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Measuring the Social Gain of Community Radio

June 2025



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List of abbreviations

CIC	Community Interest Company
CIO	Charitable Incorporated Organisation
CMA	Community Media Association
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DAB	Digital Audio Broadcast
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media, and Sport
HM Treasury	His Majesty's Treasury
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFCOM	Office of Communications
RAJAR	Radio Joint Audience Research
SCBA	Social Cost-Benefit Analysis
SCIO	Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
SHMU	Station House Media Unit
ToC	Theory of Change
TOMS	Themes, Outcomes, and Measures
UKCRN	UK Community Radio Network
VCSFE	Voluntary and community, faith and social enterprise
WCRN	Wales Community Radio Network

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Executive Summary

Introduction and research objectives

Community radio stations play an important role in providing a voice to local communities across the UK. They serve as a platform for underrepresented groups, encouraging local identity, culture, and social engagement. These stations are operated largely by volunteers and offer a unique mix of locally-produced content that reflects the diverse interests and needs of their target communities. Beyond entertainment, community radio contributes to social inclusion, education, civic participation, and local economic development.

Even though social gain is a key part of community radio's purpose, there remains no standardised approach to measuring or evidencing it. Social gain refers to the positive outcomes that community radio can generate for individuals and communities – such as improving skills and confidence, increasing community participation, giving a voice to underrepresented groups, and promoting social inclusion. The primary objective of the research, commissioned by Ofcom, was to develop a suggested approach which is practical for community radio stations to measure and demonstrate their social gain.

Research approach

To understand how community radio stations can measure and evidence their social gain, we adopted a mixed-method research approach. This began with a literature review and a sector-wide survey of Ofcom-licensed community radio stations to identify key challenges, gaps, and priorities around social gain measurement. Insights from this initial research informed the development of a set of practical tools and resources, which formed the outputs of the project.

Review of literature

The literature review revealed a rich and growing body of literature on community radio in international contexts, particularly in India and Australia. However, UK-specific studies remain limited. Importantly, the lack of published evidence on the social gain delivered by UK community radio should not be seen as evidence of a lack of impact — rather, it highlights the need for more robust and consistent approaches to measurement.

Insights from the sector survey also provide valuable context. Just over half of stations currently measure the social gain they deliver. However, expertise varies with only 25% considering themselves highly experienced. A similar proportion also lack formal training or experience in social gain measurement among staff and volunteers.

Stations also face a wide range of reporting requirements from funders — some request qualitative case studies, others seek structured outcomes data, and some do not specify how social gain should be evidenced. While certain funders focus on off-air benefits such as education or community engagement, others prioritise on-air reach or overall community benefit.

Operational constraints are a key challenge. Many stations rely heavily on volunteers and operate within tight financial limits. As a result, they often lack the time, staffing, or

resources to prioritise social gain measurement. Collecting feedback from listeners is a particular challenge, especially in the absence of dedicated roles or systems to support this work.

Evaluation guidance for stations

Drawing on the findings of the literature review and insights from the sector, we have developed five tools to help stations better understand, capture, and communicate the difference they make:

1. Listener Survey

Listener surveys help community radio stations understand their audience, assess engagement, and gather evidence of social outcomes such as connection to community, access to local information, and inclusion. The listener survey piloted for this research demonstrates the potential for this approach to capture insight into listener habits and the social benefits derived from listening. It also identifies support needs for stations to enable them to implement this approach effectively.

2. Volunteer Survey

Volunteers are central to community radio operations and social gain, yet their experiences are often not sufficiently captured in research and evaluation studies. A bespoke volunteer survey has been produced by this research to address this gap. The volunteer survey is a practical tool to measure the diverse contributions and personal outcomes of volunteering, including skill development, improved wellbeing, and enhanced community connection, while also supporting stations to strengthen volunteer support and inclusivity.

3. Case Study Template

A simple and flexible case study template has been created to help stations capture and communicate compelling stories of their social gain. Used at scale across the sector this has the potential to create a bank of case studies that can support more detailed thematic analysis across a range of social gain areas.

4. Social Value Calculator

In response to sector feedback, a simple and accessible social value calculator has been created to help community radio stations quantify and communicate their social gain using credible and nationally recognised valuation techniques. The calculator uses selected measures drawn from the National Social Value Measurement (TOMS) Framework¹ to ensure consistency and economic valuation of activities related to local skills and employment and third sector support.

5. Theory of Change

A high-level Theory of Change has been provided to show how community radio activities lead to broader social outcomes like community cohesion, employability, and civic

¹ The TOMS Framework — standing for Themes, Outcomes, and Measures — is a widely used approach developed by the Social Value Portal to help organisations measure and report on the social value they create.

participation. This draws on the evidenced presented in the literature review and aims to aid stations in articulating the social outcomes and social benefits they create.

Implementation and legacy

Implementation of any of the options or adoption of the suggested tools will require agreement within the sector on how this is taken forward. Some of the tools and approaches outlined in this research have financial implications. Technical expertise and capacity will also be required to support efforts to collate and analyse data collected by individual stations.

Given the gaps in the current evidence base there is a strong case for securing research funding or grant support to build on this research to deepen an understanding of the social gain delivered by the sector, and to further test and refine the tools and guidance developed.

1. Introduction

Community radio stations play an important role in providing a voice to local communities across the UK. They serve as a platform for underrepresented groups, encouraging local identity, culture, and social engagement. These stations are operated largely by volunteers and offer a unique mix of locally-produced content that reflects the diverse interests and needs of their target communities. Beyond entertainment, community radio contributes to social inclusion, education, civic participation, and local economic development.

Ofcom's regulatory framework for community radio, outlined in the Communications Act 2003 and the [Community Radio Order 2004](#), and most recently updated by the [Community Radio Order 2025](#), requires stations to deliver 'social gain', namely tangible benefits to individuals and communities beyond commercial interests. This includes offering training, sharing local news, creating opportunities to volunteer, or helping people get involved in their local area.

Even though social gain is a key part of community radio's purpose, there remains no standardised approach to measuring or evidencing it. While terms such as social value, social benefit, and social impact are often used interchangeably with social gain. We align with Ofcom and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in advocating for consistent use of the term 'social gain' across the sector to promote clarity, comparability, and a shared understanding.

This research was led by Wavehill with support from a range of sector experts, drawing on established relationships and local knowledge to ensure relevance and sector engagement. This included collaboration with the UK Community Radio Network (UKCRN) who along with the Community Media Association (CMA) and the Welsh Community Radio Network, acted as a reference group offering feedback and advice throughout the project.

The group shared useful examples and evidence from their own work, and made sure the research approach reflected the real experiences of stations across the sector. The involvement of these organisations helped facilitate strong sector buy-in and reach. Specifically, they aided in:

- Facilitating reach to a wide range of community radio stations across the UK, resulting in a positive response rate to the sector-wide survey.
- Supporting recruitment to the Reference Group and helped facilitate engagement across the sector throughout the project.
- Contributing directly to the design and development of the social gain measurement framework, making sure it reflected the realities of station delivery.

The research team also included academic input from Dr Alison Hulme (Associate Professor at the University of Northampton), who led the review of existing evidence on the social gain of community radio. This input helped shape the theoretical foundation of the impact framework, grounding it in broader understandings of social gain within local media and community development.

1.1 Research Objectives

The primary objective of the research was to develop a suggested approach which is practical for community radio stations to measure and demonstrate their social gain. Despite its importance in funding applications and efforts to increase community participation, there is currently no standard framework for evaluating social gain within the community radio sector.

This research aimed to fill that gap by identifying meaningful and adaptable methods that stations of all sizes can use if they choose. It should however be noted that the approaches suggested are not intended as a definitive guide to direct how community radio stations should go about demonstrating social gain. The report intends to showcase some of the ways stations can measure social gain and can be used to inform the development of alternative methods if stations choose. The research was delivered between January and April 2025. Specifically, the research sought to:

1. Understand Current Practices

- Identify how community radio stations define, measure, and report social gain.
- Explore the challenges stations face in capturing their social gain, including resource constraints and methodological difficulties.

2. Propose Measurement and Evaluation Approaches

- Provide a basis for a framework by which community radio stations can demonstrate the social gain they create. The research has focused on the following approaches:
 - **Listener survey** used to assess audience reach, engagement, and perceived benefits.
 - **Volunteer evaluation methods** to measure skills development, confidence, and employability outcomes.
 - **Standardised case study template** to document and showcase social gain examples.
 - A **social value calculator** to quantify social benefits in monetary terms where possible.²
 - **Literature review document** to provide an advocacy and reference resource for community radio stations.

² We refer to this as the 'social value' calculator as the national TOMS framework refers to 'social value'. However, it is recommended that the term 'social gain' is used in line with Ofcom and DCMS guidance, promoting consistency across the sector, and is therefore used throughout the report unless referring to the social value calculator.

Community radio stations will be aware that all data collection and processing should comply with relevant data protection regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Stations using these tools are encouraged to ensure appropriate consent processes, data security measures, and privacy notices are in place where required.

1.2 Research Approach

To develop an understanding of how community radio stations can measure and evidence their social gain, a mixed-method approach was adopted, including:

1. **Sector-wide Survey** – 370 Ofcom-licensed community radio stations were invited to complete a survey designed to gather insights into how they currently assess their social gain, the types of social gain they deliver, and the challenges they face in measuring and reporting social gain.

A total of 104 responses were received, representing a 28% response rate. To support the distribution of the survey the research team disseminated a [press release](#) to the sector. This was shared widely through online platforms and sector bodies, namely the Community Media Association (CMA), the Welsh Community Radio Network (WCRN), and the UKCRN. This helped raise awareness of the project and encouraged participation from stations across the UK.

2. **Listener Survey** – four stations were selected to distribute a pilot of a listener survey, helping to capture the perspectives of audiences on the role and value of community radio in their lives. These stations were chosen based on their responses to the sector-wide survey, demonstrating both a strong existing approach to measuring social gain and a willingness to actively contribute further to the research. The research questions and the data analysis of responses collected through the listener survey can be viewed respectively in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) of this report.

The first two elements listed above—the sector-wide survey and the listener survey—formed part of the research approach used to gather evidence and insights, while the remaining items (volunteer evaluation tools, case study template, and social value calculator) are outputs developed as part of the resulting toolkit for stations:

3. **Volunteer Evaluation Tools** – A set of volunteer evaluation questions were developed that stations can use to track the impact of their training and engagement opportunities on volunteers' skills, confidence, and employability.
4. **Case Study Template** – A standardised case study framework was also created to help stations document and showcase real-world examples of how they contribute to social gain.
5. **Social Value Calculator** – Drawing on existing social value methodologies and platforms, a bespoke social value calculator was produced as a tool to help stations quantify aspects of their social gain in monetary terms. This aims to make it easier for community radio stations to communicate their value to funders and/or wider stakeholders.

1.3 Methodological Notes

The sector-wide survey received a strong level of response, providing valuable insight into current practice of community radio stations in measuring social gain across the UK. The listener survey had a lower response rate than hoped partly due to the limited timeframe available to collect responses. While it still provided useful insights and valuable learning from the stations involved, its main purpose was to test the tool and demonstrate what it could offer, rather than to collect representative data.

Similarly, the research timeframes limited how many impact case studies could be produced. The focus of these was to show the potential of the template and how it could be used by stations, rather than to build a complete evidence base. While some data was collected through these activities, the main aim was to demonstrate how stations might use these tools in future, rather than to influence the core findings of the research.

1.3.1 Definitions and terms

The purpose of this research was to develop practical guidance to enable radio stations to measure and demonstrate their social gain. As set out in the Community Radio Order 2025, social gain means the achievement, in respect of the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives:

- a) the provision of sound (audio) broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise under served by such services,
- b) the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion,
- c) the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and
- d) the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

It may also include the achievement of other objectives of a social nature, including, but not limited to:

- a) the delivery of services provided by local authorities and other services of a social nature and the increasing, and wider dissemination, of knowledge about those services and about local amenities;
- b) the promotion of economic development and of social enterprises;
- c) the promotion of employment;
- d) the provision of opportunities for the gaining of work experience;
- e) the promotion of social inclusion;
- f) the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- g) the promotion of civic participation and volunteering.

However, other terms are also used to refer to comparable gains, most notably social value, public value and social benefit. Whilst these terms are often used interchangeably, it is helpful for community radio stations to understand the distinction between these, in particular where these are referred to specifically by prospective funders and investors.

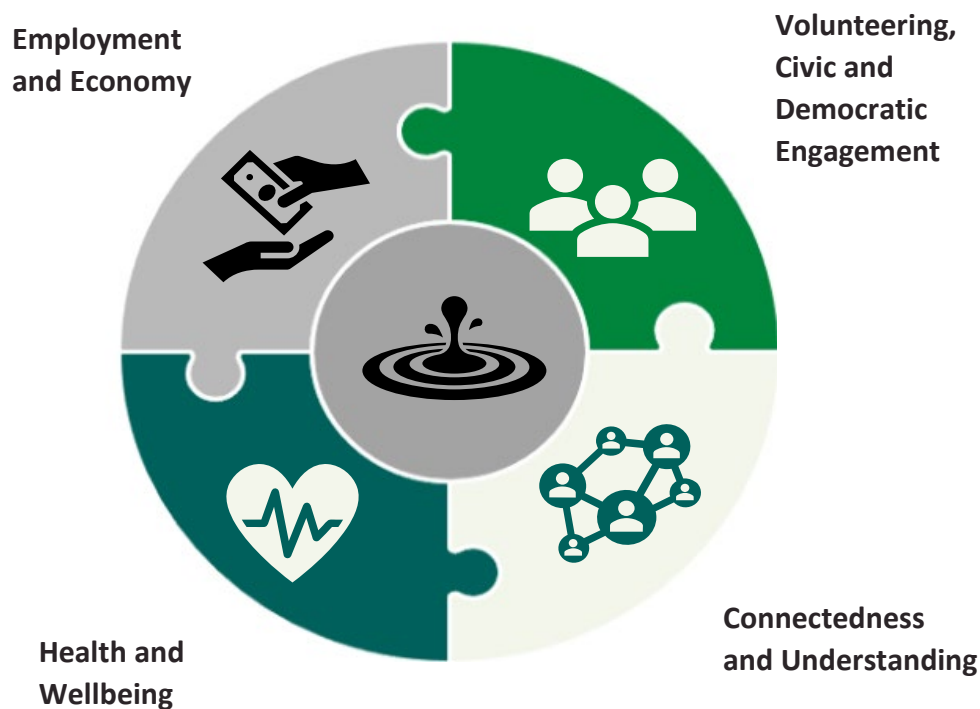
- **Social Value:** includes all significant costs and benefits that affect the welfare and wellbeing of the population, not just market effects. For example, environmental, cultural, health, social care, justice and security effects are included. ([HM Treasury Green Book 2022](#))
- **Social Benefit:** benefits to individuals or collective actors in the community that enhance their lives socially, culturally or economically, or in terms of development, empowerment and/or well-being, that otherwise would not have come about. ([Nexus Research Cooperative](#))
- **Social Cost-Benefit Analysis (SCBA):** is a way of expressing the value of a proposed government policy to society. It seeks to express the full social costs and full social benefits of policies in monetary terms so that the consequences of a diverse range of policies can be compared using a common metric. The full social costs and benefits extend beyond the financial consequences of the policy. Wider social and environmental impacts must be brought into the assessment as far as possible. These wider impacts are often much more difficult to assess. The full value of goods such as health, family and community stability, educational success, and environmental assets cannot simply be inferred from market prices. ([Valuation Techniques for Social Cost-Benefit Analysis](#)).

An awareness of The [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act \(2013\)](#) is also helpful for community radio stations seeking to secure financial support from public sector organisations. The Act requires all public sector organisations and their suppliers to look beyond the financial cost of a contract to consider how the services they commission and procure can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area.

2. Background and Context

This section of the report presents an overview of the published literature. It is intended to provide a resource for community radio stations to use and reference in applications to funders and investors. The implementation of the tools and approaches outlined in the report may provide opportunities to contribute to this evidence base in a coordinated and systematic way. There is a rich and growing body of literature on community radio outside of the UK, with studies and commentaries from the Indian and Australian contexts being particularly prevalent. However, literature relating specifically to community radio in the UK is sparse in comparison. Notable exceptions in recent years include [‘Listening Locally Across the UK’](#) and [Marsh’s \(2020\)](#) study of the impact of small-scale digital audio broadcasting. The evidence base is structured into four key themes as outlined in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Social gain provided by community radio



2.1 Literature Review

Despite being conducted over a decade ago, the [Scottish Government's \(2010\)](#) study is enlightening, and although not UK-based, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's (2020) report '[Community Radio: Delivering Social Benefit](#)' is also very useful and relatable to the UK context. Most of the existing articles and studies that are based on the UK context, tend to focus on a specific aspect of community radio, such as its ability to address issues of well-being, as opposed to providing case studies of particular stations. This is in contrast to the rich variety of studies to be found based on specific community radio stations in India, Australia, and to some extent the United States.

2.1.1 Theme: 1. Employment and Economy

Many community radio stations in the UK offer training and work experience opportunities. Community radio projects enable community members to learn new skills in technical, administrative, journalistic and creative areas. There is anecdotal evidence that such opportunities often lead to paid employment and careers both within and outside of the radio industry. More broadly, work from outside of the sector highlights the valuable contribution that quality work experience provides to supporting social mobility and enabling talent to thrive ([Waite et al., 2024](#)).

There is some evidence that radio more generally is effective in reconnecting young people specifically to education and employment. In the UK context, [Podkalicka and Staley's \(2009\)](#) research with Youthworx shows how through gaining valuable media skills, young people are empowered to become more active citizens. [Bloustien, et al \(2008\)](#) reach similar conclusions in the context of Australia. Therefore, part of the work of this report, is to help community radio stations to demonstrate the link between the opportunities offered, information provided by community radio, and an increase in paid employment on the part of listeners and volunteers.

This highlights community radio's potential as a trusted pathway into employment, skills development, and social mobility—especially for individuals facing barriers to more traditional forms of training or work.

2.1.2 Theme: 2. Health and Wellbeing

There are various ways in which community radio can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of community members. Firstly, community radio stations can play a crucial and hyper-local role in disseminating health information. As the '[Listening Locally](#)' report shows, trust in health information heard on community radio is high, but importantly, so is the likelihood of acting upon it compared to when it is heard elsewhere. The same has been found in the US context (see [Smith et al, 2011](#)). Community stations are in a unique position to use the trust factor they have, to build links between the public and healthcare providers where they do not currently exist.

Secondly, community members' health can be improved by simply going to social events advertised by the station. This helps to combat social isolation and build a sense of place. This comes through very strongly in the Australian context (see [Meadows & Foxwell, 2011](#)), and more recently in the UK context (see [Hulme, 2024](#)). There is a body of research which explores the social value of community events, to which the community radio sector provides a strong contribution. Examples include the literature review on the social value of community events ([Smith et al., 2021](#)) and the 'Power of Events' report ([Vine & Oveson, 2024](#)) both commissioned by Spirit of 2012.

Finally, being involved in the running of the station can be a rich source of social interaction and cohesion that can create enormous benefit to health and well-being. See for example the NCVO (National Council of Voluntary Organisation) 'Time Well Spent' report ([Jochum et al., 2019](#)), which finds that over three-quarters of volunteers (77%) reported that volunteering improved their mental health and wellbeing. This benefit was more widespread than physical health benefits, but they also stood at a very positive level (53%).

Community radio supports health and wellbeing not only by sharing trusted local health information, but also by fostering social connection and volunteer participation that combat isolation and enhance mental wellbeing.

2.1.3 Theme: 3. Volunteering, Civic, and Democratic Engagement

There is a wealth of evidence that proves the positive impact of volunteering on both those individuals who undertake it and for society more generally ([Jochum et al., 2019](#)). There is no reason to think that this is any different when it comes to volunteering at a community radio station. One good example is [Kyneswood's \(2014\)](#) study of 14 young volunteers broadcasting at a UK community radio station, who he engaged with for three months using blogs and group interviews at regular intervals. The focus of the study was on volunteering and learning, highlighting how young volunteers actively influenced their own learning through the ways they chose to participate. It also found that both the people they interacted with, and the physical environment played a significant role in shaping their learning experiences.

This suggests that volunteering at a community radio station provided a certain amount of empowerment for the volunteers as they were clearly able to act to shape their learning. Community radio stations are run largely by volunteers so the positive social gain in this area is huge, but as yet un-measured in quantitative terms. Other studies have also shown the effectiveness for learning when it comes to youth participation in media.

Particularly useful is [Chávez and Soep's \(2006\)](#) research in which they introduce the concept 'pedagogy of collegiality' to describe the process through which young people work alongside peers and adults with shared purpose. They argue such partnerships can enable young people to create their own cultural representations. Similarly, [Kranich and Patterson \(2008\)](#) argue such partnerships in media projects, can generate authentic opportunities for leadership roles for young people across communities.

Links have also been established between listening to and being involved in community radio and positive civic and democratic engagement, especially in the Indian context. [Gaynor and O'Brian \(2017\)](#) feel less has been done in the Irish context but that there is huge potential for community radio to have positive impact in terms of the participation in civic and democratic practices and processes that it could galvanise. The same may well be true for the UK.

This evidence underscores community radio's unique capacity to foster civic participation, learning, and empowerment through meaningful volunteering—particularly among young people—while highlighting a need for further measurement of its broader democratic impact.

2.1.4 Theme: 4. Connectedness and Understanding

In general terms, a link has been established between community radio and a sense of connectedness and understanding between community members. The Listening Locally study found that the majority of respondents felt listening to local community radio improved their cultural understanding. It showed that 43% agreed, and 13% strongly agreed with the statement 'Listening to local radio has made me understand the perspectives of other people better than I did before' - proving that community radio can be part of working towards a harmonious community ([Hulme, 2024](#)). This has direct relevance for policy objectives to build social capital. Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has shown that higher levels of social capital are beneficial and can be associated with better outcomes in health, education, employment and civic engagement ([OECD, 2021](#)).

As outlined in an evidence review conducted by the [Centre for Thriving Places \(2022\)](#), relationships matter for our individual and community wellbeing. At an individual level, feeling close to others is a core component of personal subjective wellbeing and mental wellbeing. Factors such as a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood can help protect from the effects of loneliness. At a community level, factors for 'being well together' are where we live (place), our relationships (people) and governance (power). Relationships are about the strength of networks and support between people in a community. At a national level, having someone to rely on in times of trouble is associated with high wellbeing nations.

Based on her research at youth-led community radio stations, Wilkinson discusses how certain local voices are prioritised on air, while others are silenced. She argues that by engaging hyper-diverse groups of young people in meaningful interactions around a shared interest, community radio develops relationships across cultural difference ([Wilkinson, 2019](#)). Peterson too, argues that community radio can make communities more cohesive, because it provides spaces for meaningful encounters in which diversity is safely negotiated ([Peterson, 2016](#)).

Evidence from Australian studies show how community radio enables young people, in particular, to 'locate themselves more fully in the social and cultural fabric' of their local area ([Baker, 2007](#)). [Bloustien \(2007\)](#) points to the ways in which young people discover new forms of networking and collaboration through involvement with community media, making it possible for them to have a greater sense of inclusion in social, familial and cultural activities. This means that through community radio, young people are negotiating marginalisation by developing new communities, new practices, and finding new ways to feel a sense of belonging.

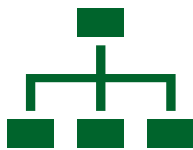
In addition to aiding harmonious communities, there is also compelling evidence that community radio has an impact not only on the perception of marginalised groups within communities, but on their ability to have greater autonomy over the representations of themselves. For example, [Moylan \(2018\)](#) found that community radio not only speaks to the local community whose members produce it, but also to other local (and marginalised) communities. It is therefore able to articulate a wider, transnational perspective.

Moylan argues community radio not only enables a voice for hyper-local and marginalised communities but also enables them to challenge mainstream depictions of their communities. This is because it can 'facilitate and produce alternative articulations of identity and experience, which, in turn, negotiate and challenge normative discursive framings of race which otherwise dominate UK mainstream media'. This is crucial when it comes to recognising local content, created by local community members, that can reflect not only who they are, but who they are in the context of mainstream images of 'them'.

Community radio fosters deeper connectedness, cultural understanding, and a stronger sense of belonging—particularly for marginalised and diverse groups—while offering a powerful platform to challenge mainstream narratives and build inclusive, cohesive communities.

3. Insights from the Sector

This section presents the **key insights from our sector survey**. It highlights the experiences, challenges, and priorities identified by community radio stations. The findings provide insights into how stations are currently measuring social gain, the barriers they face in doing so, and the support they feel would strengthen their measurement of social gain. These insights have fed into the development of our evaluation guidance. The full sector survey can be found in [Appendix 3](#).



Organisational structure

Community radio stations vary widely in organisational structure. The majority of those responding to the survey operate as Community Interest Companies or Companies Limited by Guarantee.



Social gain measurement

Just over half of stations currently measure social gain. However, expertise varies with only 25% considering themselves highly experienced. Just over half also lack formal training or experience in social gain measurement among staff and volunteers.



Funder requirement

Stations report a wide range of requirements from funders, from qualitative case studies to structured outcomes data. While some funders focus on off-air social gain (e.g., education, community engagement), others value on-air reach or show no preference, provided community benefit is demonstrated.



Time and capacity pressures

Most community radio stations lack the time, funding, and staffing to prioritise social gain measurement, with many relying heavily on volunteers and operating within tight financial restrictions.



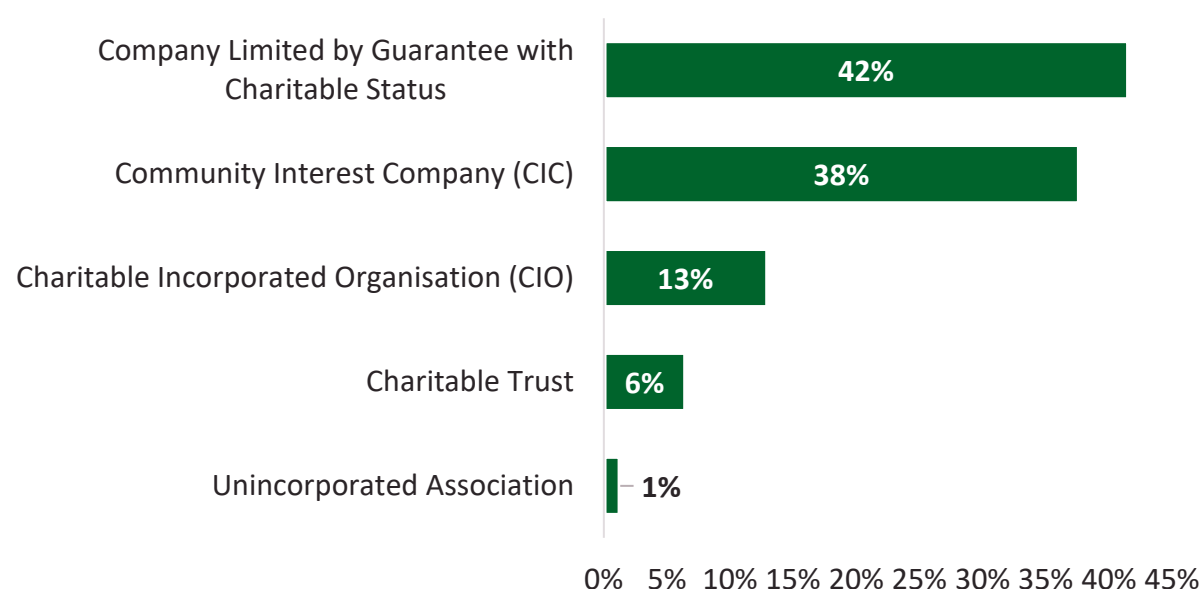
Listener feedback

Gathering feedback from listeners is a key challenge, especially without dedicated roles or systems. Hard-to-reach groups face additional barriers such as digital exclusion, language, and accessibility issues.

3.1 Station Types

The survey findings reveal a diverse range of community radio stations in terms of their organisational structures and affiliations. Figure 3.1 shows that most stations (55%) are registered charities,³ **38% of respondents indicated that they are Community Interest Companies, and 6% are Charitable Trusts.** This highlights that many Ofcom-licensed community radio stations operate with a charitable focus. As such they already provide an annual report outlining their charitable objectives as part of their reporting to the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in Scotland or the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. This may be an **untapped resource for evidencing the social gain** offered by those stations.

Figure 3.1 Organisation type



Source: Wavehill Sector Survey. N=77

Regarding organisational structure, **most stations (88%) are standalone entities**, with only 11% operating as part of a wider parent company. This suggests that most community radio stations retain a high degree of independence. Finally, **67% of stations stated that they are affiliated with trade bodies such as the CMA, UKCRN, or Wales CRN**, indicating a strong connection to sector networks. This may present an opportunity in terms of future options to implement the approaches outlined in this report across the sector.

3.2 Delivering Social Gain

Drawing on responses to the sector survey, this section explores how community radio stations are delivering social gain. This includes both on-air and off-air activities.

³ This includes Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status and Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which are both registered as charities.

3.2.1 On Air Activities

Providing local news and information



Many stations act as trusted sources of hyper-local news, offering community updates, event listings, and interviews with local decision-makers. During times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, stations have been relied upon to deliver accurate, essential information tailored to their communities' needs.

Broadcasting to underserved communities



Community radio stations are important in reaching audiences often overlooked by mainstream media. Many stations cater to diverse communities, such as multicultural populations, older listeners, or those with disabilities, providing programming in community languages and covering topics that reflect local concerns and identities.

Reducing isolation and promoting wellbeing



Loneliness and social isolation are key concerns addressed by community radio. Stations provide companionship, especially for older listeners and those unable to attend religious services or community events. Programmes featuring nostalgic music, informal conversations, and well-being content help to encourage connection and support mental health.

Supporting local arts and culture



Many community radio champions local musicians, theatre, poetry, and visual arts, offering exposure that mainstream outlets often overlook. Stations showcase live performances, celebrate cultural events, and even hand over programming to arts organisations, reinforcing their role as a hub for creativity and local heritage.

Addressing community issues



Many stations act as a platform for tackling important local and social issues. From mental health awareness and financial advice to housing support and public health campaigns, radio programmes provide information and guidance that directly impact listeners' lives. Some stations have been recognised for their efforts in promoting social cohesion and challenging extremism.

3.2.2 Off-Air Activities

Volunteering



Many community radio stations offer training and volunteer opportunities to local people, particularly those seeking work experience or media careers. This includes offering training in broadcasting, event management, journalism and technical skills. Volunteers are actively involved in all aspects of station operations, from presenting shows to managing content and supporting community events.

Outreach and community engagement



Community radio stations actively engage with local communities through outreach programs and off-air events. These initiatives often involve collaboration with charities, local councils, and service providers. By hosting events, workshops, and awareness campaigns, stations strengthen their connection with the public, encouraging a sense of belonging and support for local causes.

Events and fundraising



Many community radio stations organise events, roadshows, and fundraising activities that bring people together and generate support for local causes. These events not only raise awareness but also create opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.

Partnerships and collaboration



Community radio stations often form valuable collaborations and partnerships with local organisations, charities, schools, and businesses to enhance their social gain. These partnerships enable stations to access resources, share expertise, and broaden their reach within the community.



Youth engagement and education

Some radio stations have developed strong relationships with educational institutions, offering placements for students interested in media and broadcasting. These partnerships not only provide valuable work experience but also help young people develop their confidence and skills.

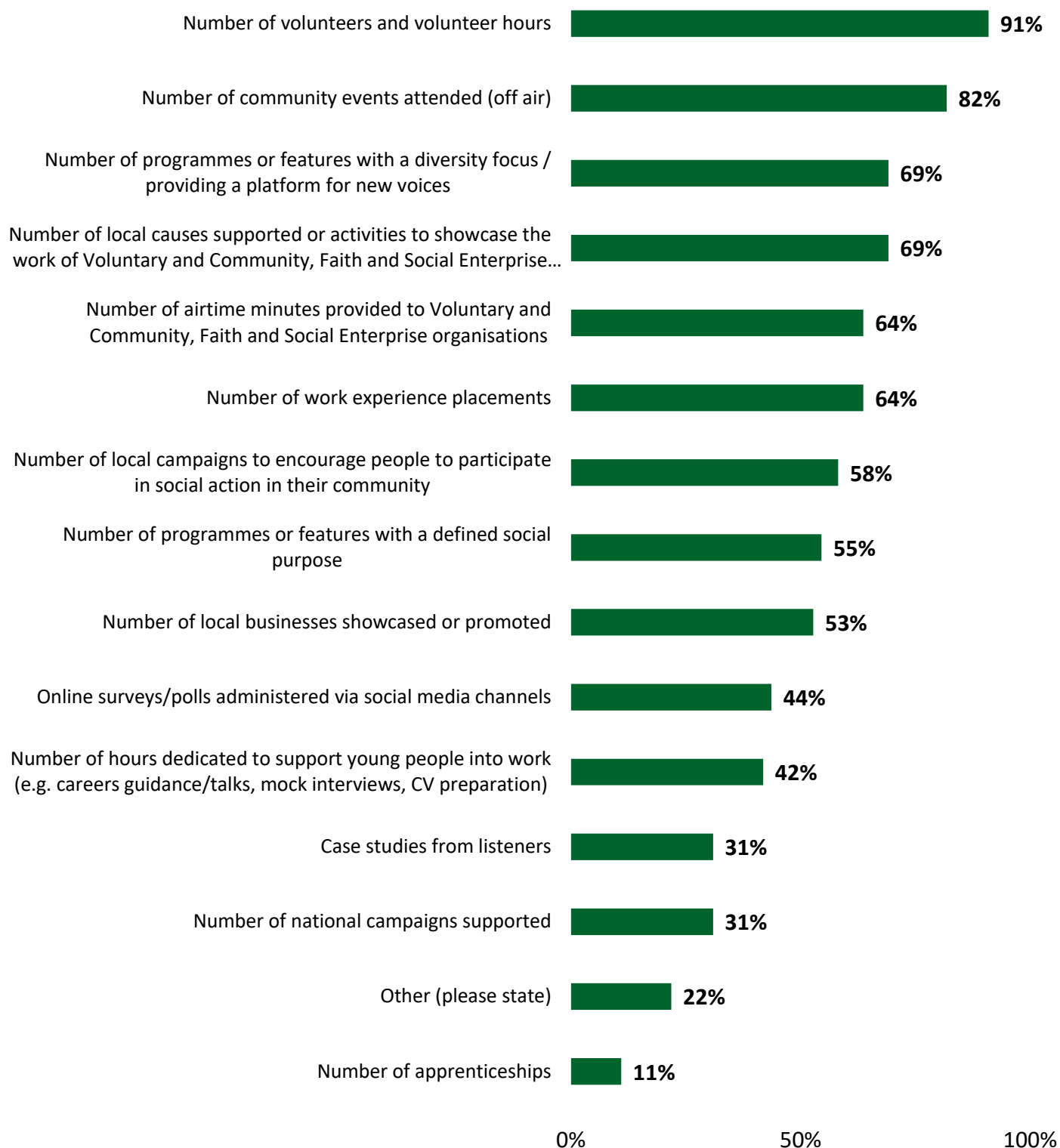
3.3 Current measurements of social gain

The findings highlight a mixed landscape in terms of community radio stations' experience and capacity to measure social gain. **The majority (56%, 55/99) of stations indicate that they do currently measure the social gain** delivered for the communities they serve. However, 34% (34/99) do not, and 10% (10/99) are unsure. This suggests that while many stations recognise the importance of evaluating their impact, a high proportion either lack the mechanisms to do so or have yet to establish formal processes. This **reinforces the value of creating a framework** to guide and support Ofcom-licensed community radio stations in measuring and evaluating the social gain or benefit they create.

Among the stations that do measure their social gain, a wide range of approaches are used. As shown on Figure 3.2 over page, the most common methods include **tracking the number of volunteers and volunteer hours (91%), attending community events (82%), and supporting local causes or showcasing the work of voluntary and community organisations (69%)**. Many stations also focus on providing platforms for underrepresented voices, with **69% tracking the number of programmes or features dedicated to diversity and new voices**.

Other widely used approaches include: measuring the number of work experience placements (64%); airtime minutes provided to voluntary and community organisations (64%); and local campaigns encouraging community participation (58%). While some stations use quantitative measures, such as counting the number of local businesses showcased (53%) or programmes with a defined social purpose (55%), others employ qualitative methods, such as case studies from listeners (31%) or online surveys and polls (44%).

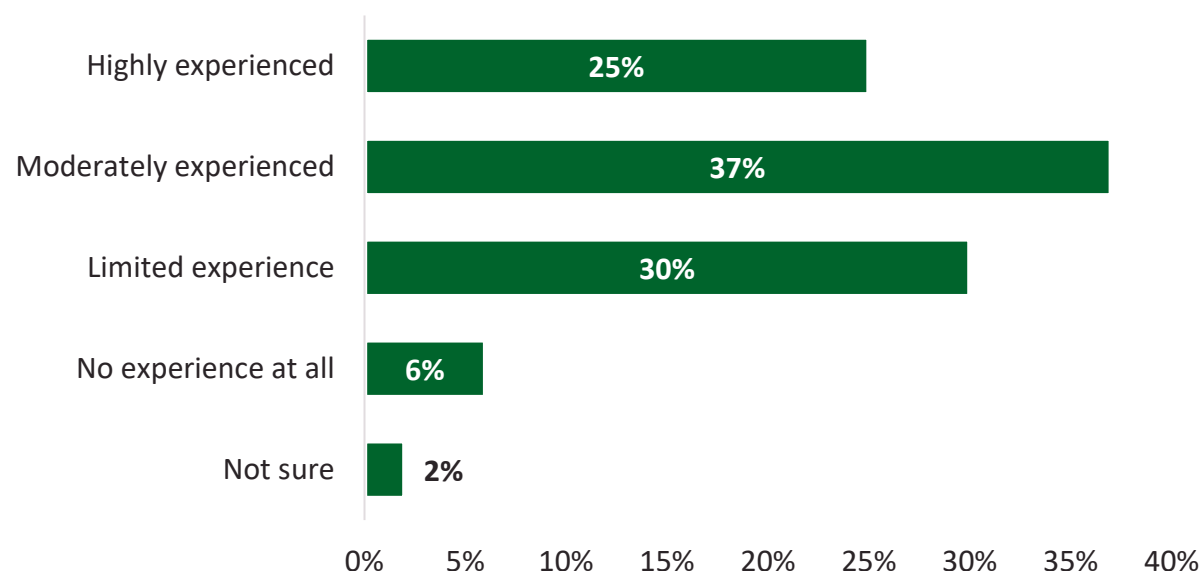
Figure 3.2. How stations measure their social gain



Source: Wavehill Sector Survey. N=55

Despite these varied approaches, **the data suggests that expertise in measuring social gain remains uneven across the sector**. While 25% of respondents consider their station highly experienced in measuring social gain, **the majority report either moderate (37%) or limited (30%) experience** (Figure 3.3 below). This indicates that while there is a strong foundation of knowledge in some areas, many stations may require additional support to develop more robust evaluation methods.

Figure 3.3 How stations rated their experience in measuring social gain



Source: Wavehill sector survey. N=100

One key challenge appears to be a **lack of formal training in impact measurement**. More than half (56%) of respondents stated that neither staff or volunteers at their station had received training or had past experience in approaches to measuring social gain. This suggests that there is a need for capacity-building initiatives to support stations in adopting more effective and consistent evaluation practices.

3.3.1 Listenership Data

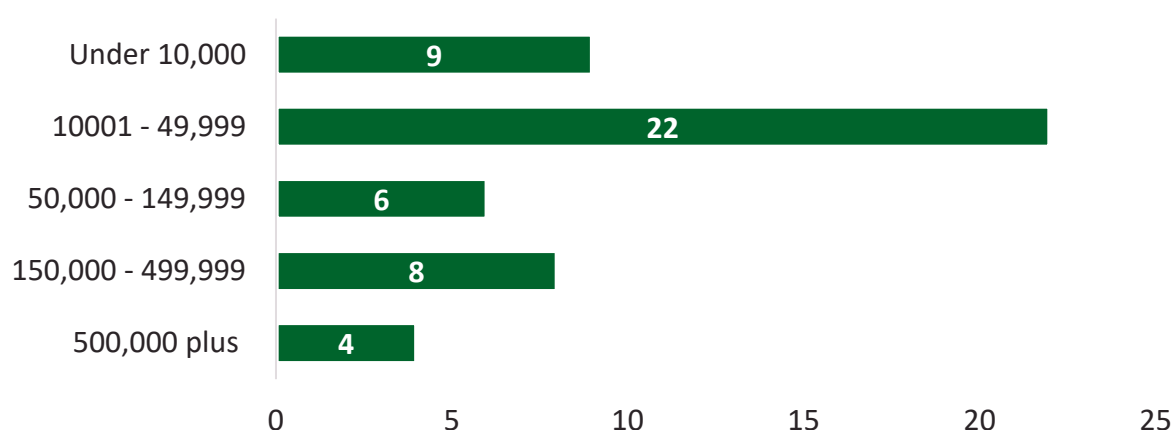
In the sector survey, 66% of respondents (56 stations) said they had some kind of estimate of their listenership, while 34% (29 stations) did not. This finding suggests that **while many stations are attempting to track their audience, they often use inconsistent methods or have limited confidence in their data**. In assessing how community radio stations are measuring the number and profile of their listeners, survey responses indicate that **most stations face challenges related to access to reliable data**.

Research indicates that community radio stations may face challenges or barriers in accessing formal audience measurement services such as [RAJAR](#). For example, Ofcom’s ‘Media Nations’ report states that one community radio station was subscribed to this service as of 2024.⁴ These perceived barriers limit the ability of stations to track their listener base in a standardised way. This is something that prospective funders and investors commonly ask for. As a result, many stations rely on a variety of non-standardised data sources, often through online streams, social media analytics, listener feedback, and occasional surveys.

1. **Online Data and Streaming Analytics:** Many stations have access to data from their online streams. This includes metrics such as daily, weekly, and monthly totals of listeners. Some stations track unique visitors, devices used for listening (e.g., smartphones, smart speakers), and geographic location. For example, some stations estimate their audience based on the number of “favourites” or followers on streaming platforms like TuneIn or social media. However, stations without an online presence or streaming platform lack such data. Stations that can track online activity often also analyse their listeners demographic data. This can include gender, age range, and ethnicity.
2. **Primary Data (Anecdotal and Survey):** Many stations collect anecdotal data from listener interactions through phone-ins, messages, and social media comments. Some stations conduct occasional listener surveys to understand engagement, though these are often limited in scope.

Figure 3.4 below illustrates the listenership figures of the 49 stations that provided data on their monthly audience numbers. Whilst the majority fall within the lower to mid-range brackets within our sample (22 stations reporting 10,001 – 49,999 monthly listeners), audience sizes ranged from under 10,000 to over 500,000 across the sample. The figures presented below reflect the variation in audience size across the community radio sector, shaped by differences in broadcast platform coverage, digital presence, and geographic scope.

Figure 3.4 Stations estimated number of listeners per month



Source: Wavehill sector survey. N=49

⁴ [Ofcom \(2024\)- ‘Media Nations: UK 2024’.](#)

3.3.2 Funder Requirements

Community radio stations report a wide range of experiences and requirements when it comes to evidencing social gain for funders. Whilst the survey asked stations to describe the funder requirements they encountered, some stations also described more informal expectations that were desired by funders. Stations report being asked to provide detailed data, such as the number of students or community groups attending activities, hours of participation, volunteer hours, and demographic information. Others face minimal or no formal reporting expectations. Listener numbers are frequently cited as a common request, especially from advertisers and public sector funders.

Some stations highlighted that funders accept qualitative evidence such as case studies, participant testimonials, or audio recordings, while others are asked for more structured evaluations, including progress reports, outcomes achieved, and learning from projects. The [National Lottery Community Fund's Young Start](#) programme and the [Bristol Impact Fund](#) were provided as examples of funders that requested more in-depth quarterly reporting on activities, participants, impact, and future plans to aid them in assessing impacts on a fund or programme level.

A number of stations, particularly those that operate on smaller budgets or those that rely on listener donations, sponsorship, or advertising revenue, report receiving little or no grant funding. As such they have limited experience with grant funders impact reporting requirements. For those who do engage with grant funders, evidence requested often includes governance documents, financial records such as bank statements or annual accounts, and indicators of community engagement such as the number of organisations featured on-air or events promoted.

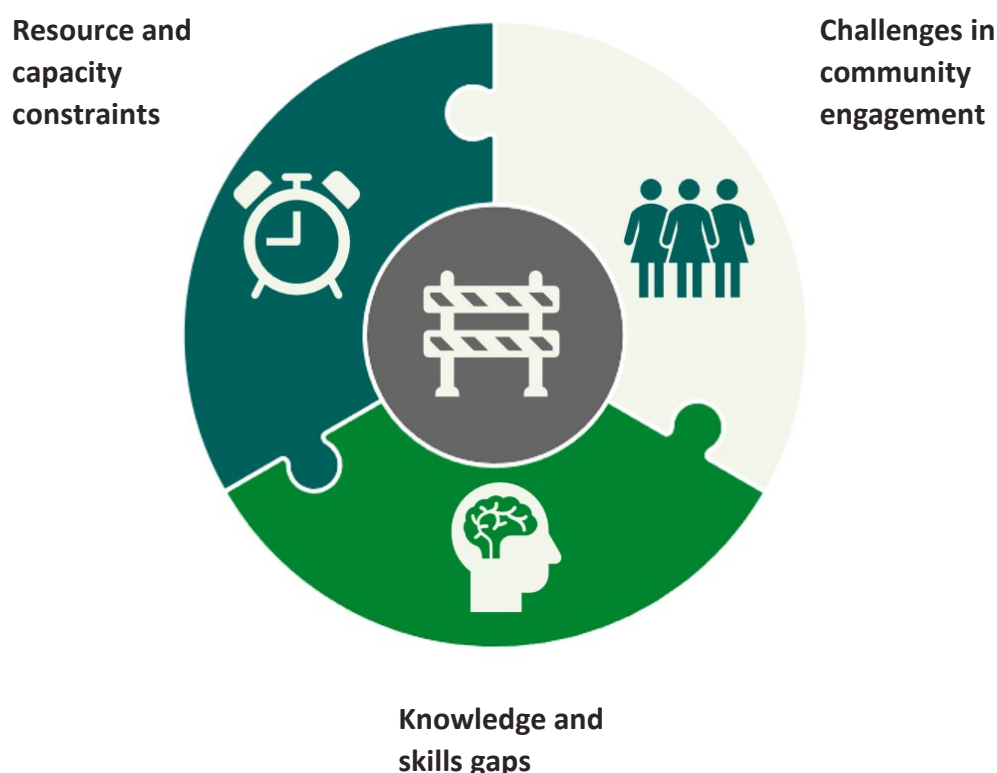
Some stations noted that certain funders, particularly local authorities, require specific educational or social gain data where funding is tied to defined learning outcomes. These can include evidence of improvements in literacy or digital skills, feedback from schools on the contribution to curriculum or attainment goals, and personal stories of progression into employment or increased self-confidence.

Stations reported mixed views on whether funders value on-air or off-air social gain more. Many respondents noted that this often depends on the nature of the funding or the specific priorities of the funder. While some funders do recognise the value of on-air content, respondents more commonly felt that off-air social gain—such as community engagement activities, educational projects, volunteer development, and in-person events—is more highly valued. These types of activities are often seen as easier to measure and more clearly aligned with funders' expectations of visible, people-focused outcomes. Others stated that funders tend to focus on on-air delivery, particularly where grants are linked to content production and audience reach. However, some stations noted that funders sometimes show no explicit preference between on and off-air outcomes as long as the station can demonstrate broader community benefit.

3.4 Barriers to Measuring Social Gain

The sector survey asked community radio stations about barriers they faced in measuring the social gain they deliver for the communities they serve. The main barriers are outlined in Figure 3.5 below with further detail outlined in the following sections.

Figure 3.5: Barriers to Measuring Social Gain



3.4.1 Resource Constraints

The most commonly reported challenge in measuring social gain is a lack of capacity. Stations are typically run by small teams or entirely by volunteers, many of whom are already stretched delivering day-to-day programming. With limited time, staff, and infrastructure, social gain measurement can often be deprioritised, even when stations recognise its value. This constraint is further exacerbated by a lack of dedicated funding, support and guidance.

Many stations operate on tight budgets and are subject to restrictions on the level of income they can generate. For example, income above £15,000 from advertising and sponsorship must be balanced with additional income from other sources. Following the introduction of the [Community Radio Order 2025](#), these restrictions have been removed for the vast majority of analogue community radio stations. Only a small number are still subject to a higher cap of £30,000 per year where their coverage overlaps with small independent commercial stations.

This regulatory change is intended to improve financial sustainability and may, over time, help stations allocate more resources to non-broadcast activities such as evaluation, data collection, and reporting. Nonetheless, many stations continue to face significant resource constraints, particularly those whose missions or circumstances limit their ability to increase commercial income.

3.4.2 Knowledge and Skills Gaps

A related barrier is the limited knowledge and skills around how to measure impact effectively. Stations frequently noted that they lack experience with research methods, data analysis, or the use of digital tools to track engagement. While there is strong interest in learning how to do this better, many stations expressed uncertainty about what social gain measurement entails and how to implement it in a practical way. This knowledge gap extends to the use of evaluation findings, with some stations reporting to be unsure how to interpret the data they collect or how to translate it into evidence for stakeholders, funders, or regulators. Some responses also pointed to a lack of self-confidence or willingness to engage in learning how to evaluate impact, particularly among individual volunteers.

Several stations highlighted the lack of a clear, shared definition of ‘social gain’ as a core issue. This included the often interchangeable use of terms including ‘social impact’, ‘social benefit’ and ‘social gain’. Without an agreed understanding of what is being measured, they noted it can be difficult to design or implement evaluation processes. We hope this report helps clarify the meaning of social gain and supports its consistent adoption by individual stations across the sector to promote shared understanding and stronger sector-wide impact.

Some also struggle with identifying appropriate and correct methodologies, or where to start in developing a measurement approach. Guidance or signposting was also identified as necessary to enable stations to select the right tools or approaches for their measurement objectives. Within this, whilst some tools and resource are free to use, others have a licence or user cost which can prove prohibitive for stations.

3.4.3 Challenges in Community Engagement

Stations noted that gathering feedback from listeners and communities in a structured and ongoing way is difficult without dedicated roles or systems in place. Many volunteers are primarily focused on content creation and may not have the time, confidence, or tools to facilitate meaningful engagement or track the outcomes of their work. As a result, the sector struggles to collect consistent, reliable data on its social gain, despite widespread recognition that such evidence could help stations better advocate for their value and secure long-term sustainability. Reporting on community engagement activities can commonly be restricted to estimates on the number of people attended specific events as opposed to the social gain and impacts derived from their attendance and participation.

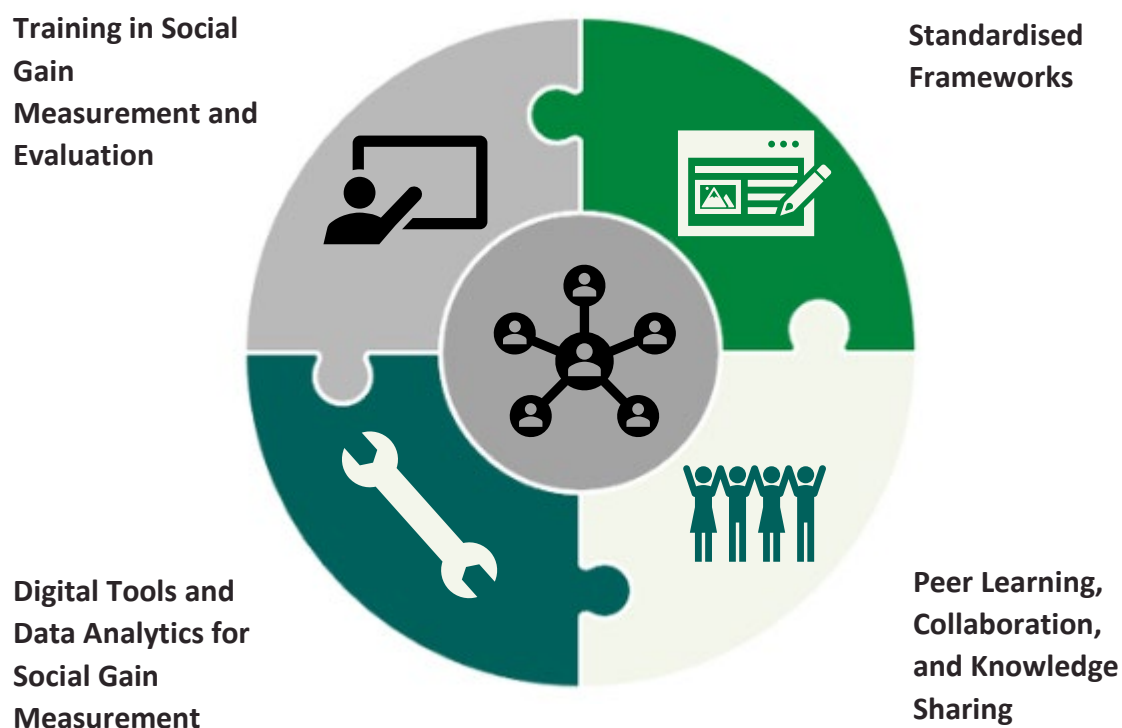
This is particularly true for hard-to-reach groups or communities with limited digital access. Barriers include unwillingness to participate, lack of time, and practical limitations like language, literacy, or accessibility issues.

Because community radio stations cover highly diverse audiences, spanning different ages, cultures, geographies, and needs, it is important that any tools or methods used to collect feedback are flexible and inclusive. Tailoring approaches to the specific contexts and communities that each station works with can help improve access, reduce barriers, and avoid data that skews toward the most easily reached groups. This in turn can lead to a more accurate and representative picture of each station's social gain.

3.5 Measuring Social Gain: Sector Needs

Responses from stations highlight strong interest in improving social gain measurement practice across the sector. Desired support includes a combination of structured training, accessible tools, industry-standard measurement frameworks, and additional resources to help stations to document their social gain without overwhelming their already stretched capacity. Importantly, stations also want opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing, ensuring that they are not working in isolation but benefiting from collective experience across the sector and with other sectors (for example the academic sector).

Figure 3.6: Support Needs in Measuring Social Gain



3.5.1 Training in Impact Measurement and Evaluation

Many stations noted that they need structured training in how to measure and evaluate social gain. This includes learning about both quantitative and qualitative research methods, such as surveys, depth interviews, focus groups, and case studies. There is also demand for practical workshops on how to collect, analyse, and present data in ways that effectively communicate the station's social gain. Some stations mentioned that while they already document aspects of social gain, they struggle with formalising and standardising their approach.

Further, social gain reporting training was frequently noted. This included translating findings into reports that are valuable to funders, stakeholders, and regulators. Stations want support in understanding how to turn their data into compelling evidence or advocacy that helps them to secure funding and income. They also need guidance on demonstrating compliance with Ofcom's requirements: under their licences, each station must provide a service which achieves the "social gain objectives" set out in its Key Commitments.⁵

3.5.2 Standardised Frameworks

Several stations expressed a need for a clear, industry-standard framework for measuring social gain. Many want guidance on how to meet Ofcom's social gain requirements ([Ofcom, 2024](#)), including best practices for documentation and reporting. A consistent, recognised methodology would provide clarity and ensure that all stations are working within an agreed-upon structure. This research aims to provide a foundation for a framework to support a more unified approach across the sector.

Some stations suggest that guidance or structured template would be useful, helping them record and report social gain in a way that aligns with regulatory expectations. Others note that without an agreed framework, stations may struggle to compare their impact or explain their value to external bodies, including funders and potential partners. A standardised framework would also provide opportunities to aggregate data at a sector level, which may support advocacy work by sector bodies to secure strategic investment at a sector-wide level.

In particular, strong evidence of community benefit could help secure and grow allocations from the [Community Radio Fund](#), and open up new funding streams from government departments other than DCMS. This could include the Department for Work and Pensions (through employment and skills outreach), Department for Health and Social Care (for public-health education), Department of Education (for youth and learning programmes), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (through community cohesion and housing support) and Ministry of Justice (via justice-sector inclusion initiatives). Demonstrating clear links between station activities and broader policy objectives, stations would better positions to make the case for strategic investment.

⁵ [Ofcom \(2024\)](#)

3.5.3 Digital Tools and Data Analytics for Social Gain Measurement

Many stations acknowledge the potential of **digital analytics tools** to help them in measuring social gain, but they need training and support in using them effectively. This includes:

- **Social media analytics** to assess audience reach and engagement.
- **Listener data tracking**, particularly on DAB+, where some stations struggle to measure listenership accurately.
- **Survey and feedback systems** to gather structured input from their audience.
- **Impact dashboards** that visually present social gain data in an accessible format.

Some stations already use tools like [Evide](#) software, while others require guidance on selecting and implementing the best platforms for their needs. The challenge for many is finding easy-to-use, cost-effective solutions that do not require significant additional resources to maintain or have prohibitive licence costs.

3.5.4 Peer Learning, Collaboration, and Knowledge Sharing

Stations expressed interest in collaborating with other stations, universities, or research organisations to develop best practices for social gain measurement. Peer learning networks were suggested to enable stations to share insights and methodologies. Others mentioned working with higher education institutions to access professional expertise and capacity in social gain assessment. Respondents suggested that co-created resources, sector networks, or funded pilot projects could help encourage a culture of shared practice around social gain measurement, reducing isolation and building confidence across the sector. There is a clear role for sector bodies to facilitate and support this.

4. Evaluation Guidance

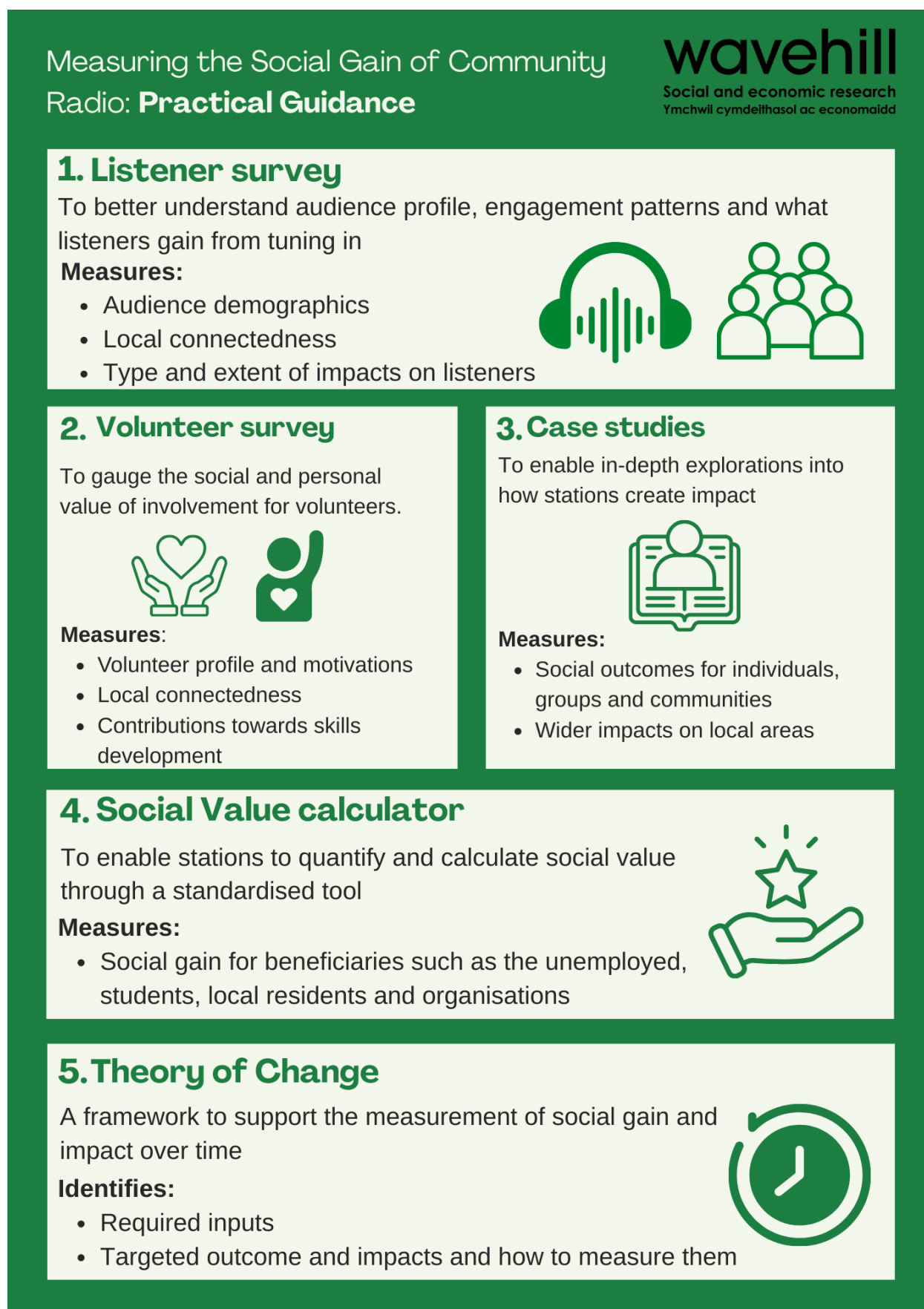
This section presents options for the sector to improve practice in measuring the social gain they deliver and in doing so to better position community radio stations to communicate their social gain to prospective funders and investors. **It responds directly to the themes outlined from the sector survey covered in the previous section.**

Summary points

- **Listener surveys** help community radio stations understand their audience, assess engagement, and gather evidence of social outcomes such as connection to community, access to local information, and inclusion. The listener survey piloted for this research demonstrates the potential for this approach to capture insight into listener habits and the social benefits derived from listening. It also identifies support needs for stations to enable them to implement this approach effectively.
- Volunteers are central to community radio operations and social gain, yet their experiences are often not sufficiently captured in research and evaluation studies. A bespoke **volunteer survey** has been produced by this research to address this gap. The volunteer survey is a practical tool to measure the diverse contributions and personal outcomes of volunteering, including skill development, improved wellbeing, and enhanced community connection, while also supporting stations to strengthen volunteer support and inclusivity.
- A simple and flexible **case study template** has been created to help stations capture and communicate compelling stories of their social gain. Used at scale across the sector this has the potential to create a bank of case studies that can support more detailed thematic analysis across a range of social gain areas.
- In response to sector feedback, a simple and accessible **social value calculator** has been created to help community radio stations quantify and communicate their social gain using credible and nationally recognised valuation techniques. The calculator uses selected measures drawn from the National Social Value Measurement (TOMS) Framework to ensure consistency and economic valuation of activities related to local skills and employment and third sector support.
- A high-level **Theory of Change** has been provided to show how community radio activities can lead to broader social outcomes such as community cohesion, employability, and civic participation. A Theory of Change is a visual and narrative tool that maps the pathway from activities to outcomes, helping to explain how and why change is expected to happen. This version draws on the evidence presented in the literature review and is intended to help stations clearly articulate the social outcomes and benefits they contribute to—both for internal reflection and for use in discussions with funders, partners, and stakeholders.

The infographic over page summarises the main components of the community radio social gain practical guidance.

Figure 4.1: Community radio practical guidance



4.1 Listener Survey

4.1.1 Rationale

Listener surveys can be a valuable tool for community radio stations to better understand who their audiences are, how they engage with content, and what difference the station makes to their lives.

By gathering information directly from listeners, stations can begin to evidence key aspects of their value: the extent and nature of their reach, how engaged audiences are with the station's output, and what outcomes are being experienced by communities as a result. This might include listeners feeling more connected to their local area, hearing voices and stories that reflect their own, accessing important local information, or learning new things through specialist programming.

Listener surveys are also a key way for stations to demonstrate their social gain externally. For funders and regulators, listener feedback can help to show how stations are delivering social gain and meeting their licence obligations.

4.1.2 Survey themes and questions

To better understand the social gain of community radio on individuals and communities, the listener survey was grounded in key themes that reflect the distinctive contribution of the sector. The questions were designed to align with Ofcom's social gain criteria ([Ofcom, 2024](#)), as well as broader goals around community development, local information-sharing, and wellbeing.

The survey was also informed by the literature review and sector survey, helping to ensure that it reflected both existing evidence and current priorities within the community radio landscape. The survey explored **five overarching themes**:

- Listening Habits and Engagement
- Motivation for Listening
- Connectedness and Understanding
- Access to Opportunities and Local Services
- Demographic Data

Further insight into each theme, in addition to example questions and their specific rationale, can be found in the Appendix.

4.1.3 Pilot Approach

A listener survey was developed and piloted with a sample of four community radio stations. These stations were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. To align with existing sector research, the survey drew on themes and questions from the '[Listening Locally](#)' survey by Dr Alison Hulme in collaboration with NLive Radio. The primary aim of the pilot was to test the survey process—assessing question clarity, digital delivery, and how well it integrated into station workflows—rather than to generate statistically robust findings. However, it successfully demonstrated the potential for a

standardised tool to capture listener perspectives on their engagement with community radio and its wider social and community gains.

Each participating station was asked to distribute the survey to their audience, reaching both on-air listeners and those engaging with offline content, through their usual communication channels, including email newsletters, on-air mentions, and social media platforms. To make this process as straightforward as possible, bespoke pre-prepared social media posts and accompanying images, tailored for X, Instagram, and Facebook, were provided for stations to adapt and share (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). This included suggested text designed to encourage participation and highlight the value of listener feedback.

Figure 4.2 Seahaven FM X/Twitter Social Media Post



Figure 4.3 Bro Radio Facebook Social Media Post



4.1.4 Listener Response

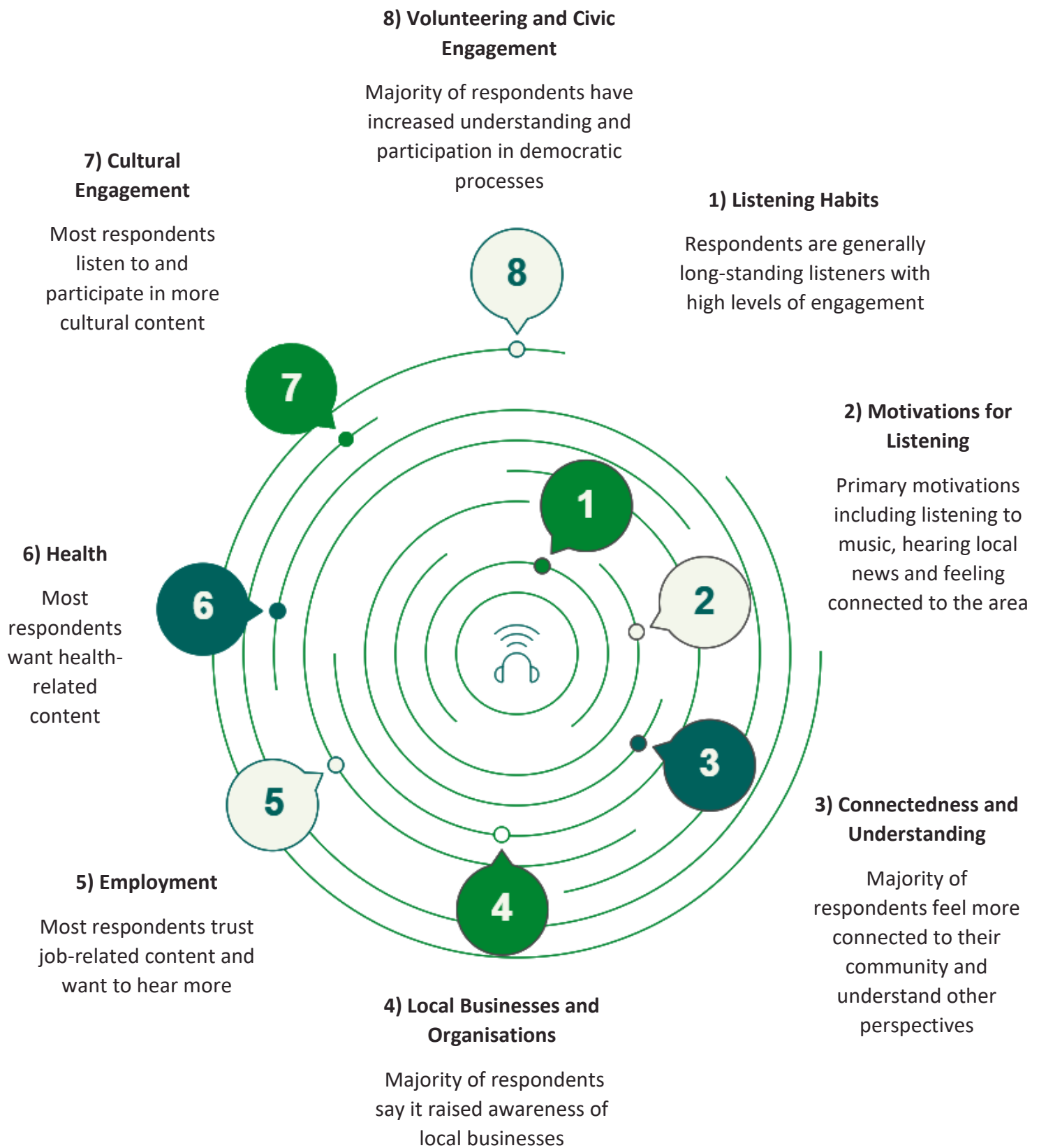
The pilot survey secured 28 responses across the four participating community radio stations. Only two of the four stations actively promoted the survey via their social media channels, which likely limited reach and engagement. Further, the survey was live for a relatively short period of three weeks, offering limited time to build momentum. Based on this experience, it is recommended to allow a longer timeframe of at least three months for future surveys, alongside a more structured promotion strategy that may include regular posts on social media and on-air mentions. This would help maximise visibility and improve response rates.

While the response rate to the pilot was lower than expected, the data collected still provides valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of community radio listeners. The responses reflect a range of voices and offer illustrative evidence of how community radio contributes to individual wellbeing, social connection, access to information, and a sense of belonging. These findings, though not statistically representative, help to demonstrate the tangible impact community radio can have on people's lives.

4.1.5 Headline Findings

This section presents key insights from our pilot listener survey. Despite the low response rate, the findings offer an example of the kind of rich, meaningful data that stations can collect from their audiences. The aim of this pilot was not to produce statistically representative data, but to test the survey tool and explore its potential for capturing demonstrable examples of social gain. The results give a sense of how listeners engage with their local station, what they value, and how stations contribute to individual wellbeing, community connectedness, and local development. Full details of the analysis are provided in [Appendix 2](#).

Figure 4.4: Summary of listener survey findings



1. Listening habits

- 89% of respondents (25/28) have been listening to their community radio station for over a year—highlighting long-standing audience loyalty.
- Two-thirds (18/28) of listeners tune in every day, and nearly all (96%) listen at least several times a week, showing that stations are an embedded part of daily routines.
- Half (13/26) follow their station on social media, 46% (12) have volunteered, and 31% (8) have actively contributed on-air—demonstrating high levels of engagement beyond listening.

2. Motivations for listening

- 82% (23/28) listen for music, making it the top reason for tuning in, but content value goes far beyond entertainment.
- 71% (20/28) rely on the station for hyperlocal news and information, and the same proportion tune in to hear about local events—confirming the station’s unique community role.
- 61% (17) listen to feel connected to their area, while 39% (11) cite companionship and relaxation—underlining emotional and social value.
- A strong participatory element is evident: 54% (15) listen to hear local voices, and 36% (10) use it to learn or join discussions.

3. Connectedness and Understanding

- 86% (24/28) feel more connected to their community due to the station, and 75% (21) report increased local pride and belief in collective action.
- 61% (17) say they’re more likely to get involved in local activities after listening, while 93% (26) feel more informed about local services.
- 61% (17) feel the station helps them better understand others’ perspectives, showing its role in promoting inclusion and empathy.

4. Local Businesses and Organisations

- 89% (25/28) say their station helped raise awareness of local businesses and organisations; 93% (26) found the information useful.
- 64% (18) acted on what they heard, and 82% (23) trusted local business content more when it came from the station.
- 41% (11/27) directly engaged with a business or organisation as a result—demonstrating the station’s power to drive real-world community and economic outcomes.

5. Employment

- 61% (17/28) want more employment or training content on-air, showing demand for support.
- 54% (15) have already received useful employment-related information via the station.
- 29% (8) gained an opportunity (e.g., job, skills training) directly as a result of listening—evidence of tangible outcomes for individuals.
- 54% (15) are more likely to trust or act on job-related information when it comes from their community station.

6. Health

- 81% (22/27) find or would find health-related content useful—showing strong audience appetite for health communication.
- 50% (13/26) gained useful health information via the station and were more likely to trust it over other sources.
- One-third (9/27) reported improved health due to content heard on the radio—highlighting potential for public health impact.

7. Cultural Engagement

- 82% (23/28) learned about local cultural, arts, or heritage events through their station.
- 68% (19) said listening increased their personal participation in arts and heritage activities.
- 68% (19) tune in specifically for arts or cultural content—demonstrating active cultural curiosity among listeners.

8. Volunteering, Civic and Democratic Engagement

- 64% (18/28) say listening motivated them to engage in decisions affecting their area.
- 64% (18) report increased understanding of how to participate in democratic processes due to the station.
- 62% (16/26) were inspired to consider or begin volunteering, and 69% (18) gained awareness of social causes—evidence of the station's power to foster civic and social action.

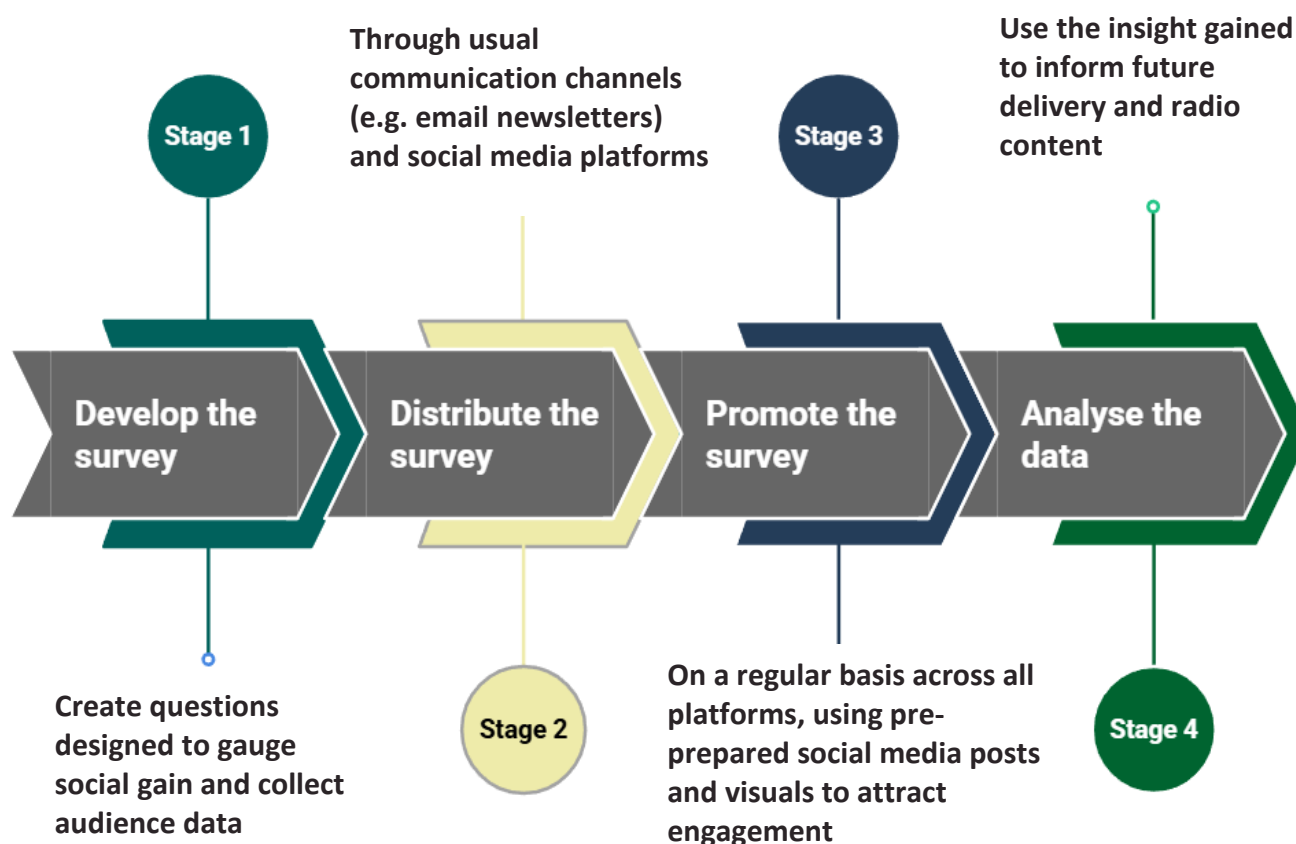
4.1.6 Recommendations for using listener surveys

When designed and used well, these surveys can provide rich insights into how stations support connection, learning, participation, and positive personal or community change. The following recommendations offer practical guidance for stations looking to develop or improve their own listener surveys as part of measuring and showcasing social gain. Community radio stations should ensure they comply with relevant data protection legislation when collecting and processing personal data through such surveys, including adhering to the requirements of the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act.

Recommendation 1: Promote the survey regularly

Listener surveys benefit from sustained promotion. In our pilot, response rates were lower than expected—partly because only half of the participating stations promoted the survey on social media, and the window for responses was just three weeks. **To gather a more representative and meaningful dataset, we recommend keeping surveys open for at least three months.** During this time, stations should post about the survey regularly across platforms, share it during relevant broadcasts, and encourage presenters, volunteers, and community partners to help spread the word.

Figure 4.5: Survey development and distribution process



Recommendation 2: Include questions aligned to social gain themes

Design surveys to capture responses across key areas of social gain, including:

- **Community connectedness** (e.g. feeling more connected, hearing local voices)
- **Access to local services** (e.g. health, employment, skills, cultural events)
- **Personal change** (e.g. increased confidence, awareness, volunteering)
- **Trust and action** (e.g. trusting and acting on information heard via the station)

Use simple, relatable language and include Likert scale questions (1–5) to measure depth of social gain. By using scales, you can also repeat the survey regularly to track changes over time

Recommendation 3: Ask about outcomes

Go beyond “Do you enjoy listening?” to “**What has changed** as a result of listening?” For example:

- Have you done something new because of the station?
- Has the station helped you learn, connect, or take action? This provides powerful evidence of social gain.

Recommendation 4: Use demographics to understand who you are reaching

Collect basic demographic info (age, gender, ethnicity, disability, location, income) to help:

- Track diversity of your audience
- Understand which groups benefit most
- Identify who might be underrepresented or underserved

Make these questions optional and clearly explain **why** you are asking them. A lack of sufficient clarification around the survey's purpose may lead to a decrease in the levels of trust held by listeners towards the service, and should be especially considered in the case of listeners from target demographics.

Recommendation 5: Use space for stories and qualitative feedback

Include one or two open-ended questions like:

- “Has the station made a difference to you personally? If so, how?”
 - “Can you share an example of something you’ve done or learned through the station?”
- These short written responses offer rich qualitative evidence to bring stats to life.

4.2 Volunteer survey

In 2023 there were over 20,000 volunteers in the community radio sector, with an average of 130 volunteer hours each week per station. The sector as a whole delivered training to over 7,000 volunteers in 2023.⁶ As outlined in the review of literature provided in this report, there is a wealth of evidence that proves the positive impact of volunteering on both those individuals who undertake it and for society more generally. To enable stations to better evidence the social benefits they generate for their volunteers, a volunteer survey was created to capture the experiences, contributions, and outcomes for volunteers working in the sector. The full volunteer survey can be found in [Appendix 5](#).

Volunteers are at the heart of community radio. Their roles, ranging from broadcasting and technical support to outreach and training, are central to stations operations and social gain. Yet, their voices are often underrepresented in formal reporting and evaluation. To ensure a more complete picture of the value community radio provides, it was important to provide guidance on how to gather direct insights from volunteers.

⁶ [Ofcom \(2024\) ‘Media Nations: UK 2024’](#).

The volunteer survey was designed to explore several key themes:



Motivations for volunteering and how volunteers first got involved with their local station.



Skills development and learning, including any training received and perceived benefits to employability or personal growth.



Wellbeing and social gain, such as increased confidence, sense of purpose, or reduced isolation.



Diversity and inclusion, helping us understand how inclusive and representative volunteer experiences are across different stations.



Feedback and ideas for improvement, giving volunteers a chance to reflect on their experience and how stations could further support or engage them.

Capturing this data at scale and encouraging stations to share their findings could enable the sector to build a clearer, collective picture of the volunteer base across community radio. This has particular value in supporting efforts to strengthen inclusion and diversity by helping stations understand whether their volunteer base reflects the communities and audiences they serve. It can also help to identify where there may be gaps or opportunities to broaden participation. Sector wide insights can also support shared learning, advocacy, and strategic development, enabling community radio to more effectively demonstrate its contribution to social value and inclusion.

Community radio stations should ensure they comply with relevant data protection legislation when collecting and processing personal data, including the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act.

4.3 Case Study Template

4.3.1 Rationale

The case study method allows stations to spotlight specific stories that illustrate how their work supports connection, inclusion, empowerment, and local identity. These stories can help demonstrate impact in ways that resonate with funders, stakeholders, and the wider public, especially when quantitative data is limited or when impact is personal or long-term. The use of case studies is recognised in the HM Treasury's Magenta Book, which provides central government guidance on evaluation.⁷ They can capture real-life situations in depth and detail and help understand complex phenomena. They work well in combination with or supplementing other methods, such as surveys and crucially can be regarded as an accessible research method for community radio stations.

Ten stations were contacted to request their consent to develop a case study. Consent was received from four stations. Responding directly to responses from the sector survey, a case study template was produced to assist stations in drawing together their work into a structured framework which can be shared with prospective funders and investors. The template was developed to enable a deeper, more narrative-based understanding of the social gain community radio stations have on their listeners, volunteers, and local communities.

The case study template was designed to be simple, flexible, and low-burden for stations to complete. It prompts stations to document who was involved, what happened, and what changed as a result, while encouraging them to include direct quotes and reflections from those impacted. The case study template sent to stations is shown over page, whilst examples of case studies for community radio stations is featured in [Appendix 6](#). Case studies may also be used in funding applications, reports, or published on station websites to showcase their social gain.

Encouraging community radio stations to produce their own case studies and then collating these at a sector level opens opportunities to use these as a resource for thematic analysis of particular aspects of social gain or benefit.⁸ Taken together, this can provide a valuable reference resource for the sector. Community radio stations should ensure they comply with relevant data protection legislation when collecting and processing personal data within such case studies.

⁷ HM Treasury (2020). [Magenta Book](#). March 2020 Central Government guidance on evaluation.

⁸ For example, see Scotland's [Year of Stories 2022 Evaluation Report](#) published by Visit Scotland. The 2022 Year of Stories was a year in which stories inspired by, created, or written in Scotland were showcased and celebrated with a programme of activity designed to support the nation's tourism, events, and related sectors.

Figure 4.6: Case study template

Radio Station Name

Right click to replace
with client logo or
delete if not needed

Overview of the Project/Activity

Things to consider:

- What were the aims and objectives?
- Who was it aimed at (e.g. specific communities or groups)?
- What did the station actually do, or deliver? (e.g. shows, training, outreach)

This section is a short summary to set the scene.

Community Need

Things to consider:

- What was the local issue, challenge, or opportunity your project responded to?
- How did you identify this need? (e.g. feedback, local knowledge, research)
- Does this link to your station's mission or impact objectives?
- Who are the main beneficiaries, and how do they benefit? At what scale?

If relevant, include:

- Any evidence or data (formal or informal) that helped shape or support the project – what research methods were used?
- Key insights that explain why the issue was important and how your station was well placed to respond

This section helps frame your work within a bigger picture—why you did it, and why it matters.

Who was involved? What happened?

Things to consider:

- Who participated, and how many people were involved or reached?
- Did you reach any underrepresented or marginalised groups?
- Were any partnerships formed or strengthened?
- What activities were carried out? (e.g. radio shows, training, events, outreach)
- How did you engage community members?
- What was the timeframe for the project?

This section helps provide a clear picture of the people and activities involved, and demonstrates how the project was delivered in your community.

Radio Station Name

Right click to replace
with client logo or
delete if not needed

Outcomes and Impact

Things to consider:

- What changed as a result of this activity?
- What short- or medium-term benefits were seen? (e.g. skills, confidence, connection)
- Any unexpected outcomes?
- How did this contribute to your station's wider goals—or the wellbeing of your community?
- Did you use any simple evaluation tools? (e.g. listener surveys, post-event forms)
- Do you have any data to back this up? (e.g. volunteer hours, training numbers)
- What evidence could you collect in future?

This section helps you capture the changes and benefits of your work, while providing a framework for evaluating and measuring impact.

Hyperlink: to relevant photos, indicators, websites etc.

Voices from the Community

Things to consider:

- Are there quotes, stories, or feedback from those involved? Any feedback from listeners, participants, or partners?
- What did people say about the experience, in their own words?
- Can you share any specific individual stories (with consent)?

Also include:

- Photos, audio clips, media links (where available)
- Focus on meaningful indicators (e.g. a quote, a personal story, engagement numbers)
- What format might this evidence take? (e.g. testimonials, attendance logs)

"Example space for listener/beneficiary quote" - Listener

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

4.4 Social Value Calculator

As part of this research, and in direct response to feedback from community radio stations, a **basic social value calculator** has been produced. Stations have consistently expressed a need for a simple, accessible tool to help them determine and articulate the social gain they generate through their activities. While many stations are deeply embedded in their communities and deliver significant social gain, they often lack the time, resources, or technical expertise to apply complex social valuation frameworks.

As outlined in the HM Treasury Green Book,⁹ which provides guidance on how to appraise policies, programmes and projects, the appraisal of social 'value' is based on the principles of welfare economics and concerns overall social welfare efficiency, not simply economic market efficiency. Social value includes all significant costs and benefits that affect the welfare and wellbeing of the population, not just market effects. For example, environmental, cultural, health, social care, justice and security effects are included. Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) can be applied to assess the impact of different activities on social welfare. In this approach, all costs and benefits are valued in monetary terms.

The purpose of producing a basic calculator is to provide community radio stations with a **practical, user-friendly tool** that enables them to quantify and calculate their social gain in clear and credible terms. This can support internal learning, external communications, and help make a stronger case to funders, partners, and regulators. To ensure consistency and credibility, the calculator draws on metrics and proxy values from a **nationally recognised measurement platform**, aligning with established social value principles and methodologies. To note, while most models refer to 'social value', such as the national TOMS framework, it is recommended that the term 'social gain' is used in line with Ofcom and DCMS guidance, promoting consistency across the sector.

4.4.1 Applying the National TOMS Framework to Community Radio

As shown in Table 4.1, the calculator draws from the Open Access TOM System (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) which is a measurement framework underpinned by government data.¹⁰ The calculator offers example figures based on real activities delivered by stations—like volunteer hours, local events, or on-air training opportunities. Each activity is linked to a recognised outcome and given a standard monetary value from the TOM System, giving stations a clearer picture of the value they create for people and communities. The measures and unit values are standardised and nationally recognised through the TOM System, giving the tool credibility when used for reporting or funding purposes.

The calculator focuses on two main areas where community radio typically creates value:

- **Work** – including skills development, employability, and volunteering
- **Community** – including local engagement, inclusion, and wellbeing

⁹ HM Treasury (2022). 'The Green Book'. Updated 16th May 2024.

¹⁰ [Social Value Portal Open Access TOM System](#). This resource is free to use on request from the Social Value Portal.

Table 4.1: Indicative Measures of Social Value in Community Radio

Theme	Outcome	Measure	Units	Units	Unit value	Total Value
Work	Providing skills and experience for good work	Personalised support to help unemployed people into work	No. hours (total session duration) No. attendees	10	£110.00	£1,100.00
Work	Providing good work opportunities	Meaningful unpaid work placements while Not in Education Employment or Training	No. weeks	20	£96.53	£1,931.00
Work	Providing good work opportunities	Meaningful paid work placements	No. weeks	4	£412.38	£1,649.52
Work	Developing skills and experience for future work	Support for students at local educational institutions	No. staff volunteering hours	60	£17.48	£1,048.80
Work	Developing skills and experience for future work	Support for enabling visits for school children or local residents	No. staff volunteering hours	40	£17.48	£699.20
Community	Building resilient communities	Support for VCSFEs through volunteering	No. staff volunteering hours	104	£17.48	£1,817.92
Community	Building resilient communities	Support for local community projects through volunteering	No. staff volunteering hours	120	£17.48	£2,097.60
					Total Value	£10,343.64

Source: Measures and values taken from the Social Value Portal Open Access TOM System.

The TOM System, which is recognised and used by local authorities and other public sector bodies, provides a much wider range of Themes, Outcomes, Measures and proxy values for organisations that wish to purchase a licence. There are also other comparable social value platforms available. For the purpose of this research, the TOM System has been referenced as this offers the Open Access information and given its use by local authorities and public bodies who are potential funders for community radio stations.

Based on feedback from the sector survey, input from the Reference Group and evidence from the literature review, another key area where community radio stations generate value for the local community is in the profile and reach they enable for free for local Voluntary, Community, Social, Faith, and Enterprise sector VCSFE organisations. Review of the respective schedules of community radio stations highlights the regular features and airtime afforded to promoting the work of local VCSFE organisations.

This, as evidenced in the [Listening Locally Across the UK study](#), plays an important role in aiding the reach of such organisations and connecting listeners with sources of support in their local community (which itself generate social benefit). This airtime is commonly provided for free but could have an equivalent commercial airtime value. As such, calculating the airtime minutes provided to VCSFE organisations is a further outcome area that can be strongly mapped to the work of the community radio sector.

One of the challenges is assigning a suitable unit cost per airtime minute. Drawing on advertising rates within either the community or commercial radio sectors as a proxy is one option, however this can be complicated in the factor that rates can vary based on audience numbers and airtime slots. Establishing a credible unit value for airtime minutes is something that sector bodies would need to agree to support this aspect of the calculator.

Table 4.2 below provides a worked example of the value that could be captured using this measure. This assumes that a sample station features VCSFE organisations for 240 minutes (4 hours) per week at a unit value of £5 per minute. Scaled for 52 weeks per year this generates 12,480 minutes per year creating a value of £62,400 for VCSFE organisations.

Table 4.2: Airtime value for local VCSFE organisations

Activity area	Outcome	Measure	Units	Unit value	Total Value
Community	Improved reach and profile of VCSFE organisations	Airtime minutes provided to VCSFE organisations to discuss and present their work	12,480	£5.00	£62,400

In this worked example, the unit value of £5 per minute is provided as illustrative. [Radio advertising](#) is usually charged at a rate of approximately £2 per 1,000 listeners. So for example, if a show has 100,000 listeners at 10am then a 30 second spot at that time would cost £200 and a 1 minute spot £400.

Our sector survey demonstrates that, where stations provided data on their monthly audience numbers, the majority fell within the 10,001 – 49,999 monthly listeners bracket. If we use the mid-point of 25,000 listeners, then using this radio advertising costing method, a 30 second spot would be £50 and a 1 minute spot £100. This suggests that the unit value of £5 per minute may be modest. Further work will be required by the sector or individual stations using the social value calculator to establish a credible cost per minute.

4.5 Theory of Change

While many stations can describe their activities, there is often a gap in evidencing how these activities contribute to broader social outcomes such as community cohesion, employability, and civic participation.

To help bridge this gap, we provide a high-level framework—sometimes called a Theory of Change (ToC)—which sets out a clear pathway from what stations do to the difference they make. A Theory of Change explains how and why particular activities (like broadcasting, training, or outreach) are expected to lead to specific changes or outcomes in people’s lives and communities.

This framework is intended as a starting point or guide that stations can adapt to suit their own goals, activities, and available resources. It is not a one-size-fits-all model, but a flexible tool that helps stations think through the cause-and-effect relationships behind their work and make these links more visible and understandable to others.

By using and adapting this framework, stations can:

- Reflect on how their activities contribute to individual and community change.
- Use a shared language to describe social value across the sector.
- Design practical measurement tools (e.g., surveys or social value calculators) aligned with their aims.
- Strengthen their case when engaging funders, regulators, and local partners.

By using and adapting this framework, stations can better demonstrate the deeper social benefits of their work, such as empowering marginalised voices, supporting pathways to employment, and building social cohesion.

4.5.1 Draft Theory of Change

The draft Theory of Change over page provides a high-level overview of how community radio stations contribute to social gain. It has been developed with reference to existing literature and evidence, ensuring it aligns with wider research on the role and impact of community radio.

Table 4.3: Community Radio Social Gain Theory of Change

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Long term impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer time and commitment • Station infrastructure and facilities • Funding or in kind support • Local knowledge and community partnerships • Technical equipment and broadcasting licences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing and broadcasting local and culturally relevant content • Training and mentoring volunteers • Supporting skills development and employability • Promoting local voices and community issues • Delivering outreach and partnership work • Hosting events and community-led programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours of original, community-based content broadcast • Number of volunteers trained or supported • Number of community events or campaigns delivered • No. of hours personalised support to help unemployed people into work. • No. of unpaid work placements whilst NEET. • No. of hours dedicated to support young people into work (e.g. CV advice, mock interviews, careers guidance) • No. of meaningful paid work placements. • No. staff volunteering hours supporting students at local education institutions. • No. staff volunteering hours enabling visits for school children or local residents. • No. staff volunteering hours support for VCSFE organisations. • No. staff volunteering hours support for local community projects through volunteering. • Airtime minutes provided to VCSFE organisations to discuss and present their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence, skills, and employability of volunteers • Improved employment readiness among young people • Increased access to accredited training and qualifications • Improved representation and inclusion of diverse voices • Stronger community networks and social cohesion • Enhanced sense of local identity and pride • Increased awareness of local issues and services • Greater visibility and awareness of the VCSFE sector from broadcast airtime • Improved capacity and reach of local VCSFE organisations • Stronger partnerships between community radio and local service providers • Higher levels of community volunteering and civic involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved individual and community wellbeing • Reduced social isolation and inequality • Strengthened local democracy and civic participation • More resilient, informed, and connected communities • Recognition of community radio as a valuable contributor to social value • Reduction in youth unemployment and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) • Cultural enrichment and preservation of local identities

As noted in the sector survey, funders increasingly want to see evidence of planned impact and strategic thinking. Stations can adapt and build on the high-level Theory of Change to develop their own versions for specific projects or proposals. This helps to align their work with local or national funding priorities and demonstrate intentionality.

The Theory of Change provides a structured foundation for identifying what to measure. By linking inputs and activities to short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes, it helps stations think through which outputs and indicators to track—including volunteer numbers, hours of youth training, or community partnerships. This strengthens their ability to evaluate their work and demonstrate social gain over time.

4.5.2 Barriers and Assumptions

Identifying barriers and assumptions is a key part of making a Theory of Change both realistic and useful. Stations should be mindful of barriers and assumptions to:

- **Stay realistic:** Recognising assumptions and barriers helps stations plan in ways that are aligned with their actual context.
- **Build resilience:** By identifying where things might break down, stations can create contingencies / mitigate risks.
- **Improve learning and evaluation:** If outcomes aren't achieved, understanding which assumptions didn't hold gives valuable learning.

Key barriers

These are the risks or challenges that could prevent the desired outcomes from happening:



1. Funding insecurity and short-term grants

Limits long-term planning, undermines consistency in activities and staffing.



2. Volunteer burnout or lack of retention

Many stations rely heavily on volunteers, and sustaining that energy long-term can be difficult without structured support.



3. Limited time for monitoring and evaluation

Without the capacity to measure outcomes, stations might struggle to demonstrate social gain



4. Digital exclusion or lack of access to radio/media

Some communities may face barriers in accessing content due to digital divides, language, or format.



5. Local needs shifting over time

Community demographics, priorities, and challenges can evolve, and stations need mechanisms to stay responsive and relevant.

Key assumptions

These are the things we assume will hold true for the Theory of Change to work as intended:



1. Stations have capacity and resource to deliver consistently

Assumes a level of funding and staff/volunteer time that may not always be present.



2. Community members want to engage with the station

Assumes there is ongoing interest, trust, and relevance to diverse communities.



3. Training leads to employment or progression

Assumes that skill-building directly translates into jobs or education opportunities, which depends on wider labour market conditions and individual circumstances.



4. Partners and stakeholders will collaborate effectively

Assumes strong local relationships and mutual understanding, which can vary significantly across areas.



5. Funders and policymakers value community radio outcomes

Assumes that the outcomes stations produce (e.g. social connection, civic engagement) are recognised and prioritised by decision-makers.

5. Implementation and Legacy

This research project aims to provide a basis for a framework that allows Ofcom-licensed community radio stations to clearly demonstrate the valuable role they play in the radio sector—to funders, regulators, and communities alike. These stations play a vital role in the UK’s broadcasting landscape, offering hyperlocal, inclusive content and providing a platform for marginalised voices. The tools and resources developed through this project are tailored specifically to support that work.

The previous sections of this report explore ways in which the social gain provided by community radio can be effectively measured and evaluated. These are currently provided as options and guidance resources. Implementation of any of the options or adoption of the suggested tools will require agreement within the sector on how this is taken forward.

Some of the tools and approaches outlined in this research have financial implications.

This includes licence costs for a suitable survey platform through which the listener survey or volunteer survey can be hosted. It may also include costs associated with the creation of a dedicated website or file sharing platform where Ofcom-licensed community radio stations can access tools, resources and guidance as well as uploading any evidence or data they have produced such as case studies.

Technical expertise and capacity will be required to analyse data collected by individual stations and to understand data protection considerations. This highlights a broader need for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing across the sector.

The research also identified **gaps in the current evidence base**. There is a strong case for securing research funding or grant support to build on this work, deepen an understanding of the social gain delivered by the sector, and further test and refine the tools developed.

6. Conclusions

Community radio stations play an important role in providing a voice to local communities across the UK. They serve as an important platform for underrepresented groups, encouraging local identity, culture, and social engagement. These stations are driven largely by volunteers and offer a unique mix of locally produced content that reflects the diverse interests and needs of their communities. Beyond entertainment, community radio contributes to social inclusion, education, civic participation, and local economic development.

The primary objective of the research was to develop a suggested approach which is practical for community radio stations to measure and demonstrate their social gain. There is currently no standard framework for capturing social gain within the community radio sector.

Literature relating to community radio in the UK demonstrates the contribution of the sector to delivering social gain in connection with the four themes of employment and economy, volunteering, civic and democratic engagement, health and wellbeing, and connectedness and understanding.

Stations report a wide range of requirements from funders, from qualitative case studies to structured outcomes data. Insight from the sector survey reveals that just over half of stations currently measure the social gain they deliver for the communities they serve. Just over half also lack formal training or experience in impact measurement among staff and volunteers. Most community radio stations lack the time, funding, and staffing to prioritise social gain measurement.

Responses from stations highlight strong interest in improving social gain measurement practice across the sector. Desired support includes a combination of structured training, accessible tools, industry-standard measurement frameworks, and additional resources to help stations to document their impact. Importantly, stations also want opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing, ensuring that they are not working in isolation but benefiting from collective experience across the sector and with other sectors (for example the academic sector).

In response, the research proposed some practical guidance and options to support the community radio sector to improve practice in measuring the social gain delivered for communities. This includes standardised listener and volunteer survey tools, a bespoke social value calculator, a case study template, a literature review and high-level Theory of Change.

Some of these tools and approaches have financial implications. This includes license costs for a suitable survey platform through which the listener survey or volunteer survey can be hosted. It may also include costs associated with the creation of a dedicated website or file sharing platform where Ofcom-licensed community radio stations can access tools, resources and guidance as well as uploading any evidence or data they have produced such as case studies. Technical expertise and capacity will be required to analyse data collected by individual stations. This highlights a broader need for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing across the sector.

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Appendix 1 Listener survey questions

The survey explored five overarching themes, each with a specific rationale:

1. Listening Habits and Engagement

The pilot listener survey begins by asking respondents about their listening habits including how long they have been tuning in, how often they listen, and whether they get involved with the station (e.g., through social media, events, or volunteering). These questions provide foundational insights into the nature of listener relationships with community radio, helping to distinguish between passive and active engagement. This baseline is important for interpreting subsequent questions on impact.

Example questions:

How long have you been listening to [station name]?

- ☐ I started listening within the past 12 months
- ☐ I started listening more than a year ago
- ☐ I can't remember when I started listening
- ☐ Prefer not to say

To what extent would you say you get involved in [station name]? (Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> I sometimes call in or contact the station to join discussions | <input type="radio"/> I have been a volunteer at the station |
| <input type="radio"/> I follow it on social media | <input type="radio"/> Other, Please specify: |
| <input type="radio"/> I have attended one or more of its social media events | <input type="radio"/> I do not get involved |
| | <input type="radio"/> Not sure |
| | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

2. Motivation for Listening

The survey asks respondents why they listen, whether for music, local information, company, or to feel connected to their community. Understanding the motivations behind listening helps to assess the extent to which community radio is meeting audience needs and providing an alternative to commercial or national services. It also offers insight into the emotional and social role stations play in listeners' lives.

Example question:

Why would you say you listen to [station name]?

- For the music
 - For the company
 - To stay informed (news, updates etc.)
 - To hear about local events
 - To listen to the phone-ins or discussions
 - To feel connected to my local community
 - To relax or unwind
-
- To learn something new
 - To hear local voices
 - Other

3. Connectedness and Understanding

A key focus of the survey was to assess whether community radio encourages a sense of connection, belonging, and mutual understanding. The survey asks respondents whether their station had helped them feel more connected to others, understand different perspectives, become more active in their community, or feel proud of where they live.

Example question:

On a scale of 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree' to what extent do you feel these statements are true for you:

Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree	Not sure
Listening to [station name] has made me feel more connected to my community						
Listening to [station name] has helped me make new friends/meet new people						
Listening to [station name] has made me more likely to get involved in things in my local community						
Listening to [station name] has made me more aware of services provided by, or activities carried out by, the local council/authority						
Listening to [station name] has made me proud to live in my local area						

4. Access to Opportunities and Local Services

Recognising the role many community stations play in disseminating information, the survey includes sections on four specific domains: employment and skills, local businesses and charities, health services, and cultural engagement. In each case, the survey asks whether listeners had received information, whether they trusted or acted on it, and whether it led to concrete outcomes such as gaining employment or using a local service. This enables the analysis of responses to test the practical value and reach of community radio as a trusted information source.

Example question:

On a scale of 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree' to what extent do you feel these statements are true for you:

Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree	Not sure
Employment						
I have heard about employment and skills opportunities through listening						
I have gained employment and/or skills opportunities as a result of hearing about them on [station name]						
Local Businesses and Organisations						
I have been made aware of local businesses/organisation/charities by listening to [station name]						
I have engaged with local businesses/organisation/charities as a result of hearing about them on [station name]						
Health						
I have been made aware of health and health service information by listening to [station name]						
Listening to [station name] has helped me personally gain information about health and health services						
I have improved my health as a result of hearing about health services on [station name]						
Cultural Engagement						
Listening to [station name] has helped me to hear about arts, cultural and heritage activities in my local area						

Listening to [station name] has increased my engagement with arts, cultural and heritage activities in my local area						
Volunteering, Civic and Democratic Engagement						
Listening to [station name] has motivated me to be more involved in decisions that affect my local area						
Listening to [station name] has increased my knowledge and understanding of local politics and how to participate in it						

5. Demographic Data

In addition to the thematic questions, the survey also captured key demographic information to help understand who is engaging with community radio and how impacts may vary across different groups. Data was captured on age, gender, ethnicity, disability status, and location, along with questions about employment and income levels.

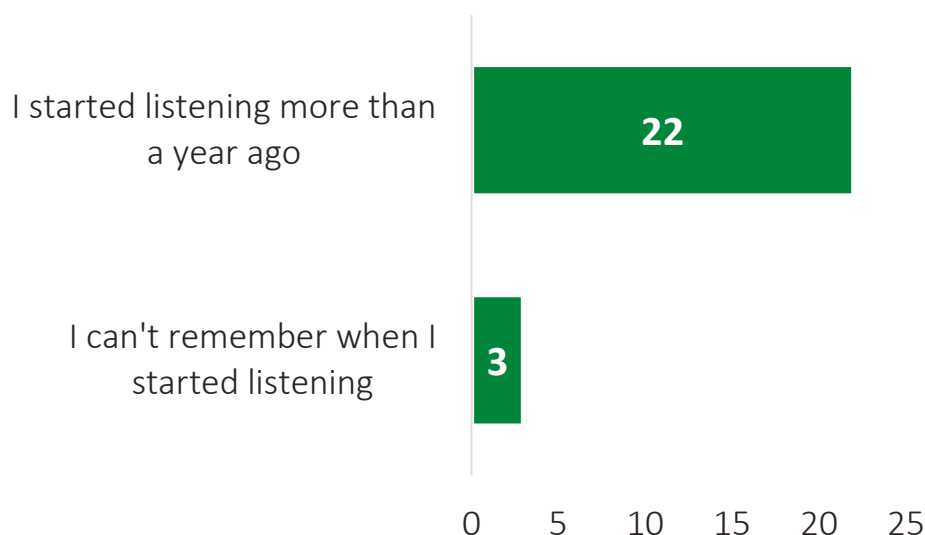
The key points which came from the demographic data can be found in the [Appendix 4](#).

Appendix 2 Listener survey analysis

Listening habits

The survey responses received offer useful insight into the listening habits and levels of engagement among community radio audiences. As shown on Figure A2.1 below, most respondents (22/25) reported that they had been listening to their local community radio station for more than a year, with only a small number (3/25) unsure of when they started listening, and none reporting that they began within the last 12 months. This suggests a strong and sustained relationship between stations and their audiences.

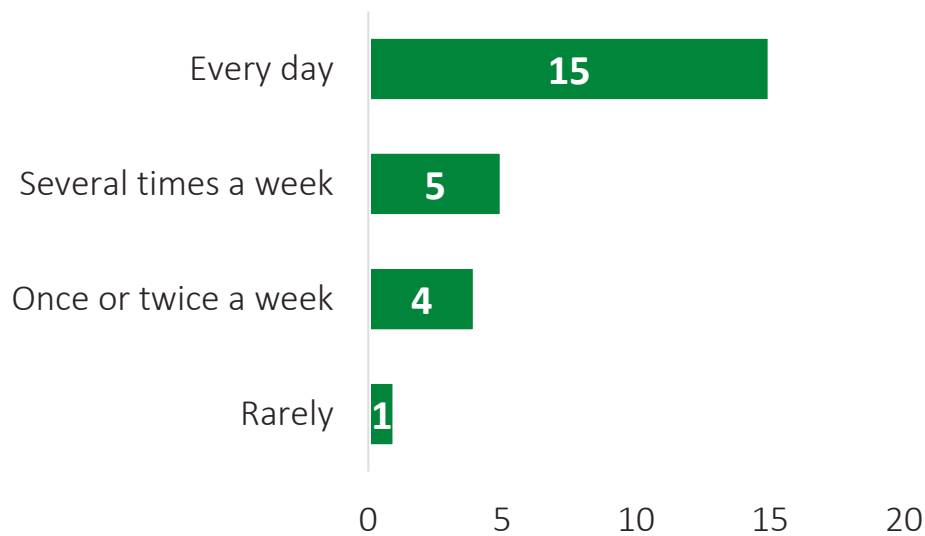
Figure A2.1 How long listeners have been listening to their station



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

In terms of frequency, community radio clearly plays a regular role in people's lives. As shown on Figure A2.2 over page, around two-thirds of respondents (15/25) said they listen every day, and a further 5/25 tune in several times a week. Only one person reported listening rarely, and no one said they never listened. These results indicate a consistent audience, with stations acting as a daily presence in many listeners' routines.

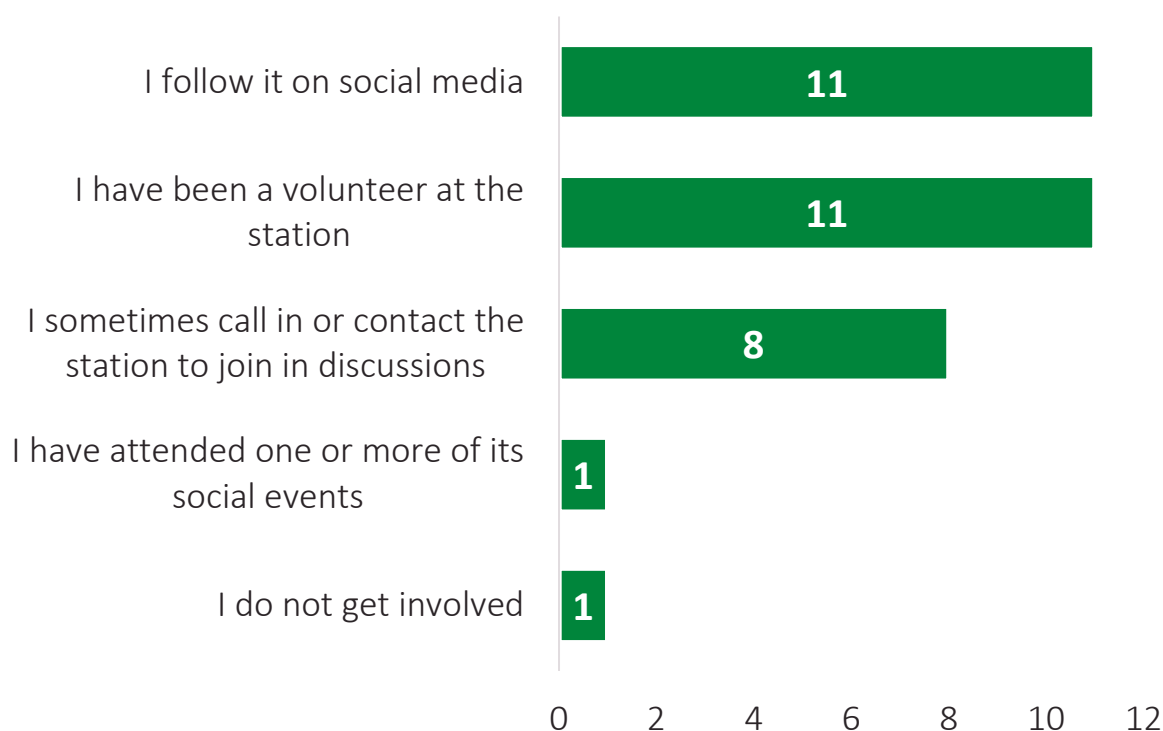
Figure A2.2 How often listeners listen to their station



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

Listener involvement extended beyond passive listening. As shown on Figure A3.3, just under half (11/25) said they follow the station on social media, while the same proportion reported having volunteered at the station—demonstrating the important participatory nature of the sector. A total of 8 listeners had contacted the station to join in discussions, and one person had attended social events organised by the station. One respondent said they do not get involved at all, further underlining the sector’s interactive nature.

Figure A2.3 How listeners get involved in their station



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

Motivations for listening

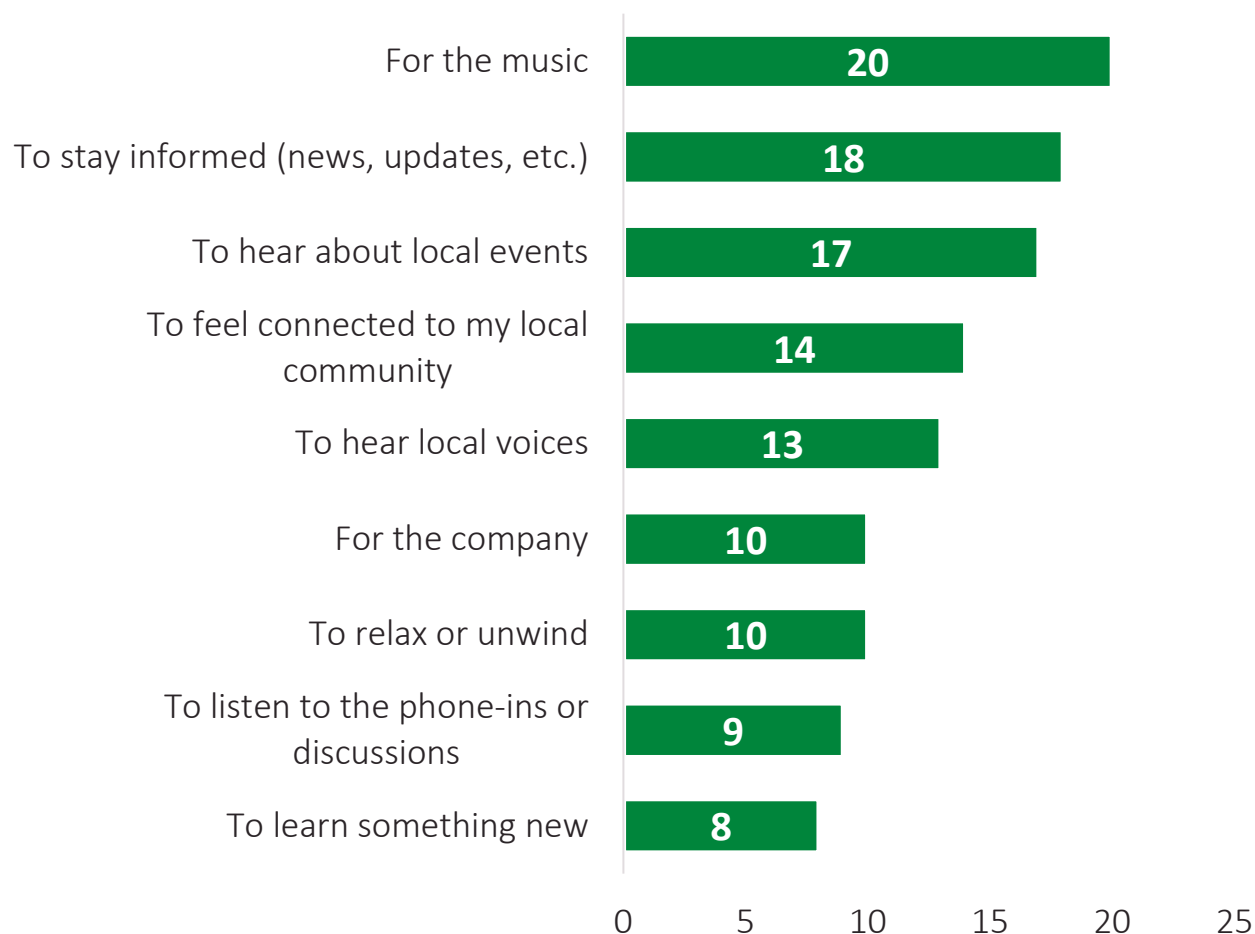
The data highlights the multiple reasons why people choose to listen to community radio. As illustrated on Figure A2.4 over page, music emerged as the most common reason, with 20 out of 25 respondents selecting it, underscoring the importance of music programming as a key draw for audiences. However, motivations went beyond entertainment.

A total of 18 listeners said they tune in to stay informed, and an equal number cited hearing about local events as a reason. This reflects the unique role community radio plays in providing hyperlocal news and information that might not be available elsewhere.

Emotional and social motivations were also prominent. 14 listeners said they listened to feel connected to their local community, while 10 cited company and an equal proportion mentioned listening to relax or unwind. These responses reflect the station's role as a social companion and a source of comfort, particularly for those who may feel isolated.

The station's participatory and educational role also came through in the responses. Nine people said they listened to phone-ins or discussions, eight said they tuned in to learn something new, and 13 appreciated hearing local voices on air. These findings point to a strong demand for locally rooted content that reflects the lived experience of the audience.

Figure A2.4 Listeners motivations for listening to their station



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

Connectedness and Understanding

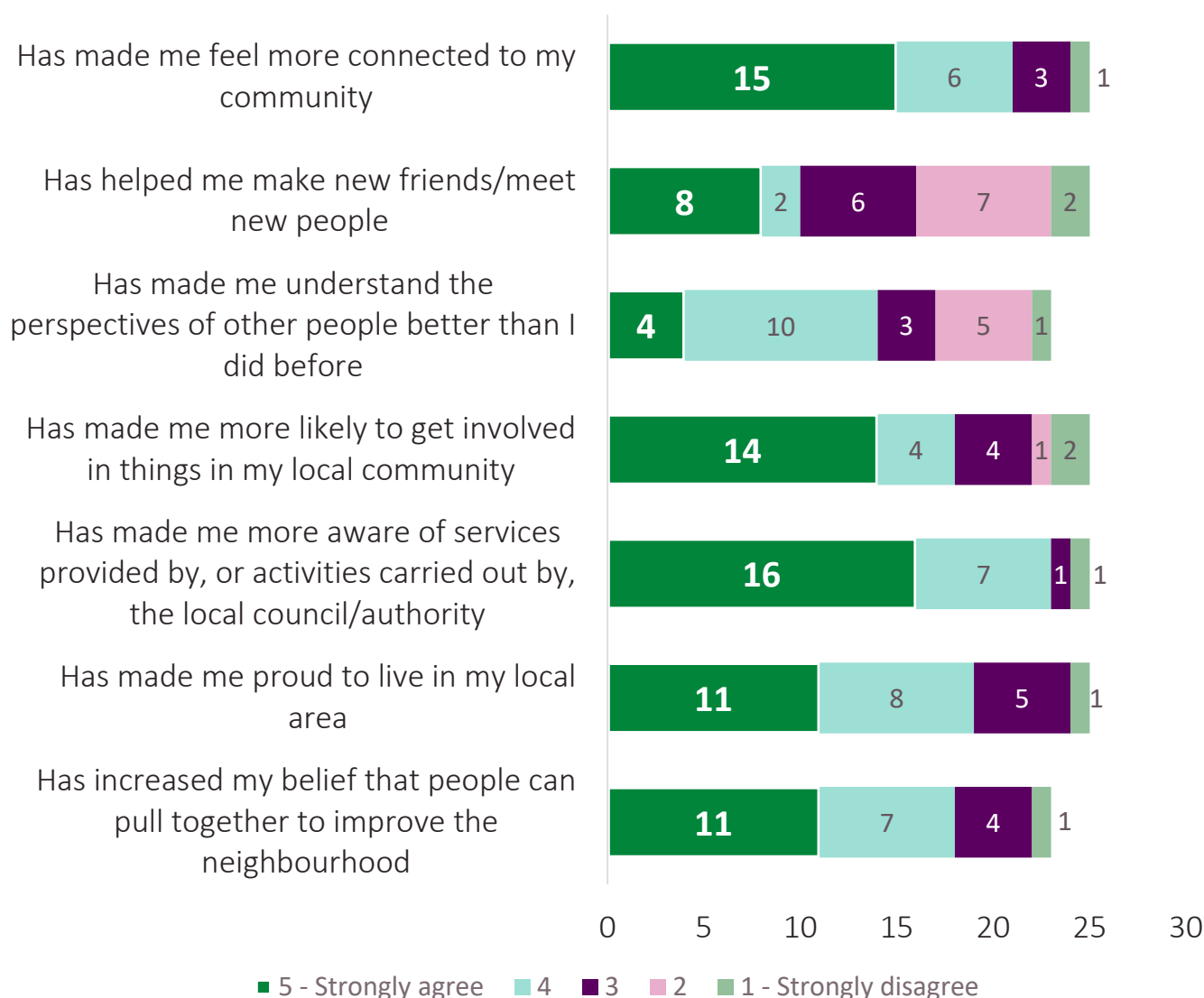
The listener survey results suggest that community radio plays an important role in encouraging a sense of connection and social awareness among audiences. As shown on Figure A2.5 over page, most respondents (21 out of 25) indicated that listening to their local station made them feel more connected to their community. Similarly, 19 respondents suggested it increased their pride in where they live, and 18 felt it strengthened their belief in the power of collective action to improve their neighbourhood.

The stations also appear to support civic and community engagement.

18 respondents agreed that listening made them more likely to get involved in local activities, while 23 out of 25 said it increased their awareness of local services or council-led initiatives.

The data also suggest that community radio helps broaden listeners’ social horizons. While only a smaller number (10 out of 25) said it had directly helped them make new friends, just over half (14) agreed it helped them better understand the perspectives of others, a key indicator of the sector’s potential for promoting empathy, inclusion, and shared understanding. Together, these findings highlight the sector’s contribution to building more connected, informed, and socially engaged communities.

Figure A2.5 Connectedness and Understanding Outcomes



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

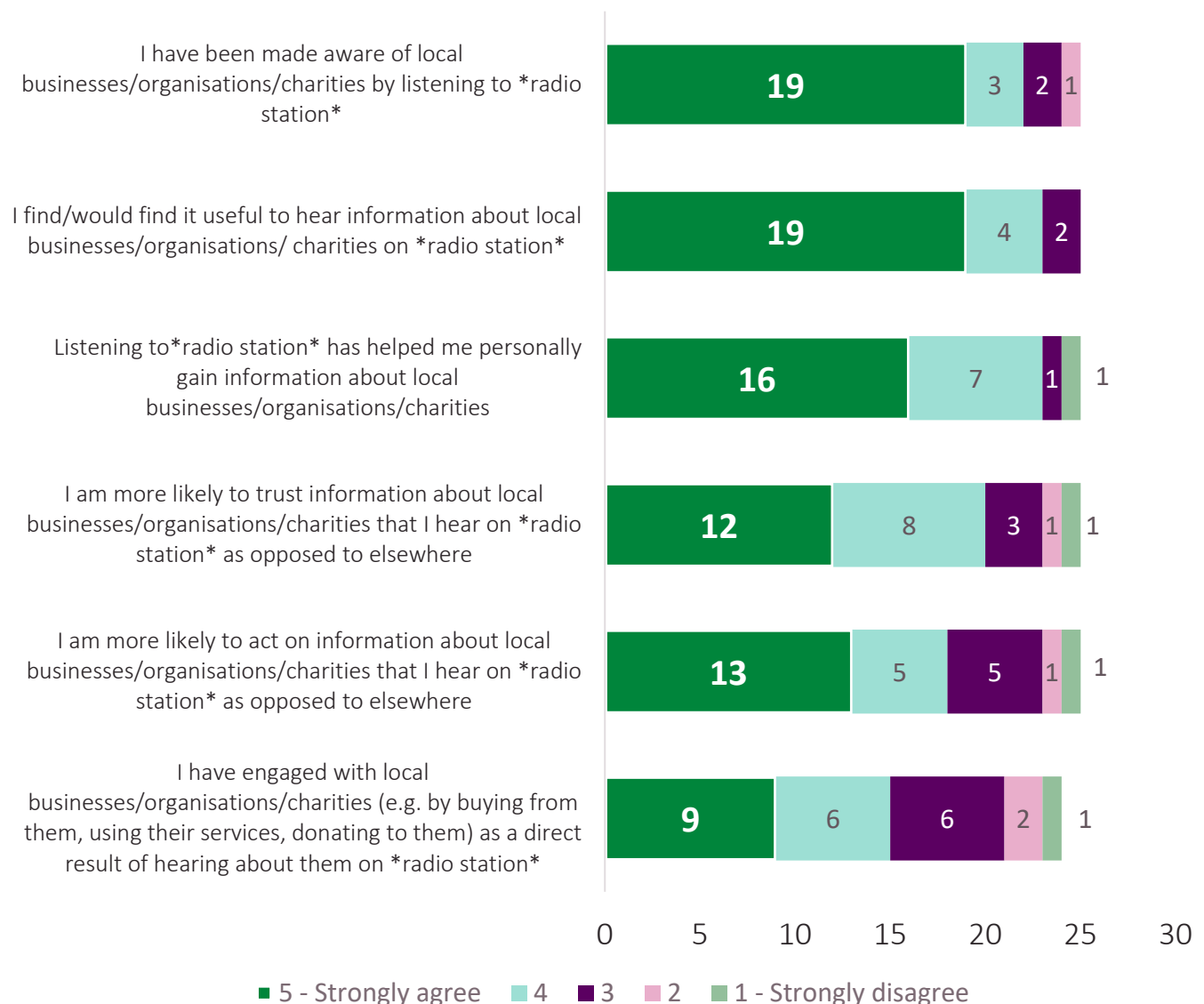
Local Businesses and Organisations

The survey responses demonstrate the valuable role community radio plays in promoting local businesses, charities, and community organisations.

As shown on Figure A2.6 below, a large majority of listeners (22 out of 25) agreed or strongly agreed that they had been made aware of local organisations through their station, with a similar number (23) saying they find this information useful. For many, this awareness translated into meaningful engagement: 20 respondents agreed that the station had helped them personally gain information about local businesses or organisations, and 18 said they were more likely to act on that information when it came from the station, compared to other sources.

Importantly, trust also emerged as a key factor. The majority of respondents (20 out of 25) said they were more likely to trust information about local organisations when it was shared through their community station. Over half (15 out of 25) said they had directly engaged with local organisations as a result of hearing about them on the radio, whether by donating, using their services, or buying from them.

Figure A2.6 Local Businesses and Organisations Outcomes



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

Employment

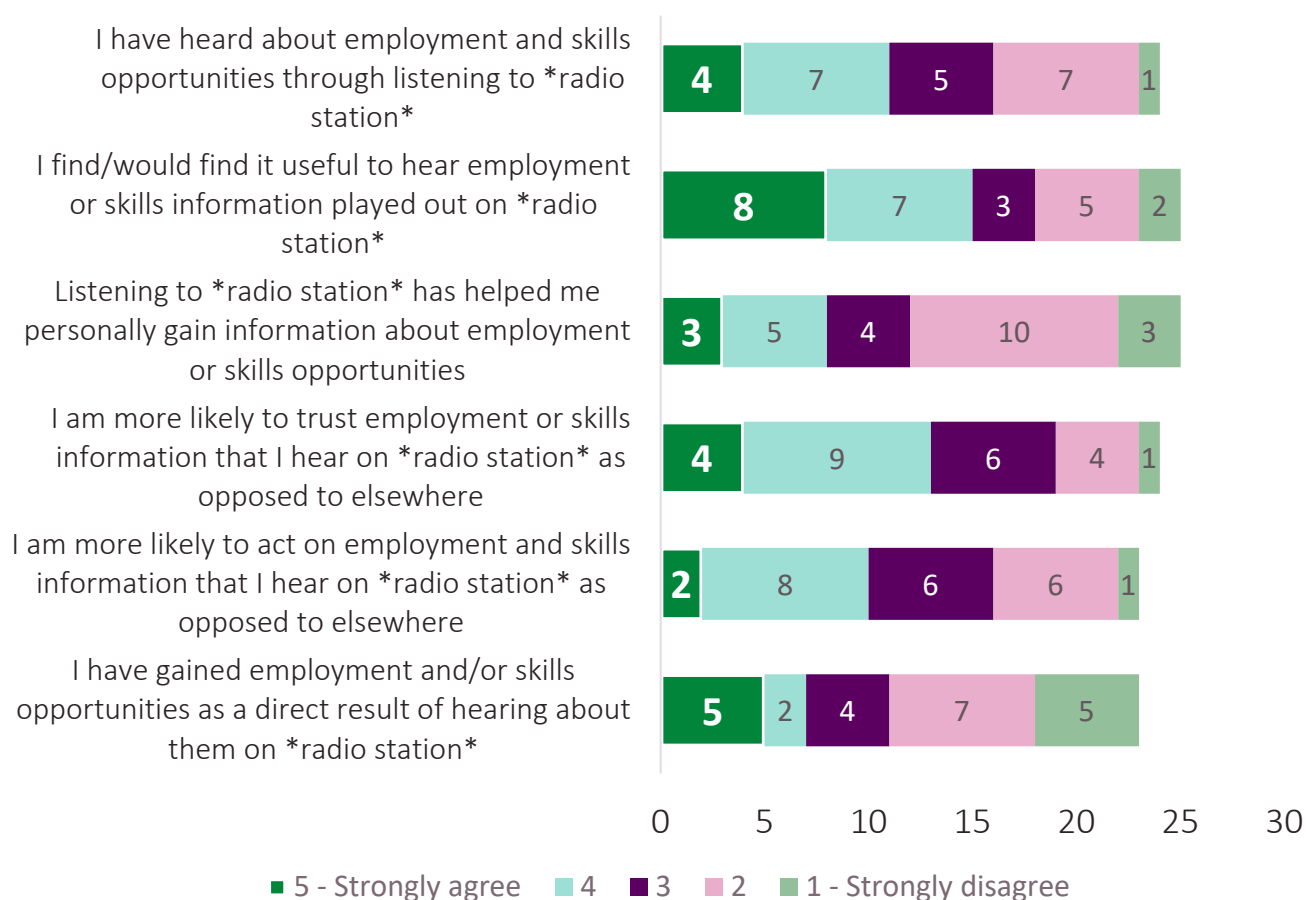
Community radio stations also show potential in supporting access to employment and skills development. While this is not the primary function of most stations, the survey responses suggest that stations are already playing a role in this area—and that listeners are open to seeing it developed further.

As shown on Figure A2.7, a total of 15 out of 25 agreed or strongly agreed that they would find it useful to hear more information about employment and skills opportunities on their local station. Around half (15 out of 25 said they had personally gained useful information of this kind through listening.

Though fewer respondents reported direct outcomes, 7 listeners strongly agreed or agreed that they had gained employment or skills opportunities as a direct result of what they heard on the radio—demonstrating a tangible benefit for some.

Trust and action followed similar trends: 13 respondents were more likely to trust information around employment and skills and 10 were more likely to act on this information when it came from their community station, highlighting the trusted position these stations have with their audiences.

Figure A2.7 Employment and skills outcomes



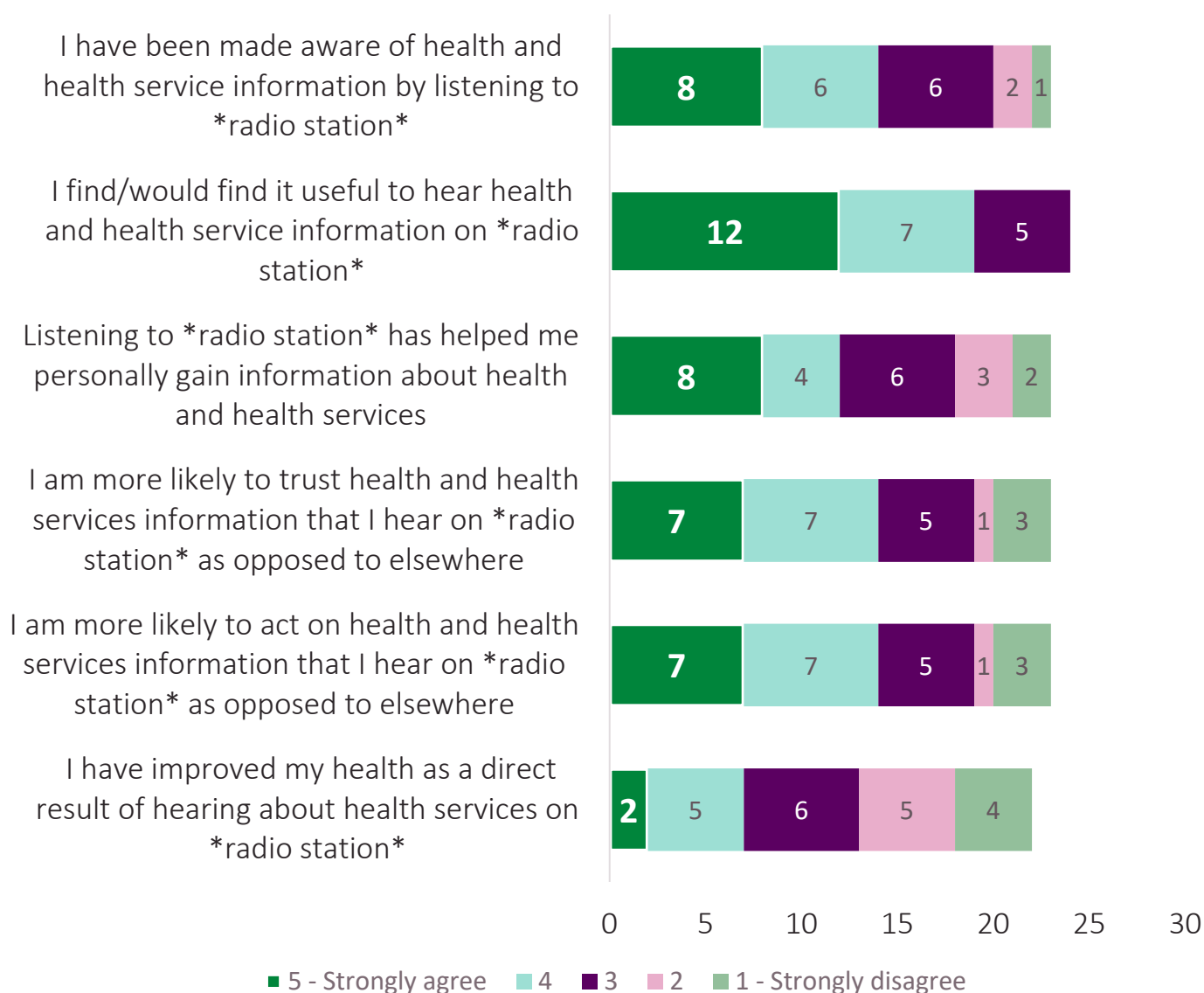
Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

Health

Community radio also appears to be important in sharing health-related information and supporting listeners' awareness of local services. As shown in Figure A2.8, 19 out of 24 said they find or would find it useful to hear health and health service information broadcast on their station. This points to a strong appetite for trusted, accessible communication on health topics. Half of all respondents (12 out of 24) agreed or strongly agreed that they had personally gained useful information about health and health services through the station. The same number said they were more likely to trust and act on this information when it came from their local community station compared to other sources—underlining the station's value as a trusted messenger.

Importantly, 7 listeners reported a direct positive impact on their own health as a result of hearing health-related content, including three who strongly agreed that their health had improved. While these numbers are relatively modest, they provide evidence that community radio can contribute to individual wellbeing outcomes, particularly when working in partnership with local health providers.

Figure A2.8 Health outcomes



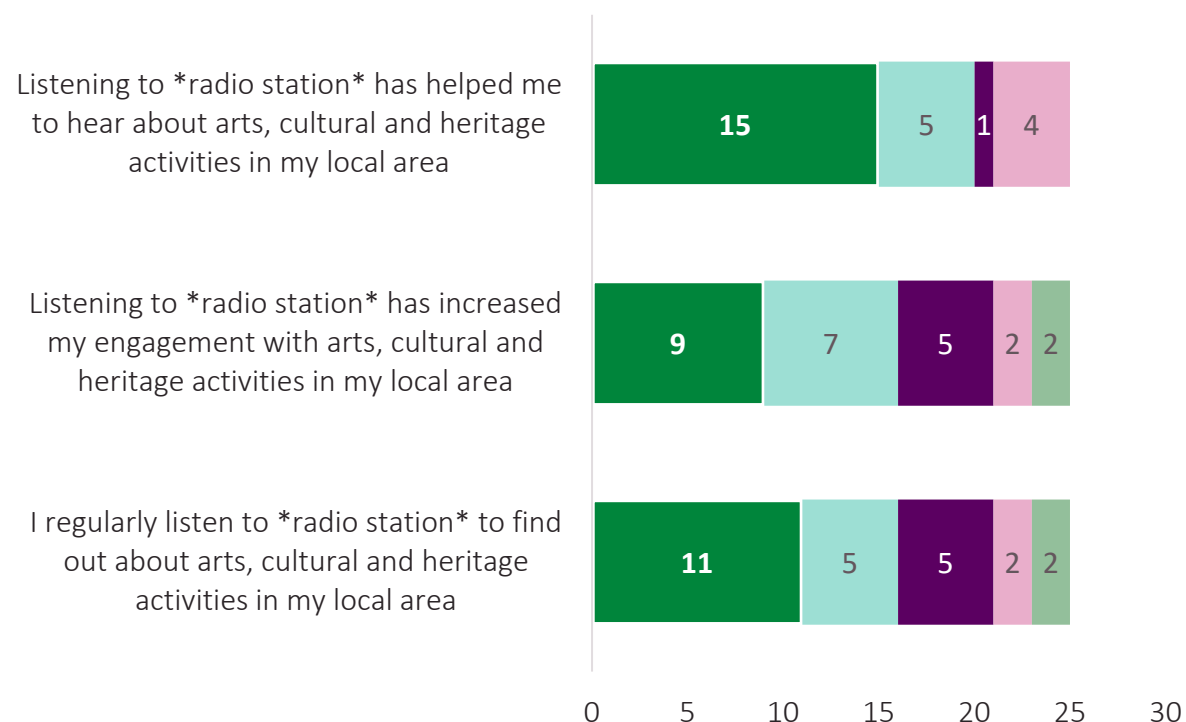
Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=24

Cultural Engagement

The survey findings indicate that community radio stations play an important role in promoting arts, cultural, and heritage activities at a local level. As shown in Figure A2.9, a majority of respondents (20 out of 25) agreed or strongly agreed that listening to their local station had helped them hear about cultural events and opportunities in their area. This suggests that the stations are successfully serving as platforms for cultural information-sharing and awareness.

Over half of respondents (16 out of 25) also said that the station had increased their personal engagement with local arts and heritage activities—highlighting the influence community radio can have on actual participation, not just awareness. Nine people said they “strongly agree” that their cultural engagement had increased as a result of listening. In addition, 16 out of 25 listeners said they regularly tune in specifically to find out about arts, cultural, or heritage content, showing that for many, this is a valued and sought-after feature of community broadcasting.

Figure A2.9 Cultural Engagement outcomes



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=25

Volunteering, Civic and Democratic Engagement

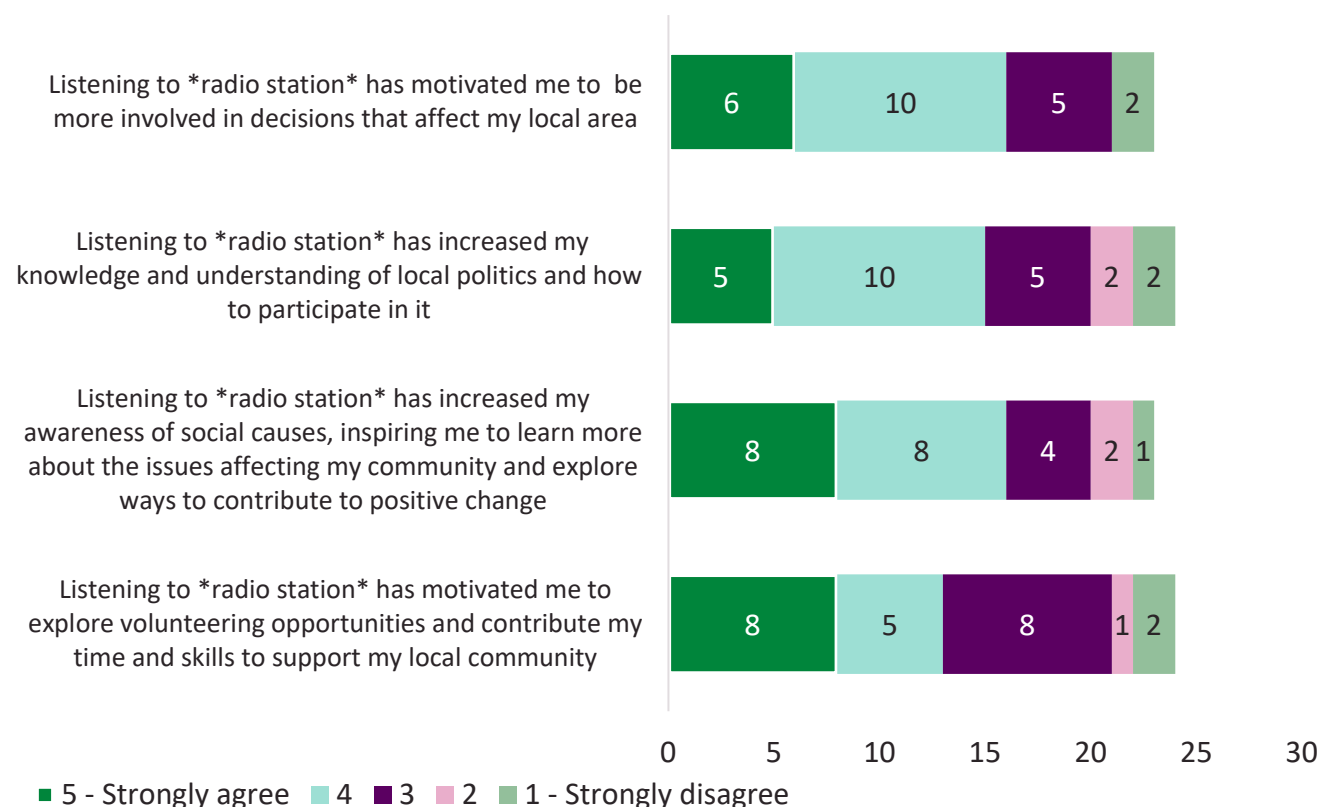
The survey responses suggest that community radio has a meaningful influence on listeners civic awareness and engagement. As shown in Figure A2.10, a total of 16 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that listening to their local station had motivated them to get more involved in decisions affecting their area. This points to the potential of community radio to encourage democratic participation at a local level by amplifying issues that matter to residents.

Knowledge and understanding of local politics was also positively affected, with 15 listeners reporting that the station had helped increase their awareness and know-how around how

to participate in local democratic processes. This reflects community radio’s unique positioning as a trusted source of accessible, relevant local information.

In terms of social gain more broadly, a large proportion of respondents (16 out of 24) said the station had raised their awareness of social causes, inspiring them to learn more and explore ways to create positive change. The station also appears to support pathways into local volunteering—13 listeners agreed that they had been motivated to consider or take up volunteering opportunities as a result of tuning in.

Figure A2.10 Volunteering, Civic and Democratic Engagement outcomes



Source: Wavehill listener survey. N=24

Appendix 3 Sector survey questions

Q1. Please could you provide the following:

- ☐ Station name:
- ☐ Ofcom Licence number(s) - please only include relevant community radio focused licence numbers, i.e. CRXXXXXXX or CDPXXXXXX:

Q2. Please could you provide the following:

- ☐ Name:
- ☐ Your role at the station:

Q3. How does your station broadcast? (e.g. analogue, online, DAB etc.)

Q4. Is your station a registered charity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

[If yes] Q5. Please provide your charity number:

Q6. What type of organisation are you?

- ☐ Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- ☐ Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status
- ☐ Unincorporated Association
- ☐ Charitable Trust
- ☐ Community Interest Company (CIC)
- ☐ Other, please state:

Q7. Is your station part of a wider parent company or standalone?

- ☐ Part of a wider parent company
- ☐ Standalone
- ☐ Not sure

Q8. Is your station part of any trade bodies? [for example, the CMA, UKCRN, Wales CRN etc.]

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Q9. Please summarise the main areas of social gain that you deliver for the communities you serve through your on-air activities. For example, this might include broadcasting to underserved audiences or addressing community issues.

Q10. Please summarise the main areas of social gain that you deliver for the communities you serve through your **off-air activities**. For example, this might include or example, this might include offering training or education to individuals not employed by your service, Involving community members in the station's operations, or hosting community events.

Q11. Does your station currently measure the social gain or benefit to the communities you serve?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Q12. Which of the following approaches do you use? [Please select all that apply]

- ☐ Number of volunteers and volunteer hours
- ☐ Number of apprenticeships
- ☐ Number of work experience placements

- ☐ Number of local causes supported or activities to showcase the work of Voluntary and Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations
- ☐ Number of hours dedicated to support young people into work (e.g. careers guidance/talks, mock interviews, CV preparation)
- ☐ Number of national campaigns supported
- ☐ Number of airtime minutes provided to Voluntary and Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations
- ☐ Number of local businesses showcased or promoted
- ☐ Number of community events attended (off air)
- ☐ Number of local campaigns to encourage people to participate in social action in their community
- ☐ Number of programmes or features with a diversity focus / providing a platform for new voices
- ☐ Number of programmes or features with a defined social purpose
- ☐ Case studies from listeners
- ☐ Online surveys/polls administered via social media channels
- ☐ Other (please state)

Q13. How would you rate your level of expertise or experience within your station in measuring the social gain or benefit to the communities you serve?

- ☐ Highly experienced
- ☐ Moderately experienced
- ☐ Limited experience
- ☐ No experience at all
- ☐ Not sure

Q14. Have staff/volunteers at your station had any training or past experience around approaches to measuring social gain or benefit?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Q15. Please provide details on the training or past experience staff/volunteers have had around measuring social gain or benefit:

Q16. What training or support would assist your station in measuring social gain or benefit?

Q17. Please provide an overview of what evidence or data, if any, your funders have required you to provide as a condition of any funding

Q18. What types of funders have asked for this information?

Q19. Have funders been more interested in on or off-air social gain delivery?

Q20. What would help you make the case for investment to funders?

Q21. What data does your station have on the number or profile of your listenership?

Q22. Do you have an estimate of the number of listeners to your station?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Q23. Please provide this estimate if possible:

Q24. How was this estimate measured?

Q25. Do you have any ideas and ambitions with regards to measuring the social gain or benefit to the communities you serve?

Q26. What barriers, if any, do you face in measuring the social gain or benefit to the communities you serve?

Q27. How could these barriers be overcome?

Appendix 4 Listener Survey results

Demographics: Key Points

Age

The largest number of respondents were in the **55–64** and **65–74** age brackets, with **9 people** in each group.

- 25–34: 3 respondents
- 35–44: 1 respondent
- 45–54: 4 respondents
- No respondents were under 25.

Gender

- 17 respondents identified as **men**
- 11 identified as **women**
- No one selected another gender identity

Income: Responses were spread across income categories, but most fell between **£15,000 and £50,000**. A few reported household incomes under £15,000, and no one reported earning over £100,000.

Health: A small number of respondents (4 out of 22) reported having a **long-term condition, illness, or disability**, while the majority did not.

Ethnicity: The vast majority of respondents identified as **White (26 out of 28)**, with limited representation from other ethnic groups.

Sexual orientation: Most respondents identified as **heterosexual or straight (25 out of 28)**, and 3 preferred not to disclose.

Appendix 5 Volunteer Survey

1. Volunteering Experience

- How long have you volunteered at [insert station]?
-

2. Motivation for Volunteering

What motivated you to volunteer at [insert station]? *(Tick all that apply)*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ I wanted to improve things/help people○ I wanted to meet people/make friends○ The cause was really important to me○ It was connected with the needs of my family/friends○ I felt there was a need in my community○ I thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills○ It helps me get on in my career○ It's part of my philosophy of life to help people○ It gave me a chance to get a recognised qualification○ I had spare time to do it○ I felt there was no one else to do it○ None of these |
|---|---|

3. How did you find out about volunteering opportunities at [insert station]?

4. Do you volunteer with any other organisations?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Approximately how many hours have you spent helping [insert station] in the last 4 weeks?

6. Outcomes of Volunteering

What have you gained from your volunteer role at [insert station]? *(Tick all that apply)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Improved health and wellbeing○ Improved life satisfaction○ Increased self-esteem○ Improved social connectedness○ Built new skills○ Pride in my community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Met people from different backgrounds or cultures○ A better understanding of the perspectives of other people○ None of these |
|---|--|

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

"My volunteer role has provided benefits in terms of my health and wellbeing."

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

8. Has volunteering with [insert station] motivated you to seek out other volunteer opportunities in your community?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

8. About You (*Optional – for monitoring purposes*)

- Age
- Ethnic background
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Do you have a long-term illness or disability?
- Working status

Appendix 6 Example case studies

Case study example 1: Rother Radio

Rother Radio



Overview of the Project/Activity

Rother Radio is a Community Interest Company broadcasting via Small-Scale DAB+ across Sheffield and Rotherham, as well as online, through smart speakers and mobile apps. The station's key aim is to use broadcasting and media training as a route to improved employability, social connection, and personal development—especially among young people and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. Through shows, outreach, and targeted training, the station creates a platform for creativity, voice, and opportunity within the South Yorkshire region.

Community Need

Rother Radio was founded to address a gap in local media provision, particularly for communities in the centre and north of Rotherham who lacked a dedicated community radio voice. The station works with schools, colleges, and youth agencies to reach people who are at risk of social isolation or facing barriers to opportunity. By identifying need through local knowledge, feedback, and organisational partnerships, the station has shaped its mission around tackling exclusion, mental health issues, and limited access to creative industries. These aims strongly align with the station's broader impact goals of promoting wellbeing, inclusion, and community cohesion.

Who was involved? What happened?

Rother Radio engages a wide network of volunteers—many with prior experience in community or commercial radio—and offers them training and development opportunities. The station has worked with young people at Winterhill School, helping to introduce media skills and raise awareness of careers in broadcasting. Volunteers are also involved in a growing number of community events, including Pride Rotherham (attended by over 5,500 people), Carefest, the Brinsworth Fete, and Sam's 1 Life Army Mission. These events provide platforms for Rother Radio to engage with diverse audiences, deliver outside broadcasts, and amplify the voices of local charities and community initiatives.

The station also supports LGBTQ+ representation through dedicated programming and partnerships, ensuring a broader platform for underrepresented communities.



Outcomes and Impact

Rother Radio’s impact can be seen in a range of short- and medium-term outcomes. These include increased confidence and life skills among young people, stronger pathways into employment and volunteering, and improved representation for marginalised groups. The station provides practical support for individuals to build emotional literacy, develop technical skills, and make informed choices about their future.

While not yet RAJAR-registered due to cost, the station monitors listener numbers via online, app, and smart speaker analytics, with an estimated 75,867+ listeners in Q4 2024. The team also tracks volunteer demographics and involvement, and is exploring new methods to better understand and demonstrate social gain. Feedback from schools and community partners suggests Rother Radio is seen as a credible and accessible local media outlet, helping to connect people, build confidence, and support wellbeing.

[Hyperlink: to relevant photos, indicators, websites etc.](#)

Voices from the Community

“Example space for listener/beneficiary quote” - Listener

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Case study example 2: Crest Community Radio

Crest Community Radio



Overview of the Project/Activity

Crest Community Radio launched in January 2025 as a 24-hour online station dedicated to delivering inclusive, engaging, and socially conscious content for the local community. The project was set up by Crest Cooperative Charity to provide more than just entertainment—it aimed to offer media-based training, amplify marginalised voices, and support wellbeing through locally relevant programming.

The station's primary objectives were to:

- Offer a platform for community expression and conversation.
- Provide training and development opportunities in media for local people.
- Raise awareness of social challenges such as mental health, disability, and poverty.
- Strengthen community connection through collaborative, people-led content.

Community Need

The station was created in response to multiple overlapping community challenges in the local area, including:

- Social isolation.
- Limited access to creative or professional opportunities for adults with additional needs.
- A lack of platforms to openly discuss issues like mental health, poverty, and local service gaps.
- Youth disengagement and the need for meaningful work experience.

These needs were identified through the charity's ongoing work and deep local knowledge, alongside informal community feedback and insights gathered via Crest Cooperative's support services. The radio station was seen as a natural and innovative extension of Crest's existing social mission—offering voice, visibility, and development pathways to those often excluded.

The main beneficiaries include:

- Adults with additional needs seeking confidence, routine, and employability skills.
- Young people gaining early media and admin experience through school placements.
- The wider community, who benefit from relevant programming and the promotion of local services.

Since its launch:

- Around **400 regular listeners** tune in each month, with audience numbers steadily increasing.
- Local school students have taken part in **admin and production-related work experience**.
- Adults with additional needs have participated in **media skills training**.

Crest Community Radio



Outcomes and Impact

In its first few months, Crest Community Radio has already made a visible impact. The station's listener base is steadily growing, with over 400 monthly engagements currently being tracked through streaming analytics. This early momentum reflects the appetite for local, inclusive, and relevant programming that speaks directly to community interests and needs.

Beyond listenership, the station is making a tangible difference in people's lives. Community members are gaining hands-on experience and developing media and communication skills through involvement in show planning, broadcasting, podcast production, and studio work. For many volunteers and beneficiaries—particularly adults with additional needs—this has fostered a renewed sense of confidence, structure, and creative ownership.

Crest Community Radio is also becoming a platform for important conversations. Through its programming, it is actively fostering dialogue around key local challenges, including poverty, mental health, disability, and social isolation. By giving voice to lived experiences and promoting local services, the station is helping to reduce stigma and raise awareness of issues that might otherwise go unheard.

[Hyperlink: Crest Co-operative Launch Radio Station! - Crest](#)

Voices from the Community

"Example space for listener/beneficiary quote" - Listener

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Case study example 3: Avondale Radio SCIO

Avondale SCIO



Overview of the Project/Activity

Avondale Radio SCIO is a community-run online radio station based in South Lanarkshire, Scotland. Its core aim is to provide a platform for local voices and foster community cohesion through inclusive broadcasting and reflection. Mainstream media often fail to cover local issues, but the station offers broadcasting programmes on various media behind-the-scenes roles including technical skills for residents. Avondale Radio focuses on creating social exclusion and local issues by providing opportunities that may not be otherwise represented in operating entirely. This includes individuals from isolated rural communities, people experiencing poverty and exclusion, and those facing key worker exposure.

In practical settings, the station provides a wide range of activities:

- Regular community shows
- Broadcast training for volunteers
- Technical and production advice

Community Need

Avondale Radio was set up in response to an area of acute community-focused media in order to amplify local voices, particularly in rural areas. This need was identified through local knowledge, ideas from Avondale Residents as communities groups on the basis of locality-support programmes existing.

The station aims to address this gap by providing the SCIO with access to information, help and limited access support such as digital training. It offers an inclusive platform where people can learn new skills relevant for employment.

This work aligns with Avondale Radio SCIO's mission: giving voice to those who are often unheard – rural residents, people aged 65+, isolated individuals who connect through broadcasting.

Who was involved? What happened?

The station is run by a team of committed local residents. All participants contribute as volunteers only. They are trained before engaging in broadcasts covering various topics such as news events or music shows hosted by trained broadcasters. Avondale Radio - The only radio training institution recognised by South Lanarkshire Council.

Avondale Radio SCIO



Outcomes and Impact

Avondale Radio has had a clear and growing impact on its community. Volunteers have developed new skills in broadcasting, editing, and public speaking, with many reporting increased confidence and a stronger sense of social connection. The station has also provided a valuable platform for local campaigns, helping to raise awareness and extend their reach, while supporting local music and creative expression.

Although formal evaluation has been limited so far, the station regularly tracks volunteer involvement, programme data, and listener engagement—reaching around 200,000 monthly listeners. This information highlights the station’s value to both participants and the wider community.

Looking ahead, Avondale Radio aims to introduce simple evaluation tools such as listener surveys and feedback forms to better capture and demonstrate its impact.

Hyperlink: Home - Avondale Radio

Voices from the Community

“Example space for listener/beneficiary quote” - Listener

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

Case study example 4: ShmuFM

shmuFM



Overview of the Project/Activity

shmuFM is a community radio station based in Aberdeen, broadcasting via analogue, online, and small-scale DAB. Operated under a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, it forms part of a wider parent organisation—Station House Media Unit (SHMU).

The station delivers a mix of activities including locally produced radio shows, training opportunities community members recruited from the station’s target areas, and volunteer-led broadcasting. shmuFM also involves community members directly in the running of the station. Their programming includes content with a social purpose, a diversity focus, and features promoting local and national campaigns, with a particular focus on tackling poverty, poor mental health, and climate change.

Community Need

shmuFM responds to a broad range of social and cultural needs in Aberdeen, particularly among underserved groups. The station plays an important role in promoting social action, supporting young people into employment, and giving a platform to local VCFSE organisations.

The need for the station’s activities was identified through local knowledge and community engagement, with additional support from the **Fairer Aberdeen Fund**, a local funding body focused on addressing poverty and inequality. shmuFM’s mission aligns with this, ensuring local voices—particularly marginalised ones—are heard and represented.

shmuFM is currently exploring a research partnership with a local academic to better understand and evidence its impact on the community, demonstrating a commitment to deeper insight into local needs and the station’s social value.

Who was involved? What happened?

The station relies heavily on community involvement. Volunteers play a central role, with activities ranging from producing and presenting radio shows to supporting community outreach and media training.

shmuFM’s projects have supported:

- Local VCFSE organisations by providing airtime to promote their work.
- Young people, through dedicated hours of employment-focused support such as careers guidance and CV preparation.
- National and local campaigns that encourage social action and civic participation.
- Programmes with a focus on diversity and new voices.

Outcomes and Impact

shmuFM's work has led to a variety of short- and medium-term outcomes:

- **For individuals:** Increased confidence, skills development (especially in media and communication), and employability—particularly for young people and those facing barriers to traditional employment.
- **For organisations:** Greater visibility for local causes and improved community outreach through radio exposure.
- **For the community:** Stronger representation, stronger local identity, and improved access to relevant and inclusive media content.

The station tracks a range of metrics to understand and demonstrate its impact. These include the number of volunteers involved and the hours they contribute, the volume of programming dedicated to social purpose or diversity, the hours spent supporting young people—such as through employability initiatives—and the number of campaigns and VCFSE organisations featured on air.

Voices from the Community

"My weekly radio show gives me purpose in life, I have something to work on, somewhere to be and it keeps me on the straight and narrow. My life would have been a lot darker without shmu"

- Listener

"I am new in the city and I was missing my home and friends a lot. At shmu I found people of my mindset. I always wanted to be a radio DJ. shmu gave me this opportunity. I'm feeling blessed." - Listener

"shmu has definitely helped my wellbeing by giving me the confidence to believe in myself and giving me a purpose while making new friends. I feel supported, understood and valued by the staff and others attending shmu." - Listener

Right click to replace
with relevant photos

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