

SMALLWOODTRUST

Enabling women to be financially resilient



EDI Update - Spring 2024

**Developing workable models
to tackle gendered poverty**

May 2024

Developing workable models to tackle gendered poverty

For this update we focus on the development of our lived experience models which are empowering grant partners to address local systems of injustice and enabling them to collaborate on initiatives that drive change and reduce gendered poverty.

This approach has resulted in the emergence of three models as follows:

Model 1

Tackling Gendered Poverty through Devolved Grant Making: Community Grant Partners

Model 2

Tackling Gendered Poverty at a Local Level: Place-based Systems Change

Model 3

Tackling Gendered Poverty through Co-design and Participatory Grant Methods: Collaborative Grant Making



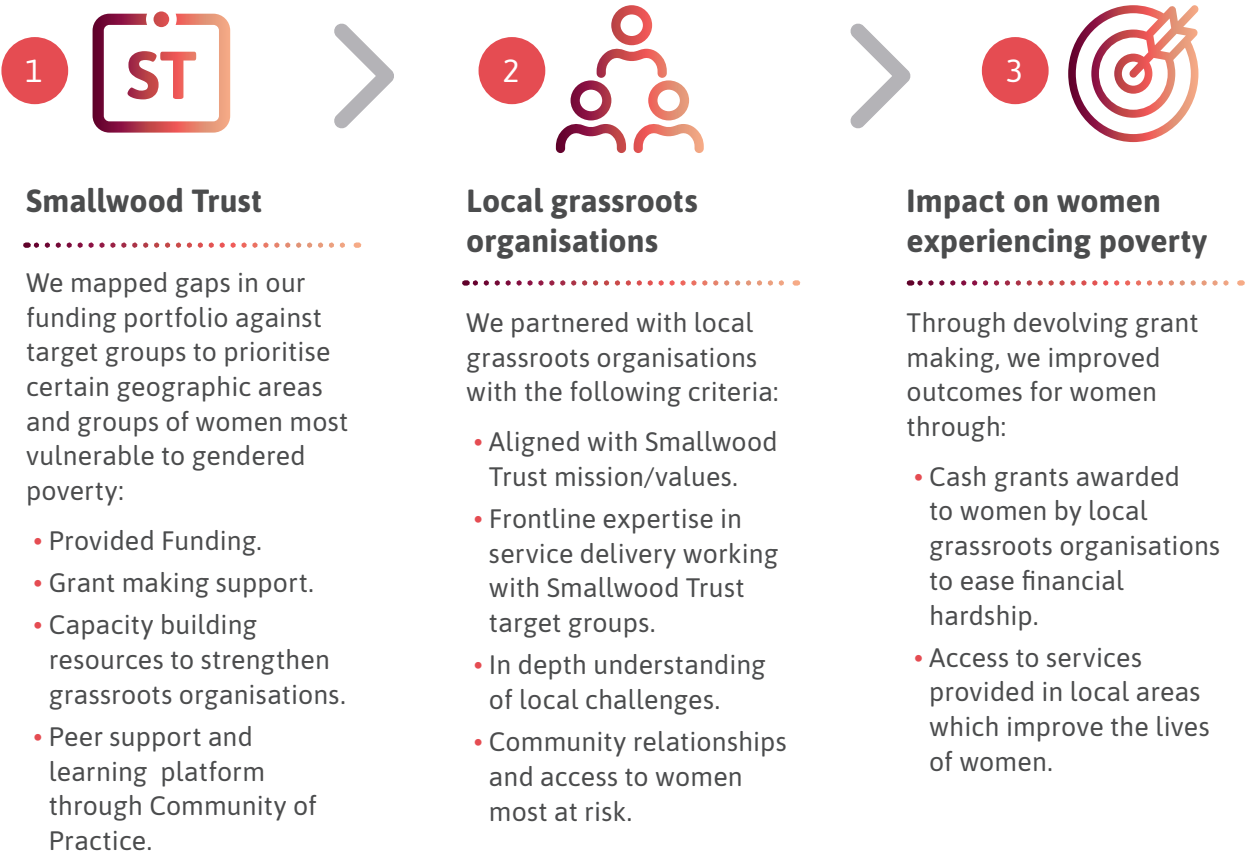
Model 1: Tackling gendered poverty through devolved grant making: Community Grant Partners

The Community Grant Partner programme is a strategic initiative that helps us to shift power on grant decision-making to local community organisations, the majority of which are led by and for women. Smallwood provides the funds, support, and an operational toolkit to help local community-led groups to provide immediate financial support through individual grants. Local partners have autonomy on how they can spend the funds to benefit women.

The programme has been running since July 2020 and we currently have 29 partners across England.

This is how we developed this model:

Smallwood Trust funding for onward grants + Local grassroots organisation expertise and support = Improved outcomes for women



Outcomes

This is an ongoing programme and this is the impact to date:

1. We are strengthening the women's sector through multi-year funding to partners, which provides stability. This reliable funding helps smaller organisations focus their limited capacity on service delivery instead of making multiple funding applications year to year.
2. We are shifting power by devolving our grant-making power to our partners who now give individual grants to women most at risk.
3. We are reducing gendered poverty for women most at risk, who can now receive individual cash grants to improve their response to crisis and hardship, thereby increasing their financial resilience.
4. We are strengthening the services women access which are provided by our grantees, in the following areas: employment, financial services, housing, mental health and wellbeing. Access to these services enables women to overcome personal and financial barriers, helping them to make changes in their lives which move them closer to financial resilience.
5. We are building long-term relationships based on trust with our grant partners, most of whom are frontline organisations.
6. From consolidating impact data and insights from the frontline provided by our partners, we have fed into policy and practice development.
7. We have been sharing our learning and influenced other funders to tackle gendered poverty using this model.



Model 2: Tackling the root causes of gendered poverty at a local level: Place-based Systems Change

One of our headline priorities in our current strategy is to develop workable place-based models that tackle the root causes of gendered poverty. These models should have the potential to scale or be adopted elsewhere. We took a ‘test and learn’ approach to this funding, being flexible in discovering what works and what doesn’t work and adapting our approach as needed.

We funded our first place-based initiative almost six years ago, and due to the success of this model, we funded two more. We are now funding three place-based networks tackling the root causes of gendered poverty most prevalent in their places/localities , i.e. Coventry, Birmingham, and Wythenshawe.

Our place-based partners are:



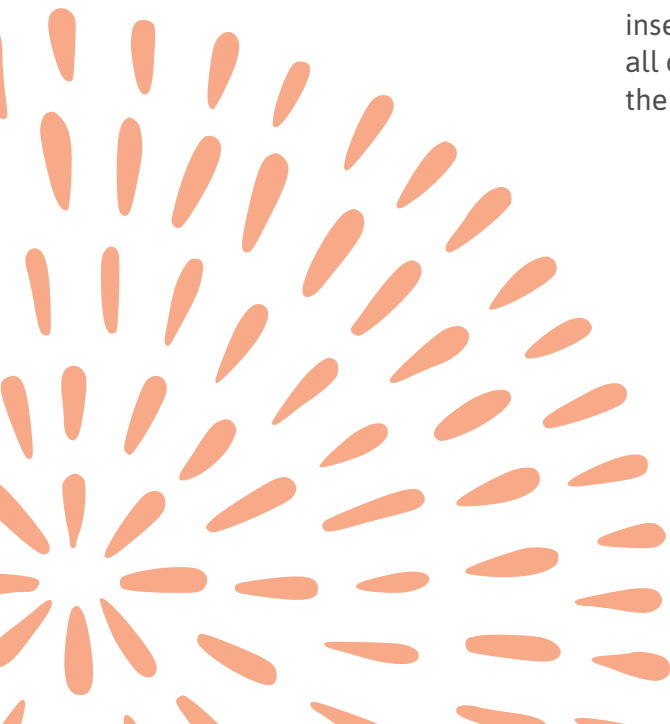
Coventry Women's Partnership, formed in response to poor economic outcomes for women in Coventry, and the need to join up women's sector organisations and enable seamless referrals.

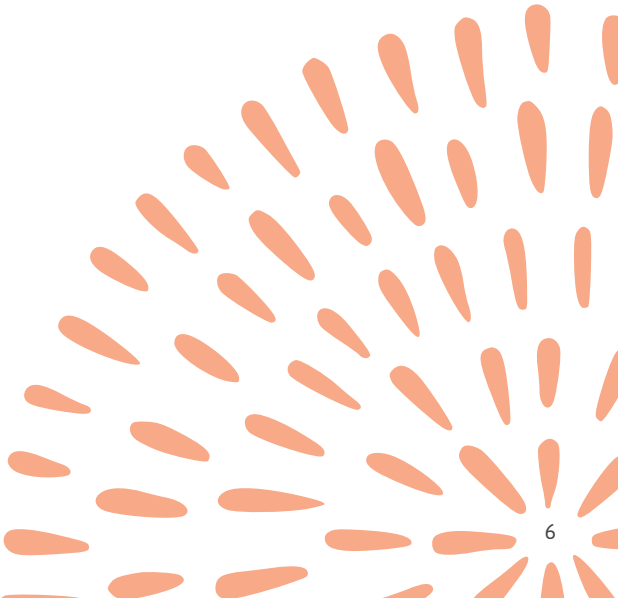
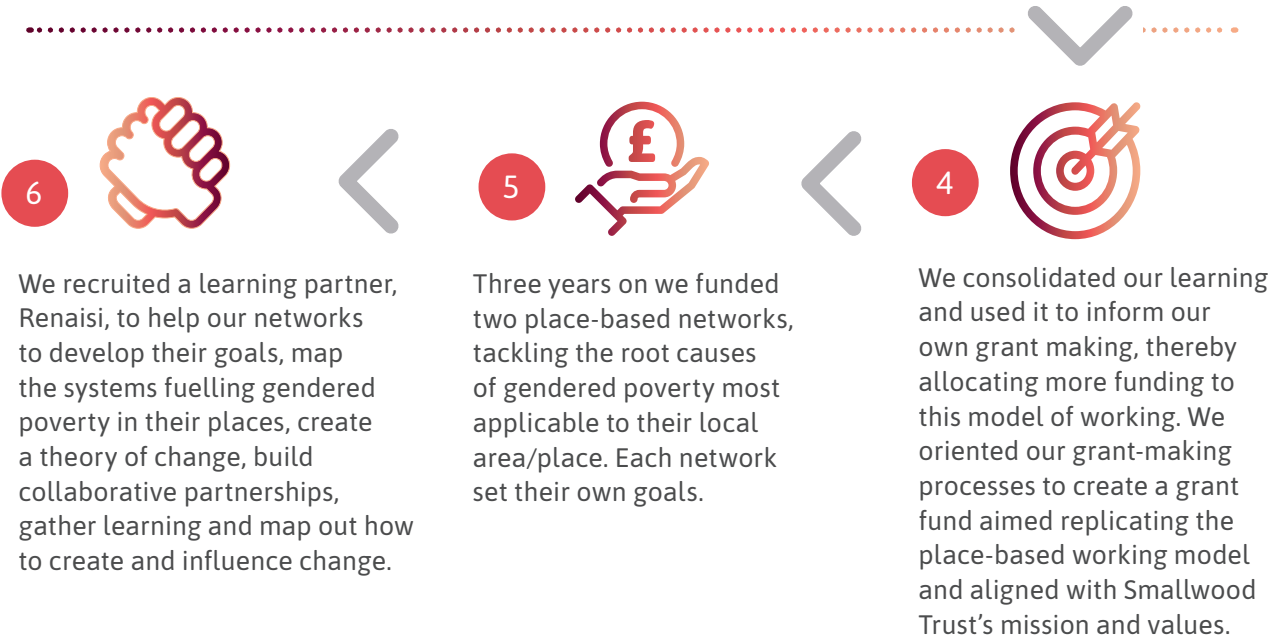
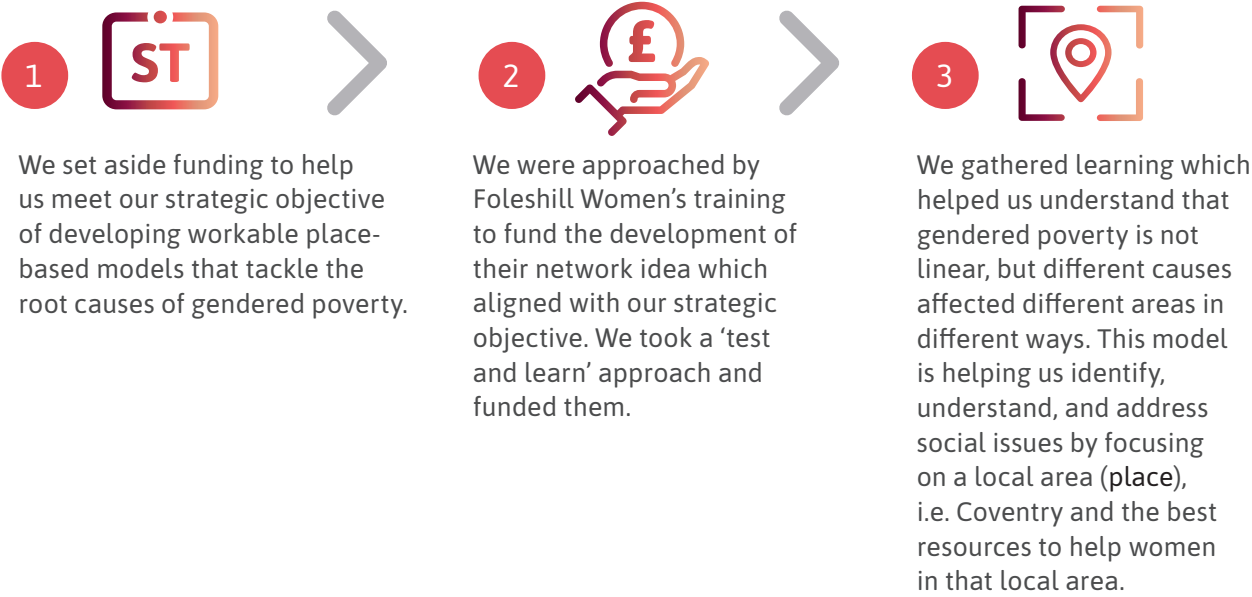


Birmingham No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Women's Support Network, working with women who are victims of abuse (domestic violence, coercive control, forced marriages etc.) and who have no recourse to public funds, or insecure immigration status, all of which impacts on their financial resilience.



Women of Wythenshawe (WoW), whose network seeks to bring low-income women into dialogue with each other and identify critical challenges that are holding them in poverty. They will co-produce solutions with professionals with access to the power and relationships that low-income women need to achieve lasting change.





Outcomes

This is an ongoing programme, and this is the impact to date:

- We are deepening our understanding of the root causes of gendered poverty in different places. Feeding our insights to policy making initiatives to help policy makers understand that gendered poverty is not linear, therefore resourcing and services need to mirror the variances which exist.
- We are strengthening regional response to gendered poverty through funding these movements which bring together different organisations working in the same place to collaboratively tackle the most prevalent challenges affecting their places.
- We are improving the quality of services women receive in places, as smaller organisations are coming together to form referral systems which improve service delivery and reach.
- We are strengthening grassroots organisations through accessing peer support and capacity building as members part of the place-based networks we are funding.
- We are gathering evidence-based learning which influences our internal grant making and other funders to adopt this working model.

Local Area Coordinators

Due to the success of our 3 place-based initiatives in helping us identify root cause of gendered poverty at the local level, we were inspired to further replicate this model of working and implement it towards the aims of Gendered Poverty Learning Programme.

We established partnerships with four local area coordinators to lead the creation of place-based networks in their local areas i.e. Zinithiya Trust, Surviving Economic Abuse, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium and Agenda Alliance.

We will work alongside our local area coordinators to tackle gendered poverty at local level in the following places: Leicestershire, Brighton and Hove, London, and the Northeast. We will work with our partners to towards these two goals:

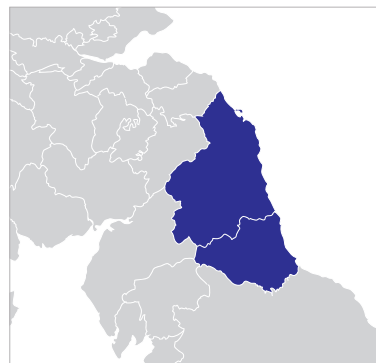
1. Coordinate local learning and capacity building in their places.
2. Work together to influence systemic change.

Case study

Meet one of the Local Area Coordinators: Agenda Alliance

AGENDA alliance

As a region, the North East has the highest poverty rates in the UK, relies more on public services than other areas, and has been disproportionately impacted by austerity spending cuts. Women with multiple unmet needs in the North East are not only disadvantaged by their gender, complex needs, and socio-economic status, but by their postcode and the impact of the country's geographical and regional imbalances.



This network was formed from the foundation of the Transforming Services for Women's Futures (TSWF) project, carried out by Agenda Alliance, and Changing lives and funded by the Smallwood Trust. Through the TSWF project, practitioners and women with lived experience worked to reimagine/reconceptualise what support for women with multiple unmet needs in the North East should look like, and what practical steps are needed to enact the changes needed. The key barrier – one recognised by the TSWF – is that whilst conversations about issues reoccur repeatedly, and there can often be wider consensus on what change is needed, this is not often translated into action.

As a local area coordinator, Agenda Alliance is leading the formation of a network which brings together local practitioners and women with lived experience based in the North East to focus on translating recommendations to real change for the most marginalised women in the region, covering 5 key areas:

- Prioritising prevention and early intervention
- Gender, trauma, and culturally informed support
- Services working together.
- Co-production and addressing power dynamics.
- Funding and commissioning structures



Historically, the key barriers preventing genuine and lasting change from happening include a lack of political will and the inability of local services to determine their own focus/approach. This network will work together in changing those outcomes with the following goals in mind:

- 1. To create the conditions for systems-change so that policy better meets the needs of the most marginalised women living in poverty in the North East.**
- 2. To enact the local policy recommendations that were developed as part of Transforming Services for Women's Futures (TSWF).**
- 3. To generate and disseminate learnings on the ways in which systems-change can be achieved to support the most marginalised women in society.**

It has been 6 months since funding this network, and this is how they are working towards their goals:

- Launched the network at a regional event in Newcastle, hosted by PCC Kim McGuinness.
- Built a network of 56 professionals and five women with lived experience, bringing together the relevant expertise to engender systems-change in the North East. To achieve this, the network has actively sought to break down barriers facing grassroots, specialist organisations and offer compensation for every meeting attended.
- Hosted the first official network meeting, bringing together the group for a targeted discussion about the recommendations for change to build consensus about key priorities among the group.
- Developed a list of pledges for both the PCC and mayoral candidates for the forthcoming May elections, drawing on feedback from the network.
- Attended a debate with the North East mayoral candidates, bringing our group of women with lived experience to ask what each candidate would do to reduce the number of women dying prematurely in the North East.



Model 3: Tackling gendered poverty through co-design and participatory grant methods: Collaborative Grant-making

Our success in replicating the place-based models and tackling gendered poverty at a local level inspired us to replicate this approach and convince other funders to join us in tackling gendered poverty at local level. We established two collaborative grant making programmes utilising the place-based approach, i.e.



Middlesbrough Programme: Funded by Smallwood Trust in collaboration with other funders: Buttle UK and Turn 2 Us, investing in tackling gendered poverty in Middlesbrough.

Local Resilience Fund: Funded by Smallwood Trust in collaboration with City Bridge Trust, investing in tackling Gendered Poverty in Hackney and Newham.

These two programmes are both local, collaboratively designed onward grants programmes. They have been designed from the community up. We (the funders) have partnered with local grassroots organisations and local women accessing services to collaboratively design a fund that will provide relief to the women of these communities, thereby tackling gendered poverty. Instead of accessing services, local women in these places will receive individual grants.

These two programmes are a hybrid of the insights and learnings from our Community Grant Partner model in devolving grant making power to the networks to give individual grants, and our second model of adopting a place-based approach, where these two programmes establish networks to enable them to work with local players to identify the challenges of the chosen local places, and design a grant fund suited to reach the women of those places.



This is how we developed these models:

- 1

Gathered evidence-based learning on the success of our place-based model of tackling gendered poverty at local level. We worked to adapt this model to the grant-making sector.
- 2

During Covid we began working with a group of funders to individuals to design a collaboration and bring in additional funding for women in crisis. This developed into the partnership between Smallwood, Buttle UK and Turn2Us.
- 3

We co-developed a grant fund aligned with the various missions of the funders collaborating.
- 4

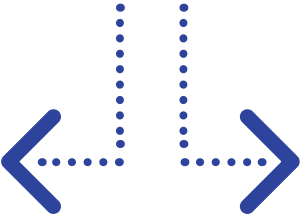
We defined the scope/ geographic areas we wanted to focus on. Setting up a steering group with representatives from the different funders was extremely beneficial in developing the structure of the programme in Middlesbrough.
- 5

Recruited a dedicated Programme Manager to work in the interest of all partner funders and coordinate this programme.
- 6

Programme Manager worked in local areas to build relationships and recruit partners to form a network of smaller grassroots organisations and individual women with lived experience. The network identified their own goals, issue areas or funding aims.
- 7

Programme manager worked in collaboration with specialist co-production/ co-design consultants to help in practically adopting these working approaches and create the grant fund.

In Middlesbrough, a grant fund has been successfully created and disbursed. Monitoring and evaluation now in progress to identify effectiveness of this approach.



In Hackney and Newham, grant fund is being developed.

Programmes are still developing and ongoing.



Outcomes

This is an ongoing programme, and this is the impact to date:

- Strengthening collaboration in the grant making sector through working together.
- Sharing of learning and best practice in grant making among funders, through learning from each other's grant making policies and processes.
- Creating more robust grants with wider reach through pooling resources for increased impact.
- Influencing the sector to adopt a gender focused lens and shift power in grant making.
- Widening each funder's reach in working with new local partners and organisations who bring fresh perspectives.
- Deepening our understanding of gendered poverty in different places i.e. Middlesbrough, Hackney and Newham.
- Opportunity to observe and analyse similarities, trends, and differences in the prevalent causes of gendered poverty in the different places as well as the strategies that are working and/or not working.
- De-mystifying the grant making sector through partnerships with local organisations, enabling cross learning between funders and local organisations. This enables local organisations to learn how grants are made and what the considerations are to strengthen their grant applications as well as funders to gain insights on how to make grants that help local organisations from application to completion.
- Ability to successfully replicate the model, further strengthening our resolve in tackling gendered poverty at local level through place-based approaches.



Co-designed fund with local partners



**WOMEN'S URGENT
SUPPORT FUND**



In May 2024 we also launched Round 2 of the Women's Urgent Support Fund.

The Fund was co-designed with 9 grant partners from Round 1 who support the priority groups for the Fund and have multiple lived experiences. Taking on board feedback from these sessions, Smallwood aims to increasingly account for the needs of disabled and/or neurodivergent applicants, remain open and flexible in recognition of women's increasingly complex needs and the current funding landscape, and welcome small, grassroots organisations.

Round 2 will award funding for organisations delivering frontline services that are led by, for and/or serving women with an income of £1,000,000 or less. Grants will enable organisations to respond to the spike in demand of priority basic needs from women.

At least 50% of the funding will be awarded to organisations that support women experiencing racial inequality and/or disabled women.

For further information on Smallwood's approach to equity, diversity and inclusion and our programmes please contact **Paul Carbury**, paulcarbury@smallwoodtrust.org.uk or **Emma Crump**, emmacrump@smallwoodtrust.org.uk.





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