the Oldham Food Partnership.

The renewed interest in this work across the sector has prompted the beginning of discussion around the refreshing of the Poverty Action Group and how, in partnership with the newly launched Oldham Community Advice Network, we can activate the network further and use it as an intentional vehicle for affecting change in the borough.

In Q3 we undertook some work with the Director of Children's Services to appoint 3 members of Voluntary Sector Leadership Group to the newly formed Children's Alliance, our Strategic Locality Lead is supporting the reps and working alongside them at the Children's Alliance.

Just a little bit of feedback from the last Community Explorers network event for Central. If anyone has anything to add please feel free:)



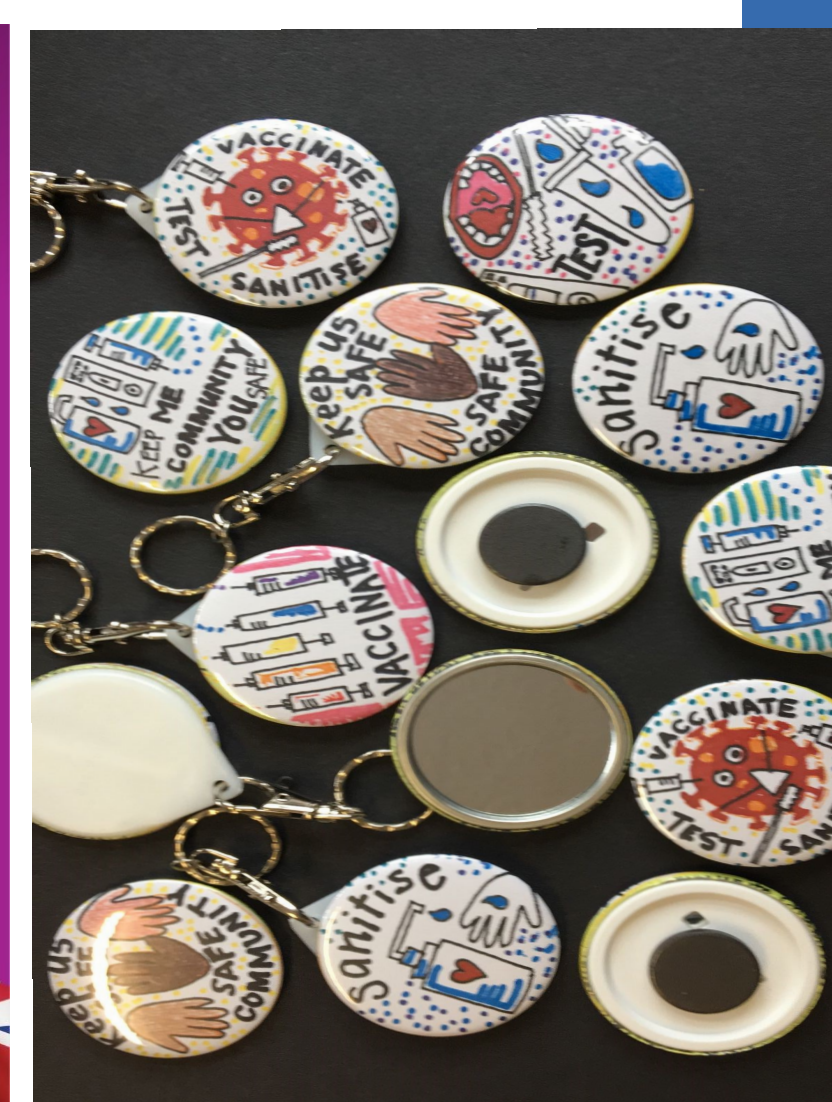
Collaboration Projects

Community Champions

Working with Oldham Council we have continued to develop the Covid Community Champions work building on from the launch of the programme in Q1. Community champions undertake community engagement work in the heart of the communities they serve and capture insight to help tackle any inequalities in relation to the covid response work in Oldham. The initiative has grown to include a regular network sessions for the 100+ champions involved, Action Groups, bringing together champions who are working across communities of focus, [training for faith and community leaders](#), a [resource library](#), WhatsApp Channel and a community [insight tracker](#). Phase 1 has focussed on South Asian communities, Black African communities, Roma and Eastern European communities and the Learning Disability and Autism community.

In Q3 we launched phase 2 of Community Champions to sustain and further develop the work of the groups and organisations from phase 1 and to invest in more groups and organisations to broaden the scope and reach of the community engagement to younger people, people with complex disadvantage and all communities in Oldham with enduring covid transmission.

We've invested £410,478 to 44 groups and organisations through phases 1 and 2 to support their capacity to deliver the Community Champions work.



Poverty Truth Commission

Five sessions of the Oldham Poverty Truth Commission have now taken place including the launch on Sept 27th. This followed extensive support and development with the 14 Grassroots Commissioners to build up their stories, their confidence to share them, and their understanding of how they connected to the wider story of poverty in Oldham.

They were joined at the launch by 14 Civic Commissioners, who in subsequent sessions have collectively unpacked the experience of poverty and hardship in Oldham, drawing out several key themes and ideas. These include:

Understanding poverty (and how it affects people) is a major way to assist people with dealing with it's impact and reducing stigma. The Commissioners have strongly connected this to alignment of positive opportunities which give people hope and belief as well as relief for the material hardship they endure and often blame themselves for experiencing.

“I want to harness what's got me through and translate it to a teachable format”

“All the quality analysis is limiting the quality”

The approach taken by social support systems when people first reach out for help is crucial to responding appropriately to where the person is/how they are feeling at that time and go beyond the 'first presentation' which is rarely the main source of difficulty. Ideas have been floated about how switching the focus of 'targets' and reporting to be more heavily weighted toward co-produced feedback as a potential way to change how social support systems interact with people when they first present.

A lot of ideas have been shared around how we can create places within our town and social support systems where people “Believe we belong... and are good enough.” This includes what is offered to people while waiting for appointments or access to services, peer support opportunities, and a less transactional approach to what people might receive assistance for.

“The systems doesn't give people the time to care”

Collaboration Projects

Oldham Toy Appeal and Winter Support

Thanks to the generosity of individuals and community groups in Oldham, our partners at Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre, Pearson Solicitors and Financial Advisors, Albion House Wealth Management, the Oldham Chronicle, and our colleagues at Oldham Council, we were able to collect and distribute **2,983** toys to children and young people who would otherwise not have been able to enjoy the magic of Christmas.

As a first for Action Together in Oldham, we are pleased with how the campaign went and plan to build on the success of the first year to: 1) reach more children and young people next year, and 2) provide developmental support to organisations that work with children, young people and families to appease the root causes of the poverty that has resulted in the large response to the campaign.

Our [Oldham Winter Support Campaign](#) saw us pull together a directory of all the support available in communities for Oldham residents across the Christmas and winter period.



Big Local Oldham

We've continued our work as the Local Trusted Organisation (funded by Big Local) with the Oldham Big Local Partnership Board, supporting them to implement their current plan which runs from April 2021 for three years. This represents the final three years of the Oldham Big Local Programme and there is a focus on thinking about the legacy that will be left behind in Clarksfield, Littlemoor and Greenacres.

A new community development worker (employed and managed by Action Together on behalf of Big Local) started working with the partnership in July and is having enormous success engaging with residents and bringing exciting innovative ideas forward for projects in the community. Projects that the Board are currently supporting are:

- Investment in Veg in the Park to pay for a manager, holiday activities and a bereavement café
- Investment in Greenacres for improvements to Beresford Park and building improvements at NEON Hub
- Investment in Clarksfield for alleyway improvements
- Activities to reduce social isolation and health and wellbeing including knit and chatter group, men's group and healthy cooking session at NEON
- Youth activities to improve fitness and confidence including horse riding lessons and an under 12s football group for residents in Clarksfield
- The board is also now working very closely with several partners including Oldham Council's new District Team for Oldham East and Oasis Hub. We have supported Oasis Hub to provide creative English and other activities for families at Oasis Academy Clarksfield. The school have made community facilities available for the use of residents which has helped with the Board's engagement with residents.



UKCRF - Breaking Digital Barriers Project

Action Together are working with the Good Things Foundation to coordinate the VCFSE sector involvement in the Breaking Digital Barriers Project which is funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund.

Community groups and organisations have the opportunity to register as online learning centres and deliver digital skills courses to support people to develop digital skills for employment.

We are working with the Good Things Foundation to provide information, guidance and practical support to community organisations to apply. We've worked closely with Oldham Libraries to identify gaps in provision and avoid duplication. Delivery of the project will commence in Q4.



Breaking Digital Barriers Project

Investment

We have significantly increased the number of grants and investments, and the amount of funding that we deliver to the VCFSE this year. The ongoing nature of the pandemic through Q1-Q3, the response the sector has provided to communities, coupled with the increased national and regional investment coming into Oldham to support the response has made this possible.

To enable us to respond and scale up our capacity to deliver the increased investments we have secured funding from Oldham Council to sustain a new Grants Administration post that was funded in 2020-2021 by the National Emergencies Partnership.

We have radically overhauled our internal process and procedures which ensures that the grants are delivered on a rolling programme, involving a community panel of decision makers, with a speedy turn around which ensures that the funding is distributed to the organisations that need it when they need it.

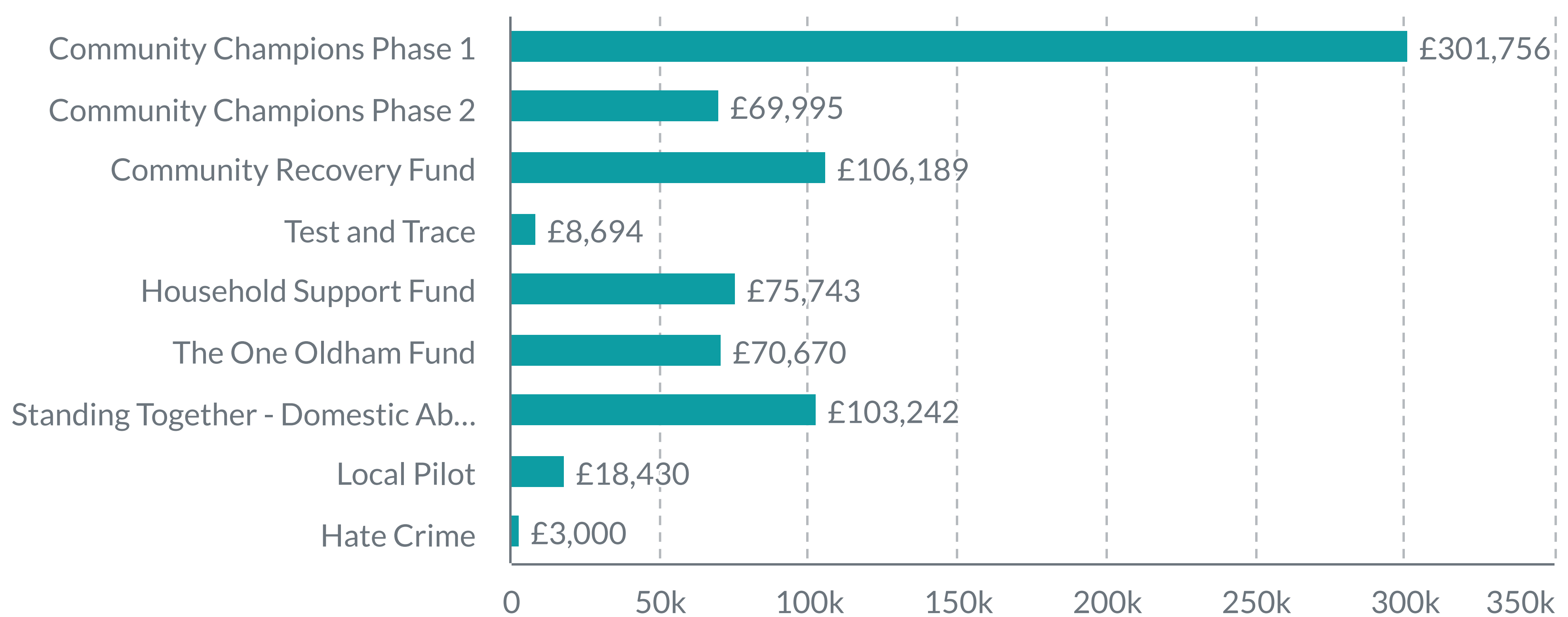
Household Support Fund

In Q3 we have worked with Oldham Council partners through Community Bronze to shape the allocation of the DWP Household Support Fund to Oldham. £179,000 was allocated for investment to the VCFSE and we facilitated a process of collaborative investment through the Poverty Action Group's sub group the Community Advice Network and have awarded funding to 11 VCFSE groups and organisations to enable them to respond to household poverty crisis through this winter. We recently facilitated a [#WednesdaysWeekly](#) Webinar for all front-line workers across the public and VCFSE sector to support their understanding of what support is available to Oldham residents through the Household Support Funding.

The One Oldham Fund

The One Oldham Fund was launched in October and replaces the Community Recovery Fund. Utilising funding available to the Council from the Containment Outbreak Management Fund, micro grants of up to £200 and £1000 and small grants of up to £10,000 are available to VCFSE members of Action Together to continue to deliver work that supports communities to respond and recover from Covid-19.

Grants and Investments Awarded Q1-Q3 (Total £734,583 to 291 groups and orgs)



■ £ Awarded



Meet the Funder



Funding for stronger communities in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside

We've held a wide range of #MeetTheFunder sessions to support our members to access regional and national funds

Click the links below to watch past #MeetTheFunder sessions on Action Together's YouTube channel.

- [Oldham Community Champions Phase 2](#)
- [Tudor Trust](#). You can also download the [handout](#).
- [The National Lottery](#)
- [Volunteer Celebration Fund - Action Together](#)
- [The Henry Smith Charity](#)
- [Beginners' Guide to Funding Applications](#)
- [Let's End Hate Crime 2021](#)
- [Migrant Destitution Fund Greater Manchester](#)
- [The National Lottery - Coronavirus Community Support Fund](#)

Action Together in GM

Across Q1-2 Action together has continued to work actively across Greater Manchester including:

- In late September, Liz represented the VCSE for formal signing of the GM Accord. The purpose of the new Accord is to further develop how the partners work together to improve outcomes for Greater Manchester's communities and citizens.
- Greater Manchester leaders in local government, health and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) have come together to sign a tripartite Accord to work together in a collaborative way to tackle entrenched inequalities.



Launch of the GM State of the Sector. You can read the report and recommendations on our website <https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/sos21>. The launch took place on Zoom in September, the event was well attended by VCSE and public sector partners. Mayor Andy Burnham attended as a guest speaker. Liz Windsor-Welsh chaired a panel to explore the recommendations of the report with public and VCSE sector partners including Portfolio Lead for GM and Leader of Oldham Council, Cllr Arooj Shah.

- As a founding partner of 10GM, Action Together continues to line management the 10GM team. 10GM's work across this quarter has focussed on engagement and activity as part of the GM wide emergency response framework. In addition, across this period 10GM colleagues worked to coordinate donations for Syrian Refugees and held two GM-wide coordination meetings with GMCA leads and the VCSE.
- In partnership with the VCSE Leadership Group we have re-established the VCSE Sub-Group on Population Health, Liz is the Interim Chair of this group. Action Together's Maddy Hubbard is the Co-Chair of the Inclusive Economy Sub-Group. We continue to engage and contribute to GM workshops and discussion on the Integrated Care System structures and the part the VCSE plays both in localities and in the GM structures. Including providing support as part of 10GM to explore the establishment of a GM VCSE Alternative Provider Federation.

In Q3 10GM work undertaken by Action Together includes:

- Establishing strategic relationships with other GM joint ventures – GM Active and GM Housing Providers.
- There has been significant engagement with GM VCSE partners on the governance and formation of the new GMICS. 10GM has been working with larger social enterprises and charities to establish the GM Alternative Provider Partnership. We have secured the initial investment and recruited an Executive Chair.
- Action Together's CEO has supported the VCSE Leadership Group to establish a GM VCSE Population Health Group, developing a strategic and engagement routes into the GM Population Health Board. She has also strategically represented the VCSE sector on GM Contain Cell and has been engaged with AGMA partners on developing the emergency structures to better connect to the VCSE in GM and in the areas that Action Together works.
- We have been part of the LGBTQ+ panel to increase support and awareness.
- We have worked as part of the GM Moving executive to review and refresh its strategy.

Internal Development



- Action Together has been working to review and strengthen its governance including an internal review of our strengths and opportunities for development.
- Action Together's auditors have been completing their internal audit across this quarter. Our audited accounts and Trustees Report will be shared with the membership as part of AGM and filed with the Charity Commission.
- Work started in this quarter to scope internal development work on an anti-racism action which we will commence later in the year.
- A digital accessibility focus group was held with some of our members to identify ways we can improve our online offer both immediately and as we start to improve and update our website.
- Action Together produced its first Data Protection and Data Security Annual Report. Its purpose is to provide the organisation's Senior Leadership Team and Board with an overview of all key issues relating to data protection and data security.
- Action Together held its 5th AGM on 8 December, we were joined online by many members and partners to celebrate the work of the VCFSE across the year and the work of Action Together. We also said goodbye to our long-standing Chair Roger Farnworth and began recruitment of our new Chair to be announced in January. We welcomed two new Board members to the organisation. Our [annual report](#) is published on our website with highlights from 2020-2021.
- Other internal developments have been; the investment and transition to a new online server, completion to the improvements to the [Community Activities Directory](#) and the delivery of data protection training across the organisation.

We're moving!

Action Together in Oldham are relocating to a new office



Action Together has recognised that the way we are working is changing and that means we don't need as much town centre space as we used to. A significant part of that change is that the majority of our teams now work out in a variety of community settings, helping to make our connection to our members and communities stronger.

We can be more accessible by being based in the same places as the people we work. Less and less people want to travel to a town centre office to access support, and technology allows us more opportunities to connect to people.

Having said all that we know how vital seeing each other in person is, too – so we're getting back to doing more of this. There are many community venues to do that in, which means we can move around and invest in local spaces rather than asking people to come to us.

We will still have a small team working in town centre offices and are pleased that we will be moving in with VCFSE partners in Oldham at Positive Steps, and sharing space with Age UK in Tameside. The Rochdale team will continue to be at the Community Warehouse one day a week, too, working alongside local organisations.