

Birchfield Big Local – Year 3 Plan



Vision

We have a dream

Birchfield will become

A neighbourhood where the diverse community feel empowered, engaged and enabled to address issues such as health, education, inequality, unemployment and environment, so creating a happy, safe, clean, prosperous and regenerated area in which to live and work.

A place where every citizen has a collective sense of ownership, belonging, pride, respect, creativity and an equal voice. A place where individual talent and skills are nurtured and people want to come and stay.

In this way we will provide a lasting legacy to all people by giving them a new direction that helps break the cycle of poverty through creating a well-served and connected community.



Partnership

The main role of the Big Local Partnership is to make the decisions that are best for Birchfield Big Local, in line with the Birchfield Big Local plan which was agreed after extensive consultations with local people. Another key role is building and strengthening relationships between the diverse individuals, groups, organisations and businesses within the Birchfield Big Local area. The partnership has a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary.

Local people are welcome to join the partnership. There is a straightforward process in place which starts with the completion of an expression of interest form that can be accessed on-line or as a paper copy.

All members are expected to sign up to the Big Local values and code of conduct together with an agreement with the Local Trust who manage the Big Local programme nationally.

Membership of the Birchfield Big Local Partnership was reviewed at an away-day held in September 2015. There are 14 partnership members, 9 of which are local residents (64%). The partnership would like to encourage new members – especially younger members and representatives from the Muslim community, which while well represented among the volunteers are not well represented on the partnership. Efforts are being made to recruit new members through the website, newsletter and word of mouth. The Local Trusted Organisation, Birmingham Voluntary Services Council, is represented on the partnership by the Finance Director.

The partnership meets every 6 weeks and starting from July a summary of matters discussed at the meetings has been added to the website - www.birchfieldbiglocal.org

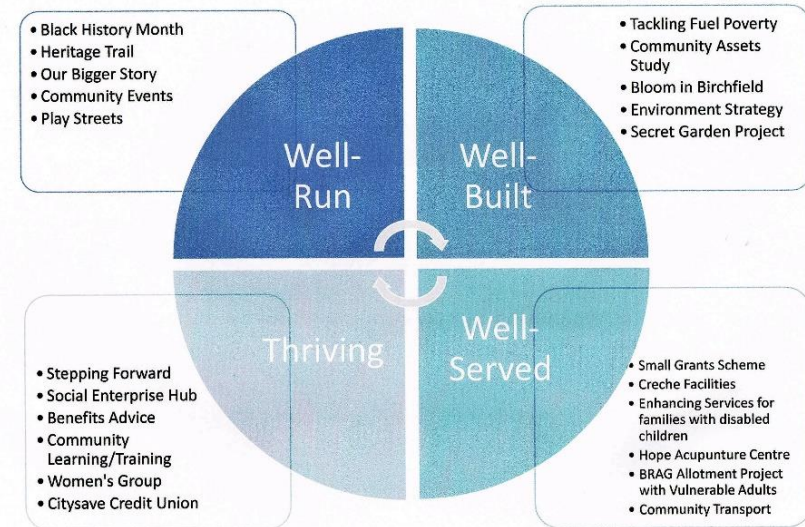
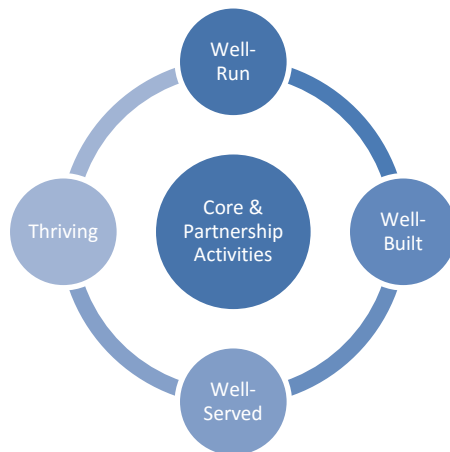


Core & Themes

The priorities for Birchfield Big Local are organized around four key themes:

- Well-Run Birchfield – participation, decision-making and local pride and identity
- Well-Built Birchfield – housing, environment and transport
- Well-Served Birchfield – public, private and voluntary/community services
- Thriving Birchfield – livelihoods and the local economy

In addition there are activities common to all four themes which include the employment of two staff to support the partnership and volunteers, and help implement and monitor the theme activities; securing a hub or base from which to operate; ensuring good communications and engaging with local residents; and providing training to help build the capacity of partnership members and other local residents.



Baseline Survey

A baseline survey was conducted in early 2015 to try and get a sense of how people think and feel about the local area at the start of Birchfield Big Local. The questions were organised around the four key themes. Residents also had the opportunity to add general comments and many did. The majority of comments were about the environment and also access to leisure and recreational facilities, especially for children and young people. People also mentioned the need for community events that bring people together. The aim is to repeat the survey at intervals to see if responses change over the life time of Big Local.

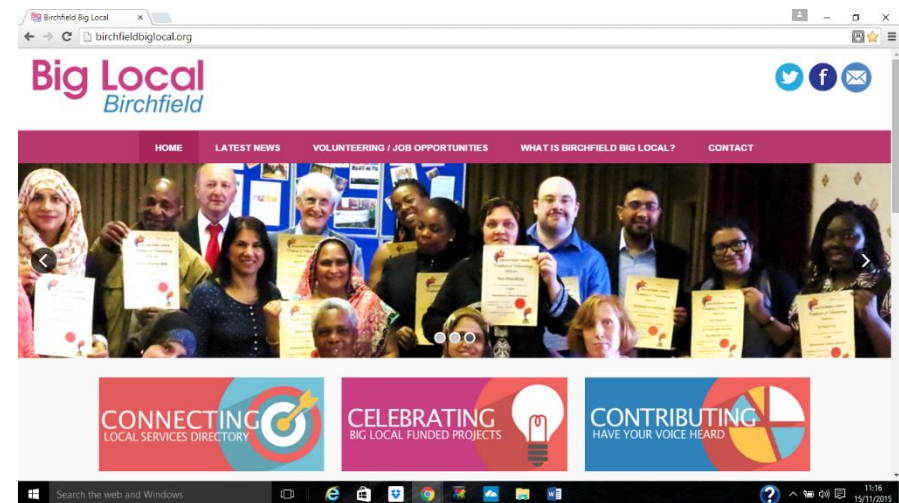
Core

A Community Development Worker was appointed in February 2014, initially on a short term contract, to provide support to the partnership, manage delivery of the action plan, and engage with local residents, groups and organisations. A part time Volunteer Coordinator was appointed in September 2014. Both posts have since been extended for a further two years. During 2015 a decision was taken to rent a second downstairs office at Grosvenor Road Studios as this is more accessible for visitors. The upstairs office is now used for initiatives such as Stepping Forward and is equipped with laptops and a printer. The use of the upstairs office is being monitored to ensure that it is providing value for money by reducing the need to hire additional rooms within the studio for meetings, Stepping Forward etc.

The Volunteer Coordinator has been very successful at recruiting and retaining local volunteers and a number of volunteer roles have been created within Birchfield Big Local. These include such roles as supporting local people attending Stepping Forward, providing benefits advice, website volunteer, administration and reception volunteer, Play Streets coordinator, helping organise the Heritage Trail and other events.

It remains an ambition for Birchfield Big Local to have a community hub or centre that would provide a common meeting space and resource for all residents in Birchfield. A Community Assets study is currently underway and is due to report in February 2016 on the options for acquiring either a building or site within the Birchfield Big Local area. Some funding has been allocated in the Year 3 budget to support further developmental work following the completion of the study, and assuming a suitable building or site can be identified.

A communications sub-group has been created which oversees the production of quarterly newsletters, delivered to all 2000 households in the Birchfield Big Local area. The newsletter is now in a larger A3 format and is generating an increasing amount of interest and feedback. The website is mostly maintained by staff and volunteers and has recently been refreshed in terms of its design in response to feedback from the many visitors to the site. Regular contributions are also made to the Birchfield Big Local Twitter account and Facebook page. It is hoped that participation in Our Bigger Story will also help to increase the ability of BBL to engage with local residents through use of social media.



Screen shot of the refreshed website

Well-Run Birchfield

Community Events

A pattern of regular events has been established, either organised or supported by BBL. The volunteers are key to helping plan and organise the events which in Year 3 will include:

- “Birchfield has talent” – an event to celebrate people who have received Star People Awards and also local volunteers - early 2016
- BRAG Spring Fete – organised by Birchfield Residents Action Group at Livingstone Community Allotment to launch “Bloom in Birchfield” – April 2016
- Volunteers Week – activities and events to coincide with Volunteers Week – first week of June 2016
- Westminster School Fete – June 2016
- Family Fun Day – date to be decided
- BRAG Autumn Fete– September 2016
- Christmas Choir Concert – December 2016
- Christmas Meal for Seniors – December 2016

Intergenerational oral history project

We are planning to run a series of events for Black History Month in October 2016 as part of a “Talking History Project” – celebrating the lives of people from different communities who have made Birchfield their home.

Heritage Trail

Birchfield Big Local ran a successful Heritage Trail event in September 2015 to coincide with Birmingham Heritage Week. The walk was organised by volunteers and included visits to several locations in the

Birchfield area of historical significance including Grosvenor Road Studios, reputedly the second oldest operational recording studio in the UK after Abbey Road; Calthorpe Arms, where Birchfield Harriers used to meet; and St Mary’s Church, where industrial pioneers Matthew Boulton, James Watt and William Murdoch are buried. The plan is to carry out more research on the heritage of the area in preparation for a further heritage trail in 2016.

Our Bigger Story

Birchfield Big Local is one of 15 Big Local’s chosen to take part in Our Bigger Story, a multi-media evaluation project being led by Birmingham University’s Third Sector Research Centre. So far several partnership members, staff and volunteers have been interviewed and training has been provided in podcasting, video making and how to upload material on to the Our Bigger Story website.

Play Streets

Following a successful event on Saturday 13th June at Haughton Road, Birchfield, we plan to run a second event on Play Day 2016. Birchfield Big Local volunteers played a key role in organising the event and will do so again in 2016. The City Council waived the £750 fee for closing the road and Amey PLC provided barriers and signage free of charge.



Well-Built Birchfield

Bloom in Birchfield

The environment continues to be a key priority for residents living in Birchfield. Birchfield Residents Action Group has taken the lead in organising Bloom in Birchfield – part of the national “It’s Your Neighbourhood” campaign promoted by RHS Heart of England. BRAG has been working with local residents and partners including BCC Fleet & Waste, and Midland Heart to develop a greater sense of ownership, responsibility and pride in the local environment. In 2014, Bloom in Birchfield achieved a Level 2: Improving Award and in 2015 achieved a Level 4: Thriving Award. The campaign takes place over the year and includes a range of activities such as community workdays to plant up communal spaces and front gardens, and a front garden competition ahead of the official visit by the IYN assessors. BRAG has also adopted some neglected planters near the shops and Post Office on Wellington Road in Birchfield.

Environment Strategy and Action Plan

Bloom in Birchfield has involved local residents working in partnership with the relevant City Council Departments and also key social housing provider Midland Heart. This collaboration has led to the development of an environmental strategy for the area. Initially the strategy will be focused on a pilot area that includes seven streets but in time it is hoped to include the whole of the Birchfield Big Local area. An environment action plan is in the process of being developed that will identify a number of desired outcomes and actions required to achieve them. Partnership members and staff attended a Big Local Learning Event on Action on Waste and Litter, led by Chris Church, which has helped in formulating the action plan.

Community Assets Study

A community hub and providing accessible outdoor play space for children have also been high on the list of priorities for Birchfield residents. BBL have appointed consultants Gavin Orton and Santosh Rai to carry out a Community Assets Study of the Birchfield Big Local area with a view to identifying suitable buildings for a community centre or land that could be developed as a children’s play area. The final report is due in February 2016 and some funding has been allocated in Year 3 to enable any potential buildings or sites to be followed up with, for example, future funding applications.

Secret Garden

One site that has already been identified is a former community garden and children’s play area located behind houses on Grosvenor Avenue, Westminster Road and Hutton Road. This small site – 500m² – was managed by a group of local residents but following the departure of key individuals it fell into disuse. A consultation with local residents has been carried out and a successful play event was held during August 2015. The plan is to set up a new steering group of local residents to manage the site and refurbish it as a community garden and children’s play area.

Tackling Fuel Poverty in Birchfield

Birchfield Big Local will be shortly appointing someone to carry out a feasibility study on Tackling Fuel Poverty in Birchfield. The aim is to develop an integrated approach to fuel poverty which aims to improve living standards and conditions for residents on low incomes; and bring health and environmental benefits. The feasibility study is a 6 month contract and so a report should be due towards the middle of 2016. An amount has been allocated in the Year 3 budget to allow for some follow up actions if the BBL partnership so wishes.

Well-Served Birchfield

A key idea with Well-Served Birchfield is encouraging the use of locally based services by local residents and supporting new and innovative services delivered where possible by local people. In this regard the partnership will continue to support the three projects supported in the first two years and in addition is to set up a small grants scheme to encourage local people with ideas for projects that will benefit local people to implement them. The work on social enterprise with UnLtd has also helped identify the potential for local people to develop ventures that provide beneficial services to local people.

Enhancing services for families with disabled children

Led by ATHAC CIC this project provides support to families with disabled children living in the Birchfield area. This includes after school sessions for children and young people, weekend family trips and activities, and family engagement and outreach support. They have set up a youth enterprise project – Team Victorious – to help young people develop their entrepreneurial skills – www.team-victorious.co.uk

Health and well-being

Led by local health practitioner Dr Rhonda Lee, this project aims to improve the health and well-being of those residents living with long term conditions through providing access to a low-cost acupuncture clinic and other therapeutic treatments at local venues.

BRAG allotment project with vulnerable adults

Based at Livingstone Community Allotment, this project works with vulnerable adults, particularly adults with mental health issues. The participants, many from local hostels, take part in food growing activities on the allotment and art workshops in the Allotment pavilion.

Small grants scheme

The BBL partnership has decided to set up a small grants scheme to encourage individuals and groups within the area to set up projects that will benefit local people. Initially the focus will be on projects that benefit children and young people and also older members of the community, which are areas of need that have been under represented in the first two years. A funding policy is in the process of being agreed with a view to launching the scheme early in 2016.

Community transport

As with years 1 and 2 we have allocated a modest budget towards the cost of transport to help cover the costs of hiring minibuses and drivers to enable residents to access facilities or activities that are not available in the Birchfield area. This budget has been used for example to enable parents and children with disabilities to access places such as Sandwell Valley and the Special Needs Adventure Playground in Cannock, and also visits for seniors to local heritage sites.



Thriving Birchfield

Stepping Forward

Birchfield Big Local set up a Job Club early in 2015 to which there was a good response initially. However, numbers attending then declined and it was decided to re-launch as Stepping Forward in September. The new project is weekly and aims to provide services typical of a Job Club but also additional support for people who may not be work ready such as conversational English, basic IT training, personal and social skills.

Social enterprise support/hub

Birchfield Big Local was fortunate to receive additional support from UnLtd during 2015. As a result we were able to set up the Birchfield Enterprise Awards and are now in the process of completing the second round of the awards. Three people received awards in January 2015 – two Do It Awards and one Try It Award - which helped double the number of Star People Award winners in Birchfield overall, from three to six. Birchfield residents will continue to be eligible to apply for the Star People Awards in 2016 and to help with this will be organising regular meetings to which existing Award winners and those intending to apply can meet together to share experiences and offer mutual support. Training and mentoring will also be provided.

Benefits Advice

With support from Birmingham Community Advice Project based at the Nishkam Centre, BBL has been able to provide general benefits advice one morning a week at Grosvenor Road Studios in Birchfield. The advisers from Nishkam have also been able to mentor local volunteers looking to gain experience in Information, Guidance and Advice work. The funding for this outreach work by Nishkam Centre has now finished but the link

will continue through the volunteers and further mentoring, while the Nishkam Centre seeks more funding.

Promoting Credit Unions

Money management and the high interest rates charged by Pay Day lenders is an issue for some Birchfield residents. The three Birmingham Big Locals – Birchfield, Firs and Bromford, and Welsh House Farm – have been meeting with social investment rep Margaret Jackson and Tom McDonnell, CEO at Citysave Credit Union, to discuss how best to promote alternative ways for people to save and secure fair loans in the Big Local areas. Citysave have provided training to volunteers or champions from the Big Local areas about Credit Unions, the services that they offer, and how to access them.

Community Learning and Training

Training provided over the past year has included play training, Mental Health Awareness training, training on providing advice on welfare benefits and debt advice; and training on the use of social media. The training has benefited staff, partnership members and regular volunteers.



Summary of planned expenditure for Year 3

Theme	Project/Activity	Details	Expenditure	Lead/Delivered by
CORE	Community Development Worker	To support Birchfield Big Local Partnership, manage the delivery of the action plan, engage with local residents, groups and organisations.	£23500	Big Local Partnership/BVSC
	P/T Volunteer Coordinator	To identify volunteering opportunities in the Birchfield Big Local area and develop a programme for recruiting, training and retaining local volunteers.	£10620	Big Local Partnership/BVSC
	Office costs	Renting of two rooms at Grosvenor Road Studios and associated office costs.	£7500	Big Local Partnership with Grosvenor Road Studios
	Room hire	Renting additional rooms for BBL activities as and when required either at GRS or other local venues	£2500	Big Local Partnership
	Communications and engagement	Publication of quarterly newsletter, maintaining and developing the website and communications using other social media, leaflets etc	£3500	Big Local Partnership – Communications sub-group
	Volunteer expenses	Out of pocket expenses for volunteers assisting with BBL activities	£500	Big Local Partnership
Sub-total			£48120	
WELL-RUN	Intergenerational oral history project	Will include activities for Black History Month 2016	£1500	Big Local Partnership – Dorrette Hanson and Suki Sohi (Volunteer Coordinator)
	Community events	Will include the following events in 2016: — “Birchfield has talent” event – early 2016 — BRAG Spring and Autumn Fetes — Family Fun day — Volunteers Week — Christmas choir event — Christmas meal for seniors	£6000	Big Local Partnership and partners including Birchfield Residents Action Group, UnLtd, Boat House Cafe, local faith groups.
	Heritage Trail	Following a successful heritage trail for Birmingham Heritage	£100	Birchfield Big Local

		Week 2015, the plan is to repeat and develop this for an event in early autumn 2016		Volunteers
	Play Streets Event	Following a successful event in June 2015, the plan is to repeat this on Play Day 2016 (3 rd August)	£500	Birchfield Big Local Volunteers
Sub-total			£8100	
WELL-BUILT	Tackling Fuel Poverty in Birchfield	BBL is about to appoint someone to carry out a feasibility study looking at developing an integrated community based approach to fuel poverty which aims to bring both health and environmental benefits to residents on low incomes.	£2500	
	Community Assets Study	The Community Assets Survey is currently underway and due to report by February 2016. A further sum has been allocated to take the process forward assuming either suitable buildings or land are found. This might for example include an application for a Reaching Communities grant.	£2500	Santosh Rai and Gavin Orton have been appointed to carry out the Community Assets Survey.
	Bloom in Birchfield	Following a successful campaign in 2016 which resulted in a Level 4 Thriving Award, the plan is to continue with this initiative in 2016 and extend the area covered. The project links to the environment strategy and action plan being developed with Birmingham City Council and other partners.	£7375 (£4375 is for Project Worker salary)	Birchfield Residents Action Group to take a lead role, working in partnership with Midland Heart, BCC and local residents.
	Environment Strategy	Following meetings with Birmingham City Council, Midland Heart and other partners an action plan is being developed focused on a pilot area in Birchfield. This will involve work with residents and local schools in the Birchfield Big Local area.	£2000	Birchfield Big Local in partnership with BRAG, Midland Heart, BCC, local schools and Birchfield residents
	Secret Garden	Following consultations with local residents living around this former community garden and play area a project proposal has been developed to refurbish the site and run regular play sessions during the spring and summer months. The aim is to set up a steering group that will take on responsibility for managing the site in the longer term.	£5000	Birchfield Big Local in partnership with local residents with support from Groundwork, BCC, Midland Heart and others.
Sub-total			£19375	
WELL-SERVED	Small grants scheme	BBL plan to set up a small grant scheme to which local individuals/groups can apply for funding to deliver projects that	£15000	Birchfield Big Local Partnership

		will benefit residents in the Big Local area. Projects would be expected to link with one or more priorities within the Birchfield Big Local Plan.		
	Crèche facilities	A modest amount of funding has been allocated to cover the costs of crèche facilities to help parents wishing to participate in BBL activities or training events etc	£500	Birchfield Big Local
	Enhancing services for families with disabled children	This project provides a range of services to families with disabled children living in the Birchfield Big Local area. This includes after school sessions for children and young people, weekend family trips and activities, and family engagement and outreach support.	£10000	ATHAC CIC
	Health and Well-being	The project aims to improve the health and well-being of those living with long-term conditions through providing a low-cost acupuncture and other therapeutic treatments at venues accessible to Birchfield residents.	£5380	Dr Rhonda Lee – Integrated Health Clinic
	BRAG Allotment Project with vulnerable adults	This project involves work with vulnerable adults/groups, particularly those with mental health issues, to take part in food growing activities at Livingstone Community Allotment.	£7525 (£4525 is for Project Worker salary and payroll costs)	Birchfield Residents Action Group
	Community transport	Funding available for groups that require transport to events and activities that will benefit Birchfield residents but are outside the Birchfield Big Local area	£1500	Birchfield Big Local
Sub-total			£39905	
THRIVING	Stepping Forward	Stepping forward replaces the Job Club and is open to local people who want to take steps aimed at improving their lives. Support will be provided to enable people to access local employment, training, education and enterprise opportunities. A team of dedicated volunteers will give 1-to-1 support with things like CV writing, email, web-search, basic IT and conversational English.	£5000	Birchfield Big Local Volunteers
	Social Enterprise Support/Hub	Throughout 2015 BBL has been working with UnLtd to promote and support social enterprise in the area. BBL residents will	£1000	Birchfield Big Local with UnLtd

		continue to have access to grants through the Star People programme and the aim is to have regular hub meetings where people can access advice and support.		
	Benefits Advice	A benefit adviser from Birmingham Community Advice Project based at Nishkam Centre has been running regular sessions at GRS and mentoring local BBL volunteers. We are exploring ways in which this arrangement can continue with a focus on building the capacity of local volunteers to take on this role.	£1500	Birchfield Big Local with Nishkam Centre
	Work with Citysave Credit Union	Meetings have been held with Citysave Credit Union and all three Big Locals in Birmingham to look at how to promote access to affordable loans and encourage saving in the Big Local areas.	£1000	Birchfield Big Local with Citysave Credit Union, Firs and Bromford and Welsh House Farm Big Locals
	Community learning/training	Training events for partnership members and volunteers to help build skills and capacity in the area. Includes venue hire, trainer fees and refreshments	£3000	Big Local Partnership
Sub-total			11500	
TOTAL			127,000	