

BRISTOL LOCAL ACCESS PROGRAMME



Impact Report

March 2025



Introduction

The Bristol Local Access Programme (LAP) is a £2.7 million programme providing development support and investment to social enterprises (SEs) coming from or working with communities experiencing inequality in Bristol. The project was launched in April 2021 and is funded by Access: The Foundation for Social Investment and Better Society Capital. It was developed using Bristol's One City Approach.

Bristol's social economy is strong - the challenge is to ensure it is more diverse and inclusive, able to create a greater social impact in communities and can play a more significant part in the city's overall economy.

This is what the Bristol LAP focuses on, by:

- Delivering tailored enterprise development support for trading and sustainability
- Making social investment more accessible so that enterprises can scale their impact

What makes the LAP special:

- Our clear and committed focus on addressing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and ensuring that groups currently underrepresented in the SE sector are supported
- Our support to early stage/start up SEs, at a time when they are most in need of support around a whole range of issues
- Our offer of competitively priced faith-based loans

The Bristol LAP is a partnership of leading local organisations who bring a wide range of experience to deliver relevant and effective programmes.

Delivery Partners

BBRC: provides social investment via loans for impactful projects and businesses

Black South West Network (BSWN): Runs a social enterprise incubator programme for Black and Minoritised entrepreneurs and charitable organisations

The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE): Provides a support programme for enterprises in South Bristol

Voscur: Provides enterprise training, capacity building and consultancy for VCSE organisations

Advisory Partners

ACH: Provides holistic integration support for refugees and migrants

Street2Boardroom: Helping people who have engaged in street crime to excel in business and wider society. They believe that it's not where you come from that counts, it's where you're going.



Challenge One: Systemic barriers for Black and racially minoritised social enterprises

The problem

- Lack of internal organisational capacity
- Lack of intermediaries between communities and social investors
- Lack of awareness about social investment options
- Difficult to access development support and concern about taking on debt

How the LAP has helped

- Delivered a programme led by Black and other racially minoritised entrepreneurs to help them learn, network and develop skills
- Provided a targeted development programme for start-ups
- Delivered a Health & Social Care Accelerator, targeted to support SEs and charities working in health, wellbeing and social care

The biggest takeaway has been the amount of services and individuals that are out there to offer support and guidance. The partnerships that could come about. It's really taught me about the integral need to understand how to operate a business on multiple different platforms and the diversity of models that can be explored to find the way that works for you personally and professionally.

Sunflower Collective CIC

Case Study

Bella, founder of Belcho Care, started her journey with the Health and Social Care Accelerator in May 2024 with a vision to deliver supported living services and domiciliary care to the local communities in Bristol. As a registered nurse with the NHS for over 10 years, her ambition was to take the next step in setting up a service that would respond to the needs of her community while growing sustainably.

Through the LAP, Bella was supported to improve her business plan and consider her registration with the CQC ahead of new applications on Pro-Contract and other care frameworks. Bella successfully upgraded her CQC registration to allow her to support from birth to end-of-life, greatly improving her ability to apply for contracts. She also successfully applied to Bristol City Council to deliver a support contract.



The most important thing for me was the networking, meeting with likeminded people on the programme, meeting experts, to find out how to move on, how things work, and it's very knowledge based. Networking with big companies such as the NHS, funders, and people in the procurement team has really exposed me to so many people and opportunities.

I was able to find out how to move on from here. One of the others showed me how to get private clients to start, and I registered with the website and am seeing clients almost every day. I wouldn't have been able to do this without accessing this programme.

Bella, Belcho Care

Challenge Two: Geographical Disadvantage

The problem:

- Bristol is a prosperous city but divided in terms of health, wealth and wellbeing
- 15% of the population live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England
- The ten most deprived neighbourhoods are in South Bristol, which also has the lowest business startup rate in the city

How the LAP has helped:

- Delivered a programme focused on South Bristol, with SEs based in the area and/or led by people from the area
- The programme included themed workshops, coaching, mentoring and 1:1 support
- Plus a £1,000 grant for early-stage SEs and a £3,000 development grant for growing SEs

Case Study

Redcatch Community Garden (RCG) is a Community Benefit Society. It brings people together to learn, socialise, and share experiences, promoting a healthier and more connected community. In 2021, RCG participated in the LAP, with a focus on business resilience. RCG received a £3,000 grant, which it used for consultancy and training in financial management processes, strategic planning, and impact measurement. The programme highlights included gaining new reference points on sustainability, benefiting from expert-led exercises on business strategy, learning practical marketing techniques, and exploring funding models for long-term sustainability.

The LAP helped RCG to become financially resilient, with the investment helping it to thrive and contribute to a stronger, more connected Bristol.



I feel I have the push I need to measure impact and to think about how our audience is segmented.



Challenge Three: Barriers to sustainability and growth



The problem:

- It is hard for SEs to thrive and grow sustainably, so that they can deliver lasting social mobility and foster equality, inclusion, participation and diversity

How the LAP has helped:

- Delivered training, consultancy, skills development and one-to-one consultancy
- Invested in skilling up SE leaders, so that they can provide meaningful consultancy to their peers

Voscur helped me understand the world of social investment... enabling us to grow.

Melanie Vaxevanakis
Director, The Mazi Project

Case Study

Inns Court Community and Family Centre in Knowle hosts community transport, room hires, Boing Softplay, a Food Club and Children's Centre Hub. It is used by over 450 people every week and has an annual income of around £500,000.

The LAP provided consultancy, training and advice to staff and trustees, including two days of strategic planning consultancy from one of our expert Enterprise Associates.

The centre reported massive progress, with a brilliant Trustees' Strategy Day. Staff attended communications, marketing and social media training. Having directly implemented learning from the training, its café saw weekly income increase by an average of 50%.

Voscur's support helped me think about the bigger picture.

Becky Gilbert, CEO
Baby Bank Network, Bristol

We gained so much confidence in running our CIC.

Lizzie Stephens
Director, Bedminster
Down Community Farm

Challenge Four: Routes to sustainability



The problem:

- The right route to being a sustainable organisation is complex.

How the LAP has helped:

- Improving trading outcomes so that the SE becomes financially sustainable, and the leadership team have the skills to manage and grow their business
- Enabling SEs to network effectively and be ready to take on public sector contracts, either alone or in partnerships
- Applying for a Shariah-compliant loan
- Encouraging a higher risk appetite from other lenders, so more repayable finance is available to SEs

Case Study

In 2023, BBRC announced a £500,000 capital investment in independent educator, boomsatsuma. This investment supports boomsatsuma's mission to provide pathways into the region's creative and digital workforce for young people from marginalised communities. The loan was made possible by underwriting from the LAP.

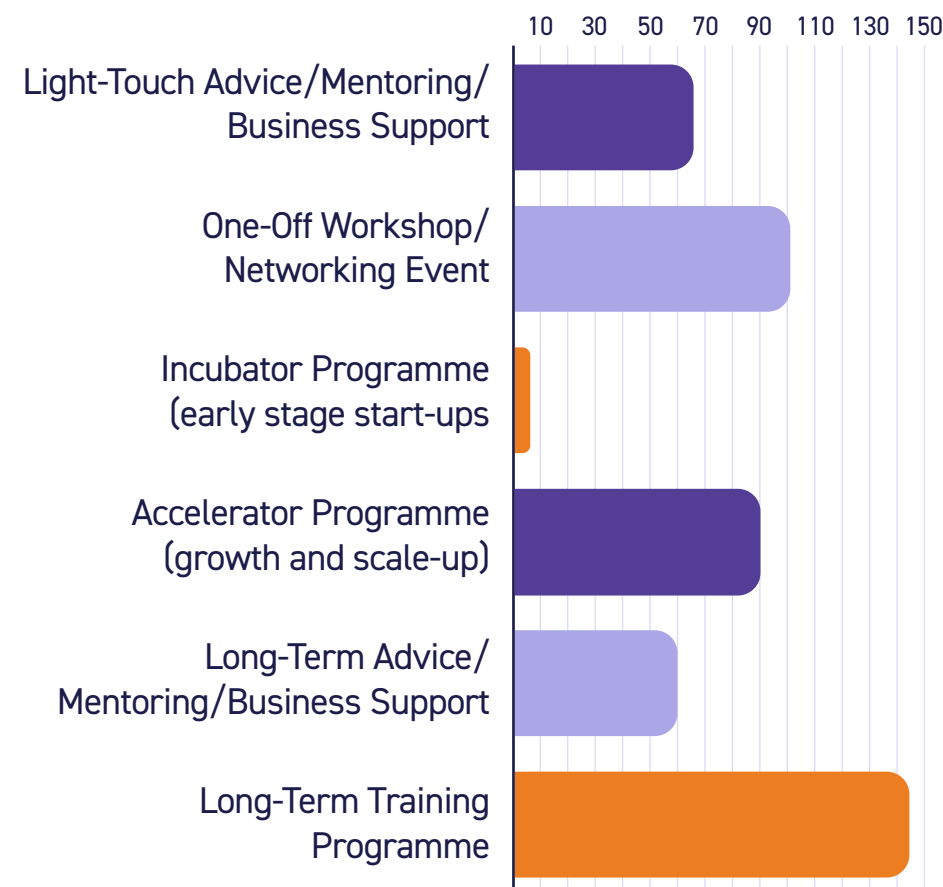
We are passionate about Bristol, its richly diverse communities, and its world-leading creative and digital industries. We believe that every young person should have the same opportunity to access an education that delivers on that young person's aspiration, regardless of their economic or cultural background. This investment takes the brakes off our plans that were slowed by the last three years of access restrictions from Covid and means that we can reach twice as many young people from across the city and this investment means we can confidently begin recruiting for over 20 new jobs this year alone.

Mark Curtis
Creative Director
boomsatsuma

Programme Impact, Phase 2 (January 2023 to December 2024)



NUMBER OF SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS BY TYPE



FUNDING / FINANCING INTERVENTIONS

Pre/Post Investment or Match-Trading Grant

36 grants **£140k**



Social Investment (Loan)

6 loans **£3.4m**

INVESTMENT

Blended investment has made it possible to fund social enterprises that may not have otherwise secured investment:



£1.3m of LAP grant blend into 9 social enterprises...

enabled

£3.4m of investment into 6 social enterprises via City Funds...

this attracted a further

£8.4m of leveraged investment...

resulting in a total of

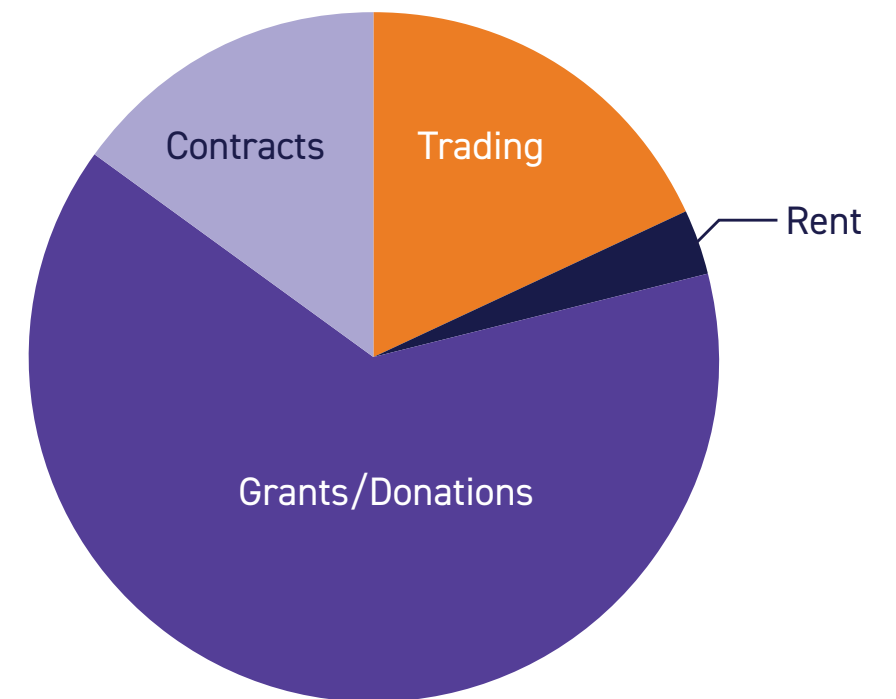
£12m of investment mobilised into social enterprises as a result of LAP grant blend support.

SPLIT OF ORGANISATION TYPES BY PRIMARY OUTCOME FOCUS

Arts, heritage, sports and faith	8%
Citizenship and community	10%
Conservation of natural environment	5%
Employment, education or training	22%
Family, friends and relationships	8%
Housing and local facilities	5%
Income and financial inclusion	4%
Mental health and well-being	22%
Other	13%
Physical health	3%

PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME

For organisations that responded, the primary source of income was:



This shows the importance of our interventions to support income diversification.

Reflections and recommendations

A round table with the programme's beneficiaries in November 2024 provided valuable insight to take forward:

- Start-up grants would be beneficial to help businesses get off the ground. It is important that SEs don't have to adapt their mission in order to get funding
- The social enterprises on the programme benefit from clearly identifying their business needs, vision and direction, and becoming more able to articulate their business idea clearly
- Having a fresh external perspective was really valuable
- Opportunities to network, work collaboratively and build sector knowledge were really valued
- Peer support was one of the most valuable aspects of the programme
- Working with other SEs to help each other and consider joint applications for contracts was beneficial
- Our programmes helped SEs to become financially self-sufficient and better at monetising their services
- More one-to-one financial mentoring would be valuable
- Tracking impact is very important in order to secure contracts and investment
- Support to recruit an effective board and advisors is crucial – they bring skills the SE may not have
- More hours of mentoring spread over a longer period, gives time to implement the learning
- More advice about legal structure and governance would be welcome



The Bristol LAP will continue to have a clear and committed focus on addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and ensuring that groups currently under-represented in the SE sector are supported.

Our future plans are based on operating over a wider area to reflect the current and future regional government structure. This will involve welcoming new partners to join us.

Find out more:

Bristol LAP Programme Manager:

Sheika Johnston
Sheika.J@voscur.org

Independent Chair:

Sally Britton
sally@sallybritton.co.uk

BBRC:

bbrcinvestors.co.uk

BSWN:

blacksouthwestnetwork.org

SSE:

the-sse.org

Voscur:

voscur.org

ACH:

ach.org.uk

Street2Boardroom:

street2boardroom.com

