

Event report

EARLY ACTION AND INTERVENTION

Learning from Funders

10.03.2015

HOSTED BY BUZZACOTT LLP

Buzzacott
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

VENUE

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130 Wood Street
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The Learning from Funders meetings give an opportunity to get together to look at good and innovative practice in supporting the sector with each meeting exploring a particular aspect of the funder relationship with funded groups.

This Learning from Funders event provided an opportunity for funders to consider recent developments within the area of Early Action and Intervention. This meeting featured contributions from members of the Early Action Funders Alliance, which is building on the work of the Early Action Task Force and we will discuss the funder collaboration that is supporting a number of pilot initiatives across the country. We also heard about the work of the Southwark Early Action Commission, being led by Community Action Southwark. The commission, which is the first of its kind, will look at how the council, NHS, police and voluntary sector can work together to prevent problems that damage people's lives and trigger demands for expensive services like hospitals and prisons – with ultimate savings for the taxpayer.

With further significant reductions facing local authority budgets, this event helped local authorities and other funders think about how to re-profile services and grapple with the challenges of trying to shift resources from reactive to proactive interventions. David Warner, London Funders, Chair, noted the importance of this topic and emphasized that the discussion would be an opportunity for people to be open and honest, emphasizing that the meeting would be following the Chatham House Rule to encourage discussion and learning.

Debbie Pippard, Barrow Cadbury Trust, began by outlining the background to the Early Action Funders Alliance. Early action can be described with the metaphor of a cliff and the spending of money to build a fence at the top of a cliff in place of needing to spend money on ambulances at the bottom. Further detail on how to define early action can be found in this Early Action Task Force report '[How to classify early action spend](#)'. Although it is a continuum, early action work can be split into 4 levels:

- Primary Prevention / building readiness: preventing, or minimising the risk, of problems arising – usually through universal policies like health promotion or a vaccination programme. [The NAO call this 'prevention'].
- Secondary Prevention: targeting individuals or groups at high risk or showing early signs of a particular problem to try to stop it occurring. For example Family Nurse Partnerships, screening programmes, or the Reading Recovery Programme. [The NAO call this 'Early Intervention'].
- Tertiary Prevention: intervening once there is a problem, to stop it getting worse and redress the situation. For example work with 'troubled families' or to prevent reoffending. [The NAO call this 'early remedial treatment'].
- Acute spending: spending which acts to manage the impact of a strongly negative situation but does little or nothing to prevent negative consequences or it reoccurring in future. For example prison, or acute hospital care.

The Early Action Task Force attempted to come up with a business case in 2011, for why early action is a good idea, the arguments of which can be found in the two reports

- The first report, [Triple Dividend](#) (Nov 2011), gives the argument and case for this approach with examples for what works. The report gives a compelling business case and started to examine the bureaucratic challenge existing at

that point. There was the hope that the economic crisis could inspire creativity.

- The second report, [Deciding Time](#) (2012), explained a lot of the obstacles including the political cycle or working in silos. Organisations couldn't afford double running costs of both approaches and there was a lack of skills in the team and lack of leadership on the ground.

A practical side to this work was the work of a group of 8 funders (including Barrow Cadbury Trust and Big Lottery Fund) who came together to form the Early Action Funders Alliance to lead this change. A 'bucketing exercise' was the attempt for funders to analyse how much early intervention work they fund in their current portfolio. The 4 buckets represent the different levels of early action work, and the funder would have to look at all work, including the aims behind their campaigning work to see how early the intervention was aimed at. Funders often didn't get the answers they expected.

Although there were already some good examples of where early intervention has been successful, the group wanted carry out a pilot of a systems change in civil society. The Early Action Fund funded put aside £3.5 million to fund projects with evaluation running alongside, giving an injection of funds to see how things can change where money is invested further upstream. Three projects were funded:

- Coventry Law Centre
- Mancroft Advice Project, Norwich
- Changing Futures, Hartlepool

The grant management and assessment has been provided by Comic Relief. It was very important that the organisations had a strong logic model and a credible plan that the proposed change could be long term, with a strong and investable organisation and leadership. The projects that were selected are those who really support this area and are very motivated. It is an area which is aligned to their mission and strategy. It was also important that partnerships were led by voluntary sector organisations but were also credible to the statutory sector. Access to expertise was given to these projects, and feedback is encouraged. The projects will be run for at least 5 years.

Independent evaluation is running alongside the projects to assist and help them develop and ensure learning is shared more widely. This evaluation will test out the theory that early action will see improved outcomes for beneficiaries. This will build on other reports which have looked at systems change and the costs of a later intervention point:

- Galbenkian Foundation have [systems change](#) as a theme running throughout their work
- LankellyChase report - [Hard Edges: Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England](#)

Gordon McCullough, Community Action Southwark, told the story of the Southwark Early Action Commission. This began with a meeting with David Robinson about the Early Action Task Force in 2013. Gordon was eager to move away from the position of many CVS organisations who are victims of cuts, to do something different and to show the value of investment in the VCS.

Initially, the plan was for the Early Action Commission to look at how to create a system change which includes the voluntary sector and allows work on early action at a local level. Once the Commission was initially established, a seminar was held with stakeholders to consider trigger points and possible intervention points. The three trigger points identified were education and employment, wellbeing and health, and housing, place and networks. Once a workshop had taken place, and the terms of reference agreed, the Commission became more formalised. The broad aim of the commission is to make a series of recommendations about how organisations such as the local council, NHS, police and voluntary sector can work together to prevent problems that damage people's lives and trigger future demand for services. The Commission is chaired by Margaret Hodge MP and is composed of a range of experts in early action and intervention across a range of policy areas.

Following a competitive procurement process the New Economics Foundation (nef) were appointed to carry out the secretariat, research and engagement functions of the Commission. In January 2015 it was agreed that Lambeth would join the Commission, and the local authority and CCG in Lambeth have contributed additional resources to cover the expansion of the commission. The Commission now intends to compete in July 2015.

The Commission decided on 4 areas for work:

- 1) Obesity in year 6 children
- 2) Long term unemployed (single males over 60 with mental health issues)
- 3) Violent street crime
- 4) Isolation amongst older people – admission rates to A&E

At an engagement event in Southwark, there were discussions on the barriers to early action and intervention. This included the lack of data, a lack of understanding of supply and existing projects, and working in silo rather than linking the issues together. Risk aversion is a cultural issue as much as systems based. There are steps being made to join up and integrate services, and also in looking at citizen's participation and engagement and how that helps early action. Commissioners have selected 2 locations and are doing some interviews to look at assets and how they could be used and integrated into systems. This will culminate in a succinct and clear report on how to promote early action, and how to put systems in place and make cultural changes. This is a voluntary sector led Commission and there is the hope that it will come up with something which has a resonance across the sector. nef has done some work on what works and what doesn't work and this will be published soon in order to share learning.

Discussion

- The group discussed the similarities and differences of the model to Social Return on Investment. Although it is partly looking at the cost savings and 'financial' returns, the focus is not on the social return, but on the better use of money and it is very provable with costs and numbers. This is about collective impact measurement, rather than the individual change for one project as seen in SROI.
- Attendees commented on a CVS taking on the work and noted that it was inspirational how a CVS has thought its role, though Gordon emphasized that

Community Action Southwark's activities are continuing as normal. This work however has of course affected the way in which they think about their work, even just in terms of helping organisations at an early point before they have a problem. The core contract with London Borough of Southwark has given them the flexibility and security to be able to do this work and to champion the sector. This support has given the opportunity for innovation.

- Some attendees commented on the level of population churn in London, and whether there could be some work pan London, through London Councils, for example. However trying to do it across 32 boroughs may be too much, and it's important to get the right balance. There is a long history of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham working together and so that worked well.
- We should work on trying to institutionalise the value of early intervention. This is some work for independent funders. The next logical step is to imbed the value in governance framework. Should there be an Office for Early Intervention?
- Does the voluntary sector have to lead on this work? Gordon considered how it does not need to be led by the voluntary sector, however it is important that there is an honest broker.
- There are several reports on how to measure cost savings, and data on the cost of not intervening.
 - [The full Housing First Evaluation](#). The specific reference to "Measuring Lifetime Costs" can be found on page 55 of the report. The section on Cost Effectiveness is useful reading.
 - LankellyChase report - [Hard Edges: Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England](#)
 - Here are some more sources of data which can be used to build a picture of "potential costs – for comparison purposes. Some expertise may be required to use some of these data sets:
 - New economy Manchester database which provides costings for different outcomes e.g. annual cost of a rough sleeper and visits to A&E etc <http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit-cost-database>
 - Sitra data : <http://www.sitra.org/policy-good-practice/housing-related-support-data/>
 - St Andrewes supporting people data: <https://supportingpeople.st-andrews.ac.uk/aboutReporting.cfm>
 - Million Dollar Murray – there are articles found via google (e.g. <http://gladwell.com/million-dollar-murray/>)

David thanked the speakers for sharing their models and the audience for attending and for the quality of the conversation.

Participants

Debbie	Pippard	Barrow Cadbury Trust (Presenter)
Dan	Paskins	Big Lottery Fund
Rohan	Martyres	CAN
Gordon	McCullough	Community Action Southwark (Presenter)
Mark	Leonardo	Greater London Authority
Kate	Moralee	Homeless Link
Lisa	Raftery	Homeless Link
Julie	Bishop	Law Centres Network
Kiran	Patel	London Borough of Camden
Ann	Wynne	London Borough of Camden
Kevin	McKenna	London Borough of Croydon
Brian	Partridge	London Borough of Havering
Angus	Lyon	London Borough of Southwark
Dorothy	Newton	Richard Cloudesley's Charity
Ieuan	Ap Rees	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

In attendance

Becky Green	London Funders
David Warner	London Funders (Chair)

With thanks to Buzzacott LLP for their support in hosting this meeting.