

# Sheffield Makes Civil Society

People-Powered Social Change  
in The Big Village

**Produced by Opus Independents  
on behalf of Marketing Sheffield**

November 2020

make  
yourself  
at home



**This report and its associated primary and secondary survey data have been compiled and produced by Opus Independents on behalf of Marketing Sheffield. Originally completed in January 2020, the release of the report was delayed due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.**

The aim of the report is to explore the civil society landscape in Sheffield, celebrate its ongoing successes, and highlight the challenges it faces in terms of both its day-to-day operations and its long-term vision.

Drawing on primary research, as well as a wide set of case studies and qualitative reflections, this report also makes recommendations to decision makers in the city.

While many of the findings and recommendations remain relevant, we have updated the introduction to this report to acknowledge the vastly changed economic, social, political and environmental context that as a city we now find ourselves in.



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# Update: October 2020

**Over the last six months the response to the coronavirus pandemic has – perhaps like never before – united civil society organisations in a common purpose across Sheffield.**

Speaking to a cross-section of civil society organisations over this period, we have heard stories of how organisations have collaborated and co-designed projects, at pace and at distance. We have heard powerful stories of neighbourhood-level, citizen-led Mutual Aid groups, often organised via WhatsApp and making critical interventions for one another. We have heard of the dramatic improvement in the city’s air quality, as we have all driven less and re-discovered the importance of moving more, the essential nature of public parks and the joy of communal outdoor spaces.

We have heard how existing networks such as the Festival Mentoring Network have become focal points for support, learning and sharing resources for cultural organisations, and how the voluntary and community sector have formed innovative and critical new partnerships – around community hub organisations, issues of social isolation, food poverty and the Healthy Holidays programme – directly supporting our most vulnerable citizens.

We have seen how both universities in Sheffield have gotten behind the critical need for research to support local and national funding packages, and how the Local Authority has worked effectively to bring lived experience and expertise from civil society into the city’s approaches through its community response teams

and active policies of inclusion at its Gold and Silver command boards.

We have seen the delivery of initiatives and networks of economic recovery and renewal, such as the Business Recovery Group and the Make Yourself At Home campaign. We have witnessed the reactive, innovative and responsible behaviour of traders in the city making their businesses safe for the public.

In essence, we have seen the breaking down of many of the barriers to collaboration that were identified pre-pandemic.

Organisations across civil society have come together at speed to work openly and collaboratively with one another. We have seen many of the things that this report, originally written in early 2020, would have advocated for and we must be mindful of the importance of retaining and reimagining this as we move into 2021 and beyond.

But the challenge that civil society must now respond to is far greater and far more urgent, because the pervasive structural inequalities which shape many of our citizens' lives have intensified and become so overt for all to see. The increased pressure of potential recession coupled with the impact of leaving the European Union must also be acknowledged.

This is why the key recommendation of this report – that a Civil Society Commission for Sheffield be established with the aims of identifying and responding to the upcoming and legacy challenges of recovery, resilience and renewal highlighted by the pandemic – is so vital.

The importance of bringing together an inclusive and ambitious vision for Sheffield, which responds to the heightened structural inequalities and upcoming external shocks that many of its citizens will face, cannot be overstated.

The 2020 State of Sheffield report, published in late August, goes some way to illustrating our position as a city and the heightened economic, social and environmental challenges we now face. In particular, we note the challenge to civil society implicit in Director of Public Health Greg Fell's comment at the launch of the report: "The impact of Covid has not been the great leveller. The impact has been inequitable in every respect."

We also note the launch of the Race Equality Commission in Sheffield, and within that the vital importance of civil society organisations moving to a footing of proactive anti-racism work, amplifying the voices of our diverse communities and supporting those most marginalised and vulnerable in our city.

With funding shortfalls for UK charities reaching into the billions, the coming months could be even more challenging for civil society organisations. But coronavirus has shown us that when we come together as a city with a shared purpose, in spite of the difficulties, we can move mountains.

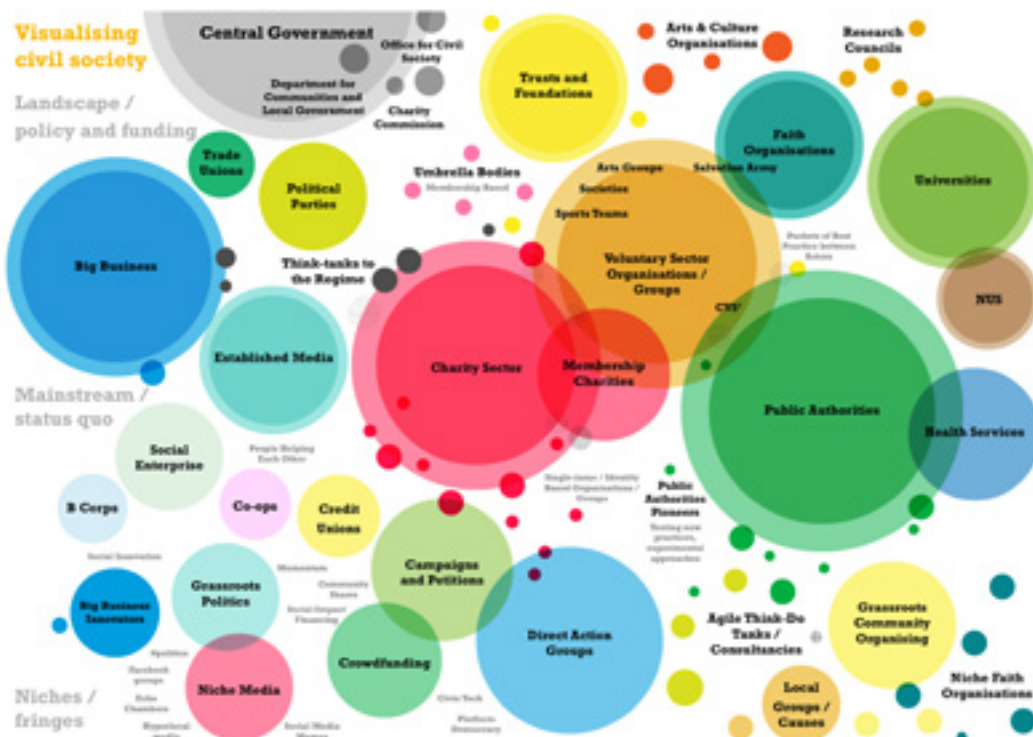
What this report offers is a framework (PACT) through which a Civil Society Commission for Sheffield could emerge and identify a shared purpose and path forward, moving us as a city from being reactive to external shocks to being proactive in our efforts to address 'upstream' the issues we collectively face.

In doing so, we can create a fairer, healthier, sustainable and more equitable quality of life for people who live here.

**Opus, October 2020**

**“[Sheffield] is full of truly special places, but it is the people that elevate it – down to earth, slightly cynical, dripping in irony, humour and love.”**

# What is Civil Society?



Credit: Civil Society Futures, 2018

**The term ‘civil society’ is an attempt to capture the collective efforts of all citizens working for a better neighbourhood, a better community or a better world by sharing their hopes and their frustrations, their criticisms and their dreams – and turning those dreams into reality through action.**

Civil society values positive social change over profit, from large registered charities to the smallest informal community group, from commercial businesses with social goals to students’ unions or local independent media.

This report was in part inspired by the Civil Society Futures report, published in late 2018. Civil Society Futures was an independent inquiry which ran from 2017 to 2018, “a national conversation about how English civil society can flourish in a fast changing world”. Led by Julia Unwin CBE, the inquiry looked deeply at the challenges

facing civic action at all scales and made a number of recommendations for reinvigorating civil society.

The implications of the report, for Sheffield and the whole country, are wide-reaching, but many of its findings chime with the experiences of charities, social enterprises, co-operatives, community groups and informal collectives across the city. In particular, one phrase among many stands out: *“We can only make a change in the world by making a change in our community.”*

In many cases this means acting on conscience and instinct — without waiting for permission — to reimagine our city and all the good that springs from it.

# Civil Society in Sheffield

Sheffield has a vibrant, innovative and hard-working civil society identity, with groups and organisations working on every level and across many sectors.

Below we offer some broad context for the scale and impact of civil society organisations in the city, taken from secondary research carried out in the last three years.



- There are an estimated **3,300 voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups operating in Sheffield.**
- Around 70% of civil society organisations have an annual turnover of less than £10k. Only 12% have a turnover above £100k.
- Sheffield civil society organisations made more than **30 million interventions or contacts in 2018-19.**
- Over half of the city's VCS organisations are working in health, welfare and social care, followed by a third in education, research and training and a quarter in community development and regeneration.
- Civil society work contributes **an estimated £810m to the Sheffield economy every year.**
- Around 118,000 volunteers contribute time equivalent to a cost of £323m per year.
- **Civil society organisations employ almost 30,000 staff in Sheffield**, representing around 3.5% of the city's workforce.
- 84% of VCS organisations in Sheffield receive government funding and are therefore vulnerable to budget cuts.
- **Sheffield's faith sector alone brought over £11m of financial value to the city in 2017** through over 700 groups and organisations.

*State of the Voluntary and Community Sector (The University of Sheffield & Voluntary Action Sheffield, 2019).*

*Sheffield Faith Action Audit (Cinnamon Network, 2018).*

*State of Sheffield 2018 (Sheffield City Partnership, 2018).*

*State of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Sheffield (Sheffield Hallam University, 2016).*

# Reflections & Recommendations

## Research

Our online survey was emailed to 213 civil society organisations in November and December 2019, 100 of which completed it.

These organisations were approached by Opus through its existing networks and contacts, as well as through a mapping exercise which attempted to capture all major sectors, although it is recognised that many are underrepresented in this report in terms of the number of respondents - for example, faith sector organisations.

The secondary research presented in

the 'Civil Society in Sheffield' section is drawn from four reports: *State of the Voluntary and Community Sector* (The University of Sheffield & Voluntary Action Sheffield, 2019); *Sheffield Faith Action Audit* (Cinnamon Network, 2018); *State of Sheffield 2018* (Sheffield City Partnership, 2018); and *State of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Sheffield* (Sheffield Hallam University, 2016).

## Purpose

This report is intended as a snapshot rather than a comprehensive audit of civil society organisations in Sheffield. For more in-depth analysis, the annual State of Sheffield report contains a sec-





tion on the city's third sector and regular publications from Voluntary Action Sheffield also dive deeper.

The aim of the report is to reflect the diverse range of civil society groups working in Sheffield - in terms of turnover and sector - but also to capture some of the finer detail around what it's like to live and work in Sheffield, what the challenges are, and what we can do to make Sheffield even more welcoming to those looking to start a social business, join an activist group or volunteer here.

It also set out to test some of the objectives, values and frameworks identified in the Civil Society Futures report by asking respondents to scrutinise statements around Power, Accountability, Connection and Trust (PACT).

The report will be shared with decision makers across the city, with a particular focus on areas of common concern and recommendations for change, as well as functioning as a document of the significant and crucial impact that civil society has in Sheffield.

## Observations & Recommendations

Perhaps unsurprisingly, **a large majority of survey respondents told us that a major challenge is generating income to cover the cost of operations.** In light of this, **in-kind support from larger**

**institutions and statutory bodies was identified as key for many civil society organisations** - whether this is providing free or low-cost office and meeting space, in-kind infrastructure support and services, or ad-hoc advice, advocacy and eldership.

Another key area of concern addresses how the work of civil society is valued. While respondents understood the need for economic metrics, **many reported that human impact and social value are not prioritised enough at a local level.** This touches on a key issue affecting most civil society organisations in the 21st century – how to 'play the game' while staying true to values and mission. A priority for decision makers in this area should be **ensuring that procurement and commissioning processes do not focus solely on 'value for money' and offer a level playing field for organisations which place social impact at their heart.** This could start by looking seriously at existing innovative approaches such as the 'Preston model', which puts 'community wealth building' and local procurement at its core, and the 'Wigan Deal', a citizen-led, asset-based approach to how Wigan Council operates differently in the context of severe budget cuts.

Without a widening of how we look at 'value' in Sheffield, civil society will continue to feel that its work – to some extent, at least – is undervalued and underappreciated.

Several respondents told us that **Sheffield is 'on the cusp of something great'**. Implicit within this is an understanding that while the city is starting to fulfill its potential, it needs greater vision and a catalyst to attract the kind of national and international recognition that many feel it deserves. The majority of those surveyed called for **greater leadership, strategy and joined-up thinking from larger institutions and statutory bodies in the city.**

This touches on another large area of focus from respondents, centred around decision making and power sharing: 65% felt that key decision makers could share more of their power, giving individuals and civil society more say on how the city is run. **The identified need for greater strategic leadership and power sharing should inspire the creation of new partnerships and open channels of communication which prioritise social impact but don't lose sight of the shared economic reality faced by civil society,** taking an asset-based approach which encourages collaboration over competition, alongside frank and open discussions about what is achievable and what is not.

The majority of respondents told us that their work fitted with existing city-wide strategies focussed on Social Cohesion (76%), Better Health & Wellbeing (68%) and Tackling Poverty & Fairness (58%), while significant minorities valued Social Prescribing (42%) and Inclusive Growth (39%). On the basis of these re-

sults - and the fact that 9% didn't identify with any of the strategies presented - **more should be done to ensure that city-wide strategies led by the city's institutions are recognised, co-produced and 'bought into' by civil society organisations of all sizes** to ensure maximum impact.

In answer to the question, *What does success look like to you?*, one respondent said: "Not being the only Black person at the table." There is a clear need for civil society in Sheffield to be more inclusive and more representative in a conscious effort to counter the imbalances we see across our society. **Proactive approaches are required to ensure that the services and messaging of the sector reach those from minority backgrounds,** including BAMER and LGBTQ+, who are more likely to experience discrimination, prejudice and barriers to progression in life due to structural inequalities. **In order to achieve this, a genuine diversity of background, faith and lived experience must reach to the very top of the city's decision-making structures.** Without this, we face an ongoing threat to social cohesion at a community level which severely limits stakeholder engagement and reinforces democratic disconnection.

Many civil society organisations in Sheffield are working for a better environment. Our survey respondents – often those not working directly in climate-related sectors themselves – highlighted the importance of the en-

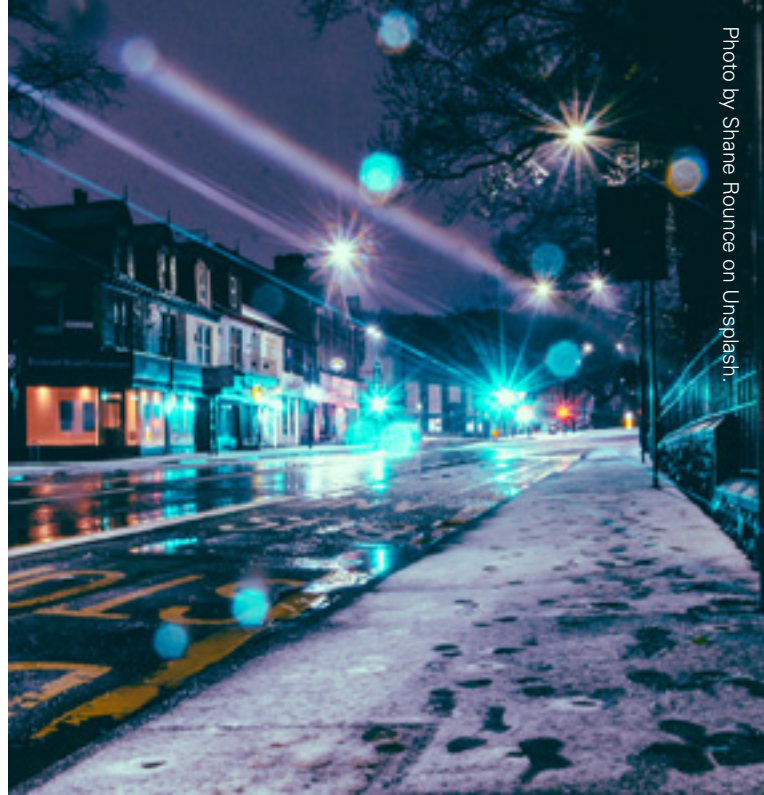


Photo by Share Rounce on Unsplash.

vironment on a local level, whether in relation to air quality, active travel and public transport, the ‘rewilding’ of public space, food production or another facet of this multifaceted issue. In light of the 2019 Tyndall Centre report, *Setting Climate Commitments for the City of Sheffield*, which calls for the city to reduce its net emissions by an average of 14% per year in order to become carbon-neutral no later than 2038, **it is crucial that large institutions and decision-making bodies in Sheffield win hearts and focus minds on the issue of climate change**, leading by example in radically changing how we live, what we consume and – ultimately – how we drastically reduce our impact on the environment.

## Conclusion

Summarising the findings identified in this report is not an easy task. As we have shown, civil society in Sheffield is so diverse that while there are many areas of common interest, there is a fine level of detail required to dig deeper and identify the best way forward for all.

In roadtesting some of the conclusions found in the Civil Society Futures report, **we found a strong affinity among Sheffield organisations for the PACT framework and its surrounding recommendations around improving Power, Accountability, Connection and Trust.**

The vast majority saw themselves as part of ‘something bigger’ – but a common theme they kept returning to was a lack of

joined-up, ‘big picture’ strategy. With this in mind, **we recommend the establishment of a Civil Society Commission for Sheffield.**

This should start with an initial meeting of all groups involved in this report, with an open invitation to other interested parties across the city to further map out the strengths of the sector, how they can be better capitalised on, and identify shared needs and vision, which could be built on the PACT framework. If the demand for more joined-up working is as high as this report’s findings indicate, the next step is to explore how best to resource a new commission and what organisations are best placed to take a lead on its development and ongoing administration. Care must be taken to ensure this body is fully co-designed and co-led by wider civil society within the city or it may be doomed to be ineffectual.

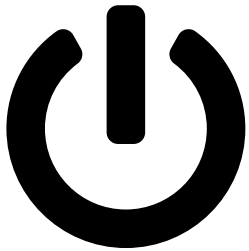
In any case, a Civil Society Commission for Sheffield would ultimately interrogate how civil society can better play a central role in the success of the city and — crucially — the wellbeing of its citizens.

# What is PACT?

The Civil Society Futures report outlines a set of principles, practices and provocations called P.A.C.T. - **Power, Accountability, Connection, Trust**.

This framework is a call to arms for future working, a way of assessing the emphasis, approach and impact of civil society on all of our lives.

We have used this framework to inform a section of our civil society survey.



## Power

**Many people feel unheard and ignored.** Civil society should lead by example, and therefore control and decision-making within civil society organisations should be shared and distributed.



## Accountability

**Civil society organisations must be transparent and accountable** first and foremost to the people, communities and causes that they serve. This includes being honest about mistakes and acknowledging the contributions of others.



## Connection

**Civil society must strive to retain its connection with the people** it represents by building real, meaningful relationships and using every channel available to open dialogues.



## Trust

**Faith in institutions of all sizes cannot be taken for granted.** Staying true to values, aims and visions is paramount, and trust can only come through time, commitment, care and honesty.

**“Sheffield really is,  
and could really be, a  
great place to make  
that change happen.**

**“All that’s needed is  
leadership, courage  
and ambition.”**

# Survey Respondents

We carried out a survey of 100 civil society organisations in Sheffield in November and December 2019. A summary of their **structures, turnovers and sectors** is below.

## Governance Structure



**Charity or Charitable Organisation 50%**

**Company Limited by Guarantee 16%**

**Unincorporated Group 14%**

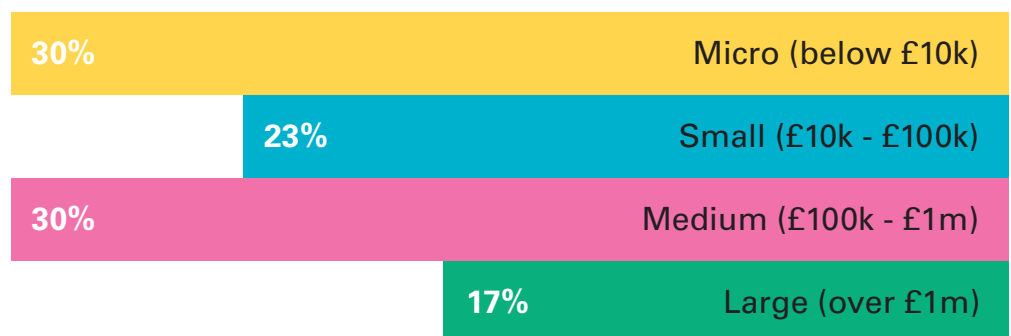
**Company Limited by Share 4%**

**Co-operative 1%**

**Other 15%**

Including community benefit societies and membership organisations.

## Annual Turnover



## Sectors

Arts & Culture	19%	Food	2%
Health & Wellbeing	15%	Faith	2%
Democracy & Activism	7%	Grant Support & Philanthropy	1%
Community Support & Regeneration	6%	Monetary & Banking Reform	1%
Asylum & Refuge	6%	Community Publishing	1%
Education	6%	Parks & Green Space	1%
Disability	5%	Advice & Advocacy	1%
Climate	5%	Business Services	1%
Housing & Homelessness	3%	Students' Union	1%
Transport	3%	Race & Identity	1%
Children, Young People & Families	2%	Repair Services	1%
Sexual Orientation & Gender	2%	Public Events	1%
Human Rights	2%	Public Policy	1%
Co-working	2%		
Digital	2%		

# PACT in Action

We asked survey respondents to reflect on a series of statements related to the Power, Accountability, Connection, Trust (PACT) framework, as laid out in the Civil Society Futures report. The responses reveal **a strong affinity from most groups for the objectives and values outlined in the PACT framework.**

For each statement, respondents chose **Very Much So**, **To Some Extent** or **Not At All**.

## Power

"We are aware of our power and seek to **proactively share decision-making** with our staff and stakeholders."



"We know how to **effectively engage with local decision-makers** and those in positions of power."



"We fully **reflect on and evaluate our own perspectives**, how they might differ from others', and how this might impact on who and what is valued in our work."



## Connection

"Our work seeks to **build real relationships** between people, meeting as equals."



"We use all tools at our disposal to **connect meaningfully with people** in ways which are fit for the 21st century."

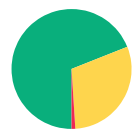


"We **welcome a wide diversity of thought** and seek to bridge divides through our work."



## Accountability

"We hold ourselves **fully accountable to the people** and communities we serve."



"We **acknowledge the contributions of all** collaborators and partners."



"We are **part of an interdependent, shared network** which is built on dialogue and responds to feedback and constructive criticism."



## Trust

"We **trust people and communities** to provide insights, make decisions and take the lead."



"Staying **true to our aims and values** — and being honest about our mistakes and shortcomings — builds trust in our work."



"**A lack of faith in institutions** — public sector, private sector and civil society — has negatively affected how people engage with us."



# The Benefits

We asked respondents, 'What are the benefits of working in civil society in Sheffield?' They were able to tick multiple boxes and add their own comments.

## Key Findings

**79% said a key benefit of working in Sheffield is that "people and organisations are open to collaboration".**

**59% told us that "there are many inspirational success stories in the city".**

**46% believe that Sheffield is "a good place to get things done".**

**34% credited "the comparatively low cost of living" as a reason to live and work in Sheffield.**

**27% feel that a plus point is that "there is less focus on competition than in other cities".**

## Respondents Said...



**[Sheffield] has a population that's generally quite politically engaged.**

**[Sheffield has] a culture of trying new things.**

**Sheffield has a good self image and is open to new arrivals.**

**It is a city with fantastic assets to build upon.**





# The Challenges

We asked respondents, 'What are the challenges [of working in civil society in Sheffield]?' Again, they were able to tick multiple boxes and add their own comments.

## Key Findings

**78% told us that a major challenge is generating income to cover the cost of operations.**

**58% believe there is "a lack of leadership or a joined-up approach to achieving goals across the city".**

**50% said "success is often measured by economic output, not wellbeing or positive human impact".**

**49% said a hurdle was "knowing which decision-makers to talk to about overcoming challenges".**

**38% feel that there is "a lack of support to develop and expand" in Sheffield.**

## Respondents Said...



**[Sheffield] has a slow place of change.**

**Vision in the sector isn't co-produced [...] It is on financially driven lines, rather than what the society wants.**

**[There are] difficulties engaging with BME people and communities.**



# Positive Change

Answering the question, 'How could your work in Sheffield be better supported?', respondents gave the below contributions.

## Key Findings

**65% would value "sharing of power by key decision-makers and the chance to have meaningful input on how the city is run".**

**56% think that "greater leadership, strategy and joined-up thinking" is required.**

**51% want more "networking, introductions and opportunities for collaboration."**

**44% require "in-kind support" to carry out their work more effectively.**

**43% believe that "greater access to city-wide marketing or advertising" would support their cause.**

## Respondents Said...



**More in-depth, joined-up dialogue with city leaders about service improvements.**

**Structured, constructive dialogue in communities.**

**Recognising and valuing social value and reflecting this in the commissioning of local services.**



# What does success look like to you?



**Leadership that champions, supports and collaborates** with organisations of all sizes to develop a holistic offer to all communities.

**Reaching and empowering all of the city's communities**, especially deprived and neglected areas and the people who feel voiceless.

**[Young people] are seen as equal partners with adults**, being seen as creators of solutions rather than service users or as a problem that needs to be solved.

**A well-resourced civil society** in terms of training, support and linked-up networks.

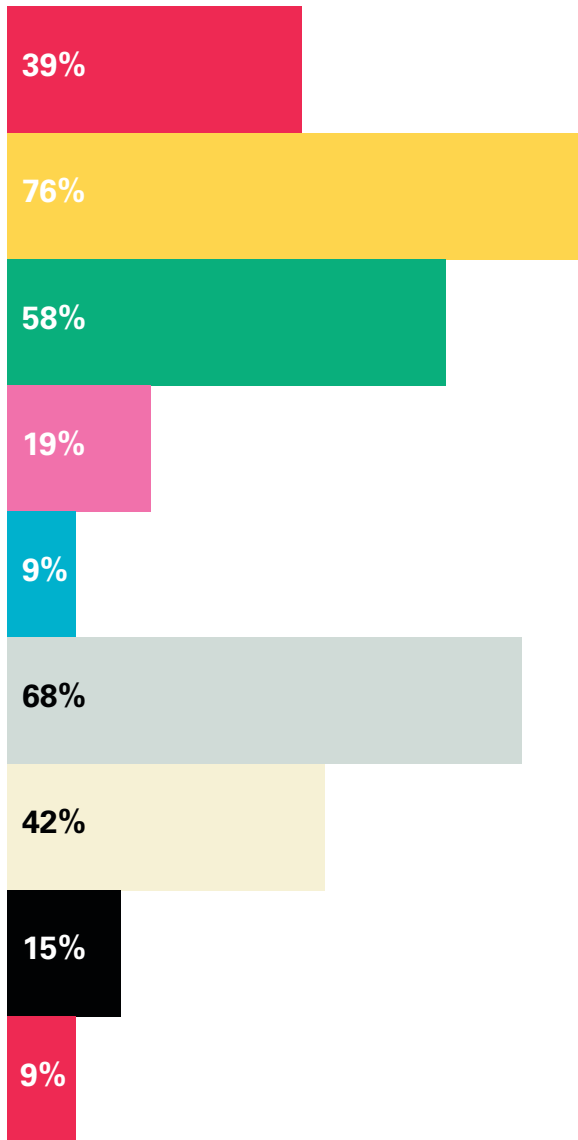
**Sheffield's streets full of bikes and people** - not cars.

**Sheffield keeping its identity somehow** - as the 'largest village' - whilst continuing to attempt to thrive and not be insular.

**Sheffield could be transformed through more access to direct democracy** and mechanisms which allow people to share their lived experience in decisions that are relevant to their lives.



# Does your work fit with the below strategies?



**Inclusive Growth** - Making sure that economic growth benefits everyone.

**Social Cohesion** - How well we get on with each other.

**Tackling Poverty & Fairness** - Closing the gap and supporting those who are worst off.

**The Outdoor City** - Sheffield as an international destination for outdoor activity.

**Building Better Parks**

**Better Health & Wellbeing**

**Social Prescribing**

**Active Travel**

**(No answer / None of the above)**

# Why Sheffield? What is special about working here?



There is an essence of collaboration and co-production that is soaked into the city. **It's hard to put your finger on, but there is a sense that we are all sailing on the same ship.**

There is a **super-connected, 'can-do' approach** in Sheffield, built on the traditions of making and equality which both still run through a number of organisations.

Sheffield has **a collective heart and conscience** which is inclusive, diverse and progressive in its outlook.

There is a certain atmosphere prevalent across the city - one of possibility. **It feels as if we're on the brink of a cultural and creative explosion** and that's very exciting.

Sheffield residents are extraordinarily proud of their city and there is a huge impetus to make a difference. **We are a city of creators, innovators and collaborators - all of which has the potential to bring about real positive change.**

**We try out new ideas without forgetting what we've learnt from the past.**



**“The people of Sheffield are passionate about living in a fairer, kinder, greener place.**

**“A lot of us simply don't know how to make this happen.”**

# Case Studies



## **Disability Sheffield: Promoting choice, control and independence for disabled people in Sheffield.**

At the heart of **Disability Sheffield's** work is the belief that people with impairments are disabled due to the barriers they face in everyday life, not due to the way their minds or bodies work.

As such, a core focus for the organisation is promoting independent living and the co-production of innovative solutions to these social barriers, as well as campaigning for real equality and a voice for disabled people in the city. Disability Sheffield is a support organisation for Sheffield's Disability Hub, part of the city's Equality Hub Network.

Andrew Crooks, Development & Engagement Worker, said: "I get to see first-hand the hard and vital work Disability Sheffield's staff and volunteers pull off on a daily basis. I am so proud to work for an organisation that supports disabled people like me in building Sheffield's civil society."



## **Hope For The Future: Changing hearts and minds on climate change.**

**Hope For The Future** informs and educates citizens on the best way to talk to and influence their political leaders about effective action on the climate crisis.

Beginning as a small Yorkshire-based campaign in the lead-up to the 2015 General Election, HFTF has since expanded its innovative training programmes to work with fellow activist organisations, including The Climate Coalition, Christian Aid and 350.org.

Assistant Director Sarah Robinson said: "It's a great asset to be outside of the 'London bubble' as it can give a fresh perspective on UK politics.

"As a climate change charity, Sheffield is a brilliant place to be, with the Peak District on our doorstep and local politicians who are committed to tackling this issue."

# Case Studies



## **Sheffield Flourish: Sharing real stories and breaking down mental health stigma.**

**Sheffield Flourish** seeks to open up frank discussions about mental health and the charity works with people with lived experience to co-create what they do.

They deliver the Sheffield Flourish, Sheffield Mental Health Guide and Sheffield Suicide Support websites, as well as supporting community enterprises working in football, gardening, creative arts, storytelling and music.

Deputy Managing Director Jo Eckersley said: "Spread across seven hills are tightly knit communities of people who really care about each other, who are willing to do whatever it takes to improve our city, and to support the most marginalised. We are a city of distinct, often separate communities, but when it really matters we know how to come together and be there for each other."



## **Tickets For Good Foundation: Social life, social good.**

**Tickets For Good** has brought philanthropy to the forefront of the ticketing experience by using the income associated with its booking fees to offer free tickets to the clients, stakeholders and service users of local charities and social projects in Sheffield.

As well as opening up access to all kinds of events, large and small, this initiative also improves the health and wellbeing of its beneficiaries, whilst enabling local people who buy tickets to give something back to the community.

Co-founder and CEO Steve Rimmer said: "Sheffield has a very special vibe around the level of social responsibility of the people and businesses working here. It has a higher than usual amount of social enterprise, charity and voluntary sector activity, and this really speaks to the ethos of the city itself."



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# Case Studies



## **ASSIST Sheffield: A lifeline for destitute asylum seekers.**

People who are unsuccessful in their applications for asylum in the UK are often left destitute, with nowhere to live and no right to work. **ASSIST** supports these most vulnerable Sheffield residents with accommodation, advice and access to essential services.

Founded in 2003, the charity works with around 90 asylum seekers each week and relies in large part on fundraising, donations and volunteers.

Events and Community Officer Lyndsey McLellan said: "Our services give asylum seekers stability and a space to make a choice and be able to plan for the future. We are humbled by the number of people in Sheffield that challenge asylum destitution alongside us every day."



## **Voluntary Action Sheffield: Infrastructure, advice and support for Sheffield's third sector.**

**Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS)** exists to support and nurture Sheffield's many voluntary and community organisations, offering advice, information, infrastructure and advocacy on behalf of the sector. VAS is one of Sheffield's largest third sector organisations and also hosts The Volunteer Centre, the leading volunteering organisation in Sheffield, sharing best practice and enabling people to volunteer at all levels across the city.

Helen Sims, Business Growth Manager at VAS, said: "You will hear people say Sheffield is like a big village, and they usually mean it in the best way possible: people know each other, work together and care about the shared assets of the city. We don't let the scale of our city phase us. It's all for the people, by the people. Sheffield is truly vibrant, with a massive heart."

# Case Studies



## **SOAR Community: Supporting people to make positive changes.**

Based in Parson Cross, **SOAR** is a community regeneration charity geared towards improving its clients' health, well-being and employability. SOAR manages The Learning Zone, SOAR Works and Burngreave Library, as well as offering a range of services, such as CV support and pre-employability training, counselling and debt advice, and running a social prescribing programme connecting its client base to community groups and local services.

Partnership Manager Ian Drayton said: "Our strapline says it all – supporting people to make positive changes. Which reminds me of the question: how many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb? One – but the bulb has to really want to change."



## **AFC Unity: Putting hope over fear through sport.**

Aiming to bring about social change through sport, **AFC Unity** is an independent, award-winning social enterprise running a women's football club which plays at Sheffield Park Academy and the U-Mix Centre in Sharrow. Solidarity Soccer sessions are open to all, while the club also fields an advanced 11-a-side team.

One of the few of its kind to have been created as a women's team without being supported by a pre-existing men's team, AFC Unity brings positivity, democracy and inclusivity to the beautiful game.

Co-founder Jane Watkinson said: "Sheffield has a unique history as a hub for radical and social justice campaigns, movements and organisation."

# Case Studies



## Heeley Trust: Common spaces for common good.

Founded in 1998, **Heeley Trust** works to improve and secure public space in Heeley and Meersbrook for community use, as well as running many projects for the benefit of residents.

Starting out with some derelict land and dilapidated buildings, Heeley Trust is now the guardian of Heeley People's Park – one of the country's biggest community-owned parks – Heeley Institute, SUM Studios and Meersbrook Hall, as well as developing Recycle Bikes, Sheffield Media Productions, Heeley Online and Big Boulder Festival.

Heeley Trust's Andy Jackson said: "For most of our staff, we didn't choose Sheffield — Sheffield chose us.

"Its people are fiercely independent, talented, unassuming, friendly, real."



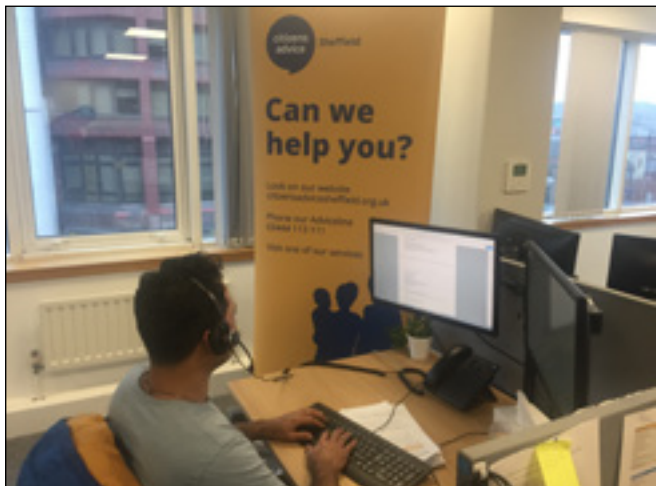
## Cycle Sheffield: For a cycle-friendly and people-friendly city.

**Cycle Sheffield** campaigns for a cycle-friendly and people-friendly city so that more people can make journeys using 'active travel'.

A vocal advocate of better infrastructure and provision for cycling, Cycle Sheffield is a voluntary organisation with over 1,400 supporters and was recently involved in the temporary pedestrianisation of Division Street and Devonshire Street in partnership with Sheffield City Council.

Dexter Johnstone of CycleSheffield said: "We want cycling to be inclusive and easy, not limited to the quick and the brave. With the declaration of a climate emergency [by Sheffield City Council] and illegal levels of air pollution in the city, it is vital we give people more sustainable transport options."

# Case Studies



## **Citizens Advice Sheffield: Independent and confidential advice and advocacy services.**

Last year Citizens Advice Sheffield helped almost 24,000 people, about one in five of Sheffield households.

Some outcomes can be easily measured, such as their services bringing more than £13m into the city through income gains for people and ensuring that over £2m of debt is managed or written off. But many of the positive outcomes are about people's health and wellbeing and how, by solving some of their immediate problems, they can move forward with their lives.

Clare Lodder, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Sheffield, said: "Sheffield is all about partnerships and strong working relationships. By working together, particularly where we deliver our services alongside other provision, such as delivering advice in foodbanks, we reach the people who need us most."



## **Hackenthorpe Older People's Lunch Club: A vital resource run and managed by volunteers.**

Local volunteer Sue Smith has been the driving force behind **Hackenthorpe Lunch Club** since 2018, helping to deliver a twice-weekly social event for older people.

Sue's knowledge of the local area and the needs of the community stems from her involvement in several neighbourhood activities and her voluntary role as manager of the community centre.

Sue Smith, Voluntary Club Manager, said: "I care about the local community and that's why I've been a volunteer running the community centre for the past 20 years. When the last club closed, I noticed a lot of local older people weren't getting out anymore. I wanted to do whatever I could to get it going again. I was surprised when I had over 60 people interested."

**“I just wish Sheffield was a bit more joined up, or that we lifted each other up more, because we are on the cusp of something incredibly special.”**



*This report was produced by Opus Independents Ltd on behalf of Marketing Sheffield.*

**Opus believes we can live in a place where everyone works to make things better for each other.**

'Better' to us means fair, diverse, accessible, independent and heard. That's why we champion social causes, independent business, not-for-profits, emerging talent and healthy debate.

Since 2008, we've run projects like Now Then Magazine, Wordlife and Festival of Debate – they connect us to each other and to music, arts, culture, ideas, action and conversations that will make change.

And more than anything, that's what we're here for: to make it easier to contribute to change for the better – and to have fun doing it.

**[www.weareopus.org](http://www.weareopus.org)**

Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash



# Sheffield



Photo by Benjamin Elliott on Unsplash

**We are a city built on character and spirit, comprised of layers and overlapping networks, in which people and communities work together in a very natural way.**

We get on with things with friendly determination, despite not having much of the limelight and needing to tackle the inevitable social differences encountered as the country's fourth largest city.

We're not perfect by a long stretch, but as a bunch of inventive people in a city that cannot stand still, we'll keep

trying to make things better. Sheffield has always been a city that makes things, it's just the things that we make continually change, as the world around us does too.

Sheffield

make  
yourself  
at home

[whatmakesSheffield.com/civil-society](https://whatmakesSheffield.com/civil-society)  
[welcometoSheffield.co.uk/makeyourselfathome](https://welcometoSheffield.co.uk/makeyourselfathome)



**“You will hear people say Sheffield is like a big village: people know each other, work together and care about the shared assets of the city. It's all for the people, by the people.”**

