



national network
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Shared Intelligence

Is Pride in Place building on previous neighbourhood initiatives where they exist?

Four case studies from July 2026

September 2026





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About 3ni

The national network for neighbourhood improvement is a learning network for local government, the wider public sector and communities that supports policy and practice towards neighbourhood working and community-led regeneration. Set up and incubated by Local Trust in 2024 and now hosted by Capacity CIC, 3ni creates a space for collaboration and innovation to drive meaningful, lasting change where it is needed most.

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About Shared Intelligence

Shared Intelligence is a public policy research consultancy with UK-based clients in central, regional, and local government, as well as charities and non-profits. It undertakes strategy development, research, and evaluation with a focus on peer learning and stakeholder engagement.

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July 2026

Cover photo: Community Winter Fair in Edmonton Green
Photographer: Zute Lightfoot

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1. Introduction

This research builds on previous work undertaken by 3ni, Local Trust, OCSI and Shared Intelligence in *Everybody Needs Good Neighbourhoods* (2023) and *Everybody Needs Good Neighbourhoods 2* (2025). These reports explored the relationship between neighbourhood-based initiatives (NBIs) and a range of local outcomes linked to liveability, social capital and community resilience.

A key feature of that earlier work was that we compared areas known to have neighbourhood initiatives with a counterfactual group of areas that were similar in all respects, except they had no history of neighbourhood working. A by-product of this is that we were left with a list of dozens of places where neighbourhood initiatives have existed in some shape or form over the past decade.

Knowing that Pride in Place funding would be going to some of these areas prompted us to ask the question: to what extent is Pride in Place building on previous neighbourhood initiatives where they exist?

That is the purpose of these case studies, and we hope what we have found will help those involved in Pride in Place build on what exists, draw on local knowledge and experience, learn from previous achievements and mistakes, and take an asset-based and additive approach.

NB While our conversations with interviewees were of enormous value in producing these case studies, the interpretation of each case study is that of the authors. It does not necessarily represent the views of the interviewees except where they are directly quoted.

2. Existing ecosystem: Matson and Robinswood, Gloucester

Pride in Place area	Matson and Robinswood, Gloucester
Existing neighbourhood initiative	Gloucestershire Gateway Trust
Interviewee	Head of Communities, Gloucester City Council

Pride in Place in Gloucester's Matson and Robinswood neighbourhood is able to build on a strong culture of community pride, self-determination and resilience, and well-established community organisations. The detail over whether Pride in Place builds on existing organisations or develops as a separate initiative will be a future decision for the Neighbourhood Board. But either way the path is clear for the programme to be embedded in local relationships, needs and ambition.

What's strong, not what's wrong

Since Pride in Place funding was announced, Gloucester City Council has adopted a facilitative role, supporting rather than directing. This approach reflects the council's recognition that the area already has strong social infrastructure. More generally it also reflects the local authority's ethos of looking at assets rather than deficits, or in the words of the council's Head of Communities, looking at *"what's strong, not what's wrong"*.

In Matson and Robinswood many residents believe they are best placed to understand and act on their own needs. Some residents perceive the council as placing limitations on what can be achieved, whereas the community focuses on what is possible. In response, Gloucester City Council has consciously focused on taking an enabling role; providing light-touch support to enable long-term and aspirational thinking.

Putting the ethos into practice

Since being awarded Pride in Place funding, Gloucester City Council has tried to put this approach into practice, starting with the appointment process for the Chair and members of the Neighbourhood Board. The council and the local MP issued a joint call for applications for the role of Chair using a social media campaign and simplified application criteria focused on the need for candidates with deep local connections. Applicants were invited to present to a panel comprising the local MP, council representatives and community members including young people. The panel's decision in selecting a Chair was unanimous – they chose the Chief Executive of Gloucester Gateway Trust, a local community development charity with a reputation for innovation and an asset-based approach.

With the Chair now confirmed, they are focussed on working with the council on the recruitment of the Neighbourhood Board. One risk the council and Chair have identified is that local residents who are not well-connected to existing local groups might feel excluded. This means the next stage will deliberately try to reach a broader cross-section of the community, including people with ideas and energy but who do not necessarily view themselves as active citizens. After that, the council's Head of Communities anticipates an exciting period of idea generation and workshoping to generate long-term community-led plans for the neighbourhood that reflect aspirations and build on what the area already has.

An area with a proven community-led model

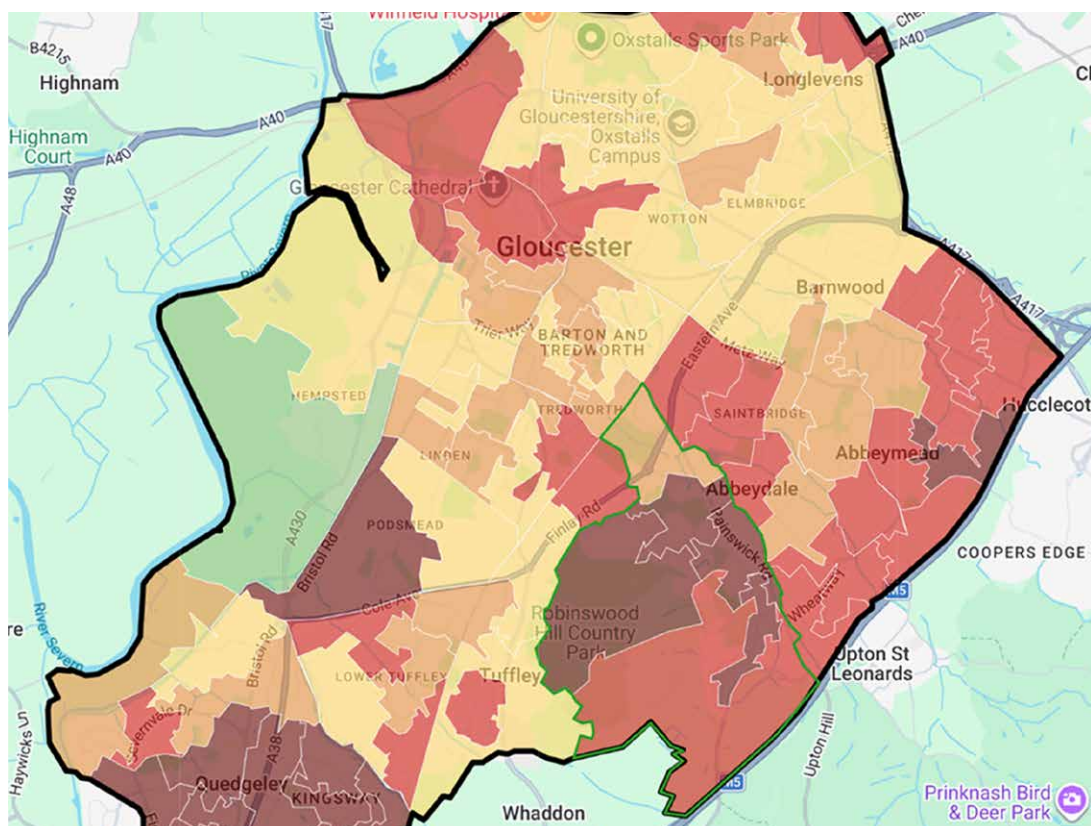
The Gloucestershire Gateway Trust, to which the newly appointed Chair is closely connected, was originally set up with an ambition that seemed very unglamorous – to create a community-owned motorway service station on the M5. But the idea was unique and innovative. Rather than 28 million vehicles passing through the area without stopping and leaving only noise and pollution, the idea was to turn that traffic into a community asset, Gloucester Services, which now holds the accolade as the UK's best motorway service station.

Today the service station generates a revenue stream that enables the Trust to fund local projects, initiatives and events by channelling 3p in every £1 of non-fuel sales into the local community. In addition, it offers community development grants to twelve partners, including three from Matson and Robinswood: Matson and Robinswood Residents Group; Matson, Robinswood and White City Community Partnership; and Together in Matson.¹

Key takeaways

The Matson and Robinswood neighbourhood already has a vibrant network of community-led action. Much of this is made possible due to the way Gloucester Services, itself a community-led initiative, channels resources into local community groups and initiatives.

Pride in Place has quickly been incorporated into this existing ecosystem and past achievements suggest the £20 million will be used in a catalytic, transformative way, perfectly fulfilling the national policy ambition for Pride in Place. What this example also shows is that this potential exists because the programme is not starting from scratch. Within the community are established relationships, trusted community leadership, and proven organisations. This also makes it easier for the council to play an enabling role and step back rather than taking over.



Community Needs Index 2023 heatmap of Gloucester generated by 3ni's Discovery tool, showing the Pride in Place MSOA of Matson and Robinswood

¹ Our community partners – Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

3. Re-building slowly: Walcot East, Swindon

Pride in Place area	Walcot East, Swindon
Existing neighbourhood initiative	(former) Parks and East Walcot Community Forum
Interviewee	Ward Councillor for Walcot

Pride in Place in the Walcot East area of Swindon is starting from a relatively low base of social infrastructure. While there are residents who want to get things going in their community, beyond the formal democratic structures of the borough and parish councils, grassroots efforts tend to be fragile and short-lived.

Starting from scratch

South Swindon Parish Council provides a degree of social infrastructure on which to build Pride in Place, but it covers a much larger geography than Walcot East MSOA, leading to the decision to call it locally Walcot East & Park North. In terms of neighbourhood groups at the scale of Pride in Place, there is little activity. A Parks and East Walcot Community Forum used to operate as a local action group and met regularly to collect local community and street scene issues. But, like many hyper-local groups, it relied heavily on a small number of individuals. During the COVID pandemic the group experienced declining participation, key members left, and then it dissolved; its name is still used but only as a community Facebook page run by one of the forum's former members.

With Pride in Place the first task for the borough and parish councils has been to create the basic conditions for local participation.

Creating the conditions

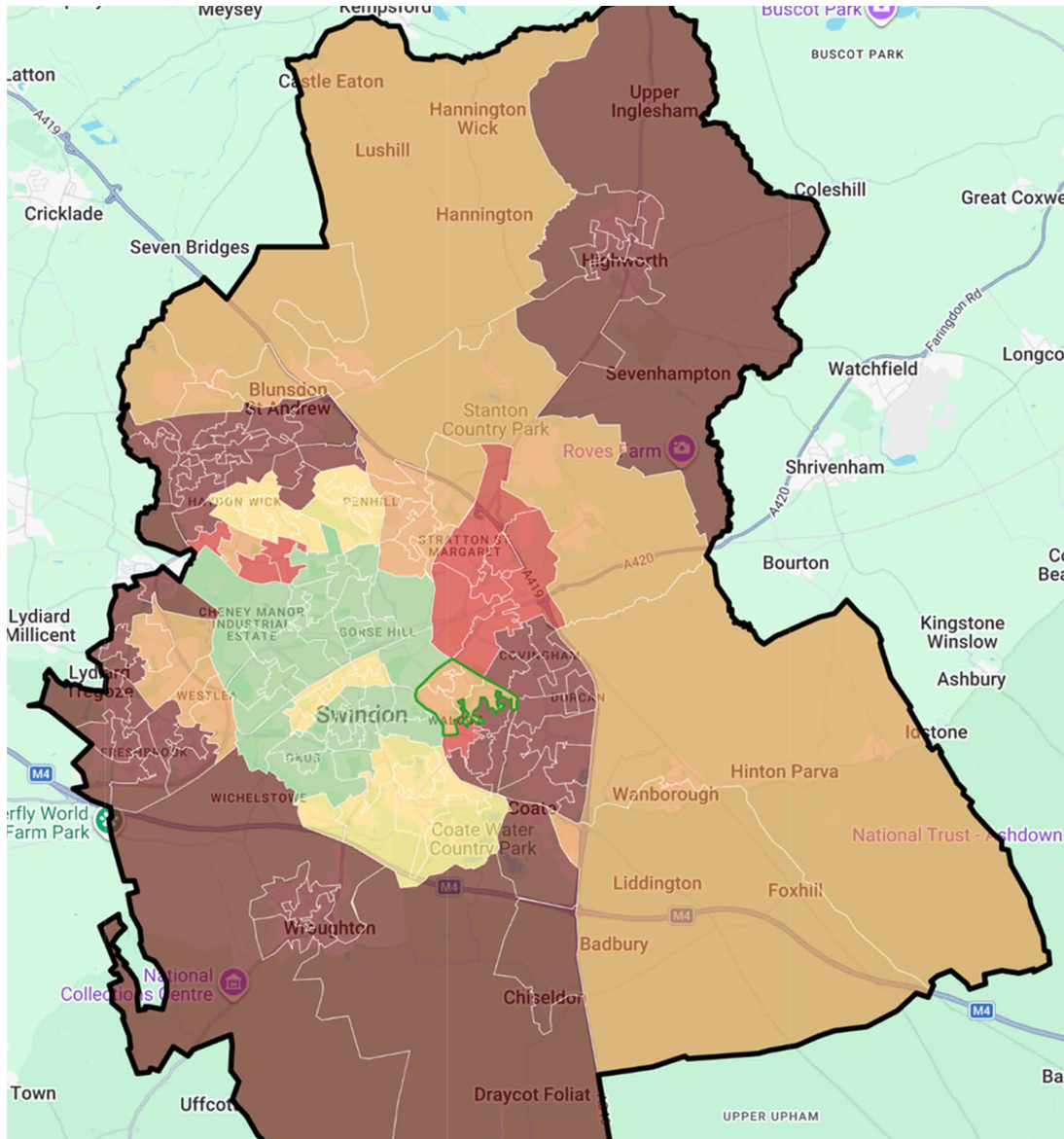
Early engagement has focused on generating visibility, gathering resident views and demonstrating early wins. Alongside selecting a Chair for the Neighbourhood Board, one of the first steps taken by Swindon Borough Council was to fund the parish council to launch a series of community events to raise awareness

of Pride in Place. The borough council and local MP also ran a resident survey asking how local people would like to be involved in Pride in Place, what matters most locally, and how they would like to be involved. Based on the survey responses, the parish council was funded to recruit two community caretakers to address local environmental worries. To start generating quick wins, the community caretakers ran a Walcot East "spring clean" to tackle doorstep concerns including litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and weeding.

The parish council has also taken on the role of keeping residents informed via a new website it has launched, alongside the Facebook page left over from the community forum.

The Chair of Governors at a local secondary school was appointed Chair of the Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board, through a process led by the borough council and local MP. Attention has now turned to recruiting the Neighbourhood Board. At the time of writing, Board recruitment is actively taking place, with interviews and the announcement of elected representatives currently in progress. This has involved community outreach and awareness raising through coffee mornings, action days, social media videos promoting community board recruitment, and efforts to make the "Pride in Place Walcot East & Park North" branding visible through leaflets and branded hi-viz jackets.

While these activities are starting to reach residents who want to get involved, so far they are all led by either the borough or parish councils, who are providing important opportunities for engagement that over time can develop into a self-sustaining community infrastructure. The Walcot ward councillor



Community Needs Index 2023 heatmap of Swindon generated by 3ni's Discovery tool, showing the Pride in Place MSA of Walcot East

we spoke with is optimistic. He believes that, despite starting from a low base, the recent activities are paying off and generating real interest from residents in joining the board and contributing to local decision-making.

Key takeaways

The former community forum faded quite quickly during the COVID pandemic, but the task of re-building community infrastructure will take time. For the moment, almost all engagement is being driven by the borough and parish council teams responsible for Pride in Place, rather than from groups within the community. The challenge is not simply low engagement, but an absence of the

local networks and relationships needed to sustain community participation, one of the characteristics of a doubly disadvantaged neighbourhood and the reason many neighbourhoods were awarded Pride in Place funding.

Walcot East illustrates a core challenge for community-led initiatives like Pride in Place. While funding can be deployed quickly, the community infrastructure and organisations that can identify and advocate for local needs cannot. This means that Pride in Place is attempting to do two things at once: deliver visible improvements to the neighbourhood and rebuild the community infrastructure to sustain them.

4. We're right here: Britwell, Slough

Pride in Place area	Britwell, Slough
Existing neighbourhood initiative	Amana's Journey and AJ Café
Interviewee	Director, Amana's Journey

We spoke to the Director of a small but very active neighbourhood initiative in Britwell in Slough that is closely aligned to the aims of Pride in Place. Their experience highlights the risk that Pride in Place may overlook or duplicate existing effort if engagement with grassroots groups is not established early and then sustained.

Integrating frontline expertise

Amana's Journey is a volunteer-led community organisation based in Britwell. The founder and Director of Amana's Journey, expanded it during the COVID pandemic to distribute food, especially for the most marginalised local residents. Since then it has grown and now runs the AJ Café in a local community centre, which has become the base of its activities. The core mission of Amana's Journey is to provide essential support to local residents, particularly women and children, through food distribution, skill-building activities, and community engagement. This includes dedicated food provision for people experiencing homelessness in partnership with other local charities, as well as targeted support for women fleeing domestic violence. The organisation has so far supported over 350 families and operates with more than 25 volunteers. Amana's Journey now also works with the NHS, Slough Borough Council, and other local organisations by accepting service referrals and offering skills training and volunteering opportunities.

In short, the organisation feels deeply embedded in the neighbourhood: *"we don't just serve the community, we are the community."*

Community engagement activity to date

The Director of Amana's Journey hopes they can be involved in Pride in Place because their aims are the same: resident empowerment, community involvement in decision-making, providing training and skills and building resilience. Amana's Journey can also contribute in practical ways by bringing knowledge and insight and connecting to local networks, especially among the most vulnerable members of the community.

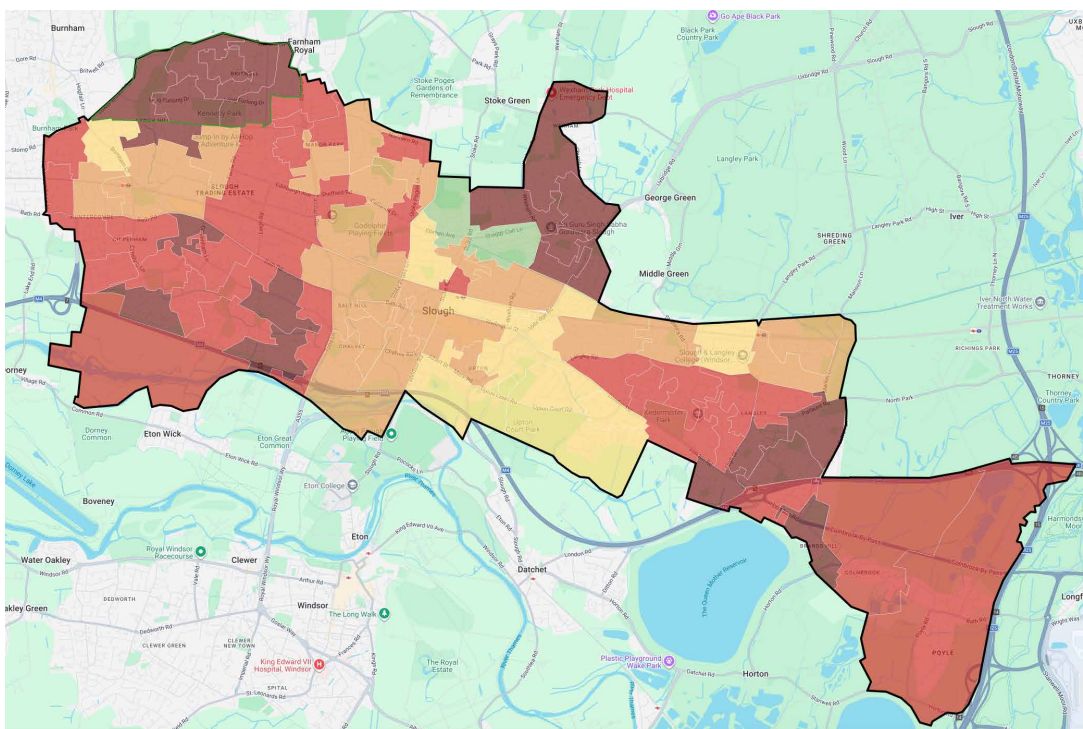
So far, however, the only information Amana's Journey has received about Pride in Place has been a resident survey distributed via letter. The survey asked residents to select priority topics for funding from a list of options, such as local infrastructure and community needs, and aimed to gather views on how funding should be allocated. But it did not ask about mapping existing community networks or action.

There has also been general communication about recruitment for the Chair and members of the Neighbourhood Board, with positions advertised on Slough Borough Council website as a call for expressions of interest. The recruitment pack says the aim is for board membership to include community partners already active in the area, which suggests the intention to involve local organisations and acknowledgement of their importance to the programme. However, The Director of Amana's Journey felt that limited information was available about the Pride in Place Board and its recruitment process. So far, no one had approached Amana's Journey to explain the process or make sure they knew about the adverts, but she hoped broader engagement was planned in the near future.

Key takeaways

Pride in Place is at an early stage but what happens at the very start may shape what happens in the future. If councils are able to reach out to existing groups and networks, which in areas of low social infrastructure are likely to be small in operation and geographic scale, then they will benefit from the knowledge, relationships, and existing trust those organisations bring. This in turn

will make it more likely that Pride in Place will get to the underlying issues that determine community resilience like those that Amana's Journey is tackling. But if Chairs and Boards are appointed without enough time for groups like Amana's Journey to get involved, then Pride in Place might fail to tap into existing resident-led activity, insight and solutions. At the worst, it might feel like a parallel top-down initiative unconnected to existing community networks.



Community Needs Index 2023 heatmap of Slough generated by 3ni's Discovery tool, showing the Pride in Place MSOA of Britwell

5. Anchored in community: Weston Bournville, Weston-super-Mare

Pride in Place area	Weston Bournville, North Somerset
Existing neighbourhood initiative	For All Healthy Living Centre
Interviewee	CEO, For All Healthy Living Centre

The electoral ward of Weston Bournville faces the combined challenges of socio-economic disadvantage alongside having few community organisations. This places a lot of responsibility on those organisations that do exist. We spoke with the Chief Executive of the main anchor organisation in the neighbourhood, the For All Healthy Living Centre (FAHLC)

Early involvement

FAHLC has been an anchor institution in Weston-super-Mare for over 20 years. It supports the community through activities and outreach, and through its physical community hub where local residents can access key services including a GP practice, family hub, public library, social workers and mental health services.

FAHLC is providing an important link between local community networks, individual active citizens and the council team tasked with establishing the Pride in Place programme. Its strong, established relationship with North Somerset Council, plus its location at the geographical centre of the Pride in Place area, meant it was a natural starting point for North Somerset Council to engage with. In addition, the local authority no longer has a standalone community development team to lead on setting up community-led programmes. Instead, it has co-opted staff from across the council to lead the process. In this context FAHLC has filled in gaps in local authority capacity and capability. Discussions with FAHLC and the local authority began

early on after the initial announcement, when they were still waiting for official Pride in Place guidance and the programme was still evolving.

An “elbows in” approach

FAHLC’s involvement with the programme is described by its Chief Executive as an “elbows in” approach, constructive without seeking a role for itself unless asked, drawing on its experience, networks, and deep local knowledge. As the Chief Executive describes it, *“we’re here, people know why we’re here... we’re ready to be part of Pride in Place if and when it’s appropriate.”*

At the same time, “elbows in” does not mean passive involvement. FAHLC has stepped in at key moments to ensure that the principles of Pride in Place – particularly around resident voice – come through in practice. One example was when FAHLC intervened over the recruitment process for the Chair. They challenged the absence of resident involvement in the process and encouraged the council to consider introducing a resident panel as part of the selection process, which they were then able to facilitate.

FAHLC has also leveraged its role in other ways to support the programme’s emerging governance arrangements. During the early stages, before the Chair and Neighbourhood Board are fully established, FAHLC has provided practical support, local intelligence and constructive challenge where needed. As the Pride in Place governance arrangements develop, its intention is to work alongside

the Chair and future board, respecting their leadership while continuing to offer support as a trusted local partner and anchor organisation.

FAHLC has also been involved in administering a local engagement fund, which is designed to help kickstart community participation by paying for things like venue hire, food and small-scale facilitation costs. The local authority lacked the internal mechanisms to distribute small amounts of funding quickly and flexibly, but for FAHLC this basic financial administration is simple and straightforward.

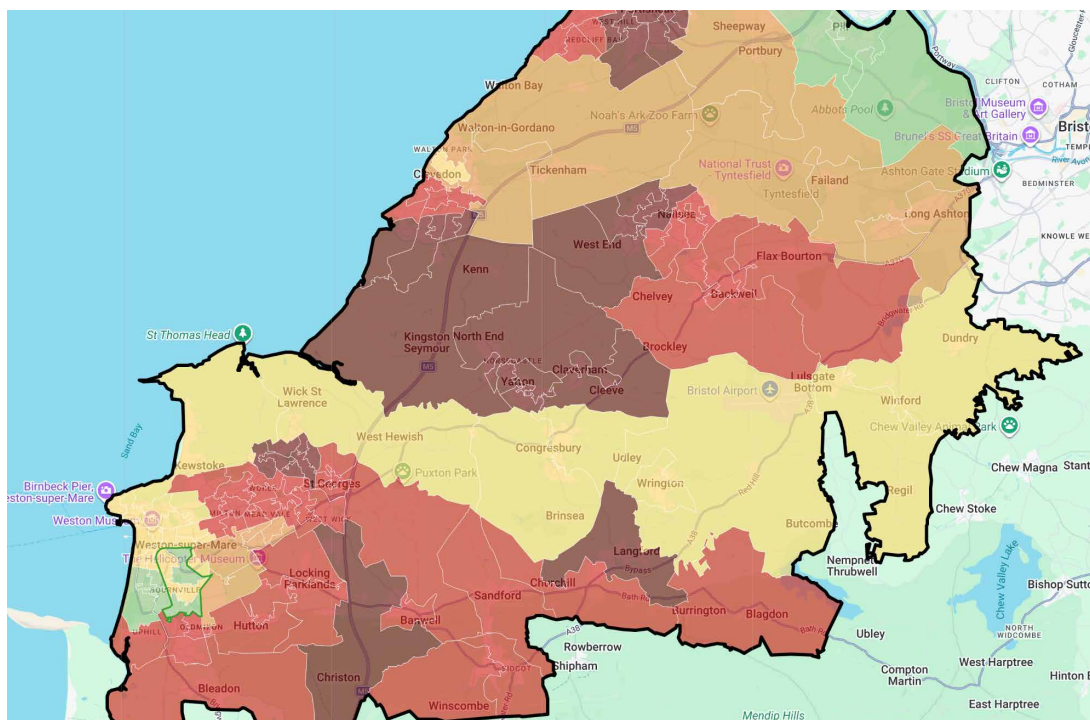
Community engagement

One activity where FAHLC has accepted a paid commission is for a six-month project to 'socialise' or spread the word about Pride in Place. This will include raising awareness and facilitating conversations with residents. Engagement will take place in community spaces, such as community venues, shopping areas and other gathering points, as well as finding new places if needed. To ensure engagement draws out views and ideas from under-represented groups, FAHLC will work with community workers and facilitators who can bring different skills and networks. For example, one facilitator they have brought in draws on an arts-based approach, capturing community perspectives through creative outputs such as poetry, images and visual materials.

FAHLC is being thoughtful and deliberate in its approach, reflecting its ethos and its own ways of working. It is contributing its local knowledge and community relationships to decisions about how engagement should be carried out, how to reach different groups, and who is best placed to lead those conversations. Its aim is for Pride in Place engagement to be inclusive and move at the pace of the community so that a broader range of voices are heard.

Key takeaways

FAHLC's role in Pride in Place in Weston-super-Mare highlights the value of working with existing local neighbourhood organisations, and of having existing organisations willing to take an 'elbows in' approach. Although the first steps of explaining Pride in Place and activating the community are falling to local authorities, they need to begin quickly working with local anchor organisations – especially where the local authority does not have a ready-to-go community development function. Pride in Place in Weston-super-Mare does not just build on neighbourhood initiatives; it relies on them. FAHLC, as a trusted intermediary, uses its understanding of local engagement and needs, which is enabling Pride in Place to build foundations for a decade-long programme.



Community Needs Index 2023 heatmap of North Somerset generated by 3ni's Discovery tool, showing the Pride in Place MSOA of Weston Bournville

6. Key learning

The Catch-22 of double disadvantage

Pride in Place areas are more likely to be lacking in precisely the kinds of social infrastructure that are needed as a precursor to community-led action.

Phase two Pride in Place funding criteria combined Index of Multiple Deprivation with Community Needs Index (CNI) scores. CNI is a measure of social infrastructure (or lack of it) which means many Pride in Place areas have limited amounts of physical civic assets (like pubs and libraries), community groups and charities, and they often have poor connectivity and access to public services.

- In Walcot East in Swindon, double disadvantage shows up most clearly through the absence of any grassroots community groups since the COVID pandemic
- In Britwell and Foxborough in Slough the challenge is not that community organisations don't exist, but that communication and connectedness are poor
- In Weston-super-Mare much rests on one main anchor organisation, and added to this the council has had to co-opt officers from other roles as it no longer has a permanent community development team to support local social infrastructure.

Moving at the speed of trust

Pride in Place is under pressure to show quick wins nationally and locally. The headline £5.8 billion is a huge public investment and Ministers and the public are justified in wanting to know that progress is being made. Locally, residents also want to see that the money coming into their community is making a tangible difference. But for Pride in Place to have real systemic impact, it needs to be used for more than just quick wins.

The experience from other long-term place-based programmes like Big Local is that it takes time and a great deal of trust to identify underlying issues and build community

structures to tackle them in sustainable, lasting ways. This tension can be seen in the way that councils are having to prioritise recruiting and appointing Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board Chairs and members rather than the deep, meaningful and sustained community engagement and capacity building needed to underpin the programme. The challenge is whether those leading Pride in Place locally have the confidence to slow down even more once they have shown some quick wins and then work at a pace that builds trust.

Involvement takes many forms

These case studies show involvement takes different forms. Some organisations want a key role, some individuals have vital knowledge and skills that Pride in Place needs to secure, some organisations want to be enablers but not to lead.

- The Britwell and Foxborough (Slough) case study illustrates how smaller organisations want to get involved but are waiting for more information.
- Weston Bournville (North Somerset) shows how large established organisations might want to step back and create space with their "elbows in" approach so others can get involved and lead.
- Matson and Robinswood (Gloucester) is an example where Pride in Place can benefit from the knowledge of a key individual even if the organisation they work for is not directly involved.

And then for individual residents, involvement might begin in very modest ways. But we have also seen examples in other programmes of residents who have no desire to join formal governance arrangements to begin with, such as a Board, but who come alive when they find a role on a group that is focused on practical action.

APPENDIX

A note on methodology

We had the idea of gathering these case studies because our previous research *“Everybody needs good neighbourhoods 2”* had identified a long list of places that were both doubly disadvantaged and also had some history of neighbourhood-based initiative.

As Pride in Place was being rolled out we wanted to know the extent to which it was building on existing neighbourhood working where it exists. Logically that would seem the ideal, but were there places where that was not easy in practice?

The first stage of this project involved compiling a list of all areas from our earlier research where neighbourhood working had been positively identified. We then matched these to the published list of Pride in Place areas which revealed a longlist of six potential case studies – areas we knew had a history of neighbourhood working and had also now been selected for Pride in Place.

We then attempted to contact relevant stakeholders within each area. In the first instance, this involved returning to the neighbourhood organisations, community anchors and local contacts (e.g. ward councillors) identified during the earlier research. In some cases contacts were no longer available, had moved roles, or could not be reached. In these cases additional routes into the area were explored, including alternative community organisations, local councillors, neighbourhood teams and local authority contacts.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one stakeholder in each selected case study area. Given the early stage of Pride in Place implementation during the research period, interviews focused particularly on emerging governance arrangements, the appointment of local chairs, and the extent to which existing community infrastructure was being incorporated into local approaches.

Interview findings were supplemented with desk research on local neighbourhood initiatives, local governance arrangements and publicly available information relating to Pride in Place activity and funding announcements.

From this we produced the four case studies. These represent a snapshot of the situation at the time of writing.



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About 3ni

The national network for neighbourhood improvement is a new learning network for local government and the wider public sector that supports policy and practice towards community-led regeneration. It was incubated and hosted by Local Trust in 2024.

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