

**IVAR**

Institute for Voluntary  
Action Research

**The possible,  
not the perfect:**  
*Learning from  
funder responses  
to emergencies*

Commissioned by:



# Authorship and acknowledgements

This report has been written by Liz Firth, Ben Cairns and Charlotte Hennessy based on fieldwork carried out by the authors.

We would like to thank the organisations and individuals who gave up their time and shared their views so freely, including BBC Children in Need, Big Lottery Fund, City Bridge Trust, Co-op Foundation, Comic Relief, John Lyon's Charity, The Kensington and Chelsea Foundation, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London Funders, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, The Tudor Trust, United St Saviour's Charity, Trafford Youth Trust, 42nd Street, and the organisations that received grants from the Community Core Costs Fund and the Children and Young People Funders Coalition.

Our thanks also to the steering group for guiding this research, including James Banks and Geraldine Blake (London Funders), Carol Mack (Association of Charitable Foundations), and David Warner.

## Contributors to this study

Over the course of this study we heard from over 35 people from funding and infrastructure bodies directly or actively involved in recent emergency funding responses, and approximately 100 community organisations in receipt of emergency funding (see Appendix two: Approach and data).

Their feedback and analysis, combined with IVAR's own experience and research, provides the foundation for both the learning and the questions posed in this report.

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# *Introduction*

The background features a complex arrangement of overlapping geometric shapes. A large, dark purple triangle points downwards from the top left. A lighter purple shape is positioned above it. A white, curved shape is on the right side. At the bottom, there are several overlapping shapes in shades of red and orange, including a white rectangular area on the left.

## Foreword

***The possible not the perfect* is a call to action to everyone in the funding community. It shows us how we can be more effective – building from the experiences and insights of funders who stepped up in times of crisis to inform recommendations that we can implement now.**

What led to the work described in these pages are individual stories of loss and suffering at a series of awful events in 2017 – through the bomb explosion at the Manchester Arena, the fire that ripped through Grenfell Tower, and the attacks at Westminster, London Bridge and Borough Market, Finsbury Park and Parson's Green, 108 people lost their lives and hundreds more were injured, bereaved and traumatised. In the funding community we recognised we had to work differently to support those affected, and in doing so to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

This report shows what is possible when people are given the power to shape funding processes. It highlights how funders responded in times of crisis, drawing on the experience of people involved from all sectors of the funding community. It recommends how we can challenge ourselves to improve ways of working – to respond effectively not just to emergency events, but to tackle the crises facing communities every day.

One of the people involved in the funder response says in this report *'I've been thinking about domestic violence and all the women who are murdered every year. We need to respond with the same level of urgency.'* Whatever issues we are seeking to address as funders, we know the importance of improving lives in our communities, but also the challenge of balancing assessment with action. The recommendations in this report will help us all to reflect on how we work, improve our processes, and increase our effectiveness.

You'll see throughout this report the passion that the funders involved in the emergency responses have for ensuring that the lessons from these awful events help us to improve how we work. One respondent says that *'I would fund this way or something similar, if I had the power.'* We all have the power to change, to increase our effectiveness for the communities we serve – this report shows how we can start to make those changes now.

At London Funders, and with our friends at ACF, we are ready to work together with you to make the recommendations in this report a reality.

***David Farnsworth, Chair of London Funders***

***Monica Needs, Vice Chair of London Funders***

## Introduction

**In the space of just three weeks in 2017, three shocking and disturbing incidents occurred in Manchester and London: The Manchester Arena bomb on 22 May, the attacks in London Bridge and Borough Market on 3 June, and the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June. All three emergencies were different – with different causes and different consequences, both in the short and long term. But they all saw attempts by funders to dispense with *'business as usual'* in order to provide urgent support to community organisations and services close to the ground in the affected communities, working to help people directly affected by the emergency and the community more broadly.**

Few funders have experience of responding to immediate emergencies. Most of the money they give looks to the longer term – supporting community organisations, working to help people in need, building stronger communities, creating opportunities and enabling local people to get their voices heard. But in all these emergencies, and particularly in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, many felt a responsibility to step outside their normal way of working and respond quickly.

The London Funders membership network coordinated the collaborative efforts of funders who provided support to community organisations and infrastructure in response to the Grenfell Tower fire. London Funders commissioned this independent IVAR (Institute for Voluntary Action Research) study to capture and share what has been learnt from this work and from the experiences of funders responding to the emergencies in Manchester, London Bridge and Borough Market.

The report does not look at how funds were donated by the public and distributed to support survivors and bereaved families. Its focus is on the narrower question of how funders sought to support community groups and charitable organisations working in response to the three emergency events. Nor is the report an evaluation of the impact of the funding provided; its aim is to understand what funders did differently and what made this possible, both to share their learning with others called to respond to future emergencies and to identify how it might be used to influence and improve day-to-day grant-making practice in relation to community organisations. Even though this report is focused on community organisations, we have also drawn on learning from the collaborative funding response to Borough Market, set up to support local businesses whose futures may be threatened by inability to trade.

There were three other incidents that occurred in London in 2017: The Westminster Bridge attack on 22 March, Finsbury Park attack on 19 June and the Parsons Green explosion on 15 September. This report has not considered funding responses to these events.

*In all these emergencies  
... many felt a responsibility to step outside their normal way of working and respond quickly*

## Purpose

### The IVAR study was commissioned by London Funders:

- To capture and distil the key features and aspects of a range of independent funders' grant-making responses to the Grenfell Tower fire, the London Bridge and Borough Market attacks and the Manchester Arena bomb in order to contribute to wider thinking about future emergency planning and related initiatives.
- To identify opportunities for adaptations and innovations to day-to-day grant-making for small local groups and organisations.

Although the initial focus of this study was independent funders, we found many of the grant-making responses were collaborative across sectors and our findings apply to both independent and governmental funding.

### Terminology that is used throughout this report

**Funders:** Independent foundations, local authority and central government were directly and actively involved in emergency funding responses. They are collectively referred to as funders throughout this report, and by sector where this is more appropriate.

**Community organisations:** Locally based organisations (including registered charities, voluntary associations and unaffiliated groups) providing services (including advice, support and activities) to people living locally, in receipt of emergency funding, and organisations that have acted in an advisory capacity or as references for other local groups.

### Collaborative grant programmes

London Funders coordinated the following grant programmes:

- Community Core Costs Fund
- Children and Young People Funders Coalition (two phases)
- Infrastructure and Anchor Core Costs Fund
- Advice and Information Fund

United St Saviour's Charity, Better Bankside and Borough Market collaboratively delivered a fund to help local businesses suffering from financial hardship, referred to in this report as the Borough Market Fund.

**Grant managers:** staff employed by independent foundations working directly with applicants and grantees.



*Executive  
summary*

*We can understand 'effectiveness' in this context as 'straightforward, easy, quick and trusting'.*

## What funders did differently

**We looked at the key features and aspects of a range of funders' grant-making responses to the Grenfell Tower fire, the London Bridge and Borough Market attacks and the Manchester Arena bomb. We found that across a number of the collaborative funds set up in response to the emergencies, funders stepped outside their normal practices in a range of different ways, most notably:**

- Commitment to speed
- Light-touch application and monitoring
- Managing risk through relationships
- Collaborative delivery and delegated decision-making
- Flexible funding

## Responding effectively in an emergency

Few of the funders that played a part in the emergency responses highlighted in this report expected to be taking on this role. None specialised in emergency funding, although some had been involved in previous emergencies, such as London Bombings Relief, or had a history of support for disaster relief, for example in flood areas. But they saw a gap in support for community organisations that was outside the scope of public donations to help individuals and would not be met – or not met quickly enough – by central and local government funding processes. Independent funders were well-positioned to contribute. And some decided to step in.

*'Being effective' in these circumstances does not mean delivering a perfect grant programme that no-one can question or criticise. But it does mean finding a way to direct money quickly and intelligently to where it appears to be most needed – often in a complex and changing situation, where extensive consultation may be impossible. Drawing on the words of organisations and groups in receipt of emergency funding, we can understand 'effectiveness' in this context as meaning 'straightforward, easy, quick and trusting'.*

The collaborative programmes highlighted in this report demonstrate that it is possible for funders to step outside their normal way of doing business – and that they do not need previous experience in emergency grant-making to make an effective contribution to community organisations responding to immediate and pressing community needs. Six conditions, principles and ways of working have emerged that may help others get money quickly and intelligently to community organisations:

- **Active networks to support collaboration:** In the context of emergency situations, it makes sense for funders to do all they can to work together. This is much easier when funders benefit from pre-existing models for cooperation, established relationships of trust and connections across sectors.

- **Leadership and facilitation:** The funders that took a lead in framing and facilitating these collaborative grant programmes offered valuable experience and skills. They are characterised by clear values, internal relationships of trust, confident and supportive leadership, small teams and nimble structures. Critical to their ability to act was a shared understanding of risk.
- **Finding out what is needed:** All the collaborative grant programmes were designed to respond to immediate needs that had been identified by affected communities. But the need for speed meant they had to be developed without structured consultation. Funders responded to this challenge by using existing local knowledge and bringing experience and an open mind.
- **Models for cooperation between funders:** Larger, generalist funders appear to particularly appreciate leadership by more agile foundations, enabling them to respond effectively to need despite greater *'distance from the ground.'* Two models were developed to respond to need after the Grenfell Tower fire. One was a single point of application for all funders, supporting informed, individual decision-making; the other enabled fast, collaborative decision-making by a coalition of non-local funders. With both approaches, grant managers remarked on the unusual level of organisational willingness to put aside inessentials, as well as the respect and accommodation for the different kinds of funder round the table.
- **Simple, supportive processes:** Each collaborative grant programme was committed to making the process as simple as possible for applicants under severe personal and professional stress. This was achieved through active outreach; a simplified application process; relationship building and conversation; light-touch due diligence; swift decision-making; and simple monitoring arrangements.
- **Readiness to manage unexpected challenges:** All the collaborative grant programmes hit some unexpected difficulties, most of which were dealt with in a straightforward way by the partners involved. Funders were operating outside what is normal for them: *'No-one knows how to do this: the only shield is to be genuinely doing the best we can - and constantly listening and learning so we can do better.'*

## Opportunities for changes to day-to-day grant-making

Funders and community organisations involved in these collaborative grant programmes are united in their hope that some of the ways of doing things that proved possible in an emergency will influence how funders behave in their day-to-day work. Drawing on their experience, we have proposed four areas where there is real potential to bring greater urgency, responsible lightness of touch and more open relationships into day-to-day grant-making practice, and balancing scrutiny and trust.

- **Streamlining core processes:** The collaborative experiences covered by our study have raised valuable questions about due diligence in day-to-day grant-making, the implications of this for community organisations, and funder practice. *'By doing things differently, you expose how things are normally done.'*

- **Creating opportunities for funders and community organisations to talk:** Community organisations, front-line grants staff and decision makers found great value in the simple act of talking to each other: *'A 45-minute conversation could bring more to the table than reams of typed words, especially when dealing with small organisations.'* Shifting towards a more relationship-based funding approach is not without its challenges, and can call for new skills and attitudes. Creating opportunities for funders and community organisations to talk brings mutual benefits, including grant-making processes that are quicker, allow everyone involved to be more candid, and feel fairer. Progress can be made in developing relationships by stepping out from behind process and actively promoting cultures and practices that put more power into the hands of applicants and grantees.
- **Exploring collective efforts to reduce the burden of fundraising for community organisations:** The collaborative grant programmes involved a number of innovations designed to reduce the burden of fundraising for community organisations working under high levels of stress. Community organisations and funders are united in their concern that greater efficiency should not be achieved at the expense of the individuality and diversity of the funding sector: *'We are different and do have different funding priorities - we don't want to end up only funding the same organisations!'* With this important proviso, the models and methods used are widely recognised by those involved as creating opportunities beyond an immediate emergency and there is a real appetite for exploring further.
- **Experimenting, learning and improving together:** All the funders were enthusiastic about the effectiveness of these programmes and the cross-fertilisation of skills, knowledge and ideas that took place. Funders showed decisive commitment and swift action. Three qualities could readily be applied in day-to-day grant-making collaborations: **focus on the organisational essentials**, applying the *'most generous possible spirit'* to stripping away organisational barriers; **work together - not just talk together - and share skills**; and aim for **facilitative and inclusive leadership**, working hard to enable others to make their best contribution. Engaging with community organisations and their beneficiaries is essential - where the aim is to be more effective in relation to these groups, they must be the judge of what will deliver value and to whom. Their voice and experience needs to be at the forefront of thinking, to inform and have a stake in any changes.

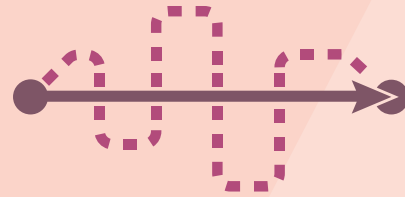
Being involved in these emergency programmes has demonstrated that it is possible for funders to work differently, to the great benefit of their grantees and the communities that they serve. These positive experiences have generated significant enthusiasm for more collaborative, practical experimentation, and to be ready to take a chance, learn and do better next time. The plea that resonates most loudly across our study is: *'There is an opportunity here and it would be a shame to let it go. Let's not get too bogged down in all the problems and challenges - all it takes is a few organisations who are willing to get on with trying out some of these ideas to see how they work.'*



*Part one:  
What funders  
did differently*



Commitment to speed



Light-touch application and monitoring



Managing risk through relationships



Collaborative delivery and delegated decision-making



Flexible funding

## 1.1

### The Manchester Arena bombing

Within a day of the arena bomb, Trafford Youth Trust put out a call to action through the Association of Charitable Foundation's (ACF) Funder Network knowledge-sharing website, requesting support to inspire a coordinated and strategic response. A number of partners responded promptly, including London Funders and Big Lottery Fund. Approximately three weeks later, a number of national, regional and local funders in Greater Manchester met with the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester and a senior policy advisor at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, to discuss a funding response and the possibility of working collaboratively.

These discussions led to a number of individual funding responses. For example, Trafford Youth Trust supported summer youth programmes for 38 organisations, aiming to foster a sense of safety and reassurance through a focus on cross-cultural and health and well-being activities. And the Greater Manchester High Sheriff's Police Trust delivered a small grant programme with the aim of bringing people together. The experience locally was that their application processes aimed to release funding into the community faster than usual.

And a partnership emerged between Co-op Foundation and Big Lottery Fund, who identified young people's mental health, and community cohesion as important areas of focus in the light of the attack and a major concern in Manchester more generally. As a result, each funder provided a grant of £50,000 in a coordinated way to 42nd Street, a long-established and respected young people's mental health and well-being charity already supported by Co-op Foundation.

These two funders stepped outside their normal practices in the following key ways:

- **Managing risk through relationships:** Both funders wanted to respond to the emergency in a sustainable way. Building on the achievements of an existing grantee provided assurance.
- **Expedited processes:** There were due diligence benefits to working together, which helped applications get to the necessary decision-making bodies in both organisations in an expedited fashion.
- **Flexible funding:** The funds provided are significant and flexible, to enable 42nd Street to increase its capability, continue its existing work and develop new partnerships to reach more communities across Greater Manchester.

## 1.2

### London Bridge and Borough Market attacks

The terrorist attacks of 3 June 2017 resulted in the temporary closure of Borough Market and a cordoning off of the wider area to enable the police to carry out a thorough forensic investigation. The cordon lasted for over a week. Local businesses, many of them very small, were at risk of going under. So, United St Saviour's Charity came together with Better Bankside and Borough Market to set up a fund for those affected, supported by initial contributions from the three partners and a public appeal for support.

United St Saviour's Charity led on the establishment and management of the fund and all the practicalities of grant-making, while communication sat with Better Bankside and Borough Market. A joint management committee, with representatives from the three partners and the market traders, provided governance and oversight and made all grant decisions. In recognition of the urgent needs of some of the smaller traders, the first priority was to get funds quickly to the most financially vulnerable. £33,000 of the first phase 'Emergency Fund' was paid on 13 June to enable 62 'umbrella' or stall-holders at Borough Market to keep trading. A second phase extended the fund to businesses within the wider cordon area, awarding around £90,000 to 61 applicants in early July.

This collaborative response attracted the attention of the Greater London Authority (GLA), which made a total contribution of £225,000 through the Mayor's Business Continuity Fund to support a further round of grant-making. The management committee continued to direct the fund, joined by two representatives of the GLA. Phase three, in December 2017, made a further 33 grants to businesses and individuals whose trading continued to be threatened as a result of losses sustained. Continuing donations from businesses and the public left £48,000 to support 29 grants in a fourth, and final, round of grant-making in February 2018. Overall, more than £400,000 was allocated to 107 traders, many of whom benefitted from more than one grant.

**Funders stepped outside their normal practices in the following key ways:**

- **Raising additional funds:** The partnership set up a crowdfunding site to encourage others to support their efforts to help traders.
- **Very light-touch applications:** The urgency of the situation meant the first phase of funding was made without application forms on the basis of local knowledge, with a very short form introduced in phase two.
- **Delegated decision-making:** Representatives on the management committee for the partnership had full authority to decide on the allocation of funds.

## 1.3

### The Grenfell Tower fire

**Five collaborative grant programmes were delivered under the London Funders banner, all designed to support the work of community organisations responding to community needs immediately after the fire and in the subsequent months.**

**The Community Core Costs Fund** distributed £1,148,789, largely granted from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), with some additional independent funding, to 100 community organisations to help meet the immediate costs of responding to the emergency.

Funders stepped outside their normal practices in the following key ways:

- **Commitment to speed:** Organisations had cash in the bank the day after their application was approved. All funds were allocated within eight weeks of the start of the programme.

- **Retrospective funding:** Organisations could ask for funds to cover costs they had already incurred.
- **Collaborative delivery:** Led and facilitated by The Tudor Trust, grant managers from seven different funders were involved in community outreach and collective decision-making.
- **Light-touch:** A commitment to very light processes throughout, including a simple application form, which could be completed on the spot at outreach surgeries and a follow-up monitoring call.

**The Children and Young People Funders Coalition** (phase one and two) enabled a total of eight independent foundations and local and central government funders (Big Lottery Fund, The Tudor Trust, BBC Children in Need, City Bridge Trust, John Lyon's Charity, The Kensington and Chelsea Foundation, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), and Department for Education (DfE)) to distribute £1,078,000 to 61 community organisations for summer holiday activities, starting less than eight weeks after the fire. A second phase secured funding of £1,288,553 from 10 funders<sup>1</sup> to 53 community organisations to support young people's needs over the coming school year.

Funders stepped outside their normal practices in the following key ways:

- **A single application form:** Applicants made one request for funding. This was posted on a shared online matching portal developed by London Funders and used by all participating funders to select bids that met their criteria.
- **Shared intelligence:** John Lyon's Charity initiated and facilitated the fund and provided an initial check or triage function. All funders, to a greater or lesser extent, relied on its local knowledge and expertise as part of their own due diligence.
- **Quick learning:** The Coalition evolved and adapted in response to feedback from community organisations and funders. This delivered, for example, improvements to the portal; greater clarity of funding commitments; and clearer communication with applicants and grantees at each stage.

**The Infrastructure and Anchor Core Costs Fund** was launched in August 2017 and distributed £861,207 from MHCLG, RBKC, Trust for London and Longleigh Foundation to 12 larger community organisations undertaking strategic work in response to community needs emerging since the fire.

Funders stepped outside their normal practices in the following key ways:

- **Identifying specific organisations:** Organisations identified as infrastructure or anchor organisations were individually approached and invited to submit applications.
- **Retrospective funding:** Organisations could ask for funds to cover costs they had already incurred.

<sup>1</sup> The 10 funders were City Bridge Trust, Big Lottery Fund, BBC Children in Need, the Kensington and Chelsea Foundation, John Lyon's Charity, Jack Petchey Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Caritas Westminster, DHL and RBKC.

- **Collaborative follow-up:** shortly after grants were allocated, funded organisations and funders held a joint meeting to explore future community needs, build relationships and encourage joint working.

**The Information and Advice Fund** brought together five independent funders to support the work of independent advice agencies. A total of £292,257 was granted to Kensington and Chelsea Citizen's Advice, the North Kensington Law Centre and two other local partners. Grants were agreed by the end of July.

Funders stepped outside their normal practices in the following key ways:

- **Collaborative development:** Charities and funders met to discuss needs and priorities, and how local organisations could respond in the most aligned way. The bid was developed together by two of the funders and the two lead organisations, and then presented to the other funders.
- **On-going engagement:** Funders stayed close to the work to make sure they were aware of how needs were changing and if other support was required.
- **Shared reporting:** Funders are working on a shared reporting format with the charities – with the aim of achieving one report from four organisations, accepted by five funders.

*‘It’s a different thought process: “Are they competent? Are they telling me the truth? Are they able to deliver this?”’*

*Part two:  
Immediate  
responses to  
emergencies —  
what can we  
learn?*

## 2.1

Few of the funders that played a part in the emergency responses highlighted in this report expected to be taking on this role. Although central and local government is responsible for the infrastructure around public emergencies of many kinds, these activities rarely touch departments concerned with funding and community development. And none of the participating foundations specialised in emergency funding, although some, such as London Bombings Relief, had been involved in previous emergencies or had a history of support for disaster relief, for example in flood areas. But they saw a gap in support for community organisations that was outside the scope of public donations to help individuals and would not be met – or not met quickly enough – by normal central and local government funding processes. Independent funders were well-positioned to contribute. And some decided to step in.

*'Being effective'* in these circumstances does not mean delivering a perfect grant programme that no-one can question or criticise. But it does mean finding a way to direct money quickly and intelligently to where it appears to be most needed – often in a complex and changing situation, where extensive consultation may be impossible. Drawing on the words of organisations and groups in receipt of emergency funding, we can understand *'effectiveness'* in this context as meaning *'straightforward, easy, quick and trusting'*.

Feedback to individual funders and IVAR indicates that, by this description of *'effectiveness'*, all the collaborative grant programmes were effective. For example, grantee feedback on the Community Core Costs Fund indicates that community organisations saw it as unusually responsive to the needs they identified: *'Offering core costs was vital – not needing to badge it up as a fancy new project but being able to go in for the boring admin stuff.'*

There were inevitable questions about the rigour or the process and who was – or was not – funded. But there is no question that the funding made a huge difference to a huge number of organisations operating under high levels of stress: *'At a time when we just wanted to get on with supporting the community, this felt like one of the best experiences.'* The collaborative programmes highlighted in this report demonstrate that it is possible for funders to step outside their normal way of doing business – and that they do not need previous experience in emergency grant-making to make an effective contribution to community organisations responding to immediate and pressing community needs. The following conditions, principles and ways of working have emerged that may help others be ready, should they be called upon to take on these roles in future emergencies.

Getting money quickly and intelligently to community organisations responding to immediate and pressing needs calls for:

- Active networks to support collaboration
- Leadership and facilitation
- Finding out what is needed
- Models for cooperation between funders
- Simple, supportive processes
- Readiness to manage unexpected challenges

## Active networks to support collaboration

Emergency situations of this kind are, by their nature, sudden and unexpected. The situation is confused and confusing, with rumours circulating and new information emerging all the time.

Government emergency procedures are all about coordinating the response effort, bringing together local government, police, health and fire services and some civil society organisations into a single command and control structure. And there is a parallel and connected effort to coordinate individual giving to support victims and their families. This is often focused through agreed distribution channels, such as the 'We Love Manchester' Emergency Fund, launched by Manchester City Council, or fundraising by bodies such as British Red Cross, which is then distributed by organisations like the London Emergencies Trust. But the task of coordination and maintaining accountability to both beneficiaries and donors is becoming increasingly complicated with the growth of individual fundraising efforts through social media. The Grenfell Tower fire saw many funds established to support individuals and families, and much confusion and anger about what funds had been raised and how they were spent. This led the Charity Commission to move into an unusually proactive coordination role around communication, in order to maintain public trust.

Under these circumstances, it makes sense for funders to do all they can to work together when responding to the needs of community organisations working on the ground and to connect in a positive way to the efforts of others. We suggest this is much easier when funders benefit from:

- Pre-existing models for cooperation
- Established relations of trust
- Connections across sectors

### Pre-existing models for cooperation

London Funders, as a long-established membership organisation, provided a highly effective platform and vehicle for mobilising the response by institutional funders. A number of its members had strong links into community networks and with grassroots groups. And it was John Lyon's Charity, an engaged local funder across northwest London, that was the first to put out a specific call for action. A formal meeting of funders, hosted by John Lyon's Charity, was held within 10 days of the Grenfell Tower fire. London Funders became part of the overall emergency response effort and its small team provided overall coordination for members, offered or organised practical support and kept communications flowing. In a tense and, understandably, angry environment, London Funders, City Bridge Trust and John Lyon's Charity were the face of funders in community meetings and in the public presentation of collaborative grant programmes – all of which were deliberately branded collectively as 'London Funders'.

Without the benefit of an existing funders' network, Manchester funders reported that it was difficult to know how to respond collaboratively, effectively and at speed: *'How do we find out what other funders are doing? The infrastructure to answer this question wasn't there. We had to rely on whoever replied to the email.'* Big Lottery Fund was involved in coordinating the first meeting, held around three

weeks after the bomb. Funders recognised that they *'needed to develop deeper knowledge of one another to foster trust and cooperation'* to support effective collaboration. The meeting decided it could best respond by doing further *'mapping of the bigger picture rather than struggling to get actions [out of the meeting]'*.

Although a number of individual funders responded to the emergency, formal collaborations to support community organisations and infrastructure did not emerge from these discussions. The closest was essentially a coordinated match funding agreement between Co-op Foundation and Big Lottery Fund, rather than any form of wider coalition, although delivered in a highly collaborative way, with 42nd Street providing expert advice and many conversations between the three organisations to develop the proposal. As such, it has been used to inform this report but not cited as a direct example of collaborative practice. The experience, and the learning from London, has catalysed the development of a Greater Manchester Funders' Forum, whose members are actively considering developing a funding collaborative model like London Funders.

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### Established relationships of trust

There is general agreement that formal models alone are not enough. The response to the Grenfell Tower fire called for *'pre-existing relationships of trust, as well as pre-existing structures to support them.'* Individuals called on their networks and professional friendships to mobilise action. The Tudor Trust, although based in west London, is not a place-based funder. It took a leadership role in distributing government (as well as its own) funds in response to the Grenfell Tower fire because it was asked to do so – and believed that it had the necessary values, culture and skill set to take on this task. Many people – both organisational leaders and operational staff – talked about the need to be ready to make a leap of faith that, if they stepped outside their normal way of doing business, others would engage and support them.

In the case of the Borough Market Fund the trust between the three founding organisations – United St Saviour's Charity, Better Bankside, and Borough Market – was critical to the overall success of the fund. United St Saviour's Charity sat at the heart of a strong informal network around the London Bridge area, and Borough Market more specifically, where it owns property and with which it has a long association. Starting the process of a coordinated response to mitigating the effect on small traders of the 3 June terrorist attacks was a matter of the three organisations picking up the phone to each other: *'Then people were volunteered to go to the first meeting where all the relevant people attended who had an interest in the market.'* All three organisations were catalysts, but United St. Saviour's was able to draw on its many years of grant-making experience to drive the process forward.

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### Connections across sectors

Members of London Funders come from both the independent funding and public sectors together with corporate and social investment sectors. And, critically, London Funders had a direct link to the Grenfell Response Team, convened under government emergency procedures to coordinate the response effort. Led by the Chief Executive of the City of London, which is sole trustee of the City Bridge Trust, he brought in its Chief Executive as a trusted link through to independent funding organisations. The Chief Executive of City Bridge Trust, in turn, chairs London Funders and was in an excellent position to mobilise its resources and share its learning at the most senior levels.

The collaboration around Borough Market involved charitable trusts (United St Saviour's Charity and the market itself), a not-for-profit Business Improvement District (Better Bankside) and a traders' representative. Together they too were well connected to the government emergency response team and well informed about the adverse impact for traders. With a clear common aim and the urgency of the situation, *'there wasn't too much politics and people pulled together'*.

In Manchester, we heard there were positive experiences of cross-sector engagement in the emergency response. But London Funders and individual foundations in London commented on the need to give more attention to the role of civil society in emergency planning and to the mechanisms needed for public authorities to link appropriately and effectively with organisations close to the ground: *'It would be helpful not to separate the voluntary sector response from that of the local authority and from the Government. If this happened again, what would the disaster plan look like?'*

The Borough Market experience reinforced the sense that it is not enough to simply rely on local authorities to *'know their patch'*. And, in the light of the high level of anger and mistrust of both local and central government in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, charitable foundations maintained their connections with community organisations. This became a vital source of *'very informal intelligence gathering to keep the response connected to the voice of marginalised communities,'* as well as a source of and conduit for much-needed funds. Government needed to act quickly and the MHCLG *'knew it wouldn't do things as it normally would – working with London Funders offered a different way to reach groups on the ground'*.

This experience echoes the learning from the Community Building Initiative (CBI) developed in Victoria, Australia through the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD). The CBI aims to support the preparedness, response, recovery and rebuilding activities of communities experiencing natural disasters such as bushfire. Their research and experience support the *'importance of community leadership, participation, access to decision-making skills and trusted information as dimensions required for building community capacity and resilience'*. Facilitators also identified that bringing people together to plan and work collaboratively potentially enhanced the disaster response of communities.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2

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## Leadership and facilitation

London Funders was well-positioned as a vehicle for coordination between funders in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, although it stepped into a much more active role than is usual and for a longer period: *'Our members were able to mobilise quickly and effectively because of the years of groundwork, networking and building collaborative cross-sector approaches that had already been achieved. The scale of the incident required London Funders to step up a gear and take on a more pro-active leadership and "front of house" role than normal.'*

<sup>2</sup> Markiewicz, A. (2009) *Review of Role of Community Development Investments in Supporting Preparedness and Emergency Response and Recovery of Victorian Communities Experiencing Bushfire*, Anne Markiewicz and Associates with Ian Patrick and Associates Pty Ltd.

The funders who initiated these collaborative grant programmes do not usually act as coordinating bodies – and, for at least one of them, this was a big step away from ‘business as usual’: *‘The rule book was thrown out of the window.’* Their experience as coordinating organisations may be of particular value to others called upon to take a lead in future emergency situations.

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### The qualities of coordinating organisations

We have reflected on the pre-existing qualities and characteristics of the funders that took a lead in framing and facilitating the collaborative grant programmes – and on how and why these made them suited to this role.

It is clear that all these funders offered valuable experience and skills, including:

- **A clear and relevant strategic purpose:** *‘We were ready to pull out all the stops – it is our patch and we are committed to it.’*
- **A good understanding of community organisations and/or local needs:** *‘John Lyon’s Charity know everyone – or they know someone who does.’*
- **A reputation for being thoughtful, trust-based funders:** *‘Tudor Trust are good at looking at form and function. And they made it a very safe space to work. That is all credit to them.’*
- **Close relationships with their grantees:** *‘They understand community organisations and listen to what we need.’*
- **Strong organisational and personal networks:** *‘It just took one person to pick up the phone to get things moving.’*

Organisationally, they are well established, endowed foundations, with assets behind them and secure in their own funding. They also demonstrate:

- **Clear values and organisational confidence:** *‘We’ve worked hard on our culture and it’s important to us to protect it.’*
- **Strong internal alignment between trustees, Chief Executive and staff:** *‘Internally, everyone was in it together – and this confidence extended into the collaboration.’*
- **Small teams and nimble structures:** *‘It isn’t just about size – it’s about being able to get your head round things quickly.’*
- **Confident, supportive leadership:** *‘The way [Tudor Trust] chaired the decision-making meetings gave everyone confidence to do things differently.’*
- **Internal relationships based on trust:** *‘We said “we are well out of our comfort zone, but we can hold this and we will all own each other’s decisions”.’*

Critical to their ability to act was alignment on the question of risk. For United St Saviour’s Charity, the Borough Market programme had the characteristics of ‘a relief effort’ of such importance that *‘there was an acceptance of a higher risk than usual’*. All institutional members of the decision-making group were board members of their organisations, with grants expertise provided by a United St Saviour’s staff member. John Lyon’s Charity has no doubt about the importance of an immediate response,

taking both the long- and short-term views: *‘What matters is the here and now – it must have immediate value. And it’s never just about the individual activities – all work with young people is about engagement, trust, relationship building, building the family.’* As a family foundation largely free of external constraint, The Tudor Trust is in a position to take risks, where this feels appropriate. But it does not see this as a risky programme: *‘What risk is there really in giving small grants to a community facing an emergency of this scale? What is a failed project in these circumstances?’*

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### Demands on capacity

No matter how well-suited an individual organisation may be to taking a lead role in a collaborative response to an emergency, there is no doubt that coordinating the efforts of others in acting quickly and effectively is demanding and time-consuming.

London Funders had a staff team of 2.5, all of whom were mainly engaged on the response to the Grenfell Tower fire for the best part of three months. All the foundations that took on coordinating roles had teams of fewer than 20 people. While some staff continued to take care of existing plans and programmes, there is no question that ‘normal business’ was significantly disrupted for a number of weeks or months: *‘It has been a huge amount of work and some other programmes have suffered. I’m not sure we could have done it a couple of years ago when the team was even leaner.’* And all the collaborative grant programmes relied on consistent commitments from other funders to release staff, attend meetings or engage with applications in a timely way: *‘It is important not to come to the table with goodwill but nothing in our pockets.’*

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### Learning

All the organisations that took a leadership role have been struck by how much they learned and how relevant this could be to their day-to-day practice as funders: *‘This intense experience needs to change us – we need not just to slide back into business as usual.’* Grant managers all had questions about the value of some of the things they do every day: *‘Why can’t we do this more often? We must be able to take some of this forward without needing an emergency. When I went back to my own organisation, it made me question why we do certain things.’* And we heard many people express the hope that this experience will be a wakeup call for funders that will not stop at the doors of those directly involved: *‘I am cautious about too much self-congratulation – it is a shame that it had to be an emergency of this magnitude to make some of these things happen.’*

## 2.3 Finding out what is needed

It can be hard to make a helpful contribution in an emergency situation: *‘With so many funds being set up to support victims and their families, there was a need to think carefully about how to position ourselves. We didn’t just want to be well intentioned.’*

Community organisations themselves have little or no time to stand back: *‘We were deeply affected. Some of our service users and volunteers lost their lives. We were confused, and distressed. We were grieving. We weren’t thinking about resources – we were trying to serve the community.’* All the collaborative grant programmes were designed to respond to immediate needs that had been identified by the community



organisations serving affected communities. But the need for speed meant they had to be developed without structured consultation. Two approaches were used to respond to this challenge.

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### Using existing local knowledge

Engaged, place-based funders clearly find it easier and more natural to take a lead in identifying need in their own areas. For United St Saviour's Charity, *'the decision came from the impulse that it was the right thing to do – because we are rooted in the area'*. With strong networks and ears close to the ground, these funders may already have a good sense of where the gaps are and be well-positioned to consult quickly and identify priorities. And their local knowledge provides considerable assurance to others. With more than 25 years' experience as an engaged local funder, The John Lyon's Charity were confident in their knowledge of the area, of the groups working in it and of the needs of young people – *'we have the everyday intelligence that others wouldn't have.'* And it has a clear interest in promoting interventions that, even in an emergency, *'keep an eye to the longer-term'* and avoid *'a parachuting in, "doing to the community" approach.'*

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### Bringing experience and an open mind

The second approach, framed by The Tudor Trust, was more unusual, starting from a position of *'neutrality'* in an angry and mistrustful environment. As a UK-wide funder, *'we had no idea about the politics and no agenda except to be helpful.'* The programme was in many ways an expression of the Trust's normal way of working – although delivered in collaboration with very different funders and at much greater speed than is usual: *'We probably made some mistakes because of it. But it's what we do. We don't go in at a systemic level: we fund on the basis of what people say to us – we trust them.'* So, in many cases, grant managers simply met with people from local community groups at open surgeries and helped them express what they needed: *'She needed space to think it through and work it out step by step. And she needed support to put it down in traumatic circumstances.'* In the decision-making process, they also drew on references and views from informed community organisations – but the starting point was a conversation based on the conviction that organisations can be trusted to ask for what they need and deliver what they promise. Time and again, community organisations fed back on how important this was to them: *'Thank you again for making it so human and so easy. It was really impressive how you handled it.'* The space provided by the open surgeries, and the dialogue it fostered with community organisations, was described to us in one conversation as a *'paradigm shift in grant-making'*.

## 2.4 Models for cooperation between funders

The willingness of others to take the lead appears to work particularly well for larger, generalist grant-makers, especially those that feel a special responsibility to respond to public emergencies. Some have established procedures to quickly set aside a funding pot, and all operate at a scale where decisions about redirecting staff capacity can be made at executive level. But *'distance from the ground'* and internal structures and hierarchies make it more difficult for them to move nimbly in framing or leading a collaborative response.

The two approaches used to understand need in the community after the Grenfell Tower fire each developed into a distinct model for cooperation between funders, which used different mechanisms to provide assurance about *'doing the right thing'* and doing it quickly.

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### A single point of application

The Children and Young People Funders Coalition relied on local knowledge but without any delegation of grant decisions. John Lyon's Charity is highly embedded in northwest London and other funders used its local knowledge (as well as their own past funding relationships) to help shortcut their normal grant process. The different experiences of Big Lottery Fund staff in Manchester and London clearly demonstrate the value of local knowledge and credibility to funders with a broader remit. In Manchester, they were aware of an organisational desire to *'act quickly'* but had no immediately obvious way to respond thoughtfully and usefully. In west London, local leadership provided a clear route map: *'I was very pleased to see John Lyon's Charity and London Funders taking the initiative. Otherwise we wouldn't have been able to find our way in and we wouldn't have done a good job in the time.'*

The use of a single application form posted on an online matching portal proved an essential tool for coordination. It also enabled UK-wide funders to quickly make informed individual decisions about who to fund rather than simply delegate these choices to a local partner: *'We do have an emergency welfare process but being able to suggest the John Lyon's option meant we could do something more focused and tangible.'*

This did cause some confusion for grantees *'As our bid was split across different funders, we weren't sure whether the process had finished and whether the rest of our application was still being considered or not.'* But it enabled these funders to engage directly in the response to the emergency; supported flexibility and negotiation about *'who funds what'*; and brought a wider range of skills and knowledge to the development of the fund as it moved from phase to phase.

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### Collaborative decision-making

The Community Core Costs Fund was a coalition of non-local funders led by The Tudor Trust, with a delivery team involving grants managers drawn from BBC Children in Need, Big Lottery Fund, City Bridge Trust, Comic Relief, Lankelly Chase Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for part of the process. All have a UK-wide remit, except City Bridge Trust, which works London-wide. Here, the funders got their confidence and reassurance from working together: *'It was great to work with people across different backgrounds and specialisms, sharing and acknowledging different experiences. Any challenges were positive and never about catching people out.'* They took references from established local community organisations where appropriate and the decision-making meeting was attended by the Community Engagement Projects Manager for RBKC in an advisory capacity. RBKC runs a number of grant programmes – both project and core funding – helping to underpin a strong and active local voluntary and community sector: *'It was through years of interaction that we could call upon organisations. If you haven't sown the seed don't go looking for the fruit.'* But decisions sat with the grant managers, who made them together, based on experience, instinct and collaborative judgement rather than *'having all the information'*.

Grant managers, who engaged throughout the process, found the approach liberating and highly effective. *'The way we worked together built our confidence from meeting to meeting. We got the money out very quickly but we weren't reckless. Where there were concerns, we deferred decisions to allow follow-up – and we turned applications*

down.’ And MHCLG officials observing the process were struck by the knowledge in the room and the care taken in decision-making: *‘They clearly understood the organisations really well – and what was needed. They were strong on due diligence and understood the purpose of the fund. But they were also encouraged to go with their gut and not be too risk adverse.’*

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### Respect for the constraints on others

In both funds, grant managers remarked on the unusual level of organisational willingness to put aside inessentials: *‘We didn’t all argue about “we do it this way”, because we had a common aim and needed to work very quickly.’* This was matched by a respect for the different kinds of funder round the table and the need to accommodate the key organisational requirements that would make it possible for them to contribute: *‘For example, we can’t reimburse organisations for any costs they have already incurred – but others could. So, we moved applications around so that, together, we could help them.’*

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### Safe spaces

Funders were very conscious of the personal and organisational stress facing people applying for grants. Hearing people’s stories of the shock and trauma of the Grenfell Tower fire was inevitably upsetting for grant managers too – and The Tudor Trust took great care to have support available both at the surgeries and through weekly debriefing. More broadly, grant managers found themselves working well outside their normal way of doing things, particularly in the Community Core Costs Fund. For some, this was liberating – but others found the speed of the process and the lightness of its due diligence challenging and unsettling. *‘I felt unconfident. My anxieties were because it was different from my work and felt more like direct community engagement.’*

Grant managers were the decision makers for the fund and the process was designed and facilitated to enable everyone’s contribution: *‘I felt able to respond, even though I’m one of the quieter ones’; ‘It felt like a safe space.’* They felt that their skills and experience were being valued: *‘Mostly, your gut instinct is right.’* And they were not left exposed by the process: *‘It was an inquiry or exploration – relying on everyone’s judgement and know-how. It was OK to be unsure. The job wasn’t to defend or justify.’* There was a genuine sense of group accountability: *‘The individual grant manager was recommending, but if the group said “no” then it was in the spirit that there was wisdom in the group.’*

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## 2.5 Simple, supportive processes

Many people emphasised the need to *‘make sure that emotion does not overcome sensible process so that we can deliver what we promise’*. Each collaborative grant programme had its own character and mechanisms – and all were adjusted and improved in the light of experience. All were committed to making the process as simple as possible for applicants under severe personal and professional stress. Wherever possible, this commitment was driven right through to the reporting and monitoring stage, rather than stopping once the funds had been distributed.

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### Active outreach

There were challenges in promoting grant programmes for organisations at a time when attention was focused on the needs of individual survivors and bereaved families. London Funders publicised them on their website and regularly attended community meetings to listen to the community and explain their purpose and who could apply. Many of the funders involved made direct contact with their existing grantees to offer help and advise them about the emergency funds. John Lyon’s Charity was very active through its local networks in promoting the Children and Young People Funders Coalition in particular.

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### A simplified application process

The programmes all used a very simple application form – and the Borough Market support fund for traders made its first round of emergency grants without any form at all, recognising the financial vulnerability of some of the smallest – often family-based – traders. All funders involved in the Children and Young People Funders Coalition accepted a single application form, developed by John Lyon’s Charity based on one of its existing forms. This was clearly an essential offer to hard-pressed organisations: *‘Applying through the central hub of London Funders made the process simple as we only had to complete one application form. We were also grateful for the quick response to our application; this ensured we could plan ahead as much as possible whilst acting immediately to the changing environment and needs of our community.’* And for London Funders, it was a major achievement: *‘London Funders is 20 years old and the first challenge we were set was to develop a common application form. It has only been achieved now as a part of this project.’*

The single application form was not without its challenges. Some were – or could be – dealt with by small adjustments to the form and to the portal on which it was published: *‘The organisations were so stretched and so busy that, for example, bank account details were tricky to get hold of. This information could possibly have been put on the portal with the application.’* But there were more intractable problems for some funders in knitting the single form with their own systems: *‘We still need to feed our systems and there are some restrictions. We lost a couple of organisations in the data capture process where they did not meet the requirements and there wasn’t the time to resolve the issues. It’s a reality check for us – some of the admin just has to be done and there is less flexibility.’* Hope was expressed that continuing improvements in technology and work on greater transparency around funding may help to remove these additional challenges over time.

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### Starting with a conversation

Most of the programmes had an active outreach element to understand need and help organisations develop proposals. The approach used for Community Core Costs Fund was noteworthy, using conversations to help achieve quick turn-around and directly support its collaborative decision-making model. Applicants had two options: to apply via email or to complete the form with a grant manager at an open surgery, and to receive a response the same day. Having a choice was welcomed – and recognised as very unusual – by grantees. Around 50% in person: *‘Sometimes we don’t have the skills to submit an attractive application. Sometimes we don’t have the right*

language for funders, but just give me 5 or 10 minutes to talk it through.' Great care was taken to create a welcoming and accessible environment for applicants, many of whom were coping with personal as well as professional trauma. Grant managers were struck by the quality of the relationship it was possible to build in such a short time: *'There is something very powerful about just sitting alongside someone, talking, asking open questions, letting the information emerge then filling in the form together.'* And they were surprised by the depth of understanding it gave them, when compared with paper forms: *'I was refreshed at how informed I felt after the conversation. You wouldn't have got that from paper.'*

### Light-touch due diligence

Due diligence was consistently light-touch in the Borough Market support fund for traders and the Community Core Costs Fund: *'The context meant accepting that you can't go into all the due diligence stuff. It's a different thought process: "Are they competent? Are they telling me the truth? Are they able to deliver this?"'*

The Children and Young People Funders Coalition was less consistent in its due diligence. John Lyon's Charity offered a *'triage service'* to other funders, who could be confident that applicants passed through to the portal were known to them and other trusted local agencies, and that some basic checks had been done. For some, this was enough: *'If they said it was a good project, I was happy to take it to our decision-making panel.'* However, others elected to follow up with their own due diligence checks: *'There are some things we just have to do before we can make a recommendation.'*

### Swift decision-making

For many applicants, the Community Core Costs Fund achieved a probably unprecedented turnaround of 24 hours between the completion of an application in a community surgery, a grant decision being made and money arriving in the community organisation's bank account: *'I was amazed at how quick it all was. To my knowledge, it is the first in the UK. I've never come across that appetite for risk before. As a model, that is hard to improve upon.'* Overall, we calculated that each application was prepared, assessed and processed in less than 90 minutes. *'Getting the funds so fast really helped pick myself up again and deliver all these amazing moments to people when we most needed it.'* The Borough Market support fund also moved with considerable speed, dealing with its first grant round in less than a week and its second one month later.

The Children and Young People Funders Coalition relied on individual funders making their own decisions rather than collaborative decision-making from a single pot, so experiences for grantees were more mixed. Some funders were able to allocate funds very quickly – others struggled to align with their internal decision-making timetables. During phase one, there were some challenges for grantees, because of the very short turnaround time needed to get activities in place for the summer holidays: *'The payment was a bit delayed. We didn't have time to wait. The funder said don't advertise until we have signed the contract, but we couldn't wait.'*

In the first phase of the programme, the portal (put together at great speed) did not highlight whether other funders were considering a particular application – so that they might come back to the portal and find someone quicker had already taken it. This was resolved for phase two – and decision-making meetings were added around certain themes to enable funders to benefit from each other's knowledge and experience and to allocate applications in the most straightforward way, significantly speeding up the process.

## 2.6

### Monitoring

The Community Core Costs Fund again offered a choice to grantees in completing the simple monitoring form, with the majority choosing a single phone call with the grant manager who dealt with their application. Reporting arrangements for the Children and Young People Funders Coalition vary depending on which funder picked up the individual application. However, there is a commitment to keep this as light-touch as is compatible with internal systems and requirements.

## Readiness to manage unexpected challenges

All the collaborative grant programmes hit some difficulties, most of which were dealt with in a straightforward way by the partners involved. However, the response to the Grenfell Tower fire raised challenges that were outside many of the funders' day-to-day competence, which may be of relevance to others.

### Managing communications

It proved particularly challenging to manage communication around the London Funders collaborative grant programmes in response to the Grenfell Tower fire. The biggest culture shock for many foundations was operating in the glare of public scrutiny and in an atmosphere of deep community anger and mistrust. Many foundations continue to work in a very private way: *'We simply don't have the skills to be public facing – and to cope with the media.'* And distinguishing these grant programmes for organisations and groups from the many appeals and donations for individuals was, unsurprisingly, a real challenge: *'There was great confusion about what money was for whom: people thought we had £20 million to spend. Constant communication was critical – about the different pots of money, what was being spent on what and why.'*

The role that London Funders played as the public face of the funds and in leading on communications and broader community engagement was essential: *'We would not have done it without the shield of London Funders.'* In turn, the London Funders team contained good experience on the community side but very little formal communications capacity: *'We started with relatively little support around communications and it quickly became very complicated. We never expected to get calls from Sky News.'* Access to specialist communications support – provided by City Bridge Trust and ACF – was, therefore, essential.

### Accountability

More broadly, the whole situation called for a degree of proactivity that independent foundations rarely face: *'The level of scrutiny our decisions were under was completely alien to us. We felt it was very important to be accountable about what was spent. And all our decisions were up on the London Funders website the day after they were made.'*

Where concerns were raised, funders recognised the need to respond in a positive and respectful way: *'It's uncomfortable, but you have to engage with it. And in a way that shows you are listening – being transparent about what you are doing and why you are doing it.'* Many people spoke about the qualities needed to operate in a responsive and ethical way in such a complex and fast-changing environment. Most talked about values and behaviour like *'being honest and straightforward with people'* and *'acknowledging when mistakes have been made or things have gone wrong and saying sorry'*. Everyone is operating outside what is normal for them: *'No-one knows how to do this: the only shield is to be genuinely doing the best we can – and constantly listening and learning so we can do better.'*

With discussions still ongoing about what happens next, many people are talking about the need to *'stop, listen and reflect and recognise that this is still a community in crisis. What are funders' responsibilities for supporting long-term recovery? And how can the community be involved in designing the longer-term programmes?'*

#### In summary

The first aim of the IVAR study was to 'capture and distil the key features and aspects of a range of funders' grant-making responses to the Grenfell Tower fire, the London Bridge and Borough Market attacks and the Manchester Arena bomb in order to contribute to wider thinking about future 'emergency planning' and related initiatives'.

Drawing on contributions from organisations and groups in receipt of emergency funding, we have proposed that 'effective' responses to emergencies by funders can be described as *'straightforward, easy, quick and trusting'*. To this description we can add *'collaborative'*.

And looking across the funding initiatives covered by our study, we can assert that the delivery of this kind of effective emergency response requires:

- Active networks to support collaboration
- Leadership and facilitation
- Finding out what is needed
- Models for cooperation between funders
- Simple, supportive processes
- Readiness to manage unexpected challenges

*'No-one knows how to do this: the only shield is to be genuinely doing the best we can – and constantly listening and learning so we can do better'*

*Part three:  
Opportunities  
for changes  
to day-to-day  
grant-making*

The second aim of the IVAR study was to 'identify opportunities for adaptations and innovations to day-to-day grant-making for small local groups and organisations.'

Funders and community organisations involved in these collaborative grant programmes are united in their hope that some of the ways of doing things that proved possible in an emergency will influence how funders behave in their day-to-day work. Their experience renewed their belief in the potential for:

#### A more urgent approach

For community organisations, this is a clear priority: *'They don't have to have a tragedy or emergency to give money that way. You get back what you put in. Every day in a community is an emergency. The more you put into a community, the more you get out.'* The funding experience was described as: *'too good to be true. The decision was the next day. Why couldn't things always be like that?'* And funders were sharply reminded of the human consequences of other pressing social issues that do not currently receive an immediate response: *'I've been thinking about domestic violence and all the women who are murdered every year. We need to respond with the same level of urgency.'*

#### A lighter touch

We found an overwhelming sense from independent foundations that their freedom to act needs to translate into less burdensome and more straightforward processes for applicants and grantees: *'Must the directness and simplicity of our approach necessarily dissolve as an immediate emergency recedes? We've gone two steps forward; let's at least keep one of them.'* And that they feel this particularly in their dealings with small, community organisations, who may be further disadvantaged by *'unnecessarily complex, risk-averse or lengthy grant-making processes'*.

Community organisations were very enthusiastic about faster, lighter-touch processes: *'If I could have more of that approach generally, life would be an awful lot easier.'* But they did not expect this to be at the expense of necessary standards: *'Some type of audit is required. That way, there is a risk of being caught if you are being dishonest.'*

#### More open relationships

Community organisations strongly welcomed the opportunity to speak to their funders or potential funders: *'They were not officious and protective, and they were very available. This is an exception to the normal crunching out of grant applications and having to pacify grant officers. It was a refreshing change and very good.'* Funders were struck by the quality of relationships and the practical value that can be created even in a short conversation when compared to *'a system that is so much about paper and emails.'*

And the experience of practical co-working with their funding peers generated much enthusiasm for future collaboration – not only between independent foundations but across sectors: *'The people round the table really knew what they were talking about. You felt that everyone brought their own knowledge into the room, whether national or local. I would fund this way – or something similar – more often, if I had the power.'*

#### Balancing scrutiny with trust

Many are aware that some of these aspirations are challenging in an environment where charities and charitable giving are under increasing scrutiny, and detailed compliance checking, monitoring and audit have become routine for many funders

and grantees. Trust played an important part in all these collaborative grant programmes. To a greater or lesser degree, all showed unusual levels of trust in relation to:

- **Community organisations:** relying on the word of applicants and grantees about what they needed and what they had done, supported by the lightest possible checks on probity and competence: *'You trusted me, and I want to deliver.'*
- **Decision-making:** trusting grant managers, other delegated individuals, expedited processes and collaborative judgements to support sound decisions to get funds moving quickly: *'Grant managers felt that, as decision makers, they were being trusted and that their experience of grant-making was being valued and used well.'*
- **Other funders:** relying on their knowledge and skills to support decision-making: *'If John Lyon's Charity said they were OK, that was 70% of the decision, as far as I was concerned.'*

And these programmes stand as tangible examples that it is possible for funders from across sectors to cooperate effectively, to work quickly and to set aside much of their usual *'baggage of due diligence'* and still make considered grants, for which community organisations are – and feel – accountable: *'I don't think we would have funded any differently if it had gone through our usual process – which takes several months. Everything I funded [has] delivered or is in the middle of delivering.'*

#### Adaptations and innovations

Drawing on their experience, we would propose four areas of learning where there is real potential to bring greater urgency, responsible lightness of touch and more open relationships into day-to-day grant-making practice:

- Streamlining core processes
- Creating opportunities for funders and community organisations to talk
- Exploring collective methods to reduce the burden of fundraising
- Experimenting, learning and improving together

## 3.1

### Streamlining core processes

The experience of using very streamlined processes was an eye-opener for many participating funders, raising questions about the unintended consequences of the way day-to-day practice has developed: *'By doing things differently, you expose how things are normally done.'*

Many examples were shared of existing processes that might disadvantage community organisations because they:

- **Slow down response times:** *'An application passes through eight or nine hands before a decision is made – we must be able to reduce that.'*

<sup>3</sup> See: IVAR (2016) *Thinking about sustainability*, London: IVAR, which highlights the myriad of difficulties associated with narrow and prescriptive uses of 'sustainability' by funders.

- **Demonstrate an undifferentiated attitude to risk (particularly around finances and expectations of sustainability) that many smaller organisations struggle to pass:** *'Shouldn't our question be: "Do we believe the organisation can deliver and will it survive for the duration of the grant?" Big contracts are awarded without looking at sustainability once the work is done.'*<sup>3</sup>
- **Put too much emphasis on identifying predetermined outcomes, particularly when supporting simple, proven interventions:** *'If we give money to really local, really embedded groups, we can be more trusting that something good will happen.'*

Some larger funders felt that complex processes had become a deliberate, if unspoken, part of a strategy to manage application volumes but without proven effect on turn-down rates. Many questioned whether the less experienced groups supported by some of the collaborative programmes included in this study would have got through their normal systems: *'There is no doubt that groups are rejected because of the quality of their application rather than the quality of the work that they are doing.'* And they regretted the consequences: *'We believe in the efficacy of small, community-based, close-to-the ground organisations, but our processes would absolutely have excluded some of them.'*

Three aspects of the grant-making process – routine due diligence, decision-making and reporting – stand out as offering opportunities for funders to become lighter-touch and quicker in their decision-making when dealing with community organisations, without losing the necessary attention to responsible grant-making and managing risk.

### Routine due diligence

Grant-making decisions are judgements about the balance between benefit and risk. The aim is to select those applications that funders reasonably believe will make the biggest difference against their funding priorities, while being as confident as possible that the proposed work is achievable, and the organisation is capable of delivery.<sup>4</sup> On top of this, some funders overlay broader questions about their own organisational benefit and risk – for example, in relation to public reputation or formal accountability requirements. Due diligence processes have been developed to help funders make these judgements in an informed rather than random way, with the aim of bringing a degree of rigour and fairness to their decision-making process. But they can only underpin the judgements that funders make, not replace them.

Funders involved in these collaborative programmes stepped well away from their usual level of due diligence. But we found high levels of confidence in the grants made and their value to communities; *'In the terms of the programme, it probably had a 100% success rate – and took a matter of hours. What value would have been added by taking weeks over it?'* From across the collaborative London Funders programmes, funders raised questions about whether the cart was leading the horse in relation to day-to-day grant-making: *'There is a danger that we are giving too much attention to the process and not to what we really want to achieve.'*

Overall, our sense is that due diligence processes – like many systems – accrete over time, with new checks and questions added as new challenges arise. The key barrier to root-and-branch streamlining appears to be a lack of confidence that operational grants staff and decision makers are sufficiently aligned in their understanding of

<sup>4</sup> ACF (2017) *Introduction to grant-making: assessing and selecting the work we support*, London: ACF

*'what risk means to us'* and how it is best measured and mitigated, particularly in relation to grants to smaller organisations. Instead of being rigorous about interrogating risk and how it plays out, there is a danger of covering everything, *'just in case'*. *'In the end, trustees are responsible for decisions, but I'm not sure we know that all the stuff we are checking actually speaks to their concerns about risk.'* This is something that needs to be addressed in detail, not just in terms of generalities: *'It is important to start with finding out what is really important in each area of due diligence to the trustees – and why they believe it matters.'*

The challenge to funders is to decide what *'the bare bones'* are. If the aim is to be less burdensome, more straightforward and quicker in their dealings with applicants and grantees, funders need to be ruthlessly clear about what they need to know – *'striving always to ask less and scrutinise less'* – so that their requirements are proportionate, appropriate and meaningful. This means thinking carefully about the value of each question and process – and how this value can be delivered in as efficient and effective a way as possible for everyone involved.

### Decision-making

A number of different decision-making models were used in the collaborative grant programmes – from expedited versions of normal processes through to immediate cross-organisational collaborative decision-making. To different degrees, all exhibited higher levels of trust than most participants were used to. For example, the management committee for the Borough Market Fund had full delegated authority in their decision-making: *'The things that made it possible were trust, the network and capacity. No-one represented anyone in a way that we had to report back.'* Even in funders with less flexible internal procedures, it was possible to take applications through all the required decision-making levels carefully but at speed: *'People wanted to make it work and there was a willingness to get it done quickly. We were able to make a decision within a week rather than the usual six to nine months.'*

Grant managers spoke very positively about their experience as decision makers for the Community Core Costs Fund: *'It felt like a meeting of equals where we were all puzzling over the applications together. Any knowledge was shared to help the decision and not in a way that made people feel superior or inferior.'* For many, this was a striking contrast to their usual experience of presenting applications to decision-making bodies. And it produced thoughtful discussion and good decisions: *'I was really impressed by the quality of the discussion between grant managers and their ability to listen. There was no showing off. They were creative, consultative, willing to compromise and take advice.'*

Independent foundations are characterised by the freedom to determine their own priorities and ways of working. But we identified a sense that both staff and trustees can feel *'boxed into corners'* by routine decision-making processes. The experience of these collaborative programmes suggests that creating an environment that supports more trusting relationships between trustees and staff has the potential to enable more meaningful discussions and better-informed decision-making, without undermining due process and accountability. It demonstrates how a clear sense of collaborative effort towards a common goal supports positive discussion and joint problem-solving, making the most of all the skills and experience around the table. And how this frees grants managers to focus their attention on matters that are critical to good decision-making, rather than spending time making sure they know *'all the answers'*. This clarity and consistency also means that trustees can more confidently delegate to staff, sub-groups or external collaborations, knowing that what is essential to them will be understood and respected.

## Reporting

The Community Core Costs Fund and the Borough Market Fund both carried their commitment to a light-touch process through into their approach to grantee reporting. Offering choice between a written report or a follow-up phone call was a welcome innovation. Other collaborative programmes generally focused their innovation on the 'front end' in order to distribute funds quickly, defaulting to standard reporting requirements (albeit with a commitment to applying them lightly) when time was less pressing. This chimes with increasing interest amongst funders in employing both lighter-touch and more consistent reporting frameworks to help reduce the burden of reporting, particularly on smaller organisations with multiple funding sources.

### In summary

Bringing greater urgency, responsible lightness of touch and more open relationships into day-to-day grant-making practices for small local groups and organisations calls for:

- A clear, shared and well-communicated sense of purpose
- Dropping those due diligence requirements that do not speak to priority risks

Above all, being ruthlessly clear about what you need to know, and challenging each question and process – what does it contribute? What does it demand of you, applicants, grantees? Does the value outweigh the cost?

## 3.2 Creating opportunities for funders and community organisations to talk

The directness and intensity of engagement, which characterised these collaborative programmes, may not be sustainable across all grant-making activities. But what is striking is the value that everyone involved in the grant-making process – community organisations, front-line grants staff and decision makers – can find in the simple act of talking to each other.

### The value of a conversation

Community organisations described how being able to talk to potential funders at the application stage built their confidence in a process and in their ability to ask for what they need to do a good job:

- **It made it easier to come forward for help:** *'I'd been very hesitant about applying, but the process was easy and the people I dealt with were all very helpful. They removed any possible stresses.'*
- **It encouraged them to ask for what they needed, not what they thought they might get:** *'We asked for a very low hourly pay rate, but the grant manager told us we should ask for more – that was very helpful because I was worried about asking for too much.'*

- **It helped them improve:** *'I liked the process, which was positive and rigorous. I thought it was firm, with good boundaries. And although it was hard to get the safeguarding policy right, it was a good discipline for us and good to recognise everything we needed.'*

And grant managers agreed, not only because the process was *'so much more human than usual'*, but because talking to applicants – and face-to-face contact in particular:

- **Helped them understand what was needed much more quickly:** *'A 45-minute conversation could bring more to the table than reams of typed words, especially when dealing with small organisations.'*
- **Provided them with reassurance:** *'Being face-to-face helps you with due diligence. I have experience of participatory budgeting and people do the due diligence for you.'*
- **Even with less than an hour's discussion, created a relationship that they could rely on later:** *'When I made my monitoring call, I had a better conversation with some of the organisations than I've had with some that I've grant managed for years! Email relationships just aren't the same.'*

### Relationship building from a UK-wide perspective

Many of the funders involved in these collaborative programmes operate UK-wide, have broad programmes and high turndown rates. They have the resources that community organisations need but find it harder than funders based in – and making grants in – a defined geographical area to connect directly with potential applicants or create and maintain informed relationships of trust with grantees.

Shifting towards a more relationship-based funding approach is not without its challenges – notably around reach into communities, capabilities and capacity. There was general recognition that new approaches call for new skills and attitudes. *'Arm's length grant-making'*, mediated by forms, paper and emails does not necessarily develop the skills called for in listening to people and building trust. And supporting organisations to prepare applications calls for particularly advanced skills, in order to help them genuinely express their own priorities and not inadvertently impose ideas or misunderstand their priorities: *'The key is the ability to engage with people and to put yourself in the applicant's shoes – to have that relationship in that space and time and for them to go away knowing that they had tried their best.'*

Some UK-wide are clearly making headway with more open grantee relationships. Community organisations spoke of relationships with funders who are not locally based or highly engaged and how positive they can be, provided the boundaries are well understood, grants staff have the necessary skills and they are managed with integrity: *'As well as local funders, we currently have relationships with Big Lottery Fund and BBC Children in Need. They understand us and understand community organisations. Talking is at the heart of these relationships: 'Having someone to call and communicate with very easily is very important.'* This echoes findings from our earlier work with community organisations in Northern Ireland, where engaged grant management and supportive relationships benefitted grantees in multiple ways, including increased confidence, stability and profile.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> IVAR (2014) *A Profound and Practical Difference: Evaluation of Lloyds Bank Foundation for Northern Ireland's Creating Change Programme*, London: IVAR.



But challenges remain in bringing more open conversations into the application process. Assessment interviews are inevitably a pressure point for applicants. And demand means it is hard for these larger funders to find an efficient and effective way to connect with community organisations at pre-application stage and really listen to and understand what their communities need.

### The potential of collaboration

It is in collaboration that funders see potential to be most radical in their approach to engaging with applicants. Their experience of working together to respond to an emergency has convinced many that there is real value to be found in bringing together the overview of large UK-wide funders with the focused and in-depth knowledge of local funders (both statutory and independent) and community organisations. Specifically, the collaborative grant programmes have:

- Enabled UK-wide funders, including central government, to listen to and respond to the needs of community organisations without the barrier of long forms and complex processes.
- Effectively mobilised an injection of funding into a community in need – and opened potential funding relationships that some funders know would not have got through their processes but that may now go further.
- Valued different skills in funders and helped them play to their strengths – combining local knowledge, networks, relationships and *‘an ear close to the ground’* with, for example, the lack of preconceptions that comes from *‘having a bit of distance’*, a good overview of what others do or the disciplines of formal public accountability.
- Enabled funders to respond to what people needed – for example, retrospective funding – unconstrained by what one or other funder could actually fund.

What the collaborative programmes achieved was an environment where *‘the job was to say “yes” – without this, it’s hard to find a way to create a safe space for organisations to be prepared to give us warts and all.’*

Looking forward, participating funders can see great potential to develop the collaborative models used for the London Funders emergency programmes to replicate this safe space. Front-line grant staff involved with the London Funders portal would like to see it tried in other ways, for example, to deliver funding into recognised *‘cold spots’* for UK-wide funders, in collaboration with local foundations and community infrastructure organisations and local authorities. And there is early talk of developing collaborative approaches modelled on the Community Core Costs Fund to enable UK-wide funders to engage directly with community organisations in hard-to-reach communities or challenging areas. This would be a significant step up from roadshows and funding surgeries to *‘going in with money and asking people to come and tell us how it is and what they need.’*

## 3.3

### In summary

Creating opportunities for funders and community organisations to talk brings mutual benefits, including grant-making processes that are quicker, allow everyone involved to be more candid and feel fairer.

These benefits need not be confined to funders with tight geographical or subject boundaries. Progress can be made in developing relationships by stepping out from behind process and actively promoting cultures and practices that put more power into the hands of applicants and grantees.

Even where levels of demand stand in the way of direct contact and open conversation with applicants, better collaboration between funders can create safe spaces for talking, in an environment where *‘the job is to say “yes”’*.

## Exploring collective methods to reduce the burden of fundraising

The collaborative grant programmes have seen a number of innovations designed to reduce the burden of fundraising for community organisations working under high levels of stress. All have potential to become part of the *‘funding toolbox’* outside an immediate emergency.

Community organisations and funders are united in their concern that greater efficiency should not be achieved at the expense of the individuality and diversity of the funding sector and an organisation’s ability to frame their approaches in the way that most appeals to different funders, which is so important to the health and diversity of the sector overall. Both expressed concerns about inadvertently creating a blander and less differentiated grant-making market: *‘We are different and do have different funding priorities – we don’t want to end up only funding the same organisations!’*

With this important proviso, the models and methods used in response to these emergency situations are widely recognised by those involved in them as creating opportunities that speak to their objectives beyond an immediate emergency. And there is a real appetite for exploring further.

### The funding portal

There is great interest in the potential of the funding portal as a mechanism for streamlining and collaboration. London Funders has already been approached by a number of other funder collaborations interested in building on the mechanism and its potential: *‘Our members are now exploring how the portal can be used for thematic or place-based funding – for example the funding of deaf and disabled people’s organisations in the capital. We have also had a significant amount of interest from non-members who are keen to manage their grants and relationships better.’*

On the long-debated question of a single application form, there is no doubt that having one form, accepted by so many different foundations, RBKC and central government was key to the success of the Children and Young People Funders Coalition: *‘Having one form for all the funders was brilliant. It was essential for the*

portal and it would have been incredibly stressful for the groups to make multiple applications.' And both funders and community organisations are keen to see the model developed for other, relatively tightly defined collaborations of a similar kind: 'I think it is great to bring together multiple funders to view a single application. It is more efficient for the applicant and potentially exposes us to new, previously unknown funders and allows us to develop new relationships.'

There remains more scepticism about a broader common application form – about the ownership of that data, the ethics of sharing it, not just the practicalities. There are fundamental questions about what information is genuinely neutral and what is part of each applicant's chance to best make their case to a specific funder. However, the experience of close, collaborative working revealed to some funders that 'we may not be as different as we think we are'. Funders acknowledge that some of the core information they are looking for is very much the same – and there may well be scope for a 'coalition of the willing' to make further progress towards streamlining the way certain questions are asked or standard information requested, so that applicants do not have to waste time tweaking their responses.

#### 'Shared' due diligence

Due diligence has emerged as a major theme from these collaborative grant programmes. Some funders see it as a first step towards an ambitious vision: 'The dream would be that you would have some joint due diligence as the amount of money and time is wasted is criminal. So, for example, if a charity has been through due diligence with one funder recently it can be carried over to another.' Others see threats to the diversity of the funding eco-system and significant challenges for governance: 'It wouldn't be right to share any negative due diligence findings. We have different expectations and requirements – something another funder did not like might be fine for us.'

But, again, the opportunity that has been created for some grant managers to begin to understand their peers' processes in more detail has highlighted that even a small amount of more formal sharing of due diligence processing has the potential to, collectively, save huge amounts of staff time, which could be redirected to the conversations and relationship building that community organisations value.

And discussions were beginning on the different ways in which funders require applicants to demonstrate compliance with key areas of risk, such as safeguarding or sustainability. Funders and community organisations collaboratively debating what meaningful due diligence looks like in these key areas has the potential both to reduce perceived risk – and therefore barriers to funding – and save time, by creating greater consistency in what funders ask.

#### In summary

No-one wants to fetter the individuality of funders or the freedom of applicants to present their best case. But fundraising and due diligence activities place a heavy burden on both. Even small improvements in consistency or progress in reducing duplication are worth pursuing.

And in other collaborative programmes, where consistency makes sense, the funding portal stands as a practical example of what can be achieved and how quickly, when there is a will to do so.

## 3.4

# Experimenting, learning and improving together

Funders of all kinds – including government – were enthusiastic about the effectiveness of these collaborative grant-making programmes and the cross-fertilisation of skills, knowledge and ideas that took place in them. The emergency responses of funders showed decisive commitment and swift action. From our findings, we have identified three areas where those qualities could readily be applied in day-to-day grant-making collaborations.

#### Focus on the organisational essentials

The models and methods used to respond to these emergencies demonstrate that it is possible to get down to the bare bones of what each funder needs in order to participate, without getting bogged down in inessentials: 'Collaboration is often difficult because we need to learn about each other's "foibles" rather than put them aside in common endeavour. And it usually takes time to get over them because they are not explicitly on the table from the start – they may not even be recognised by participants as foibles.' Participants in these emergency programmes brought a clear focus on the job in hand and took the 'most generous possible spirit' to stripping away organisational barriers. Adopting a shared commitment to this approach would benefit any collaboration.

#### Working together and sharing skills

Creating opportunities for funders not just to talk together but to work together offers added value in terms of stronger cross-organisational relationships and staff development. Grant managers felt they had learnt from collaborating closely on the nuts and bolts of grant-making: 'Foundations focus on different things – it gives you a new perspective.' Some had grown in confidence: 'Not feeling you have to know everything or be right all the time helps you trust your judgement and say when you aren't sure.' And this benefit was not restricted to foundations. Funders of all kinds clearly found great satisfaction in working in different ways and alongside colleagues from other funding organisations. 'I feel very enthused by the whole thing. I hope it gets explored more in different circumstances. This makes for a rich seam of grant-making that can be used again.' It increased people's knowledge and raised some challenges: 'I didn't know half these foundations existed before this. Foundations have lots of expertise, but they don't exercise as much influence as they could.'

#### Facilitative and inclusive leadership

Effective collaborations need leadership.<sup>6</sup> All the funders who took leadership roles in these collaborative grant-making partnerships worked hard to enable others to make their best contribution: 'We wanted to engage other funders in the area, not just release their money'; 'There was confidence in the process that everyone had created together'; 'It was important that everyone involved knew as much as we did.' Consciously adopting this style of leadership has equal potential to unlock everyone's best contribution in any collaboration.

#### Collaboration between funders and community organisations

Elements of the emergency grant-making response – notably the Advice Fund and the Infrastructure and Anchor Core Costs Fund – were based on intensive engagement

<sup>6</sup> IVAR (2011) *Thinking about Collaboration*, London: IVAR.

with a selected group of potential grantees to shape what was needed. The other programmes moved straight to action, although informed by pre-existing networks in affected communities, broader community feedback and intelligence from the emergency response teams.

We heard much reflection on whether some programmes should or should not have undertaken more prior consultation. But the general conclusion from funders was that, in an emergency, this was the right call: *'People needed help and asking what help they needed was part of the application process. Asking them in advance would just have slowed things down. Like everyone, we were "trying to do the best we can".'*

Outside an emergency, the imperative to engage with community organisations is very strong. If the aim of these innovations is to increase funders' effectiveness in the terms discussed above, then community organisations themselves must be the judge of what will deliver genuine value and to whom. So, the voice of applicants and grantees and their experience as community organisations need to be at the forefront of thinking to inform and have a stake in any changes: *'Clearly we can't judge the success of this - or any - approach without knowing what the groups made of it.'*

There is a clear appetite for this kind of engagement from community organisations: *'OK funders, you keep saying you want to work collaboratively with grantees. How are we going to take this to the next level?'* And plenty of ideas from them about how closer, long-term collaboration between communities and funders can get to the heart of underlying social problems: *'This is about addressing the underbelly, inequalities. If you could form a consortium, you could put together a 10-year programme - building on trust. This would be a different way of working, and about relationship building, local issues and how to engage local organisations.'*

### The possible not the perfect

In an emergency, barriers to action fall away and people get things done. The experience of the London Funders portal was cited by many as something that might have taken months or years to achieve in other circumstances: *'Too often, in an attempt to get something perfect, we get nowhere. By "just getting on with it" because we had to, we have come up with a viable product that was, say, 80% successful from the start and has been quickly improved.'*

Being involved in these emergency programmes has demonstrated that it is possible for funders to work differently, to the great benefit of their grantees and the communities that they serve. These positive experiences have generated significant enthusiasm for more collaborative, practical experimentation. The plea that resonates most loudly across our study is: *'There is an opportunity here and it would be a shame to let it go. Let's not get too bogged down in all the problems and challenges - all it takes is a few organisations who are willing to get on with trying out some of these ideas to see how they work.'*

### In summary

Good collaborations make things happen. With the right spirit and good leadership, they share skills, value different contributions and spread risk to deliver results.

Where the aim is to benefit community organisations, making sure the right things happen means engaging with them as an equal partner in any collaboration.

And making sure things happen at all means being ready to take a chance, learn and do better next time.

## Appendix one:

# Descriptions of emergency funding responses

### Manchester Arena bombing – proactive support on young people's health and well-being: how it worked

**Funding:** Co-op Foundation and Big Lottery Fund both wanted to respond to the aftermath of the Arena bombing and staff identified a mutual interest in making a sustainable contribution to services around young people's mental health and community cohesion.

**Consultation:** Co-op Foundation consulted with 42nd Street, an existing grantee known to be doing good-quality, evidence-based work with young people on mental health and well-being. The charity was well connected with statutory services and involved in the emergency response from the start. They advised that the attack was having a huge ripple effect in Greater Manchester beyond those directly involved.

**Application:** Co-op Foundation invited 42nd Street to apply for an extraordinary grant, in the hope that this could be match funded by Big Lottery Fund.

**Process:** Both funders took the application to their normal decision-making bodies, but in an expedited fashion and with some shared due diligence, achieving a significantly quicker decision.

### London Bridge attack – support fund for businesses facing financial hardship: how it worked

**Funding:** United St Saviour's Charity, Better Bankside and Borough Market each contributed funds and set up a crowdfunding campaign through JustGiving.

**Oversight:** A management committee of representatives from the three partners and the market traders was set up to provide oversight and make all decisions about payment allocations.

**Roles:** United St Saviour's Charity, Better Bankside and Borough Market established the fund through the vehicle of a time-bound management committee, with United St Saviour's Charity managing and administering it, including all aspects of grant-making. Communication around the fund sat with Better Bankside and Borough Market.

**Emergency funding:** To enable them to keep trading, an initial payment was made to the most financially vulnerable, on a flat rate basis depending on the number of days stallholders operate in the market. Payments were made within 10 days of the attack. No application form was required.

**Second phase:** Ten days later, the fund was extended to include businesses within the wider cordon area. This involved completion of a simple application form. To be eligible, applicants had to demonstrate that they were affected by the closures, had no other means of support and their business viability was threatened as a result of the losses incurred. Again, payments were on a flat rate basis and made in less than two weeks.

**Third phase:** Awarded through the Mayor’s Business Continuity Fund and GLA further grants were made to support businesses and individuals whose trading continued to be threatened as a result of losses sustained.

**Fourth phase:** Ongoing public and business donations were allocated for grants in a fourth and final phase.

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**Grenfell Tower fire – Community Core Costs Fund: how it worked**

**Funding:** London Funders initiated successful negotiations with government to pass on funds to independent funders to facilitate swift and informed emergency grants to community organisations responding to the Grenfell Tower fire. Some independent funds were also allocated.

**Oversight:** The Tudor Trust negotiated and held the contract with government and took responsibility for delivery.

**Promotion:** London Funders website; raised at community meetings; publicised through networks.

**Application:** By simple form, designed by The Tudor Trust. Sent in by email or completed at surgeries.

**Outreach:** Weekly open surgeries (for four weeks) in community venue to discuss needs and complete application form with experienced grant manager. Focus on being accessible, welcoming and supportive.

**Due diligence:** Presentation of a recent bank statement, and Charity Commission/ Companies House status check where appropriate. Carried out during surgeries for face-to-face applicants. References for organisations were decided on an individual basis and included references from trusted local organisations and individuals (local councillors, current and previous MPs, RBKC council staff).

**Decision-making:** At a meeting of all participating grant managers immediately after the surgeries. Chaired by the Director of The Tudor Trust, attended by the RBKC Community Engagement Projects Manager in an advisory role and observed by London Funders and MHCLG.

**Processing:** The day after the meeting, including completion of minutes of decisions, preparation of offers, sorting out any bank account problems and finding established charities to hold funds for unconstituted groups.

**Distribution:** Transfer of funds before end of the next day, reaching grantee accounts that same day.

**Monitoring:** Very light-touch, collected through a phone call unless the grantee preferred to complete a short form themselves.

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**Grenfell Tower fire – Children and Young People Funders Coalition: how it worked**

**Funding:** Significant funders confirmed their intention to participate. In phase two, funders viewed the applications before the meetings to identify which they could support. This helped expedite decisions.

**Oversight:** The Fund was initiated and facilitated by John Lyon’s Charity, with support from London Funders. No decision-making authority was delegated by participating funders.

Phase One Funders	Phase Two Funders
BBC Children in Need City Bridge Trust John Lyon’s Charity RBKC Big Lottery Fund Department for Education The Tudor Trust The Kensington and Chelsea Foundation	BBC Children in Need Caritas Westminster City Bridge Trust DHL Jack Petchey Foundation John Lyon’s Charity Paul Hamlyn Foundation RBKC Big Lottery Fund The Kensington and Chelsea Foundation

**Promotion:** London Funders website; raised at community meetings; publicised through networks; direct contact with existing grantees, dedicated community outreach sessions and surgeries.

**Application:** By simple form designed by John Lyon’s Charity based on a pre-existing form. Submitted by email.

**Outreach:** John Lyon’s Charity held four whole-day, one-to-one drop-in surgeries for community groups over the two phases. Following phase one, it also ran one large-scale feedback workshop that had approximately 85 representatives from community groups.

**Initial ‘triage’:** Review of application by John Lyon’s Charity, based on their local knowledge and past relationships. Where necessary, checks also made with one of five locally rooted organisations (Westway Trust, RBKC, EPIC CIC, Kensington and Chelsea Social Council and the Kensington and Chelsea Foundation), with good knowledge of work with children and young people.

**Presentation to potential funders:** Applications posted on a funder-only portal designed for the fund, developed by and hosted by London Funders.

**Selection of applications:** Institutional funders signed up to the portal in order to review and select applications that met their own criteria. ‘Flag’ introduced in phase two to indicate applications under active consideration.

**Due diligence:** Some funders carried out additional due diligence processes after selection; others did not.

**Decision-making:** Individual funder decisions on whether to make a grant, generally using an accelerated internal process. Some co-funding arrangements negotiated. Joint meeting of funders introduced in phase two.

**Processing:** Grant agreement issued by funder providing the grant.

**Distribution:** Speed and timing varied according to individual funders; some challenges in releasing funds quickly enough.

**Monitoring:** Subject to the standard monitoring and reporting procedures of individual funders.

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#### **Grenfell Tower fire – Infrastructure and Anchor Core Costs Fund: how it worked**

**Funding:** Provided by MHCLG, RBKC, Trust for London and the Longleigh Foundation.

**Oversight:** Directly managed by London Funders, with the support of an experienced independent consultant.

**Process:** Grant-making criteria and application form were developed by the consultant, who consulted with potentially eligible groups.

**Applications:** Fifteen groups identified as meeting the criteria for the fund were invited to participate in the fund and met with the consultant to develop their applications.

**Decisions:** Applications were reviewed by a group of trusts and foundations and decisions made on funding.

**Monitoring:** Standard approach: specifics agreed upon with each organisation.

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#### **Grenfell Tower fire - The Information and Advice Fund: how it worked**

**Funding:** Provided by Trust for London, Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief, the Legal Education Foundation, and City Bridge Trust to support the work of independent advice agencies.

**Oversight:** Directly managed by London Funders.

**Process:** Charities and funders met to discuss needs and priorities, and how the local organisations could respond in the most aligned way. Grants were agreed for the Kensington and Chelsea Citizen's Advice Bureau and the North Kensington Law Centre and two other local partners.

**Applications:** The bid was developed together by two of the funders and the two lead organisations, and then presented to the other funders.

**On-going engagement:** Funders stayed close to the work to make sure they were aware of how needs were changing and if other support was required.

**Decision-making:** Funding decisions were made by individual trusts and foundations.

**Monitoring:** Funders are working on a shared reporting format with the charities – with the aim of achieving one report from four organisations, accepted by five funders.

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## **Appendix two: Approach and data**

This study was carried out between September 2017 and February 2018. During this period, we spoke with over 35 individuals involved in recent emergency funding responses, including:

- 16 semi-structured interviews with key funding and infrastructure bodies directly or actively involved and other individuals from the MHCLG, RBKC and community organisations that have acted as advisors in the local area.
- Five focus groups with several independent grant-making organisations involved in enabling, administering and advising one or more collaborative grant programmes.

Overall, we have incorporated the views of approximately 10 grant-making organisations; and benefitted from grant managers' views collected for The Tudor Trust.<sup>7</sup>

We have also heard from approximately 100 community organisations in receipt of emergency funding through a combination of semi-structured interviews, survey responses and feedback forms.

Their feedback and analysis, combined with IVAR's own experience and research, provides the foundation for both the learning and the questions posed in this report.

The views of study participants are presented anonymously and are illustrated with unattributed quotations (indicated in italics). Where appropriate, we indicate if opinions were expressed by a particular group of people – for example, grantees. Given that this was a qualitative rather than a quantitative study, we do not indicate the number of people holding any particular point of view.

<sup>7</sup> The Tudor Trust (2017) *London Funder Community Core Costs Fund: Grant managers' reflections*

To read more about the research, please visit  
[www.ivar.org.uk/our-research/  
emergency-responses/](http://www.ivar.org.uk/our-research/emergency-responses/)

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