



Evaluation of the Small Steps Big Changes Ideas Fund



Final Report

**November 2024
By David Waterfall**



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Front page images (from top):

- St Ann's Community Orchard, "*New Shoots*", 2024
- The Toy Library, "*Twigglers*", 2016
- Nottingham Literacy Volunteers "*Learning to Love Books*", 2024.

Executive Summary

Background

“A Better Start” was a ten-year £215 million programme set-up by The National Lottery Community Fund to improve the life chances of babies and very young children by changing the way services are commissioned and delivered. The programme funded local partnerships in five areas across England and delivery in Nottingham was branded as “*Small Steps Big Changes*” (SSBC) hosted by Nottingham CityCare Partnership CIC as a £45m transformation programme April 2015 to March 2025. SSBC sought to positively impact outcomes for 0-4-year-old children across three standard A Better Start outcomes: ‘communication and language’, ‘social and emotional development’ and ‘nutrition’. There was also an additional outcome that focused on sustainability and system change across the partnership, which was the specific focus of a dedicated area of SSBC’s delivery - the Ideas Fund.

The Ideas Fund was launched in 2016 and focused on sustainability and system change across the SSBC partnership to promote and support community-based commissioning and asset-based approaches. It funded small-scale local activity that focused on 0-4s in one or more of four target wards and that aligned with at least one of the outcomes. It was a flexible fund that was able to respond to changing local need, for example in 2020 offering Covid support that removed ward restrictions.

Central to the Ideas Fund was the adoption of a ‘test and learn’ approach throughout, which enabled groups to take an idea and see what works, and why, and identified learning for how to successfully create meaningful impact locally for 0-4s and their families.

Methodology

The methodology adopted a dual approach: Stage 1 involved a detailed review of existing documentation held to identify what information had been provided by grantees and what that showed, while Stage 2 involved engagement with a sample of contacts to build an evidence base that could explore three evaluation aims (start-up experiences, effective project delivery, and community-based commissioning). The findings from both stages were reviewed to understand the project’s overall performance.

Performance

Across its lifetime 91 projects were funded, several receiving repeat funding, and in total SSBC awarded £1,004,414 to projects (2016 to 2025). The evaluation considered available evidence in relation to three aims, with a summary of findings including:

- **Aim 1 - Start-up Experiences**

Grantees used local family feedback to inform their project concept, embedding the principle of co-design from the outset, and most organisations continued engagement with families during the grant to further hone delivery. All grantees accessed some form of support available from SSBC, with particular use of the Development Day to help shape emerging applications, contact with the Senior Project Officer to provide ongoing organisational support, and attendance at regular Learning and Networking Events for themed support and ideas sharing.

- **Aim 2 - Effective Project Delivery**

Providers learned much about effective Early Years delivery, not only organisations that did not have a history with this age range but also experienced providers who were able to trial new ways of working. The funding facilitated increased engagement - not only with families and communities, but also with other providers through collaboration and sharing of resources. While a mix of terminology was used to describe achievements (such as outputs, outcomes, or impact) all projects considered their delivery to be a success. Frequently cited examples included embedding behaviour change within families, parents reporting improvements with their child, and gaining operational learning they could use to inform future projects. Many grantees considered that the paperwork was a challenge, especially that the scale of monitoring data requested was excessive and disproportionate to the amount of the grant received. All grantees had a willingness to continue their activity, subject to fundraising.

- **Aim 3 - Community-Based Commissioning**

Use of Nottinghamshire Community Foundation as the fund manager provided independence, expertise and reduced SSBC administration. It was important for the fund to be flexible and SSBC was quick to pivot and adapt to local need, for example for the cost-of-living crisis support in 2023. The Evaluation Panel embedded the principles of co-production as this brought SSBC colleagues, partner representatives, and Parent Champions together to make locally informed decisions. The fund successfully put funding directly into the heart of communities, not only strengthening local provider sustainability but also identifying a model for positive local change.

Key Learning

Overall, the Ideas Fund sought to:

- 'Test and learn' from new ways of working.
- Promote community-based commissioning.
- Support asset-based approaches.

It achieved all of these. Furthermore, specific areas of learning included:

- Investing in grass roots organisations allows them space to experiment to see what works best, and why.
- Funding longer-term activity supports organisations to be more sustainable, develop and embed activities and helps build trust with local families.
- Being flexible within the funding model allows for a quick response to both emerging and urgent needs in the community.
- Achieving robust project planning, data collection, impact evaluation and long-term sustainability require organisations to have technical and financial resources.
- Strengthening links between community organisations and statutory services takes time and mutual benefits to be acknowledged, and community-based commissioning is a positive approach toward delivering this.

However, arguably the greatest legacy is that funded projects reached more families - and new audiences that may not have traditionally engaged - all of whom have been supported to access local support, and once SSBC ends this behaviour change can continue to benefit families and their wider community.

1 Terms of Reference

1.1 Commission Summary

Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) appointed David Waterfall to undertake an intensive meta-evaluation of its “*Ideas Fund*” project activity, which is part of its 10-year £45m transformation programme supported by The National Lottery Community Fund’s (the Community Fund) A Better Start (ABS) initiative.

1.2 Report Purpose

The anticipated objectives for the evaluation were to:

- Review the start-up and delivery experience of funded projects including quality of engagement with constituent community bodies, partners, and parents.
- Review what has helped and hindered projects in effective delivery and achieving their goals.
- Assess the contributions made to SSBC’s goals for community-based commissioning including learning for future service delivery or innovations.

The evaluation process included two stages:

- **Stage 1:** a detailed review of projects funded to identify the scope of data available for analysis, overall performance, and how Stage 2 should be approached.
- **Stage 2:** consultation with a range of audiences to inform key evaluation questions relating to overall performance of the Ideas Fund.

This report accounts for findings across both stages of the commission.

1.3 Agreed Methodology

The approach was agreed in advance with SSBC, split between Stage 1 and Stage 2 delivery. In outline this included:

- Review of background information and operational documentation for funded projects, predominantly the formal Monitoring Form(s). It was recognised by SSBC that there was considerable diversity in the monitoring approach adopted during the Fund’s lifetime and inconsistencies in the depth of information that had been provided by grantees within the Monitoring Forms.
- Direct 1:1 engagement with a sample of projects, SSBC colleagues, and wider stakeholders to gain a diverse range of viewpoints.
- Routine discussions with the project team, including presentations to SSBC’s Research, Evaluation and Learning Group.

Ongoing contact was maintained with SSBC throughout the commission including taking feedback, considering emerging findings, and updating on progress.

2 Background

2.1 A Better Start

“A Better Start” was the ten-year (2015-2025) £215 million programme set-up by The National Lottery Community Fund.

Its aim was to improve the life chances of babies and very young children by changing the way services are commissioned and delivered, involving parents as equal partners, to shift attitudes and spending towards preventing problems that can start in early life. It was place-based and sought to create approaches, relationships and services which better supported people and communities to thrive. It focused on four outcomes:

A Better Start - Outcomes

- Improving children’s diet and nutrition to support healthy physical development and protect against illness in later life.
- Supporting children to develop social and emotional skills so they can develop positive relationships and cope with difficult situations.
- Helping children develop their language and communication skills, so that they can engage with the world around them.
- Bring about ‘systems change’; that is to change, for the better, the way that local health, public services and the voluntary and community sector work together with parents to improve outcomes for children.

The programme funded local partnerships in five areas across England to test new ways of making support and services for families stronger: Blackpool, Bradford, Lambeth, Southend-On-Sea, and Nottingham.

Delivery in Nottingham, was hosted by Nottingham CityCare Partnership CIC, under the name ‘Small Steps Big Changes’.

2.2 Small Steps Big Changes

Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) was a 10 year £45m transformation programme hosted by Nottingham CityCare Partnership CIC, delivered April 2015 to March 2025. SSBC was a partnership working through co-production and parent powered change to focus on giving every child the best start in life by helping children to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives. It worked with a range of partners including parents, health & social care professionals, early years workforce, community representatives, universities and city leaders. This ‘workforce’ was supported by parent volunteers who guided the programme as it changed and helped communicate with families in their local communities.

SSBC’s Core Principle was “*Children at the heart, parents leading the way, supported and guided by experts*” with the overarching aim of “*We want all our children to be ready to learn at 2, ready for school at 5 and ready for life at 16!*”

SSBC operated across four communities (Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's). The services commissioned in these areas were delivered by a range of local partners and providers and were offered free to families. The programme sought to positively impact outcomes for 0-4-year-old children across three standard A Better Start outcomes: 'communication and language', 'social and emotional development' and 'nutrition'. 'Engagement' was also added by SSBC to reflect the local situation. There was also an additional outcome that focused on sustainability and systems change across the partnership, which was the specific focus of a dedicated area of SSBC's delivery - the Ideas Fund.

2.3 Ideas Fund

2.3.1 Background

The Ideas Fund (previously known as the Innovations Fund) was focused on sustainability and system change across the SSBC partnership. The main goal was to promote and support community-based commissioning and asset-based approaches. For the purposes of the Ideas Fund, SSBC adopted the standard Local Government Association definition of asset-based commissioning, being an approach to, *"Enabling people and communities, together with organisations, to become equal co-commissioners and co-producers, and also via self-help, make best complimentary use of all assets to improve whole life and community outcomes."*

The projects supported through the Ideas Fund were small scale and funded for between 1-3 years with up to £30K, had to align with one or more of the SSBC child development outcomes and aimed to support families and build community capacity. Across its delivery, the Ideas Fund supported a variety of projects (some of which were awarded subsequent funding, resulting in longer project durations):

- 2016 - 8 funded projects, of varying duration up to five years.
- 2017 - 6 funded projects, of varying duration up to four years.
- 2018 - 13 funded projects, of varying duration up to three years.
- 2019 - 7 funded projects, of varying duration up to two years.
- 2020 - 19 funded projects, all one year in duration.
- 2021 - 13 funded projects, all of three-year duration.
- 2023 - 9 funded projects, all one-year but as they were in operation during Stage 1 they were without monitoring data and as such not included within this evaluation.

2.3.2 Delivery

The Ideas Fund was multi-faceted and included a broad range of support available for grantees and several formal procedures, supported by Nottinghamshire Community Foundation (NCF) on the administration of the grants. Those that hold relevance to this evaluation are outlined below to provide context for the remainder of this report:

- **Governance Structure:** the formal governance model is included in the Appendices in full. In outline it involved a robust process of accountability and sign-off from initial approval for launch of the Ideas Fund, through application and award of grants, to ongoing monitoring protocols and responsibility.
- **Application Process:** this operated in line with the approved governance structure, with an outline included in the Appendices. In essence this was a clear procedure from the

annual opening of the process, through the role of the award panel and the approval process, through to eventual evaluation of completed project activity.

- **Project Planning Template:** this was a two-page template that each grantee completed during the design of their project application. A copy of the Template is included in the Appendices. It supported grantees to think about the ‘*what?*’, ‘*who?*’ and ‘*how?*’ of their delivery model, and the requirements for marketing, evaluation and data collection.
- **Change Request Log:** this was developed by NCF and a copy is included in the Appendices. It was designed to provide grantees with a standard form on which to notify SSBC of any changes to their project that differed from their plan, especially any budgetary changes. The Request Log was also used for requests for additional funding, or for requests to carry over funding if activity hadn’t gone as intended.
- **Parent Champions:** these acted as representatives of their community, working with a range of professionals to help them understand and meet what local families want and need. There were 16 Parent Champions over the 10 years of SSBC. A Role Description is included in the Appendices. In outline the role provided an opportunity for local people to have their voice heard at the highest levels and make a real difference for the families in their area, to help senior decision makers and frontline staff design and deliver the highest quality of service.
- **SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events:** the original intention was to have learning and networking days on a six-monthly basis as part of the 2021 fund for all funded organisations. A timetable of delivery is included in the Appendices. These were adapted over time to respond to grantee feedback, such as reducing their duration from a full day to a half day and introducing wider Early Years partners to encourage networking and collaboration.
- **SSBC Named Advisor:** this was the main point of contact between the grantee and the SSBC programme. A Role Description is included in the Appendices. In outline the role acknowledged that the type of support a project needed can vary, and that the Named Advisor would make quarterly contact to ensure the project is on track and give the project opportunities to discuss any issues and share successes.

3 Aims of the Evaluation

3.1 Evaluation Aims

The intention was that the evaluation (across Stage 1 and Stage 2) would consider the available evidence base in relation to three evaluation aims:

- **Aim 1:** To review the start-up and delivery experience of funded projects including quality of engagement with constituent community bodies, partners, and parents.
- **Aim 2:** To review what has helped and hindered projects in effective delivery and achieving their goals.
- **Aim 3:** To assess the contributions made to SSBC's goals for community-based commissioning including learning for future service delivery or innovations.

Gaining evidence was approached in a variety of ways across each stage of delivery.

3.2 Approach to Stage 1

The purpose of Stage 1 was a detailed review of the documentation held, to identify what information had been provided by grantees and an initial consideration of what that information showed. A subsequent purpose was to identify the focus for the more detailed Stage 2 research, such as which projects would be included and why this was the case.

Stage 1 was also to be mindful of previous evaluations of the Fund undertaken by Nottingham Trent University (NTU). Of relevance to this evaluation is the '*Evaluation of Small Steps Big Changes: Annual Report 2023*' that had two recommendations for the Ideas Fund:

- *"Provide information about future Ideas Fund events in advance; and*
- *Be clearer about the amount of monitoring data required of projects receiving grants from the Ideas Fund."*

Furthermore, the NTU '*Evaluation of Small Steps Big Changes: Final Report 2023*' highlighted several Key Findings, which included:

- *"The amount of monitoring data required was not always clear at the start, and projects needed to factor in time to gather it. However, SSBC take a flexible approach to this;*
- *Implementation of project as described: For various reasons, not all SSBC interventions operated as originally planned, and in some cases there were variations between wards;*
- *Lack of access to relevant data has been a problem throughout the evaluation."*

Acknowledging the NTU findings, the primary source of evidence for this SSBC Ideas Fund evaluation has been the end of year Monitoring Form, as this presented a roundup of what had actually been achieved; rather than the original project application form that outlined what it was hoped could be achieved.

The extent of information provided in the Monitoring Forms varied greatly between grantees, with many responses not maximising the opportunity to fully answer the questions posed or link their narrative to the activity they had provided. Also, the Monitoring Form itself altered

between years. As such, the consistency of the analysed data over the Fund lifetime is low, resulting in a challenge when comparing responses across the full delivery timeframe.

The findings from the Stage 1 research are included in the following section.

3.3 Approach to Stage 2

Stage 2 involved rolling engagement to build an evidence base that could respond to the three evaluation aims. Contacts were agreed falling into one of three categories, and each was approached to schedule a suitable time for an interview to gain their views on the evaluation aims, for those contacts not engaged this was due to a lack of response from them:

- **SSBC and Wider Colleagues:** eight targets approached and six were available to contact, 75% engagement.
- **Broader Stakeholders:** eight targets approached and five were available to contact, 63% engagement. Contacts covered Nottingham City Council, Framework Housing Association, and Nottingham CityCare Partnership CIC.
- **Ideas Fund Grantees:** 15 targets approached and 12 were available to contact, 80% engagement.

The interviews involved a series of specific questions designed by the SSBC team with input from an independent academic evaluation expert, with a different set of questions for each target category to provide a variety of perspectives and insight to inform the evaluation aims. Given the duration of the Ideas Fund some of the points of contact, grantees in particular, were for newer staff that were not in post when the projects were initiated or were involved later in the process when paperwork and support had changed.

Feedback was analysed through a desk-based approach including review of interview notes, key points synthesis, and identifying commonalities and differences between viewpoints. Feedback is summarised below collating commentary from all targets, noting that all respondents were assured anonymity - and several specifically requested this - to encourage openness and critical reflection.

The findings from the Stage 2 research are considered in terms of each of the three evaluation Aims and are included in separate sections later in this report.

4 Project Analysis

4.1 Grantee Overview

The Stage 1 analysis involved a detailed review of the monitoring return(s) provided by each individual funded project. This led to the development of a series of tables to provide information in as much a standardised format as possible, acknowledging inconsistencies in project documentation, which is available as a standalone report.

Taking all of the individual project activity into account, overall findings may be grouped for ease by category in terms of:

- **Funding Allocation** (how was funding allocated, how much, and where)
- **Beneficiary Numbers** (who was reached, and how many)
- **Monitoring Form Responses** (how were questions approached)

Each of these is considered below.

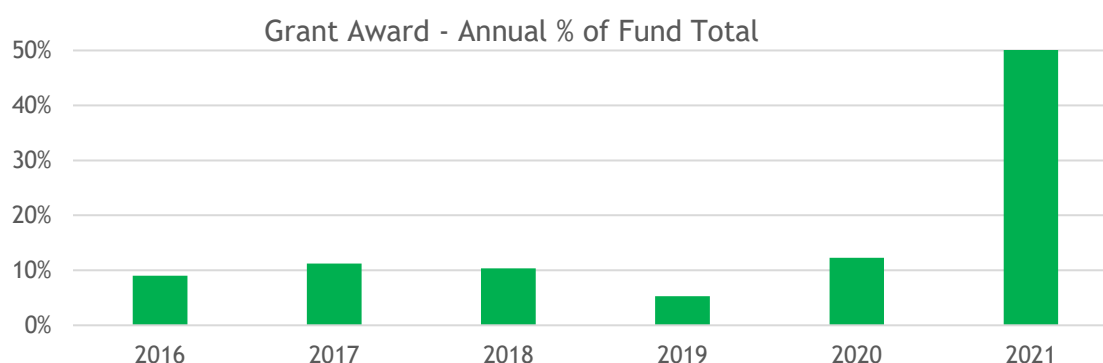
4.2 Funding Allocation^[DW1]

Key trends include:

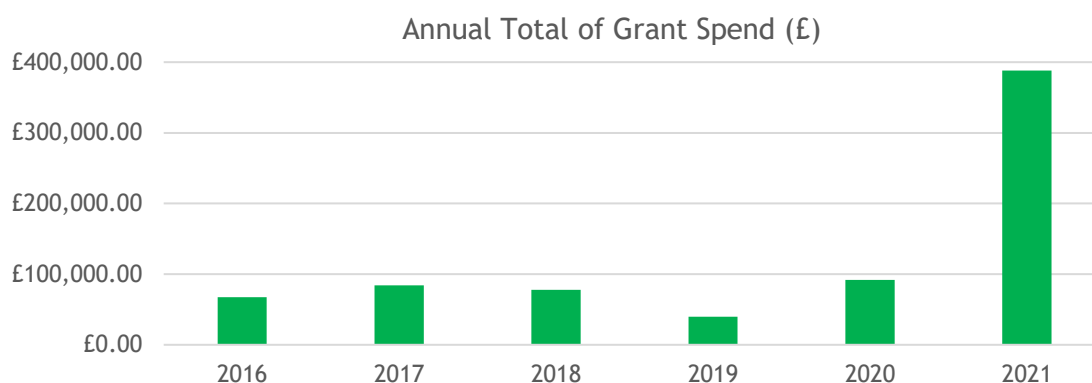
4.2.1 Grant Award

The data below shows total levels of grants awarded each year from the first year of being funded; so if a project was initially funded in 2020 for two years its total would be accounted for in 2020 to show the commitment and intentions of the Fund.

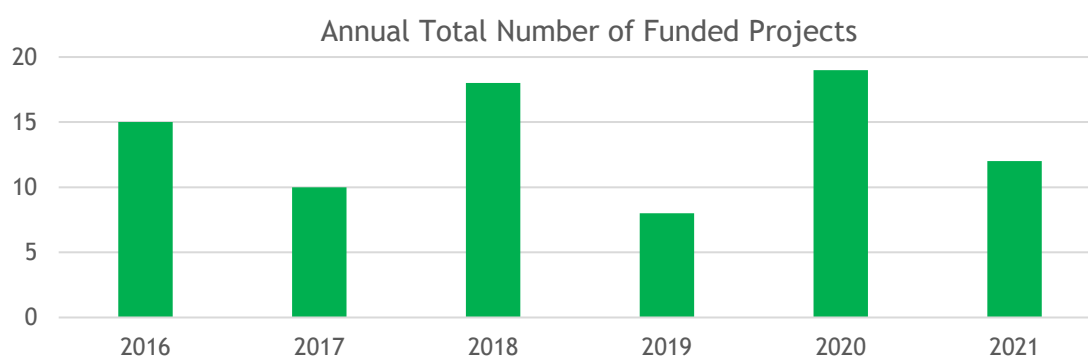
Level of Grant Award by Year				
Year	Total £ Funded	% of Total Funding	Projects (incl repeats)	£ Av/ Project
2016	£67,378	9%	15	£4,491
2017	£84,298	11%	10	£8,429
2018	£77,684	10%	18	£4,315
2019	£39,707	5%	8	£4,963
2020	£91,886	12%	19	£4,836
2021	£388,297	50%	12	£32,358
Total	£749,252	100%	82	£9,137



As expected, the annual level of grant awarded increased significantly in 2021 when the project-level grant limit was increased, as shown below:



The average grant per project was £9,137. However, if the increased 2021 year is discounted, the average reduces to £5,156. The number of projects funded per year fluctuates, although not directly mirroring the overall level of grant allocated; for example, 2020 supported 19 projects with a total of some £92,000, whereas 2018 funded 18 projects for some £78,000:



In total SSBC will have awarded £1,004,414 to projects (2016 to 2025).

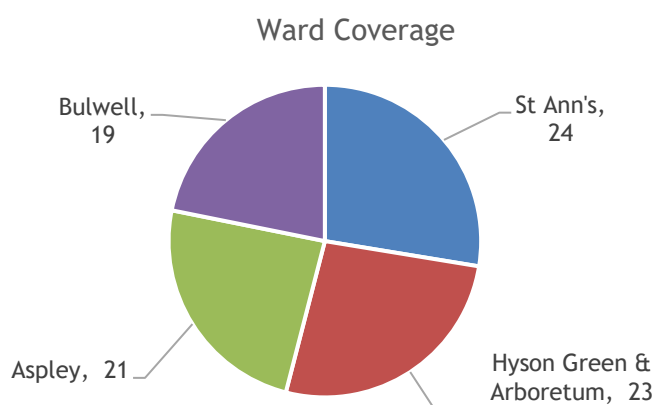
4.2.2 Wards

The data shows the ward coverage of project delivery.

Ward Coverage by Year					
Year	All Wards	Aspley	Hyson Green & Arboretum	Bulwell	St Ann's
2016	1	2	2	2	2
2017	3	0	0	1	2
2018	5	2	4	0	2
2019	2	2	3	0	1
2020	Covid Response - so not ward restricted				
2021	5	2	2	1	3
Total	15	6	8	4	9

If those projects that delivered in “all wards” are counted as delivery in each of the four individual wards, the total spread is shown in the table and chart. This shows that St Ann’s had the greatest coverage, compared to Bulwell with the least. It should be noted that the evaluation panels did consider the spread of projects across wards, acknowledging that some areas did have more viable applications potentially linking with either the number of providers based in a ward and/ or where organisation had existing relationships to support delivery such as a school, nursery or library.

Project Delivery by Ward	
Ward	Total
St Ann's	24
Hyson Green & Arboretum	23
Aspley	21
Bulwell	19



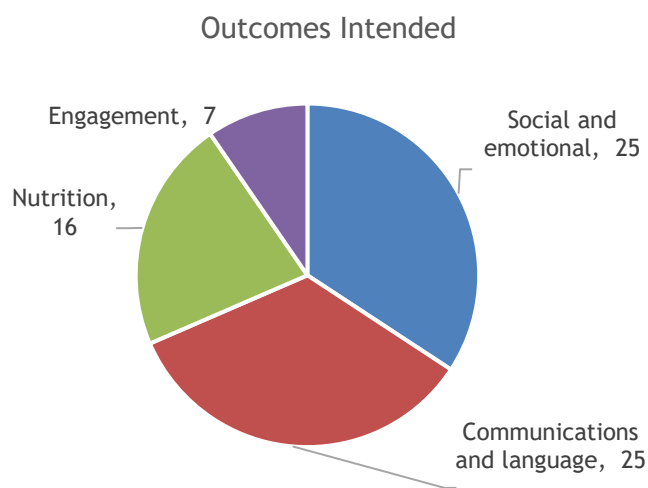
4.2.3 Outcomes

The data shows the outcomes intended within project delivery.

Outcomes Achieved by Year				
Year	Nutrition	Engagement	Social and Emotional	Communication and language
2016	4	4	4	1
2017	2	0	4	3
2018	4	1	3	6
2019	1	0	3	5
2020	Covid Response - data not consistently received			
2021	5	2	10	10
Total	16	7	25	25

This shows that ‘Communication and Language’ and ‘Social and Emotional’ were equally the most frequent outcomes, whilst ‘Engagement’ was the least aligned with:

Project Delivery by Outcome	
Outcome	Total
Comms and language	25
Social and emotional	25
Nutrition	16
Engagement	7



Unsurprisingly from the commonality of outcomes achieved, but several projects covered both ‘Comms and Language’ and also ‘Social and Emotional’ outcomes within their delivery, for example the “Sing With Me” project by Bulwell Arts Festival & Rainbow Stripes in 2017 or the “What’s up” project in 2019 by Freedom Foundation.

4.3 Beneficiary Numbers

4.3.1 Beneficiary Engagement

The figures below present data returned in the first Monitoring Form for each project, irrespective of the duration of its funding. For reference the Monitoring Form includes the following definitions:

- **Direct (In Ward):** “Total number of direct beneficiaries - children aged 0-3 years who live in Aspley, Hyson Green and Arboretum, Bulwell, or St Ann’s wards”
- **Direct (Out of Ward):** “Total number of direct beneficiaries - children aged 0-3 years who live outside of the SSBC wards”
- **Indirect:** “Total Number of indirect beneficiaries: Children under 14, Elderly, Young people 14-19, and Adults.”

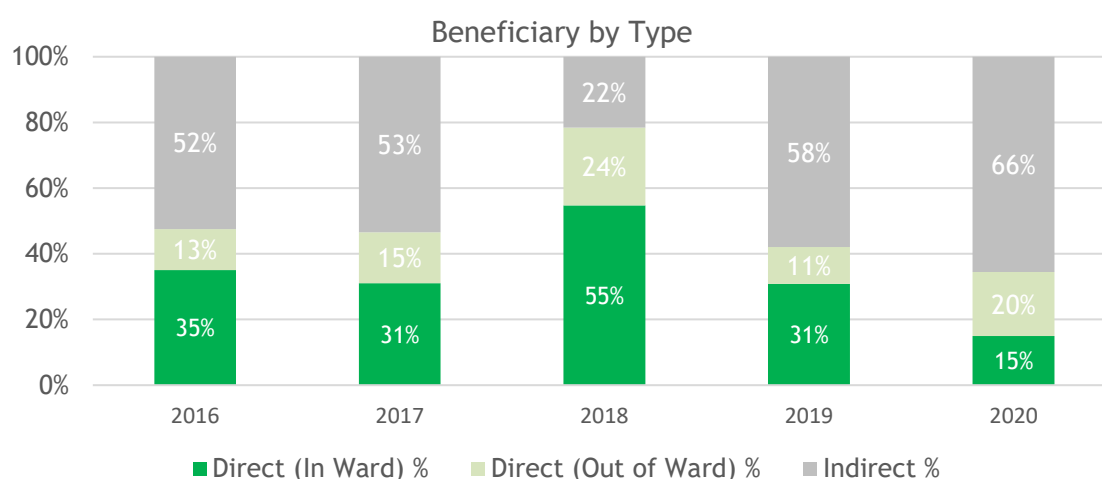
Beneficiary Engagement by Year						
Year	Direct		Indirect	Total Beneficiaries	Direct %	
	In Ward	Out of Ward			In Ward	Out of Ward
2016	143	51	214	408	35%	13%
2017	282	140	485	907	31%	15%
2018	599	260	236	1,095	55%	24%
2019	300	108	563	971	31%	11%
2020	270	352	1,182	1,804	15%	20%
Total	1,594	911	2,680	5,185	31%	18%

While this provides a snapshot of data, there are a number of factors to be considered:

- The figures are lower than actual numbers as information has been excluded from projects that received subsequent years of funding given the lack of consistent monitoring data.
- Conversely there is likely to be double counting, especially for activities taking place in the same ward given that families may have attended more than one provider’s activity - either between different activities led by the same grantee, or between grantees.
- It should be noted that 2021 is removed from the data given the monitoring reporting was changed: the original Monitoring Form asked for number of direct beneficiaries as unique individuals across the year of delivery. In 2021 the reporting asked for 0-4’s in ward and out of ward as attendees (individuals x number of attendances) and unique individuals (individuals regardless of number of attendances) although this was further complicated by reports counting unique individuals across different timeframes and not as a cumulative annual total, as reported in previous Monitoring Forms.

As examples of activity, “Brushing Buddies” in 2018 by Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust had the highest level of in-ward beneficiaries (at 248 in its first year), whereas Nottingham City Libraries had the highest level of out-of-ward beneficiaries (at 228) in the same year.

This shows that available data identifies at least 1,595 0-4s in ward were supported and a further 911 out of ward: totalling 2,505 0 to 4s supported. On average 31% of beneficiaries are direct and in ward and 18% were direct but out of ward; with the greatest level being in 2018 when over half of all beneficiaries were direct and in ward:



Given the 0-4 target audience, many projects could have the individual child (the direct beneficiary, ideally in ward) attend the activity with at least one adult (indirect beneficiary) and often an older sibling (another indirect beneficiary), so given this the likely expected ratio could be one direct beneficiary with two indirect beneficiaries, producing an approximate split of 33% direct and 66% indirect. The data above shows that on average indirect beneficiaries count for only 51% of the total, suggesting a higher-than-expected involvement of direct beneficiaries.

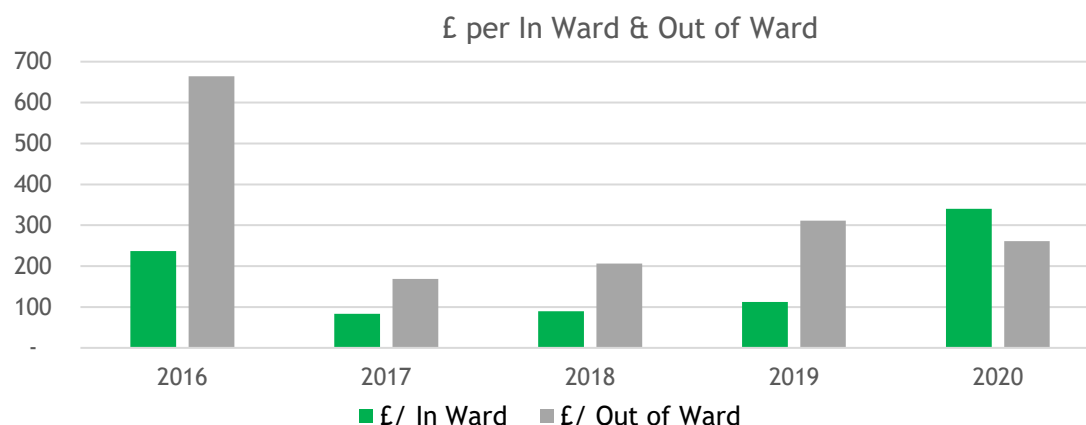
For reference, the Monitoring Form also requested data on ethnicity for direct beneficiaries although this data was inconsistently completed by grantees and as such cannot be assessed with any degree of confidence.

4.3.2 Cost-Beneficiary Value

In terms of level of grant funding per number of, and type of, direct beneficiaries supported:

Grant Funding by Type of Beneficiary							
Year	Direct			First Grant Allocation £	Average £/ Direct		
	All	In Ward	Out of Ward		All	In Ward	Out of Ward
2016	194	143	51	33,885.85	175	237	664
2017	422	282	140	23,597.80	56	84	169
2018	859	599	260	53,598.08	62	89	206
2019	408	300	108	33,601.20	82	112	311
2020	622	270	352	91,886.44	148	340	261
Total	2,505	1,594	911	236,569	94	148	260

It should be noted that some projects had no direct beneficiaries, for example if they faced challenges in securing attendance at sessions or if their focus was professional training. The data shows that when comparing the first year of funding for each project and the numbers of direct in ward and out of ward beneficiaries, the average overall for each direct beneficiary is £94, and when considering in-ward vs out-of-ward it is £148 per in-ward beneficiary or £260 per out-of-ward beneficiary (not a combined total); with averages below:



The most efficient level was in 2017 with 2018 close behind (each at under £90 per in ward beneficiary, and also each being the two lowest levels for out of ward £/ beneficiary averages). It should be noted that while 2020 had the highest level at over £340 on average for each beneficiary this was the year when the funding criteria changed to allow out of ward projects given the focus on supporting communities hit hardest by Covid. 2016 was the highest for out of ward beneficiaries at over £664 each. Further detail (where data is available for individual projects) is included in the Appendices.

4.3.3 Volunteers

The figures below present data returned in the first Monitoring Form for each project, irrespective of the duration of its funding, showing the number of volunteers involved in delivery.

Volunteers by Year				
Year	Total	Av/ Project	Minimum	Maximum
2016	8	1.0	0	6
2017	12	2.0	0	5
2018	12	0.9	0	5
2019	49	7.0	0	30
2020	81	4.3	0	50
Total	162	3.1		

This shows that 162 volunteers were engaged as a minimum, with this figure being potentially much higher in reality due to subsequent years of delivery for those projects funded across several years. Conversely, there may be some double counting such as of volunteers that support more than one organisation. For illustration the average project relied on the support of some three volunteers to assist with delivery. For reference the projects that drew on the largest cohort of volunteers were Makers of Imaginary Worlds in 2019 (30 volunteers), and Nottingham Preschool Partnership in 2020 (50 volunteers).

4.4 Monitoring Form Responses^[DW2]

The inherent purpose of the Monitoring Form was to gain project-level data from grantees to demonstrate the impact of the Ideas Fund. For several reasons the project team realised that this was not the most efficient method of gathering full and consistent data, as a better approach was to talk to grantees through active conversations (as introduced later in project delivery from 2020 with the introduction of the SSBC Senior Project Officer - Ideas Fund role). Key learning about usage and efficacy of the Monitoring Form approach included:

- Many respondents did not answer the question that had been asked. For example most respondents took the initial question *‘How has your innovation benefitted 0-3 year olds and expectant parents?’* as a chance to provide a description of what they did with the funding and as such few grantees maximised the opportunity to describe benefits for their target audiences.
- Most grantees did not specifically reference the formal outcomes they stated in their original application, and rather provided generic text around issues such as confidence, enjoyment, or *“children having fun”*. This may suggest either confusion on what they were funded to deliver, or confusion on what they were being asked to narrate.
- Several grantees included quote(s) as evidence, but without context or narrative it was not always obvious how parent feedback clearly supported achievement of a specific outcome. For example for the outcome of Communication and Language *“My 18-month old’s first live performance and he was enthralled the entire show. He loved playing with the lights at the end with the performer. Thank you!”*
- Few grantees provided a description of their evaluation approaches or examples of tools they used. It should be noted that SSBC supported grantees with project planning workshops, and from 2019 provided an evaluation template at the outset of their delivery, although few grantees reflected this in their Monitoring Form. Despite the Monitoring Form including the instruction *“Please share with us any feedback from participants”* most grantees did not provide feedback or indicate the scale of feedback they had gained. For those that did, the quotes did not always maximise the opportunity to describe credible evidence in support of their impact, such as providing *‘we had a nice time’* type sentiments from parents.
- A number of responses had the exact same number of direct beneficiaries as indirect beneficiaries; indicating an error in completion given the wording in the Monitoring Form rather than a repeated coincidence. Some provided ethnicity breakdown for only the direct beneficiaries, others for direct and also indirect beneficiaries, whereas others provided a total for an unknown breakdown that did not seem to relate to any combination of direct and/ or indirect. For example, one return stating 10 direct and 19 indirect beneficiaries, but ethnicity data for 13 individuals.
- In some cases, Monitoring Forms had clearly been issued in a draft version, but this had not been identified when the Form had been received: for example a comment in the Form *“Add about how we will target the booklets to the wards e.g. through SSBC family mentors”*.
- The Monitoring Form (used between 2016 and 2020) included a section on *“What difference has your project made?”* that included five questions to gather performance data. However in 2021 new application forms and different Monitoring Forms were introduced (and also differences between the Form used in Year 1 and Year 2 of the three-year delivery projects). This made comparing data across the timeframes problematic given the lack of consistency of information provided.

5 Aim 1: Start-up Experiences

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this aim was “*To review the start-up and delivery experience of funded projects including quality of engagement with constituent community bodies, partners, and parents.*” Feedback from interviews is considered in terms of:

- Initial project development
- SSBC’s Pre-Start and Start-Up Support Offer
- Application Process
- Project Changes
- SSBC’s Ongoing Support Offer

5.2 Initial Project Development

All grantees indicated that their project concept had been informed by local families; most frequently through formally surveying their beneficiaries and/or through informal feedback with parents. A few suggested they had held specific focus groups with families when developing their Ideas Fund project concept. Several respondents were able to indicate a longstanding culture of working with families to identify need, understand the most suitable methods of delivery, and design service models from this. Some grantees were familiar with terms such as ‘co-design’, ‘co-delivery’, and/ or ‘co-production’, most usually those that routinely approached large funding trusts and foundations. Some grantees acknowledged that language or cultural factors could be a barrier to engaging (such as where English is, at best, a second language), and this could at times limit active consultation with families.

Most grantees continued their engagement with families to hone delivery during the grant, with several commenting that this often provided an opportunity to bring parents together to socialise and develop personal connections - providing an additional and unexpected benefit to their delivery. Some grantees provided examples of where they had tweaked activity in direct response to parent feedback, such as altering delivery hours or days of the week of activity.

Those grantees that were aware of the Parent Champion role felt it provided a good mechanism for families (or at least one representative of a family) to have a voice in strategic decision making. One grantee could specifically recall a Parent Champion attending their sessions to observe activity, although was unsure of the purpose of this involvement, other than to provide the grantee with a brief update on the Ideas Fund.

5.3 SSBC’s Pre-Start and Start-Up Support Offer

All grantees accessed some support available; including those that considered themselves experienced in crafting successful grant applications. Many applauded the fact that many of the support sessions were delivered in community venues, which provided welcomed opportunities for some providers (for example childcare settings) to meet families and other providers in informal locations within neighbourhoods.

A Development Day was held for those considering making applications, that provided an opportunity to explain the application process and allowed attendees to hear each other's ideas and make suggestions. Most grantees praised this support offer in terms of its ability to introduce the Ideas Fund and the SSBC team, consider funding eligibility, and inspire local providers to consider making an application. Following the Day organisations were able to hone their applications based on their learning, and many grantees felt that this had made their eventual application stronger than it would have been had they not attended the Day.

The allocation of a dedicated SSBC Named Advisor gained mixed views; some felt this provided an external viewpoint that was welcomed in helping shape their application, others considered that it was not the role of SSBC to influence their organisational delivery model, while some felt that given the small scale of grant available the process itself should not have needed a dedicated officer to assist in the first place.

Few respondents indicated they had made connections with Early Years system partners, most indicating that either they had sufficient relations already established and did not need to increase those, or that they did not have specific connections and did not see a benefit in allocating time and resources to creating those.

5.4 Application Process

Most grantees indicated that the process of turning their project concept into a worked-up model ready for the application was reasonably simple, with several indicating that the SSBC team were available to support any questions on project development or the practicalities of what was eligible for funding. One respondent with dyspraxia confirmed that while this makes any paperwork difficult, the SSBC team were supportive and helped advise on how to approach the application process.

Responses on the application form itself, especially from grantees, fell into one of two opposing viewpoints - most felt the paperwork was very straightforward and easy to complete, while a minority considered the approach to be complicated and long-winded. Those that thought it was easy tended to be those that were used to securing funding (such as from Lottery or Arts Council England) and were familiar with application style documents, although some did comment that the scale of paperwork was not proportionate to the amount of grant being offered. Those that considered the process difficult suggested this was due to paperwork being hard to complete and templates being unclear on the depth of information required to be submitted. Several queried the usefulness of some of the approaches set in place, with the Project Planning Template receiving repeated criticism for it being difficult to complete and hard to relate to delivery once activity was underway.

The majority of respondents suggested there was no difficulty in meeting the required timescales in terms of application development, or the associated modelling of activity that was required to achieve this. Several remarked that it was helpful that supporting information, such as policies, could be collated and issued to SSBC after the main application had been submitted. The only couple of grantees that faced challenge were those that acknowledged they were more used to *“slower statutory sector timeframes, that often take a long time to filter through the hierarchies”*. Some respondents, especially those that received multiple grants, remarked that the time of year could be a slight factor, such as if

they were delivering during school terms and an application was due in the autumn, or conversely if an outdoor group when an application coincided with a busy planting time.

All grantees indicated the speed and process of drawing down the grant into their bank account was quick and efficient, with no challenges reported.

5.5 Project Changes

Most grantees engaged indicated that they had experienced a change in their activity and had requested formal approval for these using the Change Request Log form. The presence of covid in particular was a commonality for many, such as requiring changes in delivery to engagement methods, activity offered, or the scale of who could be engaged due to social distancing regulations.

Feedback indicated that SSBC were very supportive of changes to delivery, helping grantees to complete forms and submit formal requests for changes. The flexibility and understanding of the SSBC team were applauded by many grantees. Some questioned the link between SSBC and NCF in terms of 'ownership' of the Change Request Log, and who actually required it for administrative purposes.

Some indicated that the very act of submitting a Change Request Log helped them to reflect on their own delivery - not only in response to the specific issue prompting the change, but more broadly into other areas of their activity that could be improved if similar changes were adopted.

5.6 SSBC's Ongoing Support Offer

All grantees accessed some form of wider SSBC support once they had secured the grant. Many commented that the SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events were a pro-active method of allowing grantees to introduce themselves to one another, share best practice to learn from what works well, troubleshoot commonly faced challenges (such as engaging families), and consider opportunities for working collaboratively on either Ideas Fund delivery or future projects. One grantee described these as *"a place for inspiration, never a space for competition"*. The guest speakers (such as focusing on fundraising) were positively received by grantees, providing access to intelligence and current thinking they may not otherwise have had access to. Some projects also welcomed the opportunity to attend to be able to showcase their own delivery, and wider service offer, as that may have been of interest to families engaged by other grantees who could make referrals or pass on information. Conversely, some felt that the SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events did not maximise their potential given the breadth of different providers present in the same room at the same time, and that more pro-active facilitation could have targeted specific themes in more depth through structured discussion. An example of this being when a grantee asked about approaches to ensuring financial sustainability, and the facilitator asked each provider to talk about their ideas, but it was felt this was simply a *"downward spiral of uncertainty, based on a lack of knowledge and experience from groups all facing the same problems without solution"*, which mirrors the sentiment that the sector in general is facing similar issues regarding resilience and sustainability. The sharing sessions in particular provided an opportunity for existing/ longstanding grantees to share valuable insight with

more recent grantees regarding the Ideas Fund process - akin with informal mentoring support.

The SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Event held in June 2024 was designed and delivered to allocate much more time to encourage sharing between organisations of their project insight, so attendees were showcasing their offers and organisations. This specific event was welcomed by several grantees as an opportunity to learn, inspire, and celebrate their achievements.

Several commented that the frequency of support available, and the duration of the support offered, seemed excessive given the scale of grants offered with some querying if half-day sessions needed to be so long given that many providers are time-poor. Few grantees included an allowance for time for these kinds of activity within their project budget.

Projects were assigned a dedicated SSBC Named Advisor, with the intention being the assigned person would provide generic support to the grantee and assist with their sustainability, to complement the financial grant, to provide a holistic package of support for grantees. Where possible the SSBC Named Advisor was matched to the grantee, for example based on the content of the application or the skills of the officer. The allocation of a dedicated SSBC Named Advisor gained mixed views; some felt this provided a regular point of contact and a 'safety net' if required (especially for those delivering during Covid), however most felt that this resource was often not well aligned to their needs or availability. Feedback indicated that the value of this offer very much depended on the specific officer assigned, and their own capacity, interest, and areas of expertise. Stakeholders recognised that the SSBC Named Advisors were undertaking this role in addition to their regular SSBC job, and as such had limited capacity. Also some grantees requested - and expected - more input from their assigned SSBC Named Advisor than others did, meaning that demand was not equitable between the assigned officers. In 2020 the approach was altered, and SSBC introduced a single role (SSBC Senior Project Officer - Ideas Fund) to support all grantees. This change received unanimous support from those that commented on it, indicating it provided a more consistent point of contact for grantees and a more coherent awareness of delivery across the entire Ideas Fund within SSBC.

Few respondents indicated significant progress in making connections with Early Years system partners, with commonly shared reasons being uncertainty on who was appropriate to be contacted, how to make contact, and when any contact should be made. Several grantees suggested a '*you don't know what you don't know*' situation and admitted that while they did not make connections with any Early Years partners, they did not feel that this hampered their delivery in any meaningful way. It was also stated that the Annual Shared Learning Event delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund's A Better Start Programme acknowledged the difficulties in creating linkages between third sector and statutory sector partners, and that this had been evidenced in many of the other national A Better Start partnerships - as evidenced in the NCB report "*Collective Change: learning from A Better Start - doing things differently for babies, children and families*" [[ABS Annual Learning Event 2024](#)]

6 Aim 2 - Effective Project Delivery

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this aim was *“To review what has helped and hindered projects in effective delivery and achieving their goals.”* Feedback from interviews is considered in terms of:

- Ongoing Monitoring Requirements
- Changes to Working Methods
- Networking and Collaboration
- Success and Outcomes Achievement
- Continuation of Early Years Activity
- Project Sustainability

6.2 Ongoing Monitoring Requirements

Most respondents considered that the scale of the paperwork and administration set in place was excessive, and not commensurate with either the scale of grant funding being awarded or appropriate given the capacity of the grantees themselves. This echoes the NTU evaluation that recommended SSBC, *“Be clearer about the amount of monitoring data required of projects receiving grants from the Ideas Fund.”* This in some part may have been as some of the Parent Champions involved in the process viewed the grants as large amount of money going into local organisations, but this was not always the case, and this disconnect in perspective may have caused Parent Champions to increase the administrative burden involved in the funding. This is set aside SSBC’s need to align with Lottery requirements regarding longitudinal data gathering.

Most grantees felt the amount of monitoring and data capturing requirements was excessive and inappropriate, and many expressed concerns at the amount of time required to complete it that took them away from delivering the funded activities. NCF indicated that the paperwork was not always proportionate to the scale of grants offered, or in line with their own internal procedures they used with other funds they managed. For example, NCF traditionally only require monitoring data annually or at the end of a project’s delivery, whereas SSBC required interim reporting and at one point a large amount of monitoring data every three-months, which was considered to be unrealistic and unhelpful given the scale of the grants and the grantees. It was indicated that until the three-monthly requirement was scrapped, that it was often gathered over the phone with grantees and was not consistently recorded.

The SSBC Performance and Data Manager presented at an event to grantees on the fund’s requirements for data capture and the importance of outcomes measurement. It was considered the event was not well received, and attendees in general did not see the value in spending time gaining and then assessing data that they did not understand the purpose of. Data management is arguably a specific skillset and requires a clear drive within an organisation if it is to be embedded meaningfully, and this was not the case for many of the smaller grantees. One grantee commented, *“I’m not surprised that data returned was inconsistent, I think this is a negative case of leading by example as if SSBC aren’t helping us [grantees in general] with appropriate data demands, then we [grantees] aren’t going to spend time giving data back to them.”*

It was the original hope that individual children could be tracked within SSBC's SystmOne database (a single Electronic Health Record for every patient that is available across all healthcare settings) that would require each child's name, date of birth and home address to be recorded. This would in theory allow SSBC to find the child's NHS number and hence link the child to any other SSBC activity that they had accessed to help quantify overall take-up, reach, and complementarity of the funded interventions. This required grantees to gain specific consent forms from families, complete sign-in sheets at every activity, and then pass the data to SSBC who would collate it across the entire Ideas Fund. This approach did not work as some grantees could not understand the process, some were unable to record data if attendees were unwilling or unable to share information, and others altered the consent forms making them ineligible for use by SSBC as the precisely worded legal declaration had to align with CityCare's IG consent requirements.

There was a change of strategic leadership for the Ideas Fund programme in 2020, and it was felt that this changed the core focus and as a result systems were introduced that were considered to be overly complicated and was less well aligned with grantees capability, for example the extent of monitoring paperwork introduced for the three-year funds implemented in 2021. This change in strategic direction arguably allowed delivery to shift away from the principle of community-based commissioning, and more into an academic style audit of quantitative performance. When the leadership was reverted in 2022 an initial task was to streamline the process where possible. This change was welcomed by all involved in the process, especially grantees.

6.3 Changes to Working Methods

Feedback was split between two extremes: those providers that had an existing track record of delivering 0-4s provision and as such were already highly experienced and changed little, versus those for whom this was a new target audience and who had learned much during about how to deliver a successful service.

For the latter, this ranged between those that had slightly expanded their age range given the funding to those that had not worked within Early Years previously. All however acknowledged they had learned new ways of working during delivery, for example how to engage families with young children in terms of venues to use, durations of activity, and types of activity to deliver. Others have indicated that a focus on very young children has enabled them to update their own management approaches, such as being more aware of potential hazards that to older children would be irrelevant but could be dangerous for a 0-4-year-old. Others with an outdoor focus have learned for example that very young children are often inquisitive and need to be guided on what, and where, is inappropriate for them to go, such as avoiding freshly seeded ground or non-harvestable plants.

Aside from learning about ways of working better with families, many grantees acknowledged that the funding enabled them to engage a broader range of families with young children, such as from wards or demographics they may not traditionally work with. Also, an ability to create connections with local providers or wider infrastructure, such as schools.

Although a necessity of the funding, the focus on four specific ward boundaries was felt by most to be unhelpful as this is not an accurate determinant for those experiencing need - a point that the project team has fed back to the Lottery. For example, several grantees had

their venues located on the edge of a ward boundary, and in theory had to prioritise supporting families on one side of the road rather than the other.

6.4 Networking and Collaboration

Several of the grantees had developed contacts with other providers during the SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events, which had led to collaboration in one form or another. Examples included a grantee delivering their sessions at another grantee's venue to help local families experience a new activity and to help the guest grantee reach a new audience. There has also been some connection between providers based predominantly indoors with those that have outdoor facilities, to help introduce their families to new nature-based experiences. Others have jointly attended continuing professional development (CPD) sessions to maximise resources and experiences, while others have shared learning opportunities between themselves that can benefit each other. One grantee commented that *"SSBC is a great conduit for learning and sharing - it will be greatly missed."*

It has also been suggested that an informal WhatsApp group was created for grantees in 2020 or 2021 to share ideas and keep in touch, and due to the success of this the grantees themselves have sustained this without any SSBC involvement after 2022.

The majority of respondents did not consider that they had contributed to wider SSBC-led activity. Many were willing to attend activities as a participant, but less so as a content creator. This was primarily due to either not being aware of being asked to contribute, or not having the time to contribute given their focus on front-line service delivery. Several grantees co-delivered SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events (for example focusing on building capacity through volunteers and students), and one responder in particular indicated that they found the experience to be very rewarding.

Many organisations indicated they share their own project learning where they can, but most could not identify specific examples of where they had promoted specific Ideas Fund learning or experiences. Toward the end of the SSBC programme, Insight Reports were developed to capture learning from across the whole SSBC programme and the project team wanted to ensure that the contribution and learning from Ideas Fund projects was included within these.

Some stakeholders valued the diversity of local provision that the Ideas Fund created, although found the level of information provided about the Ideas Fund awards differed depending on who was approached within the SSBC team (until the introduction of the single role to cover all of the Ideas Fund grantees). For example, the wide variety of funded activity was not centrally recorded in the early years of delivery so colleagues could not access this as a resource for updating local families with, such as telling families what funded activity was available where and when. The information was later recorded on the SSBC website.

6.5 Success and Outcomes Achievement

Most grantees considered their funded project to be a success, even those that acknowledged the impact of the pandemic on their activity. While success often varied for each individual grantee, common themes included:

- Gaining learning that can inform future delivery.

- Understanding how to better engage families.
- Families having fun and wanting to engage.
- Families understanding the value of play.
- Embedding behaviour change within families.
- Parents reporting improvements in their child.
- Reaching new audiences/ communities/ backgrounds.
- Increasing the skills of the grantee team (staff and volunteers).

In terms of evidence, many grantees indicated they often used a range of surveys, observation, informal discussions, and case studies. However, observed examples were slim and few of those engaged could explicitly describe how they used the insight gained or how learning influenced their strategic development. Many acknowledged it was near impossible to gain 'pre and post' data as few of their attendees were regular participants, and not all families were willing to complete evaluation or monitoring activities at the initial intervention to define a 'pre' baseline.

Few grantees explicitly cited their own outcomes, or those of the Ideas Fund, as being central to their view of what constituted success. This was primarily due to an overriding focus on either their levels of attendance (i.e. maximising their reach through family engagement) and/ or honing their delivery methods (i.e. maximising quality of their family-facing activity). This may be considered as an overarching emphasis on process, rather than seeking to evidence the impact of what that process leads to in terms of outcomes or difference made. This echoes the NTU evaluation that concluded, *"For various reasons, not all SSBC interventions operated as originally planned, and in some cases, there were variations."*

Those grantees that did cite *"outcomes"* as being a measure of success, often described more quantitative measures such as average participants per session, frequency of repeat attendance, or scale of resources handed to families - which may be considered more as outputs, rather than outcomes. This may be in part linked to the monitoring requirements that focused on quantitative aspects, and hence framed grantee views of what 'success' should look like. Several respondents suggested that *"raising wellbeing"* or *"reducing health inequalities"* was increasingly important, although it was often a challenge for grantees to work with their families to define what this meant in reality for local communities.

6.6 Continuation of Early Years Activity

All grantees indicated that - subject to funding - they would seek to continue delivering Early Years work in the future.

Those that historically offered this type of support intended to continue as it was what they did as an organisation, and those that offered Early Years purely as a result of the funding indicated they considered the Ideas Fund to be in effect seed funding, that they could build on in the future if additional resources became available.

6.7 Project Sustainability

Given the diversity of grantees, for example in terms of governance, organisational capacity, funded activity, as well as wider services delivered, sustainability can mean different things

for each one. As such the methods of working toward sustainability are not consistent or straightforward to summarise.

SSBC used its wider networks to make providers aware of local resources that could benefit them, for example venues that offered free room hire to save using funded budgets. SSBC also made a concerted effort to disseminate opportunities for promotion and awareness raising for grantees, for example signposting to awards they could apply for to increase their recognition and kudos.

Most grantees considered that given their typical beneficiary, introducing charges at the point of access would be inappropriate and would reduce attendance, and as such was not a realistic option for working towards financial sustainability.

Few grantees indicated they had been able to fully sustain their project following the Ideas Fund grant funding (such as by securing specific additional funding), although all of those that had a project that could continue were pro-actively seeking extra resources. A sentiment of either unsuccessfully identifying suitable funding sources, or having funding bids rejected, were common responses. Several of the grantees that received three years of funding sought to use that timeframe to develop their sustainably plans with a hope that delivery may continue in some form.

A couple of projects identified that they had used the learning from their Ideas Fund delivery to directly inform a successful funding bid (such as to National Lottery Awards for All England), but that it was not for the same project as had been funded through the Ideas Fund. In addition, one grantee was able to pass unused resources to a local nursery who issued them to families over the summer, extending delivery for a few months after the original project ended, but not leading toward longer-term continuation.

One aspect that several grantees identified would be sustained was their organisational learning and the skills development that had occurred within their team. Each of these can be applied to future delivery, helping to sustain the legacy of the Ideas Fund.

A further view held by some stakeholders was that a primary driver of the Ideas Fund was to test out ideas to understand what would work and how - rather than to initiate long-term local delivery - and as such not all funded activities had to be sustained.

7 Aim 3 - Community-Based Commissioning

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this aim was “*To assess the contributions made to SSBC’s goals for community-based commissioning including learning for future service delivery or innovations.*” Feedback from interviews is considered in terms of:

- Start-Up Procedures
- Ideas Fund Application Evaluation Panel
- Gaps in Community Provision
- Success and Legacy

7.2 Start-Up Procedures

Stakeholders considered the start-up procedures set in place by SSBC to be broadly effective in facilitating community-based commissioning, for example several recalled an initial marketing drive to promote the opportunity to smaller organisations delivering locally, rather than to larger organisations considering smaller interventions.

The grant system utilised the NCF platform, which was an adapted Salesforce system, as that had been tried and tested with multiple other grants administered by NCF. NCF also assisted in designing the online application form, updating the T&Cs (for example SSBC requested additional safeguarding requirements), undertaking due diligence and financial checks on applicants, and providing an assessment on each applicant’s situation in terms of potential risks in receiving a grant. Once grants had been awarded, NCF supported ongoing budget checks and wider monitoring of delivery. For their service, NCF was paid 10% of awarded funding as a management fee.

In terms of Parent Champions, at the outset there were two per ward (eight in total) that to provide additional capacity given child illness or unavailability increased to three per ward (12 in total). Parent Champions received specific training on the remit of their role, and also introductory briefings on the Ideas Fund itself. Some grantees and stakeholders questioned the validity of including Parent Champions in the decision-making process for financial awards as few, if any, of the Parent Champions had experience of grant programmes, financial controls, delivery of community-facing activity, or management of third sector organisations. Parent Champions have indicated that early in the process they felt ‘out of their depth’ and as such focused on asking for large amounts of data to be collected from grantees as this was felt to be an area they could control, even if they did not know what the data was to be used for.

SSBC was also considered by most to be extremely pro-active in its approach to funding the sector, evidenced by its ability to pivot quickly in delivering the Covid support fund and also the cost-of-living crisis funds. The flexibility that this introduced was applauded by all, and especially welcomed by grantees who were in the main facing increased demand from their communities for their services whilst experiencing reduced resources with which to deliver those services.

7.3 Ideas Fund Application Evaluation Panel

The Ideas Fund Application Evaluation Panel was a pivotal part of the process, and was delivered mostly as intended, with an initial advert issued to recruit interested parties to have a seat to help make decisions on applications coming in. Originally NCF hosted the Panels, but as confidence grew within the SSBC team they took over the role. Panels were convened virtually (especially during Covid) with a move back to face-to-face as soon as that was practicable, and ideally consisted of members from across the SSBC partnership: statutory partners (senior manager or a nominated representative from health and local authority), a family representative from each ward being a Parent Champion, and also SSBC's Procurement, Commissioning & Business Manager - equating to nine Panel members. The mix of backgrounds provided different views and experiences of what was required locally or what provision was already in place to help avoid unintentional duplication, and as required the Panel also drew on the wider SSBC team for additional input for example on a specific technical aspect of an application. If any further information was requested by the Panel in making a decision, NCF would go to the applicant for clarification, and then report the response back to Panel to support decision making.

Stakeholders considered that being on the Ideas Fund Application Evaluation Panel was quite an undertaking given the time requirement to read applications in advance, raise any questions or concerns, and be involved in Panel meetings themselves. For many Panel members it was a new type of experience for them and most appreciated the opportunity and felt they gained valuable skills from being involved.

One particular challenge was in scheduling stakeholders' availability given many were professional practitioners with busy diaries, and to assist parent involvement a creche facility was offered that was welcomed by parents and did support their attendance.

7.4 Gaps in Community Provision

Most grantees identified gaps that linked to their own area of activity or experience, rather than commenting on wider market challenges or latent demand from families for unmet support needs. That said - many providers alluded to broader issues facing the voluntary and community sector, such as ongoing impacts from the pandemic, the current economic climate, increasing demand from communities, and reducing scope of statutory services.

Of those that did indicate broader gaps, these mostly identified that a reduction in statutory support has created increased demand and longer waiting times, and most commonly a reduction in universal support given an increasing prevalence for targeted support. The age range of four to five was suggested as being a growing area of need, as toddlers and younger early years are often well catered for, as are those from Key Stage 1 (KS1) onwards - leaving a gap. Also, that a trend was becoming more evident that parents seem to be lacking confidence more than previously - possibly due to the uncertainties, challenges and changes to routines caused by Covid - and that a gap was for provision that provided meaningful validation for parents in terms of their thoughts or actions. Some providers suggested they were seeing more children with learning difficulties, such as language delays and behavioural challenges - again possibly exacerbated by Covid.

An ongoing challenge was considered to be how to best reach those that do not traditionally engage, and while grantees have in many instances done well in supporting new audiences, there are still certain demographics of families that are not well engaged. It has been stated that there are more diverse communities living in Nottingham than ever before, and many have little experience of living in the UK or in accessing the varied support offers that may not be available in their home areas. For example, some families that have a culture of low engagement with early years provision as they draw on their internal family or community support instead, or families who are unfamiliar with food that is available in the UK and who are at risk of obesity or unhealthy lifestyles.

7.5 Success and Legacy

The Ideas Fund sought to put funding directly into the heart of communities to test new activities. Arguably its greatest success is that it has achieved this. Wider objectives included introducing a focus on 0-4-year-olds and targeting deprived wards, both of which have been successfully achieved. For example, many of the grantees that had not delivered Early Years support previously now intend to do so in moving forwards where possible. As a result, the Ideas Fund has made young children a priority for more local groups.

Feedback identified a broad range of ways that community-based commissioning had been a success in building on the strengths and assets already based within the community, with views often aligned with the specific activity or approach of those being engaged. Many of those engaged acknowledged that while funded activity would end, much learning and social infrastructure would endure from what had already been achieved, for example that the Ideas Fund:

- **Gave Families a Voice:** The Ideas Fund approach demonstrated that families themselves can be central to a process, such as through the involvement of the Parent Champions.
- **Listened to Local Need and Responded Accordingly:** The Ideas Fund allowed organisations to engage their families to identify need, and then put forward smaller-scale activity that met need and worked locally at the request of local families. This has opened up a raft of support that was not in place previously and would never have existed without the funding.
- **Encouraged Innovation and Testing:** The inherent purpose of the Ideas Fund was to allow community-based organisations to try new activities, often those that would have been challenging or impossible to fund elsewhere. It allowed local organisations to try new things without fear of failure, and provided the unique ability to understand what would work in a community, how, and why.
- **Improved Parental Engagement:** Parents can often be sceptical of new entities with bold ambitions, but SSBC took time to build trust and develop positive relations, which enabled local providers to develop meaningful engagement with local families for example when they badged activity as linked to SSBC as that had become a trusted brand in the city.
- **Increased Confidence Within Families:** The presence of the Ideas Fund grantees helped local families to benefit from local delivery, increasing confidence not only in 'the

system', but also in themselves as being able to advocate for change and subsequently engage in that change.

- **Strengthened Local Provider Sustainability:** The Ideas Fund encouraged local providers to think about their own sustainability and how their activity could be continued in the future. This has assisted understanding and provided a clear foundation for many organisations.
- **Supported Local Providers to Think About Impact:** The Ideas Fund focused on four key outcomes, and this enabled organisations to see the benefits of this approach (for example as opposed to focusing purely on quantitative levels of attendance) and enabled them to think more broadly about their own impact and the difference they make locally.
- **Provided Consistency:** The ability for local providers to deliver a range of activities created a reliable and consistent presence within communities (during the funded timeframe) that over time local families could identify and attend.
- **Strengthened Local Community Infrastructure:** Especially those grantees that invested in capital works to outdoor spaces that will remain usable for the foreseeable future.
- **Provided Pathways into Employment:** There are examples of where beneficiaries over time became volunteers who then moved into paid employment with the grantee.
- **Encouraged Local Collaborations:** The SSBC team helped partnerships come together between local providers that otherwise had not worked together. This strengthened local service delivery for the benefit of not only local families, but also those organisations.
- **Identified a Model for Change:** the approach adopted by the Ideas Fund has proven what works locally, and this can be replicated in other areas in Nottingham or further afield should funding become available.

8 Key Learning

Given the experiences gained from delivery, a number of observations may be made to help enhance future interventions of a similar nature:

- **Mismatched Importance of Data Management:** the administration of the Ideas Fund included a large focus on data collection. Grantees were expected to collect, collate and report on a large amount of data, which was not proportionate to the scale of grant funding being allocated. Many grantees did not provide the data as consistently or thoroughly as was expected by SSBC or NCF, resulting in a generally low-level of performance-based evidence across the lifetime of the fund.

In the future it will be essential to ensure that data management expectations are aligned between the accountable body and those receiving funding, acknowledging the capacity and capability of grantees when being expected to handle data. In addition, it will be important to focus data requests on relevant quantitative metrics and be clear with grantees why information is being asked for and how it is to be used.

- **Consistent and Single Point of Contact:** the allocation of a dedicated SSBC Named Advisor in the early iterations of the project was not always effective in providing a reliable resource for grantees, given the differing skillset and interest of the Advisors. The efficacy of the role very much depended on the specific officer assigned. The move to the SSBC Senior Project Officer - Ideas Fund role resolved many, if not all, of the challenges faced earlier.

In the future a dedicated point of contact should be established from the outset. This would provide greater accountability and consistency for grantees, and likely increase the effectiveness of internal communications within the accountable body as a single officer would have oversight of all areas of delivery, without having to contact a multitude of separate Advisers.

- **Focus on Outcomes:** the Ideas Fund allowed grantees to select up to four standardised outcomes that their delivery would align with (led by the A Better Start programme), which potentially reduced their desire or ability to consider alternative outcomes that may have been more beneficial to their local community. It is acknowledged that some funders seek applications that align with standardised outcomes.
- **Clear Procedures for Project Changes:** although the Change Request Log had been established for those grantees that had experienced a change in their activity, it was not always clear from a grantee-perspective on what constituted a change; such as a one-off change to a delivery date, or a change in spend between different budget items.

In the future there should be an explicit detail of what extent of variation requires approval, for example being a substantial change to the use of funding that was outside of the grantee's agreed plan. Also, it would be advantageous to clarify who grantees approach for any change if there is both an accountable body and also an external party handling administration, in this case to avoid potential confusion between SSBC and NCF.

- **Appreciation of Grantee's Available Time:** SSBC offered a raft of support and guidance, and although involvement in this support was not mandatory, at times it was felt as excessive by grantees given the often small-scale nature of the grants awarded, for example the regular half-day SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events that were held approximately every six months.

In the future it will be important for the accountable body to recognise that many grantees may be time-poor, and that the extent of support available should be proportionate to the grant provided. In addition, it may be beneficial to identify the scale of any support to be made available at the outset so that local providers can cost their time into their project budgets when they are developing their application.

- **Clear Identification of Delivery:** while SSBC in the main had strong and consistent branding, it was not always clear for grantees whether activity they engaged with (such as events) was explicitly within the Ideas Fund, or within broader SSBC delivery but not the Ideas Fund, or within other activity delivered by Nottingham CityCare Partnership CIC but not within SSBC.

In the future there should be clarity on where specific project delivery sits if held within a complex broader programme, to help those engaged recognise and recollect the support they have received - and similarly be able to attribute praise and thanks for that support.

- **Clarity of Parental Involvement:** while the role of the Parent Champions was applauded by some as being an innovative way to introduce local knowledge into the decision-making process, the role was not always well communicated to grantees.

In the future it will be important to fully explain the role to grantees of any key people involved in determining the awarding of grant funding, especially when this is local parents to cover the potential for local people (eg Parent Champions) to be given commercially sensitive information regarding other local people (eg owners of provider organisations).

- **Collaboration with Early Years Partners:** a core driver of A Better Start was to encourage improvements in the way that local health, public services and the voluntary and community sector work together with parents to improve outcomes for children. Many grantees saw little opportunity to enhance this aspect of their operations either as they considered they had sufficient existing relations, or they did not see the benefit in allocating time and resources to creating relations.

In the future it may be beneficial to provide specific opportunities for local providers and statutory services to come together to understand their prospective roles (strengths and weaknesses), and the opportunities that could be secured by more collaborative working. This could then be included within grant funded delivery to help establish and embed new ways of working.

- **Decreasing Parental Confidence:** several grantees stated that they were seeing a decline in parent's confidence in their ability to successfully parent, possibly due to the challenges and changes to routines introduced by the pandemic.

In the future it may be prudent to assist grantees explore ways that their delivery can provide meaningful validation for parents in terms of their thoughts or actions, and ideally also seek to gain evidence for the efficacy of this over time.

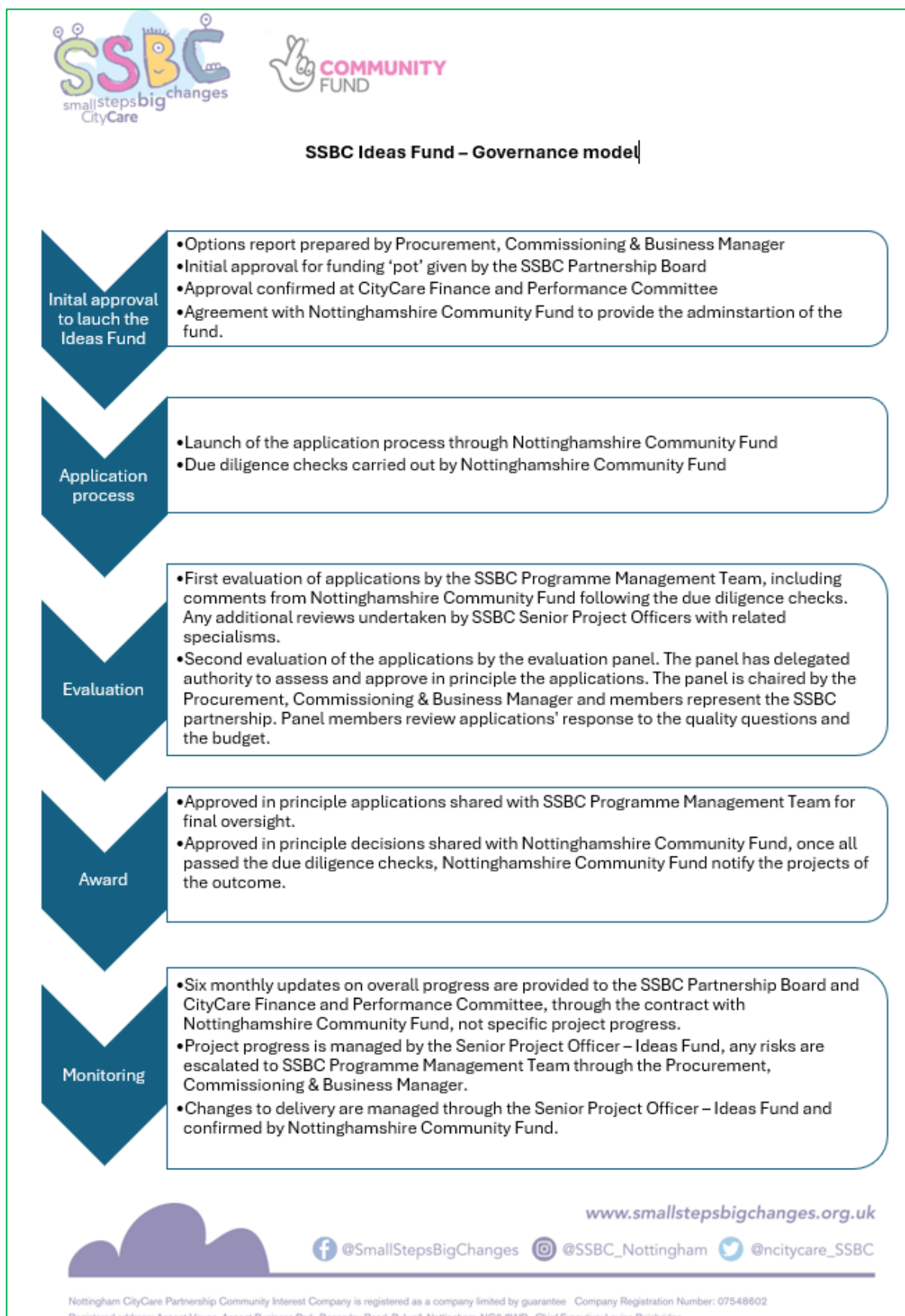
- **Acknowledge Sustainability:** working towards a position of financial sustainability is notoriously difficult in the sector, evidenced by the fact that (at the time of this report) most grantees have not secured the resources necessary to continue their funded activity. SSBC support recognised that given the diversity of grantees, group support was not an effective method of encouraging sustainability solutions that would in reality need to be bespoke.

In the future it may be helpful to have a greater emphasis on long-term deliverability from the outset, such as consideration within the funding application. This could potentially include requiring a proportion of the budget be assigned to addressing this and/ or provision by the accountable body of a dedicated resource to support organisations on a 1:1 basis to consider what sustainability looks like for them. SSBC has in part offered this toward the end of delivery through the additional capacity building grant of up to £3,000 to support organisational development.

Appendices

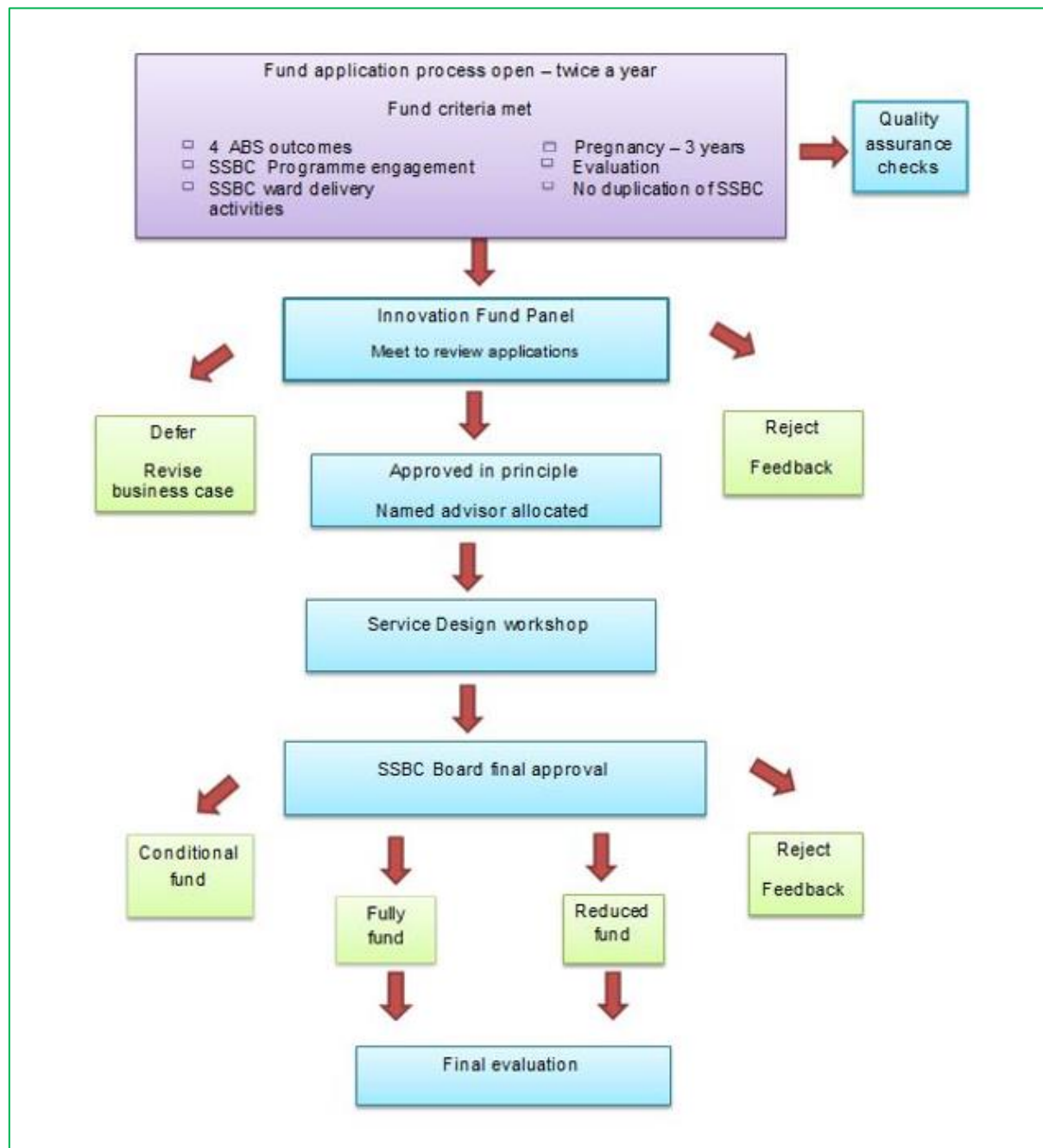
- A Ideas Fund Governance Model
- B Application Process Outline
- C Project Planning Template
- D Change Request Log
- E Parent Champion Role Description
- F Cost-Beneficiary Data
- G SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events
- H SSBC Named Advisor Role Description

Appendix A - Ideas Fund Governance Model





Appendix B - Application Process Outline

Note: the timescale was changed from what is shown below and the process is only open once a year.



Appendix C - Project Planning Template





July 2021

PROJECT PLANNING TEMPLATE - IDEA NAME:

Overview? Briefly outline your idea... *Summary of your project and its activity, including length*




<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT?</p> <p>What outcomes are you hoping to achieve? <i>I.e. Why are you doing this? Bullet point them below</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHO?</p> <p>Who is your target audience <i>(ward, age range)?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HOW?</p> <p>Describe your activity. What resources will you need to deliver this? <i>Consider; venue, transport, equipment, staff, promotional materials, paperwork, involvement of other workforce agencies.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHEN?</p> <p>When would you like to start your activity? What is the timeframe for your activity? <i>Consider; frequency, total no of sessions, term time or continuously, etc.</i></p>
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July 2021

<p style="text-align: center;">MARKETING PLAN</p> <p>How will you invite people to take part? <i>Summarise the main points from your marketing plan (or attach it here).</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EVALUATION</p> <p>How will you show your project is making a difference? <i>Summarise the main points from your evaluation plan (or attach it here).</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DATA COLLECTION</p> <p>Summarise the main points for monitoring here. <i>How will you gain consent?</i> <i>How will you collect and store personal data (Name, DOB, Postcode, Ethnicity)?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BUDGET</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Possible risks/challenges?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Additional Thoughts/Ideas?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>
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Appendix D - Change Request Log

Project Outline and Review

Change Request Log

Group/Organisation:	{{GRANT_APPLICATION_NAME}}				
Project Name:	{{GRANT_APPLICATION_PROJECT_NAME}}				
Main Contact:	{{GRANT_APPLICATION_MAIN_CONTACT_FULL_NAME}}				
Project Start Date:	{{GRANT_APPLICATION_PROJECT_OR_FUNDING_START_DATE}}		Project End Date:	{{GRANT_APPLICATION_PROJECT_OR_FUNDING_END_DATE}}	

Date change requested	What is the change? Budget or Project delivery (Please be as clear as possible)	Impact on Budget	Impact on project delivery	Comments from SSBC	Approval / Decline Date

1

Appendix E - Parent Champion Role Description



Parent Champion Role Description

Role Purpose

You will act as a representative of your community, working with a range of professionals to help them understand and meet what local families want and need. This is an opportunity to get your voice heard at the highest levels and make a real difference for the families in your area.

You will represent the views of families from across your ward (Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum and St Ann's) to help senior decision makers and frontline staff design and deliver excellent services.

Alongside the SSBC team and ward delivery teams, you'll help identify how local early years services are performing in your area. You will use your own personal experiences and knowledge of the experiences of other local families that you will gain through meeting and talking with families in the community and working with other parent volunteers.

You will build strong and lasting relationships with members of the community, the SSBC team and Early years workforce.

About Small Steps Big Changes

Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) is a £45m programme, supported by the National Lottery Community Fund's 10 year 'A better start' funding programme to improve the lives of Nottingham's young children.

Led by Nottingham CityCare Partnership, a third sector provider of community services in the city, SSBC is a partnership of parents and professionals – including Nottingham City Council, health partners, commissioners, voluntary and community groups, parents and local communities coming together to help give the best start to Nottingham's babies and children.

The SSBC programme covers 4 key wards across the city (Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum and St Ann's). SSBC seeks to deliver successful outcomes for children in communication and language, social and emotional development, and nutrition, helping Nottingham's children to grow up happy, healthy and confident.

Location

Nottingham City – You will work in or closely with one of the four SSBC wards (Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum and St Ann's)

Hours

As a Parent Champion you will be offered the opportunity to attend strategic meetings (in the SSBC wards and across Nottingham City, including the city centre) to ensure Parent Voice is heard throughout Governance Structures within Early Years Services. In your role as Parent Champion you will be expected to commit to approximately 4 hours a month to attending these meetings, and also take part in wider community activities.

Coram Family and Childcare, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ
020 7239 7535 | info@coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk | coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk
Registered charity number: 1077444 | Registered company number: 3753345



Activities

There are lots of different ways you can get involved spreading the word, listening to families and promoting positive activities and many of these activities have moved online at the moment.

Possible activities include:

- Working alongside SSBC and other local Early Years services to identify what is working well and what needs to be developed
- Be active in your community – finding out what other people living within the ward think about/want from local services through mechanisms such as: Family Mentor groups, Children's Centres and other voluntary groups; other community organisations; other parent forums or local networks and events; online forums, groups and social media; or through your own networks and contacts
- Help to recruit new Parent Ambassadors
- Along with SSBC staff, plan and deliver local activities
- Take part in training, supervisions and appraisals to help you achieve development goals
- Support the SSBC Programme team and wider workforce to develop services through informing commissioning, recruitment and service design and improvement activities
- Support SSBC partners with their efforts to improve outcomes for children. This could involve attending partner events or engaging and supporting local consultation and service improvement
- Ensure that information flows between SSBC staff, Board meetings and the wider community of families across the wards
- Read appropriate meeting minutes and papers
- Build strong relationships and work with the SSBC Participation and Engagement Officers to develop plans to improve local services
- Be a positive champion for the vision and work of SSBC at all times (please refer to the SSBC volunteer behaviour and values framework).
- Complete data monitoring forms and record parent feedback

Benefits

- Tailored training, guidance, support and opportunities for progression and accreditation
- Reimbursement of agreed out of pocket expenses incurred while carrying out activities, e.g. travel
- We will endeavour to provide childcare at times when you are invited to participate in meetings and development of the SSBC programme
- SSBC may offer a financial gift as a Thank you for your time and commitment

Person Profile

- Passionate about supporting families in your area, helping services to meet their needs and acting as a representative of families in your local area
- A broad understanding of SSBC – what the programme offers, its aims and objectives, commissioned services, the Lottery Community Fund and the Partnership approach
- Have recent and relevant experience of caring for young children

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- Currently or recently live in or near to an SSBC ward (Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum and St Ann's)
- Able to communicate appropriately with a range of people
- Able to think strategically and to empathise with the views of others
- Have a strong interest in improving services for families and young children in Nottingham
- Willingness to engage positively and to challenge where necessary
- Some experience of reading relevant papers and reports and preparing for meetings
- Good verbal and written communication skills
- 6 months experience of being a Parent Ambassador, or equivalent relevant experience

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020 7239 7535 | info@coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk | coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk
Registered charity number: 1077444 | Registered company number: 3753345

Appendix F - Cost-Beneficiary Data

For those projects that have available data for all metrics required the ordering of cost per beneficiary may be shown below, with the lowest averaged unit cost per direct beneficiary (in-ward and out-of-ward) ordered at the top of the table:

Year	Grantee	Direct (Ward)			£ 1 st Grant	£/ Direct
		In	Out	Total		
2018	Nottingham City Libraries	147	228	375	3,923	10
2020	Diversify Education Ltd	75	5	80	1,500	19
2018	Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust	248	0	248	5,000	20
2017	Bulwell Arts Festival & Rainbow Strips	164	0	164	3,600	22
2019	Makers of Imaginary Worlds	190	46	236	6,000	25
2020	Carrington Day Nursery Ltd	29	34	63	2,400	38
2017	Nonsuch	30	100	130	5,000	38
2018	Berridge Primary School	51	0	51	2,000	39
2018	Ignite	33	30	63	2,750	44
2016	Bulwell Community Toy Library	67	45	112	5,000	45
2020	Positively Empowered Kids CIC	12	106	118	5,700	48
2020	Southwold Primary School & Early Years	0	61	61	3,374	55
2017	Nottingham CityCare Partnership	6	17	23	1,331	58
2017	Nottingham Refugee Women's Group	50	23	73	5,000	68
2019	Berridge Primary School	64	0	64	5,000	78
2020	Rainbow Stripes	9	66	75	5,996	80
2019	Windmill Gardens	10	14	24	2,119	88
2020	City Arts	44	22	66	6,000	91
2016	Nottingham Play Forum	47	0	47	5,000	106
2018	Nottingham CityCare Partnership	42	0	42	5,000	119
2018	Evolve Nottingham CIC	21	2	23	2,840	123
2020	Robin Hood Primary School	0	14	14	1,846	132
2019	Nottingham Playhouse	15	27	42	6,000	143
2017	Literacy Volunteers	32	0	32	5,000	156
2020	Nottingham Preschool Partnership	0	25	25	4,196	168
2020	Heart Preschool	32	2	34	6,000	176
2018	Community Sports Trust	27	0	27	5,000	185
2020	Berridge Primary and Nursery School	27	0	27	5,000	185
2019	Belong	11	13	24	4,498	187
2018	Literacy Volunteers	23	0	23	5,000	217
2019	Freedom Foundation	10	8	18	4,984	277
2020	Roots Out CIC	20	0	20	5,753	288
2020	Full Circle Partnership Ltd	2	14	16	4,907	307
2016	Karimia Association	12	3	15	5,000	333
2016	Rebalancing the outer estates	9	3	12	4,418	368
2018	Nottingham CityCare Partnership	6	0	6	2,380	397
2020	Sahara Mental Health	10	0	10	4,350	435
2020	Makers of Imaginary Worlds	10	0	10	6,000	600
2016	Homestart Nottingham	8	0	8	5,000	625

2020	The Yoruba Community Association	0	3	3	5,400	1,800
2018	Everyone Health	1	0	1	4,985	4,985

This reveals a range from £10 per direct beneficiary (Nottingham City Libraries, in 2018) to almost £5,000 (Everyone Health, in 2018). For reference the average (mean) is £322 per direct beneficiary, and £123 (median). It should be noted that the ethos of the Fund was to allow innovation and use a 'test and learn' approach, noting that those projects that focused on resources development rather than direct engagement will by their nature have a considerably higher unit cost.

From this list the average number of in ward direct beneficiaries per project is 39, and the table below shows the percentages of projects each year that achieved this level:

Year	Projects Below Average	Projects Above Average
2016	60%	40%
2017	60%	40%
2018	60%	40%
2019	67%	33%
2020	87%	13%

This shows an unusually consistent level across the early years of delivery and that 2020 had by far the greatest percentage of funded projects reach below average levels of in ward beneficiaries, which is as expected given the more flexible nature of the Covid fund.

Appendix G - SSBC Ideas Fund Learning and Networking Events

- 2 x per year
- Topics included that are relevant and important to Ideas Fund projects
- Include external speakers
- Networking opportunities are also important to these projects

Event	Topics covered	Speakers
17 November 2021 - full day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project design + monitoring and evaluation - SSBC • Promoting your activities - SSBC • Co-production - SSBC • Knowledge in the room (led by Jo - New Shoots) • Keynote - The benefit of community projects for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Kingston Hughes - Inspired Children - Impact of community projects
2022 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Arts • Marketing sessions - SSBC • Funding Applications - SSBC • Open discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alison Denholm (City Arts)
2022 Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The big picture for funding - Rob W • Data - SSBC • Sharing learning - Literacy Volunteers and STAA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The changing context for funding and government programmes by Rob Wadsworth - Keynote
2023 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing the learning: Stonebridge City Farm • Evaluation (SSBC) • Storytelling through case studies and press release (SSBC) • SSBC the next 2 years (SSBC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steven Armitage - Chief Executive - Stonebridge City Farm
2023 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid writing workshop - NCF • Building assets and capacity by working with students/graduates. - Freedom Foundation • Meet the funder - The Key Fund • Networking marketplace - invites to local early years workforce • 3 year projects and COLCIF projects invited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nick Bell - on behalf of Nottinghamshire Community Foundation • Laura Grant - Freedom Foundation • The Key Fund - Tom Bostock
2024 June Run during Small Charities Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing project journeys, learning and challenges over the 3 years of funding. • Feedback on findings from Evaluation. • SSBC - coming to a close. • An introduction to UNICEF Child Friendly Cities. • Keynote -local picture moving into the future. • 3 year projects and COLCIF projects invited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All projects to participate. • Key note - Jules Sebelin CE of Nottingham CVS • Child Friendly Cities

Appendix H - SSBC Named Advisor Role Description



Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) Ideas Fund Named Advisor

ROLE DESCRIPTION

This is your opportunity to support a new project that has applied for funding through our Ideas Fund.

Background

The Ideas Fund has always been an element of the original bid, the vision for the fund was to create an opportunity for local parents and/or workforce to test out new ideas for activities or new approaches to existing activities. As most of the original bid set out the activities SSBC will fund/deliver, this fund allows some flexibility in the programme and allows us to grow and develop any activities that are showing impact, into the wider programme.

A key principle behind the development of the fund was that the process should be kept simple so that local groups, organisations and local teams could access a maximum award value (£5,000) to then test their ideas over short term duration (12 months).

The application process is clear, accessible and simple but coupled with the service design templates we are able to form a more detailed picture of the projects outcome focus, expected impact and evaluation measures. Under the terms and conditions of the fund, the partnership has no further obligations to fund any of the innovations beyond the twelve months funding agreement.

Below is the original proposal for information



SSBC Innovation
Fund Outline Proposal

The Fund is managed by Nottinghamshire Community Foundation in partnership with SSBC.

Nottinghamshire Community Foundation are responsible for

- Development of the application form and guidance
- Advertising grant fund on our website and throughout our networks
- Appraisal of applications, as per the our quality regulations
- Furnishing the panels with appropriate information
- Administering the payment of funds
- Notifying unsuccessful applicants
- Collecting monitoring information from groups on an end of project basis.
- The maintenance of all operational records on the Innovation fund
- Reporting to SSBS board biannually on spend and activity



Small Steps Big Changes



@ncitycare_SSBC

www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk

Nottingham CityCare Partnership Community Interest Company is registered as a company limited by guarantee Company Registration Number: 07548602
Registered address: 1 Standard Court, Park Row, Nottingham, NG1 6GN Chief Executive: Lyn Bacon

Main elements of the SSBC Named Advisor role:

Communication

The Named Advisor role is the main point of contact between the project and the SSBC programme.

The type of support a project needs can vary, some projects ask for support around promotion, some projects value the support and expertise of the Named Advisor in decision making. We would ask that the Named Advisor uses their judgement to ensure that they are only supporting the projects and do not become an integral part of the project. It is good to remember that these projects are for the groups to lead and we are there to support and offer advice. Also we have a wide pool of expertise in the team that we can draw for input for the projects, i.e. marketing, ward knowledge, parental input etc. If you are unsure about any aspect of your role, please seek support from the Programme Management team.

Time commitment

It is expected that the Named Advisor will make quarterly contact, via email, telephone or face to face meetings, to ensure the project is on track and give the project opportunities to discuss any issues and share successes.

The Named Advisors will meet together quarterly to provide an update to the SSBC Business and Contracts Manager.

Lastly the Named Advisors will complete an evaluation and collect the registers at the end of the project.



2017.6 Innovation
Fund evaluation.xlsx

Documentation

The Named Advisor role is to provide and receive any documentation –

- Service Designs



V2 Evaluation,
monitoring and service

- Consent forms/registers – please ensure the projects use the SSBC wording



Innovation Fund child
data consent form rev

- Completed registers – at the end of the project, these must contain Names, Addresses inc. Post Codes, Date of Birth and dates of attendance.

Completed registers will be inputted into SystmOne by Programme Support.

There is an additional monitoring form that Nottinghamshire Community Foundation requires the project to complete. This form is sent out by Nottinghamshire Community Foundation to the project when they initially receive their funding.

Branding

Projects are expected to use their own branding on promotional material. As our branding guidelines state that the SSBC logo should not be used in conjunction with other logos, it is easier in the first year for the project to stick to their own branding. *This is under review at the moment and could change.*

Below is some guidance around basis messaging that you can share with your project.



Plain English
Guidelines March 2011

Complaints

Any complaints received will be investigated by another Named Advisor someone who has not been involved with the project to date. We have another process in place for a complaint about the application process.

Outside of the role

The Named Advisors will complete an evaluation of their projects at the end of the funding period, this will be taken into consideration when deciding on next steps for the project. However the Named Advisor should make the projects aware that this decision is taken by the Programme Management Team and will be signed-off by the SSBC Partnership Board. Any decisions regarding future funding will be communicated to the project through the SSBC Business and Contracts Manager.

If a Named Advisor feels that the project is taking up too much of their time or they do not have the capacity to continue to support the project, please inform the SSBC Business and Contracts Manager promptly.



Document Control Small Steps Big Changes Evaluation of the SSBC Ideas Fund Final Report, Version 8 C-NCP284 11 th November 2024	Contact David Waterfall david@davidwaterfall.com www.davidwaterfall.com 07951 401 320 https://uk.linkedin.com/in/davidwaterfall
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