



# **An evaluation of the Big Local programme and the work of the OSW Partnership, 2014-2024**

**Prepared on behalf of the partnership by**





As Co-Chairs of Our Sale West Big Local, we are delighted to present this review of our work to date and hope you will find it interesting and inspiring.

In common with most other Big Local areas, the past ten years have been a rollercoaster ride, by turns inspiring and challenging; exciting and worrying; encouraging and testing but, above all, *epic*! It has been a great pleasure to see how far we have come in terms of understanding and supporting our community and what we have been able to achieve, working together as a team. We have all learned a great deal from the experience.

We have been able to deliver at least 75 individual projects associated with our four original themes of Youth; Environment and Community Spaces; Health and Wellbeing; Employment and Training and have also established ourselves as a reputable hub for the delivery of a variety of services and activities. By building up a network of partner organisations, such as the Council; the local Housing Association; NHS and Social Care; local schools and faith organisations, we are now in a strong position to move forward as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and continue our work into the future.

We are also proud to say that we have been able to bring in at least £600,000 of extra funding to add to our original £1m of National Lottery funding, thereby increasing the amount of support we have been able to give our community.

It is our belief that Our Sale West has demonstrated how communities in deprived areas, if given the financial backing, tools and support, can really make a difference and change their future for the better, ultimately meaning that the whole of society will reap the benefit.

Many thanks go to Tony Mullin for all his hard work in pulling this review together and also to Local Trust for their excellent support over the years. Last but not least, our sincere gratitude goes to the residents of Sale West, who have taught us so much and have never ceased to amaze us with their resilience, fortitude and sense of community spirit.

We hope you will enjoy reading our story.

*Ralph Rudden and Freda Eyden*

Co-Chairs, Our Sale West Big Local  
October, 2024

# Our Sale West Evaluation Report

## Executive Summary

### Background

Our Sale West Big Local is a community group based in a small housing estate in Sale West (population around 3,800) situated a couple of miles west of Sale town centre in Trafford, one of the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. As an area of multiple deprivation in an otherwise prosperous area, the estate slowly began to decline, both figuratively and materially, over the years following its construction in the 1970's. This decline was due to various factors, including Local Authority boundary changes; austerity measures and creeping isolation.

In 2015, however, Sale West became one of 150 disadvantaged neighbourhoods across England who were each awarded £1,000,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund, through its 'Big Local' programme. This money was to be used over 10 years to make the area a better place, according to the needs and wants of the local residents. Unlike previous community programmes, this one was long-term; resident-led and non-prescriptive. Support and training was offered to all Big Local areas by Local Trust, the body set up to run the national programme.

### Structure and Aims of Our Sale West Big Local

To oversee local delivery, a partnership board was formed in 2014, with a minimum of 51% of its members being residents of the estate. The name *Our Sale West Big Local* was chosen. Feedback following in-depth consultations with the local community revealed four main themes:

**Youth      Health and Wellbeing      Environment      Employment & Training**

By 2024, over 75 separate projects had been completed under these four headings.

### Evaluation Procedure

In 2024, Our Sale West Big Local commissioned an independent assessor to evaluate the impact of its work over the decade since it was established. Research methods included a desk-based review; semi-structured interviews and a public survey.

The assessment also included in-depth interviews with partner organisations, namely, Trafford Council; Irwell Valley Housing Association and Trafford Community Council. As the Our Sale West team have also worked with local schools, health and social services and faith organisations, their involvement is reflected in many of the projects undertaken (see Appendix to the main report).

### Measure of Impact

The report picked out examples of just some of the projects under the four theme headings to illustrate the overall impact of the total work done by Our Sale West.

#### 1. Youth

The report took the following as excellent examples of work in this category:

- Various attempts were made to commission outside service providers to re-establish a **weekly Youth Club**. These had moderate success but have now been replaced by a more sustainable model of training local residents as Youth Leaders to run the club.
- Our Sale West has supported a **school holiday activity programme** since 2015 to help local families.
- Much **work has been done with local schools**, including the organisation of three School Conferences in 2018, 2022 and 2024.
- A **junior parkrun, baby and toddler groups and sponsorship of a girls' football club** have also been successful.

## 2. Health and Wellbeing

Particular focus was put on the following:

- Several **community day trips** have been organised each year to places such as York, Llandudno, Blackpool and Southport, giving local residents the chance to have a change of scene at a very affordable price.
- One of the biggest services provided for the community has been **affordable, or even free, food provision**. For example, 'The Bread and Butter Thing' scheme distributes discounted food from supermarkets to around 60 residents a week in return for a small weekly fee. The Foodshare scheme offers free food collected from local supermarkets each week. This is open to anyone and has saved tonnes of food from going to landfill.
- 'Strictly Lunch' offers a **subsidised two-course meals** to elderly and vulnerable residents twice per week.

## 3. Environment and Community Spaces

The report picked out these highlights of all the work undertaken under this theme.

- The Phoenix Gardens have been created from what had been a derelict space on the site of the former Bechers Pub. This is now a **pleasant community space** and the former pub car park is presently a **community allotment space**.
- Sale West Woods is the **park area** behind the Community Centre. Over the past ten years it has been transformed through funding provided and successfully secured by OSW Big Local. Two refurbished play areas, a picnic area and a wildflower and edibles garden have all enhanced the area.
- A proposed brand new Community Centre was the focus of attention for several years until potential costs spiralled out of control. The plan is now to **refurbish the existing Youth Centre building** and secure a 25-year lease from Trafford Council so that the new Our Sale West CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) can eventually run it as a going concern.

## 4. Employment and Training

These are the examples chosen to illustrate the achievements in this category:

- Various **training opportunities** have been offered over the years, including Intermediate IT; First Aid; CV writing; Food Hygiene.
- The **Community Information Hub** was set up and has since been successful in hosting other service providers such as Trafford Council, the DWP and Citizens Advice.

The report does emphasise that this category has been the most difficult to assess of the four, as the pandemic and ongoing cost of living crisis have hindered the development of a continuous service since the first successful years.

Other major projects outside of the four categories were mentioned, namely, the creation of a **Community Grant Fund** to encourage and support local entrepreneurs, plus a collaboration with an organisation called UnLtd who were also able to help to identify and support local potential small business projects.

## Surveys and Interviews

The assessor spent a considerable amount of time consulting with and interviewing local people and users of the various services and activities.

He also spoke to high level representatives of partner organisations, all of whom had known and worked with Our Sale West from the outset. These were Sara Salah, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources at Trafford Council; George Devlin, Trafford Community Collective; Maria Garnett, Communities Investment Manager, Irwell Valley Housing Association; Louise Marsden, Irwell Valley Housing Association; Ceris Esplen, Executive Director, Irwell Valley Housing Association.

All were asked if it had been a positive experience working with OSW and if they would be happy to work with the OSW CIO in future. On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being excellent, out of 24 responses, 20 were excellent and 4 were very good.

Feedback was also sought from the public to establish how aware they were of OSW; how often they used community facilities; how they rated their quality of life; if they had perceived any improvements in the area; what future priorities should be.

## Results

The results showed that a large majority of people liked the area and planned to stay in Sale West for a few years; that most, if not all, felt their voices were heard; that two-thirds thought the area had improved in recent years. It would appear that OSW are on the right track, but they realise that more can still be done in all of these areas, particularly as regards support for older residents and young people.

Overall, OSW has had an extremely successful impact across the Big Local area. It has built up a strong and successful working relationship with a variety of partners and residents have benefitted greatly from its support, particularly during the pandemic and national austerity measures. The main criticism arising from the report regards the lack of baseline measurement from the outset, so that it has proved more difficult to measure impact in a very precise way. However, this has very much been the case in all other Big Local areas and is more to do with the way they were set up in the first place.

## Future Priorities

Priorities for the future, according to Trafford Council; Trafford Community Council; IVHA and also the public at large include setting up and sustaining a refurbished community centre; continuing their emergency provision of food and cost of living support; continuing with their four main themes; putting particular emphasis on work with young people; organising more family friendly events to bring the community together.

The CIO is well placed to succeed as a legacy project of OSW because:

- OSW already has a proven excellent track record of partnership working
- CIO priorities are based on existing approved OSW plans
- OSW has a very good reputation amongst the local community and all of the current partners with whom it works, all of whom wish to continue their collaboration.

***“They have done amazing work, I have been blown away at how effective OSW are.”***

Sara Saleh, Deputy Chief Executive, Trafford Borough Council

***“The more we get to know them, the more impressed we are”.***

George Devlin, Trafford Community Collective

## **Contents**

|  | <b><u>Page</u></b> |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>1. Introductory Letter</b>  | <b>2</b>           |
| <b>2. Executive Summary</b>  | <b>3</b>           |
| <b>3. Background to the evaluation</b>   | <b>8</b>           |
| <b>4. Aims and scope of the evaluation</b>   | <b>9</b>           |
| <b>5. Impact under each priority theme</b>   | <b>10</b>          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Young people</li><li>• Health and well-being</li><li>• Environment</li><li>• Employment and Training</li></ul> |                    |
| <b>6. Feedback from the public survey</b>  | <b>17</b>          |
| <b>7. Interviews with partner organisations</b>  | <b>26</b>          |
| <b>8. Support received from Local Trust</b>  | <b>31</b>          |
| <b>9. The impact of OSW and the Big Local Programme</b>  | <b>32</b>          |
| <b>10. Some strengths and weaknesses</b>   | <b>34</b>          |
| <b>11. Future priorities</b>   | <b>36</b>          |
| <b>12. Conclusion</b>  | <b>38</b>          |
| <br><b>Appendix</b>  |                    |
| <b>List of all OSW Projects</b>  | <b>39</b>          |

# 1. Background to the Evaluation

## (i) The national Big Local Programme

The Big Local programme is a Big Lottery Funded initiative that has invested at least £1 million in each of 150 neighbourhoods across England which had been overlooked for funding in the past. There are three key features of Big Local that set it apart from all previous area-based regeneration Programmes:

- **long term** – providing certainty and continuity, over 10-15 years
- **Resident-led** – working directly with individuals living or working in Big Local areas
- **Non-prescriptive** – enabling residents to spend on their own terms and in their own time, on the projects they judge to be most important to them.

## (ii) Sale West and the Our Sale West (OSW) Big Local

### Sale West

Sale West is a small housing estate (population around 3,800) situated a couple of miles west of Sale Town Centre in Trafford, one of the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. The estate was built in the early 1970's to rehouse people from the overcrowded inner city areas of Manchester.

Nowadays there is very mixed housing in Sale West, even though most of the houses and flats were originally built as social housing properties. Many of the ex-council houses have been sold, some of which are now rented out privately. However, most residents are tenants of Irwell Valley Housing Association.

The estate has lost a lot of facilities over the last 20 years or so. A central row of shops, including a post office, and the local pub, have all been demolished. There has been a youth and Community Centre on the estate since it was built, but at the time of the Big Local launch it was no longer perceived as the central community hub it had been, with many of the activities that had historically taken place there having ceased.

### OSW Big Local

In 2014, Our Sale West became one of those areas being awarded £1 million by the national lottery community fund (since increased to £1.2m) to be spent over 10 years. The Our Sale West Board, the resident-led partnership set up to deliver the programme, was set up in August 2014 and work began on the first Big Local Community Plan in January 2015

Over the last 10 years OSW has supported a wide range of projects designed to make the area an even better place to live.



## Vision, aims and priorities

The vision for the area has remained the same since 2014

- Support people to lead healthier, happier lives
- help people reach their full potential
- Invest in the future for this generation and beyond
- Listen to the community and be the voice to make things happen

## Priority themes

The priority themes have remained constant too. In 2015 there were 4 themes: volunteering and employment; improving community facilities; creating a better environment; and improving Health and Well Being. In the 2019 plan the environment and community space themes were combined, and a new one added which was young people. The priority themes are listed below.

- (i) Young people
- (ii) Health and well-being
- (iii) Environment and community spaces
- (iv) Employment and Training

## 2. Aims and scope of the Evaluation

In January 2024 Our Sale West commissioned 'Your Back Yard', a social enterprise specialising in managing and measuring community projects, to undertake an independent evaluation of the impact their Big Local Programme had made. At this time the Big Local programme, which had been launched in 2014, had 18 months to run. However, OSW is determined to carry on the work they have been doing beyond the end of the Big Local programme, and to this end are re-establishing themselves as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with effect from 2024.

### Aims

- (i) to measure the impact OSW and the Big Local Programme have had on the area, paying regard to achievements against each of the programme's four priority themes, and relationships with key organisations
- (ii) to find out what people; partners, stakeholder organisations and residents think the priorities should be for the future.

## Scope of the report, and research methods used

To meet these aims, the following research was carried out:

- A desk-based review of what the Programme had set out to achieve at the outset
- Sem- structured interviews with the programme manager, and partnership members for each of the four priority themes
- Semi structured interviews with 7 representatives from key stakeholder organisations
- A survey of the public, carried out at community venues, on the street and online, completed by 67 people

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with each member of OSW programme team, and the two co-chairs. Between them they had responsibility for overseeing the delivery of all projects in the Big Local Plan.

## 3. Impact under each priority theme

This section sets out what impact the Programme has had under each of the 4 themes, including an assessment of major interventions carried out under each.

### (i) Young people

When initial consultations were carried out in 2015 to provide the basis for the first plan, the need for “more things for children and young people to do” was the highest priority. However, attempts to improve the offer for young people were severely undermined and challenged when, in 2014, Trafford Council cut its entire youth service. This was in response to deep cuts in the council’s budget, part of Central Government’s programme of austerity that resulted in funding for local authorities across the country being drastically reduced, from 2010 up to 2024.

In the words of the theme leader for young people

“Losing the youth service a few years ago put our commitment to improve services and activities for young people on the back foot. There was a big hole to fill, and there were very few organisations still going that had a successful track record in working with young people”

OSW was determined to ensure some provision for young people was retained, and that included investment in the two projects set out below

### The Friday night youth provision project

This has been one of the main projects under the youth theme since 2015. OSW put in an initial investment and on top of this they have secured external funding. This has enabled them to bring in a service provider to put on a youth club every Friday in the Community

Centre. The results have been mixed, partly because of the funding arrangements. Each provider had time limited funding and when that came to an end the project, according to project managers, tended to “fizzle out” when the provider moved on. Several different youth club providers have been commissioned by the OSW partnership, which has led to a lack of continuity.

To develop something more sustainable, in 2024 OSW adopted a new approach to youth provision. In partnership with Gorse Hill Studios and Trafford College they put on a youth leadership course, on which 14 people have enrolled. In Spring 2024 the first participants qualified and it is hoped they will provide a pool of skills and expertise upon which a more sustainable approach to youth club provision can be built.

### **Holiday Activity Programme**

OSW has overseen the delivery of a holiday activity programme in the area since 2015. Those taking place during the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays have been funded by the council. OSW funds activities that take place in the half terms, ensuring there is something for young people on every day of each school holiday.

In addition to providing healthy fun activities, another aim of this project is to tackle child hunger, a growing issue in the area and across the country, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis. As well as the sporting activities, participants are given a meal, and priority is given to those children who are eligible for free school meals. The Sunshine café, located in the community centre, provides the meals.

Sale Sharks Foundation, the charity partner of Sale Sharks Rugby Club, who seek to promote physical and mental wellbeing using the power of sport, have delivered the activities. Sessions have been generally well attended, and include a free meal, arts and crafts, media and football.

### **Working with local schools**

In 2018, the decision was taken to involve four local schools (three Primary and one High School) in a consultation exercise regarding young residents’ wants and needs in the area. As it had been discovered that each of the schools had a School Council (or similar representative body), it was agreed that these pupils should be invited to come to the Youth Centre to meet with the Our Sale West Board.

After further discussion, this idea developed into staging a School Council Conference, modelled along adult conference lines, where the pupil groups would be the ‘keynote speakers’, workshops would be arranged and a plenary session held at the end. Our Sale West invited relevant organisations to attend and offer support to schools to follow up their ideas.

Each school was given a bursary of £500 to develop a project of their choice over the following year. The advantages of the exercise were that Our Sale West gained a much clearer idea of the real concerns of local young people; the pupils and staff from each school

really enjoyed meeting up with each other in a collaborative way; four worthwhile projects were set up and followed through; awareness was raised as to how Our Sale West could support local youth.

The final projects, which were all relevant to the broad aims of Our Sale West Big Local, comprised: a 'Flower Maze' to be constructed on a small area within the estate; a sports-related activity programme to encourage increased physical activity for local young people; a programme to promote better mental health and reduce stress; and a project to improve transition between Primary and Secondary school.

Following the success of the 2018 conference and using the same model, in June 2022 OSW organised, facilitated and hosted a Climate Crisis Conference for local schools. The press article below perhaps sums it up best

***An exciting conference took place at the Community Centre on the Sale West Estate, Sale, Greater Manchester. 62 pupils representing five local Primary schools and a High School joined together to give presentations, participate in workshops and plan their next steps towards a sustainable future. They were joined by a number of environmental organisations such as the Environment Agency; Sow the City; the Centre for Sustainable Energy; Recycle4GM; Living Streets; Trafford Council Officers and the Henry Royce Institute at the University of Manchester, with the aim of supporting and helping them in their ongoing journey towards carbon neutrality.***

***The day started with a banner parade from each school, converging on the Youth Centre where the Mayor of Trafford greeted the pupils. Student representatives from each school then gave a series of short presentations on climate issues of their choice. These were followed by a series of engaging workshop activities covering a range of issues including air pollution; waste and recycling; biodiversity and food production.***

***The day was rounded off with a session during which each school agreed a project, to be supported by one or more of the participating organisations. Finally, every attendee wrote a 'pledge' to be placed on a special 'tree', as a commitment to the future. It was agreed to stage a follow-up event to be held within the year to measure progress and to encourage continuing cooperation between the schools.***

***The conference was organised by Our Sale West Big Local, a community group based on the Sale West estate, who received £1m of National Lottery funding in 2015 to be used over 10 years to make the area a much better place to live. The programme is resident-led and has already made an enormous impact on the local area and beyond.***

The success of the conference is testimony to the hard work the partnership has put into building up strong relationships with primary and high schools in the area. Following the success of the climate change conference another is planned for later in 2024, with the theme of 'Community'.

### Other youth activities

OSW have funded Sale West Sunbeams, a toddler group for 0-4 year olds, which began in 2022. Sessions are free, funded by the council. They have also sponsored the Sale girls' football team who have been hugely successful over the last few years. OSW are also working with Trafford Council on the development of a Junior ParkRun, which will hopefully be starting in late 2024.

Despite the closure of the council's youth service, OSW has ensured that young people on the estate have had places to go, and activities to take part in. These included a regular youth club, activity programmes throughout all the holidays and weekly sessions for families with young children. In addition, hundreds of young people have benefitted from all the work done with local schools

### **(ii) Health and Wellbeing.**

Health and wellbeing has been one of the programme's four priority themes since the first Big Local Community Plan was written in 2013. According to project workers progress under this theme was initially a bit slow to get going. However, things improved when the partnership started working more closely with key agencies such as the Public Health team within the council.

We looked in depth at the impact of two projects under this theme, Community trips and Food share, both of which have run for several years.

### **Community trips**

Big Local has funded several community trips over the last 10 years. This has included trips to Llandudno, York, Blackpool, Bury market and Southport. Workers carry out some consultation with residents on the trips, getting feedback on a range of issues from attendees. The trips attract a very diverse group; older adults, singles, people with disabilities, young parents and a relatively high proportion from recent immigrant communities including Hong Kong and Ukraine. Many of those attending the trips do not have an annual holiday or in many cases tend not to go anywhere further afield than Manchester.

### **Food provision for vulnerable residents**

OSW delivers several projects under this broad heading, the need for which significantly increased during the cost-of-living crisis of 2022 onwards. These include Foodshare which collects surplus food from supermarkets which is then distributed free to vulnerable residents from the community centre. The 'Bread and Butter Thing' which started in 2022 distributes discounted food to an average of 60 residents a week, again from the community centre. Strictly Lunch happens twice a week in the Sunshine café, on Tuesdays and Thursdays and is a subsidised 2 course meal, with an average of 18 people attending. Also, OSW

provides an annual Christmas lunch, also based at the Community Centre, primarily for vulnerable or lonely residents.

Big Local funding for these initiatives of £5000 has been supplemented with grant funding from Tesco Bags of Help, and the Co-op Community Fund. The cost of the van is the biggest cost, followed by room hire. The service is supported by around 10 volunteers

As detailed above, the Big Local programme has had a significant impact on people's health and well-being. The regular trips out have given everyone, families particularly, the opportunity for a fun day out. However, it is in the way OSW responded to COVID-19, and the cost-of-living crisis, that the partnership really made its mark. Food share, the Bread-and-Butter thing, Strictly Lunch and all the emergency food provision delivered from the hub has had a positive, crucial impact on many hundreds of lives. In total 1.5m meals have been delivered by OSW through these projects and the Support Hub, ensuring that no person or family has gone hungry through what remains, for many households, an ongoing cost of living crisis.

### **(iii) Environment and community spaces**

The environment has been a priority theme in the Big Local Community Plan since 2014.

We looked at the impact of 2 of the key projects under this theme, Phoenix Gardens and Sale West Woods.

#### **Phoenix Gardens**

This was a derelict space which was the site of the Bechers pub that was closed many years ago. The derelict site has now been transformed into a community garden, with the former car park being used as allotments. A band of volunteers are involved in the upkeep.

The project was fully funded by Big Local and initially designed and delivered by a contractor, with volunteers playing a major role in its upkeep. It is very well used by the local community, and by customers from the nearby NHS practice. It is also used by children in the evening, and there have been no incidences of vandalism or anti-social behaviour. For a time, the newly developed gardens were under threat from a new road that was initially planned to run through the site, but this has now been diverted around the garden.

#### **Sale West Woods**

Sale West woods is located just a few metres from the community centre. A master plan for a comprehensive refurbishment of the woods has been in place since 2014. The woods contained seating and a play area but this was rather dated and not well used. The 2018

plan set out an ambitious programme of refurbishment, taking in the park, play area and woods, costing over £250,000. The first phase was to refurbish and relocate the infant play area from the back of the community centre to a more suitable and less isolated position. The refurbishment of a play area for older children, including a new zip wire and other appropriate equipment was successfully completed in 2022 and a picnic area was also established then.

The final improvements to the Sale West Woods included a wildflower meadow and area of edible native plants established in 2023 with the help of local schoolchildren and a grant from Trafford Conservation Volunteers. The final project will be the establishment of an amphitheatre area which can be used for meetings and outdoor drama/music sessions.

The works have been funded by a mix of Big Local and monies secured from external sources. The Manchester Airport Foundation funded the new benches; a Pocket Parks grant from the government funded the moving and refurbishment of the infant play area; whilst the Veolia Environmental Trust funded most of the refurbished play area for older children. £1600 was also raised from a crowdfunder connected to the wildflower meadow. In total over £100k of external funding has been secured for the park improvements, on the back of a Big Local contribution of just £20,000. The Local Authority has also contributed, providing officer time and training.

A volunteer group of around 10 people has been heavily involved in the refurbishment programme. The group is very diverse, comprising a range of ages and nationalities. Most of the volunteers have received training from Trafford Conservation Volunteers, a voluntary organisation based in Sale. This training was instrumental in the volunteers developing an extensive wildflower meadow, first planted in 2023. A local primary school has also been involved with the wildflower meadow, helping with seeding.

Since the phase 1 works were completed, usage has increased significantly, including the holding of regular events.

### **Plans for a new Community Centre**

The creation of a new Community Centre, on the Firsway site about half a mile from the existing Community Centre, was Big Local's flagship project from the outset, featuring in the Big Local community plan of 2013. £100,000 was allocated towards a new centre, whilst the bulk of the funding, around 90%, was sought from the National Lottery. When the bid failed, in 2017, this left a very large funding gap.

Despite extensive efforts to raise the funding from other sources, in 2023 OSW reluctantly decided to look at other options of achieving the aim of sustaining a multi-purpose community space in the OSW area. The favoured option is now a refurbishment of the existing centre, with OSW taking the building on a phased lease from the council. The £100,000 initially earmarked for a new build will now go towards the refurbishment. A condition survey of the building was carried out in March 2023 to identify what works are needed. When completed, OSW will hope to have free use of rooms, office, and meeting room, and will ultimately take on a full lease for the building.

Under the environment theme the creation of Phoenix Gardens and the ongoing complete refurbishment of Sale West Woods have transformed the area. The new infant play area and upgraded older children's play area (with another phase to come) have added to the provision for young people mentioned above. Phoenix Gardens provides a space that anyone can use and enjoy, not least to give their health and well-being a boost. Whilst a brand new community centre is no longer going to happen, the refurbishment of the existing centre secures the future of a well-known, increasingly well used and centrally located community hub on the estate.

#### **(iv) Training and Employment**

Training and helping people into employment has been a priority theme in the Big Local Community Plan since 2013. In the 2017 plan there was a commitment to improve IT provision in the centre, and to surveying residents about their training needs, particularly in relation to getting back into employment. Workshops and training sessions on Intermediate I.T, C.V writing, Food Hygiene, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid were all offered to residents. In 2021 a community information hub was set up in the Community centre, run by a Hub Co-ordinator (a local resident) working 3 mornings a week.

There is limited evidence of any training courses being run from the hub, although the CSC scheme was apparently a success. Aspirations towards delivering other services that were in the community plan, such as 'Tea and Tech' sessions to help get people online, do not appear to have materialised to any significant extent. Whilst people have received support around getting back into work, the numbers are unknown, as is the progress those people made after receiving support from the Hub, and there was no follow up monitoring.

This is the one theme within the OSW Big Local Programme where it is difficult to gauge the extent to which interventions have been successful, partly attributable to a lack of any kind of performance monitoring system and because the aims of the service have had to adapt to a very changeable environment, following the pandemic and ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Whilst training and getting people back into work remains within the Hub's remit, since 2022 there has been more emphasis on offering support, advice and signposting around welfare issues, debt management and financial insecurity. In addition to delivering its own support, the Hub has been successful in encouraging other service providers to deliver from the centre. It is a venue for a Jobs Club run by Trafford council and sessions run by the CAB on a Thursday. The CAB has three advisers and was initially funded by the Big Local, but this has now been 'mainstreamed' with the council taking on the funding of the service.

Training and employment was always likely to be a big challenge. Success under this theme is very much dependant on the extensive involvement of other partners; trainers, teachers, employers etc. Perhaps this is an area where a relatively small programme like Big Local needs to take more of an enabling and facilitating role. For example, OSW could have undertaken a comprehensive survey of residents to find out their training, learning and employment needs, the results of which could have been used as the basis for bringing in external partners to meet identified needs, rather than attempting to deliver an 'in house' service.



However, as mentioned above, activity under this theme did evolve, quite successfully, into something a bit different, which was to offer a wider programme of support in response to the pandemic and cost of living crisis. The Hub manager, a local resident, has been able to use her knowledge of the area, and the trust people have in her, to get people ‘through the door’, with the Facebook page being a key tool in this process. This has allowed people with a range of economic and social needs to access a wide range of key services.

### Other major projects

#### The Community Grant Fund

The Community Grant Fund is funded and administered by the partnership. It offers grants of up to £2,000 to individuals and organisations running projects that will benefit local people. By 2020 nine grants had been awarded, mainly for sports and exercise activities including football, Morris dancing and exercise classes. There was significant demand in the early years, which the project team thought had since dropped off as people had their ideas funded. There was also an acknowledgement from the team that a more comprehensive publicity campaign may have generated more applications.

#### UnLtd

UnLtd, the Foundation for social entrepreneurs, were one of the central partners commissioned by Local Trust to deliver projects in Big Local areas. Their remit is to identify budding entrepreneurs and to help them, through funding and other support, to set up their own businesses. In 2019 each Big Local was offered the opportunity to apply to become an UnLtd partner. In return for £50,000 invested by the partnership, matched by Local Trust, 20 Big Local partnerships, including OSW were given 2 years dedicated support from UnLtd. The project team felt the project never met their expectations. The partnership was surprised not to have more of an active role, UnLtd preferring to work on their own with potential entrepreneurs. The reporting back to the partnership was extremely patchy, and rarely in a written format. An estimated 15 people were given some support to set up community businesses, which was a disappointingly low number considering an overall investment of £100,000. Furthermore, OSW has little idea whether people or enterprises who were supported went on to be successful, or what they are doing now.

The lesson they learnt from the project was to be more circumspect about partners being introduced to them who were not local, and with whom they had not worked with in the past.

## 4. Feedback from the Public Survey

After interviewing project and programme managers, and partners and stakeholder organisations, the next stage was to consult with the public. This was aimed at establishing:

- How aware people are of Big Local and the work it has done.
- How often they use community facilities

- How people perceive their quality of life in the area
- Whether they think the area has improved over the lifetime of Big Local
- What people thought the future priorities should be for the CIO

To do this we

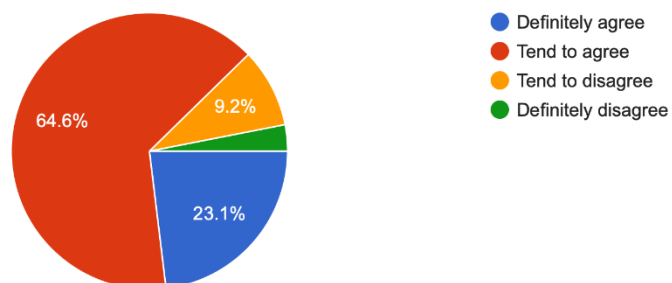
- Posted a Google survey on OSW and other Community Facebook pages
- Visited the area, asking members of the public to fill out the survey

The research team visited several places in the OSW area including the community centre, the Hub and library, local shops and the park. In total we interviewed 60 people face to face, and 8 people filled in the survey online.

People were asked several questions about how they perceived the area, what they thought of the facilities and services and whether they thought the area had improved or declined during the time of the Big Local programme. The final question asked people what they thought the future priorities should be if OSW were to carry on working and investing in the area.

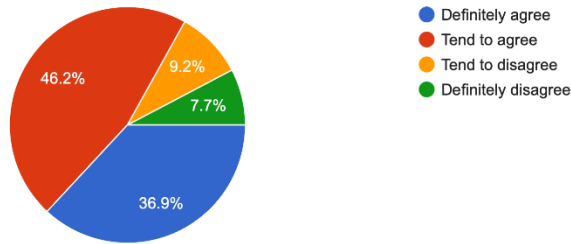
In response to the question about how well people get on with each other in the area, as the graph below shows, a large majority, 64.6% agreed they did and only 12% disagreed.

2. People in this neighbourhood generally get along with each other  
65 responses



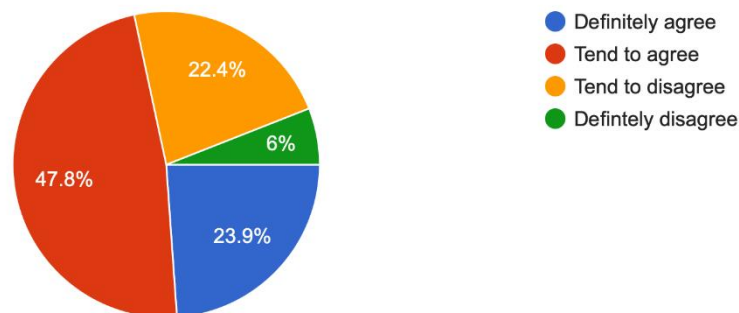
We asked people about whether they planned to stay in the area for a while, and as the graph below shows, nearly 80% agreed they planned to stay in Sale West for a few years.

3. I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years  
65 responses



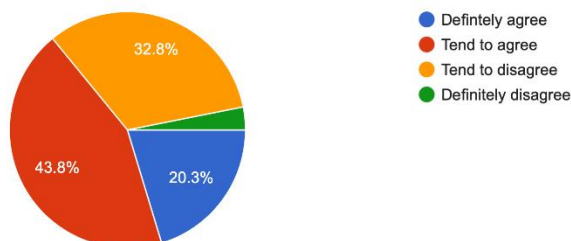
Residents were also asked if they would be willing to work alongside others to improve their neighbourhood. Nearly 70% said they would, as shown in the graph below.

4. I would be willing to work with others on something to improve my neighbourhood  
67 responses



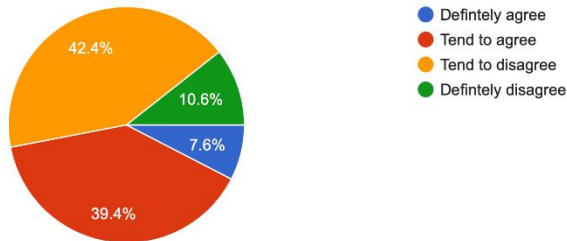
And, on a similar theme, as the graph below shows, nearly two thirds of residents agreed that people in their neighbourhood did pull together to improve it.

5. People in my neighbourhood pull together to improve it  
64 responses



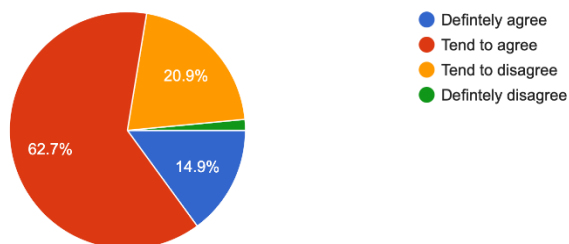
One of the fundamental aims of Big Local is to put residents in charge, and to support them in making their area an even better place to live. A survey question asked residents if they feel they can influence decisions made in their area, and as the graph below shows more people disagreed than agreed with this statement, which suggests there is still some work to do in terms of making local people think their voices are being heard.

6. I can influence decisions in my area  
66 responses



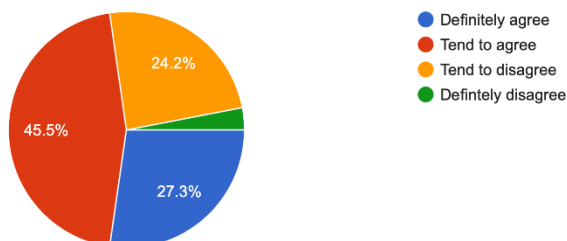
The response was more positive when residents were asked whether they thought people can change the way their area is run. The fact that more than 75% thought they could does suggest a high level of community spirit.

7. When people in this area get involved in their community they really can change the way the area is run  
67 responses



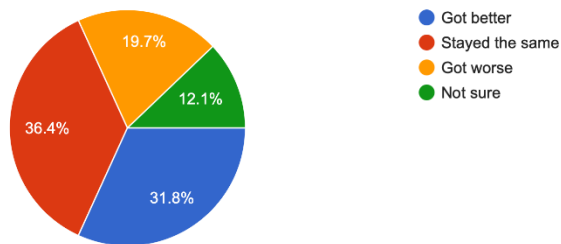
**Nearly three quarters of people agreed that it was important that they could influence** decisions affecting their area. This too suggests a tendency within the community for people to want to get involved, have and their say influence change.

8. How important is it to you personally to feel that you can influence decisions affecting your area  
66 responses



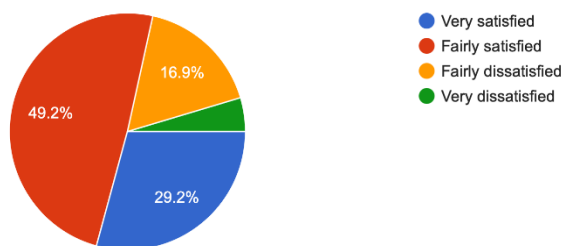
A key question for any Big Local area as it approaches the end of the 10-year programme is whether people think the area has got better, or worse. As the graph below shows, the response to this was mixed, with less than a third thinking the area had got better. Whilst this was significantly higher than those who thought the area had got worse, it does suggest there is more work to do.

9. Do you think, over the last 5 years, the area has  
66 responses



Another key question for Big local areas is how satisfied people are with their area. As the graph below shows, satisfaction levels are high, with nearly 80% being very, or fairly satisfied.

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with your area as a place to live?  
65 responses



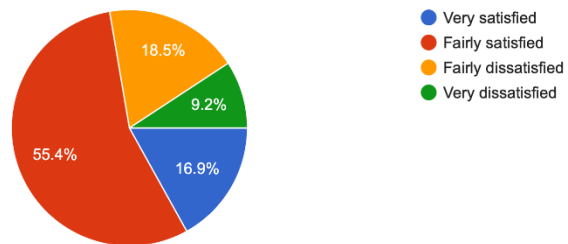
### Level of satisfaction with services and facilities

The last section on the survey form asked people what they thought of local facilities in the area; overall, for older people, for children, for families and for teenagers. As the graphs below show

- a clear majority are reasonably satisfied with the overall quality of services and facilities.
- A high proportion, over a third, are dissatisfied with facilities and services for older people
- The lowest satisfaction levels by far were facilities for teenagers, with 46%, saying they are fairly dissatisfied
- More than 4 in 5 people are less than very satisfied with all facilities and services which suggests room for improvement

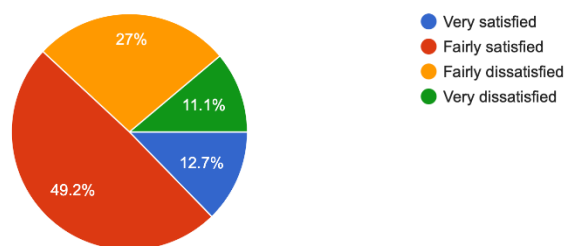
11. Generally how satisfied are you with local services and facilities in your area?

65 responses



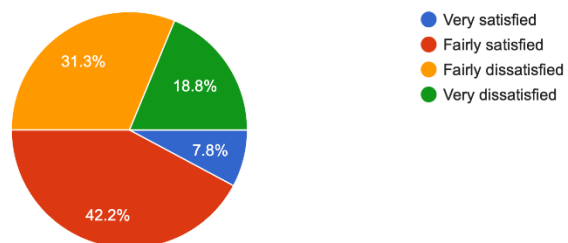
12. How satisfied are you with the quality of facilities for children in your area?

63 responses



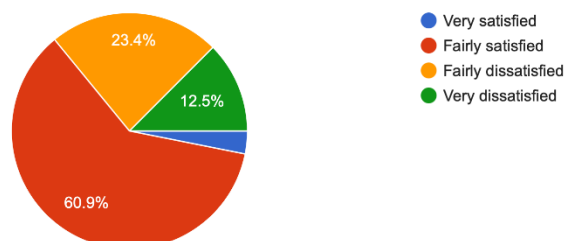
13. How satisfied are you with the quality of facilities for older people in your area?

64 responses



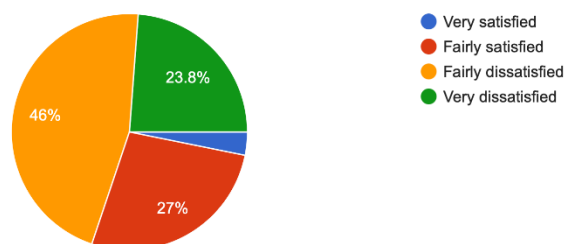
14. How satisfied are you with the quality of facilities for families in your local area?

64 responses



15. How satisfied are you with the quality of facilities for teenagers in your local area?

63 responses



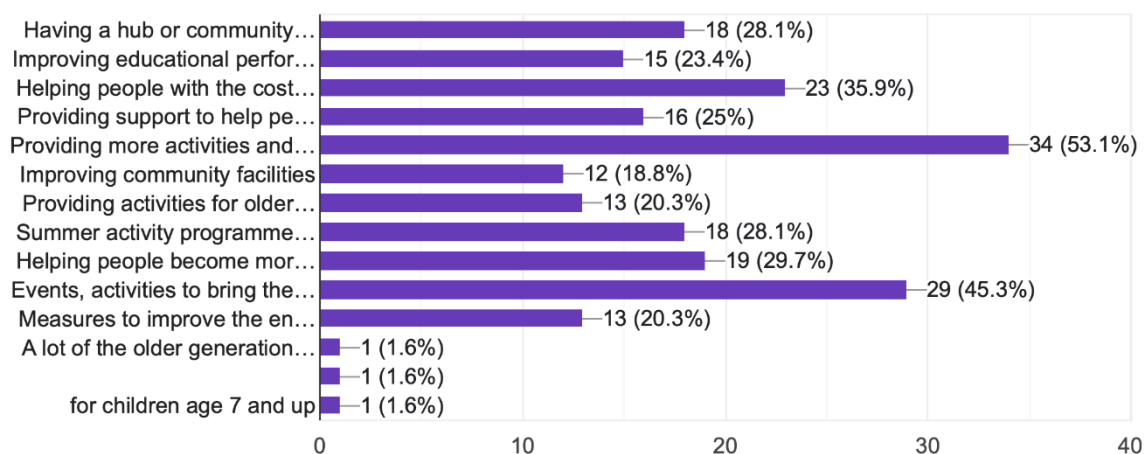
## Future priorities

All interviewees were also asked what they thought the priorities for Our Sale West should be in the future. As the graph below shows, the three most popular choices were

- providing more activities and services for younger people
- events, activities to bring the community together.
- helping people with the cost-of-living crisis.

16. What do you think the priorities for 'Our Sale West' should be in the future? Please tick up to 3 boxes

64 responses



A few residents also wrote some more ideas which are listed below:

- Helping with housing situations – Mould, dampness, fixing and structuring, overcrowding
- More seating at bus stops
- Access to e-books and computers
- Pubs and cinemas
- Public transport
- Parks for teenagers

- Evening and weekend activities for working people to connect with the community

**Below are some comments made from the residents on their surveys about areas they believe need improving in their local area:**

#### **Services**

- Bus services are slow – public transport needs improving
- Disabled parking – only two spaces

#### **Facilities**

- need more access to a gym
- leisure Centre improvements
- would like more exercise classes
- Facilities not advertised enough
- The older adults are not catered as well as those that are 50+
- Would like a homework club
- Nothing for the kids and younger generations
- Youth club not running now
- Would like to see some evening activities for those working full time so they can connect with people within the community, working full time hours can be isolating
- There is no cinema

#### **Young person's facilities**

- restricted youth club
- There is not much for teenagers
- Nothing for the kids and younger generations
- Youth club not running now
- Summer activity programmes for young people are important
- No clothes shops, no book shops and nothing for young people

#### **Cost of living**

- Coop is too expensive
- Can't afford soft play
- Have to pay for after school clubs

#### **Housing**

- Building better affordable housing for existing residents instead of the new wooden housing"



- Help residents with housing issues such as the mold, damp, fixing structured issues, overcrowding
- Slow on repairs

#### **Environment**

- Gardening and no shelter
- Lots of litter around the area
- Small improvements over the past 2 years
- Widening the pavements for people to walk around roads
- Litter and dog mess

#### **Miscellaneous**

- People do not get listened to
- Want to have a go at using computers
- Would like to be able to access e-books
- Not many family events going on
- Would like more seating at bus stops
- Shopping is too far away
- Need CCTV cameras
- Need more volunteers
- Facilities not advertised enough

#### **What people said they liked about the area**

- Good coffee shops
- Good mental health services
- Like the free school meals
- Satisfied with health centre
- Family fun days
- Good shops
- A lot of toddler groups
- Youth centre very centred to the community
- Satisfied by baby soft play indoors
- Housing has improved in the area
- Affordable family services
- The library offers a lot of opportunities
- Leisure centre has improved
- The town centre has improved in the area
- A good park for teenagers
- Good parks and good leisure centre
- Good facilities for children under 10 years old

- Christmas dinner for older people
- Good mother and baby support network
- A good library in the area

## 5. Interviews with partner organisations

Semi structured interviews were carried out with seven representatives from key stakeholder organisations: Trafford Council, Irwell Valley Housing Association and Trafford Community Council. This research was aimed at exploring how well OSW had worked with key agencies, and how those agencies perceived the performance of OSW.

### (i) Sara Salah

Sara is Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director of Strategy & Resources at Trafford Council. She started working with OSW in 2022 when she became involved in community spaces and setting up the six emergency hubs across in Trafford in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She has worked very closely with the manager and chairs of the partnership, and found both were a great help to her and the council in understanding the nature of community, both generally and in relation to Sale West. She found them both incredibly passionate and knowledgeable around community development, not only about what is going on in their area, but also in other parts of the country. They were very pragmatic, very considered and had a good sense of what is achievable in the current climate. Also, they were always willing to try out and test new things and new ways of working. For example, they worked with Trafford Community Health and community nurses, offering people health checks as part of a more preventative approach to health and wellbeing.

She thought the relationship between OSW and the council generally is excellent. She is also aware of how well OSW have worked with local schools, with Social Care, and that they have a very good relationship with the housing associations. Their relationship with the health sector could perhaps be stronger, although more recently OSW have developed closer relations with Trafford PCT which has helped in this regard. Their multi agency working has allowed them to take a more holistic approach than otherwise would have been the case, for example in bringing in the CAB to operate out of the Community Centre.

As for sustainability, the demand for emergency services, sadly, looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. As a result, all six Trafford hubs will be funded until at least 2026. After that there will need to be a plan in place. The council are looking at a hub and spokes model, i.e. a main hub, with satellite sites. They are also looking at where there are gaps, such as crisis clinics, and winter support, and at geographical gaps, such as Sale Moor and central Sale. Trafford businesses could play a part in sustainability of the hubs, for example through corporate sponsorship, or via their corporate social responsibility work. An overhaul in how councils are funded would help too. For example, if Labour gets into power they are committed to giving local councils multi-year funding agreements, as opposed to the current annual agreements, which would help with long term planning.

## Priorities for the future

Each interviewee was asked what they thought the future priorities should be for OSW. Sara thought their biggest priority should be the hub and continuing to deliver emergency services as this need, across Sale, was increasing rather than decreasing. The cost-of-living crisis was still acute, as were health inequalities. OSW is deprived, but the wider area is mixed, with Trafford characterised by extremes of rich and poor throughout the borough.

She believed the OSW hub to be a vibrant, vital part of the community, responding in an agile way to new needs and issues, e.g. the Ukrainian family work. They have had a huge impact on the area, as evidenced by a survey they carried out of local people using the hub. Of 16 people interviewed, 8 said without the hub they would have gone to the doctors, and 3 said they would have had to resort to stealing.

***“They have done amazing work, I have been blown away at how effective OSW are.”***

## (ii) George Devlin, Trafford Community Collective (TCC)

Trafford Community Collective is a member-led organisation that supports the development of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector across Trafford by promoting a Collective and partnership approach to service development and delivery. Their role as an umbrella infrastructure type organisation is like a CVS, with a neighbourhood-based approach to working.

They have worked with OSW, and Clare the programme manager, and Ralph the co-chair, for many years. They share a localised, neighbourhood by neighbourhood approach to effective community development. George has found OSW to be a very good partner, open to developing new ways of working. Whilst they are focussed on their own community, they also engage with other areas, and have worked very effectively with local schools

They have worked well together on initiatives. For example, on a project where TCC got some funding to work with health agencies, OSW was involved in that, and in a mental health/live well service.

Since 2020 Our Sale West has been managing the Sale Community Support Hub on behalf of Trafford Council. This is one of 6 hubs established in Trafford to help residents. The hub plays a really important role as a place where various agencies, such as health visitors, can visit to reach the people they need to support. The more services that are delivered from the hub, the more people will go.

***“The more we get to know them, the more impressed we are”.***

## Priorities for the future

The 10 years of Big Local have created a solid foundation. They, with the support of the TCC and others, need to build on that. As for future partnership working, TCC would very much

like to work with OSW on developing the neighbourhood plan for Trafford. The priorities for this plan are

1. Reducing social isolation and connecting people to their community
2. Help people move more
3. Encourage a better relationship with alcohol
4. Ensure our community has better mental Health

OSW also share with TCC a desire to reduce inequalities, hence they would be ideal partners to work with in the future.

In terms of **future priorities**, they would suggest:

- Reducing health inequalities
- Improving educational outcomes
- OSW becoming an anchor organisation
- Trafford local care organisation

### **(iii) Maria Garnett, Irwell Valley Housing Association, Community Investment Manager**

Irwell Valley Housing Association (IVHA) is the main provider of social housing in the OSW area. They also have a cost-of-living support fund, and a foundation arm which has charitable status. The OSW estate was a stock transfer from Manchester City Council when it was known as the Racecourse estate and had a very poor reputation. It has gone from an estate which was a bit of a no-go area, to one where people are on a waiting list to move to.

Irwell Valley is involved with OSW in different ways. Each Big Local must have a Locally Trusted Organisation (LTO) whose key job is to manage the funding on behalf of the partnership. In addition to the LTO role they have also worked with Pip and Sam, OSW project managers, on several projects. They also manage the Sunshine Café, the location for several food related projects that OSW delivers or supports.

IVHA has got £3k from the Foundation to cover Free school meals until October 2024. However, they have no money left in the household support fund. That funding has provided 5000 meals since 2020 from the café and is now at risk.

They have found them a great partner to work with. OSW is one of IVH's Anchor organisations, and they wish they were all as good as OSW, as other anchors deliver less, and their performance is much more patchy

They acknowledge the extent of the services and activities delivered by OSW:

- They have delivered training.
- Brought in other agencies
- Tackled fuel and food poverty head on, with the food bank, fuel vouchers give out emergency white goods

- They have levered in other funds on the back of the BL money
- People now have a place to go, and feel like the support they get from the hub is support, rather than a handout

Their working relations with OSW are excellent. Clare has been the lynchpin and was instrumental in OSW becoming the Trafford emergency hub in 2020, a role which could easily have been given to someone else. They have regular hub meetings with OSW, along with other community organisations, such as churches, charities and other hubs. They are also working with OSW on the Sale West Neighbourhood Plan.

The only challenging aspect of their relationship with OSW has been around the clarity, or lack of it, of the respective roles and responsibilities of OSW and IVHA within the LTO agreement. Whilst there is a Memorandum of Understanding setting these out, this needed to be tighter and better defined. It has taken up a lot of the finance team time, and there is a sense that OSW has not always appreciated the amount of work involved. For example, as well as the Big Local funding, they have also had to manage the additional money bought in, which in the case of OSW was significant, and this has never really been factored in.

As for future working, the big one is the transfer of the lease for the Community Centre from the council to OSW (they were waiting on the results of a condition survey at the time of the interview). IVHA would be very happy to use and hire space within a refurbished centre.

#### **Priorities for the future**

- Make sure the CIO is set up properly (who for example will manage the finances of the CIO?)
- Do more of the same, maybe on a smaller scale, without Big Local funding.

#### **(iv) Louise Marsden Irwell Valley Housing Association (IVHA)**

Louise has been involved with OSW regarding consultation for IVHA's newbuild development schemes. She and her colleague Jenni act as a link between OSW and Irwell Valley about any land/development issues and queries. She has always found the team there very helpful and approachable, and very open to working closely with IVHA.

As for future relationships, they would like to work with OSW on the emerging plans for a potential refurbishment of the Sale West Community Centre.

#### **What should future priorities be for OSW**

- Providing a base at the heart of the community that is accessible and easy to use with modern facilities, which will bring more people to the area, give residents something to be proud of and create renewed focus on community activities and bringing people together.
- Continue working with younger people to introduce wider opportunities and a vision for their future

- Challenges are likely to exist around apathy or disinterest from residents, opposition to physical development, official red tape and funding pots only being available for very specific things

#### **(v) Ceris Esplen, IVHA**

IVHA has been working with OSW to support residents on one of their largest estates.

As well as working together with OSW within the community, IVHA is the locally trusted organisation, so they employ the team, administer their funds, provide HR, IT and finance support to the employees.

OSW has been an invaluable partner. They have worked effectively together on numerous projects and initiatives over the years, delivering great results for the community. OSW vision for the community is commendable and they have been effective in bringing in additional funding into the community - funding that IVHA would have been ineligible to apply for.

OSW management would perhaps benefit from a greater understanding of operating costs, (HR, IT and Finance), and of corporate responsibilities, systems and processes. More knowledge in these areas would help OSW, particularly if it becomes an incorporated entity carrying on the work of OSW and the Big Local.

OSW has worked extremely well with other agencies. They are fantastic at bringing in organisations and working with others to maximize impact in the area. This was particularly evident during the pandemic and is a key strength of the OSW team.

#### **Future priorities**

As for the future, IVHA would like to support OSW in helping people live well in their neighbourhood. Some of the pressing issues they experience in the area which they would welcome collaboration on are:

- Cost of living support.
- Employment support and opportunities.
- Litter, fly tipping and general pride in homes and the wider estate.
- Community cohesion and positive neighbour relations.

All 6 interviewees from partner organisations were asked to assess the extent to which

- It had been a positive experience working with OSW
- Whether OSW had helped our organization have a bigger impact in the area.
- Whether they would be happy to work with OSW CIO in the future
- Whether working with OSW had lived up to their initial expectations

They were asked to rank their answer on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor. **Of the 24 responses, 20 were excellent, with 4 being very good**

A report commissioned by Local Trust in 2022, 'Big Local Relationships with Local Agencies', explored how Big Local programmes across the country managed in their relationships with key agencies. A key finding of the report was that barriers to forming a good relationship were

- the time and capacity required to build lasting relationships based on trust clashing with the processes and procedures of public agencies
- the perception that Big Local partnerships lack legitimacy because of their hyperlocal nature
- the complexity of the eco-system in which they operate

OSW have clearly managed to overcome these challenges, and have built very successful relationships with Trafford Council, Trafford Community Trust and IVHA. All these organisations have been very impressed with OSW and the way they work, and are keen to work with them in future. These organisations all seem to have realised that, particularly in times of austerity and ongoing budget cuts, they need to work closely with well-functioning, effective, well-staffed organisation like OSW, led by people who live in the area.

## **6. Support from Local Trust**

Local Trust was the organisation set up in 2012 to oversee and support the delivery of the Big Local Programme in all 150 areas. They provide support to all partnerships in the form of a Big Local rep, who is commissioned to advise, support and guide partnerships and who work about 2 days a month in the area. Local Trust also set up and manage the 'Make it Happen' programme which is a consortium of partner organisations offering support to partnerships, free of charge in areas such as funding, governance, engagement and business planning. They put on a regular programme of learning and training events, held in different venues across the country and free to all Big Local partnership members. They also funded regional networks, run by local reps, that brought together partnerships from different regions to share experiences, and to learn from each other.

The Big Local team thought that, broadly, Local Trust had been very important, particularly up to when COVID-19 hit in 2020. There was a concern that when Big Local came to an official end in 2026, that level of support would be very hard to replicate, not least in terms of how it would be funded. The quality of the training was deemed to have been excellent, and with free travel and accommodation, always very accessible. Several partnership members benefited from the training, and they particularly enjoyed, and benefited from, the regional networking events as people there had similar issues and worked with many of the same partners and agencies. They were very disappointed when the regional networks were discontinued in 2022.

At the national level the partnership thought the Trust could and should have done more to raise the profile of Big Local nationally. Some recognition of a national 'brand' would have helped all the 150 individual partnerships to raise awareness amongst their own communities.

More worker events would have been well received, as the workers got a lot out of those that did happen, not least as they generally felt rather isolated in their roles. They also would have preferred more, and tighter programme monitoring. The 'light touch' in this regard was welcome in some respects, but more support and guidelines around certain areas, such as the partnership with your LTO, would have been very useful (a point echoed by IVHA, the partnership's LTO). Neither partnership nor LTO were ever clear as what a good relationship should look like.

As for the 'Make it Happen' offer, this had been confusing. They had been hoping and expecting some hands-on support, for example around project development or delivery. However, it turned out to be more enabling than doing, and too light touch to make a real difference to the performance of the partnership. Also, most of the providers were based in other parts of the country, in the south mainly. OSW have learnt that it is usually better to work with local providers as they are always there if needed in the future. However, they did access the support around communication, and this was good.

## **7. The impact of OSW and the Big Local Programme**

The key consideration when assessing the performance of a programme is the tangible impact it has on the area, i.e. to what extent have local people benefited. people who live in the area

The wider political and economic context in which OSW, along with all Big Local Programmes, has operated in has been severely challenging. For its entirety the Big Local programme has been delivered in an era of 'austerity' which has meant key partners, particularly the local council, suffering year on year cuts to budgets. This has had a detrimental impact on their ability to support the work of Big Local programmes, OSW included. Indeed, the entire third sector has had to try and survive in extremely challenging circumstances, with the knock-on effect of austerity spreading down from local councils and others unable to support third sector partners. In short, not an easy time to be delivering an area-based regeneration programme!

Despite these challenges, as set out in section 3, OSW has managed to deliver significant and successful interventions under each of the priority themes.

A comprehensive list of all projects delivered by OSW is set out in the appendix. They include some very big high-impact projects that OSW have effectively project managed, such as the redevelopment of Sale West woods which has transformed this play area for children of all ages, and their parents. The infant play area has been moved and upgraded, a picnic area has been created and additional funding has been secured for the refurbishment of the junior play area. Phoenix Gardens has been created, a beautiful community garden and



quiet space, on the site left behind from a closed down pub. OSW has put on trips to places across the north west, the community fund has given everyone with an idea that would benefit the community a chance to benefit.

There are several other projects in the list where OSW has identified a need, and then commissioned other agencies to provide much needed services and activities, all delivered from what is now a very well used Community Centre and hub. These include the CAB service, holiday activity programmes, Strictly Lunch for older adults, the weekly youth club, a sporting memories project, several exercise classes including yoga and junior boxing and an OSW Heritage project that brought residents together to use their stories, photographs and memories to build up a picture of the past.

As well as these social projects, there have been IT courses, a Careers Fair, a Job Fair, support for young entrepreneurs, and support for people into jobs.

And whilst it did not prove possible to get a new Community Centre built, the aim of the project to refurbish and sustain the existing well-used community hub on the estate, looks like it will be achieved.

### [The Sale West Emergency Hub](#)

In March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, OSW was asked by Trafford council to be one of six VCSE groups across the borough to run a Community Support Hub on their behalf. OSW became the managers of the Sale Support Hub based in Sale West supporting 134,000 residents. OSW recruited and managed volunteers who carried out shopping requests and prescription requests for those who were shielding and provided emergency food boxes for those who had no way of getting the food they needed. OSW manned the phones Mon-Fri 9am-5pm and set up a weekly hub group meeting with other VCSE groups and agencies to expand their reach and services.

OSW gained funding to cover the staff costs of all hub work. OSW was also successful in gaining funding to provide 'Wellbeing' packs for those residents who were shielding on their own and activity packs for young people from families who were struggling financially. Funding was gained later in the year to create Winter Wellbeing packs for the elderly and vulnerable.

OSW continues to run the Sale Support Hub and from September 2020 has had funding to employ a Hub coordinator and cover the necessary management costs. The Hub model created in Trafford has the support of the council to continue long term and OSW will continue to play a leading role in this.

Running the Sale Support Hub has provided OSW with the opportunity to raise its profile beyond the Big Local area and across Trafford. It has also helped them develop new

partnerships and strengthen existing ones. As such, it has laid the foundations for a successful and sustainable OSW group in Sale West after the Big Local has ended in 2025.

The impact of the hub, not least in terms of the numbers of beneficiaries, has been huge.

- Christmas food packs for school children, amounting to 2000 meals
- A total 12,100 meals provided during school holidays
- Through the Foodshare project, over 20,000 kg of food has been saved that would otherwise have gone to landfill, the equivalent of over 50,000 meals
- 30 meals a week to lonely, vulnerable and isolated residents, equating to 500 meals in 12 months.
- An average of 55 families each week benefit from the 'The Bread and Butter Thing', with each family getting 3 meals a day for a family of 4 over 5 days, equating to 70,000 meals over 12 months.

## 8. Some strengths and weaknesses

### (i) Strengths

#### Partnership working

From the outset OSW has adopted a partnership approach to delivering the Big Local Programme. This is down, in part at least, to a long-standing culture of partnership working, and resident involvement in housing and community politics. For example, the Sale West and Ashton Partnership (SWAP) had been operating since 2003, chaired by a local resident, which brought together key partners including Irwell Valley Housing Association, Trafford Borough Council, Trafford College, the Neighbourhood Police team, Health Services and local schools to work in partnership with residents. And Sale West has historically had a very active and influential Tenants and Residents Association (TARA).

This culture of partnership work clearly appears to have been carried over into the Big Local Programme and the wider work of OSW. This is evidenced in the interviews with the partner organisations in section 5. OSW have clearly earned a remarkably good reputation in a relatively short space of time as an initiative that other organisations quickly came to like and respect for the beneficial work they were doing and the impact they were having. Perhaps well summed up by 2 quotes from the stakeholder interviews:

***"They have done amazing work, I have been blown away at how effective OSW are" (Sara Salah, Deputy Chief executive, Trafford Council)***

***"The more we get to know them, the more impressed we are". (Chief Executive, Trafford Community Council)***

### **Bringing in extra resources**

The partnership has a very impressive track record of bringing other resources into the area, to supplement the funds and support available from Big Local. This has often been in the form of additional funding, with over £600,000 being brought in from other sources, more than 50% of the initial Big Local allocation. They have also been very successful in bringing in 'in kind' contributions such as the time staff members from other organisations have invested in the area. OSW has also worked hard at providing volunteering opportunities for local people, a resource that has been invaluable in maximising the impact of the programme. For example, under the environmental theme, they have had a major impact helping with the wildflower meadow, the park, Phoenix Gardens and participating in a litter picking scheme

### **A strong and consistent staff team**

All 150 Big Local Programmes were free to decide for themselves what level of paid project and programme support they needed. In the early days of Big local there was a clear preference, from the centre, towards little or no paid support being necessary, on the basis they would be driven by residents and volunteers. It quickly became clear that nearly all Big Locals were going to need some level of paid support to ensure projects were developed and delivered, and processes such as engagement, consultation and monitoring were adequately carried out.

Some programmes have opted to spend relatively little on workers, or project staff, whilst others have invested more heavily in this area. The approach of OSW has been to invest heavily in a multi skilled staff team, of usually 4 workers (although none are full time). Whilst this has meant a significant proportion of the Big Local budget has gone on staff costs, this has been offset by the success of team members in bringing in very significant funds and resources from outside the programme as set out above.

The size and strength of the staff team was almost certainly a key factor in OSW being selected to run one of the emergency hubs that were set up when COVID-19, and then the cost-of-living hit. As mentioned in section 5, the successful performing of this role has been a major factor in increasing the profile, and enhancing the reputation of OSW, which provides an excellent foundation for the new CIO.

### **A strong and stable Partnership**

It is beyond the remit of this report to explore in depth the nature and composition of the partnership, or the extent to which it has fulfilled its role. However, the continuity of leadership, and the sustained involvement of several local people across the lifetime of the partnership have been big factors in the success of the programme. The co-chairs have been involved from day 1 of the programme and both, in addition to performing their partnership duties, have also provided extensive support to the staff team, even to the extent of managing projects, such as the school conferences. Conflict has been rare, significant resident involvement has been sustained and, perhaps most importantly, key personnel such as the co-chairs and programme manager have been in their positions for several years.

Whilst attracting new members to replace those who have left has been a big challenge, particularly after the pandemic, this has been a feature in nearly all Big Local areas.

## **(ii) Weaknesses**

Inevitably, given the scale of the problems OSW were facing (made significantly worse by austerity and the pandemic), the limited resources at their disposal, and the very experimental nature and ethos of Big Local, there are areas for improvement. In common with nearly all Big local programmes there was a failure to establish a set of baselines at the start of the programme, against which the impact of the programme could be measured at the end. A lack of resources would be one reason for this, but another is the fact that resident-led partnerships are unlikely to prioritise this work, unless they are encouraged, even compelled to do so, but Local Trust in keeping with its general 'light touch' approach were not inclined to do either.

Linked to this, and again common amongst Big Local programmes across the country, is a lack of systematic monitoring of projects, or the programme overall, or what impact the programme is having. Then there is the question of whether the benefits are being spread evenly across different parts of the community; the young, older adults, families, those with disabilities etc. In OSW, again in common with other Big Local Programmes, no data was collected to measure how even the impact was of the various interventions, investments and projects.

In terms of project delivery, the one project the partnership struggled to deliver was their flagship project, the new community centre. It does seem that the huge challenge of bridging a funding gap of over £1m, once the lottery bid had failed, was always going to be insurmountable. Arguably the programme could have benefitted from this being acknowledged earlier, with a switch in focus to the option of refurbishing the existing centre happening earlier. However, this Plan B for the centre now seems firmly in place

## **9. Future priorities**

A key part of the brief for this research was to help get a clear steer, from the partnership members, partner organisations and the public, as to what the priorities for OSW should be after Big Local comes to an end in 2025.

### **For Trafford Council, the priorities were**

- Sustaining a community hub on the estate
- The cost-of-living crisis
- Continuing to deliver emergency food services from the hub

### **For Trafford Community Council**

- The priority was for OSW to work with them on helping deliver the Neighbourhood plan for the area.

### **For IVHA**

- Get the CIO set up and working effectively
- Help secure the future of a community hub on the estate
- To work with younger people
- Address the cost-of-living crisis
- Improve the environment
- Continue to provide employment support

### **The public**

For the public, the top 5 priorities were

- providing more activities and services for younger people
- events, activities to bring the community together.
- helping people with the cost-of-living crisis
- supporting a community hub
- supporting a summer activity programme

Clearly any action plan for the new CIO should reflect these priorities. Our recommendation would be that the highest priority needs to be the creation, or sustaining, of a multi-purpose community hub on the estate.

The importance for this project stems not just from the fact it is probably the biggest priority for public and stakeholder organisations, but also because it is crucial to the delivery of almost every other priority that has been identified. Without a base, a central hub, that people know of and are used to attending, many other activities and services could not be delivered. There is also a very strong sense of community in Sale West (something backed up by the responses from the public survey) and the community centre, the one hub in the area, is vital to sustaining and nourishing that.

As more people in need have started to use the hub, particularly during the Pandemic, more agencies have started to attend and run services from there, as they know people they need to target will be there. For example, a large proportion of people attending the hub for emergency food provision will also tend to need financial and/or energy advice. Also, it has been found that a high proportion are not up to date with vaccinations, or even registered with a GP practice. In some ways the centre appears to have almost turned into a community health and wellbeing hub, with the pandemic being one of the drivers of this. Health advisers now do a drop-in service from the hub.

## 10. Conclusion

OSW has had a huge impact across the Big Local area, the size and extent of which belies the relatively small amount of funding it had at its disposal. The emergency hub alone has delivered 1 million meals to the most vulnerable households in the area. Securing the future of a multi-purpose community hub, delivering a wide range of activities, services and facilities, offering something to all members of the community, is a tremendous legacy. Significant and successful projects have been delivered under each of the four priority themes and Sale Woods park, when finished, will be a fantastic play, park and recreational facility that offers something to everyone, particularly children and families.

Of all the factors listed in section 8 as to why OSW has been so successful, arguably the willingness of the staff team and the partnership to work very closely and constructively with key partner organisations, and key people within those organizations, was the most important. The extent to which these relationships have been so strong is also a testament to the willingness of those organisations, Trafford Council and IVHA, to work with OSW, something which has often *not* been the case in other areas whether the Big Local has struggled to be seen as a serious partner by established agencies.

In summary, there are at least three reasons why the new CIO is well placed to continue the work of the OSW and the Big Local Programme

- (i) It has a track record of success that has been set out, articulated and measured in this report
- (ii) The research also provides a clear steer for OSW in terms of its future priorities, many of which, such as the community hub, are already being actively pursued.
- (iii) The reputation of OSW is very high, amongst both the local community, and the organisations it will need to work with in future. Trafford Council, Trafford Community Council and IVHA are all extremely keen for OSW to carry on with the work it has been doing since 2014.

### **Contacts**

This report has been prepared by 'Your Back Yard' ([www.yourbackyard CIC](http://www.yourbackyard CIC)), on behalf of Our Sale West.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **List of all OSW projects to date (September 2024)**

#### **Environment/Community Spaces**

Apple Day events  
Creation of the Phoenix Garden (formerly site of Bechers Pub)  
Re-siting Infant playground  
Updating and improving Junior playground  
Creation of wildflower meadows  
Creation of native plant (edibles) area  
Proposed amphitheatre area in park  
Upgrading multi-use games area  
Creation of an allotment group  
Creation of a regular gardening group  
Installation of picnic benches  
Installation of chainsaw sculptures  
Firs plantation

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

Community picnics  
Family fun days  
Trips out, e.g. Bury market, Blackpool, Southport, York  
Christmas lunches for elderly and vulnerable  
Weekly Foodshare sessions  
Strictly Lunch (weekly lunches for older residents)  
Baby Club  
Support for Muay Thai and Boxing clubs  
Sponsorship for local football teams (male and female)  
Support for Northern Gems Morris Dancing troupe  
Bike pod established  
Health walks  
Support for Wellbeing Weekdays classes  
'Sporting Memories' sessions  
Drop in sessions with nurses  
Smoking Cessation project  
Regular Citizens Advice sessions  
Mental Health First Aid course  
Multicultural festival  
Heritage project  
Parkrun  
Established Community Health Panel  
Volunteer Community Driver pilot scheme  
The Bread and Butter Thing food scheme  
ESOL drop-in sessions  
'Man with a Pan' cookery for men

### **Youth**

Commissioning of outside organisations to run regular youth activities  
Youth Club re-instated  
Youth Leadership training for local residents  
T-shirt design sessions (Just Add)  
Summer holiday fun sessions, including lunch  
Half Term Activities  
School Council Conference (2018)  
Schools Climate Crisis Conference (2022)  
Schools Community Conference (2024)  
Specific project work with local schools, e.g. Careers Fair  
Support for Youth Council  
Tutoring scheme  
School competitions  
Funded various school projects

### **Employment and Training**

Provision of Trafford College courses in IT, gardening, First Aid, Food Hygiene  
Community Grants programme  
Jobs Fair (with Trafford Council)  
Working with UnLtd to support local budding entrepreneurs, e.g. Cheeky Monkeys pre-school  
Careers Fair (with Ashton-on-Mersey High School)  
Community Information Hub  
Working Wardrobe  
CSCS card courses  
First Aid at work for team members  
DWP appointments for residents  
Trafford Jobs Club

### **General**

Annual General Meetings  
Newsletters  
Our Sale West Facebook page/website  
Established Community Information Hub  
Noticeboards and signs  
Our Sale West van  
Transition to Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)  
Election Day consultations  
'Away Day' training for partnership board  
Plans to lease and run future Community Hub based in the Youth Centre  
Leading Sale Support Hub