

the  
**Digbeth**  
TRUST



# Stronger together

Turning community ideas into community action for 21 years

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# Stronger together

**2007-08 is the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of The Digbeth Trust, marking our foundation as an independent charitable company. For 21 years we've been offering a unique mix of capacity building and grants management services in the West Midlands.**

Over those years, we have helped hundreds of voluntary and community groups to become established, to grow and to flourish. We have helped them to find premises and funding, to undertake feasibility studies for buildings and land use, to develop new skills to increase their effectiveness and sustainability, to realise their dreams.

We have built up a particular expertise in supporting:

- New and emerging groups and communities;
- Black and minority ethnic led organisations;
- Small, community-based groups.

As independent evaluations of our work show, we deliver on our commitment, to leave the groups we work with better able to meet the challenges facing them and less in need of our services in the future.

In recent years we have also offered a range of services to other organisations (for example NHS bodies and local authorities), helping them support the voluntary and community sector in new and better ways. This has included administering grants programmes with integrated capacity-building elements, and placing our development workers into local regeneration initiatives.

In 2006 we launched a new initiative – our Professional and Technical Aid Service (PTAS). PTAS links voluntary and community organisations with quality-assured independent consultants who can give them targeted support when and where they need it.

We are also playing an increasing role in policy work, ensuring the needs of the voluntary and community sector – needs which we tackle on a daily basis – are being addressed in the policies and practices of others, at a local and regional level.

# Working with you

**The Digbeth Trust is a development support organisation offering services to voluntary and community organisations, public bodies – such as local authorities and health service organisations – and statutory and charitable funders.**

## **Supporting groups**

For voluntary and community organisations – our main stakeholders – the Trust currently offers a package of support services to help them to develop their organisation and activities, providing step-by-step practical, hands-on support, tailor-made for each group. We offer two main services:

### **Development support**

We help groups through the process of refining their vision and determining the steps needed to achieve it. We do this through:

- **Access to professional and technical expertise** from our register of quality-assured consultants, skilled and knowledgeable in the needs of voluntary and community groups. We help with feasibility studies, architectural studies, business plans, funding strategies and organisational reviews, through our Professional and Technical Aid Service (PTAS);
- **Access to capacity building support** from our own development workers;
- **Signposting** to other sources of funding and support.

## Access to funding

The Trust can help groups get funding from grant programmes which we administer for a range of public and charitable funders. Examples have included:

- Health-related small grant programmes for the Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust;
- A consultancy programme linked to the Enterprising Communities area of East Birmingham;
- A ground-breaking project with Birmingham City Council, providing funding to groups on a reward grant basis;
- A small grants programme for capacity-building activities, for a West Midlands ChangeUp Consortium;
- The William Dudley Trust – an independent grantmaking trust with its own Board of Trustees.

We work with groups across the West Midlands, prioritising small, new and developing organisations that could not otherwise afford professional support.

## Public sector clients

For public sector organisations we offer a variety of services including:

- **Capacity building and organisational development services** – provided through our staff or through our register of quality-assured consultants;
- **Grants management services** – design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation;
- **Consultancy services** – including needs assessments, research and evaluation – with a particular expertise in community-based issues.

## **Our approach**

- Tailoring support to the specific needs of groups and communities;
- Working with groups to transfer skills to build their capacity;
- Focusing on sustainable development – so that groups and projects develop realistically;
- Facilitating links between groups and the wider policy and funding environment in which they are working.

## IF YOU ARE...

## WE CAN...

### A funder seeking to:

- Target your resources at specific communities or areas in the West Midlands
- Increase the quality of the bids that you receive
- Link your funding to community development support
- Reduce transaction costs by linking your funds with other grant schemes
- Access quality assured consultants for specific pieces of work

- Manage your grant programmes cost efficiently and effectively
- Design or redesign your programme to ensure it complies with best practice in community development and funding
- Link your programme with our development work and the other grant schemes we manage
- Distribute your tender documents to our database of quality-assured consultants
- Provide you with an analysis of demand and unmet needs in your area

### A voluntary or community group:

- Seeking help to develop your organisation
- Needing specialist support to develop your ideas for a specific project
- Needing funding to put your ideas into action

- Provide an initial assessment of your needs
- Put you in touch with the most appropriate source of local support
- Help you develop consultancy specifications to meet particular needs
- Help you find a quality assured consultant
- Help you draft bids to the grants schemes we manage

## IF YOU ARE...

## WE CAN...

### **An infrastructure support or capacity building organisation:**

- Looking to develop partnerships with others
- Interested in pooling information about community needs

- Work with you to develop and implement new ideas
- Offer time and expertise for strategic development and policy work which is focused on delivering tangible benefits for the West Midlands voluntary and community sector

# Firm foundations

**The Digbeth Trust is a not-for-profit charitable company. We're a membership organisation with over 100 members – mainly small voluntary and community-based organisations (VCOs).**

The Trust grew out of a need for communities and community-based organisations to be able to access technical support to participate in local regeneration initiatives – in particular in relation to buildings and land use issues. We made small grants, enabling groups to engage a professional consultant to carry out a feasibility study for their proposed project.

It's not what many people would consider to be the most exciting end of the voluntary sector. But when you speak to so many of our beneficiaries, about the importance of that initial support, they suddenly get very animated. It was the vital step that convinced major funders to back their dream.

In our first year of operation the Trust had a turnover of just £6,250. By 2005/06 this had climbed to £386,000.

Since our foundation, The Digbeth Trust has made grants totalling £1.7m. Our smallest grant was just £200 (in our first year) and our largest was £8,107.

# Key assets

## Our reputation

In 21 years the Trust has acquired an exemplary reputation, both for the effectiveness of our work and for our unique approach. In particular we have a very positive reputation amongst small groups and marginalised communities for genuinely working to understand their specific needs, for developing tailored support and for doing what we promise.

## Our members

We are of, as well as for, the voluntary sector. Our 100 plus individual and organisation members help ensure that we deliver our mission. They are also a source of expertise, intelligence and support.

## Our people

The Trust is led by a Board of Trustees and we aim to ensure that its membership reflects the Trust's key stakeholders, whilst maintaining a balance of the skills and experience needed for effective governance and leadership. We have a small team of staff with extensive skills and knowledge from work in the voluntary and community sector and public sector. The team is enhanced by experienced consultants who lead on specific projects. And our committed volunteers provide essential administration support whilst benefiting from a tailored personal development programme.

## Our knowledge and experience

Over twenty years of working in the community has enabled us to accumulate a substantial body of knowledge in the field. Some of this is embedded in our three key databases:

- **VCO Database** – with over 1700 voluntary and community organisations across the West Midlands;
- **Consultants Database** – our resource of quality-assured consultants which ensures we can link VCOs and other organisations with high quality specialist consultant support and access this resource for our own purposes;
- **Funders and Support Database** – enabling effective onward referral.

The Trust also has a library of resources produced during 21 years of supporting the voluntary and community sector.

# Capacity building

The Trust offers capacity building services to groups contacting us directly, or through programmes we deliver on behalf of other funders. Examples include:

- **Mobilising Your Assets** – a programme for 30 groups in south west Birmingham to increase sustainability by developing a more diverse income base (Community Network South West);
- **The Neighbourhood Performance Reward Grant** – to test new ways of empowering communities to deliver community safety services in their neighbourhood (Birmingham Community Safety Partnership);
- **Greets Green First Steps Programme** – to help organisations develop feasibility studies, fundraising strategies and business plans.

We offer a package of assistance to help groups to develop new and existing projects, with practical, hands-on support tailor made for each group.

The service delivery package includes:

- **Development workers** – to help groups to refine their vision and determine the steps needed to realise that vision.
- **Feasibility study consultancies** – to answer those questions about vision, delivered by our carefully vetted consultants.
- **Post-feasibility support** – with fundraising advice, capacity building for committees, business planning and development strategies.
- **Technical support** – for community buildings and other assets.
- **Signposting** – to funding and networking opportunities.

## Cycle Chain

**ANDY ELDER, from Cycle Chain, explains how The Digbeth Trust helped them become a thriving social enterprise...**

Cycle Chain uses bicycles to improve health, social welfare and the environment. We repair and renovate bicycles and sell them through our cycle shop. Through this business, Cycle Chain provides training and work experience to people who have a visual impairment, a mental illness or other disability.

Using feasibility study finance from The Digbeth Trust, we demonstrated a city centre demand for cycle sales and parking facilities. West Midlands Police agreed to supply unclaimed stolen cycles, and Cycle Chain quickly began turning unwanted raw materials into an income source.

A partnership with Queen Alexandra College enabled student placements for training and work experience. The students' experiences were so positive that we were able to place some into full-time employment, following completion of their courses.

Recognising the model's potential, Cycle Chain looked for another

opening. "This is where the Digbeth Trust came up trumps again," said John Shaw, a Cycle Chain Director. "We had the opportunity to work with the Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust to support their clients, but we needed to fit out a new cycle shop alongside their own Phoenix Training Workshop. With a grant from the Digbeth Trust, Cycle Chain was able to turn this renovation round in no time."

Now Cycle Chain supplies labour, cycles and spares to support the therapeutic recovery of mental health clients, alongside the cycle training instructors at the Phoenix Centre. "Our philosophy is simple. The sooner we can help people get out of the system and back into enjoying a real life and real employment, the better. The Digbeth Trust's ongoing support has been immensely valuable to our business, our partners and most importantly, our clients."

Cycle Chain sells renovated bikes to the public through its shop at Bierton Road, Birmingham. This supports the continuation of its partnership work with the Phoenix Training Centre and the Mental Health Trust's clients.

**Cycle Chain 0121 789 9724**

During 2006-07 we handled 184 enquiries for development support, including:

- 28 requests to search for suitable consultants;
- 77 enquiries for help with funding for consultancy support;
- 52 general funding enquiries, many for start up costs from small, new groups;
- 22 requests for e-mail broadcasts – sending commissioning briefs to the Trust’s register of consultants;
- 38 premises-related enquiries.

Of these enquiries: 30% were from black and minority ethnic led groups; 13% were from groups specialising in work with refugees and asylum seekers; 9% were from groups specialising in working with children and young people; 6% were from groups specialising in working with BME communities.

In addition, during 2006-07, the Trust’s new website was visited by an average of 40 people each day – a total of over 14,000 visits during the year.

# Grants management

**The Digbeth Trust believes that VCOs should have access to a range of funding opportunities, including grant funding. VCOs can make a big impact with small amounts of money and many of them will neither want nor be able to take on contracts to provide services.**

Grants ensure a healthy and diverse sector and often allow VCOs to be innovative and develop new ways of meeting people's needs.

Since we were established the Trust has managed grant programmes for a range of public and charitable funders. These include:

- **Public funders** – such as Birmingham City Council, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust and ChangeUp;
- **Area-based regeneration programmes** – such as Enterprising Communities and Greet's Green New Deal for Communities Partnership;
- **Charitable funders** – such as the William Dudley Trust.

The value we add to grants programmes includes:

- Designing grant programmes that are sensitive to the needs of groups, whilst ensuring that the funder's objectives are met;
- Incorporating capacity building into each stage of the grants process – for applicants, grant recipients and, from time to time, the funder themselves.

## **William Dudley Trust**

The Digbeth Trust provides a full grants management and administrative service for the William Dudley Trust. We:

- Promote their grants programmes (including managing its website);
- Administer and appraise grant applications;
- Service trustee and grant making meetings;
- Monitor grants;
- Co-ordinate the grants budgets and financial records.

With The Digbeth Trust providing this service, their trustees are able to focus on the development of strategy and on making effective grant decisions.

The Trust is a steering group member of the West Midlands Charitable Trusts Group and an associate member of the Association of Charitable Foundations.

## Bangladeshi Youth Forum

HARUN RAZA, Community Sports Worker for the Bangladeshi Youth Forum (BYF), explains the work of his organisation and how The Digbeth Trust has helped.

BYF was established in 1994 to empower Bangladeshi youth to participate in decision making processes in the West Midlands and help improve the quality of life for people of Bangladeshi descent.

In 2005, The Digbeth Trust provided grant aid for BYF to organise our Uniting Communities Badminton Championship – promoting regeneration through sport. The funding came from a grants programme which the Trust managed on behalf of Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust. The aim was to encourage regular participation in sport and provide health advice. We involved organisations who provided education, training and employment opportunities, opening up opportunities to both participants and spectators of the Championship. It was a valuable chance for prospective employers to engage with black and minority ethnic groups who were under-represented in their field of work. Professional health workers distributed information and gave health and nutritional advice

to over 350 participants and 200 spectators, raising awareness of the importance of regular exercise and its benefits for health and wellbeing.

We've seen a sharp increase in the number of people taking part in physical activities. The event enabled BYF to work with Badminton England, resulting in 24 people becoming qualified Badminton Coaches. This was the first time in a long time courses had been held in Birmingham. It's a real achievement which helped Badminton England to reach a new community. The project also led to a partnership with South Birmingham College, introducing educational courses at the BYF Centre. We've also developed relationships with mainstream organisations and institutions – West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service and Crown Prosecution Service, for example.

The support we received from The Digbeth Trust in developing and submitting our application was really useful. Without the grant, we would have found it very difficult to carry out this work and the championships have made a significant difference to the lives of the participants, volunteers, the community and BYF.

[www.byf-uk.org](http://www.byf-uk.org)

# Policy work

**The Trust is committed to developing flexible services that meet the changing needs of VCOs, whilst ensuring that our work fits with developing national, regional and local policies.**

One of our key objectives is to capture knowledge of the environment in which VCOs operate, in order to influence policy for the benefit of our members and other VCOs. In doing so we work in partnership with other key organisations in and beyond the sector.

In 2007/08 The Digbeth Trust chairs the West Midlands Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Partnership – leading the development of a voluntary and community sector infrastructure strategy for the region – and is co-opted to Birmingham City Council’s Asset Transfer Policy Review Group – supporting the Council to develop its new protocol for the transfer of public assets to community ownership and management.

We consult our members on key policy developments, to help us to draft responses to government and others. We have recently consulted on Government proposals on the transfer of public assets to community ownership.

## **The policy environment**

There are some prevailing trends in policy concerning the “third sector”, including:

- Increasingly becoming a deliverer of public services, through procurement mechanisms;

- Receiving funding through contracts or quasi-contracts, rather than grants;
- Targeting capacity building funds at social enterprise support;
- Increasing the sector's asset base through the transfer of the management and/or ownership of public buildings, for example, through 'community anchor' organisations;
- Developing diverse and sustainable funding strategies, with a more entrepreneurial approach, or through social enterprises;

To facilitate this, new legal forms, such as Community Interest Companies and Charitable Incorporated Organisations, have been established.

### **The sector's response**

The sector's response to these trends has included:

- **Campaigning** – for full cost recovery and the maintenance of grant funding, for example;
- **Capacity building** – such as providing training courses on contracting;
- **Development of new working relationships** – such as clustering, sub-contracting, partnership development;
- **Merger** – such as the trend in mergers of CVSs, to realise economies of scale.

Parts of the sector have voiced concern about the erosion of the sector's independence, associated with the contract culture.

## **The Digbeth Trust's response**

Our own response has included:

- Briefing and consulting our members through our newsletter, e-mail broadcasts and website;
- Providing continuing professional development training for our registered consultants;
- Designing and delivering capacity building and grant programmes for groups that enable them to anticipate and take full advantage of these trends and changes;
- Responding to consultation exercises and advocating developments that will enable the continuation of a diverse, independent and effective sector, for example through the maintenance of small grant programmes.

# The difference we make

**The Trust has well-established management information systems and we regularly monitor and assess the impact of our work. This is normally done at three distinct levels:**

**Level 1** – Every 3 or 4 years, an independent evaluation of all the Trust's work, researching impact for groups and individuals from grant funding and development support and for the regeneration programme or funder. It includes cross-programme issues and lessons learned. Policy issues for the sector and for the Trust's future direction are identified. Our next such review is due in 2008.

**Level 2** – At the end of each grant programme or project we manage, an independent evaluation along the lines of the above, but with more focus on individual programme or project-specific outcomes.

**Level 3** – Internal evaluation on completion of each grant-aided activity, researching the immediate impact of development support, grant-funded consultancies and activities and the Trust-managed grant application process.

Evaluations show that the Trust is:

- Effective at reaching marginalised communities and groups;
- An effective administrator of grant funds – delivering positive outcomes for VCOs, individuals, communities and funders;
- An important source of data on capacity building needs of VCOs – particularly new, small and BME-led groups;

- Effective at helping groups to build their own capacity – thereby having a lasting impact on the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the groups we work with;
- Effective at highlighting policy and development issues for other organisations – particularly public bodies;
- Effective at helping to lever in additional financial and non-financial resources to the sector;
- Self-critical and effective at learning from our own experiences.

To ensure that performance is measured effectively, we'll continue to develop indicators for the *outcomes* of our work rather than just the *outputs*. In 2007-08, we're including a social audit component in the evaluation of the Trust's work.

The Trust uses the PQASSO quality assurance system (we hold at least Level 1 in all areas) and will be assessing the most appropriate quality system for the future.

We're committed to tackling inequality and promoting diversity. The Trust monitors our services and internal processes to assess equitable access and impact and we take steps to target our activities accordingly.

In October 2006, an independent evaluation of the Regeneration and Health Programme (commissioned by the Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust) was published. It showed that the programme:

- Was a cost-effective means of enhancing marginalised communities' access to health information and services;
- Highlighted additional support needs within marginalised communities;

- Promoted health advocacy within excluded communities and the capacity of individuals and groups to engage with mainstream health services;
- Reached 2,070 individual beneficiaries;
- Enhanced the quality and range of service provision and identified unmet needs;
- Improved relationships between VCOs and the PCT;
- Helped the PCT to develop more transparent relationships with VCOs in its area.

A review, by the Trust, of the monitoring information for the Healthy Lifestyles programme, identified more than 2,700 direct beneficiaries and over 3,000 additional indirect beneficiaries. The majority of projects continued beyond the initial small grant funding from Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust. People involved directly and indirectly in the projects had begun to change their attitudes and lifestyles towards healthier options, becoming more active and making better dietary choices. There were improved research, organisational and decision making skills for individuals, benefiting their organisations, and evidence that the funded activities created beneficial links between funded groups and other organisations.

The Trust arranges regular, independent evaluations of its support work. The last evaluation of our work found that, as a result of our intervention:

- 92% of groups replying were able to buy in the skills and expertise which they could not otherwise afford;
- 81% had developed a clear understanding of their circumstances and needs;

- 78% had significant improvement in their organisation's skills, capacity and confidence;
- 69% made a permanent improvement;
- 54% improved services to clients;
- 27 groups raised nearly £2m of additional funds (we have other evidence that this figure may be as much as £3.5m).
- The benefits are felt most by those who most need support – groups that are mainly:
  - led by people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds;
  - small (less than £60k turnover and fewer than 3 paid staff);
  - unincorporated associations;
  - volunteer-led groups that lack internal capacity;
  - unable to access funders or technical aid providers;
  - generally lacking support;
  - involved in the direct provision of community-based services, health and social welfare, advice, neighbourhood services, recreation and education.
- The findings show that small grants worked for VCOs, whilst at the same time contributing to the policy outputs of regeneration programmes.

## Greets Green First Steps

The Greets Green First Steps Project, managed by The Digbeth Trust, offered short-term, grant-aided professional support to voluntary and community groups in Greets Green, West Bromwich, funded by Greets Green New Deal for Communities. The Trust employed a Greets Green resident as a development worker, based within the area, so we could quickly identify local voluntary and community groups that might benefit from support. The Trust supported the Ryders Green Methodist Day Centre with three consultancy grants between 2003 and 2006.

The Centre was based in the refurbished church hall of Ryders Green Methodist Church. It provides 120 places for full day care for older people who are housebound or isolated due to physical disability or mental health problems – run by 6 staff and several volunteers. It works in partnership with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and St John Ambulance.

Each phase of our support was tailored to the needs identified by the Centre, working closely with the Trust's development worker. Community development consultants, chosen from the Trust's register, provided direct support. Initially the Centre asked for help

with fundraising. 80% of their income came as a revenue grant from Sandwell MBC. Staff had to raise the remainder through raffles, bingo and a sandwich making service – time consuming and exhausting! The Trust recommended a business planning process and funding strategy to provide a more structured approach to fundraising. Business planning sessions showed that strengthening the management committee, through training and a new constitution, were vital – support delivered by our consultant, over a period of 24 days in 2003. A different consultant helped with large funding bids, which have so far raised over £54,000, including a minibus.

“What a difference The Digbeth Trust's intervention has made to Ryders Green,” said Centre Manager, Pat Briscoe, “particularly for the 120 members who need our care each week. Right from the start staff at The Digbeth Trust were very helpful.

“We now understand the nuts and bolts of the organisation and can see the training needs of the committee, who will now be involved in team training. The fundraising consultant was realistic and able to see our needs and work flexibly. We have also gained more knowledge of fundraising and how to go about it.”

**Ryders Green Centre 0121 520 5367**

# The future

**VCOs will continue to need effective technical assistance, capacity building and grant funds for the foreseeable future. The Digbeth Trust will continue to:**

- Advocate for an independent, well-resourced and effective sector;
- Encourage better co-ordination between funders and providers of capacity building support to improve our efficiency and effectiveness;
- Provide a range of innovative and effective capacity building and grant programmes – which we will continue to evaluate;
- Develop relationships with new funders across the West Midlands and nationally;
- Collect information about the needs of the sector and the impact of our work, to ensure we are targeting resources to best effect;
- Improve our governance, services and accountability to our members and other stakeholders.

## Thanks

The Digbeth Trust would like to thank the following for allowing us to use the photographs and case studies in this publication:

St Christopher's Parochial Church Council/ The Springfield Project

Ashiana Community Project

Shree Sorathia Prajapati

Muath Welfare Trust

ACE Resource Centre

Cycle Chain

Bangladeshi Youth Forum

Ryders Green Methodist Church Centre

We have very definitely been stronger together!

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## **Our mission**

The Digbeth Trust exists to enable the development of an influential, effective, independent, mutually supportive and sustainable voluntary and community sector across the West Midlands. To do this we will provide high quality needs-led expert help to the sector and influence the policy and practice of others.

## **Our vision for ourselves**

The Digbeth Trust is a dynamic, effective organisation that is a leading provider of high quality, independent, specialist support for voluntary and community organisations across the West Midlands.

## **Our vision for the sector**

The Digbeth Trust's vision is of a diverse, influential, effective, independent, mutually supportive and sustainable voluntary and community sector which effectively supports the many communities of the West Midlands.

**To find out more about The Digbeth Trust and the services we offer please, contact us at:**

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