



Working in Place Case Study

Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland pilots a place-based approach



Overview

Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland has developed a new asset-based empowerment model to support nine communities in Scotland that have not previously received funding from independent foundations.

This case study is based on interviews with staff at Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland and East Ayrshire Council, as well as a review of relevant documents about the initiative.

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1. About the approach

Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland chose to pilot a place-based funding approach as part of achieving its strategic objectives:

“Scotland has immense challenges with poverty, including rising in-work poverty, health inequalities, youth unemployment and lack of affordable housing. Place is of particular importance in terms of all of these: where you’re born, where you grow up and where you live has a huge impact on your life chances.” (Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland, 2015:1¹)

The Foundation undertook an analysis which identified areas of Scotland that received proportionately less funding than other areas, from them themselves and three other large funders (the Big Lottery Fund, BBC Children in Need and The Robertson Trust):

“We felt we had a responsibility to reach people who were struggling and we mapped these cold spots against the index of deprivation to find the areas facing the most challenges.”

In light of this analysis, nine local authorities were chosen and further investigation into each community was undertaken.

The Foundation chose to use an asset-based community empowerment approach rather than traditional grant-making:

“We thought that funding wasn’t reaching those areas for a reason and we needed to change the way we work to address it rather than expect other people to fit with what we are requiring ...”

¹ Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland, (2015) Briefing paper: PLACE-BASED At July 2015, Edinburgh: Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland, unpublished.

“We knew what we want to see ... that people feel energised, that there is more hope. We’d like to see a shift with people taking ownership and responsibility rather than just seeing improvements as the responsibility of the local authority.”

The main aims of the programme are:

- **To reach places in Scotland that the Foundation and other grant makers struggle to reach**
- **To work in partnership with the community to identify assets and encourage participation**
- **To create a network of connections that help to increase resilience and facilitate access to sustainable resourcing for the long term**
- **To increase awareness, through learning and sharing, of the importance of place and how this affects life chances and opportunities – culminating in long-term social change**

During initial discussions about the programme the Foundation’s place-based funding advisory board raised questions about whether or not the Foundation should commission a place-based approach, rather than deliver it themselves. After much thought, the decision was made to deliver the programme in-house to ensure that the Foundation could:

- **Learn what works and what doesn’t work**
- **Ensure the skills developed remain within the community rather than being pulled out when the funding is discontinued**
- **Ensure learning from one area can cross-fertilise with others**
- **Create employment opportunities in communities**
- **Be able to isolate the key factors that lead to effective community development in some of Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities**

Initially, the approach was to be piloted over a period of three years. However, learning during the first year led to the time frame being lifted in recognition of the fact that a greater commitment of time was required to achieve the desired aims. In light of the work carried out to date and the identifiable needs within communities, a decision was also taken by the Trustees to embed the place-based work into the Foundation’s way of working.

By 2018, the Foundation will be working in all nine areas, employing a team of community coordinators, supported by a national coordinator. The community coordinators will build trusting relationships within communities and build the narrative of place, taking an asset-based approach in understanding the place whilst recognising the negatives and identifying actions to address them. The Foundation will then work alongside the communities to identify their aspirations, hopes and dreams for the place, and develop a range of actions that will identify and build on the natural resources within the community, as well as supporting the sourcing of a range of funding options. However, the Foundation is very aware that what works in one community may not work in another, and recognises the need to be flexible in terms of time frame. The Foundation is passionate about creating sustainability within a community and as a result of this, the programme aims to mobilise a community’s natural resources and assets as opposed to bringing in large pots of money that merely shift the reliance from one source of funding to another. There is learning from other place-based programmes that announcing large pots of money can bring its own challenges within a community.

2. Challenges faced

Resources required

It is recognised that the work will be very dispersed, which will be challenging to manage, along with 'employing and supervising people who will be doing a difficult job'. The Foundation also acknowledges that the skill set of the community coordinator plays a vital part in helping communities to achieve their aspirations.

External buy-in

At the outset the Foundation appreciated that it would be hard to get some local authorities to engage with the pilots and that it might experience resistance amongst funders to supporting communities rather than charities, thus potentially limiting the amount of other resources that the foundation could lever into an area. However, in practice, this has not been the case – during the initial stages of the work the Foundation has found good engagement and buy-in to its work. The Foundation has also recognised the importance of building strong relationships with local authorities as many barriers can be reduced by having this relationship.

Monitoring and evaluation

Due to the innovative, flexible nature of the programme, the Foundation has been averse to imposing predefined outcomes on communities (although it does have overarching programme outcomes). While there is a risk that a community-led approach may mean investing money in an area and not seeing a huge return on investment, the Foundation believes that the ripple effect within the community could be vast. So far this approach has worked well; the iterative approach has enabled the Foundation to understand where and how it can best add value. Participants also perceive themselves to be equal partners, which is beginning to shift the power balance. A critical aspect of the programme is working directly alongside local people within communities and with a range of partners, which enables the Foundation to understand the make-up of the area and the aspirations of the community, and to develop ways to help meet those aspirations.

3. What helps?

Strong evidence base

The Foundation has invested considerable time and resources into carefully mapping the 'cold spot' areas to ensure that its investment, in both time and money, is best targeted. It also spent time researching theoretical models and real-life examples of asset-based community development in the UK, the US and beyond, so that the approach it takes is 'based on what has been proven to work and adapted to suit the environment that the Foundation is working in' (LTSBFS, 2015:3).

Relationships

The Foundation has a number of senior Government officials involved with the programme, and is therefore confident that it will face limited resistance or barriers when it comes to working with local authorities.

Funder collaboration

To support these communities the Foundation, through its new strategy, has brought together a group of UK funders – including Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Tudor Trust and Lankelly Chase, all of whom have a shared interest in a new approach to tackling deep-rooted social challenges.

4. What has been learned so far?

Inviting external challenge and expertise is helpful/necessary. The Foundation and its partners work with three very experienced advisory groups and believe that the experience, support and challenge from these groups is adding significant value to the work. An additional fourth advisory group – which will be different within each area – is designed to increase local partnership connections and access to networks.

A sustained period of commitment is needed. As noted earlier, the Foundation removed the three-year time frame for the approach because it believes that a long-term commitment is needed: ‘we are at the stage in the first cluster of communities of facilitating and supporting the turning of ideas into action for those communities, which will take time.’

The first year of evaluation has also highlighted findings about the processes and where the Foundation is adding value:

- **The local authority with whom the Foundation is working in the first area feels that a genuine partnership approach is really working – ‘It’s been really positive’ – and that the partnership is adding value through ‘having links with broader opportunities that we couldn’t access on our own’**
- **The Foundation has been able to mobilise small amounts of money quickly to facilitate engagement activities, which has been seen as vital: ‘we believe having a close working relationship with the local authority is mutually beneficial and important to realise the benefits for each community’**
- **Having a dedicated worker on the ground is seen as making a big difference**
- **The ability to train the group of local volunteers has been highlighted, and the Foundation has been likened to stabilisers on the bike – keeping the community volunteers on track, giving them more confidence and ‘permission’ to speak up – which is one part of starting to change the power balance**