



Lostwithiel

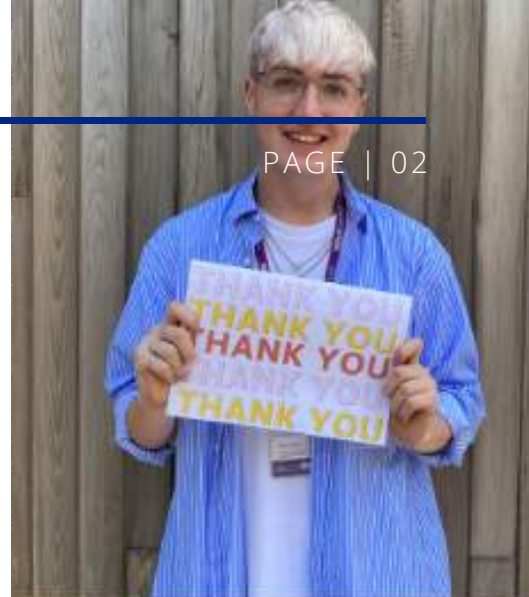


AUGUST 2021

THANK YOU DAY COMMUNITY CONNECTOR PILOT EVALUATION REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

This report sits alongside the [broader evaluation for Thank You Day](#) which was not carried out by Neighbourly Lab. This report specifically focuses on the experiences and outcomes of the 10 pilot areas that were approached directly to take part in Thank You Day and were given an unrestricted grant of £2,000 courtesy of Virgin Media O2. The support of the pilot areas, and this evaluation was made possible with thanks to generous support from Spirit of 2012.

What we set out to do:

Neighbourly Lab were commissioned to carry out the evaluation of the pilot projects for Thank You Day. Our aim for this evaluation was to explore broadly 'what worked' within the pilot projects so that the /Together coalition could learn and build on this for the future.

The evaluation was carried out in 3 phases during June and July 2021

1. Discovery individual depth interviews - before the Thank You Day event (report under separate cover)
2. Intercept interviews- on Thank You day, at the event itself using the Makerble platforms (report under separate cover)
3. Post event focus groups and depths, after the event - with organisers, volunteers and participants (2 x focus groups, 3 x depth interviews) and post event questionnaires for those who could not attend the focus groups.

Whilst our remit was to look at what worked for the pilot projects, we think it is important to think about the pilots in the context of /Together's bigger aims of building kinder, closer and more connected communities and learn from their experiences, so future Thank You Days bring about more connection and reduce barriers to participation. The opportunities surfaced in this document focus on how to help Thank You Day stand out as a community event, that helps to increase people's sense of belonging and feeling part of their place.



BACKGROUND TO THE PILOT

As part of their aim of bringing people together to connect across differences, /Together conceived of local Neighbours Day. Over the course of a few months, this idea evolved into Thank You Day, with the ambition that it would bring a more open and flexible opportunity for local groups and organisations to participate and bring people together in ways that resonated with them.

Through the pilot projects, the /Together coalition wanted to understand what benefits there could be if funding and support were channelled to hyperlocal groups and organisations, to help build a knowledge base and business case for the future.

More specifically through the pilot project locations, /Together sought to:

- Understand the role of having community connectors in helping to bring people in the community together
- Explore the impact of unrestricted funding in allowing communities groups to develop activities and events that were relevant and appropriate to them
- Ascertain the importance of bringing people together at a hyperlocal level and the impact

This evaluation sought to understand the impact of hyperlocal funding toward grass roots activity in encouraging people to participate in activities that provide opportunities to make new connections with others, including across lines of difference.

Together equipped the below 10 areas to hold Thank You Day events, ensuring a diverse regional spread. More information on their events can be found at the end of the report.

Lostwithiel, Cornwall

Lostwithiel Community Centre, connected through Eden Project Communities

Wapping, Tower Hamlets

Wapping Bangladeshi Association, local residents group

Oadby, Leicester

St Phillips Centre, connected through Near Neighbours (their Leicester Hub)

Castle Meadow, Norwich

The Shoebox Community Hub, Pop Up Enterprises, connected through Aviva

Taibach, Port Talbot, Wales

Taibach Community Group, connected through Aled Humphreys (Thank You Day Proposer)

Halton Brook, Runcorn

Four Estates, local community development charity

Bishophill, York

Bishophillbillies, local residents group

Tunstall, Sunderland

Sunderland City Rotary Club, connected through Rotary GBI

Limavady, Northern Ireland

Roe Valley Residents Association, connected through Springboard Opportunities

Drumchapel, Scotland

Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland, distributed to four small community groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For a first 'Thank You Day' this was a great start and jumping off point for future hyperlocal events that focus on bringing people together.

It clearly demonstrates the value of letting community organisers and groups spend their grants flexibly and that coming together for a shared activity (doing / not just being) can help to build new connections with people and contribute to kinder, closer and more connected communities.

The theme, 'Thank You' was positive, relevant and neighbourly.

The theme of thanking people at a neighbourhood level felt apt, inspiring and important to all those who took part in the pilots events. Being able to bring people together safely, to give thanks for the efforts, care and support people have given to their neighbours and local community was appreciated and in turn, reminded people the importance of local place and community.

The flexibility was key to the success of the pilot efforts. The theme lent itself to creative ideas for bespoke events, relevant to each location and the unrestricted funding from Virgin Media O2 and open brief from /Together, enabled this to happen. The unrestricted funding was appreciated and its flexibility was seen as essential in enabling event organisers to produce events that resonated with locals, felt relevant to their context and would better help them to leave a legacy. The funding amount and total flexibility meant they could keep people Covid safe by spreading across different sites, create more intimate gatherings, pay attention to rules and details and add special details. Many community groups appreciated the link to the National campaign, claiming it elevated how they and participants felt about their event and place, increasing the sense of belonging to where they live, as they felt part of something bigger.

Hyperlocal focus was essential in bringing people together, creating a sense of belonging and pride in place. The hyperlocal focus of the pilot areas meant that the activities and events were organised to take place either in parks, fields, or community centres & cafes - always using hyperlocal spaces to host their event/s. Some of the pilot areas hosted small events across a number of local community spaces, which meant that barriers to participation were reduced as more people could attend than if there was one event on one site, people could walk and people had a choice in what they participated in. Much of this was choreographed in this way to ensure Covid restrictions were adhered to and people were safe (see below).



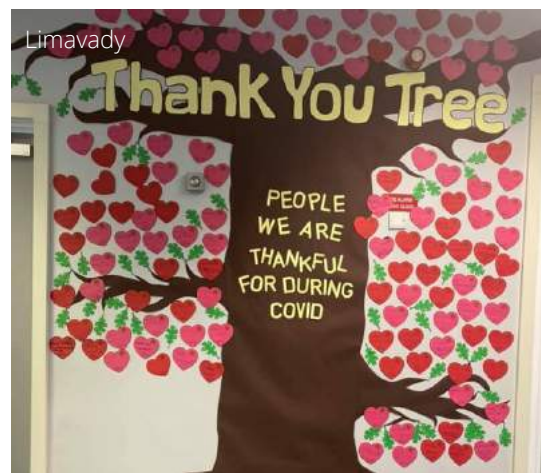
Castle Meadow



Lostwithiel



Oadby



Limavady

COVID Restrictions meant that organisers made a great effort to create a connected and participatory atmosphere. This meant that with restrictions on numbers, events were thoughtfully produced so they still had a great atmosphere, but it was less about the crowd being there and more about meaningful connection and conversations. Participants and organisers said that they had made new connections among each other, and as such, the events created a sense of belonging to their community as well as pride in place (their neighbourhood) as mentioned above. This depth of connection is less likely to happen at larger-scale events, partly due to the type of events that have bigger crowds and partly due to the event location needed to host those crowds. Whilst these events offer much, the hyperlocal sense of connection and belonging is most likely diluted.

Community connectors played an important role in encouraging participation (especially among people in the community who felt apprehensive about coming out after time in lockdown/shielding), making partnerships with local businesses for donations and support, and garnering interest among local media. Without them acting as a conduit among the community it may have been difficult to mobilise community participation and volunteer efforts so effectively in such a short space of time.

How people were included in the event is important and brings some extra learning. Owing to Covid restrictions on numbers, this year some organisers were unable to advertise or post on social media as this risked too many people coming in many locations organisers/ community connectors sent personal invitations or invited people to be nominated to attend (in line with the theme of Thank You and recognition of their community efforts up to, including and beyond the pandemic). The tone and content of invitations was warm and inviting, encouraging participation. Participants felt special, especially those nominated to attend. For those who are regularly missing from the events, we need to think about the tone and messaging

to encourage participation so they feel special and want to attend something locally too.

Volunteers were key in the event success. According to the organisers, much of the events' successes were down to the support and commitment of volunteers who helped in a range of ways: from the initial planning to delivery and evaluation of the events. Volunteer support is such an important way of encouraging participation and building stronger relationships with the group of volunteers and the participants, through events like Thank You Day. There are opportunities to harness this local support more widely to encourage people to participate beyond the life of the day itself.

Thank You Day event organisers tried to include local businesses as part of their events. In most of the locations in the pilot locations, organisers worked with the local community enterprises and businesses, particularly in catering, independent cafes/bars as well as entertainment such as musicians, actors and children's entertainers. This contributed to the local feeling of the event, especially for those businesses that would not usually get involved as organisers wouldn't have funding or the event would be too big. There is scope to increase the local business support to Thank You Day as well as look to some partnerships with bigger business partnerships.

There are some interesting learnings and opportunities to refine how /Together and funders support the hyperlocal responses, based on this year's pilot experience. These include finding more ways to increase participation of people who wouldn't normally come to activities and events, exploring how /Together can support the organisations from planning to delivery with better timeframes, tool kits and 'accessories' to better link up with the National campaign. It also includes managing the PR side of the event and supporting groups and organisations with Local Authority involvement as both of these could add extra burdens to organisers.

EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MORE DETAIL

'Thank You', inspired local groups to bring people together in unique ways

Across the sample, people reported the theme of saying 'thank you' to people in their community meant they could come up with some exciting, innovative ideas that were relevant to their groups, their location and their specific experiences and responses to pandemic. For them, it meant the events felt more authentic and relevant to their communities. They were able to bring different people together, for a common purpose, creating something that resonated personally and inspired new connections.

Using thank you as a theme in a hyper local context, enabled people who live near to each other to come together, connect over shared experiences, and express their common gratitude for the community and organisations. That this was done where they lived, made the experiences feel more intimate, shared and neighbourly.

Thank you was expressed to a diverse range of people locally. Examples include people who received food deliveries from within the community, were able to meet each other and the volunteers who helped them, community groups were able to thank local suppliers for food donations, groups and communities were able to thank the volunteers who support projects, to carers came together who had never met, to communities who took part in interfaith lockdown activities, community members thanked Pharmacists and GPs, some people thanked their local place through gardening and litter picking, some thanked parents of kids with special needs, and others put on events to kids for being resilient during lockdowns and missing out on typical celebrations like Easter and Christmas.

Recommendation:

Thank you as a theme may have also helped this event stand out from other community events happening around the same time of which there were a few (national and local campaigns). It is important that the theme is leveraged to help bring about kinder and more connected communities and doesn't get lost in the other events taking place with similar target audience and good intentions. It is important to find ways that make it unique and that allow people to express thanks that benefit community connections. It would benefit from a clear visual identity.

From the Intercept Interviews

- 40% of people hadn't been to a local community event before with Thank You Day being their first time
- Their motivation for coming was largely because they liked the idea behind Thank You Day (40%) and they wanted to meet new people in their local area (70%) Many also liked the idea of the event and that it was near their home . This correlated with their top 3 favourite things about the event -showing the benefits of locally tailored events, giving thanks for specific things
- 91% said they would want to come again.
- 97% of people said they'd recommend the event

"It is the perfect opportunity to bring the neighbourhood together, people feel part of something, not just their house"

"Thank You Day reminded you, this is my street, I can get involved"

"Was great because everyone came together and realised/appreciated what people had been doing."



EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MORE DETAIL

A different way of doing things lent itself to better social mixing

Owing to the timings of the Thank You Day, many Covid restrictions were still in place. This meant that large numbers of people were not able to gather, and community organisers wanted to ensure everyone felt safe and social distancing was in place. It also means that each event across all the areas had to be thoughtfully and carefully planned, balancing out celebratory and connecting activities and ensuring that people felt safe. Whilst these came with some logistical challenges these were quickly mitigated with creative solutions so that no one was compromised and appropriate distances and rules were respected. Organisers said they felt able to be creative and flexible and buy necessary equipment to be in different venues because the funding was generous and unrestricted.

The way people produced Thank You Day was different from the way they had done them in previous, pre-COVID times. They gave more thought into how to invite and include people (language and platform), whilst limiting numbers participating and thought about how to encourage participation and mixing whilst keeping people safe. The flexibility in how they could spend their funding meant that this was led by them and activities were relevant to who they were hosting, their location and what the focus of their gratitude.

Organisers and participants agreed that people spoke to new people and where relevant across lines of difference. These smaller numbers at the events, the choreographed lay-out of gardens and rooms and having purposeful experiences lent themselves to this. Doing activities together, gave people a shared experience and a commonality that helped people mix in new ways. Some groups facilitated reflective sessions at the end of experiences which gave people further opportunities to connect. It was important to all organisers that there was a lovely atmosphere, so people felt welcome and a sense of belonging, as well as providing a chance to connect with others. In many cases this was achieved.

Recommendation:

In future events, where numbers of people may be desired to be higher, it is important for organisers to learn from the activities that really brought people together and be encouraged to put purposeful connection into their events, so that they people connect in more meaningful ways. Subtle choreographing/social infrastructure and shared activities that people can do together (rather than just be together in a shared space) will help this.

It is also important to think about how we can encourage people to think about others from the community may need encouragement to come to events and have further opportunities to participate in a number of ways. From this event, we have learnt that communities can put inclusive, hyperlocal events on and now we need to look at beyond this and ways of expanding the width of events so events or activities widen their reach to others so more people participate.

From the Intercept Interviews

- Everyone questioned people found the events to be friendly (93% VERY, 7% QUITE)
- 72% said they would like to meet more people in their local area
- 90% of people said they talked to someone new 45% thought they may keep in touch and
- 45% thought they'd meet locally, only 1% said they wouldn't keep in touch
- As a result of coming to the event many people said they'd say hello to people they don't know but would see around (40%)
- Some thought they would join a local group (13%)
- Only a minority thought they'd be likely to organise something themselves

“Local neighbours were eagerly waiting for the event - waiting for the chance for everyone to see each other after the pandemic”

“We had conversations with people and learnt so quickly that we had things in common, just by sharing a small bit of our own history”

EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MORE DETAIL

Volunteers and Community Organisers (Connectors) were central to the success of the events

Those local groups who had plenty of volunteer support on the day, reported a much smoother flow of activities than those who had a limited amount of volunteer help. Volunteers contributed to the friendliness of the events, volunteers also captured photos, carried out evaluation interviews and uploaded information on social media, they helped with setting up and directing people where to go, they served food and helped people participate in activities. Those organisers who had fewer volunteers said the challenge was the time frame in gathering people together to help and they felt stretched. Some of the events and organisations were run solely on volunteers' time and effort.

Community Connectors were key in bringing the events together, through the whole event cycle. They were mostly those people running the community groups or organisations, so they have the networks and connections in place to encourage people to participate in activities, the trust to reassure people that it will be safe and the creds that people know it will be great! On the day, their role was of welcoming and introducing, facilitating and encouraging - enabling people to get the most out of their participation and thank everyone involved.

The Community Connectors have existing relationships with local business and other community organisations, groups and talent such as actors, magicians, chefs who are all essential to the success of the events. These connections helped the events come to life, but the events also fed back into the local businesses, which added to a sense of community especially as many have struggled during the pandemic. Examples from different locations: local community enterprise that supports mental health did the baking, local restaurant provided the food, local pub opened its garden space and gave everyone a complimentary drink, Santa Claus and the easter bunny (children's entertainers) lived locally, local theatre group could get new costumes- made locally.

Without the funding, these local businesses would not have been involved in the same way, as people could get what they needed to put on the Thank You Day events and businesses were able to be paid by the organisers, so the events were free to the participants.

Many reflected that if they had had more time to plan and develop the Thank You Day events they would have liked to bring in more business partnerships, as a way of sustaining local involvement in their groups and organisations, and potentially helping with longer time fundraising and volunteer supply.

Community Connectors recognised the importance of their role and acknowledged that it was not just them, but the volunteers and staff involved that was essential and appreciated.

Recommendation:

To consider having Community Connectors as part of the Thank You Day offer moving forward. Community Connectors could network with each other and increase the width of connection within and between communities.

Encourage volunteer recruitment around Thank You Day, for people to be involved in different elements, from planning to delivery. Some people may be more happy to help out on the day than participate, so having different roles for volunteers would be beneficial. The relationship between volunteers is another point of connection that helps to build stronger, kinder communities.

“Having community connectors gives accountability - named individuals of people who you are working on the ground and good for larger organisers of TYD to know what is happening in different areas”

“The volunteers created a welcoming environment”.

EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MORE DETAIL

The direct, unrestricted funding was the catalyst to a unique hyperlocal event essential to its success

Community organisers agreed that the unrestricted funding enabled them to produce events that made their thank you day feel unique.

The amount of money meant they could plan more easily, pay staff over time, work with local suppliers and put something on that would have meaning and importance to the local community. It also meant the event would be free to people coming, which felt important in this context and reduced any barriers to participation.

Giving funding directly to smaller community groups and organisations is seen as unusual but essential for getting things done and avoiding a lot of bureaucracy. Many said if the funding was for the local area rather than hyperlocal they would have been less likely to apply as the bigger organisations tend to have more success.

The nature of this funding also meant that events being physically on people's doorsteps generated a local interest, reminding people of the support and opportunities available to them and contributing to a pride in place. This was true of the pilot areas that used communal green areas and made them better as well as those that used community centres and faith buildings.

Many of the community organisers said they would not have done something on July 4th without the financial support given in this way (unrestricted, hyperlocal). Many of the community organisers are staff of the local charities/organisations or volunteers in groups, so they do not have the time or capacity to fundraise for events, they have other fundraising priorities such as staff costs, sustaining projects and fixing buildings.

Despite its hyperlocal nature, the link to the National day was acknowledged and appreciated, it helped anchor local efforts in something bigger giving them a further boost.

Recommendation:

Consider flexible easy to access funding for the future that goes directly to the community organisers. £2000 would be desirable for the size and scale of the events that all link together as part of a national campaign. Having some joint visual identity would further support this national connection, something that gives a subtle but clear message about Thank You Day linking to kinder, closer and more connected communities.

“Really liked the flexibility of the funding, felt we could go all in. If they expected a specific type of event, it would increase the admin”



EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MORE DETAIL

Local Authorities need to be given a clear role

With the events being in place, the Local Authorities did not have much of a role to play. A couple of the organisations were connected with their Mayor, who joined in and lent support. A minority of organisations were stressed by the Local Authorities. One requested a risk assessment and additional Covid safety reassurance, with 48 hours to go... the other, on request for a road closure, was slow to respond and refused as they needed a 10 week lead time. It is important that events feel supported by Local Authorities and owned by the community groups, with Local Authorities celebrating the event through their networks of groups and communities. They could also play a role in encouraging other local groups/ estates to do something themselves.

Recommendation: To give local authorities clear guidelines on how to best support the hyperlocal events, if need be, with enough time for risk assessments and necessary permissions to take place. To give organisers guidelines on what they may need to do to engage with LAs and adhere to any regulations.

“It was really well received and people were really enthusiastic. It helped make people aware of what we are trying to do with community led initiatives”

“Tying in local media coverage and people with a profile stirs the council into taking action but it was a lot of effort to get them involved”

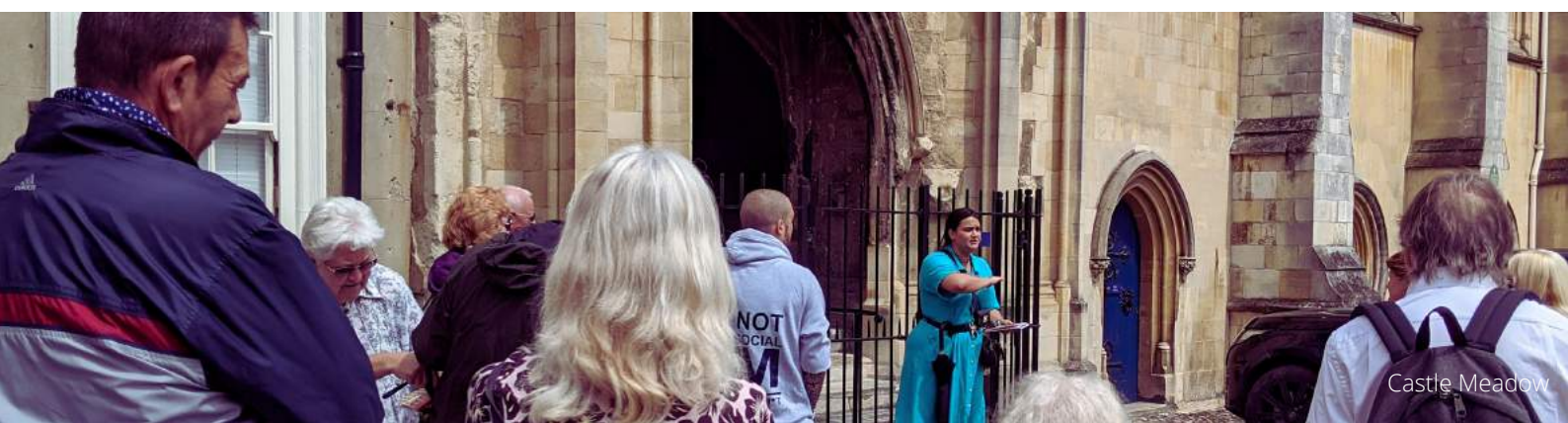
Organisers appreciated including a ‘Legacy’ element to the event

Again with this funding being unrestricted it means that each legacy can be unique to the different organisations, groups and locations. None of the events sat in isolation, there seemed to always be a ‘what next’ that benefited the local community.

For some, the legacy was physical whereby the organisations put something in their local environment for others to enjoy: from theatre costumes and historical storytelling, to planting in shared spaces and making them more community friendly, giving local plants to guests, to opening a community hub for everyone’s benefit, and making colourful thank you trees and placing them in a shared space.

For others, the legacy was more about leveraging the events as a platform for social and emotional wellbeing, reminding people they can come and meet others in the community, get advice and support and bring others to widen their reach. This included expanding interfaith connections, working with more vulnerable older people, supporting women’s groups.

Recommendation: Part of the Thank You day legacy could more closely align with the /Together coalition’s ambition of building kinder, closer, more connected communities and focus on widening the reach to others, thinking bigger than the event and ways of bringing more people out and together. It could be things that all participants do, not just the organisers, to deliberately go and connect with others and build up the hyperlocal community.



LEARNINGS FOR TOGETHER

The timeframe for planning the events needs to be longer

Across the sample organisers agreed that there needed to be more time to get the events organised. They think it needs at least 3 months but would love longer, to know they have the funding and can spend time building local relationships with residents and businesses, recruiting a range of volunteers so that they can reach others and connect more widely across the community. There was also some stress added to their already busy schedule, which could be prevented with more time available to plan.

A longer time frame will also allow community organisers to plan the activities that help Thank You Day stand out from other events and contribute to a kinder, more connected community.

Recommendation: To start the funding and planning process as early as possible giving community connectors time to do this extra work around the other commitments and responsibilities they have

"I'd love to see a national Thank You Day, organisations getting involved. It's important to get on board. But have a really good lead time. Do the application process in February or March. Give everyone a few months to organise properly"

Organisers loved sharing and celebrating their events more widely, but the PR activity needs careful management

Some of the locations in the pilot were told that there would be additional PR at their event. For those with additional volunteer support and single locations, this was simpler and welcomed. They loved showcasing their events and proudly being part of something bigger.

For some of the groups, this added to the stress of running the events. They lacked the support of others to take on some of their other responsibilities, so felt quite stretched on the day while trying to handle the PR people as well as facilitate the smooth running of the events. They appreciated being included, but would have liked to have had time to plan for this and find additional people to support. Some of the groups were not given much warning of the PR presence.

Recommendation: To build PR training and expectations into the event planning, so pilot areas feel better equipped to manage this and can delegate roles and responsibilities to volunteers.

"All over the country there were a bunch of celebrities on board - would be good to promote local thank you days with local celebrities"



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation has clearly identified an appetite from hyperlocal groups and community members to commemorate Thank You Day. It has reminded us that community gatherings can be designed to bring about new and meaningful connections, that they can benefit local communities and their pride in place and that businesses can also benefit. It has also surfaced some challenges, some which most likely can be prevented and some which may need more careful consideration.

- **Recommendation:** Leverage the theme to help bring about kinder and more connected communities and doesn't get lost in the other events taking place with similar target audience and good intentions.
- **Recommendation:** Find ways that make it unique and that allow people to express thanks that benefit community connections.
- **Recommendation:** To aid closer connection, subtle choreographing/social infrastructure and shared activities that people can do together (rather than just be together in a shared space) will help
- **Recommendation:** Think about how to encourage people to think about others from the community to come to smaller events or participate in activities beyond the events. Expanding the width of events so events or activities widen their reach to others so more people participate.
- **Recommendation:** Consider flexible easy to access funding for the future that goes directly to the community organisers. £2000 would be desirable for the size and scale of the events that all link together as part of a national campaign.
- **Recommendation:** Start the funding and planning process as early as possible giving community connectors time to do this extra work around the other commitments and responsibilities they have
- **Recommendation:** Give enough lead time so Community Connectors can build expanded networks with potential volunteers, local businesses and widen reach with people in the community.
- **Recommendation:** Having some joint visual identity would further support this national connection, something that gives a subtle but clear message about Thank You Day linking to kinder, closer and more connected communities.
- **Recommendation:** Provide information and advice about whether or not Local Authorities need to be informed of the event and on road closures and use of public spaces and how and when to do this
- **Recommendation:** To build PR training and expectations into the event planning, so pilot areas feel better equipped to manage this and can delegate roles and responsibilities to volunteers.
- **Opportunity:** To encourage and support organisers to elicit the support of volunteers and provide them with a potential task sheet, including setting up, during the event and afterwards.



NEXT STEPS

Now

- Think about developing a toolkit for organisers - that looks at how to bring people together, expanding the width of the events in order to engage a wider range of people, what to do and how to engage volunteers
- Think about a developing a design principles - to help Thank You Day stand out as different from other community based events and so it retains its flexibility for organisations but works to bring about kinder, closer, more connected communities e.g. has to reach people that are new, has to lower barriers to participation, invites people, gives everyone a follow up task at the end to connect with someone else, uses positive inclusive language, brings in subtle social activities so everyone connects with someone, include rituals of belonging or bonding
- Develop a support package that offers pro-forma templates for forms that need to be
- filed and timeframes in which they need to be done
- Develop a clear timeline of when things need to happen - from funding applications to engaging LAs, to prevent last minute u-turns or challenges

Next

- Work on a visual identity for Thank You Day, including decorations and extras, to give it stand out etc.
- Revisit the ToC and see how and if it needs to evolve based on insights.
- Explore with organisers what they may need to do differently to get volunteers on board and how /together coalition can support them.

Later

- To broker effective support from the coalition where necessary, to help the community organisers with making strategic business links to help them get more involved and gain better PR support



APPENDIX A: PILOT AREA EVENTS

Lostwithiel, Cornwall

Lostwithiel Community Centre, connected through Eden Project Communities

Event: Lostwithiel Community Centre has a network of volunteers who have really stepped up to support their local community over the past year - providing supporting services to those shielding, providing food and appliances to families, providing social contact and connection to many people who were isolated over the pandemic. Thank You Day provided them with an opportunity to celebrate these volunteers. They held a 'Big Lunch' themed afternoon tea to say thank you to these people in the centre's garden, with savoury food and a celebration cake.

Wapping, Tower Hamlets

Wapping Bangladeshi Association, local residents group

Event: Wapping Bangladesh Association held a Thank You Day (Dannaybad din) event for their local community. They began the day with a small community clean up and riverside walking sessions. They then held a community picnic including lunch/BBQ and children's activities. They also used the community engagement to have discussions about and help promote take up of the COVID-19 vaccine. The community BBQ was featured on the BBC evening news bulletin.

Oadby, Leicester

St Phillips Centre, connected through Near Neighbours (their Leicester Hub)

Event: St Phillips Centre, Leicester put on a 'Come Dine Together' event. Before the Covid pandemic, they had launched a multi-faith meal exchange - with the rationale that bringing people together over food gives them an opportunity to meet in a way that doesn't focus on tensions that may exist.

During the pandemic, they relaunched the programme during World Interfaith Week - where they shared meals over video calls. But their hope was always to get people together in person again to continue this programme.

On Thank You Day, they held the first in-person events since the pandemic. There were three events:

- A morning coffee at St Philip's Church with attendees invited from St Philip's Church congregation and the congregation of Masjid Umar, the adjacent mosque
- A lunch in Oadby, attended by participants of the recent 'Come e-dine together' project, who have not yet met face to face
- An afternoon tea at St Anne's Church, with attendees invited from the congregation of St Anne's Church and members of the Leicester Friends of the Oxford Centre for Hindu studies (who were also participants in the recent 'Come e-dine together' project.)

PILOT AREA EVENTS

Castle Meadow, Norwich

The Shoebox Community Hub, Pop Up Enterprises, connected through Aviva

Event: Pop Up Enterprises in Norwich ran a Thank You Day event that brought people together through a shared interest in history and getting to know their city better.

Attendees were thanked for their time supporting others by being offered the chance to attend free tours of the historic 'hidden street' below the Community Hub, as well as their Tombland walking tours. These tours are usually sold to the public to fund their community work, but for Thank You Day, they made them available to individuals who may otherwise not be able to afford them.

They offered free refreshments throughout the day and provided a free packed lunch. The event supported people to connect through shared experiences and encouraging conversations about the past using resources from History Begins at Home.

Throughout the day, attendees met members of the various community groups that are hosted there, in the hope that they might like to come along to a group in the future.

The volunteers who supported the event received a special thank you meal at the end of the event.

They worked with Better Together Norfolk and Norwich Together Alliance, which are partnerships working to combat loneliness and social isolation. They also worked closely with Voluntary Norfolk who manage the Better Together Norfolk service, Carers Matters Service and also coordinate Norfolk's Covid Response Volunteers, to ensure their volunteers and the unpaid carers they support were invited to the event.

Taibach, Port Talbot, Wales

Taibach Community Group, connected through Aled Humphreys (Thank You Day Proposer)

Event: A group of local organisations in the Taibach area worked together to put on a range of activities to celebrate Thank You Day. Beginning with the Big Litter Pick and a Flash Mob on the beach, the day comprised a diverse range of activities, designed to attract a wide range of local residents.

With the Taibach Community Group, they opened their new welcome garden on the day - with a local celebrity attending and a plaque put in place. With Taibach local businesses, they worked together to make the local area a real hub of activity. They held a coffee morning - free for anybody passing, and for the community group to attend after the garden opening and worked with other businesses to get involved too - for example, the 'Paint Pot' put on activities for children.

They held a Rugby 'Fun day on the field' and held a football tournament with their 'inclusion football group' which also encouraged more people to get involved (the inclusion group provides connections for parents with disabled children, and the children themselves).

The local theatre company performed a show based on a local story. The actors from the show were in costume roaming about town, acting out scenes and answering questions about the story.

Halton Brook, Runcorn

Four Estates, local community development charity

Event: Four Estates in Halton Brook held an event to say a collective thank you to those who have worked so hard throughout the pandemic so far. The event took place in the afternoon, with a separate activity for local pensioners later in the day. Activities included walk-around magic, a disco, a puppet show, various fun and games and the opportunity for people to hang a message on a Thank You tree, for which they received a token for a free hot dog. The additional event for pensioners included an afternoon tea, a few games of bingo and an opportunity to chat.

PILOT AREA EVENTS

Bishophill, York

Bishophillbillies, local residents group

Event: Event with family friendly activities, food, and live music taking place in and around the community garden and local pub. They arranged a small road closure in this area to provide more space for the event. The core organisers are a local community group, the Bishophillbillies, and the participating pub (The Golden Ball, a community-owned coop pub). Local streets were included by way of local history tours and community activities.

Tunstall, Sunderland

Sunderland City Rotary Club, connected through Rotary GBI

Event: Rotary Sunderland City invited families, neighbours to 'have a pint on us' and raise a toast to the wonderful community that they have. They gifted attendees a potted plant in collaboration with local business The Hive of Sedgefield - to encourage attendees to engage with the environment. The Hive of Sedgefield is a new North East social enterprise initiative that is volunteer led, by people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and experiences. Its primary aim is to create a safe space and to make things better for those living with disabilities, including dementia, mental health issues, social isolation, and anyone who would benefit from volunteering and supporting their work. They provide safe outdoor spaces for gardening support with friends, and as well as growing vegetables and fresh produce. They also teach cooking and provide support with food and advice. In addition, by holding the event at The Rosedene pub, they are also supporting a local business that serves local people, providing it with a much needed boost after a year of hardships due to lockdowns and loss of revenue.

Limavady, Northern Ireland

Roe Valley Residents Association, connected through Springboard Opportunities

Event: Roe Valley Residents Association held a "Covid Catch-Up" Event. The event was an opportunity for local residents to 'catch up' on all the seasons and events that were missed out during 2020 and the Covid Pandemic, including visits from Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. They encouraged residents, project participants and other organisations to acknowledge those who they wish to thank for the past year. They issued postcards for residents to write a note on and from this, compiled a Thank You Tree within the centre.

Drumchapel, Scotland

Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland, distributed to four small community groups

Events: Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland (CHSS) used their grant to fund four smaller organisations to hold a Tartan Tea Party. In the lead up to Thank You Day, CHSS hand delivered thank you cards to a number of local organisations and businesses, to thank them for their efforts over the past year. They left blank cards, and encouraged these businesses to 'pay it forward' - and share their thanks with others. On the day, four small organisations held tea parties with their local communities across Drumchapel. These groups included a youth group, a cycling class and a volunteer-led garden centre.

APPENDIX B: PRE-EVENT IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

About This Document

This document captures the insights from pre-event interviews with people in the 10 pilot areas and recipients of the hyperlocal funding. The objective of these interviews was to capture the pre-event details, such as ideas and intention, ability to do this without the funding planning, outreach and whether anything else was happening locally. Interviews took place on Zoom w/c 21 June, as planning was underway and COVID restrictions extended to 19 July (England & Scotland). They were carried out by Marnie Freeman, Neighbourly Lab. Thank you to Trudi Williams for supporting the pilots and setting up the interviews and to everyone for making time to participate.

FINDINGS

BEING ABLE TO SAY THANK YOU, BY BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER FEELS SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT

All hyperlocal organisations had people they wanted to thank for their time, effort and resilience since the outbreak of COVID. The majority of these were people who have helped their local communities, whether it be through donations, cooking, prescriptions, deliveries, caring for vulnerable people, parents, local business and people who tended to their local environment. The invitation to participate through the coalition networks was well received and appreciated.

THE HYPERLOCAL FOCUS IS ESSENTIAL TO MAKE THANK YOU DAY FEEL AUTHENTIC

The events and thanks are tailored, relevant, genuine. They are diverse in design, showing that people are planning something relevant their local communities, highlighting the importance of hyperlocal funding. The events reflect the community's response, resilience and needs based on the past 15 months. They build and boost further relationship building for the future.

The hyperlocal focus adds to the legacy of the event, as connections will be built and more common ground is established, between people and in place. Any lines of difference are determined by location (place) with a genuine community response to bringing people together in place across age, ability, socio-economic group and faith backgrounds.

THANK YOU DAY EVENTS WOULD NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT THE GIFT OF FUNDING PROVIDED BY VMO2, THROUGH THE /TOGETHER COALITION.

It provided local organisations with the opportunity to connect with their community and bring people together again. It gave flexibility to do something that fitted with their organisations, community and local culture. Some had been talking about doing something once they were allowed, to show appreciation, to reboot or launch activities but they lacked human and physical capacity to take their ideas further, until this pilot funding became available. All organisations expressed their thanks and gratitude for being part of this pilot. It has enabled them to share some positivity in the community.



PRE-EVENT IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

MAKING £2000 UNRESTRICTED, MADE PLANNING THIS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE... EVEN IF A "LITTLE LAST MINUTE!"

They have been able to put on a generous event, to give thanks to the people who have had a direct impact on their hyperlocal community. They could provide food and drinks, cards and gifts, add extra details such as music that would otherwise not have been possible with smaller amounts, more restricted rules on spend. They have been able to involve local business, other local community groups and volunteers with no extra burden on them - including providing transport, expenses, cleaning. They have been able to ensure COVID restrictions are adhered to by buying extra chairs, gazebos, tables. **Many believed that if funding was more conditional, under current circumstances, organising the event would have been too difficult.**

COVID RESTRICTIONS ARE A BARRIER FOR GETTING INVOLVED

- They have needed to be a little more creative and think about inclusion and bringing people together carefully, adhering to restrictions and keeping everyone safe, so they feel confident to come.
- The timeframe for planning has been further squeezed, but helped by the fact that they have flexibility with what they can do
- Numbers are lower than they would have chosen, but many have found ways to rotate who comes either with time slots, splitting events across locations, or using a mix of indoor and outdoor venues. Some have said that the lower numbers could lead to more meaningful and enduring connections, so restrictions may have some positive impacts.

The desire to say thank you and bring people together has meant that there is a willingness and motivation to make it work whatever the rules and challenges.

MOST OF THE ORGANISING IS BEING DONE BY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The majority of organisers rallied a team of staff and volunteers, easily and with much motivation. The speed at which the events have been planned has meant that it has been a case of all hands on deck. They have relied on partner organisations and other local connections/ businesses to organise food and drinks, music and entertainment, photos and comms. The positive outcome from the pandemic is that hyper local connections are strengthened and community organisations have a wider, reliable pool of support. Small businesses and creatives will receive a mini-boost too.

THE COMMS AND INVITATIONS ARE SHAPED BY RESTRICTIONS ON EVENT SIZE

Although organisations are keen to publicise their thanks and their events, they know they need to balance this with keeping numbers of participants COVID-safe. They have used mixed methods of inviting people, to ensure participants know about it and can join in: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, leaflets, posters in centres and community spaces, invitations, phone calls. Methods have depended on event type and numbers able to join. Most plan to use social media afterwards to share and celebrate the successes. They believe there's a real storytelling opportunity afterwards, and want to use this as a way to engage a wider community. They are also embracing working with national partners on PR.



PRE-EVENT IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

THERE IS LITTLE AWARENESS OF OTHER LOCAL THANK YOU DAY EVENTS

Many had seen the National Campaign, but not heard many people talk about it (through word of mouth). This may also be due to the fact that we approached them, so TYD was put on their radar. Little awareness of any other events taking place in their area. Their activities were the only ones they knew about. A few wondered if there were things taking place, but on a tiny scale or that people were not publicising them because of covid restrictions on numbers. This lends further support to the case for hyperlocal involvement, as people are more likely to know about events taking place close to their homes. It also shows the value and opportunity in network building across a joint event.

THANK YOU DAY LEGACY

Most organisations believe they are becoming better at thinking about their legacy on the local community and environment more generally, so thinking about it in terms of thank you day felt relevant. Thank You Day Legacy fell into the following areas:

- **Physical infrastructure:** gardens, plaques, physical infrastructure like BBQs and chairs for others to use, graffiti wall in cafe giving thanks.
- **Social capital:** bringing together volunteers, creating new community connections, building people's confidence to leave their homes, encouraging health and well being
- **Organisational reach:** launching new activities, reaching out to new members, increasing participation in projects

Again, the unrestricted nature of the funding and hyperlocal nature of the project has meant that legacy presents differently. .

Some organisations are using the funding to put ideas they had on hold into action or widen the reach of what they were already doing as their focus is on bringing people together and connection in the community. This means for them legacy is more than just Thank You Day, it is part of a continuum of community connections.

THANK YOU DAY LEARNING AND INSIGHTS

- The groups taking part are keen to make this event one of many, they see it as a jumping off point of future community engagement.
- As part of this, they are committed to learning and insights coming out of the evaluation. They want to build an evidence base to be access/use the data in the future.
- They are also keen to network build with each other.
- This adds to further legacy, through peer sharing and learning networks.



INTERVIEW SNAPSHOTS

Our event focus is that everyone has a story to tell. It's really nice to be able to create connections and shared memories, bringing people together through the history of this place.

Thank You Day it is not an event, it's a way of life- we want to see it changes in people's behaviour, there's so much negativity, people can be fractious - if they can just say thank you, by showing gratitude that would help. An annual event reinforces that behaviour.

We want to say thank you to lots of groups in area. The funding allows us do something specific on day and create a legacy afterward. It's essential to work with others. I couldn't do it on my own. £2k is a lot for 1 event, there's a danger we'd waste on silly things, so it's good to spread it across groups.

Very local people have been notified -and we've had a positive response. Some are volunteering to help - some new people and neighbours have stepped up. Our local History group and us are working together for the first time.

Volunteers that are around the patch rarely get a thank you - we want to use this to change that

We probably would've liked to do something, but we hadn't really heard about it. We would have probably prioritised differently, so the £ made a difference. It's been refugee week, carers week and volunteers week so there's a lot on.

INTERVIEW SNAPSHOTS

Want to say thank you to a lot of people. Volunteers and people who donated things. People have done kind things for people in town, who have been affected. Some people know people, some don't. It's about making new connections, meeting new people.

Our finances aren't flexible. We couldn't have done this without the donation. It's great that it's flexible especially in the timeframe. We've been wanting to create those real life connections with people for ages.

Have been networking a bit and no one else is doing things locally. It feels unique, may never be able to do it again, the funding gives us flexibility to do it, to be innovative and creative. This is giving power back to community.

Wouldn't have organised anything, as we have no unrestricted money to organise an event like this. Your money has encouraged us to organise this.

Wouldn't be able to do it without it (funding). We would have done pensioners one, but the main event for the wider community and the children's activities wouldn't have happened.

We're hoping people will make new connections on the day, and we will become a more integrated community for our next project. Our community is ripe for this as new groups popped up. And we'll get different streets talking to each other.

APPENDIX C: INTERCEPT INTERVIEWS REPORT

About This Document

- This document provides aggregated feedback from the intercept interviews carried out at each of the 10 pilot sites on Thank You Day. It captures moments from the day from attendees.
- Information was collected using the Makerble platform
- Not all sites have completed this, their feedback has been gathered in other ways
- Photos and verbatims were also collected via the questionnaires
- Total number of respondents: 166
- This is key data, and does not include in-depth analysis. This will come after the qualitative interviews

Overall

- An overwhelmingly positive response to the idea of a hyperlocal local Thank You day event
- This hyperlocal approach showed how a sense of community and positive feelings were generated when held close to home
- People were grateful and wanted to celebrate each other and shared pride in local activities and community.
- The events seemed to build more connection between people who hadn't previously known each other, by providing relevant and easy ways to participate in opportunities to come together.
- Clearly an appetite for further hyperlocal opportunities to give thanks and share space together.



Thank you all and I wish you every success in this venture. Your work and efforts are fantastic

I was happy with this event as I saw neighbour's I didn't know who existed, really glad to meet new faces and some of the Asian faces in the area.

Thank you for a wonderful afternoon it's super lovely to feel appreciated and recognised by the community

I was very pleased how different people from all backgrounds are having fun, food and Football

It was good to see elderly Bangladeshi woman sitting next to me and enjoying her BBQ, I tried to make conversation but her English was limited.

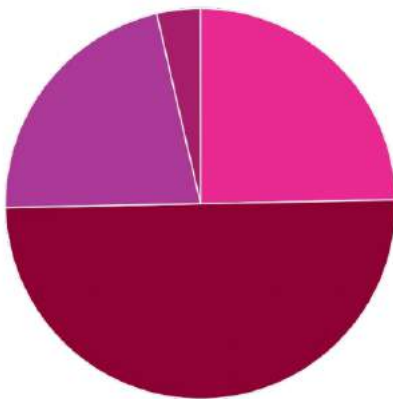
For someone who has been indoors mainly this whole year, it was good to see faces and local faces

I really enjoyed this and the food, also saw a few friends who I have not seen In a while

About The Participants

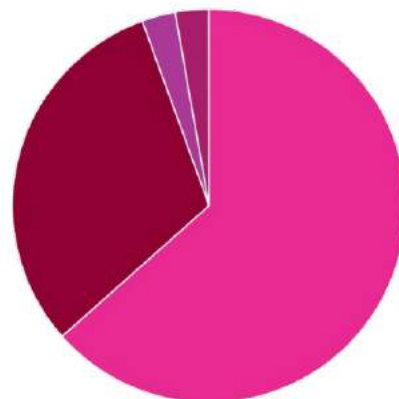
- Majority came with family, some came with friends and others on their own
- A mix of gender with more women than men participating
- Spread of age groups, with 46% being over 46
- Majority (79%) did not identify with have a disability
- Majority lived under 1 mile away, with others living a bit further (1-3 miles and above)
- People found out about the event in different ways - personal invites, through family and local WhatsApp groups
- The majority hadn't heard of other events happening locally, even though they may have heard of the National Thank You Day

Who did you come with?



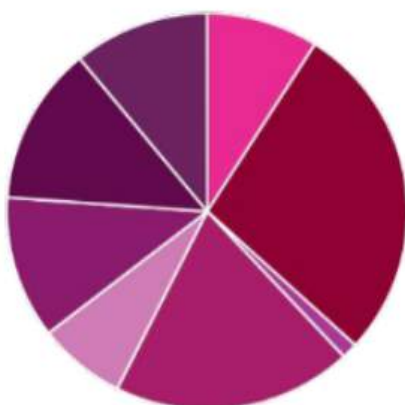
Friends : 41 Family: 83 On own: 36 Other : 6

Please tell us your gender.



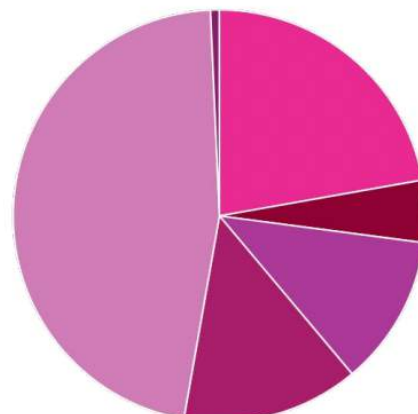
Female: 92 Male: 45 Non-binary: 4
Prefer not to state: 4 Never Tagged: 23

How did you find out about this event?



Local WhatsApp group: 14
Direct Invitation: 43
Community Noticeboards: 2
Friends/Family: 30
Other: 11
Something through the door: 18
Local group/ hobby/ community group: 20
Facebook/Instagram: 17

Which age group do you belong to?

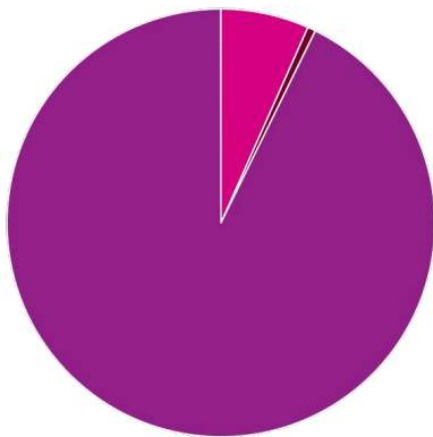


26-35: 32 18-25: 7 Below 18: 17
36-45: 20 46 and above: 67 prefer not to state: 1
Never Tagged: 24

About Meeting New People

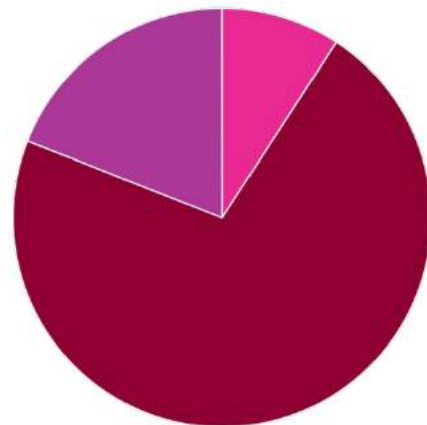
- Everyone questioned people found the events to be friendly (93% VERY, 7% QUITE)
- 72% said they would like to meet more people in their local area
- 90% of people said they talked to someone new 45% thought they may keep in touch and
- 45% thought they'd meet locally, only 1% said they wouldn't keep in touch

How friendly would you say this event is?



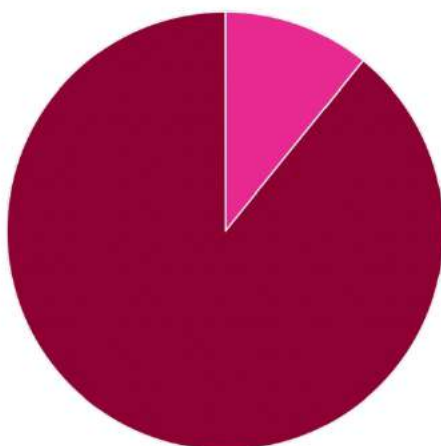
● Quite: 11 ● Not: 1 ● Very : 153 ● Never Tagged: 3

Would you like to meet more new people in your local area?



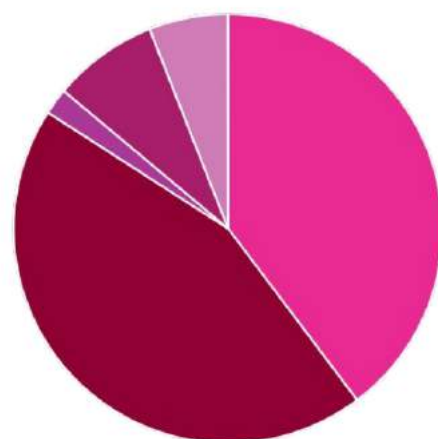
● No: 15 ● Yes: 117 ● Maybe: 31 ● Never Tagged: 5

Did you talk to anyone new?



● No: 18 ● Yes: 148 ● Never Tagged: 2

Which age group do you belong to?

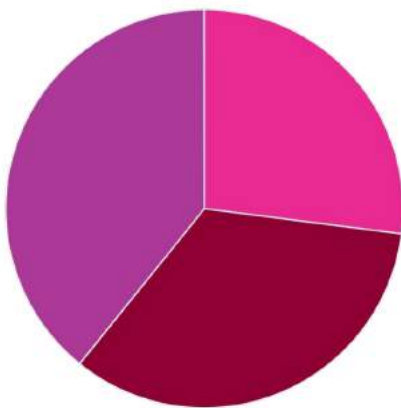


● Maybe: 60
● Yes we'd meet locally: 67
● No: 3
● N/A: 12
● Yes i'd chat to them on WhatsApp or Facebook: 9
● Never Tagged: 17

About the Event

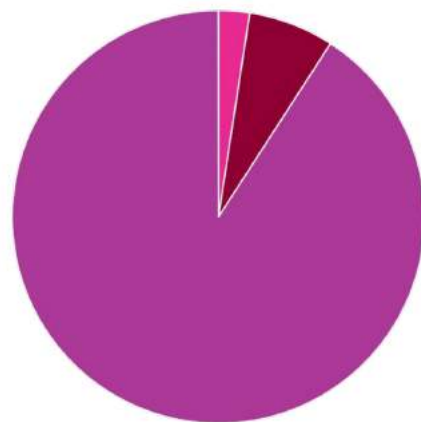
- Most people hadn't been to a local community event before with Thank You Day being their first time
- Their motivation for coming was largely because they liked the idea behind Thank You Day and they wanted to meet new people in their local area. Many also liked the idea of the event and that it was near their home. This correlated with their top 3 favourite things about the event -showing the benefits of locally tailored events, giving thanks for specific things.
- 91% said they would want to come again.
- 97% of people said they'd recommend the event

Have you been to a local community event before?



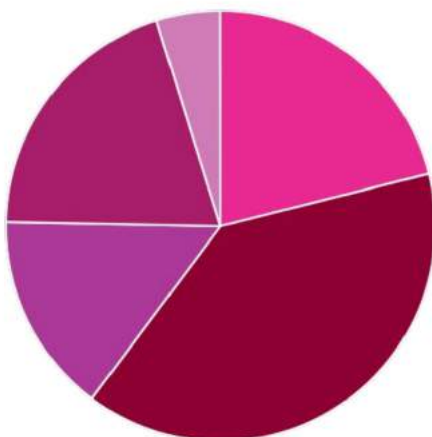
A few: 40 Many: 50 Never, this is my first time: 58

Would you come to an event like this again?



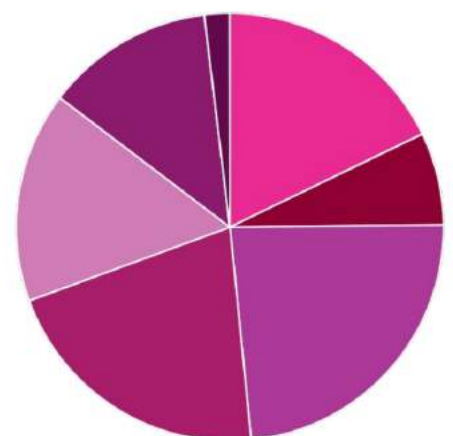
No: 4 Maybe: 11 Yes: 149 Never Tagged: 4

What made you want to come?



I wanted to meet new people in my community: 35
 I like the idea behind Thank You day: 65
 It is near my home: 25
 I liked the event idea: 33
 I was intrigued, this is new for my area: 8
 Never Tagged: 2

Choose the top three things you enjoyed about Thank You Day

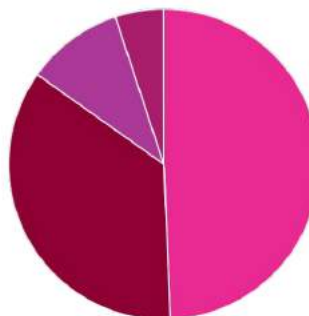


Activity: 28 Meeting new people: 37 Seeing people come out and enjoy: 25 Music: 3
 Staying local: 11 Giving thanks: 33 Food & drink: 20 Never Tagged: 11

About the Impact of the Event

- As a result of coming to the event many people said they'd say hello to people they don't know but would see around
- Some thought they would join a local group
- Only a minority thought they'd be likely to organise something themselves

As a result of coming to this event would you be more likely to do any of the following?



- Say hello to people you don't know but see around : 78
- Join a local group: 56
- Arrange a street/ block event: 16
- No: 8
- Never Tagged: 10





WITH THANKS TO

The pilot project and this evaluation was made possible with thanks to the generous support of funders. Without it we would not have been able to test this concept, nor see the incredible impact the grants had on the grassroots organisations who took part, and take that learning forward.

