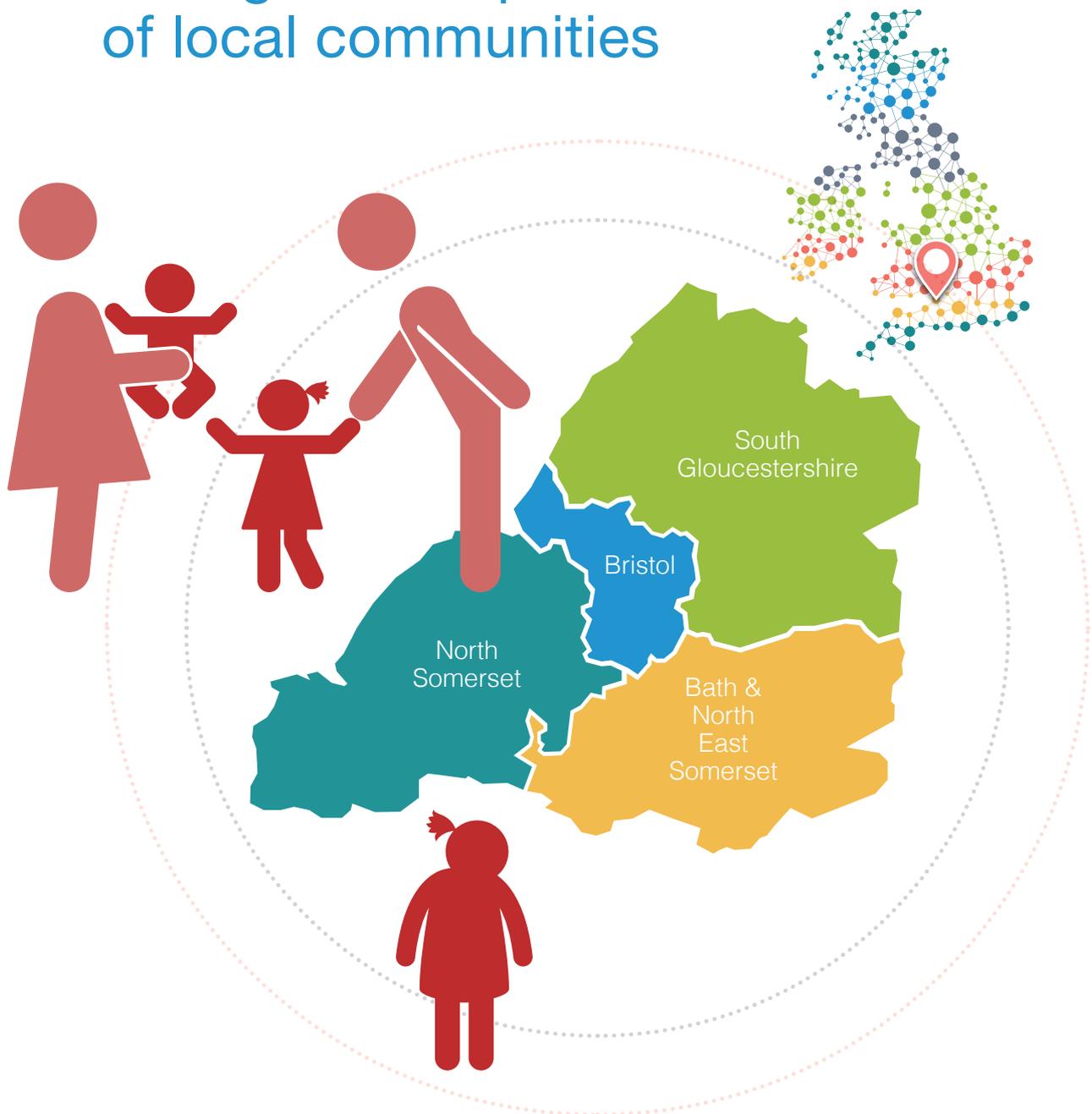


VITAL SIGNS 2019

Taking the temperature
of local communities



Introduction

People and communities across the West of England are doing a huge amount of great work to tackle problems and make their communities better places to live. These groups, often working under-the-radar through the goodwill of committed volunteers, tackle society's toughest issues from supporting young families and providing activities and motivation for young people, to bringing communities together to tackle loneliness and isolation.

There are thousands of groups like this across our area; they rarely make the headlines but they can, and do, transform communities, often operating on a shoestring. The smallest organisations are often least able to garner the support of private philanthropy so Quartet Community Foundation (Quartet) bridges the gap, connecting people who care with causes that matter.

To have an impact philanthropy needs to be based on clear evidence, so we study data and trends and share what we learn widely. This 2019 Vital Signs report shows improvements on some issues compared to our 2016 report – for example a reduction in rural fuel poverty – but other problems are growing.

The clearest finding of this year's report is that our areas are calling out for investment in services for children and young people, which have been under huge strain, impacting on the next generation unfairly and limiting their life chances. Responses to our community survey identified this as a critical issue repeatedly, in all four local authority areas we serve.

There is wide scope for philanthropy to make a difference here, supporting our young people through challenging times in the ways that young people need and want.

“Lack of youth services, lack of support for children with special needs, homelessness and inadequate mental health services now will impact on the whole community in the future.”

Resident, North Somerset

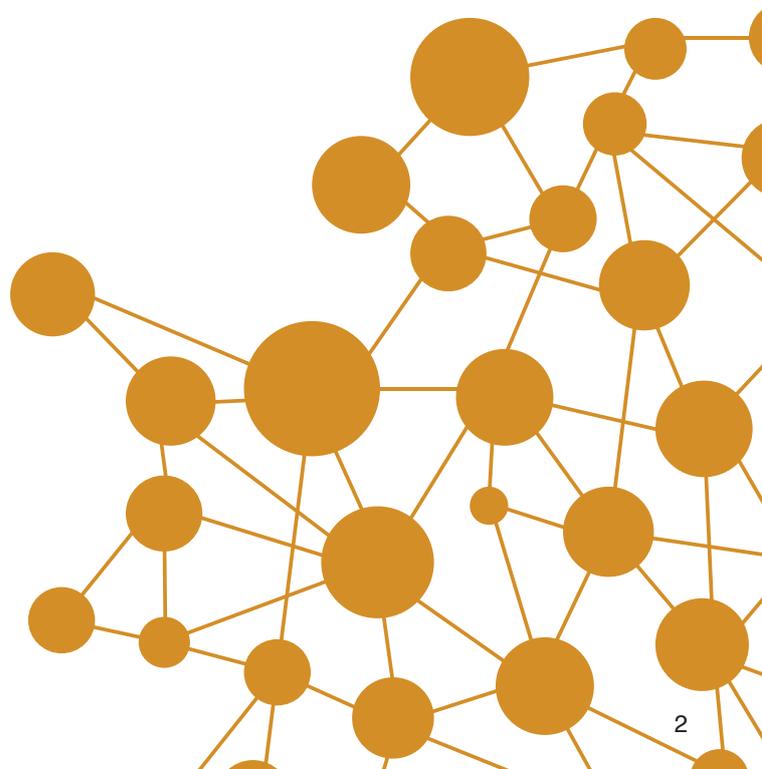
The environment in which charities operate has fundamentally changed with less funding available and more competition too. Community groups have been telling us what they need, and we have been working with our fund holders and collaborating with other funders to respond effectively, making the best use of limited philanthropic resources. Philanthropy is proactively helping many people here.

Thanks to the generosity of local people and organisations who give through Quartet, last year we gave £3.5 million in grants to help small local causes. We have also shifted towards more strategic support, funding organisations that want or need to change the way they work and supporting long-term change. This is vital if we are not to lose the groups that underpin so much support for local people.

We hope you will be inspired by the findings of this report and our recommendations on page 26 to join us and others in a coordinated effort to support those people who have been shut out of the many opportunities our region has to offer.

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Fairness

The principle of fairness is fundamental to our values but a new measure shows that 14.3 million people in our country are living in poverty. This new measure devised by the Social Metrics Commission takes into account family assets like savings, as well as inescapable costs like childcare. The number of families who are working but still in poverty has risen: two-thirds of the children who are in poverty live in a family where someone is working. The cost of living is rising beyond people's wages. Of the people classed as in poverty, two in ten are only just below the poverty line, where relatively small interventions could support them to escape the poverty trap.

Locally, the percentage of children living in poverty (before housing costs are taken into account) increased on the previous year in B&NES, Bristol and North Somerset. Latest figures show a rise in the proportion of adults estimated to be struggling with payments and debt, nationally and in each of our four local authority areas.

Your Voices

“Until my son started school, I never realised how much child poverty was right on my doorstep.”

Resident, Bristol

Vital Statistics

The Trussell Trust reports a **19%** rise in UK foodbank use in 2018-19 on the previous year.



Nearly half (**48%**) of the people living in poverty are in families where one family member has a disability.

There is a worrying lack of face-to-face debt advice services in B&NES, Bristol and especially South Gloucestershire. In South Gloucestershire, only a quarter of the estimated need is currently being met.



Available supply of face-to-face debt advice as percentage of demand



On average, people in all four local authorities think that inequality is increasing in their area. Residents in Bristol think that inequality is increasing more than residents in Bath and North East Somerset do.



Vital Statistics

After housing costs, at least **1** child in **5** lives in poverty in each of our areas.



Percentage of children living in poverty 2017-18

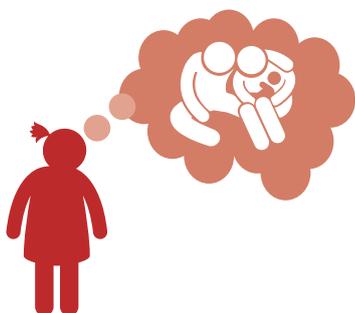
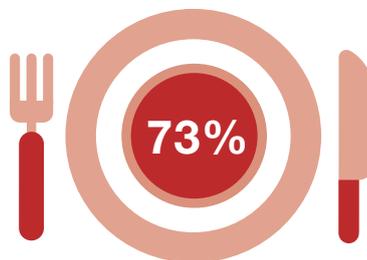
Bath and North East Somerset	19%
Bristol	27%
North Somerset	22%
South Gloucestershire	20%



Children who have been in care have significantly worse outcomes than their peers. There were **1,245** children in care in the West of England in 2018. Bristol's rate is above average but has reduced significantly, from **84** per **10,000** children, to **69** per **10,000** (compared with the England average of **64**) due to a focus on early intervention.

There were **19,197** children receiving free school meals in the West of England in 2018.

Holiday hunger is a growing issue: **73%** of parents on low incomes say they can't always afford to feed their children during the school holidays.



Living with poverty and disadvantage is a risk factor that children will experience adverse childhood experiences, shown to impact on their future health, education and other life outcomes.

Vital Initiatives

Helping people on low incomes get the advice they need

A lack of local advice services can leave vulnerable residents struggling, with escalating problems that become more damaging with time. Spotting a gap in services, the North Bristol Advice Centre has recently received a grant of £43,300 from the Henry Smith Charity, which we support locally, towards the running costs of its Community Advice Service. This project supports people in North Bristol on low incomes – many of whom are older people – to access the financial help they are entitled to and overcome any problem debt they may have.

The new service continues the home-based support we highlighted in our 2016 Vital Signs report, but the project has now evolved to include new outreach and digital inclusion drop-in services. This change helps North Bristol Advice Service to meet new needs and reach the people who need their help the most. Being rooted locally means that we often support organisations over many years as they develop, with core or project funding as and when needed.

Vital Steps

Prioritise projects that tackle the root cause of a problem before it escalates.

Overall, levels of crime are stable nationally but theft and certain types of violent crimes are increasing, including crimes involving knives. Crime rates are high in Bristol and in pockets across our region. The total number of recorded offences has risen to 115 offences per 1,000 people in Bristol, up from 102 since our 2016 report. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is widespread across the West of England; there are fears that our young people are getting caught up in behaviours that will have a negative effect on their futures and their communities.

In general, people feel that neighbourhoods are getting slightly worse. Responses to our survey indicate that people don't feel positive that the police are able to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour locally. Responses to our survey reflect an awareness of the reduction in resources for policing locally; from 2010-19, Avon & Somerset Police force had an overall funding decrease of 17%.

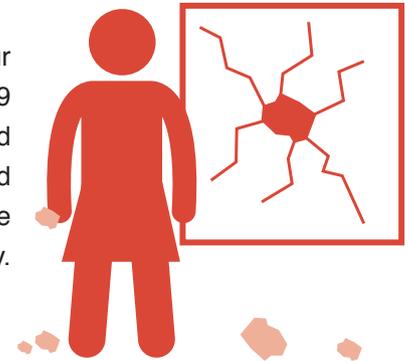
Your Voices

“A lot needs to be done to make this area a better place to live - it's filthy, unsafe and a pretty grim place to bring up children.”

Resident, B&NES

Vital Statistics

Rates of anti-social behaviour from June 2018 to May 2019 place areas of central and south Bristol, central Bath and Weston-super-Mare in the worst **1%** in the country.



Areas of Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead have ASB rates placing them in the worst **20%** in the country, as do areas of Thornbury North, Patchway, Filton, Easter Compton and Yate in South Gloucestershire. In B&NES similar rates are seen in Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Keynsham and Lyncombe.

We asked people if fear of crime affects their day-to-day life: **57%** disagreed or strongly disagreed but nearly **1 in 5** agreed that fear of crime does affect their daily lives.



Vital Statistics

Nationally, **14%** of crimes are flagged as linked to domestic abuse. There have been **60,773** recorded incidents of domestic abuse in the West of England in the last three years, with rising numbers in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.



Hate crimes are rising across the West of England. As in previous years, the majority - **62%** - of hate crimes in 2017-18 were racially motivated. **10%** were motivated by sexual orientation.

Hate crime recorded by police in the West of England

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Bath and North East Somerset	232	297	336
Bristol	1432	1980	1930
North Somerset	178	275	311
South Gloucestershire	271	328	360
West of England total	2113	2880	2937

Vital Initiatives

Tackling growing anti-social behaviour in Bath city centre

Bath Youth Partnership is a new collaboration between local youth work organisations in Bath in response to a lack of youth provision in the city centre. Some young people have increasingly been hanging around the centre with nowhere to go, engaging in anti-social behaviour, drinking and taking drugs.

Although Bath does not have a strong gang culture, a very small number of young people have been known to carry weapons, and youth workers are keen to ensure that young people are supported early to make positive choices. A grant of £10,000 from our Emerging Needs Affecting Children & Young People Grant Programme is supporting two youth workers to go into the streets and engage with these young people in the places they feel safe. Workers will develop positive relationships with young people and, crucially, listen to their needs so that future youth work delivered by Bath Youth Partnership will be informed by what young people say they want.

Vital Steps

Projects that are guided by the needs and wishes of the people they support are more likely to be successful and to make a lasting difference.

Housing and homelessness

In 2016 we reported that housing and homelessness was the main area where concerted action was needed, with residents concerned about rising levels of homelessness and the high cost of housing. Three years on, housing and homelessness remains a critical issue in our area. House prices are extremely high and home-ownership is out of reach for many local people. There is a critical shortage of affordable housing with not enough homes to meet growing demands.

Latest figures on homelessness were gathered before the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in 2018. This places a new duty on councils in England to offer prevention and signposting services as a first step to people who go to their council for help with homelessness, before they are assessed for other eligibility or priority criteria. The impact this legislation has had on homelessness in our local authority areas will be seen in homelessness figures from 2019 onwards.

Vital Statistics

Statutory homelessness rate 2017-18

	Rate per 1,000 households
Bath and North East Somerset	1.09
Bristol	3.70
North Somerset	1.37
South Gloucestershire	1.27
England	2.41

Nationally, house prices have risen by **76%** in the last 25 years. An affordability gap measures the difference between the average house prices in an area and the amount a person earning an average salary in the area could borrow to buy an 'entry level' house.

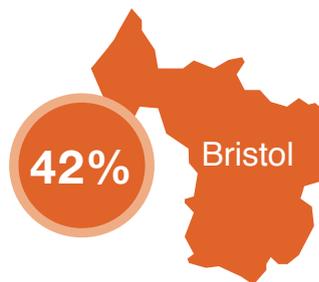
No wards in Bristol are currently affordable on this measure, and only one ward in B&NES is. Of the least affordable West of England wards, 8 out of 10 are in B&NES.



Your Voices

“Homelessness has increased like everywhere else and people feel powerless to help.”

Resident, Bristol



Of people we surveyed, **42%** feel there is not enough being done to tackle homelessness in their area. Residents of Bristol were significantly more likely to feel this.

Analysis of rental costs in the West of England Combined Authority (Bristol, B&NES and South Gloucestershire) shows that medium-level monthly rents here are only affordable for the highest-earning **20%** of residents.



Vital Statistics

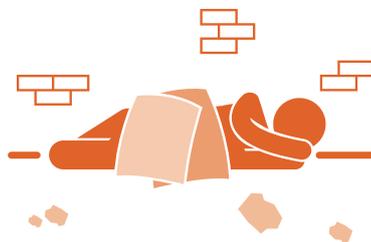
Being asked to leave by a parent or other is the main reason for young people becoming homeless.

A quarter of young homeless people are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, many of whom cite their sexuality as a major reason they were made homeless.



Young people are missing out on critical advice that could help them manage finances and housing. A recent report on Bristol showed that young people are not using services such as Citizens Advice because they don't see these services as aimed at them.

In 2017-18, **2,028** young people aged 16-24 in the West of England presented to their council as homeless or at risk of homelessness. Only **219** of these were accepted as homeless, and **855** were offered support to prevent them becoming homeless.



Vital Initiatives

Working with vulnerable young people to build confidence

1625 Independent People (1625ip) works with homeless young people in Bristol and South Gloucestershire aged 16 to 25, offering supported housing and a range of other advice and support services. When young people come to 1625ip's services, they are often lonely, isolated and have no-one else to turn to. Without positive experiences it is difficult for them to start making positive choices.

In 2017 the group wanted to establish new community and peer mentoring services for vulnerable young people. The project's aim was to help young people grow in confidence and skills, access opportunities for reaching their employment, education or training goals, and to develop positive relationships, setting them up for bright futures. Working with two of our fund holders, we offered the group a grant of £10,000 per year for three years towards this work. So far the project is a huge success and 1625ip tells us that offering multi-year funding has enabled them to develop the project more strategically to align with other areas of their work.

Vital Steps

Increasingly groups tell us that what they need is larger grants and multi-year funding, to provide security and time to ensure success.

There are wide health inequalities in our region, with very different outcomes for residents depending on their location and circumstances. Our region shows worrying levels of ill health on key indicators like cancer, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and emergency hospital admissions relating to alcohol use. For the latter, North Somerset, Bristol and Bath all contain areas with levels in the worst 5% in the country.

An ageing and growing population is placing strain on health services which are already overstretched. Helping people to become and stay healthy early on forms a key part of the plans of B&NES and Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and health services. With very strict budgets in place as health services attempt to reduce financial deficits, this is an area where philanthropy can add huge value. This is particularly true for early support with mental health and wellbeing, especially for our young people, which many people across our area identified as their key priority.

Your Voices

“If my community had £10,000 I would want prevention support for children and young people’s mental health.”

Resident, North Somerset

Vital Statistics

Life expectancy inequalities have improved among women in B&NES and men in South Gloucestershire, but life expectancy inequalities in North Somerset have increased. For women there, the life expectancy gap has increased to nearly nine years. There is a nearly ten-year difference in the life expectancies of men in North Somerset.



Incidence of cancer is very high locally, with large swathes of the West of England having levels in the worst **40%** nationally. Areas of Hartcliffe, Avonmouth, Southmead, Hillfields, Patchway, Twerton/Whiteway and Weston-super-Mare have levels which place them in the worst **5%** nationally.

The number of adults with depression has been rising year on year in all our local authority areas, with rates well above average in Bristol and North Somerset. Nearly **12%** of registered patients in North Somerset are diagnosed with depression.



Three-quarters of people in each of our local authority areas think there is not enough mental health support available in their area.

South Gloucestershire, B&NES and North Somerset have areas with very high proportions of residents with asthma, among the highest **10%** in the country.



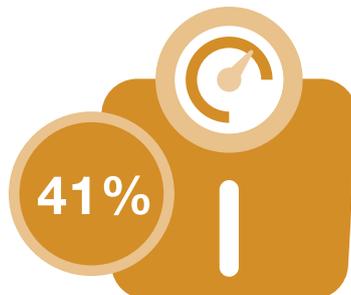
Vital Statistics

Latest government research shows that 1 in every 8 **(13%)** children and young people aged 5-19 have a mental health disorder.



Nationally, sugar makes up around **14%** of the daily diet of children and young people aged 4-18, nearly three times the recommended maximum of **5%**. The cost to the NHS of Type 2 Diabetes is around £12bn a year.

The proportion of obese and overweight children has been rising in Bristol and South Gloucestershire, but rates in North Somerset and B&NES have been reducing. Despite this, rates are far too high and will have huge health implications for children in future. In Hartcliffe & Witherwood, **41.4%** of 10-11 years olds are overweight.



Overweight & obese young people at age 10-11

	% of children
Bath and North East Somerset	25.1
Bristol	34.5
North Somerset	26.9
South Gloucestershire	30.5
England	34.3

Vital Initiatives

Intervening early on mental health

Levels of recorded depression in Clevedon are very high at around 14%. This places the area in the worst 20% of areas nationally on this measure.

Following a successful pilot, Clevedon YMCA and Clevedon School have developed a strategy to carry out early intervention work with the pupils at the school, to build young people's resilience and good mental health. This academic year, thanks to a grant of £5,000 from one of our fund holders, all of the pupils at Clevedon School will receive mental health lessons. Lessons will focus on giving young people the strategies and tools to help themselves to develop good mental health. This project is a great example of collaboration between local organisations to improve local communities.

Vital Steps

Support partnership working: it takes time and resource, but often adds huge value by bringing out the strengths of each organisation.

Strong communities

The strength of a community is a difficult thing to define; it relates to how engaged and connected people feel with their communities, how community assets are used and how accessible they are. Feeling supported where we live is a crucial ingredient of wellbeing but there are many people who report feeling isolated and disengaged. Research by Age UK estimates that by 2025, loneliness among the over 55s will have risen to 2 million, a rise of nearly 50% on ten years ago.

Communities across the West of England are doing a huge amount of great work, often under-the-radar and carried out by committed volunteers. As local authorities struggle with the cost of maintaining local assets like community centres and parks, it becomes more important that local groups are helped to run vital services and maintain community spaces. On average, over 4,000 publicly-owned community buildings and spaces are sold off by councils in England each year. These assets can be taken on by community groups but they often need additional resources, expertise and long-term support to help them to do this.

Your Voices

“If I had £10,000 I would repair the community building we operate in which is not fit for purpose. We are 90% led by volunteers facing very challenging circumstances.”

Resident, Bristol

Vital Statistics

72% of people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I feel I belong to my neighbourhood.’ Responses in B&NES were significantly more positive than responses from Bristol.



We asked people in the West of England if they see friends and family as much as they’d like to: **55%** said yes, but **45%** said no. More than half (**51%**) in South Gloucestershire said no.

Our community spaces are at risk. Over the three years from 2015-18 our communities lost **173** public spaces.



Nationally, **38%** of people say they volunteer at least once a year. Locally, volunteering rates seem to be high, with older people and people with a disability more likely to donate time to local community and voluntary groups.

We asked people if they feel they can influence decisions that affect their local area. The average response was ‘sometimes’, a positive response overall. There were no significant differences between our four areas, although wider analysis suggests that people in more rural areas are more likely to report not feeling able to influence decisions.



Vital Statistics

Of 16-24 year olds, **40%** feel lonely often or very often – a higher proportion than any other age group.



85% of young disabled adults (aged 18-34 years old) report feeling lonely.

1 in 4 (**24%**) young people aged 16-24 volunteer once a month or more.



In the areas of greatest need in Bristol, **13%** of families with children up to age 5 aren't accessing children's centre services.

Vital Initiatives

A new heart for Hillfields

In 2018 we granted Hillfields Family and Community Trust a capacity-building grant of £5,000. The funding was to help them manage the final stages of their community asset transfer of Hillfields Community Hub from Bristol City Council. It also provided for a new business plan and training for the group's trustees on their roles and responsibilities. These kinds of projects rarely make headlines, but they can transform local communities.

The hard work and success of the Hillfields Family and Community Trust team led to a further £20,000 grant from a group of local philanthropists working in partnership with us. Run and led by local residents of Hillfields, an often-overlooked area of East Bristol, the project has gone from strength to strength. Hillfields now has a vibrant community hub, and the group has a plan to develop social housing there that will help to make the project sustainable into the future.

Vital Steps

Offer capacity-building grants: they rarely sound very exciting but they lead to exciting things, and they are what groups tell us they most need.

Work and local economy

The West of England has a strong economy, currently worth £33 billion. In mid-2019, the South West had the highest employment rate and lowest unemployment rate in the UK. All of our local authority areas have an unemployment rate below the national average. This masks wide variation at ward level, however, with 7.2% of residents in Weston-super-Mare Central looking for work compared with only 0.1% in Gordano Valley - the highest and lowest rates in the West of England, both in North Somerset. Job density is very variable across the region too; many areas have fewer jobs than people, typically in the fringes of urban zones but also in small towns and rural areas.

Those who are working report a decent work/life balance. But as we stated in our report three years ago, there remain vast differences in the opportunities available for residents of our different communities. Often, it is small barriers that need to be overcome – transport, confidence, aspirations, culture shifts – that are the key to unlocking new opportunities for people who have been left out.

Your Voices

“My community is friendly, giving, supportive, despite frequent struggle for work and often low income.”

Resident, Bristol

Vital Statistics

Of the UK's largest companies, **75%** have offices in the West of England.



39%



We asked people, ‘over the last 12 months, how often have you worked in your free time to meet work demands?’ and **39%** said daily or several times a week.

15% of residents we asked said they did not know where to get information, advice and guidance about employment and training (but **64%** did).



The employment rate of people with a disability remains low, with only **49%** of disabled people employed compared with **81%** of people with no disability in 2017. On average, people with a disability earn **15%** less than people without a disability.

Rates of poverty among households with a Black or Asian head of household are much higher than in White households (**46%** and **37%**, compared with **19%**).



Vital Statistics



The proportion of 16-17 year olds participating in education or training is consistently above average in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. In Bristol, all other ethnic groups have a higher participation rate than White young people (**88.5%**).

In the West of England, 35 wards have higher than average rates of youth unemployment. North Somerset has the highest rates overall, at **3.8%** of 18-24 years olds out of work, compared with **3.6%** for England. The rate of youth unemployment in parts of Weston-super-Mare (**10.8%**) places it in the bottom **5%** in the country.



Research shows that when done well, mentoring schemes can have a positive impact on young people's attainment, and social and emotional growth, especially for vulnerable young people.



Vital Initiatives

Giving young people with special needs work opportunities

Three Ways School in Bath is a school for pupils with a diverse range of Special Educational Needs. Alongside its curriculum, the school has developed an innovative scheme to help pupils develop their skills and confidence for entering the workplace: it has an onsite café, 3 Café Kitchen, at which pupils can do work experience placements overseen by the café staff.

The school's research has shown that this type of intervention early on can help pupils to achieve the best possible future outcomes in the workplace. With school budgets extremely tight, last year we supported Three Ways School with a grant of £2,450 to enable 25 young people doing work experience at the café to achieve a Basic Food Hygiene NVQ qualification, alongside additional training for staff. One of the students has since gone on to gain work experience outside the school in a hotel, which would not have been possible without this qualification and the confidence and experience gained from the 3 Café Kitchen placement.

Vital Steps

Prioritise projects which work to remove the barriers people face to accessing opportunities.

Learning and education

Opportunities for learning and education vary hugely across our region. Some residents achieve fantastic results while for others there are barriers to fulfilling their potential. Disparities start early: the percentage of children with free school meal status achieving a good level of development at the end of reception is markedly below the percentage for children overall. This indicates that the causes and effects of living in low income households are already having an adverse impact on children by the age of 5. We see worrying trends later on, too, in the rate of children being excluded from school, particularly in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

The barriers to a person achieving their potential are sometimes easily overcome with additional support, guidance and signposting. There is an important role for philanthropists to play in complementing statutory services, adding value and supporting those at the margins to access and make full use of the opportunities that are available in our region.

Your Voices

“We need to be concentrating on helping our young people to gain and improve their skills, confidence and health.”

Resident, North Somerset

Vital Statistics



All of our areas score below average for the percentage of children with free school meal status achieving a good level of development at the end of reception, although trends show a general improvement. B&NES is doing worst: less than half (**48%**) of children age 5 with free school meal status achieve a good level of development here.

The latest figures show that across South Bristol only **15.7%** of young people went on to higher education, compared with the national average of **35.5%**. A University of Bristol study has shown that, while participation in Windmill Hill (**21.3%**) and Southville (**27.5%**) is higher, elsewhere participation is much lower (**6.6%** in Filwood, **8.0%** in Whitchurch Park, **8.6%** in Hartcliffe).



In line with national trends, the number of secondary-school aged children facing fixed-period exclusion from school has increased in all areas.

Secondary school fixed-period exclusions (state-funded schools): rate per 100 pupils

	2016-17	2017-18
Bath and North East Somerset	9.7	11.0
Bristol	18.0	18.3
North Somerset	6.3	10.4
South Gloucestershire	11.8	15.0
England	9.4	10.1

Vital Statistics

Pupils who have been excluded are likely to be already disadvantaged, but once they have been excluded the chance of their lives taking other negative turns increases. An estimated **63%** of adults in prison in the UK were excluded from school.



Nearly 1 in 5 (**17.5%**) of the people we asked feel they need to develop their computer skills. There is increasing risk of digital exclusion as more and more day-to-day services like payments, banking and benefits, are conducted online.

For the first time, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) has been given the budget of **£14.7m** for adult education across Bristol, B&NES and South Gloucestershire. The hope is that WECA will be in a good position to match education and skills training with the needs of our local people and businesses.



Vital Initiatives

Project boosts early language development

The Bourne Family Project in Kingswood, South Gloucestershire, supports children and families through play therapy for children, counselling for adults and a range of courses for families. Through their existing services they identified a need for supporting families with speech and language development and parent-child communication. Many local families are living with disadvantages that can negatively affect children's development. Parents are often unaware of small changes that can significantly improve their child's early development, and by extension, their life chances.

The Creating Communicators project was the response, offering one-to-one speech therapy to children under 6 alongside support for parents to understand and develop their child's communication skills. Funded with a Quartet grant of £3,624, the pilot project is working well, with parents reporting that they feel better equipped to help with their children's speech and language development and that this is having a positive effect on children's wellbeing and confidence.

Vital Steps

Be prepared to take risks by funding pilot and start-up projects since many funders are too risk averse to do so.

Arts, culture and heritage

The West of England has a vibrant arts, culture and heritage sector. In our first Vital Signs report we highlighted the strength of the creative industries in Bristol and Bath, our world-class heritage sites and the fantastic work of many small, local arts organisations that make creative expression accessible to all. We reported barriers to accessing the arts for some groups, and a struggle for secure funding in a sector adjusting to a decline in statutory support.

Today, many arts-based organisations have successfully changed their funding models to a more diverse mix of grants, donations and sales. Individual giving to the arts has increased dramatically and this support has been vital. There is a fear however that the smallest organisations have been the least able to garner the support of private philanthropy. More is needed to evidence the value of arts and creativity so that it is seen as essential to wellbeing and not just a nice-to-have. There remains work to do to ensure that the arts and creativity are accessible to all, at all levels.

Your Voices

“If I had £10,000 I’d put it into our community arts centre. I’d spend another £10,000 on bringing even more amazing artists to share their work with the residents of Hartcliffe & Withywood.”

Resident, Bristol

Vital Statistics



In 2016 we reported a lack of participation in arts among people with a disability. The national Taking Part Survey shows that in 2017-18 participation in arts activities overall for people with a disability has increased to **76%**, the highest figure recorded.

Participation in arts and heritage activities remains lower among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. The exception to this is the use of public libraries, which is much higher among these groups (**49%** compared with **33%** for the White British population).



In the West of England, **1 in 10** people say they never take part in cultural events. Most people report participation at least or less than once a month, but responses were significantly less positive in South Gloucestershire than elsewhere.

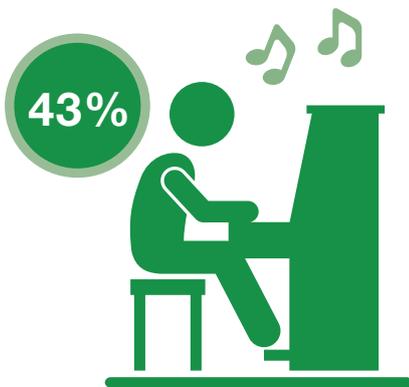
Overall people are satisfied (**68%** are fairly or very satisfied) with the range and quality of events in their area, suggesting other barriers to more regular participation such as time, money or social factors.



Vital Statistics

Nationally, **96%** of children aged 5-15 took part in arts or cultural activities last year but only **58%** visited a museum.

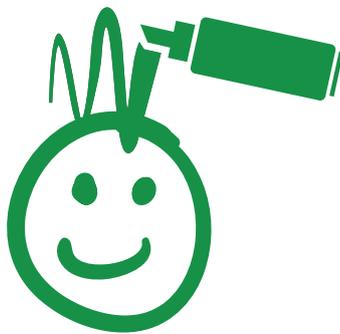
58%



43%

16-24 year olds are more likely to report having spent time doing a creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or a craft than the general population (**43%** compared with **35%**).

Research shows that engaging in arts-based activities has a positive impact on the resilience and wellbeing of children and young people, including building self-confidence and their ability to form positive relationships.



Vital Initiatives

Making the arts accessible to people in South Gloucestershire

In our 2016 Vital Signs report we highlighted the lack of arts provision in South Gloucestershire. Pound Arts run a range of arts events including the Rural Arts South Gloucestershire touring programme (RASG) which puts on high quality performing arts events in rural locations, with the performances chosen by communities themselves. The RASG model takes arts to people where they live, broadening life experiences, and also develops volunteers from local communities to host and market performances. A percentage of the box office takings are retained by communities to help support the community centres or other local venues where performances take place.

With reductions in local authority funding available for the arts, philanthropy has an increasing role in helping organisations to leverage additional funding for arts activities. Arts Council England funding is often contingent on local match funding. While the group plans to increase income through ticket sales, a grant of £3,000 from one of our fund holders enabled Pound Arts to unlock the Arts Council England funding on which the project currently relies.

Vital Steps

Match funding is a great way for philanthropy to help groups bring in additional support from other sources.

Rural issues

On average in England, 17% of people live in rural areas, but in Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset, more than a third of people do. The West of England's rural areas are beautiful, productive and highly valued, but it can be hard to live in rural areas. A lack of transport, services, higher prices and an ageing population bring huge challenges.

Many rural areas lack community spaces where people can come together; loneliness and isolation among older people are on the rise. A wealth of local initiatives have sprung up to combat this, such as community transport schemes and local lunch clubs. These initiatives are often small and volunteer-led, and volunteers don't always have the time or expertise to develop secure funding streams for these essential services. Philanthropy can do rural communities a huge service by prioritising secure funding for local initiatives which improve people's lives, especially for young people, people on low incomes, people with disabilities and the elderly, who are the most likely to be isolated in a rural setting.

Your Voices

"It is a very isolating place for those with mental health issues and the lack of things for teens to do must contribute to drug and alcohol abuse. We need proper buses for them to get to Bristol."

Resident, B&NES

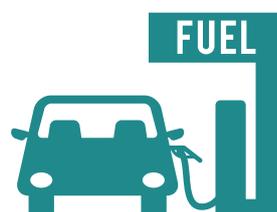
Vital Statistics

As expected, residents of our more rural areas are more likely to have to commute to work by car rather than more environmentally friendly and healthy alternatives. In Bristol **52%** of people report walking or cycling to work, compared with just **16%** in B&NES, **15%** in South Gloucestershire and **13%** in North Somerset.



Our rural populations are getting older. Now one in four (**24%**) residents are aged over 65. The number of over 65s living in rural areas increased by **37%** from 2001 to 2015, compared with **17%** in urban areas.

Fuel poverty in rural areas has reduced: in 2018, **10%** of rural households were in fuel poverty compared with **11%** of urban households, the first time that rural fuel poverty has been lower than urban.



Households in very rural areas spend on average £132 per week on transport, compared with £74 in urban areas.

Vital Statistics

The latest rural poverty statistics show that after housing costs, **24%** of children living in rural areas are living in relative poverty.



Nationally, only **8%** of homes in rural areas are affordable, compared with **20%** of homes in urban areas. This is likely to contribute to the depopulation of rural areas as young people are forced to move to areas they can afford.

Analysis shows that young people living in rural areas display more risk-taking behaviours, including alcohol use and smoking.



Vital Initiatives

Reaching elderly people in need in rural areas

Wellow is a remote village in Bath and North East Somerset with no public transport and 104 elderly people living there, many without cars. Wellow Village Shop Association, run by 30 volunteers and two part-time staff, serves as a community hub as well as supplying much needed provisions.

The group made a simple request to Quartet for items that would enable them to provide hot drinks and chairs at the shop to encourage older people to stay and chat to volunteers, reducing the sense of isolation and building community cohesion. Although a small amount – £1,530 – the grant will make a considerable difference to isolated elderly people in the village. This will be especially true during winter months when the village can be cut off by snow. Around half of the grant costs are to make sure the shop can be warm enough for older people to sit comfortably in. This simple project is a great example of community action meeting local needs, and how philanthropy can help transform communities.

Vital Steps

Most community groups have a great deal of expertise about their local area; trust groups' knowledge of what local people need.

Environment

Bristol is the 'greenest' city in England, with 29% of land designated as green space, and the West of England is home to some of the most beautiful countryside in the UK. A focus on the environment is increasingly mainstream, with fears around climate change, pollution and food security gaining interest nationally and locally. In 2018 Bristol was the first UK city to declare a climate emergency. Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils, as well as the West of England Combined Authority, have all since followed suit and stated their commitment to reducing global warming. The combined carbon reduction target for the West of England is a 50% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2035.

We value our natural spaces very highly but some residents do not benefit from accessing the natural environment as regularly as others. Philanthropy can support initiatives around inclusion, education and access to help the benefits of the natural environment reach everyone.

Your Voices

“To improve my community I’d spend more money on green space as it is super important for people to access quality green space and nature for health and wellbeing.”

Resident, Bristol

Vital Statistics

Large areas of Bristol and South Gloucestershire score poorly on measures of air quality, with levels among the worst **40%** in the country. Residents in all areas think air quality and pollution are a problem, particularly in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.



When asked, “what is the best thing about living in your community”, **1 in 3** local people said the environment and green spaces. Respondents from Bristol feel significantly less positive about the quality of parks and green spaces than our other local authority areas.

Three of our local authority areas are in the top ten performing areas nationally on measures around sustainability – Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. This score includes indicators around recycling, renewable energy, energy consumption and land use.



There were **13,198** incidents of fly-tipping in the West of England in 2017-18, with more than 8,000 of these in Bristol.

Vital Statistics

A recent YouGov poll shows that concern about the environment is higher than ever. It is highest among young people aged 18-24, **45%** of whom place it as one of the UK's most pressing concerns.



There is growing evidence that time spent in natural environments has a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits. As well as an overall reduction in stress and improvement in mood, it has also been shown to improve concentration and reduce the symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children.

In Bristol, the percentage of people accessing parks and green spaces at least once a week is lowest among people with a disability (**31%**) and Black and Minority Ethnic groups (**40%**). Among 16-24 year olds, it matches the Bristol average at around **50%**.



Vital Initiatives

Boosting local food production

Our health, happiness and the environment are all linked. Bristol Food Producers is a producer-led partnership of independent growers, farmers, retailers, restaurants and distributors. Members share the common aim of upscaling local food production in and around Bristol, flooding Bristol's businesses with healthy, locally-produced, ecologically-friendly food.

A grant of £5,000 from our fund holders is supporting this emerging group to take its next steps. First, a training hub will help a new generation of young and new producers to pursue a career in small-scale agriculture. They will encourage people to set up new enterprises and support these enterprises to become as successful as possible by providing mentoring from experienced businesses and routes to market through a new vegetable co-op. The group is working closely with other local organisations and Bristol City Council to ensure that this wider change can occur. The impact of this small grant could be very large, supporting greater food security for Bristol in uncertain times, encouraging a connection with the natural environment through food growing, and improving local people's health.

Vital Steps

Be ambitious. By working together we can achieve the wider change we want to see for our communities.

Your Voices – our community survey

In 2019 with the support of University of Bristol Q-Step student interns, Lucy Coxon and Sophie Price, we ran a community survey to find out how local residents feel about their area. We sent the survey out online to our contacts and Lucy and Sophie visited 14 community spaces across the West of England, such as foodbanks and community centres, to talk to residents and make sure no-one was left out.

We collected 552 full responses. You will have found the results of the survey and quotes from local residents throughout this report, and below are some additional highlights. The survey is very important to us because it helps guide our grant-making, so a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to complete it.

We asked, “What is the best thing about living in your community?”



“I run the local Scout Group in my community and it is absolutely amazing to see the young people grow into confident adults.”

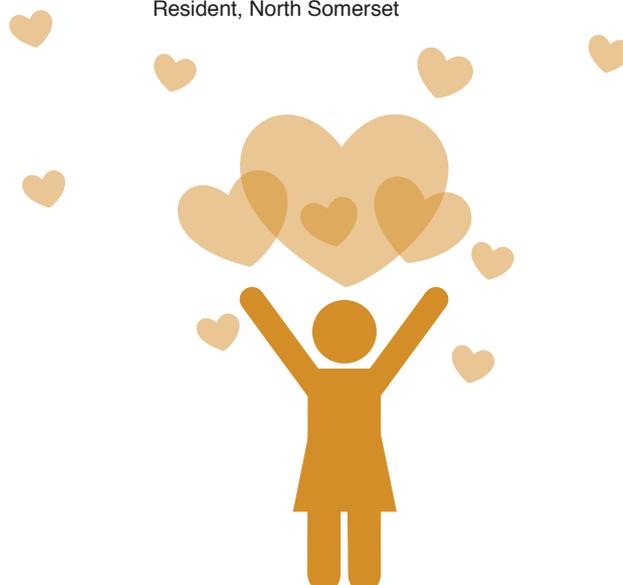
Resident, Bristol

“There are a lot of people who do kind things and volunteering for kids to try to keep them occupied out of school hours and to make their lives more fulfilling.”

Resident, North Somerset

“This is a small coastal town environment with no through traffic, lots of open space, no heavy industry and it is relatively peaceful.”

Resident, North Somerset



We asked, “If your community had £10,000 to spend what would you want to use it for?”



“Maintaining vital services, which are struggling.”
Resident, South Gloucestershire

“Put towards existing projects to tackle loneliness in elderly and others who get stuck at home (due to illness or childcare needs).”
Resident, Bristol



We asked, “In what ways do you think your local area could be improved?”



“More affordable housing, I can’t afford to live there. There is hardly anywhere in Bristol I can afford to live.”
Resident, Bristol

“More structured and interesting activities for teenagers which they actually want to do... not what adults think they want.”
Resident, B&NES

Background on Vital Signs

Vital Signs is an internationally recognised tool for assessing local social needs, listening to community voices and identifying where philanthropy can have the biggest impact. Our first ever Vital Signs report back in 2016 revealed unfair gaps in support and opportunities for many local people, with the most vulnerable people often the most excluded, and services struggling with funding cuts.

As a result in 2016 we made a commitment to people in the West of England to:

- Work with local philanthropists to identify and support key preventative services
- Seek ways to prioritise funding for essential early intervention work
- Strengthen our partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders to achieve lasting change for local communities.

For the last three years we have acted on this promise, working alongside others to prioritise early intervention and preventative initiatives in our grant-making at a time when increased need and reduced funding has placed enormous strain on services and organisations.

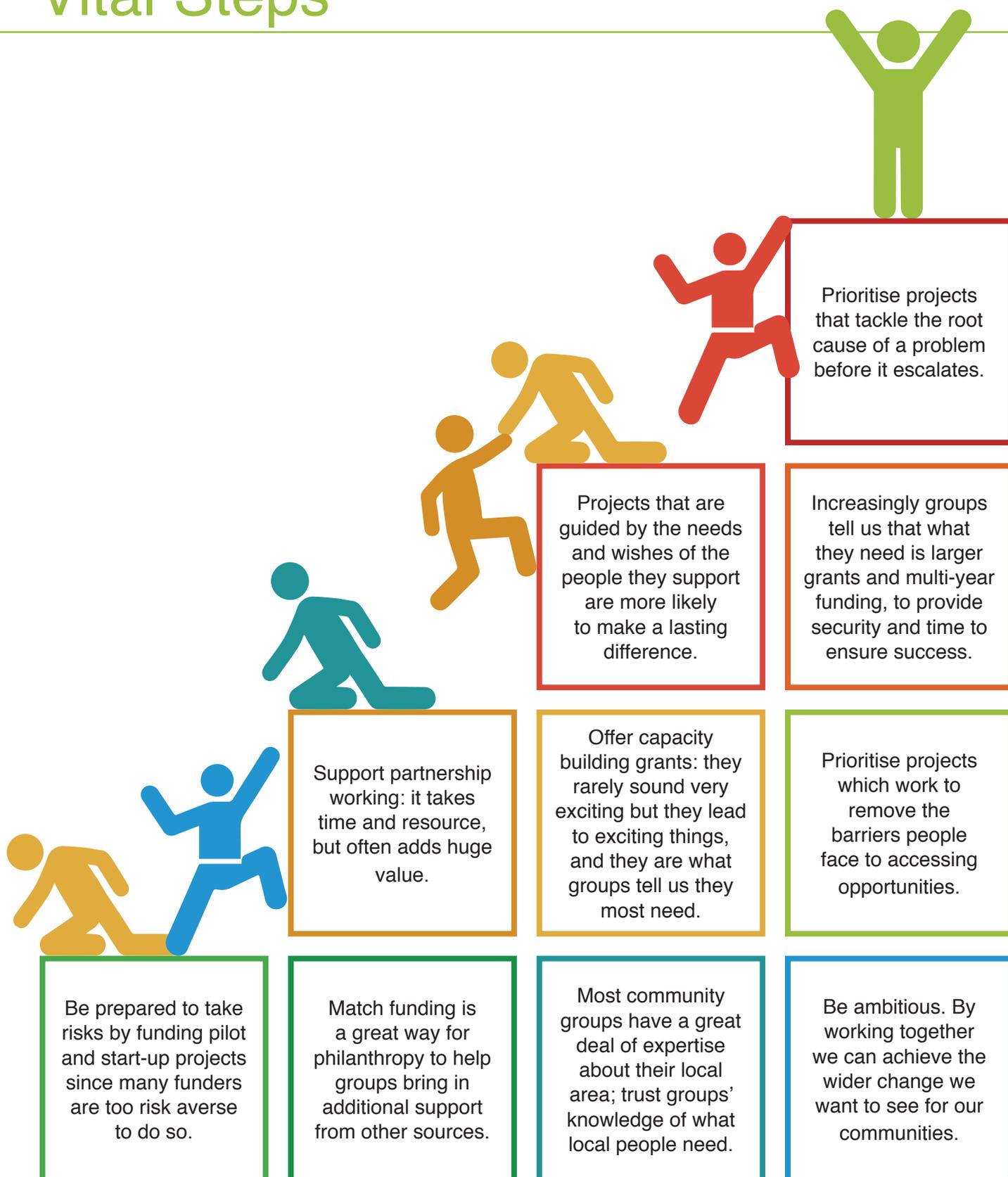
This 2019 Vital Signs report uses an international methodology to update our understanding of the issues faced by people here. This report draws on publicly available data from a wide variety of sources, as well as our own community survey.

If you would like to see the long version of this report contact Lucy Gilbert on 0117 989 7700 or vitalsigns@quartetcf.org.uk

West of England



Vital Steps



At Quartet Community Foundation we work with local donors to help people across the West of England have a fair chance of a good life. If our Vital Signs report has inspired you to help local people to fulfil their potential please do contact:
ronnie.brown@quartetcf.org.uk 0117 989 7705.



VitalSigns



www.quartetcf.org.uk/vital-signs

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