



Social Economy Drive - Impact Report 2023

Background

In 2015 The Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs (iSE) designed and delivered City Drive, a week of activity to promote and celebrate social enterprise in Birmingham. It was a phenomenal success. Since then City Drive has developed and grown. It re-branded as Social Enterprise Week in 2021 and has become an annual event.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) were keen to build on this successful formula and together with investment from Power to Change (P2C), supplied funding for a Social Economy Drive (SED) extending across the whole of the West Midlands.

iSE were asked to take a lead role in the design, development and implementation of the SED with Communications Support from BSSEC.

Aims of the project

The SED was part of an overall goal, set by the region's Mayor, Andy Street, to double the size of the Social Economy. It was a week of diverse events across the West Midlands region designed to:

- Celebrate organisations across the West Midlands tackling social and environmental challenges
- Raise awareness and the profile of these organisations
- Provide the opportunity for them to connect, collaborate, secure investment and thrive

Highlights

- Raised the profile and prompted discussions about the Social Economy and the important role it plays in the wider West Midlands economy
- Raised the profile of the work that Charles Rapson is leading on at the WMCA and put a face to other Senior figures.
- Raised the profile of P2C across the West Midlands. Provided the opportunity for them to hear, participate and receive feedback from organisations working in the Social Economy
- Raised the profile of Partner organisations in each of the local authority areas and enabled them to access and involve a wider audience
- 11 events held, at least one in each local authority area, involving over 700 attendees, 160 of which were from the private sector
- Secured positive social media coverage, pre, during and post event, across the West Midlands
- Provided a platform for the first of its kind, 'Meet the Buyer' event, supported by BSSEC and sponsored by the Department for Transport (DFT).

Social Economy

Social Economy is the collective term for social enterprises, co-operatives, community-owned and employee-owned businesses set up to generate income to address social and environmental issues. Social economy and social innovation are important as they help to create more inclusive, creative and sustainable societies and economies.

Partners

iSE identified Partner organisations in each of the 7 of the local authority areas in the West Midlands. The table below details the Partner organisations and the local authority area they represented.

Local authority	Partner org
Birmingham	iSE
Coventry	Coventry & Warwickshire CDA
Dudley	Provision House
Sandwell	Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations
Solihull	Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action
Walsall	One Walsall
Wolverhampton	Access to Business

Partners were responsible for developing, promoting and delivering events within their own areas and for supporting and participating in WMCA overarching events. Partners were briefed to base their events on the needs of the local community and local organisations. Events varied in theme, scale and complexity.

Events

The West Midlands SED took place week commencing 13th November 2023 and involved 11 main events. The table below lists all of the events that took place during the SED.

TABLE – Final Partner Event Listing

Date	Partner	Event
MON 13 NOV 2023	COVENTRY & WARKS CDA	SOCIAL ENTERPRISE – THE WAY FORWARD (Warwickshire)
TUE 14 NOV 2023	CAVA	SOCIAL ECONOMY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES
TUE 14 NOV 2023	ONE WALSALL	WALSALL's SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL ECONOMY
TUE 14 NOV 2023	BSSEC CIC	THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IS THE SOLUTION!
TUE 14 NOV 2023	iSE CIC	WOMEN IN SUSTAINABILITY
WED 15 NOV 2023	ACCESS 2 BUSINESS	SOCIAL ECONOMY WOLVERHAMPTON LAUNCH

WED 15 NOV 2023	COVENTRY & WARKS CDA	SOCIAL ENTERPRISE – THE WAY FORWARD
WED 15 NOV 2023	PROVISION HOUSE	SHOWCASING THE DUDLEY SOCIAL ECONOMY
WED 15 NOV 2023	SCVO	CREATING IMPACT THROUGH ENTERPRISE
THU 16 NOV 2023	BSSEC CIC	MEET THE BUYER with DEPT FOR TRANSPORT
THU 16 NOV 2023	ACCESS 2 BUSINESS	WOLVERHAMPTON BUSINESSES & SOCIAL ECONOMY PARTNERSHIPS

Two smaller scale events took place in Dudley, initiated by Carl Cadman at Provision House. Both organisations spoke at the main Provision House event in Dudley and then opened their doors to visitors during the following week. These included:

- Harrys Café, Brierley Hill
- The Craft House, Halesowen.

Sponsors

P2C sponsored the SED with support from WMCA. A number of Partner organisations were also successful in securing localised event Sponsorship and Contributions. A total of **£21,570** was secured, comprising the following:

- Cash - £9000
- Time - £9565
- In Kind donations - £3005

The table below provides details of the contributions received.

Table – SED Sponsors/Contributors

Sponsor	Type of support	Value of support
ESB Energy	Cash	£500
Department for Transport	Cash – Meet the Buyer event sponsor Time – Estimated time for Event organisation/team attendance	£8,500 £9,000
Music is our Sanctuary	Time - a singer	£250
Touchwood Shopping Centre	In Kind – Shopping voucher	£50
Solihull Moors Football Club	In kind - Free room hire	£180
Wolverhampton Council	In kind - Free room hire	£500

Carvers Building Supplies	In kind - Free room hire	£250
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry	In kind - Free room hire	£525
CAVA	Time - 3 Staff	£315
iSE	Time – website development	£1,500
Total		£21,570

The total amount leveraged from the SED however was **£23,570**, as Taylor Woodrow donated £2000 to Rudge Wood CIC, one of the organisations that presented at the Wolverhampton event. This investment enabled Rudge Wood CIC to be accredited to deliver Horticulture Qualifications to the beneficiaries that A2B refer to them from their DCMS Volunteering Project.

Marketing

BSSEC CIC provided Communications Support for the SED and have produced a report detailing their approach, the assets produced, the potential reach and highlights from social media.

Overall Outputs

- 11 main events successful delivered plus 2 mini open-door events
- 852 people registered to attend
- 726 people attended events
- £21,570 of Sponsorship/Contributions were secured by Partners
- A total of £23,570 was leveraged by the SED
- Secured positive social media coverage, pre, during and post event, across the West Midlands
- A bank of photographs and video's capturing the events and showcasing the West Midlands Social Economy Drive has been produced
- SED events led to the creation of a number of specific feedback reports that will strengthen WMCA insight, these are [shown in blue](#) and listed in Specific Partner Outputs.

Supporter feedback

The WMCA and P2C both felt that the aims of the SED were met:

“The Social Economy Drive 2023 exceeded expectations by a significant margin. The professionalism with which the events were delivered and the energy behind them from the various partners across the region was impressive. Rose Gardner for iSE did an incredible job project managing the weeklong series of events. What was really evident was the positivity and optimism that existed across the sector. A great week celebrating brilliant organisations with passion and professionalism”. **Charles Rapson, Strategic Lead (Social Economy Growth Programme) WMCA**

“Power to Change’s purpose is to create the conditions for community businesses to thrive. We want to encourage decision makers, funders and investors to prioritise growing community businesses. We also want to be grounded in community business and use our voice to amplify all the amazing work that community businesses are doing. One way we do this is through our place-based partnerships, and since 2021 Power to Change has been working with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to support the implementation of their social economy strategy. As part of this partnership, we are pleased to have sponsored the 2023 Social Economy Drive. The SED has made a valuable contribution to Power to Change’s ambitions working within the region in a number of ways:

- *Firstly, it has helped raise the awareness of WMCA’s social economy growth strategy within the sector, which we hope will encourage the inclusion of diverse community businesses in its implementation.*
- *Secondly, it has profiled and celebrated the fantastic work of the region’s social economy to new audiences, which we hope will lead to increased support and understanding of the vital role community businesses can play in transforming local economies.*
- *Thirdly, it has provided a valuable networking opportunity for community businesses across the region, and we know a well-connected sector can help community businesses overcome the limits of smallness. Lastly, it has helped Power to Change to raise our profile across the region, so our work is better understood, and enabled us to form valuable new connections with community businesses and key stakeholders so we can remain grounded in the sector and its priorities.*



"I thought it was great some cluster locations ran their own events as it has contributed to that feeling of momentum building as activity related to the strategy gets off the ground". **Natalie White,**
Portfolio Manager, Power to Change

Specific Partner Outputs

Partners reported a variety of significant positive outputs, with all of the Partners agreeing that the SED helped to raise their profile and provide an opportunity to showcase the work that they do.

Many reported it enabled them to gain access to new audiences/stakeholders and provided a great platform for collaboration. Many reported they secured new supporters and a number secured new business. Specific Partner outputs are detailed below:

Birmingham Outputs

“Organising the SED on behalf of the WMCA was a challenge but a highly rewarding one. It gave us the opportunity to raise our profile, to develop new relationships and to work collaboratively to showcase the very best of the West Midlands social economy.

“I felt it provided a great platform to raise the profile of the new initiatives emanating from the WMCA, initiatives that were wholeheartedly welcoming by attendees”. **Rose Gardner, SED Project Manager, iSE**

Roundtable Event

- BSSEC produced an [Event Report](#) and a [Roundtable summary](#)

Sponsor Feedback

“I personally found the BSSEC roundtable very useful as an opportunity connect with some familiar and new faces. I left feeling energised with some interesting insights into the sector’s challenges and priorities to reflect on. I think as often with these things there was an element of preaching to the converted so I wonder what more can be done to bring those who need converting into these conversations. However it did provide a safe and open space for frank conversations, and it felt like the opportunity to connect in person (rather than online) was highly valued by those in the room”.

Natalie White, Power to Change on BSSEC Roundtable

Meet the Buyer

- Robert Vaughan, SME Lead, Assurance and Supply Chain Management, DfT produced a summary report, [DfT VCSE Supplier Event Feedback](#), detailing excellent feedback from the Event
- Robert Vaughan has also set up a VCSE Working Group designed to share initiatives and resolve barriers.
- The DfT showcased the event internally, at its London HQ.
- Other Government departments are considering adopting the ‘Meet the Buyer’ model to increase the number of social enterprises and third sector organisations securing Government contracts.
- National Highways reported a significant increase in VCSE's joining the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).
- Following the success in Birmingham, The Department of Transport intend to roll out further Meet The Buyer events across the Country. Talks are underway with CEOs of Social

Enterprise Scotland and Social Enterprise Northern Ireland to arrange similar events within their regions.

- Sallie Ryan produced an [Event Reporting Summary](#) outlining key stakeholders in attendance, a marketing summary and known impacts.

Coventry and Leamington Outputs

“We generated excellent contacts from the Coventry event in particular. This included improving our links with Coventry City Council and increased community links in key areas in Coventry such as Foleshill”. **Mandy Bygrave, CEO, Coventry and Warwickshire CDA**

“The social economy plays a key role in our new Strategic Economic Plan, helping to support our ambition to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth across Warwickshire.

“Organisations in the social economy are vibrant, innovative and trusted; and crucially understand the needs of local people, local communities and deliver an array of key services.

“Working with the public sector, we particularly value the role that Social Enterprises play through their proactive approach within communities aimed at ‘prevention’, reducing the need for later and costly reactive public sector intervention.” **David Ayton-Hill, Director of Economy & Place, Communities Directorate, Warwickshire County Council**

Dudley Outputs

- PH has set up a **Social Economy Organisations group** for the Dudley Borough which will meet monthly to offer peer support and share opportunities for funding / training / networking
- PH feels there is now a much greater understanding of what the social economy is, internally and externally
- PH developed a partnership with Kumon as a result of the SED which will see Kumon renting space at PH and offering subsidised study programmes and tutoring to people accessing the Food Club.
- PH also established contact at the SED with a ‘Great British Bake Off’ winner and now plans to open a café/catering section. This will include promoting healthy eating for those accessing the Food Club and offering cookery courses for families to further empower them
- PH felt is strengthened relationships with the Council and increased understanding of the positive impact it has for vulnerable/disadvantaged people in the community.
- Harrys café and The Craft House benefitted from increased profile by showcasing their organisations as the PH event
- Harrys café have developed a new contact which will allow them to start a new project ‘Horse Bush Gardens’
- After gaining fresh insight at the PH event, The Craft House is going to change to a Community Interest Company so that it can attract and access funding more easily

Feedback from Attendees

"I really enjoyed the Provision House event and was struck by the variety of organisations that were there – from small privately run businesses looking to convert to CICs to charities that were developing their trading activities. I think that the opportunity to showcase these different types of organisation helped to build the sense of identity of the sector, and I got the feeling that those that attended valued the networking opportunity in real life too. It was also a great opportunity for me to see Provision House and meet community businesses in the region which I really valued". **Danielle Cohen, Associate Director for Portfolio Management, Power to Change**

"It was great to see the Social Economy promoted in such a positive way, looking forward to seeing how this develops into the future. The information shared and networking opportunities were so valuable." **Dudley Council**

"I really enjoyed the SED held at Provision House, I found it extremely informative. I live in Dudley so it's always great to see some investment in the people and places of the boroughs. Please keep me on your list to invite to other events you're holding." **Skern Training and Skills**

"Thank you for hosting a wonderful #SED2023. It was really great to meet you and other community leaders. I gained a lot of inspiration to do more." **Kumon Dudley Study Centre**

"What a privilege it was to be able to share at the Dudley event for SED2023. A great event and I was able to network with a lot of new people so hopefully this will grow into positive connections."
Riverside House

Sandwell Outputs

- Produced a [Feedback Report](#) outlining the findings from the interactive exercise at the start of the event.

Feedback from Attendees

"Great afternoon at the 'Creating Impact through Enterprise' event over at the West Bromwich YMCA as part of Social Economy Drive West Midlands

"Stepping out of my usual circles to come and find out what's happening in the social enterprise community of Sandwell. Lots of great support, organisations and energy on offer to really help push the social economy forward.

"Exactly what this week is all about – highlight the pockets of excellence in this sector and looking at how we can join it up, bring it together and share best practice to double the size of our social economy". **Daniel, Forward Accelerator**

"We heard some great and informative presentations from the YMCA, Rose Gardner and Stuart Ashmore and Des Ferguson from SWEDA AND Gareth Owens in the Business Growth team at Sandwell Council" **Molly Dunn**

“The event was very informative and the guest speakers were also helpful to know the amount of work that is being done around social economy in the West Midlands”.

“Really informative about social enterprises, for example, how the structure of the business can be set up, how social enterprises are classified etc. As a business who works alongside the third sector, I found this really useful to know”.

“The positive attitude of the organisers was great! Smiley and happy people”.

“The buzz in the room and the opportunity to connect with everyone”.

“Information obtained from all speakers which increased my awareness”.

Solihull Outputs

- CAVA produced a [Case Study](#) capturing the main outputs.

Feedback from Attendees

“Thank you for inviting Solihealth to the CAVA event on the 14th November 23 at Solihull Moors Football Club. We really enjoyed the day. It was very informative and a great event for us to network and meet our third sector colleagues. The speakers were impressive and highlighted the good work that is being done in Solihull with real life examples and experiences. We have made some valuable links and we hope to work in partnership with some of these organisations to ensure Solihull patients’ needs are met in the community, linking the NHS with other valuable services.” **Debbie Gregory, Operations Manager at Solihealth**

“Thank you for inviting me to this wonderful event. I thoroughly enjoyed the day and talking with many engaged people and organisations that support the health and wellbeing of residents across the whole of the Solihull borough.” **Councillor Diana Holl-Allen MBE, Mayor of Solihull**

“It was a great event, where I could feel the positive atmosphere throughout. I think many people in Solihull will benefit from the organisations that reconnected or made new connections today.” **Councillor Karen Grinsell**

“CAVA is delighted to have hosted this event and showcase the important work of the Social Enterprise Sector. It demonstrated the sector has much to offer partners and commissioners to support the social economy, as well as helping to reduce health inequalities across Solihull and within local communities. The speakers from wonderful groups and non-profit companies present showcased concretely the impactful work they deliver.” **Chief Executive at Community And Voluntary Action, Karen Winchcombe**

“The Social Economy Drive event in Solihull, focused on health and well-being, organized by CAVA, was a powerful demonstration of the energy and potential that exists in the social economy to address some of the challenges in the West Midlands. Energy and potential the West Midlands Combined Authority is determined to support and grow. A fantastic event that was really well organised”. **Charles Rapson, Strategic Lead (Social Economy Growth Programme) WMCA**

Walsall Outputs

- Following feedback from a highly successful event, One Walsall is now developing a **Social Enterprise network** to feed into newly established Walsall Economic Forum.
- One Walsall produced a document [Event Feedback](#) outlining the issues community organisations would like to raise with key partners including the WMCA, the Council, NHS.
- Mettaminds CIC secured new customers for Tai Chi

Feedback from Attendees

“The presentation made by Mick Reeves was inspirational”.

“Very useful, gave us further insight into how our organisations can benefit”

“All of the presentations were very informative especially Stop think presentation”

“Yes, useful stats but also thinking about change and how we influence”

“Gained some good information”

“it is always great to learn and some very interesting presentations”

“My learnings are to adopt a commercial ethos, use a business approach”

“Very helpful”

“There used to be a network in Walsall which brought together groups delivering welfare rights advice and support. We need to resurrect that group to co-ordinate our activities and develop collaborative opportunities”.

“It would be great if the presentations can be emailed and to run this again in the following year”

“How can we encourage new start up ideas, incubate/mentor, training provision”

“The discussion around sustainability at our table generated a large amount of conversation, so I feel that would be of interest to others”.

The collaborators in the room/bring together/circle diagram. Access to funding

“I'd like to see more start up help and guidance”

“A positive event, but I can't underestimate the level of input required to set these events up. We are keen to look at ways to provide opportunities for young people to thrive and to support young social entrepreneurs. [any funding opportunities to help?]

“Great support from the sector and partners and great to be able to bring a range of diverse organisations to the event e.g. women, disability, BME, mental health. We need to look at what support is required in the future. (Tried to use a local BSL provider but wasn’t able to supply an interpreter in the end).

“ This event encouraged some organisations considering becoming social enterprises. It benefitted the sector as a whole by providing lots of opportunities for collaboration and partnership. I’m keen to bring a tangible [funding] support scheme to Walsall, as has happened with the Boost scheme in Sandwell and Wolverhampton, as this creates an added incentive”.

Vickie Hines, Chief Executive Officer – One Walsall.

Wolverhampton Outputs

- 42 people signed the Wolverhampton Buy and Invest Pledge.
- 45 people signed up as Social Economy Champions.
- Taylor Woodrow pledged £2000 sponsorship to Rudge Wood CIC at the Wolverhampton event.

“I thought your presentation was so heartfelt and engaging, really brilliant event. We want to support you going forward.” **Taylor Woodrow (Melanie Dovey)**

“Event was great, presentation was really informative”. **Scott Thompson, Thompson, AVC (Wolverhampton Business)**

“I felt very emotional listening to the presentation. I will come and visit you to see how we can support your plans”. **Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy, City of Wolverhampton Council**

“I think my work on Wolverhampton Pound will really support your social economy plans. I will arrange a meeting with you”. **Louise West (Strategic Leads for Wolverhampton Pound, City of Wolverhampton Council)**

“So pleased to be part of this event. We will get our heads together to see how we can support you. Please sign me up as a Social Economy Champion”. **Chris Briggs (Partner at Azets)**

“I really enjoyed the event and it was great to see and hear such positivity and enthusiasm in the room. The speakers were really good and you did a brilliant job in bringing it all together and facilitating in such a purposeful and engaging manner”. **Ray Flynn, Director, University of Wolverhampton**

“Thank you for inviting me to open your Access to Business Wolverhampton Social Economy Drive event here in the City Suite. It’s fantastic to support the growth of the local economy and provide opportunities for local residents and communities. Keep up the good work!” **Steve Simkins, Leader of City of Wolverhampton Council**

“A great evening - let’s go forward from here on. I will support you and want to be a Social Economy Champion.” **Sham Sharma, President of Wolverhampton Business Forum**



“This was amazing. I am pleased to be a Social Economy Champion and will do what I can to support the Social Economy Drive. Let’s organise a meeting for all Champions soon.”. Anna-Maria McCauliffe (McCauliffe Group).

“What a great week for everyone involved! Josie Kelly and all staff at Access to Business were thrilled to be the lead on the Wolverhampton Social Economy Drive. Meeting new partners from across the West Midlands has been amazing and the shared ideas have already inspired us in our plans for the growth of the Wolverhampton Social Economy.

“The BSSEC events we attended were really informative and we look forward to attending more. The Meet-the-Buyer event in Birmingham was amazing and gave us an audience that we would otherwise not have had access to. The presentation from ‘Change Please’ really inspired me and I have come back with ideas to develop our own ‘product’ and currently in discussions about this with one of the local Social Enterprises that we support.

“Our events were amazing and far exceeded our expectations. As a result of them we have signed up new supporters, Social Economy Champions, secured funding from Taylor Woodrow and had Buy and Invest pledges from many that attended our events. What a great week! We look forward to next year.” Josie Kelly, CEO, Access to Business

Impacts

- Partners have been asked to report any additional outputs generated over the next 6 months directly to Charles Rapson.
- Robert Vaughen SME Lead, Assurance and Supply Chain Management, Department of Transport, has scheduled a VCSE questionnaire for May 2024 to assess and report any increase in contracts awarded, new partnerships developed as a result of the Meet the Buyer event.
- The Highways Agency is continuously monitoring the number of VCSEs signing up to the Social Enterprise Dynamic Purchasing System (SEDPS).