

The New & Improved Kick-Start Fund: Changes We've Made in 2018

At BAB, we aren't afraid to try new things. When the Big Lottery Fund chose to invest £78 million in England to reduce isolation and loneliness, they were looking for local programmes that sought to trial different approaches to improving older people's lives, using an evidence-based, co-produced method but not relying solely on conventional tried-and-tested models of delivery. The Big Lottery Fund instead support us using a ['test and learn'](#) approach, regularly reviewing the way we commission, support and guide Delivery Partners and making changes to these processes when necessary. That's why we initially funded pilot projects for our Group Work & Peer Support and Learning for Life Together activities, and why we have made changes to the focus of our Community Development for Older People contracts and improved the format of our evaluation tools – we have evaluated what has worked so far, and what can make it easier to support older people facing loneliness more effectively.

The Community Kick-Start Fund, our micro funding scheme, is no exception to this rule and we have made several improvements to the way we administer this fund since it launched in 2016 – most notably based on recommendations from an [audit conducted by our Community Researchers](#), and [a review of the diversity of groups accessing the activities](#). The scheme is unique in that we are able to reach grassroots groups of older people, rather than having to provide funding to registered charitable organisations. We're really keen to support as many activities happening at this level as possible, and to ensure that the funding allocated to Kick-Start goes to activities that have been suggested or endorsed by older people themselves and that will be able to become self-sustaining beyond our support of up to £2,000 per project. It's an ambitious aim, but we're confident that with the right promotion and a transparent, straightforward application process we will be able to attract applications for activities that fit the bill perfectly. We recently sat down with our expert panel of eight older people to review the successes and challenges so far and agree on some changes to make the remaining funding go even further. We looked at the geographic spread of our funded activities, as well as how many of the BAB target groups have been reached and what proportion of the projects have been able to continue beyond the funded period. The panel also discussed whether they felt the criteria they use for scoring applications was apposite, and whether the guidance notes made the criteria clear enough for applicants. Here are the main insights we gleaned and the steps we've taken to address them:

Ensuring older people are at the heart of all activities

Firstly, we looked at the 69 organisations, groups and individuals we've funded so far (we have supported 94 activities in total, but some groups have been funded for more than one activity). The largest proportion of successful applicants (35%) were registered charities that also run other activities, though we noted that in many cases the organisation submitted the application on behalf of and/or provided some supervision to a project run by a smaller community group. The next largest category was social enterprises and community interest companies, at 23%, and these have included neighbourhood action groups. 5 activities were run entirely by older people, and 5 by faith spaces comprising churches and Sikh gurdwaras.

The remaining activities were run by individuals; artists' collectives; other non-profit companies; and care homes and housing providers. This highlighted the need to further promote the fund to smaller groups, as we want as much grassroots-led activity as possible, and to tweak the application form to ensure that all activities have been designed in consultation with older people.

What sort of groups and organisations run Kick-Start supported projects?

29 vs **42**

Kick-Start projects run by registered charities

Kick-Start projects run by other groups and organisations

We will be advertising in local papers, making it clear that the fund is open to all, and have also added a separate question to the application form asking for evidence of support from older people (with practical suggestions for how to obtain this). We're also very encouraged by the fact that as all of our community development projects are now well underway, staff have been promoting the fund to groups of local residents and offering support to their applications.

About your project

(Approx. 200 words per question)

1. What do you want to do with the funding and how will it engage older people who have not been involved in your group or activity before?

We want to get a good overview of your proposed activity and will be looking for evidence that your activity is a new project not duplicated elsewhere, or that new older people will access your activity.

2. Please provide evidence of how the idea is supported by older people, for example through surveys, feedback from speaking to older people or running taster sessions of the activity

We will be looking for clear evidence of support from older people

Ensuring a city-wide spread

We also examined where activities are taking place. We're thrilled that every neighbourhood partnership (a now-obsolete delineation, but one that is still useful for viewing Bristol's geography in a way that scales for population density) includes at least one funded activity, but we would like to be able to fund activities in some areas that have been funded less but have a significant older population. These include Filwood, Knowle & Windmill Hill; Hengrove & Stockwood; and Henleaze, Stoke Bishop & Westbury-on-Trym. We will be advertising in the local news & events guides for these areas and contacting local community centres and community development workers to spread the word.

Which areas of the city have benefited from Kick-Start projects?

26	Ashley, Easton & Lawrence Hill	6	Greater Fishponds
7	Avonmouth & Kingsweston	8	Henbury & Southmead
1	Bishopston, Cotham & Redland	2	Hengrove & Stockwood
8	Cabot, Clifton & Clifton East	1	Henleaze, Stoke Bishop & Westbury-on-Trym
3	Dundry View	12	Horfield & Lockleaze
1	Filwood, Knowle & Windmill Hill	3	St. George
8	Greater Bedminster	11	City-wide
2	Greater Brislington		

Reaching those most at risk of loneliness

We have a list of eight groups that have been identified as typically having a higher risk of isolation and loneliness, and we aim to ensure that all work we fund accommodates these groups, and ideally actively seeks to recruit participants from them. These are carers; people who misuse drugs or alcohol; people with dementia; people living in care homes; those who have been bereaved; people with sensory impairment; and people from LGBT and BME communities. The majority of projects (64%) were not identified as having a particular focus on working with any of these groups. A significant proportion (18%) of activities primarily support people from BME communities, and those living in care homes, with sensory impairment and with dementia have also been specifically cited by applicants. We would like to increase the number of older people from target groups reached through Kick-Start, and have therefore taken positive action to encourage applicants to consider how they might recruit participants from target groups. This is mentioned on the funding page on our website, and is also made clearer on the application form. We have selected three under-represented groups to prioritise for the April round, and if this approach is successful we shall select a further three for the following round.

Who can apply

The Community Kick-Start fund is open to any charity, community group, individual or group with an idea about how to reduce or prevent loneliness in people aged 50 and over.

Due to a gap in funded projects working with older people at higher risk of loneliness, we particularly encourage applications for activities that will specifically aim to include:

- Carers
- People with sensory impairment
- People who misuse drugs and/or alcohol

Please note that this positive action will not affect the panel's scores, which remain objective – as before, applications will score highly on one criterion if they provide clear evidence that they will work with *any* of the eight target groups. The aim of this action is to encourage a greater number of applications, and to encourage applicants to consider these groups when designing their proposed activity.

Ensuring the scoring criteria is in line with the objectives of the fund

After nearly 2 years' worth of panels and countless hours spent scoring applications (137 to be precise), our Older Persons Commissioning Panel have got to know the metrics by which they assess applications pretty comprehensively! We have always tried to be transparent about this, even including the full scoring guidelines in the guidance notes given to all applicants. We had a thorough discussion about the guidelines, going through each criterion in turn, and have since made a couple of changes to tighten up the scores and ensure the process is as equitable as possible. It was felt that the definitions for scores between 3 and 4 were slightly nebulous in some cases, so the wording of these has been made clearer. We have also amended the criteria for 'beneficiaries', to ensure applications that score highly due to their intention to work with at-risk groups have provided concrete evidence as to how they will do so.

Beneficiaries: how proportionate is the cost to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries? Do the beneficiaries include a BAB target group?

BAB Target Groups

Living with Dementia Carers Living in a Care Home
Drug/alcohol misuse LGBT Sensory Impairment
Bereavement BME Aged 85+

5	The cost is highly proportionate to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries and there is clear evidence that the activity will be accessed by one or more BAB target group
4	The cost is highly proportionate to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries or there is clear evidence that the activity will be accessed by one or more BAB target group
3	The cost is proportionate to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries
2	It is unclear how many older people will benefit or what the outcomes will be for beneficiaries
1	The cost is not proportionate to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries

Continuity

Now that we have a large portfolio of activities that were funded more than one year ago, we were able to examine what proportion met the objective of continuing beyond the funded period. All but 19 projects did, and the reasons for activities ending included:

- Not enough participants to make the activity viable
- Not being able to charge participants for the activity, and being unsuccessful in applying for further funding
- The activity having a limited time frame (though in most cases, these were activities that included large numbers of older people and led to more interaction between community members in the long term)

Over time, the panel have become more discerning when assessing applications' chances of continuity, and we have made this requirement clearer in the guidance notes, so we hope to see a reduction in the number of activities that do not continue. We also recognise that in order to make a significant change to the variety of social opportunities for people in Bristol, we will have to take a chance on some brand new ideas, not all of which will be successful.

Transparency

As mentioned above, we don't want applicants to be in the dark about what we are looking for on the application form – we want to give them the best chance possible to demonstrate how their project will make a difference to older people. We also recognise that there isn't an unquestionable link between a well-written application form and an activity that has older people at its heart and is likely to reduce loneliness. We're therefore always looking for ways to make the application form more user-friendly and open to as many people as possible, even those who have never applied for funding before. The key changes we have made are:

- Including some concise notes below each question on the form explaining what the panel will be looking for (e.g. *'We will be looking at the value and cost effectiveness of your activity and whether you will be working with people from groups or areas that are at the highest risk of isolation and loneliness.'*)
- Making some tweaks to the language used to ensure it is Plain English, most notably changing 'sustainability/sustainable' to 'continuity/able to continue'

The guidance notes also now include an explanation as to why we purchase goods and services directly, rather than providing cash grants, and a note that the final panel will be held in January 2019, to allow projects to receive funding for up to 1 year before the programme ends.



Looking forwards

We are hoping that all of these actions will result in an even greater impact on isolation and loneliness from those activities funded in our final four rounds. We will evaluate the impact of these changes following the April panel, and will continue to promote the fund in those areas and to those people we still need to reach. We're very pleased that since July, most funded projects have been using the BAB Registration Form with participants, and we will soon have some exciting data that can tell us more about what at-risk groups are being reached, what parts of the city participants are travelling from and what motivated them to attend. The Community Researchers are also working on a second phase of their research, this time looking at the fund's effectiveness in reaching the most isolated older people, and the results of this will be invaluable as in 2019 we move towards supporting the continuity of activities and groups that we have helped kick start.

