

Event report

BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Learning from Funders

2.12.2014

HOSTED BY BUZZACOTT LLP

Buzzacott
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

VENUE

Buzzacott LLP
130 Wood Street
London
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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.

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.

The meeting consisted of two speakers followed by broad open conversation.

Kelly Walsh, Community Development Foundation

The [Community Development Foundation](#) is a leading national organisation in community development and engagement, and work to empower communities where local people are at the centre of change. CDF's stated purpose is to bring together resources, insight and people so that communities can thrive. In this meeting CDF ran a session on the Community First Neighbourhood Matched fund – a government funded programme that helps communities come together to identify their strengths and local priorities in order to plan their future and become more resilient.

Grants are between £250 and £2500 and must be matched by cash, in-kind contribution or volunteer time – this aspect of the programme is key in terms of resilience. There are 593 Community First ward panels across England, and each is made up of 4 to 8 local residents, who come together as a group to identify local priorities and decide which local projects to fund. 380 different local voluntary sector 'panel partners' support the panels for free and act as an important point of contact for those who apply, often going above and beyond their key role of validating the panel.

The panels have prioritised the following:

- Culture and recreation – 1,692
- Other (including community safety, financial hardship, social activities, the environment, training and education, unemployment) – 1,126
- Community cohesion and engagement – 695
- Health, wellbeing and personal/ social development - 504

Community First is a large programme, which has funded 15,096 to date, with almost £23million in funding. It has also demonstrated the value of volunteers, with 4.8million volunteer hours on projects to date which is valued at £53million match time. The panel partners have also provided a great support. In order to support the groups and volunteers, CDF set up www.justact.org.uk

Evaluation

- During application, people generally wait for the deadlines and apply for mid amounts.
- £25million of funding has brought in £89.4m worth of match.

- The funding was helpful – building capacity for activism and also confidence. There was also new activity as a result.
- Community First has led to resilience by connecting people and groups, supporting networks, improving population wellness, attracting resources, empowering residents, devolving decision making, building capacity.
- Since Community First began, the below shows the % of projects saying each aspect is more common in their local area:



Reflections on community resilience

- It leads to economic development, social capital, information and communication and community competence.
- People's ability to meet needs is influenced by their own self and skills, their support networks including friends, family, GP etc, and also structural conditions including economic opportunities and rights.
- Community resilience is affected by social resources, natural resources, cultural assets, human resources, political resources, built resources and financial resources.
- Interesting points made in Young Foundation research [Adapting to change: the role of community resilience](#) (Oct 2012) which suggests that community resilience is built primarily through relationships, not just between members of the community but also between organisations, specifically between the voluntary sector, the local economy and the public sector.

Kelly's powerpoint presentation is [available here](#).

Linda Butcher, Sheila McKechnie Foundation

The [Sheila McKechnie Foundation \(SMK\)](#) supports individuals, organisations and communities to have the skills and confidence to speak up and take effective action on issues that matter to them. SMK has developed several models with funders that help individuals, groups and communities to work together and influence on issues that matter to them. This can help bring about positive changes to policy, practice or behaviour, and increase community engagement and cohesion through the outcomes, processes and opportunities involved:

1. Grassroots Action Support (GAS) Fund (partner: Esmée Fairbairn Foundation)

Eligible participants on SMK programmes are invited to apply to do a 'pitch' in front of this major UK funder, to get feedback on their presentation, as well as the opportunity to receive a grant of up to £2,000. Esmée Fairbairn staff members from all functions across the organisation form a 'dragon's den' that decides which pitches are successful and who receives a grant. This is a different way for them to hear about and engage with grassroots projects. The panel provides everyone with feedback on their pitch, which past applicants have found enormously helpful in terms of strengthening their presentation skills and how they 'sell' their campaign to gain support. Only those not paid as campaigners can apply. Several applicants have been eligible to apply to the Main Fund and have been successful.

- Benefits for campaigners/communities: Real life practice at pitching themselves/their issue/campaign; feedback from major UK funder to aid future FR/pitches; potential to receive a small grant to aid their work, which is often about engaging wider communities
- Benefits for Esmée Fairbairn Foundation: development opportunity for staff, especially back office who don't go out to meet projects; opportunity to meet new, grassroots groups and individuals who are unlikely to have contact through another route; small grants are provided that make a difference with low risk as SMK administers
- Benefits for SMK: Real life pitching scenarios to support communications learning on programmes; wider offer to some of those we support; practical partnership project with EFF

2. Influencing Change (partner: Trust for London)

Influencing Change is a five day introductory level course on how to influence for change in public policy. It is spread over five months, and supports London based individuals and community organisations. It focuses on how local authorities, central and European government make decisions, and offers information and expert advice on how to work with and influence them. Participants learn about developing a campaign or influencing plan, working with the media, different methods of addressing issues, and involving stakeholders. Guest speakers with expertise in campaigning, tactics, media and government provide in-depth knowledge and insider perspectives.

The highly effective IC model = training with theory and practical content, 'expert' or practitioner presenters, well-considered participant selection, bespoke group sessions, peer learning/networking, one to one coaching at the right time.

- Benefits for campaigners/communities: Access to heavily subsidised intensive training and support programme to improve influencing, in particular on behalf of disadvantaged and marginalised groups and communities; opportunity to meet and work with others in similar sphere to strengthen voice; potential for peer learning and networking
- Benefits for Trust for London: Able to strengthen abilities of own grantees in making sustainable change; supports own sustainable change

objectives, especially around poverty and exclusion; means of meeting new groups and individuals working to tackle poverty and exclusion

- Benefits for SMK: Forms significant part of our offer in London, now extended to the West Midlands with funding from Barrow Cadbury Trust; the core model is being used on a geographical basis (London, West Midlands) and thematic basis (See Change).

3. See Change Flexible Support Programme (partner: Oak Foundation)

This is a development of the See Change programme, which SMK and Oak Foundation ran twice, and which originally offered a formal learning programme (similar to Influencing Change) to 20 Oak grantees within their Housing and Homelessness Programme. Following the learning programme, participants could apply on a competitive basis to receive one of six bespoke support packages available to help them implement their influencing plans. The See Change model was developed for a closed group of participants - only Oak grantees – and is now being run for the third time on an updated basis.

The third programme – the See Change Flexible Support Programme is based on conducting an initial needs assessment of all interested Oak grantees, and then offering a package of flexible support to each based on those needs, within a set budget which can vary from one group to another. Oak grantees are able to access and receive support in a number of ways:

- By phone or email to a member of SMK staff team
- Using SMK's Campaign Central for core information
- Attending SMK-organised events or training days or programmes that meet their needs
- Attending relevant conferences with fees and travel costs covered
- Receiving a bespoke support package
- Receiving one-off help through another agency (not SMK)

The See Change Flexible Support Programme builds participants' ability to make visible, lasting improvements to systems, policies or practice. Over the two years of the programme, a minimum of 25 grantee organisations will benefit from flexible support.

Ultimately the programme increases the ability of Oak grantees to make and sustain change in pursuance of their objectives, helping them to focus on results rather than activity.

- Benefits for campaigners/charities: Access at no cost to intensive training and support programme to improve influencing, in particular on behalf of disadvantaged and marginalised groups; opportunity to meet with work with others in similar sphere to strengthen voice; opportunities to 'look more widely' at issues and solutions in tough delivery environment
- Benefits for Oak: Able to support own grantees in making sustainable change; helps them to meet their own sustainable change objectives, especially around housing and homelessness; the approach and offer is valued by grantees as an optional, flexible support offer from Oak

- Benefits for SMK: The model gives us a clear budget and direction to work within, but does not stand alone as a separate project outside our core work. It enables SMK to offer access to our core programmes within their support package, if relevant, as well as directing participants to others if more suitable. It has given us a thematic model that we are replicating elsewhere.

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

Participants

Cathy	Togher	Comic Relief
Tom	Hulme	CDF
Kelly	Walsh	CDF (Speaker)
Ann	Wynne	London Borough of Camden
Rachel	Duke	London Borough of Hackney
Brian	Partridge	London Borough of Havering
Winston	Castello	London Borough of Lewisham
Gabrielle	Sturrock	London Community Foundation
Maxine	Quintyne- Kolaru	London Councils
Linda	Butcher	Sheila McKechnie Foundation (Speaker)
Caroline	Corfe	Youth Music

In attendance

Becky Green	London Funders
David Warner	London Funders (Chair)

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