Participatory Grant Making(PGM) Learning Together Workshop

12th December 2023

Experiences and Opinions

Picture Time!

Please pick a picture that describes how you feel about Participatory Grant Making

Why did you pick your picture – what associations did you make with your experience or opinion of PGM?
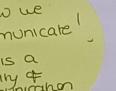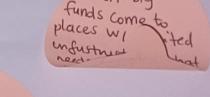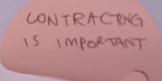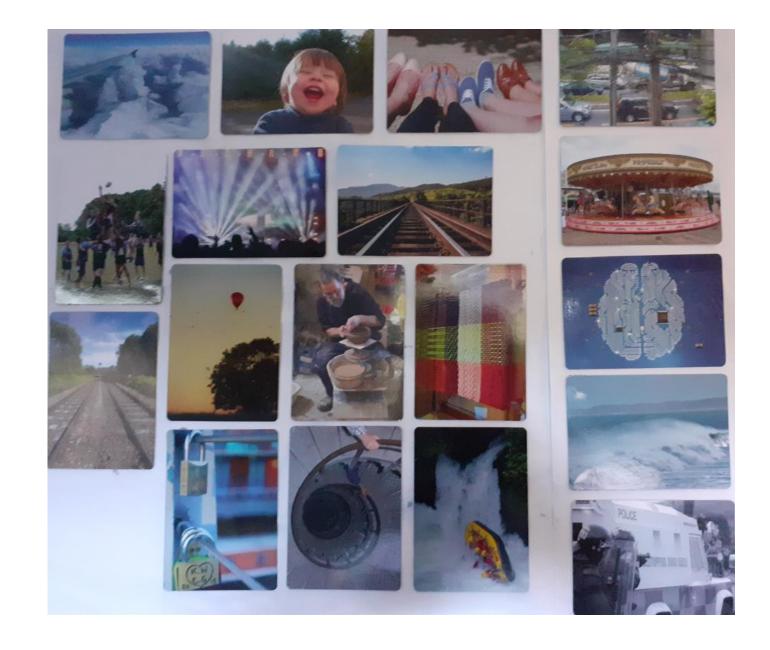
"You have got to have fun, there needs to be an element of joy."

"We are on the right track."

"I want everyone to work together on PGM."

"From the outside looking in, PGM can be a mess. It doesn't have to be pretty – lots of different ideas, different people."

"Diverse people coming together, creating ideas and going out into communities to support individuals.'

"The hot air balloon on cables, highlights me letting go of the funding strings."

"People need nurturing through PGM."

"PGM is a liberation from authority and hierarchy."

"PGM terrifies me sometimes, but it is also beautiful. There's moments of calm and moments it feels the boat is going under and at the end of it a bond is made for life. Collaboration not competing."

Why did you pick your picture – what associations did you make with your experience or opinion of PGM?

"PGM is imperfect. It sometimes feels old and clunky rather than the comparison of fast fashion, it can be chaotic and messy."

"PGM makes me feel happy and it changed my life."

"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."

"It's about celebrating having a good time and enjoying what we are doing."

"Funding is often a scrum, a bun fight, but PGM is a fair game actually. Winners come out with the funds at the end of the day."

"PGM – there is so much to it, you can delve into it. Get lost in ideas that have been done."

"We're on a journey of getting people involved in decision making. PGM is a foot in the door for people to get involved."

Past experiences and opinions of PGM 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.

"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 any more."

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. £100,000 of £150,000 pot has been allocated.

"It is good that residents are involved in decision making but it might be that the residents are ones who have strong opinions and possibly quite fixed."

Thoughts

"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."

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

Past experiences and opinions of PGM
Big Local Barrowcliff

Big Local in Scarborough

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

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

Grant making: Decisions are run by a panel with residents in the majority. There is a partnership with up to 15 residents involved in decision making about how money on projects is spent. No projects are means tested, anyone can take part e.g. a Free School Meal project in lockdown saw every child (not just those eligible for FSM) getting £3 vouchers in the area. This was decided by Big Local.

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."

Thoughts and questions

"How do people have control of the money?"

How is control passed over?"

'Response: "We do a lot of funding that is open to anyone. We have a panel of residents with the majority of residents making decisions."'

"It took 3 attempts to get the Big Local Barrowcliff partnership right."

"Learning from failure is almost as important as succeeding."

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

Past experiences and opinions of PGM
York Deciding Together

York Deciding Together (YDT) was a year long PGM activity funded by Lankelly Chase. It was an intentional effort to move away from traditional grant making and focused on system change. It came c2 years after the formation of the Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Network in the City.

"The reason we did PGM was knowing that solutions to inequalities and system breakdown are with people closest to suffering the consequences of it."

Guidance July 2021: 'Over the coming months, £240,000 will be allocated to help York better respond to people facing multiple issues including homelessness, addiction & recovery, mental health & wellbeing, poverty & offending by exploring and improving the systems that perpetuate multiple disadvantages in York.'

Different people started to form connections and make decisions together. Participating citizens said it was very inclusive. There was choice – being on a large, medium or small panel – and it was created together.

Legacy?

Will this experience help answer the question 'how do you fund system change?'

"3 homeless charities were applying for grants and instead came together somehow and how they've got this whole collaborative voluntary sector working together as a result of YDT and the MCN enablement team."
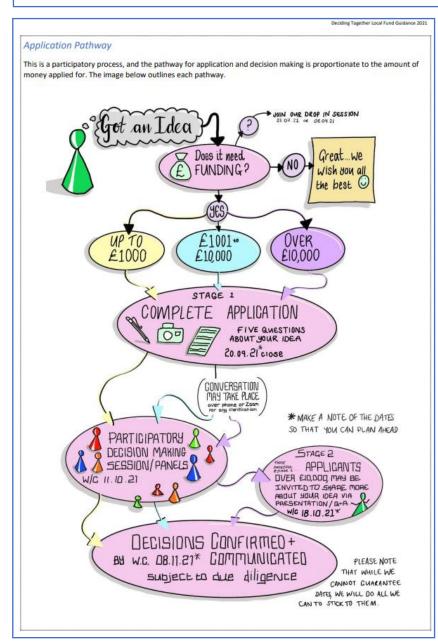
Thoughts and questions

"Who decides who participates?"

"How do you fund system change work – involving people impacted by the system?"

"Remove 80% of rich middle-class people and put in diverse people. Colour, disabled people, queer people – in that container – then the money starts to go to those people."

"I would defy anyone to say YDT didn't go out of its way to include."

The York Deciding Together Grant Application Pathway

Deciding Together Local Fund Guidance 2021

Application Pathway

This is a participatory process, and the pathway for application and decision making is proportionate to the amount of money applied for. The image below outlines each pathway.

Useful links and further information

Systems reading

Ali Spaul's blog explores "stepping into Systems Change work": https://alispaul148.com/blog/

Lankelly Chase Foundation's system behaviours document: A look in the mirror? Can the "System Behaviours" be a useful mechanism to reflect on the health of a system? – Lankelly Chase

York Multiple Complex Needs Network https://www.yorkmcn.org/systems

Find out more about some of the partners working together on this fund:

Two Ridings, managed this fund and grant making locally

Lankelly Chase, funded the work: Lankelly Chase Art of Hosting, facilitated the participatory process: Art of Hosting

Past experiences and opinions of PGM
Mental Health and Wellbeing Thematic PGM

Thematic (mental health) PGM

Scarborough in particular appears to be the location where the most examples of PGM are currently found in North Yorkshire. Moreover, the theme of mental health and wellbeing appear to bind the different approaches we learned about.

- There have been panels involving residents to help make decisions about which projects should get funding via the Community Mental Health Transformation activity (in Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale).

- 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).

- And there are local panels involving residents making decisions about small grants funding in Scarborough via the National Lottery funded SEEChange Project.

Until this learning together workshop, these different approaches and connections had not been made; each PGM activity is 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?

In the Teams and Dunston DDM approach, one of the first investments made was mental health first aid training for interested residents who would later in the process be expected to come together in a confident way to make decisions about community grants, some of which might be related to health and wellbeing.

Comments from the Group as we learned more about each approach

"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. "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.

Thoughts

*"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."*

Experience of a young person involved in a national decision making panel to distribute mental health funding

"My experience was one of a small group of young people aged 18-24 recruited to be on a national panel for a mental health human rights charity with a focus on trying to make sure young people knew their rights. The process was involved. We met in London, had regular meetings and were encouraged to make decisions on 'everything' – priorities, what do we need, want, what have we heard from other young people. There was money involved and we were asked to decide what percentage of available funding went into different areas.

We decided to create a whole platform to educate young people; we recruited a load of other young people and trained them up as rights advocates. We went into other contexts, did a manifesto. Adults from the charity were there but their role was only to hire the venue not influence our thinking. They gave us the sticky notes and pens and just enabled us to come together and do the thinking. It's different to other experiences I have seen in my professional work at a Council where you might have some people with lived experience on a decision-making panel. The difference is that you make friendships through the much more involved process that was entailed."

Past experiences and opinions of PGM
Mental Health and Wellbeing Thematic PGM

SeeCHANGE Scarborough

SeeCHANGE is all about reducing inequalities and improving wellbeing in Scarborough. It's a £500k, 3-year National Lottery funded Project. It has a leadership team comprising NYC, NHS, Scarborough Business ambassadors and VCSE leadership as well as community engagement, small grants to grassroots groups (£30k in total for these).

There has been one round of funding (May 2023) for projects up to £1,500. When community organisations expressed interest the SeeCHANGE community Engagement officer (Bex) made contact with the prospective applicant to talk through their idea, make suggestions and support with the completion of the form as needed. The forms were shared with the panel members. A panel was then held and applicants accompanied by Bex the Community Engagement officer presented their idea.

After their presentations the panel would make comments and decide to fund or not. If there were issues Bex would feedback. If the applicant was successful but we felt there could be added value Bex 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 then invited to meet up for a cheque ceremony, 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. Such as not to call it a panel since that sounds to formal and scary (feedback from two applicants).

Thoughts and 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!"

"I go to the community hubs to connect with people and tell them what's available." (SeeCHANGE community engagement role)

"Through the SeeCHANGE panel Bex sat with every group through the process. We got together afterwards and asked the groups how they felt, what shared experiences they had."

"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 (For example, Ding Dong Bells Social Group) Linked geographically, by Beyond Housing accommodation. (Seamer)"

"A group of residents were feeling isolated and very lonely and have lived here for years. The initial engagement came from a Social Prescriber trying to get a community to come together. Ding dong bell. We have a social group!" What's the common denominator – they live in Seamer, they have association with Beyond Housing and there was a desire to focus more on isolation and the wellbeing of people here."

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."

Past experiences and opinions of PGM Devolved Decision Making in Gateshead

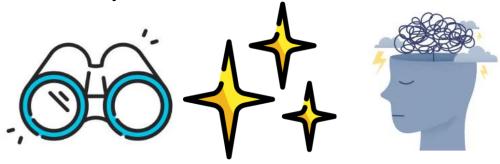## Place-based PGM in Teams and Dunston with reference to Big Local Gateshead

"It's a really tricky area – poverty, high cancer rates in women. The chances of getting work were harder and harder. I ended up on Universal Credit (and whilst on that I had been working with |Big Local in Gateshead which wasn't wonderful), and using the food bank in the area. I couldn't find work so started volunteering with mutual aid out of lockdown.

I realised I could talk to folk and was approached by Lankelly Chase to run an inquiry in Teams & Dunston to look at devolved decision making. I live there and talk to anyone and everyone."

Trinoculars

"Before bringing a panel together or spending money with help from The Relationships Project I was taught to put on my TRINOCULARS!"

1: Find out what's already there in the community e.g. we found the ADHDivas 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

Past experiences and opinions of PGM Devolved Decision Making in Gateshead

Legacy?

"Big Local wasn't brilliant. It was a panel of people. We were quizzed and quizzed about our application to do a creative project. We got the grant ,but the process wasn't wonderful. So for the Teams & Dunston 'inquiry' I wanted to ensure when I work with people in my local community that negative experience doesn't happen to other community folk."

Thoughts

"I think we need to make it much easier for individuals to get involved. Some people want to get together but there are so many formalities."

"We need to understand the traumas and neglect in areas. Everyone is looking at the same issue but through different lenses."

Themes emerging from our conversation

We didn't always agree.

Our opinions and experiences differed.

- **Voice**
- **Decision making**
- **Accountability**
- **Capacity building**
- **Power**
- **Learning**

Voice

Foundation perspectives

"We're trying to work out the best way to hear voices and get people involved" "For over 100 years the same people get levelled up in society. You often end up with the loudest voices and that doesn't get you closer to issues such as what is being done on anti-racism or mental health."

"Invariably I see the same faces in the same room time and again so how do you get out to other voices and make it a participatory experience?"

"How do we get to those next level of people who don't necessarily come banging on the doors?"

PGM facilitator and citizen perspectives

"PGM can help reach the seldom heard hard to reach voices."

"There's a sort of assumption that their voice – those isn't heard if they don't turn up, but it's not always the case. I have people say to me I've got a strong point but I can't speak because of anxiety or depression, but will you speak for me? We can act as intermediaries."

"I'm here and talk for people I feel don't have a voice."

"Kids vaping in Barrowcliff are never going to get to the table so other adults try to represent them."

"And we talk about the unheard minority but you've got enough problems with those who do come forward!" (Transforming Community Mental Health decision making participant)

"The greater the diversity of platforms for communication in this process the better if you're hoping to engage with and build trust with stigmatised, marginalised communities."

Decision making

Foundation and local authority perspectives

"You're trying to encourage ways in which a community is represented and making their grants for you as a funder."

"We went for a cross-sector panel including people with lived experience on the panel."

"Big Local Barrowcliff is a partnership with up to 15 residents."

"We've tried in the past using participatory budgeting to move decision making power from Councillors over to local people through an event where voting takes place."

"For our participatory cost of living approach we use the language 'how we come together'"

"You want different people involved in decision making, but tend to find the same people, hear the same voices, in the same room. Where do we put the adverts? How do we get the facilitation of PGM right?"

"The alternative to PGM, is a group of trustees / executives from a foundation who make all the decisions about how money is spent and the same people 'level up' in society."

PGM facilitator and citizen perspectives

"In the area of mental health, and my own experience in a charity [ex Chair] our Trustees were from the membership which were mostly mental health service users, including patients and carers and min 51% of Trustees have got lived experience – voted for by the membership. Ultimately, decisions were being taken by the end users. So, in mental health some people have to receive services by the appropriate Section they committed to (so in these cases things are done to and for users), but voluntary patients can choose what they do – which means there's the dynamic of 'with', and 'by' patients. We've tried to use this in our Mental Health Transformation activity."

Decision making
PGM facilitator and citizen perspectives

"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."

"I prefer the language 'decision making space' to panel as the word panel boxes you in. It's more about 'how we show up to the space' from our experience in York Deciding Together. The process for YDT was very slow. That formation piece. The facilitation held the space well. By the time the people were making decisions together they had gone through time to get to know each other. A lot of time and effort."

(NB the word panel was used in the promotional collateral for YDT and almost every other example given at the learning workshop. The above comment is a reflection over time about the limitation of this descriptive word)

"For some individuals, decision and power has been taken away. Decision making skills are a big thing. When working with someone that might have had power taken from them, ask – who last made a decision for them – and if it was a good decision?"

Accountability

Foundation and local authority perspectives

"Lankelly Chase were in fact super risk averse with the money. Our Foundation's Grants Team were brought in to deal with the adminny side for our accountability to the Charity Commission. There needs to be that documentation."(referring to the York Deciding Together experience)

"Whilst it's great to be open and inclusive there has to be a critique of what we need and what we don't need. The Foundation needs to know we're following grant making policy and due diligence."
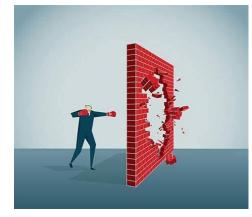
"Yeah, I've got a policy here, but we also need to be asking 'how can I work within it, change the flow so we're not creating barriers for people to get involved."

PGM facilitator and citizen perspectives

"There is a level of accountability if handing out money. Especially if it's public money you're dealing with you need some sort of trail. Great if Lankelly Chase comes along with £1 million and says 'spend how you want', brilliant!"

"There is accountability in PGM – the auditing we did as part of York Deciding Together and to the funders."

"You can seek to stretch the boundaries though with something like PGM."

Capacity building

Foundation and local authority perspectives

Appeared to align around the ideal that PGM could support their ambitions for building community capacity and creating community leadership. Their intentions are positive and enabling.

"The loudest voices might still be the ones making representations as a funder we want to reach into communities and utilise leaders to find other leaders."

"Even with PGM you naturally get people coming forward who are leaders."

PGM facilitator and citizen perspectives

These people would not necessarily focus on the ambitions of capacity building and community leadership as they are taking part in PGM or DDM for their own reasons.

The reasons are more likely due to feeling there is an opportunity for personal growth, curiosity (something to see / try / find out more about), and / or out of a sense of local / social injustice and desire to create change around something they care about or experience/d in their life.

Power
Foundation and local authority perspectives

"How do we get the power to people, to build people up to make grants, to represent their communities with confidence?"

"SEEChange's leadership team is trying to cede power to the community it serves. Bex will just go and sit in the coffee shop and talk with people. We had our panel and it was a good process sat beside each of the people coming forward with their ideas. Then we've got an event for people who got the money, coffee and cake, and we'll be asking how they felt honestly about the process and what they would like to do differently."

"One of the pitfalls of PGM is that you are presented with a load of models, and they all lead inevitably to a panel of some sort. All you're really doing is replicating your funding methodology to get other people to do it. Yes it's 'P' (participatory) and yes it's 'GM' (Grant Making), but it's not PGM! The idea of pulling a panel together is perhaps then the wrong mentality?"

"For our BAME community PGM in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland we used Phoenix Way as they are going to know much more about their communities than we do. They took the approach of having a panel, a decision making group. In the last conversation someone said to me that 'we've just realised we're just creating the same power process that we're trying to get away from. It's been incredibly important for them to arrive at this point of realising they are replicating the power system."

"How can we build on the models? PGM is the starting point."

Power
Foundation and local authority perspectives

"Is PGM building the same broken system with a different group of people? **You cannot dismantle the master's house with the master's tools**. *If you use the same tools from the same institutions that have oppressed us what changes? We need to start building a new system. PGM is the best thing we can do but I don't think PGM is the starting point. We want to ditch the master's tools and those experiencing structural anti racism (for example) need to whittle their own. We're hosting an event at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in York as I think we need to bring people together with lived experience but NOT throw them into the work of the project; instead, heal them. We use creative practice as a tool for healing and storytelling.*

And if we were doing Devolved Decision Making we would do an open application process, not call it a panel. Rather 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."

Power
PGM facilitator and citizen perspectives

One issue raised was lack of payment for involvement. Those with lived experience often volunteer their time and are not being paid to be involved in decision making activities unlike officers or council workers for example, foundations, whose job it is to be there. It means that poorer people cannot be involved in an equitable way.

"We need to get to a lower position though with the grants. £2,000 seem so much accountability, what if it all goes wrong and it takes the magic out of it [PGM]). We need to get lower than £500 without the need for feedback. We can't seem to get to that tiny amount because of the mechanisms – need to smash that apart."

"What's needed is a bit of trust, in fact radical trust for PGM to work."

"A panel feels very us and them, whereas it needs to be 'we' . The process of the formation (example CMHT work) was slow but you go through the process of getting together and knowing each other. Which was a really important process to go on."

"Public money needs funding. If you're going to do PGM, you need to lose control a little bit."

"I think we need to make it much easier for individuals to get involved. Some people want to get together but there are so many formalities."

Examples of solutions

'Adventure Cards' were mentioned where £500 are preloaded to a card for a participant. "Great idea, but there are too many!"

£250 of vouchers per person were used as a means of remuneration for participants in the York Deciding Together approach.

Social Change Nest has been mentioned throughout the feasibility study.

The Social Change Nest – The Social Change Agency

- Through our fiscal hosting we offer secure and transparent money and grant management for foundations, groups, movements and networks in the UK and abroad.

- For funders and philanthropists we provide a grant distribution service, making it easier to support small groups by acting as a link between the two, and taking on the financial admin.

- To help new movements hit the ground running, we provide start-up support, and work with early stage organisations to strengthen their governance and infrastructure. We have a hub of resources for anyone trying to create change.

- Because we specialise in working with unincorporated groups, we have a thorough approach to risk, due diligence and compliance. So you couldn't be in better hands.

Payment for Involvement Policy (Brand New)

7th February 2024 (2-4pm). York MCN will be sharing and finalising all the work they have been doing in 2023 on their Payment for Involvement policy.

Learning
Learn, fail, iterate, keep changing – remove barriers, strive to be as inclusive as possible, take the time…

"Failure is a real option – we shouldn't always look to succeed."

"Making mistakes is great."

"Took 3 attempts to get the Big Local Barrowcliff partnership right."

"PGM…the 1st time is going to be rubbish, 2nd time also rubbish but you're learning and building capacity, changing the design, being iterative."

"Most grant making uses an application form which is a barrier for people. We've got to get away from that as the main mechanism, however, people only ever use the application form even if you offer other options! It's important not to create systemic barriers."

"Application processes are a barrier in themselves. Got to get away from this being the only or default way of getting involved."

"The whole process was so inclusive (YDT)"

"The group….came from a social prescriber trying to get a community to come together."

"The YDT process was very slow, that formation and facilitation that held the space well. By the time the people were making decisions together they had gone through time to get to know each other – time and effort."

"I've got to justify to my (Foundation's) Board why PGM takes so long, to give enough time to run with it."

"There is a real importance in going back to the funders and saying 'just give it time'. We are changing seeds of cress to trees through PGM."

Learning
Question whether the process is just replicating current power systems, use creativity and measure the relationships and journeys not just the money moved

"For our PGM programme we tried to use a facilitator to bring out other local leaders but ended up with a panel of louder people and they weren't suggesting other people. We learned first that the professional facilitator role isn't always necessary [if you've got the skills within the Foundation] in fact they can bring their own bias too. Second, the people on the panel, whilst it wasn't brilliant, they do have lived experience and are working for organisations and they can reach into other organisations themselves for the future e.g. into the youth community. Perhaps that's how the approach will evolve."

"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."

"We have funded some fantastic projects."

"I'm a poet and I had an artist friend. We wanted something nice and special for local people to call their own so we created cards with a poem – they were distributed to cheer somebody's day up."

"It has taken a long time, so much so that I have had to justify to the board often as to why this is the case."

"The success of PGM is relationships and journeys not just the money moved."

"It's not easy to tap into people's voice who have felt a deficit, and yes we have to audit things, but can we make metrics more appropriate / suitable. We are creating a space with the best of intentions."

"Take it slow, let it grow."

PGM takes longer than traditional, alternative community grant making approaches. It is likely more expensive too and requires different skillsets amongst all participants.

It is time to let go

Foundation staff - who appeared to have the most 'professional' experience of PGM at the workshop - stressed the importance of being clear that they had to release power and resources when embarking on a new way of involving people with lived experience in grant making.

If an organisation is unable to let go in this way, it is unlikely that they are the right fit for something like PGM.

Personal journeys – shared to build relationships before making decisions

So much of the insight shared at the PGM workshop was about the importance of the personal journeys of residents who decided to get involved in some form of decision-making activity.

If you were making a positive case for PGM, what would you say or want someone else to consider or notice?

"PGM can provide financial, economic mobilisation of previously marginalised individuals."

"Equity – meet people as individuals – empowerment of voice – let's not create another mechanism to make people feel less, because they do not want to participate in spaces that create hierarchy."

"Giving people a chance to do it, can create positive change."

"PGM is the start of democracy."

"PGM is not the end!"

"Keep the process simple and accessible to all."

"PGM can feel 'life changing' to individuals with lived experience being involved in decision making processes."

"Through PGM everyone has a chance to be included."

"With desire to devolve power, better things will happen."

"PGM promotes a change of power balance."

"The success of PGM is in relationships and connections."

"There is a link between inequalities and PGM being able to include more voices seldom heard."

"Space – practical and intellectual. What spaces are we using? Voice? Spoken? Does everyone want to speak – build confidence on if that is the expected trajectory!"

If you were offering any caution around the case for PGM what would you say, want someone to consider or notice?

"Voice of marginalised group is not there to access yet in detail."

"Are 'panels' just another form of exclusivity?"

"Making decisions about money is hard for us all."

"Is PGM holding the bias of the old system?"

"Accessibility issues." Financial, practical, timings, meeting spaces, the language we use. Many people use symbolisms, as a form of communication, ritual also, can we diversify methodologies? Payment for involvement? Diversify individuals involved / methodologies?

"Contracting is important."

"PGM is just one of many tools."

"There are elements of Victorian philanthropy, deserving poor, real power dynamic, bias?"

"We need to see more / greater articulation of the ethos of PGM."

The Future?

Participants shared information about plans they knew about for developing DDM or PGM activity from 2024 onwards either at the workshop or soon afterwards.

The question was also asked by one of the participants with lived experience 'when is our next meeting?'

- **Two Ridings Foundation** confirmed that they will be involved in a range of PGM activity in Scarborough (CYP mental health) and in support of the evolution of 'York Together'. Thrive Lab are commissioned to support their PGM activity whether place-based or thematic in nature. The Foundation also recently invited people from York to be a part of a "participatory panel" which makes decisions on how £100,000 of Cost-of-Living crisis funds are awarded (late 2023).

- The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** confirmed that they will be active in taking forward PGM approaches in future in some cases collaboratively with the Two Ridings Foundation (above) – more details will be available in the final feasibility study report.

- **Teams and Dunston DDM** activity using National Lottery, Lankelly Chase and Ballinger Trust funding has led to the evolution of 7 Bridge Builder (community development) posts in Gateshead, evolving further where local VCSEs are their host employer. This network of VCSEs has changed language and now refer to themselves as Keystone organisations (inspired by The Relationships Project). The community pot of c£100k is still available and new, larger community-based project applications and ideas are coming through. The aim is for each Bridge Builder to have their own local satellite groups with a dedicated devolved budget.

- The **PGM pilots in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland** will continue in 2024 and be evaluated by Community Foundation Tyne and Wear using agreed metrics of success.

The Future?

Participants shared information about plans they knew about for developing DDM or PGM activity from 2024 onwards either at the workshop or soon afterwards.

"It's about shifting the power from those who typically hold the money and make the decisions, to those who have actually experienced it." Celia Mckeon, CEO of Two Ridings Foundation

- **SeeCHANGE** will be continuing to explore how they can use key elements of PGM in order to get as much grassroots community involvement in spending their £30,000 fund on activities and ideas that reduce health inequalities within Scarborough.

- **Eastfield PACT 'Cash for Causes'** continues to make decisions to award community grants that align with funding criteria. Residents are in the majority on the decision-making panel and there is c£50k remaining in the pot for allocation.

- The legacy of **Big Local (in Barrowcliff)** is likely to be something called 'Active Communities Together' but it is unclear yet what this might mean in terms of proactive DDM / PGM activity. More local insight would be welcome to ensure this development is understood and nurtured.

- **Selby Big Local** is transitioning to a legacy structure called Our Space Selby CIO which will be opening and running the community building bought by Selby Big Local, and engaging residents in that process to ensure the building is theirs. It is not obvious how much PGM activity will happen yet whilst these arrangements take effect.

- **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 community mental health commissioning.

The time flew too quickly, but there is a strong appetite to ask more questions of each other and discover the very different ways we all appear to approach PGM.

We are interested, and sometimes differ, in our opinions about PGM philosophy, ambition and aspiration, its practice, its process(es), its language (lots on this!), its merits, drawbacks and its development for the future.

We want to know more about the way in which people come together, how they decide to decide together and make community grant awards. But we're also clear that PGM is much more than the awards themselves. It seems to be a tool, alongside other approaches, for achieving something much wider and socially just.

We seem to agree that PGM is more participatory than traditional community grantmaking but does it, or could it, shift power?

We're not certain yet….

More questions as participants were sharing their experiences and opinions.

- What is SeeCHANGE?

- How can poetry and the arts play a role in PGM? *Bringing in creative practice to heal and reflect our stories*

- Is there a significant difference between DDM (Devolved Decision Making) and PGM? What is stronger? What is more realistic?

- How do we create the right conditions for other people to join?

- It'd be good to hear about some of the failures and how organisations might have endured challenge, and come out the other end?

- 'Trifocals' what are these? (mentioned by Christine)

- Would like to know what PGM models have been used?

- 'York Deciding Together' was mentioned, some would like to know more about this project.

- Would be nice to hear about MCN (Multiple Complex Needs *network in York*) cultural values.

- When big funds come to places with limited infrastructure, what needs to be paired with the funding? A PGM 'package'?

- What could be the role of social prescribers in recruiting participants for PGM?

- How do we communicate? There is a diversity of communication tools, do we use them?

Reflections from Alan after the workshop

The main area of interest amongst the group is around inclusivity and how to engage residents as widely as possible when doing DDM (Devolved Decision Making) or PGM (Participatory Grant Making) or PDM (Participatory Decision Making). There appears to be a common assumption that PGM is effective when it is associated with system change, reaching more marginalised communities and / or those people who are adversely affected by the current system.

Practical insights about payment for involvement approaches are of interest to the group – cash, preloaded cards, vouchers, something else? York MCN's presentation on the 7th of February 2024 may be instructive in this regard as their work to finalise a policy is due to be finalised.

Some group members want to demonstrate the difference that PGM does or could make in fresh non-bureaucratic ways – different types of 'relevant' metrics?

There wasn't any compelling evidence (yet) that PGM in of itself or as an approach has shifted power, rather that PGM could be part of a toolkit of approaches to devolve something – power, resource, assets, decision making.

Reflections from Alan after the workshop

The group felt that PGM was the right way forward and the right thing to do because it's more participatory than alternative community grant making, and for some, it goes further to the core of a need to disrupt the current oppressive system and that a new system of power is required. PGM would support, but not be the enabling tool to create such power shifts. Advocates of PGM say it has to be certain that it is in no way EXTRACTIVE in its approach.

For those who have been involved in DDM / PGM / PDM their experience has been mostly positive with deeper connections and trust built through the process of preparing to make decisions together. That 'support package' to give sufficient time and space for trust to be built, for personal journeys to be shared with others seems at least as important, if not more important than the process of awarding community grants. The legacy 'gamble' for PGM compared to alternative ways of getting money into communities for things that matter to local people is that the relationships formed during the process endure in a meaningful way beyond the time when the money runs out. Whether this is the same thing as 'capacity building' is a point of divergent opinion in the workshop group, deserving more thought.

The workshop threw up so many questions that merit further time to explore. There is interest in further meetings such as the one hosted as part of this feasibility study. Perhaps a community of practice approach might work with an initial focus of at very least convening time and space for the current and planned PGM approaches in Scarborough and down the Coast?

Thank you to all who were able to come to the workshop or wanted to but couldn't quite make it on the day….**perhaps this is the start of a community of practice?**

In the room we had people with lived experience of PGM, applicants for community grants, community development workers / 'bridge builders' and people who have worked on the ground to facilitate PGM in places, and investors.

We had examples between us of place based PGM and thematic PGM where it has been aimed at a particular issue such as mental health / and / or communities of interest. **It was fascinating but we just scratched the surface!**

1. Alan Graver
2. Ali Spaul
3. Amber Graver
4. Astrid Hanlon
5. Bill Chatt
6. Christine Frazer
7. Judith Webster
8. Karen Atkinson
9. Kate McLaven

10. Keith Marsden
11. Kerry Lee
12. Lisa Holden
13. Matthew Joseph
14. Nils Stronach
15. Rebecca Blakey
16. Sarah Norman
17. Thomas Waring
18. Trevor Mahon

Apologies were sent by these people who have experience of, and express interest in, the PGM topic and they would have no doubt added even more insight to our workshop. We shall keep in touch with them of course…

- Ewan Muirhead
- Gemma Sciré
- Michelle Smith
- Paddy Chandler
- Tom Jenkinson

Feels like we're just getting started together!

- We made connections and have agreed to share emails to stay in touch.

- Some have agreed to visit one another in-person to learn from each other's practice – a trip to see Christine in Teams & Dunston in Gateshead was mentioned over lunchtime….

- We have so many more questions for each other. We may decide to convene again in 2024?

- These slides along with other products have been shared with participants by Alan as a way of thanking people for their amazing contributions.