



power to
change

business in
community
hands

CENTRE4 PROFILE

EMPOWERING
PLACES

September 2023

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ABOUT **POWER TO CHANGE**



Power to Change is the independent trust that strengthens communities through community business. We use our experience to bring partners together to fund, grow and back community business to make places thrive. We are curious and rigorous; we do, test and learn. And we are here to support community business, whatever the challenge.

ABOUT **RENAISI**



Renaissi is a social enterprise that helps people and places thrive by challenging the root causes of economic and social exclusion across the UK. They do this by empowering people to overcome barriers to employment, enabling social and private sector organisations to tackle socio-economic exclusion, challenging systems that perpetuate exclusion, and embodying approaches that lead to sustainable change.

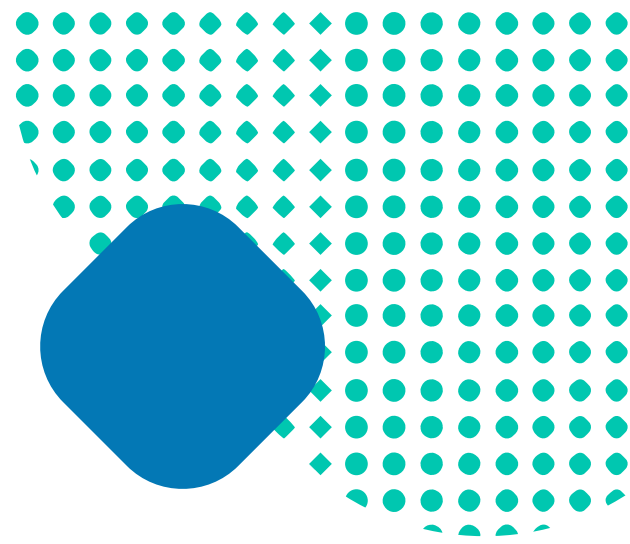


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INTRODUCTION

Empowering Places was designed by [Power to Change](#) as an experiment to explore what happens when local anchor organisations are supported to catalyse community businesses in deprived communities in England.^{1,2}

The programme took much of what Power to Change knew about supporting the development of community businesses in other programmes. It applied this to a place, considering how the interplay between place, people and community businesses could build more resilient and prosperous communities.

The programme hypothesised that building the capacity of specific, existing local organisations could enable them to catalyse and support the growth of new community businesses. In turn, these community businesses would support and develop the social economy of their communities. The programme provided a blend of funding and capacity-building support to locally rooted ‘catalyst’ organisations in six areas of high deprivation to test this idea:³

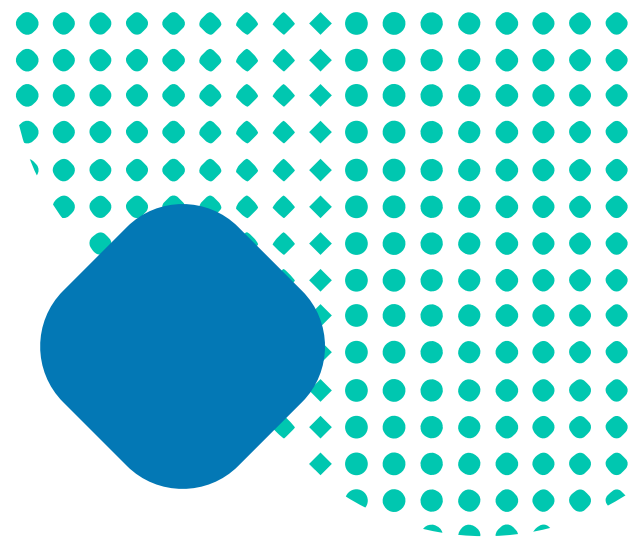
- [B-inspired](#) in Braunstone, Leicester
- [Centre4](#) in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, Grimsby
- [Made in Manningham](#), incubated by [Participate](#) in Manningham, Bradford⁴
- [Real Ideas](#) in Devonport and Stonehouse, Plymouth
- [The Wharton Trust](#) in Dyke House, Hartlepool
- [Wigan and Leigh Community Charity](#) (WLCC), formally Abram Ward Community Cooperative, in Abram, Wigan

Power to Change’s decision to invest in these places was a choice to support and empower local people to shape delivery based on local priorities, meaning the context and the realities of each place play a significant part of how the programme looks and feels in those areas.

This profile for Centre4 is one of six and draws on data and insight from the beginning of the programme (July 2017) to January 2023, including:

- the socio-economic context of Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park in Grimsby, drawing on publicly available datasets and findings from research on the area
- monitoring data from the programme and feedback from qualitative interviews with Power to Change, delivery partners, catalyst staff and community businesses
- information about the catalyst – Centre4 – and its Empowering Places journey.⁵

This profile is designed to tell the story of the Empowering Places investment in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park in Grimsby. Together with the other five profiles in the suite, it helps to build a picture of the similarities and differences in context and approaches across the Empowering Places areas.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

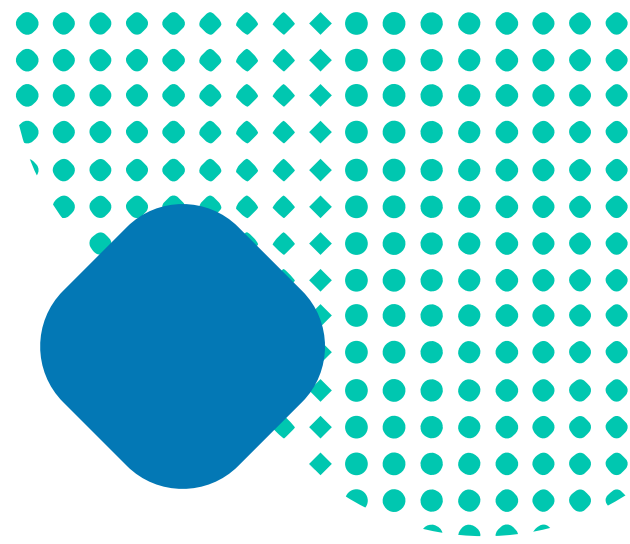


Centre4, is a long-established hub that aims to support the regeneration of North East Lincolnshire through offering an incubator space for small businesses and social enterprises, as well as a range of services for local communities. It aims to create change by supporting business development and encouraging local people to turn ideas into action, providing job opportunities for local people and bringing back green spaces.

This profile explores the social, economic and demographic context of Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park; Centre4's approach to delivering the Empowering Places programme and the programme's impact on the catalyst, community businesses and wider community; and the outlook for Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park's community businesses.

Key points:

- Centre4 is a community hub based in the middle of the Nunsthorpe Estate to the west of Grimsby town, serving the communities of Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park. Challenges faced by the area include low educational attainment, health inequality and low rates of employment.
- Centre4 hosts several businesses, office space to rent, access to a community library, community gym, business amenities and an ethical recruitment agency. It also has a free advisory service and an Ofsted registered nursery, as well as managing the social prescribing service for North East Lincolnshire.
- Through the Empowering Places programme, Centre4 has supported growing community businesses and provided business support to individuals to develop ideas. While not all the ideas that emerged throughout the programme have developed into sustainable community businesses, two of the largest community businesses, ERA and Nunny's Farm, would not have existed in their current form without Empowering Places, and are now fully self-sufficient trading businesses serving the local community.
- Empowering Places has given Centre4 resources to develop new ideas and enhance capacity to strengthen its own infrastructure as well as that of local community businesses. In particular, it has enabled Centre4 to create deeper connections to the community through community organising; as well as supporting the incubation of the Ethical Recruitment Agency (ERA). This connects Centre4 with various local providers and community members, has provided training for local people and supported them into temporary and permanent local jobs.
- Empowering Places has demonstrated the importance of effectively resourcing community engagement and co-ordination to ensure that Centre4 is rooted in the community. This has contributed to a restructuring of the staff team, and driven the catalyst to seek further funding to sustain its offer to local groups and individuals exploring how they might provide a service for those living in the area.



1.

GUIDE TO SOURCES OF DATA AND INSIGHT



The English Indices of Deprivation, managed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, provide a comprehensive measure of relative deprivation in small areas or neighbourhoods called lower-layer super output areas (LSOAs) in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation is based on 39 separate indicators organised across seven domains of deprivation. The domains are combined and weighted to produce an overall measure of multiple deprivation experienced by people living in an area. Every LSOA in England is ranked based on their level of deprivation relative to other areas.⁶

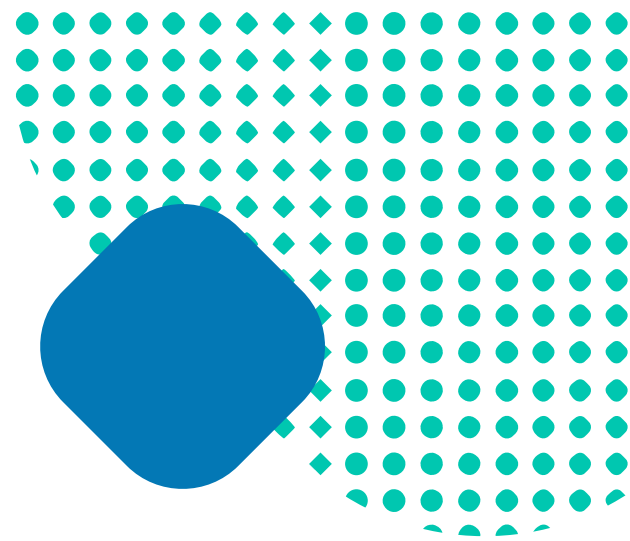
Local Insight is a hub for place-based neighbourhood level data to help decision-makers in organisations working for social good. It is provided by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI), a spin-out consultancy from Oxford University, and holds more than 1,000 neighbourhood level indicators drawing together social, economic and demographic data from more than 50 sources.⁷

The Thriving Places Index draws on a broad range of indicators in public sector datasets measuring key factors that influence wellbeing. The index is managed by the not-for-profit place-based consultancy the Centre for Thriving Places, and provides a comparative 'dashboard' of measures under three broad categories – local conditions, equality and sustainability – with a more detailed breakdown of factors driving the distinctive local experience.⁸

Place Analytics distils thousands of datasets on people, businesses, markets and the environment, providing insight into the performance of places and the levers that fundamentally affect them. It is provided by specialist business advisors Grant Thornton UK to help organisations across all sectors contribute to building a vibrant economy, by creating places where people and businesses can flourish.⁹

UK Social Fabric Index maps community strength in different parts of the UK, and is produced by Onward – a non-profit think tank supported by Power to Change. The index analyses data in four categories – economic value, relationships, positive norms and physical infrastructure – each drawing on several comparative measures of local community experience.¹⁰

The programme evaluation took a realist approach to understanding impact and what has contributed to it, focusing on the experiences of those involved. It drew mainly on interviews and video ethnography with catalysts, community businesses, tech leads and stakeholders in the local areas, and interviews with programme delivery leads at Power to Change and Co-operatives UK. Researchers tracked relevant findings to develop a comprehensive understanding of the development and impact of the programme.



2. NUNSTHORPE AND BRADLEY PARK, GRIMSBY

2.1 Context

Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park are estates to the west of Grimsby, with Nunsthorpe mostly developed in the 1940s after the war, and Bradley Park in the 1970s. Most homes are now owned and managed by social housing providers, after a vote by residents in 2004 to transfer the original council owned stock.¹¹ The housing providers have since made significant investments in upgrading homes on both estates, providing structural repairs and replacing kitchens and bathrooms, and this work is ongoing.

A significant number of properties on the estates are, however, privately rented.

North East Lincolnshire – the local authority where Nunsthorpe is located – has an Index of Multiple Deprivation average score rank of 66 and has at least one neighbourhood in the 10 per cent most deprived areas in the country.¹²

Local insight – Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park¹³

Population	13,503
Household income, after housing costs England average: £27,311	£23,776
White British (%) England: 79.8%	93%
Age under 25 (%) England: 31%	35%
Age 65+ (%) England: 18.2%	12.2%

Thriving Places Index ¹⁴	Grimsby
Health equality e.g. life expectancy at birth	2.79
Mental and physical health e.g. child obesity rate, conceptions in under 18s, illness and disability, prevalence of depression, anxiety and other health indicators	3.92
Education and learning e.g. adults with no qualifications, life-long learning, educational attainment of children, childcare quality and school readiness	3.85
Work and local economy e.g. income deprivation affecting different sections of the population, employment and percentage with low income	2.85
Place and environment local environment, housing, transport and safety, e.g. green land cover, air pollution, journey times to key services, housing affordability ratio and crime severity index	4.90
Subjective happiness Life satisfaction scores from Measures of National Well-being Dashboard: Quality of Life in the UK (ONS)	7.4

Index scores range from 0 to 10. Scores are colour coded to reflect how an area scores compared with others in England, with higher scores indicating that a place is doing better in that domain.

Key: ● Very low (below 3.5) ● Below average (3.5–4.5) ● Medium (4.5–5.5)
 ● Above average (5.5–6.5) ● Very high (above 6.5)

Place Analytics: Local authority area compared with England average ¹⁵	North East Lincolnshire
Housing affordability	80%–100%
Community assets	80%–100%
Employment rate (age 16–64)	Lowest 20%
Business formation	20%–40%
Happiness and wellbeing	60%–80%

Each category is benchmarked using multiple measures and scored (in percentile form) relative to other catalyst areas. The higher the score, the better the place performed.

Percentile key: ● 80–100% Very high ● 60–80% High ● 40–60% Above average ● 20–40% Average
 ● 5–20% Low ● <5% Very low

UK Social Fabric Index ¹⁶						
Local authority	Social fabric score	Relationship score	Physical infrastructure	Civic institutions	Economic value	Positive social norms
North East Lincolnshire	0.38	0.27	0.50	0.38	0.40	0.36
Plymouth	0.45	0.30	0.53	0.46	0.49	0.47
Hartlepool	0.37	0.24	0.48	0.38	0.44	0.33
Leicester	0.42	0.21	0.59	0.49	0.36	0.45
Bradford	0.43	0.28	0.58	0.43	0.43	0.43
Wigan	0.46	0.33	0.57	0.45	0.53	0.45

Scores are graded from zero to one, with those closer to one indicating the stronger social fabric.

Social fabric score: strength of social fabric across all five threads: relationship, physical infrastructure, civic institutions, economic value and positive social norms

Relationship score: clusters of social groups of people in communities and community-owned assets

Physical infrastructure: physical assets in communities which facilitate, structure and organise people within a community

Civic institutions: health of democracy and governance at both local and national level, considering quality, trust and satisfaction

Economic value: tangible assets which hold a monetary and/or economic value to an individual or family within a community

Positive social norms: personal wellbeing and cultural attitudes of individuals and families in a community, including people's wider habits, behaviours and activities

Key: The colour coding reflects the comparative performance of each place in each category. The highest score for each category is dark green, the lowest is dark red.

Community

In the last few decades, several tenant and resident associations have actively sought to improve the local area. Residents have been involved in setting up and running local shops, community and youth centres, restoring parks and open spaces, and addressing anti-social behaviour.

Power to Change surveys in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park in 2020 and 2018, found that people's satisfaction with local services and amenities improved over the two year period. There was also a 7 per cent increase in the proportion who reported that they felt Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

Challenges

The same survey found that there were low levels of trust compared with a matched comparison site and that only 38 per cent of people in the area felt that 'getting involved in their local area could change the way it is run' – 54 per cent felt similarly in the comparison site.

More people also reported that they considered their health 'very bad' in 2020 (4.1%) than in 2018 (1.8%).

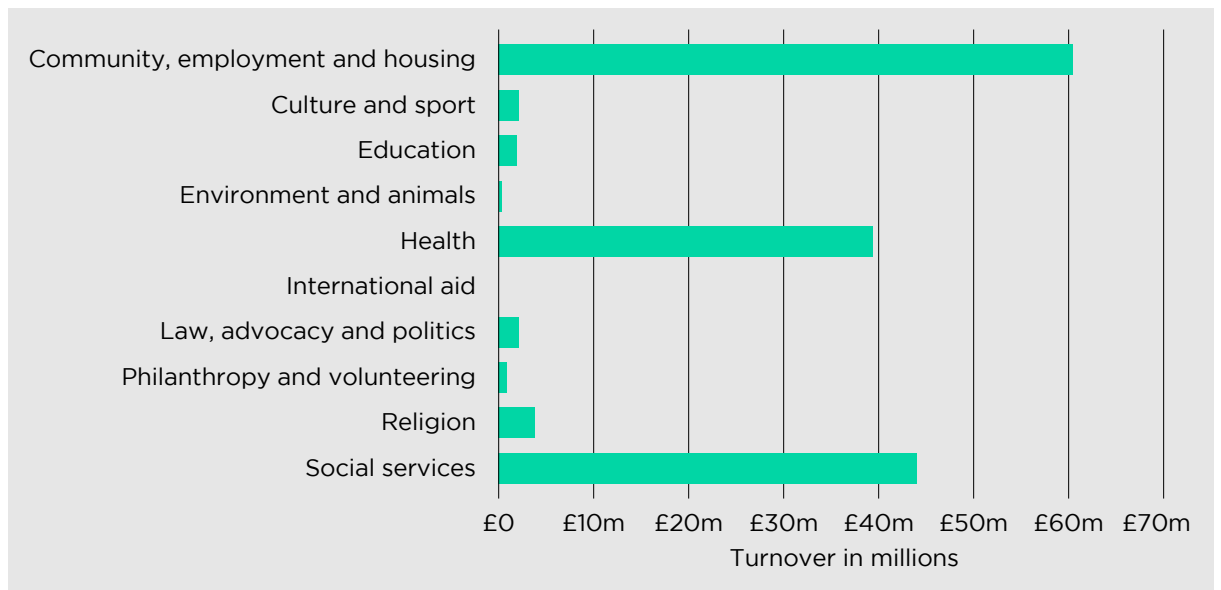
Voluntary and community sector

Turnover data is available for 238 voluntary and community sector organisations in North East Lincolnshire for the 2020/21 financial year. The combined turnover of these organisations was £156.5 million. This includes some schools, religious organisations, grant-making foundations and international aid organisations.¹⁷

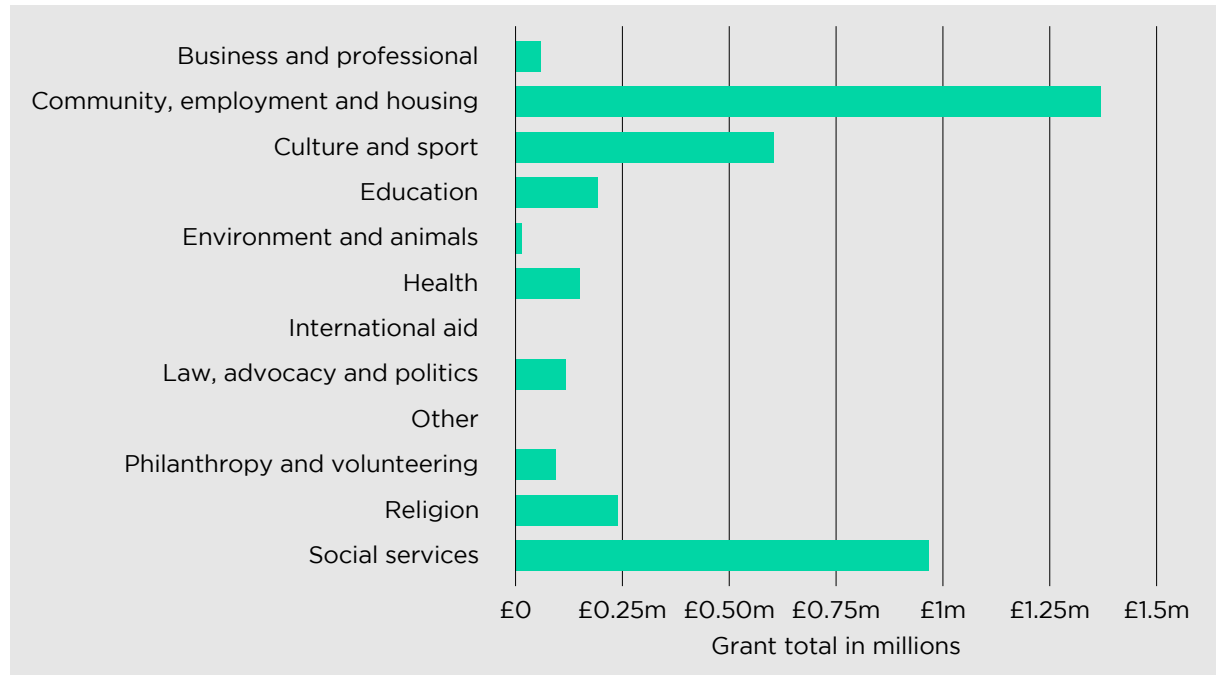
Small- to medium-sized organisations with a turnover between £5,000 and £5 million are most relevant to the programme, as these are the organisations that Empowering Places catalyst organisations are most likely to partner with or influence in their local area. Of the total number of organisations for which turnover data is available in 2020/21, 179 organisations were in this category and had a combined turnover of £27.8 million, accounting for 17.7 per cent of the total £156.5 million turnover.¹⁸

Profitability data for 231 non-profits in North East Lincolnshire in the 2020/21 financial year demonstrates that 39 per cent of organisations experienced a loss. The following chart shows turnover by sector in 2020/21 – community, employment and housing, with 38 organisations, had the highest turnover at £60.7 million, followed by social services with 62 organisations and a turnover of £44.3 million.¹⁹

Turnover by sector in Grimsby in 2020/21²⁰



Grant funding in Grimsby by sector in 2020/21 ²¹



Funding landscape

In 2020/21, North East Lincolnshire received a total of £3.8 million in grant funding, representing 0.07 per cent of national grant funding provided that year. The above chart depicts grant funding in North East Lincolnshire by sector in

2020/21, where community, employment and housing received the most in grants, followed by social services.²²

The following table gives an overview of the funding landscape in North East Lincolnshire, based on the available data.

Funding	Grimsby ²³
Top five significant funders and amounts 2017-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Lottery Heritage Fund (£4 million) The National Lottery Community Fund (£2.9 million) The Henry Smith Charity (£860,000) The Tudor Trust (£607,000) Architectural Heritage Fund (£350,000)

3.

EMPOWERING PLACES

CATALYST: CENTRE4



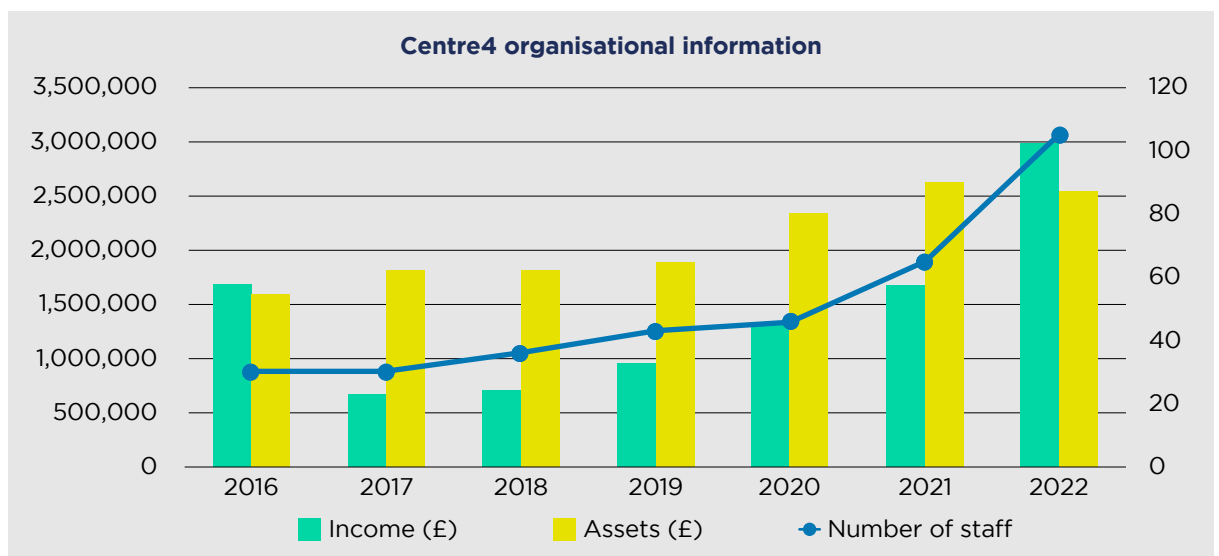
3.1 About the catalyst

Centre4 (formerly Second Avenue Resource Centre) was established in 1995 and exists as a community hub to support the regeneration of North East Lincolnshire. It offers services and activities to the local community as well as incubator space for small businesses and social enterprises.

Centre4 is a community business itself, offering spaces to rent including office space, meeting space, a sports field and a nursery, as well as services and amenities such a community café and a community shop run by tenants from the building.

The Centre4 team also delivers health and wellbeing programmes, access to a community library and business amenities, and a free advisory service and social prescribing for the North East Lincolnshire area.

As of the 2022 financial year-end, Centre4 employed 105 members of staff. The following figure shows Centre4's self-reported total income, value of assets and staff head count between 2016 and 2020.²⁴



3.2 Empowering Places delivery

A legacy for the Empowering Places programme

Centre4's vision is for Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park to be a place where community businesses raise local people's aspirations and transform life chances; a place that embraces the garden city principles on which it was designed, and a place with high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. It hopes that this will make North East Lincolnshire somewhere that people choose to live, where community business will be viewed as an essential part of local economic development plans and the local business landscape.

Approach to delivering Empowering Places

Centre4's approach focuses on bringing green and empty spaces back into use and providing job opportunities for local people. Its focus is on creating change, building profile and supporting business development by encouraging and supporting local people to turn ideas into action. As a small business incubator, Centre4 uses its building and land to host most of the Empowering Places community businesses. This approach has been beneficial for connecting businesses with clients, recipients and other services.



One of the best things about this place is that there's so many different things going on, people come and say "I don't know about that, don't know about that". It connects all those different things.

Delivery partner

Approach to delivering Empowering Places

Centre4 takes a relational approach to working with the community, providing flexible, community-centred advice and support for community businesses and local people with business ideas. This includes supporting with the development of governance structures, business plans and financial accounts. Centre4 also supports the development of community businesses through collaborative working with local enterprise support organisations, such as E-Factor.

Having been trained by Community Organisers UK, Centre4 uses a community organising approach to help build local people's capacity and inspire them to make change for themselves. Empowering Places funding enabled Centre4 to employ two community organisers as staff members to engage with the community and connect with local people who may have business ideas or feel passionate about particular issues in the local area. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Centre4 started a programme of community organising in schools with a local academy and the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education.

Throughout Empowering Places, Centre4 had an ambition to help develop 10 trading community businesses in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park by the end of 2022. Although it catalysed 13 community businesses, not all of these were trading. The catalyst found that supporting an individual to develop an idea into a community business that can sustainably trade was often challenging and unpredictable.

It has supported the development of two successful, sustainable and growing businesses in Nunny's Farm and the Ethical Recruitment Agency (ERA). At the end of the programme both are further ahead in their growth journey than most other businesses across the Empowering Places programme. ERA is the largest community business in Empowering Places and plays a key role in Centre4's approach to supporting the local area through working with local businesses to bring local people into employment.

Relationships and influence

Centre4 has a wide network of both national and local organisations, driven by its established role as a base for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSE) serving Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, and Grimsby more widely. It leases space to a wide range of organisations, including national charities like the Alzheimer's Society and British Red Cross, local service providers such as North East Lincolnshire Carelink and Sector Support, and community businesses like the community shop and café.

As both a landlord and community centre, Centre4 has access to networks of its tenants across the VSCE sector and has regular contact with community members accessing services from the building. However, Centre4 has not always had the capacity to capitalise on these relationships and take a coordinated approach to supporting the local community.

Empowering Places introduced this capacity. Dedicated support from the Empowering Places coordinator and community organisers enabled Centre4 to develop stronger relationships with and between its tenants, to learn from community members visiting the building about what they want from the community hub, and encourage ideas for community businesses.

For example, the Empowering Places coordinator recently supported a collaborative response to the cost-of-living crisis from Connect NEL, Sector Support and thrive.nel, to provide food vouchers for community members in particular need.

In the midst of Empowering Places, Centre4 focused on building relationships with influential local actors in Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park and beyond, including deepening its relationship with the local authority. While resource had to be devoted elsewhere during the pandemic, these relationships continued to strengthen as a result of the Ethical Recruitment Agency's ongoing work with the council and local health and social care providers, which included providing COVID-19 support staff to North East Lincolnshire Council.

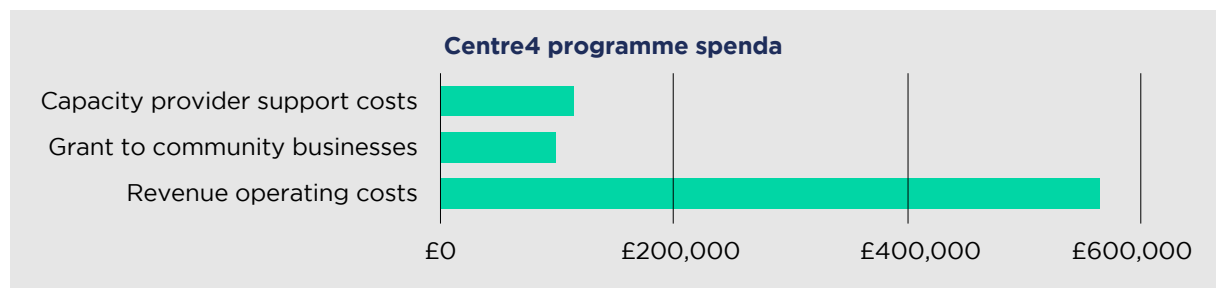
3.3 Support and funding

The following chart provides a breakdown of Centre4's spend across the programme. Operational and staff costs includes the cost of freelance support, and internal costs includes office rental, equipment, travel, subsistence, marketing, communications and events.²⁵

This new focus emerged when anticipated care needs were high, at the beginning of the first pandemic lockdown, and informed the Ethical Recruitment Agency's focus on training for adult social care and connecting with local care homes to offer free recruitment services.

Impact of the capacity support

Centre4 drew on capacity support from Locality to develop and articulate its vision. This support helped it work with more intentionality and realise that outcomes related to care were more aligned to the organisation's skills and experience than, for example, housing.



Empowering Places has resourced the community business hub which supports people to explore and grow their business ideas. The hub is staffed by the Empowering Places Programme coordinator and two community organisers. Collectively they encourage local people to develop ideas for community businesses that tackle local issues. The programme coordinator also provides business support helping local people to establish community businesses, and raising the profile of community businesses by influencing local partners.

The Centre4 team would not be supporting local businesses directly in this way were it not for Empowering Places. Part of the programme's remit is strengthening and developing Centre4 as a community business itself, ensuring a sustainable future legacy for the programme.

3.4 Impact of Empowering Places

Impact on Centre4

The Empowering Places programme has given Centre4 the time, capacity and drive to explore how it can most effectively serve the community in Nunsthorpe. It has been able to develop a range of community businesses that respond to community needs and connect Centre4 more deeply to the community it serves. This has included user-managed services requiring limited resource – operating from Centre4 in response to the shifting needs and interests of the community, like the gym, tool library and thrift shop – alongside establishing the larger staffed community businesses Nunny's Farm and the Ethical Recruitment Agency. These have developed sustainable models which will continue to build the social, economic and emotional wellbeing of the local community beyond Empowering Places.

Centre4's place at the heart of the Nunsthorpe estate, and the range of VCSE services that cohabit there, make it ideal as a community hub. Empowering Places has, however, demonstrated that truly relational working requires additional investment, and the programme coordinator and community organisers have helped Centre4 to join up and coordinate services in the building, providing more holistic support to address multiple needs.

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People will come in for the café and may then use the community library, then they might think “Oh, I need ... the advice service” that they offer

External stakeholder

The community organising approach has also given Centre4 the tools and capacity to engage the community, bring more people into the services in the building, understand how best to use the space to serve the community, and encourage people to use it to develop their own community businesses. For example, when the community food coordinator from Sector Support was developing a community orchard in Centre4, community organisers facilitated listening sessions to involve local people in designing it.

Impact on the community and wider place

Community businesses supported by the catalyst

Community business name	Community business purpose
Callie's Baby Clothing	Selling second-hand and new baby items, with surplus given to babies in the community
Community Gym	Bringing together local providers to train and support local fitness
Community Orchard	Using under-utilised and waste land to create an urban orchard and garden that will feed and educate local people as well as serving as a new communal green space
Craft Collective	Local crafters coming together to sell collectively online, at markets and from local premises
Daisy's Wish	Takes and makes donations of sports kit to help remove barriers to accessing sports activities
Ethical Recruitment Agency	Helps local people develop the skills required to access employment opportunities and works with businesses to place them
Musical Arts Stage Theatrical Productions	Theatre group aiming to be accessible to all who want to be involved from performance to back stage, offering learning and support programme for dancing, singing, acting, scriptwriting and all aspects of production
Callies Baby Clothing	Selling second hand and new baby items, surplus given to babies in community.
Community Gym	Bringing together local providers to train and support, aims to be community owned.
Community Orchard	Uses waste land to create a community orchard.
Craft Collective	Local crafters coming together to sell collectively online and at markets or from local premises.
Daisy's Wish	Takes sports kits donations to remove barriers re access to sports activities

Impact of Empowering Places on individuals, community business and the wider community

The Ethical Recruitment Agency (ERA), incubated and set up by Centre4 using Empowering Places funding, has gone from strength to strength. They have placed 108 people into permanent employment, and 180 into temporary work on their payroll. They are now starting their first year as a fully self-sufficient business without any grant funding, have taken on new staff to increase capacity, and hope to make a surplus in future years to invest back in the local community.

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they've created local jobs with a local organisation and that's therefore provided them money to spend within this area, whether it be at local markets, or local shops ...

Local stakeholder

Seed funding during the middle years of the programme enabled ERA to explore a range of potential other functions alongside recruitment. This included working with social action and volunteering platform Zlto, to explore how they might support someone's journey from involvement in social action to employment or into community business, and exploring a digital skills offer, ICT Buddies. However, in adjusting its business model for sustainability, it has focused efforts on the recruitment service, enabling staff to devote time to strategic networks with local businesses and public sector partners, helping them understand the skills needs of the local economy and placing candidates in suitable local jobs. This has manifested in its council-funded Proud to Care Academy, supporting those with unpaid care experience by providing 'on the job' training (with payment) at a local care home, and helping them find work.

Other community businesses supported by Centre4 have also started to deliver positive outcomes for the community. The community gym, for example, with an annual £10 membership and cheap sessions for non-members, has allowed people to socialise and make new connections while giving some of the more involved members a sense of ownership, with responsibly for running it. Having closed during the pandemic, it has now reopened under the enthusiastic leadership of a community member who also works in Centre4. Another Centre4 service, thrive. nel social prescribing, is now exploring programmes with the community gym to improve physical activity and social connection for those referred to them.

Nunny's Farm, based on the old sports field at Centre4, focuses on providing health and wellbeing activities and has been involved in local social prescribing initiatives. Its current focus is on engaging young people from the community in work on the farm, with a particular focus on those who are identified as at risk of exclusion from education. It has also used seed funding to create a link with the community by making videos about the animals and some of the daily tasks on the farm. These were used on the farm's website and social media channels to raise awareness and encourage donations. Set up with Empowering Places funding, Nunny's Farm is now a self-sustaining community business exploring diversifying its offer, with current plans including a possible pre-school organised around outdoor activity.

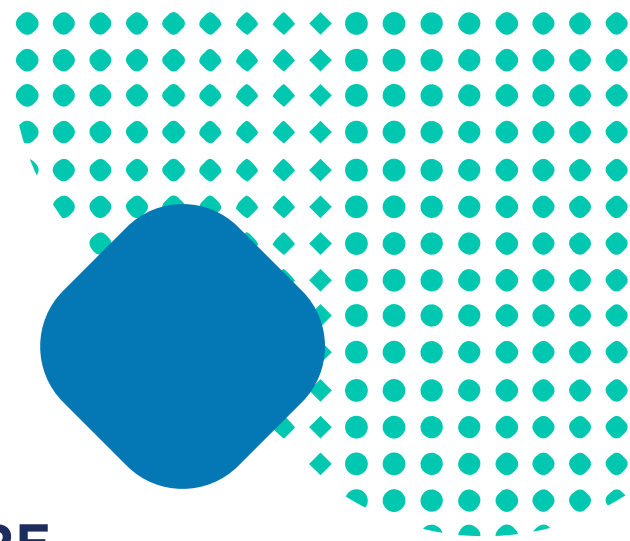
3.5 The COVID-19 pandemic

Impact on the delivery of Empowering Places

COVID-19 had an immediate impact on Centre4's ability to rent out rooms, and two tenants were forced to give notice almost immediately. However, the team managed to fill rooms quickly with a wellbeing service and the Lincolnshire Housing Partnership. The organisation also used the period of 'downtime' to raise its profile and grow its client base.

The pandemic perversely played a critical role in the development of ERA, who were able to take on multiple temporary and permanent contracts for the council during lockdown. They were able to help people into work, provide training and build confidence throughout the pandemic. A major achievement was setting up a payroll system for temporary staff to meet the needs of local employers in the unstable climate of the pandemic, where demands for staff fluctuated and longer-term financial commitments were harder to make. They are continuing to develop more robust systems to expand capacity and sustainability, and have used seed funding to develop a customer relationship management system and take on an apprentice.

Staff reflected that one of the biggest impacts of the pandemic on the programme team was on their relationships with those interested in starting up new community businesses. The pandemic led many to focus on their immediate physical and financial security, and that of those in their immediate social circles. This led to significant disengagement, as individuals prioritised caring for those close to them and maintaining jobs that were perceived as less risky than starting a community business. Rebuilding relationships across the community, listening to how needs and priorities shifted during the pandemic, and promoting the opportunities that a community business offers has been the main post-pandemic focus of community organisers. This included a listening event with support from the council to explore the persistent fear and trauma that many community members continued to experience after the pandemic, and to gather ideas for how Centre4 could help the community recover.



4. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Empowering Places has given Centre4 the capacity and momentum to explore its roles in the community – as a connector, listener and incubator for community ideas. Although Centre4 will no longer have a dedicated team to resource these functions, a recognition of the need to embed these functions into the organisation itself will be a key legacy of the programme. The staff team has restructured, ensuring there is proactive relationship-building across the organisation aligned to four key thematic pillars: health and wellbeing; community engagement, education and employability; children, young people and families; and financial sustainability. Each of these pillars has a director responsible for connecting tenants working on that area to support the local community.

Centre4 continues to subsidise community groups to use the Hubble – a space in Centre4 that served as the community business hub during Empowering Places, where local entrepreneurs could test and develop ideas – at a discounted rate. As this will be financially unsustainable in the long term, the team is seeking further funding to ensure that affordable space continues to be available to micro community businesses. This includes grants to explore a smaller more accessible space that groups would find more affordable than the Hubble, alongside funding for a creative coordinator that can engage and bring more community groups into this space.

The community organising approach has left Centre4 convinced of the importance of resourcing community relationship-building, to maintain its local rootedness. This has been embedded across the organisation's planning, recently reflected in a listening exercise to support the redesign of the front section of the building to ensure it is aligned with the community's hopes and aspirations.

“
We have developed a practice of listening to the community which we now bring across everything
Delivery partner

4.1 Sustainability

Centre4 is an established and financially sustainable organisation, with consistent rental income ensuring it can continue to provide services and spaces for the community. While the offer that Centre4 developed with Empowering Places funding cannot be maintained in the same form without further grant funding, it has been embedded in the practice of a sustainable community centre rooted in the local place it serves. The Centre4 team is also confident it can leverage funding into additional community activity to help them go beyond their role as a landlord, recently justified by a grant from the Youth Investment Fund which is enabling them to develop their youth offer in line with community needs.

ENDNOTES



- 1 Power to Change describes itself as: 'the independent trust that strengthens communities through community business. We use our experience to bring partners together to fund, grow and back community business to make places thrive. We are curious and rigorous; we do, test, and learn. And we are here to support community business, whatever the challenge.'
- 2 Informed by the 2015 English indices of deprivation (the most recent data available at the time). Available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>
- 3 Marsh Farm Futures in Luton was the seventh member of the Empowering Places cohort; its involvement with the programme ended in August 2019, shortly after Renaisi joined as evaluators.
- 4 Originally incubated by Action for Business Ltd in Carlisle Business Centre, Manningham.
- 5 An earlier version of this profile (2021) focused on qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6 English Indices of Deprivation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-indices-of-deprivation>
- 7 Local Insight: <https://ocsi.uk/local-insight/>
- 8 Thriving Places Index: <https://www.thrivingplacesindex.org/>
- 9 Place Analytics: <https://gt-placeanalytics.co.uk/>
- 10 UK Social Fabric Index: <https://www.ukonward.com/data/social-fabric-index/>
- 11 Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (previously called Shoreline Housing), the Guinness Partnership and the Longhurst Group.
- 12 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2022.
- 13 Local Insight (2019).
- 14 Thriving Places Index (2020).
- 15 Place Analytics, local authority-wide (2019).
- 16 UK Social Fabric Index (2020).
- 17 MyCake analysis of Companies House and Charity Commission Data, Office for National

Statistics (April 2020).

18 *ibid.*

19 *ibid.*

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid.*

22 *ibid.*

23 Data from 360Giving, a charity that helps organisations to publish open, standardised grants data. For more information, see: GrantNav.

24 Power to Change annual grantee survey (2020), The data presented here is self-reported by the catalyst organisation to Power to Change.

25 The grant to community businesses includes a grant of £59,000 to ERA, although this was directly awarded to them.



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