

Proper Good

No-nonsense support to start
or grow your social business

The Proper Good Impact Report

November 2024



bolton
CVS

UPTURN
enterprise



Contents

About Proper Good	3
About Local Access	4
The Proper Good Theory of Change	5
How the programme works	6
Spotlight on: Bolton	7
Spotlight on: Oldham	11
Spotlight on: Stockport	13
Spotlight on: Wigan	17
Learning from the first 2 years of the programme	20
What's next?	21
Contact details	22

Foreword

The Proper Good Programme began development in 2019 with GMCVO bringing together partners across Greater Manchester to work on a project brief and bid to run the Local Access Programme in Greater Manchester. Fast forward 3 years and a pandemic and we launched 'Proper Good', which at the time of publishing this report, is in the third year of delivery.

Proper Good is a test and learn programme, aimed not only at changing the social economy, but testing different interactions that support trading charities and social enterprises to take on social investment through their early growth stage, with buildings investment for more established organisations.

We have been on a steep learning curve and the programme is currently being fully remodeled based on what we have learnt so far. We want to ensure that both the support programme and the investment funds work for communities in Oldham, Stockport, Bolton and Wigan.

Phil Arnold was the independent chair until March 2024 and we would like to take

this opportunity to thank him very much for his valuable guidance and input during his time as chair. We are now fortunate to have recruited Scott Darraugh (CEO of Social AdVentures) as our new chair and are excited to have Scott supporting us through the next few years of the newly remodeled programme.

Cat Chrimes, Head of Investments, GMCVO



About Proper Good

Greater Manchester is one of six 'places' from across England which is part of the Local Access Programme funded nationally by Access, the Foundation for Social Investment and Better Society Capital.

Named 'Proper Good' in Greater Manchester, the programme is a pioneering blended finance social investment initiative which aims to stimulate the local social economy.

Traditional top-down models for economic growth and public service provision have failed to redress inequalities in Greater Manchester. Investing in a vibrant social economy will be a catalyst for creating sustainable social impact in areas where commercial interests have passed them by.

Launched in 2022, our programme is a collaboration between a variety of stakeholders in Bolton, Oldham, Stockport, Wigan and Greater Manchester to align resources, share learning, generate social impact and help to build a thriving social economy. We aim to support the development of stronger, more resilient and sustainable social economies by connecting social enterprises with support and social investment that helps them thrive.

The four Proper Good partnerships in

Bolton, Oldham, Stockport and Wigan are providing a locality-based programme of tailored support and advice to organisations from pre-start up through to development and scaling up. Local delivery partners led by experienced social entrepreneurs and business experts are working with organisations to help them establish and grow their trading income and social impact. When enterprises are ready to apply for investment, a dedicated team supports them to progress on their social investment journey.

A range of investment products have been developed to suit different stages of an organisation's growth; whether they are kickstarting trading income, growing their reach, or looking to purchase a building or want to refurbish a building they own or lease long term.

A multi-stakeholder Programme Board is driving the delivery of this complex programme, helping to shape the Greater Manchester ecosystem and to nurture and grow social enterprise with the use of social investment. Within each of the four delivery areas Proper Good Partnership Steering Groups have been established who feed directly into the Programme Board.

£1,287, 571 social investment awarded across Bolton, Oldham, Stockport & Wigan.

About Local Access

Local Access is a joint funding programme established by Access, the Foundation for Social Investment (£10m of dormant accounts from the government's Reclaim Fund) and Better Society Capital (£15m repayable finance) that aims to support the development of stronger, more resilient and sustainable social economies in disadvantaged places.

The aims of the Local Access Programme are:

- To build strong and sustainable local support systems to underpin enterprise growth and resilience for charities and

social enterprises.

- To pool and share resources to support more efficient delivery models for social investment or interventions.
- To promote collaborative or joint access to local pots of funding, incorporating both grant and repayable finance; and
- To promote and strengthen local money flows to keep capital within local social economies

Find out more on the Local Access website: www.access-socialinvestment.org.uk/blended-finance/local-access



The Proper Good Theory of Change

The Challenge

Support for social enterprises was disconnected, confusing or inadequate across Bolton, Oldham, Stockport and Wigan with a lack of provision or awareness of dedicated networks. This meant that opportunities for specialist support, peer support and collaboration were limited.

There was poor understanding of social enterprise, the different trading models and the impact they deliver, with few opportunities for social enterprise to be part of procurement and supply chains.

In terms of investment, there was little directed at social enterprises with organisations not knowing what options were available and finding it difficult to access the specialist support needed to secure capital to start up, scale up or acquire/renovate buildings.

The solution

The programme partners saw an opportunity to provide support tailored to reflect specific localities and the unique needs of individual enterprises and to raise the profile of social enterprise at locality level.

Creating active networks with support programmes would enable social enterprises to become better connected; to one another, to private businesses and to public sector stakeholders.

A dedicated investment fund of £6.25m with specialist support to help organisations become investment ready and to help them with the application process.

The short term outcome

By delivering events, workshops, 1:1 support and access to specialists, social enterprise activity is increased – both in new startups and growth of existing enterprises.

Engagement events and networking opportunities showcase the impact that social enterprises have on the environment and communities and connect enterprises to other stakeholders such as local authorities, investors, philanthropists and corporates. These new connections open up opportunities for new contracts, partnerships, collaborations and the co-design of new products and services that meet the market needs.

Support targeted at social enterprises looking for funding gives greater understanding of social investment and demonstrates how it can help social businesses achieve their goals. Investment products designed specifically for social enterprises along with dedicated support helps to remove barriers to applying for and being successful in raising social investment.

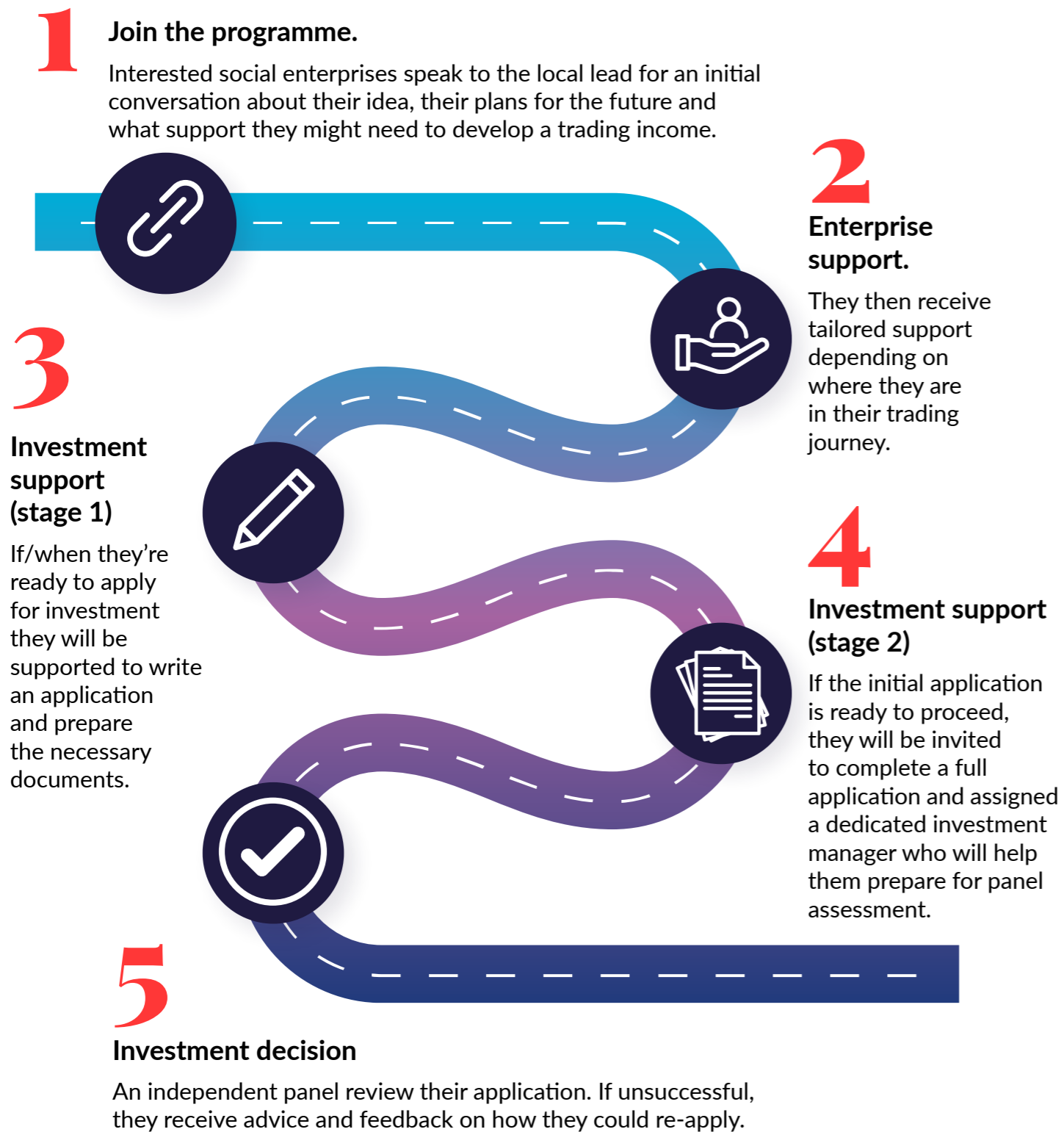
The long term impact

In five years, the four localities will have a stronger, more resilient and more diverse social enterprise sector.

More assets such as buildings will be owned and run by communities and more capital is retained within local social economies.

How the programme works

A support and investment journey:



Spotlight on: Bolton



Local delivery lead: Bolton CVS

When the Proper Good programme began, the social enterprise sector in Bolton was in its infancy. Bolton has a large, vibrant and diverse voluntary and community sector, but social enterprises were smaller in number and not as well established as the voluntary and community organisations in our town.

We wanted to create a programme that would engage and support social enterprise leaders and entrepreneurs wherever they are on their development journey. This means we've created a programme with multiple engagement points; a programme that is responsive to the needs of the organisations in our town.

We are currently delivering a schedule of workshops, events and advice sessions, alongside our business mentoring programme. Our workshops aim to address some of the key issues social entrepreneurs have told us are a priority - areas that are not necessarily explored by mainstream business or community and voluntary support services. Workshops around legal structures and governance for social enterprises, social impact accounting, cashflow forecasting and business planning are key cornerstones of our programme. All of which are facilitated by sector experts from across Greater Manchester.

We also deliver a business mentoring programme. Enterprise leaders repeatedly tell us that a key barrier to organisational development and growth is the resource and capacity to spend time away from delivery and focus on business development and strategy. Our mentoring programme has been designed to offer this space in a way that is accessible and bespoke for each entrepreneur.

The mentoring also provides valuable support for any entrepreneur looking to explore their readiness to take on social investment. The 1:1 and group inputs provide a space for ideas generation, business planning and goal setting, allowing them to fully explore and articulate the full potential of their business.

As well as working with social enterprise experts we've also made key links with our colleagues in business support services in Bolton. Our support offer is connected to both the Build a Business and Business Bolton services, as well as our colleagues at the Growth Company. This is a key element of the project legacy we are aiming to build; a business community and voluntary and community sector that fully support and recognise the value of social enterprise.

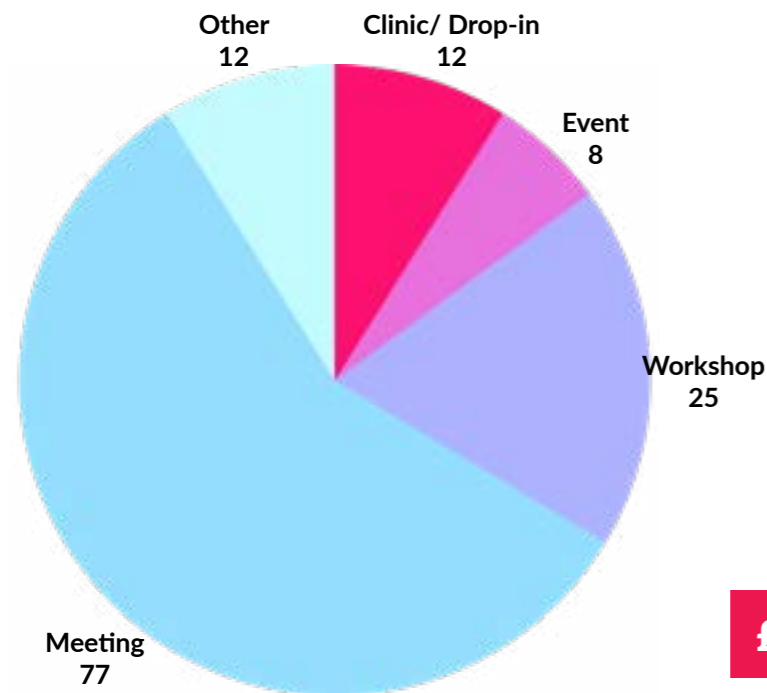
Bolton in numbers...

92 organisations supported

223 interventions delivered

£193,000 re-invested into the local economy from the programme budget

Intervention type:



Support type:

Business planning	11
Coaching/mentoring (inc. 1-2-1)	99
Finance/ Accounting	2
General	16
Legal Structures and governance	21
Marketing	6
Networking	39
Social Impact/ Social Value	24
Sustainability	5

£60,000 investment awarded

"The mentoring programme has had a profound impact on our business development, providing guidance, support, and resources that have accelerated our growth and success. It facilitated several new networks and collaborations, allowing us to connect with fantastic individuals and organisations. We are expecting an exciting future!

"Both our mentor and the workshops provided us with frameworks and tools that have been invaluable in our business development journey. We have now opened our CIC Title Productions, finalised our website and made significant progress in business development, strategic planning, and networking."

Nicolay Armando, Title Productions

"We needed support in networking and business opportunities, organisation and planning and preparation for our social investment loan application. After brainstorming with Lory [our mentor], we worked out main priorities and what strengths each of us bring to our organisation. We also looked at some of the main concepts from the Proper Good workshops in more detail.

"Having a mentor helped us focus on what we need to do before we apply for social investment and how to reach out to other business support organisations within Bolton. Lory shared a wealth of networking contacts and links for business development opportunities with us. We have since developed a new range of Bolton-based products and believe it will reach a new audience. We now have new orders from a fellow CIC!"

Jennifer Calhoun and Laura Salmon, Breakdown Bolton



Case study: Recycle-IT!

Recycle-IT! was set up in 2021, in response to increasing e-waste, chip and materials shortages, and digital poverty.

The social enterprise gives businesses an ethical and easy way to get rid of used items destined for landfill and then turns them into low-cost refurbished equipment for sale to those experiencing digital poverty. If the donated items cannot be refurbished, they get broken down into constituent parts and sold on.

The business offer placements to students from Bury and Bolton Colleges and work with volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds that don't normally have opportunities to go into this industry.

Founder and Director, John Hastings has been engaged with Proper Good since the start. He has actively engaged with the support on offer and was one of Bolton's first cohort of business mentoring participants.

Thanks to being part of the programme, the enterprise has become a social value partner with the local authority who broker collections of equipment for them. In return Recycle-IT! give back 30 per cent of the refurbished equipment into a digital loan scheme where Bolton residents can borrow tablets, laptops and other small devices.

In 2024 Recycle-IT! applied for a Proper Good investment when they outgrew their premises and moved to a larger site. The funding will

help with running costs, to purchase a vehicle and pay staff wages as well as build a new website.

Now one of Proper Good's loudest advocates, John uses his position as a social enterprise leader to support others in the sector.

"I would advise anybody to go through the process, even just for self-discovery at the very least, to get a better handle on your organisation to see where you are efficient, to see where your strengths and weaknesses are. Having Bolton CVS and Proper Good there adds a level of acumen.

"I'm on a bit of a cloud now knowing that investors believe in our model, knowing that the community gets it and that they're engaged with us. Our output has doubled and we now have 10 people from the community on placements working alongside us." - John Hastings, Director of Recycle -IT!

Visit their website: www.recycle-it.org.uk



Case study: Funding Futures CIC

Funding Futures is an innovative solution to a problem the founders saw within their local communities.

Billy Darroch and his wife Hayley already had a limited company called HD Beauty with three salons, a training centre and a shop. The pair really wanted to give something back to their community so they built a programme to support disadvantaged and unemployed women through wellbeing, life skills, accredited training that enables them to access employment or self-employment within the beauty industry. They recruited women through local charities such as homeless shelters and refuges.



When their waiting list was in excess of 50 ladies and they couldn't fund anymore themselves, Billy and Hayley approached Proper Good Bolton for some advice.

The pair attended a Proper Good drop-in session where they got answers to their many questions and after some additional research, they decided to set up as a social enterprise, Funding Futures.

Through Proper Good, Billy and Hayley have grown in confidence, learnt a lot about engaging with stakeholders, reporting impact to help attract more funders and how to manage finances. They were also awarded Proper Good seed funding of £300 which they used to create a brand and marketing materials for their enterprise.

The next step for the fledgling social enterprise is to acquire a building so they can keep growing, which they hope to help fund with social investment as part of the

Proper Good programme.

“Two pieces of advice for any social entrepreneur. Use Proper Good whilst it's there. I have been in business now for over 20 years and have never come across such a resource that is free and given with such good people behind it. Secondly, attend the training. The impact of the training on Funding Futures has been significant.” - Billy Darrough, co-founder of Funding Futures CIC

Visit their website: www.fundingfutures.co.uk

“We were one of the first to be invited onto the pioneering Proper Good mentoring programme. [The Proper Good programme] completely changed the way that we operate. Before it was a very heart-centred social enterprise, but I was burning out doing everything myself and using my own finances.

“Jenny [our mentor] taught us how to see it not just as a CIC: you need to run it as a business. We had monthly meetings where she would set me tasks such as start your website, establish income streams. Now the money that we make from paid sessions then pays to offer sessions for free in other areas and pay for room hire.

“The £1k grant from Proper Good after we finished the mentoring has helped massively with marketing, buying stock, putting sessions on and getting qualified in mental health first aid.”

Lisa Murray, The Karmic Collective

Spotlight on: Oldham



Lead delivery lead: Upturn Enterprise

The social enterprise sector in Oldham has been growing steadily, with new organisations being established to tackle pressing local issues like unemployment, social isolation, and well-being.

The Proper Good Investment Fund offers a transformative opportunity for social enterprises in Oldham that are committed to creating social impact. While the initial uptake of the fund has been gradual, the journey has proven to be a valuable learning experience for many social enterprises, enabling them to grow. Through additional support from the Reach Fund and expert guidance from the Proper Good coordination team in Oldham, many social enterprises have become investment-ready, laying the foundation for long-term success.

Our support goes far beyond just encouraging loan funding. The Proper Good team has actively provided a range of assistance to help social enterprises thrive, including business planning and strategic advice, workshops and training sessions, one to one support, networking opportunities and showcasing success.

We have also participated in numerous community and business events across the borough to continuously promote Proper Good and raise awareness of social enterprises' vital role in Oldham's social and economic development.

Having Proper Good in Oldham has also played a crucial role in securing Oldham's status as a Social Enterprise Place, a prestigious designation that highlights the borough's commitment to supporting social enterprises. This status brings Oldham recognition on a national level, reinforcing its position as a leader in social enterprise development. Proper Good has been instrumental in working with the council to achieve this designation, further cementing Oldham's commitment to social enterprise as a tool for community transformation.

The opening of The Hive, a major project by Oldham Council and managed by Upturn, has further strengthened the sector. The Hive has become the home of Oldham's social enterprises, serving as a hub for collaboration, innovation, and growth, thanks in part to the momentum generated by the Proper Good fund.

While Oldham's social enterprises have made significant strides, ongoing support and funding are essential to help start-ups grow, existing enterprises scale and for all to maximise their social impact. With the support of Proper Good, The Hive, and the Oldham Social Enterprise Network, the borough is well-positioned to continue building a sustainable, resilient, and socially driven economy.

“Over the past three years, Proper Good and Upturn have been instrumental in supporting Aim High Enterprise CIC. Their guidance in business planning and developing a sustainable trading model has empowered us to grow as a social enterprise, generating income to tackle educational gaps, especially among children from communities facing multiple deprivations. Thanks to their expertise, we have expanded from Oldham to a national platform using technology, and we're now setting our sights on further growth through strategic investments in technology and a business development manager.

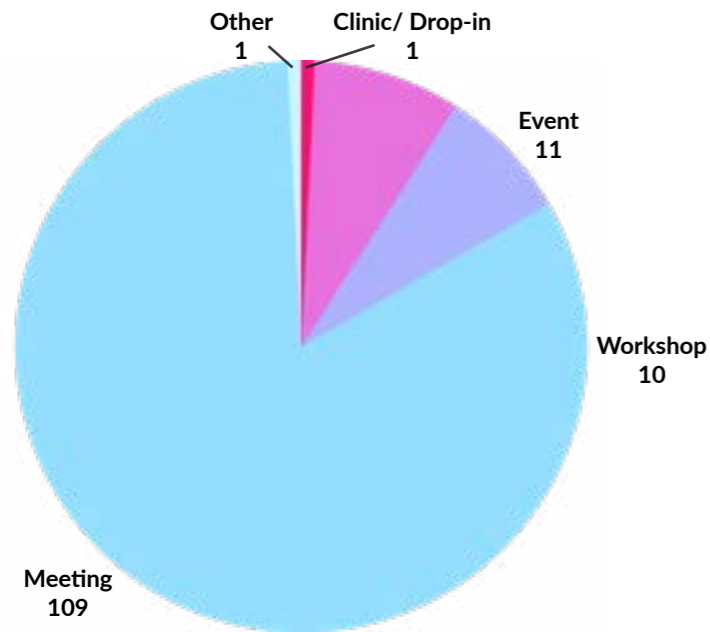
“Through this journey, we've also had the opportunity to inspire other social enterprises by delivering talks and collaborating with various establishments to raise awareness about our mission. The meetings with Muzahid Khan (Proper Good co-ordinator) have been particularly beneficial, keeping us focused on our projects and providing the mentorship we needed to move forward with confidence. The Proper Good Oldham team has truly been a key partner in our progress, and we are excited for what the future holds with their continued support.”

Arif Mohid, Aim High Enterprise CIC

Oldham in numbers...

119 organisations supported

Intervention type:



276 interventions delivered

Support type:

Business planning	13
Coaching/mentoring (inc. 1-2-1)	68
Finance/ Accounting	4
Fundraising	28
General	88
Growth	1
Networking	60
Social Impact/ Social Value	13
Sustainability	1

£375,000 investment awarded

Case study: Let's Get Active

Let's Get Active are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of residents through physical activity and community engagement helping make lifestyle changes to prevent or manage long term health conditions.

Let's Get Active faced significant challenges. While their project promoting fitness, mental health, and social inclusion were impactful, their reliance on short-term grants posed a threat to their continuity. They lacked the long-term financial stability needed to grow their impact in the community. To overcome these challenges, Let's Get Active reached out to Proper Good to help them transition into a more resilient, income-generating social enterprise model.

Through Proper Good, the organisation received one-to-one advice to help them develop a business plan to diversify revenue streams through trading. They also got support to create a financial forecast that accounted for both social impact and profitability and enhanced their operational capacity to run their services more efficiently. By presenting at the Oldham Social Enterprise Summit in November 2023 (organised by the Proper Good team) they not only increased their visibility, but also built valuable

networks with potential partners and investors.

Let's Get Active need investment to provide the financial backing necessary to scale their social enterprise. Through Proper Good, the team were referred to The Reach Fund who awarded funding to access specialist support to enable the enterprise to better articulate and measure their social impact using data.

The next step for Let's Get Active is to submit their application to the Proper Good Investment Panel. This application will include a sustainability plan, with clear pathways for generating income through trading, a social impact report which evidences a track record of success and the organisation's capacity and ambition for growth across Greater Manchester.

Let's Get Active's journey from a grant-reliant organisation to a sustainable, thriving social enterprise is a testament to the power of strategic support and investment. Their upcoming application to the Proper Good panel marks a critical milestone in their growth, positioning them for a future where they can continue to serve the community for years to come.

Visit their website: www.letsgetactive.org/



Image credit: GMCA

Spotlight on: Stockport

Lead delivery lead: Sector 3

Sector3

Since launching Proper Good just over 2 years ago in Stockport we have been focused on building connections within the sector and raising awareness about Social Enterprises, our unique business structure and the benefits of being involved with us. We have a strong, varied and vibrant sector and have been creating opportunities for our fellow social entrepreneurs and enterprising charities to build community together, learn things that will support our development and make connections to our wider economic system including our local business sector to create mutually beneficial partnerships. We've also had a fair bit of fun along the way too!

We were always about listening and responding to the needs of our sector rather than just delivering stuff we weren't really sure was needed but just sounded good. Some things have been a huge hit like our Social Enterprise Community Soups, Launching our Proper Good Business Club and Our Social Enterprise Mentoring Cohorts.

We are focused as we enter our 3rd year, on creating and supporting those in our Proper Good cohort who are showing up for themselves, their development and each

other. We have around 40 organisations in our support network and are continuing to look for ways to offer relevant and impactful opportunities for them all.

The biggest challenges for us are making social investment a viable option for those interested, and reducing the headaches the process of applying can bring. We are also keen to create a sustainable legacy project, long after the funding has run out. In year 3 we'll be thinking a bit more strategically about that!

It feels like we are making great strides in supporting the sector to feel part of something and the energy harnessed to think differently and explore diverse income streams and partnerships with our traditional business community and local authority partners. Time is our biggest hurdle. Many of us lead from a place of passion and heart and giving up time in our communities to learn, share, network outside of that work can be a stretch. It's important we have a varied programme, a flexible timetable and an accessible offer if we're to continue to make the biggest impact. Challenge accepted. Here's to another exciting year of all things Proper Good.

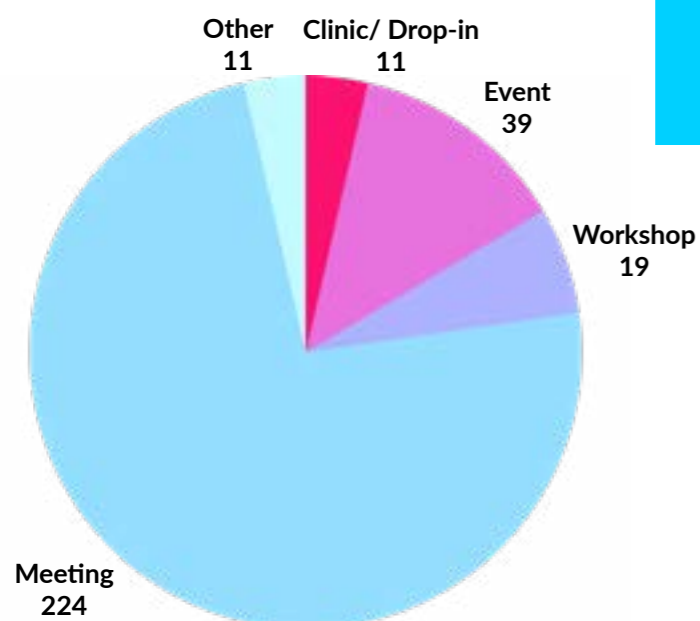
Stockport in numbers...

77 organisations supported

452 interventions delivered

£159,000 re-invested into the local economy from the programme budget

Intervention type:



Support type:

Business planning	7
Coaching/mentoring (inc. 1-2-1)	220
Finance/ Accounting	39
Fundraising	1
General	70
Networking	115

£60,000 investment awarded

"I have felt extremely lucky to be connected to Proper Good, I have learnt so much about working within the social enterprise community. I'm not sure where else I would've got the support they offer."

"Proper Good provides a network of people who are all interested and invested in making social impact - its become a group of familiar, passionate faces and I like that. I know I can approach anyone within the network for something specific or some support."

"Proper Good has given us a sounding board, an opportunity to try new ideas, and a wealth of experience and positive people to help us grow our projects."

"You know when you attend a Proper Good event that you are going to be with open-minded, like-minded, friendly and supportive people who are rooting for you and are eager to share ideas of how to help you grow!"

"Proper Good is more than a network. It's a community. I feel like I belong and the peer support is strong because we are all in it together. We all are each others' cheerleaders."

Case study: Make Build Grow

Make Build Grow offer creative art and upcycling workshops from their dedicated space in Cheadle Heath. All profits from selling workshops are used to offer free and subsidised workshops to marginalised people. The team believe that art and creativity are powerful tools to help transform lives, giving people opportunities to achieve and succeed, learn new skills, grow, and be seen and heard.

Founder Jen had seen Proper Good on social media but only signed up to the programme after a 1-2-1 conversation with Simone (Proper Good co-ordinator in Stockport).

Thanks to the wide range of events, workshops, drop-in sessions and 1-2-1 support, Jen feels part of something. No longer an isolated self-employed person, Jen now feels more confident, organised and better connected with opportunities for collaboration on projects.

As well as connecting with others in the same position, Jen has found initiatives like the Indie Bookkeeping Club a game changer in being able to understand how to run business finances, bookkeeping and cash flow forecasting. Skills that are invaluable when applying for social investment.

"The range of Proper Good support sessions



have definitely made me more organised with my admin, records and finances. I set time aside now to do this work and am on top of it with the systems I have put in place.

Proper Good has been really important to the development and growth of our business. It's the people like Simone, (Proper Good Lead) that have helped me so much." - Jen Samani, Founder of Make Build Grow

Visit their website: www.makebuildgrow.org

Case study: Self Care Creatives

Self Care Creatives teaches self expression and resilience through creative outlets. Mindful activities such as creating art and journaling helps to reduce the stress hormone Cortisol, creating a general improved sense of calm and wellbeing.

The Community Interest Company (CIC) offers unique programmes to support participants to enjoy a personalised creative project to support and boost well being. Workshops help individuals to focus on their own version of gratitude and success. We promote self worth and upskill participants



through embroidery, journaling and vision boarding.

Directors Stephanie and Kimberley have attended a number of events and workshops delivered by Proper Good, including a 'Chapati and Change' community soup event where they won their first funding as a CIC to deliver a workshop for a local postnatal support Group.

After attending and delivering a workshop at the Proper Good Business Conference the team have had enquiries from businesses that they connected with on the day. Thanks to Proper Good training workshops the small enterprise has a better understanding of how to run and grow their creative services to benefit the local community.

"We feel very lucky to have had Proper Good support for the very start of our CIC journey. It has helped us have a thorough understanding of social investment and how we can make a difference to our local community. As a relatively new CIC the support from Proper Good has made such a huge difference to our understanding, reach and ambition for our social enterprise. It has been a brilliant way to connect with fellow social entrepreneurs, local businesses and to the training and development we may not otherwise be able to afford." - Kimberley Drain and Stephanie Evans, Directors of Self Care Creatives.

Visit their website: www.selfcarecreatives.com



Image credit: GMCA

Spotlight on: Wigan

Local delivery lead: Wigan and Leigh Community Charity



The Proper Good programme in Wigan has built on the work of Wigan Council's 'The Deal' initiative that had commenced in 2013 and saw investment into the social enterprise sector.

When launching the programme, we were aware that many of our social entrepreneurs have strong social passions for change, but that not many were strong in the backroom support function and business planning.

The programme has enabled us to showcase our peer network approach, with training programmes and events all delivered and hosted by our members across the borough. We initially offered wide variety of training but found that some courses were not suitable for all which was reflected in low attendances. We have since conducted a survey to establish training needs and are planning a revised programme which creates a pathway for enterprises that enables them to better understand the steps to growth.

Aside from training, a constant throughout our Proper Good programme so far has been our marketing and networking events.

Our Wigan Borough Social Enterprise Network continues to grow, having been in place from the start of the programme in 2022. Regular network events are held at social enterprise venues across Wigan

borough, providing an opportunity for the hosts to showcase their organisations while also giving a space for news and updates from other network members.

Alongside our network events, we also compile and distribute an e-bulletin which includes our podcast series, designed to give enterprises opportunity to share their stories as well as highlighting key events and sharing advice and guidance.

A key theme of the programme has been to support the business element to our enterprises. We have found that a number of our existing and emerging social enterprises are mental wellbeing support groups who also have a crafting and product making side. We therefore helped set up a pop-up space in the former Debenhams store in Wigan Town Centre to allow for these enterprises to showcase and sell their products.

Since launching Proper Good in Wigan, we have seen an increase in the number of social enterprises incorporated and a number of social investments have been made.

As we move forward, we aim to work more strategically with anchor organisations in the borough, particularly in relation to buildings and links to the culture sector that is growing in the borough.

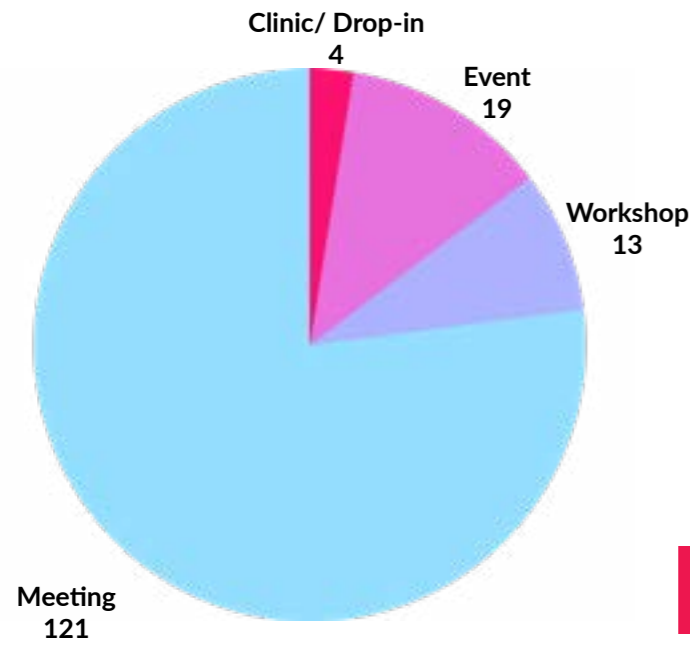
Wigan in numbers...

136 organisations supported

325 interventions delivered

£98,000 re-invested into the local economy from the programme budget

Intervention type:



Support type:

Business planning	7
Coaching/mentoring (inc. 1-2-1)	88
Finance/ Accounting	0
Fundraising	12
General	76
Growth	0
Legal Structures and governance	1
Marketing	0
Networking	141
Social Impact/ Social Value	0
Sustainability	0

£792,571 investment awarded

Case study: Craft Hive

Former teaching assistant Ali Gaskell decided to change direction and start a social enterprise in January 2023. Craft Hive CIC run community craft sessions that enable community members to come together in a safe, welcoming and creative setting to learn new skills.

Crafting can improve mental health by promoting mindfulness, reducing stress and anxiety and provides a sense of accomplishment, improving self-esteem. Attendees also use the sessions to connect with others and learn or share skills.

The sessions are designed to be open to all, regardless of age or ability and have a focus on sustainability (eg upcycling sewing workshops). Ali and her Craft Hive members sell their craft products in her online shop and at local markets to help keep sessions affordable, some sessions are even free of charge.

Support from Dave at Proper Good gave

Ali the confidence to set up her CIC. Since joining the programme she has attended workshops and learnt how to become sustainable, report her social impact and write bids. Networking events have enabled her to connect with people who are able to help her on her journey.

She has had such a positive experience with Proper Good that she has joined the Proper Good Wigan Steering Group so she can share her insight with other fledgling social entrepreneurs and help shape the programme.

"I found Proper Good, really, really helpful. I think I have been on most of the workshops they have run! They have helped me to realise that, yes, I can do this first and foremost.

"I've never gone to one session and thought, why have I bothered! They are very centred to what people need." - Ali Gaskell, founder of Craft Hive CIC.

Visit their website: www.crafthive.org



Case study: Piano, Pies and Pirouettes

Piano, Pies and Pirouettes are an art-based company that focuses on getting kids involved in drama, music and dance. They run an affordable and accessible dance school that is the front door to introduce families to the arts.

Led by pianist, composer and piano/singing teacher, Alan and professionally trained dancer, Donna, the team's work also includes working with people with disabilities. They also deliver sessions to a local Rugby team to try and encourage more boys into dance.

They have also set up 'The Wigan Minis' scheme which teaches children how to work in business and become entrepreneurs using the arts as a medium. The programme shows children that the arts are not just for those kids who are good at art, or dancing or singing. They learn that the arts also need electricians and plumbers and carpenters and they get to understand what a chief executive does and how he has to make a profit out of the business.

The social enterprise operates from a former Catholic club attached to a community centre which they want to develop into a modern dance studio. Proper Good

investment was the ideal option to help fund the development but as the premises were leased, this meant that the loan was not straightforward to apply for.

Proper Good Wigan supported Pianos, Pies and Pirouettes through the social investment application process, including helping them put together a detailed five-year business plan which was well received by the investment panel. The team were awarded investment in December 2023.

"Our lessons start at the minimal price of £1.50, which is considerably less than anybody else. To support this, we have had to take on other jobs - this funding will now subsidise the children's lessons for the first 12 months. Donna and I are now able to give up our many other roles and concentrate on the business.

The biggest positive I see from this process is we had to prove we were a sustainable business; we've been seen by an independent body of financial experts on the panel to be a sustainable business." - Alan Gregory, Co-founder of Pianos, Pies and Pirouettes.

Visit their website: www.pianospiesandpirouettes.co.uk



Craft Hive

Learning from the first 2 years of the programme

The Proper Good was always a very ambitious programme; a large investment fund to be distributed in the first three years of a programme that works on a hyper local level.

Throughout these first two years we have seen key areas of learning around the importance of being agile and adaptable to manage challenges:

Defining a shared understanding of investment-readiness

All social organisations are different and have distinct needs in their investment-readiness journey. However, we identified the need to define a shared understanding of what investment-readiness entails for organisations looking at social investment from Proper Good. This is an ongoing process where we constantly try to balance what social entrepreneurs need, and the investment and support we can offer.

Over years 1 and 2, Proper Good has offered substantial direct support to social entrepreneurs within the four local boroughs, drawing on each partner's local knowledge and understanding, alongside GMCVO's experience delivering social investment. The stories and case studies in this report are evidence of how critical this holistic approach is if we truly want to locally boost the social enterprise sector.

We have worked with other support organisations who can help us meet the needs of applicants at either end of the social enterprise maturity spectrum. Organisations like The Growth Company and local infrastructure organisations (CVS's) have helped us support those at the very start of their social enterprise journey who might take a long time to even consider trading activities or investment. At the other end, the Reach Fund (delivered by Social Investment Business) has been instrumental

in helping applicants who are ready to apply for investment but need one last push of technical in-depth support to help it all come together.

Listening to applicants and partners

Since Proper Good started, we have twice revamped our investment application process to address specific feedback from users and partners alike.

In the summer of 2023, we split the application process into two stages, making the first stage much shorter. This allowed us to diagnose the level of business support needed for each case which helped facilitate signposting and offering the right level of investment-readiness support.

By the end of 2023, we introduced changes to better align the business support offer delivered on the ground by local partners and the application support delivered by the investment team.

Both rounds of changes to our processes were a direct response to feedback from partners and users about the barriers they were facing to apply for investment. This adaptation process is continuous, and we are always trying to find new ways of improving accessibility, efficiency and inclusion across the programme.

Success requires time

Demand for social investment depends on having the right conditions for social organisations to grow their trading activities, and trying to develop and grow the social economy in local landscapes requires both investment and a lot of time. This includes giving organisations time to develop their business models, but also helping them access viable markets where they can offer their products and services. In a changing and uncertain funding environment, this issue requires much larger and coordinated

cross-sector approach.

Only after we launched Proper Good, we realised that a steady flow of viable investment applications would take much longer to build up. This is why we started considering the first two years of the programme as a pilot and the local partners have very much focussed on pre-start and start up social enterprises. We are aware that these organisations may not be ready for social investment for several years.

Things do not go according to plan, and it is ok to change course

We remodelled the investment funds after year 1 to give local partners more time to fully develop the business support and embed it locally. We reduced the investment targets and extended the whole programme for a year. Our hope was that the following year would see an increase in applications for

social investment generated through the local business support offer.

Despite substantial efforts to increase uptake, at the end of year 2 Proper Good has only managed to deploy £1.2m out of a £6m available pot. While we have had steady interest in the fund and support programme, the difficulties in getting a healthy influx of viable investment applications means that the fund is now £3m behind its overall target. To address this issue, we have been collectively working to find solutions, adjusting our investment products and support delivery to meet the needs of social enterprises.

Throughout these challenges, our funders' support has been invaluable. Both Access and Better Society Capital have been with us every step of the way, sharing our commitment to finding ways to improve the delivery and performance of the Proper Good programme.

What's next?

The Proper Good programme board have been working with consultants from the Change Coefficient to completely remodel the programme. We are working around three core elements:

1. Adjust the terms of our investment products to better meet local demand
2. Update our business support scope to specifically address the programme's target audiences
3. Change some of our internal processes for both the business and investment support so we can improve the applicant's experience from start to end of their investment journey with us

To get started, in September 2024 we launched a survey to gather feedback from organisations and have started market research to feed into the investment fund's new financial model.

We are hoping that this new programme will launch in April 2025 and these changes will support more growth stage ventures who will then go through to take on investment.

Proper Good also continues to be embedded in wider conversations and plans for the social economy in Greater Manchester. We are involved with 10GM, the Our Business programme and local policy conversations about how place-based investment can unlock growth opportunities for our sector.

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