



LOCAL ACCESS
Bradford District



Annual Report 2025

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Inspire Support Sports Empower



"2025 has been a fantastic year for the LABD programme.

We have gained real momentum and traction, enabling us to award more readiness grants with a clear view towards social investment take-up and with a new programme management team, streamlined operations, a fresh cohort of community partners joining the Partnership Board and a clear focus on impact, we're helping more organisations become investment ready.

Looking ahead to Year 4, we are excited to see even more social investment take hold, further strengthening Bradford's social economy."

Parvaze Ghani
LABD Programme Manager (INCIC)

"2025 has been an excellent year for the LABD Programme of engagement, one-to-one support and social investment.

The re-modelling exercise in 2024 of the delivery for Enterprise Support Programme through Impact Hub Yorkshire and Airedale Enterprise Services has supported the sharp increase in a higher calibre of interventions and one-to-one support which was greatly needed as grassroots organisations require intense additional support. The interventions have resulted in supporting 12 organisations with Social Investment Readiness Grants through GiveBradford, now totalling over £160,000 and our first social investment £205,000 and a grant of £20,000 of a social enterprise dental practice with our zero-rated product through Key Fund which has attracted great publicity through local, national and international media.

We must recognise the contributions made by previous and current Community Partners on the LABD Partnership Board in supporting the development of the programme."

Kamran Rashid
Chair of the LABD Board

Executive Summary

The Local Access Bradford District (LABD) programme stands as a transformative initiative for Bradford District aiming to bring societal changes with social investments and blended financing opportunities. Originating from a £6.6 million funding opportunity awarded to Bradford in 2019 as part of the national £33 million programme by Access (The Foundation for Social Investment) and Better Society Capital, the programme aims to enhance the operational capacity of small enterprises with tailored training programmes, market links and financial support to thrive in competitive markets across Bradford district.

The annual report presents a highlight of the operational, strategic and outreach activities during the period from January to November 2025. To date, the programme has made an impact of **supporting 18** local organisations with readiness grant (**a total of £161,126.00, of which 32% were made in 2025**) and one with social investment of **£205,000.00, which is first of its kind in the district.**

A sharp increase in new engagement of the grassroots level organisations was secured with multiple programme level advocacies across the local and national platforms and social media promotion. Case studies were developed and shared with partners through fixed-interval reports for knowledge sharing purposes.

As 2026 marks the fourth year of Local Access Bradford District, it is expected that LABD is well placed in 2026 to deepen this impact by scaling one-to-one support, converting more pipeline organisations into investment-ready enterprises.

Local Access Programme in Bradford

Bradford ranks 277th out of 324 local authorities on national social mobility indices, underscoring the pressing need for more inclusive and equitable economic growth initiatives across the district. The local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector is substantial, with over 5,000 registered organisations, around 90% of which are classified as small or micro-scale and typically operate within specific wards or serve marginalised and underserved communities (Bradford Council, 2024).

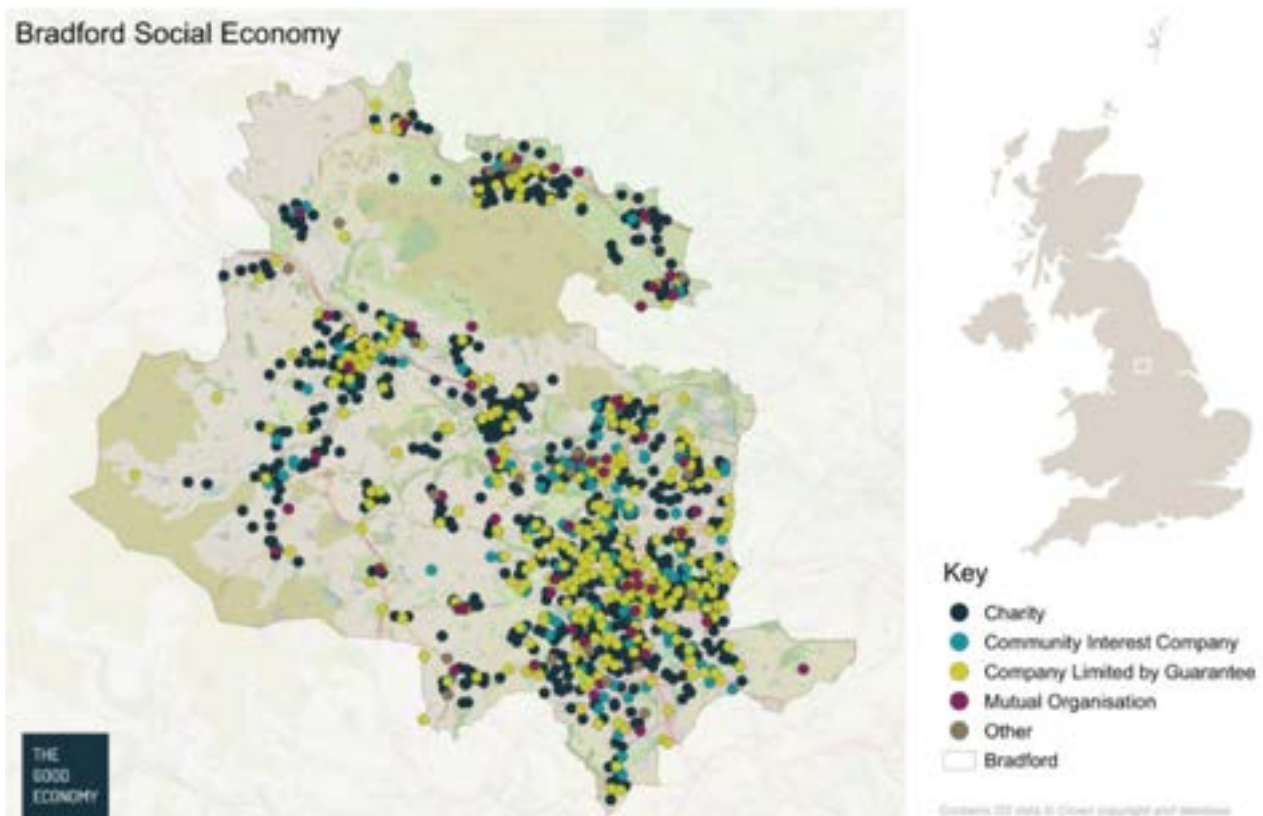


Figure 1: Social Economy of Bradford (Source: The Good Economy 2024)

Figure 1 illustrates the geographical distribution of VCSE organisations across Bradford. Each point represents an individual social economy organisation, with colour coding indicating legal form. The map shows a particularly dense concentration of organisations in and around city centre, with some significant clusters in urban areas across the district. Outlying rural and semi-rural areas also host a spread of organisations, though at a lower density, highlighting both the breadth and focal points of VCSE activity across Bradford's social economy.

Majority of these organisations rely heavily on grants and fundraising income, with limited access to sustainable trading models or social investment that could generate surplus for reinvestment. This dependency is compounded by a range of structural barriers, including

restricted access to larger funding opportunities, limited digital capacity and infrastructure and gaps in specialist support such as investment readiness, financial planning and robust impact measurement. These challenges are likely to be exacerbated by recent Bradford Council budget proposals, which indicate a potential reduction of up to 83% in voluntary sector funding, equivalent to over £1 million, over the next three years. Such reductions would have a significant impact on infrastructure support functions, shared resources and collective advocacy, placing additional strain on an already fragile ecosystem and potentially threatening the sustainability of the third sector across the district.

Bradford has a relatively dense ecosystem of support organisations providing services to VCSEs in a range of capacities. These can be broadly grouped into four core service categories: *financial support, strategic support, partnership and pro-bono support and research and policy influence.*

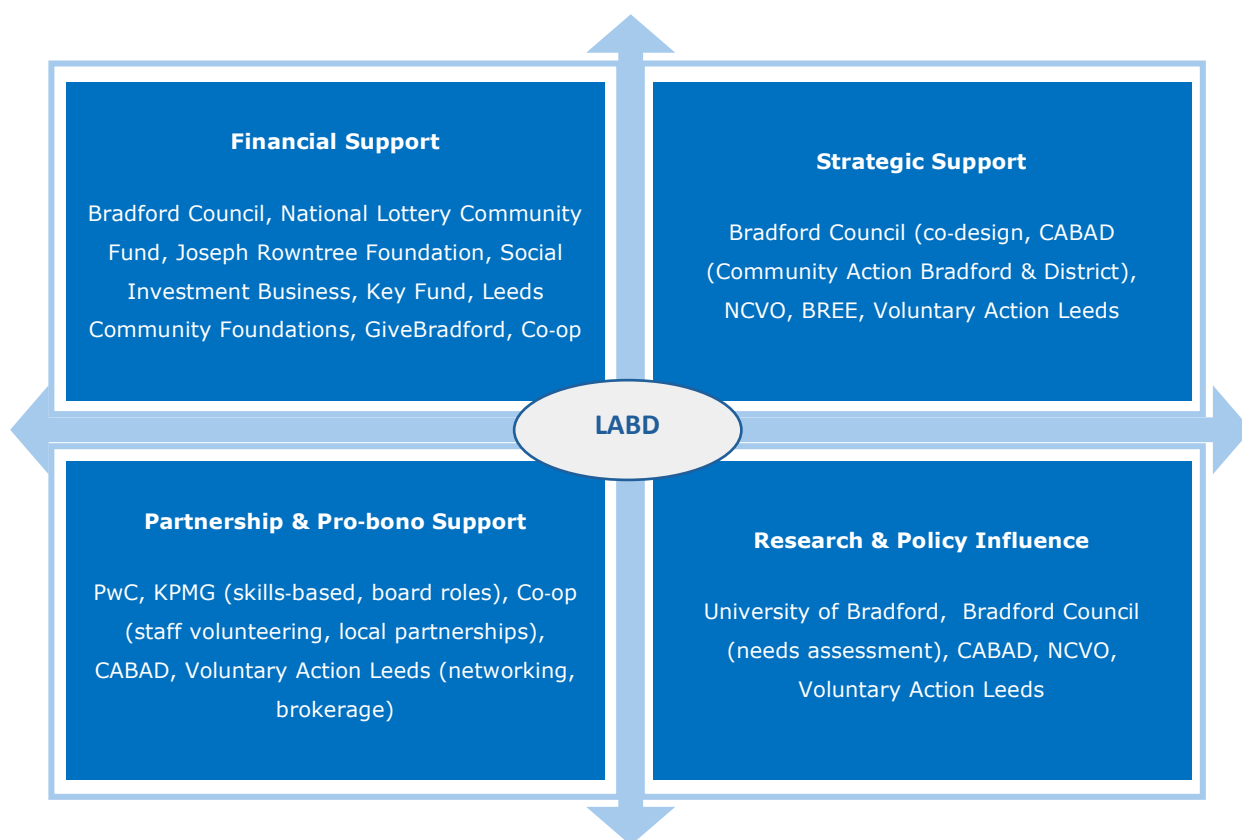


Figure 2: Matrix of support organisations for VCSEs in Bradford

Financial support organisations primarily focus on grants, contracts and access to social investment. Strategic support encompasses business planning, organisational development, coaching and leadership support. Partnership and pro-bono support reflects collaborative activity, brokerage and access to in-kind professional expertise. Research and policy

influence support includes evaluation, evidence generation and advocacy activity that informs and shapes local decision-making. Together, these forms of support constitute the wider enabling infrastructure for the local social economy.

The Local Access Bradford District Programme (LABD) commenced in May 2022. In its initial phase, the programme concentrated on workshops, mentoring and grant funding aimed at improving organisations' "investment readiness". 2024 onwards, the programme has increasingly shifted towards more tailored, one-to-one support, enabling organisations to progress through a structured pathway, from clarifying an initial idea, through strengthening governance and business models, to applying for an appropriate form of social investment.

As shown in Figure 2, **LABD occupies a distinctive position at the intersection of all four support categories.** It provides readiness grants and blended finance, while also delivering intensive business coaching and investment-readiness support, situating it firmly within the strategic support space. In

"LABD's support helped us build our foundation. Advice from our Business Advisor and Wendy's guidance meant we could step out from crisis mode to create a sustainable model." Missing Peace Wellbeing + Support

In addition, LABD facilitates connections between social enterprises, social investors and other ecosystem actors. This brokering role links the programme to partnership and pro-bono support functions, even where this is not its primary focus.

This positioning suggests that LABD plays a bridging role within the local support ecosystem, addressing multiple constraints simultaneously. However, it also raises questions about the extent to which such integrative support can be sustained at scale, particularly in a context of wider funding pressures across the VCSE infrastructure.

LABD Governance Structure

The Local Access Bradford District Programme (LABD) operates through a multi-stakeholder partnership. Inspired Neighbourhood acts as the accountable body and programme manager, with responsibility for coordinating delivery across partner organisations and ensuring alignment with the programme’s strategic objectives. The governance structure of LABD is outlined below:

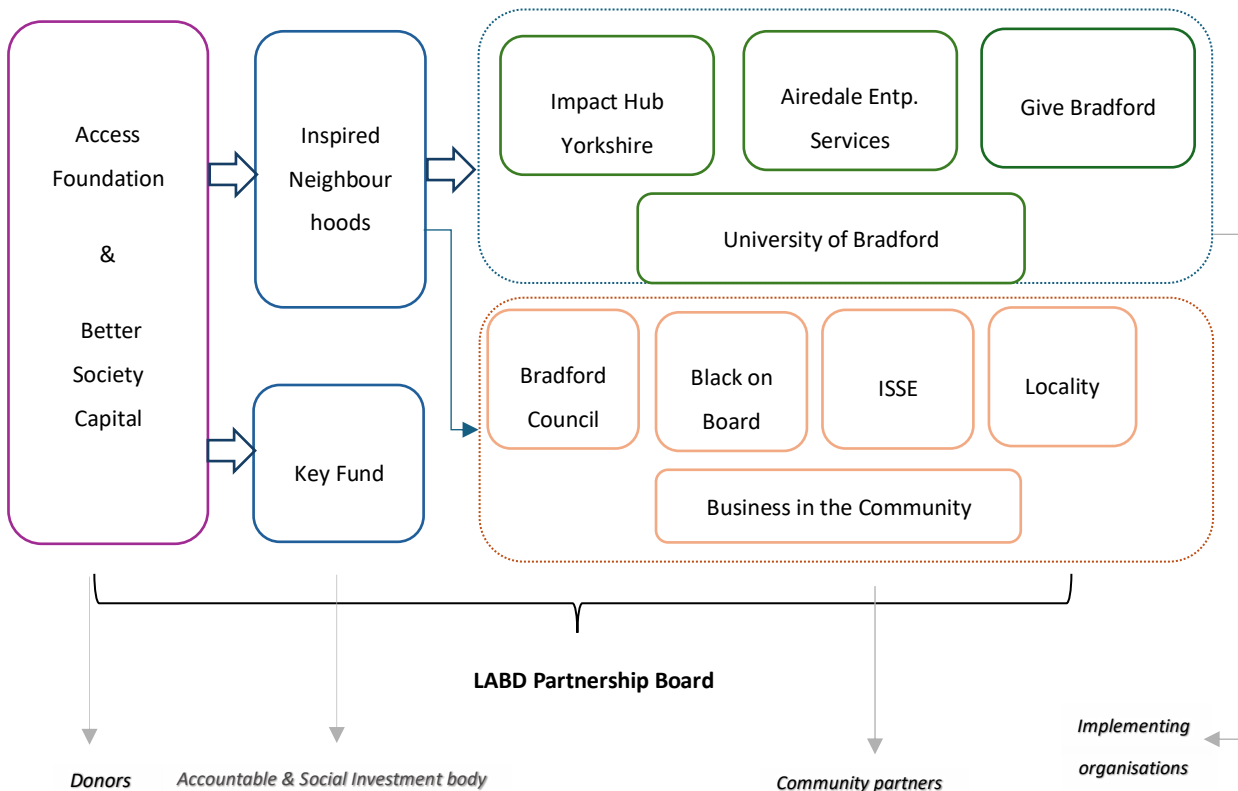


Figure 3: LABD Programme Governance Structure

Figure 3 shows LABD as a partnership-governed programme with funders at the left, accountable body and implementing partners on the right and a Board at the bottom holding overall accountability. As the prime partner, INCIC maintains a balanced approach, delivering both light-touch and longer-term interventions, supplemented by networking and information events to support broad engagement and sector-wide knowledge sharing. AES focuses on high-volume advice and mentoring sessions, demonstrating a strong emphasis on hands-on skill development and sustained client support. In contrast, IHY prioritises strategic networking, advice sessions and longer-term interventions, reflecting a commitment to ecosystem connectivity and capacity-building rather than mass outreach.



Picture: LABD Partner activities in 2025

During the reporting year, three new community partners, ISSE, Black on Board and Business in the Community joined the Board, following a competitive selection process that attracted 12 applications. Collectively, these organisations represent a broader range of communities and perspectives, enabling LABD to extend its reach and strengthen connections with a more diverse set of VCSEs.

LABD in 2025

In 2025, the programme recorded a marked increase in both intervention activity and grant disbursement. During the year, Give Bradford disbursed a substantial increase in grant spend compared to previous years (approximately 33% higher), reflecting an acceleration in delivery. These grants are intended to support organisational readiness for social investment, including strengthening governance, financial planning and business development. The rise in grant disbursement suggests a collective and coordinated effort by delivery partners to engage a greater number of grassroots organisations.



Early indicators of progression through the investment pathway are emerging. One organisation has already secured social investment, while a further five organisations have expressed interest in applying for social investment in 2026. This suggests a growing awareness of social investment as a viable option among participating VCSEs.



Organisational Readiness Grant Support

Funding supported a diverse portfolio of projects addressing a range of community needs, such as, development of a dedicated youth sports centre (ISSE); the establishment of a new community café and hub (Our Bradford CIC); the creation of a Roma cultural and social space (Connecting Roma CIC); and the launch of Bradford’s first affordable community dental clinic (Brilliant Healthy Smiles). Support also enabled the development of a Men’s Shed at Scholemoor Beacon and foundational work for Empower NextGen’s youth crime prevention and rehabilitation programme.

Table 1 shows organisations that underwent a rigorous grant application process, which included eligibility checks, submission of detailed proposals and panel assessments to ensure alignment with funding criteria and programme objectives. **The total investment recorded is £161,126.00 till 2025.**

Name	Purpose
Greensville Trust	To ascertain a business case for the development of a nursery featuring Montessori and 'Forest Garden' care in Bradford
Keighley Creative	To strengthen organisational infrastructure and capacity through targeted development support and enhanced creative engagement across the district.
Missing Wellbeing + Support Peace	To establish strategy and increase operational efficiency for turning the organisation as a centre of excellence for mental health support in Bradford district.
Peoples Portfolio Property	To develop a property management model that supports community-owned spaces, enabling affordable access for social enterprises and VCSE organisations in Bradford.
Yorkshire Works Swim	To develop wellbeing activities by developing a dedicated swim hub promoting health, inclusion and life skills for children and adults in underserved communities.
Play Bradford	To enhance inclusive play opportunities through adaptive facilities, staff training and community-led programmes supporting early development and family wellbeing.
Shape UK	To build organisational capacity and establish structured pathways for delivering employability, skills and personal development programmes for disadvantaged young people.
ISSE	To establish a dedicated youth sports centre offering a safe, increase access to physical activity, improve wellbeing and provide positive developmental pathways.
Our Bradford CIC	To transform part of its building into a welcoming community space and café that combats isolation and generates sustainable income to wider community.
Connecting Roma CIC	To redevelop a city-centre premises into a cultural and social hub for the Roma community, strengthening cohesion and providing a platform for services, events, and economic participation.

Brilliant Smiles	Healthy	To establish Bradford’s first community-focused, affordable dental care centre, addressing gaps in oral healthcare access and reducing health inequalities for low-income families and underserved residents.
Scholemoor Beacon		To develop a Men’s Shed, offering meaningful activities, peer support and practical learning opportunities to tackle loneliness, poor mental health and limited community engagement among men.
WomenZone		To redesign and improve facilities to create safer, more inclusive spaces for women and girls, enabling expanded support services, increased access and opportunities.
Empower NextGen		To strengthen organisational foundations for a new educational and rehabilitation programme aimed at reducing youth crime, supporting early intervention, re-education and successful reintegration of individuals leaving prison.
Bevan Community B Society		To develop residential properties providing safe, supportive housing for vulnerable young people, enhancing capacity to attract further investment and meet growing housing and safeguarding needs.
Airedale Services	Enterprise	To create a new social hub and expanded office space, improving access to enterprise support, business development services and community-led economic opportunities.
Better Emotions CIC		To strengthen organisational capacity to scale emotional wellbeing, resilience-building and empowerment programmes for women facing trauma, or limited support.
Allerton Comm Trust	Land	To convert a community-owned church into multi-use spaces for social activity, community support and affordable housing, supporting long-term regeneration in Allerton and Lower Grange.
Khidmat Centre		To reconfigure and partially refurbish the existing building, creating functional workspaces, multi-purpose and dedicated support areas to improve operational efficiency and generate additional income.

Table 1: List of Organisational Readiness Grant Recipients

During 2022–2025, recipients of the Readiness Grant reported that the support was particularly valuable for organisational reflection, feasibility work and early-stage planning. Organisations used the funding to review their current position, consult with stakeholders, commission feasibility studies, and develop business plans and financial models, as well as to put in place core infrastructure for future delivery. Several clients described the grant as a turning point that enabled them to move from short-term firefighting towards more strategic, future-focused planning and, in some cases, to lay foundations for traded income and new or expanded services. Looking forward to 2026, the priority is to convert these Readiness Grants into social investment that can create more resilient VCSE organisations and contribute directly to the local economy of Bradford.

First Shariah-Compliance Loan in Bradford

In 2025, LABD achieved a milestone by distributing its first social investment to **Brilliant Healthy Smiles (BHS)**, a pioneering community-driven dental clinic in Bradford. The initiative combines a strong social mission with commercial sustainability, aiming to provide affordable dental care at near-NHS pricing, directly addressing Bradford's substantial dental access gap, where up to half of the population may be underserved.

BHS was supported through a combination of grant and a zero-interest Sharia-compliant loan from Key Fund, along with his personal investment. This has enabled the build-out of purpose-built facilities and operational preparation for the clinic's launch. The clinic plans to integrate AI-driven systems and innovative service models to enhance operational efficiency and improve patient experience. Once operational in 2025, the clinic intends to employ approximately 30 staff, with potential for future growth. The pilot model will include four surgeries, with an ambitious goal of expanding to 400 surgeries per year. BHS envisions becoming a trusted, scalable hub for affordable dental care in Bradford, inspiring local young entrepreneurs and complementing NHS dental services.

"Born in Bradford and driven by a commitment to community wellbeing, I always try to create solution driven initiatives. Thanks to the invaluable support from LABD, we were able to unlock the social investment. Our aim is to break inequalities in dental access." Dr. Fraz Ali, CEO of Brilliant Healthy Smile.



II. Yorkshire Swim Works

Yorkshire Swim Works, a Community Interest Company (CIC) is repurposing Kettlewell Reservoir in St. Ives Regional Park, Bingley, to create a naturally filtered 50-meter outdoor swimming pool, sauna pods, eco-lodges and a café. Supported by LABD grant for preparatory work, the project aims to deliver both health and wellbeing benefits by encouraging physical activity and community engagement, while generating local employment and tourism opportunities. Completion is expected by 2029, coinciding with the park's 100th anniversary, marking a long-term contribution to the local leisure economy.



III. Missing Peace Wellbeing+ Support

accessed LABD support in 2022 for organisational restructuring and strategic business planning, enabling the hiring of a business advisor. With guidance from LABD, the organisation developed costing models, succession planning and strategies to grow traded income from training and support services. Ten volunteers currently deliver peer support and the WRAP programme, providing essential mental health support in response to high demand and statutory service waitlists. By aiming to become a "centre of excellence" by 2026, the organisation is building capacity to scale its specialist model, thereby increasing both social impacts, through improved mental health outcomes and economic resilience by expanding sustainable income streams.



IV. Greensville Trust

LABD provided £20,000 to Greensville Trust to fund a feasibility study and business case for a nursery using Montessori and “Forest Garden” approaches. The initiative is designed to address local childcare gaps, support parents returning to work and create employment opportunities within the community. Building on this groundwork, Greensville Trust plans to develop a larger educational and community centre, leveraging a £250,000 zero-interest loan and £750,000 of its own funds. The project is expected to generate both social value, by enhancing early years education and community cohesion and economic impact through enabling workforce participation.



V. ISSE

ISSE secured an organisational readiness grant. This funding allowed the team to develop a detailed business plan and financial forecast, setting out practical steps toward long-term sustainability. ISSE is exploring options with the Bradford Council to identify underused buildings that could become part of a new community sports hub. The next big milestone is securing social investment, targeted for 2026. ISSE is planning a blended funding model of a £30,000 grant and a £70,000 repayable loan, allowing sustainable growth without overstressing resources.



VI. Bevan Community

Bevan is developing a small, trauma-informed children's residential home in Bradford and was introduced to the LABD as part of its wider work with vulnerable children and young people. Bevan secured a readiness grant to initiate the project, using the funding to turn an outline business case into a fully developed business plan with five-year financial projections that will



underpin a future application for social investment.

VII. Play Bradford

Play Bradford is a community-based organisation focused on supporting children, young people and families through inclusive play opportunities and developmental activities. With support from the LABD grant, the organisation undertook a comprehensive review and strategic planning process to reflect on its journey to date, strengthen governance and co-create a future business strategy with staff,



trustees and service users. The consultation process ensures Play Bradford remains a user-centred project that responds effectively to community needs.

Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Exchange

Another key emphasis of LABD this year has been collaborative learning and exchange. Some of the mentionable actions by the partners are followings:

- Inspired Neighbourhoods strengthened sector engagement through active participation in the CABAD Leaders Network, VCSE Alliance and other regional forums, connecting with over 60 organisations and facilitating learning among Local Access partners.
- Impact Hub Yorkshire continued to prioritise knowledge sharing by hosting community-focused events, supporting the launch of Diverse Women's Network CIC and promoting LABD initiatives through regional and online platforms such as Pioneers Post and LinkedIn.
- An online info session was organised to target the listed 450 VCSE organisations in Bradford based on their size, location and sectoral priorities. This allowed LABD to move beyond broad outreach into tailored support, diagnose capacity gaps around governance, finance and impact.
- Airedale Enterprise Services co-hosted fortnightly Breakfast Bites networking sessions in Keighley, bringing together small businesses and social enterprises across the Airedale Corridor. Its Airedale Business Showcase in July attracted over 200 attendees and 40 exhibitors, consolidating its forty years of VCSE support system.
- The University of Bradford enhanced LABD's profile by presenting its policy approaches at the Y-PERN Conference, which drew over 250 academics, policymakers and practitioners. The event positioned LABD as a forward-looking contributor to social and economic policy dialogue in Yorkshire.



Looking Ahead

As this report shows, the programme has made significant progress in strengthening the capacity of the VCSEs in Bradford along with testing new approaches to zero interest loan. However, many local organisations continue to prioritise direct service delivery and respond to urgent community needs, driven by high levels of deprivation and funding uncertainty, this reinforces reliance on short-term grants that do not fully prepare VCSEs for blended or repayable finance.

Moving forward, LABD will focus on deepening support for enterprises already in the pipeline, sharing learning more widely across the district, and refining the programme based on what has worked. By continuing to work collaboratively with VCSE organisations, social enterprises and its partners, LABD aims to build on this foundation and contribute to a fairer, more resilient local economy for Bradford.