

Learning from Communities



Local Trust

Communities and COVID-19: responding to crisis

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Imagine: learning partner to Community Organisers

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Learning from communities in real time



- How community organising has contributed to community responses to COVID-19
- How it can contribute beyond the pandemic

Local Trust

- How communities react to, cope with and recover from major crises
- Phase 1: Initial responses – April to Sept 2020
- Phase 2: Moving on, coping and planning - Oct 2020 to May 2021

Learning from Communities

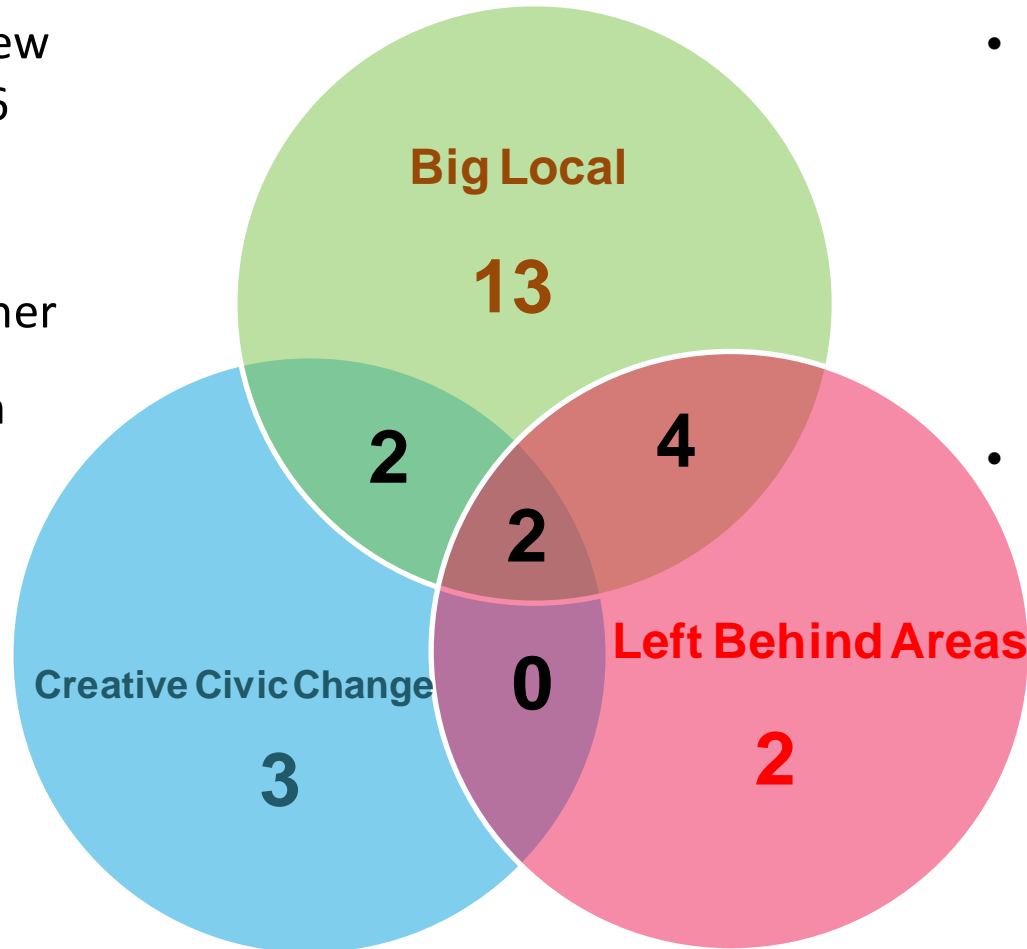
- Literature review
- 2 rounds of interviews, March to June 2020
- E-survey
- Learning from 33 people – community organisers, residents and others in the field

Report



26 case study areas

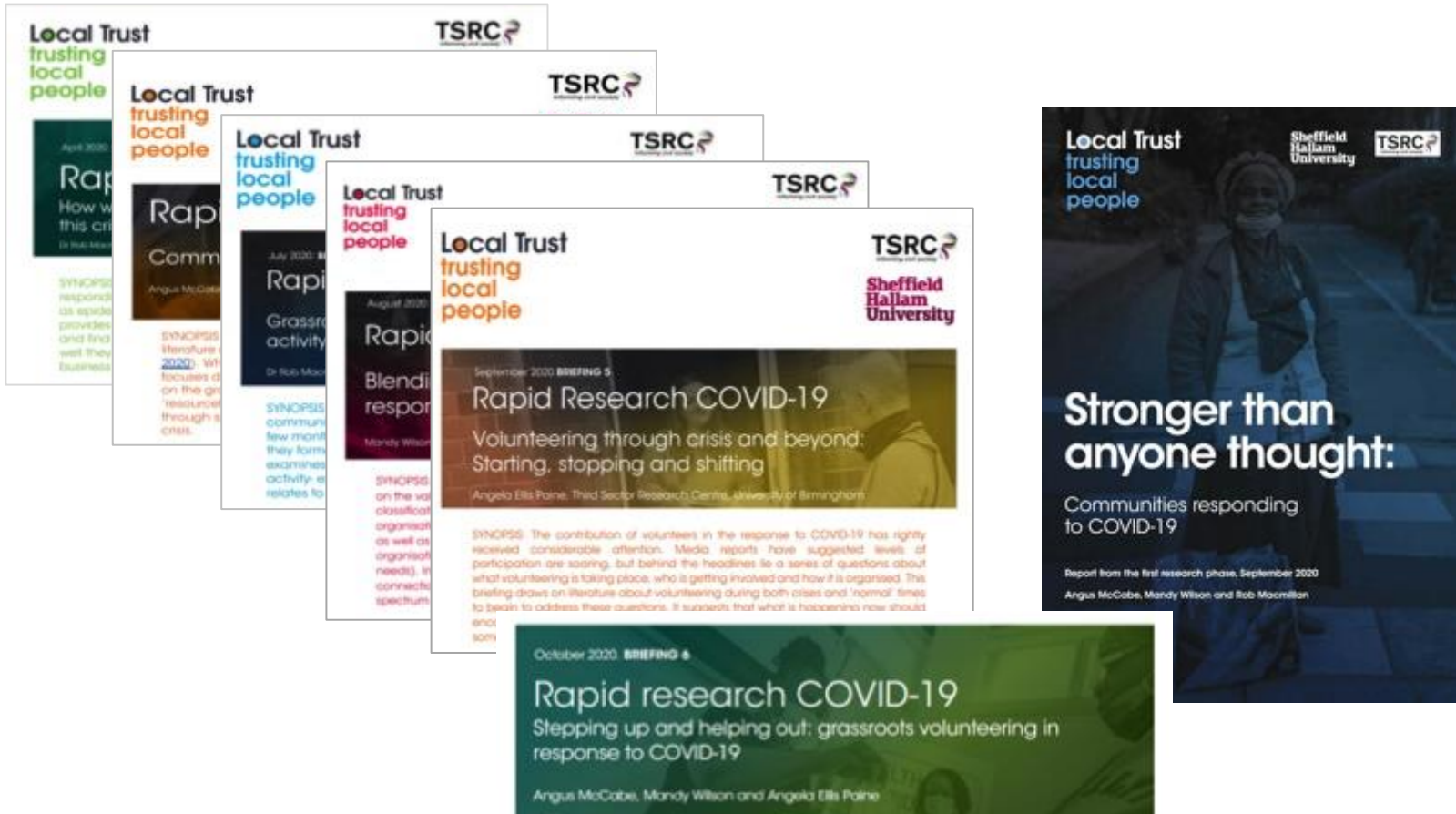
- literature review
- fieldwork in 26 study areas
- informed by other data sources – further 64 areas and other research



Research Team of 15

- 317 individual and small group online 'learning conversations' with residents and community workers
- Photo and film visual archive

Outputs so far: 5 Briefings and first phase report



SYNOPSIS: Briefing 5, *Volunteering through crisis and beyond: starting, stopping and shifting*, provided an overview of literature on volunteering. It ended with a question: would all those who have stepped up in their communities call themselves volunteers? And our current research into community responses to COVID-19 across 26 areas of England offers insights related to other questions raised in Briefing 5, concerning what volunteering is taking place, who is getting involved, how it is organised, whether new

So, what have we found out?

Organising took the form of:

- Practical help and activities
- Gathering and providing information – CO listening campaigns to find out what local people **really** needed,
- Linking and connecting people within and across neighbourhoods
- Promoting collaboration, brokering relationships and mediating
- Influencing policy and practice

One crisis many responses – food, venues, wellbeing, creativity, identified gaps, changed use of funds

Working relationships with others – existing, new and emerging but some missed opportunities

Disruption changes things

- Making sense of where we are
- Reviewing priorities and ways of working
- Opportunities as well as challenges
- Extended reach
- Digital access and initiatives
- New listening campaigns
- Making space for difficult conversations

Ready and resourceful communities

The role and significance of established community-led infrastructure and networks seems to underpin an effective community response which is continuing.

Able to move fast - existing relationships that could be quickly built on / optimised

Local knowledge and reach throughout the community

Residents knowing about, and making decisions about, their own communities

Trust

Access to money, buildings and people

Confidence to act

Paid workers

Reputation with local organisations

Summary of learning from communities so far ...

Some communities can organise spontaneously. But in most of the communities studied it is long-term, ongoing support that has built the relationships, power and resourcefulness that has enabled them to move quickly when faced with a crisis.

They need investment to play their part in response and recovery.

Much of the immediate community response to COVID-19 has been informal and based on trust and local knowledge.

Larger agencies could value and respect this more than they have.

Learning for Research

- Value of learning and prioritizing of resources by funders
- Relationships with research commissioners
 - able to get going quickly
- Relationships with people on the ground – long term trust building
- Contextual knowledge – of the national programmes and of the neighbourhoods

<https://www.organisers.org.uk/news-blogs-and-events/locally-rooted-the-place-of-community-organising-in-times-of-crisis/>

<https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research-communities-responding-to-covid-19/>

How will different communities emerge from the crisis and what will underpin this difference?



Local authority perspectives on working with community led infrastructure



This film has been collated as part of the Local Trust research which is exploring how communities respond to COVID-19 (see Local Trust website)

The purpose is to produce a visual archive of the variety of things Big Local areas are doing.



Big Local Covid-19 Responses
Health and Wellbeing