



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PROJECT GROUP MEETING

28.05.14 at London Funders

Participants

Monica	Golding	Premier League Charitable Fund
Emily	Goulborn	Impetus - The Private Equity Foundation
Kathleen	Healy	Hillingdon Community Trust
Sharon	Long	Partnership For Young London/ Children England (Presenter)
Kerry	Luker	BBC Children in Need
Rohan	Martyres	CAN
Erik	Mesel	John Lyon's Charity
Jim	Minton	London Youth (Presenter)
Jenny	Oppenheimer	The Pilgrim Trust
Ciaran	Rafferty	The City Bridge Trust (Chair)
Adam	Ruchman	London Borough of Lewisham
Kerry	Russell	City of Westminster
Chris	White	ZING

In attendance

Becky	Green	London Funders
David	Warner	London Funders

Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Boswell, GLA, Oliver Sian David, Big Lottery Fund, Ola Omishola, Prince's Trust, Thelfa Quick, London Community Foundation, Christopher Scott, London Borough of Hillingdon, Hugh Stultz, Big Lottery Fund, Marina Svistak, New Philanthropy Capital.

Ciaran welcomed everyone to the first meeting of this project group, and emphasized the background and purpose of the group in attempting to determine the current state of play in the sector in London and identify trends and areas for concern.

Introduction and background

David Warner, London Funders

David outlined the meeting in context to London Funders and wider conversations within the membership. The project group has been established in response to growing concerns from its membership about the way that the funding landscape for children and young people services across London is changing. In particular reductions in public sector funding appears to be having a significant impact on the provision of services across London.

London Funders has established a new 2014 – 2017 strategy and children and young people is now one of 3 strategic priorities. London Funders has also commissioned some research to look in detail at 4 boroughs in London and this research will help to inform the group at a later stage.

Challenges, opportunities, threats and solutions

Sharon Long, Partnership for Young London/ Children England and Jim Minton, London Youth

Sharon began by giving some information from the [Partnership for Young London](#) and [Children England](#) networks and identified some key themes affecting the sector. Jim gave a flavour of what the organisations that [London Youth](#) work with are observing, including what is currently working well, some challenges and suggestions for future priorities.

The main points from Sharon and Jim's presentations and the group discussion are noted thematically below:

Focus on targeted funding

- Local authorities are taking a strong line on focusing on targeted services with reduced funding and there are challenges around securing universal provision. As a consequence, some groups are increasingly attempting to work with the most vulnerable in order to secure funding. The overall feeling that targeted work is the future has led to some displaced risk of safeguarding concerns.
- There is a competition to reach the hardest at need. The focus seems split between NEET and Safeguarding for Local Authorities to sustain the funding, however early help and issues such as mental health need to also be prioritised.
- Previously, core funding often came from local authorities, but this is not the case now. If organisations don't have funding for staff costs and buildings, then they will never be strong enough to make good applications for more innovative projects.

Youth sector hit hard – priorities and focus

- In some reviews carried out by Partnership for Young London over the last 2 years, they found that the youth sector has been disproportionately hit with boroughs facing an average 50% cut on their budget in this area. With a lack of youth policy, it has been hard to sustain services and where there is no ring fencing of money, it makes it increasingly difficult to justify any spending above and beyond safeguarding. Although various reviews have been taking place in the Cabinet Office, the review will not be published and there is no information available on local authority spending, so there is no open picture.
- The raising of the participation age has resulted in reductions in youth unemployment in the under 18s but the institute of education research highlights that many over 18s are not getting the levels they require to get into employment. There should also be a focus on early intervention and prevention, though it can be hard to justify funding for this. The sector should be reclaiming a voice on youth policy. It is important to keep a high profile and lobby for policy priorities.
- Policy priorities should have a wider focus than just education. The Cabinet Office and the GLA are important places to influence.

Outcomes

- On a positive note, the Cabinet Office seem to be taking outcomes very seriously and this group should attempt to engage with them on this. Project Oracle are beginning to do well, and organisations are really trying to improve their ability to measure outcomes and achieve quality marks.
- There is a lack of shared approach on outcomes which can be a barrier for partnerships where individual frameworks aren't recognised by each other. Leadership is needed to set standards and expectations for quality framework.

Innovation

- There are some positive examples of innovation emerging, for example Dragon Hall organising a youth led event, London Health Commission discussing community based youth activities and work with the Youth Board.

Capacity building and infrastructure

- Networks can be very important for learning, even where there is no time to attend meetings and these are just virtual relationships. However, where there was previously a head of youth in each borough, this has been replaced by commissioning services and there is now no focused person in each area which is a challenge.
- Professional development has been generally under invested in the sector.
- A lack of local infrastructure (where funders and the VCS are expected to be the infrastructure) means

that the large organisations end up dominating. Where organisations were previously offered support and training, this has stopped happening. A forum is required to look at development needs for youth workers.

- Many organisations are not thinking strategically for the future and don't realise how severe the cuts in the councils will be. Short term funding has also contributed to the problem. Investing in the leadership and board composition of these organisations is essential to help them to survive.
- Encouraging groups to partner with others can increase learning and provide networking and a local support network.

The risk of losing small organisations

- Outcomes for young people must be paramount; commissioners and funders need to decide what sort of 'local market' they require to achieve this. Within this it is still important to develop small organisations. If not, the large players will take over and there are both positive and negative sides of that. As part of this, funders should encourage partnerships of smaller organisations. It could be seen as the funders' responsibility to support the diversity of the sector. The small can often engage in local communities in a better way. Often small organisations are required to provide the same evaluation and numbers as larger organisations, which is difficult for them. A lack of local infrastructure means that the large organisations may end up dominating.
- An emphasis on contracted work has led to a focus on larger contracts, an increasingly distant relationship with funders, and a situation where small and medium organisations are hit hardest.
- The large well-resourced innovative services can survive at the detriment for smaller organisations.

Partnerships

- Some participants noted that the future will focus on partnerships and collaboration, but it's important to have something binding you together, such as a common measurement framework to measure quality. Partnerships are important but often very tricky, depending on personality and individuals.
- Where some clubs have reached a 'gold standard quality mark', it could be possible to have them as beacon clubs and so possibly encouraging other clubs to partner with them. Some organisations have found it hard to encourage such 'buddying' schemes, though it was noted that close geographical proximity and networking can make such partnerships more successful.
- On a positive note, there are an increasing number of emerging partnerships in this space, which has also been helpfully pushed by OFSTED. Projects such as Spotlight are becoming more embedded in the community which is very positive, and the Deutsche Bank partnership has allowed for better IT equipment and renovation of youth clubs.
- Cross sector partnerships should be incentivised. There should be a focus on engaging with the private sector and also on the voluntary sector having schools as strategic partners.

Reclaiming a policy voice and setting policy priorities

- Where the VCS have stopped lobbying, it is important to reclaim a policy voice. For funders, independent funders are able to say things that boroughs may not, so there may be an opportunity there. The funders have to become more service user focussed and have strong messages across the sector. Even where each funder has different restrictions, there are enough funders to attempt to cover all bases.
- Large funders such as the Big Lottery Fund need to take the learning they have and use it. If learning is shared with each other and the sector then that would be very beneficial.
- The group discussed funder groups in other parts of the UK, where they have come together to publish something positive. For example, a piece of supportive communication so that organisations know we are aware of the issues.

Ciaran thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion. It's important to explore these issues and note key things that we can achieve. This group plans to achieve action and not just talk, and so this discussion

will feed into future meeting topics to encourage more work on these points.

Action points:

- London Funders are to follow up with Partnership for Young London and London Youth to discuss how a policy voice could be developed and what this might look like.
- London Funders and Engage London will work together on social investment which could support small to medium sized organisations
- The conversation will be continued with Sharon Long on measuring outcomes.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 5th August 2014, 10am - 12noon