

SMALL GRANTS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**AN ANALYSIS OF LOCAL NETWORK FUND AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL COMMUNITY CHEST PROGRAMMES
IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND AREA**

A RESEARCH REPORT

for

QUARTET COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**Lin Whitfield Consultancy
November 2005**

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

In late 2003 Quartet Community Foundation – then Greater Bristol Foundation – commissioned an evaluation of the impact of its grants programme, with a particular focus on three areas:

- Impact on the development of individual organisations that had received grants
- Impact on those organisations' ability to collaborate within the sector
- Impact on the area as a whole through the activities of funded organisations, individually and collaboratively

The work was undertaken by Lin Whitfield Consultancy in early 2004, using a sample of 300 groups which had received grants over the previous five years.

1.2 The report concluded that there was considerable evidence of the impact of relatively small amounts of funding on individuals, community groups themselves, and wider communities. Quartet's maximum grant size is £7000 and the vast majority of grants are much lower than this, yet impact included:

- For individuals, increased confidence, new skills, and more opportunities open to them
- For groups, increased management skills, more funding from other sources, and better joint and partnership working
- For wider communities, better morale and more involvement of local people

1.3 Since the dissemination of the evaluation's findings, there has been interest from some external stakeholders in how this impact relates to wider strategic priorities within the sub-region. For instance, the evaluation also found evidence of economic impact: some users had gained jobs through involvement in funded activities, and 21% of groups who participated in the study reported a decrease in crime and vandalism locally.

Quartet commissioned a piece of follow-on research to focus on the contributions of two of its larger programmes, the Local Network Fund (LNF) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest, to the sub-region's strategic priorities and targets. This work was commissioned in September 2005, and took place in October and November of that year.

1.4 Background

Quartet has made grants to locally-based charities and community groups in the former Avon county area since 1987. In the first ten years its grant-making totalled £1 million but since 1997 this has increased considerably. It is expected that grants totalling £2 million will be made in the financial year 2005-06.

Grants are intended for small community based organisations that:

- reach people that are most disadvantaged and isolated (people may be isolated due to poverty, disability, age or culture)
- enable people to take opportunities that would otherwise not be available to them
- involve local people in improving their community
- reflect the concerns and priorities of people living and working in the area

Quartet manages a number of funds under contract that provide larger grants eg up to either £5000 or £7000, but the average grant size is £1,825. These larger grant funds come with their own set criteria. However, as they are also targeted at smaller, hard to reach groups of people, the principle of providing a small amount of funding to maximum effect in the most accessible and efficient way remains.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the research was desk-based, using national strategy documents and those of regional and sub-regional stakeholders, and Quartet's data on Community Chest and Local Network Fund grants since 2002, including reports from grant recipients. This identified a number of broad strategic themes which formed a framework for analysing grants. These were:

- Education, learning and skills
- Community safety and crime
- Health and wellbeing
- Employment and the economy
- The environment
- Community cohesion and culture
- Community capacity and involvement

1.6 The rest of this report is in 3 sections. Section 2 describes the strategic context for the research. Section 3 analyses the impact of grants against the broad strategic themes outlined in 1.5 above. Section 4 draws some conclusions from the research.

SECTION 2 – THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 For those who are not involved in the business of grant-making in the 21st century, it is tempting to see the giving of small grants to small community groups as an act of largesse which is peripheral to the key concerns of policy-makers and strategy developers. However, a body of research is beginning to build which demonstrates the impact of funded activities on the wider strategic context, although groups themselves often struggle with how to evaluate impact.

“Small grants... provide much needed support to local community organisations so that they can tackle priority concerns in their neighbourhoods. Grants of a few hundred or thousand pounds (no more than £5000) can have a big impact on quality of life, including reducing anti-social behaviour and crime, improving the local environment and increasing learning and employment opportunities.”

- from Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, ODPM August 2005

2.2 To begin the analysis for this report, a review of local strategies was undertaken. The West of England Partnership's Quality of Life delivery priorities include:

- Ensure educational attainment is consistently above the average for city regions and gaps in attainment levels have closed by: increasing achievement levels and entry to higher education; bringing people back into education; and meeting the skills agenda of existing and emerging sectors
- Action to reduce the incidence of health inequality and avoidable deaths through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and improved access to local health care
- Promote and secure quality of place and environment in neighbourhoods and safer and sustainable communities
- Put in place the cultural infrastructure to make the West of England a place of choice, including... local cultural facilities, fostering creativity and community diversity...

Avon and Somerset Constabulary's priorities include: reducing crime – especially robbery, domestic burglaries, racial and other hate crime, domestic violence and vehicle crime; reducing local disorder and anti-social behaviour – in particular alcohol-related violence; and improving road safety.

2.3 At Unitary Authority level, community strategies are expressed in different ways and in varying levels of detail, but similar themes emerge. The extracts on pages 6, 7, 8 and 9 demonstrate that Bath and NE Somerset Council, the Bristol Partnership, North Somerset Council and the South Gloucestershire Partnership have similar broad priorities in the areas of transport; housing; education, learning and skills; the environment; community safety and crime; employment; health and wellbeing; community cohesion and culture; and community capacity and involvement.

2.4 The Primary Care Trusts in the sub-region have direct responsibilities to deliver on tackling health inequalities, tackling obesity, and improving mental health and wellbeing.

2.5 Wider strategic agendas

At a wider Government strategic level, The Future of Local Government (ODPM 2004) aims to increase community leadership, increase levels of citizen engagement, and increase user focus and empowerment. The Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (ODPM 2005) aims to:

- Reduce crime and the fear of it
- Reduce perceptions of anti-social behaviour
- Reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs
- Encourage cleaner, safer and greener public spaces
- Increase the capacity of local communities to participate in decision-making
- Improve quality of life

2.6 Aims of the Local Network Fund

The aims of the LNF derive directly from the Government's Every Child Matters. It is a Department for Education and Skills programme which aims to reduce underachievement and the overall effects of childhood poverty by raising the aspirations of children and young people between the ages of 0 and 19. It supports voluntary and community groups to improve outcomes and opportunities for vulnerable children and young people in this age range. Over the life of the Fund, the understanding of poverty has broadened from financial poverty to include poverty of opportunity.

The LNF provides support and funding to enable community groups to develop and provide services and activities for children and young people in their areas. Grants range between £250 and £7000, and are under the themes:

- Aspirations and experience – projects that help children and young people achieve goals that they would be otherwise unable to achieve
- Economic disadvantage – projects that help families improve their living standards and cope with difficulties that come from being on a low income
- Isolation and access – projects that support and provide opportunities for children and young people who may feel isolated, alone and/or have difficulty accessing services that are available to other children and young people
- Children's voices – projects that give children and young people the chance to express their opinions and contribute to improving policy and services on issues that matter to them

Quartet manages the LNF across the whole of the former Avon county area.

2.7 Aims of the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest

One of the central goals of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, is to narrow the gap between the most deprived and other neighbourhoods. It focuses on the 88 most deprived districts in England, and tackles the five key themes of:

- Poor job prospects
- High levels of crime
- Educational under-achievement
- Poor health
- Problems with housing and the physical environment

The NR Community Chest is a grants programme which promotes and encourages a wide variety of grassroots community activity, enabling local residents to become engaged in their own communities and to take an interest in the improvement of their areas. It stimulates and supports community activity. The NR Community Learning Chest is a smaller programme within it: its aim is to equip local people and groups with the skills and knowledge to play an active role in their local communities.

Quartet manages the Community Chest and Community Learning Chest for Bristol's Neighbourhood Renewal areas, which are:

- Ashley
- Barton Hill
- Easton
- Hartcliffe and Withywood
- Knowle West
- Lawrence Hill
- Lawrence Weston
- Lockleaze
- Southmead

2.8 Based on the strategic analysis above, the rest of this report analyses the impact of grants received by groups under the following headings:

- Education, learning and skills
- Community safety and crime
- Health and wellbeing
- Employment and the economy
- The environment
- Community cohesion and culture
- Community capacity and involvement

Strategic priorities under the themes of transport and housing are concerned with infrastructure, which is not addressed by grants under the two programmes. However, there is evidence of impact on social aspects of these two themes.

Bath and NE Somerset Council has a community strategy partnership with five shared ambitions:

- Promoting a 'sense of place' so people identify with and take pride in our communities
- Celebrating the contributions people from different backgrounds and with different experiences can make, and promoting equality of opportunity
- Sharing resources, working together and finding new ways of doing things
- Building communities where people feel safe and secure
- Taking responsibility for our environment and natural resources now and over the long term

It has 'improvement ambitions' in the areas of:

- Transport
- Housing – including encouraging and supporting residents and communities to become more actively involved in making their communities nice places to be
- Learning and skills – including increasing community-based learning opportunities, increasing the demand for learning, and meeting the needs of hard to reach learners
- Economy – including tackling discrimination in the labour market and promoting employment opportunities for vulnerable members of the community
- Environment – including community safety and cleaner greener streets and environment
- Health and Social Care – including preventing health problems, the health and wellbeing of young people, and improving mental health services

The Bristol Partnership's objectives for 2006 – 9 are:

To promote economic investment and productivity, increase the number of jobs in the city and reduce worklessness – particularly within disadvantaged neighbourhoods and equalities communities

To develop the skills of our workforce so that Bristol can sustain a high level of economic performance

To transform the city's educational system to raise standards of educational attainment and promote a culture for learning

To improve the health of Bristol residents, reduce health inequality and reduce the number of households with smokers, therefore increasing life chances for children and future life expectancy in the city

To improve resident satisfaction with their neighbourhoods and make public spaces cleaner, greener and safer

To reduce CO2 emissions and improve the energy efficiency of dwellings

To improve the transport system of the city, reduce congestion and the number of road accident casualties, improve public transport and promote cycling and walking

To increase the number, range and quality of housing for the city, including affordable and social housing; and to improve the quality of council houses so that 100% meet the national decent homes standard by 2010

To reduce crime, drugs misuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as reduce fear of crime

To close the gap between our most disadvantaged communities and the rest of the city, so that no-one is disadvantaged by where they live by 2026

To increase the number of residents engaged in neighbourhood renewal and the number of residents satisfied with the quality of life in their neighbourhood

To continue to support the capacity of residents, neighbourhood communities and the voluntary sector in service delivery and planning

North Somerset Council's corporate aims are:

Promoting lifelong opportunities for all, including improving achievement levels, widening participation, and extending and improving community learning facilities

Enhancing health and wellbeing, including older people living full and independent lives within the community, maximising opportunities for vulnerable children, decent and safe homes, access and choice in housing, healthy and active lifestyles, and reducing health inequalities

Protecting and improving the environment, including quality of the natural and built environment, waste management, and sustainable transport

Building safer communities, including reducing substance misuse and violent crime, reducing anti-social behaviour, and road safety

Increasing prosperity, including reducing poverty, and responding to identified needs in pockets of deprivation

The **South Gloucestershire Partnership**'s strategy has theme goals:

Strong communities where needs are met locally

A strong local economy with sustainable job opportunities for all

An environment that is enhanced and protected for future generations

A convenient, safe and inclusive transport network with less traffic congestion

Improved health and wellbeing for everyone

A dynamic and inclusive culture of learning that enables everyone to achieve their potential

Communities with low levels of crime and disorder where people feel safe

SECTION 3 – THE IMPACT OF THE LNF AND COMMUNITY CHEST PROGRAMMES

3.1 Under the LNF, Quartet awarded 314 grants totalling £1,671,899 to 239 groups across the former Avon county area (end of April 2005 data). The LNF West of England Advisory Panel established a target percentage distribution of funds based on population and need. This is reflected in the figures below.

UA area	No. of grants	No. of groups	Total amount
B&NES	53	40	£275,374
Bristol	155	112	£846,239
N Somerset	46	40	£230,068
S Glos	60	47	£320,218

3.2 Through the Community Chest, Quartet awarded 218 grants totalling £751,260 to 156 groups in the Neighbourhood Renewal areas of Bristol (end of April 2005 data). The following table breaks this down by ward. It also includes grants to groups in pockets on the edges of these areas, and grants to communities of interest.

Ward	No. of grants	No. of groups	Total amount
Ashley	31	23	£98,752
Barton Hill	5	5	£23,400
Easton	41	29	£122,472
Hartcliffe and Witherwood	10	7	£35,495
Hillfields	10	6	£37,683
Knowle West	26	18	£126,368
Lawrence Hill	4	3	£12,108
Lawrence Weston	9	6	£35,703
Lockleaze	9	7	£34,869
Southmead	16	12	£47,562
Pockets	14	9	£43,650
Communities of interest	43	31	£133,198

3.3 Part of the Community Chest is designated as a Community Learning Chest. Quartet awarded 51 grants totalling £151,191 to 40 groups and 2 individuals in the Neighbourhood Renewal areas of Bristol under this aspect of the programme (end of April 2005 data).

3.4 In order to analyse the impact of any grant, it is necessary to dig deeper than the traditional considerations of geographical areas and the profile of beneficiaries. These are clearly important, but far more crucial are considerations of the outcomes of activities and services funded by the grant. What has changed for individuals, groups and communities as a result of the funded activities, and what further changes might happen in the future?

For example, a grant is given to fund a residential weekend for 40 volunteers from a neighbourhood centre in Bristol. This might be perceived as simply a useful team-

building and bonding exercise. However, as a result of the weekend, the participants gain skills in community involvement and volunteering, a deeper insight into their own strengths and weaknesses, and more knowledge about volunteering activity in the local area. More than half of them go on to become very active in the regeneration of the area; and twelve of them seek further training to extend their skills, some of whom may then seek paid employment in community activity.

3.5 The likely consequences of funded activities not taking place also need to be considered. If the grant-funded sessions for disaffected young people in Weston-super-Mare had not been running, what might have been the impact in the short term and longer term on local vandalism and crime, educational achievement and school exclusions, and family life and wellbeing? If the older people’s lunch club in Easton had not been able to run, what might have been the impact on their diet and health and on their isolation and emotional wellbeing, and also on their ability to continue living independently? It is not possible to provide an analytical answer to these questions, but reasonable guesses can be made.

3.6 It can be seen from the above that analysing the impact of grants can be a complex task, with possible outcomes in a range of fields. LNF grants in particular may contribute to a number of strategic priorities in a geographical area. Analysis of holiday playschemes and afterschool activity clubs, which are typically funded by small grants, show that the impact of such facilities can be very wide-ranging. This is confirmed by independent evaluation results, and by comments and reports from such projects themselves.

Outline analysis of the likely impact of holiday playschemes and after school activity clubs

Strategic priority area	Likely impact
Education, learning and skills	Activities may include drama, art and craft: children gain confidence and learn skills Parents as volunteer helpers gain confidence and learn skills Activities may include trips which widen children’s and parents’ horizons
Community safety and crime	Fewer road accidents locally while children are attending Less anti-social behaviour locally while children are attending Less vandalism locally while children are attending
Health and wellbeing	Activities may include a range of sports: children get exercise and gain skills Less stress for parents: their children are positively occupied, and they may get some time for themselves
Employment and the economy	Parents are able to continue working Some sessional jobs may be created to run the playschemes and clubs

The environment	Less petty vandalism and graffiti while children are attending Activities may include environmental ones
Community cohesion and culture	Children and families from the whole community are brought together and new friendships made Activities may include cultural ones
Community capacity and involvement	Local residents' involvement as volunteers may lead to more community involvement Organisers build their skills and may make plans for further local activity

Quartet has given 27 grants to playschemes and 28 to afterschool activity clubs across the sub-region, in rural and inner city communities and on outer city estates. Grant recipients comment:

“We were able to provide safe, secure play opportunities for children of working parents. Structured games developed their sense of teamwork, and they were able to enjoy the excitement and experience of producing their own play.”

“There is now reliable out of school childcare in the area. We have remained reasonably priced, and children love coming. Knowing that their children are safe and happy, parents have been able to return to work or increase their hours. We have also been able to provide respite care for parents with children who have special needs.”

3.7 Education, learning and skills

3.7.1 Quartet has funded a number of projects and activities designed to improve children’s and young people’s educational achievement. These include:

- supplementary schools
- mentoring projects
- homework clubs
- credit union junior savers clubs
- reading help schemes
- a peer education project
- a literacy and sport project
- IT projects

A Bath project comments:

“Results were a huge increase in self-esteem and self-confidence incorporated in their writing/literacy skills and demonstrated through their Write between the Posts booklet.”

A Bristol credit union states:

“Children have been encouraged and involved in saving. Some have helped as volunteers at paying-in points along with parent volunteers. Many children have been actively involved, helping to count the money, recording deposits on sheets, and involving this in school assemblies and small group numeracy work.”

3.7.2 Some of these projects and activities are specifically targeted at children who are disaffected or at risk of exclusion. Here the impact may not only be on educational achievement, but may also be on crime and community safety, and on health and wellbeing – of the young people themselves, and of their families. A project in Weston-super-Mare comments:

“There has been a dramatic change in the lives of some who have been mentored, as they have been valued for who they are and given individual attention. One individual’s development has been so marked that the school wishes to extend and develop the arrangements.”

There may be, in the long term, significant savings for education budgets where specific interventions targeted at these children and young people have been funded.

3.7.3 A wide range of arts projects for children and young people have been funded across the sub-region. Those involved have gained new skills, built their concentration, and increased their confidence, all of which is likely to have a positive impact on their educational achievement. Quartet has funded:

- drama and theatre groups
- arts ‘taster’ schemes
- video projects
- a photography course
- music and DJ projects
- a classical Asian arts project
- young people’s newsletters
- multi-media projects
- drumming and dance workshops
- young people’s arts events

Projects in South Gloucestershire and Bristol comment:

“They have learnt skills in interviewing and expressing themselves on film. Less confident young people have been able to communicate via film and this has made them more confident.”

“The newsletter gives the young people the chance to express their views and make themselves heard, and the opportunity to develop new skills and gain confidence. A number of young people have gone on to seek careers in the media, and some are taking A level courses in photography and media studies (the area has no secondary school, and when it did there was no Sixth Form).”

3.7.4 It is not only children and young people who may be learning as a result of some of the activities funded by Quartet. Parents may also learn new skills, either through activities and training specifically set up for them, or through their involvement in activities for others. Skills-based activities or facilities funded by Quartet include:

- sewing
- community development
- public speaking and making presentations
- driving
- First Aid
- governance and management committees
- horticulture

3.7.5 Around 39% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest programmes contributed towards strategic priorities in education, learning and skills.

3.8 Community safety and crime

3.8.1 While few activities funded by Quartet through the LNF and Community Chest programmes are specifically designed to have an impact on community safety and crime, a number of them undoubtedly have this effect. As discussed in 3.3 above, many playschemes, Saturday clubs and afterschool activities engage children and young people in constructive and positive activity. Evidence from evaluation of these activities elsewhere shows that road accidents, incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism are fewer while these activities are taking place. Savings are clearly being made on policing and community safety budgets. A project in Bath comments:

“The project has engaged positively with young people who would otherwise be using their time unconstructively. Parents and residents regularly using the site have said that they are really pleased to see young people using the site and taking part in activities.”

Local community festivals and community arts events, such as Big Time in St Pauls and the Hartcliffe and Withywood Carnival, engage many children and young people. Quartet has given grants to a number of such festivals and events. Cultural festivals can also promote understanding of diversity and lessen tension within communities:

“The festival celebrating Islamic culture improved community relations through mutual respect, allowing non-Muslims to see that there is nothing to ‘fear’ from Muslims and vice versa, and allowing Muslims to see the benefits of avoiding self-imposed segregation.”

3.8.2 Around 17% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest programmes contributed towards strategic priorities in community safety and crime.

3.9 Health and wellbeing

3.9.1 Quartet has funded many projects and activities designed to improve the exercise levels and physical health of children and young people. These include:

- sports activities
- drug issues projects
- skateboard/BMX projects
- sports activities for disabled children
- a healthy eating project
- video projects on health and wellbeing issues
- theatre and drama productions on health and wellbeing issues

Sports and exercise projects for children and young people may also have an impact on educational achievement and/or personal development, and on community safety and crime. A girls' football project in Bristol states:

“Most of the girls we work with have been excluded from school or have problems within the family. We hold sessions where we discuss problems and point the girls in the right direction for help. We also work with the girls on a one-to-one basis and work with the parents... It has made a great difference... their attitudes have changed and now they have some idea of what is expected of them.”

Projects focusing on drugs issues may also have an impact on community safety and crime. A Bristol project comments:

“We have been able to keep vulnerable Black and Minority Ethnic young people off the streets, reducing anti-social behaviour and engaging them in personal and social development activities. They have had support with issues such as drugs and alcohol abuse... An overall achievement has been the development of self-respect, self-discipline and self-confidence which has been identified through them becoming involved in other projects.”

A video project with young people in South Gloucestershire which addressed issues of child abuse had a particularly wide-ranging impact:

“It enabled them to explore issues of abuse and present them to other young people. All were influenced in their education and career choices, many deciding to stay on at college as a result of this project. The group were particularly proud that the video was their own work based on their own ideas. Some of the group have reported showing the video to their friends, and there is some evidence that it has already encouraged young people to talk to an adult.”

3.9.2 Quartet has also funded a number of projects and activities designed to improve the physical health of adults. These include:

- lunch clubs for older people
- food growing projects
- keep fit courses
- a men's health promotion project
- health care for Asian women

3.9.3 Within the field of mental health and wellbeing, Quartet has funded a wide range of projects and activities. Some, such as counselling or victim support schemes, are easily recognisable as being health-related but many of those which provide support for individuals and families improve mental wellbeing through reducing isolation and stress. Quartet has funded approximately 50 projects which have an impact on mental health and wellbeing. They include:

- young carers support projects
- parenting skills courses
- after school therapy groups for children with low self-esteem and confidence
- counselling projects for children and young people
- an anger management course for young fathers
- refugee support projects
- ‘playing together’ sessions for parents and children
- Asian women’s groups
- activities for disabled children which allow parents a respite
- interest groups for older people
- a victim support scheme
- young parents and young mothers support groups
- a Black elders group

A group in Bath states:

“The parents group provides a chance for socially isolated parents in the area to have a break and meet with other adults. For some, it is the only break from childcare that they get all week. It is a warm supportive environment in which people can talk about whatever is troubling them. Although the group has a facilitator, the emphasis is on members being empowered to find their own solution to their problems, by having the chance to talk them through and to listen to the responses and suggestions of other members.”

A young mothers group in Bristol comments:

“The weekend provides the young mums with an opportunity to look at things in their lives from a positive viewpoint... Most of the group have a lot of negative issues in their lives and many are taking anti-depressants. The weekend is a kick-start, setting achievable goals and gaining a feeling of accomplishment... More positive attitudes and higher self-esteem of the young mums will benefit their children who will receive more constructive input.”

3.9.4 Most of the projects funded by Quartet across both LNF and Community Chest rely on volunteers. It is widely recognised that volunteering can reduce isolation and improve mental wellbeing.

3.9.5 Around 25% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest programmes contributed towards strategic priorities in health and wellbeing.

3.10 Employment and the economy

3.10.1 Projects and activities funded by Quartet are rarely specifically designed to have an impact on employment and the economy. However, as has already been reported, playschemes and out of school activities enable many parents to continue working or to extend their hours, and the funding of new locally-based activities has created some new jobs.

Arts activities have built the skills of some young people and encouraged them to take up jobs and pursue careers in the arts and media. Community involvement and training in committee and groupwork skills have encouraged some volunteers to consider taking up paid employment in these and other fields.

3.10.2 The funding of some community festivals, such as St Pauls Carnival and the St Marks Road Street Party, brings visitors to the area who then contribute to the local economy.

“The event challenged the negative perception of Easton often portrayed in the local media... Visitors from outside Easton came to the Street Party and spent money on the day, but also came back in the weeks and months after the event because they’ve discovered a range of specialist retailers and restaurants.”

3.10.3 Around 8% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest programmes contributed to strategic priorities in employment and the economy.

3.11 The environment

3.11.1 Quartet has funded a number of projects which focus on improving the natural and built environment. These include:

- school and community garden projects
- improving access for disabled people
- consultation events for using and improving under-used sites
- a conservation project
- improving community buildings
- clearing derelict land and bringing it back into community use
- improvements to parks and playing fields

3.11.2 A small number of projects and activities which focus on wider environmental issues have also been funded: demonstration allotments, city farm activities, cycling initiatives, and food growing projects.

3.11.3 Around 9% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest programmes contributed towards strategic priorities in environment.

3.12 Community cohesion and culture

3.12.1 Through the Community Chest, Quartet has funded 17 local festivals, local community events, and cultural festivals and events across Bristol. These bring

communities together, sometimes involving hundreds of volunteers. They challenge negative stereotypes of specific localities, celebrate diversity, and build understanding within communities.

“The event has become an essential part of community life in St Werburghs... We estimated that between 2000 and 3000 people attended. The day involved local performers showcasing their talents, and stalls held by local people, charities and organisations who sold their goods or provisions.”

“The event raised cultural awareness among local residents and organisations, and encouraged communities to have a greater understanding about the traditional culture of the Sikh community. The event also provided an opportunity for the Sikh community itself to get together and for the younger generation to learn and discuss their cultural heritage.”

Quartet has also funded 9 smaller celebratory events targeting specific cultural communities within the area, reducing isolation and bringing people together to celebrate their heritage.

3.12.2 Community newsletters are another way of bringing local people together. Quartet has funded 9 such newsletters, mainly in Bristol. Four of them are produced by young people, who will have gained valuable skills and experience from their involvement.

3.12.3 Both the LNF and Community Chest programmes have enabled Quartet to fund a total of 43 Black and other Minority Ethnic groups across the old Avon county area, most of them in Bristol. The funding has been for a wide range of specific activities, but will also have strengthened the groups themselves and the communities in which they work.

3.12.4 A total of 26 grants have been awarded for projects and activities which provide support and practical help to refugees and asylum seekers, including homework clubs and training

3.12.5 Quartet has also contributed funding to a small number of projects whose specific aim has been to educate and build understanding between cultures. These initiatives were:

- Black History Month
- an event to mark the 10th anniversary of the attack on Marlon Thomas
- the Asian History Project
- a conference on Islamophobia
- Refugee Week

“The conference brought together a wide cross section of young people, MPs and City Councillors, and raised awareness of the long term effect of racial violence.”

3.12.6 Around 15% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest programmes contributed to strategic priorities in community cohesion and culture.

3.13 Community capacity and involvement

3.13.1 Assessing the impact of funded activities on the capacity of a local community is a complex undertaking which needs to measure changes over a period of time rather than on a snapshot basis. Consideration needs to be given to the capacity and involvement of individuals in initiating projects and activities, and in running them. It also needs to be given to the capacity of groups and organisations to grow and to be sustainable.

3.13.2 Quartet has funded a number of activities, mainly through the Community Chest, which aim to increase the capacity and involvement of individuals. These include:

- training for volunteers in delivering services
- volunteer expenses
- attendance at conferences
- visits to similar projects
- sessions to raise awareness of specific issues
- consultation events

It is important to note that involvement in any children's and young people's activity as an adult volunteer can have a far-reaching impact.

"There is no doubt that the pool of skills, talents and experience has been deepened and widened in these [LNF] communities and this will have an impact which knocks on into other areas of community life. Some adults found that their experience in working with groups provided them with enough self-confidence and experience to help them into the labour market. It seems reasonable to assume that, in the same way, these skills and experiences would be, for many more adults and parents, transferable into other local community activities, such as running tenants groups or becoming more involved in other organisations and generally enhancing their level of political skills."

- from 'Was the Money Used Well?' national evaluation of LNF 2005

3.13.3 The evaluation of Quartet's grants programme in 2004 demonstrated that small grants can have a major impact on the capacity of groups and organisations, particularly when groups are new or relatively young. Under the LNF and the Community Chest programmes, Quartet gave:

- grants to help with the start-up phase for 9 groups
- funded consultancies and other development activities for 13 groups to help them to grow or to cope effectively with change
- grants to develop business plans or feasibility studies for 11 groups in order to help them develop strategies for sustainability
- grants for tailored training for the management committees or Trustees of 11 groups

3.13.4 Many of the groups funded by Quartet have a focus on community involvement through the development of a range of local activities. They include:

- community centres
- local action groups
- youth forums
- city farms
- community forums and partnerships
- Black and Minority Ethnic groups
- residents and neighbourhood associations
- church and community halls
- development trusts

The stability and growth of groups like these result in the development of more local activities and services which involve local people.

3.13.5 Around 20% of grants from the LNF and Community Chest contributed towards strategic priorities in community capacity and involvement.

Strategic priority area	% impact
Education, learning and skills	39
Community safety and crime	17
Health and wellbeing	25
Employment and the economy	8
The environment	9
Community cohesion and culture	15
Community capacity and involvement	20

The percentages add up to greater than 100% as some of the grants will have contributed to more than one strategic priority

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSIONS

4.1 It is clear from the analysis in section 3 that the grants awarded by Quartet under the LNF and Community Chest programmes have had a significant impact, not only on individuals, groups and communities across the old Avon county area, but also on a wide range of strategic priorities at regional and sub-regional levels. They have enabled small groups to contribute to all the broad strategic priorities of major public bodies and partnerships within the West of England area, with the exception of those which are about infrastructure improvement. Grants from Quartet's other programmes have also undoubtedly contributed to these but are beyond the scope of this piece of research. It is also beyond its scope to quantify such contributions, but the vital contribution of the voluntary and community sector to civic society and social capital is increasingly being recognised.

4.2 Large scale regeneration funding by its very nature does not have the flexibility to fund small scale community activity. Most regeneration funding is designed for big projects which have to be run by large organisations with the capacity to manage complex financial and reporting requirements. Capital funding schemes specifically exclude the revenue finding for activities which can make big building projects and large training schemes seem more connected to the local communities in which they are sited. The LNF and Community Chest programmes can give a softer, more approachable edge to these larger projects, through funding activities which can help people to feel involved.

4.3 The LNF and Community Chest programmes are also ways in which small projects can access regeneration funding for themselves. They enable many stand-alone activities to take place at local level, reaching parts of the community who perceive that there is little for them in large regeneration programmes. These small activities provide the 'social glue' that brings communities together. Larger regeneration schemes can be seen by local people as slow to move and hampered by bureaucracy. The small grants element gives a degree of immediacy: the assessment process is relatively quick, allowing activities to start while involvement and enthusiasm are still high.

4.4 The Community Chest programme has enabled a number of grants to go into quite localised geographical areas. In places such as Hillfields in Bristol and Ventura Farm in South Glos, where there are relatively few community groups, the effect on community capacity and involvement over a three year period can be considerable. Quartet may wish to consider undertaking some qualitative research in one of these areas.

4.5 It is worth remembering that the findings detailed in section 3 of this report have been drawn solely from Quartet's grants data, and monitoring information from most groups. This information does not give the full picture which might have emerged from interaction with the groups themselves, and should therefore be taken as a probable under-estimation of the impact of the grants under these two programmes.