

Event report

# YOUTH WORK WORKS? IMPACT AND VALUE IN FUNDING WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

An event in partnership with John Lyon's Charity

26.09.2013



JOHN LYON'S CHARITY  
PART OF THE HARROW SCHOOL FOUNDATION

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VENUE

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City Hall  
The Queen's Walk,  
London,  
SE1 2AA

On 26 September, London Funders and John Lyon's Charity brought a diverse range of funders together to discuss youth work and how to identify good quality services that will be effective in delivering outcomes. The meeting offered funders in London examples of how to benchmark the quality of youth work intervention and a chance to hear each other's experiences of funding youth services and projects.

**Ciaran Rafferty, The City Bridge Trust**, chaired the meeting and gave a warm welcome to those gathered. With the focus on London's youth at the meeting, Ciaran pointed out the importance of the venue of the GLA and thanked the GLA Peer Outreach group who were helping at the meeting and were to be involved in some of the group discussions. The aims of the meeting were outlined, emphasizing the focus on maintaining quality in youth work, even if we can't control the quantity of funds going into this area, allowing for discussion on what quality means, what types of youth work can be supported and listening to what funders are currently supporting.

The host of the meeting, **Caroline Boswell, The Greater London Authority**, described the range of targeted youth intervention currently existing in London and argued that at the heart of good youth work is the human interface of mentoring and coaching. The difficulty though, is how to capture the outcomes. These are very challenging and turbulent times and it's important to look at how to best make a difference. This is the question opened up to the panel for discussion.

**A Funder's experience: Craig Tomlinson and Helen Morton, BBC Children in Need.** Craig introduced the scope of BBC Children in Need and its vision for all children and young people in the UK to be safe, happy and secure and able to reach their potential. These ambitions are achieved by funding projects across the UK that are focused on improving the social and personal development outcomes for a very wide range of disadvantaged children and young people. BBC Children in Need fund over 2,700 projects across the UK with a value of £115 million and youth work forms a major part (around 25%) of their portfolio – most of these are community-based youth clubs.

The BBC Children in Need Speak Out Listen Up event listened to young people and what they felt were barriers to their feeling safe, happy and secure and being able to reach their potential. Focusing on the London picture, BBC Children in Need has seen an increase in the success rate for youth service applications, with this year up to 36% success rate. The most common reasons for applications being declined overall are around project planning, organisational capacity, evidencing disadvantage and safeguarding. Aspects such as project budget and organisational finances appear much further down the list and BBC Children in Need are trying to have a much more pragmatic approach to grant making in the current economic climate.

Helen described some of the key issues being considered by the London and South team at BBC Children in Need this year, including changes in legal aid affecting legal advocacy work, and seeing an increase in work being done

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around healthy relationships by youth projects, as well as by refuge type projects.

**London Youth: Rosie Ferguson, London Youth, with Mel Ancliff, WAC Arts and Francis Augusto, Stewarts Road Adventure Playground.** Francis gave an account of his own personal experiences of youth work and the role of the youth centre, demonstrating that the reality of youth work is the relationship between a young person and their personal development. Francis stated that the youth centre's role is to give opportunities to young people, with the youth worker overseeing this and giving help and support. A good youth worker empowers young people. A great youth worker enables young people. Francis argued that the difference between these two things can depend on funding.

London Youth support a network of youth clubs and is diverse and community led, giving a voice for youth work/ youth clubs. Rosie described the scope of London Youth in that the youth clubs vary in many ways, in size and location, but that they have common perspectives, being embedded in communities. The youth clubs have a broad remit, having youths from 8 to 25 years old, and offer long term support. The youth worker will remain throughout even if programmes themselves are temporary and Rosie emphasized the importance of the permanency in the young people's lives. There is very diverse funding and less Local Authority funding than previously, but sustained long term funding is something that has historically been difficult to acquire. Rosie focused on the importance of continuous and long term support so that young people are not constantly building temporary relationships. Youth centres have developed from the traditional and clique centres and are becoming open and community led. Although Rosie stated that not all youth centres have achieved the ideal yet, she highlighted that they should be in the process of developing or at least aspiring to get there and the focus should be on giving young clubs the opportunity and encouragement required in order to get to this point.

Mel introduced WAC Arts, highlighting that young people need and deserve the best teaching, youth work and facilities. Young people are our future and we need to provide high quality services and support. WAC Arts have programmes for young people from 5 to 25 years old representing young people from the whole of London with 75% of young people from black minority/ ethnic background and 18% with disabilities. Programmes range from junior programmes to encourage young people to enjoy the arts, senior programmes for a career in professional arts, programmes for young people with disabilities and even professional diplomas in theatre. WAC Arts encourage young people to volunteer as mentors to support other young people in their career with a holistic approach, helping young people to achieve their ambitions by raising self-esteem and confidence.

Mel outlined the challenges facing WAC Arts:

- Funding – mainstream activities are struggling for funding.
- Provision on offer for young people with disabilities. The majority of funding is for severe disabilities with little provision for mild to moderate learning disabilities where there are many children trying to cope at school with conditions such as autism.
- Some young people have worked hard, volunteered, been to university and then leave university with a degree and find themselves back in the same position of being asked to volunteer in internships. It is difficult to reengage disengaged youths whose role

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models have done everything asked of them and are still in the same position with no job.

Mel stressed that people should remember the positive about young people. There is a lot of press on what they do that is not good and society need to celebrate young people.

The discussion of measuring the quality of youth work was continued by Rosie who outlined the challenge of not having a common set of framework and language to celebrate outcomes. Rosie described the Young Foundation Outcomes Framework which is connected to hard outcomes in society and argued that the next action should be to build a generic evidence framework so that you can see where effective work is being done in a variety of youth groups. This should use language that is about young people and is accessible to youth groups and staff.

**“The focus should be on encouraging and funding quality”**

Rosie outlined some factors that contributed to a good youth club, but noted that there was no standard way to measure it, describing the need for a quality standard so that youth clubs and funders can recognise what makes good quality. The quality standard consists of 3 progressive stages:

- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold

Rosie emphasized that everyone with young people should be aspiring to achieve a bronze level at a minimum and that the focus should be on encouraging and funding quality. She outlined the soon to be announced scheme that City Bridge Trust will give unrestricted funding if a group reaches silver or gold so as to recognise the good work these groups are doing and provide an incentive for quality. Challenges to youth clubs include low funding leading to a poor work force, a low profile for youth clubs and a failure to articulate what they have achieved. Whereas schools have clear methods of accountability, youth clubs also need a common framework to demonstrate what they do and why it works.

In looking to the future, funders should take consideration of the following points:

- It is important to invest in quality. Youth clubs should aspire to achieve this standard.
- Long term generic youth work needs to be funded, not just short term programmes.
- Continue to involve young people.

**“Youth clubs need a common framework to demonstrate what they do and why it works “**

**Introducing group discussion: Erik Mesel, John Lyon’s Charity.** In an introduction to the small group discussions, Erik outlined the work of John Lyon’s Charity and the difficulties in measuring quality. John Lyon’s Charity is a grant making charity that supports projects for young people under the age of 25 in nine boroughs in North West London, last year making grants of £5.3 million. Erik emphasized the lack of funding for youth centres by detailing statistics that young people spend 85% of their waking hours outside school yet the government spends over 55 times more on formal education than on youth services outside of school. It is difficult though, to measure the quality of the youth groups that you fund and so Erik argued the positive impact of the London Youth framework, which will eventually become a requirement for funding with John Lyon’s Charity. The discussion focused on:

- 1) Should the quality mark be a carrot or stick for funding?
- 2) What do you fund? Or why don't you fund?

**Project Oracle: Amy Hochadel, Project Oracle, with Simon Fulford, Khulisa and Charlotte Neary-Bremer, Street Doctors.** Charlotte introduced Street Doctors and how it has been supported by Project Oracle from being a start-up charity and trying to improve their evidencing. Street Doctors consists of 120 volunteer medical students and doctors providing first aid training in the community. Initially the organisation had only case studies from which to evaluate the impact of their work and so worked with Project Oracle in order to get evidence and learn about the theory of change. Street Doctor's moved their focus from the measurement of how many lives were saved, a statistic difficult to measure, to using a tool that assesses people's first aid skills. Charlotte detailed the challenge to organisations of measuring evidence and evaluating their impact, and argued for the helpful strategies and frameworks provided by Project Oracle.

Amy gave a detailed explanation of the stages of Project Oracle and how this knowledge is shared to organisations. A framework is provided to providers, funders and to commissioners to ensure that everyone actively involved in commissioning programmes are involved. There are also schemes where awards are given for the use of evidence and evaluation to give an incentive to engage in providing evidence. Amy emphasised that this evidence is already in existence, but that Project Oracle enables people to get the evidence and to use it, by putting it in a format that is usable for funders. Research placements provide a trained academic to support the organisation to evaluate the evidence and progress through different levels.

S1- Theory/ logic (Emerging evidence)

S2- Evaluation plan (Emerging evidence)

S3- Effective evidence

S4- Model evidence

S5- System ready evidence

Amy emphasised the importance of progressing through the levels, to at least S3 to order to evidence that what you do has an impact. Consistency is important in that the entire program is based on this framework so that everyone understands the same criteria and requirements. Project Oracle has 120 trained providers and organises evidence competitions where organisations can analyse the evidence they provide and have an opportunity to check their impact and make moves to improve it.

Simon from Khulisa, an organisation that offers short intensive behaviour change schemes, gave details of how Project Oracle supported their evaluation journey in this way. Khulisa used programme models brought and adapted from South Africa, therefore it was essential to provide evidence as to how techniques could work in the UK, in very different social and economic structures. Initially, Khulisa did not have a theory of change and this led to some unsuccessful experiences where expectations and aims were not successfully communicated and monitored. Project Oracle's research placement analysed toolkits, interviewed partners, mentors and pupils and helped to map a theory of change. This enabled Khulisa to better articulate what they could achieve and what was beyond their remit and therefore align how the organisation's work is presented. The second Project

**“The challenge to organisations of measuring evidence and evaluating their impact “**

Oracle placement concentrated on the monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that they were evidencing what the theory of change stated. This was revised and embedded into the programmes. Simon reinforced Khulisa's future goals to mentor other organisations on evidence based theory of change to support other organisations to improve their evidencing and evaluation processes. The principles are the same for small and large organisations.

Amy stressed the remit of Project Oracle in comparison with London Youth's quality mark and emphasized that they are complementary. The London Youth quality mark is an operational standard to measure the quality of the youth provider, the staff and the environment. The next step though, is to have the Project Oracle mark in order to look at the evidence impact on work. A provider/ funder should have confidence in these marks. They are distinct but complementary and both should be honed. Amy described the aims of Project Oracle in creating an ecosystem of evidence. To make a community where academics, providers and commissioners can coordinate and communicate. Project Oracle can create bespoke packages that speak to what that team needs and where they want to get to. Amy emphasized that Project Oracle aims to work with funders and asks the question of what funders want in evidence and evaluation.

**Ciaran Rafferty** took feedback points from the discussion groups. Ciaran emphasized the importance that there is a commitment to improvement and an attention to equality and evidence, and groups should be guided to achieve this instead of looking at how old the project is. Some participant feedback focused on the discussion of costs in terms of time and resources. The panel argued for the use of funding as a carrot with the example of City Bridge Trust providing unrestricted funding to organisations achieving a silver or gold, as a reward for good quality. There should be a flexible approach though, with these frameworks providing only one way to look at the quality of the evidence, although there was agreement that it should be integrated into the work in the earliest stages possible. Feedback from participants also noted the importance of youth workers to focus on the quality of staff as an important factor to consider. There was general acceptance as to a lack of funding, though there was common agreement that if this cannot be changed, then the quality of the use of the funds and the quality of the projects funded should be the priority. Some areas for further discussion include core funding vs. target youth provision projects and the meeting concluded that any further points on this topic or ideas to be discussed should be sent to David Warner in order to continue the discussion.

Ciaran closed the meeting by noting the importance of having this conversation and looked to the way forward:

- The initiation of a London Funders Project Group to talk about Youth groups
- More thoughts/ ideas and feedback on this topic should be sent to [David Warner](#), London Funders.

### Participants

Mel	<b>Ancliff</b>	WAC Arts (Speaker)
Ace	<b>Aristotles</b>	GLA Peer Outreach Team
Francis	<b>Augusto</b>	Stewarts Road Adventure Playground (Speaker)
Sally	<b>Bartolo</b>	GLA Peer Outreach Team
Stephen	<b>Bediako</b>	Project Oracle

**“The quality of the use of the funds and the quality of the projects funded should be the priority “**

Emma	<b>Blackwell</b>	Sported
Caroline	<b>Boswell</b>	Greater London Authority (Speaker)
Nick	<b>Clinch</b>	London Borough of Lewisham
Paul	<b>Davies</b>	City of Westminster
Maddie	<b>Dinwoodie</b>	Media Trust
Rosie	<b>Ferguson</b>	London Youth (Speaker)
Susie	<b>Finlayson</b>	Young Foundation
Simon	<b>Fulford</b>	Khulisa (Speaker)
Monica	<b>Golding</b>	Premier League Charitable Fund
Becky	<b>Green</b>	London Funders
Kathleen	<b>Healy</b>	Hillingdon Community Trust
Amy	<b>Hochadel</b>	Project Oracle (Speaker)
Roxy	<b>Hotten</b>	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Gaynor	<b>Humphreys</b>	London Funders
Mervyn	<b>Kaye</b>	London Borough of Lewisham
Natalie Jade	<b>Lee</b>	GLA Peer Outreach Team
Mary	<b>Locke</b>	Charity Bank
Natasha	<b>Malpani</b>	Big Society Capital
Simon	<b>McMahon</b>	Project Oracle
Erik	<b>Mesel</b>	John Lyon's Charity (Speaker)
Jim	<b>Minton</b>	London Youth
Christopher	<b>Mitchell</b>	London Borough of Islington
Helen	<b>Morton</b>	BBC Children in Need (Speaker)
Charlotte	<b>Neary-Bremer</b>	Street Doctors (Speaker)
Rebecca	<b>Palmer</b>	Greater London Authority
Georgie	<b>Parry-Crooke</b>	Project Oracle
Sangita	<b>Patel</b>	Sported
Dawn	<b>Plimmer</b>	New Philanthropy Capital
Thelfa	<b>Quick</b>	London Community Foundation
Ciaran	<b>Rafferty</b>	The City Bridge Trust (Chair)
Henning	<b>Riedel</b>	CityWest Homes
Rasheed	<b>Rollins</b>	GLA Peer Outreach Team
Nancy	<b>Shakerley</b>	Mousetrap Theatre Projects
Andrew	<b>Stafford</b>	The Dulverton Trust
Hugh	<b>Stultz</b>	Big Lottery Fund
Keni	<b>Thomas</b>	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Josie	<b>Todd</b>	Greater London Authority
Craig	<b>Tomlinson</b>	BBC Children in Need (Speaker)
David	<b>Warner</b>	London Funders
Charly	<b>Williams</b>	London Borough of Lewisham

**In attendance**

Becky	<b>Green</b>	London Funders
Gaynor	<b>Humphreys</b>	London Funders
David	<b>Warner</b>	London Funders

**Apologies for absence**

Lucy Ashdown, Royal Borough of Kensington& Chelsea; Aruna Dudhia, Project Oracle; Julia Kaufman, John Lyon's Charity; Sanda Osei, The Mayor's Fund For London; Cathryn Pender, John Lyon's Charity; Sonia Watson, Southern Housing Group; Susan Whiddington, John Lyon's Charity

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