



BUZZACOTT

LONDON PERSPECTIVES: HOW FUNDERS USE INFORMATION TO ENHANCE THEIR INSIGHTS AND PRACTICE

LONDON FUNDERS MEMBERS' MEETING, 1 OCTOBER 2009
BUZZACOTT, 12 NEW FETTER LANE, LONDON EC4

SARA LLEWELLIN, Chair of London Funders, welcomed participants to what had proved a popular topic. She thanked Buzzacott for their generosity in hosting the event by providing the venue and refreshments.

She also noted that there were many people at the meeting new to London Funders and this was indicated by a blue spot on their name badges: she encouraged all the "old hands" to make sure they welcomed new people in the networking breaks.

The meeting was prompted by three very different pieces of research by foundations into poverty in London. London Funders was keen to give each of these some exposure for its intrinsic value, but as well as this, each one has had an impact on the policy and practice of the foundation embarking on this work. The work would offer insight and inspiration to other funders and encourage shared examples of other use of data to inform funding decisions. As the morning's contributions unfolded, the way these different views of London dovetailed together provided additional interest.

LONDON'S POVERTY PROFILE

MUBIN HAQ, Director of Policy and Grants, City Parochial Foundation, explained the background to the collation of data on poverty in London first published as a website and printed report earlier this year. City Parochial Foundation (CPF) has a primary concern about poverty in London and wanted to look at overarching questions such as what makes London different from other regions and large cities (eg is it different because it has a younger demographic profile?) and why child poverty appears to have been static in London despite levels improving in other regions.

What makes London different from other regions and large cities?

CPF was also interested in establishing some information benchmarks so that change over time could be measured: the plan is to update the data regularly, and to produce an updated report in 2010 and a comprehensive one the year after. They already have a sense of emerging needs and concerns that are informing their grantmaking and encouraging them to work more with strategic partners such as London Councils. In particular, the evidence collated shows several factors improving in inner London and deteriorating in the outer boroughs.

The exercise had also helped staff to become more confident in understanding and using figures, eg the vital difference between numbers and proportion. In terms of pensioner poverty, for example, the percentages show Tower Hamlets as the worst borough in London and Bromley the best, but the numbers involved make it clear that there are many more poor pensioners in Bromley than there are in Tower Hamlets and, in general, there are many more poor, older people in Outer London.

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People outside London, of course, fail to realise how poor London is. This point was picked up later by Peter Kenway (of New Policy Institute) who also noted that this is true of many policy makers and opinion formers who spend at least part of their time in London but who mostly live and work in restricted and generally prosperous areas. When the Poverty Profile was published, the Wall Street

Journal, for example, initially expressed disbelief that “rich, glamorous London” had any problem of poverty at all. Widely shared and accurate perception of the problems among London’s communities is vital to London achieving its fair share of resources.

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The work has already influenced CPF: its trustees and staff have undertaken a big review of priorities, and inequality will be emphasised in policy development, including tackling the correlation between unhappiness and inequality. Evidence of the scale of in-work poverty will also provide some specific direction and Mubin cited CPF’s support of the London’s Living Wage Campaign.

When staff first proposed this research it was not obvious to CPF’s trustees that it was needed, given CPF’s extensive experience of tackling poverty in London – what more could be learned? They are now confident of the importance of the information collated and analysed and they have all learned something new which has helped reshape their policies.



Mubin Haq

Mubin introduced **PETER KENWAY** and **TOM MACINNES** of New Policy Institute (NPI) who had undertaken the research – they have been good to work with, he said, and were very supportive of a CPF team that “knew nothing about research” at the start of the process.

Peter explained that NPI had been working on poverty research with Joseph Rowntree Foundation for 12 years but wanted this work to make a different contribution. He also noted how much information is available to researchers. In France, for example, detailed breakdown by ethnicity is not possible, but information available in the UK, correlated by ethnic origin, has been enlightening.

His mantra is “If you need evidence, assume it is there” though he conceded that Office of National Statistics poverty reports at borough level were so misleading that they had not been used: thus there were no borough-level poverty maps in the report yet.

Tom went through a series of sample tables from the report to show how they could be used and interpreted. ([Click here for the presentation at this meeting](#) or [click here for the full report](#)). Key evidence shows, for example, that while all the English regions have a proportion of people considerably

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richer than the rest, it is only London that has a disproportionate number of both rich and poor households: London’s greater inequality is shown by the very much larger numbers in the richest and poorest tenths of the population. The researchers took time in establishing a robust definition of poverty and decided on a level of less than 60% of median income, taking out housing costs.

Rowntree’s survey of people’s perception of a minimum income standard produces figures higher than this level. Benefit levels are considerably lower for some people – especially for single person households.

London’s levels of child poverty are well known. What this study has revealed, by comparing figures from 2000 with 2008, is that child poverty has been steadily reducing in inner London boroughs (from more than half of children at the start to 44% now), while worsening in the outer ones (the only part of England where incidence is rising). Pensioner poverty has fallen everywhere: the figures in Inner London dramatically improved from 2000 to 2008, and in Outer London over the same period they are somewhat better.

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Taking all poor households together, there are now more people living in poverty in outer London than inner. There is still work to be done to understand how much this is a shift in people’s circumstances and how much people moving from one area to another.

The good news amongst all these figures lies in educational attainment, where the number of young people not getting five GCSEs has been lowered to the point where Inner London is no longer very different from anywhere else and Outer London is the best area in England. Where these figures are especially useful is in showing the different levels of attainment by household income (using free school meals as the indicator) and ethnicity. There are considerable differences between poorer and better off

white British children (especially in Outer London), while by the same measure the difference between non-white British children of different income levels is much less.

The proportion of households in temporary accommodation in London is ten times greater than the next largest region.

Homelessness is an area in which London's problems loom large. The proportion of households in temporary accommodation in London is ten times greater than the next largest region, at 2% of households. The proportions of people first presenting as homeless appear quite similar in all the regions: the key difference appears to be the slow rate at which London's homeless people can move to permanent homes.

Meeting participants found the presentation extremely helpful. The material available in the report is clearly reported and helpfully analysed – as Tom did for us at the meeting. In some areas the information sharpened questions about the reasons for change, in others it helped shake off assumptions about different parts of London. Analysis by borough and sub-region illuminated figures further and while these clearly show the Inner East and South sub-region as exhibiting the highest levels of problems, every borough shows up on specific indicators as having above average problems.

Peter explained how NPI has begun to track the impact of the recession on London. So far, job losses are higher outside London but comparison with the last significant recession (1979-81) suggests that unemployment will increase in London: at that earlier time, employment continued to shrink at least a year after general economic recovery was sighted, and this is likely again. Given that in London, families with one working member have a 25-30% risk of poverty (and the risk is 60-65% in workless households), job losses will have a bad impact. Unemployment in 18-25 year olds is already 18.5%, higher than previously recorded, and certainly highest since the early 1980s.

The report is being regularly updated to help keep track of these sorts of figures. The work is freely available for others to use and while it could be seen as limited in not providing detail at local level, the London-wide, sub-regional and borough comparisons have already contributed a great deal. Discussion and questions that followed allowed participants to ask for help in analysing some of the information they had heard and how to go about delving into the statistics further.

The material is available on www.londonspovertyprofile.org.uk

INVISIBLE ISLINGTON

KRISTINA GLENN is Director of Cripplegate Foundation, founded in 1500 to address and alleviate poverty and now serving the borough of Islington and part of the City. Islington is perceived as a rich and lively place and has a high level of gentrification. It is in fact the fourth most deprived borough in London where men have the lowest life expectancy in London, 42% of children are raised in families dependent on benefits, suicide rates are 60% higher than the national average, and levels of mental illness are significantly higher than anywhere else in the country.

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The Foundation has an endowment of about £25 million and makes grants to groups and individuals in need. In the latter case, when they provide a bed or a cooker to a poor household, they also offer a link to welfare rights support or other services. They take clues from such relief in need grants to identify services that need development or support (eg to counter domestic violence or support a new community). They always visit applicants and approach the evidence of poverty and inequality with the question of how they can help bring about lasting change. One of the characteristics of Islington is how intertwined wealth and poverty are, partly because there are almost no big social housing estates and partly because of a long process of gentrification which has left multiply occupied houses next door to multi-million pound single family homes.

It is an area of extremes and this seems to be intensifying: a recent calculation says a family here seeking to move from social housing to owner-occupation would need an annual income of £65,000.

All these factors have led the Foundation to ask itself how to make its £2 million per annum grants income have the most impact. They commissioned the consultancy Rocket Science to undertake in-depth interviews over a six-month period with people who represented the most vulnerable groups, eg single parent families, men in their 40s and 50s, older people, and those with mental health issues. The findings are published in *Invisible Islington*.

Despite the foundation's experience, the interviews produced surprises. Of 29 households interviewed only one was not in debt and only one had any savings (an old lady saving for her funeral). Almost no-one interviewed had a job (though some had experience of short-term and low paid work). All had poor mental and physical health. Kristina was especially shocked by the isolation they found – the tiny numbers of contacts many of the interviewees had in a typical week and their narrow physical boundaries (graphically seen in maps in the report). For some, language skills were a factor in excluding them from decent health care. Friends and family were valued but were all in similar circumstances.

The Foundation's trustees and staff have used the evidence to make some immediate changes in their grantmaking in the following ways:

- They have stimulated a Debt Coalition made up of partners across all sectors, led by Islington Council and working to tackle debt and make independent advice more accessible. One outcome has been a decision by the Council to allocate one officer to advise a family on all its debt – coordinating across departments rather than households having to juggle multiple relationships, responses and deadlines themselves. "If this works", said Kristina, "it will be revolutionary". They are also looking at those most likely to be in debt to find better ways of targeting services to reach vulnerable groups – currently, for example, women in their 30s and people from ethnic minority communities.
- The Foundation is exploring the best ways of improving people's financial capability. They fund around 120 small community groups at present and are asking them to help spread financial literacy skills and access to training and support. This "fine-grained" approach is proving effective where area-based initiatives have failed. A lesson has been recently learned by the borough's Adult Literacy Unit. They have tried to extend their services to financial skills but have had almost no take up of courses entitled "dealing with debt" or "feed your family for a fiver" whereas other agencies' offers of support that do not seem to ask participants to identify themselves as "bad with money" have had excellent take up. Many people, especially perhaps the young, are ashamed of being poor and worry all the time about how to manage. But the Council courses had asked them to identify themselves publicly as being in debt.
- Islington Connect ("Help On Your Doorstep") is addressing low take up of services by training and paying local people to knock on doors and offer links to useful services – sorting out benefits, dealing with housing problems, linking to the Foundation's small grants, etc. There has been good use of services as a result from people often assumed to be "hard to reach". On one estate there were 100 referrals to different services in the first two weeks. Some other activity is developing (eg a primary school offering lunch to older people once a week – thus bringing them together and getting them involved in a school where very few children have links with their own grandparents). A bigger programme is now being funded by the Local Strategic Partnership and involving the health service, Department for Work and Pensions, and other agencies.
- One piece of evidence from interviews was the ineffectiveness of much ESOL provision, with people not progressing beyond the basic level of language proficiency and therefore continuing to be isolated and unable to obtain permanent jobs or get out of low paid work. The Foundation is working with City and Islington College to provide more tailored support for 40 people to find out how to keep them engaged with ESOL long enough to make a significant difference to their language skills. Lessons from this pilot stage will be shared widely.
- Through the Catalyst Programme, the Foundation is giving grants to seven partner organisations so that they can give around 70 local residents support and immediate small grants to realise their ambitions. These sums are seen as what a better off family or friend might be able to provide (eg £80 for a fishing rod) and which could make a real difference to someone's life. They will be asking individuals to help them understand the impact of these grants – using some external research support and a version of the Outcomes Star – and will adapt the programme if necessary.
- The motivation to use money to create change has also prompted the Foundation for the first time in 500 years to get involved in fundraising. With two other local grantmakers, they are looking at how richer people in the borough can give something back. "Forensic trawling" of *The Rich List* is under way as the Foundation learns new skills for fund development. They are also asking City-based people and companies to understand why they should look north as well as east in their support of local communities.

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Inviting comments and questions, Sara noted what a useful counterpoint this presentation of qualitative research was to the data-driven work presented earlier. She thanked Kristina for sharing the way

Cripplegate had asked people about their lives and listened to them and really exploited the Foundation's role of "honest broker".

Tim Oshodi (London Diocesan Fund) asked Kristina if they had analysed their work in terms of building social capital: she agreed that concept was quite a helpful way of identifying positive change.

Peter Kenway (admitting this was a "data-driven" comment), noted Kristina's evidence that Islington is the prime example of the close geographic interweaving of extremes. This does not emerge in borough-wide statistics or comparisons with wider London, so the kind of analysis Cripplegate commissioned has to be the right way to dig out the facts. He felt that this juxtaposition of rich and poor in Islington should be promising for fundraising once wealthy people are helped to realise the circumstances of their near neighbours.

Siân Edwards (Andrews Charitable Trust) added a comment on Kristina's point about courses to deal with debt. Her Trust had funded work in Bristol that was aimed at helping people deal with debt but presented itself as computer training leading to a computer diploma and take up had been good.

Some of the comments on advice services triggered points from the floor about the shrinkage of services, largely due to cuts and changes in funding. Mubin referred to a coalition of foundations that were discussing urgent need for change with the Ministry of Justice in the light of changes in legal aid. There is also a London Debt Strategy Group, hosted by the Greater London Authority and serviced by Capitalise, which is looking at the high level of demand for debt advice at present and the shortage of trained advisers.

MAPPING SHOREDITCH

CHRIS ROBINSON, Chief Executive of The Mayor's Fund for London, sketched in briefly the background to this new Fund, initiated by Mayor Boris Johnson and recently launched as an independent charity with Sir Trevor Chinn as its Chair. [Chris' presentation](#) set out the aims and purpose of the Fund and its commitment to finding evidence of effective ways of working to improve the lives of children, so that it can ensure its resources go where there will be observable achievement and scope for scaling up activity. Chris was careful to note that as the Fund is independent of the Mayor there is no question that its time horizon has to be bounded by Mayoral terms of office.

As Chris and the Trustees have developed their ideas and identified the niche where they can create change, they have started to use some key words and concepts to drive their work. "Connectivity" is one - how services and different strands of intervention can be linked to make a bigger whole, more accessible to families and more effective in outcomes. They have also agreed that the best change can be effected at a point of transition in a child's life, eg the shift from primary to secondary school or from school to work. They expect only to support work which is community led.

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They will make grants initially in Shoreditch, and add further areas in 2011 and 2013. They are raising and using funds and encouraging other foundations to come into partnership with them.

Connectivity is a requirement built into their contracts and they wish other funders would follow suit as they believe this would create change. The other key word, "evidence" recurred in Chris' comments: they want proof of what works, and are linking with the Social Research Unit at Dartington to help with this. They recognise that this asks a lot of grant-seekers, many of which will be more comfortable with anecdotal evidence than hard data.

They have started with Shoreditch, a small but complex area including parts of four boroughs, and an array of ethnic groups from traditional white working class to a diverse range of ethnic minorities. They have developed a database of services and agencies in the area offering child-related projects, of which they have found 300. The local authorities covering the area reckon they put £150 million into child-related services. No one service is easily comparable with another: even between the local authorities there are differences in how mainstream services are organised and named. "How do you know when you have enough data?" asked Chris. If you look at statistics on women's employment, he said, the picture becomes richer and more useful if you also break it down by ethnicity. If you then add the knowledge and perspective of the LDA, Equality and Human Rights Commission, the boroughs and other agencies, you add new layers of information.

How to turn dry plans into accessible, graphic material for local communities.

The Fund has been developing an area profile of Shoreditch, layered with demographic information and the rich data they are collecting on child-related services. A firm of architects is working pro bono on structuring the presentation of this information: they are offering great experience of how to turn dry plans into accessible, graphic material for local communities. This will be ready as a benchmark in a few months' time – "however, the point is", says Chris, "not to keep describing it, but to change it".

There were many questions and comments. In describing his ambition for the sort of evidence the Fund wants, Chris compared it with the clinical trials that mean a prescribed pill can be trusted. Kate Hinds' experience at The King's Fund is that it is over-ambitious to expect scientific standards of evidence in community-based work since there is never the scope for a controlled experiment. While her description of evidence as "rhetoric" might be too extreme for some, there was great interest in her offer to show the Fund how NICE uses public health evidence – she felt this could be a bridge between two extremes.

There was a request for the Shoreditch database to be disseminated to show how this sort of detailed analysis could be done and what it offered. Chris explained that McKinsey had originally been helping with the overall approach and that the architects' involvement was an effort to stop the data being too dry and unapproachable. The plan is to find a way that local people, local projects and a wider range of organisations can have access to it all and Barclays Capital's Communications department has offered voluntary help with this. Chris promises to share this through London Funders and other networks.

Elaine Malloy from Westminster Council talked about the Family Recovery Project that has identified 600 families in the borough in extremes of need and is currently working with 50 of these to rationalise the range of services they use from the Council, Police, NHS and the voluntary sector and to assist with more positive solutions which leave families more in control of their own lives. There is a financial rationale in this too as typically between £300,000 and £500,000 per annum can be incurred by a plethora of agencies in keeping families in a state of dependency.



Left to right: Sara Llewellyn, Kristina Glenn, Chris Robinson

Questions and discussion

A final session drew on all the speakers and comments from the floor. The sessions had enthused and energised people. There were further questions, especially to Mubin about how the London Poverty Profile had influenced CPF and how they were going to put into practice the prioritising of inequality. Mubin said they were starting with a look at financial inequality and knew it would be hard to do, not least as it raised all sorts of challenging questions about class and personal wealth: he felt, though, that the crisis of the recession was making some of these issues easier to discuss. He also wanted to challenge the idea that poverty is always around. If Scandinavian countries and Japan could virtually eliminate poverty, then this had to be a goal for the UK.

Kate Hinds asked whether funders might be too keen to map and monitor without knowing why they are doing it. Sara noted *Turning the Tables*, New Philanthropy Capital's recent report, which criticises funders for collecting too much data from funded organisations and not using it. Tom's response was that any kind of research must be integrated into the cycle of planning and activity; Chris commented that you must know what you want to change before you measure it. This gave rise to some interesting discussion on whether poverty is best approached as an economic problem or whether it is the wellbeing of children that should be tackled.

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Michael Murray shared a question that is being looked at in the Heritage Lottery Fund: in their work they are conscious that results are not quick, nor easily measured and he asked colleagues for any advice on how to look at outcomes of funded work some years after the funding has expired – how do you measure continuing change after a project's formal end? Kate offered to share a King's Fund research report. Sara noted that City Bridge had been offering discounted places on Charities Evaluation Services' courses and found that with such training reporting considerably improved.

Sara thanked the speakers warmly for what had been a fascinating opportunity to think about information needs, how research could be approached and the nature of data which could reshape policy and practice.

She thanked Buzzacott again for generous hosting and CCLA for donating an iPod Nano to be used as a prize to encourage people to complete evaluation forms about the meeting.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Kristina Glenn is Director of Cripplegate Foundation. She has been involved with the voluntary sector for over 30 years as a funder, volunteer and member of management committees. Most of her work has been in inner London. She has worked for central government, local authorities and grantmaking trusts. She is a member of Volunteering England's board and chair of their Grants Committee.

Mubin Haq is Director of Policy and Grants for City Parochial Foundation (CPF) and Trust for London. He joined the Foundation and Trust in 2002 and he takes the lead on the Foundation's open grants programme and a number of special initiatives, particularly those related to research, such as London's Poverty Profile. He also leads on policy issues relating to poverty and inequality for CPF and the Trust and has responsibility for the Foundation's Programme Related Investments, which seek to provide a financial as well as social return.

Before this, he worked for South East London (now Capital) Community Foundation in several roles including Interim Director; and for five years he ran St John's Community Centre, North Woolwich. Mubin is an Executive Committee member of London Funders and has previously been on the board of a range of other organisations including London & Quadrant Housing Association's Community Investment committee, Community Foundation Network and Royal Docks Trust. He is active in local community issues and campaigns where he lives in east London.

Peter Kenway is Director and Co Founder of the New Policy Institute. His career has combined spells as a manager, consultant and planner in public transport with time as an academic economist at the University of Reading.

Tom MacInnes joined the New Policy Institute as a senior researcher after a spell working at the Department of Health as an operational researcher. In addition to his central role on most of NPI's major projects, Tom is NPI's principal data analyst, leading its effort to provide data support to third sector organisations.

Chris Robinson was appointed Chief Executive of the Mayor's Fund a year ago. He has been running charities in the UK for the last ten years – most recently the international sport for development charity, Right To Play, and the children's hospice service, CHASE, before that, and the highly successful homelessness partnership "Off The Streets and Into Work" - which Chris helped to set up before becoming the first Chief Executive.

Chris was born and bred in London – and indeed was homeless as a child in the West End – and most of his education was in the city, too. He has had a varied career featuring working as a management consultant in the public, private and voluntary sectors. He also had a successful career in professional sport including time as Manager of Cheltenham Town FC and worked at Manchester City FC and the Football Association, and coached in Saudi Arabia. He sees his latest role with the Mayor's Fund focusing on fighting child poverty in London as bringing him full circle.

PARTICIPANTS

ORGANISATION

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