

SMK presentation on models – London Funders’ Group session on Community Cohesion held on 2 December 2014 at Buzzacott

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. Our programme connects, informs, and supports campaigners, and includes introductory and advanced training, bespoke support, information and networking. We help people become active and effective citizens and participants on issues that concern them, showing that ‘democracy’ can be something everyone does.

You can find out more about SMK here: <http://www.smk.org.uk/>
SMK’s latest annual report is here: <http://www.smk.org.uk/annual-report/>

The bulk of our work is focused on those who are new to campaigning and influencing, are marginalised, have few resources and cannot get the support they need elsewhere. 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. GAS is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and administered by SMK. 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

Gas Fund - Impact/Outcome examples:

1. "Our (GAS) funding was to help local communities threatened with major bus service cutbacks by Leicestershire County Council. It enabled us to bring many different communities together, and get them working together with the Council and bus operators. This encouraged the Council to drastically improve its proposals. They said that our work was instrumental in this process. And we couldn't have done it without this funding." Terry Kirby, GAS Fund Recipient
2. Because of personal experience, Kathleen Carter, who is 63 and from Stockton, began campaigning locally against doorstep lenders. They were profiteering from poor and vulnerable people – like her - through high interest payday loans. With bespoke capacity building from SMK and a small grant from the GAS Fund, she targeted the companies most active in her area, making them change their practices and contracts, and helping to ensure her community does not spiral into debt.

2. Influencing Change

Partners: 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).

Influencing Change - Impact/Outcome Examples:

1. "I have moved from hoping to change things, to knowing what work we need to do to identify and influence decision makers: this is thanks to the programme."
Influencing Change participant
2. "The support from SMK is not just about training me...we pass it on and...there is a trickle-down effect." Influencing Change participant

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.

See Change Programme – Impact/Outcome examples:

1. Lift is a charity and social enterprise that works with homeless and disadvantaged people, empowering them to improve their lives and realise their potential. In 2012 Lift took part in the See Change programme. SMK provided a series of training sessions for Lift's staff, volunteers and Trustees using Campaign Consultant Emma Taggart. "We worked with Emma to produce a framework to facilitate sustainable and effective, user-led campaigning. This ensured that we develop our campaigning capacity in a way that suits our ethos and circumstances. We now perceive campaigning in a fresh and innovative way, and it will be exciting to see the difference it will make to the people and communities we work with as the strategy develops and moves forward."
2. A See Change participant from Northern Ireland, who won their campaign for policy change as a result of the bespoke programme support, said: "Going on See Change was like winning the lottery; it was a real treat having someone investing resources in our campaign like that. Without the input and motivation and support we wouldn't have got here; it has given us an extra edge and confidence in our issue. The campaign wouldn't have succeeded without See Change."