

Shared Prosperity Fund Impact Report 2026

SPARK
SOMERSET
Inspiring communities

UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Funded by
UK Government



Somerset
Council



Strengthening Somerset Together



The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) invested in places to support people. In Somerset, funding gave us space to pilot new projects and strengthen our support enabling Somerset's charity and community sector to grow and keep growing.

At the outset we commissioned evidence-led research, you can read the full [State of the Sector report here](#). Over the past two years, we've helped local groups build skills, confidence, leadership and practical know-how. We've supported organisations to share experience and create connections to make community-led action possible. And we've built systems so everyone can access reliable data, platforms to connect, chat and support each other, benefitting Somerset long after the SPF funding ends.

“What has been drummed into us is to create projects that can be sustainable.”

Sarah Moore, Community Organiser

The Story in Numbers



23

VCFSE recipients and
11 donors connected
through SkillShare



107

Community
projects
supported



1,144

People attended
training events



270

one-to-one
fundraising support
sessions



400+

Organisations
strengthened through
training



3,375

Leadership
training hours
received



£500k

Funding
raised



155

Documents in the
Knowledge Library from
17 contributors



2,262

Residents
engaged in Yeovil
and Highbridge



COMMUNITY CENTRE

"Too often, a community organiser comes in on a white horse; they've got lots of money and they give it away, but then they leave and it falls flat. Having Spark has been different. They proved that facilitation needs to be human. The biggest legacy is the positive ripple they've created. They've magnified everything we wanted to do."

Joe Knights, Able2Achieve

What SPF Enabled Across Somerset



Community and Connection

Bringing people together to make change happen.



Leadership and Skills

Strengthening leadership for people and places.



Funding and Enterprise

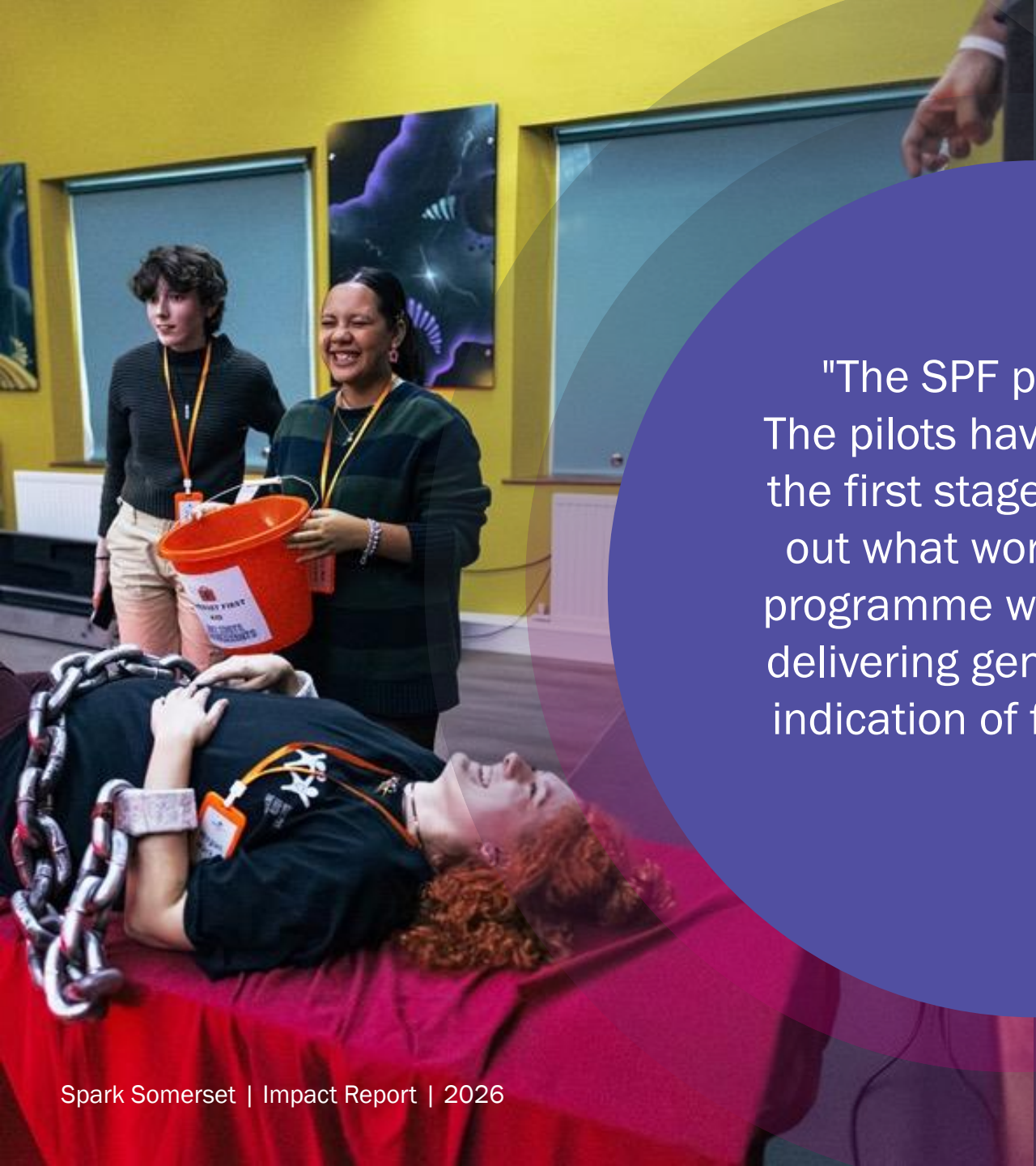
Support that strengthens organisations.



Data and Collaboration

Clear evidence and stronger connections.





"The SPF programme has been highly successful. The pilots have done exactly what pilots should do: test the first stage of implementation of a solution to figure out what works before expanding on its use. The SPF programme was comprehensive, practical, and flexible, delivering genuine value should be regarded as a clear indication of faith in what Spark are trying to achieve."

Quay Research

The Difference We See



More
confident
leaders



More
connected
communities



Stronger
pipelines
into funding



Better
organisational
health



Real
collaboration
emerging



Clearer data and
evidence-led
decisions

Community and Connection
Bringing People Together to Make Change Happen

Community Organising: Real Change is Rooted in People

Community development works when we listen.

Every community has the building blocks for success; passionate people, shared history, local pride. Our community organisers in Highbridge and Yeovil brought this together with commitment and tenacity, working alongside residents and local groups to make things happen.

Community organising is about more than delivering one-off projects. It's building a movement that belongs to the community, full of their ideas and run by them.



Community Engagement



2,262
Residents
engaged



196
Rewarding
volunteer
opportunities



132
Groups
supported



124
Events and
activities
supported



107
Sustainable
projects
supported



Birchfield, Yeovil: A Community Leading the Way

In Birchfield local people are showing what's possible when they have the right support to back their ideas. By spending time locally and building real relationships, our team helped residents, schools, and local services to come together to create the Birchfield Action Group (BAG). Everyone is welcome to listen, make suggestions, share ideas and find ways to get things done.

And they've got a lot done. From a volunteer-led café and a school uniform rail to family dog shows and a new nature trail, Birchfield is brimming with activity. Our community organisers made sure they were there to guide, but it was residents running the projects and building their skills to benefit their neighbours for years to come.

“If you are kind,
kindness comes
back to you.”

Local resident

[Read more](#)

Westfield, Yeovil: A Place to Grow

Once an overgrown eyesore, the Westfield Community Garden is now a thriving outdoor space the whole community is proud to visit. Spark Somerset supported Westfield Community Association to recruit volunteers, help organise events with the team and make ideas happen.

Today, it's an award-winning space where generations come together, from the local Brownie group to residents in their 90s. With its outdoor gym equipment, accessible paths, and quiet corners for a chat, the garden has become a little oasis for the neighbourhood. Most importantly, it's run by local volunteers using and learning skills to keep it growing for years to come.

“It’s a little oasis of peace on a morning walk; it’s pure joy to see a formerly waste place come alive.”

Ian, local resident

[Read more](#)

"Creating a community hub at Birchfield has widened the opportunities for our children. It's been multigenerational and we've loved getting involved in family days and events. We've opened our facilities, like our school kitchen, so they can support the wider community. It enriches our lives and those of our children, and it puts our children at the heart of their community."

Judy Parker, Birchfield Primary School

Leadership and Skills Strengthening Leadership for People and Places



Building Resilience in Somerset's Charity and Community Sector

Leadership grows when people feel supported. SPF funding allowed us to offer free training and development support at the right moment. Giving charity and community organisations the space, skills and confidence to lead.

Practical sector-based sessions ensured organisations strengthened their skills and shifted from stretched to strategic. This wasn't just about courses. It was about growing future leaders and building healthier organisations able to support their communities with purpose and resilience.



Leadership and Skills



81

Leaders upskilled



95

In-person and online
training courses
delivered



1,144

People attending
training events



3,375

Leadership
training hours
received



16

Training topics



Somerset Youth Theatre: Create Change

Somerset Youth Theatre (SYT) was created so local young people had a place to belong. Somewhere they could grow in confidence and find connection through creativity. As SYT began to grow, founder and CEO Selina found herself leading not just a project, but a team and an organisation. She joined the Leadership Bootcamp, which gave her the tools and clarity to lead SYT and understand her role as a leader. The difference was immediate.

Today, SYT is stronger, more grounded, and better placed to support the young people who rely on it.

“Spark helped me understand how to lead with more confidence, to be curious and be comfortable with challenge. It changed how I work, and as a result, it's changed what's possible for our young people.”

Selina Keedwell,
Somerset Youth Theatre

[Read more](#)

Stand Against Violence: Confidence, Capacity and Leadership Built to Last

When Stand Against Violence (SAV) reached a pivotal moment, Spark's Leadership Bootcamp gave Operational Manager Aimee Mckean the tools and confidence she needed to steady the organisation and lead it forward. With staff numbers low and pressures high, attending ten weeks of training felt like a risk. But it became the turning point.

“The Bootcamp gave me extra confidence and the tools to run SAV effectively. It showed me the organisation doesn't fall apart without me, and that helped me become a better strategic leader and we are stronger for it.”

Aimee Mckean,
Stand Against Violence

[Read more](#)



Support That Strengthens Organisations

Funding and Enterprise support works best when it's personal. Through one-to-one guidance, Lunch & Learn sessions, funding forums and organisational health checks, we help groups make sense of their income options.

For Spark Somerset it's about more than securing a grant. It's about enabling organisations to understand their strengths, explore different ways to be financially sustainable, and have clear steps to better support the people and places they serve.



Sector Readiness



£500k

Funding
raised



270

One-to-one sessions
provided



414

People receiving
regular funding
updates



23

In-depth Charity
Excellence/
Organisational
Health Checks



95

Fundraising
Coffee and
Connect
attendees



This Living Place: Growing Skills, Confidence and Rural Futures

Two years ago Laura founded This Living Place driven by her passion for Somerset's land and communities. But setting up an organisation is daunting. From legal structures to funding, the pressure of getting it right is real. For Laura meeting Spark Somerset changed that and gave her confidence.

With Spark's support, Laura shaped a clear strategy, identified the right funders and secured £45,000 at short notice to launch a pilot supporting women landworkers and creating a new rural role for a young person. Working with Off Grid Organics, Skool Beanz and This Living Place this extra pair of hands strengthens local food production, and supports our local community to have increased access to healthy, nutritious food.

“Spark didn't make me feel I was foolish for trying.”

Laura Tyley, This Living Place



[Read more](#)



Clear Evidence and Stronger Connections

Good decisions need good information. SPF funding helped us build shared data and digital tools making insight easier to access and collaboration part of everyday practice.

Bringing together local data, lived experience and peer support, organisations across Somerset are now able to better understand local needs, evidence their impact, strengthen funding bids and work together with confidence. Supporting them to turn information into action.





The Insights Hub











Hosted by
Spark Somerset



The Insights Hub helps organisations across Somerset understand community needs, show the difference they make, and build stronger cases for support. Sharing information openly helps us plan better, work together more easily, and speak with a clearer, collective voice about what our communities need.

Hosted by Spark Somerset, the Insights Hub brings together local data, sector evidence, stories, and research in one place. It gives organisations a simple way to explore neighbourhood, county and national data, demonstrate impact, and share their own impact.

The Insight Hub Gives Groups an Easy Way to Access

-  **Activity Reporting** A shared view of the scale and spread of the VCFSE sector's day-to-day work. 
-  **Impact and Social Value** Reports, stories, and tools (with more to follow) to help organisations understand and communicate their social value with confidence. 
-  **Knowledge and Research** Access to local and national insights, learning, and good practice. 
-  **Local Insight** Easy-to-use mapping and data for funding bids, service design, and understanding where needs are changing. 

Sector Readiness



200+

External users
of ShareSpace



2

SkillShare events
for **80** businesses and
45 VCFSE groups



23

VCFSE recipients and
11 donors connected
through SkillShare



45

Impact and Social
Value Reports uploaded



155

Documents in the
Knowledge Library from
17 contributors



"The report you sent from the Insights Hub is flipping incredible, what a document! This is going to be incredibly useful for a bid we're submitting. Huge thanks to everyone in Spark, this is exactly what we need as 'ammunition' when dealing with the 'Big Guns' 😊"

Clare Pound, Homestart West Somerset





ShareSpace

ShareSpace is an online peer-to-peer platform helping colleagues across Somerset's charity and community sector stay connected and collaborate. People can share updates, ask questions, link into Spark forums and networks, and access useful resources in one place.

Over 200 external users joined our ShareSpace platform, and the new streamlined site is now live, making it easier for everyone to exchange advice, signpost each other to support, and stay connected between gatherings.





SkillShare

SkillShare helps charities and community groups access the kind of practical support that makes a real difference at key moments. Matching organisations for one-off advice sessions or longer mentoring, the programme gives participants space to step back, build confidence, and tackle challenges with support. Organisations report gaining new skills, accessing expertise they couldn't afford, and growing in confidence as leaders.

For Prickles Hedgehog Rescue, this meant being matched with Nik Harwood from Young Somerset. Watch the video to see how together they explored fundraising, planning, culture and sustainability and the impact on both organisations.



[Watch the video](#)



Skillshare Connects Charities With Help Through Two Strands

1

Business-to-charity professionals offering skills such as finance, digital, HR, marketing, governance or mentoring.

2

Charity-to-charity experienced VCFSE leaders sharing practical knowledge with peers.

Our partnership with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce makes it easy for businesses to match their expertise with local causes to build confidence and links between sectors.



“This partnership provides a vital link between the business and charity sectors, enabling firms to match their expertise with the right cause and make a real local difference.”

Somerset Chamber
of Commerce

"As a very small charity we simply didn't have the capacity. Having someone dedicate their time and skills to creating professional content took a huge weight off our shoulders. We couldn't have done it without them."

Frome Birth Talk, supported by Click2Connect CIC



Better leaders



**More confident and resilient
organisations**



**Increased volunteer-led
activity**



**New collaborations
across sectors**



**More capacity to support the
sector long-term**



**Deeper learning from pilots to
improve future programmes**

Let's Stay Strong By Working Together



Get Involved

Visit

www.sparksomerset.org.uk

Email

support@sparksomerset.org.uk

Phone

01458 550973

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