



Birmingham Community Matters (BCM) is a charity registered in England & Wales: 1179442.

Annual report and accounts

1 April 2021 —
31 March 2022



Birmingham
Community
Matters

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Birmingham Community Matters (BCM) is a charity registered in England and Wales: 1179442.

Registered office:
Stirchley Baths,
2—4 Bournville Lane,
Stirchley, Birmingham B30 2JT.

Supported by



**Everyone has something to learn and
everyone has something to teach**

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Foreword



The period covered by this report saw the UK emerging from the coronavirus pandemic and imagining what the 'new normal' would look like. At BCM we wondered: how can we use what we learned from the lockdowns to find even better ways to support micro voluntary groups across Birmingham?

We'd never thought of online provision as being inclusive and people-friendly, but Covid-19 forced us, like many organisations, to reach people via new platforms (thank goodness for Zoom!).

Many people found it easier to access our support digitally for reasons that included work or caring commitments, budget constraints or disabilities.

So we expanded our reach – not only geographically but in the scope of our support.

Lots of us missed meeting in person, though. The accidental ideas that come from casual conversations; connecting with old friends and making new ones. The chances to build local networks. So BCM's new normal is a 'hybrid' service. As well as resuming in-person events, we are offering online information and learning sessions.

Behind the scenes we're busy building local networks and boosting community venues that host Birmingham's brilliant groups, activities and voluntary services.

Our core work was made possible with a Reaching Communities grant. We are grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund for its flexibility and support throughout our changes.

What the last couple of years has shown is that, whatever your plans, you need to be ready to change and adapt. BCM wants to see micro community groups thriving - making Birmingham an even greater place in which to live, work and learn. We are ready to adapt to make that happen.

We are looking forward to working with more volunteers and more anchor organisations, embedded in their communities, recognising their role at the heart of everything we do.

Thank you to everyone who enables BCM to help Birmingham's community groups and volunteers do what is important to them.

Emma Woolf MBE,
Chair of Trustees

Our organisation



Our mission

Birmingham Community Matters (BCM) aims to boost the development and sustainability of small voluntary and community groups in and around Birmingham.

Our peer support and learning network inspires people into action and gives them space to share their skills, knowledge and experience.

Our vision

Voluntary and community action is encouraged and celebrated in our city, with people empowered to make change happen – no matter how small. Ideas flourish and Birmingham communities grow stronger and more connected.

We call our approach peer support and learning, as our BCM helpers support people as equals, rather than as experts. They don't give advice or answers and they nearly always end up discovering something too.

Our objects

BCM is established to promote the voluntary sector and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of other charitable organisations for the benefit of the public in the area of Birmingham and immediate surrounding areas by:

1. Helping to build the capacity of small voluntary and community organisations and provide them with the necessary support, information and services to enable them to pursue or contribute to any charitable purpose.
2. Promoting, organising and facilitating cooperation and partnership working between small voluntary and community organisations, statutory and other relevant bodies in the achievement of the above purpose within the area of benefit.

Our values

Thoughtful

People come first. We are compassionate towards one another and our supportive working culture encourages us to be compassionate to ourselves as individuals and to model that style of working to the groups we support. We embed inclusivity and accessibility into everything we do.

Listening

Our motto (below) – and peer support and peer learning model – reflect the value we place in each person's knowledge and experience. We seek to nurture a diverse team of employees, associates, BCM helpers and trustees, valuing the different worldview that every individual brings.

Adaptable

We are open to new opportunities, thoughts, and ways of doing things. We respond to the needs of the people and groups we support, as well as the changing needs of communities. We are innovative in our approach to reaching people, and keep our working systems flexible so we can react quickly to new situations — and we never assume we've got everything right.

Empowering

We are generous with our knowledge, connections and experience. We work with people to explore what their next step should be, rather than telling them what to do. We are comfortable with not having the answer straight away, taking an iterative approach to solving problems.

Authentic

We foster a culture of openness, sharing our failures as well as celebrating our achievements. We view mistakes as part of being human – and a vital way of learning. This frees us to try new things, 'fail fast' if needed, and find more effective ways forward.



Achievements and performance

In the reporting year 2021-22 we were busy embedding our hybrid approach to working – a responsive mixture of digital and in-person services that came about as our response to the pandemic.

We worked hard in creating new partnerships and developing our ‘infrastructure’ – people, systems and use of technology – to offer the highest-quality support to Birmingham’s micro community groups.

“I am so grateful for your help and support. It means that I can spend more of my limited time on doing the community work, rather than trying to find out how to take the next steps and gathering the information that I need. Thank you!”

Working with our stakeholders, trustees and staff team, we adopted a new way of measuring our impact, which assesses BCM’s resilience, scope, reach, quality and influence. Our new systems help us collect information about the groups we work with and the progress they make.

Our volunteer BCM helpers have been, as always, the backbone to our activities. Their flexibility and commitment remains essential to our resilience and success.



We have enjoyed ...

Supporting people to unlock potential in their neighbourhoods

With Birmingham City Council’s Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit, we began running information and discussion sessions around Assets of Community Value and Community Asset Transfer, for groups with an interest in protecting important local places.

Expanding our Neighbourhood Network Scheme support

We value our ongoing links with Birmingham’s Neighbourhood Network Schemes, which build stronger communities for older residents of the city. We have worked with Hodge Hill, Ladywood, Perry Barr and Yardley NNS-funded groups, helping to strengthen their work in preventing social isolation and loneliness. We have been funded to give specialist support to Selly Oak NNS and - from January 2022 - Perry Barr NNS groups.

We supported 42 Selly Oak NNS groups with workshops, online sessions and in-depth, one-to-one guidance around governance, financial governance and management, volunteer recruitment and risk assessments.

Helping groups apply for Celebrating Communities grants

In 2021, preparations for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games were in full swing. Birmingham City Council funded BCM and Locality to help micro groups wishing to celebrate the Games and create a legacy in their local communities. Together we provided ‘Celebrating Communities’ grant application and project support to 280 different organisations across Birmingham, through online briefings and workshops. We gave 50 of those groups one-to-one support with preparing their grant applications.

Enhancing our communications

We launched our [new website](#). It gives people a simpler way to access support from BCM and is an effective place from which we can share and grow our bank of useful resources, templates and information.

Our [monthly newsletter](#) has continued to be a valuable communication tool, championing Birmingham’s voluntary groups and sharing useful information. By the end of March 2022 we had over 800 subscribers, with an open rate in this reporting period of 37 per cent.

(The average across all industries according to Mailchimp is 21.33 per cent and for the non-profit sector is 25.17 per cent.)

Achievements and performance: the statistics

In the reporting period 2021-22, our Reaching Communities project supported 99 individuals and small and micro community groups.

We delivered our service via:

- ♦ Email and/or telephone
- ♦ Group sessions
- ♦ Online workshops
- ♦ Dedicated one-to-one support from our BCM helpers.

Of the groups we supported:

- ♦ 30% were unincorporated associations
- ♦ 21% were small charities*
- ♦ 21% had no structure or had not yet chosen a structure
- ♦ 9% had another eligible structure, such as company limited by guarantee or co-operative
- ♦ The remaining 19% came to us via webinars or workshops and did not state their structure.

Although our governing document precludes us from offering in-depth support to CICs, we did accommodate 26 social enterprises through our webinars and by signposting them to support.

“It’s been useful ... being able to talk ‘shop’ [with someone] who understands the difficulties small groups and charities have.”

**BCM defines this as one paid member of staff, or none.*

“I got more information to move ahead. This information will help me understand how to deal with the problem and how to start, where to start, where to go.”

The most common topics people asked us for help with

Governance

Including choosing a legal structure for groups relative to size and purpose, steps to constituting a group or registering as a CIO.

Fundraising

Including ways to fundraise, grants and trust funder programmes, tools and bulletins for finding funding opportunities.

Marketing

Such as managing social media, setting up a simple website or promoting groups.

Organisational development

Including the start-up, planning and development stages of a group, policies and procedures.

“Being awarded our charity status was thrilling. We’re so excited for what this means for us moving forward and in all honesty would not have taken this plunge without the considered guidance and support from BCM. I would definitely recommend them to any voluntary groups like ours looking to expand, take steps such as registering or just for guidance.” - Lucy, Kings Heath Action for Refugees.

A 78% boost in confidence

At the beginning and end of our interactions with people we supported, we took a measure of their ‘confidence to take next steps’ - with regards to their group or project. On average, people reported an increase of 78% in their confidence to take next steps after receiving support from BCM.



Case study:
Fruit & Nut Village



We helped this Stirchley community group to become a charity.

Fruit & Nut Village was operating as part of a community interest company and wanted to become a CIO in its own right. The team also asked us for help with understanding the roles of trustees.

We signposted them to Charity Commission information on registering as a charity and setting up a constitution. We then held a one-to-one session to explore this further, discussing appropriate 'objects' and how these would align with the charity's many activities. We answered questions around selecting a registered address. We looked together at the roles and responsibilities of trustees. We signposted Fruit & Nut Village to many resources, including trustee induction and refresher courses.

Our overall aim was to help Fruit & Nut Village find and support trustees that are confident and effective in working for public benefit, acting in the new charity's best interests and managing resources.



“We would not have got our charity off the ground without this support. Setting up a charity looked very complex but with some steering, signposting and detailed guidance it became far simpler than initially anticipated. We are extremely grateful for the guidance we received that really allowed us to move from pilot project, dipping a toe in the water, to that of a serious, constituted CIO with a clear focus and direction”
- Rob Tilling, Fruit & Nut Village.

Case study:
CASE (Carol's Advisory, Support & Everything Else)

We helped this Handsworth community group with applications, documentation and connections.

We met Carol of CASE in 2019, before the pandemic, and held a busy BCM drop-in session at Soho Community Hall. During the outbreak, we supported Carol to prepare successful applications for emergency Covid-19 funding – exploring together what funders look for from applications and addressing their priorities.

We have since helped CASE to establish finance management systems, policies and procedures, and plan budgets. We have connected CASE with mutually helpful organisations – including Fareshare (which redistributes unsold food) and community-led housing groups.

We have also helped Carol approach larger organisations such as supermarkets to ask for donations of equipment (including sewing materials) to help with running CASE sessions that meet people's needs and interests.

When BCM restarted in-person sessions after the lifting of coronavirus restrictions, Soho Community Hall was the first venue we worked with.



“As a micro voluntary group with no access to resources, being in touch with Birmingham Community Matters was extremely helpful to me. I would never be able to afford the advice you have given me, if this was in the private sector. The patience and guidance you have given me to develop my skills, I'm truly grateful for and would like to thank you all, for your time and patience” - Carol Henry, CASE.

Our next steps and priorities

The uncertainty of the pandemic is mostly behind us, but its impact on the communities we work with has not gone away. We expect day-to-day running to become even more challenging, due to the cost-of-living crisis.

BCM’s own resilience, our partnerships and connections and our ability to amplify the voices and impact of Birmingham’s small voluntary and community groups will underpin all we do.

For BCM, staying agile and responsive in uncertain times is essential - ensuring that our own systems, policies and processes are fit for purpose and that they prioritise the people seeking our support.



To continue enhancing the scope, reach and quality of our impact we will:

- ♦ Work with existing anchor organisations to cover more parts of Birmingham and support a greater variety of groups and individuals
- ♦ Continue sharing high-quality communications (through our newsletter, social media and blog), and grow our mailing list.

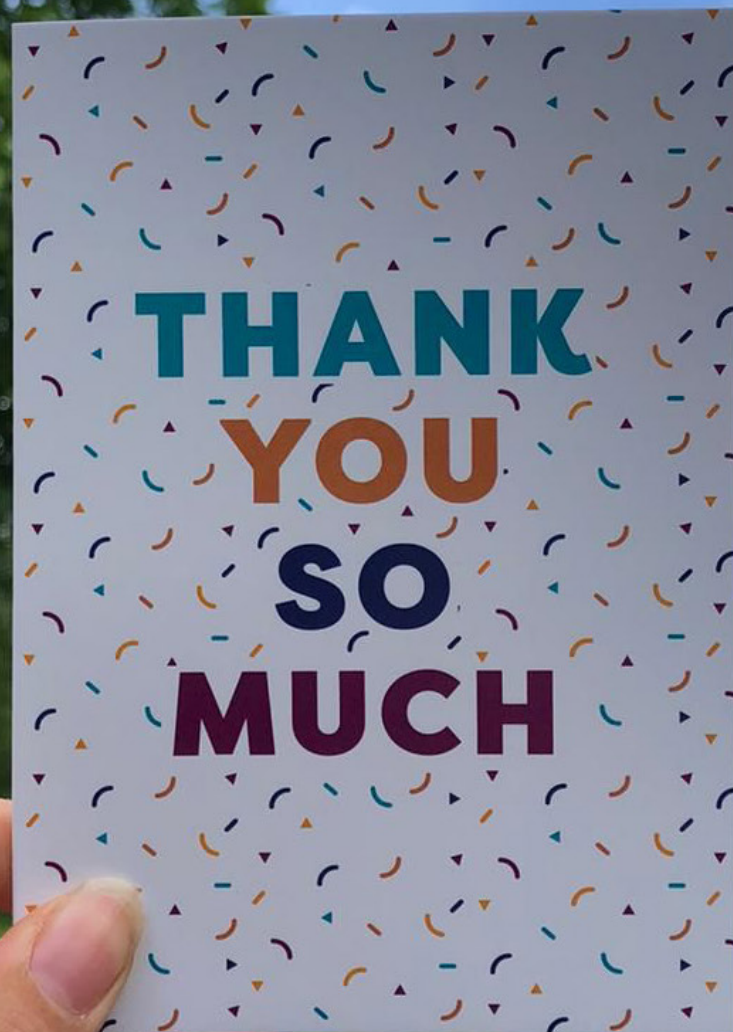
To continue expanding our influence we will:

- ♦ Relaunch our stakeholder group, following the pandemic hiatus, to shape and develop our work
- ♦ Analyse data on those we support, as well as on the wider sector, to develop our services, champion the needs of micro community groups, and target groups and areas of Birmingham with which we don’t yet have contact
- ♦ Recruit additional trustees to further enhance the capacity, skills and diversity of our board.

To ensure our resilience we will:

- ♦ Grow our pool of volunteer helpers to reflect Birmingham’s geography and demography, prioritising their training and development so they can help small voluntary and community groups to achieve their aims
- ♦ Develop our staff team to ensure our hybrid way of working is as effective as possible
- ♦ Continue sourcing and developing resources such as templates, guides and videos - and use our new website as a vehicle for sharing them
- ♦ Continue developing links with support organisations whose work complements our own and to whom we can refer groups we cannot support (such as social enterprises and larger groups)
- ♦ Continue to review and update our policies, communications and practice around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and also Environment and Sustainability.

Structure, governance and management



Our people

BCM is a small voluntary organisation, registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Associated CIO) with the Charity Commission. The board of trustees has responsibility for BCM's policies, its strategic direction and priority. It also has full financial and legal responsibilities for BCM, its staff, activities, services, contracts and assets.

Thank you to our trustees who served BCM during the period covered by this report:

Emma Woolf MBE (Chair)
Helga Edström OBE (Vice Chair)
Dipali Chandra (Treasurer)
Chris Bonnard
Sandra Cooper
Emma Macpherson

Thank you also to our core team:

Jo, Development Coordinator
Afsari, Development Assistant
Claire, Selly Oak Neighbourhood Network Scheme
Marie, marketing and communications
Kerry, graphic design and administration

And associates:

John Ellery, Get Grants
Rob Jones, Misfits Music

BCM helpers

We are hugely grateful for the dedication and knowledge of our BCM helpers – the people who work with us on a voluntary basis to give one-to-one peer support to small and emerging community groups across Birmingham. We truly appreciate their flexibility and enthusiasm in helping us to adopt our post-pandemic way of working - moving from informal, face-to-face events to more in-depth sessions online.



Structure and governance

Everyone at the table: we're seeking to diversify our board

Having a diverse range of voices at board level is one step all small charities like BCM can take to breaking down society's bigger structural inequalities.

We want to broaden and deepen the strengths of our board. The people BCM supports have a huge multiplicity of experiences, ethnicities, skills, worldviews and roles. Reflecting this diversity in our organisation will help us to better serve the city, as well as challenge BCM's working practices to ensure we keep growing and learning.

Recognising there are many barriers preventing people from becoming trustees, we aim to be clear about the time commitments involved in serving at board level. We pay travel expenses so that no-one is out of pocket for transport or personal reasons.

And to encourage younger people to apply, we value skills, knowledge and ideas over experience. We strongly believe that volunteering with BCM should represent a chance to grow, so we supply resources and learning opportunities to help all BCM trustees continue developing their knowledge.



Our partners

We are thankful to senior officers from Birmingham City Council, especially Karen Cheney and colleagues from the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit, who have provided invaluable support to our trustees and staff. Their insight is giving a strategic context to the development of BCM across Birmingham.

We are grateful to our colleagues in other infrastructure support organisations for being crucial supporters of and collaborators with BCM. Thank you:

- ♦ Locality
- ♦ Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council (BVSC)
- ♦ Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
- ♦ West Midlands Funders Network
- ♦ Bournville Village Trust Community Development Team
- ♦ Coalition of Efficiency
- ♦ Birmingham Partners.

This year we have begun to align our offer with the grantmaking of funders in the region especially National Lottery funding officers and colleagues at Heart of England Community Foundation and Severn Trent Community Fund. We have benefited from their support and insight into the state of the sector and their trust in referring groups to us in need of support.

We have also been pleased to work with the following organisations to deliver activities to support voluntary and community groups in Birmingham:

- ♦ Age Concern
- ♦ Age UK
- ♦ Aston Villa Community Foundation
- ♦ Birmingham Settlement
- ♦ CASE @ Soho Community Hall
- ♦ DigiKick
- ♦ Disability Resource Centre
- ♦ Gateway Family Services
- ♦ Holloway Hall Community Association
- ♦ Karis Neighbourhood Scheme
- ♦ Moseley Community Development Trust
- ♦ New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council
- ♦ Northfield Community Partnership
- ♦ PohWER
- ♦ Saathi House
- ♦ Stirchley Baths.

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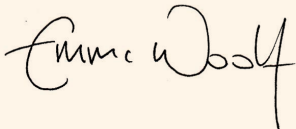


Financial review

Our reserves policy

BCM has a reserves policy which is reviewed every 24 months. The latest policy was reviewed and approved on 24 June 2020. The current reserves policy is to hold as free reserves a level equivalent to four weeks outgoing resources for critical operations for the financial year 2021/2022 (£4000). The target for 2022/2023 is to hold as free reserves a level equivalent to eight weeks of outgoing resources (£8000) for critical operations plus an estimate for redundancy for existing staff (£4500)

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees

Signature 

Print name Emma Woolf
Chair, Birmingham Community Matters

Date 14 Oct

Accounts

Receipts and payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

	Un-restricted funds	Restricted funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Grants	34,250	92,961	127,211	81,874
Other income	11,440	-	11,440	1,650
Total receipts	45,690	92,961	138,651	83,524
Payments				
Salaries and staff costs	-	45,683	45,683	44,435
Administrator's fees	1,600	10,600	12,200	3,000
Staff travel & subsistence	-	714	714	-
Staff training & development	-	1,263	1,263	262
Consultancy/partner costs	10,960	14,831	25,791	5,236
Professional fees/evaluation	-	950	950	600
Volunteer costs	-	72	72	-
Venue hire	-	329	329	-
Marketing	200	11,304	11,504	11,087
Website	-	3,007	3,007	-
Office costs	484	1,999	2,483	2,154
Insurance	-	475	475	464
Equipment	-	185	185	302
Independent Examiner's Fee	-	550	550	550
Bookkeeping/accountancy	-	3,064	3,064	2,203
Bank charges	-	72	72	-
Total payments	13,244	95,098	108,342	70,293
Net receipts over payments	32,446	(2,137)	30,309	13,231
Cash funds last year end	6,519	33,512	40,031	26,800
Transfers	-	-	-	-
Cash funds this year end	38,965	31,375	70,340	40,031

Accounts

Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the year

	Un-restricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds 31/3/22	Total funds 31/3/21
10.1 Cash Funds	£	£	£	£
Bank Balances	38,965	31,375	70,340	40,031
10.2 Restricted fund balances	Fund balance at 1/4/2021	Receipts	Payments	Fund balance at 31/3/2022
	£	£	£	£
National Lottery Reaching Communities	21,709	72,961	(74,817)	19,853
Selly Oak Neighbourhood Network Scheme	11,803	10,000	(19,081)	2,722
Perry Barr Neighbourhood Network Scheme	-	10,000	(1,200)	8,800
Total	33,512	92,961	(95,098)	31,375

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees

Signature

Print name Emma Woolf
Chair, Birmingham Community Matters

Date

Report of the Independent Examiner

Independent Examiner’s Report to the Trustees of Birmingham Community Matters on the receipts and payments accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Birmingham Community Matters (‘the Charity’) for the year ended 31 March 2022 which are set out on pages 23 & 24

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (‘the 2011 Act’).

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity’s accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner’s statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1.) Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2.) The accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Karen Hanlan, ACA, ACIE
Date
Karen Hanlan Independent Examiner Ltd,
1 Saracen Close
Ettington, CV37 7SZ



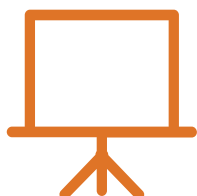
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