

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PROJECT GROUP MEETING

1.12.14 at London Funders

Participants

Kerry	Luker	BBC Children in Need
Marcus	Hulme	Big Society Capital
Jo	Wells	The Blagrave Trust
Alice	Power	Cabinet Office
Ciaran	Rafferty	City Bridge Trust (Chair)
Erik	Mesel	John Lyon's Charity
Malcolm	John	London Borough of Harrow
Christopher	Mitchell	London Borough of Islington
Adam	Ruchman	London Borough of Lewisham
Jim	Minton	London Youth
Rachel	Wharton	New Philanthropy Capital
Sharon	Long	Partnership For Young London (Speaker)
Harry	Clucas	Peabody
Kate	Long	Peabody
Jenny	Oppenheimer	The Pilgrim Trust
Stephen	Bediako	Project Oracle (Speaker)
Emma	Heel	Sported
Chris	White	ZING

In attendance

Becky	Green	London Funders
David	Warner	London Funders

Apologies for absence were received from Francesca Sanderson, Big Society Capital; Nicola Kelly, CAN; Michael Fuller, Forward Foundation; Emma Cornish, Peabody; Andrea Jimenez Cisneros, Project Oracle; Ciaran Rafferty, The City Bridge Trust; Amy Hochadel, The Social Innovation Partnership

Ciaran welcomed everyone to the group, and noted the meeting notes from 5th August 2014.

Project Oracle and the Centre for Youth Impact

Stephen Bediako

Stephen Bediako began by giving a brief introduction to [the Social Innovation Partnership \(TSIP\)](#) before continuing to outline [Project Oracle](#), a focused Children and Youth Evidence Hub for London, which will now be focusing on deepening its work in London with funders and providers and contributing nationally through the [Centre for Youth Impact \(CYI\)](#) and its work in supporting commissioners across areas such as Social Action, Employment and Education nationally.

TSIP launched in 2010 and aims to make evidence accessible to everyone and create new partnerships to drive social innovation and join up the dots between research, policy, and practice. TSIP works to help clients to use evidence and innovation to increase their social impact using evidence hubs, evaluation, training and designing and implementing innovation processes.

Project Oracle is London's first children and youth evidence hub, funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Project Oracle promotes the use of quality evidence to build a depository of what works. It uses five standards to encourage organisations at any level to increase their use of

evidence. Project Oracle works in London, but is also looking nationally through the Centre for Youth Impact (CYI).

The focus of CYI is to provide a collaborative space for sharing and learning around impact for youth services nationally, and is a partnership of Project Oracle, NCVYS and SRU supported by the Cabinet Office. It is a national initiative to support the youth sector understand how to use evidence and demonstrate impact. The Centre aims to develop as the youth sector's space where practitioners, funders and policy makers come together to discuss, generate, validate and reflect on high quality evidence of the impact that good youth services have on the lives of young people.

CYI is in a pilot phase from September 2014 to March 2015 and is interested in feedback on what it can do to support other organisations in their practice with young people, what the barriers to success may be and what success would look like.

Discussion

- On concerns as to the need for more analysis in the sector, Stephen argued that it is good for an organisation to demonstrate what it does: with local authorities making difficult decisions, it is important to be able to demonstrate value. If you can get a really good grip of data then you can use this and communicate it to your benefit. As local authorities are downsizing, there is a need for those who understand the sector to use evidence to get the best possible service for children. Evidence, innovation and a strong business case can contribute to fixing the sector. There is an attempt to create a consistent framework, as part of the challenge is the inconsistency in the sector. In response to concerns that it will fall to independent funders to fund risk and innovation, it was noted that the focus should be about creating the right system for the statutory sector to be able to get involved where possible.
- Timing is a challenge, as the project is starting towards the end of a parliament, however it is positioned in a way that is not politically driven. This will fill a gap and be bottom up. CYI will be run in the same way as Project Oracle and not try to push any agenda, or a vehicle of any government. This is centre led and not driven by a particular agenda.
- The Quality Mark is easy for groups to understand and accessible for even small groups. Language is important, so that it is put in a way that people can understand, and that they are speaking the same language. However, Stephen noted the Project Oracle standards and the quality mark are two different things: increasing the quality of the evidence is not the same as measuring the quality of the work. CYI will be national and a useful prism to use to measure your standards of evidence. However other groups may find a way to evidence what they do.
- There were several comments as to how difficult it can be for small organisations to fund their outcome measurement journey as it can take time to see results. Also, some were concerned that it would be more difficult for small organisations to achieve the standards and therefore harder for them to compete for funding at a time when many are struggling. However, Stephen stated how the Project Oracle standards can still be a vehicle to support smaller organisations, instead of promoting larger organisations. This is not a way for big organisations to immediately enter at level 5 in order to secure funding. The aim is to work with small organisations to support them to stay competitive. This is a structure which allows innovation into the funding world. The challenge is how it is presented very early on in the minds of commissioners, funders and small organisations.
- Engagement with young people. CYI have a strand of work in order to engage with young people. It was noted that it is important to attempt to target the hardest to reach young people.

Review on freely accessible services – ‘Being good doesn’t pay’

Sharon Long

Sharon Long, [Partnership for Young London](#), presented on research commissioned by London Funders looking at what is happening to children and young people’s open access services in London.

Initially, Sharon outlined National Youth Agency slides on ‘Youth Services in England: changes and trends in the provision of services (October 2014)’ which were informed by discussions with heads of regional youth work units in the North-west, North-east, Yorkshire and Humber, South-west and London. The findings and main themes of discussion included:

- There is no longer a common form of youth service across England and there is an absence of national youth policy.
- There is a shift from open access to targeted services which is continuing.
- Commissioning is widespread, but other models of youth service delivery, such as mutual, are limited.
- The resilience of the local voluntary sector is often down to strong leadership, good partnership and clarity of vision.
- The funding situation is likely to change for the worse in the next 18 months following 2015 spending cuts. With the uncertainty about current funding are programmes that build long term relationships and support for young people.

Moving on to the PYL research, commissioned by London Funders, Sharon provided some background on the project. Earlier in 2014, London Funders commissioned Partnership for Young London to carry out a small research project looking at what is happening to children and young people’s open access services in London. This research was funded by a number of London Funders members and the detailed research will only be available to members. A ‘think piece’ setting out the issues raised by the research and the challenges for funders will be published in January and in this session, Sharon Long presented on the key findings and learning from the research.

- Budget reductions and a policy focus on targeted services has generally exacerbated the lack of joined up approaches across services. There are so many approaches and outcomes frameworks in place.
- There are a range of service delivery models in place, with significant regional variations.
- The financial allocations to young people’s services are diverse and wide ranging. All boroughs have experienced significant reductions and further restrictions are anticipated in 2015.
- Many boroughs are trying to sustain a balance between both universal and targeted services across their provision, however resourcing is being increasingly drawn to targeted services.
- There is a noticeable gap in local provision for children and young people aged 8-13.

The detailed feedback in the review poses a number of questions to be considered by independent funders:

- The role of independent funders to provide leadership across the region, and also to share intelligence on the constantly changing situation.

- The importance of a focus on both universal and early intervention services.
- A question on how all partners can collaborate more effectively.
- The challenge of core funding, where organisations have traditionally relied upon local authorities.
- New ways of showing impact in order to free up the capacity to deliver stages.

Sharon noted that the general feeling was one of focusing on survival, which, in addition to an increased feeling of competition, did not give a lot of opportunity for strategic thinking or good partnership work. Local authorities measure in different ways and so it is difficult to make comparisons. However, it is clear that they are expecting significant budget cuts.

This research captures a snapshot in time. A wider think piece briefing will also be more widely available to the sector and may influence a regional event. The group discussed the piece and had an opportunity to feedback on it.

The next stage for this work will be to facilitate a session with representatives from the boroughs focused on within the research, and also wider stakeholders to view the approach to funding services for young people and identify ways forward for more effective collaboration.

Discussion

- It is important that there is a collaborative focus to this work and any conversations which take place.
- The rate of change is so quick. This is a valuable piece of research in order to capture one particular moment and the direction of travel.
- Many people discussing what the role of the local authorities is going to be and whether they will be just commissioning social care. It is impossible to get the boroughs to all agree and buy into the same thing.
- Within the think piece document, it is important to be very careful about the messaging and definitions, and expressing what we mean.
- It is important to reduce the burden on organisations with reduced capacity.

Ciaran thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5th February 2015, 10am - 12noon.