

Impact of BRAG Services

A Report for BRAG Enterprises



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

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1: Introduction

This report introduces BRAG Enterprises and describes the scope and method of the research.

BRAG Enterprises

BRAG Enterprises was established in 1989 with the aim to improve the life chances of people in the Benarty area of Central Fife after the closure of the coal pits. Throughout the years BRAG has developed into a thriving social enterprise that works across Fife helping disadvantaged communities achieve a more prosperous future. In 2023 BRAG employed 40 staff and had an annual turnover of £1.9 million.

BRAG delivers a range of core programmes in three main areas that are the focus of this evaluation:

-
- **Employability:** getting local unemployed people the skills and confidence to get a job.
-
- **Enterprise:** providing local businesses and social enterprises with high quality space and support.
-
- **Poverty:** helping local community members tackling issues of poverty and inequality.
-

BRAG is celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2024 and has commissioned Social Value Lab to undertake an evaluation of the impact of BRAG on people and communities in Fife.

Research Objectives

The overall aim of the evaluation was to better understand the impact BRAG has had on people and communities in Fife.

The detailed objectives of the study were to:

-
- Tell the story of BRAG to celebrate their 35th anniversary.
-
- Assess the portfolio of programmes and services against their stated outputs and outcomes.
-

-
- Provide evidence of the impact of the programmes on communities and individual local citizens.
-
- Prepare a compelling impact report.
-

Scope

This evaluation covers the activities of BRAG over the last three years, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Our Research Methodology

For this study we have applied a mixed method containing the following elements:

-
- A Theory of Change workshop attended by 7 staff and Board members.
-
- Review of monitoring and evaluation data.
-
- Semi-structured Interviews with 3 employability clients and 3 employability staff members.
-
- Semi-structured Interviews with 2 BRAG tenants and 5 video interviews with tenants.
-
- Semi-structured Interviews with 7 community service clients and 3 community services staff members.
-
- A focus group interview with 7 Square Start participants.
-
- Semi-structured interviews with 8 key stakeholders.
-
- A survey of employability service users with 9 responses.
-
- A survey of tenants with 12 responses.
-
- A survey of community service users with 53 responses.
-

2: BRAG Enterprises

This section describes the history of BRAG Enterprises and provides more detail on the services they have been delivering in detail.

BRAG's Vision and Mission

BRAG's charitable objects are set out in their constitution and guide all their activities and services:

- To relieve poverty among residents.
- To advance education among residents.
- To promote and/or provide training in skills of all kinds particularly to assist in obtaining paid employment.
- To promote, establish and operate other schemes of a charitable nature for the benefit of the community.
- To relieve those in financial hardship, suffering discrimination by encouraging inward investment and business start-ups to take place.

In achieving these objectives, BRAG has developed a set of values and principles that underpin everything they do. These are: honesty and integrity; acting respectful; being innovative and courageous; being inclusive; and being person-centred and responsive.

BRAG's core business ambition and vision is in supporting marginalised people and communities on their journey towards a more positive future.

"WE EXIST BECAUSE A BETTER LIFE IS WITHIN EVERYONE'S REACH."

BRAG Enterprises History

In 1988 the Benarty Regeneration Action Group (B.R.A.G.) was established as a result of the closure of the coal mines and the resulting economic and social impact on the local community. Local unemployment and accompanying social issues had soared.

In 1989 it changed its name to BRAG Enterprises and in 1990 it adjusted its constitution to widen its geographic reach to the whole of Fife. This was adjusted again in 2012 meaning BRAG can now deliver anywhere in Scotland.

Due to the construction of the new Lochgelly High School and the old high school becoming a primary school Crosshill Primary School building became redundant. The building was then leased to BRAG with the purpose to retrain unemployed people.

In the mid-90s BRAG, after financially difficult times, BRAG refocused on three core activities: property letting, local economic development and vocational training.

Over time, the school building was converted into offices and workspaces and additional units were constructed within the former playground.

BRAG formed formal partnerships with local colleges to offer training and formal qualifications. This was called College@BRAG

In the 1990's BRAG also presented itself more and more as a focal point for the local community. A community café was opened, and an internet suite was added in 2000.

In 1998 BRAG also purchased, with support from the European funding, the Co-op pharmacy in Lochgelly. The site had space to train local people for emerging opportunities in the call centre industry but was also able to provide additional spaces for rent. In 1999, after refurbishment, the Lochgelly Business Centre opened its door to the public.

In 2004 BRAG purchased a local training company called Sabre that was merged into its employability and training provision.

In 2008, with support from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Fife Council, BRAG was able to purchase the building.

In 2013 BRAG secured funding from the Big Lottery Fund for Greenpower Formula 24, a project introducing young people to engineering, design, science, and green power. This was the first time that BRAG was able to work with young people in a significant way over a longer period of time.

In 2015 BRAG also started to support local unemployed people to become self-employed after they secured a subcontract to deliver the New Enterprise Allowance.

In 2020 after a period of decline in the building and competition from Ore Valley Business centre nearby BRAG then sold the Lochgelly Business Centre using the free funds to go towards the purchase of Thomson House in Methil, now the Levenmouth Community Enterprise Centre.

In its time BRAG have also played host to a number of community initiatives including Trans-Fife community transport and Subliminal Directions which was a music project. Its also delivered sports projects with a number of local football teams using sport as a hook to engage.

BRAG was also the original home for the Scottish School for Social Entrepreneurs. BRAG had delivered this from its BRAG site in Crosshill from 2002 until 2009. The school then detached itself and went on its own way with BRAG going on to then set up the Motivate to Innovate programme. It also hosted the Fife Social Enterprise Network with many new social businesses emerging from this approach including Recycle Fife

BRAG in the pandemic

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country, BRAG staff were involved in the government's emergency response by delivering food parcels and other support for the community. Initially the emergency response was delivered from its Crosshill site covering the Benarty area. On the back of this it then went on to establish the Pantry@BRAG in the newly

renamed Crosshill Community Enterprise Centre.

Initially The Pantry concentrated on providing and delivering food parcels as part of the Covid emergency response. When the Covid restrictions started to ease at the end of 2021, the Pantry@BRAG started to concentrate on providing affordable food to the community, whilst also promoting reducing Food Waste through links with Fareshare. With support from the Scottish Government Community Fund, the pantry space was refurbished into a community store where members can shop each week for a small, fixed fee.

BRAG also supported its tenants during the pandemic. A staff member was freed up to support the BRAG tenants throughout the pandemic. This included support with applying for grants, advice on how to comply with Covid regulations and moral support.

Employability Services

Fife Employment and Training Consortium (Fife-ETC)

Fife-ETC was set up as a pilot consortium in 2015 and after an external evaluation and a bidding process, was confirmed as the major provider of employability services in Fife in 2016. Fife-ETC brings together a range of third sector partners to provide employment support services across Fife. The consortium is led by BRAG Enterprises with all the partners delivering differing interventions at various sites across Fife.

Fife-ETC operates a Fife-wide service aimed at reducing barriers to employment. It has a 'no wrong door policy' which means that a client can present at any of the consortium partners and will be supported to the right place for their needs.

Fife-ETC has a key worker approach, which means that a client will be supported by a dedicated staff member throughout their whole journey.

Fife-ETC offers a range of specialisms including housing advice, mental health and emotional resilience, drugs and alcohol

support and volunteering. BRAG and Kingdom Works deliver the core end to end employability support provision.

The service is focused on areas of greatest geographical need and target groups. Its main aim is to reduce the number of people in long-term unemployment.

Covid employability support

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and its lockdowns, BRAG, like many other organisations, closed its operations.

As an anchor community organisation, BRAG was involved in delivering food and other support to the communities in Fife from the start.

After the initial shock, BRAG also realised that employability support was still very much needed throughout the pandemic and adjusted its employability services to online delivery.

BRAG delivered online employability training, needs assessments, CV building, application support and job coaching. BRAG also provided employability clients with other advice and support during the pandemic, such as wellbeing, food security and money advice.

No One Left Behind (NOLB)

No One Left Behind is the Scottish Government's approach to transforming employability support in Scotland. It aims to redesign employability support services to make them more responsive to peoples' needs into employment. It focuses in particular on people with health conditions, disabled people and others who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

NOLB - Spring Forward

Spring Forward is BRAG's NOLB programme for people aged 25 and over. It is delivered through Fife-ETC with BRAG and five partners: Kingdom Works, Clued Up, Frontline Fife, Fife Voluntary Action (FVA) and Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF).

The service is focused on providing a one-to-one bespoke service to people who are facing multiple barriers to employment. This can include confidence building and self-esteem, support with mental health issues, action planning, training and work experience opportunities.

NOLB - Bright Futures

Bright Futures works with unemployed people in Fife aged 19 to 24. This programme is delivered through-Fife ETC with Greener Kirkcaldy as an additional partner.

The programme provides unemployed people with a key worker who will support the client through the 5 stage employability pathway.

Shared Prosperity

Shared Prosperity is employability support for adults aged 19 and over, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The service offers certified training, CV building, IT training, job brokerage, volunteering, work placements and referral to other services.

Coalfield Worx

BRAG has recently delivered Coalfield Worx, a programme designed and funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, in the Cowdenbeath area.

The programme supported local unemployed people into employment through paid training and support. Participants undertook a range of environmental maintenance jobs coupled with skills and qualification development. Trainees also worked on their employability skills and personal development.

Trainees were offered a 12 month guaranteed job with BRAG on the understanding that they move to a more permanent employer when appropriate.

The project had the dual benefits of improving the physical appearance and environment of the Cowdenbeath area whilst giving unemployed people a better chance to succeed in life.

New Enterprise Allowance

BRAG delivered the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) scheme in Fife, Tayside, Forth Valley and West Lothian.

The programme supported unemployed people, aged 18 and over and in receipt of benefits, to become self-employed.

Candidates were referred through the Job Centre. BRAG provided a half-day NEA Start Up Workshop, allocated a business mentor and arranged a weekly allowance for up to 26 weeks. Participants could also apply for a start-up loan.

Enterprise Services

Business Centres

BRAG provides office suites, business units and light industrial units for rent in its two business centres:

- **Crosshill Community Enterprise Centre** - a 25,000 square foot business centre offering 55 units for rent.
- **Methil Community Enterprise Centre** - a 9,000 square foot business centre offering 21 units for rent.

All rent includes heating, lighting, CCTV and security, reception, and mail handling services. All units in both locations are currently fully occupied.

In both venues BRAG also offers meeting and conference space and co-working spaces.

Together Levenmouth

Together Levenmouth started in 2019 as an events programme to attract new visitors to the area and regenerate the town centre. Together Levenmouth also acted as a community conduit with the aim of reaching out to other community organisations so was instrumental in supporting a range of activities and events, such as a local artisan

market, a fun run, a food and drink festival and an open air cinema.

he Leven Artisan Market attracts up to 30 market stalls and 1,500 people visiting.

In 2021 the Levenmouth Community Lottery was launched to raise funds for the community chest, distributing grant funding to community groups.

Together Levenmouth - The Hub

In 2021 BRAG purchased an empty High Street building in Leven to turn it into a visitor attraction centre. The Hub offers escape rooms, crazy golf courses, a café, And pop up community space called Popup@the hub

There are several other activities run from The Hub, including Bingo Buddies and energy and finance advice.

Community Services

The Pantry@BRAG

In 2020 in response to the Covid-19 Outbreak BRAG set up an Emergency People's Pantry and Food Delivery service which had started out as free of charge. We secured approx. £22,000.00 of funding within 10 days from a variety of funders (The National Lottery – Awards for All, Foundation Scotland's Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund, Coalfields as well as support from Benarty Forum and Cowdenbeath Local Area Committee). The Pantry was set up for the most vulnerable people and families within the Benarty area who had been impacted by Covid-19 and the lockdown. In 2021 the Pantry received valuable core funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. Brag's Pantry model is a community-led approach, run by volunteers, supported by staff and operates a weekly membership scheme. We consulted with our members before moving to a payment model where each member then paid a small fee of £3 per week (£4 delivery) to have their choice of affordable, local food from the Pantry, provided by the charity FareShare along with donations from other local suppliers and food purchased by BRAG to address shortfalls in products. In 2021 the Scottish Government Community Fund also awarded us £24,470 for pantry building

works. This allowed us to refurbish the space, creating dedicated storerooms.

The Mary Pit Stop, a café with seating area, opened up for members to socialise. The Pantry currently has 300 community members.

In 2022 BRAG then added the Food for Thought programme into the pantry space. This now allows The Pantry to deliver training and information about healthy eating, cooking, budgeting and food waste. It also helps combat social isolation and loneliness.

Pantry members can register to become volunteers.

The Pantry also hosts Energy Advice sessions, delivered by Greener Kirkcaldy, to help people manage the recent energy crisis.

The Pantry has recently set up a community garden and growing space where members can spend time together and grow fruit and vegetables for themselves with any surplus being donated to the Pantry.

The Pantry also organises a weekly Friday Brunch for its members.

Warm Space session

BRAG delivers warm space sessions for the community during the winter months from its Crosshill and Levenmouth Hub location.

Food Bank

BRAG hosts the local food bank in Crosshill. The foodbank is run by Dunfermline Foodbank, and BRAG provides free space and services.

Square Start

Funded through NOLB, Square Start is a family support service for the residents of Dunfermline, Southwest and Northeast Fife.

The project officers will assess the needs of a family and create a bespoke action plan. Peer support is an important element of the programme.

Sessions are held mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends, and include budgeting workshops, cooking and nutritional skills, health and wellbeing sessions, mental health resilience sessions, Bookbug sessions, messy play, arts and crafts, play therapy, Makaton sessions, B:Active sessions for children, family fitness, and weekly family afternoon and evening groups.

Square Start also offers formal training including conflict resolution, first aid awareness, emotional health and well-being, and trauma informed parenting.

BRAG partners with Frontline Fife, CARF and Youth 1st to offer families additional support.

3: The BRAG Theory of Change

This Section provides the Theory of Change for BRAG Enterprises and the context it is operating in.

The Issue

The towns and communities in Fife that fall within BRAG's remit are areas of high deprivation. Up until the 1980s, many local families were dependent on the mining industry, and its decline left people and whole communities facing unemployment and poverty. Little has changed in the way of employment opportunities in the 40 years since.

There are numerous barriers to employment for the people who live in these communities, many of whom have grown up and lived with financial hardship. Though undoubtedly exacerbated by the current cost-of-living crisis that is affecting the whole nation, in the areas where BRAG operates, issues around income and employment are entrenched and historic. There are limited opportunities for employment or training in the area, and space to start up or run a business from is often unaffordable for small local businesses or self-employed individuals, which limits their ability to provide services within their local community. Traditional landlords tend to want people to commit to lengthy leases and pay out large deposits. They also need to make a profit and are unlikely to set up in more deprived areas.

People who do work often face in-work poverty, meaning that families receiving benefits have little incentive to look for work. Routes out of poverty are scarce and complicated given the lack of training, employment and other resources in the area. Added to this, the prospect of relinquishing benefits by gaining employment is a daunting one for people who have relied on a range of government subsidies for generations.

There is a strong sense of community identity and pride in Fife, and tackling problems that have become enmeshed in the local culture

requires a keen understanding and sensitivity towards this area's specific history.

There are a number of specific issues arising from this context:

- Older generations have low hope and optimism about the future and are not incentivised to improve their own lives.
- They become socially isolated, and many older people have not 'returned to normal' levels of socialising since Covid-related lockdowns.
- Younger generations lack role models and have low aspirations for themselves.
- Young people lack the skills and training necessary for employment roles that would help lift families out of poverty.
- People of all generations are affected by the negative impacts that poverty, stress and unemployment have on mental and physical wellbeing.
- Programmes and opportunities that are delivered at national level are ineffective in this area as they do not address the specific cultural and historic issues faced by people living in poverty in Fife.
- People lack the skills and resources to start their own businesses or become self-employed.
- People in deprived areas are less likely to having a car let alone a driving licence so getting to the areas where jobs exist is more problematic.

The consequences

Without intervention, the problems outlined above would continue to deteriorate, resulting in a range of negative consequences:

- Businesses would not have affordable space to deliver services within their local community.
- The local economy would be depleted, with high unemployment rates and low investment.
- The mental and physical health of the residents would worsen which would have negative consequences for local and national health services.
- Individuals would miss out on opportunities to socialise, resulting in disintegrated communities.
- Children and young people would not get the best start in life.
- Without local insight and empathy, statutory services and national organisations would not be able to address the systemic issues in the area, and would waste resources, ultimately leading to their efforts being channelled elsewhere.

BRAG Theory of Change

The Theory of Change sets out how BRAG aims to address these issues. It describes the resources that are used to deliver the services (input), the activities they deliver (output), the people and organisations benefitting from the services (stakeholders) and the changes this will make to their lives (outcomes).

BRAG Theory of Change

| Inputs | Outputs | | Outcomes -- Impact | | |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | Activities | Stakeholders | Short | Medium | Long |
| Funding Charitable donations Tenants' rent Staff and volunteer hours Partner organisations | See Section 2 of the report. | Children and Young People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better start in life Increased learned behaviour and positive habits. More opportunities for socialising and learning in local area. More role models in their local community Increased confidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased potential | People in Fife have improved life chances |
| | | Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced isolation Increased parenting confidence More digitally included. Improved mental health and wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More positive family relationships | |
| | | Young adults / unemployed people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased skills, experience and qualifications Increased confidence and self-worth Increased resilience Improved outlook and hope for the future Improved mental wellbeing. Reduced antisocial or risk-taking behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher aspirations for themselves Increased employability and job sustainability Improved financial situation | |
| | | People with past convictions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased confidence Improved self-expression Greater awareness of opportunities available to them Increased job application skills Improved outlook and hope | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased employability and job sustainability | |
| | | Families of clients | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved family relationships Reduced stress and anxiety More involvement in local community and school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved financial and living situation | |
| | | Pantry Members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to affordable food Reduced stigma Increased skills and knowledge around cooking, food use and waste | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased sense of ownership Improved financial situation | |
| | | Older people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced social isolation. Improved mental and physical wellbeing. Stronger links with their community Increased access to other services Improved financial awareness and reduced debt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More optimistic about the future | |
| | | Businesses with BRAG tenancies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More affordable rent Better business terms and conditions Increased access to business support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater business resilience and sustainability | |
| | | Local community / economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower levels of social isolation Lower levels of antisocial behaviour Higher employment rates More money spent locally. Enhanced workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater community pride Increased tourism | |
| | | Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced food waste Reduced carbon footprint | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased ability to achieve net zero | |

Assumptions

There are a number of underlying assumptions that underpin the Theory of Change:

- BRAG knows what clients want and need.
- BRAG knows what the scale and nature of the issues are.
- People across Fife face similar issues
- BRAG is a community anchor organisation in both Cowdenbeath and Levenmouth locality.
- People in the community know what BRAG does (and what BRAG doesn't do)
- People want the services that BRAG provides.
- BRAG is the right organisation to provide those services (and stakeholders agree)
- BRAG services work and make a difference.
- Communities will take ownership of the projects.

External factors

There are a number of external factors that influences the Theory of Change:

- Public transport
- Elections
- Government policies, programme and priorities
- Austerity and availability of funding
- Pandemics
- National economy / cost of living
- Availability of staff and volunteers
- Individuals in the council or other partner organisations moving on.

4: Getting People Into Work

This section of the report describes the impact of BRAG's support for unemployed people.

Getting people into employment

Getting people into work has been a core activity of BRAG since the start. In the last three years BRAG has engaged with 1,984 unemployed people providing

employability training and support, resulting into **611 people moving into employment**.

Table 4.1 shows details of client engagement and employment outcomes.

TABLE 4.1 EMPLOYABILITY OUTCOMES

| | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | Total |
|---|---------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Number of clients engaged | 445 | 601 | 498 | 1,544 |
| Number of supports provided ¹ | 471 | 819 | 694 | 1,984 |
| Number of clients into employment | 139 | 230 | 151 | 520 |
| Number of employment outcomes achieved ² | 158 | 276 | 177 | 611 |

Those supported who did not move into employment still moved significantly further towards employment. Table 4.2 shows a range of intermediary outcomes towards employment achieved.

TABLE 4.2 INTERMEDIATE EMPLOYABILITY OUTCOMES

| | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | Total |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Accredited training | 39 | 93 | 98 | 230 |
| Other training | 5 | 34 | 70 | 109 |
| Practical support ³ | 967 | 1,982 | 1,812 | 4,761 |
| Job Brokerage | 3 | 197 | 201 | 401 |
| Volunteering | 11 | 21 | 21 | 53 |
| Money advice | 67 | 169 | 138 | 374 |
| Referral to address barriers | 301 | 372 | 242 | 915 |
| In-work support | 100 | 139 | 58 | 297 |

¹ Some clients have received more than one support under a different programme by a different staff member (e.g. criminal justice and job brokerage). For each intervention a separate Project Involvement Log is opened and kept.

² Some clients have achieved more than one employment outcome, some have achieved multiple jobs.

³ Practical support can include CV building, digital support, discretionary funding support, one-to-one key working, travel training.

BRAG has been the lead partner in Fife-ETC, working with 43% of the total client base of Fife-ETC and 46% of the employment outcomes. Table 4.3 provides the details.

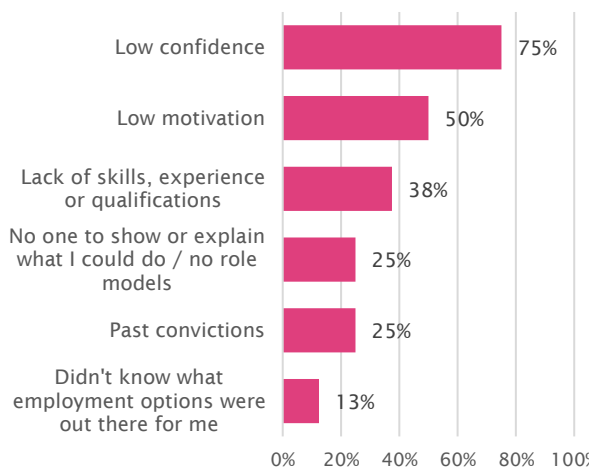
TABLE 4.3 BRAG – FIFE-ETC OUTCOMES

| | BRAG | Fife-ETC |
|--|-------|----------|
| Employment Outcomes | | |
| No. clients engaged | 1,544 | 3,591 |
| No. supports provided | 1,984 | 5,040 |
| No. clients into employment | 520 | 1,187 |
| No. of employment outcomes achieved | 611 | 1,329 |
| Intermediate Employability Outcomes | | |
| Accredited training | 230 | 1,609 |
| Other training | 109 | 196 |
| Practical support | 4761 | 8,519 |
| Job Brokerage | 401 | 548 |
| Volunteering | 53 | 156 |
| Money advice | 374 | 652 |
| Referral to address barriers | 915 | 1,312 |
| In-work support | 297 | 615 |

Barriers to employment

BRAG clients have a range of barriers that prevents them looking for and finding a job. Figure 4.1 presents the barriers experienced by clients.

Figure 4.1: Barriers to employment



Three quarters of clients reported low confidence (75%) and half low motivation (50%). Other barriers reported were low skills and experience (38%), a lack of role models (25%), past criminal convictions (25%) or lack of understanding what options were available (13%).

New Enterprise Allowance (NEA)

BRAG also supports people into self-employment through the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) service. In the period 2020-2022, when the programme finished, BRAG has supported 1,654 aspiring entrepreneurs. This has led to 530 new businesses starting up of which 431 were still trading after 6 months. Table 4.4 shows the details.

TABLE 4.4 NEW ENTERPRISE ALLOWANCE

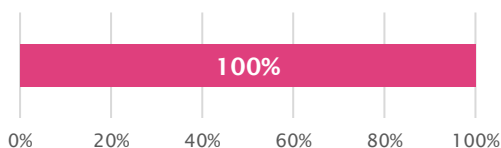
| Year | Bus Plan approved | Started trading | 6 Months trading |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 2020/21 | 439 | 158 | 123 |
| 2021/22 | 628 | 372 | 308 |
| TOTAL | 1,067 | 530 | 431 |

"I went to the job centre, there was a scheme called the New Enterprise Allowance which was set up to help new businesses which I joined, it is run by BRAG ... I ended up getting my kitchen space at their Crosshill site. I am happy I did it, and it has brought me closer to home and to my kids. I'm no longer jetting around the world, so it has definitely been a good move. It has been a long hard slog, starting any business involves hard work and long hours, but at the end of the day you are only as good as the last cake you make!"

Increasing skills

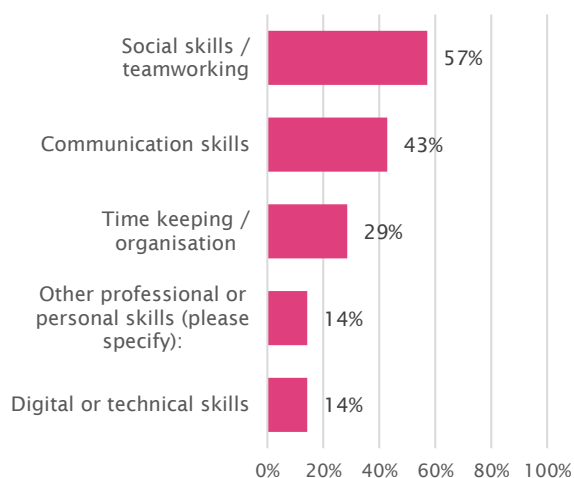
All clients gained skills from their involvement with BRAG.

Figure 4.2: Skills gained



Clients reported a range of skills they gained from the BRAG support, as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Skills gained



The majority of clients reported social skills (57%), followed by communication skills (43%) and organisational skills (29%)

"I now understand my skills better than before."

"I would keep on living my life thinking that my CV is a work of art, but it's not."

Interviewees mentioned a range of skills they had gained through BRAG.

One client mentioned that their language skills were a main barrier to finding a job. BRAG helped them to access an ESOL⁴

course, which improved his skills significantly.

"I must say that language barrier was the biggest challenge I have faced, and thanks to BRAG for helping me to join the ESOL, which made things much easier."

Another client said that they learned a lot from preparing a CV with their key worker. They now have the skills to write in a professional way responding to job adverts.

"I'm new to the Internet, now I know about Indeed."

Building confidence

Almost two-thirds of clients reported an increase in confidence (63%).

Figure 4.4: Increased confidence

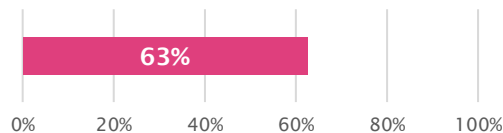


Figure 4.5 presents the indicators of increased confidence.

Figure 4.5: Indicators of increased confidence



⁴ English for Speakers of Other Languages

Clients harnessed confidence from their new skills and abilities (60%), and now find it easier talking to others (60%) or try unfamiliar things (60%). Two out of five said that others had commented on their newfound confidence (40%).

"I would still be sitting in the house with no direction."

"It has made me realise it is possible to get a job."

Interviewees reported that their new skills and the support provided increased their confidence.

"I became more confident with myself and my language."

"[key worker] made me realise my own skills, things I didn't think I had."

Getting a better understanding of the requirements to apply for jobs and the process they could expect also helped to build confidence.

"I now know what to expect."

"A job now feels achievable. [key worker] has reassured me."

BRAG employability staff confirm the skills gained by clients. This includes soft skills, such as social and communication skills.

Staff noted that many clients come to BRAG with low expectations, but after the support they better understand their skills and opportunities and they have raised their expectations.

"They think 'I can only be a cleaner, work in McDonalds' etc. But then we get people who come back and ask

for help applying for higher up positions e.g. team leader."

BRAG staff.

Creating resilience

More than three quarters of clients (78%) thought that they were now more resilient as a result of the BRAG interventions.

Figure 4.6: Increased resilience

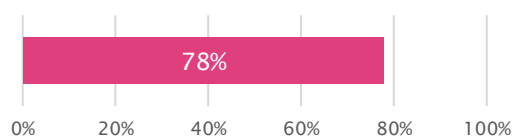
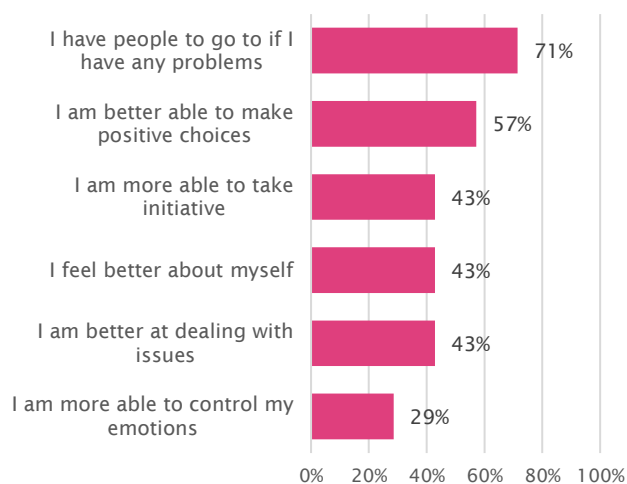


Figure 4.7 reveals why clients are more resilient.

Figure 4.7: Indicators of increased resilience



Clients know where to go for help (71%), make better choices (57%), are able to take the initiative (43%), have increased self-esteem (43%), better able to deal with any issues (43%) in the future and more able to control their emotions (29%).

"They have helped me engage in looking for work whereas left to my own devices I would struggle."

"I would have continued to feel stuck and unsure about how my conviction would impact on finding employment."

"I wouldn't be as motivated and would have no idea and be 10 steps behind."

Interviewees said that they were now more prepared to tackle employment in the future. Some of their barriers to employment were addressed and they realised that help is available, which made them more resilient.

"I now don't feel like there are that many barriers, before it was quite daunting."

"Knowing I had [key worker] support made it less bad."

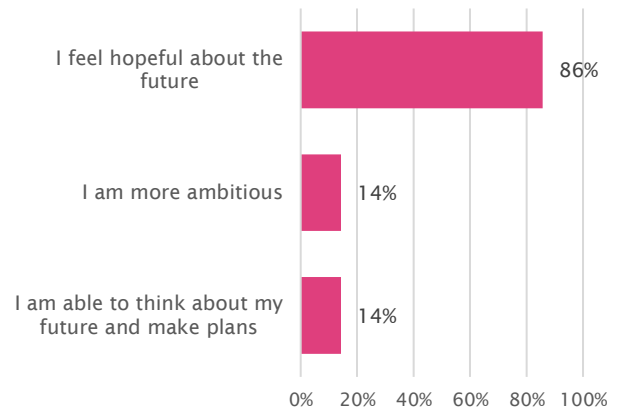
BRAG staff confirm they support clients with all issues they bring and after they support their aspirations.

"If they have an issue with their work, we advocate on their behalf- we aren't employment law specialists, but we help individuals to make their own case."

BRAG staff.

The vast majority of clients (88%) are looking more positive towards the future because of the support BRAG has provided, as shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.8: Outlook on the future



Improving mental health and wellbeing

More than half of clients reported an improvement of their mental health and wellbeing (56%).

Figure 4.9: Improved mental health and wellbeing

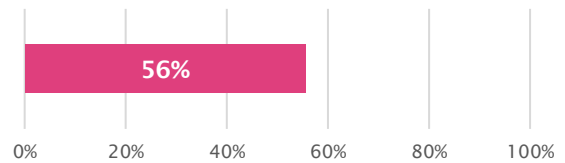
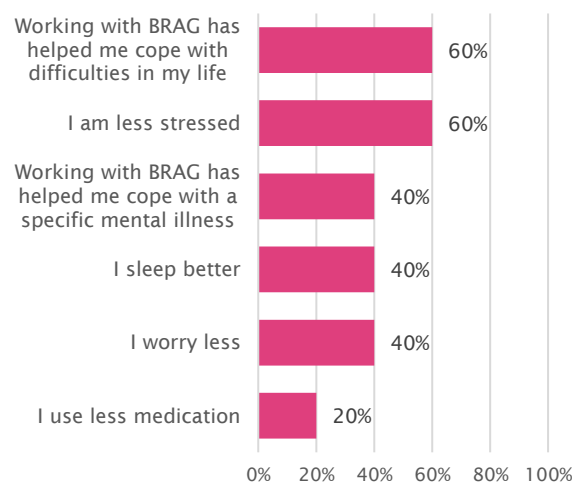


Figure 4.10 presents the indicators of improved mental wellbeing.

Figure 4.10: Indicators of improved mental wellbeing



The BRAG support has helped clients coping with difficult issues (60%), reduced stress levels (60%) and helped clients cope with specific mental health issues (40%). Some mentioned sleeping better (40%), worrying less (40%) or reduced medication (20%).

Interviewees also talked about the positive effect the BRAG support had on their mental wellbeing. The positive turn of their life improved their mood and helped fighting depression.

A happier family

Half of the clients (50%) reported that getting skills, confidence and resilience also has a positive effect on the rest of their family.

Figure 4.11: Improved family relationships

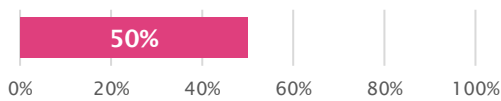
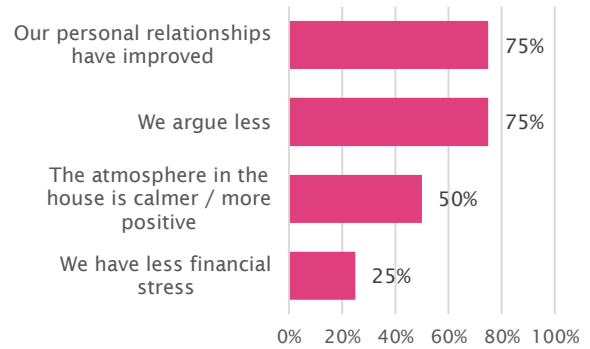


Figure 4.12 reveals the indicators of improved family relationships.

Figure 4.12: Indicators of improved family relationships



Three quarters of clients reported less arguing (75%) and generally improved relationships (75%). Others remarked on the improved home atmosphere (50%) and reduced financial worries (25%).

"I became a calmer person and I know how to improve my attitude."

5: Thriving Businesses

This section of the report portrays the impact of BRAG Enterprises on the business community of Fife.

Business Space

BRAG provides office suites, business and industrial units in its two Business Centres in Crosshill and Methil.

In total there are 76 spaces across the two venues providing working space to 50 tenants.

Table 5.1 provides details.

TABLE 5.1 BUSINESS SPACE

| | Offices | Industrial |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Crosshill | 49 | 6 |
| Methil | 21 | - |
| TOTAL | 70 | 6 |

BRAG also provides meeting and conference space and facilities to local businesses in the centres.

Value for money

All respondents thought that BRAG as a landlord offered value for money.

Figure 5.1: BRAG offering value for money

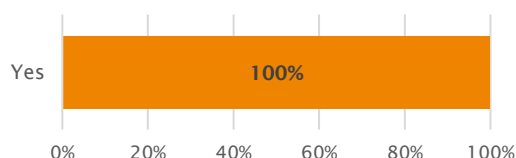
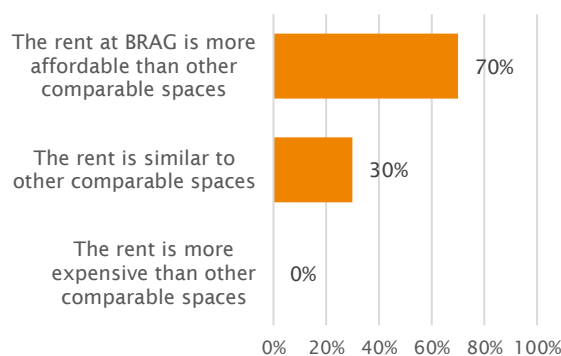


Figure 5.2 shows that tenants generally find the rent at the Brag business centres affordable.

Figure 5.2: BRAG rents



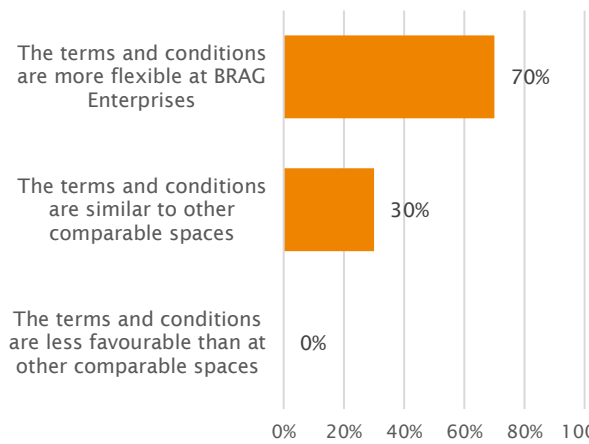
“Very fair price wise and certainly cheaper than a lot of the council properties.”

“I considered opening a salon, but I thought there would be too much cost, electricians, plumbers, lots of different costs to pay, but BRAG actually gave me their electrician and plumber, and I can pay that back for 12 months during paying my rent, so that was absolutely amazing.”

“Other rental rooms are more expensive.”

Figure 5.3 reveals that tenants also find the terms and conditions that BRAG applies to its tenancies generally favourable to other venues.

Figure 5.3: BRAG terms and conditions



“Only have to give 3 months’ notice.”

“They are very accommodating in terms of lease.”

“If BRAG hadn’t been here, I probably wouldn’t have been in business. It would be unaffordable and unachievable for what I’m trying to do as a business.”

“It [the business space] is close and cost effective.”

Interviewees valued being part of a community. Tenants spoke of how they benefitted from other businesses located in the centre and how they would refer their clients on to others within the building.

“I’ve been coming in here since I was about 3 years old, in the room next door there was a single mum’s computer class and my mum used to bring me too, when I was in primary school there was an internet café.”

“Those next door would come in for a cup of tea, lots of networking is going on.”

“We’ve had t-shirts made by some of the local guys [businesses] here, and some signage. It’s a good network, they’re all very friendly.”

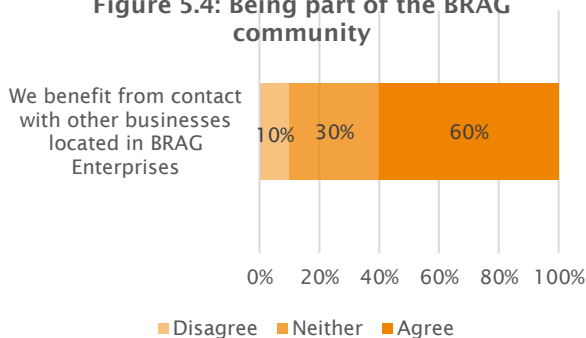
“We and our clients are able to use other areas, such as the Pantry.”

“There is a lot of other business going on here which is great custom for me because there is always new people coming in and out.”

Being part of a community

One of the advantages of renting space at the BRAG business centres is being co-located with other businesses.

Figure 5.4: Being part of the BRAG community

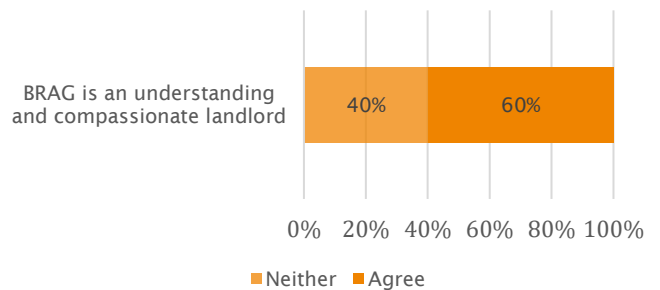


Almost two out of three tenants (60%) report that they have benefitted from contacts with other businesses in the centre.

Support when required

BRAG aims to have regular contact with its tenants and provide support where possible, such as help accessing grants.

Figure 5.5: BRAG support



BRAG is seen as an understanding and compassionate landlord by most tenants (60%).

"BRAG have been extremely good at giving us support when needed."

"Good advice on grants."

"[BRAG staff member] is really approachable, understanding and easy to get on with."

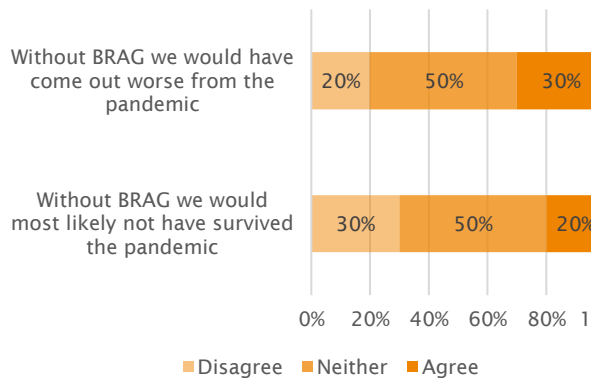
"Staff have all been superb, everyone supported us."

"I don't think anywhere would support us in the same way."

"[BRAG staff member] helped with lots of advice, business advice, how to apply for small business rates relief."

During the Covid-19 pandemic, BRAG has been in contact with its tenants constantly and has provided support when required.

Figure 5.6: BRAG Covid-19 support



Almost a third of tenants (30%) acknowledge that the BRAG support during the pandemic has been very helpful and that it has helped them to weather the storm. A fifth of tenants (20%) think that without the support delivered by BRAG their businesses would have ceased to exist.

"It [leaving BRAG space] would affect my mental health negatively. My unit is a safe workspace, I love it."

Interviewees valued the support they received from BRAG.

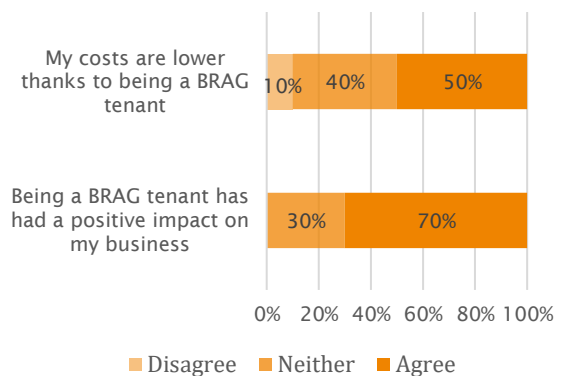
"The support and feeling of being looked after was why we decided to stay where we are."

"We have not had the support we had before we got to BRAG."

Positive effects on businesses

Being a BRAG tenant has a positive impact on businesses, as displayed in Figure 5.7.

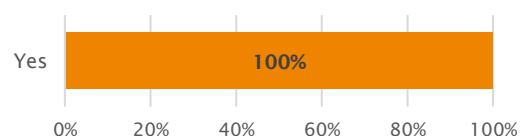
Figure 5.7: Positive effect on business



Half of tenants (50%) agree that their cost are lower and almost three quarters (70%) acknowledge a positive impact on their business from being a BRAG tenant.

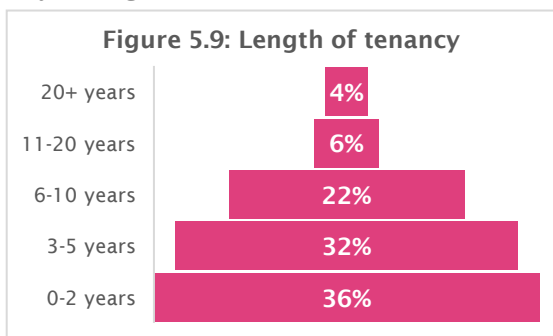
All tenants (100%) would recommend BRAG to other businesses as shown in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8: Would you recommend BRAG



“It allowed us to grow, expand and help more families.”

Tenants typically stay a long time with BRAG, which is another testament to the value they attach to being a BRAG tenant. Figure 5.9 reveals the length of tenancies with BRAG.



There are five tenants (10%) that rent premises for more than 10 years⁵.

⁵ It should be noted that the Methil Community Business Centre has only been operating since 2016.

6: Fighting Poverty and Inequality

This section of the report describes the impact of BRAG Community Services.

Survey respondents

The community survey was completed by 53 community members.

Figure 6.1 presents the age range of survey respondents. Most respondents are 55-64 years old (37%).

Figure 6.1: Age respondents

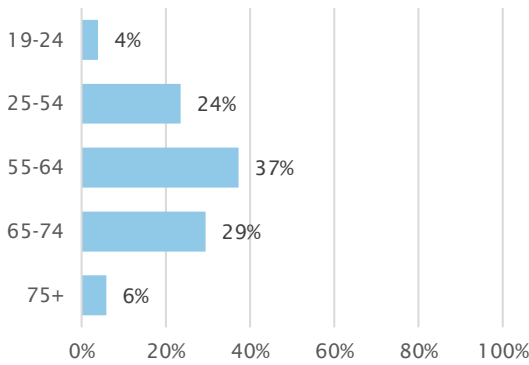


Figure 6.2 shows the range of BRAG community services that survey respondents have used.

Figure 6.2: Services used

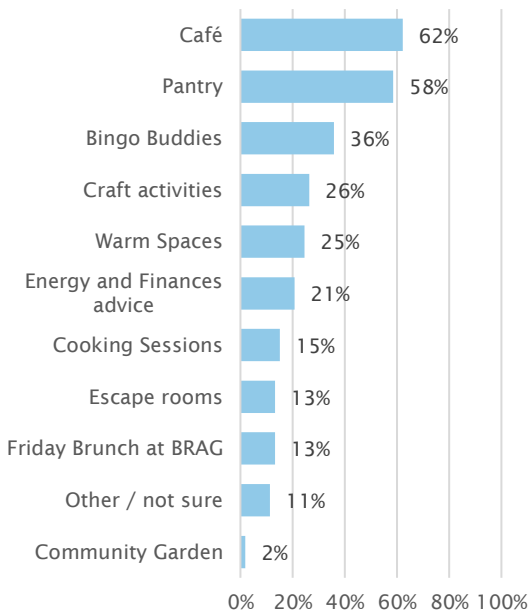
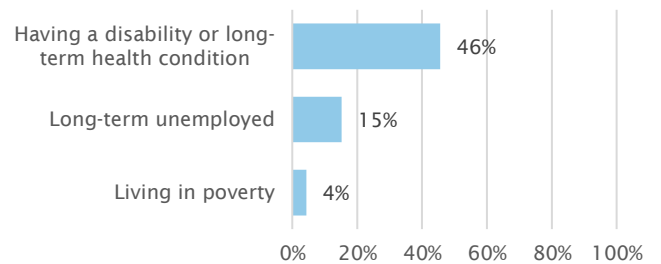


Figure 6.3 shows that almost half of respondents self-identify as having a disability or long-term condition (46%), while one in seven are long-term unemployed (15%). Only a small minority identify as living in poverty (4%).

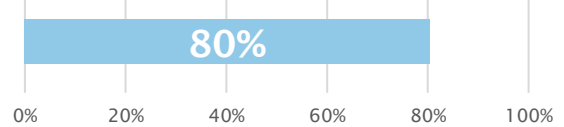
Figure 6.3: Self identifying as....



Feeling less isolated

Four out of five community members feel less isolated as a result of attending BRAG services (80%).

Figure 6.4: Feeling less isolated



"[without BRAG] I would feel lonely."

"[without BRAG] I would be more isolated/anxious."

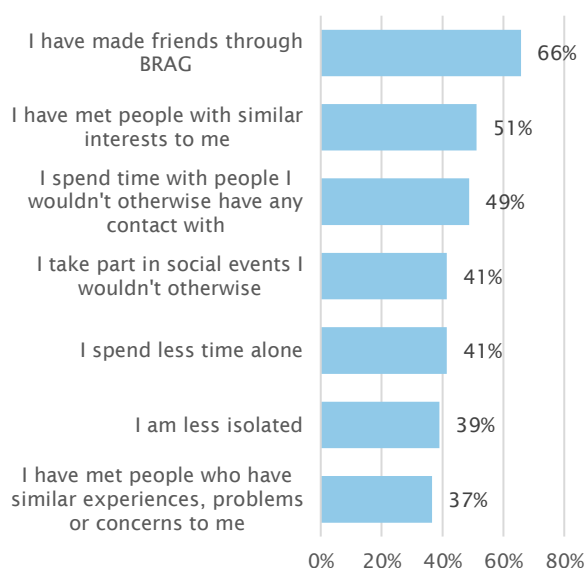
"[without BRAG] I would be sitting in house alone."

"[without BRAG] I would spend more time sitting in the house."

"[without BRAG] I would feel very isolated."

Figure 6.5 presents the indicators of reduced social isolation.

Figure 6.5: Indicators of reduced isolation



People make new friends (66%), meet likeminded people (51%), spend time with new people (49%) and take part in new activities (41%). Two out of five reported feeling less lonely (41%) or isolated (39%) and BRAG has given them the opportunity to share their worries and experiences (37%).

"I have enjoyed meeting/mixing with others and learning new skills."

"I have made quite a few new friends."

"You get a good blether."

"I have met a few new friends."

"I would have less friends."

"It's good to socialise with other people."

"It helped so much; it's nice to know people care."

"BRAG helped me develop friendships in Benarty."

Interviewees also stressed the importance of BRAG in looking after each other. People got to know each other and helped each other if needed.

"It's a good way to catch up, you notice who hasn't been."

BRAG staff point out there is not a lot to do in the area and many people feel lonely and isolated. Some people do not see or speak to anyone for days. Staff make a point of engaging with people on their own and regulars will go to new people on their own.

"We always sit and start a conversation with people that come on their own. They always leave with a smile."

BRAG staff member.

Boosting confidence

Three out of five community members gain an increase in confidence by attending BRAG services (60%).

Figure 6.6: Feeling more confident

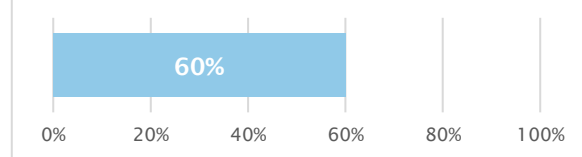
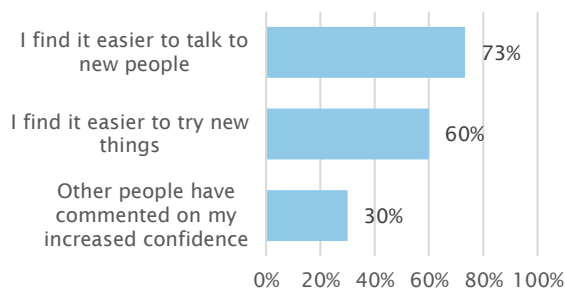


Figure 6.7 reveals the indicators of increased confidence.

Figure 6.7: Indicators of increased confidence



People find it easier to talk to strangers (73%) and try unfamiliar things (60%). Almost a third commented on their newfound confidence (30%).

“BRAG has helped build my confidence.”

“I’m getting out more.”

One interviewee said that they were referred by BRAG to professional mental health services, and now they feel confident enough to access any support service they need.

Square Start participants said that the skills they picked up and the peer support they received from other participants increased their confidence in their parenting abilities.

Square Start staff confirmed that parents gain in confidence. They learn new practical skills, such as cooking, cleaning, or budgeting, and soft skills, including communication and conflict management, which in time changes their attitude and motivation. Parents start to feel more in control, which gives them the confidence to turn their life around.

“They feel like bad parents, we give them the confidence to manage things better.”

Improved mental health and wellbeing

More than three quarters of community members report an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing (78%).

Figure 6.8: Improved mental wellbeing

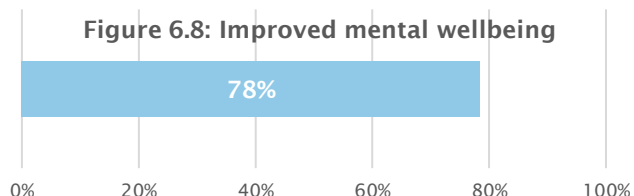
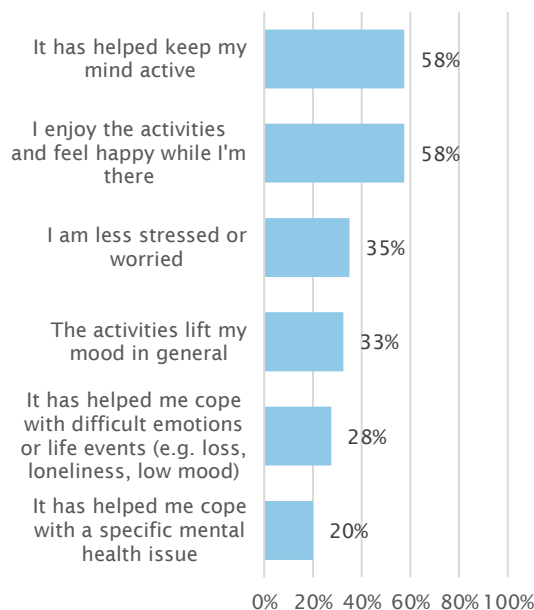


Figure 6.9 displays the indicators of improved mental wellbeing.

Figure 6.9: Indicators improved mental wellbeing



BRAG attendees report being active (58%) and feeling happy (58%) while attending services. Around a third say they are less stressed (35%) or in a better mood (33%). Significant groups of community members credit BRAG for helping them with specific difficult life events (28%) and specific mental health issues (20%).

“I feel happier.”

One interviewee talked about their depression and how attending BRAG on an almost daily basis has helped them to overcome this.

"My future is a lot brighter."

Square Start participants revealed how attending the sessions impacted on their mental wellbeing. Having some respite from childcare and talking to other parents with similar issues in a supportive environment reduced stress levels.

"I use it as a relief."

"We have a group chat to catch up during the week, so we're always in contact for support."

Improved physical health

Almost half of community members report an improvement in their physical health (49%).

Figure 6.10: Improved physical health

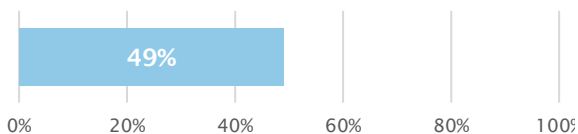
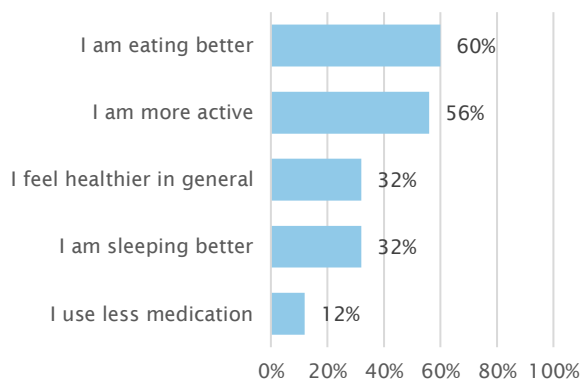


Figure 6.11 shows the indicators of an improved physical health.

Figure 6.11: Indicators improved physical health



People attending BRAG services report eating healthier (60%), being more active (56%), sleeping better (32%) and using less medication (12%). A third feel healthier in general (33%).

"I feel more active."

"My cupboards would not be as full. Now cooking more varied meals."

Increased financial wellbeing

Attending BRAG services has improved the financial wellbeing of just under half of community members (48%).

Figure 6.12: Improved financial wellbeing

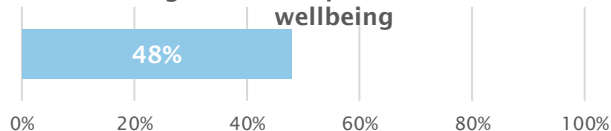
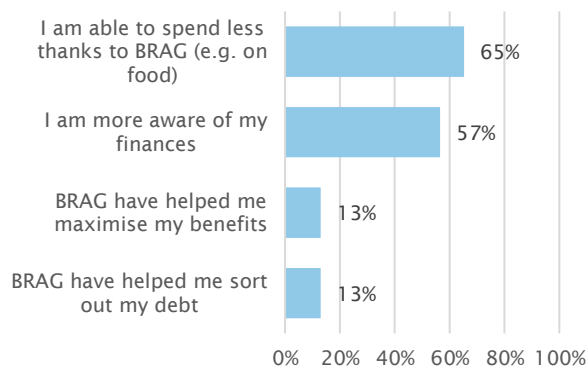


Figure 6.13 reveals the ways BRAG has helped financial wellbeing.

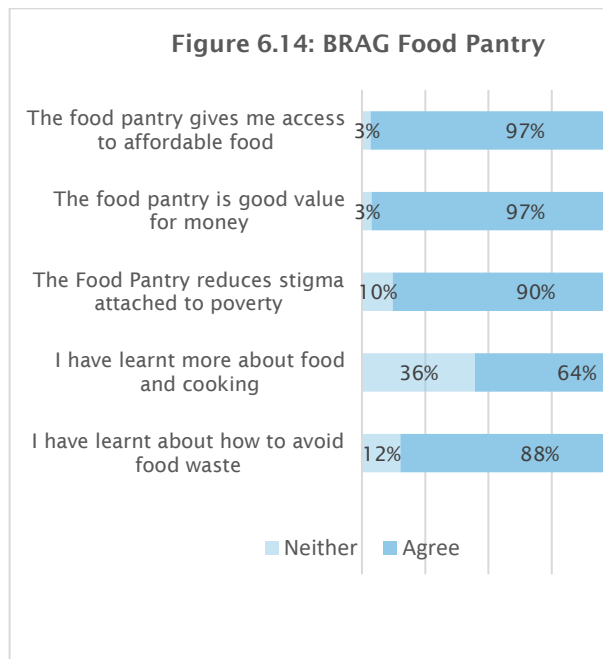
Figure 6.13: Indicators financial wellbeing



BRAG has helped community members to save cost (65%), increased financial literacy (57%) and helped people to maximise their income (13%) or reduce their debts (13%).

In particular, the Food Pantry has had a positive impact on people's financial

wellbeing. Figure 6.14 reveals how the BRAG Food Pantry has helped people.



"I'm not embarrassed coming here."

Almost everyone agreed that the Food Pantry provided affordable food (97%), was good value for money (97%), and that it reduces the stigma of poverty (90%). The Food Pantry also taught people about cooking (64%) and food waste (88%).

"Food would be harder to afford."

"Food bills would be higher."

"I would struggle to manage money on food."

Interviewees confirmed the impact of the Food Pantry on their financial wellbeing and enabled them to spend money on heating and treats for their children.

"With what I save I can put my heating on for a while longer. Every penny is a prisoner now."

"I could not afford oranges or bananas, but now I can get them here."

Another pantry user disclosed that they now are able to save money for a family holiday, they would otherwise not be able to afford.

Increased community cohesion

Three quarters of community members report better links with their community as a result of attending BRAG (75%).

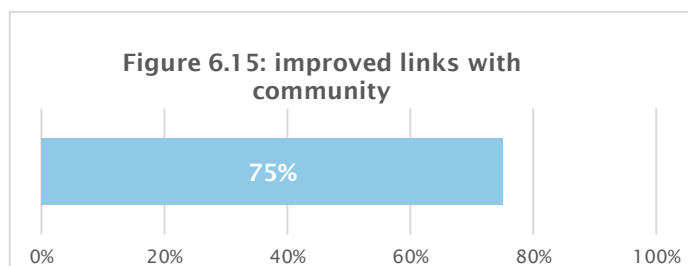
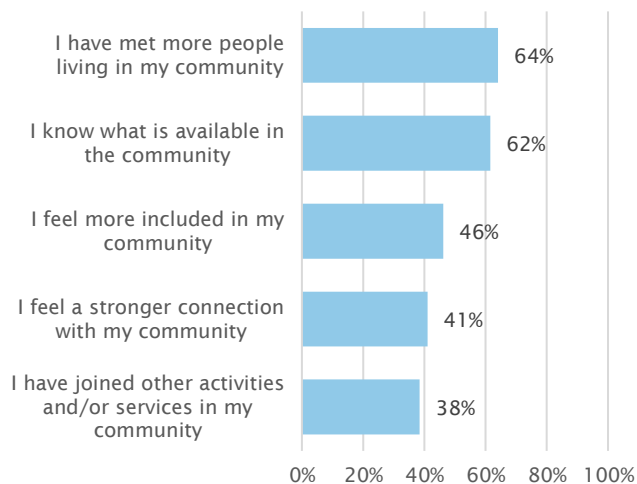


Figure 6.16 reveals the indicators of increased links within their community.

Figure 6.16: Indicators increased links with community



People report meeting new people (64%), having a better knowledge of what is going on in their community (62%), feeling more included in (46%) and having a stronger connection with (41%) their

community. For a significant group this has led to becoming more active in their community (38%).

"I have lived in this area all my life, and there's people here that I meet that I haven't seen before."

Just over three quarters of community members also have a better understanding of what other services there are available to help them addressing any issues they have (76%).

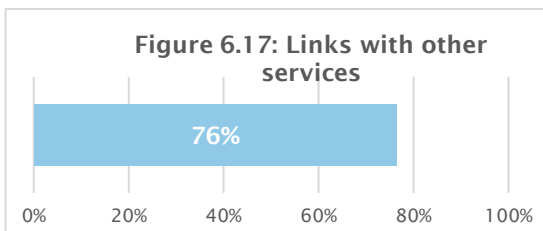
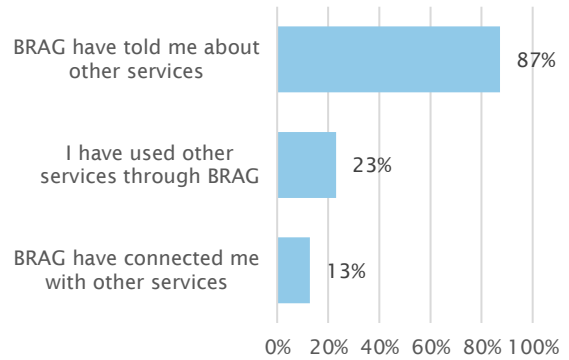


Figure 6.18 shows the extent of their links with other services.

Figure 6.18: Connections with other services



One community member disclosed how benefits advice and help with filling forms from BRAG has enabled them to access more benefits.

"I have heard people talking about it [PIP benefits] but wouldn't have known I was entitled to it."

"I'm more aware of what I can get; they [BRAG staff] inform us."

7: Views on BRAG

This section of the report provides the views of service users, tenants, and key stakeholders on how BRAG operates and delivers services.

Fit with strategic priorities

Key stakeholders all acknowledge the pivotal role BRAG plays in the area. BRAG helps other statutory and third sector organisations active in Fife to achieve their objectives.

BRAG provides valuable physical infrastructure to the area, and, perhaps more importantly, because the trust BRAG has in the community, they play the role of ‘honest broker’ between the community and other service providers.

They also recognise the role that BRAG plays in ensuring that people without a support network do not fall between the cracks.

“They [people in Fife] were pushed from pillar to post before.”

Key stakeholder

Key stakeholders involved in the employability field mention the role BRAG is playing as lead partner of the Fife-ETC. BRAG brings all the mainstream and specialist employability support providers together and ensures a seamless service provision for unemployed people in Fife.

The combination of providing physical community infrastructure, getting people into work and facilitating business development makes BRAG a key partner in the Community Wealth Building agenda.

BRAG is also able to lever in grant funding that is not available to the statutory sector.

“[If BRAG did not exist] we would have had to invent something similar to BRAG.”

Key stakeholder

Representing the Third Sector

As one of the largest third sector operator in Fife, BRAG also plays a role in representing and advocating for the third sector. Key stakeholders recognise this role and value it.

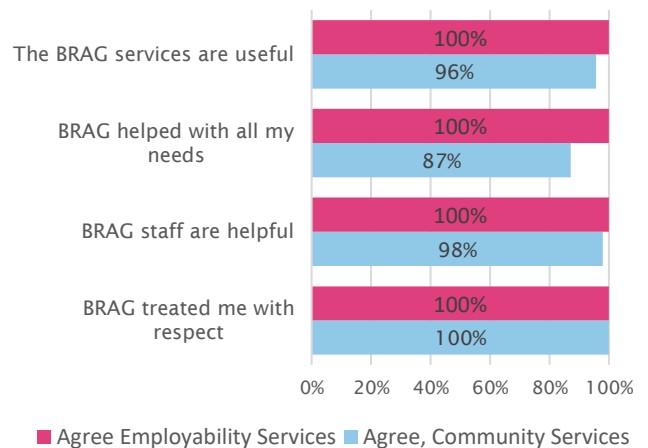
“BRAG is a single point of contact to marshal the troops.”

Key stakeholder

Service delivery

Figure 8.1 shows that both employability and community service clients are very satisfied with how BRAG delivers their services.

Figure 7.1: Satisfaction with BRAG



Interviewees agreed that BRAG services are delivered effectively. It was appreciated that many staff are local and known to the clients.

"We all grew up together, because they are all local and you know no one is judging you."

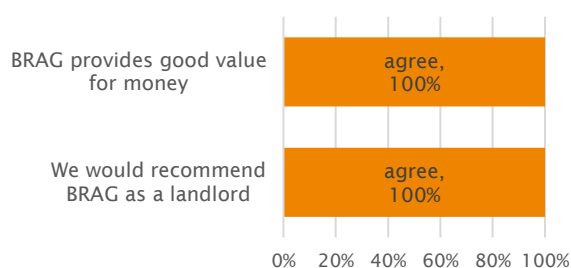
"The staff is fantastic; they are good listeners and [BRAG staff] was acting like an old friend."

"They are really nice, and local; we know them all."

"They are very helpful. I went through a bad patch, and they listened to me and helped me. I was really down, in a bad place, and they advised me what to do."

As mentioned in Section 4, the tenants of the BRAG business centres are very happy with BRAG as a landlord. All tenants think that BRAG delivers value for money, and all would recommend BRAG as a landlord, as displayed in Figure 8.2.

Figure 7.2: Satisfaction tenants



Interviewees found it really easy to work with BRAG as their landlord and found them flexible and approachable.

"[BRAG staff] are really approachable, understanding and easy to get on with."

"They helped us with our out-of-the-box ideas."

"The staff have always been superb, everyone supports us."

BRAG tenants

Key stakeholders are generally very satisfied with the way BRAG delivers their services and how BRAG interacts with them.

Key stakeholders value BRAG's attitude towards partnership working. BRAG is seen as a trusted partner by both statutory partners and the third sector.

The flexible, holistic, person-centred approach of BRAG, and their reach across Fife is praised.

The relationship of BRAG with its communities is seen as very useful.

Some stakeholders noticed BRAG's balanced appetite to risk taking. This has enabled BRAG to be transformative in Fife.

Room for improvement

Clients had few suggestions for improvement. They wanted more services and extended opening hours.

Key stakeholders mentioned a few suggestions, including more services for young people and becoming involved in the use of vacant retail space on the high street for community organisations.

Some key stakeholders warned that BRAG should be careful not to lose its focus when growing further.

8: Conclusions

This section summarises the key findings from the evaluation

Conclusions

From the research the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. BRAG Enterprises is successful in getting people into work, with 520 people moving into employment over the last three years.
2. BRAG is also very successful in supporting unemployed people becoming self-employed, with 431 successfully trading entrepreneurs over the last three years.
3. BRAG's Employability Services is helping unemployed people in Fife gain employment and personal skills, boosting their confidence in their abilities, creating resilience for the future, improving their mental health and wellbeing and is having a positive impact on their wider family.
4. BRAG is seen as an excellent landlord for businesses, offering value for money, adequate support for tenants that need it and making them feel part of a community.
5. Tenants believe that being part of the BRAG community has a positive effect on their business.
6. BRAG's Community Services are effective in tackling social isolation and loneliness, building confidence, improving physical and mental health, increasing financial wellbeing and building community cohesion.
7. BRAG helps statutory and third sector organisations to achieve their strategic objectives, by providing physical infrastructure and access to the Fife communities. They are seen as an 'honest broker between communities and service providers.
8. As one of the largest third sector organisations and their role as community anchor organisation, BRAG is representing the third sector in Fife.
9. BRAG is praised for its partnership working, which is seen as a major strength of the organisation.
10. All clients, tenants and other stakeholders are very satisfied with the delivery of BRAG services.

Find out more
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