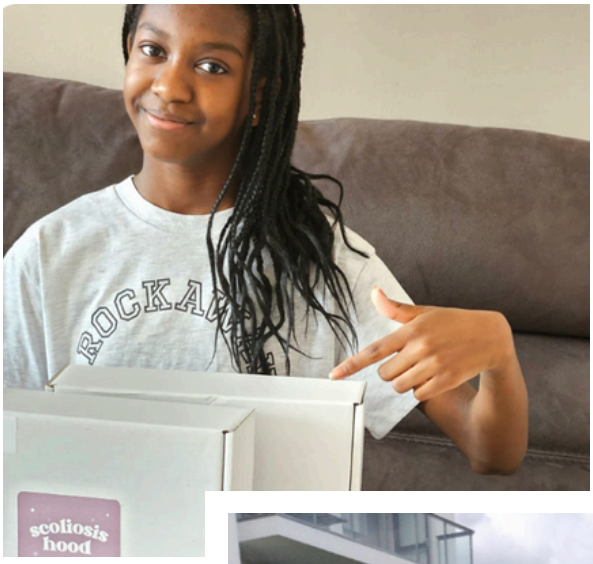
Make it Happen

Impact Report 2023-2024



islington giving

Make It Happen (MIH) has been an ongoing collaboration and funding partnership between Islington Giving and various housing associations. Since the last report in 2022, Islington Giving has continued to work with housing associations Peabody, Hyde and Southern and welcomed Clarion in 2023. In 2024, the fund has also received contributions from Slaughter & May, Mullaley and an individual donor. MIH received £43,000 in donations throughout 2023 and 2024, bringing the overall total income since the fund began to £64,000. More than £62,000 has been distributed to residents and small groups across six rounds, each receiving a grant of up to £500 to carry out a small community project of their choice. Demand for the fund continues to grow as in 2024 almost £29,000 in grants were awarded, a 65% increase from 2023.

Income	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Total**
Islington Giving	£5,000	£5,000		£10,000
Peabody	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£15,000
Hyde	£5,000	£5,000	£2,500	£12,500
Southern	£5,000	£3,000		£8,000
Newlon	£1,000			£1,000
Clarion		£5,000	£5,000	£10,000
Slaughter & May – IG contribution			£5,000	£5,000
Individual Donor			£2,000	£2,000
Mullaley			£500	£500
Total income	**£21,000**	**£23,000**	**£20,000**	**£64,000**
Less funds distributed	£16,405	£17,415	£28,875	**£62,695**
Funds carried forward	£4,595	£10,180	£1,305	**£1,305**

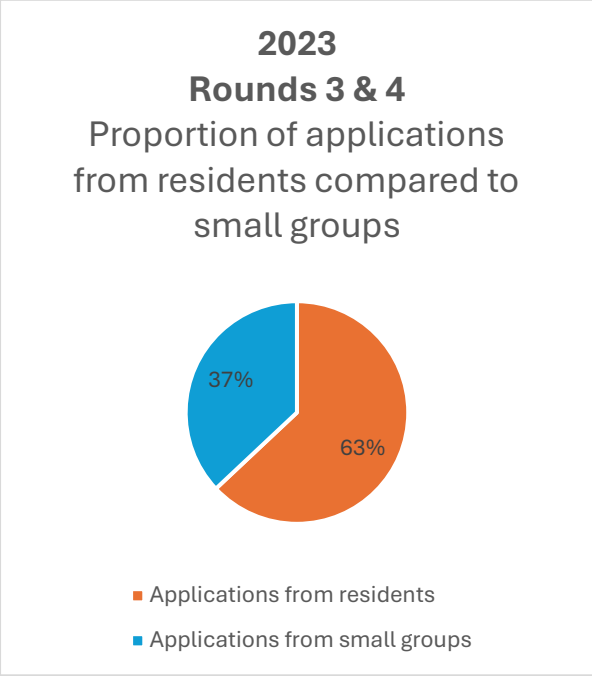
Over the last two years, 95 small community projects have been funded over four rounds: rounds 3 & 4 in May and November 2023 and rounds 5 & 6 in May and November 2024. The panel continues to be a mix of representatives from housing associations, Islington Giving and members of the alumni who have resident panel experience which works well in creating a balance of values and opinions in the decision-making process. The flexible nature of MIH is reflected in the success rate of applications, which has remained consistently high, averaging at 83% across all rounds, and is the reason why MIH is referred to as the 'yes' fund!

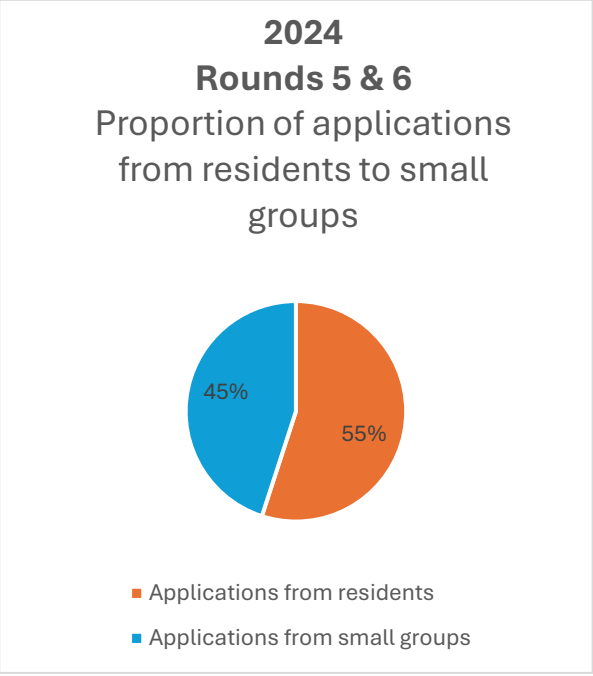
Month/Year	**Round**	**Number of projects applied**	**Number of successful applicants**	**% success rate**	**Total funds distributed**
May 2022	Round 1	15	12	80%	£6,000
Nov 2022	Round 2	23	21	91%	£10,405
May 2023	Round 3	24	19	79%	£9,500

Nov 2023	Round 4	20	16	80%	£7,915
May 2024	Round 5	37	32	86%	£15,555
Nov 2024	Round 6	35	28	80%	£13,320
	Totals	**154**	**128**	**83%**	**£62,695**

Who applied?

Since 2022, there has been a significant increase in the number of applications coming directly from residents compared with small groups. This is a positive outcome in terms of fulfilling the purpose of MIH in wanting to encourage groups of residents to organise something fun that brings the community together with the potential to develop. In 2023 (rounds 3 & 4) 63% of applications came directly from individual residents, more than double the proportion of 29% in 2022. In 2024, over half of the applicants were residents, and the largest number of residents to date applied in rounds 5 and 6 (16 and 17 respectively). Almost half of all successful resident applicants in 2023 were also housing association residents of funding partners Peabody, Hyde and Clarion. The proportion fell in 2024 to 13%, which in part can be explained by the higher number of applications overall. There have also been several applications from tenants and resident associations and friends' groups.





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The application process also lays the foundations for groups of residents wishing to continue their project to constitute as a group and apply to larger grants such as Islington Councils Community Chest (ICCC). For example, to apply to MIH, a group of at least three unrelated residents are required, which is also a requirement of becoming a constituted group. Grantees wanting to develop their idea into an ongoing community project are referred to Voluntary Action Islington who are a useful resource in supporting residents to constitute as a group. MIH has been successful in encouraging

residents to continue their project ideas, and several grantees have either gone on to constitute as a group and apply to ICCC for funding or are in the process of doing so.

Supporting small organisations and returning applicants

Make It Happen has been a resource for existing small organisations who want to deliver an additional service they are unable to afford, often due to limited resources and the increasing challenges within fundraising. Several of the returning applicants have been small organisations wanting to host a one-off event or small project that requires a relatively small amount of funding. There were five successful returning applicants in round 3, ten in round 5, and six in round 6. In round 4 there were no returning applicants, which may have been due to the additional rule of successful applicants having to wait one round before they can apply again. Almost all returning applicants have been from small organisations, apart from in round 6, where four of the six returning applicants were from groups of individual residents who either wanted to keep the momentum of their project going until they became a constituted group and could apply to ICCC, or because the cost of their project was relatively low.

> ***"Make It Happen has been a resource for existing small organisations who want to deliver an additional service they are unable to afford, often due to limited resources and the increasing challenges within fundraising."***

Life Chances is an example of a small organisation who have successfully reapplied for funding to provide additional one-off events for their service users. With the funding they received in round 5, they collaborated with AFLAH and hosted a summer day event to bring the local Somali and Ethiopian communities together, share traditional foods and discuss their concerns surrounding language barriers and mental health and unemployment issues. The event helped strengthen relationships between the communities as well as the partnership of both charities, helping them work together and utilise scarce resources more effectively.

Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies (HMHB) is another small organisation who received funding in rounds 3 and 5 to provide regular outings for vulnerable groups of residents to help reduce isolation and improve wellbeing. HMHB is an inclusive group supporting older people, people with neurodiversity and people with mental ill health and substance misuse issues. Over the summer (2024), Lawrence (who runs HMHB) organised various outings to London Zoo, Kew Gardens, Sadlers Wells Theatre and The Royal Opera House. The daytrips gave people the opportunity to socialise and enjoy experiences they may not have the chance to due to low income or low self-esteem.

> ***"I know people may say that we are funding people to just go out, but it is far more than that. It gives people something to look forward to, a joyful experience, and something to bring a smile and happiness." (Lawrence, HMHB, rounds 3 & 5)***

New Applicants

In the last four rounds, over 80% of all applications were from first time applicants to MIH, many with unique project ideas and inspirational stories. Isaac received a grant in round 5 to hold a two-day film-making masterclass, teaching young people film making and content creation skills. Isaac initially developed his cinematography and film practice skills through a Cripplegate funded programme at the Bomb Factory in Archway, where he also held an exhibition titled 'Shades of Resistance' this year. Through hard work and determination, Isaac established himself within the industry making short films and documentaries about various social issues and won Arsenal's 'No More Red Shirt' award for his community contributions. Through sharing his skills, Isaac was able to give back to the young people in his community with the help of MIH.

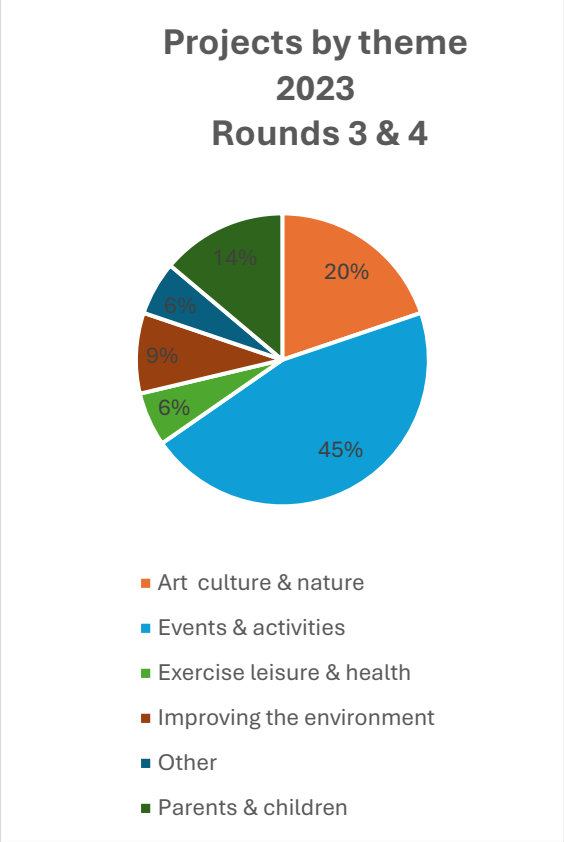
'Shades of Resistance' exhibition by Isaac

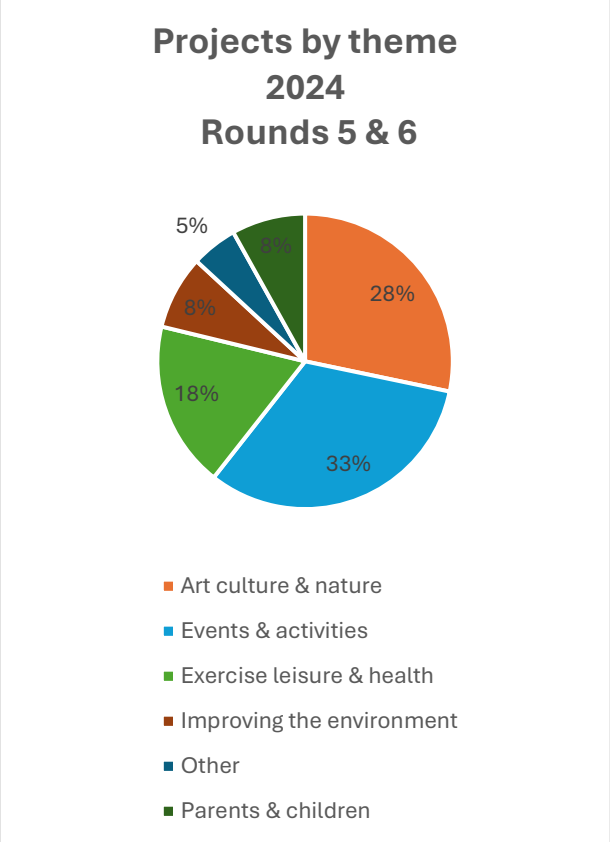
> **"In the last four rounds, over 80% of all applications were from first time applicants to MIH, many with unique project ideas and inspirational stories."**

In round 5, there were two other new groups of residents who both had project ideas aimed at young people in the Archway area, specifically related to addressing youth violence, illustrating how MIH also funds projects that are more serious in nature. Summit Amiss hosted the Archway Street Art Festival to commemorate the one-year anniversary of a young boy who tragically lost his life to knife crime. The event was also used to promote an upcoming art project for young people in the area who are vulnerable to violence, so they have an alternative and creative outlet. The other group of residents called 'Next Muay Thai' wanted to provide MMA training for young people as part of a larger collaborative project to combat knife crime.

Project themes

Each project has been categorised into one of the six following themes: Art, culture & nature, Events & activities, Exercise, leisure & health, Improving the environment, Other and Parents & children. Events and activities that bring the community together have consistently made up the highest proportion of project themes in each round. In 2023, the proportion of events and activities peaked, making up almost half of all projects (16 out of 35), due to several residential home events and activities as well as Kings Coronation parties. The proportion dropped down to a third in 2024 where 19 out of the 60 projects funded were events and activities. In round 6 alone, nine grants were awarded for Christmas events, predominantly for older people. Across the other themes, there have been increases in the number of art, culture and nature projects and exercise, leisure and health projects in 2024. There has been a relatively even range across the other three themes over both years, with many of the projects crossing over two or more themes.





One-off events

The timings of both the May and November rounds were initially planned to coincide with the Queen's Jubilee (2022) and Christmas to encourage residents to come together and organise a one-off celebration event. In 2023 the Kings Coronation coincided with round 3, where two events to celebrate the occasion were funded. In round 5, there were several summer street parties, including Hungerford Roads 160th Street Party, which was featured in the Islington Tribune. One idea behind encouraging these events is to connect residents with their local community, giving them the opportunity to find out about and engage with other ongoing community projects. For example, Caledonian Park Friends Group, held an arts and crafts stall at the 2024 Caledonian Clocktower Festival, where the lead applicant was also able to promote her weekly knitting group. As a result of the event, there has been an increase in the number of residents who attend her group. As mentioned, MIH has also funded many one-off events and activities in residential homes, including fish and chip suppers, tea dances, and a wellness day with alternative therapies. In round 6, several Christmas day dinner events were granted for vulnerable groups including those who are isolated, asylum seekers and people with mental ill health in supported living. An important part of MIH has been to support the most vulnerable groups to take part in something nice they wouldn't normally have the opportunity to do.

Exercise, leisure and health

Over the last four rounds, there have been several projects wanting to improve health and wellbeing through exercise. Women's football has been one focal point, with MIH supporting Wrayvens

Women's Football Team as well as a mother and daughter football event hosted by Galbur Foundation. Wrayvens Women's Football Team was set up in January 2022 to encourage local women over the age of 35, with little to no experience in football, to learn a new skill and become part of the team. Wrayvens' is one of only two services offering football training to women in Islington and have had 27 women participate since it began. With the funding they received in rounds 3 and 6, they were able to buy football kits and equipment so they can train as needed and look professional at matches, with one teammate stating, "We look like a team, we play as a team, we win as a team!"

> ***"The session was a huge success! The mothers and daughters thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and it was heartwarming to see them bond while being active. Many of the mothers expressed their enthusiasm for participating in similar activities in the future, saying they valued the opportunity to connect with their children in a fun and engaging way." (Faisa, Mother and daughter football event, round 5)***

In round 5, Galbur Foundation received a MIH grant to hold a mother and daughter football event, with a particular focus on the Somali community. Following their programme 'Hijabi Football Fun', that offered football activities specifically for girls who need a safe and supportive space to exercise, a strong desire to share these experiences with their mothers was highlighted by the girls, to help strengthen their relationships and bridge the generation gap. With 17 participants, the event provided a fun opportunity for mothers and daughters to come together and play football. Some of the daughters were pleasantly surprised by their mothers' football skills, whilst others encouraged their mothers to try football for the first time. The session not only strengthened the bond between mothers and their daughters but also helped improve confidence and inspired some of the women to continue being active with their daughters at home.

Continuing projects and success stories

Part of MIH has been to support residents improve their environment and take pride in their communal space. MIH has funded several community garden projects which are especially valued not only because green spaces are important for mental wellbeing, but Islington is one of the least green boroughs in London as well as having one of the highest rates of mental ill health in the country. One successful gardening project is Greenman Street Garden Project, situated in a Peabody Housing Estate and is run by Michael and Vicky.

> ***"Islington is the least green borough in London. Our garden tries to address this by providing a space that is beautiful and accessible. We have overwhelmingly positive feedback from the residents passing by who enjoy just looking at something beautiful." (Michael, Greenman St Gardening Project, rounds 4 & 6)***

Residents of the estate each have their own patch to grow vegetables and wildflowers to attract bees. The garden has turned the estate into a vibrant and attractive space for residents to relax and have social gatherings and they are now very protective of their communal space, even warding off vandals on occasion! By having a space to connect, the project has helped reduce loneliness and isolation. One resident, who cares for her elderly mother, uses the space regularly for respite and some company. Michael has lived on the estate for 30 years and has only got to know his neighbours

since starting the project. After successfully reapplying to the fund in round 6, Michael and Vicky are now exploring the idea of becoming a constituted group, so they can apply to ICCC for further funding and encourage more neighbours to get involved.

Paddle Play by Nicola

Nicola, a passionate paddle boarder and instructor held a pilot project called 'Paddle Play' to encourage people to try out paddle boarding. Nicola works with people who have mental ill health and substance misuse issues and strongly believes in the mental health benefits of paddleboarding as it provides an active way to re-engage with the community and empowers people to get fit and do something away from their peer sufferers. As an ambassador for #ShePaddles, Nicola is currently campaigning to get paddleboarding onto the NHS social prescribing list. The pilot project consisted of running a 'dry' workshop before venturing onto the water at Islington Boat Club. The project was a success, and Nicola was awarded another grant in round 6 to provide a block of paddleboarding sessions to vulnerable residents.

> ***"It was an amazing session; the group who have very severe personal challenges (from poverty and confidence to pain and mental health challenges) had the most brilliant time on the water learning to paddleboard. They enjoyed a 'holiday' from their difficult situations and all but one were really keen to come out again..." (Nicola, PaddlePlay, round 4 & 6)***

Allie's Art Club by Lydia

Lydia is a resident artist who runs Allie's Art Club and now holds regular art workshops at Vibast Community Centre after applying to ICCC for funding. After successfully applying to MIH in round 4, Allie's Art Club hosted a nature themed arts fair in collaboration with a local eco-friendly gardening group called Mother Roots. The event connected emerging resident artists with local organisations and strengthened the working relationship between Ali's Art Club and Mother Roots. Around 90 residents enjoyed the arts and crafts table and hanging poems they had written on paper leaves on the 'Poetree'.

Roshana who is 15 and has scoliosis, wanted to help others with the same condition by putting together care packages for young Islington residents who are in hospital or about to have surgery. With the grant she received in round 4, Roshana donated over 35 care packages which proved to be very popular and in high demand. Roshana also set up a WhatsApp group to provide a space for young people to connect and support each other. She also set up a website for people to access information on the condition and apply for her care packages. Roshana won an award from Black Girl Fest for all her hard work and efforts and is a glowing example of why MIH also welcomes the ideas of young people.

Scoliosis Hood by Roshana

For the first time, in round 4, MIH funded a campaign 'Loos for Islington', aiming to improve public toilet facilities in Islington, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as older people and people with disabilities. Mike and his team promote awareness of the lack of toilet facilities and the profound wellbeing concerns that can arise from social isolation due to the 'loo leash'. Through petitioning, discussions with the council and various articles being published in the Islington Tribune, the campaign helped ensure Islington Council went through with their commitment to spend £1.25m to replace existing toilets. As only one of the eight toilet facilities have so far been replaced, their campaign continues.

'The ice cream dream team'!

In round 5, Adam, had a unique idea of setting up a free ice cream stand on the canal path, to help reduce isolation and loneliness by encouraging neighbours to stop and have a chat whilst enjoying an ice cream. Make Do Play, a small local organisation, supported Adam with his project and labelled their collaboration 'the ice cream dream team'!

"One person burst into (happy!) tears, saying that this was the best thing that had happened to them all week. They had received some tough news, and said this small act of kindness and us talking with them made them feel supported and brought joy to a difficult week." (Adam, free ice cream on canal path, round 5)

Make Do Play provide stay and play sessions for parents and children, where they initially received a grant from MIH in round 3 before applying to ICCC to fund ongoing weekly sessions. This is an example of how MIH can facilitate relationships between small organisations and residents as well as help projects to develop and grow so they can go on to support other residents to bring their project ideas to life.

Learning through experience and looking forward

MIH uses a 'learn through experience' approach, and each round raises points of discussion relating to how projects align with the original purpose of the fund. Over the past four rounds, additional rules have been added to the guidelines so there are clearer boundaries of what MIH will fund and to help with the decision-making process, especially as demand grows and more applications are received. Some areas of discussion led to further eligibility criteria being added including:

- From round 4 it was decided that successful applicants would need to wait one round before they can reapply to the fund, as there appeared to be a growing trend of some organisations applying in each round. This was added to encourage and prioritise new applicants and to keep in line with the original purpose of MIH to fund small one-off projects rather than existing and ongoing projects. Predictably, a new pattern of applicants now reapplying every other round has emerged, raising questions as to whether there should be a limit on how many times an applicant can reapply or if new applicants should be prioritised when demand is high. It is however also acknowledged that many of the returning applicants provide invaluable support to vulnerable groups especially in the current climate, where resources are increasingly scarce.

- In round 6, eligibility criteria were further tightened in relation to the size of a project, in terms of cost and timeframe. This was a result of two projects funded in round 5, where the £500 grant was only a small contribution towards a much larger ongoing project. One was a project providing football practice to children from low-income households and the other aimed to combat knife crime through mixed martial arts sessions for young people. As both projects were regarded as important causes, the panel decided to award the grants, but it highlighted the need for a clearer boundary that encouraged small projects that are more in line with MIH objectives. The guidelines now state that the maximum grant amount of £500 should cover a substantial if not the total cost of the project and should either be a 'one off' event or a series of events lasting no longer than 6 months.

Looking forward: Suggestions for future rounds

- A feedback form will now be sent to grantees to help streamline the feedback process. As MIH is a microgrant, a full monitoring report has not been necessary and up until now, some basic questions have been used to help guide their feedback. In order to formalise the process a little more, a simple form will be provided when grants are awarded that will help groups to provide easier and more consistent feedback about the outcomes of each project. The form will also include formal consent to share information and photos in our published reports as well as thoughts and suggestions on the application process.

- At present, as stated above, previous successful applicants must wait one round before reapplying to the fund. In 2024 over a quarter of projects funded were from returning applicants. If demand for the fund continues to grow in 2025, implementing additional eligibility criteria to limit the number of times an applicant can reapply may need to be

considered. Alternatively, the guidance could be amended to state that those applying to the fund for the first time are likely to be prioritised if demand for funding is high.

- Finally, there are plans to hold a celebratory MIH event in 2025, where grantees and funders will be invited to celebrate all the community projects that have been supported by Make It Happen to date.

Feedback Quotes

"One of our members is a wonderful lad who has autism, he also came to the Zoo and Kew Gardens, and it makes such a difference for him. He is part of our group too, which I know he loves. Another member is a recovering alcoholic with poor mental health, but the events help to calm him, and he interacts well and would never get the chance to do these things due to low income and low self-esteem. I know people may say that we are funding people to just go out, but it is far more than that. It gives people something to look forward to, a joyful experience, and something to bring a smile and happiness." (Lawrence, HMHB, rounds 3 & 5)

"It was an amazing session; the group who have very severe personal challenges (from poverty and confidence to pain and mental health challenges) had the most brilliant time on the water learning to paddleboard. They enjoyed a 'holiday' from their difficult situations and all but one were really keen to come out again. Their feedback was extremely positive." (Nicola, PaddlePlay, round 4 & 6)

"Many volunteers have chosen to grow edible crops which offers the chance to see everyday products like tomatoes in their natural state and to enjoy the superior flavour to anything bought in the shops. It's also a chance to learn something new and to share skills with other gardeners on site. We all have different skills in the community garden - one of our team is a professionally qualified horticulturist, another has experience of guerilla gardening. We are all learning, all the time. Islington is the least green borough in London. Our garden tries to address this by providing a space that is beautiful and accessible. The garden is often used for children's parties, especially on hot days, we have many visitors that call in to say hello or just to relax and enjoy the garden, parents with children and elderly people with carers enjoying the fragrance and textures that the garden offers. We have overwhelmingly positive feedback from the residents passing by who enjoy just looking at something beautiful." (Michael, Greenman St Gardening Project, rounds 4 & 6)

"It went great! We saw smiles all around, and several people told us they greatly appreciated the work we were doing to strengthen the community in the area. Many people got chatting to strangers they otherwise wouldn't talk to, and several nearby neighbours came out of their homes to say hello and meet others. One person burst into (happy!) tears, saying that this was the best thing that had happened to them all week. They had received some tough news, and said this small act of kindness and us talking with them made them feel supported and brought joy to a difficult week." (Adam, free ice cream on canal path, round 5)

"The session was a huge success! The mothers and daughters thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and it was heartwarming to see them bond while being active. Many of the mothers expressed their enthusiasm for participating in similar activities in the future, saying they valued the opportunity to connect with their children in a fun and engaging way. Some of the daughters were pleasantly surprised at how skilled their mothers were at football. One child excitedly asked her mum, "Where did you learn to play like that?" Another commented, "When do you even practice?" These moments brought laughter and joy, making the event a memorable experience for everyone involved." (Faisa, Mother and daughter football event, round 5)

"Thank you for everything you do for the borough. The Make It Happen Fund has been a joy to work on with you, as well as the Grants Giving panels. You play such a crucial role in connecting Islington residents, businesses, and community organisations" (Emma Gladwin, Islington Peabody)