FST unwrapped
National learning from the Fair Share Trust
UK-wide evaluation
About the Fair Share Trust Programme

UK Community Foundations (UKCF) was responsible for using its local giving expertise to ensure the effective implementation of the £50 million UK wide Fair Share Trust programme (FST), funded by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG).

FST ran from 2003–2013, working in 80 plus neighbourhoods across the four UK nations, each one of which had not previously received their ‘fair share’ of Lottery funding and was statistically one of the least advantaged communities in the UK.

How this report was developed

The paper draws on a number of sources and is primarily qualitative in nature.

Earlier evaluations of FST, local evaluations, and the body of quantitative data that has been generated by the programme over time have all been reviewed. This has been supplemented by primary evidence gathered from those people at the heart of FST, both nationally and locally, and with content from an innovative impact focused website which has invited contributions from the range of FST stakeholders and has sought to generate debate around those postings.
Find out more about the impact of Fair Share Trust...

This report is one of a series of documents evaluating the Fair Share Trust programme. To view or download other documents in the series, visit: www.fst-impact.org.uk

There is one programme management report
Part one of this paper describes FST in more detail and summarises why UKCF advocates for devolved grant-making. Part two looks at the constituent elements of a devolved programme, using the learning from FST to help future grant programme designers learn from its experience.

There is a paper about the co-created evaluation process
This is a brief summary of the co-creation approach that constituted part of the final evaluation of FST.

There are four national reports
The papers tell the story of FST in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, highlighting the impacts that have been achieved and the learning.

And one report focusing on the four programme aims
This paper focuses on FST’s four aims: capacity building, social capital, liveability and sustainability. It identifies the changes that the programme achieved and highlights the approaches, methods and programme features that have made an important contribution to achieving the four aims.

Read comments and blog posts from people involved in FST, watch videos and download written reports from local FST areas at:

www.fst-impact.org.uk
The story of Fair Share Trust in England is one of innovation and commitment. Given the opportunity to make choices about how funds would be spent in their own neighbourhoods, people across the country have been inspired to make plans for the future while dealing with the needs of the present. The programme has changed lives and communities, and built a platform for future community development.

Fair Share Trust was designed and driven by the Community Foundation Network, now UK Community Foundations, which was responsible for using its local giving expertise to ensure the effective implementation of the £50 million UK-wide Fair Share Trust (FST) programme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

In England, the Fair Share Trust programme ran from 2003-2013 and was managed by 26 appointed Local Agents, the majority of them Community Foundations or Councils for Voluntary Service. A total of £39.7m has been awarded, creating over 650 community projects across 48 target neighbourhoods that were among of the least advantaged communities in England and which had lost out on Lottery investment in the past.

In each target area a Local Panel made up of local people identified key gaps and needs in their area, set priorities for their future, and outcomes they wished to achieve with the funding. Using the local priorities and outcomes they were able to guide and advise on the allocation of funds. Final decisions on funding were made by the Local Agents. The practice of placing local people at the heart of planning and delivery was a defining feature of UK Community Foundation’s design of Fair Share Trust, and has been key to the programme’s success in delivering change in communities.
The achievements of the programme are impressive. Communities have been drawn together to learn about local needs, about each other, and to make choices about the collective action required.

People and organisations have discovered and learnt new skills, and new ambitions, and transformed their communities.

Social capital – the connections and interactions between people – and community capacity have grown. These success stories are what the Fair Share Trust programme has been about, and what this paper highlights.
The model: approach

Ground level decision-making means relevant grant-making. Panels with strong local involvement have rooted the English Fair Share Trust programme in community needs and ambitions.

Fair Share Trust was ahead of the Localism game in devolving budgets for community grant-making to Local Agents and Local Panels, typically a blend of committed local residents and workers or managers from key local organisations.

Local Panels and Local Agents worked together to deliver the programme, with Panels acting, as one Agent put it, as ‘the eyes and ears of Fair Share Trust on the ground’, and fulfilling the key decision-making function over the allocation of funds.

Passing decision-making to ground level was an ambitious goal for Fair Share Trust. 10 years of Local Panel working across the country has brought success, learning and friendships, and trials and tribulations for some. The programme has highlighted the benefits of devolved decision-making and identified the challenges in making it work well.

The learning from Fair Share Trust shows that locally led grant-making can add significant value to the ownership and delivery of projects in communities, and can add to the longevity of the impact of the grants through the momentum of goodwill, new capacity and social capital generated by engaging local people within the process.
“I’ve seen the Panel grow and I’ve seen what we’ve done in the community. It’s taken me into community leadership, and into how services can work with the community. I can see the product and the growth, both personally and in the community.”

Manchester Local Panel member

Avoiding the pitfalls – where local decision-making can be difficult

What have been the challenges faced by Local Panels?

• Recruiting local people, especially in areas where there is limited community activity and infrastructure
• Supporting local people to succeed (and working with partners to allow them the space and time to grow and develop)
• Clarifying roles and processes at the start (and whenever it is needed)
• Managing vested interests, pet projects and the influence of established organisations and individuals
• Keeping an eye on the ball; remembering agreed priorities
• Keeping people interested once the money has been spent

Unlocking potential – making local decision-making work

What has helped Local Panels to work well?

• Getting a good balance between local knowledge and the bigger picture - between activists and strategists
• Strong and consistent Chairing
• Taking the long view, and being willing to wait for benefits to emerge over time
• Being prepared to make grants to key organisations over time, and make repeat grants if needed
• Being willing to make grants for development as well as activities
• Understanding the difference between grant-making and commissioning, and knowing which is preferred
• Being willing to shift the approach from grants to commissioning, or from commissioning to grants, or to have a balance between the two approaches
The model: approach

Ground level decision-making: three case studies

Accountability and transparency are two key benefits of Local Panels. Concerns expressed by residents in Little Digmoor, Lancashire, part way through the Fair Share Trust programme led to an unusual, though highly democratic solution.

The programme priorities for the area had been agreed by the Local Panel following a community visioning event on the estate. These were: the local environment, leisure activities for young people, traffic and road safety, community safety and community development.

Early projects focused on physical improvements to demonstrate change and to create a sense of momentum and purpose. Technical, planning and tendering issues began to slow the process and generate frustration locally. This led to inaction as local residents sought greater influence over the decision making process.

The Local Panel comprised representatives from local public and voluntary sector agencies, West Lancashire CVS (the Local Agent) and representatives from the Little Digmoor Community Association. To alleviate local concerns, it was agreed that residents should hold an in-built majority on the Panel, ensuring no grant could be awarded without the support of local people. Furthermore, the Local Panel determined that potential new grants for high value projects should have wider community approval, and initiated a system of estate wide postal voting to offer residents influence over decisions.

This commitment to local decision making necessarily added to the time taken to make awards, but guaranteed transparency and accountability. The Local Panel went on to make 29 further grants, with three projects being rejected by the residents through the community voting system.

‘From our perspective as the Local Agent, we now have a community that’s not solely dependent on their council: they do things for themselves’

Local Agent

Understand why people volunteer
Forever Manchester surveyed members across the 10 Local Panels they supported. The most common reason for local people to get involved was a desire to give something back to their community. Professional workers were motivated to add value to their role, and Voluntary and Community Sector staff were attracted by the opportunity to offer local people a voice in decision-making.
“We recruited Panel members from the local neighbourhood which got things going quicker and led to more creative ideas around what we might want to fund”

Local Agent, Manchester

Case study: THE NORTH SOMERSET LOCAL PANEL

Described as the driving force behind Fair Share Trust in North Somerset, the Local Panel was drawn from the Local Authority, North Somerset Partnership, Quartet Community Foundation (the Local Agent) and local community representatives from the targeted areas.

The Local Panel were primarily concerned with the weakness of the voluntary and community sector infrastructure and capacity in the district at the outset of the programme. They believed that ‘just another grants programme’ would be unlikely to address this, and adopted a clear strategy of development work alongside infrastructure organisations and what were termed ‘community anchor organisations’ in target neighbourhoods. The Local Panel had a relatively stable membership over the life of Fair Share Trust, which enabled it to operate flexibly and for long-term relationships to be developed.

The Local Panel evolved into a blend of “community experts” and “community agents” who brought a combination of energy, experience and knowledge to the Local Panel’s work. The Local Panel used a commissioning approach, engaging in dialogue with potential providers and undertaking extensive research before making awards. The Local Panel funded a total of 11 organisations (with nearly 60% of funds supporting the development of a new local infrastructure organisation – Voluntary Action North Somerset), creating a legacy of support for community development in the district.
The Grimsby Local Panel was made up of representatives from the Local Authority, Primary Care Trust, Local Strategic Partnership, local provider organisations, the local voluntary and community sector, a specialist community enterprise agency, local residents and a young person’s representative.

An early choice was made to employ two Development Workers, and the Local Panel used the workers to map local needs, capacity and gaps in the target communities, drawing up a strategy based on the mapping exercise.

The Local Panel initially used an open grants approach, publicising the available funds and appraising bids. As the strategy developed to meet the three agreed priorities (voluntary sector capacity, community development and community business development), the Panel shifted more to a commissioning approach, identifying what was needed and seeking out appropriate providers and bids.

The Local Panel made a total of 21 awards, 17 of which were sustained beyond the life of Fair Share Trust. Key success factors identified through evaluation were a very clear sense of purpose, a Panel that understood its role well and worked well together, and a high quality communications strategy, developed after initial feedback suggested a lack of awareness of the programme in the target areas.
The model: devolving priorities

Fair Share Trust in England devolved choices over priorities to Local Panels: ensuring local knowledge was at the heart of the programme.

Guided by the four Fair Share Trust aims of capacity building, liveability, social capital and sustainability, the Local Panel for each Fair Share Trust area made choices over the priorities that would be used to make grants or commission activities.

English Local Panels made their choices for priorities through dialogue with local people, organisations and partner agencies. A Neighbourhood Assessment Document was produced through liaison with the Local Strategic Partnership, followed by consultation with local people and organisations to produce a Neighbourhood Priorities Document.

In some areas, Local Panels undertook new research to encourage involvement and to get good local knowledge. Visioning events, community surveys, consultative meetings and structured research were each used to help identify needs and assets within communities and support Local Panels to make their choices.

Many Local Panels also aligned their work with other knowledge about their target areas to ensure the priorities chosen were a good fit with wider plans as well as complementing local people’s perceptions and ideas.

Give people the chance to succeed

Offering support and training may add value to a Local Panel, helping members to know their roles, the processes the Local Panel will follow and the expectations placed on them. Lincolnshire Community Foundation created a Panel Induction Pack covering processes, roles and responsibilities and a code of conduct. Dorset Community Foundation ran Panel Development Sessions covering these areas and others before the Local Panel was able to consider any grant awards.
Children and young people was the most commonly identified priority. Other high priorities were health and wellbeing, local voluntary and community sector capacity, the environment, community safety and training/education.
## Local area priorities

### East Midlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ashfield, Nottinghamshire | • Interventions relating to young people, drugs and health  
• The development of social enterprise  
• Learning and skills opportunities  
• Meeting the needs of older people  
• Developing financial support facilities and access to information |
| Bolsover, Derbyshire       | • Support and develop community capacity  
• Youth work  
• Training and education |
| City of Derby              | • Community work  
• Youth work  
• Regeneration of commercial centres and social spaces |
| Basildon, Essex            | • Developing and enhancing the local environment  
• Family development  
• Training and volunteering |
| Great Yarmouth, Norfolk    | • Local infrastructure: environment, road safety, heritage restoration, community play |
| Luton, Bedfordshire        | • Improve the range of activities that engage young people  
• Improve employment and learning skills of residents  
• Improve and maintain the health and well-being of individuals and the community |
| Peterborough, Cambridgeshire | • An active, healthy, thriving and inclusive community  
• Widen access to a wide range of services, resources and information  
• Children and young people  
• Life-long learning, training, enterprise and employment |
| Tendring, Essex            | • Developing and enhancing the local environment  
• Family development  
• Training and volunteering |
| Lowestoft, Suffolk         | • Community development  
• New services and activities (activities for young people, increase volunteering, parent skills development / support, and improvement of the local environment)  
• Community safety, and the wellbeing of local residents |
| London                    | • Community infrastructure  
• Community involvement and cohesion  
• Community empowerment and local services  
• Residents opportunities (education, learning and training)  
• Children, young people and families  
• Community development  
• Neighbourhood pride  
• Access to existing or new facilities, services and activities  
• Improvements to the local environment  
• Tameside (Micklehurst)  
• Increase the capacity and sustainability of local voluntary and community groups  
• Increase children and young people’s engagement |
| North East                 | • Community development  
• Health activities  
• Partnership development and community group capacity  
• Development of community facilities  
• Access to services  
• Children and young people  
• Health issues and healthy lifestyles  
• Community linkages  
• Children and young people  
• Health and well-being |
| Blackpool, Lancashire      | • Improving community pride and cohesion  
• Reducing community violence and crime  
• Improving the health of young people  
• Increase community capacity  
• Widen participation in learning  
• Children and young people / youth nuisance  
• Vulnerable, older and disabled people |
| Ellesmere Port and Neston, Cheshire | • Sustainable neighbourhoods – particularly crime & anti social behaviour, inter-generational working and environmental problems  
• Community and voluntary sector development  
• Children and young people  
• Improved access to existing and new facilities |
| Greater Manchester        | • Community capacity building and cohesion  
• Environment and health  
• Community facilities / assets  
• Crime, anti social behaviour and community safety  
• Voluntary and community sector capacity  
• Children, young people and families |
| Oldham (St James)          | • Voluntary and community sector capacity  
• Children, young people and families  
• Health and well-being |
| Oldham (All)               | • Children and young people  
• Health and wellbeing  
• Voluntary and community sector capacity, facilities and services  
• Community safety |
| Rochdale                  | • Young people’s active involvement in their community  
• Young people’s employment and learning  
• The health of young people  
• To improve community safety  
• To improve access to and use of services and facilities by young people |
| Salford                   | • Health and well-being  
• Learning and creativity  
• Community safety and the environment  
• Children and young people  
• Inclusivity and stronger communities  
• A more cohesive voluntary and community sector |
| Tameside (Droylsden)       | • A more cohesive voluntary and community sector  
• Access to existing or new facilities, services and activities  
• Improvements to the local environment  
• Tameside (Micklehurst)  
• Increase the capacity and sustainability of local voluntary and community groups  
• Increase children and young people’s engagement |
| North West                | • Community development  
• Health activities  
• Partnership development and community group capacity  
• Development of community facilities  
• Access to services  
• Children and young people  
• Health issues and healthy lifestyles  
• Community linkages  
• Children and young people  
• Health and wellbeing |
| Blackpool, Lancashire      | • Improving community pride and cohesion  
• Reducing community violence and crime  
• Improving the health of young people  
• Increase community capacity  
• Widen participation in learning  
• Children and young people / youth nuisance  
• Vulnerable, older and disabled people |
| Ellesmere Port and Neston, Cheshire | • Sustainable neighbourhoods – particularly crime & anti social behaviour, inter-generational working and environmental problems  
• Community and voluntary sector development  
• Children and young people  
• Improved access to existing and new facilities |
| Greater Manchester        | • Community capacity building and cohesion  
• Environment and health  
• Community facilities / assets  
• Crime, anti social behaviour and community safety  
• Voluntary and community sector capacity  
• Children, young people and families |
| Oldham (St James)          | • Voluntary and community sector capacity  
• Children, young people and families  
• Health and wellbeing |
| Oldham (All)               | • Children and young people  
• Health and wellbeing  
• Voluntary and community sector capacity, facilities and services  
• Community safety |
| Rochdale                  | • Young people’s active involvement in their community  
• Young people’s employment and learning  
• The health of young people  
• To improve community safety  
• To improve access to and use of services and facilities by young people |
| Salford                   | • Health and well-being  
• Learning and creativity  
• Community safety and the environment  
• Children and young people  
• Inclusivity and stronger communities  
• A more cohesive voluntary and community sector |
| Tameside (Droylsden)       | • A more cohesive voluntary and community sector  
• Access to existing or new facilities, services and activities  
• Improvements to the local environment  
• Tameside (Micklehurst)  
• Increase the capacity and sustainability of local voluntary and community groups  
• Increase children and young people’s engagement |

### West Midlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dudley                    | • An infrastructure of youth & community facilities and opportunities for young people  
• Greater community involvement |
| North Solihull            | • Communication and information  
• Develop and support existing community groups  
• Cross community groups and projects  
• Community owned assets and facilities |
| Sandwell                  | • Youth activities  
• Anti-social behaviour, drug abuse, and crime & community safety  
• Health & wellbeing |
| Telford & Wrekin          | • Community safety, housing and the environment  
• Children and young people  
• Widening access  
• Healthy communities |
| Walsall                   | • Voluntary infrastructure  
• Young people  
• Provision of a permanent asset that will be of benefit to all residents |
| YORKSHIRE HUMBERSIDE      | • Voluntary sector capacity  
• Community development  
• Promotion of community business |

### South Yorkshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Barnsley                  | • Pulling together to build our future  
• Community pride  
• Children and young people  
• Health  
• Accessibility and inclusion |
| Doncaster                 | • Opportunities and access to sport, recreation, training and employment  
• Children and young people  
• The environment |
| Rotherham                 | • Health and wellbeing  
• Accessibility to existing and new services, facilities and resources  
• Community safety and the environment  
• Children and young people  
• Further education/training and job creation opportunities |
FST: the impact

Some key achievements of Fair Share Trust in England:

• £39.7m allocated across 48 English communities

• Average of approximately £880,000 of grants made in each community

• £18.4m of additional funding levered from other sources (a further 46.3% on top of the original allocation)

• Over 650 new services, facilities or initiatives established
capacity building page 16

“We built a sports centre here when they said it couldn’t be done and in an area where we’ve never received any funding like this before.”

*Springview Community Sports Association, Wigan, Lancashire*

liveability page 24

“Looking at the crime figures, they’ve certainly gone down. People want to live here now... they didn’t want to be anywhere near us before.”

*Local Councillor, Tameside, Manchester*

social capital page 32

“The contacts and relationships we’ve built up are strong and trustworthy. We are on the ball. We’ve got groups mixing together; we are the Big Society in action.”

*Prime project, Droylsden, Manchester*

sustainability page 38

“When you invest in people they want to give something back. It’s building up people who carry on a legacy. They can actually carry on the work that has been done.”

*Local Agent, London*
The impact on: capacity building

From personal confidence to stronger community infrastructure, Fair Share Trust has built capacity for people and for organisations.

Confidence and self-belief are building blocks for change, and Fair Share Trust has worked to strengthen these through its work and investments across England. This has led to new aspirations and ambitions, and built skills and abilities to realise those ambitions.

Fair Share Trust aimed to move people, community groups, organisations and systems into a stronger position. This strength created a legacy of energy and assets within communities and a shift in the capacity of people and communities to bring about change, either for themselves or for their neighbours.

Capacity has been strengthened at many levels in England: individuals have gained confidence and skills and used these to secure qualifications and work; community groups have grown stronger at meeting local needs in their neighbourhoods and healthier systems and structures within the voluntary and community sector have been developed to support ongoing work in communities.

A great many people and organisations have been supported across the country through training, mentoring and dedicated support.

“It sounds like an exaggeration, but working in the local bureau has changed my life – I started out as a trainee and now I am advising people by myself. I am very proud to be part of such a great charity.”

Project volunteer, Cheshire
Many jobs have been created through Fair Share Trust grants. In Manchester alone, which had the most Fair Share Trust areas, a total of 49 full time and 124 part time jobs were created, and 65% of organisations supported through Fair Share Trust agreed that their capacity had increased as a result of the support received through the programme.

“It would appear that Fair Share Trust has resulted in exactly what it was created to do: helped create organisations that were able to identify local need and subsequently apply to the Big Lottery for funding.”

*Project Evaluation report, Ashington, Northumberland*
Pat had been seriously ill after being a victim of domestic violence.

A leaflet from a local Fair Share Trust funded Day Centre in Grimsby arrived at a time Pat believed she was well enough to spend time with other people. With the help of her GP, Pat volunteered at the centre, helping out with cleaning, cooking and reception tasks.

Over 18 months, Pat built her confidence and self-belief, stopped using the medication she had been taking for many years, and got a job working with the NHS to support people with mental health needs.

“Harbour Place (the day centre) offered the chain of support that helped me regain a part of my life which I had lost. I needed the centre, but I was proud that I began to help others who were less fortunate than me. Harbour Place has helped me turn all the negatives in my life into positives.”

John joined a community volunteering project in the Tees Valley following a period of homelessness.

John volunteered at local community projects – a lunch club, a youth group, a community allotment and a homelessness action group. He applied to join the Rank Foundation’s Gapper programme, and used this experience to gain a post with a local community organisation as a trainee youth worker.

John has now set up his own social enterprise to support vulnerable young people with their personal development.

Some examples of individuals who have built their capacity through Fair Share Trust in England...
Mandy joined a confidence building and self esteem programme run through Fair Share Trust in Bournemouth, after her children were placed on a Care Plan.

The course worked to help Mandy consider her future and how volunteering may be a valuable step along the way.

Mandy went on to volunteer at a local music festival and community shop, as well as in schools and nurseries.

She has gained a total of four qualifications, and secured a job with a charity in nearby Poole visiting older people living alone to help re-connect them with social activities.

Sarah, who had struggled to find work since leaving school, was supported by a Fair Share Trust volunteering project in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

Sarah was interested in working in the retail sector, and the project set up a volunteering role at a local charity shop.

Sarah enjoyed the role, and soon increased her hours. Some weeks later, the volunteering project received a call from Sarah’s mum, saying that Sarah had been offered a part time job with a large fashion retailer.

Sarah was convinced the volunteering had helped build the confidence and skills to help her ‘get her foot on the ladder.’
The impact on: capacity building

A stronger voluntary sector in North Somerset

Alarmed at the weakness of voluntary sector infrastructure in North Somerset, described as a ‘sink or swim’ environment characterised by a lack of support to local groups, the FST Local Panel chose to make large grants to develop new support for voluntary and community activity.

This involved playing a long game – identifying the potential providers of support services to the voluntary sector or ‘community anchor’ organisations and being prepared to make grants over a number of years in the development of those organisations, and the networks between them.

The key impact identified by the local evaluation, is the evolution of Voluntary Action North Somerset as a fully functioning Local Infrastructure Organisation. Coupled with the strengthening of other infrastructure providers and the facilitation of networks between them for partnership working, the programme has bolstered the overall capacity available to support smaller, more local community organisations in the district.

“The real impact we’ve had is in encouraging organisations to restructure, look at different ways of organising themselves, re-visit their management plans, look at them in the light of current circumstances, and to develop themselves.”

Local Panel Member, North Somerset

The Local Panel and the Local Agent, Quartet Community Foundation, needed to be flexible and creative in their approach, especially in response to the economic downturn and public sector cuts, and have used Fair Share Trust funds to stabilise, develop and enhance a range of organisations.

The Local Panel made key grants to Somerset Racial Equality Council (to enable development of a BME forum), North Somerset Enterprise Agency (to help develop support to social enterprises), a local arts organisation (to create a support structure for community arts), a Community Transport organisation (enabling a merger of two previous organisations), and two local community organisations seen as critical in offering local community support and development.
Stronger local community groups – stories from Hull

Community Development Workers (or similarly titled roles) have been a common feature of capacity building work funded by Fair Share Trust across England. Often employed through the Local Agent, or an infrastructure provider such as a CVS, these workers have provided much of the support and information to small local organisations delivering Fair Share Trust work, helping to boost local capacity on the ground. In Hull, a Development Worker was employed to support groups with tasks such as improving governance, managing volunteers and identifying potential funding streams...

“Orchard Park United is a new football team being established in the area for the benefit of young men who have previously had difficulties with discipline and have often been in trouble with the law. The volunteer team manager was keen to establish the team but lacked the experience and knowledge of how to run a charitable organisation. I helped him to write a constitution and establish a management committee. We submitted a number of small grant bids to help with the purchase of equipment and the hiring of suitable training facilities. These were successful and the team experienced almost immediate success. Since then I have helped the team with a number of subsequent funding bids, all of which have been successful. The organisation has now launched a ‘B-team’ due to its increasing stature within the area.”

Fair Share Trust Development Worker

“Our Development Worker quickly recognised a number of skills gaps within local community groups. A volunteer management programme, employment law sessions and fundraising workshops were facilitated and engaged the majority of groups based within Orchard Park. Feedback forms from the event suggest each participant had a positive experience and were confident to implement new practices that could develop their organisation.”

Local Agent

“Courts Community Association was supported to deliver effective youth provision. Links were made with a City Council project that support and train local volunteers in youth work and this helped the Community Association to develop their own volunteering and employment practice. The Association grew stronger with support and is now in a position to deliver youth services on behalf of the Council. The group was originally reliant on Fair Share Trust funding, and has now been delivering youth work for over three years by accessing other grants and contracts due their proven track record and capacity to deliver.”

Fair Share Trust Development Worker
The impact on: capacity building

Gaining confidence through work as Local Panel Members

Fair Share Trust has involved local people across the UK as Local Panel members, ensuring a local influence and voice on how Fair Share Trust funds are distributed. This has been a great opportunity for many community members to gain knowledge, skills and confidence in working with others, in shared decision-making and in monitoring and evaluating the impact of awards. Some Local Panel members have extended this experience into new opportunities, such as the Big Local and Community First programmes, demonstrating their application of the skills gained through Fair Share Trust.

Members of some of the Manchester Local Panels reflect on their experiences...

“I’ve seen the Local Panel grow and I’ve seen what we’ve done in the community. It’s taken me into community leadership, and into how services can work with the community. I can see the product and the growth, both personally and in the community.”

“It gives you a wider outlook on everything. It makes you realise just how many things are going on in the community that you didn’t know about. It gives you a better idea of how to apply for other grants as well. I’ve become involved with other groups and our group now gets more involved with all sorts of things.”

“Actually seeing the empowerment to residents is what I’ve got most from it (being a Local Panel member). Seeing how local people have led decision making and taken control in their areas.”

“It has instilled a sense of confidence in me and raised my self-esteem. It has brought out the skills I had and helped me use them as a Local Panel member.”

“I enjoyed being with other residents that under normal circumstances I wouldn’t. I’ve got to know a lot more about the community and the people. I understand a lot more about what we, as a Town Council, can do to help. From my point of view, it has taken away the fear of my title (councillor) for others. I’m just a person like them who does the washing up and plays bingo.”
Creating the capacity to work

Train to Gain is a social enterprise in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, which trains young people in handling machinery. Fair Share Trust funded new equipment, supporting the organisation to work with young people who were out of work, education or training.

This cohort of young people could find it difficult to engage with year-long courses, so the organisation switched to ‘bite-sized’ modules instead. Young people learnt time-keeping and attendance skills in addition to key skills in construction, plant machinery work and motor vehicle maintenance, reporting that they particularly liked the ‘real’ situation of being on a trading estate in a proper workshop, rather than a college.

The approach has been very effective – over four years of operating, the organisation has helped 150 previously socially-excluded young people into full-time employment and over 60 into part-time jobs. 95% come away with at least one qualification.
The impact on: liveability

Changing places together. Fair Share Trust has given people the chance to create better buildings, spaces and areas for play in their communities.

Fair Share Trust’s goal of liveability, and a 10-year long programme to make changes, offered communities and organisations the chance to think carefully about how to improve the places they lived in. Groups around England seized their chance, designing projects that went beyond bricks and mortar to make places and spaces that are safer, healthier, greener, cleaner, more welcoming and more accessible to all groups.

Fair Share Trust has enabled different people to change places in different ways around the country – some have worked on local community buildings, others on green spaces, play areas, parks, shops and people’s homes and gardens. Others have invested in equipment or facilities to bring people together, or in festivals, sports or arts projects to boost community spirit. In some areas, liveability has been the key goal for their Fair Share Trust work, inspiring residents to take a whole community approach to improving their local environment.
“At the outset of the programme there was considerable antagonism and even animosity between people in the local area, now there is far more warmth.”

*Panel member, Ashfield, Nottinghamshire*
Some key LIVEABILITY impacts in England:

People’s homes and gardens have been changed through Fair Share Trust.

In Lowestoft, the Pride in our Road project captured the Lowestoft in Bloom award after involving over 120 volunteers, many of them young people, in renovating the gardens, walls, paths and frontages of 173 local properties.

“I never thought that clearing an old person’s garden would make such a difference to her. She was nearly in tears. I felt pretty good that I’d done it.”

Young trainee, Pride in our Road

In another part of the town, a further 200 gardens were improved and unemployed volunteers were given valuable work experience by the Mow & Grow project.

Play and recreation spaces were a priority for many Fair Share Trust areas.

Parks, local green spaces, public areas such as war memorials, MUGAs (Multi Use Games Areas) and play areas have been a feature for many local programmes. Lostock Park in Trafford, Manchester, was transformed through the effort of local volunteers and a Fair Share Trust grant. Community involvement in the design of the new play areas led to increased use of the park by children, young people and families, more community events and a decrease in littering and anti-social behaviour. A Friends of Lostock Park group has taken shape to take the work forward.

“The project has been a fantastic achievement for the community and given young people faith in democratic processes and the knowledge that they can improve their environment.”

Friend of Lostock Park
Liveability is also about what takes place in communities.

Community events bring people together, give many a sense of purpose and pride, and use the skills of a community well. Mossley Community Festival in Tameside brought together people from across the area to plan and host a two-day arts festival which attracted over 8,000 people. Creating the festival brought different groups from the community together, increased revenue for local groups and businesses, and led to a skills exchange between the Festival Association and the local Residents Association, who volunteered to act as stewards in exchange for coaching in organising their own local events.

“I would like to congratulate the organisers of a very enjoyable couple of days of music which I do believe to be of tremendous benefit to the community.”

Local resident, Mossley

Community buildings are key assets to many neighbourhoods.

Good investment can make the difference between those assets being used well, or having little value to local people. St Luke’s Community Centre in St Helen’s, Lancashire, received grants for very functional improvements – the kitchen and car park – and this has brought the centre to life. A regular clientele of around 50 older people are now using the centre regularly to meet, spend time and eat together, and a pool of volunteers has been created, with mini-teams helping out on different projects around the centre.
The impact on: liveability

Little Digmoor – a transformed community

The Little Digmoor Community Association set out in 2005 to make their small estate in Skelmersdale, Lancashire, a ‘place where people wanted to live, rather then leave.’

The liveability of the area was not good at that time: there were high crime and fire setting rates, and a surplus of empty properties which could not be let.

The Community Association began their Fair Share Trust work with very visible projects to demonstrate that change was possible – the refurbishment of two local communal squares, installation of a toddlers’ play area and the renovation of the gardens at a block of pensioners’ flats. A community building became available, and the Community Association and other local groups used it to create a hive of local social and recreational activity, including an arts and crafts club, Cubs and Beavers, a drama club, a dance club, a youth club and an IT suite. Although the building was lost when it became uneconomic to repair during the latter stages of the project, all the activities have been rehoused in other settings around the area, and continue to thrive.

Community events have also played a large part in transforming the liveability of the estate, with trips for children and families and an annual festival.

Little Digmoor has indeed become a place where people now want to live: in 2012, there was a waiting list of over 550 people who had chosen the estate as their future home, and crime and fire setting rates have dropped dramatically (48% decrease in criminal damage and 82% decrease in secondary fires).

Linda Mangan, Secretary of Little Digmoor Community Association, reflects on her experience

“The main priority we had at the start of the project was to improve the local environment in which we had to live. Ten years ago our estate was starting to look sad and neglected and although we didn’t probably realise it at the time, it must have affected our outlook on life and given us a feeling of apathy towards our estate so we created a number of new public garden areas and refurbished others.

“Our estate is now much improved and a joy to walk around. The best news is that we now have a group of 20 or so residents who are now looking after the area outside their houses, removing the litter, weeding the flower beds and pruning the bushes so we can keep our public areas looking great.

“We now have good and productive relationships with the local police, councils and councillors, as well as the community safety partnerships. Having the money has allowed us to sit down with them to discuss our problems as equals rather than nuisances asking for things that they could not deliver.”
Skating away – young people take the lead in the North East

Liveability for young people in Ashington, Northumberland, meant having a skate park. They took their ideas to the Local Panel, and after consultation with other young people and residents, written proposals, videos and presentations, plans were put in place for a new park.

The Paddock Wood skate park has become a magnet for young people in the area, attracting hundreds of skateboarders, scooter riders and BMX riders aged from four up to 20.

Being involved from the outset in the project has given young people a sense of ownership of the project and the site, increasing liveability for themselves and others. Young people have organised litter picks to keep the area clean and are acting as peace keepers on site, resolving disputes between different groups of users. The Internet is being used as a place to chat about the site and let others know about it, and the local Police have welcomed the site and the impact it has had on life in the area.

“It’s the best thing that’s ever happened round here. It’s given the kids a focus – before the park there was nothing for them.”
Chair, North Seaton Residents Association

“We have had a problem with mini-motos in that area but the young people that use the skate park just don’t let them on. Anti-social behaviour has gone down and we don’t get any trouble from there – there’s been a massive decrease (in Police reports).”
Community Support Officer, Northumbria Police
The impact on: liveability

From bleak house to open house –
St Francis’ Church Hall, Trafford

Described as ‘bleak, cold and unwelcoming’ by a Community Needs survey, St Francis’ church hall, dating from the 1960s, was not adding much to the liveability of local people in Sale Moor, Trafford. It was falling out of use as it became more neglected and outdated.

A serious makeover was provided by Fair Share Trust funds and hard work from local people – new toilets, two meeting rooms, wi-fi, new flooring, re-wiring, central heating, new doors and an entrance canopy, and Disability Discrimination compliant access works have brought this fading community resource back into use. The Church, as owners, are seeing increases in usage from across the community, and have developed plans to keep the hall solvent and sustainable for the future.

“The hall is well used and is a great resource. Previously it was not a place of choice to go to. Now we offer many more services for the community. I feel privileged to have been part of the Fair Share Trust process – so that other people’s quality of life is improved.”

Rev. Julian Heaton, St Francis’ Church
Uniting neighbours –
Sholver, Oldham

The Sholver estate of Oldham has often been seen as two separate communities, ‘top’ and ‘bottom’, with little to bring residents together. Oldham Play Action Group used Fair Share Trust funds to bring children and families together from across the area, increasing liveability by re-connecting people with each other and providing a sense of community and identity through shared activity.

A programme of creative community arts and play activities for 5-13 year olds, located centrally between the top and bottom of the estate, and actively promoted across both communities, drew over 150 children and their parents together. The project has helped children gain new skills, confidence and friendships, and provided a buzz in the area through sharing art in events with parents and the wider community.

The project has also provided the spark for local people to consider a shared future between the two communities, and work is now underway with a local Community Partnership to discuss wider improvement and regeneration plans for Sholver.

“The most positive thing achieved through the project has been the parades which have proved to be a positive focal point to galvanise summer activities in the area.”

*Project Co-ordinator*
The impact on: social capital

Connections have been made. People and groups have found allies and friends, and are working together in communities.

Relationships and connections can be what make communities tick. Bringing people and organisations together helps trust and understanding to be built, and opens up the possibility of people spending time together or working together to improve a neighbourhood.

Fair Share Trust has been a catalyst for many individuals and groups to make the links they needed. This has helped bring isolated people together to gain support and discover friendships. It has also challenged perceptions and broken down barriers between different people, allowing many to see past labels such as ‘old’ and ‘young’ or ‘black’ and ‘white’.

Some key SOCIAL CAPITAL impacts in England:

Young Dads and their children were the focus of the Dallow Dads group in Luton.

A range of shared activities helped build relationships between the Dads, and between them and their children. Children found that they got to know their Dads better by having a good time with them, and Dads discovered that they enjoyed spending time with their children, and made new friends. A knock-on benefit which Dads identified was that the children spent less ‘screen time’ as a result, and that levels of homework improved!

“I strongly believe this has provided us with a great opportunity to interact and socialise, to improve our health and to get to know each other as Dads of different backgrounds and cultures. The youngsters love the badminton sessions and the Dads get to know their children better.”

Member of Dallow Dads
‘Nothing happens in the town now that we don’t get invited to... it has allowed us to sit on strategic partnerships which we wouldn’t otherwise have been able to do... it has allowed us to re-establish ourselves in the community’

Panel member, Darlington

Relationships between young people and the Police have been the focus of the Prime project in Droylsden, Tameside.

Bringing young people and Police Officers together to work on personal safety and a video focused on gun crime, gangs and domestic violence has built respect and understanding, and been a factor in reducing anti social behaviour in the area.

“It’s improved the levels of trust between young people and the Police. Given recent troubles in the area this is a relationship people really value.”

Local Headteacher

Residents and agencies have made connections and used them well in Parnwell, Peterborough.

The Local Delivery Group of residents began to work with partners to help turn their local neighbourhood plan into reality. The Delivery Group was also successful in bringing together a range of smaller local groups to unite around the plans for Parnwell. The new relationships developed, particularly with the Council, brought about much needed repairs to the pavements in the area, and a new partnership which led to the refurbishment of the local Community Centre.

“The group has been successful because...they work together to find ways to resolve concerns, they work closely with the Council and they appreciate the work that partners do to support us.”

Positively Parnwell Development Co-ordinator
The impact on: social capital

Older people brought together through social networking

The purchase of eight laptops for use by residents in warden-supported blocks of flats in Bolton created connections between older people, and helped them re-connect with relatives and friends in other parts of the country, and the world.

A communal booking system is operated by the Residents Association, and the laptops have also played a part in the residents monthly social gatherings.

The Chair of the Residents Association says the laptops have made a huge impact:

“The improved quality of life is very apparent in the greater cohesion among people. Residents are helping each other to use the laptops, and they have gained a greater understanding of the value of technology.”

Chair of the Residents Association

In addition to the social capital gained by the residents, the laptops are improving other areas of life for the residents – online shopping, banking and bill payments have now become regular activities for many residents.

Although one of the smallest Fair Share Trust awards made in the area, the laptops and the support to use them have opened many doors for the residents...

“We’re now in touch again with people we had lost touch with.”

“We enjoy playing games on the laptops with our young grandchildren.”

“I’ve contacted old school friends through Friends Reunited.”

“We can now communicate when we can’t write due to arthritis.”

“We’re keeping in touch with distant friends and relatives through Skype and emails.”
Working together becomes the norm in Bournemouth

Fair Share Trust work in the West Howe community of Bournemouth brought people and organisations together to focus on local issues and needs. An open forum, the Community Services Action Meeting, and the active presence of a Fair Share Trust Neighbourhood Worker, created known reference points for activity and networking.

20-25 individuals regularly came together as the Community Service Meeting Group, with local practitioners, service providers and councillors. Over 200 contacts were established and connected through the Group, enabling information to be shared, activities to be planned and issues to be debated.

The local evaluation identified significant social capital increases:

- Improved links between residents, between agencies and between residents and agencies
- Better awareness between different groups of residents of each other
- A bigger community feel that all are networking together – groups know about each other’s activities and events.
- Better awareness of each other between different groups of residents.
- A better sense that groups in the community are networking better.
- There are better connections between groups’ volunteers and beneficiaries.

“Fair Share Trust was meant to be strategic. We interpreted that as meaning that we should weave a West Howe fabric so every individual and project could be free to contribute without boundaries or silos”

Martha Searle, Fair Share Development Officer, West Howe
Young women share learning with their peers

The risks of alcohol and peer pressure were brought to life for young people by a group of young women from Lostock College in Trafford.

The group wanted to use their own experiences to help other young people to understand risk. Supported by their school, Mashed youth project and a youth worker from a local Housing Trust, the girls wrote, directed and filmed a 10 minute video concerning alcohol and peer pressure. They then showcased the film to families, Police, their school and local councillors.

The positive response encouraged the group to host a series of after school clubs for other young people, where the film was used as a prompt for discussion and young people had the chance to speak with local support agencies, that were invited to attend and offer advice and information.

“Weed is for losers, this project has proved this. I am my own person now and I will not give in to peer pressure.”

Young film maker
“I was extremely impressed with the presentation the young people gave. They had obviously researched the issues and took responsibility for highlighting the growing problem of underage drinking across Trafford.”

Stretford Neighbourhood Policing Team
The impact on: sustainability

Fair Share Trust has built a platform for the future. People, groups and organisations are drawing in new funding for the next step of their journeys.

Ensuring an ongoing legacy of activity and energy has been a strong focus for Fair Share Trust in England. Local Agents and Local Panels have encouraged and funded work to identify forward plans, and supported local communities and projects to think carefully about their future.

The programme has also created its own shift in resources, capacity and attitudes to redress the balance in resources in the target communities. As Fair Share Trust ends, people and organisations across England are now better equipped to meet needs, deliver activities and attract investment in their communities.
Some key SUSTAINABILITY impacts in England:

**New money has been attracted to Fair Share Trust areas.**

Many projects have used the resources gained through Fair Share Trust to lever in extra or ongoing money to sustain work.

Examples of this include: £1.6m additional funds secured in South Normanton & Pinxton, Derbyshire; £1m in Solihull, Birmingham; £1.8m in Manchester. A study in North Somerset identified that for every £1 invested, and additional £3 had been secured, and a Social Return on Investment Study in Brent, north London, reported that the social value returned for every £1 spent in the borough through Fair Share Trust was £7.

**Stronger organisations have been created or developed.**

The emphasis on sustainability and capacity building means the programme will leave behind a far stronger workforce in communities than at the outset.

One illustration of this comes from Darlington in County Durham, where 100% of funded groups reported that Fair Share Trust had made their organisations stronger.

Volunteering has also been substantially increased in Fair Share Trust areas, adding to the potential sustainability of activity. In Manchester, an equivalent of 25 new volunteers were recruited per funded organisation. This is unlikely to have been replicated across every area, though it is indicative of the boost to community activity and commitment generated by Fair Share Trust.
The impact on: sustainability

Better networks and connections have been established.

Fair Share Trust has strengthened the links and shared working between people, communities, groups and agencies.

The inclusion of Fair Share Trust areas in Strategic Plans is one indicator of these stronger networks (an example of this is the West Howe area of Bournemouth, adopted as a regeneration priority as part of the sustainability planning from Fair Share Trust). 70% of supported organisations in Manchester reported that the programme had helped them to form new collaboration and networks; 90% said their connectivity to other relevant groups and agencies had been increased.

New attitudes and behaviours have emerged.

The success of project work and the commitment to involvement within Fair Share Trust has inspired people and organisations to take new steps and to adopt a more optimistic outlook.

Here are two short examples...

- A young man from Luton known for challenging behaviour, pressurising his peers and associating with criminals is now using his influence over other young people positively after becoming involved in a Fair Share Trust youth arts project in the town.

- Support from a Fair Share Trust Community Liaison Worker in Bournemouth has re-energised the Chair of a local play organisation, who had been feeling exhausted and overwhelmed after 35 years of commitment to local families and coping with the effect of public sector funding cuts to his organisation. Help to gain short term funding to develop the organisation resulted in new policies, a revised business plan, new connections to possible funders and new funding bids. Fair Share Trust has given the Chair renewed energy to "continue the battle" for his organisation.
Planning for a future without Fair Share Trust in Grimsby

The Local Agent and Local Panel anticipated the end of the programme by making grants to neighbourhood forums in the two districts targeted by Fair Share Trust. In addition, the Panel employed two workers to support the development of the forums and consider future funding needs in the East and West Marsh communities.

Both these grants proved pivotal in enabling local people and community organisations to plan for the future, and build on the work established under Fair Share Trust. In addition to working with the neighbourhood forums on structures, governance and skills development, the two Development Workers also worked alongside the forum members to secure additional funding, attracting nearly £650,000 across the two organisations.

“The key legacy that Fair Share Trust funding will leave is a recognition by individuals and groups that cooperation is far more effective than competition when it comes to community development.”

Fair Share Trust Development Worker
The impact on: sustainability

Volunteers take Bolton gardening project forward

AGES – the Active Gardening Exchange Scheme – was a Fair Share Trust project working to maintain the gardens of older and disabled people in the town. The project was run by Groundwork and delivered mainly by a team of volunteers. With the Fair Share Trust funds coming to an end, the volunteer team got together to consider the future of the project.

The volunteers decided that the committed workforce, great clients and equipment were too good to let go, and they carried on the project.

Others have been keen to support the volunteers now that the project has no core funds. Groundwork have continued to offer the volunteers access to their office, phones and IT to organise the visits; a local landscape gardener donated 20 spades, 20 forks and five rakes; a local resident has offered the team the use of his garage for storage; and one of the volunteers is using her old camper van as a way of moving people and tools around the town. The team has needed to cut down the client list to those most in need, but still works with 40 people, and Groundwork are helping put together new funding bids to help support the running costs of the group.

“I used to be really fit and healthy, but I have dodgy knees and a bad back. I get out and about but gardening is a real struggle.”

AGES client

“If I wasn’t a volunteer I’d be sat in my flat going crackers. I had a drink problem and volunteering has turned my life around 360 degrees. Sorting this lot out focuses me.”

AGES volunteer
Using assets to ensure sustainability

The Old School House project in Knowsley, Merseyside, used Fair Share Trust funds to refurbish a disused education facility, creating a viable and sustainable Community Resource Centre.

The project worked hard to encourage and promote existing community organisations and groups to use the centre and develop new areas of community interest in consultation with local people.

The building has attracted a number of groups, agencies and activities and is hosting learning, health, recreational and social events. Local residents now have improved access to services such as family support, advice and information, and health awareness. The project has also considered future sustainability, and has negotiated long-term rental agreements with partner organisations to enable good quality forward planning. This income is supplemented by occasional hire of rooms, meaning the Old School House can continue to meet local needs well into the future.

Tailored support ensures longevity for Essex projects

Making a grant to fund dedicated support to three key Fair Share Trust projects through a Development Manager was key to sustainability in Tendring, Essex. Work on business planning, governance, marketing and quality standards helped the projects to develop their own strategies to find ways to support their future work.

- One organisation chose to incorporate as a charity to become more attractive to public sector commissioners and has since secured a contract with the local NHS.
- The second group have re-structured and adopted a new strategic plan which will see it expand into other areas of need on the county.
- The third organisation had the chance to participate in Channel 4’s Secret Millionaire show, promoting their work to new audiences, and generating over £10,000 as a result.

“We have had an effect in the community beyond the direct impact of the (Fair Share Trust) funding, building long term sustainable services for the community.”

Steering Group member, Old School House project
Creating local ownership – what the English Fair Share Trust experience offers other grant makers

Fair Share Trust was a unique opportunity – a devolved programme delivered not just as a quick fix, but over a full decade.

Much has been learnt within communities themselves about the skills, strengths and potential that can be tapped with the right support and stimuli. Much has also been learnt about how this can be done, offering valuable insights into how funding programmes like this need to operate to achieve lasting local change.

What then would be the key messages from the programme, which might guide future grant-making in England, or elsewhere?

“When you devolve power and decision-making to local people and give them the time, resources and support to improve their local area then extraordinary things will happen. The Fair Share Trust has done just this.”

Panel member, Essex
Devolving authority adds value to grant-making

Traditional grant-making works from the top down. This offers a funder and a grant maker assurance and control. Fair Share Trust offered a different model, with the direction and boundaries coming from the top, but the wisdom of what would work best in each neighbourhood coming from communities.

This was a brave choice. By definition, the communities targeted by Fair Share Trust were those where, for various reasons, there was a limited history of drawing down Lottery funds. Would the chance to direct substantial funds make communities stronger, or be too much to cope with?

While there have been struggles in some areas, and the significance of good support has been highlighted (see ‘the right support’ overleaf), much of the experience of Fair Share Trust has been one of communities discovering their own ambitions and abilities by making their own choices over grants or commissions.

The value added by devolving decision-making

- offering local people a role in decision-making and implementation increases commitment to the goals and outcomes of the programme
- shared decision-making (where roles are clear) will increase cooperation and co-working between residents, community groups and agencies in an area, build partnerships and grow capacity
- placing decision-making close to the ground means those decisions will be more relevant and appropriate to local needs, wishes and circumstances
- ownership of the issues, problems, processes and solutions is increased when people think of the programme as theirs
- decision-making becomes more transparent, understandable and credible when local people are involved
The right support is essential

The choices made by English Local Panels are characterised by the value placed on support. Local Panels have understood the challenges in their neighbourhoods and communities and that there were reasons why they had found it difficult to access funds in the past.

Goals such as increased capacity, stronger infrastructure, better connections between people and groups and sustainable community development are unlikely to be attained without the right support. Fair Share Trust gave the chance for Local Panels to make grants for support, which took many forms across the country – training for Panels, community development workers in communities, organisational development workers in key groups or agencies, investments in new systems within organisations.

Across the programme, support made a difference at different levels – individuals gained the confidence to achieve, organisations became more effective and efficient, and infrastructure for community activity and development was built or strengthened.

The prioritisation of support was also key to achieving sustainability for many.

One size doesn’t fit all

Top down grant-making usually comes with a process. This may vary depending on the size and complexity of awards, but essentially it remains the same for all. Devolving decision-making to Local Panels offered flexibility in each Fair Share Trust area. While process remained important, getting the right approach for each area was crucial for Fair Share Trust. Guided by the desire to use the 10-year life of the programme well, and make choices rooted in strategic goals, Local Panels had the scope to set out on a route which would work for them.

This was a key success factor for Fair Share Trust in England, allowing a variety of strategies and approaches to be adopted, each appropriate to the needs and ambitions of one area. In North Somerset, the Local Panel chose a series of investments in voluntary sector infrastructure, and made no grants of any kind. The Stockton on Tees Local Panel used an open tendering process to secure providers for six key projects, and latterly moved towards small grants to support new start up activities in the target communities.

The Bolton Local Panel decided on the use of a conventional open grants process, while their near neighbours in Rochdale opted to commission the majority of projects from known providers in the town as the voluntary sector resources in the area were known to be weak.

This variety in approach typified the diversity of approaches used by the Local Panels in the Fair Share Trust communities, and affirms the value of grounding choices in local knowledge.
Time is a great asset

The longevity of Fair Share Trust has given the opportunity for many communities to think differently about creating change. In many English areas, Fair Share Trust has adopted a commissioning approach, rather than an open grants programme. This has enabled many areas to consider structural needs as well as working on immediate and presenting concerns.

The use of Development Workers to support communities and groups has been a common and effective practice across England, and the range of approaches to awarding grants has strengthened projects, motivated individuals and built capacity and sustainability.

“Being able to work over a long timescale allowed a degree of experimentation and piloting of new ways to respond to need. The size of the fund also supported the development which would not otherwise have been possible as it would have been unlikely to appeal to other funders. The local ownership married with expert support allowed the community to be ambitious but with the support to achieve ideas. The networks of the Foundation enabled professional services to be brought in which local people themselves may not have been able to identify.”

Local Agent
Conclusions

Fair Share Trust in England has shown that local people can take the right choices about how to make their communities better places to live.

The Fair Share Trust ambition of engaging local people to make choices over long term grant-making in their communities has been realised in many neighbourhoods across the country. Letting go of aspects of the traditional grant-making process has been highly beneficial for all involved; UK Community Foundations, the Local Agents, Local Panels, individuals, organisations and agencies have gained experience, knowledge, skills and self belief as a result.

The stories of change told in this paper illustrate the success of this approach – how devolving decision-making to ground level has built new relationships, developed hidden abilities and strengthened self-belief. Taking ownership and direction has given many people the chance to develop, take new steps and make new commitments to their areas. The evidence points to a programme that has done more than make grants. Rather, Fair Share Trust has used the grant-making process as a vehicle for local change, encouraging involvement, commitment and long-term thinking.

This strategy has a good chance of creating a lasting legacy in many places. The experiences described in this paper suggest FST has created a strong base of skilled and committed individuals, organisations, networks and resources to sustain action for change in communities across England.
If you’ve enjoyed learning about the impact of Fair Share Trust in England, you can find out more by visiting the website.

Explore comments posted by people involved in FST from around the UK, watch local evaluation videos, download reports and more:

www.fst-impact.org.uk

Fair Share Trust was managed by UK Community Foundations, previously known as Community Foundation Network.

UK Community Foundations’ vision is to see thriving communities across the UK.
To find out more about our work, visit:

www.ukcommunityfoundations.org

This report forms part of the UK-wide evaluation of Fair Share Trust, carried out by Icarus Collective and Andrassy Media for UK Community Foundations.

Published June 2013