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
Introduction

Putting local people at the heart of grant-making was the centrepiece of Northern Ireland’s Fair Share Trust Programme. Listening, sharing decisions and seeking consensus created ownership, connections and social change.

Northern Ireland’s Fair Share Trust programme can be summed up using numbers – 8 years, £2.8m awarded, 65 projects, 49 wards benefiting in 14 districts, average grants of £35,000 – but this would be to miss the point.

The Northern Ireland Fair Share Trust story is one of adventure and change. Community Foundation Northern Ireland (CFNI) used their knowledge of the people, places and culture of the Province to depart from traditional grant-making approaches and offer a new direction, one based in co-operation. It set out to capture people’s passion and commitment for their neighbours and neighbourhoods, and challenged people to find new neighbours across the divides between communities.

CFNI changed the grant-making game with their approach to Fair Share Trust: outcomes and outputs were determined from the bottom up, not the top down; there was no prescription about what could or could not be funded; CFNI staff operated more as community development workers than grants officers and, crucially, competition for funds was replaced with consensual decision-making.
The results have been impressive. People have been
drawn together to learn about local needs, about each
other, and to make choices about the collective action
required. Organisations and communities have grown
stronger by working with others and bringing their own
ideas to life. Social capital – the connections and
interactions between people – has grown.

These success stories are what the Fair Share Trust
programme has been about, and what this paper explores.
Traditional grant-making models are, by nature, competitive. There are winners – and losers. CFNI believed that such competition is counter productive in divided communities, driving people further apart rather than encouraging co-operation and unity. They also knew that the drive to spend and the imposition of goals and targets common to conventional grant schemes had, in the past, weakened, not strengthened, Northern Irish organisations and communities.

An approach which avoided these pitfalls, which guided people into working with others, that built on local skills, and started where people were at, was what was needed.

Consensus grant-making delivered this for CFNI. Within a consensual model, people from a local community came together and worked with other stakeholders (community organisations, the Local Authority, charities etc) to consider local needs and solutions. Facilitated discussions between the interested parties created a single joined up proposal for each area that all involved believed would be effective. A countrywide Local Panel considered assessment reports of these joined up proposals, making recommendations to CFNI trustees.

CFNI changed the grant-making game with their approach to Fair Share Trust: outcomes and outputs were determined from the bottom up, not the top down.
By using consensus approaches, CFNI placed a great deal of trust in the hands of those within the targeted communities. They offered involvement in shaping the grants, ownership of the delivery process and responsibility for ensuring money would be wisely spent. In return, they gained commitment and cooperation, and partners in making the Fair Share Trust money work on the ground.

“This was a fresh approach to funding. It encouraged people and agencies to work together, which brought benefits for all of us. The funder remained interested and enthusiastic throughout, which was a different experience from most. The whole process was transparent and open and this increased enthusiasm on the ground.”

*Local youth worker*
Choosing the priorities – a countrywide approach

Fair Share Trust consensus building in Northern Ireland began with the choice of priorities. The target communities were consulted over the best ways of directing the Fair Share Trust spend, leading to three priority groups of people which all communities would focus on...
The humble spud drew families together in Newtonabbey, Co. Antrim, through the Pruttie Project (pruttie is the common name for the potato in the Ulster Scots dialect). Families came together from different communities to grow, cook and learn about healthy eating. Practical learning, better diets and new friendship networks emerged…and 400 people took part in a Potato Festival!

CASE STUDY: A new community development tool – the potato!

The humble spud drew families together in Newtonabbey, Co. Antrim, through the Pruttie Project (pruttie is the common name for the potato in the Ulster Scots dialect). Families came together from different communities to grow, cook and learn about healthy eating. Practical learning, better diets and new friendship networks emerged…and 400 people took part in a Potato Festival!

The Pruttie Project

Run by a local social enterprise, the project focused on bringing families together to learn about healthy eating, with a focus on the potato. Families across a range of ages and neighbourhoods grew their own food, cooked together and learned about the history of the potato in Ireland by studying the Irish Famine of the 18th century.

Local people gained new social connections, making new friends with others from different communities, learning (30 people completed an accredited Eat Clever course) and skills in growing and cooking fresh, healthy food.
2 Young people aged 14–21

CASE STUDY: A gateway to work for young people with learning disabilities

Fair Share Trust funds helped young people with special needs to gain skills and a chance of work at the Greenlight Gateway in Ballycastle, Co. Antrim. A realistic work experience in a safe, secure and stimulating setting supported five young people to work on recycling, horticulture and retail and administration projects, building confidence, supporting families and challenging attitudes towards disability.

Greenlight Gateway

An intensive project focused on a small number of young people, Greenlight Gateway offers dedicated support to young people with complex needs to enter the world of work. Operating as a social enterprise, the project provides opportunities through partnerships with local businesses and the Local Authority for young people to work productively and realistically. Recycling aluminium and textiles, growing and selling bedding plants and retail and admin experience in the project's shop, coupled with a person-centred philosophy and social opportunities means the project brings significant capacity building benefits for young people, their families and the volunteers who work with them, and provides a role model in challenging perceptions of disability in the community.

“It has given him responsibility and a sense of purpose and interest. He has matured in the short time he has been here.”

Parent

“When the public come up to buy things from us it changes people's mindsets about disability. It's great seeing people who were told there was nothing for them to do working away on our projects and conversing with the public. What we are trying to show is that even if you have a disability, you still have the ability to do something.”

Staff member, Greenlight Gateway
3 Isolated older people

CASE STUDY:
A hub called HOP

Helping Older People, or HOP – a project with a simple name that belies the complexity and hard work involved in delivering a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of older residents in Craigavon, Armagh. HOP has become a hub for supporting older people in Craigavon, enabling advice and information giving, social and activity projects, benefit take up and advocacy work for older people.

The HOP project

A substantial Fair Share Trust project, HOP adopted a needs based approach, active outreach and partnership working to connect with older people and organisations supporting older people in the community. This drew organisations, groups, agencies and people together, forming connections and networks through the range of activities and services supplied and co-ordinated by HOP.

The project built local capacity to support older people and strengthened social capital, connecting older people and their support networks in Craigavon. Benefits arising from the work included information and advice, health and social gains through activities, and a stronger voice for older people in the town. HOP also bolstered the infrastructure of support locally, with identified benefits to older people’s groups including a support database, organisational development on issues such as management and governance, fundraising, skills development through training and transport.

“We would have no back up if they weren’t there. We just got information from HOP on free electric blanket checks to make sure they are safe – who else would tell us about things like that?”

Older people’s support group

“They’ve brought us new activities which we wouldn’t have thought of.”

Member of older people’s group
FST: the impact

Some key achievements of Fair Share Trust in Northern Ireland:

• £2.8m allocated across 49 wards

• £511,000 of additional funding levered from other sources (the equivalent of 23% of the original allocation)

• Grants made averaging £35,000 to 65 new projects, activities or services
“Fair Share Trust... united the groups in appreciating the benefits of working together to build a stronger community.”

Local resident, Strabane, Co. Tyrone

“Give young people a chance and the support to do something positive and constructive, and they’ll do it.”

Highfield Youth Initiative, Belfast

“Everybody kept to their own community at the start but by the end everybody was mixing no bother at all.”

Participant, Bonkerz youth project, Newtonabbey, Belfast

“We’ve had older people and young people working together for the first time – they all want to keep it going.”

Community Worker, Craigavon, Co. Armagh
The impact on: capacity building

Fair Share Trust has built confidence and skills for individuals and communities. It has done this in communities which can find it hard to access resources and support.

Fair Share Trust has built local capacity across Northern Ireland through the projects it has funded, but also through the process used to deliver the programme...

The bringing together of people and groups to develop their ‘joined up proposals’ obliged thinking, conversation, negotiation and appreciation of ideas. People became more able to listen, communicate and value the contributions of others, and grow in confidence that the ideas put forward for funding were backed by peers and neighbours.

A new capacity in taking shared decisions was built through the approach among those who made choices and decisions at a local level.

Groups have also grown in confidence and capacity through the experience of delivering their projects, and the trust offered them by CFNI.

At the same time, projects have been supporting families, young people and older people to take up the opportunities they have offered to grow in confidence, think bigger or acquire new skills.
Community organisations have grown their skills and confidence in delivering projects to meet local needs.

Parents have been supported to develop parenting skills.

Older people have become better connected with sources of support and with their peers.
Coleraine parents learn new ways to relate to their children

Fair Share Trust commissioned the Children and Family Centre at Harpurs Hill in Londonderry to support parents of children with special needs.

A support group and a Family Visitor dedicated to special needs families created a supportive setting where parents could learn from each other and from parenting education.

The Family Visitor model offered flexible support, often helping parents to grow in confidence at their own pace. Training and self development opportunities were often the next steps for parents, who picked up new skills from formal learning and from each other’s experience.

“We share information and tips with each other. We’ve helped each other’s children. We’ve also learnt skills from each other. I’ve learnt how to communicate better with my child who was learning signing at school.”

*Parent, Harpurs Hill*

**Capacity building**

Coming together to boost capacity building

The shared work prompted by the consensual approach to identify shared priorities and a joined up proposal has been built on in many settings.

Working together has widened people’s horizons and ambitions, and opened the door to opportunities impossible to consider when acting alone:

“the Fair Share Trust funding has opened doors for us, and others, in all three of our project areas, so hopefully we can keep the doors open now.”
Alleviating debt – building financial literacy

The financial literacy project in Highfield, Belfast, provided home visits to local families and individuals struggling with borrowing and debt. The project provided case by case support and training in schools, churches, parents’ groups and with organisations working with local people. Clients were connected to other sources of support to help strengthen their skills and capacity to break out of debt. The project identified debt of almost £2m through its contact with local people and supported them to begin to manage their finances more effectively.

“The advice I would probably give is: do the training, whatever age you are... it’ll definitely make a difference to you.”

MoneySense participant
The impact on: liveability

People have given time to make their neighbourhoods better places to live.

Some key LIVEABILITY impacts in Northern Ireland...

✓ People from neighbouring communities have worked together and learnt about each other’s culture.

✓ Grants for equipment and resources have widened the impact for priority groups, and meant that more people have benefited from FST.

✓ Intergenerational work has helped young and old to learn about each other.
A striking feature of the Northern Ireland Fair Share Trust is the level of commitment to community which has been demonstrated by local people.

This has been expressed through the giving of time to the consensual grant-making process, and in the willingness of people to come together to think about what would improve their communities, and the lives of their neighbours.
The impact on: liveability

Something for everyone

The partnership which drew up the joined up proposal for Ligoniel in Belfast aimed to reach the priority target groups for Fair Share Trust, and to ensure as many people as possible benefited.

Ten community organisations agreed a collection of activities and awards designed to create a wide benefit and improve the liveability of the neighbourhood. Fair Share Trust funded...

- a minibus for use across the community
- equipment for the local boxing and football clubs
- a horticulture project creating raised vegetable beds, polytunnels, propogating area and four community gardens
- new digital cameras available to all local community groups
- new fencing, toilets and kitchen equipment for the local Family Centre
- older people’s activities including a History Group, an event at Belfast Castle and intergenerational work
- a feasibility study into potential new sports pitches and facilities.

The impact of the minibus, which is charged out at a sustainable rate, has been significant: young people, families and older people have all benefitted from access to the bus.
Being able to set outcomes locally widened the potential for local people to improve the liveability of their neighbourhoods.

Fair Share Trust offered the chance for those developing the joined up local proposals to find their own outcomes for their work.

This was unusual in Northern Ireland, where traditionally grant makers had set out the changes they expected from their grants.

This approach created a wide variety of impacts, with some communities opting for one of two ‘big impact’ projects and others spreading funds more widely. Setting outcomes locally widened the ownership of the work, and the commitment to seeing it through and reporting the changes.
The impact on: liveability

Planning for the future

Fair Share Trust funding in the Galliagh area of Derry has enabled local people to make some physical improvements to their neighbourhood, and to plan for the future.

A Galliagh in Bloom competition, the installation of a sculpture at a local roundabout and the redevelopment of a local park were choices made by the Galliagh Development Trust, each of which added to the quality of the local environment.

Fair Share Trust also captured the ambitions of local people for a brighter neighbourhood by consulting on regeneration plans, the creation of a new multi-purpose community building and an integrated masterplan for the Galliagh area.
While there have been instances of slow progress, and communities where it has proved challenging to bring people together, the story of Fair Share Trust in Northern Ireland is, in the main, one of significant success in building social capital, or establishing the conditions in which social capital can grow.

The aspiration to bring people from different communities together through consensus approaches has been realised in a number of areas. People from across communities have been spending time with each other, listening to each other, and, in places, working together to bring about change.

The grant-making approach has obliged a focus on things in common, rather than aspects of difference, leading to individuals and groups offering contributions, and seeing each other as assets. This offers optimism, and foundations, for the future.
Some key SOCIAL CAPITAL impacts in Northern Ireland...

✓ New connections have been made between Catholic and Protestant people and communities.

✓ New community networks and partnerships have been developed linked to young people and isolated older people.

✓ Local people and agencies working in communities have begun to work better together.
The impact on: social capital

Bonkerz – young people explore issues through drama

Sectarianism, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy formed the subject matter for Bonkerz – a cross-community young people’s project in Newtonabbey, Co Antrim.

Bringing young people together in the Coole, Dannaney and Valley areas of Newtonabbey was a challenging and carefully managed process.

Specialist engagement support and a youth arts company supported 40 young people aged 14-16 to create and perform a powerful drama to peers, families, community representatives and local agencies.

Young people identified a number of benefits from their involvement, including shifts in attitudes towards sectarianism, new friendships, and a desire from some young people to seek further drama training, or youth work training.

Befriending scheme reduces isolation and creates friendships for older people

Loughside Volunteer Centre in Newtonabbey delivered a befriending scheme as part of Fair Share Trust.

In addition to building confidence among the older people it supported in going out and mixing with others, the scheme brought people together across communities and established new friendships, and gave older people a more positive outlook on life.

“It wasn’t just cross-community by design, it developed naturally that way.”

Befriending scheme participant, Loughside Volunteer Centre, Newtonabbey
Cross-community youth programme begins to break down mistrust

Some of the young people involved in the projects initiated through Fair Share Trust in the Ligoniel and Ballysillan areas of Belfast had never met someone from the neighbouring Catholic / Protestant communities before.

Fair Share Trust work in these neighbourhoods focused on activities to bring young people together to begin to build connections.

A variety of activities were used to provide a wide range of opportunities for young people to be involved...

- A youth forum of 24 young people (12 from each community) was established
- Work with young men and community artists to create a mural of images which represented their lives (fishing, a Celtic cross, a bus, and the view of Belfast were included)
- A citizenship project across two local youth clubs which included cultural diversity discussions
- A fitness programme
- Self defence classes for young women
- A fly tying course for young men through the local fishing club

Impacts were significant. New friendships were made through the youth forum and the majority remained involved over 18 months after launching the forum; the young men involved in the mural project all undertook a Youth Achievement Award; members of the citizenship group agreed they should see themselves as being from the same community; some participants in the fitness programme joined local sports clubs.
The impact on: sustainability

The grant-making process has generated commitment to places and people.

Fair Share Trust’s approach, rooted in consensus and relationships, has created the conditions for good levels of sustainability. Attitudes towards others and towards the potential for change have been influenced and the coalitions and networks established through the process have continued in places.

A 2011 evaluation report found a remarkable 90% of groups funded through Fair Share Trust were continuing their work after the end of the programme.

The approach has generated a commitment from people and groups to each other and to the places where they live.
A large majority of funded groups continued their work after the end of FST funding.

A positive ‘can do’ culture has been created in many areas.

Increases in capacity and social capital have had a knock on benefit of building sustainability.

Some key SUSTAINABILITY impacts in Northern Ireland...
The impact on: sustainability

Money sense – understanding personal finances

Educating young people, and older people, about the psychology of money, was the aim of the Ballymena Community Forum, who were concerned about the levels of financial exclusion in the area.

Money Sense, a DVD and training package was devised by the local Youth Bank and delivered to groups of young people and older people in Ballymena.

The programme focused on how money relates to living and aspirations, and how to make sense of earnings, savings, financial services and products.

“I will soon be moving out of a children’s home and this training was good because it prepared me for the move. The trainer came into the home to work with me and now I know how to budget.”
Young person, aged 17

“It made me realise how much money I can spend within a day – and how quickly it could dwindle away.”
Nicola, Money Sense participant
Agencies working better together

Working together on a Restorative Justice project near Belfast which was part of Fair Share Trust has built relationships between public agencies (the Police Service, social services, probation) and shifted attitudes in the community towards offenders and statutory agencies. This has created a more sustainable way of working than that used in the past.

“The community are resolving problems in a different way. They now see ‘families with problems’ as opposed to the former view of ‘problem families’”

Head of Service, Restorative Justice project
The learning that the Northern Irish Fair Share Trust experience offers other grant-makers

Consensus grant-making was a great fit in Northern Ireland. It proved to be mutually beneficial for grant-maker, grant recipients and local communities alike.

It put Fair Share Trust money to work effectively, achieving outcomes agreed through dialogue, and it recognised and respected the unique circumstances and cultures of the Province.

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

Letting go can build local ownership

Local ownership was a strong aspect of Fair Share Trust in Northern Ireland. Setting out a process which local communities needed to follow to develop their ideas, but not controlling the content of what should emerge from that process, proved catalytic, releasing passion, knowledge and commitment from people and organisations.

The act of creating the ‘joined up proposals’ requested by CFNI widened the base of people involved in community action and enabled local people to gain a stake in change for their neighbourhood. The process also engendered trust, allowing local people to feel valued and involved, and drew in other stakeholders who would become the support networks for those who would deliver the projects.

Ownership has also been built, through dialogue and relationships, across divided communities. Perhaps the strongest reason for using consensus approaches in Northern Ireland, Fair Share Trust has added to the process of reconciliation and relationship building, bringing people together to focus on local change.

Adding value

- Offering dialogue builds confidence and self esteem in communities
- Strong local relationships can generate a willingness to protect and respect people and assets
- Stimulating local commitment is likely to generate a willingness to stay involved.
As a grant giver, become an honest broker

CFNI were well positioned to deliver Fair Share Trust. Widely regarded as an independent agency, the Foundation had a good working knowledge of the community and voluntary sector in the Province, and what was described by one commentator as ‘a deep understanding of social change’.

These were critical factors in developing the consensus model, as was the willingness, shared by Fair Share Trust, to pursue a non traditional model of grant-making and manage the associated risks.

Acting as an honest broker means behaving differently as a grant maker. Although the responsibilities remain the same (making choices about grants, designing processes, monitoring and evaluating progress, ensuring funds are well used), a consensus approach means delivering those responsibilities differently, through negotiation, give and take, patience and relationship building.

**Key learning points**

- A consensual approach can be time consuming, for grant maker and for communities
- Community development skills among a staff team will aid grant / project development
- Building consensus can be challenging in areas where social capital is low
- A consensus approach will mean higher levels of engagement than would be usual with traditional grant giving.

Be prepared to build flexible relationships

Dialogue is a key tool of consensus approaches. Without both offering and encouraging dialogue, the relationships needed to make a more co-operative model work are unlikely to develop.

CFNI offered a dialogue from the outset of Fair Share Trust, embarking on a series of roadshows and workshops to sell the message that this was a new way of grant-making in communities. This work was actively focused on those in neighbourhoods who could access marginalised sections of the community, and people and groups who would not usually come into contact with funders.

As local collections, groupings and coalitions picked up the message and began to identify local needs and shape the ‘joined up proposals’ desired by Fair Share Trust, the lines of communication opened through the initial engagement enabled CFNI to encourage, guide and shape project ideas as they emerged.

And once those projects were up and running, the relationships became the routes for support and learning to be exchanged.
Conclusions

Fair Share Trust broke the mould of grant-making in Northern Ireland and demonstrated how people can be brought together to make shared decisions about local change.

Fair Share Trust in Northern Ireland benefitted hugely from the choice to use consensus approaches to deliver the programme. CFNI’s recognition that traditional grant-making techniques would widen, not bridge, divisions and foster competitiveness, not cooperation, opened the door for many to see their communities, and their neighbours, in a new light.

From the outset, Fair Share Trust drew people together and offered processes and support that encouraged optimism and ambition. The stories told in this paper are characterised by a willingness to listen and to begin to trust others by working together in a common enterprise.

The evidence from the Fair Share Trust programme tells of people learning about each other, organisations that have grown stronger by working with others, of needs being met and of new connections being made, sometimes across historic divides. FST has offered a model for successful and inclusive grant-making in Northern Ireland, and sown the seeds for future cooperation in local communities.
If you’ve enjoyed learning about the impact of Fair Share Trust in Northern Ireland, 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.

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