

Small Grant Big Impact

Capturing the experiences of
receiving a small grant



CNet
COMMUNITY NETWORK
BRADFORD & DISTRICT

1. Background

In September 2006, CNet decided to research people's experiences of being involved in a community group and of receiving a small grant from CNet during 2005/6.

As a funder, we felt that there is more to receiving a grant than just the fact that the money is benefitting a whole range of people in a community group. We felt that the grant is doing more than just meeting the neighbourhood renewal outcomes and targets. We think a grant has an impact on individuals and offers them a new experience in life and new ways of thinking about the world and getting involved in community activity. But we did not know whether this was true, nor what the difference it might make to those leading the project.

2. The Research

The research was intended to scope the potential impact that there might be on key individuals by interviewing a selection of people from groups that had received grants during 2005/6. As a first step, it was felt necessary to hear a range of 'voices' and listen to their comments about the impact. The report that follows uses exact quotes from the respondents rather than any statistical analysis of the responses. We asked a series of questions to 26 out of 150 recipients. The response rate for those selected was 100%. The individuals were identified from the list of the contact persons on the grant applications - both for the devolved neighbourhood grants and the generic small grants scheme. Initially, every tenth person was selected. Then this list was analysed to examine the range of groups, and to identify missing elements using the categories: beneficiary (children and young people, older people, BME), group size (community, voluntary), area. Additional individuals/ groups were then selected for interview. All were known to the interviewer. This sample was not representative, nor was

it intended to be (see Appendix 1 for the list of organisations). The interviews were conducted over two days in Sept 2006 by telephone using the following approach:

1) Personal explanation of the reason for the phone call (including referring to confidentiality issues).

2) Questions:

a) Before you had contact with us, and before you received a grant from us, what did you personally like about being involved with the group you are part of?

b) Did your experience/s (e.g. your knowledge, skills, practice, understanding, know-how) of being involved with the group change after you had received a grant from us?

c) Tell us a bit more about what you have gained personally by receiving a grant from us.

d) Can you tell us a bit more about what other individuals have gained by receiving a grant from us (that could be other group members, beneficiaries, support workers etc)?

e) Thanks for your help. Have you any other things you would like to add?

3. The responses

The responses were grouped by the researcher into a number of key points - so there is a strong element of interpretation in the organisation of the responses. There will also be contra points in the responses to different questions.

Q1. Before you had contact with us and before you received a grant from us, what did you personally like about being involved with the group you are part of ?

The key points that people made:

a) Being able to get involved in something of interest to them and also help people in the same situation.

Remarks included :

- "I've looked after older people for 16 years",

- "I have a lot in common with the other parents",
- "I have a lot in common with the other women and as ethnic minority women we have the same needs",
- "The issues that affected me were issues that affected others - we're all in the same boat but I also got to know about other issues too that did not affect me, therefore learning about other people's personal circumstances and difficulties".

b) Personal satisfaction was also one of the first comments interviewees made. Many got involved in their community group to put something back into the community.

- "People appreciate it when others have the time to spend time".

c) Providing a service that was missing within the community and addressing concerns within a neighbourhood were common responses:

- "I knew there was a want and need for our service because I'd been involved in other organisations who were saying there was a gap in provision",
- "The management committee had a plan to make the area a better place to live but it could not materialise without the money",
- "I got involved to help out and fundraise".

d) Learning from a community and learning within a wider community context featured strongly within people's feedback:

- "I have learned about dealing with people of different backgrounds and dealing with the way people relate, reason, their culture, likes and dislikes, 'white ways' - coming to UK - and learning where people are at".
- "Since being involved with the group I have developed an understanding and received updates on government policies",

e) Others said that they liked been involved in their community groups because it provided a constructive service to the

particular area or group of people they were serving.

- "Looking for young people to do something different",
- "Extra curricular activity",
- "Providing an organised service for young people".

f) Many of the interviewees liked being part of the group because of the social aspects and the opportunity to make new friends,

- There was a "happy atmosphere",
- The group provided a community spirit,
- "The buzz" of being involved, overcoming isolation, friendship (ongoing), and meeting people.
- "Developing friendships and partnerships"

g) Linking people to service providers: One said she had "made strong links with health visitors."

h) Participation and empowerment of communities were other factors that people liked about being involved with their community group.

- "Doing things for people and helping them make a difference"
- "Doing things for people that they want to do and not what they are told to do",
- "Giving something valuable to them",
- "Making things available to people, asking them what they want and listening to them, then making it happen".

The empowerment of communities appeared to be a particularly strong feature with the ethnic minority women's groups and the young people's group's that were interviewed.

i) Some of the other comments made included :

- "Creativity via arts amongst deprived"
- "Giving deprived people opportunities"
- "Promoting culture as well as worldwide connections"
- "Being in a position where you can do things".

j) On a negative note, one participant made the comment that initially the group caused her frustration. "It's frustrating running around and asking people who you know have no money (because they are all on low incomes) to contribute towards something they can not really afford".

Q2. Did your experience/s (e.g: your knowledge, skills, practice, understanding, know how) of being involved in the group change after you had received a grant from us ?

Two people said "no" because they had done this sort of work before.

However, the rest of the responses suggested that people's experience had changed since receiving a small grant from us.

a) Getting other service providers and professionals involved was one of the prevailing comments made here, (e.g : the school, BCEP).

- "We have learned a lot about other organisations and existing services and forums that are out there to help or who are in the position to deal with specific issues".

b) Since receiving our grant some groups had been enabled to gain support from CVS, make links with the council ("they gave us information") as well as other services (for example the local community centre).

- "We know where to go to get help and who's out there".

c) Interestingly it should be noted that the experience of receiving a small grant also works to the benefit of existing service providers.

- "Our group has been of value and benefit to the local community centre".

d) Some groups found that there was an increased interest in what they were doing as a group within the community.

- "More people are aware we are there now to support their children" (response from a homework club).

- After receiving a grant... "people wanted to know what we were doing and what our group was all about".

e) However, one group's experience of receiving our grant was a negative one. "People were in favour of the project but once we had got the grant they were not supportive in delivering it. People didn't turn up. I know in the future to be warier and less expectant of peer support".

f) There was an element around learning from a community and learning within a wider community context that participants made comment on within this particular question.

- "I was involved with other groups so getting involved with this one gave me a different outlook on other communities needs".
- The grant had enabled one group to widen their experience of young people's needs and issues.
- One person commented she had "increased my awareness of access issues because I had to get out and about".

g) The development of new (practical and social) skills was a significant area that some interviewees felt they had gained. After receiving our grant individuals within groups had gained knowledge or experience in: maintaining spreadsheets, computers skills, project management, how to manage accounts and spend money, how to develop other strategies and funding opportunities for the group, as well as personal development such as how to deal with people, learning patience, humanity, how to cope with situations and people's temper and learning from others. A small number of participants said that the grant had enabled the young people they were working with to flourish upon their hidden gifts and learn new skills (for example football skills and the fact that one interviewee stated "some - young people - were good at adding up").

h) A number commented that our grants scheme had taught them the art of "form filling in" and how to apply to funders. One gentleman commented "don't put posh words in, keep it in English and keep it real".

i) It appears that our grants had opened up the number of training opportunities available to voluntary and community groups across the district that they were not already aware of. Some of those opportunities listed included: social enterprise, becoming a charity and social enterprise, home safety, coaching classes (putting theory into practice) and supporting groups to look at delivering accredited training courses themselves.

j) What was prominent in the majority of the responses interviewees gave was the real community value and benefit they (and others) had gained after receiving a small grant. The grant enabled most groups to make an improvement or increase to a service which was needed by the community, together with enhancing the physical image and people's mentality of an area - e.g: improving the local environment, creating a safer community and giving local people an appreciation of their local area.

- "The grant gave the group a sense of pride and unity",
- "We worked together and were all part of the 'wow' factor",
- "A lot has happened in a short space of time".

k) The grant for some groups enabled them to develop, move forward and be more inclusive of the community.

- "The grant made young people's ideas turn into a reality. When they got the finance they began to plan things more differently as it was a real project then".
- "Getting the resources we needed made life easier",
- "Without the grant the project would not have happened". "Bigger grants don't make

a difference but the smaller ones do because there's a need to justify it and this enables you to bring in more people to work with them".

l) It is important here to highlight that many of the groups felt their experience had changed after receiving a small grant by giving others an opportunity to get involved and take ownership of what was being provided to them.

For example groups were proactive in involving young people:

- "Getting women out of the home" and
- "Letting people know there is money out there for them".
- One participant said "everyone here has a say about what goes into the application. Too many organisations are still being led by one person".

m) There is also an element of people within communities contributing something towards projects and services which are provided for them.

- "People are good at giving things 'in kind' for the club",
- "We are good at asking around and getting people to contribute (e.g: local businesses) and getting things on the cheap".
- However, in comparison with this last point, the participant who commented earlier about the group initially causing her frustration went on to comment that when she had received the grant she was fulfilled with "enjoyment because I did not have to go around and knock on people's doors asking them for money!".

n) Finally one important point that a number of the participants commented on was the fact that the experience of receiving a small grant had enabled them to draw in other money and therefore develop the work of the group.

- "The grant was a key that opened the doors to other opportunities",
- "The grant gave us the confidence to approach other funders and one success led to another."

Q3. Tell us a bit more about what you have gained personally by receiving a grant from us..

Many of the responses to this question reflected upon the individual's development of their own (mainly interpersonal) skills, e.g. Co-ordinating and organising activities, improvement of teaching skills, fundraising, monitoring, supervision and assessment skills and supporting individuals to work with children and young people and become an enabler / facilitator of their learning. "I can help out a massive group of children and deal with it now" and "developing people skills" were comments people fed back.

a) Underpinning individual's personal development was evidence that the grant had enabled these skills to take place because their confidence had been raised within the whole process.

- One participant suggested that "the grant gave me confidence to go in other directions, e.g: sit on other forums and within official meetings, as well as the confidence to communicate with my local community".
- One person said she had gone on a fundraising course and now had the confidence to apply to other funders.

b) A significant amount of interviewees said that what they had got personally from receiving the grant was respect from and of their local community.

- "High regards in community",
- "Confidence in the community as they recognised what we were trying to achieve", "the community appreciate our voluntary work",
- "People recognise me now in the community and trust me with their girls - that's all the payment you need",
- "Our group's work has broken down barriers and women and elderly ask who we are now",
- "When you succeed people think you are doing well and this reflects back on the community"

c) The word "satisfaction" also rated high within people's responses. When asked to expand upon what they meant by "satisfaction" people went on to say:

- "Getting something done for other people",
- "Personal satisfaction of achieving a project",
- "Seeing an idea grow from 4 to 20 people",
- "The thrill of people saying we were doing something positive",
- "Sharing the feel good factor",
- "My dreams were turned into a reality",
- "Community spirit"
- "Getting the grant was an achievement to me".

d) Personal bonds within a project is also a point that was prominent in terms of personal development.

For example many of the interviewees said that what they had got personally out of receiving the small grant was:

- "Friendship",
- "Meeting new friends",
- "Team spirit",
- "The grant has saved work at the club so now I can sit down and have a cup of coffee with people before they have their lunch", "I've been in contact with the group more since receiving the grant",
- "The grant has helped the group to gell".

e) Access to information was another feature that a smaller number of interviewees gained from being part of the group and receiving a small grant.

- "I would not have known about emergency treatment and dentistry for disabled people if I had not been involved in doing this voluntary work".

f) However many people also commented on the fact that receiving the grant was more of a group and community development gain to them (a selfless act) rather than it being a personal gain (selfish).

g) In terms of group development a significant number of interviewees said their group had learned how to apply for grants and what others grants were available for them to access (i.e: fundraising skills).

- "The process of applying for your grant made us think more about our group's aims and objectives from a wider viewpoint. We began to think about what we do as a group as a way of getting a grant rather than just applying everywhere".

h) In one instance our grant had made less work for one group with reference to the comment that:

- "£1,000 is a lot of money to fundraise via events etc. The grant for our gates saved months of fundraising via coffee mornings and tombolas!",
- "I can see our group growing from here"
- "The group gained money management skills but your process was easier than most funders".

i) Wider community development (in essence, reaching out to the community) is the other key area people touched upon. What some interviewees had gained was personally seeing the peers in their group.

- "Working with different groups",
- "Building up new relationships with other organisations", "more networking experience",
- "Offer something concrete",
- "Visible change is powerful,
- "We are now able to address our kid's issues in other arenas"
- "Hitting key areas where deprivation is at its highest".

j) One person did comment:

- "I'm there as a support worker now and people come to me for other support such as filling in council tax forms etc" suggesting that the work of that particular group should not be seen at just face value.

- Another person said "I've been able to pass on the skills I've learned".

k) Whilst receiving a small grant has been a mainly positive gain for all the participants who were interviewed, we must not underestimate that it is hard work applying for money and spending it. As one person commented when asked what they had got out of receiving a small grant, "a sense of total exhaustion!" was their response !!

Q4. Can you tell us a bit more about what other individuals have gained by receiving a grant from us (that could be other group members, beneficiaries, support workers, etc)?

a) Friendship was a common response made by the majority of the interviewees, in line with comments such as:

- "An opportunity to socialise with peers who have something in common", "socialising and getting people out of their homes and into the centre", "enjoyment and something to look forward to".
- "A place for the elderly to socialise".

b) The concept of "working as a collective" on a project was a key feature within people's feedback. For example, individuals within groups have:

- "Worked alongside other people",
- "Were able to contribute something to their community",
- "It's nice to see other people helping out",
- "We worked hard",
- "Working together to achieve the same goals",
- "Built up community spirit",
- "Higher moral",
- "People are more neighbourly and involved",
- "Respecting other people's input into society".

c) Expanding upon this, formal as well as social networking within and outside of the project's was something else that other individuals had gained from the small grant. This was reflected in comments such as:

- "Signposting to other relevant services",
 - "More knowledge of other service providers, agencies and individuals", "knowledge of carers grants",
 - "Giving people an opportunity to meet others",
 - "Beneficiaries were introduced other agencies" (e.g.: EASA, careers advice),
 - "The agency have a new partner now",
 - "2 of our committee members are now speakers for the school", "police and neighbourhood forums are now working with us",
 - "Engaging members of the community and committee (e.g.: collecting the cheque from CNet and delivering the project)",
 - "Beneficiaries have an awareness of general disability and are aware of other services that are out there to help them".
- d) An extensive number of people interviewed echoed the fact that what other individuals had gained from our small grant were services which addressed their needs and also services which they had confidence in approaching and using.
- "Our comments book has all positive comments so it says we are doing it right,"
 - "Without your funding a lot of our activities would not have gone ahead",
 - "There was demand for the project to continue running because there is a need for it",
 - "We get a lot of enquiries now from the Asian community about what we can offer them",
 - "The register is full and people come regularly and are getting used to the facility been here now"
 - "The grant has helped us to reach out to people who need help with bringing up their baby".
 - People have gained "information and confidence (e.g.: to communicate in English) and people know where to come for advice and help".
- "It's been worth while and appreciated by parents and the kids".
 - "The grant has enabled us to provide a service where we work as an open group and people come along and feel able and free to talk about problems / issues".
 - One youth project said that since gaining our funding their young people realised others were interested in supporting their wants and needs.
 - One last remark stated that "it's about making sure services are comfortable for people to use".
- e) The issue of inclusion leads on from the last point made and was an area that a smaller number of participants commented upon. The grant for some groups had enabled them to address the issue of equality:
- One group had begun working with the blind as a result of our grant.
 - In one instance our grant meant that beneficiaries had "been treat equal and there's not much of that about!!".
 - One project provided a "place for people to come out of their homes, socialise and get to know their neighbours and what's going on by using the park".
- f) An important point to highlighted is that our grants ensured services delivered by community and voluntary sector groups remained value for money or cost effective.
- For some groups the grants ensured that "lunches at the luncheon club have remained the same price because of the grant and we have been able to spend money on other things we needed".
 - "Providing a free training service that people would have had to pay for at the college".
- g) In addition to providing a cost effective service to some groups, the grant also enabled individuals to gain access to training opportunities which they may not otherwise have explored. Training opportunities in health, culture, coaching,

counselling, teaching Eastern European communities the English language, IT and reading were all avenues opened up to both volunteers and management committee members to develop their skills.

- h) As well as the above formal training opportunities, volunteers within projects gained work experience, social skills and "learning on the job", skills which led some beneficiaries of projects into employment (e.g: translating Urdu for professional organisations).
- i) A common theme which prevailed within a large number of interviewees' responses to this question highlighted children's development and the learning opportunities young people had gained from the projects (in some instances this was regardless of whether or not a project set out to work with children or young people). Comments included:
- "Children have enjoyed learning and doing things",
 - "We have been able to value disadvantaged young people's skills (that they have skills which can be used outside of the school environment)",
 - "Young people have felt important and felt part of it".
 - Some projects provided young people with: "Increased self esteem and confidence",
 - "Social skills and learning on the job",
 - Whilst others taught "children good citizenship skills and things parents are not able to teach them".
 - The grant for some groups enabled projects to take on young people's ideas and get them on board.
 - Career progression was a common feature fed back by a lot of the groups, for example getting young people "into the world of work,"
 - "The leisure industry", "college",
 - "Helping youngsters decide what career they want to do (e.g: childcare)" and

- "We motivated them to go in a certain direction".
- j) For a small number, the grant had enabled them to gain the reassurance of forward planning within their project. Finally, one participant stated that what people had gained from their project was an improvement on their health.
- k) There was one negative comment to this question and it focused around a service which people had gained from the small grant but they were still unaware of where that service had actually come from and therefore did not appreciate its value. As the interviewee said "some think that the items (for a sheltered housing project) have appeared by magic !"

Q5. Thank you for your help. Have you any other things you would like to add ?

No surprises here in that the majority of participants asked if we had any more grants to give out!

- a) In general, interviewees were happy with the process of the small grants schemes and appreciated the helpfulness of staff at CNet. They commented on the outreach support and said that receiving a grant from CNet had been a great experience.
- "Getting to know staff at CNet was good because with too many funders (e.g.: Lottery) you never get to meet the face behind the name. The outreach and support service there helped us".
- b) A lot of participants said that they had gained a lot from being involved with CNet and had enjoyed being involved in other things that CNet does (e.g.: events) as well as enjoying the networking opportunities (for example, meeting other groups) and learning from others.
- "We hope CNet will run for many years because they have been the first port of call and have helped us make a great difference".
 - "We have learned who CNet is and what CNet does to support groups".

c) Following on from this point however, one participant commented that some of their management committee members worked full time so were not able to attend some of the day time training sessions CNet ran, and would have liked to, given the opportunity.

d) For some, the grant had encouraged them to apply to other places and for others they were already in the process of tackling new projects such as working with young people to improve another derelict area within their community, a stop smoking project and a gardening project.

e) Some projects had begun working with the council as well as national organisations such as the British Heart Foundation. For others, more people were interested in what the group were doing and were at the start of the process of meeting other groups and looking towards working in partnership with them.

f) Other final comments included :

- "Without the grant the service would not have been provided and we do not want to lose people from the club".
- "It's good to see that grants like yours don't just go to inner city areas and come to rural areas too".
- "Groups need to account for the money properly or there will be a black mark against your name !"
- "I lived off the Euphoria for a week !!"
- "Children and teachers understand about where money has come from to fund this".
- "Accreditation has been an area that people want".
- "People want to put something back into their communities".
- "We all learn from each other and there should be no hierarchy".

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Ed: John Corbishley

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Appendix 1

Name of sample groups interviewed

Key:

m = main grant up to £5k

d = devolved neighbourhood grant up to £1K.

K = Keighley

S = Shipley

BN = Bradford North

BS = Bradford South

BW = Bradford West

Able All (**m**)

Addingham Garden Friends (**d-K**)

Asian Cultural Association (**m**)

Bangladeshi Community Association
(**m and d-K**)

Bangladeshi Elders Group (**m**)

Bierley Walkers (**m**)

Bolton Woods Junior Football Club (**d-S**)

Disability Support Service (**m and d-BW**)

Dynamo Allstars (**m**)

Friends of Buck Wood (**d-BN**)

Friends of Oakworth Park (**m and d-K**)

Heaton Graveyard Project (**d-BW**)

Holmewood Activity Centre (**m and d-BS**)

Keighley and District Local History
Society (**m**)

Manor Court Tenants (**d-S**)

Over 55's Luncheon Club - Community

Association of Great Horton (**d-BS**)

Parkside Residents Association (**m and d-BW**)

Pondside Neighbours Group (**m**)

Rongdhonu Bangladeshi Welfare
Association (**m**)

Salvation Army - Idle (**d-BN**)

Shipley New Start Friends and Users
Association (**m**)

St Anthony's Baby Group (**d-BW**)

St John's Luncheon Club (**d-BS**)

VI Sahara (**m**)

West Bowling Activity Group (**m and d-BN**)

Women's Community Link (**m**)

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Evaluation Report

NLDC Programme 2006

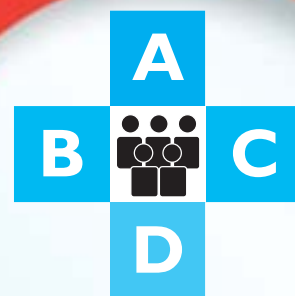


CNet

COMMUNITY NETWORK
BRADFORD & DISTRICT



Leading learning and skills



ACTION FOR BLACK
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This report reviews the work delivered by CNet from January to July 2006 with funding from NLDC. It will describe the project from proposal through delivery, noting users' and providers' experiences. It will offer an analysis of the effectiveness of the programme from statistics gathered, as required by the funding body.

Background

Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding is designed to increase basic skills and educational levels amongst people who have not, or usually do not, access opportunities for increasing their skill sets. It aims to deliver such learning to local communities and to offer them a springboard for further personal development. It adopts the approach of providing such learning through community agencies, capitalising on their location within neighbourhoods to overcome perceived barriers to accessing self-improvement programmes.

The 2005-2006 NLDC programme in Bradford was led by the VCS (voluntary and community sector) district-wide delivery consortium, a group of VCS agencies which had come together to foster community-based learning provision in the district. Funds to enable this were offered by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in December 2005 through their open tendering/commissioning process. This contract was subsequently offered to the Cathedral Centre as lead agency. Bradford College was to be the accountable body as it has adapted the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), a necessary prerequisite for the LSC. The CIF is the inspection standard adopted by the LSC and central Government for monitoring adult learning. The Cathedral Centre has built a track record of delivering adult learning to socially excluded groups, and holds contracts with the LSC; it is externally

monitored by Ofsted, and is certified by Investors in People. Bradford College is the largest Further Education provider in the district; and CNet (Bradford Community Empowerment Network) is developing a network of community representatives, in order to increase community involvement in deliberations of the local strategic partnership, Bradford Vision.

The CNet project was conceived as part of a programme of interventions, designed to work in sequence; with different projects complementing each other, by focussing on different strands of delivery within the main commissioning framework. Conceived as a VCS-led programme, each partner was to address the aims of the funding stream, but from its own perspective and delivering to its own strengths and experience. Other partners involved were Bradford Community and Voluntary Services, and Bradford Resource Centre.

Application

The NLDC VCS consortium pilot had been meeting to establish working relations and drafting of bids under the aegis of the Cathedral Centre. Tenders were commissioned by the LSC in December 2005, and contracts awarded the following month, January 2006. A training day for successful partners was held in February 2006, and the programme was launched in May 2006. Eight tender specifications were disseminated via the Learning Partnership's database, and full details were made available on their websites, and by e-mail and post. Thirty four tenders were received, and seventeen were short-listed after careful sifting through a scored appraisal process. Revenue, or "recurrent", expenditure was over-subscribed seven times, and capital by 50%.

The proposal aimed to promote the NLDC to the voluntary sector and learners across the district, highlighting the strategy of a 'back-to-basics' method of learning through community-based events, with a clear

timescale of 6 months: January to July 2006. Quarterly monitoring of outputs was required by NLDC. The Cathedral Centre conformed to the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework through its Quality Policy which involves its management committee and staff in continuous performance improvement, with production of an annual report. Financial monitoring was overseen by the Finance Director, and this task was part of CNet's monthly delivery role.

Outcomes were to be 100 individual learners and 10 organisations attending - with 150 and 15 respectively for both the first and final events - at 5 learning centres. It is unclear from the application how strategic partnerships would benefit, apart from through the participation itself.

Delivery

A few funders were selected, in consultation with BFunded (the local funding advice service), as accessible: Abbey, Lloyds TSB, Big Boost, Craven Trust and Local Network Fund. Five events were organised to showcase them along with other local service providers: Bradford CVS, Keighley Voluntary Service, West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service, Bradford Council's Neighbourhood Support Officers and West Yorkshire Police.

The aim was to offer all involved the opportunity to network and learn of funding opportunities in an informal setting, and become more aware of strategic issues in the district, eg. the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Community centres were selected in each of Bradford's parliamentary constituency areas - CNet, Frizinghall (Shipley); Gateway Centre, Ravenscliffe (Bradford North); Odsal Stadium, Odsal (Bradford South); Central Library (city centre); and also Disabled People's Centre, Keighley.

Presenters were urged to be brief, with questions and discussion reserved for the networking lunch, when handouts and

further information would be made available. Centres were assessed for access and popularity in the communities. Community groups were invited based on CNet's prior knowledge - particularly those groups who had been unsuccessful previously in applying for small grants - contacted through network and local authority mailing lists, and notified by advertisement in briefing bulletins. A maximum of two attendees were invited from each group and a reserve list was operated; each event was over-subscribed.

One event was held in April, three in May 2006, and three in June - a further two events were led by a consultant and another by Bradford Resource Centre on the strategic infrastructure of the district ("Getting Heard"). ABCD also ran two briefing sessions on the LAA with the same consultant. Each CNet session lasted two hours before a provided lunch, and were run in the week, with two at weekends. Printed information was later sent to those who could not attend.

Evaluation

We shall now proceed to looking at the effectiveness of the programme as a whole, and the reactions and levels of participation to the initiative.

Interviews

Interviews for this evaluation were conducted with Sally Teasdale, Small Grants Outreach Worker, and John Corbishley, CNet Coordinator; a third staff member, Chris Murdoch, closely involved with delivering the NLDC project has since left CNet and was not interviewed, though her comment was recorded: "people want more events across the district, more opportunities like this".

Sally confirmed that the NLDC programme, though new to CNet, was viewed as an opportunity to approach groups already worked with under the previous Small Grants regime, to offer an element of

capacity-building; that the "learning should be relevant to groups". Sally reported difficulty with the evaluation forms which were felt to be difficult to understand, with people needing assistance in completing the forms.

John Corbishley's interest was to increase awareness of the Local Area Agreement, hence his employment of a consultant to demystify the topic as part of the "Getting Heard" sessions, which concentrated on the more strategic issues of community representation.

The focus was on building confidence, through informal instruction and networking, and partnership working in an attempt to link small funding programmes with the larger strategic framework. John felt this was partially successful, and the experience certainly assisted individuals in sorting priorities for consideration by funders.

Records Analysis

There is broad correspondence between numbers of residents and organisations attending (by location), with highest attendances corresponding to BD5 - Little Horton/West Bowling, and BD21 - Keighley.

High individual attendances were also recorded from BD4 - East Bowling and BD18 - Shipley; high group attendance was recorded from BD10 - Ravenscliffe. All these areas are of high recorded deprivation, and are in receipt of regeneration funding, so have some experience of community development initiatives.

(See Appendix 1, group chart and Appendix 6, individual chart).

There is less similarity between individual and group records in the area of ethnicity: whilst less than 60% of the groups claimed to serve white residents, over 80% of the residents attending were white. At the other end of the scale less than 10% of the attendees described themselves as 'black', yet over 15% of the groups claimed to serve black users.

(See Appendix 2, group chart and Appendix 7, individual chart).

Regarding NLDC 'priorities', there is very high correlation between group and individual records, with the highest category recorded by both sets being "capacity building of VCS organisation members".

The least recorded categories were "residents with basic skills needs", and "new learners" (residents not engaged in learning for the last 3 years).

(See Appendix 3, group chart and Appendix 8, individual chart).

Consider the following revealing results from the individual statistical analysis:

- women outnumbered men by a ratio of approximately 3:2
- employed people outnumbered those unemployed by nearly 2:1
- there were comparatively high numbers of active retirees in attendance: approximately one third of all attendees
- the self-assessed standard of education amongst attendees was high: nearly half recorded degree-level education or higher.

(See Appendix 4, individual table).

However for well-educated white workers employed in community development in areas of national deprivation, to network and learn about availability of funding is what the programme is all about - to "support local voluntary and community sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods" is the stated aim of the programme.

Group comments highlighted the success of the programme in hosting a range of funding providers' presentations, with funding assistance ('funding advice', 'new funders' and 'applying for funding') of varying kinds, leading 'networking' and 'meeting funders' representatives' as a beneficial outcome by a ratio of 3:2; budgeting and training were also valuable perceived learning outcomes with strategic learning also showing highly in responses.

To this extent the CNet project was successful - after all assistance with understanding the ramifications of the Local Area Agreement is a must for everyone involved in community development; but we wonder does it address the fundamental aims of NLDC funding: "to engage new learners and enable access to learning opportunities for disadvantaged communities in locations where there are none"? The programme was clearly successful in delivering its outcomes - that of building capacity through funding advice, and improving learning opportunities through informing of strategies delivered in the community.

Comments

Although several organisations were cited as potential partners in the application, the following did not seem to have been consulted or involved at all:

Action for Black Community Development,
Consortium of Ethnic Minority Organisations,
Milan Centre,
Council for Mosques,
Baildon Link,
Airedale Enterprise Centre,
Lister Print,
and certain drug-misuse centres.

The projected budget appears optimistic when compared to actual spend: a higher proportion being spent on management fees and staffing in particular, and less on publicity and events than originally estimated. Compliance with equal opportunities practice was to be achieved through event attendance; with this evaluation report contributing to the marketing and communication strategy.

People clearly had difficulties with the evaluation forms: they are poorly laid out and the categories are difficult to understand. For example, ethnicity is recorded as 'sector details' on the group form, and the only category to include African is "Mixed". The layout is confusing: two of the NVQ qualification categories

appear under the "priority learning" categories. Amongst individual learners' records the category least often completed was the "priority learner" category, where no explanation was provided for what this meant; and the descriptors are patronising (e.g. "member of a disadvantaged community-of-interest group").

Such events as these NLDC workshops seem to have served disproportionately large numbers of retired white women and educated community workers. Yet one of the purposes of the funding was to encourage take up of learning opportunities by those who have been out of the influence of any educational initiative for some time.

Recommendations

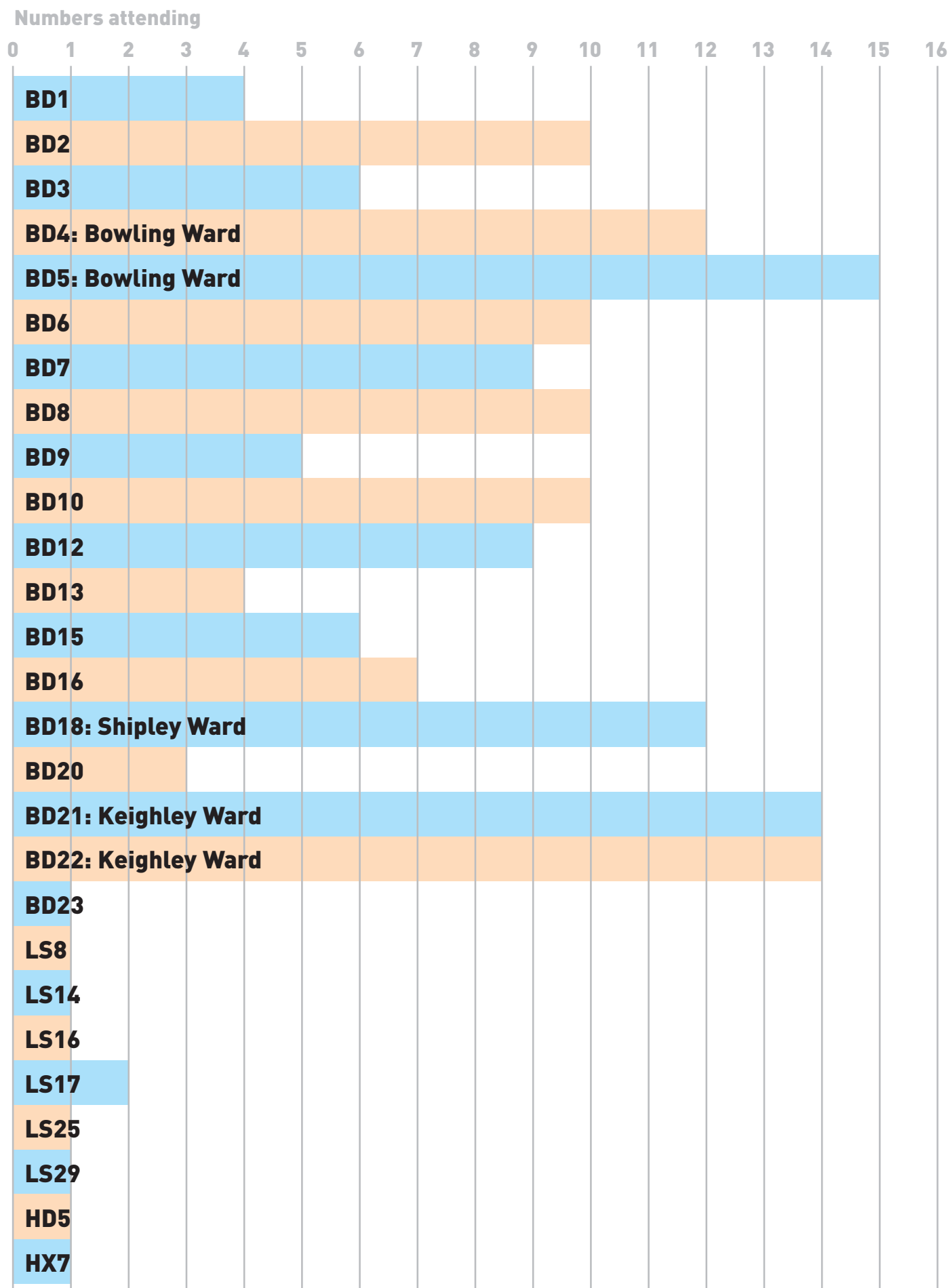
1. The "BME" (black and minority ethnic) tag is used to attract funding yet generic projects only deliver to a small section of that population. These groups are best involved through being engaged in the whole process: from course design to delivery of learning opportunities.
2. Any follow-up sessions should be planned to target the communities that are so often under-represented as beneficiaries: BME and 'new learners', by requesting the assistance of the community groups that specifically serve those communities, in deed rather than by merely quoting them on the application form.
3. Whilst people attended from some of the most deprived wards in the District the question remains did enough of the intended target audience benefit - the "new learners" that the NLDC programme is aimed at?
4. The time period for preparation of the application was approximately two weeks, over the Christmas holiday period - this is totally inadequate.

David N. Odunukwe

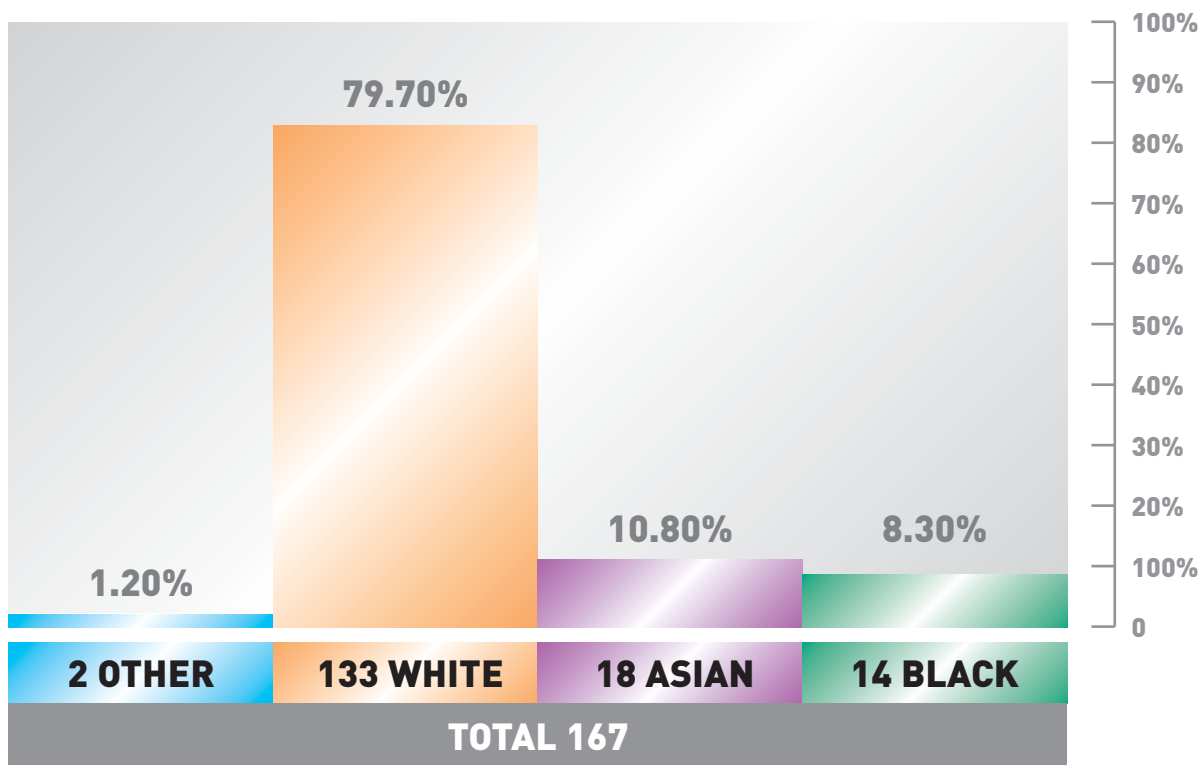
Action for Black Community Development Ltd
December 2006

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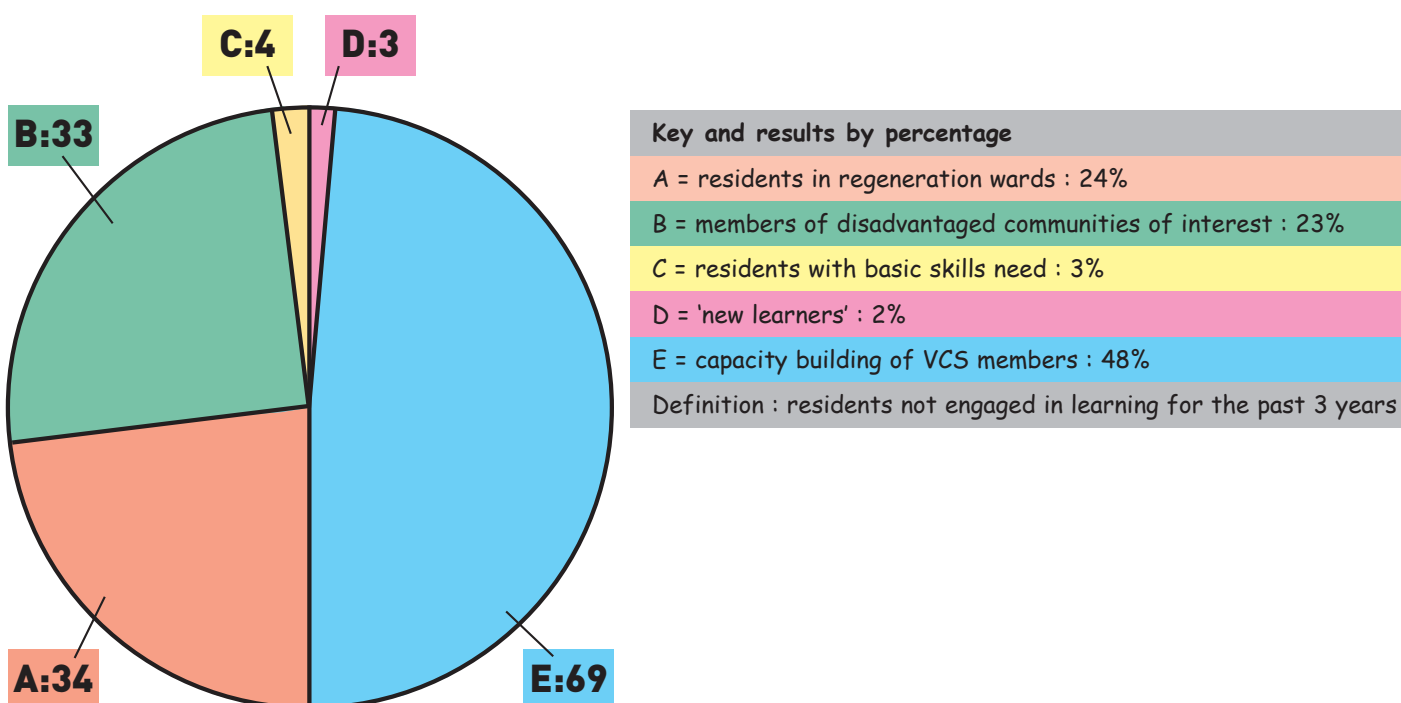
Appendix 1: Individuals attending by postcode - total 150



Appendix 2: Individuals attending by ethnicity



Appendix 3: NLDC priorities - individuals' replies



Appendix 4: Additional results from individual responses

Individuals by gender	Individuals by employment	Individuals by education
Male 71	Employed 88	No qualifications 19
Female 98	Unemployed 6 months 4	NVQ1 1
	Unemployed 1 year 1	NVQ2 6
	Unemployed 2 years 2	NVQ3 25
	Unemployed 3 years 52 (inc 'retired')	NVQ4 11
		NVQ5 30

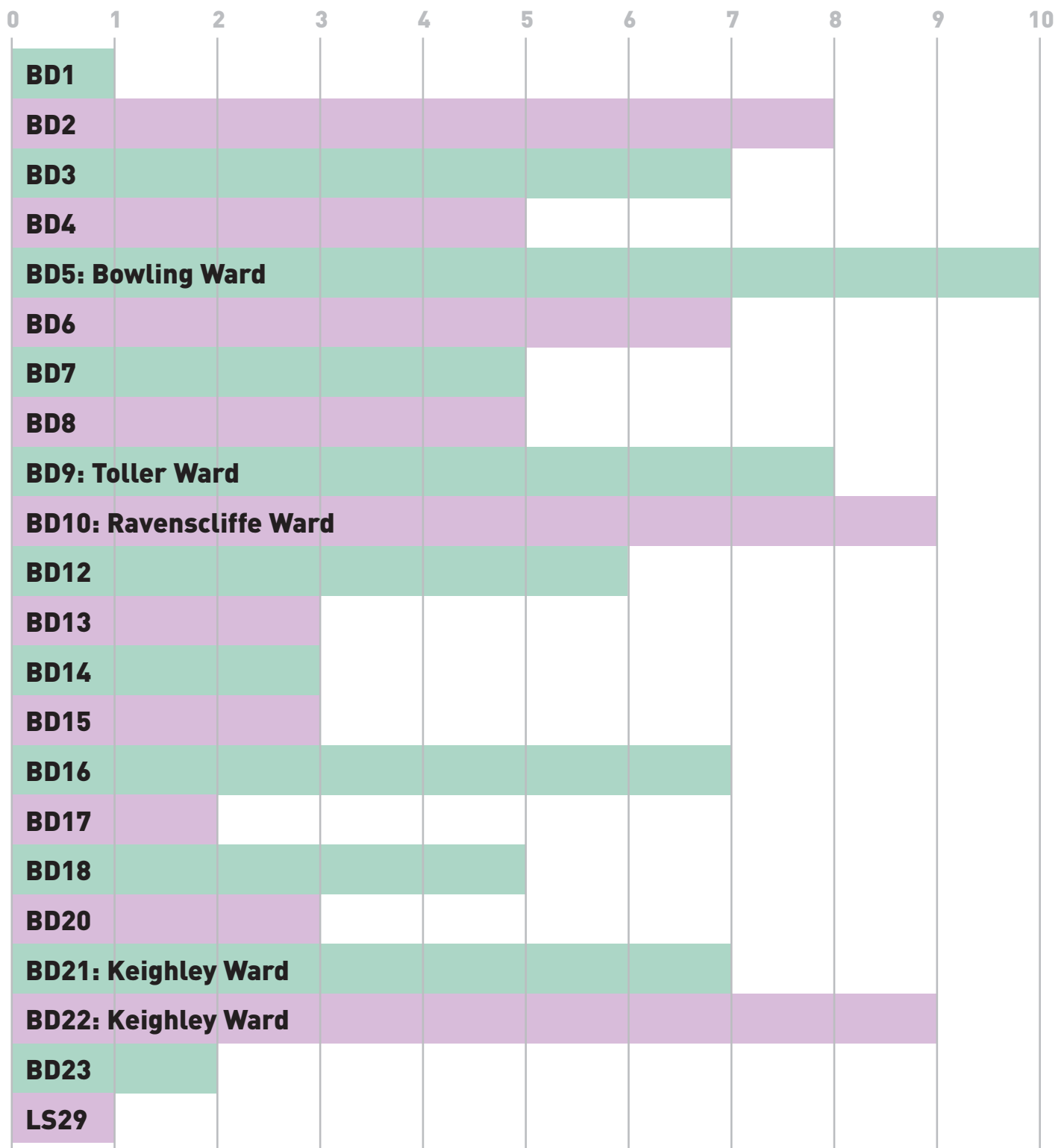
Individuals by age bands
65+ years 49
50+ years 36
35+ years 49
18+ years 23
Under 18 years 2

Appendix 5: Benefits from attending

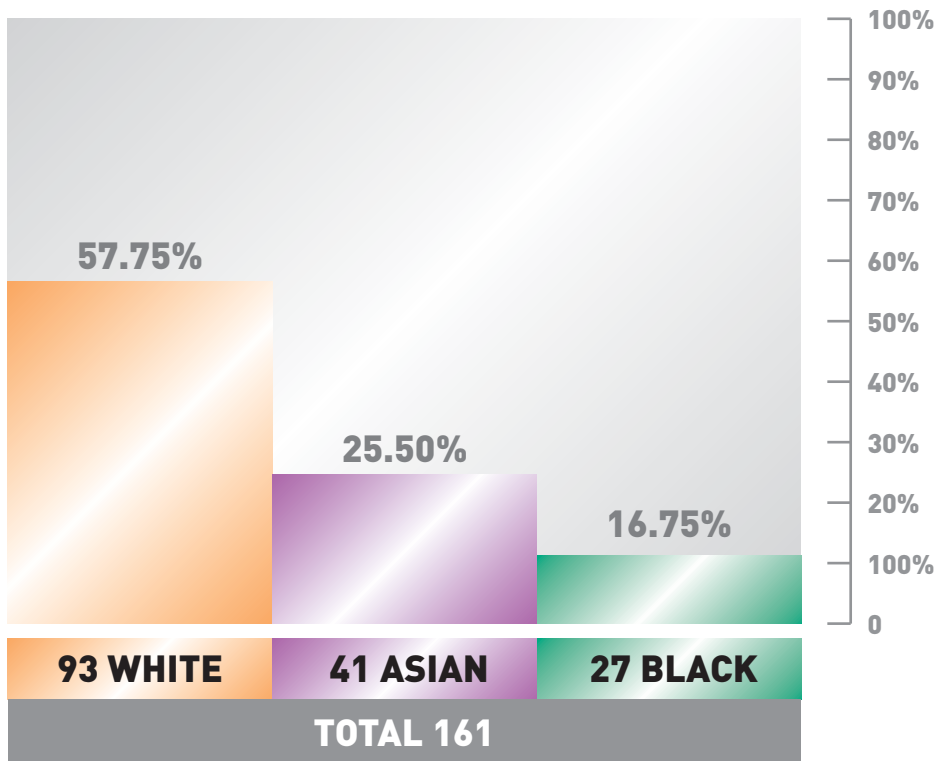
Group comments
Networking 53
Funding advice 35
New funders 34
Applying for funding 30
Budgeting advice 17
Training opportunities 14
Meeting funders' representatives 13
Understanding 'wider' picture 13
Monitoring projects 4
Empowering groups 2
Follow-up requested 2

Appendix 6: Organisations attending by postcode - total 84

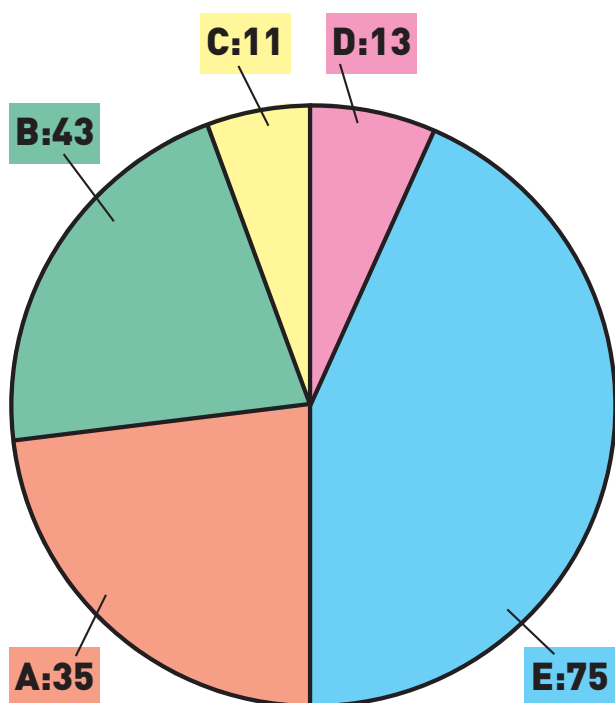
Number of organisations



Appendix 7: Number of organisations by clients' ethnicity



Appendix 8: NLDC priorities - group replies



Key and results by percentage	
A = residents in regeneration wards	: 20%
B = members of disadvantaged communities of interest	: 24%
C = residents with basic skills need	: 6%
D = 'new learners'	: 7%
E = capacity building of VCS members	: 43%
Definition : residents not engaged in learning for the past 3 years	