Big Lottery Fund – written evidence (CCE0246)

Introduction

This paper outlines the Big Lottery Fund's experience of citizenship and civic engagement as a grant-maker and how we view our role in promoting and supporting it. We have also outlined what the Big Lottery Fund sees as the key challenges to citizenship and civic engagement at the moment, and the Fund’s recommendations for addressing these. While all sectors, from government to private companies, have an important role to play in embedding citizenship and civic engagement across the UK, in this submission we focus on funders, the voluntary sector and broader society due to our direct involvement in, and understanding of, those areas.

Key messages

In this submission we outline:

- The context within which the Fund, and the country, are grappling with issues of citizenship and civic engagement;
- The positive possibilities of citizenship – including the potential payoff for getting it right, and the risks of getting it wrong;
- Our view of citizenship and civic engagement as positive, reciprocal, diverse and non-exclusive; and
- Our People in the Lead approach – which puts people at the heart of social change, and works with their strengths to make the UK a better place to live.

Recommendations:

- Funders, including the Big Lottery Fund, should be more open to funding ‘risky’ projects.
- Funders, including the Big Lottery Fund, should simplify funding application processes.
- The voluntary sector should better embed experts by experience in all aspects of their operations from service design to governance and decision making.
- The voluntary sector should better engage with the opportunities and threats provided by the shift to digital.
- As a society we must establish new ways for citizens to participate.
- As a society we must celebrate our strengths.

About the Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest community funder in the UK. Last year we awarded £713m of good cause money raised by National Lottery players to more than 13,000 community projects. Our ambition is to enable communities to thrive. We fund bright ideas – big or small, to help you make your community a better place to live.

What is citizenship and civic engagement?

As the UK’s largest community funder, promoting and supporting citizenship and civic engagement are central to the way we work. This is exemplified by both the projects we fund and the ways in which they successfully deliver change.

That’s why it is so important for us, as a grant maker, sector and community, to embrace an inclusive, positive and reciprocal vision of citizenship. When fully realised such citizenship offers significant benefits to us all. These benefits have been identified through rigorous analysis and lived experience.
The Royal Society of the Arts’ meta-analysis\(^1\) – funded by the Big Lottery Fund – found that active citizenship and civic engagement (‘citizen powered energy’) brought benefits to:

- The economy: ‘participation helps save money’
- Public services: ‘participation develops more effective services’
- Community: ‘shared social norms and strong feelings of trust and belonging...nurture further participation’ and
- The individual: ‘Participation increases individual well-being, confidence and skills’

As we outline below, these benefits resonate with the Fund and our aspirations and experience as a grant-maker.

Nazee Akbari, the Executive Director of the Barnet Refugee Service stresses the importance of citizenship and civic engagement to (re)building a sense of self:

“Citizenship is vital for refugees – it is part of the process towards people regaining their lost identities. Leaving their past lives, and often being unable to return, is deeply traumatic and destabilising for people’s identities. Being valued and recognised as contributing to their new home is very helpful in stabilising people’s mental health, allowing them to feel valued, ensuring they do not feel left behind.”

At the Fund, we embrace a reciprocal, non-exclusive and diverse style of citizenship. Below we outline why these concepts are vital building blocks for UK communities and civic engagement. Throughout we also emphasise that citizenship covers an enormous array of activities – from village fetes to community mental health support to involvement at every level of service design and delivery.

Citizenship is positive

When people feel proud of their communities – and when they recognise the strengths their communities possess – they are empowered to drive change. Indeed, positive citizenship is at the heart of emancipatory movements worldwide. In ‘Pride Parades’ Katherine McFarland-Bruce sets out the power of a positive sense of citizenship: “Pride participants challenge culture by enacting a new vision of what LGBT acceptance can look like.”\(^2\) This is particularly crucial in the face of discrimination or oppression, where positive feelings of citizenship can provide a defence against external condemnation and a platform from which to drive social change.\(^3\)

In the UK today, communities are crying out for opportunities to develop a positive sense of citizenship. In 2016, the Fund launched our ‘Celebrate’ programme to give communities the opportunity to celebrate their strengths. We funded projects across the country from traditional village fetes in Kent to a celebration of the Sierra Leonean community in Brighton and Hove. With only a small funding contribution available (up to £10,000) communities across the country jumped at the opportunity to celebrate their strengths. So significant was the demand for this funding that we doubled its initial budget. Over a single year, we funded 1,714 events which helped to embed and grow a positive vision of community across the country. Of these, 26% had never applied for Big Lottery funding before.

\(^1\) Taylor M and McLean S, CITIZEN POWER PETERBOROUGH: IMPACT AND LEARNING, SEPTEMBER 2013
\(^2\) McFarland-Bruce, Katherine, Pride Parades: How a Parade Changed the World, 2016
\(^3\) Mind: How to develop resilience: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/stress/developing-resilience/#.Wb_XRLKGNpg accessed on 18/09/17
Our experience demonstrates both that communities want to celebrate their citizenship in a positive way, and that they are ready and able to do so, with only minimal support.

John Rose, Welsh Director, Big Lottery Fund: “Civic engagement is what makes places great places to be.”

Citizenship is reciprocal

There is strong evidence to show that reciprocal relationships deliver the best results for communities. Volunteering is a clear example of the benefits of reciprocity. It clearly helps those in receipt of services. A report by Action for Children found that the total value of volunteers to the charity and the families they support was £1,182,720 per year. But volunteering also has significant benefits to volunteers themselves. These range from learning new skills and improving employability to improving health and wellbeing and strengthening community cohesion and engagement.

In a recent analysis of volunteering undertaken as part of our £54m, 6-year Headstart programme, which aims to improve the mental health of young people, participants of the scheme reported the multiple benefits they received from volunteering.

Scheme participants:

“Sometimes I get in a lot of trouble, but now I’m not in trouble”

“[I’ve gained] socialising skills, like not being shy when, when talking to like people that you don’t know”

“I started getting more confident”

When citizenship is reciprocal communities benefit both from the receipt of support, and participation in its delivery.

Citizenship is diverse and non-exclusive

For communities to get the most out of citizenship and civic engagement, the barriers to participation should be as low as possible. The projects we support are replete with the positive contributions of those excluded from some definitions of citizenship (asylum seekers, ex-offenders and homeless people). For example, the Barnet Refugee Service highlights the incredible impact of Helal Attayee, an Afghan refugee who is now a qualified Doctor and a trustee of the charity.

The contributions that people on the outskirts of citizenship can make to communities are clear and powerful. By adopting a wide, and diverse definition of citizenship, we are able to access sources of

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4 Brodie, E and Jackson, L, Evaluation of the impact and value of volunteers in Action for Children children’s centres, NCVO and OPM, 2012
7 http://www.b-r-s.org.uk/success-stories/helal-attayee/ accessed on 18/09/17
expertise and lived experience that enrich the entire community. For example, our £112m 8-year programme to improve the lives of people with multiple and complex needs is partly delivered by ‘experts by experience’ – those who have been homeless, a substance misuser, or a prisoner – and can offer their support to others in a similar situation.

A recent report by Baljeet Sandhu, part of the Big Lottery Fund’s Generous Leadership group, also found that a whole host of benefits result from including people with lived experience in all elements of delivery. These include:

- Strengthening the legitimacy and accountability of social purpose work;
- Improving the effectiveness of existing, and developing new, services and social change initiatives;
- Enhancing community cohesion and cultivating effective partnerships, action and collaboration; and
- Allowing innovation to flourish.

Further, our initial evaluation of our Stoke-on-Trent multiple and complex needs project stresses the importance of experts by experience in all elements delivery from designing services effectively to best communicating who and what the service is for. In addition, many people who have accessed support from peers through the Inspiring Change Manchester Multiple and Complex Needs programme have become mentors themselves. A number have also gone on to use their experience to gain paid employment as trainees supporting delivery of the programme.

People in the Lead

At the Big Lottery Fund, we are working hard to embed the positive, reciprocal, diverse and open citizenship we would like to see in the world. Our People in the Lead approach, set out in our strategic framework 2015-21, is the foundation of our efforts to embed that kind of citizenship across the UK.

We operate a strength based approach that recognises and builds on what communities are good at, rather than where they fall short. By inviting communities to share their unique strengths and talents, we invite also invite them to share their positive vision of citizenship. This is in marked contrast to approaches which require applicants to demonstrate how bad their lives are, or how much they need help, before they receive support.

People in the Lead necessitates the direct involvement of beneficiaries in project design. This approach has a proud history, in particular in the disability movement’s slogan: “nothing about us, without us”. By involving communities in the design and delivery of services that are intended for them, we embed a strongly reciprocal citizenship which asks for involvement, rather than requiring passive receipt. By involving beneficiaries directly, this approach also delivers better quality, better informed and more effective support. For example, Hyde Community Action, which works with women from BME backgrounds, runs projects and activities that are driven by the community themselves, responding directly to what people want rather than dictating what people need. This includes English language classes, employment support sessions, bake sessions, and exercise classes.

Further, we endowed Big Local with £150m to enable people in 150 urban and rural communities to identify local needs, and take action to meet them. The trust puts residents themselves in charge of

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9 Robinson, S, Involving people with lived experience: A case study of the VOICES partnership, Stoke on Trent, March 2017
10 [https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/about-big/strategic-framework/our-vision](https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/about-big/strategic-framework/our-vision) accessed on 18/09/17
11 We fund Hyde Community Action by £604,471 from 2011-19
spending to improve their communities. Across the country they have invested in programmes offering training and employment support, tackling anti-social behaviour and providing more activities for young people.

People in the Lead also facilitates an open and diverse approach to community – one built on relationships between diverse and varied people. As Cormac Russel, the founder of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) outlines, relationship based approaches to change can deliver far more than individually driven change – no matter how exceptional the individual.12

Cormac Russell: “Relational power enables consensual ‘grouping-up’ or hive like behaviours to amplify and multiply the capacities of individuals, ensuring the societal whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. This is not to say that the individuality of members does not matter, it does, but rather to point out that for us to have a good life there are certain things we need to do with each other, as we cannot do them alone, that is where relational power matters.”

By encouraging collaboration, and embedding new ways of cooperating, our funding seeks to bring communities together, so their combined strength can deliver impactful change.

Citizenship in Context

In the current political and social climate, citizenship is fiercely contested. A series of crises, including the tragedy of Grenfell Tower, dramatically declining public trust,13 and significant political shifts, including Brexit, have dramatically challenged our shared conception of civil society. This presents both a threat, and a call to action, to communities in the UK and those who seek to promote citizenship and civic engagement.

In some ways, community cohesion has never looked so weak. Trust in institutions – from the Government to banks to charities – is down, and barriers to citizen engagement seem to be increasing. But in other ways, these tragedies have revealed communities’ hidden strength. In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the most effective help was delivered directly by volunteers, neighbours, friends and citizens across London. We see the same response after terrorist incidents, from cab drivers offering free rides to get people to safety,14 to families offering beds and sofas for affected people to sleep on,15 to mosques and churches opening their doors to rebuild communities and re-establish trust,16 society pulls together.

The benefits which would be delivered by better connecting communities are immense. According to research undertaken by the Centre for Economics and Business Research for the Big Lunch (funded by the Big Lottery Fund) “disconnected communities could be costing society a potential welfare improvement valued at £32 billion and about £12 billion of this could be realised as a net economic gain (a boost to GDP) through improved productivity”.17

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13 EDELMAN TRUST BAROMETER 2017 - UK FINDINGS
16 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/03/visit-my-mosque-day-open-day-non-muslims accessed on 14/09/17
17 The Cost of Disconnected Communities: The Big Lunch, Centre for Economics and Business Research, Jan 2017
In many ways, the National Lottery itself is a model of community collaboration. Every week millions of people across the country contribute to a significant prize fund, a large and important fund for good causes, and even tax revenue for the Government. Without players, the National Lottery would have no prize, and communities would have been £713m poorer last year alone. The simple act of buying a National Lottery ticket is part of a collaborative community efforts so embedded in our culture that it can go almost without mention on a weekly basis.

But despite citizens coming together to provide support when it is needed, the infrastructure that supports this involvement is often creaking at the seams. After the spontaneous response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy large amounts of donated money and support remain undistributed.\textsuperscript{18} Local authorities, established charities and others remain too slow to react effectively, and unable to properly serve the communities they are intended to support.

There is also evidence of growing community tension. The most high profile example of this tension was the spike in hate crime following the Brexit vote,\textsuperscript{19} but we can see evidence of this tension long before last year. For example, the Everyday Sexism project\textsuperscript{20} has been capturing daily examples of sexism and misogyny for more than five years, while there have been increasing incidents of hate crimes against Muslims, recorded by Tell MAMA over a similar period.\textsuperscript{21} Alongside this, concerns about immigration and integration have been raised repeatedly in recent years from local communities to political parties,\textsuperscript{22} and an ongoing debate around intergenerational fairness is being played out in families and communities across the country.\textsuperscript{23}

In this context, it is vital that we all do our bit to strengthen community cohesion. At the Big Lottery Fund, we work with communities across the country to break down barriers to citizenship and barriers between people and communities. Whether that means funding outreach to give culturally-excluded communities better access to the arts, working with faith communities to combat extremism and racism, or facilitating neighbours who have never spoken to share a meal, we strive to bring communities together.

Below are some of the hundreds of projects we fund each year to promote community cohesion and citizenship:

- Via the Young Vic\textsuperscript{24} we fund the Neighbourhood Theatre project which gives everyone in Southwark and Lambeth the opportunity to go to the theatre and become part of the theatre family. A group of 70-80 local people from marginalised groups work with the theatre as ambassadors and help the theatre reach other disadvantaged people. They also come up with ideas for theatre projects and help to deliver them.
- We fund the Eden Project to deliver the Big Lunch\textsuperscript{25} each year, which encourages people to talk to their neighbours, and address the rising tide of loneliness in our communities.
- We fund The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace\textsuperscript{26} to develop skills in peaceful conflict resolution amongst young people vulnerable to radicalisation and survivors of political violence.

\textsuperscript{18} \url{http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40610825} accessed on 14/09/17
\textsuperscript{20} \url{https://everydaysexism.com/} accessed on 14/09/17
\textsuperscript{21} We have funded Faith Matters, the umbrella organisation for Tell MAMA by £742,908 from 2013-18
\textsuperscript{22} \url{http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24147027} accessed on 20/09/17
\textsuperscript{23} Gardiner, L, Stagnation Generation: the case for renewing the intergenerational contract, Resolution Foundation, 2016
\textsuperscript{24} We fund the Young Vic by £240,000 from 2016-19
\textsuperscript{25} We fund the Eden Project by £14.8m from 2007-17
\textsuperscript{26} We fund The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace by £1.73m from 2003-19
• We also fund Participatory City\textsuperscript{27} in partnership with Barking and Dagenham Council, which will work with 25,000 residents to create over 350 neighbourhood-led projects, bringing people together with a renewed sense of community spirit.

• In Wales, our £12m Community Voice project supported citizens to have a greater influence over policies and decisions affecting their community; built their capacity to engage in planning and running services and projects that respond to their communities’ needs and advance community benefit.

What needs to change?

There are a number of ways that we must all work together to embed a model of positive, reciprocal and open citizenship in the UK. Some of these changes are for funders (including ourselves), others are for charities and communities, and others are for society as a whole. We outline below our roadmap of these changes.

Funders

Funders, including the Big Lottery Fund, should be more open to funding ‘risky’ projects. In our UK portfolio we have trialled and rolled out a different approach to grant giving. We take a more conversational approach, with a strong focus on grassroots social innovations that address the root cause of pressing issues.

We have also taken a test and learn approach to funding, by supporting a cluster of projects around themes, including ageing, dementia and food, to find projects and interventions that work well. We have funded projects like Apps for Good\textsuperscript{28} to provide young people with the technical, entrepreneurial, problem solving and life skills that will enable them to drive social change, and transform their communities through social technology. As a funding community, we must come together to support more projects like these.

The Big Lottery Fund, and other funders, should simplify funding application processes. Too often we create barriers to innovative projects and hard to reach communities seeking funding. At the Fund we are moving our small grants online, reaching out to new communities (e.g. by running funding fairs targeting rural communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and talking about the Fund in Urdu on local Manchester radio) and cutting processing times. But more needs to be done.

The voluntary and community sector

The voluntary and community sector should better embed experts by experience in all aspects of their operations from service design to governance and decision making. We have outlined the benefits of including people with lived experience above, but too often this experience is not effectively used to drive positive change.

"Despite sector-wide appreciation that lived experience of social issues can help inform social change initiatives, the wider sector has been slow to recognise the full value and benefit of lived expertise in terms of ‘leading change’. In turn, organisational and leadership development in this

\textsuperscript{27} We fund Participatory City by £6.3m from 2016 - 2020

\textsuperscript{28} We fund Apps for Good by £1.2m from 2016-2020
area is largely unexplored and underdeveloped, and much needed.”

We are supporting the sector to do this in some areas – for example, in Northern Ireland, we have recruited a Young People’s Panel to inform the children and young people’s projects that we fund. But, there is much more to be done to embed this approach across the voluntary sector.

The sector must also better engage with the opportunities and threats provided by the shift to digital. The ever increasingly role of digital in UK life presents both dramatic opportunities for change, and poses significant threats to individual and collective wellbeing. The digital revolution has allowed people to build new communities and convene existing ones with ease.

If you were a disabled person with severe mobility restrictions, it would have been almost impossible 15 years ago to share experiences with thousands of people facing the same issues – but online communication now makes that as easy as pressing a button or speaking into a microphone. Similarly, the transgender community’s visibility and confidence has dramatically increased in recent years, due to the effective establishment of a positive and supportive online community. At the same time, the rise of social media has been accompanied by both a significant rise in anxiety among young people, and a dramatic upswing in threats of violence, cyberbullying and racism, sexism and homophobia online.

But the voluntary and community sector has been slow to respond to, or effectively harness, these changes. While most charities have websites, social media accounts, and online portals for donation, few have embraced digital as an effective service delivery channel. While some of our projects, such as Headstart, offer some online services (e.g. counselling) most are only just beginning to take advantage of the opportunities made available by digital.

**Broader Society**

As a society we must establish new ways for citizens to participate. The benefits of reciprocal citizenship and volunteering are clear. We must come together to identify new ways for people to get involved – with a particular focus on those who currently lack effective civic engagement. There are many examples of this engagement already available, but we must work together to create more. For example, South East Hampshire Community Outlook set up an arts centre in a social housing area in Fareham which has given local young people who are facing challenges in their lives together to create art (including window art, graffiti art, and website design) and build a positive community. Further, in London, the Bromley-by-Bow centre takes a holistic approach to community-health, delivering services that acknowledge that health is dependent on social, financial and emotional wellbeing which puts citizens at its heart. This approach reduces the strain on the health service, as well as empowering local people to drive change.

As a society we must celebrate our strengths more. Investing time and resources in bringing communities together around our skills, strengths and experience will offer the building blocks for a positive model of citizenship, and help break barriers down which are currently separating

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32 We fund South East Hampshire Community Outlook by £545,400 from 2006-20
33 We fund the Bromley-by-Bow centre by £340,000 from 2016-19
communities. For example, we are funding Friends of Shadon House in Blaydon\textsuperscript{34} to run a story-making and creative writing course, bringing together local school children and patients with dementia. We also fund Home Share,\textsuperscript{35} which links older people with spare rooms in their homes and who are in need of practical assistance with (e.g.) shopping or DIY with young people struggling with high housing costs. In exchange for help around the house, young people benefit from low rents in good quality housing, while older people are supported to be more mobile, more socially connected and more independent.

In summary, while there is much good work going on across the country to embed positive citizenship and civic engagement, the scale of the challenges we are facing means that more needs to be done. By taking a few simple steps, as funders, as the voluntary sector, and as society, we can transform community relations and deliver significant benefits across the UK. At the heart of these changes must be a positive, reciprocal and open model of citizenship which encourages participation and involvement, and does not undermine it.

Contact

We would be very happy to expand on the issues outlined above in future, in particular at an oral evidence session for the committee. Please do get in contact at Ciaran.osborne@biglotteryfund.org.uk if you would like to hear from us further.

\textsuperscript{34} We are funding Friends of Shadon House by £10,000 in 2016-17
\textsuperscript{35} We fund the Home Share programme by £1.3m from 2016-18