The Baring Foundation

Changing communities: supporting voluntary and community organisations to adapt to local demographic and cultural change.

Marilyn Taylor & Mandy Wilson, June 2015

Foreword

This report is based on scoping research conducted for the Baring Foundation to inform the development of its Strengthening the Voluntary Sector (STVS) programme.

The research was originally used to consider whether the Baring Foundation might focus the STVS programme on supporting organisations to adapt to demographic and cultural change among their beneficiaries. Ultimately, the Baring Foundation decided to give priority to another topic, which will focus on encouraging and developing the use of the law and human rights as tools of social change for the voluntary sector.

However, the research and analysis provided by Marilyn and Mandy presents a compelling case for further funding in this area. It not only highlights the need for funders – as well as the wider voluntary sector - to focus on changing communities, it also provides a valuable insight into what and how to fund.

This paper outlines the original research for a wider audience, in the hope that it can inform the debate on changing communities and the role of the voluntary sector.

We are very grateful to Marilyn and Mandy for their hard work and hope this report can be of use to other funders and the wider sector.

David Sampson
Deputy Director
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Summary

We live in a fast changing world. But some communities and neighbourhoods bear the brunt of change more than others and the voluntary and community organisations that serve them face considerable challenges in adapting to their changing populations, particularly at a time when cuts and a reduction in the role of the state are changing the voluntary sector landscape – perhaps irrevocably.

The changes we report on here are driven by migration, redevelopment or changes in housing tenure, often all three. They can often bring positive new energy into a neighbourhood. But they bring considerable challenges too, with respect to identity, community connections, trust and people's sense of security. For these changes are often taking place in communities with a background of disadvantage and this has been aggravated by benefit cuts, cuts to local services and the stigmatisation of poor people in politics and the media. Newcomers are often blamed for circumstances beyond their control. And the impact of change will vary according to the history, make-up and location of a neighbourhood; for example, whether communities are used to change, and whether the neighbourhood already has a mixed population.

Voluntary and community organisations are often well placed to help communities facing rapid change. But many face an uncertain future in today's funding environment. Fighting for survival leaves little time for organisations to think about how they might need to change their services, let alone to get out into and understand the newer communities, while keeping the support and trust of those they have traditionally served – community development has been a particular victim of cuts. Translating leaflets, setting up targeted projects or relying on special one-off events is important but not enough. And seeing everything as a problem of race can be detrimental when residents face common and serious material disadvantage. It is important, too, to respond to the diversity in newer population groups, although they will face many common barriers. Traditional forms of organising and community representation may not be relevant to people from newer communities – or indeed to transient private tenants - and often exclude them or make unrealistic demands of them. The same applies to the need to diversify governance – if this is tokenistic, new trustees will melt away.

So what does work? It is easy for hard-pressed organisations to stick with what they know or to make minor adjustments when what is needed is flexibility and a willingness to take a long, hard look at what they do and how they do it. Responding effectively to change will need new connections to be made with new communities and creativity in bringing people together around common issues: creating space for informal encounter and conversations, and using the enormous potential of social media and the internet, especially to reach younger people.

How can funders help? At a very local level, small 'at risk' grants will help the very small, often informal, groups emerging from the newer communities to organise and engage with other local communities. At an area level, larger organisations such as community anchors need the resources to take a step back from day to day demands, think through their strategy, promote peer research in different communities and create space for conversations. Resources for

buddying, mentoring, mediation and partnership building will build connections between communities and between large and small organisations. At a national level, a lead needs to be taken in informing debate through research, briefing papers and think-pieces while national umbrella bodies need support in helping their members with the challenges they face. At all levels, grants could be used to encourage innovative use of social and multimedia, in partnership with organisations with specific expertise.

Contents

Introduction

We live in a fast changing world. The image of the stable tightly connected local community - if it was ever true - is increasingly out of date as populations become increasingly mobile across and within national borders. And yet, the impact of major population change on local communities is an issue that is surprisingly neglected in national debate. It may raise its head when immigration hits the headlines or when residents hold out against redevelopment, but the question of how communities can be supported to reap the benefits of change while addressing its many challenges is rarely addressed.

This report is based on a study carried out for the Baring Foundation as part of its Strengthening the Voluntary Sector Programme. This study involved a review of relevant literature (see Appendix 1), a small number of interviews and a focus group. Respondents were drawn mainly from local voluntary organisations, but also included researchers and consultants (see Appendix 2). Quotes in italics are taken from the interviews unless otherwise specified. The first section outlines the nature and context of the changes they see; Section II describes the impact these changes have on local voluntary organisations and the challenges they face. Section III discusses some of the responses that have helped voluntary organisations to adapt and suggests how policy makers, voluntary sector infrastructure bodies and funders can support them in this process.

Section I: The nature of change

1. Neighbourhood change

The main population changes highlighted by this study are driven by migration, (people moving both within and from outside the UK), redevelopment or changes in housing tenure, often all of these. But their impact varies according to the history and location of the neighbourhood, as well as its levels of poverty. Inner city neighbourhoods, for example, may have experienced waves of change over a long period of time, as new population groups come and go. They are likely to respond differently from social housing estates that have had a predominantly stable population until very recently, or whose stock has been sold off under right to buy and then let out to a much more transient population. Rural areas with little experience of inward migration will face still different challenges as new housing developments are built or agricultural and other rural industries attract an influx of migrant workers. And changes in the ethnic or tenure mix bring other changes with them - an increase in the numbers of children and young people, for example, or, conversely, an increasingly transient population of one person households with the spread of private renting.

> *This has always been an area of considerable transience. Almost everyone started as a migrant. First, social housing estates moved from being stable white working class to a high proportion of Bangladeshis. Under right to buy now half the estate is privately rented – students, city workers.*
> Community anchor

Change can be positive and bring new energies and resources into a community. But it brings challenges too. The existing community may feel a loss of identity or even a sense of abandonment as services adapt to the needs of newcomers. Harris Beider, in his 2011 research, reports that white working class residents often felt that they were a forgotten group with no one advocating on their behalf, describing:

> *A toxic mix of neighbourhood loss, uninvited population change and disconnection from local politics, which has been taken over by ethnically different newcomers.*

Lack of contact and understanding between communities may bring with it insecurity and a fear and distrust of strangers and, too often, this is fuelled by the media. Newcomers are easily blamed for circumstances beyond their control. And local agencies are faced with new demands and new dilemmas as they try to respond to new communities.

These changes are often happening in communities with a background of disadvantage, which has been aggravated by current policy changes – cuts to public services and benefits, increasing stigmatisation of poorer communities and increasingly unstable working patterns:

> *It is principally socio-economic deprivation – not migration – that best explains people's perceptions of their local area... it would be wise for policy makers to focus on deprivation rather than migration in setting policy on cohesion and integration (Saggar, 2012).*

However, gentrification brings problems, too, illustrated in one area by the clash of lifestyles between young, affluent single person households and the settled community.

2. The broader context

Wider societal change, too, affects the way communities experience and respond to change. People encounter and associate with each other in different ways in the 21st century. The expansion of social media offers people new ways of communicating, socialising and organising. At the same time, changes in household composition and family commitments mean people often have less time for traditional community activities: they may be looking after older parents or grandchildren, they may be juggling two or three jobs or unpredictable zero hours contracts. Changes in consumption patterns, high street decline and the loss and privatisation of public space, meanwhile, mean there is less opportunity for casual encounter between generations and ethnic groups at neighbourhood level. As local government shrinks and services are privatised, it is often difficult even for the most established groups to know how to negotiate services and democratic

> *Many smaller local organisations we have encountered in the last few years are very much in 'survival mode', focused on funding issues. They often have little time to take stock of broader organisational issues not directly related to funding streams, no matter how important these might be. Adapting to local demographic change is a good example of something that might not be high on organisations' agendas.*
> Researcher

systems, let alone newer and less well organised communities (Blake et al., 2008).

The voluntary sector is often well placed to help communities facing change. But it, too, is facing an uncertain future. Many organisations find their energies are completely absorbed by survival and they have little time or resource to take stock of the changing nature of the community they serve. Local service ecologies and networks have been stripped out by cuts and much of the available funding is based on highly specified contracts based on business models, which leave little room for the flexibility and innovation that are needed to respond to new needs. Organisations are steered toward social investment but the principal victims of the changing funding environment have been community development, advocacy, volunteering support, research, infrastructure and even the places to meet that are necessary to help communities and organisations to adapt to change.

As local networks and support are eroded, small locally based groups find themselves working in isolation with nowhere to go for support and may find it difficult to keep going. There is evidence to suggest that cuts have fallen disproportionately on BME groups, especially those with advocacy functions, and also that their volunteers have less time and money to be involved (McCabe and Phillimore, 2012). More generally, volunteers are often demoralised by the pressures and levels of need they face, especially if they are volunteering because of the absence of paid work. Meanwhile, increasing competition for resources threatens collaboration between the organisations that remain and local organisations frequently lose out to nationals in the contracting marketplace.

Section II: The impact of demographic and cultural change on the voluntary and community sector

Against this background, we have taken two functions associated with the voluntary sector – service provision and voice – and one of its central defining characteristics - governance - to assess the implications of rapid demographic and cultural change on its organisations.

1. Impact on services

Increasing/changed demand

A changed population brings changing demands on services. Sometimes these can revive services that are under threat but they can also overwhelm. An influx of new young families can breathe new life into a school, for example, but schools may have to adjust to an increase in children for whom English is not the first language or high turnover when families move on. It is particularly difficult to respond to the needs of constantly changing and transient populations. The organisations represented in our focus group discussion also commented on the increase of severe mental health needs amongst their users, and the fact that they are ill equipped to respond.

Responding to 'higher level' needs
Voluntary organisations say they are receiving more referrals for people reaching a crisis level but were never intended to be a crisis service. The Well Women Centre, Wakefield, is starting to run more practical services e.g. food parcels, advice etc., to meet women's needs but is finding responses to mental health needs more complex: *'We provide primary mental health care but we are seeing a lot of women now who need much higher levels of mental health care but the secondary care system is not designed to meet their needs…. In addition, some women find it hard to keep regular appointments if they are on zero hour contracts for example, and don't know their working hours from week to week ….. it would take a massive restructure for us to change our approach to counselling support to properly accommodate this.'*
The Well Women Centre is however, '*developing some excellent partner relationships with other, often statutory providers who come to our sessions to support women with wider needs – this is where they really benefit from a 'one stop shop' type model rather than having to seek out and know all the different agencies'.*

Cuts mean that there are fewer agencies to meet these increased and changing needs. Voluntary organisations may have to pick up services that used to be provided by other agencies, including local government, but without the support networks that they themselves have been able to rely on in the past.

Access
As the local population changes, organisations cannot rely on just responding to demand. They need to go out to new communities, both to make their organisations known and to build relationships, so that they can identify new and emerging needs. At the same time they need to keep the support and trust of those they have traditionally served. This can be a difficult balancing act. There may also be practical considerations to take into account: the need for more flexible opening times to respond to different work and lifestyle patterns; the need to review their meeting venues and times.
Translation and interpretation is essential but this is more complex than it may sound. There are often many different languages within one area, and resources for this kind of work are much reduced. This also has an impact on capacity to train local volunteers.

The traditional organisations have gone down the traditional routes without any real understanding. They think that if they translate their posters, that will do. But they need to understand how migrants see them. Voluntary organisations are often seen as agents of the state by some communities. So they need to question drop-ins and coffee mornings as a vehicle for reaching people because they won't work.
Local authority community worker

Understanding cultural needs
Existing local voluntary organisations need to get to grips with cultural understandings that require nuanced approaches – for example, about childcare and upbringing - as well as issues which require sensitivity (FGM, domestic violence and forced marriage were among those mentioned to us). But, at the same time, it is essential to avoid 'ethnic' or other kinds of

So Somali women may suffer real health issues, but when they walk into a GPs surgery, all the GP can see is FGM.
People assume that all Somalis know each other and are linked through social networks.
Community anchor

stereotyping'. This means that the organisations that newcomers themselves form are often best placed to pick up on the community aspirations and concerns that are hidden behind cultural norms. But these organisations are often fragile, informal and difficult to track down. They seldom conform to the expectations of outsiders, whether funders, local and health authorities or other organisations, and they are rarely constituted in a way that gives them access to funding or mainstream routes of influence.

2. Impact on voice/advocacy roles

Changing patterns of organisation

The growth of identity based organisations and services, together with the disappearance of social clubs and pubs can lead longer established residents to feel that local politics has been taken over by ethnically different newcomers (Beider, 2011). On the one hand they no longer have the range of groups and representatives they may see in BME communities and on the other they feel these groups are more concerned with their own identity than they are with the neighbourhood in which they live. Indeed, research often finds that the networks of newer immigrants tend to be city- or area-wide rather than at the neighbourhood level, anchored, for example, by places of worship, ethnic community centres or shops (Markova and Black, 2007; Blake et al., 2008; Munoz, 2011).

On the other hand, traditional forms of organising and community representation may be losing their relevance. Tenants' and residents' associations, for example, are the product of a time when many social housing tenants lived on an estate with one landlord and residency was more stable, and they often find it difficult to adapt to a changing demographic. At the same time, the role of many mainstream voluntary organisations as service providers increases the chance that they will be seen as arms of the state rather than as allies and supporters (Semino, 2014).

We have had a long held role in supporting group development, helping them constitute etc. But is this still relevant? Should we now be supporting individuals who want to be active, supporting more informal social action? We need to take a step back and look at how we relate to informal movements and digital organising.
VCS infrastructure / support organisation

Representation and leadership

Established organisations, often unintentionally, may exclude voices from newer and differently organised communities. In the rural context, for example, newer voices may be rarely heard. Many village activities and meetings take place during the day, when newcomers are working. This mean they find it hard to play a part in village life. As one person said 'no one talks to incomers – just about them'.

Voluntary organisations will often look for leaders from the newer communities to help them understand and adapt to new needs. But the issue of leadership and representation can be a thorny one, especially when there hasn't been the time to build deep-rooted relationships with, and understandings of, these communities. The most visible leaders do not – and cannot be expected to - always reflect the needs of their diverse communities (Blake et al., 2008). But even when

organisations are able to establish good links with members of incoming communities, it is easy to place those who are willing to engage under too much pressure, as they try to relate to unfamiliar systems and institutional cultures, as well as different ideas about representation. As well as the training all trustees should receive, they may require a lot of support to be effective and to survive in a new role.

Transience

Not all newcomers want to be involved – or have time. Others are simply not around for long enough. The transience and insecurity that comes with the rise of private renting poses particular problems for those seeking to help them represent their interests.

Voice is a struggle. Most private renters are on a 6-month tenancy and then they are gone. You haven't got the relationship. So most of our advocacy work is focused on the stable population.
Community anchor organisation.

3. Impact on voluntary sector governance

A commonly held value among voluntary organisations is that at least some of their trustees should be drawn from members, users and local residents. But even when they are successful in reaching a wide range of users, many struggle to achieve diversity in their governance structures. And even when organisations are successful in attracting a broader range of trustees, community tensions can play out within the governing body.

We tend to attract people like ourselves. Getting diversity and churn is difficult; we need to look for people who will be positively disruptive.
Community anchor organisation

In addition, the issues of expectations and understanding that apply to representation apply also to governance. Voluntary organisations cut to the bone and only funded for delivery, often lack the staff capacity to support newly involved trustees. The risk then is that many will melt away.

Involving residents in governance

Community Links has resident steering groups in the different neighbourhoods in which it works and has strict rules about length of membership to ensure that existing members don't become gatekeepers of their own agendas. This opens the groups up to different people but it does require a lot of outreach support. Severe reductions in funding have led to the loss of all its volunteer support staff and so 'people get involved and then they disappear'.

In another organisation, a Somali woman joined the Board. Even the existing trustees struggle with all the paperwork and her first language wasn't English, so it was hard to know how she coped. In the end, she left.

Section III: Responding to change

Dynamism is part of many communities and has to be integral to the organisations who work with them. But adapting to change requires flexibility and responsiveness to be at the heart of the organisation – part of its DNA. It is easy

for hard pressed organisations to stick with what they know or to make minor adjustments when what they may need is major organisational and cultural change. In some cases, with the best will in the world, it is simply too hard to find the time and energy to contemplate this. But elsewhere, our respondents commented that some organisations simply don't get the fact that they need to adapt and change or aren't prepared to take the risk – one mentioned a local refugee council that is following a model of working established forty years ago. Others are stuck with agendas and projects that have been overtaken by events. A CAB said, for example, that it had lots of money for debt advisors but that current demand was more about complex welfare rights enquiries.

Many agencies didn't have the skills for intercommunity working. To meet the challenges of change you need both the political mindset and the necessary skills.
Community anchor organisation

Common responses are not always the best way forward, for example:

- Thinking that translating leaflets is enough, without understanding that what the organisation is offering and the way it is offering it may not be appropriate;
- Seeing everything as a problem of race – it isn't.
  *The focus on desegregation and integration can act to deflect attention away from material disadvantages, which remain the experiences of most minority groups, to focus instead on reducing cultural differences between groups. (*Catney, 2011*)*;
- Relying on 'set piece encounters' such as occasional festivals. These can be a good way of creating space for people to mix together but they have their limitations too. Kesten (2011) argues that voluntary organisations need to 'focus on the ordinary (local) sites of everyday encounter (Amin, 2002) rather than the set pieces:
  Community festivals are lovely events, but in terms of a long-term impact, you need more, people actively doing something together, even if cohesion is not the formal objective. It's genuine interaction that's needed, where people genuinely work together. (Voluntary organisation);
- Tokenism – e.g. bringing someone from a new community onto the Board without adequate support; in effect 'setting them up to fail'.

Appropriate responses require an understanding of what is changing and how, as well as a lot of relationship building. Recruiting and keeping volunteers from the newer communities is resource intensive, as is the staff capacity required to regularly go out, talk, listen and get to understand the diversity of concerns and ambitions in newer communities. It is important, too, in responding to new needs, not to neglect the old ones. Reaching out to new communities and finding new ways of working whilst holding onto traditional users and not alienating them, requires sensitivity and skill.

So what does work? While 'community' can be a site of tensions, it can also generate a lot of positive energy and act as a catalyst for new forms of collective action and interaction (Jupp, 2013). Below we look at the implications for types of activity, individual organisations, local areas and national organisations.

1. Types of activity

- Welcome packs for new residents providing information about where and how to access services and advice;
- Creative opportunities for people, especially young people to meet and work together, e.g. through community arts, social media;
- Community development and outreach work which enables people to be recognised, to have their concerns and aspirations heard and share what they have to contribute e.g. peer research, community listening projects, taking services out to new populations;

Community outreach
The Well Woman Centre in Wakefield has taken on a community organiser who has taught them the value of this model of outreach work – knocking on doors, listening, engaging residents in dialogue and supporting community activity. The approach has engaged some women from the SE Asian community who have helped the organisation to reshape some of their services and make them more appropriate and accessible to this community. The presence of the outreach role and the trust in the individual practitioner from all stakeholders, has also led to additional income being generated to develop the work with the community, again breaking the previous cycle of one off parachuted in pieces of work.

- Recognising the value of neutral space where people can meet and hang around in everyday settings (Beider, 2011; Hall, 2008; Munoz, 2011) with no 'agenda'. Cafes, shops, community centres, faith spaces allow serendipitous encounters to occur between ethnic groups and across generations;
- Facilitation of cross cultural communication and allowing the time for this to grow;

Cross-cultural communication
A Bristol based organisation - Community Resolve - worked in one tower block for two years to resolve tensions. Frustrations with the lack of maintenance there focused on other people rather than the problem. The small playground was plagued by bullying and it was clear that the parents were not setting much of an example. It worked with tenants to help them to express their own feelings and appreciate each other's feelings and now everyone gets on much better together. In other work, it has used photographs to work with ten-year olds in the city to dismantle prejudice. It has also used sport and cookery to bring young people from different backgrounds together and discuss their differences.

- Reclaiming and sharing different histories (Hall, 2008) helps reaffirm identity in a positive way (e.g. there is a resurgence in the 'disappeared' summer galas in coalfield communities, which are once again a source of pride);
- Tapping into new ways of associating, using apps and social media. An innovative Dutch organization, Critical Mass, uses digital games and interactive settings to get young people to think about conflict and there must be more and more examples of this kind of work. New forms of association are

constantly being created with social media and respondents mentioned that incomers were often 'young and highly digitalised'. However, this requires voluntary organisations to skill up. As a recent NCVO report put it, the 'digitally excluded are being supported by the digitally challenged' (Jochum et al, 2014).

2. Individual groups and organisations

- Going back to basics – why are we here and what are we here for?;
- Revisiting membership and coverage e.g.
  i) Faith groups, for example, have opened up their facilities beyond their 'core' members. Churches, mosques and gurdwaras have a significant social footprint and tend to follow need rather than funding. They can also make their buildings available for neighbourhood based activities and community interaction. The Church Urban Fund's Near Neighbours Project provides many examples of community listening projects;

The role of faith organisations
Faith organisations involved in the current work think of themselves as community anchors though they don't use the term – e.g. the Gurdwara/Nishkam's response to food poverty has been to open free lunch meals to any community. Last time I was there in the summer, Poles, Somali, Sudanese, Afghans, Iranian, Iraqi were all there, which is very different from a few years ago. Academic researcher

  ii) Infrastructure organisations have opened up to individuals rather than just recognised organisations;
- Reviewing organisational governance and leadership to ensure diversity in the staff team and the Board. This requires appropriate support for paid workers and trustees from new communities/different generations, perhaps through working with smaller, informal groups from these communities.

Revisiting membership
Rotherfed, a borough wide infrastructure body which had been established for tenants and residents groups, noticed that many of the newer communities weren't engaging with this structured form of representative organisation. The umbrella body recognised that if it was to be a platform for community concerns to be heard, it would need to organise itself differently. It has undergone a transformation, changing from an organisational structure that was based on a membership of groups to one that now includes individual membership so that a host of voices can be heard and its governance can be more inclusive. And it has a new name; Rotherham Federation of Communities (previously Rotherham Federation of Tenants and Residents) reflects and promotes this change.

None of this is easy. Organisations that were trying to change and adapt highlighted the tensions in creating a more inclusive membership, balancing diversity with cohesion, and being relevant to all. In poorer communities in particular, the more disaffected the long-term residents, the more difficult it is to get them to

Having people from different backgrounds puts a bit of grit into the system as well as sending out messages to different local constituencies.
At X, we put up stuff in other languages, but it was the Somali woman on the Board who provided the challenge that was needed
Community practitioners

realise that newer residents share their concerns, let alone persuade them to participate in joint activities.

3. Across local areas

A local Darfur association here or a French speaking Congolese Association there. Many of these organisations had fantastic access to these communities, even if their merits as organisations were sometimes variable (like so many VCS groups in general). The point is, they are the first port of call for many people from those communities…

- Community organisers/community development /community profiling/ peer researchers. Many of our respondents felt that the only way voluntary organisations can really understand their community is to go out and listen to people, and engage them in shaping relevant services and activities. Peer research, training up researchers from within different communities can be particularly effective;
- Buddying and mentoring between 'mainstream' organisations and the smaller groups that spring up from new communities;
- Larger organisations can also share resources with smaller, provide 'on tap' advice and facilitation, give them access to the power holders and mainstream providers they want to influence and even act as accountable bodies to allow small informal groups to access funding;
- Partnerships, e.g. with local schools, as well as with other voluntary sector and faith organisations so that partners can share knowledge, resources and expertise, provide peer mentoring and generally collaborate more effectively;
- Learning events to increase understanding of the range of needs and interests in communities of benefit, including input from authentic community voices;
- Mediation with skilled facilitation and safe space to help difficult conversations to happen;
- Facilitating cross-cultural learning.

Challenge and celebration
Next Generation Youth and Community Project told us how they are trying to respond, despite few resources and capacity, to engage with new migrants. They are working with the local authority to tackle some of the issues that divide communities - primarily around cleanliness and understanding refuse collections, signage (all in English), and landlord responsibilities. They are combining opportunities to share concerns and co-design solutions with a celebration of all the communities in the neighbourhood.

4. Beyond local areas

We were surprised to find that some national voluntary organisations we approached did not relate to this agenda – perhaps because they are not confronted with it from day to day. But there is plenty to be done at regional and national level:

- Sharing learning through examples of what is being done in different parts of the country, opportunities for peer mentoring, and to meet other similar groups elsewhere;

Digital mediation hub
Community Resolve is developing an app and online ways of conveying and sharing knowledge. It aims to build an online multilingual learning community and a library of resources – acting as a mediation hub.

- Research and intelligence gathering by sub-regional/regional voluntary organisations (who aren't in competition for local resources) can play an important role in evidence gathering and policy influence;
- Foresighting work to alert voluntary organisations to the implications of current changes for the future. For example, planning for the likelihood that high numbers of children now will mean high numbers of young people later on.

Section IV: What can funders do?

Funders have a crucial role to play in addressing this agenda, and as part of the scoping study for the Baring Foundation, we asked research respondents what they thought would be appropriate and explored potential resourcing options. Of course, some funders are already investing in some of the ways suggested below and we thought it useful to share what some respondents see as making for good practice.

A small grant of £200 could make a lot of difference to a small VCO – pay for a venue; photocopying etc.
One off funding can help groups to make the space, and perhaps bring in a facilitator, to do this.
Community anchors

Funders cannot fill all the gaps left by the cuts of recent years - there are limits, for example, to their capacity to fund the community development that respondents and the literature repeatedly argued for across the country. But previous programmes have demonstrated again and again that relatively modest resources can make a difference, even in the face of quite complex problems. Below we outline both what to fund - the kinds of activities that can be supported at very local, area-wide and national level and we also suggest how to fund in order to ensure that the best possible use is made of the funds available.

1. What to fund

Respondents suggested that funding was needed at three levels:

Very local level

- Small 'at risk' grants (e.g. under £500) to small, often informal, organisations from the incoming communities that don't require the group to scale up or formalise to satisfy funder requirements. These might cover basic operational costs such as meeting venues and training, fund activities for their members or help them to organise as necessary to get their first pot of slightly larger funding, and/or influence mainstream providers:

  Providers can't relate to all the different local refugee organisations, so it is important to build up the capacity of these organisations to consult with their members and then report back;

The value of small grants
Communities R Us *provided £10k in three pilot areas plus external support. Similarly,* ***Near Neighbours*** *demonstrated the value of small grants in the four areas where it worked. In the mid 2000s, the government's* ***Community Chest Programme*** *demonstrated the value of small grants administered through local organisations, such as community foundations.*

- Grants (e.g. up to £1500) for consultancy to help existing community groups to adapt and remain relevant:

  It is a big ask to adapt to change on top of the day job they are funded to do. Small kinds of money would help organisations think about what they are/what they want to do and the business planning for that. They also need examples of what others have done.

Area-wide level - community anchors and partnerships

- Grants (e.g. £5-10,000) to help infrastructure organisations or groups of organisations to step back and think though their strategy and governance:

  Everyone is struggling with how to relate to the newer, transient communities. Opportunities to fund some thinking that can be turned into practical action would be useful.

  Being able to bring in the right sort of support allows for a better use of my time – a few days of consultancy support makes a big difference;
- Grants (e.g. £2,000) to encourage buddying between a mainstream organisation and smaller, often informal, BME organisations - to allow the former to tap into the (paid) specialist expertise and networks of the latter and promote access to their services/diversify service users;
- Grants (e.g. £5,000) to support partnership building:

  Partnership is a way of getting more done but you need the time to invest in partnership before the money is on the table – build the capacity to work together. This capacity has been hit in the last 4 years – as money disappeared it became much harder to maintain relationships;
- Larger grants (e.g. £20,000 over time) to community anchor organisations to train residents from different communities in peer research and community organizing and pay them sessional costs to carry out the work;
- Funding for skilled mediation and conflict resolution, maybe in collaboration with a specialist organisation;
- Grants for innovative use of social media – and for sharing the learning more widely.

National level

- Work with the Early Action Task Force to pioneer a 'ready for anything' community with a relevant and responsive independent voluntary sector;

> ***Early Action*** *sets out to answer the question: 'How do we build a society that prevents problems from occurring rather than one that, as now, copes with the consequences?'. The Early Action Task Force, led by Community Links, comprises people from government, business, funding bodies, voluntary and community sector organisations, policy bodies etc., all united by a desire for a society which acts earlier.*

- Work with national umbrellas (e.g. Locality/UKCF/NACVA) to improve their capacity to support community anchors and voluntary sector infrastructure in responding to this agenda;
- Commission briefing papers that help to stimulate thinking within the voluntary sector about responding to a changing demographic;

- Commission research to get a better picture of how the newer communities see the challenges that have been described here.

2. How to fund

Access

Access to very local, smaller groups will not be easy for national funders. One way of tackling this is to support infrastructure community/community trusts to extend their reach in some of the ways suggested above. However, at area-wide and national level there should be at least some open access – to get at the new ideas that no one else has thought of or come across.

There are plenty of examples of what we would like you to look at in your community, but what is it that communities feel is a priority themselves?
Community anchor

Conditions of grant

Small and newly emerging groups at local level often have no prior experience of funding requirements and can easily fall foul of traditional accountability requirements. Reaching and supporting them requires a funder to take risks. One approach would channel the money through a trusted local infrastructure organisation, as Big Local has done. Another would be to offer funds and support for them to formalise, as part of a phased grants strategy as the Community Chest Programme did in the early 2000s.

Reporting requirements

Tracking impact can be very difficult, especially in areas with a transient population. Reporting expectations need to be realistic and appropriate, especially when funding is short term, with support to help organizations make a meaningful assessment of how they are doing and what they are learning:
It is the interaction of approaches and relationships rather than methodological rigidity, which produces a genuinely effective transformation process (Jones et al., 2013).

Local flexibility

Whilst the Funder should be prescriptive about what can be funded, the way in which funding is used to meet agreed objectives should be relevant to an organisation's needs. For example, grants to infrastructure /groups of organisations may be used for consultancy or they may wish to do the work themselves and use the funding to backfill existing management time. Equally, the choice of consultants should be locally determined and recruited either through a local or national infrastructure body's pool of consultants or recruited through normal advertising and commissioning channels.

Big Assist provided around £6-7000 of consultancy in two 4/5 month slots. Although small scale it was very valuable. It wasn't over prescriptive either - they were flexible about how they used their resource to meet their needs, and the monitoring was reasonable.
Community anchor organisation

Phasing funds

Several respondents recommended phased funding, that is, for organisations to have the option of a further grant to follow up on their outreach, research and strategy activities.

Supporting learning
Many funding programmes demonstrate that the learning local groups most value is peer learning, where funders bring grantees together to share experience and examples of what is being done in different parts of the country. These are valuable networking opportunities, give groups the confidence of knowing that they are not alone, and provide important opportunities for peer mentoring.

A potential approach, as informed by this research:
A two year place based 'Communities in Transition' pilot fund

This could focus on up to six geographical areas working through a local community anchor organisation that has the understanding and leadership qualities to manage a phased approach and, where appropriate, in collaboration with local community foundations. This would include a requirement to share learning with the funder to help inform and shape policy at a national level.

The geographical areas could include a mix between areas that have strong voluntary sector histories and those that are relatively weaker (e.g. from this scoping study these would include Bristol, Newham or Tower Hamlets (strong) and Wakefield District, Rotherham and Great Yarmouth (weaker) for example).

In each area, the fund would enable a 'pick and mix' approach, drawn from the ideas above, as appropriate, e.g.:

- An 'at risk' small grants pot for very small new groups (this could be targeted/managed/delivered by the lead community anchor organisation);
- Resources to allow larger organisations, one of which would be the lead body, to have some thinking time, take a step back and consider their strategic and organisational development (this could be used to buy in consultancy support or backfill management time);
- A pot of resources for community profiling and engagement through peer research or community listening projects at neighbourhood or sub district level;
- Resources to share learning and engage in influencing at a strategic level (this might include influencing others about what they fund and how, how risk can be allowed for, as well as managed, and around the value of peer research/listening type work).

A phased approach to this would mean delivery of resources in stages over a one to two year period:

- Early research, community mapping work;
- Organisational thinking and change management work;
- Sharing what works and influence.

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Appendix 2: list of people involved in the study

People interviewed

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