



Time to Shine



Case study of Small Funds

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Summary

The Small Funds project, run by Leeds Community Foundation, is delivered in partnership with the Time to Shine (TTS) programme, which aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness amongst older people, over 50, in the city of Leeds. Time to Shine is supported by the Lottery funded Ageing Better programme, which operates in 14 areas across England. The Small Funds programme has been running since 2015 and will continue until 2021. Small Funds has awarded grants to a wide range of projects and activities to address different themes, such as working with a specific target subgroup (e.g. people with dementia and carers) or a particular issue (e.g. transport), with priorities linked to expanding the diversity and reach of TTS.

Background

The Small Funds programme aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation by strengthening communities and working with groups who are less likely to engage in activities. The fund awards small grants of between £5,000 - £10,000 to third-sector groups which target disadvantaged communities. Previous grants have included support for dementia outreach, men's breakfast clubs, and transport schemes. Alongside working to reduce social isolation and loneliness, the fund contributes towards a wider understanding of *what works*, by enabling local organisations to use the funds to test or develop an idea that can be sustained after TTS funding ends.

A previous case study of the Small Funds initiative was carried out in 2017. The study found that Small Funds effectively engaged with underrepresented groups (based on funding Rounds 1 and 2) through tailored support and by facilitating the meeting of like-minded people. Small Funds is currently in its 11th and final round. The previous funding rounds focused on: (1) Dementia and carers; (2) Men; (3) Communication; (4) Relationships; (5) Transport; (6) Transport and open theme; and Rounds 8-9 have been open themed. This case study focused on the experiences of beneficiaries, project workers and volunteers from Rounds 6, 7 and 8 (summarised in **Table 1**).



Based on monitoring data, 56 Small Funds projects have been commissioned by Leeds Community Foundation from a total of 170 applications. £537,000 has been awarded to Small Funds projects across 11 separate funding rounds. Almost 4000 people have been involved in Small Funds, this includes 2577 older participants, 362 older volunteers (aged 50+) and 275 younger volunteers (aged 49 and under). Volunteers have given over 25,000 hours of their time (so far) to support Small Funds projects.

Methods

Information was gathered from June-September 2019. The following methods were used to collect data for this case study:

- A focus group of eight participants (beneficiaries and volunteers) from four TTS Small Funds projects.
- Two face-to-face semi-structured interviews with a Community Outreach Worker (Toast Love Coffee) and a Project Coordinator (Fair Ride Car Club).
- A review of documents including monitoring returns, case studies and Test and Learn examples.

The projects assessed for this case study are summarised below in Table 1.

Table 1: Projects assessed for the case study

Round	Target Group	Project (s)	Brief Description
Round 6	Men and women (50+)	Dance: Bollywood Dance in Oulton and Woodlesford	A dance workshop led by a professional dancer. Teaching the skill of Indian dance.
	Women (55+)	Shantona Women's Centre: Around the World Art & Craft	Reducing social isolation through art and craft, home visits.
Round 7	People with sight loss, dementia, reduced	Association of Blind Asians: Fair Ride Car	A volunteer scheme that provides accessible and



	mobility, socially isolated.	Club.	affordable taxi rides.
Round 8	Older people (50+).	Toast Love Coffee (TLC)	A community cafe that engages with people over 50. Led by a Community Outreach Worker to promote activities and train volunteers.

Key Findings

Getting involved with TTS activities as a ‘preventative’ approach

Avoiding loneliness in later life was viewed by focus group participants as one of the main reasons for getting involved in TTS activities. Beneficiaries acknowledged that life course transitions, such as retirement and bereavement, may increase their likelihood of experiencing loneliness and social isolation later in life; and that joining activities now, may help to mitigate this.

“I wanted to avoid that situation. Quite a lot of ladies they are aware that maybe loneliness could be a problem and have joined already, it’s preventative in other words,” (Beneficiary, D Dance).

Collectively, the focus group described loneliness in powerful terms, ***“palpable,” “shocking”*** and ***“really hard to watch.”*** Whilst the majority of focus group participants did not identify themselves as lonely or socially isolated, they did acknowledge that other individuals may have joined their TTS activity for that very reason; ***“one’s 88 and very lonely, she can go days and not speak to anyone else,”*** (Beneficiary, D Dance).

Two beneficiaries who had been involved in activities run by Toast Love Coffee (TLC), a community cafe based in Harehills, reflected on how their involvement in TTS activities had boosted their confidence and led to a huge improvement in their mental health. They described feeling ***“released”*** and a ***“feel good factor”*** after spending time at the cafe, which seeks to be a



welcoming space with a pay-as-you-feel basis; thus removing some of the financial barriers involved with eating out. Feedback from a carer volunteer who regularly attended the TLC cafe with his father (who has Alzheimer's disease) described how visiting the cafe every week had ***"reignited my father's desire to stay alive."***

Volunteers underpin the success of the groups

Volunteers described the broad range of activities carried out as part of their involvement in TTS projects, including befriending, supporting/leading activity sessions and distributing leaflets. At TLC, volunteers working within the café played an integral role in greeting people, and promoting the TTS funded activities on offer. The TLC outreach coordinator described the importance of ***"having a volunteer team that represent and reflect the local community, and have networks that they can advise us on how to use."*** Both volunteers and beneficiaries the TLC cafe described feeling able to put forward ideas and suggestions to run activities of their own, that would utilise their skills in meditation and photography. These feelings were echoed by other volunteers within the group, who described the benefits of volunteering for TLC as ***"feeling useful"*** and ***"like you've got a purpose."***

Two focus group participants involved with Shantona, a multi-cultural women's centre based in Harehills, described initially starting out as beneficiaries, but were both now volunteering part-time as befrienders and supporting Arts and Crafts activities;

"I'm really happy with it, it makes me feel alive and happy" (Volunteer, Shantona).

Another beneficiary of D Dance, a Bollywood dance group for over 50's, described her move towards volunteering by leading the dance sessions during the summer months when the professional instructor would go on holiday. The purpose of this was to keep the activities going during the summer months, and prevent their progress from unravelling.

For Fair Ride Car Club, a community transport scheme, volunteer drivers were the key to sustaining the project and supporting passenger demand. The project coordinator described a future vision for developing partnerships and expanding the scheme after recruiting more drivers:



“It’ll be some months before I have a bigger stock of drivers that will allow me to genuinely support other community partners in more than just an ad hoc way.” (Fair Ride Club, Project Coordinator)

What has worked well?

Creating opportunities for partnership development

Both TLC and Fair Ride Car Club have linked up with other TTS community partners, including the Touchstone Centre, 100% Digital, Friends of Gledhow Valley Woods and Sporting Memories. For Fair Ride Car Club, there was the added potential for beneficiaries to utilise their taxi service to attend TTS events and activities; ***“we’ve been collaborative and even cross-referred and shared marketing. After speaking to other TTS partners in particular, they’ve said to get our work done, it would be great if your transport scheme would link in.”***

The TLC cafe had recently partnered with another TTS funded project (Bee Together) to host a “Bee Social” afternoon, which created a safe space for older people with learning disabilities to meet, play games and make friends. The overarching ethos of TLC was to connect with more partners in the local community and encourage collaboration between TTS partners; ***“building that relationship where we share the work, otherwise it becomes too much.”*** (Outreach coordinator, TLC)

Facilitating opportunities to meet new people and foster friendship

In the focus group, both beneficiaries and volunteers described the new friendships that had developed as a result of being involved in TTS activities. Beneficiaries of the D Dance activity described the positives of meeting new people from different walks of life, extending their social networks, and as a result, had become more community orientated.

Two volunteers involved in Shantona similarly highlighted the positives of meeting new friends through a shared interest of Arts and Crafts; ***“knowing we are old, finding ourselves isolated***



from the outside, but then knowing there is a place to go and make a new friend... that is really, really nice. (Volunteer, Shantona).

Barriers and Challenges

Publicity and marketing

Like most TTS projects, publicity of the groups and activities was often through word of mouth. The costs of advertising in local magazines were viewed by volunteers as a barrier, with some projects moving towards social networking such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Focus group participants acknowledged that while online publicity might not work for everyone, it was a free alternative for promoting the group. The need for more time to focus on publicity and volunteer recruitment was highlighted by an outreach coordinator:

“I know that to get people in, you have to do door knocking, you have to send reminder texts to people who are struggling with memory. I know all of that is effective, but I’ve not had the time to do it. And I need more time to do it.” (Outreach worker, TLC)

For Fair Ride Car Club, publicity and marketing had been approached tentatively to balance the supply and demand of the scheme. This meant shifting the marketing materials towards volunteer recruitment before publicizing the scheme to passengers (service users). The aim of this was to ***“maintain demand at a level that won’t outstrip supply and undermine what we do, we don’t want people to ring us up and have to tell them we’ve not got a driver.”***

Transport and access

Transport was highlighted by the focus group as a key barrier in terms of cost and reliability. This was a pertinent issue for a visually impaired beneficiary of the Fair Ride Car Club, who underscored the difficulties of navigating public transport with a guide dog:

“When you’re deaf and blind, it’s a lot harder.” (Beneficiary, Fair Ride Car Club)



Beneficiaries also acknowledged that transport may be a barrier for individuals who are interested in trying out an activity, but then feel “put off” by the long journey to get there. Beneficiaries of the D Dance activity regularly split car-sharing duties, offering lifts to those who would struggle to travel independently. The motivation behind this was, **“if I’m doing my bit now, hopefully if I do get to that point, somebody will do the same for me,”** (Participant, D Dance).

Taking the first step: attending a group for the first time

Beneficiaries suggested that lack of motivation may be a barrier for people who are thinking about joining a new group or activity. Focus group participants shared their experiences of taking the first step; for the majority, this often involved being introduced to the group by a friend.

“You’ve got to be quite daring to go on your own, haven’t you?” (Volunteer, TLC)

Both volunteers and beneficiaries acknowledged the anxiety of joining a group for the first time, but that for most, that feeling didn’t last very long - **“once you get through the door you’re not on your own anymore!”**

Learning and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this case study, there are many positive examples of partnership development across Small Projects. The Fair Ride Car Club in particular has the potential to address some of the transport barriers raised, by offering taxi rides to TTS activities at affordable rates and a personalised service for individuals who need extra support.

The success of Small Funds is heavily reliant on volunteers; and factoring in sufficient time for outreach work and volunteer recruitment was an important issue raised by paid project workers. Based on focus group feedback, those who volunteered for Small Funds projects felt valued, well-supported, and were happy to continue their involvement in TTS projects. It is however important to note that a number of the focus group participants did not appear to



identify as lonely or socially isolated, and their motivations for taking part in TTS activities were mostly viewed as a preventative measure, to avoid becoming lonely in the future.

Sustainability and Legacy

For Fair Ride Car Club there is potential for the scheme to become a sustainable social enterprise after the TTS funding ends. The project coordinator expressed the long-term desire to move away from being dependent on grant funding, but acknowledged this would take a number of years to phase out. Similarly, the TLC cafe has established itself as a Community Interest Company, and plans to sustain itself beyond TTS funding through intercepted ingredients and food donations. To continue running free activities and increase outreach work at TLC, funding would be needed. To sustain the D Dance project, the group have started to pay £5 per class, which contributes towards the ongoing running of their activities, and fundraising to keep the session going after TTS funding ends.

References

Small Funds Case Study 1:

<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.timetoshine.co.uk/Care-Connect-Small-Funds-Report.pdf>

Further Information:

<https://timetoshineleeds.org/projects/small-funds>

<https://www.ddancetheatre.co.uk/projects-whats-on/>

<https://timetoshineleeds.org/projects/small-funds/round-six/around-the-world-art-craft>

<https://timetoshineleeds.org/projects/small-funds/round-seven/fair-ride-car-club>

Report prepared by Charlene Martin, January 2020.