

A Feasibility Study to Explore the Potential for Participatory Grantmaking (PGM) in North Yorkshire



Supported by North Yorkshire Council and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Skyblue Research Ltd

June 2023 to January 2024

Case Studies

Background

These case studies are based on triangulated interviews conducted by Alan Graver (Skyblue Research Ltd) between June and December 2023. Interviewees comprised funders, intermediary organisations, facilitators, community developers and people with lived experience who participated in Participatory Grantmaking activities since 2021 in areas including York (case study 1), Teams & Dunston in Gateshead (case study 3) and Scarborough and Ryedale (case study 2). Some experiences go further back in time, specifically participants involved in decision making that formed part of the Big Local Barrowcliff approach and - *though not the same thing as PGM* - Participatory Budgeting in Scarborough many years ago.

These 'deep dives' contributed to, and complemented, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund feasibility study which was completed by Skyblue in January 2024. A detailed report, short summaries and 'PGM learning together workshop' slide packs were also produced and are available on request from Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Localities, North Yorkshire Council.

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Case study 1: York Deciding Together (Published 2021)

published by Two Ridings Foundation as part of their commitment to share learning from the PGM process in 2021



Lankelly Chase



THE DECIDING TOGETHER LOCAL FUND FOR YORK

THE PROCESS

The Deciding Together Local Fund for York was created through a Participatory process that co designed the Grant Making model. It was a process that took a year to complete from which lots of valuable learning took place.

This writing attempts to take the you on the journey we collectively experienced in 2021, sharing insights and learning so that you may draw on our experience to support the development of yours.

WHERE WE STARTED FROM

The Deciding Together process was funded by Lankelly Chase, a national funder that seeks to tackle the root cause of extreme marginalisation. They devolved power to the participation group with no prerequisites beyond the fund moving beyond “get the money out quickly” to thinking about the process of making use of the funding and to consider activity that enable systemic change.

Lankelly were open about what emerged from it. They understood and accepted, even, that the process ‘might not work’.

Deciding Together was also building off two years of work already underway by the York Multiple Complex Needs Network (York MCN) in the city, which brought together people in York from diverse perspectives of multiple complex needs (homelessness, addiction and recovery, poverty, mental health difficulties). Their aim was to see how York as a city could change the system that perpetuates disadvantage for people experiencing multiple complex needs. This network involved people with lived

experience, commissioners, housing practitioners, senior statutory leaders and support workers.

Regional Funder, Two Ridings Community Foundation, brought their 20-year history of grant making alongside an in-depth knowledge of local need and local communities. Two Ridings came with wisdom but openness to learn, to be stretched and to work with others. Two Ridings recruited and hosted a Facilitator to administer the process.

Deciding Together built on what was already strong in our City of York.

Learning from this...

“It is key to assess whether your starting point is already out there in some form in your area. Anyone starting this process needs to attempt to connect with a network of people with principles that align.”

Lankelly Chase also commissioned facilitators from the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that matter community. “The Art of Hosting” is a method of participatory leadership for facilitating group processes.¹ This

community group understands “hosting” as a certain way of facilitation that is supposed to have the capacity of making emerge the collective intelligence that people possess. The practitioners see this methodology of engagement as a way to bring people in complex, social systems into convergence on collective actions, with the participants discovering and proposing their own solution

INVOLVING EVERYONE

The initial process was the three starting institutions– York MCN, Two Ridings and the Art of Hosting – reaching out to as much of the York population as possible, through a power mapping exercise.

They ensured Council leaders, funders, community groups, lived experience networks, faith organisations, disability groups, culturally diverse organisations, faith groups and education establishments all received invitations to get involved, initially through conversation then an open Information Event. In the invitation was a clear offer to anyone wanting to be involved that they could do so in one of three ways.

- Very involved in the whole process, committing day per month for six months
- Partially involved unable to participate throughout,
- Low key involvement where they were kept informed via a mailing list

Seventy people attended the first meeting. It was made very clear that you didn’t have to ‘apply’ to be involved, anyone could come along.

Learning from this...

By not having an application process, which at the time we felt was important, we couldn’t create an appropriate system as payment for peoples’ involvement. This resulted in at least one person dropping off because it was not in

place. We were naïve in this circumstance. It was not good enough not to pay people. We were honest and open about our error and apologised. Although we lost one person because of this, we gained respect from others for how we dealt with it transparently.

THE FIRST SESSION

A month after the initial Information Event we held our first session to form the group and build the relationships needed. We had a clear engagement plan so that people were fully able to commit to the full process. At this meeting we also ran a session on ‘Understanding Participatory Grant Making’

Learning from this...

We recognised that introducing formalised Participatory Grant making models at this stage was too early. Our Facilitator stated “Until I saw the models, I didn’t really get it [Participatory Grant making], but because I had a vague understanding, it became clear to me once I had seen them. But our actual participants hadn’t really got to that stage, they hadn’t the chance for even a vague understanding, so more time was needed before this was introduced.”

At the first session, a Framework was established and we worked backwards from that to create a timeline, so we knew which milestones we wanted to hit.

Although we had planned this first session, plans for subsequent sessions would not be formed until we had drawn from the group.

Before each session – which we called our Decision-Making Space – everyone involved were pre-ready having established what we were making a decision on and also from some of the group meeting each other separately to discuss.

Before any decision was reached there was space to talk and share each person’s own

perspective and listen to everyone else in order to come away with a collective decision.

We applied 'Consent decision-making' whereby not everyone might agree, but everyone 'consents' to the final decision.

We created a Tweak/Remember model to use in our process ...

This is a simple process where anyone could use the word Tweak or Remember to guide us through the process.

An example was when we were creating the application form we did a 'Tweak' to ensure the form was really in very plain English for anyone to understand

An example for 'Remember' was when people were talking about individual applications for the fund and we had to remember that the funding was about system change in York, not about an individual application

The group were constantly empowering each other through the decisions that were made.

SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS

We held six sessions in total, at each one making decisions as a collective.

The Two Ridings facilitator had no decision-making power. They inputted insight, experience and knowledge but were never part of the final decision.

How we were together

From the emerging agreements, we put in place an informal group agreement around how we connect with each other and how we are in the space.

This was about humanity, creating an ethos where diversity was welcomed, individuals were welcomed and power dynamics were neutralised.

The decision made

Decisions made were:

- How do people apply?
- What questions will be in the application?
- What will the invite look like to apply
- What will be in the Guidance notes for the fund?
- How many panels will we have and how will those panels look?

Collectively it was decided to have three panels

- **Small Grants** – under £1k – 10% of pot – Up to £24k
Anyone can apply – including individuals
- **Medium Grants** – Between £1k and £10k – Up to £80k allocated
- **Large Grants** – Over £10k – Up to £130k

Each member of the group was asked which panel they would like to sit on and it was ensured that each panel had a spread of people with different experiences on them – including lived, professional and grant making. Although people were not labelled, anyone on a panel could have a variety of different experiences, it was never highlighted who was there in what capacity.

Learning from this...

Throughout the process trust was being built. It was always an open space for discussion, honesty and connection between all involved.

Occasionally small groups would come together between sessions to finalise part of the process. This would be circulated to the whole groups to Tweak and Remember before finalising and signing off anything.

HOW PEOPLE AND GROUPS WERE INVITED TO APPLY

We designed an invite together which we tried to make as accessible and open as possible and got that out on our social media channels. We also wrote a blog, covered it on our websites and crucially every individual agreed to speak to as many people as they could to invite them. We had already done a lot of the 'groundwork' about the fund when we engaged with the York population on the idea behind the fund.

We also facilitated two Drop-Ins, attended by over 20 people. We openly provided email and phone number of the facilitator for anyone to call at any point

Learning from this...

Before the Panel Process the objective of the fund was tweaked, through a collective decision, for projects applying to answer 'How do we create the time and space to make fundamental change in York for people with multiple complex needs?'

THE FUNDING PANEL PROCESS

Some people in the group only wanted to be on the Small Grants panel as they felt uncomfortable making decisions around larger sums of funding.

Who should go on which panel was decided through a private vote. Each person said which panel would be their preferred choice and then their subsequent choices. The facilitator mapped the roles balancing up the experience people shared and what they thought they would bring to the panel process.

A week before the panels, each panel member received a full panel pack. It was stressed that it was the individual's responsibility to read thoroughly and not to

discuss with each other. The Facilitator was available for any queries.

Collectively we decided to anonymise the applications

Learning ...

The Facilitator found anonymising the applications difficult because they were not a detailed-focused person. The next time this happened others were also involved in the anonymisation

The Facilitator ordered the applications by how they fitted with the Fund (Remember, the Facilitator was neutral throughout the process, they weren't part of the decision-making process). For some people this helped them with their thinking, but for others they felt it could create bias and they did not like it. In future the group would be asked about this.

We were advised that Panels often didn't read the full applications beforehand, but in the case of Deciding Together, everyone read in detail. We put this down to the group being very tight and committed to the process and the right outcome.

York Deciding Together (YDT) new insights (2023)

Acknowledgements: We are grateful to the 6 individuals interviewed for this case study. They shared different perspectives; one from the originator funder, one from the intermediary organisation (Foundation) with responsibility for the YDT Programme; the 1-day per week paid Facilitator; and 3 people with lived experience who participated in the YDT experience. These additional insights were collected in 2023 as part of this feasibility study and seek to complement the published case study.

Drivers and purpose for PGM in York

“Lankelly Chase had an agenda to try and create change to the things that perpetuate a system that creates multiple disadvantage. They also wished to bring people together in York to see how to address this question – not necessarily to solve it – but to explore the issues. The focus wasn’t on spending the money although this was referenced from the outset. Our role (Two Ridings Foundation) was not to do community development but to help others make decisions. We were really clear about our purpose. The Art of Hosting kept us focused on our purpose.”

Rationale for PGM

“The best people to make decisions are those closest to the community - particularly those that are marginalised or suffering poverty.”

To test the belief that: *“The people closest to the issue are best placed to solve the issue.”*

Why 2021?

“The York Deciding Together process was for 12 months in 2021. A wonderful moment in time - Lankelly Chase had the money, Two Ridings Foundation was in a good place with its grantmaking and its involvement with the Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Network in York (also funded by Lankelly Chase for two years’ prior). It also felt novel at the time.”

Further insights about some of the processes and experiences of YDT>>>

Three broad groups formed over the course of 2021:

1: A core group of facilitators and organisations with responsibilities for the funding comprising the Facilitator (or ‘Weaver’) who was a central person that *“took all the admin away from participants / citizens.”*; the CEO of the Two Ridings Foundation who had internal influencing powers¹ and helped create the conditions for this work (including support of the Board); the Head of Grants at the Foundation *“so that she could take the learning from this and take that into the wider grants landscape she oversees; and also to provide technical knowledge because people still need to know how they can access money when they apply and that wasn’t the Facilitator’s skill.”*; and The Art of Hosting (from Leeds) who were described as good facilitators of emergent processes.

2: The Participation Group. This comprised residents / citizens of York reached through different contacts in Group 3 (see next) and the MCN. There were 70 people involved in total of which 25 attended 6 monthly sessions to October 2021.

“I would have liked more time to put in a process of paying people for their participation along the Minimum Wage for those that needed it but a maximum of

¹ i.e. amend policies and procedures to enable the organisation to do things differently

£250 cash (grant) or voucher was enacted / possible based on advice (and supported by other steps) that this had the least risk of implications on people's other income and declarations, at the time of the work."

3: Group 3 comprised funders / organisations that could reach different people in different systems e.g. through City of York Council's communities team, The National Lottery, faith groups and health contacts. Interestingly, there was some resistance to participate from the faith and health sectors though they did share the YDT information around their networks.

"I believe it was time capacity that was the limiting factor for both sectors. However, I believe with faith and culture groups it had a lot to do with lack of embedded relationships with YDT/York MCN/the Foundation due to systemic marginalisation that we know much more about and are beginning to collectively address now. Gratefully we were able to fund work to address this as part of the fund which should mean the relationships are developing and future involvement might be more connected."

The Project was also limited in how much it could 'chase' and the priority was involving people with lived experience rather than representing institutions.

"Non-involvement inevitably did impact the outcome, however there are many more perspectives we did not involve and recognised that we would never get everyone on board. We maintained an ethos/mentality of recognising who is not in the room – keeping us grounded in the fact we could talk for ourselves but not general population – we haven't and couldn't represent full population."

Recruitment

"Recruitment was supported by The Art of Hosting who helped us through a process called POWER MAPPING – we looked at York MCN, CYC, youth work, housing, business, faith, LGBTQ+ and others then the contexts within each of those. Then we reached out to people in those contexts via different supporting organisations / sectors."

Building decision making capability

"Every session involved reaching a decision about something using the 8 breaths approach². This would help people feel more confident by the time they were making bigger decisions associated with the community awards when applications came through."

Making PGM as participatory as possible

"I would have liked more people with lived experience on the group, but their voices were definitely listened to - and I had moving experiences in panels where people talked openly and candidly about why an application was so important."

"You do need really strong facilitation skills to enable voices to be heard and for decisions to be made in a fully participatory way."

"When I chaired the giving effective feedback it's the process to get the right decisions - we've had trustees exerting their authority to make bad decisions and delegates didn't feel powerful to challenge that process. The deep democracy model coming out of South Africa (like a conflict resolution process) helped us learn to be comfortable with disagreement and having tools to surface and resolve those disagreements. It teaches you things like why you should surface them instead of people nodding but inside not agreeing with something; there's wisdom in the

² [Background Papers 31-46 2nd edition 2019 \(civilsocietytoolbox.org\)](https://civilsocietytoolbox.org/)

minority. I would make it a core training course for everyone!"

"In meetings that are circling back around issues the Facilitator is able to name it and stop it. You explore things during the voting process like 'what would it take for you to come along with that majority decision?'"

Top tips and techniques

"Make the front end processes as deliberative as you can."

"Delivery/engagement success is in the relationship building and taking time to speak to everyone one to one, getting to know them and listening. The facilitation was done in partnership with the Art of Hosting. There's lots of things we did like:

- Check in and check out of sessions (personal/emotional connection and closing sessions well).
- Triads – connecting in groups of three – building close connections and accountability within the group, not just to us the "leaders."
- Fish bowls – where you have three people in conversation and everyone else has to listen, only allowed to speak if they step into the bowl.
- Use of art and imagery, audio and written communication supported accessibility.

What is different about PGM?

"PGM is about involving people in the design and dissemination of resource and money. It's not about being locked in a room with well-paid people from the voluntary sector. It was looking to bring in different people, build trust, relationships and provide mechanisms for listening – things I took for granted before the process began. If these aren't in place it's really difficult for people to reach a position personally where they can make decisions. People otherwise fear – or are

doubtful – that they have control, and someone might swoop in and over-ride everything or challenge them."

"The panels were the place where we had the most honest conversations and generous conversations about grantmaking - different to the other panels – a more facilitative process in PGM challenged the orthodoxies."

Hindsight – anything that you would do differently?

"Dreamland possibly, but if I could, I would have a follow up opportunity available sooner, like another PGM process applying the learning in a more rapid way and giving participants an opportunity to consolidate what we'd done together in a new opportunity. "

"Develop a citizen grantmaker model for participants who wished to become freelance citizen grantmakers who could support other processes and future participants."

"We did everything online because of COVID – starting with a session in person and ending with a session in person would have been brilliant."

"There was something about me being an "outsider" that worked for York, I had no alliances really so people trusted me more than they might trust others...it's a small city with a lot of politics. However, I've done a lot of work elsewhere in the country and where possible I'd like to have someone local who knows more people and can sustain the way of working beyond the funding."

"Perhaps there was more opportunity to gain commitment and share learning with The Lottery, other Foundations and Councils to learn together, but officer time was a constraint for this to happen."

Key take aways from the experience

"Start small and keep doing it."

"The dynamics of people's relationships with money - giving people with limited money big decisions - people get paralysed. In the first round people don't want to spend the money. They are frightened of making a mistake so doing workshops about money can be helpful. Start with a small grants pot and get people's PGM muscles developing."

Final reflections

Complexity vs simplicity?

"I think the Deciding Together process was brilliant and created a lot of good outcomes, I learned a lot as did most people involved. I would say though, that it was a massive endeavour because the originator funder is 'complex and hugely resourced.' As a Facilitator I was only 1 day a week on this. You can do PGM really well (without all the bells, whistles and celebrations) with the right 'community development/youth worker' leads."

A timeline for PGM?

"Emergent processes can be difficult to plan, but people need to know what their commitment is in order to engage. Then good communication is needed throughout to share if agreements/timelines need to be tweaked."

"Making the mistake -as some people do - that just because a person is not in a particular job position they can't make informed decisions."

How much does it cost to do PGM?

"Bearing in mind this a massive estimate the first time cost investment for a funder to get something working is going to be 20-30% rather than traditional community grant making costs c10% but it would probably get to 15% on repeated occasions in future getting closer to the lower costs of traditional community grant programmes. This, of course, also depends on the size of the pot. And a £10,000 pot could not be done for £1500"

Some of the cost was the voucher payment for participation; other costs = professional facilitation, Facilitator (1 day per week) paid role; venue hire for creating safe spaces for conversations."

"We also think there's value in looking at using something like Social Change Agency, a fiscal host for individuals and collectives."

How many people make PGM meaningful?

The number of people doesn't matter it's the process to get to that number. If you've done a really open supportive process and only 3 people have come forward then that's the 3 people you've got."

Success?

"Learning was the main outcome."

"The connection between the grantees. The connection across the City is strengthened. Some of the (lived experience) participants could phone up the Foundation and say, 'that's rubbish' and the Foundation would take it whereas this wasn't there before. The collective knowledge is strengthened. The Foundation can talk to more / different people than before via drop ins."

"All the groups are still coming together. This is what's lasted rather than an end year report."

Interestingly, people with lived experience shared that they had enjoyed their participation, but felt a few things hadn't worked as planned, like iterating the process so more people could get involved after the 2021 year period. They were also unsure whether there had been any follow up about the £240,000 of projects awarded and what they had contributed towards.

Future?

"The evolution of YDT is 'York Together' which will see decisions being made about

the use of a devolved pot of funding from Lankelly Chase Foundation promised for use in the city, hopefully including aspects of PGM in its future approach."

"How do you know PGM is working? When public sector organisations use it to spend their own money. There is a theory if you get people into PGM they get into wider democratic processes - e.g., they're going to vote."

Useful links

- Here's what was funded in Deciding Together:
<https://www.tworidingscf.org.uk/deciding-together-fund/>
- Blog during the process of each session:
<https://www.tworidingscf.org.uk/deciding-together-york-session-1/>
- Guidance notes
chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://www.tworidingscf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Deciding-Together-Local-Fund-for-York-Guidelines-FINAL-no-form.pdf>
- <https://www.tworidingscf.org.uk/participatory-grant-making-deciding-together-session-3/> - this includes a decision timeline.

Case study 2: PGM approaches in Scarborough and Ryedale

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the 17 individuals interviewed for this case study. They shared different perspectives; three from a Regional Funder; another from an issues-based funding organisation; five local authority officers; two PGM facilitators; a place-based Project Manager and community engagement worker; and four residents with lived experience involved in decision making processes including grant panels. Their insights were collected via interviews and 'PGM Learning Together' workshop in 2023 as part of this feasibility study.

A member of North Yorkshire Council's Stronger Communities Team helped the consultant to peer review insights collected in order to develop this case study which is less about the detailed processes in each activity discovered, rather to bring together some of the reflections having noticed this critical mass of PGM down the north Yorkshire Coast and into Ryedale – which converge thematically around health, mental health and wellbeing, with decision making opportunities being enabled for adults and young people alike. Until this study, the connections were not known or being made.

Scarborough and Ryedale PGM Models

The challenges around delivering pure PGM models are always around the time it takes to do it really well, the release of power and control from the funder and the success in getting a truly representational group, including those seldom heard voices to have the confidence to work together for the greater good.

In recent years Scarborough has become an area that has trialled a variety of grant giving and grantmaking that have been modelled on PGM approaches. These attempts have not always been labelled as

PGM, rather have been built around attempts to give some control and decision making back to communities in order to help communities decide what they would like to see and how it is to be delivered. It has been the case that these attempts have often been shaped by the restrictions around the initial funding, but all the groups have made attempts to circumnavigate these in order to let communities decide for themselves.

These are their stories.

"For the Scarborough, the youth panel approach had so many different systems involved, it had great plans but the time pressure to spend the money meant that we were then asked to do a down and dirty quick process. This tight timeline meant that the youth panel didn't have time to shape priorities, do any design process etc which would have been better and could feed learning for the next iteration on the coast."

"Described as transformational - Because young people felt first time voice was heard and valued"

"It's important to meet people where they are – adapt, change, grow, evolve with participants"

"I loved that young people were involved in the panel. It worked hard to not exclude anyone".

"I wonder if in future it could also be an online decision making approach. Were any voices being missed because of the limiting aspect of cost and time for public transport from rural areas to get involved in the face-to-face decision making day?"

SeeCHANGE – tackling health inequalities in Scarborough

SeeCHANGE is all about reducing inequalities and improving wellbeing in Scarborough. It is a £500,000, 3-year National Lottery funded Project from 2023-2026. It is a holistic approach to Scarborough with all sectors coming together bringing their area of insight for the benefit of the town as a whole. As no one person has the answers it takes collaboration. It has a leadership team comprising North Yorkshire Council, NHS, Scarborough Business ambassadors and VCSE leadership as well as community engagement, small grants to grassroots groups (£30,000 in total for these). Many of those are also residents and bring their own person insight into the mix.

SeeCHANGE's Community Funding is available for small projects seeking to tackle **health inequalities**. The National Lottery have been clear that there must be certain formalities around the funding, and in this way the funding looks no different from other conventional funding arrangements with application forms, panels and a decision making panel made up of professionals. It is, however, the process around nurturing ideas, that makes SeeCHANGE's funding different.



'B' is the Community Engagement Officer for the Project, and she visits communities in Scarborough, sitting and chatting to people in cafes and community centres. She listens and encourages the development of their ideas, building up their confidence. While there is an application process 'B' supports them through that removing any barriers they might have about filling out a form.

Never taking over but rather supporting them to have the confidence to believe that their idea has worth.

At the time of writing (January 2024) there has been one panel where a number of applicants' ideas were considered. With 'B' once again at their side, they could explain in their own words what their idea meant, taking confidence that 'B' believed in them. If there were issues 'B' would feedback and support them to consider what was said and whether they wanted to make any changes. If the applicant was successful, but it was felt that the Team could give some form of added value, 'B' would once again share this with the applicant and also support them with any other areas that might be needed as part of an ongoing relationship.

The successful applicants were invited to meet up over coffee and cake to talk to some of the SeeCHANGE team and discuss their thoughts about the process and also to share what their project was with other applicants. This aspect would build as more applicants were successful and a bit of a 'community' of groups could form to share and support each other. This was the first funding tranche, and it was recognised there would be learning from it. How they felt honestly about the process and what they would like to do differently.

Experiences

"We've done our first round of funding and some fantastic projects have been funded. The stand out is a project for non-neuro typical people – when the panel get together it's beautiful, that self-awareness coming from the ground up. It's a good job I'm not on the panel as I'd give them all money!"

"The panel was all 'professionals' including representation from the National Lottery who insisted that they were present for all panels. So, no community/residents doing the decision making."

“It’s been really great. The question is – how do we get to the next level? We’ve done our first round of funding and have funded fantastic work. It is really good to see how life has changed in a small amount of time for some people.”

Legacy?

Keep listening, keep learning to improve the grant giving process in order to empower those who feel they don’t have the power to shape their community. Celebrate the great projects and ideas that are emerging from those communities and improve the wellbeing of residents of Scarborough.

Eastfield PACT – Cash for Causes

The Eastfield PACT set up Cash for Causes (C4C) as a Scarborough Borough Council funded small grants scheme to support projects of community benefit in the community of Eastfield.

A total pot of £150,000 has been drawn down over three years from Council monies acquired from the sale of land.

Cash for Causes is one of six work programme areas that are overseen by the Eastfield Pact Regeneration Partnership that is in the process of delivering circa £5million of regeneration investment into the community. The other work programme areas are people, place, jobs / skills, aspiration and community hubs.

Cash for Causes allocates small grants under two strands:

- Micro grants of up to £1,000 with less rigid due diligence criteria; and
- main grants of over £1,000 with no upper limit.

Applications are welcomed from community organisations and private sector organisations if they can demonstrate the project is not for profit. Importantly applicants to C4C must be able to demonstrate a tangible local

connection and projects must contribute to one of the five other work programme areas mentioned above.

Decisions on what gets funded and what does not reside with a panel of 7 people – 5 local residents and 2 stakeholders, drawn from a larger pool of about 25-30 residents and 8-10 stakeholders.

Whilst the resident led panel ultimately decides what projects get funded they reach their decisions using a scoring framework aligned to the fund priorities.

All panel members go through informal training before sitting on their first panel. To date we have allocated just over two thirds of the total available pot and are investigating options for continuation of the scheme.

Some of the grants awarded

- **Off the Hook**
- **Football for Youth**
- **Sight and Hearing Hub**
- **Soup Bap and Banter**
- **Junior Design Factory**
- **Toddler Group and Coffee Morning**
- **Dementia Dance and Movement**
- **Exercise and Pain Management scheme**

C4C is commissioning an external evaluation with results due end of June 2024, to reflect on its successes and learning to inform future decisions about its continuation or otherwise.

Big Local Barrowcliff

There is a partnership with up to 15 residents involved in the decision making about how money on projects is spent. None of the projects are means tested meaning anyone can take part. For instance, the Free School Meal project in lockdown saw every child (not just those eligible for FSM) getting £3 vouchers in the area.

Many residents have lived in Barrowcliff for generations and have family connections throughout the estate. Barrowcliff as a community is faced with a number of challenges especially around income, crime and health but it does have positives too and these are rarely celebrated. There is a sense that as a community it feels let down by authority but The Big Local has done a lot of work to break down the barriers to unite residents and to support the community in getting what it wants and needs.

Experiences and reflections

"This has felt positive. Better than before. No people coming in with badges on telling people what to do."

"Learning from failure is almost as important as succeeding. It took 3 attempts to get the Big Local Barrowcliff partnership right."

"We made sure that we didn't wear our lanyards in Barrowcliff, or Council badge when with Big Local."

"Gallows Close (a local trusted voluntary community organisation) is giving residents what they need now, not something that a politician says 5 years ago."

"We ask what do people want? People are good at telling you what they need. And it's OK to fail."

Legacy?

"Big Local is becoming Active Communities Together (ACT). 51 of 150 Big Locals across the country have signed up and 140+ residents have signed up locally. Come to a meeting, see how the legacy is being created."

"For the theme of mental health, the approach has to be built around [co-creation](#) within a service. A lot of work has gone in to this in TEWV and the NHS. PGM can be a part of that wider approach."

Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale Community Mental Health Transformation (CMHT)

Community Mental Health Transformation in the Scarborough Whitby and Ryedale area will build on the successful participatory decision-making processes that have already designed and invested £190,000 in community mental health projects, to design and invest the next phase of around £245,000 in 2024 before evaluating and informing future CMHT commissioning. The process was successful in giving out 6 large grants and 7 smaller grants all for new projects that adopted different approaches to supporting MH across the wider area.

The grant giving process still has not always been easy and it is recognised that there is still room for improvement.

A stakeholder decision panel member who had had previous experience with PGM across different places, sectors and thematic approaches felt that: *"The CMHT investment panels in Scarborough ended up supporting people with lived experience but the matrix scoring approach to scoring things was laboured. A brief discussion then 15 minutes to score each one 1-5 per application was mechanical. It did enable discussion but could have got done in a third of the time using an alternative PGM approach. I felt that the use of matrix scoring for grants for the CMHT felt quite traditional and prescribed whereas using another approach might have got the decisions made in a third of the time... but power would need to be released".*

Participants with lived experience commented: *"PGM smashed my prejudices wide open. I've been on benefits for 20 years, suffered discrimination, poverty and trauma. People assume I don't know how to function."*

"Alcoholics and addicts have the answers. Without patronising them, that's the bit PGM does."

Young people's Mental Health PGM in Scarborough

There has been a Young Persons Panel (involving young people that are already a part of the Youth Council and others that were not part of that Council) to help make decisions about how £25,000 of mental health funding (from Two Ridings Foundation and profiled by the Royals Foundation and visit in 2023).

This experience has been supported by expert facilitation too, and whilst the young people have not had sufficient time to complete a PGM exercise where they actually define the priorities or criteria of the funding – that was pre-determined – they have been able to do some decision making together for small grants given to local VCSEs they felt would help support young people's mental health.

Foundation perspectives

"I was blown away by the York Deciding Together stuff so when I had the chance in my role at the Foundation I brought together a panel of young people to make decisions on some available funding for projects that supported CYP mental health and wellbeing in Scarborough.

They were a phenomenal bunch of young people – their integrity, passion and drive. I came in as the adult very process-focused and thinking 'this is what we need to do'. But on the day of decision making the young people took over, got on their feet, used flipcharts, pens, different colours – they brought questions about the community project applications we had brought to them for a decisions; they asked budget questions and what about value for money.

Reflections

"I loved that children / young people were involved in the panel. The timing of meetings, done after school, and open to carers recognising their responsibilities. It worked hard to not exclude anyone. I wonder if in future it could also be an

online decision making approach. Were any voices being missed because of the limiting aspect of cost and time for public transport from rural areas to get involved in the face to face decision making day?"

Legacy?

The Two Ridings Foundation's CYP mental health PGM activity is developing and in a second round of funding for 2024 the young people are shaping the criteria more for that.

Scarborough Participatory Budgeting

Using Scarborough BC grants, a participatory budgeting scheme had been pioneered some years ago with an aim to move decision making power from Councillors to local people.

"Decision making power moved from Councillors and Committee to the individuals / residents. Organisations would put forward their pitches and individuals / residents made decisions based on these."

This typically took the form of a 'Dragon's Den' style event with voting and scoring. Often held in a public building such as a library space. Groups would create a stall and deliver their pitch as residents visited each group and asked questions and gave their scores to support the projects they felt best deserved the funding.

Experiences and reflections

"It had good success across the Borough, hundreds of people got involved."

Legacy?

"It [PB] fizzled out because the Area Committees ceased, and the funding wasn't there anymore. There is nevertheless current PGM activity involved in the Eastfield PACT Regeneration Partnership's 'Cash for Causes' work programme area which sees a panel of 7 people (including 5 residents) awards small community grants."

“If we can do this kind of thing with grant making why can’t we do it with local authority budgets?” “I think PGM is a precursor to Participatory Budgeting.”

What does this all mean?

Participatory Grantmaking has been carried out in different ways in different settings across Scarborough and Ryedale for a number of years. Mostly these projects have been working independently of each other and in all but one case without following a formal PGM model. Instead, what has informed these funders’ practices is a belief that ceding power and giving it the communities of either interest or of place is the right thing to do.

Grants have been given to a range of different groups and providers. Some have been given to small groups that only came together when inspired e.g., by the potential SeeCHANGE funding. One example is ‘Ding Dong Bells’, a group of residents in Seamer. While other grants have been given to established medium sized charities whose work covers the towns of Scarborough, Filey Whitby, Pickering and Malton. All the grants that have been given out are thought to be worthwhile and are helping people to improve their wellbeing, improve their health, encouraging people to try new things and make connections.

What is different is that some of the people involved in receiving the grants would never have anticipated being involved in a community project, they would never have had the confidence to approach a more formal funding offer with their idea. The other difference is the process, the coming together of residents, of individuals with lived experience and of making their voices heard, of giving their opinions and learning how to listen to others, to negotiate and to champion. It is the experience that these communities have had in knowing that they make a difference, that they have been part of something that was for the benefit of

others. While none of these grant structures have been perfect, participants feel that they have been positive.

“We are also learning that there is a way to improve and build on what is being done currently. To do PGM properly it needs to be properly resourced with ongoing facilitation and development support and that it always looks different even though it follows some key principles because it is built around people and communities.”

“If we were doing Devolved Decision Making we would do an open application process, not call it a panel. We would go into shops, salons, cafes and think ‘what are the conditions that might be needed before they could bring their voice in the room’ Start with bringing people together for meals, do some creative workshops. Then talk about values and governance and when the healing has happened, only then, start to make decisions about things such as money for projects. The success of PGM is relationships and journeys not just the money moved. PGM of the future is less about how much money moved in x amount of time – we need a decolonised approach.”



What next?

It was not until December 2023 when a workshop was delivered exploring what PGM meant in Scarborough and Ryedale that the connection between these Scarborough and Ryedale based funders and project leaders, each with their different but similar approaches, was made. Each PGM activity had been working in isolation of one another despite the commonalities of place and thematic intention. Perhaps this can lead to some practical joining up of know-how as a consequence of their workshop should the appetite to learn together continue in 2024?

“To do PGM justice and support our communities to get the best from it we need to be able to share existing and future learning, improve practices and processes with some kind of shared ambition to make a difference to our communities. This must be linked to community and individual empowerment; creating the right environment for nurturing skills and confidence in order to build trusting relationships. So people feel empowered to trust in each another’s ability to make decisions in an agreed way that is elected by the participants themselves.”

Case study 3: Devolved Decision Making in Gateshead

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the 4 individuals interviewed for this case study. They shared different perspectives; two coming from different place-based funding organisations that provided collective resources for a community pot of money that could be decided upon by participants; a 'Bridgebuilder'³ with local lived experience and community development expertise to lead on a local inquiry and engagement approach; and a community interest company dedicated to transforming systems to work better for people and communities. This began as one of several projects that were part of Lankelly Chase's⁴ devolving decision-making' partnership with Gateshead.

Overview

'This is an ongoing project that started in 2021 that is about local residents and communities making decisions about what matters to them and building community strength and cohesion. It focuses on the Teams and Dunston community in Gateshead, who have been allocated an unrestricted pot of funding to spend as it wishes on initiatives that will build on the strengths of the community and help it address things that residents want to see change.'

Between June 2021 and February 2023 (21 months) operational costs were covered by The National Lottery Communities Fund whilst funding for the 'community pot' has been provided by Lankelly Chase (£115,000) and The Ballinger Charitable Trust (£15,000).

Aims at the start of the Project were:

- New projects will be chosen, created and actioned by people living in the area
- Test this new approach to tackling issues and opportunities
- Help the community become more resilient, in part as a response to COVID-19
- Strengthen relationships within and across Teams and Dunston communities.

- Build an increased sense of community power and agency by bringing local people into the decision making process around funding¹.

Whilst involving participatory grantmaking (PGM) principles in the Project's approach, it is more accurately described as a learning experiment in devolved decision making (DDM).

What started it all?

Lankelly Chase, an independent charitable foundation and network reported that their:

'PGM journey started in 2017/18. The Trustees felt unmoored from the grants they were deciding about and what the grants were doing so they devolved the decision making to the Lankelly Chase Staff Team; who similarly went on to feel that the decisions should be made by people closest to it.'

They decided to go on a journey of losing control and saw an opportunity to re-imagine outcomes and solutions in systems and communities.

Lankelly Chase were actively investing in numerous parts of the UK including Gateshead, and that had spawned relationships with the local authority and the Collective Impact Agency (CIA) who together were trying to find different ways

³ This role has been inspired by [Bridge Builder's Handbook - Relationships Project](#).

⁴ [Overview – Lankelly Chase](#)

‘with community and doing what’s right for the community.’

Together, there was agreement that people far removed from Gateshead shouldn’t be making decisions about the things affecting people’s lives in Gateshead. That was the common ground and basis for new conversations.

One interviewee explained that:

‘This was also partly driven by the local authority who were recognising that they were all working in silos, departments and asking the same people in the same communities ‘tell us your problem.’ It was felt that there should be a combined attempt to support individuals.’

This new approach – which would include ingredients of a community development worker, operational support and a community pot - was consolidated by the CIA who had built strong relationships with the National Lottery and in the North East including with the Ballinger Charitable Trust whose Board felt:

“It was an interesting experiment. And if the National Lottery were willing to invest in the community development aspect of the approach and Lankelly Chase would put up the major funding the Trust were OK to hold the Lottery money and add in £15,000 to the pot so long as ‘our’ bit was getting into the hands of the community and them deciding what to spend it on – not the overheads or community development costs of the staff at CIA doing that work up-front.”

There is no perfect way of distributing money to a community of need. CIA said, ‘why not experiment in Gateshead’ and we thought why not – especially with other investors on board. An interesting way to see if it could support a community to decide how to use money for itself.”

Subsequently a proposal was developed by CIA to The National Lottery who agreed

to cover the operational costs of the proposed Project between June 2021 and February 2023. This covered salaries², rent, professional fees, training, volunteer costs, equipment, marketing/advertising, general expenses and events. The main investment was in a skilled local person appointed as a community development worker by what is now called the Gateshead Community Bridgebuilder (GCB) team and initially placed in Teams Medical Practice. This role would be about building relationships and trust in the chosen community, gathering people’s experiences and laying the foundations for later bringing people into a decision making role for the ‘community pot.’

Why Teams and Dunston (Gateshead)?

A variety of explanations were provided.

“Teams and Dunston is an area of deprivation³; also divided by a main road with underpass structures, so physical things that divide the community. It’s a splintered community. There are people in difficult circumstances. There’s a half way home for people coming out of prison; there’s addiction-supported housing; it’s fragmented and divided as a community.”

“Teams and Dunston was selected because of highest suicide rates in men; generational unemployment; low literacy levels and specifically there are ‘lay lines on the map, unwritten, but there, where people from one part won’t talk to a person from another part.’ There are 35 languages in the area; refugees, asylum seekers. North of West Street wouldn’t talk to South of West Street.”

Furthermore:

“One of the people at the CIA lived there so we felt we knew the area well so at the Trust we thought it might work better because of that local insight. This gave the Trust’s Board enough reassurance to invest and experiment.

From the CIA’s perspective:

“We were always trying to make the community stronger – strengthen connections and relationships. This was an experiment – an exercise in learning about devolved decision making – the idea of sub-devolving money into a smaller locality than ‘Gateshead’ – into Teams and Dunston was novel and getting to the point where local people could decide what to do with money.”

What happened?

Community engagement

The Project team thought carefully about what matters to the community which included the community centre in the centre of Teams; and the pub which acted as a useful congregation point for the Bridgebuilder’s conversations.

“We knew we couldn’t rely on people coming to any building so our Bridgebuilder got to know everyone she could out and about.”

The Bridgebuilder was pivotal in sparking interesting conversations in the community to find out what people felt was strong, wrong or mattered. Not everyone was ready for that conversation though and more work had to be done to build trust across different parts of the community.

A huge amount of effort went in to engaging with ‘people services typically struggle to connect with – often the most hurt, angry, with addictions and least money with little by way of connection to services or ‘the local system.’

“In this community they are in plain sight – it’s not that they are hard to reach, it’s often that no one is listening.”

The conversations surfaced tensions, stigmas and unhelpful dynamics between those in power and those whose difference had not been sufficiently accounted for.

The Bridgebuilder learned about these attitudes and behaviours and spent time

meeting many of the different local groups where connections were already present or showed potential. This provided an understanding of the underlying trauma within such groups as well the things that bind them.

Despite being trusted, local and embedded before taking on the Bridgebuilder role, she nevertheless had to work hard to win trust in new parts of the community.

Slowly, through quiet (often 6 months or longer) trust-building the Bridgebuilder was ‘let in’ by the groups and the Project’s aims alongside the power of money provided a useful inroad. The Bridgebuilder later shared that local people in groups that eventually ‘let her in’ said they were more reassured that she was not “not one of them that wants a glass for her can of pop are they?” (i.e. an outsider).

Top tip from the Bridgebuilder

“Before bringing a panel together or spending money, with help from The Relationships Project, I was taught to put on my TRINOCULARS! That means:

- 1: Find out what’s already there in the community e.g. we found the ADHDDivas folk working with neurodiverse people.
- 2: Find the ‘sparkle’ in the community – could be a person, a place, something that creates a sense of belonging.
- 3: Acknowledge the grief and trauma in a community.

TADA Festival

The Bridgebuilder joined in February 2021. The first few months were about building those relationships and local connections, and this led to the Project

organising the TADA Festival in September that same year. This was an opportunity for different community members to have conversations about how people felt about Teams and Dunston. But importantly it was a day about creativity and fun too where people could enjoy music, food, art and even circus skills! It drew some, but not 'a full representation' of the community and the Project wanted to put even more effort into attracting and engaging with the diversity of the area.

The Four Horses

From the TADA festival and follow up events in October 2021, participants identified 4 things that really mattered:

- Mental health
- Community living room/s
- Children and young people
- '2k22s'.

This gave the Project some steer for how best to expend energy next. It invested in mental health first aid training for people who would later go on to make decisions about the community pot. This investment was a means of building group cohesion through bringing strangers together in a shared learning experience.

The 'living rooms' concept was all about creating time, space and the conditions for people to come together. The work with children and young people is still developing and the 2k22 refers to events held in 2022 where typically a dozen community members being supported to make decisions, including how to spend £2000 on the community.

These groups don't just make the decision though, they are also invited to help make that decision happen which is an interesting model. You have all 3 aspects being experimented – community

members generating ideas, deciding on funding and activating them rather than one role being separated from the other. This is forged from a belief that working on a shared project is a brilliant way of building good relationships.

"There was also a concern that creating a panel whose sole role is to decide who gets money and who doesn't often serves to exacerbate local tensions, rather than diminish them one of our funders challenged us early on to consider how we would avoid exacerbating existing community tensions."

The £2,000 was just a starting point. If the group generated further ideas more funding was available from the pot.

In March 2022, the first 2k22 was held, the first of many that year which enabled community members to come together and start to generate small scale ideas for funding, subsequently awarded. The TADA Next Steps Group also formed itself, meeting monthly, to help shape and steer the Project – a space where those involved are becoming 'organic' community leaders.

Decision making

The Project explained how it was interested in changing normal decision-making patterns as part of the 2k22s and so the Bridgebuilder sought to create time and space for people to think about:

- What decisions they felt able to make in their lives
- What decisions they felt unable to make.
- How to feel a sense of power and agency when typically denied these by current structure.

Then opportunities were created for ideas to be discussed asking questions like 'which ideas do you think have legs?' and 'which excite you?' and 'which would you like to do?'. For some participants, they had uncomfortable feelings of

accountability towards money when making decisions and there was almost a need to unlearn this for some people.

Learning about decision making

"When I was doing my community engagement activity, I came across women who had been victims of domestic violence. Their decision-making power had been taken away. They would be in a supermarket and couldn't remember what they liked to eat or drink or struggled with knowing what they were able to do on their own independently. So for these people, who we were trying to involve in the DDM approach, we had to go right the way back to decision making and ask 'who makes good decisions in your lives, who makes bad decisions in your lives, who is responsible for it?'

We put together a pack of stuff around their responses. Often, in fact 99% of the time people would say 'the Council' makes the decisions that affect their lives. Then they would say the Council isn't good at making good decisions. But when we asked 'what decisions would you like the Council to make better' the residents were not sure about that. There was a lot to unlearn and learn to equip people for decision making."

Interestingly, they decided they would not organise decision-making panels in the same way they – and other community members from a local walking group - had experienced in the Big Local Gateshead approach. This is because they had had a negative experience and worry in relation to spending money.

"We didn't create a single panel and invite people to bid. Instead, we built on pre-existing discrete community groups and the way they developed ideas together. If you have PGM with a panel it can become a bit gimmicky, Dragons Denny."

Members of the Project team felt this approach had proved to be successful saying:

"Different ideas are coming forward from the individual and increasingly connecting groups in the area that our Bridgebuilder has nurtured."

What ideas were generated?

A group of residents had facilitated time to look at what the problems were in their community and come up with solutions. Then they voted on what they really wanted to do. Examples included these activities that then led to each one being taken on by a sub-group

- A sensory library for community centres
- A community bench upgrade
- A community map of local groups, services and gatherings
- Fairy doors for the new fairy door trail
- A seaside trip for the walking group
- A pottery course for a support group called 'U, Me and ADHD'
- A trip for 'The Men's Group' and team building and social activity – a meal, a ghost tour and bowling together
- A defibrillator at the Teams Life Centre
- Mental health first aid training
- A 12-month skill swap where 12 women each take a lead on running sessions at the local community centre
- The setting up of a craft club
- Printing of 'You are not alone' signposting card to show people where to go for help, especially in mental health crisis
- A 'blues-busting event' developed by the 'dishwasher stress' group and the 'Cup of tea, a tab and a scone' group

3k23 events followed in 2023 with the opportunity for community members to decide on projects and activities up to £3,000 of spend. Ideas emerged around:

- Transport for elderly folk
- First aid and defibrillator training
- Deaf awareness.

By February 2023, the community had decided to spend c£9,000 of the available £130,000 community pot. There had also

been some underspend relating to the Project operational costs. This led to some useful reflections from the funding organisations.

The Project team said: *"We didn't want to simply replicate the existing funding decision-making structures, just with local people 'pretending' to be the funders. We tried to experiment with creating significantly different infrastructure.*

And from a funder's perspective: "It produced the results we expected as a Board as we wanted the community to decide how to spend the money available to them."

But for balance, and although the estimate of distributed money is slightly different from that described above:

"We gave out £75k to infrastructure to give out £20k. PGM – or DDM - is not the quickest way to get money into a community. In the time taken for the PGM approach in T&D we could have been funding the pre-existing charitable infrastructure. I don't think that PGM was a better way of giving grants to the community."

"It's not just about coming in to a community with a bag of money – that's extractive, colonial."

But the Project Team learned that the Project both was and wasn't about money. These and other learning lessons are considered next.

Learning

The Project has continued beyond the period supported by The National Lottery. And this is important because it gives clues as to the kind of legacy that is possible to create beyond an 18-21 month focused period of community development work, building trust and starting to encourage different people to make

decisions about small amounts of funding to spend in their community.

Firstly, the Bridgebuilder post has endured,. The Bridgebuilder has joined a team of 7 such Bridgebuilders in Gateshead meaning that the vital role of continuing to build connection, find sparkle and support idea generation has continued. That in turn has seen larger project ideas – such as one for over £20,000 to celebrate the deaf community – come forward because confidence in and across different community groups has grown and matured.

Helpfully, the community pot is retained to support such ideas. It didn't end at a specific point in time just because The Lottery funding period ended. The Charitable Trust has also seen that the benefits beyond the initial period can come in many forms:

"Individuals and small groups within the community themselves are starting to come forward and access small pot funding (without any barriers) to support their development work. The Bridge Builder is there to help encourage, but I realise now (2 ½ years on since the start of the experiment) that more of an 'eco-system' in that community has been fostered from that 18 months Lottery funded community development work by than we had given credit to."

The community pot itself now sits with the local community centre so that anyone wanting to trial, pilot and develop some activity can go and get a bit of that money from there without ever seeing or even knowing about the funders. This evolution prompted one of the funders to give this advice to other organisations thinking of a PGM approach:

"Be available for that time beyond 3 years. If you're lucky it may take 2 years to get the relationships going, but could be 3 years, 5 years or 10 years. As a funder don't expect PGM to work within your timescale, and also calling it PGM is

problematic; maybe better to call it devolved decision making."

Another of the funders said:

"If you're giving grants using this method it has to be UNCONDITIONAL. The originator must accept that the money goes where it goes. Also, the group of people that will be making decisions need a bonding, shared relationship experience. Good relationships are what remains and that these people are willing to find a way forward. This is facilitating a shared agreement on how to be together. There can't be judgement in the approach. We learnt that as a funder you have to be open, transparent and clear – about intentions and the money and the amount available. Paying people for their time has been very helpful too. Our approach has been smaller amounts of money first before making larger sums of money available, which we think has worked. Engaged, enfranchised groups will exist after we've gone and the money's gone."

The Project Team have learned so many things. Here are just a few of them:

1: The Bridge Builder role has been vital to engage with the community, and the Bridge Builder Team now presents new opportunities for devolving power further to an even more local level, with each one potentially developing their own satellite groups and budget.

2: The work and thinking of The Relationships Project inspired such a human, deep listening and gentle approach and putting on 'the trinoculars'.

3: The Bridge Builder can be a part of the process of local divides, barriers and tensions to diminish such as when people across the North and South of West Street came together for the Thursday 'clap for the NHS' during COVID; and building on the opportunity of that connection. The Bridgebuilder was getting well known and using social media the street would know she'd be walking down at 5pm to take

photos so everyone would be getting ready, looking their best in case they featured on the Facebook page!

4: There was some resistance from local councillors in the community when the project went out with an open invitation for residents to talk about what's strong and what's wrong. There was push-back from those in power to suggest it wasn't correct to suggest things were wrong. Some VCSEs felt that the money being invested in the PGM approach could have come to them instead.

5: That it is possible to build relationships though with such VCSEs who ultimately went on to become a part of the iteration of the project, agreeing to host Bridge Builders and work alongside one another rather than against each other.

"We're all interested in building our people up but there are so many barriers to power."

6: Whilst only a small proportion of the community pot had been decided upon within 21 months, the community engagement work had surfaced so much trauma and helped the Project team understand what was needed first to help people come together, trust one another and feel in a safe space to disagree with one another yet still move towards a role of making decisions together. That investment in relationship building amongst people in recovery, ex addicts, ex-army members, people experiencing domestic abuse or violence and many others in a position of adversity appears to generate a dividend around the 2-3 mark in a PGM Project lifetime where bigger ideas start to emerge.

The Project team reflected:

"It's not about how quickly you get money out the door. It's about what you're building in community. There is often not a direct correlation between the two."

This view might not always or originally be shared by funder organisations though, and having a Project that creates enough time and space to work out together what's important is a part of the learning process. Comparing PGM to other methods, funders interviewed, did initially discuss speed of getting money into a community as an important initial driver for their involvement and willingness to take a risk and experiment. The emphasis on this particular metric demonstrably diminished over the lifetime of the Project.

7: The infrastructure built by the Project didn't require anyone to submit an application. This was another way the Project deliberately differed from conventional funding decisions.

8: However, a problem encountered is some people's inherent mistrust in a community's decision making ability. 'Won't PGM just lead to people involved and deciding to spend money on themselves?' The Project team would say they have learned to 'let go.' If that's what the decision is then so be it. The things that got funded were ways of building binds and connection without which the growth in each individual would not be such that they would likely be ready or want to make bigger decisions down the line about others in their community. There was a need to feel some agency and power as part of the participation experience.

"I think this part is so important. It's not about what the money gets spent on - that's missing the point. It's about the relationships, power, and agency that can be built if you do all this in a fundamentally different way."

The Project team feel strongly that taking this intentional approach in disadvantaged communities enables the development of an alternative infrastructure or ecosystem.

9: Creating the conditions for people to actually feel good themselves to be able to work together, bond and make decisions

for others was also key so investment in things like MHFA training was an essential capacity building element required before you can expect people with lived experience / backgrounds described to make decisions of the nature anticipated.

10: There is benefit in, and ways of reaching, grassroots, informal and unconstituted groups as they don't always find it easy to apply for funding or the funder eligibility criteria exclude them. The Social Change Nest⁴ is recommended.

11: For community development there is a sense that people need to know money is in place first before they collect ideas otherwise they fear they will be let down. If they know they've got a bit of money they are more likely to sustain their engagement."

11: Success metrics for DDM

"This was never about how we most effectively get money into the hands of community members. This was about building a sense of power and agency in local communities that historically struggle with systemic disempowerment. The money is merely a tool for doing so. The right 'success' question should be: 'How much power and agency did we build?' not 'What was our infrastructure-to-distribution ratio?'"

"PGM is a bit broken. There are bright and shiny blue pottery pieces, the pieces don't fit in with everyone perfectly, we are trying, we are starting, getting pieces that are broken and making something of them, is it good enough? No but it's a great start."

The future?



- There are now 10 people in the Bridgebuilder team comprising 7 Bridgebuilders and 3 Coordinators. They are all working with marginalised communities including refugees, asylum seekers and others performing a common brokerage role.
- Some of the groups engaged in Teams & Dunston Project are now looking to run their own 2k events which presents opportunities for devolving power and money to that most local level.
- Ideas can continue to be supported by accessing the community pot held by the community centre.
- Participatory investment approaches are inspiring the Project Team, based on similar work coming out of Barking and Dagenham.

The belief remains very strong amongst all involved that DDM – including PGM – is the right thing to do with a community.

“Over the last 30 years citizens have become service users or customers to local authorities and others which implies a set of power dynamics – and it’s patriarchal, people have been ‘done to’ for a long time. PGM can give a spark of agency for people who have felt on the margins and passive about how their area has changed – gives them a resource bubble.”

“Our experience has been about focusing on disadvantaged communities, supporting people in those communities to learn and encouraging them to bring ideas

on what to spend money on. Participation teaches everyone that people are worthwhile, and they matter. Who makes the decisions is really important.”

“PGM is confirmation and validation of the fact that people are resourceful and have strengths and that relationships should lead to more than outcomes; and that when people come together they can scratch a collective itch”

Top tips

1: Start slow and let it grow. The bridge Builder reflects: *“I’m 3 years in and only just starting to develop the level of trust needed for something like PGM as part of DDM to work.”*

2: Look after yourselves as a Project team.

“We paid for 1-2-1 counselling not in response to feeling ill or burnt out but as a preventative measure done in advance – because the community work can be hard gathering those stories.”

3: Create space to meet, provide food, hot drinks, biscuits, free accessible transport, childcare, support during day and evening, language/interpreters – all the conditions for conversations that are inclusive for the people you’re trying to put at the heart of the decision making for the future.

Removing all those practical barriers to get involved.

4: Be prepared to do something differently.

¹ Source: Project End Report to The National Lottery, February 2023

² The project team comprised three people with operational support from two people at the CIA. The guiding body was the Gateshead Community Bridgebuilders team (formerly the Gateshead Coordination Team – a group of individuals interested in system change across Gateshead who have devolved decision making power over Lankelly Chase funds for the town. This group used Lankelly Chase funds to seed this Project and continue it after The National Lottery Community Funding period ended in February 2023. This Group appointed the Community Development Worker and assigned the CIA as the stewards of TNCL funding.

³ T&D ward is located in Inner West Gateshead with a population of 9,114. See www.gateshead.gov.uk/imd.

⁴ [The Social Change Nest – The Social Change Agency](#)