



Bedfordshire & Luton
Community Foundation

Local Focus. Lasting Change.

Our Strategic Plan 2022-2027





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About Us

The Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation has impacted thousands of lives over its 20 year history, and we couldn't have done it without the many individuals and funders who support our causes, initiatives, and campaigns.

Our work is vital for transforming communities across Bedfordshire and Luton, whether it is addressing food, fuel, or digital poverty, or combatting mental ill-health, inequality or isolation.

Local Focus. Lasting Change.

The Foundation's vision is to ensure **Local Focus. Lasting Change** across the county whilst playing our part in a global context by aligning our work to UN Sustainable Development Goals. We deliver our work in the strategic context of our partners, funders, and stakeholders. Through a clearly mapped delivery plan, we ensure we align, deliver, and have impact, adding to the landscape of support and not duplicating, and measuring that work through clear agreed deliverables and targets.

Our Vision

We want a Bedfordshire which is thriving, collaborative, and inclusive – where there is opportunity for all, and for the lives of the most disadvantaged to be transformed through innovative, community-based solutions.

Our Mission

Our mission is to make a lasting difference in Bedfordshire by being a catalyst for positive social change in the county through connecting people, ideas, and resources to needs.

Our Values

Our eight Values sit at the heart of our work and our people, and we strive to deliver our Vision and Mission through these.





Our Operating Landscape

Our communities exist in a complex landscape that is geographically bound to the South by London Luton Airport and expansion plans, to the West by the M1 and the Chiltern AONB, and to the east by Hertfordshire.

Expansion of infrastructure and housing initiatives (e.g. The Oxford-Cambridge Arc) continue with little consideration as yet to the impact and needs of the new communities, and our proximity to London fuels the drain of talent to the capital whilst putting pressure on already overstretched statutory provision. The political landscape is complex with three Unitary Authorities operating under 3 differing political structures.

With a total population of over 560,000, and with one of the fastest areas of population growth and fluidity, it is also diverse (Bedford), and in some cases super diverse (Luton), highly mobile (Luton), yet in some areas highly static (Central), younger than national average (Luton), and older and aging (Central). County wide diversity and demography is changing rapidly, this creates significant opportunities and challenges around provision, reach, and need.

1. READY TO CHALLENGE:

Enabling us to excel, our partners to have impact, our communities to work together and for all to help shift the balance of power through the value of our data, insight, and knowledge.

Our Priority Areas of Need

The communities of Bedfordshire face challenges to their daily lives due to the impact of post Covid-19 economic recovery and Long Covid's impact on health, education, employment, and economic growth.

A skills shortage exists, and although some areas see high employment, the quality of that employment is below average, forcing many to take multiple roles to cover basic needs.

2. DELIVER LASTING CHANGE:

We use influence to make change happen that is long lasting and impactful for our community partners and individuals.

Our new priority needs will address overarching themes and in turn interconnected themes:

- 1. To eradicate poverty in our county**
- 2. To create a healthy Bedfordshire**
- 3. To grow stronger communities**

How We Deliver the Plan

Our Strategic Priority Outcomes are:

Outcome 1 is to – Widen our Reach - to grow to be the 'go to' grant maker working with and for our partners to ensure we deliver the greatest impact across the county through our grant programmes. To build relationships of trust, openness, and transparency.

Outcome 2 is to – Listen, Learn, Adapt, and Change - to address the needs of the communities we support, and respond through our initiatives and programmes, stamping out inequality.

Outcome 3 is to – Offer Excellence - through our methods, models, systems, and team, to provide exemplary service that is transparent and valued.

Outcome 4 is to – Sustain, Grow, and Thrive - to ensure a strong sustainable future for the Foundation, and therefore the VSCE sector, through our long-term ethical developments, investments, growth, and strategic partnerships.

3. EMBRACE RISK TAKING:

We have an appetite to take calculated risks to ensure our own, and the charity sector's, sustainability and to help us grow, and explore new opportunities.



Widen Our Reach

The Foundation is a community leader, connecting, convening, and impacting the sustainable future of the county's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE), working with its partners from individuals, businesses, philanthropists, Trusts, Foundations, and Local Authorities.

Our priority is to grow to be the 'go to' grant maker working with and for our partners to ensure we deliver the greatest impact across the county through our grant programmes. To build relationships of trust, openness, and transparency through strong communications and network reach.

4. ALWAYS ACCOUNTABLE:

We are trusted by our partners, our funders and the people of Bedfordshire. We understand the needs of the communities and build that knowledge through relationships, fairness, equality, and transparency.

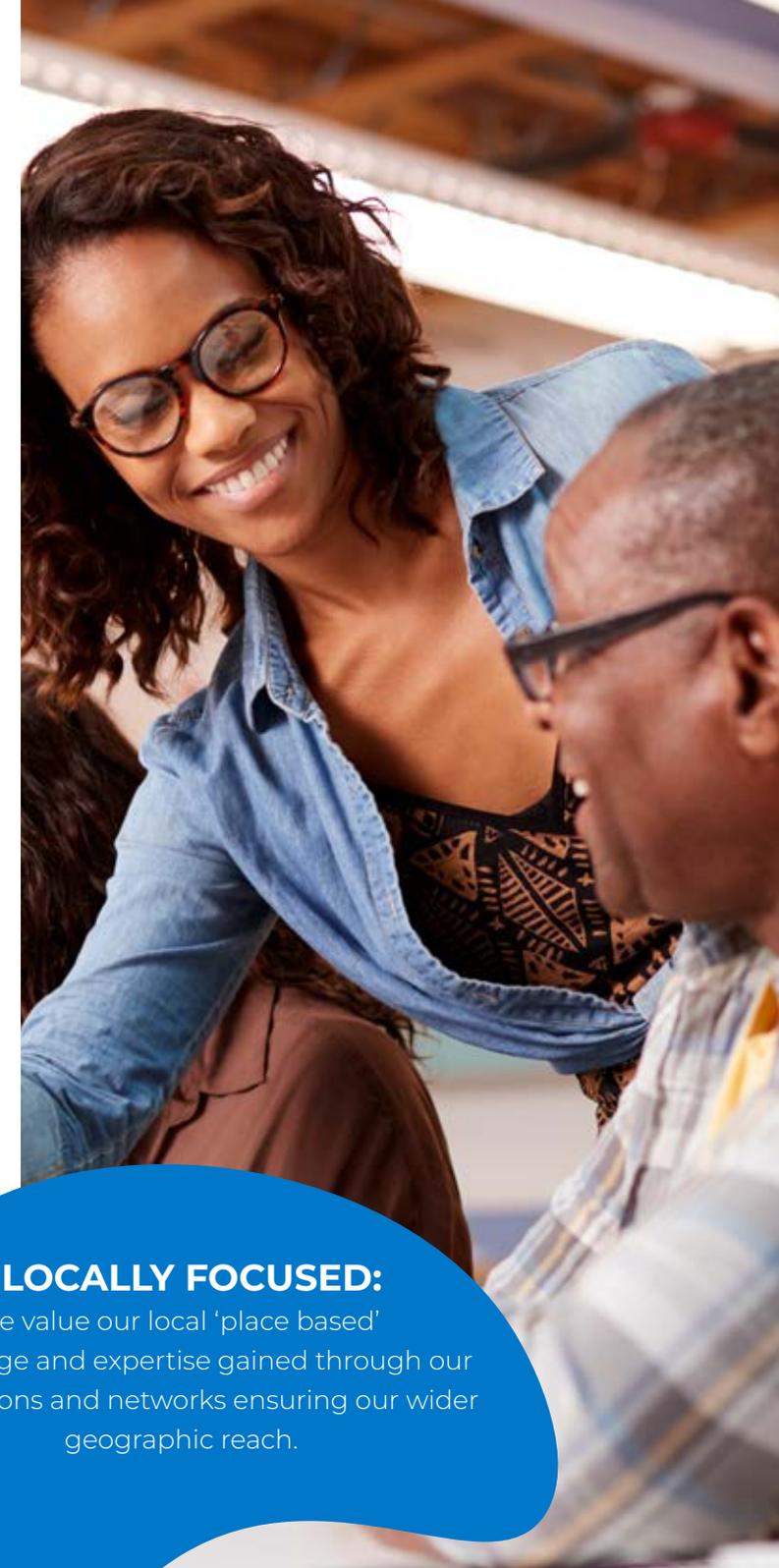
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Listen, Learn, Adapt, Change

We value and champion the voices of the communities we serve in our decision making and governance, and are committed to giving open, fair, and independent advice to all those we work and collaborate with, whilst listening and responding to their needs.

We recognise the power imbalance in our sector and set targets to address this across all aspects of our work.

Our priority is to address the needs of the communities we support, and respond through our initiatives and programmes, stamping out inequality.



5. LOCALLY FOCUSED:

We value our local 'place based' knowledge and expertise gained through our connections and networks ensuring our wider geographic reach.

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Offer Excellence

We offer the highest quality of services, supported by our policies, processes and systems. We strive to improve our practice through independent Quality Accreditation, and our membership of networks, always growing and expanding the range, scope, and depth of our spheres of influence and learning.

We develop models and methodologies which ensure that quality is maintained and invest in the skills and expertise of our workforce to offer the best services we can.

Our priority is to offer excellence through our operations, methods, models, and systems to provide exemplary service that is transparent and valued.



6. EVER CURIOUS:

To grow our understanding of local need through our collective curiosity and strive to always understand and be informed of the ever-changing needs we aim to address.

7. HIGHLY SKILLED:

We are skilled in the work we do through our quality standards, reputation, experience, and professional development.

Sustain, Grow, and Thrive

The Foundation plays its part as a global, national and local leader by aligning our work to UN Sustainable Development Goals, and to the strategic plans of our anchor partners. In doing so we ensure our long term sustainability and future growth.

Our priority is to sustain, grow, and thrive in the new post-Covid-19 era, to ensure a strong sustainable future for the Foundation, and therefore the VSCE sector, through long-term ethical developments, investments, growth, and strategic business partnerships.

Our Golden Threads

The needs of the communities we serve are complex. So we adapt and increase flexibility to ensure we support the most disadvantaged in our communities.

To do so we further commit to overarching **'golden threads'** that run through all our grantmaking, operational, and partnership work to ensure BLCF plays its part in the new post-Covid-19 world. BLCF is therefore committed to

1. Addressing inequality across all protected characteristics
2. Listening and learning from our community partners
3. Contributing to addressing the Climate Crisis



1. Addressing Inequality

As an equitable funder, we call out inequality in our work, our programmes, our governance, and our decision making. All protected characteristics are supported, as we recognise the power imbalance in our sector and strive to address it through new models and opportunities. BLCF endeavours, to address inequality by better understanding the specific needs of Bedfordshire, and we focus our resources for lasting change.

We pledge to:

- Align ourselves to key partners to stay informed and challenged (e.g. Funders For Race Equalities Alliance, BAOBAB Foundation).
- Network to ensure we understand the barriers experienced by our communities, and pilot and test ideas to remove them (e.g. Luton Council's Fairness Taskforce, Central Beds Equalities Forum).
- Seek representation of the voices of the communities we serve in our decision making and governance (e.g. Independent Grant Panel, Participatory Grant Making).
- Climb Arnstein's Ladder of Participation by reviewing our programmes, addressing inequality at their core, and sharing that transparently (e.g. 360Giving and Salesforce monitoring).

8. REFLECT AND REPRESENT:

The communities we serve by including their lived experience in the make-up of our staff team, volunteers, panel members, and Trustees

2. Learning Organisation

We are driven by the needs of our communities and ensure our work makes a lasting difference. We deliver this by:

- Developing INSIGHT, a network of like-minded local VSCE organisations striving for sustainability who come together as a forum. We listen, learn, adapt, and change to the needs of our communities.
- Using this intelligence to support members of our Bedfordshire & Luton Funders Network, helping them address gaps in provision and reduce the complexities of the grant application process.
- Fostering partnerships between members to enable more sustainable projects to be developed.



3. Addressing the Climate Crisis

As a business, an employer, and as global citizens we are committed to doing all we can to raise awareness and address and change behaviours when it comes to climate change and its impact on our planet. To do this we:

- Look at how BLCF can change the way we work to minimise our own impact on the planet, through our operations and grant making. We seek opportunities to invest that support the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- We support Grantees and our Community Partners to understand and address their own impact on the environment.
- We seek partnerships and programmes which will bring advice, training, and financial support to ensure that community groups are more informed, and can adapt and respond to the crisis.



Real Partnership

We develop our work to align with the key players in the county ensuring strong strategic fit. We work to redirect resources, learning, funding, and opportunities into the community.

- 1. Anchor Partners** – We share our values and vision, and work to support those addressing these in their own work, and in turn ask them to support us by helping us to align to their own strategic plans.
- 2. Community Partners** – We work with them through INSIGHT to understand and address needs of the VCSE and communities they/we work with, and in turn receive support, opportunities for better partnerships, and access to programmes that are fit for purpose.
- 3. Funding and Donor Partners** – We work with our Funders Network to ensure we reach all those in areas of need and deprivation, reduce gaps and overlap in provisions, and share valuable data to change and influence their work to better support our communities.

Data is Everything

With a strong Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) of over 1700 charities registered in the county, there is a substantial opportunity for BLCF to use aggregated data as a powerful tool for social good.

We will use our data to:

1. Advocate for support and investment
2. Develop new partnerships with long term impact
3. Challenge the views and direction of others to have better outcomes for our communities



Get in Touch

01525 306 690

administrator@blcf.org.uk

www.blcf.org.uk

Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation

Room 135, Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe, MK45 4HS

To find out more, please sign up to our newsletter:

blcf.org.uk/newsletter

