

Community Voice



Community Choice

Participatory Budgeting Programme MutualGain Final Report October 2021

“

It's so nice to see what people are doing for the community, I don't think organisations get enough credit and acknowledgement. This is such a fabulous opportunity to see the good in Blaenau Gwent ♡ ~ Event Attendee

”

Introduction

The impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups has been well documented.

A recent report published by Public Health Wales (2021)¹ identified that *“The Coronavirus pandemic has revealed the complex, interwoven relationships between health, wellbeing, inequalities, the economy, the environment, and society as a whole. In doing so, it has created new inequalities, but also exacerbated existing health inequalities.”* There is also tangible proof that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on those who are older, carers and other vulnerable groups, including young people.

In order to help the community of Blaenau Gwent emerge from COVID-19, it was decided that a public budget of £250,000 would be used to generate ideas and help the community develop local projects. The projects should focus on helping the community emerge from the pandemic.

Although the funding for the Blaenau Gwent programme was provided by the Aneurin Bevan Health Board via Early Years and Prevention Funding, the programme was overseen by Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board (PSB).

In mid-2021, Blaenau Gwent PSB partner organisations

commissioned MutualGain to develop and deliver an online Participatory Budgeting programme. The programme would provide an opportunity to empower local groups to develop sustainable projects that support vulnerable groups and individuals as they emerge from the challenges COVID 19 has presented.

MutualGain are specialists in building social capital and have an extensive track record of training and supporting the delivery of Participatory Budgeting (PB) projects across the UK.

Robert Hall, one of the planning group, kindly submitted a number of poems throughout the planning and delivery of this programme. Many of them are shown later in this report.

“

Thank you for the funding and such great projects out in the community. I watched 3 out of 4 of the events and can't believe what we have around us in Blaenau Gwent. Congratulations to you all. Thank you to all the organisers & everyone who supported us by voting on the day!

”

Julie Withey ~ Beaufort Hearts

¹ <https://phw.nhs.wales/publications/publications1/rising-to-the-triple-challenge-of-brexit-covid-19-and-climate-change-for-health-well-being-and-equity-in-wales/>

Scoping, Training, And Supported Delivery

The scope and reach of the programme was agreed with key partners prior to the commencement of PB training. Due to the amount of funding available, it was understood that there was a possibility that a large number of applications would be received resulting in multiple PB voting events being required.

As a result of restrictions imposed by the pandemic, it was decided that the whole programme would be delivered online using training and support materials that have been developed, tested and delivered by MutualGain throughout the pandemic.

Prior to the commencement of the training, MutualGain conducted a series of online briefing sessions. The purpose of the sessions was to engage with partners and the community, encouraging them to participate in the planning and delivery of the programme. They would later form a Planning Group that would make all of the key decisions and go on to shape the programme.

As a result of the briefings, a group of 15 people attended the training sessions and went on to form the core of the Planning Group. Other members drifted in and out of the sessions throughout the process.

The people attending ranged from:

- Employees of Blaenau Gwent Council
- Members of the Aneurin Bevan Health Board
- Members of the voluntary sector
- Members of local councils
- Members of the community
- Other key partners

The training was delivered online over three one-hour sessions and covered the following areas:

- The development and philosophy of PB
- The relationship to strengths-based approaches to engagement and building social capital
- The values and principles of PB
- The role of the community planning group
- A short practice PB session

The training was jointly delivered by Andrew and Antigua from MutualGain. Both have experience of managing and delivering online grant funded PB programmes in the UK, thereby enabling them to share experiences of these throughout the Blaenau Gwent programme.

The training was well received with feedback comments being collated and transformed into a Word Cloud as shown below.



Following the training, a series of one to two hour long Supported Delivery sessions were undertaken. It is at these meetings that the branding for the programme, as well as key decisions relating to the criteria, timescales, and logistical planning in relation to the voting event were agreed.

The brand of **Community Voice** **Community Choice** was agreed with a logo developed by local resident, **Tracie Yanton**. Tracie is also a member of the planning group. While there were steps that

had to be followed in terms of logistical planning, (e.g. the time and date of the voting events and creation of applications), the key role of the Planning Group was to develop the criteria that applicants would need to comply with.

The criteria were discussed at each Supported Delivery session with the Planning Group being split into breakout rooms before being recalled together to share their proposals. Consensus would then be agreed via an online poll created in Zoom.

Key criteria and decisions are shown below:

<i>Can the planning group apply?</i>	Yes, but they cannot paper sift any applications they are involved in
<i>What is the limit for a single application?</i>	£10,000
<i>Are multiple applications acceptable?</i>	Yes, projects must be separate and not exceed a maximum of £10,000
<i>Can public/private organisations apply?</i>	Yes, any group or organisation may bid as long as their project is serving Blaenau Gwent, and the profits are not given to stakeholders and/or directors etc.
<i>What is the age limit for voters?</i>	11yrs. Under 16's must be accompanied by/ registered with someone over the age of 18 (this can be monitored through registration)
<i>Do applicants have to come from the area?</i>	No, provided the money is spent for the benefit of those living in Blaenau Gwent
<i>Do applicants have to be from a constituted group?</i>	No, but non-constituted groups should be supported by a constituted group/organisation, that will hold their funding in a ring-fenced bank account.
<i>What area can voters attend from?</i>	The Blaenau Gwent area
<i>Is there an age limit for those applying/voting?</i>	Yes, 16yrs
<i>What will the voting process be?</i>	Online
<i>What will be the opening/closing dates to receive applications?</i>	Applications will be opening on 15th/16th July - and closing on 6th August.



The impact of COVID-19

MutualGain had already developed and tested an online PB programme that would help to achieve the aims of increasing networks and building social capital.

This programme would include all training Supported Delivery, Support Surgeries, application submissions and a paper sifting process.

In order for community to view project details and allow them to vote for a preferred project, it was agreed that all applicants would submit a short film in place of a face-to-face pitch.

Online support sessions took place to help applicants complete their applications and give guidance in relation to the style, content and standard of the films. It is evident from the quality of the films submitted that many applicants followed the advice given and produced films that were of a high standard in terms of style, content, and quality.

However, there were also a number that did not follow the advice. This included films that failed to include details such as the amount being asked for (or often the correct amount being applied for), who the beneficiaries would be or who would deliver the project. This resulted in MutualGain having to contact many projects asking them to correct their film and resubmit it.

Initially, a total of 89 applications were received, none were withdrawn during the planning group led paper sift.

A total of 17 applicants voluntarily withdrew their applications either as a result a not having time to complete a short film or failing to submit a short film despite numerous contact calls. This left 72 applications going forward to voting events at a final cost of £422,191. This was an excellent result and was achieved through the hard work of the Planning Group, and the use of social media.

As a result of the number of applications, it was agreed that there would be four voting events with the £250,000 funding split evenly across all four events. The total cost of applications would, as far as practicable, also be split evenly across the four events and the applications asking for the full £10,000 would also be split as evenly as possible.

However, due to a number of applicants not submitting films, the final total was adjusted and is shown here:

Event 1	£116,509
Event 2	£121,459
Event 3	£113,080
Event 4	£104,459

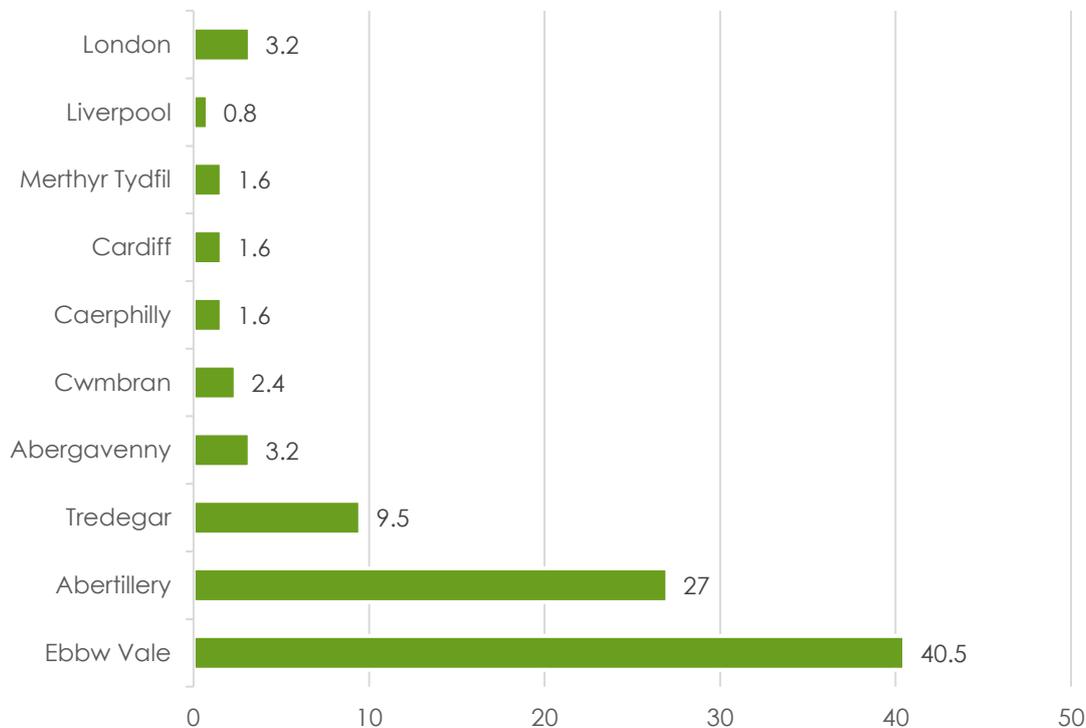
The online process

All links in relation to submitting applications and registering for the voting event were shared on the [Community Voice Community Choice](#) Facebook page.

Between 12th July and 29th September this page had:

- **Likes – 126**
- **Page reach – 8,433**
- **Post engagement – 615**

The breakdown (in percentage) of views across the UK is shown below:



The online process developed by MutualGain involves the use of a number of key systems to enable voters to register, watch the films from applicants and subsequently vote for their preferred project.

The registration process allowed potential voters to read an abstract to allow them some time to consider their preferred projects.

The running order of films is kept secret to avoid any voting bias. The procedure relating to irregular voting patterns was explained at the commencement of each event. However, the consistency in terms of voting was extremely high in each event.

Applications and Totals

Day Time of event	No of Applications	Total	Total £10,000 applications
AM 19th Sept 2021	19	£116,509	4
PM 19th Sept 2021	18	£121,459	4
AM 26th Sept 2021	17	£113,080	5
PM 26th Sept 2021	18	£104,459	4
Totals	72	£455,507	17

*We have got a pot of money It might not be a lot
So ask for what you need
To help you to succeed
So now it's up to you
So give it a try
and don't be shy
Sit right down and apply!*

- Written by Robert Hall, 2021

The voting process was broken up by introducing a series of photographs of the area, with voters guessing the location, this helps to build confidence using the Zoom platform and creates a sense of cohesion as individuals try to identify the mystery picture.

The voting registration process opened with an initial 300 places available. This was reduced to 280 to allow for 'guests' to view the event without having voting rights. This included members of the planning group who were ineligible to vote. The breakdown of registrations compared to numbers attending is shown below:

Day Time of event	No of Registrations	No attending	% voting consistency
AM 19th Sept 2021	141	52	90% - 93%
PM 19th Sept 2021	144	76	92% - 95%
AM 26th Sept 2021	214	68	95%-97%
PM 19th Sept 2021	140	74	96%-98%
Total	639	270	

This means that 639 people were able to read details of each application via Eventbrite. Along with those who viewed the Facebook site, there are a large number of people who are now aware of the 72 projects being undertaken across the Blaenau Gwent area.

As can be seen, the voting processes took place online on Saturday 19th September and Sunday 26th September 2021. While the numbers attending the voting sessions may seem to be a significant reduction from the 639 registered, this is not unusual. It is often the case that about one to two thirds of those who register do not sign in for the voting event.

Having anticipated that this may be the case, the Planning Group agreed to use an average voting score to allocate the funds. Bidders and voters were made aware of this prior to the event starting.

However, as can be seen above, the dip in voting was extremely low. This is the highest percentage that we have seen on any of our online PB voting processes.

Once the votes were counted 24 of the 72 projects were supported. They are shown below. The projects that were not supported are also shown in this table.

AM 19th September 2021

No.	Project	Amount Requested	Voting Average	Comment
1	Head4Arts	£6,500	4.20	Fully funded
2	SirHowy Community Centre	£9,360	3.95	Fully funded
3	Men' Den	£5,000	3.86	Fully funded
4	Festival of learning	£461	3.73	Fully funded
5	Gwent Valley centre of Mission	£596	3.69	Fully funded
6	RTC People First	£6,373	3.67	Fully funded
7	The Wyndham Vowles Community Centre	£7,200	3.66	Fully funded
8	Blaina Community Institute	£10,000	3.51	Fully funded
9	Cwmcelyn Digital History Project	£3,000	3.49	Fully funded
10	Kids R Us	£10,000	3.45	Fully Funded
11	RTB Ebbw Vale Bowls Club	£7,400	3.37	There is £4,101 remaining - part funded
12	<i>Blaina Community Centre - Rehabilitation after COVID-19 (RAC19)</i>	£8,623	3.26	<i>Not Funded</i>
13	<i>Friends of Granny's Wood</i>	£1,194	3.25	<i>Not Funded</i>
14	<i>Nantyglo FC - Playing field drainage</i>	£10,000	3.17	<i>Not Funded</i>
15	<i>Banna Park Green</i>	£9,537	3.14	<i>Not Funded</i>
16	<i>Hermon Cemetery Trust</i>	£9,537	3.07	<i>Not Funded</i>
17	<i>Oriel Trinity Gallery – Creative Writing for Wellbeing</i>	£6,000	3.04	<i>Not Funded</i>
18	<i>Central Baptist Church Tredegar – Craft Club</i>	£1,000	2.98	<i>Not Funded</i>
19	<i>Abertillery Splash</i>	£10,000	2.91	<i>Not Funded</i>

PM 19th September 2021

No.	Project	Amount Requested	Voting Average	Comment
1	Rotary Club Abertillery & Blaina	£789	4.45	Fully funded
2	Blaenau Gwent Film Academy	£9,600	4.21	Fully funded
3	Volunteering Matters	£9,863	4.20	Fully funded
4	Chillax Charity	£1,402	4.07	Fully funded
5	Abertillery Town Band	£7,633	4.06	Fully funded
6	Gelli Crug Park	£10,000	3.89	Fully funded
7	Your North Veteran Support	£9,900	3.89	Fully funded
8	Families First	£6,712	3.80	Fully funded
9	Ffin Dance	£7,070	3.70	There is £6,601 remaining – part funded
10	<i>Tredegar Miners Memorial</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>3.65</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
11	<i>Active Blaenau Gwent</i>	<i>£9,260</i>	<i>3.61</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
12	<i>Abertillery Excelsiors</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>3.51</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
13	<i>BGFM Radio – Box Allot</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>3.43</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
14	<i>Nantyglo and Blaina Horticultural Society</i>	<i>£6,000</i>	<i>3.41</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
15	<i>Zion Miners Chapel – Dementia Friendly and Living Alone</i>	<i>£1,200</i>	<i>3.35</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
16	<i>Meet Up Blaenau Gwent Covid Recovery</i>	<i>£5,030</i>	<i>3.27</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
17	<i>Oriel Trinity Gallery – Life After Covid: Expressing Your Emotions Through Colour</i>	<i>£4,020</i>	<i>3.18</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>

AM 26th September 2021

No.	Project	Amount Requested	Voting Average	Comment
1	Tredegar Torpedoes Swim Squad - SPLASH	£7,256	3.91	Fully funded
2	Valleys Gymnastics Academy – Fit and Fed	£3,000	3.89	Fully funded
3	Ebenezer Baptist Church and Community Hub – Families In Need	£3,240	3.76	Fully funded
4	Cwm Community Cares – William Street Park	£10,00	3.74	Fully funded
5	Cefn Golau Together – Nip it in the Bud	£4,416	3.72	Fully funded
6	The Beaufort Theatre – Welcome Home	£4,374	3.70	Fully funded
7	Abertillery Workmen's Welfare – SOS Save our Sstitute	£10,000	3.65	Fully funded
8	Men's Den – Woodworking Project: Creating Products, Building Bridges	£5,00	3.60	Fully funded
9	Toy Box Project	£1000	3.48	Full funded
10	Abertillery Town Cricket Club	£9,084	3.48	There is £5,214 remaining - part funded
11	<i>Friends of Six Bells Park – Resurfacing the Tennis Courts</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>3.39</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
12	<i>BGFM Supporters Group – Face 2 Face</i>	<i>£3,693</i>	<i>3.29</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
13	<i>Waulnwyd and Victoria Community Events – Community Christmas Party, Gifts and Hampers for Families</i>	<i>£3,000</i>	<i>3.28</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
14	<i>Aneurin Bevan Hospital League of Friends</i>	<i>£5,460</i>	<i>3.19</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
15	<i>Turning Landscape</i>	<i>£5,598</i>	<i>3.12</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
16	<i>Central Baptist Church – Exterior Wall and Roof Repairs</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>2.72</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>
17	<i>Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council</i>	<i>£8,959</i>	<i>2.53</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>

NB. An anomaly arose whereby the Toy Box project and Abertillery Cricket Club received the exact same score in terms of average votes and number

of votes across the range of 1-5. Both have been contacted and informed of this fact and it has been agreed by the steering group (comprising representatives of PSB partner organisations) that the Cricket Club will receive a small amount of extra funding set aside for the planning of the project. Both parties are in agreement with this proposal.

PM 26th September 2021

No.	Project	Amount Requested	Voting Average	Comment
1	Beaufort Hearts	£3,000	4.06	Fully funded
2	Horeb Chapel, Trefil – Deffiber	£2,000	4.02	Fully funded
3	Llanhilleth Miners – YEP (Youth Enrichment Project)	£9,265	3.90	Fully funded
4	The Christian Centre – The Hope Initiative	£10,000	3.89	Fully funded
5	Tizah Kids Community Group – Food Share	£10,000	3.86	Fully funded
6	Pentref Tyleri – Wellbeing Space	£9,981	3.72	Fully funded
7	Zion Miners Chapel – Dementia Friendly and Living Alone	£1,200	3.60	Fully funded
8	Abertillery Rugby Football Club – Raise the Posts!	£10,000	3.57	Fully funded
9	The Old Codgers – Practice Rehearsal Room	£5,181	3.532	Full funded
10	Off The Streets	£4,350	3.530	There is £1,873 remaining - part funded
11	Central Baptist Church – Mother and Toddler Group	£2,500	3.46	Not Funded
12	Christmas Lights for Community Cheer	£7,000	3.36	Not Funded
13	Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan Hospital – Mindfulness Garden	£6,000	3.27	Not Funded
14	Sirhowywoodlands – Reinstatement of the Main Track	£10,000	3.23	Not Funded
15	Gwent Valley Centre of Mission – Cuppa and Company	£1,742	3.17	Not Funded
16	Cwmcelyn Angling Club – Get Kids Fishing	£4,000	3.07	Not Funded
17	Blaenau Gwent Community Express	£6,240	3.23	Not Funded

18	Showstoppers – Shrek the Musical	£2,000		Not Funded
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Ordinarily, MutualGain would have two representatives at a face-to-face PB event, however on the days of the Blaenau Gwent events MutualGain had three members of staff conducting various roles from hosting the event, troubleshooting IT and connection issues and inputting of votes. This ensures a smooth transition through the

voting process and allows us to support any people who are having problems accessing Zoom or participating in the voting. However, the number of people who required help was extremely low, perhaps indicating how comfortable people have become in using Zoom to remain in contact throughout the pandemic.

*We have a quarter of have a million quid
That's in our pot
So time to take to take off the lid
We have got to spend the lot*

*So come on Blaenau Gwent it's up to you
So what will you do?
No more doom and gloom and sitting down with zoom*

*It's time to use your voice
And help to make a choice
Let's put things right
And ensure our futures bright*

*So let's forget the past and put things into place
That make us all smile and sit and think a while
How life is getting better now we have the time
To reminisce about the things we have missed*

*Tomorrow's another day
And COVID s gone away.*

- Written by Robert Hall, 2021

Key Learning Points

The following points are made in no particular order.

- There is evidence from the Zoom Chat during the event that many of the projects were aware of each other, but there were many who offered to connect and support other groups, suggesting at this early stage that there is an increasing level of social capital
- Despite sharing practical information, some applicants simply did not read or follow protocols or advice in terms of ensuring consistency between application and film, including submitting films on time. We spent countless hours chasing people to submit films, however, many simply did not return calls or emails resulting in them being removed from the programme despite submitting an application
- The Planning Group was fairly consistent throughout and agreed to meet on a weekly basis to truncate the time frame of the programme, thereby allowing for the earliest possible release of funds to support the community
- There is a request to develop a community resource, highlighting the names of all programmes and main contact details. As a result, all groups were asked for permission to share their email addresses. However, a number used personal email addresses in their application and are not willing for these to be shared
- There is an appetite to share the success of this event across the area with a specific request from Plaid Cymru MP Peredur Owen Griffiths
- Leadership from Aneurin Bevan Health Board, and Blaenau Gwent Council was also important. While they kept an eye on progress, the Planning Group were empowered to make key decisions and, where necessary, alter them to account for changing circumstances.
- The motivation, dedication and commitment of the Planning Group played more than a significant part in the success of this programme. They have been a pleasure to work with.
- Leadership in terms of directing the local issues was another significant part in the success. Thanks go to Emma Scherptong, Andrew Parker, David Arnold, Steve Wetten, Huw Lewis, Ceri Waters and especially Kathryn Cross who agreed to speak at all hours of the day, even when on annual leave!

Governance and Next Steps

- On 29th July 2021, the Planning Group held a final meeting to discuss governance and next steps for the programme.
- The proposals for governance ranged from a regular written update of progress to a regular video diary of progress. The group were keen to build on the success and following of the Community Voice Community Choice Facebook page
- The proposal taken forward by the Planning Group was to request a video update that would be posted on the Community Voice Community Choice Facebook page. This would be done at intervals of three months for a twelve-month period from the point of funding being received. Where possible, some statistical information should be included, and the video/ written reports should also include how the programme has achieved it's aims in terms of benefitting the community of Blaenau Gwent within the context of emerging from the pandemic.
- This information will be shared with the successful groups via a notification letter sent by the council.
- The continued development and use of the Community Voice Community Choice Facebook page site will be overseen by Kathryn Cross. MutualGain will disengage as authors and administrators of this platform once a handover has been undertaken.
- The Council will also require the successful programmes to inform the council of their spending via a simple process to be administered in spring 2022
- The above proposals are in line with the principles and values of PB. PB should be a community led programme and in this instance the planning group came to a facilitated consensus.



Conclusion

The overall aim of the programme was to increase social capital, those networks that exist across the community of Blaenau Gwent. This was to be accomplished by giving an opportunity for the community to play an increased role in sharing and developing projects across the area that are designed to help

vulnerable groups emerge from COVID-19.

The community are starting to share ideas and resources. This is the foundation of the building of social capital. **Trust, Norms and Networks** are key to the success of helping vulnerable groups emerge from COVID-19

Key roles have been consistently played by:

- Kathryn Cross
- Tracie Yarnton
- Lyn Maloney
- Des Hillman
- Robert Hall
- Shannon Griffiths
- Steve Harford
- Sharon Harford
- Victoria Phillips
- Lucy Harding
- Chris Garret
- Gareth Winmill
- Mark Jed Burns
- Helen Vaughan
- Victoria Price
- Lisa Kenny Gough

It has been an absolute pleasure to work with you all.

Thank you.

Andrew Fisher

Dr Andrew C. Fisher

Senior Associate – MutualGain

ARC Orion

Antigua Riley Corion

Junior Consultant - MutualGain

Feedback

MutualGain collects feedback in a variety of ways at each of our events. In this case, we have collated feedback from five different processes. They are shown in the appendix below.

A.

Feedback from
Zoom chat

B.

Feedback from
Facebook

C.

Comments from the
planning group
feedback session

D.

Answers to post
event polls

E.

Answers to equality
survey

F.

Completed impact
forms

This information is attached as Appendix A – F. It is fair to say that the majority of the comments are positive with thanks given to the Community Voice Community Choice Planning Group and those who made the funding available.

*Out of the fire into the light
Now is the time to put things right
So use your voice and make a choice
So we can select which is the best
After seeing all the rest*

- Written by Robert Hall 2021



LISTEN!

Appendix A:

Feedback from the Zoom chat function

Cwmcelyn Digital History Project:



Tracie: So Excited!!!!

Diane: Lovely idea for school children and Welsh history

Hannah: my godchildren would like visiting this especially if its interactive



Festival of Learning:

Julie: Oh my, another fab idea! 🤔

Leah: Great idea and range of activities

Kate: Lots of things to connect people here

Jessica: lovely idea ♡

Diane: Can we just give everyone the money? They're all such important ideas xx

Hannah: love adult ed! Did some courses when I lived in Kent and was a great way to meet new people and learn new skills!



Head 4 Arts – We'll Meet Again:

Julie: Singing is brilliant for mental health for all ages! 😊

Neil: Brilliant!

Hannah: Love this!



RTC People First – Stepping Out:

Lucy: Excellent project for community member who are often members who are often disenfranchised.

Leah: A really great project

Baldw: Loved the video

Nantyglo FC:

Tracie: The smiles in this video sum up how important this is 😊

Leah: Made some great improvements over the past few years, increasing opportunities for the community



Tracie: I love Welsh translations in this video.. Da iawan x

Kate: Lots of benefits from being in nature

Oriel Trinity Gallery – Creative Writing for Wellbeing:

Kate: Helping people express their feelings through a creative writing project is a great idea – especially with outreach across the county borough!

Hannah: Looking forward to the new gallery opening in Abertillery



Sirhowy Community Centre – Sustainable Food Project:

Dianne: It's so nice to see what people are doing for the community, I don't think organisations get enough credit and acknowledgement. This is such a fabulous opportunity to see the good in Blaenau Gwent <3

Kate: Great way to prevent waste too.

Tracie: Emotional watching these videos

Jenny: Food poverty is often a hidden issue within our communities and so its great to see how you are looking to reduce food waste and help those in need.

Kidz R Us – Can It: Recycling Projects:

Kate: Great video from these young people. So good to hear their commitment

Leah: Will be great to see this production in local schools

Helen: Amazing kids!



Gwent Valley Centre of Mission – Holiday Happenings:

Lucy: Lovely idea to support families at little or no cost during what's often a challenging time finding kids activities during holiday times

Blaina Community Institute – Drop in Café:

Hannah: Love community cafes, they're great to pop into as no matter how you're feeling there's a friendly face at them!



Mens Den Explorers:

Lucy: There seem to be many more opportunities for women to meet up – this is a great group who often don't socialise much because of work commitments

Meet Up Blaenau Gwent Covid Recovery:

Nadette: What a wonderful project that would benefit so many in the community.

Keira: So many people are feeling isolated – would be such a shame for this not to continue

Hannah: Projects like this are so vital – I was lucky to spend many hours talking on the phone with older isolated people during the pandemic and it would be such a shame if these projects are lost.



The Wyndham Vowles Community Centre – Free for All:

Helen: I love the Wyndham Vowles centre. Such a nice clean building with reasonable rates for hire. I've used it many times.



Active Blaenau Gwent:

Jones: Great to see another project with strong links with education and community business

Nadette: Love how its free for all children <3

Julie: Great idea for all the children!



Blaenau Gwent Film Academy:

Jones: Great opportunity for young people

Cathy: Absolutely brilliant! Makes a huge difference to children's lives!

Celina: Fantastic project for local cares 👍 FILM academy

Aria: The kids would love to get involved

Celina: Fantastic project for local children, which is well needed! Tredegar film academy.

Cefn Golau Together – Nip It In The Bud:

Hannah: Loving all the gardening projects and would be interested in getting in touch with anyone who might be interested in helping/advising me as to what to do with some space we have outside St Michaels Church in Abertillery that's a bit overgrown. If there is anyone who could have a chat over coffee that would be great!

Maria: Hi Hannah – email me maria.perkins@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk happy to chat about this!



Cwm Community Cares – William Street Park:

Lucy: Fantastic evidence of community consultation and proven support for the project!

Hannah: Great to see how communities want to use their parks, outdoor spaces have been so important over the last year or so. It's just sad that parks aren't a priority for councils/governments



Toy Box Project:

Tracey: I've got toys that we have outgrown but are too good to throw out so would be happy to donate

Lynpra: I've got toys you can have!

Mark: Is there a link for where to send toys?

James:
<https://toyboxproject.co.uk/find-a-drop-point/>
Networking at its best!



The Beaufort Theatre – Welcome Home:

Anya: Culture and arts are SO important for recovery, mental health, and wellbeing... wonderful to see this!

Carl: What a fantastic project for our young people and local community!

Ewers: Brilliant project, giving something back to the community

Off the Streets:

Zarina: Off the streets are amazing. Something for children to do after school hours

Appendix B:

Hayley: Off the streets are great! We love the work you do with us at the institute



Feedback from Facebook

Julie Withey

Thank you for the funding and such great projects out in the community. I watched 3 out of 4 of the events and can't believe what we have around us in Blaenau Gwent. Congratulations to you all. Thank you to all the organisers & everyone who supported us by voting on the day.

Natalie Owen

Thank you from all at Tredegar Torpedoes Swim Squad!

Charlotte Clark

We were so pleased to be voted to receive funding to improve our lovely park. Thank you so much! 😁 A great event with so many brilliant and worthy projects, well done everyone.

RTB Ebbw Vale Bowls Club

Absolutely fantastic. thanks very much. this will make a big difference to our club and community

Hannah Seal

Thank you so much! Really excited to receive support to get our project started in half term. It was great to learn about so many different projects doing good things in Blaenau Gwent

Maria Perkins

Thank you so much, cannot wait to get our project up and running. Well done all, fantastic initiatives and work being done in Blaenau Gwent

Appendix C: Comments From the Planning Group De-Brief Session

- Introduction was very well received
- Happy with the process and results
- MutualGain supported anyone having issues voting online or struggled with technology throughout the process
- Open, transparent and it works!
- Overall was a great success
- Liked the planning process and how we got through the supported delivery sessions
- Loved the way we worked together as a team
- As we go forward, people are getting used to online events!

- Second event I struggled with Eventbrite and Zoom
- Complaints of Eventbrite and Zoom from the older generation
- Some of the older generation felt excluded – if the event was face to face we may have had more people but less of other groups
- Closing dates of the Eventbrite should be better publicised
- There should be an option to follow updates on a platform other than Facebook (i.e. Not social media)
- Emphasis of the importance of applicant's film volume should be made – some films were difficult to hear

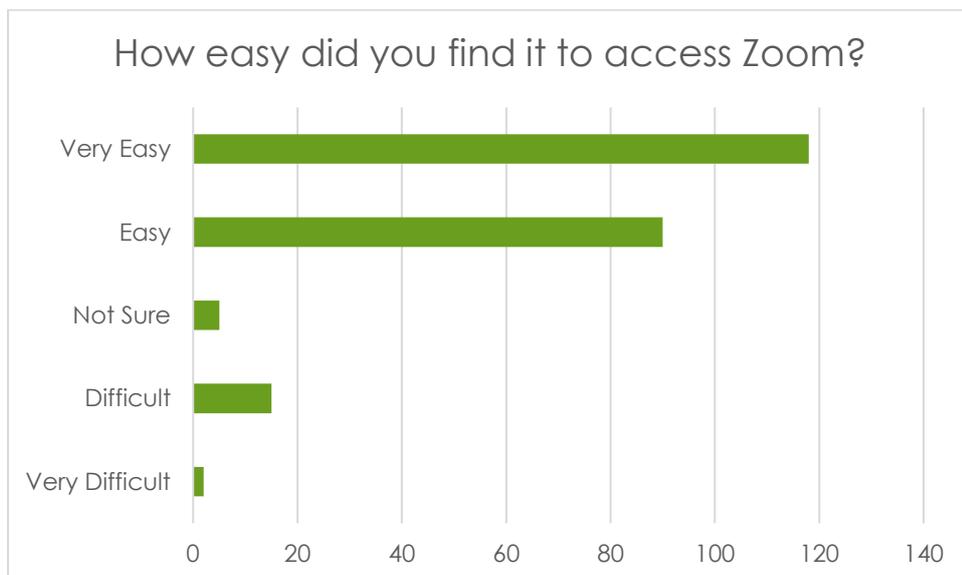
*Well the time as past
We have cast our votes at last
That's the end of community voice
And community choice*

*So now we must see
If it improves the lives of you and me
The future will be bright
If we spend the money right*

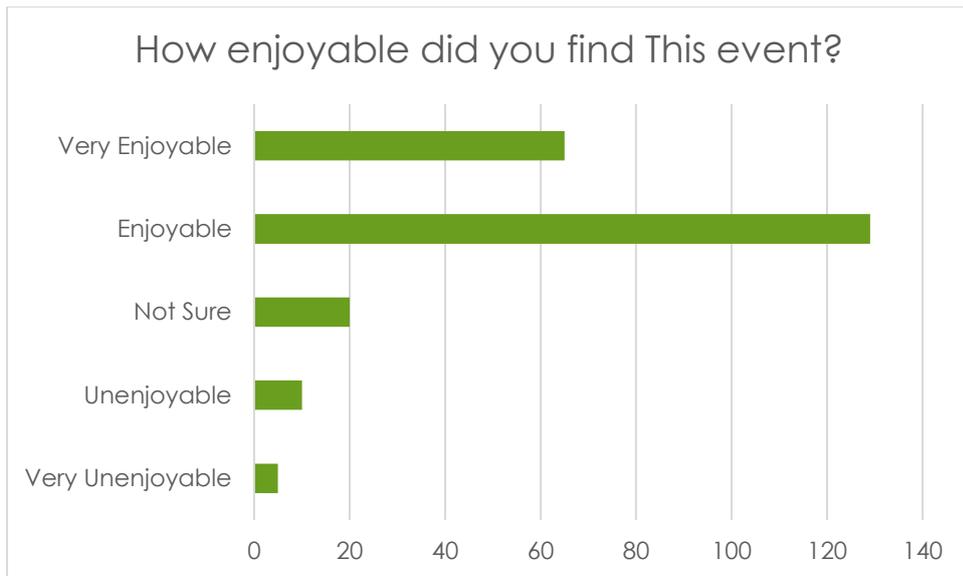
*Our thanks to Andrew and Antigua of MutualGain
Who steered us through the pain
So we have all played our part
And with sadness in our hearts
We must say goodbye until we meet again
When covid gone away
And we all live a better way*

- Written by Robert Hall, 2021

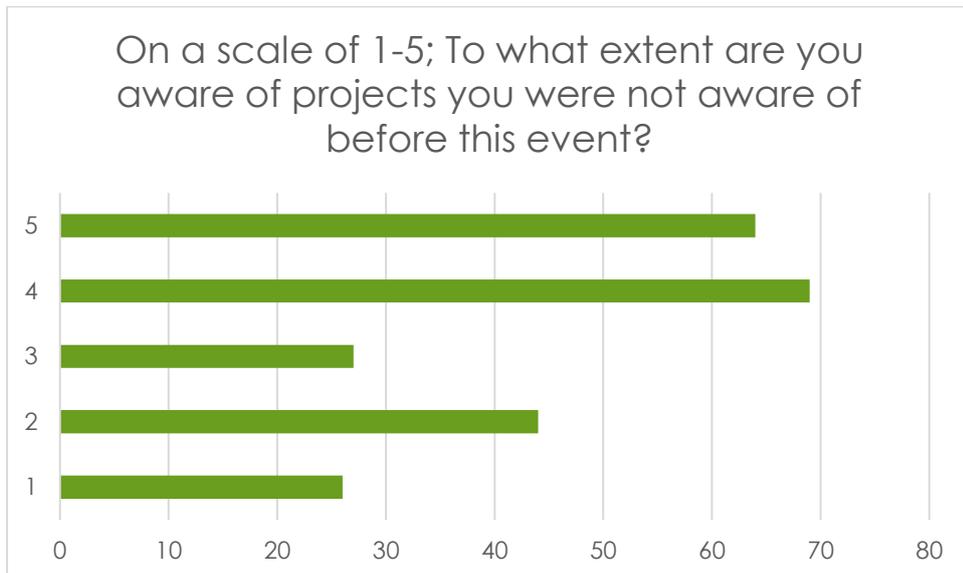
Appendix D: Feedback from Post Event Polls



The above two charts indicate that people are able to access and navigate through the registration and viewing processes of Eventbrite and Zoom. Where people did have difficulty, MutualGain provided support prior to and on the day of the event.

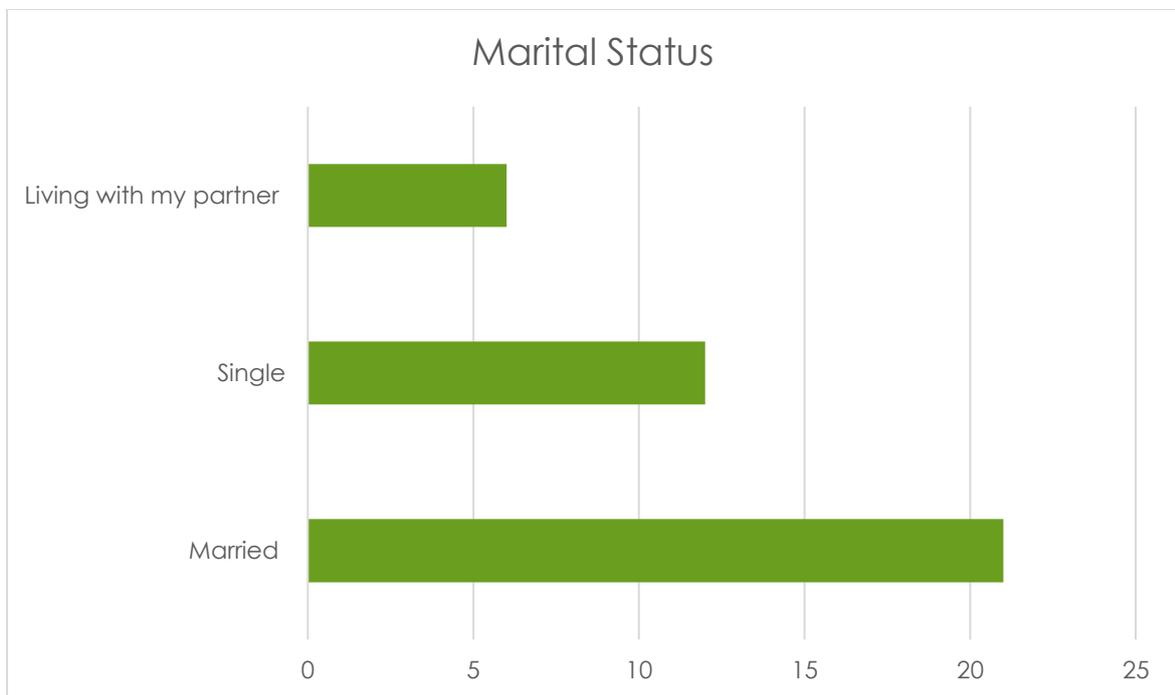
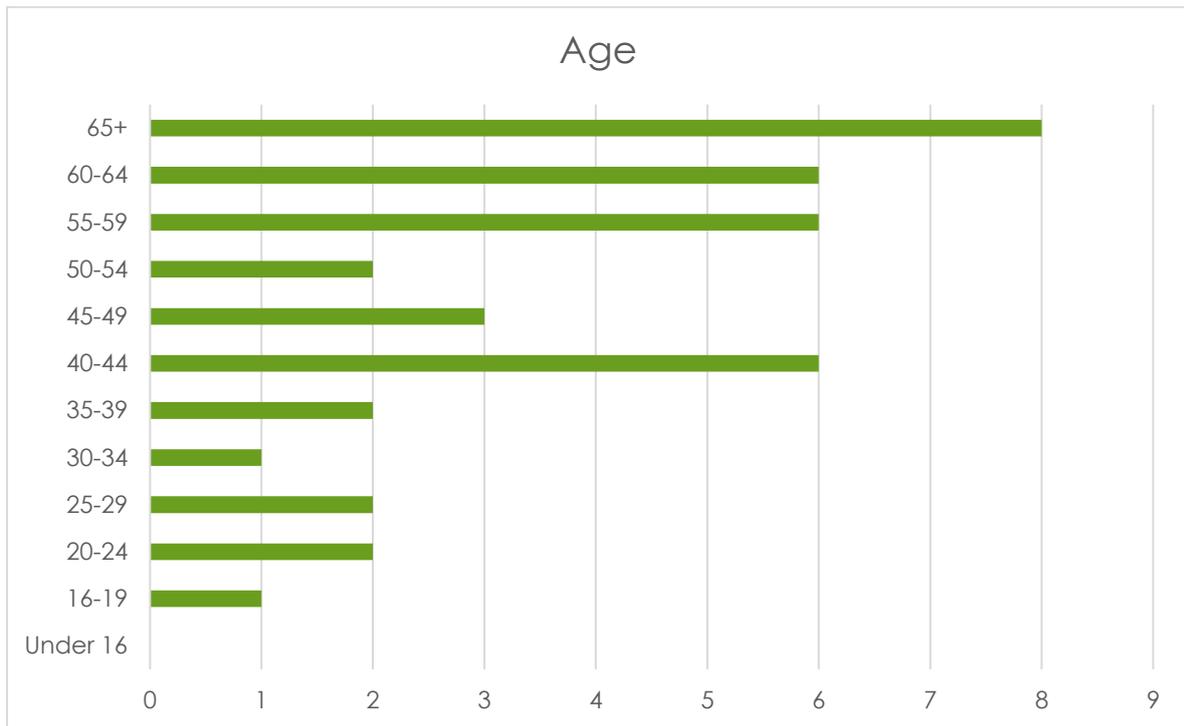


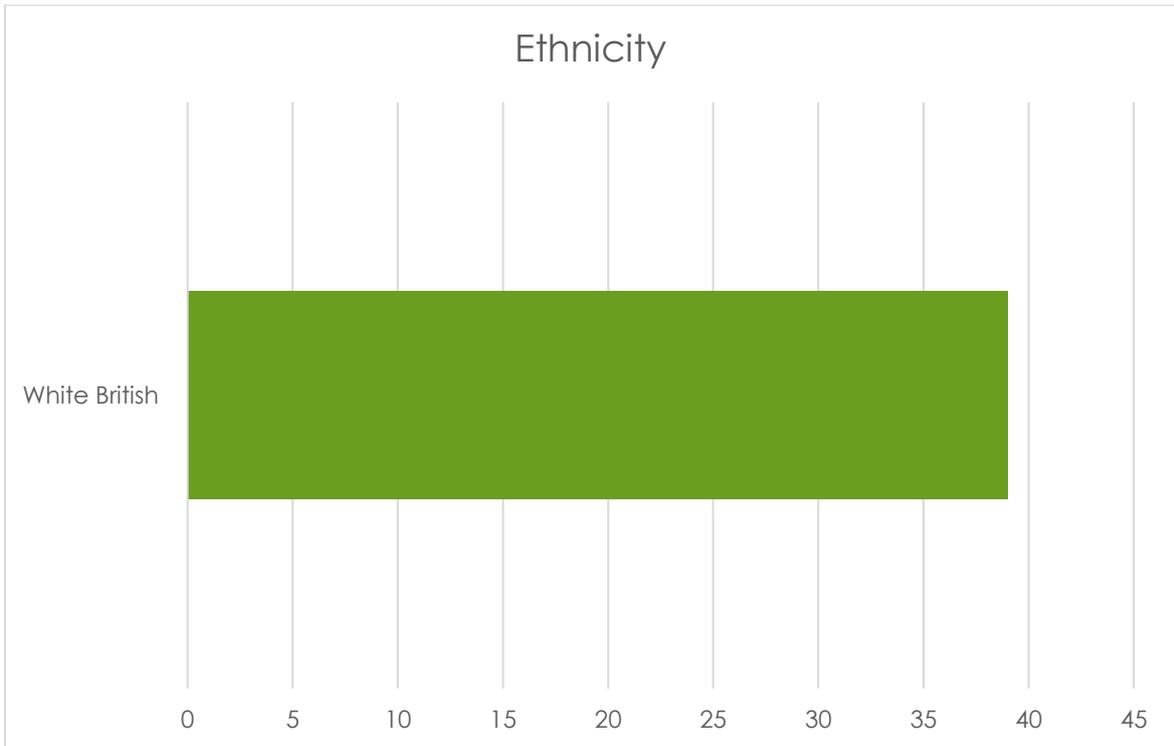
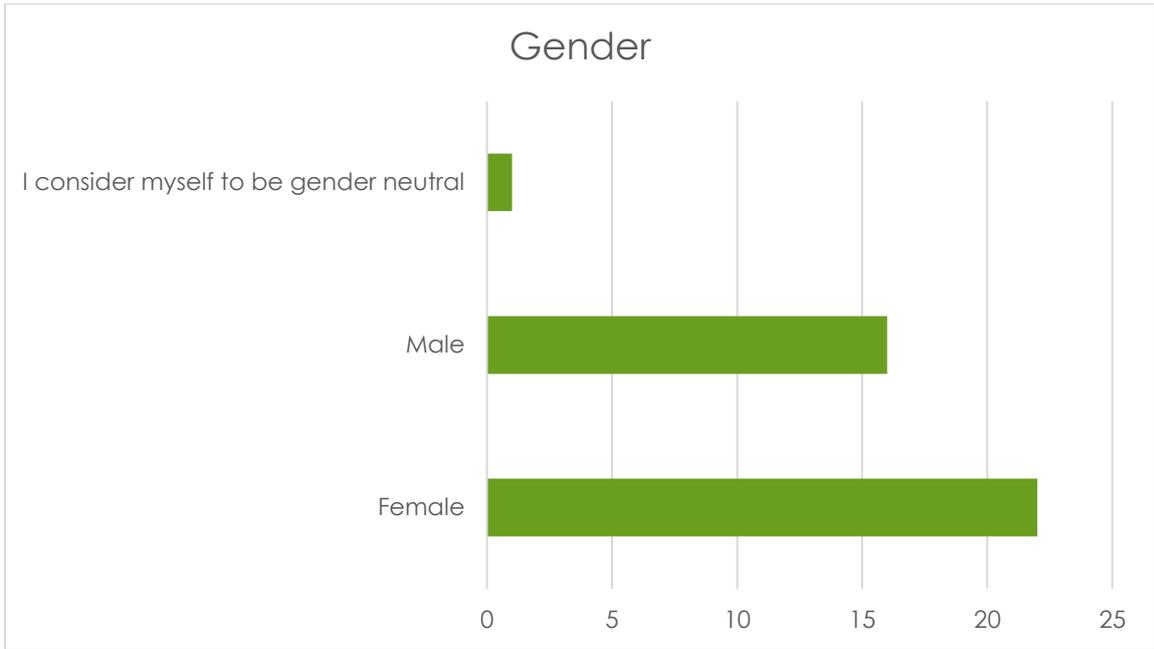
The above chart indicates that those attending enjoyed the online experience. This is a very positive chart that overwhelmingly suggests that people attending enjoyed the online experience.

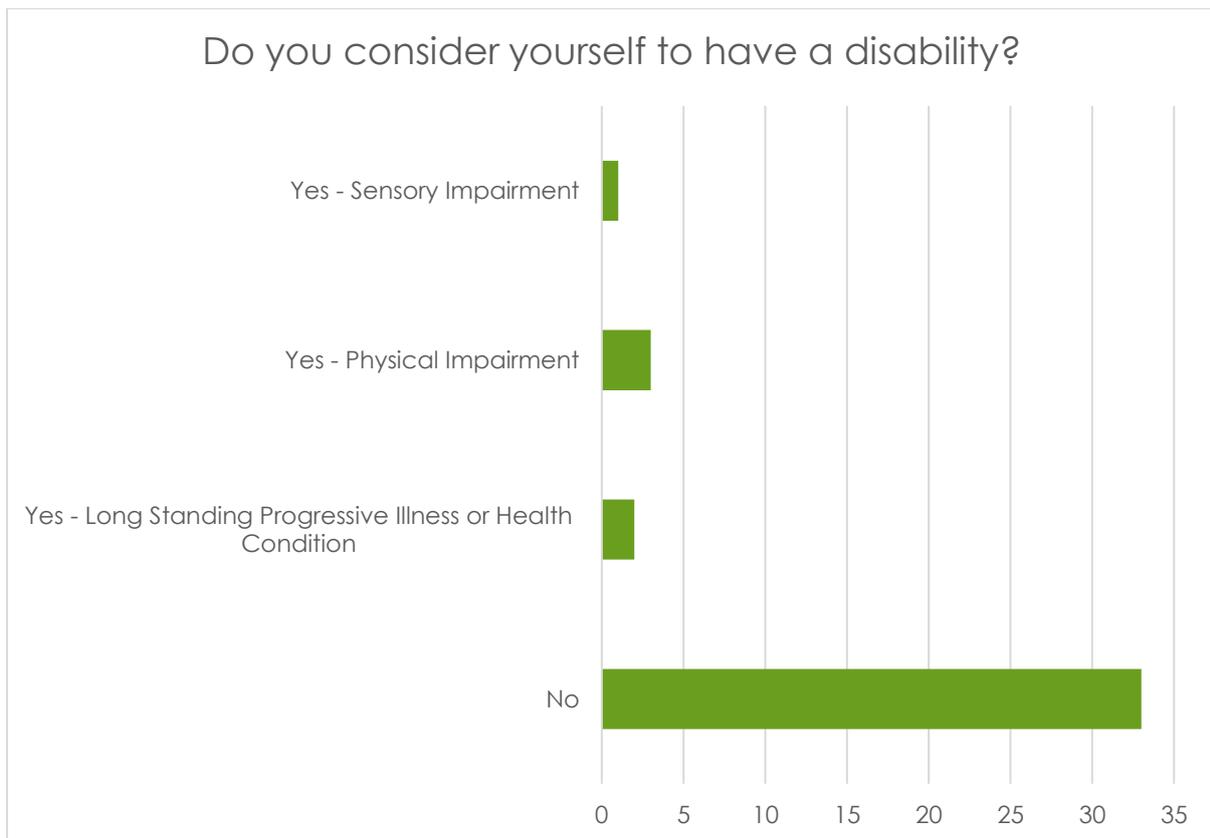
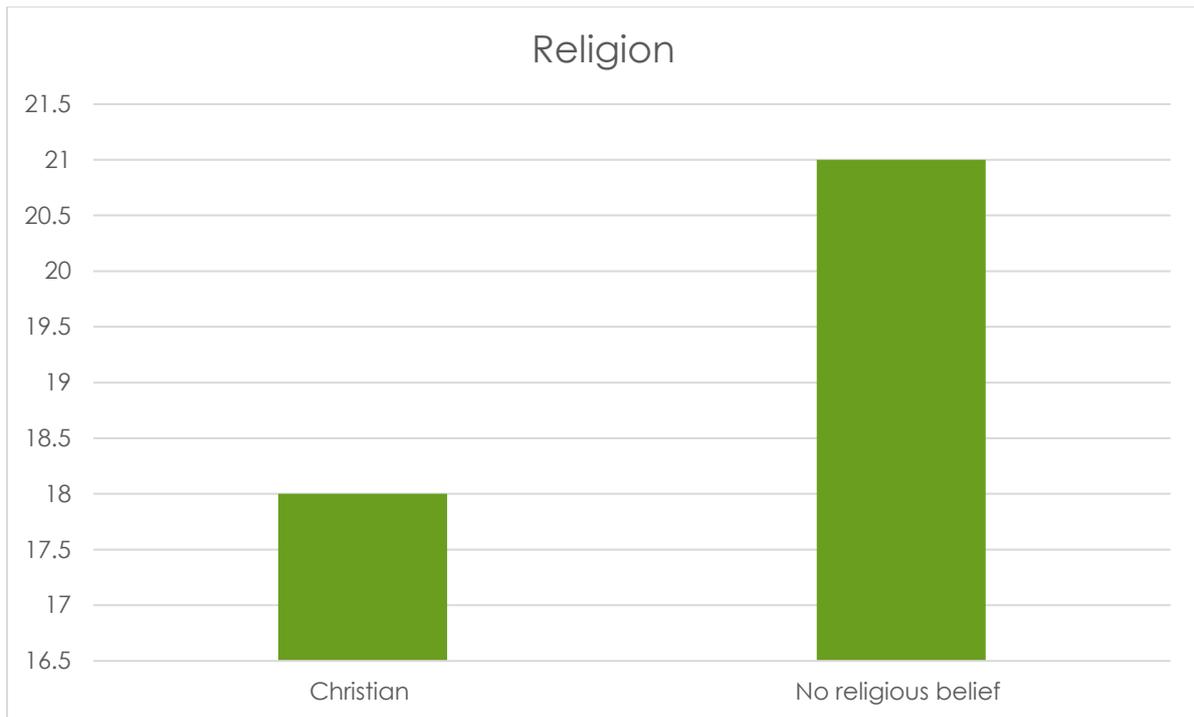


Most of those online heard of projects that they were unaware of prior to the PB event. This gives a solid base to build upon for the future as networks grow and people become engaged in supporting each other in developing programmes

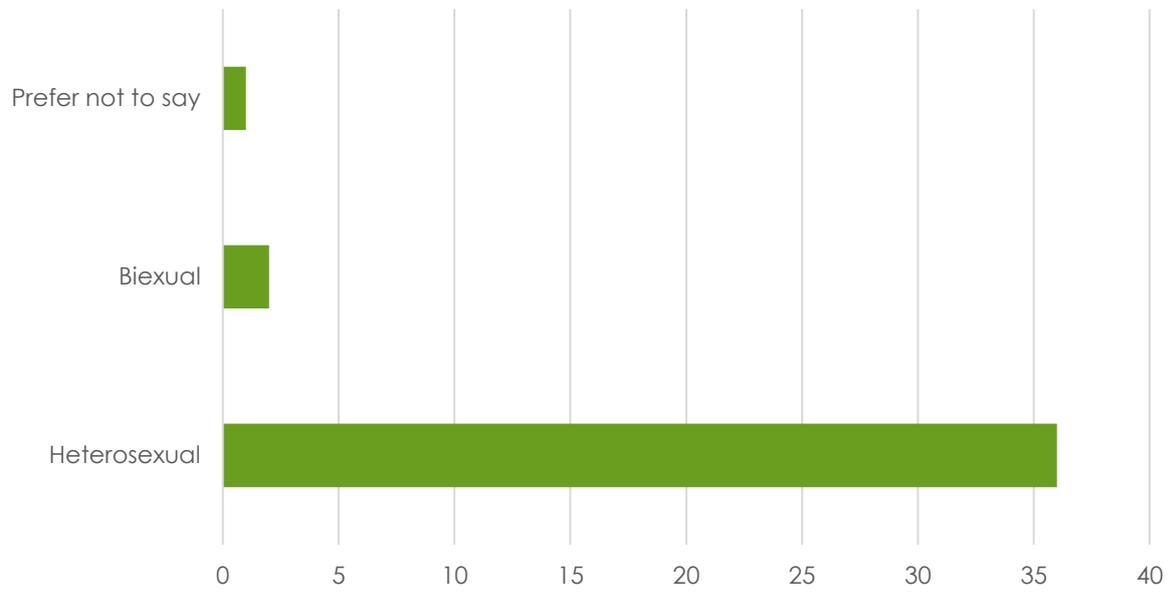
Equalities Data



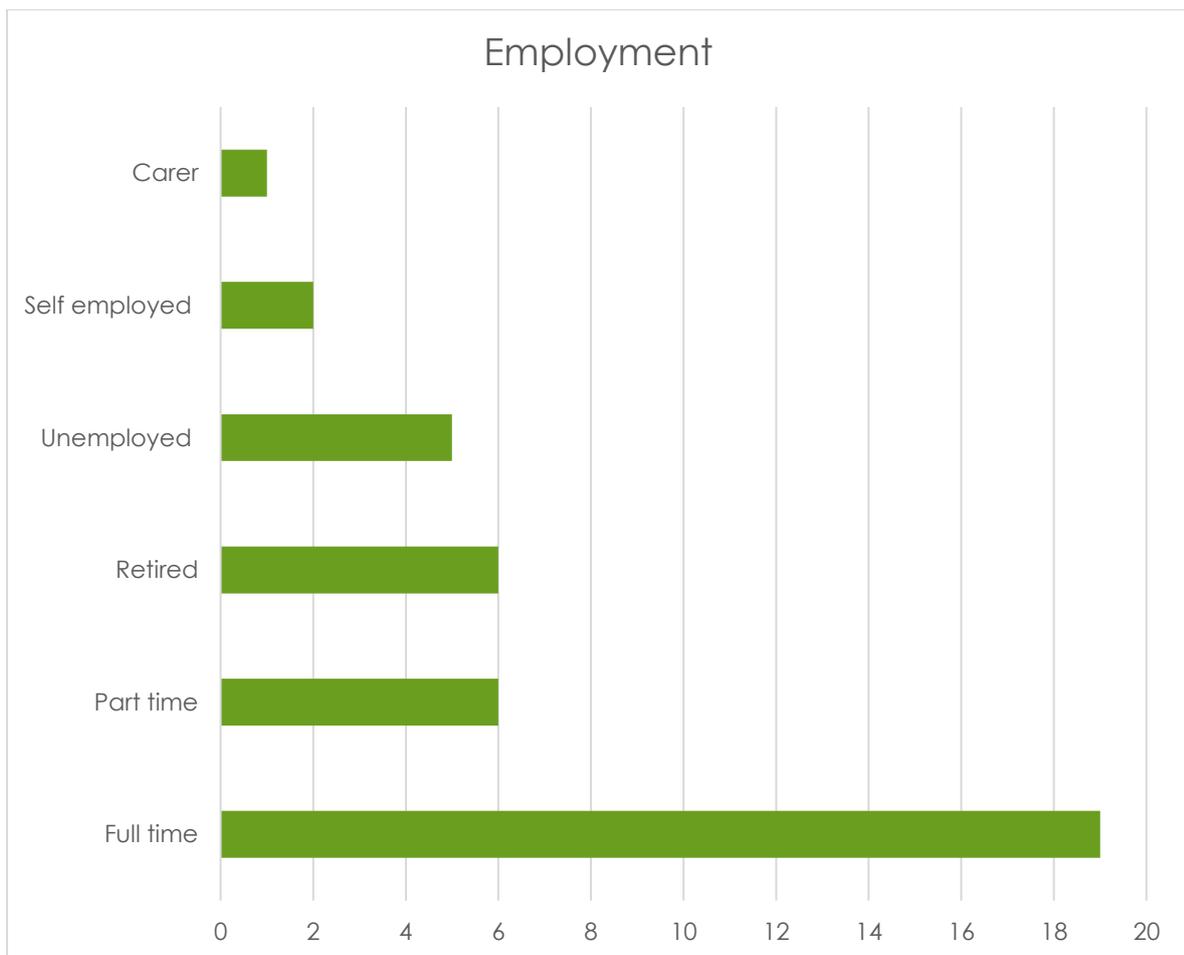




Sexual Orientation



Employment

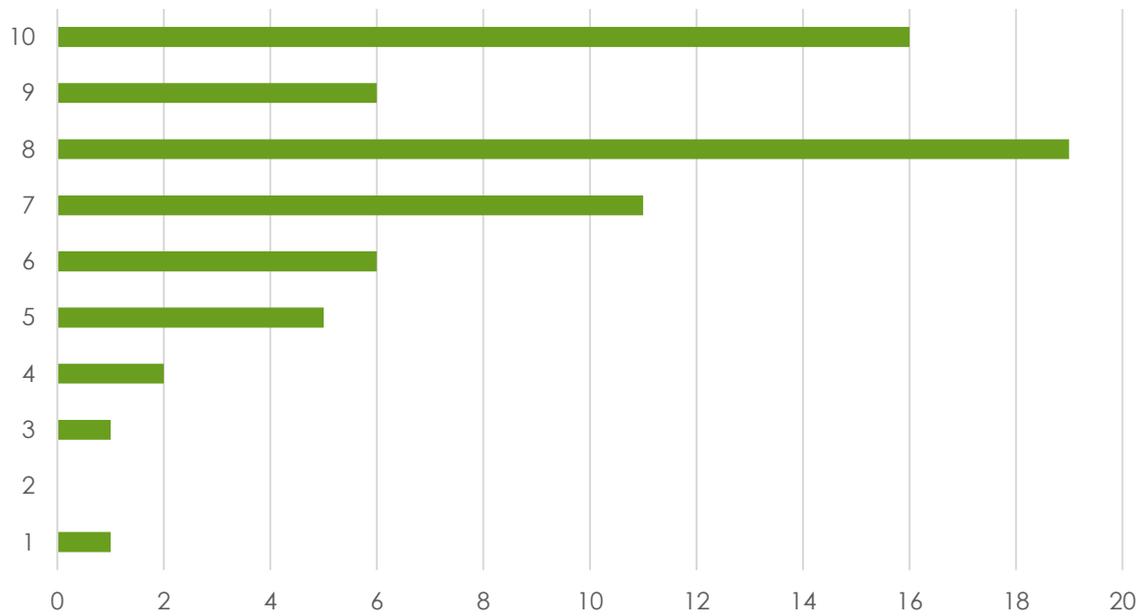


Appendix F: Impact Data

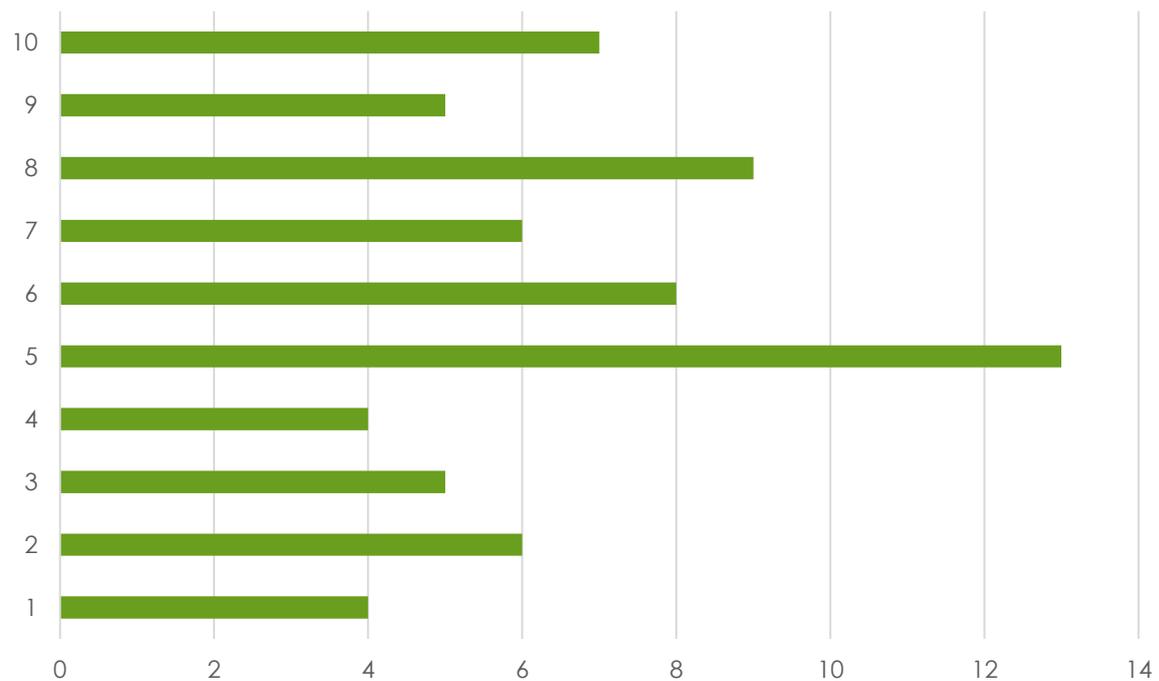
This information is collated by MutualGain to help develop a national understanding in relation to levels of engagement. It is presented here for information purposes only.



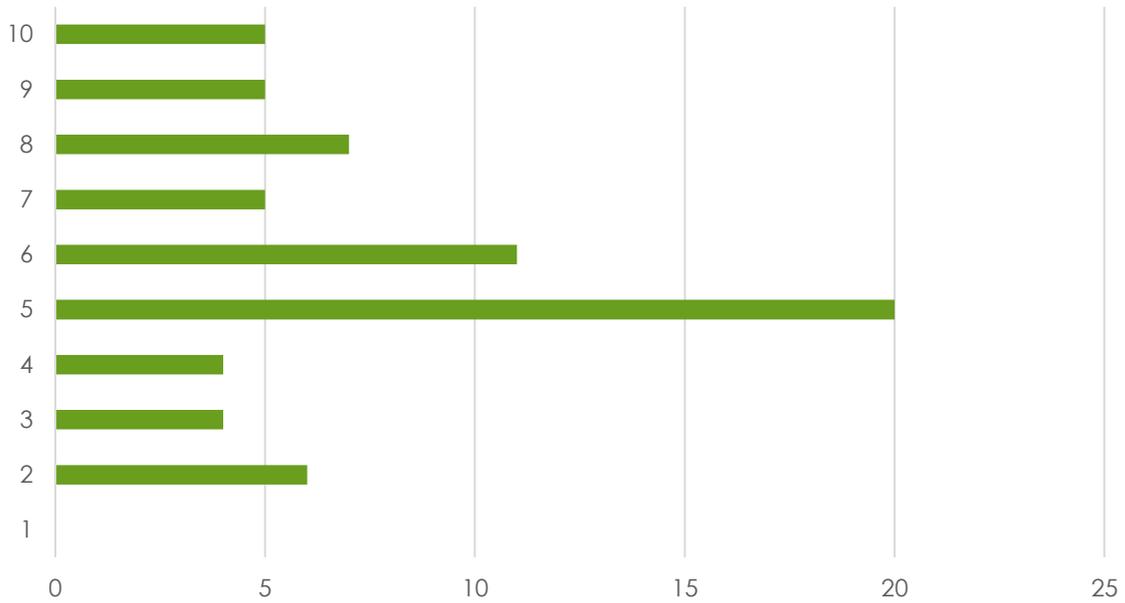
Local people in my neighbourhood work together to make changes that make our community better.



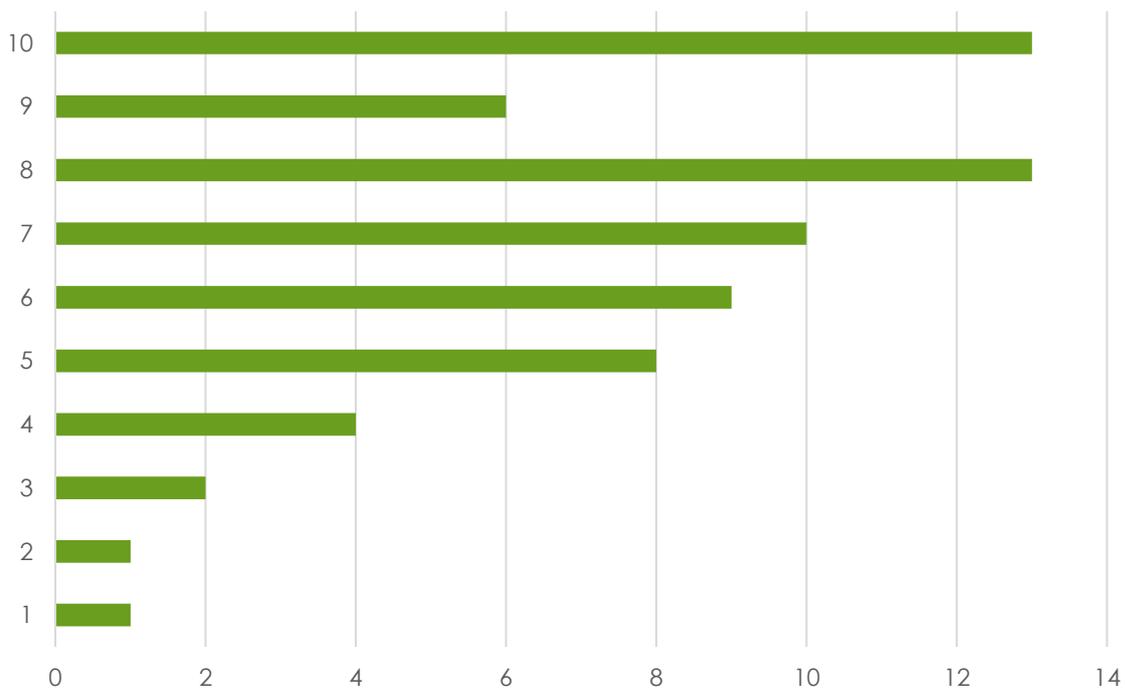
I feel I am aware of the decisions service providers (e.g. the council, the police, housing agencies etc) make for my local community.



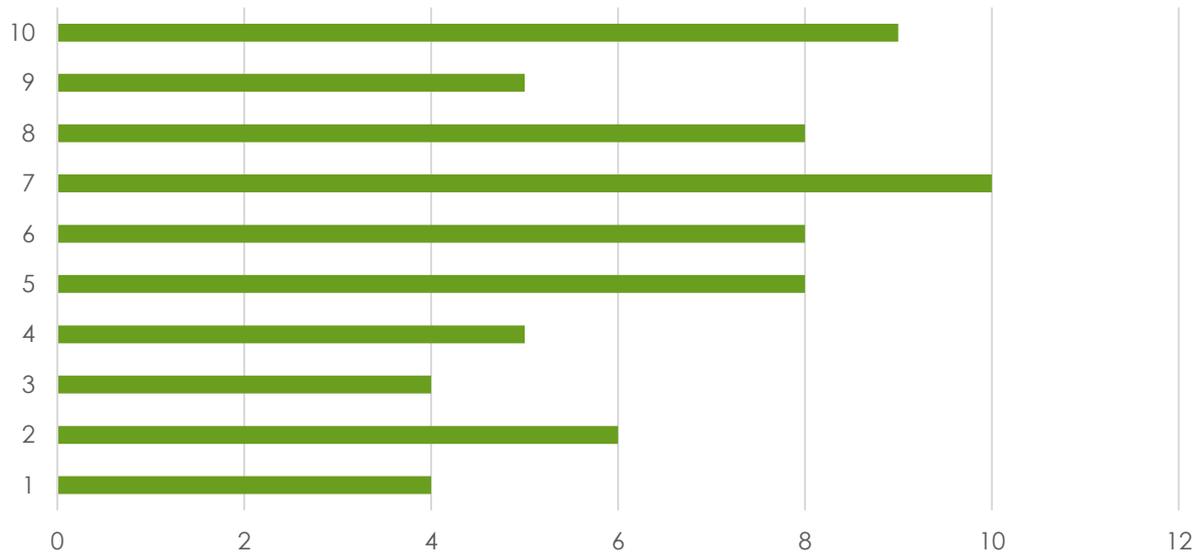
I have trust in my local community institutions (e.g. council and service providers) to act on behalf of community needs.



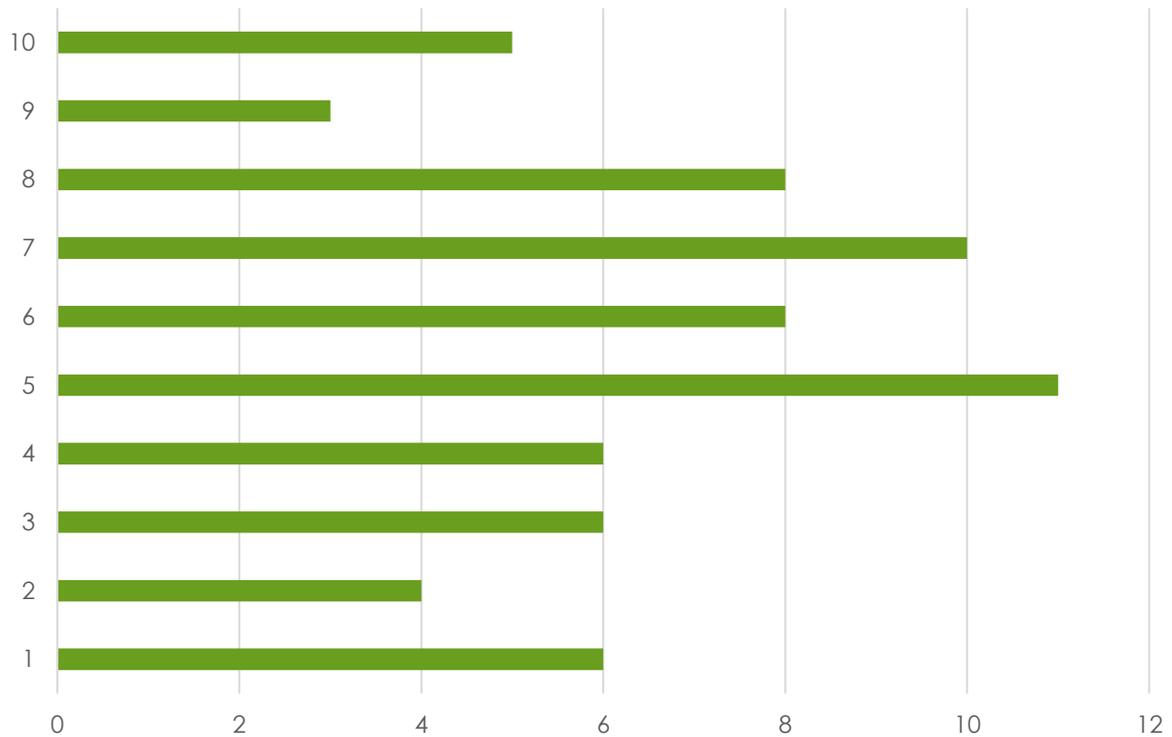
I have trust in my local community members (e.g. my neighbours) to act with community benefit in mind.



It is clear in my local neighbourhood who to ask and where to go for information and assistance when I have a problem.



I feel my voice is heard by those who deliver local services in the community.



Current levels of engagement



It is clear in my local neighbourhood who to ask and where to go for information and assistance when I have a problem.

