

Bridging community divides

The impact of grassroots bridge building activities

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The Researchers

This publication summarises findings from a study of 'Bridge Building at the Grassroots' conducted by Margaret Harris with Patricia Young.

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Margaret Harris PhD and Patricia Young

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Background to our study

From earlier research we know that there is widespread agreement that bridge building activities can be successful in reducing prejudice and hostility between different groups and in helping people to live peacefully alongside each other.

But we have found some gaps in earlier research. There has been little work done on bridge building activities being run at the grassroots community level and how they are managed, financed and run. Also, while bridge building between different faith groups has been studied, there is not much research into bridging between groups from different ethnic backgrounds or from different countries. In any case, faith and ethnic categories can overlap in the real world.

What do we mean by bridge building activities?

We see bridge building activities as ones which create connections at the grassroots between people from different faith and ethnic backgrounds and from different countries.

There are groups up and down the country in local neighbourhoods running activities based on these principles.

Why now?

In an increasingly diverse Britain the UK government sees a pressing need to support and encourage what it has called 'community cohesion'. Many public policies are focused on getting people involved and promoting better community relationships across faith and ethnic divides.

Activities taking place within local areas have the greatest potential to make a real difference to how people feel about members of other faith and ethnic groups. Yet we know little about the practical challenges facing grassroots bridge building projects.

So our study was intended to increase understanding about the difference that bridge building activities can make and what happens in local bridge building projects. What are the challenges they face and how can their good experiences be shared?

The study therefore focused on local organisations and projects which have a vision to build links and bridges between people from different faith groups, from different ethnic groups or from different countries of origin. We looked at the activities they are running, how they are managed and how they are funded.

We selected three geographical areas that have diverse populations but different population profiles and different histories and local politics. These are Birmingham, Oldham and Tower Hamlets in London.

There is no central information about organisations that run bridge building activities but using a mixture of techniques we have been able to identify more than 160 bridging projects in those areas – 80 in Birmingham and roughly 40 each in Oldham and Tower Hamlets. All of the groups were surprised and delighted that we found so many other groups running bridge building activities in their region.

Our survey only included activities that are being run at grassroots level and that bring people together across streets or neighbourhoods. We used questionnaires to capture information about the projects, their goals and history, and the activities they run. With nine organisations we also carried out deeper case study research and snapshots of their stories are included throughout this publication.

Impact of grassroots bridge building

Bridge building activities can make a significant difference to people and change local areas in very positive ways

- Increasing understanding
- Creating relationships and networks
- Developing people's skills
- Influencing public policy

We found strong evidence that bridge building activities can increase understanding between individuals and groups. In the most powerful examples, increased understanding could also reduce prejudice and conflicts between people from different faiths, countries and ethnic backgrounds.

"People realise, oh yeah, I'm no different from you. I have similar views and aspirations."

Creating networks and relationships

We found that bridge building activities can be very effective in making connections across religious and ethnic divides. These can be at a very local level and as simple as individuals acknowledging each other in the street for the first time, but they provide the starting point for friendships. People who develop

friendships through bridge building activities often then go on to develop links within the wider community and see themselves as part of that local area.

"We have kids now coming into our club that actually speak to each other, the whites and the Asians, they shake hands and talk."

Other groups run activities to develop wide-reaching networks that link local people with agencies and organisations to create connections and cohesion within the community.

"All community members come out of their houses for the parade. You've got the police involved, councillors, every member or agency within that parade. Local people have grown up with this through the years and it has changed their attitudes."

This organisation has been running since 2003. It runs social activities and other services designed to build bridges between refugees and asylum seekers from African countries which have been in conflict. Their vision is to rebuild cross-cultural and cross-ethnic relationships that were broken during war and to develop trust and acceptance among people who are now living in the same local area in England. "When people come here, some are coming from the same region, but are divided by the politicians and situations in their countries. So when they arrive here they see each other as enemies. If we don't work out how to bring them together they will develop hatred and transfer it to their children and create a terrible situation in the UK. If they come here to seek asylum then they are seeking peace and they must learn to live with each other."

Activities

Social activities / Education activities and citizenship programmes / Facilitated dialogue / Conflict resolution / Visual arts / Sports / Interpretation, Advice and guidance / Advocacy

Run by

Entirely volunteers

Formal structure

Project of a registered charity

Funded by

Grant from charitable trust and premises from other organisations

Developing people's skills

People taking part in bridge building activities gain greater skills and experience. Sometimes this is through accredited education or classes.

"Having the certificates makes me feel more confident and proud of myself actually."

Skills can also develop through less direct means. The opportunities provided by volunteering or participating in bridge building activities can improve expertise and develop greater confidence and self esteem. Many people then invest these skills back into the community by getting involved in local activities and going on to get better qualifications and jobs. Other activities develop listening and discussion skills.

"We have a system where people are free to express their views...we get progress through debate and understanding"

Influencing public policy

Bridge building activities can empower local people to campaign for change and influence policy by putting them in touch with their local councillors and members of parliament. They can also connect people to local organisations such as schools, hospitals and local authorities where local concerns can be represented to decision makers. And they can create links between the communities and policy makers, at a local and national level.

"What we try to do is create a situation where relationships between the state and community can be built, but we also build bridges between the different local groups."

People taking part in bridge building activities can give decision makers a perspective on local issues.

"Decisions, instead of being based in a vacuum or on the back of a very strong government driven agenda and a strong local authority agenda, can be made on the basis of where actual communities are in terms of their perceptions of each other and their aspirations for the kind of borough they want for the future."

Table 1: Stated aims of bridge building groups responding to the survey

Aim	% of bridge building groups (total 127) with that aim
Social cohesion	90
Social contact	86
Mutual understanding	80
Community development	76
Developing people's skills	58
Crime reduction	29
Neighbourhood regeneration	22
Economic development	21
Other	16

Activities

We have found that groups use one of three main approaches to build bridges

- Social activities
- Education activities and citizenship programmes
- Dialogue and conflict prevention

Social activities

An overwhelming majority of groups taking part in our study organise social activities, including meetings, parties, invited speakers, days out, football, arts projects, fetes or festivals. These activities are not usually promoted as being about bridge building but they are the kinds of activities which leaders find to be most effective in developing understanding between different local groups. They are also the kinds of activities which are most popular with people from different backgrounds and which people really want to participate in.

“You have to have a project that young people want to be part of. There are far too many projects where someone has a bright idea but nobody wants to do it.”

Educational activities and citizenship programmes

Many groups provide educational activities some of which include citizenship programmes that encourage and support people to understand and participate in politics. Educational activities range from formal accredited courses through to sharing information about different groups and cultures. Other groups run activities that aim to demystify the British political system and open it up to people who feel excluded.

“Going to the House of Commons enabled women to see that politics was not just for the men – they could see that they could talk to their MPs themselves.”

Project B

This community arts project brings young people and elderly people together from the two main ethnic groups living in neighbouring areas - predominantly Asian and white. It has been going since 2005 with the straightforward purpose of bringing the two communities together through the arts.

“Our project bridges two neighbouring areas using community arts. It works because it is something the community is interested in. It’s an arts project – there are no strings attached.”

Activities

Social activities / Education activities and citizenship programmes / Facilitated dialogue / Neighbourhood regeneration / Visual arts projects

Run by

Paid staff co-ordinate the project

Formal structure

Run by a lead voluntary agency in partnership with other organisations

Funded by

Funded by grants from a charitable trust, regeneration contract funding, plus support from staff and premises from other organisations

Dialogue and conflict prevention

Dialogue, or “giving people a platform to speak openly”, is used to air the historical and current conflicts that are preventing people from communicating fully with each other. Dialogue takes place in groups with a facilitator to help people talk about the differences between them and to find points of contact and similarities.

“There is constant dialogue with the other group to understand each other’s workings. You need to know how you are different as well as how you are the same.”

In some cases facilitated dialogue is not enough. Conflict prevention or resolution techniques are used to try to resolve issues between groups or prevent communities from becoming further divided. The groups in our study use a range of techniques including sending facilitators from group to group, bringing local people together, responding to incidents they see on the street and tackling prejudiced speech on a one to one basis.

“We can’t hide from conflict. We have to be able to challenge it in an appropriate manner.”

Project C

This organisation brings together leaders of community groups to share information about potential sources of conflict between different minority ethnic groups living in close proximity. Since 2004 they have been alleviating tensions between groups of people, helping to develop good community relations and providing citizenship training.

“The town is very segregated with very distinct boundaries between communities. There are high levels of tension and lots of inter-ethnic clashes. Our project is a grassroots voluntary sector response intended to pre-empt more serious problems.”

Activities

Facilitated dialogue / Conflict resolution

Run by

Has paid staff but mainly run by volunteers

Formal structure

Run by a network of grassroots organisations coordinated by a voluntary sector infrastructure organisation

Funded by

In the past, by grant from central government (ChangeUp), currently grants from charitable trusts, plus support from staff and volunteers from other organisations

Characteristics

Table 2: Bridge building activities of groups responding to the survey

Activity	% of bridge building groups (total 127) running that activity
Social activities	81
Education activities and citizenship programmes	72
Facilitated dialogue	64
Sport	41
Visual arts projects	39
Religious or faith-based activities	32
Support to resolve conflicts	23
Regenerating the physical neighbourhood	17
Other	38

Our study identified that groups running successful bridge building activities share common characteristics that include

- Being rooted in the community
- Inspirational leaders
- Clear bridge-building vision and values
- Creating and using networks
- Willingness to take risks
- Investing time and energy

Being rooted in the community

Being rooted in their local areas is very important to the success of bridge building activities. It means that the groups running the activities know the issues and tensions within the community and are more likely to be trusted and known by the people who live in that area.

“It is much easier if somebody is known to the community and speaks the language. The independence of the project gives us a better chance. The community is much more likely to listen to us than the police.”

Successful bridge building programmes are led from the ground upwards and focus on the needs of the local community. They give different groups a common goal.

“It’s good to listen to the young people’s Afro-Caribbean organisation speaking to the Kashmiri organisation. They are not competing. They are trying to work together. There is 100 per cent co-operation because of the bridge building programme. It’s a massive success.”

Often a sense of ownership flows from this so that local people really feel that a bridge building activity belongs to them.

Further evidence that successful bridge building activities are rooted in their communities comes from the way that many activities are initiated and run by people who live in the local area.

“It needs people on the ground otherwise it won’t work.”

Being rooted in the community means:

- Organisations are known and trusted by local people
- Activities are led by local people
- Local people have a shared goal
- Grassroots groups are independent and can be responsive to local needs
- People running activities mostly live in the area

Inspirational leaders

Most of the bridge building activities in our study were initiated by one person or two people working together. When the activities were initiated by an organisation then one person within the organisation was pivotal for both start-up and continuity. Often it is the passion and commitment of just one person that drives bridge building in a local area.

“In the end personalities are important. If you don’t have the right people at the helm, the best case scenario is that it won’t progress. In the worst case scenario things will simply fall apart.”

We also found that inspirational leaders are good role models for motivating other people to get involved and give their time to bridge building activities.

“One of the reasons it works is the founder who was compelled to set it up in the first place. However, there is now a dedicated volunteer who is doing all the inter-faith work and reaching out to the communities. Her main role is to engage people from different cultural backgrounds and she is passionate about this.”

Many founders have lived in their communities all of their lives and have personal experience of crossing religious and ethnic divides.

“You have got two individuals who are used to being themselves in a minority situation. They have got the self confidence to move between different cultures.”

What inspiring leaders bring

- Passion to make a change
- Understanding of the issues facing local people
- Time, energy and commitment to get activities off the ground
- Leadership behaviour that others can follow
- Personal experience of the issues they are addressing

Project D

In 2002, a local Church of England priest realised the benefits of running an annual festival made up of activities that represent and involve the whole community. The festival project brings the community together in a safe space to celebrate the area. Initially, it relied heavily on the priest’s leadership but it has since gone on to develop its own dynamic.

“Our local church priest realised that the community needed a cross-communal festival as there was nothing to bring people together. The community now see the festival as theirs. The ideas need to come from local people. They need to be involved and run it.”

Activities

Social activities / Visual arts / Sport / Music

Run by

Mainly volunteers, now has a part-time community development officer

Formal structure

It is run as a registered charity by the local Parish Council

Funded by

Grants from local authority, central government, a charitable trust and local businesses

Clear vision and values

Groups in our study identified the importance of strong vision and values to give bridge building activities focus and purpose. Without a shared vision and understanding of how to work together it is very difficult to organise activities, particularly those involving volunteers.

“You’ve got to have a vision and an intent to pursue that. It doesn’t have to be detailed but you need some aspiration that our life together can be different.”

A clear vision and values are central to project planning and delivery and to understanding what the bridge building activities are aiming to achieve.

“This is a key thing. If you haven’t got values then it’s another programme which is just superficial.”

Benefits of a clear vision and values

- Shared understanding of what everyone involved is trying to change
- Shared understanding of how they should work together
- Focus and purpose for bridge building activities

- A basis for making decisions about managing and delivering bridge building activities

Willingness to take risks

Several participants said that they feel their success is due to being prepared to take risks, particularly when starting up.

“It’s about being able to respond to community issues. You can’t do it by policy. It’s just about being around. And initially you need to be willing to take some risks.”

People taking part in bridge building activities also said that they sometimes need to take a risk personally but that it is worth it to learn more about the wider community.

“As a Muslim, I was worried about how my friends would react when I attended the investiture of the founder. You have to be steadfast and not swayed by other people’s reactions. In the end my friends were fine and they were envious about me being invited to such an event. You have to be adventurous.”

Project E

An Anglican vicar and group of volunteers are taking on an ambitious initiative to demolish an existing church and rebuild it as a community centre to accommodate both Muslims and Christians. Since 2005, the two groups have been planning the building together and say that the new centre will make a positive statement about community cohesiveness and a theological statement about being equal in the eyes of God.

“The success of this is going to depend on a sense of ownership – it is going to be a space that is theirs. But you really do need to work on the relationship first. It isn’t a project where you can create space for interfaith independently of a relationship emerging.”

Activities

Social events / Religious activities / Neighbourhood regeneration

Run by

Volunteers and the vicar

Formal structure

Run as a registered charity by partnership of local organisations

Funded by

Currently applying for capital funding

What benefits risk taking can bring

- Helps get innovative projects off the ground
- Allows groups to respond to local issues
- Expands participants’ boundaries and experiences

Organisation

Bridge building activities are run by a wide variety of organisations ranging from small groups run entirely by volunteers to formal third sector organisations with staff. Bridge building activities are also run as partnerships by a number of different organisations working together. Within this spectrum we find that bridge building activities generally share some management features:

- Involving volunteers
- Importance of committed leaders
- Project-planning approach
- Support from other organisations
- Time and commitment needed

Involving volunteers

Volunteers are critical to running bridge building activities. Many projects in our study are run entirely by volunteers and many of those volunteers are highly motivated.

“You have to have your heart in it – not to think about who will pay or what you will get out of it. You have to have a positive belief in helping your fellow human beings.”

Involving volunteers is also a key route to drawing in local people.

“It belongs to the community so that everyone knows that they are welcome.”

Importance of leaders

Smaller organisations tend to rely on one or two key people.

“He is the leader. People follow him. It’s the nature of the job and his personality. When he leaves people will feel lost.”

Generally relying too much on one person is risky for an organised group but some of those running bridge building activities say that it also encourages trust – that well known and trusted leaders can encourage other people to get involved. It is part of the nature of grassroots groups that the success of the activities they run often depends on the energy and enthusiasm of key leaders.

Project planning approach

All the groups in our study use procedures for organising their bridge building activities. The least formal groups use tools like regular meetings or steering

groups. The larger, more structured groups tend to use a project planning approach. Even the organisations that already have a governance structure tend to organise their bridge building activities separately along non-hierarchical lines using a project planning approach. This distinction can be particularly helpful to inter-faith groups that can run bridge building activities separately from their formal faith-based governance structures.

“The church has its hierarchy and a local parish committee. We have a committee which is elected according to our own constitution.”

Support from other organisations

The majority of bridge building activities in our study are supported by networks and/or established voluntary organisations. Many are essentially projects of larger organisations.

A number of bridge building activities are run within an infrastructure of a local voluntary sector organisation or by a partnership of organisations. In these cases the bridge building activities tend to be managed by paid staff supported by volunteers. In other cases, one organisation

initiates the bridge building activity and then brings in other grassroots organisations into a partnership to deliver it.

Smaller organisations running bridge building activities often have informal relationships with bigger organisations – not only other voluntary organisations but also schools or the police. This gives them access to support and resources to run their activities through things like sharing staff, knowledge of funding and experience of running community projects and facilities.

“Our facilitators are anchored within a voluntary and community sector organisation but they work in the community. They play a role as a mediator and conduit between different organisations and agencies in the community, and the people. They can reach the hard edges of the community and the more extreme dimensions.”

In the main, networks and support from bigger organisations are very valuable for bridge building activities. However, a few study participants warned that some networks and organisations can try to take over the activities and use them for their own purposes. Bridge building activities

need to be clear about their purpose and values to guard against this.

Time and commitment needed

Most of the groups in our study required a great deal of time and energy to get bridge building activities off the ground and keep them running. Often, this responsibility is shouldered by just one or two people.

“For every hour you spend talking to people, interviewing people, you spend another ten fixing up that meeting – which is an incredible ratio.”

This is not unusual for grassroots organisations that rely heavily on volunteers. However, despite this, 71% of groups in our study managed to run regular or frequent bridge building activities.

Project F

A women’s interfaith initiative that has been running social activities predominantly for Asian Muslims and Christians, who are mainly white, since 2001. They run informal social activities and organise outings to local places of interest, places of worship and political institutions.

“You have to build relationships within the community. You need to talk to people individually and find out what they want and what their fears are. It’s taken six years to build this up.”

Activities

Social activities / Religious and faith-based activities / Education activities and citizenship programmes / Facilitated dialogue / Outdoor activities

Run by

Volunteers

Formal structure

Independent project with close links to local primary school

Funded by

Small grants from a charitable trust, community and voluntary organisations and a local church

Funding

Table 3: Formal status of bridge building activity

Legal arrangement	% of bridge building activities constituted that way (total 127)
Part of a registered charity	49
Registered charity	16
Part of a government organisation	11
Community association	6
In a partnership	6
A company	9
Respondent not sure of status	4

Eighty-nine per cent of the bridge building activities in our study are funded by external sources – money, in-kind support or both.

Typically, smaller grassroots organisations’ bridge building activities are funded by grants from charitable trusts. Bridge building activities that are run as projects by larger voluntary sector organisations tend to be funded by multiple sources including local and central government, trusts and in-kind support. Groups that are able to raise money from diverse sources are often those that can draw on professional fundraising expertise.

“I have experience of local regeneration funding so will advise on funding and support and help with the development of funding proposals.”

Several groups say that they find it difficult to secure funding for bridge building activities and 39 per cent receive no funding from any kind of government sources.

“The project is very high profile, it has been very successful. I cannot understand why the government is not funding it. We hear about how successful it is but nobody is putting their money where their mouth is.”

But other groups find that statutory funding comes with too many restrictions and have turned contracts down because they are too prescriptive.

“The contracts don’t really cover costs and they are not really about enabling us to run activities that deliver our mission, there are too many constraints.”

It can be particularly difficult to find funding to support social activities as most funders do not see such activities as appropriate or serious enough. Yet, social activities, as we showed earlier, are regarded as the most popular and effective of all the activities used to build bridges at the grassroots.

Study participants told us that they feel strongly that difficulties in securing adequate funding undermine their ability to run and develop bridge building activities. Many also complain that the bureaucracy of applying for and reporting on external funding deters them from making applications to support their projects.

“It should be simplified. The very people who need the money are losing out because they can’t fill out all the forms.”

In practice, grassroots bridge building activities are often sustained not by external grants and contracts but by ‘in-kind’ support - being allowed to use premises for nothing or being lent staff or volunteers from other organisations. This is very valuable to many organisations and can be a by-product of local networking.

Despite the fairly precarious nature of the funding for bridge building activities our research found that many local projects have been running for five years or more.

Project G

This community drama project has been going since 2006. It gathers people’s stories to reflect their thoughts and feelings about other people in the area. It then uses drama to help participants understand better the views and backgrounds of others in the local area.

“The key is cohesion. Talking to the young people and understanding their needs. If two neighbouring communities have a common need then we can bring them together because they have that common interest and passion. Our dilemma is that we want to do something bigger than we have the resources for.”

Activities

Facilitated dialogue / Drama

Run by

Volunteer responsible for day to day running

Formal structure

Project run by registered charity

Funded by

Grant from Equalities and Human Rights Commission

Challenges

Table 4: How bridge building activities are funded

Source of funding	% of bridge building groups (127 in total) which mentioned this source of funding for their work
Grant from charitable trust	51
Grant or contract from government or European Union programme	31
Grant or contract from local authority	30
Premises from other organisation	23
Grant or contract direct from a central government department	22
Paid staff from other organisations	21
Volunteers from other organisations	20
Grant from voluntary or community organisation	17
Donations from individuals	10
Grants from businesses	8
Others	11

While our study reveals many positive aspects of bridge building activities we also identified some common challenges faced by our groups. These include:

- Resistance
- Characteristics of the group
- Cultural and religious barriers
- Lack of political support

Resistance

Our study participants told us that many people taking part in bridge building activities are those who are already aware of the benefits it can bring – they are preaching to the converted. The challenge facing many groups is how to broaden participation in their activities to include individuals and groups who are not yet convinced of the benefits.

“A fundamental challenge is that you have to contend with people who don’t want their communities to change.”

Characteristics of the group

The characteristics of some groups can make bridge building more difficult. Study participants identify refugees, asylum seekers and older people as finding it

particularly difficult to trust anyone who is different. Anxieties over immigration and poor English language skills can add to the barriers.

However, our groups also say that these are often the very people who benefit most from taking part in bridge building activities to help them integrate into the wider community.

“Only through bridge building activities can you get them to forget and get a sense of group fulfilment.”

Cultural and religious barriers

Some of the barriers to building bridges are often more about differences in culture than about differences in religion or ethnic group.

“Culturally it’s incredibly difficult because there are cultural differences that we can’t overcome. The older men won’t eat with women.”

Among inter-faith groups, too, there can be fundamental differences of belief and practice that can get in the way of building bridges.

“Two faith groups working together is complex and multi-layered. Some of the layers, like we believe in God and prayer, work well together. Other layers, like what is our moral stance on homosexuality, never work well together. We never talk about that.”

Racism not only affects bridge building but can also make it difficult for local people to get involved.

“It’s difficult to stand out in a community as tightly knit as this one because you put yourself at risk and in the position of the person being attacked.”

The challenges are often compounded by residential segregation which means that families from different ethnic and faith backgrounds live in separate areas so that neither adults nor children are aware of each other’s lives: *“we don’t have Asian families living here”*.

Lack of political support

Recent government initiatives strive to promote community cohesion by encouraging people to get involved in their communities and by encouraging interaction across faith and ethnic group boundaries. But several people felt that there is not enough open support from politicians.

“Our politician is not keen to speak openly because he feels he will lose votes. They should be more keen to stand up and say that this is a model that works.”

Project H

This project aims to build bridges between mainly white elders and first generation Bengali elders by running integrated day care, advice and recreational services. It was set up in 2005.

“I thought that they would get together and it would be easy to integrate the two sections of the community. But it’s an ongoing process. Two steps forward and then one step back.”

Activities

Social activities / Education activities and citizenship programmes / Facilitated dialogue / Visual arts / Pension advice / Daycare services

Run by

Mainly paid staff

Formal structure

Project of a large registered charity

Funded by

Grants from local authority, central government department and a charitable trust. Runs a charity shop to part-fund the facilities

Key messages

We asked the groups taking part in our study what key messages they would pass on to other people interested in bridge building activities including

- Practitioners
- Funders
- Policy makers

For practitioners

Most study participants said that the most important thing practitioners can do is to listen to the community and approach bridge building activities with an open mind. This allows bridge building activities to be rooted in their communities and respond to their needs.

“Community cohesion happens most naturally when it’s led by people in those communities and it’s not brought to them”

For funders

A lack of funding, particularly for smaller groups, and the difficulties caused by funding bureaucracy, were frequently mentioned to us. Many groups complain that bigger funders exclude smaller groups or effectively exclude them because of inappropriate monitoring and controls.

It was also suggested that funding should be less prescriptive and outcomes-based.

Groups call for longer-term funding that will allow them to run bridge building activities in a sustainable way.

“Don’t put a little bit of money in the pot, put proper money behind it.”

Project I

This football club organises a multicultural league and days out with the aim of bridging relationships between young people from different backgrounds – mainly Asian and white. It has been running since 2004.

“Most of the local young people go to mono-ethnic schools. The football league was established to create new friendships and lay the foundations for their lives, for getting employment, for example. Indirectly, we are also trying to prevent disaffection, drug use and anti-social behaviour.”

Activities

Mutual understanding / Social activities / Sport

Run by

Volunteers

Formal structure

Project run by registered charity attached to a football club

Funded by

Grant from a charitable trust and uses premises from another organisation

For policy makers

Participants advise policy makers to support more grassroots groups to run bridge building activities by reducing the red tape associated with policy streams and programmes. They say that policy and decision makers should listen to communities and be prepared to admit more quickly when something isn't working effectively.

Practically, participants call for politicians to support open ended community work rather than setting very specific outcomes. And they want fewer area-based income regeneration projects, where one area receives investment while a neighbouring one doesn't. This can actually breed tensions across ethnic and faith boundaries.

Most think that more joined-up, active policies are needed to give direction and make sure that community issues are not addressed in a fragmented way.

“It needs a push and a shove and a little bit of collective direction from all communities.”

